

President Trump Praises U.S. Special Forces in Florida Visit

Monday, President Donald Trump visited U.S. Central Command and U.S. Special Operations Command at MacDill Air Force Base near Tampa, Florida.

Following his visit, the president addressed the senior military commanders and CENTCOM and SOCOM officials who took part in the tour. While reiterating his desire to “build up” the U.S. military, he also gave a bit of a pep talk to the service members.

Here is the complete transcript of his comments:

I’m honored to be here today among so many of our really and truly great heroes. I want to begin by thanking General Votel and General Thomas for their distinguished leadership and service on behalf of our country. Very, very outstanding people. I’d also like to thank General Dunford, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. That’s big stuff, when you have the Chairman. Where is—Joe, stand up for a second. This is one of the great people. Thank you.

Also, Commander Vogel and everyone serving at MacDill Air Force Base. Quite a place. And we’re going to be loading it up with beautiful new planes and beautiful new equipment. You’ve been lacking a little equipment. We’re going to load it up. You’re going to get a lot of equipment. Believe me.

So importantly, also, let me thank all of the coalition partners and their representatives assembled here today. We proudly—very proudly—stand with you, and we will be fighting for your security. They’re fighting for our security and freedom.

Let me recognize our great governor and a very good friend of mine, and somebody who endorsed me—that makes him a better friend of mine. You know, if they don't endorse, believe me, if you're ever in this position, it's never quite the same, OK? You can talk, but it never means the same. But this man is a great, great governor and has done a fantastic job—Rick Scott, governor, stand up please. Thank you, Rick.

Finally, on behalf of the entire nation, let me express our gratitude to all members—and I mean all members—of our military serving in the United States Central Command and the United States Special Operations Command. We salute the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard, along with our civilian defense personnel, who are so important to the success of what we're doing.

Let me also recognize the military families and spouses who bravely shoulder the burdens of war. I want every military family in this country to know that our administration is at your service. We stand with you 100 percent. We will protect those who protect us, and we will never ever let you down. As your president, I have no higher duty than to protect the American people—highest duty we have. I said it the other night. Great, great Supreme Court nominee—you all saw that—but I said to myself, perhaps the only thing more important to me definitely is the defense of our nation. The Supreme Court is so important, but we have to defend our nation. And we will do that, believe me. We will do that. And each and every one of you is central to that mission.

The men and women serving at CENTCOM and SOCOM have poured out their hearts and souls for this country. They really experience things that very few people get to experience. You've shed your blood across the continents and the oceans. You've engaged the enemy on distant battlefields, toiled in the burning heat and bitter cold and sacrificed everything so that we can remain safe and strong and free. Our

administration will always honor our sacred bond to those who serve, and we will never ever forget you. Believe me, we will never ever forget you.

We will ensure that the men and women of our military have the tools, equipment, resources, training and supplies you need to get the job done. You've seen me say we've been depleted. Our Navy is at a point almost as low as World War I. That's a long time ago. That's a long time ago. It's not going to happen anymore, folks. It's not going to happen anymore—not with me.

But we will ensure no taxpayer dollars are wasted. I have already saved more than \$700 million when I got involved in the negotiation on the F-35. You know about that. And I want to thank Lockheed Martin and I want to thank Boeing, and I want to thank all of the companies that have really opened up. And when I say opened up, Rick Scott understands this very well—opened up and cut their prices. OK? Because that's what they did. And we've got that program, it's going to be back in really great shape from really being very troubled.

And we are going to be taking care of our great veterans. We will make a historic financial investment in the Armed Forces of the United States and show the entire world that America stands with those who stand in defense of freedom. We have your back every hour, every day, now and always. That also means getting our allies to pay their fair share. It's been very unfair to us. We strongly support NATO. We only ask that all of the NATO members make their full and proper financial contributions to the NATO Alliance, which many of them have not been doing. Many of them have not been even close, and they have to do that.

Central Command and Special Operations Command are at the very center of our fight against radical Islamic terrorism. America stands in awe of your courage. Those serving at CENTCOM have bravely fought across the theater of war in the

Middle East, and bravely battled a vicious enemy that has no respect for human life. Today, we express our gratitude to everyone serving overseas, including all of our military personnel in Afghanistan.

SOCOM has dispatched its legendary warriors to the most secret, sensitive and daring missions in defense of the United States of America. No enemy stands a chance against our Special Forces—not even a chance. They don't have a chance, and that's the way we're going to keep it. And you're going to be better off because you're going to have the finest equipment known to man. Going to be better off.

For proof that our nation has been blessed by God, look no further than the men and women of the United States military. They are the greatest fighters and the greatest force of justice on the face of the earth and that the world has ever known. The challenges facing our nation nevertheless are very large—very, very large.

We're up against an enemy that celebrates death and totally worships destruction—you've seen that. ISIS is on a campaign of genocide, committing atrocities across the world. Radical Islamic terrorists are determined to strike our homeland as they did on 9/11; as they did from Boston to Orlando to San Bernardino. And all across Europe, you've seen what happened in Paris and Nice. All over Europe, it's happening. It's gotten to a point where it's not even being reported and, in many cases, the very, very dishonest press doesn't want to report it. They have their reasons, and you understand that.

So today, we deliver a message in one very unified voice: To these forces of death and destruction, America and its allies will defeat you. We will defeat them. We will defeat radical Islamic terrorism, and we will not allow it to take root in our country. We're not going to allow it. You've been seeing what's been going on over the last few days. We need strong programs so that people that love us and want to

love our country and will end up loving our country are allowed in—not people that want to destroy us and destroy our country.

Freedom, security and justice will prevail. In his first State of the Union message, President George Washington wrote that, “To be prepared for war is one of the most effectual means of preserving peace.” Almost 200 years later, as the general was also speaking about Ronald Reagan, he said that wisdom comes in three very, very strong words: “Peace through strength.” I’ve said it many times during the campaign, speaking in front of tens of thousands of people at one sitting, and I’d always mention America first—a phrase that you probably never heard, “Make America Great Again.” Anybody ever heard that? And peace through strength.

The men and women of the United States military provide the strength to bring peace to our troubled, troubled times. We stand behind you. We support your mission. We love our country. We are loyal to our people. We respect our flag. We celebrate our traditions. We honor our heroes. You are our heroes. And we are prepared to fight. And we pray for peace.
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