

Vice President Pence Gives the Air Force Space Command a Pep Talk

As President Donald Trump was keeping his promise to America's veterans to improve the quality of the care they receive from the Department of Veterans Affairs, Vice President Mike Pence was addressing our newest generation of heroes with a bit of a pep talk.

The nation's second-in-command visited U.S. Air Force Space Command headquarters at Schriever Air Force Base in Colorado Springs. The command directs 38,000 personnel in 134 locations around the world protecting Americans from threats in space—and in cyberspace, arguably the newest frontier in national defense.

"We couldn't be more honored to be here in Colorado with the men and women of Schriever Air Force Base where every day you are evolving the force, driving innovation and mastering space," he said that outset of his 10-minute speech. The following is the transcript of the remainder of his speech:

I bring greetings this afternoon from your commander-in-chief, a champion of the Armed Forces of the United States, the 45th president of the United States, President Donald Trump. And I also brought my commander-in-chief with me, my wife of 32 years, who also is a Marine Corps mom. Would you give a rousing welcome to the second lady of the United States, Karen Pence, is with us today ...

We're just delighted to be with all of you today and for the great work at Air Force Space Command. And also I want to congratulate the newest brigadier general of the United States Air Force—just announced this morning—the commander of the 50th Space Wing, General Deanna Burt.

Congratulations, General. And lastly, allow me to just—this is my first opportunity to do this—to introduce the president's choice to be the United States secretary of the Air Force, herself an 11-year veteran of the Air Force. I served with her in the Congress of the United States. She is an incredible advocate of our armed forces, a courageous veteran who has worn the uniform. Join me in welcoming Secretary and Doctor Heather Wilson.

And to all the leadership and all the men and women who serve at Schriever Air Force Base, it's an honor to be with you. The Old Book says if you owe debts, pay debts; if honor, then honor; if respect, then respect. And I'm just really here to pay a debt of honor and a debt of gratitude on behalf of the American people for your service to this country. Each and every one of the men and women in this cafeteria have stepped forward in this all-volunteer military that we have to serve our country at an enormously important time. And you here at Space Command in every real sense—as I'll say more than once—literally, you might be in Colorado, but you are on the front lines and every day you are in the fight for freedom and the American people are grateful.

I told the president this morning I was headed your way and he said to me just, "just tell 'em I'm proud of 'em." And I'll tell you what, the president speaks for all of the American people. I can attest to it. The pride the American people place in all the men and women of our armed forces is incalculable and I hope you feel it every single day.

This Air Force Base has really exemplified American leadership and American excellence now for more than 30 years. There may not be any runways here, but every day you reach into the stars and you make it possible for your fellow warriors to be able to take the fight to the enemy with enhanced security and enhanced safety. And you guard the nation in space and in cyberspace. You're on the

cutting edge of technology and arms and you complete the Air Force's mission. You know, the Air Force's mission—if I get this right, Heather—is to “Fly, fight, and win in air, space and cyberspace.” And you're the last two of that in every sense of the word and we commend you for it.

You know, this base is named after a legendary American who wore the uniform, General Bernard Schriever—the father of the Air Force Space program. And today the more than 7,700 members of the 50th Space Wing operate the space and cyber systems that literally are the envy of the world and keep America one step ahead of all who would do us harm.

You direct no fewer than 175 American satellites that are crucial to our national security every day—in weather, communications, and early warning of foreign missile tests. Every American benefits from your efforts here—the world's only global utility, the GPS system that's essential to our daily life.

And as the president said in his inaugural address and many times since, space is a priority for this administration and it is a priority for the American people and it will always be. In fact, I'm pleased to report that nearly two decades after it was disbanded, in just a few short weeks the President will soon relaunch the National Space Council. And it will be my great honor as vice president of the United States to serve as its chairman, which has been a historic role for this office. The president recognizes that America needs a coherent and cohesive approach to the last, greatest frontier in history, and the National Space Council, as it has played a role before, will advise the president on both civilian and military national policy and strategy for space and we look forward to the work of that new entity.

It will strengthen opportunities that we have and it will encourage more investment at the national level and more

aspiration for all of our people to look to space for careers and for service. And I just want you all to know that this administration is determined to once again ensure that America is leading in space in near Earth orbit and exploration far, far beyond our planet.

And you, the men and women of Schriever Air Force Base, will play a leading role as America leads in space. Under President Trump your mission will be more important than ever before because this administration knows that your work, in the depths of space and cyberspace, is crucial to our security in the 21st century.

You know, it really is the greatest privilege of my life to serve as vice president to a president who cares so deeply about the men and women of the Armed Forces of the United States, their families and our veterans. In fact, you'll probably see on the news a little bit later today that not more than a couple of hours ago, President Trump gathered in the East Room at the White House and signed the VA Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act—comprehensive legislation to provide our veterans with the care they earned in the uniform of the United States and America and we're going to see it through for world-class healthcare for all those who served.

This new act, following the Choice Act the president signed into law, is a historic step to hold VA employees accountable to the highest performance standards, it will ensure they're accountable when those standards are not met, and it includes long-overdue protections for VA employees who uncover wrongdoing or blow the whistle on poor care. We all remember those terrible stories. Literally some of our veterans, men and women who have worn the uniform of this country and protected our freedom, who literally struggled with health and some who passed away waiting for care at the VA. I promise you, with this new legislation today and under President Trump's leadership

and Secretary Shulkin, the days of bad health care at the VA are over. And reform at the VA is coming.

And let me also say—as I already mentioned before—as the proud parents of a United States Marine, I couldn't be more grateful to stand with a president who is so committed to rebuilding our military, restoring the arsenal of democracy. And President Donald Trump is fighting every day to make sure that our soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and Coast Guard have the resources and the training you need to accomplish your mission and bring our soldiers home safe.

Last month, the president signed a \$21 billion increase in funding for the Armed Forces of the United States. It was the largest investment in our military readiness in nearly a decade. In his first budget, the Congress will take up this fall, the president called for the biggest increase in military spending since the days of Ronald Reagan—including a nearly 20 percent increase in the Air Force space budget. We're going to fight to lead in space and we're going to put the resources of the United States of America behind you.

In short, the president of the United States is going make the strongest fighting force in history stronger still—American strength will only grow under the leadership of this new President and this new administration. It doesn't matter whether we're dealing with a brutal regime in North Korea or Iran, or radical Islamic terrorists in Syria, Yemen, or Iraq, the United States will continue to stand strong. We'll continue to take the fight to the enemy on our terms on their soil.

And each one of you are going to continue to be at the tip of the spear, and I understand that, and so does the president. It's one of the reasons I wanted to be here today. It's one of the reasons why I'm told the secretary

of the Air Force has already been here once before in her very short tenure. Because you warriors in the room are playing a central role every hour, every day in the fight against radical Islamic terrorism and the fight for freedom around the world, and we recognize it.

As we speak, your brothers-and-sisters-in-arms are stationed across the wider world on the frontiers of freedom in the mountains of South Korea, fields and forests of Eastern Europe, the deserts and valleys of Iraq and Afghanistan; and it's an enormous comfort to them and a great source of confidence that you're here. That your vigilance and your professionalism is here ensuring that they have the real-time information to accomplish their missions.

You know those who wear the uniform of the United States, all of you in this room, and all those around our country and around the world are really the bulwark of American freedom. Every day you here at Schriever Air Force Base play your part to defend our freedom, protect the American people, and I want you to know we're grateful each and every day.

You know, it's always humbling for me to stand before men and women who are wearing the uniform of the United States because my life did not take me on that path. I didn't wear the uniform. I'm actually the son of a soldier. My father saw combat in the Korean War. And as I mentioned, I'm the proud father of a United States Marine. But maybe it's altogether fitting that someone like me stands before men and women like you just to say thanks. Make sure you know how grateful the American people are each and every day for the service that you provide here and the sacrifice you and your families make to keep our country safe.

So let me tell you, I can assure you that you have the support of your commander in chief and of his No. 2 and of

our entire administration. You have the support of the Congress of the United States and the support of the American people that they represent. Let me also assure you one other way—you also have the prayers of the American people. I know each and every day, there are people across this country who pray for your protection, who pray for your skill and professionalism, and you provide protection and cover over those in harm's way. And they'll continue to carry you, carry you in faith and in prayers as you serve our country.

So I came today to say thank you. Thank you for your service. Thank you for your service that creates our freedom at home and our security around the world. And I look out around this room, I have faith. I have faith that in the days ahead we will keep America safe. That we'll make it possible for America to prosper. And to borrow a phrase, we'll Make America Great Again.

Thank you for your service, God bless you, and God bless the United States of America. {eo}