

*Administration of Barack Obama, 2013*

## **Remarks at an Independence Day Celebration**

*July 4, 2013*

*The President.* Come on out guys. [*Applause*]

Hello, everybody.

*Audience members.* Hello!

*The President.* Welcome to the White House. And Happy Fourth of July!

So we've tried to plan a proper Fourth of July celebration. We're grilling some food. We've got the fireworks coming. We've got lots of music. The band fun. is here with us today. And we've got multiple groups from our Marine Band. We've got the Marine concert band. We've got the Dixieland band. We've got the marching band. And we've got Free Country, the country band.

So we hope everybody has a great time. We are incredibly grateful for your service, and we're thankful that you get a chance to spend the Fourth here with us. And by the way, it's Malia's birthday, so she is appreciative that you're all going to be wishing her a happy birthday as well.

So I don't want to keep you from the food, but let me just say this. There are children all over the world, right now, asking their parents what's so special about today. And maybe some of those little ones are running around, even here in the South Lawn, thinking, well, this is just an excuse for some hotdogs. [*Laughter*] But it's worth remembering what happened 237 years ago on this date and what it meant to the world.

On July 4, 1776, a small band of patriots declared that we were a people created equal, free to think and worship and live as we please; that our destiny would not be determined for us, it would be determined by us. And it was bold and it was brave. And it was unprecedented; it was unthinkable. At that time in human history, it was kings and princes and emperors who made decisions.

But those patriots knew there was a better way of doing things, that freedom was possible, and that to achieve their freedom, they'd be willing to lay down their lives, their fortunes, their honor. And so they fought a revolution. And few would have bet on their side, but for the first time of many times to come, America proved the doubters wrong.

And now, 237 years later, this improbable experiment in democracy, the United States of America, stands as the greatest nation on Earth. And what makes us great is, not our size or our wealth, but our values and our ideals and the fact that we're willing to fight for them. A land of liberty and opportunity, a global defender of peace and freedom, a beacon of hope for people everywhere who cherish those ideals.

And we have also earned it—you have earned it—because as part of a long line of folks who are willing to fight for those ideals, we've been able to not only preserve and make more perfect this Union, but also try to spread that light elsewhere. You, the fighting men and women of the United States, and those who came before you, you've played a special role. You've defended our Nation at home and abroad. You fought for our Nation's beliefs to make

the world a better and safer place. People in scattered corners of the world live in peace today, are free to write their own futures, because of you.

And we've got all of you here today. We've got Army. We've got Navy. We've got Air Force. We've got Marines. We've got Coast Guard. And we've got National Guard. That's all right, National Guard, we love you too.

And up here with me are, incredibly, capable and brave men and women from each service branch. And we salute you, one and all. We salute our soldiers, like Specialist Heidi Olson, who, when she was wounded by an IED in Afghanistan, gave lifesaving treatment to another injured soldier, and then another. She had to be ordered to stop and get treatment for herself when the medevac aircraft arrived. And for her courage she was awarded a Bronze Star. Give her a big round of applause.

We salute our sailors, like Petty Officer Joe Marcinkowski, who serves wounded warriors at Walter Reed, coordinating their care and supporting their families throughout their recoveries. Thank you, Joe.

We salute our airmen, like Staff Sergeant Adam Ybarra, who helped save 9 lives in 11 combat search and mission rescues in Afghanistan in 2012. Give Adam a big round of applause.

We salute our marines, like Corporal Amber Fifer, who was shot five times in an attack in Helmand Province and is staying on to serve as a Marine Corps drill instructor.

And we salute our Coasties, including Petty Officer Randy Haba, who was one of the first responders to rescue the crew of a ship off the coast of North Carolina when Hurricane Sandy struck and saved the lives of five mariners.

So every day, men and women like them, and like all of you, are carrying forward the ideals that inspired that American Dream, 237 years ago. Defending our Nation and our freedoms with strength and with sacrifice is your daily charge. And it's the charge of all of us, the charge of all who serve worldwide, including our troops that are still in harm's way and their families back home. They serve too. And so we think of them, we pray for them.

And on behalf of all Americans, I want to say thank you and wish you all a very, very happy Fourth of July. You've earned it. So God bless you. God bless your families. God bless the United States of America.

And with that, let me turn it back over to the Marine Band.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:58 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : Independence Day celebration.

*Locations:* Washington, DC.

*Names:* Fifer, Amber; Haba, Randy; Marcinkowski, Joe; Obama, Malia; Olson, Heidi; Ybarra, Adam.

*Subjects:* Afghanistan : U.S. military forces :: Casualties; Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: Service and dedication; Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: Casualties; Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: Service and dedication; Foreign policy, U.S. : Democratization; Holidays and special observances : Independence Day; Natural disasters : Hurricane Sandy .

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