

Administration of Barack Obama, 2011

**Remarks to United States and Australian Military Personnel at Royal
Australian Air Force Base Darwin, Australia**

November 17, 2011

The President. Thank you! Hello, everybody!

Audience members. Hello!

The President. How are you going? Well, I know that you all have a great Australian cheer. I want to hear it. So let me say first, Aussie, Aussie, Aussie!

Audience members. Aussie, Aussie, Aussie!

The President. I enjoyed that. [*Laughter*] It is great to be here at RAAF Darwin—I mean, "Dah-win." [*Laughter*] I'm learning to speak "Strine." [*Laughter*] The Prime Minister said that she wanted to show me Australia at its best. And she's right, you all are all true blue. So thank you, Julia, for bringing us together today, for being such a great friend and champion of our alliance, and for this visit to Australia, which I will remember forever.

Now, it is good to be here in the Top End. I thank the people of Darwin for the incredibly warm welcome. And I'm proud to be the first U.S. President ever to visit the Northern Territory.

I want to begin by respectfully acknowledging the traditional owners of this land and their elders, past and present. You are one of the world's oldest continuous cultures, and I want you to know that your strength, your dignity is an inspiration to me and people all around the world.

I'm not going to give a big speech. It's a little hot. [*Laughter*] I already gave a big speech. What I really want to do is spend a little time shaking some hands.

Audience member. Yeah!

The President. I'm not sure I'm going to be able to reach all the way back there. [*Laughter*]

As the Prime Minister said, we're celebrating the 60th anniversary of our great alliance. And we couldn't think of a better group to do it with than you. All of you are the backbone of our alliance. It's an honor to be here with Australia's legendary Diggers. You are some of the toughest warriors in the world. And so are another group of folks here today, our extraordinary United States marines.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. Aussies and Americans like you have stood together since World War I, the war in which so much of your national character was born, your incredible ANZAC spirit.

But in a sense, it was here, in Darwin, where our alliance was born, during "Australia's Pearl Harbor." Against overwhelming odds, our forces fought back, with honor and with courage. The Prime Minister and I just paid our respects at the memorial to one of the ships lost that day, the USS *Peary*. And we looked out at those beautiful blue waters where so many Australians and Americans rest where they fell, together.

The days after Darwin were tough. Some thought Australia might fall. But we dusted ourselves off. We picked ourselves up. We rebuilt. And thanks to the extraordinary generation of troops, we went on to victory in the Coral Sea and at Midway and at Milne Bay.

And when that war was won, and as another raged in Korea, our countries forged a new alliance. We pledged our "collective defense for the preservation of peace and security." And that's a promise we've kept ever since.

As I said in Parliament earlier today, our alliance is rooted in the bonds between our people and the democratic values that we share and our commitment to stand with each other through thick and through thin, no matter what.

And that includes Afghanistan. I know many of you served there, including proud members of the 1st Brigade. Like generations before you, you've lived and served alongside your American colleagues, day in and day out. You work together so well, it's often said you can't tell where our guys end and you guys begin. Today I want to say thank you. Thank you for a job well done. Thank you for your incredible sacrifices. Thank you for your families' sacrifices. And welcome home.

Others among you served in Iraq and on dangerous missions around the globe. Among us today are families whose loved ones made the ultimate sacrifice in today's wars. This morning the Prime Minister and I paid our respects at the Australian War Memorial.

And in that magnificent space I saw the Roll of Honour, with the names of your fallen heroes, including those from Afghanistan. And to their families, I say, no words are sufficient for the depth of your sacrifice. But we will honor your loved ones by completing their mission, by making sure Afghanistan is never again used to attack our people. And I am confident that we are going to succeed.

Now here in Darwin and Northern Australia, we'll write the next proud chapter in our alliance. As the Prime Minister and I announced yesterday, some of our marines will begin rotating through these parts to train and exercise with you and to work as partners across the region for the security we all want.

Today, on behalf of the American people, I want to thank the people of this community for welcoming our men and women in uniform. We are grateful for your friendship, and we are grateful for your hospitality.

So we're deepening our alliance, and this is the perfect place to do it. I know the training conditions around here are tough, at least that's what I've heard: big, open spaces, harsh weather, mozzies—[*laughter*]*—snakes, crocs. [Laughter]* In fact, I was just presented with the most unique gift I've ever received as President, crocodile insurance. [*Laughter*] My wife Michelle will be relieved. [*Laughter*] I have to admit that when we reformed health care in America, crocodile insurance is one thing we left out. [*Laughter*]

But there's another reason we're deepening our alliance here. This region has some of the busiest sea lanes in the world, which are critical to all our economies. And in times of crisis, from the Bali bombings to East Timor to relief after a tsunami, Darwin has been a hub, moving out aid, caring for victims, making sure that we do right by the people of this region. And that's what we're going to keep doing, together.

Going forward, our purpose is the same as it was 60 years ago: "the preservation of peace and security." And in a larger sense, you're answering the question once posed by the great

Banjo Paterson. Of Australia, he wrote, "Hath she the strength for the burden laid upon her, hath she the power to protect and guard her own?"

Well, generations of Australians—and you, its men and women in uniform—have given your answer. And America has been honored to stand with you, as allies with an enduring commitment to human freedom.

On this 60th anniversary, we are saying together, proudly: Yes, we have the strength for the burden laid upon us, and we have the power to protect and guard our own, here in the Asia-Pacific and all around the world.

So thank you all for your extraordinary service. And thank you for representing the very best of our two countries. God bless Australia, God bless America, and God bless the great alliance between our two peoples. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:55 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Julia E. Gillard of Australia.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Australia :: Royal Australian Air Force Base Darwin, remarks to U.S. and Australian military personnel.

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