

Administration of Barack Obama, 2012

Remarks on Presenting the Commander in Chief's Trophy to the United States Air Force Academy Falcons

April 23, 2012

Well, good afternoon. Now, I heard last year, with this trophy on the line, Jon Davis said, "You don't get to meet the President every day." Today, you do. *[Laughter]*

Congratulations to the Fighting Falcons on winning their second straight and record 18th Commander in Chief Trophy last season. *[Applause]* There we go. I'm happy to meet you too. *[Laughter]* And welcome, everybody, to the White House.

Now, this trophy, which by the way is the biggest trophy—I give a lot of these out—*[laughter]*—this is the monster of all trophies here. This trophy has logged a lot of miles just jetting back and forth between Cadet Field House and the White House the past couple of years. And I'm looking forward to seeing it again when I visit Colorado Springs next month.

We are honored to be joined today by the Superintendent of the Air Force Academy, Lieutenant General Michael Gould, as well as Representative Mike McIntyre is in the house. To all the friends of Air Force football, congratulations on holding onto the title of gridiron supremacy in the Armed Forces.

Now, it was no easy feat for this team to make it here today. These guys faced a brutal schedule, but they never backed down. As Coach Calhoun said, "This group had a warrior spirit in them." And they brought that fight to every game this season. They shut out New Mexico on the road. They brought home the Ram-Falcon Trophy with a decisive victory over Colorado State, a game that won them a bowl bid for a record-setting fifth straight year. They battled down to the wire against Toledo in an exciting Military Bowl, boldly going for the win with a 2-point conversion and falling just short. But I like that in you. *[Laughter]*

Even when they were dogged by injuries, this team pulled together when it mattered most. These guys toughed it out—toughed out a narrow overtime victory against Navy, with Alex Means blocking an extra point in overtime and Tim Jefferson barreling the last yard into the end zone with the game on the line. They stormed from behind to beat Army and secure this trophy with a third quarter that included two field goals, two touchdowns, a 2-point conversion, and two takeaways.

So this team had to fight hard this whole season. But the work paid off. The senior class standing behind me distinguished itself as one of the most talented in school history. Brady Amack and Jon Davis put together the sixth-ranking passing defense in the country. Asher Clark led the Nation's third-best rushing attack. Tim Jefferson will graduate as the winningest Air Force quarterback of all time and the first quarterback in service academy history to lead his team to four consecutive bowl games.

So these young men have a lot to be proud of. And if the past couple of seasons are any indication of what is to come, Coach Calhoun, we expect the Air Force will be back here this time next year. *[Laughter]* Now, I know Army and Navy will have something to say about that. *[Laughter]* But I know that the next year will take these young men from the Cadet Field House to pilot training, to air bases around the world, in defense of our country. Ultimately, these seniors understand that shutouts and bowl games and trophies are not nearly as

important as the solemn obligation, the solemn oath that they will take in just a few weeks as the newest officers in the world's finest Air Force.

So, gentlemen, I have no higher privilege and no greater honor than serving as your Commander in Chief, and I look forward to joining you for that important ceremony.

Today, we honor the success that these outstanding young men had on the playing field. And we look forward to their continuing excellence on behalf of the Nation. And, cadets, as you look to trade the proud uniform of your team for the proud uniform of your country, I want you to know that this country will stand by you and do everything possible to help you succeed and come home safe.

So God bless all those who serve, and God bless the United States of America, and God bless Air Force.

Thank you so much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:42 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Jon Davis, defensive back, Alex Means, linebacker, Timothy Jefferson, Jr., quarterback, Brady Amack, linebacker and Asher Clark, running back, U.S. Air Force Academy football team.

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