

*Administration of Barack Obama, 2016*

**Remarks to United States and Japanese Troops at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni in Iwakuni, Japan**

*May 27, 2016*

*The President.* Hello, everybody! *Konnichiwa!*

*Audience members.* *Konnichiwa!*

*The President.* Well, it is great to be here. Thank you so much. I've got to tell you, during my visit to Japan, we are reaffirming one of the greatest alliances in the world between the United States and Japan. And I wanted to come by and just say thank you: Thank you to all the men and women in uniform, thank you to your families, because you guys are the backbone of our alliance. Thank you, everybody.

I want to thank Colonel Boucher, also known as Waterboy. *[Laughter]* I want to thank Sergeant Major Garza. I know that we've got a lot of folks in the house. We've got some NCOs. *[Applause]* Staff NCOs. *[Applause]* We've got some officers. *[Applause]* Junior Marines. *[Applause]* Oh, okay. We've got some DOD civilians. *[Applause]* And let's hear it from the family members. *[Applause]*

I want to thank our Japanese friends for joining us: *[Applause]* *[Vice]*<sup>\*</sup> Foreign Minister Kikawada. Mayor Fukuda. Members of the Diet, who are here. Admiral Sonoda and personnel from the Japanese Self-Defense Forces. *[Applause]* I also want to thank the wonderful people of Iwakuni City. Your hospitality serving Americans who are far away from home means so much to our Nation. On behalf of all of us, *arigato*.

Now, I'm just going to give some very brief remarks, because I want to shake as many hands as possible. *[Applause]* Although, I've got to warn you in advance, no selfies, because then I'll be here all day. *[Laughter]*

But let me just say that, as President of the United States, I have no greater honor than serving as Commander in Chief to our men and women in uniform. You serve and protect the American people. You promote peace and security around the world. And I especially welcome the chance to be with you as we enter into Memorial Day weekend, because it's a reminder of the risks and the sacrifices that are part of your job, and it's a reminder that we can never forget that we have to honor all of those who have given everything for our freedom.

As President, I've made sure that the United States is leading again in the Asia-Pacific, because this region is vital to our shared security and prosperity. And that takes security cooperation. It takes trade agreements. It takes relationships built between people. And it takes the proud service of our men and women in uniform throughout the region, working with our outstanding men and women who serve the armed forces of Japan.

Now, as you know, this afternoon I will visit Hiroshima. And this is an opportunity to honor the memory of all who were lost during World War II. It's a chance to reaffirm our commitment to pursuing the peace and security of a war where nuclear weapons would no longer be necessary. And it's a testament to how even the most painful divides can be bridged;

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<sup>\*</sup> White House correction.

how our two nations—former adversaries—cannot just become partners, but become the best of friends and the strongest of allies.

We see the strength of our alliance on display right here. This base is a powerful example of the trust and the cooperation and the friendship between the United States and Japan. American Marines working side by side with Japanese Self-Defense Forces to protect the peace and engage with our partners throughout the region and assist with humanitarian aid and disaster relief. You've responded to flooding in the Philippines and in Thailand. You've responded to devastating cyclones in Bangladesh. You played a critical role in relief efforts following the 2011 earthquake and the tsunami here in Japan. So, together, you have saved countless lives across the region. And we could not be prouder of that.

Your service, right here, is rooted in the shared values of today's Japan and today's United States: the values of freedom, the values of democracy, the values of human rights, the values of rule of law. And as a result, our alliance hasn't just been essential to the security of our two countries. It's an indispensable source of stability and a foundation for prosperity in this region and around the world. You are the foundation of our quality of life.

So I want to close with an incredible story that captures the essence of our alliance. Where is Captain Tessa Snow? Where is Tessa? You're out here somewhere, I know.

*Audience member.* Right here!

*The President.* There she is. Captain Snow is an Osprey pilot, and in the aftermath of the Kumamoto earthquakes last month, she and her squadron flew missions to bring humanitarian aid and supplies to those in need. And one Japanese family was so worried about their house collapsing that they spent several nights outside. Thanks to your efforts, that family and so many others received food and water and the supplies that they needed.

And now this family is expecting a baby—a baby girl—in June. When they heard that Tessa flew the mission that helped save them, they decided to name their baby after Tessa. They want their daughter to grow up with the same qualities that Tessa has: honor and courage and commitment and a willingness to help others.

Aren't those the core values of the Marine Corps?

*Audience members.* Oorah!

*The President.* Qualities that, for generations, have defined our men and women in uniform. They're the qualities that represent the very best of our two nations. And because of your service, our shared commitment to human dignity and freedom will endure, and this region will prosper. And we will continue to spread hope wherever we travel. I'm very proud of you. I'm very grateful to our Japanese hosts. I couldn't be prouder of the men and women of the U.S. Armed Forces.

God bless all of you. God bless your families. God bless the United States of America. Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:02 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Col. Robert V. Boucher, USMC, commanding officer, and Sgt. Maj. Christopher J. Garza, USMC, sergeant major, Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni; Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Hitoshi Kikawada of Japan; and Rear Adm. Naoki Sonoda, commander of Fleet Air Wing 31, Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni in Iwakuni, Japan, remarks to U.S. and Japanese troops.

*Locations:* Iwakuni, Japan.

*Names:* Boucher, Robert V.; Fukuda, Yoshihiko; Garza, Christopher J.; Kikawada, Hitoshi; Snow, Tessa; Sonoda, Naoki.

*Subjects:* Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: Service and dedication; Japan : Defense relationship with U.S.; Japan : Foreign Affairs, Deputy Minister for; Japan : Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni in Iwakuni; Japan : President Obama's visit; Japan : Relations with U.S.

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