

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2017

Remarks on Signing the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018

December 12, 2017

Thank you very much. Mr. Vice President, Secretary Mattis, General Dunford, senior military leaders, and distinguished guests: Thank you all for being here as we prepare to sign something that is extremely important, the National Defense Authorization Act. We're signing it into law. This historic legislation demonstrates our unwavering commitment to our men and women in uniform, the greatest fighting force in the history of the world. And we're making it a lot better than even that.

Terrorist Attack in New York City

Before we begin, I want to address the terrorist attack that took place yesterday in New York City and to praise the first responders, local police, and Federal law enforcement for their quick action. They did an incredible job.

There have now been two terrorist attacks in New York City in recent weeks carried out by foreign nationals here on green cards. The first attacker came through the visa lottery and the second through chain migration. We're going to end both of them. The lottery system and chain migration, we're going to end them fast.

Congress must get involved immediately, and they are involved immediately, and I can tell you we have tremendous support. They will be ended.

National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018

These attacks underscore the dangers we face from around the globe. The National Defense Authorization Act could not come at a more opportune or important time. This legislation represents a momentous step toward rebuilding our military and securing the future for our children. I applaud the work of the members of both parties who came together to pass the National Defense Authorization Act, which passed with overwhelming, bipartisan support, something that sounds very nice to my ears.

I especially want to thank Chairman Thornberry, who is here with us today, for his tireless efforts. Thank you, Mac. Thank you. It was a great job. Fantastic job.

In recent years, our military has undergone a series of deep budget cuts that have severely impacted our readiness, shrunk our capabilities, and placed substantial burdens on our warfighters. And great warfighters they are.

History teaches us that when you weaken your defenses, you invite aggression. The best way to prevent conflict or be—of any kind—is to be prepared and really be prepared. Only when the good are strong will peace prevail. Today, with the signing of this defense bill, we accelerate the process of fully restoring America's military might. I also want to thank Senator John McCain for the work he's done on this bill. He has fought very, very hard to make it just the way he wants it and that we all want it.

This legislation will enhance our readiness, expand our modernized—and modernize our forces, and help provide our servicemembers with the tools that they need to fight and to win.

We will fight and win. But hopefully, with this, we won't have to fight, because people will not be wanting to fight with us.

It authorizes funding for our continued campaign to obliterate ISIS. As you know, we've won in the—in Syria; we've won in Iraq. But they spread to other areas, and we're getting them as fast as they spread. We've had more success with ISIS in the last 8 months than the entire previous administration has had during its entire term.

It approves missile defense capabilities as we continue our campaign to create maximum pressure on the vile dictatorship in North Korea. We're working very diligently on that, building up forces. We'll see how it all turns out. It's a very bad situation, a situation that should have been handled long ago by other administrations.

It upgrades our ground combat vehicles, allows for the purchase of new joint strike fighter aircraft, and paves the way for beautiful new Virginia-class submarines, the finest in the world.

Finally, the defense bill authorizes major investments in our military's greatest weapon of all, its warriors. The NDAA increases the size of the American Armed Forces for the first time in 7 years, and it provides our military servicemembers with their largest pay increase in 8 years.

Now Congress must finish the job by eliminating the defense sequester and passing a clean appropriations bill. I think it's going to happen. We need our military. It's got to be perfect. At this time of grave global threats, I urge Democrats in Congress to drop their shutdown threats and to send clean funding and a clean funding bill to my desk that fully funds our great military. Protecting our country should always be a bipartisan issue, just like today's legislation.

We must work across party lines to give our heroic troops the equipment, resources, and support that they have earned a thousand times over. Together, we will send a clear message to our allies and a firm warning to our enemies and adversaries: America is strong, proud, determined, and ready. And I might add, when we're completed—and it won't be that long—we will be stronger than ever before, by a lot.

So thank you to all of our friends in Congress. And we do appreciate the bipartisan support, and we appreciate your hard work on this historic defense authorization.

And thank you, most of all, to our brave warriors for standing watch over our country, our families, and our freedom. Brandnew, beautiful equipment is on its way, the best you've ever had by far. We make the best in the world, and you're going to have it.

God bless you, God bless our military, and God bless America. Thank you very much. Thank you.

I won't be showing all of this to everybody, believe it or not. That's a lot of pages. That is a lot of pages.

[At this point, the President signed the bill.]

Mac, I think this is yours.

[The President handed the pen to W. McClellan Thornberry, chairman, House Armed Services Committee.]

Thank you very much, everybody.

Q. Mr. President, what did you mean when you said that Kirsten Gillibrand "would do anything" for a campaign contribution?

The President. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:03 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Sayfullo Saipov, suspect in the vehicular terrorist attack on the bike path along the West Side Highway in Lower Manhattan on October 31; and Akayed Ullah, suspect in the bombing of a passageway between the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey bus terminal and Times Square subway station in New York City on December 11. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist organization. A reporter referred to Sen. Kirsten E. Gillibrand. H.R. 2810, approved December 12, was assigned Public Law No. 115–91.

Categories: Bill Signings and Vetoes : National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018, signing remarks.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Dunford, Joseph F., Jr.; Mattis, James N.; McCain, John S., III; Pence, Michael R.; Saipov, Sayfullo; Thornberry, W. McClellan; Ullah, Akayed.

Subjects: Armed Forces, U.S. : Funding; Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: Service and dedication; Budget, Federal : Government programs, spending reductions; Congress : Bipartisanship; Congress : House of Representatives :: Armed Forces Committee; Defense and national security : Military readiness; Defense and national security : Missile defense; Defense, Department of : Joint Chiefs of Staff; Defense, Department of : Secretary; Immigration and naturalization : Foreign nationals and refugees, U.S. admission policy; Immigration and naturalization : Reform; Legislation, enacted : National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018; New York : New York City :: Terrorist attacks; North Korea : Nuclear weapons development; Terrorism : Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist organization; White House Office : Vice President.

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