

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

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REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT AND THE VICE PRESIDENT
AT A CEREMONY HONORING NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF POLICE
ORGANIZATIONS (NAPO) TOP COPS
Rose Garden

1:50 P.M. EDT

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to the Rose Garden. It's a lot safer place than -- it's always safe, but it's particularly safe today. (Laughter.)

Ladies and gentlemen, let me begin by saying congratulations. It's a genuine honor to be in the presence of the best of the best. You each are -- the folks behind us -- an inspiration -- an inspiration to not only your fellow law enforcement officers, but to the whole country.

And the President and I recognize, and have for a long time recognized the bravery you display simply by putting on that shield every morning, strapping on a sidearm, kissing your husband or wife good-bye and walking out, knowing that you don't know with any degree of certainty what's going to greet you.

The officers honored here today have been singled out for going above and beyond the call of duty. And we commend each and every one of them. But we also know that there are thousands and thousands more law enforcement officers out there today on the job, and every day, who are taking risks that are hard for ordinary people to imagine -- risks just to protect their community, to protect people they don't know, protect people they've never met, and in some cases, maybe protect people they don't even particularly like. But they go out there and they do it.

And today is a day for them as well; a day for every man and woman in uniform to feel proud and to feel proud of themselves. And today is the day the entire community of police officers should understand that America appreciates what you're

doing, and this President and I and the Secretary, we appreciate what you're doing.

The President's commitment to law enforcement can be seen by the unprecedented -- the unprecedented investment we've been putting in cops on the street and this administration's plan to give you all access to what we promised a long time ago -- a wireless public safety network so you can actually -- actually communicate with all first responders.

And we're also doing everything in our power to protect the rights of workers -- including you, including law enforcement officers. You're too important to us.

And, folks, let me say -- and I will conclude with this -- what I said to the honorees in the Roosevelt Room before the President came in. We owe the families. We owe the families -- because you, other than those who have men and women deployed or work in the fire service, every single day you kiss your husband or your wife good-bye, your son or your daughter, you know; there's that little nagging feeling inside you, that nagging feeling inside that I wonder what's going to be there for them today. And that is a sacrifice. It's a sacrifice that warrants recognition.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is my great honor and privilege to present to you a President whose commitment to law enforcement is in his bones and in every action he's taken as President. Ladies and gentlemen, the President of the United States, Barack Obama. (Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you so much. Thank you, everybody. (Applause.) Thank you. Please, everybody have a seat.

Thank you, Joe, not just for being a great Vice President, but being one of law enforcement's best friends and strongest advocates over the years. I think they've gotten even more love from you than the railroads -- (laughter) -- and that's hard to -- that's hard to do.

I look forward to this event every single year. I can't tell you how much I appreciate the efforts of law enforcement officials nationwide -- not just because I've got several around me 24 hours a day. I have had the special honor of meeting police officers and law enforcement officials in all 50 states. Last week I had the special honor of visiting with the men and

women of New York City's First Precinct, which was the first to respond on 9/11 and serves the area encompassing Ground Zero.

And what I told them is the same thing that I'll tell all of the law enforcement professionals here today: Thank you. We appreciate your service. You have our support. We're grateful for the sacrifices you and your families make, and my administration is committed to making sure that you get what you need.

Some of the public servants helping us do that today are here: Our excellent Secretary of Homeland Security, Janet Napolitano. (Applause.) Our Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy, Gil Kerlikowske, is here -- (applause) -- a longtime police officer who also served as police chief in four different cities.

I'd also like to say that today I am seeking a two-year extension for FBI Director Bob Mueller. (Applause.) And in his 10 years at the FBI, Bob has set the gold standard for leading the Bureau. He's improved the working relationship with local law enforcement across the country. And I hope that Democrats, led by Judiciary Chairman Pat Leahy, who's here, as well as Republicans in Congress will join together in extending that leadership for the sake of our nation's safety and security.

We've also got several elected officials here today, and I'm grateful for their services and their support of law enforcement. And obviously I want to welcome the leaders of the National Association of Police Organizations, including your president, Tom Nee, and your Executive Director, William Johnson. (Applause.)

And most importantly, congratulations to the 30 officers, sheriffs, detectives, investigators, agents who are behind me -- our nation's Top Cops -- right here. (Applause and cheering.) We've got the Montana crew hollering. (Laughter.) That was Missoula, right? (Applause.) There you go, Missoula.

I know the families are just bursting with pride for your loved ones' accomplishments -- but your love and support has had a lot to do with those accomplishments. So, again, we are grateful to you.

This is the third year I've had the honor of welcoming America's Top Cops to the White House. It's kind of like the Heisman Trophy presentation for law enforcement. But I just

spent a little time with these men and women inside, and I can tell you with certainty, they carry themselves with such humility. They don't say to themselves "This is it -- this year I made Top Cop." "I'm going to train, put in long hours, and go to Washington and stand with the President." That's not why they do what they do every single day.

None of them put together a PR package for our consideration. Some of them are still recovering from gunshot wounds suffered in the line of duty. Some have heavy hearts for partners who've been lost, and they commit themselves to their memory. And all would put forward others in their units who they would say are just as brave, or just as dedicated, or just as capable, or just as deserving of this recognition.

But, you know, a moment came when their actions earned recognition. It wasn't talk; it was what they did. They didn't know it that morning, as they pinned on a badge, or strapped on a vest, or holstered a weapon. But that day, something would happen that would make them worthy of this honor -- whether it was a random act of bravery, or a successful outcome that was the results of months or even years of painstaking and dangerous police work.

The men and women we honor today have responded with courage under withering fire to defend the innocent. They've skillfully rescued women and children from armed gang members, and have saved the life of a shooting victim when there wasn't time for paramedics to arrive. They've carried out a dangerous and deadly sting operation to get drugs off the streets. They've burst into a white-hot building to save paralyzed senior citizens whose beds were engulfed in flames. They've doggedly pursued an 18-year-old cold case until justice was done. And they've investigated last year's attempted Times Square bombing, successfully extracting a full confession and a wealth of actionable intelligence leading to arrests that have made this country safer.

Think about the strong stuff that takes. Think about the character it takes to refuse to close the books on a case forgotten by all but the victims' families; the coolness it takes to talk down an armed and hostile criminal; the courage it takes to run into flames or press forward through a hail of bullets when every natural instinct would say, "Stop. Think about yourself. Survive."

They'll be the first to say that they've been trained to do it. Some of them will argue they're not heroes. They'll tell you a badge doesn't bestow courage; that special training or physical strength doesn't make you braver; that heroism isn't something made evident only after the chaos of a firefight. I think when you talk to most of these guys they'll say heroism lies just as much in the action of their fellow officers and the hearts of the fellow citizens they've sworn to protect.

And it's true, heroism is all around us, inside of all of us, just waiting to be summoned. But, I tell you what, when gunshots ring out and fire burns hot, when injustice goes unanswered and innocent people cry out for help, it's one thing to talk about courage; it's another thing to respond swiftly, decisively, heroically, with little regard for yourself and complete regard for your fellow man.

And these are the men and women who actually responded. These are America's Top Cops -- who protect and who serve; who walk the beat; who answer the call, and do the dangerous and difficult work of forging a safer, stronger America, block by block, and neighborhood by neighborhood.

So each of you deserves this moment in the sun -- and it is sunny. (Laughter.) Because tomorrow we know that you and your fellow first responders will be back on your diligent duty -- looking out for us, looking out for one another, looking back at times with fallen partners, determined to make sure that their extraordinary sacrifices were not in vain. And we will be standing behind you, as one nation and one people, proud of your actions, awed by your courage, and grateful for your service on our behalves.

So, to all of you and to all who wear the badge, thank you for keeping us safe. (Applause.) God bless you. God bless the United States of America. (Applause.) We're going to knock down this podium and let's take a picture with America's Top Cops. (Applause.)

END

2:05 P.M. EDT
