

# In Independence Day address, Trump condemns left, media

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President Donald Trump on Saturday criticized American progressives, protesters and the media as he celebrated the Fourth of July with a "Salute to America" on the White House South Lawn.

He continued the attack he started Friday night at the foot of Mount Rushmore, portraying those protesting the death of George Floyd and toppling monuments as the nation's enemies.

"We are now in the process of defeating the radical left, the Marxists, the anarchists, the agitators, the looters and people who in many instances have absolutely no clue what they are doing," Trump said, with first lady Melania Trump seated nearby.

The invitation-only event came during some of the worst days of the coronavirus pandemic but did not have the crowd density of the Mount Rushmore speech. Saturday's attendees included members of law enforcement agencies and the military, along with their families and doctors and nurses.

Trump lashed out at the protests, which a majority of Americans support and that continue more than a month after Floyd died in Minneapolis police custody.

"We will never allow an angry mob to tear down our statutes, erase our history, indoctrinate our children or trample our freedoms," Trump said. "We will safeguard our values, traditions, customs and beliefs."

Trump lashed out at the news media for what he said was slander against himself, the American people and "generations who gave their lives for America."

Statues of Confederate leaders who fought for slavery have been a major target of demonstrators' takedowns, and Trump said Saturday that the media has participated in desecration by slandering those who died fighting the Civil War.

"You slander their memory by insisting they fought for oppression and racism," Trump said. "You slander people much braver and more principled than you."

He recited the names of Americans he said would be honored in a National Garden of Statues that he announced on Friday by executive order. They include Susan B. Anthony, Daniel Boone, Davy Crockett, Frederick Douglass, Amelia Earhart and Harriet Tubman.

"The patriots who built our country were not villains," Trump said, "They were heroes."

As calls for police reform continue across the country, he praised officers, saying many have been "facing down violent assaults by very bad people."

He blamed China for the struggles with COVID-19 as the U.S. leads the world in cases at more than 2.8 million.

"China must be held fully accountable," he said.

Trump promised a vaccine "long before the end of the year," an optimistic estimate shared by few medical experts.

He wrapped up his address by saying, "Our country is in great shape."