

Donald Trump delivers acceptance speech at Republican National Convention

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Milwaukee, July 19 (RHC)-- Six days after surviving an assassination attempt, former U.S. President Donald Trump took the stage at the Republican National Convention to accept the party nomination for the presidency. He spoke for more than 90 minutes – the longest acceptance speech in modern history.

Many political observers said that what was meant to be a unifying speech, veered into familiar grievances as Trump denounced undocumented immigration, political “witch-hunts” and election fraud.

Still, it was a crowning moment for Trump, complete with lots of fanfare. The speech was the final event of the party convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and Republicans rallied around him, praising him on and off stage. That show of support for Trump offered a stark contrast with the political troubles of President Joe Biden, who is facing mounting calls from his fellow Democrats to drop out of the race after a disastrous debate performance last month.

But in Milwaukee, the night was all about Trump. Biden was seldom mentioned by name.

During his speech Thursday night, Trump tried to present himself as a unifying figure. He rejected demonising political opponents and said he would be a president for "all Americans."

"Together, we will launch a new era of safety, prosperity and freedom for citizens of every race, religion, colour and creed," he said. "The discord and division in our society must be healed. We must heal it quickly. As Americans, we are bound together by a single fate and a shared destiny. We rise together or we fall apart."

Trump previously nodded approvingly at rallies when his supporters called for locking up his 2016 Democratic rival Hillary Clinton and deporting Muslim American Congresswoman Ilhan Omar.

By contrast, Trump's tone in the early stages of Thursday's speech was solemn and calm. His voice nearly descended into a whisper at points.

After the assassination attempt, there have been calls to tone down the heated political rhetoric surrounding this year's presidential race. Trump appeared to heed those calls, at least for the first part of his address.

But the call for calm and harmony that opened Trump's speech was short-lived. The former president fell back to his usual anti-immigrant rhetoric as his address went on. He referred to the influx of undocumented immigrants as an "invasion" and accused other countries of treating America like a "dumping ground" for criminals and "insane asylum" patients.

"The greatest invasion in history is taking place right here in our country. They are coming in from every corner of the Earth, not just from South America but from Africa, Asia, the Middle East. They're coming from everywhere," Trump said. "They're coming at levels that we've never seen before. It is an invasion, indeed."

But research shows such statements are misleading, if not false. A 2020 study by the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS) found that "undocumented immigrants had substantially lower crime rates than native-born citizens and legal immigrants across a range of felony offenses."

Bucking his own call for unity across party lines, Trump also referred to former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi as "crazy" and repeated false claims that Democrats had perpetrated election fraud in 2020.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine, Israel's continuing war on Gaza and the chaotic U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan were major themes in Trump's speech. The former president painted a world in chaos and pointed the finger at Biden, arguing that the Democrat had weakened U.S. standing overseas.

While Trump did not articulate how he would resolve these crises, he claimed that they would have never happened if he were in office.

In one instance, Trump linked Hamas's attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, to Biden's Iran policy.

However, U.S. intelligence officials have said that Tehran did not have prior knowledge of the Palestinian group's plans to attack Israel. Moreover, Biden has kept Trump-era Iran sanctions in place and added dozens more penalties on Iranian officials and companies.

Notably, during Thursday night's speech, Trump did not pledge more support for Israel or criticise Biden for not being supportive enough of the country, as other Republicans have. For months, Biden had resisted demands to call for a ceasefire, and the U.S. has pushed forward with its "unwavering" support to Israel, whose military offensive in Gaza has killed more than 38,000 Palestinians.

Trump also pledged to “end every single international crisis that the current administration has created, including the horrible war with Russia and Ukraine“. Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 is seen as illegal by most of the international community. The country, however, had previously annexed the Ukrainian territory of Crimea in 2014 – well before Biden or Trump were president.

In his speech, Trump also sought to highlight the tumultuous U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan as evidence of Biden’s bungling of world affairs...The chaos in the world, Trump implied, began at that time, transforming the globe into a “planet of war”.

“It began to unravel with the disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan, the worst humiliation in the history of our country,” he said.

However, the agreement with the Taliban to pull U.S. troops out of Afghanistan was finalised under the Trump presidency.

One of the most highly anticipated parts of Thursday’s speech was Trump’s account of his assassination attempt – and he led his remarks by describing his experience, pledging never to revisit it.

Trump’s brush with death was a frequent theme throughout the four-day convention. Several Republican speakers on Thursday suggested that Trump survived the assassination attempt last week due to divine intervention, portraying the former president as a messianic figure.

“When we prayed for President Trump, only God knew that 30 days later there would be a miracle by a millimetre,” Reverend Lorenzo Sewell said. “If President Trump had moved one millimetre, he wouldn’t have been here on Monday to talk to us about how America was going to be made wealthy again.”

Conservative media personality Tucker Carlson argued that Trump emerged from the incident as a “leader,” not a mere politician.

“Being a leader is very different. It’s not a title. It’s organic. You can’t name someone a leader. A leader is the bravest man. That’s what the leader is,” Carlson said. “That is true in all human organisations. This is a law of nature. And in that moment, Donald Trump – months before the presidential election – became the leader of this nation.”

Trump himself embraced that reasoning. “I’m not supposed to be here tonight – not supposed to be here,” he said. The crowd responded: “Yes, you are.”

Trump added: “Thank you, but I’m not. And I’ll tell you, I stand before you in this arena only by the grace of Almighty God.”

After the assassination attempt last weekend, Trump received an outpouring of concern – and Republican officials at the convention sought to build on that goodwill by reframing their nominee as a family man and concerned citizen.

Trump is known to talk about his own perceived achievements, wealth and qualities. He calls himself one of the best presidents ever. In 2018, while president, he described himself as “really smart.” But according to several convention speakers on Thursday, there is another side to Trump – one that is caring and selfless.

“He decided to leave behind the comforts of an unbelievable business empire, to leave behind everything he had ever built, to answer the call to serve our nation,” his son Eric Trump said.

Carlson, the conservative media personality, said that, when he reached out to Trump after the assassination attempt, the former president did not say a “single word about himself.” Rather, Carlson explained they talked about the crowd and how his supporters did not run away during the shooting.

There were also multiple references to Trump's relationship with his grandchildren, with his former administration official Linda McMahon describing one missing his famous hair.

"Donald Trump is not only a fighter, ladies and gentleman," McMahon said. "He is a good man."

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