

At Naval Academy commissioning, JD Vance deplores ‘ideological crusades’



Vice President JD Vance shakes hands with graduates as they get their diplomas. The U.S. Naval Academy held its Class of 2025 Graduation and Commissioning ceremony Friday at Navy-Marine Corps Memorial Stadium. (Paul W. Gillespie/Staff)



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Vice President JD Vance used his commencement address at the U.S. Naval Academy Friday to lambaste the foreign policy of previous administrations and offer advice to the new graduates.

“You’re not just graduates of some random university about to embark on careers in the private sector. And I’m not just giving another political speech. I’m your vice president, and the minute you walk off this stage with your diploma and your commission, you will be officers in the United States Navy and the United States Marine Corps, and that is an incredible thing,” Vance said.

This year, while graduates marked the end of commencement by tossing their hats into the air, at least 150 people gathered at the corner of Rowe Boulevard and Taylor Avenue to protest Vance’s presence at graduation. On his way into the stadium, his motorcade passed a banner that read, “Congrats Mids! Teach VP honor.”

The protest was organized by area groups including Annapolis Pride, the Caucus of African American Leaders and Veterans for Peace, among others.



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“We are saddened that this time of joy and celebrating your accomplishments may be overshadowed. Overshadowed because the commencement speaker’s administration is working to enact legislation denying members of your families, communities and society crucial benefits,” the groups said in an open letter to the graduating class.

Vance used his time at the podium to congratulate the graduates and discuss foreign policy in what he called “this new and very dangerous era for our country.” A former Marine, Vance criticized past administrations, seemingly both Republican and Democratic, for pursuing “ideological crusades.”

“No more undefined missions, no more open-ended conflicts,” Vance said. “This doesn’t mean that we ignore threats, but it means that we approach them with discipline.”

He added that the Trump administration would never deploy service members without a “clear path home.” Rather, the administration will favor efficient military actions, he said, pointing to the bombings President Donald Trump has ordered against Houthi rebels in Yemen.

Speaking as a veteran, Vance offered advice from “a junior enlisted guy to a bunch of new officers.”

“People will look at you as graduates of the Naval Academy in a different way,” Vance said. “More often than not, you will be giving them orders, and just as I see you as our most precious resource, so you must see the men and women who call you ‘sir’ and ‘ma’am’ as your most sacred charge.”

He spoke for roughly 25 minutes, but did not address the Trump administration’s efforts to dismantle diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives that have affected military academies, including the Naval Academy.

The academy no longer considers race, ethnicity or sex in admissions. A May 9 Pentagon memo set Wednesday as the deadline to remove books that address diversity, race and gender issues, but nearly all of the [381 books removed from the Naval Academy library](#) are back on the shelves.

“To me, this shows that protests matter,” said Lynda Davis, an organizer. “We are here today to say, ‘Fight fascism, not the Constitution.’”

It is unclear which books, or how many, were not returned.

Kirsty Grace and Crystal Shelley worked with friends on social media and Growing Minds Bookstore in Catonsville to purchase dozens of copies of Maya Angelou’s “I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings,” one of the removed books.

As midshipmen and their families passed them on their way into the stadium, they offered free copies of the book. Most did not take one.

“I just think it’s a really important book that people need to read to understand our past and what it was like to be a Black girl. We can’t let that be erased from our nation’s memory,” Grace said.

Vance shook the hand of each graduate as they walked across the stage and left after the hat toss, departing as protesters continued chanting.

Have a news tip? Contact Bridget Byrne at bbyrne@baltsun.com or 443-690-7205

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