



# President Obama Pays Respects, Remembers Heroes at Normandy American Cemetery and Memorial

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**C**OLLEVILLE-SUR-MER, France – President Barack Obama and French President François Hollande spoke today to more than 10,000 attendees at the Normandy American Cemetery and Memorial here June 6, commemorating the memory of the Soldiers who gave their lives 70 years ago fighting to end the Nazi reign over Europe.

The event was one of several commemorations of the 70th Anniversary of D-Day operations conducted by the Allies during WWII, June 6, 1944. Roughly 650 personnel from 20 U.S. military units and six nations participated in many events across the Normandy region in tributes to the lost and living veterans of WWII at the invitation of the French government.

“Here we don’t commemorate victory, as proud of the victory as we are,” the U.S. Commander in Chief said in his address to the thousands in attendance. “We don’t just honor sacrifice, as grateful as the world is. We come to remember why America and our Allies gave so much for the survival of liberty in this maximum moment of peril. We come to tell the story of the men and women who did it so it remains seared into the memory of the future world.”

During the ceremony approximately 400 WWII veterans shared the stage with the presidents and faced the crowd while listening to the speeches, almost all reacting with standing applause and emotion now sitting only miles from where they fought for their lives.



Ellan Levitsky-Orkin, a Delaware native who served as a U.S. Army nurse in Normandy during World War II, speaks with a U.S. Army paratrooper during a ceremony to honor their service in Bolleville, France, June 4, 2014. The event was one of several commemorations of the 70th Anniversary of D-Day operations conducted by Allied forces during World War II June 5-6, 1944. Over 650 U.S. military personnel have joined troops from several NATO nations to participate in ceremonies to honor the events at the invitation of the French government. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Sara Keller)

The spectators sat alongside the cemetery, which holds more than 9,300 white crosses and Stars of David, each marking the grave of a Soldier who paid the ultimate price on the 50 mile stretch of beach.

“Nations that once only knew the blinders of fear began to taste the blessings of freedom,” Obama said. “None of that would have happened without the men who were willing to lay down their lives for people they never met and ideals they could not live without.”

Behind the veterans on stage was a garden dedicated to the 1,500 Soldiers missing in action who have yet to return home.

The memorial states, “Here are recorded the names of Americans who gave their lives in the service of their coun-

try and who sleep in unknown graves. This is their memorial. The whole earth their sepulcher. Comrades in arms whose resting place in known only to God.”

The audience stood silently and military veterans presented arms as a 21-gun salute was rendered and taps was played as the ceremony was coming to an end.

“May God bless our veterans and all those who serve with them including those who rest here in eternal piece and may God bless all who serve today for the peace and security of the world,” Obama said, as he ended his speech and receiving applause from the veterans behind him and the audience in front.

Following their remarks, both presidents walked down together to the memorial’s overlook, and laid a red, white and blue wreath in front of the memorial to commemorate the memory of the Soldiers still missing in action and the young men who never came home. About us: U.S. Army Europe is uniquely positioned to advance American strategic interests across Eurasia as U.S. European Command’s force of choice and has unparalleled capability to prevent conflict, shape the environment and, if necessary, win decisively. The relationships we build during 1,000 theater security cooperation events in more than 40 countries each year lead directly to support for multinational contingency operations around the world, strengthen regional partnerships, and enhance global security. ■

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