

Speech for Memorial Day Ceremony

Saint Mihiel American Cemetery

May 24, 2015

Mesdames et Messieurs les autorités civiles et militaires,

Mesdames et Messieurs,

Chers Amis,

Superintendent Michael Coonce,

Men and women in uniform,

Veterans,

Families,

Friends,

**The American President Woodrow Wilson declared
in his Memorial Day Address on May 30, 1917: “There**

are times when words seem empty and only actions seem great.” The context of this speech was that not two months earlier on April 6, the United States Congress had declared war and shortly thereafter, U.S. forces were headed for Europe.

I am deeply honored to be here with you today on this occasion to mark Memorial Day. We are gathered in this sacred place to pay tribute to all the American forces who gave their lives for their country. We are here to pay our respects to those who sacrificed their tomorrows so that we could have our today, to those who fought and died so we could live in peace.

As we stand here, in the shadow of the Linden trees that line this cemetery, we show our gratitude for the valiant service of our fallen soldiers. Under the polished marble headstones, lie over 4,000 soldiers most of whom fought and died during the Saint Mihiel Offensive

of World War I. They left their families and home to travel towards the unknown to defend the cause of liberty and democracy, and to fight tyranny. They fought the battle; they suffered the hardship. In September 1918, they gave their all to help turn the tide of war.

On Memorial Day, it is fitting that we remember the purpose of our soldiers' sacrifice. Here, they fought against the orchestrated forces of the German military. But it's interesting that Memorial Day was originated after the U.S. Civil War to commemorate the Union and Confederate soldiers fallen in battle, and was later expanded to honor all Americans who died in military service. Throughout history, American soldiers have shouldered a heavy burden for values that we all believe in: equality, justice, and liberty. Keeping their memory alive - remembering all the selfless sacrifice of those who have died for our country in the civil war and since - is our duty and our privilege.

During that civil war, when President Abraham Lincoln dedicated the Soldiers National Cemetery in 1863 in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, he spoke words I believe are still relevant for us today. He said,

“The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us, the living, rather to be dedicated to the unfinished work which they who fought here so nobly advanced... That from these honored dead, we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion...that we highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain. “

Mesdames et Messieurs, je suis très honorée de pouvoir partager ce moment solennel avec vous ici au cimetière de Saint Mihiel. Comme vous le savez, le Memorial Day est commémoré aux Etats-Unis pour rendre hommage aux membres des forces armées des Etats-Unis morts au combat. Je tiens à rendre hommage

aujourd'hui non seulement aux soldats américains qui ont périés dans les combats, mais également aux autres soldats de cette terre – les soldats français qui se sont battus à coté de nos soldats américains pendant les guerres mondiales et qui continuent à se battre à coté de nous dans la lutte contre le terrorisme. Nous vous en sommes extrêmement reconnaissants. Il est de notre devoir de garder vivante la mémoire de ces soldats.

Le Président des Etats-Unis Abraham Lincoln dans son célèbre discours de Gettysburg en 1863 a exprime le sentiment qu'aucun discours prononcé, aucune stèle érigée, aucune gerbe déposée ne peuvent pleinement exprimer notre gratitude pour le sacrifice ultime de ceux qui ont perdu la vie dans le combat. Le prix qu'ils ont payé nous permet à tous d'être libres.

Vous savez, la liberté et la paix ne sont jamais acquises – ce que nous prouvent les annales de l'histoire, et nous pouvons le constater aujourd'hui

même. Le monde est entré en guerre en 1914 et ensuite de nouveau en 1939. Les Etats-Unis ont offert leur aide aux européens et français pendant ces deux guerres mondiales. L'amitié franco-américaine et la solidarité entre nos peuples, dans le respect des valeurs de chacun est indispensable pour le maintien de la démocratie, des droits de l'homme, et de la paix.

Ces hommes qui reposent ici devant nous en parfaite formation militaire nous rappellent le prix et la folie de la guerre, mais ils nous rappellent également ce que c'est que de se battre pour des valeurs partagées – et pour la liberté.

Je tiens à remercier le peuple français pour le soin qu'il prend de nos soldats qui reposent sur le sol français. Merci – nous vous sommes à jamais reconnaissants.

These men lying before us today rest in their final military formation, eternally on duty to remind us of the cost and the human folly of war, but also of the will to fight to preserve our shared values and freedom. So, we come here today to honor these fallen soldiers and to rededicate ourselves to doing our utmost so their sacrifices will not have to be repeated. And our presence reaffirms the words of General John J. Pershing, engraved in the monument at the center of this cemetery that “time will not dim the glory of their deeds.”

To those that fought in these fields, to those who fight near and far, we thank you. And a very special thanks to Superintendent Michael Coonce and his team for keeping this hallowed place so beautiful.

In conclusion, let me say that France and the United States have walked many roads together in the past 100

years. Today, more than ever, solidarity among nations is of utmost importance. I look to the future with confidence that the strong ties of friendship between France, the rest of Europe and the United States will only continue to strengthen.

Long live French-American friendship. Long live freedom. Long live peace. Vive l'amitié franco-américaine! Vive la liberté! – Et Vive la paix !

Merci.