

Memorial Day Ceremony: American Hero Monument Bucharest, Romania
Monument Donated by AHAC

Embassy Press Release

Remarks Delivered By Chargé d'Affaires Jeri Guthrie-Corn

On The Occasion Of Memorial Ceremony At American Heroes Monument

Kiseleff Park

Bucharest

May 22, 2009

Secretary of State Oancea;

Military Attaches and other distinguished members of the diplomatic corps;

And, especially, veterans: Family and friends will soon begin gathering across the United States for picnics, excursions, and backyard barbeques as the Memorial Day weekend commonly marks the beginning of our summer holiday season. But we must remember what Memorial Day truly represents.

Fundamental rights and freedoms—to life, to liberty, and to the pursuit of happiness—were inscribed at America's birth. Going from declaration to attainment; however, has demanded enormous effort--and the ultimate sacrifices of our revered soldiers, sailors, and airmen. In short, American rights and freedoms were defended yesterday, and are protected today, by those willing to give their lives so that others may enjoy the gifts of justice and prosperity.

Like the achievements of those commemorated today, Memorial Day is the product of initiative and determined purpose. Union Army veterans first designated 30 May 1868 as a day to decorate graves and conduct fitting services of respect for those who died to preserve the Union during the American Civil War.

After World War I, Memorial Day observances began honoring those who died in all of America's battles, and we continue that tradition today by paying homage to all our fallen warriors. Today we pay fitting tribute to all of those Americans who have sacrificed their lives for their country.

We now stand before the Monument of the American Heroes here in Kiseleff Park to praise those U.S. servicemen—mostly airmen, and many still unidentified--who gave their lives in and over Romania to defeat tyranny and fascism in World War II.



Chargé d'Affair Jeri Guthrie-Corn, speaks on the occasion of Memorial Ceremony at the American Heroes Monument. Bucharest, May 22, 2009 (Lucian Crusoveanu / Public Diplomacy Office)



Chargé d'Affair Jeri Guthrie-Corn (Right), speaks on the occasion of Memorial Ceremony at the American Heroes Monument. Bucharest, May 22, 2009 (Lucian Crusoveanu / Public Diplomacy Office)

This monument, donated by the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company of Boston, Massachusetts, is a perfect setting for us to pause and reflect on the significance of their sacred acts. Today we take full measure of our responsibility to value and honor these hallowed heroes. We must be vigilant as the heirs of their trust and faith, and constantly hold ourselves accountable for the preservation of the liberty and justice for which they fought.

Our commemoration this Memorial Day is an opportunity to pledge anew to our nation and it's honored dead that we will support the freedoms which they so courageously defended.

For all who may still be asked to make the ultimate sacrifice today to advance freedom and justice, let us consider the words of the great American jurist Oliver Wendell Holmes regarding Memorial Day:

"It celebrates and solemnly reaffirms from year to year a national act of enthusiasm and faith. It embodies in the most impressive form our belief that to act with enthusiasm and faith is the condition of acting greatly. To fight out a war, you must believe something and want something with all your might. So must you do to carry anything else to an end worth reaching.

More than that, you must be willing to commit yourself to a course, perhaps a long and hard one, without being able to foresee exactly where you will come out. ... One may fall at the beginning of the charge or at the top of the earthworks; but in no other way can he reach the rewards of victory."

For Oliver Wendell Holmes, the worst fault was indifference to adversity or to tyranny.

On this Memorial Day we honor our warriors by pledging ourselves to renounce apathy and pessimism and to treasure and protect our liberty.

So let us remember those fallen friends who in pursued something greater than themselves as well as those whose continued vigilance today serves to make this life something profoundly more virtuous. May we continue to honor them in the future as much as they have honored us.

Thank you.

Read Remarks by Mr. Viorel Oancea, State Secretary, and Chief, Defense Policy and Planning, MOD.

The senior Romanian official at the ceremony.



Memorial Ceremony at the American Heroes Monument. Bucharest, May 22, 2009
(Lucian Crusoveanu / Public Diplomacy Office)



Chargé d'Affair Jeri Guthrie-Corn talks to Romanian media. Bucharest, May 22, 2009
(Lucian Crusoveanu / Public Diplomacy Office)