

Good morning/afternoon, I'm NAME, POSITION WITH DAV.

Before I begin, I'd like to RECOGNIZE ANY SPECIAL GUESTS. Thank you for being with us today.

Memorial Day. That time of year that evokes images of flags waving proudly, solemn ceremonies and moments of quiet reflection. It's a day etched into our nation's conscience, a designated time to remember and honor the men and women from all generations who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to our nation. This year, the weight of history feels particularly profound, marked by the 50th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War era and the 80th anniversary of the conclusion of World War II. These milestones offer a powerful lens through which to view the enduring meaning of this day.

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In the spring and summer of 1945, guns fell silent across Europe, Japan and the Pacific Islands. The echoes of World War II, the largest and deadliest conflict in human history, still resonate today. We remember the over 400,000 American lives lost and the nearly 1 million others wounded—brave soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines who stormed beaches, soared through the skies and faced unimaginable horrors to defend freedom and democracy against tyranny.

Their sacrifice in Normandy, Iwo Jima, the Ardennes (aar-denz) and many other places secured a future for generations to come, a future we are privileged to inhabit. The sheer scale of their commitment and the unwavering resolve in the face of overwhelming odds serve as timeless testaments to the power of courage and the cost of liberty.

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This year also marks a poignant anniversary: the half-century mark since the official end of the Vietnam War. For many Americans, this conflict remains a complex and often painful chapter in our history. The young men and women who served in Vietnam not only battled a determined enemy but also navigated a deeply divided homefront. Still, they answered their nation's call and endured grueling conditions. Tragically, more than 58,000 Americans lost their lives in the jungles and rice paddies of Southeast Asia.

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While these two anniversaries represent distinct conflicts separated by time and circumstance, they are united by the common thread of sacrifice that underpins Memorial Day. Whether fighting in the deserts of North Africa, the frozen landscapes of Europe or the tropical heat of Vietnam, the men and women we honor today shared a common dedication to duty and a willingness to lay down their lives for something greater than themselves. They came from diverse backgrounds with different hopes and dreams, but they were bound by a shared commitment to the ideals that our nation represents.

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It is vital that we do more than simply acknowledge these anniversaries. We must actively engage with the lessons they offer. World War II reminds us of the fragility of peace and the importance of global cooperation in the face of aggression. The Vietnam War compels us to reflect on the complexities of war and the profound impact that conflict has on those who serve and their families.

Memorial Day is a solemn day for remembering those who laid down their lives in service to our country in every conflict. Let us remember the heroic actions of legendary units like the “Band of Brothers” of Easy Company, 101st Airborne Division, who fought across Europe in World War II and the Marines who perished in the Pacific island-hopping campaign.

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We also remember the soldiers of the Vietnam War, including those of the 1st Cavalry Division who fought in the Tet Offensive and the Marines who held the line at Khe Sanh. They embody the highest ideals of American courage and dedication. Their sacrifice and memory continue to inspire us today.

As we gather at cemeteries, attend parades and spend time with loved ones this Memorial Day, we remember the fallen of World War II and Vietnam, as well as all those who have lost their lives in service to our country. Let their stories serve as a constant reminder of the preciousness of peace and the enduring value of freedom. Their sacrifice must not be just a memory; it must be a guiding principle, inspiring us to cherish peace, uphold justice and never forget the true meaning of Memorial Day.

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