

ICYMI: This Is How President Trump Spent His Memorial Day

It's become a bit of a tradition for presidents to visit Arlington National Cemetery and to lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns, but President Donald Trump once again showed his admiration for the U.S. military by spending most of his day at the cemetery, commemorating the sacrifice of our nation's fallen.

In the video above, you can see the president's wreath-laying ceremony. Afterward, he gave a speech in which he once again expressed his—and the nation's—gratitude for those who have sacrificed so much for our nation's freedom.

The following is a transcript of that speech:

Thank you so much. And thank you, General Dunford and Secretary Mattis, for your moving words and for your service to our great nation. Vice President Pence, Cabinet secretaries, members of Congress, members of the Armed Forces and veterans—thank you for joining us as we honor the brave warriors who gave their lives for ours, spending their last moments on this earth in defense of this country and of its people.

Words cannot measure the depth of their devotion, the purity of their love or the totality of their courage. We only hope that every day we can prove worthy not only of their sacrifice and service but of the sacrifice made by the families and loved ones they left behind. Special, special people.

I especially want to extend our gratitude to Secretary John Kelly for joining us today. Incredible man. I always like to call him General. He understands more than most ever could or ever will the wounds and burdens of war. Not only did

secretary [Kelly] proudly serve in the military for more than 40 years, enduring many hardships, but he and his incredible wife Karen have borne the single most difficult hardship of them all—the loss of their son, Robert, in service to our country. Robert died fighting the enemies of all civilizations in Afghanistan.

To John, Karen, Heather, Kate, Andrea and the entire Kelly family, today 300 million American hearts are joined together with yours. We grieve with you. We honor you. And we pledge to you that we will always remember Robert and what he did for all of us. Thank you, John.

The Kelly family represents military families across the country who carry the burden of freedom on their shoulders. Secretary Kelly is joined today by his son-in-law, Jake, a Wounded Warrior. And the secretary's son, Johnnie, will soon leave on his fifth deployment. It is because of families like yours that all of our families can live in safety and live in peace.

To every Gold Star family who honors us with your presence, you lost sons and daughters, husbands and wives, mothers and fathers. They each had their own names, their own stories, their own beautiful dreams. But they were all angels sent to us by God, and they all share one title in common—and that is the title of hero. Real heroes. Though they were here only a brief time before God called them home, their legacy will endure forever.

General Douglas MacArthur once said that “the soldier who is called upon to offer and to give his life for his country is the noblest development of mankind.” Here at this hallowed shrine, we honor the noblest among us—the men and women who paid the ultimate price for victory and for freedom. We pay tribute to those brave souls who raced into gunfire, roared into battle and ran into hell to face down evil. They made their sacrifice not for fame, or for money or even for

glory—but for country.

We are privileged to be joined today by a man whose life demonstrates the values of service and sacrifice: Senator Bob Dole, here with his wife, Senator Elizabeth Dole. Senator Dole fought bravely in World War II and was severely wounded by German fire. In just a few weeks, Bob will be celebrating his 94th birthday.

And, Bob, I know I speak for millions of grateful Americans when I say thank you. Thank you, Bob. We thank you not only for your service, but for helping us to remember your fallen comrades and the countless American patriots who gave their lives in the Second World War.

Since the first volley of gunfire in the Revolution, brave Americans in every generation have answered the call of duty and won victory for freedom in its hour of need. Today, a new generation of American patriots are fighting to win the battle against terrorism—risking their lives to protect our citizens from an enemy that uses the murder of innocents to wage war on humanity itself.

We are joined today by the wife of Specialist Christopher Horton, who rests on these so beautiful grounds. As Jane tells us, Chris “was a man who loved his country with every part of his being.”

In 2008, Chris enlisted in the Oklahoma Army National Guard. He trained as a sniper, becoming known as one of the best shots anywhere at any time. He was a talented, tough guy. While Chris was in the National Guard, he was also a volunteer police officer. In everything he did, he was thinking about how he could serve God, serve his family and serve his country.

In 2011, he deployed for the first time to Afghanistan. Chris knew his job was one of the most dangerous there was, but he was determined to go after the enemy at any cost to

himself. His missions helped target and kill terrorists who sought to destroy innocent people. Just three months into his first deployment, Chris was near the Pakistan border, trying to eliminate an enemy cell that was doing so much damage and that was planting deadly roadside bombs against his unit and the units of many others. Standing watch with his comrades, he died in the ensuing gun battle with enemy forces. Chris sacrificed his life to protect his fellow soldiers—and to protect all Americans. He was awarded the Purple Heart and Bronze Star for his courage. At only 26 years old, Chris secured his place in our hearts for eternity.

Jane, America, grieves with you. Our whole entire nation sends you our support, our strength and our deep, deep love. You lost your husband, and America lost a hero. And together, we will preserve his memory—today, tomorrow and always. Thank you, Jane. Thank you, Jane. Thank you, Jane. Thank you, Jane.

We are also joined today by David and Rose Byers, the parents of Major Andrew Byers. As a boy, Andrew dreamed of the chance to attend the United States Military Academy at West Point. He worked hard, he earned that chance, and he graduated at the top of his class. He became the commander of a Special HALO team, leading his fellow soldiers out of aircraft, hurtling into dangerous and unknown territory.

About this time last year, Andrew was sent on his third combat deployment. This time he went to Afghanistan. On November 3rd, he was one of 10 Special Forces operators to land by helicopter near a Taliban safe haven in northern Afghanistan. They trekked through a mile of waist-deep mud and climbed a steep cliff before finally reaching the village that they wanted to reach. There, a night-long battle ensued. Andrew and his team fought off wave after wave after wave of enemy fighters. A grenade detonated, and as the Taliban began to surround the American and Afghan

forces, Andrew ran through the smoke and through the hail of bullets to rescue an Afghan soldier. In the midst of this torrent of gunfire and danger, Andrew worked heroically to open a gateway and get his men to safety—risking his life to save theirs. And he did it. Unbelievably, he did. But in saving those lives, Andrew was killed right then and there by enemy fire. Andrew has since been awarded the Silver Star for gallantry in battle.

To his parents, David and Rose, we stand in awe of your son and his courageous sacrifice. On behalf of the American people, I express to you our everlasting gratitude for what your son did for his country, for his comrades, and for all of us.

Andrew's father has said that he holds on to the promise of Joshua Chapter 1, Verse 9 (NIV): "The Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. What a man he was.

To every Gold Star family, God is with you, and your loved ones are with Him. They died in wars so that we could live in peace. I believe that God has a special place in heaven for those who laid down their lives so that others may live free from fear and this horrible oppression.

Now let us pledge to make the most of that freedom that they so gallantly and brilliantly fought for and they died to protect. Let us also pledge to tell the stories of Robert, Chris, Andrew and all of America's fallen warriors today and for the next 1,000 years.

And while we cannot know the extent of your pain, what we do know is that our gratitude to them and to you is boundless and undying. Boundless and undying. We'll always be there. Thank you. Their stories are now woven into the soul of our nation, into the Stars and Stripes on our flag, and into the beating hearts of our great, great people.

Today we also hold a special vigil for heroes whose story we cannot tell because their names are known to God alone—the unknown soldiers. We do not know where they came from, who they left behind, or what they hoped to be. But we do know what they did. They fought and they died in a great and noble act of loyalty and love to their families and to our country.

The letter written that is now famous—one Civil War soldier captured it all and for all time. He wrote to his wife, “If I do not return, my dear Sarah, never forget how much I love you, nor that when my last breath escapes me on the battlefield, it will whisper your name.” That is the love we hear whispering throughout this sacred place and from every tombstone on these hallowed grounds. It is the love that binds this earth beneath us, and it bleeds from the hearts of all of those who died so that we might live free.

We can never replace them. We can never repay them. But we can always remember. And today, that is what we are doing—we remember. Words cannot wipe away the tears or bring back those smiling faces. But if Americans just take the time to look into your eyes and tell you how much we thank you and how dearly we pray for you and how truly we love you, then hopefully you can find solace through your pain. And every time you see the sun rise over this blessed land please know your brave sons and daughters pushed away the night and delivered for us all that great and glorious dawn.

Thank you. God bless you. God bless our fallen heroes. God bless their families. God bless our military. And God bless the United States of America.

You can see the full speech in the video clip below. After the speech, the president visited Section 60 of the cemetery, and laid flowers at the grave of Secretary Kelly’s son. While he was there, he also met Christian Jacobs, the 6-year-old son of fallen Marine Corps Sgt. Christopher Jacobs—who died during

military training exercises in Twentynine Palms, California, in 2011—and his mother, Brittany.

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