

## The President's Radio Address May 24, 2008

Good morning. This Memorial Day weekend, kids will be out of school, moms and dads will be firing up the grill, and families across our country will mark the unofficial beginning of summer. But as we do, we should all remember the true purpose of this holiday: to honor the sacrifices that make our freedom possible.

On Monday, I will commemorate Memorial Day by visiting Arlington National Cemetery, where I will lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns. The tomb is the final resting place of three brave American soldiers who lost their lives in combat. The names of these veterans of World War I, World War II, and the Korean war are known only to God, but their valor is known to us all.

Throughout American history, this valor has preserved our way of life and our sacred freedoms. It was this valor that won our independence. It was this valor that removed the stain of slavery from our Nation. And it was this valor that defeated the great totalitarian threats of the last century.

Today, the men and women of our military are facing a new totalitarian threat to our freedom. In Iraq, Afghanistan, and other fronts around the world, they continue the proud legacy of those who came before them. They bear their responsibilities with quiet dignity and honor. And some have made the ultimate sacrifice in defense of their country.

One such hero was Sergeant First Class Benjamin Sebban of the Army's 82d Airborne Division. As the senior medic in his squadron, Ben made sacrifice a way of life. When younger medics were learning how to insert IVs, he would offer his own arm for practice. And when the time came, Ben did not hesitate to offer his fellow soldiers far more.

On March 17, 2007, in Iraq's Diyala Province, Ben saw a truck filled with explosives racing toward his team of paratroopers. He ran into the open to warn them, exposing himself to the blast. Ben received severe wounds, but this good medic never bothered to check his own injuries. Instead, he devoted his final moments on this Earth to treating others. Earlier this week, in a ceremony at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, I had the honor of presenting Sergeant Sebban's mom with the Silver Star that he earned.

No words are adequate to console those who have lost a loved one serving our Nation. We can only offer our prayers and join in their grief. We grieve for the mother who hears the sound of her child's 21-gun salute. We grieve for the husband or wife who receives a folded flag. We grieve for a young son or daughter who only knows dad from a photograph.

One holiday is not enough to commemorate all of the sacrifices that have been made by America's men and women in uniform. No group has ever done more to defend liberty than the men and women of the United States Armed Forces. Their bravery has done more than simply win battles; it has done more than win wars; it has secured a way of life for our entire country. These heroes and their families should be in our thoughts and prayers on a daily basis, and they should receive our loving thanks at every possible opportunity.

This Memorial Day, I ask all Americans to honor the sacrifices of those who have served you and our country. One way to do so is by joining in a moment of remembrance that will be marked across our country at 3 p.m. local time. At that moment, Major League Baseball games will pause, the National Memorial Day Parade will halt, Amtrak trains will blow their whistles, and buglers in military cemeteries will play

“Taps.” You can participate by placing a flag at a veteran’s grave, taking your family to the battlefields where freedom was defended, or saying a silent prayer for all the Americans who were delivered out of the agony of war to meet their Creator. Their bravery has preserved the country we love so dearly.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 10:06 a.m. on May 23 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on May 24. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 23, but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. In his address, the President referred to Barbara Filik Walsh, mother of Sfc. Benjamin L. Sebban, USA. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

## Remarks During a Meeting With Leaders of Rolling Thunder, Inc. May 25, 2008

*The President.* [Inaudible]—to get to know the leaders of Rolling Thunder. For our fellow citizens who don’t know Rolling Thunder, Rolling Thunder is a—the moment in time here in Washington, on Memorial Day weekend, when thousands of motorcyclers come to the Nation’s Capital to pay tribute to those who have died in service, those who sacrifice, and those who serve. And it’s a magnificent sight.

We just choppered in, Artie, and I saw your brothers and sisters cranking up their machines and driving through the Nation’s Capital. Many of them have got the flag on the back. And I am just so honored to welcome you back. I want to thank you and all your comrades for being so patriotic and loving our country as much as you do. And I think this is the—I don’t know if this is the eighth time we’ve been together here, but pretty close.

*Artie Muller.* Pretty close, sir. Maybe one more.

*The President.* Yes, one more. [Laughter] Anyway, Artie is the main man, and this is his board of directors who have continued to rally people around the country.

I went to Greensburg, Kansas, Artie, and I came into this town that had been destroyed by a tornado. I was going to give the high school graduation speech, and rode in from the airport, and the motorcyclers were all lining the streets with the flags. And it made me feel great.

When people go to protest at the funeral of one of our brave soldiers that died in combat, Artie’s folks are there to make sure that those protestors don’t denigrate the moment.

And so you’re doing a lot for the country.

*Mr. Muller.* Thank you.

*The President.* And our troops appreciate you, the veterans appreciate you, and your President appreciates you.

*Mr. Muller.* Thank you, Mr. President.

*The President.* Welcome.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:54 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. Participating in the meeting was Artie Muller, national executive director, Rolling Thunder, Inc.