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story of a humble birth in a quiet town, and the story of one life that changed millions more. For two millennia, the story of Christmas has brought joy to families, comfort to communities, and hope to hearts around the world.

During Christmas we celebrate the blessings of the season and the blessings that surround us every day. And the greatest of these blessings is freedom, the Almighty's gift to every man, woman, and child on the face of the Earth.

And today we give thanks to the brave men and women who protect the American people by defending freedom around the world. Over the past 8 years, my greatest honor as President has been serving as Commander in Chief of the finest military ever known.

Our men and women in uniform have stepped forward to defend our Nation during a time of war. They serve with courage and with honor, and they've made incredible sacrifices. Many of them will spend this Christmas stationed in distant lands, far from the families they love. Yet they're never far from our thoughts, and they are always in our prayers. America honors their service, and we are grateful to the sacrifice of the families who stand by their side.

Some of those families are with us tonight, and Laura and I are pleased to be joined by Kayleigh Kepler and Lindsey Van Horn. Lindsey's dad is in Baghdad. Kayleigh's dad will deploy to Iraq next year. Kayleigh and Lindsey, America is safer because of your dads, and moms and dads across America, who have stepped forward to defend our country.

And now I'm going to ask Kayleigh and Lindsey to get up here with Laura—to please come up with Laura—[*laughter*]—and help us light this beautiful tree.

Everybody join—five, four, three, two, one!

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:55 p.m. on the Ellipse at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne, who introduced the President; SFC Steve Cramer, USA, U.S. Army Chorus, in his role as Santa Claus; Vin Cipolla, president and chief executive officer, National Park Foundation; and Luis Leon, rector, St. John's Church.

Remarks on Signing the National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day Proclamation and the Proclamation To Establish the World War II Valor in the Pacific National Monument

December 5, 2008

The President. Thank you all for coming. I am going to sign two documents: one a Pearl Harbor Day Proclamation, and the other creating the World War II Valor in Pacific National Monument. The national monument will include nine sites: five in Hawaii, three in Alaska, and one in California at the Tule Lake Segregation Center, where Japanese Americans were detained during World War II.

The purpose of the monument is to remind generations of Americans of the sacrifices that Americans made to protect our country. But there's a broader purpose as well, and that is to remind generations of Americans about the transformative effect of freedom.

One of the great stories of—during World War II was that people fought bitterly to defend our country and way of life, and then worked to help our enemies develop democracies according to their own cultures and their own history. And today I am so pleased to report that Japan is a strong ally of the United States of America, an ally in defending our liberties, and an ally in spreading liberty as the great ideological alternative to an enemy that still wants to do us harm.

And so this monument will help people realize the breadth and the history of World War II and its aftermath.

So I'm pleased to sign both documents, and I want to thank our distinguished visitors for joining me.

[*At this point, the President signed the proclamations.*]

The President. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:25 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Proclamation 8326—National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day, 2008

December 5, 2008

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

On National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day, we mourn the more than 2,400 Americans whose lives were lost in the surprise attack on our homeland that changed the course of history. Their service and sacrifice and the service and sacrifice of all our World War II veterans will be forever honored on this day by the citizens of a free and grateful Nation.

On December 7, 1941, the enemy nearly destroyed our Pacific Fleet, and the United States was forced into a long and terrible war. A generation of Americans stepped forward to fight for our country. Their message to America's enemies was clear: If you attack this country and harm our people, there is no corner of the Earth remote enough to protect you from the reach of our Nation's Armed Forces.

Following the war the United States worked to make our most bitter enemies into our closest friends through the transformative power of freedom. The joys of liberty are often secured by the sacrifices of those who serve a cause greater than self. To honor and recognize the sacrifice of our Armed Forces, I have designated nine sites as the World War II Valor in the Pacific National Monument. This monument will preserve our history and help share this heritage with future generations. On this anniversary, we honor the heroes who risked and lost their lives for our security and freedom. Their selfless dedication exemplifies the great character of America and continues to inspire our Nation.

The Congress, by Public Law 103–308, as amended, has designated December 7 of each year as "National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day."

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim December 7, 2008, as National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day. I encourage all Americans to observe this solemn occasion with appropriate ceremonies and activities. I urge all Federal agencies and interested organizations, groups, and individuals to fly the flag of the United States at half-staff this December 7 in honor of those who died as a result of their service at Pearl Harbor.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this fifth day of December, in the year of our Lord two thousand eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-third.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 11:15 a.m., December 8, 2008]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on December 9.

Proclamation 8327—Establishment of the World War II Valor in the Pacific National Monument

December 5, 2008

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Beginning at Pearl Harbor with the day of infamy that saw the sinking of the USS ARIZONA and ending on the deck of the USS MISSOURI in Tokyo Bay, many of the key battles of World War II were waged on and near American shores and throughout the Pacific. We must always remember the debt we owe to the members of the Greatest Generation for our liberty. Their gift is an enduring peace that transformed enemies into steadfast allies in the cause of democracy and freedom around the globe.

Americans will never forget the harrowing sacrifices made in the Pacific by soldiers and civilians that began at dawn on December 7, 1941, at Pearl Harbor on the island of Oahu. The surprise attack killed more than 2,000 American military personnel and dozens of civilians and thrust the United States fully into World War II.

America responded and mobilized our forces to fight side-by-side with our allies in the European, Atlantic, and Pacific theaters. The United States Navy engaged in epic sea