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Office of the White House Press Secretary

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THE WHITE HOUSE

TEXT OF REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT  
TO BE DELIVERED AT  
MEMORIAL DAY CEREMONIES  
ARLINGTON CEMETERY  
May 26, 1975

There is no higher or more solemn privilege than to represent a grateful Nation in paying tribute to its honored dead. No man or woman who comes to Arlington on Memorial Day can help but feel the burden and the pride of what it means to be an American.

The freedom we enjoy today, these fallen won for us. The way of life we cherish, they protected for us.

The heritage they defended is now in our hands. We are the guardians of their trust. Arlington Cemetery is their sacred shrine, but their greatest monument is the America they died to defend.

The value of their sacrifice -- the worth of what they gave their lives to defend -- depends on how well we meet our responsibilities today. If we live in peace as bravely as they died in war, the world will remember them as long as there are free men to be inspired.

Memorial Day has always meant a great deal to me -- as a schoolboy, as a young man in the Navy during the Second World War, in my years in the Congress, and, last Memorial Day, when I spoke from this rostrum as Vice President. Today, it is an occasion even more deeply felt.

Although we live in a rapidly changing world, some things remain the same. One is the need to maintain our military strength. For as long as there are lawbreakers in the world, we must have the strength and the resolve to stand up for what is right. It is the price we have always paid for being free. It is the price we must be willing to pay in the future.

So, today, we pay tribute not only to our wartime dead, but to those who made the same sacrifice in keeping the peace. They have proven that the quality of heroism -- of love of country and willingness to serve in time of troubles -- beats just as strong in American hearts today as ever.

As we honor the men and women who have given their lives, let us also pray for the safety of those still missing in action and the solace of those who wait as well as those who mourn. The world should know that the United States will not falter in its determination to achieve an adequate accounting of our MIA's.

Finally, let us resolve to learn from the example of those whose memories we honor today. May the courage they demonstrated in war guide us to even greater achievements in peace. Peace, too, can have its heroes. In our every day lives, in the example we set, in the kind of country we build, and in the national character we sustain, we can erect the greatest monument of all to those we honor here today.

They will not have died in vain -- and their loved ones will not have suffered in vain -- if we vow to live our lives in the cause of honor, freedom and justice that they so gallantly served.

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