



NEWS RELEASE

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Public Affairs Office

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Memorial Day 2011

ERMC Soldiers pay tribute to fallen during ceremony in France

BONY, France – Soldiers from the Europe Regional Medical Command alongside Marines of France’s 1st Marine Artillery Regiment, gathered with military leaders, dignitaries and members of the local community at the Somme American Cemetery and Memorial here May 29, to honor the fallen Soldiers laid to rest at the historic site.

Positioned on a gentle slope on the rolling countryside of Bony, France, (200 miles north of Paris) the cemetery is the final resting place for nearly 2,000 Soldiers, Airmen, Sailors and Marines who made the ultimate sacrifice for their country during World War I.

In the area, which includes the Somme American Cemetery and the hill to its north, the 27th Division’s 107th Infantry suffered 995 casualties during the first day’s attack – the largest one-day American regimental loss for the entire war.

During the ceremony, Brig. Gen. Nadja Y. West, the commanding general of the Europe Regional Medical Command, reflected on the significant number of lives that were lost at the site and throughout our Nation’s conflicts.

“These numbers are unfathomable,” said West. “Each one represents a unique, precious and unrepeatable human being who gave his or her all.”

Among the 1,844 American servicemembers laid to rest at the site, is Lt. William T. Fitzsimons, a physician who was killed while attending to the wounded during a German airstrike on his field hospital. He was the first American officer killed in action during the war.

West, who completed her residency in dermatology at Fitzsimons Army Medical Center in Denver, Colo., urged everyone to never forget those that served, as well as those who continue to defend our freedom every day.

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“Let us remember those lost, the sacrifices they made, and the service that they rendered. Let us remember those who are in harm’s way fighting for us today. And for all those who have fought for their country and who have lived and died with honor – we thank you, we remember you, and we salute you,” she said.

Following remarks by West, the mayor of Bony, dignitaries and representatives, twenty wreaths were ceremoniously placed neatly in front of the chapel. The firing of rifle volleys, playing of taps, preceded the silent raising of the American Flag. Each moment served as somber memorial for the hundreds of visitors at the ceremony.

Soldiers from several ERMC units made up the color guard, the honor platoon, and firing party during the ceremony. Soldiers represented the 30th Medical Command headquarters in Heidelberg, 212th Combat Support Hospital in Miesau, 421st Multifunctional Medical Battalion in Wiesbaden, the Heidelberg Medical Activity Department, and Landstuhl Regional Medical Center.

The 14-acre Somme American Cemetery is named after the region in which the American 1st, 27th, 30th, 33rd and 80th Divisions and the 6th and the 11th Engineers fought during the period between March 1917 and September 1918. It is the final resting-place of 1,844 American servicemembers who fought at Somme, Cambrai, Hamel, in front of Amiens, and during the Hindenburg Offensive.

Story and photos by Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Fincham, 30th MEDCOM Public Affairs NCOIC. For more information please contact him at christopher.fincham@us.army.mil. Information from the Somme American Cemetery and Memorial website at www.abmc.gov.

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CUTLINES:

SommeMemorialDay_2011_29MAY2011_release001: The color guard from the Europe Regional Medical Command marches during the Memorial Day Ceremony May 29, at the Somme American Cemetery and Memorial in Bony, France.

SommeMemorialDay_2011_29MAY2011_release002: The color guard from the Europe Regional Medical Command marches during the Memorial Day Ceremony May 29, at the Somme American Cemetery and Memorial in Bony, France.

SommeMemorialDay_2011_29MAY2011_release005: Brig. Gen. Nadja Y. West, the commanding general of the Europe Regional Medical Command speaks during the Memorial Day Ceremony May 29, at the Somme American Cemetery and Memorial in Bony, France.

SommeMemorialDay_2011_29MAY2011_release009: Soldiers of the firing party render honors during the Memorial Day Ceremony May 29, at the Somme American Cemetery and Memorial in Bony, France.

SommeMemorialDay_2011_29MAY2011_023: Soldiers of the honor platoon stand in formation during the Memorial Day Ceremony May 29, at the Somme American Cemetery and Memorial in Bony, France.

SommeMemorialDay_2011_29MAY2011_053: A family member holds a rose while watching the Memorial Day Ceremony May 29, at the Somme American Cemetery and Memorial in Bony, France.