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Americans, French, Germans gather to honor Normandy veterans at famed Mont Saint Michel

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LE MONT-SAINT-MICHEL, France -- U.S. and allied servicemembers, World War II veterans, local dignitaries and others honored the memory of those who fought in the D-Day invasion at a ceremony at the foot of famed Mont Saint Michel, June 4.

Three Normandy veterans were recognized for their wartime service and for liberating France.

French Army Gen. Pierre Barbaud presented Julius Eisner with the French Legion of Honor. Eisner, a veteran of the 82nd Airborne Division's 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment was wounded fighting in the hedgerows near Sainte Mere Eglise, but returned to continue fighting that same day.

“The airborne is like a family. Your friends can save your lives or someone else’s and you felt something when one of your buddies died,” said Eisner.



MASS COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST 2ND CLASS CHRIS HENRY
Germany's military attache to France, Army Col. Christian Duhr, addresses servicemembers and veterans from the United States, France and Germany, as well as hundreds of others who attended a ceremony at Mont Saint Michel, France, June 4, honoring the 65th anniversary of the allied invasion of Normandy. Maj. Gen. Yves Fontaine, commander of U.S. Army Europe's 21st Theater Sustainment Command (center) and French Army Gen. Pierre Barbaud (left) also spoke at the ceremony.

Bill Alan and another Normandy veteran were presented with the Mont Saint Michel Medal of Honor for his combat service by Eric Vannier, Mayor of Mont Saint Michel.

Military and civic leaders from France, Germany and the United States spoke to the crowd of more than 500 who gathered for the ceremony.

“Close to Mont Saint Michel, the American cemetery in Saint James and the German cemetery in Huisnes sur Mer are living memorials to the terrible bloodshed and a reminder of the sacrifices that were made during the war,” said Vannier. “But out of the ashes rises hope and the sacrifice of these Soldiers, together with the wisdom of the people and the determination of leading heads of state laid the foundations for a Europe of peace and fraternity.”

Soldiers from the 82nd Airborne Division traveled from Fort Bragg, N.C to take part in the ceremony, one of dozens of events across the Normandy region in honor of the 65th anniversary of the D-Day invasion.

“It was a privilege and an honor to participate in the ceremony and watch our veterans get awarded by the French military for their actions in the war,” said Steve Bolton of the 82nd.



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