



Task Force Normandy 65 Joint Information Bureau  
Release #N2009-06-5-07-05

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June 7, 2009

## German ambassador to France calls for moving beyond past during tribute to German Soldiers who died in Normandy campaign

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**NORMANDY, France** -- “Only those who know the past have a future.” These were the famous words of Wilhelm von Humboldt and they were the opening remarks by Reinhard Schaefers, Germany's ambassador to France, at the German military cemetery in La Cambe, near Bayeux, France, June 5.



SPC ADRIENNE KILLINGSWORTH

Members of the British Foreign Legion pay their respects after laying wreaths in honor of German Soldiers who lost their lives in the Normandy campaign during World War II, at a ceremony in the German military cemetery in La Cambe, near Bayeux, France, June 5. The ceremony was one of dozens of events commemorating the 65th anniversary of the World War II D-Day invasion.

Schaefers's remarks were made to troops, veterans and dignitaries from around the world who gathered at a public ceremony here to remember the more than 21,000 German soldiers killed during the Normandy invasion 65 years ago. La Cambe is a few miles from Omaha Beach, where allied troops invaded France on June 6, 1944.

The ceremony was an opportunity to remember the German soldiers who died, “carrying out the instructions of a regime to which they had pledged loyalty and obedience,” as Schaefers said,

but also an opportunity to renew the friendship and bond that has developed between nations which were once bitter rivals.

For some veterans of D-Day, such as Command Sgt. Maj. (Ret.) Bill Ryan, 84, a former paratrooper who landed on Omaha Beach with the 16th Infantry Regiment, the anniversary is a time to focus on the things that bring countries together instead of on past differences. Ryan, a native of Melbourne, Fla., has been coming to Normandy on the anniversary of D-Day every year for 28 years.



SPC ADRIENNE KILLINGSWORTH  
Command Sgt. Maj. (Ret.)  
Bill Ryan stands in the  
German military cemetery in  
La Cambe, France June 5,  
during a ceremony to honor  
German Soldiers who died in  
the Normandy invasion.  
Ryan, 84, is a former  
paratrooper who landed on



SPC ADRIENNE KILLINGSWORTH  
American, German and British troops salute as the national  
anthems of their countries are played during a ceremony at  
the German military cemetery in La Cambe, near Bayeux,  
France, June 5.

The presence of the veterans of D-Day alongside the formation of British, American and German soldiers was symbolic of the progress that has been made in the generations following World War II.

Schaefers said the event at the cemetery was meant to address the nations, as well as the generations, gathered there. The ambassador noted that the veterans of the war have often been “the first to extend their hands to the former foe and rebuild Europe from the ruins.”

Later generations have built on that foundation by achieving a Franco-German alliance, and today’s generation protects and defends

those achievements for future generations, he said.

Even with the deep friendship between the former foes, and the close bonds they share, Schaefers said many Germans have mixed feelings about the cemetery here.

Schaefers said it is essential that Germans today recognize the “senseless actions” committed by German forces during World War II. He pledged that such things would never be allowed to happen again.

The progress that has been made is too precious to give up, he said, and “all the greater is the value we attach to the friendship that we ... share today.”

Schaefers told the audience at the ceremony that, “You all emphasize this special friendship by attending this ceremony today,” Schaefer told the gathered audience, “and I would like to thank you on behalf of Germany.”



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