

# VFW Reminds Everyone to Remember of the Cost of Freedom

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May 28, 2021

**KANSAS CITY, Mo.** — Memorial Day, America’s annual reminder of those who made the ultimate sacrifice, is Monday, May 31, in a year of a historic milestone for the country. Almost 20 years have passed since U.S. troops put boots on the ground in Afghanistan to avenge Al Qaeda’s 9/11 attack on America. And as the end of our nation’s longest war draws near, so does the threat of losing the significance of the holiday in the public consciousness. For this reason, the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and its Auxiliary are asking its members, as well as every American, to renew their commitment to commemorate the many generations who have given up their lives for freedom.

“Comrades, I would like to remind each and every one of you of the somber reason for Memorial Day,” said Hal Roesch, VFW Commander-in-Chief. “We must not forget the service members buried in hallowed grounds throughout the country and around the world.”

Last year, the coronavirus pandemic forced most of the veteran cemeteries across the United States and abroad to cancel Memorial Day events and gatherings, leaving seas of white headstones and grave markers unvisited and undecorated by the general public. However just this month, federal and state COVID-19 safety guidelines relaxed as more and more of the population becomes fully vaccinated, and places like Arlington National Cemetery, and the 155 other national cemeteries across the country, have once again fully opened their gates.

“For many in our nation, this Memorial Day weekend will be like a breath of fresh air,” said Roesch. “As more and more of this past year’s restrictions are lifted across the U.S., this long holiday weekend marks a moment of needed relief for many of our fellow Americans. While there is an air of elation around us, let us take time to give pause, reflect and honor our

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fallen brothers and sisters, reminding everyone of the selfless sacrifices that secured the freedoms we enjoy.

As of May 24, 2021, the U.S. Department of Defense casualty status reports a total of 2,312 U.S. military personnel who died in Afghanistan as part of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Freedom's Sentinel. Their deaths are counted in the sacred cost that past and future generations pay in freedom's defense.

"May we continue to honor their legacy, living lives worthy of those who laid down their lives for us," said Roesch.