

war is a human endeavor, and while the Nazis had lots of armor, the troopers of the 101st had a rendezvous with destiny. Now most of history will tell you that that siege was eventually broken on the 26th of December, at 1650 hours as Cobra King, the lead tank of Patton's Third Army reached Bastogne. I think the troopers of the 101st would tell you that the only thing those tanks allowed him to do was continue the attack. War is a human endeavor. It was then, and it is now. What the world witnessed 80 years ago is what happens when the cause of freedom is led by valiant action, a coalition and Alliance built on freedom and liberty, not conquest. In the words of General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Battle of the Bulge was a great and glorious victory. But it is also a reminder that freedom is not free, that the price of freedom is paid in the blood and the sweat of those that defend it. Today, we are joined here today by veterans of that fight from 80 years ago. And gentlemen, it is my great honor to be in your presence. Thank you. Your legacy is what makes our Army great today. Thank you.

REMARKS OF FOREIGN MINISTER
BERNARD QUENTIN

HON. JOE WILSON

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, on December 13, 2024, during the commemoration of the 80th Anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge, hosted by the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) and the U.S. Embassy in Belgium, inspiring remarks were presented by Belgian Foreign Minister, Bernard Quentin. The alliance of Belgium and the United States is unshakeable.

Dear Senator, Bill Nelson NASA Administrator and Representative of His Excellency, the President of the United States of America, Ambassador Michael Adler, and members of the official U.S. delegation, including, of course, very specially, the veterans and their families and carers. It is a true honor to stand in front of you here in Bastogne, ambassadors and other security distinguished guests present tonight. Dear Mr. Benoît Lutgen, Mayor of Bastogne, ladies and gentlemen, dear friends, the nuts that will be thrown tomorrow in homage to General Anthony McAuliffe, the GIs elements in which you might drink a delicious local beer in a Bastogne Cafe later tonight, carefully the last resting place of General George Patton just across the border. Not many battles in history have generated emotions and symbols as strong as those related to the Battle of the Bulge for many generations, this Battle is synonymous with courage, resilience and self-sacrifice. It is a powerful symbol of unity and resistance of democratic countries against tyranny and violence, it is also a potent reminder that peace and freedom come at a price, as we honor the memory of so many young soldiers from all over the U.S. and other allied countries who fell for the freedom of Europe. How can we not think of the Ukrainian soldiers who are today dying in the snow, in the frozen mud to defend their country against an unprovoked war of aggression? Tonight, ceremonies remind us of the importance to stand side by side in the fight for the rightful cause. It reminds us of our duty to support Ukraine for as long as it takes, because, as we saw here in Bastogne, the violence and brutality should never prevail, ladies and gentlemen, not taking any-

thing away from the tribute we owe to the British and Canadian soldiers who also fought and died in the larger theater operation, including your own Brigadier men, nor the Free Poles, Free French, and also all those coming from all over the world, including India and Africa. Looking at the names on the graves, on the Ardennes Forest, this is essentially an American history and a tragic and glorious epitome of America's unflinching dedication to preserving liberty, democracy and human rights in the world. We are here, first and foremost, to honor freedom and do tribute to troops from all corners of the U.S. who came here to liberate our land, my land, from the yoke of Nazism thousands of miles from their own cities and villages. We celebrate them, those who are with us today, the others who could enjoy and the children, nieces, nephews, grandchildren and grand children of those who are not with us any longer. We are also here to give a strong message of hope and unity, both as a minister and as a historian. I know that the United States of America and Belgium share a long history during which they have consistently defended together the values of humanity and freedoms that both our nations are built upon. One moving story I remember was told in a great documentary series in the battle that was broadcasted in on Belgium television when I was still a child, already a long time ago, the story of young servicemen from the Midwest who, during the battle, were trying to communicate with local villagers despite not speaking any French. Soon, they discovered that the dialect they were speaking back in Wisconsin or Minnesota was actually a Walloon, one perfectly understandable to the Bastogne they were addressing. Like them, hundreds of thousands of Americans claim Belgian lineage today. Thousands of viewers and Belgian citizens live in the other country, with hundreds of thousands more employed by investors from the other country and countless tourist researchers. And students, sports, people and artists traveling each year across the Atlantic Ocean. These are deep and enduring bonds. Allies yesterday are allies today, and it is only by remaining trustful security partners that we will be able to tackle the current global challenges, a nature of safety and prosperity. Belgium's commitment to the Transatlantic Partnership is a tenet of its foreign policy, as is our result, to strive for peace in Europe, in Africa and, of course, in East Asia and the Middle East. Allies were also in many other combats with us. One example among many, the fight against criminal activities, including narcotics and the modern slavery of peoples of people smuggling, increasingly co-operating, both at home and in third countries. We need to enhance our common fight, because these threats are numerous, challenging our freedom and our democracies worldwide. Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends, we are those future generations for which the young GIs, paratroopers, gunners and Rangers fought 80 years ago. Let us show ourselves worthy of those who gave their lives for us, and let us continue the strong tradition of mutual trust and friendship that has existed for close to two centuries, and even more so since World War Two and the Battle of the Bulge, it is now our duty to preserve the freedom that has been bestowed on us and to pass it on to today's fellow generation. And if you allow me, dear veterans, when I saw you, I had to remember a personal event late in the 90s. I was sitting watching the news with my beloved late grandmother, born before the First World War. It was a war in Serbia, and she was crying, and I don't remember. I don't want to remember the stupidity I told her, so why are you crying? And she looked at me back,

and she loved me a lot, but there Her eyes were not happy, and she told me, I knew. What do you know about war? Nothing, But you know and you give to all of us. The best of you. Thank you very much.

WELCOME REMARKS OF
SECRETARY CHARLES DJOU

HON. JOE WILSON

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, Americans are grateful for the service of American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) Secretary Charles K. Djou who provided welcome remarks of the Commemoration of the 80th Anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge at the Luxembourg American Cemetery on December 14, 2024. With his AMBC leadership, American cemeteries worldwide are a permanent recognition of affection for servicemembers recognizing Freedom Is Not Free. When Americans liberate nations from oppression, it is not for occupation as we request only to have sufficient acreage to bury valiant American patriots.

Good morning, Your Majesties, Prime Ministers, Administrator Nelson, Ambassador Barrett, members of the United States Senate and United States House of Representatives. Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the Luxembourg American Cemetery. I'd like to start here this morning by sharing with all of you a very quick story about one soldier. His name is Alexis Sommaripa. Alexis was born in Odessa, Ukraine. He went on to serve. He went on to graduate from Harvard University, and when World War Two broke out, he was 41 years old. But he nevertheless volunteered to serve in the United States military, and because of his language skills, speaking Russian, Ukrainian, German, and French. He was put in the Intelligence Corps. He landed on Normandy Beach and fought here at the Battle of the Bulge. He went on and was assigned to the 37th Tank Battalion, Fourth Armored Division, unfortunately, after the Battle of the Bulge, while he was sitting at the top and commanding a tank, Alexis' tank was strafed by German Messerschmidt. It wounded the driver, flinging him from the tank, and the tank Raj fell over on Alexis. He is buried here at the Luxembourg American Cemetery. He is buried a Plot E, Row 15, Grave, 65. I raise the story with all of you, because all of these crosses and these Stars of David that rest behind me are not movie props. They are not just figures. They are the lives of real Americans who gave the ultimate sacrifice in the cause of freedom, and each and every one have a story as compelling as Alexis. And I raise this story because Alexi was a Ukrainian-American, and the relevance today with the largest invasion on the plains of Ukraine, unprovoked, is today steaming across Europe. I know, ladies and gentlemen, that there are many here in this world who question, who doubt, who wonder, do places like this exist? Do ceremonies like this still have relevance today? I'm here to respond to you, to all who question, to all who wonder, to all who doubt. Come, come here to Luxembourg. Come here to the Luxembourg American Cemetery. Come see these crosses and these Stars of David. Come and see what true sacrifice is about. Because you see, ladies and gentlemen, when the United States of America stands at its best, when we are at our finest America does not send its young, its brave and its finest to fight for a king or

a crown. We do not fight for a sect or denomination. We do not even fight for a motherland or a fatherland, and Americans most certainly never fight for conquest or plunder or enslavement of another people. Instead, when America sends its young, its brave and its finest to fight and yes, sometimes make the ultimate sacrifice, America does it for simple, humble values, the values of liberty and democracy and when the job is done, when the mission is accomplished, when America has taken down the dictator and

stood up democracy, Americans do something utterly unique in the history of mankind. We go home all that America asks for in return. In exchange for the sacrifice of our young, are a few small plots of land to bury our dead. All of you are seated here today in one of those small plots of land, and that is why this place, this ceremony, is still so important. It reminds us of American sacrifice, and it reminds all of the autocrats and the dictators in this world, whether they be in Moscow or Beijing, whether they be in

Tehran or Pyongyang, the autocracy may seem powerful. The dictatorship may seem strong. But here this place at the Luxembourg American Cemetery. We remind the world that there is nothing more powerful in it than a free people willing to fight for freedom. Ladies and gentlemen, May the good Lord bless each and every one of you. Bless Luxembourg and the United States of America. Thank you.