

**Field of Valor Dedication  
Memorial Day Weekend Speech**

**Saturday, 29 May 2010  
Buffalo, NY**

**Speech by BG Jeffrey W. Foley  
Commander, US Army Signal Center and Fort Gordon**

Thank you very much for that kind introduction Mr. Deveso.

I am very pleased and honored to represent the 1.1 million soldiers and over 279,000 civilians and their families proudly serving in 80 countries around the world. (According to the Army's 2010 posture statement).

I would like to recognize the distinguished guests here with us today (State Senator William T. Stachnowski, Council Member Kevin Smardz, Council Member Amy Ziegler, Mr. Joseph Dispenza, Ms. Cindy Craig, Terry Depreta, Ms. Lisa Whitlow, and especially the Hamburg Township VFW Post and the trustees of Forest Lawn Group for their invitation to speak here today.

Many of you are aware the Forest Lawn Group consists of four cemeteries; Forest Lawn, Lakeside, Williamsville, and St. Matthews. Among these four, Forest Lawn, Lakeside and St. Matthews developed Fields of Valor in May 2009 to honor the sacrifice and service of all veterans.

On May 5, 1866, veterans, civic societies, and residents decorated the village of Waterloo, NY by placing evergreen wreaths throughout the village. With flags at half mast, the town honored the living veterans of our nation and remembered those who died. The patriots who decorated Waterloo joined General John B. Murray who was a veteran of the Civil War and the driving force behind the town of Waterloo, as he placed flowers on the graves of those who lost their lives fighting for our country. This event began the FIRST Memorial Day observance.

Each Memorial Day we remember those that made the ultimate sacrifice. It is not a day of celebration, but of somber remembrance of those men and women. They set aside their hopes and dreams for others. Being here is a way of immortalizing the ultimate sacrifice they made. Americans do not fight to conquer the world, but to liberate those enslaved by evil. Oliver Wendell Holmes, who served as an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court and was a Civil War veteran, called this "Our most sacred holiday," and he urged that we, "not ponder with sad thoughts the passing of our heroes, but rather ponder their legacy – the life they made possible for us by their commitment and pain."

On this day old soldiers pull themselves up and stand straight to salute their lost brothers and sisters. They place flags at grave markers, tie ribbons to trees, and attend ceremonies like this to keep their memories alive. The words "never forgotten" grace many banners unfurled around the country. I think these words ring quite true today, as we can see how much each person here has "never forgotten" our heroes who have served.

Those that have made the ultimate sacrifice tell us that we must remain ever vigilant of our freedoms and the threats to them in order to ensure this legacy is passed on to our sons and daughters. ((Not used: As Daniel Webster once said, "God only grants liberty to those who love it, and are always ready to guard and defend it.")) We dedicate this "Field of Valor" today in their memory. As you look around, you will see marble headstones placed upright in the same manner as those in Arlington National Cemetery. This

is unique because there are only a few cemeteries that have the honor of placing their headstones in this manner.

Today, there are over 2 million men and women who wear our country's uniforms. That is less than one percent of the total population of the United States. We are very proud of all our service members who continue to make a positive impact on our world, they have all raised their right hand and sworn an oath to support and defend our nation. We also remember the families that gave the ultimate sacrifice of their loved ones – they bear a burden as great as those who have died. These families need our support because that weight cannot be carried alone. For those in attendance who have lost a dear relative to war or to military service, I offer my sincere recognition of their sacrifice and thanks on behalf of the United States for their contribution. ((Ad libbed: "About three years ago this month, at a Forward Operating Base called Fallij, about 40 KM northwest of Baghdad, BIG base, all services represented there, they have a movie theater that they created in one of the buildings. There's not a lot to do in combat zones when you're not on duty, movies is one of them, and those who've been in Vietnam as many of you here have, or Korea, you find some way to entertain yourself when you can.)) ((cut off))

For those of you who came out today to show your respect, it brings me joy because it shows that you care for those who have endured great hardships even though you may never have met. As we show our continued support of our veterans and those who made sacrifices for us, the display of support shown today continues to inspire the hearts of all servicemen and women.

Young Americans joining the military services today raised their right hand knowing full well that our nation is at war. That takes courage, devotion, and a special commitment that most generations do not understand. I am honored each day I put on this uniform, to serve with such brave men and women, and be part of the camaraderie that links us so deeply to the history of our army, our military, and our nation.

Therefore, let us *remember* their heroism and dedication to the ideals of liberty for all people, *remember* their courage that was necessary to guarantee our way of life, and *remember* these citizens who taught us what it is to be an American. Thank you for showing your support today and for allowing me to speak to you. God bless you, God bless our Armed Forces, and God bless the United States of America! Thank you.

I now want to take a moment to introduce you to a great soldier who came with me to be with you today, Command Sergeant Major Thomas Clark.