

Nation, families take moment to remember, honor the fallen

SAMANTHA L. QUIGLEY

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON — More than 1,000 families and friends of servicemembers killed in Afghanistan and Iraq gathered near the Washington Monument for "A Time of Remembrance" today.

The event, initiated by the White House Commission on Remembrance, was designed to remember America's heroes, military and civilian, who have lost their lives in defense of the nation's freedom. It also served as a tribute to the families, whom speaker Marine Gen. Peter Pace called "the heroes here today who do not even think about themselves as heroes."

"Somehow, we hope that days like today, we can tell these wonderful Americans how much we cherish and appreciate their sacrifice," Pace, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said. "We know that they have served and continue to serve this great nation as well as anyone who has ever worn the uniform."

One special group honored was children who have lost parents in the global war on terrorism. Pace and Veterans Affairs Secretary James R. Nicholson presented David Smith, 12, with the Gold Medal of Remembrance at today's ceremony. The medal was especially designed for the children of fallen servicemembers.

Smith's father, Army Sgt. 1st Class Paul Smith, was killed April 4, 2003, in Baghdad and received the Medal of



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The children of servicemembers who lost their lives fighting in the global war on terrorism were honored with the Gold Medal of Remembrance during the "A Time of Remembrance" ceremony May 21 on the National Mall in Washington.

Honor posthumously.

"These young men and women someday, we all pray, will appreciate what their father and what their mother bought for all of us with their lives," Pace said. "They bought the opportunity to gather together like we are today, to meet and assemble as we see fit, to pray to the God that we choose or not choose, and to live (our) lives the way we want."

While the ceremony's focus was on those servicemembers lost in the global war on terrorism, it also honored those who sacrificed their lives in previous conflicts. A descendant of a ser-

vicemember from each war was recognized.

Emily Wolgemuth, great-great-great-great niece of American Revolution-era Nathan Hale, said the event was a special way to remind people that others are giving their lives to make the nation a better place.

"People should recognize that there are people that are giving their lives selflessly," Wolgemuth said. "They should be remembered & and celebrated." Hale was the first American captured and executed for spying behind British lines during the Revolutionary War.

As much as the ceremony was a solemn affair, it also was a celebration of the American spirit. It began with an honor guard presenting the colors, followed by Ezra M. Hill Sr., a Tuskegee Airman from World War II, singing the national anthem.

Even the invocation was a tribute to America's heroes past and present. Four military chaplains representing the four World War II chaplains lost on the USS *Dorchester* delivered a prayer written by George Washington. The chaplains lost in the war had given their life vests to troops onboard the sinking vessel.

Kelly Sullivan Loughren knows firsthand the importance of the American spirit. She is the granddaughter of Albert Sullivan.

Sullivan and his four brothers joined the Navy together with the stipulation that they serve together. All five were all lost when the USS *Juneau* sank in World War II's Battle of Guadalcanal.

"They symbolized sacrifice, they symbolized family spirit, and they symbolized patriotism," she said of her grandfather and great uncles. "They truly loved their country."

To this day, the United States is a country that loves and appreciates its heroes, Army Secretary Francis J. Harvey told the crowd. "On behalf the United States Army and all the uniformed services, thank you for your sacrifice and thank you for your patriotism," he said.

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