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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## President Begaye, Vice President Nez issue Memorial Day message



President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez honor and pay respect to the brave men and women who paid the ultimate sacrifice in the name of freedom and democracy. President Begaye is pictured here with Perry Benally, a Vietnam vet and recipient of two Purple Hearts and the Silver Star. (Courtesy photo)

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—Freedom is not free. It is paid for by the lives of patriots and heroes who answered the call of duty to protect our country.

Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez honor the heroic men and women who paid the ultimate price to defend our nation from enemies foreign and domestic.

“We salute the courageous men and women who gave their lives in defense of this great nation, especially our Navajo warriors who answered the call for war,” President Begaye said. “We extend our support

to the Gold Star Mothers who lost family members in action.”

For the Navajo Nation, Memorial Day festivities will be held in Chinle and Leupp to honor veterans killed in action, beginning with early morning flag raising ceremonies. Vice President Nez will be honoring warfighters lost in battle and speaking at the event in Leupp.

“The Navajo Nation pays respect to the fallen warriors of this country. For those who paid the ultimate sacrifice in defense of our nation, your sacrifice will not be forgotten,” said Vice President Nez.

Before Navajo men and

women began volunteering for service in the U.S. Armed Forces, our Navajo ancestors fought *ana’i*, the enemy, during *Hwéeldi*, the Long Walk, for the freedom of the Navajo people. They too, must be remembered and honored.

Memorial Day is a time of respect and reverence for those who did not return home. From the more than 2,000 Navajos who perished during *Hwéeldi*, to battlefields of World War I and World War II, we will always remember their courageous sacrifice.

Our brave Navajo Code Talkers transmitted messages on the battlefields of the Pacific Theater during World War II, utilizing *Diné bizaad*, the Navajo language, for an unbreakable code that was never deciphered by the enemy.

We honor the men and women we lost on the icy battlefields of Korea and in the hot jungles of Vietnam. For the patriots who gave their lives in the Persian Gulf War, Operation Desert Storm and Operation Enduring Freedom, you too, will not be forgotten.

As you see the American

flags raised across the great Navajo Nation, please take moment to reflect on the heroes who sacrificed their lives for us to continue our Navajo way of life. Memorial Day is a time of respect. Please share this reverence with your children.

For our brave Navajo warriors who lost brothers and sisters on the battlefield, we are here for you. The sacrifices of your brethren will be honored and remembered.

President Thomas Jefferson once said, “The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time, with the blood of patriots and tyrants.”

We must not take the freedom of choice and liberties we have for granted. Please remember to honor the brave men and women who paid for the liberties we enjoy today. They paid the ultimate price for our freedom.

We salute your sacrifice. *Ahéhee’*.

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