

The Virgin Islands Consortium

War Can Be An Ugly Thing: Officials, Civilians, Celebrate Memorial Day Territory-Wide

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War, in and of itself, can be just plain ugly. Unfortunately, it seems inevitable at times.

ST. CROIX -- Those were the words of LTC Donald Woodley, the keynote speaker of Monday's Memorial Day commemoration on St. Croix, which took place at 9:30 a.m. beginning with a procession from the Frederiksted Post Office to the Cemetery for a gravesite ceremony, which was followed by a march down to the waterfront at the Verne I. Richards Veterans Memorial Park.

The theme, *Never Forgotten*, ran through every speech given at today's event, which was decorated with Army and government officials, including Charles David, Commander, District #10, Dept. of Puerto Rico and V.I., Ms. Sheila Jackson, director of Veterans Benefits Administration in San Juan, PR, and the territory's leader, Governor Kenneth Mapp.

David questioned whether the general public understood Memorial Day and the importance of remembering their fellow Americans killed at war.











































































"Judging from what Memorial Day has become, simply another day off from work, the answer is a resounding no," he said, adding that "Perhaps a reminder is due."

Patrick D. Farrell, the local director of Veterans Affairs, thanked the residents who came out to Frederiksted paying homage to the fallen. Farrell said the onlookers could have been anywhere else today -- at a beach, perhaps, but they chose to be with those who've paid the ultimate price for freedom, and that was highly commendable, he said.

Jackson concurred. She said it stood as a mark of gratitude that residents would come out in solid numbers in support of those lost to war and, while motioning to the crowd, she called the turnout "good people."

"Good people say thank you when someone gives them a great gift like our fallen dead have given us," Jackson said. "So we gather today to say thank you because we have been given liberties and freedoms that came at their ultimate cost, and the ultimate cost of the families who love them."

Jackson said this year's commemoration was different from the others because the organizers of the event didn't want residents to simply remember. Instead, the goal was to inscribe on their minds and hearts the sacrifice of the 144 servicemen and servicewoman, who have given up their lives in the name of liberty.

In between speeches, the crowd was serenaded with selections by the University of the Virgin Islands Concert Band. One such selection preceded the governor's speech. There were also presentations from the Virgin Islands Lottery to the families of fallen personnel in appreciation of their sacrifice.

Mapp focused on the responsibility of government to always honor veterans and ensure that "all who stand on guard for this nation coming from this territory, that we always extend our gratitude and appreciation." The governor gave a short history of soldiers from the territory who were drafted into the armed services in the 1950s. Mapp said while the fallen of that time were inducted into the military, they were not listed as Virgin Islanders.

"Many went to Puerto Rico, many went to New York, many went to many other states and were inducted there, and served and listed as veterans from those locations," the governor made known.

Mapp said the government signed a contract with UVI to identify each of those Virgin Islanders who were inducted in places other than Puerto Rico and the territory, who listed as veterans in those locations and gave the ultimate sacrifice, so that their names can be enshrined in the Frederiksted memorial.

The governor then thanked the family members of survivors for their service and sacrifice. Before bidding farewell, he shook hands and greeted onlookers.

Following Mapp's speech, the names of the territory's military personnel who died during service from April 2014 to May 2015 were read aloud. 19 from the St. Thomas/St. John district and 30 from St. Croix.

Simultaneous commemorations were held in St. Thomas and St. John.