

*Cérémonie de Remise de la Légion d'Honneur  
Vétérans de la Seconde Guerre Mondiale  
3 mars 2015*

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Ladies and gentlemen

First, allow me to say how pleased and honoured I am to be with you today.

Today, it is a special Day.

Today, we are celebrating nine heroes whose courage, faith and dedication contributed – more than 70 years ago – to defend and preserve the independence of France and to save our common values: freedom, tolerance, democracy.

I would like to extend the tribute today to all your fellow soldiers during the Second World War, especially to all of those who did not make it back to their country and families.

Ladies and gentlemen,

These heroes did all of this far away from their home, from their beloved family, from their friends. You are heroes.

It is almost impossible for us to imagine how much courage and bravery it must have required to cross the ocean and to fight over Europe as you did.

Courage and bravery are precisely the qualities that Napoleon wanted to reward while creating the Legion of Honor in 1802. Your courage and your bravery are precisely the reason why the President of French Republic has decided to award you the highest French recognition.

General Eisenhower told you: "the eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you".

You did your duty. You said to Eisenhower: "you can count on us".

And you saved France and Europe from hell. You saved people you didn't even know.

I am here, today, to tell you that the people of France have not forgotten. Their children and grandchildren have not forgotten. France will never forget.

We, the French people, know exactly what we owe to the American people, to the US Army, to the US Navy, to the US Air Force, to the US Marines, to the US coats guards, to the men and women who spent days and nights in American factories and shipyards to build the most powerful military force in history, an Armada for Liberty.

We know exactly what we owe to you personally.

Thanks to you and thanks to America, people of my generation were allowed to grow up in a free country.

On behalf of the President of the French Republic, I want to express the deep, sincere and eternal gratitude of the French people.

On this note, and 70 years after the D-Day and the liberation of France, permit me to quote from the French President, who said:

“In France, there are many white crosses where lie some of your comrades who did not return to the United States. Know that their memory is cherished by all the people of France. The sacrifice made by you and your comrades was not in vain. If I am here before you, it is because men like you did their duty.”

As decided by the President of the French Republic, I will now bestow the Legion of Honor upon you.

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**Pauline CARMONA**  
**Consule générale**