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Hawaii honors veterans at Memorial Day ceremony

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The state of Hawaii honored military veterans during a Memorial Day ceremony on May 31 at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific (Punchbowl) in Honolulu.

Since May 30, 1868, Americans have set aside a day in May to remember those who have died in the nation's service.

The day's ceremony featured music by the Royal Hawaiian Band, Pearl City High School Choir and Honolulu Boys Choir. Various veterans' organizations presented memorial wreaths. The Hickam Air Force Honor Guard delivered a memorial 21-rifle salute, the 199th Fighter Squadron of the Hawaii National Guard performed a missing man flyover and the local singing group Touch of Gold sang a special rendition of "God Bless the USA."

U.S. Senator and World War II Medal of Honor recipient Daniel K. Inouye addressed the nearly 1,400 visitors in attendance.

"It should serve as a reminder to us all of the tragedy and darkness of war and of the glory of courage and patriotism," he said. "Today is a day of reflection. Today is a day of remembrance."

Mufi Hannemann, mayor of the city of Honolulu, and host of the 61st annual event, talked about the connection to all veterans.

"They were our fellow Americans," he said. "They were our people. And they will always be remembered, especially on this special day."

Rear Adm. Dixon Smith, commander of Navy Region Hawaii and Naval Surface Group Middle Pacific, one of many active duty service members in attendance, also addressed the crowd and reflected on the importance of Memorial Day.

"It is important for us all to take a moment today remember those who have gone before us, and reflect on the reasons that we serve our country," said Smith.

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