



Arkansas Democrat-Gazette/STATON BREIDENTHAL

Air Force veteran and Patriot Guard rider Rick Schrunk salutes during the playing of taps Monday at the state of Arkansas Memorial Day ceremony at the Little Rock National Cemetery. More photos are available at arkansasonline.com/528memorial/.

Hundreds honor fallen soldiers Memorial Day event returns to LR National Cemetery

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ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

Hundreds gathered among the graves of fallen soldiers at the Little Rock National Cemetery on Monday to remember the ones who gave the ultimate sacrifice and to pray for the ones fighting now.

Col. Thomas D. Crimmins, commander of the 189th Airlift Wing of the Arkansas

Air National Guard, was the keynote speaker at the state's Memorial Day ceremony.

The event was held at the Little Rock National Cemetery, 2523 Springer Blvd., for the first time in years. In the recent past, it has been held in North Little Rock.

Multiple veterans expressed their pleasure at having the event at the Little

Rock cemetery.

"It's an honor to be among them," John Smallwood, a Marine combat veteran, said. "It's the oldest one. I fought in Vietnam and came home, but a lot of these guys didn't and they are buried here."

R.D. Kinsey, state commander for the American Legion, urged Americans to never forget those who sacri-

ficed for their freedom.

"The Bible says that 'there is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends,' and that is what they did for us," Kinsey said.

Crimmins, a graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy and a veteran of several combat operations, spoke about making sure to remember the

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R.D. Kinsey, state commander of the American Legion, gives the invocation Monday during the state of Arkansas Memorial Day ceremony at the Little Rock National Cemetery. More photos are available at arkansasonline.com/528memorial/.

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ones who gave the 'last full meaning of devotion' for their country.

"There is a line on a gravestone of a soldier that reads 'for your tomorrow we gave our today,'" Crimmins said. "We must pause and recognize these sacrifices, the loss and the legacy of freedom they left behind."

After the event, Christine Hendrickson, an Air Force

reserve member, was talking on the phone to her husband, an Air Force pilot currently deployed in Afghanistan.

"It's our 13th anniversary actually," Hendrickson said with a laugh as her children spoke to their father.

For Hendrickson this day hits especially close to home.

"A few years ago on Memorial Day we lost two Air Force cadets that I graduated with," Hendrickson said. "It was a real wake-up call. They had only been active duty for a little while and they were killed in

action. You really never know what is going to happen."

Ten-year-old Jacek Brown, whose father was deployed with Hendrickson's husband, spoke about how difficult it was not having his father around, but also recognized the sacrifice others had made in the past.

"I thought the event was very patriotic and thoughtful for all the fallen veterans," he said. "I have a lot of family members who have been deployed and it's hard on us when they are gone, espe-

cially my dad. I am grateful though for the ones who made the sacrifice."

Over a million American soldiers have died in battles since the Revolutionary War and that is the real reason behind Memorial Day, Steven Veazey, senior enlisted leader for the Arkansas National Guard, said at the event.

"That is why we pause," Veazey said with tears in his eyes. "It doesn't matter your position, your stature or political affiliation, they gave their lives for you."