

Commemoration of the 67th Anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge at Arlington, Virginia December 16, 2011

Address to the Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge by

Paul Goffin, former Vice President of the Belgian American Association and trustee of BOBHF

Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge, families, and friends of the Veterans,

I am grateful for the honor of participating in this important commemoration. It's a privilege to be with you. This week, in the Ardennes and Luxemburg, there are commemoration events celebrating the Battle of the Bulge and the liberation of both countries. These include concerts, parades and wreath laying's in the military cemeteries of Hamm, Luxemburg and Neupre and Henri-Chapelle, Belgium. Some 18,000 marble headstones stand in perfect military order, worthy of the dignity of those who rest there. Each headstone is a testament to the price paid for freedom.

In September 1944 I , with my family, my neighbors, my whole village and my whole country, Belgium, were thrilled with joy and admiration for those who liberated us from the Nazi tyranny. But the joy was of short duration, three months later, in December 1944, the news spread like fire that "the Germans are coming back and shooting even civilians". It took three to four weeks before the good news reassured us that not only were the Germans contained but that they were crushed. The response brought by 45 units assembling more

than 600,000 men of the United States Forces was swift and decisive and became known in history as the Battle of the Bulge. But that victory came at a tremendous cost. About 19,000 U.S. soldiers died, and 47,000 were wounded. The British suffered 1,400 casualties with 200 killed. The Germans themselves experienced 100,000 killed, wounded or captured. To this list let's not forget the 2,500 civilian casualties of which hundreds were massacred by the German troops. So one can question was this bloodshed worthwhile? The positive answer lies in the word "liberation".

Its meaning is something very beautiful and literal. It's the triumph of freedom over tyranny. That's what it meant in 1944 and what it still means today.

The story of the Battle of the Bulge, both in combat and in decisiveness, is recounted today to our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan by our military and political leaders. They characterize it as part of a struggle that brought freedom to a huge part of Europe and helped make this country more safe and secure. The discipline, courage and motivation displayed in the Battle of the Bulge prevails today in the Armed Forces of the United States.

Sixty seven years ago you fought valiantly in the Ardennes and we were liberated. We owe you the life of freedom we know today. We are lucky to be together here this evening and thank the good Lord. We might be a bit balder and bit rounder around the waste but our feelings have not changed we have the same gratitude and affection for you as in 1944. You are the best, God bless you and God bless America.

