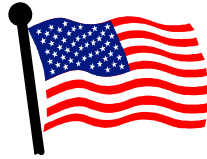


Military Celebrations



The month of May has the distinction of having **two** days in which the members of the United States Armed Forces are honored. **Armed Forces Day** will be celebrated May 15, and **Memorial Day** on May 31, 2010. Hopefully the following explanation will clarify the difference between the two holidays.

There is some confusion as to the reason for Armed Forces Day. This could be due to the lack of promotional instruction and publicity concerning the history of the holiday. On August 31, 1949, Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson announced the creation of an Armed Forces Day to combine the separate holidays celebrated by the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines and Coast guard. It stemmed from the unification of Armed Forces into what we now know as the Department of Defense. Instead of each military branch celebrating its own holiday they would then all celebrate on one special day. The Marines and Coast Guard, however, retained their individual dates of establishment, but also agreed to observe Armed Forces Day as an additional celebration. By official proclamation Armed Forces Day was first celebrated on May 20, 1950. The significance of the holiday was and still is “to honor all United States Military forces and the work they do to protect the country”. This day was also designed to expand public understanding of what type of job is performed and the role of the military in civilian life. It was a day for the military to show “state of the art” equipment to the civilian population they were protecting.

There are some contradictions throughout history with several cities in the United States claiming to be the first to observe **Memorial Day**. The fact is that decorating heroes’ graves with flowers and garlands is an ancient custom originating in Greece 2,500 years ago. Our observance, originally held in 1868 in commemoration of soldiers killed in the American Civil War, later extended to all U.S. war dead. The holiday was originally referred to as **Decoration Day**. Therefore Memorial Day is intended to honor all those who have given their lives for our country.

On this **Memorial Day** let us celebrate by: memorializing all of our war heroes who have gone on to their rest by perhaps visiting a military or civilian cemetery; placing flowers at the tomb of a service member whether you know him/her or not; visiting graves of service members from earlier wars who perhaps no longer have family left in the area to visit or place flowers on their graves.

Most importantly do not forget the significance of these special holidays.

Please remember: on Memorial Day fly the United States flag at half-staff from dawn until noon.

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Sources: www.defense.gov/afd/military/history www.memorialdayorigin.info