

**Statement by H.E. Jean Asselborn
Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of Luxembourg**

**Arlington National Cemetery
Wreath laying at the Battle of the Bulge Memorial
April 3, 2019**

Mr. Deputy Secretary,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honor to stand here at the Memorial of the Battle of the Bulge with my Colleague Didier, and with all of you.

Luxembourgers of all generations will never forget the sacrifices that the American people, and so many young Americans, made to free Luxembourg from foreign oppression *twice* during the last century.

The American Military Cemetery in Luxembourg is an eternal symbol of that deep gratitude to the United States and to its Veterans, and we are extremely proud that General Patton, who played such a decisive role in the Battle of the Bulge, wished to be laid to rest there, in Luxembourg, amongst more than five thousand American soldiers. In fact, 5.073 Americans lie in honored rest there, including 22 sets of brothers, together for eternity. Inscribed in granite are the names of 371 more Americans whose remains were never recovered.

The Battle of the Bulge hit the Allied Forces by complete surprise, during one of the coldest winters of the century. After the September pushback of German troops beyond the Luxembourg-German border and the celebrations of the Liberation of the country, Luxembourg had become a place where American troops could rest and recover, before heading back to the frontline. And then,

on December 16, 1944, all hell broke loose over the Northern and Eastern part of Luxembourg and the Belgian Ardennes. Every family from that region has their own history of suffering and survival that is being kept alive from one generation to the next. And every family has stories of acts of great kindness of American soldiers towards the local populations, by soldiers who had gone through terrible fighting but made unbelievable efforts to relieve the pain of the suffering population. These stories are deeply rooted in the Luxembourg collective memory, and will never be forgotten.

As my colleague, Minister Reynders just recalled, it was the largest and bloodiest battle fought by the United States in the European theater during World War II. Nearly 700.000 American soldiers were engaged in the fight. There were 89.000 American casualties, and over 19.000 were killed in action. But, the sacrifices were not in vain: the pushback against the Nazi troops in the Battle opened the way to final victory over the Third Reich four months later.

2019 marks the 75th anniversary of the Battle, and we intend to duly commemorate this important anniversary, with, hopefully, many veterans making the trip to Luxembourg and Belgium. We look forward to receiving them in Luxembourg to, once more, express our deepest gratitude for their service and their sacrifice.

Thank you.