

WWII Aerial Tribute Taking Flight over National Mall and Potomac River



WASHINGTON, D.C. – On Friday, September 25, an aerial tribute commemorating the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II will take place over the National Mall and Potomac River. Organized by the Arsenal of Democracy Flyover, the aerial tribute will include over 65 WWII era airplanes flying in historical sequence formations representing the significant battles of WWII and ending with the missing man formation.

“The 75th anniversary of the end of World War II is such a seminal event that Congress passed legislation, which was promptly signed into law by the president, directing its official commemoration. Our mission is to fulfill the objectives of that law while fully taking into account the COVID-19 related protocols that must be responsibly implemented to carry out such a tribute. We can’t drive tanks down Constitution Avenue nor place ships in the Tidal Basin, but through extraordinary coordination with multiple federal agencies, we can fly warbird aircraft through the heart of our nation’s Capital to honor the sacrifices of those who came together three quarters of a century ago as one, to defeat fascism and preserve our freedoms,” said Pete Bunce, President and CEO of the General Aviation Manufacturers Association (GAMA), and Arsenal of Democracy Executive Committee member.

The flyover, which was originally scheduled to coincide with the 75th anniversary of VE-Day (May 8), was rescheduled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Arsenal of Democracy Flyover, which also organized the 2015 aerial tribute in recognition of the 70th anniversary of VE-Day, is urging spectators to follow local guidance in regards to social gatherings and distancing, and encourages people to safely enjoy the tribute anywhere along the planned flight path – starting from around the American Legion Memorial Bridge, moving southeast down the Potomac River, along the National Mall and then south towards Alexandria, Virginia.

“Our country owes a debt of gratitude to the men and women who made incredible sacrifices to defend our country,” said John Cudahy, President and CEO of the International Council of Air Shows (ICAS), and Arsenal of Democracy Executive Committee member. “For all of those involved in this event, it has been a genuine honor to help recognize our Greatest Generation on this 75th anniversary.”

The aerial tribute will also be live streamed on the Arsenal of Democracy Flyover website (ww2flyover.org) and Facebook page (facebook.com/ww2flyover). The live stream will include special programming, including interviews with veterans and heroes, starting at 10:00 AM ET. Live coverage of the first formation approaching the National Mall with detailed narration will start at approximately 11:30 AM ET. Local spectators can also utilize this live feed to hear narration while watching along the planned flight path. It is estimated that the aerial tribute over the National Mall will last approximately one hour.



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To complement the aerial tribute, the Smithsonian Institution's Air & Space Magazine has put together a special webpage dedicated to the 75th anniversary of the end of WWII. The webpage includes the history and stories of WWII aircraft, many of which are participating in the aerial tribute. The dedicated website can be found at airspacemag.com/flyover.

"We are proud and humbled by the large number of pilots and aircraft owners who have dedicated their time and aircraft to pay homage to our World War II veterans. It truly is fulfilling to see the reactions and emotions that overcome our nations' heroes when they see the aircraft they flew or worked on over 75 years ago fly overhead," said Mike Ginter, Airboss for the Arsenal of Democracy Flyover and Executive Committee member.

The Arsenal of Democracy Flyover was organized to be as part of the commemorative programming events authorized in the 75th Anniversary of World War II Commemoration Act, which was signed into law in January 2019. The bill encouraged commemorative programs to honor World War II veterans, highlight the service of those who served on the home front during the war, recognize the contributions of U.S. allies, remember the horrors of the Holocaust and educate the public about the history of these events.

"The Commemorative Air Force is dedicated to educating, inspiring and honoring through flight and living history experiences," said Hank Coates, President of the Commemorative Air Force (CAF), and Arsenal of Democracy Executive Committee member. "We're proud to be part of the Arsenal of Democracy Flyover and to help ensure we recognize and remember the enormous sacrifices of our nation's heroes."

The planning committee has been working closely with federal and local government officials, aircraft operators and volunteers to establish the safest ways to carry out this tribute. Gatherings of air and ground crews, as well as support volunteers, at the staging bases will be closely screened, monitored and limited, therefore participating aircraft will not be available for public tours.

Organizers of the Arsenal of Democracy Flyover include the General Aviation Manufacturers Association, (GAMA), the Commemorative Air Force (CAF), the International Council of Air Shows (ICAS) and the National Air Traffic Controllers Association (NATCA).

For more information regarding the Arsenal of Democracy Flyover, visit ww2flyover.org.

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