

Invocation for Airborne Memorial Dedication Miramar National Cemetery.

It is my privilege to open this monument dedication with prayer. I invite each of you to bow and pray according to the direction of your own faith tradition as I will in mine or simply to keep a moment of respectful silence.

Lord God Our Heavenly Father we come into your presence on this hallowed ground in hope and thanksgiving. We thank you for placing your hand upon this country founded on the acknowledgement of your blessing upon a nation dedicated to freedom that only you can provide when a country turns to you. We are grateful that we can serve this nation and you, and we thank you for each brave man and woman who has answered the call to defend our country. We think of each soldier, sailor, airman and marine that has served and especially those who have fought our country's battles to defend liberty. Among this elite group are the elite warriors that wear parachutist wings. Those who commit themselves to the absurd act of jumping out of a perfectly functioning aircraft thousands of feet above the hard unforgiving ground. In the words of SGT Barry Sadler "Fighting soldiers from the sky, Fearless men who jump and die, Silver wings upon their chest make them one of America's best." To this we add the gold wings of our Navy and Marine Corps brethren.

It takes a special breed of warrior to jump behind enemy lines where the only tanks and artillery are those of the enemy, and are a lethal threat rather than a supporting defense. We think of the courage of those who took part in mass envelopments opening a new front behind enemy defenses to pave the way for straight leg soldiers to breach those lines and advance. We also remember those Special Forces, Commandos, SEALs, Pathfinders and Rangers who slip into hazardous areas sometimes in the dead of night for special missions to neutralize or seize critical targets. We remember their remarkable bravery and also their sacrifice as many have given their lives in these extremely hazardous missions. We also remember those who have died in training accidents developing proficiency in airborne assault. We thank you for your presence during each hazardous mission. For each paratrooper to whom you have given the extra blessing of finishing their tour of duty or even making it to retirement, thank you for chutes that properly opened, for manageable winds, bullets that missed their mark, and healing of inevitable jump injuries.

We ask your blessing upon us your servants. Grant us the wisdom to seek your will in all that we do, and the courage to follow the direction you would have us go. In seeking to serve you our God and this land that you have privileged us to serve as well, we pray for peace, and we pray for all who serve the public, that they may discharge their duties capably and with honor and dignity. We pray for our comrades and for all our fellow citizens that we may continue to enjoy the blessings of freedom purchased for us at so great a cost. We lift up those continuing to serve in harm's way and especially those in the crucible of combat in Afghanistan, Syria, and Iraq. We ask your watch care over them and over their families. May their sacrifice bring hope and a better life to those areas purchased with American blood. Bless the United States of America and grant that this Nation may live in peace among the nations of the world. We pray also, O Lord, for our comrades in hospitals or homes, who are suffering from mental and physical illness or disability. Comfort them with a sense of your continuing presence, cheer them with the knowledge of your love, and grant us the blessing of health and happiness. All this we ask in your Holy Name. Amen.