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Congressman Jason Smith's Capitol Report - May 31, 2019

JUNE 04TH 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Appreciating our Armed Forces
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The men and women of the United States military make up the most elite, advanced fighting force the world has ever seen and have never shied away from perilous odds or dangerous conditions. U.S. troops have placed their lives on the line every day to keep our country safe and liberate entire continents from evil. Freedom doesn't come free and those troops, their families, and our country has paid a heavy price.

This week marks the 75th anniversary of Allied Forces storming the beaches of Normandy, France to liberate Western Europe from the Nazi regime. On June 6th, Missouri-native General Omar Bradley commanded hundreds of thousands of American ground forces into one of the largest amphibious invasions in military history, now referred to as D-Day. While the Allied Forces successfully drove the Nazis back and eventually liberated France from Nazi control, the United States would lose close to 2,500 troops in just the first day of the attack on Normandy.

This year Missouri lost one of the last Army Rangers involved in D-Day, who helped take out the artillery that was blasting allied troops. Charles Ryan passed away at the age of 96, living a full life after being wounded in the invasion. He was fortunate to make it out

alive; 50 of the 65 men in his unit never saw American soil again.

America lost many heroes on D-Day, but the U.S. also took heavy losses leading up to the invasion 75 years ago. A top-secret training exercise held five weeks prior, called Operation Tiger, ended in disaster when German torpedo boats spotted the massive training exercise. They ambushed the rehearsal, destroying ships and killing more than 749 men. More than 200 men from Missouri died in Operation Tiger, but the painful lessons learned from the rehearsal better prepared the Allied Forces to invade Normandy.

During the month of May, it's tradition to celebrate Military Appreciation Month and show our gratitude to U.S. servicemembers. To kick off the month, I spent some quality time with the five students from southern Missouri who will attend our nation's prestigious service academies, getting to know them and why they feel a call to serve our country. On Armed Forces Day, which was created by Missouri native President Harry Truman to pay tribute to the men and women of the Armed Forces and the strength of our military, Cape Girardeau was treated to a roaring air show with the Blue Angels, the U.S. Navy's elite fighter squadron, and the U.S. Army Golden Knights Parachute Team.

Of course, not every member of the armed forces is fortunate enough to return to American soil. Last week at the end of Military Appreciation Month, we paused on Memorial Day to remember and honor the brave troops who gave their lives in the line of duty. I attended the grand opening of Missouri's National Veterans Memorial in Perryville, and I spent some time at the full-scale replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial thinking about all of the men and women who have given their lives to protect our country and its values. We owe them a debt we can never repay – so we must pay it forward by honoring their sacrifices and their memories.

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