

# US Fed News

## SECRETARY OF DEFENSE GATES SPEAKS ON DEDICATION OF DEFENSE HUMANITARIAN RELIEF CORRIDOR

684 words  
21 May 2009  
US Fed News  
INDFED  
English

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WASHINGTON, May 19 -- The U.S. Department of Defense issued the text of the following speech:

Alright Mike [Rhodes]. At Camp Leatherneck, I was introduced as Bill Gates. I said, "He's the rich one." Thank you all for joining us.

Given that so much of the history being cited today is related to inclement weather, it seems appropriate that the effort to commemorate that history began with a "snowflake." Four years ago, Secretary Rumsfeld proposed having a corridor of the Pentagon that would pay tribute to the humanitarian activities of the United States armed forces. Mr. Secretary, it was a great idea, and thank you so much for joining us today. Let me commend Ms. Betty Brennan and her team for bringing Secretary Rumsfeld's vision to fruition.

The U.S. military is the greatest fighting force in the world - but there is another side to what they do. That side is represented in this exhibit. The suffering caused by war and natural disaster prompts a compassionate nation to respond. These vivid displays take us around the world, and back in time, to understand more about the relief operations of our military. Some of these missions of mercy have been carried out on foreign soil; others here in the United States. Some are legendary; many more deserve to be.

"Legendary" certainly describes the Berlin Airlift of 1948 and 1949, one of the earliest events depicted in this corridor. We are lucky to have a veteran of that operation with us today, Colonel **Gail Halvorsen**, whom I will introduce shortly. He was part of the team flying C-47s, C-54s, and C-74s into Tempelhof airport around the clock during those famous 462 days, as Soviet forces choked off the city's food and energy supplies. That effort saved the lives of Berliners. We remember, too, that it cost the lives of 31 American servicemen.

In 1956, Hungarian men, women, and children streamed westward toward the Austrian border as Soviet tanks and attack planes pummeled Budapest. With us today are former refugees who were part of that exodus, many of whom were helped by the U.S. military after being forced to flee their own country. We welcome them and we honor the memory of those who tried to liberate Hungary from Soviet communism.

The scale and scope of these missions has widened over the decades. Our servicemen and women have responded to natural disasters on our own shores, from forest fires and blizzards to Hurricane Katrina, and have gone to every corner of the globe in the wake of tsunamis, earthquakes, mudslides, and floods. In all of these missions the military plays an important role - not necessarily in the lead, but in support of and partnership with the civilian

agencies of our government. Today's broad range of activities requires close cooperation between civil and military institutions, whether we are talking about a hospital ship, the USNS Comfort, which has provided health care to thousands of people in Latin America and the Caribbean, or civil affairs teams in eastern Africa.

As these wall panels attest, it is not just fancy technology and lift capacity that make these operations possible. It is also the resourcefulness of these men and women: their desire to make something good and decent happen even amid situations of chaos and destruction. No one exemplifies this better than a pilot who earned not just one but three nicknames from grateful German children. They called **Gail Halvorsen** "The Candy Bomber," "the Chocolate Flier," and my personal favorite, "Uncle Wiggly Wings." After he speaks, we will all get a chance to see

his handiwork from 61 years ago, the delivery system he cleverly devised, so that Berlin's children could snatch sweets from out of the sky. Colonel Halvorsen lifted everyone's morale during those tense days of the Berlin Airlift. And it is my pleasure to introduce him to you now.

Ladies and gentlemen, Colonel Halvorsen. For more information please contact: Sarabjit Jagirdar, Email:-  
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Document INDFED0020090521e551002yq

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