

Dear Veterans, dear Rainbow fellows, and I may as well say dear friends.

I'm so proud to be here today as part of the Rainbow Division Veterans Memorial Foundation, and it fills me with pride to belong to you brave people who liberated my country and hometown and saved us from Nazi tyranny.

As I may presume that most of you know about the Purple Heart Jewel ceremony in June 2008, as well as about the Honorary Membership Certificate Presentation ceremony in May 2009, I want to take the chance to give you my detailed reasons and some background for why I did what I did.

It was in the year 2003, beginning of Iraq war, as my government and the then German Chancellor Schroeder spoke in connection to the aftermath of 9/11 about friendship and solidarity from Germany, but acted very differently, I would dare to say he acted contrarily, for his and his parties benefit.

I got the impression that our countries friendship was in jeopardy, it hurt me as more, as my wife was only two days before 9/11 in New York, but at this gruesome day I was not sure about where she was. This gave me an even stronger emotional connection to this sad day.

Let's have a look on the year 2003. There was a abominable dictator in Iraq and the country was oppressed.

Today this country is free and this person exists no longer.

I believe that it was and that it still is right to remove any tyrant and end tyranny. It is my strong believe that no dictator nowhere on this earth should be able to hide behind his country's sovereignty to slaughter and threat other human beings.

This tyranny ended, Iraq got liberated, as there were people who showed commitment.

Current 42nd Rainbow had a great part on this liberation, and this way the current Rainbow Division continued the Rainbow history in the best possible way.

Iraqi people where given the chance to live in peace and freedom, the same as German people where allowed through the commitment and sacrifice of you proud people to live in peace, freedom, liberty and justice.

That's why it was right to liberate the Iraqi people. Only because different parties with different agendas are in power, it does not become wrong, neither should the sacrifices made forgotten out of political reasons.

In case the same thinking and the same non-commitment would have been standard at World War II, we still would have the Nazis ruling today.

So my goal was to show there are people who remember, who are thankful and who do not forget about the sacrifices and the good that was done.

And my goal was also to show and affirm our countries friendship.

That is why I have created the Purple Heart Jewel, as a sign to comprise and express this thankfulness and friendship.

I have chosen the original medal of the Purple Heart as my ideal for creation because of its meaning, and because of the idea behind it.

Like I have chosen 29 diamonds to represent the 29th of April in 1945, the day my hometown Dachau was liberated.

And like I have chosen gold as a precious and everlasting material, to represent this lasting remembrance, friendship and appreciation.

It all has a meaning for me.

So let me speak about the meaning the medal of the Purple Heart has, and why it became an ideal for me.

You may notice, that the following words were part of my address in Freising, Germany, but I feel they contain so much truth, that it would not be right to change or omit them.

It was in the year 1782 when General George Washington, first President of the United States of America, introduced the medal of the Purple Heart, also known then as Badge of Military Merit, given for extraordinary fidelity and essential service.

The words of General Washington were: "The road to glory in a patriot army and a free country is thus open to all,"

Before this time only higher ranks in the armies were awarded with medals, and in contrary General Washington was the first who broke with this behavior, and created this award for the common soldier.

It's the common soldier, who sacrifices, and who gives all for freedom, liberty and justice, today as well as in these struggling years of the late 18th century, fighting for the independence of the United States.

This is the reason, that the medal of the Purple Heart is a very special medal to recognize, honor and remember those proud people.

In this spirit I have created the Purple Heart Jewel, which was given to the 42nd Rainbow Division Veterans Memorial Foundation on June 15th 2008 in Fredericksburg, as my expression of honor for the troops of the United States of America and especially the 42nd Rainbow Division veterans.

Be sure my friends - independent from political streams, independent of governments that come and go, what you folks did will always live on in our hearts and minds.

Thank you.