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Statement from Department of Veterans' Services Commissioner Hendon on the 75th Anniversary of Victory Over Japan Day

New York City Department of Veterans' Services Commissioner James Hendon released the following remarks on the 75th anniversary of Victory Over Japan (V-J) Day.

“Human history’s course runs neither smooth or straight, yet even within its ebbs and flows, there are moments indelibly seared in our consciousness.

Seventy-five years ago, on August 6th and 9th, 1945, the United States dropped atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, setting the stage for the end of World War II. World War II, which was fought by more than thirty countries in multiple theaters, was a brutal conflict that pitted fascism against democracy and left an estimated 70 to 85 million fatalities worldwide—3% of the world’s population at that time—in its wake. Millions more were injured.

Days after the bombs fell, on August 15th, Imperial Japan announced its unconditional surrender to the Allied Forces under the terms of the Potsdam Declaration. A formal signing of the surrender occurred on September 2nd, 1945, aboard the USS Missouri.

Upon hearing of Japan’s surrender on August 14th in the United States, a wave of boisterous celebration, pent up from years of living through the harrowing conflict, spread rapidly across the country. There were fireworks in California, spontaneous parades in Kansas, and a ticker tape promenade in Times Square, where the quintessential image of an exuberant Sailor kissing a nurse forever immortalized the national moment.

On this hallowed date, we take a moment to reflect on the dedication, heroism, and sacrifice of the Greatest Generation and their commitment towards protecting the freedoms that we still enjoy. Let the hard choices that these Veterans made and their lives of selflessness inspire us as we rise to meet the occasion of our own generational challenges: the Global War on Terrorism, the novel coronavirus pandemic, the economic recession, along with major societal discussions about inclusion, equity, and racism.”