

# U.S. independence day

## Standing together with our friends in Japan

John V. Roos  
U.S. AMBASSADOR TO JAPAN

Today, millions of Americans will look to the sky to watch brilliant displays of fireworks in celebration of Independence Day. As they have done every Fourth of July for the last 235 years, Americans will take a moment to reflect on what these fireworks represent — the liberty, equality, freedom and democracy that our founders fought so hard for. These principles have since become the cornerstones of American society. For those of us overseas, the Fourth of July takes on even greater importance as we celebrate the



values that so strongly define and unite us as Americans, despite being far from our own shores.

At times, these fireworks have burst over cloudy skies, during periods that sorely tested our nation. As President Barack Obama noted at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy commencement in May: "We haven't always been the biggest or strongest of nations. There have been moments in our history when others have counted us out or predicted the demise of our improbable American experiment. But what the naysayers and doubters have never understood is that our American journey has always been propelled by a spirit and strength that sets us apart."

It is this spirit and strength that led colonists to cross the Atlantic Ocean, immigrants to

stream into Ellis Island, and pioneers to cross unknown and dangerous territory in the West, all of them seeking a new life and new opportunities in America. It is this spirit and strength of millions of Americans that turned "our improbable American experiment" into a democratic system that has inspired people the world over.

Every Fourth of July, Americans pause to reflect on "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" sought by our founders, but these values need no special occasion in America. They are part of the fabric of our nation. There is another American value that I'm very proud of, and that is our compassion and our willingness to help out those in need. Never has this been more true than in the aftermath of the terrible earthquake and tsunami that struck Japan on March 11. Our thoughts and prayers continue to be with the victims and their families. The United States is committed to supporting Japan in any way possible as it rebuilds from this unprecedented disaster.

Our two countries have strengthened each other over the last five decades through our security alliance, through our economic ties, and through our people-to-people exchanges like The Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) program. The tragic events of March 11 marked a new chapter in this relationship. For example, Operation Tomodachi (Japanese for "friend") demonstrated not only the remarkable capabilities of the U.S. military and the Japanese Self-Defense Forces, but



**Life:** Members of the U.S. military and the Japanese Self-Defense Forces clean up a schoolyard in Ishinomaki, Miyagi Prefecture, on April 1. U.S. MARINE CORPS / MARK STROUD

also the generosity of the men and women who defend both our countries. Countless private American citizens and organizations reached out to help Japan, underscoring the deep affection and bonds between the peoples of the United States and Japan. We are working with the U.S.-Japan Council and others in the private sector to establish a Tomodachi Fund that will build on this good will and provide a basis for sustained, creative and strategic contributions

to Japan's recovery.

Despite the horrific devastation of the earthquake and tsunami, the resilience of the Japanese people has served as an inspiration to citizens around the world. I am confident that Japan will persevere and emerge from this crisis stronger than ever before, and we will continue to work together to ensure a more peaceful and prosperous future for ourselves and the Asia-Pacific region.

As the U.S. ambassador to

Japan, it gives me great pleasure to extend Fourth of July greetings to all my fellow Americans. On this Independence Day, I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to our gracious hosts, the Japanese people, for their continued friendship and support. May both our great nations continue to enjoy the blessings of liberty, and may the people of both our nations continue to look to the sky as we move toward a brighter future.



**Liberty:** On the Fourth of July, fireworks burst in the air by the Washington Monument. U.S. AIR FORCE / LONO KOLLARS



**The pursuit of happiness:** U.S. President Barack Obama gazes at the Golden Gate Bridge during a visit to San Francisco on April 20. OFFICIAL WHITE HOUSE PHOTO / PETE SOUZA

*Congratulations to the American People  
on Their Independence Day*



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