

# U.S. independence day

## A beautiful partnership: the United States and Japan

John V. Roos  
U.S. AMBASSADOR

On this day, the 237th anniversary of the founding of the United States of America, I send my best wishes to all of my fellow Americans and to our gracious hosts, the people of Japan.



For nearly four years now, I have had the singular privilege and honor of representing my country as the U.S. ambassador to Japan. It has been a momentous period in Japan's history, with profound domestic political changes, a constantly evolving regional security situation, and, of course, the unforgettably tragic events of March 11, 2011. When I first arrived, I could not have imagined witnessing so many historical events — nor could I have imagined how deeply my family and I would be touched by the Japanese people.

Accordingly, this year's Independence Day — the final one of my tenure in Japan — is a bittersweet occasion. I always look forward to the July Fourth holiday, but in the future I will miss being able to share that celebration with the friends that I've made here in Japan.

The theme of the U.S. Embassy's Independence Day gathering this year is "America the Beautiful." In addition to celebrating the birth of our nation, we are highlighting the many diverse regions that make

up the United States. But it is not just the stunning natural landscapes that make America "beautiful." It is the character of our citizens and the values they hold dear: liberty, democracy, justice, tolerance, hard work and resilience.

These attributes become particularly evident during times of crisis. Indeed, one of the great similarities between the United States and Japan is that our better angels are often revealed during the darkest moments. It is well known that both the American military and the American people rushed to Japan's aid in the wake of the March 11 disasters, but perhaps what is less well known is Japan's recurring generosity toward America during times of need. Just a few weeks ago, for example, I met with several groups of Japanese government officials and private citizens who contributed many thousands of dollars to the victims of the Oklahoma tornadoes. They did this without fanfare or expectation of reward; they did it because they simply wanted to help.

One of the best ways to ensure that our vital partnership continues into the future is to motivate the younger generations in Japan and the United States to get to know each other better. There is no substitute for the hands-on, face-to-face connections that are built when young people study, live, and work in a different culture and society. That is why we are so excited about the success of the Tomodachi Initiative, a public-



**Celebration: Every Fourth of July, fireworks light up the sky in Washington, D.C., over the Washington Monument and U.S. Capitol building. The United States has been a nation of strong leaders, such as the four outstanding presidents — George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln — memorialized at Mount Rushmore.** U.S. EMBASSY

private partnership designed to connect the young people of Japan and the United States through exchanges in sports, education, culture and leadership development. Through the opportunities provided by the Tomodachi Initiative and other exchange programs, we are striving to lay the foundation for the future friendship between our two countries.

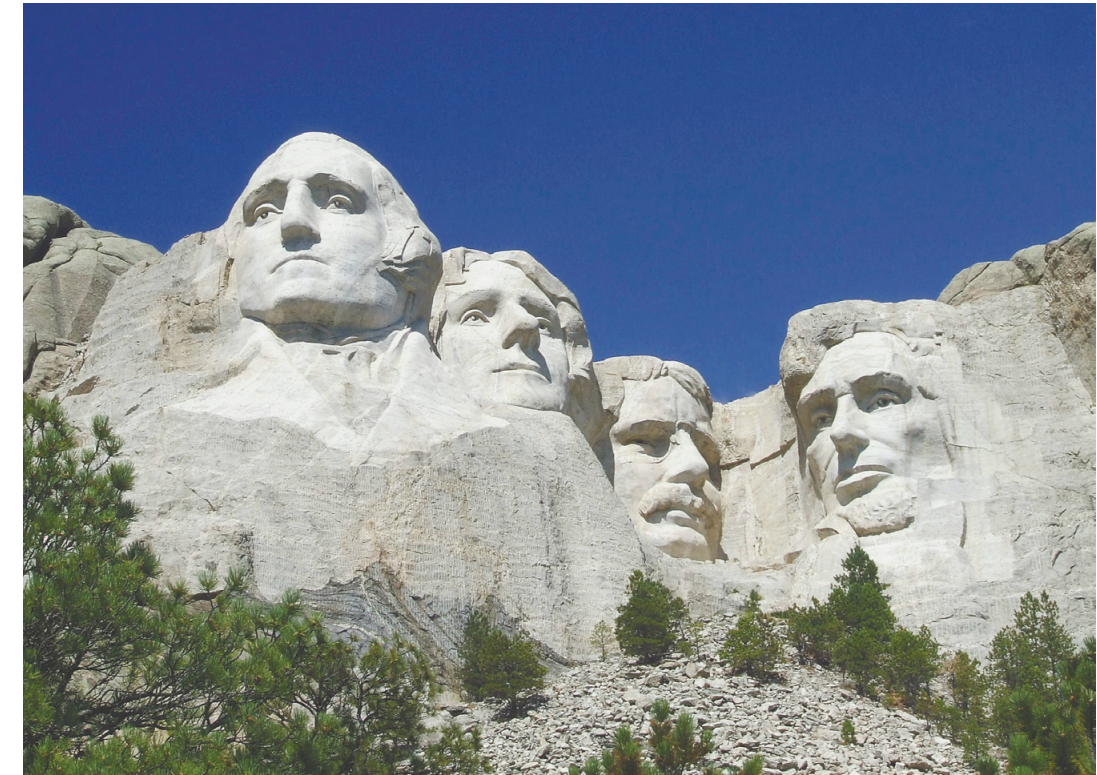
In fact, as we celebrate this Independence Day, there are 26 high school students from Southern California visiting Japan as part of a Tomodachi Initiative exchange program to learn more about Japanese

culture. They will travel to Miyagi Prefecture to visit Japanese schools and meet Japanese students from the disaster-affected areas in an effort to better understand how Japan is recovering from the Great East Japan Earthquake. At the same time, a group of Japanese high school students, many from the Tohoku region, are making a reciprocal visit to the United States on a four-week English-language program sponsored by the Tomodachi Initiative. They are developing the skills that will help them in their future careers, but they are also acting as ambassadors to build bridges between

our two countries.

These are just a fraction of the thousands of young people who have participated in such exchange programs over the past two years — and we need to get even more young people involved in the future. I am enormously pleased that our two countries have set a goal, through the U.S.-Japan Conference on Cultural and Educational Interchange (CULCON) Education Task Force, to double the number of young Americans and Japanese studying in each other's country by the year 2020.

It is for this reason that I am



confident about the future of our bilateral partnership. You don't have to look far to find inspiring examples of the spirit of our two peoples, from the young, energetic students seeking to expand their horizons to 80-year-old Yuichiro Miura, who this year became the oldest person to ever reach the summit of Mount Everest — even after recovering from heart surgery in January. When asked about the hardships of climbing the mountain, Miura responded: "If you have a dream, never give up. Dreams come true."

I would like to thank the Japanese people, from the bottom

of my heart, for their friendship over the last four years. Happy Fourth of July, and let us all keep

working to sustain this beautiful partnership between the United States and Japan.

*Congratulations to the American People  
on Their Independence Day*



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