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Friday, May 16, 2014

Rolling Thunder arrives in Newport

About a dozen motorcycles associated with the Rolling Thunder campaign arrived in Newport late Thursday afternoon.

Residents lined Broadway and the Cosby Highway as the cyclists made their way to the Holiday Inn Express. John McKendree of Oxford, Mississippi, passed a flame torch around the circle as participants remembered those who have served, who died or are POW/MIA. Grand Marshal Geoff Bodine, a retired NASCAR driver, is a strong supporter of the Rolling Thunder program and was on hand to show his support. "My dad was in World War II and survived, and I spent six years in the National Guard.

I believe in the Red, White and Blue and the letters U.S.A., and I love our country. " Bodine expressed concern that "veterans are not being treated very well, they need medical help, and the things we've been hearing lately, indicates how bad that has become. And some veterans are still POW's and we know where some of them are but nobody goes and gets them. They are still locked up from recent wars, so that is unacceptable. These soldiers signed up to protect our country with promises that they would be taken care of, and we need to live up to those promises."

Involved in the local event were Pastor Roger J. Piggott of Iceman Television in Toronto, Canada and Dr. William Scott Magill of Missouri who is President of Veterans in Defense of Liberty. The Cocks County High School NJROTC also participated. The Flame of Freedom is the only ride sanctioned by Rolling Thunder® Inc. as a cross country ride to the world's largest motorcycle demonstration.

Each year more than 900,000 people attend the spectacular POW/MIA event held in Washington, DC, Memorial Day Weekend. This year Iceman Productions and The Stars Foundation partnership is filming a 13 episode "Made for Television" series called AMERICA RISING, featuring Rolling Thunder® Inc. and its Flame of Freedom Ride. The series, honoring troops and veterans, is scheduled for broadcast in the first quarter of 2015, and at least 210 television stations have been cleared to air the series, according to spokesperson Cheryl Robeson Piggott.

Rolling Thunder®, Inc.'s mission is to publicize the POW-MIA issue: To educate the public to the fact that many American Prisoners of War were left behind after previous wars and to protect future veterans from being left behind should they become Prisoners Of War-Missing In Action. It is a non-profit organization totally supported by volunteers Iceman Television delivers sports and philanthropic television programming to 46 countries through a group of independent networks, including 550 episodes of Offshore Powerboat and International Long Drive Golf Championships.

The current production features celebrities through The Stars Foundation of Nashville, along with other dignitaries "to create a message of reverence and honor for our American heroes," says Piggott. The cross-country motorcycle journey began May 11 and will conclude on Sunday, May 25 at the National Mall, in Washington, D.C. "We are so encouraged that communities such as Pigeon Forge, Newport and Spencer, North Carolina are putting forth a great effort to welcome our Flame of Freedom campaign. Harley Davidson Dealerships are valuable community supporters as well. We appreciate government officials and local bike clubs and supporters coming out to welcome us in every media stop. It will only grow in future years", Piggott said.