



# SDI CASE STUDY

## SHOWCASING THE NEW WORLD WAR I MEMORIAL DESPITE COVID



THE UNITED STATES  
WORLD WAR ONE  
CENTENNIAL COMMISSION



**Situation:** The World War I Centennial Commission (WW1CC) hired Susan Davis International (SDI) to lead public relations outreach for the First Colors Ceremony of the new World War I Memorial in Washington, D.C. The event served as the Memorial's public opening.

The event took place in April 2021, which meant remarks from speakers such as President Joe Biden and Interior Secretary Deb Haaland would be virtual. SDI successfully lobbied the WW1CC for an opportunity to drive media to cover the ceremony on-site despite these limitations.

**Approach:** SDI worked with the WW1CC to shed light on the "Forgotten War" and pursue the theme of history repeating itself, such as drawing parallels to the Spanish Flu pandemic during World War I.

SDI ensured blanket coverage of the Memorial's opening prior to the event. The Memorial's architect was interviewed by media in his home state of Arkansas and his business home of Atlanta. SDI pitched WW1CC commission members to national press for on-site media tours and to global press. The members were able to explain the importance of the Memorial's opening through their involvement and personal experiences serving in the military.

For on-site media attendance, SDI pitched captivating visuals such as a performance by the U.S. Army Band "Pershing's Own", the dramatic flag raising over the Memorial site, and a spectacular flyover.

**Results:** The media attention on the World War I Memorial in April 2021 was massive:

- 500+ print stories & 600+ broadcast stories in the United States
- Coverage in all 50 states and 10 countries on 5 continents

Pre-event coverage highlights included an on-site Gray TV story featuring WW1CC directors Dan Dayton and Meredith Carr that aired across nearly 200 local TV stations. The New York Times and The Guardian published lengthy features on the Memorial's opening.

There were a dozen outlets on-site for the event, including CBS News, CNN, Getty Images, CQ Rollcall and Stars & Stripes. DC's ABC affiliate WJLA was on-site for the entire morning with live coverage during its morning show.

The coverage for the event lasted through Memorial Day, as C-SPAN and Fox News Sunday prepared special segments from interviews and footage captured during the April event.