MAY 2018 (ARLINGTON, Va.) - DEA’s annual Memorial Program, held on May 14, was attended by many family members, employees and distinguished guests, who gathered to greet each other in the Training Room prior to the start of the formal program.

Just prior to the program in the auditorium, families, guests and DEA leadership gathered in front of DEA’s Wall of Honor to observe a moment of silence, followed by the presentation of wreaths in honor of all DEA’s agents and employees who lost their lives in the performance of their duties.

Sean Fears, Section Chief of DEA Community Outreach, served as Master of Ceremonies. The Arlington County Police Color Guard presented the colors, and the DEA Choir sang a beautiful rendition of the National Anthem. Mary Kay Balchunas, mother of TFO Jay Balchunas, gave the invocation, followed by remarks from DEA Acting Administrator Rob Patterson and Attorney General Jeff Sessions.

Mr. Sessions congratulated the DEA on its good work. "DEA agents deal with some of the most dangerous criminals and crime syndicates in the entire world. It’s a dangerous business, indeed," he
said. "As we remember those who have given their lives in the line of duty, let us also remember the noble cause for which they died. ... On behalf of President Trump, I want to thank each of you for your service. As we remember those who served in the past and given their lives in service to their country as part of this effort, thank you for that. We will honor you by fulfilling the mission of this agency. And you can be certain about this: we have your back and you have our thanks."

Acting Administrator Rob Patterson addressed the families in attendance: "... to the families of those who have been lost -- we welcome you. Some of you have been here before, and some are joining us for the first time. These memorial services honor those we have lost, but they are also just as much about honoring the families, for you too have made a heavy sacrifice and have the most courageous task of carrying forward without your loved one. We share your pain, and while nothing can ever fill the loss of a loved one, know that you will always have the DEA family by your side."

Mr. Patterson continued, "I hope you can feel the love that this group surrounding you has for those we are here to honor, and for you as well .... I hope you can feel it not just in this room, and not just from DEA, but all law enforcement around the globe."

The 84 names on the Wall of Honor were read in chronological order by James Schrant, Chief, Congressional and Public Affairs; Former Administrator Peter Bensinger; Greg Cherundolo, Chief of Staff; and Former Administrator Karen Tandy.
DEA’s own Black & Gold gathered for a group photo with Acting Administrator Patterson and former Administrators Peter Bensinger and Karen Tandy.