

**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY**

**COMPLETE STATEMENT**

**OF**

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**BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL AND THE**

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS OF THE**

**COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES**

**UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES 1<sup>ST</sup> SESSION, 112<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS**

**ON**

**THE ACCOUNTING OF GRAVESITES AT**

**ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY AND COMPLIANCE WITH ARMY DIRECTIVE**

**2010-04: ENHANCING THE OPERATIONS AND OVERSIGHT OF THE ARMY**

**NATIONAL CEMETERIES PROGRAM**

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Chairmen and distinguished Subcommittee members, thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding the progress underway at Arlington National Cemetery.

## **INTRODUCTION**

On June 10, 2010 circumstances at ANC came to light that degraded the trust and confidence of the American public. As you know, Mr. Chairman, widespread reports caused us all extreme concern regarding the level of standards and the quality of care taken to inter our nation's veterans and their loved ones at Arlington Cemetery.

As I testified previously, after conducting an intensive review of Cemetery operations, a salient fact emerged. The main contributor to the state of Arlington at that time can be described as a lack of standards, a reliance on a number of ineffective business and operational practices and ineffective implementation of technology solutions. The organization still used typewriters to record critical information about veterans' interment services and index cards held the record of burial for those laid to rest at Arlington. The skills of the workforce were misaligned to organizational needs and training was inadequate to properly and effectively perform assigned duties. Perhaps most important: effective rigor was not in place to maintain a standard of accountability befitting our veterans and their families. We have addressed this lack of standards and

we are meeting the accountability challenge. Arlington now is on the path to meet the high quality standards expected of our nation's preeminent military cemetery.

Before addressing the Inspector General Report, it is important to recognize and acknowledge the courage and leadership of the Secretary of the Army, the Hon. John McHugh, who recognized the challenges and took bold steps. Secretary McHugh brought to bear the resources required from across the United States Army and Department of Defense to make meaningful corrections. We are grateful and honored that Secretary McHugh has placed his trust in our leadership and abilities to right the wrongs at Arlington.

I am pleased to report to this Subcommittee that we have significantly increased effectiveness and efficiencies in all functions at Arlington National Cemetery and the Soldiers' and Airmen's Home National Cemetery. Tremendous progress has been made and care taken to analyze the 76 deficiencies identified in the June 2010 inspection report from the Department of the Army Inspector General. Since that time, ANC has established standards and crafted corrective actions which directly address these deficiencies and positively impact root causes. As noted in the 11 March 2011 Inspector General's Interim Review, we have "significantly increased effectiveness and efficiency" in all of our missions and functions.

When last I testified before the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee, you asked what we needed most to help implement necessary change. I replied that I needed time. These Subcommittees have graciously provided that time. Now it is important to highlight the real progress we have made since June 2010.

### **CEMETERY PROGRESS**

We have diligently corrected errors of the past by identifying and correcting five documented burial errors and addressed the concerns expressed by families. When an issue at the cemetery is discovered, from a sunken grave due to weather to a burial error, we immediately contact the families, providing them accurate, detailed information. The Superintendent has implemented new standards and processes to prevent this from happening in the future. We have stood up the Gravesite Accountability Task Force; a joint military-civilian team focused on driving greater accountability and restoring faith and confidence in the American people. The actions of the Task Force will meet and exceed requirements of Army Directive 2010-004 and Public Law 111-339. The Accountability Task Force has digitally photographed 100% of the markers and niche covers and initiated a digital scan of all supporting paper records. We have leveraged Army experts, notably at the Army Data Center Fairfield, California, to create the tools necessary to review and electronically cross reference all of our records dating back to the Civil War. Task force personnel work daily reviewing every record and assembling a single authoritative data base for Arlington National Cemetery.

Cemetery personnel are institutionalizing these processes and will ensure they are sustainable into the future.

We have implemented a new organizational structure to manage the many facets of the Cemetery. The organization already has made not only significant but measurable improvement and we will continue to evolve to meet/exceed the expectations of our many stakeholders.

We continue to implement a comprehensive training program for our workforce.

Starting with a six-step chain of custody process, implemented by the Superintendent, the staff is focused on maintaining positive identification of remains during pre-burial activities and ensures positive identification of remains when disinterment is required.

These identification practices apply to all types of receptacles for remains. The business processes built by the Gravesite Accountability Task Force are now the day-to-day standards and practices which the workforce will apply to ensure the validation process is sustained as we move forward.

We are now exploring methods for institutionalizing an internal inspection program modeled after the Army's Organizational Inspection Program to continually assess our changed processes.

Commercial training such as how to operate heavy equipment safely and with proficiency has contributed to a more capable efficient workforce too. Additionally, we are complying with all the Army civilian workforce training requirements. The

Superintendent's mantra of "Re-organize, Re-train and Re-tool" nicely sums up the essence of our team effort.

The Army has made a tremendous leap in effective use of technology at Arlington. We have replaced the paper records of the past, prepared on an IBM Selectric typewriter, with a digital system that uses industry best practices in database management. To schedule interments, our team is leveraging a state-of-the-art system that ensures visibility for all appropriate stakeholders and an ability to share information like never before. We have ensured fiscal accountability and stewardship through the implementation of the General Fund Enterprise Business System to ensure full visibility on all cemetery expenditures. We have initiated a Geospatial Application Development initiative at Arlington. This will form a "Google maps" like information system that enables the Cemetery to better manage the grounds, grave and niche assignments and provide street directions and site locations to our guests. Arlington has embarked on an all-encompassing effort to develop baseline enterprise architecture. This formal review will capture all business processes and dependencies and drive the development of integrated solutions. By formally documenting all requirements, information technology can be applied in a consistent way that eliminates redundancy while increasing availability and most importantly, accuracy of cemetery data.

Most recently, we launched a new Arlington National Cemetery web site that rivals the looks and functionality of any web site on the Internet. I encourage you to review the

new website and see firsthand how we are communicating in a more relevant way with our stakeholders. Now that the Arlington National Cemetery is pointed in the right direction, we feel we have set the course for Arlington to become an organization of excellence.

Although much has been accomplished, we have much work to do. We are on the right path and continue to work as we earn and maintain the faith of the American public. To date this calendar year we have conducted 4,869 burials; 3,146 ceremonies; hosted over 4 million visitors and guests; reviewed and addressed over 1,200 family member concerns; increased the work force by one third; re-competed all service contracts; drafted new policies and implemented standards; immediately addressed identified errors; and conducted honest and frank engagements with families. We have executed these efforts while also maintaining the current operational tempo. In order to meet ever increasing requests for dignified services, we expanded operations to include placement only services on Saturday that do not require honors and continue to conduct an average of 27 funeral services each day.

If you were to ask today what is necessary to continue this positive and fast paced trend, it is the continued stalwart support of these Subcommittees.

## **CUSTOMER FOCUS**

The next phase for Arlington National Cemetery is a more intense focus on our many stakeholders because cemeteries are for the living. We owe this great nation, our veterans and their loved ones a deep understanding of their needs and meaningful interaction, so they are able to take full advantage of all Arlington has to offer.

We must not only meet but exceed the expectations of families who have loved ones interred or inurned at Arlington. My vision is that the burden of scheduling and managing interment services will be completely eliminated through leveraging existing technology and refining Arlington operations as we focus more intensely on service to veterans, families and millions of visitors each year.

We want to engage all veterans to ensure we fully understand and provide an Arlington that represents what it should be to them, the heroes who have taken the oath and served this country with dignity, loyalty and respect. We will reach out to Veterans Service Organizations to improve our links with our nation's veterans. We must continually have open and quality dialogue with VSO's in order to stay connected to this very important community.

In late August, the Army National Cemeteries Commission, as directed by Secretary McHugh, had eight of nine nominees approved for appointment by the Office of the Secretary of Defense. This Federal Advisory Commission will provide an independent

and holistic look at the future of Arlington and how best the Army and the Department of Defense can continue the legacy of dignified services on these hallowed burial grounds for our nation's veterans and their families while preserving the rich history of the 628 acres nestled along the rolling hills across the Potomac River from our nation's capital.

Arlington National Cemetery is a place available for every generation to Honor, Remember, and Explore the depths of the creation of this great Nation and the heroes which have made incredible sacrifices for freedom. We have greatly increased our capacity to reach every generation through our new web site which veterans, family members and children will find engaging, user friendly, and informative. We want all to explore the cemetery's rich history, to touch the final resting place of their loved ones who have sacrificed for our nation's freedoms, and to enjoy the landscape of our nation's capital. Nowhere else in the world can one find the magnificent social and military history of the Civil War, witness first-hand our nation's reverence for our war dead at the Tomb of the Unknowns, and memorialize significant National events such as space shuttle tragedies and the attacks of 9/11. We owe our veterans, their families and all future generations a full accounting at Arlington National Cemetery and that is exactly what we intend to provide. We look to the future to make Arlington a place to Honor, Remember, Explore.

Thank you for your patience and allowing me to share our progress to date. I look forward to answering your questions.