

RECORD VERSION

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

COMPLETE STATEMENT

OF

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BEFORE

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COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ON

RECENT MANAGEMENT CHANGES AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICES AT

ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY

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COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES**

Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to provide an update on progress at Arlington National Cemetery.

INTRODUCTION

Arlington National Cemetery is both the most hallowed burial ground of our Nation's fallen and one of the most visited tourist sites in the Washington, DC, area. A fully operational national cemetery since May 1864, Arlington National Cemetery presently conducts an average of 27 funerals each workday-final farewells to fallen heroes from the fronts of Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as to veterans of World War II, the Korean conflict, Vietnam and the Cold War and their family members. While maintaining the honor, dignity and privacy of each graveside service, Arlington National Cemetery hosts approximately 4 million guests annually. This duality of purpose serves to bring the national shrine of Arlington National Cemetery, and the sacrifices of those buried there, closer to the American people.

The Army is committed to rendering public honor and recognition through dignified burial services for members of the Armed Services and other qualified deceased persons where they may be interred or inurned in a setting of peace, reverence and natural beauty. On behalf of the cemeteries and the Department of the Army, I would like to express our appreciation for the support that Congress has provided over the years.

LEADERSHIP

We believe that the update that the subcommittee requested can be most directly addressed by explaining how we have executed, and continue to execute, our leadership responsibilities. Army Field Manual 6-22, *Leadership*, defines leadership as "the process of influencing people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation while operating to accomplish the mission and improve the organization."

Our statement explains how we have provided purpose and direction by establishing a clear and comprehensive vision and supporting mission statement. It continues by explaining how we have implemented management changes to improve the organization and increase quality and efficiency. The impact of these changes is best described by reviewing the standards that have been established and their results in the areas of daily operations, customer service, records management, and fiscal responsibility. This leads us to a discussion of sustaining the cemetery for the future to be able to achieve the vision. In the end, we are confident that you will see the progress that has been made and the foundations for reestablishing the Nation's confidence in Arlington National Cemetery.

VISION AND MISSION

We have provided purpose and direction by establish a clear and comprehensive vision for Arlington National Cemetery that defines the desired future state:

America's premier military cemetery

- **A national shrine**
- **A living history of freedom**
- **Where dignity and honor rest in solemn repose.**

While the vision provides the long range goal that the organization is striving for, the mission is essential to provide clarity for daily operations. The mission is:

On behalf of the American people, lay to rest those who have served our nation with dignity and honor, treating their families with respect and compassion, and connecting guests to the rich tapestry of the cemetery's living history, while maintaining these hallowed grounds befitting the sacrifice of all those who rest here in quiet repose.

MANAGEMENT CHANGES

To successfully accomplish the mission and put Arlington National Cemetery on the path to achieve the vision, there have been several management changes.

These changes started immediately at the top by clearly delineating roles, responsibilities and relationships. The Executive Director of the Army National Cemeteries Program is a direct report to the Secretary of the Army, and is responsible to effectively and efficiently develop, operate, manage and administer both Arlington and the Soldiers' and Airmen's Home National Cemeteries. The Superintendent of Arlington National Cemetery is a direct report to the Executive Director, and is responsible to effectively and efficiently manage and execute daily operations.

Management functions have been consolidated within the Army National Cemeteries Program. The Executive Director's staff has functional expertise in strategic management and communications, information management, and resource management. The Executive Director is supported by ceremonial units from the Armed Services, a detailed staff of chaplains, staff support from Headquarters, Department of the Army, and the Arlington Ladies who represent the Chief's and Commandant's of each Armed Service at funerals. The result is clearly defined roles, responsibilities and relationships.

The Executive Director's staff performs both an enabling function and an oversight role for the Superintendent's execution of daily operations. The intent is to enhance operations by removing administrative burdens from those

responsible for execution, while having those administrative functions performed by subject matter experts and clearly segregating duties to ensure proper accountability and oversight.

We have refocused the execution elements of the workforce by establishing leadership positions and accountability where none existed before. There are now team leader positions and job assignments to better manage and execute daily operations.

DAILY OPERATIONS

First and foremost, Arlington National Cemetery is an active cemetery conducting approximately 27 funerals per day. We consider it part of our sacred trust to ensure that each funeral is executed with the utmost dignity and respect. Every veteran's, and eligible dependent's, funeral receives our full attention to detail. Daily operations are critical to maintaining one of the unique hallmarks of Arlington National Cemetery, multiple simultaneous private grave side interments with full honors. Neither the importance nor complexity of this hallmark can be overstated.

To establish accountability while maintaining this hallmark, standards were developed throughout the operation where none existed. The leadership team is training the workforce to implement these standard operating procedures. Finally, we are holding supervisors and leaders responsible and accountable for meeting our established standards. All supervisors are responsible for quality control in the cemetery. The Superintendent and his staff spend at least 60% of every day in the cemetery, regardless of weather conditions, observing daily operations and ensuring expected standards are being met.

New standards for a chain of custody have been implemented to maintain positive identification of casketed or cremated remains from the time they arrive at the cemetery until they are secured in their final resting place. For casketed remains a system of six checks are made by the cemetery representative to ensure positive identification; cemetery representative validated daily interment schedule with family; a non-biodegradable tag is placed on the casket containing the name of the deceased, date of death, date of interment, section and grave number and checked with the section and grave number painted on the concrete lid of the grave liner; section and grave number are painted on inside the grave liner; temporary grave marker contains name, dates, section and grave number; and headstone (if applicable).

A "dig slip" is now the standard for excavation of a grave being opened for a second interment. This standard assists in preventing the unintentional removal of interred cremated remains during the excavation of a grave. The dig slip is issued to the equipment operator and must be verified by the equipment operator

before opening the grave. Similarly, niche covers in the columbarium are not removed for the second interment until the cemetery representative is present. This standard prevents cremated remains from being left unattended in an open niche prior to a service. All cremated remains received at the cemetery are tagged with a non-biodegradable tag and maintained in a locked area until required for the funeral service. Gravesites where cremated remains are interred to be followed by a second interment of casketed remains are now placed in a concrete government grave liner. This procedure effectively eliminates the improper or unintentional disassociation of cremated remains from their assigned grave site.

Supervisors and work leaders are being trained regularly by the cemetery leadership on standards for the correct layout of burial sections according to burial maps, accurate assignment of grave sites, and correct procedures for closing graves. The Army has completed a memorandum of agreement with the Department of Veterans Affairs and is leveraging training at the National Cemetery System, Veterans Administration training site in St. Louis. Contracting officer representatives throughout the cemetery workforce are holding contractors working in the cemetery to the standards of the contracts. Contractors are being monitored and held accountable to fulfill all contractual obligations and for any damage sustained to government property.

Standards are in place to ensure that all sections of the cemetery are tamped correctly to prevent graves and headstones from sinking. All first interment sections are raked level, clear of any excess rocks, to present a neat and cared for appearance. As soon as possible (seasonal restrictions apply) a stand of turf is created either by adding a layer of topsoil, seeding, and fertilizing or installing sod. We are now using hand operated gas tampers in second interment sections to close graves correctly. Attachments for tractors have been added to rake large first interment areas substantially improving the overall appearance of the cemetery. Government markers (headstones) are being installed and checked against the newly established standard in the cemetery. Government markers are installed with 24"-26" of stone visible above the ground. Headstones are installed using the permanent monumentation in the sections and checked with a level to ensure that they are aligned vertically and horizontally.

Daily operations have been enhanced through the establishment, training and enforcement of standards, by optimizing procedures, and by procuring the right equipment for each task. This ensures full accountability of all remains that are interred or inurned and higher quality of interment services and grounds keeping. The result is full confidence that individuals are laid to rest in the correct gravesite or niche and an astounding increase in the appearance of the cemetery.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Arlington National Cemetery is truly about the living. It provides a means for the living to honor our fallen veterans and their families. It provides a unique lens on the history of freedom. But, first and foremost, Arlington National Cemetery, on behalf of the American people, lays to rest those who have served our nation with dignity and honor, treating their families with respect and compassion. Hence, customer service is a critical priority.

When we arrived at Arlington National Cemetery the standard process for scheduling services or getting questions answered was to call one of two toll numbers. If there was not someone immediately available to answer your call, you would be put on hold. That hold would last until one of three things happened: the caller got tired of waiting, the wait hit the limit of just under an hour and the caller was transferred to a voice mailbox that was not set up, or a cemetery representative picked up the line. We cannot tell you how many calls went unanswered because of this system or how many people decided to go elsewhere. This undoubtedly led to frustration and also to frequent users finding ways to get priority.

To be responsive to each and every caller and to establish a uniform standard for scheduling we streamlined public interaction and telephonic communications by transitioning initial call screening to the Information Technology Agency's Consolidated Customer Service Center (CCSC) on December 13, 2010. The customized interactive voice response tree allows us to receive and track incoming calls. This has also forced us to document detailed processes and work instructions that reside in a searchable knowledge management database. The call center leverages CCSC's existing case management application customized for Arlington National Cemetery to document and track all customer interactions. We have trained a dedicated team of agents to answer, triage, resolve when possible, and document all calls. To date the call center has handled more than 14,000 calls, averaging 210 calls per weekday with 45 of those to schedule an interment.

Accessibility and preparedness for customers is also a priority. While the buildings were constructed prior to the American's with Disabilities Act, that is no excuse for a lack of accommodation. We have installed a handicapped ramp between Visitors Center and Administration Building for family members arriving by Metro. We have also constructed temporary ramps for placement curbside at interment services and include carpet for wheel chair access graveside. Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) have been installed at locations throughout the cemetery and staff have been trained on their usage to ensure immediate response when necessary.

While we are pleased with the progress to date to improve customer service, improvements will continue. We firmly believe in continuous process improvement and are working to establish feedback mechanisms to increase our understanding of customer concerns and needs.

RECORDS MANAGEMENT

To address identified information assurance deficiencies in the Department of the Army Inspector General report and based on the CIO/G-6 assessment, we commissioned the Army Data Center-Fairfield to transition the Interment Scheduling System to current hardware and software. The Army Data Center Fairfield completed this work and transitioned hosting of Arlington National Cemetery's business application to the US Army Information Technology agency on November 23, 2010. This critical transition has ensured survivability of this mission critical application. We are now leveraging the Pentagon data disaster recovery capability and improvements to the Interment Scheduling System to allow scheduling to be transparent to the Joint Staff, Office of the Secretary of the Army, and all service force providers. The Army Data Center-Fairfield's continued support of the Interment Scheduling System and enhancements will enable a transition of the interment services branch to a fully digital organization.

The activities of Army Data Center-Fairfield provide a bridging solution to allow the Army and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to collaborate on a new acquisition to replace the current version of VA's Burial Operation Support System (BOSS). The VA-BOSS system is at the end of its life cycle and VA is planning the process for gathering requirements for a new acquisition. Army acquisition professionals have been tasked to oversee the programmatic delivery of a new system, at which time milestone decision points will be determined according to Department of Defense and Army acquisition standard operating procedures.

One of the biggest concerns upon arrival was the paper records and the lack of any backup of this information. We have been able to recover images from efforts in 2005 to scan the records. These images have been integrated by the Army Data Center-Fairfield with VA-BOSS records and Interment Scheduling System data from 2003 forward into a searchable database that provides both a digital tool and, more importantly, a backup for the vast majority of the authoritative records. This database will be expanded and form the basis of the accounting effort mandated by the Secretary of the Army and Public Law 111-339.

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

Arlington National Cemetery did not certify the FY 2010 year-end financial reports and schedules due to a lack of available accountability records. To

remedy this issue for FY 2011, we accelerated the implementation of the General Fund Enterprise Business System (GFEBS) to 1 October 2010. GFEBS will provide the accountability, to include the ability to conduct required audits, to ensure Arlington National Cemetery can certify FY 2011 year-end financial reports.

Instrumental to fiscal responsibility was instituting disciplined processes, with oversight and direction, to enhance procurement operations. Executive Director policies and appointments are now in place to ensure a qualified senior-level staff member conducts funds certification; only the Director of Resource Management and the Budget Officer are authorized to certify funds. Similarly, funds approval is limited to the Executive Director and Chief of Staff. We developed and implemented a Gift Policy to ensure proper joint ethics accountability and approval for all gifts and proffers made to Arlington National Cemetery. We initiated accountability of all Real Property and implemented a preventative maintenance and repair process to ensure care and maintenance.

We lowered the threshold for legal review of contracts to \$100,000. Recurring service contracts were extended to allow for a thorough review for requirements determination prior to re-competing all contracts. The current contract requirements have been consolidated in areas that would allow ANC to gain efficiencies, streamline work efforts and limit the contractor footprint on the grounds of Arlington National Cemetery at any given time. The consolidated requirements went from 28 to 16. This reduction was possible consolidating requirements from separate contracts into better defined requirements and through leveraging already existing support to the headquarters, Department of the Army. Each of the new service contracts has a Quality Assurance Surveillance Plan and a Performance Requirements Summary as part of the contractual requirement. These documents will assist the trained contracting officer representatives in effectively managing the contract Quality Assurance and essentially ensuring the contractor is held accountable for services.

To ensure accountability for the past, the Army Audit Agency (AAA) was asked to audit contracts, revenues and the government purchase card. The Army will use these results to learn from past errors and correct them where possible. I have asked AAA to return to ensure that the policies, procedures, and practices that have been established are indeed working and sufficient.

SUSTAINING ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY

Arlington National Cemetery includes 624 acres of rolling hills with 20 miles of roads and the necessary infrastructure to support interment services, ceremonies, and visitation. Planned expansions include the 31 acres known as the Millennium Project and 42 acres that will come with the Base Realignment of the Navy Annex.

Under current estimates, Arlington National Cemetery expects to exhaust its availability for inurnments in niche spaces in Fiscal Year 2016. To preclude this from happening, we have accelerated investment in developing and constructing Columbarium Court 9 during Fiscal Year 2011. This investment will add approximately 20,300 niches to the inventory and with the follow on efforts in the Millennium Project, should allow Arlington National Cemetery to continue to offer inurnment services out to Fiscal Year 2037. We expect Columbarium Court 9 to be operational by November 2012.

Investment in the Millennium Project recommences in Fiscal Year 2012. When all five phases have been completed, this project will provide space for casketed remains, niches, and space for in-ground cremated remains. Continuation of this project is critical to extend the viable life of Arlington National Cemetery and will permit us to offer multiple services to be performed simultaneously across the expanse of the cemetery.

Arlington National Cemetery now has a dedicated engineering staff and has recently completed a comprehensive assessment of the current status of all facilities and infrastructure. This draft Ten-Year Capital Investment Plan for Arlington National Cemetery is to assist top-level management to manage, plan, budget, and acquire capital assets that will best serve the mission effectively. The draft is a living document that is updated regularly. It is flexible so the decision makers can change the project implementation schedules. The plan intends to highlight and address potential spikes (i.e., large, one-time increases in annual appropriations) that may have an impact on other necessary projects. It also establishes a process for managing the portfolio of capital assets to achieve performance goals with the lowest life-cycle costs and to minimize risks.

We are committed to maintaining Arlington's grounds and infrastructure in accordance with the standards expected of a National Shrine while also maintaining the cemetery's viability as an active cemetery for those who continue to serve our Nation.

CONCLUSION

We hope that the highlights of the actions taken and changes implemented demonstrate the progress that has been, and continues to be, made to restore the Nation's confidence in Arlington National Cemetery. We would like to thank the Subcommittee for taking a positive leadership role in the oversight of Arlington National Cemetery.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes our testimony. We will be pleased to respond to questions from the Subcommittee.