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REVIEW OF THE REPORT ON THE NATIONAL CEMETERY SYSTEM, FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS, AS REQUIRED BY SECTION 613 OF THE VETERANS MILLENNIUM HEALTH CARE AND BENEFITS ACT, PUBLIC LAW 106–117

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

OCTOBER 16, 2002

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WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2002

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC

The committee met, pursuant to call, at 1:05 p.m., in room 334, Cannon House Office Building, Hon. Christopher H. Smith (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Present: Representatives Smith, Simpson, Miller, Boozman, Evans, Reyes, Snyder, Rodriguez, Udall and Davis.

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN SMITH

The CHAIRMAN. The hearing will come to order, and I want to apologize for being a little bit late. I was down the hall actually meeting with some of the widows from 9/11 who have an ongoing end of game problem of getting that 9/11 inspection or blue ribbon panel together. So we have been working on that issue. Again, I apologize for being late. This hearing, as you know, is on veterans' cemeteries, and I want to thank everyone for coming here today.

I want to welcome our distinguished witnesses, Dr. William Moore, Mr. Ronald Lind, Mr. Donald Prettol from Logistics Management Institute, and VA Under Secretary Vincent Barile, and Mr. Richard Jones, who will be testifying today.

In July of 1862, Congress enacted legislation authorizing the President to purchase, quote, "cemetery grounds to be used as national cemeteries for soldiers who shall have died in the service of their country." That year, 14 cemeteries were established. To understand the importance of this action, we can recall the words spoken so eloquently by Abraham Lincoln at the dedication of the national cemetery at Gettysburg, when he said, "We cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here have consecrated far above our poor power to add or detract."

Today there are 120 national cemeteries in 39 States, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Thirty-three of these cemeteries are closed to new interments; 26 can accommodate only cremated remains and family members of those already interred, and 61, or roughly half, are open to all interments. In all, VA maintains 2.4

million gravesites. The number of interments in VA national cemeteries has increased from 36,400 in 1973 to 84,800 in 2001, and the number of cremations has increased to more than 34 percent of total interments for the last 2 years.

Today's hearing will give us an opportunity to hear about the independent study that was mandated by section 613 of the Veterans Millennium Health Care Benefits Act of 1999. This law required VA to contract for an assessment for the current and future burial needs of our Nation's veterans. Logistics Management Institute was awarded the study by the VA. Volume 1 of the study entitled Future Burial Needs reviews current and future burial needs of veterans and identifies areas of the country where new national cemeteries might be constructed. According to existing VA planning guidelines, VA should establish cemeteries as needed to provide service to 90 percent of veterans within 75 miles of their homes. The report projects burial needs in 5-year increments to the year 2020 and discusses the costs of establishing a new cemetery.

Volume 2, titled National Shrine Commitment, gives an evaluation of the current maintenance and construction work NCA needs to bring these cemeteries up to standard. This report documents the existing conditions at each cemetery, evaluates and makes recommendations on the number of one-time repair projects for improving the condition, function or appearance of each cemetery. It estimates the total costs of these projects at $279 million.

Volume 3, titled Cemetery Standards of Appearance, provides a detailed review of steps the NCA must take to establish and preserve our cemeteries as national shrines. This was a collaborative effort involving cemetery directors and veterans' service organizations to establish standards of excellence for the appearance of national cemeteries.

This report prepared by LMI is the third such report on veteran cemetery requirements in the past 15 years. The first study was presented to Congress in 1987, and the second study was completed in 1994.

What we want to hear today are recommendations to help this committee and the VA to set a course for the future of the National Cemetery Administration. In the past 5 years, 5 new national cemeteries have been opened, and an additional 6 cemeteries are in various stages of construction. But in planning this expansion, it appears that the significant maintenance needs of the existing cemeteries have been overlooked. While meeting the ever-increasing demands for burials that are expected to peak in 2008, it is an important goal that should not come at the cost of maintaining existing cemeteries to high standards.

I expect that at the appropriate time Members will want to discuss the needs of their own constituencies and States. I know that my own home State of New Jersey is among the most densely populated in the country and the home to over 600,000 veterans. I would like to explore VA's decision to brush aside my veterans' need for a national cemetery to accommodate future burials.

Today the national cemetery at Beverly, which was once in my district, is basically closed for in-ground burials, yet the study says this cemetery will serve all the needs of the veterans in the Philadelphia-Trenton area until 2010. I have been there. That is simply

not the case. My question is how will we do it? The only in-ground burial option for the families of veterans living in New Jersey is the Brigadier General William C. Doyle State Veterans Cemetery in Arneytown. While some families outside of Central New Jersey do opt to bury their family members here, it is hardly convenient for the majority of families of veterans in the State of New Jersey. I intend to pursue this a little bit later in my questioning, and perhaps our distinguished witnesses can respond to that.

We are pleased that we were able to facilitate a substantial increase of $25 million in NCA's budget for the past 2 years; however, this study provides compelling data for a decision to provide even more resources in the future.

How we honor our Nation's veterans is a reflection of how much we value their service and their role in preserving our freedoms. I speak for all members of this committee, on both sides of the aisle, when I say we are dedicated to ensuring that the men and women who have served their Nation honorably will have a final resting place in a veterans cemetery if they so desire. Families of those buried in national cemeteries expect that we will maintain these graves to high standards. Future generations will mark our response to the challenges which this study presents and the challenges—and the duty it puts upon us to act.

[The prepared statement of Chairman Smith appears on p. 27.]

The CHAIRMAN. I would like to ask if my distinguished colleagues might have—Mr. Reyes, if you have an opening comment.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SILVESTRE REYES

Mr. REYES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a brief statement.

I want to thank you and our Ranking Member Mr. Evans for your leadership over the course of this legislative session, and thank you specifically for holding this hearing here today. Veterans' cemeteries should provide a peaceful and dignified setting to honor the many men and women who bravely served this country in uniform.

I want to thank the witnesses for appearing before us today, and I look forward to hearing their testimony. I am particularly interested in being provided more information about the factors that the VA considered in developing the future burial needs. I am concerned that because the future burial needs assessment was issued prior to the 2000 census data being made available, the census was not taken into consideration, and the VA may not have identified population shifts, particularly in some of the Southern States, including some of the areas in my own State of Texas.

I am interested in hearing from the VA about the strategy to address the maintenance and the repair needs throughout the National Cemetery System, including the budgetary impact such as the commitment to these maintenance costs would require. It is one thing, I think, to make plans, and quite another to follow through on the plans that we have made. To truly honor our Nation's veterans, VA must do both exceptionally well, and from my perspective, I think we expect nothing less from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Finally, I look forward to hearing the Independent Budget's assessment of the VA's report on the National Cemetery System.

And, Mr. Chairman, in closing, I just wanted to—I have talked to a number of Members about the evaluation that is ongoing on some of our national cemeteries, specifically in my area, an attempt to zeroscape the cemetery, do away with the grass, which really has impacted our veteran community. So I am looking forward to this hearing, and I appreciate the opportunity to make a few comments.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Mr. Reyes.

[The prepared statement of Congressman Reyes appears on p. 29.]

The CHAIRMAN. Chairman Simpson.

Mr. SIMPSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't really have an opening statement except to say that I haven't had the opportunity yet to read the three reports, although they are on my reading list, and I will get to them shortly. Our subcommittee will be holding follow-up hearings on this, and I appreciate the comments of our Ranking Member Mr. Reyes. It is an important hearing. I am glad that you scheduled it today.

And let me say in advance that I have to leave early, and I apologize for that. I had looked forward to hearing this testimony, but I do have some post-hearing questions that I would like to submit at the appropriate time.

The CHAIRMAN. Without objection, that will be made a part of the record.

(See p. 111.)

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Evans.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. LANE EVANS

Mr. EVANS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate this hearing this afternoon. I don't normally have to apologize for not being here because of the bad weather we have outside and planes are delayed and so forth, so we appreciate you being here.

One thing that is not directly on point but I wanted to mention because I think it shows the caliber of persons that we have on this committee, when he was the first new member, he took me down to the Korean Veterans Memorial after hearing complaints from veterans that that memorial was run down after only about 2 years or so into its existence, and you have turned that around, Sergeant Reyes, and we appreciate it very much. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent to enter my remarks in the record.

The CHAIRMAN. Without objection, your remarks will be in the record.

[The prepared statement of Congressman Evans appears on p. 30.]

The CHAIRMAN. Would any other members of the committee like to be heard?

Mrs. Davis.

Mrs. DAVIS. I might say there is great interest in this issue in San Diego. I happen to represent Rosecrans National Cemetery, and there we have no more in-ground burials. We have tried to come up with some creative ways of addressing this issue, and I welcome the testimony today. And thank you very much for the hearing.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Mrs. Davis.

[The prepared statement of Congresswoman Davis appears on p. 31.]

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Udall?

Mr. UDALL. Just briefly, Mr. Chairman. We have similar needs in Santa Fe with our Santa Fe National Cemetery closing in 2012, and apparently there isn't a nearby cemetery even opening up projected in these reports until 2015. And there are 84,000 people that are needed to be served, and you have this 3-year period and then not being served. So that is something that I am interested in talking to each of the panels. I also have several questions to submit if I am unable to be here through all of these panels, and thank you, Mr. Chairman, again.

(See p. 109.)

The CHAIRMAN. Yes, Jeff.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JEFF MILLER

Mr. MILLER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As you know, my district hosts five military bases and one of the largest concentrations of veterans in the country. And I would say that cemeteries, like other services for our veterans, are high priorities for my constituents, and these men and women who have committed years to the military and continue to participate in their community after their formal service has concluded, they prefer to be buried in a community that has become their home and the home of their wives, their husbands, their children and grandchildren.

I realize my district is not the only district that feels the need for more and more land for cemeteries, infrastructure improvements to existing cemeteries, or other maintenance needs, but, Mr. Chairman, it is these needs that place me on this committee. It is the care and attention I believe our veterans deserve that has focused my time and attention to these matters.

In closing, I appreciate the opportunity to listen to the panel that has assembled here today because it is a most important endeavor that we undertake today.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

I want to welcome our very distinguished witnesses. Dr. Moore, if you would begin. Just a note that Dr. Moore graduated from West Point in 1974 and has got his Ph.D. at the University of Maryland in 1989, a very impressive résumé. I would note that assisted in establishing the Commission on Base Closure and Defense Conversion. We won't hold that against you. But it was a very worthwhile exercise and needed.

And your two distinguished associates, if you wouldn't mind introducing them as well, and please proceed.

STATEMENT OF WILLIAM B. MOORE, Ph.D., VICE PRESIDENT FOR INFRASTRUCTURE MANAGEMENT, LOGISTICS MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE, ACCOMPANIED BY RONALD W. LIND, PROGRAM DIRECTOR, ORGANIZATIONAL IMPROVEMENT, LOGISTICS MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE; AND DONALD C. PRETTOL, RESEARCH FELLOW, LOGISTICS MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE

Mr. MOORE. Chairman Smith and distinguished members of The Committee on Veterans' Affairs, LMI welcomes the opportunity to give the committee an overview of our study on veteran cemeteries.

I am Dr. Bill Moore. I am LMI's vice president for infrastructure management and the corporate officer responsible for this work. With me today are Mr. Ron Lind, the program director responsible for the study, and Mr. Don Prettol, our project leader for the effort.

In 1999, VA cemeteries had 2.3 million graves, more than 6,000 developed acres, 600 buildings and other infrastructure such as roads, walks, electrical systems and monuments. Because the mortality rate of World War II and Korean War veterans was increasing, as was the utilization of the burial space by Vietnam war veterans, annual interments have increased from 58,400 in 1989 to 77,680 in 1999, a trend that will continue for the next decade.

We did the study to assist the National Cemetery Administration of the Department of Veterans Affairs with maintaining and improving all cemeteries under its jurisdiction in a manner befitting their status as national shrines. In the study we did three things: review the current and future burial needs, evaluate the maintenance required at the cemeteries, and recommended cemeteries' standards of appearance.

I will describe our evaluation of the maintenance needs, Mr. Lind will discuss our analysis of future burial needs, and Mr. Prettol will review our recommendations for cemetery standards of appearance.

As the first step in our evaluation of maintenance requirements, we asked the NCA cemetery directors to answer a Web-based survey questionnaire. These preliminary questions were about cemeteries, their inventories of buildings, burial sections and infrastructure. We then transformed the directors' responses to a database which was the primary source for the site-specific data and helped us identify potential problems.

A field survey of professionals, including landscape architects, civil engineers and architects, did the on-site assessment and data collection for this project. During site visits members of the team interviewed the directors, discussing specific details noted on the preliminary survey and gaining additional insight into specific concerns.

The field survey teams used a checklist specifically created for this project and approved by the National Cemetery Administration to assess and document existing conditions at each cemetery. The field effort consisted of visually assessing each location, using digital photography to document the problems, completing survey checklists to capture all elements in the electronic database. We then used that database to generate a comprehensive report about the condition of each cemetery.

With problems and deficiencies clearly identified, we recommended one-time repair projects, assigning a ranking in priority to each project. For each project we assessed the scope of the work for correcting the deficiencies, evaluated the overall effect of the project on the problem category and cyclical maintenance operations, and estimated the costs. The detailed results of our analyses are in our report, which we have summarized in Exhibit 1, which is included and also contains the results of a review for a sample cemetery.

I would point to the exhibit that accompanies my testimony today. The first table shows the summary of the results. There are

two columns displayed. The first has the regionally adjusted costs for each memorial service network. The second column has the number of projects. I would mention that those projects are not individually discrete. There can be aggregations of types of work in represented in each project.

The next 15 pages show an illustrative cemetery. We picked this location not because it was particularly good or bad, it was a good example of the types of issues that we found in many cemeteries. And with the Chairman's permission, I will show you a few slides very quickly that are illustrative of the types of problems.

This is a particular cemetery, but these things were found in many locations, so it gives you some sense of what we saw. The gravestones misaligned and tilted as a result of sinkage over time. Same issue here. Again, another look, you can see in the well-maintained cemeteries these tended to be very much aligned, and the staining and general appearance was kept up through typical maintenance. Road structures in and around the cemetery. Drainage structures. Standing water, again from drainage issues. Maintenance of facilities, in this case roof structures and gutters. As you can see in some of these, and we will show in the next couple of slides, these are historic structures, and, of course, maintenance to those structures were in some cases were below standards.

I will be followed by Mr. Lind, who will discuss the forecasting of burial requirements.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Moore, with attachment, appears on p. 42.]

Mr. LIND. Chairman Smith and distinguished Members, in response to Public Law 106–117, the Veterans Millennium Health Care and Benefits Act of 1999, LMI was contracted to provide analytical support to the National Cemetery Administration. Under the provisions of the act, we have examined providing a burial option for 90 percent of the veterans residing within a 75-mile service area of an open national or State cemetery.

Our report contains the following data for the 90 percent service objective: The number of additional cemeteries required in 5-year intervals beginning in 2005 and extending to 2020; for each 5-year period, the areas of the United States with the greatest concentrations of veterans whose needs are not served by national cemeteries or State veteran cemeteries.

From our analysis, we conclude that 31 additional veterans' cemeteries will be required over the next 20 years so the 90 percent of veterans will have a burial option in each of those periods. On the basis of our analysis, we recommend the locations of those 31 new cemeteries, which we have highlighted in the tables in Exhibit 1 for each of the 5-year periods.

We recommended the following for VA to achieve the 90 percent service objective: One, continue to encourage State grant program cemeteries as a means of serving veterans. Two, continue to examine ways of expanding the useful life of existing cemeteries, thereby avoiding closure and loss of service. And third, build new national cemeteries at or near the locations we recommend if neither of the previous options is possible.

Let me just take a minute and take you through the data that is in the exhibits. This is a summary of each of the 5-year periods.

These are the locations that we recommend for future cemeteries. If you notice at the top of the 2005 table, the cumulative percentage on the baseline is 81 percent, so in the year 2005, with the cemeteries that are still to be built until that period of time, there will be 81 percent coverage under the 90 percent rule. So we need to pick up about 10 percent of coverage to get to the 90. And what we have done is we found the locations by the largest coverage, first one Birmingham, Alabama, that population gained is the additional number of vets within 75 miles of that location that would now have coverage that didn't previously have coverage. And you can see that then runs a cumulative percentage up to 82 percent, so an increase of about 1 percent. We did that in decreasing order, so the size of the coverage with each additional cemetery increases until we reach the 90 percent, which is at the bottom of the table. That took 18 locations in 2005.

As we start the next look at 5 years later for 2010—shift to page 2 now of the exhibit. Now, during that period some cemeteries have closed, so the coverage dropped from the 90 percent. You see it is back down to 87 percent as the start point. So, again, the same methodology, largest first, and go down until you reach 90 percent again, and you can see it took four more locations to reach the 90 percent.

The same methodology applies for 2015 and 2020, for a total of 31 locations, this is true if—none of the current cemeteries that are planned for closing are extended in terms of their life or other State cemeteries are not added. Those would offset some subset of this set of 31 additional cemeteries.

With that, I would turn it over to Mr. Don Prettol.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Lind, with attachment, appears on p. 65.]

Mr. PRETTOL. As cemeteries that are clearly military in nature, the 119 national cemeteries belonging to the NCA, are individually and collectively, national shrines to those who offered their lives in defense of their country. The finest cemeteries in the world vary in certain common visual characteristics. Although there is some variation, we developed a broad set of standards. NCA can feasibly use this set of cemetery standards of appearance throughout its system. We recommended that NCA consider a set of 121 standards taken from these world-class cemeteries. The standards we recommended can be adjusted to accommodate differences in geography, types of markers, ground cover and burial activity without making them overly complex or convoluted.

The standards of appearance we propose fall into two categories, maintenance and burial operations. These standards apply to all cemeteries, whether active or closed. The standards are for headstones, turf, other ground cover, horticulture, facilities, floral tributes, neatness, personnel and security. The burial operation standards minimize the negative effect of operations on families and visitors without unduly detracting from their efficiency. The standards are for interments and inurnments, committal shelters and equipment.

With respect to using flat grave markers, we recommend using three determinative criteria, geophysical conditions, climate and

other conditions, when evaluating requests from the field for using flat grave markers in exception to Public-Law.

Establishing the standards of appearance we recommend, and implementing the use of these standards in one of the ways we suggest, will certainly and predictably improve the appearance of NCA's cemeteries. Following our guidance about the requests for exception to the grave marker statute will help the review of cemeteries to proceed in a more smooth and effective manner. That concludes my statement.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Prettol, with attachment, appears on p. 74.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you so much for your testimony, and let me thank LMI—all of you for a job very well done. This document that you have presented to the committee and to the VA really gives us a blueprint for action by the committee, by the subcommittee chaired so ably by Chairman Simpson, by our Senate counterparts, and hopefully going forward we will all do a better job, and you certainly aided our work immeasurably.

Let me just ask a couple of brief questions. I noticed in your report that you make the point that $279 million is the maintenance backlog; however, you suggested that some backlog is acceptable. What are the numbers there? How much do you think really absolutely has to be done yesterday, so to speak, and where can we stretch it out a little bit?

Mr. MOORE. As I mentioned in our report, a standard of 5 to 7 percent of the capitalization value of the facilities is—for this type of thing we think is an appropriate standard. That would translate into about a $60 million or $70 million backlog that you would expect to see as kind of a steady backlog as projects get added to it. That is vis-á-vis the 279 million that we have listed in the report total.

The CHAIRMAN. I noticed and I will ask the VA this as well, and, Mr. Lind, you may want to comment on this. Going back to July 29 to Secretary Principi, you recommended 31 new cemeteries. There are three, as you know. The word back from the VA by way of letter was that LMI overestimated the number by nine. You probably are familiar with that. How would you respond to that in terms of those numbers? I mean, it still brings us to 22, and we are nowhere near that with the 3. But, I mean, the nine that they say you have overestimated, has there has there been any give and take?

Mr. LIND. I have no heads up on that, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. We will give you the Secretary's response to that, and perhaps you can give us the benefit of the analysis. I looked at the future burial needs—areas of need, the response by the VA, and, frankly, was disappointed. There are at least 17 instances where there is no anticipated actions or comments.

But, again, talking about Beverly, the talk there is that 2010 year needed, and you know the VA itself will tell you there are no more in-ground burials at Beverly. What were your findings vis-á-vis Beverly, because, again, as I said in my opening comments, that used to be in my district. It is full for all purposes. We are using Arneytown. Matter of fact, my parents are buried at Arneytown. My father was a combat veteran from World War II. It is a very

fine cemetery, very well kept by the State. It is one of those State-Federal cooperative agreements.

But New Jersey is the most densely populated State in the Union, and we do have a serious problem with burial grounds, and Beverly can't handle it, and yet this says 2010. I mean, that gives a false picture about the reality on the ground. Dr. Lind or Dr. Moore.

Mr. PRETTOL. For the purposes of the study, we considered cremations and inurnments as the criteria for a cemetery being opened. A change in this assumption will affect the results of the analysis. We discussed changing this assumption but decided this definition was appropriate to consider a cemetery open.

The CHAIRMAN. But the majority of burials or the final disposition of the remains continues to be in-ground burials. So it would seem to me it does paint a false picture, and hopefully we can get that rectified by the VA as well.

Let me just ask you your sense of the VA's criteria that—75 miles, the distance being used, is that adequate these days? I mean, we use highway miles, but there seems to me there should be a differentiation between an urban area, suburban area and a rural area. Is it still an adequate gauge or criteria, if you will?

Mr. PRETTOL. We have had some discussion internally at LMI about taking a look at that. The conference report accompanying the Veterans Millennium Health Care and Benefits Act specified a 75-mile service area. It doesn't seem unreasonable from the perspective that the military catchment areas for hospitals is 50 miles. I think a 75-mile service area is reasonable. I also quote some statistics from the VA strategic plan that says they have done analysis which showed that 80 percent of the currently interred veterans lived within a 75-mile radius. All of that led us to believe it was probably reasonable.

The CHAIRMAN. What about the criteria of 170,000 veterans to be the threshold? Did you look at that as well, or was that just outside the scope?

Mr. LIND. That was not our assumption. We used the 90 percent coverage as our standard. So it went deep enough to get to 90 percent, independent of the size of the population that any one of those cemeteries picked up. And the 170,000, I think, would probably pick up a total of 6 or 7, as I recall, off of the 4 increments.

The CHAIRMAN. Of the 900 projects with a total cost of $280 million, can you provide the committee with a breakout of how that money ought to be spent?

Mr. MOORE. It is in our final report. What we did is we gave a prioritized list based on health and safety, and then going down through other criteria, and then we ranked them by one-time needs as well as reoccurring. That is for each cemetery that is in there.

The CHAIRMAN. I hope we have better luck and we get better traction with our colleagues in the Senate. And this committee has passed two bills on hospital and infrastructure repair. One of them was for $550 million over 2 years, and another put out by Mr. Moran, our distinguished Chairman of our health committee, specifically called for repairs to be made at specific sites throughout the country. Regrettably, both of those are languishing over on the Senate side, and I hope we don't repeat that feat for these repairs.

Thank you for the blueprint. It is very, very helpful.

Mr. Evans.

Mr. EVANS. I am lucky. Due to a recent land acquisition at the Rock Island cemetery in Quincy, Illinois, there is now under-capacity in my congressional district.

Also, as long as we are looking at these issues, sometimes when you do something right, you don't get a pat on the back. I appreciate the work that you do.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Mr. Evans. Chairman Simpson.

Mr. SIMPSON. Just one question. You recommended 31 new national cemeteries be built. You also said that the addition of State cemeteries could reduce that amount. Did you take into consideration any additional new State cemeteries, or is that 31 national cemeteries if no new State cemeteries are built?

Mr. MOORE. We made no assumptions about additional State cemeteries.

Mr. SIMPSON. So if there are some new State cemeteries coming on, it could reduce that requirement, and could that be the difference between what VA said was the nine overestimated?

Mr. MOORE. We have not looked at that issue, but it is possible.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Reyes.

Mr. REYES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a couple of questions. First one deals with whether or not your recommendations about future national cemetery locations would change if it were based on the 2000 census instead of the 1990 census data.

Mr. PRETTOL. I have to assume that it would change, but the data was not available, and the committee had a deadline for the report, so we used the best information we had at the time.

Mr. REYES. Mr. Chairman, I am concerned about that, because 10 years makes a big difference in terms of the population shift. Is it feasible to do a supplemental study in terms of vis-á-vis 1990 versus 2000 census?

The CHAIRMAN. Very good question.

Mr. MOORE. Technically it is possible to do that. Most of the census products are available now, so I would say the quick answer is probably yes.

The CHAIRMAN. Probably could be some weighting done.

Mr. REYES. The reason I mention that, just reducing it to Texas, we know that Corpus Christi, Laredo, Brownsville, McLennan area have seen a tremendous shift in population there, and yet the facilities for veterans are nonexistent down there. So this would be a big step in the right direction for them.

The CHAIRMAN. Again, I think the gentleman has an excellent point. I think we ought to ask the VA that question as well as to whether or not a new study is needed. I mean, I know we have a couple of gentlemen from the State of Florida who serve in this committee, and there are many veterans from New Jersey who eventually migrate to Florida and die there and then are potentially buried in a VA cemetery there.

So it is a very good question, and I think we should follow that up with the VA, and they might want to take a shot at that answer as well.

Mr. REYES. The other question I have, and this relates directly to the cemetery in El Paso. We have a new director, and he was

putting forth a proposal to go from natural grass to zeroscaping. Can you tell us what goes into that decisionmaking process? Is it a decision that is made locally? Is it something that is being pushed nationally? Do you have any idea?

Mr. MOORE. We don't have any real expertise on that. We know that—some of the factors that affect it in terms of the cost from a maintenance standpoint, but we are not certain what the policy is on that.

Mr. REYES. That is all I had, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

Mr. Miller, gentleman from Florida.

Mr. REYES. Mr. Chairman, if you will excuse me, I have to go to an intelligence hearing, so I wanted to apologize for having to leave.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Miller.

Mr. MILLER. Could you restate what committee you are going to? I do have a question. The Chairman was asking about the 75-mile rule, and I may not have been paying attention. What was the answer? Is that adequate now? Do you see it is adequate?

Mr. MOORE. Our response to that is it, to us, appears to be reasonable based on our other work in other areas of health systems and the like. There is a question about urban versus rural. Seventy-five miles isn't the same in all locations, but it seems to be a reasonable standard.

The CHAIRMAN. Mrs. Davis.

Mrs. DAVIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I know in your introduction you mentioned bringing in architects, engineers and a lot of the administrators to talk about the needs that we have out there, and I am just wondering about the role of some of the veterans' organizations, and if you are able to go to them, how much input do they provide, and do they have a different perspective; what are they asking for what; do they feel is really needed?

Mr. PRETTOL. I can say that at the very outset of the project, we met with most of the veterans' organizations. They reviewed the methodology. We also met with some of the local veterans' organizations as we visited cemeteries as as part of the standards task. As far as their opinions as to future burial needs, I do not have any knowledge in that area.

Mrs. DAVIS. I know that the 75-mile rule is a major issue, and as I raised Rosecrans in San Diego, and I believe we have the largest veteran population in the country there, that there is a cemetery in Riverside, but it is really quite far for people to go. And there has been some talk of trying to work closer with that, but there are also concerns about trying to find additional new sites in San Diego that could be additional sites, and I am just wondering what your thoughts are about that. I know that Secretary Principi has visited San Diego on a number of occasions, and I think people are averse to look at auxiliary kinds of cemeteries. Do you have any input in particular to that?

Mr. PRETTOL. I really don't. It has been so long since we actually did the report that I can't recall the analysis in that specific area. I can go back and revisit that and send an answer to you.

Mrs. DAVIS. Great. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Mrs. Davis. Mr. Boozman.

Mr. BOOZMAN. No.

The CHAIRMAN. Dr. Snyder.

Mr. SNYDER. Just one question. I had occasion, I don't know, 3 or 4 years ago to visit one of our overseas cemeteries. I think it was outside of Bastogne, and it was a beautiful place, very well maintained. I met with the, I guess, superintendent, and he is the only person I ever asked in my time in politics where I asked him, do you have adequate funding, and he said, yes, we have everything we need. Does your study at all involve the maintenance and those kinds of issues about overseas cemeteries?

Mr. PRETTOL. We did go overseas. We have a list in the report of all the cemeteries we visited. We looked at several American Battle Monuments Commission cemeteries. They have different situation in that they are closed cemeteries. They are gorgeous, and we recognize those as some of the finest in the world.

Mr. SNYDER. You did not see any problems with them?

Mr. PRETTOL. No.

Mr. SNYDER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Any further questions?

I want to thank you again for your fine work and for being here and for giving us the benefit of your thoughts and counsel, and we appreciate it. We look forward to being in touch with you if we have any additional questions from Members.

And I would like to welcome our second witness, Vincent L. Barile, Deputy Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs. Mr. Barile was appointed Deputy Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs on October 4 of 2002. In this role, Mr. Barile directs budget and planning, information systems, communications, human resources, administration, contracting, memorial programs, State cemetery grants, operations and construction for 120 national cemeteries.

From 1990 until his appointment, Mr. Barile was the Deputy Under Secretary for Management for the National Cemetery Administration. Prior to 1990, he was Director of the NCA Budget and Planning, where he managed the annual budget, all NCA planning activities, plus other functions including emergency preparedness, energy conservation and safety programs. So if he doesn't know, nobody knows, what is going on within the VA cemetery system.

He is a former commander in the Navy, a Navy veteran. He also served in the Mediterranean and the Far East.

Thank you for being here, and please proceed.

STATEMENT OF VINCENT L. BARILE, DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY FOR MEMORIAL AFFAIRS, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS, ACCOMPANIED BY DANIEL TUCKER, DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF FINANCE AND PLANNING, NATIONAL CEMETERY ADMINISTRATION, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. BARILE. Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the three reports that the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) completed in response to the requirements of section 613 of the Veterans Millen-

nium Health Care and Benefits Act. With me today is Mr. Dan Tucker, Director of NCA's Office of Finance and Planning. And I would like to submit my written testimony for the record.

The CHAIRMAN. Without objection, your written testimony will be made a part of the record.

Mr. BARILE. Section 613 of the act required us to contract for an independent study to address several issues, including identifying the one-time repair needs at each of our national cemeteries, the feasibility of making standards of appearance of VA national cemeteries equal to the finest cemeteries in the world, and the identification of the number of additional cemeteries required to meet future burial needs of veterans.

Logistic Management Institute was selected as the independent contractor for this study. The scope and objective of the study was developed in consultation with professional staff members of both the House and Senate Committees on Veterans' Affairs, and with representatives of the major veterans' service organizations. In order to easily present such a large amount of information, the results of the study were issued in three separate volumes. These reports serve as valuable tools for the Department by providing data for use in our planning processes. I appreciate this opportunity to explain how VA is using the information to meet its mission today and in the future.

The Cemetery Standards of Appearance study addresses the feasibility of establishing standards of appearance for our national cemeteries equal to those of the finest cemeteries in the world. The study serves as an independent reference guide that will assist us in ensuring that the overall appearance of each national cemetery reflects the distinction of a national shrine.

NCA is using the report to evaluate and review its current standards. It is important to note that the report did not find a single cemetery that qualified for the distinction of the finest cemetery in the world on all elements of appearance.

The National Shrine Commitment report provides the first independent systemwide review of the condition of our cemeteries. NCA is currently evaluating the 928 identified projects and developing a strategy to address the report's findings.

And finally, the report, entitled Future Burial Needs, provides an assessment of the number of additional cemeteries that would be required to provide service to 90 percent of veterans within 75 miles of a cemetery beginning in 2005 and projecting out to 2020. In order to meet this required 90 percent service level, the report identified 31 locations as those areas in the United States with the greatest concentration of veterans whose burial needs are not served by a national or State cemetery.

We acknowledge that there are a number of factors that could impact travel to a national cemetery. Some of these are geographic, and some reflect the challenges found in densely populated metropolitan areas. For this reason, accessibility to a potential site is carefully considered when choosing a new cemetery's location in order to maximize access for veterans and their families.

VA determined that a veteran population threshold of 170,000 within a 75-mile service radius would be appropriate for the establishment of a new national cemetery. This is consistent with deci-

sions relating to the location of recently opened national cemeteries.

Based on the threshold limit as well as the locations recommended by the report, VA would plan for three additional national cemeteries by 2020. This includes one in Sarasota County, Florida, to ensure continued service delivery when the Bay Pines National Cemetery closes due to the lack of additional land acquisition. The remaining two cemetery sites in Birmingham, Alabama, and Columbia-Greenville, South Carolina, will provide a burial option in areas not currently served by any national or State veterans cemetery within 75 miles.

We consider a cemetery open if it provides for the first interment of casketed or cremated remains. A cemetery is considered closed when there are no longer first interment options, even though burial operations continue with the interment of family members in already occupied graves. At the end of fiscal year 2002, 87 of our 120 cemeteries were open.

We recognize that cremation is not considered to be an acceptable burial choice for everyone; however, the choice of cremation continues to increase in private as well as national cemeteries across the country. For example, the Cremation Association of North America projects that the national cremation rate will increase from its actual rate of 26 percent in 2000 to 49 percent in 2025. Some areas already exceed this national average. For fiscal year 2002, NCA's cremation rate was 37 percent for all interments performed, and we project this number will increase consistent with the national trend.

The State Cemetery Grants Program was established in 1978 to complement VA's network of national cemeteries. Grants may be used only for the purpose of establishing, expanding or improving veterans cemeteries that are owned and operated by the State. We can now provide up to 100 percent of the development costs for an approved project, but we do not provide funds for the land acquisition. We will continue to encourage States through this program to expand already open veterans cemeteries as well as to establish new State cemeteries in unserved areas.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my oral testimony. I will be pleased to respond to any questions you or the committee members may have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Barile appears on p. 87.]

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Tucker, did you have anything you wanted to add?

Mr. TUCKER. No, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Couple of opening questions. What is NCA doing to address the maintenance backlog that was detailed in LMI's report? Dr. Moore testified a few moments ago that an acceptable backlog will probably be in the realm of $60 million to $70 million. That leaves, if we took that as a reasonable gap, about $210 million that is not being addressed. When can we expect a budget submission to include the details and the requests for that kind of funding?

Mr. BARILE. As you mentioned in your opening statement, Mr. Chairman, we have had actually $15 million already appropriated by Congress in support of the National Shrine Commitment. The

President's budget request for fiscal year 2003 includes another $10 million, bringing a total of $25 million for the National Shrine commitment. That money in itself was addressing the visually prominent areas of concern at several of our cemeteries. That would mean raising sunken grave sites, cleaning and realigning of headstones.

We are evaluating the projects listed now in determining the prioritization of need, and we will address those along with our 5-year minor construction program as we develop the fiscal year 2004 submission as well as some of the projects already listed in our fiscal year 2003 submission.

The CHAIRMAN. I mentioned earlier to Dr. Moore and Mr. Lind a question with regards to the letter I sent back in July, and we had an exchange of letters between Secretary Principi and myself, and if you didn't draft that letter, you certainly had a hand in it. And the response back was the recommendation was 31 new cemeteries. You pointed out, or the Secretary pointed out, that it was overestimated—the need—by nine because of an expansion of existing cemeteries and the purchase of new areas to expand their capacity, but that still leaves 22, even if that analysis is correct, they are not being adequately planned for.

Is there any—now using the report, LMI's report, as a catalyst, is there any new initiative perhaps under way to try and create additional cemeteries.

Mr. BARILE. If I may in the way of providing some background, also in your opening testimony you referred to the two previous reports. In those two previous reports, we were to identify the 10 areas of greatest need in the country based on veteran population. While each report indicated a list of 10 locations, the total number of locations identified was 13. VA established national cemeteries in 6 locations, is currently establishing an additional 6 national cemeteries, and acquired land to keep an existing national cemetery open. And that finishes that list from the combined reports.

This report takes us beyond a number of 10, which makes it really unrealistic for the VA to grapple with this type of requirement. What we are trying to do is work with the States, and that is the purpose of the threshold. We are saying that 170,000 is a threshold. We have no plan at this point in time to address those locations below that threshold with the establishment of a national cemetery. Therefore, the States should consider proceeding with some plans and talk to the State legislatures about supporting a State veterans cemetery.

The areas above the 170,000 threshold includes, as I mentioned in my testimony, three new cemeteries, but it also includes the assumption which was part of the question by Chairman Simpson. The fact is we have to keep open cemeteries open, so we are looking for land acquisition at at our cemeteries in Willamette, Oregon, at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, and Jefferson Barracks in St. Louis. So we have six cemeteries above that 170,000 that we are working already based on this report.

The CHAIRMAN. Just, again, because I know it is of interest to all the Members, the 170,000 threshold, perhaps it is a surface appeal to look at, but it appears to be arbitrary. Why not 150,000? Why not 175,000? Could you detail what that is based on?

Mr. BARILE. What it is based on is an analysis of the veteran populations—the two prior reports, the 1987 and the 1994 combined, had 13 sites identified. *The lowest populations* basically were in Oklahoma City and Albany. They were around 170,000 veterans. So we looked at that and said when we went down the list of the future burial needs, you look at Sarasota County, which is 373,000; Salem, Oregon, 267,000. It just came down to six cemeteries, if you will, around the 170,000. I wouldn't say it is arbitrary, but I would say we figured six would be enough to deal with in the next coming years.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me just ask you with regards to the VA's original budget request to OMB for the fiscal year 2003 budget for the maintenance of existing cemeteries. Did you ask for more than you got from OMB?

Mr. BARILE. We always ask for more than we get. I didn't bring that figure with me.

The CHAIRMAN. Could you provide it, because I know you go through the filter, as do all the agencies in government, but it would be very helpful to this committee, knowing you are the man on the job and you are sharp, to know where are the needs. Maintenance needs to be upgraded. We need to hurry up offense on that. We can be helpful. We now have one blueprint out of my study, and your recommendations will be very helpful. And that is not going out of the line authority either, because you are being asked, and we would like to know that if you could provide it.

(The information follows:)

VA's original budget request to OMB for the fiscal year 2003 budget for the maintenance of existing cemeteries.

The fiscal year 2003 budget request to the Office of Management and Budget for the operations and maintenance appropriation for the National Cemetery Administration was $138,149,000. This excludes funds associated with the legislative proposal to have agencies pay for the full cost of the accrual of the Civil Service Retirement System and the Federal Employee Health Benefits Programs.

Mr. BARILE. I would add although, as I said, we always ask for more than we get, the amount we got was probably more generous than some other elements both in the government and in the VA. So we found it to be manageable.

The CHAIRMAN. Has Secretary Principi received his briefing on NCA's final standard of appearance mentioned in the cover letter accompanying Volume 3? And what is being done on the appearance issue, since that is another area of great concern to the committee?

Mr. BARILE. The Secretary was briefed. What we have done is we have analyzed the recommendations. I believe, as the LMI expert said, there were 121 elements to those. So what we are doing now is in a sense reviewing them to see how applicable they are to our operations and coming up with our final set of standards that will then be transmitted within the next several weeks to all of our field facilities to allow them to start to analyze their own individual facilities and determine where they are as a baseline.

The CHAIRMAN. Can we get a copy of that, please?

Mr. BARILE. Yes, sir.

(The information follows:)

Copy of the final set of standards that will be transmitted within the next several weeks of all field facilities.

The review of the National Cemetery Administration's (NCA) final Standards of Appearance is being completed. NCA compared the contractor's recommended "finest in the world" standards to NCA's standards, adding to NCA's standards or modifying existing standards where appropriate. The standards will be provided to the Committee when the Department completes its review.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me ask you with regards to the Beverly National Cemetery. Again, I look at this future burial needs document, and it states rather categorically, Philadelphia-Trenton area served by Beverly, served until 2010. How can that be since there are no new in-ground burials occurring?

Mr. BARILE. I think in essence we have said that Brigadier General Doyle, which I might add for fiscal year 2002—I brought the interment statistics—had 2,430 interments. And if you rank that—and I would like to point out that there is, with the change in the funding for the State Cemetery Grants Program where VA can provide up to 100 percent, the States are actually a true complement, and they meet the standards of a national cemetery—Brigadier General Doyle would rank twelfth among our active cemeteries, and so it is a widely used cemetery. And, as you indicated, it is a very pleasant and serene cemetery.

The CHAIRMAN. No doubt but Beverly should not be on this list.

Mr. BARILE. As I said, we are using the definition of cremation—only cemeteries as open cemeteries and the 75-mile as a basis for determining what the service areas are, and that is what LMI used when they did their analysis.

Mr. EVANS. With the interest of time, I will yield back the balance of my time.

The CHAIRMAN. Mrs. Davis?

Mrs. DAVIS. No.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Boozman?

Mr. BOOZMAN. No.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Miller?

Mr. MILLER. No.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. I apologize. I just got off the plane. I didn't put a tie on.

Let me ask you, in San Antonio, we have a large area to the south. I was concerned by the numbers that you have for the valley in Cameron County and Hidalgo County and even Webb County. It is the fastest growing region in the entire Nation. I was wondering, you know—and they were telling me that you were using the 1990 census?

Mr. BARILE. That is correct.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. When do you plan to plug in the actual numbers?

Mr. BARILE. What we are planning to do is—and that goes to Mr. Reyes' question as well—we will update our planning tool when we have the 2000 census data, and we are projecting the VA's actuary will project our veteran population demographics based on that, and we expect this data sometime mid next year.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. We have some counties down there. One of them went from 50,000 to 200,000.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. The other, Hidalgo, almost half a million people and not to mention in Nueces County and these areas down there.

Mr. BARILE. The model, as I said, is a planning tool and it is only as good as its currency; and we would plan to update it and to use the relevant data.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. The determination for a new burial site consider proximity of the nearest site, does it. For example, the valley is about 200 miles away from San Antonio, and that is the closest cemetery that they have.

Mr. BARILE. The focal points are, in a sense, centers of population. Where we build then will depend on the site locations that are available within that general area. Obviously, you can't just plop down a point in the middle of a central veteran population. We try and locate a cemetery in an area where it is accessible and the road system will support easy transportation to the cemetery for visitation.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Regarding the San Antonio site, did consider how it might be able to be expanded?

Mr. BARILE. We have been very lucky that the DOD has been cooperative with us, and we have had land acquisition from them. It has been in small parcels, but parcels enough that we keep the cemetery open.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Okay. I know—because you mentioned some projections would be expanded in the future, does that take into consideration, the expansion that took place just recently?

Mr. BARILE. Right.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Did you look where you might be able to get additional land.

Mr. BARILE. Yes.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. I know the last plot came from the school district.

Mr. BARILE. No, this is DOD land that we are looking at that DOD is willing to transfer.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Is this additional land that we have already taken?

Mr. BARILE. Yes, we are in the process of acquiring that.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Okay. Do you know where exactly?

Mr. BARILE. Not off the top, but we can provide that for you.

(The information follows:)

Location at DOD land that VA is looking at in order to expand the Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery.

Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery, located in San Antonio, Texas, provided 3,470 interments of both casketed and cremated remains in fiscal year 2002. The cemetery is projected to have available grave space until 2011. The National Cemetery Administration (NCA) is currently working with the Department of Army for the transfer of two parcels of land. One is a 13-acre tract and the other is an estimated 150-acre tract. The 13-acres is surrounded by cemetery land, which was transferred to VA from Army. A total of 39 acres was transferred in 1997. The 13-acre tract was originally planned to be part of that transfer from the Army, but was delayed due to the presence of a landfill, which has been cleaned up. The 150-acre parcel is directly adjacent to the cemetery to the east. It is a tract of land that includes the old Army MAARS radio antennae station. NCA is planning a major construction project to upgrade the cemetery as well as develop a significant portion of the land to be transferred. The additional land should provide burial capacity for over 25 additional years.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Okay.

Going back again to the numbers, looking at if you are working from the 1990 Census, Mr. Chairman, we may have a problem. You

know because a lot of things have transpired in the last decade. I apologize if it was already brought up, but I mean, we get bombarded down in the Valley, Congressman Ortiz and Congressman Hinojosa, part of it; it is not even in my area. But they don't have a cemetery. They are almost 200 miles away.

Mr. BARILE. As the LMI indicated, the reporting deadlines precluded us from waiting. That is why I said we will update the model. We had to provide the reports within as reasonable amount of time as Congress gave us.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. And when do you update your direction, if that has to change?

Mr. BARILE. About mid-next-year we will have the VA's veteran population model laid over the outyear projections for the census.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Okay.

Now, is it my understanding that when you do the census, they identify who is a veteran and who is not?

Mr. BARILE. The census has some data and then we do veteran population projections, and we work with DOD on veteran accessions and deaths, and so then we project out the future veteran migration.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Okay.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. I understand Mrs. Davis has a question.

Mrs. DAVIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

May I ask you just to comment on the question I asked earlier about what I would call an auxiliary cemetery that is smaller, cemeteries that are connected to a much larger—and again we are talking about maintaining the standards of a national cemetery. Are there some throughout the country, and could you give me just your assessment of whether that is a good idea or not?

Mr. BARILE. It is not usually a good idea, because what we do then if it is adjacent land, it is not an auxiliary site; it is an expansion of the existing cemetery. If you have to move equipment and people over highways or roads 5, 10, 15 miles away, it becomes—actually what you are doing is establishing a second cemetery in that proximity, and that diverts our resources for the major metropolitan areas. Our primary goal is to keep service areas being served; and we do everything we can to acquire adjacent land, as we were just talking about, land from the Army.

We had in Oregon—our cemetery, Willamette, was scheduled to close, and for years there was no willing seller. Just recently, we were able to acquire the adjacent land to the cemetery, so we are going to be able to keep that service area open. That is our goal. Once we are in an area, we would like to keep the service to the veterans and the community there as best we can. If we cannot, then we turn to the State and say, we are going to close. If the population doesn't support a national cemetery based on the threshold, then you need to explore going to the State legislature and seeing about getting some funding for a State veterans cemetery.

(Subsequently, the Department of Veterans Affairs provided the following information:)

ADD NOTE

The National Cemetery Administration (NCA) acquired an additional 68 acres in 1990 that allowed the Willamette National Cemetery to remain open until 2015,

which is past the original projected closure date. NCA anticipates acquiring an additional 37 acres to further extend the service life of Willamette National Cemetery.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Mrs. Davis.

And, Mr. Barile, let me ask you a question. And I think you will probably need to get back to us on this one.

But it would be very helpful for us to gain a better understanding about the radius issue and the distance issue of 75 miles. What percentage of veterans who take advantage of interment in any given national cemetery lived within 40 miles and 50 miles?

Mr. BARILE. Oh, that—I will have to work a model up for you on that. Those statistics are not readily available.

What we do know is that 80 percent do come from within 75 miles. And so that is why, when we worked with LMI, they said they thought that was reasonable. We think it is reasonable. I would acknowledge that you can find locations around the country that are not realistic, but as a national measure, we find that to be somewhat realistic.

I would offer the same thing for Calverton, NY, where people are coming along the Long Island Expressway all the way out—beyond 75 miles to be buried at a national cemetery. People will come. But what we try to do is put them in the locations that will best serve and try and get them in that proximity.

(This information is on p. 22.)

The CHAIRMAN. And as quickly as possible, because I think it would be very helpful in our oversight function, and hopefully going forward, to figure out whether or not this figure, especially given the rural/suburban break, because 75 miles isn't 75 miles in some places, as you just pointed out.

Mr. BARILE. Right. And I would think that then we would have to go back and see how long LMI would take to run their model based on the demographics that they have, and if we want to wait for the population; so I am not sure, in a sense, how realistic we could provide you with data as far as updates, but we can provide you the current data.

The CHAIRMAN. You know, my sense—and I could be wrong—is that with every succeeding 10 miles or so, there has got to be a drop-off, especially when you get—I mean, 50 maybe is more reasonable, 40 is more reasonable. But when you get to 75, some people may say, I will go locally, especially when it comes to visitation.

You know, I visit my parents frequently at the Arneytown; for me, it is not that far. But if I lived in North Jersey, if I lived in Philadelphia, it would be a hike. And it would be a lot more difficult, particularly for an elderly person, the survivor, to make that 75-mile trek to remember their loved one.

So it is not just the day of interment I would be concerned about. It would be the ongoing visitation of loved ones who are still very, very far away in some cases.

Mr. BARILE. We will provide you that.

The CHAIRMAN. If you would provide that, that will be helpful. Thank you.

(The information follows:)

What percentage of veterans who took advantage of interment in any given national cemetery lived within 40 miles and 50 miles?

The National Cemetery Administration (NCA) currently collects information, through its automated burial records database, on how many burials were performed for individuals whose address of record was within 75-miles of the national cemetery. In order to be able to report data for multiple distances, as requested, NCA is currently defining a sampling model that will be able to calculate the percentage of veterans whose address of records were located within 40 and 50 miles of the national cemetery. Once this information is available, we will be able to share it with the Committee. We hope to be able to have this information to the Committee by the end of November 2002.

The CHAIRMAN. We have three votes on the floor, I regret to say, so we are going to have to take a short recess. But I would encourage members to come back. Richard Jones from AMVETS will be giving the Independent Budget's perspective, AMVETS and on behalf of the Independent Budgets.

Mr. BARILE. All right.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

[Recess.]

The CHAIRMAN. I would like to welcome our third panelist, Mr. Richard Jones, the National Legislative Director of AMVETS, who is here to give the Independent Budget's assessment or the report. And Mr. Jones is a good friend of the committee and has provided many, many excellent insights over the years. It is good to have him here.

And I apologize to you for this long delay between panels. There were three votes on the floor and nothing I could do about. But still it is an inconvenience to you, so I do apologize.

Please proceed.

STATEMENT OF RICHARD JONES, NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR, AMVETS

Mr. JONES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and indeed we do understand the process of Congress and we thank you very much for your service.

On behalf of the member organizations, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Evans, the organizations of The Independent Budgets, including AMVETS, the Disabled American Veterans, the Paralyzed Veterans of America and the Veterans of Foreign Wars, we thank you very much for this opportunity to come by and report on our assessment of the study recently concluded by VA on improving burial benefits and cemeteries.

I know that my statement is in the record, and I don't believe it is important for me to go over the statement, but I would like to highlight two areas, understanding the time of the committee and the nature of Congress.

Now, the first is in Volume 2, the national shrine commitment, which provides a system-wide, comprehensive view of the conditions at VA national cemeteries. The study in Volume 2 identifies over 900 projects for grave site renovation, repair, upgrade and maintenance, and with a total estimated cost of completing these projects of nearly $280 million, according to the study.

Now, a major part of the contributing factor of these project repair recommendations is the accumulation of uncorrected past deficiencies, in our estimation. Deferred maintenance, as any public facilities manager knows, results in continued deterioration of facilities and increasing costs related to necessary repairs. The Independent Budget Veterans' Service Organizations agree with the assessment in Volume 2, and we recommend and urge Congress and VA to work together to establish a timeline for funding these projects based on the severity of the problems. We believe that a timeline could help relieve this backlog and return us to a solid track of regular maintenance expenditures.

I would also like to highlight one other volume of the report, Volume 3, Cemetery Standards of Appearance. We believe that is a careful and a richly articulate presentation. VA examined closely many of the elements that comprise what they call "the finest military cemeteries in the world"; and indeed they have. They also looked at Arlington National Cemetery, and these efforts are all aimed at helping form a potential set of national standards which would improve the appearance of NCA cemeteries and guide application of future resources.

Volume 3 also describes one of the most important elements of veterans cemeteries, namely to honor the memory of America's brave men and women who have served in the Armed Forces. As the report states, an important part of the purpose of veterans cemeteries is to serve beyond a dignified burial of a veteran and "to serve a national purpose after the burials have ceased, even long after the visits of families and loved ones."

The Independent Budget Veteran Service Organizations agree with this assessment of the purpose of the cemeteries as national shrines. Truly, many of the individual cemeteries within the system are steeped in history. And the monuments, markers, grounds and related memorial tributes represent the very foundations of these United States.

With this understanding, the grounds, including monuments and individual sites of interment, represent a national treasure that deserves to be protected and nurtured. Unfortunately, despite NCA's continued high standards of service and despite a true need to protect and nurture this national treasure, the system continues to be seriously challenged as these reports indicate.

The current and future needs of the National Cemetery Administration require continued but adequate funding to ensure that the system remains a world-class, quality operation to honor veterans and recognize their contributions and service to the Nation. When the Independent Budget for fiscal year 2004 is published later this year, we will recommend a budget consistent with NCA's growing demands and in concert with the respect due every man and woman who wears the uniform of the United States of America.

The study on improvements to veterans cemeteries presents the valuable information and tools for the development of a truly national veterans cemetery system. We recommend that you give it your close attention, and we thank you for initiating the study in the Millennium Act, and for this oversight hearing, which follows on that process begun in the last Congress. We thank you.

Mr. Chairman, again we applaud the committee for holding the hearing. We thank the committee for extending the opportunity to present remarks on this important subject. We look forward to working with the committee to strengthen, enhance and improve the earned benefits of our Nation's veterans and their families.

And this concludes my statement. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Jones appears on p. 94.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Mr. Jones.

Do any of the VSOs, as far as you know, make regular written reports on the appearance at several of our veterans cemeteries.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Chairman, I know that we receive reports from the field from our members. And in receipt of those reports, we write letters to the National Cemetery Administration. Most of these letters are in regard to the repair and necessary alignment of headstones, for example. But generally in regard to the appearance, that is the area where we receive most of our communication from the field and where we translate that communication to the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The CHAIRMAN. Has the NCA been responsive to your appeals?

Mr. JONES. They have, sir. And I think in large part the national shrine movement, which was begun just a couple of years ago with great intensity and enthusiasm by National Cemetery Administration, is part of that response.

The CHAIRMAN. You heard the discussion earlier that we had about Dr. Moore's recommendation that $60 to $70 million would be an adequate or reasonable backlog as opposed to the 280—is that the number, 280? What would, in your view, be a reasonable backlog that you could say, well, we can't get to it now, but—do you have any——

Mr. JONES. I think Dr. Moore is in the ball park. The problem we have is that that money has not been going to NCA. It has been chipped off, of course, following the appropriations bills for other activities at the Department of Veterans Affairs. We understand that Department of Veterans Affairs letters are sent on a regular basis to the members of the committees on appropriations—the "cardinals."

The cardinals receive these letters and allow transfers of funds from NCA to other areas, for example, health care, where funds are needed. There are shortfalls at NCA. And this area seems to be nickeled and dimed on occasion, and the result is what we see in this report, a backlog of 900 projects. Certainly, if we were able to take care of those in backlog and return to a regular maintenance schedule, $60 million a year for maintenance may well be an appropriate figure, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. You know, (I think, as you know,) one of the main reasons why we have introduced legislation to create a mandatory funding mechanism for VA health care, not only do we nickel and dime the health care part of the budget, but it also crowds out and takes money from other very important projects like the NCA repair projects that need to be undertaken, as well as additional cemeteries.

You know, it is all in competition with itself under the general heading of the VA. And then it is competition with other parts of that VA-HUD appropriation. So you have got all of this competition

for scarce funds and much falls out as a result of that, as I know you know.

And again, I want to thank you for your work. The Independent Budget again provides us with a blueprint that both our staff and the members take very seriously. It is very helpful in crafting our recommendations, not just for the Budget Committee, but for legislation as well.

Mr. JONES. Thank you, sir. Thank you very much.

The CHAIRMAN. I would like to yield to my good friend and colleague, Mr. Evans.

Mr. EVANS. No questions.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay. I thank you, Mr. Jones, again for your patience and, more importantly, for your good work.

The hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:10 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN CHRIS SMITH (NJ)
FULL COMMITTEE HEARING ON VETERANS' CEMETERIES
OCTOBER 16, 2002

Good afternoon. The hearing will come to order. I want to thank everyone for coming here today. I want to welcome our witnesses: Dr. Willliam Moore, Mr. Ronald Lind, and Mr. Donald Prettol from Logistics Management Institute, VA Deputy Under Secretary Vincent Barile, and Mr. Richard Jones.

In July of 1862 Congress enacted legislation authorizing the President to purchase "cemetery grounds to be used as national cemeteries for soldiers who shall have died in the service of the country." That year, fourteen cemeteries were established. To understand the importance of this action, we can recall the words spoken by President Abraham Lincoln at the dedication of the national cemetery at Gettysburg: *"We cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract."*

Today there are 120 national cemeteries in 39 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico; 33 of these cemeteries are closed to new internments, 26 can accommodate only cremated remains and family members of those already interred and 61, or roughly half, are open to all internments. In all, VA maintains 2.4 million gravesites.

The number of internments in VA national cemeteries has increased from 36,400 in 1973 to 84,800 in 2001, and the number of cremations has increased to more than 34 percent of total interments for the last two years.

Today's hearing will give us an opportunity to hear about the independent study that was mandated by section 613 of the Veterans Millennium Health Care Benefits Act of 1999. This law required VA to contract for an assessment of the current and future burial needs of our nation's veterans. Logistics Management Institute was awarded the study by VA.

Volume 1 of the study, entitled "Future Burial Needs", reviews current and future burial needs of veterans and identifies areas of the country where new national cemeteries might be constructed. According to existing VA planning guidelines, VA should establish cemeteries as needed to provide service to 90 percent of veterans within 75 miles of their homes. The report projects burial needs in 5-year increments to the year 2020, and discusses the costs of establishing a new cemetery.

Volume 2, titled, National Shrine Commitment, gives an evaluation of the current maintenance and construction work NCA needs to accomplish to bring these cemeteries up to standard. This report documents the existing conditions at each cemetery, evaluates and makes recommendations on the number of one-time repair projects for improving the condition, function, or appearance of each cemetery. It estimates the total cost of these projects at $279 million.

Volume 3, titled, Cemetery Standards of Appearance, provides a detailed review of steps the NCA must take to establish and preserve our cemeteries as national shrines; this was a collaborative effort involving cemetery directors and veterans service

organizations to arrive at "standards of excellence" for the appearance of national cemeteries.

This report prepared by LMI is the third such report on veterans cemetery requirements in the past 15 years. The first study was presented to Congress in 1987 and the second study was completed in 1994.

What we want to hear today are recommendations to help this Committee and VA to set a course for the future of the National Cemetery Administration. In the past five years, five new national cemeteries have been opened; an additional six cemeteries are in various stages of construction. But in planning this expansion, it appears that the significant maintenance needs of the existing cemeteries have been overlooked. While meeting the ever increasing demands for burials, expected to peak in the year 2008, is an important goal, it should not come at the cost of maintaining existing cemeteries to high standards.

I expect that time Members will want to discuss the needs o their own constituencies and states. I know that my home state of New Jersey is among the most densely populated in the country, and home to over 600,000 veterans. I would like to explore VA's decision to brush aside my veterans' need for a national cemetery to accommodate future burials.

Today, the national cemetery at Beverly is basically closed for in-ground burials, yet the study says that this cemetery will serve all the needs of veterans in the Philadelphia-Trenton area until 2010. My question is "How will it do that?" The only in-ground burial option for the families of veterans living in New Jersey is the Brigadier General William C. Doyle State Veterans Cemetery in Arneytown. While some families outside of central New Jersey do opt to bury their family members here, it is hardly convenient for the majority of families of veterans in New Jersey. I intend to pursue this issue later in my line of questioning.

We are pleased that we were able to facilitate a substantial increase of $25 million in the NCA's budget for the past two years. However, this study provides compelling data for a decision to provide even more resources in the future.

How we honor our Nation's veterans is a reflection of how much we value their service and their role in preserving our freedoms. I speak for all the members of this committee when I say that we are dedicated to ensuring that the men and women who have served our Nation honorably will have a final resting place in a veteran's cemetery, if they so desire. Families of those already buried in national cemeteries expect that we will maintain these graves to high standards. Future generations will mark our response to the challenges which this study presents.

Statement of the Honorable Silvestre Reyes
Ranking Democratic Member, Subcommittee on Benefits
Committee on Veterans Affairs
October 16, 2002

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Evans, thank you for your leadership over the course of this legislative session and thank you for holding this hearing today. Veterans' cemeteries should provide a peaceful and dignified setting to honor the many men and women who bravely served this country in uniform.

I want to thank the witnesses appearing before us today and look forward to hearing your testimony. I am particularly interested in being provided more information about the factors the VA considered in developing the "future burial needs – priority list." I am concerned that because the future burial needs assessment was issued prior to the 2000 Census data being made available, the VA may not have taken into account the identified population shift to some southern states, specifically, certain areas in Texas.

I am also interested in hearing from the VA about its strategy to address the maintenance and repair needs throughout the national cemetery system. Including the budgetary impact such a commitment would require. It is one thing to make plans, and quite another to follow through on those plans. To truly honor our nation's veterans, VA must do both exceptionally well. We expect VA to do no less.

Finally, I look forward to hearing the Independent Budget's assessment of the VA's report on the national cemetery system.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Statement of the Honorable Lane Evans
Ranking Democratic Member, Committee on Veterans Affairs
October 16, 2002

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for holding this hearing to discuss the study and three-volume report on the future needs, standards of appearance, and maintenance commitments related to the national cemetery system. These are clearly important subjects, Mr. Chairman.

Before our first witness testifies today, I want to thank Mr. Simpson and Mr. Reyes, Chairman and Ranking Member, respectively, of the Benefits Subcommittee, for their hard work during this legislative session. Generally, veterans' cemetery issues fall under the purview of the Benefits Subcommittee and their leadership.

I extend a warm welcome to all of the witnesses today and thank you all for your hard work and insight. The information you will be providing allows the Committee to make informed decisions and assists us in performing our duties.

I look forward to the testimony today from Logistics Management Institute, the organization contracted by VA to conduct the study and issue the report we are discussing today (*An Independent Study on Improvements to Veterans' Cemeteries*). Information regarding your methodology, findings and recommendations would be enlightening and welcomed by the Committee. In particular, I would also appreciate your comments concerning the impact of changes in the veterans' populations identified by the 2000 census, since your work was based on data from the 1990 census.

I am also interested in hearing from the VA regarding its views on the report's recommendations and any actions taken in response to these recommendations. Moreover, I would be interested in a report on the status of the latest national cemeteries chosen by VA to be established as a part of the national cemetery system. I am also particularly interested in the VA's state cemetery grant program.

As we all know too well, veteran death rates have been increasing rapidly in recent years. In fact, 1000 World War II veterans currently die each day and the VA estimates that in a few years the veteran death rate will reach nearly 620,000 per year. Our national cemeteries will be facing tremendous demands and it is incumbent upon us to work together to maintain our national cemeteries as memorials to the nation's veterans and provide our veterans a dignified and respectful final resting place truly worthy of their service and sacrifice.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CONGRESSWOMAN DAVIS

VETERANS AFFAIRS FULL COMMITTEE
VA Study of Veterans Cemeteries
October 16, 2002

- Mr. Chairman,
  - Thank you and the Ranking Member for bringing the Veterans Committee together to discuss the current state of our veterans' cemeteries and future burial needs.

- The Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery in San Diego provides our veterans with a magnificent final resting place. Its breathtaking ocean view creates a peaceful and tranquil atmosphere---a perfect location for those individuals who sacrificed so much in order for future generations to experience peace.

- Unfortunately, Fort Rosecrans no longer has space to conduct casket burials. Its capacity was reached many years ago. The cemetery can only provide for cremations at this point.

- Riverside National Cemetery is the nearest national cemetery open to casket burials. For my constituents, this ranges in distance from 50 to 90 miles. This presents a great hardship for many family members, especially older spouses who do not have access to transportation.

- Veterans consider it an honor to be in a national cemetery, among their comrades, but relatives should not have to bury their loved ones so far from home. Surviving family members want to be close to their loved ones.

- I have been working with my San Diego colleagues and local veterans groups to develop innovative ways to increase the capacity of the Fort Rosecrans cemetery.

- I look forward to hearing from today's witnesses. In particular, I am interested in learning more about expansion plans to address situations like the one at Fort Rosecrans. Thank you.

Congressman Bob Filner

VA Full Committee
Hearing on Current and Future Burial Needs
of our Nation's Veterans

Wednesday, October 16, 2002 at 1:00 PM

Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this important hearing today. I appreciate the testimony of the Logistics Management Institute, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and AMVETS which will help us in determining and meeting the increasing needs of the National Cemetery Administration in providing for the honorable burials of our nation's veterans.

It is our obligation to provide respectful and dignified cemeteries for the men and women who defend our nation. Veteran death rates are accelerating and are expected to continue to in the near future. If we do not act accordingly to provide adequate resources, the National Cemetery Administration will become overwhelmed. Our Veterans' Affairs Committee must be vigilant and proactive in its efforts to maintain our veterans' cemeteries as final resting grounds of which we all can be proud.

Of course, there are many areas, in addition to those top 31 that the LMI report identified, that need additional cemetery space. Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery, in San Diego, California, which serves the residents of my Congressional District, is technically open but it is closed to in-ground burials. Any family that wishes an in-ground burial must travel to Riverside to visit their veteran's gravesite, not a small feat for working families without a great deal of disposable income. Although cremated remains will be accepted at Ft. Rosecrans for the next few years, there are many families who are religiously opposed to cremation. I have learned that a support group has been started for veterans' families who opted for cremation when they believed they had no practical option, but after the cremation are having continuing religious and emotional problems coping with this decision.

To address the needs at Ft. Rosecrans, I am working on four fronts, some of which follow the recommendations of the report to Congress that the Logistics Management Institute has presented today. I am working with Secretary Principi to identify land adjacent to Ft. Rosecrans for expansion of this national cemetery, and I am cooperating with California state legislators to develop a state veterans cemetery. I have

introduced legislation, H.R. 441, to create a second national veterans' cemetery in the San Diego metropolitan region.

And finally, I have joined with a commendable local effort among the private sector, local authorities, and veterans' organizations to produce what I consider to be an excellent pilot program--two parcels of land, twenty acres each, have been identified in Glen Abbey Memorial Park and Mortuary in Bonita, California and in Eternal Hills Memorial Park in Oceanside, California to complement Ft. Rosecrans as satellite cemeteries. This solution came from a generous offer of land for the purpose of veteran burials from Service Corporation International (SCI). The land would be donated to the Veterans Memorial Center & Museum, a non-profit 501c3 corporation, who will turn over the land to the Department of Veterans' Affairs. I have introduced H.R. 4806, the Honorable Burial for Veterans' Act, to authorize the establishment of this satellite cemetery pilot project. While not ideal, it would be an interim solution for families that have served our nation. With our limited federal budget, I believe that we must become innovative and creative in our efforts to meet our veterans' needs.

I mention these activities to demonstrate that we must address the growing number of burials of our veterans, not only in the top tier of identified sites, but throughout our nation.

Let us remember that the Members of this Veterans' Affairs Committee hold in our hands the future of the country's veterans' national cemeteries. Certainly, providing a final resting place for our brave veterans must be one of our top priorities! We must provide a budget that will both maintain current cemeteries in pristine condition and will provide for additional cemeteries as are needed. We must provide a budget that is worthy of our veterans.

Congresswoman Berkley
Veterans Affairs Full Committee Hearing to Review the Study on Improvements to Veterans Cemeteries.
Questions for the Record
October 16, 2002

- For Las Vegas veterans who want to be buried in a national cemetery, the closest location is Phoenix or Riverside, more than 200 miles away. Clark County, Nevada has one of the fastest growing veterans population in the country. Why was Las Vegas not chosen as one of the thirty recommended locations for a new national cemetery?

- Under the Department of Veterans Affairs State Cemetery Grants Program, Nevada established two state veterans cemeteries, the Northern and Southern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery. The Southern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery is the second busiest state veterans cemetery in the United States.

- The Department of Veterans Affairs gives the family of a deceased veteran $2000.00 toward funeral expenses. However, $2000 is not enough to pay for the burial and funeral costs. Why are full funeral expenses not payed for our nation's veterans, and who bears the burden of additional funeral costs?

- The Department of Veterans Affairs grants State Cemeteries in the Grants Program a $300 plot allowance for veterans who, at the time of death, were entitled to receive a pension or compensation or who died at a VA facility. Are there veterans who are not entitled to receive a pension and therefore denied a plot allowance? If so, how many veterans are denied a plot allowance?

Statement of Congressman Tom Udall (NM-3d)
House Veterans Affairs Committee
Hearing on the Improvements to Veterans Cemeteries
10/16/02

Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Evans:

Thank you for holding this hearing today to allow us the opportunity to hear from Mr. Vincent Barile, VA Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs; Dr. William Moore, Logistics Management Institute; and Mr. Richard Jones, AMVETERANS.

The 119 cemeteries comprising our National Cemetery Administration truly are shrines to those who offered their lives in defense of their country. However, some are falling into disrepair and many, as indicated in LMI's *Study on Improvements to Veterans Cemeteries,* are nearly reaching capacity level. Such is the present fate of the Santa Fe National Cemetery, located in the heart of my Congressional District.

Santa Fe National Cemetery was originally a military post cemetery containing the graves of soldiers from the Indian

wars, and those killed in the battles of Pigeon's Ranch and Valverde during the Civil War. In 1875, it became a National Cemetery pursuant to legislation enacted in 1862 authorizing the creation of national cemeteries for soldiers who died in service of their country. LMI's recent report illustrates issues that presently effect the Santa Fe cemetery. I would like to address these concerns in the form of questions to today's panel.

First, Table 3.6 on page 3-8 of Volume 1 of LMI's report "Study on Improvements to Veterans Cemeteries" indicates that first interments at the Santa Fe National Cemetery will cease in 2012. Moreover, the Table shows that there will be 84,214 veterans that will lose service between 2012, when Santa Fe closes, and 2015, the proposed date for the opening of Albuquerque. Considering this, what will happen to those veterans affected in the interim?

Second, Table 3.6 also indicates that there is no overlap coverage for Santa Fe. Other cemeteries listed in this table provide alternative sites for the interment of veterans when

the primary cemetery reaches capacity. Considering that nearly 85,000 veterans in New Mexico will be affected, why is there no overlap coverage for Santa Fe?

Third, in the absence of overlap coverage, what kind of studies can be done to determine whether there is any land contiguous to the cemetery grounds that could be used to accommodate veterans? Is all the land on the cemetery grounds being utilized to its full potential? If not, is there a way to survey the land to determine if it can be used for burial, and if so, to determine the cost to make such land adequate for burial?

Finally, in regard to national future burial need, Albuquerque is ranked 19th in the context of national priorities. In 2001, $125,000 in VA-HUD Appropriations was earmarked to conduct a feasibility study to establish a new cemetery in the Albuquerque Metro area. I would like to know 1) the progress of that study, 2) how the study effects the priority of Albuquerque, and 3) whether it will

help to expedite the completion of the new cemetery in light of the absence of overlapping coverage in Santa Fe, and the fact that Santa Fe is scheduled to close 3 years before Albuquerque opens.

Considering the above, it is imperative that we take measures to ensure that the National Cemetery Administration is able to accommodate the growing demand for burial plots. Thus, we can better perpetuate the tradition of honoring our veterans in a manner commensurable to the tremendous services and sacrifices they made in defending our great nation and democracy.

Thank you.

Statement of Congressman Ander Crenhaw
Hearing to Review Comments on the Study on Improvements to the Veterans Cemeteries
Wednesday, October 16, 2002

Mr. Chairman, I appreciate you holding this hearing so the committee can review the report commissioned by the VA and receive the testimony for a very important issue for many veterans in my Florida district and throughout the country. I would like to welcome all of our panelist and guests as well.

Beginning in 1862 this Congress and this nation made the commitment to the internment our nation's veterans in national cemeteries. As this report indicates in many areas of the country we are slipping on that commitment. Florida is one of those areas where we are slipping; as indicated by the six Florida locations listed for future burial needs. It is encouraging, however, that we are taking the first step in identifying the areas that are in the greatest need. Now the mettle of our commitment will be tested in what we do with the information before us.

Mr. Chairman, more than 150,000 veterans live in just the five North Florida counties that I represent. This LMI study shows what veterans have been telling me for some time – there are currently no viable options for burial in a veteran's cemetery for these honorable citizens. The new West Palm Beach cemetery will be as far as 350 miles from my district, two veteran's cemeteries in the state are closed, one is open only to cremated remains, and another is expanding, but already has a waiting list that exceeds its added capacity.

Congressman Stearns, Congresswoman Brown, and I have legislation, H.R. 1205, pending before this committee that would establish a veteran's cemetery in the Jacksonville metro area. Today, five to seven years are needed to dedicate a new national cemetery, as a number of steps from environmental assessment, site acquisition, design, and construction are needed. This makes it imperative that we do not delay action so all veterans receive the honorable burial they have earned.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing and for the leadership you provide for this committee.

TESTIMONY

TO

THE HOUSE COMMITTEE

ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

DR. WILLIAM B. MOORE, VICE PRESIDENT
LOGISTICS MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE

OCTOBER 16, 2002

ORAL STATEMENT BY DR. WILLIAM B. MOORE, VICE PRESIDENT, INFRASTRUCTURE MANAGEMENT, LOGISTICS MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS, OCTOBER 16, 2002.

Chairman Smith and distinguished members of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, LMI welcomes the opportunity to give the committee an overview of our study of veteran cemeteries. I am Dr. Bill Moore, LMI's Vice President for Infrastructure Management and the corporate officer responsible for this work. With me today are Mr. Ron Lind, the program director responsible for the study, and Mr. Don Prettol, our project leader for the effort.

In 1999, VA cemeteries had 2.3 million graves, more than 6,000 developed acres, 600 buildings, other infrastructure, such as roads, walks, and electrical systems; and monuments. Because the mortality rate of World War II and Korean War veterans was increasing as was the utilization of burial services by Vietnam War veterans, annual interments have increased from 58,400 in 1989 to 77,680 in 1999, a trend that will continue for the next decade. We did the study to assist the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) with maintaining and improving all cemeteries under its jurisdiction in a manner befitting their status as national shrines. For the study we did three things: reviewed current and future burial needs, evaluated the maintenance required at the cemeteries, and recommended cemetery standards of appearance. I will describe our evaluation of the maintenance needs. Mr. Lind will discuss our analysis of future burial needs, and Mr. Prettol will review our recommendations for cemetery standards of appearance.

As the first step in our evaluation of maintenance requirements, we asked the NCA cemetery directors to answer web-based survey questions. These preliminary questions were about the cemeteries and their inventories of buildings, burial sections, and infrastructure. We then transferred the directors' responses to a database, which was the primary source for site-specific data and helped us identify potential problems.

A field survey team of professionals—including landscape architects, civil engineers, and architects—did the on-site assessment and data collection for this project. During the site visits, members of the team interviewed the directors,

discussing specific details noted on the preliminary survey and gaining additional insight into specific concerns.

The field survey teams used a checklist, specifically created for this project and approved by the NCA, to assess and document existing conditions at each cemetery. The field effort consisted of visually assessing each location, using digital photography to document problems, and completing the survey checklist to capture all elements in the electronic database.

We then used the database to generate a comprehensive report about the condition of each cemetery, with problems and deficiencies clearly identified. We recommended one-time repair projects assigning a ranking and priority to each project. For each project, we assessed the scope of work for correcting deficiencies, evaluated the overall effect of the project on the problem category and cyclical maintenance operations, and estimated the costs. The detailed results of our analyses are in our report, which we've summarized in Exhibit 1 that also contains the results of the review for a sample cemetery.

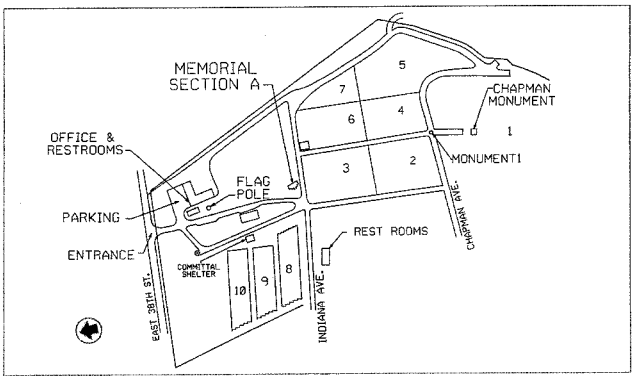
Memorial service network	Cost ($)	Number of projects
1. Philadelphia Network Office	71,660,056	233
2. Atlanta Network Office	30,145,757	250
3. Denver Network Office	39,929,084	121
4. Indianapolis Network Office	38,101,807	174
5. Oakland Network Office	100,009,368	150
Total	$279,846,072	928

Exhibit 1

CEMETERY PROFILE—STATION 817

LOCATION:	Marion, IN
STATUS:	Open
DATE ESTABLISHED:	1973
FIRST BURIAL:	1890
TOTAL ACRES:	45.1
DEVELOPED ACRES:	35.9
GRAVESITE (FULL CASKET) USAGE:	6,776
IN-GROUND CREMAINS SITE USAGE:	293
COLUMBARIA USAGE:	0
AVAILABLE GRAVESITES (FULL CASKET):	3,156
AVAILABLE IN-GROUND CREMAINS:	16
AVAILABLE COLUMBARIA:	0
POTENTIAL GRAVESITES/CREMAINS IN UNDEVELOPED LAND:	3,000/1,600
CASKET/CREMAIN DEPLETION:	2030+/2030+
LISTED ON NATIONAL REGISTER:	No

Historic Monument

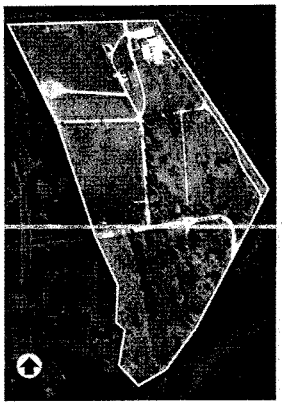


Cemetery Map

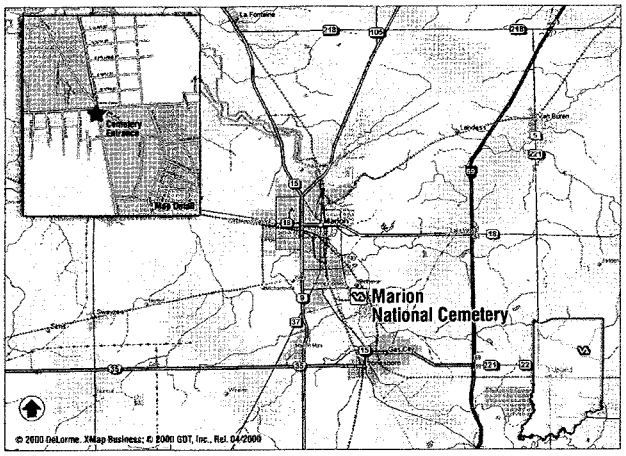
LOCATION AND ACCESS

Marion National Cemetery is located in the southeast section of Marion, IN, approximately 80 miles northeast of Indianapolis. The site is bordered by 38th Street and Lincoln Boulevard and is easily accessed from I-69.

The cemetery, which is located on the east side of the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, is situated in a rural area surrounded by residential property and open woodlands.



Aerial View of Cemetery



Location Map

VISUAL CHARACTER

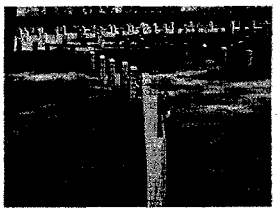
The cemetery is situated on a linear, predominantly flat site, which borders the VAMC on its south and west. The site visually comprises three distinct areas: a large, single section to the south, a central area, and an area to the north.

The southern section, which is the oldest portion of the cemetery, is laid out in concentric rings, radiating outward from the Silent Circle. A historic monument, dedicated to the Marion branch of the National Home, serves as a focal point for this area.

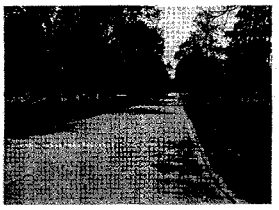
The central area is nearly flat in topography and features a linear road pattern. Large trees line the road edges and provide visual breaks between interment sections.

The north section primarily comprises historic buildings, which serve as administrative and maintenance facilities. In addition, several new burial sections have been added along the western perimeter.

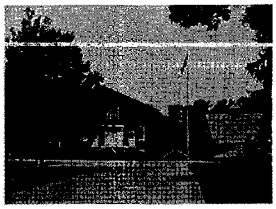
Even though the cemetery's first burial was in 1890, it lacks an historical feel. This is mostly due to the neglected condition of the burial sections, deteriorating infrastructure and facilities, and use of low quality, unattractive site furnishings, signage, and fencing.



Concentric Rings of Grave Markers



Tree-Lined Streets



Historic Structures

Summary of Visual Inspection Results

Overall, Marion National Cemetery is in fair to poor condition: the historical style of the primary cemetery buildings adds to the overall character of the site.

Many areas need improving, either to enhance the visual experience or increase the functionality of the site and its facilities:

- The chainlink fencing, small-scale brick pilasters and signs, and lack of ornamental landscaping fail to significantly identify and aesthetically enhance the main entrance area.
- The deteriorated, perimeter chainlink fencing diminishes the appearance of the cemetery.
- On several historical facilities, exterior building materials are deteriorating. This includes slate and metal roofing, windows and wood trim, and brick mortar joints.
- The public restroom facilities are worn from heavy use, and the asphalt shingles are deteriorating.
- Sunken gravesites, low-branched trees, and grave markers that are misaligned and dirty diminish the appearance of the burial sections.

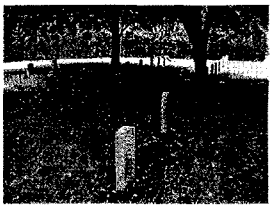
Historic Structures

Deteriorated, Architecturally Incompatible Public Restroom Facility

Misaligned and Dirty Grave Markers

Burial Sections

RATING	ITEM	ACTION
2.4	**TURF**	
	Poor turf coverage exists in many sections due to low-branching trees and surface roots.	RP 1
2.9	**GRAVESITES**	
	Most burial sections have areas of uneven ground and/or sunken graves.	RP 1
2.0	**GRAVE MARKERS**	
	Most burial sections have misaligned markers.	RP 1
	Most grave markers are severely stained and dirty.	RP 1
2.8	**BURIAL SECTIONS OVERALL**	



Poor Turf Coverage

Dirty and Stained Grave Markers

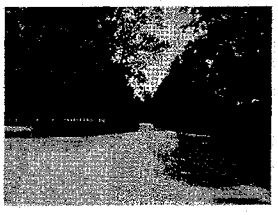
Vegetation

RATING	ITEM	ACTION
2.5	ORNAMENTAL TREES	
	Most trees within the burial sections are inappropriate because of their low-branching tendency and surface root characteristics.	RP.1
	The main entrance area looks sparse due to the lack of ornamental trees.	RP.2
	The area south and west of Section 1 lacks visual delineation and screening.	RP.4
2.5	SHRUBS (MAJOR PUBLIC AREAS)	
	The entrance area lacks landscaping that would provide visual delineation and aesthetic value to the area.	RP.2
2.5	VEGETATION OVERALL	

Low Branching Trees

Roads/Drives/Parking

RATING	ITEM	ACTION
4.0	PAVEMENT	
	The asphalt roads are cracked and deteriorating. This has resulted in poor ride quality and a negative visual impact on the site.	RP.3
3.0	CURB/GUTTER	
	The concrete curb has deteriorated in many areas.	RP.3
2.0	ALIGNMENT	
2.0	PARKING AREAS	
2.8	ROADS/DRIVES/PARKING OVERALL	



Pavement Failure

Damaged Curb and Deteriorated Pavement Near Drain Inlets

Walks/Pedestrian Paved Areas

RATING	ITEM	ACTION
2.0	PAVEMENT	
2.0	DESIGN AND LAYOUT	
2.0	WALKS/PEDESTRIAN PAVED AREAS OVERALL	

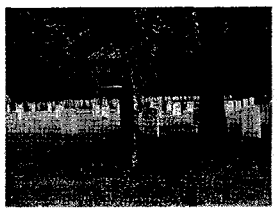
Walls/Fencing

RATING	ITEM	ACTION
2.7	ENTRY WALL/FENCING	
	The brick pilasters and small-scale signage fail to significantly identify the main entrance.	RP 2
	The chainlink fencing is unattractive.	RP 2
3.5	FENCES	
	The chainlink perimeter fencing has deteriorated and is unsightly.	RP 4
3.1	WALLS/FENCES OVERALL	

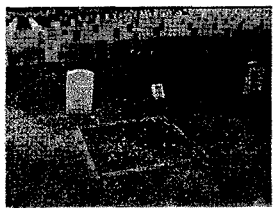
Deteriorating Perimeter Fencing

Site Furnishings

RATING	ITEM	ACTION
3.5	BENCHES	
	The wood benches are deteriorating and unattractive.	RP 5
2.0	TRASH RECEPTACLES	
4.0	FLOWER CONTAINER RECEPTACLES	
	The unattractive flower container receptacles do not blend with the historical character of the cemetery.	RP 5
3.5	WATER SPIGOTS	
	Water spigots are located too close to the grave markers.	RP 5
3.3	SITE FURNISHINGS OVERALL	



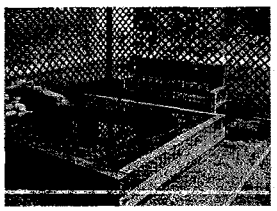
Unattractive Flower Container Receptacles



Poorly Sited Water Spigots

Site Features

RATING	ITEM	ACTION
2.0	MAIN FLAGPOLE	
2.0	OTHER FLAGPOLES	
NA	GARDEN ORNAMENTS	
	The residential style statuary is an inappropriate site element.	RP 5
2.0	MONUMENTS OR STATUES	
4.0	OTHER SITE FEATURES	
	The unattractive arbor and plastic pond are negative visual elements.	RP 5
2.5	SITE FEATURES OVERALL	

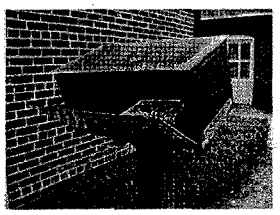


Unattractive Sitting Area

Signage

RATING	ITEM	ACTION
2.7	MAIN ENTRY SIGN	
	The unattractive main entry sign is small and lacks significance.	RP 2
2.5	TRAFFIC REGULATIONS, FLORAL REGULATIONS	
	DOT-type traffic regulations signage does not blend well with the historical character of the cemetery.	RP 5
2.0	SECTION MARKERS	
4.0	GRAVESITE LOCATOR STAND	
	The wooden gravesite locator stands are deteriorating and do not blend well with the historical character of the cemetery.	RP 7
2.8	SIGNAGE OVERALL	

Insignificant Entry Sign



Unattractive Gravesite Locator Stand

Utilities

ADEQUATE	ITEM	ACTION
YES	ELECTRICAL	
YES	WATER	
YES	SEWER	
NA	IN-GROUND IRRIGATION	
NO	STORM/DRAINAGE	
	Near the historic monument, water does not adequately drain from the road surface.	RP 3

Standing Water

Environmental Issues

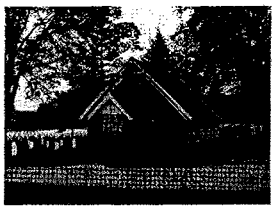
HAZARD	ITEM	ACTION
NO	ABOVE-GROUND STORAGE TANKS	
NO	OFF-SITE IMPACTS	
NO	RUNOFF FROM SPOILS AREA	

Buildings/Structures

RATING	ITEM	ACTION
2.4	**ADMINISTRATION—1301**	
	The slate and standing seam metal roofing are deteriorating.	RP 6
	Paint is peeling and flaking from deteriorating wood trim.	RP 6
	Aluminum gutters and downspouts do not blend with the historical character of the building.	RP 6
	An exterior brick wall is failing near the maintenance bay door.	RP 6
3.3	**OLD BARN—3001**	
	The asphalt roof leaks and does not blend well with the historical character of the building.	RP 8
	Windows are cracked and deteriorating. Paint is peeling and flaking.	RP 8
	Mortar joints are cracked and deteriorating.	RP 8
3.2	**MILKING SHED—3002**	
	The building is in a deteriorated state and is currently only used for seasonal storage.	RP 7
2.2	**TEMPORARY COMMITTAL SHELTER—48T1**	
	The unattractive structure is residential in style and inadequate for its intended use.	RP 3
4.7	**OLD CARE TAKERS HOUSE—OCTH**	
	The uninhabited structure is deteriorating and a negative visual element.	RP 5
3.0	**PUBLIC RESTROOMS—PR**	
	The public restrooms are inadequate and are deteriorating.	RP 7
3.1	**BUILDINGS/STRUCTURES OVERALL**	

Deteriorated Roof and Unattractive Aluminum Gutters on Administration Building

Historic Barn Deterioration



Deteriorated and Neglected Old Care Taker's House

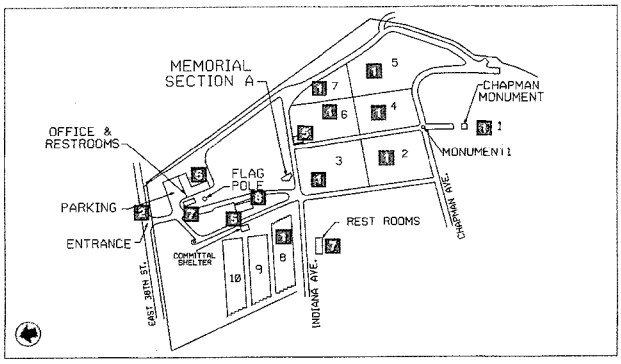
ONE-TIME REPAIR PROJECTS

Introduction

This section presents the proposed repair projects for this cemetery in order of priority. It begins with a map that shows the location of projects, followed by a list of projects, in priority order, with their costs. We based the priority of the repairs on the nature of the problems.

The pages that follow contain detailed descriptions of the projects and their estimated costs. Problem categories appear below each cost estimate.

Project Location Map

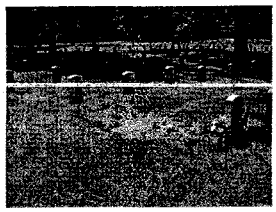


1. Renovate Burial Sections $1,848,657
2. Improve Main Entrance Area $138,769
3. Improve Roads/Comm Shelter/Entry Fence (5-Year Plan Project) (not shown on above map) $2,650,000
4. Replace Fence and Landscape (not shown on above map) $181,374
5. Improve Site Overall (not all shown on above map) $55,728
6. Improve Administration Building $171,471
7. Renovate Milking Shed into New Public Restrooms $150,928
8. Restore Historic Barn $271,938

TOTAL $5,468,865

1 Renovate Burial Sections

ITEM	QUANTITY	COST
SUNKEN GRAVE FILLING		
Remove existing sod, till soil to a depth of 4 inches, level, and compact. Spread 4 inches of topsoil over disturbed area, level, and compact. Install new sod.		
Section 1	1,901	253,898
Section 2	280	37,397
Section 3	300	40,068
Section 4	150	20,034
Section 5	500	66,780
Section 6	200	26,712



Uneven Ground and Sunken Gravesites

Section 7	100	13,356

GRAVE MARKER ALIGNMENT—UPRIGHTS

Remove grave marker. Auger/excavate a 24-inch-deep hole with a diameter 2 inches larger than the width of the grave marker. Fill hole with compacted sharp gravel to a minimum depth of 6 inches. Insert grave marker, add or remove gravel to correct horizontal alignment, plumb to correct vertical alignment, and temporarily brace. Backfill hole with compacted sharp aggregate to within 8 inches of top and then with compacted soil to within 2 inches of top. Remove temporary brace and add topsoil and new sod.

Section 1	1,901	165,033
Section 2	350	30,385
Section 3	400	34,726
Section 4	425	36,896
Section 5	250	21,704
Section 6	375	32,555
Section 7	225	19,533
Section 8	300	26,044

Misaligned Grave Markers

GRAVE MARKER CLEANING

Rinse grave marker with water. Apply a 50/50 solution of household-grade chlorine bleach and water with a hand sprayer. Lightly scrub the stone surface with a soft bristle brush. Rinse the marker with water. (Do not use a pressure washer.)

Section 1	1,901	25,390
Section 2 (upright)	781	10,431
Section 3 (upright)	828	11,059
Section 4 (upright)	558	7,453
Section 5 (upright)	817	10,912
Section 6 (upright)	675	9,015
Section 7 (upright)	395	5,276

TREE REMOVAL

Remove existing 20- to 40-foot deciduous and evergreen trees within burial sections. Remove stumps, fill and level the disturbed area, and seed.

Section 1	150	360,612
Section 2	25	60,102
Section 3	35	84,143
Section 4	18	43,273
Section 5	29	69,718
Section 6	26	62,506
Section 7	4	9,616

Trees That Should Be Removed

LANDSCAPING

Install 3-inch-caliper deciduous trees adjacent to the burial sections, along adjacent roads, and in prominent locations.

Section 1	180	144,245
Section 2	25	20,034
Section 3	35	28,048

Section 4	18	14,424
Section 5	29	23,239
Section 6	26	20,835
Section 7	4	3,205
TOTAL COST		**$1,848,657**

PROBLEM CATEGORIES

VISUALLY PROMINENT
FUTURE MAINTENANCE

2 Improve Main Entrance Area

ITEM	QUANTITY	COST
GENERAL DEMOLITION		
Remove the chainlink fencing.	360 LF	2,885
Remove the brick entry columns and metal gate. Salvage the bronze plaques and store.	2	1,736
WALLS		
Construct 3- by 3- by 8-foot brick entry pilasters with cut stone cap and base.	2	6,678
Install two 12- by 8-foot, ornamental, wrought-iron entrance gates.	LS	10,685
Construct 8-foot high brick wall and pilasters capped with cut stone.	360 LF	96,163
SIGNAGE		
Install salvaged bronze plaques on the proposed entry pilasters.	LS	268
Install 12-inch-high, cast-bronze lettering, denoting the cemetery name.	LS	3,526
LANDSCAPING		
Plant 2 ½-inch-caliper deciduous trees between the road and proposed wall.	20	12,020
Plant 3-gallon evergreen and deciduous shrubs next to the proposed wall at the entry point.	80	4,808
TOTAL COST		**$138,769**

Chainlink Fencing Along Frontage

Entry Feature

PROBLEM CATEGORIES

VISUALLY PROMINENT
VISUAL
FUTURE MAINTENANCE

3 Improve Roads/Comm Shelter/Entry Fence (5-Year Plan Project)

TOTAL COST **$2,650,000**

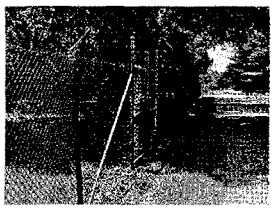
PROBLEM CATEGORIES

VISUAL

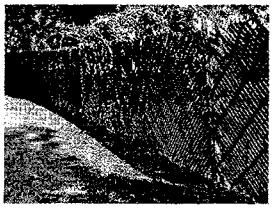
FUTURE MAINTENANCE

4 Replace Fence and Landscape

ITEM	QUANTITY	COST
FENCING		
Remove the chainlink perimeter fencing.	4,200 LF	33,657
Install black, vinyl-coated aluminum, chainlink fencing Along the east and west perimeters.	4,200 LF	100,971
LANDSCAPING		
Install 2½-inch-caliper, deciduous trees next to the proposed east perimeter fence.	30	18,031
Install 8-foot evergreen trees in clusters along the southern edge of Section 1.	50	16,695
Install 2½-inch-caliper deciduous trees between the proposed clusters of evergreen trees along the southern edge of Section 1.	20	12,020
TOTAL COST		**$181,374**



Rusted and Deteriorating Fencing



Deteriorating, Screen-Type Fencing

PROBLEM CATEGORIES

VISUAL

FUTURE MAINTENANCE

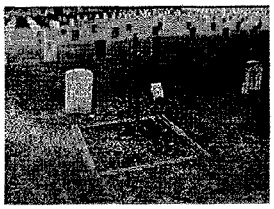
5 Improve Site Overall

ITEM	QUANTITY	COST
GENERAL DEMOLITION		
Remove pond/fountain, brick pavement, and wooden overhead structure.	LS	2,671
Remove statuary by the barn.	1	534
Remove concrete block caretaker's house and concrete slab floor. Fill, grade, and seed.	180 SF	2,404
SITE FURNISHINGS		
Remove the wood benches.	10	1,336
Remove the flower container receptacles.	10	1,336
Install 8- by 4-foot concrete slabs for proposed benches.	320 SF	1,329
Install 8-foot, powder-coated steel, slat-style benches with	10	13,356

Residential-Style Site Features

backs and armrests.		
Install powder-coated steel, slat-style, trash receptacles with rain bonnets.	10	10,685
Install powder-coated steel, slat-style, flower container receptacles with rain bonnets.	10	10,685
WATER SPIGOTS		
Remove the water spigots, stand pipes, and gravel splash pits.	10	1,603
Install new standpipes and water spigots approximately 20 feet from current locations. Include a 3- by 3-foot concrete edged gravel splash area.	10	3,339
SIGNAGE		
Remove standard DOT-style traffic regulation signs.	12	1,282
Install bollard-style posts with caste aluminum signs.	12	4,808
Sandblast, prime, and paint historical signs (2 feet by 40 inches).	3	360
TOTAL COST		**$55,728**

Abandoned, Deteriorating Old Caretaker's House



Water Spigots

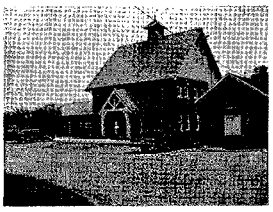
PROBLEM CATEGORIES

VISUAL

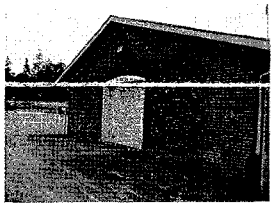
FUTURE MAINTENANCE

6 Improve Administration Building

ITEM	QUANTITY	COST
EXTERIOR RENOVATION (7,490 SQUARE FEET)		
Remove the slate and standing seam metal roofing. Install slate shingles on all roofs.	LS	100,036
Scrape paint on all windows, doors, soffit and fascia, and exposed wood trim. Replace deteriorated wood, prime, and paint.	LS	60,022
Replace aluminum gutters and downspouts with copper ones.	LS	5,002
Reconstruct the brick wall and foundation near the maintenance bay door using salvaged brick.	240 SF	6,411
TOTAL COST		**$171,471**



Administration Building



Deteriorating Brick Wall

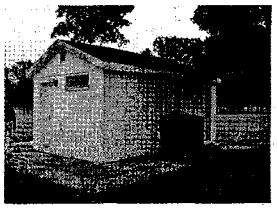
PROBLEM CATEGORIES

VISUAL

FUTURE MAINTENANCE

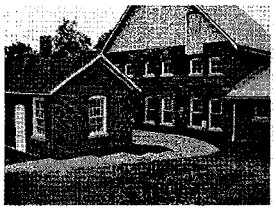
7 Renovate Milking Shed into New Public Restrooms

ITEM	QUANTITY	COST
GENERAL DEMOLITION		
Remove the concrete block restroom facility and fill, level, and seed the disturbed area.	150 SF	4,808
Remove the post-mounted gravesite locator stands.	2	668
INTERIOR/EXTERIOR RENOVATIONS (360 SQUARE FEET)		
Gut the interior, construct interior walls and ceiling, and insulate. Partition the area and construct men's and women's restrooms. Install ceramic tile on the walls and floor. Provide separate, accessible, exterior entrances.	LS	96,163
Remove the fiberglass shingles and install slate shingles. Scrape, prime, and paint all exterior wood.	LS	6,252
Replace the windows.	6	8,655
Clean the mortar joints, repair the damaged areas, and tuck point entire exterior.	LS	3,205
Provide and install an electronic, automated gravesite locator unit in an exterior wall of the renovated building.	LS	18,698
SITE WORK/LANDSCAPING		
Remove the existing shrubs around the administration building and milking shed.	LS	1,202
Install 5-gallon deciduous and evergreen shrubs around the perimeter of the buildings.	120	9,616
Install concrete walkways leading to the proposed restroom facility.	400 SF	1,661
TOTAL COST		**$150,928**



Concrete Block Restroom Facility

Historical Administration and Milking Shed Structures



Areas Needing Exterior Renovations

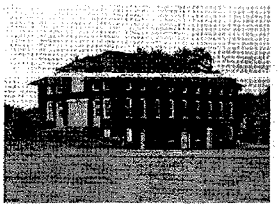
PROBLEM CATEGORIES

VISUAL

FUTURE MAINTENANCE

8 Restore Historic Barn

ITEM	QUANTITY	COST
STABILIZE STRUCTURE—(10,530 SQUARE FEET)		
Remove the asphalt shingles and replace them with slate shingles. Assume 60 percent replacement of wood roof sheathing.	LS	165,954
Remove the windows and replace them with insulated, historic reproduction windows.	53	76,450
Scrape, prime, and paint the wood trim. Assume 40 percent replacement.	LS	14,064



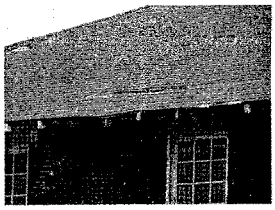
Historic Barn

Clean mortar joints and tuck point.	LS	15,470
TOTAL COST		**$271,938**

PROBLEM CATEGORIES

VISUAL

FUTURE MAINTENANCE



Asphalt Shingles and Damaged and Deteriorated Wood

F•CAM COMPONENTS

Backlog

The condition assessment identified eight one-time repair projects, including one previously planned by NCA for Marion National Cemetery. For purposes of calculating the F•CAM ratio, we use the total cost of these repair projects as the "cost of backlog and recapitalization," or the numerator in the F•CAM equation. Backlog is considered any project, other than routine maintenance, needed to bring the condition of a facility up to an acceptable level of condition. The table below sums the recommended one-time repair projects, or backlog, at Marion National Cemetery.

YEAR	ONE-TIME REPAIR PROJECTS	PRIORITY CODE	COST
2002	Renovate Burial Sections	Visually Prominent	$1,848,657
2002	Improve Main Entrance Area	Visually Prominent	$138,769
2003	Improve Roads/Committal Shelter/Entry Fence (5-Year Plan Project)	Visual	$2,650,000
2004	Replace Fence and Landscape	Visual	$181,374
2005	Improve Site Overall	Visual	$55,728
2005	Improve Administration Building	Visual	$171,471
2006	Renovate Milking Shed into New Public Restrooms	Visual	$150,928
2006	Restore Historic Barn	Visual	$271,938
	TOTAL BACKLOG		**$5,468,865**

Plant Replacement Value

The plant replacement value, or PRV, generally consists of the cost of replacing the infrastructure in today's dollars. Cemeteries are unique, however, in that among their primary "capital assets" are burial markers, thus we include these in the PRV calculation. The table below provides an estimate of Marion National Cemetery's PRV, along with examples of PRV components.

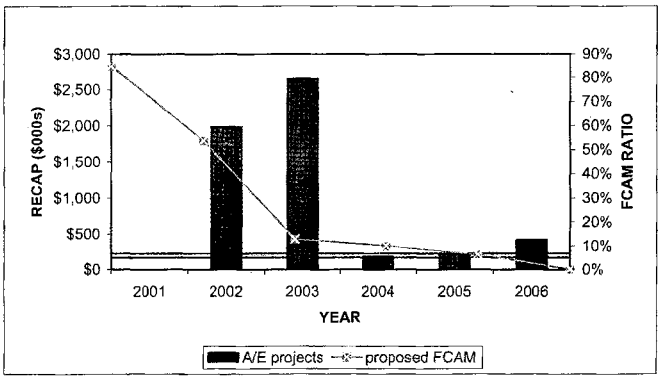
PRV COMPONENTS	EXAMPLES	VALUE
BURIAL SECTIONS	Flat markers, upright markers	$1,382,484
INFRASTRUCTURE	Roads, curbs, turf, parking lot, walls	$2,439,506
STRUCTURES	Administration building, committal, storage, lodge, rostrum	$2,631,687
TOTAL PRV		**$6,453,678**

F•CAM ANALYSIS

Using the F•CAM equation, Marion National Cemetery's current F•CAM ratio is 84.74%, indicating that a vast amount of backlog reduction is needed to bring the facility up to a satisfactory condition. The recommended one-time repair project plan achieves a

desirable F•CAM ratio by 2005. This is a base-case estimate; other funding scenarios are possible that could yield different results depending on factors such as funding availability, perceived importance of the projects, and importance of projects compared to other requirements throughout the NCA system.

$$F \bullet CAM = \frac{Cost\ of\ backlog\ and\ recapitalization}{Plant\ replacement\ value} = \frac{\$5{,}468{,}865}{\$6{,}453{,}678} \times 100\,\% = 84.74\%$$



WILLIAM B. MOORE, PH.D., P.E.

VICE PRESIDENT

Education

Ph.D., Civil Engineering, University of Maryland, 1989

M.S., Civil Engineering, Pennsylvania State University, 1980

MBA, Drury College, 1978

B.S., Engineering, U.S. Military Academy, West Point, 1974

Employment History

1997–Present, Logistics Management Institute, Vice President

1990–1997, Logistics Management Institute, Program Director

1984–1990, Logistics Management Institute, Research Fellow

1983–1984, U.S. Army Engineer District, New York, Special Assistant to the District Engineer

1982–1983, U.S. Army Engineer District, New York, Assistant Chief of the Engineering Plans Formulation Branch

1980–1982, U.S. Army Engineer District, Al Batin, Saudi Arabia, Project Engineer

1974–1980, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Engineer Officer

Experience

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Advised the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers regarding studies and analyses concerning its proposed reorganization, which included modeling alternative organizational structures.

Assisted in establishing the Commissions on Base Closures and Defense Conversion; advised top management about strategies for meeting goals and objectives.

For the U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center, examined the current delivery process and assisted with reengineering the facility delivery processes.

For the Department of State's Foreign Buildings Office, advised senior management about the current status of the facility delivery process, established quality standards, and reengineered the facility delivery processes.

For the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, developed quality standards and performance measures for technical service areas.

Analyzed the relationship between contract types and the quality of the resulting construction; recommended methods for enhancing that quality.

ANALYSIS OF FINANCIAL, PERFORMANCE AND ECONOMIC ISSUES

Assisted the Office of the Secretary of Defense with base closing process by developing models and methodologies for estimating the economic impacts of military base closing decisions and ensuring the quality of the analyses.

Directed financial analyses and market assessments for capital assets including real property holdings.

Developed corporate strategies for the Corps of Engineers for managing engineering information. These strategies included reviews of current industry practices and identified applicability to Corps of Engineers requirements.

Developed decision support systems for assessing capital asset decisions for various agencies.

Developed an innovative approach for routing, managing, and documenting facility and engineering information that served as the basis for implementing process reengineering results.

For the Department of Energy, developed and applied a benchmarking approach that has been utilized at four major production complexes and addresses support and administrative cost.

Analyzed project management, quality, contracting, and financial issues related to facility, technical service, and major construction programs.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Developed manpower models for forecasting requirements for construction management, design, design management, and facility management for the Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Postal Service. These models translate expected workload into staffing requirements and are used to resource organizations and examine efficiency.

REENGINEERING PROCESSES

Reengineered the facility support process for the INS and incorporated information strategies into the reengineering effort.

Assisted with the development of a plan for ISO 9000 implementation for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Served as the technical lead for an analysis of Department of Energy maintenance costs to determine appropriate performance measures and to identify best in class performers to serve as benchmarking candidates.

Directed analyses of facilities management and related processes, which resulted in the reengineering of the processes. Efforts included the use of flowcharting and modeling techniques as well as the use of process simulation models. These analyses were conducted for the National Institutes of Health, the Department of State Foreign Building Operations, and various Corps of Engineers organizations.

Awards and Relevant Organizational Memberships

Recipient of the Field Award from the Society of Logistics Engineers for contributions to facility engineering and management

Registered Engineer, Virginia

Registered Engineer, Pennsylvania

Member, American Society of Civil Engineers and Society of American Military Engineers

List of Selected Publications

"Impacts of Development and Infrastructure Financing," *Journal of Urban Planning and Development,* American Society of Civil Engineers, Vol. 117 No. 3, September 1991.

"Developing Defensible Transportation Impact Fees," *Transportation Research Record 1283,* Transportation Research Board, National Research Council, 1990.

Logistics Management Institute, *Managing Engineering and Construction Information: An Industry Overview,* May 1989.

"SBA Set-asides: How They Affect Contractor Selection," *The Military Engineer,* July 1989.

Logistics Management Institute, *Controlling Engineering and Construction Management Costs Within the Corps of Engineers,* December 1988.

"Job Order Contracting: A Procurement Success Story," *Contract Management,* November 1988.

Logistics Management Institute, *Corps of Engineers Military Construction: Management Costs Below the Industry Average,* August 1988.

"Paying for Growth: The Impacts of Rapid Growth," *Engineering Management International,* 1988.

Logistics Management Institute, *Contracting for Quality Construction,* January 1988.

Logistics Management Institute, *Corps of Engineers Resource and Military Manpower System,* May 1987.

Logistics Management Institute, *Analysis of Vieques Industrial Park Alternatives,* March 1987.

"Engineering Management in Action: Infrastructure and Fiscal Planning for Communities Impacted by Rapid Growth," *Proceedings,* First International Conference on Engineering Management, September 1986.

Security Clearance

Top Secret

RELATED FEDERAL CONTRACTS

Task Title: National Cemetery Administration Study

Contract Number: 973A.P329.VA101

Customer: Veterans Affairs

Project Leader: Donald Prettol, Logistics Management Institute

Period of Performance: 12/27/2000–04/30/2002

Funding: $2,504,082

TESTIMONY

TO

THE HOUSE COMMITTEE

ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

RONALD LIND, PROGRAM DIRECTOR
LOGISTICS MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE

OCTOBER 16, 2002

ORAL STATEMENT BY MR. RONALD LIND, PROGRAM DIRECTOR, LOGISTICS MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS, OCTOBER 16, 2002.

In response to Public Law (PL) 106-117, The Veterans Millennium Health Care and Benefits Act of 1999, LMI was contracted to provide analytical support to the National Cemetery Administration. Under the provisions of the act, we have examined providing a burial option for 90 percent of veterans residing within a 75-mile service area (SA) of an open national or state cemetery.

Our report contains the following data for the 90-percent service objective:

- The number of additional national cemeteries required, in 5-year intervals, beginning in 2005 and extending to 2020.

- For each 5-year period, the areas in the United States with the greatest concentrations of veterans whose needs are not served by national cemeteries or state veterans' cemeteries.

From our analysis, we conclude that 31 additional veterans' cemeteries will be required over the next 20 years so 90 percent of veterans will have a burial option in each 5-year period.

On the basis of our analysis, we recommended the locations of the 31 new cemeteries and their capacity, which we've highlighted in the tables in Exhibit 1 for each of the 5-year periods.

We recommended the following for VA to achieve the 90-percent service objective:

- Continue to encourage state grant program cemeteries as a means of serving veterans.

- Continue to examine ways of expanding the useful life of existing cemeteries, thereby avoiding closure and loss of service.

- Build new national cemeteries at or near the locations we recommend if neither of the previous options is possible.

Table 1. Additional Cemeteries by 2005

Location	Population gained[a]	Cumulative percentage	Incremental increase in percentage
Baseline		81.1	
Birmingham, AL	228,714	82.1	1.0
Greenville/Columbia, SC	174,458	82.8	0.76
Bakersfield, CA	160,456	83.5	0.7
Jacksonville, FL	159,180	84.2	0.69
Charleston, WV	153,467	84.9	0.67
Buffalo, NY	130,271	85.5	0.57
Longview, TX	117,478	86.0	0.51
Omaha, NE	115,002	86.5	0.50
Roscommon, MI	100,102	86.9	0.43
Tucson, AZ	98,828	86.3	0.43
Middletown, NY	96,481	87.8	0.42
Melbourne, FL	96,184	88.2	0.42
Waco/Austin, TX	93,302	88.6	0.41
Des Moines, IA	81,919	88.9	0.36
Tallahassee, FL	80,354	89.3	0.35
Spokane, WA	73,973	89.6	0.32
Winfield, KS	70,480	89.9	0.31
Evansville, IN	68,154	90.2	0.30
Total veterans gaining service	2,098,803		

[a] In certain instances, our recommended location for new cemeteries may not coincide with the location of closing cemeteries. This may cause a variance between veterans losing service because of cemetery closures and veterans gaining service from recommended openings.

Table 2. Additional Cemeteries by 2010

Location	Population gained[a]	Cumulative percentage	Incremental increase in percentage
Baseline		87.4	
St. Louis, MO	201,642	88.4	0.96
Chesapeake, VA	151,795	89.1	0.73
Philadelphia/Trenton, PA	127,801	89.7	0.62
Crestview, FL	96,338	90.2	0.47
Total veterans gaining service	577,576		

[a] In certain instances, our recommended location for new cemeteries may not coincide exactly with the location of closing cemeteries. This may cause a variance between veterans losing service because of cemetery closures and veterans gaining service from recommended openings.

Table 3. Additional Cemeteries by 2015

Location	Population gained[a]	Cumulative percentage	Incremental increase in percentage
Baseline		85.7	
Salem, OR	222,209	86.9	1.2
San Antonio, TX	170,762	87.8	0.92
Beaufort, SC	108,805	88.4	0.59
Biloxi, MS	98,239	89.0	0.53
Albuquerque, NM	88,298	89.4	0.47
Roanoke, VA	66,510	89.8	0.36
Davenport, IA	64,665	90.1	0.35
Total veterans gaining service	819,488		

[a] In certain instances, our recommended location for new cemeteries may not coincide exactly with the location of closing cemeteries. This may cause a variance between veterans losing service because of cemetery closures and veterans gaining service from recommended openings.

Table 4. Additional Cemeteries by 2020

Location	Population gained[a]	Cumulative percent	Incremental increase in percentage
Baseline		87.7	
Sarasota County, FL	322,681	89.6	1.92
Sumter, FL	95,001	90.2	0.57
Total veterans gaining service	417,682		

[a] In certain instances, our recommended location for new cemeteries may not coincide exactly with the location of closing cemeteries. This may cause a variance between veterans losing service because of cemetery closures and veterans gaining service from recommended openings.

Ronald W. Lind

Education

M.S., Applied Mathematics, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI)

B.S., Systems Engineering, U.S. Military Academy

Recent Experience

1992–Present, Logistics Management Institute, Research Fellow and Program Director

1984–1992, CACI International, Inc., Division Vice President and Department Manager

1982–1984, Headquarters, Department of Army, Program Manager

1980–1982, U.S. Army, Korea, Director, Automation Management Information Center

1976–1980, Headquarters, Department of Army, Resource Manager and Project Leader

1974–1976, Concepts Analysis Agency, Project Leader and Senior Engineer

1970–1973, U.S. Military Academy, Associate Professor of Mathematics

1964–1974, U.S. Army, various management, staff, and school assignments

Specific Technical Accomplishments

ORGANIZATIONAL IMPROVEMENT/WORKFORCE PLANNING

Leading an organizational improvement analysis of the Headquarters, U.S. Transportation Command for the Combatant Commander. Activity/workload analysis of all headquarters positions is underway as part of a planned reduction in positions to be transferred to the new U.S. Northern Command Headquarters.

Leading a comprehensive organizational improvement effort in support of the National Nuclear Security Administration, Department of Energy. Effort includes workforce analysis, process reengineering, and organizational redesign.

Lead the organizational improvement analysis of the Joint Staff for the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. This effort keyed on all joint positions, and involved activity/workload analyses designed to determine priorities and organizational adjustments. As part of this assessment, personally interviewed each of the OSD Principals, and each of the Joint Headquarters Deputy Combatant Commanders. Monthly interface with the Director of the Joint Staff and each of the Staff Directors. Updated the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs on a periodic basis throughout the project.

Lead the development of leadership initiatives and workforce planning for the Combatant Commander of the Special Operations Command. This analysis lead to the reorganization and restructuring of core business areas in the headquarters. Conducted interviews with all senior directors on the staff. Briefed the Combatant Commander on a monthly basis throughout the project.

Lead a comprehensive activity/workload analysis of the Headquarters, U.S. European Command for the Chief of Staff. All joint positions were evaluated and ranked as part of an upcoming reduction.

Lead an organizational improvement analysis of the Headquarters, Regional Command North, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). As two previous NATO command headquarters were merged, assisted the Commander in Chief (CINC) with organizational improvements necessary to stand up the new headquarters. Periodically briefed the CINC and DCINC throughout the project.

Lead the restructuring analysis of the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations Department Headquarters in New York. This effort included workforce planning, process reengineering, and organizational restructuring.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Lead the strategic planning processes for the Joint Staff, Washington Headquarters Services, and NATO's Regional Command North.

Tailored the strategic planning process to DoD civilian personnel management needs and conducted workshops designed to expose key players to the quality management aspects of the strategic planning process.

Facilitated strategic planning conferences and workshops of DoD civilian personnel, middle managers, and key employees in the development of operational objectives, strategies, and performance targets with emphasis on quality management and process improvement.

Drafted, staffed, and published a DoD civilian personnel management information systems strategic plan.

Facilitated the development of vision, goals, and objectives for the Information Technology Directorate of the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

In the Army, assisted senior DoD executives in the development of initial strategic plans for the Strategic Defense Initiative ("Star Wars").

CUSTOMER AND MARKET FOCUS

Planned, developed, and conducted employee training on improved civilian personnel business processes and associated technology.

Developed strategies for performance improvement in personnel processing and customer satisfaction, successfully acquired necessary training funds through cost/benefit analysis, and documented results in cost/benefit briefing and report.

Organized process improvement teams that included a cross-section of key employees and customers; oriented them on quality management and process improvement techniques; institutionalized these teams to lead particular improvement initiatives throughout a wide range of sponsor organizations.

INFORMATION AND ANALYSIS

Facilitated senior DoD civilian personnel officials in the development of investment strategies and cost/benefit analyses, which gained approval and funding of over $350 million to implement quality management and process improvement initiatives. Documented those initiatives, investment strategies, and cost/benefit analyses in a DoD civilian personnel management implementation planning and progress report.

Developed activity-based costing models and conducted activity-based costing associated with process reengineering efforts in DoD, NATO, the United Nations, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Conducted benchmarking/best practices analysis for DoD civilian personnel, Federal Emergency Management Agency information systems, and Navy Facilities and Engineering Command's headquarters operations.

Developed a performance management system for the Information Technology Directorate at the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT

Conducted workshops and developed human resource staffing plans for reengineered regional personnel processing centers in the Army, Air Force, Navy, and defense agencies.

Conducted workload analysis and staffing plans for the Federal Emergency Management Agency designed to improve efficiency and reduce costs.

Developed a workforce planning mechanism to better match required and available workforce skills and competencies at the Department of Health and Human Services.

PROCESS MANAGEMENT

Conducted workshops and developed reengineered business processes for a variety of clients including the Army, Navy, Air Force, NATO, the United Nations, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Planned and conducted quality assurance (proof of concept) testing of reengineered processes prior to implementation for the Army, Navy, and Air Force civilian personnel.

Developed an evaluation model for quality assessments of business process improvements.

Facilitated the development of quality management and process improvement initiatives with senior DoD civilian personnel policy executives.

Facilitated the conduct of an organizational assessment and implementation of an improvement transformation of the Chief Information Officer/Information Technology Directorate at the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Facilitated the development of an organizational assessment and transformation of the Navy's Facilities and Engineering Command Headquarters.

BUSINESS RESULTS

Managed the development of simulation models for the assessment of alternative staffing plans in DoD, Health and Human Services, Federal Emergency Management Agency, and the United Nations.

FACILITATION

Facilitated a variety of workshops involved in strategic planning, process reengineering, workload, and staffing analysis for a variety of customers.

SURVEY

Developed customer surveys and evaluated the results for a variety of personnel processing activities for DoD.

Awards and Relevant Organizational Memberships

Who's Who in U.S. Executives, 1990

Association of the United States Army

American Defense Preparedness Association

Security Clearance

Top Secret

RELATED FEDERAL CONTRACTS

Task Title: National Cemetery Administration Study

Contract Number: 973A.P329.VA101

Customer: Veterans Affairs

Project Leader: Donald Prettol, Logistics Management Institute

Period of Performance: 12/27/2000–04/30/2002

Funding: $2,504,082

TESTIMONY

TO

THE HOUSE COMMITTEE

ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

DONALD C. PRETTOL, RESEARCH FELLOW
LOGISTICS MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE

OCTOBER 16. 2002

ORAL STATEMENT BY MR. DONALD PRETTOL, RESEARCH FELLOW, LOGISTICS MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS, OCTOBER 16, 2002.

As cemeteries that are clearly military in nature, the 119 national cemeteries belonging to the National Cemetery Administration are—individually and collectively—national shrines to those who offered their lives in the defense of their country.

The "finest cemeteries in the world" vary in certain common visual characteristics. Although there is some variation, we developed a broad set of standards. NCA can feasibly use this set of cemetery standards of appearance throughout its system. We recommend that NCA consider a set of 113 standards taken from these cemeteries. (See Exhibit 1) The standards can be adjusted—to accommodate differences in geography, types of markers, ground cover, and burial activity—without making them overly complex or convoluted.

The standards of appearance we propose fall into two categories:

- Maintenance
- Burial operations.

The appearance standards apply to all cemeteries, whether active or closed. The standards are for headstones, turf and other groundcover, horticulture, facilities, floral tributes, neatness, personnel, and security. The burial operations standards minimize the negative effect of operations on families and visitors without unduly detracting from their efficiency. The standards are for interments and inurnments, committal shelters, and equipment.

In addition, we recommend using three determinative criteria (geophysical conditions, climate, and other conditions) when evaluating requests from the field for using flat grave markers in exception to public law.

Establishing the standards of appearance we recommend—and implementing the use of these standards in one of the ways we suggest—will certainly and predictably improve the appearance of the NCA cemeteries. Following our guidance about the requests for exception to the grave marker statute will help the review of cemeteries to proceed more smoothly and effectively.

Standards of Appearance

MAINTENANCE OF APPEARANCE

These standards apply to all cemeteries—active and closed. They fall into 10 subcategories.

Headstones

One of the hallmarks of NCA cemeteries is the arrangement and uniformity of headstones and markers—whether flat or upright. Visitor expectations concerning headstones in national cemeteries are uniformly high. Therefore, meticulous attention to detail is required in this area in order for a cemetery to be judged among the finest.

1. Headstones are aligned in accordance with the section plan or historic pattern.
2. Headstones are set at the proper height.
3. Headstones are free of objectionable accumulations.
4. Headstones' natural surfaces have been retained.
5. Headstone inscriptions are visible and legible.
6. Damaged or illegible headstones and incorrect inscriptions have been identified and action taken for repair or replacement.

Turf and Other Ground Cover

Lawn and turf maintenance involves more than cutting and trimming the grass. Other aspects include filling in sunken graves; maintaining a weed-free, healthy turf; repairing equipment and erosion damage in developed areas; and repairing erosion damage in buffer and non-gravesite areas.

CEMETERIES USING LAWN GRASS FOR GROUND COVER

Turf in burial and other public areas is maintained at a height of 1.5 to 2.5 inches and in no case more than 3 inches.

1. Turf in burial and other public areas is a uniform color of green.
2. Turf in burial and other public areas is 90 percent weed free.
3. Turf in burial and other public areas covers at least 95 percent of the area.
4. Grass is trimmed around the headstones and other monuments.
5. Turf does not encroach on flat grave markers.
6. Grass is trimmed on borders.
7. Turf is free of debris such as leaves, fallen branches, and trash.
8. Newly seeded or sodded areas where mowing is inappropriate are clearly identified to the public by signs.
9. Grass in areas other than burial and other public areas is kept cut and trimmed to maintain a good appearance and reduce danger from fire.
10. Sunken graves are identified and measures taken to reestablish the ground level and cover.

CEMETERIES USING NATURAL VEGETATION FOR GROUND COVER

1. Natural vegetation in burial and other public areas is trimmed to maintain a neat appearance.
2. Natural vegetation is trimmed around the base of headstones and other monuments.
3. Natural vegetation is trimmed so that it does not encroach on flat markers.
4. Natural vegetation is trimmed at borders.
5. Natural vegetation is free of debris such as leaves, fallen branches, and trash.
6. Sunken graves are identified and measures taken to reestablish the ground level and cover.
7. Vegetation in areas other than burial and other public areas is controlled to maintain a good appearance and reduce the danger from fire.

CEMETERIES USING SAND OR GRAVEL SURFACES

1. Sand and gravel surfaces in burial and other public areas are kept smooth and even.
2. Footprints and other markings in burial and other public areas are removed from the surface before they become unsightly or distracting.
3. Sand and gravel surfaces in the burial and other public areas are kept free from "volunteer" vegetation.
4. Surfaces are free of debris such as leaves, fallen branches, and trash.
5. Sunken graves are identified and measures taken to reestablish the ground level and cover.
6. Vegetation in areas other than burial and other public areas is controlled to maintain a good appearance and reduce the danger from fire.

Horticulture

Trees, shrubs, and flowers are significant in any cemetery, and effective use of horticulture is consistently found in all finest-in-the-world cemeteries. Keeping plants both healthy and attractive calls for constant and relentless attention.

1. Horticultural displays, including (as appropriate for the location) trees, flowering trees, shrubs, and flower arrangements, are used to highlight the entrance, flag and assembly area, committal shelters, and administration facilities.
2. Trees and shrubs or other regional plants are used to delineate roads and burial areas and, when consistent with the overall plan, to soften the regimentation of the headstones.
3. Trees are pruned to maintain a healthy appearance and proper shape.
4. Fallen twigs and branches are not in evidence.
5. Flowerbeds contain healthy plants and are properly weeded.
6. Where annual plants are used, they are rotated when they have finished blooming.
7. Hedges and shrubs are properly trimmed and present a neat appearance.
8. Dead flowers and other plant materials are removed.
9. There is an active and effective program for controlling insect infestations and other blights and diseases on trees, shrubs, and plants.

10. Provision is made for the removal of clippings and other dead plant material.

Woodlands

Woodlands are natural growth. They generally consist of a mixture of species and, with only minimal maintenance, should be self-sustaining. Attention is required to ensure they do not encroach on open space, are safe for people, and do not pose a fire hazard.

1. Woodlands are maintained within the boundaries prescribed by the plan and neither reduced in extent nor permitted to encroach on open land.
2. Fallen trees and branches over 4 inches in diameter are cleared from the woods.
3. Undergrowth is controlled to the extent necessary to keep the woods accessible to maintenance personnel and to prevent the buildup of combustible material.
4. Clinging vines, such as poison ivy, wild grape, and kudzu, are controlled so that trees are not overcome.

Water Features

Water features include a range of forms, such as naturally occurring streams and ponds, man-made lakes, and formal pools and fountains. All require continuing attention if they are to make a positive contribution to the appearance of the cemetery.

1. The vegetation on natural banks of steams, ponds, and lakes is trimmed to the water's edge.
2. Reeds and other semi-aquatic plants are controlled to minimize the still water in which insects breed.
3. Aquatic plants and algae are not permitted to take over water features.
4. Floating debris is removed from water features.
5. Fountains and other water displays are kept in operable condition.
6. Fountains and other water displays are operated whenever weather conditions permit.

Facilities

In most of the NCA cemeteries, the entrance, road network, and visitor facilities create an overall first impression that colors the reaction to everything else on the grounds. For cemeteries located near busy highways, the condition of the street-side facilities may serve as the only impression most of the public retains.

1. Restrooms are clean, sanitary, and supplied with soap and toilet paper. Trash is regularly removed.
2. Structures have a clean appearance, free from any staining or moss growth.
3. Exterior masonry surfaces directly visible to the public have no flaking paint.
4. Areas normally away from the public have no flaking paint in an area greater than 1 square foot.
5. No visible cracks, missing tile, missing shingles, or moss growth are evident on roof surfaces.
6. Metal roofs have no signs of corrosion.
7. Windows are clean and free of cracked panes.
8. Roads and paths are clean, safe, and in excellent repair.

9. The surface area of parking lots is smooth, crack free, and cleaned of debris.

10. Large capacity parking lots have clearly marked parking spaces and directional signage.

11. Gravel paths are raked and resurfaced as needed.

12. Support elements (infrastructure, service area, etc.) are screened from public view.

13. Reception rooms and office spaces open to the public present a comfortable, yet business-like, appearance.

14. The entrance and entrance sign are carefully maintained.

15. Signage is standard throughout the cemetery and in a style compatible with the architectural design.

16. Signage is clear, complete, and easy to read.

17. Hand-lettered temporary signs are not used.

Floral Tributes

Floral tributes associated with burials and memorial flowers placed on graves (or in niches in columbaria) matter greatly to family and loved ones. The cemetery must handle these floral tributes carefully to allow timely operations for maintaining appearance without at the same time offending or unduly inconveniencing those providing the flowers. The cemetery should reasonably accommodate floral tributes and other forms of grave decoration, which are prevalent in some cultures within our society.

1. The rules for placing real and artificial flowers and other grave decorations are prominently displayed.

2. The times and conditions for the removal of floral tributes are clearly stated.

3. Times for removal of floral tributes are not made subject to change without notice.

4. Vases are accessible and available throughout the cemetery.

5. Containers for vases are well marked and in good condition.

6. Water is either available for the vases or due notification to the contrary is prominently displayed near the entrance to the cemetery.

7. Flower removal occurs in accordance with the schedule.

8. Wilted, unsightly flowers are promptly removed.

Neatness

Neatness is a collective term for activities related to policing the grounds and picking up after visitors.

1. Trash receptacles are conveniently located throughout the cemetery.

2. Trash receptacles present a neat appearance consistent with the architectural features of the cemetery.

3. Trash receptacles are emptied before they are half full or stay too long in the sun.

4. Grounds are policed for trash and other foreign objects.

5. Tools and equipment used for grounds and other maintenance are not left unattended in public areas.

6. Spoil areas and organic disposal areas are located where, or shielded so that, they are not visible to the visiting public.

Personnel

Personnel are not an appearance issue per se, but the appearance of the staff, both in the offices and on the grounds, does contribute to the overall impression of the cemetery left with clients and visitors.

1. Office staff and others responsible for dealing with the public wear the formal business attire appropriate for the location.

2. Personnel working on the grounds present a neat and uniform appearance such that visitors can identify them as cemetery staff members.

Security

Cemeteries are not much frequented at night, and many of our cemeteries are either at remote locations or in declining neighborhoods. Both factors attract people who don't want their activities observed and youth bent on mischief. The nation expects the cemetery-shrines to be secure; family and friends expect that individual graves will not be desecrated.

1. Hours during which the cemetery is open to visitors are clearly posted.

2. Federal law with respect to the desecration of national cemeteries is clearly posted.

3. The cemetery is surrounded by an iron or stone fence as provided for by statute.

4. Gates, if provided, are shut at closing time.

BURIAL OPERATIONS

These standards are intended to minimize the negative impact of burial operations and inurnments on families and visitors without unduly detracting from operational efficiency. They fall into the three subcategories that follow.

Interments and Inurnments

These consider both first and second interments. Active operations have trace effects on appearance, ranging from spoil from freshly dug gravesites and fresh mounds of dirt over recently covered graves to heavy equipment awaiting work and the tracks and ruts caused by such equipment moving about the premises. Active areas where large numbers of first interments take place daily are a unique feature of active NCA cemeteries. We found no instances of similar practices in civilian or other military cemeteries. Because of the intensity of what is essentially a ground surface construction effort in these areas, the construction zone appearance is difficult, if not impossible, to avoid. The standards apply to the interment of both casketed remains and cremains.

FIRST INTERMENTS

The visitor should see a careful, planned progression of the section from open, working gravesites toward orderly ranks of headstones against a sea of neatly manicured turf, raked gravel, or natural local vegetation.

1. The number of open graves is kept to a minimum.

2. Open graves are identified and protected by guards and markers appropriate to cemetery operations, not those used in road construction.

3. Each day's graves are prepared on the previous day.

4. Each day's burials are covered, initially groomed, and marked before close of business.

5. Each gravesite is graded to blend with adjacent grade levels

6. Equipment not in use is parked out of the way in an orderly manner (not simply left where last used).

7. Casing awaiting installation and caskets awaiting burial are placed in an orderly manner.

8. The burial site has the appearance of a disciplined evolution and not of a construction site.

9. Boundaries are posted advising persons of the work in progress.

10. Subsections show evidence of progress toward completion.

11. Headstones are set by groups to avoid a gapped appearance in the section.

12. Sections awaiting seeding or installation of turf present a neatly groomed appearance.

13. Seeding or turf installation is carried out as quickly as climate conditions permit.

SECOND INTERMENTS

Second interments should disturb adjoining graves as little as possible. When the interment is complete, no residual evidence should remain other than the fresh grave.

1. Precautions are taken to prevent heavy equipment from making ruts in the ground when working on the gravesite.

2. Precautions are taken to minimize spoil from the graves left on adjoining graves.

3. Precautions are taken to prevent damage to adjacent headstones and markers.

4. Spoil is removed from the site or covered with a green covering while the grave is open.

5. The open grave is covered and marked in an effective but unobtrusive manner using markers appropriate to a cemetery.

6. Equipment is removed from the burial area during the period between opening the grave and completing the interment.

7. After interment and before completion of the day's work, the grave is squared, tamped, and raked, ready for the application of topsoil or sod.

8. In climates where seeding or sodding must be delayed, the grave is covered with a green all-weather covering.

9. Marks left on adjacent sites are removed upon completion of the interment.

10. The new grave marker is set and appropriately aligned.

INURNMENTS

The following concerns columbariums:

1. Columbarium niche covers are removed and placed unobtrusively out of direct sight in preparation for inurnment.

2. Columbarium niche covers are replaced after the funeral urn is placed.

Committal Shelters

In association with any given funeral, the committal shelter is the part of the cemetery that most people see and where family and friends part with the loved one before interment.

1. Committal shelters are permanent structures of an architectural design appropriate to the overall cemetery design.

2. Committal shelters are policed after each service such that subsequent guests see no evidence of the previous service.

3. The bier appears to be permanent and is maintained in an as-new condition.

4. The committal shelter is scrupulously clean.

Equipment

The state in which equipment is maintained and presented reflects on the professionalism of the staff and its attitude toward clients and work.

1. Equipment is not operated within direct sight or sound of a committal shelter while services are being held.

2. Equipment is clean and free from accumulations of mud, dirt, or oil other than that resulting from the day's work.

3. Equipment paint presents a good appearance and properly protects the equipment from deterioration caused by the environment.

4. Equipment is in proper repair and does not have a patched-together or jury-rigged appearance.

Donald C. Prettol

Education

M.B.A., Business Management, Syracuse University, 1972

B.S., Accounting, Colorado State University, 1967

Recent Experience

1990–Present, Logistics Management Institute, Research Fellow

1989–1990, Automation Research Systems, Ltd., Program Director

1986–1989, Automation Research Systems Ltd., Project Manager

1981–1986, Office of the Comptroller of the Army, Staff Officer

1967–1981, U.S. Army, various operational and staff positions of increasing responsibility including command and staff planning positions

Specific Technical Accomplishments

ORGANIZATIONAL ANALYSIS

At the Logistics Management Institute conducted an organizational /workload analysis of the United States Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM). Collected workload on a 1,200 person staff, categorized the workload according to centralization/duplication issues. Loaded workload data into a workload database which portrayed the TRANSCOM baseline workload. Conducted process analysis and built process models on several stovepipe processes. Presented several alternative organization options to the management staff. The USTRANSCOM staff elected to implement our functional organization alternative which will result in a 15 percent reduction when fully implemented.

At the Institute conducted an organizational/workload analysis for the Federal Supply Service. Collected workload on over 2,200 employees, categorized the workload according to centralization issues and recommended a set of organizational alternatives to the FSS commissioner.

At the Institute, led an organizational/workload analysis for the Defense Supply Center Philadelphia (DSCP). The analysis showed that the DSCP was significantly understaffed due to increased mission workload. The analysis was instrumental in increasing the DSCP staffing.

At the Institute, participated in an organizational analysis for the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff which resulted in recommendations for streamlining the organization. An action committee was formed to implement our recommendations.

At the Institute, led an acquisition analysis study that provided the National Institutes of Health (NIH) a comprehensive review of all positions and organization of the Institutes. The analysis report was presented to the Acquisition Management Steering Committee composed of representative stakeholders from the 28 institutes and centers. The study included a future assessment with trend analysis to predict workload and skills requirements. Based on our findings, the NIH instituted a workforce realignment for the acquisition community.

At the Institute, led an organizational analysis study for the Defense Supply Center Columbus which recommended organizational improvements for the command. Study considered the current workforce skill, current workload analysis, and future workload trends.

At the Institute, led an organizational analysis study that provided the Naval Supply Systems Command an objective review of workforce productivity. Study identified areas of workload duplication and operational inefficiencies. Provided the command a workload database detailing functions, activities, and level of effort for each individual in the command.

At the Institute, led a project that provided the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA) with a detailed workload and core competencies analyses for their Human Resources Management Group. Identified the current on-hand competencies and projected competencies to the year 2005. Based on

this projection, the HCFA will develop a comprehensive plan on how best to attain required skills and competencies.

At the Institute, participated in an organizational analysis of the United States Special Operations Command, (USSOCOM). LMI conducted a thorough analysis of the USSOCOM headquarters organizational structure, staffing, and key functional processes. The analysis focused on increasing the efficiency and effectiveness with which USSOCOM's headquarters conducted its business-oriented processes. As a result of the analysis USSOCOM restructured from a traditional functional focus to a process centered focus.

At the Institute, led a project that provided the National Cemetery System (NCS) of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) with an objective review of its operations and strategic plans for future development. Identified to top management the need to assess the internal, external, and cultural environment that would impact the long-range plans for the locations of cemeteries.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

At the Institute, assisted the National Cemetery Administration in meeting the Congressional requirements as delineated in the Veterans Millennium Health Care and Benefits Act of 1999. We conducted a demographic analysis to determine the projected cemetery needs by location through the year 2030. The objective was to assist the NCS to locate cemeteries so that 90 percent of veterans could be serviced within 75 miles of their homes. We also conducted a facilities assessment of all 119 cemeteries to determine the one-time repair requirements needed to bring the cemeteries to a national shrine status. Finally, we did an assessment of the feasibility and estimated cost to establish standards of appearance commensurate with the finest cemeteries of the world. This task required coordination and briefings with the Veterans Service Organizations, Congressional Staff members, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, the American Battle Monuments Commission and several related associations. The results of these analyses were used to justify additional resources to Office of Management and Budget and Congress.

INFORMATION AND ANALYSIS

At the Institute led a task resulting in a Micro-Soft Access database containing the HCFA workload data and core competencies required by HCFA management. The database provided HCFA management with the ability to analyze current and future training requirements.

At the Institute, provided a databases containing demographic information at the zip county level of detail for VA's future planning requirements. This model provided top management with a new methodology for future strategic analyses. Also provided a detailed backlog of maintenance database for use by the NCA in future repairs analysis.

PROCESS MANAGEMENT

At the Institute lead a project for Department of Defense (DoD) analyzing the effect of applying scarce resources to the training requirements for the department.

At Automation Research Systems Ltd., developed a resource planning methodology and model for installation operations. The model predicts base operation resource requirements and relates them to meaningful output measurements. Was responsible for developing cost-estimating relationships, data quality, and model integrity. The model was used by the Department of the Army for planning, programming, and budgeting funds for installation operations.

BUSINESS RESULTS

At the Institute, conducted a study for DoD involving performance indicators for organizational readiness. The study analyzed current reporting mechanisms, and made recommendations on improving reporting systems.

At Automation Research Systems, Ltd., developed a planning methodology and model to project the resources required by the Army Medical Department. The model projected resource needs in 5-year increments and was based on critical workload units. Delivered the model to Health Services Command who used it in their planning, programming, and budgeting system.

List of Relevant Publications

Logistics Management Institute, Study on Improvements to Veterans Cemeteries, Report VA101R3, Donald C. Prettol and Paul J. Glace, Jr. August 2001.

Logistics Management Institute, *Health Care Financing Administration: A Workforce Planning Methodology,* Report HC701R1, Donald C. Prettol and Mario Maculuso, January 1999.

Logistics Management Institute, *USSOCOM Organization and Staffing Analysis: Challenges and Opportunities,* Report SO701R1, Colin Halvorson et al., September 1997.

Logistics Management Institute, *Collective Unit Training: an Examination of the Training Resource Allocation Process,* Report FP 206MR1, Donald C. Prettol and Stephen L. Lieberman, November 1995.

Logistics Management Institute, *The Future of the National Cemetery System,* Report VA202R1, Donald C. Prettol, Dayton Picket, and John B. Jennings, February 1993.

The Program Resource Methodology: In Direct Support of Management, Resource Management Journal, Spring 85.

Awards and Relevant Organizational Memberships

LMI Presidents Award for helping change the process and management practices of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2000.

American Society of Military Comptrollers

Security Clearance

Secret

RELATED FEDERAL CONTRACTS

Task Title: National Cemetery Administration Study

Contract Number: 973A.P329.VA101

Customer: Veterans Affairs

Project Leader: Donald Prettol, Logistics Management Institute

Period of Performance: 12/27/2000–04/30/2002

Funding: $2,504,082

STATEMENT OF VINCENT L. BARILE
DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY FOR MEMORIAL AFFAIRS
NATIONAL CEMETERY ADMINISTRATION
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
BEFORE THE
THE HOUSE VETERANS' AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
October 16, 2002

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the three reports to Congress that the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) completed in response to the requirements of Section 613 of Public Law 106-117, the Veterans Millennium Health Care and Benefits Act.

This portion of the Act required the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to contract for an independent study to address the one-time repair needs at each national cemetery maintained by NCA; the feasibility of making standards of appearance of active and closed national cemeteries commensurate with the finest cemeteries in the world; the number of additional national cemeteries required to meet future burial needs of veterans until 2020; the advantages and disadvantages of using flat grave markers and upright headstones in national cemeteries; and the condition of flat grave marker sections in national cemeteries. Logistics Management Institute (LMI) was selected as the independent contractor for this study. The scope and objective of the study was developed in consultation with professional staff members of both the House and Senate Committees on Veterans' Affairs, and with representatives of the major Veterans Service Organizations.

The results of the study required by section 613 were issued in three separate volumes:

Volume 1: Future Burial Needs
Volume 2: National Shrine Commitment
Volume 3: Cemetery Standards of Appearance

These reports serve as valuable tools for the Department by providing data for use in our planning processes. I appreciate this opportunity to explain how VA is using the information to meet its mission today and in the future.

One of NCA's statutory mandates is to maintain our national cemeteries as national shrines. A national shrine is a place of dignity and memory that declares to the visitor or family member that each veteran who rests within is honored for his or her sacrifice. Visitors should depart feeling that the grounds, the gravesites and the environs of the national cemetery are a beautiful and awe-inspiring tribute to those who gave much to preserve our Nation's freedom and way of life. The commitment of our Nation is to create and maintain these sites as national shrines, transcending the provision of benefits to an individual. As national shrines, VA's cemeteries serve

a purpose that continues long after burials have ceased and visits from families and loved ones have ended.

Standards of Appearance (Volume 3)

The Cemetery Standards of Appearance study addresses the feasibility of establishing standards of appearance for our national cemeteries commensurate with those of the finest cemeteries in the world. The study serves as an independent reference guide that will assist VA to ensure that the overall appearance of each national cemetery reflects the distinction of a national shrine. The study took into account expected differences between active and closed cemeteries.

The combination of research, visits, and interviews by LMI resulted in the identification of several elements of appearance. Such elements include the appearance and condition of burial areas and other landscape features as well as the condition and appearance of headstones and grave markers, the location and impact of monuments as a visual focal point, and the conduct of active burial operations. LMI noted that while "overall visual impact distinguishes some cemeteries as 'finest in the world'," they did not find a "single cemetery that qualifies for that distinction on all elements of appearance."

NCA is using the report to review and validate its current standards. NCA began the formal effort to develop a set of operational standards and measures for key cemetery operations in 1999. A working group of senior NCA managers met to review LMI's recommended list of standards. This working group compared LMI's list of standards to those already in place in NCA and is developing recommendations for appropriate changes to NCA's standards.

Facility Condition Assessment (Volume 2)

The National Shrine Commitment report provides the first independent, system-wide, comprehensive review of the condition of assets at 119 national cemeteries. The new Ft. Sill National Cemetery in Oklahoma, which opened in November 2001, was not included. The study requirements directed the contractor to recommend projects that would ensure a dignified and respectful setting appropriate for each cemetery's age, climate, topography, and available burial options. Projects were identified through comprehensive on-site assessments at each national cemetery. Assessments were conducted by teams of building architects, landscape architects, and engineers using a Field Survey Checklist developed in collaboration with NCA that incorporated both VA and industry standards for burial sections, landscape features, roads and buildings.

NCA is currently evaluating the 928 identified projects and developing a strategy to address the report's findings. The contractor provided an extensive database with its assessment and cost information. NCA will use that data to develop a matrix for prioritizing projects that takes into account the problem category, and the condition

rating to determine the severity of problems within each category. NCA will also evaluate the recommended repair processes. In some cases, recommended solutions involve materials and processes that, while achieving the same results, are different from NCA's established methods. NCA will review these alternative methods for cost effectiveness and long-term benefits.

One result of the study that NCA identified is that the largest number of projects and the greatest potential cost are in the area of "Visually Prominent," the category where burial section renovation and headstone and marker alignment and cleaning projects are found.

Over the past year, some of these projects identified in the report received funding and others were completed. Since fiscal year 2001, $15 million has been appropriated for gravesite renovation and repair projects as part of NCA's National Shrine Commitment initiative. The President's budget request for fiscal year 2003 includes an additional $10 million. This funding, and the work it accomplishes, will be considered against the list of projects identified in the report. In addition, NCA will be able to address many of the projects through its 5-Year facilities planning process.

As NCA continues to review its long-term maintenance plans for its cemeteries, it will consider the fact that very few of the repair projects identified in the study are "one time" requirements. The care and maintenance of cemetery grounds and facilities are cyclical in nature and requires continuing efforts. This is especially true for the maintenance of burial sections to include cleaning and realignment of headstones and markers.

The information provided in the National Shrine Commitment report will assist VA in making appropriate and timely project decisions for repair needs at national cemeteries. As a result, VA will ensure that our cemeteries continue to provide the dignified and respectful setting that our veterans deserve.

Planning Process for Establishing National Cemeteries

One of VA's primary missions is to assure that the burial needs of veterans are met. In support of this mission, NCA's goal is to increase service delivery by providing veterans and their families with reasonable access to a burial option in a national or state veterans cemetery. In fiscal year 2002, 74 percent of veterans were served by a first interment option in a national or state veterans cemetery within 75 miles of their residence. NCA expects to increase this percentage to 85 percent by fiscal year 2007.

VA's priority for new national cemeteries is to identify geographic locations with the greatest veteran need for a burial option. VA uses concentrations of veterans who are not currently served by a burial option within a 75-mile radius of their residence as the determining factor for where a national cemetery should be established. VA then works with private or other government entities to identify a multiple number of

possible sites. VA always considers land at Federal facilities within the underserved geographic area that has been deemed excess and is suitable for a national cemetery. In the past, VA has received land transferred from other Federal agencies; for example, VA received 982 acres from the Department of Army to establish the Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery in Elwood, Illinois, which opened in 1999. Regardless of how VA acquires additional land, either through Federal transfers or real estate purchases, the overriding factor has been to provide effective service to veterans and their families.

Once several sites are identified within the specified geographic location, a site evaluation team considers a wide variety of factors to survey a site's potential, such as topographical features, sufficient acreage size, and the surrounding land use. As the list of potential sites is narrowed down to the most favorable locations, environmental assessments are conducted and a preferred site is then recommended to the Secretary.

The Nation's Veterans Burial Needs (Volume 1)

The findings in two reports to Congress, one completed in 1987 and a follow-up completed in 1994, have been the basis for planning new national cemeteries. The use of these veteran demographic studies has been extremely helpful in providing a framework for VA's planning and budget processes to work effectively toward meeting the unserved needs of our Nation's veterans. Each report identified the geographic areas in the United States with the greatest need for burial space for veterans based on concentrations of the veteran population. The Future Burial Needs report is the third demographic study completed to assist the Department in its long range planning.

The Future Burial Needs report provides an assessment of the number of additional cemeteries that would be required to provide service to 90 percent of veterans within 75 miles of a cemetery beginning in 2005 and projecting out to 2020; this is consistent with the study parameters required by Section 613 of Public Law 106-117. In order to meet this 90 percent service level, the report identified 31 locations as those areas in the United States with the greatest concentration of veterans whose burial needs will not be served by a cemetery. It also provided an estimate of the costs to construct, staff and equip a new cemetery.

The demographic projections in the report were provided by VA's Office of the Actuary through a statistical model. The model estimates and projects the veteran population nationwide using updated 1990 census data and Department of Defense data. It also considers annual separations from the armed forces, annual projected veteran deaths, and interstate migration figures.

VA will continue to maintain a 75-mile radius as an appropriate service area standard in order to meet the 90 percent service level mandated by the Millennium Act. Substantial documentation exists to demonstrate that 80 percent of burials in national

cemeteries come from within 75 miles of the cemetery. VA acknowledges that there are a number of factors that could impact travel to a national cemetery. Some of these are geographic and some reflect the challenges found in densely populated metropolitan areas. For this reason, accessibility to a potential site is carefully considered when choosing a new cemetery's location in order to maximize access for veterans and their families.

VA determined that a veteran population threshold of 170,000 within a 75-mile service radius would be appropriate for the establishment of a new national cemetery. This is consistent with decisions relating to the location of recently opened national cemeteries. This threshold is responsive to our commitment to serve as many veterans as possible by placing cemeteries in locations of the greatest population density.

VA has not established a veteran population threshold for the awarding of grant funding for new state veterans cemeteries. VA will continue to encourage states through the State Cemetery Grants Program (SCGP) to expand service capacity of open state veterans cemeteries, to establish cemeteries to replace national cemeteries that are depleting their inventory of first interment gravesites, and to establish new state cemeteries in unserved areas.

As directed by VA, LMI prepared the report using the assumption that VA would not be able to expand or extend the service capability of existing national cemeteries. This assumption was used because it was not possible to predict what cemetery expansion opportunities could take place in the future. NCA has and will endeavor to continue to maintain available service at existing cemeteries either through the acquisition of additional land or construction of columbaria to optimize available land. Because VA has been able to identify opportunities to extend the life of several national cemeteries projected to close, 6 of the 31 locations listed in LMI's report will not require new cemeteries.

National Cemeteries

VA's role in providing a final resting place for veterans was expanded in 1973, when 82 national cemeteries were transferred from the Department of Army. Since that time, we have actively worked to expand the number of burial sites and provide a wider range of burial options for our Nation's veterans and their eligible family members. Since 1973, we have established 17 new national cemeteries and increased the system's capacity by over 10,000 acres. We have expanded the use of columbaria to provide additional burial options to veterans and their families. We have established a partnership with the States to increase service delivery for veterans through the State Cemetery Grants Program. Nearly 18 million veterans are now served by a burial option in a national or state veterans cemetery.

There are currently six geographic locations where VA is establishing new national cemeteries, as directed by Section 611 of the Millennium Act. VA is proceeding with

developing new national cemeteries near the following locations: Atlanta, Georgia; Detroit, Michigan; South Florida; Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and Sacramento, California. All six new cemeteries are projected to be open by the beginning of 2006. These six cemeteries will provide service to over 2 million veterans.

We have also been able to begin operations at new cemeteries while construction is underway by developing "fast track" burial sections. A "fast track" section is a small-scale development separate from the major construction project and allows for burials to begin during construction of the cemetery. Such a section was dedicated at the Ft. Sill National Cemetery (near Oklahoma City, Oklahoma) in November 2001.

Based on the threshold limit as well as the locations recommended by the report, VA would plan for three additional national cemeteries by 2020. This includes one in Sarasota County, Florida to ensure continued service delivery when the Bay Pines National Cemetery closes due to the lack of any additional land for acquisition. The remaining two cemetery sites in Birmingham, Alabama and Columbia/Greenville, South Carolina will provide a burial option in areas not currently served by any national or state veterans cemetery within 75 miles. Three areas identified above the threshold will not need a new national cemetery based on opportunities to acquire adjacent land at Willamette National Cemetery (Salem, Oregon), Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery (St. Louis, Missouri) and Ft. Sam Houston National Cemetery (San Antonio, Texas).

Cremation Options

VA considers a cemetery *open* if it provides for the first interment of casketed or cremated remains. A cemetery is considered closed when there are no longer first interment options even though burial operations continue with the interments of family members in already occupied graves. At the end of fiscal year 2002, 87 of the 120 cemeteries were open to either full-casketed or cremated remains of first family members as well as subsequent family members.

We recognize that cremation is not considered to be an acceptable burial choice for everyone and NCA keeps its cemeteries open for first interments of casketed remains when possible. At the end of fiscal year 2002, 12,358 acres or 89 percent of NCA land is in national cemeteries that offer all burial options. However, the choice of cremation continues to increase in private as well as national cemeteries across the country. For example, the Cremation Association of North America projects that the national cremation rate will increase from its actual rate of 26 percent in 2000 to 40 percent in 2010 and to 49 percent in 2025. Some areas already exceed the national average. In 2000, the regional average for the West Coast was 54 percent. For fiscal year 2002, NCA's cremation rate was 37 percent of all interments performed and we project this number will increase consistent with the national trend.

State Veterans Cemeteries

State veterans cemeteries date to before the Civil War. States have always been partners with the Federal government in providing for the needs of military veterans. With regard to veterans cemeteries today, VA has focused on keeping national cemeteries open as long as possible, developing available land as needed, and establishing new cemeteries in large metropolitan areas identified in demographic studies of the veteran population. The partnership between VA and the States improves service to veterans living in smaller urban areas and remote, rural areas, by establishing, expanding and improving state veterans cemeteries. VA provides the funding for design, construction and--in the case of new cemeteries—initial equipment. The States provide the land and the operational and maintenance costs.

The VA State Cemetery Grants Program (SCGP) was established in 1978 to complement VA's network of national cemeteries. Grants may be used only for the purpose of establishing, expanding or improving veterans cemeteries that are owned and operated by the State. VA can now provide up to 100 percent of the development cost for an approved project. VA does not provide funds for acquisition of land.

Cemeteries established under the grant program must conform to VA-prescribed standards and guidelines for site selection, planning and construction. Cemeteries must be operated solely for the interment of service members who die on active duty, eligible veterans, and their spouses and eligible dependents. The administration, operation and maintenance of a VA-supported state cemetery are the sole responsibility of the State. VA is authorized to pay a "plot allowance" of $300 to a State for expenses incurred in the burial of an eligible veteran without charge. To date, VA has awarded 123 grants totaling more than $148 million to establish, expand or improve 64 State veterans cemeteries in 29 states plus Guam. Fifty-eight State veterans cemeteries in 27 states and Guam are now operational. At the present time, the SCGP has 36 grant requests in various stages of development.

VA plans to use the demographic data in the Future Burial Needs report to work with the States in order to assist them in locating state veterans cemeteries in the most advantageous sites. VA will continue to maintain a very active outreach program with the States as well as be available to answer questions from State officials. VA will work closely with all State Directors of Veterans Affairs to meet the burial needs of veterans.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my testimony. I will be pleased to respond to any questions you or the Subcommittee members may have.

SERVING
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A M V E T S

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TESTIMONY

of

RICHARD "RICK" JONES
AMVETS NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

presented to the

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

regarding:

***The Independent Budget* Assessment of the Department of Veterans Affairs Report on the National Cemetery System**

Wednesday, October 16, 2002,
1:00 P.M., Room 334
Cannon House Office Building

MR. CHAIRMAN, RANKING MEMBER EVANS, AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE:

On behalf of the member organizations of *The Independent Budget*, AMVETS, Disabled American Veterans, Paralyzed Veterans of America, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars, I am pleased to present an assessment of the Department of Veterans Affairs report on the national cemetery system. My name is Richard Jones, the National Legislative Director of AMVETS.

As you know, this coming year will be the 17th year *The Independent Budget* Veterans Service Organizations have cooperatively worked to produce a document that sets out policy positions and budget recommendations on veterans' programs administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs. A continuing part in the overall development and publication of *The Independent Budget* has been on the development of recommendations to improve the national cemetery system, veterans' burial benefits, and overall management of the National Cemetery Administration.

The Independent Budget veterans service organizations (*IBVSOs*) strongly backed congressional approval of the Veterans Millennium Health Care and Benefits Act, which became Public Law 106-117 in November 1999. Section 613 of this Act mandates VA to conduct a comprehensive study on current veterans' burial benefits and future burial needs of veterans and their families, including options to better serve veterans and the projections of estimated costs of a national system.

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs issued the results of the required report entitled *Study on Improvements to Veterans Cemeteries* in three separate volumes:

- Volume 1: Future Burial Needs
- Volume 2: National Shrine Commitment – Facility Condition Assessment
- Volume 3: Cemetery Standards of Appearance

In the viewpoint of the *IBVSOs*, the *Study on Improvements to Veterans Cemeteries* adequately responds to the mandate of Congress. The Study addresses what we believe to be the National Cemetery Administration's two major challenges: First, to provide for the passing of the generation of men and women that defended freedom and democracy in World War II; and Second, to ensure the maintenance of current cemeteries and the continued planning, design, and construction of world-class, quality cemeteries to honor veterans and their families into the future.

Volume 1: Future Burial Needs reports that 31 additional veterans cemeteries will be required over the next 20 years in order to provide 90 percent of veterans with a burial option in a veterans cemetery. According to the report, current and planned cemeteries under the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) fiscal year 2000 strategic plan, which runs through 2006, will service most large population centers. However, to reach the 90 percent level, the report states that an additional 18 cemeteries would need to be added.

Currently the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) maintains more than 2.5 million gravesites in over 13,850 acres of cemetery land while providing interments to more than 85,000 individuals annually. NCA responsibilities include 120 cemeteries, 61 open for full service, 26 allow only cremations, and 33 are closed to new interments. A new cemetery in Oklahoma, Ft. Sill National Cemetery, is currently under construction and operating a fast-track section that permits interments to begin prior to completion of all construction activities. In addition, continued progress is anticipated on cemetery development in Atlanta, Florida, Pittsburgh, Detroit, and Sacramento.

Clearly, the rapid aging of the current veteran population has placed great demands on NCA operations and currently available burial space. Primarily because of the passing of the World War II veterans and eligible family members, the VA interment rate is projected to increase significantly over the next several years, peaking at nearly 108,000 in fiscal year 2008. As veteran deaths accelerate, the demand for veterans' burial benefits will increase.

Volume 1: Future Burial Needs concludes with three important recommendations to achieve a burial option for 90 percent of veterans residing within a 75-mile service area of an open national or state cemetery.

1. Continue to encourage state grant program cemeteries as a means of providing service to veterans.
2. Continue to examine ways to expand the useful life of existing cemeteries to avoid closure and loss of service.
3. Build new national cemeteries at or near the locations of high veteran populations if neither of the previous options are possible.

The *IBVSOs* strongly support these options, and we encourage the Committee's active review of the future burial needs of veterans and their families to ensure a continued effort to meet the growing demand for space. Clearly, without the strong commitment of Congress and its authorizing and appropriations

committees, VA would likely fall short of burial space for millions of veterans and their eligible dependents.

Volume 2: National Shrine Commitment provides a system-wide comprehensive review of the conditions at 119 national cemeteries. (An assessment of the new Ft Sill National Cemetery in Oklahoma was not conducted because the cemetery, although open for burial, has not yet been fully constructed.)

The study in *Volume 2* identifies over 900 projects for gravesite renovation, repair, upgrade, and maintenance. According to the study, these project recommendations were made on the basis of the existing condition of each cemetery, after taking into account the cemetery's age, its burial activity, burial options and maintenance programs. The total estimated cost of completing these projects is nearly $280 million, according to the study.

A major part of the contributing factor in these project repair recommendations is the accumulation of uncorrected past deficiencies. Clearly, as any public facilities manager knows, failure to correct identified deficiencies in a timely fashion will surely result in continued deterioration of facilities and increasing costs related to necessary repair. The *IBVSOs* agree with this assessment and believe that Congress needs to carefully consider this report to address the condition of NCA cemeteries and ensure they remain respectful settings for deceased veterans and visitors. We recommend that Congress and VA work together to establish a timeline for funding these projects based on the severity of the problems.

Volume 3: Cemetery Standards of Appearance is an careful presentation of the scope of work required to elevate existing national cemeteries as national shrines. *Volume 3* serves as a planning tool to review and refine overall operations in order to express the appreciation and respect of a grateful Nation for the service and sacrifice of military veterans. In developing its response, VA closely examined some of the elements that comprise the finest military cemeteries in the world, including military cemeteries under the jurisdiction of the American Battle Monuments Commission and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission of the United Kingdom. It also examined our nation's most prominent military cemetery, Arlington National Cemetery, to help form a set of national standards to improve the appearance of NCA cemeteries and guide the application of future resources.

The report describes one of the most important elements of veterans cemeteries, namely to honor the memory of America's brave men and women who served in the Armed Forces. "The commitment of the nation," the report finds, "as expressed by law, is to create and maintain national shrines, transcending the

provisions of benefits to the individual." An important part of the purpose of veterans cemeteries is to serve beyond the dignified burial of the veterans and "to serve a national purpose after the burials have ceased, even long after the visits of families and loved ones."

The *IBVSOs* agree with this assessment. The purpose of these cemeteries as national shrines is one of NCA's top priorities. Many of the individual cemeteries within the system are steeped in history and the monuments, markers, grounds and related memorial tributes represent the very foundation of these United States. With this understanding, the grounds, including monuments and individual sites of interment, represent a national treasure that deserves to be protected and nurtured.

Indeed, Congress formally recognized veterans cemeteries as national shrines in 1973 stating, "All national and other veterans cemeteries…shall be considered national shrines as a tribute to our gallant dead." (P.L. 93-43:24 1003(c))

Unfortunately, despite NCA continued high standards of service and despite a true need to protect and nurture this national treasure, the system has and continues to be seriously challenged. The current and future needs of NCA require continued adequate funding to ensure that NCA remains a world-class, quality operation to honor veterans and recognize their contribution and service to the Nation.

When *The Independent Budget* for fiscal year 2004 is published later this year, we will recommend a budget consistent with NCA's growing demands and in concert with the respect due every man and woman who wears the uniform of the United States of America.

In this vein, we call on the Administration and Congress to provide the resources required to meet the critical nature of the NCA mission and fulfill the Nation's commitment to all veterans who have served their country honorably and faithfully.

One more point that deserves comment is individual burial benefits used by veterans in church, community, and other private sector cemeteries to include state cemeteries. The final study submitted by the Secretary appears to overlook the assessment VA contracted PricewaterhouseCoopers to complete in December 2000 on the adequacy and effectiveness of current burial benefits.

The PricewaterhouseCoopers report finds that many of the burial benefits provided veterans have seriously eroded due to inflation. The *IBVSOs* are deeply concerned that the Federal government has not

increased veterans' burial benefits for the families of wounded or disabled veterans to keep up with inflation. While these benefits were never intended to cover the full cost of burial, they now pay for only a fraction of what they covered when the Federal government first started paying burial benefits for our veterans in 1973. Future congressional consideration of burial benefits should mark carefully the erosion of individual benefits and take effective actions to restore these burial benefits to a level sufficient to honor our nation's service men and women.

The Independent Budget for fiscal year 2003 recommended Congress consider several legislative updates based on the PricewaterhouseCoopers report, as follows:

- support veterans who desire burial in state facilities by increasing the plot allowance to $670 from the current level of $300. The plot allowance now covers only 6 percent of funeral costs. Increasing the burial benefit to $670 would make the amount proportionally equal to the benefit paid in 1973.
- increase the service-connected burial benefits from $2,000 to $3,700. Prior to action in the first session of the 107th Congress, which increased the amount $500, the benefit had been untouched since 1988. The request would restore the allowance to its original proportion of burial expense.
- increase the nonservice-connected benefit from $300 to $1,135, bringing it back up to its original 22 percent coverage of funeral costs. This benefit was last adjusted in 1978, and today covers just 6 percent of burial expenses.
- index these burial benefits for inflation to avoid their future erosion.

The *Study on Improvements to Veterans Cemeteries* presents valuable information and tools for the development of a truly national veterans cemetery system. We recommend Congress give it close examination, because the suggestions it contains require congressional and administrative budgetary support.

Mr. Chairman, we applaud the Committee for holding this hearing and thank the Committee for extending the opportunity to present remarks on this important subject. We look forward to working with the Committee to strengthen, enhance, and improve the earned benefits of our nations' veterans and their families. This concludes my statement, and I would be pleased to answer any questions you might have.

STATEMENT OF
CAROL J. M. RUTHERFORD, DIRECTOR
VETERANS AFFAIRS AND REHABILITATION COMMISSION
THE AMERICAN LEGION
TO THE
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ON
THE NATIONAL CEMETERY ADMINISTRATION

October 16, 2002

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

The American Legion is pleased to have the opportunity to submit testimony on the report on the national cemetery system as required by section 613 of the Veterans Millennium Health Care and Benefits Act, Public Law (PL) 106-117.

PL 106-117 directed the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to contract for an independent study on improvements to veterans' cemeteries. The study was to look at several issues along with assessing the following:

- one-time repairs required at each national cemetery under the VA's jurisdiction;
- feasibility of making standards of appearance of active national cemeteries, and the feasibility of making standards of appearance of closed national cemeteries equal to the standards of appearance of the best cemeteries in the world;
- the number of additional national cemeteries that will be required for the interment and memorialization of individuals qualified under chapter 24 of title 38, United States Code, who die after 2005. VA is also to identify the number of additional national cemeteries required during each five-year period beginning in 2005 and ending in 2020. Additionally, with respect to each five year period, the areas in the United States with the greatest concentration of veterans whose needs are not served by national cemeteries or State veterans' cemeteries are to be identified;
- advantages and disadvantages of the use of flat grave markers and upright grave markers; and
- the current condition of flat grave marker sections at each of the national cemeteries.

Logistics Management Institute (LMI) was selected to conduct the study. The results of the study are being issued in three separate volumes:

- Volume 1: *Future Burial Needs*
- Volume 2: *National Shrine Commitment – Facility Condition Assessment*
- Volume 3: *Cemetery Standards of Appearance*

Future Burial Needs

The need to ensure adequate burial space within the National Cemetery Administration is the number one goal of the NCA, as written in their strategic plan for 2001-2006. With veterans' deaths projected to peak in 2008 to over 623,000, and annual gravesites used projected to increase from 62,000 in 2000 to 82,000 in 2006 it is critical that NCA be prepared to handle this growth. In addition to the rising numbers of deaths are the depletion of burial space and the inability of some cemeteries to accept full-casketed remains for first family members for interment.

The *Future Burial Needs* report assessed the current and future burial needs of veterans for NCA and identified potential sites for the new Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

national cemeteries. In order for NCA to ensure that 90 percent of veterans live within 75 miles of a national cemetery, the report suggests that 31 new cemeteries are needed in various parts of the country beginning in 2005 and projecting out to 2020.

One of the assumptions used in the analysis was that NCA would do nothing to expand burial capacity or extend the service capability of existing national cemeteries. However, NCA is continually looking to acquire land adjacent to existing cemeteries or build columbaria where feasible in order to maintain current services and to keep national cemeteries open for interments. They also work closely with states to establish state cemeteries that, by design, complement national cemeteries. Due to this extension of life of existing cemeteries, nine of the cemeteries LMI had projected to close simply will not have to and NCA believes no new cemeteries will be needed in those areas. However, there are still 16 new cemeteries needed in 2005 to accommodate the burial needs for veterans and their families.

The American Legion strongly supports the establishment of additional national and state veterans' cemeteries and columbaria wherever a need for them is apparent. Adequate funding is needed to ensure burial space is available for veterans and their eligible dependents.

National Shrine Commitment

Maintaining the national cemeteries as national shrines has been a top priority for NCA over the past several years. Between Fiscal Year (FY) 2001 through 2003, NCA has completed some gravesite renovations and repairs, receiving $25 million in funding for its National Shrine Commitment initiative. The improvement in the appearance of the national cemeteries that have had this work done such as Fort Sam Houston, Willamette, Long Island, and Golden Gate, is remarkable. The American Legion has strongly supported this initiative and we continue to testify on the need for adequate funding. It is no small task ensuring that the national cemeteries are a dignified and respectful place for veterans and their families.

The *National Shrine Commitment* report encompassed all 119 national cemeteries and recommended a number of one-time repair projects for improving the condition function, or appearance of the cemetery. No assessment was done at Fort Sill, which opened in 2001. Each cemetery was evaluated on 13 cemetery elements and over 60 specific features. The study identified over 900 projects with an estimated price tag of nearly $280 million. While NCA has identified many of these projects already, funding of these projects will need to be done on a priority basis.

Cemetery Standards of Appearance

The *Cemetery Standards of Appearance* report focused on addressing the feasibility of establishing a single set of appearance standards, derived from characteristics of the "finest cemeteries in the world," for use throughout the NCA system.

The report recommends that NCA consider a set of 121 standards, all of which were derived from these cemeteries. The standards are somewhat flexible in nature to help adjust for the differences in geography, types of markers, ground cover, and burial activity of the 119 cemeteries. The standards fall under one of two categories:

- Maintenance of appearance in the absence of active burial operations,
- Burial operations.

The report suggests that implementation of these standards among the 119 cemeteries is feasible. While it may prove to be a challenge, the publication of the recommended appearance standards will assist NCA in the future to continue the successful development of national cemeteries.

Summary

The recently published reports required by PL 106-117 will serve as a comprehensive, valuable, planning guide to NCA for future decisions regarding the national cemeteries.

The American Legion remains concerned over budget issues and we fear that lack of funding will sabotage the best of intentions.

This concludes my testimony, thank you.

WRITTEN COMMITTEE QUESTIONS AND THEIR RESPONSES

CHAIRMAN SMITH TO DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Post-Hearing Questions
From the Honorable Christopher Smith
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Hearing on VA's National Cemetery System
October 16, 2002

1. Please provide the Committee with the Department's views regarding the findings of the Logistics Management Institute on the standards of appearance and maintenance presented in Volume 3: Cemetery Standards of Appearance of its Study on Improvements to Veterans Cemeteries. How long will it take the Department to meet these standards system wide? Please provide the Committee with the National Cemetery Administration's time line for meeting these recommendations.

Response: The National Cemetery Administration (NCA) recognizes the value of having an established system of standards and measures by which the organization can determine the effectiveness and efficiency of its operations and against which actual achievement can be compared or measured. The Cemetery Standards of Appearance study addressed the feasibility of making standards of appearance of active and closed national cemeteries commensurate with standards of appearance of the finest cemeteries in the world. The report contained a list of 122 standards incorporating existing standards from NCA as well as other national, public and private cemeteries in the United States and Europe. NCA is completing its review of the report by comparing the contractor's recommended "finest in the world" standards to NCA's standards, adding to NCA's standards or modifying existing standards where an NCA working group felt it was appropriate to meet the needs and challenges of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) national cemeteries. Additional work is in progress to identify and include appropriate measures for each standard that describe how performance toward the standard can be assessed in a quantitative manner. The end result will be Version 1.0 of NCA's Operational Standards, which should be completed in January 2003 and then distributed to all VA national cemeteries. The degree of improvement and amount of time needed to meet the standards will vary from cemetery to cemetery. A timeline for meeting the standards system wide will be determined after each cemetery establishes its baseline performance as well as defines its action plans for closing any identified gaps between the baseline performance and the standard. NCA is committed to meeting the high standards of appearance expected of our national cemeteries and we will keep the Committee informed of our progress.

2. What steps are being taken by NCA to ensure that the veterans in areas not currently served by new in-ground burials, and for which no new projects, either land acquisition or state grants cemeteries, are being planned, will have their needs met?

Response: NCA works to ensure that there is no interruption in service delivery for veterans within the service area of any existing VA national cemetery. Where possible, NCA keeps its cemeteries open for first interments of casketed remains. In those cemeteries where there is a limited amount of land available, NCA establishes columbaria in order to continue to offer a cremation burial option as well as to keep these cemeteries operational. While everyone may not consider cremation as a burial choice, NCA does consider the provision of first interments for cremated remains a viable burial option, albeit a limited one, based on the increasing national cremation rates. NCA will continue to explore potential options for keeping its current cemeteries open for meeting the needs of veterans and their families.

3. Please provide a list of the State Cemetery Grants Program grants that are currently pending. What is the total funding requested for these pending grants?

Response: The States submitted the following pre-applications. The States are at various stages of developing their final design and funding requirements. The rate of progress made in the process varies by State, and funding for these projects will be provided over several fiscal years.

1	Flagstaff	AZ	Establish new cemetery	$6,000,000
2	Redding	CA	Establish new cemetery	$5,986,000
3	Bear	DE	Improvements to Admin Building	$4,200,000
4	Boise	ID	Establish new cemetery	$8,900,000
5	Winfield	KS	Establish new cemetery	$3,113,250
6	Ft. Riley	KS	Establish new cemetery	$5,250,000
7	WaKeeney	KS	Establish new cemetery	$3,400,000
8	Eastern	KY	Establish new cemetery	$5,775,000
9	Radcliffe	KY	Establish new cemetery	$8,900,000
10	Williamstown	KY	Establish new cemetery	$9,500,000
11	Shreveport	LA	Establish new cemetery	$5,553,400
12	Ft. Polk	LA	Establish new cemetery	$5,696,434
13	Winchendon	MA	Establish new cemetery	$7,270,068
14	Springvale	ME	Establish new cemetery	$9,600,000
15	Mt. Vernon Rd.	ME	Expansion	$500,000
16	Saipan	MP	Establish new cemetery	$2,000,000
17	Jacksonville	NC	Expansion	$3,018,684
18	Mandan	ND	Expansion/Improvement	$2,254,000
19	Grand Island	NE	Establish new cemetery	$5,102,000
20	Alliance	NE	Establish new cemetery	$2,849,990
21	Wrightstown	NJ	Add columbarium	$1,101,433
22	Wrightstown	NJ	Admin/Maintenance building	$4,329,935
23	Wrightstown	NJ	Public Information Center	$2,232,795
24	Ft. Stanton	NM	Establish new cemetery	$3,000,000
25	Boulder City	NV	Expansion	$4,341,355

26	Aguadilla	PR	Establish new cemetery	$3,500,000
27	Exeter	RI	Improvements to Admin Building	$2,500,000
28	Anderson	SC	Establish new cemetery	$5,222,715
29	Killeen	TX	Establish new cemetery	$8,539,945
30	Mission	TX	Establish new cemetery	$8,013,212
31	Hampton Roads	VA	Establish new cemetery	$6,522,056
32	St. Croix	VI	Establish new cemetery	$787,975
33	St. Thomas	VI	Establish new cemetery	$500,000
34	King	WI	Expansion/Improvement	$4,018,600
35	Union Grove	WI	Maintenance Building	$1,795,000
36	Evansville	WY	Irrigation Improvements	$140,000
			Total	$161,413,847

4. In a letter dated March 28, 2002, Secretary Principi stated that the Standards of Appearance Study "will serve as a planning tool to review and refine our inventory of standards. When complete, the inventory of standards will be published and linked to statements of policy and operational descriptions of process through directives and handbooks." When do you expect this study to be completed?

Response: NCA expects to complete Version 1.0 of NCA's Operational Standards in January 2003.

5. Please provide a list of states that do not have a National Cemetery located within their borders?

Response: There are 11 states that do not have a national cemetery within their borders: Connecticut, Delaware, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Rhode Island, Vermont, Utah and Wyoming. Each of these states, with the exception of Idaho, has an open state veterans cemetery. Idaho is in the process of establishing a state veterans cemetery using funds provided by the VA through the State Cemetery Grants Program.

CONGRESSMAN EVANS TO DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
NATIONAL CEMETERY ADMINISTRATION
WASHINGTON DC 20420

DEC 17 2002

The Honorable Lane Evans
Ranking Democratic Member
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Evans:

Enclosed are the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) responses to the five post-hearing questions you submitted, and the five post-hearing questions submitted on behalf of Representative Tom Udall, on October 23, 2002. These questions pertain to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, October 16, 2002, oversight hearing on VA's National Cemetery Administration.

If you have further questions, or need additional information, please have a member of your staff contact Charlie Likel, in the Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs, at 202-273-5615.

Sincerely,

Vincent L. Barile
Deputy Under Secretary
for Memorial Affairs

Enclosure

Post-Hearing Questions
From the Honorable Lane Evans
Ranking Democratic Member
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Subcommittee on Health
Hearing on VA's National Cemetery System
October 16, 2002

Question 1: Would your recommendations about future national cemetery locations change if they were based on 2000, not 1990, Census data? What do you estimate the costs to be for VA to reevaluate these locations using the 2000 Census data, and make any necessary changes?

Response: The recommended locations for future national cemeteries will continue to be those areas of the country identified as having the greatest need, based on concentrations of veteran population. The veteran population threshold of 170,000 will allow VA to plan cemeteries in locations with the greatest population density. The data used in the Future Burial Needs study was the most current and accurate data available at the time of the study. While based on 1990 decennial census data, the data in the study had been adjusted to reflect annual changes for veteran mortality, mobility, and military separations. Now that veteran data from the 2000 census is available, VA's actuarial staff will use this to develop new projections of the number and characteristics of veterans. When the new veteran population projections are available, the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) will apply that data to all current and proposed burial service area locations. This will include a review of the findings in the Future Burial Needs study for shifts in population that may impact the current list of areas of need. The estimated cost to conduct this reevaluation is in the range of $200,000 to $250,000.

Question 2: VA testified that it is using the LMI report to review and validate its current cemetery standards of appearance. When can the Committee expect to receive an update on this subject?

Response: The study, Cemetery Standards of Appearance, provides an independent reference guide to assist VA in ensuring that the overall appearance of national cemeteries provides a dignified and respectful setting for deceased veterans and for those who visit these hallowed grounds. The body of the report contains a list of 122 standards incorporating existing standards from NCA as well as other national, public and private cemeteries in the United States and Europe. NCA is completing its review of this report by comparing the contractor's recommended "finest in the world" standards to NCA's, adding to NCA's standards or modifying existing standards. Additional work is also being completed to identify and include appropriate measures for each standard that describe how performance toward the standard can be assessed in a quantitative manner. The end result will be publication of Version 1.0 of NCA's Operational Standards, which should be completed in January 2003.

Question 3: Since Fiscal year 2001, $15 million has been appropriated for gravesite renovation and repairs. The budget for fiscal year 2003 requested an

additional $10 million. How many of the over 900 maintenance projects identified by the report will be completed by the end of 2003?

Response: VA's National Shrine Commitment initiative has been successful in improving the appearance of burial sections and individual gravesites through projects at a number of national cemeteries. These aspects of national cemetery appearance are the ones most important to visiting family members and the general public. Through fiscal year 2002, funding has been provided to complete the headstone and marker and gravesite renovation projects at Fort Sam Houston and Golden Gate national cemeteries. Four other national cemeteries that received funding in 2002 will be given high priority for additional funding in 2003 to continue progress in improving cemetery appearance. Those cemeteries are Long Island (NY), Willamette (OR), Wood (WI) and Memphis (TN). For the balance of funds requested in 2003, NCA will review the customer satisfaction survey data and results from the study on one-time repairs, as required by section 613 of Public Law 106-117, the "Veterans Millennium Health Care and Benefits Act," to determine the most urgent need. We will keep the committee informed as we continue to make progress in correcting the deficiencies identified in the LMI report.

Question 4: Based on threshold factors and the LMI report, VA has identified Sarasota, Florida; Birmingham, Alabama; and Columbia/Greenville, South Carolina as the areas in greatest need of a national cemetery. Please provide the Committee an update on the status of these projects.

Response: VA is currently concentrating its efforts to complete the planning and construction of six new national cemeteries to provide service in areas where veterans currently do not have reasonable access to a burial option in a national or state veterans cemetery: Atlanta, GA; Ft. Sill, OK; South Florida; Detroit, MI; Pittsburgh, PA; and Sacramento, CA. VA is also working to acquire additional land adjacent to three national cemeteries (Ft. Sam Houston (TX), Willamette (OR), and Jefferson Barracks (MO)) identified in the Future Burial Needs study in areas having veteran populations exceeding 170,000 in order to keep those cemeteries open and to avoid any disruption of service. As progress is made in the development of these nine projects, planning activities will be initiated for new national cemeteries to serve the Sarasota, Birmingham and Columbia/Greenville areas.

Question 5: What obstacles to completing and opening the six new national cemetery sites by the 2006 target date have arisen, if any? (Atlanta, Georgia; Detroit, Michigan; South Florida; Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and Sacramento, California).

Response: The National Cemetery Administration anticipates all six of the new national cemeteries will be completed and opened by 2006. As required by section 611 of Public Law 106-117, VA is providing to Congress annual status reports until the establishment of the six cemeteries is completed. The next status report will be transmitted in May 2003.

Post-Hearing Questions
From the Honorable Tom Udall
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Subcommittee on Health
Hearing on VA's National Cemetery System
October 16, 2002

Question 1: Table 3.6 on page 3-8 of Volume 1 of LMI's report "Study on Improvements to Veterans Cemeteries" indicates that first interments at the Santa Fe National Cemetery will cease in 2012. And, considering that there will be 84, 214 vets that will not have access between 2012, when Santa Fe closes, and 2015, the proposed date for the opening of Albuquerque, what will happen to those vets affected in the interim?

Response: Section 613 of Public Law 106-117, the "Veterans Millennium Health Care and Benefits Act," required VA to report on the future burial needs of veterans in 5-year increments beginning in 2005 and ending in 2020. These 5-year milestones are for reporting purposes only and do not indicate when the need for service begins. VA is working to ensure that there will be no interruption in service delivery for the Santa Fe area. Plans are being developed to establish a columbarium at Santa Fe National Cemetery, which will allow the cemetery to continue to offer cremation burials well beyond 2020. While cremation may not be considered as a burial option for everyone, NCA does consider the provision of first interments for cremated remains a viable burial option, albeit a limited one, based on increasing national cremation rates. NCA will continue to explore potential options for meeting the burial needs of New Mexico veterans.

Question 2: Considering the above, why isn't there any overlap coverage for Santa Fe?

Response: Through the establishment of a columbarium at Santa Fe National Cemetery, veterans will be provided coverage with a cremation burial option until a new veterans cemetery can be developed to provide both casket and cremation burial options.

Question 3: What kind of studies can be done to determine whether there is any land contiguous to the Santa Fe cemetery grounds that could be used to accommodate veterans?

Response: The Santa Fe National Cemetery is surrounded on three sides by steep, rocky slopes and ravines that are unsuitable for use as casketed-burial areas. The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Santa Fe owns the property on the remaining side. The National Cemetery Administration (NCA) has approached the Archdiocese on several occasions to discuss the possibility of acquiring additional property. The Archdiocese has indicated it does not want to sell the property. There is no additional land adjacent to the cemetery available for consideration.

Question 4: Is all the land on the Santa Fe premises being utilized? If not, can a survey be made to determine the feasibility of developing any arroyos, hills or other perceivable impediments contained thereon to make the land adequate for burial purposes?

Response: The last development project at the Santa Fe National Cemetery was completed in 2001. This expansion project provided an additional 9,500 full-casket gravesites and 1,700 cremain sites. The project completed the development of all available land and required the construction of extensive retaining walls as well as the relocation of a major arroyo to provide the necessary area so that the additional gravesites could be provided. This project also required the development of retaining walls within the new burial sections. These walls will form the support structures for a future columbaria project that is being planned for development during the next several years. When complete, the columbaria project will provide significant additional capacity for cremated remains at the cemetery and will permit the cemetery to remain open well beyond the year 2012. The remaining segments of land within the cemetery cannot be developed for burial purposes.

Question 5: In regard to national future burial needs, Albuquerque is ranked 19th in the context of national priorities. For FY02, $125,000 in VA-HUD Appropriations was earmarked to conduct a feasibility study to establish a new cemetery in the Albuquerque Metro area. I would like to know: 1) the progress of that study, 2) how the study effects the priority of Albuquerque, and 3) whether it will help to expedite the completion of the new cemetery in light of the absence of overlapping coverage in Santa Fe, and the fact that Santa Fe is scheduled to close 3 years before Albuquerque opens.

Response: In report language that accompanied the fiscal year 2002 Appropriations Act for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), VA was directed to begin planning activities not to exceed $125,000 for a new cemetery in the Albuquerque, New Mexico area. Those locations with the largest concentrations of veterans that do not have reasonable access to a national or state veterans cemetery are identified as areas of need.

VA is complying with the report language by beginning initial site selection activities for a potential cemetery. These activities include: (1) an analysis of veteran demographic data to identify gravesite and acreage requirements; (2) preliminary identification of available public and private land by canvassing local real estate companies as well as city, county, state, or federal officials; (3) visiting with interested parties and conducting site visits of potential sites; (4) completing a preliminary evaluation and feasibility assessment of all potential sites—looking at issues such as type of land available, size of available parcels, cost, topography, site access, and potential environmental impact; and (5) developing a list of possible acceptable sites for more in-depth assessments. These activities, which comprise "initial planning activities" for a cemetery, should be completed early in 2003 and will not affect the priority of Albuquerque. VA continues to make progress and is working to ensure that there will be no interruption in service delivery for the Santa Fe/Albuquerque area.

Post-Hearing Questions
From the Honorable Mike Simpson
Chairman, Subcommittee on Benefits
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Hearing on VA's National Cemetery System
October 16, 2002

1. At page two of your written statement, you say, "this (NCA) working group compared LMI's list of standards to those already in place in NCA and is developing recommendations for appropriate changes to NCA's standards."

a. What kinds of changes is the working group contemplating?
b. When will the list of proposed changes be complete?
c. Would you share the listing with the Committee?

The Cemetery Standards of Appearance report provides an independent reference guide to assist the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) in ensuring that the overall appearance of national cemeteries provides a dignified and respectful setting for deceased veterans and for those who visit these hallowed grounds. The report contains a list of 122 standards incorporating existing standards from NCA as well as other national, public and private cemeteries in the United States and Europe. NCA is completing its review of this report by comparing the contractor's recommended "finest in the world" standards to NCA's, adding to NCA's standards or modifying existing standards where our working group felt it was appropriate to meet the needs and challenges of VA's national cemeteries. Additional work is in progress to identify and include appropriate measures for each standard that describe how performance toward the standard can be assessed in a quantitative manner. The end result will be Version 1.0 of NCA's Operational Standards, which should be completed in January 2003. At that time, NCA will share this document with the Committee.

2. Also at page two, you state that, "NCA is currently evaluating the 928 identified projects and (is) developing a strategy to address the report's findings."

a. When will this "strategy" be developed?
b. Would you brief the Committee staff on this "strategy," as it sounds like it will very much guide your work?

The National Shrine Commitment report is an important planning tool that will assist NCA in project planning now and into the future. A strategy to address the comprehensive findings will be multi-faceted. NCA has already begun using the report findings to evaluate and prioritize projects. For example, we know that there are 34 projects that are identified as Life Safety. This means that the problem poses a safety hazard and is a potential liability issue. These projects will be given the highest priority. In addition, the contractor has provided NCA with an extensive database of assessment and cost information. NCA is currently using that data to develop a matrix that takes

into account the problem category priority, the condition rating to determine the severity of problems within each category, the Facility Condition Assessment Model (F*CAM) ratio for individual cemeteries and data from our Annual Survey of Satisfaction with National Cemeteries to factor in the viewpoint of veterans and their families. The information included in the matrix will be used in future planning cycles.

3. At page three, you state that, "over the past year, some of the projects identified in the LMI report received funding and others were completed."

a. How many projects received funding? (specify by name)
b. How many projects were completed? (specify by name)

In fiscal year 2001, $5 million was provided for four projects to raise, realign and clean headstones and markers and renovate burial sections in VA national cemeteries. Projects were initiated at Long Island National Cemetery (NY), Willamette National Cemetery (OR), Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery (TX), and Golden Gate National Cemetery (CA). In fiscal year 2002, $10 million was provided to continue headstone and marker and gravesite renovation projects at the above four cemeteries and to initiate two additional projects at Memphis National Cemetery (TN) and Wood National Cemetery (WI). This funding is allowing NCA to complete the headstone and marker and gravesite renovation projects at Fort Sam Houston and Golden Gate national cemeteries.

4. At page 4, you reference a statistical model for making demographic projections developed by VA's Office of the Actuary. Could you share this model with the Committee?

A description of the model, as provided by the VA's Office of the Actuary, may be found in Attachment A. This description was written in May of 2001 and describes the model that generated the 2000 demographic data used by LMI.

5. At page five of your written statement, you state that, "VA has determined that a veteran population threshold of 170,000 within a 75-mile service radius would be appropriate for the establishment of a new national cemetery." I know that Chairman Smith asked a question in this regard at the hearing, but would you please state again the methodology VA used in arriving at the 170,000 threshold?

In two previous reports to Congress, in 1987 and 1994, VA was asked to identify those areas of the country most in need of a new national cemetery based on unserved veteran population. The six cemeteries that NCA is currently constructing will serve veterans in the last six areas identified in those studies. In each of the 13 locations identified in the 1987 and 1994 reports, no location served less than 170,000 veterans. Establishing a veteran population threshold of 170,000 for new national cemeteries is consistent with the populations served by the most recently developed national

cemeteries and will allow VA to focus its planning efforts on those areas of the country with the largest concentrations of unserved veterans.

6. Also at page five, you state that, "because VA has been able to identify opportunities to extend the life of several national cemeteries projected to close, 6 of the 31 locations listed in LMI's report will not require new cemeteries." Which cemeteries are these, please?

NCA expects to acquire additional land adjacent to Willamette National Cemetery, Portland, OR; Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery, St. Louis, MO; Ft. Sam Houston National Cemetery, San Antonio, TX; and Florida National Cemetery, Bushnell, FL. Land has already been acquired for expansion of Barrancas National Cemetery, Pensacola, FL; and Rock Island National Cemetery, Rock Island, IL.

7. At page six, you state that, "at the end of fiscal year 2002, 87 of 120 cemeteries were open to either full or cremated remains of the first family members as well as subsequent family members." What is the 87-cemetery figure estimated to be in 2007 and 2012, respectively?

NCA will be opening an additional five new national cemeteries by 2005, which will increase the total number of national cemeteries to 125. In 2007, it is projected that 81 of the 125 will be open to either full-casketed or cremated remains for the burial of first family members and subsequent family members. In 2012, 68 of the 125 national cemeteries are projected to be open to either full-casketed or cremated remains for the burial of first family members and subsequent family members. These figures are based on estimated projections for cemetery closure dates included in the Future Burial Needs report. They do not account for future additional land acquisition to keep existing national cemeteries open or the establishment of additional national cemeteries based on the Future Burial Needs report.

8. At page seven, you state that VA has 36 state cemetery grant requests in various stages of development. In general, what methods does NCA use to promote the state cemetery grant program with the states?

NCA employs a wide range of outreach opportunities to promote the grants program to the states. NCA works to educate state representatives about the program; for example, program representatives meet with state veterans affairs directors twice a year, once at their annual conference and a second time at their winter conference in Washington, DC. In addition, NCA stays in constant communication with state cemetery directors to ensure that they are aware of the grant application and approval process. At two recent conferences, NCA staff provided grant process training to state cemetery directors and will present similar training at another conference planned for September 2003. Communications with interested directors remain constant throughout the year. NCA representatives have also provided briefings to the National Association of County Veterans Service Officers. NCA also provides information about

the program to the National Cemetery Administration's Memorial Service Network personnel and national cemetery directors for use in their outreach activities to veterans.

9. I note at page 91 of VA's Annual Performance Report for fiscal year 2001 that, "to ensure sensitivity to the grieving process, NCA allows a minimum of three months after an internment before including a respondent in the sample population [survey]." I have no question in this regard, but I applaud NCA's policy.

NCA recognizes that collecting customer satisfaction data from families who have suffered a loss requires a great deal of tact and sensitivity. We are careful to be respectful of the grieving process but at the same time we would like the experience to be recent enough so that recollections are as accurate as possible. In developing our survey methodology we took the time to conduct focus groups with families who had interred loved ones in national cemeteries and asked them for their opinion on an appropriate time to be contacted by NCA for feedback about the services received from the national cemetery. Families told us 90 days would be both respectful and timely.

10. I note on page 103 of the aforementioned report that VAIG found with respect to "percent of the veteran population served by the existence of a burial option within a reasonable distance—VA could not recreate population projections used to calculate this measurement because essential data no longer existed." Why did such data no longer exist?

The reference cited is to an audit of data used by NCA to calculate the percent of the veteran population with a VA burial option for Fiscal Year 1997. VA's Office of Policy and Planning provided the data to NCA using information prepared in 1995. In its audit report, dated May 12, 1999 (9R5-B04-103), VA's Office of the Inspector General (VAIG) observed that the calculations underlying the data "could not be re-created because certain essential documentation was not available." Specifically, "a data set prepared by a former employee to account for veteran migration was lost, and data concerning separations from the military were periodically updated, and prior versions could not be retrieved."

VAIG recommended that sufficient documentation be retained "to recreate veteran population projections prepared in the future." Because it noted, "several measures were already underway to ensure such documentation," the VAIG considered the issue resolved. The validation and redesign of the veteran population model as incorporated in VetPop2000 and VetPop2001, and the establishment of the Office of the Actuary in 1999 with responsibility for population projections and documentation, ensure that this will not occur again.

Attachment A

A Brief Description

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) completed a new veteran population model, VetPop2000, in December 2000. The Office of Policy and Planning used data from this model to prepare tables for the *FY 2000 Annual Accountability Report* and to answer questions about the veteran population. In February, 2001, VetPop2000 was released to data and planning offices in VHA, VBA, and NCA. This paper is a brief summary of the design, data sources and results of the new model. Details of all aspects of the development and content of the model are available from the Office of the Actuary.

VetPop2000 was, at that time, the latest in a series of veteran population models that provide data widely used both inside and outside VA as the official estimate and projection of the total number of veterans and their demographic characteristics. The new model was completely redesigned to incorporate advances in computer technology, new data sources, and user needs. VetPop2000 was just the beginning. An update should be completed on or about September 30, 2001 and every year thereafter.

VA contracted with the Hay Group and Mathematica Policy Research Inc. (MPR) to help design and build VetPop2000. The Hay Group is a human resources consulting firm with particular expertise in designing and implementing complex actuarial models. MPR is a policy research firm with over 30 years of experience in social policy evaluation and data collection, and over 25 years of experience developing policy simulation models for a variety of clients.

Design Methodology

The prior veteran population model was last updated in 1993 based on data from the 1990 Census. VetPop2000 also uses 1990 Census data, but incorporates major changes that make the estimates and projections more accessible, timely, accurate, and responsive to user needs. These changes were based on extensive consultations with VA stakeholders, detailed technical studies of the prior model, improved computer technology, and updated data sources.

The prior model began with the number and characteristics of veterans as of 4/1/90 determined in the 1990 Census. That population of veterans was projected forward from 1990 by adding the number of military separations and subtracting the number of veterans who died. Military separations from 4/1/1990 to 1993 were provided by the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC), while separations after 1993 were estimated by VA. Veteran deaths were estimated by using mortality experience for the white non-Hispanic United States population from the Bureau of the Census as a proxy for the mortality experience of veterans.[i]

VetPop2000 follows a logical strategy similar to that used in earlier models. That is, new separations from service over a period are added to the base population at the beginning of the period and deaths over the period are subtracted resulting in the population at the end of the period. However, studies leading to VetPop2000 identified two new data sources that greatly improve the accuracy and detail of the model. One of the two data sources is the DMDC file of veterans who left service on or after 7/1/1970. This DMDC data had been used in the prior model for separations after 4/1/1990; VetPop2000 uses the DMDC data for all veterans born after 1951 or serving after the Vietnam Era.[ii] The number of veterans born prior to 1952 and not serving after the Vietnam Era is estimated using census data, as was done in the earlier model.

VetPop2000 therefore has two major data components: data from the census, so-called "census cells," and data from DMDC, so-called "DMDC cells." The two types of cells are treated differently up to 9/30/99 and the same thereafter, as indicated in the table and discussion below:

	Beginning data	Separations	Mortality
Census cells	1990 Census	None	White non-Hisp.
DMDC cells	None	Actual	Actual
Both post 9/30/99	-----	DOD projection	Modified military

A few entries in the above table need some explanation. No separations are added to census cells; all separations go into DMDC cells. Actual deaths for DMDC cells are determined by matching the DMDC file with the Social Security Administration death file. Mortality post 9/30/99 for all cells is a modification of the mortality rates used by the Department of Defense Office of the Actuary (DOD OACT) in their determination of the cost of the military retirement system. Separations post 9/30/99 are also from the DOD OACT. This is the other data source identified in the review of data sources previously mentioned. It was found that the DOD actuarial model already incorporated sophisticated procedures for projecting new veterans and that these could be readily adapted as the basis for projections in VetPop2000. The DOD model has the additional advantages of having been reviewed and approved by an independent Board of Actuaries and being based on DOD's projection of force strength.

VetPop2000 was designed to run in a PC environment using PC SAS version 8. User-friendly output data is available on a single CD in Excel using PivotTable technology. PivotTable technology provides straightforward lookup features to easily extract any information needed with no additional training required beyond the ability to use basic Excel.

Key Assumptions

Mortality and separations have already been discussed; migration will be discussed in the next section. Beyond those assumptions (mortality,

separations, and migration) VetPop2000 expands on the set of assumptions used in the prior model to provide greater accuracy in projecting the veteran population. For example, post 9/30/99 mortality rates differentiate between officers and enlisted and between healthy and disabled veterans. The expansion also increases the number of demographic characteristics of the veterans in the projections beyond the four characteristics identified in the prior model (age, gender, state, and period of service). A set of 28 parameter files, developed by the Hay Group and reviewed by the staff of the VA OACT are the basis for an extensive fine-tuned projection of veterans recognizing a variety of demographic aspects of the veterans population. These parameter files include projections of mortality, migration, disability status, branch of service, and retirement status. Modified parameter files can be easily inserted into the model to test their effect.

Major Data Sources

Three of the major data sources have already been mentioned in the discussion of design: the 1990 Census, actual separations from DMDC, and projected separations from the DOD OACT. Another major data source is the C&P master file. It is used in at least two important ways -- to identify veterans by disability status and to determine migration patterns after the 1990 census. The 1990 Census is used to allocate veterans to states as of 4/1/90 for both Census and DMDC cells. In the prior model, migration after 4/1/90 was based on the net state migration of the total U.S. population. However, studies indicate that veterans are twice as mobile as the population as a whole. Therefore, in VetPop2000 migration between the states (and other areas) was based on the migration of C&P recipients.[iii]

All data included in VetPop2000 is "as of" September 30, 1999 although some data, such as separations, was captured during the summer of 2000 to make sure that reports were as close to being final as possible.

Selected Results

The estimates and projections[iv] in VetPop2000 were validated by actuaries from the Hay Group through the application of a series of standard actuarial tests of both individual and total results for each year in the estimate and projection. VA staff also reviewed the output for internal consistency and to make sure that any deviations from prior estimates and projections were reasonable and explainable. In order to make appropriate comparisons, VetPop2000 provides data at each of the prior model's report dates: 4/1/90, 4/1/91, and each 6/30 from 1991 to 1999.

As reported in the FY 1999 Annual Accountability Report, the prior model had projected 24,803,000 veterans as of June 30, 1999. Despite the general decline in the number of veterans due to the dying off of the WW II generation, for the FY 2000 Report, VetPop2000 estimates 25,498,000 veterans as of September 30, 2000. (See the attached spreadsheet). The main reason for the increase is the inclusion of veterans in VetPop2000 that were not previously counted. In the 1980s, the eligibility of veterans for most benefits was changed to exclude most veterans with less than two years of service after September 7, 1980 (L2s). Accordingly, the L2s were excluded from the prior estimates and projections of the number of veterans. The decision has been reconsidered and reversed for a number of reasons as discussed in a separate note.[v] There were 1,043,000 veterans who fit the "less than two years of service since 1980" category on June 30, 1999. This number grew to 1,111,000 by September 30, 2000. The inclusion of L2s appears to explain almost the entire difference between the projected number of veterans in the current and prior models.

However, there are also a number of smaller differences that resulted from improvements in the estimates in VetPop2000. The most significant of these are:

- VetPop2000 includes 126,000 veterans who were living in U.S. territories and abroad as of 9/30/00. The veteran count from the 1990 Census had been limited to the United States and Puerto Rico; the prior model was similarly limited. It is appropriate to include all veterans, regardless of residence at the time of the Census, since all are potentially eligible for veteran's benefits.

- Both VetPop2000 and the prior model include an estimate of veterans who only served in the Reserves but are potentially eligible for veteran's benefits because of the conditions of service. There were 200,000 fewer veterans of this type than had been previously included.

In both models, new veterans who left service after the 1990 Census were estimated based on data from DMDC. The current DMDC data files show 255,000 more veterans than had been projected in 1993, based on new veterans in the early 1990s.

- The use of actual mortality for DMDC cells gave rise to about 21,000 additional deaths over the 1990s in VetPop2000 when compared to the prior model.

- The veteran population was estimated as of the end of the fiscal year rather than June 30. In the five quarters between June 30, 1999 and September 30, 2000, there was a net loss of 528,000 veterans due to deaths exceeding new separations.

- Revised migration has changed the estimated distribution of veterans by state between 6/30/99 as reported in the 1999 Accountability Report and 9/30/00 as will be reported in the 2000 Report. Changes range from a 24% increase in Nevada to an 11% decrease in California. See attached spreadsheet in "Appendix to Brief Description" for detail by state. These changes are the cumulative effect over the 10.5 years since the 1990 Census of the difference between migration rates used in VetPop2000 and the migration rates in assumed in the prior model.

Conclusion

The output of the prior model consisted of 60 binders each with about 200 pages of hard copy tables. The output of VetPop2000 replaces the binders with a single CD-ROM containing straightforward data lookup features permitting timely retrieval of demographic information. The four basic reports of the past model have been replaced by a standard set of 23 reports, with the flexibility to generate almost 2000 variant reports using simple menu choices. This data will be made available on VA's Intranet. Much more detailed output for researchers is available in SAS format.

VetPop2000 represents a vast improvement over previous VA estimation and projection models. It takes lessons learned from the past and applies new research and greatly improved technology. The result is a more accurate, accessible, flexible, versatile, and comprehensive model. It includes all veterans, is parameter-driven, contains many veteran characteristics, makes extensive use of veteran and military data, is PC based, provides flexible output, and will be fully documented.

The results of VetPop2000 should help to understand what is happening in the utilization of VA programs and provide general guidance as to what may happen in the future. In using these results, it is important to realize that these are estimates and that it is unlikely that the future will turn out exactly as

predicted and that even the estimates of the past may not reflect exactly what happened. In particular, although the results of VetPop2000 differ from the results from the prior model, they do not change what is actually happening. The change appears larger because of the time lag between this and the prior model. If the prior model had been updated annually, changes each year would have been smaller. Similarly small changes in these results should be expected in future annual updates. When veteran data from Census 2000 becomes available, sometime in 2002 or 2003, it will provide a check on these projections and will be incorporated into future projections.

Stephen Meskin, Chief Actuary
May 1, 2001

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[i] White non-Hispanic mortality was used because studies indicated that veteran mortality is lower than that of the general population. Opinion has not changed on that fact, however the appropriateness of that particular mortality table is questionable.

[ii] The 1990 Census does not ask about dates of military service, it only asks which wars a veteran served in. Thus we need to use age and period of service as a proxy for years of service in relating the 1990 Census to DMDC data. Any veteran born after 1951 or who served after the Vietnam era must have served after 7/1/1970 so they are in the DMDC file. For the rest, we used the 1990 Census to be sure that we captured all veterans.

[iii] In both VetPop2000 and the prior model migration rates are applied by age and gender. The prior model used the 52 net migrations for each state plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. VetPop2000 improves on this by using a 53 by 53 matrix of out-migration rates from state to state (including the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and veterans living abroad (Territories/Foreign)).

[iv] In the context of determining the number of veterans the term "estimate" has traditionally been used to indicate historic numbers and "projection" future numbers. Put another way the difference between estimates and projections are that estimates are based on actual separations and projections on projected separations. For VetPop2000 the numbers of veterans as of 9/30/99 or earlier are estimates while the numbers as of 9/30/2000 or later are projections.

[v] Estimates and projections of the number of veterans excluding those with less than two years of service after 1980 are available to researchers in the same detail as in VetPop2000.

CHAIRMAN SMITH TO AMVETS

Questions for the Record
Chairman Chris Smith
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
October 16, 2002

Hearing on the Current and Future Burial Needs of
America's Veterans

Response: Richard Jones, AMVETS National Legislative Director.

1. QUESTION: Would AMVETS agree that the maintenance situation at the national cemeteries is an overwhelming problem requiring immediate action?

1. ANSWER: AMVETS would agree that the NCA is struggling to maintain burial grounds across the country. Clearly, it is a continuing challenge that will only grow in magnitude and cost the longer needed maintenance remains unattended and deferred. It is also clear that current funding under the Continuing Resolution is not adequate. It will not get the job done. Without a commitment of adequate resources, AMVETS believes we hazard more than the visual and physical condition of the cemetery system. We place in jeopardy the obligation of a grateful Nation to honor those who offered their lives in the defense of their country.

2. QUESTION: How has *The Independent Budget* made either the Department of Veterans Affairs or this Committee aware of the deplorable conditions that have manifested themselves at some of our cemeteries in the past five years?

2. ANSWER: Over the past five years, *The Independent Budget* has, without exception, asked Congress to support additional staff and resources to reduce serious shortages in field operations. In fiscal year 1999, for example, the *IB* said, "Budgetary shortfalls have forced the system to address only the highest priority projects while forgoing important preventive maintenance and infrastructure repairs." In fiscal year 2001 and in fiscal year 2002, the *IB* noted that inadequate funding caused "backlogging important preventive maintenance and infrastructure repairs." Last year, fiscal year 2003, the *IB* stated that despite "marginal increases to its appropriations over the last two years, prior years of successive restrained budgets have made it impossible to address long-term field management and operational needs of the system." It continued saying, "There is a clear need to establish a national commitment to identify and address the standards of appearance at national cemeteries." Recent publication of the report *An Independent Study on Improvements to Veterans Cemeteries*, from the Department of Veterans Affairs, confirms the concern expressed by the *IB* regarding the scope of work necessary to correct deficiencies at our veterans national cemeteries.

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