POLICY AND OPERATIONAL ISSUES FACING ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY AND THE AMERICAN BATTLE MONUMENTS COMMISSION

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SUBCOMMITTEE ON DISABILITY ASSISTANCE AND MEMORIAL AFFAIRS

ONE HUNDRED NINTH CONGRESS

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OVERSIGHT HEARING ON POLICY AND OPERATIONAL ISSUES FACING ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY AND THE AMERICAN BATTLE MONUMENTS COMMISSION

Thursday, March 30, 2006

U.S. House of Representatives,
Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs,
Committee on Veterans' Affairs,
Washington, D.C.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 1:33 p.m., in Room 334, Cannon House Office Building, Hon. Jeb Bradley presiding.

Present: Representatives Bradley and Buyer.

Mr. Bradley. Good afternoon everyone. This hearing will come to order. Chairman Miller had to return to Florida for a funeral, so I am assuming the chair today with the graces of our Chairman, who is here.

We are meeting to receive testimony from representatives of Arlington National Cemetery and the American Battle Monuments Commission, ABMC. You may recall that last April the Subcommittee held an oversight hearing on the Department of Veterans Affairs' National Cemetery Administration. This hearing is the second part of the Subcommittee's cemetery oversight agenda. Arlington National Cemetery is the nation's premier military cemetery. Arlington is the final resting place of war heroes, former presidents, Supreme Court justices, astronauts, and other individuals who have contributed to the armed services and our nation.

Last year, Arlington Cemetery conducted over 4,000 interments, and nearly 2,600 inurnments. In addition to welcoming millions of visitors annually, Arlington hosts many ceremonies which commemorate the service and sacrifice of men and women who served in the United States military.

The American Battle Monuments Commission, an independent agency of the executive branch, was established in 1923 to commemorate and memorialize the sacrifice of nearly 125,000 of the nation's war dead and 94,000 servicemembers who are missing in action, or

lost, or buried at sea.

The Commission administers, operates, and maintains 24 permanent American military cemeteries; 35 federal monuments, memorials, and markers; and 4 non-federal markers. If you have seen the movie "Saving Private Ryan," then you have seen the ABMC cemetery at Normandy, France. However, there are 23 other cemeteries that are also awe-inspiring.

Since Ms. Berkley or Mr. Udall is not here for their opening remarks, I'm going to turn to the Chairman, Mr. Buyer, for any opening remarks that he may have, and then recognize Mr. Udall and Ms. Berkley when they arrive.

MR. BUYER. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Metzler, and Brigadier General Nicholson, I just want to thank both of you. You are stewards of our honored and sacred dead, and the manner in which you hold the high standards of dignity on behalf of the country, I want to thank you for that.

Mr. Metzler, you've been pretty busy lately, and each time that I go over to Arlington, I also feel good about the reception that you give the visitors, but in particular the families. I have found it to be very orderly, and people really know that they are at a very sacred place, and they just want to follow the rules, and follow the order. What I have noticed is that you all handle that very, very well, and so I want to extend my complements to you.

With that, I yield back.

MR. BRADLEY. Since Mr. Udall and Ms. Berkley are not here, let us proceed directly to the panel. And with the forbearance of the minority, we will try to accommodate them when they arrive. Thank you.

We have one panel this afternoon. Mr. John Metzler, Jr., is the Superintendent of Arlington National Cemetery. Mr. Metzler served three years in the United States Army, including a tour in Vietnam where he was a helicopter crew chief. He was appointed Superintendent of Arlington in 1991, a post his father held from 1951 to 1972.

We also welcome Brigadier General John Nicholson, Secretary of the American Battle Monuments Commission. General Nicholson, a graduate of West Point, had a distinguished career as an Airborne Ranger.

Prior to his appointment at ABMC, General Nicholson served as the Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Gentlemen, welcome. We will hold our questions until each of you has testified. Obviously, your full statement will be submitted and printed in the official record.

Mr. Metzler, please begin.

STATEMENT OF JOHN C. METZLER, JR., SUPERINTENDENT, ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY, BRIGADIER GENERAL JOHN W. NICHOLSON, U.S. ARMY, RETIRED, SECRETARY, AMERICAN BATTLE MONUMENTS COMMISSION

STATEMENT OF JOHN C. METZLER, JR.

MR. METZLER. Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman, members of the other Committee.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify before the Subcommittee in support of the Department of the Army's Cemetarial Operation Program at Arlington, and the Soldiers and Airmen's Home National Cemeteries.

I am testifying today on behalf of the Secretary of the Army, who is responsible for the operation, maintenance, and oversight of these two national cemeteries.

Arlington National Cemetery is our nation's premier military cemetery, and it is an honor for me to be here today to represent the cemetery. On behalf of the Department of the Army, I would like to express our appreciation for the support that Congress has provided to us over the years.

Arlington continues to be a very busy operation, with over 4000 interments in fiscal year 2005, and more than 2500 inurements in the Columbarium during the same period.

It is important to proceed with the expansion projects for Arlington National Cemetery in a timely manner so that there will be no disruption for services for our deceased veterans and their families, and to relieve the significant crowding of our daily funeral services. Significant crowding is already occurring, due to the ever shrinking land availability at Arlington, and the increased number of funerals. This sometimes can compromise the dignity of the funerals by distracting the families at the ongoing services nearby, as well as the disruptions caused by the daily maintenance required to be performed at new grave sites.

At present, we are completing land development 90, phase one, which is developing the last 40 acres within the cemetery on the old South Fort Myer property, along Route 110. This project, when completed, will develop 26,000 new grave sites.

Phase two, which will start later this year, when completed will have a new boundary wall, and 5000 niches within this boundary wall for cremated remains.

Also this year, we will begin construction of our eighth building at the Columbarium complex.

Finally, I am happy to report to you that our visitation this year is in full operation. We expect over 4 million visitors to tour the grounds at Arlington National Cemetery. Thank you.

[The statement of Mr. Metzler appears on p.11]

MR. BRADLEY. Mr. Nicholson, that buzzer means that the votes have begun but we have several minutes before we have to leave, so we will proceed as expeditiously as possible. General Nicholson.

STATEMENT OF GENERAL JOHN W. NICHOLSON

GENERAL NICHOLSON. Mr. Chairman, members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to testify on behalf of the American Battle Monuments Commission. Our Commission Chairman, General Fred Franks, regrets he could not attend today's session due to illness, but wishes to submit his testimony for the record.

I would like to make a few opening remarks to highlight the Commission's mission, give you an opportunity to know what our scope of our operation, and to provide insight to the direction the Commission is headed.

As Secretary, it is my responsibility to direct the Commission's operations to ensure that we, as a nation, continue to honor appropriately the service, achievements, and the sacrifices of America's armed forces, where they fought. Since its creation in 1923, the Commission has served as a guardian of America's overseas commemorative cemeteries and memorials. We are committed to preserving the future generations at 24 permanent memorial cemeteries, 25 monuments, memorials, and markers around the world that honor America's war dead, missing in action, and those who fought at their side; and doing so in a manner befitting their achievements and sacrifices.

Our inspiration comes from words written more than 70 years ago by our first Chairman, General of the Armies, John J. Pershing, who promised that "time will not dim the glory of their deeds." Remaining faithful to Pershing's promise, and with a view to the future, we are focusing our energies and resources toward accomplishing four strategic goals.

Number one, to develop, operate, maintain, and improve the Commission's facilities as the world's best commemorative sites.

Two, to value and invest in each employee.

Three, to have the Commission's commemorative sites recognized worldwide as inspirational and educational visitor destinations.

And four, to make the Commission's business and resource management the best in government.

Contributing directly toward accomplishment of our third strategic goal is the work the Commission has done since 2002 to design and construct an interpretive center at the Normandy American Cemetery in France. This center will tell the story of the 9387 American soldiers buried in Normandy, and the 1557 missing in action memorialized there. Construction is progressing well, and we plan to open

the center by early summer, 2007.

As you travel abroad on Subcommittee business, we invite you to visit our commemorative sites, to see for yourselves the commitment our nation has made and continues to make toward maintaining our sacred trust to America's war dead, and to their families. And we ask that you encourage your constituents to do likewise.

The Commission's fiscal year 2007 appropriation request for 40.738 million support our work toward accomplishing our strategic goals, and continues our commitment for worldwide mission and responsibilities. Our challenge is to sustain the high standards of excellence we have set in maintaining our commemorative sites, as shrines to America's war dead. Concurrently, we plan to do a better job of telling the story of these uniquely splendid cemeteries and memorials. They inspire patriotism. They evoke gratitude. And they teach lessons of history to all who visit.

We are grateful for the support we receive from the House. The trust you place in us, and your understanding of our operational needs, ensures that we have sufficient resources, when we need them, to sustain our operations.

I would like to close by introducing the members of my staff accompanying me today. Brigadier General William Leszczynski, U.S. Army, retired, Executive Director and Chief Operations Officer; Guy Giancarlo, Director of Finance; Alan Gregory, Budget Officer; Tom Sole, Director of Engineering and Maintenance; and Mike Conley, Director of Public Affairs.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This concludes my opening statement. I will be pleased to respond to your questions.

[The statement of General Nicholson appears on p. 17]

[The statement of General Franks appears on p. 20]

MR. BRADLEY. Thank you very much, General. I am going to yield my time to the Chairman, Mr. Buyer.

MR. BUYER. Thank you very much, Chairman Bradley, for yielding. I just have a question, Mr. Metzler. Do you have any unfunded requirements right now with regard to the submission of the budget you just did for '07?

MR. METZLER. For '07? Oh-seven, sir, will be a challenging year for us to meet with the changes [inaudible] upon us, so we are working very diligently --

MR. BUYER. Can you hit your microphone for me, please?

MR. METZLER. Excuse me. Oh-seven will be a challenging year for us. The constraints that we are trying to work within will make it very challenging for us to continue to maintain the high standards at Arlington Cemetery. And right now, we are working to try to figure that out.

MR. BUYER. All right, let me read between the lines then. I need for you to help me identify what the unfunded requirements are. You know what it takes to run your business out there, and obviously you have sent some submissions in, and they gave you a budget number. So tell me what the differential was.

MR. METZLER. Well, sir, if I could just go back for a little history here, if that is permitted.

MR. BUYER. Sure.

MR. METZLER. In fiscal year 2005, our budget was about $28 million. Fiscal year 2006, $32 million. And our submission for fiscal year 2007 was $26 million. Now, granted, the submission for '06 included the major construction projects that we are currently working toward.

The challenge we are going to have, sir, is the operation and maintenance of the cemetery; in other words, keeping everything that we have on track, and also to be able to continue to improve the infrastructure, to continue to bring new things to the cemetery as we develop and push the boundaries of the cemetery out at the same time.

MR. BUYER. All right. To remove that challenge, what is your need?

MR. METZLER. My need, sir, is a challenge to continue to work with the administration to get that dollar amount to our construction projects, as well as our O&M projects, as we continue to meet the increase in costs that we are seeing right now, with each contract year.

MR. BUYER. All right, that is wonderful, but I want you to work with the legislative branch for a moment. So tell me what your needs are. I mean, if I can come in and work with the Chairman here, and propose working with the Armed Services Committee, and defense appropriators, and we are able to actually designate for Arlington, what am I supposed to designate?

MR. METZLER. Well, sir, it would be -- if we could maintain a level that we had in '06, with a look at the increases proportionately for cost of living, that would keep our heads above water.

MR. BUYER. All right, what does that mean, cost-of-living?

MR. METZLER. Our '06 appropriations was about $32 million.

MR. BUYER. Yes.

MR. METZLER. And the increase that we would have across-the-board on different projects, I don't know that I have a dollar amount or a percentage right now, but you seem to be seeing at least a five percent to a 10 percent increase on our current contracts that we let each year.

MR. BUYER. All right. We would like to work with you. And whatever we can do to increase the level of funding for you, we are going to work to do that.

MR. METZLER. Thank you, sir. I would look forward to working with your Committee.

MR. BUYER. I also want to thank you. You are coming back here next week to testify once again before this Subcommittee in reference to the demonstration bill that Mr. Rogers and Mr. Reyes have introduced.

MR. METZLER. Yes, sir.

MR. BUYER. I want to thank you for that. We are trying to block them at the pass. I think the last thing we want is for these demonstrators to show up on your doorstep. I know you have the procedures and all, and -- I just want you to know that as the Committee has put this together, working with Mr. Reyes, we have, because these are federal lands with exclusive jurisdiction, we have sought to examine proportionality with regard to what level should these individuals be cited. And so we became comfortable with a Class A misdemeanor with a $100,000 fine and one year in jail. The Class A misdemeanor at the federal level is a lot tougher than it is at the state level, but to you, Mr. Metzler, and to Brigadier General Nicholson, we have narrowly tailored this to apply to our national cemeteries, so that we can set the standards of dignity, and grant grieving families their rights and liberties, because they should not be infringed by someone else's abnormal behavior.

I want to thank you for coming over, not only today. We will work on the budget numbers. Let me thank General Nicholson, if you can extend also to your Commission members, let me thank you for upholding the high standards that our sacred heroes deserve.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

MR. BRADLEY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Before I close, I just want to make it clear to the minority, they may submit for the record opening statements or questions. There will be questions that the Subcommittee will be submitting to you for the record, and we will await your answers. I apologize for having to close this hearing so quickly, but we do have a vote.

I would just close by saying that we have a sacred honor, and a duty, to commemorate the men and women of the United States military. Whether it is in a VA national cemetery, or Arlington Cemetery, or an ABMC cemetery, the obligation remains the same. I appreciate your time, your candor, and your thoughts today on what your organizations need to maintain and operate your facilities in a manner that reflects the service and sacrifice of those interred in these facilities.

With nothing further, the hearing is adjourned.

MINORITY COUNSEL. Excuse me, Mr. Chairman. Ms. Berkley and Mr. Udall do have statements for the record.

MR. BRADLEY. Without objection, they will be entered. And if there are any questions they would like to submit, we are certainly happy to have them.

[The statements of Ms. Berkley and Mr. Udall appear on p. 9 and

p. 10 respectively]

MR. BRADLEY. So seeing nothing else, the hearing is adjourned and I thank you again.

[Whereupon, at 1:53 p.m. the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

Statement of Ranking Member Shelley Berkley
Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs
Oversight hearing on policy and operational issues facing Arlington National Cemetery and the American Battle Monuments Commission
March 30, 2006

First, I would like to thank Chairman Miller for holding this hearing on the Arlington National Cemetery and the American Battle Monuments Commission. Arlington and the AMBC cemeteries provide a peaceful and serene resting place for our nation's veterans. They are national shrines and must be preserved as such.

I am concerned that the FY 2007 budget for Arlington National Cemetery is significantly less than the FY 2006 allocation. I hope that Mr. Metzler will be able to discuss the implications of the reduced funding on necessary repairs and maintenance as well as services provided to those who choose Arlington as their final resting place.

I appreciate the work of the American Battle Monuments Commission. My father, George Levine, is among those honored at the World War II Memorial, which was established by the Commission but is now maintained by the National Park Service. I know how much that memorial and others mean to so many Nevada veterans and their families. In addition, many Nevadans are buried at the overseas cemeteries that the ABMC operates and maintains.

I hope that the ABMC will be able to address the steps taken to resolve the deficiencies raised by the Government Accountability Office in its recent report.

Again, thank you for being here today and I look forward to your testimony.

Congressman Tom Udall (NM-03)
HVAC Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs
Oversight hearing on the policy and operation issues facing Arlington National Cemetery and the American Battle Monuments Commission
March 30, 2006

Mr. Chairman,

Thank you to today's witnesses for their testimony. As members of this committee, we are charged with honoring our nation's veterans, and one of the ways in which we express that honor is through the creation and administration of national cemeteries and memorials.

Almost weekly, constituents from New Mexico call or stop by my Washington office while on vacation. One area many of these constituents end up visiting is Arlington National Cemetery. This cemetery, perhaps the most famous in the U.S., contains memorials to presidents, justices, generals and other great leaders of this country. It also is the final resting place for thousands of individuals who answered the call to service and made the ultimate sacrifice. Superintendent Metzler, I am interested in hearing your expectations for the expansion of the cemetery, and what problems or difficulties you believe may be encountered where this subcommittee could be of assistance.

In today's current environment, we can also greatly appreciate the mission of the American Battle Monuments Commission: to commemorate the service, sacrifice, and achievements of U.S. armed forces where they have served overseas. Thousands of men and women have given their lives in service and in protection of our country, and have fallen in the field of battle far from home. For nine decades, the ABMC has maintained twenty-five memorials throughout the world which preserve the memory of the fallen.

I understand that the ABMC is attempting to increase the visibility and tourism to all of its memorials, but particularly to its lesser-known and lesser-visited sites, and I look forward to hearing from General Nicholson on how the ABMC campaign will attempt to achieve these increases.

Honoring the memory of our veterans should be done from the day when they retire from service. It means ensuring full funding of health care benefits that these men and women were promised. It means providing support service-connected conditions such as PTSD. And it means providing properly maintained burial places where the public can be educated and where family and friends can celebrate the service of these individuals.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

COMPLETE STATEMENT

OF

MR. JOHN CHARLES METZLER, JR.

SUPERINTENDENT OF ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY

BEFORE

THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON DISABILITY AND MEMORIAL AFFAIRS

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS

UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ON

POLICY AND OPERATIONAL MATTERS

March 30, 2006

COMPLETE STATEMENT

OF

MR. JOHN CHARLES METZLER, JR.
SUPERINTENDENT OF ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY

BEFORE

THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON DISABILITY AND MEMORIAL AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ON

POLICY AND OPERATIONAL MATTERS

Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Subcommittee:

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before this subcommittee in support of the operations of Arlington National Cemetery and Soldiers' and Airmen's Home National Cemetery. I am testifying on behalf of the Secretary of the Army, who is responsible for operating and maintaining Arlington and Soldiers' and Airmen's Home National Cemeteries, as well as making necessary capital improvements to ensure their long-term viability.

Arlington National Cemetery is the Nation's premier military cemetery. It is an honor to represent this cemetery and the Soldiers' and Airmen's Home National Cemetery. On behalf of these two cemeteries and the Department of the Army, I would like to express our appreciation for the support that Congress has provided over the years.

FUNERALS

In FY 2005, there were 4,005 interments and 2,563 inurnments. In FY 2006, we estimate there will be 4,062 interments and 2,590 inurnments. Looking ahead to FY 2007, we estimate there will be 4,062 interments and 2,590 inurnments. Of the 2,300 Iraq War casualties, a total of 256, or 11 percent, have been interred at Arlington.

CEREMONIES AND VISITATION

Millions of visitors, both foreign and American, come to Arlington to view the Cemetery and participate in ceremonial events. During FY 2005, about 3,200 ceremonies were conducted, with the President of the United States attending the ceremonies on Veterans Day and Memorial Day. The Vice President was here to attend the Veterans Day ceremony on November 11, 2005.

FISCAL YEAR 2007 BUDGET OVERVIEW

The FY 2007 budget is $26,549,713, which is $2,209,787 less than the FY 2006 regular appropriation of $28,759,500, which reflects a rescission of $290,500. In addition to the regular FY 2006 appropriation, an additional $1,000,000 is expected to be available from proceeds generated from parking receipts to pay for maintenance, repair and replacement of the parking facility.

The FY 2007 budget will support Arlington National Cemetery's efforts to improve its infrastructure and continue working toward implementation of its Ten-year Capital Investment Plan. The funds requested are adequate to support the work force, assure maintenance of buildings and grounds, acquire necessary supplies and equipment, and provide the standards of service expected at Arlington and Soldiers' and Airmen's Home National Cemeteries.

GRAVESITE DEVELOPMENT

The budget also includes funds to pursue expansion efforts needed to ensure that Arlington National Cemetery remains an active burial place for service men and women into the next century. The following table displays how long gravesites will remain available in both developed and undeveloped areas that are currently part of the Cemetery. It is presented to illustrate the importance of proceeding with expansion projects in a timely manner so that there will be no disruption in services for deceased veterans and to relieve significant crowding of funeral services. Significant crowding is already occurring due to the ever-shrinking land available for burials in the Cemetery. This is compromising the dignity of funerals by distracting families at ongoing nearby services, as well as disruptions caused by daily maintenance required to be performed at new gravesites.

Note that the gravesite capacity shown in the table for the undeveloped area includes Project 90 and utility relocations, but does not include the Millennium Project. Nor does the table reflect future land expansion projects programmed in the Ten-year Capital Investment Plan, such as the Navy Annex and Ft. Myer parking lot, which are currently authorized and addressed in the Concept Land Utilization Plan.

Arlington National Cemetery						
Gravesite Capacity as of September 30, 2005						
Gravesite Capacity - Developed Areas	Total Gravesites Used	Gravesites Currently Available	Year Available Capacity Exhausted	Gravesite Capacity - Undeveloped Area	Total Gravesite Capacity	Year Total Capacity Exhausted
243,373	219,681	23,692	2013	36,000	279,373	2025

Project 90 Land Development. As the table illustrates, capacity in the currently developed area of Arlington National Cemetery is becoming more concentrated and will be exhausted by 2013. In order to extend the Cemetery's useful life to 2025, it is necessary to develop the 40 acres of open land within its current boundaries known as Project 90. This involves the development of gravesite areas, roads, utilities and a boundary wall with niches for the placement of cremated remains. Approximately 26,000 additional gravesites and 5,000 niches will be provided when the development is complete.

The Project 90 land development effort is fully designed and $9.4 million in construction funds for Phase I were appropriated in FY 2002 and FY 2003. Phase I consists of grading the site, relocating utilities, constructing roads and landscaping gravesite areas. Construction of Phase I began in FY 2004 and is scheduled to be finished in FY 2007.

The FY 2005 budget included $5 million for Phase II of Project 90. In a letter dated February 1, 2006, we informed this subcommittee that $3,100,000 were being reprogrammed in FY 2006 to address a cost increase resulting from inflation and the need to pay for a 48-inch storm drain line as part of the first phase of the project. Phase II primarily entails construction of a new boundary niche wall that will hold the ashes of cremated remains on the inside of the wall. The niches and covers will be the same size and resemble those currently used at the existing Columbarium Complex. After allowing sufficient time for ground settlement, it is anticipated that construction of Phase II would begin in FY 2007 and be completed in FY 2009. At the current rate of niche use it is estimated that the additional niches will be needed by the year 2012.

Utility Relocations. Arlington County is planning to replace an aging sanitary sewer line that runs through Arlington National Cemetery with a new line known as the Potomac Interceptor. The presence of the existing sewer line prevents burials in approximately ten acres of land along Eisenhower Drive. The new sewer line would be placed directly under the existing roadway, and if the other utilities (i.e., electric, telephone and water) that run through that area are also relocated, it is estimated that approximately eight to ten thousand more gravesites could be developed.

BUDGET DETAILS

The budget is made up of three programs -- Operation and Maintenance, Administration, and Construction. The principal items contained in each program are described below.

Operation and Maintenance Program

The budget for the Operation and Maintenance program is $17,588,000. It provides for the cost of operations necessary to conduct an average of 25 funeral services per day, accommodate approximately four million visitors each year, and maintain 652 acres of land and associated infrastructure. This program supports 93 of the cemeteries' total of 99 full time equivalent (FTE) work-years. Contractual services comprise $9,200,000, or 52 percent, of the Operation and Maintenance program.

Administration Program

The budget includes $1,431,000 for the Administration program, which provides for essential management and administrative functions, including staff supervision of Arlington and Soldiers' and Airmen's Home National Cemeteries. Budgeted funds will provide for personnel compensation, benefits, and reimbursable administrative support services provided by other government agencies. This program supports the balance of the cemeteries' workforce of six FTE work-years.

Construction Program

The Construction program's budget is $7,531,000. The following two major projects are particularly important to increase the capacity of Arlington National Cemetery, so that additional space can be made available for burials and inurnments.

The Millennium Project. This project consists of three parcels of land. The first parcel (7 acres) is land within the boundaries of Arlington National Cemetery made available by demolition of the old warehouse buildings. The second parcel (12 acres) was transferred to the Cemetery from the National Park Service on January 28, 2002, pursuant to the authority contained in Section 2863 of Public Law 107-107, the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2002. The final piece of the Millennium Project is a 13-acre parcel of adjacent land formerly owned by Fort Myer (picnic area), which was transferred to the Cemetery on January 21, 2004, in accordance with Section 2882 of the FY 2000 Defense Authorization Act (Public Law 106-65). Design of the Millennium Project began last year with funds appropriated in FY 2004. The first phase of construction is anticipated to start in FY 2007 and $5,904,000 is included to primarily address storm water runoff that brings large amounts of water into the Cemetery from heavily developed portions of Fort Myer. This is a preliminary estimate that is subject to refinement as more design work is completed.

Phase IVB Columbarium Complex. As the option for cremation becomes more acceptable and because eligibility in the Columbarium at Arlington National Cemetery is less restrictive than eligibility for in-ground interment, use of the Columbarium has been and will continue to increase. The recently completed Phase IV A court has 7,672 niches and Phase IV B will have about the same number. Construction of Phase IV B will begin in Fiscal Year 2006 to ensure that niches will be available when required.

The following table displays niche capacity and how long that capacity is expected to last, based on current usage. Note that the niche capacity shown in the table for the undeveloped area includes Phase IV B of the Columbarium and the Project 90 Phase II boundary niche wall, both of which are funded, but does not include the Millennium Project. Niche capacity provided in the Millennium Project will not likely be available until FY 2017. The table does not reflect future land expansion projects programmed in the Ten-year Capital Investment Plan, such as the Navy Annex and Ft. Myer parking lot, which are currently authorized and addressed in the Concept Land Utilization Plan.

Arlington National Cemetery						
Niche Capacity as of September 30, 2005						
Niche Capacity - Developed	Total Niches Used	Niches Currently Available	Year Available Capacity Exhausted	Niche Capacity - Undeveloped	Total Niche Capacity	Year Total Capacity Exhausted
39,416	32,905	6,511	2008	22,584	62,000	2019

TOMB OF THE UNKNOWNS

A crack has developed in the marble stone that marks the Tomb of the Unknowns. Repair or replacement options are being considered as part of the National Historic Preservation Act consultation process. At the conclusion of that process, we will know when the work will need to be done and how much it will cost. We will include any funding needs associated with the repair or replacement in future budgets.

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

OPENING STATEMENT

BEFORE

THE HOUSE VETERANS' AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEE

ON

DISABILITY ASSISTANCE AND MEMORIAL AFFAIRS

BY

BRIGADIER GENERAL JOHN W. NICHOLSON
U.S. ARMY (RETIRED)

SECRETARY

AMERICAN BATTLE MONUMENTS COMMISSION

March 30, 2006

GEN Nicholson – Opening Statement
Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs

March 30, 2006

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

I open my statement with the words of Admiral Chester W. Nimitz:

"They fought together as brothers-in-arms. They died together and now they sleep side by side. To them we have a solemn obligation."

These words are inscribed on the World War II Memorial. They express beautifully the idea that a nation's greatness is reflected in the way it chooses to honor its war dead. The words provide a moral compass for the American Battle Monuments Commission's worldwide commemorative programs.

As General Franks noted, we are focusing our efforts and resources on programs and activities that contribute directly to accomplishing our strategic goals.

Our fiscal year 2007 appropriation request for $40.738 million funds the Commission's Salaries and Expenses Account as well as our Foreign Currency Fluctuation Account.

For our Salaries and Expenses Account, we request $35.838 million to support the Commission's requirements for personnel costs, service fees, scheduled maintenance and repairs, supplies, materials, spare parts, equipment replacement, and capital improvements.

For our Foreign Currency Fluctuation Account, we request $4.9 million to replenish the funds needed to defray losses experienced due to currency fluctuation so we can maintain our buying power for services and materials to operate and sustain our commemorative sites in the European and Mediterranean Regions.

Our facilities, most constructed following World War I and World War II, have aged considerably. Over time, deterioration accelerates and the costs of materials, labor and utilities increase around the world. We are allocating $2 million toward high-priority engineering projects specifically designed to protect the American people's investment in the commemorative sites for which we are responsible. This funding will be used to perform periodic maintenance and to correct deficiencies within our infrastructure.

Since 2002, the Commission has been in the process of designing and constructing an Interpretive Center at the Normandy American Cemetery in France. The Center will tell the story of the 9,387 American soldiers buried at Normandy and the 1,557 missing in action memorialized there. Construction is progressing well, and we plan to open the new center by early summer 2007.

Our FY 2007 appropriation request contains $1.042 million to fund the initial costs for personnel, facilities maintenance and support necessary to initiate operations at the new Normandy Interpretive Center. Associated with our appropriation request is

an increase in staffing levels from 391 to 404 Full-Time Equivalent positions to allow us to hire personnel to staff the Center when it opens.

Our challenge is to sustain the high standards of excellence we have set in maintaining our commemorative sites as shrines to America's War Dead. Concurrently, we plan to do a better job of telling the story of these uniquely splendid cemeteries and memorials. They inspire patriotism, evoke gratitude, and teach lessons of history to all who visit.

We are grateful for the support we receive from the House. The trust you place in us and your understanding of our operational needs ensures that we have sufficient resources, when we need them, to sustain our operations.

I would like to close by introducing the members of my staff that accompanied me today:

- Brigadier General William Leszczynski, U.S. Army (Retired), Executive Director and Chief Operations Officer;
- Guy Giancarlo, Director of Finance;
- Alan Gregory, Budget Officer;
- Tom Sole, Director of Engineering and Maintenance; and
- Mike Conley, Director of Public Affairs.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This concludes my opening statement. I will be pleased to respond to your questions.

OPENING STATEMENT

BEFORE

THE HOUSE VETERANS' AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEE

ON

DISABILITY ASSISTANCE AND MEMORIAL AFFAIRS

BY

GENERAL FREDERICK M. FRANKS, JR.
U.S. ARMY (RETIRED)

CHAIRMAN

AMERICAN BATTLE MONUMENTS COMMISSION

March 30, 2006

GEN Franks – Opening Statement
Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs

March 30, 2006

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before this Subcommittee on behalf of the American Battle Monuments Commission.

As Chairman, it is my duty and honor to oversee Commission policies to ensure that we, as a Nation, continue to honor appropriately the service, achievements, and sacrifices of our American Armed Forces where they fought.

Since its creation in 1923, the Commission has served as the guardian of America's overseas commemorative cemeteries and memorials. We are committed to preserving for future generations the twenty-four permanent memorial cemeteries and twenty-five monuments, memorials, and markers around the world that honor America's War Dead, Missing in Action, and those who fought at their side.

Our inspiration comes from words written more than 70 years ago by our first Chairman, General of the Armies John J. Pershing, who promised that "time will not dim the glory of their deeds." Last year we conducted a transformational review of our vision and strategy. Remaining faithful to Pershing's promise and, with a view to the future, we have focused our energies and resources toward accomplishing four strategic goals:

- To develop, operate, maintain, and improve the Commission's facilities as the world's best commemorative sites;
- To value and invest in each employee;
- To have the Commission's commemorative sites recognized worldwide as inspirational and educational visitor destinations; and
- To make the Commission's business and resource management the best in government.

The Commission's fiscal year 2007 appropriation request for $40.738 million supports these goals and continues our commitment to our worldwide mission and responsibilities. We remain dedicated to preserving our commemorative cemeteries, monuments, memorials, and markers in a manner befitting the achievements and sacrifices of America's Armed Forces.

We do this in memory of those whose sacrifice, in wars past, our commemorative sites honor, and in respect for the courageous men and women of our Armed Forces today who willingly follow in their footsteps, fighting for our own freedom and the freedom of others, the most noble of missions.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, in keeping with our third strategic goal of having these worldwide shrines to our fellow Americans recognized as educational and inspirational visitor destinations, we invite you to visit our commemorative sites as you travel abroad on Subcommittee business, to see for yourselves the commitment our Nation has made—and continues to make through you the Members of Congress—toward maintaining our sacred trust to America's War Dead and to their families. And, we ask that you encourage your constituents to do likewise.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This concludes my opening statement.

With your permission, I would now like to introduce the Commission's Secretary, Brigadier General John W. Nicholson, U.S. Army (Retired), who will continue with our testimony.

THE AMERICAN BATTLE MONUMENTS COMMISSION
Courthouse Plaza II, Suite 500
2300 Clarendon Boulevard
Arlington, VA 22201

Established by Congress 1923

April 11, 2006

Representative Jeb Bradley
Vice Chairman
Subcommittee on Disability Assistance
and Memorial Affairs
Cannon House Office Building, Room 333
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Bradley:

I have attached the Commission's response to your questions for the record from the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs oversight hearing held on March 30, 2006.

If you have any further questions regarding the Commission's operations or policies, please contact me directly or send them to our budget officer, Alan Gregory via email [gregorya@abmc.gov].

Thank you for your support of our vital program.

Sincerely,

William J. Leszczynski, Jr.
Brigadier General, US Army (Ret)
Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer

House Veterans' Affairs
Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs

Hearing Date: March 30, 2006

Questions for the Record

1. **ABMC's FY 2007 budget request is nearly $11 million less than the FY 2006 appropriated level. How will the reduction impact ABMC's operations and maintenance? Will it be necessary to defer maintenance projects? If so, please identify the projects being deferred.**

   ABMC Response: The reduction in the Commission's total appropriation between the FY 2006 appropriation and the FY 2007 budget request reflects the change in our requirements to replenish funds in our Foreign Currency Fluctuation Account. This account, established by Congress and codified in 36 U.S.C. 2109, enables the Commission to maintain its buying power against potential losses due to foreign currency exchange rates.

   For FY 2006, the Commission estimated its requirements based on losses it expected to incur for the U.S. Dollar against the European Euro. The $15.2 million appropriated in FY 2006 to the Commission's Foreign Currency Fluctuation Account included funding to offset exchange losses for its normal operations in its European and Mediterranean Regions. Additionally, the Commission requested that funding be added to its Foreign Currency Fluctuation Account to offset losses expected during design and construction efforts for the Normandy Interpretive Center. Funds to offset these currency exchange losses had not been requested previously.

   For FY 2007, the Commission reevaluated its budget estimating rate due to a more stable ratio between the U.S. Dollar and the Euro. In consultation with the Office of Management and Budget, the Commission estimated that it would need $4.9 million to replenish its Foreign Currency Fluctuation Account in FY 2007 to offset exchange losses.

   As such, the reduction to the Commission's request for Foreign Currency Fluctuation Account funding between FY 2006 and FY 2007 does not require the Commission to defer maintenance projects to sustain its operations.

2. **Does the Commission have sufficient resources to fully staff the Normandy Interpretive Center, scheduled to open in the summer of 2007?**

   ABMC Response: Funding requested in FY 2007 supports the initial costs for personnel, facilities maintenance and support necessary to initiate operations. Our request includes an increase in staffing levels from 391 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) positions to 404 FTE to allow us to hire personnel to staff the center when it opens to the public.

House Veterans' Affairs
Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs

Hearing Date: March 30, 2006

3. **Please explain the Commission's outreach activities to increase the visibility of ABMC cemeteries.**

   ABMC Response: The Commission is working to increase awareness of America's overseas commemorative cemeteries and memorials so more Americans and foreign citizens will visit them when traveling overseas. The Commission had great success creating awareness and support for the World War II Memorial project. The memorial is now a well-known symbol of service and sacrifice. The Commission wants to achieve that same level of awareness for its overseas cemeteries; they too are symbols of service and sacrifice.

   Our cemeteries instill patriotism, evoke gratitude, and teach history to all who visit. But not enough people know of them—or visit them. We want to change that. It is not enough simply to maintain our cemeteries to the exceptional standards for which they are known. To truly honor those Americans who rest in honor in foreign lands they died to liberate, we also must tell their story. This initiative supports the Commission's vision statement that "Time will not dim the glory of their deeds."

4. **Nearly two years ago ABMC dedicated the National WW II Memorial in Washington, D.C. Does the Commission have any other memorials in the works at this time?**

   ABMC Response: At the present time we have no new memorial projects underway, nor does the Commission anticipate beginning any in fiscal year 2007. Its current construction focus is on completing a $30 million interpretive center at Normandy American Cemetery in France, which it plans to open by early summer 2007.

THE AMERICAN BATTLE MONUMENTS COMMISSION
Courthouse Plaza II, Suite 500
2300 Clarendon Boulevard
Arlington, VA 22201

Established by Congress 1923

April 11, 2006

Representative Shelley Berkley
Ranking Democratic Member
Subcommittee on Disability Assistance
and Memorial Affairs
Cannon House Office Building, Room 333
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Berkley:

I have attached the Commission's response to your question for the record from the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs oversight hearing held on March 30, 2006.

If you have any further questions regarding the Commission's operations or policies, please contact me directly or send them to our budget officer, Alan Gregory via email [gregorya@abmc.gov].

Thank you for your support of our vital program.

Sincerely,

William J. Leszczynski, Jr.
Brigadier General, US Army (Ret)
Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer

House Veterans' Affairs
Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs

Hearing Date: March 30, 2006

Questions for the Record

A March 2006 Government Accountability Office (GAO) Report found two reportable audit conditions for the American Battle Monuments Commission:

- **Deficiencies in controls over information technology systems (documentation of systems and subsystems and security concerns; and**
- **Improper recognition of property and accounts payable.**

1. **Does the ABMC have the funding and resources to address these deficiencies?**

   ABMC Response: The Commission is adequately funded to address and resolve these issues.

2. **Can you tell us what steps ABMC has taken to resolve these issues and when compliance is expected?**

   ABMC Response: The Commission has completed or taken steps to resolve these issues as outlined below:

   a. Deficiencies in controls over information technology systems:

      User Documentation: This issue was partially corrected in January 2004 by contracting payroll for the Commission's General Schedule employees to the General Services Administration, which provided sufficient user documentation. During fiscal year 2005, a contractor began designing and documenting a new payroll system for the Commission's Foreign Service National employees, which is expected to be operational by September 30, 2006. Further efforts to improve user documentation are ongoing.

      Security program and access controls: The Commission has implemented many of the GAO recommendations as issues became identified. To address remaining issues, the Commission has hired, under contract, an individual to act as the agency's Chief Information Officer. He is implementing a program that will correct the remaining issues during fiscal year 2006 and will initiate other actions to ensure that the Commission remains in compliance with Federal Government requirements and best business practices for security and access control.

   b. Improper Recognition of Property and Accounts Payable: The Commission corrected property and accounts payable accounts through year-end audit adjustments in order to fairly represent its financial statements and placed additional controls over capitalization of assets purchased. Both of these actions were taken in conformity with U.S. generally accepted accounting principles.

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