

**Executive Summary of the  
Written statement before the House Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on  
Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs by the  
Honorable Max Cleland, Secretary, American Battle Monuments Commission  
December 9, 2014**

Since 1923, our purpose has not changed—to commemorate the service and achievements of America’s armed forces. 2014 has been a significant commemorative year: the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the D-Day landings at Normandy; the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Operation Market Garden at Netherlands; and the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Operation Dragoon at Rhone. Although the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United States entry into the Great War will not begin until April 2017, the Commission’s eight World War I cemeteries in Europe will receive increased attention as visitors travel to those battlefields.

Visitor centers at our Cambridge and Sicily-Rome cemeteries were dedicated on Memorial Day, and the renovated visitor center at the Pointe du Hoc Ranger Monument was dedicated in June. Visitor center renovation projects at two World War I cemeteries—Meuse-Argonne in France and Flanders Field in Belgium—are in design, and three additional visitor center projects are in various stages of development: at our Honolulu Memorial; at Manila; and at the World War I Chateau-Thierry Monument in France. We also have two new monuments in development: at Midway Island and for New Zealand’s national memorial park. Both projects are part of an initiative to honor significant achievements of U.S. forces that have not previously been commemorated by the Commission.

Closer to home, we partnered with the National Park Service to renovate and upgrade kiosks and educational content at the World War II and Korean War memorials on the National Mall, and we are strengthening our collaboration with Arlington National Cemetery, defining opportunities to share best practices and training. Likewise, we continue our long-standing relationship with the National Cemetery Administration through advisory committees and our shared interest in the Honolulu Memorial.

Phase two of the Commission’s education program has begun with award of a contract to National History Day and the George Mason University Center for History and New Media, to create a World War II-focused education program developed by teachers. Products related to World War I, developed in partnership with the University of North Carolina and Virginia Tech as phase one of our education program, will be completed by the end of this year.

The Commission received a new mission responsibility in fiscal year 2014 when Clark Veterans Cemetery in the Philippines became ABMC’s 25<sup>th</sup> cemetery. We are awaiting the completion of an engineering assessment of the physical condition of the cemetery and expect initial results this month. We will carefully analyze those results to develop recommendations regarding appropriate next steps that will guide future restoration plans, long-term maintenance requirements, and budget requests beginning in the fiscal year 2017 budget cycle.

ABMC’s core mission remains unchanged, but to appropriately honor our Nation’s fallen, it is essential that we tell the stories of these brave men and women. We are re-invigorating our strategic plan to set forth a path focused on better supporting this essential mission; we have codified a new set of guiding principles for this effort: We will tell their story; we will preserve our heritage assets; and we will develop our cultural and historical resources. We will continue our emphasis on maintaining the highest standard for our memorials and cemeteries, while providing a first class visitor education experience at each of our sites.