



Biography

Department of the Army



Karen Durham-Aguilera

Executive Director
Army National Military Cemeteries



Ms. Karen Durham-Aguilera is the Executive Director of Office of Army Cemeteries and Army National Military Cemeteries (Arlington National Cemetery and the US Soldiers' and Airmen's Home Cemetery), serving as the Principal Advisor to the Secretary of the Army on all matters related to Army cemeteries. Ms. Durham-Aguilera administers and oversees policies, doctrine, plans, and standards with all stakeholders to include the Army staff, major commands, and the other services. She establishes and sustains gravesite accountability, provides technical guidance, training, staff assistance, and inspections; adjudicates burial exceptions, disinterment, and expansion requests at nearly 40 Army Cemeteries across the nation. As Executive Director, she oversees the nation's premier military cemetery: Arlington National Cemetery, which has over 6500 burials, 4000 ceremonies and 3.5 million visitors each year, and manages a \$118 M annual budget, \$130M in major construction projects, and the planning/development/construction of a new \$600M expansion.

2011-2017: SES Director, Contingency Operations and Office of Homeland Security, Headquarters, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). Responsible for USACE Homeland Security mission in support of the Departments of Homeland Security, the Army, and Defense. Served as the Agency Principal for all USACE efforts to assist Federal, state and local emergency management and response to prepare, respond and recover to any emergency or disaster, natural or manmade. Ms. Durham-Aguilera led the federal engineer response (over 2000 military/civilian personnel, roughly a \$3 Billion effort) to numerous events, including hurricanes, tropical events, ice storms, river flooding, tornadoes, and landslides. Her portfolio included leading USACE efforts in flood risk management and critical water resources infrastructure resilience, and supporting Combatant Commands with forward field engineering assets for overseas contingency operations.

2007-2011: SES Director, Task Force Hope, New Orleans, LA, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Ms. Durham-Aguilera planned, led, and delivered the Corps' \$14.6 Billion hurricane storm damage

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reduction system in New Orleans and Southeast Louisiana in the wake of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. She led over 5000 military/civilian personnel in collaboration with academia, industry, research and development, and stakeholders. She also served as Program Manager for nearly 400 construction contracts and employed acquisition techniques unprecedented for Civil Works. This system performed as designed when Hurricane Isaac made landfall, August 2012, preventing catastrophic flooding, and loss of life and property damages such as occurred during Hurricane Katrina. The keystone project of this system received the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) 2014 Civil Engineering Achievement Award, the first time for USACE in its 50+ year history.

2003-2007: SES Director, Programs, Northwestern Division, Portland, OR, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Ms. Durham-Aguilera managed and led over 100 engineers and scientists, and five subordinate engineering districts (over 3000 personnel), responsible for \$3.5 Billion in civil works and military programs, covering about 25% of the United States. She led the successful issuance of the Missouri River Master Manual, resolving 14 years of litigation across eight states, tribal nations, and numerous other entities. The Master Manual was upheld by the Supreme Court and continues to guide the operations and environmental compliance of the Missouri River main-stem dams.

2005: SES Director of Reconstruction Programs, U.S. Army Project and Contracting Office (PCO), Baghdad, Iraq. Joint Armed Forces Position. Ms. Durham-Aguilera deployed and led a workforce from all branches of the armed forces, multi-national civilians and Iraqi professionals, to deliver nearly 3,200 construction projects throughout Iraq. She also developed mentor-mentee network for Iraqi women engineer-owned businesses.

CAREER CHRONOLOGY:

- 1983-2003, served in numerous progressive positions home and abroad, construction, operations, and engineering, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, GS-0810-11 to GS 0810-15. Served as lead construction manager, project engineer, resident engineer, area engineer, and Chief, Construction-Operations, for civil works and military construction, with supervisory positions consistently from 1987-present.
- 1980-1983, employed in private industry with Architectural/Engineering firms

EDUCATION:

- University of Louisville, Louisville, KY, MEng, Civil (Geotechnical) Engineering
- University of Louisville, Louisville, KY, BS, Civil Engineering
- Harvard Kennedy School of Government, National Preparedness Leadership Institute

SIGNIFICANT TRAINING AND LICENSES:

- Harvard Kennedy School of Government, National and International Security for Senior Execs
- Department of Defense Vanguard Senior Executive Development Program
- Army Senior Executive Advanced Course, University of Virginia
- Department of Defense, APEX for Senior Executives
- Registered Professional Engineer (Civil), State of Louisiana

SIGNIFICANT AWARDS AND HONORS:

- Society of American Military Engineers-DC post, Outstanding Contributions to the Engineering Profession (Government) (2024)
- American Society of Civil Engineers Outstanding Projects and Leaders (OPAL) Lifetime Achievement Award (2023)
- Secretary of the Army Decoration for Exceptional Civilian Service (2017) (two awards)
- American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) 2016 Government Civil Engineer of the Year

- Presidential Rank Award for Distinguished Service (2014) and Meritorious Service (2008)
- University of Louisville JB Speed Engineering, Professional Award for Engineering (2013)
- Silver Order (2010) and Bronze Order (2006) of the DeFleury Medal
- Secretary of Defense Medal for the Global War on Terrorism (2009)

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS AND ASSOCIATIONS:

- Society of American Military Engineers
- American Society of Civil Engineers
- Association of the US Army (AUSA)
- Senior Executive Association (Board of Directors 2015- 2018)