

**RECORD VERSION**

**STATEMENT BY**

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ARMY NATIONAL MILITARY CEMETERIES**

**BEFORE THE**

**APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, VETERANS AFFAIRS AND  
RELATED AGENCIES  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**FIRST SESSION, 116TH CONGRESS**

**ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY:  
BUDGET HEARING**

**MARCH 12, 2019**

**NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED BY THE  
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Chairwoman Wasserman Schultz, Ranking Member Carter, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to provide an update on Arlington National Cemetery. Arlington National Cemetery is a unique and iconic place devoted to honoring those individuals in the armed services who made a significant commitment of service and sacrifice in defense of our Nation. Today, the cemetery conducts between approximately 25 - 30 funeral services each weekday and ~10 services on Saturday. In fiscal year 2018, Arlington National Cemetery laid to rest almost 6,500 active duty service members, veterans and their eligible family members. For each and every graveside service, we provide our veterans, patriots, and families the dignity and honor they have earned in service to our Nation. Arlington National Cemetery also hosts approximately 3.3 million guests annually, bringing the sacrifices of those buried at Arlington National Cemetery closer to the American people. On behalf of the Cemetery and the Department of the Army, I express our deep appreciation to our citizens and for the support provided by Congress and this subcommittee over these many years.

### **THE STATE OF ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY**

Arlington National Cemetery's enduring mission is to represent the American people for past, present, and future generations by laying to rest those few who have served our nation with dignity and honor while immersing guests in the cemetery's living history. Our focus is Readiness, People and the Future. Charged with the sacred trust of caring for our nation's fallen, readiness at Arlington National Cemetery means that we synchronize and sustain the appropriate resources of personnel, equipment and facilities to execute our mission every day, getting it right each time, every time.

Past support from this subcommittee has enabled us to maintain and improve the existing infrastructure, properly structure and resource our workforce, and expand the Cemetery's capacity. Today, Arlington National Cemetery is committed to executing its sacred mission, leading the military cemetery profession in gravesite accountability, and preserving the iconic look and feel of the cemetery in order to properly care for our military service members laid to rest, their families, and our other guests. Our future efforts are focused on extending the active life of the cemetery for first interments well into the future, defined as 150 years. Collectively as a Nation, we have the responsibility to preserve our Army cemeteries and what makes them special, especially Arlington National Cemetery. Our Army cemeteries serve as perpetual tributes to those at rest, and we strive to extend this tradition for current and future generations that defend our freedom.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE SUSTAINMENT, RESTORATION AND MODERNIZATION (SRM)**

We thank Congress for providing the resources needed to address years of deferred maintenance of the Cemetery's aged physical infrastructure. Annually the cemetery receives \$25 million to repair aging roads, utilities, and buildings while developing a sustainment program in order to avoid developing another maintenance backlog. Since 2013 Congress has provided \$169 million for projects to sustain, restore and modernize the Cemetery's infrastructure. These projects have preserved the historic dignity of the Cemetery and improved its operational capabilities.

The Cemetery has completed over 70 infrastructure projects since 2013 and is actively engaged in either design or construction of another 25 projects. We have completed or are currently rebuilding more than 8 miles of roadways, with approximately 10 additional miles in planning and design. We have replaced about one third of the Cemetery's storm sewer lines, with much of the remaining lines being addressed as part of future road repairs. Projects funded since 2013 have replaced over 1,000 feet of sanitary line, typically as an emergency repair, and we plan to replace or rehabilitate an additional 5,000 feet to prevent further system failures. Additionally in this same period,

the Cemetery privatized our electrical network, updating lines and equipment in the process, resulting in a reliable and modernized electrical system.

We are mitigating the risk of future infrastructure failures by implementing asset management systems that will allow us to track the conditions of and conduct life-cycle programming for our facilities. We have completed the inventory and assessment of facilities and are working with the US Army Corps of Engineers to project future capital investment needs.

In addition to significant infrastructure improvements, the Cemetery has also invested in projects to improve its operational capabilities. We completed; construction of a new facility to support storage of salt, sand, and soil; new funeral procession queuing lanes; the Tomb of Remembrance, an ossuary to provide a dignified resting place for disassociated remains; and the renovation of the Welcome Center Basement to provide much needed office space for over 80 of our staff. We have also begun a major renovation to modernize the Administration Building, making it more accessible and welcoming for families, and improve space for our cemetery representatives, chaplains and schedulers.

To ensure we are continually planning for the future, we are updating our master plan. That plan has identified one of the Cemetery's largest needs as being welcoming to and safely controlling visitor access, particularly along Memorial Avenue. Our master plan will propose potential solutions that require investment by the Cemetery. The master plan will also help us update you and others on other real property investments that will continue to maintain the Cemetery as an important asset to our Nation.

### **CAPITALIZING ON CONTIGUOUS LAND**

The Army remains committed to maintaining Arlington National Cemetery in perpetuity as the Nation's iconic symbol and shrine to selfless service and sacrifice. We

are also committed to actively serving and honoring our Nation's veterans and their families for as long as possible. Arlington National Cemetery has experienced a long history of expansion into adjacent land to provide our veterans additional burial opportunities.

### **Millennium Expansion Project**

In 2013, Congress provided \$81.7 million for design and construction of the Millennium Project, which the Cemetery opened in 2018. This project added 27 acres and over 27 thousand burial spaces that extended the Cemetery's active life by nearly eight years. Noting the Cemetery's quickly shrinking capacity for interments, the Army reported to Congress in 2017 that without eligibility changes and additional expansion, it would reach maximum capacity for first interments in the early 2040s. Consequently and with tremendous support from Congress, Arlington National Cemetery is pursuing its Southern Expansion project to increase burial capacity while continuing to lead a national dialogue to inform decision-making on the future of the cemetery.

### **Southern Expansion and Defense Access Road Projects**

Arlington National Cemetery's Southern Expansion is comprised of two separately funded projects: the realignment of Columbia Pike and adjacent roads under a Defense Access Road project to maximize contiguous land around the former Navy Annex site, and the conversion of that land into new interment space consistent with the iconic look of Arlington National Cemetery. With the support of Congress and this subcommittee, the Defense Access Road project is fully funded with \$60 million and the Southern Expansion project is partially funded with \$219.1 million no-year funding toward a \$350 million requirement. Both projects are in the planning and design phases, and the Army's land acquisition for the roadway realignment is underway. Federal Highways, which leads the Defense Access Road project, expects to start construction of the road relocation in 2020 with completion in 2022. Current funding for

Southern Expansion is sufficient to complete the Planning and Design effort necessary. When complete, the Southern Expansion will add 37 acres of burial space and extend the Cemetery's active life. We will continue to provide quarterly reports to Congress outlining the progress of these important projects.

### **Memorial Avenue Land Exchange**

Another ongoing effort to capitalize on existing land contiguous to Arlington National Cemetery, involves a potential land exchange between the Department of Interior and the Army. Legislative authority is necessary to accomplish the exchange, to transfer 16.09 acres of land on and surrounding Memorial Avenue adjacent to Arlington National Cemetery, from the Department of Interior to the Army, and to transfer approximately 1.04 acres of land interior to the Cemetery, from the Army to Department of the Interior.

The primary objectives of this proposal are to: (1) improve safety, traffic flow, and security in this area of high pedestrian and vehicle flow; (2) elevate the level of care for the transferred property in a manner consistent with the high standards that are found within Arlington National Cemetery; and (3) to leverage available underutilized land to potentially provide above ground inurnment opportunities, memorial markers, and improved interpretive space.

The Army is collaborating with the Department of Interior and National Park Service to reach consensus on the exact parcels to be exchanged, and in consideration of operational and infrastructure requirements for the respective organizations. We will continue to keep Congress informed of our progress on this initiative.

## REVISED ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

We greatly appreciate the support of Congress and the resources required to maintain and expand the Cemetery. However, expansion alone will not keep Arlington National Cemetery open to new interments well into the future. We must also address the demand and rate of interments by considering new eligibility criteria. Unfortunately, if we maintain current eligibility criteria, Arlington National Cemetery will not be a burial option – even for Medal of Honor recipients or those killed in action – after 2041.

Eligibility for Arlington National Cemetery is a difficult and emotional topic. Our Nation remains committed to our veterans, evidenced by a robust network of military cemeteries that continues to grow. Currently, there are nearly 250 national and state military cemeteries, available to veterans wherever they live nationwide.

The FY19 NDAA, passed by Congress and signed into law by the President (August 2018), requires the Secretary of the Army, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, to "prescribe revised criteria for interment at Arlington National Cemetery that preserve[s] Arlington National Cemetery as an active burial ground 'well into the future' [and] shall establish the criteria...not later than September 30, 2019."

In order to inform his decision, the Secretary of the Army has requested a deliberate and iterative process to prescribe and evaluate multiple options for revised eligibility criteria. To gather as much input as possible, we conducted two public surveys of nearly 260,000 respondents; held numerous meetings and listening sessions with key stakeholders including over 25 Veteran and Military Service Organizations; received an independent recommendation from the Advisory Committee on Arlington National Cemetery; socialized options with each service Chief and Secretary; and we seek to incorporate input from our oversight committees.

Once the Secretary establishes the revised criteria no later than September 30, 2019, the Army will follow the administrative legal process to implement, which includes publishing the draft rule in the Federal Register for public comment, receiving and adjudicating public comments on this revised criteria, and rendering the final rule.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

Information technology remains a critical enabler of Cemetery operations and accountability since 2011 and \$77.5 million has been invested to improve our overall record accountability and cemetery operational capabilities. Since 2011, Arlington National Cemeteries Information Technology posture has transformed from an archaic index card and typewriter-based system to a geospatially-aware digital interment record capability. Arlington National Cemetery tremendously improved records accountability through a comprehensive digitization of cemetery source data: GPS location, headstone photos, and quality assurance review processes for each gravesite. These digital sources combined with our research tools allowed quality assurance staff to triage cases, through well documented quality assurance review processes and vetted business rules, which allowed Arlington National Cemetery to meet the requirements of Public Law 111-139., Reports on Management of Arlington National Cemetery.

Over the last eight years, we have fielded several systems and applications that have improved cemetery operations, record accountability, and the visitors' experience. Arlington National Cemetery Mapper is a geospatially-aware system that allows staff to assign burial locations and de-conflict events across the cemetery. Arlington National Cemetery Explorer is a mobile app that enables families, visitors, and the public to locate gravesites, learn about events, or other points of interest throughout the Cemetery. The app has a feedback mechanism allowing visitors to communicate concerns, relayed to the Arlington National Cemetery Call Center for resolution. Arlington National Cemetery is currently in the process of cascading these capabilities to all Army Post Cemeteries.



Support from this subcommittee has also allowed Arlington National Cemetery to digitize hundreds of thousands historic documents to be cataloged, backed up and transmitted to National Archives. We have greatly improved network capabilities, adding Wi-Fi to the Cemetery in support of visitors as well as to provide continuity of operations for Arlington National Cemetery's primary communications network. Lastly, we have added redundant network capabilities and are actively migrating to a cloud construct to further enhance network availability and security.

## **RESOURCE AND BUDGET CONSIDERATONS**

Arlington National Cemetery's Salaries and Expenses budget submission is capped at the FY11 levels. Continuing the current pace of operations at \$70.8 million, while also adding maintenance requirements associated with the recently opened Millennium expansion project of 27 acres, will require us to reprioritize infrastructure modernization projects and adjust annual contracts' period of performance. In the past, hire lag covered increases in civilian pay and contract inflation, as well as emerging, minor requirements; however, we have continued to increase our hiring over the past several years to achieve authorized end strength levels. Arlington National Cemetery currently has 180 civilians on board with 45 hiring actions in progress to fill 100% of current authorizations. The majority of our unfilled positions are our security guard positions – a field in which there is an Army-wide shortage and retention challenges.

## **CONCLUSION**

Enabled by the tremendous support of Congress and through the diligent efforts of our dedicated and stellar military and civilian team serving at Arlington National Cemetery, the Army will continue to sustain the sacred trust of the American people. We look forward to working with Congress, the Advisory Committee on Arlington National Cemetery, Military Service Organizations, Veteran Service Organizations, and the American people, to sustain and improve Arlington National Cemetery, construct future

expansions, and implement future changes to eligibility criteria, as we continue our efforts to explore all viable options to ensure Arlington National Cemetery continues its long tradition of honoring our Nation's heroes for generations to come.