

**RECORD VERSION**

**STATEMENT BY**

**MS. KAREN DURHAM-AGUILERA  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARMY CEMETERIES**

**BEFORE THE**

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

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**ON ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY:  
CURRENT OPERATIONS**

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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 the service and sacrifice of military veterans and their family members with dignity, compassion, and accountability. On average, we conduct between 24 and 27 funeral services each weekday and between 5 and 10 services on Saturday. Throughout calendar year 2020, COVID-19 significantly impacted the rate of interment operations, to the degree that we anticipate addressing the subsequent challenges for the next two years. During FY20, Arlington National Cemetery laid to rest over 4,800 active duty service members, veterans and their eligible family members, which is 25% less than the previous two years. We have generously accommodated family rescheduling requests due to COVID-related concerns; as a result, our average wait times—from time of need to the conduct of the service—have increased by approximately two months. Regardless of limitations associated with COVID, each and every graveside service provided our veterans and their family members the dignity and honor that they have earned through service and sacrifice to our Nation. On behalf of the Cemetery and the Department of the Army, I express our deep appreciation for our engaged citizens and for the support provided by Congress and this subcommittee over the 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 priorities remain as: People, Readiness, and Modernization. Charged with the sacred trust of caring for our Nation's fallen, people are at the heart of everything we do.

We honor the service and sacrifice of our eligible military members, Veterans, and their family members with dignity, compassion, and accountability. We perform our mission and ensure the highest quality family and visitor experience with our talented workforce and a culture built on teamwork and trust. Readiness at Arlington National Cemetery means that we synchronize and sustain the appropriate resources of personnel, equipment, and facilities to safely execute our mission every day, getting it right each time, every time. We focus on modernization to sustain, extend, and improve the tradition of honoring our Nation's Veterans for future generations.

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 and their families laid to rest as well as our visitors. Our most strategic efforts are focused on extending the active life of the cemetery for first interments well into the future, defined as 150 years. We are accomplishing this in two ways: by increasing capacity through ongoing cemetery expansion efforts at our southern boundary, and through a deliberate public rule-making process to revise burial eligibility requirements, which will preserve burial space well into the future.

## **COVID RESPONSE AND ANC OPERATIONS**

Over the last year as the COVID-19 virus impacted our great Nation, so too was Arlington National Cemetery significantly impacted. Our initial response was to restrict visitation to protect the health of our workforce in order to sustain our ability to conduct our essential funeral mission. Arlington National Cemetery hosts approximately 3.5 million guests annually, bringing the sacrifices of those buried at Arlington National Cemetery closer to the American people and to visitors from around the world. However, in the last year only a fraction of our normal visitors have been able to visit

due to health protection conditions. Several milestone events—to include Memorial and Veteran’s Day Observances, and Wreaths Across America—though implemented differently over the past year but were accomplished, delivering honor and respect earned by our military members and families laid to rest at the Cemetery. As conditions have improved and the bulk of our workforce have been vaccinated, we have gradually resumed most of our routine operations and visitation by the public. Our two most visited locations, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and the JFK gravesite, are opened with modified traffic flow to accommodate social distancing. We expect to resume public wreath ceremonies in the near future. Only our indoor exhibits in the Amphitheater display room and in the Welcome Center currently remain closed, out of caution to preclude crowds in close indoor spaces until health protection conditions further improve. We expect to open these exhibits back up to the public as soon as conditions allow.

## **TOMB OF THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER (TUS) CENTENNIAL COMMEMORATION**

The FY17 NDAA directed that DoD commemorate the Centennial of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and defined five objectives: (1) To honor America’s commitment to never forget or forsake those who served and sacrificed for our Country, including personnel who were held as prisoners of war or listed as missing in action, and to thank and honor the families of these veterans; (2) To highlight the service of the Armed Forces in times of war or armed conflict and contributions of Federal agencies and governmental and nongovernmental organizations that served with, or in support of, the Armed Forces; (3) To pay tribute to the contributions made on the home front by the people of the United States in times of war or armed conflict; (4) To educate the American Public about service and sacrifice on behalf of the United States of America and the principles that define and unite us; and (5) To recognize the contributions and sacrifices made by the allies of the United States during times of war or armed conflict. Due to COVID-19 health protection restrictions, we transitioned many of our planned events to virtual events, which have reached a wider audience. Completed activities

include a Facebook live-streamed inaugural ribbon cutting ceremony for the exhibits in the ANC Welcome Center and Display Room. Ongoing activities include monthly, virtual historic interpretive webinars in collaboration with the National WWI Museum, the National Park Service, the American Battle Monuments Commission, the National Cemetery Administration, the National Archives and Records Administration, the National WW II Museum, and the Smithsonian Institute. Planned activities include a Commemorative Publication in collaboration with the Army's Center of Military History, and, a public Flower Ceremony, a Joint Procession, a Joint Flyover, in collaboration with the Military Districts of Washington. The culminating event is the TUS 100th Commemoration on November 11, 2021. We expect that we will be able to conduct the November events with full public participation. The commemorative program meets the intent of accomplishing the objectives outlined in the FY17 NDAA.

## **EDUCATION PROGRAM**

One of Arlington National Cemetery's most recent initiatives is our first-ever education program. This education program is ongoing and reaching educators and others across our Nation and to other countries. Over the next three and a half years, 27 thematic educational modules with resources and activities for elementary, middle, and high school students and educators, as well as life-long learners, will continue to be added and be available to the public at our education website, <https://education.arlingtoncemetery.mil>. The educational modules connect our visitors, whether in person or visiting virtually, to the rich history and environment of the Cemetery. These materials can be used in classrooms, in a hybrid learning environment, when visiting the cemetery in person, or virtually. These materials have been extremely useful to educators and students in the COVID-19 environment and will continue to be immensely valuable as the modules contain all the lesson plans, activities, and resources needed to complete the educational objectives. Our first four modules are now available on the website to include African American History at Arlington and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Upcoming modules include a History of

the Military Services, the Environment at Arlington (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics – STEM), and the World War II Homefront.

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

We thank Congress, and especially this subcommittee, for providing the resources needed to address years of deferred maintenance of the Cemetery's aged physical infrastructure. The cemetery receives \$25 million annually to repair aging roads, utilities, and buildings while developing a sustainment program to minimize maintenance backlogs. Since 2013, Congress has provided over \$200 million for projects to sustain, restore and modernize the Cemetery's infrastructure. These projects have helped to preserve the historic dignity of the Cemetery and improve its operational capabilities.

The Cemetery has completed over 80 infrastructure projects since 2013 and is actively engaged in either design or construction of another 21 projects. We have completed, or are currently rebuilding, more than 11 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 planned as part of future road repairs. Projects funded and constructed since 2013 have replaced over 1,000 feet of sanitary lines, necessary as emergency repairs, and we plan to replace or rehabilitate an additional 5,000 feet to prevent system failures. Additionally since 2013, the Cemetery privatized our electrical network, updating lines and equipment in the process, resulting in a reliable and modernized electrical system. Although significant progress has been made, there is still much work to be done.

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 completed the inventory and assessment of facilities and are working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to project future capital

investments. We are also conducting a comprehensive assessment of our underground utilities to fully capture the status of their serviceability, some of which are over 150 years old.

In addition to significant infrastructure improvements, the Cemetery has also invested in projects to improve operational capabilities. In 2020, we completed a revitalization of our cemetery operations material spoils area to enhance our operational capacity. Following our completed construction of a new facility to store salt, sand, and soil and of new funeral procession queuing lanes, we also completed a major renovation in the year 2020 to modernize the Administration Building, making it more accessible and welcoming for families, while improving the space and working conditions for our Internment Services team of 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 our largest needs for visitors to safely access and enter the Cemetery, particularly along Memorial Avenue. Thanks to Congress and the FY20 NDAA, the 16 acres of land that include and surround Memorial Avenue have been transferred from the Department of Interior to the Department of the Army, and an interior parcel from the Army to Interior. We will continue to work with our partners at the National Park Service on the associated follow-on actions and revise our master plan to improve safety, security, traffic flow, and maintenance of the transferred property. The master plan will also help us update you and others on other real property investments that continue to maintain and sustain the Cemetery as an important asset to our Nation.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

Since 2011, information technology remains a critical enabler of Cemetery operations and accountability; \$87 million has been expended to improve our overall records accountability and cemetery operational capabilities. Additionally, since 2011,

Arlington National Cemetery's information technology posture has transformed from an archaic index card and typewriter-based system to a geospatially-aware digital interment record capability. The Cemetery tremendously improved records accountability through a comprehensive digitization of cemetery source data, establishing 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, and enable well documented quality assurance review processes and vetted business rules, thereby meeting the requirements of Public Law 111-339, which mandated reports on the management of Arlington National Cemetery.

Over the last nine years, we have fielded several systems and applications that have improved cemetery operations, records accountability, and our visitors' experience. Arlington National Cemetery "Mapper" is a geospatial application 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, and learn about points of interest throughout the Cemetery. The "Explorer" app also has a feedback mechanism allowing visitors to communicate concerns, which are relayed to the Cemetery Call Center and leadership for resolution. In April 2021, Arlington National Cemetery released the Enterprise Interment Services System (EISS), an upgrade to the previous Interment Services System (ISS), which is the decedent database of record for all those interred within the cemetery. This release includes multi-site functionality and expands capabilities to the Soldiers and Airmen's Home National Cemetery (SAHNC), marking the first step of cascading ANC capabilities to all Army Post Cemeteries. The EISS release also marked the completion of the application migration of all mission critical business systems to the Army's substantiation of the cloud (cArmy). The cloud architecture provides overall performance improvements, lowers long-term infrastructure lifecycle replacement costs, offers common shared services for cybersecurity oversight and management, and increases continuity of operations



through the utilization of local availability zones with regional availability zones now in development.

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 the National Archives. We have greatly improved network capabilities, which includes redundant network capabilities to ensure continuity of operations, adding Wi-Fi to the Cemetery in support of visitors, as well as providing continuity of operations for Arlington National Cemetery's primary communications network.

## **DEFENSE ACCESS ROAD AND SOUTHERN EXPANSION PROJECTS**

The Army remains committed to sustaining Arlington National Cemetery in perpetuity as the Nation's iconic symbol and shrine to sacrifice and selfless service. We are also committed to actively serving and honoring our Nation's veterans and their families for as long as possible. Arlington National Cemetery is undergoing an expansion, the Southern Expansion (SE) project, to provide our service members and veterans additional burial opportunities.

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 (DAR) 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 DAR project is fully funded with \$60 million and the SE project is partially funded with \$219 million no-year funding toward a \$360 million requirement. The project requires an additional \$141 million to be fully funded. The DAR project will complete the 100% design by the end of April 2021; and the SE project 100% design will be complete by December 2021. The Federal Highway Administration, which leads the DAR project, expects to start construction of the road

relocation in August 2021 with completion in the year 2025. Current funding for Southern Expansion is sufficient to complete the planning and design efforts. Once the SE project is fully funded, it will enable a planned construction award in September 2022 with a projected completion in 2027. The Southern Expansion will net an additional 37 acres of burial space with an expected 80,000+ new burial opportunities. Combined with the proposed changes to eligibility, this additional burial space will extend the Cemetery's life as an active burial ground well into the future. We will continue to provide quarterly reports to Congress outlining the progress of these important projects.

## **REVISED ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

We greatly appreciate the support of Congress for the resources required to maintain, sustain and expand the Cemetery. However, expansion alone will not allow Arlington National Cemetery to remain open to new interments well into the future. We must also address the demand and current rate of interments by revising eligibility criteria. Without changes to eligibility, Arlington National Cemetery will run out of space for new burials in the early 2040s—or the mid-2060s with the construction of Southern Expansion—even for those service members who are Killed in Action or are recipients of the Medal of Honor.

The FY19 NDAA required the Secretary of the Army, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, to "prescribe revised criteria for interment at Arlington National Cemetery that preserve Arlington National Cemetery as an active burial ground 'well into the future' [and] shall establish the criteria...not later than September 30, 2019."

The Secretary of the Army announced the proposed revisions to eligibility criteria on September 25, 2019, with three established imperatives: sacrifice, service and impact to our Nation's security. Before announcing the proposed revisions to eligibility, the Secretary: (1) weighed input from two public surveys of nearly 260,000 respondents;

(2) conducted numerous meetings and listening sessions with key stakeholders, including over 25 Veteran and Military Service Organizations; (3) received an independent recommendation from the Advisory Committee on Arlington National Cemetery; (4) socialized criteria with the other Military Services; and (5) incorporated valuable input from our oversight committees.

The proposed criteria honors sacrifice and preserves ground burial for those who are killed in action, receive the highest awards and also participated in armed conflict service combat, while honoring service with above-ground inurnment for the larger populations of retirees and veterans. The proposed above-ground eligibility includes retirees from the armed forces who are eligible to receive retired pay, and veterans who have served a minimum of two years on active duty and who have also participated in armed conflict service. We are currently engaged in completing the public rule making process. The Army's proposed revisions to eligibility rules were published in the Federal Register for public notice and comment on September 15, 2020 and closed on November 16, 2020. The Army received and adjudicated 1,965 public comment submissions. The Cemetery expects to staff the revised eligibility criteria packet for final approval by the Secretary of the Army in the third quarter of 2021. We anticipate publication of the final revised eligibility rule in the Federal Register by fall of 2021.

Our Nation remains committed to our veterans, evidenced by a robust enterprise of military cemeteries that continues to expand. Revised eligibility at Arlington National Cemetery will not affect Veteran eligibility at the 155 Veterans Affairs national cemeteries and 156 state Veterans cemeteries. Eventual implementation of revised eligibility at Arlington National Cemetery will also not affect previously scheduled services or families with a loved one already laid to rest at the Cemetery.

## **RESOURCE AND BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS**

Congress has consistently provided resources from FY18 to FY21 which have assisted Arlington National Cemetery in absorbing civilian pay and benefit increases, annual contract inflation, and funding new expenses associated with security that have occurred since the 2011 timeframe. In the past, hiring lags covered increases in civilian pay and contract inflation, as well as emerging minor requirements; however, we have successfully increased our hiring over the past several years to achieve authorized personnel end strength levels. In addition, recent manpower studies have validated 31 additional civilians to support the mission of Arlington National Cemetery. Currently, we have 203 civilians on board with hiring actions in progress to fill at our attrition rate. Maintaining adequate fill rate of our security guard positions is a continual challenge—especially as there are Army-wide shortages and retention challenges in this field. We have limited flexibility to absorb these increased salary and expense costs of these enduring requirements.

## **CONCLUSION**

Enabled by the tremendous support of Congress, and especially this subcommittee, and through the diligent efforts of our dedicated 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, Veteran and Military Service Organizations, and the American people to sustain and improve Arlington National Cemetery, construct the SE project, and implement revised 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.