



Advisory Committee on Arlington National Cemetery

Arlington National Cemetery
Arlington, VA 22211

December 1, 2018

The Honorable Mark T. Esper
Secretary of the Army
100 Army Pentagon, Room 3E700
Washington DC, 20310

Dear Mr. Secretary,

The Advisory Committee on Arlington National Cemetery (ACANC) is a congressionally mandated non-discretionary advisory committee established under Title 10 United States Code § 4723. The ACANC is chartered to make periodic reports and recommendations with respect to the administration of Arlington National Cemetery (ANC), the erection of memorials at the cemetery, and master planning for the cemetery. These recommendations compliment, not supplant, Army command and staff actions with respect to ANC. The Department of the Army provides support through Arlington National Cemetery.

The DoD, consistent with the Committee's mission and DoD policies and procedures, has authorized two subcommittees:

The Honor Subcommittee. The primary mission of this Subcommittee is to accomplish an independent assessment of methods to address the long-term future of the Army national cemeteries, including how best to extend the active burials and what ANC should focus on once all available space is used. Specifically, to assess current eligibility requirements for interment and inurnment at ANC as they affect the available space and life of active burials and ensure that recommendations serve and protect the interests of all service members and veterans, surviving family members, and the American public. The Subcommittee's review of the Southern Expansion Project focuses on the qualitative and quantitative benefits of the options to best honor our veterans, their families, and the Nation while maintaining the iconic nature of ANC.

The Remember and Explore Subcommittee. The primary focus of this Subcommittee is to review issues and provide recommendations to the Committee to best maintain the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier Monument, accomplish an independent assessment of requests to place commemorative monuments, identify means to capture and convey the history of Arlington National Cemetery, and to improve the quality of visitors' experiences now and for generations to come.

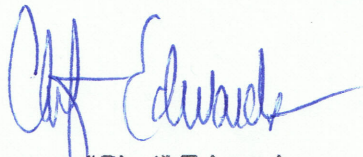
The Committee takes seriously its mandate to provide independent advice and is excited and pleased with the significant progress that continues at Arlington National Cemetery.

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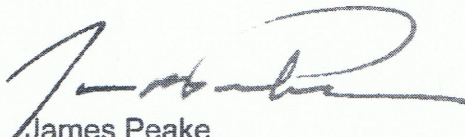
The Committee, after thorough review and deliberation, voted unanimously on November 7, 2018 to:

- Recommend the Secretary of the Army approve placing a commemorative monument for the USS Thresher within ANC
- Recommend the Secretary of the Army approve recommendations to extend ANC as an active burial ground "well into the future" as provided in the following report

Very Respectfully Yours,



Thomas "Chet" Edwards
Co-Chair
Advisory Committee on
Arlington National Cemetery



James Peake
Co-Chair
Advisory Committee on
Arlington National Cemetery

Enclosure

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References

- (a) Federal Advisory Committee Act of 1972, Title 5, United States Code, Appendix 2.
- (b) The Government in the Sunshine Act of 1976 (5 U.S.C. § 552b)
- (c) National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) of 2012, Advisory committee on Arlington National Cemetery (10 U.S.C. § 4723)
- (d) Department of Defense Instruction 5105.04.
- (e) Advisory Committee on Arlington National Cemetery Charter, July 31, 2018.

Background

Title 10 U.S.C. § 4723 stipulates that “not later than 90 days after receiving a report or recommendations from the advisory committee, the Secretary of the Army shall submit the report or recommendations to the congressional defense committees and the Committees on Veterans’ Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives and include such comments and recommendations of the Secretary as the Secretary considers appropriate.”

Report

On November 7, 2018, meetings of the Remember and Explore Subcommittee, the Honor Subcommittee and the parent Advisory Committee on Arlington National Cemetery (ACANC) were held at Arlington National Cemetery. Each meeting was convened with a quorum of members. The Designated Federal Officer, Ms. Renea Yates, was present for all meetings which were open to the public. Formal minutes were produced and are available to the public on the Arlington National Cemetery public website.

- The Remember and Explore Subcommittee deliberated a proposal for placement of a commemorative monument in honor of the crew of the USS Thresher
- The Honor Subcommittee deliberated eligibility changes at ANC
- The Advisory Committee on Arlington National Cemetery convened to consider reports from the subcommittees and deliberate potential recommendations for consideration by the Secretary of the Army

Seven of nine appointed ACANC members (a quorum) were present:

- Dr. James Peake (LTG USA, Retired), Co-Chair
- Mr. Chet Edwards, Co-Chair
- Mr. Gene Castagnetti (COL USMC, Retired)
- Mr. Ronald Fetherson (SGM USMC, Retired)
- Ms. Debra Fix (COL USA, Retired)

The estimated cost of this report or study for the Department of Defense is approximately \$1,650 for the 2018 Fiscal Year. This includes \$0 in expenses and \$1,650 in DoD labor.

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- Ms. Debra Fix (COL USA, Retired)
- Mr. Thomas Kelley (CAPT USN Retired), Medal of Honor Recipient
- Mr. Jack Kelly (MAJ USA, Retired)

The Chair of the Remember and Explore Subcommittee reported that, after thorough consideration, the subcommittee recommends approval for placing a commemorative monument within ANC in honor of the crew of the USS Thresher. The chair noted that the Arlington National Cemetery Monuments Working Group had studied the proposal independently from the subcommittee and recommended approval.

- 38 USC 2409 (b)(1) states that "a monument may be placed in Arlington National Cemetery if the monument commemorates - the service in the Armed Forces of the individual, or group of individuals, whose memory is to be honored by the monument." The proposed monument is in memory of the crew and therefore suitable for placement at ANC.
- By law, monuments may only be placed on land not suitable for burial. The subcommittee concurs that ANC can provide space for this monument as codified in 38 USC 2409. The size of this proposed monument is similar in size to the previously installed commemorative tree monument honoring the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots and Crewmembers and can therefore be placed and maintained with minimal impact to operations.
- The U.S. Navy validated that the loss of the USS Thresher led to today's enhanced safety procedures in use for the SUBSAFE program. This program has made valuable and legacy contributions to safety, not only to submarine operations, but across the Armed Forces and NASA operations as well.
- The costs for construction, emplacement, and sustainment of the monument are adequately funded.

The Chair of the Honor Subcommittee reported comprehensive study over an extended period of the issue of potential changes to interment eligibility at ANC as articulated in public law 114-158 and directed by NDAA 2019. After meeting on three occasions reaching out to Veteran and Military Service Organization community representatives to assist shaping two public surveys which garnered nearly 250,000 responses, receiving ANC update briefings on ANC statistics and projections as well as contiguous expansion projects (including the Millennium Project and the Southern Expansion Project), the subcommittee recommended the ACANC propose changes to ANC interment eligibility.

Advisory Committee Recommendations

1. Recommend Secretary of the Army approve placement of a commemorative monument for USS Thresher.

- The Committee voted unanimously to recommend approval of this initiative.

2. After research, careful analysis and thoughtful deliberation of an exceedingly difficult and emotional issue, the ACANC makes the following recommendations to extend ANC as an active burial ground "well into the future" (150 years as described in the report to Congress) as required by the FY19 NDAA.

Therefore:

- In keeping with the following principles:
 - The iconic nature of ANC be preserved
 - That ANC honors service and sacrifice to maintain a free nation
 - That ANC remains an active cemetery - a living symbol of that service and sacrifice for current and future generations
- And in consideration of the extensive collaboration over the past two years with citizens, military members, and veteran service organizations, the committee, with consideration:
 - For the voices of 250,000 citizens via public survey and input from major stakeholders including VSOs and individuals
 - An extensive - and expanding - network of distinguished national cemeteries and state veterans cemeteries that provide a sacred memorial for our nation's veterans
 - The work so far done to expand the footprint of ANC, but the limited expansion opportunities given the proximity of the Nation's capital
- Recommends the following to be considered:
 - That eligibility for interment at ANC be changed to more specifically identify with and honor the level of service and sacrifice
 - To wit:
 - Killed in action
 - Recipients of the Medal of Honor
 - Recipients of the Purple Heart, Silver Star, and above
 - Died on active duty
 - Former POWs

Further, that above ground inurnment would remain available to a rapidly declining population of WWII and Korean War veterans, absent one of the qualifiers above (The committee respects the overwhelming survey support to honor our WWII veterans, rather than remove them from eligibility, having them remain above-ground eligible is consistent with that desire).

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The committee appreciates that qualifying awards, as described, include the Distinguished Service Medal (DSM). While it may be argued that this award is normally reserved for only the most senior military members, therefore is a predisposed basis for eligibility at ANC, the Committee agrees this award is presented for a unique level of service consistent with the service and sacrifice represented by ANC. We recognize and acknowledge that there are objections in that this decoration is not awarded for valor.

Additionally, while significant geographic expansion - other than Southern Expansion - is limited, the committee encourages exploring options for contiguous expansion on the cemetery periphery. This does not alter our eligibility recommendations.

The committee is aware of an increasing trend to relocate to ANC the remains of those who have been previously interred or inurned. In support of extending the life of the cemetery and the recommendations above, we recommend that eligibility for ANC be limited to first disposition of remains. This recommendation does not preclude the burial of previously unidentified remains.

The committee makes these recommendations fully aware that these are difficult choices and respects that there are differing views on this sensitive issue and that there are currently eligible populations that will be excluded from ANC.

Acknowledging this, we make these recommendations consistent with the requirements in the National Defense Authorization Act of Fiscal Year 2019 to extend ANC as an active burial ground "well into the future."

- The Committee voted unanimously to recommend approval of this initiative.

Actions Pending Further Review

The Committee takes seriously its mandate to advise the Secretary of the Army on Arlington National Cemetery. Continued study of the design and progress of the Southern Expansion Project along with further proposals to expand ANC can be expected in due course.