

RECORD VERSION

STATEMENT BY

THE HONORABLE JOHN M. MCHUGH
SECRETARY OF THE ARMY

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Introduction

Chairman Skelton, Ranking Member McKeon and distinguished Members of the House Armed Services Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to discuss the Army's extensive inspection and investigation of Arlington National Cemetery (ANC). The Inspector General, Lieutenant General Steven Whitcomb, and I look forward to providing you with an overview of his findings, as well as the Army's plan to improve cemetery operations, correct interment and documentation errors and ensure the proper accountability of remains.

Each day, as thousands of visitors enter the cemetery, they see a simple sign which reads, "Welcome to Arlington National Cemetery, Our Nation's Most Sacred Shrine." For the Army, this simple statement is more than a mere greeting, it is a calling to faithfully honor and properly care for the heroes interred in ANC's hallowed ground.

So, first and foremost, let me assure this Committee, the Congress, our Service Members and Veterans, and the American people that the Army is fully committed to rapidly correcting the management and leadership deficiencies and organizational problems at ANC. It is not only our responsibility, but our solemn

duty. We will not rest until the cemetery is led, managed and operated in a manner commensurate with the service and sacrifice of our fallen warriors. I can report today that we are already making steady progress towards achieving this goal.

Inspection and Investigation

In October 2009, shortly after becoming Secretary of the Army, I learned that Lieutenant General Whitcomb was conducting a special inspection and management review into the operations of ANC. This review, ordered by my predecessor Secretary Pete Geren, was examining the cemetery's policies and procedures; its management, administration, and coordination processes; as well as its command and leadership structures.

On November 12, 2009, after being briefed on the progress of the inspection, I directed Lieutenant General Whitcomb to expand his inquiry to include an examination of ANC's information technology and assurance programs; and its contracting procedures. I also ordered the Inspector General to conduct a full-scale investigation into allegations of a hostile work environment; inappropriate hiring practices; improper interment, trans-interment, and inurnment of remains; non-compliance with internal regulations/policies; and accountability errors.

On June 8, 2010, Lieutenant General Whitcomb submitted his reports, in which he made 76 factual findings and 101 recommendations for improvements at

ANC. Broadly stated, Lieutenant General Whitcomb found that ANC suffered from dysfunctional management; a lack of established policies and procedures; an unhealthy organizational climate; errors in the accountability of remains; as well as 211 discrepancies between burial maps and grave sites. These disturbing findings demanded immediate and comprehensive actions by the Army; and we quickly instituted aggressive corrective measures.

Immediate Army Actions

Upon receipt of the Inspector General's reports, I directed the restructuring of ANC's leadership, administration and oversight. This included the following specific actions:

- The rescission of Army General Order 13, which had created a fractured, unmanageable oversight structure for the cemetery.
- Creation of the position of Executive Director, Army National Cemeteries Program, to provide direct leadership and management; as well as the appointment of Ms. Kathryn Condon, one of our most senior, capable and experienced executives, to the post.
- The establishment of the ANC Provisional Oversight Group to support the Executive Director in the restructuring of cemetery operations, and the correction of the deficiencies found by The Inspector General.
- The creation of the Army National Cemeteries Advisory Commission to provide independent oversight, and a regimented review of near and

long term activities at ANC. Former Senators Bob Dole and Max Cleland have agreed to assist with the establishment of this key, strategically focused group.

- The detail of Mr. Patrick Hallinan, Director, Office of Field Programs, National Cemetery Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs to ANC. Mr. Hallinan has over 30 years of experience in cemetery management.
- An all-inclusive study of ANC's organizational structure, manpower, equipment, requirements and workload. This will ensure that we have the right resources, personnel and capabilities to meet the cemetery's growing mission.
- A comprehensive evaluation of ANC's information technology systems and information assurance processes to develop methods to resolve deficiencies, as well as to automate ANC operations and administration.
- A review of all contracts in support of the Army National Cemeteries during the past five years.

Combined, these sweeping changes, evaluations, studies and reviews will ensure that ANC has competent leadership, proper resources, a clear line of authority and sufficient strategic-level oversight for both current and future operations.

Current Status

Although much remains to be done, I am proud to report that the Army has made steady progress in improving cemetery management and addressing the issues identified by the Inspector General. Examples include the following:

- Through the use of records analysis and site examination, the Provisional Oversight Group is working to rapidly resolve the 211 discrepancies between maps and burial sites noted by the Inspector General.
- The Executive Director, who reports directly to me, has established a hotline and call center to effectively resolve family member questions and concerns regarding their loved one's remains.
- The Executive Director also developed the first in a series of comprehensive policies and procedures for the general administration of ANC, as well as the review, analysis and resolution of grave site discrepancies.
- As required by my directive, the Executive Director, in coordination with the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Acquisition, Logistics, and Technology) and the Chief Information Officer/G-6, immediately launched reviews of ANC's manpower, information technology and contracting operations.

- Upon learning of decades old headstones lying in a creek, the Executive Director immediately began operations to safely remove, examine and properly dispose of these discarded grave markers.

Although these actions demonstrate important improvements, they are only the beginning. I have ordered the Executive Director to develop an accountability baseline for the cemetery; restart the acquisition of appropriate automation and data management support; and conduct a comprehensive review of the ANC master plan and Millennium Project. The Army is committed to providing ANC with the resources, personnel and systems needed to properly carry out these challenging tasks.

Conclusion

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, since becoming Secretary of the Army, I have attended numerous funerals at ANC for our heroes killed in Iraq and Afghanistan. On those beautiful rolling hills, I have watched as grief stricken families paid one final tribute, not just to a fallen warrior, but to a father or mother, a brother or sister, a daughter or son. Their loss is real, personal and unimaginable. Understanding the tragic, yet individual circumstances each family must face, our employees ensure that every service is not only conducted with military precision, but also with kindness, compassion, sensitivity and honor—for the Nation owes the defenders of freedom and their families nothing less.

Now, the Army must instill this same level of devotion, precision, professionalism and pride into the leadership, management, administration and oversight of ANC. For the record, I and the entire Army leadership are unequivocally committed to take every step necessary to correct yesterday's oversights and meet tomorrow's requirements. We owe no less to our Veterans, their loved ones and the American people.

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, thank you for your continued and generous support for our outstanding Service men and women, their families and our Veterans. I look forward to answering your questions.