

STATEMENT BY

LIEUTENANT GENERAL R. STEVEN WHITCOMB
INSPECTOR GENERAL OF THE ARMY

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SECOND SESSION, 111TH CONGRESS
ON ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY

JUNE 30, 2010

NOT FOR PUBLICATION
UNTIL RELEASED BY THE
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

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 our inspection and investigation into issues at Arlington National Cemetery (ANC).

On August 17, 2009, then Secretary of the Army, the Honorable Pete Geren, directed me to conduct a special inspection of ANC and its subordinate Soldier's and Airmen's Home National Cemetery. On November 12, 2009 Secretary McHugh expanded our inspection to include two additional inspection objectives and he also directed an investigation of specific allegations of misconduct by individuals at ANC. I will provide you a summary of the findings of these two efforts, beginning with the inspection.

From August 2009 to January 2010, the Inspection Team conducted an extensive examination of Arlington National Cemetery operations and management. We interviewed military members, civilian government employees, and other individuals involved with cemetery operations at these two cemeteries, and conducted site visits to other Army, Veteran's Administration, and civilian cemeteries. I will provide you with an overview of the scope and findings of this inspection:

- **Inspection Objective One** (*Assess policy and procedures for operation of Arlington National Cemetery and the Soldier's and Airmen's Home National Cemetery*). The inspectors noted that all governing documents concerning

operations at ANC are outdated and the cemetery has codified very few aspects of daily operations. Inspectors also looked specifically at existing policies concerning the overall supervision of the cemetery, commemorative items/mementos, and funeral honors; we determined each of these policies must be updated to reflect current needs and trends.

- **Inspection Objective Two** (*Assess management, administration and coordination processes as well as training of personnel involved with operation of ANC*). We found that resourcing for the cemetery does not appear to match requirements, particularly in terms of being able to potentially meet personnel requirements for an increased mission. Training and information technology programs do not enable performance improvements or efficiencies. In addition, the IG team discovered an unhealthy work environment while assessing the management effectiveness of the cemetery. Most employees reported that they got job satisfaction through helping Veterans and Families; but they did not enjoy the organizational climate promoted by cemetery leadership.
- **Inspection Objective Three** (*Assess the effectiveness, coordination, and synergy of command and leadership structures and other entities involved in the operation of ANC and attendant activities*). The most significant findings identified by the team were within this objective. As the team compared the Army's management structure for ANC to other U.S. government agencies that manage national cemeteries, it found that the Army lacks a single operational or strategic level organization that has responsibility and accountability for the future

direction of ANC. The team also found that there are no formalized programs to assess operations at ANC.

- **Inspection Objective Four** (*Assess ANC's compliance with Army information assurance (IA) requirements*). The inspection of ANC's information assurance program revealed that inadequate workforce training on information assurance combined with a lack of properly trained information management personnel and staff oversight, undermines the ability of the cemetery to achieve regulatory compliance.
- **Inspection Objective Five** (*Assess contracting procedures at ANC*). The inspection team found that procurements for ANC are not in compliance with applicable Federal, Defense, and Army acquisition regulations. ANC has not developed an acquisition strategy or Information Technology plan. Untrained and unqualified personnel were developing requirements and providing contract oversight with no internal or external oversight.
- **Other Matters:** The inspection team found two matters that did not specifically fall within the scope of an assessment of ANC, but were assessed in this report. *First*, the Army does not have one entity responsible for the management of all Army cemeteries. The Army is responsible for ANC, the Soldiers' and Airmen's Home National Cemetery, 28 post cemeteries, and three Army-managed plots on civilian cemeteries (not including installation cemeteries affected by Base Realignment and Closure). This leads to different levels of maintenance, oversight, and control of those cemeteries. *Second*, the assessment of

contracting at ANC identified possible systemic issues in the agencies responsible for contract preparation and oversight.

In addition to the inspection, a separate thorough investigation of allegations and concerns with the ANC leadership and management was conducted. Investigators conducted interviews with current and former ANC employees, and reviewed numerous reports and other documents related to the alleged improprieties. In addition to physically observing burial processes and procedures, investigators conducted extensive reviews of burial documentation related to gravesites identified through various means as having potential discrepancies. A summary of the findings of the investigation is as follows:

- **Investigation Issue One** (*Hostile work environment, including use of inappropriate racial comments or vulgarity, and intimidation of subordinate employees*). This issue was determined to be not founded. Although no hostile work environment existed, ANC did exhibit an unhealthy organizational climate that was largely attributable to the dysfunctional working relationship between the Superintendent and his Deputy. The long-standing rift that existed between these two was the single most disruptive factor in the organization and has caused poor morale, operating errors and inefficiency.
- **Investigation Issue Two** (*Inappropriate hiring practices, including instances of favoritism or nepotism*). This issue was determined to be not founded. Although some ANC employees perceived favoritism and nepotism in hiring practices, the evidence showed that temporary hires were selected from candidates who submitted resumes through the proper personnel channels and summer hire

vacancies were announced based on the availability of funds and hired using proper selection criteria.

- **Investigation Issue Three** (*Improper interment and trans-interment of remains, including non-compliance with applicable internal regulations and policies regarding approval authority, accountability, and notification of next of kin*). This issue was determined to be founded. ANC burial mistakes included: the loss of accountability of remains; remains found in gravesites listed as empty; unmarked gravesites; discrepancies in burial documentation; improperly marked gravesites; improper selection of gravesites; improper handling of cremated remains; and failure to notify next of kin regarding the trans-interment of remains. These mistakes have occurred over several years and resulted from the lack of documented operating procedures, the lack of leader involvement in identifying systemic problems and developing solutions, and the lack of automation in cemetery operations.

Additionally, the investigation resulted in the following substantiated allegations:

- The Superintendent failed to properly execute his oversight responsibilities for the administration, operation, and maintenance of ANC. His failure to work effectively with his deputy and his failure to provide guidance to his subordinate leaders contributed to poor morale and an operation that, while on the surface appeared highly professional and effective, was inefficient and error prone. Additionally, his reactive approach to problem solving resulted in his failure to identify systemic flaws and to implement long-term solutions and strategies. Finally, his lack of leadership and engagement in the effort to automate cemetery

operations contributed to this effort's failure, resulting in the expenditure of millions of dollars over a seven year period with no automation system produced for ANC's use. These leadership failures contributed to and resulted in repeated interment errors.

- The Deputy Superintendent failed to ensure that gravesites in ANC were appropriately marked. He was responsible for the day-to-day operations of ANC. During his time as Deputy, there were many instances of unmarked or improperly marked gravesites. He failed to analyze the causes of these errors and failed to establish procedures to prevent their recurrence.
- The Deputy Superintendent failed to conserve government resources. He failed in his responsibility to manage and oversee the automation contracts at ANC. This resulted in the expenditure of millions of dollars over a seven year period with no automation system produced for ANC use.
- The Deputy Superintendent failed to adhere to Army Values. He knowingly signed a memorandum to Fort Belvoir's Information Assurance Manager that falsely asserted ANC had completed a required privacy impact assessment.
- The Interment Services Branch, ANC, failed to ensure that a gravesite in Arlington National Cemetery was appropriately marked, after being brought to the attention of appropriate officials on several occasions. This resulted in that gravesite remaining unmarked for over seven years.

While our findings raise very serious issues calling for the significant remedial actions taken by Secretary McHugh, I would like to make it clear that we also found that

ANC employees, working under an extraordinarily high operational tempo of 27 to 30 funerals a day, performed their jobs with dedication and to a high professional standard. Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, thank you for your continued support for our Soldiers, their families, and our Veterans. I look forward to your questions.