

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

COMPLETE STATEMENT

OF

MR. JOHN CHARLES METZLER, JR.

SUPERINTENDENT OF ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY

BEFORE

THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON DISABILITY AND MEMORIAL AFFAIRS

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS

UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ON

POLICY AND OPERATIONAL MATTERS

March 30, 2006

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Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Subcommittee:

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before this subcommittee in support of the operations of Arlington National Cemetery and Soldiers' and Airmen's Home National Cemetery. I am testifying on behalf of the Secretary of the Army, who is responsible for operating and maintaining Arlington and Soldiers' and Airmen's Home National Cemeteries, as well as making necessary capital improvements to ensure their long-term viability.

Arlington National Cemetery is the Nation's premier military cemetery. It is an honor to represent this cemetery and the Soldiers' and Airmen's Home National Cemetery. On behalf of these two cemeteries and the Department of the Army, I would like to express our appreciation for the support that Congress has provided over the years.

FUNERALS

In FY 2005, there were 4,005 interments and 2,563 inurnments. In FY 2006, we estimate there will be 4,062 interments and 2,590 inurnments. Looking ahead to FY 2007, we estimate there will be 4,062 interments and 2,590 inurnments. Of the 2,300 Iraq War casualties, a total of 256, or 11 percent, have been interred at Arlington.

CEREMONIES AND VISITATION

Millions of visitors, both foreign and American, come to Arlington to view the Cemetery and participate in ceremonial events. During FY 2005, about 3,200 ceremonies were conducted, with the President of the United States attending the ceremonies on Veterans Day and Memorial Day. The Vice President was here to attend the Veterans Day ceremony on November 11, 2005.

FISCAL YEAR 2007 BUDGET OVERVIEW

The FY 2007 budget is \$26,549,713, which is \$2,209,787 less than the FY 2006 regular appropriation of \$28,759,500, which reflects a rescission of \$290,500. In addition to the regular FY 2006 appropriation, an additional \$1,000,000 is expected to be available from proceeds generated from parking receipts to pay for maintenance, repair and replacement of the parking facility.

The FY 2007 budget will support Arlington National Cemetery's efforts to improve its infrastructure and continue working toward implementation of its Ten-year Capital Investment Plan. The funds requested are adequate to support the work force, assure maintenance of buildings and grounds, acquire necessary supplies and equipment, and provide the standards of service expected at Arlington and Soldiers' and Airmen's Home National Cemeteries.

GRAVESITE DEVELOPMENT

The budget also includes funds to pursue expansion efforts needed to ensure that Arlington National Cemetery remains an active burial place for service men and women into the next century. The following table displays how long gravesites will remain available in both developed and undeveloped areas that are currently part of the Cemetery. It is presented to illustrate the importance of proceeding with expansion projects in a timely manner so that there will be no disruption in services for deceased veterans and to relieve significant crowding of funeral services. Significant crowding is already occurring due to the ever-shrinking land available for burials in the Cemetery. This is compromising the dignity of funerals by distracting families at ongoing nearby services, as well as disruptions caused by daily maintenance required to be performed at new gravesites.

Note that the gravesite capacity shown in the table for the undeveloped area includes Project 90 and utility relocations, but does not include the Millennium Project. Nor does the table reflect future land expansion projects programmed in the Ten-year Capital Investment Plan, such as the Navy Annex and Ft. Myer parking lot, which are currently authorized and addressed in the Concept Land Utilization Plan.

Arlington National Cemetery						
Gravesite Capacity as of September 30, 2005						
Gravesite Capacity - Developed Areas	Total Gravesites Used	Gravesites Currently Available	Year Available Capacity Exhausted	Gravesite Capacity - Undeveloped Area	Total Gravesite Capacity	Year Total Capacity Exhausted
243,373	219,681	23,692	2013	36,000	279,373	2025

Project 90 Land Development. As the table illustrates, capacity in the currently developed area of Arlington National Cemetery is becoming more concentrated and will be exhausted by 2013. In order to extend the Cemetery's useful life to 2025, it is necessary to develop the 40 acres of open land within its current boundaries known as Project 90. This involves the development of gravesite areas, roads, utilities and a boundary wall with niches for the placement of cremated remains. Approximately 26,000 additional gravesites and 5,000 niches will be provided when the development is complete.

The Project 90 land development effort is fully designed and \$9.4 million in construction funds for Phase I were appropriated in FY 2002 and FY 2003. Phase I consists of grading the site, relocating utilities, constructing roads and landscaping gravesite areas. Construction of Phase I began in FY 2004 and is scheduled to be finished in FY 2007.

The FY 2005 budget included \$5 million for Phase II of Project 90. In a letter dated February 1, 2006, we informed this subcommittee that \$3,100,000 were being reprogrammed in FY 2006 to address a cost increase resulting from inflation and the need to pay for a 48-inch storm drain line as part of the first phase of the project. Phase II primarily entails construction of a new boundary niche wall that will hold the ashes of cremated remains on the inside of the wall. The niches and covers will be the same size and resemble those currently used at the existing Columbarium Complex. After allowing sufficient time for ground settlement, it is anticipated that construction of Phase II would begin in FY 2007 and be completed in FY 2009. At the current rate of niche use it is estimated that the additional niches will be needed by the year 2012.

Utility Relocations. Arlington County is planning to replace an aging sanitary sewer line that runs through Arlington National Cemetery with a new line known as the Potomac Interceptor. The presence of the existing sewer line prevents burials in approximately ten acres of land along Eisenhower Drive. The new sewer line would be placed directly under the existing roadway, and if the other utilities (i.e., electric, telephone and water) that run through that area are also relocated, it is estimated that approximately eight to ten thousand more gravesites could be developed.

BUDGET DETAILS

The budget is made up of three programs -- Operation and Maintenance, Administration, and Construction. The principal items contained in each program are described below.

Operation and Maintenance Program

The budget for the Operation and Maintenance program is \$17,588,000. It provides for the cost of operations necessary to conduct an average of 25 funeral services per day, accommodate approximately four million visitors each year, and maintain 652 acres of land and associated infrastructure. This program supports 93 of the cemeteries' total of 99 full time equivalent (FTE) work-years. Contractual services comprise \$9,200,000, or 52 percent, of the Operation and Maintenance program.

Administration Program

The budget includes \$1,431,000 for the Administration program, which provides for essential management and administrative functions, including staff supervision of Arlington and Soldiers' and Airmen's Home National Cemeteries. Budgeted funds will provide for personnel compensation, benefits, and reimbursable administrative support services provided by other government agencies. This program supports the balance of the cemeteries' workforce of six FTE work-years.

Construction Program

The Construction program's budget is \$7,531,000. The following two major projects are particularly important to increase the capacity of Arlington National Cemetery, so that additional space can be made available for burials and inurnments.

The Millennium Project. This project consists of three parcels of land. The first parcel (7 acres) is land within the boundaries of Arlington National Cemetery made available by demolition of the old warehouse buildings. The second parcel (12 acres) was transferred to the Cemetery from the National Park Service on January 28, 2002, pursuant to the authority contained in Section 2863 of Public Law 107-107, the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2002. The final piece of the Millennium Project is a 13-acre parcel of adjacent land formerly owned by Fort Myer (picnic area), which was transferred to the Cemetery on January 21, 2004, in accordance with Section 2882 of the FY 2000 Defense Authorization Act (Public Law 106-65). Design of the Millennium Project began last year with funds appropriated in FY 2004. The first phase of construction is anticipated to start in FY 2007 and \$5,904,000 is included to primarily address storm water runoff that brings large amounts of water into the Cemetery from heavily developed portions of Fort Myer. This is a preliminary estimate that is subject to refinement as more design work is completed.

Phase IVB Columbarium Complex. As the option for cremation becomes more acceptable and because eligibility in the Columbarium at Arlington National Cemetery is less restrictive than eligibility for in-ground interment, use of the Columbarium has been and will continue to increase. The recently completed Phase IV A court has 7,672 niches and Phase IV B will have about the same number. Construction of Phase IV B will begin in Fiscal Year 2006 to ensure that niches will be available when required.

The following table displays niche capacity and how long that capacity is expected to last, based on current usage. Note that the niche capacity shown in the table for the undeveloped area includes Phase IV B of the Columbarium and the Project 90 Phase II boundary niche wall, both of which are funded, but does not include the Millennium Project. Niche capacity provided in the Millennium Project will not likely be available until FY 2017. The table does not reflect future land expansion projects programmed in the Ten-year Capital Investment Plan, such as the Navy Annex and Ft. Myer parking lot, which are currently authorized and addressed in the Concept Land Utilization Plan.

Arlington National Cemetery						
Niche Capacity as of September 30, 2005						
Niche Capacity - Developed	Total Niches Used	Niches Currently Available	Year Available Capacity Exhausted	Niche Capacity - Undeveloped	Total Niche Capacity	Year Total Capacity Exhausted
39,416	32,905	6,511	2008	22,584	62,000	2019

TOMB OF THE UNKNOWNNS

A crack has developed in the marble stone that marks the Tomb of the Unknowns. Repair or replacement options are being considered as part of the National Historic Preservation Act consultation process. At the conclusion of that process, we will know when the work will need to be done and how much it will cost. We will include any funding needs associated with the repair or replacement in future budgets.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my testimony. We will be pleased to respond to questions from the Subcommittee.