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COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

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Arlington Burial Records Discovered Off-Site, Investigation Underway

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Yesterday, the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs held an oversight hearing to obtain an update from Arlington National Cemetery (ANC) on the problems that have plagued the Cemetery. It was disclosed at the hearing that boxes of records from the Cemetery had recently been discovered at an off-site public storage facility on June 10, when a bill for the facility went unpaid. The Committee requested information regarding this incident immediately upon notification nearly two weeks ago.

ANC officials confirmed that a total of 69 boxes were recovered, which included documents such as copies of grave cards, and other records directly related to the interment of veterans. The Army's Criminal Investigation Division is now leading the investigation into why and how the boxes were moved and found outside of ANC. Subcommittee Chairman Jon Runyan described himself as "less than pleased with the lack of follow-up and public disclosure."

"It's been a long year, and the new team at Arlington is unfortunately still finding problems. While much has been accomplished in just 12 months, there is still more hard work ahead. We have a responsibility to restore the trust and confidence in America's most hallowed grounds and to close this dark chapter in the Cemetery's history for good," Runyan said. "This Committee is dedicated to providing support to the Department of the Army, the families of those buried at Arlington, the Veterans Service Organizations and all interested Americans to work together to ensure a much brighter future for Arlington National Cemetery."

"This developing situation is unacceptable, and the fact that this Committee still does not have answers two weeks into the investigation does not help to instill confidence in Arlington. We need to know are there other boxes left to be found? And what is the extent of this latest discovery?" asked Rep. Bill Johnson, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, who attended the hearing.

Over the past two years, troubles at Arlington have mired the reputation of the Cemetery—from the highly publicized problems with gravesite locations, low employee morale, and an IT system that was virtually non-existent despite several years of development and millions of taxpayers' dollars.

A GAO report is expected on the progress of the new administration at Arlington National Cemetery in August.

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