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**ACCOUNTABILITY AT ARLINGTON
NATIONAL CEMETERY**

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT
AND INVESTIGATIONS

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

HEARING HELD
APRIL 14, 2011



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ACCOUNTABILITY AT ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS,
Washington, DC, Thursday, April 14, 2011.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 2:05 p.m., in room 2118, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Rob Wittman (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. ROB WITTMAN, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM VIRGINIA, CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS

Mr. WITTMAN. I call to order the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations.

And today's hearing is on accountability at Arlington National Cemetery. I want to welcome everybody to this hearing on this issue about accountability at our national cemetery.

Preliminarily, I would like to note for the record that the Secretary of the Army and the Army inspector general received invitations to testify at our hearing today, and I was bitterly disappointed to learn that they have decided not to participate. I hope this isn't a reflection of their seriousness concerning this issue.

Instead of hearing from them, we will be receiving testimony from the Army National Cemetery's program executive director, Ms. Kathryn Condon, and the Arlington superintendent, Mr. Patrick Hallinan. I hope, too, today that they are ready for very robust and direct questions.

These officials will address ongoing discrepancies and issues related to the 2010 Army inspector general's investigation into misconduct at Arlington. I anticipate a number of Members from other committees may wish to participate. Therefore, absent any objections, I ask for unanimous consent that they be allowed to participate and also be provided with an opportunity to ask questions.

Before we get started with testimony, however, I would like to share a story with you that highlights why I am absolutely committed to addressing this issue. It is a story about an American hero who has dedicated his life to our Nation and to others who serve. His name is Paul Bucha.

In 1970, Army Captain Paul Bucha received the Medal of Honor in Vietnam. Captain Bucha distinguished himself by risking his life to save the lives of his fellow wounded soldiers. Captain Bucha's story is a reminder of the thousands of other brave men and women in our Nation's military who served quietly and honorably, who all too often go unrecognized for their service and sacrifice,

and who willingly gave up their lives in defense of freedom for all of us.

Mr. Bucha continues his life of service and has spoken on the issues that have plagued Arlington. And he has stated, "There is no place in the United States that is as committed to perfection as Arlington. And, as a result, no solution to the issues or challenges at Arlington can be accepted that strives for something less than perfection."

The guardians of Arlington are the men and women of the old guard. It is their self-imposed dedication to perfection, from their performance of duty to their lifelong commitment to service, that sets them apart. They establish the standard for everyone who would pass among them and for those over whom they stand guard.

Those who they protect and guard, those who lay beneath the white markers so neatly placed across that hallowed ground have a contract with all of us. Their sacrifice on behalf of our Nation was perfect in all respects, and it is our responsibility to similarly strive for perfection as well.

There is no question that the Department of the Army recognizes the importance of resolving outstanding accountability. However, progress toward full restoration and resolution of these issues has been unsatisfactory and is in no way commensurate with the service and sacrifice of our fallen heroes.

Our expectation is that each and every family affected by this scandal will have their issues addressed and, hopefully, their faith restored as a result of our work here today. Our Nation's heroes deserve better. Today, this committee is demanding better.

I now turn to the ranking member, Mr. Cooper, for his remarks.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Wittman can be found in the Appendix on page 37.]

Mr. Cooper.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JIM COOPER, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM
TENNESSEE, RANKING MEMBER, SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVER-
SIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS**

Mr. COOPER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

In the interest of time, I would like to insert my written statement in the record, but I commend you for holding this hearing. I am sorry that we even have to have this hearing. But I am dedicated to working with you to make sure that we solve these problems.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Cooper can be found in the Appendix on page 39.]

Mr. WITTMAN. Thank you, Mr. Cooper. I appreciate that. And, with that, we are going to begin our first panel of witnesses.

And before hearing from our Army representatives, we are going to hear from Colonel Koch. He has taken time out of his busy schedule to travel here from his home in North Carolina to be with us and to share his experiences. I can't think of a better way to start the discussion about accountability than to start to hear from Colonel Koch. And I appreciate him taking the time. We had a few minutes before the hearing to meet and talk and to learn more about him and his commitment to our Nation and his family.

And, with that, Colonel Koch, I am going to turn it over to you and ask for you to give us your thoughts, concerns, and ideas about the current state of affairs there at Arlington. I know you have some personal experience there that I think is very compelling and very useful to us as members of this committee.

So, Colonel Koch.

STATEMENT OF COL. WILLIAM C. KOCH, JR., USAF (RET.)

Colonel KOCH. Thank you.

I was going to say, I have good news and bad news. The bad news is, I feel like the guy given a last cigarette and ready to be blindfolded. The good news is, I don't notice any of you having any rifles, so I think I am pretty safe. And I guess that is going to be the only humor I come up with. I guess that is very little humor, but at least I guess it is a good start.

What I would like to talk about is another kind of hero, not a military hero, but the wife of these heroes and the wife of all of us military folks who are also buried at Arlington. Arlington gives us the opportunity to have our wives with us for eternity, and I think that is great.

And this is my wife—excuse the shaking; when you get old, that is what happens—and this is her gravesite as it was before August. And the back of it has the location, Section 66, 1180. And for many years—she died in 2005—I sent flowers to that location. Just to show you, in summer and in winter.

And in June or July of last year, I started reading about some problems at Arlington, but none of them seemed to be associated with Section 66, so it didn't bother me. And I guess it should have anyway, but it didn't.

And, later on, all of a sudden, it started spreading to other sections, and then I started getting concerned. And Arlington Cemetery gave us a number to call, and I called that number. And I said, "I would like to know if my wife is actually buried where you say she is, based on what I have been reading." And they took my information and they said, "We will call you back."

So about a week to 10 days later, they called me back and said, "No problem. We checked all our records. Everything is fine." Well, that was good. I felt good about that because I had been visiting her regularly, and everything was good.

About a week later, I got a call from an Army officer, saying, "We have a problem." And he explained it this way—and I have here a picture of the three gravesites that were affected by this. This is my wife's, this is an Army staff sergeant, and a Navy commander's wife.

And what he told me was, the wife of the Army staff sergeant had had her husband's gravesite dug up to prove that he was, in fact, buried there. And when they dug it up, they found a wooden casket; only, he had been buried in a metal casket. And somehow they realized that my wife had been buried in a wooden casket. And so they went one gravesite over and dug in my wife's gravesite, and it was empty. So they went one gravesite the other way, and they found the urn—the woman had been cremated—for the wife of the Navy commander. And they dug deeper, and they found the staff sergeant's casket.

My understanding is that he is now buried somewhere else at Arlington. My wife, they left her in the new gravesite and put a new headstone on her. And where she was originally supposed to be buried, they buried someone else.

Now, over that almost 5 years, I sent flowers, as you could see, I sent wreaths at Christmas. I even took her mother up there so she could see her daughter's gravesite, and all she saw was a headstone and an empty grave.

So I went from being elated when I was told everything was okay to being very, very sad. And maybe "sad" is the wrong word, but I was no longer elated.

And so, what happened next is everything looks the same with the headstone; only, now on the back it has "Section 66, 1181" instead of 1180, because she has moved over.

And I put this one in there because this is the first flowers that I sent her and I knew she was there. No longer was I sending flowers to an empty grave.

And I found a picture, I think in the newspaper, that kind of tells the story better than I can. It is, I think, a beautiful picture. But if you look, right behind this headstone, the front headstone, is where my wife was supposed to have been buried. And you will notice there is no headstone back there. She is now over here in her new headstone. So it kind of tells a story of what went on at Arlington during this time.

And I guess—I have been interviewed by several news media, and I have told the same story. And I was asked, what do I expect to get out of this hearing? And I said, I guess two things. And I wasn't going to mention two things, I was only going to mention one, but I think I better mention two.

First of all, I wanted people out there to know that there is a problem at Arlington. A lot of people probably read about it, but there may still be families out there that are going to visit an empty grave or a grave that is supposed to be John Smith and it is Mary Jones. And I think that needs to be corrected as best they can.

And the other part is, the people that were in charge that caused all this, from my point of view and from what I have been able to read, have been given a slap on the wrist. And I don't want revenge; I want justice. And I think that is the only fair thing that we, the people that have been involved in this—and it is not just me; there are many others that have been through similar situations—expect from Arlington, the Army, and I guess from the Congress.

With that, I will take any questions.

Mr. WITTMAN. Well, thank you, Colonel Koch. We really appreciate you taking the time to share your story with us. It is very heart-wrenching to go to Arlington and believe that your wife was in one place but she was not. And we appreciate your service to our Nation.

I want to begin by asking you how you felt after you first realized that through the years your wife wasn't located where she was supposed to be and what your feeling was there as far as the trust that you had in Arlington and the expectation that you had with the folks there at Arlington and how that cemetery is run.

Colonel KOCH. Well, the first thing, like I say, I was elated because there were no problems. And when I got the second call, I think I was in shock at first. And then I guess I was angry. And then I got over that, and I said, I think it is time something is done.

The first time I went to Arlington, I was a high school senior. And watching or wandering, walking through all those gravesites, just, it was awesome. And I have been to some cemeteries in Europe, also, from World War II. If you have ever been to them, it is a similar type situation; you get the same feeling.

But this is in our own country. This is our major national military cemetery. And it is not something we should be putting up with. And I guess, having been in the Air Force for 30 years, I am not as emotional externally as some people are. And I don't apologize for that. I just know that, after I found out about this and was home, it was harder being home than it was before I found out.

Mr. WITTMAN. Thank you. And let me ask, from your perspective today and what you went through in the efforts to resolve this problem, do you feel, number one, that you were dealt with fairly and that the problem was directly addressed and that it was solved in the best way possible?

And secondly is, do you believe, based on your experience, that the folks currently at Arlington have the wherewithal to continue to manage that facility the way it needs to be managed?

Colonel KOCH. Well, for the first question, when we had the burial for my wife, everything went well, everything was perfect, except it was done after some very heavy rain, so we never did get to see the casket lowered into the ground, which probably was good, but there was—I mean, when you walked on the grass, it was “slush, slush, slush,” so we never did get to see it buried. And there was a little card that had her name on it where she was supposed to be buried. Now, whether that was 1180 or 1181, I don't remember.

But we were treated well at Arlington. Everything went smoothly. We had an Air Force sort of honor guard of pallbearers. And I can't say anything bad about that whole situation.

The only thing bad I can say about that process was—not Arlington's fault, it was the VA [Department of Veterans Affairs]—they wouldn't let me put—my wife was a minister—they wouldn't let me put “Reverend” under her name. And on the new headstone, they let me put “Reverend” on it, but they put it under my name. So I want you all to know I am not a reverend; my wife was.

As to what they are doing today, having read some things about it, I think they are probably going in the right direction. They have a terrific task. I don't know how they are ever going to go back. I think I mentioned to you earlier that the only way I can see to solve the problem is do DNA testing on everybody in Arlington, and we know that is never going to happen. And it is not something that is even, I don't think, financially possible.

But how do you know that this person that is in this grave, even though it is a one-for-one, grave versus headstone, is the right person? I don't know how they are ever going to figure that one out.

Mr. WITTMAN. Colonel Koch, I couldn't agree with you more. That is, I think, something compelling that this nation needs to be

assured, and that is that there is 100 percent certainty about every grave and every set of remains there at Arlington. I think that is something that we owe to our men and women in uniform, obviously.

From your standpoint, do you see that there are more things that Arlington can do to restore the trust, not only of the members of the military and their families that are buried there, but of the American public?

Colonel KOCH. Well, I think—I think it would be nice if there was some way they could maybe notify the families of all the people there that they have had problems, that people should check in, make sure that their loved one is there, and see if they can somehow work that out.

Like I say, if the lady had not had her husband dug up, this isn't something I have been thinking about. And, say, 20 years from now I died and they dug up the gravesite to put me in it, expecting my wife to be there, and it was empty, what would happen? Would they just put me in there and bury it and say, "Okay, it is all done," or would they have gone and checked and found out, "Okay, she is over here" and then bury me over there? I don't have an answer to that, and maybe they can answer that one for you. But that is looking out a long time in the future—hopefully, a long time in the future.

But, yeah, I don't know everything they are doing, so I can't answer for what the people at Arlington are doing 100 percent right or 50 percent right or 25 percent right.

Mr. WITTMAN. All right. Very good. Thank you, Colonel. I am going to turn to the ranking member now, Mr. Cooper.

Mr. COOPER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Colonel. I am grateful for your service to our Nation. I am sorry that you have been treated this way. Nobody should have to undergo this. And this will probably go down as one of the biggest snafus in the history of the U.S. Army, to have allowed Arlington Cemetery, the most honored and sacred of places, to be mismanaged in this fashion.

So we are working on a bipartisan basis to make sure that these problems are corrected as quickly as possible. I hope that we can get a handle on this immediately, if not sooner. Already, there have been years of problems and delays.

So we just regret the experience that you faced. So if there is anything that we can do, we are there for you. Thank you, sir.

Colonel KOCH. I would say the thing you can do is keep after them. Don't let them stop. Keep after them. Make sure they are doing it, just like you are doing today. And don't let up.

Now, facetiously, the other—or, earlier today, I met some Air Force guys, and they asked me why I was here, and I told them. And I also told them, I said, "If the Air Force were in charge of Arlington, this wouldn't have happened."

Mr. WITTMAN. Well, Colonel, I think you have my commitment and Mr. Cooper's commitment and the members of the committee's commitment that we will not rest until we have absolute certainty of all the remains and identification there and the management of Arlington.

So thank you so much for taking that time to come in.

Colonel KOCH. Can I say one other thing? Ask the media to keep it up also.

Mr. WITTMAN. Amen. We will definitely do that. Mr. Conaway.

Mr. CONAWAY. Colonel, thank you for coming in and sharing this with us today.

I don't have any questions, other than I came in right in, kind of, the "Tinkers to Evers to Chance" of what you were doing. Are you comfortable your wife is buried where you believe she is buried? Did I understand that?

Colonel KOCH. I am sorry. I didn't hear you.

Mr. CONAWAY. Are you comfortable that your wife is buried where you believe she is buried?

Colonel KOCH. I am probably 98 or 99 percent sure.

And I will tell you, when they notified me, I called the funeral director that handled her burial and her funeral, and I said, you know, "How do you identify bodies, and how does Arlington do it?" And the man told me that the funeral parlor has to put a little tag or something in the casket that has name and date of birth, date of death, and all that, and that Arlington puts a little tag on the casket externally.

So I called Arlington and I said, "Did you find this tag"—no, I said, I was told that this happened. And the answer I got was, "We are doing it now," which implies to me that they were not doing it prior to that time, which was—that was probably in August or September.

Mr. CONAWAY. Well, there is no more delicate way to ask this. As part of this process, did they determine your wife's remains were in that casket? Did they open it up?

Colonel KOCH. They did nothing to do that. They just assumed—well, they never told me they did anything. But they assumed, because it was a wooden casket. And, apparently, there are not that many wooden caskets buried there. And it was in the general area of where she was supposed to be.

Mr. CONAWAY. Okay.

Colonel KOCH. I don't have 100 percent proof. Let me put it that way. But I kind of feel comfortable that it is okay. But I couldn't say 100 percent.

Mr. CONAWAY. Okay. Well, and my apologies. I am sorry that this happened, as well. I buried a wife also one time, and so I have a sense of what you went through, what you have gone through, and I am sorry that you were put through that.

And I yield back.

Mr. WITTMAN. Thank you, Mr. Conaway. Mr. Young.

Mr. YOUNG. Colonel Koch, thank you so much for your service. And I, of course, mean your military service but also your presence today. I appreciate receiving your testimony.

And I guess I want to express to you the gratitude I have for some of the real human impact that these complications have created for you and others around the country.

And I just would like to say, one of the things that I think I will be focused on, moving forward, as we try and rectify some of these issues, is ensuring that the concerns of our surviving military family members are addressed throughout the process, that we are involving you as we make such important decisions as disinterment,

reinterment, and we draw on your wisdom and, frankly, your feelings as we try to handle these matters delicately.

And there are some organizations out there that I have become aware of that have provided some thoughts on how we might involve you in the process, moving forward. The Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors has a number of good suggestions, I think. And perhaps we can talk about implementing some of those.

But, really, I just want to say, thank you, sir. You are doing great credit to the military services and to our citizenry by your presence and testimony here today. God bless you.

Colonel KOCH. Excuse me. Could I say one thing?

Mr. WITTMAN. Yes, Colonel, please.

Colonel KOCH. I have to remember. That is the trouble when you get old; you forget things faster than you should. Let me think about it, and I will—

Mr. WITTMAN. Okay.

Colonel KOCH. I will think about it.

Mr. WITTMAN. All right. We will come back to you, I guarantee, guarantee. Mr. Rooney.

Mr. ROONEY. Sir, when you say the people that were responsible for the errors—and I am sorry, I came in late. If I could ask a question before I ask a backup question.

When your wife's—when you were at the site and you said that it was raining and you didn't actually see the casket go in the ground, how did it go from there to not going into the ground there? If you could back up and—and I apologize for coming in late, and I didn't hear if you said that in your opening testimony. What is your understanding of how there was a mixup?

Colonel KOCH. I don't have an answer for that. I don't know how it got mixed up, other than the fact—well, you see, it wasn't just my wife's that was mixed up; it was also the staff sergeant, it was also the Navy commander's gravesite. So, really, there were three gravesites in that one area.

Mr. ROONEY. Uh-huh.

Colonel KOCH. So, apparently, some of the worker bees must have either not followed the procedures or did something they shouldn't have or didn't have some supervisor or something there to make sure that they did it right.

But how they got it wrong I don't know. Because, like I say, there was a little card there with her name on it. And the thing I didn't know was whether it was the correct gravesite or not, because we couldn't even bring the casket up to that location, it was so wet.

Mr. ROONEY. Uh-huh. And, sir, you say in your testimony that those that were responsible for this received a slap on the wrist. Do you know what that entailed, what was the slap on the wrist?

Colonel KOCH. My understanding is that they were given letters of reprimand, that in the last paragraph, I believe, of the letter of reprimand it said, "This will be taken out of your records when you retire." So, in other words, once they retired, it was as if this whole situation never occurred.

Mr. ROONEY. Thank you, sir. Mr. Chairman, I don't have any—I yield back.

Mr. WITTMAN. All right. Thank you, Mr. Rooney. Mr. Coffman.

Mr. COFFMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And, Colonel Koch, thank you so much for your service to our country and for your willingness to come before this committee. And, again, my apologies for what has occurred to you and your family.

Help me out here. I understand it was inclement weather, and so, because of that, you didn't see your wife's casket go into the ground. Is it normal procedure in Arlington that in weather conditions where there is not inclement weather that one would observe—that the family would observe the casket going into the gravesite?

Colonel KOCH. I really can't answer that. I think you should ask—

Mr. COFFMAN. Okay. Very well. That will be a question, certainly, that we raise to the staff at Arlington.

What was the attitude of, in your communications with the staff at Arlington, the graves registration staff or whatever they—if there is a civilian term for it, I am not familiar with it. What did—tell me about the course or the conduct of those communications. I mean, were they bureaucratic? Were they sympathetic? How would you describe them?

Colonel KOCH. Certainly, they were sympathetic. When I spoke with the funeral director, he said, "Well, it is probably going to be several weeks before we will be able to do the burial." And the night that we had the viewing in Raleigh, he came to me and said, "It is going to be on the 6th of January," and she had died on the 20th of December. So it was probably as quick as I would have even thought of.

The man that dealt with us the day of the actual burial was as nice as could be. And, like I say, the only complaint I had at that point was not with Arlington, it was with the VA and my concerns about the headstone.

And then the burial, itself, as far as it went—

Mr. COFFMAN. When you were first notified, the communications at the point in time where you realized that there was a problem—

Colonel KOCH. Oh.

Mr. COFFMAN [continuing]. And you had contacted the staff at Arlington, tell me about those communications and how they went.

Colonel KOCH. I went back too far, I think.

Mr. COFFMAN. No, that is fine. That is fine.

Colonel KOCH. It was an Army lieutenant colonel. He called me up, he left me a message and said something like, "We've got a problem"—no, he said, "Please call this number," and he gave me the number.

Mr. COFFMAN. Okay. Good.

Colonel KOCH. He didn't say there was—

Mr. COFFMAN. That is good.

Colonel KOCH. When I called him, he then told me there was a problem. He explained it to me exactly.

And now I remember what I was going to mention to Mr. Young. They dug up my wife's grave, and someone said, "I thought that was illegal, to dig up a grave without permission." And I don't know if that is true or not; they would have to ask the legal people. But that was one of the concerns more people had than I did.

But anyway, everybody that I dealt with in the building where they bring the families, everything there was fine, had no problems. They escorted us to our cars, took us out to the gravesite, waited for us, went back, showed us how the cars should be set up. So I have no complaints about that part of it.

Mr. COFFMAN. Okay.

Colonel KOCH. The lieutenant colonel was very nice. He explained it. He did not try to make excuses. He said, here's the facts. And I think that is what I like about the military: They don't try to make excuses; they tell you the facts. If you don't like the facts, tough luck.

But, yeah, he was—everything, from that point of view, I thought was okay, other than the fact that I didn't like what he was telling me.

Mr. COFFMAN. Sure.

Colonel KOCH. Not how he was telling me, but what he was telling me.

Mr. COFFMAN. Okay.

Mr. YOUNG. Would the gentleman yield just for a moment?

Mr. COFFMAN. Yes, I yield.

Mr. YOUNG. Sir, you indicated, just to make sure we have this correct here, that your wife's remains were dug up without any consultation with you. Is that correct?

Colonel KOCH. Not exactly. What it was was they dug up the gravesite where she actually was, which was the staff sergeant's gravesite. So they had permission from the wife of the staff sergeant to dig that up. But then they went into where my wife's gravesite was and dug that one up, not knowing whether she was there or not until they actually dug and found that she wasn't.

Mr. YOUNG. Thank you. I thought I missed something there. I appreciate that. Troubling nonetheless. Thank you.

Mr. COFFMAN. Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. WITTMAN. Thank you, Mr. Coffman. Mr. Runyan.

Mr. RUNYAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thanks for inviting me today.

I know some of the other Members may wonder why I am sitting down here, but I am a member of HASC, but I am also chairman of the Veterans Committee, Disability Assistance and Memorials. And oversight of our veterans cemeteries and Arlington is one of my primary issues that I deal with.

And, Colonel Koch, thank you for your service, and thanks for sharing your story with us.

You know, it was literally my second week in—or my second month in office that I had a similar constituent complaint much like you had. And I have since been over to Arlington, and it was fixed rapidly.

I think many people on this committee will be comforted in knowing I think we are moving in the right direction. And I look forward to their testimony.

And the situation I would like to share with the constituent I had. I had a gentleman reach out to my office the 1st of March, that his nephew came down to visit his grandfather's gravesite, and there was a different headstone in the gravesite. And it was shocking to them. I reached out to Arlington. They fixed the prob-

lem—identified the problem, and it was, obviously, a human error issue that had happened when someone had, you know, buried their spouse along with them, and it got put in the wrong part of the graveyard. But it was fixed.

So, you know, I look forward—I appreciate the opportunity to be here, but I look forward to tackling this, also, on the VA side with several more hearings to make sure we are moving in the right direction. Because stories like yours, unfortunately, you know, they are not one of a kind. They happen all the time. And that is really why we are having this hearing.

Thank you again for sharing your story with us today. I yield back.

Colonel KOCH. Can I say something?

Mr. WITTMAN. Yes, please.

Colonel KOCH. The VA cemeteries appear to be run pretty well, from what I understand. And maybe they are smaller, maybe they are not in such a situation that maybe it is easier to handle.

But I was going to say, in the military—I was a navigator in Vietnam, and we always had checklists. And you would have the checklist, and you would check things off. Now, I don't know if Arlington has a checklist. I hope they do. And it says: Call this person—check, we did it, and initial it, here is who did it; call this person; dig a hole—I mean, a gravesite—sorry about that. But, you know, do each step of the process and have somebody sign off on it.

At the end, the last guy signs off and says, “These are all done.” Now you know this person is buried at this section, this gravesite, everybody has done their part, we don't have to worry about that one, we can check that one off, let's go on to the next one.

Mr. RUNYAN. Mr. Chairman, will you yield for one second?

Mr. WITTMAN. Please, yes.

Mr. RUNYAN. Just to let you know, Colonel, that we stole the superintendent to Arlington from the VA, so, yeah.

Colonel KOCH. That is right.

Mr. RUNYAN. I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. WITTMAN. Thank you, Mr. Runyan. We appreciate your interest in this, appreciate you joining us today. And we look forward to making sure that these issues there at Arlington are, indeed, resolved.

And, Colonel, thank you so much for taking your time today.

And I do want to offer to the committee members, if anybody has any additional questions, now would be the time to pose them. If not, then what we will do is move into recess. But I want to open the floor again if anybody has any additional questions.

Mr. COFFMAN. Mr. Chairman, if I could?

Mr. WITTMAN. Yes.

Mr. COFFMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Colonel Koch, when you were told that the identification card, that it was the normal procedure to place the identification card in the casket itself—

Colonel KOCH. Yes.

Mr. COFFMAN [continuing]. What was their response again? That they just started doing that? Or was it at some point in time after your wife had been interred that they started doing that? What was the response again?

Colonel KOCH. Well, the card from the funeral director was apparently—I think the funeral director told me, by law, they have to put that inside the casket. The one outside, it sounded as if they had—either they had done it for a while and then they stopped, or they had never done it even though people thought they were doing it.

Mr. COFFMAN. Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Mr. WITTMAN. Thank you, Mr. Coffman. Mr. Rooney.

Mr. ROONEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am not going to be able to make it back for the next panel, so I just wanted to say, you know—and, Colonel, again, thank you for your testimony.

I think that the thing that gets me, personally, so upset about your situation and the situation that Mr. Runyan was talking about is, you know, if you go to Arlington and you go to the changing of the guard and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and the reverence that we have for soldiers or servicemen that we don't know quite—we are not quite sure who they are, but we have that much respect. Or, you know, you see the President last year going up to Dover Air Force Base, and the somber mood of those soldiers coming home.

And, yet, we make what could very well just be an honest human error. It is just unacceptable, in my mind. And, you know, the fact that this country reveres so much the people that died for this country, that we would have the kind of honor and pomp and circumstance of the changing of the guard, but, at the same time, we are making these kind of mistakes in the same exact place, in the same exact venue, is just unconscionable.

And I am sorry—I am sorry that you had to go through this, you know, on behalf of myself and, I am sure, the rest of this body. And I am sorry I am not going to be able to be here for the next block. But I hope everything, moving forward, will be squared away.

Colonel KOCH. Yeah, I think we have more than one unknown soldier in Arlington now. There may be multiples spread out over the whole cemetery, unfortunately.

Mr. ROONEY. Yeah. Thank you.

Mr. WITTMAN. All right. Thank you, Colonel Koch. Any other questions for the colonel?

Mr. COFFMAN. Mr. Chairman, just very quickly.

Mr. WITTMAN. Yes, Mr. Coffman.

Mr. COFFMAN. I am sorry. When was your wife buried again, interred?

Colonel KOCH. She died on December 20th, and she was buried on the 6th of January last—let's see. She died in 2005 on the 20th of December, and she was buried January 6th in 2006.

Mr. COFFMAN. In the associated graves of the—I think you talked about a staff sergeant, and was it a—I think a lieutenant commander or commander's wife?

Colonel KOCH. Commander.

Mr. COFFMAN. Commander's wife. Do you remember at all when they were interred?

Colonel KOCH. No, I don't.

Mr. COFFMAN. Okay. Thank you.

Mr. WITTMAN. Thank you, Mr. Coffman. Colonel Koch, thank you again. We really appreciate you spending your time with us. We know this is a very difficult situation for you, to come in here and share your experience, but it is extraordinarily helpful to us to have an experience, a face, a name, a person associated with the issues we are dealing with there at Arlington.

So I deeply, deeply appreciate that. Thank you for taking your time coming here from North Carolina and sharing what I know is a very personal situation with us.

Colonel KOCH. Well, thank you for inviting me.

And I don't know if anybody saw, but there was a picture up there of my wife and I. And that was the last picture ever taken of her. There it is. And she was a very beautiful lady, and I still miss her. But I have gotten over some of it. You never get over it all, but you get over a little bit of it. And I wish she were still here and I didn't have to sit here and talk about her. Thank you all for inviting me.

Mr. WITTMAN. Well, Colonel, thank you. And we will continue to keep you and your wife in our thoughts and prayers. We appreciate you sharing with us today.

And, with that, I am going to recess the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee while we go to the floor and vote. And we will reconvene 5 minutes after the vote on the floor.

[Recess.]

Mr. WITTMAN. I call the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations back to order.

And we will begin with our next panel of witnesses: Ms. Condon, Mr. Hallinan, and Mr. Schneider. We welcome you to the committee and look forward to your opening statements. So, Ms. Condon, we will begin with you.

**STATEMENT OF KATHRYN A. CONDON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
ARMY NATIONAL CEMETERIES PROGRAM, OFFICE OF THE
SECRETARY OF THE ARMY**

Ms. CONDON. Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to provide an update on Arlington today.

I am joined today by Mr. Patrick Hallinan, who is the superintendent of Arlington, and Mr. Karl Schneider, who is the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs.

As the executive director responsible for both the U.S. Soldier and Airmen's Home National Cemetery and Arlington National Cemetery, I want you to know that the Army is committed to rendering public honor and recognition through dignified burial services for members of our armed services and their loved ones.

On behalf of the cemeteries and the Department of the Army, I would like to thank Congress for the support they have provided over the years. But, in particular, sir, I would like to thank you and the Members for the support that you have provided Mr. Hallinan and I in our first 10 months on the job.

As executive director, I report directly to the Secretary of the Army. And it is my responsibility now to effectively and efficiently develop, operate, manage, and administer both of the cemeteries.

Mr. Hallinan, as the superintendent, is responsible for the daily operations.

I know that the past serious mismanagement of Arlington National Cemetery has caused great consternation to the American public, to Congress, but most importantly, to our veterans and their loved ones. The news reports, combined with the inspector general [IG] reports, have shattered the trust in Arlington.

I am here today to personally tell you that Arlington Cemetery has the full support of the Army and we are moving forward to fix the problems found by the inspector general. And we will comply with the legislative requirements that will continue to correct the mistakes of the past while ensuring future strong management, oversight, and, most importantly, accountability.

In less than a year, we have taken several steps to address the past issues, including rebuilding the workforce, overhauling the automated interment scheduling system, establishing a consolidated call center, implementing a financial management system and a procurement system, and employing a new chain of custody for procedures that weren't there before.

Arlington National Cemetery, as you know, conducts 27 funerals a day. We consider it part of our sacred trust to ensure that each funeral is executed with utmost dignity and respect. Every funeral receives Mr. Hallinan and my full attention to detail.

Daily operations are critical to maintaining one of the unique traditions of Arlington National Cemetery: multiple, simultaneous, private gravesite interments with full military honors. Neither the importance nor the complexity of this tradition can be overstated.

To establish accountability while maintaining this tradition, standards were developed throughout the operation which didn't exist before. In addition, we have procured new equipment, we are training the workforce to implement the standards that have we put in place, and we are now holding our supervisors and leaders accountable for the operations.

Arlington National Cemetery is truly about those who have served. It provides a means for families, friends, and the country to honor our fallen veterans. Hence, customer service is a critical priority, because our goal is to help each and every family come to closure.

While we are making progress to date to improve service to our veterans and their loved ones, improvements still must continue. We firmly believe in continuous process improvement, and we are working every day to establish and improve feedback mechanisms to increase our understanding of family needs and concerns.

One of the biggest concerns upon arrival were the paper records and the lack of any backup of this information. We have been able to recover images from the efforts in 2005 to scan the records that were beginning in the Civil War. These images have been integrated with VA's BOSS [Burial Operation Support System] records and our interment schedule records into a searchable database that now provides both a digital tool and, more importantly, a backup for the vast majority of those authoritative records. This database will be expanded and is forming the basis for the accounting effort that has been mandated by public law.

We hope that we can highlight today the actions that we have taken to change, and demonstrate the progress that has been and continues to be made to restore the Nation's confidence in Arlington National Cemetery.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my testimony.

[The joint prepared statement of Ms. Condon and Mr. Hallinan can be found in the Appendix on page 40.]

Mr. WITTMAN. Thank you, Ms. Condon. I will offer an opportunity to Mr. Hallinan or Mr. Schneider, if they have any opening comments they would like to make. I will take them at this time.

**STATEMENT OF PATRICK K. HALLINAN, SUPERINTENDENT,
ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY**

Mr. HALLINAN. Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the subcommittee, I thank you for the opportunity to speak to you about Arlington National Cemetery.

I was appointed to superintendent of Arlington National Cemetery on October 10, 2010, and I have served as the acting superintendent of Arlington National Cemetery since June 6, 2010. This is my first opportunity to speak before Congress.

Ms. Condon and I started at Arlington National Cemetery on the same day. I came over as a subject-matter expert on the detail, at the request of the Secretary of the Army and at the direction of the Secretary of the VA, to provide assistance with cemetery operations.

I was formerly the director of field programs for the National Cemetery Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs [VA]. And, in that capacity, I was responsible for policies, procedures, their implementation and development on cemetery operations and to provide guidance to all national cemeteries. I also had oversight responsibility for 131 national cemeteries, five memorial service networks, and helped establish the National Training Academy for the National Cemetery Administration. I bring my commitment and that expertise to Arlington National Cemetery.

I began my career, Mr. Chairman, in Federal service as a Marine. Upon my honorable discharge from the Marine Corps, I took a position with the National Cemetery Administration as a temporary caretaker. My entire life has been devoted to cemetery operations. As I look back on my 37-year career, I view my appointment as superintendent of Arlington to be the high point.

I am committed to being part of a team that fixes the many problems that we are all aware of and some we may also discover.

As Ms. Condon mentioned in her testimony, in less than 1 year—10 months—we have taken several steps to address the problems. We have introduced industry standards, national standards that the VA has used at their national cemeteries and other national cemeteries and private industry use. We sent our employees out for professional training. We are training our employees onsite. We have purchased new equipment. We are providing the leadership and direction that they need.

I am personally out on a daily basis, no matter the weather conditions, snow or rain, directing, leading, guiding, coaching, mentoring, holding the supervisors, the team leaders, and the entire workforce accountable. I will say that the workforce has responded

in a positive manner, and I have seen improvement, while I freely admit there is much improvement to be made.

Arlington National Cemetery is hallowed ground. It is the place where America's heroes lie in rest. As a veteran, as the father of a Marine, and, most importantly, as a person who has dedicated his entire life to service to our military families, I am honored to be the superintendent, and I am committed to fix the mistakes of the past and restore the public faith and trust in the operations of Arlington National Cemetery.

I thank you for allowing me to be here today.

[The joint prepared statement of Mr. Hallinan and Ms. Condon can be found in the Appendix on page 40.]

Mr. WITTMAN. Mr. Schneider.

STATEMENT OF KARL F. SCHNEIDER, PRINCIPAL DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE ARMY FOR MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Mr. Chairman, I don't have a statement. I am here, though, as the Army's senior career civilian personnelist. I have over 30 years of service with experience with both military and civilian personnel. And the Secretary of the Army has asked me to appear today to answer your questions about the personnel actions related to Arlington National Cemetery.

I am happy to take your questions, sir.

Mr. WITTMAN. All right. Very good. Well, thank you, members of the panel. We appreciate your opening statements.

And, at this point, we will begin a line of questioning. And I want to begin with you, Ms. Condon, and I will move over to Mr. Hallinan.

Full faith and trust in Arlington National Cemetery is, I think, critical not just to the men and women that are interred there, but to this Nation. It is a symbol of what is right and what is just in how we honor the fallen.

My question is this: We have heard from the Secretary, when he testified before the full committee, and his words were he pledged to do everything necessary and possible to right the unimaginable and unacceptable wrongs that have taken place. That means 100 percent accountability, 100 percent auditing, to make sure that everything at Arlington, both past and present, is beyond reproach.

It seems to me that now we learn that the Army doesn't plan on following up with that promise, that there is not going to be 100 percent certainty in identification of remains, we won't use every means possible to make sure that we take up the concerns of families that may not know with certainty the placement of their loved ones there.

Also, it is clear to me today by both the Secretary and the Army inspector general not being here for this hearing that they don't take this very seriously.

And I am wondering, from your standpoint, I will first ask, is the Army really serious about 100 percent accountability and making sure that we do everything to assure that there is not a single set of remains there that is misidentified, misplaced, and that families have full closure on that?

And is it difficult for you to work under a circumstance where you come here—obviously, you are committed—but it doesn't seem like the Secretary or the IG are taking this seriously? It must be kind of frustrating for you not to have the people above you taking this issue at Arlington seriously.

And I will look for your comments.

Ms. CONDON. Sir, I can tell you personally that the entire Army, to include the Secretary and the inspector general, do take the issues at—

Mr. WITTMAN. Ms. Condon, I hate to say this, but words fail in this situation. It is obvious that they have something better to do today than to make sure that Arlington is beyond reproach with how we treat the men and women who have served this Nation.

What else on their schedule can be more important than that? It is obvious that they don't get it. And I know it is frustrating for you to work under those conditions. And words fail. Actions speak louder than words.

Ms. CONDON. And, sir, actions do speak louder than words, and you have the commitment of Mr. Hallinan and myself that we truly are putting together the steps that need to be taken to do the accountability at Arlington.

I would like to use the analogy that, when we started in June, we were almost—we moved into a house that didn't have a foundation. There wasn't an IT infrastructure. There wasn't the accountability. There wasn't the standards and procedures. So what we have had to do was to build that first. And now we are working on the plan to truly move to do the accountability.

Mr. WITTMAN. Will we be assured that not only going forward that we have the accountability, but that accountability will be held in context of what has happened in the past?

I think that is critical for families to have closure and to make sure, too, that the wrongs of the past are righted in relation to making sure we assure families with 100 percent certainty about the identification and the location of their loved ones.

Ms. CONDON. And, sir, we will work for the accountability from June 10th forward, when Mr. Hallinan and I started, and we will work on every gravesite in Arlington.

Mr. WITTMAN. Very good. Mr. Hallinan.

Mr. HALLINAN. In support of what Ms. Condon has stated, you have our commitment, sir, this subcommittee, the families, and the American public, that we will correct the problems of the past and ensure that, from an operational standpoint and a maintenance standpoint, that Arlington is run to the highest standards.

And, also, we also have a focus on customer service—the need to be compassionate, the need to be sympathetic, the need to be understanding—realizing that there are real operational, systemic issues that need to be repaired and fixed, but, at the same time, do not lose a sense of the families you are dealing with and the grief and the trauma they may be going through.

Mr. WITTMAN. Thank you. Mr. Schneider, could you comment about the accountability element? Obviously, there have been wrongs in the past. Can you update us on where the Army is? Obviously, the inspector general is doing something—hopefully is

doing something. Maybe he is not; maybe that is why he is not here today.

But maybe you can give us an update on what is going on with making sure that folks are held accountable for actions of the past.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. And the frustrating thing about that—and I am sure it is frustrating for the committee; I know it is frustrating for us—is the superintendent and the deputy superintendent, as soon as the report—right after the report was delivered to the Secretary, retired. And our jurisdiction to take any adverse action against them evaporated the day that they retired.

Mr. WITTMAN. Well, I understand that their retirement was not necessarily a voluntary retirement. But, anyway, that being said, it is perplexing, I think, to both the committee, subcommittee, and the public that a letter of reprimand was in the file, to be removed 6 months later, and that is the extent of how folks there in the past have been held accountable.

And I would want to know from you, where is the progress with the inspector general? We hear that there is an ongoing investigation. Can we expect that to come to a conclusion? Can we expect actions from that investigation?

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Again, I think what you can expect—yes, I think that will be brought to a conclusion, although I haven't—I don't track the inspector general investigation.

What I can tell you is, the Secretary has told all of us that he expects accountability to be one of our top priorities. And to the extent that the inspector general report identifies either poor performance or misconduct, the Secretary will expect us to ensure that accountability is held.

The frustrating thing, again, is, the way in which the civil service laws work, the tools that we have available to us, especially when people are retirement-eligible, once they retire, we have no control. We have no control over when they retire; they can retire at any time. And, once they are retired, we lose the opportunity to do anything more to hold them accountable.

For example, with the letter of reprimand to the superintendent, that was as much as the Secretary could get done before he retired.

Mr. WITTMAN. Mr. Schneider, isn't it correct, though, that that is limited to administrative procedures on folks that retire? If there is criminal behavior there, they fall under the criminal statute. So that doesn't exempt them, if they are Senior Executive Service, from being prosecuted if they are found to be criminally—

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Absolutely.

Mr. WITTMAN [continuing]. A criminal wrongdoing.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. And what the Criminal Investigation Command does is they coordinate with the U.S. Attorney who has jurisdiction. And it is up to the U.S. Attorney, obviously, to decide—if it is a civilian.

Now, if it is military, it is under the Uniform Code of Military Justice, and the chain of command can deal with it appropriately. But for civilians, it would rest with the U.S. Attorney and, in the case of Arlington, probably for the Eastern District of Virginia.

Mr. WITTMAN. Is the inspector general pursuing all courses of actions concerning past actions there by personnel, both civil and criminal? Of course, on the civil side, obviously, that would be the

administrative element that you speak of, but even on the criminal side?

Mr. SCHNEIDER. If they discover criminal activity, they turn it over to the Army's Criminal Investigation Command—

Mr. WITTMAN. I guess the question is, are they looking at the potential for criminal activity there?

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Sir, I think whenever they find criminal activity, they turn it over to the CID.

And I think they are committed—I guess what would be best to do is to get for the record exactly what the Department of the Army inspector general is doing in this area, so you can see exactly where they are at.

Mr. WITTMAN. I think that would be nice, Mr. Schneider. We will certainly submit some questions in writing. Although, it would have been nice for the inspector general to be here today, as I have said. Obviously, he doesn't feel this is very serious, so we will certainly pose some formal questions to him and gauge his seriousness with this effort.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Yes, sir.

Mr. WITTMAN. I am going to pursue one other line of questioning, and then I am going to turn it over to the other members of the committee.

Normally, if you look at situations throughout other parts of the military, there is a certain standard and procedure that folks go through. And I know that you all had spoken of the heavy workload that is there and the things that you have to deal with each and every day—the number of burials, the maintenance, those kinds of things.

But it seems to be standard practice in other branches of the military that, when you have something of this magnitude that happens—in this instance, I think, a tragedy, and whether it is a plane going down in another branch of the military, whatever—normally, those branches have a stand-down. They say, "Okay, we are going to stand things down. We are going to really get down to what caused this problem."

It doesn't seem like, in this situation, that there has been a stand-down, that there has been the direction or the redirection to say, "Not only are we going to make sure that things are happening properly going forward, but we are going to make sure that those problems that have happened in the past are taken care of." And if you look at stand-down procedures throughout the military, that is normally the course of procedure.

I would like your comments on why, in this situation, there doesn't seem to have been a stand-down that not only addresses things going forward—and, like I said, I want to give you all credit for the things that are going on going forward, although I still think there are things that need to happen there. But what has happened with problems that have occurred in the past and how we resolve those particular issues?

Ms. CONDON. Sir, if I could, I am very familiar with stand-down procedures in the military, and I would like to think that Mr. Hallinan and I really did that. In order for us to do all the changes that we are making going forward, we had to correct those issues in the past. And that is what we have been doing.

Mr. WITTMAN. Very good. Mr. Young.

Mr. YOUNG. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank our panel for being here today.

Mr. Hallinan, I am a Marine, too, and I know you understand the ethic "Semper Fidelis."

For those who are watching this hearing today, the origin of "Semper Fidelis," the Marine Corps motto, it speaks to the seriousness with which the Marine Corps regard loyalty to their fellow Marines. It extends not just to the living; "always faithful" even extends to those who happen to pass away, those on the battlefield. And it is the Marine Corps tradition, even under the most difficult of circumstances, to retrieve those who have departed in service to our country from the battlefield, even if that requires great danger to our fellow soldiers. I think that speaks to the sort of commitment all of us have as a country to those who have departed and all of their families.

In this case, we know we have unmarked and mismarked graves, we had the existence of a mass grave, so many other things, that it sort of boggles the mind here. And we are working here constructively, I hope, to address these problems.

I am quite disappointed, as a member of this subcommittee, that invitations went out to the Secretary of the Army, the Army inspector general. And I want to say it puts all of you in a very difficult position. Because one of the first things a young lieutenant learns in the military is you can delegate responsibility but not accountability. So any inadequacies we might discover here today don't just reside with you; ultimately, accountability, we understand, is a bit higher in the food chain. And, hopefully, we can speak to the IG and the Secretary in due course.

We can honor the memory by dealing with the grief and trauma, as Mr. Hallinan put it, of family members. And what I want to most learn about from you is whether you individuals—Mr. Hallinan, Ms. Condon, Mr. Schneider—have reached out to each and every family that has been impacted by this scandal, and, if so, how that has taken place, and any other details that you think might be useful to this panel.

Ms. CONDON. Sir, if I could start. Each and every time that we have discovered a discrepancy in Arlington, the first people that we do contact are the next of kin.

Mr. HALLINAN. When we do discover a discrepancy, if there is an issue with a gravesite, we are required to contact the next of kin. We cannot arbitrarily just go into a person's gravesite. So we are trying to be—we are being transparent. We are contacting the families.

Mr. YOUNG. And does that involve sending a letter? Through what means do you contact the family members?

Ms. CONDON. Sir, we try to contact them via phone so that we talk to them, rather than a letter. And if we cannot reach them by telephone, we follow up with a letter.

Mr. YOUNG. And, presumably, we have a log, records of all the contacts that have been made and the results of said contact?

Ms. CONDON. Sir, for all the discrepancies, you know, most of them have been via telephone and we have been very fortunate to be able to contact the next of kin.

Mr. YOUNG. Is there a further plan of engagement of family members moving forward? And, if so, what is that plan?

Ms. CONDON. Sir, one of the things that Mr. Hallinan and I have done is we have had a town hall with Gold Star families. And what it was, it was our opportunity to have those family members who have lost a loved one talk to us about what they would expect the new leadership team at Arlington to discuss with them and any other family member that is in a situation that we have encountered to date.

Mr. YOUNG. As someone who holds many town hall meetings, I know those are useful, but their reach can sometimes be limited. So what sort of participation do you have in these town hall meetings? And what proportion of the overall family universe that has been impacted by this tragedy does it touch, your town hall?

Ms. CONDON. Sir, that town hall meeting was put on by TAPS, and that was the organization that I think did send a letter to you, Congressman. And they were the ones who orchestrated our first town hall.

The means that we are trying to do to reach our families is via our Web site. That is one of the means of communication that we are using for any issue that we have at the cemetery. And we are constantly trying to improve that medium, as well.

Mr. YOUNG. Now, I know Web sites, many of us check them regularly, especially when they have valuable content. But I know many people do not and they are not comfortable with computers, perhaps don't even own them.

So are you doing other things in addition to updating a Web site to keep the family members engaged and fully informed of progress? Is there a help line? Is there an intermediary between government, which sometimes can be a sterile organization, and the impacted families?

Ms. CONDON. Yes, sir. As a matter of fact, on the first day on the job when the inspector general hit, we immediately set up a call center hotline. And it was a telephone—where members who read this in the media could call us. We now have a consolidated call center, which is a toll-free number, for anyone who can call in to the cemetery.

That didn't exist before. Prior to Mr. Hallinan and I and the call center, we really couldn't tell you how many people were trying to contact the cemetery, whether for something as simple as directions, to get a parking pass, or if they truly had an issue or if they were going to schedule a service for their loved one.

Right now, we receive over 200 phone calls a day into the cemetery, which 45 of those are for families who are trying to schedule services to have their individuals buried. So that is the means that we are—the call number, the call center, we answer every call now that comes into the cemetery.

Mr. YOUNG. Can you speak to any specific programs or things that you have implemented to ensure continuous improvement of engagement and information being passed down to the families? For example, surveying them, asking them what sorts of improvements you might make to better inform them of future developments.

Ms. CONDON. Yes, sir, we are working on that. As I said, we are trying to build a foundation. What we really had to do was to even build the IT architecture in the cemetery to even have the means to put out a survey electronically. But that is one of the future plans that we are having.

Then we are also putting out a new burial guide that truly is a guide that will really answer a lot of the questions that individuals have that, before, they just didn't have a place to go, which will outline all of the places of how you can contact anyone in the cemetery.

Mr. YOUNG. And, finally, I am curious about a related matter. I know many family members care deeply about the mementos that are left at these gravesites, particularly military gravesites. There is a real history of that.

Does Arlington National Cemetery now operate some sort of system for protecting these mementos, properly cataloging them, and then allowing family members to access this information in a reliable way?

Ms. CONDON. Sir, the mementos are collected in Section 60, which is where most of the current casualties from the wars are. And we have our Center for Military History is collecting those mementos and cataloging them.

And that is one of the long-term plans that is on my plate, to decide how do we, long term, you know, capture those mementos for future generations so that we don't lose that.

Mr. YOUNG. So that process has not been fully developed as yet, is that correct?

Ms. CONDON. Right. It is still a pilot that we are still collecting the mementos and cataloging them. But we have not finalized, you know, what we are going to do for the future on that.

Mr. YOUNG. Do you have a time frame by which you intend to implement?

Ms. CONDON. Sir, I don't have the exact date, but, you know, it is something that I will take as a do-out. And I will work with the Center of Military History on, you know, what is the best time to transition for that.

Mr. YOUNG. Okay. Well, I will and I know many of my colleagues will continue to keep their finger on the pulse of all these different lines of inquiry. And I expect you will keep us informed every step of the way.

Ms. CONDON. Sir, we will.

Mr. YOUNG. All right. Thank you much.

Mr. WITTMAN. Thank you, Mr. Young. Mr. Coffman.

Mr. COFFMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I understand we have changed the leadership at the very top. But, yet, there were whole echelons of subordinate leadership that were complicit in these activities that are still there. I mean, I just find that stunning.

I mean, this is an organization that is rotten to its core. This is an organization that has conducted itself really—I think the best way to describe it is a culture of incompetence, if not a culture of corruption. And if this was a military organization and such an investigation would have occurred, not only would the Uniform Code of Justice have been used fairly dramatically, but at all of those

echelons of subordinate leadership, they would have been relieved. They would have been gone.

You know, I tell you, this organization—and I am a combat veteran, and I can tell you—does not reflect the values of our military. They do not honor our military and their sacrifices. And they need to go.

And so I am asking you, what actions are being taken to change leadership at every level, to get rid of these people who have done these things, and start over again?

Ms. CONDON. Sir, if I may, in fairness to the workforce, they weren't trained to do the job. And I will let Mr. Hallinan follow up on that since he is in charge of—they were not trained.

I will give an example of one of the supervisors who we recently sent to the VA training center. It was the first time he was sent to training in 20-some years of employment at the cemetery. There weren't standards, there weren't procedures, and they weren't held accountable.

The thing that Mr. Hallinan and I are doing is giving each and every one of the workforce the tools to do the job correctly——

Mr. COFFMAN. So you are saying these things were okay that occurred, basically. You are defending the actions that were taken by this workforce, are you not?

Ms. CONDON. Sir, I am not defending the mistakes that were made in the past.

Mr. COFFMAN. But it is really okay what they did, because we can just kind of explain it away. Is that what you are saying?

Ms. CONDON. No, sir, that is not what I am saying.

Mr. COFFMAN. That is what I am hearing.

Mr. HALLINAN. Mr. Congressman, may I take part of that question, please?

Mr. COFFMAN. Please.

Mr. HALLINAN. It is not okay, and it is not acceptable. If there was any criminal wrongdoing, if the IG investigation comes back and provides recommendations about incompetence or misconduct——

Mr. COFFMAN. Oh, we know that is there. Please go ahead.

Mr. HALLINAN [continuing]. We will address it. A blind eye will not be turned. People will be held accountable.

The employees, as Ms. Condon was speaking to, were not provided leadership. Those of you who are combat veterans and my fellow Marine in the back—no leadership, no guidance, no direction, absolutely no training. They are one-person deep out there. And it is a very difficult and challenging situation.

But I can assure you with 100 percent confidence, under our watch, if they do not respect and honor the service of our veterans, if it is misconduct or if it is a performance issue, it will be addressed.

Mr. COFFMAN. Well, you referenced the Marine Corps. And I can tell you that the leadership that I am seeing here at Arlington couldn't lead starving troops to a chow hall. But that is fundamentally not the issue. You referenced the Marine Corps, and every Marine has basic values, understands the basic mission. And what you are, in effect, telling me is that these people were so incom-

petent or so poorly led that they didn't even understand what they were supposed to be doing. Is that correct?

Mr. HALLINAN. What I am saying, Congressman, is we need to change that culture. There has been identified a definitive problem. No doubt. We all know this. We need to change that culture and instill a culture of professionalism and a culture of honoring our veterans and caring. And we do that individually and personally by setting that standard and providing that leadership. And that is what is happening today.

Mr. COFFMAN. You don't honor veterans and their families by leaving people in place that have disgraced their memory. You get rid of them, and you bring in people that have the integrity, without supervision, you know, that certainly can independently perform their job and understand—understand—the sacred nature of that ground. Because, obviously, the culture of Arlington today does not understand that. And that is a tragedy.

And I just don't see—maybe we need another change in leadership at the top, because I don't think you all get it. I just don't think you get it. I don't think you get how these families are affected. I just don't think you get it. That is what I am hearing today, is you don't get it; that you really, fundamentally, at the end of the day, don't care; that you are bureaucrats in place.

And we need something—we need to honor these veterans. We need to honor their families. We need to honor the sacred ground of Arlington. And I can tell you, we need leadership that respects that. Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. WITTMAN. Thank you, Mr. Coffman. Mr. Runyan.

Mr. RUNYAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank both of you for coming here again today.

Many of my colleagues may not know—I know the chairman does—I had a visit out there, as I said, earlier in mid-March. I understand my colleague's frustration, but I also know that there is a reason why these people are here, because of precisely what you are very upset about and what we are all frustrated about.

And just, kind of, touch on that. I think we touched on that when I met with you out there. But has there been a dramatic turnover in the workforce since you guys took your positions?

Ms. CONDON. Sir, since we have taken over, we have had 15 individuals who have retired or transferred to other positions.

But we have also, as part of a manpower survey, we were told that there were 57 more people that we really needed to run the cemetery effectively and efficiently. We have managed to hire 22 more individuals, we have 24 active recruitments on the street, to bring in the new team to run Arlington.

Mr. RUNYAN. And, of your knowledge, since you were either on an interim basis or permanent, has any incident like this happened under your watch?

Mr. HALLINAN. What type of incident, Congressman? Performance issues?

Mr. RUNYAN. Issues that we would have with burials or loved ones being there and noticing things that have been created under your watch.

Mr. HALLINAN. Yes, we have had two incidents of gravesites being misassigned.

Mr. RUNYAN. And that is part of—I know we spoke out there—part of your process of setting up these parameters and basically trying to go to a digital system to where it is more at your fingertips, there is less paper involved. How is that process going, and how quickly are we moving there?

Because I don't know if many of the other Members know that most of the records out there are basically in a card catalog system, and it is basically ancient.

I know you guys are addressing that, but just fill us in on how that procedure is moving forward.

Ms. CONDON. Sir, that procedure is moving forward. What we are doing is—that is part of the accountability that we are doing by the public law. What we have to do is we are going to re-scan all of our records. We are doing that, tying that to a digital flyover of each and every gravesite so that we truly will have a digital process for our recordkeeping at Arlington.

And if I could go back on the question about the mistakes that have happened—and Mr. Hallinan didn't touch on the burial mistake. The new standards and procedures that we have in place—the workforce, when they made that mistake, immediately notified, you know, the chain of command that there was a switch in the two gravesites. So that the procedures that we are putting in place are working, because the workforce, when they made a mistake, came forward to the leadership.

I don't know if you want to expound on that, Mr. Hallinan.

Mr. HALLINAN. In the misassignment of the gravesites, what we found in the past was that it would not be reported to the leadership. The leadership was not trusted. The leadership was divided. And it is all part of the IG report, the inspector general's report.

In this instance, they did come to me and said they made a mistake. And even though these procedures we are putting in place are new and they have been trained to those procedures, when they made the mistake they came forward and let myself personally know. I let Ms. Condon know. And we have corrected the mistakes.

Mr. RUNYAN. Thank you very much. And, you know, with what has happened out there, I think you guys are living under a microscope. It is a very ambitious undertaking, and I wish you all the best. We have to do this, because it is truly for our heroes. Thank you very much for your testimony. I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. WITTMAN. Thank you, Mr. Runyan. Mr. Langevin.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And, first of all, I want to thank you for holding this hearing and paying attention to this all-important issue of the lapses that took place at Arlington and how we get this right.

I know that the folks at the table are new to their positions, and they are charged with trying to make things right. And I want to thank you for the work that you are doing.

I, like many of my colleagues and the American people, were appalled at the lapses that had taken place and how remains were not properly handled and the things that—wrong gravesite burials and remains in the wrong place. It is totally unacceptable.

We have an obligation not only to, obviously, support our warfighters and, certainly, support our veterans, particularly those disabled, but the ultimate sign of respect, of course, is how we treat

our soldiers at the end of their lives and how their remains are properly handled afterwards. So I am grateful that we are paying attention to this issue of how we make things right at Arlington.

I will have several questions for the record, Mr. Chairman. Just one question for purposes of this hearing right now.

First of all, I understand that it is the Army that basically is responsible for Arlington National Cemetery. Around the country, the veterans cemeteries, from what I understand, are mainly handled by the VA.

Could you give me the pros and cons of the Army continuing to have jurisdiction and oversight and, basically, operational control over Arlington National Cemetery versus the VA? What are the pros and cons for either method, if we were to transfer jurisdiction to the VA?

Mr. HALLINAN. Being a former VA employee until recently, Congressman, and responsible for those 131 national cemeteries that are highly maintained with a dedicated workforce, I do want to say that Arlington National Cemetery is currently being operated and maintained to those same consistent standards.

Arlington National Cemetery—and this touches upon something the chairman spoke to early in one of his questions—is unique. Can we stand down? Is it like an aircraft carrier; should it be taken in and dry-docked and overhauled? Unfortunately not an option. We have families, 27 interments, burials on a constant basis.

Arlington is unique. It is one of the busiest national cemeteries in the United States, if not the entire world. Arlington National Cemetery conducts over 3,000 ceremonies; has dignitaries, heads of state from around the world that come pay their respect to America's fallen service men and women. Arlington also provides graveside service, which VA cemeteries do not.

And, additionally, Washington, DC, and Arlington National Cemetery is one of the most visited tourist spots in the country. We average over 4 million visitors who come also to learn of the history and pay their respects. There is no other VA cemetery like that. These complexities are challenging, and they are very real.

One thing I would like to add for the record is that the families that Ms. Condon and I have dealt with—because we do get feedback on a daily basis from the families that come in and out—encourage us. So, through difficult times for them, they are encouraging us to correct and fix the problems.

But the families we have met and spoke with, and specifically the Gold Star parents that we have met with, their feelings on that issue, Mr. Congressman—and I was on the defensive as a VA employee at that point—they felt quite passionately and adamantly that Arlington should stay under the Army and not become a VA national cemetery.

And lastly—and Ms. Condon can follow up—I believe, based on being on the ground and dealing with these issues, that the Army has the resources and has the commitment to fix the past mistakes and to operate Arlington National Cemetery effectively into the future.

Ms. CONDON. And, sir, if I can add, the mistakes that happened and Arlington being broken, the Army needs to fix it. When things

are broken in the Army, the Army needs to fix the issues that happened in the past.

And then, you know, the decision—once it is fixed, then we can make the decision on if, you know, Arlington should remain under DOD [Department of Defense], which—I agree with Mr. Hallinan, because of the uniqueness of all of the things that we do at Arlington, that it should be a DOD-run cemetery.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Very good. Well, I thank you for your answers. This committee takes this issue of getting things right at Arlington very seriously, as does every Member of Congress. And we are going to continue to provide aggressive oversight.

Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you again for holding this hearing, and my colleagues who participated in this hearing, and the folks at the table.

And, as I said, I know you are new in your positions and you are charged with getting things right at Arlington, and we look forward to continue working with you. As I said, there is no greater sign of respect than how we treat our soldiers at the end of their life and their final interment, and we want to make sure that we are providing the ultimate respect. Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. WITTMAN. Thank you, Mr. Langevin. We appreciate you joining us here at the hearing today.

I want to do a couple of follow-up questions. First, you talked about discrepancies. Have you identified exactly how many discrepancies exist? And is there a plan of action to address those?

Ms. CONDON. Sir, when we do our accountability effort that we are mandated by law, when we check all of the records with the actual gravesite, that should identify where we may have potential discrepancies in the cemetery. When we do that, then we will address each and every one of those discrepancies. And, as we stated before, in the first course of action, if we find a discrepancy, is that we will contact the families that are involved.

Mr. WITTMAN. When do you expect to complete that evaluation of the entire cemetery to discover the full content and magnitude of the discrepancies that exist?

Ms. CONDON. Sir, as you know, we have the public law that says I have to do that by December 22nd of this year.

Mr. WITTMAN. Okay.

Ms. CONDON. And we are well on our way of putting forward the plan and starting the effort to do just that.

Mr. WITTMAN. So you expect to comply with that by December 22nd?

Ms. CONDON. Sir, I will—we will do our best to comply by that date.

Mr. WITTMAN. Okay. I would like for you to say that you will accomplish it.

Ms. CONDON. Yes.

Mr. WITTMAN. Doing your best is great, but accomplishing it is what we all want.

Ms. CONDON. Got it, sir.

Mr. WITTMAN. Thank you. Thank you.

I wanted to ask, too, I know that there is obviously a wide scope of problems, discrepancies, issues. Have you all contemplated putting together a panel of experts from other areas, such as the VA,

to do an independent look at the things that you face—the record-keeping system, the identification of remains, the operational issues there? Have you thought about doing that, rather than continuing to do it internally?

Because it seems like, internally, we continue on a weekly basis to learn more and more about the things that are going on there. So I am wondering if it may not be time to have an independent panel come in and take a look.

Ms. CONDON. Sir, as you know, we are in the process of nominating for the Arlington Commission. I didn't realize how, you know, putting a FACA commission in, all the requirements to get your members nominated and actually on board.

That was one of the reasons for putting that independent commission together. Secretary McHugh has directed that. And that is what we are going to be using the independent commission for, is that outside look of the issues at Arlington. And they could recommend other views that they feel that need to be, to make sure that Mr. Hallinan and I are doing all that we need to do.

Mr. WITTMAN. So the independent commission—I want to make sure I am clear—the independent commission is going to be looking at existing operations. But will they also be looking at discrepancies in the past and what should be done to fix those discrepancies? And then will they also look at the problem operationally with conduct of personnel there at Arlington?

Ms. CONDON. Sir, you know, since the commission hasn't started yet—but those are probably very good agenda items that we could put on the commission to look at or to recommend, issues that we should have, perhaps, other commissions look at.

Mr. WITTMAN. Is there a date certain for this commission starting its work?

Ms. CONDON. Sir, we are putting together the nomination packages and forwarding them through the process. And I don't know when all of those will be approved and vetted, but we are trying our best to get it done within the next several months.

Mr. WITTMAN. Okay. All right. We would like a little more specificity on that. I think the urgency, obviously, is before us. I think the public wants to see things done and, obviously, people there to provide that guidance, that independent commission that the Secretary puts in place. I think timeliness is of the essence. So it would certainly be, I think, very, very important.

I want to go back again to Mr. Schneider. I think we cannot understate the efforts that need to be undertaken by the IG in looking at all of the past performance there of employees.

And, again, as more and more of this comes to light, just as Mr. Coffman said, it is beyond me that somehow there wasn't significant wrongdoing. And I don't want to prejudge people, but I can tell you, externally, looking at this, it sure appears to me that there was more than just oversight or mistakes being made there, that this type of action and behavior, if it is not criminal sure seems that way.

So I want to get a little more definition about where the IG is in that investigation, when they hope to come to some kind of conclusion, when we can hope to hear something.

I hope this isn't an effort where this is a marathon where the IG is just trying to continue to push this into future and hopefully the issue will go away. Because I can assure you, from this committee's standpoint, the issue is not going away.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Well, I think two things. Number one, I think we get it that it is not going away and this committee is not going to let it go away.

Secondly, we owe you an answer on where the IG is going and when the IG expects to be completed with its work. My belief is the IG will take it wherever it goes, and if criminal activity is identified, it will be turned over to the criminal investigators for them to work through their process.

And, again, if it is military people, it would be under the Uniform Code of Military Justice. If it is civilians, it would be Title 18 and handled through the Justice Department and U.S. Attorney's office.

Mr. WITTMAN. Okay. Well, we can hope to get something definitive out of the IG?

Mr. SCHNEIDER. I will go back tonight, and—

Mr. WITTMAN. Okay.

Mr. SCHNEIDER [continuing]. This will be number one on my agenda.

Mr. WITTMAN. Very good. Well, we would like to hear from them. And we also be submitting some questions for the record—

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Yes, sir.

Mr. WITTMAN [continuing]. To the IG and asking that they respond within a short time period. We will put it like that.

I wanted to follow a little bit further up on Mr. Langevin's question, because I think it is very, very pertinent to what we are dealing with here. There has been a lot of suggestion—we have had a lot of calls from veterans who said, hey, you know, the cemetery there may be better run by the VA, for a variety of reasons. And I respect Mr. Hallinan's viewpoint on that, having worked on the VA side and come over to the Arlington side.

But the question always comes up, the Army's mission is winning wars, it is not really running cemeteries. And with the problems that have occurred there, the question then becomes, are we better off going to the VA, especially with the magnitude of the cemeteries that they manage, to look at how do we re-establish faith, how do we re-establish trust there at Arlington.

And I wouldn't expect anything other than to say, hey, the Army can do the job. But I also want, too—I know that professionally both of you have seen operations both in the VA and the Army. And I know that there, obviously, are some ideas that you are going to have that are going to say, keep it in the Army.

But I do want to get your thoughts about, what strengths do you see the VA bringing to the table in the way that they run their facilities? And I want to put that in context to understand what might be still lacking there at Arlington.

Ms. CONDON. Sir, if I could start on that one, first of all, right now I think if we were to transition today to the VA, I think the turmoil that that would cause at Arlington would probably impact our veterans and their families to a great extent.

I think what we really need to do is, as I stated before, is to put together those standards and procedures and fix the issues, and then make the determination on where Arlington should go.

Mr. WITTMAN. Okay. Very good.

Mr. Hallinan, I know you had elaborated on that, but I don't know if you had any additional comments.

Mr. HALLINAN. I agree, Mr. Chairman. I think the Army should fix the problem. I think we should restore some faith and trust of the families. And then that decision can be made by this body or another committee or body if that is the correct course of action.

But I think, for the here and the now, we need to correct and we need to move Arlington forward.

Mr. WITTMAN. Very good. Any other questions?

Yes, Mr. Coffman.

Mr. COFFMAN. Ms. Condon, can you clarify when you said that changing from the Army to the Veterans Administration might cause turmoil for the veterans and their families?

Ms. CONDON. Sir, because one of the things that Mr. Hallinan and I have experienced as we are putting and implementing the new changes in standards and procedures and getting the workforce to adapt to the new accountability that we are doing, I think if we were to take the workforce that we have now and to put a whole new leadership team in there, it would create a turmoil and chaos that would impact our veterans and their families and the services that we provide at Arlington in a day.

Mr. COFFMAN. So you actually believe that there is a level of incompetence beyond what has been done? You got to be kidding. You can't be serious about that. I mean, the fact is, the United States Army—and God bless it as an organization; I was once a soldier—but it has demonstrated such a level of incompetence in the management of Arlington that it needs to step aside and let the Veterans Administration come in there and lead and serve the veterans and their families and end this turmoil. And I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. WITTMAN. Thank you, Mr. Coffman. I want to follow up on one additional question also. You talk about making sure that you are identifying these issues going forward, making sure you are taking care of them, in context of doing 27-plus burials a day.

My question is this. It seems like, in that context, you would want to have a team that does nothing but implement these improvements, taking up these discrepancies. And it is great to say we are dealing with 27 burials, but if you are really serious about getting this done, are there plans on putting in place an implementation team to say, "Your job is to do nothing but fix the past wrongs, make sure that there is 100 percent certainty in the identification and location of remains, to get the paper system into a digital form." And I know we met several members of the Army there that are working on that.

But my question is, will we have a bifurcated process—day-to-day operations, implementation—to right past wrongs?

Ms. CONDON. Sir, as a matter of fact, we are putting together a task force, headed by a colonel who was a signal officer, to address solely the accountability aspect of the cemetery.

Mr. WITTMAN. Okay. Very good.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. And, sir, one issue I would like to add on—it is something we were talking about before—is sharing of information and skill with the Department of Veterans Affairs. Maybe we should have some Army employees go off and work at VA for a while, have some VA employees come.

And Ms. Condon and I have talked about the need for military officers, Army officers, to be assigned at Arlington. And I think it gets to something Mr. Coffman was talking about, in terms of, no kidding, we need some people. And, gosh, if we could get, you know, men and women, officers who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan to come in and help us make sure we do the right thing, I think that would be something that we would want to do.

So I am going to work with Ms. Condon from the personnel side and see that we can't make that happen.

Ms. CONDON. And, sir, if I may add to that, when we did the new manpower structure, we did add military spaces to our structure. And it has truly made all of the difference in how Arlington has operated when you really have, as Colonel Koch saw, when you have a lieutenant colonel who was actually calling you in his very military fashion and telling you that you have an issue. So that has truly been one of the improvements that I think is very important at Arlington.

Mr. WITTMAN. Very good. Thank you, Ms. Condon. Mr. Runyan, do you have any other questions?

Mr. RUNYAN. No.

Mr. WITTMAN. Okay. Well, I want to conclude by thanking the witnesses for coming today. We are going to place great attention on the efforts there at Arlington.

I hope that you will pass on to the Secretary and the Army inspector general that we missed having them here today, and we are going to continue to place a focus on this issue, again, to make sure that there is no question left at Arlington that any family has with the location or identification of remains there. I think that is critical.

And I want to close with a quote from Colonel Koch in his testimony. I think it is very compelling, and I think it is the best way to close and to denote the challenges ahead.

Colonel Koch said this, he said, "I think we have more than one unknown soldier at Arlington now. I think that we want to make sure that we go back to only having one Tomb of the Unknown there at Arlington."

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you all so much for joining us today.

I want to remind the committee members that you have 14 days by which to submit additional questions that we will submit to the Army for their answers.

And we look forward to having some quick responses to those questions as we submit them to you.

Thank you. And, with that, the subcommittee is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 4:15 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

APRIL 14, 2011

PREPARED STATEMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

APRIL 14, 2011

**Hearing: “Accountability at Arlington National Cemetery”
Chairman Wittman -- Opening Statement**

PRELIMINARY MATTERS

Welcome to this hearing on “Accountability at Arlington National Cemetery.”

Preliminarily, I would like to note for the record that the Secretary of the Army and the Army Inspector General received invitations to testify at our hearing today and I was greatly disappointed to learn that they have decided not to participate.

Instead of hearing from them, we will be receiving testimony from the Army National Cemeteries Program Executive Director, Ms. Kathryn Condon, and the Arlington Superintendent, Mr. Patrick Hallinan. These officials will address on-going discrepancies and issues related to the 2010 Army Inspector General’s investigation into misconduct at Arlington.

I anticipate a number of Members from other committees may wish to participate. Therefore, absent any objections, I ask for unanimous consent that they be allowed to participate and also be provided with an opportunity to ask questions.

STATEMENT

Before we get started with testimony, however, I would like to share a story with you that highlights why I am absolutely committed to addressing this issue. It’s a story about an American hero who has dedicated his life to our nation and to others who serve. His name is Paul Bucha.

In 1970, Army Captain Paul Bucha received the Medal of Honor in Vietnam. Captain Bucha distinguished himself by risking his own life to save the lives of his fellow wounded soldiers.

Captain Bucha’s story is a reminder of the thousands of other brave men and women in our nation’s military who serve quietly and honorably; who all too often

go unrecognized for their service and sacrifice; and who willingly give up their lives in defense of freedom for all of us.

Mr. Bucha continues his life of service and has spoken on the issues that have plagued Arlington. He has stated:

“there is no place in the United States that is as committed to perfection as Arlington and as a result, no solution to the issues or challenges at Arlington can be accepted that strives for something less than perfection. The guardians of Arlington are the men and women of the Old Guard. It is their self-imposed dedication to perfection, from their performance of duty . . . to their life-long commitment to service that sets them apart. They establish the standard for anyone who would pass among them, and for those over whom they stand guard. Those who they protect and guard, those who lie beneath the white markers so neatly placed across that hallowed ground, have a contract with all of us. Their sacrifice on our behalf was perfect in all respects, and it is our responsibility to similarly strive for perfection as well.”

There is no question that the Department of the Army recognizes the importance of resolving outstanding accountability. However, progress toward full resolution has been unsatisfactory and is in no way commensurate with the service and sacrifice of our fallen warriors.

Our expectation is that each and every family affected by this scandal will have their issues addressed, and hopefully, their faith restored as a result of our work here today.

Our nation’s heroes deserve better. Today, this Committee is demanding better.

I now turn to the Ranking Member, Mr. Cooper, for his remarks.

Opening Statement of Rep. Jim Cooper (TN-5)
Hearing on Arlington Cemetery
April 14, 2011

Thank you, Chairman Wittman, for calling this hearing.

It is a shame, however, that conditions at Arlington were so bad that we must have this hearing. Problems that never should have occurred have been discovered, and have taken years to correct. There are continuing concerns. We simply must get answers to these questions.

There is probably no more honored, no more sacred, place in America than Arlington Cemetery. That's where so many of America's greatest heroes are buried. Arlington, with its row upon row of gravestones, is the magnificent reminder that our precious freedom is not free. It takes the blood and sacrifice of patriots to keep America great. That's why Arlington is so important to the nation, and why it must be run in an absolutely first-rate fashion.

I hope and pray that, with continued improvements at Arlington, that we will finally be able to lay these troubling issues to rest.

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RECORD VERSION

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

COMPLETE STATEMENT

OF

MS. KATHRYN A. CONDON

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ARMY NATIONAL CEMETERIES PROGRAM

AND

MR. PATRICK K. HALLINAN

SUPERINTENDENT, ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY

BEFORE

THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ON

RECENT MANAGEMENT CHANGES AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICES AT

ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY

APRIL 14, 2011

NOT FOR PUBLICATION
UNTIL RELEASED BY THE
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to provide an update on progress at Arlington National Cemetery.

INTRODUCTION

Arlington National Cemetery is both the most hallowed burial ground of our Nation's fallen and one of the most visited tourist sites in the Washington, DC, area. A fully operational national cemetery since May 1864, Arlington National Cemetery presently conducts an average of 27 funerals each workday-final farewells to fallen heroes from the fronts of Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as to veterans of World War II, the Korean conflict, Vietnam and the Cold War and their family members. While maintaining the honor, dignity and privacy of each graveside service, Arlington National Cemetery hosts approximately 4 million guests annually. This duality of purpose serves to bring the national shrine of Arlington National Cemetery, and the sacrifices of those buried there, closer to the American people.

The Army is committed to rendering public honor and recognition through dignified burial services for members of the Armed Services and other qualified deceased persons where they may be interred or inurned in a setting of peace, reverence and natural beauty. On behalf of the cemeteries and the Department of the Army, I would like to express our appreciation for the support that Congress has provided over the years.

LEADERSHIP

We believe that the update that the subcommittee requested can be most directly addressed by explaining how we have executed, and continue to execute, our leadership responsibilities. Army Field Manual 6-22, *Leadership*, defines leadership as "the process of influencing people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation while operating to accomplish the mission and improve the organization."

Our statement explains how we have provided purpose and direction by establishing a clear and comprehensive vision and supporting mission statement. It continues by explaining how we have implemented management changes to improve the organization and increase quality and efficiency. The impact of these changes is best described by reviewing the standards that have been established and their results in the areas of daily operations, customer service, records management, and fiscal responsibility. This leads us to a discussion of sustaining the cemetery for the future to be able to achieve the vision. In the end, we are confident that you will see the progress that has been made and the foundations for reestablishing the Nation's confidence in Arlington National Cemetery.

VISION AND MISSION

We have provided purpose and direction by establish a clear and comprehensive vision for Arlington National Cemetery that defines the desired future state:

America's premier military cemetery

- **A national shrine**
- **A living history of freedom**
- **Where dignity and honor rest in solemn repose.**

While the vision provides the long range goal that the organization is striving for, the mission is essential to provide clarity for daily operations. The mission is:

On behalf of the American people, lay to rest those who have served our nation with dignity and honor, treating their families with respect and compassion, and connecting guests to the rich tapestry of the cemetery's living history, while maintaining these hallowed grounds befitting the sacrifice of all those who rest here in quiet repose.

MANAGEMENT CHANGES

To successfully accomplish the mission and put Arlington National Cemetery on the path to achieve the vision, there have been several management changes.

These changes started immediately at the top by clearly delineating roles, responsibilities and relationships. The Executive Director of the Army National Cemeteries Program is a direct report to the Secretary of the Army, and is responsible to effectively and efficiently develop, operate, manage and administer both Arlington and the Soldiers' and Airmen's Home National Cemeteries. The Superintendent of Arlington National Cemetery is a direct report to the Executive Director, and is responsible to effectively and efficiently manage and execute daily operations.

Management functions have been consolidated within the Army National Cemeteries Program. The Executive Director's staff has functional expertise in strategic management and communications, information management, and resource management. The Executive Director is supported by ceremonial units from the Armed Services, a detailed staff of chaplains, staff support from Headquarters, Department of the Army, and the Arlington Ladies who represent the Chief's and Commandant's of each Armed Service at funerals. The result is clearly defined roles, responsibilities and relationships.

The Executive Director's staff performs both an enabling function and an oversight role for the Superintendent's execution of daily operations. The intent is to enhance operations by removing administrative burdens from those

responsible for execution, while having those administrative functions performed by subject matter experts and clearly segregating duties to ensure proper accountability and oversight.

We have refocused the execution elements of the workforce by establishing leadership positions and accountability where none existed before. There are now team leader positions and job assignments to better manage and execute daily operations.

DAILY OPERATIONS

First and foremost, Arlington National Cemetery is an active cemetery conducting approximately 27 funerals per day. We consider it part of our sacred trust to ensure that each funeral is executed with the utmost dignity and respect. Every veteran's, and eligible dependent's, funeral receives our full attention to detail. Daily operations are critical to maintaining one of the unique hallmarks of Arlington National Cemetery, multiple simultaneous private grave side interments with full honors. Neither the importance nor complexity of this hallmark can be overstated.

To establish accountability while maintaining this hallmark, standards were developed throughout the operation where none existed. The leadership team is training the workforce to implement these standard operating procedures. Finally, we are holding supervisors and leaders responsible and accountable for meeting our established standards. All supervisors are responsible for quality control in the cemetery. The Superintendent and his staff spend at least 60% of every day in the cemetery, regardless of weather conditions, observing daily operations and ensuring expected standards are being met.

New standards for a chain of custody have been implemented to maintain positive identification of casketed or cremated remains from the time they arrive at the cemetery until they are secured in their final resting place. For casketed remains a system of six checks are made by the cemetery representative to ensure positive identification; cemetery representative validated daily interment schedule with family; a non-biodegradable tag is placed on the casket containing the name of the deceased, date of death, date of interment, section and grave number and checked with the section and grave number painted on the concrete lid of the grave liner; section and grave number are painted on inside the grave liner; temporary grave marker contains name, dates, section and grave number; and headstone (if applicable).

A "dig slip" is now the standard for excavation of a grave being opened for a second interment. This standard assists in preventing the unintentional removal of interred cremated remains during the excavation of a grave. The dig slip is issued to the equipment operator and must be verified by the equipment operator

before opening the grave. Similarly, niche covers in the columbarium are not removed for the second interment until the cemetery representative is present. This standard prevents cremated remains from being left unattended in an open niche prior to a service. All cremated remains received at the cemetery are tagged with a non-biodegradable tag and maintained in a locked area until required for the funeral service. Gravesites where cremated remains are interred to be followed by a second interment of casketed remains are now placed in a concrete government grave liner. This procedure effectively eliminates the improper or unintentional disassociation of cremated remains from their assigned grave site.

Supervisors and work leaders are being trained regularly by the cemetery leadership on standards for the correct layout of burial sections according to burial maps, accurate assignment of grave sites, and correct procedures for closing graves. The Army has completed a memorandum of agreement with the Department of Veterans Affairs and is leveraging training at the National Cemetery System, Veterans Administration training site in St. Louis. Contracting officer representatives throughout the cemetery workforce are holding contractors working in the cemetery to the standards of the contracts. Contractors are being monitored and held accountable to fulfill all contractual obligations and for any damage sustained to government property.

Standards are in place to ensure that all sections of the cemetery are tamped correctly to prevent graves and headstones from sinking. All first interment sections are raked level, clear of any excess rocks, to present a neat and cared for appearance. As soon as possible (seasonal restrictions apply) a stand of turf is created either by adding a layer of topsoil, seeding, and fertilizing or installing sod. We are now using hand operated gas tampers in second interment sections to close graves correctly. Attachments for tractors have been added to rake large first interment areas substantially improving the overall appearance of the cemetery. Government markers (headstones) are being installed and checked against the newly established standard in the cemetery. Government markers are installed with 24"-26" of stone visible above the ground. Headstones are installed using the permanent monumentation in the sections and checked with a level to ensure that they are aligned vertically and horizontally.

Daily operations have been enhanced through the establishment, training and enforcement of standards, by optimizing procedures, and by procuring the right equipment for each task. This ensures full accountability of all remains that are interred or inurned and higher quality of interment services and grounds keeping. The result is full confidence that individuals are laid to rest in the correct gravesite or niche and an astounding increase in the appearance of the cemetery.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Arlington National Cemetery is truly about the living. It provides a means for the living to honor our fallen veterans and their families. It provides a unique lens on the history of freedom. But, first and foremost, Arlington National Cemetery, on behalf of the American people, lays to rest those who have served our nation with dignity and honor, treating their families with respect and compassion. Hence, customer service is a critical priority.

When we arrived at Arlington National Cemetery the standard process for scheduling services or getting questions answered was to call one of two toll numbers. If there was not someone immediately available to answer your call, you would be put on hold. That hold would last until one of three things happened: the caller got tired of waiting, the wait hit the limit of just under an hour and the caller was transferred to a voice mailbox that was not set up, or a cemetery representative picked up the line. We cannot tell you how many calls went unanswered because of this system or how many people decided to go elsewhere. This undoubtedly led to frustration and also to frequent users finding ways to get priority.

To be responsive to each and every caller and to establish a uniform standard for scheduling we streamlined public interaction and telephonic communications by transitioning initial call screening to the Information Technology Agency's Consolidated Customer Service Center (CCSC) on December 13, 2010. The customized interactive voice response tree allows us to receive and track incoming calls. This has also forced us to document detailed processes and work instructions that reside in a searchable knowledge management database. The call center leverages CCSC's existing case management application customized for Arlington National Cemetery to document and track all customer interactions. We have trained a dedicated team of agents to answer, triage, resolve when possible, and document all calls. To date the call center has handled more than 14,000 calls, averaging 210 calls per weekday with 45 of those to schedule an interment.

Accessibility and preparedness for customers is also a priority. While the buildings were constructed prior to the American's with Disabilities Act, that is no excuse for a lack of accommodation. We have installed a handicapped ramp between Visitors Center and Administration Building for family members arriving by Metro. We have also constructed temporary ramps for placement curbside at interment services and include carpet for wheel chair access graveside. Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) have been installed at locations throughout the cemetery and staff have been trained on their usage to ensure immediate response when necessary.

While we are pleased with the progress to date to improve customer service, improvements will continue. We firmly believe in continuous process improvement and are working to establish feedback mechanisms to increase our understanding of customer concerns and needs.

RECORDS MANAGEMENT

To address identified information assurance deficiencies in the Department of the Army Inspector General report and based on the CIO/G-6 assessment, we commissioned the Army Data Center-Fairfield to transition the Interment Scheduling System to current hardware and software. The Army Data Center Fairfield completed this work and transitioned hosting of Arlington National Cemetery's business application to the US Army Information Technology agency on November 23, 2010. This critical transition has ensured survivability of this mission critical application. We are now leveraging the Pentagon data disaster recovery capability and improvements to the Interment Scheduling System to allow scheduling to be transparent to the Joint Staff, Office of the Secretary of the Army, and all service force providers. The Army Data Center-Fairfield's continued support of the Interment Scheduling System and enhancements will enable a transition of the interment services branch to a fully digital organization.

The activities of Army Data Center-Fairfield provide a bridging solution to allow the Army and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to collaborate on a new acquisition to replace the current version of VA's Burial Operation Support System (BOSS). The VA-BOSS system is at the end of its life cycle and VA is planning the process for gathering requirements for a new acquisition. Army acquisition professionals have been tasked to oversee the programmatic delivery of a new system, at which time milestone decision points will be determined according to Department of Defense and Army acquisition standard operating procedures.

One of the biggest concerns upon arrival was the paper records and the lack of any backup of this information. We have been able to recover images from efforts in 2005 to scan the records. These images have been integrated by the Army Data Center-Fairfield with VA-BOSS records and Interment Scheduling System data from 2003 forward into a searchable database that provides both a digital tool and, more importantly, a backup for the vast majority of the authoritative records. This database will be expanded and form the basis of the accounting effort mandated by the Secretary of the Army and Public Law 111-339.

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

Arlington National Cemetery did not certify the FY 2010 year-end financial reports and schedules due to a lack of available accountability records. To

remedy this issue for FY 2011, we accelerated the implementation of the General Fund Enterprise Business System (GFEBS) to 1 October 2010. GFEBS will provide the accountability, to include the ability to conduct required audits, to ensure Arlington National Cemetery can certify FY 2011 year-end financial reports.

Instrumental to fiscal responsibility was instituting disciplined processes, with oversight and direction, to enhance procurement operations. Executive Director policies and appointments are now in place to ensure a qualified senior-level staff member conducts funds certification; only the Director of Resource Management and the Budget Officer are authorized to certify funds. Similarly, funds approval is limited to the Executive Director and Chief of Staff. We developed and implemented a Gift Policy to ensure proper joint ethics accountability and approval for all gifts and proffers made to Arlington National Cemetery. We initiated accountability of all Real Property and implemented a preventative maintenance and repair process to ensure care and maintenance.

We lowered the threshold for legal review of contracts to \$100,000. Recurring service contracts were extended to allow for a thorough review for requirements determination prior to re-competing all contracts. The current contract requirements have been consolidated in areas that would allow ANC to gain efficiencies, streamline work efforts and limit the contractor footprint on the grounds of Arlington National Cemetery at any given time. The consolidated requirements went from 28 to 16. This reduction was possible consolidating requirements from separate contracts into better defined requirements and through leveraging already existing support to the headquarters, Department of the Army. Each of the new service contracts has a Quality Assurance Surveillance Plan and a Performance Requirements Summary as part of the contractual requirement. These documents will assist the trained contracting officer representatives in effectively managing the contract Quality Assurance and essentially ensuring the contractor is held accountable for services.

To ensure accountability for the past, the Army Audit Agency (AAA) was asked to audit contracts, revenues and the government purchase card. The Army will use these results to learn from past errors and correct them where possible. I have asked AAA to return to ensure that the policies, procedures, and practices that have been established are indeed working and sufficient.

SUSTAINING ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY

Arlington National Cemetery includes 624 acres of rolling hills with 20 miles of roads and the necessary infrastructure to support interment services, ceremonies, and visitation. Planned expansions include the 31 acres known as the Millennium Project and 42 acres that will come with the Base Realignment of the Navy Annex.

Under current estimates, Arlington National Cemetery expects to exhaust its availability for inurnments in niche spaces in Fiscal Year 2016. To preclude this from happening, we have accelerated investment in developing and constructing Columbarium Court 9 during Fiscal Year 2011. This investment will add approximately 20,300 niches to the inventory and with the follow on efforts in the Millennium Project, should allow Arlington National Cemetery to continue to offer inurnment services out to Fiscal Year 2037. We expect Columbarium Court 9 to be operational by November 2012.

Investment in the Millennium Project recommences in Fiscal Year 2012. When all five phases have been completed, this project will provide space for casketed remains, niches, and space for in-ground cremated remains. Continuation of this project is critical to extend the viable life of Arlington National Cemetery and will permit us to offer multiple services to be performed simultaneously across the expanse of the cemetery.

Arlington National Cemetery now has a dedicated engineering staff and has recently completed a comprehensive assessment of the current status of all facilities and infrastructure. This draft Ten-Year Capital Investment Plan for Arlington National Cemetery is to assist top-level management to manage, plan, budget, and acquire capital assets that will best serve the mission effectively. The draft is a living document that is updated regularly. It is flexible so the decision makers can change the project implementation schedules. The plan intends to highlight and address potential spikes (i.e., large, one-time increases in annual appropriations) that may have an impact on other necessary projects. It also establishes a process for managing the portfolio of capital assets to achieve performance goals with the lowest life-cycle costs and to minimize risks.

We are committed to maintaining Arlington's grounds and infrastructure in accordance with the standards expected of a National Shrine while also maintaining the cemetery's viability as an active cemetery for those who continue to serve our Nation.

CONCLUSION

We hope that the highlights of the actions taken and changes implemented demonstrate the progress that has been, and continues to be, made to restore the Nation's confidence in Arlington National Cemetery. We would like to thank the Subcommittee for taking a positive leadership role in the oversight of Arlington National Cemetery.

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

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS POST HEARING

APRIL 14, 2011

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. WITTMAN

Mr. WITTMAN. When will the Arlington Commission be up and running? What will their agenda specifically be?

Ms. CONDON.

- The Army National Cemeteries Advisory Commission Charter was filed on October 11, 2010 and will consist of nine full time members. The Commission will maintain balanced membership that includes a cross-section of qualified experts on, as well as others having a strong vested interest in, the dignified transfer and burial of remains eligible for interment or inurnment in the Army National Cemeteries, veteran's affairs, service member's entitlements and surviving family matters.
- Per Department of Defense policy (DoDI 5105.04), Commission member nominations will be handled as confidential until approved by the appointing authority. Those who are not currently full-time or permanent part-time Federal officers or employees shall be appointed as experts and consultants under the authority of 5 U.S.C. § 3109 and shall serve as special government employees.
- The initial agenda of the Commission will be to establish business protocols and practices; receive ethics training; and become acquainted with the overall operation and conditions at Arlington National Cemetery and the Soldiers' and Airmen's Home Cemetery. Topics to be addressed as general business will be directed by the Secretary of the Army and Executive Director. Initial topic agenda items include:
 - o Strategic planning to extend the life of active burials at Arlington National Cemetery which includes the Millennium Project and Navy Annex
 - o Long term implications of Section 60 Mementos study
 - o Repair of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier

Mr. WITTMAN. What are the details of the inspector general investigation? When will it be complete?

Mr. SCHNEIDER. The current, ongoing Department of the Army Inspector General (IG) investigation relating to ANC is under review by the Department of Defense Inspector General. This investigation is in regards to an incident that occurred in 2010 where a Service member's remains were disinterred then reinterred. In addition, the Department of the Army Inspector General provided additional information to Criminal Investigation Command (CID) to consider as a part of their currently on-going criminal investigation.

Because this is an ongoing investigation, it is not possible to establish a definitive completion date. I will keep the committee apprised of the investigation results as the information is made available.

