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ATTITUDE AND RESPONSE
OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE
CONCERNING REPATRIATION OF
AMERICAN WAR DEAD

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Introduction

Since 1898 policies and procedures have been in effect whereby the remains of members of the Armed Forces of the United States who died in service while on duty overseas may be returned to the United States for interment or reinterment, at the option of next of kin, in a national or private cemetery. However, the genesis of this policy dates back to a more significant period in the history of the United States, the years of the Civil War (1861-1865) and the period immediately following its conclusion. This great civil conflict, which tried and tested the very existence of a young nation, had its inevitable casualties--the dead, the wounded, and the sick--exceeding in numbers those of any previous conflict on the North American continent.

The exigencies of this conflict with its toll of casualties, some 364,511 deaths from all causes from among the Armed Forces of the Federal Union, necessitated first a vast number of temporary initial burial sites at or near combat areas and in cemeteries established to care for the dead from many war-time military hospitals. A permanent solution of the problem and an expression on the part of the United States Government of its obligation to provide honored and secure final resting places for those who died in the service of their country during the Civil War were the establishment of a National Cemetery System. Legislation to establish national cemeteries for this purpose was enacted even as the war was still in progress. The first national cemetery legislation was approved by President Lincoln on 17 July 1862, followed by additional legislation approved on 13 April 1866 and 22 February 1867.

Within five years after Appomattox, the Army Quartermaster General, acting for the Secretary of War, had virtually completed the tremendous task of reinterment of the remains of nearly 300,000 Civil War dead in 73 national cemeteries. This accomplishment effected by the Government of the United States very definitely established in the minds of the people of the United States, especially the next of kin of those who died in defense of the nation, that there was concern that these dead be honorably interred as a tribute of respect for their services.

Repatriation--Spanish-American War Dead-1898-1902

During the period 1898-1902 when the United States Armed Forces were committed to service beyond the continental limits of the nation, in Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Philippines, the matter of care of the remains of the military forces who died in these areas received the attention of the Government of the United States. On 6 August 1898 President McKinley directed that graves of United States Soldiers buried in Santiago, Cuba, should be marked and a careful record kept of the places of burial. Mr. D. H. Rhodes, a Quartermaster Department official long associated with the administration of national cemeteries, was given this task and brought it to completion during September 1898. Previous to this action, an act of Congress approved 8 July 1898 provided for the appropriation of \$200,000 to enable the Secretary of War to provide transportation to their homes of the remains of officers and soldiers who might die in military camps, or who were killed in action, or who died in the field outside the limits of the United States.

Pursuant to the provisions of this legislation, Mr. Rhodes organized the Quartermaster Burial Corps composed of civilian morticians and assistants; and on 27 April 1899 the Army transport Crook docked at New York with 747 war dead from Cuba and Puerto Rico. As of 30 June 1899 a total of 1,222 casketed remains were returned to the United States. The number of unidentified remains, 13.63 percent, was a noticeable improvement from the Civil War reinterment of remains in national cemeteries. The percentage of unknowns for that conflict was 42.5.

Following completion of its mission in Cuba and Puerto Rico, the Burial Corps with Mr. Rhodes in charge was dispatched to the Philippines to disinter the remains of United States dead and prepare them for shipment to Manila where a United States Army Morgue and Office of Identification had been established. During 1901, 1,384 remains were shipped from Manila to the United States. Of this total, only 9 were unidentified.

During the period 1899-1902 some 5,931 remains were returned to the United States from overseas areas concerned with the Spanish-American War, the Philippine Insurrection, and the North China Expedition. Arlington National Cemetery received 1,336 of these remains, and the San Francisco National Cemetery 1,922. Some 2,673 remains were sent to next of kin for reinterment in private cemeteries or other national cemeteries.

Repatriation--World War I Dead

With the advent of World War I and the entrance in April 1917 of the United States as an active military participant in that conflict, the Government of the United States was committed to the transportation and maintenance overseas of a military force whose numbers far exceeded the forces raised and transported for service in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. Inevitably, the casualties of the war in Europe would be great--deaths in combat, from wounds, and from illness. The establishment of a Graves Registration Service was requested by General Pershing, and the Quartermaster Graves Registration Service Company was authorized by War Department General Orders No. 104, 7 August 1917. This unit was the functional successor of the Quartermaster Burial Corps. The operation of this Service was carried on in France, Belgium, the United Kingdom, and Italy, with most of the work being concentrated in France.

Battle conditions made it almost impossible to make proper initial disposition of the dead, and there were many burials in undesirable locations. The Graves Registration units assumed the responsibility for disinterment of remains, establishment of identity, if possible, and concentration of remains in more properly located cemeteries. After the Armistice, further concentration of remains into more permanent cemeteries was made. A total of 1,836 cemeteries was in existence at one time. This number was reduced to 512 by December 1919.

Early in 1918 the War Department had committed itself to a policy of bringing home the United States war dead in Europe. This policy had its strong defenders and equally vocal opponents. Perhaps the best-known opponent of the policy of repatriation of the war dead was ex-President Theodore Roosevelt, whose youngest son Quentin had been killed in action in France. On 25 October 1918, Col. Roosevelt wrote General Peyton C. March, Army Chief of Staff, that he desired that the body of his son, Quentin, remain in the grave in which the enemy had buried it. In his reply to the former president, General March stated that he had authorized General Pershing "to take the same course of action with regard to the body of any other soldier whose relatives or proper legal representatives desire such a course to be taken."

After the Armistice still more public discussion ensued concerning the policy of repatriation of the war dead. Some high officers of the American Expeditionary Forces and the Secretary of War favored permanent burial of American war dead in Europe. A "Bring Home the Dead League" advocated repatriation of the war dead, and an equally aroused "Field of Honor Association" favored permanent burial in Europe. The War Department, taking cognizance, no doubt, of the many emotional factors involved in the whole matter of repatriation of the war dead, adopted a policy whereby the next of kin of each decedent

would decide whether the remains of their loved one should be brought back from Europe or remain in the areas in which they had served and died. Questionnaires were dispatched to the emergency address left by each soldier who had died or was killed in action. About 60 percent of the next of kin requested repatriation of their soldier dead. Pursuant to this decision, some 46,250 remains of World War I decedents were returned to the United States. By the same process of choice communicated to the War Department, it was determined that the remains of 31,591 American war dead would receive honored and final burial in permanent American cemeteries in Europe.

Many factors, especially the large number of war dead, the distance separating overseas fields of combat from the United States, and the very personal interest of next of kin as to the manner of final disposition of the remains of their loved ones, contributed to the imposition of heavy responsibilities on the War Department during the years immediately following the conclusion of World War I. Approximately three-fifths of the war dead were to be returned to the United States. The American Graves Registration Service, a special organization established within the Quartermaster Corps, was charged with these responsibilities and the multitude of problems ensuing therefrom. Cooperation with foreign governments with reference to the opening of war-time cemeteries for the disinterment of remains, identification and preparation of remains, and recasketing and shipment of remains to the United States--these were but a few of the problems, the solution of which necessitated the establishment of many new procedures and regulations. Similarly, in Washington the Cemeterial Division of the Quartermaster Corps adapted its procedures and regulations to accomplish its sensitive mission concerned with receipt of remains returned to the United States and their transportation to the burial locations designated by the next of kin. One significant and noteworthy aspect of the World War I war-dead-return program was the return of the remains of an unknown American soldier from the battlefields of Europe. This unknown, symbolizing all of the unknowns of World War I, was entombed as the Unknown Soldier in the plaza of the Memorial Amphitheater at Arlington National Cemetery with solemn and moving ceremonies on Armistice Day, 11 November 1921.

During the years 1920 and 1921, most of the cemeteries in Europe were evacuated of the United States dead whose relatives elected for return to the United States. The repatriation project was officially terminated with the arrival of the transport Cambrai at New York at the end of March 1922. However, remains continued to be shipped to the United States for many years after that date. A special force of investigators was maintained in France for some time after the official termination of the repatriation project to continue to search for missing soldiers and to work on the identification of unknown dead. During the period from February to July 1924, 147 remains were located. The Graves Registration Service, on several occasions, made efforts to arrange for the removal to the United States, or at least to mark the graves, of American soldier dead in Russia. As there was then no

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diplomatic relations between the United States and the Soviet Government, no direct agreements were possible. At different times the intervention of the French and British Governments was sought. In the spring of 1929, a small group composed of members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, including several persons experienced in graves registration work, received permission from the Russian Government to visit graves and disinter remains. Eighty-six remains were removed at that time.

While the thousands of World War I dead were being repatriated to the United States pursuant to the wishes and direction of next of kin, the War Department was formulating plans whereby "Fields of Honor" would be established in Europe for the final interment of other thousands of World War dead. These were the dead whose relatives had elected burial overseas rather than repatriation to the United States. Remains which could not be identified were also to receive final burial in these cemeteries as unknowns. The Chief of the Army Quartermaster Corps Graves Registration Service was given the responsibility for the acquisition of burial rights on the property to be included in the cemeteries. The War Department determined that there should be eight permanent American Military Cemeteries in Europe. Six are located in France, one in England, and one in Belgium.

Initial work in the development of the United States World War I cemeteries overseas was carried on by the Quartermaster Corps Graves Registration Service and the Constructing Quartermaster. Legislation approved 4 March 1923 created the American Battle Monuments Commission. The Commission was empowered by Congress to prepare plans and estimates for the erection of suitable memorials to commemorate the services of American forces in Europe and to erect the memorials at such places as the Commission should determine. Congress removed the Commission from War Department control by requiring that all Commissioners, military and civilian, should be appointed by the President. General of the Armies John J. Pershing became the first Chairman of the American Battle Monuments Commission and served in this capacity until his death in 1948.

The American Battle Monuments Commission established a field office in Paris and, working in close collaboration with the Chief, American Graves Registration Service, QMC in Europe, directed all engineering aspects of the cemetery development program. The Commission was charged with the erection of permanent headstones and the construction of utility buildings, chapels, and other memorial features in the cemeteries and park areas. The Commission was also to develop markers and other visual aids to supplement a guide book for the benefit of tourists visiting the cemeteries and battlefield sites. Plans were also formulated that the War Department, acting through the American Graves Registration Service or a successor organization, would assume responsibility for maintenance of the cemeteries and memorials when erection of chapels and monuments had been completed.

In October 1933 the chapels and monuments in the American Military Cemeteries in Europe were so near completion that maintenance was taken over by the American Graves Registration Service. However, this period of maintenance by the War Department was terminated by Executive Order No. 6614 issued 26 February 1934, which transferred all functions of administration pertaining to cemeteries and memorials in Europe from the War Department to the American Battle Monuments Commission. The transfer was completed on 27 April 1934.

During the period of development of the World War I cemeteries overseas, the question of the type of permanent gravesite marker to be used aroused some controversy. A white marble slab-type government headstone had long been standard for marking graves in the national cemeteries in the United States. A Board of Officers appointed to consider matters relating to the European cemeteries recommended on 26 April 1922 that the marble government headstone be also used in the cemeteries in Europe. However, many veterans of the American Expeditionary Force were not in accord with this decision. Wooden white crosses had been almost universally used in initial war-time cemeteries as temporary markers for Christian graves, and there was considerable sentiment for the retention of this type of marker in the permanent cemeteries. The Graves Registration Service favored the use of the government-type headstones used in national cemeteries in the United States for reasons of economy and because it was feared that the cross-type marker would not be as lasting as the slab-type headstone. Another argument against use of a marble cross was the fact that it could not be used to mark the graves of Jewish decedents. In 1924 Congress appropriated more than a half million dollars for grave markers for the cemeteries in Europe with the specification that the design and material for the markers should be agreed upon by the Secretary of War and the American Battle Monuments Commission. The Commission unanimously favored headstones of white marble in the form of a cross for Christian burials and the Star of David for Jewish burials. This decision was approved by the Secretary of War on 24 December 1924.

Placement of marble crosses or Stars of David at the graves in the World War I American Military Cemeteries in Europe was completed in the spring of 1929. Erection of row upon row of white marble crosses and Stars of David in these cemeteries necessitated a change from the procedure followed at national cemeteries in the United States. The government headstones used in these cemeteries were, for the most part, placed about 18 inches in the ground, no foundation being necessary. The Constructing Quartermaster was of the opinion that markers set in the ground in this manner would not remain in place and alignment because of the nature of the soil in France. He recommended that the British practice of setting the stones in continuous concrete foundations be adopted. This recommendation was approved by The Quartermaster General.

The American Battle Monuments Commission has jurisdiction over eight World War I Military Cemeteries at the following locations in Europe:

Aisne-Marne, Belleau, France
Brookwood, England
Flanders Field, Waregem, Belgium
Meuse-Argonne, Romagne, France

Oise-Aisne, Fere en Tardenois,
France
St. Mihiel, Thiaucourt, France
Somme, Bony, France
Suresnes, France

Memorial chapels designed by leading American architects and artists have been erected at each of these cemeteries. The walls of these chapels bear the names of American servicemen who lost their lives in the vicinity and whose remains could not be individually identified. The names of the unknown dead of the Services of Supply and of the American expedition to Northern Russia are also inscribed on the chapel wall of the Meuse-Argonne Cemetery. Inscriptions on the walls of the chapel at the Brookwood and Suresnes Cemeteries include the names of American soldiers, sailors, and coast guardsmen who lost their lives at sea. The Commission has also erected and maintains 11 World War I commemorative monuments, eight of which are on sites of American battles, and monuments at Brest, France, and at Gibraltar commemorating the operation of the United States Navy during World War I. There is also a monument at Tours, France, where the Headquarters of the Services of Supply of the American Expeditionary Forces was located. Two bronze tablets have been erected by the American Battle Monuments Commission, one at Chaumont, France, and the other at Souilly, France, marking the General Headquarters of the A.E.F. and the Headquarters of the American First Army during World War I.

Repatriation--World War II Dead

Active participation by United States Armed Forces in World War II followed the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on 7 December 1941. This war was a conflict of truly global proportions. Theaters of conflict were not confined principally to the continent of Europe as in World War I. Vast areas in Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Hawaii, and hundreds of islands, large and small, throughout the area of the Pacific Ocean felt the impact of a world at war. The United States called approximately 15,000,000 to service with its Armed Forces, and in round numbers suffered some 359,000 fatalities, of which 281,000 were recovered and given burial in temporary overseas cemeteries.

Procedures developed during and after World War I for the recovery, identification, reinterment, and repatriation of United States war dead were useful as guidelines for the carrying out of a much greater task imposed by the exigencies of a war whose battle areas spanned the world. However, changes in procedure and in lines of organizational responsibility were effected to surmount the difficulties and solve the many problems incident to the whole matter of care and disposition of the remains of those who sacrificed their lives in the service of the United States during World War II. Search and recovery teams throughout the world endured many times the discomforts and perils of deserts, steaming jungles, and lofty mountain peaks as they sought and recovered the mortal remains of the war casualties. New techniques involving the use of X-ray and fluoroscope apparatus, dental and fingerprint charts, as well as the services of skilled anthropologists, chemists, fingerprint technicians, dentists, doctors, and morticians, were concentrated to resolve the many problems incident to positive identification of remains.

Public Law 383, 79th Congress, approved 16 May 1946 provided the basic authorization for the repatriation of World War II dead. This law vested responsibility for the execution of the program in the Secretary of War (now Secretary of the Army). In accordance with the provisions of this law, the Secretary of War by War Department General Orders No. 125, 29 December 1946, delegated the responsibility for direct supervision of the return program to The Quartermaster General. This order also established the Pacific Theater Area of the American Graves Registration Service in addition to the European Theater and various Zone Commands.

The War Department, acting through the Memorial Division of the Office of The Quartermaster General, conducted a poll of next of kin of World War II decedents to ascertain their wishes as to the place of burial of recovered and identified World War II dead. The response to the poll of next of kin was similar to the one following World War I. Approximately three-fifths of the war dead were returned to the United States, and two-fifths were left in cemeteries overseas. Among those who died in action during World War II were two sons of the late Colonel Theodore Roosevelt, 26th President of the United States. Major Kermit Roosevelt, Headquarters Alaskan Defense Command, died in Alaska on 4 June 1943. At the direction of his wife, his remains were left in Alaska and are now interred in the Post Cemetery at Fort Richardson, Alaska. Brigadier General Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., eldest son of the late president, died on 12 July 1944 during the Normandy invasion of Europe. At the direction of his wife, his remains are now interred in the Normandy American Cemetery and Memorial, St. Laurent, France.

Some 171,000 casketed remains of World War II dead were delivered to next of kin in the United States by the time of the official conclusion of the World War II Dead Program on 31 December 1951. Of this total, 134,000 decedents were interred in private cemeteries, while some 37,000 decedents were interred in national cemeteries. Approximately 97,000 World War II dead were interred at the request of next of kin in cemeteries abroad beyond the boundaries of the continental United States. This figure includes about 14,000 remains which were interred in three national cemeteries under the jurisdiction of the Department of the Army--the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, Honolulu, Hawaii; the Puerto Rico National Cemetery, Bayamon, Puerto Rico; and the Sitka National Cemetery, Sitka, Alaska.

The World War II repatriation program necessitated the development of new procedures to assure delivery of remains to designated next of kin for final interment in national or private cemeteries. Two Ports of Embarkation for initial receipt of casketed remains were established --one at the port of New York and the other at San Francisco. Thirteen subsidiary distribution centers within the continental United States were also activated to speed the delivery of the flag-draped caskets to their final destination. Each was accompanied by a specially trained military escort selected from among members of the same military service to which the deceased had belonged. Specific and detailed plans had to be put into effect for the efficient loading and unloading of the ships which brought the remains to New York and San Francisco. Railway mortuary cars specially designed and equipped were utilized to transport the casketed remains from these ports to the various distribution centers.

During the years immediately following World War I, eight American Military Cemeteries were established in Europe as honored and final resting places overseas for decedents whose next of kin had requested these burial locations rather than reinterment in the United States. During the period immediately following World War II, fourteen American Military Cemeteries were established as similar resting places for those whose next of kin had directed reinterment beyond the boundaries of the United States. Reinterments in these cemeteries and the initial development thereof were made by the War Department acting through the Office of The Quartermaster General with subsequent transfer to the American Battle Monuments Commission for permanent care and maintenance. Beautiful memorial chapels, each one developed from plans of distinguished architects and engineers, have been erected at each of these cemeteries. On the walls of these chapels are inscribed the names of those whose remains were not recovered or could not be identified.

American Military Cemeteries for World War II are located in Europe, Africa, and the Far East. Their names and locations are as follows:

Ardennes, Neuville-en-Condruz, Belgium
Brittany, St. James, France
Cambridge, England
Epinal, France
Florence, Italy
Henri-Chapelle, Belgium
Lorraine, St. Avoild, France
Luxembourg
Manila, Philippines
Netherlands, Margraten, Holland
Normandy, St. Laurent, France
North Africa, Carthage, Tunisia
Rhone, Draguignan, France
Sicily-Rome, Nettuno, Italy

The American Battle Monuments Commission has also erected three Memorials in New York City; San Francisco, California; and Honolulu, Hawaii. The East Coast Memorial is located in Battery Park, New York City. The memorial commemorates those soldiers, sailors, marines, coastguardsmen, and airmen who lost their lives in the western waters of the Atlantic Ocean during World War II. Eight tall granite pylons bear the name, rank, organization, and State of the 4,596 who gave their lives in the service of their country and whose remains were not recovered. The West Coast Memorial is located at the Presidio of San Francisco, California, near the southern end of the Golden Gate Bridge. The memorial commemorates the soldiers, sailors, marines, coastguardsmen, and airman who died in American coastal waters of the Pacific during World War II. On its curved gray, granite, sculptured wall are inscribed the names, rank, organization, and State of 412

individuals whose remains were never recovered or identified. The Honolulu Memorial is located within the boundaries of the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific. Following its erection by the American Battle Monuments Commission, the memorial was dedicated on 1 May 1966. It consists of a specially designed chapel and Court of Honor reached by a monumental flight of stairs. On either side of the stairway are "Courts of the Missing" formed by marble walls on which are inscribed the names of 26,280 members of the Armed Forces of the United States (18,093 World War II--8,187 Korea). Each of these service persons was recorded as missing, or lost or buried at sea, in the Northern, Southern, and Western Pacific regions. The names of those missing, lost or buried at sea in the Southwest Pacific are recorded in the Memorial at the Manila American Cemetery.

Following the precedent established by the ceremonial entombment at Arlington National Cemetery of the remains of a representative Unknown Soldier of World War I, plans were made after the conclusion of World War II for a similar entombment at Arlington National Cemetery commemorating the supreme sacrifice of the Unknown Servicemen of World War II. Public Law 429, 79th Congress, approved 24 June 1946, authorized and directed the Secretary of War to return to the United States the remains of an American who lost his life while serving overseas in the Armed Forces of the United States during the Second World War and whose identity had not been established. The remains were to be interred with appropriate ceremonies in the Memorial Amphitheater at Arlington National Cemetery near or beside the remains of the Unknown American Soldier of the First World War. Participation of United States military forces in Korea beginning in June 1950 delayed action on this matter until after the armistice for that conflict in 1953. Public Law 975, 84th Congress, approved 3 August 1956, authorized and directed the Secretary of Defense to return to the United States the remains of an American who lost his life while serving overseas in the Armed Forces of the United States during the Korean conflict and whose identity had not been established. The law further directed that provision be made for the burial of this Unknown with appropriate ceremonies on 30 May 1958 in the Memorial Amphitheater of Arlington National Cemetery in conjunction with the burial of the Unknown American of the Second World War, near or beside the remains of the Unknown American Soldier of the First World War.

On Memorial Day, 30 May 1958, ceremonies akin in dignity and impressiveness to those of Armistice Day 1921 were held in the Memorial Amphitheater, Arlington National Cemetery, and the plaza thereat committing the remains of two Unknowns of the Armed Forces of the United States--one representing all of the United States unknown combat dead during World War II and the other, all of the Nation's unknowns during the conflict in Korea. To the left of the Unknown Soldier's Tomb, a white marble slab inscribed with the numerals 1950-1953 marks the place of entombment of the Unknown American Serviceman of the Korean War. To the right a similar marble slab with the numerals

1941-1945 marks the resting place of the Unknown American Serviceman of World War II. This hallowed spot commemorating for all time the cherished memories of sacrifice and service of those whose identity is "Known But To God" is guarded twenty-four hours a day by specially chosen members of the 1st Battalion (Reinforced), 3d Infantry (The Old Guard), U. S. Army of Fort Myer, Virginia.

Early in the program for repatriation of remains of World War II, the Department of the Army established a policy relative to reinterment of those decedents, identified by name, whose death with comrades in arms was such as to preclude individual identification of remains for separate burials. These remains were returned to the United States for reinterment as group burials in those national cemeteries most centrally located from the place of residence of all of the next of kin concerned. Some forty-nine of the eighty-five national cemeteries under the jurisdiction of the Department of the Army have been chosen as sites for group burial interments. Specially designed headstones and markers bearing the names, rank, and date of death of all members of the group burial mark the sites of group burials in the national cemeteries. Among the group burials in national cemeteries after World War II was the reinterment in Arlington National Cemetery on 15 June 1949 of fifty-two caskets containing the individually un-identifiable remains of 199 Coast Guardsmen, 50 Army personnel, and one U. S. Public Health Service official who died on 29 January 1945 at Lunga Beach, Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands when the USS Serpens, a Coast Guard ammunition ship, exploded and sank. A specially designed monument of Georgia granite, five feet high and octagonal in shape marks the burial site of these decedents. Their names in alphabetical order are inscribed on the eight panels of the monument.

Repatriation--Korea and Vietnam Dead

Permanent reinterment of United States war dead from World War I and World War II in overseas cemeteries, national cemeteries, or private cemeteries in the United States was not possible until after cessation of hostilities. From 1951-1953 a Concurrent Return Program was in effect to bring back the identified remains of members of the Armed Forces who died in Korea. Following the armistice in 1953 terminating combat military actions, additional identified remains of members of United States forces were disinterred and returned to the United States.

Interment of the 848 unknowns of that conflict in the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, Honolulu, Hawaii, was completed on 24 May 1956. On 15 May 1958 four flag draped caskets, each containing the remains of an unknown American serviceman killed in action in Korea, were in place opposite the flag pole on the grounds of the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific for the impressive and solemn ceremony of selection of the representative Unknown Serviceman of the Korean Conflict for entombment in Arlington National Cemetery. Master Sergeant Ned Lyle, 25th Infantry Division, a recipient of the Distinguished Service Medal for heroic service in Korea, made the selection. He faced the four flag draped caskets, looking and deliberating on each one. Then, bearing a large circular carnation wreath with blue and white carnations arranged at the center to represent the Korean Service Ribbon, he walked to the end casket to his left and placed the selection wreath. Following the selection ceremony, the caskets of the three remaining unknown decedents were reinterred within the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific for honored and final rest among their comrades in arms. Pursuant to directions furnished by next of kin, the known and recovered remains of decedents who died in Korea have been returned for final interment in national or private cemeteries. No American Military Cemetery overseas has been established by the American Battle Monuments Commission for decedents of the Korean conflict.

Active involvement of increasing numbers of United States Armed Forces in the conflict in Vietnam has resulted in changes in procedure and restructuring of lines of organizational responsibility to assure that members of the Armed Forces who die in Vietnam may be recovered, their remains identified, embalmed, casketed, and returned to the United States for interment in national or private cemeteries in accordance with the wishes of the next of kin. No temporary combat area cemeteries have been established in Vietnam as the program for care of war fatalities has become a Concurrent Return Program in Vietnam and in the United States.

By direction of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Department of Defense, 1 July 1966 mortuary activities in the Republic of Vietnam became an Army responsibility. This action placed responsibility for all aspects of search, recovery, identification, and preparation of all United States remains in the Republic of Vietnam on one Service, the Army. Unit commanders evacuate United States decedents to Collecting Points and/or to the Mortuary. Army Graves Registration units operating the Collection Points provide preliminary identification and evacuate the dead to the Mortuary at Tan Son Nhut where all remains are processed for final identification and are prepared for return to the United States. Thus far there have been no unknown United States servicemen among those who have died in Vietnam, as all recovered remains have been identified. Remains of United States Armed Forces personnel dying in Vietnam are transported by air to ports of entry in the United States, and to the place of final interment by commercial air, rail, or hearse, or combination of all of these facilities. The casketed remains of all Vietnam decedents are accompanied to the place of final interment by a military escort of the branch of service in which the decedent served. The Concurrent Return Program now in operation for Vietnam decedents exemplifies once again the concern of the people and Government of the United States that all respect and honor be accorded members of the Armed Forces who have offered their lives for their country.

Conclusion

Over the period of more than a century, from the critical years of the Civil War to the present time, the United States Government through specific legislation and implementing regulations has developed policies demonstrating its concern for the care and maintenance of the final resting places of members of the Armed Forces who died in the nation's service. The policies thus developed may, in a sense, be designated as policies of accomodation reflecting in a very real and meaningful manner the expressed wishes and desires of next of kin as to the place and manner of final interment of their loved ones. The United States is a comparatively young nation among the great nations of the world. Its existence as an independent political entity spans a bit less than two centuries. Its population is a heterogeneous one composed of people of many races, nations, and tongues. Many from among this population, confronted with the sad necessity of choosing honored burial locations for loved ones, elected to have final interment within the United States, their chosen homeland. Others among the bereaved next of kin were comforted and strengthened in the knowledge that loved ones would rest in honor and dignity with comrades in arms in lands throughout the world, far removed from the United States. For all--the known and the unknown, for those gathered beneath the restless expanse of great oceans--the Government and people of the United States have resolved that the service and sacrifice expressed in their lives and deeds will forever be held in grateful remembrance.

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