



SECRETARY OF THE ARMY
WASHINGTON

APR 13 2011

The Honorable Claire McCaskill
Chairman
Subcommittee on Contracting Oversight
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator McCaskill:

Thank you for your March 31, 2011 letter regarding the current state of the Army's ongoing efforts to strengthen management and oversight of Arlington National Cemetery. Your support and that of the entire United States Congress has been critical in our efforts to regain accountability and restore public confidence in the cemetery's management after exhaustive Army investigations detailed unacceptable deficiencies in the cemetery's operation.

As you know, we replaced Arlington National Cemetery's management with a new team that now reports directly to me. Ms. Kathryn Condon and Mr. Patrick Hallinan are working tirelessly to correct the difficulties that we have had at Arlington National Cemetery in the past. I am confident this leadership team is addressing issues and requirements, and has a plan to effectively, proactively and openly resolve any discrepancies. I am grateful for your confidence in their ability and their "extraordinary efforts." Thank you.

First, I want to assure you and the committee that one of the first actions the Army took was putting in place new policies and procedures that will ensure accountability is never again questioned. Arlington National Cemetery still conducts, on average, 27 funerals each day.

New chain of custody standards 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, six different checks are made by the cemetery representative to ensure positive identification. These new policies and procedures – standards that were developed throughout the operation where none previously existed – will ensure accurate documentation and thorough records that provide absolute accountability.

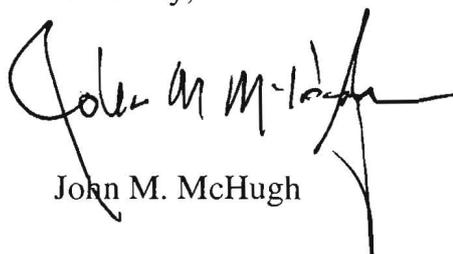
Second, I would be remiss if I did not bring to your attention errors of fact and omission that were made in a recent article in *Time* magazine to which your letter refers. For example, *Time* reported that there were four instances of individuals being listed with

two burial sites. We were able to substantiate and correct two instances where typographical errors were made on gravesite cards, but have been unable to substantiate the other two. As you know, correcting and reconciling cemetery records is a major undertaking, and we have been open in that we expect to find more paperwork errors. This example, however, was not a case of misplaced remains, as the article might lead one to believe.

Further, the *Time* report claimed that two individuals were documented as being interred in the same grave. Current records reflect that there is only one person in the gravesite in question and that the other individual was never interred at Arlington National Cemetery. Unfortunately, *Time* magazine did not question us about these records prior to publication.

Finally, per your request, I have enclosed an interim update, which provides more detailed answers to the specific questions you posed. We appreciate the subcommittee's interest and Congress's continued support, as we continue to correct the mistakes of the past, while ensuring a future of strong oversight, management, and accountability.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John M. McHugh", with a stylized flourish extending from the end of the name.

John M. McHugh

Enclosure