

PENTAGON MEMORIAL FUND SEEKS NEARLY \$30 MILLION IN DONATIONS

The campaign kicking off the Pentagon Memorial Fund was officially launched during a Capitol Hill ceremony in April.

Almost \$30 million is being solicited for the memorial. About \$17.5 million of collected funds will be used to build the memorial. The rest will be earmarked for memorial maintenance.

Some \$2 million already has been collected, including a \$1 million donation from the Anheuser-Busch Foundation, the first major corporate donor to the fund.

The Pentagon Memorial will be built in a park-like setting among maple trees, and will consist of 184 individual units – the number of people killed in the 11 Sept. 2001 terrorist-hijacked airliner attack on the Pentagon. Each memorial unit will consist of a bench bathed in light from a reflecting pool.

The group of 184 memorials will be located near the spot where Flight 77 hit the Pentagon.

SENATE PASSES LEGISLATION AUTHORIZING AWARD OF SEPARATE CAMPAIGN MEDALS

The Senate has passed legislation authorizing separate campaign medals for military personnel who participated in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The legislation would authorize separate medals for the Iraq and Afghan campaigns. The President and the Pentagon would be charged with determining who would receive the medals.

Rep. Vic Snyder (D-AK) was primary sponsor of the House legislation. Senators Blanche Lincoln (D-AK) and Mark Pryor (D-AK) cosponsored the Senate version of the bill.

DOD LAUNCHES NEW PENTAGON CHANNEL BROADCASTING TO MILITARY WORLDWIDE

The Pentagon Channel, the Defense Department's news and information television service, was officially launched with a live broadcast from the Armed Forces Day opening ceremony at Andrews Air Force Base, MD.

The Channel, which previously existed as an information channel within the Pentagon, is now being distributed 24 hours a day, seven days a week to all military installations in the United States.

Allison Barber, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Internal Communications, said that recent research showed that military members both in the United States and overseas felt that they had adequate access to general news and information, but not enough access to military news.

"The important thing about the Pentagon Channel is that it is information specifically geared to the military; and that's what our audience is looking for, because it's relevant, it's credible, and it's important to their success," Ms. Barber said.

She also pointed out that the operational tempo across the services further demonstrated need for DoD leaders to be able to talk directly to the military audience, and that expansion was especially important for Guard and Reserve members and their families, who are the most isolated from DoD news and information.

DEPLOYED SERVICE MEMBERS CAN EARN INTEREST BY USING SAVINGS PROGRAM

Deployed service members can earn 10 percent interest annually on up to \$10,000 of their savings by placing them in the Savings Deposit Program (SDP).

Service people are eligible to participate if they are serving outside the U.S. in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. The service member must also have served at least 30 consecutive days in an area that has been designated as a combat zone or in direct support of a combat zone.

The SDP includes Operation Iraqi Freedom members assigned to a combat zone or in direct support of a combat zone. For more information, members should contact their finance offices.

OLD VETERANS RECORDS ARE NOW AVAILABLE TO VIEW ON THE WEB

The Department of Veterans Affairs has made it easier and faster to get answers about family history, old war buddies, or famous war heroes.

The agency has put on the Web 3.2 million records of veterans buried at 120 national cemeteries since the Civil War. The VA's Nationwide Gravesite Locator also has records for some state veterans cemeteries and burials in Arlington National Cemetery since 1999.

The site includes names, dates of birth and death, military service dates, service branch

and rank if known, cemetery information, and grave location in the cemetery. The VA will withhold some information, such as next of kin, for privacy purposes

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS REACHES OUT TO NEWEST COMBAT VETS

The Department of Veterans Affairs is expanding its efforts to reach veterans of combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan to ensure that they are aware of benefits they have earned.

Anthony J. Principi, Secretary of Veterans Affairs, is sending personal letters to more than 150,000 veterans of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom who have recently separated from active duty to thank them for their service and to remind them of their eligibility for VA benefits.

"I want these men and women to know that we are grateful for their service to our country," Secretary Principi said. "Those who served in Afghanistan, Iraq, and other places around the world have risked their lives to make America more secure. One of the ways the nation shows its gratitude is by ensuring that veterans receive the benefits they deserve."

As Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom veterans continue to leave active duty, VA expects to mail about 10,000 letters each month.

VA, also, regularly mails information packets to all service members separating from the military to remind them of eligibility for basic VA benefits, such as VA-guaranteed home loans and education benefits. There are provisions in these programs for Reservists and National Guard members.

FORE AND AFT:

The House and Senate have agreed to an across-the-board pay raise of 3.5 percent for military people in 2005 Hospital Corpsman First Class Larry G. Tentinger, USNR, has been selected as the 2004 Naval Reserve Force Sailor of the Year. He is attached to the Naval Reserve Center, Sioux City, IA Secretary of the Navy Gordon R. England has named DDG 100 in honor of Medal of Honor recipient RADM Isaac Campbell Kidd, USN, who lost his life in the attack on Pearl Harbor The Department of Veterans Affairs has named two new national cemeteries – in the Detroit area, the "Great Lakes National Cemetery," and in the Atlanta area, the "Georgia National Cemetery." 📄