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Contact: Josh Holly or John Noonan
202-225-2539

Wittman Statement on Arlington National Cemetery Hearing

Washington, D.C.—U.S. Rep. Rob Wittman (R-Va.), the chairman of the Armed Services Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, today released the following statement for the 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.

"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."

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Josh Holly

Communications Director

U.S. House Armed Services Committee ([Link](#))

Rep. Howard P. "Buck" McKeon (R-Calif.), Chairman

direct: 202.226.3988 | work cell: 202.316.8581 | personal cell: 202.236.7909

email: josh.holly@mail.house.gov

twitter: <http://twitter.com/JoshHolly>

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