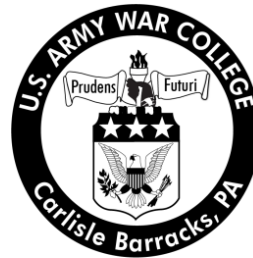


Civilian Research Project USAWC Fellow

Special Operations Commemoration: Monuments, Memory & Memorialization Practices of Elite Organizations

by

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United States Army War College
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**Special Operations Commemoration: Monuments, Memory & Memorialization
Practices of Elite Organizations**

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Abstract

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The remembrance and memorialization of warriors has long been a significant element in many societies and cultures. One of history's earliest records of commemoration is from the Greeks during the Peloponnesian War. The forms and processes of remembering and memorializing have changed, and continue to do so. The United States also has a long tradition of paying special respect to those military members that have given the ultimate sacrifice, their lives, in the service of their country during times of hostilities. This thesis examines the history of military memorialization, but within a specific focus on unique segments of the military and select government agencies. It covers memorialization practices from the Greeks until present day focusing on elite military special operations units. It examines how these national mission forces (NMF) and civilian counterpart organizations have developed and sustained their memorial programs. As military operations in Iraq are now concluded and those in Afghanistan are coming to a close, this thesis seeks to move forward the effort to recognize those fallen warriors from those conflicts in meaningful and lasting ways.

Special Operations Commemoration: Monuments, Memory & Memorialization Practices of Elite Organizations

Historian Thomas Laqueur identified the two central themes used for this study, noting, with regard to war, that “remembrance follows armed conflict, as night follows day” and the more universal feeling that “everyone has a memorable life to live, or in any case the right to a life story.”¹ This paper acknowledges both of these concepts as truths and attempts to start a dialogue within the Army’s Senior Leadership about commemorating the contributions of elite military organizations. How do we foster remembrance while respecting the “right” to a life story? Can we use life stories as part of a memorial complex to commemorate group achievements and at the same time honor individuals? And, in the environment of the special operations community, how do life stories emerge from behind the fog of secrecy and classification to allow for a sufficient process of remembrance?

Formal remembrance and memorialization of warriors has long been a significant element in many societies and cultures. One of history’s earliest records is from Thucydides, writing during the Peloponnesian War. He captures the eloquent funeral oration of the Athenian leader Pericles paying respect to the men killed in battle. The eulogy spoken by Pericles over two thousand years ago is as applicable to our fallen comrades today as they were then. In reference to the fallen warriors he said, “not only are they commemorated by columns and inscriptions, but there dwells also an unwritten memorial of them, graven not on stone but in the hearts of men.”²

In some ways, however, the ancient Greeks appear exceptional, or at least precocious in their democratic forms of memorialization. Commemorative practices up until the 1900s as a general rule honored individual commanders or the “great men.”

The two world wars of the twentieth century ushered in a new paradigm in commemoration, one that seeks to recognize the ordinary individual rather than the commander or the abstract organizational unit.³ Commemoration of units has a somewhat longer history, especially in the British tradition, and has often been used to instill a sense of pride and esprit de corps. Commemorating individuals can have a similar effect. Honoring those who gave the ultimate sacrifice can inspire an organization to achieve excellence or endure hardships, and provides a sense of family and unity within our chosen profession.

The forms and processes of remembering and memorializing soldiers has its own history within the United States. In general Americans have been quicker to acknowledge individuals rather than just great men or units. As the United States emerges from the current wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, it will become important for us as a nation and as a military to consider how to portray the sacrifices of those who lost their lives in these wars. Whatever national narrative is written it will undoubtedly be controversial based on divided public support for these conflicts. This essay begins with a look at the history of commemoration through the ages. It then links the important components of commemoration, memory, and form and also identifies recent Congressional legislation that may impact commemoration practices. It then looks at memorialization practices of some of the most elite organizations within the Department of Defense as well as their strategic allies with the Interagency community. Finally, it gives some suggestions targeted at the Army and the Joint Special Operations Command in order to move them towards the development of a comprehensive commemorative strategy to support our most recent conflicts.

According to noted author Jay Winter, commemoration is considered the natural continuation of the mourning process by the survivors in an attempt to rebalance the socio-cultural harmony that has been thrown off balance.⁴ One challenge of any commemoration is determining its primary purpose. Is it to honor the dead, comfort the survivors, or meet some other expectation? Generally speaking, most commemorative efforts, regardless of their form, will on some level honor the dead, and by doing so provide comfort to the survivors. Typically, memorials substitute for headstone markers, and are designed to displace thoughts from the fact of death to the contemplation of the individual's values displayed in life. Monuments can embody the dual potentials of commemoration by combining the artistic form, whether statue or obelisk, with engraved names, thereby meeting both the individual and collective nature of commemoration. Even a list of names can rise above simple individual memorialization; by its magnitude it demonstrates how the community or organization itself has sacrificed. One French prisoner of war in 1918 defined a goal as worthy now as it was then. Speaking to the purpose for an enduring monument commemorating the war dead, he said "their names should be glorified not only by the generations that have witnessed their heroism, but by all generations. They must therefore be forever engraved on our most durable monuments, so that they may be transmitted to our children, who will return to them in tribute what they receive from them in example."⁵

Commemoration is crafted; it does not occur by itself. It emerges through the actions of both groups and individuals, combining personal memories of individuals with the connectedness achieved in shared events. War memorials produce feelings both

intensely personal and profoundly public, and should provide meaning and function within a society.⁶

Now that the U.S. war in Iraq has concluded and U.S. participation in the war in Afghanistan is drawing to a close, the United States, as a nation, is faced with the task of shaping how those events will be interpreted for current and future generations of Americans. The American people have long struggled over the most appropriate ways to remember and commemorate their past, especially when it comes to wars.⁷ Regardless of which political party is in power, commemorative efforts for Iraq and Afghanistan are likely to be surrounded by controversy.

Memorial design, form, and function will be among the most contentious issues, not even taking into account the debates on the moral justifications for the war. This kind of controversy is not new; every war our nation has fought has prompted similar debates about building memorials. Since the conclusion of the Revolutionary War, noteworthy individuals and special groups, especially veterans and family members, have campaigned for and lobbied the federal government to establish national monuments. They advocated for creating official federal holidays and sponsored rituals designed to ensure that Americans remember their wars and conflicts as instances of national unity. Every generation of Americans has seen the nation involved in a major conflict, and as a result our national identity is tightly linked with the commemoration and memory of past wars.

For example, the establishment of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial offers some insight about how events may play out for the next major monument in our nation's capital. Despite the initial controversy in the early 1980s about the Vietnam Veterans

Memorial, it has become a symbol of healing for the nation. In the end, the memorial has received accolades from diverse groups to include the veterans themselves, the general public, and both ends of the political spectrum, the left, right, and everyone in between. This remarkable memorial was somehow able to bridge the deep divisions within our country.⁸ Over the past thirty years it has been the most visited War Memorial in our nation, typically drawing more than four million visitors each year.⁹

Although this paper will survey commemorative practices throughout the ages, it will focus on the important role commemoration plays within societies and to a lesser degree within elite organizations. It deals more specifically with two critical areas that impact any commemorative effort: memory and architectural form. It argues further, that there are two complementary organizational goals for thinking about how to commemorate recent conflicts, one at the service level and one at the unit level. The desired goal at the service level is to encourage the Army's senior leadership to anticipate and embrace the commemorative process. By virtue of sheer casualty numbers the Army becomes the largest military stakeholder when it comes to remembering our fallen soldiers. This distinction should entitle the Army to have a voice in the development of a national project. Therefore, this paper recommends the Army's leadership begin developing now a commemorative strategy for the development of a new national memorial. At the unit level, I encourage the Joint Special Operations Command's leaders to reflect not only on the past decade but on its history since the inception of the command. Leaders should determine if there is room for improvement when it comes to current commemorative practices. This paper begins the dialogue to create a lasting legacy that will serve the organization for years to come.

History of Commemoration

Commemorating those who have fallen during times of war can take a wide spectrum of material forms, and those forms have evolved over time. A look into commemoration practices provides insight into how Americans have derived meaning from the tragedies and successes produced by warfare. Commemorative practices at the most intimate level begin with individual mourning or family displays of grief. Other commemorative practices include those sponsored by units or organizations at the local level and at the highest level can be nation-sponsored, such as national cemeteries both at home and abroad. The building of monuments and the establishment of federally recognized days of remembrance such as Memorial or Veterans Day celebrations are also included in these practices. In most cases there is a desire to link the fallen and the cause for which they sacrificed their lives.¹⁰ Therefore the goal in commemoration is to show that the cause was worthy to extract such a heavy price of death. Monuments and other commemorative elements are erected or enacted in order to capture ideals and values and pass them along to future generations. They seek to develop material forms that will endure the passage of time so that others will appreciate and understand the nature of the sacrifice, without these permanent displays their contributions might simply be forgotten.¹¹

Days set apart for commemoration and special ceremonies to honor the dead are common occurrences throughout history and are as old as history itself. The Greeks performed rituals at each new grave known as *zoai*. This ritual funeral observance consisted of offerings of olives and flowers and a floral wreath was placed at the head of

the deceased. The Romans honored the war dead in the annual festival called *Parentalia*. The Druids celebrated their memorial day around the first of November just prior to their festival of thanksgiving to the sun.¹² Early Christians inscribed names of the dead on diptychs or altar lists which were then read by the priest. Japan and China also have ancient practices in which they honor their dead, which are known as the Feast of Lanterns. The Catholic Church encouraged people to approach “All Souls Day” as a time to disengage from the trials and tribulations of everyday life and reflect on those dearly departed and remember why they were so dear to you and what lasting impact they had on your life.¹³

In many cultures warriors become the embodiment of the ideals and standard that a particular society holds dear. A few notable examples include Achilles, the most famous Greek warrior, King Leonidas of Sparta, and Alexander the Great. To varying degrees these thought patterns still prevail in the twenty-first century.¹⁴ Thucydides’ account of Pericles’ funeral oration in 431 BCE is even today familiar to many modern day warriors. It has been so influential in western culture that is said to have influenced President Abraham Lincoln’s Gettysburg address. In addition to Pericles’ speech, Athenian war dead generally were memorialized by having their names inscribed in stone tablets which were part of a larger stone monument. In a highly class conscious society it was significant that the individual names were listed and were also categorized by campaign and tribe.¹⁵ This practice may have inspired Sir Edwin Lutyen, the master British artist that emerged after World War I. He designed over ninety war memorials, of which his most famous work is his memorial to the missing at the Battle of the Somme at Thiepval, which has over 73,357 names engraved on the walls of the

memorial. It shows the specific attention paid to the recording of each individual and how they might form the basis of the commemorative process.

In death, Spartan custom, which differed significantly from the Athenians, did not allow for a headstone except for two specific instances. The first being for Spartan women who died during childbirth and the second was afforded to the soldier who had been killed in battle. If the death occurred in war the soldier's name was inscribed on the headstone with "in war" listed below it.¹⁶

Scholars such as Thomas Laqueur, George Mosse, Antoine Prost, Daniel Sherman and Avner Ben-Amos all agree that the listing of names as a mode of commemoration is a practice that emerged at the conclusion of World War I. This period was called "the new era of remembrance."¹⁷ Other research, however, suggests that the individual naming form of commemoration began during the French Revolution era from 1793-1794, in which the Revolution's war dead were commemorated in villages and towns across the county. These took the form of posting lists on buildings, monuments, cenotaphs, and even pyramids; the most famous being the "monument aux morts" in Reims. Reflecting on events from thirty years earlier, French lawyer and political figure Antoine Claire Thibaudeau offered the following as reasons why the government was unable to build monuments and statues to honor the war dead: "Since the outbreak of the war, before and after the 9 Thermidor (Reign of Terror), we had plenty of other things to do...The rapid train of events, the continual clash of party strife, the instability of government and the expense of the war did not leave us either the time to think about creating fine monuments, nor the means to erect lasting ones."¹⁸

Discussions about commemorative efforts in the United States began as early as 1783, with a Congressional proposal for a monument to George Washington. This proposal floundered for decades within the halls of Congress. In 1794 a group of Massachusetts Masons erected an individual monument to honor Joseph Warren where he fell in battle at Bunker Hill. On July the 4th, 1799 a monument, established by the citizens of Lexington and funded by the Massachusetts General Court, was dedicated on the Lexington Green commemorating the eight minutemen killed by British regulars on 19 April 1775. The inscription reads, “the Freedom & Independence of America is Sealed & Defended with the Blood of Her Sons.”¹⁹ These words have inspired each generation over the past two hundred years about the high cost required to obtain freedom. The symbol and spirit of the minutemen has been evoked in each of our nation’s conflicts to encourage soldiers to live up to the ideals displayed by the citizen soldiers at the inception of our country.²⁰ The first national war memorial in Washington D.C. commemorated those killed during the engagement at Tripoli in 1805. Although permitted on the Capitol grounds, it was a private undertaking funded in 1806 by naval officers who had participated.

As previously stated, commemorating individual war dead, especially by name, is a relatively new phenomenon that began at the conclusion of the American Civil War and has gained momentum ever since.²¹ One would have to look all the way back to the classical Athens and the Hellenistic period to find a time when all individuals killed in warfare were honored and commemorated as a regular practice. In the intervening centuries very little post-mortem attention was paid to individual burials. The emergence of this practice after the American Civil War and on into the twentieth

century has been responsible for a “memory boom” and has fundamentally changed the way nations recognize and pay homage to the common soldier.²² A testament to this practice is the proliferation of monuments at Gettysburg, where there are over thirteen hundred monuments and markers dedicated to both units and individuals clearly demonstrating the enthusiasm involved in leaving lasting legacies in spaces newly defined as sacred.²³

Without the commemorative efforts of the Civil War veterans in the 1890s, our modern memory and understanding of that conflict would not be what it is today. Civil War veterans held monuments, markers, and tablets in extremely high regard. In one sense the monuments were viewed as reincarnated soldiers who served to honor both the men who had died as well as those who survived and were able to erect the monuments.²⁴

The period of World War I, arguably a major event in the transition to “modernity,” led to a dramatic increase in individuals being named as part of a larger memorialization process. Prior to the introduction of mass conscription during the Napoleonic Wars, most soldiers had been volunteers, professionals, and soldiers for hire. But it was only with the scale of World War I that it seemed that every man went to war. Very many bodies were never recovered for individual burial, and therefore much significance was attached to the names of individuals. Naming individual war dead on memorials in effect reclaimed each individual victim and returned them to an individual existence. In effect the memorial process was designed with the goal of ensuring that each war dead would have “Their Name Liveth for Evermore” in an attempt to connect commemoration to history.²⁵

For the United States, the repatriation of war dead from World War I was the single largest driver in commemoration practices for that conflict. The policy of repatriation was announced by Secretary of War Newton Baker, who announced that “the U.S. government would ensure a home burial to all who died in its foreign service.”²⁶ This policy was announced without prior consultation with General Pershing, the AEF Commander, or with Major General Henry Shape, the U.S. Army’s quartermaster general. Army policy had been to inter the dead in country until the end of the war, the lack of available shipping space for coffins and burial equipment was part of the reason for this decision. Secretary Baker’s pronouncement dramatically changed procedures and ultimately cost the government over thirty million dollars and forced massive repatriation operations that lasted from 1919 to 1922. Although controversial at the time the precedent set for repatriation remains U.S. policy today.²⁷ For example, Private Thomas Enright, Private Merle Hay, and Corporal James Gresham are probably known to only a few historians and perhaps by some relatives who have an interest in family history. They were the first three U.S. Army soldiers killed in combat during World War I, in November 1917 near Verdun, France. At the time all three were honored by both nations and a monument was even erected over their graves by French citizens. Ironically, due to Secretary Baker’s promise, all three were eventually disinterred in 1919 and returned to their families for burial in the United States.²⁸

In addition to repatriation, a National Committee on Memorial Buildings was formed in 1919 and endorsed by General John S. Pershing. Some of the significant questions at the time dealt with the purpose of the memorial itself. Are memorials expected to fill a concrete need for the living? Do they need to be totally distinct from

their surroundings? America clearly took a different approach to memorialization than the Europeans after World War I. Instead of the traditional war standalone memorials, Americans sought to incorporate them into the life of the community as cultural centers, buildings, convention halls, or sports stadiums. Europeans on the other hand felt that the construction of memorials should be thought of in the same manner as the construction of a church.²⁹ Americans by and large incorporated memorials into the daily lives of the living whereas the Europeans felt the issues of sacredness, reverence and interpretation were of paramount concern.

At the conclusion of World War II there was no great desire on the part of the American public to erect new memorials. Also, most communities did honor their war dead, but tended to do so by simply adding their names to the monuments and memorials already built to commemorate the First World War.³⁰

Given this relative inattention to the issue of memorialization in the first decades after World War II, there is a certain irony to the fact that American interest in war memorialization first resurfaced in connection to the much more controversial war in Vietnam. Perhaps even more ironic, was that one of the primary motivations for the establishment of what is now the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was the visceral reaction felt by many veterans to the portrayal of American soldiers in Martin Scorsese's film *The Deer Hunter*. After seeing the film, Vietnam veteran Jan Scruggs determined to find a way to honor and remember his friends and all Americans that had perished in the Vietnam War. He, and a small group of veterans and other supporters of the idea, formed the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund that lobbied Congress and eventually obtained land on the Mall as well as sufficient private donations to help fund the project.

Their stated goal was to build a memorial to the men and women who died in the Vietnam War and to ensure that the names of the fallen would not be forgotten.³¹

The now-famous Vietnam Veterans Memorial with its 58,195 names carved into a starkly black wall is a vivid reminder of the high price that was paid on behalf of the nation. The continued focus on individuals in memorial efforts of the twentieth and twenty-first century shows that the anonymity of death is a thing of the past. The names have a special attraction to many who read them, touch them, and trace them; they turn a mass of people into individuals.³²

Memory

Joel David Robinson, a modern art historian and researcher, claims that typically in Western thought and culture memory is only as enduring as the memorials that are built. He argues that designs have traditionally been constructed to rebuff the natural elements and somehow strive to stand the test of time.³³ Shared memories give social groups the ability to create and sustain a distinctive identity. This identity is crucial in order to maintain the group's cohesiveness and allows them the ability to transmit those norms and cultural values to future generations of warriors.³⁴ Therefore, any commemorative effort that the Army or the Joint Special Operations command attempts should incorporate the sacrifices of our comrades into the fabric of our "Army Strong" warrior culture and Special Operations collective memory. As with any commemorative effort there is a real concern that despite efforts to memorialize significant national events that current and subsequent generations may grow up with without the knowledge and understanding of the sacrifices made by previous veterans.³⁵

The Army, the larger military enterprise, and Interagencies narrative of the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq will undoubtedly be told to future generations. Despite how these conflicts are viewed in the future, whether as noble undertakings or misguided pursuits, the sacrifices and heroism of the individuals who participated will be remembered. The form that the commemorative effort will take, however, is yet to be determined.

Physical memorials can assist with conveying knowledge about past events but memory plays an integral part as well. In order to appreciate the value of memory in commemorative practices one must be aware of the different kinds of memory that shape memorialization.

“Memory,” especially within a community, is not a simple concept, nor a single process. In one formulation there are several different types, some building on the others. “Collective memories” are powerful to both the organization and the individuals within that organization. Individuals within a group define themselves not only by the traits they personally possess but also by the groups they are associated with and where they fit into the historical context of that organization. Collectively defining an organization’s historical memories helps establish identities for future generations of the organization.³⁶ Collective memories emanate from shared communications which are transferred, thus creating an identity building capacity and are equally responsible for the development and the assigned meaning of past events through narratives, symbols, and signs.³⁷

Commemoration rituals within an organization are a means to provide some semblance of order, coherence, and stability to memory. The laying of wreaths,

ceremonies, and memorial speeches bring commemoration out of the individual domain and into the collective domain. They show the bonds that existed with the individual being commemorated and it brings a sense of community. These rituals speak to the living about their unique bond, loyalty, and respect for the lives that the commemorated lived and the contributions that they made. When that collective memory begins to fade the commemorative practices have a tendency to fade as well right along with the memorials themselves.³⁸

“Communicative memory” is categorized as the memory of everyday life it is usually informal, unstructured and amorphous.³⁹ This type of memory lasts for as long as the organization that is producing it and as a general rule will be lost or forgotten within three generations if there is not a conscious decision to ensure it is turned into cultural memory.

“Cultural memory” is defined as a community’s collective memory materialized in forms and practices and referring to a distant past. This type of memory is dependent on various memory aids such as rites, rituals, myths, or monuments which are generally supervised by specialists in the field that can convey the intended message. Preservation of this type of memory stabilizes and spreads its self-image; a collective shared knowledge, preferably of the past, on which a group’s sense of unity and individuality is based.⁴⁰

Finally there is what is termed as “social memory,” which is “an artificial recollection of some experiences by some groups, institutions, or individuals in society organized according to recognizable scripts and having a moral dimension.”⁴¹

Increasingly this social memory is shaped by popular culture in the form of books, television, movies and even video games.

Having a comprehensive knowledge of different types of memory is vital to understanding commemorative practices. It is equally important to grasp the concept that once memory is formed into a memorial that space becomes awash with the combined personal and public memories from those that visit in a combination with the intentions of the artist or designer. Meaning associated with any particular memorial lies somewhere between the artist's intention and the visitor's interpretation. Initial intent can change with the emergence of new information, attitudes, or feelings over time.⁴²

When planning commemorative efforts the Army and JSOC must take into account the multiple perspectives of those interpreting the memorial and remain cognizant that perspectives, attitudes, and feelings are subject to shift with public sentiments. Realizing the nuances involved with memory helps provide a foundation for the development of commemorative efforts or the construction of memorials.

Commemorative Form

Monuments shed insight on the people who advocate, raise money, and erect them, as they do about the people who are the primary focus of the effort who are being honored. Memorialization can be difficult since it is not an effort where one will find a single point of view that satisfies all parties that participate in the process. Oftentimes, there are intense debates over what the memorial is designed to represent or the message it is to convey. Edward Linenthal defines memorial construction workers as

the following: veterans, politicians, museum professionals, historians, and opinion shapers from all walks. He also has three working hypotheses about public memory and memorialization:⁴³

- 1) The finished product in no way captures all the behind the scenes drama and infighting that occurs among the various groups associated with the memorial;
- 2) Memorial construction will always be controversial;
- 3) Controversy surrounding the memorial doesn't mean that something is wrong, rather that volatile memory work is taking place.

In the United States monuments are typically built right after a traumatic event or in 20-30 year cycles after the event. Building a monument or memorial, whether on the local or national level can be a rigorous social undertaking. Some basic considerations that must be addressed include the following: 1) is there consensus to the effort, 2) is there overt opposition to the effort, 3) establishing committees to procure funding, land, artist, design just to name a few.⁴⁴ Many of the war memorials in Washington D.C. were built in classic architectural styles that proclaim "military triumphalism," such as the World War II Memorial and the Iwo Jima Monument. However, it should be noted that the most visited war memorial, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, does not embrace the same architectural style which indicates that a shift has taken place from the more traditional forms of remembrance.⁴⁵

John Ruskin says, "there are but two strong conquerors of the forgetfulness of men, Poetry and architecture." Memorials are an effort to extend the lives of the dead in the memories of the living and are designed to counteract the forgetting that increases

with each succeeding generation. One other indisputable fact about memorials is that “the production of sacred space depends on money.”⁴⁶ Military organizations and governmental organizations are not budgeted for memorials therefore they generally rely on support organizations to raise the necessary funds in order to establish memorials.

Sites of memory can be underwritten by nations but the preponderance of memorials are normally works undertaken by small groups who make a concerted effort to perpetuate remembrance. Without these “social agents” working to keep memories alive there would not be as strong a collective memory as currently recognized. These groups are normally brought together not by blood relations but rather through shared experiences of history that has had a profound impact on their lives. Many of the state-sponsored monuments of the twentieth century, especially in Europe, can evoke simultaneous emotional appreciation on multiple levels from the national, regional, local, and in some cases even down to the individual family level.

Often organizations want to create agency for those that have been lost in war, not due to national pressure but rather because the sense of duty and responsibility of the individual’s or organization’s need to speak out on behalf of the war dead. Although almost all have altruistic goals in mind at the inception, it is imperative to understand that creating this agency is extremely arduous work and requires tremendous time, effort and financial resources in order to successfully create an appropriate memorial. Regardless of the energy expended in the creation of a memorial and of a collective memory, it has a limited “shelf life” and will fade with time. Furthermore, as time marches on from the establishment of the memorial, the meaning assigned to the site of

memory will lose the particular significance that those responsible for its creation had associated with it.⁴⁷

Those who desire to create a site of remembrance do so because the significant event has impacted their lives in some way. They also approach the project with the understanding that it will undoubtedly be controversial, at least on some level, and require huge expenditures both financially and through personal sacrifice, which can be in many different forms including: lobbying, artistic design and development, securing donations, forming support organizations, etc.

Michael Keren in his book *War Memory and Popular Culture* brings up the point that many veterans come to the realization that their war memories are not transferable. Therefore it is imperative that memorials are built to overcome or perhaps simply mitigate the non-transference between the veteran and the next several generations. Nation states are normally quick to build memorials and sponsor ceremonies to their warriors when the war itself was considered noble and justified. This “non-transference” problem is aggravated when a war is seen as controversial or lacking in public support, evidenced among other things by long delays in building memorials, or even an absence.

As a general rule, most veterans desire to pass along their wartime heritage to subsequent generations. One significant reason is their sense of obligation towards their fallen brothers. Additionally, many feel it is incumbent on them to extol the virtues that come through personally experiencing war, such as heroism, sacrifice, valor, camaraderie, disregard for class distinction, and devotion to a cause higher than oneself. Traditionally these virtues were the foundations of the nation state and

veterans were often encouraged to help create a social memory for their country.

George Mosse claims that these positive elements of war memory were embraced by nations as validation of their choosing to fight for national glory and national interests.⁴⁸

Recent Legislation

Over the last several decades there are many factors that have and will continue to be impediments to commemorative efforts after our nation concludes the war in Afghanistan. The nation state is no longer seen as the primary shaper of virtues, this is due to globalization, the penchant of academia to shy away from historical narrative, feminist agendas that reject masculine war commemoration efforts, general anti-war sentiment, and, probably most significant of all, the overwhelming influence of the media in popular culture and the unimaginable the rise and influence of social media which only acerbates the problem.

To date, two Congressional attempts have been introduced to create a memorial in Washington, D.C. to commemorate those that have died due to terrorist attacks. In September 2002, H.R. 2982 passed 418-0 and was sent over to the Senate where it died in committee. This bill authorized the “establishment of a memorial to victims who died as a result of terrorist acts against the United States or its people, at home or abroad.” In 2007 another attempt was made with the introduction of H.R. 3707 for the “Memorial Dedicated to All Victims of Terrorism Act of 2007, this bill was provided to the National Capital Memorial Commission, the gatekeepers in the National Capital, and they decided not to support the initiative. At least part of their rational for not supporting the effort was the Commemorative Works Act of 1986, which stipulates that no event or

person can be commemorated within the city for a period of at least twenty-five years from the event.

The Pentagon Group Burial Marker also referred to as the September 11 Memorial joins three other monuments in the Arlington National Cemetery that have linkages to terrorist attacks in what is known as the “terrorist cluster.” It joins the Iran Hostage Rescue Mission Memorial which commemorates the eight individuals, two Marines and six Air Force personnel, who perished in the failed attempt to rescue American hostages in Teheran in 1980. Also contained within this cluster is the Beirut Barracks Memorial, which pays tribute to the 241 individuals killed in Lebanon in 1983. The last memorial in this group is the Lockerbie Memorial Cairn that honors the passengers killed in the 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Scotland. The interpretive plan for this cluster shows that the attacks of 9/11, although horrific in nature, is only one of several incidents in recent decades in which the United States has suffered casualties at the hands of terrorists, a process with potentially no discernible end.⁴⁹

Elite Organizational Commemorative Practices

In developing a guiding theme for the Joint Special Operations Command it is prudent to look at how other elite organizations have chosen to commemorate their fallen members. The investigation here examines not only the motivations behind their commemorative processes, but also evaluates them in terms of best practices in design and interpretation that could be incorporated in newly commissioned monuments or

memorials. This portion of the research compares examples of governmental, law enforcement, and military memorials.

Like the inception of many organizational memorials, the idea for the Central Intelligence Agency's Memorial Wall came from the employees of the organization. In 1973 several agency officers suggested that a memorial plaque be installed at the CIA Headquarters in Langley, Virginia to honor employees killed in Laos and Vietnam.⁵⁰ In order to organize the commemorative effort, the Honor and Merit Board was established. Their first official action was to consult the American Foreign Service Association to see the procedures and criteria they used for U.S. State Department Memorial Plaques. Harold Vogel, a master stone carver, designed the CIA Memorial in the Bauhaus/International style. His goal was to have harmony between the function of an object and its design as well as to avoid ornamentation. Vogel desired to make the memory of the fallen (represented by stars) an integral part of the building. Director William Colby approved the project and in July 1974 the current Memorial Wall was unveiled, with neither an official dedication nor a ceremony. Originally the marble memorial wall had thirty-one carved stars below the citation that reads "IN HONOR OF THOSE MEMBERS OF THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES IN THE SERVICE OF THEIR COUNTRY."⁵¹ The first death of an agency officer dates back to 1950, and as of April 2013 there are 102 stars on the wall.⁵² Accompanying the Memorial Wall is the CIA Book of Honor that is enclosed in a glass case and contains the names of fallen officers. The names are listed by year and have a 23-carat gold leaf star next to their name except in the cases where the identities must remain covert, which is then depicted by a star with a blank next to it. The idea to hold

an annual memorial ceremony, like the idea for the Wall itself came from within the ranks of the organization. The first ceremony was held in 1987 and was presided over by the Deputy Director Robert M. Gates. The Memorial Ceremony has evolved over time, initially an intimate affair consisting only of employees it has now grown into the largest annual event held by the CIA. In 1990, non-Agency family members were invited for the first time to attend the ceremony. In 1995 all the names of the officers were read aloud to include those who were still undercover. In 2009 each family member of a fallen officer was presented with a replica memorial star.

Two eloquent quotes from past CIA memorial ceremonies timelessly capture the essence of any memorialization or commemorative practice. At the inaugural Memorial Ceremony in 1987 Robert Gates remarked: “Ceremonies that honor the dead are, in truth, for the living. They remind us of our mortality but also celebrate the lives and memories of those we have loved, trusted and respected. Certainly, we mourn their loss – but we also glory in the knowledge of their extraordinary contributions to our service and to our country.” Even more apropos to organizational significance were Director Porter J. Goss’s words in 2006: “When we move on – whether to another chapter in our careers or our lives – we never lose the distinct sense of pride in belonging to such a storied and exceptional organization. Nor do we ever forget having been in the company of such remarkably talented men and women, especially those we honor today, whose deeds are immortal. We see, in our mind’s eye, these deep cut stars engraved in marble, and we know that we always will be part of something noble and worthy.”⁵³

The State Department's program, in some ways similar to that of the CIA, although without the anonymity, honors its members with memorial plaques displayed in their diplomatic lobby. Most military and governmental organizations manage commemorative practices internally. The State Department's memorial program is unique, in that it is administered by the American Foreign Service Association (AFSA). The initial concept was formulated in the 1920s and 1930s with the intent to commemorate Foreign Service Officers who had died by violence or other circumstances related to serving abroad through some kind of "Roll of Honor." The first official memorial plaque was unveiled by Secretary of State Henry Stimson on March 3, 1933. The inscription above the memorial plaques reads, "Erected by members of the American Foreign Service Association in honor of diplomatic and consular officers of the United States who while on active duty lost their lives under heroic or tragic circumstances." As of May 2012 there were 236 individuals honored with plaques, each containing name, year, and cause of death. These individuals died in service in 64 different countries across the globe. The first individual recognized with a plaque was William Palfrey, selected by the Continental Congress to be Consul General to France, and lost at sea in 1780 enroute to his foreign posting. Until the 20th Century, disease and "lost at sea" explained the majority of State Department service-related deaths. Since World War II, terrorism has become the leading cause of death among Foreign Service Officers.⁵⁴ The criteria for memorial plaque consideration has fluctuated over the years, with revisions as recent as 2011. Originally, only Foreign Service Officers were eligible for this honor but after World War II the criteria changed to include all Foreign Service personnel. Consideration for inclusion was opened to any employees,

both governmental and military personnel, working within an embassy. The American Foreign Service Association's Awards and Plaques Committee considers recommendations and passes those to the Governing Board which makes the final determination. The State Department and the AFSA hold an annual Foreign Affairs Day Plaque Ceremony each May where new names are unveiled and a wreath is laid. May 3, 2013 promises to be especially somber as this will mark the addition of seven new names, including Ambassador Christopher Stevens and three others from the Benghazi, Libya terrorist attack on September 11, 2012.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Secret Service both have memorial displays within their respective organizations' headquarters, and they both participate in the consolidated National Law Enforcement Officer's Memorial located in Washington, D.C. The FBI Headquarters Building has their Hall of Honor divided into two plaques: one honors "Service Martyrs" which includes FBI Agents who have been killed as the direct result of adversarial action. The other honors FBI Agents who have given their lives in the performance of their law enforcement duty. To date a total of thirty-six agents are categorized as Service Martyrs and another nineteen are honored for losing their lives while engaged in performing law enforcement duties.⁵⁵ The U.S. Secret Service Memorial is their actual headquarters building which is dedicated to those that have given their lives while in the performance of their duty. President Clinton gave the dedication remarks on October 14, 1999 at the ceremony where the thirty-two names of Special Agents were unveiled on a wall within the building.⁵⁶ The National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial was dedicated on October 15, 1991 and seeks to honor all federal, state, and local law enforcement officers who have sacrificed their lives while

protecting the citizens of the United States. The memorial wall has the names of over 19,000 officers listed that have been killed in the line of duty dating back to 1791. There are multiple commemorative ceremonies held at the Memorial throughout the year but names are only added once each year during the spring and the event normally coincides with the observance of National Police Week.

Many organizations within the Special Operations community also have memorials, some now several decades old. Typically, all Colonel-level commands have some type of formalized memorial within the unit area. The ritual of commemoration has also been incorporated at the three- and four-star level commands. For example elaborate memorials are currently located at the Special Operations Command at MacDill Air Force Base, in Florida, the U.S. Army Special Operations Command at Fort Bragg, North Carolina and the Marine Special Operations Command at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

The U.S. Army Special Operations Command at Fort Bragg has established a Memorial Plaza on the grounds of its current headquarters in Fort Bragg, North Carolina. The first memorial plaza was dedicated in November 1969, the centerpiece being the twelve foot statue of a Special Forces soldier. This “green beret” Special Forces soldier known as “Bronze Bruce” was the nation’s first Vietnam memorial. The intent of the plaza at the time was to honor the more than 550 Special Forces soldiers that had been killed in Vietnam up to that point. The plaza was relocated into the new headquarters building across post in 1994.⁵⁷ In 1995 the relocated USASOC Memorial Wall of Honor was dedicated at the plaza outside the building’s entrance and incorporated the 804 bronze nameplates from the Vietnam War. The wall underwent

extensive refurbishment in 2009. On May 27, 2010 the wall was renamed and rededicated as the Fallen Special Operations Soldiers Memorial Wall and contained the names of 1,134 individuals. As of April 2013 there are 1,151 names listed with another seventeen to be added in May.⁵⁸

The idea for the U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) Memorial was first formulated in 1995. As with many unit memorials, it was conceived by individuals then assigned to the unit and by former unit members. This memorial has the distinction of being the first interservice memorial that honors all personnel within the special operations community. The USSOCOM Memorial concept was approved by General Wayne Downing, commander of USSOCOM in 1995, supported by General Henry Shelton, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and eventually dedicated by General Peter J. Schoomaker on April 6, 1999. The memorial design is in the shape of the "Tip of the Spear" with a statue as the centerpiece surrounded by a wall on which to engrave the names of fallen "quiet professionals." Additionally, there are tributes to Special Operators that were awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor and the Australian Victoria Cross. The walls contain the names of all special operations personnel that have been killed in action or died in training since the Iran Hostage Rescue Mission in 1980.⁵⁹

Another category of memorials are those built for specific populations of soldiers not necessarily associated with any particular unit. Two good examples of this type of memorial are the U.S. Army Ranger Memorial at Fort Benning, Georgia and the Underwater Demolition Teams (UDT) and Sea, Air, Land (SEAL) Memorial at Fort Pierce, Florida. These memorials are tributes to honor all those individuals that have

been killed in action or training and had met the qualifications to be admitted into those prestigious ranks.

The Rangers also have a World War II Pointe du Hoc Ranger Monument that was the backdrop for President Ronald Regan's speech on June 6, 1984 commemorating the 40th Anniversary of the Normandy Invasion, D-Day. This monument was erected by the French to honor American Rangers who landed on Omaha Beach during the D-Day invasion and secured the cliffs at the beachhead. During the commemoration President Reagan unveiled plaques to honor the 2nd and 5th Ranger Battalions.

Commemoration practices within the special operations community are just as important now as they have always been. The methods of commemoration continue to evolve and it is my opinion that the traditional can exist alongside the new forms. Some examples of current individual memorial practices are identification bracelets with names and dates of the fallen, vehicle window stickers, tattoos and multiple forms of virtual memorials. At the unit level there are several methods that the Joint Special Operations Command can implement to cultivate a more commemorative-conscious environment. Many units sponsor memorial 5 & 10K races, marches, memorial golf tournaments, raffles, memorial trees and even reflective memorial gardens. These are all innovative ways to commemorate, however, I think it is time for the command to seriously consider making a lasting monument at the headquarters to honor and remember those individuals, past, present, and future that have or will make that ultimate sacrifice.

Conclusion

As previously noted, prior to the Civil War commemoration was generally restricted to private cemeteries. At the conclusion of the Civil War there was a movement to create national cemeteries, memorials in the center of small towns and numerous Union and Confederate Memorials that dotted the public landscape until about the 1920s. Over the next fifty years commemorative efforts were typically done at the local level. Not until the 1970s and 1980s was there a resurgence at the national level to commemorate the war dead. The push was brought about by the most recent American conflict, the Vietnam War, but also to recognize the casualties from the Korean conflict. In 2001 the U.S. declared its first war in the new century as the “War on Terror”. Even though isolated terrorist attacks directed at or indirectly affected Americans dating back to 1961. The new dynamic of persistent conflict challenges the nation yet again with how to best commemorate our war dead.

Practices of commemoration are formed in many ways in modern society. It is essential the U.S. Army at the national level and the Joint Special Operations Command at the unit level give strong consideration to developing appropriate commemorative sites with which to honor fallen members associated with the command. Although the design concepts could take numerous forms it should ultimately function in much the same way that Steven Spielberg depicted the battlefield cemetery scene in *Saving Private Ryan*. The tombstone of Captain John H. Miller was used as a single focal point that unleashed emotional reactions on multiple levels. It impacted the survivor, his spouse, his children and also his grandchildren. Each individual was uniquely and profoundly affected by the grave marker and will interpret the history of World War II

through a markedly different lens than most others. The Army and JSOC must view any commemorative effort through not just memorializing individuals but also taking into account how it will be perceived by the current members of the Army or the command and the families of the fallen for generations to come.

JSOC faces special imperatives in approaching the problem of commemoration and historical remembrance. In our society there are many individuals that deal in historical fiction and will attempt to exploit the command's highly publicized history for profit. Historical remembrance is comprised of first person narratives along with the command's annual historical report. Jay Winters warns of possible involvement in the contemporary memory boom by novelists, playwrights, poets, filmmakers, architects, museum designers and curators, television producers, and others that dabble in the "heritage trade" and view it as a business rather than as an altruistic labor of love and appreciation. Furthermore he states that "remembrance is an act of symbolic exchange between those who remain and those who suffered or died. They went through much; they lost or gave much; we give the little we can – starting with recognition and acknowledgment and then moving on, at time, to material expressions of both."⁶⁰ There have already been multiple books, films, interview and articles that are shaping public opinion about the organization, possibly to the detriment of the unit. By thoughtful commemoration the command can provide a site of memory that will preserve individual and unit contributions for generations to come.

Our nation is at the tail end of two extensive and costly wars. I submit that the nation's Special Operators will soon be added to the distinguished list of the world's most elite warriors throughout all of history. Special Forces Soldiers, Delta Operators,

Rangers, Special Operations Aviators, along with Navy Seals, have long been the premier standard bearers that most, if not all, general purpose forces have attempted to emulate. These organizations along with the elite government agencies (CIA, FBI, Secret Service and State Department) all have well established commemorative programs and memorials. Over the last decade the American public and our nation's leaders have recognized the unmatched capabilities and talents of those personnel assigned to the Joint Special Operations Command. Now is the time for action on the commemorative front while the opportunity to honor and remember our comrades is within our power.

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