



October 1, 2021

Chairman Jonathan B Jarvis
National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission
1100 Ohio Drive, S.W.
Washington, DC 20242

Chairman Jarvis and Members of the Commission:

As President and CEO of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF), the organization that founded and still helps maintain The Wall, I want to provide some information as you review S. 2571, the Flying Tiger Act, which would direct inclusion on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall the names of the soldiers who died on Flying Tiger Flight 739 and March 16, 1962.

VVMF endeavors to honor all Vietnam veterans for their service and sacrifice and will continue to work diligently to add any new names as approved by the DoD. We respect that the DoD must make eligibility decisions based on the merits of each particular case. However, the Flying Tiger Act will not only overrule existing DoD eligibility criteria but also create impossible situations due to a shortage of space to add new names.

Currently, under the current nomenclature and design parameters of The Wall, it is impossible to add the 93 of those from the Flying Tiger Flight 739. It may be possible to accommodate these but only by changing the nomenclature to FI MI LastName. In order to implement this change, the National Park Service (NPS) must seek changes to the artistic design of The Wall from the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) and the Commission of Fine Arts (CFA). That process can take months to years. Even if NPS received authorization to change the nomenclature, to FI MI LastName the names would be spread amongst the space available on all the remaining panels, few if any would be amongst their comrades who died in 1962. We expect some families might take exception to their loved ones being listed differently and not "en masse."

Additionally, VVMF has funded the expenses related to name additions in the past at the rate of ~\$5,000 per name. If a large number of names are approved for inscription

on The Wall, VVMF may NOT be able to absorb this cost. The NPS or DoD would have to fund the inscriptions.

Approval for the Flying Tiger Flight 739 names would spark re-examination of these other cases:

- Previous efforts to add 84 names of those who died in an aircraft crash that left El Toro air station en route to Vietnam on June 25, 1965.
- Another 27 sailors aboard the USS Enterprise were killed just outside territorial waters during a fire and ensuing explosion on January 15, 1969.
- Current legislation attached to the National Defense Authorization Act directs the addition of the 74 sailors lost on the USS Evans on June 3, 1969.
- Another 45 soldiers/airmen were killed when a chartered DC-8 crashed November 27, 1970, while en route to Vietnam from Anchorage, AK.
- There are 80 – 100 cases of individuals or small groups lost just outside Vietnam's territorial waters.

Additionally, as I have communicated with National Mall and Memorial Parks Superintendent Jeff Reinbold, our contractor who inscribes name additions on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, has retired after 36 years of service. Since they use an older photo stencil and “sandblasting” method to engrave the names, there are few stone workers who still use this method and are skilled enough to engrave with the granite panels in place.

Our efforts to find another stone worker since May have so far failed. Until resolved, no name additions for any names approved in 2022 or later years can occur until a qualified engraver is identified to do the work.

I hope that these factors and a better understanding of the challenges as to placement on The Wall will help your commission evaluate its feedback to S. 2571, the Flying Tiger Act.

Sincerely,



Jim Knotts
President and CEO