

Military OneSource Podcast — Military In Lasting Tribute

Program title: Casualty and Mortuary Affairs

Episode transcript

Intro voiceover (Jean Gibbs):

Welcome to the Military OneSource podcast.

Military OneSource is an official program of the Defense Department, with tools, information and resources to help families navigate all aspects of military life. For more information, visit MilitaryOneSource.mil.

Jean Gibbs:

Welcome to the Military OneSource podcast. I'm Jean Gibbs. It is Memorial Day weekend, a time for the nation to honor those who have died while serving in the military.

On this solemn weekend, we would like to talk about an online memorial set up by the Defense Department. This memorial recognizes service members who have died while serving honorably on active duty from 1985 to the present. It's called Military In Lasting Tribute.

Joining me today to talk about this online memorial, I have Mrs. Patricia Montes Barron, the deputy assistant secretary of defense for Military Community and Family Policy, and Ms. Deborah Skillman, the director of Casualty and Mortuary Affairs. Welcome, and thank you both for joining me.

Deborah Skillman:

It's a pleasure to be here with you today.

Patricia Montes Barron:

Thank you, Jean. Appreciate being here today.

Jean:

Ms. Skillman, we'll start with you. In the fall of 2021, the Defense Department took an important step to honor service members who have died. Can you please tell us about that?

Deb:

Yes, certainly, and thank you for having us today, Jean.

So, yes, we developed this tribute, the Military In Lasting Tribute memorial, last fall. It includes individual memorials of deceased service members with their service member's name, their branch of service, their date of death and a photo of their loved one. The photos are really wonderful. They come in all sizes and shapes of the service member in uniform, but we created the memorial because we wanted to demonstrate the department's commitment and dedication to caring for the families, extending beyond the death of the service member; so, no matter the circumstances, surviving family members will be well cared for, and that we as a nation will remember the sacrifice of their loved one.

Jean:

You're absolutely right, Deb, and Ma'am, please tell us how this memorial helps our nation in honoring and supporting the survivor community.

Patricia:

I'd be honored to, Jean. Thank you. So, this is new and just like you and Deb mentioned, it's a modern way to honor those who have died in service to our country.

What is truly new is that the memorial is online, which is amazing. The Defense Department is providing an enduring remembrance and recognition for our service members who have died, making sure that their name and memory live forever. With many of us using mobile devices to access sites, including the Military In Lasting Tribute, to our online platform, this means that this memorial will travel with you, you the survivor, the surviving family member, wherever you go.

As you know, you'll meet friends or loved ones, and sometimes get into conversations about the person that's gone before us, and now there's a way for you to pull up their photo, and just kind of share some of their service with that person to whom you're talking to. So, I think this is great.

Jean:

I couldn't agree more, Ma'am. Deb, how many service members are currently being honored on the memorial site?

Deb:

So, as of today, I'm pleased to say that we have 787 service members currently honored on the Military In Lasting Tribute memorial page.

Jean:

Ma'am, where would we go to learn more about the memorial, including information to help them submit a loved one for recognition?

Patricia:

Jean, they can access the memorial site at Tribute.MilitaryOneSource.mil. I'll say that one more time. Tribute.MilitaryOneSource.mil. The memorial site includes a place to view all of the honorees, an individual page for an honoree and a submission form to add a new honoree, as well as frequently asked questions addressing eligibility and the submission process.

Jean:

Like you said, Ma'am, it's just that easy. Deb, would you provide some information on current details about the memorial?

Deb:

Oh, absolutely. So, very easy process. Family members can submit their eligible loved ones for recognition with the memorial website, which is only available online.

So, no mailing in, no postage stamps, but all online. So, most service members who died while on active duty from 1985 to present, and served honorably, are eligible for recognition on the memorial.

This is the only DOD website that not only honors those that die in the combat zone, but also during peacetime. So, the submission process is very easy, as I've said. Family members, if they have access to the DD Form 1300, which is the Report of Casualty, they can access that document, answer some simple questions and submit a photo of their service member, and they will then be posted on that website.

Jean:

So Deb, why does the memorial only include service members who died from 1985 to present?

Deb:

Deaths prior to 1985 do require validation. All of those records are housed at the National Personnel Records Center and, unfortunately, due to COVID restrictions, they are not fully open at this time. So, we are dedicated to expanding our site to those

service members who died prior to 1985, and once the National Personnel Record Center opens up, we'll be able to start that coordination process with them.

Jean:

As we're wrapping up, Ma'am, Deb, do you have any closing comments?

Patricia:

This is such a bittersweet day, Memorial Day.

It's a day when our memories just come flooding back. For many of our surviving family members, and even their now-adult children, it's a time to reflect on what your, what could have been, and what your current life situation is now. But more than anything else, it's a time to remember and to thank and to be grateful for the kinds of Americans that will step up and say, "Send me."

Just very honored by that fact and also very, very proud that we were able to put this memorial up online.

Deb:

So, Jean, it's, I wholeheartedly agree with Mrs. Barron. It's a wonderful site, and it really is a tribute to our service members and not only them, but to the family members that they've left behind.

So, on Memorial Day, we want to recognize the service members, remember them and invite all of our surviving family members, who are just so important to us, to come to this site, visit it and think about submitting your service member to the Military In Lasting Tribute site.

Jean:

While the Military In Lasting Tribute memorial was created to honor our deceased service members, know that we are equally committed to caring for and helping those who survived them, moving forward.

Visit MilitaryOneSource.mil to access resources and support.

Visit the memorial at Tribute.MilitaryOneSource.mil to view, remember and honor the men and women who died while serving our nation. We'll have a link to the memorial in this episode's notes.

Mrs. Barron, the deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy, and Ms. Skillman, the director of Casualty and Mortuary Affairs, thank you to both of you for being here with us today, and have a wonderful Memorial Day.

Jean:

Thanks for joining this episode of the Military OneSource podcast, brought to you by the Defense Department.

Be sure to subscribe, because we'll be covering all aspects of military life. And as always, you could connect with us at any time at MilitaryOneSource.mil.

Thanks so much for listening. I'm Jean Gibbs. Goodbye.