# Angeles City VFW Post 2485
## District 7 (Philippines)
## Department of Pacific Areas
## Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States

June 23, 2011

Mr. Trevor Dean
Office of The Honorable Jim Webb
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Dean;

I am writing in response to your inquiry concerning our administration of the Clark Veterans Cemetery.

The cemetery, located on the former USAF base at Clark Field, Pampanga, Philippines was abandoned and forgotten by our government when the U.S. forces left the country in 1992. In 1994, after observing two years of neglect and decay, VFW Post 2485 stepped forward and conducted a massive clean-up and restored it to the best of our ability. We then entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Clark Development Corporation (CDC), the Philippine Government entity responsible for Clark, to administer and maintain the cemetery. I am attaching a copy of that agreement.

Under the terms of the agreement, the Philippine Government has allowed only U.S. Veterans and Filipino Scouts who served in the U.S. Army to continue to be buried there. Since the VFW assumed administration of the cemetery in 1994, 362 service members have been interred. In each case, our Post renders honors for our fellow comrades. All interments since 1994 were in fact veterans, and in each case and every case, and in accordance with the terms of the MOA, the family produced a valid DD-214 and death certificate which we must present to CDC for their approval. The Department of Veterans Affairs provides the headstone and burial flag.

I have attached a complete listing of those buried in the cemetery. We update this listing with every new burial. The VFW maintains records as best we can, however, and unfortunately, records of the old Fort McKinley remains that were relocated to Clark in 1948 are not available, and the old USAF records from 1948-1991 are similarly unavailable other than the master record I have attached. I would like to point out that since 1949, after the Clark Cemetery was created, 93% of all burials were either U.S. military or dependents of U.S. military, and since we assumed responsibility in 1994, 100% have been exclusively veterans. I know there have been a lot of allegations or

innuendos about the remains in the cemetery, but I think if you analyze the master listing you will find that there are circumstances that dictated that all those interred were buried in U.S. military cemeteries because it was in the best interest of the U.S. Government.

For example, please note that in April-May 1975, nine Vietnamese refugees were buried in the cemetery and during the period December 7, 1941 and the outbreak of WWII until 1947, 37 burials took place in Fort McKinley, the majority of whom were American civilians or dependents of civilians who were trapped during the war. We also would like to point out that the over 2,100 Unknowns buried in the cemetery were the result of heavy fighting during the liberation of Manila which took place in and around the old Fort McKinley Military Cemetery which caused damage to many graves and caused records to be lost. We also know that there are individuals categorized as Civilians who are in fact Veterans, so it is very difficult to say with certainty the exact numbers in each category. However it is clear that the majority are veterans spanning every war since the Spanish American War along with authorized others (civilians trapped during the war, Vietnamese refugees the U.S. Government hosted, etc).

I would also like to point out that the former U.S. Fort McKinley Military Cemetery and its successor, the Clark Veterans Cemetery (formerly Fort Stotsenburg), were budgeted, managed, administered and controlled exclusively by the U.S. Government up through 1991….and by definition, all remains therefore were authorized by the U.S. Government to be buried there. At no time during its history did the Philippine Government or others administer the cemetery. It is only through an administrative oversight and lack of awareness at the time of the base closure negotiations that the cemetery fell through the cracks. We must fix that now.

The Clark Veterans Cemetery has a rich and storied history. While we are pleased to honor our fellow comrades through our voluntary efforts, and we all salute the efforts of the Clark Veterans Cemetery Restoration Association (CVCRA), Peregrine Development International and Del Marco Marble Company, it is simply not enough. This cemetery deserves to be recognized and administered by the U.S. Government, and we applaud your efforts to bring this matter to the attention of Senator Webb.

Warriors would never leave anyone behind on the battlefield….so too, we should never forget the sacrifices of our veterans. Please help us ensure no veteran is ever abandoned. LET NO VET BE FORGOTTEN!

Sincerely;

Robert Chesko
Commander