



**Department of
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News Release

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VA Awards \$3.7 Million for El Paso Cemetery Project

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has awarded more than \$3.7 million for a construction project at Fort Bliss National Cemetery in El Paso.

“With the further development at this national shrine, VA will ensure that memorial benefits for Texas and New Mexico Veterans are available for many more years,” VA’s Acting Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs Steve Muro said.

Design and construction contracts totaling \$3,740,935 were awarded to M. R. Tafoya Construction Company Inc. of Albuquerque, N.M., a service-disabled, Veteran-owned small business.

The project to install 5,000 pre-placed crypts in three existing burial sections began June 1. Landscaping and water-wise restoration of the area is included.

The cemetery is in the central section of El Paso on the far north side of the Fort Bliss Military Reservation. Situated on 82.1 acres, the cemetery accommodates casketed and cremated remains.

Fort Bliss was established in the late 1840s at the end of the Mexican-American War. Although there are no definitive dates for the establishment of the first post cemetery, records indicate the first interment was made in 1883 and 16 burials were made prior to 1890.

In 1914, Fort Bliss changed from an infantry to a cavalry post. At that time, the area set aside as a post cemetery totaled 2.2 acres with a capacity of 800 graves. In 1936, Congress authorized establishing a national cemetery at Fort Bliss, but funds were not appropriated for construction until 1939 and interments began in 1940.

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Ft. Bliss Cemetery Construction 2/2/2/2

Today, the cemetery serves an estimated 57,000 Veterans in western Texas and southern New Mexico. Approximately 1,300 burials are conducted each year. Fort Bliss National Cemetery staff also maintains Fort Bayard National Cemetery, located approximately 150 miles away near Silver City, N.M.

Veterans with a discharge under conditions other than dishonorable, their spouses and eligible dependent children can be buried in a national cemetery. Other burial benefits include a burial flag, a Presidential Memorial Certificate and a government headstone or marker – even if they are not buried in a national cemetery.

In the midst of the largest cemetery expansion since the Civil War, VA now operates 128 national cemeteries in 39 states and Puerto Rico and 33 soldiers' lots and monument sites. More than three million Americans, including Veterans of every war and conflict — from the Revolutionary War to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan — are buried in VA's national cemeteries on more than 18,000 acres of land.

Information on VA burial benefits can be obtained from national cemetery offices, from the Internet at <http://www.cem.va.gov> or by calling VA regional offices toll-free at 1-800-827-1000. To make burial arrangements at the time of need, call the national cemetery scheduling office at (800) 535-1117.

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