

April 4, 2007

ABMC POLICY LETTER NO. 05-01

SUBJECT: COROZAL AMERICAN CEMETERY INTERMENT AND DISINTERMENT
POLICY

1. Purpose. The Corozal Cemetery has a very limited number of available gravesites. When all these sites are filled the cemetery will be closed and all interments, without regard to eligibility, will stop. This policy establishes eligibility and procedures for interments and disinterments within the Corozal American Cemetery. This policy may not be changed without the approval of the Executive Director, American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC).

2. Eligibility. The following personnel are eligible for interment at Corozal American Cemetery:

a. United States citizens who are honorably discharged veterans of the armed forces and United States citizens who were employees of the former Panama Canal Commission before the turnover in 2000 are eligible for internment at Corozal American Cemetery. These identified citizens must be residing in the Republic of Panama at the time of their death.

b. Members of the U.S. armed forces who die on active duty and were born or have immediate family members permanently residing in the Republic of Panama.

c. Immediate family members of eligible veterans and former Panama Canal Commission employees that are residing in Panama at the time of their death. This includes husbands or wives of those eligible as well as minor children. Maximum age of minor children of eligible personnel is between 18 and 23 years of age, depending on whether or not the child is a student and a recognized dependent at the time of death.

d. Individuals who reserved a cemetery plot in Corozal American Cemetery prior to the June 2000 execution of the agreement between the United States and Panama concerning the cemetery. There was a specified period of time announced in the Canal Zone before the execution of the agreement, but it has long since closed. The cemetery no longer accepts reservations.

3. Exceptional Circumstances. If survivors of an individual that does not meet the above criteria believe that interment in Corozal American Cemetery should be approved due to exceptional circumstances, such survivors may submit a request setting forth these circumstances through the Cemetery Superintendent to the Executive Director, ABMC. No interment is authorized pursuant to this section without written approval from the ABMC headquarters.

4. Documentation. The following documentation is required for interment in the Corozal American Cemetery:

- a. Members of the armed forces and veterans.
 - (1) DD 214, Military Identification Card or Honorable Discharge.
 - (2) Certificate of Death.
 - (3) Original copy of Interment Permit, obtained through the funeral home.
 - (4) Copy of Panamanian Cedula or Passport Visa to prove residence in the Republic of Panama.
 - b. Civilians.
 - (1) Panama Canal Identification Card or other documentation of employment.
 - (2) U.S. Passport for those who were Canal Commission employees.
 - (3) Certificate of Death.
 - (4) Original copy of Interment Permit, obtained through the funeral home.
 - (5) Copy of Panamanian Cedula or Passport Visa to prove residence in the Republic of Panama.
 - (6) For immediate family member interment: Marriage Certificate to identify marriage date and partner (for spouse based eligibility) or Birth Certificate to identify parents and age (for dependent child eligibility).
5. Procedures:
- a. The Corozal American Cemetery is not responsible for providing interment or disinterment services.
 - b. The survivors of the deceased must coordinate with the Corozal American Cemetery at least seventy-two hours (3 days) prior to interment to confirm eligibility and grave location. Burials are not conducted on the weekends or on American or Panamanian holidays. Corozal American Cemetery provides the burial plot free of charge for those that are qualified and there are no monthly or yearly maintenance fees charged for the burial plot.
 - c. Corozal American Cemetery does not provide headstones but will facilitate the obtaining of a headstone from the Department of Veterans Affairs for honorably discharged veterans of the U.S. armed forces and their immediate family members. The legal representative of the deceased must sign VA Form 40-1330 immediately following the completion of the interment to order the headstone; the headstone cannot be ordered until the applicant signs this form. If a VA headstone is provided it usually takes 3 to 4 months to arrive; it will be placed free of charge upon arrival. Corozal American Cemetery is not responsible for the replacement of headstones that deteriorate over time. A basic cleaning of headstones is conducted periodically by the cemetery workforce but the ultimate responsibility for care, maintenance and repair of the

headstone rests with the family. The family will be responsible for any changes or corrections to the headstone after its arrival.

d. Corozal American Cemetery, in accordance with a 1979 cemetery transfer agreement, is not responsible for digging burial holes. The family is responsible for the burial hole and is responsible for contracting this work. The funeral home must contact the Corozal American Cemetery the day prior to the burial to ensure this is completed. The burial holes for urns should be 2 feet deep, 1.5 feet in length and 1.5 feet in width. The burial hole for a casket should be a minimum of 4 feet deep, 7 feet in length and 3 feet in width. If the burial hole is not dug or not dug to standard, the burial will be postponed to the following day without exception.

e. In accordance with local law, two caskets will not be placed together in the same burial plot. Cremated remains that are contained in an urn may be buried with the remains of previously interred immediate family members. This includes the urn of an immediate family member that died in the United States and is not eligible for his/her personal gravesite in the cemetery. Only the remains of immediate family, i.e., husbands, wives and dependent children as identified in paragraph II.C. may be buried together in the same plot. These burials require written approval of the designated point of contact (POC) listed in the Corozal American Cemetery burial data base, or an ABMC-approved successor POC. Those intending to transport remains from the United States to Panama must coordinate in advance with the Corozal American Cemetery to ensure that proper documentation and eligibility requirements are met. Additional coordination must be made with the closest Panamanian Consulate before arriving in Panama to fulfill Panamanian Department of Health requirements. The family is responsible for adding names to the existing headstone.

f. The survivors of the deceased must coordinate any funeral service or funeral mass through a local church or funeral contractor. The Corozal American Cemetery no longer has a chapel area to provide this service. Graveside services are permitted provided they are conducted in a quiet, reverent manner that respects the peace of all that are buried here. Corozal American Cemetery will not coordinate veteran's graveside services. Graveside services may be coordinated with a veteran's organization and coordinated by the family with that organization. The Corozal American Cemetery does not supply overhead cover, chairs or elevators for the burial service; these must be contracted by the family separately.

g. After the service is completed and the grave has been filled, Corozal American Cemetery representatives will inspect the site. When it is determined that all is in order, the family will be provided with a Disposition of Remains Form.

h. Corozal American Cemetery does not provide or coordinate burials at other national cemeteries such as Arlington National Cemetery. These cemeteries must be contacted individually by those who are interested in burial information for those locations.

6. Disinterment:

a. Interment of eligible decedents is considered permanent and final. Disinterment will be permitted only for cogent reasons and with the prior written authorization of the ABMC Executive Director. Disinterment will be approved only when all living immediate family members of the decedent, and the person who initiated the interment (whether or not he or she is a member of the immediate family), give their written consent, or when a court of competent jurisdiction directs the disinterment.

- b. If the requirements set forth above are met, the following requirements will apply:
- (1) The family of the deceased must coordinate with the Corozal American Cemetery and provide the extraction date and a copy of the “Permiso de Exhumacion” issued by the Metropolitan Region, Department of Health.
 - (2) The family of the deceased must coordinate with a local contractor to extract the remains, exhume the site and for the destruction and removal of the casket and headstone. The burial site should be left in its original condition (i.e., the hole will be filled with dirt and the grass re-sodded so that a 6-inch mound is protruding above the ground that will allow for settlement).
 - (3) Corozal American Cemetery will inspect the site and, after all is in order, will provide a Disposition of Remains Form and remove the name from the cemetery registry.
 - (4) Once remains are removed the gravesite becomes available for other burials.
7. This letter supercedes ABMC Policy Letter 05-01 dated August 17, 2005.

William J. Leszczynski, Jr.
Brigadier General, US Army (Ret)
Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer

CHECKLIST FOR VETERANS & THEIR IMMEDIATE FAMILY MEMBERS

1. At least 72 hours (3 working days) prior to the funeral the family must contact Corozal American Cemetery. Eligibility of the deceased will be determined when the proper documentation for burial is presented. A representative of the family of the deceased must present the proper documentation in person before Corozal American Cemetery proceeds with any burial arrangements. All coordination must be done in person at the Corozal American Cemetery Visitor Center and not by phone or by faxing documentation. The family representative will be briefed upon arrival and given a copy of the Corozal American Cemetery interment policy letter and regulations.
2. Failure to produce all of the required documentation will delay the burial arrangements. All correct documentation must be presented before any action is initiated. The following documents are required:
 - a. DD 214, Military Identification Card or Honorable Discharge.
 - b. Certificate of Death.
 - c. Copy of Panamanian cedula or Passport Visa to prove residence in the Republic of Panama.
 - d. Interment for immediate family members: Marriage Certificate to identify marriage date and partner (for spouse based eligibility) or Birth Certificate to identify parents and age (for dependent child eligibility).
3. The family must coordinate the excavation of the burial site after the initial coordination with the Corozal American Cemetery is conducted. The family is responsible to contract out the digging of burial holes for both urns and caskets and ensuring that they are completed 24 hours (1 day) prior to the burial. Corozal American Cemetery is not responsible for this action and will delay burials for 24 hours or longer if the holes have not been completed.
4. Twenty-four hours (1 day) prior to the burial the funeral home must contact the cemetery and confirm that all is ready for the burial. It is the responsibility of the family, not Corozal American Cemetery, to ensure this takes place. A member of the family of the deceased or the funeral director should physically inspect the burial site with the superintendent or designated representative of Corozal American Cemetery to ensure the burial hole is completed and that all has been properly prepared for the interment. The family of the deceased, not Corozal American Cemetery, is responsible to ensure all is ready for the interment at the burial site.
5. The funeral director will present the Corozal American Cemetery with the original copy of the Interment Permit upon arrival the day of the burial.
6. After the burial is completed the legal representative of the deceased must sign VA Form 40-1330, which is an application for a U.S. Government headstone. A Disposition of Remains form will also be given at this time to the legal representative of the deceased at the Corozal American Cemetery Visitor Center.

CHECKLIST FOR CIVILIANS

1. At least 72 hours (3 working days) prior to the funeral the family must contact Corozal American Cemetery. Eligibility of the deceased will be determined when the proper documentation for burial is presented. A representative of the family of the deceased must present the proper documentation in person before Corozal American Cemetery proceeds with any burial arrangements. All coordination must be done in person at the Corozal American Cemetery Visitor Center and not by phone or by faxing documentation. The family representative will be briefed upon arrival and given a copy of the Corozal American Cemetery interment policy letter and regulations.
2. Failure to produce all of the required documentation will delay the burial arrangements. All correct documentation must be presented before any action is initiated. The following documents are required:
 - a. Panama Canal Identification Card or other documentation of PCC employment.
 - b. U.S. Passport for those who were Canal Commission employees.
 - c. Copy of the death certificate.
 - d. Copy of Panamanian cedula or Passport Visa to prove residence in the Republic of Panama.
 - e. Interment for immediate family members: Marriage Certificate to identify marriage date and partner (for spouse based eligibility) or Birth Certificate to identify parents and age (for dependent child eligibility).
3. The family must coordinate the excavation of the burial site after the initial coordination with the Corozal American Cemetery is conducted. The family is responsible to contract out the digging of burial holes for both urns and caskets and ensuring that they are completed 24 hours (1 day) prior to the burial. Corozal American Cemetery is not responsible for this action and will delay burials for 24 hours or longer if the holes have not been completed.
4. Twenty-four hours (1 day) prior to the burial the funeral home must contact the cemetery and confirm that all is ready for the burial. It is the responsibility of the family, not Corozal American Cemetery, to ensure this takes place. A member of the family of the deceased or the funeral director should physically inspect the burial site with the superintendent or designated representative of Corozal American Cemetery to ensure the burial hole is completed and that all has been properly prepared for the interment. The family of the deceased, not Corozal American Cemetery, is responsible to ensure all is ready for the interment at the burial site.
5. The funeral director will present the Corozal American Cemetery with the original copy of Interment Permit upon arrival the day of the burial.
6. After the burial is concluded the family is responsible to order and place the headstone. This must be coordinated with the Corozal American Cemetery administration prior to actual installment.