

USASMA Veterans Day service planned

MASTER SGT. ERIC PILGRIM

U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy

Leaders and students from the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy will conduct a special Veterans Day service in front of Biggs Army Airfield Chapel at noon today to remember local military heroes killed during the Global War on Terrorism.

Sponsored by the El Paso Sergeants Major Association and

the academy, the service will include a special roll call for 28 uniformed service personnel, all either from the El Paso area or stationed in El Paso when they were killed in combat.

"This is an opportunity for veterans to honor the memory of their fallen comrades while simultaneously honoring our commitment to care for the families left behind," said Chap. (Maj.) Mark Johnston, the academy chaplain. He further

explained this will be the first time all the families will meet each other.

Family members of each of the fallen heroes were formally invited by military officials to participate in the service; more than 85 of them to date are planning to attend. Some are even traveling from as far away as South Carolina to be at the 45-minute service. Academy leaders say this is the first time many of the family members will meet each other.

Several dignitaries and local officials have been invited, including Maj. Gen. Robert P. Lennox, commanding general of the U.S. Army Air Defense Artillery Center and Fort Bliss. Lennox has been involved in the burial of at least six of the honored warriors and will be the guest speaker at this service.

The ceremony will include posting of the colors, playing of Taps, a 21-gun salute, a musical tribute, tolling of the bell for each fallen hero and an unveiling of specially engraved granite benches commemorating the event. As well, the names of each hero will be posted on the columns of the bell tower at Biggs Chapel. Seating is very limited; be prepared to stand. Uniform for the event is the duty uniform.



SPC. JOSEPH EDMUNDSON

Freddy Escamilla, USASMA, is assisted by two maintenance workers in affixing plaques onto the memorial walls of the bell tower that will bear the names of the fallen 28.

Army's Old Guard recognizes the wounded

SPC. BRIAN K. PARKER

Old Guard Public Affairs

FORT MYER, Va. - With Veterans Day approaching, citizens have begun looking at the sacrifices servicemembers have endured to protect the freedoms of America.

Last Friday, the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard) recognized individuals who made huge sacrifices in support of Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom by hosting patients from Walter Reed Army Medical Center to an all-day event.

Cpt. Eric Stainbrook, Staff Sergeants Mia Sidlasky and Eric Sundell, Sgt. Ryan Hackett and Marine Lance Cpl. Brian Ahern laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National

Cemetery in front of fellow servicemembers and civilians to pay tribute to those who gave the ultimate sacrifice.

"Being at the Tomb was very somber and very humbling. It was a great experience to pay respects and see all the people watching and paying their own respects," said 2nd Lt. Walter B. Jackson, a WRAMC patient.

Following the wreath ceremony, Tomb Sentinels Staff Sgt. Stephen Kuehn, Sgt. Christopher Moore and Spc. Matthew Perovich led the patients through ANC on buses, highlighting historical gravesites and markers along the way.

Patients then had time to interact with members of The Old Guard while being treated to lunch at the Fort Myer Dining Facility.

"The dining facility was a great opportunity for our Soldiers to get to know the patients on a personal level. I think some friendship bonds were being formed and that is a positive thing," said Sgt. Jeremy Kern, a bus escort.

The patients also visited The Old Guard stables, where the horses that walk in ANC funerals are housed and maintained by the Caisson Platoon, a unique group of Soldiers qualified to ride on horses during funerals.

The day finished with performances by the U.S. Army Drill Team, Fife and Drum Corps, The U.S. Army Band (Pershing's Own) Choral Singers and an NCO-led full-honor review ceremony.

"The review was amazing. I felt very privileged to be honored like that. The professionalism and caring The Old Guard demonstrated was outstanding," Jackson said.

The Old Guard Regimental Commander, Col. Bob Pricone, addressed the patients during the ceremony.

"Our Soldiers wanted you to know that we have the utmost respect and admiration for what you have endured and continue to endure in the defense of freedom at home and around the world," he said.

"We thank you for answering your country's call, putting your boots on the ground in a physical demonstration of America's commitment to pay any price, bear any burden and meet any challenge and defeat any enemy that stands between the blessings of freedom and the people who desire to live with those blessings."



SPC. BRIAN K. PARKER

Staff Sgt. Mia Sidlasky, a patient from Walter Reed Army Medical Center, salutes with Old Guard Soldier Staff Sgt. Ebony Y. Flowers at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier Nov. 3.



President, senate recognize Nat'l Veterans Awareness Week

DONNA MILES

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON - President Bush officially declared this week National Veterans Awareness Week and urged all Americans to honor veterans who "stepped forward when America needed them most."

As the president proclaimed a weeklong tribute to the nation's 25 million veterans, the U.S. Senate issued a resolution encouraging Americans to commemorate it by teaching young people about the contributions veterans have made through the country's history.

Bush issued a proclamation paying tribute to "America's men and women in uniform (who) have defeated tyrants, liberated continents and set a standard of courage and idealism for the entire world."

Military members have protected the United States through its history, he said, placing the country's security before their own lives in a way the country can never repay. "Our veterans represent the best of America, and they deserve the best America can give them," he said.

The president urged Americans to pause this Veterans Day to honor it's the country's soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen and to remember that defending freedom involves "great loss and sacrifice."

"This Veterans Day, we give thanks to those who have served freedom's cause," he said. "We salute the members of our armed forces who are confronting our adversaries abroad."

The president paid special tribute to "the men and women who left America's shores but did not live to be thanked as veterans."

"They will always be remembered by our country," he said.

Meanwhile, a Senate resolution designating this week National Veterans Awareness Week emphasizes the need to develop educational programs regarding veterans' contributions to the country.

Senate Resolution 507 recognizes the tens of millions of Americans who have served in the armed forces during the past century and the hundreds of thousands who have given their lives in that service.

It notes that the all-volunteer force has resulted in "sharp decline" in the number of Americans personally connected to the military and, as a result, the decrease in young people's awareness about "the nature and importance of the accomplishments of those who have served in the armed forces."

Recognizing that the system of civilian control of the military "makes it essential that future leaders ... understand the history of military action and the contributions and sacrifices of those who conduct such actions," the Senate resolution encourages Veterans Day activities that focus on related educational programs.

Veterans Day School Kits for teachers as well as students are posted on the VA Web site to support those programs.