

Senate names Pete Geren 20th Secretary of the Army

WASHINGTON – The Honorable Pete Geren became the 20th Secretary of the Army Friday, following his nomination by President George W. Bush and confirmation by the U.S. Senate.



Pete Geren

As Secretary of the Army, Geren has statutory responsibility for all matters relating to the U.S. Army: manpower, personnel, reserve affairs, installations, environmental issues, weapons systems and equipment acquisition, communications and financial management.

Geren is responsible for the Department of the Army's annual budget and supplemental of \$170 billion. He leads a work force of more than one million active-duty and reserve-component Soldiers, 230,000 Department of the Army civilian employees and 280,000 contracted service personnel.

Caring for Soldiers and their families has been Geren's top priority since his days serving as the 28th Under Secretary of the Army.

Geren was the Under Secretary of the Army until Feb. 21, 2006. He was named Acting Secretary of the Army March 9.

Geren joined the Defense Department in September of 2001 to serve as Special Assistant to the Secretary of Defense with responsibilities in the areas of inter-agency initiatives, legislative affairs and special projects. He also served as Acting Secretary of the Air Force from July to November 2005.

From 1989 until his retirement in 1997, Geren was a member of the U.S. Congress, representing the 12th Congressional District of Texas for four terms. He served on the Armed Services, Science and Technology and the Public Works and Transportation committees during his tenure in Congress.

DoD increases R&R policy

WASHINGTON - The Department of Defense approved Wednesday a policy change to the U.S. Central Command Rest and Recuperation Leave Program, increasing the time provided to military servicemembers for rest and recuperation in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom.

The policy change, signed by David S. C. Chu, undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness, increases the R&R leave period from 15 to 18 chargeable days for those servicemembers deploying to the OEF and OIF area of operations for 15 months.

The amended policy became effective July 13, applies to military personnel only and is not retroactive. Only servicemembers who took leave on or after July 13 may take 18 days of leave.

Servicemembers will not be charged for their travel days. The R&R leave begins when the servicemember arrives at the commercial airport nearest their leave destination.

Servicemembers serving one-year tours will continue to receive 15 days of chargeable R&R leave.

The amended R&R policy came as a result of the recent DoD change to the rotation and mobilization policy increasing some theater deployments to 15-month tours.

4-1 Cav. honors fallen Soldiers

VIRGINIA REZA

Monitor Staff

Four fallen Soldiers of the 4th Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division were honored Wednesday during a memorial ceremony at Soldiers Hall.

The fallen warriors, Spc. Jeremiah D. Costello, Spc. Keith V. Nepsa, Spc. Joseph P. Kenny and Pfc. Raymond N. Spencer deployed to Southwest Asia in late October, early November 2006, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"Thank you for joining us today, as we pause to recognize four fallen brothers in arms," said Maj. Jerry Sheppard, 4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Rear Detachment commander, "four Americans who stood on freedoms frontier for the love of freedom, the love of mankind and human rights. We gather to comfort each other and to be inspired by the example that these warriors have left for us all. These heroes are now a part of the newest greatest generation.

"To my fallen brothers in arms, you have served us proudly," he said. "Your nation owes you a debt of gratitude for your service. From now until the end of the world we and it shall be remembered we few, we happy few, we band of brothers for he who sheds his blood with me shall be my brother. Our collective band of brothers is sadly a bit smaller today, but never let us forget their love of family, their love of their profession and their love of nation. We pledge to each of you, we will never forget."

Spc. Arturo Villareal, 4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div., Nepsa's friend and fellow Soldier, said Nepsa was a good son, brother friend and Soldier. He thought of him as a hard working loyal friend. Villareal said he would never forget Nepsa, but the one thing he remembered the most was his fashion attire.

"[Especially] his pink striped shirt he would wear most of the time when we would go out," said Villareal. "I would tell him 'hey what's up with the pink shirt.' He would say 'shut up you drunk, I'm a sexy.' A lot of good memories will be with us about him and he will live in our hearts forever. Rest in peace brother."

Sgt. Ruben Gonzalez, 4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div., said it was not easy to write about Costello.

"My dilemma surfaced while I was trying to explain what a great person Jeremiah was," said Gonzalez. "I realized my words will not give justice to how special [he was]. I had the honor and privilege of attending the funeral services and have to say that after meeting his community, the love for this



DANIELA VESTAL

Displays honoring Spc. Keith V. Nepsa, Spc. Jeremiah D. Costello, Spc. Joseph P. Kenny and Pfc. Raymond N. Spencer lined the stage at Soldiers Hall Wednesday during a memorial ceremony.

young man spread much further than just his immediate family. He is much loved and adored by all who were fortunate enough to know him.

"I served with Jeremiah Costello in Iraq," said Gonzalez. "I have been witness to the level of dedication he had for the Army and our unit. He never had a bad thing to say about anyone. Jeremiah fully understood the importance of being prepared for the mission with his trademarked rosy red cheeks and his calm country drawl the Soldier definitely put smiles on the faces of all who had pleasure of knowing him. Jeremiah would not ask us to cry for his passing, but instead celebrate his life and the joy he spread for anyone he knew him."

Sgt. 1st Class Orlando Garcia, 4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div., spoke of Kenny and compared him to Forrest Gump because of his running abilities. He told stories of how Kenny would pass everyone in 10-mile runs to get to the guidon bearer and take the guidon from him. Garcia said Kenny had been promoted to specialist and was presented with a commander's coin for excellence from general [David Howell] Petraeus. He was also going to appear before the noncommissioned officer promotion board next month with only one year and 11 months in service, he said. He also remembers Kenny as a very quiet and dedicated Soldier.

"[He was] always there always ready," Garcia said. "Specialist Kenny was always striving for the max and was on a fast track to success. Our chain of command used words like loyalty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity and personal courage to describe Specialist Kenny. It was an honor to have served with and to have known such a fine Soldier and human being with God's speed may he rest in peace.

Sgt. Rick Sones, 4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div., remembers Spencer as a bright Soldier.

"I first met Specialist Spencer as he entered the unit for in-processing," Sones said. "At that time, Specialist Spencer along with seven other Soldiers filled our ample paperwork. He was the only one, out of all the other Soldiers that did the paperwork correctly the first time. At that time I realized this Soldier would shine and he never stopped. When I started this eulogy, I asked myself what is a hero? A hero has a heart not just a heart to pump blood to the body. A hero has a heart for people. Specialist Spencer had a hero's heart. A hero makes sure everything is done to a highest standard. Every task that he was given he would give it 100 percent. A hero respects people all people [regardless] of race, creed or religion. A hero has to be outstanding, Specialist Spencer, as a man, Soldier and infantryman was just that. Specialist Spencer we will never forget you. You will always be in our hearts and always be a part of the Second Battalion, First Cavalry Division. Keep shining Spencer, keep shining."

Costello, 22, and Nepsa, 21, died June 2, in Qayyarah, Iraq of wounds sustained when an improvised explosive device detonated near their vehicle. They were assigned to 5th Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment. Spencer, 23, died June 21, in Baghdad, Iraq of wounds sustained when his unit was attacked by insurgents using an improvised explosive device and small arms fire. He was assigned to 2nd Battalion, 12th Cav. Regiment. Kenny, 20, died June 23 of a non-combat related incident. He was assigned to the 27th Brigade Support Battalion.

Facility

Continued from Page 1

2006, he realized the merits of the center and fully supported it.

"Our goal is to return Soldiers to full functioning level, back to duty as soon as possible," Powell said. "This is a focused effort to keep Soldiers in the Army using nontraditional medicines along with known mental health treatment protocols."

Soldiers returning from World War II were diagnosed as being shell shocked. However, following the Vietnam War, many veterans developed psychological symptoms that led to impaired functioning. Today, this impaired functioning is defined as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Fortunato said symptoms may vary among patients, but include flashbacks of the tragic event, detachment,

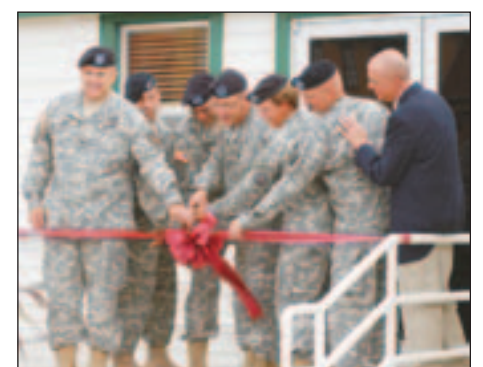
difficulties within the family, memory lapses and nightmares.

"Our goal is to successfully transition the Soldier from the gut-reaction conditioning he developed to cope on the battlefield back to life on the home front," he said. "With teamwork they will be taught how to quiet-down and modify their behavior, taking small steps. Soldiers will learn successive desensitization techniques and individualized relaxation exercises."

The program will link in with the Soldier's spiritual beliefs. Behavioral health studies have shown that an individual's spiritual practice is linked to a greater likelihood of recovery.

"Through this recovery process, we believe we can mend the Soldier's broken spirit and return him to his passion as a career Soldier," Fortunato said.

For information about the center and access, call 569-3223 or 3602.



PAUL FERRIS

Cutting the ribbon for the opening of the Fort Bliss Restoration and Resilience Center are, from left, Col. Robert T. Burns, Garrison commander; Brig. Gen. James K. Gilman, Great Plains Regional Medical Command commanding general; Col. Heidi V. Brown, deputy commander; and Col. John A. Powell, WBAMC commander. Dr. John E. Fortunato, chief of the center, looks on.