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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 2, 2013

VA Acquires More Than 247 Acres to Continue Memorial Benefits for Veterans

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently acquired 247.4 acres of land in Morovis, Puerto Rico, to prevent the loss of burial benefits to Puerto Rico’s Veterans when the Puerto Rico National Cemetery, located in Bayamón, closes to new casketed interments sometime in 2022.

“Veterans in Puerto Rico have earned the right to burial in a national shrine,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “We are committed to replacing Puerto Rico National Cemetery so that Veterans will continue to have a final resting place and lasting tribute to their service and sacrifice for years to come.”

VA closed on the Morovis property, located off PR Route 137, in March for approximately \$7.6 million. The replacement site is located about 28 miles from the existing cemetery. There is no possibility for expansion adjacent to the original cemetery because the property is surrounded by commercial and residential development.

Puerto Rico National Cemetery became a national cemetery on July 12, 1948. The cemetery serves approximately 107,480 Veterans in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Situated on 108.2 acres, of which 99 have been developed, the cemetery accommodates casketed and cremated remains. More than 1,700 burials were conducted in fiscal year 2012.

Puerto Rico National Cemetery is the only national cemetery located outside of the United States. More than 56,000 Veterans and family members are interred there.

Veterans with a discharge issued under conditions other than dishonorable, their spouses and eligible dependent children can be buried in a VA national cemetery. Also eligible are military personnel who die on active duty, their spouses and eligible dependents. Other burial benefits available for all eligible Veterans, regardless of whether they are buried in a national cemetery or a private cemetery, include a burial flag, a Presidential Memorial Certificate and a government headstone or marker. Families of eligible decedents may also order a memorial headstone or marker when remains are not available for interment.

In the midst of the largest expansion since the Civil War, VA operates 131 national cemeteries in 39 states and Puerto Rico and 33 soldiers' lots and monument sites. More than 3.8 million Americans, including Veterans of every war and conflict, are buried in VA’s national cemeteries.

Information on VA burial benefits can be obtained from national cemetery offices, from the

Internet at [www.cem.va.gov](http://www.cem.va.gov) or by calling VA regional offices toll-free at 800-827-1000. To make burial arrangements at the time of need at the Puerto Rico National Cemetery, call 787-798-8400 or 8413, Monday thru Friday, between the hours of 7:30 am to 4:00 pm.

To make burial arrangements at any other open VA national cemetery, call the National Cemetery Scheduling Office at 800-535-1117, 7 days a week, between the hours of 7:00 am to 6:30 pm CDT. For more information on Puerto Rico National Cemetery, call the cemetery office at 787-798-8400.

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