March 2, 2023

The Honorable Lloyd J. Austin, III
Secretary
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Secretary Austin:

Nearly 1.8 million courageous Americans valiantly served in theater during the Korean War, and their legacy of service and sacrifice is enshrined in the Korean War Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. Since the Memorial’s dedication on July 27, 1995, millions of visitors have paid tribute to the bravery of our Korean War veterans. In 2016, Congress authorized a new Wall of Remembrance (Remembrance Wall) to honor more than 36,000 American servicemembers who died in theater in support of what is often called “The Forgotten War.” The intent of the Remembrance Wall is to “eternally honor the brave Americans who gave their lives in defense of freedom during the Korean War,” ensuring that their sacrifices are not forgotten.

Recent reports, however, claim that the newly unveiled Remembrance Wall may contain more than 1,000 spelling errors and hundreds of additional inaccuracies. As part of the law enacting the Remembrance Wall, Congress directed the Department of Defense (DOD) to develop criteria for including names on the Remembrance Wall and transmit a complete, accurate list based on such criteria to the Department of the Interior (DOI). The law also prohibited the use of federal funds to construct the Remembrance Wall. A non-profit organization, the Korean War Veterans Memorial Foundation (Foundation), constructed the wall using official information from DOD for the names of the fallen and worked with DOI for the design and placement of the Remembrance Wall. Discrepancies related to the number of names listed on the Remembrance Wall for both American veterans and members of the Korean Augmentation to the U.S. Army remain today on the websites of DOD, DOI, and the Foundation.

5 Id.
Errors of this magnitude should not have made it past the initial blueprints, much less
carved into stone, and certainly not erected and unveiled to the public. We find these errors
deeply concerning and write to seek accountability on how the Remembrance Wall’s glaring
flaws went unnoticed until post-construction.

In the words of the late sponsor of the authorizing legislation and Korean War veteran,
Representative Sam Johnson, “the Korean War Veterans Memorial Wall of Remembrance would
eternally honor the brave Americans who gave their lives in defense of freedom during the
Korean War . . . as a visual record of their sacrifice.”8 We find it unfortunate that what should
have been a touching tribute for bereaved family members and a grateful nation has turned into
an embarrassing gaffe. We must take the necessary steps to correct the issue, find the
communication and research flaws that caused the errors, and ensure such errors are never
repeated.

To assist the Committees with their oversight activities, please schedule a briefing with
the Committees and produce the following, as soon as possible, but no later than 5:00 p.m.,
March 23, 2023:

1. A document sufficient to describe the process used by the Department of Defense to
provide the lists of names for inclusion in the Korean War Veterans Memorial Wall of
Remembrance to the Department of the Interior and the Korean War Veterans Memorial
Foundation.

2. A document sufficient to describe the dates on which the lists of names for inclusion in
the Korean War Veterans Memorial Wall of Remembrance to the Department of the
Interior and the Korean War Veterans Memorial Foundation were transmitted and the
corresponding lists provided. Please include a description of all errors or inaccuracies in
the list of names transmitted to the Foundation for inscription on the Korean War
Veterans Memorial Wall of Remembrance.

3. A document sufficient to explain the Department of Defense’s plan to provide a revised
and accurate list of names for inclusion in the Korean War Veterans Memorial Wall of
Remembrance to the Department of the Interior and the Korean War Veterans Memorial
Foundation.

American servicemembers); and Korean War Veterans Memorial Foundation,
https://koreanwarvetsmemorial.org/our-progress (website references 36,634 American servicemembers and 7,174
members of the Korean Augmentation to the U.S. Army).

8 CONG. REC., supra note 2.
Please deliver your response to room 1324 of the Longworth House Office Building. The Committees prefer, if possible, to receive all documents in electronic format.

Please contact the House Committee on Natural Resources Majority Staff (HNRR_Oversight@mail.house.gov) and Minority Staff (NRDems@mail.house.gov), Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources Majority Staff (David_Brooks@energy.senate.gov) and Minority Staff (John_Tanner@energy.senate.gov), House Committee on Armed Services Majority Staff (Ryan.Breitenbach@mail.house.gov), and Senate Committee on Armed Services Minority Staff (Katie_Magnus@armed-services.senate.gov). Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Bruce Westerman
Chairman
House Committee on Natural Resources

Raul Grijalva
Ranking Member
House Committee on Natural Resources

Joe Manchin III
Chairman
Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

John Barrasso, M.D.
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

Mike Rogers
Chairman
House Committee on Armed Services

Roger Wicker
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Armed Services