

STATEMENT OF STEPHANIE TOOTHMAN, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, CULTURAL RESOURCES, PARTNERSHIPS, AND SCIENCE, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS OF THE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE, CONCERNING S. 995, A BILL TO AUTHORIZE THE NATIONAL DESERT STORM MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION TO ESTABLISH THE NATIONAL DESERT STORM AND DESERT SHIELD MEMORIAL AS A COMMEMORATIVE WORK IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

JULY 31, 2013

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior's testimony regarding S. 995, a bill to authorize the National Desert Storm Memorial Association to establish the National Desert Storm and Desert Shield Memorial as a commemorative work in the District of Columbia, and for other purposes.

The Department supports S. 995 with an amendment.

S. 995 would authorize the National Desert Storm Memorial Association to establish the National Desert Storm and Desert Shield Memorial as a commemorative work, on Federal land in the District of Columbia. This memorial would commemorate and honor the members of the Armed Forces who served on active duty in support of Operation Desert Storm or Operation Desert Shield. This bill also prohibits the use of federal funds to establish this memorial, and directs the Association to be solely responsible for accepting contributions for, and paying the expenses of, the establishment of the memorial.

On August 2, 1990, Iraqi forces invaded and occupied Kuwait. Fearing an Iraqi invasion of Saudi Arabia and a loss of control of Saudi oil fields, the United States launched Operation Desert Shield on August 7, 1990. This defensive buildup was intended to deter further Iraqi aggression and to persuade Iraqi forces to leave Kuwait. After diplomatic efforts failed, U.S. and other coalition forces began military actions against Iraq on January 17, 1991, in what is known as Operation Desert Storm. The aerial bombardment and the ensuing ground invasion of Iraq resulted in the destruction of Iraqi forces and their retreat from Kuwait, and hostilities concluded on February 28, 1991. A total of 294 Americans lost their lives over the course of the conflict, including 114 from enemy action. There is currently no national memorial to Operations Desert Shield or Desert Storm.

The National Desert Storm Memorial Association is a 501(c)(3) corporation organized under the laws of the State of Arkansas whose mission is to establish a national memorial to these conflicts.

The Department notes that Section 3(b) of this bill requires the establishment of the memorial to comply with Chapter 89 of Title 40, United States Code, commonly known as the "Commemorative Works Act". The Commemorative Works Act establishes a process for the establishment of new memorials on certain Federal lands within the District of Columbia.

On November 7, 2012, the National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission (NCMAC) reviewed the previous version of this bill, H.R. 5914, which was introduced in the 112th Congress. On December 20, 2012, after confirming with the Department of Defense that Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm were major military operations, the Commission informed the House Natural Resources Committee of its unanimous support for the proposal.

Although S. 995 provides for the deposit of excess funds, the Department recommends that Section 3(d) of the bill be amended to clarify the disposition of excess funds should the authority to establish the memorial lapse. We would be glad to work with the Subcommittee to amend the existing language.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer questions that you or other members of the committee might have.