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Description of document:

American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC)
Records Regarding Removal of Black Soldier Panels at the
Margaten Cemetery in the Netherlands 2025

Requested date:

30-December-2025

Release date:

13-January-2026

Posted date:

09-February-2026

Source of document:

FOIA request
American Battle Monuments Commission
Attn: FOIA
2300 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 500
Arlington, VA 22201
Email: foia@abmc.gov
[FOIA.gov](#)

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AMERICAN BATTLE MONUMENTS COMMISSION

FOIA Tracking #: 2026-15

January 13, 2026

The American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) FOIA office received your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request on December 30, 2025, and assigned it control number 2026-15. Please cite this number in any future communications with our office regarding your request. This constitutes ABMC's response to your request.

You requested:

I request all records since April 1, 2025 about this action by ABMC, including also any email with other agencies or the White House about this action. MARGRATEN, Netherlands — Ever since a U.S. military cemetery in the southern Netherlands removed two displays recognizing Black troops who helped to liberate Europe from the Nazis, visitors have filled the guestbook with objections. Some time in the spring, the American Battle Monuments Commission, the U.S. government agency responsible for maintaining memorial sites outside the United States, removed the panels from the visitors center at the American Cemetery in Margraten, the final resting place for roughly 8,300 U.S. soldiers, set in rolling hills near the border with Belgium and Germany.

ABMC response:

Please see attached six responsive records.

If you have any questions regarding this response, you may contact me by telephone at (703) 584-1562, or you may write to me at: FOIA@ABMC.gov, or by mail via: FOIA Requestor Service Center, American Battle Monuments Commission, Suite 500, 2300 Clarendon Blvd, Arlington, Virginia, 22201.

If you are dissatisfied with this response, you may contact the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) of the National Archives and Records Administration to inquire into the FOIA mediation services they provide. OGIS can be contacted at the following:

Office of Government Information Services
National Archives and Records Administration
8601 Adelphi Road
College Park, Maryland, 20740
Telephone: (202) 741-5770

Facsimile: (202) 741-5769
Toll-Free: (877) 684-6448
Email: ogis@nara.gov

Respectfully,
Lisa Crunk
ABMC FOIA Representative

From: Charles Djou, Secretary
Sent: Friday, March 28, 2025 6:10 PM
To: Karen Wurzburger
Cc: Mike Conley; Robert Dalessandro SES; Nealie Sutton; Thomas Spoehr; Ashleigh Byrnes
Subject: American History at ABMC

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/03/restoring-truth-and-sanity-to-american-history/>

Karen I know this Executive Order (EO) does not explicitly apply to the ABMC. Nevertheless could you help me just do a scrub to be sure we have nothing that might run our agency awry of this EO. I want the ABMC to avoid showing up in the media (or a visitor complaining to the media) for not following the spirit of this order even if it doesn't expressly target us. I'm pretty sure we have nothing that might violate this EO at any of our visitor centers, I'd just like to be sure. I'm copying Ashleigh if you need any PAO help. Thank you and all the best!

Charles K. Djou
Secretary & Chief Executive Officer

American Battle Monuments Commission
2300 Clarendon Boulevard | Suite 500 | Arlington, VA 22201
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(571) 278-4124 | Eastern Time Zone
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Education and Public Engagement

2025 Strategic Plan

Strategic Goal:

Educate and Expand Audiences

Strategic Objectives:

- Capture the nature of sacrifice**
- Innovate educational products**
- Conduct outreach to expand audiences**

Strategic Tasks: Public Affairs

Media

- METRICS
 - Proactive media pitching – 12 total new pitches
 - Targeted outreach to new and specialized media – 20 new media contacts/sources
- Op-ed engagement schedule
 - **Early February:** Op-ed on Battle of Manila to promo MNAC event
 - **March:** Public release of VLM database with NCA
 - **End of April:** Holocaust Remembrance Day tying into May headstone changes
 - **End of May:** Memorial Day
 - **June/July:** Stars & Stripes Special Publication - Travel to ABMC sites overseas
 - **November:** Native American report release
- Podcast targets
 - C-SPAN Lectures in History
 - History This Week
 - American History Tellers
 - American History Hit

Digital Media

- METRICS
 - Audience Growth: Goal of +5%
 - Video Views: Goal of +10%

- Monitored Metrics (for awareness only)
 - Net Growth: Will help us determine which platforms match our audience objectives, and if we need to reconcentrate our efforts on certain sites
 - Post Click Links: Can help us identify content that drives web traffic, especially as we look toward implementing the new redesign of abmc.gov later in 2025
- ABMC Virtual 360 Expansion
 - Phase 1 begins Oct. 1, 2024 (30 days duration)
 - Identify/upload rediscovery visitor center videos to relevant virtual 360s
 - Phase 2 begins Nov. 1, 2024 (90 days duration)
 - Review/resolve word count, meta titles, character count best practices, improve SEO copy optimization across virtual experience
 - Phase 3 begins Feb. 3, 2025 (30 days duration)
 - Finalize revisions to intro copy and obtain copy update approval
 - Phase 4 begins Mar. 4, 2025 (14 days duration)
 - Load approved copy to virtual 360s to go live across all sites
 - Phase 5 begins Mar. 17, 2025 (30 days duration)
 - Final review of content updates. Discuss overall review process, establish an ongoing review plan, and update plan for the next cycle
 - Ongoing updates, monitoring and reporting
 - Special events content updated as they occur and removed after 30 days unless superseded by another event; evergreen content will remain
 - Key performance metrics and SEO results will be reported monthly

Outreach

- METRICS
 - Development of outreach in-person or virtual events – 2 per quarter
- Creation of ABMC Ambassador Guide
 - Dec 13 – First draft
 - Jan 30 – First Layout
 - Feb 14 – Revisions due
 - Feb 28 – Final draft
 - ***March 17 – Internal launch***
- Creation of ABMC Partner Kit
 - Apr 14 – First layout
 - Apr 28 – Revisions due
 - May 5 – Final draft
 - ***May 12 – Internal/external launch***

- Create engagement opportunities for ABMC commissioners and staff through OneABMC and ABMC Voice, and with the general public

ABMC Digital Partner Collection

- ABMC will begin outreach to individuals, museums, non-profits to highlight art, photographs, letters, artifacts as part of an ABMC Digital Partner Collection through ABMC's website

Pierre Delcour, Painting of the temporary cemetery of Foy-Recogne, 1945

*Portrait of Medal of Honor recipient
William James Jr.
(Netherlands American Cemetery)
Black Archives of Mid-America*

*Austin M. Purves Jr., Sketch No. 2 –
Mosaic for Rhone American Cemetery
Litchfield Historical Society*

Native American Service Members Project

- ABMC will do a public launch of the Visitor Services & Interpretation Native American Service Members project, including:
 - Branded digital report

- Digital content
- Media and op-ed pitching in concert with Veterans Day 2025 and Native American Heritage Month

Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee (CSAC)

- ABMC will submit a proposal for our sites as a featured U.S. postage stamp or series
 - Submissions should be considered 3 years out
 - Target commemoration of 105th anniversary of ABMC in 2028
 - Proposal to be submitted in February 2025

Theater of War Production (in partnership with ABMF)

- "Theater of War" production (ABMF)
- Theater of War Productions works with leading actors to present dramatic readings from Greek tragedies and contemporary works, followed by town hall-style discussions to draw connections and relevance between historic themes and modern audiences
- Hybrid in-person and livestreamed event could be hosted at an ABMC site, such as the East Coast Memorial, to enhance exposure

Theater of War production of Philoctetes in October 2024 at the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial in Washington, D.C.

Student art contest

- ABMC will propose art competition in partnership with ABMF, Smithsonian
- Proposal would feature themes akin to essay contest, highlighting commemorative art
- Contest would be age group based, with possible temporary installation of winners at ABMC sites or Smithsonian

ABMC Brand Guide Refresh

- ABMC will issue a new agency brand guide in 2025
 - Blending classic ABMC seal and elements with updated centennial styling
 - Includes full brand guide, one-pager, and “quick start” user guide

Strategic Tasks: Visitor Services and Interpretation

Baseline Data Gathering

- Conduct baseline data gathering to better understand our visitors, to identify trends and areas of opportunity and growth, and to inform agency management decisions
 - Visitor Use Studies to better understand our visitor demographic trends, changes, and quality assessments of services. **METRIC:** Conduct qualitative surveys every 5-7 years – create longitudinal data; understand visitor demographic trends and changes.
 - Visitor Counts – finalize installation at remaining sites (NAAC); continue to manage and refine visitation count formulas for each site. **METRIC:** Monitor and analyze visitor counts on a quarterly basis; produce annual report and analyze trends from year to year. Include “heat maps” or areas of high use/high visitor traffic to inform site management, preservation and/or educational decisions.

Comprehensive Interpretive Plan

- Conduct Comprehensive Planning to inform program priorities, goals, and create a roadmap for the next decade of Visitor Services, Interpretation, and Preservation:
 - Finalize and Implement ABMC's first ever Comprehensive Interpretive Plan for the entire agency. This is a baseline planning document which defines agency and site significance. **METRIC:** define core experience for visitors to all ABMC sites and monitor and support implementation (for example: all sites have a junior guide program)

Connect with Visitors

- Connect with our visitors in a meaningful way – include children and diverse audiences:
 - Maintain engaging exhibits and non-personal services interpretation.
METRIC: Analyze for upgrade/refurbishment all non-personal interpretive exhibits every 5-years; full renovation of exhibits on a 10-year cycle. Cambridge visitor center renovation in 2025; Sicily-Rome in design.
 - **METRIC:** Rotate elements of exhibits which are designed to change (rotating content panels, servicemember stories, collection objects etc.) at least every 12 months to ensure stories remain fresh and relevant for repeat visitors, and collection items are preserved according to best practices.
 - Develop children's activity booklet at all sites (in process). All sites are set to complete booklets by December 2024. **METRIC:** Update activity booklets every 3 years.

- Support sites with historic research (personal stories, diverse communities) where needed. **METRIC:** 2 projects per year. (Native American Soldier Research; African American Solider Research; Corozal/Mexico City history and personal story research.)
- Collaborate with Historical Services to develop tools for site-created “school packs” which address country-specific curriculum.
- Support the development of specialized school tours tailored to lower, middle, upper school ages at all sites
- Use new and engaging techniques to expand audiences (Illustrated Handbook/Graphic Novel)

Cultivate Interpreters

- Cultivate the best Interpreters in the field of commemorative interpretation.
 - Provide training resources and professional support to ABMC interpretive staff and staff with regular visitor contact (Guides, Superintendents, Asst. Superintendents, Cemetery Associates)
 - **METRIC:** All staff with Interpretation in their PD will become Certified Interpretive Guides (by the National Association of Interpretation) within the first 6 months of employment
 - **METRIC:** Develop continuing education plan for all interpretive staff; create opportunities for exchange (Docent Exchange Program; NARA Research Initiatives collab with Guide Staff and Historical Services).
 - **METRIC:** Every 2 years, conduct review and analysis of individual interpretive services and products

Preserve Our Sites

- Preserve ABMC sites and historic resources for future generations.
 - Create frameworks for identifying and prioritizing ABMC historic structures and site elements to inform management, preservation, and interpretation of ABMC's unique cultural resources.
 - Expand on-site programming, interpretation, and external communication to highlight site design elements (architectural and horticultural) maintenance and preservation as part of our commemorative mission (i.e., bronze restoration project; historic paint analysis; mosaic restoration projects, etc.)
 - Conduct Cultural Resource Management Plans (CRMPs) to document each site's specific cultural and historic resources to inform the management, protection, and interpretation of these important aspects of ABMC sites. **METRIC:** 1-2 CRMPs per year

- Maintain ABMC Preservation Policy and implement preservation review procedure to ensure adherence to best-practices and document decisions in a routine manner. **METRIC:** Maintain and review/update every 3 years.

Strategic Tasks: Historical Services

Ongoing Collaborations

- Smithsonian American Art Museum
 - Lifelong Learning and targeted Double Take programs highlighting ABMC sites and associated artwork using SAAM collections and highlighting parallels to ABMC artworks
 - Additional contract with SAAM to further develop and produce a monograph or booklet about ABMC artists using previous research from the centennial book that wasn't able to fit into the final book.
- National World War I Museum
 - Collaboration with their Education department to incorporate ABMC history and mission in their programs. Support for specific programs hosted at museum and their overseas tours to include ABMC sites.
- National World War II Museum.
 - Continue work with their education department to include ABMC content in their teacher education programs, participation in conferences and seminars, and support of their exhibits with ongoing availability of content to support “Price of Freedom” exhibit

Build New Collaborations with Other Museums

- Smithsonian
 - National African American History and Culture
 - National Museum of the American Indian
 - National Air and Space Museum
 - National Museum of American History
- National Museum of the United States Army
 - Supporting education programs and teacher development programs, with participation in seminars and conferences.

- Department of State, National Museum of American Diplomacy
 - Adding ABMC content into museum renovation and working with their educators on lesson plans and programs.
- Allies Museum WWII Liberation of Italy
 - Beginning discussions on potential for digital collaboration and outreach to American and other audiences to include ABMC content in virtual museum and social media, in coordination with Public Affairs and Visitor Services and Interpretation.

Other Education Program Initiatives

- Publish ABMC Children's Book
 - Explains ABMC and our mission, highlighting sites and individuals of note.
 - Recent hiring of ABMC graphic artist will enable this book to be published by the end of this calendar year.
- National History Day
 - Updating existing Lesson Plans and content as well as development of new “Silent Heroes” bios and lesson plans through teacher workshops.

- Development of program with Visitor Services and Interpretation to have Interpretive Guides present projects with 1 or 2 selected each year to visit Arlington office and conduct primary research at NARA and Library of Congress as well as other sites in the DMV. Finished research project will be added to information available at one of our sites. **METRIC:** 1-2 selectees each year. Program in early discussion phase.
- New Education Officer working to develop lesson plans aimed at high school audience and undergraduate students. Possible collaboration with local, regional and national teacher and education associations as well as history organizations.
- Continue to leverage speaking and presenting opportunities with Professional history organizations (SMH, AHA, AASLH, SHFG etc.)
- The John A. Adams '71 Center for Military History & Strategic Analysis at VMI wants to include ABMC as one of the internships they provide for cadets every summer.
 - Adams Center would fully fund travel including stipend and living fees.
 - Intern would do research on an individual in one of our cemeteries and visit the grave.
- Continue to provide historical research for public affairs and visitor services initiatives and projects.

From: Charles Djou, Secretary
Sent: Thursday, March 20, 2025 3:16 PM
To: Robert Dalessandro SES; Mike Conley; Ashleigh Byrnes
Cc: Karen Wurzburger; Michael Knapp
Subject: Re: Foreign DEI

Mike got it.

Since the NEAC panels are removable and intended to be rotated let's just rotate the NEAC panel for now to avoid raising any ire of the administration. Thank you for looking into this.

Charles K. Djou
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From: Robert Dalessandro SES <dalessandr0r@abmc.gov>
Sent: Thursday, March 20, 2025 9:30:03 AM
To: Mike Conley <conleym@abmc.gov>; Charles Djou, Secretary <djouc@abmc.gov>; Ashleigh Byrnes <byrnese@abmc.gov>
Cc: Karen Wurzburger <wurzburgerk@abmc.gov>; Michael Knapp <knappm@abmc.gov>
Subject: Re: Foreign DEI

Mike -

I agree on the Netherlands. That panel should go. Frankly, it never should have been there in the first place.

Rob

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

From: Mike Conley <conleym@abmc.gov>
Sent: Thursday, March 20, 2025 10:55:55 AM
To: Charles Djou, Secretary <djouc@abmc.gov>; Ashleigh Byrnes <byrnese@abmc.gov>
Cc: Robert Dalessandro SES <dalessandr0r@abmc.gov>; Karen Wurzburger <wurzburgerk@abmc.gov>; Michael Knapp <knappm@abmc.gov>
Subject: RE: Foreign DEI

Sir,

- The African American and Native American databases are used internally only; they are not available to the public.
- We have scrubbed our website and removed content that we believe would be flagged as counter to the Executive Orders.
- I believe the panel that was added to the Netherlands visitor center at the former ambassador's insistence is a problem. It is attached. I recommend that we remove this panel.
 - The individual African American soldier story panels that were created for NEAC are okay – honoring the individual achievements without racial environment context.

R / Mike

Michael G. Conley
Executive Director for Education & Public Engagement

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“Time will not dim the glory of their deeds.”

From: Charles Djou, Secretary <djouc@abmc.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, March 19, 2025 1:14 PM
To: Ashleigh Byrnes <byrnese@abmc.gov>; Mike Conley <conleym@abmc.gov>
Cc: Robert Dalessandro SES <dalessandr0r@abmc.gov>; Karen Wurzburger <wurzburgerk@abmc.gov>
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Mike, could you get with Ashleigh and make sure our agency complies with this Executive Order below. Although it does not specifically target ABMC, it clearly is directed at the Federal agencies with a major workforce located abroad.

I do our African-American, Native American, etc. databases run afoul of this order? Do we have any specific racial celebratory months that we recognize? Finally, please touch bases with Karen if there might be any panel displays that would get us in trouble at any visitor center. I know the former Netherlands Ambassador pushed us hard to put up a Black-American display at NEAC that I know we just re-directed as a 962nd QM panel - I think should be ok, but let's just double check.

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/03/removing-discrimination-and-discriminatory-equity-ideology-from-the-foreign-service/>



Removing Discrimination and Discriminatory Equity Ideology From the Foreign Service - The White House

memorandum for the secretary of state the secretary of agriculture the secretary of commerce the administrator of the united states agency for international development

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From: Karen Wurzburger
Sent: Friday, March 21, 2025 3:13 AM
To: Charles Djou, Secretary
Subject: RE: Foreign DEI

Sir,
No problem at all. We will adjust as needed.

Hope all is well in Arlington!
Karen

Karen C. Wurzburger
Chief, Visitor Services & Interpretation
Federal Preservation Officer (FPO)

American Battle Monuments Commission
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+33 (0)1 40 75 27 78 | Central European Time
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Sent: Thursday, March 20, 2025 11:23 PM
To: Karen Wurzburger <wurzburgerk@abmc.gov>
Subject: Fw: Foreign DEI

Karen I'm emailing just you on this. I really am grateful you had the forethought to do these NEAC panels as magnets. Let's just keep the 962nd QM panel in storage for the Trump administration. Then you can take it out again if Amb Razdan comes back to the Netherlands in a new admin in 2029. All the best.

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Ashleigh Byrnes <byrnesa@abmc.gov>
Cc: Karen Wurzburger <wurzburgerk@abmc.gov>; Michael Knapp <knappm@abmc.gov>
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“Time will not dim the glory of their deeds.”

From: Charles Djou, Secretary <djouc@abmc.gov>
Sent: Thursday, March 20, 2025 3:16 PM
To: Robert Dalessandro SES <dalessandr0r@abmc.gov>; Mike Conley <conleym@abmc.gov>; Ashleigh Byrnes <byrnesa@abmc.gov>
Cc: Karen Wurzburger <wurzburgerk@abmc.gov>; Michael Knapp <knappm@abmc.gov>
Subject: Re: Foreign DEI

Mike got it.

Since the NEAC panels are removable and intended to be rotated let's just rotate the NEAC panel for now to avoid raising any ire of the administration. Thank you for looking into this.

Charles K. Djou
Secretary & Chief Executive Officer

American Battle Monuments Commission
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From: Robert Dalessandro SES <dalessandr0r@abmc.gov>
Sent: Thursday, March 20, 2025 9:30:03 AM

To: Mike Conley <conleym@abmc.gov>; Charles Djou, Secretary <djouc@abmc.gov>; Ashleigh Byrnes <byrnese@abmc.gov>
Cc: Karen Wurzburger <wurzburgerk@abmc.gov>; Michael Knapp <knappm@abmc.gov>
Subject: Re: Foreign DEI

Mike -

I agree on the Netherlands. That panel should go. Frankly, it never should have been there in the first place.

Rob

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From: Mike Conley <conleym@abmc.gov>
Sent: Thursday, March 20, 2025 10:55:55 AM
To: Charles Djou, Secretary <djouc@abmc.gov>; Ashleigh Byrnes <byrnese@abmc.gov>
Cc: Robert Dalessandro SES <dalessandr0r@abmc.gov>; Karen Wurzburger <wurzburgerk@abmc.gov>; Michael Knapp <knappm@abmc.gov>
Subject: RE: Foreign DEI

Sir,

- The African American and Native American databases are used internally only; they are not available to the public.
- We have scrubbed our website and removed content that we believe would be flagged as counter to the Executive Orders.
- I believe the panel that was added to the Netherlands visitor center at the former ambassador's insistence is a problem. It is attached. I recommend that we remove this panel.
 - The individual African American soldier story panels that were created for NEAC are okay – honoring the individual achievements without racial environment context.

R / Mike

Michael G. Conley
Executive Director for Education & Public Engagement

American Battle Monuments Commission
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“Time will not dim the glory of their deeds.”

From: Charles Djou, Secretary <djiouc@abmc.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, March 19, 2025 1:14 PM
To: Ashleigh Byrnes <byrnesa@abmc.gov>; Mike Conley <conleym@abmc.gov>
Cc: Robert Dalessandro SES <dalessandr0r@abmc.gov>; Karen Wurzburger <wurzburgerk@abmc.gov>
Subject: Foreign DEI

Mike, could you get with Ashleigh and make sure our agency complies with this Executive Order below. Although it does not specifically target ABMC, it clearly is directed at the Federal agencies with a major workforce located abroad.

I do our African-American, Native American, etc. databases run afoul of this order? Do we have any specific racial celebratory months that we recognize? Finally, please touch bases with Karen if there might be any panel displays that would get us in trouble at any visitor center. I know the former Netherlands Ambassador pushed us hard to put up a Black-American display at NEAC that I know we just re-directed as a 962nd QM panel - I think should be ok, but let's just double check.

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/03/removing-discrimination-and-discriminatory-equity-ideology-from-the-foreign-service/>



Removing Discrimination and Discriminatory Equity Ideology From the Foreign Service - The White House

memorandum for the secretary of state the secretary of agriculture the secretary of commerce the administrator of the united states agency for international development

www.whitehouse.gov

Charles K. Djou

Secretary & Chief Executive Officer

American Battle Monuments Commission

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“Time will not dim the glory of their deeds.”

From: Karen Wurzburger
Sent: Friday, March 21, 2025 1:59 PM
To: Frenk Lahaye; Ryan Dakir
Cc:
Subject:

Dan Hicks
RE: NEAC panel

Hi Frenk,

That's good news. If you can put it up as soon as possible, that would be great. Next week is fine though.

Thank you!
Karen

Karen C. Wurzburger
Chief, Visitor Services & Interpretation
Federal Preservation Officer (FPO)

American Battle Monuments Commission
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“Time will not dim the glory of their deeds.”

From: Frenk Lahaye <lahayef@abmc.gov>
Sent: Friday, March 21, 2025 8:48 AM
To: Karen Wurzburger <wurzburgerk@abmc.gov>; Ryan Dakir <Dakirr@abmc.gov>
Cc: Dan Hicks <hicksd@abmc.gov>
Subject: RE: NEAC panel

Good morning, Karen,

Hope you are doing fine. We still have the panels of course and we can put it back as it was before.
Would you like to have this done today or after the weekend? Just let me know and I start on it right away.

Kind regards,

Frenk

Frenk Lahaye
Director Visitor Center

American Battle Monuments Commission

Netherlands American Cemetery
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Discover. Learn. Remember: Explore new features and immersive stories of America's military service and sacrifice on the redesigned [ABMC.gov](#).

From: Karen Wurzburger <wurzburgerk@abmc.gov>
Sent: Friday, March 21, 2025 8:20 AM
To: Ryan Dakir <Dakirr@abmc.gov>; Frenk Lahaye <lahayef@abmc.gov>
Cc: Dan Hicks <hicksd@abmc.gov>
Subject: NEAC panel

Hi Ryan, Frenk,

If possible, can you please remove the panel requested by ABM Razdan Duggal and replace it with the two photos which were originally in their place (if we still have them)? I know this will impact the small key panel which identifies which image is which, but we can fix that later as needed.

I'm out of the office today but can give you a call to discuss on Monday.

Thank you in advance!
Karen

Karen C. Wurzburger
Chief, Visitor Services & Interpretation
Federal Preservation Officer (FPO)

American Battle Monuments Commission
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