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U.S. ARMY, DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF, G-4 ADDRESSES SURVIVORS OF FALLEN WARRIORS

By Evelyn Candor@publius.publications.com 6:47 p.m. May 26, 2015

NEW JERSEY – There was not a more patriotic place to celebrate Memorial Day than the All Veterans Memorial at Turkey Brook Park in Mount Olive, New Jersey. Memorial Day, originally called Decoration Day, is a day of remembrance for those who have died in service of the United States of America. As communities across the nation gathered to remember and honor the lives of their own fallen heroes, the AVM carved out a special moment for the families of those who recently lost their lives while fighting the Global War on Terror. As it turned out, it was a day few will ever forget.



More than 350 patriots stood in support of several New Jersey Gold Star Mothers, fathers, wives and siblings of the fallen heroes that perished after the September 11th attacks. A special dedication of the newly added North Star Seating area was conducted by Hackettstown Home Depot Manager Gail Williams, who was the primary thrust behind the North Star Seating platform. Williams led the dedication with compassionate words of gratitude and healing to the families who had sacrificed so much. At the end of her conveyance, Williams was joined by the family members to ceremoniously cut the yellow ribbon. The beautifully designed North Star Seating platform provides easy access and secure seating for the family members of fallen heroes, elderly, handicap and disabled veterans during ceremonies and events.

Immediately preceding the dedication, a procession of color-guards, war re-enactors, drummers and buglers began to make their way around the park circle and towards the AVM. At that time, the family members of the fallen heroes were repositioned onto the AVM memorial ground for a very special surprise. As soon as the Colors were posted, the re-enactors assumed their positions and the drummers and buglers were silenced; the National Anthem began to crescendo throughout the park. The final note left everyone still. The moment of silence was suddenly broken by a rapid military cadence sounding the arrival of Lieutenant General Gustave F. Perna; the AVM's Guest of Honor and Keynote Speaker.

About LTG Perna

Lieutenant General Gustave F. Perna assumed duties as the U.S. Army's Deputy Chief of Staff, G-4, on 18 September 2014. He oversees policies and procedures used by 240,000 Army logisticians throughout the world. Prior to joining the Army staff he served for two years as Deputy Chief of Staff, G-3/4, U.S. Army Materiel Command, one of the Army's largest commands with 70,000 employees impacting all 50 states and 155 countries.

LTG Perna's key staff assignments include: Director of Logistics, J4, U.S. Forces-Iraq, responsible for sustainment plans and policies for strategic and operational logistics to sustain coalition and joint forces; Executive Officer to the Director of the Defense Logistics Agency, supporting the Director's mission of providing Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and other federal agencies with logistics, acquisitions and technical services support; Ordnance Branch Chief, Human Resources Command; DISCOM Executive Officer and G4, 1st Cavalry Division, where he deployed to Bosnia; 544th Maintenance Battalion Support Operations Officer and Battalion Executive Officer, 13th COSCOM; and G4 Maintenance Officer, 13th COSCOM, where he deployed to Somalia as a member of Joint Task Force Support Command.

His awards and decorations include: Distinguished Service Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, Defense Superior Service Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, Legion of Merit, Bronze Star Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Meritorious Service Medal with four Oak Leaf Clusters, and the Parachutist and Air Assault Badges.

LTG Perna, a Morris County native, began his address by giving praise to the People's remarkable achievement in creating an impressive memorial for our warriors. He thanked the many people that came to observe the holiday for the fallen, then addressed the wives, mothers, fathers, and siblings of the 147 New Jersey fallen Marines, Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen who were lost while fighting the Global War on Terror. Though he had never met any of those who were present, he knew the price they paid was the supreme ultimate. "Your sons and daughters were heroes. They lived, died and will always be remembered as heroes. We are a nation will be forever indebted to you." LTG Perna expressed. As LTG Perna continued, the mothers wept. Gold Star Mother Tina Franklin said, "The General's words meant the world to me. It's the first time I felt someone really cared about Michael. I am so happy I came today." Franklin's son Spc. Michael W. Franklin was assigned to the 44th Engineer Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team during Operation Iraqi Freedom when a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device detonated near his screening area in Ramadi, Iraq. Franklin was 22 years old when he lost his life on March 7, 2005. "Though nothing anyone can say or do will bring Michael back, it was nice to see that a General of the U.S. Army cared enough to travel so far to speak with us (Gold Star Mothers)", Franklin explained.

Immediately after LTG Perna delivered his closing remarks, a special dance was performed by the Theater Dance Company volunteers, following the presentation of flowers by the Mount Olive Girl Scouts. Dueling taps were performed by Mount Olive High School Band, as the flag was raised at full staff.

Upon the closing of the ceremony, LTG Perna personally addressed each parent of the fallen heroes. He then, made himself available to answer questions and allowed photos before he returned to Washington, DC. It was indeed an emotional day.