

War on terror memorialized in Hermitage

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By Bob Batz Jr., Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

After Monday morning's Memorial Day parade in the Mercer County town of Hermitage, the public will be able to see a new national War on Terror Memorial.

Engraved on its 12-foot-tall glass and stainless steel panels will be the names of at least 2,256 members of the U.S. military, from all over the country, who have been killed while fighting terrorism. They'll include Marine Sgt. Michael A. Marzano, 28, of nearby Greenville, killed by a suicide truck bomber in Iraq earlier this month, and U.S. Army Spc. Jonathan R. Kephart, a 21-year-old from Oil City who was killed when his patrol was ambushed in Baghdad on April 8.

"The timing of it and the honor of it are just perfect," Kephart's father, Bert, said yesterday after viewing the memorial during a media preview.

"This whole project is blessed," said Tom Flynn, who had the idea for the memorial on Dec. 1. He owns the Hillcrest Memorial Park where it is located, at one end of the famous "Avenue of Flags." The 444 American flags were put up each day between Nov. 4, 1979, and Jan. 20, 1981, when Americans were being held hostage in Iran.

This new memorial, designed by architect Bob Moro of Pittsburgh's IKM Inc. and built by Butler County's Wesex Corp. and others, now consists of six rectangular glass panels standing around a fountain on a circular concrete walkway.

Names, from the Department of Defense, are etched to the black glass panels in chronological order of death, and new ones will be added at least weekly. Flynn says a volunteer will add the most recent names as late as Monday morning. Eventually new panels will be erected -- up to 23 total -- also as needed.

The engraved panels so far have been grouped low enough so visitors can trace the names, like the ones on Washington, D.C.'s, Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

The first name -- Paul Shaffer -- dates to 1975, when the Air Force colonel was shot in Tehran.

"If you're doing the war on terror, you can't just start with 9/11," said Flynn, who knows of no other memorial like it.



Gene J. Puskar, Associated Press

Some of the 444 flags that stand in memory to the Iranian hostage crisis are reflected in a portion of the War on Terror Memorial yesterday in Hermitage, Mercer County.

[Click photo for larger image.](#)



Gene J. Puskar, Associated Press

Don Raider, of Warren, Ohio, assembles as portion of The War on

He said he was "haunted" by how many years, or decades, it took to build memorials to casualties of other wars such as World War II. "So I thought ... we have to do it in a way that it's a living memorial, in that it's constantly updated."

Terror Memorial yesterday in Hermitage. Engraved on the memorial's panels are the names of at least 2,256 members of the U.S. military who have been killed while fighting terrorism.

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As is the case now, one panel will stand empty, awaiting more names, he said. "We're trying to very subtly tell people this isn't over with."

The main speaker at Monday's ceremony -- to begin around 10:45 a.m. -- is Army Maj. Gen. Karol A. Kennedy, commanding general of the 99th Regional Readiness Command in Moon. Family members of service men and women included on the memorial, including Bert Kephart, will unveil each of the panels.

The memorial, which is illuminated at night, is to be open to the public around the clock.

The memorial is being paid for by the new War on Terror Foundation that Flynn leads. He said the group has raised \$1 million toward the memorial's \$5 million cost.

The non-profit foundation, which he describes as nonpolitical, also is building a Web site, www.waronterror.org, as a place to house biographies of military personnel and civilians who died as well as information about the history and ongoing actions of the terrorism war.

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[Back](#)