

The House of Commons'
Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs
"Canadian Strategy for Commemorations"
May 10, 2021

Brief: "Inclusion of Canadian Military Personnel who died and are buried in Europe while in service of Canada during the Cold War"

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Abstract

The Seventh Book of Remembrance was Commissioned in 2005 to commemorate members of Canadian Forces who have died while on duty in Canada **or** serving overseas since October 1, 1947. The purpose of this brief and my appearance before this Honourable Committee is to rectify a grave injustice to approximately 400 members of the Canadian Forces who died while serving this Great Nation and are buried in foreign and at times hostile soil and not included in the Seventh or any other Book of Remembrance. The injustice extends beyond these members to their extended friends and families that due to circumstances such as economics are unable to visit and pay respects to their loved ones. The purpose of the Seventh Book of Remembrance and it's display in the Memorial Chamber of the Peace Tower is not only to immortalize these individuals contribution to this nation but to give their families and loved ones a tangible location to pay respect.

Argument

Commission of The Seventh Book Of Remembrance

Commissioned on November 11, 2005 as the final chapter that “never ends”

“The Seventh Book of Remembrance commemorates members of the Canadian Forces who have died while on duty in Canada **or** serving overseas since October 1, 1947.” 1. *Government of Canada News Release Nov 11, 2005*

The usage of the disjunctive particle “**or**” combined with the descriptive “**serving overseas**” as “opposed to “on duty in Canada” is significant and recognizes the distinction between service within Canada and service overseas.

Following the surrender of the Axis forces in 1945 tensions arose between the allied forces and Russia, with the Communist Coup in Czechoslovakia and Russia's West Berlin Blockade, Western nations feared that Stalin was on a trajectory for world domination. In 1949 the Western Nations established the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to shut down Soviet expansionism. This began the Cold War. Canada pursuant to NATO commitments provided both personal and equipment for over 40 years as a defense against eastern aggressions. Canada and more importantly our Military Personnel were at war.

Currently there are approximately 547 Canadian Military Personnel buried in graves in Europe who lost their lives while “**serving**” overseas during the “Cold War” as part of Canada’s commitment to NATO.

Of these approximately 151 are commemorated in the Book of Remembrance, the rest are forgotten.

There is no debate that not one of the forgotten would be buried in foreign soil but for their role as members of the Canadian Forces and in the service of their Country.

Today, a member of the Forces dies overseas, they are returned to Canada in a flag draped coffin, they make their trip down the Highway 401 designated the Highway of Hero’s where they are rightfully honoured by the Canadian Public, names entered in the Book of Remembrance and buried at home where friends and family members can visit long into the future.

Those Military Personal who died during the Cold War are buried in Europe, there remains to be forever interned in foreign soil, their repatriation to Canada was never an option. They are buried in foreign lands thousands of miles from their homes and their families. For many, their families have never been able to visit their loved ones, the economic costs make the journey impossible. This is the role of the Seventh Book of Remembrance.

This is where the significant of “**or**” and “**serving overseas**” is important, as opposed to “**on duty in Canada**”. The Canadian Government in the Commission of the Seventh Book of Remembrance recognized the distinctive differences between service in Canada as opposed to overseas. The distinction between the two is easily understood in the context of simple questions “Are you on duty?” as opposed to “When did you serve?” One is asking for a specific time whereas the other is referencing a time frame.

Furthermore, it cannot be ignored that the “forgotten” were serving in a war zone and therefore on duty 24/7. We cannot ignore at the time Canada was a member state of NATO which was “at war” with the Warsaw Pact. The frontline was the borders between Eastern and Western Europe and our personal were there to prevent Soviet expansion into Western Europe. As such they were on duty 24/7 and again a substantial difference than a being in Canada.

The distinction between service overseas as opposed to on duty in Canada is clear in the case of Captain Frank Paul in 2010 who died of natural causes while on leave from Kandahar in Canada. Captain Paul passed away while on leave, he was not on duty but he was serving his country overseas and as such his death, even though by natural causes in Canada entitled him, as it should, to being included in the Seventh Book of Remembrance. Do our military personnel buried in Europe as a result of their “service to Canada overseas” not deserve the same entitlement?

The catalyst for this 10 year project is my brother Lance Corporal Marcellus “Sonny” MacMullin, Sonny was stationed in Soest in Germany, on the 24th of July 1957 he was killed in a car accident less than 40 kilometers from where he was stationed in his service to Canada. In around 2008 my younger brother attended the Peace Tower in Ottawa and went to view the Seventh Book of Remembrance to see Sonny’s name. He was shocked to learn that he was not included. I followed up and learned that approximately 400 of the 547 Military Personnel buried in Europe are not included in the Seventh Book Of Remembrance as although “serving overseas” they were deemed not to be on duty

It is not possible to say that had my brother not been in Europe in the service of Canada he would be alive today. However, what can be said is but for the fact that he died in the service of Canada he would be buried next to his Father, Mother, Sister and Brother in St Johns Graveyard in his home town of Glace Bay where his family and friends could routinely visit him.

Conclusion

It is recognized that this Honourable Committee has been established to develop a strategy of recognition into the future, however, how can one move forward without first addressing the injustice of the past. The inclusion of Captain James into the Seventh Book Of Remembrance demonstrates that the injustice has been recognized and has only been applied to those who died during the Cold War. How can one be juxtaposed against the other? Arguably the only difference is one died on foreign soil and the other at home. Ironically, using this standard, my brother would have been immortalized in the Seventh Book of Remembrance had he died in a car accident while on leave in Glace Bay.

The following is a list of names of the forgotten, we owe them an apology and their entrance into the 7th Book of Remembrance

Attachments

List of Military Personal excluded from Seventh Book of Remembrance “A”

Note from the Clerk: This list was unable to be translated in a timely manner.

Press Release Government of Canada November 11, 2005 “B”

EN:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/news/archive/2005/11/seventh-book-remembrance-dedicated.html>

FR:

<https://www.canada.ca/fr/nouvelles/archive/2005/11/devoilement-septieme-livre-souvenir.html>