

Mojave Desert Memorial Torn Down

Reward offered to catch and prosecute vandals

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WASHINGTON — The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. learned yesterday that the cross-shaped veterans' memorial in the Mojave Desert was torn down Sunday night by someone or persons with no respect for the dead or the nation's laws.

"This was a legal fight that a vandal just made personal to 50 million veterans, military personnel and their families," said VFW National Commander Thomas J. Tradewell, Sr. "To think anyone can rationalize the desecration of a war memorial is sickening, and for them to believe they won't be apprehended is very naive.

"The memorial will be rebuilt and the vandals will be caught and prosecuted in federal court, since the crime occurred on government property," said Tradewell, a combat-wounded Vietnam veteran from Sussex, Wis. "We hope this horrible act will highlight the importance of resolving this case quickly so that the memorial and land can be transferred to the VFW so that the service and sacrifice of all American war dead will be properly recognized and honored, as originally intended by a group of World War I VFW members 76 years ago."

A reward is now being offered through the Liberty Institute, which represented the VFW, American Legion, Military Order of the Purple Heart, and American Ex-Prisoners of War in an amicus brief involving the 76-year-old war memorial in the Supreme Court case of *Salazar v. Buono*.

Anyone with information relating to this crime can leave a message on a National Park Service Tip Line that will soon be posted on the Mojave Desert Veterans Memorial website at www.donttearmedown.com.

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

406 W. 34th Street
Kansas City, MO 64111
Office 816.756.3390
Fax 816.968.1157

WASHINGTON OFFICE

200 Maryland Ave., N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002
Office 202.543.2239
Fax 202.543.6719

info@vfw.org
www.vfw.org