

# National Memorials Honor Veterans Across the Country

**To commemorate this year's Memorial Day, the VFW magazine features seven established, new and future memorials**

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One of the VFW's core missions is to preserve the memories of U.S. troops who have given their lives in defense of the nation.

Through the years, Americans across the nation have joined in this effort to remember those heroes, as well as other endeavors dedicated to those who have served or are currently serving in the armed forces. Here are brief overviews of seven memorials dedicated to U.S. veterans throughout history.

## **52 BOAT MEMORIAL SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA**

The memorial is dedicated to submariners of World War II and is based at San Diego's Liberty Station, the location of the former Naval Training Center San Diego. The 52 Boat Memorial was dedicated on March 25, 2010, and commemorates the 52 Navy submarines and crews lost in WWII.

The 52 Boat Memorial features 52 elm trees and 52 granite markers that list the crew members lost on each submarine. The now disbanded San Diego chapter of the United States Submarine Veterans of World War II voted to create the memorial, and the fundraising process took about 14 years.

On Sept. 9, 2022, the *San Diego Union-Tribune* first reported that the 52 Boat Memorial had endured weather damage, vandalism and construction issues through the years.

Douglas Smay, founder and treasurer of the nonprofit 52 Boat Memorial Veterans, said his organization is in the process of replacing all plaques and markers of the memorial. Smay added that it will "basically be a brand-new memorial" by the end of 2023.

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### **AFRICAN AMERICAN VETERANS MONUMENT BUFFALO, NEW YORK**

The African American Veterans Monument in Buffalo, New York, is dedicated to African American men and women who have served and are serving in the military.

The memorial depicts a timeline and a map of America's wars. There are 12 black concrete pillars, each standing 10 feet tall and three feet wide, that mark the dates and locations of the conflicts.

African American troops have fought in all 12 of the military conflicts "since the country's first war, whether they enlisted voluntarily, or were drafted," according to the African American Veterans Monument Inc.

The monument is located at the Buffalo and Erie County Naval and Military Park in Buffalo, New York. Visit <https://aavmwny.org> to learn more about the African American Veterans Monument.

### **CORPSMEN MEMORIAL JACKSONVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA**

Located near Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune in Jacksonville, North Carolina, the Corpsmen Memorial was dedicated on Oct. 12, 2022.

The new memorial features a statue that details a Navy corpsman using himself as a shield to protect a wounded Marine. It was designed by Abbe Godwin, who also designed the Vietnam War memorial at the Raleigh, North Carolina, Capitol building and the Beirut Memorial at Camp Lejeune.

The Corpsmen Memorial Foundation in 2008 began raising funds to build the memorial. It honors "all those who served alongside the Marines as Fleet Marine Force corpsmen," according to the Foundation.

Some 2,227 corpsmen have been killed "in the line of duty," according to the Navy.

Visit <https://fmfcmf.org> to learn more about the memorial honoring "Docs."

### **GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM MEMORIAL WASHINGTON, D.C.**

VFW is a supporter of the memorial dedicated to post-9/11 Global War on Terrorism troops.

The organization supported the Global War on Terrorism Memorial Location Act, which was passed in the omnibus National Defense Authorization Act of 2022 (P.L. 117-81). It was the final approval needed for the memorials' construction in the nation's capital.

The memorial was made possible after then-President Donald Trump in 2017 approved the Global War on Terrorism War Memorial Act. The law exempted the Global War on Terrorism Memorial from the 1986 Commemorative Works Act, which requires a 10-year wait after the official end of a war for constructing a memorial on Washington, D.C.'s National Mall.

As of *VFW magazine's* print deadline, the exact location and completion date have yet to be determined. The estimated cost of the Global War on Terrorism Memorial is \$100 million, as reported by the Military.com Network.

*Update: On March 31, 2023, [the Global War on Terrorism Memorial Foundation \(GWOTMF\)](#) announced that the Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) has approved Site A at 23rd St. NW and Constitution Avenue NW (see map below) as a location for the Memorial.*

## **USS GROTON SAIL MONUMENT GROTON, CONNECTICUT**

The USS Groton Sail Monument will be dedicated to all U.S. submariners. It will be in Groton, Connecticut, the so-called "Submarine Capital of the World."

The memorial was spearheaded by the USS Groton Sail Foundation. The centerpiece of the monument, according to the foundation, will feature the USS Groton's sail and rubber insulation. These Navy boats were covered in rubber to keep a low noise profile while they were submerged. The "sail" refers to a submarine's topside super structure.

The USS Groton Sail Foundation and Groton residents held a groundbreaking ceremony on Sept. 19, 2022, at the future site of the Groton memorial.

## **NATIONAL DESERT STORM AND DESERT SHIELD MEMORIAL WASHINGTON, D.C.**

The National Mall in the nation's capital is the future site of the National Desert Storm and Desert Shield Memorial.

VFW, which has donated \$500,000, has been a long-time supporter of the National Desert Storm Memorial Association's mission to build a memorial in Washington, D.C. VFW Posts together have contributed more than \$200,000, said Jill Etter, a spokeswoman for the National Desert Storm Memorial Association.

"The Memorial's design will commemorate the historical significance of Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm while honoring the service and the sacrifice of the U.S.

and coalition military personnel who liberated Kuwait from Iraq and defended Saudi Arabia and the Arabian Peninsula from further invasion,” according to the National Desert Storm Memorial Association.

The memorial is planned to be completed next year. Learn more about the memorial at <http://www.ndswm.org>.

## **VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL WASHINGTON, D.C.**

For more than 40 years, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, also known as “The Wall,” has been one of the most well-known war memorials in the world. It is the most visited memorial on the Washington, D.C., National Mall, with more than 5 million people visiting each year, according to the Department of Defense.

Throughout the years, VFW has contributed more than \$600,000 toward the memorial’s construction and various endeavors by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund.

Last year, the organization announced that it had collected at least one photo of each of the 58,281 troops featured on “The Wall.” The venture took more than two decades, according to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund.

Take a virtual tour of “The Wall of Faces” at <https://www.vvmf.org/Wall-of-Faces>.

*This article is featured in the 2023 May issue of [VFW magazine](#), and was written by [Dave Spiva](#), associate editor for VFW magazine.*