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Governor Lemanu and First Lady Ella Honors our Fallen Toa o Samoa Heroes at the Arlington National Cemetery, Virginia



Governor Lemanu and First Lady Ella Mauga had the opportunity to visit the Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia on February 2, 2023, to pay their respects to our fallen Toa O Samoa heroes. The Arlington National Cemetery is home to many of our nation's greatest heroes including more than 300,000 veterans of every American conflict, from the Revolutionary War to

Iraq and Afghanistan. Governor Lemamu and First Lady Ella visited the gravesites of fallen Toa o Samoa warriors listed below:

- CSM Ioakimo Falaniko (USA) – shares a grave with his son (PFC Falaniko) who died in 2003
- PFC Jonathan Falaniko (USA)
- MSG Tulsa Tulaga Tuliau (USA)
- SSG Loleni Gandy (USA)
- PFC George J. Howell (USA)
- COL George Te'o Martin (USAF)
- LCDR Iakopo "Jake" Poyer (USN)

Governor Lemanu and First Lady Ella also participated in the “Laying a Wreath” ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier is a symbolic grave for all fallen warriors whose remains have not been found or identified. It is guarded by Soldiers of the 3rd United States Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard) stationed at Fort Myer. The Tomb of the Unknown is honored and protected, every hour of every day, in the sun, rain, and snow. The laying of the wreath ceremony is a sacred service performed upon request and it is a way to honor the sacrifices of American service members. The ceremony was filled with tourists who came by to tour the place and witness this sacred event. The floral wreaths carry a special meaning of victory, bravery, and peace. Governor Lemanu and First Lady Ella were guided by the soldiers of the “Old guard” to present and place the wreath on the tomb of the unknown soldier. A moment of silence was observed while the sound of Taps echoed the surrounding of the tomb of the unknown.

Governor Lemanu extends his prayers for God’s strength and comfort to the families who continue to mourn the loss of these servicemen and women. May we always reflect on the unwavering commitment and patriotism of our fallen Toa o Samoa and all fallen warriors whose sacrifice has allowed our people to live and enjoy our freedom.

Biographies of the Fallen Toa o Samoa Laid to Rest in Arlington, Virginia

CSM Ioakimo “Niko” Falaniko

Date of Birth: August 06, 1954
Date Called Home: October 20, 2021
Branch of Service: United States Army Sec 60/8132



CSM (Ret) Ioakimo Falaniko, served in the U.S. Army for 32 years. His high standards are embedded in the foundations of the tens of thousands of Soldiers with whom he trained, mentored, and led in peace and combat. He is a Sapper Icon having served as a Sapper Instructor in the early-1990s, was a founding member and sat on the board for the Sapper

Association and maintained a constant presence at the Sapper School through his retirement.

He was married to Maliana Ching Falaniko, and they have four children. One of the training Forward Operating Bases (FOB) used by the Sapper Leader Course was named “FOB Falaniko” in honor of his son, Jonathan.

Originally from American Samoa, CSM Falaniko always extended his leadership and mentorship to help Samoans and Pacific Islanders at every installation he was assigned. As a result of his dedication as a great ambassador for the Pacific Islanders, he was awarded the Federal Asian Pacific American Council (FAPAC) award in recognition of his significant contributions to the advancement of Asian Pacific Americans (APA) and the promotion of equal employment opportunity in the Federal workforce in May 2001.

CSM Falaniko started and ended his military career at the home of the Engineers: Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. His stateside assignments included: Fort Belvoir, Virginia; two tours at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri; Fort Bragg, North Carolina; Fort Bliss, Texas; and Fort Lewis, Washington. His overseas tours included: Hanau, West Berlin; Giessen, Germany; Camp Indian and Camp Howze, Korea; and Operation Iraqi Freedom, Iraq.

PVT Jonathan Ioakimo Falaniko

Date of Birth: August 06, 1954
Date Called Home: October 20, 2021
Branch of Service: United States Army Sec 60/8132



PVT Jonathan Falaniko wanted to be just like his dad -- right down to the green Army uniform his father, CSM Ioakimo Falaniko, had worn for 27 years. So it was with great pride that CSM Falaniko stood beside his son in February 2003 as the 20-year-old was sworn in.

PVT Falaniko was a new Soldier who had been in the Army less than 6 months. He attended basic training in May 2003 and deployed to Iraq in August 2003.

During this deployment PVT Falaniko and CSM Falaniko were reunited. Though family members rarely serve in the same theater of operations in times of combat, according to military officials, Jonathan's battalion was assigned to his father's division in Baghdad.

MSG Tulsa Tulaga Tuliau

Date of Birth: August 01, 1972
Date Called Home: September 26, 2005
Branch of Service: United States Army Sec 60/8412



MSG Tulsa Tulaga Tuliau was born in San Francisco and raised in American Samoa. He enlisted in the US Army in March of 1992 and was an artillery non-commissioned officer assigned to the 3rd Battalion,

314th Regiment of the Army Reserve's 78th Division (Training Support) based at Fort Drum.

MSG Tuliau was Posthumously awarded the Purple Heart for wounds received as a result of hostile actions, the Bronze Star for meritorious service and the Combat Action Badge for actively engaging or being engaged by the enemy.

MSG Tuliau married Katharine J. Ellis of Pierrepont Manor, November 9, 2000. He has two daughters, Vanessa and Sophia.

SSG Loleni Gandy

Date of Birth: February 09, 1974
Date Called Home: November 19, 2010
Branch of Service: United States Army Sec 60/9488



SSG Loleni Gandy was from American Samoa and has earned the title "Toa o Samoa," hero of Samoa of American Samoa.

SSG Gandy lived with his family in Wisconsin. He graduated in 1991 from Marist High School and was a member of the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Tomah, Wisconsin.

He entered the Active Army in 1993 and re-enlisted in the Reserves for 6 years on March 17, 2003. He previously served a tour in Iraq with the 411th Engineer Battalion from January 2004 to July 2005 and was assigned to Fort McCoy, Wisconsin as a Senior Mechanic from August 2005 through October 2009. He was assigned to the 103rd ESC and deployed to Iraq on June 6th, 2010. Loleni Gandy entered the military in 1993 and served on active duty for 9 years 4 months.

His unit was the primary logistical planners for Operation New Dawn, which is focused on the training, assistance and equipping of Iraqi Security Forces. He was an excellent soldier and his very likeable personality made him an immediate part of the 103d logistics family.

SSG Gandy and his service of distinction and honor is part of both his Wisconsin and American Samoan brother and sisterhood.

PFC George J. Howell

Date of Birth: January 25, 1983
Date Called Home: December 21, 2007
Branch of Service: United States Army Sec 60/8728



PFC George Howell was an infantryman from Salinas, Calif., who entered the Army in April - was killed by a roadside bomb in Iraq four days before Christmas,

PFC Howell, who was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 87th Infantry

Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team of the 10th Mountain Division, sustained fatal wounds when the blast hit his convoy near Riyadh.

The combat team was responsible for security in the Kirkuk region of northern Iraq and assists in training Iraqi security forces.

PFC Howell completed basic and advanced individual training at Fort Benning, Ga., and had been awarded a Purple Heart and the Army Service Ribbon. He is survived by his wife, a daughter and a son, all of Watertown, N.Y., and his mother.

CoL George Teo Martin

Date of Birth: April 27, 1957
Date Called Home: July 21, 2008
Branch of Service: United State Air Force Sec 60/8882



Col Martin, Flight Surgeon, was killed in a B52 aviation accident on July 21, 2008, in Guam and was among those remembered for their ultimate sacrifice.

The crew was based at Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana. They were deployed to Guam with the 20th Expeditionary Bomb Squadron as part of the U.S. military's continuous bomber presence mission in the Pacific.

The B-52 was carrying nearly 19,000 gallons of jet fuel when it crashed but the National Oceanic Atmospheric Association determined there was no threat to the environment.

Col Martin was a family man. His wife is Ursula Fitimaleafa Teo Martin of American Samoa. He has one son, Guahan Aiono.

LCDR Iakopo “Jake” Poyer

Date of Birth: February 9, 1961
Date Called Home: May 17, 2015
Branch of Service: United States Navy Sec 55/1539



Retire Lieutenant Commander Iakopo (Jake) Poyer, hails from American Samoa and attended the University of Albuquerque before he began his military career. LCDR Poyer enlisted in the United States Navy in 1981 and served in five different commands including three ships, an overseas tour, and two shore commands.

In 1993, he was accepted for the Limited Duty Officer Program and

served on seven different commands including four ships and three shore commands. LCDR Poyer completed eleven deployments overseas covering the Atlantic Ocean, Mediterranean Sea, Black Sea, Adriatic Sea, Caribbean Sea, Red Sea, Persian Gulf, Indian Ocean, Pacific Ocean, China Sea and the South Pacific. He had served as the Port Operations Officer on board Naval Station Norfolk, Virginia.

In 2010, he retired from the U.S. Navy after 29 years of service. LCDR Poyer was extremely involved in the Polynesian community locally and abroad. He served as the Chairman and Co-Founder of the Pacific Islanders American Group of Virginia (PIAG) and the CEO of the National Fagaitua High School Alumni Association.

LCDR Poyer was a family man. His wife of 28 years is Joy Volk of Woodbury, NJ. He has one daughter, Patricia Maina, and one son, Derek Esau.

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GANDY
SSG
US ARMY
IRAQ
FEB 9 1974
NOV 19 2010
BRONZE STAR



IAKOPO
POYER

LCDR

US NAVY

PERSIAN GULF

FEB 9 1961

MAY 17 2015

AMERICAN SAMOA

LOVING HUSBAND

& FATHER



