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Monument Battle Ends: Court Rules in Favor of Building Air Force Memorial

Arlington, VA, May 7, 1999 - After two years of skirmishes, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit today ruled in favor of the Air Force Memorial Foundation giving a green light to completion of a memorial honoring the men and women of the Air Force. The ruling marks the second time in the past year a federal court has dismissed a suit aimed at stopping construction of the memorial on Arlington Ridge, north of the Arlington National Cemetery.

"Today's decision by the U.S. Court of Appeals marks the end of the controversy over the Air Force Memorial," stated Air Force Memorial Foundation President Chuck Link. "Our Air Force Memorial has now been approved by an act of Congress, by four different government agencies and has twice won judgements in federal courts. It is time to move forward and allow the Air Force Memorial to join those honoring the other branches of the military in our nation's capital." The United States Air Force is the only major branch of the Armed Services without a memorial site in Washington, D.C.

In today's ruling, the U.S. Court of Appeals ruled that the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia decided properly in favor of the Foundation and the federal approval agencies in June 1998. The initial suit had been summarily dismissed by the District Court which found that the Air Force Memorial Foundation and the U.S. Government had complied with the provisions of the Administrative Approval Act and the Commemorative Works Act in approving the memorial site.

"Today's decision didn't come as a surprise," Joe Coors, Jr., Chairman of the Air Force Memorial Foundation's Board of Trustees, said. "The National Park Service had long envisioned a memorial on the two-acre site selected for the Air Force Memorial. As the memorial takes shape on Arlington Ridge, I am confident that everyone will see how the design blends with and complements the two existing monuments on the site." The Arlington Ridge consists of a total of 27 acres of which the Iwo Jima Memorial occupies eight-acres and the Netherlands Carillon occupies three-acres. A full 12-acres of open space will surround the three structures.

The Air Force Memorial was designed by James Ingo Freed of New York City's Pei Cobb Freed & Partners. Freed was also the principal architect for the National Holocaust Memorial Museum. The composition centers on the famous five-pointed Air Force star. "The Air Force star has a long tradition of gracing Air Force aircraft, missiles and spacecraft and is central to the rank insignia of every enlisted member of the United States Air Force," Link explained. "The star is richly symbolic of the millions of United States Air Force members this memorial will honor." The structure will rise no higher than 50 feet in the air and is an uplifting design open to the elements and capturing the impression of sky and air.

The Air Force Memorial is scheduled for completion in 2002. "We are building this memorial entirely with private funds," Link said. Over half of the \$30 million needed to build the Air Force Memorial has been raised to date. Foundation members plan to have the memorial fully funded in early 2000. "Today's court decision removes the final barrier," Link concluded. "The Air Force Memorial will soon be a reality -- giving wings to the dreams of the men and women of the United States Air Force."