



# REPORT

## THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO TO THE PARK AND RECREATION BOARD

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DATE ISSUED: May 8, 2015

REPORT NO: 103

ATTENTION: Park and Recreation Board  
Agenda of May 21, 2015

SUBJECT: Veterans Memorial Garden Commemorative Bust of General Robert Cardenas

### SUMMARY

Issue – Should the Park and Recreation Board recommend approval of the proposed commemorative bust of Brigadier General Robert Cardenas, to be placed in the Air Garden portion of the Veterans Memorial Garden?

Director's Recommendation – Recommend approval of the proposed the proposed commemorative bust of Brigadier General Robert Cardenas, to be placed in the Air Garden portion of the Veterans Memorial Garden.

Other Recommendations – The following groups have reviewed and considered the proposed project. Actions taken and recommendations made by these groups are listed under Discussion below.

- Balboa Park Committee

Fiscal Impact – None. The costs of fabrication, installation and maintenance will be the responsibility of the Veterans Museum and Memorial Center.

Water and Energy Conservation Status – The proposed commemorative bust will comply with all water and energy conservation guidelines contained in Council Policy 200-14.

Environmental - This activity is covered under Project No. 27829, dated 6/29/04 for the Veteran's Memorial Garden approved & certified by City Council Resolution R-299667 (9/21/04) and R-300136/R-300137 (2/14/05). The activity is adequately addressed in the environmental document and there is no change in circumstance, additional information, or project changes to warrant additional environmental review. Because the prior environmental document adequately covered this activity as part of the previously approved project, the activity is not a separate project for purposes of CEQA review per CEQA Guidelines Section §15060(c)(3) and 15378(c).

## BACKGROUND

The Veterans Memorial Garden is located adjacent to the Veterans Museum and Memorial Center (former Navy Chapel) in the Inspiration Point area of Balboa Park. The Balboa Park Master Plan was amended in 2004, incorporating the Air Garden component of the Veterans Memorial Garden. Two remaining components, the Land Garden and the Sea Garden, are yet to be designed or constructed.

The concept of the Veteran's Memorial Garden is to have three sub-gardens: the Air Garden, the Land Garden and the Sea Garden. Each sub-garden would honor those who have served our country in the air, on land and at sea.

Construction of the Air Garden was completed in 2006, including the central plaza known as the Veterans Circle. The Air Garden includes a water fountain with a scale sculpture of a B-24 Liberator bomber aircraft. The garden also includes a large bronze plaque about the B-24 Liberator aircraft and its importance to San Diego. Two other large bronze plaques contain the names of those who donated toward the fabrication of the B-24 Liberator sculpture. The Veterans Circle has a dedication plaque and an informative plaque.

The Veterans Museum and Memorial Center has several plaques surrounding their facility. These include a Purple Heart Memorial and the Vietnam Veterans Peace Memorial.

## DISCUSSION

The Veterans Museum and Memorial Center is proposing a bust to be placed in the Air Garden portion of the Veterans Memorial Garden. The bust would commemorate Brigadier General Robert Cardenas (United States Air Force, Retired). Graphics and a description of the proposed commemorative bust are attached.

Park and Recreation Board Policy No. 1002 addresses "Gifts of Architectural Features, Works of Art and Commemorative Plaques for Public Parks or Other City-owned Land." A copy of this policy is attached. The policy provides criteria for the Park and Recreation Board to evaluate proposals, which are as follows:

- a. Does it add to the attractiveness and/or usefulness of the park?
- b. Does it commemorate an individual, group or event of general interest to citizens and tourists?
- c. Is the individual, group or event worthy of commemoration to future citizens?
- d. Does a proposal for a tribute to a living person meet all criteria, and will "time" substantiate the memorial?
- e. If the "feature" provides a service, are City funds needed for installation, and are they available?
- f. Will proper maintenance be feasible?

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- g. Will the feature withstand vandalism and can its design be altered either to deter vandalism or make cleanup of vandalism easier?
- h. To what extent has the person, group or event been commemorated in other locations in the metropolitan area?
- i. Does the location proposed add significance to the memorial?


In regard to criterion d, General Robert Cardenas is still living. To the best of staff's knowledge, he has not been commemorated in any other part of San Diego. However, he is included in an exhibit in the San Diego Air and Space Museum. As noted on the attached graphics, Brigadier General Cardenas was a military pilot who flew the B-24 Liberator aircraft during World War II; the location in the Air Garden adds significance to the memorial.


On May 7, 2015 the Balboa Park Committee voted unanimously (6-0-1) to recommend approval of the proposed commemorative bust of Brigadier General Robert Cardenas.

#### ALTERNATIVES

1. Do not recommend approval of the proposed commemorative bust of Brigadier General Robert Cardenas, to be placed in the Air Garden portion of the Veterans Memorial Garden?
2. Recommend approval of the proposed commemorative bust of Brigadier General Robert Cardenas, with modifications.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Bruce Martinez  
Deputy Director, Developed Regional Parks

  
Prepared by: Charles Daniels  
Park Designer, Administrative Services

BEM/cd

Attachments: General Robert Cardenas Plaque and Graphics  
Photographs of Existing Plaques  
Park and Recreation Board Policy No. 1002

cc: Council District 3 Office

# *Veterans Museum and Memorial Center*

2115 Park Boulevard, San Diego, California 92101  
(619) 239-2300 fax (619) 239-7445 email: [info@veteranmuseum.org](mailto:info@veteranmuseum.org)  
[www.veteranmuseum.org](http://www.veteranmuseum.org)

February 23, 2015

Susan Lowery-Mendoza, Balboa Park District Manager  
San Diego Park and Recreation Department  
2125 Park Blvd  
San Diego, CA 92101

Dear Ms. Lowery Mendoza

On September 21, 2004, the City Council unanimously approved amendments to the General Plan and Balboa Park Master Plan to authorize construction of the Veterans Memorial Garden to serve as a memorial to **those who have served our country on land, in the air and at sea.** The City's Veterans Affairs Advisory Board noted at the time that the garden should not only be a memorial to veterans but also a memorial to the City of San Diego and its military and aerospace history. In this spirit, the Veterans Museum and Memorial Center proposes the attached addendum to the approved plan for the Veterans Memorial Garden in Balboa Park. There will be no financial impact on the City to implement this addendum.

*Sheldon Margolis*

Captain Sheldon Margolis, USN (Ret)  
Executive Director

A 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to honor and perpetuate the memory of Veterans  
Registry of Charitable Trusts – CT-76500; EIN 33-0361154  
Funded in part by the San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture and the County of San Diego

February 23, 2015

## Proposed Addendum to the Veterans Memorial Garden Approved Plan

1. The addendum would authorize the addition of the statue to the existing air element of the Veterans Memorial Garden. This bust of General Robert Cardenas will complement the existing B-24 sculpture, and represent all B-24 pilots. General Cardenas is the ideal person to be the pilot representative. He not only had a distinguished career in the Army Air Corps in World War II, but continued his service in the Air Force, leading Air Force Commands in Korea, Vietnam and the Cold War, flying over 80 different types of aircraft, and being a pioneer in the breaking of the sound barrier. A San Diego resident since 1925, he settled here after a 34 year career, and became a mainstay in the veterans and San Diego community. In retirement, his most lasting achievement will be his leadership in the establishment of the Miramar National Cemetery, which opened in 2010
2. The statue is a stainless steel bust on a granite base, describes as follows:
  - a. Overall size – 72” high, by 22” wide, by 18” deep
  - b. Bust – Young WWII pilot with flight jacket, helmet and goggles
    - i. Cast 3/8” stainless steel, 1 ½ times life-size
  - c. Pedestal – polished black granite
    - i. Etched white images and lettering
3. Attachments include proposed location description and photographs of the statue and of the sides of the granite base.









# BRIGADIER GENERAL ROBERT L. CARDENAS, USAF



In a life that spanned more than nine decades of war and peace, Brig. Gen. Robert L. Cardenas was a key figure in some of our nation's greatest endeavors. He was at the forefront of aviation during a time of rapid technological advancement. He was an innovative military leader who could be trusted with any complex or hazardous mission.

Cardenas served his country with great distinction, inspiring all who have known him with his courage, honor and conduct. In retirement, his most lasting achievement was leading the effort to establish San Diego's Miramar National Cemetery, which opened in 2010.

Born in Mérida, Yucatán, Mexico, on March 10, 1920, Cardenas and his family moved to San Diego when he was 5 years old. In 1939, he joined the California National Guard. In July 1941, he was commissioned a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army Air Corp. He spent the next two years as a flight instructor and test pilot, including starting the first military glider school in Twenty-Nine Palms, Calif., and flight-testing invasion gliders and tow planes in Wilmington, Ohio, for use during the D-Day landings.

On March 18, 1944, Capt. Cardenas was leading his 20th bombing mission over southern Germany. Attacking an armaments factory, his bomber was hit repeatedly by anti-aircraft fire. Cardenas suffered a head wound from shrapnel. The aircraft was so severely crippled after a second bombing run, the pilot turned toward neutral Switzerland.

Cardenas bailed out of the burning plane, landing on the German side of Lake Constance. Despite his injury, he attempted to escape capture by swimming the lake. A passing boatman landed him safely in Switzerland, where authorities interned him. During this period, he trained Swiss pilots to fly interned American bombers. He also visited several internment camps, and reported to the U.S. Consulate on the deplorable conditions he found there.



Anti-aircraft fire set the B-24 bomber "Sack Artists" ablaze during an attack over southern Germany. Cardenas bailed out at the last moment. Painting "Last One Out" by Richard Taylor.

After six months, and with the help of the Swiss underground and French Resistance, he escaped through France and was able to rejoin U.S. forces.



Cardenas' B-29 bomber, with Chuck Yeager's X-1 rocket plane attached and ready for launch over Muroc AFB in 1947.



Flown by Cardenas, the YB-49 "Flying Wing" angles into a turn over Muroc AFB in 1948.

In 1947, Maj. Cardenas led a pioneering project to break the "sound barrier." He was command pilot of the aircraft that launched Capt. Chuck Yeager's rocket plane into supersonic flight, marking one of the major aviation achievements of the 20th century. The next year, he risked his life on several occasions while testing the revolutionary YB-49 "Flying Wing" – a predecessor of the B-2 Stealth Bomber. He also flew the XB45, first jet bomber, and the XP59, first jet fighter. A true aviation hero, Cardenas flew over 80 different aircraft during his career.

In 1962, during the China-India war as Director of Special Operations for Strike Command he led the 1050th Special Activity Group to the Himalayas with the task of preventing the Chinese coming from Tibet to invade India by breaking their way through Nathu-La pass in the Eastern Himalayas. The defense activities were successful.

During the Korean War, Colonel Cardenas commanded the 51st Fighter Interceptor Wing on Okinawa. During the Vietnam War, Col. Cardenas commanded the 18th Tactical Fighter Wing and flew F-105 combat missions over North Vietnam. He then commanded the 835th Air Division, training jet fighter crews for combat.

In 1968, Brig. Gen. Cardenas founded a commando group, the Air Force Special Operations Force. He later served as Vice Commander of the 16th Air Force in Spain, and helped negotiate with Muammar al-Qaddafi for the withdrawal of U.S. air forces from Libya.

During the Cold War, he was U.S. Deputy Chief of Staff for "LIVE OAK," a secret NATO group charged with maintaining Allied access to the divided city of Berlin. His final assignment was as Chief of the National Strategic Target List Division, Joint Strategic Target Planning Staff, U.S. Nuclear War Plans.

Brig. Gen. Cardenas retired from the Air Force in 1973 with 34 years' service.



# BRIGADIER GENERAL ROBERT L. CARDENAS, USAF

## CAMPAIGNS

- World War II
- Korea
- Vietnam
- Cold War

## DECORATIONS

- Air Force Distinguished Service Medal
- Legion of Merit with Oak Leaf Cluster
- Distinguished Flying Cross
- Purple Heart
- Meritorious Service Medal
- Air Medal with four Oak Leaf Clusters
- Joint Service Commendation Medal
- Air Force Commendation Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster
- Presidential Citation
- Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with two Oak Leaf Clusters
- Spanish Grand Legion of Aeronautical Merit with Sash & Dagger

## HONORS

- Outstanding Professional Contributions and Leadership, University of New Mexico, College of Engineering, 1993
- Distinguished Alumnus, USAF Test Pilot School, Edwards Air Force Base, 1994
- Inductee, International Aerospace "Walk of Honor" Monolith, City of Lancaster, CA, 1995
- Inductee, Air Commando Hall of Fame, 2002
- San Diego Veteran of the Year, 2002
- "Significant Sig" Hall of Fame, Sigma Chi Fraternity, 2005
- Gathering of Eagles Foundation "Walk of Honor," 2005
- Inductee, San Diego Air and Space Museum Hall of Fame, 2008
- Flight Test Historical Foundation "Excellence in Aviation," Flight Test, 2010
- Inductee, 31st Gathering of Eagles, Air University, Maxwell Air Force Base, 2012
- Inductee, Palm Springs Aerospace Museum Hall of Fame, 2014
- Enshrined, National Aviation Hall of Fame, 2015

### Career Highlights

First Operations Officer USAAC Glider School, Twenty-Nine Palms, California.  
Operations Officer, First Glider Test Base, Wilmington, Ohio.  
B-24 Pilot, 44th Bomb Group, Shipdham, England.  
Chief of Bomber Test, Flight Test Division, Wright Field, Ohio.  
Chief of Flight Test Operations & Transonic Project, Muroc, AAF.  
Wing Commander, 51st Fighter Interceptor Wing, Naha AB, Okinawa.  
Chief of Special Operations Division, US Strike Command, Eglin AFB.  
Commander 18th TFW, Kadena AFB, Okinawa.  
Commander 835 Air Division, McConnell AFB, Wichita, Kansas.  
First Commander of USAF Special Operations Force (SOF), Hurlburt AFB, Florida.  
Vice-Commander 16th Air Force, Spain.  
U.S. Deputy Chief of Staff, Operation Live Oak, Mons, Belgium.  
Chief of the National Strategic Target List Division of the Joint Strategic Target Planning Staff which produced the US Nuclear War Plan, Offutt AFB, Nebraska.

### Flew more than 80 different types of aircraft:

A-20, A-26, AC-47, AT-6, AT-12, BC-1, B-17, B-24, B-25, B-26, B-29, B-34, B-47, B-50, C-46, C-47, C-54, C-73, C-87, C118, C-119, C-123, C-130, C-133, CG-4A, F-80, F-86, F-84, F-100, F-105, F-4, F-4U, F-5, F-56, F-84, F-86, F-87, F-89, F-94, F-97, F-100, F-105, F-106, F-108, F-117, F-119, F-120, F-121, F-122, F-123, F-124, F-125, F-126, F-127, F-128, F-129, F-130, F-131, F-132, F-133, F-134, F-135, F-136, F-137, F-138, F-139, F-140, F-141, F-142, F-143, F-144, F-145, F-146, F-147, F-148, F-149, F-150, F-151, F-152, F-153, F-154, F-155, F-156, F-157, F-158, F-159, F-160, F-161, F-162, F-163, F-164, F-165, F-166, F-167, F-168, F-169, F-170, F-171, F-172, F-173, F-174, F-175, F-176, F-177, F-178, F-179, F-180, F-181, F-182, F-183, F-184, F-185, F-186, F-187, F-188, F-189, F-190, F-191, F-192, F-193, F-194, F-195, F-196, F-197, F-198, F-199, F-200, F-201, F-202, F-203, F-204, F-205, F-206, F-207, F-208, F-209, F-210, F-211, F-212, F-213, F-214, F-215, F-216, F-217, F-218, F-219, F-220, 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F-793, F-794, F-795, F-796, F-797, F-798, F-799, F-800, F-801, F-802, F-803, F-804, F-805, F-806, F-807, F-808, F-809, F-810, F-811, F-812, F-813, F-814, F-815, F-816, F-817, F-818, F-819, F-820, F-821, F-822, F-823, F-824, F-825, F-826, F-827, F-828, F-829, F-830, F-831, F-832, F-833, F-834, F-835, F-836, F-837, F-838, F-839, F-840, F-841, F-842, F-843, F-844, F-845, F-846, F-847, F-848, F-849, F-850, F-851, F-852, F-853, F-854, F-855, F-856, F-857, F-858, F-859, F-860, F-861, F-862, F-863, F-864, F-865, F-866, F-867, F-868, F-869, F-870, F-871, F-872, F-873, F-874, F-875, F-876, F-877, F-878, F-879, F-880, F-881, F-882, F-883, F-884, F-885, F-886, F-887, F-888, F-889, F-890, F-891, F-892, F-893, F-894, F-895, F-896, F-897, F-898, F-899, F-900, F-901, F-902, F-903, F-904, F-905, F-906, F-907, F-908, F-909, F-910, F-911, F-912, F-913, F-914, F-915, F-916, F-917, F-918, F-919, F-920, F-921, F-922, F-923, F-924, F-925, F-926, F-927, F-928, F-929, F-930, F-931, F-932, F-933, F-934, F-935, F-936, F-937, F-938, F-939, F-940, F-941, F-942, F-943, F-944, F-945, F-946, F-947, F-948, F-949, F-950, F-951, F-952, F-953, F-954, F-955, F-956, F-957, F-958, F-959, F-960, F-961, F-962, F-963, F-964, F-965, F-966, F-967, F-968, F-969, F-970, F-971, F-972, F-973, F-974, F-975, F-976, F-977, F-978, F-979, F-980, F-981, F-982, F-983, F-984, F-985, F-986, F-987, F-988, F-989, F-990, F-991, F-992, F-993, F-994, F-995, F-996, F-997, F-998, F-999, F-1000.



Cardenas suited up for a flight in an F-105 fighter jet in 1965.

# WHERE DO WE FIND SUCH MEN?

“We find them where we’ve always found them. They are the product of the freest society man has ever known. They make a commitment to the military – make it freely because the birthright we share as Americans is worth defending. God bless America.”

President Ronald Reagan

Armed Forces Day Address  
May 15, 1982

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Dedicated 2015

by the  
Veterans Museum and Memorial Center  
San Diego

Sculpture by Richard Becker, N.S.S.  
Text by Bill Heard, Capt. USNR (ret.)

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Figure 1 - B-24 Liberator Plaque



Figure 2 - Veterans Circle Informative Plaque





Figure 3 - Veterans Circle Dedication Plaque



Figure 4 - B-24 Donor Plaque (typical of two)









**Figure 7 - Vietnam Veterans Peace Memorial**



**Figure 8 - Vietnam Veterans Peace Memorial Re-dedication Plaque**



PARK AND RECREATION BOARD POLICY

SUBJECT: Gifts of Architectural Features, Works of Art and Commemorative Plaques for Public Parks or Other City-owned Land

BACKGROUND: Public parks have as a primary function, the provision of outdoor recreation in spacious, landscaped surroundings. Special architectural features, such as water elements, sculpture, and other works of art add significantly to the parks by the enjoyment derived from experiencing the beauty of the feature. All features must be consistent with applicable Park Master Plans and General Development Plans.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this policy is to establish criteria for design, placement and acceptance of architectural, artistic and commemorative features within parks or other City-owned land, and to maintain same.

- POLICY:
1. The City of San Diego shall encourage community groups and individuals to donate "special features" which will add to the interest and attractiveness of the parks, or be of service to patrons of the parks, i.e., drinking fountains, benches.
  2. Proposals for "special features" and their locations shall be reviewed by the Park and Recreation Board and submitted by them to the City Council with recommendations in accordance with Council Policy 100-2 (City Receipt of Donations).
  3. Proposals for special features shall be coordinated for review with the City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture.
  4. A "special feature" may serve as a recognition to an individual or group; living or dead, who have made a significant contribution to a specific park or community; commemorate an historic occasion; or acknowledge interest of a group or individual in a park.
  5. All "special features" proposed as memorials shall add to the attractiveness or usefulness of the park area or be of unusually significant historical value.

6. The initial costs of development and placement of a decorative memorial or commemorative feature shall be borne totally by private funds. Costs may be shared by the City if the "feature" provides a service to park patrons. The City will assume ownership and maintenance, if accepted, and place in a public park. The City will not assume responsibility for replacement of "features" removed due to vandalism or lost to theft. Proposed "special features" which pose an unusual risk of vandalism, theft or extraordinary maintenance due to design or location, shall not be approved unless the private sponsors make financial arrangements, satisfactory to the City, for replacement, repair or removal of the "feature" due to vandalism, theft or extraordinary maintenance.

7. "Living Memorials," features or facilities which (in addition to their inherent beauty) provide an opportunity for active recreation, shall be encouraged.

8. The Park and Recreation Board shall evaluate each individual memorial feature on the following basis:

a. Does it add to the attractiveness and/or usefulness of the park?

b. Does it commemorate an individual group or event of general interest to citizens and tourists?

c. Is the individual, group, or event worthy of commemoration to future citizens?

d. Does a proposal for a tribute to a living person meet all criteria, and will "time" substantiate the memorial?

e. If the "feature" provides a service, are City funds needed for installation, and are they available?

f. Will proper maintenance be feasible?

g. Will the feature withstand vandalism and can its design be altered either to deter vandalism or make the cleanup of vandalism easier?

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h. To what extent has the person, group, or event been commemorated in other locations in the metropolitan area?

i. Does the location proposed add significance to the memorial?

SUBSTANTIATION:

Park and Recreation Board Minutes of 5/12/65

Park and Recreation Board Minutes of 3/15/77

Park and Recreation Board Minutes of 5/19/94

Public Facilities and Recreation Committee Minutes of 6/22/94