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Gen. Steve Anderson, Brigadier General, US Army (Retired), 202-450-0848

**Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks Region National Monument Designation
Honors Veterans, Military History of the Region**
Local Vets cheer new monument

LAS CRUCES, N.M. – Veterans today are celebrating news that President Barack Obama will use his executive authority under the Antiquities Act of 1906 to designate the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks region as a National Monument on Wednesday, May 21, 2014.

Located within the newly designated monument are sites that are significant to the history of the United States military, including 24 large bull's-eyes that made up the Deming aerial bombing targets. The targets were used to train Army Air Corps pilots during World War II.

Bernie Digman of Las Cruces, a Vietnam Era veteran and member and volunteer for the non-profit Vet Voice Foundation, applauded President Obama's efforts saying that permanent protection of the area will preserve an important part of our nation's history.

"Having served this country, I have a special affinity for the places located within the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks region that help tell the story of our nation's military history," Mr. Digman said. "The region's new monument status ensures that these places will be protected and maintained so future generations can visit them and learn about the sacrifices of our military personnel."

Reagan Sullivan, another local U.S. Army veteran who served in Iraq said: "When Americans are fighting overseas, we are fighting for our rights and freedoms and for American soil. This includes our public lands – the special places we want to return to, take our children to, and enjoy. We did not fight to see out special and wild places overrun with development, trash and vandalism. These are places where our nation's warriors – especially those carrying the burden of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder – can heal and enjoy peace and nature in their backyard."

Retired U.S. Army Brigadier General Steve Anderson, who served 31 years in the U.S. Army, also supported the news of the new national monument.

"Congratulations to President Obama for protecting the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument. This designation will stimulate the local economy, preserve our history, and protect a beautiful part of our nation -- while allowing Border Patrol to continue doing their job keeping our public lands among the most secure along the Southwest border."

Today's announcement begins the fruitful ending for the community's decade-long effort to protect the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks. Following the lead of former U.S. Senator Jeff Bingaman, New Mexico's current U.S. Senators Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich introduced legislation calling for the creation of the national monument in December. This was followed by a visit from Interior Secretary Sally Jewell in late January and the president's expected signing of the National Monument proclamation this coming Wednesday.

"The veterans' community sincerely thanks President Obama for taking action to protect a place that is so important to New Mexicans," said Garrett Reppenhagen, Regional Coordinator for Vet Voice Foundation.

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