



Navajo Nation Council updated on status of investigations into deaths of Navajo soldiers at Fort Hood

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PHOTO: A roadside memorial set up for US Army Private Carlton L. Chee of Ramah Pine Hill

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Acting on concerns by relatives of US Army Private Carlton L. Chee and Army Specialist Miguel D. Yazzie, Navajo leaders continue to appeal to national leaders for a diligent investigation into the deaths of the soldiers at Fort Hood. On Thursday, Fort Hood officials provided updates to the Office of the Speaker in the ongoing internal investigations within the Army.

“This issue concerns all Navajo servicemen and servicewomen,” said Speaker Seth Damon. “They’ve chosen to lay it all on the line to serve under the flag, and they deserve our best efforts in ensuring the Navajo Nation Council will speak up for them. The new leadership at Fort Hood has committed to being as transparent as possible, and as the families of Private Chee and Army Specialist Yazzie grieve, we will continue to provide our support while providing assurance that we remain committed to advocating for our warriors as they carry out their service.”

“The Ramah Pine Hill communities continue to grieve our fallen soldiers,” said Council Delegate Jamie Henio. “We extend our appreciation to Fort Hood for maintaining these lines of communication. This is an important part of the healing process for a community and for the family, and we hope to see some closure through this process.”

Chee, a member of the Navajo Nation from Ramah Pine Hill, New Mexico, collapsed during a training exercise at the Fort Hood Army post on Aug. 28. He was transported to a civilian facility where he passed on Sept. 2 with family at his side. Yazzie, also a member of the Navajo Nation, was reported by family members to have passed on Jul. 3 while serving at Fort Hood.

The two deaths are part of 28 soldier deaths reported by the Associated Press at the Fort Hood Army post this year.

"The federal government has an obligation to ensure the families of Private Chee and Specialist Yazzie know every aspect of its decision making process and the leadership decisions surrounding these events," said Council Delegate Carl Roessel Slater. "Navajo soldiers often make the choice to enter in to the US Armed Forces as young men and women to continue a disciplined and dedicated way of life. The Navajo Nation Council gives its support our Navajo service members, and that includes using our voices to hold the US Government to its sacred responsibilities to our warriors."

Fort Hood officials have confirmed contact has been made with the families of Chee and Yazzie. The Army will continue to provide updates to the next of kin as the process develops and the results of the investigations are delivered to Fort Hood leadership. Due to the thoroughness of the investigations, Fort Hood officials said it expects to finalize any reports in six to eight weeks.

The Office of the Speaker will continue to provide fallen soldier family assistance. Chee leaves behind a three week old son, a two year old son, a fiancé, his parents, and five sisters. Donations to the next of kin may be submitted through the GoFundMe donation page set up by the family at: <https://gf.me/u/yw97jt>.

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MEDIA CONTACTS: communications@navajo-nsn.gov (928) 287-2085
Byron C. Shorty, INT Communications Director
Timothy Benally, Public Information Officer