



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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U.S., POLISH OFFICIALS HONOR V CORPS AVIATOR KILLED IN 2001 TRAINING ACCIDENT

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LAGOW, Poland — Local dignitaries and American Soldiers participating in a nearby exercise honored a V Corps aviator who died here in a helicopter accident nearly three years ago.



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Warrant Officer Travis Workman (left) and 1st Lt. Joshua de Freitas of V Corps' 159th Medical Company (Air Ambulance) place a wreath presented in honor of the Soldiers and civilians now taking part in exercise Immediate Response 04 on a memorial to Chief Warrant Officer 3 Michael Reece, a V Corps pilot who died in a training accident nearby on Oct. 9, 2001.

Chief Warrant Officer 3 Michael E. Reece, an AH-64 Apache helicopter pilot with the corps' B Troop, 2nd Squadron, 6th Cavalry, was killed when his aircraft made a hard landing during a night training exercise on Oct. 9, 2001. The Big Pine Key, Fla., native was 36 years old.

Father Norbert Nowak of Lagow began the ceremony in the Swiebodzin forest with praise for Reece's sacrifice in the cause of freedom.

Following a minute of silence, two aviators from the corps' 159th Medical Company (Air Ambulance) laid a wreath on an engraved plaque attached to a memorial to

Reece. The wreath was donated in honor of the U.S. and Polish Soldiers and civilians now taking part in exercise Immediate Response 04 here.

Local forestry officials laid flowers by the stone, and 1st Lt. Joshua de Freitas laid his unit patch by the memorial.

"Any pilot is a brother of ours. We try to remember that. One of our job is to save lives.

It hurts when we don't have that option."

Lt. Col. Ed Manning, exercise director for Immediate Response 04, thanked the participants and called the memorial an example of Polish-American cooperation, noting that Polish support in the global war on terrorism and for the current exercise was strong.

"It shows what great support we have from Poland, we fight alongside the Poles in Iraq and Afghanistan. The support here from the communities has been great," said de Freitas.

In the months following the accident, Bronislaw Domgala initiated the building of a memorial honoring Reece, after receiving permission by Reece's family and local forestry officials.

One year after the accident, Domgala and representatives of the town of Lagow unveiled the memorial in a ceremony attended by more than 100 people, including Reece's family and local and military leaders.

