



## Annual Newsletter – December 2024

Dear Gunrunners and Association Members,

We hope this newsletter finds you well and able to spend the upcoming holiday season with your family and friends. It has been a very busy year for our Association. Another year filled with hard work, discovery and collaboration as we work towards our goal of establishing a Commemorative Memorial to honor our proud heritage.

As you may be aware, we have been working diligently to obtain approval for the Commemorative Memorial to be placed in the Lejeune Memorial Gardens (LMG) in Jacksonville, NC. In September 2023, the Association presented our plan to the LMG Steering Committee and subsequently in February 2024 to the Marine Corps Base leadership. After additional discussions, we submitted a "formal gift proposal" for the 269 Commemorative Memorial to the Marine Corps on March 2<sup>nd</sup>. Our proposal package was favorably endorsed by the Commander on June 13<sup>th</sup> and is now being staffed through Headquarters Marine Corps and will ultimately be sent to the Secretary of the Navy for review. Once the Department of the Navy accepts our gift, then we will have to submit the exact location details with an Environmental Impact Study for staffing before receiving "*The Final Approval*". Needless to say this all takes time.

While the proposal works its way through the staffing process, we have selected a site for the Commemorative Memorial within the Gardens; our vendor has ordered the black granite stone, and we are close to finalizing our design. Once our proposal receives final approval, we will be the first aviation organization to gain approval and the Memorial will be placed in a prominent location in close proximity to the LMG Welcome Center and the Carolina Museum of the Marine (<https://www.museumofthemarine.org>). We remain extremely optimistic that our plans will be approved and are now coordinating site construction details.

On 1 July 2024, the Association supported the Reactivation Ceremony of HMLA-269 at MCAS New River. It was a first-class event and was well attended by many of the alumni and friends of 269. It was truly a GREAT day!!!

On the fundraising front, we have reached our preliminary campaign goal of \$120,000, raised through a combination of individual donors and corporate funding. We could not have reached this point without the support of hundreds of Gunrunners, their families and the friends of 269. Additionally, local government and businesses played a key role in fundraising and advocating our effort with Marine Corps leadership. Although we have successfully achieved our initial financial goal, the future brings new costs associated with construction and maintenance, and we will continue our fundraising efforts!

We are now in the planning phase for a “Buy A Brick” campaign that will kick off in 2025 and will be a welcome addition to the memorial footprint. Stay tuned for details as we firm up the design.

In October, we held the biennial election for board members to the Alumni Association. One of the board’s goals was to increase our board membership which required a By-Laws change to increase to nine members from six. The change was approved and added to the existing board members, were Ms. Kim Conard, Sergeant Major Myles Thorne (Ret.) and Colonel Ralph Tompkins. Additionally, we included HMLA-269 Commanding Officer LtCol Gilbertson and SgtMaj Bessant as Associate Directors to provide squadron input and perspectives.

Finally, although the exact timeline for commencing construction of our Commemorative Memorial is not certain due to the approval process being out of our control, we are confident that we will have a beautiful memorial to dedicate as soon as possible. We would like to extend our deepest appreciation to everyone who has supported this ongoing effort. We could not do it without you, and we will continue to provide updates as this effort moves forward.

Please reach out to your fellow Gunrunners who may not be aware of our activities and encourage them to join our Association. It’s easy, just visit the website at [269gunrunners.org](http://269gunrunners.org) to join and its free.

Semper Fidelis,

HMA/HMLA-269 Gunrunners Alumni Association

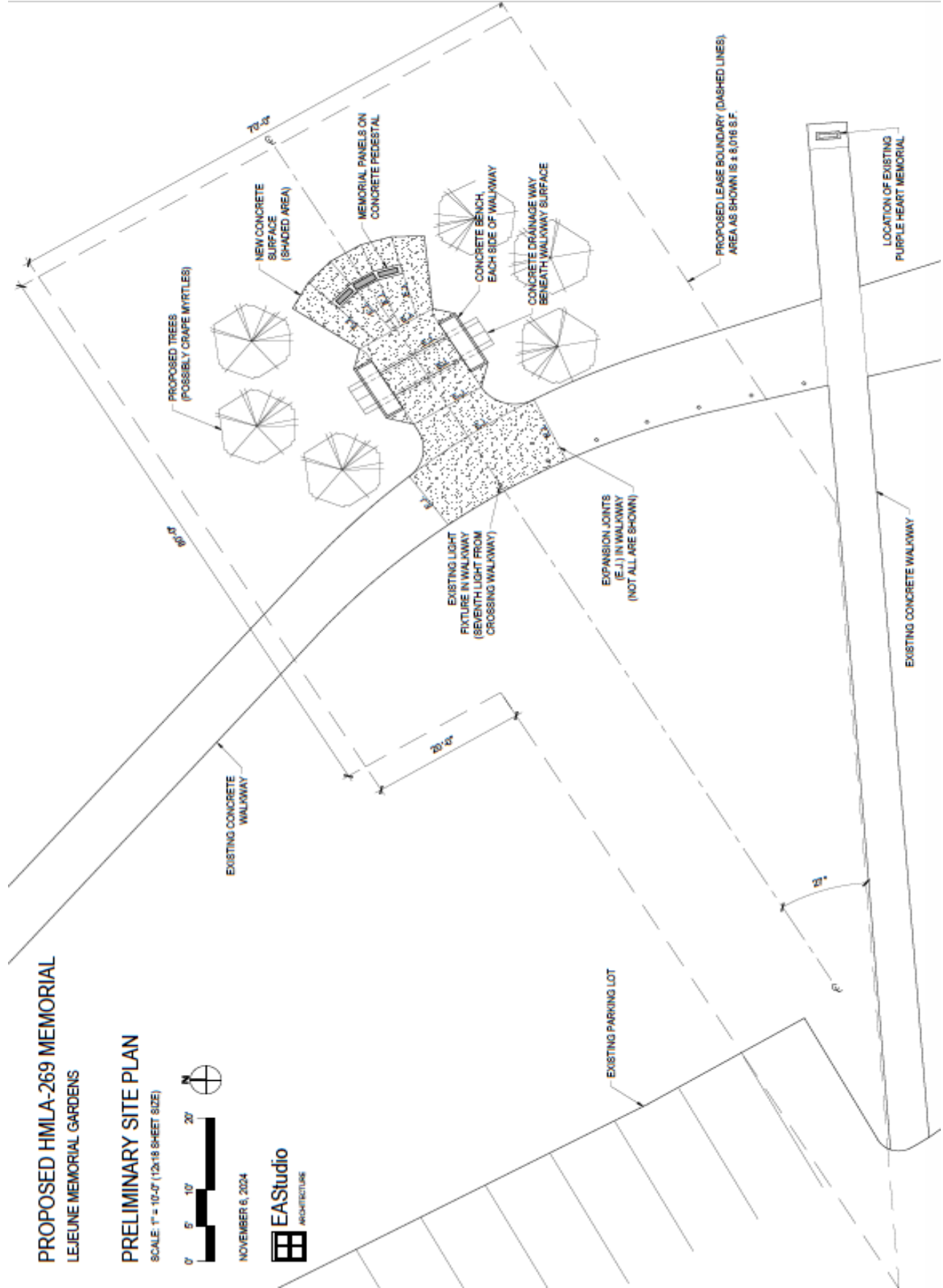
Joe Yannessia President / Chairman	Brad Lindberg Vice President	Steve Jones Secretary	Carl Kunhardt Treasurer	Kim Conard Assistant Treasurer	Rob Martinez Director
Bill Morales Director	Myles Thorne Director	Col Ralph Tompkins Director	LtCol Jens Gilbertson Associate Director	SgtMaj Perry Bessant Associate Director	

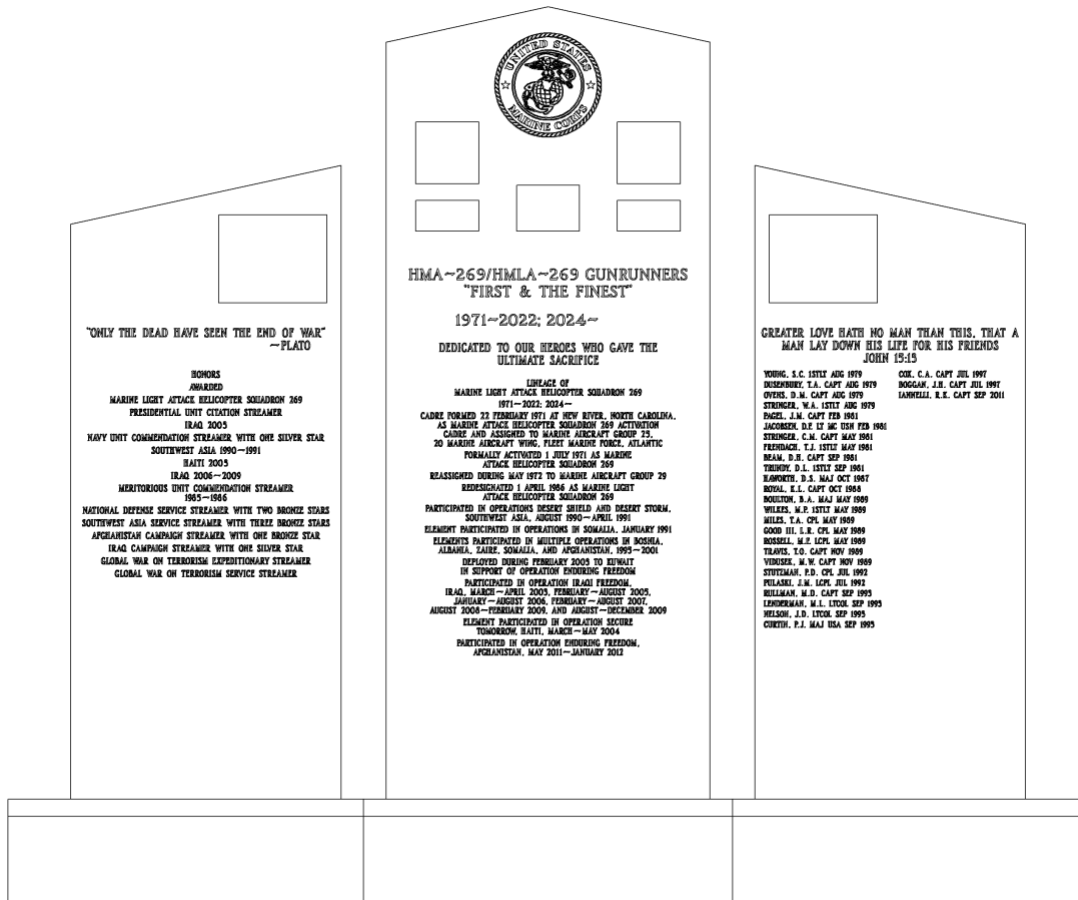
*The HMA / HMLA-269 Gunrunners Alumni Association, is a tax-exempt organization under Section 501(c)(19) of the Internal Revenue Code [EIN # 88-1520450].*

Please visit our e-store at your convenience: <https://269gunrunners.org/store>

Enclosure: Conceptual Depiction of the Commemorative Memorial

# Conceptual Depiction of the Commemorative Memorial





**Black Granite with Laser Etching (Inscriptions Depicted are Only Notional and Not Final)**

