SDI CASE STUDY

GULF WAR VETERANS TOOK CENTER STAGE DURING AN UNFORGETTABLE GROUNDBREAKING EVENT

NATIONAL DESERT STORM
WAR MEMORIAL

Situation: Operation Desert Storm and Operation Desert Shield, in the early 1990s, was a 35-country military coalition spearheaded by the United States, the U.S. first major conflict since the end of the Cold War. It was a quick and resounding success but memories have faded over the past 30 years.

The National Desert Storm Memorial Association (NDSWM) brought in Susan Davis International (SDI) to secure top-tier media coverage, centered on the July 2022 groundbreaking for the new National Desert Storm and Desert Shield War Memorial. Additionally, SDI supported NDWSM in securing VIP speakers drafting remarks, and aiding in the run of show for the groundbreaking ceremony.

Approach: We began in May 2022 by recommending that NDSWM secure a full-page print ad in The Washington Post to promote the groundbreaking and serve as a "Thank You" to donors. SDI worked directly with the Post on behalf of NDSWM to negotiate placement for a full-page ad that ran the day before the event, as well as providing strategic visual direction for the ad.

To secure media coverage in advance of the groundbreaking, SDI pitched NDSWM board members who served during the Gulf War, to regional and military-focused media. This successful strategy resulted in a wave of print and TV stories in local markets including Texas, Indiana, and North Carolina.

SDI kept national outlets apprised of updates to the Groundbreaking Ceremony to encourage day-of coverage. These updates included the addition of recommended high-profile speakers including Gulf War veterans retired Brigadier General Rhonda L. Cornum and Gulf War veteran Admiral Christopher Grady, Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

National news coverage of the groundbreaking was complicated by timing, as President Biden was traveling to the Middle East that same week. SDI leveraged relationships and unique storytelling to secure on-site coverage from national outlets including ABC News, Fox News, the Associated Press, Washington Post, and Kuwait TV. SDI also worked one-on-one with key media organizations with D.C. bureaus such as Gray TV, Nexstar, and Sinclair.

Results: The media campaign surrounding the groundbreaking exceeded expectations, with coverage that reached people in all 50 states,10 different countries and four continents Highlights included:

- 1,000+ print and broadcast clips
- 2.5+ billion readers/viewers worldwide
- National coverage from Associated Press, The Washington Post, The Independent, ABC News, Fox News, and CNBC.
- Military outlets included Military.com, Stars and Stripes, Connecting Vets.

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