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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Speaker Morgan and the 21st Navajo Nation Council joins the rest of America in paying tribute to honor the POW/MIA/KIA with the 2007 Navajo-Hopi Honor Run-Rolling®Thunder-Across-America-Operation-Carry-the-Flame

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – The Honorable Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan (Iyanbito/Pinedale) told a crowd of Navajo veterans, Gold Star mothers, Gold Star families and motorcycle riders who stood in the cold rain Thursday afternoon, May 17, that the 2007 Navajo-Hopi Honor Run-The Rolling Thunder® Across-American and Operation-Carry-the-Flame is a solemn event to remember those Warriors who are Killed In Action and Missing In Action.

“The 21st Navajo Nation Council joins the rest of America in paying tribute to honor the POW/MIA and all those who paid the ultimate price, those Killed in Action,” Morgan said. “Today, the Navajo Nation joins all of America to pledge that we will not rest until they are fully recovered and accounted for.”

Speaker Morgan along with several council delegates and Honor Run motorcycle riders and supporters rode their motorcycles to gather in the rain at the Navajo Nation Memorial Veterans’ Park to remember and pay tribute to those KIA, MIA and POW Warriors.

“We are inspired by their valor and loyalty,” Speaker Morgan said. “We give special honor to the extraordinary sacrifice made by those who have been Prisoners of War, and to those who are still MIA.”

Speaker Morgan was joined by the Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley Jr. “in paying solemn tribute to all former American Prisoners of war and those Missing in Action who valiantly served our great nation, the United States of America as well as the Navajo Nation.”

“Today, we join hands again to honor our latest Fallen Warrior, the late Christopher Neil Gonzalez of Birdsprings, Ariz.” Speaker Morgan said. “We are deeply saddened to learn of this casualty. We pray that there will be comfort for the family as they proceed with the final plans toward eternal rest.”

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Gonzalez's mother, Judy Nez, along with her parents, Betty and Julius Nez were present at the event.

Speaker Morgan added that "the pain is deep and comfort needs to come from us as the Navajo people.

"Today, I say to the family, 'The efforts of your son to serve this great country will never be forgotten,'" Speaker Morgan said. "I extend that same condolence to each family who has lost a loved one in times of conflict; the efforts of your loved ones will never be forgotten."

Earlier in the day, an Honoring Ceremony centered on those Warriors who are POW/MIA/KIA. The event included a Call to Prayer by Angela Barney Nez of the Office of the Speaker, and a Blessing of the Flame by Milt Shirleson, Chaplain, of the Tohatchi Veterans' Organization.

There was a Gold Star Salute and a Rose Petal Ceremony that included the reading of the names of deceased Navajo veterans by Marian Skye of Houck, Ariz.; Katherine Arviso; Loula Dahozie of Leupp, Ariz.; Ann Arivso of Tohatchi, N.M.; Ida Burnside of St. Michaels, Ariz.; Julie Badonie of Tohatchi, N.M.; Cecelia Morris of Mexican Springs, N.M.; Antalena Lee of Ganado, Ariz. and Helena C. Cosen of Grants, N.M.

The arrival of the Navajo-Hopi Honor Run-and-The Rolling Thunder® Across America and Carry the Flame joined the Navajo veterans, Gold Star mothers, families and spectators during the late afternoon along with the cold rain.

The National Flame was presented to Speaker Morgan, President Shirley and the crowd of Gold Star mothers, families, veterans and bike riders by King Cavalier, President of the Operation Carry the Flame.

King Cavalier said this year marks the 10-year anniversary of Rolling Thunder® Across America Operation Carry The Flame event that is an annual West Coast to East Coast ride involving predominantly motorcycles. The event is organized to raise funds in support of Veterans' families, Veterans' issues and to increase awareness about America's POW/MIAs from all wars and joins others in Washington, D.C. to demonstrate to national political leaders and the public that our Warriors will never be forgotten.

The Rolling Thunder® Across America Operation Carry The Flame event carries a ceremonial torch that is lit at each stop. The event is a 12-day ride that starts from the Gold Star Manor in Long Beach, Calif. The torch is carried for the American Gold Star Mothers, Blue Star Mothers of America, and Gold Star Wives of America.

"Torch Ceremonies" are held in different communities across the country, memories, prayers and sometimes mementos of loved ones are collected to take to The Vietnam Memorial and other Memorials in Washington, D.C.

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Speaker Morgan and several council delegates will join the Rolling Thunder® Across America Operation Carry The Flame event riders to Washington, D.C. during Monday, May 21 to May 30, 2007.

The official roll out for the Honor Run to Washington, D.C. is scheduled at 7 a.m., Monday, May 21, 2007 at the Navajo Nation Veterans' Memorial Park.

Members of the public, veterans, and the media are welcome to attend to observe Speaker Morgan and Navajo Nation council delegates begin their journey to the nation's capitol in honor of those Warriors gave their lives for our American way of life.

Stops during this Honor Run include visiting the Muskogee-Creek Nation in Oklahoma and the Lumbee Nation in North Carolina.