



NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

Libya WWII Veterans Ready to Return

A group of WWII veterans are preparing to return to the battlefields on which they served in the North Africa Campaign for the first time since 1943. The three veterans will begin their long anticipated 9 day journey from Heathrow this Thursday, 7th October, flying to Tripoli in Libya before traveling east to Tobruk.

This Commemorative tour, organised by British Veterans Travel, will enable veterans of the campaign to return to the battlefields where they saw active service, visit memorials and remember lost comrades with a simple ceremony of remembrance. The veterans, each accompanied by a family member, represent a cross section of the units that served in the campaign: 1st The Royal Dragoons, the Royal Army Service Corps and the Merchant Navy – though their purpose of remembering is the same.

One of those traveling, Mr Rex Willcox, who served in the Merchant Navy, recalls: “The war in North Africa was at its height and I was serving on a petroleum tanker which delivered gasoline destined for the front line. Our ship docked at Benghazi shortly after it was relieved by the Allies and I remember being inoculated against bubonic plague carried by black rats that were living amongst the many German corpses still to be removed from their defensive positions. This is my first opportunity to return to Libya and whilst I am looking forward to the trip, it will be tinged with the memories of this ghastly period of the war.”

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...2/Veterans Ready to Return (cont)

The party will depart Terminal 5, Heathrow, at 9.20am on Thursday flying with British Airways direct to Tripoli Airport. Staff at British Airways have recognized the sensitivity of this trip and are doing all they can to make the journey as comfortable as possible for the Veterans. The tour will take place from 7th-15th October and will visit all the key strategic points of the campaign within Libya; the ports of Benghazi and Tobruk, the battlefields of Sidi Rezegh and Gazala and even Fort Capuzzo on the Egyptian border. The party will have the chance to step foot once again onto these famous battlefields under the guidance of a local historian and to visit the many cemeteries still carefully tended by the War Graves Commission.

Simon Lamb, Director of British Veterans, says: "As an ex-serviceman myself, I feel privileged to be accompanying these veterans on this important visit to Libya and I look forward to hearing their experiences of the War and, in one case, of life as a Chelsea Pensioner. We felt that the organisation of a commemorative visit would be complementary to the other services that we offer and given that Libya has only recently been opened to tourism, it seemed like a wonderful opportunity for our first tour."

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Issued by British Veterans Travel. For further information please call Frances Morris on 07899 797997 or 01376 513215 or email francesmorris@britishveterans.co.uk

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...3/Veterans Ready to Return (cont)

Notes to Editors:

- A facility for interviews will be made available by British Airways on Thursday 7th October at Heathrow, Terminal 5, from 7.15am onwards. Please inform British Veterans Travel if you wish to use this facility.
- British Veterans Travel is the new travel branch of British Veterans Recognition Card, established in 2003, which is the sole provider of photo-identity cards to ex-servicemen and women. To find out more about British Veterans Travel and the Libya trip in particular, please call 01376 513215 or visit www.britishveteranstravel.co.uk
- World War II veterans who wish to return to the place where they saw active service are able to apply to the Big Lottery Fund for funding from Heroes Return 2 Programme (Ends 31st December 2010). Eligible individuals are able to apply for grants to cover travel and accommodation costs for themselves and also a spouse or carer. Since the scheme was launched in April 2009, close to £7 million has now been awarded to veterans of the Second World War. For more information about the Heroes Return 2 Programme, visit:
 - www2.biglotteryfund.org.uk/prog_heroes_return