

WASHINGTON - Congressman Spencer Bachus (AL-6) and Congressman Joe Baca (CA-43) announced that the Department of Army plans to recognize a group of American soldiers held as prisoners of war at a Nazi work camp in Berga in Germany during World War II.

Senior Army leadership will attend the annual Berga survivors' meeting on June 5-6 in Orlando, Florida to meet with survivors and their families to express thanks and recognition for their service and sacrifice, according to a letter to the congressmen from Army Secretary Pete Geren. The Army has offered to arrange local recognition events for survivors unable to travel to the meeting.

Bachus and Baca requested the Army to consider an appropriate way to honor a group of 350 soldiers held captive under cruel conditions in Germany in 1945.

Congressman Bachus said of the soldiers, "Their story is an integral part of the history of World War II, and their conduct under the most extreme and trying conditions an enormous credit to themselves and their country. This is particularly special to me because one of my constituents, Wallace Carden of Vestavia Hills, Alabama is a Berga survivor."

Congressman Baca said, "As an Army Veteran myself, I was disheartened to learn that so many Americans were unaware of the sacrifices made by the soldiers at Berga. The courage and perseverance they demonstrated in enduring such inhumane conditions is awe inspiring and I am pleased the Army will be sending senior leadership to express our nation's gratitude to survivors and their families."

During the Battle of the Bulge, Nazi troops sent 350 captured soldiers to the Berga camp in Germany. Some were selected on the basis that they were Jewish or looked Jewish. The soldiers labored under inhumane conditions. Over 100 soldiers perished either at Berga or during a forced march connected to it, the highest number of fatalities at any Germany camp. About a dozen or so of the 250 soldiers liberated from the camp in April 1945 remain alive today.

In his letter, Secretary Geren said, "The survivors of Berga certainly deserve both our thanks and recognition for their service and sacrifice."

In a Congressional Record statement presented to Mr. Carden and his family during Memorial Day 2008 commemorations in the Sixth District, Congressman Bachus said of the continuing legacy of the Berga veterans, "Wallace Carden and his fellow soldiers have provided important personal testimonials about Nazi brutality and prejudice, so that succeeding generations never forget the Holocaust and fully appreciate what it took for freedom to triumph during World War II."

The story of the Berga soldiers recently attracted national attention as a result of a series of reports on CNN.