

Atheist Dispute Over Pendleton Crosses Must Wait

A Marine Corps ruling on a pair of crosses located on a hill above California's Camp Pendleton isn't expected until next year. An atheist group wants the crosses removed.

The Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers claims the Christian symbol violates the U.S. Constitution and have petitioned the Marine Corps to have the crosses removed.

However, many Marines want the crosses to stay in honor of the servicemen and women killed in the line of duty.

In 2003, a group of Marines constructed the first 13-foot cross high above the camp near San Diego, Calif.

But in 2007, that cross was destroyed by a fire. A new cross was erected in 2008. An additional cross was added to the hill on Veteran's Day of this year.

The crosses are surrounded by thousands of rocks put there by Marines, many with memorial messages written on them.

There are also many other items left at the site as tokens of love and remembrance to the American lives lost in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Jennifer Tully, who lost her Marine husband to suicide, was with the group that put up the Veteran's Day cross.

"It's a memorial site to everyone, and no one is forced to go up there," Tully told the *San Francisco Chronicle*. "It's a place where troops and family members can go and honor the memories and grieve for the losses they have suffered.

"I know we put our heart, soul and tears into getting that cross up there," she said.