

Acclaimed Architect Kengo Kuma Discusses Designing the GWOT Memorial at MCON ASIA 2025 at Tokyo Tower in Tokyo Japan on March 1, 2025

Tokyo Japan, February 10, 2025 – MCON, a leading platform for thought-provoking events serving the military community, is proud to host a captivating discussion titled **Designing Legacy: Kengo Kuma and the GWOT Memorial**. The discussion takes place on **March 1st from 2:45 PM JST**.

This insightful conversation will feature **Kengo Kuma**, a world-renowned Japanese architect celebrated for his innovative and human-centric designs, and **Michael "Rod" Rodríguez**, the CEO of the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) Memorial Foundation. They will be joined by three members of the Foundation's Design Advisory Council (DAC), all of whom are directly involved in the design of the Memorial: Jennifer Ballou, GWOT Memorial Foundation Chief of Staff and DAC Co-chair, Jacob Rodríguez, and Eduardo Loredó. Also joining the discussion will be Balazs Bogнар, Partner at Kengo Kuma & Associates. Together, the group will delve into the process of designing a memorial that honors the service and sacrifice of all those who have been impacted by the Global War on Terrorism.

"I am humbled to share about the first of its kind approach that Kuma san and the Foundation are taking to build the National Global War on Terrorism Memorial in Washington, D.C.," said GWOT Memorial Foundation CEO Michael "Rod" Rodríguez. "Kuma san and his incredible team are directly aligned with our mission, and it will be a great honor for us to have a dialogue in his home country about our close collaboration."

What to Expect:

- **Kengo Kuma's Vision:** Hear directly from Kengo Kuma and Balazs Bogнар as they share their vision for crafting a memorial that transcends commemoration and embodies the GWOT Memorial Foundation's tenets: Honor, Heal, Empower, and Unite. They will explore how their expertise in blending architecture with nature and culture will shape the Memorial, utilizing materials, space, and symbolism to immortalize the stories of service members and their families.
- **The Memorial's Mission:** Mr. Rodríguez will offer valuable insight into the GWOT Memorial Foundation's mission. He will discuss the Memorial's significance to veterans and their families, and its role in fostering public understanding of the sacrifices made during this conflict, the longest in U.S. history. He will also explore how the Memorial will save lives.
- **Bridging Generations:** The discussion will explore the challenges and opportunities of designing a space that resonates with both past and future generations. It will also focus on creating a timeless tribute that celebrates resilience and honors the legacy of those who served.

About the Speakers:

- **Kengo Kuma:** A legendary architect, Kengo Kuma is renowned for his innovative and human-centric designs, often drawing inspiration from nature. His projects include the New National Stadium in Japan and the V&A Dundee in Scotland.
- **Michael "Rod" Rodríguez:** Mr. Rodríguez is the President and CEO of the Global War on Terrorism Memorial Foundation and a decorated US Army Special Forces Green Beret that deployed 10 times in his 21 years of service. He is dedicated to creating a lasting tribute to all

those who have served and sacrificed in the Global War on Terrorism.

- **Balazs Bognar:** Balazs Bognar is an American architect, Tokyo-based Partner at Kengo Kuma & Associates overseeing the office's U.S. work since 2007, and the 2025 President of American Institute of Architects Japan. He is committed to honoring those who serve and have served, in varied capacities, by listening and giving shape to the stories for generations to come.
- **Jennifer Ballou:** Mrs. Ballou is the Chief of Staff of the Global War on Terrorism Memorial Foundation, a retired U.S. Army Veteran, proud spouse of retired U.S. Army Veteran, CSM Omari Ballou and Gold Star Spouse of SSG Edwardo Loredó. She proudly serves as the Co-chair of the GWOT Memorial Foundation's Design Advisory Council.
- **Jacob Rodríguez:** Mr. Rodríguez comes from a family with a strong, long-standing tradition of military service. He intends to serve in the U.S. Army, as well. His great-grandfathers, grandfather, parents, and older brother all have served in combat or are serving in the military today. He is tremendously honored to serve on the DAC and plans to share his personal experiences of watching his mother, father, and older brother all serve in the GWOT.
- **Eduardo Loredó:** Mr. Loredó is a high school student and lived the first 8 years of his life as a proud military child. He fully understands the meaning of service and sacrifice, as both his parents have served in the GWOT. He is the Gold Star Child of fallen SSG Edwardo Loredó, who gave his life during the GWOT in 2010. He plans to share his voice and experiences in a way that will positively impact the Memorial.

Don't Miss Out:

This thought-provoking discussion will inform anyone interested in learning more about the unique challenges faced by those who have served in the Global War on Terrorism, and how the National Global War on Terrorism Memorial's design will honor their sacrifices.

Register at www.mconasia.live to attend in person or virtually.

ABOUT MCON

MCON was created by veterans to bring the military community together for an epic celebration. It's the only annual event celebrating what we love and miss about military culture. MCON is an organization that values service, purpose and sacrifice. The mission is to create community, facilitate connection, and improve the well-being for those who served and their families.

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