

# **Army proceeds on 2001 decision to place National Museum of US Army at Ft Belvoir**

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The Army announced Friday afternoon that the National Museum of the US Army, long-planned for Fort Belvoir, will be sited at the installation's North Post to open in June 2015. The Army in 2001 selected Fort Belvoir as the site of the National Museum of the US Army after a site selection process that began in 1983. This Army's decision about the NMUSA was the final guidance needed by the NMUSA planners to move forward in planning the 41-acre museum, scheduled for a June 2015 opening.

"The process that led to the designation of this site has been comprehensive and thorough, beginning with an evaluation of over 64 sites around the country, then the examination of eight different site locations on Fort Belvoir during the planning process for NMUSA, and concluding with a successful environmental assessment," wrote Secretary of the Army John M. McHugh in a letter to Army commanders, June 16.

This decision does not change the future of the US Army Heritage and Education Center in Carlisle. The development of the USAHEC complex has proceeded on a parallel track since the 2001 decision. In 1999, Secretary of the Army Caldera wrote to Pa. Governor Ridge to say that, "An Army museum at Carlisle would be a welcome addition to the Army Museum System."

The USAHEC complex in Carlisle now includes three facilities funded through federal and non-federal sources. The Military Heritage Foundation's fundraising efforts resulted in the \$14 million Visitors and Education Center. The VEC was transferred to the Army for its operation and maintenance; it is co-located with Army-funded buildings: the \$17.3 Military History Institute, the \$13 million Conservation Center which is now completing construction.

The Visitors and Education Center at Carlisle formally opened on Armed Forces Day, 2011, and includes a large gallery for interpretive exhibits; meeting rooms for conferences, workshops and reunions; administrative areas, and food serve and retail areas. The VEC currently displays a special Civil War 150 exhibit.

Fort Belvoir is undergoing a major transformation as a result of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission of 2005, which directed relocation of multiple organizations and activities, to include a new Army hospital and the NMUSA. The large Fairfax County, Va., base provides logistical, intelligence and administrative support to a large number of Defense commands, activities and agencies.

Initial construction of the NMUSA will include a multi-story, main museum building with exhibit halls, theater, Veterans' Hall, food

service and retail areas, administration areas, an experiential learning center and a lobby with visitor reception area.

The Army is currently the only service without a centralized museum. The Navy Museum is located at the Navy Yard in Washington D.C.; the Marine Corps Museum is located at the Marine Base Quantico in Prince William County, Va.; and the Air Force Museum is located at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio.

U.S. Army War College Archives - News Article - 21 June 2011