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The new director of the Army Heritage and Education Center leaps from responsibilities as a Chief of Plans for the US Forces in Iraq to lead USAHEC into the future.

Col. Matthew “Matt” Dawson became Director of the US Army Heritage and Education Center at Carlisle Barracks, January 16.

“I am absolutely excited to be here,” said Dawson. “Everyone has been very positive and professional. Not only did the military family take care of my family, the Carlisle community welcomed my wife and kids and looked out for them while I was deployed.

“I knew of AHEC but I didn’t have a full appreciation of how much they can do and how much an asset they are to the Army until I got here,” he said. “The staff has opened my eyes to the value we bring to the Army War College, the Army and the nation.

“I can see that it will be my responsibility to serve the professionals at AHEC, to be a positive and contributing member of the Army War College team, and to tell the Army story ... one Soldier at a time.”

Historian and Army leader, Dawson will be responsible for the world-renowned Military History Institute; Visitors and Education Services; Collections Management and the Army Heritage Museum. The USAHEC organizations acquire and conserve historical records, personal materials, and artifacts. Its conservation staff ensures that donated items are preserved for future generations. Its museum galleries and education programs present the Army’s history and heritage to wide-ranging audiences of military leaders, historians, researchers, scholars, students, tourists, families, and fellow Americans.

“The US Army Heritage and Education Center is a one-of-a-kind national treasure, and Col. Matt Dawson will guide the center's future with intelligence, leadership, and commitment," said Col. Bobby Towery, deputy commandant for the Army War College, USAHEC's parent organization.

"Matt is the right officer with the right skills at the right time to take this fantastic organization to the next level," said Towery. "We are confident that we have chosen the right person."

Dawson most recently served as the Chief of Plans, J5, US Forces-Iraq in support of OPERATIONS IRAQI FREEDOM and NEW DAWN and returned from Iraq in December 2011.

An Army Field Artillery officer, Dawson has served in Germany, Korea, Afghanistan and Iraq in positions of increasing responsibility, including command of the 6th Battalion, 37th Field Artillery (MLRS), 2nd Infantry Division at Camp Stanley, Korea, 2003-2005. Since then, he served as chief of the Joint Staff Special Access Program Central Office and Focal Point Program Manager for the Joint Staff in the Pentagon. After completing the Naval War College in Newport, R.I., he was assigned to the US Army Central Command as Chief, Design Team and Deputy G5 for strategy, plans and international military affairs before deploying to Iraq in May 2010.

Dawson earned his Army commission and bachelor's degree at The Ohio State University. He earned a master's in History from Florida State University and served as an instructor in the History Department of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. He deployed as a Combat Historian in 2002 in support of OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM. He holds a doctorate in History from Florida State University. He is the author of the book, Partisanship and the Birth of America's Second Party, 1796-1800, published by Praeger Publishers in 2000.

Dawson will be introduced to the area by both his USAHEC staff and his family, who made their home here during his deployment. He and his wife, Ellen, live at Carlisle Barracks with their Carlisle High School daughter, with a son in college.