



MEDIA ADVISORY

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Long-Awaited Gallery at the NIM Now Open!

Securing Our Freedom/Defining the Nation chronicles Infantry's early years

Columbus, Georgia – June 6, 2017: The story of the Infantry's history – at least the pieces of it that can fit inside one museum – is finally complete. The National Infantry Museum has opened the long-awaited *Securing our Freedom/Defining the Nation* gallery, which chronicles the branch's history from 1775 to 1889.

When the museum opened in 2009, budgetary constraints put the completion of the planned Revolutionary War and Civil War galleries on hold. In 2011, the museum offered one of those two unfinished spaces to the Armor branch, which had just moved its school to Fort Benning.

Visitors to the new 5,100-square-foot gallery will be transported to the years preceding the Revolutionary War, and will travel through to the end of the Frontier Indian Wars. Among the 175 priceless artifacts now displayed are numerous muskets and rifles, a 200-pound mountain howitzer used in the Mexican-American War, a Civil War era James gun with its innovative rifling system, and the Gatling Gun -- the forerunner of the modern machine gun -- used in the Frontier Indian Wars.

There are interactive kiosks, too, including one that illustrates the challenges of building a disciplined and effective Army, and one that demonstrates the critical role of music in communication on the battlefield. Two large silk regimental and national flags from the 2nd United States Colored Troops – among the museum's rarest artifacts – are on display for the first time.

Maneuver Center of Excellence Museums Chief Dave Hanselman says the gallery is intended not only to inform and educate the public, but to fulfill the mission of supporting Infantry training at Fort Benning. The underlying theme of the gallery, he says, is how ever-evolving technologies have dictated ever-evolving training since the Infantry's earliest days.

"This time period set the stage for everything that has followed over the past 242 years," said National Infantry Museum Foundation President Greg Camp. "We are thrilled to finally be able to share this chapter of Infantry history."

The gallery will be formally dedicated in a ceremony at 10 a.m. Wednesday, June 14, the Army's 242nd birthday. The guest speaker will be LTG Tom Metz, Chairman of the National Infantry Museum Foundation Board of Directors. The public is invited to attend.



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***The National Infantry Museum and Soldier Center**, a 155-acre tract linking Columbus, Georgia, and the Maneuver Center of Excellence at Fort Benning, is the first world-class site to pay tribute to the U.S. Army Infantryman and those who fight alongside him. Voted the **#1 Free Museum in America** in the 2016 USA Today Readers' Choice Awards, the museum showcases the contributions of the Infantry Soldier in every war fought by the U.S. by offering immersive participation and engaging visitors in the unique experiences of the Infantry Soldier. The complex also includes a parade field, memorial walk of honor, authentic World War II Company Street, Vietnam Memorial Plaza, combat simulators, a full-service restaurant and a Giant Screen Theater. For more information, visit www.nationalinfantrymuseum.org.*