

Army Museum Closure Information

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This article has been updated to clarify that some of the facilities proposed to be closed include traditional museums and training facilities and add examples.

More than 20 U.S. Army museums that showcase the legacies of major historic units or bases will close in the next three years under a major overhaul of the museum system, Army officials said Wednesday.

A list of museums and facilities that could close by 2028, obtained by Task & Purpose, includes ones at Fort Drum, New York, which is dedicated to the 10th Mountain Division, and museums at major bases like Fort Stewart, Georgia, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas and Fort Bliss, Texas. The list of specific museums to be closed, an official told Task & Purpose, was still “pre-decisional,” but senior Army leaders had approved the plan in concept.

In all, the Army plans to reduce its current roster of 41 museums and other facilities — 38 of which are on or near bases inside the U.S. with three overseas — to 12. The decision comes as the Army’s office for overseeing the museums deals with aging buildings and growing maintenance costs.

“We have more museum footprint than we can support and that is the bottom line,” said James Vizzard, the deputy executive director of the Army Center for Military History at Fort McNair in Washington, D.C. “We can keep the museums open, but we cannot present a museum experience our visitors deserve and, frankly, our workforce deserves.”

Army museums are overseen by the Center of Military History, under its Army Museum Enterprise directorate, and take several forms: 33 traditional museums open to the public with curated displays; four properties dubbed training support facilities, which are generally attached to major training schools and open to soldiers while training in major disciplines like artillery or infantry; and two major warehouses in Alabama and Virginia which house the vast majority of the system’s 540,000 artifacts — the historical weapons, uniforms, vehicles and other notable objects with educational value. The museums also oversee a collection of 60,000 archived documents.

Only about 1% of the Army’s artifacts are on display at any time in the museums, Vizzard said. Historians and curators regularly create exhibits from the vast pool of stored artifacts for showcasing in the museums.

“Part of the problem is that [each museum] can afford to hire a couple of curators, but every museum should also have education specialists. That’s what museums are for,” said Vizzard, who retired from the Army as a colonel after a career in artillery. “You need to have exhibit technicians and educators and those are where we tend to skimp, frankly, and that

gets back to that museum experience. You're not getting the right museum experience if you just have curators."

The National Museum of the United States Army at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, is also overseen by the center, but its budget, staffing and exhibit spaces will not be affected by the round of closures.

One of the driving factors is the state of the aging facilities. Many Army museums, said Vizzard, occupy older buildings on a base, leading to high maintenance costs.

"The museum enterprise was created because lots of individual entities, whether that was posts or units or schools, created their own little museums," Vizzard said. "So you had a post commander who was all excited about it and put a lot of money into it and built it up. And then the next commander was like, 'I don't really care about the museum. I got to train people to go to war.'"

As a result, museums at smaller bases without outside funding often find their way to ever smaller and older buildings.

"They'll say 'we have this really old building, let's put the museum in it,' Vizzard said. "And as someone who lives in a 90-year-old house, my word for it is 'money pit.'"

If the Army were to repair and update the over 100 buildings that Army museums now occupy, Vizzard said, the cost could run to \$65 million. By comparison, the total annual operating budget for all 41 museums, he said, is \$35 million. Leaky roofs and bad HVAC, he said, make for bad experiences for visitors and also can damage exhibits.

Closings, consolidations, and new public-private partnerships

As museums are closed in the next three years, Vizzard said, their employees will be offered jobs at other facilities, and some facilities will maintain a local presence.

Three smaller museum facilities currently in Virginia, for example, will be consolidated while a fourth is closed. The U.S. Army Transportation Museum at Fort Eustis, and both the Quartermaster Museum and the Ordnance Training Support Facility at Fort Gregg-Adams will be consolidated in a single facility under the theme of Army Sustainment at Gregg-Adams, near Richmond.

The U.S. Army Women's Museum at Gregg-Adams will be closed and its exhibits considered for addition to other museums.

In Kansas, a museum currently on the closing list will likely be replaced with a new facility under a public-private partnership with local backers. The Army-run Frontier Army Museum at Fort Leavenworth is on the proposed list of facilities to be shuttered, but its role could largely migrate with Army support to a new, privately funded museum planned for just

outside the base gates. The facility would follow the model of the National Infantry Museum at Fort Benning, Georgia and the Wings of Liberty museum at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, which already operate as public-private facilities.

And some museum properties that serve as local landmarks may stay. The formal museum at the White Sands Missile Range, Vizzard said, may close as an active museum, but its ‘missile park,’ with dozens of historic rockets mounted in the open, will likely remain.

Not a DOGE decision

The overhaul of the Army’s museum, Vizzard said, was not a reaction to the flurry of federal budget cuts under President Donald Trump. Planning for the cuts, he said, predated both the Elon Musk-run Department of Government Efficiency, or DOGE, and recent budget mandates by Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth.

“One question we’ve gotten a lot is, you know, ‘was this from DOGE? Was this the new administration?’ It absolutely was not. We were working on drafts of the information paper, frankly, before the inauguration, and we did not change them significantly in response to anything that happened after. This has been a long time coming,” Vizzard said.

Bases and facilities where the Army is proposing to keep museums open, according to a draft proposal obtained by Task & Purpose, are:

The U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York

U.S. Army Museum of Hawaii in Honolulu

Fort Gregg Adams, Virginia

Fort Bragg, North Carolina

Fort Cavazos, Texas

Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri

Fort Campbell, Kentucky

Fort Jackson, South Carolina

Fort Benning, Georgia

Fort Novosel, Alabama

Fort Sam Houston, Texas

Fort Sill, Oklahoma

Those set to be closed include museums at the following locations:

Fort Huachuca, Arizona

Fort Lewis, Washington

White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico

Fort Carson, Colorado

Fort Riley, Kansas

Fort Bliss, Texas

Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

Fort Knox, Kentucky

Fort Stewart, Georgia

Fort Drum, New York,

Fort Hamilton, New York

Rock Island, Illinois

Fort Eustis, Virginia

Camp Humphreys, South Korea

Vilseck, Germany

“The Fort Sill National Historic Landmark and Museum is currently on the proposed closure list, but no final determination has been made regarding its future. However, I can confirm that the U.S. Army Field Artillery Museum and the Air Defense Artillery Training Support Facility at Fort Sill are not on the closure list and will remain open and fully operational.”

F. Lee Reynolds, PAO U.S. Army Center of Military History

If closure of the museum does occur, all artifacts would be transferred or consolidated within the AME. Meanwhile, any historic buildings would be transferred to the local garrison.