



For Immediate Release

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Museum Effort Is Gaining Momentum

The drive to build a national museum dedicated to understanding the Vietnam era is gaining momentum as the news of its existence spreads. What started just over three years ago as the idea of a group of Vietnam helicopter pilots meeting in Mineral Wells, Texas is beginning to receive national attention. Thanks to the publication of recent articles in several veterans' publications, other veterans and veterans' organizations have begun making contact with the museum committee to see how they can contribute to the effort.

The concept for the museum began simply enough, a group of former helicopter pilots decided that it was time those who answered their country's call to serve in Vietnam deserved some recognition. The original Plan was for a modest helicopter museum, in an existing building in Mineral Wells. This would include recognition of the contribution of the former Fort Wolters as a training base for virtually every helicopter pilot who flew in Vietnam.

However, as the committee continued to work on this idea, contact with outside elements in the museum community and the consulting world convinced them that they were thinking on too small a scale. The time appeared to be right for a national venue that would address the full scope of the Vietnam War - the participants, the root causes, the after effects - in an honest, and reasonably unbiased manner.

The plans now call for a world-class facility that will create an atmosphere of learning to engage people of all ages, nationalities, and political points of view. Using storytelling, problem solving, immersion, and interactive displays, the museum will address the following major themes:

The Cold War - The war in Vietnam will be examined from the perspective of the global Cold War that drove American foreign policy decisions after World War II.

The Nation and Culture of Vietnam - How our understanding of the history and people of Vietnam affected the outcome of our participation in the war.

The Chronology of the Vietnam War - From the fall of Dien Bien Phu to the fall of Saigon, how the campaigns of the war fit in a historical context.

The Helicopter War - There is perhaps no more memorable and recognizable symbol of the war in Vietnam than the helicopter. This will provide a focal point for many displays.

The Home Front - The convergence of the civil rights movement with the anti-war movement will be examined as well as the interconnections between the war and various aspects of popular culture.

Technology and the War - Various innovations can be traced directly to the war in Vietnam including armaments, medical advances, and the helicopter.

War's End and Aftermath – The museum will pose the very troubling questions: Did we lose the war? What were the social effects of the war? What were the diplomatic and political effects?
Fort Wolters – As the training ground for most Vietnam helicopter pilots, the origin and mission of Fort Wolters will be explored.

Despite its cultural and military importance, there is currently no national venue dedicated to examining the Vietnam War. While the healing process began with the creation of the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, the full story has not been told. This museum seeks to put the Vietnam experience in broader cultural and historical perspective to further the understanding of this important moment in American history.

The project was initiated by the Fort Wolters chapter of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association. While their viewpoint will be represented, a deliberate attempt will be made to present the historical facts and consequences of the war in an unbiased fashion. After more than 25 years, many people on both sides of the conflict have amended and tempered their views. It is time to share, study, and learn from the past.

As a natural part of the creation of the museum, the committee has been engaging in modest fund raising efforts. Chief among these have been the sale of memorial bricks and tablets. The bricks, selling for \$100 each, allow the purchasers to have three lines of text of fifteen characters each engraved in a brick that will be part of the museum's memorial garden. Prior to the building of the museum, the brick purchasers receive a miniature replica of their brick for use as a paperweight, and a certificate of purchase.

The larger memorial tablets are targeted at units who served in Vietnam, to honor all the members who served with that unit. These memorial tablets, selling for \$1,000 each will also be placed throughout the memorial garden. To date, the sale of the memorial tablets has been limited to Army aviation companies, but is open to any unit organization regardless of size. If demand warrants, even larger memorials for Division or larger size units will also be explored.

The newest fund raising venture is in conjunction with a local community auxiliary of the museum – the Mineral Wells Friends of the Museum organization. The museum board and the Friends organized a campaign to raise funds for the purchase of a suitable piece of property for the museum site. The plan is to sell "Landowner" shares to a limited number of private individuals to be used for land acquisition. The goal is to have a total of only 200 Landowners. Like the memorial tablets, the cost of a Landowner share is \$1,000. In the first four months of the campaign, there are 25 subscribers from the Mineral Wells area alone.

Based on the Landowners campaign, the museum board is in the final stages of negotiations on the purchase of 12 acres of property in Mineral Wells. This is a prime location that fronts on U.S. Highway 180, close to both the Fort Wolters location and Lake Mineral Wells State Park. Once they have closed on the property, there will be a national competition announced for the design of the museum building. Concurrent with the design competition is the plan for a full-scale fund-raising campaign. The goal of this campaign will be to raise between \$15 and \$17 million to build the state-of-the-art facility envisioned.

Through the involvement of veterans' organizations, concerned citizens, business, and government agencies, this museum will become a reality, and a place to preserve the history of one of the defining moments of the Twentieth Century. Those who are interested in assisting with this effort should contact the museum at **P.O. Box 146, Mineral Wells, TX 76068**, or visit the museum web site at **<http://www.nationalmuseumvnwar.org>**.

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