



# Fact Sheet

Joint Force Headquarters-National Capital Region  
The U.S. Army Military District of Washington



Guardian of the Nation's Capital

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## History of the U.S. Army Military District of Washington (MDW)

The United States Army Military District of Washington can trace its origin back to 1921 when the War Department created the District of Washington, an entity that existed until 1927 as an organizational headquarters that comprised Fort Washington, Md., Fort Hunt, Va., the District of Columbia and Fort Myer, Va.

With dissolution of the District of Washington, the commanding general of the 16th Infantry Brigade at Fort Hunt became responsible for conducting military ceremonies and administering discipline to service members in the nation's capital.

About five months after the start of World War II, the War Department created the U.S. Army Military District of Washington in part to plan for a ground defense of the nation's capital.

MDW was headquartered during those years in "temporary" buildings at Gravelly Point, Va., near Washington National Airport. It moved to Second Street, S.W., in Washington, DC, in the early 1960s, and to its present headquarters at Fort Lesley J. McNair in 1966.

During the World War II era, MDW was gradually reorganized as a service-and-support command. One of MDW's main responsibilities was servicing the newly built Pentagon through the Army Headquarters commandant. The U.S. Army Band, "Pershing's Own," also became an integral part of the command's ceremonial mission during this period.

At the end of World War II, the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard) was deactivated. This regiment, the oldest U.S. infantry unit, was reactivated in 1948 and assigned to MDW to meet the command's tactical commitments and for military ceremonies.

In 1980, MDW gained responsibility for the administration and daily operation of Arlington National Cemetery, in addition to the ceremonial support the command has always provided.

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Through the last half of the century, MDW's mission remained the same, although it gained, lost and regained various installations and support responsibilities over the years.

Vint Hill Farms and Arlington Hall Station, both in Virginia, and Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, DC, were once part of MDW.

In 1987, MDW's support responsibilities for the Pentagon were transferred elsewhere. Fort Belvoir became a major subordinate command in 1988.

In 1992, Davison Aviation Command was reorganized as the Operational Support Airlift Command, with responsibilities for fixed-wing Army aircraft support throughout the United States. Additionally, they provide rotary-wing (helicopter) support to Army leadership and distinguished officials in the National Capital Region.

In April 1993, MDW reorganized its MACOM staff and the Fort Myer Military Community formed a garrison staff to support Forts Myer, McNair and Cameron Station.

On Oct. 1, 1993, Forts Meade, Holabird and Ritchie in Maryland, and A.P. Hill in Virginia, joined the MDW family of installations. The command more than doubled in size as MDW went from four posts totaling 9,802 acres to eight posts totaling 91,889 acres. The number of service members and civilians on MDW installations also increased from 16,166 to 61,531.

Cameron Station officially closed on Sept. 30, 1995. Most of the organizations were relocated to either Fort Belvoir or Fort Myer.

Fort Hamilton, N.Y., became the newest member of MDW's family of installations when it was transferred to MDW from U.S. Army Forces Command Oct. 6, 1997.

When the Installation Support Agency, later Installation Command, was formed, the MDW commander's installation management responsibilities transitioned and his role became one of senior mission commander, an oversight function that allowed the command to focus more fully on its ceremonial, force protection, legal and contingency missions.

The latter, contingency missions, underwent a sea change after the Sept. 11 attacks in 2001. Its role in homeland defense and defense support to civil authorities evolved within the National Capital Region, even as the role of the Department of Defense evolved nationally.

Presently, MDW exists to deter, prevent, and respond to attacks in the National Capital Region; provide force protection; conduct ceremonies and special events; provide administrative, legal, and support services and serve as Senior Mission Command for assigned installations. In meeting its missions, MDW supports our nation's leadership, promotes our Army and the Armed Forces, sustains relations with the American public, and enables mission success, high morale, and discipline.

This diverse command includes the multi-faceted 3rd Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard), The U.S. Army Band (Pershing's Own), the MDW Air Operations Group, U.S. Army Priority Air Transport, the 12th Aviation Battalion, MDW Engineer Company, Raven Rock Mountain Complex and Arlington National Cemetery. Its Senior Mission Command responsibilities extend to Fort Hamilton, N.Y.; Fort Meade, Md.; Fort Myer, Va., Fort McNair, DC; Forts Belvoir and AP Hill, Va., and the Joint Personal Property Shipping Office of the Washington Area.

MDW serves as the core element and Army Service Component Command of the Joint Force Headquarters National Capital Region (JFHQ-NCR) and is responsible for all joint ceremonies in support of the U.S. president, the secretary of Defense, and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.