

Perry D. Allmendinger
421 Chesapeake Avenue
Newport News, Virginia 23607

January 25, 2007

Reference: The future of Fort Monroe

To Whom it may concern:

I am the most recent former Commander (2002-2005) of Fort Monroe, fortified in 1609 to protect Jamestown and under the continuous jurisdiction of the United States Army since 1823.

As Commanding Officer I was responsible for the entire 570 acres of Fort Monroe located on Old Point Comfort, including the 460 acres designated as a National Historic Landmark District and the maintenance and care of old stone fortress, the batteries and the almost all of the nearly 200 historic buildings on the property. During my tenure and before and since, the Army has made great progress in the care of these historic properties, and I personally take great pride in their condition today and it is my fondest hope the nation will do what is necessary to maintain them and enhance them and their environs for our and future generations.

I am writing today because I am deeply concerned about the future of this national architectural and scenic treasure on this splendid and historic site where Chesapeake Bay meets Hampton Roads. If the public does not divert the current direction of the reuse process for Fort Monroe, which is to close in 2011, I fear the property's unique beauty and character will be degraded by private development, the essentially public nature of the site altered permanently and its historic assets begin an inevitable physical decline.

It is not too late to change this course but action is required now. I strongly endorse the National Trust for Historic Preservation recognizing Fort Monroe as one of the Top 11 Most Endangered Historic Places in the United States. Such recognition and action consistent with that recognition will make a difference, by educating the public to the importance of the asset, the imminence of the danger, and the future potential of the 570 acres if it is made into a great and properly financed public place for all Americans, such as a national park on the model of the Presidio.

Let me add this, from my perspective both as a career Army officer who commanded Fort Monroe and now a local citizen of the area. Because Fort Monroe has been an Army post for more than 183 years and, in recent years (post 9-11), access has been less convenient, its tremendous beauty and character, and utility to the public, is not as well known to the public, particularly younger people, than would otherwise be the case. This insufficient public awareness, while not preventing both local newspapers and groups like Citizens for a Fort Monroe National Park and the Civil War Preservation Trust from understanding what is at stake here, has perhaps allowed developers and their political allies to think they might just be successful in getting control of this icon. Recognition by the Trust and further action by the Trust with others interested in this great place to mobilize the public is the key to doing the right thing by Fort Monroe.

Sincerely,



PERRY D. ALLMENDINGER
Colonel, US Army (Retired)