

THE NATIONAL WWI MUSEUM AND MEMORIAL

News Release

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Special Exhibition *They Shall Not Pass* | 1916 Opens May 6 at National World War I Museum and Memorial

*Media preview featuring Senior Curator Doran Cart: Friday, May 6, 10 a.m. – Noon in Exhibit Hall;
Exhibition images available upon request*

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – Mud and mayhem, death and destruction, staggering unnecessary losses. All aptly describe the two pivotal battles of 1916, the Somme and Verdun, the focus of [They Shall Not Pass | 1916](#), a new special exhibition at the National World War I Museum and Memorial.

The Battle of the Somme in 1916 was actually the second Battle of the Somme. In September 1914, the British Expeditionary Force was not involved in the battles of Picardy and Albert so it is not as well recorded or reported.

Although fighting around the ancient fortress city of Verdun started in 1914 and continued until 1918, the massive German offensive beginning on Feb. 21, 1916 and lasting until the French counter offensive on Dec. 15 was meant to break the French spirit. It did not. On June 23, French General Robert Nivelle exhorted his men to hold: “vous ne les laisserrez pas passer” (you shall not let them pass). The shortened adopted French battle cry then and forever after the 1916 battle was “on ne passe pas or ils ne passeront pas” (they shall not pass).

“The Somme and Verdun are among the most destructive and tragic events in human history,” said National World War I Museum and Memorial Senior Curator Doran Cart. “The loss of life during these two battles was absolutely catastrophic. Through this special exhibition, we paint a broad picture of these staggering events, while sharing deeply personal stories from those who participated.”

Opening Friday, May 6, *They Shall Not Pass* | 1916 draws on the extensive collection of the Museum to show the immense scope of the 1916 Western Front battles and other areas of action. Noteworthy objects on exhibit include a British Vickers machine gun, a Verdun commemorative flag, German uniforms from regiments at both battles and a French infantry folding bicycle. Nearly all of the objects and documents are being exhibited for the first time in the Museum’s history.

“We hope that this exhibition provides an avenue for the general public to develop an understanding of the monumentally tragic effect of the Great War on the world and how events during this global conflict continue to affect everyone to this very day,” said National World War I Museum and Memorial President and CEO Dr. Matthew Naylor.

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They Shall Not Pass | 1916 is open from May 6, 2016 – March 12, 2017 in Exhibit Hall. The Museum is planning several free public programs in conjunction with the exhibition, the first of which is *They Shall Not Pass | 1916: Anatomy of an Exhibition* at 1 p.m. on Saturday, May 7. During the event, Cart will illustrate the production of the exhibition from concept to content selection to installation.

The National World War I Museum and Memorial holds the most diverse collection of World War I objects and documents in the world and is the second-oldest public museum dedicated to preserving the objects, history and personal experiences of the war.

Media interested in covering any of the Museum's offerings should contact Mike Vietti at 816-888-8122 or mvietti@theworldwar.org.

About the National World War I Museum and Memorial

The National World War I Museum and Memorial is America's leading institution dedicated to remembering, interpreting and understanding the Great War and its enduring impact on the global community. The Museum holds the most diverse collection of World War I objects and documents in the world and is the second-oldest public museum dedicated to preserving the objects, history and experiences of the war. The Museum takes visitors of all ages on an epic journey through a transformative period and shares deeply personal stories of courage, honor, patriotism and sacrifice. Designated by Congress as America's official World War I Museum and Memorial and located in downtown Kansas City, Mo., the National World War I Museum and Memorial inspires thought, dialogue and learning to make the experiences of the Great War era meaningful and relevant for present and future generations. To learn more, visit theworldwar.org.

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