



Service members place Christmas wreaths on headstones as they participate in Wreaths Across America day at Arlington National Cemetery on Friday in Virginia. ANNA MONEYMAKER/GETTY IMAGES

# Confederate memorial to be removed from Arlington

## Some GOP legislators oppose decision

ASSOCIATED PRESS

ARLINGTON, Va. – A Confederate memorial is to be removed from Arlington National Cemetery in northern Virginia in the coming days, part of the push to remove symbols that commemorate the Confederacy from military-related facilities, a cemetery official said Saturday.

The decision ignores a recent demand from more than 40 Republican congressmen that the Pentagon suspend efforts to dismantle and remove the monument from Arlington cemetery.

Safety fencing has been installed around the memorial, and officials anticipate completing the removal by Dec. 22, the Arlington National Cemetery said in an email. During the removal, the surrounding landscape, graves and headstones will be protected, the Arlington National Cemetery said.

Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin disagrees with the decision and plans to move the monument to the New Market Battlefield State Historical Park in the Shenandoah Valley, Youngkin spokeswoman Macaulay Porter said.

In 2022, an independent commis-

sion recommended that the memorial be taken down, as part of its final report to Congress on renaming of military bases and assets that commemorate the Confederacy.

The statue, unveiled in 1914, features a bronze woman, crowned with olive leaves, standing on a 32-foot pedestal, and was designed to represent the American South. According to Arlington, the woman holds a laurel wreath, a plow stock and a pruning hook, with a Biblical inscription at her feet that says: “They have beat their swords into plough-shares and their spears into pruning hooks.”

Some of the figures also on the statue include a Black woman depicted as “Mammy” holding what is said to be the child of a white officer, and an enslaved man following his owner to war.

In a recent letter to Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, more than 40 House Republicans said the commission overstepped its authority when it recommended that the monument be removed. The congressmen contended that the monument “does not honor nor commemorate the Confederacy; the memorial commemorates reconciliation and national unity.”

“The Department of Defense must respect Congress’ clear legislative intentions regarding the Naming Commission’s legislative authority” the letter said.

U.S. Rep. Andrew Clyde, a Georgia Republican, has led the push to block the memorial’s removal. Clyde’s office did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment Saturday.

A process to prepare for the memorial’s removal and relocation has been completed, the cemetery said. The memorial’s bronze elements will be relocated, while the granite base and foundation will remain in place to avoid disturbing surrounding graves, it said.

Earlier this year, Fort Bragg shed its Confederate namesake to become Fort Liberty, part of the broad Department of Defense initiative, motivated by the 2020 George Floyd protests, to rename military installations that had been named after confederate soldiers.

The North Carolina base was originally named in 1918 for Gen. Braxton Bragg, a Confederate general from Warrenton, North Carolina, who was known for owning slaves and losing key Civil War battles that contributed to the Confederacy’s downfall.

The Black Lives Matter demonstrations that erupted nationwide after Floyd’s killing by a white police officer, coupled with ongoing efforts to remove Confederate monuments, turned the spotlight on the Army installations. The naming commission created by Congress visited the bases and met with members of the surrounding communities for input.