Dear Colleagues,

It is with profound regret that I am informing you that the Society Council has decided to cancel the 2020 SMH Annual Meeting and Conference. Please understand that we did not come to this decision lightly. But judging by the rapidly deteriorating conditions with the COVID-19 virus, as well as sanctions on travel and the recent Virginia ban on meetings of more than one hundred people, cancellation is the most prudent path to ensure the safety of our members and attendees.

On 15 March, Virginia Governor Ralph Northam banned all meetings of groups larger than one hundred persons for one month. That ban is likely to be extended, and it, along with travel bans placed by the president on flights from Europe and Asia, as well as bans on official travel issued by colleges, universities, U.S. government offices, and the Department of Defense, prevents us from hosting even a minimally-viable conference. Finally, on 16 March the CDC issued guidance recommending restrictions on gatherings for groups larger than fifty people for eight weeks. Several states have already turned those recommendations into mandates, along with closing restaurants, bars, and nonessential businesses. Finally, and most importantly, is our uncompromising commitment to the safety of Society members and others attending the conference. Given the rapidly deteriorating conditions, it would be the height of irresponsibility for us to convene the conference knowing there would be a possibility of virus transmission to hundreds of members.

I want to acknowledge the hard work that went into the planning for the conference. Prof. Heather Perry and her Program Committee worked tirelessly to build an incredibly exciting and diverse program, and Matt Seelinger and his team at the Army Historical Foundation have literally been working toward this conference for years. We are also cognizant of the adverse effect this decision will have on the Marriott and other businesses in Crystal City. But above all we are disappointed for you and the other members of the Society, for whom the annual meeting provides not only the opportunity to share the best work being done in our field today, but also to reconnect with old colleagues and to make new friends. Speaking for myself, SMH is the professional highlight of my year, and I will sorely miss your company.

As previously announced, the Society will refund all registration fees; please remember to cancel your hotel reservations. The Council will conduct its annual meeting virtually, and we will post minutes detailing some of the Society’s most exciting and important initiatives in due course. If you have any questions or concerns, I and the other officers of the Society will do our
best to address them. In the meantime, best wishes for you and yours during this trying time. I look forward to seeing you in Norfolk in March 2021, and I thank you for your continued membership in and support for your Society for Military History.

Sincerely,

John W. Hall
President

CC:
Peter Mansoor, Vice President
C.C. Felker, Executive Director