



Retired Master Sgt. Gilbert Howland, left, and former Staff Sgt. Robert Passanisi discuss their experiences as Merrill's Marauders with lawmakers and congressional staffers. (AUSA PHOTO)

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Bill honoring WWII heroes gains support

Two surviving Merrill's Marauders traveled to Capitol Hill Wednesday to meet with lawmakers in support of a bill that would award the Congressional Gold Medal to the famed World War II unit.

"All of the Marauders and their descendants are very proud of what they accomplished and endured and feel that the award of the Congressional Gold Medal would be recognition by our country and its citizens what was accomplished by this small group of volunteers," said former Staff Sgt. Robert Passanisi, a 94-year-old Marauder.

In 1943, about 3,000 soldiers answered the call for a "dangerous and hazardous" mission without knowing where they'd go or what their mission would entail.

The mission of the 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional)—which became known as Merrill's Marauders after its commander, Brig. Gen. Frank Merrill—was to disrupt Japa-

nese supply lines and communications in Burma, now known as Myanmar, and capture the Japanese-held airfield in Myitkyina.

"The volunteers were considered expendable and not expected to survive their mission in the China-Burma-India Theater, today called the 'forgotten theater' of World War II," retired Gen. Carter Ham, the Association of the U.S. Army's president and CEO, wrote in a Dec. 6 letter to the co-chairmen of the House Army Caucus.

After a 30-day trip from California to India, the unit began training in the Himalayan Mountains before combat operations began in February 1944.

In just five months, the Marauders marched more than 1,000 miles through mountains and thick Burmese jungle, fought in five major battles and 32 minor engagements, and secured victory for the U.S.—all despite being largely outnumbered by Japanese forces.

Just over 100 Marauders were left in fighting shape—and only two uninjured or ill—by the time the unit disbanded in 1944, according to the Associated Press. The unit had lost more than 1,000 soldiers to injuries and disease.

While every member was awarded a Bronze Star—and some received additional honors—supporters are hoping to do more.

H.R. 906, known as the Congressional Gold Medal Act, aims to bestow the honor on the Marauders for their actions more than seven decades ago.

"The Association of the United States Army gives our full support to H.R. 906 ... in recognition of their extraordinary efforts and sacrifices during World War II," Ham wrote.

The bill, introduced in January 2019, is pending before the House Financial Services and Administration committees and had 81 co-sponsors as of Thursday.

See **Marauders**, Page 2

Pilot program seeks to improve summer PCS rotations

Officers and senior NCOs reporting to leadership schools at three Army installations this summer will be part of a pilot program that aims to “synchronize and integrate” the delivery of their household goods with their assigned living quarters, a senior Army leader said.

The initiative by the U.S. Army Installation Command is part of an overarching initiative prioritized by Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy and Army Chief of Staff Gen. James McConville to improve the quality of life for soldiers and their families.

The pilot will involve the summer rotation of some 1,000 NCOs, officers and their families, Gen. Gus Perna, commander of the U.S. Army Materiel Command, said at a breakfast hosted by the Defense Writers Group.

“We’re breaking some dishes. We’re changing our philosophy about bringing these future leaders of our Army in,” said Perna, whose command absorbed Army Installation Command a

year ago and who has taken the lead on the Army’s housing and quality of life improvements.

NCOs attending the Sergeants Major Academy at Fort Bliss, Texas, majors attending Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and colonels reporting to the U.S. Army War College at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, will receive their orders 120 to 180 days out “so everybody knows where they’re going,” Perna said.

The students will be instructed not to report before a certain date to allow the installations to “synchronize and integrate” delivery of household goods and ensure houses are available, clean and with no outstanding work orders.

“The day they show up, they sign for a house, they already know their address, household goods show up right behind them, like in a movie—a car shows up and a truck shows up, families move in,” Perna said.



The pilot is one of two such programs taking place to improve soldiers’ quality of life, Gen. Gus Perna said. (AUSA PHOTO)

“Our excuse was, it’s a thousand people, it’s too hard. We said, ‘Bull crap.’ We can figure this out, we’re the Army,” Perna said, adding, “If we can do that, why can’t we do it for the entire Army?”

Marauders

From Page 1

Sponsors are seeking help from House leaders to speed action on the measure.

“I feel like it’s going to happen, I just hope it happens sooner rather than later,” said Jonnie Clasen, daughter of the late Merrill’s Marauder Master Sgt. Vincent Melillo. “They deserve this. They were one of the most unrewarded units.”

Passanisi and retired Master Sgt. Gilbert Howland, 96, were on Capitol Hill Wednesday for a full day of events and meetings.

Passanisi, now the Merrill’s Marauders Association’s historian, joined the Army in 1942 after the attack on Pearl Harbor. He was the only volunteer among 250 soldiers of the company he initially served with when the secret mission was announced.

Howland joined the Army in April 1941 and served in Panama before



At a Wednesday reception on Capitol Hill are, left to right, Rep. Trent Kelly, R-Miss.; retired Master Sgt. Gilbert Howland; Rep. Brad Wenstrup, R-Ohio; former Staff Sgt. Robert Passanisi; and Rep. Ralph Abraham, R-La. Kelly is a brigadier general in the Army National Guard and Wenstrup is a colonel in the Army Reserve. (AUSA PHOTO)

volunteering for 5307th. He went on to serve in the Korean War and Vietnam War.

Both soldiers are in the Army’s Ranger Hall of Fame.

“You have an honor to your men, to

your troops,” said Howland, a triple Combat Infantryman Badge recipient.

The reason he joined the fight more than 70 years ago, he said, was because of his motto: “Duty, honor, country.”

Army gender integration initiative yields positive results

Three years into a gender integration initiative, the results are positive, the Army's nominee to become Army undersecretary told Congress.

Buried in a pile of questions posed by the Senate Armed Services Committee, James McPherson says more than 1,400 women are now part of infantry, armor and field artillery units, and 42 women are Ranger School graduates.

McPherson is a one-time Army military policeman who went on to serve 24 years in the Navy, rising to become the Navy Judge Advocate General.

He has served as Army general counsel since January 2018. His nomination to be undersecretary is pending before the committee.

McPherson told the Senate committee that if confirmed he would "continue to explore ways to maximize the assignments of women in formerly closed



More than 1,400 women are now part of infantry, armor and field artillery units, and 42 women are Ranger school graduates. (U.S. ARMY/PATRICK ALBRIGHT)

units and occupational specialties."

"In 2017 we began integration in two brigade combat teams, one at Fort Bragg and one at Fort Hood," he said.

"Since then, the Army has fully gender-integrated units on Forts Hood, Bragg, Bliss, Campbell and Carson, and in 2019 we began integrating units on Forts Stewart, Riley, Polk,

Drum; Joint Base Lewis-McChord; Vicenza, Italy; and Vilseck, Germany."

There is more to be done, he said.

"I believe we need to continue focusing our mentoring, recruiting and advertising efforts to increase female awareness of Army opportunities, for both currently serving members and new recruits," he said.

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DoD, Army prepare to release fiscal year 2021 budget request



AUSA will strongly encourage the House and Senate to pass both the fiscal 2021 defense authorization and appropriation bills before the new fiscal year begins. (COURTESY PHOTO)

By Mark Haaland

The White House has informally notified Congress that executive branch departments will not be ready to testify on their fiscal year 2021 budget requests until mid-March, which is unusual given the budget will be released on Monday.

Of some concern is the one-month delay in testimony decreases the amount of time congressional defense committees have to review budgets, meet with DoD and military service staffs, mark up, and approve the final defense authorization and appropriation bills before the new fiscal year begins on Oct. 1 and Congress goes out of session for the national election.

But with the Democratic Party's interest in winning the White House and gaining the majority in the Senate, we expect, unfortunately, a continuing resolution for appropriations that will keep funding at fiscal 2020 levels at least through January.

The Association of the U.S. Army will strongly encourage the House and Senate to pass both the fiscal 2021 defense authorization and defense appropriation bills before the new fiscal year begins.

We will provide highlights of the Army's fiscal 2021 budget in the next *AUSA Extra* update, and we are also

planning a podcast in March to discuss the Army's budget request.

In other legislative news, AUSA is a strong supporter of the Merrill's Marauders Congressional Gold Medal Act H.R. 906, which would bestow the Congressional Gold Medal to the Army's Merrill's Marauders in recognition of their extraordinary valor and heroism during World War II.

For new legislation to be considered in the House of Representatives, 290 members of Congress are needed as co-sponsors.

On Wednesday, AUSA co-hosted meetings and a reception for members of Congress and their staffs to meet two surviving Merrill's Marauders and relatives of other members of the unit to build support for this important legislation.

Lastly, this year's AUSA Global Force Symposium and Exposition, March 17–19 in Huntsville, Alabama, coincides with a congressional recess, so invitations have been extended to the congressional defense committee staffs and to the Alabama congressional delegation.

Unless events cause Congress to change its recess, we anticipate lawmakers and their staffers to be quite interested in visiting Global Force.

Mark Haaland is AUSA's Government Affairs Director.

AUSAExtra

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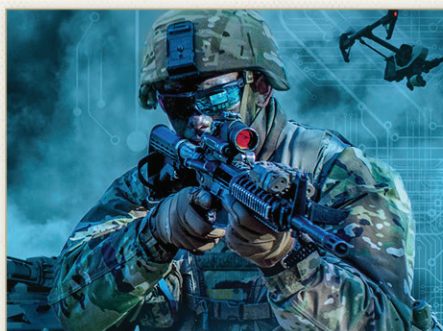
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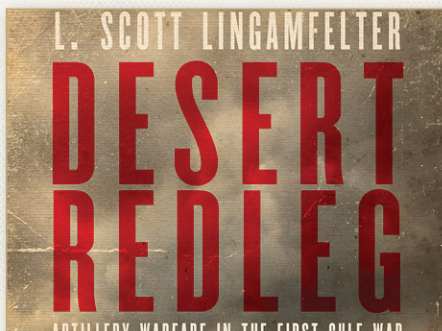
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By Susan Rubel

Most of you know the Association of the U.S. Army provides many opportunities for professional development, networking and growth through local chapter events, national symposia, exhibitions, lectures and more.

But that's not all you get when you join AUSA.

When you join AUSA, we say you "Give, Get and Save."

As members, you give of your time and sometimes your treasure, you get professional development opportunities, and you save money.

When we negotiate an agreement with a company to offer a benefit or savings to members, we look for a win, win, win: a discount members would not be able to find on their own, a donation to AUSA, and new business for the partner company.

I can't promise you will never find a better deal, and not all the companies donate back to the mission, but

Member Benefits

I encourage you to check them out at www.ausa.org/savings and use them to benefit yourself and multiple AUSA programs.

When I ask for suggestions for additional benefits, members usually say they want discounts at Marriott or Hilton or pick your favorite hotel brand. Then I get to show them how



As AUSA members, you give of your time and sometimes your treasure, you get professional development opportunities, and you save money. (AUSA PHOTO)

they have access to these and almost all hotel brands by signing in at www.ausa.org/hotelclub.

Just create an account, enter your travel information and favorite hotel, and see your AUSA member savings. When you see a comparison to an "internet rate," that's the current Expedia rate.

When I speak to a company rep to request an affinity relationship, I am often told that it's not in their interest to provide a discount. So, I encourage you to support the companies who have said, "Yes, I support your mission and want to partner with AUSA."

Did you know members get a \$45

Sam's Club membership for \$24.88 as well as a \$5 gift card?

Visit our entertainment deals site at www.ausa.org/entertain and click on "shopping memberships."

And check out the AUSA member discounts on movie tickets, theme parks and attractions, concerts and shows—you'll find special member discounts at ski resorts as well.

The GEICO discount program, AUSA's insurance programs (Life, Accident and TRICARE Supplement), the Office Depot discount and discounts on hotels and car rentals are our most popular programs.

The discount at Apple was recently improved to include 99% of Apple store products, so interest is getting stronger.

Our members are learning more about the UPS savings program and reporting substantial savings. Both corporate members and individuals are taking advantage.

If you have questions or comments about any of the AUSA savings programs or suggestions for things you'd like to see included, please contact me at srubel@ausa.org. I look forward to hearing from you.

Susan Rubel is AUSA's Affinity Programs Director.



Membership provides many opportunities for professional development, networking and growth, including through national symposia, exhibitions, lectures and more. (AUSA PHOTO)

AUSA paper: Developing principled leaders takes time

A new paper by the Association of the U.S. Army calls for a renewed focus on leader development strategies that place less burden on “self-development” and more emphasis on shared responsibility.

Army professionals are shaped by the “three Cs”—character, competence and commitment—but this approach falls short, authors Maj. Chaveso Cook and Capt. Alison Aman write.

“The problem with these assumptions is that they place an inappropriately excessive burden on service members for their own self-development,” the paper says.

While Army doctrine offers some guidance, it doesn’t have a “comprehensive strategy and framework for professional development,” Cook and Aman write.

The Army is the smallest it has been in 20 years, and while this may limit its manpower and resources, the authors caution readers not to neglect essential priorities when prioritizing those that are urgent.

According to the paper, profes-



According to the paper, professional development should be deliberate and continuous, and a mutual responsibility among leaders and soldiers alike. (U.S. ARMY/ STAFF SGT. JACOB SAWYER)

sional development should be deliberate and continuous, and a mutual responsibility among leaders and soldiers alike. This involves time and attention to train and challenge all team members.

While no plan is perfect, the paper says, a professional development

strategy should have clearly defined goals, communication and commitment.

The paper, titled “A Strategy for the Development of Principled Professionals,” is part of AUSA’s Landpower Essay Series.

[Read the full essay here.](#)

AUSA volunteer leader and Biddle Medal recipient dies

Retired Col. Russell Davis Jr., a longtime volunteer leader with the Association of the U.S. Army, died Tuesday night after a battle with cancer.

Davis, from Valarico, Florida, was at various times president of AUSA’s Suncoast chapter, president of AUSA’s Third Region, and the chair of the association’s chapter operations committee.

At the 2006 AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition in Washington, D.C., he was awarded the Major General Anthony J. Drexel Biddle Medal.

The medal is awarded annually to the individual who has contributed most significantly to the advancement and mission of the Association of the U.S. Army.



Retired Col. Russell Davis Jr., center, receives the 2006 AUSA Biddle Medal from retired Gen. Gordon Sullivan, left, and retired Lt. Gen. Roger Thompson. (AUSA PHOTO)

Dailey holds town hall forums with local ROTC cadets

The Association of the U.S. Army's Greater Los Angeles chapter recently hosted retired Sgt. Maj. of the Army Daniel Dailey, AUSA's vice president for NCO and Soldier Programs, for a series of town hall forums with local ROTC cadets.

During the Jan. 15 event, Dailey offered his reflections on lessons learned during his 30-year Army career while providing inspiration and encouragement to the soon-to-be officers.

Greater Los Angeles

In his presentations, Dailey talked about leadership, motivation, direction, purpose and respect.

He also discussed the important role of professional organizations such as AUSA with the future Army leaders.



Retired Sgt. Maj. of the Army Daniel Dailey, center, spoke to the ROTC cadets about leadership, motivation, direction, purpose and respect. (AUSA PHOTO)

Chapter asks more community partners to join AUSA

The Association of the U.S. Army's Fort Rucker-Wiregrass chapter issued a call for more community partners to join during its quarterly general membership luncheon Jan. 15 in Dothan, Alabama.

"Your local chapter leadership fully understands that we must do a better job educating the civic and business leaders throughout the Wiregrass and supporting the Army, the mission of the U.S. Army Aviation Center of Excellence, the tenant units assigned to Fort Rucker, and our National Guard and Army Reserve soldiers and their families," said retired Col. Mark Jones, the chapter president.

The Fort Rucker-Wiregrass Chapter has 141 community partners, and it is seeking to grow that number, especially since Fort Rucker has an enormous economic impact on the surrounding region.

"As membership grows, so grows access to members of Congress, which is extremely important in our



Retired Col. Mark Jones, chapter president, said the chapter wants to do more to support the U.S. Army Aviation Center of Excellence at Fort Rucker, Alabama. (U.S. ARMY PHOTO)

current political climate," Jones said. "As you all know, Congress controls the nation's purse, and in order to keep our Army relevant and ready, we must modernize and grow. To do so requires predictable and sustained funding."

Dothan Mayor Mark Saliba echoed that message in his remarks.

"I implore you, if you're a business out there and you're not a partner, sign up today," Saliba said.

During the luncheon, the chapter

also presented a \$500 check to Geneva city officials for construction of a monument at Robert Fowler Memorial Park honoring Sgt. Maj. Robert Fowler's service in Vietnam.

Fowler was serving in 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division when he was killed in May 1968 in Vietnam. Fowler, who also fought in the Korean War, received the Silver Star, the third-highest award for valor, for his actions in both Korea and Vietnam.



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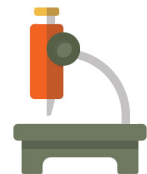
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