



A drill sergeant shapes the beret of a soldier in basic training upon the completion of a Rite of Passage ceremony at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. (U.S. ARMY/SGT. DAVID RESNICK)

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Army adds 10 new basic training units

Buoyed by a resurgence in enlistments after two tough recruiting years, the Army is expanding the number of units that can train new recruits.

Ten additional training units will be established by April and split between basic training sites at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, and Fort Sill, Oklahoma, according to Hunter Rhoades, a spokesman for the Army's Center for Initial Military Training.

There are 153 units across the initial entry training enterprise, company- and battery-sized elements that conduct basic training or One Station Unit Training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, Fort Moore, Georgia, Fort Sill and Fort Leonard Wood.

Expansion of basic training capacity is aimed at moving more people

into training sooner, including some of the 11,000 recruits who were placed in the delayed entry program at the end of fiscal year 2024. The extra units will create basic training slots for as many as 9,600 new recruits annually, Rhoades said.

To meet the training requirements, Army Training and Doctrine Command is working with Army Human Resources Command to fill the new companies with active-duty drill sergeants, NCOs who are currently attending the Drill Sergeant Academy, Rhoades said.

Following two years of failing to meet its recruiting goals, the Army announced in October that it had exceeded its fiscal 2024 goal of 55,000, bringing in 55,300 new recruits, plus the 11,000 who went into the delayed entry program.

Army Recruiting Command is on track to meet its fiscal 2025 recruiting goal of 61,000 new soldiers and an additional 10,000 in the delayed entry pool, according to command spokeswoman Madison Bonzo. She noted that as of Feb. 5, Recruiting Command had contracted 59% of its fiscal 2025 goal.

"Our success couldn't be possible without the hard work of our recruiters, continued transformation of the recruiting enterprise and modernization initiatives to attract qualified talent into America's most lethal fighting force," Bonzo said.

Recruiting was hampered during the COVID-19 pandemic as brick-and-mortar recruiting stations were shut down and in-person canvassing in schools and public events was pro-

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AUSA hosts leadership conference for ROTC cadets

Future Army officers from Virginia, Maryland and Washington, D.C., gathered Feb. 7 at the Association of the U.S. Army headquarters in Arlington, Virginia, to learn about the principles of leadership from currently serving and retired leaders.

The Senior Leader Development Conference, co-hosted by the AUSA Center for Leadership and Army Cadet Command's 4th Brigade, allowed 90 ROTC cadets from 10 universities to interact with senior leaders from the Pentagon, Fort Meade and Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland, and the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Johnson, Louisiana.

"The AUSA Center for Leadership was proud to help the 4th ROTC Brigade plan and execute their Senior Leader Development Conference, furthering the association's mission to develop leaders of character," said retired Col. Scott Halstead, director of the AUSA Center for Leadership. "We are especially thankful that these senior leaders selflessly took time away from their schedules to educate and inspire the next generation of Army officers."

Highlights from the conference included two panels featuring senior leaders and a panel of junior officers, as well as speed mentoring sessions that paired a senior leader with a group of 10 to 15 cadets for questions and candid feedback, Halstead said.

Retired Command Sgt. Maj. Jeff Wright, an AUSA leadership fellow who moderated the day's first panel discussion, emphasized the importance of mutual trust in the relationship between an officer and an NCO.

"That mutual trust leads to empowerment" for both the officer and NCO, Wright said. "That empowerment provides your senior NCO with access to information you might not otherwise have gained. Make sure you use that relationship wisely."

Newly minted officers have all the tools they need to succeed, said Brig.



ROTC cadets from 10 universities hear from Army senior leaders during the annual Senior Leader Development Conference, co-hosted by the AUSA Center for Leadership and Army Cadet Command's 4th Brigade. (AUSA PHOTO)

Gen. W Bochat, commander of the 20th Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, Explosives Command.

"You have everything you need to be a successful leader," Bochat said. "The Army does it right. They pair a brand-new lieutenant who is coming in with the latest foundational knowledge with an NCO who has much more institutional experience. As an officer, your responsibility is to have a vision and clear priorities."

She encouraged the cadets to use the mentorship of senior NCOs when they experience challenges. "I haven't met a sergeant major that doesn't

want to spend time with lieutenants. You're going to make mistakes, and I promise you that your platoon sergeant is going to respect you if you're authentic and well researched," she said. "Keep asking those questions, find mentors and read everything you can get your hands on, because that's what they expect out of a lieutenant."

Leaders from the Pentagon told the cadets that as the future of the Army, the service would rely on them to synthesize and integrate the battlefield of tomorrow. Young officers must understand the environment and home in on threats, said Lt. Gen. Michele Bredenkamp, the director's adviser for military affairs in the office of the director of national intelligence.

It is critical to "speak truth to power," Bredenkamp said. "You have to tell the commander exactly how it is, not align your words with what you think they want to hear, to make sure our force is protected."

The conference was "a world-class leadership development event," said Col. Michael Farmer, 4th Brigade commander. "Our cadets, as future warfighters, had the opportunity to engage with senior officers and command sergeants major, as well as company grade officers, on leadership and decision-making in the contemporary environment."



Col. Michael Farmer, left, Army Cadet Command's 4th Brigade commander, speaks with a cadet during a leader development conference at AUSA headquarters in Arlington, Virginia. (AUSA PHOTO)

Fort Liberty renamed Fort Bragg for WWII Silver Star recipient



On Monday, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth directed that Fort Liberty, North Carolina, be renamed Fort Bragg in honor of Pfc. Roland Bragg, a Silver Star recipient who served during World War II. (U.S. ARMY PHOTO)

North Carolina's Fort Liberty is being renamed Fort Bragg in honor of Pfc. Roland Bragg, a Silver Star recipient who served during World War II.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth directed the change in a memo on Monday to honor Bragg and "in recognition of the installation's storied history of service to the United States of America."

In 2023, the post was renamed Fort Liberty following the recommendations of an eight-member commission that was tasked by Congress to remove Confederate names, symbols, displays and monuments from DoD properties.

When Fort Bragg was established in 1918, it was named for Confederate Army officer Braxton Bragg. The return of the name Bragg to the North Carolina post now honors the decorated World War II soldier, a native of Sabattus, Maine.

Pfc. Bragg enlisted in the Army and was assigned to the 17th Airborne Division's 513th Parachute Infantry Regiment, part of the XVIII Airborne Corps at the post that bears his name.

He was awarded the Silver Star and Purple Heart for heroics during the Battle of the Bulge, according to Hegseth's memo. Bragg is credited with saving another soldier's life by "commandeering an enemy ambu-

lance and driving it 20 miles" to an Allied hospital in Belgium, the memo says.

Bragg died in January 1999. He was 75.

"Fort Bragg has a long and proud history of equipping, training and preparing our soldiers to fight and prevail in any operational environment," Hegseth's memo says. This directive "honors the personal courage and selfless service of all those who have trained to fight and win our nation's wars, including Pfc. Bragg and is in keeping with the installation's esteemed and storied history."

The memo directs the secretary of the Army to "take all steps necessary and appropriate actions to implement this decision in accordance with applicable laws and regulations."

In addition to the 2023 redesignation of Fort Bragg to Fort Liberty, eight other Army installations were renamed.

Three are in Virginia—Fort Barfoot, formerly Fort Pickett; Fort Gregg-Adams, which was Fort Lee; and Fort Walker, formerly Fort A.P. Hill. The others are Fort Novosel, formerly Fort Rucker, in Alabama; Fort Cavazos, formerly Fort Hood, in Texas; Fort Moore, formerly Fort Benning, in Georgia; Fort Eisenhower, formerly Fort Gordon, in Georgia; and Fort Johnson, formerly Fort Polk, in Louisiana.

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PERK OF THE WEEK

AUSA members receive added discounts with PODS through Feb. 17. For local and long-

distance moves, members save 20% on initial delivery, first month's storage, re-delivery and final pickup—plus 10% off long distance transportation. For more, visit <https://www.pods.com/partners/ausa>.



Basic training

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hibited. The Army also grappled with low national unemployment rates, competition from the private sector and a cohort of young people who are unfit or unwilling to serve.

The Army responded to the recruiting crisis with a Total Army effort that included updating its training programs; adding two new recruiter MOSs, including a new warrant officer recruiting specialty; expanding the Future Soldier Preparatory Course, which helps potential recruits meet the service's academic or physical requirements; developing the Go Recruit mobile application; and restructuring Recruiting Command by incorporating the Army Enterprise Marketing Office and transitioning the two-star command into a three-star command.

Most recently, the Army established two regional recruiting com-



Army recruits with the 198th Infantry Brigade experience the first day of One Station Unit Training on Sand Hill at Fort Moore, Georgia. (U.S. ARMY/PATRICK ALBRIGHT)

mands to oversee the five recruiting brigades responsible for enlisting new recruits. Slated to be fully operational this summer, the new command headquarters—the first of

their kind—will be in Atlanta and Los Angeles. Each will have about 30 personnel commanded by a deputy commanding general of Recruiting Command.



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Spotlight on AUSA Association Partner: USAOCA

Headquartered at Fort Gregg-Adams, Virginia, the mission of the U.S. Army Ordnance Corps Association is to promote the development, production, acquisition and support of weapons systems, ammunition and missiles through research, quality education and outreach. It also aims to foster and preserve the heritage and history of the Ordnance Corps.

The association aids the chief of ordnance “in strengthening the image of the branch” in the eyes of the public and supports the Ordnance Corps Heritage Center at Fort Gregg-Adams, according to the group’s website. It works with other organizations to promote the Army and encourages defense industry involvement.

A variety of awards are administered by the association, includ-



ing the Ordnance Order of Samuel Sharpe Award, recognizing personnel with outstanding contributions to the Ordnance Corps. In 1629, “Sharpe was appointed by the Council of the Plantation in the Massachusetts Bay Colonies to be ‘Master Gunner of Ordnance,’ a title brought over with the colonists from England,” the organization’s website says.

The group also presents the Keeper of the Flame Award to military spouses, and the LTG Levin Hicks

Campbell Distinguished Award of Merit to individuals who distinguish themselves through meritorious achievements or acts. Campbell was the Army’s 16th chief of ordnance and is known for improving manufacturing techniques as the nation ramped up firepower production during World War II by decentralizing his department’s administrative structure to overcome many unprecedented difficulties.

For more information about the association, click [here](#).

If your association is interested in partnering with AUSA, contact Susan Rubel at srubel@ausa.org.

Association Partnership with AUSA is an opportunity for like-minded military service organizations to join AUSA in support of the Total Army—soldiers, DoD civilians and their families.

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SkillBridge program assists with military-civilian transition

The Department of Defense SkillBridge program began in 2011 as a pilot program to help service members transition to civilian life. By connecting transitioning service members with industry partners, SkillBridge provides an opportunity for service members to gain valuable civilian work experience through specific industry training, apprenticeships or internships during their last 180 days of service.

For service members, SkillBridge provides an invaluable chance to work and learn in the civilian workplace. For industry partners, SkillBridge is an opportunity to access and leverage

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Service members participating in SkillBridge programs continue to receive their military compensation and benefits, while industry partners provide civilian training and work experience. With over 100,000 service members to date participating in this program and almost 5,000 opportunities currently available, there is plenty of space for those preparing to leave the military.

One of those opportunities resides in the Association of the U.S. Army's NCO and Soldier Programs



Retired Sgt. Maj. of the Army Daniel Dailey, left, AUSA's vice president for NCO and Soldier Programs, greets Sgt. 1st Class Colten Baitch, a DoD SkillBridge program participant, at the association's headquarters in Arlington, Virginia. (AUSA PHOTO)

director. Our teammate Michelle Cabotaje started as an intern and is now employed as our program manager, handling many items including scholarships and sponsorships. I also participated in the SkillBridge program while transitioning after 29 years in the Army and was hired as AUSA's director for NCO and Soldier Programs.

Sgt. 1st Class Colten Baitch joined our team for the AUSA Annual Meet-

ing and Exposition in October as he was transitioning after over 20 years of service, most recently at the Army's strategic operations directorate in the Pentagon.

"When I initially began searching for a SkillBridge opportunity, I believed my skills would only align with the defense industry, private security contracting and the combat-related expertise I developed over 20 years of service," Baitch said. "However, my internship with AUSA's NCO and Soldier Programs team has given me the chance to realize that my potential extends far beyond those areas. I have learned that I can contribute to a wide range of functions that can support and enhance private institutions."

Baitch took the lead on growing subscribers for our Soldier Today online publication and our Instagram account by over 600%. "The NCO and Soldier Programs directorate was instrumental in helping me recognize my ability to succeed in areas such as marketing, media outreach, planning, concept development and integration, business development and corporate relations," he said.

As Baitch ended his time with us, he said, "These skills have proven to be vital in my transition from soldier to civilian, especially in a field that initially intimidated me. Thanks to your guidance, I feel confident and proud knowing that I am an asset to any organization I join in the civilian world."

Soldiers preparing to leave active duty can speak to their installation and unit commanders about bridging the gap between their military service and the beginning of their civilian careers with the SkillBridge program.

Visit <https://skillbridge.osd.mil/> for more information about available opportunities and how to participate.



Staff Sgt. Krisynthia Sullivan, center, a SkillBridge intern from the 11th Engineer Battalion, pets Bella, an American Red Cross Animal Visitation Program dog, during a well-being initiative at Pyeongtaek, South Korea. (U.S. ARMY/STAFF SGT. BRENDEN DELGADO)

Retired Command Sgt. Maj. Julie Guerra is AUSA's director of NCO and Soldier Programs.

Mingus: Holistic Health and Fitness program keeps growing

The Army's program to enhance soldiers' readiness through regular mental and physical fitness continues to expand across the force, Army Vice Chief of Staff Gen. James Mingus said.

In remarks Feb. 4 at the monthly meeting of the Association of the U.S. Army's George Washington chapter in Arlington, Virginia, Mingus said the program, known as Holistic Health and Fitness, or H2F, started with 28 brigades and has now expanded to 71 brigades in the active Army.

By fiscal year 2027, the program, which puts teams of nutritionists, physical therapists, strength and conditioning coaches and other

George Washington

experts with units, will expand to 111 brigades and to the entire Army beyond that, including the Army Reserve and Army National Guard.

"We cannot afford not to do this, because what it is giving back to the Army in terms of soldier lethality, readiness and everything else, it is paying for itself," said Mingus, who has been the Army vice chief of staff since Jan. 4, 2024.

The H2F system is designed to empower soldiers to maintain their health, fitness and well-being for peak performance by optimizing physical and non-physical performance while minimizing injury. The system, which promotes mental, sleep, nutritional, physical and spiritual readiness, is supported at the brigade level with specialists and equipment.

While the Army Combat Fitness Test measures a soldier's fitness at a particular time, Mingus noted, the H2F program goes to the root of bolstering soldiers' readiness by promoting regular health and fitness habits with the help of nutritionists, physical therapists, strength and conditioning coaches and more.

"Never have we had a program that



Army Vice Chief of Staff Gen. James Mingus, center, speaks with soldiers of the 25th Infantry Division during a visit to Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. (U.S. ARMY/STAFF SGT. BRENDEN DELGADO)

got after the holistic components of mind, body, soul, sleep and nutrition," Mingus said. "It takes all those things together in a meaningful way to allow that soldier to be better, faster, stronger. ... It's about being able to do your job better, about being better than your adversary."

Regardless of MOS, he said, all soldiers have the same mission profile and can expect to endure "long peri-

ods of aerobic activity" in a combat setting, followed by anaerobic activity as the mission shifts to moving on an objective.

"In that period of time, whether that firefight lasts five minutes, 10 minutes, 20 minutes, three hours or all day, during that time you're going to have to be able to slow down, get your heart rate back down, take deep breaths, make decisions, take shots, do things that require agility and then, when it's all said and done, you've got to get home," Mingus said.

Unlike professional athletes, Mingus said, soldiers don't have an off-season to recover and train. Soldiers must be "ready every day because we don't know when the call is going to come," he said.

"We owe it to our soldiers to give them the best trainers, facilities and everything else so that when we actually ask them to go somewhere, they can fight and win," Mingus said.

Army leaders will provide updates on the H2F program and other health and fitness initiatives on March 5 during a "Holistic Health and the Resilient Soldier" Hot Topic hosted by AUSA. Learn more and register to attend here.



A soldier assigned to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center takes a combat fitness assessment at Miesau Army Depot, Germany, as part of the Army's Holistic Health and Fitness Instructor Course. (DoD/TRAVIS JONES)

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