



Paratroopers assigned to the 82nd Airborne Division walk to their aircraft Feb. 14 at Pope Army Airfield, North Carolina. The soldiers are deploying to support U.S. allies and partners in Eastern Europe. (U.S. ARMY/SGT. HUNTER GARCIA)

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AUSA unveils 2022 advocacy areas

The Association of the U.S. Army's 2022 advocacy efforts focus on people, readiness, modernization and on-time funding for the Army, with an eye toward supporting efforts to strengthen the force.

Supporting soldiers from the Regular Army, Army National Guard and Army Reserve, Department of the Army civilians, families, veterans and retirees, AUSA's focus areas stress the importance of having timely and sufficient budgets, providing programs and policies to support people, maintaining readiness and momentum for the Army's modernization efforts, and supporting a healthy and resilient defense industrial base.

AUSA will advocate for on-time passage of the fiscal year 2023 Na-

tional Defense Authorization Act as well as the defense, military construction and veterans appropriations.

The association also will support the Army People Strategy and the service's diversity and inclusion initiatives, as well as its programs to prevent suicide and sexual assault and harassment.

Competitive compensation for soldiers and Army civilians and top quality-of-life programs for soldiers and their families, including health care, child care, housing, spouse employment and permanent change-of-station moves, are also priorities.

On readiness, AUSA is calling for on-time and appropriate funding to continue improving readiness throughout the total force. AUSA also

supports maintaining momentum on the Army's modernization efforts.

In terms of the defense industrial base and Army infrastructure, AUSA supports modernizing the DoD support base and securing the defense supply chain to enhance readiness. This includes depots and maintenance facilities, training ranges and deployment centers.

AUSA also supports a healthy, resilient and expandable defense industry and defense acquisition system.

AUSA developed its 2022 advocacy focus areas after discussions with national staff, senior fellows, region presidents and a region working group, and with feedback from the Army.

You can see the full list of focus areas here.



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POWER TO PROTECT

McConville: Army ‘taking a hard look’ at modernization

Army leaders are preparing to make some tough choices as they look to modernize the force while dealing with budget uncertainties and expanding missions at home and abroad, the service’s top general said.

“Our job is to provide the best Army we can provide with the resources we have,” Army Chief of Staff Gen. James McConville said Feb. 10 during a virtual event hosted by the Heritage Foundation.

Soldiers are supporting COVID-19 missions at home and providing security around the world, he said.

Last fall, thousands were called up on short notice for the evacuation mission in Afghanistan, and more recently, the Pentagon announced it was deploying up to 6,000 soldiers to Poland, Romania and Germany to bolster U.S. allies amid growing tensions with Russia.

At the same time, the Army continues to operate under a temporary funding measure that prohibits it from starting new programs and holds funding to last year’s levels, which McConville said leads to a delicate balancing act as the Army also is pursuing its most ambitious modernization effort in decades.

McConville pledged that he and Army Secretary Christine Wormuth remain “committed to modernizing



Army Chief of Staff Gen. James McConville, left, speaks with soldiers from the 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment during training at Fort Hood, Texas. (U.S. ARMY/SGT. ARTURO GUZMAN)

the Army” and are “taking a hard look at everything.”

“We’d like to have a big stick, but if we can’t have a big stick, we’d better have a sharp stick, and that’s what we’re looking at,” he said.

Key to the Army’s modernization effort is its 31 plus four priority programs. Of those 35 systems being developed, 24 are expected to be delivered to soldiers by fiscal 2023, McConville said.

Success is getting new systems into the hands of soldiers, he said.

“We need to rapidly develop them as we do it,” he said.

McConville said it’s important for the Army to stay committed to its six modernization priorities, but leaders are taking a hard look at the 31 plus four programs.

“We need these systems, we’re continuing to take a look at them,” he said, but the Army may need to adjust those that aren’t performing or are not on schedule or on budget.

When asked if some of these programs could be cut, McConville said, “Anything is possible.”

“It’s about people, it’s about readiness, it’s about modernization,” he said. “We have to take those resources, that are going to be constrained no matter how much we get, and we have our priorities.”

Meet the AUSA headquarters staff

Tiffany Clarke

Program Manager, Chapter Support and Young Professionals

Tiffany Clarke has been a permanent AUSA employee for one month. She has been married for 13 years and has two children, Britton and Chloe. She is an HIV/AIDS and rare disease advocate and loves to volunteer and shop with her daughter. Creative writing and good food also help to fill her time and belly.



AUSA Coffee Series

McConville will further discuss his priorities at a special event hosted by the Association of the U.S. Army.

Part of the new AUSA Coffee Series, the in-person event will take place March 8 at the National Museum of the United States Army at Fort Belvoir, Virginia.

Attendees must be vaccinated against COVID-19 and wear a mask except while eating or drinking.

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

Army rolls out new programs to grow, retain warrant officers

Seeking to stem a growing shortage of warrant officers across the force, the Army has rolled out several initiatives aimed at retaining the technical knowledge and skills found in the NCO and warrant officer corps.

Managing talent across the force is a key initiative for the Army, as it works to better find the right people for the right jobs.

Warrant officers account for about 3% of the Army, and about 600 warrant officers retire from active duty each year, said Chief Warrant Officer 5 Rick Knowlton, the senior warrant officer adviser for the Army Talent Management Task Force.

“If you just take 600 and multiply that by at least the 20 years of experience they have, that’s 12,000 years of experience that we could potentially connect with jobs in the [National] Guard or the [Army] Reserve,” Knowlton said Tuesday during a Noon Report webinar hosted by the Association of the U.S. Army.

The new initiatives are “a great opportunity when we have some clearly identified shortages in both the Guard and Reserve and the experience that could be connected to this,” he said. “This, to me, is what talent management is all about.”

Among the initiatives Knowlton highlighted is a new directive that removes some of the barriers that have kept retired warrant officers from serving in the reserve component.

It also gives the reserve component access to a deep bench of talent and experience.

The directive, Retired Regular Army Warrant Officers Serving in the Ready Reserve, allows the Talent Management Task Force to look at the Army’s three components “as one big group,” Knowlton said.

Another initiative that has been tested in the Special Forces allows the Army to promote NCOs to the rank of



Chief Warrant Officer 3 Eric Stewart, with the 29th Infantry Division, conducts counter-UAS training on a SPECTRE virtual reality simulator at Camp Buehring, Kuwait. (U.S. ARMY/MAJ. JASON SWEENEY)

chief warrant officer 2 straight out of the warrant officer technical and tactical courses. Knowlton said that other Army branches are exploring ways to apply the same directive, creating a more direct warrant career path for qualified NCOs.

For Army aviators, a study conducted by the aviation branch recommended “extra developmental time” for new pilots, Knowlton said.

The result is an October directive that no longer automatically promotes warrant officers to the next grade after two years. Instead, their two-year terms begin after they’ve completed flight school and Warrant Officer Basic School, giving them more time to develop their skills and experience.

Leaders were initially concerned the change would lead to a drop in accessions, Knowlton said, but “accessions have actually gone up for aviation branch.”

“I think those that understand that program and [the] intent behind it are all in, and we’re looking forward to seeing how this plays out in the future,” Knowlton said.

AUSA Extra

Voice for the Army –
Support For the Soldier

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Sharing, managing data critical on future battlefield

The Army's ability to quickly share and manage data with and alongside the joint force will be critical to success on the future battlefield, according to a new paper published by the Association of the U.S. Army.

"As the U.S. restructures its military for great-power competition, battlefield effectiveness will be dependent upon the U.S. military's ability to outperform the decision-making cycle of its near-peer competitors," Lt. Col. Brittany Lloyd and 2nd Lt. Jeremiah Rozman write in "Achieving Decision Dominance through Convergence: The U.S. Army and JADC2."

"Speed is of the essence—how quickly the military can collect data from its sensors, analyze the data, discern the important information, send it to the relevant operators and optimally respond," the paper says.

JADC2 is Joint All-Domain Com-



Soldiers with the 3rd Infantry Division test an antenna for a network equipment set during the Army's three-week armored formation network pilot at Fort Stewart, Georgia. (U.S. ARMY/CAPT. DETRICK MOORE)

mand and Control, DoD's concept to connect sensors from all the military services into a single network, according to the Congressional Research Service.

The Army will play a central role

in JADC2, the paper says, as it "informs the development of the operational and tactical network; provides the logistical backbone for [the Joint Warfighting Concept]; and tests convergence in a series of collaborative experiments with the services, agencies and international partners."

All these efforts are designed to give the military what leaders have referred to as "decision dominance ... the capability to make better decisions, faster, enhanced by technology and convergence," the paper says.

Lloyd, who previously served as an Army fellow with AUSA's National Security Studies directorate, is the deputy provost marshal for the Army Corps of Engineers.

Rozman, an infantryman in the Israel Defense Forces, was a national security analyst at AUSA before commissioning in the Army.

Their paper is available here.

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'Buffalo Soldier' hero featured in new AUSA graphic novel

The story of 1st Lt. Vernon Baker, who led his platoon in an assault on a German stronghold in the mountains of Italy during World War II, is told in the latest graphic novel in the Association of the U.S. Army's series on recipients of the nation's highest valor award.

Medal of Honor: Vernon Baker tells the incredible tale of one of the nation's famed Buffalo Soldiers and how he waited more than 50 years before he was fully recognized for his courage on the battlefield.

"Baker had to wait more than half a century for full recognition of his service in World War II; we want to help make sure that service is always remembered," said Joseph Craig, director of the AUSA Book Program.

Medal of Honor: Vernon Baker is available here.

AUSA launched its Medal of Honor graphic novel series in October 2018. This is the 13th novel in the series, with three more planned for 2022.

The digital graphic novels are available here.

Born in December 1919 in Cheyenne, Wyoming, Baker was orphaned at age 4 and raised by his grandparents. His first attempt to join the Army was rebuffed, but he persisted and was accepted into the infantry.

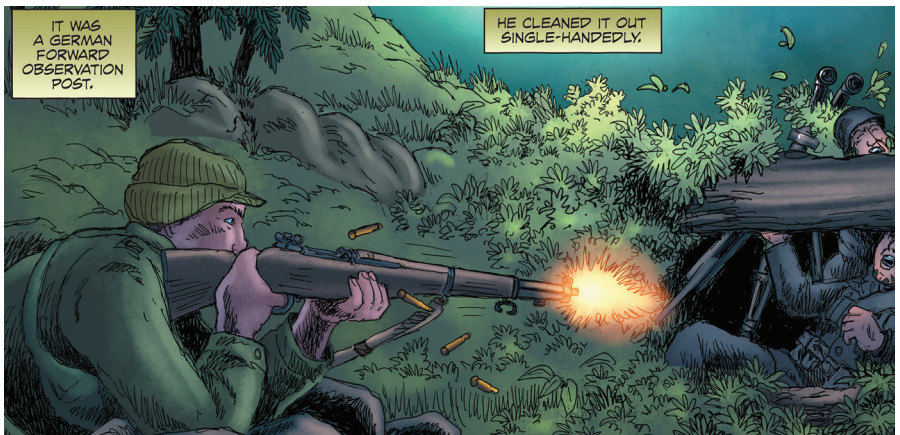
Commissioned as a lieutenant in the 92nd Infantry Division, known as the Buffalo Soldiers, Baker led his soldiers into combat in the summer of 1944 in Naples, Italy.

In April 1945, Baker and his soldiers were sent to assault Castle Aghinolfi, a German strongpoint in the Italian mountains.

As they moved toward the castle, Baker came upon a German observation post tucked into the edge of a hill.

"Crawling up and under the opening, he stuck his M-1 into the slit and emptied the clip, killing the observation post's two occupants," according to his Medal of Honor citation.

Baker then killed two more enemy soldiers who were in a well-camou-



First Lt. Vernon Baker, a Buffalo Soldier who led an assault on a German stronghold during World War II, is the subject of the latest graphic novel in the Association of the U.S. Army's Medal of Honor series. (AUSA GRAPHIC)

flaged machine-gun nest nearby.

Baker then went down into the draw alone, where he used a grenade to blast open the concealed entrance of another dugout. He "shot one German soldier who emerged after the explosion, tossed another grenade into the dugout and entered firing his sub-machine gun, killing two more Germans," the citation says.

As Baker climbed back out of the draw, enemy machine-gun and mortar fire began raining down on his soldiers. When reinforcements didn't arrive, Baker volunteered to cover the

soldiers' withdrawal, destroying two more enemy machine gun positions in the process.

"In all, Lieutenant Baker accounted for nine enemy dead soldiers, elimination of three machine gun positions, an observation post, and a dugout," his citation says.

He received the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions.

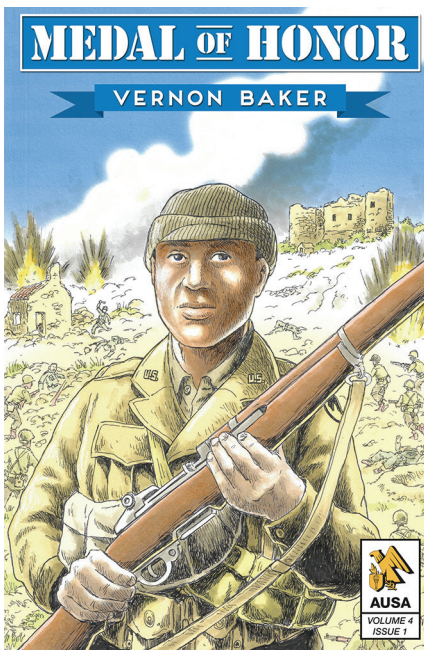
In 1996, more than 50 years later, the Army found that Baker and six other Black soldiers had been unjustly denied the Medal of Honor for their actions during World War II, according to the National World War II Museum.

Baker, the only one of the seven soldiers still living, received the Medal of Honor in a 1997 White House ceremony.

He died in July 2010. He was 90.

Each AUSA graphic novel is created by a team of professional comic book veterans. The script for the graphic novel on Baker was written by Chuck Dixon, whose previous work includes *Batman*, *The Punisher* and *The 'Nam*.

Pencils, inks and the cover were by Wayne Vansant, a veteran of *The 'Nam*, *Savage Tales* and *All Quiet on the Western Front*; colors were by Peter Pantazis, who previously worked on *Justice League*, *Superman* and *Black Panther*; and the lettering was by Troy Peteri, who has worked on *Spider-Man*, *Iron Man* and *X-Men*.





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Fort Bragg family makes a difference with selfless service

By Holly Dailey

In February, many celebrate Valentine's Day by showing love through cards, candy, flowers and dinners.

But another way of conveying love is by helping others—and not just during the month of February.

First Sgt. Justin Dixon of the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, his spouse, Tawni, and their son, Cameron, spread their love through everyday living.

They didn't realize the ripple effect and impact they made by touching one person at a time.

Dixon's one act of kindness of inviting a veteran to go fishing with him inspired other boat-

Family Readiness

ers to volunteer their time with more veterans.

Fishing trips and equipment are provided to veterans and wounded warriors with post-traumatic stress disorder and physical disabilities.

Through this outreach group, connections are continuously made, and camaraderie is shared.

For Tawni Dixon, being a military spouse and mom who works outside the home means she understands the importance of supporting and helping one another.

"Being a military family means you are part of your community, because your immediate family doesn't live locally with you most of the time," she said.

Speaking to Thea Green, our Family Readiness deputy director, during the Family Voices podcast, Tawni Dixon added, "The best way to create a sense of community is to be involved with it."

The podcast, part of the Association of the U.S. Army's "Army Matters" series, is available here.

Tawni Dixon's involvement in her community has brought awareness to programs and resources at organizations such as Soldier and Family Readiness Groups, GivingTuesdayMilitary and the Armed Services YMCA.

She also wanted to do something to



First Sgt. Justin Dixon, left, and his wife, Tawni, receive the Association of the U.S. Army's Volunteer Family of the Year Award during AUSA's 2021 Annual Meeting and Exposition in Washington, D.C. (AUSA PHOTO)

recognize our phenomenal resilient military children, so she created the Junior Paratrooper of the Year Dependent Award, which recognizes dependents of 82nd Airborne soldiers for their volunteer work.

She also started "Healing Hands," a grief support group for anyone who has been touched by pregnancy and infant loss.

"To us, when you are supporting your community, that is what is important," she said. "Go out and spread it like confetti."

The Dixon family continues to make a difference.

And you can find them helping out at AUSA's Braxton Bragg chapter.

"Just like Fort Bragg is a big family, AUSA is also about family," Tawni Dixon said. "Our AUSA Fort Bragg chapter is our family, and they came with us to the AUSA 2021 Annual Meeting and Exposition for the entire time. They were there to support us."

If you didn't know, the chapter nominated the Dixons for the AUSA Volunteer Family of the Year Award ... and they won.

Because of the Dixon family's continuing acts of kindness, they were

also recognized as the 2021 Military Family of the Year for North Carolina and the Fort Bragg Family of the Year in 2020.

Tawni Dixon reminds us about the importance of strong communities, especially during the pandemic.

"Spouses had to take on new roles in the household, and there was a level of uncertainty no one was prepared for," she said. "And unfortunately, many of our spouses lost their jobs, which put families in financial hardships. For most families, this is a place they've never been."

Connection to resources is key, especially for those who don't know they exist.

"With COVID still among us, you can still volunteer from your home, for example by quilting and knitting for our deployed troops," Tawni Dixon said. "It's not about being grand in your gesture of volunteering, it can just be something as simple [as] ... making someone laugh or opening the door for someone. Your small action makes a difference."

Holly Dailey is AUSA's Family Readiness Director.

AUSA chapter members honored for leadership skills

Two members of the Association of the U.S. Army's Tobyhanna Army Depot chapter in Pennsylvania recently were recognized as the installation's Employees of the Quarter for their outstanding leadership.

Jennifer Conrad, an AUSA Life Member, was honored in the supervisor category, and Michelle Reese was selected in the senior category.

Each winner received a special parking space for the quarter, a \$500 On-The-Spot Award and a plaque.

Additionally, their nominations were forwarded to the Army Communications-Electronics Command to compete in their respective categories at that level.

Conrad was selected for the award for her actions while serving as chief of the Production Management Directorate's C4 Program Management Division.

Tobyhanna Army Depot

"This award means a lot to me," Conrad said. "My goal as a leader has always been to help others, and this award is a testament that I am heading in the right direction."

Co-workers who submitted her nomination said Conrad always puts her team first. She headed the largest division in volume of work while also overseeing the best performing division in terms of cost and schedule, according to the nomination package.

"She is an active mentor and goes out of her way to help others become more knowledgeable about the business. Every day, she demonstrates that leading is not about being in charge, but about setting the tone for the culture you want to see in the organization," said Maria Portonova, division operations manager, according to the Army.

Conrad said that she has been "very fortunate ... to have learned a lot about Army processes" as she has worked in different directorates.



Jennifer Conrad, an AUSA Life Member, was selected as Tobyhanna Army Depot's Employee of the Quarter in the supervisor category. (U.S. ARMY/THOMAS ROBBINS)

"Most importantly, I've been able to grow into my leadership role through the various experiences I've had while working with a diverse team," she said. "Developing relationships with others to help drive improvements is crucial to getting needed systems back into the hands of the warfighters."

Reese, a logistics management specialist, was recognized for her work while assigned to the Production Management Directorate's Sustainment Planning Division, where she managed public-to-private partnerships for Tobyhanna Army Depot.

She has recently assumed the role of depot chief of staff.

Reese said she is honored to receive the award, adding that she's "very proud and [enjoys] opportunities to speak about Tobyhanna's C5ISR capabilities."

Her previous supervisor, Kristyn Smith, said Reese "sets the bar high in everything she does" and has an aggressive yet tactful approach to customer relations.

"It is clear that the mission of Tobyhanna Army Depot is her passion, and she will always put the [warfighter] first," Smith said. "Michelle believes in full transparency and communication. If the customer needs it, she makes sure it is done, and most importantly, it is done right with quality service at the forefront."

Reese's nomination package described how her daily mentorship, coaching and training set up her team for success.

"I'm a leader and take pride in educating my co-workers, industry partners and government program offices on public-to-private partnerships," she said, adding that her goal is to "showcase the depot's command, control, communication, computers, cyber, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities through visits, events and symposiums as the best value to the warfighter."



AUSA member Michelle Reese, front center, is Tobyhanna Army Depot's Employee of the Quarter in the senior category. (U.S. ARMY/THOMAS ROBBINS)



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