



Leaders must be ready to make tough decisions as the military braces for flat or smaller defense budgets in the coming years, Army Chief of Staff Gen. James McConville said. (U.S. ARMY PHOTO)

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## Global Force Next features Army leaders

Registration is open for Global Force Next, the Association of the U.S. Army's three-day virtual event featuring keynote presentations from senior leaders and a focus on the Army's modernization efforts.

Acting Army Secretary John Whitley, Army Chief of Staff Gen. James McConville, Gen. Mike Murray, commander of Army Futures Command, and Gen. Ed Daly, commander of Army Materiel Command, are among those scheduled to speak.

Global Force Next will take place March 16–18. The theme for this year's event is "The U.S. Army: Protecting Tomorrow through Persistent Modernization."

Attendees will have the opportunity to connect, network and learn from

key industry and senior Army leaders.

There will be presentations from Futures Command's cross-functional teams, which are tasked with developing the Army's six modernization priorities.

The priorities are Long-Range Precision Fires, Air and Missile Defense, Next-Generation Combat Vehicle, Future Vertical Lift, Network and Soldier Lethality.

Each cross-functional team is scheduled to discuss current projects, requirements, lessons learned and what's needed to support tomorrow's soldiers.

There also will be networking opportunities throughout the event through chat and by visiting select sponsors. Attendees also can join topical ZoomGov sessions and product

demonstrations hosted by industry partners and sponsors.

Global Force Next is being held instead of an in-person symposium in Huntsville, Alabama, because of COVID-19 health and safety concerns.

"While it may not replace the full experience of the in-person event, Global Force Next will serve to keep us connected with Army senior leaders and messages, with industry partners and academia, and with AUSA members around the globe," said retired Gen. Carter Ham, AUSA president and CEO. "We are planning for a forum that will resonate with our industry partners and provide them important updates about the future of the Army."

For more information or to register, click here.



# THE AUSA NOON REPORT

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## A CONVERSATION ON ENLISTED TALENT MANAGEMENT

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Vice President, NCO and Soldier Programs, AUSA

**DATE: 24 FEBRUARY 2021**

**TIME: 1200-1300 ET**

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## McConville: Army must continue modernization efforts

**E**very soldier and every dollar count as the Army balances today's missions with an urgent push to modernize the force for tomorrow, Army Chief of Staff Gen. James McConville said.

"When I look at the demands for the Army ... we'd like a much bigger Army, but what I have to do at my level is determine, what can we actually afford?" McConville said Wednesday during a webinar hosted by the Heritage Foundation.

Leaders must be ready to make tough decisions as the military braces for flat or smaller defense budgets in the coming years.

"People will say, 'Well, you can't have everything.' What we can't afford to do is waste one dollar," McConville said. "We're going to every single area and taking a look at where we can find the money to modernize the Army. I believe we absolutely must do that."

The Army has stood firm on its six modernization priorities, and it has made "tremendous" efforts to keep those priorities on track, McConville said.

This includes moving billions of dollars from lower priority programs into key modernization efforts and streamlining the yearslong acquisition process.

The Army also has changed the way it works with industry. Instead of spending years writing require-



In addition to modernizing the force, the Army must keep its current end strength, Army Chief of Staff Gen. James McConville said. (U.S. ARMY/1ST LT. SAMANTHA DIMAURO)

ments that are "very prescriptive," McConville said, the Army now provides "basic characteristics" to industry and works closely with them to develop designs and potential prototypes.

This "different approach" is much more attainable, more quickly puts new technology in soldiers' hands, and "we don't waste a lot of money in the process," he said.

"We're aggressively moving out to get these systems," McConville said. "We have to show that every dollar we get from Congress, we're going to use appropriately."

McConville said he's pleased with the Army's progress.

"We know there may be some tough decisions, but we're prepared to make those decisions," he said.

At the same time, McConville said, "the end strength we have, we have to keep."

The Army also must make sure its soldiers are properly trained and equipped for whatever mission they may be called to do.

Having ready and trained units is part of the Army's push to take care of its people, from soldiers and Army civilians to family members and retirees.

"For the last 19 years, we've been heavily engaged in combat, specifically in Iraq and Afghanistan, and we've asked a lot of our people," McConville said.

It'll take leaders at all levels to make sure the right soldiers are in the right place, especially as the service works to rid the ranks of "corrosives" such as sexual assault and harassment, extremism and racism, McConville said.

"When we get the force right, everything else follows," he said.

## Meet the AUSA headquarters staff

### Zain Abdullah

*Accounting Manager*

Zain Abdullah has been with AUSA since June 2018 and is currently employed as an accounting manager. In his spare time he enjoys reading a book, going on daily walks with his wife and watching football on Sundays while rooting for his hometown team, the Baltimore Ravens.



## Tricare Select beneficiaries urged to create allotments for enrollment fees



Affected beneficiaries who were disenrolled on Jan. 1 have until June 30 to request to be reinstated to Tricare Select. (U.S. ARMY PHOTO)

**D**efense health officials are calling on thousands of Tricare Select beneficiaries to make sure they've set up payment arrangements so they do not lose health care coverage.

As many as 218,200 beneficiaries—or about 25% of the affected population—had not set up allotments to pay new monthly enrollment fees for Tricare Select coverage as of Dec. 31, according to information from the Defense Health Agency.

The fees went into effect Jan. 1, and beneficiaries were disenrolled if they failed to pay.

Affected beneficiaries have until June 30 to request to be reinstated to Tricare Select.

Officials said some of the 218,200 beneficiaries who had not set up allotments may have voluntarily disenrolled from the program.

Officials did not provide updated numbers on how many beneficiaries have taken action since Jan. 1.

Mandated in the 2017 National Defense Authorization Act, the fees apply to Group A retirees, whose initial enlistment or appointment occurred before Jan. 1, 2018, and their beneficiaries. This marks the first time this group of beneficiaries is being charged such fees.

Individual enrollment fees are \$12.50 a month or \$150 a year. Retirees on a family plan pay \$25 a month or \$300 a year.

Enrollment fees are waived for active-duty family members, survivors or medically retired retirees or family members, according to Tricare.

Additionally, the catastrophic cap will increase from \$3,000 to \$3,500; the enrollment fees will apply toward the catastrophic cap.

To resume coverage, beneficiaries must contact their Tricare regional contractor to set up a monthly allotment through their DoD pay center or via electronic funds transfer, credit card or debit card. Tricare Select coverage will be reinstated back to Jan. 1 after beneficiaries pay their back enrollment fees.

Those who are not reinstated can only get care at a military hospital or clinic if space is available, according to the Tricare website.

Beneficiaries who want to switch to Tricare Prime can make the change during open season, which typically is at the end of the calendar year, or if they have a qualifying life event.

Depending on your Tricare contractor, you may set up your payments online, by phone or by mail.

For more information, click here.

# AUSAExtra

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## PERK OF THE WEEK



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## Army should spend less on legacy systems, paper says

**T**he Army needs to forgo legacy system upgrades and focus on equipment “suitable for 21st-century conflict,” according to a new paper published by the Association of the U.S. Army.

“The U.S. Army should significantly curtail investments in upgrades for heavy, manned tanks that cannot effectively or efficiently address today’s or tomorrow’s problems—better investments exist,” author Benjamin Fernandes writes.

In his paper, “Stop Upgrading: Buy 21st Century Equipment,” Fernandes says “change is now necessary to revolutionize” the Army’s capabilities so it can better compete with great-power adversaries.

“The Army’s attachment to legacy equipment, originally designed in the 1970s, wastes resources and slows investment in the equipment, force structure, training and doctrine



The Army continues to focus on heavy equipment—like the M1 Abrams—that have ‘limited strategic mobility,’ the paper says. It should instead invest in equipment for 21st century conflict. (U.S. ARMY/PATRICK ALBRIGHT)

needed to successfully overcome 21st-century threats,” writes Fernandes, an Army strategist serving as a joint planner on the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

While adversaries like Russia and China have “adopted their strategies and operations” to target these legacy

systems, the U.S. Army continues to focus on heavy equipment—like the M1 Abrams tank—that have “limited strategic mobility,” he writes.

According to the author, DoD requested \$1.5 billion for M1 tanks for fiscal year 2021. By spending so much on upgrades, he says, the Army appears to “prioritize legacy systems” while disincentivizing the designing and testing of new ideas.

Fernandes says the Army shouldn’t discard the M1 without “a solid replacement,” but instead focus on equipment and force structure that will help with speed, lethality and strategic movement on the battlefield.

“More research on what should be done is necessary, but for now it should be clear that upgrading M1 tanks is a poor way to spend limited Army resources,” Fernandes writes. “There are more important priorities.”

Read the full paper here.



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## Podcast promotes professional development for NCOs

By Sgt. Maj. of the Army Daniel Dailey,  
U.S. Army retired

The NCO Professional Development Program has long been the method by which the Army trains and develops the backbone of its leadership corps.

As a young NCO, I was frequently assigned the responsibility of preparing training materials for the company's NCOPD classes. In the early 1990s, this consisted of hunting down a hard copy of the appropriate field manual or regulation, begging the supply sergeant for butcher block paper and commandeering a stack of 3x5 cards from the unit training NCO's secret stash.

Then came a fun-filled evening of manually transferring all the relevant information, which hopefully resulted in a logical and legible translation of what the first sergeant wanted me to teach. Oh, those were the days.

Today, modern technology has greatly changed the way we acquire and distribute information.

The ability to access information online and hold classes virtually has significantly improved preparing for and executing NCO professional development.

### 'NCOPD Live'

One NCO has taken the concept to the next level.

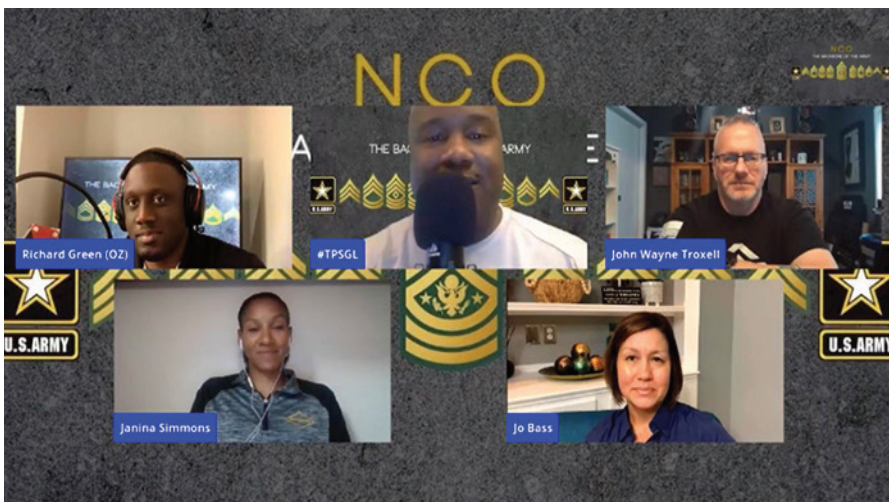
Staff Sgt. Dexter Hicks created an online video podcast called "NCOPD Live" that has generated quite a following.

In his weekly broadcasts, Hicks covers topics of importance to the NCO corps and interviews guests.

His entertaining interactive series has grown in popularity to over 13,000 followers in a short amount of time.

Hicks, who hails from Missouri City, Texas, served on active duty after a short tour in the Army Reserve.

Like many, the tragic events of Sept.



Staff Sgt. Dexter Hicks, top center, interviews then-Command Sgt. Maj. John Troxell, top right, senior enlisted adviser to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. (COURTESY SCREENSHOT)

11, 2001, served as his call to duty.

Hicks knew then that it was his job to do more and avenge the tragic events of that day.

A few years later, while attempting to correct a uniform deficiency of a reluctant NCO outside the post shopette, Hicks felt another calling.

He went live on Facebook to share his thoughts on the interaction with the fellow NCO, who not only failed to set the example but refused to be corrected.

With a little coaxing and encouragement from his battle buddy, retired Staff Sgt. Ajai Haynsworth, Hicks continued sharing his stories on Facebook Live, and "NCOPD Live" was born.

Hicks, serving as an instructor—or small group leader, as the Army calls it—came to be known as "The Professional Small Group Leader."

### Gaining traction

"NCOPD Live" didn't grow in popularity overnight. Viewership didn't spike until Hicks invited then-Command Sgt. Maj. John Troxell, who was the senior enlisted adviser to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, on the show.

"Once the SEAC came on the show, our number of followers just kept climbing," Hicks said.

Since then, "NCOPD Live" has hosted several guests who have continued to take the show to a new level, including the first woman service senior enlisted adviser, Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force JoAnne Bass; Sgt. 1st Class Janina Simmons, the first Black woman to graduate from Ranger School; Staff Sgt. Casey Raines and his family, who were named the 2020 Association of the U.S. Army Volunteer Family of the Year; and yours truly.

With "NCOPD Live," Hicks hopes "to give back and give every NCO the ability to say they have a place to join in an NCOPD."

He also hopes to expand the show by creating a network with other online leader development broadcasts, and he wants to pass the torch when he transitions out of the Army in a few years.

"NCOPD Live" has become the No. 1 leader development forum on Facebook Live, Hicks said.

You can follow "The Professional SGL" and "NCOPD Live" on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube at @NCOPDLIVE.

**Retired Sgt. Maj. of the Army Daniel Dailey** is AUSA's vice president for NCO and Soldier Programs and was the 15th sergeant major of the Army.



## Chapter briefing highlights Army's testing capabilities

**A**s the Army continues its modernization efforts, having soldiers test new capabilities and technologies early in the process is critical to speed and success, the deputy commander of the Army Test and Evaluation Command said Tuesday during a virtual briefing hosted by the Association of the U.S. Army's MG Harry Greene, Aberdeen chapter.

"Anything that a soldier touches, uses, wears, or anything that has any part of executing their mission" comes through ATEC, which is based at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, Col. James West said.

**MG Harry Greene,  
Aberdeen**

The command exists in a direct support role to the three-year-old Army Futures Command and provides "timely, important information to senior Army leaders," allowing for quicker decision-making, he said.

ATEC has facilities in 20 locations across 15 states and Panama, West said.

Testing in multiple environments enables a better understanding of how equipment is going to perform and what soldiers need in different situations, he said.

There are more testing requirements than the resources available, so prioritizing efforts is critical to getting the most significant capabilities to the force, West said.

### Soldier feedback

"There is a heavy focus on soldier-centered design" in test events, building confidence in both the personnel and the equipment, he said.

Getting early feedback from soldiers in the field helps identify problems before spending years and millions of dollars on a project that could eventually be delayed or scrapped entirely, West said.

Another important aspect of ATEC is data collection, he said. The ability to "collect data once and use it mul-



Getting early feedback from soldiers in the field helps identify problems before spending years and millions of dollars on a project, Col. James West said. (U.S. ARMY/BRIDGETT SITER)

multiple times" in the lifecycle of capability development through simulation, modeling and developmental and operational testing is a huge asset, particularly in a resource-constrained environment, he said.

The command is also examining ways to update and operationalize its testing procedures in partnership with the Army's eight cross-functional teams that are driving the modernization priorities, West said.

"Those CFTs and how we're able to be embedded with them to have early and continuous input in requirements documents" allows for ATEC to design an efficient plan and leverage resources from industry or other military services, he said.

The transition from requirements to testing should not be a "hand-off of a baton in a relay race," West said. "Through the inclusion of soldier touchpoints in events, we're able to merge developmental testing and operational testing and evaluation into one common thread."

West said that input from soldiers and leaders at every level, "from the squad through the division com-

mander," is "invaluable" information that is immediately leveraged at multiple stages in the development process.

### Unique challenges

New technologies such as artificial intelligence and machine learning provide a unique challenge for testers because there are no legacy systems to compare them against, West said.

In addition to training for current personnel, ATEC is seeking subject-matter experts to identify the path forward in testing and evaluation for emerging capabilities.

Relationships with defense industry representatives, academic experts and other entities that Futures Command meets with on a daily basis "are opportunities to see what's coming, what gaps we may have in our testing capabilities," and identify necessary equipment for assessing capabilities that do not have legacy systems, he said.

All modernization lines of effort point to "providing the greatest capabilities on the planet to our soldiers in our formations," West said.



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