



Incoming 1st Sgt. Jessica English, right, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Space Brigade, receives the company's guidon at Fort Carson, Colorado. (U.S. ARMY/STAFF SGT. DENNIS DEPRISCO)

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Army overhauls NCO assignments

The Army is pushing forward several NCO talent management initiatives aimed at overhauling the way enlisted leaders are promoted and assigned and giving soldiers new options as they progress in their careers.

Bolstered by the success of new officer promotion and assignment programs launched early last year, the Army is advancing three new programs that focus on leadership positions for senior NCOs.

The First Sergeant Talent Alignment Assessment, run at the division or installation level, is designed to look at the local population of master sergeants and senior sergeants first class who are eligible for first sergeant positions to see how they can be matched with the right job at the

right time.

Rather than taking away the decision-making process from local leaders, the program aims to provide more information about each soldier and a better understanding of the position itself, Sgt. Maj. Robert Haynie of the Army Talent Management Task Force said Wednesday during The AUSA Noon Report, a webinar hosted by the Association of the U.S. Army.

"It's really to build a local market on that installation so they can manage their master sergeants into those first sergeant positions, the building out of a bench so they can manage their NCOs and build some succession planning into place," Haynie said.

The program was tested at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, with 13 master sergeants from the 82nd Airborne

Division and the XVIII Airborne Corps, and "99% of them said it was a great initiative," Haynie said. "They felt that it had a more holistic look at an NCO to match up with those positions."

It's now slated for more testing with NCOs at the 1st Infantry Division at Fort Riley, Kansas, the 10th Mountain Division at Fort Drum, New York, and possibly the 25th Infantry Division at Fort Richardson, Alaska, later this year, Haynie said.

The Sergeant Major Assessment Program, which was tested last fall at Fort Knox, Kentucky, will move forward in November with implementation at the brigade level.

Modeled after assessment programs for lieutenant colonels and col-
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COVID-19 vaccine is the ‘light at the end of the tunnel’

As the pandemic’s year mark approaches, the COVID-19 vaccine rollout showcases the “light at the end of the tunnel” and chance for a “new normal,” Army senior leaders said.

“Vaccines are among the most important accomplishments in modern medicine,” Lt. Gen. R. Scott Dingle, Army surgeon general, said Monday during a virtual town hall with soldiers and family members. “They have saved more lives around the world than any other medical innovation, including antibiotics and surgery itself.”

The town hall featured Dingle and a panel of other senior leaders, and it addressed questions about the COVID-19 vaccine, including its safety and efficacy, distribution plans, and eligibility.

The virtual presentation is part of a larger push by the Army and DoD to encourage service members, families and veterans to get the vaccine.

Command Sgt. Maj. Diamond Hough, senior enlisted soldier for Army Medical Command, said navigating the pandemic is “a matter of readiness” as missions continue at home and abroad.

“We are asking for your assistance and your trust,” Hough said, adding that vaccines are “an important part” of making sure troops are fit and ready.

While age can be a risk factor, Dingle said the virus has also caused severe illness in young and middle-aged adults. Its effects, he said, can “linger for weeks or months,” even in healthy adults.

“If you have not received your vaccine, be sure to get it as soon as it is available,” Dingle said.

Response efforts continue

The continued push for vaccinations from Army leaders comes as soldiers remain active in COVID-19 response efforts across the country, including vaccine distribution.



Capt. Skyler Brown, a family medicine physician assigned to the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, receives the COVID-19 vaccine from Pfc. Luca Webe at the Army Health Clinic in Grafenwoehr, Germany. (U.S. ARMY/AUSTIN RIEL)

In February, the Pentagon approved more than 4,700 active-duty troops to deploy in support of the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s vaccination efforts.

According to Hough, DoD has requested vaccines for 11.1 million personnel, including service members in the reserve component.

Reserve soldiers, he said, will receive the vaccine based on prioritization guidelines outlined by DoD and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

“If enough of us roll up our sleeves, these vaccines can reduce the death and severe illness to help us eventually reclaim normalcy in our communities,” said Lt. Gen. Leslie Smith, the Army inspector general.

Phased rollout

As DoD conducts a phased vaccine rollout, Dingle said a specific timeline for availability remains the “million-dollar question,” but distribution is “moving as quickly as possible.”

DoD will monitor the vaccine’s administration through “existing medi-

cal record reporting systems,” he said, and monitor and track reports of side effects.

Dr. Steven Cersovsky, deputy director of the Army Public Health Center, said side effects usually subside in a day or two, and severe side effects are “extremely uncommon.”

Addressing safety concerns, Cersovsky said the available vaccines have gone through “rigorous studies to ensure they are as safe as possible.”

“I, along with other Army senior leaders, remain committed to protecting our service members, our civilian employees, and our families,” Smith said. “We need you to take it in order to be ready, not only for our units, but our families, our communities, so we can get back to the new normal.”

Right now, the COVID-19 vaccine is not mandatory for military personnel while it’s under an emergency use authorization, he said, but that could change in the future.

“Do your part to protect yourselves, your family and friends, and to remain combat-ready,” Dingle said.

Trailblazing Black soldiers ‘paved the way’ for future generations



Brig. Gen. Benjamin Davis Sr., right, pins the Distinguished Flying Cross on his son, Col. Benjamin Davis Jr. (U.S. AIR FORCE PHOTO)

African American soldiers have been trailblazers for equality since the Revolutionary War, and Black leaders from the past remain examples for troops today, a senior Army leader said.

“During the past year, the United States has faced significant social equality challenges. I believe now, we are at an inflection point,” where it is important to remember how diversity made and continues to make the Army the greatest one on Earth, said Lt. Gen. Jason Evans, deputy Army chief of staff for installations, or G-9.

Black American troops have bravely fought for the nation since 1775, “making Black History Month a time of year when we can highlight the achievements and contributions of Black soldiers,” Evans said Feb. 19 at a Black History Month event hosted by the Association of the U.S. Army.

Throughout the Army’s 245-year history, Black men and women “have overcome tremendous barriers,” setting the conditions for future generations of Black Americans, he said.

Many Black military leaders have “paved the way in the quest for equal-

ty” in the Army and DoD, Evans said.

He pointed to Benjamin Davis Sr., the first Black soldier to be promoted to general officer, as an example.

After joining the Army as a private, Davis rose to the rank of sergeant major, earned a commission and was promoted to brigadier general in 1940.

Davis’ son, Benjamin Davis Jr., began his career in the Army before going on to become the first Black Air Force general.

The Army promoted the first Black woman to general officer in 1979 when Hazel Brown became the chief of the Army Nurse Corps. Three years later, Gen. Roscoe Robinson became the first Black four-star, Evans said.

Almost 50 years after Davis Sr.’s historic promotion, Gen. Colin Powell became the first Black chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

“The aforementioned leaders have served as role models and inspirations for all Black Americans,” Evans said.

The Army must embrace diversity “as a way to maximize individual talent, increase morale and enhance military effectiveness, regardless of race, creed, gender or color,” he said.

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Book series provides German perspective from WWII

By Joseph Craig

“History is written by the victors” is a familiar saying, often misattributed to Winston Churchill.

While the quote’s origins may be murky, its meaning is clear—the winners of a conflict get to control how the narrative is told in the history books.

Occasionally, though, the vanquished also get a say.

Such is the case with a series of books called *Die Wehrmacht im Kampf*, which gives the German army’s perspective of operations in World War II.

The Association of the U.S. Army’s Book Program has partnered with Casemate Publishers to release the first English versions of these books, which were originally published in the 1950s and 1960s by former members of the Wehrmacht.

Those veterans provide first-hand accounts of key battles fought throughout Europe and North Africa.

Each volume in the series features a modern introduction by Matthias Strohn, an expert on the German army who teaches at the University of Buckingham and at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst.

As Strohn points out, the significance of the books extends beyond the battles they cover. The series kicks off with *Panzer Operations*, written by the noted armor officer Hermann Hoth.



Each book in *Die Wehrmacht im Kampf* provides a first-hand account of key battles fought throughout Europe and North Africa. (GERMAN FEDERAL ARCHIVES PHOTO)

When Hoth originally published his story in 1956, the Cold War was in full swing, and NATO allies were very interested in tactical and operational details of how the Germans battled the Soviets on the eastern plains of Europe.

Here is the full list of *Die Wehrmacht im Kampf* books, starting with the most recently published titles:

- *Arctic Front: The Advance of Mountain Corps Norway on Murmansk, 1941* by Wilhelm Hess
- *Narvik: The Struggle of Battle Group Dietl in the Spring of 1940* by Alex Buchner
- *Leningrad: The Advance of Panzer Group 4, 1941* by W. Chales de Beaulieu
- *Operation Crusader: Tank War-*

fare in the Desert, Tobruk 1941 by Hermann Büschleb

- *Dunkirk: German Operations in France 1940* by Hans-Adolf Jacobsen

- *The Battle of Korsun-Cherkassy: The Encirclement and Breakout of Army Group South, 1944* by Nikolaus von Vormann

- *Vitebsk: The Fight and Destruction of Third Panzer Army* by Otto Heidkämper

- *Panzer Operations: Germany’s Panzer Group 3 During the Invasion of Russia, 1941* by Hermann Hoth

Look for more to be released in the future, and click here to get your copy of any of these titles.

Joseph Craig is AUSA’s Book Program Director.

NCO talent management

From Page 1

onels, the new program is designed to assess brigade-level sergeants major for assignments in key billets.

“While we’re going to start with brigade level, it will expand to battalion level for the following year, so now we’re going to have an opportunity to really use objective assessments, to complement the current subjective evaluations that are already used,

as we select battalion and brigade command sergeants major,” Maj. Jed Hudson, also of the Army Talent Management Task Force, said during the webinar.

He also highlighted the Assignment Satisfaction Key-Enlisted Marketplace, or ASK-EM, a program managed by Army Human Resources Command that is “now up and running,” Hudson said.

ASK-EM allows NCOs to see what

assignments are available and nominate themselves for jobs that best suit their abilities and interests.

Hudson estimates about 9,000 NCOs will be using this system for their next assignments.

“Their preferences matter,” he said. “The soldier has transparency, can see all the jobs available, and the soldier has predictability on when they’re going to move ... [which is information] they didn’t have prior to ASK-EM.”

Retired general shares his Army story at chapter event

Retired Lt. Gen. Larry Jordan, a former deputy commanding general of Army Training and Doctrine Command, shared his Army story as a Black cadet and officer during a virtual Black History Month event hosted by the Association of the U.S. Army's Fairfax-Lee chapter.

Growing up in Kansas City, Missouri, several of Jordan's family members served in the Army, sparking in him "an early interest" in the military.

"They all took pride in it, and it was part of our family history," he said.

That interest intensified when Jordan enrolled in junior ROTC during high school. Later, he attended the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York.

Being a Black cadet at West Point in the 1960s during "a time of upheaval and change" was a unique experience, Jordan said. The

Fairfax-Lee

civil rights movement, the Vietnam War and other cultural and global changes "put a lot of stress on society and also hit the Army," he said.

To a certain extent, the rigor and discipline of being a cadet overshadowed larger issues, Jordan said. But out of 991 young men in his 1964 class, only 10 were Black. Among the 2,400 cadets at West Point, the total Black population was 19, "so you always stood out," Jordan said.

Over his four years at the academy, most white cadets were friendly and respectful "due to our shared experience," but there were some "who brought their pejorative, unpleasant views ... and that's just the way people are," he said.

Leadership lessons

When Jordan reached his first assignment as a tank platoon leader at Fort Hood, Texas, "it was a great learning experience," and three important lessons stood out, he said.

"If you take care of your soldiers



Then-Lt. Gen. Larry Jordan, right, greets Black History Month essay contest winner Shallah Marshall at a 2002 Pentagon reception. (U.S. ARMY/RUDI WILLIAMS)

and lead them well, they will follow you anywhere and do what's needed," Jordan said.

He gained an understanding of the importance of NCOs, who he described as "the key to everything at every level," and he also learned that color and culture didn't define intelligence, talent and dependability during a time when the Army was attempting to implement a more performance-based talent management system.

Jordan, who has also served as an assistant professor of history at West Point, said that "by the 1960s, Black NCOs had become a fixture in the Army. At the same time, Black officers were still rare," particularly in the Armor branch.

Jordan was stationed at three different posts, but it wasn't until his deployment to Vietnam that he saw a Black colonel of any branch, he said.

"The Army was moving in the right direction, but the pace was slow," he said.

Equality and readiness

As civil unrest and changing attitudes about democracy and equality impacted the nation, Army leaders recognized that unit cohesion was critical to combat readiness.

"It required the best use of all available talent, and soldiers had to be treated fairly and equally" regardless of race, Jordan said.

"I personally believe the Army often led the nation in equal treatment of individuals, giving them opportunities that made them feel worthwhile," but even the best institution with the best intentions is made of imperfect humans, Jordan said.

For that reason, "policies alone are not enough. All leaders have to remain vigilant" and watch out for their soldiers, he said.

"Today, Black officers can not only dream about being division and corps commanders, branch commandants, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff or even the secretary of defense, but they can do it," Jordan said.

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