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Pfc. Noah Jordi of the 7th Infantry Division holds a Burmese Python during Exercise Cobra Gold 2023 at Camp Erawan, Thailand. The Army's fiscal 2024 budget has funding for 115 exercises worldwide, including 33 in the Indo-Pacific. (U.S. MARINE CORPS/SGT. MEGAN ROSES)

# Fiscal 2024 budget fuels Army plans

**T**he fiscal 2024 defense budget unveiled Monday includes a 5.2% across-the-board pay increase and an overall \$26 billion hike in defense spending.

The Army's \$185.5 billion share, which is \$5.6 billion less than the fiscal 2023 budget approved by Congress, covers the service's priorities, briefers said as the budget was unveiled.

Army Undersecretary Gabe Camarillo said the Army can do a lot with the funding, which allows continued emphasis on transformation programs while sustaining readiness and funding quality-of-life initiatives.

"We are very pleased with the FY24 budget submission," Camarillo said. "It enables us to continue our momentum on our modernization

programs, fully fund our efforts to address recruiting and to effectuate the National Defense Strategy."

Overall, Army funding makes up 22% of the \$842 billion DoD budget. The Air Force would receive 30.8%, the Navy would receive 30.4% and defensewide programs make up 16.8%, according to budget documents.

The flat Army funding partly reflects the expectation that the service's active-duty and Army National Guard troop levels won't dramatically increase over the next year, and that the Army Reserve's strength will drop by about 2,200. The result is a total Army force level of 951,800, about 20% less than in fiscal 2022.

Camarillo said the Army also is "fundamentally improving" its recruiting enterprise, with several targeted efforts and full funding of

marketing programs. "It will take time to get there. It will not happen overnight," he said.

The proposed 5.2% pay increase would be the biggest increase in more than 20 years for soldiers. The increase would be effective Jan. 1, 2024. If approved by Congress, it would apply to both uniformed and civilian workers.

The budget also has "significant emphasis" on improving soldier housing, access to child care and quality-of-life programs, Camarillo said. Key projects include five new barracks projects, worth \$287.5 million, and more than \$200 million in future facilities investments at 10 child development centers and two youth centers.

In terms of readiness, the budget

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## Military groups urge timely, adequate defense budgets

Joined by four other military associations, the Association of the U.S. Army is urging key lawmakers to approve a timely and adequate defense budget to avoid unnecessary disruptions in modernization and people programs.

“We are in what has been described as the ‘decisive decade,’ and our nation faces many severe threats. From an increasingly capable and aggressive China, the continued unprovoked Russian invasion of Ukraine, Iranian and North Korean malign activities, impact of inflation, to floods and wildfires, our soldiers are answering our nation’s call,” the associations say in a March 7 letter to the top four leaders of the Senate and the House.

“The reportedly arbitrary budget cuts described by some are not appropriate at this time,” says the letter signed by retired Gen. Bob Brown, president and CEO of AUSA.

He is joined by retired Brig. Gen. J. Roy Robinson, president of the National Guard Association of the United States; retired Maj. Gen. Jeffrey Phillips, executive director of the Reserve Organization of America; retired Chief Warrant Officer 4 Jack Du Teil, national executive director of the U.S. Army Warrant Officer Association; and retired Command Sgt. Maj. Karen Craig, president of the



A letter to key lawmakers from AUSA and other military associations emphasizes the need for predictable funding to ensure national security. (U.S. ARMY/STAFF SGT. MATTHEW FOSTER)

Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States.

President Biden on March 9 unveiled his budget plan for fiscal 2024. The request includes \$842 billion for defense, which is \$26 billion more than the fiscal 2023 enacted level.

The Army’s share of the budget is \$185.5 billion.

“The president’s budget request provides the resources necessary to address the pacing challenge from the People’s Republic of China, address advanced and persistent threats, accelerate innovation and modernization, and ensure operational resiliency amidst our changing climate,” Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said.

The budget also includes 5.2% pay raises for service members and civilian workers, the largest in more than 20 and 40 years for the military and

civilian workforce, respectively, Austin said.

As Congress begins its work on the budget request, AUSA and the other military associations are urging lawmakers to provide predictability to the Pentagon and the services.

“It is intuitive that budget cuts to DoD or the Army diminish national security and the capabilities of our service members,” the letter says.

Readiness, modernization and quality of life programs would suffer, and cuts also could hurt the defense industrial base, the letter says.

“We urge you and your colleagues to provide the predictability and resources commensurate with the demonstrated need and urgency that our national security challenges require,” the letter says.

Read the letter here.

## Meet the AUSA headquarters staff

### Aurora Sunga

*Senior Accounting Manager*

Aurora Sunga has been with AUSA since 2007. She is passionate about traveling to different parts of the world to learn different cultures and cuisines and enjoys cooking, reading and walking in her spare time. Aurora has lived in Arlington, Virginia, since 1985 and cherishes her time with her husband, three daughters and two grandchildren.



### Budget

*From Page 1*

funds 22 combat training center rotations, including a rotation in Hawaii and one in Alaska, training more than 140,000 soldiers, Camarillo said. There also is funding for 115 exercises worldwide, including 33 in the Indo-Pacific.

Army budget experts will further discuss the service’s fiscal 2024 budget request March 23 at a Coffee Series event hosted by the Association of the U.S. Army. For more information or to register, click here.

## Suicide prevention efforts require constant care, attention, leaders say



From left to right, retired Lt. Gen. Leslie Smith, AUSA's vice president for Leadership and Education; James Helis, director of the Army Resilience Directorate; Maj. Gen. Thomas Solhjem, the Army's 25th chief of chaplains; and retired Sgt. Maj. of the Army Kenneth Preston, an AUSA senior fellow, discuss Army suicide prevention efforts. (AUSA PHOTO)

**P**reventing suicide in the Army is an “all-hands-on-deck effort,” Army leaders said.

“Every death of a soldier is a tragedy. Every death by suicide is even more tragic,” said James Helis, director of the Army Resilience Directorate. “It has cascading effects across the unit, to the battle buddies, to the squadmates, to the family, to the leaders. This is a problem that we have to stay on top of all the time.”

Speaking March 8 during an Association of the U.S. Army Noon Report webinar, Helis said that soldiers who die by suicide tend to be young, junior enlisted men experiencing a crisis.

“They’re typically in their 20s, 21 to 29, [in the] grade of private first class to staff sergeant, combat arms, men and in some level of crisis,” Helis said. It could be relationship troubles or substance abuse, behavioral issues, financial challenges or work-related issues, he said.

The military suicide rate in 2021 was lower compared to 2020, according to DoD’s most recent annual report on suicide in the military.

Especially during times of difficulty, how soldiers frame their experienc-

es can have a big impact on outcomes, said Maj. Gen. Thomas Solhjem, the Army’s 25th chief of chaplains.

“People with a strong spiritual core grow stronger through trauma,” he said. “As a matter of fact, trauma is ... an opportunity to grow. It’s not a negative. I think we have got a real narrative issue. ... You’re suffering or you’re going through hardship, but this is an opportunity for you to really grow.”

Over the past two years, the Army has invested in suicide prevention through wellness checks, requiring senior commanders to deliver in-person suicide prevention guidance to subordinate commanders, briefing Army leaders on policies and tools to prevent suicide and deploying a suicide prevention awareness campaign, among other efforts.

“We’re identifying soldiers before they get to crisis and connecting them with resources,” Helis said.

He emphasized that seeking mental health help is not a sign of weakness.

“The soldier mentality is we’re tough, we’re strong, we can tough it out,” Helis said. “There’s times when we need help from others. It is not a weakness to seek counseling.”

# AUSA Extra

Voice for the Army –  
Support For the Soldier

**Gen. Bob Brown, USA Ret.**  
President and CEO, AUSA

**Lt. Gen. Leslie Smith, USA Ret.**  
Vice President, Leadership and Education,  
AUSA

**Luc Dunn**  
Editor

**Desiree Hurlocker**  
Advertising Manager

**Advertising Information Contact:**

Fox Associates Inc.  
116 W. Kinzie St. • Chicago, IL 60654  
Phone: 800-440-0231  
Email: [adinfo.rmy@foxrep.com](mailto:adinfo.rmy@foxrep.com)

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### PERK OF THE WEEK



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## Paper defines tenets of modernization for future force

**A** new paper published by the Association of the U.S. Army introduces the tenets of Army modernization as a primer for the service's future leaders.

In "Tenets of Army Modernization," author Lt. Col. Hassan Kamara lays out the individual elements that constitute how the Army "defines, constructs and operates within the context of doctrine, operations, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, facilities and policy," known as DOTMLPF-P.

"Modernization occurs when progressive transformation ventures, successfully implemented across DOTMLPF-P components, holistically enhance the Army's ability to accomplish its mission," he writes.

In his research, Kamara, the senior military acquisition adviser to the Fires Capability Development

and Integration Directorate in Army Futures Command's Futures and Concepts Center, studied the theories of modernization in society, which he said, "facilitates intellectual inquiry into how societies evolve politically and socioeconomically."

Kamara cites Army Chief of Staff Gen. James McConville, who in remarks at an AUSA breakfast in January 2020 said the Army is "at a similar inflection point to the one our leaders faced coming out of Vietnam, and like them we have to ask ourselves: Are we building the Army than can compete and win for the next 40 years?"

Pointing out that the effort to modernize the Army will continue as new generations of leaders take the helm, Kamara explains that he wrote the paper to help define and examine the subject and outline a "practical

framework of understanding to continue ongoing efforts."

He analyzes the individual elements of DOTMLPF-P and offers examples to demonstrate the role each plays in the operation of the Army and how they have evolved through history to meet the changing global security environment.

However, he cautions that these elements work in concert and should never be transformed unilaterally.

"The singular pursuit of progressive transformation in one element or component of DOTMLPF-P to the neglect of the others ... can cause a mission-threatening imbalance," Kamara writes. "As shown in the [individual] analyses, the elements are all interrelated and complementary; modernization planners must holistically manage their synergy going forward."

Read the paper here.

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## Celebrating women's contributions to America's Army

In March, we observe Women's History Month and celebrate the contributions and achievements women have made throughout American history.

They include Sacagawea, who helped guide Meriwether Lewis and William Clark's expedition; Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan Anthony, leaders of the women's rights movement; Harriet Tubman, who

### Family Readiness

escaped slavery and helped others do the same before serving as a scout, spy, guerilla soldier and nurse during the Civil War; aviation pioneer Amelia Earhart; and Rosa Parks, who helped ignite the civil rights movement by refusing to give up her seat on the bus.

As an Army spouse of 30 years, I have learned much about remarkable women who have profoundly impacted the service and laid the foundation for someone like me. Starting in the Revolutionary War with Gen. George Washington's spouse, Martha, to the Civil War where Dr. Mary Walker became the first woman to receive the Medal of Honor, to the Army Nurse Corps and the Women's Army Corps—to which my mother belonged—women have driven change in the armed forces just as they have in America.

With the creation of the all-volunteer force and the expansion of roles during the global war on terrorism, women in the Army continue to make history.

Army spouses continue to serve and contribute as well. Throughout the years, I have seen firsthand how the role of the Army spouse has evolved—so much that senior leaders recognize the importance of our spouses and their effect on Army readiness.

That's why the Army continues to invest in and improve quality-of-life programs, including spouse employment, to promote the health and well-



Army Secretary Christine Wormuth, left, addresses military child care and other topics during the 2023 Defense Communities National Summit. (U.S. ARMY PHOTO)

being of soldiers and families.

Last week, I was invited to represent the Association of the U.S. Army at the Defense Communities National Summit hosted by the Association of Defense Communities.

I witnessed three Army spouses who continue to move the needle in changing history: Patricia Barron, deputy assistant secretary of defense for military community and family policy and former director of Family Readiness at AUSA; Patty George, spouse of Army Vice Chief of Staff Gen. Randy George; and Elizabeth O'Brien, executive director of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Hiring Our Heroes initiative.

During their panel, the women shared their own experiences with spouse employment, how critical it is for Army spouses to find meaningful employment and careers and how businesses can be involved in supporting these efforts.

The following morning, I listened to another woman who has made

history—Christine Wormuth, the first woman to serve as secretary of the Army. Among the topics she discussed was the service's push to improve child care across the force.

"Any time I do a town hall with soldiers and families, I hear about child care. We've built new centers. We've raised the minimum wage for staff," Wormuth said, according to a news release from the Association of Defense Communities. "It has been a challenge for us to fully staff the child development centers. ... I would call on you to let people in your communities know about the employment opportunities with our child care centers, especially in areas where bases are more remote."

These women, like so many throughout history, are paving the way for future generations to continue to do great things for our Army and our nation.

**Holly Dailey** is AUSA's Family Readiness director.

## Chapter event recognizes service of Vietnam veterans

Soldiers from Fort Hood, Texas, joined members of the local community Feb. 10 at the Gatesville Civic Center for the 15th annual Military Appreciation Fish Fry, hosted by the Association of the U.S. Army's Central Texas chapter.

Nine Army Vietnam veterans were honored in a pinning ceremony during the event, including Stan Esparza, Bill Don Gifford, Amador Guajardo, John KIELTYKA, Eloy Mainez, John Pitts, Thomas Preston, Ronnie Lee Snively and Norman Wibbenmeyer.

"It is a distinct honor for us to participate in the pinning ceremony," said retired Maj. Gen. Kendall Cox, the chapter president, as reported by the *Gatesville Messenger*. "It is important for us to make sure these veterans receive the appreciation and recognition they should have received years ago. As authorized by Congress and on behalf of our nation, we are



A Vietnam veteran receives a pin and certificate during a military appreciation event hosted by AUSA's Central Texas chapter. (GATESVILLE MESSANGER/JEFF OSBORNE)

doing now what we should have done 50 years ago ... honoring Vietnam vets and their families."

Gatesville Mayor Gary Chumley agreed, saying it was important to

recognize the Vietnam veterans "and give them the recognition they deserve and didn't get when they came home."

The pins "are intended to be a lasting memento of our nation's gratitude" to the nation's 7.2 million Vietnam veterans and 9 million families connected with them, Cox said.

"That American flag we fly and you wear on your shoulder means something. It stands for freedom and is a beacon of hope to people around the world," said Maj. Gen. Joseph Edwards, commander of First Army Division West, according to the *Gatesville Messenger*.

"It is a sign of hope that we are here to defend you. You are the 1% of Americans allowed to stand up and defend our nation so that others may live freely," he said. "What you do matters, and we're eternally grateful. We are one big team. God bless each and every one of you."

Cox also recognized the "unsung heroes" of Fort Hood and First Army Division West.

"They get overlooked sometimes but what they do to get us ready [to mobilize] is really crucial to what we do," he said.

## AUSA volunteer leader selected for induction into C5ISR Hall of Fame



MG Harry Greene, Aberdeen

Retired Col. Jim Costigan, left, past president of AUSA's MG Harry Greene, Aberdeen, chapter and current vice president of the association's Second Region, has been voted into the C5ISR Hall of Fame at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland. The induction ceremony is scheduled for June. Above, Costigan presents a donation on behalf of the chapter to Janice Chance, president of the Gold Star Mothers Maryland chapter. (COURTESY PHOTO)

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