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Sgt. 1st Class Nickesha Cabrera, a recruiter assigned to Lacey Army Career Center, presents information about career and education options within the Army during a recruiting event on Feb. 26 at Ridge High School, Washington. (U.S. ARMY/SGT. ELIZABETH DEGROOT)

Mingus: Recruiting efforts bearing fruit

The Army is more than halfway to meeting this year's recruiting mission and faces the possibility of exceeding its funded end strength projections, Army Vice Chief of Staff Gen. James Mingus said.

"We've seen momentum unlike we have seen in probably a decade," Mingus said March 12 in testimony before the Senate Armed Services subcommittee on readiness and management support. He explained that the Army is 50% ahead of where it was last year, having recruited 44,358 of its goal of 61,000 new soldiers.

The Army recruited 55,300 new soldiers in fiscal year 2024, exceeding its goal of 55,000, and placed 11,000 more into the delayed entry program.

In the fiscal 2025 budget, the Army requested money to fund an end strength of 442,000 soldiers in the Regular Army, but with the strong recruiting environment, Mingus said he expects the fiscal year end strength to be higher.

"What I believe will happen, if the trajectories remain consistent with where we're at today, we're going to end this year somewhere between 449,000 and 452,000, so almost 10,000 over what we believe will be appropriated from a military pay and allowances standpoint," Mingus said.

If that happens, "there will be a deficit there that we will have to come back and ask for help," he said.

Mingus testified alongside his counterparts from the Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and Space Force, and Diana Maurer, director of the Government Accountability Office's defense capabilities and management team, about the readiness of the joint force.

He told members of the subcommittee that the turnaround in the recruiting slump that marked the past three years is the result of initiatives that overhauled how the Army recruits. These initiatives include professionalizing the recruiting force and expanding the recruiting demo-

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Distinguished Service Cross awarded to retired NCO

For heroic actions in Iraq in 2007, retired Sgt. Maj. Eric Geressy was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, the nation's second-highest award for valor, during a Pentagon ceremony on Tuesday officiated by Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth.

Geressy was awarded a Silver Star in September 2011 for his actions on Sept. 4, 2007, in Baghdad, where he took command of a combat outpost and thwarted a complex enemy attack. In upgrading his award to the Distinguished Service Cross, Hegseth, who fought with Geressy in Iraq, though not in this battle, said it was time to "recognize his actions of that day."

Geressy was first sergeant of Eagle Company, 2nd Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, when on Sept. 3, 2007, he and his soldiers conducted a relief-in-place at a combat outpost in Al Hadar in southern Baghdad, according to the award citation.

On Sept. 4, with his company's officers away, Geressy received orders to check on a suspected vehicle-borne IED. While his soldiers were outside the safety of the outpost, they came under enemy gunfire, prompting Geressy to deploy a quick-reaction force that extracted the soldiers and killed three enemy fighters, according to the citation.

Within 15 minutes, the outpost



Retired Sgt. Maj. Eric Geressy, center, is awarded the Distinguished Service Cross by Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth in a Pentagon ceremony. (DOD/SENIOR AIRMAN SPENCER PERKINS)

came under a complex attack led by up to 45 enemy fighters who simultaneously launched a massive volume of gunfire and rocket-propelled grenades from three different directions, the citation says.

Geressy immediately requested an air weapons team, then moved to the rooftop and "exposed himself to direct enemy fire by moving from guard tower to guard tower assessing the situation and inspiring his soldiers by calmly encouraging them to keep up the fire," the citation says.

When one of his soldiers in a guard tower was shot, Geressy moved to his position to direct the medical evacuation and helped carry the soldier to safety, according to the citation.

During this time, the air weapons team arrived and, acting as the on-scene commander, Geressy authorized the air weapons team to launch a Hellfire missile into the defensive position, crippling the enemy.

As the quick-reaction force evacuated the wounded soldier, enemy gunfire increased, targeting the evacuation vehicles. Geressy authorized the air weapons team to launch additional Hellfire missiles and to conduct strafing runs with their 30 mm cannons, breaking "the enemy's will to continue to attack," the citation reads.

Geressy "heroically led his company in high intensity combat" while fulfilling the jobs of company commander, fire support officer and first sergeant, Geressy's citation says. "On numerous occasions, he fearlessly exposed himself to direct enemy fire to instill confidence in his men, care for his wounded and to destroy the enemy."

Meet the AUSA headquarters staff

Maj. Young Joo

Army Fellow, National Security Studies

Maj. Young Joo is an active-duty Army officer currently serving as AUSA's Army Fellow. An avid fan of smoking meat, he has been trying to perfect the art of smoking brisket and beef ribs since 2018. Young lives in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area and enjoys doing yard work, playing lacrosse and spending time with his family.



Report: Army Combat Fitness Test could reduce soldier injury risk

The Army should collect more injury data and add physical fitness assessments to its injury monitoring programs to better measure the Army Combat Fitness Test's impact on soldier health, according to a report from the Rand Corp.

When the Army announced the Army Combat Fitness Test in 2019, its first new fitness test in decades, "two of the Army's stated goals for the ACFT at the time were to reduce injuries and to establish a culture of fitness," the report said. "However, evidence regarding the relationship between the ACFT and soldier health and injuries remains limited."

In 2022, over 40% of all medical encounters among active-duty soldiers were for injuries, amounting to 2 million injury-related encounters and outpacing mental and behavioral health-related visits, according to the Defense Health Agency's 2022 annual injury surveillance report.

Previous reports evaluating the ACFT, which consists of six events that measure key fitness indicators, have focused on soldier pass rates, but "relatively little guidance, policy, or research addresses the mechanisms through which the ACFT is intended to transform the Army's fitness culture or enhance mental toughness and stamina," the report found.

ACFT scores provide an accurate assessment of injury risk, according to the report.

"The ACFT is a highly predictive test when assessing injury risk," the report found. "Groups that scored higher on the ACFT overall had significantly lower risk of any injury than the group that received 'narrowly passing' total scores on the ACFT. ... Those who failed the ACFT, in contrast, were about 20 percent more likely to suffer an injury in the 180-day window following the ACFT."



Spc. Heremes Rodriguez of the Georgia Army National Guard performs the sprint-drag-carry event of the Army Combat Fitness Test March 9 at the Cumming Readiness Center in Cumming, Georgia.

(ARMY NATIONAL GUARD/SPC. ALEXANDRIA AMOS)

As soldiers gain more experience with the ACFT, their injury risk goes down. "Injury risk declines with each subsequent attempt of the ACFT for at least the first three tests ... and possibly for additional tests beyond these," the report found. "These patterns suggest that, as the force gains experience with the ACFT, injury rates may continue to fall."

The report recommends that the Army incorporate more demographic and health data into its systems and incorporate the ACFT into the service's injury surveillance efforts, among other recommendations.

"Injury surveillance systems, whether aggregated or for individuals, could include information on fitness performance—both overall ACFT and individual event scores—as an additional early warning sign for risk," according to the report.

Read the report here.

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Tricare users should download health records by April 1

Beneficiaries who want to keep a copy of their legacy health records must download them by April 1, before the Tricare Online patient portal is decommissioned.

“All military hospitals and clinics have transitioned to MHS GENESIS. We encourage you to take these important steps to save your personal health records before the TOL Patient Portal decommissions,” Navy Rear Adm. Tracy Farrill from the Defense Health Agency said in a Tricare news release.

The online change comes as the Defense Health Agency transitions from the Tricare Online patient portal to the MHS Genesis electronic health record. Embracing the MHS Genesis system “eliminates the need to maintain two systems and streamlines [electronic health record] management,” according to the news release.

Parents can view complete health data for children under 12 and limited health data for children ages 12–17, according to the news release.

Service members and veterans who are planning to file a claim with the Department of Veterans Affairs will not be affected by the decommissioning of the Tricare Online patient portal, as providers will still have access to patients’ complete health records, according to the news release.

After April 1, patients can request a physical copy of their health records from the records management office at their military hospital or clinic.

“Your medical history is a valuable resource for managing your health, and saving your records now ensures you have access if you need it,” Farrill said in the release.

For more information or to download your health records, click [here](#).



As Tricare beneficiaries download legacy health records, parents can view complete health data for children under 12 and limited health data for children ages 12–17, according to the Defense Health Agency. (ARMY NATIONAL GUARD/PFC. KAMERON SPENCER)



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Mingus

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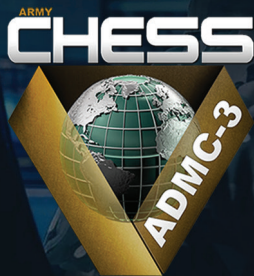
graphic to colleges and private industry in addition to the traditional high school recruiting.

The recruiting enterprise updated its training programs; added two new recruiter MOSs, including a new warrant officer recruiting specialty; expanded the Future Soldier Preparatory Course, which helps recruits meet the service's academic or physical requirements; developed the GoRecruit mobile application; restructured Army Recruiting Command by incorporating the Army Enterprise Marketing Office; and stood up two regional recruiting commands that oversee the five recruiting brigades responsible for enlisting new recruits.

"All those things that we've been working on for the last 18 to 24 months, we believe are coming to fruition this year," Mingus said.



Army Vice Chief of Staff Gen. James Mingus greets new Army recruits in the military entrance processing station at Fort Gregg-Adams, Virginia. (U.S. ARMY/JEFFERSON WOLFE)



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Operation Deploy Your Dress, AUSA host pop-up event

As a service member's spouse, I've experienced firsthand the unique challenges and opportunities that military families face and understand the importance of organizations that seek to improve quality of life for soldiers and their families.

One of those groups is Operation Deploy Your Dress, which provides gently used formal wear to service members or their family members to offset the cost of attending formal military functions. These events, which include balls, galas and dining-ins, are crucial for maintaining military traditions and fostering camaraderie within the military community.

That's why I am excited to share that the Association of the U.S. Army is once again hosting an Operation

Family Readiness

Deploy Your Dress pop-up event. This year's event will be on April 26 at

AUSA headquarters in Arlington, Virginia. This is the eighth year that AUSA's Family Readiness directorate has partnered with Operation Deploy Your Dress to host the event.

This pop-up represents more than just a gathering; it celebrates community, resilience and patriotism. This year, we aim to beat our record from last year of "deploying" 824 dresses.

Operation Deploy Your Dress currently has 15 brick-and-mortar shops at Army installations worldwide, many of which work closely with AUSA chapters. This relationship is fundamental to the association's mission of fostering community through volunteerism. The shops are run by military spouse volunteers, providing a unique opportunity for spouses to gain valuable work experience while contributing to their community.

Cultivating and continuing our military traditions is about honoring the history, values and sacrifices of those who serve. These traditions foster a sense of belonging and continuity, connecting current service



Thea Green, left, AUSA's deputy director of Family Readiness, and Family Readiness program manager Cindy Risch hold dresses donated for the Operation Deploy Your Dress pop-up event, scheduled for April 26 at AUSA headquarters. (AUSA PHOTO)

members and families with those who came before them. Operation Deploy Your Dress and AUSA Family Readiness are proud to help maintain these cherished traditions by ensuring that all families can participate, regardless of financial constraints.



Yvonne Coombes, left, co-founder of Operation Deploy Your Dress, AUSA mascot Cpl. M. Power and Holly Dailey, the association's Family Readiness director, prepare for the 2024 pop-up event at the Military Women's Memorial in Virginia. (OPERATION DEPLOY YOUR DRESS PHOTO)

Our goals also extend beyond the military community. By bridging the military and civilian worlds, AUSA and Operation Deploy Your Dress events offer a tangible way for the public to show their appreciation for the service and sacrifice of military members and their families. Every dress donated, every hour volunteered and every smile shared helps strengthen the bonds that unite us all.

As we prepare for the pop-up event, we are confident that we will surpass our goal and continue to make a meaningful impact on the lives of military families thanks to the support of our incredible volunteers, generous donors and the wider community.

Join us in April at AUSA headquarters to participate in this inspiring mission. Together, we can make a difference—one dress at a time.

To learn more and see where you can drop off your gently used dresses, click [here](#).

Cindy Risch is AUSA's Family Readiness program manager.

Eagle Chapters

The following chapters attained Eagle status for February by showing positive membership growth. The number of consecutive months of growth since July 1 is shown in parentheses.

Central Texas (8)	St. Louis Gateway (7)	Texas Capital Area (6)
Chattahoochee Valley-Fort Moore (8)	Suncoast (7)	Tucson-Goyette (6)
First In Battle (8)	Sunshine (7)	Utah (6)
Fort Campbell (8)	Thunderbird (7)	COL Edward Cross (5)
Fort Riley-Central Kansas (8)	Arizona Territorial (6)	Last Frontier (5)
Houston Metroplex (8)	Arsenal of Democracy (6)	Mediterranean (5)
Pikes Peak (8)	Big Bend (6)	Silicon Valley (5)
Puerto Rico (8)	Cowboy (6)	Space Coast (5)
San Diego (8)	CSM James M. McDonald-Keystone (6)	White Sands Missile Range (5)
Alamo (7)		Carlisle Barracks-Cumberland Valley (4)
Arkansas (7)	Dix (6)	
Columbia River (7)	First Militia (6)	Fort Liberty (4)
Crossroads of America (7)	Florida Gulf Stream (6)	GEN William C. Westmoreland (4)
Delaware (7)	Fort Jackson-Palmetto State (6)	Mid-Palatinate (4)
Denver Centennial (7)	Fort Pitt (6)	Polar Bear (4)
Fort Sheridan-Chicago (7)	Greater Los Angeles (6)	United Arab Emirates (4)
Gem State (7)	Greater Philadelphia (Penn & Franklin) (6)	Fort Novosel-Wiregrass (3)
Greater Atlanta (7)		GEN Joseph W. Stilwell (3)
Joshua Chamberlain (7)	Hawaii (6)	Guam (3)
Las Vegas-John C. Fremont (7)	Korea (6)	MG Robert B. McCoy (3)
Marne (7)	Minutemen (6)	Hellenic (2)
Milwaukee (7)	New Orleans (6)	
North Texas-Audie Murphy (7)	Rock Island Arsenal (6)	
PFC William Kenzo Nakamura (7)	San Francisco (6)	
Redstone-Huntsville (7)	SGM Jon Cavaiani (6)	



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