



Army Undersecretary Gabe Camarillo, right, speaks Wednesday with retired Gen. Bob Brown, AUSA president and CEO, during an event at the association's headquarters. (AUSA PHOTO)

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Supplemental funding 'critical' for Army

The Army faces "devastating" effects if the \$95 billion supplemental spending bill pending before Congress isn't passed, Army Undersecretary Gabe Camarillo said.

Speaking Wednesday at a breakfast hosted by the Association of the U.S. Army as part of its Coffee Series, Camarillo explained that since the Oct. 1 start of fiscal year 2024, the Army has been paying for operations including support for NATO missions and deployments that previously had been paid for with supplemental funding.

"We have been cash-flowing a lot of those costs with our own internal Army funding," Camarillo said, adding that the amount of cash outlay so far is about \$800 million. "We need that supplemental to reimburse us,

because that's essentially operations funds that we cannot use for other things like exercises that we had planned in Europe and the Pacific."

The \$95 billion supplemental spending bill includes about \$60 billion in military aid for Ukraine as well as aid for Israel and Taiwan, the Associated Press reported.

The Army was further challenged fiscally as it spent the first five months of the fiscal year operating under a continuing resolution, stop-gap funding that keeps spending at the previous year's levels and prohibits new starts to programs. Congress passed and President Joe Biden signed the fiscal 2024 appropriations in late March.

Camarillo said that among the areas affected by the unpredictable funding are capabilities that protect

soldiers and allow them to perform their missions, such as counter-unmanned aerial systems interceptors.

"There was on the order of 200 Coyote interceptors in the base [fiscal] 2024 budget that we really could have used those procurement dollars to buy them sooner," Camarillo said, adding that the money to purchase the interceptors arrived just after the fiscal 2024 appropriations bill was passed by Congress on March 23.

Investments in infrastructure and housing for soldiers also are affected, he said, explaining that a lack of money means that work to replace or upgrade barracks has not begun. Additionally, the delays likely will "cost us more money to complete those projects" because of a rise in labor and

See **Camarillo**, Page 5

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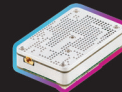
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WWII ‘Ghost Army’ receives Congressional Gold Medal

During a ceremony on Capitol Hill, three surviving members of the “Ghost Army,” a special unit that used visual, sonic and radio deception against German forces during World War II, were presented with the Congressional Gold Medal.

Bernard Bluestein, John Christman and Seymour Nussenbaum are among just seven surviving members of the Army’s 23rd Headquarters Special Troops, according to The Ghost Army Legacy Project, a nonprofit dedicated to honoring the soldiers who served in the unit.

Bluestein and Nussenbaum served in the visual deception unit, the 63rd Engineer Camouflage Battalion, and are now both 100 years old, according to the nonprofit. Christman, 99, was a demolition specialist in the 406th Engineer Combat Company.

“I’m very proud and happy to be here to receive this honor,” Bluestein said during the March 21 ceremony.

It’s been 80 years since the Ghost Army landed in France, said Ricky



Surviving members of the Army’s 23rd Headquarters Special Troops—known as the ‘Ghost Army’ for their use of visual, sonic and radio deception against German forces during World War II—receive the Congressional Gold Medal. (U.S. ARMY/SGT. DAVID RESNICK)

Beyer, president of The Ghost Army Legacy Project, which spearheaded the nine-year effort to secure the Congressional Gold Medal for the soldiers. “This is a day that’s been a long time coming,” Beyer said.

Army Secretary Christine Wormuth said the soldiers’ actions helped change the course of World War II. “The Ghost Army were master storytellers. Many of the techniques you all pioneered can still be found on the battlefield today,” she said. “Your story continues to inspire thousands of men and women in our Army today.”

The Congressional Gold Medal is the “highest expression of national appreciation,” and it is given “for distinguished achievements and contributions by individuals or institutions,” according to a Senate website.

The 23rd Headquarters Special Troops was activated in January 1944 with the sole mission of deceiving German forces during World War II, according to the Army. Nicknamed the Ghost Army, the soldiers were “a carefully selected group of artists, engineers, professional soldiers, and draftees,” and they were the first mobile, multimedia, tactical deception unit in U.S. Army history, according

to the National World War II Museum.

To mislead the enemy, they used inflatable tanks and artillery, sent false radio transmissions, and blasted audio recordings of troop movement and construction to create phantom forces, according to the Army. “Armed with nothing heavier than .50 caliber machine guns, the 23rd took part in 22 large-scale deceptions in Europe from Normandy to the Rhine River,” according to the National World War II Museum.

The unit of about 1,100 soldiers, commanded by Col. Harry Reeder, was capable of simulating two divisions—about 30,000 troops, according to the museum.

“The United States is eternally grateful to the soldiers of the 23d Headquarters Special Troops and [its sister unit] the 3133d Signal Service Company for their proficient use of innovative tactics during World War II, which saved lives and made significant contributions to the defeat of the Axis powers,” according to the Ghost Army Congressional Gold Medal Act.

“Rarely, if ever, has there been a group of such a few men which had so great an influence on the outcome of a major military campaign,” the act says.

ARMY magazine April issue



AUSA Basic Members can now view a selection of articles from the April issue of *ARMY* magazine. To read the articles, [click here](#).

George pushes Army to adapt to new technology, transform on the move

Dominance on the future battlefield will depend on the Army's ability to quickly adapt to new technology and transform while on the move, Army Chief of Staff Gen. Randy George said.

In remarks during a virtual event hosted by Defense One, George cited the importance of quickly putting new equipment into the hands of soldiers, including some who are deploying, so that the Army and its industry partners can adjust equipment and technologies based on their feedback.

He pointed to the value of Project Convergence, a joint and multinational experimentation event that took place in March at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin and the Marine Corps' Camp Pendleton, both in California, as a proving ground for many of the concepts being tested by soldiers.

"Technology is moving really fast, and Project Convergence kind of gave us an opportunity to see just how we could do that," George said at the March 22 Defense One event.

What he saw during Project Convergence at the National Training Center, George said, "reinforced what we're looking at as far as transforming in contact, that we actually are going to take a unit, put these systems inside the units and then let them operate it. We're going to get our best innovation from our soldiers working with these developers."

Some systems being used now, he said, require soldiers to attend a weeklong course to learn how to operate, while other systems are so intuitive that soldiers are learning them on the fly.

George offered some examples, such as the modular Ghost unmanned aerial system that a soldier was able to "master" in one day, and a tablet-like command-and-control system that a platoon leader learned



Army Chief of Staff Gen. Randy George, left, receives a demonstration of a next-generation command and control system from a 1st Infantry Division officer March 18 during Project Convergence at Fort Irwin, California. (U.S. ARMY/SGT. BRAHIM DOUGLAS)

how to operate "by playing around with it for a couple of hours." A soldier operating another piece of equipment suggested it would be better with a text box, and a correction "was made overnight," George said.

The capabilities of ground and aerial robotics also were demonstrated at Project Convergence. "We've all seen how the battlefield is changing," George said. "We know that you can't be having these big command-and-control nodes that are out there. We know that machines can do a lot of things much more effectively and much cheaper, and we're going to have to incorporate them into our formations."

Robotics will be "infused into" some brigades that have been selected to "transform in contact," and a determination will be made about "what needs to happen at each level," George said. "We all talk a lot about incremental improvement, and I think that that's what we're looking at. Obviously, some of the higher end systems may take a little bit longer."

George said the Army wants to "lighten the load, have less complex, more intuitive formations, a lower signature, and we saw all of that at the National Training Center."

AUSAExtra

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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

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Camarillo

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construction costs, Camarillo said.

“It’s easy to talk about it as aggregate numbers or processes, but if you’re a soldier facing the threat of a small [unmanned aerial vehicle] system that’s lethal or if you’re living in a barracks that is substandard, these are very real daily things to you,” he said.

The cash-flow crunch affects operations at the unit level as well as procurement of critical munitions, Camarillo said. This includes funding for 155 mm artillery shells, which the Army aims “to be able to produce ... at a rate of 100,000 rounds per month by the end of 2025,” he said.

Without the funding, he said, those procurements cannot happen, and that includes investment in facilities such as the Scranton Army Ammunition Plant, Pennsylvania, and the Holston Army Ammunition Plant,



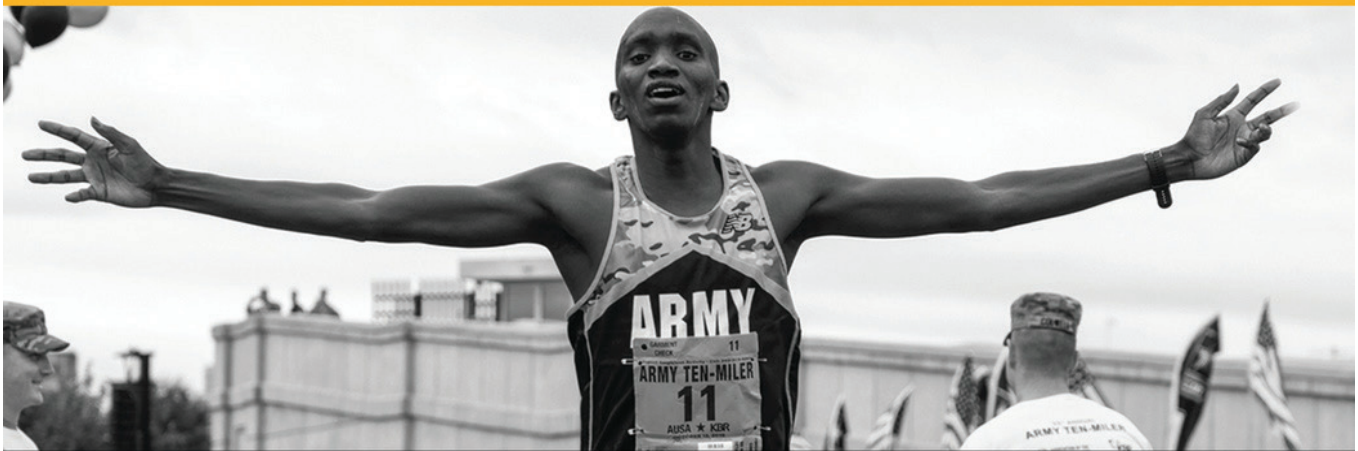
A soldier assigned to the 2nd Cavalry Regiment carries a 155 mm artillery shell during a live-fire exercise at Grafenwoehr Training Area, Germany. (U.S. ARMY PHOTO)

Tennessee. The supplemental is “vital to the industrial base,” it generates jobs in the U.S., and it supports Ukraine, reflecting an ongoing commitment, he said.

“The need to pass the supplemental

is absolutely critical, not just because we’re supporting Ukraine in its conflict against Russia,” Camarillo said. “Not passing the supplemental would have devastating effects on the United States Army.”

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Congress begins work on fiscal 2025 defense funding

Action on Capitol Hill resumes next week when both chambers of Congress return from recess.

The good news is the fiscal year 2024 appropriations bills were enacted before the break, preventing a destructive government shutdown and funding the federal government until Sept. 30.

As part of its advocacy outreach with lawmakers, the Association of the U.S. Army partnered with the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States,

Government Affairs

the Global Special Operations Forces Foundation, the National Guard

Association of the United States and the U.S. Army Warrant Officers Association in sending a letter to the top four leaders of the Senate and the House of Representatives urging passage of the fiscal 2024 appropriations. You can read the letter [here](#).

The fiscal 2025 appropriations process is now in full swing as congressional committees begin hear-



Members of AUSA's Government Affairs team participate in an event on Capitol Hill to raise support for legislation to recognize and honor Army 'dustoff crews' of the Vietnam War with the Congressional Gold Medal. (AUSA/JOHN NOBREGA)

ings and review the administration's fiscal 2025 budget request. You can view highlights of the request for the Army [here](#) and [here](#).

Timely and sufficient appropriations and passage of the National Defense Authorization Act remain AUSA's top advocacy recommendations to Congress.

The association's Government Af-

fairs directorate also participated in an event on Capitol Hill highlighting the service and heroism of U.S. Army air ambulance crews that operated in southeast Asia during the Vietnam War. The helicopter crews are credited with the evacuation of about 900,000 people—American troops and Vietnamese and allied forces—from 1962 to 1973.

AUSA supports legislation to award these soldiers, known as "dustoff crews," the Congressional Gold Medal.

The bipartisan and bicameral legislation, known as the Dustoff Crews of the Vietnam War Congressional Gold Medal Act, is led in the Senate by Sen. John Cornyn of Texas and Rep. Steve Kilmer of Washington in the House of Representatives.

You can help build momentum for the legislation honoring dustoff crews and passage of the National Defense Authorization Act and appropriations bills by contacting your representatives and senators.

We will continue to monitor these and other developments closely as we advocate for the Total Army with Congress.

Mark Haaland is AUSA's Government Affairs director.

Mingus speaks to Army fellows at AUSA



Army Vice Chief of Staff Gen. James Mingus addresses approximately 50 Army fellows Monday during a luncheon hosted at AUSA headquarters. (AUSA PHOTO)

AUSA member savings include car rentals, hotel stays

Many members of the Association of the U.S. Army request membership cards or numbers to access the association's many benefit programs, but you don't need either.

While you can't just walk into a retail outlet and show them your AUSA membership card for your discount, as AUSA strikes agreements with a retailer's corporate headquarters, we have tried to make it easy for members to access their savings through a special landing page—www.ausa.org/savings.

Just click on the logos of our affinity partners on this page to get right to your savings. In some cases, your member discount will automatically apply. If a promo code is needed, it is shown in the brief description under the company's logo on the savings page.

There are many partners, so to narrow down what you're looking for, choose a category at the top such as business/electronics, education, entertainment, financial/insurance, health/wellness, shopping/gifts or travel.

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At Avis and Budget, combine one of the additional coupons shown on their landing pages for even greater savings. For Alamo, Enterprise and National—which are all owned by Enterprise—you'll find a widget that will display member pricing for all three brands if a car is available. Hertz also will automatically show member pricing.

If you want to add the AUSA member discount codes to an existing premiere account with these companies, use:

- Avis: G242800.
- Budget: X741700. To use the ad-



When you are making travel plans, make sure to search AUSA's member benefits landing page to access discounts for car rentals, hotels and more. (U.S. ARMY PHOTO)

ditional coupon codes, you'll need to go to the savings page because they change seasonally.

- Hertz: 83086.
- Alamo, Enterprise and National: 6020136.

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For hotel discounts, there are three options.

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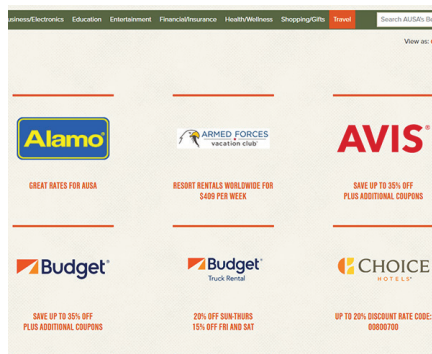
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The Armed Forces Vacation Club is available to all AUSA members, regardless of military service. The original program—called R&R—provides weeklong resort stays for just \$409 a week. That price might sound unbelievable, but search the R&R Resort Page and see for yourself.

There are over 200,000 resort accommodations in more than 100 countries with a range of unit sizes, from studio to three bedrooms. Vacation rentals are priced per unit, not per person, and typically sleep two to eight people.

This program is free to AUSA members, but you may also choose to join AFVC's premium program for \$119, which provides additional benefits such as greater hotel discounts.

Susan Rubel is AUSA's Association and Affinity Partnerships director.



AUSA members can click on the logos of the association's affinity partners on the special landing page to get right to the organization's discounts. (AUSA GRAPHIC)

Chapter award honors outstanding Fisher House team

The Association of the U.S. Army's Coastal South Carolina chapter recently presented its quarterly Outstanding Service Award to the Fisher House Charleston team for the outstanding service it provides to families of veterans and service members.

Retired Lt. Col. Larry Dandridge, the chapter's vice president for veterans' affairs, presented the award and letters of commendation and appreciation to Fisher House Charleston

Coastal South Carolina

manager Erik Zielinski, assistant manager Charity Anderson and

housekeeping supervisor Percy Jones during a Fisher House public viewing event sponsored by the Ralph H. Johnson Veterans Affairs Medical Center and the Friends of Fisher House Charleston.

"The award plaque and commendations mention that the Fisher House Charleston team has provided outstanding service to the veterans and families staying at the house for the fourth quarter of 2023," Dandridge said. "However, it is well known that the facility has provided extraordinary services to its guests since accepting its first guests in January 2018."

The Fisher House is the region's "home away from home" for families of those receiving care at the VA medical center, Dandridge said. In addition to five-star accommodations, including 16 private suites, a library, laundry facilities and free transportation to and from the medical center, the Fisher House provides groceries and amenity items "so that families can focus on their hero while they receive treatment," he said.

In 2023, Fisher House Charleston maintained the third-highest occupancy in the VA system out of 45 other medical centers, according to the award citation. It also was in the top two VA locations for total families accommodated and served, with



Retired Lt. Col. Larry Dandridge, left, vice president for veterans' affairs with AUSA's Coastal South Carolina chapter, presents the chapter's Outstanding Service Award to Fisher House Charleston manager Erik Zielinski. (AUSA PHOTO)

1,246 families, the citation says.

The dramatic increase in occupancy and referrals in 2023 was driven by several process improvements and increased community outreach—a testament to the dedication and drive of Zielinski and his team. "The AUSA chapter award recognized the Fisher House Charleston's three leaders but also the other employees and hundreds of volunteers who have made it the great lodge that it is," Dandridge said.



Fisher House Charleston is the region's home away from home for families of those receiving care at the VA medical center. (FISHER HOUSE PHOTO)

The Fisher House also has implemented a dashboard admissions report that was recently recognized as a national best practice, Dandridge said.

The report will be accessible to all VA sites and will save an estimated \$5 million in annual out-of-pocket lodging expenses for veterans and families nationwide.

Fisher House Charleston has been full for the past four months, and the demand for free lodging has resulted in the need for a second location in Charleston, Dandridge said.

"The VA, the Friends of Fisher House Charleston, the AUSA Coastal SC chapter and many veterans support organizations are working on getting a second Fisher House built in Charleston to support the rapidly growing need for free housing for the families of veterans receiving care at the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center," he said.

For more information about Fisher House Charleston, [click here](#).

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