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APRIL 13, 2023

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Army Undersecretary Gabe Camarillo addresses recruiting, modernization and other challenges during a Coffee Series event at AUSA headquarters in Arlington, Virginia. (AUSA PHOTO)

Recruiting tops list of Army challenges

An almost flat 2024 Army budget will not prevent considerable progress in critical initiatives like improving recruiting and transforming capabilities, Army Undersecretary Gabe Camarillo said Tuesday.

Speaking at an Association of the U.S. Army Coffee Series event, Camarillo talked about the challenge of introducing the Army as an “enduring employer of choice,” as well as about overdue efforts to improve installations, infrastructure and housing, and expanding warfighting capabilities, an area where much progress is being made.

Improving living and working conditions was not a high priority during the two decades the Army was fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan. This

work is overdue, and it’s a critical priority as a small part of the larger recruiting challenge because it will help attract and retain soldiers and their families, Camarillo said.

The Army’s work in this area is part of much larger marketing and recruiting efforts, he said. “There is no part of the Army that isn’t actively engaged in confronting the recruiting challenge,” Camarillo said.

Part of the focus is collaborating with school districts, he said, and trying to stress the opportunities available in the Army. “The reality is you can do virtually anything in the Army, regardless of what your career aspirations are. We give you an opportunity to accelerate your career in a variety of areas,” he said, adding that the Army hopes to make

this a special emphasis to service-aged youth, their families, educators and mentors.

“It is hard to tell how it is going to land, but the important thing is we are doing everything we can,” Camarillo said about the Army’s recruiting initiatives. “This is not a one-year or two-year challenge,” he said, nor is it an Army-only issue, noting that the other services face similar problems.

The future force is the Army’s central focus, and the service is looking to field new capabilities as initiatives take shape. “We are really excited about it,” Camarillo said.

The Army’s eyes are also on the future, looking at how it’s organized, warfighting concepts and coopera-

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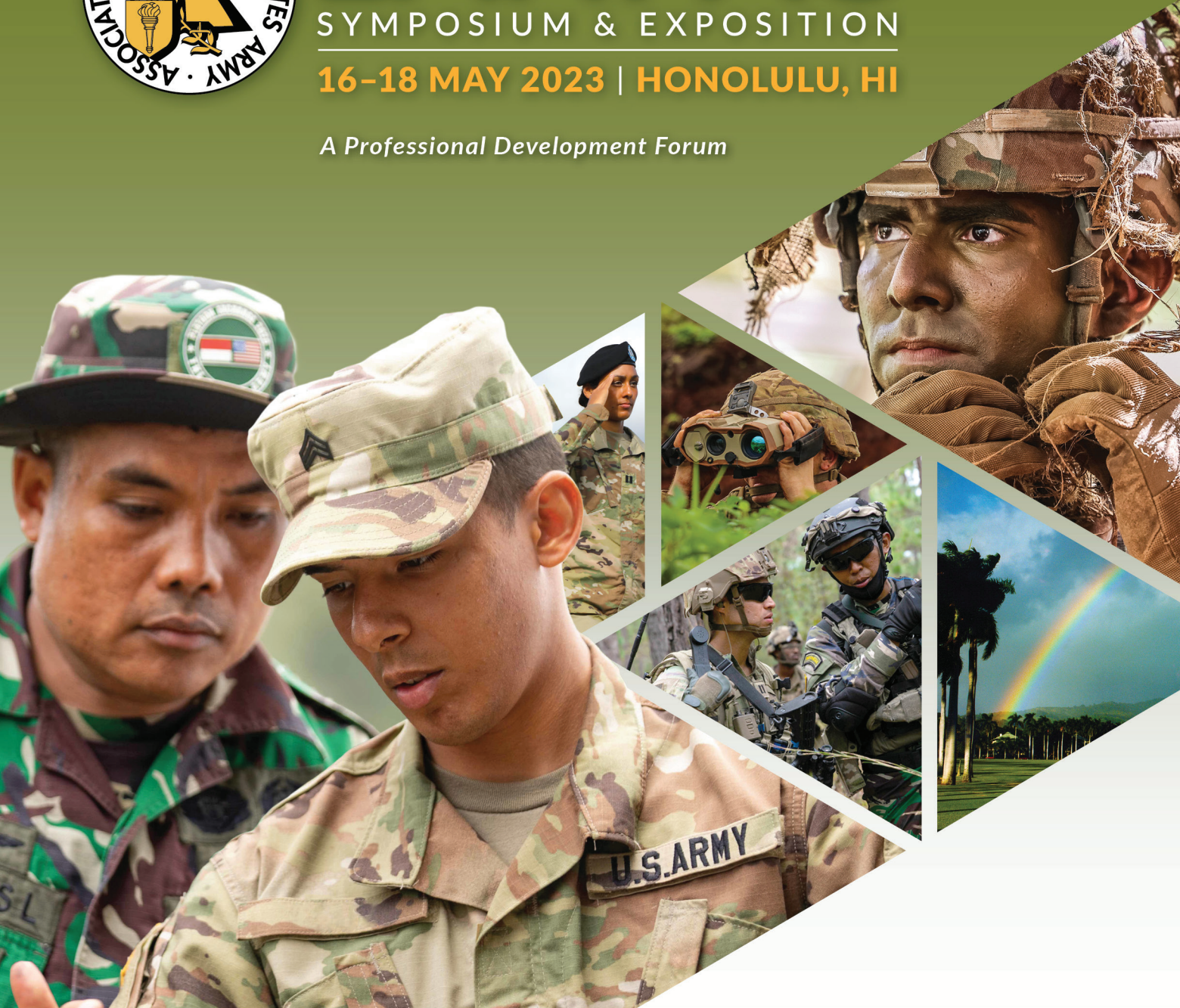


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Survey: Military families most worried about finances, jobs

Financial pressures, spouse employment and the impact of military service on family life were among the top concerns for military families, a new survey found.

The 13th annual Military Family Lifestyle Survey, published in late March by Blue Star Families, uses data collected between May and July 2022 and includes research from more than 9,300 respondents from active-duty, National Guard and Reserve service members, veterans and their families.

For many families, financial pressures such as increasing housing and food prices were causing them to weigh the costs and benefits of military service, the survey says.

Though almost three-quarters of active-duty family respondents reported their family financial situation as “doing OK” or “living comfortably,” military families experience additional financial considerations compared to their civilian counterparts, the survey says.

“Active-duty military families, who usually have fixed family income with additional costs related to their military lifestyle (e.g., PCS costs, travel costs, unreimbursed housing costs related to relocation), end up paying greater proportions of their disposable income to basic necessities,” the survey found. “Just 1 in 7 active-duty family respondents re-



Sgt. Franklin Walker, of the 1st Cavalry Division, and his family participate in a family day event March 25 at Fort Hood, Texas. (U.S. ARMY/SGT. ELLIOT ALAGUEZIAN)

port that their family currently has no financial stress.”

Rising housing costs are a big challenge. “Houses are too far away, rent is much too high, not enough bedrooms, unsafe areas, need to have big deposits, needed pet friendly housing, we have 5 children, so some didn’t want to rent to us,” one active-duty Army spouse said in the survey.

Spouse employment is another challenge. It is “the top concern for active-duty spouse respondents for the sixth consecutive year, and one of the top five concerns for active-duty service member respondents,” according to the survey.

Some Army spouses opted for self-employment or operating their own business, particularly as they tried to balance a career with child care and the expectations of military life. “I like interacting with my customers on a personal level, and when I initially began my business, I needed employment that I could juggle around our kids’ schedules,” one Army spouse said.

Families also worried about balancing military service with family life, the survey found, and issues such as financial security and spouse employment are “significantly related to relationship satisfaction.”

“Active-duty spouse respondents who were employed, who were sometimes or always able to find child care that meet their needs, and those who were ‘living comfortably’ or ‘doing OK’ financially reported significantly higher relationship satisfaction” than those who could not find work or child care and were not financially stable, according to the survey.

Strong relationships not only contribute to service member readiness, but they are a protective factor against negative mental health outcomes.

“Current research shows that greater relationship satisfaction can decrease PTSD symptoms, depressive symptoms, comorbidity with hazardous drinking, and overall risk for suicide,” the report found.

Moving forward, the report suggests building resilience among military families through adapting policies that affect families’ financial stability and providing support for service members and their families.

“Building resilience among military families can create a stronger, more cohesive military community that is better equipped to meet the needs of its members and the nation as a whole,” the report found.

Read the full report here.

Camarillo

From Page 1

tion throughout the joint force. Camarillo said he expects these decisions will require adaptation over time, particularly as technologies and threats evolve.

However, the Army can’t do everything at once because budgets are limited. “I think the Army always has to make trade-offs and choices,” Camarillo said. “We put together the best budget that we can, emphasizing the priorities we have.”

Army will have to ‘fight our way’ to sustain troops on future battlefield



Soldiers with the 25th Infantry Division sling load an M777 howitzer to a CH-47 Chinook helicopter on Pohakuloa Training Grounds, Hawaii. (U.S. ARMY/PFC. MARIAH AGUILAR)

With its focus on contested logistics, a new cross-functional team will get after a critical capability for the Army, senior leaders said.

“We can’t do what we do without logistics,” Army Chief of Staff Gen. James McConville told lawmakers on the Senate Armed Services Committee during a March 30 hearing on the service’s fiscal 2024 budget request. “We’re seeing it play out in Ukraine.”

Creation of the new cross-functional team was announced March 29 by Gen. James Rainey, commander of Army Futures Command, at the Association of the U.S. Army’s Global Force Symposium and Exposition. The team, the Army’s ninth, is being stood up in partnership with Army Materiel Command, and it will be based in Huntsville, Alabama.

The Army’s ability to sustain the force under pressure will be critical on the future battlefield, leaders said. For two decades, the Army was able to move supplies, fuel and other critical equipment to support operations in Iraq and Afghanistan without any type of enemy contact, McConville said.

In the future, “we know that’s not

going to be the case,” McConville said. “It’s not going to be the case in the Pacific if we have to fight in the Pacific.”

One critical capability the Army is building is its pre-positioned stocks, McConville said. “We can’t assume we’re going to be able to just sail across the seas safely,” he said. “So, we want to position equipment and ammunition in the theater. We need to disperse it. We need to protect it.”

Tanks, artillery pieces and aircraft become “expensive paperweights” without fuel, parts and ammunition, he said. “All that is part of what this contested logistics is about,” he said.

The Army also expects cyberattacks as it tries to move equipment and supplies. “We’re going to have to protect our systems, ... and we’re going to have to basically fight our way across,” McConville said.

To start filling some gaps, particularly in the Indo-Pacific, the Army’s 2024 budget request includes funding for watercraft and pre-positioned stocks, McConville said. “These weapon systems, without fuel, without parts, without bullets, do not perform their duties, so we’re working that very hard, and we think it’s very important,” he said.

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AUSA paper urges ‘realist’ perspective on armed conflict

The future of armed conflict is best understood through the lens of a conflict realist, according to a new paper published by the Association of the U.S. Army.

In “The War for the Soul of Military Thought: Futurists, Traditionalists, Institutionalists and Conflict Realists,” author Lt. Col. Amos Fox argues that mainstream schools of thought regarding war and warfare oversimplify the reality of armed conflict.

“The primary problem with Futurists, Traditionalists and Institutionalists is that they represent modern and future war through the gilded lens of aspiration, focusing on how armed conflict should be, instead of viewing war and warfare through the blood-red lens of how things actually are—and arguably, how armed conflict will be in the future,” he writes.

Fox, who is a doctoral candidate at

the University of Reading in the U.K. and a graduate of the Army’s School of Advanced Military Studies, defines conflict realism as a school of thought that “emphasizes the importance of causal mechanisms in armed conflict rather than emphasizing narrative, procurement strategies and centuries-old myths.”

One of the tenets of conflict realists is an emphasis on “suboptimized outcomes,” where competing factors during conflict mean that goals often fall short during armed conflict.

Conflict realists assert that “future wars will be long, bloody and destructive affairs of attrition” and “decidedly urban,” Fox writes. “From the Bosnian War’s Siege of Sarajevo to the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian War’s Siege of Mariupol, urban operations sit atop modern armed conflict,” he writes.

The conflict realism school of thought is useful when analyzing states that do not comply with many international norms, Fox writes. “To get ahead of the shock associated with the actions of states like Russia—states that seemingly violate nearly all the rules of the game of the rules-based international order—Western militaries must embrace Conflict Realism as a viable school of thought when examining future armed conflict,” he writes.

The conflict realist perspective must be taken into consideration in the study of armed conflict, Fox writes. “Policymakers, academics and theorists must accept the fact that Conflict Realism, despite its comparatively grotesque assessments and forecasts, is a force of nature that must be accounted for,” he writes.

Read the paper here.



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Spotlight on AUSA Association Partner: AFBA

The Armed Forces Benefit Association promotes the welfare of service members, first responders, government employees and contractors and their families by providing access to life insurance and other benefits.

The association was established in 1947 in the basement of the Pentagon with the support of General of the Army Dwight Eisenhower to ease the strain on military members and their families. “At the time, life insurance that would pay a death benefit if the member was killed in combat was not available,” according to the organization’s website.

Today, AFBA death benefits, funded by life insurance underwritten by 5Star Life Insurance Company, provides 24/7 coverage without war or terrorism exclusions, coverage on and off duty with no hazardous, line of



duty or occupational restrictions, and optional spouse and child coverage.

The association has paid nearly \$2 billion in death benefits since its inception, according to its website.

Additionally, the association offers the Charles C. Blanton AFBA Family Survivor College Scholarship for families of eligible fallen members.

Surviving spouses and children are eligible for \$10,000 a year, up to a total maximum benefit for the entire family of \$40,000 toward an undergraduate degree.

“While we have grown considerably from our first offices in the basement of the Pentagon, we will never be too large to forget that we are here to serve with integrity by offering flexible, customized insurance solutions,” the association’s website says.

For more information, please visit <https://afba.com/>.

If your association is interested in partnering with AUSA, contact Susan Rubel at srubel@ausa.org.

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Competitions put soldiers' skills, endurance to the test

Across our Army, something is brewing—and it's more than the traditional morning cup of Joe.

Now that winter is behind us and we're off and running in 2023, soldiers across the force are gearing up to compete for the right to be called the Army's top NCO, soldier and squad of the year.

Each October at the Association of the U.S. Army's Annual Meeting and Exposition in Washington, D.C., the

NCO & Soldier Programs

Army has recognized the winners of the Best Warrior Competition.

This tradition began in 2002, when then-Army Chief of Staff Gen. Eric Shinseki and Sgt. Maj. of the Army Jack Tilley made the decision to culminate all the NCO and Soldier of the Year competitions across the Army at the national level.

In 2021, as part of the "This is my Squad" initiative, Sgt. Maj. of the Army Michael Grinston announced the creation of the annual Best Squad Competition to recognize the best squad from across the Army.

During the 2022 AUSA Annual Meeting, the first-ever Best Squad was recognized. Additionally, a top NCO and soldier were selected from the larger group of competitors.

The trek to be named top NCO, soldier or squad lasts about eight months. Company-level units choose their best squads early in the year. From there, squads participate in successive competitions from the battalion level up to major Army command.

Winners will be invited to compete in the Armywide Best Squad Competition, scheduled this year for September at Fort Stewart, Georgia.

To get a firsthand look at this year's competition, AUSA's NCO and Soldier Programs team flew to Camp Rilea Armed Forces Training Center in Oregon. Nestled in the beautiful northwestern Pacific coastline, Camp



Cpl. Ashton Dieli low crawls on the obstacle course during the 2023 Oregon National Guard Best Warrior Competition at Camp Rilea. (U.S. ARMY/STAFF SGT. CORY GROGAN)

Rilea served as the location of the 2023 Oregon National Guard Best Warrior Competition.

Oregon National Guard soldiers from across the state assembled in mid-March to see who would come out on top and get a chance to move on to Fort Stewart in September.

"The Oregon National Guard's annual Best Warrior Competition tests the military skills, physical strength and endurance of the top soldiers and noncommissioned officers across the

state," said Command Sgt. Maj. Lee Smith, senior enlisted leader for the state.

Over the course of three days, with limited sleep, competitors were treated to events including land navigation, weapons tests, an obstacle course, a ruck march, a military operations in urban terrain exercise, and much more. The culminating exercise, appropriately named "Normandy Beach," required the soldiers to conduct a beach assault and carry resupplies up the beachhead.

It was a fun but extremely demanding three days for the competitors. At the end, Sgt. John Shown was named the 2023 NCO of the Year, and Cpl. Ashton Dieli is the Soldier of the Year.

After the awards ceremony, retired Sgt. Maj. Jerry Glesmann, AUSA's Sixth Region president, joined several other retired Oregon National Guard NCOs to provide a barbecue meal for the competitors.

Good luck to Sgt. Shown and Cpl. Ashton—we hope to see you at Fort Stewart later this year.



Retired Sgt. Maj. of the Army Daniel Dailey speaks with soldiers competing in the 2023 Oregon National Guard Best Warrior Competition. (AUSA PHOTO)

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 members honor service of Vietnam veterans

Several Vietnam War-era veterans were honored March 29 during a ceremony marking the 50th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War.

The event in Saratoga Springs, New York, was sponsored by the Association of the U.S. Army's Capital District of New York chapter and the Friends of the New York State Military Museum.

During the ceremony, 34 veterans or their surviving spouses received lapel pins issued by DoD as part of the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War Commemoration, a multiyear program to thank and honor Vietnam veterans and their families for their service and sacrifice.

Capital District
of New York

This recognition is overdue, said retired Brig. Gen. Barry Hartman, the AUSA chapter's vice president.

In 2012, then-President Barack Obama signed a presidential proclamation establishing March 29 as Vietnam Veterans Day. The signing also marked the 50th anniversary of the departure of the last American troops from Vietnam, on March 29, 1973, according to DoD.

Five years later, on March 28, 2017, then-President Donald Trump signed into law the Vietnam War Veterans Recognition Act of 2017, designating every March 29 as National Vietnam War Veterans Day "to be observed in perpetuity," Hartman said.

Hartman, the Saratoga Springs event's master of ceremonies, served two tours in Vietnam as an armored cavalry troop commander and was on the last plane out of Da Nang—the next-to-last flight out of Vietnam—on March 29, 1973.

"That was 49 years ago today," Hartman said, as reported by *The Saratogian*. He noted that those who

You have become role models with your values and character. We are incredibly grateful for your service."



Retired Command Sgt. Maj. Bob Van Pelt, center, executive director of AUSA's Capital District of New York chapter, and the Rev. Charlene Robbins, a Gold Star mother, cut the cake during the Vietnam veterans' commemoration event. (AUSA PHOTO)

served in Vietnam were not properly honored and recognized for their service at the time, and the 50th anniversary commemoration is a way to welcome them home after all these years.

After receiving a pin from retired Command Sgt. Maj. Bob Van Pelt, the AUSA chapter's executive director, each veteran spoke briefly of their service and thanked the organizations for honoring them.

Richard Comstock, who was commissioned as a second lieutenant after graduating from St. Lawrence University in 1969 and served one and a half tours in Vietnam from 1971 to 1973, was one of the veterans in attendance. Because of his ability to speak Vietnamese and French, he was assigned as an adviser to the South Vietnamese Army, advising

field artillery and infantry battalions and local militia forces.

Comstock was on the last troop plane leaving Saigon. He retired in 1990 as commander of the New York National Guard's 1st Battalion, 258th Field Artillery Regiment.

Special recognition was given to Marine Corps Capt. David Wallingford, an AUSA member who was seriously wounded during his service in Vietnam.

Color guards from the Junior ROTC program at the La Salle Institute of Troy, New York, posted the American flag at the start of the ceremony, and Master Sgt. Brooke Leavitt of the New York Army National Guard sang the national anthem.

"It's an honor to be in your company this evening. Some 150,000 New Yorkers served in Vietnam," said State Assemblywoman Carrie Woerner of the 113th District. "You have become role models with your values and character. We are incredibly grateful for your service."



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