



Soldiers with the 82nd Airborne Division perform and learn ambush techniques and teamwork during training at the Lightning Academy, Hawaii. (U.S. ARMY/PFC. MARIAH AGUILAR)

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Army force structure changes coming

The Army is “largely on track” with its transformation priorities, with some restructuring of the force required to be ready to fight and win future wars, Army leaders told the Senate Appropriations defense subcommittee.

Continuing recruiting challenges make this a complicated and necessary adjustment, they said.

In their fourth and final congressional hearing focused on the Army’s current posture and the fiscal 2024 budget, Army Secretary Christine Wormuth, who testified alongside Army Chief of Staff Gen. James McConville, acknowledged that recruiting is a problem with wide implications.

“We are seeing improvements in our recruiting situation over last year,” she said at the hearing Tuesday, but the Army likely won’t meet

its recruiting target this year. The Army missed its goal last year as well, by about 15,000 recruits.

“We do not want a hollow Army,” Wormuth said. Army leaders have been reviewing potential changes in the size of units with the goal of “thinning out” some organizations. First responder units need to be fully manned. Others may not, she said.

New systems coming online in the next 10 years will need to be staffed, while other systems could be streamlined, she said. “We would like to avoid major changes,” she said, adding that she expects to have a long-range plan ready for congressional review in a few months. No final decisions are required until 2025, but planning needs to begin now, she said.

McConville said some systems will be more important than others in fu-

ture warfare, which will be part of the changes. The Army needs to remain ready to fight as the force structure adjustments are being made. “We are a ready Army, and we continue to emphasize readiness in everything we do,” said McConville, who will retire this summer.

The 2024 defense budget request pending before Congress includes \$185.5 billion for the Army, a flat or slightly declining amount. The Army has provided Congress with a separate \$1.9 billion list of unfunded priorities.

Wormuth said the budget request is enough for the current year, but future budgets must increase to cover costs for new systems. “I worry how we are going to manage the out-years,” she said, predicting that financial needs will arise in 2030 and beyond.



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Recruiting commander highlights ‘positive momentum’

Army Recruiting Command is “shooting for the stars” as it works to reintroduce service-eligible individuals to the Army, the two-star in charge said.

“We’re about to shoot for the stars in terms of where we can take the force in terms of recruiting,” said Maj. Gen. Johnny Davis, commanding general of Recruiting Command. “As we face [recruiting] challenges, we are starting to see this positive momentum.”

Speaking Tuesday during an Association of the U.S. Army Noon Report webinar, Davis said that he remains optimistic about Army recruiting efforts even though the service faces a challenging recruiting environment, stiff competition from civilian employers and a shrinking pool of eligible and interested potential recruits.

This year, the Army has set an ambitious goal to recruit 65,000 people by Sept. 30. With recruiters entering schools for the first time in two years because of the COVID-19 pandemic,



Future soldier Isantae Howard-Coleman, left, speaks with Sgt. James Wright of the 1st Infantry Division prior to taking the oath of enlistment April 18 with other recruits at the Douthitt Gunnery Complex at Fort Riley, Kansas. (U.S. ARMY/SGT. JARED SIMMONS)

they are up against an awareness and knowledge gap, Davis said.

“One of the biggest [issues] that my recruiters shared with me is this general lack of awareness and knowledge,” he said. “I think getting the recruiters back into schools is a big deal.”

The Army also has introduced several benefits to encourage young people to join. So-called “quick ship” bonuses, given to qualified recruits who ship quickly to basic training, and offering recruits the duty station of their choice have been particularly well received, Davis said.

Davis also praised the Future Soldier Preparatory Course, which helps young people meet the Army’s physical or academic standards, calling it “transformative.”

“In just two weeks, you’ll start to see a change,” he said. Nearly 5,000 people have gone through the course, he said. “Quality over quantity always. ... What we’re seeing is they enter basic training, and because of their time [in the course], they really take on leadership roles [during basic training],” Davis said.

Internally, the Army continues to

refine the way it recruits and selects soldiers to become recruiters. “We’ve changed a lot of different things in how we approach training,” Davis said.

One effort is to increase family involvement in the recruiter training process. “We want them to be allowed to be a part of the assignment process of where they go,” Davis said. “We want the families to be involved ... [and] that has been totally transformational in terms of what we’re doing for investing in our families.”

The Army also is seeing success since it reintroduced its “Be All You Can Be” marketing campaign in March, Davis said. “It connects quickly with ... not just the young generation, but with my generation and the generation that invested in me,” he said.

As the Army continues to work on recruiting, Davis urged veterans to share their stories with service-eligible individuals. “Please be the influencer and share the importance of service to this wonderful nation, service to this country,” he said. “It will be a life accelerator and change all for the better.”

ARMY magazine May issue



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

Russia-China alliance threatens US, allied interests in Europe, Cavoli warns



A soldier with the 8th Cavalry Regiment prepares a Bradley Fighting Vehicle for training April 27 during Exercise Arrow 23 at Niinisalo Training Area, Finland. (U.S. ARMY PHOTO)

The war in Ukraine is “far from over” as Russia remains a significant threat and China continues to increase its influence in several European sectors, the officer in charge of U.S. forces in Europe said.

In testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, Gen. Christopher Cavoli, commander of U.S. European Command and NATO’s supreme allied commander, said the U.S. “remains optimistic for Ukraine’s future, but this war is far from over,” because while Russia shows no sign of relenting, it is not the only problem facing the European alliance.

“The People’s Republic of China continues to increase its access and influence in our theater, and its activities pose a risk to U.S., allied and partner interests,” Cavoli said during the April 26 hearing, where he testified alongside Celeste Wallander, assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs.

Cavoli explained that China wields its power through “foreign direct investment, government-backed business ventures and loans to gain access to technology and to get control over vital European infrastructure and transportation routes.”

Russia and China also “have grown

closer together,” a friendship that has been enhanced by China’s diplomatic, political and moral support for the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which has also helped Russia at home, Cavoli said.

The alliance between Russia and China is compounded by other challenges in Europe, such as the activities of violent extremist organizations, uncontrolled migration, organized crime and the effects of climate change, Cavoli said. He assured the committee that the U.S. “trains and cooperates” with allies and partners to counter those issues as well.

Describing the China-Russia alliance as a “development of significant concern,” Cavoli said that he sees “bright spots” in Europe where leaders have taken note of the dangerous friendship and are taking “significant actions to limit the increasing influence, and malign influence where it exists, of the [People’s Republic of China] inside Europe.”

“Staying the course [that] we are on right now is very important,” Cavoli said. “We are in a position where we are moving into a period where the Ukrainians will conduct offensive operations, we have good, solid plans to continue to support them.”

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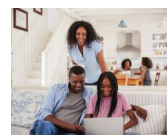
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Report: Readiness improving, logistics shortfalls remain

A Government Accountability Office look at readiness indicators found ground forces—the Army and Marine Corps—have improved while sea forces have declined.

The congressional watchdog agency looked at changes in resource readiness and mission capability rates from fiscal 2017 through fiscal 2021. Ground forces were the only area to show improvements in both categories.

That does not mean the Army was perfect. The report finds shortfalls in rail support for moving Army equipment in training for operations in environments with contested mobility. The Army and Marines also need to do more to prevent tactical vehicle accidents, the report says.

GAO investigators expected to find readiness gaps. “Nearly two decades

of conflict has degraded military readiness,” the report says. “To maintain the U.S. military’s advantage across all domains in a new security environment characterized by great-power competition, DoD is working to rebuild and restore readiness while also modernizing its forces.”

Rebuilding readiness is not simple, the report says. “DoD’s readiness rebuilding efforts are occurring in a challenging context that requires the department to make difficult decisions regarding how best to address continuing operational demands while preparing for future challenges,” it says.

The Army requires rail transportation to move about 67% of unit equipment for overseas deployments.

This is a big task. A 2020 simulation to move equipment from just one installation in support of large-scale

combat operations showed it would take 2,200 rail cars over three days. It would take 600 rail cars to move one armored brigade combat team.

Additionally, it is not clear whether all the rail tracks needed for such a big movement are in good condition, the report says. There are also concerns about whether there are enough rail crews to conduct major movements.

The report recommends the Army take a closer look at the condition of rail lines and the availability of trained rail crews.

“Without such a determination and a quantifying of the risk of any shortfalls for combat operations, the Army and DoD may not be certain that they can fully support a large-scale combat operation,” the report says.

To read the full GAO report, click here.

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Congress hears Army testimony on fiscal 2024 budget

Senior Army leaders wrapped up their posture statements on Capitol Hill this week, with lots of support from lawmakers for a bigger budget in fiscal 2024 to support the service's sweeping transformation efforts.

On Tuesday, Army Secretary Christine Wormuth and Army Chief of Staff Gen. James McConville appeared before the Senate Appropriations defense subcommittee to talk about the Army's \$185.5 billion budget request for fiscal 2024.

Government Affairs

Also on Tuesday, the Senate Armed Services readiness and management subcommittee heard from Army Vice Chief of Staff Gen. Randy George and his counterparts from the other services on the readiness of the joint force.

As Army leaders testified before House and Senate committees, lawmakers have expressed support for more funding for the service as it modernizes key equipment and prepares for large-scale combat operations and competition with countries such as China.

We will find out soon if their support will result in a bigger budget for the Army. The House Armed Services Committee will begin writing its version of the 2024 National Defense Authorization Act in May, with hopes of getting the measure on the House floor in June.

The Senate Armed Services Committee hasn't announced its plans, but the two bodies seem far away from approving funding for defense programs.

First, they'll face a challenge over raising the federal debt limit, which will include discussions about spending levels for federal agencies. A decision is needed to avoid a default on U.S. debt, with Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen telling lawmakers Monday that the U.S. could reach that point in early June.



Bryn Wollacott, left, military legislative assistant for Rep. Doug Lamborn, R-Co., receives an update on military operations from Lt. Col. Benjamin Hassell of the 4th Infantry Division during a visit to Fort Carson, Colorado. (U.S. ARMY/MAJ. JASON ELMORE)

While it does not appear defense spending will be reduced as part of the debt ceiling discussion, other programs, including those for the Department of Veterans Affairs, could be part of the talks.

There is little clarity on how the debt ceiling and appropriations topline will be resolved, and these discussions will continue to dominate Washington, D.C., in the coming months.

Another item to watch is the nomi-

nation of George, who has served as the 38th vice chief of staff since last August, to be the next Army chief of staff. Nominated on April 20, George would succeed McConville if he's confirmed by the Senate.

The Senate Armed Services Committee is responsible for first approval of nominees, but no date has been set for George to appear before the senators to answer questions.

We will monitor these and other developments closely as the Association of the U.S. Army continues advocating for the Total Army with Congress. In our meetings, we urge lawmakers to pass appropriations legislation and the NDAA in time for the new fiscal year on Oct. 1, and to support the Army's budget priorities for people programs, readiness, modernization and infrastructure.

AUSA members can help build momentum for passage of critical legislation that supports the Army by contacting your representatives and senators and encouraging them to act.

Mark Haaland is AUSA's Government Affairs director.



In meetings with Congress, AUSA is urging lawmakers to pass critical legislation in time for the new fiscal year on Oct. 1. (ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL PHOTO)

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With ChooseHealthy and Active&Fit Direct, AUSA members can save big on fitness, wellness products and more. (U.S. ARMY/SGT. 1ST CLASS JASON HULL)

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AUSA members receive an exclusive discount of 60% off digital subscriptions to *Stars and Stripes*, serving the U.S. military since World War II. (COURTESY PHOTO)

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

AUSA member recognized for service, volunteer efforts

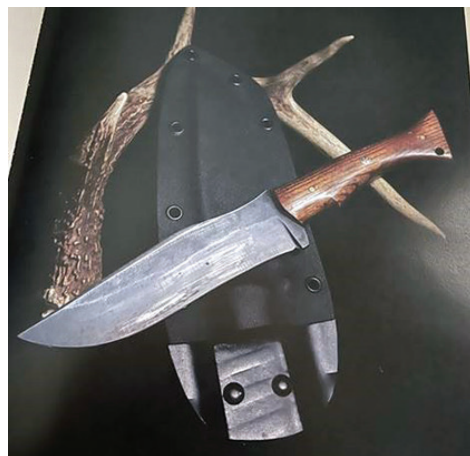
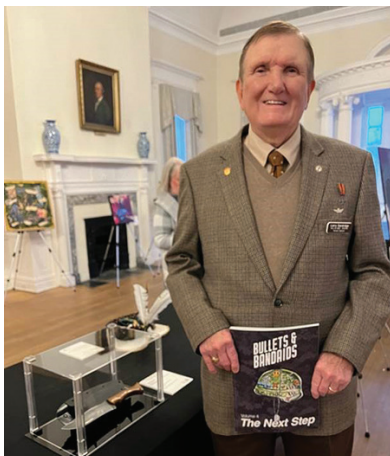
Retired Lt. Col. W. Larry Dandridge, vice president of veteran affairs for the Association of the U.S. Army's Coastal South Carolina chapter, was recognized for his military service by Joey Lynn, a blacksmith and artist who has appeared on the television show *Forged in Fire*.

Lynn captured Dandridge's combat experiences as a helicopter pilot by creating a hunter's knife called "Hunter Fighter."

"I created the knife because that is what [Dandridge] was, a hunter and fighter. The gun-metal finish was for obvious reasons, intentionally

not meant to be mirrored—unseen by the enemy—except for the cutting edge itself," Lynn said. "The mosaic pin in the handle speaks to the individuality of the man himself, and the Osage handle, like the hardened steel, speaks to the man's constitution."

The knife was exhibited at art shows throughout South Carolina, including a show in Charleston hosted by the nonprofit Bullets and Band-aids, which is dedicated to shar-



Retired Lt. Col. W. Larry Dandridge, left, vice president of veteran affairs for AUSA's Coastal South Carolina chapter, holds a copy of the latest Bullets and Band-aids book of veterans' stories at an art show featuring the 'Hunter Fighter' knife, pictured at right, which was created for Dandridge by blacksmith and artist Joey Lynn. (AUSA PHOTOS)

ing the stories of veterans and their families.

The organization also publishes a book with stories and pictures of the art created for sale at its art shows and auctions.

Ron Osso, a Vietnam veteran who serves on the board of directors for Bullets and Band-aids, interviewed Dandridge about his military service and his continued efforts as a champion of service members, veterans,

their families and AUSA.

"It is the families of our military men and women who sacrifice the most to our great nation," Dandridge said in the interview. "They are at home raising the children, taking care of the dog and working an underpaying job and worrying to death over their soldier, while we warriors are away doing what we love most, like flying helicopters and defending our buddies and country."

Chapter award honors outstanding junior ROTC cadet

The president of the Association of the U.S. Army's Texas Capital Area chapter presented the chapter's Academic & Leadership Award to junior ROTC cadet Alexandra Gonzalez Guevara in an April 20 ceremony at John Connally High School in Pflugerville, Texas.

Guevara was recognized by retired Col. Garry Patterson, the chapter president, with an award certificate and medal set, as well as a challenge coin from the chapter and a two-year AUSA membership.

"It was an honor" for Patterson to present the award to Guevara in

front of family and friends, the chapter said in a Facebook post.

Keynote remarks were provided by retired Lt. Col. Joseph Kelley, director of the school's junior ROTC program, who thanked the people and organizations present for their service and support of the cadets.

Approximately 275 people attended the event, where Guevara and roughly three dozen other cadets were recognized for their hard work and dedication.

In addition to AUSA, cadets received presentations from the VFW, the American Legion, Daughters of the American Revolution and the Purple Heart Association.



Retired Col. Garry Patterson, left, president of AUSA's Texas Capital Area chapter, presents the chapter's Academic & Leadership Award to junior ROTC cadet Alexandra Gonzalez Guevara. (AUSA PHOTO)

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