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Spc. Wilguerre Decayette with the 143rd Expeditionary Sustainment Command carries a simulated casualty on his shoulders while his teammates carry another in a sled and provide security during a Best Squad Competition at Camp Buehring, Kuwait. (U.S. ARMY/SPC. RHEMA EGGLESTON)

Operations tempo straining the force

Facing one of the most challenging recruiting environments in decades, the Army continues to operate at a high pace, with no relief in sight, the service's top enlisted soldier said.

"We have an enormous strain on soldiers," Sgt. Maj. of the Army Michael Grinston said. "We're busier now than we ever have been."

Speaking at the recent Fires Symposium in Lawton, Oklahoma, Grinston said the Army's operations tempo is a "huge concern."

"When you're short people ... and you come back from a deployment, my sense is you're just going to move to another unit and redeploy right back somewhere," he said.

The Army has a brigade combat team in South Korea, three in Europe and one in the Middle East,

Grinston said. But the concerns don't end with the Army's brigade combat teams, he said.

"The No. 1 right behind that is the [air defense artillery units]," he said. Grinston cited Iraq and Syria as an example. "When you look at what's going on, there are real rockets, there are real things flying around and real people trying to kill our soldiers in combat right now," he said. "And that's the problem with air defense. We have an obligation to protect our soldiers, ... and any time something happens, that causes a 'Hey, do we have enough air defense in that area? We want more. We want to keep them there.'"

There also are demands at home. "It's amazing what your Army does all the time, and we do it over and over and over," Grinston said.

During his four-year tenure as sergeant major of the Army, "the link of everything we've done has been the Army," Grinston said. "Whether it's COVID, hurricanes, forest fires, Russia, Ukraine, all the way to what we're doing today. That's why, again, I'm concerned about our optempo."

Not much relief is expected soon for the busy Army, which has gotten smaller as it struggles to make its recruiting goals. The Army in fiscal 2024 expects to have a total Army force level of 951,800. With 452,000 in the active Army, 325,000 in the Army National Guard and 174,800 in the Army Reserve, that's about 20% less than in fiscal 2022.

Despite the challenges, soldiers have always answered the call, Grinston told the audience at the symposium.

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Paper: Land power plays foundational role in Indo-Pacific

The U.S. Army and the capabilities it brings to the fight are critical to deterring China, according to a new Landpower Essay published by the Association of the U.S. Army.

“More advanced military capabilities, particularly in the air and maritime domains, are essential to deterring the People’s Republic of China, but implementing or operationalizing the National Defense Strategy (NDS) in the Indo-Pacific fundamentally requires landpower to practically integrate joint and combined military operations,” write Gen. Charles Flynn, commander of U.S. Army Pacific, and Maj. Tim Devine, an Army strategist assigned to Army Pacific.

In their paper titled “Implementing the Strategy to Deter China Hinges on Landpower,” Flynn and Devine describe the Indo-Pacific as the “biggest and most complex operating environment on Earth, including not only the world’s largest maritime expanse but also the bulk of the Asian continent, the Australian continent and 300,000 square miles of Pacific Island landmasses.”

The region also is home to some of the world’s largest armies, including the Indian Army, the People’s Liberation Army and the Korean People’s Army Ground Force, Flynn and Devine write.

However, the Army faces “persistent challenges” when describing its value in the Indo-Pacific because the region is considered “predominantly



Soldiers with the 25th Infantry Division conduct convoy operations and rehearse strategic movement during a Joint Pacific Multinational Readiness Center rotation at Pohukuloa Training Grounds, Hawaii. (U.S. ARMY/PFC. MARIAH AGUILAR)

an air and maritime theater,” they write.

The Army “has long provided foundational capabilities that underpin unity of effort among all military services—which is a cornerstone of conventional deterrence,” their paper says. That work continues today, with three signature Army efforts to help DoD deter China and build enduring advantage, their paper says.

First is the Joint Pacific Multinational Readiness Center, the Army’s newest regional combat training center with campuses in Hawaii and Alaska and an exportable package that can be deployed to a host nation. “Now in its third year, JPMRC involves complex, high-end collective training in live, virtual and constructive environments in both tropical and arctic climates,” the paper says.

The second initiative is Operation Pathways, which links the Army and the joint force’s well-established bilateral and multilateral exercises. “Operation Pathways is the predominant way that the joint force strengthens interoperability with allies and partners, builds joint readiness and denies

key terrain to the [People’s Republic of China] by projecting combat-credible forces west of the International Date Line—in places like the Philippines, India, Japan, Thailand and Australia—for extended periods of time,” the paper says.

Finally, the Army is building joint interior lines in the region to provide the U.S. military with the “positional advantage to project and mass combat power along multiples lines of approach from distributed locations,” Flynn and Devine write.

The United States manages a complex framework of bilateral and multilateral security relationships against several threats in the Indo-Pacific, with China chief among them, Flynn and Devine write.

“Based on the urgency to implement the [National Defense Strategy], now is the time to leverage the Army—landpower—in the priority theater to allow the joint force, together with our allies and partners, to deter one of the most serious threats that the U.S. military, the region and our nation has ever faced,” they write.

Read the paper here.

Operations

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sium hosted by the Air Defense Artillery Association and the U.S. Field Artillery Association.

Every time the secretary of defense or the president has called the Army, “we’ve never said no,” Grinston said. “I’ve watched these soldiers, year after year, they’ve said, ‘Yes, I’ll go do that.’”

Transformation in Army civilian corps is 'top priority' for senior leaders

Guest Speaker

Dr. Agnes Gereben Schaefer
Assistant Secretary of the Army
for Manpower & Reserve Affairs



Agnes Schaefer, assistant secretary of the Army for manpower and reserve affairs, speaks at an event honoring Army civilians at AUSA headquarters in Arlington, Virginia. (AUSA PHOTO)

While the Army modernizes to build the force of 2030, the service's civilian corps will also transform by changing the way it recruits, develops and retains the best talent needed to support the warfighter, a senior Army civilian said.

Agnes Schaefer, assistant secretary of the Army for manpower and reserve affairs, said modernization of the Army's civilian policies, processes and systems will be a top priority for her as "we work to build the Army of 2030 and beyond."

"Throughout my career I have always put an emphasis on Total Force issues, and that includes not just the reserve component and the active component, but it also includes civilians," Schaefer said May 4 at an event hosted by the Association of the U.S. Army to honor Army civilians.

During the event, which was held in honor of Public Service Recognition Week, Schaefer recognized four Army civilians with awards for distinguished service.

Schaefer pointed out that civilians have been supporting the Army since 1776, a corps that today makes up 24% of the Army population.

After just four months on the job, Schaefer said, she has made it a prior-

ity to elevate the focus on Army civilians by charging ahead with the Civilian Implementation Plan, a program of initiatives introduced last year that aims to modernize civilian talent management. "The Civilian Implementation Plan is our roadmap to enhance the Army civilian experience by modernizing how we recruit, develop and retain top talent today and for the future workforce," she said.

Schaefer, who was sworn in as an Army civilian on Dec. 22, previously served as a senior adviser to the deputy secretary of defense and the undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness.

In promising to advance the Civilian Implementation Plan, Schaefer said she will work to allow more movement for Army civilians across components, rotational job assignments for those who want to try different career tracks and to better match people with jobs by upgrading a talent management process and personnel system "that is very inflexible," she said.

"I am extremely proud to be an Army civilian, and along with you, I want to ensure that we are ready for the future with the right talent, skills and capabilities to support the warfighter," she said.

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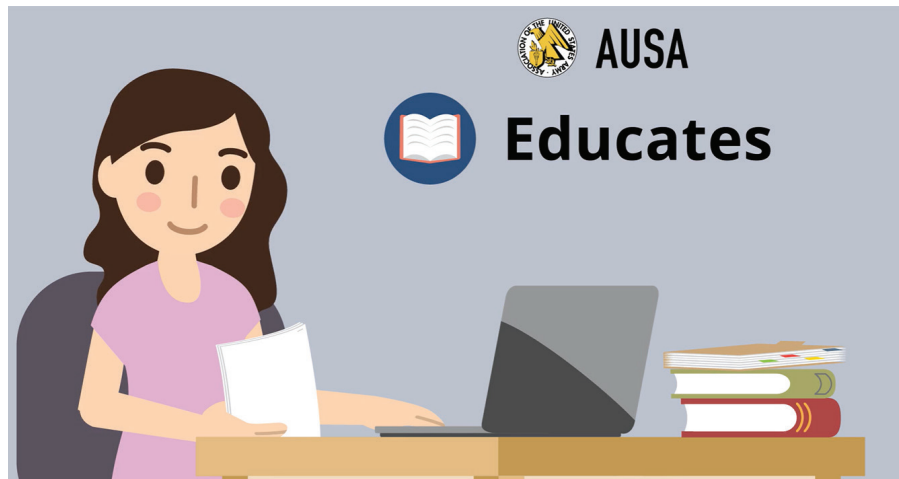
Video showcases AUSA's support for military families

A video describing the resources and benefits available to military spouses and families from the Association of the U.S. Army is now available online.

Created by the Defense Department's Military Spouse Transition Program, with help from AUSA's Family Readiness team, the video shows how AUSA can help spouses find publications and podcasts on key topics, apply for scholarships and amplify their voices with Army senior leaders.

AUSA also helps connect military families. "Connection is fostered through the 120-plus AUSA chapters that are located throughout the United States and abroad," the video says.

The video also illustrates how AUSA serves as a voice for soldiers and families by elevating their con-



The video shows how AUSA can help spouses find publications and podcasts on key topics, apply for scholarships and amplify their voices. (DoD SCREENSHOT)

cerns, advocating on their behalf and advancing their interests.

"AUSA Family Readiness was honored to produce this video for DoD Military OneSource MySTeP explain-

ing the association's purpose and outlining our efforts to assist military families," said Holly Dailey, AUSA's director of Family Readiness.

[View the video here.](#)



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Spotlight on AUSA Association Partner: OCA

The Ordnance Corps Association has the mission of “promoting, enhancing and preserving the legacy of the third largest branch in the U.S. Army,” according to the association’s website.

It does this by supporting the development, production, acquisition and support of weapon systems, ammunition, munitions/missiles and maintenance support materiel, and focuses special attention on the role of the Ordnance Corps and its soldiers in building strategic readiness and sustaining land warfare dominance, the group’s website says.

In October 1985, the association’s executive council approved several objectives to guide its efforts. They include assisting the Army’s chief of ordnance in strengthening the image of the branch; supporting the Ordnance Corps Heritage Center at Fort



Gregg-Adams, Virginia, which was formerly known as Fort Lee; and fostering the professional development of its members.

The Ordnance Corps Association administers the Ordnance Order of Samuel Sharpe Award, which recognizes individuals “who have served the Army Ordnance Corps with demonstrated integrity, moral character and professional competence over a sustained period of time and whose selfless contributions stand out in

the eyes of their seniors, peers and subordinates alike,” the association’s website says.

It also administers the “Keeper of the Flame” award for spouses and the LTG Levin Hicks Campbell Distinguished Award of Merit for members who distinguish themselves through meritorious achievements or acts, and provides a scholarship named for Col. Decius Wadsworth, the Army’s first chief of ordnance..

For more information, please visit <https://usaoca.org/>.

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

Association Partnership with AUSA is an opportunity for like-minded military service organizations to join AUSA in support of the Total Army—soldiers, DoD civilians and their families.

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Gainey Cup tests scout squads from US, allied armies

During the first week of May, I represented the Association of the U.S. Army at the biennial Gainey Cup competition at Fort Benning, now Fort Moore, Georgia.

This year's Gainey Cup featured 22 six-person scout squads from the U.S. Army and international militaries vying to be named the best of the best.

After five days of grueling physical and mental challenges, the 42nd Brigade Reconnaissance Company of the Royal Netherlands Army was named the top scout squad, marking the first time an allied partner has won the competition.

NCO & Soldier Programs

Reconnaissance Company of the Royal Netherlands Army was

The squad from the Illinois Army National Guard's 2nd Squadron, 106th Cavalry Regiment, 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, came in second place, while the 4th Squadron, 2nd Cavalry Regiment, based in Vilseck, Germany, was third.

The Gainey Cup is designed to test scout squads on their knowledge, tactical competence and fortitude in the fundamentals of reconnaissance and security operations. Scouts can showcase their mastery of their profession while building camaraderie and esprit de corps among teams and nations.

This competition is named after



Retired Command Sgt. Maj. William Gainey, center, namesake of the Gainey Cup, stands with scouts from the 42nd Brigade Reconnaissance Company of the Royal Netherlands Army, winners of the 2023 competition. (U.S. ARMY/PATRICK ALBRIGHT)

retired Command Sgt. Maj. William Gainey, who served 33 years in the Army in armor and cavalry units and was the first senior enlisted adviser to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff before retiring in 2008.

Critical tasks during the Gainey Cup include calls for fire, land navigation, route and area reconnaissance, communications and observation post operations. The team from the Netherlands performed consistently well in all of these "bread and butter" tasks.

There also were dozens of warrior tasks and drills, range firing tasks

and physical challenges to further separate the best from the rest.

In a new addition this year, competitors were required to watch video footage from notional unmanned aerial vehicles and identify combat systems from allies and adversaries.

All the teams performed very well, representing their units and nations with their organizational patches proudly worn on their sleeves.

When I spoke with the winning team members about their preparation for the competition, the Royal Netherlands Army squad said they spent several months preparing and learning the differences in doctrine.

All of the Gainey Cup competitors learned what it takes to attain excellence in their profession. The dedication and commitment required to prepare for and participate in this competition makes it a rare training opportunity for these young leaders.

The knowledge and wisdom these soldiers take back to their units will make our Army and our allies better for the next generation to follow.



U.S. Army scouts carry a simulated casualty during a live-fire exercise testing their tactical competence at the 2023 Gainey Cup competition. (U.S. ARMY/DAVID LOGSDON)

Retired Sgt. Maj. of the Army Kenneth Preston is an AUSA senior fellow. He is the association's past vice president for NCO and Soldier Programs and the 13th sergeant major of the Army.

Chapter donation aids Honor Flight memorial project

The Association of the U.S. Army's Fort Rucker-Wiregrass chapter in Alabama recently presented a \$5,000 donation to the Wiregrass Honor Flight project, which provides trips at no cost to Washington, D.C., for veterans to visit the memorials built in their honor.

Travis Parker, who is leading the project, received the donation from Otis Smith, first vice president of the AUSA chapter, and Mark Ivey, the chapter treasurer.

"Participating veterans will visit a variety of sites, including Arlington

Fort Rucker-Wiregrass

National Cemetery, the World War II Memorial, Korean War Memorial and

Vietnam Memorial," Parker said, as reported by the *Dothan Eagle*. "The honor flights started with a focus on World War II veterans, then the Korean War vets were added, and now Vietnam-era veterans are the focus."

The first Wiregrass Honor Flight is planned for Sept. 13, Parker said. "We are using the week that the Vietnam Wall will be in the Wiregrass as



Otis Smith, left, first vice president for AUSA's Fort Rucker-Wiregrass chapter, and Mark Ivey, right, the chapter treasurer, present a \$5,000 donation to Travis Parker, leader of the Wiregrass Honor Flight project. (DOTHAN EAGLE/MICHELLE MANN)

a kickoff for the flight. That way the people who can't go see the Vietnam Wall in Washington, D.C., in person can get an idea of what it is like," he said, the *Dothan Eagle* reported.

AUSA works to connect the Army, industry partners, like-minded associations and supporters at the national, regional and chapter levels, said

Doug Wynn, the chapter president.

"Many of the younger veterans worked to send the original groups to see the monuments, so now it is their turn to go on the honor flight themselves as a veteran," Parker said.

Fort Rucker was renamed Fort Novosel on April 10. The AUSA chapter's name has not changed.

AUSA members honor service of Vietnam veterans

Several Vietnam veterans were honored last week by the Association of the U.S. Army's Monmouth chapter during a ceremony hosted by the 254th Regiment of the New Jersey National Guard.

The event in Sea Girt, New Jersey, was held in remembrance of the 50th anniversary of the last U.S. troops

Monmouth

leaving Vietnam in March 1973.

During the ceremony, each veteran in attendance was recognized with a memorial pin and coin by Ed Thomas, the chapter president, who served as master of ceremonies.

Thomas said that 75 veterans and their families from 11 local organizations, including AUSA's Northern

New Jersey and Dix chapters, had been invited to participate in the ceremony.

The golden coins, created for the event by the AUSA chapter and the Special Forces Association Chapter 19, were engraved with the words "Grata Domon," which translates to "welcome home" in Latin.

"Vietnam veterans represent nearly 10% of their generation, they fought under challenging conditions, and when their service ended, they were not always welcomed when they returned home," said Thomas, as reported by the *Coast Star*. "So today, in some small way, we want to welcome you [our veterans] back and thank you for your service and sacrifice."



Ed Thomas, president of AUSA's Monmouth chapter, speaks during a ceremony honoring Vietnam veterans hosted by the 254th Regiment of the New Jersey National Guard. (COURTESY PHOTO)

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