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Soldiers with the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard) perform during a Twilight Tattoo show at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall, Virginia. (U.S. ARMY/SGT. NATALIE PANTALOS)

# Celebrating the Army's 249th birthday

**O**n Friday, the Army celebrates its 249th birthday with several events in the Washington, D.C., area and across the force.

This year's theme is "Honoring the Past, Defending the Future."

Since its official establishment on June 14, 1775—more than a year before the Declaration of Independence—the Army has played a vital role in the growth and development of the nation. "Our Soldiers and civilians are committed to defending our country, just as they have for the past 249 years," Army officials said in a news release.

"From the Revolutionary War through today, the U.S. Army has answered every time the nation has called," said retired Gen. Bob Brown,

president and CEO of the Association of the U.S. Army. "Here at the Association of the U.S. Army, we are proud to support America's Army, the greatest land force the world has ever known, and the soldiers who serve today and those who came before them. Happy birthday, Army!"

Celebrations in the Washington, D.C., area began Wednesday with a Twilight Tattoo featuring soldiers from the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard) at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall, Virginia.

At 7 a.m. Eastern Friday, a run/walk will take place beginning at Summerall Field on Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall and continuing through Arlington National Cemetery. At 10:45 a.m. Eastern, senior

Army leaders will conduct a wreath-laying ceremony at the cemetery, which will be livestreamed here.

At 11:30 a.m. Eastern, a cake-cutting and reenlistment ceremony at the Pentagon will feature 30 soldiers from all three Army components. [Click here to watch the livestream.](#)

On Saturday, an Army birthday festival will be held at the National Museum of the United States Army at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, with live entertainment, equipment displays, aerial parachute demonstrations and more. You can reserve free tickets here. Senior Army leaders will host a cake-cutting ceremony at 1 p.m. Eastern, which can be viewed here.

A list of interactive links for Army Birthday Week can be found here.

# AUSA 2024

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## Rand: High school access remains challenge for recruiters

**M**ilitary recruiters are having trouble accessing potential recruits at high schools, according to a recently released report from the Rand Corp.

“Recruiting at high schools is an effective method to successfully meet manning requirements of the all-volunteer force and ensure that the services have the troops they need to help defend the nation,” the report found. “However, recruiters have been facing challenges in accessing high schools.”

The study identified high schools with recruiting challenges using 2017 data and conducted interviews in 2022 and 2023 with military recruiters and school representatives to understand the barriers recruiters face at high schools. Just under one-third of the recruiters and supervisors interviewed in the report were soldiers.

### Common challenges

Up to 14% of schools in some states failed to comply with the law or provided inadequate access, the report found. The most common challenges were not providing student names, which is required by federal law, and not allowing recruiters school access or highly restricting access even when it is granted.

The report identified several structural factors that increased the likelihood that recruiters may have difficulty accessing potential recruits, including larger school populations, schools where most students don't receive free or reduced lunch and schools in urban areas.

The Army has been working hard to address high school access issues.

“More recently, U.S. Army leaders have acknowledged that high school access sometimes is a challenge and have started visiting high schools and talking to stakeholders to understand what the military can do better to reach young people and convince them that the military is a good ca-



Lt. Col. Adam Kirschling, left, commander of the 2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery Regiment, administers the oath of enlistment to 10 soldiers and four airmen June 7 at the Chickasaw Bricktown Ballpark in Oklahoma City. (U.S. ARMY/CAPT. ERICK SCHNEIDER-CUEVAS)

reer choice,” the report found.

Interactions with school faculty and students, including through demonstrations, can help recruiters to describe Army career opportunities and build rapport, a recruiter interviewed for the study said.

“Demos are a real connection between recruiters and the school[s]. We had one where they were able to fly ... helicopters [via a flight simulator]. Students went first to try it, then school administrators went second. They were saying things like, ‘We didn’t know the Army had helicopters,’” the recruiter said. “So, it was building that bridge for students, faculty, and administrators.”

### Improving outreach

In response to access issues, the report recommends that DoD review its outreach practices to high schools, streamline its infrastructure for reporting school access issues and work with the services to ensure high schools understand federal regulations regarding military recruiter access, among other recommendations.

“Many school representatives lack

knowledge about the wide range of skills that recruits can develop through military service” such as “cybersecurity, logistics, and other technical skills that are highly transferable to later civilian careers,” the report found. “Messaging from recruiters about the benefits of military service and the marketable skills gained ... should be shared not only with students, but also with school representatives and the broader school community.”

Amid an already difficult recruiting environment, recruiters’ access to high school students is more important than ever. “High schools are critical venues for recruiters as they seek to provide information about military careers to the widest relevant audience,” the report found. “Most recruiters face challenges in building strong relationships with high schools. ... Even when access was provided to recruiters in accordance with legal requirements, there were concerns that for some high schools the level of access fell short of what is needed for effective recruiting.”

Read the full report here.

## Former Ranger remembers Battle of Mogadishu and its legacy

As a young lieutenant with 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, in 1993, James Lechner was selected for a special operations task force and found himself embroiled in the Battle of Mogadishu.

What began as a raid in Somalia's capital turned into an 18-hour firefight, and Lechner and his fellow Rangers and Delta Force operators were surrounded and outnumbered after they came to the aid of two American Black Hawk helicopter crews shot down by insurgents. By the end of the battle, 18 Americans were killed and dozens more were wounded.

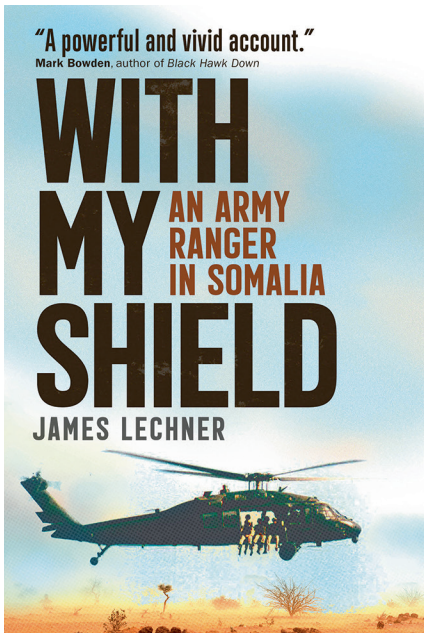
"I think [Task Force Ranger] stands for a lot of important themes that are ... at issue right now, [including] brutal and realistic training. Civilians often see military training ... as brutal, but there's a reason for it," Lechner, a retired Army infantry officer, said June 6 during an Association of the U.S. Army Noon Report webinar.

Unit cohesion is another key to enabling soldiers to withstand the "test of combat," he said. "I think Task Force Ranger and its story is a testament to why those things are important."

Lechner recounts his experiences during the Battle of Mogadishu, made famous in the book and movie *Black Hawk Down*, in his new book, *With My Shield: An Army Ranger in Somalia*. He served for 27 years in six wars, including operational deployments and tours in Sinai, Bosnia, Iraq and Afghanistan.

After Somali insurgents downed the two helicopters, the raid shifted to a fight to survive.

"Less than 125 guys on the ground had to fight to secure that crash site against tens of thousands of Somalis, as we'd struck right in their stronghold in the middle of the day," Lechner said. "Because we had to get the guys out of the helicopters ... we [had] to stand all together like a shield wall,



Retired Lt. Col. James Lechner shares first-hand knowledge of the Battle of Mogadishu in his book, *With My Shield: An Army Ranger in Somalia*. (AUSA PHOTO)

and we were not going to take a step back no matter what came at us. That's the only way we could survive."

Lechner pushed back against those who call the battle a defeat. "Just to take the ... fact that 18 guys were killed, a high number of casualties, that does not translate to defeat," he said. "From a tactical perspective, we achieved exactly what we wanted to achieve that day, we succeeded in our mission and captured all of our targets that we were after, and we successfully got out."

Soldiers today must be ready to meet the demands of battle, Lechner said. "When combat becomes extremely adverse, ... we're going to be challenged, and our soldiers are going to be faced with adversity," he said. "I never thought I'd be outnumbered. I never thought I wouldn't have the overwhelming advantage. I've found myself in that situation a number of times now. Mogadishu was the first, and that's going to happen again."

# AUSA Extra

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# Harter nominated to be next chief of the Army Reserve

**M**aj. Gen. Robert Harter has been nominated by President Joe Biden to be the next chief of the U.S. Army Reserve and commanding general of U.S. Army Reserve Command.

If confirmed by the Senate, Harter, who has commanded the 81st Readiness Division at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, since Sept. 20, 2022, would receive his third star and succeed Lt. Gen. Jody Daniels, who has led the Army Reserve since July 28, 2020.

Harter's most recent assignment before the 81st Readiness Division was deputy chief of the Army Reserve.

A native of Alaska and Virginia, Harter was commissioned in 1988 as a field artillery officer after graduating from Virginia Tech with a degree in business and communications. He also holds a master's degree in na-

tional security strategy from the National War College, according to his DoD biography.

Before transferring from active duty to the Active Guard Reserve program in 1999, Harter held assignments in the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment in Germany and the 101st Corps Support Group. He also commanded the 584th Direct Support Maintenance Company at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, according to his biography.

His Active Guard Reserve assignments included training chief for readiness in the 99th Regional Readiness Command; support operations officer in the 55th Sustainment Brigade;



Maj. Gen. Robert Harter.  
(U.S. ARMY PHOTO)

distribution management chief in the 316th Expeditionary Sustainment Command in Iraq; and various staff positions on the Joint Staff and in the Office of the Chief of Army Reserve, according to his biography.

Harter's general officer assignments include assistant deputy commanding general for Reserve Affairs and full-time chief of staff for Army Materiel Command; commander of the 316th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary); chief of staff and operations officer in the Office of the Chief of Army Reserve and the Army Reserve senior representative to the 39th Chief of Staff of the Army Transition Team, according to his biography.



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## Spotlight on AUSA Association Partner: CGSCF

The Command and General Staff College Foundation, Inc., is a nonprofit educational foundation that provides resources and support to the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College.

Founded in 1881 as the School of Application for Infantry and Cavalry, the Command and General Staff College aims to educate and develop leaders for full-spectrum joint, interagency and multinational operations. It is comprised of four schools: the Command and General Staff School, the School of Advanced Military Studies, the School for Command Preparation and the Sergeants Major Academy.

The foundation “enhances the development of agile and adaptive leaders by helping connect the American public with the Army and the College in support of multi-service, interagen-



cy, and international leaders,” according to the organization’s website.

Programs include roundtables, seminars and lecture series focused on national security issues; sponsorship of awards for academic excellence; staff rides and other leader development programs; and a scholarship program for high school and

college children and grandchildren of Command and General Staff College students, faculty and alumni.

The foundation also funds the Arthur D. Simons Center for Ethical Leadership and Interagency Cooperation, a research, analysis, studies and publication center that opened in 2010 at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

Overall, the foundation has provided more than \$9 million in support of the College.

For more information, please visit [www.cgscfoundation.org](http://www.cgscfoundation.org).

If your association is interested in partnering with AUSA, contact Susan Rubel at [srubel@ausa.org](mailto: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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## Commemorating Pride Month with dignity and respect

In December 2010, Congress ended the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy that had been in place since 1993. The policy allowed service members to serve only if they kept their sexual orientation secret, and the military did not learn of their sexual orientation.

Many service members across all branches were separated because of this policy.

The Department of Defense celebrated its first Pride Month in June 2012, and now the entire department, to include the Army, recognizes Pride Month as a reminder that the LGBTQ+ community is valued and deserves to serve with dignity, respect and support.

Staff Sgt. Franceska Allende, a soldier stationed at Joint Base Henderson Hall-Fort Myer, Virginia, married her wife, Yvonne, this spring in Florida. Being able to openly serve as a gay woman meant representation and showing others that they are not alone.

"I get to express my individuality and be my authentic self while also allowing others like me to do the same," Allende said.

Gregory Hale-Morales, spouse of Capt. Cody Hale-Morales, who is stationed at the National Training Center in Fort Irwin, California, spoke with me about his experiences.

"Being a gay Army spouse certainly comes with its challenges, no more or less unique than any other Army spouse," Gregory Hale-Morales said. "The pride and love my husband and I live out every day as Americans is only enhanced by his being able to serve our nation with dignity—that is, without legal barriers."

The couple was stationed overseas for three years, where he saw that other countries did not celebrate Pride in the same way, Gregory Hale-Morales said. "We both have a newfound appreciation and respect for how blessed we are to be able to share our lives to-



**Left:** Capt. Cody Hale-Morales, his husband, Gregory, and family and friends attend his promotion ceremony to captain. **Right:** Staff Sgt. Franceska Allende marries her wife, Yvonne, earlier this year in Florida. (COURTESY PHOTOS)

gether, thanks in large part to those opportunities afforded us through his service," he said.

More than 6% of the U.S. military identifies as LGBTQ+. Across the Army, there are multiple events to commemorate this month, from observances to color runs and more, that celebrate the soldiers who are part of the LGBTQ+ community.

Most recently, the California Na-

tional Guard had the opportunity to participate in the San Diego Pride parade, celebrating efforts to support the individual rights of all people. You can find events celebrating Pride in your local community and at many Army installations.

**Retired Command Sgt. Maj. Julie Guerra** is AUSA's director of NCO and Soldier Programs.



Chief Warrant Officer 2 Matthew Reece of the California Military Department marches in the 2023 San Diego Pride parade. (ARMY NATIONAL GUARD/SGT. MARLA OGDEN)

## Volunteer leaders conduct training at AUSA headquarters

From June 5–8, new chapter presidents with the Association of the U.S. Army gathered at the association’s headquarters in Arlington, Virginia, for training and discussions on best practices.

Attendees heard from AUSA’s executive leaders and representatives from many of the association’s departments. Topics included finances, marketing, volunteer recruiting, activity planning and more.

“The passion these volunteer leaders have for supporting soldiers and families is truly remarkable,” said retired Command Sgt. Maj. Troy Welch, AUSA’s Membership director. “After spending time with them, I am confident that our chapters around the world will do more than ever in the coming year to educate, inform and connect the Army with the American people.”

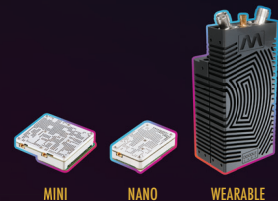


AUSA chapter presidents and the association’s national leaders convene June 5 at AUSA headquarters in Arlington, Virginia. (AUSA PHOTO)

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## AUSA member donates Purple Heart medal to alma mater

In a unique effort to give back to the community, an Army veteran and member of the Association of the U.S. Army's Gen. John W. Vessey chapter, based in St. Paul, Minnesota, donated his Purple Heart medal to his alma mater of Oklahoma State University-Tulsa.

"I was with my daughter one day and she said, 'You should make the same impression on OSU-Tulsa that they made on you.

**Gen. John W. Vessey**

Do something to show them that you appreciate

what they did for you,'" said retired Cpl. Shannon Matthews, according to a news release from the university.

Matthews, a motivational speaker who retired from the Army Corps of Engineers in 2012, earned his Purple Heart nearly three decades ago during Operation Uphold Democracy in Haiti. "My Purple Heart was up in a box, dusty as you know what. We thought, 'This was a chance for me to do something different, something other people haven't done,'" Matthews said, according to the release.

A native of Tulsa, Matthews joined the Oklahoma Army National Guard in 1989 after graduating from high school. He served during the Gulf War and transferred to active duty in 1992.

In September 1994, while assigned to the 4th Psychological Operations Group (Airborne) at Fort Liberty, North Carolina, formerly known as Fort Bragg, Matthews was deployed to Haiti for Operation Uphold Democracy. The U.S.-led military intervention succeeded in removing the military regime installed by the 1991 Haitian coup that overthrew elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

On Oct. 9, 1994, Matthews encountered two men crawling under a fence to enter the compound where he was stationed. When he told the men they couldn't enter, they attacked him and knocked him down.

"One guy slugged me, they both



Mitch Reed, left, legislative ambassador for the State of Oklahoma Purple Heart Association; Chris Bengel, center, interim senior vice president for Oklahoma State University-Tulsa; and retired Cpl. Shannon Matthews attend the ceremony for Matthews' donation of his Purple Heart medal to the university. (COURTESY PHOTO)

started beating me up pretty good," Matthews said, according to the release. "One of them had a knife covered in barbed wire, and I got stabbed in the leg."

Other soldiers arrived and took the men into custody, and three days later, Matthews was back in the U.S. recovering from his wounds. The cut

to the bone required 12 stitches, but his recuperation didn't end there.

"I had got really, really, really sick while I was in. Come to find out I was suffering from multiple sclerosis. Couldn't run, couldn't do anything. So I had to ease on out and move on to something else," Matthews said.

After leaving the military, Matthews used his G.I. Bill benefits to attend Tulsa Community College and went on to earn a bachelor's degree in business at OSU-Tulsa in 2001.

He was presented with the Purple Heart by then-Sen. Jim Inhofe in 2000.

He then worked in civilian procurement jobs at the Department of Veterans Affairs, Army Recruiting Command, the Army Reserve Contracting Agency and finally the Corps of Engineers.

Matthews also established the Shannon L. Matthews Scholarship for veterans at Tulsa Community College in 2010.

Matthews' Purple Heart is now on display in a glass case in the OSU-Tulsa Student Union.

"Members of AUSA are doing positive things," Matthews said. "Service doesn't end when you get out of the military—it's only beginning."



Retired Sgt. Maj. of the Army Daniel Dailey, left, AUSA's vice president for NCO and Soldier Programs, greets retired Cpl. Shannon Matthews during a visit to AUSA's Gen. John W. Vessey chapter in St. Paul, Minnesota. (COURTESY PHOTO)



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