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'The Army must have conversations on race' even though it's a difficult topic, Army Undersecretary James McPherson said. (AIR NATIONAL GUARD/SENIOR AIRMAN SEAN MADDEN)

Leaders urge 'real talk' on race, diversity

Armey leaders are encouraging squad-level conversations about race and diversity, knowing that it is a controversial and challenging topic but also an important one.

In a webinar Wednesday as part of The AUSA Noon Report, hosted by the Association of the U.S. Army, Undersecretary of the Army James McPherson and Vice Chief of Staff Gen. Joseph Martin said talking about race is important.

"We need leaders across all levels of the Army to check in with their squads," McPherson said. "The Army must have conversations on race, and we need you to lead."

"What has gone on in this country, it caused us to pause," Martin said. "Grab your subordinates, sit down

and have some real talk."

Martin said he has done this with his own staff, having a conversation that resulted in some tears and frank discussion.

"I got to know my people better," he said. "I got to know what they have experienced in their lives, and I got to see something way behind the uniform that I would not have seen had I not had the conversation in the first place."

Blacks are in the Army at a rate slightly higher than their representation in the U.S. population, according to a January 2020 demographic report.

Blacks make up 21% of the enlisted ranks but are 17% of the U.S. population in the ages of 18–39 with high school diplomas, the report says.

Blacks make up 13% of the officer ranks while making up just 9% of the U.S. population of blacks with college degrees.

Army leaders want to increase minority representation in the top ranks.

"This is something you cannot fix with one action," Martin said of underrepresentation of minorities in the higher ranks. "It takes a series of actions over time."

Retired Gen. Carter Ham, AUSA president and CEO, said the McPherson and Martin webinar is the first of several similar events the association will host on diversity issues.

"Given our Army's history of leading change, this is a particularly important time for American Army," Ham said. "This is the first, not the final conversation."

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Army on track to meet fiscal 2020 end strength goal

The Army expects to meet its end strength goal of 485,000 active-duty soldiers by the end of this fiscal year even as it continues to adjust to recruiting, retaining and training soldiers in a COVID-19 environment, senior leaders said.

“We’ve aligned our resources, we’ve aligned our plans, and that’s coming to bear when we hit our end strength of 485,000 soldiers,” Casey Wardynski, assistant Army secretary for manpower and reserve affairs, said Wednesday during a call with reporters.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced Army recruiters to work from home and rely on social media and other virtual recruiting efforts to connect with prospective soldiers.

The Army also reduced the number of new soldiers shipping to basic training while commanders put in place health and safety measures.

But those efforts are now ramping up as recruiters do more face-to-face recruiting, and retention is higher than expected.

At one point, the Army was shipping 50% of its typical number of new soldiers to training sites, said Gen. Paul Funk, commanding general of Army Training and Doctrine Command.

“We’re at 100% shipping for the last couple of weeks now,” he said.

Since April, the Army has moved 23,000 soldiers through the training base—about 13,000 from basic training to advanced individual training,



A drill sergeant watches over trainees as they stand in formation before entering basic combat training at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. (U.S. ARMY/SGT. DUSTIN BIVEN)

and about 10,000 to their first units of assignment, Funk said.

“We’ve done that in the COVID environment, focused like a laser beam to make sure we can keep those security bubbles as we move through the process,” Funk said.

Those efforts include screening and testing soldiers and social distancing measures.

“The bottom line on our training is we understand how to do this, we’ve taken on this virus and molded our processes and procedures to units around the world,” he said.

Looking ahead to the Sept. 30 end of this fiscal year, the Army is launch-

ing a three-day hiring campaign with the goal of bringing in 10,000 new soldiers.

Army National Hiring Days will take place June 30–July 2.

“We were very lucky to have a heavy presence on social media” at the outset of the pandemic, said Maj. Gen. Frank Muth, commander of Army Recruiting Command. But as recruiters resume working in recruiting stations, they have some catching up to do, he said.

“Are we behind? Yes, we are ... but we’re close, and we’ve got momentum going,” he said.

For example, Recruiting Command typically hits 90% to 92% of its requirements in June. This year, it was at 80%—lower than usual but good for a force grappling with a pandemic, Muth said.

“Army National Hiring Days is to allow for us to get and make up that ground,” he said.

Meet the AUSA headquarters staff

Alana Jewett

Assistant Director, Education and Programs

Alana Jewett has been with AUSA for 11 years. She has four children with her husband of nine years, including a baby boy born April 21. In her spare time, Alana enjoys watching the Washington Capitals, taking daily walks with her family and working with her dad on his 1967 Chevy Camaro SS350.



Correction

In the June 11 issue of *AUSA Extra*, the article “AUSA supports spouse licensing, parental leave bills” should have stated that Sen. Tammy Duckworth is from Illinois.

Army Combat Fitness Test will be 'only test of record' in October

The new Army Combat Fitness Test will be the service's official test of record beginning Oct. 1, but soldiers' scores will not be part of their records until 2022, senior leaders said.

"Pretty much the goal for this year is to take the test ... but it will not be used for any flagging or adverse action," Sgt. Maj. of the Army Michael Grinston said Monday during a call with reporters. "If you don't pass the test, you will not be separated from the military at all."

While the ACFT will be the "only test of record" as of October, Grinston said, the rollout will give all soldiers time to take a practice test and improve before scores are recorded.

The ACFT replaces the Army Physical Fitness Test, which has been the Army's fitness test for 40 years. It consisted of pushups, situps and a two-mile run.

The ACFT consists of six tasks, including a three repetition maximum deadlift, standing power throw, hand release pushups, leg tucks, a two-mile run, and the sprint, drag and carry. For now, soldiers who can't do the leg tuck can opt for a two-minute plank as an alternative.

"The ACFT will strengthen our fitness culture. It'll reduce injuries, it'll increase Army readiness, and it'll help us reduce unplanned attrition," said Maj. Gen. Lonnie Hibbard, commanding general of the Army Center for Initial Military Training.

In late March, the Army suspended fitness tests as part of a larger effort to stop the spread of COVID-19 and prepare plans to reopen with social distancing and public health guidelines in mind.

The pandemic also created training challenges for soldiers as gyms and other businesses shut down and shipping delays held up equipment needed for the ACFT.

Pass or fail, ACFT scores will not



Pass or fail, ACFT scores will not be documented in soldiers' evaluation reports for now. (U.S. ARMY/SPC. NICHOLLE SALVATIERRA)

be documented in soldiers' evaluation reports for now, but scores will be entered into the training management system to collect data to "make sure we've got the appropriate standards," Grinston said.

Many active, reserve and National Guard soldiers are already training for and passing the new ACFT, Hibbard said.

The Army expects to have about 200,000 soldiers trained to take on the task by the end of this fiscal year.

"What it takes is time," Hibbard said. "We're not trying to rapidly do this [test] without allowing enough time" to prepare.

"We'd like to give everybody the opportunity to take the test," Grinston said. "That way you can improve on it and then we can start counting that."

Even with March 2022 as a "mark on the wall" for record keeping, leaders are prepared to be flexible.

"There's no hard date," Grinston said, adding that he's unprepared to set hard dates due to "fluid" conditions. "We don't know what the country is going to look like two weeks from now ... from a COVID perspective."

For more on the ACFT, click here.

AUSAExtra

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Support For the Soldier**

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PERK OF THE WEEK

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Dailey honored for advancing NCO education system

Retired Sgt. Maj. of the Army Daniel Dailey, the Association of the U.S. Army's vice president for NCO and Soldier Programs, has been selected as a 2020 inductee into the NCO Leadership Center of Excellence Hall of Honor at Fort Bliss, Texas.

"I am truly humbled to be inducted into the Hall of Honor," Dailey said. "When you take a look at those who have been inducted in the past, it is a reminder of the incredible contributions over the years to advance the professional education of our noncommissioned officer corps—and it is an absolute privilege to be in their company."

Dailey was inducted during a ceremony on Wednesday.

The Hall of Honor was established in May 2006 to provide a highly visible and prestigious means of recognizing individuals who significantly



Retired Sgt. Maj. of the Army Daniel Dailey contributed to either the Sergeants Major Academy or the NCO education system.

Dailey was nominated in part for his efforts to provide accreditation through the Army's education system, giving soldiers some college credit or professional credentialing for each level of NCO training.

"Accrediting our NCO education system is a monumental mark in our

history that will not only keep us at the forefront of enlisted education but change the lives of thousands of non-commissioned officers and provide them with well-deserved opportunities well beyond their service in the Army," Dailey said.

As both the command sergeant major of Army Training and Doctrine Command and the sergeant major of the Army, he took many steps to advance the NCO professional development system.

For years, that system "has been the envy of every professional army around the world," Dailey said.

"For years to come, the Army will benefit from the world-class professional education it provides its NCOs," he said. "And because of the recent efforts to accredit our enlisted education system, so will each and every NCO themselves."



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New book explains Army culture to families and friends

A new book from the Association of the U.S. Army captures the cultural essence of the Army with a guide on everything from flag etiquette, uniforms and rank insignia to place cards, protocol and pleasantries.

Compiled and written by Ginger Perkins, *Customs, Courtesies and Traditions of the United States Army: A Primer for Family Members* is a comprehensive reference book

Family Readiness

aimed at bringing spouses, parents, siblings, extended family members

and friends closer to the bigger Army family by explaining their soldier's world.

Perkins, who dedicated much of her 38 years as an Army spouse to learning and sharing what she knows about military protocol with other spouses, said the book "is for family members and anyone interested in this great Army, whether they have a soldier or not."

"I love tradition, and I value the culture" of the Army, said Perkins, who, with her husband, retired Gen. David Perkins, are now Army parents.

She previously co-authored *The Army Spouse Handbook*, which was compiled largely from an extensive library of books on Army history and customs she collected over the years in her work with units and commanders.

But *Customs, Courtesies and Traditions*, she said, "is a way of reaching out to society."

Perkins discussed her book Monday during an episode of AUSA's "Army Matters" podcast series—click here to hear her remarks.

The 70-page book, with a foreword by AUSA President and CEO retired Gen. Carter Ham, is organized in an easy A-to-Z format where readers can learn about almost anything they'd want to know about the Army.

This includes what forms of iden-



The 70-page book is organized in an easy A-to-Z format where readers can learn about almost anything they'd want to know about the Army. (U.S. ARMY/PFC. MATTHEW MARCELLUS)

tification they need to gain access to a post if they're attending an event, how to understand deployment orders, what a soldier's shoulder patches and tabs mean, and when to stand during a military ceremony.

There are also charts explaining appropriate attire for different types

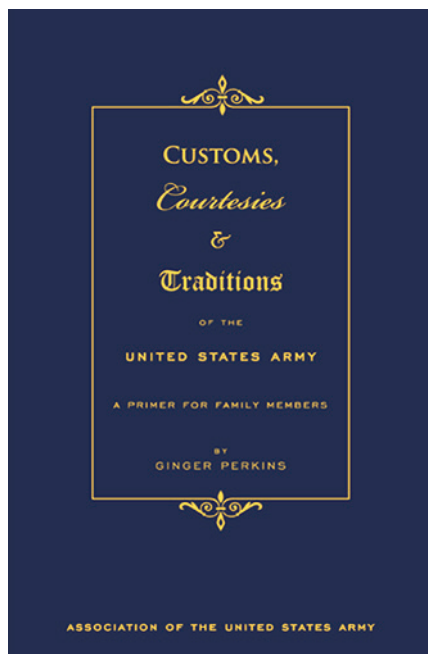
of events, formal and informal dinner place settings, and even the words to the Army Song.

Patty Barron, director of AUSA's Family Readiness directorate, said Perkins was the obvious choice to compile this new book because of her vast experience educating family members on the ways of the Army and her passion for sharing it with others.

"We value our members, and not all members of AUSA have served in the Army; we want to share that pride and knowledge that we have about the Army with them, especially parents of soldiers and entry-level spouses," said Barron, who's also an Army spouse.

"We're thrilled to have been able to give [Perkins] the opportunity to share her passion for the Army with our members. This was a labor of love," Barron added.

Customs, Courtesies and Traditions of the United States Army: A Primer for Family Members is available here. AUSA members receive a 20% discount.



AUSA member honors the sacrifices of WWII soldiers

The president of the Association of the U.S. Army's subchapter in the Netherlands is going above and beyond to honor and remember American soldiers who gave their lives in World War II.

Max Poorthuis, 26, has been interested in WWII history his entire life. His parents even took him to France's Normandy Beach for his 12th birthday after he read about the allied invasion on D-Day.

"I think it was during my high school years that I decided I wanted to do more, but I was not exactly sure what," Poorthuis said.

The answer came to him in 2010 when he met a WWII veteran from the 16th Infantry Regiment in Nor-

Netherlands mandy during the commemoration of the 66th anniversary of D-Day. They talked extensively about the veteran's wartime experiences and exchanged addresses.

Poorthuis began researching the history of the regiment and contacted the 16th Infantry Regiment Association to ask for permission to start a website about the unit's history.

They agreed, and in 2014, he and two friends founded the 16th Infantry Regiment Historical Society.

On his trip to Normandy in 2010, Poorthuis also learned about the possibility of adopting the grave of a soldier.

"I didn't know much about it, so I decided to contact the Foundation for Adopting Graves American Cemetery Margraten," he said.

The Netherlands American Cemetery and Memorial, often called "Margraten" after the nearest village, is the final resting place of 8,301 American service members.

In addition, 1,722 names are chiseled into the Tablets of the Missing.

Most of the soldiers were killed during airborne and ground operations to liberate eastern Holland or during the advance into Germany.

Shortly after the cemetery was



Max Poorthuis places flowers at the grave of 1st Lt. Edward Thompson, one of several soldiers he has adopted to honor their sacrifice. (COURTESY PHOTO)

erected in 1945, people began tending to the graves of American soldiers.

All the graves had already been adopted, so Poorthuis adopted the name of 2nd Lt. Salvatore Panepinto from Gary, Indiana, who served with the 2889th Engineer Technical Intelligence Team.

"Panepinto was killed in action on Dec. 3, 1944, while trying to deactivate German mines to be used for troop training. One was faulty and set off the entire pile of mines already disabled by him," Poorthuis said.

After learning that the nearby Henri-Chapelle American Cemetery and Memorial in eastern Belgium had many graves available for adoption, Poorthuis reached out to ask if it was possible to adopt the grave of a 16th Infantry Regiment soldier.

"After all, this now was 'my' unit," he said.

The cemetery, where 7,992 service members are buried, sent him the adoption certificate for Pfc. Warren Gay, who served with Company F, 16th Infantry Regiment.

Gay died Sept. 17, 1944, after he was wounded three days earlier south of Aachen, Germany.

After noticing a lack of flowers at

the Henri-Chapelle American Cemetery one Memorial Day, Poorthuis adopted two more graves: Pfc. George Lucky and 1st Lt. Edward Thompson, both from the 16th Infantry Regiment.

"Going to the cemetery three or four times a year to place flowers on their graves to keep their memory alive is the least I can do," Poorthuis said.

As he had done for Panepinto and Gay, Poorthuis researched his newly adopted soldiers and was able to find a living relative of Thompson—his daughter.

"Edward received the Silver Star just before he died, and the medal was presented to his little girl, and I was talking to her. And not just her, Ed's widow was still alive as well," Poorthuis said, adding that he is still in touch with them.

Poorthuis' actions have not gone unnoticed. In 2014, he was designated as an honorary member of the 16th Infantry Regiment.

"Adopting the graves of American soldiers is the greatest honor of my life. They gave their lives for our freedom," Poorthuis said. "I feel this is a debt that I can never fully repay, but I will never stop trying to do so."



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