



Soldiers, AUSA members, defense industry representatives and more gather in the Walter E. Washington Convention Center during the 2024 AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition. (AUSA PHOTO)

## IN THIS ISSUE

VOLUME 7 NUMBER 12  
JULY 31, 2025

### Leaders Discuss 2026 Budget at AUSA

3

### Army Unveils New Combat Ration

4

### Book Program

Tanker Titles

8



### Chapter Highlights

Suncoast

Eagle Chapters

9

## AUSA Annual Meeting registration opens

**R**egistration is now open for the Association of the U.S. Army's 2025 Annual Meeting and Exposition.

Scheduled for Oct. 13–15 at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center in Washington, D.C., the three-day event will feature addresses and professional development forums by top Army and DoD leaders on the Army's transformation and its efforts to grow and prepare the force for a complex future battlefield.

There will be displays marking the Army's 250th birthday and its legacy of service and sacrifice, as well as more than 700 exhibits spread over five halls featuring the latest technology and equipment.

Attendees also can register for housing, which opened in June.

For more information or to register, click [here](#).

AUSA is pleased to offer attendees two options for attending educational sessions and forums—a digital access pass or a printed badge. Attendees who use the digital access pass may minimize their wait times to enter a session during the Annual Meeting. The digital access pass, which will be scanned upon entry to the convention center, can be used to attend all contemporary military forums and educational sessions.

All attendees will receive a digital access pass with their registration confirmation, which can be downloaded to their smartphones.

A printed badge is required to receive social event tickets and to visit the exhibit halls.

The Army is taking on a sweeping transformation that promises big changes in force structure, weaponry, platforms and acquisition. Dubbed the Army Transformation Initiative, the effort aims to build a leaner and more lethal force.

"The Army Transformation Initiative will make us into an Army that's lean, agile and relentlessly focused on empowering soldiers," Army Secretary Dan Driscoll said earlier this year.

The Army is a professional team that remains focused on its warfighting mission, Army Chief of Staff Gen. Randy George said. "But we have work to do," he said. "We know the world is changing. Commercial technology is rapidly evolving, and this is

See **Annual Meeting**, Page 3



# BUILDING THE FUTURE OF AUTONOMOUS WARFARE.

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## 2026 budget prioritizes ‘continuous transformation’

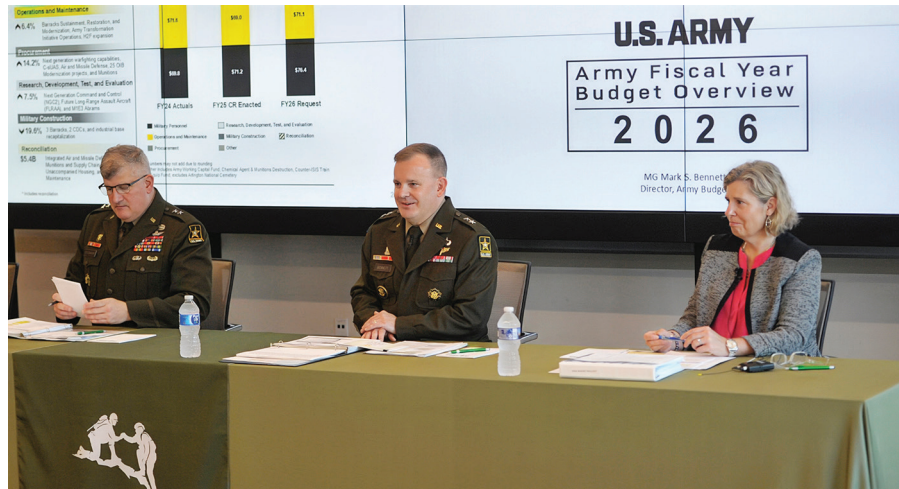
**A**rmey transformation is a key component of the service’s fiscal year 2026 budget request, which “demonstrates a strong commitment” to the service, its soldiers and the nation, said Maj. Gen. Mark Bennett, director of the Army budget.

In remarks at a Coffee Series breakfast hosted by the Association of the U.S. Army, Bennett gave an overview of the \$197.4 billion budget request, which he said will “allow the Army to remain the most capable, ready and dominant force in the world.”

The request, a 6.9% increase from the budget enacted in fiscal 2025 and part of a \$961.6 billion DoD budget request, reflects a strong focus on the Army Transformation Initiative, which seeks major changes in how the force is structured, weapons and warfighting platforms, acquisition and divestiture of legacy equipment and formations.

Bennett explained that the budget “lays the groundwork for a more lethal, agile and resilient Army, and a key component in that for us is Army transformation, for our continuous transformation initiative.” The budget, he said, is “focused on rebuilding the Army to a leaner, more lethal force ready for the challenges of the modern battlefield.”

He outlined three primary lines of effort aimed at advancing transformation, the first of which is delivering critical warfighting capabilities. To



Maj. Gen. Mark Bennett, center, director of the Army budget, addresses an AUSA Coffee Series event at the association's headquarters in Arlington, Virginia. (AUSA PHOTO)

do that, he said, the Army is prioritizing and accelerating the acquisition of technology that can address the use of unmanned aircraft systems, counter-unmanned aircraft systems, long-range fires, missile defense, cyber and electromagnetic warfare.

Next, he said, the Army is “optimizing our force structure,” which includes consolidating major headquarters in the generating force and streamlining U.S.-based operational headquarters. “To increase effectiveness,” he said, the Army is also “freeing up soldiers” to serve in maneuver and support units back out in the field.”

Outlining the third line of effort, Bennett said the Army’s continuous transformation is a strategic shift

toward reinvesting resources to “ensure our future dominance.”

“It truly is a divest to invest strategy,” he said. “We’re making smart choices to shed outdated systems, programs that no longer meet the demands of the modern battlefield. The initiative is about creating a leaner, more lethal and more agile force ready to face any threat.”

The fiscal 2026 budget, he said, is a responsible and strategic investment in the Army and the nation’s security, he said, explaining that it prioritizes people and the service’s modernization efforts “to ensure we are prepared to meet any challenge, deter aggression and promote and protect our interests around the globe.”

### Annual Meeting

From Page 1

impacting the character of war. We understand we must transform to stay ahead of our adversaries.”

The Army must keep getting better—and faster, George said. “We must get better by 2026, 2027, not 2030,” he said.

In addition to keynote addresses and contemporary military forums featuring senior Army leaders, An-

nual Meeting attendees also will be able to view Warriors Corner and Innovators Corner presentations, visit more than 700 exhibits and network with industry and military leaders.

Also scheduled are several award presentations, including the winners of the Best Squad Competition, NCO and Soldier of the Year and the Marshall Medal, AUSA’s highest award for selfless service to the country.

This year’s Marshall Medal, in

commemoration of the Army’s 250th birthday, is being awarded to Army recipients of the Medal of Honor, the nation’s highest award for valor.

The annual meeting is free, but registration is required. Some seated events require separate reservations and may have a fee.

Updated information will be available here. You can register here. Housing registration is available here.

## New Close Combat Assault Ration now available for troops



The Close Combat Assault Ration is a new, lightweight, energy-packed, nutrient-dense individual field ration featuring three menu choices that significantly reduces the volume and weight of rations warfighters have to carry. (U.S. ARMY PHOTO)

Troops now have a lightweight, nutrient-dense individual field ration available through the Defense Logistics Agency Troop Support, according to an Army news release.

“We have a longstanding saying in the food world that it’s not nutrition if it’s not eaten,” Erin Gaffney-Stomberg, combat feeding division chief at the U.S. Army Combat Capabilities Development Command Soldier Center, said in the release.

“It’s critical that optimal nutrition is supplied to warfighters when and where they need it, and in a form that looks, smells and tastes good and is safe,” Gaffney-Stomberg said.

Smaller and less bulky than the MRE and the First Strike Ration, the new ration, called the Close Combat Assault Ration, was created with the goal of supporting small units during operations in austere environments where they need to sustain themselves for seven to 10 days with little to no resupply, according to the release.

Currently, the Close Combat Assault Ration can sustain semi-independent small units for five days with resupply and can be a sole source of nutrition for up to 10 days.

Balancing the ration’s nutrition to fuel warfighting readiness is es-

sential because “negative energy balance, or the inability to consume enough calories to meet metabolic demands, is a threat to warfighter performance,” James McClung, the military nutrition division chief, said in the release.

Studies showed the new ration “did not adversely affect physical performance,” McClung said.

“As the Army and DoD continue to seek ways to optimize warfighter performance and lethality, evidence indicates that the [Close Combat Assault Ration] is a promising option for short-term missions where it is crucial to minimize the logistical burden while maximizing energy intake and maintaining warfighter performance,” he said.

Ultimately, the Close Combat Assault Ration will lighten soldiers’ loads and free up more space for ammunition, water and medical supplies, Gaffney-Stomberg said.

“This is a significant improvement in capability for contested operational environments,” she said. “This ration will replace the [First Strike Ration], and the 39% reduction in volume and 17% reduction in weight as compared to the [First Strike Ration] translates to warfighters being able to now carry five days’ worth of nutrition in a three-day footprint.”

# AUSAExtra

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**MEMBERSHIP RATES.** To celebrate the U.S. Army’s 250th birthday, from April 1, 2025, to Dec. 31, 2025, membership rates are reduced to a five-year Premium rate of \$50 and a two-year Premium rate of \$30. Lifetime membership is \$250. A special Premium rate of \$10 for two years is open to E1-E4 and cadets only. Two-year Basic membership with select benefits is free. Learn more at [www.ausa.org/join](http://www.ausa.org/join).

## PERK OF THE WEEK



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## Army faces unique logistics challenges in Indo-Pacific

**U**nderscoring the importance of joint logistics in the Indo-Pacific, the return of large-scale war in Ukraine “has been a wake-up call for the U.S. joint force,” according to a new paper published by the Association of the U.S. Army.

“After two decades of fighting in relatively permissive environments, DoD faces demands to modernize logistics as it prepares for possible conflict with the People’s Liberation Army in the Indo-Pacific,” Charles McEnany writes. “The U.S. Army, the joint force’s ‘backbone’ in the region, is leading this logistics transformation.”

In “Contested Logistics in the Indo-Pacific: Joint Sustainment Through Positional Advantage,” McEnany contends that the role of land power in the Indo-Pacific is “critical but often overlooked” and “sets the conditions for other services to bring their unique capabilities fully to bear.”

In his paper, McEnany, a national security analyst at AUSA who has a master’s in security policy studies from George Washington University, argues that the Indo-Pacific presents “interrelated logistics challenges,” including scale, topography and adversary capabilities, that distinguish it from other regions.

Since it was established in 2023,



Col. Ned Holt, center, chief logistics officer for Eighth Army, visits U.S. Army Materiel Support Command–Korea July 10 to consolidate ideas during a Combined Ground Logistics Committee Workshop. (U.S. ARMY/CHONG MIN PAK)

the Army’s Contested Logistics Cross-Functional Team will support the fight through precision sustainment, human-machine integration, advanced power and demand reduction, according to McEnany.

Knowing that “demand for materiel will outpace supply” during a large-scale conflict in the Indo-Pacific, the Army’s cross-functional team is using artificial intelligence for a proactive approach to sustainment.

Using AI more proactively “can not only provide the Army with the ability to identify what forces require, how much of it and where they need

it (precision sustainment) but also enable the anticipation of these demands (predictive sustainment),” McEnany writes.

There is no silver bullet for mastering contested logistics, McEnany writes. “Contested logistics is not so much a problem to be ‘solved’ as it is a problem that DoD must continuously manage. Adversaries will persistently probe new ways to disrupt sustainment,” he writes. “The Army, DoD, Congress and industry must act urgently to build on current progress.”

To succeed in the Indo-Pacific, the Army will need to position its forces strategically while also utilizing the Contested Logistics Cross-Functional Team’s innovations.

“The Indo-Pacific represents the most challenging logistical environment the U.S. military has faced in decades. Its vast distances, difficult terrain and contested domains require logistics and sustainment to be a top priority for the joint force,” McEnany writes. “As the Indo-Pacific faces the risk of great power conflict for the first time since World War II, whether the U.S. military and its partners can maintain the long-standing strategic ‘order’ may depend just as much on logistics.”

[Read the paper here.](#)



Sgt. 1st Class Mohammed Awal Ismail with the 8th Theater Sustainment Command works to load military vehicles and equipment in June at south Bandiana in Victoria, Australia, in preparation for exercise Talisman Sabre 25. (U.S. ARMY/SGT. DEVIN DAVIS)



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	EVENT	MEMBER PER PERSON*	NON-MEMBER PER PERSON**
13 OCT MONDAY	MG Robert G. Moorhead National Guard and Army Reserve Breakfast	\$75	\$95
	Best Squad, NCO, and Soldier of the Year Recognition Luncheon	\$100	\$120
	AUSA President's Reception	\$100	\$125
14 OCT TUESDAY	Dwight David Eisenhower Luncheon	\$100	\$120
	Army National Guard and Reserve Reception	\$65	\$85
15 OCT WEDNESDAY	George Catlett Marshall Memorial Award Reception and Dinner	\$175	\$190

Save up to 35% off tickets as a Premium Member—visit [www.ausa.org/join](http://www.ausa.org/join).

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\*\*Non-Member Pricing: AUSA Basic Members, Non-Members

QUESTIONS? [AnnualMeetingOperations@ausa.org](mailto:AnnualMeetingOperations@ausa.org)

## AUSA books showcase stories of Army tankers at war

**W**e are entering the dog days of summer as July gives way to August. Whether at the beach, in the field or just crossing a parking lot in between air-conditioned climes, the merciless sun brings to mind Lawrence of Arabia crossing the Nefud as we struggle to deal with the oppressive heat.

Now, imagine spending these days inside a tank.

Cramped inside a sealed metal box with other soldiers and working machinery, tankers could face temperatures up to 130 degrees Fahrenheit. Metal hulls could get hot enough to blister skin, and crews constantly faced dehydration and the threat of heat stroke.

Modern tanks have air conditioning systems to help regulate temperatures and protect the crews and the electronics, but even when functioning properly, things can get uncomfortable.

Having trouble imagining what it's like? The Association of the U.S. Army's Book Program includes many titles to bring you into the tanker's world.

Tanks made their debut in the first World War, with then-Capt. George Patton leading the way for the U.S. Tank Corps. This part of the famed general's story is told in *Blood, Guts, and Grease: George S. Patton in World War I* by Jon Mikolashek. To widen the scope, editor Lawrence Kaplan collects the experiences of the first men inside the machines in *Pershing's Tankers: Personal Accounts of the AEF Tank Corps in World War I*.

World War II is often regarded as the epitome of armored warfare. The book *1,271 Days a Soldier: The Diaries and Letters of Colonel H.E. Gardiner as an Armored Officer in World War II* provides a firsthand view of the U.S. involvement in the war, while *Patton's Photographs: War as He Saw It* by Kevin Hymel offers a visual take on the conflict.



Soldiers operate M4 Sherman tanks in Europe during World War II. (U.S. ARMY PHOTO)

The AUSA Book Program also offers other perspectives on the war. Titles such as *Panzer Operations: Germany's Panzer Group 3 During the Invasion of Russia, 1941* and *Panzer Tactics: Tank Operations in the East, 1941-42* show German experiences. The Soviet General Staff series includes a volume on the biggest tank battle in history with *The Battle of Kursk: The Red Army's Defensive Operations and Counter-Offensive, July-August 1943*.

Vietnam is usually thought of as an infantryman's war, but Don Snedeker shows how armored forces were

an integral part of the conflict with *The Blackhorse in Vietnam: The 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment in Vietnam and Cambodia, 1966-1972* and *Blackhorse Tales: Stories of 11th Armored Cavalry Troopers at War*.

*Heavy Metal: A Tank Company's Battle to Baghdad* brings the tanker story up to the global war on terror. Author Jason Conroy was a company commander in Task Force 1-64 of the 3rd Infantry Division's 2nd Brigade Combat Team, at the tip of the Army's spear and one of the first elements into Baghdad.

Finally, for readers seeking a comprehensive history of the American armored experience in a two-volume set, Steven Zaloga offers a fully illustrated overview with *US Battle Tanks 1917-1945* and *US Battle Tanks 1946-2025*.

The second volume of the set recently won a 2024 Army Historical Foundation Distinguished Writing Award in the reference category.

Please visit [www.ausa.org/books](http://www.ausa.org/books) to order these and other titles in the AUSA Book Program. Use the promo code SUM25AUSA for select member discounts when purchasing directly through the publisher links.

**Joseph Craig** is AUSA's Book Program director.





# Chapter sponsors dinner event for Fisher House guests

**O**n July 9, the Association of the U.S. Army’s Suncoast chapter in Tampa, Florida, hosted an event in support of guests at the James A. Haley Veterans’ Hospital Fisher House.

During the evening, chapter Community Partner Vino E Pasta provided meals and dessert for more than 30 guests, served by AUSA chapter members and other

Suncoast

volunteers. “Members of our community came together to serve the guests at Fisher House, fostering a sense of camaraderie and support,” said Marilyn Westropp, the chapter president.

The chapter was honored to be joined by members of the BLK-OPS Foundation, a nonprofit that aims to inspire young people by sharing the experiences of U.S. special operations veterans, Westropp said.

Located near military and VA medical centers, Fisher Houses provide a “home away from home” for families of military and veteran pa-



Marilyn Westropp, left, president of AUSA's Suncoast chapter, and other volunteers prepare to serve dinner to guests at the Fisher House in Tampa, Florida. (AUSA PHOTO)

tients undergoing medical treatment. The locations offer free accommodation while a loved one is hospitalized, saving military families more than \$650 million, according to the Fisher House Foundation, which constructs and oversees the residences.

The highlight of the evening was the insightful tour of the Fisher Houses in Tampa, Westropp said. “It’s truly heartening to witness the impactful work and support provided by such initiatives in our community,” she said.

## Eagle Chapters

**The following chapters attained Eagle status for June by showing positive membership growth. The number of consecutive months of growth since July 1, 2024, is shown in parentheses.**

Central Texas (12)	GEN Creighton W. Abrams (9)	Western New York (8)
First In Battle (12)	Joshua Chamberlain (9)	Last Frontier (7)
Puerto Rico (12)	Las Vegas-John C. Fremont (9)	Northern New York-Fort Drum (7)
Houston Metroplex (11)	Northern New Jersey (9)	Rhode Island (7)
Central Virginia (10)	PFC William Kenzo Nakamura (9)	Guam (6)
Fort Knox (10)	Tucson-Goyette (9)	Polar Bear (6)
Gem State (10)	COL Edward Cross (8)	GEN Joseph W. Stilwell (5)
Marne (10)	CPL Bill McMillan-Bluegrass (8)	GEN William C. Westmoreland (5)
San Diego (10)	Ethan Allen (8)	Hellenic (4)
Sunshine (10)	Greater Philadelphia (Penn & Franklin) (8)	Lake Cumberland-PVT Chris Guillen (2)
Central California (9)	Silicon Valley (8)	
Fort Leonard Wood-Mid Missouri (9)		

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