



Army Chief of Staff Gen. Mark A. Milley, right, congratulates Army Secretary Mark T. Esper during his farewell ceremony at the Pentagon as Esper's wife, Leah, applauds. (U.S. ARMY/EBONI EVERSONMYART)

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## Esper's farewell: 'Stay focused on mission'

As he bid farewell, now former Secretary of the Army Mark T. Esper said he was proud of the Army's many accomplishments and confident his successor, Acting Secretary Ryan D. McCarthy, "will do an excellent job."

The next key changes in Army leadership will take place Friday, when Gen. James C. McConville succeeds Gen. Mark A. Milley as Army chief of staff and Command Sgt. Maj. Michael A. Grinston succeeds Sgt. Major of the Army Daniel A. Dailey as the Army's senior enlisted adviser.

Sworn in July 23 as the 27th secretary of defense, Esper urged uniformed and civilian workers to "stay focused on your mission, remain steadfast in your pursuit of excellence and always do the right thing."

At a July 24 farewell from the Army ceremony, Esper was awarded the U.S. Army Leadership Award and



Acting Army Secretary Ryan D. McCarthy will likely take over the post full-time. (AUSA PHOTO)

Department of Defense Medal for Distinguished Public Service.

He praised Army soldiers and civilians for their expertise and dedication, and said he wasn't completely abandoning the Army.

"I'll be down the hall," he said, promising to keep an eye on things.

Esper is a retired Army lieutenant colonel who spent 10 years on active duty and then 11 years combined in

the Army National Guard and Army Reserve.

His service included leading soldiers in wartime and peace in command and staff assignments around the globe.

Undersecretary of the Army McCarthy became acting Army secretary on July 23 with Esper's move to the top Pentagon post.

President Donald Trump announced earlier this year that he intends to nominate McCarthy for the permanent Army secretary post.

McCarthy said people shouldn't expect many changes.

"No policies or priorities are changing," he said. "We are going to continue, our heads down, and continue to march on the same azimuth."

Like Esper, McCarthy is an Army veteran. He served from 1997 to 2002, including a deployment in Afghanistan with the 75th Ranger Regiment.

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## Military consumers average higher losses to scams

**M**ilitary personnel and their families have a higher average rate of loss to scammers and other marketplace fraud due to their unique lifestyle, according to a recent report from the Better Business Bureau.

The report, *Military Consumers & Marketplace Trust: An Analysis of Marketplace Challenges Facing the Military Community*, looked at the more than 28,000 business complaints and 5,000 scam reports submitted to the BBB by military consumers in 2018.

The report then compared those to reports from all consumers in the U.S. and Canada.

Military consumers reported losing a median of \$200 when falling victim to a scam, 32% higher than the \$152 reported by all consumers in 2018.

“Trust is vitally important in the military community,” Melissa Bittner, who manages the BBB’s Military &



Military consumers are frequent targets due to their unique lifestyle. (U.S. ARMY PHOTO) Veterans Initiative, said in a press release. “Knowing which businesses military families can trust while navigating life in the military is essential, because scammers prey on individuals who must make quick purchasing decisions.”

During permanent change-of-station moves, military consumers are often forced to make quicker purchas-

ing decisions compared to civilians.

Military consumers also filed more complaints about securing and maintaining their homes, moving, and purchases related to relocation than the general population, and they reported losing money at higher rates to home-improvement scammers.

Additionally, relocation can make finding secure employment a challenge for military spouses and other family members.

“Employment scams were the riskiest scams for military consumers, as they were for all consumers in 2018,” said Melissa Lanning Trumpower, executive director of the BBB Institute for Marketplace Trust. “The difference is that for military consumers the median losses reported were \$2,460—more than double that of all consumers.”

To view the full report, click here: <https://www.bbb.org/MilitaryReport>.

## Program combining active, Guard units likely to continue

**T**he Army is likely to continue a pilot program that pairs active-duty and reserve component units to build readiness and strengthen unit cohesion across the force, the new director of the Army National Guard said.

The Associated Units Program, launched in 2016, was designed to test whether combining units across the components would increase readiness and improve relationships and unit cohesion.

The pilot program was to run for three years, with senior Army leaders deciding on the program by Sept. 30.

So far, the program has been so successful that leaders plan to recommend it continue, said Lt. Gen. Daniel R. Hokanson, who was sworn in as director of the Army National Guard on June 21.

For the pilot, soldiers in 11 active-duty and 13 mostly Army National Guard units donned one another’s shoulder sleeve insignia, and, in a cou-



The Associated Units Program increases readiness and improves relationships by pairing active-duty and reserve component units. (U.S. ARMY/CAPT. JO NEDERHOED)

ple of cases, the Guard unit assumed the role of higher headquarters.

Despite the increased number of training days during the pilot, especially for the Guard units, the AUP has been popular and the desired results have been achieved.

“We’ve had some very positive feedback, and our recommendation is to

continue the AUP under a different name,” Hokanson said

Hokanson said he was unsure what the new name would be but noted that some adjustments were likely, such as discontinuing the 36th Infantry Division’s role as higher headquarters for the 10th Mountain Division’s 3rd Brigade Combat Team.

# Trump signs bipartisan budget deal; appropriations deadline looms

By Mark Haaland

**W**elcome to the congressional August recess.

On Aug. 2, President Trump signed into law a budget deal that puts the era of budget caps and the threat of sequestration behind us.

Congress' success in passing the two-year bipartisan budget deal will hopefully set a course for funding the government without the fiscal brinkmanship of recent years.

The budget deal raises spending \$320 billion over current levels and lifts the debt ceiling for two years.

As a result of the deal, Sen. Richard Shelby, chairman of the Appropriations Committee, announced that he may package the fiscal 2020 defense, Labor-Health and Human Services-Education and Energy-Water spending bills in September as the first of a series of "mini-bus" appropriations.

The House passed its version of the defense appropriation back in late May.

So, the potential exists for the Senate to pass its version and conference both the House and Senate bills in time for the new fiscal year on Oct. 1.

Time is short, though, with only 13 work days remaining for the Senate before the new fiscal year.

**Government Affairs**

The Association of the U.S. Army remains optimistic.

And if we miss the mark, we expect the continuing resolution to be short in duration, perhaps a week or two, which would minimize the disruption on the Defense Department and the Army.

On another positive note, the House and Senate have both passed their versions of the National Defense Authorization Act.

The staffs are hard at work over the August recess to reach agreements on the differences between the two measures and prepare for the two committees to meet and conference the legislation when Congress returns in September.



Advocacy priorities for AUSA include supporting the Army's top priority of continuing to improve readiness and supporting Army modernization.

The House Armed Services Committee marked Army and Army National Guard operations and maintenance accounts, which are the near-term readiness accounts, down about 2% from the requested amounts.

We are encouraging for this to be restored as much as possible.

The good news is that both the House and Senate Armed Services Committees largely support the Army's modernization plans.

On Defense Health Reform, AUSA is recommending the NDAA conference adopt a House-included measure that would require more thorough planning and follow-up prior to implementing the proposed significant reductions to military medical positions and the transfer and consolidation of hospitals and clinics.

We support reform of the Defense Health System to improve health care, readiness and achieve efficiencies.

But we believe thorough planning and performance metrics to gauge the results are important.

Stay tuned for our next congressional update. Hopefully, we will be able to report continued progress on defense, military construction and Veterans Affairs appropriations, and the National Defense Authorization Act.

**Mark Haaland** is AUSA's Government Affairs Director.

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**Gen. Carter F. Ham, USA, Ret.**  
President and CEO, AUSA

**Lt. Gen. Guy C. Swan III, USA, Ret.**  
Vice President, Education, AUSA

**Luc Dunn**  
Editor

**Desiree Hurlocker**  
Advertising Production and Fulfillment Manager

**Advertising Information Contact:**

Fox Associates Inc.  
116 W. Kinzie St. • Chicago, IL 60654  
Phone: 800-440-0231  
Email: [adinfo.rmy@foxrep.com](mailto:adinfo.rmy@foxrep.com)

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### PERK OF THE WEEK

**AUSA discount at Apple**

The AUSA member discount at Apple has been improved and now includes iPhone, the Apple Watch and iPods, as well as Macs and iPads. Now members get a 2%-10% discount on almost all of the products in the Apple Store. Visit [www.ausa.org/apple](http://www.ausa.org/apple) or mention the Association of the U.S. Army in the Apple Store. Military service will be confirmed for an additional discount in some cases.





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## AUSA chapter supports troops suffering from PTSD

The Gen. John W. Vessey Jr. chapter of the Association of the U.S. Army is working to help veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder by partnering with NightWare, an Apple Watch application that helps people suffering from traumatic nightmares to get a more restful night's sleep.

The partnership began when Sgt. Patrick Skluzacek, an Iraq War veteran, returned from active duty and began to battle sleep issues due to traumatic nightmares.

In an effort to help, Skluzacek's son, Tyler, then a 21-year-old college student, invented a smart watch app to treat his nightmares.

**Gen. John W. Vessey Jr.**

The app detects when a person enters a nightmare and intervenes by buzzing the watch to arouse the sleeper from the nightmare without completely waking them.

The application worked and has changed his life, Skluzacek said.

Skluzacek and his son wanted to share the discovery, so Tyler co-founded NightWare with Grady Hannah, a Vessey chapter member.

"The Vessey chapter and NightWare listen and take returning soldiers' PTSD to heart," Hannah said.



Tyler Skluzacek, right, created the NightWare smart watch application to help his father, Patrick, an Iraq War veteran who suffers from PTSD. (COURTESY PHOTO)

NightWare is currently conducting clinical trials at the Minneapolis and St. Cloud, Minnesota, Veterans Affairs centers with patients with PTSD and nightmare disorder. They hope to publish findings in 2020.

The group also is conducting a nationwide trial open to anyone over 18.

The trial application process can be found here: <https://bit.ly/2Jlz36t>.

NightWare has worked for more than 30 vets with PTSD and has received official Breakthrough Status

from the FDA and a \$100,000 grant from the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs' Support Our Troops fund.

The AUSA Vessey chapter continues to support NightWare and encourages all AUSA chapters to help get the word out about this fantastic solution for soldiers struggling with PTSD.

To learn more, contact Hannah, who is the CEO of NightWare, at [grady@nightware.com](mailto:grady@nightware.com) or visit their website at <https://night-ware.com/>.

## Chapter leaders attend training at AUSA headquarters

Almost 30 chapter leaders gathered for New Chapter President Training July 31-Aug. 4 at the Association of the U.S. Army's headquarters in Arlington, Virginia.

The 27 volunteers traveled from all over the U.S. and from as far away as South Korea and Germany.

During the training sessions, they learned about their duties and responsibilities as chapter presidents, shared best practices and talked about how to improve engagement with their members and local communities.



Chapter presidents are briefed at AUSA headquarters by retired Lt. Gen. Patricia McQuiston, AUSA's vice president of membership and meetings. (AUSA PHOTO)