



A soldier at Fort Hood, Texas, participates in the Army's limited user assessment test for the Flexible Eating and Expanded Dining initiative. (U.S. ARMY/LACEY REINOEHL)

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Army tests new flexible dining initiative

The Army is piloting its Flexible Eating and Expanded Dining initiative at Fort Hood, Texas, allowing soldiers to use their meal entitlements outside of traditional Army-operated dining facilities for the first time.

During the limited user assessment test from Aug. 11–25, 200 soldiers from the 61st Quartermaster Battalion will be able to swipe their Common Access Card at select Army and Air Force Exchange Services vendors. Troops can choose from special menus with items approved by food service experts and dietitians at locations such as Freshens, Qdoba, Burger King, Starbucks and Subway, according to an Army news release.

The special menus also were formed based on affordability in accordance with the set meal entitlement ranges, the Army release said. Soldiers participating in the test will be able to purchase multiple meal types—breakfast, lunch and dinner—in a single visit, using separate transactions for each.

The assessment comes in response to soldier feedback. It is not meant to replace traditional dining facilities but add options for soldiers, said Lt. Gen. Chris Mohan, deputy commanding general and acting commander of Army Materiel Command. “We’ve expected soldiers in barracks to follow the same eating patterns that we have maintained for decades,” Mo-

han said, according to the release. “We were swinging behind the pitch and failing them. We are on the cusp of totally changing that.”

The Flexible Eating and Expanded Dining, or FEED, initiative supplements other expanded options in installation dining, including grab-and-go kiosks, food trucks and bistros; a growing meal prep program; and a campus-style dining venue pilot that will transform the traditional dining facility model.

While the Fort Hood assessment is primarily to test system functionality, it also will provide a snapshot into soldier preferences and emphasize accessibility, said Rick Bennett,

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AUSA launches new Corporate Leadership Program

From Aug. 12–14, the Association of the U.S. Army's Center for Leadership hosted Leonardo DRS for a three-day professional development event—marking the official launch of the AUSA Corporate Leadership Program.

This event was the culmination of a year of planning and collaboration with human resources directors at Leonardo DRS. The program enhances internal leadership development by translating Army leadership principles into the corporate environment. As an institution built to develop leaders, the Army offers a uniquely powerful foundation for cultivating leadership in business.

Nineteen mid- to senior-level leaders, identified as high performers and future successors across all lines of business, participated in the immersive experience. The agenda featured six tailored workshops led by a diverse group of facilitators, including retired Army leaders, corporate professionals and subject-matter experts.

Retired Gen. Dave Perkins, the Center for Leadership's distinguished chair, led a session on effective delegation through empowerment, emphasizing how the Army's concept of mission command translates to corporate audiences. He stressed the importance of communicating the "why" behind decisions



Retired Gen. Dave Perkins, the AUSA Center for Leadership's distinguished chair, addresses the association's inaugural Corporate Leadership Program. (AUSA PHOTO)

and empowering teams to contribute insight and solve problems.

Jacqueline Hooper, assistant professor and lead for professional development programs at the Air Force Academy, underscored the importance of emotional intelligence in leadership. She noted that adapting communication styles is essential for effectively supporting employees in a variety of situations.

Retired Command Sgt. Maj. Tabitha Gavia, a Center for Leadership education fellow and director of operations at Merit International, led a session on leading with character. She highlighted the need to recognize and mitigate personal stress

triggers, because how you behave under pressure is how people will remember you.

Additional facilitators included retired Col. Scott Halstead, director of the AUSA Center for Leadership, who facilitated a session on accountability in leadership. Leadership education fellows retired Lt. Gen. Tom James and retired Brig. Gen. Jennifer Buckner delivered sessions focused on cultivating a growth-oriented culture to build cohesive teams and adaptive leadership, respectively.

Participants also experienced AUSA's signature "Inspiration to Lead" journey on the National Mall, connecting workshop themes to powerful stories of leadership at national memorials. "The speakers made clear and effective connections between the impact that leadership has on our warfighters and the potential for lives saved through effective leadership," one participant said. "It was an incredible experience and changes the way I think about how my actions and influence can affect so many lives."

The program's value was summed up by another participant. "This experience was very informative; the best leadership training course I've attended because it was intimate, informative, provided tools for application and offered great networking for mentors."

Session Two of the Leonardo DRS program is scheduled for June 2026 in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

This inaugural program sets the stage for future partnerships, bringing the Army's legacy of leadership into the heart of corporate America.

Learn more about the AUSA Corporate Leadership Program and schedule an introductory meeting by visiting www.ausa.org/center-for-leadership/corporate-leadership.

Heather Calvert is the AUSA Center for Leadership's corporate leadership specialist.

Meet the AUSA headquarters staff

Joel Theroux

Senior Financial Budget Manager

Joel Theroux has been with AUSA since January 2024. Married for almost two years, he and his wife welcomed their son in May. Joel is an avid supporter of all Minnesota professional sports and Virginia Tech sports and is a self-described "huge nerd" who has enjoyed nerd culture and video games since before he started kindergarten.



Army pursuing lighter, more mobile technology for space capabilities



Soldiers assigned to the 1st Multi-Domain Task Force fill a high-altitude balloon during exercise Balikatan 25 in the Philippines. (U.S. ARMY/STAFF SGT. BRANDON RICKERT)

As the U.S. competes against global adversaries in the space domain, the Army needs continued investment in technology to deliver capabilities to warfighters, the commander of Army Space and Missile Defense Command said.

“China and Russia are competing heavily in space ... that’s a competition that we can’t allow them to win,” Lt. Gen. Sean Gainey said Aug. 11 during a *Defense News* webinar. “We need to continue our investments and continue to evolve the capability to be able to meet the needs of our warfighters on the ground. So, we have to be able to deliver capability that allows our forces to be able to maneuver, shoot and communicate without impediment from space effects.”

Space and Missile Defense Command is reorganizing the command, modernizing air and missile defense and delivering space capabilities to troops, Gainey said. It also is augmenting close-fight activities to get “capabilities down to the tactical edge” and support troops in key areas throughout the world, he said.

The command also is embracing

new technologies, such as high-altitude balloons, that could operate well in contested or denied environments. Soldiers want capabilities that are “smaller, lighter, more mobile,” Gainey said, “so [we’re] taking the capabilities we have now, leveraging technology to make it smaller and mobile, and then the warfighter is able to push it down to the tactical edge.”

He added, “When you’re in a contested and denied environment, you’re looking at, ‘How can we leverage other platforms to provide some of the same or similar capabilities so we continue to have uninterrupted communication, continue to leverage ... maneuver under obscurity?’”

The Army will continue to invest in its space capabilities and adapt to meet the needs of troops, Gainey said, citing as an example the creation of a new 40D space operations MOS.

Creating a cohort of Army space experts, via the new MOS, “is a natural progression to keep up with the changing warfare environment and leverage those next-gen ... technologies to be able to put our soldiers in an advantage on the battlefield,” he said.

AUSAExtra

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Dining options

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senior logistics management specialist in Army Materiel Command's Army Food Innovation and Transformation Division.

"If a soldier can't make it to a dining facility, that soldier now has somewhere to go to get a meal without forfeiting their entitlements," Bennett said, according to the news release.

Throughout the test, representatives from Materiel Command, AAFES, the 61st Quartermaster Battalion's human resources representatives and others will be available to troubleshoot, assist soldiers and collect feedback.

While the Army wants soldiers gathering in dining facilities where they also build camaraderie, it can't expect troops to eat in those facilities three times a day, seven days a week, Mohan said, adding that transforming the way the Army feeds its soldiers is crucial.



Soldiers from the 61st Quartermaster Battalion eat at Qdoba during the Flexible Eating and Expanded Dining initiative pilot at Fort Hood, Texas. (U.S. ARMY/LACEY REINOEHL)

"When soldiers pass up that benefit and that entitlement every single day, we fail them. We've expected soldiers to figure it out. We are changing that," he said, according to the

release. "It's imperative that the Army gets this right. Our goal is to ensure that soldiers remain the best-sustained, best-fed and fittest fighting force in the world."



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Our Members Are the Mission

Families play significant role in Army customs, traditions

Codes, rituals and symbols shape the military world. At the heart of this world are Army customs, courtesies and traditions, which are more than formal practices—they are the living bonds connecting generations of soldiers and their families.

This month, we want to highlight the significance of customs, courtesies and traditions and celebrate the vital role families play in preserving and living these values. You can also learn more in the Association of the U.S. Army publication *Customs, Courtesies & Traditions of the United States Army: A Primer for Family Members* by Ginger Perkins, an AUSA family fellow who thrived as

Family Readiness

an Army spouse for 38 years through more than 20 moves around the world and multiple combat deployments.

Customs are time-honored practices passed down through repeated use that shape daily interactions and the character of Army life. While not always written into regulations, they are woven into the fabric of service, learned by both soldiers and their families.

Examples of Army customs include reveille and retreat ceremonies, which mark the raising and lowering of the flag; formal tea gatherings to honor incoming and outgoing senior spouses; and blessings, invocations and benedictions given by Army chaplains at events.

These customs develop naturally over time, often shaped by the involvement of families who provide steadfast support.

Courtesies are the outward expressions of respect and consideration that reinforce the Army's values. For both soldiers and their families, courtesies strengthen the bonds of mutual respect and teamwork, creating a welcoming and supportive environment.

Examples of Army courtesies in-



Sarah Soyka, wife of incoming garrison commander Col. Michael Soyka, receives yellow roses from a soldier—a long-standing Army tradition—during the garrison change of command ceremony Aug. 6 at Fort Bliss, Texas. (U.S. ARMY/DAVID POE)

clude the hand salute—a gesture of respect, integrity and professionalism—and volunteering to improve the quality of life in local Army communities. Courtesies are important because they are the foundation of a culture where all soldiers and families feel valued and included.

Traditions are the ceremonies,

symbols and rituals that connect service members and their families to the Army's rich history. These traditions deepen the sense of belonging and continuity for everyone in the Army community.

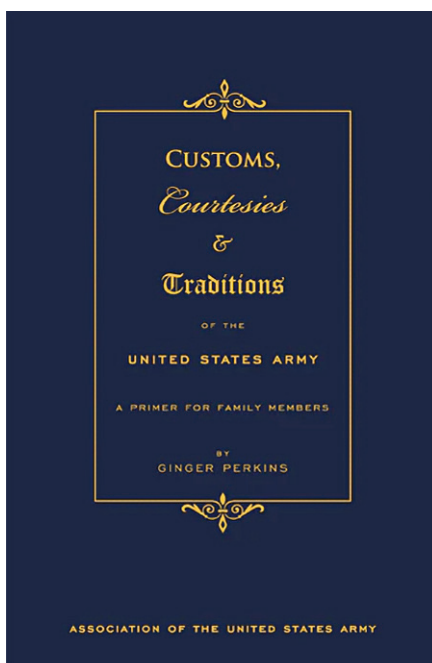
Notable Army traditions include change of command ceremonies, celebrating the Army birthday on June 14, unit mottos and songs and formal military balls and dinners.

Traditions are kept alive not only by those in uniform but by the families who participate and carry these rituals forward.

Families are the heart of the Army community, offering encouragement and stability to soldiers through the challenges of military life. The role of families is inseparable from Army customs, courtesies and traditions.

By taking part in ceremonies, social events and daily routines, families help build a strong network of mutual support. This sense of community is essential for morale, especially during deployments or times of change.

Cindy Risch is AUSA's Family Readiness program manager.



Chapter provides car leases for two exceptional soldiers

Two outstanding soldiers at Fort Hood, Texas, will have new automobiles for the remainder of their time at the installation, thanks to an initiative from the Association of the U.S. Army's Central Texas chapter.

Spc. Leonyn Ojeda and Staff Sgt. Joel Kayoka, Soldier and NCO of the Year for III Corps and Fort Hood, received the new vehicles July 31 from the AUSA chapter and Killeen Auto Group, a chapter Community Partner.

"This is one of the best times to be a member of AUSA, because we get

Central Texas

to recognize excellence—excellence in our NCO corps and in our soldier corps," said Chris Albus, the chapter president, as reported by the *Fort Hood Herald*.

Each year, the chapter and Killeen Auto Group award the winners of the III Corps Soldier and NCO of the Year competition with a new car of their choice.

Ojeda, who is assigned to the 9th Hospital Center, 1st Medical Brigade, chose a black Ford Mustang. Ojeda has been in the Army four years and recently reenlisted with a five-year contract.

"I always wanted to be in the Army," Ojeda said, as reported by the *Fort Hood Herald*. "I have soldiers under me, and I wanted to motivate them ... so I could show them that you've got to want it to stay in the Army."

Ojeda is in communications but soon will be training at Joint Base San Antonio to be a veterinary technician. He said that he hopes to eventually become NCO of the Year after he gets promoted.

Col. Scott Preusker and Command Sgt. Maj. Osmil Sazon, Ojeda's command team with the 9th Hospital Center, attended the event. Sazon said that the Best Squad competition consists of an array of difficult tasks, including physical fitness, panels, land navigation and chemical de-



Killeen Auto Group managing partner Joshua Smith, left, and Chris Albus, rear, president of AUSA's Central Texas chapter, present new cars to Spc. Leonyn Ojeda, right, and Staff Sgt. Joel Kayoka, Soldier and NCO of the Year for III Corps and Fort Hood. (AUSA PHOTO)

fense drills. "Our team was No. 3, but Ojeda was the soldier over all," Sazon said. "Anybody can take it, but he was the winner for the whole III Corps."

Kayoka, who was joined by his family at the presentation ceremony, selected a Hyundai Santa Fe. He is a combat engineer with the 36th Engineer Brigade who has orders to move to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, in the coming months.

He said he had only been doing

his job and wasn't particularly seeking recognition as NCO of the Year. "I don't think I was aiming for it, I think it just kind of fell into my lap. I was just leading my soldiers, doing everything I needed to do, and they just made this announcement that I would be winning," Kayoka said, as reported by the *Fort Hood Herald*.

Even though it will only be for a short time, "I appreciate the blessing," Kayoka said of the car.



Spc. Leonyn Ojeda, Soldier of the Year for III Corps and Fort Hood, smiles in his new Ford Mustang, courtesy of AUSA's Central Texas chapter. (AUSA PHOTO)

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