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Maj. Gen. Christopher Donahue, commander of the 82nd Airborne Division, was the final American service member to depart Afghanistan. (U.S. ARMY/MASTER SGT. ALEX BURNETT)

US troops withdraw from Afghanistan

Twenty years of combat operations and a Herculean evacuation mission came to an end just before midnight on Monday with the full withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan.

The end of America's longest war culminated with a massive evacuation mission, with thousands of U.S. troops, including paratroopers from the 82nd Airborne Division and soldiers from the 10th Mountain Division, deploying to Hamid Karzai International Airport in Afghanistan's capital of Kabul.

The last American soldier to leave Afghanistan was Maj. Gen. Christopher Donahue, 82nd Airborne Division commander, who stepped onto a waiting C-17 with a final message to

troops that he was proud of them for a "job well done."

Retired Gen. Carter Ham, president and CEO of the Association of the U.S. Army, said, "As America's military role in Afghanistan concludes, I suspect many of you share my mixed emotions."

"My heart breaks for the Afghans left behind to an uncertain future, especially those who served with, supported and even fought alongside American troops over the past 20 years," he said. "But I am so proud of all the troops who served in Afghanistan since those early days in October of 2001."

Americans should never forget that the soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines did their duty, Ham said.

"Our nation called, they answered that call to duty in a far-off land under often harsh conditions, and 2,641 gave their all," he said. "We owe them and their families a debt we can never repay, but we pledge to never forget."

Ham added, "Our nation is divided today on so many things that won't be easily resolved, but the Association of the U.S. Army hopes we can remain united behind supporting our soldiers and their families, some of whom are still suffering today from grief, wounds, sadness and even anger as the U.S. mission in Afghanistan ends in an unsatisfying way. The bonds of military service and sacrifice have been strong for 246 years, and we need to all be strong today."

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SMA: Caring for people is key aspect of Army readiness

Army efforts to take care of people are critical to maintaining readiness, the service's senior enlisted leader said.

"We need to look at our people as readiness and then we build up from there," Sgt. Maj. of the Army Michael Grinston said.

Speaking Tuesday at the Fires Conference 2021, a three-day virtual event hosted by the Fires Center of Excellence at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, Grinston emphasized the importance of the Army's People First focus.

"I don't think it's People First versus readiness," he said. "In the Army, our people are our readiness. If I'm a soldier and I need to come to work, and I'm worried about these other things, whether you know, I can't get child care for my family, I'm not physically ready ... [then] how can we be a ready Army?"

Grinston also talked about the importance of taking care of soldiers' mental health, saying the Army must continue to be proactive and continue to remove the stigma around seeking help.

"We work every day on our physical fitness," he said, "but are you working on your mental fitness every day?"

"I think the more we can get in



Sgt. Maj. of the Army Michael Grinston, center, discusses living conditions for soldiers after touring a barracks at Fort Hood, Texas. (U.S. ARMY/BLAIR DUPRE)

front of those issues before you have a catastrophic event, the better," Grinston added. "Every day in our units, I encourage you ... to take those few minutes to clear your mind and think of positive things that are happening in your life, because all those negative things will replay over and over throughout the day."

Taking care of soldiers will ensure the United States has the greatest Army in the world, Grinston said, using as an example the recent evacua-

tion mission in Afghanistan.

"Some people will question, 'Do we have the greatest Army in the world?' Absolutely," he said. "What other Army in the world can take a unit in 18 hours, deploy them to another country and hold an airfield, and then evacuate 120,000 people?"

As the Army looks to the future, it must continue to modernize the force, and that includes investing in long-range precision fires, Grinston said.

"The No. 1 priority is still long-range precision fires," he said. "We're not coming off that. We've done some incredible things, but we've got a long way to go with our long-range precision fires."

A career artilleryman, Grinston said he was proud to serve in his career field.

"I've always been an artilleryman, I'm very proud of that. I've never changed my MOS, 13 Bravo," Grinston said.

"I am so proud of what job I had and where I came from, and I appreciate being a part of this discussion. I'm proud of our Army, and I'm proud of all that you've done for your country in the last year."



Paratroopers from 2nd Battalion, 319th Field Artillery Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, engage Islamic State militants in Mosul, Iraq, in 2017. (U.S. ARMY/SGT. CHRISTOPHER BIGELOW)

Army review considers upgrades for Distinguished Service Cross medals



Left to right, Sgt. 1st Class Melvin Morris, Master Sgt. Jose Rodela and Sgt. Santiago Erevia had their Distinguished Service Cross medals upgraded to Medals of Honor in 2014 as part of the 'Valor 24' award review. (U.S. ARMY PHOTO)

The Army will review Distinguished Service Cross medals awarded to African American and Native American troops for their actions in World War II, Korea and Vietnam, the Pentagon announced.

The review, directed by Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin to all the services, will examine whether the recipients of the Service Crosses warrant the Medal of Honor.

The Distinguished Service Cross, which is awarded by the Army, the Navy Cross and the Air Force Cross are the nation's second-highest valor awards, behind only the Medal of Honor.

Austin directed the review "to ensure African American and Native American Service Cross recipients are afforded the same opportunities to have their valorous actions reviewed for possible upgrade to the Medal of Honor as previously afforded to their Asian American, Native American Pacific Islander, Jewish American and Hispanic American counterparts," the Pentagon said in an Aug. 6 statement.

While at least 3,498 U.S. service members have received the Medal of Honor throughout history, only 88 Af-

rican American troops were awarded the medal, according to a 2017 DoD article.

Previous awards reviews have resulted in upgrades for several veterans. In 2014, 24 Army veterans from World War II, Korea and Vietnam who had been awarded the Distinguished Service Cross received belated Medals of Honor in one of the largest Medal of Honor ceremonies in history.

Dubbed the Valor 24, these veterans' upgrades were the result of a review of Jewish American and Hispanic American award recipients.

During the review, records of several soldiers who were neither Jewish nor Hispanic were found to be worthy of the upgrade, according to the Army.

For this new review, the services must complete their work by Aug. 2, 2026. The Army, which has already reviewed Distinguished Service Cross awards for Black World War II veterans, will review such awards for African American soldiers from Korea and Vietnam.

It also will review Distinguished Service Cross awards for Native American veterans from World War II, Korea and Vietnam.

Austin's memo is available here.

AUSA Extra

Voice for the Army –
Support For the Soldier

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AUSA paper touts importance of long-range precision fires

Long-range precision rockets, missiles and munitions provide key capabilities for the U.S. joint force in competition, crisis and conflict, according to a new Association of the U.S. Army Spotlight report.

It was written by retired Lt. Gen. Stephen Lanza, a former I Corps commanding general who was involved in regionally aligned forces supporting the Indo-Pacific region, and retired Col. Daniel Roper, a career artilleryman who is AUSA's director of national security studies.

Their paper, *Fires for Effect: 10 Questions About Army Long-Range Precision Fires in the Joint Fight*, explains that long-range precision fires is the Army's No. 1 modernization priority in response to the ongoing demand signal from combatant commanders. They also explain that the Army has a big role in an area where the Air Force and Navy are also im-



Army long-range precision fires provides a critical capability demanded by combatant commanders to enable operations across warfighting domains. (U.S. ARMY PHOTO)

portant players.

"It is not about surface-based versus air-delivered, or manned versus unmanned, or Army versus Air Force versus Navy; it is about providing complementary options to joint force

commanders and creating multiple dilemmas for potential adversaries," they write.

"U.S. military forces are outgunned and outranged," the authors write, particularly noting progress made by Russian and Chinese military forces. Army long-range precision fires, enabled by a robust and resilient intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance architecture, provides a critical capability demanded by combatant commanders to enable operations in the air, sea, land, space and cyber domains.

The full paper is available here.

The Lanza-Roper paper was released just as the Army's Fires Conference 2021 began. The three-day virtual conference, which began Tuesday, includes discussions with senior Army leaders about air and missile defense, field artillery and long-range precision fires. Information on the conference is available here.

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Members save on clothing, antivirus software and more

By Susan Rubel

From antivirus protection to customized handbags, the Association of the U.S. Army offers members a variety of deals and savings.

We recently started a new discount program with McAfee. Members can now get a two-year subscription for trusted antivirus and privacy protection for up to 10 devices at \$19.99 a year—\$55 off the standard price.

Additionally, 70% of that amount is donated back to AUSA programs, so you're supporting scholarships and soldier, family and other programs through your purchase.

Authentically American

Authentically American has a new "Rise and Grind" T-shirt that I love. Made with sweat activated ink, the T-shirt's design changes when it's wet.

This one says "Rise and Grind" when dry. After you've put in the work and gotten it wet with sweat, it says "Mission Accomplished."

Member Benefits

The company has a variety of sweat tees available, including a "Go Army" shirt that turns into "Beat Navy" when wet. Use promo code AUSA20 for 20% off your order.

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Our Costco member benefit has been upgraded from a \$10 to \$20 Costco Shop Card to a \$30 card when you join online. It is one of the many discounts in the Abenity website for AUSA members. Join now at www.ausa.org/abenity.

To join Sam's Club, the best deal for AUSA members is through our entertainment deals discount site at www.ausa.org/entertain.

The membership is nearly half price, and you get \$15 off another purchase on the site, like tickets for movies, theme parks, water parks, concerts, virtual events and more.

Other offers on this members-only



R.Riveter, a company started by two military spouses, can create personalized handbags from your loved one's uniform, duffle bag or other materials. (COURTESY PHOTO)

site include a \$200 Visa card with an ADT Security Systems order and \$40 off Calm, the No. 1 app for meditation and sleep. For a limited time, you'll receive \$30 off your first purchase when you sign up.

Provengo

All AUSA members have access to Provengo, a government contractor offering deep discounts on top lifestyle and tactical gear. Their 70-plus brands include Yeti, 5.11 Tactical, Oakley, Under Armour, Costa Del Mar, Bajio Sunglasses, Crye Preci-

son, Danner and many more. Savings are up to 60%, and an exclusive deal for AUSA members provides an additional \$15 off with code AUSA15.

R.Riveter

If you're planning ahead for holiday presents, here's a great idea for a special gift.

You may have seen one of AUSA's affinity partners, R.Riveter, on the TV show *Shark Tank*. The company was started by two military spouses with the goal of providing meaningful employment for military spouses who move frequently.

One of my favorite R.Riveter products is the "Heirloom Collection," which transforms well-loved materials into stunning and unique bags.

You can send in a loved one's uniform, duffle bag or other materials to create a personalized handbag. Let R.Riveter know your preferences for leather color, bag size and what aspects of the material you want showcased for a handbag you'll love forever.

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The designs on Authentically American's sweat tees change when wet. (COURTESY PHOTO)

Susan Rubel is AUSA's Insurance and Affinity Programs Director.

Chapter donates school supplies for military children

School supplies including notebooks, pencils, glue and more were recently donated by the Association of the U.S. Army's National Training Center-High Desert chapter in Helendale, California, in support of a Back to School Bash held by the Fort Irwin Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation office.

"Members of the Fort Irwin community were so thankful that the chapter handed out free school supplies," the chapter said in a Facebook post.

At the event, service members and their children were able to receive free school supplies, play games and learn about on-post services.

**National
Training
Center-
High Desert**

"Events like these are all about building social connection and ensuring our families

build relationships based on church groups, youth groups, sports groups, spouses' groups" and recreation programs, said Brig. Gen. Curt Taylor, commanding general of the National Training Center and Fort Irwin.



Families at Fort Irwin, California's Back to School Bash pick up school supplies donated by AUSA's National Training Center-High Desert chapter. (U.S. ARMY/CASEY SLUSSER)

In addition to the AUSA chapter's contribution, more than 500 backpacks were distributed by the USO, and lunch bags were donated by The Villages at Fort Irwin apartment complex.

"Anything that brings together community is what we're really driv-

ing for. Building these community relationships is what makes this a great small town," Taylor said, according to an Army press release.

"We've all watched enough television this last year, and it's time to get out and be a part of the community," he said.

AUSA headquarters staff marks Women's Equality Day

The Association of the U.S. Army hosted a meeting Aug. 26 to mark Women's Equality Day.

The event commemorates the adoption just over a century ago of the 19th Amendment, which secured for women the right to vote. The historic 1920 passage of the 19th Amendment was the culmination of decades of struggle, and for many, the tide turned largely due to the courageous service of thousands of women during World War I, experts have said.

Today, about 74,100 women serve on active duty in the Army, and all military occupations are open to women, according to DoD data.

Service members are encouraged when they see women pursue opportunities that were previously unavailable, Sgt. Maj. Tres Bien Adams



First Lt. Jessica Pauley became the first female infantry officer in the Idaho National Guard last year. (U.S. ARMY/CRYSTAL FARRIS)

said in a video, produced by Regional Health Command Europe, that was shown during the AUSA event.

"Being able to see women graduate Ranger School or to go infantry basic and be successful is amazing, and I'm just in awe of what I watch

women achieve today in the Army," Adams said.

Nzinga Curry, AUSA's director of Education and Programs, said it's important to recognize the women who have served, especially those who paved the way for women in the Army.

"I think it's beautiful that we now recognize those who have served before us ... and have really paved the way for those who are to come," she said.

Women's Equality Day offers an opportunity to reflect on history and work toward furthering the progress that's been made, said retired Gen. Carter Ham, AUSA president and CEO.

"I think it is important to look back and remember history," Ham said. "It's also a great day to look forward and to remember that there is much yet to be done."

MARATHON WAR



LEADERSHIP IN COMBAT IN AFGHANISTAN

JEFFREY SCHLOESSER,
MAJOR GENERAL, US ARMY RETIRED



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