



President Donald Trump awards the Medal of Honor to Sgt. Maj. Thomas 'Patrick' Payne at the White House in Washington, D.C. (U.S. ARMY/SPC. ZACHERY PERKINS)

IN THIS ISSUE

VOLUME 2 NUMBER 20
SEPTEMBER 17, 2020

Senior Leader Fights Mental Health Stigma

3

Army Continues Push for Diversity, Equity

4

Family Readiness

AUSA Now Family Forums

6



Chapter Highlight

Fairfax-Lee

7

Ranger NCO receives Medal of Honor

Sgt. Maj. Thomas "Patrick" Payne, a special operations soldier who has deployed 17 times, received the Medal of Honor Sept. 11 for his role in a daring hostage rescue mission in 2015 in Iraq.

Payne, 36, received the nation's highest award for valor during a ceremony at the White House. He is the seventh service member—and second living recipient—to receive the Medal of Honor for actions in Iraq.

"You embody the righteous glory of American valor," President Donald Trump said to Payne during the ceremony. "We stand in awe of your heroic daring and gallant deeds."

Trump marveled at the "astounding" number of deployments Payne has served, adding that "today he joins the immortal company of our

most revered American heroes. Pat, you personify the motto, 'Rangers lead the way,' and you inspire us all."

Receiving the Medal of Honor is "an amazing responsibility," Payne said. "I look forward to serving as a guardian of the Medal of Honor and as a man who wears it well."

On Oct. 22, 2015, Payne, then a sergeant first class, was an assistant team leader on the mission to rescue more than 70 Iraqi hostages being held by the Islamic State group in a prison compound in the northern Iraq town of Hawija.

The mission, which included Kurdish Special Forces partners, took on added urgency when the special operations task force learned that freshly dug graves had been spotted, and commanders feared the hostages

would likely be executed soon.

"From that point, it was our duty to bring those men home," Payne said.

When his element arrived at the compound, "it's a complete brown-out, part of the compound was already in a pretty intense firefight," Payne said.

The NCO, who joined the Army in July 2002 and cites the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks as a defining moment that spurred him to serve, quickly led his team to clear their assigned building, freeing 38 hostages.

"You could see their faces light up," Payne said. "They've been liberated. Some are crying, some are excited. And in all that's going on, there's still an intense firefight going on in the next building. You can see the flames; you can hear the explosions."

See **Medal of Honor**, Page 5

CACI's Counter-UAS

EXPERTISE and **TECHNOLOGY**

Protect Our Forces



CACI
EVER VIGILANT

CACI is a National Security Company

www.caci.com

Military must ‘get over’ mental health misconceptions

A senior military leader is sharing his own story in a renewed effort to eliminate the stigma many troops feel when it comes to seeking behavioral health care.

“It took me 15 years to finally go ahead and identify it, and I did get help,” Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Ramon Colon-Lopez said Monday during an Association of the U.S. Army webinar.

By position, Colon-Lopez is the military’s most senior enlisted member.

“It’s very important for our young service members, and old, to go ahead and seek the help they need in order for them to remain effective. We need to get over the misconceptions of mental health,” he said, describing brain health as one of eight areas in DoD’s Total Force Fitness program, which focuses on service members’ overall health and effectiveness throughout their careers.

There is much to learn about how the brain works, Colon-Lopez said.

While “we’re making great strides,” mental health concerns are “leading to a lot of personnel being taken off the line of duty” or being medically retired, he said during The AUSA Noon Report virtual event.

It is important that service members get the help they need, he said.

It is also important for the military to identify potential pitfalls and forecast when someone might need a break to recuperate.



The military must combat the stigma around mental health, Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Ramon Colon-Lopez said. (U.S. ARMY/SGT. JAMES MCCANN)

“A lot of people shy away from seeking help out of fear of losing their job or their clearance or simply being labeled as someone who went to mental health,” Colon-Lopez said.

Some also may feel as if their concerns aren’t as important if they haven’t served in combat, he said.

“Never measure your worth by your proximity to the fight,” he said. “Regardless of where you work, regardless of what you do, military service is stressful ... and life is stressful.”

Fighting the stigma

Leaders at all levels of the military must be supportive of their troops, and the military could rethink the way troops get help, he said.

Maybe instead of going to a behavioral health clinic, troops can go to a human performance lab where they

get a holistic, head-to-toe evaluation, “it’s nonjudgmental, and people feel comfortable that they’re going to get fixed regardless of what the problem is,” Colon-Lopez said.

Seeking help

Colon-Lopez, an Air Force pararescueman with multiple deployments, said his wife asked him “for a long, long time” to seek help.

“Because of personal pride and the company I kept in special operations ... I didn’t for a very long time,” he said.

It wasn’t until “I was in a place where it could’ve been detrimental to everything we’d built” that he finally listened to his wife’s pleas, he said.

“I was guilty for not believing I needed help, I was worried about what would happen, I was concerned about my reputation. Was I going to be seen as weak? Was I going to be seen as broken?” he said.

Colon-Lopez, who said he was receiving care when he interviewed with Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Mark Milley for his current job, is urging others to get the help they need.

“Don’t become another number or another statistic,” he said, using as an example how people will get chemotherapy or radiation or surgery or whatever is needed to fight cancer.

“We’ve got to treat mental health in the same fashion, because it is no different,” he said. “It is an ailment.”

Meet the AUSA headquarters staff

Norma Helsham

NCO Communications and Social Media Program Manager

Retired Sgt. Maj. Norma Helsham has been with AUSA since 2017. Among other roles, she is the editor of AUSA’s Soldier Today newsletter. Norma loves spending time with her children and grandchildren. She also enjoys hiking, spinning and working in the garden.



Army examines personnel policies in push to eliminate bias, boost equity



Sgt. Maj. Monnet Bushner, right, discusses the Army's Project Inclusion initiative with Staff Sgt. Shakina Lewis and Maj. Christopher Baisa at Fort Detrick, Maryland. (U.S. ARMY/C.J. LOVELACE)

The Army's top personnel leaders are stepping up efforts to identify and break down barriers to career advancement as the service continues to prioritize diversity, equity and inclusion in the ranks.

Lt. Gen. Gary Brito, deputy Army chief of staff for personnel, said he sees this moment of change in the country and the Army as a "dry-erase board opportunity, a clean slate to look very closely at all of our talent management policies, processes and practices in place now and apply them to a rich, diverse talent, which we're competing for across the Army."

Brito spoke Wednesday during a webinar hosted by the Association of the U.S. Army. The virtual event, part of The AUSA Noon Report series, also featured E. Casey Wardynski, assistant secretary of the Army for manpower and reserve affairs, and Anselm Beach, deputy assistant secretary of the Army for equity and inclusion.

Brito, who took over as the Army's chief personnel officer last month, said he wants to be sure there are "no barriers to opportunities, no barriers that will prevent anyone from achieving all they have talent for once that talent is identified. It's a great opportunity to look at all our talent management processes."

In a departure from the way the Army once looked at the aggregate force by gender, Wardynski pointed out that Army leaders "no longer think that way" as women can now serve in any specialty in the Army.

He pointed to the Army People Strategy published 14 months ago and said it is now in the implementation phase. Rather than seeking a way for diversity, equity and inclusion to support the strategy, the Army is looking at how the strategy can "support those attributes we aspire to in our country. We want an Army that does the same."

Beach noted that the Army Values already speak to what the Army wants to achieve in its quest for equity. In combing through the Army's talent management policies, he said, one priority is taking a new approach to increasing diversity in the officer ranks by identifying and mitigating any barriers and allowing "people to determine what success is."

"We tend to look at numbers and say if we don't have X representation, does that mean we're not a diverse organization? But I think part of what's missing sometimes is the notion of choice," Beach said. "We want people to be able to succeed and partner with them, but they also have to have a choice in what that path looks like."

AUSAExtra

**Voice for the Army –
Support For the Soldier**

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 Manager

Advertising Information Contact:
Fox Associates Inc.
116 W. Kinzie St. • Chicago, IL 60654
Phone: 800-440-0231
Email: adinfo.rmy@foxrep.com

ARTICLES. Articles appearing in AUSA Extra do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the officers or members of the Council of Trustees of AUSA, or its editors. Articles are expressions of personal opinion and should not be interpreted as reflecting the official opinion of the Department of Defense nor of any branch, command, installation or agency of the Department of Defense. The publication assumes no responsibility for any unsolicited material. Email: extra@ausa.org

ADVERTISING. Neither AUSA Extra, nor its publisher, the Association of the United States Army, makes any representations, warranties or endorsements as to the truth and accuracy of the advertisements appearing herein, and no such representations, warranties or endorsements should be implied or inferred from the appearance of the advertisements in the publication. The advertisers are solely responsible for the contents of such advertisements.

RATES. Individual membership fees payable in advance are \$40 for two years, \$75 for five years, and \$400 for Life Membership. A discounted rate of \$10 for two years is available to members in the ranks of E-1 through E-4, and for service academy and ROTC cadets and OCS candidates. More information is available at our website www.ausa.org; or by emailing membersupport@ausa.org, phoning 855-246-6269, or mailing Fulfillment Manager, P.O. Box 101560, Arlington, VA 22210-0860.

PERK OF THE WEEK

Abenity
BENEFITS. DISCOUNTS. SAVINGS.

AUSA members get discounts on online educational products that can be great resources as many people continue to work and learn at home. Visit www.ausa.org/abenity for your discounts on Rosetta Stone, Babbel, ABC Mouse, Code Ninjas, Kids Discover, myKlovr, Thinkster Math and many more. After signing up, click "Top Categories" and "Education."

Medal of Honor*From Page 1*

Payne then heard a call on the radio for help clearing the other building.

"I looked at a teammate and said, 'Hey, let's get in the fight. Let's go,'" he said.

Payne and his teammate exposed themselves to enemy fire as they bounded across the compound to the other building, according to the White House.

Payne climbed up onto the building's roof, which was already partially engulfed in flames, and engaged enemy fighters below with grenades and small arms fire.

He then moved to ground level and continued to fight off the enemy through a hole in the west side of the building.

Knowing time was running out for the hostages, Payne entered the building under intense enemy fire, amid smoke, heat and flames, to find

the armored door that was imprisoning the hostages, according to the White House.

Payne and other members of his team took turns using bolt cutters to cut the locks on the door.

Payne, choking on smoke and heat, reentered the building once again and finally broke through the door, freeing 37 hostages.

He made sure every hostage was safe before evacuating the compound.

It wasn't until the team returned to their base that they learned Master Sgt. Joshua Wheeler had been killed during the rescue.

"His last words before he moved toward the sound of the guns were, 'On me,'" Payne said.

Payne is "the first to remind us that he was not alone that day," Trump said, as he acknowledged Wheeler's wife, Ashley, during the ceremony.

"Our nation endures because fearless warriors like Josh are willing to

lay down their lives for our freedom. Our children can grow up in peace because Josh had the courage to face down evil," Trump said. "Our debt to him and to you is everlasting. We will honor him forever."

The rescue mission is one of the largest in U.S. Special Operations Command history.

Payne, who overcame a near career-ending injury when he was wounded in a grenade blast in Afghanistan in 2010 and just two years later was part of the duo that won the Best Ranger Competition, was quick to credit his teammates for the successful hostage rescue mission.

"It was an honor for me to serve with my teammates that night," he said. "Personal courage is contagious on the battlefield. We were just feeding off one another."

He added: "Just going back to a normal day at work, that's what I'm looking forward to."

Contact us to learn about our quick turnaround on year-end requirements.  Spacesaver®

STORAGE HEADACHES?

Use fiscal year-end funds to promote readiness.



NEW!

» Mobilization Crate



» PPE Storage



» Weapons Racks



Storage Solved®

ALWAYS READY. ALWAYS SECURE.

Making military family voices heard during AUSA Now

By Patty Barron

The military family forums have always been a highlight of the Association of the U.S. Army's Annual Meeting and Exposition, and 2020 promises to be no different.

AUSA Now, this year's virtual annual meeting, will feature three family forums, including a town hall meeting with the Army's top leaders and two sessions focused on the Army chief of staff's quality of life initiatives.

Registration is required to view and participate. To register, click [here](#).

Spouse employment

Supporting military spouse employment and careers without excessive delay or extra expenses reduces moving stress, improves quality of life and contributes to retention and readiness.

Join us at 10 a.m. Oct. 14 for a frank discussion on what the federal government, DoD and private organizations are doing to support military spouses and their careers.

This forum features Lee Kelley, director of military community support programs at DoD; Meredith Lozar, director of military spouse programs for Hiring Our Heroes; and Max Wyche, deputy chief of staff for personnel at Army Materiel Command.

Karen Wolfe, chief of the staffing



From left, Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy, Chief of Staff Gen. James McConville and Sgt. Maj. of the Army Michael Grinston speak at the 2019 senior leader town hall. (AUSA PHOTO)

and classification division in the office of the assistant G-1 for civilian personnel, and Sgt. Maj. Kristopher Rick, senior military fellow at Veterans Employment and Transition Services for the Department of Labor, also are scheduled to participate.

Military moves

The Army is making great strides to improve housing, household goods shipments and access to child care.

This forum, beginning at 10:30 a.m. Oct. 15, features information on the Army's new Digital Garrison App and things families can do to ensure their children return to school safely.

Speakers include Lt. Gen. Douglas Gabram, commanding general of Army Installation Management Command; Maj. Gen. Michel Russell, director of operations in the office of the deputy

Army chief of staff for logistics (G-4); Becky Porter, president and CEO of the Military Child Education Coalition; and Helen Roadarmel, director of child, youth and school services in the office of the deputy chief of staff (G-9).

Senior leader town hall

Join us at 2 p.m. Oct. 15 to hear from the Army's top leaders about efforts to improve quality of life and increase readiness through caring for the Total Force.

This popular forum features Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy, Army Chief of Staff Gen. James McConville, Sgt. Maj. of the Army Michael Grinston and Lt. Gen. Jason Evans, deputy chief of staff for installations, or G-9.

Patty Barron is AUSA's Family Readiness Director.

Temporary tax deferral begins with mid-month pay period

Beginning with September mid-month pay, the federal government will not withhold Social Security taxes for many service members and federal workers through the end of the calendar year, according to the Defense Finance and Accounting Service.

The reduction will apply to soldiers receiving less than \$8,666.66 a month in basic pay and Army civilians receiving less than \$4,000 a pay period.

This is temporary. Deferred taxes will start being collected from pay checks beginning Jan. 1 and continuing through April 30, warns Larry Lock, chief of compensation and entitlements in the office of the Army deputy chief of staff for personnel.

The tax deferral process will be different for members of the National Guard and Army Reserve due to differing pay systems, according to DoD.

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



Deferred taxes will start being collected from pay checks beginning Jan. 1. (U.S. ARMY PHOTO)

Chapter member competes in Guard endurance challenge

Pfc. Michael Tenta, a member of the Association of the U.S. Army's Fairfax-Lee chapter, recently participated in the inaugural All Guard Endurance Team time trials at the Nebraska National Guard's Greenlief Training Site.

Tenta, of the Virginia Army National Guard, was one of the only junior enlisted soldiers chosen for the Aug. 29–30 competition, which featured 62 National Guard soldiers and one airman. He was also the youngest competitor at age 22.

"We are very proud of Pfc. Tenta. It is a tremendous honor to be selected to participate in this elite competition," said Nancy Jean-Louis, president of the Fairfax-Lee chapter.

The endurance team is an expansion of the National Guard Marathon Program, which now consists of both the marathon team and the endurance team. Each will represent the National Guard in about five events annually.

Fairfax-Lee

"Up until this point, the Guard has only had a marathon team for competitions that reach out to the civilian population," Tenta said.

The endurance team will allow the Guard to cast a wider net, with the goal of reaching more young people and sparking an interest in the opportunities offered by the National Guard, he said.

Endurance challenges

The time trials included 13 endurance challenges divided into four categories: DEKA Strong, the Army Combat Fitness Test, obstacle course racing and distance running.

Greenlief Training Site, near Hastings, Nebraska, was chosen in part because it has an 18-obstacle course.

The DEKA Strong challenge is a modern-day decathlon that combines 10 fitness zones preceded by a 500-meter run.

Immediately after completing DEKA Strong, the soldiers began



Pfc. Michael Tenta competes in the All Guard Endurance Team time trials at the Nebraska National Guard's Greenlief Training Site. (COURTESY PHOTO)

their 10.5-mile journey through the remainder of the event.

About half a mile in, "we were faced with our first exercise, which was a 100-pound sandbag carry for 500 meters," Tenta said. One mile further on was the knee tuck station, requiring 10 repetitions in perfect form.

Following the knee tucks were the first six obstacles on the course, another mile-long run and 30 hand release push-ups, Tenta said.

Almost 5 miles in was the medicine ball toss, where competitors covered 250 meters while tossing a medicine ball, and at mile 6.5 they carried a 45-pound plate for 500 meters.

Next came a tunnel course.

"We had to navigate [a quarter] mile through pitch black tunnels and find our way out," Tenta said.

Soldiers then conducted a grenade toss followed by the remainder of the obstacle course.

At mile 10, soldiers had to walk a 250-pound deadlift 20 meters, complete 3 repetitions, and walk it back.

They then moved on to a sprint-drag-carry event with 80- and 90-pound weights, Tenta said.

From there, the finish line was about 100 meters away.

Tenta completed the grueling course in 2 hours, 30 minutes and 37 seconds.

"Personally, I believe I could have shaved 20 minutes off my time and done even better. Even so, I still would not have made the cut for the team as the majority of finishers who made it were around two hours exactly," he said.

Better soldiers, leaders

Every competitor gave it their all and are now better athletes, soldiers and leaders, said Sgt. 1st Class Mark Jones of the Colorado Army National Guard, the competition's coordinator.

"The people that showed up performed," Jones said. "I think the majority just wanted a challenge, and they all got that. And that challenge is now going to follow them like a shadow into the future and tap them on the shoulder every time they start slacking off, because they remember that pain and suffering and remember, 'I need to work on that' ... and push harder."

Tenta said he was honored to have competed with his fellow Guardsmen from across the nation, all of whom are world-class athletes.

"I am also honored to have represented the 29th Infantry Division and the great Commonwealth of Virginia in doing so," he said. "The opportunity presented to me was unlike any other. I look forward to next year's qualifier, and I would highly recommend this event to any soldier looking to test their physical and mental strength."



VIRTUAL JOB FAIR

10 NOVEMBER 2020 | 10AM – 2PM EST



RECRUIT TOP PROFESSIONALS

GOLD SPONSORS

- ✓ Fully Customized Booth
- ✓ Top Tier Lobby Placement
- ✓ Up to 4 Recruiter Seats
- ✓ Database of All Candidates with Resumes
- ✓ Top Tier Logo Placement on Registration Page
- ✓ 2 Featured Jobs on Registration Page
- ✓ Company Description on Registration Page
- ✓ (2) 30-day Job Postings on AUSA Job Board
- ✓ 60-Day Resume Database Access on AUSA Career Center

MEMBER RATE \$1,500
(Save \$250)

SILVER SPONSORS

- ✓ Fully Customized Booth
- ✓ Middle Tier Lobby Placement
- ✓ Up to 2 Recruiter Seats
- ✓ Database of All Candidates with Resumes
- ✓ Middle Tier Logo Placement on Registration Page
- ✓ 1 Featured Job on Registration Page
- ✓ (1) 30-day Job Posting on AUSA Job Board
- ✓ 30-Day Resume Database Access on AUSA Career Center

MEMBER RATE \$1,000
(Save \$250)

BRONZE SPONSORS

- ✓ Fully Customized Booth
- ✓ Lower Tier Placement on Registration Page
- ✓ Up to 2 Recruiter Seats

MEMBER RATE \$600
(Save \$150)

**SIGN UP
TODAY!**

VISIT WWW.AUSA.ORG/RECRUIT

Or contact Jim Cook at **727.497.6552** or jim.cook@communitybrands.com.