



## IN THIS ISSUE

VOLUME 2 NUMBER 29  
NOVEMBER 19, 2020

### Report: U.S. Military Capability 'Marginal'

3

### Army Vets Elected to Congress

4

### Family Readiness

More Support for Kids, Spouses

6



### Chapter Highlight

Central Texas-Fort Hood

7



'We are on the path to deliver the capabilities our soldiers require,' said Lt. Gen. James Pasquarette, Army deputy chief of staff for resources and plans. (U.S. ARMY/STAFF SGT. MICHAEL WEST)

## Modernization requires budget balance

**T**he Army will begin 2021 with some confidence about its modernization efforts, said Lt. Gen. James Pasquarette, Army deputy chief of staff for resources and plans.

That may not last. Pasquarette says the Army is engaged in a budgetary balancing act as it tries to grow troop strength, improve readiness and expand capabilities. In the past, reducing modernization was the first choice while preserving troop levels, but this may not work now.

"I believe it is going to be different this time around," he said. If topline cuts are made, he believes the Army will fully fund critically needed capabilities, which he wouldn't name.

Speaking Wednesday at a webinar hosted by the Association of the U.S. Army, the Army G-8, who has been deeply involved in modernization and budgeting in his two years in the post,

said, "At this point in the progress, we feel pretty good [about] where we are at."

As he spoke, Congress had yet to pass the separate funding and policy bills for fiscal 2021, which began Oct. 1, leaving the Army operating at 2020 funding levels and prevented from making major changes in programs, including weapons and systems.

There is nothing unusual about beginning a fiscal year without a new budget, but fiscal 2021 could be more difficult than usual because of the turmoil related to the November elections that will change the political balance of power in Washington, D.C.

The Army anticipates the 2021 budget will be about \$178 billion. That is slightly less than the \$180 billion enacted budget for 2020 but is about \$4 billion more in direct spending after taking into account reductions in

overseas contingency funding.

Pasquarette was confident.

"We are on the path to deliver the capabilities our soldiers require, and to fight and win," he said.

The major capability advances undertaken by Army Futures Command and its cross-functional teams are advancing, he said, with results coming in 2022 across most of the programs, although some capabilities are more than a decade away from being fielded. The programs "are right over the horizon," he said.

He acknowledged the budget outlook for the future "is a bit hazy" because of economic and political factors outside of the Army's control.

If Congress accepts rising deficits, the Army could be fine in terms of funding. If Congress doesn't, the Army "would face tough decisions," he said.



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# Army readiness gains offset by modernization challenges

**T**he Heritage Foundation's "2021 Index of U.S. Military Strength" gives the U.S. Army high marks for improved readiness but once again scores the service as "marginal" because those readiness gains continue to be offset by ongoing struggles to modernize and grow the force.

The Army isn't alone. The report also rates the Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and U.S. nuclear capabilities as marginal.

The new U.S. Space Force was not assessed in the 2021 report.

"As currently postured, the U.S. military is only marginally able to meet the demands of defending America's vital national interests," according to the report.

The force is likely capable of meeting the demands of a single major regional conflict in addition to various "presence and engagement activities," the report concludes.

It would be "hard-pressed" to do more and "certainly would be ill-equipped" to respond to two major regional conflicts, according to the report.

## Making progress

But there are positive trends across the military, the report states, including progress in bringing some new equipment into the force, filling gaps in manpower, rebuilding stocks of munitions and repair parts, and



The Army received a 'marginal' score for capability, including for the age of its equipment and the health of its modernization programs. (U.S. ARMY/SPC. JESSICA SCOTT)

building force readiness.

In the Army, efforts to increase the readiness of the force earned a "very strong" rating, with 35 brigade combat teams projected to be available, including as many as four or five in the Army National Guard.

But the Army's capacity remains "weak" because the force remains too small, the report says.

The service should have available 50 brigade combat teams to be fully sized to meet threats, particularly if faced with two major regional conflicts, according to Heritage.

The Army's current brigade combat team capacity is projected to be 70%

of that benchmark, according to the annual report.

## Modernization efforts

Heritage lauded Army leaders' commitment to modernizing the force but cautioned that many programs remain in the development phase.

Several programs are "two to three years from entering procurement phases. Thus, they are not yet replacing legacy platforms and cannot contribute to warfighting capability today," the report says.

Most of the planned programs "will still be in development and sensitive to changes in funding or priorities" until 2022 or later. Even then, budget constraints will likely delay fielding of new systems until 2030 and beyond, according to the report.

In its current state, the Army received a "marginal" score for capability, including for the age of its equipment and the size and health of its modernization programs.

"The Army has a better sense of what it needs for war against a peer, but funding uncertainties could threaten its ability to realize its goals," according to the report.

The full report is available here.

## Meet the AUSA headquarters staff

### Colleen Stembridge

*Senior Conference and Event Center Specialist*

Colleen Stembridge has been with AUSA for just over two years. She enjoys spending time with friends and family, particularly at wine tastings and bonfires. She celebrated her two-year wedding anniversary on Nov. 4 with her husband, Ben, and they both love their dog, Winona.



## Seven newly elected members join ranks of Army veterans in Congress

**T**here will be 36 Army veterans in the House of Representatives and eight in the Senate when Congress convenes in January.

The total for the 117th Congress, which convenes Jan. 3, includes six new members of the House and one new senator who have Army experience.

Sen.-elect Roger Marshall of Kansas is a former member of the House of Representatives who served seven years in the Army Reserve.

A physician, he served in the Reserve from 1984 to 1991, when he started a medical practice as an obstetrician. In the House, the Republican served on two committees, agriculture, and science, space and technology.

Sen. James Inhofe, the Senate Armed Services Committee chairman, is the most senior Army veteran in Congress in terms of clout, although he only served two years in the Army.

Drafted in 1957, he went through boot camp at Fort Chaffee, Arkansas. He was assigned to Fort Lee, Virginia, as a clerk, leaving the service as a private first class.

Incoming members of the House include Rep.-elect Darrell Issa of California, who enlisted in the Army in 1970 on his 17th birthday and served three years as an explosive ordnance disposal technician.

He later attended college on an ROTC scholarship and served as an officer, attaining the rank of captain.

This is the 67-year-old's third congressional seat. The Republican now represents California's 50th congressional district. From 2001 to 2003, he represented the 48th congressional district, and from 2003 to 2019, he represented the 49th congressional district.

Newly elected Army veterans to the House are:

Rep.-elect Barry Moore of Alabama, a former state legislator who chaired the military and veteran affairs com-



Six new members of the House and one new senator have Army experience.

(ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL PHOTO)

mittee in the state legislature and served in the Army, Army Reserve and National Guard over a period from 1986 to 1995. He is a Republican.

Rep.-elect Peter Meijer of Michigan is an Iraq veteran who deployed in 2010 as an NCO. The Republican served in the Army Reserve from 2008 to 2016.

Rep.-elect Troy Nehls of Texas is a retired Army Reserve major who served in Bosnia, Iraq and Afghanistan. The Republican has 21 years of service, and his family, including his Korean War veteran father and two brothers, has a combined 90 years of service.

Rep.-elect Scott Fitzgerald of Wisconsin, a Republican, retired from the Army Reserve in 2009 as a lieutenant colonel after 27 years of service. He previously served in the Wisconsin legislature, rising to be the Senate majority leader.

Rep.-elect Mariannette Miller-Meeks, a Republican from Iowa, enlisted in the Army at 18, with her nursing education covered by the Army. She served six years of active duty, retiring as a lieutenant colonel after a combined 24 years of active and reserve service. She met her husband, also a retired Army lieutenant colonel, while they were stationed at Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

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## PERK OF THE WEEK

### Thanksgiving deals

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# New programs support military children, mental health

By Patty Barron

**T**here is nothing more important to military families than the health and welfare of their children and keeping relationships strong.

Recently, the Pentagon implemented new programs and priorities that aim to increase positive mental health and connections for military families.

One new priority for DoD is promoting Purple Star Schools at the local level. That's also a major focus for the Military Child Education Coalition, which recently launched the Purple Star School designation program to support kids transitioning into new schools after permanent change-of-station moves.

The Purple Star Schools movement supports the many children who move to new schools whenever their active-duty parent receives a PCS order.

## Family Readiness

Purple Star programs designate schools as friendly to and familiar with the unique educational and social-emotional needs of these students who move every two or three years.

The designation lets service members know that a school is dedicated to helping their child gain the educational skills they need.

It also signals that a school supports the social and emotional well-being of military kids adjusting to new schools and the absence of a parent during deployment.

Arkansas, Georgia, Indiana, Montana, North Carolina, Ohio, Virginia, South Carolina, Texas and Tennessee have Purple Star School programs.

The Military Child Education Coalition is raising awareness of the Purple Star School initiative—and offering support and guidance—in the many states that have yet to start a program.

Programs are established by a



New DoD programs and priorities aim to increase positive mental health and connections for military families. (U.S. ARMY PHOTO)

state's education authority or an individual school district.

There is no one-size-fits-all pattern, but all programs share a similar application process and initiatives that allow military children to transition into a new school smoothly and effectively.

## Mental health help

DoD's Military Community and Family Policy office has launched two new tools to support mental health and resilience.

The My Military OneSource app lets you access support from anywhere, 24/7. This app keeps all the best resources Military OneSource has to offer at your fingertips.

Service members and families can personalize the app by saving guides, benefits and settings in their "favorites" to revisit with one touch.

Another important effort focuses on interpersonal relationships.

"The top reason that service members and families seek nonmedical counseling ... is for relationship support, and certainly, that need has not gone away during this pandemic," said Lee Kelley, director of

DoD's military community support programs, in a recent press briefing.

That's why DoD has focused on a "relationship campaign to help pull back the curtain on what relationship support looks like for couples in the military, and we're looking internally at how we provide that relationship support to determine how we can do it in the most effective manner possible," she said.

The Family & Relationships page on Military OneSource has also been updated with tools and interactive programs to keep personal relationships healthy during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

Information on keeping relationships strong, managing deployments and separations, relationship challenges and divorce can also be found on the site.

COVID-19 has brought great challenges for families. Thankfully, DoD believes that military families should not have to navigate this pandemic alone. We can get through this if we stand strong together.

**Patty Barron** is AUSA's Family Readiness Director.



## Chapter event brings together soldiers, local community

**T**he Association of the U.S. Army's Central Texas-Fort Hood chapter hosted a community event Nov. 7 to clean up two gates to Fort Hood, Texas, as part of the chapter's professional mentorship program.

More than 300 volunteers, including Fort Hood soldiers, representatives from national and state lawmakers' offices, local police and city employees, and ROTC and Junior ROTC cadets, joined chapter members for the event.

"We want to beautify the area and make it nice for people coming in and out of Fort Hood, but beyond that, we really want people to connect, talk and visit and get to know each other," said Kelly Brown, the chapter president.

In addition to simply picking up trash at the Main and East gates, the event helped increase partnerships between soldiers and the civic, business and academic leaders in the local community.

### Central Texas-Fort Hood

The chapter's new mentorship program works to link soldiers and their spouses with members of the community, Brown said. The idea for the program came after the chapter received several requests from soldiers looking to connect with people who could mentor them on specific things.

"We're bridging this opportunity to bring more community partnership



Soldiers, volunteers, ROTC and Junior ROTC cadets and AUSA members clean up trash outside Fort Hood, Texas. (U.S. ARMY/BRANDY CRUZ)

onto Fort Hood, and Fort Hood back into our community," Brown said, according to a local news report. "We want soldiers and their families to have the ability to reach out to community leaders, whether it's an interest in entrepreneurship, spiritual knowledge, opening a business or getting into real estate."

During the cleanup project, ROTC cadets from Texas A&M University-Central Texas and the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor took time to mentor 21 JROTC cadets from Shoemaker High School, according to the Fort Hood public affairs office.

Many soldiers enjoy volunteering because it teaches standards and discipline, said Command Sgt. Maj. Cliff Burgoyne, senior enlisted leader for III Corps and Fort Hood.

"To be able to volunteer and do something good for your community does a lot for everybody. It sets a good example," he said, adding that the event was more than just removing litter from the gates.

"If you look at the way we grow up in the United States, we grow up as a community, so it takes a community to teach you the different things in life about standards of discipline, how to keep things clean, and so we've gotten together with AUSA and our community partners, and we are going to beautify the entrance of Fort Hood," Burgoyne said.

Other event participants included soldiers from the Fort Hood Audie Murphy Club, Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers and Equal Opportunity Advisers, and members of the Greater Killeen Chamber of Commerce, Hispanic-American Chamber of Commerce, Innovation Black Chamber of Commerce, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the League of United Latin American Citizens.

"We had an amazing morning serving #TheGreatPlace and connecting soldiers, veterans, and our amazing community. Thank you to everyone who took part of their Saturday to make today a huge success," the chapter said in a Facebook post.



More than 300 volunteers joined AUSA chapter members for the event. (AUSA PHOTO)



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