



Retired Gen. Lloyd Austin presents the General Colin L. Powell Lecture for students of the 2019 Command and General Staff Officers' Course at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. (U.S. ARMY PHOTO)

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Austin nominated for defense secretary

A retired Army four-star general is President-elect Joe Biden's choice to become his secretary of defense, a historic selection because Gen. Lloyd Austin would be only the third retired general officer to serve in the post and the first Black person to lead DoD.

The 67-year-old Austin retired from the Army in 2016 after rising to serve as the 33rd Army vice chief of staff and the 12th commander of U.S. Central Command.

Austin, who grew up in Thomasville, Georgia, is a 1975 graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York, who began his career as an infantry officer. He has 41 years of military service, including time in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Austin's confirmation by the Senate to the top Pentagon post will

require a congressional waiver because the National Security Act of 1947, last modified in 2008, requires a minimum seven-year gap between active-duty service and an appointment to be defense secretary.

A waiver was granted in 2017 allowing retired Marine Gen. Jim Mattis to serve as defense secretary. A waiver was also required in 1950 for General of the Army George Marshall.

Austin has a personal connection to Biden. In a Dec. 8 commentary in *The Atlantic*, Biden wrote that he was at the 2010 change of command ceremony at Camp Victory in Iraq when Austin became commander of U.S. Forces-Iraq and was there again with Austin in December 2011 for a ceremony marking U.S. forces' departure from the country.

"General Austin got the job done,"

Biden wrote.

"He played a crucial role in bringing 150,000 American troops home from the theater of war. Pulling that off took more than just the skill and strategy of a seasoned soldier. It required Austin to practice diplomacy, building relationships with our Iraqi counterparts and with our partners in the region. He served as a statesman, representing our country with honor and dignity and always, above all, looking out for his people."

Austin, speaking Wednesday at an event where Biden announced his nomination, called it "my sincere honor and privilege" to serve.

He added that if he's confirmed, "my priority will always be the men and women, military and civilian, who make up the department, and their families."

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Army works to improve troop safety after Fort Hood review

The Army is standing up a task force to address a series of recommendations to improve soldiers' safety, welfare and readiness, Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy announced Tuesday.

The service also has relieved or suspended 14 commanders and other leaders at Fort Hood, Texas, in extraordinary actions after a three-month review of the command climate and culture at the installation.

The review and actions result from the April murder of Spc. Vanessa Guillen, a 20-year-old member of the 3rd Cavalry Regiment at Fort Hood who went missing April 22. Her remains were found June 30.

The soldier suspected in her death killed himself when confronted by law enforcement, and a civilian suspect was arrested.

"The challenges at Fort Hood forced us to take a critical look at our systems, our policies and ourselves," McCarthy said. "This is not just about metrics, but about possessing the ability to show compassion for our teammates and to look out for the best interest of our soldiers. This report, without a doubt, will cause the Army to change our culture."

Taking action

The independent review was conducted by a panel of five civilians.

Their report found a "deficient" command climate at Fort Hood, including ineffective implementation of the Army's Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention program that resulted in a pervasive lack of confidence, fear of retaliation and significant underreporting of cases, the Army said.

The report also found that Fort Hood leadership knew or should have known of the high risk of harm to female soldiers, according to the Army.

"We will fix this," pledged Army Chief of Staff Gen. James McConville. "We know in the Army that we're not perfect, but what makes us



'The findings contained in the committee's report impact the entire Army and more than 1.2 million soldiers,' Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy said. (U.S. ARMY/SGT. ELISE MOORE)

the greatest Army in the world is we recognize when we must change."

The review extends beyond one installation, McCarthy said.

"While the independent review focused on the command climate and culture at Fort Hood, the findings contained in the committee's report impact the entire Army and more than 1.2 million soldiers," he said.

The People First Task Force will study the recommendations, map out a plan to tackle them, and reevaluate current Army policies and programs, McCarthy said. The goal is to begin implementing changes by March.

The task force will be led by Lt. Gen. Gary Brito, deputy chief of staff for personnel; Diane Randon, assistant deputy chief of staff for intelligence; and Sgt. Maj. Julie Guerra, the G-2 sergeant major.

Missing soldier policy

The Army also announced a new policy on missing soldiers, with the goal of making sure the service "maximizes efforts to find missing soldiers," the service said.

The directive clarifies "expecta-

tions and responsibilities of unit commanders and Army law enforcement authorities" during the first 48 hours after a soldier fails to report for duty.

"When one of our teammates does not report for duty, we will change their duty status to 'absent-unknown' and take immediate action to find them," McCarthy said.

The new "absent-unknown" duty status code will give commanders time to determine an absent soldier's status. Previously, soldiers who were absent for unknown reasons were listed as "absent without leave."

If commanders cannot determine that a soldier's absence is voluntary, they will be classified as "missing," and the Army will initiate a "duty status whereabouts unknown" casualty case, providing the soldier's family with a liaison officer while commanders continue to try to locate the missing soldier.

The actions announced Tuesday are just a start, McCarthy said.

"We have a great deal of work ahead of us," he said.

The full report is available here.

Army Reserve on track to meet end strength goals despite 'tough year'



Command Sgt. Maj. Andrew Lombardo talks with soldiers at Fort McCoy, Wisconsin, about the latest updates from Army Reserve leadership. (U.S. ARMY/SCOTT STURKOL)

The Army Reserve is set to meet its end strength goal this year, according to the component's senior enlisted soldier, who said that while the component missed last year's recruiting mission, it surpassed its retention goals.

Describing 2020 as "a tough year" for the Army Reserve as it carried out multiple emergency missions at home, Command Sgt. Maj. Andrew Lombardo, who became the 14th command sergeant major of the Army Reserve in April, said the component has increased its mission requirements and is executing a plan that will help boost recruiting.

"We believe we're going to meet the end strength objectives for fiscal year 2021," Lombardo said Wednesday during The AUSA Noon Report, a webinar series hosted by the Association of the U.S. Army.

The Army Reserve, with an end strength of 188,703, fell just short of its goal of 189,500 for fiscal year 2020, but Lombardo pointed out that the component exceeded its retention requirements by 134%.

Lombardo also noted that the Reserve has 16 MOSs "that also offer a \$20,000 bonus for a specific commit-

ment, which will help you transition" to the Reserve from active duty.

He encouraged soldiers to talk to their retention NCOs about options in the Reserve, and he urged members of the Army's sister services, whose career options may have peaked, to consider joining the Army Reserve.

"One of the benefits of the Army Reserve is that you can get promoted into any vacancy that we have anywhere in the country. We'll pay you to travel there, and we'll also pay for your lodging as well," Lombardo said.

Before his current assignment, Lombardo, a military police soldier, was the senior enlisted soldier of the 200th Military Police Command at Fort Meade, Maryland, and the command sergeant major for the 99th Readiness Division at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst in New Jersey, the 100th Training Division and the 333rd MP Brigade.

He has served six overseas deployments, including twice to Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom and once to Afghanistan. He also served in Bosnia, Kosovo and the first Gulf War.

In his civilian career, Lombardo is a deputy inspector with the New York City Police Department.

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Defense bill prioritizes modernization efforts, families

By Mark Haaland

Members of the House of Representatives have passed the fiscal year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act, and we anticipate the Senate will pass the bill very soon.

This important legislation provides management policy and funding authorization for DoD and the services.

The Senate Armed Services Committee's summary of the NDAA describes the bill as being "built on broad consensus" and focused on the priorities of "implementing the National Defense Strategy to confront current and future security challenges from China, Russia, transnational terrorism, and beyond."

Other priorities include "regaining a wide margin of military superiority; building a National Security Innovation Base to maintain our technological advantage; securing our supply chain; prioritizing accountability and streamlining operations at the Department of Defense; and—most importantly—taking care of our service members and their families," according to the summary.

Key provisions in the NDAA include updates to the COVID-19 response and support for health care and military families.

In response to the pandemic, the legislation directs a registry of Tricare beneficiaries diagnosed with COVID-19 and requires the comptroller general to conduct a study on mental health services provided to service members during the pandemic.

It also protects reserve component troops from having their retirement eligibility penalized because drill weekends and annual training were canceled.

Health care, family support

The NDAA takes steps to improve combat casualty care, encourages the use of telehealth and virtual health



AUSA will continue to be an advocate for Army readiness, including family readiness and modernization support for the Total Force. (ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL PHOTO)

technologies, prohibits the reduction of military medical end strength authorizations for 180 days following enactment, and mandates a comprehensive clinical quality management program throughout the military health system.

Additionally, the bill expands benefits available under Tricare's Extended Care Health Option program.

It includes reforms to address mental health and prioritize suicide prevention, such as making permanent a suicide prevention program for the reserve components and requiring additional reporting to evaluate military suicides and prevention efforts.

For military families, the NDAA defines "Family Readiness" and adds new legislation supporting spouse employment, child care and education, and housing.

Army modernization

The NDAA includes several items specific to the Army, particularly the service's critical modernization efforts.

It supports the Army's long-range precision fires and integrated air and missile defense priorities, including the Precision Strike Missile, the Hy-

pervelocity Projectile, the Lower Tier Air and Missile Defense Sensor, high-energy lasers, Indirect Fire Protection Capability Increment 2, and the Integrated Air and Missile Defense Battle Command System.

The bill also sustains the Future Vertical Lift program request and increases investment in Future Long-Range Assault Aircraft development.

It also invests in efforts to boost the lethality of close combat forces, including the Integrated Visual Augmentation System, body armor modernization, small-unit robotics and the Soldier Enhancement Program.

The NDAA supports the Army's revised acquisition strategy for the Optionally Manned Ground Vehicle and increases investment in Next-Generation Combat Vehicle technologies.

The legislation also authorizes additional funding to accelerate the Army's multidomain task forces in the Indo-Pacific region.

Appropriations

Congress continues to work on an omnibus appropriations package that would include defense, military construction, veteran and other appropriations.

However, lawmakers do not believe they can reach an agreement and pass legislation before the continuing resolution expires Friday, so another continuing resolution will be needed.

Fortunately, congressional leaders remain optimistic the House and Senate can pass an omnibus appropriations bill before the end of the calendar year.

The passing and signing of all this legislation would result in quite the year-end gift to the country from Congress, but challenges remain.

AUSA will continue to be an advocate for Army readiness, including family readiness and modernization support for the Total Force.

Mark Haaland is AUSA's Government Affairs Director.

Chapter hosts discussion on Army role in space operations

Leaders from Army Space and Missile Defense Command discussed the space domain and its role in the national defense strategy during a recent fireside chat hosted by the Association of the U.S. Army's Greater Los Angeles chapter.

The Nov. 12 panel was part of the chapter's annual symposium on space and the Army network.

"Winning first in space really matters, and we understand that here at SMDC," said Lt. Gen. Daniel Karbler, commander of Army Space and Missile Defense Command.

The command has far-reaching relevance, he said. "If you look at what we're doing with space and missile

Greater Los Angeles

defense and with the network, not a week goes by that we are not talking about how space integration touches different organizations across different elements," Karbler said, according to SMDC public affairs.

Richard De Fatta, director of the Space and Missile Defense Center of Excellence, said that Army personnel with space experience "are in high demand" as capabilities continue to grow and transform.

"As capabilities like space, intelligence and cyber become more and more important to a tactical commander, we have to transform our formations and our personnel," he said.

Growing dependence

The Army and joint force are growing more dependent on space-enabled capabilities to execute ground operations, said Thomas Webber, director of the SMDC Technical Center.

"We ... are developing technologies to really get after better enabling ground combat operations for the Army," he said, as reported by SMDC public affairs.

Space operations can deliver decisive combat power in support of the warfighter, particularly as the gap



Left to right, Thomas Webber, director of the Army Space and Missile Defense Command Technical Center, Lt. Gen. Daniel Karbler, SMDC commanding general, and Richard De Fatta, director of the Space and Missile Defense Center of Excellence, participate in the fireside chat. (U.S. ARMY/JASON CUTSHAW)

narrows between U.S. capabilities and those of near-peer competitors, said Col. Brian Bolio, commander of the 1st Space Brigade.

Soldiers have an "increasing reliance on space-based capabilities to essentially shoot, move and communicate with tactical precision," he said.

"We can't wait until we are contested in every domain to seize the high ground in space," Bolio added. "First Space Brigade warriors are what will help ensure the joint force can deploy space capabilities across

all domains."

Enhancing modernization

The space domain is also key to the Army's modernization efforts.

"Space and space-enabled capabilities are going to enable and enhance virtually every modernization priority the Army is working on right now," Webber said, according to SMDC public affairs.

Col. Stephen Parrish, Army Satellite Operations Brigade commander, talked about how his brigade—the only one of its kind in the Army—consolidates communications for efficient command and control up to the joint force commander level.

"We provide wideband and narrowband communications for all the services, agencies and departments across the Department of Defense and the government, as well as international partners," Parrish said. "The experts within my brigade have a minimum of 22 months of experience in operating satellite payloads."

Senior leaders understand how critical the space domain is, said Col. Jason Kalainoff, chief of the Army G-3/5/7 space division.

"Leaders recognize the importance of space as that key element in multidomain operations," he said. "That is where wars are fought and won."



Soldiers with the Army's 1st Space Brigade adjust a SIPR/NIPR Access Point dish at Fort Carson, Colorado. (U.S. ARMY/STAFF SGT. AARON ROGNSTAD)

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