



'We need to transform the Army right now' for large-scale combat operations, Army Chief of Staff Gen. James McConville said. (U.S. ARMY/SGT. THOMAS CALVERT)

AUSA Extra will be on
break until Jan. 7.
Happy holidays!

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Chief: Army will remain busy in 2021

The Army must continue to juggle a high demand for troops around the world with an urgent need to modernize the force, the service's top general said.

Soldiers remain very busy overseas and at home, from combat operations to COVID-19 response missions, Army Chief of Staff Gen. James McConville said. Ideally, the active-duty force would number 540,000 to 550,000 soldiers, he said.

"We're not going to get that," McConville said recently during a virtual event hosted by the Foundation for Defense of Democracies. "We don't have the resources right now, and we've been very well resourced. If we want to modernize and keep the Army ready, then end strength will not grow to that level."

The service ended fiscal 2020

with an active Army end strength of 485,383 soldiers, and it plans to add another 1,500 by the end of fiscal 2021.

A smaller force means soldiers' operations tempo is "a lot higher," McConville said, adding that an active Army force of 490,000 to 495,000 soldiers is "acceptable with a certain amount of risk" if the Army has "the right forces in place and we're very efficient and effective."

It's important for the Army to maintain a robust force, McConville said.

"People say we don't need a big Army," he said. But he pointed to how the Army had 720,000 soldiers on active-duty—a combination of Regular Army troops and mobilized Army National Guard and Army Reserve soldiers—during the height of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, with many deploying on 15-month tours because

the Army didn't have enough soldiers.

"That was just for a regional fight," McConville said. "This was not great-power competition."

At the same time, the Army must also invest in modernization, McConville said. From long-range precision fires to new aircraft and combat vehicles, the Army must remain competitive as it prepares for large-scale combat operations after almost 20 years of counterinsurgency and counterterrorism, he said.

"We need to transform the Army right now," he said. "If I don't get this done over the rest of my term ... we have let our soldiers down for the future."

McConville will talk about his vision for the Army Jan. 19 during The AUSA Noon Report webinar. For more information or to register, click here.

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Army faces difficult decisions as budget challenges loom

Defense analyst Todd Harrison of the nonpartisan Center for Strategic and International Studies warns 2021 could be a bleak budget year for the U.S. Army, with a significant risk to modernization efforts and troop strength.

In a Federal News Network interview, Harrison said tighter defense budgets do not provide a rosy Army outlook.

“The Army has already been, over the last four years, on the losing end of a lot of budget battles,” said Harrison, a senior fellow and director of defense budget analysis at CSIS.

“We’ve seen the Army share of the budget slipping over time, and we see more questions about some of the Army’s modernization priorities and how they fit into the priorities of the National Defense Strategy,” Harrison said, predicting that the incoming Biden administration will “have to start making some of those tough calls.”

Nuclear weapons upgrades, a larger Navy and Air Force programs aimed at countering Russia and Chi-



Lack of funding could hinder modernization efforts, especially ground vehicle and helicopter programs, defense analyst Todd Harrison said. (U.S. ARMY/PFC. RAEKWON JENKINS)

na could squeeze the Army, “especially ground vehicle programs and some of the helicopter programs,” he said.

“If push comes to shove with the budget, the Army is going to lose force structure, and it is going to lose personnel,” Harrison said, suggesting that Regular Army troop levels could “go as low as 400,000.”

“I think we are looking at a potentially significant reduction because,

honestly, if you want to save money in the Army, the Army is all about people costs,” Harrison said.

Harrison’s predictions are not unexpected. Army leaders have been talking about the challenges of funding modernization programs, and they have mentioned the possibility of trimming the number of soldiers, although nothing as large as the almost 90,000-person cut Harrison says is possible.

Russian forces are ‘fierce’ adversary for U.S. troops

Preparing soldiers for high-intensity combat against the Russians may be “commanders’ most important task,” according to a paper published by the Association of the U.S. Army.

Retired Army Col. Richard Hooker, author of “How to Fight the Russians,” says combat against the adversary will be “fierce” and at a level the U.S. Army hasn’t seen since in several decades.

“It is time to steel our soldiers’ hearts against the test to come,” he wrote.

While the U.S. Army has access to better training, equipment and synchronizing capabilities than its adversaries, it still faces challenges in field artillery, air defense and electronic



The Russians are ‘combat-hardened, well-equipped and offensively-minded’ according to the paper. (COURTESY/VITALY KUZMIN)

warfare, according to the author.

Hooker says the Russian army “attacks resolutely and with determination,” focusing on speed, momentum and firepower.

U.S. commanders, he says, should study the opponent and prepare sol-

diers for a “difficult but winnable fight,” warning the Russians are “combat-hardened, well-equipped and offensively-minded.”

“Russian ground forces will take risks to gain and maintain momentum and the initiative,” Hooker wrote. “The idea here is to push hard to crack and overcome resistance and to keep moving, causing a cascading collapse of the defense.”

To effectively fight on the ground, the U.S. Army will need “a true combined-arms approach” equipped with fires, accurate targeting and intelligence work, and exceptional command and control, Hooker says.

“Above all, leaders must be aggressive, even pugnacious,” he wrote.

Read the full paper [here](#).

Ham: Serving others is an enduring responsibility of all citizens



Two Army Human Resources Command soldiers perform a ceremonial flag folding at the Kentucky Veterans Cemetery-Central in Radcliff, Kentucky. (U.S. ARMY/PATRICK HODGES)

Understanding civic duties starts at home and continues through education and engagement, according to a former senior Army leader.

"You have responsibilities that come along with the privileges of being an American citizen," retired Gen. Carter Ham, president and CEO of the Association of the U.S. Army, said Monday. "There are lots of ways to fulfill that."

Speaking during a virtual event hosted by the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Ham said many Americans who haven't lived, served or observed other forms of government "don't really recognize what the alternatives are."

"If they saw them ... up close as the three of us have, you'll be thanking your lucky stars every day to be in this great country," Ham said, speaking alongside retired Navy Adm. William McRaven, former commander of U.S. Special Operations Command, and retired Air Force Gen. Lori Robinson, former commander of U.S. Northern Command.

Ham said the idea of serving others "was a central theme" when he was growing up. In school, courses in history and government were required, he said, noting these courses are now

"falling by the wayside."

Exercising civic responsibilities—and the ability to hold leaders accountable—involves "a bit of investment" among citizens to learn, read, listen, engage, vote and make their interests known, Ham said.

Civilian oversight of the military is "hugely important," Ham said.

Because the process of being nominated, vetted and confirmed for a senior military position is rigorous, he said, senior commanders are accountable for their actions.

"It's not my army. It's not the Army's army. It's America's army," Ham said. "It is accountable to the people of America."



"It's not my army. It's not the Army's army. It's America's army," said retired Gen. Carter Ham, AUSA president and CEO. (AUSA PHOTO)

AUSAExtra

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Support For the Soldier**

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PERK OF THE WEEK

As seen on *Shark Tank*, R.Riveter was created to support military spouses who may struggle to stay employed with so



many moves, often to remote military bases where there are few professional opportunities. Most products on www.rriveter.com are handmade by military spouses and include handbags, jewelry, candles and other products. Save 15% with code AUSA15.

AUSA board members nominated for three-year terms

The Association of the U.S. Army's Board of Directors has nominated seven currently serving board members to new three-year terms and one new director.

During a virtual meeting Monday, Scott Greene of Lockheed Martin was nominated to replace Frank St. John, whose term ends June 2021. Greene is Lockheed's executive vice president for missiles and fire control. St. John is Lockheed's chief operating officer.

Nominated to serve additional three-year terms are directors Thomas Arseneault, president and CEO of BAE Systems; Leanne Caret, president and CEO of Boeing Defense, Space and Security; retired Maj. Gen. Patricia Hickerson; retired Master Sgt. Leroy Petry; retired Lt. Gen. Jack Stultz; retired Gen. Carl Vuono; and retired Chief Warrant Officer 5 Phyllis Wilson.

If AUSA members wish to make an additional nomination to the board, association bylaws require a petition of candidacy to be submitted to national headquarters. Additional candidacies must be in compliance with Article V of the bylaws.

Nominations must be received at national headquarters by Feb. 1, 2021, for newly elected officers' terms that will begin July 1.

In other action, the AUSA board elected six people to serve on committees.

Faye Earley will serve an additional term on the Standing Bylaws Committee. Dave Barber, Wes Waters, retired Col. Michelle Yarborough and Bob Pavlak will each serve an additional term on the Finance and Audit Committee, and Andy Hove was elected to serve as a new member of the Finance and Audit Committee.



Member nominations for AUSA's Board of Directors must be received at national headquarters by Feb. 1. (AUSA PHOTO)





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Chapter challenge winner donates gifts for military kids

By Sgt. Maj. of the Army Daniel Dailey,
U.S. Army retired

It looks as though the Association of the U.S. Army's Pikes Peak chapter, winner of AUSA's inaugural NCO and Soldier Programs' "Chapter Plus Challenge," is already on a path to defend its title and claim the crown again in 2021.

The Chapter Plus Challenge, along with the NCO and Soldier Programs Ribbon, was created in 2020 to encourage chapters to produce additional programming geared toward NCOs and soldiers. Completing the challenge requires several steps, such as participating in a local chamber of commerce event.

One of the ways the Pikes Peak chapter met the Chapter Plus Challenge this year was through one of its signature annual events.

Every year during the holidays, the chapter donates to Santa's Workshop at Fort Carson, Colorado.

The Mountain Post Santa's Workshop is a registered nonprofit where volunteers work to provide toys, books and games for in-need Colorado-based active-duty Army families with children under the age of 12.

In past years, chapter members have helped by donating funds. This year, they decided to make it more personal.

Through outreach and community support, the chapter raised \$2,500 and worked with the local Walmart to buy gifts and toys at a generously reduced rate. In total, the chapter was able to support Santa's Workshop with more than \$2,900 in holiday gifts.

Because the initial toy drive was so successful, and there were so many more families in need this year because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the chapter decided to do even more.

Chapter members held a second fundraising campaign and asked members and community partners



Soldiers with Fort Carson's 3rd Battalion, 29th Field Artillery Regiment, prepare to deliver gifts from AUSA's Pikes Peak chapter to Santa's Workshop. (AUSA PHOTO)

to pitch in to donate money to buy bicycles for the kids.

The chapter raised more than \$1,800 in just two days, allowing it to buy 34 bicycles to include in the annual Santa's Workshop donation.

The best part of this holiday story is how the chapter delivered these gifts. Through "Operation Reindeer Ruck," chapter members partnered with Fort Carson's 3rd Battalion, 29th Field Artillery Regiment.

In the early morning hours of Nov. 24, approximately 70 soldiers loaded toys into their rucksacks, stacked gifts on stretchers, and marched through the snow to Santa's Workshop.

When the snow settled and the soldiers arrived at the workshop, the Pikes Peak chapter was able to deliver the much-appreciated donation of almost \$5,000 in toys, games and bicycles.

Scott Leeling, the chapter president, said this year's Operation Reindeer Ruck was a huge success. And it was all possible due to the chapter's deep desire to help and find creative ways to connect soldiers and their families with the community, he said.

None of this would have happened "had it not been for our long history of partnership with the Fort Carson Mountain Post Santa's Workshop and the hard work of our very own Yvonne Coombes, vice president of special activities, and Marissa Wentling, vice president of spouse and family readiness," Leeling said.

The Pikes Peak chapter is no stranger to finding creative ways to get involved during the holiday season. In addition to Operation Reindeer Ruck, the chapter partnered with the Salvation Army to provide over 300 families with Thanksgiving meals and help run their Red Kettle Giving Tuesday.

"We are always looking for ways to build cohesive teams and educate, inform and connect," Leeling said.

For more information about the Chapter Plus Challenge, contact Victoria McAdoo, AUSA's senior coordinator for NCO & Soldier Programs, at vmcadoo@ausa.org.

Retired Sgt. Maj. of the Army Daniel Dailey is AUSA's vice president for NCO and Soldier Programs and was the 15th sergeant major of the Army.

AUSA members honored for lifetime of volunteer service

Members of the Association of the U.S. Army's Redstone-Huntsville chapter were recently honored for their volunteer work by the North Alabama Veterans & Fraternal Organizations Coalition.

Jim and Carolyn Rountree received a Lifetime Achievement Award for their volunteer efforts with AUSA, Gold Star Family programs, Floyd E. "Tut" Fann Veterans Home programs, and the Legacy 4 Korean War Veterans Foundation, among other veterans' organizations.

"Jim and Carolyn are an integral part of promoting volunteerism and staying connected through volunteering opportunities in the communities," said K.C. Bertling, the coalition president. "They are both heavily engaged with serving veterans and veterans' organizations."

The North Alabama Veterans & Fraternal Organizations Coalition's mission is to serve as a venue and communication conduit for organizations supporting veterans and first responders.

The awards are traditionally presented during an annual dinner host-



Jim and Carolyn Rountree, left, receive a Lifetime Achievement Award from K.C. Bertling, North Alabama Veterans & Fraternal Organizations Coalition president. (COURTESY PHOTO)

ed by AUSA's Redstone-Huntsville chapter, but they were presented this year in a private ceremony because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Two other award recipients were also recognized. Earl Hokanson, commandant of the Brandon-Wilbourn Detachment #820 of the Marine Corps League, is the Madison County Veteran of the Year, and Still Serving Veterans is the Madison County Veteran Organization of

the Year.

"Sometimes, as in the situation we have now, it can be discouraging to veterans, but we are doing our best under the circumstances to stay connected with the organizations and veterans in our community," Bertling said, according to a local news report. "It's a challenge, but I believe in the American resiliency, and I know we can overcome it, and we are still here to serve."

Chapter supports Fort Bragg 'Holiday Hearts' program

The Association of the U.S. Army's Braxton Bragg chapter recently donated to the annual Holiday Hearts Program, organized by Army Community Service, for military families at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

Ariel Aponte, the chapter president, visited ACS on Dec. 2 to deliver the donation, and gifts were packaged Dec. 7. The chapter was able to sponsor three families, providing gifts for 15 children, according to a Facebook post.

Developed in 2003, the Holiday Hearts Program was created to

match soldiers and their families with community members who want to help. It is administered by Army Community Service, the Armed Forces YMCA and the installation's volunteer services.

A "Hearts" tree is set up with information on participating children, including their gender and age.

Soldiers in the ranks of corporal or specialist or below with a verifiable hardship are eligible to receive gifts or a gift card for a child living in the home.

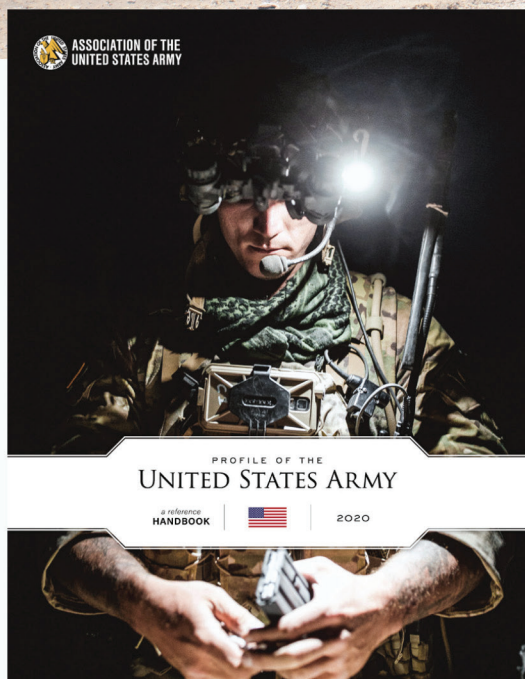
Community participants can donate toys, clothing or a gift card to the eligible families.



Ariel Aponte, president of AUSA's Braxton Bragg chapter, visits the Holiday Hearts tree. (AUSA PHOTO)

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