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The Best of the Best Army Warriors 2017 NCO and Soldier of the Year

Spc. Hazen Ham, soldier of the year, left, and Staff Sgt. Ryan McCarthy, noncommissioned officer of the year, winners of the 2017 Best Warrior Competition, were announced by Sgt. Maj. of the Army Daniel Dailey during the Sergeant Major of the Army's Awards Luncheon held in conjunction with the AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition. (AUSA News photo)

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Gary Sinise: 'For as long as I'm able, I stand with you'

AUSA Staff

Gary Sinise, recipient of the Association of the U.S. Army's highest award for service to the nation, pledged that his work on behalf of service members, veterans, first responders and military families isn't going to come to an end anytime soon.

"For as long as I'm able, I stand with you," Sinise said as he accepted the 2017 George Catlett Marshall Medal, AUSA's award for distinguished, extraordinary and selfless service to the United States.

"We can strive to do a little more each day so you will know we will always have your back," he said.

Adding, "I am so humbled to be here and deeply moved to receive this honor. ... I know where my freedom comes from, and I will not forget our defenders," he said.

An actor, director, producer, musician and humanitarian, Sinise never served in the military but many members of his family served, dating back to World War I.

One of his most famous acting roles was as a Vietnam veteran, Lt. Dan Taylor, in the movie *Forrest Gump*.



Gary Sinise, accepting AUSA's George Catlett Medal, said, 'I am so humbled to be here and deeply moved to receive this this honor. ... I know where my freedom comes from, and I will not forget our defenders.' (AUSA News photo)

Sinise said he was very close to many of his relatives who had served in the military, many of them in the Army, and that after the 2001 terrorist attacks he had decided to dedicate himself to making certain people who put themselves in harm's way came home getting the respect and attention that Vietnam veterans never did.

He has a nephew currently serving as an Army recruiter.

The Marshall Dinner at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center in Washington, D.C., was the final event of the three-day AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition, which was attended by about 30,000 people.

Mattis: Budget caps, confusion affect our competitive edge

Otto Kreisher
AUSA News

Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said the international situation today "is the most complex and demanding" he has seen in his four decades of service, and he needs the Army to be "at the top of your game, in body, spirit."

We must be so ready ... that everybody in the world will want to deal with [Secretary of State Rex] Tillerson's Department of State, not the Department of Defense, your warfighting skills" and for every day they are in uniform "to be dedicated to getting better," he said.

In the keynote address at the 2017 Association of the U.S. Army Annual Meeting and Exposition at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center, Washington, D.C., Mattis cited the persistent threat of terrorists in the Middle East, Russian aggression in Europe and North Korea's provocations in the Pacific.

At a question and answer period following his address to an audience of more than 3,000 AUSA members and guests, he was asked what the Army could do about threats from North Korea.

Replying, Mattis said, "It is a diplomatically-led, economic-sanctions buttressed effort to get North Korea off this path."

But because no one knows what the future may bring, "One thing the U.S. Army can do, and that is you've got to be ready so we can have military options that our president can employ if needed."

The secretary repeatedly stressed the need for readiness, which is this year's theme for the AUSA professional development forum.

He said, "Everything we do must contribute to the increased lethality of our military. We must never lose sight of the fact that we have no God-given right to victory on the battlefield."

But he expressed his concern that "our competitive edge over our potential adversaries" is eroding "due to budgetary confusion and budget caps," and said he is "among the majority in this nation that be-

lieves we can afford survival. I want the Congress back in the driver's seat of budget decisions, not in the spectator's seat."

He said he has great confidence in the Congress," but no confidence in automatic budget restraints, a reference to the 2011 Budget Control Act that sets arbitrary limits on spending.

Mattis gave a salute to veterans in the audience who served in Vietnam, then stayed in uniform and built the great Army of today and made him the marine he was.



Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis shakes hands with retired Gen. Carter F. Ham, AUSA president and CEO, after giving the keynote address at the AUSA Annual Meeting. (AUSA News photo)

If Army neglects readiness – We will lose the next war



Gen. Mark Milley, Army chief of staff, gives his 'State of the Army' address during the AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition. (AUSA News photo)

Susan Katz Keating
AUSA News

“We will pray for peace every day, but at the same time, the U.S. Army will prepare for war,” said Army Chief of Staff Gen. Mark A. Milley.

Adding, “No one wants war,” but the Army must maintain a laser focus on readiness.

Milley delivered his remarks at the well-attended Dwight D. Eisenhower Luncheon held at the 2017 Annual Meeting and Exposition of the Association of the U.S. Army.

In the speech, an impassioned Milley outlined his views on the Army’s role in a rapidly changing world.

“The world is becoming more complex and dangerous,” Milley said, adding that in order to understand the shifting dynamics, “all you have to do is pick up a newspaper.”

As such, “Combat readiness is our No. 1 priority,” Milley said. “The need has become more apparent.” And the need may be accelerating. The most dangerous near-term threat, Milley said, is North Korea.

“If history has taught us anything,” Milley said, it’s that we must not ignore threatening words when the threats are combined with capabilities. North Korea issues threats repeatedly, Milley said – and has the ability to implement them.

If carried out, those threats could create unimaginable consequences, he said, such as a nuclear strike on the American homeland.

Other threats could emerge from Europe or China, he said.

Potential adversaries in both locales have been studying our strengths and how to counter them, Milley noted.

Additionally, threats could stem from the Middle

East, or continue to evolve via “the long reach of terrorism.”

The Army chief could not say which threat would nor could trigger first, if at all. “I’m not in the business of predictions,” Milley said.

“I’m in the business of readiness.” That, Milley said, is the Army’s No. 1 task. As such, he said, the Army is immersed in maintaining readiness.

Among other things, the service is pre-positioning stocks and equipment. It also is in the process of standing up a new command aimed at streamlining the modernization process, Milley said, reiterating a plan he announced at the AUSA meeting in conjunction with Acting Secretary of the Army Ryan D. McCarthy.

The Army wants new, lethal equipment and weapons. Weapons alone are not the answer, though.

“It won’t matter if you’re dead,” he said. As such, force protection is key. So, too, is training. Training must be rigorous, hard and constant, he said, and will include being set in dense urban combat environments.

During his stirring address, Milley acknowledged the importance of others.

Valued foreign partners provide much value to national and international security, Milley said. So, too, do the American people. “Armies do not go to war,” Milley said, highlighting how the American people consistently pull together in time of crisis, including weather disasters and shocking events such as the recent shootings in Las Vegas.

“Nations go to war.” That includes first responders such as police, medical personnel and EMTs, plus industry. “We all of us are in there together,” Milley said. If the Army neglects readiness, “We will lose the next war.”

Hence the laser-like focus on keeping the force ready to fight.

“It has never been more important,” Milley said.

‘Why we fight’

AUSA Staff

Army Chief of Staff Gen. Mark A. Milley concluded a major speech at the Association of the U.S. Army Annual Meeting and Exposition with what he called “a little commentary on why we fight.”

Speaking at the Dwight David Eisenhower Luncheon where he and other chiefs have made major policy announcements about their visions for the Army’s future, he said the U.S. was formed on a “very powerful idea ... that here in America we will have a government of the people, by the people and for the people.”

Milley said, “It says that all of the people, regardless if you are male or female.

“It doesn’t matter if you are gay or straight or anything in between. It doesn’t matter if you are black or white or Asian or Indian or any other ethnic group.

“It doesn’t matter what the country of your origin is or the spelling of your last name. It does not matter if you are Catholic or Protestant, Muslim or Jew, and it doesn’t matter if you believe at all.

“It does not matter if you are rich or poor, common or famous. In this country, in these United States, under these colors of red, white and blue, all Americans are created free and equal.

“We will rise or fall based on our merit, and we will be judged by the content of our character and not the color of our skin.

“That is the core organizing principle of the United States of America, and that is why we fight.”

All in the Family? (Not Really)



Prior to the Eisenhower luncheon, Acting Secretary of the Army Ryan D. McCarthy and Staff Sgt. Ryan McCarthy, NCO of the year, left, join Spc. Hazen Ham, soldier of the year, and retired Gen. Carter F. Ham, AUSA president and CEO for an 'Army Family' picture. (AUSA News photo)

AUSA News

Voice for the Army – Support for the Soldier

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The Institute would like to invite you—past and present servicemembers, Army civilians, friends of the Army and others with an interest in and knowledge of national defense—to submit a manuscript to one or more of our writing programs. Membership in AUSA, while always encouraged, is not a requirement for participation.

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Pres. George H.W. Bush and Barbara host veterans and their service animals

Joseph Craig
Director
AUSA Book Program

Former U.S. President George H.W. Bush and First Lady Barbara Bush recently welcomed veterans and their service animals to their home at Walker's Point in Kennebunkport, Maine.

The gathering took place to recognize the publication of *Vets and Pets: Wounded Warriors and the Animals that Help Them Heal* by Dava Guerin and Kevin Ferris.

The book tells the stories of 15 service members who were wounded and how service and companion animals – dogs, cats, horses, pigs, and birds of prey – helped them adapt to civilian life.

Guerin has been friends with the Bushes since they were in the White House, and Mrs. Bush provided one of the book's forewords.

On the day of the event, the warriors and their families gathered at the Bush compound on the edge of the Atlantic Ocean. In the crowd were four service dogs, two screech owls and a Vietnamese potbelly pig.

President Bush, 93 years old and in a wheelchair, came to the bottom of the 100-yard driveway to greet the visitors. After a few handshakes and hellos, the group made the trek back to the house, where they were greeted by the 92-year-old Mrs. Bush in her electric scooter.

All the veterans had the opportunity to meet the Bushes and tell their stories.

There was Justin Crabbe, who lost both legs and some fingers after an IED explosion in Afghanistan; his dog Gnome helps with physical activities and in dealing with the public.

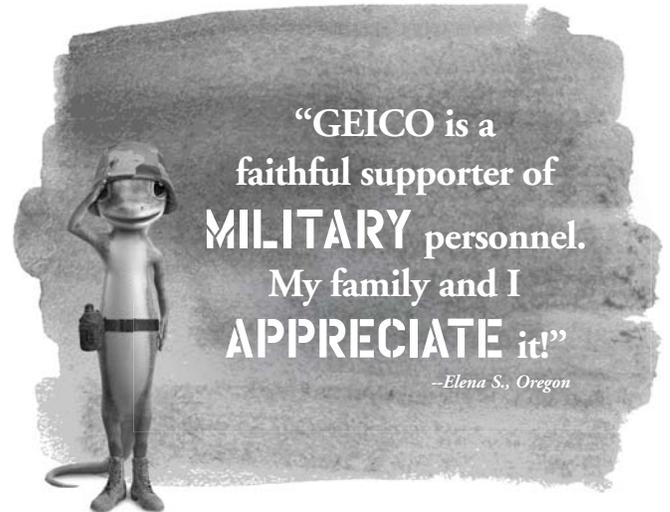
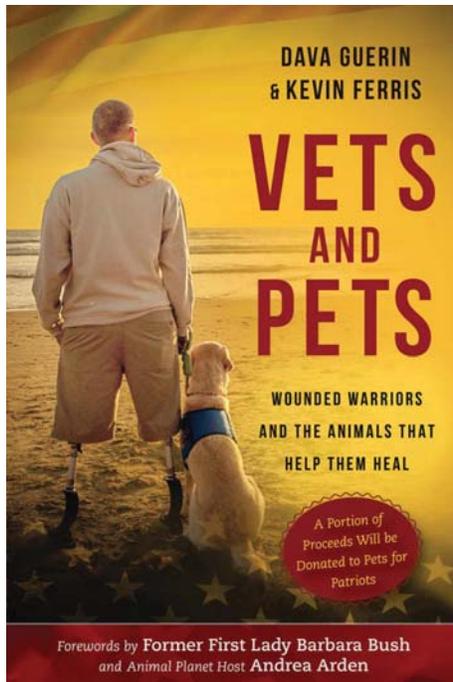
Vietnam veteran Patrick Bradley helped found the Avian Veteran Alliance to help veterans deal with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) by taking care of wounded birds. Mandi Tidwell and her husband drove all the way from Georgia with her charismatic service pig named Willie.

Willie did not seem recognize the honor of the occasion and chose to answer the call of nature on the lawn. A Secret Service agent said it was ok to let it be, but Tidwell came prepared with plastic bags. Ricky, one of the screech owls, got excited when meeting the president. "[He] had a slight accident and it landed on 41's pant leg," said Guerin. "He just laughed, and that was that."

The Bushes posed for photos with the veterans and their families before the end of the event, and President Bush followed with a tweet: "Barbara and I loved meeting a few of the patriots and service animals featured in a wonderful new book, *Vets and Pets*. God bless them all."

In addition to the meet-and-greet at Walker's Point, the group appeared on a live show at the local NBC affiliate in Portland and met 140 third-grade students at a Kennebunk Elementary School assembly.

A portion of proceeds from *Vets and Pets* are being donated to the organization Pets for Patriots.



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Ham praises volunteer leaders for membership increase

AUSA News

Retired Gen. Carter F. Ham, president and CEO of the Association of the U. S. Army, addressed AUSA's volunteer leadership at the Chapter Presidents Dinner, the Sunday before the Annual Meeting and Exposition's opening ceremony on Monday, Oct. 9, at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center in the nation's capital.

Recalling his first talk to this audience a year ago, Ham said, "I feel as honored today as I did on day one. I know more about AUSA than a year ago when we met. And I know many more of you now than I did a year ago when we met."

Adding, "I've had the privilege of visiting your chapters and your communities and joining in various chapter activities. I have a deeper understanding and appreciation to serve as your president, and I am humbled by your willingness to serve, to lead and make our association stronger."

Recognizing the many contributions the volunteer leaders make to AUSA, he said, "What I've learned in the last year plus is that your service actually runs much deeper than that – you truly do in very real ways make the Army, your communities and indeed our nation stronger."

When Ham spoke last year, AUSA membership had "bottomed out at about 61,000."

He reported to the leaders that this downward trend, running over several years, was not acceptable.

"Today, he said, "because of a year's worth of extraordinary effort, membership is now over 75,000. That's an average gain of over 1,000 a



Retired Gen. Carter F. Ham, AUSA president and CEO, told AUSA volunteer leaders that association membership grew from 61,000 to 75,000. Adding, 'Our goal is 100,000 by the end of this year.' (AUSA News photo)

month since last year's Annual Meeting."

But, he noted, this positive trend to reach this membership level, "is not enough.

"Our goal," he said, "is 100,000 by the end of this year, and we have three months to go."

Adding, "We're going to do what they say can't be done. We have a long way to go and a short time to get there. We're going to reach 100,000 by the end of this year."

In 2017, AUSA's Membership and Meetings Directorate conducted two training sessions at the

Association's national headquarters in Arlington, Va., that provided the volunteer leaders with the tools necessary to build successful programs and increase membership in their chapters.

The first, in June, was a four-day training program for chapter leaders, and the second, in August, was for new AUSA chapter presidents.

Retired Lt. Gen. Pat McQuiston, AUSA vice president for membership and meetings, praised the chapter volunteers at both sessions for their dedication and for their contributions to the Association.

She also stressed the importance of strong and committed volunteer leaders who unselfishly give of their time and talents to lead our chapters.

Ham called the chapter presidents at their session: "The future of AUSA."

On Sunday before the Annual Meeting's dinner, the association's region presidents conducted five workshops focusing on communications and sharing best practices.

At the dinner, Ham said, "I think we can do better by sharing our ideas and our best practices to connect more effectively across our Association so that we can learn from one another instead of having to start from scratch.

"AUSA lives and thrives in our 121 chapters throughout the globe. The heart and soul of our Association is you – the committed volunteer leaders and the more than 75,000 members that you represent.

"You bring our Association to life. Without you and without our members, we simply don't have an Association."

Appropriations Groundhog Day – Déjà vu All Over Again

View from the Hill

John Gifford

Director

AUSA Government Affairs

The days are ticking by, but Congress is not moving closer to passing appropriations for Fiscal Year 2018, which began on Oct. 1.

Each day that passes is an opportunity lost to improve our Army's readiness.

As of late October, both the House and Senate had finally passed a budget resolution.

Budget resolutions are supposed to be completed by April 15 as the first step in the Congressional budget system, a system that is widely acknowledged to be completely broken. The budget resolution isn't a binding law, but it sets the allocations (or funding levels) for each committee to then mark its appropriations bill.

In this case, all the House appropriations committees went ahead and marked their bills without a budget resolution, and their bills have since passed

the House in an omnibus bill passed on party lines.

However, the House omnibus was dead on arrival in the Senate, which has only marked nine of their 12 appropriations bills in committee, and haven't passed any on the Senate floor.

The current continuing resolution will expire on Dec. 8. If appropriations aren't passed and signed into law by then, another continuing resolution will be required, or else the government will partially shut down.

Complicating everything is the fact that the president's budget request and all the appropriations bills currently exceed the caps in the Budget Control Act of 2011.

This means that even if the House and Senate can pass the bills on time, sequester will kick in and mindlessly shave off tens of billions of dollars of appropriations unless separate legislation is passed to raise the budget caps for 2018.

In general, Republicans only want to raise the defense caps, and Democrats will only agree to raise the defense caps if the non-defense discretionary caps are equally increased.

In two previous episodes, a Bipartisan Budget Act was passed in 2013 and again in 2015 to raise

the caps for two years. However, with health care, tax reform and disaster recovery taking the attention of the Congress, there has been little movement toward a third cap-raising bill so far.

We should also remember that Dec. 8 is the date when the suspension of the debt limit expires, once again jeopardizing the full faith and credit of the United States.

It is unclear at this point how long the Treasury Department will be able to delay default through what are called "extraordinary measures," but the debt limit is just one more complicating factor in a witch's brew of Congressional gridlock and inaction.

If we get through December without defaulting or shutting the government down, we can look forward to an even less productive 2018 as Congress moves toward the mid-term elections.

Here's to hoping that my next column will reveal the shocking and extraordinary Congressional progress made in November, where all of these complications were worked out with exemplary bipartisan statesmanship.

That would be a column I would love to write.

See you on the high ground.

McCarthy, Ham win 2017 Army Best Warrior Competition

Luc Dunn
AUSA News

The winners of the U.S. Army Best Warrior Competition were announced during the Sergeant Major of the Army Awards Luncheon at the Association of the U.S. Army's Annual Meeting and Exposition in Washington, D.C.

Spc. Hazen Ham, U.S. Army Pacific, is the Army's Soldier of the Year, and Staff Sgt. Ryan McCarthy from U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command is the Noncommissioned Officer (NCO) of the Year.

During the six-day Best Warrior Competition at Fort A. P. Hill, Va., 22 of the Army's finest representing 11 commands test their Army aptitude by conquering urban warfare simulations, board interviews, physical fitness tests, written exams, and Warrior tasks and battle drills relevant to today's operating environment.

"We have the world's greatest Army because we have the world's greatest noncommissioned officers and soldiers," said Army Vice Chief of Staff Gen. James McConville, the luncheon's keynote speaker.

"They are highly trained, extremely well-disciplined and they set the example in being physically fit. They are the best of the best," he said.

Ham has been in the Army for nearly two years, and serves as an infantryman with the 25th Infantry Division.

McCarthy is a combat engineer with nine years of service, including deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, and is currently stationed at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo.

Before presenting the awards, McConville noted two examples of enlisted leaders who epitomize what an NCO should be: Command Sgt. Maj. Scott



Staff Sgt. Ryan McCarthy conducts a physical fitness assessment during the Best Warrior Competition. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Nicholas Williams)

Schroeder and Command Sgt. Maj. Alonzo Smith.

McConville asked Schroeder a question when they first met: Should an NCO teach soldiers what to think, or how to think?

The answer Schroeder gave, McConville said, is to first teach what to think.



Spc. Hazen Ham investigates the wreckage of a simulated improvised explosive device detonation as part of the Best Warrior Competition. (Photo by Pfc. Eric Cerami)

"He [Schroeder] told me that we need to train them to move, shoot and communicate. We need to make them masters of their profession, and instill the Army values, before anything else," McConville said.

Smith is a combat veteran who was wounded by an 82 mm recoilless rifle in Kandahar, Afghanistan, causing him to lose part of his leg.

After a difficult recovery, Smith became command sergeant major for the 101st Airborne Division.

"When he stood in front of the division, every soldier knew he led from the front," McConville said. "Those are the kind of NCOs the Army needs."

Honorary Sergeant Major of the Army

Also during the luncheon, Sgt. Maj. of the Army Daniel Dailey named retired Gen. Frederick Kroesen as the third Honorary Sergeant Major of the Army.

"This award recognizes one thing – lifelong service to soldiers and their families," Dailey said.

Kroesen is a former Army vice chief of staff who has been in combat and received the Purple Heart three times – in World War II, Korea and Vietnam.

Speaking of his 41 years in the Army and his life of service, Kroesen said, "I would do it all over again if I had the opportunity."

He added, "Today's soldiers are a continuation of the incredibly important work the Army has been doing for over 200 years."



Retired Gen. Frederick Kroesen, center, was named the third Honorary Sgt. Maj. of the Army. Standing with him are, left to right, retired SMA Ken Preston, AUSA vice president for NCO and Soldier Programs; retired SMA Raymond Chandler; Army Vice Chief of Staff Gen. James McConville; Sgt. Maj. of the Army Dan Dailey; retired SMA Jack Tilley; and retired Gen. Carter F. Ham, AUSA president and CEO. (AUSA News photo)

Best Warrior Competition tests physical, mental endurance

NCO and Soldier Programs

**Sergeant Major of the Army
Kenneth O. Preston, USA, Ret.
Vice President, Noncommissioned
Officer and Soldier Programs**

Greetings from the Association of the United States Army (AUSA), our Army's association for education and professional development, and a major supporter of the Army's Soldier for Life efforts.

One of the highlights of this year's Annual Meeting was the opportunity to recognize and celebrate the selection of our Army's Best Warriors, the Noncommissioned Officer and Soldier of the Year for 2017-2018.

The 16th annual Best Warrior Competition began at Fort A.P. Hill, Va., on Oct. 1.

Competing in this year's competition for the coveted Sergeant Major of the Army Jack L. Tilley award were 11 NCOs and 11 soldiers representing 11 major commands and their assigned organizations.

This year's Noncommissioned Officer of the Year is Staff Sgt. Ryan McCarthy representing the Maneuver Support Center of Excellence, Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command; and the Soldier of the Year is Spec. Hazen D. Ham representing the 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division, Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, U. S. Army Pacific Command.



Spec. Hazen Ham, 25th Infantry Division, prepares to fire an M302 grenade launcher during the Pacific Theater Best Warrior Competition. Ham would go on to become the Army's Soldier of the Year. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Joseph Moore)

Starting on day one until the announcement by the Sergeant Major of the Army Daniel Dailey during the SMA Awards Luncheon at the AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition, none of the competitors knew where they ranked in the competition or how they performed in any of the competitive events.

McCarthy, the noncommissioned officer of the year said the toughest part for him was the uncertainty of how he did in the competition from event to event, he said, "This competition was a great training event for me."

Adding, "Everyone in the competition was a proven winner and a true professional. You couldn't gauge where you stood with your competitors."

Ham, the Army's Soldier of the Year, also said he never thought at any point in the four-day competi-

tion that he was winning because his fellow competitors were just as good.

"Just the caliber of the soldiers I've competed and trained with, I really feel like we competed with each other and not against each other," said Ham.

Ham said the toughest part of the competition for him was the cumulative stress from event to event over the four-day period.

All the competitors competed as individuals throughout the competition consisting of phase one at Fort A.P. Hill and phase two at the Pentagon.

Adding to the isolation of the competition, all the human interaction during the competitive events were directly related to the role players who served as evaluators.

see next page



Sgt. 1st Class Brendon Shannon, U.S. Army Forces Command, and second-place noncommissioned officer in the Best Warrior Competition, fires an M500 12-gauge shotgun during the event. (Photo by Sgt. Steven L. Galimore)



Pfc. Rowan Lovell, U.S. Army Special Operations Command, walks through a tunnel during the Best Warrior Competition. Lovell finished in second place in the competition. (Photo by Spc. Jada Owens)



Staff Sgt. Ryan McCarthy, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, is the Army's Noncommissioned Officer of the Year after winning the Best Warrior Competition at Fort A.P. Hill, Va. (U.S. Army photo)

Physical, mental endurance from preceding page

Starting on the first day with a situational briefing that placed the competitors in a fictional country as military advisors, assigned to provide their military expertise in a series of challenging covert operations to take place over the four-day period.

First, the competitors had to demonstrate to the "embassy" leadership that they had the fitness and endurance to complete the covert patrols and operations as individuals.

Going far beyond the standard three-event Army physical fitness test, these competitors faced a multi-event physical fitness assessments that included pushups, sit-ups and a 2-mile run coupled with lifting, carrying, climbing, rolling and sprinting their way to the completion of this initial task.

As all the competitors finished this physical challenge, they carefully selected the equipment they would need for the next several days, packed their rucksack and moved 15 miles to their basecamp for continued operations.

Arriving in the basecamp by late afternoon, each competitor was given a written examination of general military topics to complete before preparing for the next phase of the competition.

Over the next three days, the competitors navigated through a series of situational training exercises, as individuals, navigating to their first point, accomplishing the mission assigned and gaining the information needed to navigate to their next location.

Sgt. Maj. of the Army Daniel Dailey said, "The rigors of this year's Best Warrior Competition went even further [than before] by stressing the characteristics of leadership required to be the Army's Best Warrior."

He added, "We bypassed the traditional format of competition, not in an effort to meet the marks on a

checklist, but to think as a strong leader would in a true combat environment."

Dailey noted, "They endured hunger, fatigue, lack of sleep and a myriad of mental and physical trials in their quest to be the NCO and Soldier of the Year."

Embedded in the competition, competitors completed a graded essay on an assigned topic, conducted media interviews, reacted to and engaged the "enemy" with weapons, and demonstrated knowledge of numerous Warrior Tasks and Battle Drills during the exercises.

Additionally, the competitors faced a series of mystery events on the last day to test their leadership skills and resourcefulness.

All the competitors completed phase one of the competition at Fort A.P. Hill to advance to the second phase; the dreaded appearance at the Pentagon before a panel of the most senior sergeants major from across the Army testing their knowledge, appearance and military bearing.

Finishing in second place was Sgt. First Class Brenden C. Shannon representing the 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, Joint Base Lewis McCord, U.S. Army Forces Command; and Pvt. 1st Class Rowan Lovell representing A Company, 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, Fort Benning, Ga., U.S. Army Special Operations Command.

Finishing in third place was Sgt. 1st Class Benjamin S. Garcia representing the 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, U.S. Army Pacific Command; and Sgt. Grant M. Reimers representing the 1st Platoon, 1859th Light-Medium Transportation Company, Nevada Army National Guard.

Noncommissioned officers and soldiers across the Army are now competing at the company, troop and battery levels, gaining the expertise to compete

Senior leaders said

"The Best Warrior Competition is a test of physical and mental endurance. The soldiers and noncommissioned officers who participate represent the Army's best and they deserve to be commended for their dedication and proven commitment to teamwork."

Ryan D. McCarthy
Acting Secretary of the Army

"Your participation in this year's Best Warrior Competition sets you apart from your peers as some of the best soldiers and NCOs the Army has to offer. We, as soldiers, need to be ready to deploy at a moment's notice and the knowledge you possess is a key component to maintaining that readiness. As you look back on your experience, remember you had the dedication and perseverance to challenge yourself and grow as an individual and a leader. You truly are Army Strong!"

Gen. Mark A. Milley
Army Chief of Staff

"Highly trained, disciplined and fit soldiers are the Army's most important weapon system. The Best Warrior Competition showcases our best soldiers. And remember, winning matters!"

Gen. James C. McConville
Army Vice Chief of Staff

in next year's Best Warrior Competition.

These competitions across the Army promote self-development, fitness and professionalism among our junior leaders and noncommissioned officers.

These professional development events are occurring every day around the Army; across the nation and around the world.

If you are interested in any of our professional discussions, this publication, social media, or our webpage, then join the team and be a member of the Army's professional association.

There is no substitute for the knowledge and wisdom gained through experience, and when you are a young up-and-coming Army professional, associating with other members of your profession with varied experiences creates a unique opportunity to learn through the eyes of others.

Now more than ever America's Army needs AUSA, and AUSA needs your membership support.

Membership is the volume knob to ensure your voice is amplified many times over and heard throughout the halls of Congress, from sea to shining sea across this country, and throughout every small town and community in-between.

Keep America's Army Strong!
Take a Stand!

Still Serving, Still Saluting!

Defense policy bill in conference; McCarthy addresses Hill staffs

Capitol Focus

Julie Rudowski
Assistant Director
Government Affairs

Defense Policy Bill Heads to Conference. Formal negotiations on the fiscal 2018 defense policy bill also known as the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) are finally underway.

Conferees from the House and Senate will work together to hammer out a final version of the bill. Their major hurdle: Resolving the topline dollar amount.

The House version of the bill authorized \$621.5 billion in the base defense budget and \$75 billion for the Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) account while the Senate's version authorized \$640 billion for the base defense budget and \$60 billion for the OCO.

Both versions are above the administration's \$603 billion base defense spending request and the Budget Control Act caps for fiscal 2018, which are set at \$549 billion.

There are many provisions contained in the bills that are important to AUSA, its members and the Army.

On Oct. 20, AUSA along with its other partners in The Military Coalition, a group representing 5.5 million currently serving, retired, and former service members and their families and survivors, weighed in on some of those provisions.

Here are some of the top items:

□ **Force Levels** – AUSA and the coalition remain concerned by continuing statements of Service leaders regarding the extent to which our forces are overstretched.

We believe force levels should be increased to meet continuing and projected demands. For this reason, we support the House-proposed increases for the Army: Active Duty: 10,000; National Guard: 4000; Reserve: 3000.

□ **Military Pay Raise** – The coalition believes strongly in the principle of pay raise comparability and believes service members have earned and deserve the same annual raise as the average American's, as measured by the Employment Cost Index (ECI).

We urge the conferees to sustain and reinforce this fundamental comparability principle with a 2.4-percent raise for FY18. AUSA and the coalition support the Senate-passed provision limiting the conditions under which the president may propose an alternative pay raise.

□ **Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH)** – AUSA and the coalition strongly oppose the Senate-passed plan to deny with-dependent BAH payments to dual-member couples with children sharing the same household.

For two married O-4s with children in Washington, D.C., this would impose an annual pay cut of



Acting Army Secretary Ryan D. McCarthy provided his view of the state of the Army at the Congressional Staff Breakfast held during the AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition. (AUSA News photo)

more than \$4,000. For married E-7s with children in San Diego, the annual income loss would be more than \$5,600.

We agree with DoD, BAH is an integral element of military compensation, and any changes should be initiated through the Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation (QRMC) with one underway in 2018 for this very purpose.

Further, service members with dependents should not be subjected to this financial penalty based on whether they marry another service member vs. a civilian. For these reasons, we urge conferees to leave with-dependent BAH rules unchanged.

□ **TRICARE Fees** – AUSA and the coalition oppose the Senate initiative to impose fee increases on currently serving and retired members and families who were explicitly grandfathered against such increases in the FY17 NDAA.

Congress expects service members to live up to their commitments, and those who are serving or have completed a career of service should have a reasonable expectation Congress will live up to the reciprocal commitments it has made to them, especially commitments made less than one year ago.

□ **Pharmacy Copays** – We oppose Senate-proposed increases in TRICARE pharmacy copays and elimination of the COLA-based adjustment process for those copays. The coalition believes these copays already are too high and that recent actual and proposed increases have been determined arbitrarily, with the primary purpose of requiring beneficiaries to fund program changes rightfully the responsibility of the government.

For example, the current \$10 retail generic copay is already more than double than the \$4 Walmart charges people with no insurance for hundreds of generic medications. Military beneficiaries deserve better than repeatedly seeing proposed copay hikes without any principles established for what level of pharmacy benefit their decades of service and sacri-

fice should have earned.

COLA-adjustments contained in current law should continue to ensure fees do not outpace income.

□ **Survivor Benefits** – AUSA and the coalition are grateful to both chambers for their initiatives to prevent the Special Survivor Indemnity Allowance (SSIA) authority from expiring. But military survivors deserve better than the status quo, or simply COLA-adjusting the current SSIA.

The coalition is seeking House and Senate senior leadership support to provide non-HASC/SASC offsets to allow multi-year increases in SSIA amounts, in accordance with Congress' originally expressed intent to continue increasing SSIA as a means of phasing out the unfair deduction of Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) annuities for VA's Dependency and Indemnity Compensation.

SSIA increases should not be funded by taking money from other military benefits (e.g., by raising pharmacy copayments). Solutions must come from the government, not the beneficiary.

□ **TRICARE Reserve Select (TRS)** – We support the Senate proposal to extend TRS eligibility to reserve component members eligible for the Federal Employees Health Benefit Program, funding for which should not be forced on beneficiaries through excessive pharmacy copays.

The coalition believes this important equity issue should be funded by selling federal assets or other means that do not compel military beneficiaries to fund obligations that rightfully are the government's.

□ **Hospice Care for Children** – The coalition supports the Senate's provision allowing hospice care coverage for children also receiving curative care. Medicare rules currently prohibit TRICARE coverage of hospice care services for children receiving curative healthcare treatments.

see next page

Focus from preceding page

❑ **Reserve Benefit Comparability** – AUSA and the coalition support the House provision granting equal treatment of orders to serve on active duty under section 12304a and 12304b of Title 10. Service members making the same sacrifices in support of our nation should receive the same benefits. We see no reason for Congress to deny equal treatment for equal sacrifice.

❑ **Assessing Characterization of Discharges** – The coalition supports the House provision emphasizing consideration of additional medical evidence and liberal consideration of evidence from VA or civilian healthcare providers relating to PTSD or TBI for correction of military records as relates to discharges or dismissals.

TMC likewise supports the Senate provision, with regard to survivors of sexual assault, which includes those who allege sexual assault.

AUSA's Congressional Breakfast Breaks Records. This year's Congressional Staff Breakfast, held during the AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition, was one of the best attended congressional events in the association's history, with AUSA President Gen. Carter F. Ham, USA, Ret., hosting approximately 700 attendees.

More than 270 key congressional staff members were among the guests. The event featured two speakers. The Army chief of staff, Gen. Mark Milley, who addressed the group and described the way forward as the Army continues to provide service to

the nation and strength for the future.

After he spoke, the Army's Acting Secretary Ryan D. McCarthy provided his view of the state of the Army to the gathering that included top leaders of the Army, both military and civilian.

McCarthy told the crowd that failure to pass the FY 18 budget will prevent the Army from modernizing, and "will force us to continue mortgaging our future readiness and lethality."

Congressional paralysis will have profound implications – our adversaries will be emboldened, global stability will continue to decline, and our options to respond to an emergent threat will be reduced."

"Above all, the Army needs sufficient, sustained, and predictable funding, to restore balance and reduce risk. We defend the nation with a force based on a strategy, not on a budget", McCarthy said.

He also spoke at length about the Army's plan to create a command aimed at streamlining Army modernization and one that will "pursue a modernization strategy that balances capacity and capability."

McCarthy outlined the strategy which McCarthy said he has already initiated along with the Army chief of staff – a strategy that directs the Army to take "aggressive moves and invest against six signature modernization efforts that can be realized in the near and mid-term."

McCarthy said, "I have initiated a reprioritization of money in the POM, and a science and technology review that will support development of these efforts. And I will continue to invest in them

with ruthless prioritization with resources protected across the five-year Future Years Defense Plan.

"First, a precision fires capability that restores US Army dominance in range, munitions, and target acquisition.

"Second, next generation combat vehicles, including optionally-manned variants with the most modern firepower, protection, mobility, and power generation capabilities, to ensure our combat formations can fight and win against any foe.

"Third, future vertical lift platforms – optionally-manned, both attack and lift, that are survivable on the modern and future battlefield.

"Fourth, an Army network that is mobile and expeditionary – that can be used to fight cohesively in contested cyber and electromagnetic environments.

"Fifth, air and missile defense capabilities like mobile-SHORAD (Short Range Air Defense), directed energy, and advanced energetics – capabilities that ensure our future combat formations are protected from modern and advanced air and missile delivered fires – including drones.

"And, last but not least, soldier lethality that spans all fundamentals – shooting, moving, communicating, protecting and sustaining."

The new command will draw from within existing force structure, officials said, and is not expected to create civilian job losses or movements.

The Army plans to stand up the new organization by the summer of 2018. As such, the Army has assigned Lt. Gen. Edward Cardon to lead a task force that will study and plan the new organization. Cardon has begun the 120-day planning process.

Lt. Harrison Barber, Cpl. Kristen Gray win Battle Challenge

AUSA Staff

Soldiers from the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard) and the 1st Infantry Division Sustainment Brigade took first place in the male and female categories at the Battle Challenge obstacle course during the Association of the U.S. Army Annual Meeting and Exposition in Washington, D.C.

First Lt. Harrison Barber, with the Old Guard, posted the overall fastest time of 1:34.40.

Winning the female category was Cpl. Kristen Gray, with a time of 2:42.33.

Sgt. 1st Class Brendan Shannon had the second-best overall time of 1:34.42, and Sgt. Laura Goodwin was the female runner-up, completing the course in 3:11.78.

The Battle Challenge was a new event at this year's Annual Meeting.

The course, in an AUSA exhibit hall at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center, consisted of nine individual tasks, including climbing a cargo net, descending on a knotted rope, scaling a wall, crossing horizontal bars, toting fuel cans, shooting an M4 laser rifle and dragging a mannequin.

Sgt. Maj. of the Army Daniel Dailey led more than 60 soldiers through the Battle Challenge on Monday, Oct. 9, the first day of the Annual Meet-



Over 320 service members competed in the Battle Challenge obstacle course during the three-day Annual Meeting. (AUSA News photo)

ing, replacing what had been a traditional run with the sergeant major of the Army followed by breakfast and a speech.

"It looks short, but I'll tell you it's high intensity," said Dailey, who predicted the event is here to stay because it's relevant to what soldiers do every day.

He added, "We used to bring everybody in and just talk to them, and I said this is not the way we start our day as soldiers, we start our day as soldiers

doing PT."

"This is pretty cool, beats a breakfast," said retired Gen. Carter Ham, AUSA president and CEO, while watching soldiers complete the Battle Challenge.

He predicted that at future AUSA events "we'll see this expand."

In total, over 320 service members competed in the Battle Challenge during the three-day Annual Meeting.

AUSA member benefits – Many ways to spread holiday cheer

Susan Rubel

Director

AUSA Affinity Programs

It's hard to believe it's already time to think about Christmas, holiday traveling, shopping and gift giving – and we have a variety of ways to help you.

First, consider giving an AUSA membership.

This is a win-win-win as AUSA is growing membership to increase our support to soldiers, Army civilians, and families – and be a stronger voice on Capitol Hill for their needs. You win for the thoughtfulness of your gift, and the recipient wins with access to the professional development and other resources AUSA membership provides.

They will also be eligible for all the discounts that you enjoy. Visit www.ausa.org/join to give the gift of membership.

Second, a tax-deductible donation to AUSA

A donation in the recipient's name to support AUSA's scholarship programs, family support programs or the Institute of Land Warfare's work to educate on defense issues is an excellent gift.

Learn more at www.ausa.org and donate at www.ausa.org/donate.

AUSA has put together a package of travel and shopping offerings that will save you money. Many of these programs also support AUSA's missions.

Here are some exclusive member benefit programs to consider this time of year.

Experticity – AUSA members have expert status

Experticity works with hundreds of brands to give incredible access, perks and exclusive pricing to people who inspire others about what to buy, where to go or what to do. In other words, "Experts."

Your AUSA membership gives you access to an exclusive community of experts as passionate as you are. Experticity's invite-only community is an exclusive way to connect directly with top brands and unlock rewards like these:

- A behind-the-scenes look at products and technologies
- Expert pricing, in some cases up to 70 percent off retail
- Opportunities to try new products before they hit the shelves
- Chances to work directly with brands

Brands include Beretta, Big Agnes, Helly Hansen, Ariat, Purina, Toms, Outdoor Research, Diamondback, SOG Knives, and many more.

Visit www.ausa.org/expert. Members will need to log in to the AUSA website to see the offer.

Provengo – Save up to 60% on top outdoor brands

Provengo has partnered with AUSA to offer deep-discounted prices with stock shipping the same business day. Register for an account through

the AUSA Members Only access to save up to 60 percent on Costa Del Mar, YETI, Sperry, and more.

And right now, take \$15 off your first order with code AUSA15. Visit www.ausa.org/provengo.

COSTCO – New member benefit partner

Just in time for the cooking and shopping that need to be done, AUSA members who become new COSTCO members will receive a special coupon pack not available to the public. The pack includes three free items and additional savings with a total value of more than \$60.

Visit www.ausa.org/costco. Members will need to log in to the AUSA site to activate this offer.

Here's a shortcut list of other exclusive AUSA member savings.

Shopping Discounts

■ **APPLE** – Discounts on Macs, iPads, AppleCare and Apple Accessories. www.ausa.org/apple.

■ **COVERT THREADS** – These are not your ordinary socks! You must try them if you have any foot comfort problems. You'll never turn back. Read about military sand socks and order with code AUSA for additional savings at www.ausa.org/covert. (Can be combined with their new customer offer.)

■ **DELL** – Special member deals, plus an additional 10 percent off coupon at www.ausa.org/dell.

■ **ENTERTAINMENT** – Through AUSA's arrangement with MemberDeals, you save up to 40 percent on tickets to theme parks, movies, shows and more. Visit <https://memberdeals.com/ausa/?login=1>

■ **OFFICE DEPOT/OFFICE MAX** – For special AUSA member deals on printing and shopping, visit www.ausa.org/office. Save up to 80 percent on preferred products. You can also print a card to take into a local store for your discount.

■ **SUBSCRIPTION BOXES**. For the runners, cyclists and triathletes in your circle, you can purchase gift boxes, as well as sign up for regular monthly delivery. Visit www.ausa.org/runner and get 20 percent off your first box with code AUSA.

Try Blue Apron for delivery of fresh ingredients and recipes in exact portions to make simple, seasonal home-cooked meals. Take \$40 off your first order at www.ausa.org/blue.

Travelling? – Use your AUSA travel discounts

WYNDHAM HOTELS – Up to 20 percent off all Wyndham Brands at www.ausa.org/wyndham. The Wyndham discounts are at the following hotels:

- Baymont Inns and Suites®
- Days Inn®
- Hawthorn Suites® By Wyndham
- Howard Johnson®
- Knights Inn®
- Microtel Inns and Suites® By Wyndham
- Ramada Worldwide®
- Super 8®
- Travelodge®

- TRYP® by Wyndham®
- Wingate® By Wyndham
- Wyndham Garden®
- Wyndham Grand Hotels and Resorts®
- Wyndham Hotels and Resorts®

CHOICE HOTELS – 20 percent off at more than 6,400 Choice Hotels. Visit www.ausa.org/choice for reservations. The Choice brand includes:

- Cambria Suites®
- Clarion®
- Comfort Inn®
- Comfort Suites®
- Econo Lodge®
- MainStay Suites®
- Quality®
- Rodeway Inn®
- Sleep Inn®
- Suburban Extended Stay Hotel®

RED ROOF INN AND RED ROOF PLUS+ – Did you know pets are welcome at Red Roof Inns? Not only welcomed, but they stay free. Great for holiday traveling and families PCSing.

And even better, AUSA members get 20 percent off for the people staying with their pets. Visit www.ausa.org/red.

Special Offer: the first 25 Members to write me at srubel@ausa.org to request a certificate, get a free night's stay at Red Roof Inn or Red Roof Plus+. Please provide your full name and mailing address.

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Enjoy 5 percent off web fares at www.ausa.org/hawaiian.

CAR RENTAL DISCOUNTS

AUSA works with a variety of car rental companies to offer you discounts and, in some cases, additional coupon savings. Avis and Budget provide discounts up to 20 percent plus additional coupons like a free upgrade, free weekend day, and more. Visit www.ausa.org/avis and www.ausa.org/budget.

For Hertz, visit www.ausa.org/hertz. For Alamo, Enterprise and National Car Rentals, you'll need to log in to the AUSA site first at www.ausa.org/aencar then enter your travel information to see rates for all three of these companies.

Magazine/Newspaper Subscriptions

Members get 25 percent off Military Kids' Life Magazine, a wonderful gift idea for military children. Visit www.ausa.org/kids.

Also enjoy 25 percent off Army Times, Defense News and Federal Times at www.ausa.org/times.





AT **AUSA** EVERY DAY IS **VETERANS DAY**

It is our mission to honor those
who serve, past and present.

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Educate | Inform | Connect



**ASSOCIATION OF THE
UNITED STATES ARMY**

Elevate caring for Army families; maintain combat readiness

AUSA Family Readiness

Gina Cavallaro
AUSA Staff

The Army's top leaders reaffirmed their deep commitment to the well-being of soldiers and their families, and answered questions on a variety of topics during a packed Association of the U.S. Army Annual Meeting and Exhibition town hall concerning Army families.

Chief among the messages delivered by Army Chief of Staff Gen. Mark A. Milley was his iron-clad assertion that Army readiness cannot happen if soldiers' families are not taken care of.

"Priority one is combat readiness of the force. Second is combat readiness of the future force, otherwise known as modernization; but the third is not really a third priority, it is a constant priority and that is to take care of soldiers and families," said Milley, reiterating his oft-stated belief that soldiers cannot focus on combat tasks unless they know their families – especially their children – are taken care of.

He added, "That means we have to elevate taking care of families in order to maintain readiness. We hold this as a very critical element of overall readiness of the Army."

Sgt. Maj. of the Army Daniel A. Dailey described his interaction with families across the Army, and shared his impressions of how family members are feeling based on feedback he's received at multiple town hall meetings.

"They have hope in our leaders, they believe in us and they trust us, but we have to keep trust, because a break of that bond would cause significant degradation in the morale of our families and our soldiers. I think that to this day we have



Acting Secretary of the Army Ryan D. McCarthy, Army Chief of Staff Gen. Mark Milley, and Sgt. Maj. of the Army Daniel Dailey speak at an AUSA Military Family Forum, stressing the importance of military families, especially children. (AUSA News photo)

maintained that trust as an institution, but there are things we can get better at," Dailey said.

Childcare, a top priority, can improve with better background screening of employees, hours that match families' work schedules, and maintenance of infrastructure, Dailey said, recognizing that in the current fiscal environment, tough choices have to be made.

He affirmed that families understand the need to invest in combat gear over sustaining certain family programs, saying "we're OK, we're not broken, we're not bent, we're OK," he said, acknowledging "there are things we can improve" by continuing to listen to families.

A question about suicide prevention arose first and was addressed by Dailey with the declaration that after years of studying the problem, the Army has made strides in breaking the stigma of mental health issues with initiatives such as screening during in-processing and out-processing soldiers, and a focus on peer intervention.

"In many cases, when we have a suicide across the force, someone else saw the indications but

failed to do something about it," he said.

Milley added that "young people are doing diving catches every day" to prevent their peers from killing themselves at the tipping point, and offered his studied view of the problems people deal with daily. "The first thing to think of is, there but for the grace of God go I.

"The human psyche is very fragile and any one of us, any human under the right combination of stress can break, so the stigma piece is really important. There should be no stigma to any sort of mental health. People struggle every day," Milley said in a fatherly tone, putting forth that while it may sound simple, sleep, exercise and good eating habits, along with taking advantage of resources that build resilience, can go a long way toward overall mental health.

Other topics discussed at the town hall were education, medical care and problems with making claims for items broken or mishandled during permanent change of station moves.

Milley shared a personal story of the time his wife had to handle the family's move to Korea on her own, describing having been "in the doghouse for a year" with her because it was such a logistical nightmare. He vowed to personally look into making the "painful process of filing claims" easier.

Acting Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy's contribution to the town hall was simple: He vowed to fight hard to improve funding.

He said, "I've been on the job a short period of time, and my singular focus has been how do we build a budget that has the resources and authorities that we need to support the force. Times are very difficult, a lot of this is out of our control. To get sustainable, sufficient, predictable funding has been a challenge.

"It is my job to make a compelling case, first with my boss Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis, then to the Congress to get the resources we need for the Army, and you have my vow to do that every day that I'm in office. That is my single focus as I proceed."

Download the new AUSA app today

AUSA Staff

If you recently attended the AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition, you may have used the Association of the U.S. Army's new AUSA app.

If you did, don't delete the app just yet – this app was not exclusively for your use at the Annual Meeting.

The app will also offer useful tools for those attending the annual Global Force symposium in Huntsville, Ala., and the LANPAC symposium in Honolulu, Hawaii, where you can access information such as exhibit hall maps, program agendas, speaker bios, and much more.

But, association officials said, support for events like these symposia is not the only benefit AUSA's app offers.

You are able to switch to the AUSA Connect year-round event to engage with other AUSA members and chapters around the world. You are also able to receive the latest news and updates from AUSA national headquarters.

With the app, you can learn what your AUSA chapter is doing and how you can better spread the word and support our goal: "Voice for the Army – Support for the Soldier."

This will help us build a strong online community and, hopefully, increase our membership and better tell the AUSA – Army story.

The app is now available from Apple's App Store, the Google Play store, and online via a web app.

Visit www.ausa.org/mobile for download links and instructions on how to get started.

CAPITOL HILL UPDATE

A listing of bills that AUSA is currently tracking

ACTIVE DUTY/GUARD & RESERVE ISSUES

House Action

H.R. 1384 (Reserve Component Benefits Parity Act)

Cosponsors: 68

- Amends titles 5, 10, 37, and 38 of the United States Code to ensure that an order to serve on active duty under section 12304a and 12304b of title 10, United States Code, is treated the same as other orders to serve on active duty for determining the eligibility of members of the uniformed services and veterans for certain benefits and for calculating the deadlines for certain benefits.

• Introduced by Rep. Steven Palazzo, R-Miss.

• **Referred to Committees: Armed Services; Veterans' Affairs, Oversight and Government Reform**

H.R. 2099 (GI Bill Fairness Act)

Cosponsors: 1

- Amends title 38, United States Code, to consider certain time spent by members of reserve components of the Armed Forces while receiving medical care from the Secretary of Defense as active duty for purposes of eligibility for Post-9/11 Educational Assistance.

• Introduced by Rep. Mark Takano, D-Calif.

• **Referred to Committee: Veterans' Affairs**

Senate Action

S.492 (Servicemember Retirement Improvement Act)

Cosponsors: 1

- Amends the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow members of the Ready Reserve of a reserve component of the Armed Forces to make elective deferrals on the basis of their service to the Ready Reserve and on the basis of their other employment.

• Introduced by Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas

• **Referred to Committee: Finance**

RETIREE ISSUES

House Action

H.R. 303 (Retired Pay Restoration Act)

Cosponsors: 71

- Permits additional retired members of the Armed Forces who have a service-connected disability to receive both disability compensation from the VA for their disability and either retired pay by reason of their years of military service or Combat-Related Special Compensation.

- Introduced by Rep. Gus Bilirakis, R-Fla
- **Referred to Committees: Armed Services; Veterans' Affairs**

H.R. 333 (Disabled Veterans' Tax Termination Act)

Cosponsors: 37

- Permits retired members of the Armed Forces who have a service-connected disability rated less than 50 percent to receive concurrent payment of both retired pay and veterans' disability compensation
- Extends eligibility for concurrent receipt to chapter 61 disability retirees with less than 20 years of service.

• Introduced by Rep. Sanford Bishop, D-Ga.

• **Referred to Committees: Armed Services; Veterans' Affairs**

Senate Action

S.66 (Retired Pay Restoration Act)

Cosponsors: 9

- Permits additional retired members of the Armed Forces who have a service-connected disability to receive both disability compensation from the VA for their disability and either retired pay by reason of their years of military service or Combat-Related Special Compensation.

• Introduced by Sen. Dean Heller, R-Nev.

• **Referred to Committees: Armed Services**

SPOUSE/FAMILY ISSUES

House Action

H.R. 578 (Military Residency Choice Act)

Cosponsors: 7

- Amends the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to authorize spouses of servicemembers to elect to use the same residences as the servicemembers.

• Introduced by Rep. Rob Wittman, R-Va.

• **Referred to Committee: Veterans' Affairs**

H.R. 1796 (Lift the Relocation Burden from Military Spouses Act)

Cosponsors: 39

- Authorizes the military department concerned to reimburse a member of the Armed Forces up to \$500 for "qualified relicensing costs" incurred by the member's spouse as result of a PCS across state lines. "Qualified relicensing costs" are the costs, including exam and registration fees, needed to secure a license or certification to engage in the same profession in the new state.

- Introduced by Rep. Elise Stefanik, R-N.Y.
- **Referred to Committees: Armed Services**

H.R. 2850 (Military Patron Protection Act)

Cosponsors: 1

- Establishes the Military Resale Patron Benefits Advisory Commission

• Introduced by Rep. Walter Jones, R-N.C.

• **Referred to Committee: Armed Services**

VETERANS' ISSUES

House Action

HR 3272 (Veteran Education Empowerment Act)

Cosponsors: 43

- Directs the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a grant program to provide Veteran Student Centers at institutions of higher education to assist veterans in the pursuit of higher education.

• Introduced by Rep. Lois Frankel, D-Fla.

• **Referred to Committee: Veterans' Affairs**

Senate Action

S.591 (Military and Veteran Caregiver Services Improvement Act)

Cosponsors: 27

- Expands eligibility for the program of comprehensive assistance for family caregivers of the Department of Veterans Affairs, to expand benefits available to participants under such program and to enhance special compensation for members of the uniformed services who require assistance in everyday life.

• Introduced by Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash.

• **Referred to Committee: Veterans' Affairs**

S.1198 (Veterans Care Financial Protection Act)

Cosponsors: 2

- Protects individuals who are eligible for increased pension under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs on the basis of need of regular aid and attendance from dishonest, predatory, or otherwise unlawful practices.

• Introduced by Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass.

• **Referred to Committees: Veterans' Affairs**

Reserve soldiers: Balancing readiness, civilian responsibilities

Luc Dunn
AUSA News

Spanning 20 time zones and containing 200,000 soldiers, the Army Reserve provides 78 percent of the sustainment capabilities for the Total Army, but reserve soldiers must balance readiness with their civilian responsibilities, senior leaders said at a panel discussion at the Association of the U.S. Army Annual Meeting and Exposition.

“We recruit and we retain where our soldiers live and work,” said Lt. Gen. Charles Luckey, chief of the Army Reserve.

Adding, “That fundamental dynamic about how we sustain our force from the manning perspective is absolutely critical.”

Roughly a year ago, Army Reserve leaders began creating a new contingency deployment model, known as Ready Force X (RFX), Luckey said.

RFX contains approximately 600 units of action, divided into four categories based on percentage of unique Reserve capabilities and amount of pre-deployment preparation time required in a contingency situation.

“When we talk about having to fight fast, when I talk about combat readiness and lethality for America’s Army Reserve, I’m not kidding around,” Luckey said.

Adding, “Part of what we owe the Army is to go fast enough to be relevant.”

Gen. Robert Brown, commander of U.S. Army Pacific, said that he’s never seen a better Total Force than in today’s Army. “In the Indo-Asia-Pacific, we simply cannot do our mission without those critical Army Reserve assets,” he said.

Of the five major challenges facing the nation today, four are in the Pacific region – China, Rus-



Army Reserve Master Sgt. Robert Mango engages moving targets during the U.S. Army Forces Command Weapons Marksmanship Competition. Senior Army leaders discussed the importance of Army Reserve capabilities during AUSA’s Annual Meeting and Exposition. (Photo by Tim Hale)

sia, the Islamic State group and North Korea, Brown said, adding, “The key to our success is working as a total force.”

In addition to logistics and sustainment, reserve forces have unique value for other reasons, Brown said. For example, “I have 650 Reserve component soldiers that speak 42 languages in the Pacific. That expertise of knowing the region makes a huge difference.”

In the future, the Army must capitalize on the reserve component to provide needed operational capabilities and capacity, Brown said.

Adding, “The ability to strike, protect and maintain will require reserve efforts above and beyond anything we’ve seen before,” he said.

The U.S. is still the only military superpower in

the world, said Lt. Gen. Aundre Piggee, deputy chief of staff, logistics. “That’s because of our ability to project combat power anywhere in the world – and that’s logistics. That’s the power that the Army Reserve brings to this nation.”

Unit readiness is essential to logistics, Piggee said. Equipment must arrive on time when required, “and that’s the capability we’re looking for from these Ready Force X formations. We have to be ready for those missions.”

The Army needs to get back to sustainment fundamentals, because the high level of contractor support over the past 16 years will not always be available, Piggee said, adding, “We’re going to have to sustain ourselves, and we need to start training now for that.”

‘Toolkit’: Focus on AUSA Skills Knowledge (ASK) for success

AUSA Staff

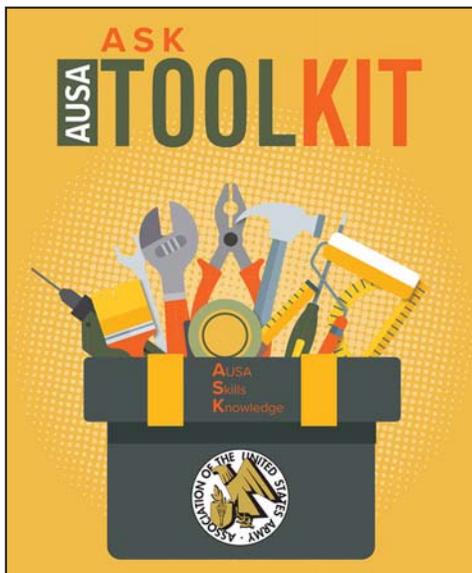
The Association of the U.S. Army rolled out a new program for its chapter volunteers at the recent AUSA Chapter Presidents and Delegates Workshop held during the Annual Meeting and Exposition at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center in Washington, D.C.

AUSA Skills Knowledge, or ASK, is designed in a publication called the AUSA “ASK Toolkit” to give chapter volunteers the tools they need to succeed.

The association’s membership department partnered with Suzy Wagner from Brand and Buzz to develop this comprehensive toolkit publication.

The key component of the ASK program is a road map that walks chapters through the steps to recruit and retain quality members.

Items included in the AUSA “ASK Toolkit” include tips on planning successful events that appeal to a wide range of demographics, the critical role of



a chapter membership director, in addition to dozens of templates to help chapters send invitations, present awards, and write newsletters and press releases.

The program also encourages chapters to implement a buddy program.

Studies have shown that members who get involved with an organization are more likely to remain members of that organization over time, and a big buddy will be there to welcome a new members, help them grow their network, and get them involved right from the start.

AUSA views this effort as a starting point that can be expanded on in the coming months and years.

Chapter leaders attending the workshop received an AUSA “ASK Toolkit” workbook and a thumb drive that included all of the fillable templates.

If you have questions or suggestions regarding the AUSA Skills Knowledge program, contact Christine Lathrop at clathrop@ausa.org or 703-907-2681.

AUSA ILW HOT TOPICS

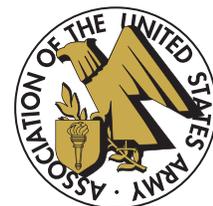
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3 NCOs receive awards at professional development forum

Luc Dunn
AUSA News

Three outstanding NCOs received awards this week during the Sergeant Major of the Army's professional development forum at the Association of the U.S. Army Annual Meeting and Exposition.

The 2017 Sergeant Major Larry L. Strickland Educational Leadership Award senior NCO recipient is 1st Sgt. Scott Tate with the 258th Military Police Company, Fort Polk, La. The midgrade NCO recipient is Sgt. First Class Theodore Kirchmeier with the U.S. Army Medical Department Activity, Fort Wainwright, Alaska.

"The Sgt. Maj. Larry L. Strickland Educational Leadership Award is awarded annually to a senior and midgrade noncommissioned officer who exemplify the Army's vision of lifelong learning," said retired Sgt. Maj. of the Army Ken Preston, AUSA vice president for NCO and Soldier Programs.

The Strickland Award is given in honor of the memory of Sgt. Maj. Larry L. Strickland, the deputy chief of staff, G1 sergeant major who was killed in the 9/11 terrorist attack on the Pentagon.

"Honoring Sgt. Maj. Strickland today gives us the opportunity to honor all those who have given their life in the service of our nation," Preston said.

The Sgt. Maj. Dawn Kilpatrick Memorial AUSA Scholarship Award, given in honor of the memory of Sgt. Maj. Dawn Kilpatrick, was presented to Master Sgt. Jeremy Bunkley of the 1st Armored Division Public Affairs.

Kilpatrick had a long and distinguished career in Army public affairs, culminating in her assignment as personal public affairs officer for the secretary of the Army. She was the first NCO to serve in that role, Preston said.

Following the awards presentation, Preston reminded the audience of AUSA's new scholarship fund.

Named for the fourth sergeant major of the Army, the SMA Leon Van Autreve Scholarship Fund will award a scholarship for \$25,000, one for \$10,000, one for \$5,000 and five for \$2,000 to provide educational support to those who have dedicated themselves to serve the nation by pursuing self-improvement.

Van Autreve, who died in 2002, served as Sergeant Major of the Army from July 1973 to June 1975 under two Army Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Creighton W. Abrams and Gen. Frederick C. Weyand.

It is open to Regular Army, Army National Guard and Army Reserve enlisted personnel, officers in the rank of captain and below and those who are warrant officer or chief warrant officer 2.

Those interested must act soon because Nov. 11 is the application deadline for 2018 awards.

The scholarship application and more details about awards are available at <https://www.ausa.org/programs/nco-and-soldiers>



1st Sgt. Scott Tate, top center, and Sgt. 1st Class Theodore Kirchmeier, bottom center, receive the 2017 Sergeant Major Larry L. Strickland Educational Leadership Awards (senior and midgrade NCO). With them are, left to right, retired Sgt. Maj. of the Army Ken Preston, AUSA vice president for NCO and Soldier Programs; Command Sgt. Maj. David Davenport, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command; retired Sgt. Maj. Tom Gills, president of the Strickland Award committee; and Pam Swan, director of military relations and business development for Veterans United Home Loans. (AUSA News photos)



Master Sgt. Jeremy Bunkley, center, receives the Sgt. Maj. Dawn Kilpatrick Memorial AUSA Scholarship Award from retired Sgt. Maj. of the Army Ken Preston, Command Sgt. Maj. David Davenport, Sgt. Maj. Jose Velazquez Jr., the Army's public affairs sergeant major, and Pam Swan. (AUSA News photo)

Army special operations uses indigenous forces in the fight

Susan Katz Keating
AUSA News

Army special operations provides a suite of invaluable tools to the nation, said Lt. Gen. Kenneth E. Tovo, who leads U.S. Army Special Operations Command.

Tovo made his remarks as part of a forum addressing Army Special Operations on the final day of the Association of the U.S. Army Annual Meeting and Exposition. Among the tools Army special operations employs is the use of indigenous forces in the fight against common adversaries.

Previously used by Special Forces in Vietnam, among other places, indigenous forces are among the approaches Army Special Operations employs.

“This provides a low-cost, high-impact approach,” offering knowledge of the local culture and the ability to use the local language, Tovo said.

Special operations forces tap into multiple ways to complete the mission, panelists said.

A recent successful mission that used a range of resources was the defeat of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) in Uganda, said panelist Col. Bethany Aragon, who commands the 4th Military Information Support Group (Airborne).

The mission began in the wake of a highly publicized campaign about LRA leader Joseph Kony, Aragon said.

The notorious warlord had kidnapped more than 60,000 children, and killed or displaced more than 2 million people in Northern Uganda, Aragon said.

Describing an intricately orchestrated operation that included leaflet drops and aerial loudspeakers, Aragon described how a dedicated network created an effective campaign.

Part of that involved a psychological operations campaign targeting a key Kony deputy.



Soldiers from Group Support Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne), conduct weapons training during Enabler Integration Program on Joint Base Lewis-McChord. Army Special Forces provide a suite of invaluable tools to the nation, senior leaders said during AUSA’s Annual Meeting and Exposition. (Photo by Spc. Garret Smith)

The deputy one day was walking through the jungle, when loudspeakers broadcast his mother’s voice pleading for him to come home, Aragon said.

The deeply personal approach, which included exposing him to photos of family members and other methods, were designed to make the deputy abandon the LRA. He did.

Working in conjunction with military and civilian partners, including the Sudan People’s Liberation Army and Invisible Children, the operation prompted a series of defections and leaks.

The end result, Aragon said, was that the LRA went from some 2,000 members down to about 100. “The Lord’s Resistance Army was rendered inef-

fective,” Aragon said. “It is the most effective psy-ops campaign on the continent today.”

The Kony mission is an example of the kind of nonlinear mission that special operations can execute, panelists said.

“They offer scalable, tailorable mission command nodes to be just right, or a best fit,” said Lt. Col. Tom Craig, who commands 1st Battalion, 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne).

In conclusion to the panel that was followed by a lengthy question and answer period, Tovo summarized his view of what special operations does.

“We’re an integral part of a giant capabilities team that serves the nation,” Tovo said.

AUSA publishes Vicki Cody’s *Your Soldier – Your Army*

AUSA Institute of Land Warfare

Your Soldier Your Army, a popular free booklet for Army families published by the Association of the U.S. Army’s Institute for Land Warfare, has been updated and is now available in print and online.

The daunting task of trying to understand the ways of the Army has been made easier for the families of soldiers over the past 12 years by the easy-to-read guide first published in 2005.

Written by Vicki Cody, an author, Army wife of 33 years and mother to two active-duty soldiers with families of their own, *Your Soldier Your Army – A Family Guide* has been updated to include her perspective as a parent and reflections of her time as an Army wife.

The subtitle of the book, which used to be *A Parents’ Guide*, is the first notable difference.

In the 45-page booklet, Cody – whose husband Gen. Dick Cody retired in 2008 after 36 years in

uniform – explains practical matters like what it’s like to have a soldier in the family, deployment orders and the Army’s casualty notification procedures.

She offers advice for in-laws, what a spouse can expect when a soldier returns from a long deployment, and how to keep faith and live your life by trusting in the Army and your soldier.

The booklet also includes a chart of Army rank

insignia, a glossary of Army terms, and the Soldier’s Creed.

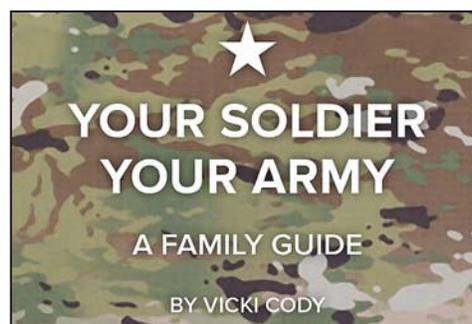
As with the first edition of the booklet, Cody embraces the reader by explaining the Army’s ways in her signature, down-to-earth style, brought forth her through anecdotes and lessons learned.

“My goal back in 2005 was – and continues to be today – to share, teach, comfort and ultimately help others experience the joys that come with serving this nation,” Cody says in her preface.

Adding, “Whether it is you, someone in your family or someone you know who is in uniform, I hope this book opens your eyes, ears and heart and helps to give you the resources, the strength and the courage you may need.”

Printed copies of the book can be requested by emailing ilwresources@ausa.org or calling (703) 907-4630.

A digital copy of the book may be downloaded here: <https://www.ausa.org/publications/institute-of-land-warfare>



World War I commemorative coin unveiled at Annual Meeting

AUSA News

A commemorative coin marking the 100th anniversary of U.S. participation in World War I was unveiled by Acting Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy and Army Chief of Staff Gen. Mark A. Milley at the Association of the U.S. Army's Annual Meeting and Exposition.

The theme of the 2017 AUSA meeting was: "Building Readiness – America's Army from the Great War to Multi-Domain Battle."

In a small ceremony following the meeting's opening ceremony, re-enactors dressed as American soldiers, NCOs and officers joined McCarthy, Milley, World War I Centennial Commission Chair Terry Hamby and T.V. Johnson, director of the U.S. Mint's corporate communications, for the unveiling.

In his remarks, McCarthy noted that 100 years ago, the modern Army we know today began and its storied divisions came to be in response to worldwide threats that sparked World War I.

He thanked Congress for authorizing the \$1 collectible coin, and put forth the importance of honoring and learning from the lessons of yesterday's troops.

"Our soldiers performed a difficult mission and left a legacy that touches us all every day. No war should be forgotten, no military member's service should be forgotten," McCarthy said.

He added, "The lessons of their service are to be



Army Chief of Staff Gen. Mark Milley is joined by re-enactors at the unveiling of a World War I centennial commemorative coin during the AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition. (AUSA News photo)

honored and to be learned from. Their service and their inspiring legacy is our nation's heritage. It is our gift to future generations of America."

Developed and produced by the U.S. Mint, the coin was authorized by statute in 2014 through bipartisan legislation.

The Secretary of the Treasury selected the winning coin design after the Mint held an open design competition in 2016 judged by a six-member panel with three members each from the U.S. Commis-

sion of Fine Arts, Citizens Coinage Advisory Committee, and chaired by the Secretary of the Treasury's designee.

One side of the coin is titled "Soldier's Charge," and shows a stone-like soldier gripping a rifle. Barbed wire twines are featured in the lower right-hand side of the design.

On the other side, the wire design continues in a design titled "Poppies in the Wire," which features abstract poppies mixed with barbed wire.

McCarthy to senior Army civilians: 'We need your best ideas'

Susan Katz Keating
AUSA News

Top civilian executives who work for the Army should come out of their comfort zones in order to help the Army address urgent needs, Acting Secretary of the Army Ryan D. McCarthy said.

"We need a war of ideas," McCarthy told members of the Senior Executive Service (SES) at a breakfast meeting held during the Association of the U.S. Army Annual Meeting and Exposition.

Underscoring the week's theme of readiness and modernization, McCarthy told executives that the Army is armed with yesterday's equipment while heading into modern battle zones.

"We have run out of time to talk," McCarthy said. "Now is the time for action."

A bureaucracy is inherently a slow-moving entity, McCarthy said. The process exacts a toll: "We become lumbering, risk-averse."

The SES corps represents continuity, with its members holding the long-term view, McCarthy said. Now, he wants executives to take risks in order to help move the Army forward.

"I need your best and hardest ideas," McCarthy said. "If you disagree with me, tell me."



Acting Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy told top Army civilians, 'I want you to be wildly successful.' (AUSA News photo)

The Army needs a fresh approach, McCarthy suggested.

"We need to change our enterprise," McCarthy said. "We haven't really looked at our organization for 40 years. We need to adapt. That's hard."

McCarthy asked the civilian executives to help rewrite the organization.

"Impart the sense of urgency to others," McCarthy said. He encouraged them to scout for talent,

and to mentor young people who are just entering government service.

The stakes are high, McCarthy said. "It's about the soldiers who walk the battlefield."

Those soldiers weigh on him heavily, the war veteran said.

Questions from audience members included queries on a range of topics.

One executive commented on the challenges of working with a Congress that does not unilaterally understand what the Army needs. Segments of Capitol Hill tend to look at the Army through a straw, and don't get the whole picture, the executive said.

Another remarked on the challenges of recruiting from a shrinking pool of potential recruits.

Others wanted more information on the forthcoming Army command geared toward modernization.

McCarthy and Army Chief of Staff Gen. Mark A. Milley announced the yet-unnamed new command at the AUSA Annual Meeting.

McCarthy closed his meeting with SES members with words of encouragement and affirmation. "I want to turn you loose," McCarthy said. "I don't want you to be successful. I want you to be wildly successful."

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Army soldiers take top spots in 33rd Annual Army Ten-Miler

Francis Chung
Photojournalist
Pentagram Staff

A pair of soldiers were the top finishers as approximately 35,000 runners persevered through difficult weather conditions to participate in the 33rd Annual Army Ten-Miler in Arlington, Va., and Washington, D.C., Oct. 8.

Army Spc. Haron Lagat of Fort Carson, Colo. was the overall male winner, finishing with a time of 49 minutes, 23 seconds.

Army Spc. Susan Tanui, also of Fort Carson, was the overall female winner, completing the course in 56 minutes, 50 seconds.

Conducted by the U.S. Army Military District of Washington, the Army Ten-Miler is the world's third largest 10-mile road race. The USA Track and Field certified course started and finished at the Pentagon, and took runners through a scenic and historic route through Arlington and the District of Columbia.

At 10:08 a.m., well after the elite runners had finished, organizers reclassified the event from a competitive race to a "recreational run," shortening the course by approximately one mile due to unseasonably high temperatures that approached 80 degrees and humidity that soared well above 80 percent.

Participants who completed the full course after 10:08 were given an official finish time, but were



Spc. Haron Lagat (49 minutes, 23 seconds), left, and Spc. Susan Tanui (56 minutes, 50 seconds) were the male and female winners of the 33rd Army Ten-Miler. (Photos by Francis Chung)

ineligible for official awards.

Those who completed the shortened course were credited with "finisher status," but their finishing times were not compiled.

"The safety of our runners is paramount," said Jim Vandak, Army Ten-Miler race director.

Adding, "The Military District of Washington is committed to providing a world-class road race in a safe and secure environment. The decision to downgrade the road race was made in coordination with medical, safety and race operations personnel."

see next page

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Army Ten-Miler from preceding page

Throughout the morning, numerous racers and spectators were observed falling ill in the stifling conditions. A joint military medical team partnered with Fire and Emergency Medical Services personnel from Arlington County and Washington, D.C. to provide the first response.

“It was really hot and muggy,” said Army Sgt. 1st Class John Camarillo of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard), who completed the race as a member of one of four teams representing Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall (JBM-HH).

“This is probably one of the hottest Army Ten-Milers that I’ve ran,” the four-time participant added as he praised the performance of his fellow JBM-HH runners. “Conditions were really humid today, so it kind of seems like everybody really put their heart into running today, and I think everybody in the end is very proud of what they accomplished today.”

Participating in her first-ever 10-mile race, Army Staff Sgt. Erin Morgan said she was proud to rep-



resent JBM-HH, and she credited the support of her colleagues from the Old Guard Fife and Drum Corps for boosting her spirits as she tested her limits. “It was tough out there with the humidity,” the Old Guard Fife and Drum Corps member said. “For me, personal courage was something I had to tap into just to get out there and push myself to the end. Those last two miles were a push, but my company was at mile 8 and 9, so they were cheering me on during the hardest part.”

Several elite competitors underscored the ways in which the Ten-Miler embodied and promoted Army values.

“It’s not just about running, it’s all about what the Army offers, what the Army is all about, and that

pride that you just have to wear” Tanui said after becoming the first female runner to cross the finish line. “It’s hard work, courage, selfless service, it’s all the values of the Army that I’m proud of. Being a soldier, being out here pushing out in a race, it kind of motivates someone to apply that in life.”

Army Capt. Robert Cheseret, who finished as the third-place overall male winner, said the race was about more than individual goals. “I think what is special about the Army Ten-Miler is we are running to represent all the soldiers in the Army and all the service members in the military,” he said. “We’re also running to honor our fallen soldiers.”

Running in his 6th Army Ten-Miler, Army Maj. Shane Mantz, a reservist from Lancaster, Pa., said he and his family were particularly inspired by the example of fortitude and resilience set by the more than 150 Wounded Warriors and wheelchair athletes who participated in the race.

He also noted the symbolic significance of the race’s location in the nation’s capital.

“It’s special just being down here in D.C. and being at the heart of the country,” Mantz said. “We always carry the flag all the way through.”

Army National Guard and Army Reserve units receive awards



Gen. Robert Abrams, commanding general, U.S. Army Forces Command, stands with Walter T. Kerwin, Jr. Readiness Award recipients.

Left: Capt. Carllose Almanza, 900th Quartermaster Company, U.S. Army Reserve, received the Kerwin Award on behalf of his unit.

Right: Maj. Scott Nivens (left) and Command Sgt. Maj. Irving N. Reed, Jr. accepted the award for the 1st Battalion, 116th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Virginia Army National Guard. (AUSA News photos)

Larry Moffi AUSA News

Host and Association of the U.S. Army Council of Trustees member retired Lt. Gen. Jack Stultz kicked off the annual Maj. Gen. Robert G. Moorhead Guard/Reserve Breakfast on the first day of the Association of the U.S. Army’s Annual Meeting and Exposition by stating the theme of the 2017 AUSA Annual Meeting & Exposition – “Building Readiness.”

Among the speakers at this forum were Gen. Robert B. Abrams, commanding general, U.S. Army Forces Command; Acting Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs Raymond Horoho; and Chief of the Army

Reserve Lt. Gen. Charles Luckey.

To a man, each reiterated the meeting’s theme.

Abrams cited the Army Reserve and National Guard components, along with families, for their successes in terms of readiness over the past year.

“Readiness has been the primary mission of our forces command since its inception,” Abrams said, noting that “sustained readiness creates [the appropriate] culture” for individuals and individual units.

Luckey noted the guard and reserve are training more closely with Regular Army soldiers.

This program, launched in 2016, was designed to support the Army’s Total Force policy. Over the past year, the program was expanded from three to 13 participating units.

Among the awards presented were the Walter T. Kerwin, Jr. Readiness Award, presented to outstanding guard and reserve units with the highest level of readiness. To be considered, each unit must have been rated as having superior performance in eight areas, as well as other criteria.

The 900th Quartermaster Company, U.S. Army Reserve, and the 116th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Virginia Army National Guard, were this year’s recipients.

AUSA member chapters were also honored for the greatest membership increase in reserve component membership: Redstone-Huntsville Chapter, Ala.; Fort Leonard Wood–Mid Missouri Chapter; Gen. John W. Vessey, Jr., Chapter, Minn.; Monmouth Chapter and the Delaware Chapter.

★ Eagle Chapters ★

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