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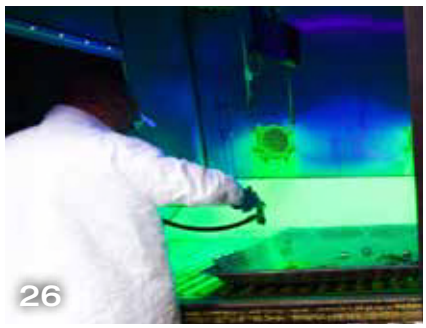
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On The Cover

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Briefings

Aviation Senior Leader Legacy Lunch

U.S. ARMY PHOTO

Army Aviation leaders from the Total Force gathered at Fort Rucker, AL the last week of January to examine transformation, modernization, force integration, and emerging operational concepts critical to future large-scale combat operations. MG Clair Gill, commanding general of the US Army Aviation Center of Excellence and Fort Rucker and Aviation Branch Chief, hosted the Aviation legacy leaders for lunch – a rare chance to hear lessons learned from those that built the branch.

Alaska Army National Guard Aviators Perform Medical Evacuation Under the Northern Lights

U.S. ARMY NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO BY CW3 NICK LIME

Bethel-based U.S. Army UH-60L Black Hawk aviators assigned to the 207th Aviation Troop Command, Alaska Army National Guard, fly under the Northern Lights while responding to a medical evacuation request in Western Alaska, Jan. 21, 2026. Due to daylight restrictions, local civilian air ambulance services were unable to conduct the MEDEVAC mission. Using night-vision goggles the AKARNG Black Hawk aviators along with two Bethel Fire Department medics successfully transported a patient from New Stuyahok to Dillingham.

Army Aviation Supports U.S. Customs and Border Protection and Joint Task Force-Southern Border

U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY 1LT SYDNIE RISSEL

The 3rd General Support Aviation Battalion, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade assisted the 66th Combat Engineer Company - Armored, 40th Engineer Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, assigned to Joint Task Force-Southern Border (JTF-SB), recently with slingload operations transporting border reinforcement materials through difficult terrain. Joint Task Force-Southern Border executes full-scale, agile and all-domain operations in support of U.S. Customs and Border Protection to protect the territorial integrity of the United States and achieve 100% operational control of the southern border.

Hegseth Establishes Personal Property Activity to Ensure Successful PCS Moves

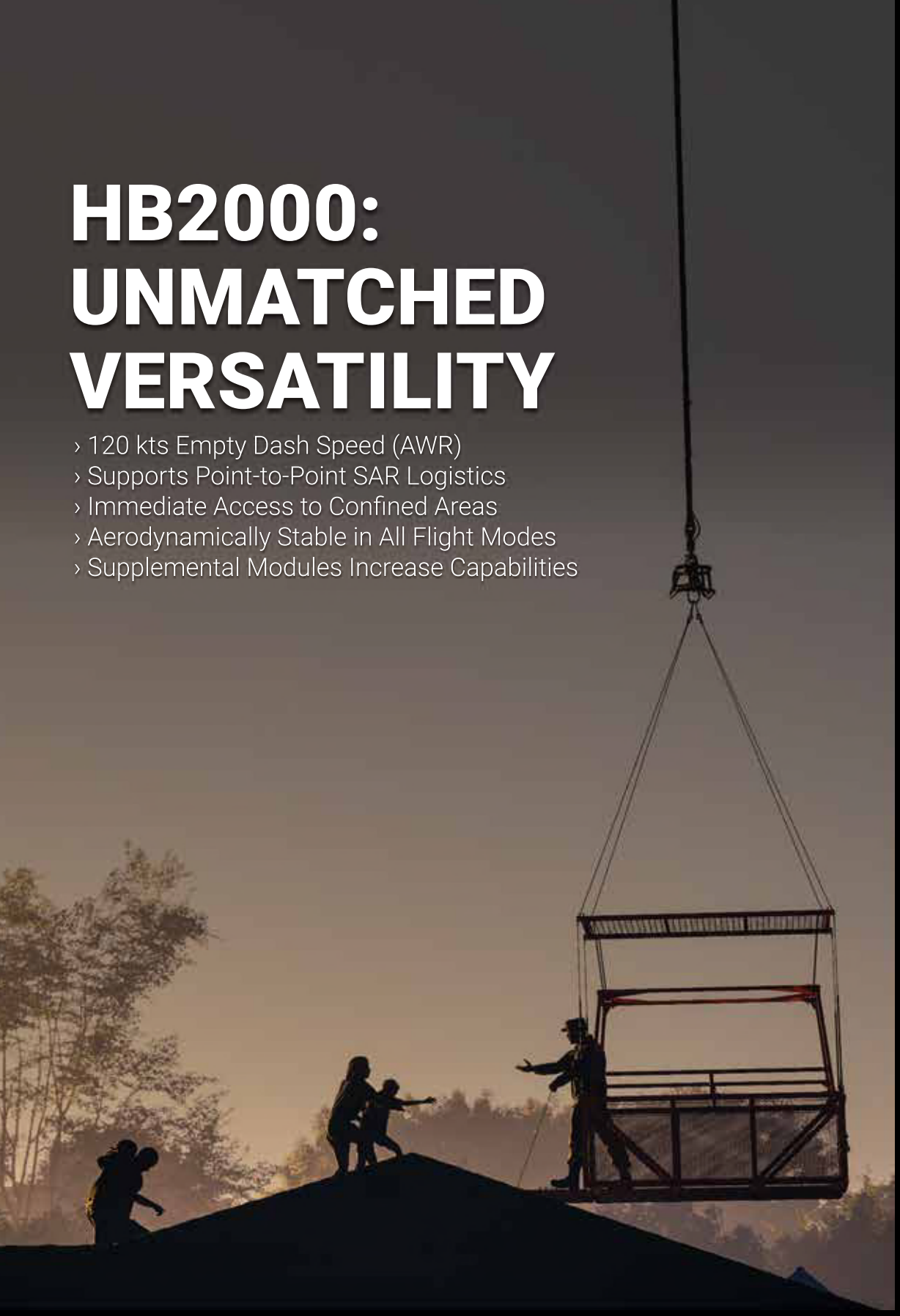
U.S. NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO BY MSG DANNY WHITLOCK

The War Department's Personal Property Activity will stand up this summer as a permanent fix of the myriad woes service members and their families have experienced during permanent change of station moves. Last year, the department did two things to improve the movement of household goods for service members. In May, it established a PCS task force to investigate the problems service members experienced during moves. And then in June, the department canceled the existing mechanism for conducting PCS moves. Army MG Lance G. Curtis will now take over as head of the new Personal Property Activity.

$1,776 'Warrior Dividend' Tax-Free, IRS Confirms

U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY ETHAN STEINQUEST

The Internal Revenue Service recently confirmed that the $1,776 "Warrior Dividend" more than 1.5 million service members received last year, at the direction of President Donald J. Trump, would be tax-free. According to the IRS, U.S. tax law excludes from gross income a "qualified military benefit." The Warrior Dividend is just such a benefit and is therefore not taxable. Service members will keep all of the dividend to use as they see fit.



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Fully Engaged in Army Aviation's Continuous Transformation

Our annual Army Aviation Warfighting Summit is almost upon us!

BADGER CHAPTER PHOTO BY JEFF KENNEN PHOTOGRAPHY

MAJ (Ret.) Doug Denson is inducted into the Bronze Honorable Order of St. Michael by Badger Chapter President, COL Dan Allen, assisted by National AAAA President, MG (Ret.) Wally Golden during the Army Aviation Ball, Jan. 10, 2026.

From April 15 to 17, 2026 the entire Army Aviation community will gather in Nashville, TN at the Gaylord Opryland Hotel.

The Summit is the one time each year when all elements of Army Aviation, from Sustainment to Acquisition; Active Duty, National Guard, Reserve, Retired, members of industry and even cadets and ROTC students gather with our Army Leadership. It is another example of AAAA executing its mission of taking care of Army Aviation Soldiers and Families through our four pillars of Networking, Recognition, Voice and Support.

AAAA and Army Aviation remain in a period of continuous transformation as we prepare for the future, while remaining ready to fight tonight. The MV-75 Future Long Range Assault Aircraft, (FLRAA), drones, counter-drone, artificial intelligence (AI), and cyber are integral to this year's event. We will also ensure that the backbone of our maneuver capability; Black Hawks, Chinooks, Apaches and their crews are modernized and recognized as the best in the world! And we will continue to recognize our legacy with our aviation pioneering veterans from the Vietnam War, Cold War, Desert Storm and Global War on Terrorism (GWOT).

I know many of you are already tracking that our Branch Chief, MG Clair Gill, is now also the Portfolio Acquisition Executive (PAE) Maneuver Air. This restructuring of the acquisition process promises vastly accelerated fielding of our new systems. Recent press reports indicate that the MV-75 FLRAA will undergo an accelerated acquisition path in concert with the Chief of Staff Army (CSA) and Secretary of War's intent to cut through bureaucracy and get equipment in the hands of our Soldiers as rapidly as possible.

I recently returned from a visit to the AAAA Badger Chapter at their annual ball held at the Osthoff Resort in Elkhart Lake, WI on 10 January 2026. It was an exciting and inspirational event as the state's Army National Guard Aviation Soldiers and Spouses gathered for an evening of recognition, entertainment and networking. I was honored to assist in the presentation of four Bronze Orders of St. Michael (OSM). I was also excited to see the recently selected Wisconsin Adjutant General (TAG), MG Matthew Straub and his wife Tina, at the ball. MG Straub is the first Army TAG in over 25 years in Wisconsin and was proudly wearing his AAAA Gold OSM. My sincere thanks to the chapter officers for their hospitality and the invitation to attend the Badger Ball – COL Dan Allen, President; LTC Nils Henderson, Sr. VP; CPT Patrick Peterson, Treasurer; CPT Meredith Porter, VP Awards; 1LT Austin Smith, Secretary; CW4 Craig Hatfield, VP Scholarship; and MAJ Joshua Felber, VP Industrial Affairs.

Finally, by the time you read this, we will have completed the Army's very first Best Drone Warfighter Competition at the University of Alabama Huntsville Drone Range in Huntsville, AL. The amount of hard work, attention to detail and detailed coordination between the Maneuver Center of Excellence (MCOE) at Ft. Benning, Georgia and the Army Aviation Center of Excellence (AVCOE), Ft. Rucker, Alabama has been remarkable. There will be a full report in the next issue, but I want you all to know that AAAA is fully engaged in Army Aviation's Continuous Transformation, supporting the Branch and the Army in developing this emerging capability.

If you aren't registered already, make sure you register now for our annual Summit in April. You won't want to miss it!

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MG Wally Golden, U.S. Army Retired
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Future of Sustainment Driven by Innovation

By LTG Christopher Mohan

U.S. ARMY PHOTO

The Army's Organic Industrial Base is not just a collection of facilities and equipment; it is a vital component of our national security that has the ability to produce sUAS.

We find ourselves in pivotal times for our nation, facing challenges in a global environment that feels more perilous than ever before.

Our world is marked by rapid technological advancements and increasingly complex threats; speed of innovation is changing the character of warfare. Ensuring combat readiness necessitates providing the appropriate capabilities at the optimal moment to enable freedom of action, operational reach and sustained endurance for the joint force commander. We must not be held captive to how we've done business for the past 30 years but rather develop innovative solutions to solve Army problems.

Delivering the right support, to the right place, at the right time, and in the right quantities – even in the most challenging and austere environments – is a long-standing, fundamental objective for Army sustainment. Today, we have the right tools at our disposal, from cutting-edge technologies to streamlined processes that will truly enable data-driven decision making. Army sustainers must be willing to transform into a data-centric enterprise, leveraging Advanced Analytics and Artificial Intelligence, or A3I, to streamline processes, maximize resources and implement new tactics, techniques and procedures.

Harnessing data to develop and maintain combat readiness begins at home. The Army's Organic Industrial Base (OIB) is not just a collection of facilities and equipment; it is a vital component of our national security.

The Army continues to make significant strides in our 15-year modernization efforts, investing nearly $100 million in facility and equipment upgrades across our OIB sites. We are capitalizing on new technologies such as advanced robotics and engaging with academia and industry partners to improve our processes and increase production capability and efficiency.

These investments are just examples of how the Army continues to deliver on its promise to bring the OIB into the 21st century. We are investing with purpose and intention in new technologies and innovative manufacturing processes that enhance our production capabilities. We are also leveraging industry best practices, including expanded capabilities in Advanced Manufacturing, AI and machine learning.

To improve visibility and understanding across the Army's complex supply chain, the sustainment community developed the game-changing platform, Weapons System 360. The system provides a real-time, end-to-end view of the Army's supply chain, allowing us to proactively identify and address bottlenecks before they become a problem for our units. We can now identify bottlenecks down to the part and supplier level. Weapons System 360 allows leaders at

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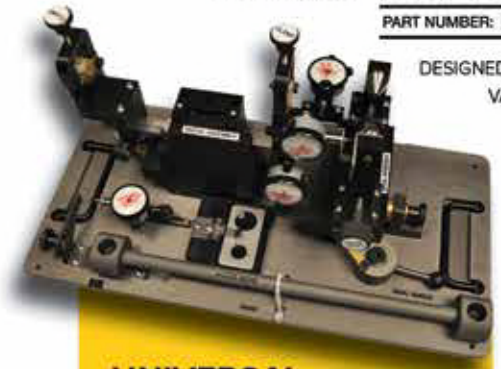

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echelon unprecedented visibility of the global supply chain to help them make data-informed decisions that strengthen our sustainment capability.

We are also reimagining how sustainers drive operational readiness. The Operational Readiness Program (ORP) is a pilot that proactively embeds maintenance teams from the OIB directly with tactical units preparing for deployment, as well as conducting targeted substitutions of troubled systems. They provide on-site expertise, facilitate targeted fleet vehicle exchange, and train unit maintainers to keep equipment running reliably and through the power of artificial intelligence and machine learning, they are empowering our Soldiers to attain and sustain operational readiness throughout their deployment cycle. This also allows us to proactively prepare the supply chain and ensure our forces are prepared to deploy, fight and win anytime, anywhere.

To ensure this continued capability at the tactical edge, we must prioritize the development and deployment of advanced manufacturing capabilities at every echelon to unlock new levels of agility, resilience and lethality in an increasingly complex and contested environment. Across the OIB, we are integrating advanced manufacturing into all of our production lines – from vehicle hulls to wiring harnesses – allowing us to bring tactical vehicles off the deadline report and get back to the fight faster than ever.

Closer to the tactical edge, our Soldiers are printing small parts to assist combat missions and training. The data they collect will help us make more informed decisions about supply, reduce costs of repairing parts, and provide quicker delivery to the warfighter. Advanced manufacturing isn't the future of Army sustainment – it's here now and it's already giving us a tactical advantage on the battlefield.

Sustainment must not only keep pace with modernization but, in some cases, lead the way. It's not just about pursuing the latest technologies; it's about proactively shaping and adapting to the future operational environment to secure our strategic advantage. By aggressively leveraging existing data, streamlining processes, and empowering Soldiers with intuitive tools, we are assuring our ability to sustain our troops in a contested global environment at the speed of war.

LTG Chris Mohan is the commanding general of U.S. Army Materiel Command headquartered at Redstone Arsenal, AL.

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The PAE and Acquisition Reform

By MG Clair Gill

U.S. Army MV-75.

U.S. ARMY PHOTO

The idea of further change might have many in Army Aviation on edge. After all, within the last year we have seen a great deal of transition in the branch, including the divestment of the Shadow (pre-ATI), 11 air cavalry squadrons, legacy AH-64Ds and UH-60Ls, and even the FTUAS cancellation.

Some of the recent changes were in response to analysis of enduring mission requirements and others were based upon the idea that we cannot fight the wars of tomorrow with the weapons of the past, as validated by recent conflicts. However, these deliberate changes are part of the Army's larger strategy of continuous transformation to ensure future success.

Continuous transformation is vital to the future of our Army. Current conflicts across the globe have indicated that some of our peers are already moving at the speed of technology, and embracing rapid solutions based upon existing civilian capabilities. This approach to weapons acquisition is vital on the modern battlefield, as Soldiers facing hybrid threats can no longer afford to wait on the protracted methods of an antiquated acquisition process. And so, just as the Army has invested heavily in revised doctrine and training, it has also embraced continuous transformation of its acquisition process through the introduction of the Portfolio Acquisition Executive, or PAE. To that end, as some of you may have learned, I was recently identified as the PAE for Expanded Maneuver - Air. My intent herein is to describe and clarify what a PAE is, and what Army Aviation can expect in the coming months regarding acquisition reform.

PAE and Acquisition Reform

Acquisition reform for the Army is all about emphasizing speed and delivering to Soldiers the latest and most effective tools more rapidly than previously allowed under our legacy acquisition framework. The Army is accomplishing reform by moving away from its traditional Program Executive Office (PEO) model and implementing a new paradigm centered around six new PAEs and include: Fires, Expanded Maneuver – Ground, Expanded Maneuver – Air, Command and Control and Counter-Command and Control, Agile Sustainment and Ammo, and Layered Protection and CBRND.

This new structure is intended to cut through bureaucracy, reduce paperwork, and significantly accelerate the delivery of critical warfighting capabilities to Soldiers—by as much as 30 to 50 percent, according to Army officials. The Army's previous system was often described as risk-averse, which on more than one occasion led to delays in getting new technologies into the hands of warfighters. The new PAE structure aims to address this by consolidating 46 previous requirements-generating organizations into just nine capability directorates under the six PAEs. This consolidation is intended to create single points of accountability for entire

capability areas, from requirements and science and technology to contracting, acquisition, testing, and sustainment.

In many ways, this directed evolution in the acquisition system may initially appear somewhat of a shock to the system for any branch or warfighting function. After all, the Secretary of War, Pete Hegseth, put it simply at a November 7th speech to industry representatives: "the defense acquisition system, as you know it, is dead." And while meant to shock the system, the real intent of the reform is best outlined by the Secretary in that "speed replaces process, money follows need." This does not necessarily imply a free-for-all, but it does mean that layers of former bureaucracy and red tape in the form of endless and rigidly sequential meetings and reviews can now be removed to achieve speed of delivery to the Aviation warfighter.

So, what exactly is changing? The new acquisition structure gives PAE leaders authority to oversee an entire capability portfolio area, aligning decisions across programs and functions to deliver complete and integrated solutions. Unlike challenges being experienced elsewhere in the Army, for PAE-Air, this directed change just codifies what we – as an Aviation enterprise, specifically at the General Officer Steering Committee – have already been doing for years. And that is really best reflected in our genuine teamwork to position the enterprise for success, through consistent communication and collaboration on efforts that will impact every aspect of Army Aviation. So, this whole undertaking is not a 90-degree turn for us, as it might be for others. This just further codifies the integration of DOTMLPF with our already-high performing Capability Program Executive (CPE)-Aviation team, perhaps better injecting the operational perspective and need into all that we do.

How it will Work

In early December, I participated in a "town hall" in Huntsville, AL alongside the Deputy PAE, BG David Phillips, and the Army Acquisition Executive, the Hon. Brent Ingraham. I expressed that this reform does not necessarily bring me in as the "new sheriff in town." Instead, it was explained that I represent a significant voice to be employed on behalf of the Army Aviation team. Because of my great relationship with the Aviation GOSC, and BG Phillips' (former PEO/now CPE) team specifically, this only formalizes an existing process we have used for years now in the aviation enterprise. We ensured that the town hall attendees understood how this new framework is intended to work, and that we are tapping into efficiencies and speed in acquisition work.

The idea is to ensure we move programs with acceptable risk and avoid delays over issues with perfection. Bureaucratic steps in our processes can and should be removed. Additionally, layers within the old acquisition organization structure have been dramatically reduced, meaning we are closer to senior leaders to ensure we benefit from enhanced communication. For instance, the PAE's direct line of communication includes the Chief of Staff of the Army (CSA) and Transformation and Training Command (T2COM) Commander, and the Army Acquisition Executive (AAE) - this improved access to decision-makers will help accelerate things dramatically. Acceleration can and should also be enabled by the following: 1) Earlier start to prototyping, 2) Delegated decision rights, 3) Integrated testing, 4) Flexible contracting, 5) Singular accountability, 6) Horizontal structure, and 7) Concurrent actions.

What I want everyone to understand is that under this structure, winning requires speed. Where we have historically graded ourselves on system cost, schedule, performance, we now think about the entirety of the portfolio in terms of "schedule, performance, cost" in that order. Speed will look different for each program under development, but the idea is to not have perfection be the enemy of good enough. After all, an 80% solution today is better than a potentially beneficial tool wasting away in never-ending iterations of evaluation, only to never make it to the hands of the Warfighter. Still, this approach also means we remain on the hunt for improvement after fielding. We will iterate. This is also about risk – and we are willing to assume some appropriate risk, to deliver capability to our Army.

First Efforts and Path Forward

While all of these future benefits are great, everything begins with a first step. All PAEs are currently operating in what the Army calls the Pathfinder Phase. During this period, we have assembled a *Transition Task Force*, or TTF. I will be working alongside the TTF to ensure that we are progressing as intended by Army Senior Leadership and communicating as often as possible with enablers and teammates. Initial and consistent attention will focus upon continuous improvement of structure, relationships, and authorities. The aim is to discover unrealized efficiencies to best contribute to the overall function of the PAE and equip Soldiers sooner and with cutting-edge capabilities. Our first major mark is IOC on 3 FEB 2026 with a mission tasking letter defining roles and responsibilities across the revised organizational structure. FOC to codify PAE is tentatively set for 1 OCT 2026. I can assure you were aren't waiting – in fact, we have our first capability portfolio review with Army leadership in the coming weeks. As I mentioned earlier, speed matters.

Closing Thoughts

This formalized role in the acquisition space is new ground for me as a life-long operator, and the process is new for everyone else. But I am very comfortable to again be teamed with BG Phillips and our hand-selected enabler team.

And so, I wish to leave you all with a few prescient thoughts before closing. Again, speed matters – we are certainly on the clock. We need an appropriated FY26 budget to deliver. Risk – I am very comfortable living in a world of risk-informed decisions. We aren't going to reduce it to zero, but we will assume prudent risk when it comes to delivering capability. We have some areas where it makes more sense to prioritize speed over capability, and others where we need to be more deliberate for all the right reasons. This effort means we will require transparency and frank and open communication. I need to understand the problems we're trying to solve, so reach out and make sure BG Phillips and I are keeping pace with what's happening at the tactical formation levels. Growing comfortable with the PAE structure and process will take some time, but our excellent relationships across the branch certainly work to our favor. Finally, I want everyone to think of me as your 2-star Action Officer while serving as the PAE. Now, let's roll-up our sleeves and get to work!

MG Clair Gill is the commanding general of the United States Army Aviation Center of Excellence and Portfolio Acquisition Executive for Maneuver – Air at Fort Rucker, AL.

From PEO Aviation to CPE Aviation:
Transformation Through Continuity and Opportunity

By Rodney Davis

For over four decades, Program Executive Office (PEO) Aviation has been a cornerstone of Army modernization and readiness.

U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY MICHELLE MILLER

Rodney Davis speaks in Huntsville, AL.

Generations of civilians, Soldiers, contractors, and industry partners have built an enterprise that sustains the most capable combat aviation force in the world. From the introduction of the AH-64 Apache to the global fielding of the UH-60 Black Hawk and CH-47 Chinook, PEO Aviation has consistently delivered world-class capabilities to Soldiers at home and abroad.

Today, Army acquisition is undergoing a profound transformation. The newly established Portfolio Acquisition Executive (PAE) structure, supported by Capability Portfolio Executives (CPEs), is reshaping how the Army modernizes. For aviation, this evolution culminates in the transition from PEO Aviation to CPE Aviation.

This transformation is not a repudiation of the past; it is a continuation of what makes Army aviation strong. The mission endures. The workforce endures. The relationships across the operational, engineering, and industrial communities endure. What is changing is the speed, integration, and cross-domain collaboration required to outpace rapidly evolving threats.

Continuity of Mission: Delivering Capability, Sustaining Readiness

At its core, CPE Aviation inherits the same end-to-end responsibility that has defined PEO Aviation: delivering and sustaining combat aviation capability for the Army and our partners.

The Aircraft Portfolio remains foundational, and the aviation enterprise will continue to oversee:

- UH-60 Black Hawk and variants
- AH-64 Apache
- CH-47 Chinook
- Fixed-wing fleets
- Aerial sensors and mission equipment
- Airworthiness, safety, software, and sustainment

The enterprise remains tightly integrated with AMCOM, AvMC, ACC-Redstone, and Army Test and Evaluation Command, ensuring that sustainment, engineering rigor, contracting discipline, and safety standards remain strong. However, the transition to CPE Aviation broadens these responsibilities.

In addition to sustaining legacy fleets, the enterprise is taking on rapidly growing roles in:

- Autonomy
- Small and tactical unmanned aircraft systems (UAS)
- Counter-UAS
- Software modernization
- Survivability and mission systems
- Digital engineering and model-based systems

These are not future aspirations; they are current mission demands. Aviation is central to the Army's operational concept and to joint and coalition operations. Our Soldiers will fly, fight, and survive in contested environments where autonomy, sensors, networks, and resilient supply chains are decisive. This continuity of mission is the foundation for transformation.

Why Change? The Strategic Drivers Behind the Transition

The strategic environment has changed faster than traditional acquisition timelines. Peer competitors are adapting with speed. The commercial drone sector has exploded. Supply chains have globalized, and in some cases, become vulnerable. The battlefield is no longer defined by altitude alone, it now includes data, autonomy, and artificial intelligence.

Against this backdrop, the Army has made it clear: we must modernize faster. The PAE/CPE model reflects four strategic imperatives:

Speed to Capability: The Army needs faster pathways from idea to fielded systems. The PAE construct consolidates authority across requirements, technology, contracting, and testing, reducing serial handoffs and enabling concurrency where appropriate.

Integration Across Portfolios: Aviation cannot modernize in isolation. Survivability depends on sensors, autonomy, fires, networks, and counter-UAS, many of which fall outside traditional PEO boundaries. The PAE construct breaks down these seams to enable cross-domain collaboration.

Stewardship and Affordability: With constrained budgets and growing demand, decisions must be optimized

across the portfolio, not within individual programs. CPE Aviation will balance readiness, modernization, sustainment, risk, and industrial base health to ensure resources are used effectively.

Enhanced Talent Mobility: Modernization requires a workforce that can adapt. Under the CPE construct, technical experts, program managers, logisticians, and contracting professionals can move across mission sets while remaining under a unified enterprise.

These imperatives do not reflect a loss of confidence in PEO Aviation; they reflect the Army's belief that the organization has earned the responsibility to lead at an even higher level.

Opportunity for the Workforce: Growth, Development, and Leadership

Transformation often raises questions about personal impact. What does this mean for careers, identity, and team cohesion? The answer is simple: opportunity.

The aviation enterprise is not shrinking, it is expanding. The demand signal from commanders, combat training centers, and international partners has never been stronger. We must sustain fleets, modernize systems, and accelerate development in autonomy, sensors, software, and mission systems.

The transition to CPE Aviation offers new pathways for leadership:

- Expanded career ladders
- Broader project exposure
- Cross-functional teams
- Engineering and digital authority roles

The PAE model elevates civilian expertise, recognizing that our workforce provides the continuity and institutional knowledge required for long-term success. For the next generation of aviation leaders, military and civilian alike, the opportunity is extraordinary.

Unity with Industry and International Partners

Aviation has always been a collaborative enterprise. Industry partners, both large and small, are essential to modernization and sustainment. The transition to CPE Aviation strengthens this collaboration through:

Earlier Engagement: Prototypes, demonstrations, and experimentation earlier in the lifecycle shorten timelines and identify risks before production.

Contracting Agility: Unified contracting strategies across the portfolio allow for reuse of instruments, expansion of Other Transaction Authority (OTA), and alignment of contracting tempo with industry capacity.

Global Interoperability: Supporting a coalition of 76 countries with more than $85 billion in Foreign Military Sales, the aviation enterprise continues to prioritize shared training, cooperative development, configuration control, and supply chain resilience.

Integrating Autonomy and Uncrewed Systems

The rapid expansion of small UAS, tactical drones, and counter-UAS capabilities is one of the most visible opportunities for growth. Aviation is no longer only about rotorcraft and fixed-wing platforms. The battlefield now includes low-cost, attritable systems powered by autonomy, sensors, and resilient communication links.

CPE Aviation will bridge the gap between manned and unmanned systems through:

- Manned-unmanned teaming
- Autonomy packages
- Common control stations
- Mission systems and payload integration
- Digital airworthiness and safety assessments

The objective is not to replace the helicopter, rather it is to empower aviators with new capabilities, supported by an engineering and sustainment enterprise they trust.

Looking Ahead: The Future is Strong

The transition to CPE Aviation reflects confidence in the enterprise and the workforce that has made aviation a hallmark of Army capability. Our mission endures. Our relationships endure. Our commitment to Soldiers endures.

What changes is our ability to move faster, integrate across domains, and capitalize on new technologies. In the coming years, we will sustain the world's most capable rotorcraft fleets while expanding into autonomy, small UAS, mission systems, software, and digital engineering.

The future is not uncertain; it is full of opportunity. Together, with continuity, discipline, and innovation, we will deliver world-class aviation capabilities to our Soldiers and allies.

Mr. Rodney Davis currently serves as the Capability Program Executive for Aviation at Redstone Arsenal, AL.

Mission Autonomy: Advancing Unmanned Systems to Empower the Future Force

By BG Anthony Gibbs

Unmanned systems and autonomy are reshaping the modern battlefield, offering innovative solutions to break the deadlock of constant surveillance and contested domains.

As GEN Valery Zaluzhny observed, "The simple fact is that we see everything the enemy is doing, and they see everything we are doing. For us to break this deadlock, we need something new, like the gunpowder which the Chinese invented and which we are still using to kill each other."

Just as gunpowder revolutionized warfare, robotics and autonomous systems are poised to redefine military operations today. These technologies enable forces to outpace, outmaneuver, and outthink adversaries, creating decisive overmatch and disrupting enemy operations. However, the U.S. Army's current unmanned systems, despite decades of investment, remain largely tele-operated with one-to-one control, limiting their potential as force multipliers.

The Army has fielded over 3,700 unmanned platforms, including Small Multipurpose Equipment Transport (SMET) and Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) systems, yet these systems are not networked to leverage the data they collect. This disconnect between commercial advancements in autonomy—such as driverless taxis and autonomous UAS for first responders—and military applications highlights the need for a paradigm shift.

Mission Autonomy: A System-of-Systems Approach

The Capability Program Executive (CPE) Mission Autonomy organization is addressing this challenge by delivering interconnected unmanned systems that operate autonomously and intuitively to support mission success. Focused on enhancing situational awareness, lethality, and survivability, CPE Mission Autonomy is developing a unified Command and Control (C2) architecture for unmanned systems and prototypes solutions tailored to prioritized tactical challenges. The organization oversees the development and production of unmanned ground and maritime systems, a portion of the Army's Small UAS portfolio, and establishes reference architectures and interface standards for payloads, platforms, and mission autonomy.

By adopting a system-of-systems approach, CPE Mission Autonomy integrates platforms with systems like Next Generation Command and Control (NGC2), Soldier Borne Mission Command (SBMC), and Forward Area Air Defense Command and Control (FAAD C2), leveraging commercial technologies and open Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) to enable rapid onboarding of new capabilities. The organization prioritizes delivering systems that are intuitive, reliable, and adaptable to operational needs, ensuring a seamless Soldier experience.

Enabling Mission Autonomy

Mission autonomy requires systems that are networked but capable of independent operation when communication links are degraded. It enables one operator to control multiple platforms or payloads, shifting from active piloting to task-based control. This approach demands mission planning and management tools tailored to echelon and user needs, as well as algorithms for faster decision-making and collaborative behaviors between systems.

Delivering mission autonomy is fundamentally an integration challenge. It requires robust communication protocols, synchronized actions across networks, and high-level decision-making capabilities such as route planning and task prioritization. Success hinges on collaboration across Army organizations, joint communities, and industry partners.

A Unified Vision for the Future

The Army's acquisition reform provides the structure needed to deliver mission autonomy capabilities. By unifying existing unmanned programs and adopting a "First Principles" approach, the Army can deliver a system-of-systems capability centered on the mission autonomy tech stack concept.

Extensive prototyping efforts across the Army's S&T and acquisition enterprise, combined with experimentation initiatives under U.S. Army xTech (https://xtech.army.mil/about-xtech/) and Pathway for Innovation (PIT, https://asc.army.mil/web/the-armys-2025-acquisition-reforms-revolutionize-processes-to-expedite-cutting-edge-capabilities), will support cross-domain fires, breaching operations, logistics, and other enabling tasks. Iterative development with operational units will empower commanders to con-

Enlisted Aviation Soldier Spotlight

Each month we will feature a past AAAA National or Functional Enlisted or NCO Award winner as part of our ongoing recognition of the Best of the Best in our Aviation Branch.

AAPI FILE PHOTO

Rodney J.T. Yano Noncommissioned Officer of the Year, 2024

Sponsored by Lockheed Martin Corp.

SFC Jason J. Moore

1st Battalion, 10th Aviation Regiment
10th Combat Aviation Brigade
Fort Drum, New York

SFC Jason Moore, a platoon sergeant in 1st Battalion, 10th Aviation Regiment, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, exemplifies leadership, technical proficiency, and Soldier focused commitment. Leading a team in U.S. Central Command supporting 1,500 flight hours and over 200 sorties, he ensured operational success and readiness in austere conditions. His proactive infrastructure improvements and Soldier welfare initiatives significantly enhanced morale and contingency preparedness. A champion of Soldier development, he emphasized cross-training and tactical readiness. He encouraged Soldiers to expand their skill sets through cross-training opportunities and hands-on experience in areas beyond their primary military occupational specialties (MOS). He organized and led MOS cross-training sessions, familiarization exercises for mine-resistant, ambush protected (MRAP) and Common Remotely Operated Weapon Station (CROWS) systems, and over 10 weapon proficiency ranges. Notable for his character and resilience, SFC Moore inspired excellence through mentorship and physical leadership. His success during critical missions, including the renovation of life supporting systems at Patrol Base Shaddadi Syria, underscores his adaptability and professionalism. Through his technical expertise, operational leadership, and dedication to Soldier welfare, SFC Moore has made significant contributions to the success of Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve operations in Syria and clearly make him the AAAA 2024 Rodney T. Yano Noncommissioned Officer of the Year.

figure packages of unmanned systems tailored to mission needs.

CPE Mission Autonomy will prioritize leveraging commercial solutions, adapting them when necessary, and developing bespoke systems only when required. Early in 2026, new opportunities will be available to industry, from unified C2 architecture to platforms and payloads addressing tactical priorities.

A Call to Action

Delivering mission autonomy requires new ways of thinking—rethinking requirements development, funding, testing, and contracting. It demands risk acceptance in fielding systems before full maturity and creating a sustainable business model that incentivizes industry investment.

The stakes are high, but the opportunity to stay ahead of adversaries is within reach. By embracing innovation, collaboration, and adaptability, the Army can ensure mission autonomy becomes a transformative capability for the future force.

BG Anthony Gibbs is the Capability Program Executive, Mission Autonomy headquartered at Fort Belvoir, VA.

FY25 Army Aviation End-of-Year Review

By Directorate of Analysis and Prevention, U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center

A simple look at the FY25 Army Aviation statistics seems to tell a good news story. Five Class A flight mishaps resulted in a manned Class A flight mishap rate of 0.66 per 100,000 flying hours.

This was the third best Class A flight mishap rate in the recorded history of Army Aviation. We also had one aircraft ground Class A mishap that resulted in a fatality when a Soldier was struck by the rotor system while on top of a CH-47. The flight mishaps included an AH-64E at Fort Campbell, KY, and four variants of the U/MH-60 in widely disparate units and mission sets. When compared with FY24's final rate of 1.90 per 100,000 flying hours, the FY25 numbers look good, but each of the five mishaps was avoidable, and we must do better.

In FY25, we successfully closed the training gap in unanticipated right yaw / loss of tail rotor effectiveness training, which started to manifest at the end of FY23 and continued into FY24. Since the safety stand-up in FY24, we have not experienced an unanticipated right-yaw event. This significantly contributed to reducing the Class A rate below 1.0 per 100,000 flight hours. Early identification of organizational training gaps in Army Aviation is critical. Without adequate mid-level experience to identify and correct training deficiencies at the unit level, organizational training gaps can manifest to a higher degree than in years past.

While the Class A rate was lower, the FY25 Class A-C flight mishap rate of 10.06 was higher than in any of the last 10 years. The increase in Class C flight mishaps is concerning since many of them are only "inches and seconds" from being a Class A mishap. This increase in mostly Class C mishaps began in FY23 and continues to be a concern this year.

The three leading events for Class C mishaps in FY25 were power plant failure or malfunction, airfield / landing zone operations, and system failure or malfunction. Additionally, the leading human factor identified was "procedure or checklist not followed correctly." The specific circumstances may differ, but the message is the same: Somewhere in the sequence, a required step was not executed the way it should have been. In a fast-paced environment, when procedures are not always as straightforward as we would like and daily distractions come into play, it becomes easier for a step to be overlooked or rushed. That applies to cockpits, flight-line operations and, most importantly, to leadership synchronization, task deconfliction and oversight.

To help address this, we recommend during crew briefings to set the tone with an emphasis on actions to take during an emergency and briefing a detailed power management plan for the mission. This, combined with adherence to checklists / established procedures, will go a long way toward reducing these mishap events. When aircrews use the checklist out loud and stay committed to a clean, professional cockpit environment, it becomes much harder for steps to slip through the cracks. With steady planning, clear communication, disciplined checklist use and verified maintenance, we can stop many of these errors long before they reach the aircraft or the mission.

There was an uptick in the Class A Unmanned Aviation Systems (UAS) mishap rate from 1.56 in FY24 to 4.42 in FY25. However, that is still below the five-year average of 6.06 for Class A mishaps per 100,000 flight hours. In FY25, there were three MQ-1C Class A flight mishaps (one lost link, one landing gear failure and one controlled flight into terrain on takeoff).

The data says that as a force we did well in FY25. Obviously, the tragedy near Reagan National Airport in January shows that data doesn't tell the whole story. We must remain vigilant in all operations. As a former commander of the 10th Mountain Division used to say, "There are no dry-fire rehearsals in aviation." Every mission is critical and requires critical eyes in the planning and execution.

Readiness through Safety!

This article was created by the Aviation Division, Directorate of Analysis and Prevention, U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center, Fort Rucker, AL.

Sharing the Love, or in this case, the Asphalt

By Kevin Scherrer and Greg Sevilla

Unbeknownst to many, the Army National Guard owns and operates eighteen fully-functional airfields and heliports (see map below) across the continental United States.

Map of ARNG Airfields and Heliports.

These facilities might fit nicely into your future training or operational plans, so we encourage their exploration and use.

Most of these airfields have air traffic services, airfield services, collocated or adjacent restricted airspace and ground maneuver areas, and ample space in which to stage. They are thus well-suited for IFR recoveries and collective training events.

Although these are all ARNG owned and operated facilities, they are available for the Total Force. Feel free to reach out directly to coordinate their use (see phone directory below). For general questions, or if you can't reach someone at a specific airfield, please contact the Guard "headquarters" in Arlington, VA, specifically: Mr. Greg Sevilla, gregory.sevilla.civ@army.mil, (TEAMS) +1 520-671-6143, or Mr. Virgil Moore, virgil.l.moore.civ@army.mil, (TEAMS) +1 520-672-1498

There are lots of resources out there… you just have to discover them.

	Name	State	POC
A	Bryant AAF	AK	Mr. Andy McWhorter (907) 428-6447
B	Roberts AHP	CA	Mr. David Clark (805) 238-8935
C	Picacho AHP	AZ	Mr. Brian Bertram (520) 750-5653
D	Silverbell AHP	AZ	LTC Sheldon Klein (520) 750-5925
E	Papago AHP	AZ	MAJ Joseph O'Neill (602) 267-2794
F	Guernsey AAF	WY	Mr. Jason Miller (307) 836-7878
G	Muldrow AHP	OK	Mr. Cyrus Haines (572) 247-7378
H	Martindale AHP	TX	Mr. Troy Meuth (210) 460-8800
I	Ray Miller, AAF	MN	Mr. Nathan Foster (320) 616-2780
J	Robinson AAF	AR	Mr. Christopher Dunn (501) 212-5667
K	Hagler AAF	MS	WO1 Christopher Windham (601)558-2290
L	Himsel AHP	IN	Mr. Steven Bowman (812) 526-1368
M	Grayling AAF	MI	Mr. Scott Karner (989) 344-4310
N	Blackstone	WV	Mr. Walter Tisdale (434) 292-2193
O	Muir AAF	PA	Mr. Joshua Dietrich (717) 861-3338
P	Weide AHP	MD	Mr. Thomas (Gill) Godwin (410) 436-3068
Q	Dawson AAF	VA	Mr. Robert Nelson (304) 791-4976
R	Los Alamitos AAF	CA	Mr. Jeff Sibley (562) 795-2571

Points of contact for ARNG Airfields and Heliports.

COL (Ret.) Kevin Scherrer is the Deputy Chief of the Army National Guard Air and Space Division and Greg Sevilla is the Army National Guard Airfields Branch Chief; they are headquartered in Arlington, VA.

Icing Certification Testing: Part 2 – Testing

By Dr. Thomas L. Thompson

U.S. ARMY REDSTONE TEST CENTER PHOTO

Artificial Icing Testing with the V-22 Osprey

In Part 1, we met Lynn and Kim Hanks, a test pilot and test engineer from the Aviation Flight Test Directorate (AFTD) at the U.S. Army Redstone Test Center, who have been conducting icing tests together for more than 28 years.

We discussed how they prepare for icing tests; now we'll focus on how they conduct the tests.

The AFTD team deploys to the test site typically in the fall, where they collaborate with the industry team supporting the aircraft to be certified. For the last 10 years, testing has been conducted at Marquette/Sawyer Regional Airport in Marquette, MI, located on the southern shore of Lake Superior.

The test plan includes both artificial icing, with the test aircraft flying behind the CH-47F Helicopter Icing Spray System (HISS) aircraft, and natural icing test points. The test team reviews the local weather forecast to determine which type of testing is best for a given day.

For artificial icing testing, a temperature survey is first conducted by the RC-12G Airborne Cloud Measurement Equipment (ACME) aircraft to determine if the desired temperature is available at achievable test altitudes and if the air quality is smooth enough for test operations. If conditions are satisfactory, the HISS and test aircraft launch to the test area reported by the ACME aircraft. When the ACME aircraft joins the formation (opposite side of test), the HISS aircraft will begin its spray checklist. Based on ambient conditions, Kim will direct the HISS crew to set a water flow rate to achieve a target cloud liquid water content (LWC). Stable measurements from the ACME aircraft at a 150-ft standoff distance behind the HISS for 30 to 60 sec are required to provide a representative assessment of cloud properties. In addition to air temperature and humidity, Kim reviews LWC measurements to determine if she needs to direct crewmen in the HISS aircraft to adjust flow rate to achieve the desired test condition.

When spray cloud conditions are established, AFTD pilots maintain the HISS aircraft at the desired airspeed and outside air temperature (aircraft altitude will be changed, as needed, to maintain the desired air temperature). The ACME aircraft exits the spray area behind the HISS aircraft, establishing a position on the left or right of the three-ship formation. Pilots of the test aircraft then establish position about 150 ft behind the HISS aircraft. At that location, the spray cloud is about 36 ft wide and 8 ft deep, which, depending on the size of the test aircraft, may not allow all the main rotor (or wing) to be fully immersed in the cloud. When testing a larger aircraft, engineers may request pilots to position the test aircraft laterally so that at least one side of its main rotor (wing) is fully immersed in the HISS cloud. Also, if both the main rotor and fuselage cannot be fully immersed in the cloud height, pilots may need to adjust the aircraft vertically to fully immerse the rotor in the cloud (a separate test point might be added to fully immerse the fuselage). Data is acquired as test aircraft pilots maintain the desired 150-ft standoff distance relative to the HISS using visual cues from radar-activated station-keeping lights mounted to the belly of the CH-47F. Duration of the exposure is limited by flow rate and the amount of water carried by the HISS aircraft.

After the team is confident the aircraft's ice protection systems are functioning properly, and that the aircraft can safely encounter icing, natural icing testing begins within the envelope established by artificial (HISS) testing. To accomplish natural icing testing, the ACME aircraft surveys clouds in the test area. Once suitable conditions are verified, test aircraft pilots and engineers monitor instrumentation to assess any degradation in aircraft flight performance, handling qualities, and vibration as testing progresses. Also, photos and videos are taken from the ACME, HISS, or test aircraft to document ice accretion and any damage caused from ice shedding.

In our final article, we'll discuss how test results are used to establish certification.

Dr. Thomas L. Thompson is the Chief Engineer, Aeromechanics, Aeromechanics Systems Readiness Directorate, U.S. Army Combat Capabilities Development Command Aviation & Missile Center, Redstone Arsenal, AL.

Corneal Refractive Surgery

By CPT (Dr.) Jesse Britt

Q: I am tired of wearing glasses and contacts on the flight line. What eye surgery options are available to aviators today?

FS: That is a common concern among aircrew. Fumbling with glasses under a helmet or dealing with dry contacts in a dusty environment is more than an inconvenience; it's a performance issue. Fortunately, we have come a long way since the early days of eye surgery. Current Army-approved options include LASIK, LASEK, PRK, and a newer procedure called SMILE. Another option, the implantable Collamer lens (ICL), is available but has stricter limitations.

How Your Eye Works

To understand these surgeries, it helps to think of your eye like a camera. Light enters through the cornea (the clear front window), passes through the lens, and focuses onto the retina (the film or sensor at the back). The cornea performs most of the work in bending light (refraction) so it focuses clearly. If the cornea is shaped imperfectly, the light bends incorrectly, known as a refractive error. Depending on the shape, this causes nearsightedness, farsightedness, or astigmatism. Glasses or contacts fix this by bending the light before it hits your eye. Refractive surgery fixes it by reshaping the cornea itself.

The Surgical Options

The Army currently approves several laser procedures. While the goal is the same – sharper vision without lenses – the technical approach differs:

LASIK (Laser-Assisted In Situ Keratomileusis): The surgeon creates a thin flap on the surface of the cornea, lifts it, and uses a laser to reshape the tissue underneath. The flap is then smoothed back into place. Recovery is usually very fast with minimal discomfort. However, because the flap never truly heals to its original strength, there is a small risk of flap displacement in high-impact environments.

PRK (Photorefractive Keratectomy): This procedure involves no flap. Instead, the surgeon gently removes the very top layer of "skin" cells on the cornea and reshapes the cornea directly. A contact lens is placed on the eye like a bandage while those cells grow back. While recovery is longer and can be uncomfortable, it is often preferred for aviators because it eliminates flap-related complications entirely.

LASEK (Laser Epithelial Keratomileusis): This is a middle ground. The surgeon loosens the ultra-thin outer skin layer and pushes it aside. After laser reshaping, this layer is slid back into place. This reduces risks associated with the deeper LASIK flap, but recovery is slower. LASEK may not be suitable for those with very high prescriptions.

SMILE (Small Incision Lenticular Extraction): This is the newer technique. A laser creates a small disc of tissue inside the cornea, which is then removed through a tiny incision. Because there is no flap and minimal disruption to the surface, it offers quick recovery with good structural stability.

ICL: This involves placing a permanent prescription lens inside the eye, behind the iris. Because this is an intraocular surgery (inside the eye), it carries different risks, such as increased eye pressure or early cataracts. It is currently waiverable for some personnel but is generally not approved for pilots.

Risks and Timing

Surgery is never without risk. Possible side effects include glare, halos around lights at night, dry eyes, and a decrease in the ability to distinguish objects from their background (contrast sensitivity).

Timing is your most important consideration. You will be grounded for a healing period– typically 6 to 12 weeks. You cannot return to flight status until your vision is stable and you meet all aeromedical standards. For trained aviation personnel, the earliest an evaluation can occur is 6 weeks post-op. If you are an initial applicant or a student pilot, the timelines are much longer. It may be better to complete initial flight training first and seek surgery later when your career allows for a period of non-flying duty.

Be a Team Player

Do not go it alone. If you are in the service, command approval is required before any elective surgery. Crucially, you must consult with your Flight Surgeon and aeromedical optometrist before scheduling a consultation. They will verify which procedures are authorized for your specific aircraft and duty class. Bring your pre-surgery records, operative reports, and follow-up notes to your flight physical. A little coordination now ensures you stay safe and legal in the air later.

Fly safe!

Questions for the Flight Surgeon?

If you have a question that you would like addressed, email it to AskFS@quad-a.org. We will try to address it in the future. See your unit flight surgeon for your personal health issues.

The views and opinions offered are those of the authors and should not be construed as an official Department of the Army position unless otherwise stated.

CPT Jesse Britt, D.O., is a Flight Surgeon with 1st Aviation Brigade, Ft. Rucker, AL.

During a visit to ACLC, MG Lori Robinson (2nd from right), COL Tim Harloff (left) and other staff members toured aircraft, equipment and facilities.

U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY CPT. STERLING MCCANN

Sustaining the Training Base:

How AMCOM FMX Enables Aviation and Fires Modernization

By Mr. Steven A. Collins

For more than 20 years, the AMCOM Combined Logistics Command (ACLC) has delivered essential aviation and ground sustainment in direct support of the Army's Transformation and Training Command (T2COM) mission to generate the future force. Across multiple Centers of Excellence, ACLC ensures the availability, safety, and reliability of equipment critical to training throughput and readiness. As the Army modernizes force structure, platforms, and training models to meet large-scale combat operations requirements, ACLC's Field Maintenance Expansion (FMX) sites play a central role in minimizing operational disruption while delivering scalable sustainment solutions.

Five key initiatives illustrate how ACLC directly supports Center of Excellence priorities while preserving training capacity and operational readiness across the training base. These initiatives include:

1. UAS Modernization at Fort Huachuca, AZ
2. Additive Manufacturing for Maintenance Training at Fort Eustis, VA
3. Rotary-Wing Modernization Through Low-Rate Initial Production (LRIP) Exchanges at Fort Rucker, AL
4. Aviation at the Tip of the Spear at Fort Benning, GA
5. Fires and Air Defense Artillery Sustainment at Fort Sill, OK

FMX Huachuca — UAS Modernization in Support of the 15X Force

As the Aviation Center of Excellence (AVCOE) expands UAS force structure to support multi-domain operations, Fort Huachuca remains the focal point for UAS training and sustainment modernization. Central to this effort is the introduction of the 15X Military Occupational Specialty, which consolidates legacy operator and maintainer roles into a single specialty aligned with evolving doctrine, force design, and range integration requirements.

ACLC, through FMX Huachuca, minimizes operational impacts during this transition by synchronizing sustainment planning with training modernization. In coordination with AVCOE, FMX Huachuca facilitated the removal of legacy RQ-7 Shadow systems to posture the training base for increased UAS inventories and revised programs of instruction. ACLC also coordinated updates to contract maintenance requirements to support the new 15X curriculum and projected growth in student throughput.

Beyond platform sustainment, ACLC provides maintenance for Program of Instruction (POI) aircraft, advises on ground control station requirements, and leads long-term logistics planning for the expanded UAS fleets. As AVCOE projects significant growth in 15X training requirements—reaching up to 900 students annually by fiscal year 2027—ACLC's planning ensures sustainment capacity, workforce alignment, and communications infrastructure remain synchronized with AVCOE's modernization priorities.

FMX Eustis — Additive Manufacturing for Scalable Maintenance Training

At Fort Eustis, the 128th Aviation Brigade trains approximately 3,300 aviation maintainers annually using retired or repurposed aircraft to deliver realistic and cost-effective maintenance instruction. A persistent challenge within this environment is providing high-fidelity training aids without diverting airworthy components required by operational units.

FMX Eustis, supported by ACLC, has expanded the use of additive manufacturing to address this gap. Using 3D scanning and printing technologies funded by AVCOE, FMX Eustis produces validated, non-airworthy training parts that replicate the form, fit, and function of operational components. These parts allow unflyable airframes and simulators to replicate maintenance tasks affordably and at scale.

ACLC's role includes validating approved training parts lists, certifying printer and material specifications for training use, funding instructor conversion, and establishing quality control and acceptance criteria. This approach accelerates part availability, increases training throughput, improves realism for maintenance tasks, and preserves operational inventories for the field. Additive manufacturing also supports curriculum integration of digital skills, reinforcing long-term sustainment readiness across the 15-series maintainer force.

FMX Rucker (Air) — Rotary-Wing Modernization Through LRIP Exchanges

Fort Rucker sustains the Army's most demanding aviation training mission, producing thousands of aviators annually through a robust Flight Hour Program. As the Army modernizes its rotary-wing fleet, maintaining training continuity while introducing newer aircraft presents a critical sustainment challenge.

ACLC supports AVCOE modernization by coordinating Low-Rate Initial Production (LRIP) aircraft exchanges that rotate newer AH-64 airframes into the training base and will incorporate Compo 3 (U.S. Army Reserve) CH-47 airframes into the training base in response to force-wide fleet reductions. These exchanges preserve Flight Hour Program continuity while accelerating exposure to modern platforms for instructors and students. FMX Rucker (Air), under ACLC oversight, synchronizes depot support, fielding timelines, and contract maintenance to ensure aircraft arrive mission ready – Ready to Launch (RTL).

ACLC also pre-stages spares, updates National Stock Numbers, deploys maintenance surge teams, augments contractor support, and ensures technical publications and configuration management records are updated during transfers. This phased fielding approach supports instructor conversion training, aligns temporary maintenance capacity, and prevents training backlogs—directly contributing to improved readiness across the aviation training enterprise.

FMX Benning — Aviation at the Tip of the Spear

Nowhere is the unique nature of ACLC's support more evident than at Fort Benning. Unlike traditional aviation models where flight operations and maintenance are collocated, ACLC provides the direct, flexible, and critical aviation capability – the "tip of the spear" – for the Airborne and Ranger Training Brigade. This distinctive model allows the Maneuver Center of Excellence to focus exclusively on training the world's most elite soldiers, while ACLC handles the demanding operational aviation component.

This support is the linchpin for the brigade's grueling training curriculum. ACLC provides and maintains the UH-60 Black Hawks that enable the highly skilled crews of the 4th Ranger Training Battalion's "Ravens" flight company, which directly enables the complex air assault, mountaineering, and insertion training across the three phases of Ranger School. For students, this means conducting fast-rope insertions into dense forests during the Benning Phase, executing precarious hoist operations over the peaks of the Appalachian Mountains in the Mountain Phase, and performing airborne water jumps into the swamps of Florida. These are not just training events; they are foundational skills that replicate the lethal, high-stakes environments where Rangers operate.

Crucially, this responsibility extends to the solemn duty of providing immediate MEDEVAC coverage. ACLC ensures flight crews stand ready to launch at a moment's notice, offering a vital lifeline that underwrites the safety of every student and instructor engaged in the high-risk training environments of Ranger and Airborne School.

FMX Sill — Fires and Air Defense Sustainment in a Rapidly Evolving Mission Set

At Fort Sill, the Fires Center of Excellence (FCOE) trains more than 43,000 Soldiers annually across fires and air defense specialties spanning 205 programs of instruction. Unlike other FMX locations, FMX Sill provides hands-on maintenance performed by Army civilians sustaining more than 27,000 pieces of equipment, including Patriot, Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD), Counter-Rocket, Artillery, and Mortar systems, artillery platforms, rocket systems, and associated support vehicles.

As FCOE evolves as the Army's lead for counter-UAS operations, FMX Sill has sustained pace with rapid fielding and training demands, particularly with the introduction of Stryker-based Maneuver Short-Range Air Defense systems. ACLC enabled this transition by assuming sustainment responsibility for new counter-UAS platforms and coordinating New Equipment Training to ensure maintenance personnel were prepared to support emerging systems.

ACLC's integrated sustainment approach at FMX Sill ensures fires and air defense training remains synchronized with evolving threats, emerging technologies, and multi-domain operational requirements—while maintaining the safety and readiness of complex weapon systems throughout the training pipeline.

Sustaining the Training Base for the Future Force

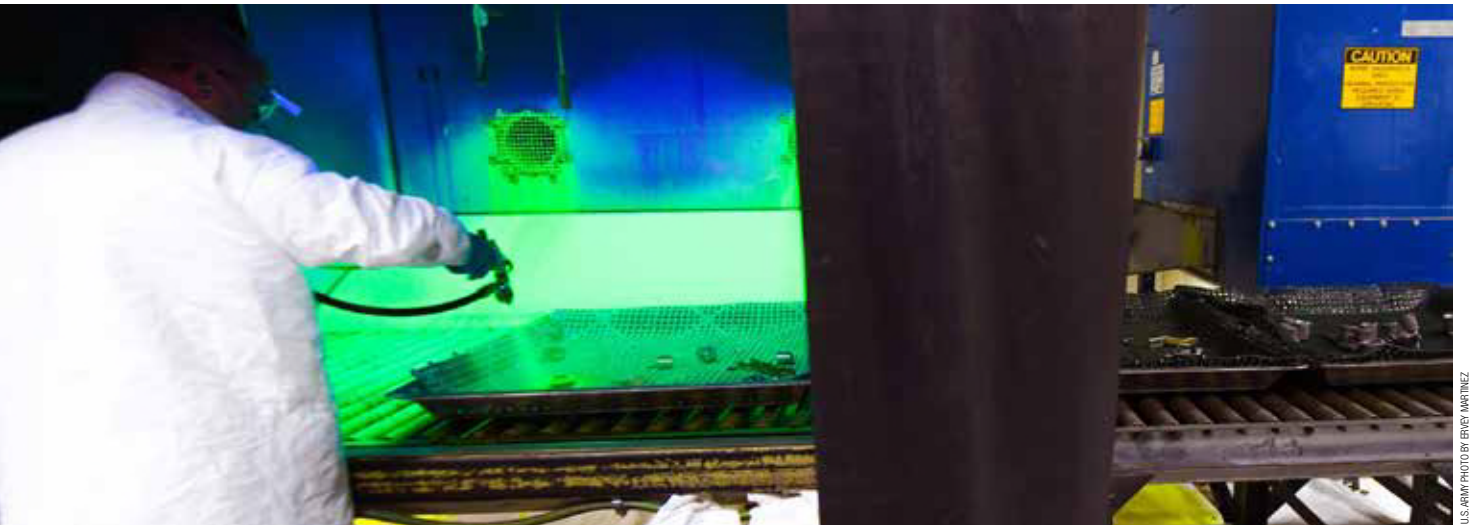
Across the training base, ACLC's FMX sites provide the sustainment backbone that enables both aviation and fires modernization to proceed without sacrificing readiness or throughput. By anticipating requirements, coordinating enterprise partners, and delivering tailored sustainment solutions, ACLC ensures Centers of Excellence remain aligned with the Army's transformation priorities.

As the Army continues to adapt to large-scale combat operations and multi-domain challenges, ACLC remains positioned to adjust sustainment in step with evolving training requirements—ensuring the training base continues to generate ready, capable Soldiers for the future fight.

Mr. Steven A. Collins serves as the Deputy to the Commander for the AMCOM Combined Logistics Command at Fort Rucker, AL.

CCAD: Transforming Army Aviation Sustainment for the Future Fight

By COL Kevin Consedine



U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY ERVEY MARTINEZ

Paul Zaklukiewicz, non-destructive tester, applies oil penetrant to aircraft components to detect defects visible under black light.

"If you don't know where you're going, any road will get you there."

That familiar observation underscores a reality facing today's Army Aviation enterprise: transformation without direction risks drift, inefficiency, and lost readiness. At the Corpus Christi Army Depot (CCAD), we know exactly where we are going. Our direction is clear - deliver aviation readiness faster, smarter, and more affordably while evolving to meet the demands of the future fight.

General engineers Leonel Narvaez (on left) and Austin Vallejo (on the right) demonstrate the blue light scanning ability to verify a part is dimensionally accurate to the digital model.

For more than six decades, CCAD has been a cornerstone of Army Aviation readiness. As the Army's premier rotary-wing sustainment facility, CCAD delivers combat power by restoring and returning helicopters to the field - ensuring Soldiers around the world have the aircraft they need to train, deploy, and fight.

While CCAD's mission is global, its roots are firmly planted in South Texas. The depot's workforce of civilian artisans, engineers, logisticians, and support professionals sustains the Army's aviation fleet while also strengthening the local economy and supporting the surrounding community. This combination of national mission and regional impact has defined CCAD since its founding.

Today, Army Aviation is undergoing significant transformation. As part of the Department of War's modernization strategy, legacy aircraft such as the AH-64D Apache are being divested to make way for advanced capabilities. These changes affect workload across the sustainment enterprise and present an opportunity for CCAD to adapt, modernize and remain a critical contributor to the future force.

Adapting the Organic Industrial Base

Transformation within the Organic Industrial Base (OIB) is not optional. To remain relevant, depots must evolve alongside the operational Army. At CCAD, that evolution is already underway through deliberate investments in people, infrastructure, technology, and partnerships informed by projected workload and operational requirements.

Reimagining the Workforce Structure.

CCAD has taken deliberate steps to align its workforce with projected future workload while preserving the critical skills essential to Army Aviation readiness. Over the past year, the depot reorganized from **14 directorates to seven**, streamlining management layers and improving unity of effort across production, engineering, and sustainment functions. This restructuring increases organizational agility and better positions CCAD to execute emerging missions.

Building the Team of the Future.

In parallel, CCAD leveraged voluntary workforce attrition to responsibly reduce overhead without compromising mission execution. Through these

actions, the depot achieved approximately $1.2 million in annual salary savings, resources that can be reinvested into modernization, training, and next-generation capabilities. Together, these efforts ensure the workforce remains properly sized, skilled, and aligned with the Army's evolving aviation sustainment demands.

Modernizing Infrastructure.

Construction of the Aviation Multi-Purpose Production Facility represents a major leap forward in depot efficiency. Once complete, the facility is projected to reduce internal parts movement by 70 percent and save the Army an estimated $60 million annually, improving aircraft flow and overall readiness.

Leveraging Smart Technology.

In partnership with the Advanced Robotics for Manufacturing Institute, CCAD is integrating artificial intelligence and human-machine collaboration into depot operations. These technologies increase precision, accelerate production, and enhance safety across the shop floor. Beginning in 2026, CCAD will introduce shearography in partnership with the National Institute for Aviation Research (NIAR), a non-destructive inspection technology that assesses rotor blade structural integrity and significantly reduces inspection timelines from hours to minutes while improving accuracy and repeatability.

Innovating Sustainment.

CCAD's Sustainment Level Repair (SLR) program exemplifies a shift toward smarter maintenance. By reusing approximately 80 percent of critical flight components, the Army avoids new procurement costs and returns aircraft to service in months rather than years.

Partnering for Readiness.

Direct Support Partnership Agreements with original equipment manufacturers provide depot artisans access to technical data, specialized tools, and critical parts. These partnerships shorten repair timelines, reduce costs, and ensure aircraft return to operational units faster.

Delivering Readiness at Speed and Scale

CCAD's mission extends beyond repairing helicopters and components. As part of the Army's organic sustainment enterprise, the depot provides strategic depth, surge capacity, and technical expertise that cannot be rapidly replicated elsewhere. At the same time, CCAD remains deeply committed to the Coastal Bend - supporting local schools, suppliers, and workforce development initiatives that sustain long-term regional growth.

Army Aviation faces a future defined by speed, adaptability, and modernization. CCAD is not navigating that future by chance. We have direction, a plan, and a workforce aligned toward our future goals. By embracing change, investing in people, and modernizing how sustainment is delivered, CCAD is positioning itself to remain a cornerstone of Army Aviation readiness for decades to come.

Because when you know where you're going, every road becomes a deliberate path - and at CCAD, that path leads directly to readiness for the next fight.

COL Kevin Consedine is the commander of Corpus Christi Army Depot, Corpus Christi, TX.

Aviation Sustainment Support to Army Continuous Transformation

By Bennett (Ben) Moe and CSM (Ret.) Tod Glidewell

U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY JERRY DUENES

UH-60 Black Hawk on a test flight, honing its capabilities.

The U.S. Army Aviation and Missile Command (AMCOM) is optimizing aviation sustainment capabilities in line with the Army's Continuous Transformation (CT) and program acquisition focus. Shifting fleet priorities, driven by Army and Department of War operational requirements, are driving the Aviation Enterprise to develop leaner, more capable forces, fleets, and technologies. As the Army further embraces the challenge of rapid and continuous transformation, and the shift to a portfolio-based focus, AMCOM is applying the depth and breadth of its mission capabilities to enable readiness across the aviation fleet.

AMCOM continues to meet transformation challenges through shaping investments, driving maintenance and sustainment readiness across the fleet, building CONUS-based and global sustainment maintenance capabilities across theaters, and delivering sustainment innovation aligned with Army modernization priorities.

Aviation Enterprise Sustainment Investments Supporting Continuous Transformation

The Army's shift toward continuous transformation requires a whole-of-sustainment approach, that emphasizes accountability across the Aviation Enterprise. AMCOM works closely with Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA), the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA), Portfolio Acquisition Executives (PAE) Manuever Air, and reserve components to effect aircraft depopulation efforts across our modernizing fleets.

The Aviation Enterprise has quickly leveraged data analytics, lessons learned, subject matter expertise, and partnerships to identify, prioritize, and distribute resources. These efforts enable the harvesting of critical Class IX repair parts, especially those affected by obsolescence and high-demand, while supporting redistribution of modernized aircraft to build war-winning capability.

Simultaneously, divestiture and spares harvesting activities enable rapid production of modernized fleet variants and create additional opportunities to support foreign military sales partners strengthening burden sharing with allies. Within fleet composition and divestiture, AMCOM is also supporting realignment of modernized aircraft to Ft. Rucker, AL in support of AMCOM Combined Logistics Command's (ACLC) mission to improve the Aviation Center of Excellence (AVCOE) green fleet aviator training throughput via targeted distribution of aircraft. This approach allows structured aviator career progression aligned with emerging requirements such as launched effects unmanned aircraft system integration and autonomy.

The Emerging Aviation Digital Ecosystem

AMCOM continues to partner to support development and delivery of cutting-edge, cross-platform sustainment solutions across modernizing fleets. In coordination with PAE Maneuver Air, Capability Portfolio Executive Air, AMCOM directly supports the groundwork for the Army's first aviation platform to be born into a digital environment – the (MV-75).

While previous efforts laid the groundwork for digital fleet management, the sustainment enterprise is building out the standardization, digital framework and documentation to launch the Future Long Range Assault Aircraft (FLRAA) with fleet-enabling digital capabilities. While earlier digital twin efforts enabled advanced production capabilities, platforms fully resident in the digital space create opportunities for sustainment and operations across digital, interactive technical manuals, digital viewer integration, model-based systems engineering, and potential streamlining of airworthiness and materiel release process – capabilities that prom-

ise to deliver capabilities faster to where they are needed most – at the point of need.

The Future of Composite Inspection & Repair

Sustainment innovation also continues across composite repair technologies in support of ready aviation forces. With the addition of FLRAA (MV-75) to the Army mix of fleet capabilities, the requirements, acquisition, engineering, and sustainment enterprises realized an urgent need to develop next-generation composites diagnostics and repair capabilities at the schoolhouse, unit, the Aviation Logistics Readiness Center and depot levels. After assessing current capabilities, the aviation enterprise determined that existing fleet capabilities would not meet the advanced composite repair challenge posed by MV-75.

The collaborative team continues to assess available and developable non-destructive inspection/test technology capable of Soldier-level diagnostics supporting field-level repair of damage across all environments. The aviation sustainment enterprise and its partners will continue to define and deliver effective materials, processes, and tools to shape and transform Army composite repair capabilities.

Embracing Industry-partnered Sustainment Innovation

AMCOM continues to explore a wide range of innovative engineering tools in collaboration with industry partners to enhance the mission readiness of aviation platforms. One area of sustainment investment is thermography, a critical technology to assess damage to components and airframes not visible to the unaided eye with a higher degree of accuracy than traditional methods. This technology supports newer composite technologies such as vacuum debulking and hot-bonded repairs.

Simultaneously, AMCOM, in partnership with industry and academia, is developing and delivering thermal shearography blade inspection technologies to the organic industrial base at Corpus Christi Army Depot (CCAD) and the Mississippi Army National Guard Aviation Classification Repair Activity Depot facility in Gulfport, MS. Such effective technologies transform aircraft blade inspection and repair processes, providing faster and more accurate inspections, maintenance, and reports. These and similar industry-leading sustainment technologies are currently under review by U.S. Army aviation logistics personnel. This effort will aggressively drive continuous, industry-partnered sustainment innovation throughout the duration of CT.

Enabling Army Advanced Manufacturing (AdvM)

With the July 2025 publication of Army Directive 2025-14 (Advanced Manufactured Parts Certification Authority Assigned to Commanding General, United States Army Materiel Command), AMCOM continues to drive efforts to apply advanced manufacturing methods to mitigate supply chain challenges.

AMC is now empowered by the Army to make risk-informed decisions to enable the certification of materials, processes and methods of AdvM and to certify and qualify those parts for use in the Army's supply chain. AMC, and its Life Cycle Management Commands, now serve as the configuration manager's exclusive partner for AdvM processes. While aviation's role and safety requirements pose unique challenges for AdvM, AMCOM is partnered with life-cycle managers to identify and prove technologies and concepts designed to improve readiness at the point of need through a risk-informed parts identification framework. AdvM technologies will be leveraged to overcome supply chain and obsolescence challenges, enabling more responsive authorized stockage lists.

Aviation Global Sustainment Capabilities – Regional Sustainment Frameworks (RSF)

AMCOM, in concert with the Aviation Enterprise, is actively engaged in shaping globally enabling RSFs with industry partners and allies. With the number of Army aircraft in the hands of allies approaching fleet parity with our own inventory, select partners have developed domestic maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) capabilities in cooperation with original equipment manufacturers. These theater-based maintenance capabilities allow the Army the ability to leverage state-of-the-art facilities and tooling for rapid repair and return, while strengthening strategic partnerships.

AMCOM is engaged across multiple partners and echelons to effectively shape RSF capabilities, ensuring that the Army and Department of War effectively prioritize strategic partnerships and investment, targeting MRO capabilities based on capacity requirements (e.g., high average monthly demand / low stock on hand). Furthermore, AMCOM is working to build and integrate a seamless organic industrial base (OIB) / RSF framework, balancing total capacity while projecting depot artisans to RSF locations to complete certified repairs in support of targeted theater needs. Prevailing in contested logistics environments will require balanced, scalable RSFs across theaters.

Continuous Transformation of the Army Aviation Organic Industrial Base

Army Aviation's OIB enabler, CCAD, is heavily engaged in multiple lines of effort in support of Continuous Transformation. CCAD is nearing the final milestones in its multi-year effort to create the Army's only multi-aircraft, multi-purpose production facility, enabling advanced overhaul and throughput of Army and joint fleets. CCAD continues to reflect its role as a proven force enabler, simultaneously depopulating aircraft based on Army requirements while restructuring its workforce, facilities, and processes to meet the challenge of MV-75 and sustainable fleet management (e.g., Sustainment Level Repair). Furthermore, CCAD continues to transform its Depot Forward Team capabilities, regularly projecting skilled artisans and equipment domestically and globally to address both acute and systemic readiness challenges.

Closing Thoughts

AMCOM, as the Army's premier and trusted aviation sustainment partner, operates across multiple fronts to drive continuous transformation of its capabilities – shaping requirements to enable force employment, supporting life-cycle managers in optimizing fleet sustainment, and supporting aviation units in meeting global mission demands. AMCOM will continue to evolve and adapt as a valued and transparent industry partner, a key enabler for portfolio managers, and a trusted ally to the Warfighter.

Mr. Bennett (Ben) Moe is AMCOM's senior strategic planner supporting the Strategic Effects Division; and CSM (Ret.) Tod Glidewell is the lead sustainment integrator for FLRAA (MV-75), supporting PAE Maneuver Air, the Program Manager for FLRAA, and the AMCOM Strategic Effects Division.

The Indispensable Role of AMCOM LAR in Sustaining Army Readiness

By William (Billy) Barnes

The U.S. Army's combat readiness is fundamentally dependent on the operational availability of its sophisticated aviation and missile platforms. Central to sustaining these complex systems are the U.S. Army Aviation and Missile Command (AMCOM) and its forward-deployed civilian experts, the Logistics Assistance Representatives (LARs). The synergy between these highly skilled individuals and the units they support is a cornerstone of Army Aviation's ability to maintain a high operational tempo, reduce aircraft downtime, and ensure the lethality and survivability of its forces.

The primary function of a LAR is to provide on-site, expert-level assistance and advice on the maintenance, logistics, and training of AMCOM-managed systems. Operating globally, from home-station flightlines to active combat zones, LARs are not merely support staff; they are integral members of the units they serve. They act as a critical bridge between the tactical edge and the Army's vast strategic sustainment enterprise. By living and working alongside their assigned units, LARs develop a deep understanding of the commander's priorities and the operational context, allowing them to anticipate needs and proactively address maintenance challenges.

The Army has been moving towards reducing its reliance on external technical support and increasing the use of Logistics Assistance Representatives (LARs). This shift is part of an effort to return ownership of maintenance to the Soldier. LARs are Department of the Army Civilians who fall under the Army Materiel Command (AMC) and serve as a significant force multiplier. By providing advanced troubleshooting and possessing the authority to conduct repairs beyond the scope of standard technical manuals, they drastically reduce the time aircraft and missile systems are non-mission-capable (NMC). This on-the-spot repair capability often prevents the need to ship components or entire systems to depots, a process that can take 18 to 24 months, thereby keeping critical assets in the fight. A foundational principle of the LAR program is to "train themselves out of a job" by mentoring and developing the skills of Soldier-maintainers, enhancing the unit's organic capabilities and fostering self-sufficiency.

U.S. ARMY PHOTO COURTESY OF AMCOM

LARs providing support worldwide: Providing expert complex engine mount guidance to B Company, 4th Battalion, 4th Attack Aviation Regiment maintenance personnel during a National Training Center (NTC) rotation; Hosting LAR University for 4 AMCOM AH-64 E-LAR personnel and 4 Soldiers from Ft. Hood; LAR support to B Company, 1st 3rd Aviation Regiment as they conducted successful live fire demonstration of the SPIKE NLOS Missile system during test at Ustka Army Airfield, Poland; troubleshooting and providing solution to pressure switch issue on CH-47 FWD/ AFT transmission.

The effectiveness of the LAR program hinges on the deep expertise of its personnel. The vast majority of LARs are military veterans who bring years, often decades, of hands-on experience with the specific weapon systems they support. This background provides an immediate, ingrained understanding of the equipment and its operational environment. AMCOM builds on this experience by offering specialized courses to keep LARs proficient on the latest system upgrades, modifications, and maintenance practices. This continuous learning prevents costly trial-and-error maintenance and ensures LARs remain an invaluable asset as the Army modernizes its fleet.

A multi-million-dollar aircraft or missile system provides no operational return while it is non-mission capable. By drastically reducing equipment downtime from months to mere days or hours, LARs increase the operational availability of these critical assets. This enhanced readiness translates to a higher return on the Army's substantial capital investments and reduces the need for a larger, more expensive fleet to meet mission requirements.

The following examples highlight their direct impact:

Ingenuity on the Flightline (AH-64E Side Loader Tray)

An AH-64E aircraft at the 12th CAB, 2-159th, was grounded by a missing side loader loading tray. The correct E-model part was unavailable through the supply system, and the unit had acquired an incorrect AH-

64D tray. LAR James Wright conducted detailed research and discovered that the only difference between the two parts was a small, machined slot. He submitted a Maintenance Engineering Call (MEC) and coordinated with engineering to get approval to modify the existing D-model tray. This simple, LAR-driven solution restored the aircraft to serviceable conditions, providing a solution where the supply system could not.

Depot-Level Repair in the Field (CH-47F Rotor Head)

During a rotation in the Central Command (CENTCOM) area of responsibility, the 101st CAB reported non-repairable thread damage on multiple CH-47F Aft Rotor Head oil tank liners. The standard fix required depot-level machining and replacement heads that were not available in theater, threatening to ground the helicopters for an extended period. Senior Technical Representative (STR) Joe Peca and his LAR team developed an innovative off-component machining solution and drafted a detailed 35-step replacement process. After successfully demonstrating their proof-of-concept remotely to Liaison Engineers, they received an approved Maintenance Engineering Call (MEC). This sustainment-level effort, performed in the field, saved over $975,000 and avoided critical non-mission-capable time, having an immediate impact on the unit's readiness rate.

Driving Innovation (Apache FCR-OATS)

The knowledge and experience of AMCOM LARs were the driving force behind the development of the Apache Fire Control RADAR Off Aircraft Test Set (FCR-OATS). This ground-based tool allows technicians to test and train on the radar system without it being installed on the helicopter, streamlining maintenance and developing the skills of AH-64 personnel. In cooperation with PAE Maneuver Air, the FCR-OATS has provided hundreds of training hours, saved over $3 million in repair parts, reduced maintenance man-hours, and increased the operational readiness of FCR systems.

The AMCOM LAR program is a key component of the Army's sustainment strategy, providing forward-deployed expertise that directly supports readiness and operational availability. Built on a foundation of experienced personnel and continuous technical training, the program enables rapid problem resolution and effective knowledge transfer to supported units. Units that integrate LARs into production control and maintenance planning benefit from earlier problem identification and faster resolution of complex issues. LAR participation in routine maintenance discussions enhances coordination between units and the broader sustainment enterprise, reducing delays, anticipating challenges and improving decision-making.

When leveraged early, LAR expertise can streamline maintenance actions, accelerate engineering solutions, and expand the technical proficiency of Soldier-maintainers. This collaborative approach strengthens organic capabilities, minimizes equipment downtime and contributes to sustained readiness across Army Aviation formations.

William (Billy) Barnes, is the chief of the LAR Training Branch, U.S. Army Aviation and Missile Command, Redstone Arsenal, AL.

2026 Aviation Senior Leader Forum Focuses on "Transforming with a Vision"

By Ken Holder, Editor

Senior Army aviation leaders from across the Total Force gathered at Fort Rucker, AL, from Jan. 25–29, for the 2026 Aviation Senior Leader Forum, a multi-day event focused on shaping the future of Army Aviation under the theme "Army Aviation: Transforming with a Vision." The forum brought together general officers, command sergeants major, warrant officers, branch chiefs, and legacy leaders to examine transformation, modernization, force integration, and emerging operational concepts critical to future large-scale combat operations. The AAAA Functional awards and LTG Ellis D. Parker awards were presented as part of the event.

MG Clair Gill, Commanding General of the Army Aviation Center of Excellence, CW5 R. Scott Slider, Chief Warrant Officer of the Aviation Branch, and CSM Kirk Coley, AVCOE Command Sergeant Major, congratulate AAAA Functional Award winners presented by AAAA National President MG (Ret.) Wally Golden.

ALL PHOTOS – U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY DR. LESLIE HERLICK

SFC Christopher B. Robinson, 1st Battalion, 58th Aviation Regiment, Fort Rucker, AL accepts the 2025 Air Traffic Control Maintenance Technician of the Year Award. This award is sponsored by Raytheon.

CW2 Shane C. Polidoro, 1st Battalion, 58th Aviation Regiment, Fort Rucker, AL accepts the Air Traffic Control Manager of the Year Award. This award is sponsored by Raytheon.

SSG Dillon W. Vance, 1st Battalion, 58th Aviation Regiment Fort Rucker, AL accepted the 2025 Air Traffic Controller of the Year Award as well as the award for the Air Traffic Control Facility of the Year for Simba Tower (MOTS), Magagoni Airfield, Kenya on behalf of the Soldiers of 1st Battalion, 58th, Aviation Regiment, Fort Rucker, AL. This award is sponsored by Raytheon.

LTC Andrew R. Morgan and SGM Carlos J. Silva Lind, 1st Battalion, 58th Aviation Regiment, accept the 2025 Air Traffic Control Unit of the Year Award on behalf of the unit. This award is sponsored by Raytheon.

CW2 Clark C. Urban, 1st Battalion, 58th Aviation Regiment, Fort Rucker, AL accepts the 2025 Airspace Manager of the Year Award.

SFC Matthew P. Gorgias, Special Operations Aviation Training Battalion, U.S. Army Special Operations Aviation Command, Fort Campbell, KY accepts the 2025 Army Aviation Trainer of the Year Award. He is joined in the photo by Mr. Scott Lower from CAE USA, the award sponsor.

MAJ David D. Odineal, 96th Aviation Combat Support Battalion, 101st Aviation Brigade, Fort Campbell, KY was the winner of the 2025 Army Aviation Medicine Award. He was unavailable to attend this year's ceremony and CW5 Dave Hardin accepted the award on his behalf. He is joined by Mr. Mark Jones (far left) and COL (Ret.) Marcus Gengler (2nd left) of GENTEX Corporation, the award sponsor.

SSG Kendal L. Reynolds, Company C, 6th Battalion, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade, Fort Campbell, KY accepts the 2025 DUSTOFF Flight Medic of the Year award, sponsored by Air Methods.

Spartan 164, 40th Combat Aviation Brigade, Fresno, CA was awarded the 2025 Army Aviation Air/Sea Rescue Award. LTC Christopher D. Morisoli, LTC Michael J. Christensen and SFC Anthony Poppick accepted the award. Mr. Richard Bryson represented award sponsor, Onboard Systems Hoist and Winch.

2025 winner of the LTG Ellis D. Parker Award, Table of Distribution and Allowance Category, is the 1st Battalion, 212th Aviation Regiment, 110th Aviation Brigade at Fort Rucker, AL. LTC Ryan Sommer, CW5 Teddy Nelson and CSM Lee R. Buller accepted the award on behalf of the unit.

The 2025 winner of the LTG Ellis D. Parker Award, Combat Service Support Category is the 404th Aviation Support Battalion, 4th Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, Fort Carson, CO. Accepting on behalf of the unit are LTC Douglas Gray, Commander, and CSM Christoper Stewart.

The 2025 winner of the LTG Ellis D. Parker Award, Combat Category is the 5th Squadron, 17th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Combat Aviation Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, stationed at Camp Humphreys, Republic of Korea. The award was accepted on behalf of the unit by LTC Brian J. Silva, commander, and CSM Wesley J. Kilpatrick.

The 2025 winner of the LTG Ellis D. Parker Award ,Combat Support and Overall Top Aviation Battalion of the Year: 2nd Battalion (Assault), 2nd Aviation Regiment, 2nd Combat Aviation Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, Seoul, Republic of Korea. Unit commander, LTC William H. Gratz and CSM Yasser D. Rodriguez accepted the award on behalf of the unit.

US ARMY PHOTOS BY LESLIE HERLICK

From Competition to Dominance:

How the U.S. Army Drone Team Leads Small Drone Lethality

By CPT Jacob E. Bickus and LTC Matthew R. Stockton

In an era where the battlefield is rapidly evolving, the integration of Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) has become a game-changer for modern military operations. As adversaries adapt to new technologies, the U.S. Army stands at the forefront of this transformation, leveraging UAS capabilities to enhance situational awareness, precision strikes, and logistical support. From the deserts of Iraq to the dense jungles of the Pacific, the role of drones is not just about surveillance; it is about redefining warfare itself.

In recent commentary, observers argued that the United States is "scrambling to catch up" in small-drone warfare. This assessment misunderstands how the U.S. Army develops combat power. Rather than reacting belatedly, the Army is doing what it has historically done best: identifying emerging forms of warfare, institutionalizing talent, and accelerating dominance through disciplined competition, training, and innovation. Nowhere is this more evident than in the U.S. Army Drone Team (USADT).

Army Drone Team Established

Established in the summer of 2025 under the 1st Aviation Brigade at the Aviation Center of Excellence (AVCOE), Fort Rucker, AL, the U.S. Army Drone Team formed in direct alignment with Presidential and Secretary of War's executive orders on Unleashing Drone Dominance. The team began with a handful of Shadow drone operators converted to First Person View (FPV) operators. Early competitive success quickly validated the concept. What followed was deliberate institutionalization: a formal mission, designated leadership, standardized training pathways, and a clear purpose: drive unmanned systems innovation to ensure technological and operational dominance in modern warfare through national and international competitions. By recruiting and training the next generation of drone operators, the USADT advances tactical and technical capabilities aligned with the Army's Continuous Transformation Initiative.

The first challenge as a formalized team proved to be recruiting the Army's top unmanned system operators. We recognized that the capability existed within the Army; we just needed an effective method to identify and harness that talent. To achieve this, we conducted a recruiting campaign from 15-29 October 2025 using the VelociDrone First Person View (FPV) simulator as our primary assessment tool. Starting with over 120 applicants, the team meticulously analyzed letters of recommendation, Soldier Talent Profiles, and conducted interviews to select 30 new members. Our recruitment goal: identify the Army's best FPV operators, train them to a common standard, and equip them with the newest drone technology to compete in national and international events while driving Army-wide innovation. Applicants hailed from units across

the globe including Hawaii, Germany and nearly every major FORSCOM division. The team comprises a diverse mix of Military Occupational Specialties (MOS) and backgrounds, including Soldiers from Infantry, EOD, Military Intelligence, Aviation, Military Police, and Cyber branches.

With the team established, our first major competition was the National Drone Association's Maneuver and Crucible event split between Full Sail University in Orlando, FL and Camp Blanding Joint Training Center, FL. The USADT finished first with the fastest time at the Maneuver event at Full Sail University and completed the Long-Range Engagement during the Crucible closest to the target. More important than our competitive victories was the training we received from competing against the 75th Rangers and Navy Seals, which tested our tactics and advanced our understanding of small drone warfare.

Force-on-force night operations during what the team now refers to as the "Battle of Camp Blanding" yielded lessons that will inform Army-wide unmanned systems training, particularly under constraints of limited airspace, terrain, and equipment. This is how the Army learns and adapts quickly: not by theory alone, but through friction.

Combining Lessons Learned with Rapid Growth

However, "lessons learned" is not synonymous with "scrambling to catch up." Many Soldiers on the team would attest that the U.S. Army's dedication to establishing drone dominance has resulted in the most rapid buildup of small unmanned system equipment, training, and expertise that any of us have experienced with any prior U.S. Army initiative. Furthermore, the U.S. Army has fought with unmanned systems for years. Some Soldiers were operating unmanned systems before Russia even invaded Ukraine. The Army's investment in drone warfare is not reactive; it is accelerating. In just six months, Army Aviation alone has expanded equipment in-

Above far-left: U.S. Army Drone Team gets briefed by our tactics NCO in charge SFC Aaron Teran prior to conducting Close Quarter Battle (CQB) at Camp Blanding Joint Training Center, Florida December 2025.

Above 2nd from left: Conducting pre-checks and inspections on drone equipment is essential prior to mission execution at Camp Blanding Joint Training Center, FL in December 2025.

Above 2nd from right: Team prepares First Person View googles prior to mission execution at Camp Blanding Joint Training Center, FL December 2025.

Above far right: SFC Aaron Teran and SFC Stephan Ringsmuth conduct Close Quarter Battle building clearing with small 3" drones prior to breaching at Camp Blanding Joint Training Center, FL in December 2025.

US ARMY PHOTOS BY LESLIE HERLICK

U.S. Army Drone Team receives mission brief from CPT Jacob Bickus prior to executing night force on force against Navy Seal Team 1 at Camp Blanding, FL, December 2025.

ventories, established specialized training pipelines such as the Unmanned Advanced Lethality Course (UALC), and contributed directly to operational learning through engagement with Special Assistance Group- Ukraine (SAG-U). These efforts reflect deliberate preparation for future conflict, not institutional surprise.

The Post-9/11 era serves as a compelling example of how the U.S. Army has effectively adapted to emerging threats in asymmetric warfare. In Iraq and Afghanistan, the Army quickly recognized the need for enhanced aerial support in counterinsurgency operations. This led to the integration of advanced drones like the MQ-1 Predator and MQ-9 Reaper into the vertical aviation support stack. These systems provided critical ISR capabilities and enabled precision strikes against high-value targets, fundamentally changing the dynamics of combat. This history of leveraging UAS capabilities to dominate the COIN battlefield underscores the U.S. Army's commitment to innovation and operational excellence, which continues to inform our current approach to small-drone warfare.

Ukraine offers invaluable insights, but the Army does not copy; it adapts. During competition, the USADT did not fight as Ukraine fights. Instead, team members applied Ukraine-derived lessons within a distinctly American framework of combined arms, command and control, and disciplined initiative execution. That distinction matters.

Focus on Huntsville

The USADT's next focus will be the Army Best Drone Warfighter Competition in Huntsville, AL. While running the Best Drone Operator Lane to identify and reward the Soldier with the best training, mental acuity, and operator skill set, we will also prepare for our next major competition in Sydney, Australia: The Military International Drone Racing Tournament (MIDRT). Last year, we competed against Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines from several allied countries including the United Kingdom, Belgium, Germany, Australia, New Zealand, and the Philippines. The objective is clear: challenge Australia's decade long hold on the MIDRT championship and demonstrate American leadership in small-drone warfare on the global stage.

There is no substitute for victory—but victory is not merely a podium finish. It is credibility, interoperability and the confidence of the next generation of warfighters. The USADT is not evidence of an Army scrambling to catch up. It is proof of an Army doing what it has always done best: competing forward, learning faster than its adversaries, and turning innovation into dominance.

In Closing

As we look to the future, the USADT presents an ideal opportunity for the Program Executive Office (PEO) to equip the team with emerging small drone technologies. By testing these innovations in both racing and tactical applications, the USADT can provide valuable feedback to the PEO, ensuring that new systems are effectively integrated into operational environments. This collaboration would not only enhance our competitive edge in competitions but also refine the tactical applications of these technologies, ultimately contributing to the Army's broader mission of maintaining technological superiority in unmanned systems.

CPT Jacob E. Bickus is the officer in charge, of the U.S. Army Drone Team, 1st Aviation Brigade, Aviation Center of Excellence, at Fort Rucker, AL., and LTC Matthew R. Stockton is the Battalion Commander, 1-145th Aviation Regiment, 1st Aviation Brigade, Aviation Center of Excellence, also both at Fort Rucker, AL.

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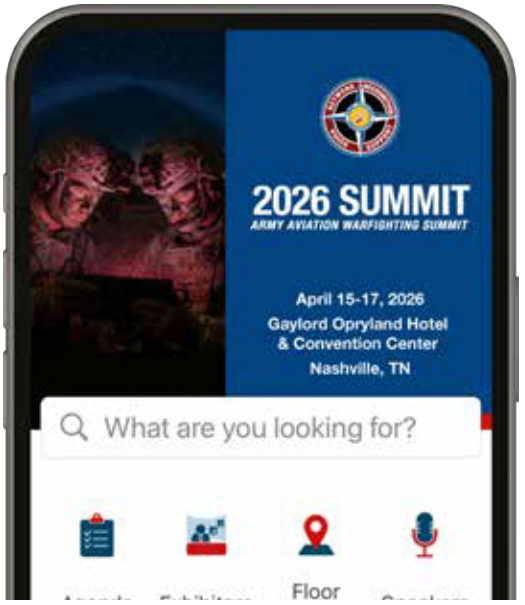

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Inside the Army's First Purpose-Built Attritable Systems Academy

By CW2 Page Frazier

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The Robotics and Autonomous Integration Directorate (RAID) team and the 3rd Mobile Brigade Combat Team, at the Kinnard Mission Training Center (KMTC), Ft. Campbell, KY.

At Fort Campbell, the 101st Airborne Division is training infantry Soldiers to fly, build, and fight with the same low-cost drones reshaping modern warfare.

By the summer of 2025, the lessons of Ukraine were no longer abstract for the U.S. Army. Across Eastern Europe, inexpensive first-person-view (FPV) drones – many built from commercial components – had become decisive battlefield tools, guiding infantry assaults, destroying armored vehicles, and giving small units unprecedented situational awareness. Some Ukrainian units were losing thousands of drones a month, yet commanders continued to rely on them, even risking lives to recover damaged aircraft rather than fight blind.

At Fort Campbell, KY, leaders inside the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) were watching closely - and acting.

The division quietly executed a pilot program that may signal a major shift in how the Army prepares for future combat. Known as the Purpose Built Attritable System (PBAS) Academy, the eight-day course trained infantry Soldiers not only to fly FPV drones, but to assemble, program, and tactically employ them as organic battlefield weapons.

The inaugural course was developed and executed by the Robotics and Autonomous Integration Directorate (RAID), a division-level organization aligned under G-32. Working alongside the 3rd Mobile Brigade Combat Team, the famed "Rakkasans," and the Kinnard Mission Training Center (KMTC), RAID set out to answer a fundamental question: can the Army institutionalize the kinds of drone tactics now dominating modern warfare?

The early answer appears to be yes.

Training the Infantry Drone Operator

The pilot PBAS Academy trained 10 Soldiers – primarily infantrymen already certified as small unmanned aircraft system (sUAS) Master Trainers – over 40 hours of instruction. Two Tactical UAS warrant officers and a UAS operator rounded out the cohort, blending maneuver and aviation expertise.

Unlike traditional Army aviation courses, the PBAS Academy was deliberately hands-on and fast-moving. Training began in simulators, using commercial and military software to replicate real-world FPV flight dynamics. Within days, students progressed to live flights and mock kinetic strikes on Fort Campbell's Range 17.

"They weren't just learning how to fly," said one instructor familiar with the course. "They were learning how to fight with these systems – how to integrate them into small-unit tactics, manage the electromagnetic spectrum, and operate under realistic combat stress."

Students trained in basic and advanced flight maneuvers, urban navigation, swarm tactics, ambush and escort techniques, and counter-drone camouflage. They learned how to troubleshoot hardware, manage frequencies to avoid interference, and safely handle training munitions.

By the end of the course, every participant had conducted a simulated kinetic strike using a RAID-assembled

A Purpose Built Attritable System (PBAS) A.B.E. 1.01 with mock explosive.

The Purpose Built Attritable System (PBAS) A.B.E. 1.01.

The author adjusting a PBAS (A.B.E. 1.01).

FPV drone, coordinating with teammates while receiving real-time video feedback – a milestone for light infantry formations.

Lessons from Ukraine, Applied in Kentucky

The PBAS Academy draws direct inspiration from the war in Ukraine, where FPV drones have transformed close combat. According to a 2025 Royal United Services Institute assessment cited by Forbes, drones now account for a majority of Russian equipment losses. Ukrainian units, however, face constant shortages, sometimes losing more than 10,000 drones a month.

In that environment, drones are considered expendable – but indispensable. "Losing a drone can mean losing situational awareness at a critical moment," noted defense analysts tracking the conflict. Commanders increasingly rely on live drone feeds to make split-second decisions during trench assaults and urban fighting.

RAID's leadership saw those dynamics as a warning and an opportunity. PBAS drones, they argue, give U.S. infantry units precision engagement, enhanced reconnaissance, and psychological dominance – particularly in denied, degraded, and disrupted space operational environments (D3SOE), where traditional networks and sensors may fail.

Rather than waiting for a program of record, the 101st Airborne built its own solution.

Building Drones In-House

One of the Academy's most notable features is its connection to the 101st PBAS Production Facility, where Soldiers are learning to manufacture their own drones.

Using a three-axis CNC router, RAID personnel machine carbon fiber frames for both five-inch and seven-inch FPV platforms. All internal components are sourced from U.S. manufacturers and vetted through the Defense Innovation Unit's Blue UAS Components List.

Each drone costs roughly $700 to build – less than a third of the price of comparable commercial systems, many of which come with proprietary software restrictions.

Future plans for the facility include resin-printed propellers, forged carbon fiber components, and modular attachments. Soldiers trained in open-source software will be able to rapidly reprogram flight profiles and mission parameters, allowing units to adapt in real time.

"This isn't just about saving money," said one RAID planner. "It's about resilience – avoiding supply chain bottlenecks and retaining control over how these systems operate."

During the pilot course, instructors found that seven-inch airframes offered better stability, visibility, and endurance than smaller platforms, reinforcing the value of experimentation outside rigid acquisition pipelines.

What Worked and What Comes Next

The Academy's after-action review highlighted several successes: high-quality instruction, realistic simulation fidelity, and extended live-flight periods that allowed Soldiers to build confidence and discipline.

It also identified improvements. Future courses will begin FPV goggle use earlier, eliminate inverted simulator settings that slowed learning, and incorporate HDMI outputs so team leaders can observe live feeds during training.

Safety procedures – including preflight checks, battery disconnect protocols, and throttle-zero techniques – proved effective and are expected to become standard. Perhaps most importantly, the course validated a scalable model.

Leaders from the Rakkasans, KMTC evaluators, and Master Trainers all assessed the Academy as both operationally relevant and urgently needed. Rather than a niche capability, PBAS employment is increasingly viewed as a core infantry skill.

A Doctrinal Seed

RAID leaders describe the PBAS Academy as more than a training event – it is a "doctrinal seed."

PBAS platforms allow junior leaders to shape the battlefield directly, without waiting for higher-echelon assets. In urban, subterranean, and electronically contested environments, that immediacy may prove decisive.

The Academy also lays groundwork for future integration with robotics, artificial intelligence-assisted targeting, and joint fires networks – key elements of the Army's transition to multi-domain operations.

The 101st Airborne plans to continue refining the program and sharing lessons learned with partners across the Army, including aviation and lethality courses at Fort Rucker.

As global adversaries continue to exploit low-cost, high-impact technology, the PBAS Academy offers a glimpse of how the U.S. Army may respond – not by chasing perfection, but by embracing adaptability, speed, and Soldier-driven innovation.

At Fort Campbell, the future of warfare is already airborne.

CW2 Page Frazier is a member of the RAID team, G-32, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Fort Campbell, KY.

Largest U.S. Army Air Deployment in Europe Since WWII

By COL (Ret.) Thomas A. Balish

Thirty years ago, the U.S. Army executed an aviation operation that remains largely absent from the public memory of the Balkans. Most people familiar with the 1995–96 mission recall the dramatic photos of armored vehicles crossing the flooded Sava River into Bosnia. But within the 1st Armored Division Aviation Brigade, the more defining image came from the air—waves of Apaches, Black Hawks, Chinooks, Cobras, and Kiowas lifting off from bases across Germany, crossing Austria and Hungary, and flowing into Bosnia. It was the largest U.S. Army Aviation movement across those nations since World War II and set the foundation for NATO's Implementation Force (IFOR) to enforce the Dayton Peace Accords.

U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY MAJ TOM BALISH

Top photo: An IFOR AH-1 Cobra sits at the ready during the deployment to uphold the Dayton Peace Accords.

Bottom photo: UH-60 Tuzla Commanche Base 1995.

Alert and Initial Planning

The mission began quietly over Columbus Day weekend in 1995. The division was scattered across Hohenfels and Bavaria conducting gunnery rotations when the alert arrived: if the Dayton Peace negotiations succeeded, the 1st Armored Division would constitute the core of the U.S. contribution to IFOR. The aviation brigade would be responsible for one of the most complex peace enforcement missions in Army history—despite little rehearsed doctrine for such an operation.

At the time, I served as the assistant brigade S-3. Within hours, I was in a cold WWII-era barracks with our S-2 and S-4, translating emerging division guidance into an aviation concept of operations. We were planning for a mission no one had rehearsed and for which almost no doctrinal template existed. Yet one advantage stood out: a remarkable amount of shared human capital. Many of the division's officers—across staff sections and maneuver units—had recently graduated from the Command and General Staff College. That common educational foundation gave us a shared language, assumptions, and trust. It allowed us to compress planning timelines dramatically.

From that cohesion emerged the idea that shaped the operation: we would move as combined Company/Team packages, pairing attack and lift aircraft the way armored units pair tanks and mechanized infantry. If we entered Bosnia as self-contained, mission-ready teams, we could begin operations as soon as our skids hit Tuzla.

Identifying Gaps and Building Capability

We quickly identified significant gaps. The brigade lacked non-lethal capabilities. Heavy-lift aviation was minimal. MEDEVAC capacity was insufficient for an operation likely to span rugged, cluttered terrain and contested zones. With division support, we reinforced the formation with a CH-47 element and a dedicated MEDEVAC company. Working in coordination with UN forces, we secured an intermediate staging base in Taszár, Hungary, and confirmed Tuzla Air Base as the primary U.S. aviation hub inside Bosnia.

Planning was intense, collaborative, and improvisational. We effectively built initial rules of engagement, air coordination procedures, and peace-enforcement aviation SOPs from scratch. One planning exchange stands out vividly. During a session with the division engineer planner—a fellow CGSC classmate—he asked whether aviation could rehearse sling-loading ribbon

bridge sections. It seemed a small logistical question at the time, but we agreed to practice it.

Weeks later, when catastrophic flooding halted the division at the Sava River, that small rehearsal became decisive. Aviation sling-loaded bridge components into position, enabling the historic Sava River crossing and restoring momentum to the entire operation. That moment reinforced a lesson I would carry through my career: minor rehearsals often become strategic opportunities when conditions deteriorate.

The Air Deployment: Diplomacy Meets Logistics

Executing the aviation movement required intricate diplomatic choreography. Moving more than 100 helicopters from Germany to Hungary demanded overflight approval from Austria—a corridor that was politically sensitive in 1995. NATO liaisons, U.S. embassy teams, and national ministers all played roles in securing the necessary agreements. The logistics were complex: refuel points, mission staging areas, air corridors, timing windows, and the need to keep the formation mission-capable at every stage.

When the movement order finally executed, waves of aircraft flowed across hundreds of miles over several days. Watching those aircraft land in Hungary—crews transitioning seamlessly into staging, maintenance, and onward movement—was one of the most impressive displays of professionalism I witnessed in Army Aviation.

Unexpected Challenges

Not all challenges were foreseen. On Christmas Eve, we received a report that a UH-60 had crashed near the Zone of Separation during heavy snow. For a tense hour we believed it was one of ours. The helicopter turned out to belong to the IFOR Commander. Working with the 173rd Infantry Brigade, we secured the site and evacuated the crew. By dawn on Christmas morning, a CH-47 from "Big Windy" flew into Bosnia through near white-out conditions, slung the damaged aircraft, and carried it back to Hungary. The mission had no fanfare, no press coverage, and little formal documentation—but it captured the disciplined adaptability of the brigade.

What IFOR Demonstrated

The aviation deployment into Bosnia was more than a logistical feat; it demonstrated that the U.S. Army could mass, maneuver, and sustain an aviation brigade across multiple national borders under diplomatic and environmental constraints—and arrive ready for immediate tactical action. It enabled the division's mobility, reconnaissance, security, and sustainment across rugged terrain. It also signaled that large-scale aerial movements would remain central to U.S. operations in Europe long after the Cold War.

Today, as the Army faces potential missions requiring rapid aviation movements across politically complex corridors—whether reinforcing NATO's eastern flank or responding across the Pacific—the operational patterns from IFOR remain relevant. The conditions change, but the fundamentals endure: diplomacy and logistics are inseparable, staff cohesion matters, and doctrine rarely anticipates the exact challenges encountered in the field.

Lessons Learned: Reflections Three Decades Later

Three decades later, the most enduring lessons of IFOR are not found in major events but in the cumulative weight of small, often unrecorded actions.

First, the power of small rehearsals. Our ribbon-bridge sling-load practice seemed unremarkable at the time; it became the critical enabler of the Sava River crossing. That experience taught me that technical repetition creates strategic flexibility.

Second, the human dimension mattered enormously. Our shared CGSC background created a common operating picture that enabled rapid planning under pressure. Trust and shared mental models mattered more than detailed doctrinal checklists.

Third, large-scale aviation operations are as dependent on diplomacy as on fuel or aircrews. Austrian overflight approval was not a routine procedural step—it was an international negotiation. That experience shaped the way I approached every cross-border aviation mission thereafter.

Fourth, agility lives at the edge of the formation. The Christmas recovery mission demonstrated the strength of decentralized, empowered leaders. Decisions made by junior officers and NCOs under harsh conditions ensured mission success.

Fifth, doctrine will always lag reality. In 1995, non-lethal tools were scarce, and peace-enforcement doctrine was thin. We built TTPs in real time. That improvisation was not a sign of organizational deficiency—it was a necessity.

Finally, I often think about the missions that never made it into formal histories: night recoveries, snow-choked air movements, and quiet coordination across the Zone of Separation. Those small, often invisible actions revealed the brigade's true character.

These lessons remain relevant today. The environments change—from the Balkans to Eastern Europe to the Indo-Pacific—but the principles of adaptation, trust, rehearsal, and decentralized initiative endure.

COL (Ret.) Tom Balish is a former Chief of Cavalry and HQDA G-8 Modernization Leader, Aviation Officer, Scout Pilot and Strategic Planner. He serves as the Principal of LH6-Services, LLC and has been published in Army Magazine and First Breakfast.

The Start of a Helicopter Pilot Career

By Ralph Arnesen

I can't remember seeing a helicopter before I joined the U.S. Army and finished my basic training at Fort Polk, LA. Those of us who were headed for helicopter school were put on a bus and driven to Fort Wolters, TX, 70 miles west of Dallas, TX. As helicopter pilot candidates we were known as snowbirds, no wings. The course was almost a continuation of basic training and as there was a backload of students; my training was delayed for a few months.

After the summer of 1967 I finally started and was assigned to Class 68-503. The program was known as the Warrant Officer Helicopter Candidate Course, and we were now known as WOCs. The day started with a run before breakfast. After which came classes and finally flight training, these alternated every week so that we all got a chance to fly in the heat of the day. The classroom courses consisted of technical training on the OH-23D the military model of the Hiller 12D, map reading, navigation, weather, and such. In addition, we were expected to know how to be Warrant Officers, so a quick study of military law and various other interesting things were on the curriculum.

It was not uncommon to return to your room and find the whole place upside down, this was part of the getting to know "attention to detail", everything in the room had to be spotless and according to very strict requirements. If you were so unfortunate that a fly should have died in your display while you were out, then it required a military funeral for a fellow aviator. This meant getting a burial squad and burying the offending insect in a match box at the back of the barracks. Having accumulated so many demerits or negative points for substandard appearance or room condition, I did not see the outside of Fort Wolters until the end of November.

Another part of the training was to get individuals to work together as a team. As soon as we realised this, life became a lot easier. They were not letting us off that easy. Looking back, I now see the reasoning behind the exercise but today it might be seen as antiquated.

As the program progressed, we got a little more freedom. We also gained seniority after soloing and doing cross country flights during the day and at night. We had one situation which came on totally unexpected, a night cross country which ended in a wall of fog rolling in across the area. There were helicopters landing all over the place. A few budding pilots had landed safely, walked to a road and hitch-hiked back to the base but couldn't remember where they had left the helicopter the next day. It took two or three days to find them all.

We lost a few students, a night autorotation after the engine failed in unforgiving terrain and one student, I can recall that flew into wires. On the lighter side, one of my classmates got the instructors seatbelt around the collective controls, he didn't secure it as it should have been, and when coming in to land he could not get the collective down, he thought it was a mechanical problem and declared a mayday. It all ended well but he got a stern talking-to from the chief instructor, and we never missed a day to remind him.

From primary flight school a group of us decided that we would prefer to take advanced flight at Savannah, GA instead of Fort Rucker, AL. We figured that the new program at Savannah might be a touch easier, but we were wrong, it was just as hard. We transitioned into the UH-1D and started instrument training for a month or so and then the real thing, tactical flying. There was low level navigation, formation flying, artillery spotting, and survival training.

Survival training started with lectures and a nice bowl of rattlesnake soup. The course ended with an escape and evasion trial. We were put in groups with a chicken or a rabbit, these were to eat, of course, but some groups couldn't and just let them go, so much for the killer instinct. We were captured with regularity that night and interrogated, then let go to get caught again. We finally made it to the bus and back to the barracks led by our capturers; the seriousness of what we had enlisted for had not yet sunk in.

Graduation was a grand affair; unfortunately, I had to return to the barracks after the ceremonies, I had been arrested on the beach at St. Simon's Island, GA in an orange flight suit and a large bourbon and coke in my hand. I was under house arrest. The brigade commander gave me a month confined to quarters when not at classes and two months at half- pay. I didn't lose the money because he could not transfer a punishment to another posting, Vietnam.

I met my parents in Singapore; my father was working in Indonesia and arranged some time off. I could also visit some of my old school friends who stayed on after or came back to work after university. We had some time togeth-

er and then I got on a flight to Saigon. After getting assigned to a unit, I later tried to get back the money for the plane tickets. There were three regulations that I had not known about that prevented the army from paying the money back, I broke all three. If I had been in the U.S., I think I might have had some words with the personnel sergeant who said I could just go and the Army would reimburse me. I can now boast that I paid my own way to Vietnam. Anyway, I had more than enough on my plate now and not much use for money.

I can't remember that we got a lot of information once we got to Vietnam; we had to learn by "on the job training". My first assignment was to the 120 AHC, the Deans. I was lucky; this unit had a lot of pilots finishing their tour, so it was pilots from my class who were selected for this plumb job. We flew VIPs, generals, and lower brass if they had to go somewhere. Our flights took us over a large area around Saigon and to the Mekong Delta region. We also had the midnight courier flight into Saigon with the mail to the U.S. from Long Binh, the U.S. Army Headquarters. This could be very exciting on special occasions like New Year's Eve and other times when the sky was filled with fireworks and tracer bullets. We flew blacked out so that the drunker people would not be able to use us as a target.

Life was, if not good, was as good as it could be. A daily annoyance were the shit burners. There was no sewer system in the camp, so every morning the hooch maids, local women, came into the camp and cleaned the latrines. The facilities were an outhouse with half a 55-gallon drum under the drop zone. These drums were pulled out, and diesel was poured on it and burned. I can still remember how it smells. We lost our padded socks, the hooch maids used them for sanitary towels, what can I say, war is hell. But on the other end of the scale, the officers club had cold beer and we ate well. We had it a lot better than the others who slept in tents and ate C rations or Long-Range Patrol rations.

After eight months I had enough of this opulence and requested a transfer to our gunship platoon in Saigon, the "Razorbacks", better known as the" Pigs". Anyone from the southern states of the U.S. can tell you that the Razorback pig is the mascot for Arkansas State University, but "The Pigs" suited us better.

Ralph Arnesen is a VHPA life member living in Milford Haven, Wales.

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Thank you for your service. We hope to see you there!

At Life's Last Sunset, What Will Be Your Legacy?

By Jennifer (Jen) Potts

COURTESY PHOTO

As I write this article, it's the middle of the 2025 holiday season. Thanksgiving has passed. Christmas is on the horizon. The joys of the season abound, and I'm full of gratitude for traditions. As I hung lights with vintage bulbs in colors of the rainbow this past weekend, I smiled with fondness in recalling this style of lights have been on my parent's home every year as far back as I can remember. As I pulled decorations out of boxes that spend most of their year stored away in the attic I reflected on the past with joy. Alone they're just things, but with the shape of memories, they tell stories of generations of family and friends. These fond trips down memory lane got me thinking a lot about legacy.

Oxford Dictionaries defines legacy as: "A tangible or intangible thing handed down by a predecessor; a long-lasting effect of an event or process."

For me, this definition falls short of the magnitude and fullness of the word. When I think legacy, I think the lasting contributions a person has had in life – lessons taught through actions, character traits passed on, investment in others and things that endure beyond our lives and into memory of others that we touched. Our legacy should be the best parts of ourselves that we imprint on the hearts, minds and lives of others.

Most of us likely aren't thinking about our legacy in the moments we're going about being the person we desire to be, seeking passions and callings that are important to us: our spouse or relationship, family, friends, children, career, community, or hobbies. Legacy is generally one of those things that become more significant as we experience the inevitable: someone close to us dies and we reflect on their life. It's in those moments when legacy becomes most impactful and the indelible mark someone had upon our own lives is even more evident. Someone once told me that we all have a beginning and end date (birth and death), but the real testament to our life is what we do with the dash (our life).

A part of legacy can be affected through estate planning, where the plan for material possessions and financial distribution upon death is documented. In addition to making plans for family and loved ones, estate planning can make a lasting contribution through a giving legacy to charitable causes and philanthropic interests. These choices are a way to influence the future, beyond our lifetimes, through generously gifting. A skilled estate attorney can help you navigate the best means to ensure your wishes are met in balancing the choices for leaving both to those you love and care for, as well as the causes that are meaningful to you.

When considering legacy giving, AAAA Trade School, Licensing, and Certification (TLC) Foundation would be honored if you considered a lasting contribution to future generations by partnering in grant opportunities with us. As a non-profit, tax exempt 501(c)(3) charitable organization AAAA TLC provides financial assistance for education and training in skilled fields including, but not limited to, artisans of manufacturing, A&P mechanics, plumbers, welders, electricians, IT specialists, real estate professionals, CDL drivers, HVAC technicians and home inspectors that are critical to and the backbone of America.

AAAA TLC provides multiple avenues by which gracious donors can impact their legacy into the future with their estate gifting decisions including perpetual and named memorial grants. More information about AAAA TLC and giving opportunities can be found at http://www.quad-a.org/tlc. I'd also be honored to be a personal resource for additional information on ways to partner with AAAA TLC!

Jennifer (Jen) Potts is member of the AAAA TLC Foundation Board of Governors. She can be reached at pottsjennifer2005@gmail.com


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AAAA Chapter Affairs

By COL (Ret.) John Broam

I greatly appreciate the support from COL Matthew (Craig) Lewis, Free Dominion Chapter President for authoring and sharing this information to our membership.

The Free Dominion Chapter

The Free Dominion Chapter serves the Richmond and Central Virginia region. In the past year, the Free Dominion Chapter of the Army Association of America has fervently dedicated itself to empowering the Army Aviation community.

We are focused on advancing our profession and are also committed to investing in the futures of those who serve. Guided by these principles, our chapter has actively worked to cultivate robust professional relationships and generate meaningful opportunities for the next generation of aviation professionals.

Key Events

Last fall, the Free Dominion Chapter held its annual golf tournament, which turned out to be a tremendous success. The event brought together members and supporters for a fantastic day of friendly competition and camaraderie at the Brookwoods Golf Course. Ten teams competed under sunny skies, all hoping to claim the coveted first-place trophy. The day featured memorable moments, a few lost golf balls, and lively networking among Army Aviation professionals and industry partners. The funds raised from this tournament directly support the Staff Sergeant Darryl D. Booker Scholarship, a perpetual scholarship that AAAA matches every year. This scholarship is awarded annually to assist chapter members and their families in pursuing college degrees.

Central to the mission of the Free Dominion Chapter is its continued support of the 2-224th Assault Helicopter Battalion, known as the "Phoenix" Battalion. As a cornerstone Army Aviation unit in Virginia, the 2-224th AHB represents the very best of the Virginia Army National Guard and the future of the force. Every year, the Free Dominion Chapter makes significant contributions to support the Battalion's annual holiday dining out. This year's event, hosted at a local vineyard, was particularly memorable, with approximately 200 guests in attendance.

CHAPTER COURTESY PHOTO

Recipients of the Order of St. Michael, and colleagues, enjoy a toast at the 2-224th Dining Out. From left to right: CW5 Graham Cashwell, CW5 (Ret.) John Anderson, CW4 Shane Leipertz, CW5 John Calley, CW4 Brandon Durham, CW5 (Ret.) Eddie Whitt.

Among the attendees were the Adjutant General of Virginia, MG James W. Ring; the Command Sergeant Major of the 29th Infantry Division, CSM Eric J. Saxton; various State Senior Leaders; and two Gold Star spouses from the Battalion, Maria Kelly and Jeanne Booker. During the event, the Chapter recognized four recipients of the Order of St. Michael and one awardee of the Lady of St. Loreto. The evening was filled with music, food, and camaraderie, making it a yearly hallmark event for the Battalion.

In addition to events and fundraisers, 2025 was an incredible year for the chapter, marked by a significant increase in memberships that underscores the growth of the AAAA community. The dedication of the chapter's officers, along with outstanding participation at recent events, has led to the Free Dominion Chapter welcoming 81 new members! We are excited to embrace all new members and look forward to utilizing this expanded pool of talent and experience to further our mission. As the chapter looks ahead, it recognizes that its strength lies in the collective efforts of its members and partners. Remaining true to its purpose, the Free Dominion Chapter is prepared to support the mission, honor the legacy of those who have served, and help shape the future of Army Aviation.

Contact Us!

Feel free to contact me or Chelsea Jarvis, our AAAA Assistant Director of Member Engagement, if you need help with your Chapter, Executive Board support, would like your chapter featured in the AAAA magazine, or to obtain clarification of National procedures. I can be reached at john.broam@quad-a.org. I look forward to working with you and supporting AAAA.

Above the Best!

COL (Ret.) John Broam
AAAA VP for Chapter Affairs
john.broam@quad-a.org

AAAA CHAPTER NEWS

Air Assault Chapter supports the 101st Combat Aviation Brigade's "Destiny Ball"

PHOTO BY SCOTT HOLLINGSWORTH

The 101st Combat Aviation Brigade held their Dance with Destiny Ball at the Renaissance Hotel in Nashville, TN recently. The AAAA Air Assault Chapter was proud to be a part of the evening's festivities. It was an honor to celebrate the history and achievements of the 101 CAB and to recognize the excellence of our soldiers, whether deployed or stateside, all while spending time on the dance floor with our Wings of Destiny family. The Chapter takes great pride in the accomplishments of the Brigade. Pictured from left to right are Colonel Tyler B. Partridge, Commander, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade, Colonel Henry C. "Hawk" Ruth III, President of the AAAA Air Assault Chapter, and guest speaker for the evening, LTG (Ret.) Douglas M. Gabram.

Free Dominion Chapter participates in 2nd Battalion, 224th Regiment's Holiday Dining Out

CHAPTER PHOTO

MG James Ring speaks to the attendees at their annual dining out. The AAAA Free Dominion Chapter (VAARNG) supported the 2-224th AHB annual holiday dining out at the Ashton Creek Vineyard in Chester, VA. The event hosted over 190 guests to include State Senior Leaders, the 29th Adjutant General of VA, the 29th Infantry Division CSM, and two Gold-Star spouses of the Battalion. During the program, the Free Dominion Chapter recognized four Order of St. Michael award recipients and one Lady of Loreto award recipient. Aviators, their families, and guests enjoyed dinner, GROG, and plenty of music! This event was hugely successful and continues to be one of the highlights for 2nd Battalion every year.

MacArthur Chapter signs up five new members and two lifetime memberships at annual holiday event

CHAPTER PHOTO

The MacArthur Chapter Holiday Party paid off in a big way as they recruited and welcomed five new members and two lifetime members into the Chapter. The MacArthur Chapter was founded in 1985 by Soldiers assigned to the 42nd Aviation Bn, NYARNG located at MacArthur Apt, Islip NY. Initially the chapter was comprised of about 20 Officers and Enlisted soldiers. Since then our membership has increased to over 200 members comprised of Active Duty, Retirees, civilians and corporate members.

ORDER OF ST. MICHAEL INDUCTEES

Aviation Center Chapter

CHAPTER PHOTO

CW4 (Ret.) Robert Mitchell, Director, U.S. Army Aviation Museum was inducted into the Silver Honorable Order of St. Michael in a ceremony held recently at Fort Rucker, AL. Mitchell had more than 49 years of combined Army and Civilian service. MG Clair Gill, Commanding General, Aviation Center of Excellence joined COL (Ret.) Chris Carlisle, Chairman of the AAAA Aviation Center Chapter Executive Committee in presenting the award.

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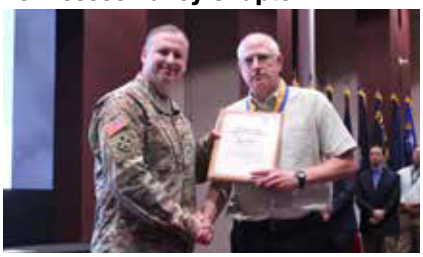
ARMYAVIATIONmagazine.com

Northern Lights Chapter

CHAPTER PHOTO BY CW2 ANDREW HERMES

Fifteen Army Aviation professionals were inducted into the Honorable Bronze Order of St. Michael at an OSM ball recently, underscoring a collective commitment to leadership, technical mastery, and operational excellence in some of the Army's most demanding environments. Among those recognized as awardees were **MAJ Sean Wester, CW4 Tim Deblaey, CW4 Samantha Palmer, CW3 John Mason, CW3 Daniel Holmes, CW3 Joe Mitchell, CW4 Jimmy Harlow, CW3 Jim Nelson, CW3 Ryan Ray, CW3 Micah Rochin, CW2 James Foster, CSM Caprina Rivers, SFC Nicholas Allen, MAJ James Buczek,** and **SFC Kevin Smith.** Each of these individuals played a critical role in advancing Army Aviation capabilities in Arctic conditions, where operational success depends on precision, adaptability, and teamwork. The ceremony was supported by senior leaders and presenters who helped commemorate the achievements of the awardees, including MAJ Ethan Miller, COL Russell Vanderlugt, Chapter President CW5 Dan Hansen, BG Thomas Burke, and CSM Freddy Rivera. Their presence highlighted the importance of recognizing excellence across ranks and specialties within the Army.

Tennessee Valley Chapter



CHAPTER PHOTO BY WILLIAM SUGGS

COL (Ret.) Scott A. Riley was inducted into the Silver Honorable Order of St. Michael by COL Ryan C. Nesrsta, Utility Helicopters Project Office Project Manager during a special recognition ceremony at Redstone Arsenal, AL. He is currently serving in the USAR as the DET 1/5 OIC, AMC-ARE in Huntsville, AL and is a Senior Systems Engineer supporting the International Product Office in the Utility Helicopters Project

OSMs Continued on page 49

AAAA **Membership** Update By COL (Ret.) Liz Martin

Devoted to Serve: Leadership, Aviation Maintenance & Logistics, and Community

Mr. Kenric Smith is one of the dedicated Department of the Army Civilians uniquely equipped with vast experience, aviation maintenance acumen, and deep commitment to Warfighter success.

COURTESY PHOTO

Above left: LTC Kenric Smith and his wife Suzette after his Battalion Command Reception at Fort Campbell, KY.

U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY: JEREMY COBURN

Above right: Kenric Smith, AMCOM Deputy Chief of Staff

His unique expertise, formed through 24 years in uniform, directly shapes his continued contributions to our branch.

Kenric, a steadfast member of AAAA since he was a lieutenant, appreciates the voice, support, and professional resources provided to Soldiers and advocacy for the Branch.

Service is a value Kenric embraced young, growing up a proud USAF brat with formative upbringings in Kansas City, MO and Las Vegas, NV.

After graduating from high school in 1993, Kenric enlisted as an Ammunition Specialist into the Missouri ARNG with aspirations of becoming a USAF pilot. His love for Army Aviation crystalized with a rare opportunity to ride in the front seat of an AH-1 Cobra. It was this unique experience that motivated Kenric to later earn his FAA Fixed-Wing Private Pilot Certificate, Aviation Management Bachelor of Science degree, and Active Duty Army Aviation commission via Green-to-Gold program from Central Missouri State in 1997.

Kenric's formative years as a UH-60 Black Hawk officer included assignments with the 101st Airborne Division at Fort Campbell, KY as Aviation Unit Maintenance Company Executive Officer (XO), B Company Assault Helicopter Battalion,101st Airborne Division Platoon Leader (PL), and Battalion Logistics Officer (S4). He graduated from the Logistics Aviation Captains Career Course, Maintenance Managers Course, and Aviation Maintenance Test Pilot Course before serving in Korea with 19th Theater Sustainment Command as a Reception, Staging, and Onward Integration Planner, and an Aviation Intermediate Maintenance (AVIM) PL.

Kenric returned to Fort Campbell and served as an Aviation Support Battalion (ASB) [later transforming to 96th ASB] S4. He deployed to OIF as a General Support Aviation Battalion (GSAB) Commander and served as 96th ASB AVIM XO and Production Control Officer.

Kenric's broadening positions include Aide-de-Camp and later as XO to the Deputy Commanding General of Combined Arms Command at Fort Leavenworth, KS.

He graduated from Command & General Staff College and served at Fort Bragg, NC as 82nd Combat Aviation Brigade (CAB) S4 (+ OEF); B Company, 122nd ASB Commander; and 82nd CAB XO (+ OEF). He later led the training of future Army officers as Professor of Military Science at Vanderbilt University, TN.

Kenric led as Commander, 96th Aviation Support Battalion Commander (2015-2017), with simultaneous responsibility of the 101st Combat Aviation Brigade Rear Detachment including 3,000+ Soldiers. He served as 101st Combat Aviation Brigade Deputy Commander before retiring in 2018.

As a civilian, Kenric contributes at the Aviation Enterprise-level at Army Aviation & Missile Command (AMCOM). He has served in numerous contractor and Government Civilian capacities at AMCOM including Field Maintenance Division Maintenance & Logistics Planner, XO to the Chief of Staff, Commander's Initiatives Group Chief, Assistant to the Chief of Staff, and in his current role as Deputy Chief of Staff (GS-15).

When asked, why AMCOM? Kenric remarked, "I love supporting Aviation Soldiers. AMCOM is the only Aviation Enterprise-level organization that globally supports all Soldiers in the field daily, providing aviation maintenance, and logistics solutions to assist units with complex issues. AMCOM directly supports the Aviation Soldier, producing combat power for the Warfighter."

When not supporting Army Aviation, Kenric volunteers at his church. He remains grateful for the tremendous support of his wife, Suzette, and their daughters.

COL (Ret.) Liz Martin
AAAA Vice President for Membership
liz.martin@quad-a.org

New AAAA Life Members

Iowa Chapter
CW5 Joshua Runyan
North Star Chapter
CW5 Brett M. Setterlund
Pikes Peak Chapter
LTC Lisa Shouse

New AAAA Members

Air Assault Chapter
CW5 Frank Escamilla
Aloha Chapter
CPT Katherine Kolb
CW3 Nyles Nakama
CW4 Craig Takenaka
Arizona Chapter
Mr. Dennis Gloodt
Mr. Matthew McNulty
Aviation Center Chapter
CPT Eliezer Bar-Meir
CPT Michael D. Emerson
1SG Alfred Jerome
Mr. Tyler Phillips
CW3 Jonathan A. Slothower
Miss Brooklynn Smith
A1C Matthew Smith
Mr. Todd Tyler
Badger Chapter
Mr. Jack Brandt
SFC William G. Green
Mr. Brett Hottenstein
Mr. Matthew Ross
Battle Born Chapter
CW5 Steve Nielsen
Black Knights Chapter
WO2 John Nielsen
Central Florida Chapter
Mr. Luis Bello
Mr. Barrington Black
1SG Paul Bohnert
Mr. Mark Deevey
Mr. Luis Fernandez
Mr. Alain Ledo
Mr. Carl E. Mankinen
Mr. Sean Padfield
Ms. Jackie Quintero
Mr. Scott Ross
Mr. Jeff Small
SFC Richard Templin
Mr. Tom Tennihill
Mr. Joerg Wilmink
Colonial Virginia Chapter
Mrs. Amy Burell
SSG Tyrone Cruse
Dr. Tom Dubois
SFC Marianna Feliciano
Mr. Garrett Lyons
SSG Nicholas Thompson
Connecticut Chapter
2ndLT Cassidy Murphy
Mr. Nate Prussian
Capt Marc Winchester
Corpus Christi Chapter
Laura Rye
Desert Oasis Chapter
CW4 Mark Jordan
Diamond State Chapter
Mr. Byron Crawley
Empire Chapter
Michael Aquilina
Timothy Strong
Flint Hills Chapter
SFC Richard copeland
CW2 Zachariah Espino
CPT Daniel McKillop
Free Dominion Chapter
SGT Melonie So
Gold Standard Chapter
Lt. Gen. Jon Davis, USMC Ret.
Mr. Gary McNutt
Mr. Marshall Moser
COL Jeff Moses, Ret.
Mr. Ryan Pfeiffer
Mr. Nolan Ricker
CSM Eric Roberts
Mr. Jorge Saenz
Great Lakes Chapter
Mr. Jeff Helm
Greater Atlanta Chapter
Ms. Valerie Andrew
Ms. Angela Brown
Mr. Dennis Fairfield
SFC Joshua Hardin
Mr. Daniel Oleks
MAJ Abraham Owen
Grizzly Chapter
CW2 Jason Sepulveda
Iron Mike Chapter
SGT Eli Baker
SGT Yizheng Wang
Jack H. Dibrell/Alamo Chapter
CSM Brandon Lynch
Jimmy Doolittle Chapter
COL Wallace Bonds, Ret.
Ms. Misty Mullinax
Mr. Matt Westra
Keystone Chapter
SFC Rebecca Holman
SFC Ryan Smith
Land of Lincoln Chapter
Mr. Blake Hargens
Live Free or Die Chapter
Ryan Chase
CPT Andrew Pohl
MacArthur Chapter
SFC Alexander Douglas
Mr. Zhi Feng
Mrs. Jessica L. Haegele
LTC Joseph Holland
Mr. Brian Mayer
Mr. Kevin L. McBrien
Mr. Piotr Pacholski
Mr. Jack Stevens
Mr. Mike L. Venables
Magnolia Chapter
LTC Jaye Germany
Mid-Atlantic Chapter
William Everett
Dr. Asha Hall
Dr. John Hrynuk
Mr. Daniel McGowan
Mr. Seth Parmer
LTC Bethanie Schultz
Minuteman Chapter
Mr. Hunter Ballard
Morning Calm Chapter
SFC Stephen Ellis
CW2 Tyler Mikulka
MAJ Alexandre Roy
CPT Hatem Smadi
Mount Rainier Chapter
CPT Patrick Falk
SGT Shannon N. Forster
CW3 Matthew J. McWilliams
SPC Tristin Salisbury
SGT Matthew Sprowl
Megan Young
North Country Chapter
Mr. Jordan Kiss
Mr. Dan Lessard
Ms. Rachel Rash
SPC Pavel Syrovatskii
North Star Chapter
Mr. Cade Benjamin Wright
Mr. Lukas Wright
North Texas Chapter
Mr. Joseph Epps
Mr. Michael Hamilton
Mr. James Harris
Mr. R. Casey O'Neill, Esq.
Mr. Daniel Podojil
Mr. Jay Rizzo
Mr. Caden Roberson
Mr. Michael Ward
Old Tucson Chapter
Mr. Greg Bell
Mr. Aaron Churchill
Mr. Kevin Compagnon
Oregon Trail Chapter
Mr. Matt Parker
Phantom Corps Chapter
MSG JaJuan S. Broadnax
CPT Jonathan Evans
SSG Marcus J. Groves
SSG Brandon Schiller
Pikes Peak Chapter
CW4 Jeffrey Blakeman
Mr. Travis Mitchell
LTC Kyle Shouse
CPT Britney Tingstrom
MAJ Bryan Zesiger
Prairie Soldier Chapter
Ms. Wendy Vargas
Rio Grande Chapter
Mr. Ross Aguirre
John Ayuyu
CW3 Corey Billizone
Mr. Chris Carman
CW3 Chase Johnson
Richard Long
1SG Michael Skolnick
Adam Stepan
Drew Walborn
Garrett Wooldridge
Rising Sun Chapter
CW4 Parker Allen
Savannah Chapter
RET Matthew Moffitt
Jakob Poole
SSG Anthony Robert Tryon
ShowMe Chapter
CW5 Steven K. Haley
Southern California Chapter
SGT Miguel Godinez
LTC Celma Gonzalez
Ms. Onilda Sanchez
Ms. Lorna Singh
Straight Arrows Chapter
SGT William Case
CPT Lorence Cossette
Tarheel Chapter
Miss Winston Hoffman
CPT Shervon Pope
Tennessee Valley Chapter
1SG Charlie Brown

OSMs *Continued*

Office where he is directly responsible for the development of complex Black Hawk Aircraft FMS cases. He served in numerous leadership and technical positions while in the USAR and on active duty performing in an exceptional manner at every level of Army Aviation from an Avionics Mechanic, Maintenance Test Pilot, Senior Staff positions, and a Commander, and is a graduate of the Army War College.

CHAPTER PHOTO BY WILLIAM SUGGS

Roger J. Olson was inducted into the Bronze Honorable Order of St. Michael by COL Ryan C. Nesrsta, Utility Helicopters Project Office Project Manager during his retirement ceremony at Redstone Arsenal, AL. Olson made significant and long-lasting contributions to Army Aviation for over his 42 years of service. The culmination of his career was serving as the Chief Engineer, International Product Office, Utility Helicopters Project Office, where he was directly responsible for technical oversight and development, execution, and delivery of Black Hawk Aircraft to our Partner Nations. His performance as an aerospace aviation engineer made an enduring impact on the Black Hawk program.

Ms. Cari Cooper
SPC John Cooper
Mr. David K. Cox
Dr. JosepDiNoto
Ms. Brittany Etherly
Mr. Easton Farr
COL Ryan Fayrweather, Ret.
Mr. Quinton Gaspard
Mr. Whitt Hall
MAJ Mark Lorenzo
MAJ roi panker
Ms. Briseida Ruelas
Thunder Mountain Chapter
CW5 Wayne Colins
CW5 Nathan Reeb
Thunderbird Chapter
Brandon Branham
Ms. Samantha Slater
Volunteer Chapter
Mr. Robert Sumner
Voodoo Chapter
Capt John Allen
CW5 Thomas Wilson
Washington-Potomac Chapter
Mr. Justin Baltz
Mr. Reynaldo Betancourt
Mr. Rick Brown
Ms. Amanda Cross
Mrs. Darcy Eid
Ms. Denise Fisher
Mr. James Gallagher
CW4 Karl Halterman
Ms. Rebecca Hayden
Mr. Nick Kovacyk
Mr. William O'Neill
Mr. Nicholas Phillips
Mr. Joe Stanisha
Mrs. Bonnie Taylor
Ms. Noelle Valenta
Winged Warriors Chapter
CW3 Scott Anderson
MSG Richard Bowman
Mr. Tommie Branham
CPT Jacob Chapman
SSG Ian Cottrell
CW4 Hugh Eberhart
CW2 Kelly Francis
MAJ Ashley V. Johnson
SSG Rudy Scott
CW2 Travis Stephens
MAJ Damien Watkins
Yellowhammer Chapter
SSG Joshua Epps
No Chapter Affiliation
COL Miles Irving
Mrs. Lisa Lichty
Mr. Chris McMahon
Mr. Jamie Muise
Mr. Troy Schweitzer
COL Rick Watling

AAAA **Family Forum** By Judy Konitzer

I was inspired to write this article after reading a holiday season thank you note to members of The Spectrum Group from Andrew J. Campbell, Executive Chairman. His historical references and focused insights along with my research made me appreciate more than ever the importance of Gratitude in our daily lives. Judy

Gratitude in the New Year

"There is always, always, always something to be grateful for." - *Abraham Lincoln*

As we begin a New Year, please accept my gratitude for the opportunity to share my column with you over the past 20 years. It has been a genuine privilege as I have learned so much from so many of you who have shared your experiences, as well as from those in government and private organizations who provide valuable resources for our Soldiers and their Families.

It was Abraham Lincoln who established Thanksgiving as a National Holiday during the darkness of the Civil War. Making 'Gratitude' a New Year's resolution is also a worthwhile goal. Lincoln shared Cicero's views that gratitude is a moral obligation - the greatest of all virtues and the parent of all the others. It is central to and a highly valued concept across all the world's religions - including Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, and Buddhism.

There is much to be learned from perspectives of classic scholars like Cecero, one of Rome's greatest statesman and orators, who emphasized several other key points.

A Social Obligation: "No duty is more indispensable than that of returning a kindness ". Expressing thanks and repaying favors are essential for maintaining strong friendships and a functioning society.

A Holistic Attitude: Cicero believed that a grateful person acknowledges benefits received from various sources including friends, country. teachers, and even a higher power, fostering Greek and Roman philosophy in a sense of interconnectedness and community.

The Stoics were followers of an ancient Greek and Roman philosophy who went a step further with believing that gratitude was a vital practice that connected directly to their core principles of virtue, reason, and living in harmony with nature and providence.

A Form of Justice: It was a proper way of giving and receiving benefits in society.

For Everything Good and Bad: Stoics practiced gratitude not only for the good things in life but also for the difficult ones, viewing setbacks as opportunities to practice virtue, to build character, and thus as something to be grateful for.

Focus on the Inner Self: Gratitude was tied to focusing on what one can control – one's thoughts and responses - rather than external events like wealth, health, or reputation, making the Stoics grateful above all for their rational mind and the ability to choose a virtuous response.

A Daily Practice: One of the Big 3's famous Stoics was the Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius. His Meditations begin with a detailed gratitude list of people and their specific character traits to be thankful for, highlighting how this was a personal, daily exercise in self-improvement.

Along with Lincoln, Cicero, and Marcus Aurelius, Voltaire, a French Enlightenment philosopher, felt that "Appreciation is a wonderful thing: it makes what is excellent in others belong to us as well".

Two quotes from President John F. Kennedy capture the most essential insights: "As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them." and "We must find time to stop and thank the people who make a difference in our lives."

Motivational speaker, Brian Tracy, conveys his philosophy for why you should be grateful everyday and spells out the 4 A's to express your gratitude:

Appreciation: Cultivating an overall thankful attitude and recognizing the good in your life.

Approval: Praising and validating others' efforts, ideas, and contributions.

Admiration: Complementing people on their positive traits and accomplishments.

Attention: Giving others your focused, patient, mindful presence when they speak.

By incorporating these elements into your life and consciously practicing them, you can train your mind to seek out and focus on the positive, leading to greater happiness and stronger connections.

Judy Konitzer is the Family Forum editor for ARMY AVIATION. Questions and suggestions can be directed to her at judy@quad-a.org.

AAAA **Awards**

Order of St. Michael

Silver
Bavarian Chapter
CSM Trenton Zaragoza
Bluegrass Chapter
COL Michael D. Armstrong
Colonial Virginia Chapter
LTC Margaret Larson
High Desert Chapter
CSM Shawn M. Redondo
Iron Mike Chapter
COL Mathew D. Elliott
Keystone Chapter
COL Timothy M. Zerbe
Tennessee Valley Chapter
Clay Carnes
Bronze
Aviation Center Chapter
CW3 Sammy Echevarria
CW4 Steven L. Hawley
Joseph Hetrick
CW3 Traci Nesthus
David A. Pierce
Daniel J. Stamaris
CW3 Ian Walsh
Badger Chapter
LTC Andrew J. Dahlie
MAJ Lucas J. Sivertson
Bluegrass Chapter
CPT Jacob E. Conner
CSM Zachary A. Downs
CW4 Anthony F. Ewers, Ret.
MAJ Miles C. Miller Jr.
SSG Shaun M. Morris
CW5 Chad W. Russell
CW4 Ryan S. Thompson, Ret.
Colonial Virginia Chapter
Eugene Corrales
SSG Dalton D. Kyme
SFC Joey R. McKenzie
Johnathan Scott
SSG Samuel E. Stephens
SSG Angel M. Velez Deleon
CPT Paige M. Ziegler
Free Dominion Chapter
SSG Lewis E. Ashworth
1SG Daniel T. Romero, Ret.
Gold Standard Chapter
David L. Barbee
Iron Mike Chapter
CPT Paul Ambrose
CPT Lorenzo Cico
LTC Elizabeth Verardo
Morning Calm Chapter
MAJ Paul M. Anderson
CW2 Craig M. Daugherty
CW2 Christopher Hodgdon
CW2 Ryan W. Huebler
CW3 Patrick C. Ting
North Star Chapter
CW4 Russell Grau
Rio Grande Chapter
1SG David C. Robinson
Southern California Chapter
CW2 Carl A. Catone
LTC Timothy J. Escobar
MAJ Robert A. Humphrey
CW4 James R. Irons III
CW4 Derek R. Johnson
CW4 Bridger A. Kimber
CW4 K. Richmond Kirkendall
CW3 Morgan R. LaVake
CW4 Phillip D. Strickland
Tennessee Valley Chapter
CW3 Keith E. Stilwell

Knight

Aviation Center Chapter
LTC Claire Curry
LTC Steven D. Hicks
Idaho Snake River Chapter
Msgt Becky Vanshur
Iron Mike Chapter
LTC Aaron S. Bragg
CPT Ethan Carmack
MAJ Jeffrey L. Slinker

Our Lady of Loreto

Air Assault Chapter
Patricia Bredlau
Bluegrass Chapter
Trista Crotti
Idaho Snake River Chapter
Megan J. Geary

AAAA Salutes the Following Departed...

COL Gerald L. Crews, Ret.
Deceased 1/1/2026

MAJ Philip L. Beckerich, III Ret.
Deceased 3/9/2025

AAAA **Legislative** Report

By LTC (Ret.) Kevin Cochie
AAAA Representative to the Military Coalition (TMC)
kevin.cochie@quad-a.org

Cleared for Landing: FY26 Defense Appropriations and a Strong Outcome for Army Aviation

As the new year unfolds, Army Aviation finds itself no longer circling in uncertainty but lined up on final approach. House and Senate appropriators have reached agreement on a final FY26 defense appropriations bill, delivering a notably strong outcome for Army Aviation across procurement, research, development, test and evaluation (RDT&E), and operations and maintenance. The remaining task is straightforward but critical; Congress must now pass the bill and send it to the President's desk.

While procedural hurdles remain, the hard work on funding levels is largely complete. For Army Aviation stakeholders, this moment represents a decisive shift from fiscal ambiguity to execution, once the budget is enacted. After months of operating under temporary authorities, the enterprise is poised to move from planning and preservation to deliberate, sustained execution.

FY26 Defense Appropriations: Agreement Reached, Execution Pending

Following months of negotiation under a continuing resolution (CR), House and Senate defense appropriators have finalized an FY26 defense spending agreement, expected to advance as part of a broader legislative package. Importantly, Army Aviation emerges from the process in a very strong position, reflecting bipartisan recognition of aviation's role in readiness, force projection, and operational flexibility.

Across all major budget accounts, the FY26 agreement demonstrates clear congressional support for aviation readiness, modernization pacing, training throughput, and sustainment of aging fleets. The bill provides the funding stability required to move programs from constrained planning to full execution, enabling predictable contract actions, production rates, depot workloads, and training pipelines across the aviation portfolio.

The remaining uncertainty is no longer about what is funded, but when Congress completes final passage. Until enactment, the Department remains bound by CR restrictions. Once passed, Army Aviation will be positioned to accelerate execution rapidly, restoring tempo and predictability across programs that have been forced to manage around uncertainty for much of the fiscal year.

Why Passage Matters: From Paper Agreement to Real Capability

The distinction between an agreed bill and an enacted one is not academic. Under a CR, Army Aviation continues to operate under restrictive flight rules: no new program starts, limited production rate increases, and constrained funding flexibility. Even well-funded programs cannot fully execute until appropriations are signed into law.

CRs function as an operational drag chute on aviation portfolios. Procurement schedules compress, modernization timelines slip, and sustainment planning becomes reactive rather than deliberate. Training capacity and simulator investments, areas where Army Aviation demand remains consistently high, are particularly sensitive to delayed funding certainty, often resulting in lost throughput that cannot be easily recovered later in the year.

By contrast, enactment of the FY26 bill would immediately unlock execution authority across the aviation enterprise. Program managers could initiate planned contract actions, depots could stabilize maintenance flow, and industry partners could operate at forecasted production rates rather than throttling activity to manage risk. In practical terms, passage converts congressional intent into real aircraft availability, trained aircrews, and sustained readiness.

A Strong Signal for Army Aviation

The strength of the FY26 outcome sends a clear signal: Congress recognizes the central role Army Aviation plays in readiness, deterrence, and operational maneuver. Funding levels reflect sustained confidence in rotary- and fixed-wing aviation as indispensable enablers of maneuver, sustainment, reconnaissance, and command and control, particularly as the Army adapts to contested, multi-domain environments.

Equally important, the bill reinforces support for the aviation industrial base. Stable, predictable funding allows suppliers, maintainers, and depots to manage workforce levels, inventory, and capital investments with confidence. This stability reduces downstream risk to readiness, mitigates lifecycle cost growth, and preserves critical skills in a labor market that remains highly competitive.

For an enterprise as complex and interdependent as Army Aviation, funding certainty is itself a readiness enabler.

Looking Ahead: FY27 on the Horizon

Even as Congress works to finalize FY26, attention is already shifting to the FY27 President's Budget Request (PBR), expected in late February or early March. FY27 will serve as an important inflection point, translating strategic priorities into longer-term resource alignment and setting conditions for future authorization and appropriations debates.

For Army Aviation, the FY27 request will be closely scrutinized for signals across sustainment of aging rotary-and fixed-wing fleets; training and simulation capacity; survivability, sensors, and mission-system modernization; integration of unmanned and optionally crewed platforms; and continued support to the aviation industrial base. Early signals in the PBR often shape the boundaries of what is politically and fiscally achievable later in the cycle.

The Final Step: Finish the Job

With appropriators aligned and Army Aviation strongly funded, the remaining task is clear: Congress must pass the FY26 defense appropriations bill and move it into law. Doing so will convert months of bipartisan work into real capability, allowing Army Aviation to transition decisively from planning to execution, from constraint to momentum.

For stakeholders across the aviation enterprise, this is a moment for sustained engagement, not complacency. The runway is clear, the aircraft is configured, and the weather is favorable. All that remains is final clearance to land. If all goes right, this edition hits your mailbox in mid-February, and we have a defense budget signed by the President.

People On The Move

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF WAR PHOTO BY NAVY PO1 CALEXANDER KUBITZA

Promotion

Craig Morgan Promoted by SECWAR

Country music star and Army Reserve soldier Craig Morgan, left, was promoted to the rank of Chief Warrant Officer 2 in a ceremony officiated by Secretary of War Pete Hegseth at the Pentagon, Jan. 16, 2026. Morgan was the featured performer at last year's AAAA Army Aviation Mission Solutions Summit at the Opryland Hotel, Nashville, TN.

He serves with the 313th Army Band at Redstone Arsenal, AL, and contributes to a suicide prevention program that uses music to speak to soldiers. The Prevention Music Initiative ensures soldiers' wellbeing and also keeps them from being non-deployable, according to Morgan, who emphasized that everyone in the chain of command is committed to taking care of soldiers.

Flight School Graduates

AAAA provides standard aviator wings to all graduates and sterling silver aviator wings to the distiguished graduates of each flight class ... *another example of AAAA's* ***SUPPORT*** *for the U.S. Army Aviation Soldier and Family.*

AAAA congratulates the following officers graduating from Flight School XXI at the U.S. Army Aviation Center of Excellence, Fort Rucker, AL.

33 Officers,
December 18, 2025
Class 26-005
Commissioned Officers
1LT Dyer, Neven A. -DG *
1LT Ballantine, Aurelia D. -HG *
2LT Ashley, Michael S.*
2LT Haven, Olivia A.*
1LT Humenay, Luke J.*
1LT Machowicz, Nicholas R.*
2LT Masuddramani, Mariam
2LT Padilla, Remus T.*
2LT Poor, Micah D.*
1LT Randolph, Preston T.*
1LT Somera, Cydnee R.*
Warrant Officers
WO1 Travis, Riley R. -DG
WO1 Gabrielson, Brandon D. -HG *
WO1 Mangiarelli, Joseph V. -HG *
WO1 Schwartz, Nicholas S. -HG *
WO1 Allen, Brock H.*
WO1 Cootes, Lucas W.*
WO1 Fallon, Russell L.*
WO1 Houx, Daniel P.
WO1 Hubbard, Christopher D.
WO1 Jeansonne, Logan A*.
WO1 Jones, Samuel I.
WO1 Lawrence, Tyler R.*
WO1 Leonard, Zane W.
WO1 Miller, Charles E.*
WO1 Nelson, Aran V.*
WO1 Palumbo, Katherine L*.
WO1 Pebley, Chance W.
WO1 Roberts, Jimmy P.
WO1 Rush, Mark J.
WO1 Silva Guerra, Jose C.*
WO1 Trebesch, Kelley M.
WO1 Zay, Nicholas D.

FSXXI Class 26-005

8 Officers,
January 22, 2025
Class 26-005
Commissioned Officers
1LT Aiden O. Hopping -DG *
1LT Edward H. Jung *
2LT Isaac A. Lewis *
Warrant Officers
WO1 Aaron M. Munguia -HG
WO1 Keiron G. Adorno
WO1 Jose A. Garcia *
WO1 Ryan A. Mora *
WO1 Jonathan J. Streff

-DG: Distinguished Graduate
-HG: Honor Graduate
* = AAAA Member

UFT Class 26-006

People On The Move

ADVANCED INDIVIDUAL TRAINING (AIT) GRADUATIONS

AAAA congratulates the following Army graduates of the indicated Advanced Individual Training (AIT) courses at the 128th Aviation Brigade, Joint Base Langley-Eustis, VA and the U.S. Army Aviation Center of Excellence, Ft. Novosel, AL.

Aviation Maintenance Technician

Class 007-25
WO1 Cheylese R. Dross-DG *
SGM Hatim Alqesair
1LT Khalid Anwar A. A. A. Alyafei
WO1 Mitchell C. Barnier
WO1 Matthew C. Hankey

Class 008-25
WO1 Thomas J. McNeely-DG *
SGM Salem Alzahrani
WO1 Matthew C. Hinshaw
WO1 Steven C. Hofmeister
WO1 Conner A. Oneal
WO1 Kashad A. Randall

AH-64 Attack Helicopter Repairer (15R)

Class 047-25
PFC Zowey Machelle Witt-DG *
PFC Randy Tyler Bonney
PV2 Rajiv Kumar Chettayar
PV2 Samuel Serphy Dorce, Jr
SPC Jacob Matthew Eddy
PFC Tylan Alan Lang
SGT Mark Anthony Mata
PV2 Samuel Edward Miklos
SPC Trent Austin Morgan
SPC Andrea Caroli P. Sarmiento
PV2 Joshua William Tice
PFC Sihang Zhang

Class 049-25
SPC Isabel Louise Diaz-DG *
PV2 Alexander Regan Bergeron
PV2 Asa Daniel Carter
PV2 Xavier Ladon Costa
PFC Jocelyn Marie Gonzalez
PV2 Elijah Jobe Hooker
SPC Bristen Tyler Jackson
PV2 Feliciano Adrian Leon
SPC Nathan John Matz
PV2 Eric Leonel Mendez
PV2 Benjamin Merlin Refior

Class 050-25
PFC Trevor Michael Leach-DG *
PFC Seth Aaron McCullough
PFC Assetou Mone
PVT Keegan Jasper Pope
PVT Tecuapa Justin Telix
PFC Emily Faith Ann Young

UH-60 Helicopter Repairer (15T)

Class 097-25
PV2 Justin Nicholas Frymire-DG *
PV2 Kolbi Izabella Dillon
PFC Nicholas James Glenn
PFC Christian Y Morales
SPC Jacob Andrew Mundt
PFC Dylan Ray Neal
SPC Perry Joe Nelson
PV2 Keaten Alexander O'neal
PFC Thomas Joseph Ronkainen
PVT Joshua Dawayne Stokes
PFC Daniyal Tukhtakhunov
PVT Wongaton Jonathan Villace

Class 098-25
PFC Joziah Anthony Then-DG *
PFC Javier Alvarez Ricardo
SPC Joseph I Cable
PVT Marc Calventus
PFC Dawson O Connor Circle
SPC Aaron F Emerson
PVT Seth Mitchell Ford
PFC Leandro Duvan Quintanilla
SPC Christian Rivera Rodriguez
PFC Vincent Van Slyke

Class 100-25
SPC Richard Vasquez-DG *
PFC Charles Lindy A.Butner
PFC Caleb Isaac Gilde
PFC Caleb Allen Hicks
PFC Benjamin Michael Hilson
PFC Isaac Paul Jackson
PV2 Cynthia C Lopez
PFC Levi Trenton Monet
PVT Stephen Andrei Muresan
PFC Aiden Peter Muschter
PFC Braedyn J. Mutschelknaus

Class 101-25
PV2 Allan Aldair Abarca-DG *
PVT Jonas Howard Brown
PV2 Jean Carranza
PFC Colton James Danos
PFC Emily Joy Dority
PFC Austin Matthew Grigsby
PFC Garrett Michael Holtgrewe
PFC Gabriel Allen Jackson
PFC Michael Faustino Mata
PFC Muhammad Sadiq

Class 102-25
PV2 Alayna M. Edwards-DG *
PVT Irene Belle Allende
PV2 Robert Connor Bradley
PVT David Lee Branaman
PVT Marcelo Diaz Velasquez
PFC Blake Preston Glenn Griffen
PFC Cassidy Jaynne Posey
PV2 Cohen V Bramwell Robinson
PV2 Edmond George Root
PV2 Matthew Aiden Ward
PVT Callum Trey Wruck

Class 103-25
PV2 Rowein Mathew Toler-DG *
PV2 Austin Hunter Colson
PVT Arleigh Ellsworth Harrett
PVT Daulton James Henderson
PV2 Isaac Emanuel Lopez
PVT Brennan Patrick O'connell
PFC Tyler Dean Paul
PV2 Jose Manuel Segura
PV2 Steven Moses Talon Smith
SPC Gavin Lee Tussey
PFC Kyle Philip Vance
PFC Benjamin Aiden Zachariah

Class 105-25
PFC Charlee Rae Leedahl-DG *
PV2Jesse Buenrostro
PV2 Logan Grant Hawxwell
PVT Michael Richard Hollar
PFC Cayden M.Mogonye-Burkett
PFC Zackary David Allen
PFC Colin Michael Palmer
PVT Trysen Lee Ratliff
PFC Aiden Cole Roberts
PFC Andrew Wes Stephens
PFC William Ernest White

Class 106-25
PV2 Gavin Michaelgillette-DG *
PV2 Waylon Michael Hall
SPC Levi Everett Jones
PFC Jeremy Austin Long
PV2 Kendric Samuel-Taylor Maclean
PVT Kevin Martinez
PFC Kai Brandon Maxey
PFC Dillion James Moore
SPC Zander Gage Nichols
PFC Blake Alan Nieto

Class 107-25
SPC Gabriel Christian Broussard
PFC Joshua Jamal Byrd
PV2 Matthew Clint Crossley
PVT Kaden Garrett Fischer
PVT Tyler Jaden Flanagan
SPC Makhia Lauren Fouts *
PV2 Olivia Marion Puliafico
PFC Ethan James Arcadio Ruiz
PV2 Gavin Ryan Taylor
PFC Ethan George Vanhillo
PFC Malaki Curtis Williams
PFC Emmanuel Zatarain

Class 108-25
PFC Jett Russel Sellner-DG *
PFC Jayden Alexander Alfaro
PV2 Cooper Smith Bowman
PFC Tanner Scott Crawford
PV2 Joseph Thomas Iacobone
SPC David James Martinka
PFC Dominic Matthew Misciagna
PV2 Adriel Jacob Munoz
PFC Nolan Daniel Papke
PV2 Quentin Bernard Stephens
PVT Isaac Nathan Stol
PV2 Jeremy Lee Wilson

Cargo Helicopter Repairer (15U)

Class 041-25
PV2 Benjamin G.Strokosch-DG *
SPC Hasanain Ali Saee Al Tayyar
PVT Giovanni Sebastian Cohea
PVT Corbin Dallas Fairchild
PV2 James Thomas Fraser
SPC Tyler Allen Frisch
PVT Gaona David
PV2 Ian Patrick Nystuen
PVT Jonas Shlomo Offer
PVT Dagon Russell Walker
PV2 Ethan Daniel Welch

Class 042-25
PFC Camron Aydan Kemp-DG *
PV2 Jalani Joanalton Adjodha
PV2 Kahlil Rene Alcazar
SPC Jaycee Wayne Christensen
PFC Melvin Gabriel C.Sanchez
PV2 Logan Kain Amadeus Combs
PV2 Barrington George Coombs
PVT Damon Anthony Everett
PVT Phenix Rivera Gabel
PFC Camden Fletcher Holloway
PFC Camron Aydan Kemp-DG
PV2 Solara Siabchi Lee
PVT Joshua P Schellenberger

Class 043-25
PV2 Isabella Amara Shoostry-DG
PFC Nicholas Ray Argueta
PFC Morgan Ailie Bekkala
PV2 Brennen Charles Boyd
PVT Camacho E. Camacho
PFC Aaron Cardel Lewis
PV2 Justin Christian Lippert
PFC Alex Zachary Martin
PV2 Joshua Cole Meade
PV2 Xander Nathaniel Russell
PVT Nicholas Ewen Whitney
PV2 Laura Catherine Wiggins

Class 044-25
PFC Kyle Benjamin Watson-DG *
SPC Rex Okhaifoh Akonofua
PV2 Seth James Bubb
PV2 David Michael Evans
PFC Logan Daniel Gafner
PV2 Christopher S.Gellenbeck-Koesy
PVT Corbin Jay Gersch
PFC Leonard Raheem Howell
SPC Andy Martinez
PFC Mateo Roberto Sanchez
SPC Mitchell Case Starnes
PV2 Jordan Eban Stewart

Class 045-25
PFC Christian Miles Atchison-DG *
PVT Joeyleigh Bergeron
SPC Jason Anthony Paul Brown
PV2 Dylan Thomas Fuson
PFC Stephan Patrick Heschel
PV2 Parker James Johnson
PV2 Alvin Nganga Kimani
PFC Isaac William Lee
PV2 Lucas David McKenzie
PFC Danny Ouyang
PVT Tyler James Patterson
PV2 Noah Michael Welte

Class 046-25
PV2 Danylo Tolkachenko-DG *
PFC Benjamin Drake Anderson
PV2 Noah Trooper
PFC Noah David Brayton
PFC J.R. Coleman
PV2 Jace Hayden Lugo
PFC Melissa Avery Marbury
PFC Luis Angel Marin Moreno
SPC Joshua Michael Phillips
PV2 Alexandra I.L.Rogers

Aircraft Powerplant Repairer (15B)

Class 010-25

People On The Move

PFC Jackson Allen Roberson- DG
PFC Jody Anthony Campbell
SPC Pedro Alexis De Ona
PV2 Yakeenie Alexsie Dobson
PV2 Christopher Guevara
SPC Batuhan Gul
PV2 Xavier Jamal Malcolm
PFC Bailey Joseph Perrodin
PFC Darby Norma Lu Rennhack
PVT Curt John Rodrigues
PV2 Jared Marvin A.Thomas
PV2 Kaela Mahiaihoolauae Wong

Aircraft Powertrain Repairer (15D)
Class 009-25
PFC Noah Joseph Blum-DG *
PFC Luis Fernando A.Gonzalez
SPC Devon James Bloom
PFC Adan Range Byrd
PV2 Landon Chase Garner
PFC Tolga Gerek
PV2 Prestin Jay Gibbs
PFC Obinna Johann Ihekire
PV2 Michael Don D.Janovsky
PV2 Bodhi Gene Ledford
PV2 Jackson McDonald
PV2 Iain Christopher McKay
SPC Gerardo Quinones
PFC Adrian Rocha
SPC George W Shenas
SGT Danny Chance Whittler

Aircraft Electrician (15F)
Class 017-25
SPC Brian M. Mierzejewski-DG
PV2 Christian Dangelo Dreis
PV2 Jacob C. Mayberry, Jr
SPC Kwaku Ohene Nimako
PV2 Jordan Lawrence Parson
PV2 Aidan Naransuld Unudelger

Aircraft Structural Repairer (15G)
Class 011-25
PV2 Lucas Calvin Hager-DG *
PFC Vincent Joel Castor
SPC Dylan Kekoanohopono Lee
PFC Cesar Alberto Mendoza
PFC Dale Dwain Richey, Jr
PFC Tyrek Raynard Salley
PFC Mason Sandy Tynes
PFC Gavin Michael Walker
PFC Cody Hunter Williams
PFC Wesley Winston Wix
SPC Huyang Yu

Aircraft Pnedraulics Repairer (15H)
Class 010-25
PFC Bradley K.Armstrong-DG *
SPC Zihan Bai
PV2 Aaron Joseph Bobb
PV2 Remy Michael Dubret
PFC Hailey Ryann Lehman
PV2 Ezra Campbell McMurrich
PFC Thinh D Phan
PFC Zackary Konnor Reavis
PFC Jack Dempsey Veselka
PV2 Sean Thomas Worley

Avionic Repairer (15N)
Class 018-25
PFC Vera Naomi Tyrrell - DG *
PFC Lizjeilys Acosta Hernandez
SPC Hunter Conlin Brown
PV2 Danny Chu
PFC Diego Ernesto Tario
PFC Alex Gabriel Vigil
SPC Serenity Rose Walker
SPC Christopher Lamont Winton
Class 019-25
PV2 Saulo M. Urenasantos-DG *
SPC Kryshone Makenzie Brooks
PFC Dawson Robert Clark
SPC Maxwell Joseph Larosa
PFC Jimmie Pitchford Lay
PV2 Mario Augusto Then
PV2 Dorian Javon Williams

AH-64 Armament/Electrical/ Avionic Systems Repairer (15Y)
Class 020-25
PV2 Wyatt James Bailey-DG *
PFC Cameron Wayne Boehmler
SPC Colin Reese Burstein
PVT Joseph Howerton
PV2 Caden Randell Jones
PFC Javier O. Melendez
PFC Israel Montiel
PVT Drake Alexander Porter
PVT Ian X. Rodriguez
PV2 James Leslie Stinson
PFC Bodie John Wright
SPC Gian Carlo Yerena
Class 021-25
PVT William H. McGuire-Pettersen-DG *
PVT Luis Jomar Acosta
SGM Abdulla Faraj H. A. Al-Marri
PVT Jose D. Isaiah Avalos
PVT Breanna Lysette Avila
PVT William James Brooks
SGM Ahmed G. El Hasanin Gowda
PV2 Canon Dirk Harris
PVT Peyton Reese Lingle
PV2 Lucas Cade McNeal
PV2 Darian Rand Neri-Watkins
PV2 Jasmen Lashae Robinson
-DG: Distinguished Graduate
- HG: Honor Graduate
* = AAAA Member

Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) Graduations

UAS Repairer
AAAA congratulates the following Army graduates of the Unmanned Aircraft Systems Repairer Course, MOS 15M at Fort Huachuca, AZ.

Shadow UAS Repairer Course
5 Graduates, 9 December 2025
PFC Johnathan Barton
PFC Logan Goodman
PVT James Mathews
PFC Logan Smith
PFC Eli Spence
PFC Jacob Taylor

UAS Operator
AAAA congratulates the following Army graduates of the Unmanned Aircraft Systems Operator Course, MOS 15C and 15W at Fort Huachuca, AZ.

Shadow UAS Operator Course
7 Graduates, 26 November 2025
SPC Michael Bennett
PV2 Patrick Cotter
SSG Malcolm Knight
SPC Daniel Lonnen
SPC David, Mills
PV2 Landon Ullman
PV2 Jericho Weston
12 Graduates, 17 December 2025
PVT Nia Adams
PVT Blade Aunu
PFC Lily Beyer
PV2 Jhakobie Evans
SPC Nakiela Gaines
SPC Logan Hale
PFC Kiana Hose-see
PFC Ethan Kling
PFC Hector Montelongo
SGT Conner Payne
PV2 Nash Vogh
PV2 Marcus Wastik

Gray Eagle Operator Course
7 Graduates, 18 December 2025
SPC Cody Davis
SPC James Garcia
PV2 Bryan Guerra
PFC Marcus Hardy
SPC Jare Johnson
PFC Tswvyim Lee

ARMYAVIATION ▶ Advertiser Spotlight

DeltaHawk Engines

DELTAHAWK

DeltaHawk Engines is pioneering the next generation of advanced propulsion and power systems for Army Aviation, with a focus on delivering reliable, efficient, and scalable solutions for both crewed and uncrewed platforms. Our family of FAA-certified compression-ignition engines provides unmatched fuel flexibility, endurance, and power density to meet the demanding requirements of Army operations across the globe.

With hybrid-electric integration at the core of our design philosophy, DeltaHawk systems enable new capabilities for uncrewed aircraft systems (UAS), vertical lift, and expeditionary power generation. From lightweight tactical platforms to larger Group 3–5 UAS, our engines support extended range, increased payload capacity, and enhanced operational resilience, ensuring the Army maintains overmatch in contested environments.

DeltaHawk is also driving advancements in expeditionary power through hybrid architectures derived from our proven diesel cycle technology. These solutions deliver mobile, scalable power for distributed operations, UAS charging, and C2, directly supporting the Army's vision for multi-domain operations and the Transformation in Contact campaign.

As the Army accelerates its modernization efforts, DeltaHawk Engines stands ready to serve as a propulsion and power partner that can adapt to evolving mission sets. By combining innovative engineering with battlefield practicality, we are not only shaping the future of expeditionary power generation, but propelling the future of Army Aviation itself.

SIZE OF COMPANY: Small 0-99 Employees
CATEGORIES: Manufacturing

https://www.deltahawk.com

Thank You to Our Scholarship Fund Donors

AAAA recognizes the generosity of the following individuals, chapters and organizations that have donated to the Scholarship Foundation, Inc. from January 2025 through January 2026. The list includes donations received for all scholarships, as well as the General Fund which provides funding to enable the chapter, corporate, heritage and individual matching fund programs as well as national grants. Every penny donated to the Scholarship Foundation goes directly towards scholarships as a result of the Army Aviation Association of America subsidizing all administrative costs (minus investment brokerage fees).

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Industry News

Announcements Related to Army Aviation Matters

Editor's note: Companies can send their Army Aviation related news releases and information to editor@quad-a.org.

Secretary of War Continues "Arsenal of Freedom" Tour

Secretary of War Pete Hegseth is continuing on the nationwide "Arsenal of Freedom" tour, a call to action to revitalize America's manufacturing might and re-energize the nation's workforce. The tour's message is emphasizing that our national security and the peace of the world move at the speed of our Defense Industrial Base (DIB) and rely on the hard work of our American workforce. The tour highlights the urgent need to rebuild our Defense Industrial Base (DIB) to ensure that we continue President Trump and Secretary Hegseth's peace through strength agenda.

Safran Federal Systems Demonstrates Blacknaute™ Inertial Navigation System on U.S. Army Black Hawk Following AUSA Debut

SAFRAN COURTESY PHOTO

Safran Federal Systems, a trusted U.S. Department of Defense mission partner and leader in Assured Positioning, Navigation and Timing (A-PNT), announced the successful flight demonstration of its Blacknaute™ Inertial Navigation System (INS) aboard a U.S. Army UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter. The live flight test confirmed Blacknaute's ability to maintain high-accuracy inertial performance without GNSS support, validating operational readiness.

Honeywell LED Landing Searchlight Selected by Bell for the MV-75 Future Long-Range Assault Aircraft

Bell Textron Inc., a Textron Inc. company, has selected Honeywell's LED Landing Search Light (LSL) for the U.S. Army's MV-75 Future Long-Range Assault Aircraft (FLRAA). Honeywell's LSL is an efficient, high-intensity landing searchlight that incorporates multiple functions in one to reduce pilot workload. Honeywell's LED Lighting offers proven performance and is optimized to meet the stringent requirements of the MV-75 FLRAA missions with enhanced optical design, power and thermal management, and environmental protection while reducing operating costs and weight.

Bell Advances to the Next Stage of Flight School Next Competition

BELL COURTESY PHOTO.JPG

Bell Textron Inc., a Textron Inc. has been selected to continue in the competition for the U.S. Army's Flight School Next program. As part of this selection, Bell and our industry teammates will advance to the second phase of the Army competition.

Contracts – (From various sources. An "*" by a company name indicates a small business contract / "**" indicates a woman-owned small business)

Sherwood Avionics and Accessories Inc., Opa-locka, FL, was awarded an $18,439,750 firm-fixed-price to contract W58RGZ-26-D-0032 for the overhaul of the gas engine turbine to provide sustained mission readiness and prevent a gap in maintenance and overhaul supply; work locations and funding will be determined with each order, with an estimated completion date of Jan. 26, 2031.

Rogue Signal Processing Corp.,* Sterling, VA, was awarded a $100,000,000 cost-no-fee, cost-plus-fixed-fee, firm-fixed-price, and indefinite-quantity to contract W911SR-26-D-A002 to analyze, design, develop, enhance, test, deploy, procure, and sustain prototype technologies and sensors; work locations will be determined with each order, with an estimated completion date of Jan. 22, 2031.

Amentum Services, Chantilly, VA, was awarded a $10,645,952 cost-no-fee, time-and-materials modification (P00074) to contract W58RGZ-25-C-0004 to provide global aviation maintenance services. The modification brings the total cumulative face value of the contract to $158,855,989; work will be performed in Schofield Barracks, HI; Fort Hood, TX; and South Korea, with an estimated completion date of Nov. 30, 2026.

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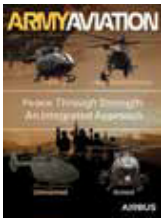

Contact:
Bob Lachowski, Erika Burgess or Carmen Tuohy
AAAAindustry@quad-a.org
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Art's Attic

By Mark Albertson

Art's Attic is a look back each issue at 25 and 50 years ago to see what was going on in ARMY AVIATION Magazine. Contributing editor Mark Albertson has selected a few key items from each decade's issues. Art Kesten is our founder and first publisher from 1953 to 1987. He is also the founder of the AAAA in 1957 and served as its Executive Vice President. The cartoon, right, was created back in 1953 by LT Joe Gayhart, a friend of Art's and an Army Aviator, showing the chaos of his apartment-office in New York City where it all began.

25 Years Ago

February 28, 2001

Briefings

Five aviators from the Nevada Army National Guard, Det. 1, 717th Medical Company, were recently honored for rescuing two crewmen from a crashed Navy SH-60 helicopter. Honorees: Captain Daniel Waters, C.W.3 Craig F. Robinson, Sergeant Steven D. Milovich, Sergeant Patrick Moore and Sergeant Randy L. Barnes. All received Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal and the Valley Forge Cross for Heroism. Waters and Robinson all received Air Medals; while Milovich, Moore and Barnes each received the Soldier's Medal. The rescue entailed lifting the downed Navy crewmen from near the crest of Nevada's 11,000 foot Mount Grant.

Homemaker's Dream

DuPont has introduced a new line of wipes. These are engineered to avoid catching on metal parts and corners and, leave no wipe marks on pre-paint applications. Further data may be obtained on the Santara AC wipes from www.santara.com

Toys for Tots

Sam Richards, President of the A.A.A.A. Central Florida Chapter (second from the left) and Vice President of Programs Jan Drabczuk (third from the left), present donated toys to U.S.M.C. Sergeant Hunter (left) and Captain Meade (far right) for the Marine Corps' Toy for Tots program. Monies generated for the purchase were obtained from the chapter's December 2000 social, a monthly event normally used to finance the Central Florida Chapter's scholarship fund.

50 Years Ago

February 28,1976

New Career

SP4 Susan Baker is an air traffic controller at Cairns A.A.F., Fort Rucker, Alabama. Soon she will be on her way to the U.S. Military preparatory School at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey. SP4 Baker is going to prepare to enter West Point.

Under Test

Sikorsky's XH-59A research helicopter is undergoing flight tests at the company's Stratford, Connecticut plant. AKA the Advanced Blade Concept, it has attained a speed of 140 knots and an altitude of 4,000 feet thus far.

In the Classroom

From Enterprise, Alabama is Mrs. Linda Wise. Mrs. Wise is attending classes on helicopter repairs. Her hope is to become the first female civilian instructor to teach the U.S.A.A.V.N.C. course. Here she is listening, via headset, to her lesson while following same in the class workbook.

Record Time

C.W.2 Benny R. Easter has completed a U.S.A.A.V.N.C. correspondence course; that is the Warrant Officer Senior Course, and in record time. He was allowed, though, at least three years to complete the course. Yet, C.W.2 Easter blitzed the course in just 32 days. He is the director of the Army Band at Fort Rucker, Alabama.

Army Aviation Hall of Fame

The Army Aviation Hall of Fame, sponsored by the Army Aviation Association of America, Inc., recognizes those individuals who have made an outstanding contribution to Army Aviation.

The actual Hall of Fame is located in the Army Aviation Museum, Fort Rucker, AL.

The deadline for nominations for the 2026 induction is June 1, 2026

Contact the AAAA National Office for details and nomination forms at (203) 268-2450 or visit www.quad-a.org

Major General Jeffrey John Schloesser

Army Aviation Hall of Fame 2024 Induction - Denver, CO

Aviation Soldier, combat Division Commander, Special Operator, Embassy foreign area officer in the Middle East, and founding Deputy Director of the National Counter Terrorism Center, MG Jeffrey J. Schloesser, Retired, has dedicated his life to Army Aviation, the Army, and the Nation.

A graduate of the University of Kansas, he enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1976, attended Officer Candidate School, and was commissioned as an engineer officer in 1977.

After a tour in Germany, he graduated from flight school in 1981 and served in the 6th Cav before joining the Special Operations world of Task Force 160 for multiple tours including commanding two of their three battalions. Always a CH-47 Chinook driver, he commanded the "Innkeepers" of the 271st Aviation Company in Korea, took part in operations from Haiti as 2nd Battalion, 160th commander, to 12th Aviation Brigade commander in Kosovo as well as countless sensitive missions with the 160th.

Over his 34-year Army Career, he had an amazing breadth of assignments ranging from conventional Army, Special Operations, and Arabic Language school, to becoming a National Security Fellow at Harvard including the U.S. Embassy in Amman, Jordan as a foreign service officer and Army Strategist.

After serving as 101st Airborne Division's Assistant Division Commander for Support, during Iraqi Freedom, he became the Director of the Army Aviation Task Force on the Army Staff from 2004 to 2005. In 2006 he served as the 101st AASLT Division Commander for 33 months, including 15 months in combat in Afghanistan, also commanding NATO's Regional Command East, with over 30,000 troops from the U.S., Poland, France, and other allied countries.

Renowned as a military thought-leader and Aviation warrior who always maintained a command climate of total integrity, there is no doubt that MG Jeff Schloesser, Retired, belongs in the Army Aviation Hall of Fame.

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