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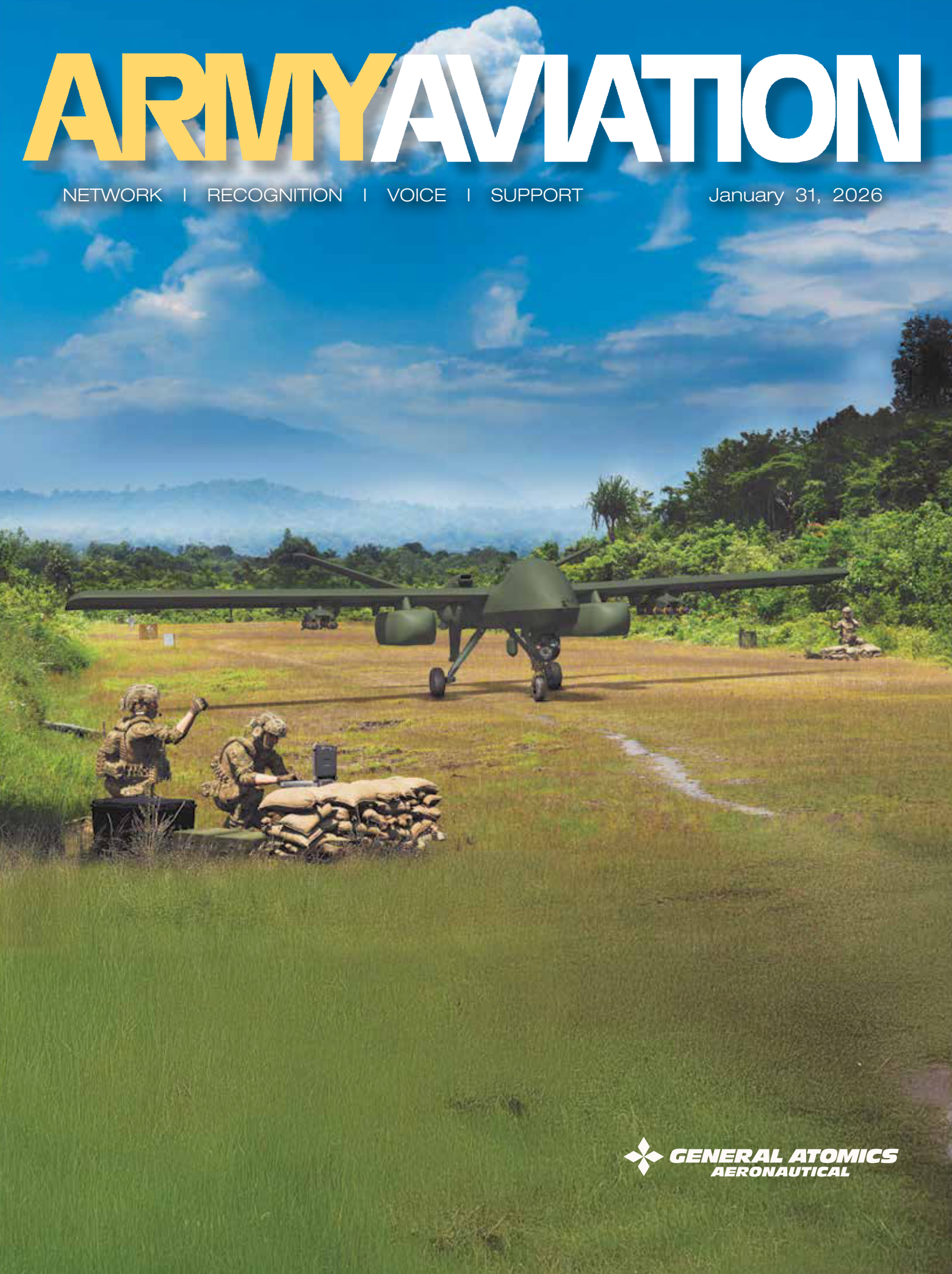
January 31, 2026



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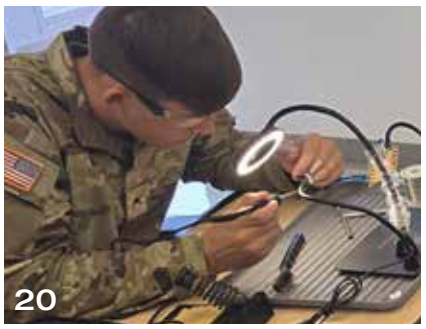




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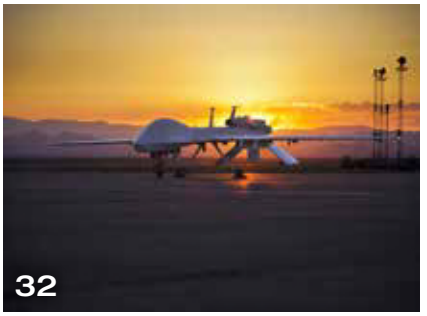






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ARMY AVIATION is the official journal of the Army Aviation Association of America (AAAA). The views expressed in this publication are those of the individual authors, not the Department of Defense or its elements. The content does not necessarily reflect the official U.S. Army position nor the position of the AAAA or the staff of Army Aviation Publications, Inc., (AAPI). Title Reg® in U.S. Patent office. Registration Number 1,533,053. SUBSCRIPTION DATA: ARMY AVIATION (ISSN 0004-248X) is published monthly, except May and September by AAPI, 593 Main Street, Monroe, CT 06468-2806. Tel: (203) 268-2450, FAX: (203) 268-5870, E-Mail: aaaa@quad-a.org. Army Aviation Magazine E-Mail: magazine@quad-a.org. Website: http://www.quad-a.org. Subscription rates for non-AAAA members: $45, one year; add $10 per year for foreign addresses other than military APOs. Single copy price: $6.00. ADVERTISING: Display and classified advertising rates are listed in SRDS Business Publications, Classification 90. POSTMASTER: Periodicals postage paid at Monroe, CT and other offices. Send address changes to AAPI, 593 Main Street, Monroe, CT 06468-2806.

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**Founders /**Art and Dotty Kesten

**Publisher /** William R. Harris Jr.

**Managing Editor**
CW4 (Ret.) Joseph L. Pisano Sr.
joe@quad-a.org

**Editor /** Ken Holder
ken@quad-a.org

**Associate Editor /** CW5 Adam Jarvis
adam@quad-a.org

**Director of Design & Production**
Anne H. Ewing
magazine@quad-a.org

**Contributing Editor** / Mark Albertson
mark@quad-a.org

**Family Forum Editor /** Judy Konitzer
judy@quad-a.org

**Director of Advertising & Exhibit Sales**
Robert C. Lachowski
bob@quad-a.org

**Deputy Director of Advertising & Exhibit Sales**
Erika Burgess
erika@quad-a.org

**Advertising & Exhibit Sales Manager**
Carmen Tuohy
carmen@quad-a.org

**Marketing Director /** Jennifer Chittem
jenn@quad-a.org

**Social Media Manager /** Chelsea Jarvis
chelsea@quad-a.org

**Director Data Services /** Ben Marini
ben@quad-a.org

**Circulation Department**
Mira Auxier
Deb Cavallaro
Debbie Coley
Jackie Harris
Genesis Miller

**Editorial Address**
593 Main Street, Monroe, CT 06468-2806
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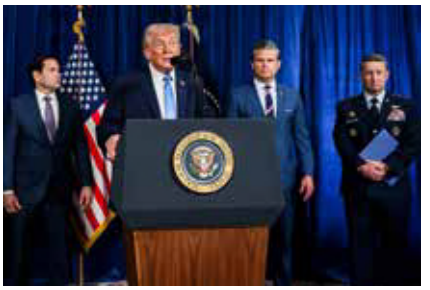
# Briefings

## Operation Absolute Resolve



WHITE HOUSE PHOTO BY MOLLY RILEY

President Donald J. Trump announced on Jan. 3, 2026 the capture of Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro and his wife, Cecilia, following a successful overnight joint U.S. military extraction in Venezuela's capital of Caracas. Labeled Operation Absolute Resolve, the joint military and law enforcement mission to capture the Maduros was the result of months of planning and rehearsal involving U.S. joint forces – including special operations forces – from multiple service branches. The military also networked extensively with multiple U.S. intelligence agencies, according to Air Force Gen. Dan Caine, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He added that the mission to extract the Maduros –in which there were no U.S. casualties – was so precise that it involved more than 150 military aircraft from all across the Western Hemisphere launching in close coordination to provide cover for the ground-based extraction force in Caracas.

## Baker Nominated for Promotion

U.S. ARMY PHOTO

Secretary of War Pete Hegseth announced on Dec. 18, 2025, that President Trump has nominated BG Phillip C. "Cain" Baker for appointment to the grade of major general. Baker is currently serving as director, Aviation Future Capability Directorate, Redstone Arsenal, Alabama.

## First Army UAS Unit Formed

U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY SPC MASON NICHOLS

Company F, 1st Battalion, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade was activated during a December 16, 2025 ceremony at Fort Drum, New York. The unit will focus exclusively on offensive action including conducting reconnaissance, acting as decoys, jamming enemy communications or delivering lethal strikes. "By integrating Fox Company's recon forces with the overwhelming firepower of three Apache companies, 1st Battalion, 10th Aviation Regiment will decisively win battles for the 10th Mountain Division," stated battalion commander LTC Chris Stoinoff. The newly formed company will also work alongside the division's innovation unit to develop and produce in-house drone components.

## Family Separation Allowance to Increase

101CAB FACEBOOK PHOTO

The fiscal 2026 National Defense Authorization Act, signed Oct. 18 by President Donald Trump, increases the family separation allowance (FSA) from $250 to $300 per month; a 20% increase for service members involuntarily separated from their families for 30 days or more due to deployments, sea duty or other assignments. The money is tax-free and is in addition to other pay and allowances. It's meant to help cover the extra costs that hit when one parent is managing everything alone. The last increase was 24 years ago in 2002.

## Army Creates New AI/ML CF for Officers

U.S. ARMY GRAPHIC

The Army announced on December 31, 2025 it is standing up a dedicated artificial intelligence and machine-learning career field for officers. The new specialty, designated 49B, will be open to eligible officers through the Voluntary Transfer Incentive Program, beginning in January 2026. The program is open to all officers eligible to voluntarily transfer branches. Those selected will receive graduate-level training and hands-on experience with AI-enabled systems – officers will be reclassified by the end of fiscal year 2026. The Army is considering broadening the program in the future to include warrant officers. In 2025, the Army also introduced a Robotics Technician specialty for warrant officers, meant to provide brigade and special forces formations with information on robotics, AI and machine-learning.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# Happy New Year!

AAAA begins this new year in great shape with membership near record levels of over 20,000 members and our strongest ever financial balance sheet.

The future also looks bright as we prepare for the rapidly approaching Army Aviation Warfighting Summit April 15-17, 2026 at the Gaylord Opryland Hotel in Nashville.

By the time you read this I will have returned from visiting our Badger Chapter in Wisconsin for their annual ball and will have also attended the Aviation Senior Leaders Conference at Fort Rucker, AL.

In many respects these two very different events show the breadth and depth of AAAA's mission statement of *Supporting the Aviation Soldier and Family*. From the grass roots level, in this case at a largely Reserve Component-based chapter, to the Branch policy and vision level with our senior Army and Branch leaders at Fort Rucker, AAAA is present, providing assistance through presence and resources.

In a just a few weeks, AAAA is sponsoring the inaugural annual Army Best Drone Warfighter Competition in Huntsville, AL, February 17-19, 2026. We have had a tremendous response from the most senior levels of the Pentagon, all the way down to our individual units. The three-part competition will take place in the mornings on the 2,300 acre University of Alabama Huntsville (UAH) Drone Range, while the working groups will meet every afternoon at the Huntsville Marriott at the Space & Rocket Center, a few minutes away.

This is an Army Soldier event coordinated by the Aviation and Maneuver Centers, but we will have a few industry partner exhibits, both at the hotel and the UAH range. Special thanks to Neros Technologies for sponsoring, supplying and supporting the standardized drones for the individual warfighter competition at the UAH Military Operations in Urban Terrain (MOUT) site at the range.

In the second phase of the competition, the tactical Hunter-Killer event teams will bring their own unmanned aircraft systems, as will the Innovation Competitors who will present their unit-built systems. Exhibits sold out almost immediately and we are going to have to expand the event for next year to accommodate the demand for everything from moving targets to counter-drone operations.

As mentioned earlier, the Annual Summit is just around the corner and we are putting the final touches on that agenda now. We will have an outstanding roster of speakers and opportunities for interaction and networking that span the breadth of the Army Aviation Enterprise from sustainment to acquisition. We'll also showcase many of the emerging technologies including artificial intelligence (AI), drone warfare, launched effects (LE) and of course, the Future Long-Range Assault Aircraft (FLRAA) MV-75. We'll also continue to offer opportunities for professional career development and post-Army employment. Continuous Transformation is the name of the game as we prepare to face our peer competitors and support the Army Aviation Branch to remain agile, adaptive and lethal on the modern battlefield.

At the end of the day, everything we do from sponsoring the Army Aviation Congressional Caucus, to the millions of dollars that AAAA has provided in support of scholarships over the decades, AAAA has one goal in mind. Since AAAA's inception in 1957, almost 70 years ago now, we have had no higher calling than to support you, your family, and your career by remaining relevant to you, the Branch, and the Army. Let us know how we can do even better.

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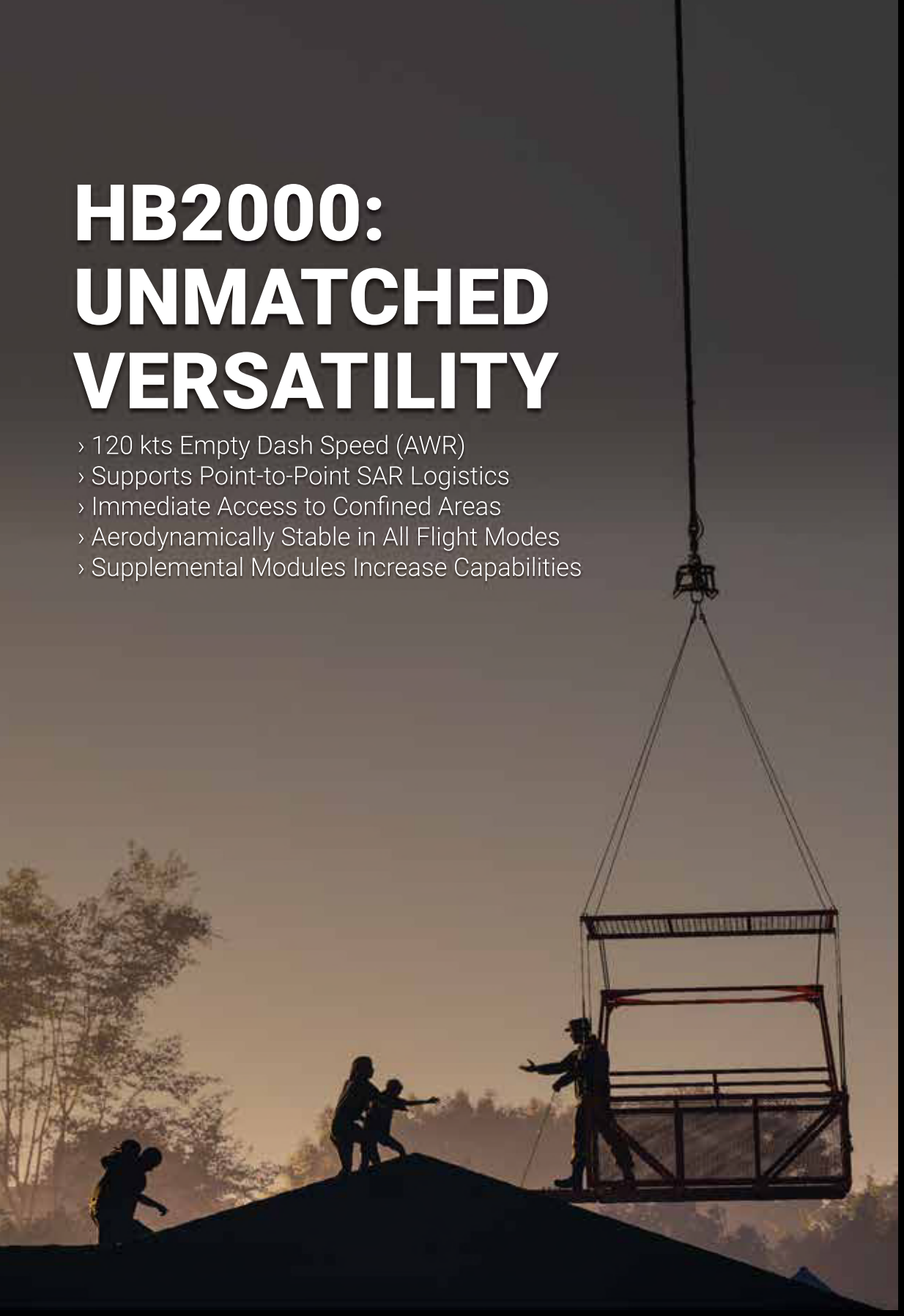

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**U.S. Army Futures and Concepts Command**

# Transformation: Forging the Vision Toward an Unfair Fight

By LTG Michael C. "Mac" McCurry


U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY NELSON BALLEW

*CW2 Thomas Simmons, A Troop 1-17 Air Cav, 82nd Combat Aviation Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division, uses an End-User Device to dynamically control a Launched Effect (LE) surrogate in his AH-64E Apache during Project Convergence Capstone 5 (PC C5) at the National Training Center (NTC), in March 2025.*

As a former Aviation Branch Chief, I am honored and humbled to still be serving and to be asked to write for this publication once again, this time in a new role: as the first Commanding General of the Army's Futures and Concepts Command.

Since its very inception, Army Aviators have lived at the intersection of courage and innovation. From Professor Thaddeus Lowe, and experimentation with balloons to direct artillery fire in the Civil War, to today's rapid evolution of unmanned and autonomous systems, aviation warfighters have consistently embraced change and looked toward the next fight. As we enter a decisive decade for our Army and our Nation, a solid vision and aggressive spirit of innovation have never been more critical.

This moment, encapsulated by the activation of the Army's new Transformation and Training Command (T2COM) and the associated establishment of the Futures and Concepts Command as one of its major subordinate units, represents one of the most consequential structural shifts in the institutional Army in over fifty years! FCC is aligning the Army's ability to envision the future, experiment rigorously, and integrate requirements across operational units and the institution simultaneously, to enable the fielding of capabilities at speed and scale. This is real and needed transformation, and Army Aviation must also embrace the pace and magnitude of change.

## A New Command for a New Era

Last Summer, Army leadership deliberately chose a major institutional move to signal the magnitude of change required across our force at this critical juncture. This was so much more than the merging of two major Army commands (ACOMs). It was the reimagination of a singular command that is exponentially more than the sum of its parts. It is the complete rethinking of how we get a fielded army…fast! There is no argument that the entity most responsible for rebuilding our Army after Vietnam was the Training and Doctrine Command created from Continental Army Command and Combat Developments in the 1970s. It spawned professional military education, professionalized our Non-Commissioned Officer Corps (still the envy of armies around the world), developed new concepts and doctrine, invented combat training centers…the list goes on. Similarly, we saw the brilliance and effectiveness of Army Futures Command's flatter "go fast" innovative culture which

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U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY PFC CASSANDRA TIFFT

*An autonomous UAS takes off during Project Convergence-Capstone 5 (PC-C5) at Fort Irwin, CA, in March 2025. PC-C5 serves as an experiment for Joint, Multinational allies and partners that integrates technologies supporting an aggressive transformation platform for future warfighters.*

was inextricably linked with the start-up and venture capital focus in Austin. So today, we have a broader, more expansive, ACOM that links everything from first handshake with a recruit to first unit of assignment, from first inspirational idea to materiel solution, and then brings them together to rapidly create fielded capability.

T2COM combines, for the first time in modern history, the traditionally separate functions of force design, force development, and force generation under one command. As a part of this, FCC exists for one reason: To ensure our Soldiers can fight and win not only today, but tomorrow, and the decade after that… and that it is never a fair fight for our adversaries.

FCC brings together concepts, requirements, experimentation, and integration, into a coherent, synchronized force design effort that can be rapidly transitioned to our partners at the Combined Arms Command. To describe it succinctly, FCC's efforts demand imagination, innovation, and integration. While we are incentivizing bold action in ideas and innovation, we also demand a solid underpinning of analytic rigor and science provided by our system center engineers, labs, and operational analysts. This rigor is focused on learning from observations in places like Ukraine, Gaza, and the Indo-Pacific and informing senior leader decisions.

## The Changing Character of War

We see the character of warfare shifting at a speed the world has not seen in generations. Even a casual observer understands that persistent surveillance, precision ground fires, advancing autonomy, and contested domains are reshaping the battlefield in real time. Our forces face unprecedented threats from low-cost, highly adaptable unmanned systems in multiple domains.

The air-ground littoral, or upper tier of the land domain (as I like to call it) – a space not unfamiliar to Army Aviators – is now a zone of continuous combat involving thousands of small, unmanned aircraft, missiles, and manned platforms. UAS conduct sense and strike missions around the clock and are expanding into other roles such as extending command and control networks and sustainment at the edge. The result is a battlespace where action is constant, adaptation is rapid, and integration demands new tools, new formations, and new ways of fighting.

This environment reinforces several key ideas:

***Constant Observation***. Ubiquitous sensing makes all forces more vulnerable.

***Speed matters***. Decision advantage, speed of maneuver, and agile firepower will determine victory.

***Data is like ammunition***. Sensing, deciding, and acting faster than an adversary is as decisive as any weapon system.

***Every domain will be contested simultaneously***. Land, air, maritime, space, and cyber are converging. The most effective forces can influence multiple domains.

***Integration is the ultimate measure of power***. The Army that best connects sensors, shooters, decision makers, and agile formations will hold the initiative.

All of these apply to Army Aviation, and demand not only faster and more agile formations, but adaptive leaders.

The response must be a radical embrace of transformation. Launched effects, a more expansive and imaginative version of manned-unmanned teaming, greater dispersion of assembly areas, platform speed and range, reduced sustainment tail, and AI-assisted command and control systems/airspace integration tools are some of the essential adaptations required for Army Aviation to dominate in this new environment. Open, rapidly adaptable architectures, and a keen eye on cost are imperatives.

Yet, for all the revolutionary technology, the immutable nature of war endures. War remains a human endeavor. Technology is a powerful instrument, but it cannot replace the moral burden of command, the intuition of a seasoned leader, or the raw courage of our fighters. AI can process terabytes of data, but it is the warfighter's judgment that is irreplaceable. This new generation of Soldiers are "digital natives with analog courage" who wield these advanced technologies with the timeless virtues of the American Soldier. Our focus is on empowering our Soldiers, not replacing them.

## Powering Transformation Through Acquisition Reform

We have many partners in the "build the Army" part of the institution. I mentioned earlier the Combined Arms Command, but our materiel developers and acquisition community retain their central role in obtaining our kit. To get "better ideas, faster" into the hands of our Soldiers, we must do more than just innovate.[1] We must revolutionize the engine that turns those innovations into reality. Acknowledging that our legacy acquisition system was not built for the speed of digital-age conflict, the Army is executing its most significant acquisition reform in decades.

The core of this transformation lies in the creation of Portfolio Acquisition Executives (PAEs)[2]. These are empowered leaders with cradle-to-grave accountability for an entire warfighting portfolio. To enable PAEs with speed in requirement development, FCC has eliminated multiple repetitive and duplicative forums at echelon and provides the future capability directorates (FCD) in direct support of the PAEs. For the aviation community, this means the Maneuver Air PAE, along with the Aviation FCD, is the first point of entry for everything from autonomous air systems to the next-generation platforms that will team with them.

By consolidating functions and authority, leaders remove bureaucratic friction. The PAE is empowered to take calculated risks and streamline decision-making, ensuring a direct, high-speed pipeline from a validated requirement to a fielded capability. It is the organizational weapon that allows the Army to adopt a "venture capitalist mindset,"[3] rapidly scaling our most promising solutions and ensuring that the courage of our aviators is always matched by the superiority of their equipment.

## Army Aviation at the Heart of Transformation

Aviation has long been a hotbed for innovation. Before the Korean War, the Army's experience with helicopters was minimal. However, the harsh terrain and fluid battle lines of the war made traditional ground-based medical evacuation difficult and slow. In response, the Army deployed its first helicopter detachments to Korea in late 1950. The success of these early MEDEVAC missions directly influenced the development of future Army Aviation.[4]

Today, Army Aviation's role in transformation is even more vital. The Aviation Center of Excellence is advancing a bold vision for third-dimension ground combat, built on launched effects, and the seamless integration of autonomous air and ground systems with a new balance of more lethal and survivable manned platforms.

The Army learned long ago of the value of air and ground integrated formations. Now these capabilities must be re-focused from industrial age mass to software and autonomous age precision and synchronized effects

FCC's responsibility is to ensure that the ideas behind this vision (e.g., extended sensing and strike, reduced cognitive load, and combined manned/autonomous maneuver) are rigorously tested, validated or invalidated, and integrated.

Our experimentation efforts examine hard questions:

- How do we best balance launched effects with manned platforms for survivable deep sensing and strike?
- How can AI tools fuse data from multiple sensors into a common operational picture equally usable on a Soldier's handheld device, tablet, or in the cockpit?
- What formations most effectively blend autonomous systems, manned platforms, and ground maneuver into an effective combat element?
- What hardware and formation designs enable sustainment while dispersed?

These experiments help us move toward a future where autonomous systems make the first strike, absorb the first salvo, extend reach and lethality, and enable Soldiers to fight smarter, faster, and safer.

U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY SPC ZION THOMAS

*Soldiers sling load cargo for a UH-60A Black Hawk during an autonomous flight as part of persistent experimentation at Project Convergence - Capstone 4, Fort Irwin, CA., on March 10, 2024. During Project Convergence in 2022 at Yuma Proving Ground, AZ, a Black Hawk, using an autonomous system, performed three missions without a pilot.*

## The Road Ahead

FCC has a demanding agenda ahead, aligned with the Army's need for speed, agility, and integration. Our priorities include:

- Updating and aligning warfighting concepts across formations and domains.
- Conducting rigorous experiments with operational units (in the dirt at CTCs) to validate future force designs, including manned-unmanned combinations.
- Refining the continuous transformation framework in support of T2COM and alongside the acquisition community.
- Strengthening partnerships with industry, academia, and allied nations to accelerate learning and prototyping.
- Ensuring every validated concept leads to a real, fielded capability that Soldiers can train with and employ with confidence.

## Tomorrow Is Worth Protecting

The Army's transformation is not about technology alone. It is about fielding cohesive warfighting systems that are organized, trained, equipped, sustained, and led to win under the most demanding conditions. It is about honoring the sacred trust we share with our Soldiers.

Every idea we test, every formation we imagine, every experiment we run, and every concept we refine is ultimately about one thing: ensuring that when the Nation calls and our Soldiers step onto the field of battle, it is never a fair fight – for the enemy!

Forging the Vision!
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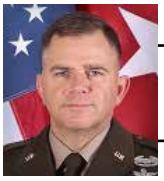
*LTG Michael C. "Mac" McCurry is the commanding general of Army Futures and Concepts Command, U.S. Army Transformation and Training Command, headquartered at Fort Eustis, VA.*





# Unmanned Systems: Defining Warfare in the Twenty-First Century

By BG Phillip C. Baker

U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY MATTHEW RYAN, PEO AVIATION PUBLIC AFFAIRS

*Soldiers conduct preflight checks on a launched effects (LE) system at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, WA, during a special user demonstration (SUD) in August 2025. The event marked a major modernization milestone as the first-time operational units used LE technology in a field environment.*

> "If small arms defined the twentieth century, drones will define the twenty-first.

They are the perfect convergence of artificial intelligence (AI), advanced materials, batteries and propulsion systems, sensor fusion and much more. They will absolutely dominate warfare in the twenty-first century." – Army Secretary Dan Driscoll, 2025 AUSA Annual Meeting & Exposition. The use of UAS in Ukraine and other conflicts highlights their critical role in modern warfare. UAS offers cost effective precision targeting, enhanced situational awareness, and the ability to sense and strike in denied areas. As warfare evolves, unmanned systems will remain central to shaping the battlefield and ensuring the Army maintains overmatch against adversaries.

U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY MATTHEW RYAN, PEO AVIATION PUBLIC AFFAIRS

*A Launched Effects-Short Range (LE-SR) system is fired during a demonstration at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, WA, in August 2025, marking the first time operational units have used the technology in the field.*

Army Aviation is at the forefront of the Army's drone dominance efforts. In short, to enable multi-domain operations and the Army Warfighting Concept, Army Aviation must execute interdependent manned and unmanned operations throughout the depth of the Division and Corps areas of operation. The newly formed Aviation Future Capability Directorate (AFCD) supports the Maneuver Air Portfolio Acquisition Executive (PAE) by driving innovation with warfighting concepts, experimentation, and accelerating requirements development.

Key to this effort is developing and scaling autonomy solutions in coordination with key stakeholders. Fielding unmanned systems is an important first step – the Army needs drones of multiple forms on the modern battlefield. However, developing appropriate levels

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of platform and mission autonomy is required to turn those systems into a revolutionary warfighting capability. The unmanned systems we field must enable warfighters through an interdependent ecosystem with the requisite mission autonomy that allows those unmanned systems to perform collaborative mission tasks which offload cognitive burden from warfighters. All the while, our unmanned systems must integrate with a common data fabric stretching across all formations to increase the velocity of commanders' decision cycles.

### Scaling Autonomy to Meet Operational Challenges

Autonomous solutions must address a few broad conceptual problems at scale to integrate into manned and unmanned formations and enable the Army Warfighting Concept. First, commanders must use unmanned systems to fight outnumbered and win on an expanded battlefield. Second, the Army must use unmanned systems to make contact at operational depths. These two statements cover a wide range of technology requirements but encapsulate the "so what" of integrating UAS into existing air and ground formations.

To enable formations to fight outnumbered and win, unmanned systems must operate as integrated components of warfighting formations. Accomplishing this requires systems that possess the mission autonomy to execute planned intent and complex tactical tasks with minimal human input. The Army will know that we are on the right track when a platoon leader's sector sketch depicts UAS covering their dead space in the same way that machine guns or mortars are currently depicted. It cannot require multiple Soldiers to operate one UAS. Autonomous solutions must enable one Soldier to monitor one or multiple dozens of UAS that feed critical updates to command nodes through on-platform autonomy and AI enabled mission command software. Finally, trust in the system's autonomy is essential for leaders to adopt these capabilities.

Autonomous systems must also enable commanders to make contact at operational depths to shape the close fight. Launched effects (LE) at division and corps levels will operate collaboratively, as a wolfpack, with interdependent payloads and behaviors. Some LE will find and fix targets, others will relay communications, while others will decoy enemy systems or deliver lethal payloads. These systems must operate effectively in communication-denied environments, executing planned intent while regaining connectivity when necessary to counter enemy capabilities. Ultimately, the integration of collaborative autonomous behaviors enables UAS to operate cohesively in complex environments.

All the while, AI enabled mission command systems must interface with autonomy software to enhance decision-making allowing individual systems to coordinate actions, share information, and execute missions with minimal human input.

### The AFCD Charter – Concepts, Experimentation, and Requirements

The AFCD attacks the challenges of integrating unmanned systems and scaling autonomy through its mandate to develop Army Aviation requirements, lead the development of aviation concepts that support the AWC, and plan and lead live and virtual experimentation.

The AFCD's concepts division is working with teams from across the Army to design and test future manned and unmanned formations. Most recently the Army's Future Studies Program (FSP) 26-1 provided a venue to test integrated manned and unmanned formations against a complex threat array to inform a manned unmanned mix of aviation capabilities


that increases survivability and lethality. FSP informed how UAS formations can augment existing systems to deliver critical effects and logistical support to tactical and operational formations.

We know that autonomous systems will play a critical role in shaping the close fight by sensing and striking at operational depths, enabling maneuver commanders to commit UAS before engaging the enemy with Soldiers. The concepts division refines that understanding into an aviation warfighting system – driving both experimentation and requirements.

The AFCD Experimentation Division leads events such as Project Convergence and the Concept Focused Warfighting Experiment (CFWE) to test and evaluate unmanned systems in realistic operational scenarios, offering valuable insights into their performance and limitations.

During the LE Special User Demonstration (SUD) at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Soldiers demonstrated how LE can enhance situational awareness and extend operational reach. The SUD validated short-range LE in division-level operations prior to fielding. Since then, the Army fielded LE to 1st Cavalry Division at NTC 26-02 and will field LE to every division at combat training centers (CTCs) and to every Multi Domain Task Force in FY26.

The upcoming CFWE in Spring 2026 will refine unmanned capabilities and ensure alignment with operational needs. CFWE experimentation will focus on delivering LE from AH-64 and UH-60 and offboarding ASE data to the common intelligence picture. Through experimentation, the AFCD informs new requirements and suggests updates to requirements already in existence.

Requirements ultimately drive material development. They outline the objective capability and chart an iterative path that enables rapid delivery through the fielding of minimum viable products, often commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) solutions, with insertion of new technologies as they mature. To that end, the AFCD recently held a Requirements Summit to streamline the requirements portfolio and ensure alignment with required capabilities and warfighting gaps – ultimately assisting the PAE with a prioritized roadmap for Army Aviation transformation.

The Army is prioritizing intuitive systems that are easy for Soldiers to operate, supported by training programs that prepare them to integrate drones into combat operations confidently. Building trust in system autonomy is critical, ensuring Soldiers view unmanned platforms as reliable teammates capable of enhancing mission success and operational effectiveness.

## Conclusion

AI-enabled unmanned systems are redefining twenty-first-century warfare, providing precision, situational awareness, and cost-effective solutions that enhance lethality and survivability. Recent and ongoing conflicts underscore their critical role in achieving operational success and maintaining overmatch against adversaries. To address evolving threats, the AFCD, in collaboration with government and industry partners, is working to scale autonomy to enable one-to-many-control, mission autonomy, and dynamic airspace integration across manned, unmanned, and fires systems. Modular, adaptable, platforms ensure these systems remain effective and ready for future challenges.

The AFCD, in support of the Maneuver Air PAE is shaping the future of warfare, ensuring the Army maintains dominance in an increasingly complex operational environment.

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*BG Phillip C. Baker is the director of the Aviation Future Capability Directorate located at Redstone Arsenal, AL.*



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# Overcoming Technical Challenges in the Age of Drone Dominance

By CW5 Micah Amman and CW5 John Bilton


U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY SGT MARTA SCHWAB

U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY NELSON BALLEW

*Above left: The Survivable Tactical Intelligence Launch Effect Target Tracking Observation (STILETTO) system prepares to launch a drone during Project Convergence-Capstone 5 (PC-C5) at Fort Irwin, CA., in March 2025.*

*Above right: A UH-60M pilot from the 82nd Combat Aviation Brigade uses a prototype Aviation Tactical Assault Kit (ATAK) to update mission data, a system designed to increase lethality and situational awareness, during Project Convergence-Capstone 5 at Fort Irwin, CA., in March 2025.*

Achieving drone dominance requires a robust and integrated infrastructure to support the simultaneous operation of hundreds of robotic systems. The integration of Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS), including Launched Effects (LE) and autonomy, is not merely about fielding advanced platforms.

It hinges on developing systems that enable seamless command and control (C2), employ both platform and mission autonomy, and shorten the sensor-to-shooter kill chains to unburden the Soldier. This article explores the core technical pillars required to realize the Army's war fighting concept for unmanned systems.

## The Need for Robust Networks

Effective UAS operations depend on a resilient (self-healing and switching) and secure network that can manage data from multiple platforms, especially as the Army aims to deploy swarms of UAS and LE for diverse missions. Current communication systems struggle with bandwidth and latency; a challenge magnified in contested environments. To overcome these hurdles, the Army is actively developing its next-generation command and control (NGC2) system. This initiative is designed to create a unified, data-centric, ecosystem that provides the reliable high-speed data transfer required for modern warfare. By integrating solutions like secure mesh networks, NGC2 will ensure that UAS can maintain connectivity in degraded environments and enable commanders to receive the real-time intelligence needed for rapid, informed, decisions.

## Common Control Interfaces

A critical aspect of the UAS strategy is establishing common control

interfaces. A key objective is to equip Soldiers with intuitive, user-friendly systems that allow them to operate multiple, diverse unmanned platforms (many-to-many, one-to-many, and potentially none-to-many) with minimal training. By simplifying control mechanisms, the Army can maximize the potential of its UAS capabilities and allow Soldiers to focus on mission execution rather than grappling with complex technology.

### Enhancing Autonomy

Autonomy is a game-changer, enabling unmanned systems to perform tasks with minimal human intervention and answer information requirements even with intermittent command and control. Therefore, the Army's strategy is prioritizing the development of autonomous capabilities by integrating artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) with computing taking place near the tactical edge. A key focus of this effort is on LE, where the Army is developing collaborative teaming algorithms that allow these air-and-ground launched drones to autonomously coordinate reconnaissance and strike missions. These systems are being designed with AI-driven algorithms for automatic target recognition (ATR), enabling them to provide targetable intelligence and make real-time decisions driven from sensor data. This allows UAS to adapt to changing conditions and execute missions with minimal human commands, ultimately increasing operational tempo and reducing cognitive burden on Soldiers and battle staff.

### Shortening the Sensor-to-Shooter Kill Chain

Ultimately, the integration of advanced networks, common controls, and autonomy is crucial for shortening, and increasing the velocity of, sensor-to-shooter kill chains. In modern warfare, rapidly detecting, identifying, and engaging targets is essential for maintaining the initiative. The Army is actively pursuing this with LE, which can be deployed at a safe standoff distance and push sensors deep into contested areas. By implementing real-time data analytics and AI-driven decision-making, these forward-deployed UAS and LE can process information quickly and relay actionable targeting data with high track-quality to ground forces almost instantly. This rapid feedback loop enhances a Soldier's ability to outmaneuver and defeat adversaries.

### Conclusion

Achieving drone dominance requires a comprehensive focus on these key technical pillars. By developing robust networks, establishing common control interfaces, enhancing autonomy, and shortening the sensor-to-shooter kill chain, the Army can empower its Soldiers to succeed in future conflicts. Such advancements are not without challenge but are essential for maintaining operational overmatch in the evolving era of unmanned warfare.

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*CW5 Micah Amman is the Senior Warrant Officer (Unmanned) and CW5 John Bilton the Senior Warrant Officer (Manned) for the Aviation Future Capability Directorate (AFCD) located at Redstone Arsenal, AL.*

# Advancing Army Aviation:
## Empowering Soldiers for the Future Fight

By SGM Clem A. Gamez

U.S. ARMY PHOTO

The battlefield is changing, and Army Aviation is evolving with it. You've heard the talk from our senior leaders: unmanned systems, AI, and new technologies are redefining how we fight. Secretary Driscoll recently laid out a strategic vision along these same lines.

U.S. ARMY PHOTO

My job is to tell you what it means for us—the NCOs and Soldiers who will turn that vision into a reality on the ground.

Aviation modernization is not just about fancy new helicopters or drones. It's about giving you the tools, the training, and the career paths you need to dominate the fight and, above all, to bring each other home safely. We are ensuring you have a voice in this process from the ground up, because the best technology in the world is useless if it doesn't work for the warfighter. Initiatives such as the Future Long-Range Assault Aircraft (FLRAA), the creation of the Tactical Unmanned Aircraft System (TUAS) Specialist–15X MOS, and the implementation of Mobile Advance Readiness Training (MART) are all strategically aligned with a single priority: equipping the modern Soldier for success.

*Above: At Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, a 15W UAS Operator learns soldering, a skill typically performed by a 15E UAS Systems Repairer, during the 15X Mobile Advanced Readiness Training Course (MART) to build a more versatile skill set.*

*Left: A student launches an SUAS to conduct reconnaissance during the "Force on Force" event of the 15X MART course at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii.*

### Putting Soldiers First: Building the FLRAA from the Ground Up

Too often in the past, we've been handed new equipment and told to "make it work." We're changing that. With the FLRAA, we are embedding our enlisted experts into the development process from the very beginning.

We hand-picked ten of our most experienced NCOs to serve on the FLRAA Operational Development Team (ODT). These aren't just any Soldiers; they are masters of their craft in maintenance, engine repair, and flight operations. Their fingerprints will be all over this aircraft long before it reaches the first flight line. They are there to ensure the FLRAA is not only lethal and fast but also maintainable in the toughest conditions. They'll make sure the access panels are in the right places, that the components are durable, and that it's a machine built for the Soldier.

We've already brought the first five NCOs on board, and by FY26, a second group specializing in fabrication, avionics, and cargo operations will join them. Their mission is simple: represent you and your expertise. This is our commitment to you – we will build the future of Army Aviation with you, not for you.

## 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.The CY 2024 National winners were featured in the April/May AAAA Army Aviation Mission Solutions Summit issue.*

AAPI FILE PHOTO

### Henry Q. Dunn Crew Chief of the Year, 2023

*Sponsored by Robertson Fuel Systems, L.L.C.*

### SGT Zachary H. Kingsbury

Company A, 2nd Battalion,
160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment
Fort Campbell, Kentucky

SGT Kingsbury is a combat proven MH-47G maintainer, crew chief, and NCO who excelled within Alpha Company 2/160th SOAR (Abn). He earned Fully Mission Qualified (FMQ) status on the MH-47G six months ahead of schedule after successfully completing multiple rigorous evaluations. Two months later, he earned his Flight Engineer designation due to his superior knowledge, expertise, and leadership. This impressive feat is usually reserved for the highest performing FMQs and generally takes two years to achieve, however, SGT Kingsbury accomplished this in only 15 months. This year he led two different CONUS training missions as the section NCOIC. His expertise resulted in 268 corrected maintenance actions totaling 588.2 accident-free man hours. His leadership directly resulted in the Task Force accomplishing nearly one hundred missions, totaling 600 flight hours. He is the embodiment of the total Soldier concept who recently graduated from the Air Movement Control Officer Course, increasing the battalion's deployment capabilities by becoming qualified to certify Strategic Airlift operations. Finally, he selflessly volunteered at work and off-duty to mentor junior NCOs and crew chiefs, guaranteeing their future success while maintaining the prestigious legacy of Alpha Company 2/160th SOAR. These qualities and his professionalism identify him as the AAAA Henry Q. Dunn Crew Chief of the Year.

#### Smarter, Not Harder: Evolving Training for the Modern Warfighter

We've heard you loud and clear: The strain of long training pipelines and time away from home is a burden on you and your families. We must train to a high standard, but we also must be smart about it. That's why we are evolving our training delivery to better support you.

Our initial Mobile Advance Readiness Training (MART) concept proved that we could bring agile, high-impact training directly to the warfighter. The lessons we learned from training with units like the 25th Infantry Division were invaluable and showed us a better way forward. Based on your feedback and these lessons, we are refining this model to be even more efficient and sustainable.

Moving forward, we are shifting to a powerful "train-the-trainer" model centralized at Fort Huachuca. Instead of sending teams out, we will bring designated Soldiers to the schoolhouse for premiere, expert-level instruction. Upon graduation, these Soldiers will return to their home station not just as operators, but as certified facilitators equipped with a comprehensive training support package (TSP) and the knowledge to run the course for their own units.

This evolution empowers your unit to own and sustain its own expert training, on your schedule, right in your own backyard. The result is what matters most: less long TDY, more time at home with your families, and a deeper level of expertise embedded directly into your formation. It's a solution built on respecting your time and maximizing your unit's lethality.

#### A New Path for Experts: The 15X TUAS Specialist

To ensure we dominate the unmanned battlefield, we are introducing the new 15X MOS, a dedicated career field created directly from your feedback. For too long, our skilled UAS operators and maintainers have lacked a clear path for progression. The 15X solves this by creating a master of tactical UAS operations at the brigade and below. They will be the tip of the spear, responsible for conducting reconnaissance, managing swarms, and countering electronic warfare threats.

Creating the 15X MOS provides a dedicated career path for our unmanned systems experts, with opportunities for leadership, professional development, and promotion. It ensures that your invaluable skills are recognized and that you have a path to advance as a leader in this critical field.

#### Conclusion: Our Commitment to You

Modernization is more than just new gear. It's about our people. True combat effectiveness comes from pairing the most advanced technology with the unmatched skill and ingenuity of our Soldiers. It's about empowering the entire Army Aviation team, from the cockpit to the command post to the maintenance bay, to become the lethal, agile, and expert force our Army needs. From empowering our NCOs to help design the FLRAA, to smarter training that respects your time, to creating new career paths for our UAS experts, we are committed to keeping all our people at the center of everything we do.

Together, we will ensure that Army Aviation not only owns the skies of the twenty-first century but that our Soldiers have the tools and support they need to lead the charge.

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*SGM Clem A. Gamez is the senior enlisted advisor for the Aviation Future Capability Directorate (AFCD) located at Redstone Arsenal, AL.*

# 2040 – Keeping Up By Looking Out

By COL Aaron Schilleci and Mr. Kevin Scherrer

The ARNG Aviation Enterprise continues that work, choosing the year 2040 as our current long-range target, as fifteen years from today gives us time to effect significant change.

T2COM provides us with a nice launching point, with their publication "The Operational Environment, 2024-2034." We add the following predictions for 2040:

- the widespread implementation of AI and quantum computing, which may allow for more-secure cyber environments.
- more widespread counter-space, hypersonic missiles, nuclear, directed-energy, biological, social engineering, and radicalized insider threats
- increased potential for complex attacks well behind the FLOT, resulting in disrupted global supply chains
- increased potential for eroded American values - will our newest residents assimilate or radicalize?

## What the Guard Does

As we continue our planning, we remain grounded in our purpose - To provide high-quality, leading-edge, and rapidly-responsive Air and Space capabilities to the Governors and COCOMs.

But the Guard's LSCO vs. DOMOPS Dual Mission is an inadequate description of what the Guard actually does, so we choose this as an improved model:


***Each Title now implies Where, What, and Duration.***

*Foreign: outside the 54 States, Territories, and District (S/T/D), Title 10*
*Combat: likely kinetic action against a foreign adversary.*
*Campaigns: likely a long-duration stay.*
*Domestic: inside the 54, might be more than one S/T/D, Title 10 or 32*
*Security: protecting our population and property*
*Operations: likely a mid-duration stay*
*State: within one of the 54. Title 32*
*Support: responding to State (community) emergencies.*
*Missions: likely only until the immediate task is completed.*

U.S. ARMY GRAPHIC

Much of what we do in the planning business is about accomplishing the mission, using insufficient resources, and incurring the least aggregate risk.

Why is this model important for the Guard? If we can define, scope, and position the circles correctly, the overlap tells us where to focus our training and preparation dollars in an era of reduced resources.

We've also reorganized and rebranded inside our Arlington Readiness Center to better reflect our tasks. We've become the Air & Space Division, responsible for anything that operates above the earth's surface or counters threat systems that do so (with a few exceptions).

## Requirements and Capabilities

The goal of our strategy is to identify those Air & Space capabilities that will be required of the Guard in the year 2040. PAE's December 2025 Requirements Summit outbrief is a great start, to which we add the following:

***Persistent stare***. Untethered, for both ISR and networked communications and data, capable of long-term station-keeping. Relevant in both LSCO and COIN, this has applications in both Domestic Security Operations and State Support Missions as well.

***sUAS*** inside aviation force structures for low-altitude and immediate on-scene observation. Particularly helpful in search and rescue operations in disaster response.

An ***optionally-crewed light utility helicopter***, capable of acceptable risk operations in all three domains ("circles"). A MEDEVAC-dedicated version of this aircraft is specifically undesired.

***Both inter- and intra-theater fixed wing*** capable of high speed, moderate cargo, and acceptable survivability. Capability constrained by cost, and likely a two-aircraft solution.

***Counter-UAS***, both aircraft- and ground-based. Both kinetic and non-kinetic, and highly "intelligent."

A ***highly-capable, specialized recovery capability***, to retrieve personnel, equipment, or aircraft, or to insert well-equipped repair or rescue teams as a last resort.

A mobile, intelligent, and organic ***data-fusion center***, capable of integrating and managing airspace, operations, and logistics. This would also provide improved and organic awareness of joint, combined, and interagency activities.

A remote, automated medical-treatment capability, designed for forward or enroute care without the need for a physician or other medical personnel.

## Path Forward

Domain and responsibility boundaries are more blurred than ever, and peacetime resources will always be insufficient. So, we seek mission accomplishment and reduced risk through our continued and exceptional collaboration and cooperation with the entire Army Aviation Enterprise.

Go Guard. Go Air and Space.

*COL Aaron Schilleci is the chief and Mr. Kevin Scherrer the deputy chief of the Air & Space Division, Army National Guard, Arlington, VA.*

# Icing Certification Testing: Part 1 – Preparing

By Dr. Thomas L. Thompson

A fall visitor to Huntsville, AL, might be puzzled by the sight of a Chinook helicopter flying several thousand feet over Redstone Arsenal spraying water from a large orange apparatus attached to the aircraft (Photo).

U.S. ARMY REDSTONE TEST CENTER PHOTO

*CH-47F with HISS installed.*

"What is that?" the visitor might ask. An informed local, unfazed by the aircraft and the cloud of moisture trailing behind it, might respond quickly, "Oh, that's just the Army flight test folks getting ready for icing testing up north. They want to make sure everything's working right before they get there."

Lynn and Kim Hanks, my colleagues at the Aviation Flight Test Directorate (AFTD) at the U.S. Army Redstone Test Center (RTC), are all too familiar with that routine. The Hanks have been heading north for icing testing most of the 28 years they have been married. The tests, which demonstrate that an aircraft will operate safely throughout an icing envelope, usually begin in the fall and continue through the spring. Although there may be long periods of downtime due to weather and aircraft maintenance, Kim says, "We enjoy working with industry test teams and learning about designs of ice protection systems. And, the hotel staff is wonderful, welcoming, and treats us like family."

Lynn, an experimental test pilot who flew his first icing test in 1973, and Kim, a flight test engineer (FTE) who supported her first icing test in 1997, begin preparations for the next icing season soon after they return to Redstone Arsenal in the spring. Two aircraft are readied for testing – the CH-47F with the Helicopter Icing Spray System (HISS) and a RC-12G "calibration aircraft" that is equipped with special instrumentation called Airborne Cloud Measurement Equipment (ACME) to measure characteristics of the HISS spray cloud.

The HISS spray boom, designed and built for the Army by All American Engineering Company in 1972, is suspended about 19 feet below the helicopter from a cross-tube through the cargo compartment. The spray boom consists of two parallel 27-foot trapeze sections separated by 5 feet and constructed of concentric metal pipe. Bleed air from two auxiliary power units, and water, pumped from an 1800-gallon tank in the cargo bay, pass through the outer and inner pipes, respectively, to 100 atomizing nozzles distributed along the trapeze sections. The system is designed so that water droplet size distributions in the HISS spray cloud more closely resemble those found in natural clouds. The Hanks and the AFTD team verify water and airflow rates through the system, deployment and retraction of the boom, and proper functioning of the systems that independently jettison the water supply and spray boom in case of emergency.

The RC-12G ACME aircraft includes laser particle-sizing probes mounted at the wing tips to measure cloud water droplet sizes and distribution, a liquid water content sensor to measure the mass of liquid per unit volume of air, two visual ice accretion meters, independent differential and static pressure sensors, a total air temperature probe, and a dew-point hygrometer. As lead FTE, Kim verifies the calibration of these systems, which are critical to conducting the testing and ensuring credibility of the results.

In addition to readying the two AFTD aircraft for testing, Lynn and Kim collaborate with pilots and engineers from the company or organization responsible for the aircraft that will be certified for icing. The test plan is reviewed carefully to ensure that test conditions are aligned with certification requirements. Also, since natural icing test results can be supplemented with artificial icing test results (with the aircraft under test flying behind the HISS), test plans include both types of points.

When preparations are complete, the two AFTD aircraft are ferried to the test site in Michigan, where the AFTD team joins forces with the industry team supporting the aircraft to be tested.

In our next two articles, we'll discuss how icing certification tests are conducted and how the results are reported to the airworthiness authorities.

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

# Motion Sickness, Part 2

By CPT R. Tyler Williamson, D.O., F.S.

In Dr. Carlson's July 2025 "Ask the Flight Surgeon" article, she discussed the overarching topic of motion sickness. The intent of this article is to dive into specifics about the diagnosis, required treatment, and medications.

This article builds on the previous discussion to provide further explanations for our aviation community.

## Diagnosis

As stated in the prior article, motion sickness occurs when there are mixed signals sent to the brain by the inner ear's vestibular system, the eyes, and the sensors in your joints and skin that are part of the somatosensory system. While most people associate motion sickness with nausea and vomiting, the symptoms can also include cold sweating, pale skin, and a specific set of symptoms known as "Sopite Syndrome," which includes drowsiness, lethargy, apathy, and mood changes.

Airsickness presents on a spectrum of varying intensity. Many studies highlight this spectrum by utilizing terms like mild, moderate, or severe airsickness. Ideally, a student aviator adapts to the novel environment of flight. However, when the condition becomes severe enough to interfere with flight training or safety, it becomes a medical concern. It is much more likely for students to experience airsickness than experienced rated aviators because the students have not yet developed the internal model required to process these new motion cues. However, even experienced aviators can have brief episodes of motion sickness due to factors like heat, dehydration, fatigue, extreme flying profiles, or a new airframe.

## Statistics

Data between studies differs on the prevalence of air sickness in pilots. A range of 40 to 60 out of 100 pilots at

some point experienced motion sickness related to flight. Of that symptomatic group, about 6-9 pilots had severe enough symptoms to stop training. The majority were able to become desensitized by continuing training and experienced on average 2 episodes of motion sickness since the beginning of their flight training, although some experienced up to 10 episodes.

## Treatment

For those with persistent or recurring motion sickness, there are processes to evaluate, treat, and waive the condition to allow for continued flight. The Army utilizes a specialized Motion Sickness Desensitization Program. Historically, military desensitization programs, which combine exposure to the motion stimulus with cognitive confidence-building strategies, have shown success rates ranging from 80% to 85% in returning aviators to the cockpit. "Success" is defined as the improvement of symptoms allowing the aviator to return to unrestricted flight duties.

Regarding medications, most anti-motion sickness drugs have side effects that are generally incompatible with flying duties. For example, scopolamine is an effective drug but can cause drowsiness, blurred vision, dry mouth, and dizziness, which degrade crew performance. Consequently, your flight surgeon may ground you while initiating these medications to control severe symptoms.

For desensitization therapy, Fort Rucker is home to the only U.S. Army air sickness desensitization program. They accept aircrew for medical temporary duty (TDY). The program focuses on controlled exposure to motion (progressing from the spinning Barany chair to a simulator then finally to actual flight) combined with relaxation techniques. This allows the brain to update its internal model of orientation without the interference of sedating medications. However, when appropriate, scopolamine patches are locally authorized for supervised, short-term use for in-flight symptom control. Caution is required because some studies suggest that the use of anti-motion sickness medications may delay the physiological process of habituation, or the body's natural learning process to ignore the motion triggers. This implies that using medication might slow down your long-term adaptation to the flight environment!

## Conclusion

If you are a student aviator experiencing these symptoms, you are not alone. Motion sickness is considered a normal response to an abnormal environment. While many students will experience some degree of airsickness during their initial training, the vast majority will adapt naturally. For those who struggle with persistent or recurring symptoms, the Army's desensitization program is a proven resource to keep you flying with minimal to no symptoms, so you can focus on your mission.

**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 do our best 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 author and researchers and should not be construed as an official Department of the Army position unless otherwise stated.*

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*CPT (Dr.) R. Tyler Williamson is a flight surgeon at the U.S. Army Department of Aviation Medicine, Fort Rucker, AL.*

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# UAS Marketplace Strategy:
## Driving Innovation in Unmanned Aircraft Systems

By LTC Jeffrey Bess, Matthew Hudson, Scott Thovson, and Anthony Buchanan


U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY MATTHEW RYAN

*COL Danielle Medaglia, project manager for the Uncrewed Aircraft Systems Project Office, speaks to attendees at the UAS Marketplace Industry Days held in Huntsville, AL on September 16.*

Today's rapidly changing battlefield environment, and hard-fought lessons learned from Ukraine and the middle east, require new ways of doing business and acquiring capabilities for Soldiers. The Drone Dominance Memo, signed by the Secretary of War, charts a bold new direction for the Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) Industrial Base, calling for the rapid expansion of production and delivery of UAS. By leveraging the UAS Marketplace, vendors can expand production capacity and offer units a range of UAS options to Army formations tailored to specific mission requirements.

The Marketplace is the one-stop shop for trusted UAS solutions vetted through a clear onboarding and compliance process. It employs a three-phased onboarding method designed to streamline vendor entry while preserving product quality and compliance. This streamlined process consists of Initial Acceptance, Provisional and Cleared phases. This approach marks a significant shift from traditional acquisition strategies, which relied on a limited number of vendors. The new strategy aligns with the Secretary of War's Acquisition Transformation directive, fostering competition, driving innovation, and broadening the array of solutions to meet operational needs.

"The UAS Marketplace is a transformative approach to acquisition," said COL Danielle Medaglia, the Army's Project Manager for UAS. "By fostering competition and innovation, we are ensuring that Soldiers have access to the most advanced technologies to meet their mission requirements. This strategy is about delivering capability at scale and at speed."

### UAS Industry Days: A Call to Action

The UAS Marketplace Industry Days, held September 16-18, 2025, at the Von Braun Center in Huntsville, AL served as a pivotal event in modernizing UAS acquisition and development. Industry partners must continue working with the Army to shape the future of unmanned systems. Discussions emphasized small business participation, interoperability standards, and balancing cost with capability. Army leaders highlighted key challenges, such as supply

chain verification and opportunities with reduced barriers for smaller vendors.

"Our process emphasizes collaboration and innovation," said MAJ Christopher Dudley, Launched Effects Assistant Product Manager. "By leveraging available contracts and simplifying acquisition processes, we are driving efficiency and ensuring the Army stays ahead in unmanned systems technology."

## Progress Since Industry Days

Since the event, the Army has made significant strides in integrating key partners into working groups, including the Army Research Lab (ARL), the Global Tactical Edge Acquisition Directorate (G-TEAD), Joint Interagency Task Force (JIATF) 401 Counter UAS, and Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Defense Exports and Cooperation. Their collaboration has been instrumental in advancing objectives while unifying the effort for UAS Marketplace development.

"The UAS Marketplace is a critical accelerator for our modernization efforts," BG David Phillips, Deputy Portfolio Acquisition Executive-Maneuver Air, said. "By aligning with the Secretary of War's directive, we are creating a competitive environment that drives innovation and ensures our Soldiers have the tools they need to succeed on the battlefield."

The UAS Marketplace has coordinated early and often with the Drone Dominance Working Group (D2WG) to align efforts with Army directives. By incorporating subject matter expertise into the D2WG the Marketplace will address obstacles and provide feedback to key decision-makers. Additionally, efforts are underway to accelerate compliance with the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) Section 848, ensuring capabilities reach Soldiers faster. To fully scale our defense industrial base, the Army seeks a wide range of buyers across the Department of War, other key government agencies, international allies, and industry to use the UAS Marketplace.

The UAS Marketplace team has also advanced a digital storefront and is collaborating with Amazon Web Services (AWS) and the Enterprise Cloud Management Agency (ECMA) to reach several critical milestones. Key features being integrated into the storefront compare functionality, quantifiable feedback mechanisms and ordering features. These milestones will help the Army onboard current vendors and make their products visible to users.

Obtaining the Authority to Operate (ATO) will be a significant milestone for the team and is expected by the end of January 2026. This ATO signifies that all the requirements have been met to secure the digital storefront for all users in the environment. Initial efforts include working with existing vendors on Initial Acceptance Packages and loading data onto the storefront. The Army is initially focused on system level assets with verified product mapping and will progress into other capabilities such as software, subcomponents, and sustainment. Immediately following an ATO, the Army will conduct a virtual launch event to assist all interested stakeholders with UAS Marketplace onboarding and training.

## Looking Ahead: Launched Effects Initiative

Launched Effects (LE) are a family of attritable air- and surface-launched unmanned systems designed to autonomously or semi-autonomously deliver mission effects either as independent agents or as a member of a collaborative networked team. Disruptive by design, LE challenges traditional manned/unmanned teaming paradigms. The introduction of LE represents a shift from UAS as tools to UAS as teammates. Launched effects will accelerate the kill chain and improve maneuver. Introducing LE to Army Divisions strengthens operational effectiveness and readiness across air and ground domains, helping the Army address emerging threats in contested environments, and presenting multiple dilemmas to our enemie.s

The LE initiative complements the UAS Marketplace strategy by prioritizing speed, modularity, and innovation. Focused on rapid prototyping and iterative development, the initiative delivers capabilities to Soldiers in months rather than years. With an umbrella of available contracts and simplified acquisition processes, it fosters continuous competition and refines solutions based on real-time feedback from Soldiers.

"The Launched Effects initiative is designed to deliver capabilities at the speed of relevance," said LTC Hunter Gray, LE Product Manager. "By focusing on rapid prototyping and iterative development, we ensure Soldiers receive tailored solutions that meet their operational needs in record time."

The LE Product Office is collaborating with a growing number of vendors, cultivating a competitive environment that drives innovation and delivers cutting-edge solutions. By attracting new vendors and bolstering industry partnerships, the office addresses evolving operational demands while remaining agile and responsive to emerging challenges.

Recently, PM UAS delivered the first LEs to the Army. Soldiers deployed and controlled multiple LEs, demonstrating the system's performance and its capability to independently execute LE missions. Feedback from these real-world evaluations is driving rapid iteration and refining equipment to meet operational requirements and strengthen mission effectiveness.

## Path Ahead for 2026

As momentum from Industry Days continues, the UAS Marketplace fosters collaboration, streamlined processes, and enhances unmanned systems' capabilities. Integrating key partners and close engagement with industry and users are central to this strategy. By driving innovation and giving Soldiers access to advanced UAS technologies, the Marketplace transforms acquisition and shapes the future of unmanned systems.

The UAS Marketplace is more than a platform, it is a transformative approach to acquisition that promises to redefine the future of how the Army acquires and delivers unmanned systems. The primary function of the UAS Marketplace and what motivates the team is to deliver a broader range of capabilities faster than ever before to meet unique mission needs.

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*LTC Jeffrey Bess, product manager for Tactical Uncrewed Aircraft Systems, Matthew Hudson, UAS Marketplace lead, Scott Thovson, strategic analyst for Launched Effects, and Anthony Buchanan, operations analyst for Launched Effects, support the Uncrewed Aircraft Systems Project Office on Redstone Arsenal, AL.*

# Excellence through Competition

By COL Nicholas D. Ryan

PHOTO COURTESY CIVILIAN MARKSMANSHIP PROGRAM

*Soldiers compete at a National Match in military rifle marksmanship circa 1920.*

*"The first step – in the direction of preparation to avert war if possible, and to be fit for war if it should come – is to teach our men to shoot."*

President Theodore Roosevelt,
Message to the Senate and House of Representatives, December 8, 1908

U.S. ARMY PHOTO

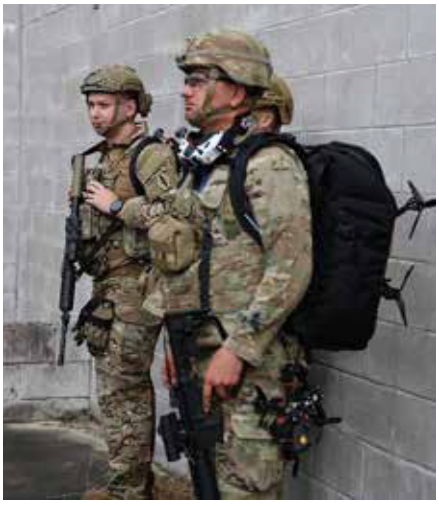
*Members of the Army Drone Team at the National Drone Match in Florida, December 2025.*

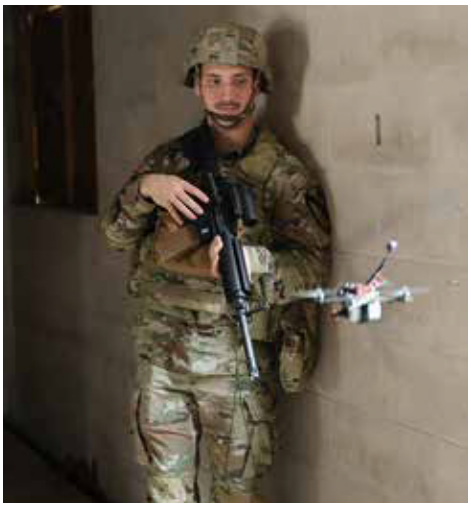
Throughout history, cultures have fostered skill in combat by recognizing the best fighters. As weapons and tactics evolved, the best warriors gathered in a variety of competitions to showcase their skills. Leaders and warriors would use these events to observe the other competitors, develop new techniques, share the best tactics, and reward excellence. Since the Revolutionary War, the United States military has used competition as a method to build and reward excellence in combat skills.

Following the Spanish-American war, President Theodore Roosevelt recognized that the military desperately needed to improve its rifle marksmanship skills. Working with Congress and the Department of War, President Roosevelt established the National Board for the Promotion of Rifle Practice (NBPRB). In 1903, the NBPRB held the first National Match with marksmanship teams from across the military. Since the inaugural National Match in 1903, the military's best warrior skill competitions continue to evolve, including the Best Ranger, Best Sniper, Best Sapper, Best Warrior, Best Squad, Sandhurst, and the Sullivan Cup.

Over a century later, there is an evolution of weapons and tactics transforming conflict around the world. Drones and robotics are proliferating at an exponential rate, shaping how we fight. The 2025 Presidential and Secretary of War's executive orders on Unleashing Drone Dominance recognized that developing skills in drone combat is essential to the military's ability to fight and win. With this recognition and support, the Aviation and Maneuver Centers of Excellence, in partnership with the Army Aviation Association of America (AAAA), established a new competition in arms program, the annual Army Best Drone Warfighter Competition.

In early 2026, drone teams from across the Army will converge at Huntsville, AL to compete for the title of Best Drone Warfighter. Invited from the Active, Reserve, and National Guard, each Corps, Division, Special Operations Command, and drone training school will send their best Soldiers to compete in a head-to-head series of drone contests. These events integrate observations from drone warfare in overseas conflicts, while remaining aligned with





U.S. ARMY PHOTOS BY LESLIE HERLICK, FORT RUCKER, AL

*Soldiers from the Army Drone Team conduct a mission brief before a tactical event at the National Drone Match in Florida, December 2025.*

*A Soldier from the Army Drone Team follows a drone during a tactical event at the National Drone Match in Florida, December 2025.*

*Soldiers from the Army Drone Team use a drone before entering a building during a tactical event at the National Drone Match in Florida, December 2025.*

Army Warrior Skills and Mission Essential Tasks. Soldiers of any rank or military occupational specialty (MOS) can compete in the Army Best Drone Warfighter Competition's three lanes: the Best Drone Operator, the Best Tactical Drone Squad, and the Best Drone Innovation.

The Best Drone Operator Lane is designed to identify and reward the individual Soldier with the best training, mental acuity, and operator skill set. To ensure a level playing field and focus on individual skills versus material solutions, every Soldier will employ an identical NDAA compliant First Person View (FPV) drone. The operators will fly in a head-to-head race through an urban terrain obstacle course. They will receive penalties for veering off path, missing target guides, or crashing. Each competitor can use their drone to knock other competitors out of the air. This lane will gather lessons on the individual skills, unit training programs, and local resources the Soldiers leveraged to become the best operator.

The Best Tactical Drone Squad Lane is designed to identify and reward the unit with the best squad tactics, techniques, and procedures. Soldiers will employ any combination of NDAA compliant Group 1 or Group 2 drone equipment they desire to bring from their home station. A team of two drone operators will receive a mission, conduct hasty mission planning, and conduct a tactical road march to a hide site, carrying all required drones and equipment with them. They will execute a reconnaissance with their hunter drone to identify targets and then destroy those targets with one way attack drones. They will be evaluated in the total time to complete the lane while properly identifying and destroying the correct targets, demonstrating the tasks, conditions, and standards from the mission essential task list. This lane will gather lessons on the squad tactics, techniques, procedures, training programs, material solutions, and local resources available to allow them to train in these skills.

The Best Drone Innovation Lane is designed to identify and reward the unit with the most innovative Soldier built material solution. Units will bring any Group 1 or Group 2 drone that has been fabricated and built by Soldiers at their installation using NDAA compliant components. The first evaluation task will be a board proposal to a group of drone engineers from across military, civilian, and academia.

Units will be judged on multiple criteria, including the total cost, time to build, component application, ability to scale, and capabilities of their drone. The final evaluation task will require them to employ their drone through an obstacle course to demonstrate its capabilities. This lane will gather lessons on the fabrication capabilities, component utilization, required training, and local resources available to achieve the innovation.

Like all military skill evaluations, the goal of the Army Best Drone Warfighter Competition is not to hand out trophies, but to collect, analyze, and share the best DOTMLPFP tactics, techniques, and procedures. Teams from the Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL), Transformation Integration Directorates (TID), Future Capability Directorates (FCD), Program Executive Offices (PEO), and Combat Training Centers (CTCs) will embed in each lane to collect the best practices from each team. These observations will be analyzed and integrated into Army-wide DOTMLPFP transformation efforts.

On-going efforts to achieve drone dominance, combined with anticipation for the inaugural Army Best Drone Warfighter Competition, are already driving innovation and transformation across our formations. Installations are hosting local drone competition programs to develop, train, and identify the best drone operators. Units are innovating on new drone TTPs based on lessons taken from other organizations. As technology evolves and the execution of modern warfare adapts, the annual Army Best Drone Warfighter Competition will continue to foster excellence in drone warfare.

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*COL Nicholas D. Ryan is the Director of the Unmanned Aircraft Systems Transformation & Lessons Learned Manager, Transformation Integration Directorate, U.S. Army Aviation Center of Excellence, Army Transformation & Training Command (T2COM), at Fort Rucker, AL.*

# Transforming UAS Training:
## Achieving Drone Dominance with the 15X Tactical UAS Specialist

By LTC Lisa M. Becker

U.S. ARMY PHOTOS

*Above left: A 2-13th student executes pre-mission checks on an sUAS.*

*Above top right: 2-13th students execute reconnaissance tasks during field training at Fort Huachuca, AZ.*

*Above lower right: A student at 2-13th conducts battle damage assessment, a skill taught to quickly return air vehicles to flight.*

In the Secretary of War's "Unleashing Drone Dominance" memorandum, he outlined three focus areas. Where the first two focus areas zero-in on procuring the best drone technology, modifying current capabilities, or amassing drones, the third focus area requires an overhaul to drone training. The 2nd Battalion, 13th Aviation Regiment – the Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) Training Battalion – recognizes that *how* and *what* we train UAS Warfighters is just as critical to achieving drone dominance as resourcing materiel solutions.

Beginning in the spring of 2025, senior leaders recognized the need to man formations on today's battlefield with a group 1-3 UAS specialist capable of outperforming traditional operator or maintainer roles. The 2-13th answered the call to transform training and began the creation of a new Military Occupational Specialty (MOS), the 15X Tactical UAS Specialist. Instructors at 2-13th teach the Tactical UAS Specialist to employ, operate, repair, service, modify, fabricate, and train UAS in groups 1-3. Most importantly, the Tactical UAS Specialists are master learners, adapting to ever-changing technology and tactical employment of drones.

In June 2025, Army leaders formally charged the 2-13th with two lines of effort (LOE) that comprise the new 15X MOS. First, 2-13th is leading a Train the Trainer (T3) course which converts over 2000 Aviation Warfighters in the operational force from their current MOS of 15E or 15W (Tactical UAS Maintainer and Operator) to 15X. The second LOE focuses on developing a new 15X program of instruction for initial entry trainees that can meet the demands of any operational environment.

To tackle the T3 LOE that focuses on the operational force, ten instructors from 2-13th conducted Mobile Advanced Readiness Training (MART) at 25th ID less than six weeks after the initial concept was born. The intent of the pilot was to cross-train 30 UAS Soldiers from 25th ID, providing each Soldier additional skills such as additive manufacturing, sensor exploitation, survivability, counter-UAS, and tactical

training prior to the culminating force-on-force assessment. Most of these Lightning Soldiers went to a brigade field exercise and then received 15X validation at JPMRC 26-01.

The 2-13th team implemented lessons learned from these exercises at 25th ID to refine the training plan for the T3 course that starts January 2026 at Fort Huachuca, AZ. This new T3 course, derived from 25th ID MART improvements, is a seven-week course attended by 15E and 15W leaders across the operational force. Upon completion of the seven-week resident course, these leaders attend a two-week online course where they learn how to teach the T3 curriculum. Afterward, these leaders return to their corps or division to deliver the seven-week course to 15E and 15W at their unit.

Alongside training the operational force, the 2-13th began focusing on the second LOE, creating a new program of instruction for the 15X initial entry trainees. Rather than merging the relevant 15E and 15W curriculum, the team overhauled instruction to meet the needs of today's students and the demands of the operational force. The team used the following premise to begin the rapid transformation to the 15X: While advances in drone technology provide powerful tools for the battlefield, Soldiers trained as master learners truly unlock innovation and transform drones from a mere tool into a dynamic solution.

To create adaptable and innovative UAS Specialists, the 2-13th first looked at lesson plans, refining each one to give students an interactive environment. Lessons are now student-centric where research, scenario-driven prompts, group work, and hands-on instruction are emphasized. The outcome of a student-centric learning environment moves students higher on the cognitive hierarchy, moving from recall and rote memorization to analyzing ideas and creative problem solving.

The modification of classroom spaces also enabled the transformation to a student-centric learning environment. The unit upgraded classrooms with Wi-Fi and provide student-issued laptops for in-class research. Additionally, instructors facilitate hands-on instruction with interactive multimedia instruction complemented by capabilities such as an expanded 3D printing lab and upgraded electrical and soldering stations.

The 2-13th continued faculty development of 15X instructors through cross-training and refresher training on the Adult Learning Model. Instructors cross-trained on skills traditionally taught by maintainers or operators and were validated on new material for the 15X course. As the lessons were built for a student-centric environment, the instructors learned new techniques to move away from instructor-centric, lecture-based training to guide and facilitate discussion amongst students. The instructor training will prove critical to the success of the students both in class and in the operational force.

An important aspect of the 15X is that each Soldier can integrate into any maneuver formation and, also, understand how UAS compliment and inform the ground force commander's scheme of maneuver. To augment faculty development, the 2-13th partnered with the cadre at the Reconnaissance and Security Leaders Course at Fort Benning, GA to inform 15X instructors. 2-13th instructors learned instructional techniques to effectively deliver training in field craft, movement techniques, and battle drills. Instructors will use these skills throughout the 15X T3 with the operational force, initial entry training, and during each culminating field training assessment.

Finally, the unit is partnering with the United States Army Aeromedical Research Lab (USAARL) at Fort Rucker, AL. The scientists at USAARL will provide data-driven feedback on teaching methodology to achieve the goal of creating a more innovative UAS Warfighter for the operational force. The partnership with USAARL will create an important feedback loop to ensure the 15X instructors and curriculum adapt to current technology, battlefield observations, and needs of the U.S. Army.

Although drone dominance is often associated with the type and number of air vehicles flying in the sky, the 2-13th focuses on enhanced training to deliver UAS solutions to the ground force commander. The team looks forward to training current 15E and 15W leaders, while also growing the new generation of 15X Tactical UAS Specialists. By merging technology and rapid adaptation alongside the master learner 15X, the force stands ready to unleash drone dominance.

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*LTC Lisa M. Becker is the commander of 2-13th Aviation Regiment, U.S. Army Aviation Center of Excellence, Fort Huachuca, AZ.*

# Eagle in the Night: Differentiating the 160th SOAR (Airborne) MQ-1 Operator

By James Matthews

COURTESY PHOTO

The world of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) has revolutionized modern warfare, offering persistent surveillance, precision strikes, and invaluable intelligence gathering capabilities. Within the U.S. Army Aviation community, two distinct UAV platforms – the MQ-1C Gray Eagle and the MQ-9 Reaper – stand out as stalwarts in the fight against terrorism and global instability. While both systems share some operational similarities, the highly specialized 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne) "Night Stalkers" field a unique cadre of MQ-1C operators who possess skills and undergo training distinct from their MQ-9 counterparts. This article delves into the nuances that differentiate these two operator profiles, focusing on the rigorous Enlisted Green Platoon pipeline and the demanding operational A within which the 160th SOAR MQ-1 operators excel.

## A Lineage of Excellence: The 160th SOAR's Heritage

The 160th SOAR (A) traces its lineage back to the Vietnam War, evolving from small helicopter units conducting covert operations into a globally recognized special operations force. Their motto "Night Stalkers Don't Quit," reflects their proficiency in low-level nighttime missions and unconventional warfare tactics. The regiment leverages a diverse fleet of helicopters – including Black Hawks, Chinooks, and Little Birds – alongside the MQ-1C Gray Eagle to execute complex missions demanding precision, stealth, and adaptability.

## The MQ-1C Gray Eagle: A Specialized Platform for SOAR Operations

Unlike the larger, heavier MQ-9 Reaper primarily utilized for long-range strike missions, the MQ-1C Gray Eagle is a medium-altitude, long endurance UAV designed for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR). Its smaller footprint allows for greater maneuverability in confined spaces and reduces its radar signature, making it ideal for special operations missions. The MQ-1C also boasts advanced sensor suites, including electro-optical/infrared (EO/IR) cameras, synthetic aperture radar (SAR), and signals intelligence (SIGINT) capabilities, enabling real-time target identification and tracking.

## The Enlisted Green Platoon: Forging Elite MQ-1C Operators

The selection process for becoming an MQ-1C operator within the 160th SOAR is exceptionally rigorous. Candidates must meet stringent physical and mental standards before entering the "Green Platoon," a specialized training pipeline designed to forge elite UAV operators capable of handling the demanding missions unique to the 160th SOAR. This intensive program typically lasts 12 months and encompasses:

***Basic Aviation Fundamentals***: Candidates begin with foundational knowledge of aviation principles, meteorology, navigation, and flight planning tailored for UAV operations. *MQ-1C Systems Training:* In-depth instruction of the MQ-1C complex systems, including sensor operation, data analysis, communication, protocols, and weapon employment procedures.

***Mission Planning and Execution***: Simulation exercise and real-world missions designed to develop skills in intelligence gathering, target identification, surveillance planning, and coordinated operations with ground forces.

***Special Operations Tactics and Techniques***: Integration of SOAR doctrine

and operational principles into UAV missions, emphasizing stealth, adaptability, and mission flexibility within a dynamic battlefield environment.

### Beyond the Technical: Cultivating Adaptability and Decision-Making

The Green Platoon training emphasizes not just technical proficiency, but also cultivates critical thinking, decision-making under pressure, and adaptability to ever-changing situations. 160th SOAR MQ-1C operators must be able to analyze complex data streams in real time, identify potential threats and opportunities, and communicate effectively with ground units and commanders. This constant need for situational awareness and rapid response requires a level of mental agility rarely demanded of other UAV platforms.

### Operational Distinctions: A Focus on Synergy and Stealth

While both MQ-1C and MQ-9 operators possess advanced technical skills, 160th SOAR MQ-1C operators distinguish themselves through their unique operational focus, forward deploying closer to the fight as the norm. These missions often involve:

***Close Air Support (CAS) in Complex Environments***: Providing precision fire support to ground forces operating in highly contested areas while minimizing collateral damage. This demands exceptional coordination with forward observers and a deep understanding of the battlespace.

***Intelligence Gathering for Special Operations Missions***: Conducting special operations reconnaissance and surveillance missions to gather critical intelligence on enemy position, movements, and infrastructure. Stealth and low detectability are paramount in the operations.

***Target Acquisition and Designation:*** Identifying and marking high-value targets for precision strikes by other aircraft or ground forces. This requires accurate sensor analysis and real-time communication with coordinating elements.

### The Path to Mastery: A Continuous Readiness Cycle

160th SOAR MQ-1C operators progress through a rigorous continuous readiness cycle designed to maintain their elite status. The cycle incorporates a progression of milestones, beginning with Basic Military Qualification (BMQ) training and culminating in the achievement of Fully Mission Qualified (FMQ) Aircraft Commander Status:

***MQ-1 BMQ***: This ~6-month individual training process certifies Army Special Operations Aviation (ARSOA) MQ-1 operators in basic gunnery and all ARSOA Series 1 Aviation Task Manual (ATM) tasks, equipping them to fly an MQ-1C as a crew member and fulfill an Aircraft Operator billet.

***MQ-1 FMQ***: This robust ~2-year program incorporates the Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) course, FMQ gunnery tables, a minimum of 150 live flight hours, and culminating evaluation, ultimately designating operators as Aircraft Commanders (ACs).

***Operational Currency and Advanced Certifications***: MQ-1 operators consistently re-certify in gunnery tables and maintain flight currency within 30 days of a scheduled deployment rotation. This ensures peak operational readiness for missions worldwide. The unit also supports joint special operations forces through pre-deployment Joint Tactical Air Control training and validation exercises, further solidifying their expertise.

### Conclusion: A legacy of Excellence

The 160th SOAR MQ-1C operators represent a highly specialized cadre within the U.S. Army Aviation Community. Their rigorous training, combined with their focus on synergy with ground forces and adherence to SOAR operational doctrine, distinguishes them from their MQ-9 counterparts. This continuous pursuit of excellence through a demanding readiness cycle ensures that these skilled operators remain at the forefront of unmanned aerial warfare, embodying the Night Stalkers' tradition of unwavering dedication to national security.

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*James Matthews is a pseudonym for a UAS company commander in the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne).*


# Revolutionizing Data Collection With Open Architecture

By Julie M.Isaac

In an era of increasingly complex operational environments, Project Director Sensors-Aerial Intelligence (PD SAI) is leading the charge in developing cutting-edge solutions that facilitate the tasking of sensors across a diverse array of platforms and systems to expose and retrieve intelligence data.

With a focus on open architecture standards, PD SAI is revolutionizing the way data is gathered, shared, and used by leveraging automation, artificial intelligence, and machine learning to reduce the need for human intervention and enhance mission success. We have demonstrated this capability in numerous events, including a recent Joint Pacific Multinational Readiness Center exercise, where we successfully enabled interoperability between disparate sensors, and were operating across different security enclaves.

By creating a common messaging framework for the sensors, sensor data was autonomously correlated behind the scenes. This environment acts as the connective tissue between sensors, data, and networks, allowing operators to focus on mission-critical tasks while improving overall operational efficiency.

In addition to correlating sensor data autonomously, PD SAI's cross-cutting capabilities provide a significant force multiplier and aligns with the timeframe, responsibilities, and requirements for advancing the launched effects (LE) initiative outlined in the recently released Headquarters, Department of the Army Executive Order 272-25 ISO Unleashing U.S. Military Drone Dominance. Two vital elements to address from the Executive Order are the ability to rapidly field systems and to have the flexibility to dynamically integrate solutions that satisfy the evolving intelligence requirements of a modern battlespace.

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LE is a program intended to meet the Army's need to provide reconnaissance, surveillance, and target acquisition to the manned aviation fleet, off-board survivability, and situational awareness. The LE payload strategy currently being defined as payloads will be dependent on the Program Executive Office-Aviation/Project Manager Uncrewed Aircraft Systems (PM UAS) platforms.

LE will be acquired through an incremental approach that will allow rapid technology prototyping and fielding to field available capabilities while continuing science and technology (S&T) efforts to mature and transition emerging technologies to fully realize the required capabilities.

As LE technology continues to evolve, PD SAI is committed to expanding its automation and cross-cutting capabilities to meet emerging LE challenges. While the current focus of the LE initiative is on rapid fielding using commercial off-the-shelf solutions, PD SAI is leaning forward in addressing Tier 2 and Tier 3 sensors, payloads, and orchestration methods to take advantage of the synergy of a LE swarm concept. These more exquisite, advanced systems require further design and development to be fully mature, with the ultimate goal of integrating them into the PM UAS Marketplace. PD SAI's efforts to decentralize control, develop orchestration for self-organization and automation and standardize data formats for data correlation are paving the way for a more connected and efficient operational environment, ensuring the U.S. military maintains information dominance.

As an effort to strengthen the selection within the soon-to-be launched UAS Marketplace, PD SAI looks to our S&T partners for collaborative maturation of both sensors and non-kinetic effectors. Through Technical Maturity Initiatives (TMIs), we are refining existing solutions to advance their key technical performance parameters to achieve TRL-7, readying these systems for real-world missions.

Persistent Radar EW Suite for Targeting of Integrated Ground Emitters (PRESTIGE), a TMI starting this year, will integrate multi-function capabilities with a data fusion solution onto a single platform enabling collection and rapid action on high priority threats. This effort enhances reconnaissance by improving accuracy while ensuring platform survivability. By combining advanced functionality with robust performance, PRESTIGE will deliver actionable intelligence that will directly support mission success.

PRESTIGE is just one of several S&T efforts spearheaded by PD SAI. Unlike traditional S&T transitions, which often pass solutions to program management offices for further development and fielding, we are taking a more agile approach. By maturing these technologies in-house, PD SAI can deliver mission-ready solutions directly to units, enabling immediate operational use, and faster fielding of advanced capabilities.

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*Ms. Julie M. Isaac is the Project Director, Sensors-Aerial Intelligence in the Capability Program Executive Office Intelligence, Electronic Warfare & Sensors (CPE IEW&S) at Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD.*

# 2025 National Functional Award Winners
## Army Aviation Association of America

### ARMY AVIATION TRAINER OF THE YEAR
*Sponsored by CAE, Inc.*

**SSG Matthew P. Gorgias**
**Special Operations Aviation Training Battalion**
**U.S. Army Special Operations Aviation Command**
**Fort Campbell, Kentucky**

SSG Matthew Gorgias exhibited exceptional dedication and delivered innovative contributions to Army Aviation training, specifically within the demanding environment of the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (SOAR). As the Senior Flight Medic Instructor and Senior Proctor, he authored 21 new lessons and led more than 150 flight hours of training, directly contributing to the graduation of 12 students from the Special Operations Medic Indoctrination Course. His impact is amplified by his leadership in medical simulation innovation, selected from a competitive pool of 72 to lead USASOAC medical simulations efforts. He independently planned and executed specialized training for the 3rd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault}, enhancing the proficiency of over 32 soldiers. During the Regiment Medical Multi-lateral Training (MLAT) event, he served as a key Observer/Controller, providing insightful feedback to Special Operations Forces and personnel from the 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne}, 531st Forward Resuscitation Surgical Detachment, and the 3rd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). He embodies excellence in Army Aviation training, consistently raising the standard of care and preparing medics for the challenges of modern warfare. His professionalism, dedication to mission success, superior technical competence, and performance consistently beyond the call of duty identify him as the 2025 AAAA Trainer of the Year.

### ARMY AVIATION MEDICINE AWARD
*Sponsored by Gentex Corporation*

**MAJ David D. Odineal**
**96th Aviation Support Battalion**
**101st Combat Aviation Brigade**
**Fort Campbell, Kentucky**

MAJ David Odineal is a shining example of the embodiment of a Flight Surgeon. He deployed to the CENTCOM Area of Responsibility in support of Operation Inherent Resolve and led the Aviation Consolidated Aid Station (ACAS) providing critical medical support to three Task Forces, an Air Force weather element, and civilian air traffic controllers. Operating without access to CONUS electronic medical records, he ensured operational readiness throughout the theater. Soon after redeployment and reintegration, he was the on-call flight surgeon responding to a Class A aviation mishap involving the loss of a pilot. As a medical investigator, he coordinated with the U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center, the Armed Forces Medical Examiner's investigator and pathologist facilitating toxicology collection for the survivor. His work in identifying critical Container, Restraints, Environment, Energy absorption, Post-crash (CREEP) factors and Aviation Life Support Equipment (ALSE) analysis will undoubtedly contribute to improved aviation safety. Currently he provides comprehensive medical care to a population exceeding 300 personnel, many requiring nuanced and complex care. His unwavering commitment and singular efforts make him the perfect choice for the Army Aviation Association of America's 2025 Army Aviation Medicine Award.

### ARMY AVIATION DUSTOFF FLIGHT MEDIC OF THE YEAR
*Sponsored by Air Methods Corporation*

**SSG Kendal L. Reynolds**
**Company C, 6th Battalion,**
**101st Combat Aviation Brigade**
**Fort Campbell, Kentucky**

SSG Kendal Reynolds is a critical care flight paramedic and standardization instructor who deployed with the Company C, 6th Battalion, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade in January 2025 to CENTCOM in northern Iraq. She has conducted multiple lifesaving rescues. On March 4, 2025, a U.S. Special Forces member was struck in the neck by shrapnel and required immediate transport from the Forward Surgical and Resuscitation Detachment. Throughout the flight, she managed the ventilator, bleeding, and sedation to maintain a stable patient until he could receive next level of care. Her role during in-flight care was crucial in keeping the patient stable. She also had a role in CASEVAC operations using CH-47 in the form of forward staging in support of deliberate operations. Her coordination and instruction helped develop a load plan for a MASCAL scenario, provide a shared understanding with the SOF team of how patients would be triaged, and set expectations with the CH-47 air crews to best accomplish successful outcomes for future patients. She is also working closely with individuals from across the Army to identify hazards to hoist riders that experience static shock. SSG Reynold's patient care during combat, medical leadership, and personal commitment to improvement, establish her as the 2025 AAAA DUSTOFF Flight Medic of the Year.

## ARMY AVIATION AIR/SEA RESCUE AWARD

*Sponsored By: Collins Aerospace*

*Pilot in Command:*
*MAJ Christopher D. Morisoli*

*Co-Pilot:*
*LTC Michael J. Christensen*

*Crew Chief:*
*SFC Anthony A. Poppick*

## Spartan 164

**40th Combat Aviation Brigade**
**Fresno, California**

On July 2-3, 2025, the crew of Spartan 164 - Pilot-in Command MAJ Christopher Morisoli, Co-Pilot LTC Michael Christensen, and Crew Chief SFC Anthony Poppick - executed a daring and highly complex rescue of a severely injured climber and two SAR personnel from a precarious location on Mt. Williamson, CA. Multiple prior rescue attempts by other agencies had failed due to challenging weather conditions, high altitude, and difficult terrain. The Spartan 164 crew overcame significant operational constraints, including limited fuel capacity and the need to maximize aircraft performance, through meticulous planning and precise execution. They successfully hoisted the patient from a 13,200-foot elevation, battling strong winds and navigating a narrow margin between aircraft performance and disaster. A subsequent extraction of the SAR team was further complicated by a sudden downdraft, requiring exceptional airmanship and crew coordination to avoid a catastrophic outcome. The crew's unwavering commitment to mission success, combined with their expertise and professionalism, ensured the safe recovery of all individuals involved.This rescue exemplifies the highest standards of Army Aviation and is a testament to the dedication and skill of these outstanding aviators. Their actions undoubtedly saved lives and represent a remarkable achievement in challenging circumstances.

Army Aviation Association of America
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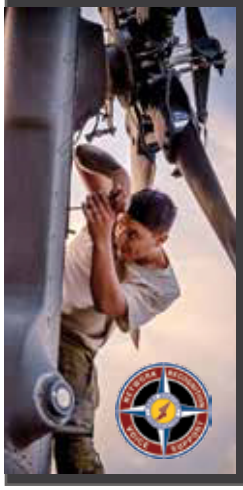

**AAAA Functional Awards**

*Suspense: July 1* ■ AMSO Award ■ ASE Award ■ Avionics Award ■ Donald F. Luce Depot Maintenance Artisan Award

*Suspense: August 1* ■ Logistics Unit of the Year Award ■ Materiel Readiness Award for a Contribution by a Small Business or Organization ■ Materiel Readiness Award for a Contribution by an Individual Member of Industry ■ Materiel Readiness Award for a Contribution by a Major Contractor ■ Materiel Readiness Award for a Contribution by an Industry Team, Group, or Special Unit ■ UAS Soldier of the Year ■ UAS Unit of the Year ■ Fixed Wing Unit of the Year

*Suspense: September 1* ■ Air/Sea Rescue ■ ATC Facility of the Year ■ ATC Unit of the Year ■ ATC Technician of the Year ■ ATC Controller of the Year ■ ATC Manager of the Year ■ DUSTOFF Medic of the Year ■ Medicine Award ■ Trainer of the Year

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# 2025 National Functional Award Winners
## Army Aviation Association of America

### ARMY AVIATION AIRSPACE MANAGER OF THE YEAR
*Sponsored By: AAAA*

## CW2 Clark C. Urban
**1st Battalion, 58th Aviation Regiment**
**Fort Rucker, Alabama**

CW2 Clark C. Urban displayed innovation and expertise in airspace management during garrison and combat operations. He identified critical airspace coordination gaps and swiftly closed them with bold and unique solutions. During garrison operations, he successfully integrated an ATNAVICS with Cairns ARAC to create a robust airspace. During combat operations supporting CJTF-HOA, he created forward operating site (FOS) Manda Bay's first C-UAS SOP and effectively embedded response protocols into base defense plans. He significantly reduced threat response timelines. His efforts with the Kenyan Civil Aviation Authority to formalize FOS Manda Bay's airspace, secured operational freedom of maneuver while respecting Kenyan sovereignty. His mentorship of Kenyan forces through joint knowledge exchanges fostered trust and interoperability and laid the groundwork for future coalition operations. CW2 Urban established the first Air Defense Airspace Management (ADAM) Cell at FOS Manda Bay, significantly enhancing situational awareness and operational effectiveness. He also coordinated the first live fire APKWS at FOS Manda Bay, showcasing his mastery of real-world airspace deconfliction. His relentless pursuit of excellence in all aspects of airspace management is unquestionable, and his technical expertise and ingenuity are incomparable. CW2 Clark Urban has earned the 2025 AAAA Airspace Manager of the Year.

### AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL MAINTENANCE TECHNICIAN OF THE YEAR
*Sponsored By: Raytheon Company*

## SFC Christopher B. Robinson
**1st Battalion, 58th Aviation Regiment**
**Fort Rucker, Alabama**

During a 2025 combat deployment with the 1-58th Airfield Operations Battalion to Magagoni Airfield, Kenya, SFC Christopher B. Robinson transformed a team of inexperienced technicians into one of the Army's most capable and sought-after maintenance sections. His rigorous hands-on training regimen and relentless mentorship enabled junior Soldiers to execute complex repairs and support multiple airfields across East Africa. He maintained a 97% operational readiness rate in a resource-constrained environment, exemplified by his rapid restoration of a Mobile Tower System. Beyond maintenance, he identified and resolved a critical manning shortage in airfield management by cross-training and deploying his Soldiers to fill operational gaps. His efforts ensured uninterrupted airfield operations and fostered inter-team collaboration. He also revitalized the aging ATNAVICS system, extending its service life and reinforcing joint mission safety. He authored technical guides, shared best practices, and elevated maintenance standards across the theater. His dedication, innovation, and selfless service embody the highest ideals of military professionalism. His legacy continues to shape the future of expeditionary air traffic control maintenance. SFC Robinson's achievements and unwavering commitment to his craft and team earned for him the AAAA 2025 Air Traffic Control Maintenance Technician of the Year Award.

### AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL MANAGER OF THE YEAR
*Sponsored By: Raytheon Company*

## CW2 Shane C. Polidoro
**1st Battalion, 58th Aviation Regiment**
**Fort Rucker, Alabama**

As the Officer in Charge for all airfields in Somalia, under Combined Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA), CW2 Shane Polidoro simultaneously directed operations at Baledogle, Kismayo, and Mogadishu and synchronized ATC efforts with the host nation and coalition partners. His leadership in the complex and dynamic HOA ATC environment enabled safe and standardized air traffic operations during combat missions. He secured delegated authority of Baledogle airspace through direct engagement with the Somalia Civil Aviation Authority, and he established the first-ever tower-to-tower communications between Baledogle and Mogadishu. His efforts undeniably enhanced air safety. He also strengthened aviation safety by crafting procedures with Djiboutian controllers that expertly balanced the flow of civilian and military traffic. In Uganda, he assessed multiple airfields and trained controllers on GPS approach procedures, which enhanced partner nation capacity and informed USAFRICOM level campaign planning. During combat operations, he oversaw $10 million in infrastructure projects without disrupting flight operations. While in garrison, he spearheaded a comprehensive training plan that produced ten newly rated ATNAVICS controllers, ensuring the 1-58th AOB was fully prepared to deploy. CW2 Polidoro has unequivocally earned the Army Aviation Association of America 2025 ATC Manager of the Year award.

# 2025 National Functional Award Winners
## Army Aviation Association of America

### AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER OF THE YEAR
*Sponsored By: Raytheon Company*

## SSG Dillon W. Vance
**1st Battalion, 58th Aviation Regiment**
**Fort Rucker, Alabama**

As Facility Chief for Simba Tower Mobile Tower System (MOTS) at Magagoni Airfield, Kenya, SSG Dillon Vance led efforts to standardize air traffic operations across the region, integrating counter unmanned aerial systems into base defense plans and enhancing battlefield awareness for commanders. His swift assessments and innovative solutions directly influenced CJTF-HOA's strategic decisions and expanded aircraft operations throughout East Africa. His mentorship and cross-training initiatives elevated the performance of his team, enabling dual-rated controller certifications and setting a new standard for operational readiness. His creation of the first-ever knowledge exchange program between U.S. and Kenyan air traffic controllers fostered international collaboration, improved flight safety, and strengthened interoperability. He formalized agreements among U.S. and Kenyan military branches, civil aviation authorities, and contractors, streamlining airfield operations and resolving longstanding communication breakdowns. As Safety NCO, he synthesized multi-branch safety doctrines, conducted inspections, and implemented wildlife management programs, ensuring Magagoni Airfield's continued viability. His contributions have redefined the role of an Air Traffic Controller in combat environments, leaving a legacy that will shape future deployments and doctrine. SSG Vance's achievements and dedication to excellence identify him as the 2025 Army Aviation Association of America Air Traffic Controller of the Year.

### AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL FACILITY OF THE YEAR
*Sponsored By: Raytheon Company*

*Tower Chief:*
*SSG Dillon W. Vance*

## Simba Tower
**1st Battalion, 58th Aviation Regiment**
**Magagoni Airfield, Kenya**

The 1-58th Airfield Operations Battalion's Mobile Tower System (MOTS) Air Traffic Control (ATC) facility, Simba Tower, at Magagoni Airfield, Kenya performed outstandingly during a nine-month combat deployment. Safely managing over 15,000 aircraft movements without a single incident, the facility demonstrated unmatched precision, coordination, and vigilance in one of the most demanding operational environments. The 1-58th MOTS facility led a successful redefinition of regional airspace in partnership with the Kenyan Civil Aviation Authority, harmonizing military and civilian priorities to enhance safety and interoperability. They also pioneered dynamic Counter Unmanned Aircraft System (C-UAS) protocols, now adopted as best practices across multiple theaters, and played a central role in the first-ever live-fire test of the CWS-APKWS system. The facility's commitment to mentorship and partnership was equally impressive, training nine Kenyan air traffic controllers and fostering multinational collaboration. Their coordination with the 4- 75th Fire Rescue Team to refine emergency response protocols further elevated airfield safety and readiness. The facility's legacy is defined not only by flawless execution but by innovation, leadership, and strategic influence. They have set a new benchmark for ATC operations in combat zones, are a model for future joint and coalition efforts and their enduring impact proves they are, without a doubt, the AAAA 2025 ATC Facility of the Year.

### ARMY AVIATION ATC UNIT OF THE YEAR
*Sponsored By: Raytheon Company*

*Commander:*
*LTC Andrew R. Morgan*

*Senior NCO:*
*SGM Carlos J. Silva-Lind*

## 1st Battalion, 58th Aviation Regiment
**Fort Rucker, Alabama**

The 1-58th Airfield Operations Battalion (AOB) distinguished itself in 2025 by delivering unmatched airfield and air traffic services supporting the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA). 1-58th AOB exercised mission command of split-based operations spanning three countries. At Manda Bay, Kenya, 1-58th AOB employed its Mobile Tower System {MOTs), Ground Controlled Approach (GCA) team, and Airfield Management Element {AME) to enable 15,000+ aircraft movements and 200+ GCA approaches. The team improved infrastructure with new taxiways, a 700-foot runway extension, and updated SOPs, while also integrating new Counter-UAS (C-UAS) systems into base defense plans. In Somalia, teams at Baledogle, Mogadishu, and Kismayo executed runway and taxiway upgrades, new SOPs for UAS and C-UAS, ramp extensions, and continuous airfield upkeep. They supported 4,000+ aircraft movements, sustained joint operations, and strengthened host-nation and multinational partnerships through close coordination with installation commanders and the Somali Civil Aviation Authority. Meanwhile, the headquarters element at Djibouti supported crisis response planning across Africa, refined Force Tracking Number (FTN) requirements with the Global Force Manager (GFM), sustained outstation operations, and led the stand-up of HHC/1-58th and the AOB's first Airfield Operations Company. Collectively, these accomplishments expanded CJTF-HOA's operational reach, enhanced multinational interoperability, and set the standard for excellence. For these achievements, 1-58th AOB unquestionably earned recognition as the AAAA 2025 ATC Unit of the Year.

# Defining Long-Range Maritime Air Assault Operations During JPMRC 25-01

By CPT David J. Block

U.S. Army Photo by SPC Charles Clark

*Flying over multiple types of terrain required extensive planning by the 25th CAB team.*

During Joint Pacific Multinational Readiness Center (JPMRC) 25-01, the 25th Combat Aviation Brigade (CAB) executed Long-Range Maritime Air Assault (LRMAASLT) operations, prompting a crucial discussion on defining the mission's parameters.

The decision to add "maritime" to Long-Range Air Assault stemmed from the unique operational challenges faced during JPMRC 25-01. The brigade was preparing for a 22-ship air assault into the Corps deep area, which required transiting overwater between multiple islands. The mission involved launching from Oahu, conducting an enroute refuel and rearm operation on Maui, and executing the final assault on the Big Island. While explaining the depth of planning required to Observer Coach/Trainers (OC/Ts), it became evident that 25th CAB planners took for granted the complexities of operating in a maritime environment—something most other units do not routinely encounter. The additional considerations involved in maritime operations, such as overwater navigation, refueling logistics, and aviation life support equipment, necessitate additional planning time and specialized equipment.

MAJ Curtis T. Shorkey, S3 OIC, 3rd Battalion, 25th Aviation Regiment, is no stranger to the Indo-Pacific theater, and understands firsthand how this distinctive environment requires unique planning considerations. Shorkey said, "The tyranny of distance in the Pacific theater of operations presents the most significant challenge

U.S. Army Photo by SPC Charles Clark

*A CH-47 experienced a breakdown during their mission, however they landed safely at Kalaeloa Airport. In response, the 2-25th AHB launched DART support, and the 3-25th GSAB quickly executed a bump plan to transport the remaining 2LBCT Soldiers to their objective.*

to military operations due to the vast expanses of water, the limited number of forward bases and logistical nodes, and the sustainment demands of forces across thousands of miles. Unlike land-based theaters where supply lines can be maintained through roads or rail like Eastern Europe, operations in the Pacific require extensive naval and aerial logistics to transport personnel, equipment, fuel, and supplies over long distances. This distance complicates the rapid deployment of forces, resupply efforts, and sustained operations, making strategic positioning and logistical hubs critical for maintaining military effectiveness."

Recognizing this unique distinction, the 25th CAB decided to formally incorporate "maritime" into the mission title. CW5 Ryan J. Maltsberger, standardization officer for the 25th CAB, realized that this change also required a precise definition to ensure shared understanding among all parties involved in planning and execution. He worked closely with leaders at all levels to align with the brigade commander's intent and codify the definition in the unit's standing operating procedures (SOP).

## Defining the LRMAASLT

Long-Range Maritime Air Assault (LRMAASLT) is an Air Assault Mission (ATP 3-04.1) conducted in a Maritime Domain (FM 3-0) with an operational threat that requires the use of additional fuel tanks or refueling enroute to accomplish the mission. Key mission planning considerations include over-water operations in accordance with the 25th CAB SOP, joint operations, over-the-horizon communications, aviation life support equipment (ALSE) requirements, refueling operations, and maintenance operations such as corrosion prevention and aircraft modifications. These planning considerations may dynamically increase the coordination time required from mission receipt to mission execution beyond a standard air assault planning timeline.

COL Matthew J. Scher, 25th Combat Aviation Brigade Commander, emphasized the importance of formally defining these operations:

"During the planning of a long-range air assault for an infantry battalion—an operation involving 22 helicopters spanning the Hawaiian island chain—we recognized that the complexities of the maritime environment necessitated additional planning time and specialized equipment considerations. To address this, I directed our team to formally define key operational terms, including Long-Range Maritime Air Assault and Maritime Out-of-Contact Attack, to better encapsulate these complexities and standardize planning factors and equipment requirements. While many Combat Aviation Brigades (CABs) occasionally operate in the maritime domain—and even more may be required to do so in future conflicts—we are the only CAB that conducts maritime operations daily. As such, we have a responsibility to share our expertise and lessons learned with the broader Army aviation enterprise."

## LRMAASLT in Action

During a period of darkness on 8–9 October 2024, 25th CAB put the LRMAASALT plan into action, transporting over 200 soldiers, two Infantry Squad Vehicles (ISVs), and four Silent Tactical Energy Enhanced Dismounts (STEEDs) from the 2nd Light Brigade Combat Team over a maritime/land distance of more than 200 miles in a single lift. Planned and largely executed by the 3-25 General Support Aviation Battalion (GSAB), the mission employed six CH-47Fs, ten UH-60Ms for the assault lift, one HH-60 for tail-to-tail patient transfer, and two AH-64Es to conduct reconnaissance and deep attacks ahead of the assault. With an additional three aircraft supporting the exercise, 25th CAB flew a total of 22 aircraft in support of the mission.

This LRMAASLT was a full CAB effort, with every Battalion in the 25th CAB contributing to its success. Forward Support Companies from both the 2-6th Cavalry Squadron and the 2-25th Assault Helicopter Battalion (AHB) pre-positioned Forward Arming and Refueling Points (FARPs) on both Maui and Hawaii's Big Island. Meanwhile, the 1-25th Aviation provided Grey Eagle support during the mission window, and the 209th Aviation Support Battalion established a FARP at Wheeler Army Airfield while also offering communication retransmission support for the Island of Oahu.

Furthermore, the 2-25th AHB supported a real-world Downed Aircraft Recovery Team (DART) during mission execution. When a CH-47F loaded with ground forces experienced a significant transmission oil leak over water south of Oahu, it landed safely at Kalaeloa Airport. In response, the 2-25th AHB launched DART support, and the 3-25th GSAB quickly executed a bump plan to transport the remaining 2LBCT Soldiers to their objective 200 miles away.

## Lessons Learned

MAJ Shane T. Hinton, Executive Officer, 2nd Battalion, 25th Aviation Regiment, highlighted key considerations for command and control during these operations, underscoring the value of the lessons learned, "Constant coordination across the joint force is crucial during both the planning and execution phases of a long-range maritime air assault. This requires efficient communication to ensure a unified and successful operation. Over-the-horizon communications are a must, and lost communication procedures must be practiced and rehearsed to ensure that the operation can continue uninterrupted in the event of a communication breakdown."

Hinton also stressed the importance of training in a maritime environment, "Given the complexity and risk of long-range maritime air assault, it is essential that aviators are trained in a maritime environment. To ensure success in this environment, regular training must include deck landing qualifications, egress procedures, multi-ship flights over water while utilizing night vision goggles and practicing Forward Arming and Refueling Points (FARPs) jumps to adjacent islands."

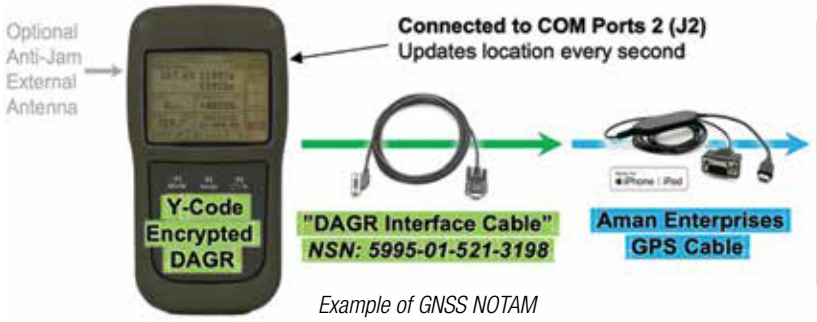
With this definition solidified in the SOP, unit planners at all levels now have a clear understanding of LRMAASLT operations, along with an established framework for mission timelines and key planning considerations. This clarity enhances operational readiness and ensures seamless execution of future maritime air assault missions in the Pacific theater.

---

*CPT David J. Block served as the Public Affairs Officer for the 25th Combat Aviation Brigade before moving to his current role as the commander of the 28th Public Affairs Detachment.*

# Grassroot Solution: What If We Could Connect a DAGR to a Pilot iPad?

By CW3 Matthew E. Belot




*Example of GNSS NOTAM*

**CAUTIONARY INFORMATION FOR AIRCRAFT OPERATING IN INCHEON FIR: PILOTS HAVE REPORTED THAT GPS SIGNALS ARE UNRELIABLE OR LOST INTERMITTENTLY IN INCHEON FIR. EXERCISE EXTREME CAUTION WHEN USING GPS.** RKRRYNYX Z1467/24

Effective Dec 31, 2024, 0040Z (Active)
Expires Jan 31, 2025, 1500Z (in 25 days)

*Diagram of the Technical Solution*

PHOTO COURTESY OF AUTHOR

Aircrews can no longer take the electromagnetic spectrum (EMS) for granted. Amid a steady world-wide rise in Global Navigation Satellite Systems (GNSS) interference reports, 3rd MI BN (AE) developed a low-cost turnkey technical solution to feed Precise Positioning Service (PPS) from an AN/PSN-13 Defense Advanced GPS Receiver (DAGR) to a unit Electronic Flight Bag (EFB).

Modern avionics and ancillary systems rely heavily on GNSS technology making the aviation industry especially susceptible to interference. During interference, aircrews receive degraded and/or misleading position data that can affect navigation performance, safety of flight, and survivability if left unmitigated.

There are four main GNSS: The U.S. Global Positioning System (GPS), the Russian GLONASS, the Chinese BeiDou, and the European's Galileo.

The GPS (U.S.) consists of at least 24 satellites orbiting in Medium Earth Orbit (MEO) broadcasting the codes below on L1 (1575.42 MHz) and/or L2 (1227.60 MHz) bands:

- Coarse/Acquisition Code (C/A-Code) – Provides unencrypted (open access) Standard Positioning Service (SPS) for civilian use with accuracy sufficient for general navigation applications (e.g., EFB).
- P(Y)-Code – Provides legacy encrypted (restricted access) Precise Positioning Service (PPS) with higher accuracy for military use (e.g., DAGR).
- (Future) M-Code – Similar to P(Y)-Code, M-Code provides PPS for military use, but with stronger encryption and signal resilience in contested environments (e.g., DAPS).

Military aircraft avionics suites have built-in mitigations designed to shrug off erroneous signals (if loaded and operated properly), but civilian systems such as pilot EFBs remain susceptible. EFBs are Commercial Off the Shelf (COTS) Apple iPad tablets configured and operated IAW AR 95-1 and appropriate Airworthiness Release (AWR). They are used to access aeronautical publications required to operate in complex Airspaces (e.g., Korea), and until now, relied exclusively on unencrypted coarse acquisition satellite signals making them especially susceptible to GNSS interference.

A casual comment during a mission briefing "What if we could connect a DAGR to an EFB?" sparked the idea for the grassroots solution. A DAGR is a handheld encrypted Selective Availability Anti-Spoofing Module (SAASM)-capable GPS Receiver that delivers secure, reliable positioning data. After some research, 3rd MI BN (AE) identified a technical solution and socialized it with Project Manager Fixed Wing (PM-FW) and PM-PNT (Positioning, Navigation and Timing). With limited testing approval in hand, the unit procured the necessary components and conducted testing. The bold, out-of-the-box idea seemed like a long shot at first, but to everyone's surprise, it worked right away. Best of all, the solution required no aircraft modifications, simplifying the ongoing AWR approval process and making it ideal for rapid rollout.

## Components List:

The plug-and-play solution was implemented using the following components:

$679 iPad Mini 5
+ $350 MFi-certified Aman Enterprises GPS cable (licensed from RedPark)
+ $99.50 DAGR J2 to PC Serial Cable
+ $109.50 DAGR Crypto Cable J1 for AN/PYQ-10 fill cable
+ $48.95 Suction Cup Mount
+ AN/PSN-13 DAGR (configured to output NMEA 0813)
Total Estimated Cost (excluding the DAGR): $1,286.95

*Note: In line with the 501st MI BDE modernization emphasis, this solution is receiver-agnostic and can be easily adapted to support other NMEA 0183-compatible sources such as future M-Code capable GPS receivers (i.e., DAPS).*

As demonstrated by this command-supported grassroots initiative, when creativity meets necessity, even the most entrenched vulnerabilities can be overcome. Aircrews must not only master the capabilities of their fielded systems but also be empowered to innovate and continually strengthen their Denied, Degraded, and Disrupted Space Operational Environment (D3SOE) posture. In Large-Scale Combat Operations (LSCO) and beyond, adaptability is not just an advantage; it is a necessity.

---

*CW3 Matthew E. Belot is the 3rd MI BN (AE) Aviation Mission Survivability Officer (AMSO), Camp Humphreys, South Korea. Special contributions from CPT Adrian W. Stark, Space Operations Officer at the 2nd Infantry Division/ROK-U.S. Combined Division.*

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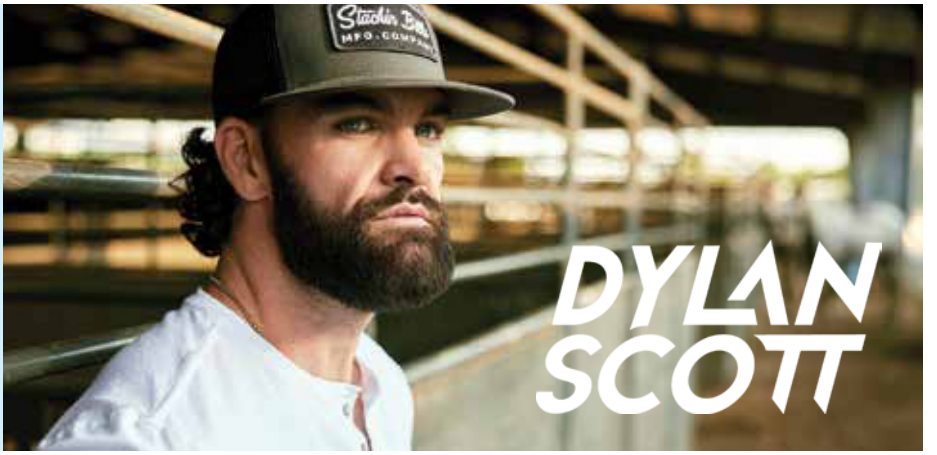

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# Taking Flight with a New Dream:

## Michael Gross's Journey into Aviation Maintenance with a TLC Grant

By MG (Ret.) Jessica L. Wright

Like many high school seniors approaching graduation, 18-year-old Michael Gross wondered about his future, feeling both excited and uncertain. College wasn't his top choice because he was focused on a hands-on career that offered stability and a skilled trade to develop. The military initially seemed like a good fit. However, a chance encounter during his senior year led him down a different path—one focused on aviation, but not in the way he expected.

Michael was studying electromechanical skills at the Lebanon County Career and Technology Center, Lebanon, PA while completing his traditional high school curriculum when representatives from the Pittsburgh Institute of Aeronautics (PIA) gave a presentation that changed everything. They introduced students to their 16-month Aviation Maintenance Technology (AMT) program, which prepares graduates for FAA Airframe and Powerplant (A&P) certification and careers in aviation maintenance.

For someone like Michael, mechanically inclined and fascinated by aircraft, it was a perfect match. "My interest in aviation started with my dad, who was an Army pilot for over 20 years," Michael explained. "That sparked my curiosity early on. In high school, I even joined the Civil Air Patrol to try flying myself. I realized piloting wasn't for me, but I still loved the field and wanted to stay involved."

After touring PIA campuses in Hagerstown, MD, and Myrtle Beach, SC, Michael chose the Hagerstown location and enrolled just three months after graduating from high school. Now well into his fourth semester, he's excelling in a fast-paced, hands-on learning environment that enhances his skills and fuels his passion. "The program has exceeded my expectations," he says. "One of my favorite projects so far has been the reciprocating engine overhaul. We disassembled, inspected, and rebuilt a Cessna engine. I've also worked with various magneto systems, which helped me understand aircraft ignition."

MICHAEL GROSS PERSONAL PHOTO

Plus, there's more to come. Future modules will cover 100-hour aircraft inspections, sheet metal fabrication, and aircraft skin repair, each designed to simulate real-world situations students will encounter in their careers.

Michael's dedication and perseverance have also earned him recognition as a 2024 AAAA TLC grant recipient, further supporting his progress. He graduated in December 2025 with his A&P certificates and a guaranteed position as an Aviation Maintenance Technician with Piedmont Airlines.

For those considering a future in aviation without becoming a pilot, Michael offers this advice: "If you enjoy problem-solving, working with your hands, and want a career that's both challenging and rewarding, I highly recommend the AMT program at PIA. It's one of the best decisions I've ever made. I also greatly appreciate the financial support from the Army Aviation Association of America TLC Foundation, which played a significant role in supporting my journey."

---

*MG (Ret.) Jessica L Wright is a member of the AAAA TLC Foundation Board of Directors.*

# The Stinson 0-62/L-5 Sentinel

By Mark Albertson

The Army's second most popular liaison aircraft during World War II was the Stinson L-5, known previously as the O-62. For the most part, the L-5 was the light plane for the United States Army Air Forces, not the ground forces. In that role the L-5 served a variety of tasks: air taxi for brass, observation and reconnaissance, medical evacuation, light transport, wire laying duties. . . as an Army cooperation aircraft, it better served the needs of the U.S.A.A.F., owing to its 185 horsepower, 6 cylinder engine, greater speed and higher service ceiling, and its ability for more poundage as a light transport versus Piper's L-4 Cub.

The Cub better served the needs of the ground forces, in particular, the Field Artillery, owing to its unsophisticated, off-the-shelf advantages: a four-cylinder engine of 65 horsepower which burned regular gasoline, ability to operate near the front from cow pasture airfields and a simplicity of maintenance and repairs, not to mention the relative affordability of the cost of production; to which the Cub, by comparison, was a cheapie.

Prior to the O-62, the A.A.F. was giving serious consideration to another candidate from Stinson, the O-49 or L-1. Comparisons here to the superlative German cooperation aircraft, the Fi-156 Fieseler Storch, abound here.**1**

The L-1 saw service with the A.A.F., in the China-Burma-India Theater; but, owing to its sophistication, cost and its difficulty of maintenance by comparison, including the services of a two-ton jack when required, the L-5 offered a breath of fresh air. Quite rightly the Army decided to reduce its costs with another Stinson product, the Model 74 and then Model 75. The latter featured a 125 horsepower, six-cylinder Franklin engine. The basic version was the civilian Model 10 Voyager, "which became the YO-54.

"But with large production orders for the O-49 Vigilant, Stinson built only six Voyagers for the U.S. Army in 1940. However, the French Air Force saw the Model 10, liked it, and ordered 600 of them. Only a very small number of the Model 10 Voyagers/O-54 were delivered to France before the Germans occupied France."**2**


MARK ALBERTSON FILE PHOTO

*A pilot prepares for take-off in his L-5.*

The military version, Model 76 or L-5, known to many as the "Flying Jeep," was not considered a Grasshopper. Flown by A.A.F sergeant-pilots, it became the A.A.F.'s cooperation aircraft. Besides the roster of tasks offered above, it was also used for courier services, photographic reconnaissance, night observation and reconnaissance. Indeed, the L-5 was the only American liaison plane to serve in all branches of the armed forces and in every theater of war and it was used by most of America's allies.

In the Pacific Theater of Operations, the Navy and Marine Corps procured 306 L-5s from the Army, designated as the OY-1. Forty more were transferred to the R.A.F for use in the CBI Theater and were labeled as the Sentinel I. Another sixty L-5Bs were delivered to the R.A.F as the Sentinel II; to which they, too, were transferred to the C-B-I.

The L-5 was used for the Horsefly missions in Italy and France. Flown by fighter-bomber pilots together with ground forces observers, these missions were generated to stake out targets of opportunity for fighter-bombers attached to close air support duty. L-5s continued service into the Korean War. The Cessna L-19/O-1 would be the eventual replacement. Though the L-5 would remain in the service of the National Guards for many years after 1945. Indeed, the venerable Stinson was still a glider-tow aircraft for the Air Force in 1962.

**Data: 3, 4**
Manufacturer: Vultee-Stinson.
Personnel: Pilot and observer, tandem seating.

| Model | Total Obtained | Fiscal Year Procured | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|
| L-5 | 1,731 | 1942 | U.S.A.A.F & U.S. Navy |
| L-5A | 685 | 1942 | Remodeled L-5 with a 24-volt electrical system |
| L-5B | 679 | 1943 | Modified to incorporate litter or cargo carrying capability |
| L-5C | 200 | 1944 | Modified for K-20 camera and litter |
| L-5E | 558 | 1944 | Same as L-5C except for drooping ailerons |
| XL-5F | 1 | 1944 | Altered L-5B with a reworked engine |
| L-5G | 115 | 1945 | Improved L-5E |

Total produced – 3,984

**Stinson 0-62/L-55**
Manufacturer: Stinson Division of Consolidated Vultee Aircraft

Corporation.
Power plant: One Lycoming O-435-1 engine rated at 185 hp at 2,500 rpm at sea level.
Propellers: A Sensenich fixed pitch, two-bladed wooden propeller, 7 feet, 1 inch diameter.
Length: 24 feet, 1 inch.
Height: 7 feet, 1 inch.
Wingspan: 34 feet.
Wing chord: 60 inches; total wing area, 155 square feet.
Weight empty: 1,495 pounds.
Weight gross: 2,200 pounds.
Maximum speed: 128 mph
Cruising speed: 115 mph.
Service ceiling: 15,800 feet.
Maximum range: 483 nautical miles.

## Endnotes

1. At the Cleveland Air Races, 1937, a Fieseler Storch put on an impressive demonstration: "Perhaps the most telling influence of the Storch came somewhat later when a Fieseler model flew at the Cleveland Air Races in competition with an autogiro. Material Division representatives were so much impressed by their personal observation of the Storch in action that the division chief asked O.C.A.C to arrange for the aircraft to be brought to Wright Field where the airplane could be inspected in detail by aircraft laboratory personnel. The Storch's performance was convincing, but even before it came to Wright Field…" See page 60, Chapter IV, "Lighter-Than-Air Experiments and Autogiros," Evolution of the Liaison-Type Airplane, 1917-1944, by Captain Irving B. Holley, Jr.
2. One of the Model 10s to be delivered to France, wound up flying support for troops being evacuated from Dunkirk; after which it flew to England. See page 35, Chapter Six, "Stinson YO-54/O-54/O-62/L-5/OY," L-Birds, by Terry M. Love.
3. See page 127, "Stinson L-5 Sentinel," Box Seat Over Hell, by Hardy D. Cannon.
4. See page 330, "Appendix A: Selected U.S. Army Field Artillery and U.S. Army Air Forces Liaison Aircraft and Helicopters, 1942-1945," Eyes of Artillery, by Edgar F. Raines, Jr.
5. See page 128, "The Planes: Stinson L-5 Sentinel," Box Seat Over Hell, by Hardy D. Cannon and page 8, "L-5 Sentinel," Army Aviation: Cub to Comanche.

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*Mark Albertson is the award-winning Army Aviation Publications Historian and a contributing editor to ARMY AVIATION magazine.*


# A Flag Comes Home

By Don Beatty


*CPT Steven Cleppe (left) and Don Beatty (right) at the unveiling of the 128th guidon flag.*

*Don and Manny Beatty in the UH-60 simulator.*

The 128th Aviation Company (Airmobile) was formed and trained at Fort Campbell, KY in 1965. The company was later renamed 128th Assault Helicopter Company, following its deployment. The members of the 128th were deployed to the Republic of Vietnam aboard the USS Point Cruz and USNS Barrett. They arrived in III Corps, Vietnam in October 1965. The 128th was assigned to the 11th Aviation Battalion at Phu Loi in November 1965. 11th Battalion was assigned to the 12th Aviation Group. The 128th, with 11th Battalion, supported 1st Infantry Division and other II Field Force, Vietnam (FFV) units. Approximately 250 personnel and 30 UH-1s (22 UH-1D/H troops ships and 8 UH-1A/B/C/M gunships) were assigned. The 128th was one of several key aviation units in the defense of Saigon and Long Binh Base Camp during the Tet offensive in January and February 1968. They also participated in the Cambodian Offensive in May-June 1970. The 128th stood down and redeployed to the Republic of South Korea in January 1972. During the 128th deployment to Vietnam, forty crew members were killed in action, numerous other crew members were wounded in action and many aircraft either destroyed or damaged.

But the path of the 128th flag had a mysterious twist. Sometime after the 128th deployed to South Korea and were re-designated as Alpha Company, the flag disappeared. It wasn't until early 2000s that it resurfaced. At the time, I was volunteering at the Mid Atlantic Air Museum located at Reading Regional Airport, Reading, PA. I took a call from a fellow Vietnam Vet in charge of a small Vietnam War Museum located at Cape May County Airport, Cape May, NJ. After we exchanged our Vietnam information, including my being a Tomahawk, he said he had our 128th guidon flag and asked if I wanted it. Of course, I said yes. Several weeks later, I met the owner and accepted the flag on behalf of the Tomahawks. I purchased a staff for the flag. It accompanied me to numerous VHPA reunions and was the centerpiece for 128th mini reunions and our banquet tables. It was a piece of our history, although, we didn't pay much attention to it in Vietnam. We knew it was always posted outside headquarters building when the commander was in the office or for company formations.

The 2019 Kansas City, MO VHPA reunion was the last reunion where the flag was displayed. After a few war stories, a few adult beverages, a toast to our departed friends and some contemplation, it was decided the flag should find a more permanent home.

The quest for a permanent home began with contacting several U.S. Army museums. They were not interested in the flag. However, the U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center at Carlisle Barracks, Carlisle, PA. said they would be interested in finding a home for the flag. Meanwhile, through my own research, I discovered that the Tomahawks had been redesignated from the 128th AHC to Alpha Company, 1-52nd General Support Aviation Battalion while in Korea. In 2005, Alpha Company 1-52nd GSAB moved to Fort Wainwright, AK. The Heritage Center helped me contact CPT Steven Cleppe, the company commander of Alpha Company. When I explained that I had the 128th guide-on flag from Vietnam, he expressed interest in having the flag as part of the Tomahawk legacy. I sent the flag to CPT Cleppe along with Tomahawk, Gunslinger and Witchdoctor patches. He had them framed. A dedication ceremony was held on 8 December, 2022. I was invited to attend.

After talking to my family, we decided that my oldest grandson, Emmanuel Beatty, would accompany me to Alaska to document my trip. Manny is a film major at DeSales University, Centre Valley, PA. We started our trip on Monday, December 6, 2022, at Philadelphia International Airport. Three stops and 19 hours later, we finally landed at Fairbanks International Airport. It was 0015 local time and a very cold, zero degrees. We checked in at a local hotel. When we walked into the lobby, I was very moved when I saw a Missing Man Table set up to honor those who gave their all. The next day, we went to Fort Wainwright and found Alpha Company. Their welcome could not have been warmer. On their orderly room wall were plaques and other memorabilia from Korea and Alaska. In the center of the wall were two framed items, the 128th flag with patches and a print list of the forty 128th men who died in Vietnam. It was another moving experience for me. My grandson Manny filmed my interactions with current Tomahawks and took a few photos as well. There was a dedication ceremony rehearsal that afternoon. We also got to see Fairbanks in the daylight. In December, sunrise is late and sunset is early. It is very cold, very snowy, very dry, but it was very beautiful. We had a nice dinner with CPT Cleppe and 1SG Kim Brown.

The dedication ceremony was held the next morning, December 8th, on the Alpha Company hangar floor. In attendance, in addition to Alpha Company, were the Commander and CSM of 1-52nd GSAB and members of the battalion. After introductions and prayer, four pilots from Alpha Company read 128th after action reports telling of significant events during the 128th time in Vietnam. Then, CPT Cleppe and I unveiled the framed flag, another emotional moment. I spoke briefly emphasizing our legacy and the comfort I felt knowing that the Tomahawk legacy was being carried on at Fort Wainwright. Afterwards, we had lunch with some of the Alpha Company pilots which included pilot talk, war stories and good food.

On Friday, December 9th, we were given tours of the other hangars which housed AH-64 Apaches and the Medevac company. We got to fly the UH-60 flight simulator. I was also invited to speak at an Officer Professional Development session about my tour with the 128th. There were plenty of questions and a lot of interest in what we did and our part of the war. Later, CW2 Paige Quintano, a member of the board of directors of Pioneer Aviation Museum, gave us an exclusive tour of the museum. It should be noted that there is a UH-1H, a Vietnam War veteran, in the museum. It was a nice end to a great day. The next day, Saturday, December 10th, we departed Fairbanks for home. Another long day flying back from Alaska. We arrived in Philadelphia on Sunday, tired but excited after such a great trip.

We had succeeded in returning the 128th AHC flag to its appropriate home. The welcome we had received from the Alpha Tomahawks was overwhelming. They are very curious and appreciative of what we did in Vietnam. Many are interested in meeting the other 128th Tomahawks and would welcome any who want to make the trip to Fort Wainwright.

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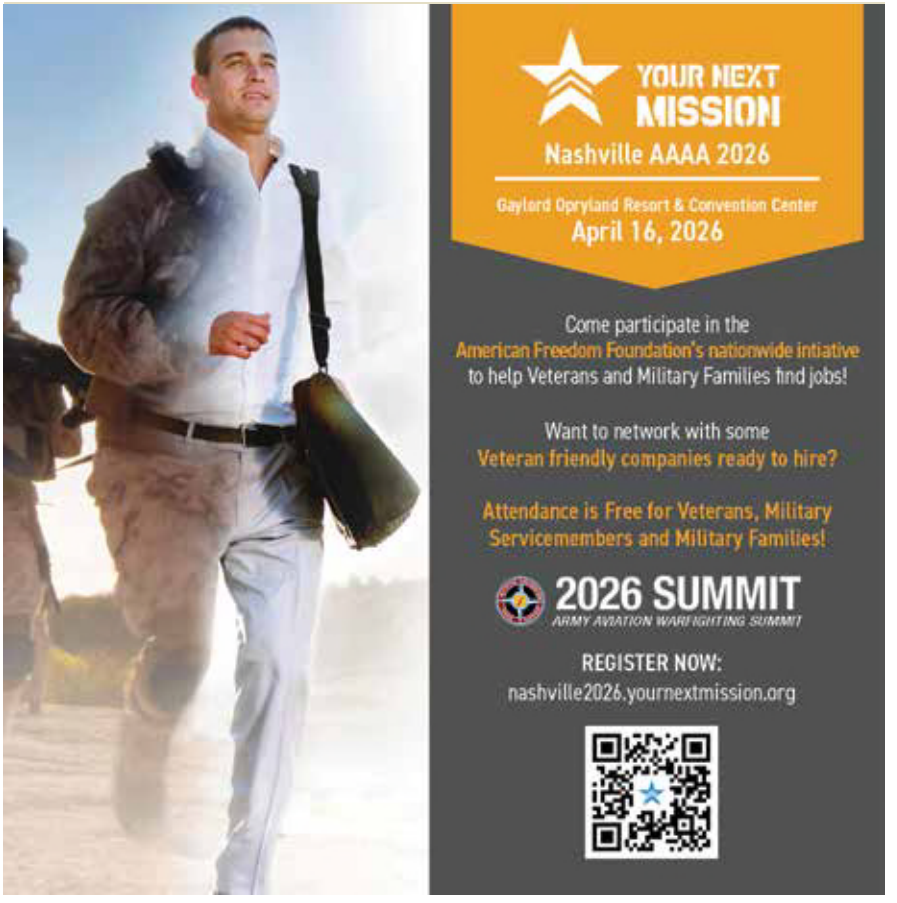
*Don Beatty is a VHPA life member living in Lebanon, PA.*

# AAAA Chapter Affairs

By COL (Ret.) John Broam

*I greatly appreciate the support from COL (Ret.) Ron Lukow and Crispin Burke, Washington-Potomac Chapter President and Vice President Communications, respectively, for authoring and sharing this information to our membership.*

# The Washington-Potomac Chapter

CHAPTER COURTESY PHOTO

*The Washington-Potomac Chapter and scholarship awardees at the annual Scholarship Dinner.*

The Washington-Potomac Chapter (WPC), a "super chapter" of over 1,000 members, is in the National Capital Region (NCR).

The WPC encourages, supports, and promotes exemplary performance in support of the Army Aviation Enterprise. The WPC supports aviation units and Soldiers within the NCR and helps recognize academic achievement by supporting AAAA's Scholarship Program.

Thanks to the Soldiers, Civilians, Veterans, Family members, and sponsors for their incredible work in helping to make the WPC the AAAA Super Chapter of the Year in both 2022 and 2024!

## Key Events

The WPC is busy year-round with events that encourage networking and fellowship within the Army Aviation community. The bedrock of keeping the membership engaged is their monthly Final Friday membership meetings/socials at the Crystal City Sports Pub, where various industry partners sponsor food and give members a chance to catch up with one another. Additionally, the chapter conducts twice-annual golf tournaments at the Fort Belvoir Golf Club, drawing approximately 70 golfers per round, along with good-natured competitions to test members' skill and accuracy. This twice-annual event raises thousands of dollars for AAAA scholarships.

The WPC also has an active awards program that recognizes Soldiers, Civilians, and Family members who have supported AAAA and the Army Aviation Enterprise. During 2025, the WPC issued 57 individual awards, including 32 Bronze Order of St. Michael (OSM) awards, 12 Silver OSMs, and four Knight OSMs. They have also presented nine Family members with the Our Lady of Loreto award. Additionally, the WPC has presented 20 chapter awards to five outstanding enlisted Soldiers, five Non-Commissioned Officers, and ten Department of the Army Civilians during 2025. The WPC presents these chapter awards on a monthly, quarterly, and annual basis.

The chapter's most significant event is the annual Awards Dinner. This black-tie affair allows members to participate in a formal military tradition and recognizes students who have demonstrated academic excellence. This year's Awards Dinner took place on November 6, 2025, at the Army-Navy Country Club in Arlington, VA. MG David L. Hall, Deputy Commanding General of Transformation and Training Command (T2COM), served as the guest speaker. MG Hall equated T2COM's mission of modernization with AAAA's goal of investing in the future through its scholarship program. The event recognized 29 students who received over $44,000 in scholarship funds. The annual Awards Dinner also raised over $50,000 to support AAAA's 2026 scholarship fund, thanks to industry partner sponsorships, individual donations, and gift basket raffle prizes. This also included over $10,000 raised through the AAAA National Give Butter online portal, doubling the initial goal.

Finally, in 2025, WPC supported The Army Aviation Brigade (TAAB), the only brigade-level aviation unit in the chapter, by sponsoring their Winter Ball as well as assisting with a memorial service for three fallen Aviation Soldiers. TAAB operates both fixed and rotary-wing aircraft and consists of Soldiers from all three Army components. TAAB provides aviation services throughout the Military District of Washington.

## 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 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

### Live Free or Die Chapter hosts Chapter Awards Dinner

CHAPTER COURTESY PHOTO

The inaugural AAAA Live Free or Die Chapter Awards Dinner, held at the picturesque Pembroke Pines Country Club in Pembroke, NH, marked a vibrant and memorable beginning to what promises to become a cherished annual tradition. The event brought together more than 80 members of the Army Aviation community, their families, and supporters for an evening dedicated to camaraderie, recognition, and honoring those who continue to lift the chapter to new heights. A major success of the Awards Dinner was the chapter's fundraising effort for the AAAA Live Free or Die Chapter Scholarship Program – an initiative supporting the educational goals of military families and the broader Army Aviation community. Through raffles, silent auctions, and generous donations, the chapter raised over $2,000. Seven distinguished chapter members were honored with the Order of Saint Michael, recognizing exceptional contributions and unwavering dedication to the Army Aviation community. This year's awardees were: SGM(Ret.) Brian McKay, SFC Joshua Stone, SFC Allan Robinson, CW4 David Breton, CW4 Jeremy Grey, CW3 Kevin Doyle, and CW3 Michael Fletcher. The emotional high point of the evening came with the presentation of the Lady of Loreto Award to Mrs. Sandy Jacques for her many years of dedicated support to Soldiers, families, and the aviation community.

### Washington-Potomac Chapter Presents 4th Quarter Awards

The Washington- Potomac Chapter continued its long-standing tradition of recognizing excellence recently by presenting SGT John Patino (911th Technical Rescue Engineer Company) and SPC Daniel Moore (B Company, 12th Aviation Battalion) the NCO and Soldier of the Quarter Awards for 4th Quarter FY25. CSM (Ret.) AC Collins, the Washington-Potomac Chapter's Vice President for Enlisted Affairs presented the awards on December 5, 2025 at Fort Belvoir, VA.

## ORDER OF ST. MICHAEL and KNIGHT, INDUCTEES

### Air Assault Chapter

Fifteen soldiers of the 101st Combat Aviation Brigade were inducted into the Honorable Order of Saint Michael after the brigade's return from a nine-month deployment to Central Command. During the deployment the brigade flew over 21,000 hours with 97 aircraft in five countries, conducted over 200 MEDEVAC missions and completed 55 phases. These 15 inductees were instrumental in the brigade's success. The inductions took place during the Air Assault Chapter's quarterly meeting at Cole Park Commons, Fort Campbell, KY on Tuesday, November 25, 2025. Not pictured are Colonel Henry C. "Hawk" Ruth III (Ret.), Chapter President and Colonel Tyler B. Partridge, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade (101CAB) Commander, who inducted the awardees. Receiving the Honorable Order of Saint Michael (Silver) were **CW4 Allen A. Bender,** 96th Aviation Support Battalion Command Chief Warrant Officer and **CSM Marcus R. Pitts,** Senior NCO, 101CAB. Receiving the Honorable Order of Saint Michael (Bronze) were **MAJ Evan S. Dawson, MAJ Kevin M. Dobbyn, CPT Dillon E. Siener, CW3 Joseph J. Duncan, CW3 Randall D. Forrester, CW3 Justin E. Frazier, CW3 D'Mario Graham, SFC David M. Gray, SFC Ryan M. Landrum** and **SFC Daniel C. White**. Receiving the Honorable Order of Saint Michael (Knight) were **MAJ Joshua J. Grant, CPT Kirby D. Einck** and **SFC Luis F. Cruzarevela**.

*CW4 Bender*

*CSM Pitts*

*MAJ Dawson*

*MAJ Dobbyn*

*CPT Siener*

*CW3 Duncan*

*CW3 Forrester*

*CW3 Frazier*

*CW3 Graham*

*SFC Gray*

*SFC Landrum*

*SFC White*

*MAJ Grant*

*CPT Einck*

*SFC Cruzarevela*

PHOTOS BY MAJ (RET.) SCOTT HOLINGSWORTH

## ORDER OF ST. MICHAEL, KNIGHT and OUR LADY OF LORETO INDUCTEES

### Air Assault Chapter

PHOTOS BY MAJ (RET.) SCOTT HOLINGSWORTH

In a separate ceremony the 160th Special Operations Aviation Training Battalion (SOATB) inducted four members into the Honorable Order of Saint Michael. From left to right, CSM Holly N. Cano, Senior NCO, SOATB (Presenter), **Mrs. Kristin A. Hernandez,** HSC, SOATB (Knight), **Ms. Ruth B. Farwell,** HSC, SOATB (Knight), **Mr. Scott A. Gourley**, B Co., SOATB (Bronze), **Mr. Alejandro L. Allison**, B Co., SOATB (Bronze), LTC Joshua W. Clemmons, Commander, SOATB (Presenter) and CW5 Brent L. Middleton, CCWO, SOATB (Presenter).

### Colonial Virginia Chapter

PHOTO BY 1SG RYAN FORD

**CW5 Preston Coon** was inducted into the Bronze Honorable Order of St. Michael in ceremonies held recently at Fort Eustis, VA. CW5 Coon has been the battalion AMSO for the past 2 years where he ensured that the concerns of U.S. Army Aviation was integral in the testing of the latest aircraft survivability systems. He is joined in the photo by (left to right) daughter Aubrey Coon, wife Leah Coon, and daughter Makayla Coon.

### Tennessee Valley Chapter

CHAPTER PHOTO

**SSG Kyle Robert McKee** was inducted into the Bronze Honorable Order of St. Michael (posthumously), in recognition of his extraordinary contributions to Army Aviation over a distinguished 16-year career. On November 12, 2020, Staff Sergeant McKee made the ultimate sacrifice while serving as part of the Multinational Forces and Observers in Egypt. His courage, dedication, and selflessness in defense of peace and stability in the region exemplify the highest ideals of Army Aviation and the United States Army.

CHAPTER PHOTO BY PEGGY MEAGHER

**LTC (Ret.) James W. Kelton** was inducted into the Silver Honorable Order of St. Michael during a retirement ceremony in September honoring his 50 years of service to the nation (combined military and civilian service) which culminated in his role as the Deputy Product Manager for Aerial Communications and Mission Command, PEO Aviation, Redstone Arsenal, AL. For her tremendous and unwavering support for her husband, her Nation and the Soldiers and family members with which they served, his wife, **Anna Kelton**, was inducted into the Honorable Order of Our Lady of Loreto. Joining the Keltons in the photo representing the Chapter is Mr. Daresse C. Henry.

CHAPTER PHOTO BY NELSON BALLEW

**CW4 Alexandre Drouin** was inducted into the Bronze Honorable Order of St. Michael by BG Cain Baker and CW5 John Bilton during his December 15th retirement ceremony at Redstone Arsenal, AL. Drouin distinguished himself over a 21-year career of exceptionally meritorious service to the Army and the Nation, progressively assuming positions of increasing responsibility. His culminating assignment as an Aviation Subject Matter Expert with the Future Vertical Lift Cross Functional Team (FVL CFT) will have a lasting impact across the Army for decades.

### Washington-Potomac Chapter

CHAPTER PHOTO

The Washington Potomac Chapter inducted deserving Aviation stalwarts into the Honorable Order of St. Michael during a recognition of service awards ceremony on December 15th at the District of Columbia National Guard Regional Training Institute, Fort Belvoir, VA. Photo left to right: COL Aaron Schilleci (Presenter), **MAJ Evan Henry** (Bronze), **CW5 Wayland Hamlin** (Bronze), **CW3 Jeremy Sherman** (Bronze), **SFC Wesley Roper** (Bronze), **CPT Justina V. Buck** (Knight) and **CW4 Matthew Vennie** (Bronze).

# 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 December 2024 through December 2025. 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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AAAA **Membership** Update By COL (Ret.) Liz Martin

# People: The Critical Component of American Military Drone Dominance

By COL (Ret.) Liz Martin

CW4 Chris Burns is among the aviation professionals shaping the future of U.S. Army Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS). His career reflects how people - through experience, adaptability, and leadership - remain the decisive element behind American Military Drone Dominance.

Driven by an early curiosity for technology and a commitment to the Warfighter, he has helped transform UAS capabilities across the Army and Joint Force.

Raised in a deeply patriotic, multigenerational military family, Burns grew up surrounded by aviation and service. Members of his family served across the U.S. Air Force, Army, Marine Corps, and the Warrant Officer Corps dating back to World War II. Before entering the Army, he lived in several locations including Houston and Atlanta, experiences that shaped his adaptability and perspective.

Burns enlisted in the U.S. Army at age 21 with a clear goal of joining the UAS community. His path was not immediate. He began his career in the Chemical Corps with the 185th Theater Aviation Brigade in the Mississippi Army National Guard. In September 2009, he graduated from the UAS Operators Course, marking the start of his long-standing contributions to Army UAS operations.

Over the next decade, he held many operational and instructional roles critical to Army readiness. He supported one of the Army's first Shadow UAS unit roll-outs in 2010 and became a core member of the UAS Regional Flight Center at Camp Shelby, MS. There, he directly supported flight currency, Instructor Operator training, and Readiness Level Progressions for both Active Duty and National Guard units. As a UAS Standardization Officer, his efforts supported Component 1 and 2 units including the 2nd Infantry Division, 173rd Airborne Brigade, and 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment.

In 2014, Burns transitioned from Staff Sergeant to Warrant Officer, becoming a 150U. He served at the platoon level and later as the 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team UAS Warrant Officer, supporting Combat Training Center rotations and training teams in the employment of UAS in combat environments.

Burns deployed in 2018 in support of Operation Inherent Resolve, serving as a Platoon UAS Operations Officer. During this deployment, he supported multiple Special Operations units across Syria while operating in austere and kinetic conditions, further reinforcing his operational credibility and technical expertise.

Following redeployment, Burns served as both Airfield Commander and UAS Flight Center Director at Camp Shelby, providing airfield management and UAS training support to Active Duty and National Guard forces. In 2022, he was selected to serve as a Future Tactical Unmanned Aerial Systems (FTUAS) Requirements Writer at the Future Vertical Lift Cross Functional Team at Redstone Arsenal, AL. In this role - one previously filled by a senior CW5 - Burns quickly mastered the acquisition process, refined FTUAS requirements, and briefed Army senior leaders at the Army Requirements Oversight Council.

Today, Burns serves as Assistant Project Manager UAS Subject Matter Expert and Program Integrator, helping to ensure continuity and momentum within the Future Unmanned Aircraft Systems (FUAS) portfolio. Known within the community as a "Swiss Army Knife," he combines combat experience, instructional expertise, and requirements knowledge to bridge Soldiers, program offices, and industry partners.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CW4 BURNS

*CW4 Chris Burns is welcomed home by his mother, Christina Derrow, at the completion of his 2019 deployment to Syria in support of Operation Inherent Resolve.*

Burns credits mentorship and teamwork for his success and remains energized by the rapid evolution of the UAS community. He emphasizes that shortened feedback loops and collaboration across industry, acquisition, and operational units are accelerating innovation and combat effectiveness. For Burns, drone dominance is not only about technology, it is about people willing to learn, adapt, and lead with transformative capability.

Burns values his AAAA membership, attributing the AAAA Summit and Army Aviation Magazine as key offerings that enhance his professional connection, integration and collaboration with others across the Aviation Enterprise.

Outside of uniform, he is supported by his wife Olivia and their children, Keira and Fallon, whose encouragement enables his continued service to Army Aviation and the Warfighter.

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

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## AAAA Family Forum By Judy Konitzer

# Attack Helicopter Association Reunion

By Judy Konitzer

What was originally called the Cobra Hall Reunion is now known as the Attack Helicopter Association (AHA). The name change evolved to embrace the wider family of attack helicopter personnel beyond those who trained at Hunter Army Airfield, GA in the early Vietnam days.

AHA now welcomes all pilots, crew members, maintainers, and other support personnel who have worked with "AH" designated aircraft (AH-64, AH-6, MH-60 DAP, or Vietnam era UH & AH gunships).

The 3rd Biannual gathering of the Attack Helicopter Association (pilots, maintainers, academia, and spouses) was held at The Island Resort, Fort Walton, Beach, FL on October 19-22, 2025. It provided an opportunity for members to share their experiences and renew the bonds formed with unit mates and others with whom they have served or supported over the years.

Major events for this reunion were to visit the Fort Rucker Army Aviation Museum and the Naval Aviation Museum in Pensacola on separate days. Unfortunately, the government shutdown caused a change in plans.

The Pensacola trip was scrubbed, but the committee decided to visit Fort Rucker. Committee Coordinator, CW5 (Ret.) Ken Donahue and his spouse Carmen, arranged two buses for the reunion attendees to enjoy a trip down memory lane. This included visiting the outside displays of the Aviation Museum and the Vietnam Memorial Park, along with drive-by tours of Post HQ, the former Officer's Club, several housing areas and other points of interest around the post, along with the airfields that many flew out of while going through training or being stationed there. Three days before the reunion Carmen suggested Ken contact the 1st Battalion, 14th Aviation Regiment, the unit responsible for training AH-64D/E aviators at Hanchey airfield. MSG Ronald Warner, along with SSG Andrew Jones came up with an approved plan for a static display and briefings.

*Members of AHA along with instructors and students of 1st Battalion, 14th Aviation Regiment gather at Hanchey AAF, Fort Rucker, AL.*

LTC Brian Haas, Commander of the 1-14th presented an informative rundown on battalion operations and functions, followed by CW4 Christopher Warrick who provided an update on the Echo model Apache in their Heritage Room. Next, the group relocated to the flight line where 3 Echo models were on display to allow for pictures in and around the aircraft. The highlight was meeting with all the available instructor pilots and students with questions from the crusty crowd and vice versa. This was very much appreciated and a topic of conversation for the remainder of their time at the resort.

The reunion concluded with a banquet where three Quilts of Valor were presented to BG (Ret.) Neal Sealock, COL (Ret.) Dave Sale, and CW4 (Ret.) Denny Dvorchak for their exemplary

*(l-r) CW4 (Ret.) Denny Dvorchak, COL (Ret.) Dave Sale, and BG (Ret.) Neal Sealock with their spouses receive Quilts of Valor at the AHA Banquet.*

PHOTO BY BG (RET.) TOM KONITZER

*COL (Ret.) Dave Sale presents a memento to AHA Banquet guest speaker COL (Ret.) Bill Reeder.*

contributions while in service, as well as to the organization. Barbi Ouellette gave a brief history of the organization with its origins in 2003. Organization founder, Catherine Roberts, noticed marked differences in the well-being of her son who had recently returned from Iraq when he wrapped himself in a gifted quilt. Her dreams followed about a young man struggling with war demons, but when wrapped in a quilt he became hopeful. To her Quilts = Healing. Her first quilt was presented to a wounded Soldier at Walter Reed Medical Center and the formal non-profit organization soon followed. Standards were established and the quilts are always "awarded" in special ceremonies like the one at the banquet.

We were honored to have COL (Ret.) Bill Reeder as the guest speaker and provide his very personal and heart wrenching story of being held as a POW from May 1972-March 1973. He was the last U.S. Army prisoner captured during the Vietnam war. He explained what gave him strength to persevere was his belief that if he could just endure his captivity no matter how difficult it was, he would someday be again able to enjoy freedom, which he missed the most.

The following link offers AHA lifetime membership for anyone interested in participating in future gatherings that take place every other year: https://www.zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/attack-helicopter-association-lifetime-membership-2.

*My appreciation to CW4 (Ret.) Denny Dvorchak and CW5 (Ret.) Ken & Carmen Donahue for their assistance with this article.*

---

*Judy Konitzer is the family forum editor for ARMY AVIATION; questions and suggestions can be directed to her at judy@quad-a.org.*

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## AAAA Salutes the Following Departed...

COL Robert Mangum, Ret.
*Deceased 10/7/2025*
SSG Mark Nelson, Ret.
*Deceased 1/26/2025*
Mr. Donnie Buchanan
*Deceased 10/1/2025*

## UPCOMING AAAA EVENTS

**FEBRUARY 2026**
3-5 Defense Strategies Institute Military Additive Manufacturing Summit, Tampa, FL
17-19 "Army Best Drone Warfighter Competition," UAH, Huntsville, AL
17-19 NDIA 40th Annual National Logistics Forum
24-25 National Uncrewed Aerial Vehicle Summit, San Diego, CA

**MARCH 2026**
9-12 VERTICON (formerly HAI Heli-Expo) 2026, Atlanta, GA
19-21 37th Annual Women in Aviation International Conference, Gaylord Texan Resort, Grapevine, TX

# AAAA **Legislative** Report

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

## After the NDAA: A New Year and a Positive Outlook for Army Aviation in Y26

With the federal government reopened and the FY26 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) now passed by Congress and signed into law by the President, Army Aviation enters the new year with renewed momentum and a broadly positive outlook. While some fiscal uncertainty remains as lawmakers work to finalize defense appropriations, the completion of the NDAA provides clear policy direction and an encouraging signal as the Army Aviation community looks ahead to 2026.

## From Shutdown to a Fresh Start

The 43-day government shutdown that extended into the fall was disruptive across the Department of Defense, and Army Aviation felt those impacts directly. Contract awards slipped, depot maintenance slowed, and program offices operated with reduced civilian staffing. Although flight operations for operational units continued, the absence of civilian maintainers, depot artisans, and acquisition professionals created readiness and sustainment friction that will take time to fully unwind.

Over the past month, however, the legislative environment has shifted meaningfully. With the NDAA enacted, Congress has provided the statutory foundation needed to move forward. As the new year begins, Army Aviation leaders can plan against a far more stable policy backdrop than existed during the shutdown, even as funding questions remain.

## What the FY26 NDAA Means for Army Aviation

The FY26 NDAA establishes a constructive framework for Army Aviation as it moves into the next fiscal year. Congressional language reinforces the importance of maintaining near-term readiness while continuing to modernize aviation platforms, mission systems, and digital infrastructure. This balance, long emphasized by aviation leaders and stakeholders, remains central to sustaining operational advantage across contested environments.

The NDAA also reflects continued congressional support for improving aviation training and pilot production. Policy direction encouraging next-generation flight training approaches is intended to increase throughput, address instructor and aircraft availability challenges, and ensure the Army can meet future demand for trained aviators without sacrificing quality or safety.

Equally important, Congress placed renewed emphasis on sustainment capacity and industrial-base health. Army Aviation depends on a complex ecosystem of depots, suppliers, and small businesses, many of which operate with thin margins and limited surge capacity. Recent legislative language underscores oversight of maintenance capacity, supply-chain resilience, and long-term affordability; key drivers for preserving readiness as legacy fleets age and modernization efforts continue in parallel.

The NDAA also continues congressional interest in unmanned aviation systems and manned–unmanned teaming. Rather than treating unmanned platforms as stand-alone capabilities, Congress reinforced the need for thoughtful integration across aviation formations, enhancing flexibility, survivability, and effectiveness across the force.

## Appropriations: The Remaining Step

While the annual authorization legislation (NDAA) is complete, Congress has not yet finished FY26 defense appropriations. The government is currently operating under a continuing resolution (CR) that expires in late January. Final funding decisions will determine how quickly authorized programs can move forward and how much flexibility the Army will have to execute aviation priorities.

One complicating factor remains the administration's use of reconciliation funding to support procurement and research, development, test, and evaluation activities. This approach has obscured toplines for several acquisition accounts and created discrepancies between House and Senate funding levels. For Army Aviation, the outcome of these negotiations could influence the pace of aircraft procurement, sustainment efforts, and mission-equipment upgrades.

## A Cautious Note on Risk

As the CR expiration approaches, there remains a non-trivial risk of another funding lapse if Congress is unable to reach agreement on full-year appropriations or a further extension. While there is broad bipartisan recognition of the disruption caused by the recent shutdown, unresolved policy disagreements could still complicate the path forward. Another lapse in funding would again interrupt contracting, depot operations, and modernization timelines – areas that Army Aviation is actively working to stabilize.

That said, the existence of a signed NDAA, combined with increased attention to defense funding, provides reason for cautious optimism that lawmakers will avoid another prolonged disruption.

## Looking Ahead in the New Year

As 2026 begins, several fiscal paths remain possible, ranging from passage of full-year appropriations to an extended CR. While uncertainty is never ideal, the overall environment is notably more positive than it was just a few months ago. The NDAA is in place, congressional support for aviation readiness and modernization is clear, and the Army's topline remains relatively stable.

Most importantly, Army Aviation enters the new year with strong alignment between Congress, the Army, and the operational force. The FY26 NDAA signals confidence in the aviation enterprise and recognition of its central role in future operations across all domains.

## Conclusion

The passage and enactment of the FY26 NDAA closes a challenging chapter and opens a new one. While appropriations remain unfinished business, and some near-term risk persists as the current CR approaches expiration, the policy foundation is set, and the outlook for Army Aviation in 2026 is positive. With continued engagement, steady execution, and sustained congressional support, the aviation community is well positioned to regain momentum, strengthen readiness, and advance modernization in the year ahead.

## Final Note – Another Army Aviator in Congress

On December 5, 2025, Army aviator Matt Van Epps won a closely watched congressional special election in Tennessee's 7th District, adding another Army aviator to the U.S. House of Representatives. Way to go Matt – now let's get you joined onto the House Army Aviation Caucus!

# **People** On The Move

## 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.*

FSXXI Class 25-025

FSXXI Class 26-001

FSXXI Class 26-002

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

**61 Officers October 16, 2025**
*Class 25-025*
**Commissioned Officers**
1LT McElderry, Isaiah Z. -DG
1LT Farris, Andrew M. -HG
1LT Fay, Codi J. -HG
1LT Silva, Miles H. -HG
2LT Smithey, Joshua M. * -HG
1LT Bedard, Mitchell A. +
2LT Elliott, Brevyn P.
2LT Falano, David O.
2LT Garcia, Ashley E. *
1LT Henning, Jeromy J.
1LT Jens-Karwowski, Gregory K.
1LT Karres, Garrett M.
1LT Lerum, Caden C.
1LT Lieberman, Chaney H.
1LT McClellan, Aaron B.
1LT Nabe, Kyle W.
2LT Najor, Ryan A.
1LT Olson, Ethan V.
2LT Peach, Devon A. *
2LT Perez, Hector
CPT Pohl, Andrew E.
1LT Rhoades, Carson A.
1LT Russo, Matthew G.
2LT Schrawyer, Collin L.
2LT Shronce, Noah L.
CPT Silvis, Ryan S.
2LT Simmons, Samuel B.
2LT Tseu, Lorin Q.
2LT Williams, Emmitt S., IV
Warrant Officers
WO1 Murphy, Thomas O. *-DG
WO1 Cobb, Damien V. -HG

Continued on next page
WO1 Crague, Brian M. -HG
WO1 Prusaczyk, Mateusz -HG
WO1 Arrowood, Natalie B.
WO1 Bessette, Brandon R.
WO1 Braudrick, Misael
WO1 Cochran, Benjamin G.
WO1 Davis, Andrew S. *
WO1 Dockus, Anthony A.
WO1 Hendry, Zachary A.
WO1 Huggins, Ian F.

# People On The Move


FSXXI Class 26-003


FSXXI Class 26-004

## Flight School Graduates continued

WO1 Jackson, Dale F.
WO1 Kellogg, Emilie H.
WO1 Kortum, Christian J.
WO1 Lang, Colten A.
WO1 Mauldin, Alexander E.
WO1 Mendez Vega, Allan J.
WO1 Montano, Alexander F.
WO1 Ormond, Tristan K
WO1 Oubre, Andrew L.
WO1 Pirtle, Trey M.
WO1 Rasmussen, Joe E.
WO1 Rodriguez, Alejandro J., Jr.
WO1 Rogers, Uriah N.
WO1 Sanchez-Rivera, Fabian G.
WO1 Serravillo, Dario
WO1 Steigerwald, Daniel L.
WO1 Strickland, Alexxander T.
WO1 Tucker, Seth M.
WO1 Williams-White, Kenneth J.
WO1 Wood, Slaton D.

**42 Officers October 30, 2025**
*Class 26-001*
**Commissioned Officers**
1LT Peters, Sage M. -DG
2LT Fagin, Samuel B. -HG
2LT Leslie, Tyler A. -HG
2LT Barrios, Marcus A.
2LT Beebe, Benjamin J. *
1LT Biedinger, Brandon A.
2LT Blust, Caden M.
2LT Chambers, David R.
2LT Cunningham, Izabelle F.
2LT Haynes, John T.
2LT Johnson, Jeffery M.
2LT Kachur, Alexandra L.
2LT Tibble, Candelaria O. *
2LT Vernier, Zach A.
2LT Wardell, AnnaGrace E.
**Warrant Officers**
WO1 Atwell, Alexander T. * -DG
WO1 Cobb, Sawyer T. -HG
WO1 Morlan, Evan C. * -HG
WO1 Patana, Mark S. -HG
WO1 Pate, Taylor J. -HG
WO1 Amacher, Andrew B.
WO1 Anderson, Shawn L.
WO1 Blowers, Elizabeth M. *
WO1 Boddennunez, Glenn D.
WO1 Duke, Zachary A. *
WO1 Good, Jasper R.
WO1 Hajdo, Peter D.
WO1 Jackson, DMonte L.
WO1 Jackson, Lamar E., Jr.
WO1 Jung, Si Eun
WO1 Lipp, Benjamin G.
WO1 Macklin, Kyle D. *
WO1 McFadden, William E., IV
WO1 Moran, Abraham I.
WO1 Morris, Marlon M.
WO1 Retz, Benjamin E.
WO1 Riddle, Jaycob I.
WO1 Rynne, Jacob I.
WO1 Schiller, Jacob B. *
WO1 Schur, Daniel L. *
WO1 Stephens, Remington B. *
WO1 Stevens, Larry J. *

**42 Officers October 30, 2025**
*Class 26-002*
**Commissioned Officers**
1LT Rosling, Kamrin L. -DG
2LT Farthing, William O. -HG
1LT Westervelt, Peter C. * -HG
2LT Bramble, Matthew D. *
2LT Butler, Brandon A.
2LT Creel, Morgan K.
2LT Dieken, Amanda N.
1LT Dougherty, Conrad M.
2LT Marschall, Daniel J.
2LT Mendez, Destiney A. *
1LT Miller, Kameron D.
2LT Palummo, Nickolas W. *
1LT Rivera, Frankie J.
2LT Turner, William N. *
1LT Zook, Logan T.
**Warrant Officers**
WO1 Robinson, Gregory M. -DG
WO1 Creech, Caleb A. -HG
WO1 Miller, Julia A. -HG
WO1 Muncy, Curtis J. -HG
WO1 Rountree, Stacy M. * -HG
WO1 Andreani, Kevin
WO1 Beimborn, Brooke O.
WO1 Cushine, Brittany M.
WO1 Darsonval, Tally D.
WO1 Drayton, Jacinda A.
WO1 Eisenback, Joshua R.
WO1 Gilmore, Aaron R.
WO1 Gramig, Kyle A.
WO1 Holcombe, Marion D. *
WO1 Johnson, Caleb D.
WO1 Katzenberger, Michael J. *
WO1 LeBlanc, Bernard C.
WO1 Lima, Kevin
WO1 Mafnas, Blas Jude F.
WO1 Payne, Daniel L. *
WO1 Rennemo, Lexie R. *
WO1 Schurter, Kolin A.
WO1 Steffler, Christopher J. *
WO1 Tapia, Tristan S.
WO1 Watson, Kyle R.
WO1 Wolford, Garrison A. *
WO1 Zwickl, Trey D. *

**36 Officers November 26, 2025**
*Class 26-003*
**Commissioned Officers**
2LT Kelley, Dante P. -DG
2LT Bachman, Skyler J. * -HG
2LT Boehm, Aiden J. * -HG
1LT Frederick, Jacob J. -HG
1LT Bowen, Jack R.
2LT Buitrago, Andres F.
2LT Hall, Andrew G. *
2LT Hooper, Vance L.
2LT Johnson, Reese R.
2LT Jones, Milton L. *
2LT Logan, Ryan J. *
2LT Mach, Ivy J.
2LT Merlino, Spencer O. *
2LT Moore, Sade L.
2LT Riemenschneider, Boe B. *
2LT Salas, Aysia M. *
2LT Schlecht, Hillary K.
1LT Velazquez, Edwin A. *
1LT Vespi, Adam D. *
**Warrant Officers**
WO1 Calley, Spencer L. -DG
WO1 Brass, Devyn T. * -HG
WO1 Brown, Branden T. * -HG
WO1 Arias Canas, Emerson H.
WO1 Burch, Perry J.
WO1 Cochran, Joseph D.
WO1 Coles, Elija L. *
WO1 Grant, Darren E.
WO1 Hrusovsky, Eric W.
WO1 McDonald, Patrick J., Jr.
WO1 Minnis, Levi D.
WO1 Moncrief, Michael R.
WO1 Nguyen, Davis T.
WO1 Oliver, Isaac
WO1 Speer, Ryan J. *
WO1 Witmer, Broderick M.

**24 Officers December 11, 2025**
*Class 26-004*
**Commissioned Officers**
2LT Race, Theodore M. * -DG
2LT Kauhaahaa, Taisyn K. -HG
2LT Brechbill, Ethan G.
2LT Bruschi, Richard L. *
1LT DiCaprio, Ryan M.
1LT Fenn, James E.
1LT Hellman, Claire E.
1LT Litton, Christian C. *
1LT Moore, Matthew A.
2LT Walker, Joseph R. *
**Warrant Officers**
WO1 Holten, Zachary C. -HG
WO1 Leon Castro, Edson G. -HG
WO1 Vaughn, Zachary S. -HG
WO1 Dewitt, Coty A.
WO1 Echeverria, Rodolfo A.
WO1 Ellis, Devin N.
WO1 Ellis, Johnathan D.
WO1 Loveland, Jacob D.
WO1 Meng, Hsien E.
WO1 Olson, Brandon M.
WO1 Rakauskas, Lukas
WO1 Ramsey, Mitchell L.
WO1 Riegsecker, Justin M.
WO1 Valade, Zachary S.

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

## 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 005-25*
WO1 Michael Glaser * -DG
SGT Rashed Jumah S.J. Alghafri
WO1 Brandon Cross
WO1 Michael Ecker
WO1 Gerson Paniaguamorales
WO1 Jacob Pedigo
*Class 006-25*
WO1 Adam Cortes -DG
WO1 Chad Blasé
WO1 Zachary Keith
WO1 Alexander Luttman
WO1 David Sobieski

**AH-64 Attack Helicopter Repairer (15R)**
*Class 038-25*
SPC Sade A. Hylton * -DG
MSG Aouab Abdrebbi
SGT Madi Faleh Al-Hajri
PV2 Calvin A. J. Andersen
SPC Emmanuel Kofi Asante
SPC Skyler J. S.Boyack
PFC Yuri C. C. Henao
SPC Isaiah Daniel Dalton
SPC Ryan Dennis Kelsey
PV2 Isaiah Kololo Lajwi
SGM Abdellatif Naoum
SPC Zachariah Lee Stokes
*Class 039-25*
SPC Sungjae Mason Min * -DG
PV2 Nicholas P. B.Joslin
SPC Sagar Basnet
PFC Isaac William Blodgett
PVT Patrick Passun Clacken
PFC Shamar Byron Dillon
PFC Jacob Roman Fodczuk
PFC Austin Lee Hopkins

# **People** On The Move

PV2 Konan K. D. Koffi
PV2 Hernan Castillo Lopez
PFC Paul James Lopez, Jr.
PV2 Daniel W. Wunderlich, Jr.
Class 040-25
PV2 Joshua T. Varughese * -DG
Cpt Mohamed A.S. M. Alkaabi
PV2 Thomas Andrew Banaitis
PV2 David M.I Dickenson
SPC Lee D. Eitniearhall
Ltc Mostafa S. R.Elafify
SPC Rosecaballero Ivy Flores
PFC Aline Melanie Foster
PV2 Michael Derek Hennig, II
PFC Anthony Jalen Palmer
PV2 Alexander X. Schultze
PV2 Grant Jacob St. John

**UH-60 Helicopter Repairer (15T)**
*Class 080-26*
PFC Nicholas A. Patton * -DG
PV2 Luanlucas N. Deoliveira
PVT Garrett Wayne Doering
PFC Casey James Greenlee
PFC Gavin Russell Hawkins
PFC Jose Maria Moran
PV2 Jesus Eduardo Munoz
PFC Christian A Rivera
PFC Jonathan Rodriguez-Arroyo
*Class 081-25*
PFC Wilson T. Davis * -DG
PFC Joseph Hayden Cervetti
PFC Mason Jeffery Cygan
SPC Mason Lane Gremillion
PV2 David Ibarra Lopez
PVT Wade M.I McCawley
PFC Jaden S.Montgomery
PFC Jeroid Cesar Morris
PFC Lucian A. Rhoades
PFC Genilo Adrian Hugo Sosa
PVT Cato Riley Wetherington
SPC Seth James Whitten
*Class 082-25*
PFC Mubarak Jasim Alqalaf
PV2 Nico Paul Bell
PFC Gregory John Diaz
PFC Deshaun E. T. Fisher
PFC Erik James Hymans
PV2 Ethan Michael Koziolek
SPC Micah Ernest Leiboult
PFC Hudson M. Morinigo
PV2 Alyssa Nicole Patton
PFC Jariah Shailee Reeves
PFC Alexandra B. T. Saine
PFC Kyle Leighton Stone *
*Class 083-25*
PV2 Moore N. J. Paul * -DG
PV2 Alcantara M.Alexander
SPC Badajos K. L.Tuall
PV2 Davidson Sydney Wayne
SPC Dillardrynard S. Coyote
PV2 Dixon Morgan Taylor
PV2 Dowhitt Herbert Daniel
SPC Gurung Prajolish
PV2 Javing Andrei Lacanaria
PV2 Moya Miguel Angel
PV2 Reyes Mark Anthony
PV2 Trujillo Alejandro Josiah V
*Class 085-25*
SPC Weir Gregory John *-DG
SPC Lynch Garrett James
PVT Martinez Wyatt Douglas
PV2 Matutino E.Keliiokala
PV2 Moon Cody David
PFC Prestwood E. Michael
PV2 Ruley Charles Brandon
PV2 Schultz Ashton Thomas
PV2 Smellie Norbert Junior
PFC Soper Tyler Ryan
PV2 Turner Samuel Wayne
PVT Watson John Travis
*Class 086-25*
SPC Lynch Gavin Wayne *-DG
PV2 Borrero Luis Daniel
PV2 Butler Kaden Owen Martin
PFC Christensen J. Meeks
PFC Doty Judd Abram
PFC Jackson Luke Everett
PFC Kennedy Kyle Doniphan
SPC Mahinan Anthony R.
PFC Scott William Mark
PV2 Stinespring Justin Tyler
PV2 Zinz Hunter Daniel
*Class 087-25*
PFC Collier Taylor Lee * -DG
PVT Aguinaldo Z. Resurrecc
SPC Bennett Justin Taylor
PFC Fritz Kendell Lynn
PVT Groeneveld M.James
SPC Hodges J.A. Roni
PFC Kessler Chloe Marie
PV2 Marte Emely
PFC Powell Morgan Blue
PFC Winters Avant Merle
*Class 088-25*
PFC Dewey E. Matthew * -DG
Arichavala David Sebastian
Bronson Braedon S.
Hudson Drew Tyler
Kastner Hunter W.
Love Robert Earl
Maxwell Trenton Bernard
Reed Conner Allan
Ricker Karl Alexander
Thomas Dustyn Zachary
Woodgett Dekedric Gemylon

**Cargo Helicopter Repairer (15U)**
*Class 034-25*
SPC Varner J. Patrick * -DG
PFC Bailey Walker Allan
SPC Beecher Jack Michael
PFC Brimer William Thornton
SPC Carter Blake A.
SPC Carter Crede Moroni
PV2 Castillo Jason Alexander
PV2 Gaw Campbell Kelly
PFC Littrell Matthew Kaden
PV2 Lopez Jeffrey Anthony
SPC Noe Thomas Joseph II
*Class 035-25*
PFC Andersson C.Wilhelm -DG
PVT Genius Andrae Archibald
SPC Ibey Mark Joseph
PFC Leehy Jerry Leslie IV
PV2 Lopez Arnaldo
PVT Maddox Drew Savan
PVT Mertz Ashton Patrick
PV2 Nevarez Gabriel
PVT Perez Charlie Jr.
PV2 Petrovski R.Aiden
PV2 Stephens Gunner M
*Class 036-25*
Sprague Andrew Bryant -DG
Algarin Jaykelis Alexander

*Continued on next page*

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Huntsville, AL

# People On The Move

## AIT Graduations continued

Bell Shavaneaux Brooke
Brickey Joshua Kyle
Cortes Osvaldo Jesus
McGregor Malcolm Keith
Mclean Maurice Derrick
Medina Johanze
Reilly Braeden John

**Aircraft Powerplant Repairer (15B)**
*Class 008-25*
PV2 Anthony J. Kurzeja -DG
PV2 Ian Anthony Brennan
PV2 Omar Tagaine Buchanan
PV2 Wilber Antonio Chevez
SPC Logan Michael Gallegos
PV2 Bryce Dean McFarlin
PV2 Cristian Medina Lopez
SPC Omowonuola Mohammed
PFC Luis Alberto Rosa Rivera
PV2 Damon Blaze Starr
*Continued on next page*

**Aircraft Powertrain Repairer (15D)**
*Class 007-25*
PFC Bradley S. Walker -DG
SPC Jovin Slade Chandler
SPC Ricky Chavez
PV2 Sean Ted Tolson Ford
SPC Alexis Chante Kebreau
SPC Rhoniel Dale D. Magat
PV2 Kaleb Cameron Meier
PFC Patrick Dalen Mitchell
PFC Samuel John Moore
PV2 Victor Robert Sanchez
SPC Ahmet Erkam Senturk

**Aircraft Electrician (15F)**
*Class 013-25*
PV2 Logan E.Notte * - DG
PV2 Carter Benjamin Anciaux
SPC Mitch Eric Grissom
PV2 Tavaris Terren Miller
PV2 Antonio Vincent Rosado

**Aircraft Structural Repairer (15G)**
*Class 009-25*
PV2 Stephen M.Williamson * -DG
SPC Kemanne Adriano Bailey
SPC Solomon P.Bellows
PV2 Bryce Anthony Buendel
SPC Shaynne R. R.Graham
SPC Esteban E.J.Gomez
PFC Narayan Mangrati
PV2 Cesar Alberto Mendoza
PVT Chloe Elizabeth Preus
PVT Kenneth E.R.Arevalo
SPC Yeshi Tshering Sherpa
PV2 David M. Smolinski
PVT Alexis Kay Vanbuskirk
SPC Tahje Malik Willis

**Aircraft Pneudraulics Repairer (15H)**
*Class 007-25*
PFC Bradley S. Walker -DG
SPC Jovin Slade Chandler
SPC Ricky Chavez
PV2 Sean Ted Tolson Ford
SPC Alexis Chante Kebreau
SPC Rhoniel Dale D Magat
PV2 Kaleb Cameron Meier
PFC Patrick Dalen Mitchell
PFC Samuel John Moore
PV2 Victor Robert Sanchez
SPC Ahmet Erkam Senturk
*Class 014-25*
PFC Gage A. Broyles * -DG
PFC Judah Wesley Bang
PV2 Matthew David Conti
PVT Aries Farias Salamanca
PFC Ethan Allen Hoff
*Class 015-25*
PV2 Ashim Nag
PV2 Ryan Michael Martin
SPC Emmanuel J.P. Valiente
PFC Evan Dean Schaberg
PV2 Joshua Steven Ventura

**AH-64 Armament/Electrical/ Avionic Systems Repairer (15Y)**
*Class 016-25*
SPC Ben M. Thompson * -DG
PV2 Joseph Nicholas Armijo
PFC Michael Aaron Bender
PV2 Cameron James Budget
SPC Justin Tyler Hall
PV2 Jesse Allyn Kennedy
PFC Joseph Aaron Miller
PFC Christian Tomas Murguia
PFC Nicholas Santiago Salas
PFC Patrick J.Strawbridge
PV2 Josue David Zarate
*Class 017-25*
PV2 Mikhala E. Herbert -DG
PFC Ryan C. Ditmars
PV2 Alonzo C. Dominguez
PFC Hunter J. S.Hegstrom
PV2 Darphus Murray, Jr.
PV2 Roberto A. Perez, Jr.
PFC Landon K.Richardson
PFC Elijah Justin Walker
PFC Spencer C. A. Wright

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

## Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) Graduations

Tactical Unmanned Aerial Systems (TUAS) Operations Technician
AAAA congratulates the following Army graduates of the Tactical Unmanned Aerial Systems (TUAS) Operations Technician, MOS 150U at Fort Huachuca, AZ.

**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**
*4 Graduates, 18 November 2025*
PV2 Felagai Acevedo
PV2 Jose Garcia
PV2 Justin Kitterman
PFC Trent Stephens

**Gray Eagle Repairer Course**
*8 Graduates, 18 November 2025*
PFC Ethan Dimmitt
PV2 Machai Garrison
PV2 John Hairgrove
SGT Nicholas Harrison
PV2 William Maxwell
SPC Renix Molina
PFC Fernando Rivera
SPC Brian Saetern

**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**
*5 Graduates, 5 November 2025*
PV2 David Fisher
PV2 Apolinar F. Hernandez
PFC Callum Lavigne
PFC Brandon Osborne
PFC Nicholas Treace

**Gray Eagle Operator Course**
*8 Graduates, 29 October 2025*
PV2 Masaud Barzinjee
PV2 Jason Brandrup
SPC Iosefa Custodio
PFC Isabella Fusco
SPC Elijah Miller
SPC Julian Owususampah
SPC Austin Soehlman
SPC Jeffrey Vaughn

# 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.*

## War Department Asks Industry to Make More Than 300K Drones, Quickly, Cheaply

U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY PFC PETER BANNISTER

The War Department requested information earlier this week to gauge industry's willingness and ability to make some 300,000 drones quickly and inexpensively — a concrete effort by Secretary of War Pete Hegseth to directly meet the "drone dominance" goals laid out by the president. A stable demand signal means the War Department will make concrete plans to buy lots of drones, on a regular schedule, over a long period of time. When that happens, American industry will step up to the plate to satisfy the department's needs, including by investing in and building out its own capacity to produce in the long term.

## Counter-drone Warfare at Scale? Army Demo Shows it's Getting Closer

U.S. ARMY RESERVE PHOTO BY 1SG MICHEL SAURET

U.S. soldiers recently used net-shooting hunter drones, specially outfitted rifles, and .50-caliber machine guns to drop dozens of drones, large and small, into the cold mud. For the U.S. Army, the daylong event marked the beginning of the end of firing $4-million missiles at $20,000 drones; for its European counterparts, it showed off options to counter Russia's accelerating threat. The event was part of Project Flytrap, a U.S. Army effort to advance the state of counter-drone art. More than 200 vendors applied to participate in the November iteration; 20 were chosen by the Global Tactical Edge Acquisition Directorate, a new procurement office the service set up to get such gear to the field quickly.

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

**Airbus U.S. Space & Defense Inc., Arlington, VA,** was awarded a $323,734,736 modification (P00214) to contract W58RGZ-22-C-0022 for UH-72 Lakota logistics support and engineering services; work will be performed in Grand Prairie, TX, with an estimated completion date of Dec. 31, 2026.

**Amentum Services Inc., Chantilly, VA,** was awarded a $30,645,502 modification (P00069) to contract W58RGZ-25-C-0003 for worldwide aviation maintenance; the modification brings the total cumulative face value of the contract to $289,470,540; work will be performed in Chantilly, with an estimated completion date of Nov. 30, 2026.

**M1 Support Services LP., Denton, TX,** was awarded a $601,135,303 modification (P00205) to contract W9124G-17-C-0104 for aviation maintenance; the modification brings the total cumulative face value of the contract to $4,850,644,617; work will be performed at Fort Rucker, AL, with an estimated completion date of Jan. 15, 2027.

**Lockheed Martin., Orlando, FL,** was awarded a $35,810,336.90 modification (P00023) to contract W58RGZ-21-C-0016 for performance-based logistics supporting depot-level maintenance of Apache Attack Helicopters (AH-64) Sensors components, specifically the Modernized Target Acquisition Designation System/Pilot Night Vision Sensor (MTADS/PNVS), including all obsolescence replacement configurations, upgrades and United States Government-approved components; the modification brings the total cumulative face value of the contract to $363,776,446.58; work will be performed in Orlando, with an estimated completion date of June 30, 2026.

**Sikorsky, A Lockheed Martin Co., Stratford, CT,** was awarded a $433,214,151 modification (P00087) to contract W58RGZ-22-C-0010 for full funding of Program Year Five under the Black Hawk multi-year ten contract, providing for the delivery of nine UH-60M and 15 HH-60M aircraft, as well as associated program management, from July 2026 through December 2027; the modification brings the total cumulative face value of the contract to $4,699,642,384; work will be performed in Stratford, with an estimated completion date of Dec. 31, 2027.

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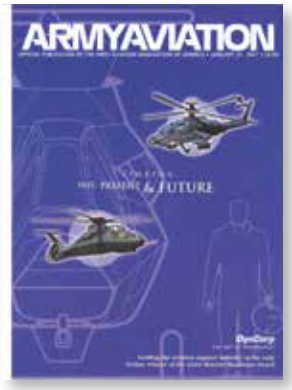
# Art's Attic

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

### January 31, 2001

#### Briefings

Lear Siegler Services, Inc., an international military-support contractor, has announced the creation of an Army Aviation Association of America Scholarship Foundation, Inc., perpetual, scholarship fund. The scholarship – which will benefit members of AAAA's Fort Rucker, Alabama Aviation Center Chapter and their dependents--is part of the A.A.A.A.S.F.I. Corporate Matching Fund Scholarship Program established in 1977. The program allows a company to contribute a donation over a five-year period, with a maximum of $10,000 matched dollar for dollar by the foundation's general fund, which effectively doubles the company's contribution.

#### 151

Members of Task Force 151 collect under a brooding sky at the National Guard Training Center at Fort Stewart, Georgia. In the background are the busses which are to take them to Hunter Army Air Field and a waiting C-5B. Next stop is Kuwait and Operation: SOUTHERN WATCH. Left to right are: SFC Jake Wright; 1LT J. Ray Davis; CW2 Scott Carnes; SSG Rupert Baird; CW3 Vic Dabney and SPC Allen Accord.

#### Sebaco

Members of the Pennsylvania National Guard, Company G, 104th Aviation Regiment, deployed to Nicaragua with a pair of CH-47 Chinook helicopters. Together with active duty Army, Army Reserves and Marines, the 104th took part in Joint Task Force Sebaco. Objective: Construct two clinics and a school for several communities. In ten weeks, the Chinooks moved some 1,000,000 pounds of cargo and 2,000 passengers.


## 50 Years Ago

### January 31,1976

#### AAAA's Checkpoint Charlie Chapter Hosts Sergei Sikorsky

The featured speaker of AAAA's Checkpoint Charlie Chapter was Sergei Sikorsky. Mr. Sikorsky addressed the chapter members on a history of aviation as seen through the eyes of his father, Igor Sikorsky.

#### Turnabout

Having completed nine months of aviation training at Fort Rucker by December 9, Gary Wacks is shown being sworn into the Army, as a warrant officer. Performing the honors is his wife, Captain Gloria Wacks. Captain Wacks is a nurse and is assigned to Fort Lee's Kenner Army Hospital.

#### Briefing

To the left is Norman R. Augustine, Under Secretary of the Army. To the right is Major General William J. Maddox, Jr. General Maddox is briefing Mr. Augustine on the particulars of a newly-equipped Huey helicopter. The Under Secretary was visiting Fort Rucker for a December presentation to an A.U.S.A. audience.

#### Two at a Time

Two women graduated from U.S.A.A.V.N.C. flight training recently: 1st Lieutenant Beverly S. Birkbolz and WO1 Mary E. Reid, who are second and third from the left. Flanking the new aviators from the left is Deputy Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, E.H. Tankersley and on the right, U.S.A.A.V.N.C. Commander, Major General William J. Maddox Jr. Mr. Tankersley was the guest presenter for the graduation ceremony.

# 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

## Captain Larry Lowe Taylor

*Army Aviation Hall of Fame 2024 Induction - Denver, CO*

A Tennessee volunteer and Armor officer and an attack helicopter leader, CPT Larry Taylor's service to the nation is to be lauded.

Born in Chattanooga, TN on February 12, 1942, into a family with a record of service dating to the civil war, he answered the call. He was commissioned in 1966 as an Armor officer and made the leap to Aviation, graduating at Fort Rucker in 1967. 1LT Taylor went quickly to Vietnam, assigned to D Troop (Air), 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division, flying some of the first Bell AH1-G Cobra attack helicopters in combat.

On June 18, 1968, near the village of Ap Go Cong, Republic of Vietnam, 1LT Taylor commanded a team of two Cobra helicopter gunships that responded to an urgent call for support from an encircled U.S. team. Using artillery delivered illumination, he made attack runs through heavy ground fire for 45 minutes, to deliver accurate rocket attacks on the enemy positions. After determining that the ground route was untenable for the forces to evacuate, out of ammunition and low on fuel, 1LT Taylor decided to extract the team with his two-man Cobra helicopter gunship, a feat never before accomplished. He landed amid the fire and instructed the patrol team to climb aboard anywhere they could. With the four-man long range patrol team seated on rocket-pods and skids, he evacuated them to the nearest friendly location, undoubtedly saving their lives.

CPT Taylor was a dedicated combat leader, engaged by enemy fire 340 times and was shot down five. He was awarded at least 50 combat decorations, including the Medal of Honor, the Silver Star, 43 Air Medals, a Bronze Star, and two Distinguished Flying Crosses.

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