

**'BE A PART OF THE SOLUTION' -- ARMY LEADERS URGE SOLDIERS TO GET COVID-19 VACCINE – SEE PAGE 7**

# ARMY FLIER

SERVING THE U.S. ARMY AVIATION CENTER OF EXCELLENCE AND THE FORT RUCKER COMMUNITY SINCE 1956

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PHOTO BY SGT. RENEE SERUNTINE

A UH-60M Black Hawk assigned to 1st Battalion, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) participates in Eddie's Odyssey, a first-time joint exercise with U.S. and Greek aviation and special operation forces in the Aegean Sea in Greece Jan. 14.

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# Enterprise mayor speaks at African-American History Month luncheon

By Jim Hughes  
*Fort Rucker Public Affairs*

When considering whether or not to host the African-American History Month luncheon this year in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, leadership decided to go ahead with the event because it is “too important to us because of what it represents, and also what it does for us as individuals and as Americans,” said the deputy to the commanding general of the U.S. Army Aviation Center of Excellence and Fort Rucker.

“This is a chance to reflect on the history of America, and the history of African-Americans in relation to that history as one,” William G. Kidd said at the event at the Landing Feb. 22. “As we drink deeply from the program today and the talents that are going to be displayed here, I just ask you to reflect on the words, emotions and lessons we’ll gain from it, and then commit ourselves as individuals, as organizations and groups, as Americans, all of us, to making the American dream a reality for all of us – all Americans.”

The few attendees at the event sat at tables wearing masks and following social distancing guidelines, while enjoying interpretive dance, spoken word and musical performances, and lunch provided by the Landing staff. The event was aired on Facebook Live.

Maj. Gen. David J. Francis introduced the guest speaker of the event, Enterprise Mayor William E. Cooper, who also spoke at the event last year, as a “tremendous friend and partner for us here at Fort Rucker.”

A Dothan native, Cooper became Enterprise’s 21st mayor and first African-American mayor in 2017 after serving on the city council for the past 28 years, according to his biography.

“His efforts extend beyond the impact of his mayoral duties as he serves on multiple boards,

committees and organizations that have been instrumental in the service of and dedication to all members of the community,” Francis added. “This month, we celebrate the cultural heritage, diverse contributions and unbreakable spirit of African-Americans and of America itself. We commend the heroes, the pioneers and the common Americans who tirelessly fought for and firmly believed in the promise of racial equality as granted by our creator, enshrined in our Constitution and enacted in our laws.”

Cooper thanked the general for the introduction, and then quoted Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

“I have decided to stick with love. Hate is too great a burden to bear,” he said.

“It is good that we look back at the history of African-Americans, who have unquestionably had a historic and far-reaching impact on this nation and our world, with the same kind of pride, strength and determination as our forefathers who achieved the progress that we know of today,” Cooper said. “We recognize the struggle that they faced in order to gain fair representation, so that we can use our talents and skills, obtained in education, to live productive lives. They understood that with the opportunities open, with the freedom to make life the choice, we can put our talents and our skills to use to further our education, reach positive goals, and live our professional and personal lives in the realm of society, of business, as we desire.

“The black race has come from the cotton field to the White House. From shared houses under the hill to the brick houses on the hill,” he added. “Now we must learn how to live amongst ourselves. There’s too much violence in the black community. We need to align ourselves with the 4Bs – brains, books, bucks and



PHOTO BY JIM HUGHES

**Enterprise Mayor William E. Cooper speaks at the Fort Rucker African-American History Month luncheon Feb. 22 at the Landing.**

the ballot.

“Brains being that you must learn to think for yourself. There is no hope in dope,” Cooper said. “Books means that you must learn how to read and understand what you have read. Bucks means that you must work hard, save your money, and buy some land or buy a house. Ballots means for you to go and register to vote, and when the time comes exercise that right.”

The mayor thanked his family for teaching him the values he lives his life by.

“I am a blessed man to have a strong family background that has taught me these things. I had a mother, a father and grandparents who loved me and instilled in me good values, taught me a good work ethic and motivated me to do the best things in all things,” he said.

“Whatever your life’s work is, do it well. This is the advice that I’ve given to people of all races and backgrounds – I promise it will

serve you well,” Cooper added. “Be productive, not aimless. Be understanding, not intolerant. Be loving, not hateful. Be generous, not selfish. Love your neighbor as you love yourself. These are the values set by our heavenly father, and they are values taught in every home by responsible parents and grandparents. It’s each individual’s choice to accept them. I firmly believe that the progress that the larger African-American community has made throughout the generations has been largely in the belief of those values.

“Black Americans have been resilient and have spread their influence around the world with great contributions to science, education, music, literature, politics, etc. They sought diversity rather than accept defeat. We have come a long way and every day we are continuing to write our own history,” he said.

# EXCEPTIONAL FAMILY MEMBER PROGRAM

Preparation now key to  
successfully navigating EFMP  
during PCS season

By Jim Hughes

Fort Rucker Public Affairs

Few things can expand the to-do lists of Soldiers and their family members quite like receiving permanent change of station orders.

The resulting flurry of activity can seem overwhelming at times, but officials remind servicemembers and their families to keep the Exceptional Family Member Program in mind, according to Sarah Smith, Lyster Army Health Clinic EFMP case coordinator and special needs adviser.

"EFMP is a program designed to ensure that required care is available at the required minimum frequency at any gaining installation that a servicemember and their family may go to," she said, adding that Fort Rucker has almost 900 family members enrolled in the program. "We don't want servicemembers and their families to end up anywhere where the medical care they need is unavailable to them."

EFMP provides comprehensive support to family members with special needs. EFMP takes an all-inclusive approach to coordinate military and civilian community, educational, medical, housing, and personnel services to help Soldiers and their families with special needs, according to Army Morale, Welfare and Recreation officials on their website at <https://www.armymwr.com/programs-and-services/personal-assistance/exceptional-family-member-program>.

An exceptional family member is a family member with any physical, emotional, developmental, or intellectual disorder that requires

special treatment, therapy, education, training, or counseling, and meets the eligibility criteria. Soldiers with exceptional family members are required to register for EFMP and keep enrollment information current. This way, family needs will be considered during the outside of the continental United States assignments process, according to information on the site.

Soldiers who receive an OCONUS assignment, including Alaska and Hawaii, will need to go through the EFMP office to have their family members screened, according to Smith.

"Family members need to get screened, so we can determine if they need any type of specialty care," she added.

If the family member is registered, EFMP screening simply acts as a process to confirm that the special need still exists or provides an opportunity to update the status of the special need if it has changed, according to Smith. If the family member is not registered, the EFMP screening process may result in the identification of an exceptional family member and enrollment in the EFMP.

The time to act is now, Smith said.

"The entire process, if all paperwork and their exams are in order, can take between 30-40 business days," she said. "We're in peak season because many people will be PCSing this summer and they really need to get going on this."

One thing people need to make sure they have is a current physical – one within the last



## EXCEPTIONAL FAMILY MEMBER PROGRAM

### EFMP Roles

Confused on whom to call?

Not sure which agency oversees which part of the EFMP process.

Learn more by referencing the chart below.

### Military Treatment Facility (Lyster Army Health Clinic)

#### Enrollment Process (Medical and Educational)

- Initial
- Updates
- Dis-enrollments

#### Overseas Screenings/Family Member Travel Screenings

- Germany
- Korea
- Hawaii
- Alaska

#### Contact Information:

Military Treatment Facility (MTF)  
Lyster Army Health Clinic  
Preventive Med, Room L-107  
(334)255-7431



### Army Community Service (ACS)

#### Information & Referral

Advocacy

Support Groups

Respite Care

Relocation Assistance

Special Needs Accommodation  
Process (SNAP)/  
Multidisciplinary Inclusion  
Action Team (MIAT)

#### Contact Information:

Army Community Service (ACS)  
Soldier Service Center  
Bldg 5700, Room 350  
(334)255-9277





## EFMP cont.

365 days, according to Smith.

“If they need a physical and are seen at Lyster, they need to contact their primary care manager, just as they would to schedule an appointment,” she said. “If they have a civilian provider, we will normally require an authorization to release medical information, so we can get those family members’ medical records here and review them.”

Once servicemembers get their orders, they will go through military personnel and get their DA Form 5888, Family Medical Deployment Screening Sheet, and they also get the DA Form 7246, EFMP Screening Questionnaire, Smith added.

“Regardless of whether family members are enrolled in EFMP or not, they do have to all go through the screening process,” she said. “Our EFMP medical director then reviews the medical information that we have for those family members and he makes the determination, according

to Army Regulation 608-75, whether they need to be enrolled in the program or if they are medically cleared and don’t have any specialty care that’s needed.”

Family members who have referrals for specialty care within the last one or two years that are still open need to schedule an appointment with their provider as soon as possible, Smith said. “We need to know the results to see if the family member requires additional care and follow-up, or if they are cleared medically.”

EFMP also handles children with learning disabilities – on the medical side with Smith, and also on the family services side through Army Community Service.

“The education side of the house seems to get forgotten a lot,” Smith said. “If your child received any type of special service or accommodations that fall under an Individualized Education Plan, or 504 Plan, they need to go ahead and get in contact with me, so we can start the educa-

tion enrollment process. If we have any kiddos that are under the age of 3 that are receiving any early intervention service, whether off post or here on post, we need to get an Individualized Family Service Plan in place, or get a copy of that, and then we will do an education enrollment for them.”

ACS’ portion of the EFMP mission is focused on education, activities and coordination, according to Amanda Goodson, ACS EFMP coordinator.

“My part of the program focuses on family services – education and training for parents, conducting workshops to help parents understand their children’s disabilities or whatever interests that we have with our parent population here,” Goodson said. “We keep in touch and send out monthly emails about activities and workshops going on. When people enrolled in the program receive an assignment, I can also write to the gaining installation EFMP office to tell them they have a family coming who will request assistance with housing accommodations or spe-

cial educational needs, so we can go ahead and get those things arranged for them before they get there.”

While some servicemembers may find themselves with orders to locations where the special needs of their families cannot be supported and accordingly do not receive command sponsorship for their family members, EFMP continues to look out for their best interests.

“Our program is for the family,” Smith said. “If we take care of their families, then servicemembers are able to focus on their jobs because they know their family is getting the care that they need. Occasionally, servicemembers may end up being separated from their family or may be declined an assignment to locations that they feel enhance their career, but essentially, in the long run, we’re trying to take care of their family.”

For more information on EFMP on the medical side of the house, call 255-7431; and on the family services side, call 255-9277.

Newly updated EFMP forms are available at <https://efmp.amedd.army.mil/forms.html>.



The U.S. Army has partnered with the Army & Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES) to create the **Digital Garrison** mobile app. **Digital Garrison** is a one-stop information source for Army communities. The app puts real-time information into Soldiers’, families’, and civilians’ hands and keeps military communities connected – a key part of readiness and resiliency.

**DOWNLOAD DIGITAL GARRISON TODAY FROM THE APPLE APP STORE OR GOOGLE PLAY!**



# Lyster Nutrition Care Clinic official offers tips for combatting weight gain during pandemic

By Janice Erdlitz

*Lyster Army Health Clinic Public Affairs*

The Lyster Nutrition Care Clinic wanted to share helpful pointers to keep servicemembers and families on track for a healthy year.

Developing new dietary habits doesn't have to happen overnight. Implementing small changes over time can make a big difference, according to Andrea Jones, Lyster chief of Nutrition Care, who shared her insight on combatting weight gain during a pandemic.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has been challenging, and some of us have struggled mentally, emotionally and physically. Our adjusted routines have made it far too easy for us to abandon our regular diet and exercise plans and blame it on COVID. With some gyms closed and more people staying home, regular exercise routines continue to be put on the back-burner for many of us. Staying home more and generally decreased daily movement coupled with eating more unhealthy foods or eating more food in general, can make weight gain inevitable," explained Jones.

There are plenty of things you can do to combat COVID weight gain. Below are a few simple tips to help prevent weight gain, jump start weight loss, and keep you healthy.

The following are some Nutrition Care Clinic tips on combatting weight gain.

- **Plan ahead:** Plan out a menu for a week. From that menu create your grocery list. Start with planning dinners, and move on to planning other meals when you get more comfortable with the process. There are tons of great apps out there that can help you

plan menus, get recipes, and automatically generate your grocery lists; some popular ones include Mealime, Yummly, FoodPrint, Pepperplate, and Spootacular.

- **Focus on food groups:** When creating menus, remember to include at least five servings of fruits and vegetables each day. You need those vitamins and minerals to help boost your immune system now more than ever! Be sure to include whole grains, lean meats, and low-fat dairy products.

- **Remember to take your vitamins:** Because some of us don't always get in our recommended servings of fruits and vegetables, a daily multivitamin is important. Getting the right vitamins and minerals in the right amounts can help keep your immune system at peak performance.

- **Be mindful of mindless eating:** If you're home more than usual and out of your normal routine, it can be easy to mindlessly grab a snack because you are bored, even if you are not hungry. Every time you reach for something to eat, ask yourself, "Am I really hungry?" If you're not truly hungry, think of ways to redirect yourself such as doing a chore, reading, or taking a walk.

- **Commit to move:** To start, commit to a certain amount of planned physical activity each day for example; going for a walk, riding a bike, or doing an exercise video. Start with just 15 minutes of moderate physical activity, such as walking, each day. Make it your goal to work up to doing 30-60 minutes of planned exercise each day, at least five days per week.

- **Track your steps:** Using a step tracker



PHOTO BY JANICE ERDLITZ

**Andrea Jones, Lyster Army Health Clinic chief of Nutrition Care, conducts a nutrition class to keep servicemembers and families on track for a healthy year.**

or fitness watch is a great way to determine how active, or inactive, you are being. Setting a step goal for yourself to meet each day is excellent motivation.

- **Enjoy the great outdoors:** Social distancing is a bit easier when you're outdoors. Parks and walking trails are still open for walking, running, and biking.

Jones concluded, "Visit the Nutrition Care Clinic. The registered dietitians here are committed to improving the health and well-being of you and your family through optimal nutrition. A main focus of the

Nutrition Care Clinic is Weight Loss and Maintenance. We provide group weight control classes each week, individual appointments with a registered dietitian that specializes in Weight Management, and access to our state-of-art InBody 570 Scales."

To learn more about programs and services offered at the Nutrition Care Clinic, call 255-7986 to book an appointment or talk with a team member for more information.

People can also follow the Lyster Army Health Clinic Facebook page to learn more about nutrition care.

# WINGED CHINOOK

Despite failures,  
BV-347 experiment  
led to Army Aviation  
fleet improvements

**Army Flier**  
*Staff Report*

When building the world's finest aircraft for the world's finest fighting force, experimentation is key to getting it right, and one aircraft provided the trial and error necessary to keep Army Aviation's heavy lifter flying high.

In 1969, the Army and then-Boeing Vertol entered into a partnership to improve upon their cargo helicopter fleet, and thus the BV-347 was borne from a CH-47A Chinook that was provided by the Army as a technology demonstrator, according to retired CW5 Jim Kale, a tour guide for the U.S. Army Aviation Museum.

The aircraft, which now sits on the lawn across the parking lot of the museum, was created for the sole purpose of trying out new technologies, said Kale.

"Within the program, they took an existing aircraft that they knew had real history and they tried a bunch of new technologies on it to see how it would work," he said.

The most noticeable experimental feature of the aircraft is its wings that extend from the center of the helicopter. The wings were added as a means to improve lift, and although the addition served its purpose, the added weight canceled out any positive effects it provided,



PHOTO BY JIM HUGHES

said Kale.

The BV-347 was tested for more than two years and flew about 350 hours with the intention to meet five primary goals: improve flying qualities with external loads and instrument flight; improve stability, control and maneuverability in hover flight and forward flight with high gross weight; reduce rotor noise; reduce vibration stress; and create a modern cockpit environment with improved instrument and navigation displays.

While attempting to reach these goals, improvements made to the test helicopter included extending the fuselage about 110 inches, raising the aft pylon 30 inches, installing a four-blade rotor system, installing retracting landing gear, installing an enclosed flight engineering station, testing advanced fly-by-wire control systems and installing an advanced moving map navigation system.

Many of the additions did improve upon the aircraft, said Kale, but the gains were negated by other drawbacks, such as cost or

inconvenience.

For example, in an attempt to reduce the noise of the aircraft, a four-bladed rotor system was installed, which helped to reduce noise and vibration by splitting the load between more rotor blades, he said. The issue with installing the new rotor system was that it required the aircraft's fuselage to be extended and the aft pylon to be raised, essentially rebuilding the entire aircraft.

"The problem with that was that it was too expensive to make the change to the entire fleet of aircraft, so it wasn't feasible," said Kale. "It's advantageous, but just too expensive. The next time (the Army) builds another big helicopter, they can go back and revisit that."

That's what the benefit of a program like this is, he added. The Army may not be able to use it in the near future, but in the far future it may be something developers can utilize.

Another improvement that was installed on the aircraft was the moving maps that used paper maps on rollers to pinpoint the location of

the aircraft. The issue with the new navigation system was that it took too much additional training and setup to implement across the entire fleet, and the idea was eventually scrapped. The introduction of GPS later negated the need for the paper map system, added Kale.

Not all of the technology that was put into the BV-347 was scrapped, though. The quality of flight was much improved with the addition of fly-by-wire systems, which improved on the control stability of the aircraft and was later incorporated into the CH-47D and later models.

"It's because of programs like the BV-347 that leads the industry to innovate aircraft into the fleet that Army Aviation uses today," said Kale.

The museum is open to visit Mondays-Fridays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. It is closed on federal holidays, except for Memorial Day, Independence Day and Veterans Day.

For more information about the museum, visit <http://www.armyaviationmuseum.org/>.



# 'BE PART OF THE SOLUTION'

## Army leaders urge Soldiers to get COVID-19 vaccine

By Thomas Brading  
*Army News Service*

WASHINGTON – Although safety guidelines are in place to stem the spread of COVID-19, vaccines are what will end the virus, top Army medical leaders said during a virtual town hall Monday, in an effort to encourage Soldiers to get vaccinated as soon as possible.

For now, the coronavirus vaccine is voluntary for Soldiers, but following full approval from the Food and Drug Administration, FDA, or if the president waives the option for them to receive it, the vaccine may become mandatory, similar to the influenza shot.

But with limited supplies, it's unlikely either will happen soon. Instead, Army medical leaders are imploring all Soldiers, when their time comes, to take the vaccine and "be part of the solution," said Army Surgeon General Lt. Gen. Scott R. Dingle during the town hall.

"If you get vaccinated, you're doing [your part] to protect someone else who might be at risk," said Dr. Steven Cersovsky, deputy director of the Army Public Health Center. "As long as you remain unvaccinated, you can become infected and pass it along to other people. You're part of that transmission chain."

But many Soldiers remain nervous about the COVID-19 vaccine's safety, said Lt. Gen. Leslie Smith, the Army's inspector general, whether it's a choice based on their medical history, apprehensiveness because of its expedited approval, based on something they read online, or simply because they declined to offer a reason at all.

Soldiers may even "just want to wait and see how others react to the vaccine," Smith said. But, like with the rest of the senior leaders on stage, he assured all Soldiers the vaccines are safe.

### WHY IT'S SAFE

Both Pfizer and Moderna vaccines were given the green light for emergency use by the FDA, which means although they have not completed every meticulous round of testing required by the administration, a process that often takes a decade to complete, they were determined safe following rigorous reviews of the clinical trials.

During the initial trials, researchers tested the then-experimental vaccines on a small group of people for the first time. In Phase 2 trials, the experimental vaccines were given to a larger group of people to see if they were effective and to further assess their safety. Phase 3 trials were administered to an even larger pool of people.

The trials give researchers enough data to confirm effectiveness, gauge potential side effects, the ability to compare it to other commonly used treatments, and to collect additional information needed to allow the experimental drug or treatment to be safely used.

The FDA also combs through all the raw data collected by researchers to ensure safety, immune response, and efficacy from the trial stages before they are allowed for use and distribution.



PHOTO BY JOSHUA J. SEYBERT

**A servicemember prepares a COVID-19 vaccination dose Feb. 4. Army senior leaders encouraged all Soldiers to take the vaccine when it's available to them during a virtual town hall Feb. 22.**

Safety and effectiveness is a top concern with the development of the vaccines and researchers believe women trying to get pregnant in the short and long term will not have complications, Cersovsky said.

"Each person needs to make an individual decision with their health care provider regarding getting the vaccine while pregnant, lactating, or if they plan on becoming pregnant soon," he added.

"I urge you to make certain that your families also get the vaccines," Dingle said as if speaking directly to individual Soldiers. "Do your part to protect yourselves, your family, and friends, and remain combat-ready. Let me

emphasize these vaccines are equally effective on everyone -- I have received the vaccine, and I hope you follow suit and get the vaccine when it is available."

### MYTH VERSUS REALITY

The town hall also gave the medical leaders a chance to set the record straight on misbeliefs concerning the vaccine. For example, despite some theories, vaccinations have no serious side effects, said Col. Jennifer McDannald, Army Public Health Center director, in a pre-recorded video leading into the town hall.

For individuals who have reported side effects, the most common is pain at the injection

## SOLUTION cont.

site, which usually subsides within 24 hours, she said. Although some people have experienced fever, chills, tiredness and headaches; those minor cases are resolved within a few days and are not signs of COVID infection.

While the vaccines may likely stop COVID-19, Soldiers should continue using preventive measures to ensure the vaccine has the most effective chance of working, said Command Sgt. Maj. Diamond D. Hough, senior enlisted leader of U.S. Army Medical Command.

"Vaccines are among the most important accomplishments in modern medicine," Dingle said. "They have saved more lives around the world than any other medical innovation, including antibiotics and surgery itself."

If someone does have a negative response

to the first of the two-shot vaccine, such as difficulty breathing, they should not take the second dose, Cersovsky said. However, previously experiencing adverse reactions to flu shots does not predict potential complications from the COVID-19 vaccination.

For Hough, taking the vaccine isn't a gamble. It's an assurance. "[The vaccines] are safe for everyone," he said. "The vaccines for COVID-19 are only made available after being demonstrated to be safe and effective. [They] have been manufactured and distributed safely and securely as well."

Maintaining readiness

One of the town hall's top messages was trust. The senior leaders urged Soldiers to trust the science, and the Army, because that was the biggest way to ensure overall readiness, they said.

"Our people are important, and safely navigating this pandemic is critical because it's a matter of Army readiness," Hough said. "These vaccines are an important part of ensuring we are fit. We need you to stay healthy, not just our Soldiers, but our families, civilians and contractors as well."

"To ensure maximum Army readiness, we are asking for your assistance and your trust," he added. "We must continue to maintain the highest level of readiness to meet our worldwide responsibilities."

Right now, over 100,000 Soldiers are deployed in 140 countries. According to Hough, fighting COVID-19 is just as important as any of their deployments because "we must be ready to win decisively here at home, and that means beating this pandemic."

To date, the Army has vaccinated over

300,000 personnel. That tally, along with the individuals following health guidelines, has offered protection against COVID-19, said Christopher Lowman, the senior official performing the duties of the undersecretary of the Army.

In the meantime, he said the prevention guidelines haven't changed: individuals still need to cover their nose and mouth, maintain social distancing, clean and disinfect their workspaces and wash their hands.

"I understand the concerns about getting vaccinated, however, safety has been the No. 1 priority in developing and administering these vaccines," Lowman said, who said he has received the vaccine with no adverse effects. "Building a defense against COVID-19 helps your office or unit, helps our Army, and our nation."

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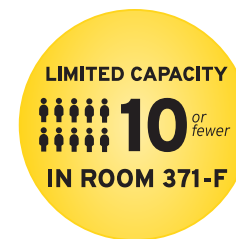
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# Army moves forward with enlisted talent programs

By Sean Kimmons  
*Army News Service*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Army continues to expand talent management plans for senior NCOs that could one day incorporate junior NCOs as part of the service's ongoing effort to place the right leaders in the right jobs.

Following the rollout of command assessment programs for lieutenant colonels and colonels, the Army Talent Management Task Force is now focusing to harness enlisted talent.

In November, the Sergeant Major Assessment Program was initially tested at Fort Knox, Kentucky, to evaluate nearly 30 brigade-level sergeants major for future senior assignments.

Earlier this month, the sergeant major of the Army decided to implement the program at the brigade level this fall, with plans to extend it to the battalion level the following year, said Maj. Jed Hudson, the task force's action officer for enlisted talent.

"Now we're going to have an opportunity to really use objective assessments to complement the current subjective evaluations that are already used as we select battalion and brigade command sergeants major," he said Wednesday during an Association of the U.S. Army Noon Report.

## FIRST SERGEANTS

The First Sergeant Talent Alignment Assessment also held a recent pilot with about a dozen master sergeants from the 82nd Airborne Division and 18th Airborne Corps at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

"99 percent of them said it was a great initiative and they felt it had a more holistic look at an NCO to match up with those positions," said Sgt. Maj. Robert Haynie, the task force's NCO team lead.

Additional pilots are being scheduled with 1st Infantry Division, 10th Mountain Division, and potentially with units in Alaska later this year, he added.

Leaders believe if the best individuals can fill first sergeant slots, it could help bolster the Army's "This is My Squad" initiative, which aims to build cohesive teams at the squad level.

"That company-level first sergeant really coaches, teaches and mentors and puts those squad leaders into those right positions," Haynie said. "Having the right NCOs with the right characteristics helps us get after that."

Similar to the officer assessments, both enlisted programs plan to use objective methods to prevent unconscious bias, such as behavioral-based interviews that are double blind using a standard rubric of questions for each person, Haynie said.

The First Sergeant Talent Alignment Assessment also collects details on an individual through an assessment battery that measures a variety of their attributes, such as ethics, decision making, and general intelligence.

Those details are then seen by local commanders along with the normal data previously used, including evaluations, military and civilian education and military occupational specialties.

"They still have the authority to make the decision, but [now] they have the information to make an informed decision," Hudson said.

## ASK-EM

The Assignment Satisfaction Key-Enlisted Module, or ASK-EM, is also now fully operational and is in its second iteration, which is on track to assist about 9,000 NCOs through their permanent change-of-station process, he said.



PHOTO BY SGT. DANIEL SCHROEDER

**Sgt. Maj. of the Army Michael A. Grinston receives a brief about the Sergeant Major Assessment Program pilot at Fort Knox, Ky., Nov. 18.**

ASK-EM, which is run by Army Human Resources Command, allows NCOs from E6s to E8s to access a marketplace where they can enter their preferences and see available positions, while providing them more predictability on when they'll move.

During the initial run of ASK-EM, about 25% of NCOs were able to receive their first choice of duty station, while roughly half had one of their top five choices, Hudson said.

In comparison, the first assignment cycle of the officer's marketplace, called the Army Talent Alignment Process, saw 47% of roughly 13,000 officers receive their top choice last year.

"We think there's no reason that the non-commissioned officer marketplace won't be able to emulate that type of success," he said.

The major said he recently spoke to a master sergeant with the 2nd Security Force Assistance Brigade, who informed him that he was able to get his first choice at U.S. Africa Command.

"One thing he told me, though, you still have to preference based on what skills you have," Hudson said. "Are you qualified for the

job and is it right for your career?"

"So if you're only preferencing based off location, especially junior NCOs who may not understand the career implications as much, there's a chance that they will not set themselves up for success."

The enlisted marketplace will shift the decision authority from assignment managers to local commanders, so they can better decide on what they require from a list of individuals.

"The assignment manager remains in the process as far as an advisor and a mentor to the individuals who are moving," Hudson said. "It allows people to really have transparency on all the talent available and the individual [to have] transparency on all the assignments available."

While senior NCOs may mostly benefit from the initial enlisted programs, Haynie said they will eventually trickle down to junior NCOs.

"We are moving forward with 'people first' and really putting our money where our mouth is and doing these initiatives," he said. "This is going to continue."

# Soldiers weigh in on Army's diversity, inclusion efforts

By David Overson

*TRADOC Communication Directorate*

FORT EUSTIS, Va. – For two days, Soldiers and Army civilians assigned to U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command units at Fort Eustis voiced their opinions on diversity and inclusion efforts during a virtual Your Voice Matters listening session.

This Army-wide listening session, which took place Feb. 2-3, was initiated by senior leaders in response to recent events across the nation and within the Army. Directed by former Secretary of the Army Ryan D. McCarthy, the Army launched the worldwide Your Voice Matters listening tour July 8, and is scheduled to continue into 2022.

The event's intent is to better understand concerns across the force on diversity, equity and inclusion, as well as dignity and respect.

"The Army must continue to put People First by fostering a culture of trust that accepts the experiences and backgrounds of every Soldier and civilian," said Gen. James C. McConville, Army chief of staff, in a June press briefing. "Our diverse workforce is a competitive advantage and the Army must continue to offer fair treatment, access and opportunity across the force. The Project Inclusion reforms will complement ongoing efforts to modernize our talent-management processes and ensure equitable treatment for every member of our formation."

Participants were first shown a video by Army senior leaders explaining why diversity and inclusion is important. After being informed that everything was open and anonymous, they were encouraged to voice their opinions regardless of the sentiment. If they didn't feel comfortable speaking during the session, they were provided with an email address they could forward their thoughts to.

"I felt the session was very well presented," said Darlene Roberts, an instructional systems specialist with TRADOC's Quality Assurance Program, who agreed to share her identity. "I was assured privacy and highly encouraged to participate openly and honestly. Everyone was allowed to speak and elaborate on their points. The body language displayed by the facilitators indicated they were actively listening."

Comments and feedback were diverse and covered a range of topics from the Army Combat Fitness Test, racism and extremism, quality of life for Soldiers living in the barracks, daily work environments in their respective units, to sexual harassment within the force.

Knowing that race is a difficult thing to discuss in the workplace, it's crucial to have a candid and respectful dialogue with colleagues. The Your Voice Matters listening session served as a great vehicle for individuals to reach out to each other and engage around challenges, whether professional or personal. It helped everyone know they and their input are valued in the Army, and this inclusion supports them being fully focused on the mission.

"When we do in-person sessions, the responses and information are truly anonymous because everyone is in civilian clothes and we do not know who is in the audience," said Maj. Sam Winkler, a personnel policy integrator with Army G1 (Personnel), who was one of the event's facilitators. "We never take down names and we never associate a topic of discussion to a unit or person. Our sessions are 100 percent non-attributional."

Open dialogue is critical to helping people understand and support each other. In the Army it is crucial to have units and workplaces where every individual is valued. To have this

environment, everyone must talk with and listen to their teammates, and gain a better perspective of different points of view.

"We want to know what people are thinking and feeling," Winkler added.

She also said that facilitators are looking for trends with the feedback. If they sense there is an overwhelming belief that some policies are biased, they know it is policy that should be reexamined further for change.

The Your Voice Matters listening sessions

are focused on maintaining open lines of communication with Soldiers and Army civilians around the world. Soldiers and DA civilians deserve the opportunity to excel as far as their talents will take them.

The Army will use data collected from the voluntary and confidential Your Voice Matters sessions to determine whether installation or Army-wide policies need to be reviewed, revised or updated based on systemic or institutional trends.





# Soldiers, Airmen support interservice readiness with joint training

By Sgt. Evan Ruchotzke  
Fort Hood Public Affairs

FORT HOOD, Texas – “It’s fun putting a plan together from an idea through execution and actually seeing it happen,” said Air Force Capt. Nick Evangelista, an Air Force liaison at Fort Hood Feb. 24.

Soldiers from D Company, 3-227th Aviation Regiment came together with Airmen from the 621st Mobility Support Operations Squadron and 22nd Airlift Squadron to make a training plan a reality following a devastating February ice storm that left many Texans without power or water.

“It pushed our timeline back a little,” said Evangelista with a laugh, adding that despite the challenging weather, he was impressed by the efficiency of his Army counterparts. “We had everything in place logistically other than getting rid of the ice, which the 60-degree Texas weather took care of for us anyway.”

The joint Army-Air Force training exercise saw Army UH-60 repairers folding the blades of a UH-60 Black Hawk into a storage



PHOTOS BY SPC. FROYLAN GRIMALDO

**Sgt. Bryan Battaglia, a maintenance supervisor with the 3rd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, helps to move a UH-60 Black Hawk to a C-5 Galaxy aircraft at Fort Hood, Texas, Feb. 24.**

position in order to practice storing the four-blade helicopter on a C-5 Galaxy aircraft. The 380,000-pound transport aircraft can hold up to five Black Hawks in its hold.

“A C-5 isn’t something you see every day. It’s such a large airplane and can carry multiple helicopters at once. It’s pretty impressive,” said Evangelista.

Evangelista went on to explain that the Expeditionary Air Liaison Ground Elements work as loadmasters – port personnel with extensive experience dealing with cargo loads that assist in teaching practical and hands on knowledge. The EAGLEs were on hand to provide training opportunities with Soldiers.

“They make the whole process more efficient and effective at the same time,” he said.

“It’s been fun working with the Army. Everyone is really awesome,” said Air Force Staff Sgt. Christine Lopez, one of the EAGLEs.

“It’s so important for these units to get this training. The next time this might be the real world, so they’ll be able to take this training and apply it to that next movement,” said Lopez. “That way when their cargo is getting inspected by joint inspectors this process can be smooth.”

“Getting to do this with the Air Force is great, they’re phenomenal,” said Army Sgt. Bryan Battaglia, UH-60 repairer. “I’d say they’re pretty good partners overall. We don’t get to do stuff like this very often, so this is good for the Soldiers.”

Battaglia said that practicing skills in a real-time environment with joint cooperation al-

lows for what he calls “organized chaos. When we do stuff like this there’s so much going on, it’s easy for a person to freeze up. A lot of people will freeze up in a real life situation like this because it’s just so extensive. Once you get to see it and do it in real time you’ll be able to focus and care about safety.”

He said that safety is his primary concern for his Soldiers and that the more practice the team got the safer they would be in the future.

The training was slated for three days, Feb. 23-25.

Pvt. 1st Class Jacob Del Castillo, a UH-60 repairer, said that it was some of the best training he had participated in so far.

“The Air Force has been very nice to us and very informative,” said Del Castillo, adding that he was happy to have a chance to train with a tangible, real-world challenge.

He also said that the difficult training would only make his organization more ready to face challenges in the future. “This is significant to the Army because it shows that when the time comes we’re not going to fall behind, we’re battle ready. We really know what we’re doing.”



**Soldiers and Airmen work together to move a UH-60 Black Hawk into a C-5 Galaxy aircraft.**



# Commissaries, AAFES launch 9th season of program offering skills camps for military family children

By Rick Brink

*Defense Commissary Agency Public Affairs*

FORT LEE, Va. – Meeting the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic head-on, organizers of the Procter & Gamble Military ProCamps held a virtual kick-off event Feb. 16 to launch the program that hosts football camps for military family youngsters worldwide.

The kickoff for the program's ninth season signaled it's time for commissary and exchange patrons to make the camps happen in their locations by shopping.

Installations qualify for a camp based on sales of designated P&G products at their local commissaries and exchanges from mid-March to mid-April.

Customers will see mass product displays in participating stores. Patrons can also help their installation win by texting their installation name to 833-998-1228 anytime between Feb. 26 and April 11.

The camps are scheduled to be conducted in June and July, either in-person or virtually, depending on the status of public health precautions in effect then because of the pandemic.

Last year, for the first time, they were virtual because of COVID. Either way, youth in grades 1-8 enjoy activities led by NFL athletes. So far more than 90 camps have been held for military youth on installations

worldwide.

Defense Commissary Agency Director and CEO Bill Moore got the kickoff started with opening remarks delivered from a DECA Headquarters conference room. Representatives of the other military resale entities also participated during the event attended virtually by fans who registered in advance and were eligible for prizes.

"ProCamps' payback to the military is part of the benefits our commissary and exchange customers receive from our partnership with industry suppliers and manufacturers," Moore told the audience. "Our industry partners provide millions of dollars annually in giveaways and promotional events that greatly enhance military quality of life."

P&G is partnering with DECA, the Army

and Air Force Exchange Service, the Navy Exchange Service Command, the Marine Corps Exchange and the Coast Guard Exchange to provide the camps. In the camps NFL players interact with participants, and that also happened in the kickoff. Green Bay Packers running back Aaron Jones and Washington Football Team defensive tackle Jonathan Allen spoke and answered questions from the registered attendees.

Both players talked about their experiences as "military bats." Allen's father is a retired Army sergeant first class and his brother serves as an Army staff sergeant. Jones' parents are both military retirees – his father served as a command sergeant major and his mother as a sergeant major.

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