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10



14



26



30



34

Contents

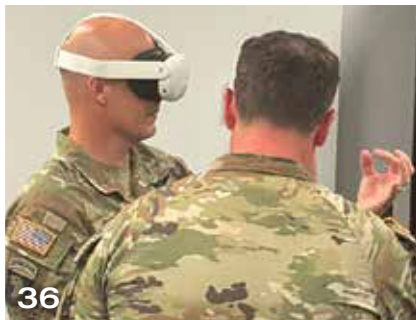
July 31, 2026, Vol. 75, No. 7

TO THE FIELD

- 10 Army Aviation Branch Chief Update**
By MG Clair A. Gill
- 12 Chief Warrant Officer of the Branch Update**
By CW5 Scott Slider
- 14 Command Sergeant Major of the Branch Update**
By CSM Ruben Davila
- 18 Combat Readiness Center Update**
By the U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center, the Army Analytics Group and Booz Allen
- 20 Reserve Components Aviation Update**
By CW3 Jacob Gappmayer
- 22 CCDC AvMC Tech Talk**
By Dr. Thomas L. Thompson
- 24 Ask the Flight Surgeon**
By CPT (Dr.) Emily Hawker and CPT (Dr.) Brian Jiménez

SPECIAL FOCUS — Training

- 26 Maximizing Readiness through Versatile and Affordable Aviation TADSS**
By Brian Bennett
- 28 Masters of the Terrain: Army Aviation's Inherent Survivability in the IADS Fight**
By LTC Daniel Ball
- 30 Aviation Tactical Assembly Area Organization in the Next War**
By CPT Michael B. Leinen, CPT William S. (Liam) Thies, CPT Calvin L. Smith and MAJ Ronald J. Edwards
- 34 From the Box to the Branch: How JRTC is Accelerating Army Aviation Adaptation for Large Scale Combat Operations**
By LTC Amoreena "Ammo" York



36



38



40



48



56

Contents

July 31, 2026, Vol. 75, No. 7

SPECIAL FOCUS – Simulation

36 **Army Aviation: Directorate of Simulation Training and Simulation Advancements**

By MAJ Marc McMenamin

38 **Building Capability at Speed: How Simulation Strengthens Operational Readiness**

By MAJ Cameron Vasquez

SPECIAL FOCUS – Aviation Survivability

40 **Forging the Future: Air Warrior's Commitment to Crew-Centric Modernization**

By LTC Brandon Nixon, Mr. Robert Seybold, MAJ Francisco Arocho and MAJ Brandon Bastian

42 **The Invisible Shield: Forging Army Aviation's Unseen Armor**

By Joseph D. Nispel

FROM THE FIELD

44 **From Cockpit to Combat: How Research is Shaping the Future of Army Aviation**

By Dr. Katie Feltman, Jason Gerstner and MAJ Amanda Charlton

46 **Building Readiness Through Real-World Operations: Army Aviation on the Southern Border**

By 1LT Noah Methvin

DEPARTMENTS

AAAA NEWS

AAAA President's Cockpit.....	8
AAAA VP Chapter Affairs.....	52
Chapter News, OSMs.....	53
AAAA VP Membership	54
New Members.....	55
AAAA Family Forum.....	56
AAAA Legislative Report.....	64
AAAA Scholarship Foundation	60
AAAA TLC Foundation	58

ARMY AVIATION COMMUNITY NEWS

Advertisers Index	65
Art's Attic.....	66
Briefings	6
Enlisted Spotlight.....	16
Hall of Fame.....	67
Historical Perspective	48
Industry News.....	65
In Memoriam.....	57
People on the Move	62

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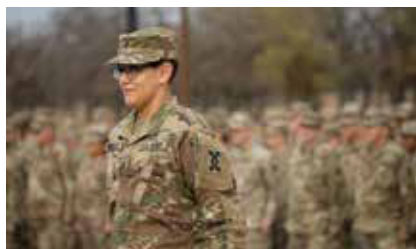
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Briefings

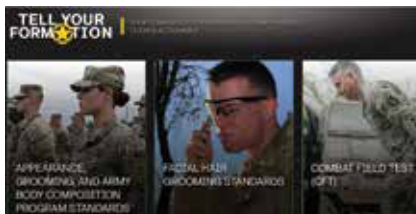
U.S. Army Expands Unit Stability Program For Junior Officers



U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY CPT KATHERINE ALEJANDRO

The U.S. Army announced it is expanding its pilot program that allows some high-performing first lieutenants the option to remain with their current unit for an extended period after completing the Captains Career Course (CCC). The Company Grade Retention and Incentive Program (CGRIP) began in 2025 with a cohort of 35 first lieutenants in combat arms branches who could opt to stabilize at units including the 1st Infantry Division, 1st Cavalry Division, 10th Mountain Division, 7th Infantry Division and 82nd Airborne Division. The program will expand to a total of 16 units including the 101st Airborne Division, National Training Center and Joint Readiness Training Center, among others. Applications for eligible officers in year-group 2023 opened on May 29. Those selected will incur an additional two-year active duty commitment. Additional information, eligibility requirements and application procedures are available in the official MILPER message at <https://www.hrc.army.mil/Milper/26-203>.

Tell Your Formation



COURTESY PHOTO

The U.S. Army has activated "Tell Your Formation," a new website designed to provide Soldiers with clear, accessible information on a variety of Army policies and programs. According to the site, its goal is to translate "complex Army policies into clear, understandable and actionable information." Topics include appearance, grooming and body composition standards, facial hair grooming standards, the new Combat Field Test for Soldiers in combat arms military occupational specialties (MOSs), and the Army Food Program. The website also provides quick access to a

number of Army resources, including the Integrated Personnel and Pay System-Army (IPPS-A), Personal Property Activity, MyPay, Army Emergency Relief, Army Community Service, and TRICARE. For more information, visit: <https://www.army.mil/tellyourformation>.

PCS Help



COURTESY PHOTO

The Pentagon has launched PPA.mil, a new website designed to help service members and their families navigate the permanent change-of-station (PCS) process. Managed by the Department of Defense's Personal Property Activity, the site offers step-by-step moving guidance and checklists for every stage of relocation. Resources include information on permanent change-of-station moves, personally procured moves, overseas shipments, and guidance for filing claims. "Our service members and their families deserve a relocation experience built on trust, quality and support," said MG Lance Curtis, commander of the Personal Property Activity. In addition to the new website, the Personal Property Activity's call and operations center will operate 24 hours a day through Sept. 15 to assist service members and families during the peak PCS season. The center can be reached at PCSCallCenter@mail.mil or 1-833-MIL-MOVE.

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Taking Aim on the Future

It's hard to believe that summer is already here! Early June 2026 found the National Executive Group (NEG), consisting of myself, Senior VP Tim Edens, Treasurer Todd Royar and Secretary Ray Davis, along with VP Membership Liz Martin and VP Chapters John Broam in Connecticut at the AAAA National Headquarters.

We were joined by Bill Harris, Laura Arena, Art Agnew, Janis Arena and other members of the National Staff to conduct our annual review of AAAA programs, strategic plan, bylaws, management contract and proposed events including the Army Aviation Warfighting Summit.

We had enjoyable and productive sessions, evaluating the last year, planning for 2027 and working initiatives together as a team. It was especially helpful that we took a long-term approach to try synchronizing goals and objectives both now and in the future as we all look forward to supporting each other's presidencies over the next seven years!

Bottom line is that AAAA is in great shape. From our record-setting 2026 Summit to membership, chapter activity, scholarships, and Trade-School Licensing and Certification programs, we are confident that we are meeting or exceeding your expectations.

We still have room for improvement, of course. We are looking to re-energize Congressional Caucus engagements in DC, becoming even



AAA National President, MG (Ret.) Wally Golden, pauses for a Kodak moment with Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association past president, Art Jacobs, during an Air Assault Chapter meeting on June 15, at Cole Park Commons, Fort Campbell, KY.

more proactive in representing your needs while ensuring that we are 100% aligned with Aviation Branch objectives and initiatives.

We also had some lively discussions on reshaping the Annual AAAA Army Aviation Warfighting Summit, the Cribbins Futures Forum, the Survivability and Counter Drone Forum, and the Second Annual Army Best Drone Warfighter Competition. More to follow on these initiatives.

I just returned from an outstanding visit to the Air Assault Chapter at Fort Campbell, KY. As usual, Chapter President COL (Ret.) Hawk Ruth and his team were magnificent. I had the opportunity to visit the 101st Airborne Division headquarters, as well as meet with Soldiers from the 101st Combat Aviation Brigade and 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne). I was honored to be able to speak briefly about AAAA at their quarterly chapter meeting where several individuals were recognized with Orders of St Michael, along with opportunities to network while enjoying a complimentary all-

you-can-eat barbecue dinner. I look forward to sharing more chapter visits with you in 2027.

During the first week of June, AAAA Past President, BG (Ret.) Howard Yellen, represented me at a well-deserved Gold Order of Saint Michael presentation to BG Travis McIntosh, Deputy Commanding General of the 101st, who is now enroute to his new assignment as Deputy Director for Regional Operations, The Joint Staff J-3, at the Pentagon. Thank you Howard for representing AAAA and congratulations to Travis for this well-deserved recognition.

All in all, it has been a great month. On behalf of the entire staff and leadership of AAAA, have a healthy and safe Summer and as always let us know what more we can do to best "Support the U.S. Army Aviation Soldier and Family".

MG Wally Golden, U.S. Army Retired
37th President, AAAA
walter.golden@quad-a.org

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► Army Aviation Branch Chief Update

Virtual Reality, Actual Readiness: Army Aviation Simulators

By MG Clair A. Gill

Army Aviation simulations have come a long way since the early 1900s with devices such as the Sanders Teacher, which was a real aircraft mounted on a universal joint that enabled students to react to aerodynamic forces.

The fundamental goal of simulations was the same then as it is today: realistically replicating the flight environment to reduce operational costs, mitigate risks during high-risk maneuvers, and save wear and tear on our primary airframes.

While these advantages remain constant, our aircraft and equipment are undergoing changes at the speed of technology. U.S. Army Aviation is currently transitioning from a costly, fragmented simulation strategy to a modernized, affordable model. The current reliance on expensive, proprietary, full-motion simulators—illustrated by the modern simulator cockpit—is be-

coming unsustainable due to funding constraints and logistical inefficiencies.

Operational Friction Points

It is in our DNA to tackle problems head-on. While we maintain stellar facilities at Forts Rucker, Bragg, and Campbell, we face significant operational hurdles. One of the most pressing issues is the “concurrency gap,” where simulator software and flight models lag months or years behind the actual aircraft. This creates a severe risk of negative habit transfer, as muscle memory and emergency procedures are compromised if the virtual cockpit does



U.S. AIR FORCE PHOTO BY HADEN HALLMAN

An historical image of the Sanders Teacher aircraft on a universal joint.

not mirror the physical one.

Furthermore, the shift toward “regional” consolidation of simulators is a consideration, but it introduces a new tension between cost-effectiveness and readiness. While regional centers save money on paper, they place a heavy logistical burden on units, often trading actual flight and maintenance availability for time spent traveling. This deficit extends to our maintainers as well.

Maintenance simulators often lag even further behind flight simulators, forcing us to tie up fully mission-capable aircraft just to practice fault isolation and run-up procedures. Compounding these issues is the challenge of vendor lock-in, where closed, proprietary architectures prevent us from rapidly integrating third-party software without exorbitant original equipment manufacturer fees. We will need to address all these friction points in our Training Aides, Devices, Simulators, and Simulations (TADSS) strategy.

Warrant Officers Colton Marlow and Edric Guillen prepare to conduct instrument training in a UH-60 Black Hawk simulator during U.S. Army Flight School at Fort Rucker, AL.



U.S. AIR FORCE PHOTO BY HADEN HALLMAN

A Coherent TADSS Strategy

The path forward requires a strategy that addresses these shortfalls through modernization, affordability, and a cultural shift. The core of this strategy is to move away from expensive, “one-off” hardware and leverage new virtual and mixed-reality tools. A foundational element is the re-evaluating training requirements to determine which tasks necessitate high-fidelity, full-motion simulators versus those that can be effectively trained on more accessible, lower-cost devices.

To achieve this, we must push for concurrent updates between aircraft platforms and their associated training devices. By adopting a Modular Open Systems Architecture (MOSA), future systems like the MV-75 Cheyenne will allow for “plug-and-play” simulator upgrades. For instance, if a new sensor is added to the aircraft, MOSA enables a rapid, software-driven update to the simulator without a total hardware overhaul. Additionally, by integrating Mixed Reality (XR/VR), we can use portable, commercial-off-the-shelf headsets to achieve vital repetitions on “switchology” before burning time in an expensive

full-motion dome. This “right-sizing” of fidelity acknowledges that an aviator does not need a full-motion dome for communications planning, reserving high-fidelity assets for autorotation or degraded visual environment training.

The Requirement

As we modernize, we must also ensure the virtual battlefield reflects the complexity of modern warfare. Aviators are no longer just flying; they are managing networks in contested environments. Future TADSS must seamlessly integrate Electronic Warfare, Cyber threats, and Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) teaming into the virtual environment to prepare crews for Multi-Domain Operations.

Distributed Mission Training is becoming a necessity. We must possess the capability to link simulators globally, allowing an attack weapons team at Fort Campbell to fly a virtual mission fully integrated with ground commanders at Fort Bragg and artillery units at Fort Sill. The simulator must reflect the joint, multi-domain reality of the next conflict to ensure our crews are prepared from day one.

Conclusion

We must be joined at the hip with our industry partners to ensure we maintain state-of-the-art Training Aides, Devices, Simulators, and Simulations (TADSS) for both the aviator and maintainer. The goal is to foster systems that are tailored to meet training standards and nothing more—emphasizing “goal-plated” requirements over “gold-plated” luxuries. We can ill-afford capabilities where the return on investment is minimal. The Army’s new aviation simulation strategy must be a forward-looking plan designed to enhance training effectiveness and readiness while ensuring long-term affordability. It pivots from a hardware-centric model to a flexible, technology-enabled ecosystem that can adapt to the evolving needs of the force and the speed of change for the modern battlefield.

Above the Best!
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MG Clair A. Gill is the commanding general of the U.S. Army Aviation Center of Excellence, Portfolio Acquisition Executive and the Army Aviation Branch Chief located at Fort Rucker, AL.



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► Chief Warrant Officer of the Branch Update

The Importance of Sets and Reps: Army Aviation Training and Advanced Simulations

By CW5 Scott Slider

The reality is that operating modern rotary-wing aircraft such as the AH-64E Apache, UH-60M Black Hawk and CH-47F Chinook is expensive.

Every time one of our aircrew executes their assigned mission, whether in training or combat, it requires an immense expenditure of financial resources and human capital.

Not to mention, Army Aviation is inherently risky business. Historically, Army Aviation has offset the cost and risk of operations, while simultaneously investing in aircrew readiness, with high-fidelity simulators. Unlike live aircraft, simulators allow aircrews to practice surviving catastrophic emergencies that are too perilous to execute in actual aircraft, experience challenging weather conditions, and practice complex navigation routes and procedures prior to flying them in an actual aircraft. Simply put, simulations allow Army Aviators to get the necessary sets and reps in preparation for live flight.

Simulators are not only for preparing crews on procedures and actions to survive standard emergency procedures and challenging weather. In fact, some



Warrant Officer Colton Marlow prepares to conduct instrument training in a UH-60 Black Hawk simulator during U.S. Army Flight School at Fort Rucker, AL.

simulation devices were intended to better prepare for large-scale combat operations against peer and near-peer adversaries. Simulators like the AV-CATT could never quite capture the attention of aircrews practicing tactical flight. Instead, practicing complex tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs) were usually reserved for live flight and once relegated to specific training environments, including National Training Center (NTC) and Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC), but ultimately lacked the ability to present situation-based threats with the ability to cue real aircraft systems. The good news is that the ASE B-Kit Emulator, or ABE, is finally here, among other devices, and the future of simulation relies not just on replicating the physical cockpit, but on

stimulating the aircrew's cognitive decision-making loop through advanced hardware emulation and algorithmic adaptation.

Advancing Survivability: The Role of ASE B-Kit Emulators

In modern combat, challenges found in the electromagnetic spectrum are as lethal as anything found in the physical domain. Just like the steps of an emergency procedure are meant to provide protection against mechanical failures or damage, Army aircraft are further protected by a complex suite of Aircraft Survivability Equipment (ASE). ASE is a series of critical components that detect radar, laser and missile threats, automatically dispensing countermeasures or providing the crew with actionable

warnings. These systems are typically divided into A-Kits (the permanent wiring and antennas on the airframe) and B-Kits (the sensitive, highly classified line-replaceable units, processors and operational software).

Historically, integrating actual ASE B-Kits into unclassified or lower-security simulator facilities presented severe logistical, financial and security challenges. Static software approximations were often used instead, which frequently failed to replicate the nuanced behavior of the real systems under dense electronic warfare and other threat conditions. The introduction of ASE B-Kit Emulators fundamentally solves this capability gap. Emulators are unclassified, software-driven replicas that run the exact Operational Flight Program (OFP) of the tactical B-Kit.

When a simulated surface-to-air missile site tracks the virtual aircraft, the emulator processes that threat exactly as the tactical hardware would, triggering identical audio tones, visual display symbology, and countermeasure logic.

Hardware that provides such dynamic and mission-oriented cueing in the cockpit of the aircraft blends capability

of the training and simulation world with that of live flight. This blending of the best of both worlds will certainly ensure that aircrews build precise, accurate muscle memory with respect to flight in the tactical environment. By training with emulators, pilots learn to trust their survivability equipment and react to its cues instantly, an imperative for surviving the complex Integrated Air Defense Systems (IADS) deployed by near peer and peer threats.

Now, the ASE-E B-Kit emulator has been a valid product for quite some time, with an initial device built and ready for evaluation right before the onset of COVID. With the intent to leverage modern simulation tech below main simulation devices, ABE was well ahead of its time but seemed to hit snags in timing during previous years. Today, ABE is finally at the starting line for employment, with 48 kits at Fort Rucker, AL, and simply awaiting completion of the Air Worthiness Release for UH-60s and CH-47s. Once the AWRs are finished, ABE will first see use in the Aviation Tactics Instructor Course (ATIC) and undoubtedly contribute to the instruction of our fu-

ture instructors. Following initial utilization in ATIC, ABE will find its way to CABs across the Army and assist instructors to provide augmented reality training to all our formations.

Closing

ABE promises to be a windfall for traditional simulation training in Army Aviation. Augmented reality devices have been around for a bit and now have made their way to Army Aviation. No matter what the device might be, it is critical to remember that simulation remains highly valuable to maintaining readiness and ensuring crew safety while collecting valuable reps and sets for the most challenging modes of flight. It is imperative that all Army Aviators maximize available training and simulation devices to their advantage. Continue to train and never stop trying to achieve excellence in your craft as we are.

Fly Army!

Above the Best!

CW5 Robert S. "Scott" Slider is the eleventh Chief Warrant Officer of the Aviation Branch with the U.S. Army Aviation Center of Excellence, Fort Rucker, AL.


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► Command Sergeant Major of the Branch Update

Ready to Train

By CSM Ruben Davila

On May 8th at Fort Rucker, AL, I assumed responsibility as the Aviation Branch Command Sergeant Major from CSM Kirk Coley.

CSM Coley retired after serving the nation and the Army with distinction for over 30 years. There is no question that CSM Coley will be an incredible success in whatever he pursues next. I consider it the honor of my career to step into this role as his successor and look forward to serving alongside the rest of the great Aviation Branch team as we continue to transform Army Aviation for the future fight!

Change of Scenery, Same Mission

My most recent assignment was in the Directorate of Army Aviation at the Headquarters, Department of the Army, or DAMO-AV, where I served with the current Chief Warrant Officer of the Branch, CW5 Scott Slider. The beltway was great, but it sure feels good to be in Fort Rucker, AL. Yes, things are slower in Alabama when compared to life at the building; however, I know this change of scenery does not mean things are about to slow down. On the contrary, as my previous assignment was DAMO-AV, I am very aware of the challenges facing the U.S. Army and the Aviation Branch as we proceed down the azimuth of continuous transformation. Transformation is never easy, but it is necessary to ensure the branch is best prepared to meet the needs of the future fight. I am very excited to help through the process of transformation, and I know that the Aviation Branch remains resilient and ready to face any challenge.

My mission as the Command Ser-



U.S. Army PFC Carson Smith, 128th Aviation Brigade AH-64 attack helicopter maintainer, uses a radio during Phoenix Week at Joint Base Langley-Eustis, VA, March 5, 2026. The Downed Aircraft Recovery Team exercise tested Soldiers' application of aviation-specific skills in a simulated operation, to foster confidence and competence in mission execution.

geant Major remains the same as always. First, I aim to be an excellent teammate to the Commanding General and Chief Warrant Officer of the Branch, advocating specifically our enlisted Soldiers and trying to enhance their career opportunities. Second, I seek to bring my passion and motivation for soldiering to everything we do as a Branch, committing myself to the full support of the U.S. Army, the Aviation Branch, its Soldiers and their families. Finally, I remain ready to directly support and invest in training opportunities, evolution of Soldier education and all efforts that contribute to enhanced readiness.

Moving Forward

I know there are those wondering what to expect from the new CSM? Initially, I can tell you that my focus is finding ways to maintain our edge in initial training and ultimately positive-

ly impact branch readiness. Admittedly, this is challenging to undertake, especially given requirements to be more fiscally aware in light of competing Army and greater Department of War requirements and constraints. However, both savings and enhanced training can be found in a variety of programs trying to leverage Training Aids, Devices, Simulators and Simulations, or TADSS. Many of our programs currently experiencing revitalization or evolution involving TADSS began under the tenure of CSM Coley, and we seek to continue to cultivate these efforts to drive readiness.

Watching the Phoenix

A lot of attention is constantly paid to Fort Rucker, manned aviation, and its associated programs, and rightfully so; however, the 128th Aviation Brigade, also known as the Phoenix Brigade, is leading the way in enlisted

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▶ Enlisted Aviation Soldier Spotlight

Each issue 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.



AAAA Trainer of the Year, 2023

SSG Christopher L. Korthals

Aviation Operations Division

Joint Readiness Training Center, Fort Johnson, Louisiana

SSG Korthals has far surpassed his operational duty description as the Air Traffic Control NCO/Trainer at the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC). He has demonstrated his technical and tactical expertise by providing outstanding ATC training, guidance, and evaluations while at Fort Johnson and Fort Wainwright. During his very first JRTC event as an evaluator / trainer, he was voted by his peers as the Aviation Division's Observer, Controller and Trainer of the Rotation. SSG Korthals has revolutionized how Air Traffic Services are evaluated while training at JRTC, using the Training and Evaluation Outline from the unit's Mission Essential Task List (METL) to provide an accurate and realistic reflection of their performance. This provides invaluable feedback to the visiting unit's leadership as to the preparedness for global

response and support. SSG Korthals has received numerous accolades and was awarded an Army Commendation Medal (ARCOM) from the Commander of Operations Group, JRTC, as the OC/T of the rotation for the largest Aviation rotation in JRTC history. He volunteered to be the MEDEVAC Observer Coach/Trainer (OC/T) for a March 2023 rotation in Fort Wainwright, Alaska. SSG Korthals was again voted by his peers as the Aviation Division's OC/T of the Rotation in August 2023. His performance identifies him as the 2023 Army Aviation Association of America Army Aviation Trainer of the Year.

education modernization. For those who may not know, the Phoenix Brigade is responsible for training our branch maintainers, and these Soldiers require the very best in TADSS devices to ensure they are fully ready to keep CABs in the air!

There is currently some great work ongoing between the Apache Project Manager and 2nd Battalion, 210th Aviation Regiment, as they are upgrading its fleet of engines, replacing outdated T701 models with new T701D units. This shared endeavor will ultimately include the delivery of ten new engines and equipping every training section with the latest instructional aids and supplemental spare parts, significantly boosting student learning and future readiness. Their sister battalion, 1st Battalion, 210th Aviation Regiment, recently integrated two modernized Digital Captive Boresight and Harmonization Kits (D-CBHKs) into Soldier training. To ensure full operational capability, all 12x L-7AY Multiplex, Avionics, Visionics, Weapons, and Electrical Systems Trainer, or MAVWEST

maintenance trainers, were modified to interface seamlessly with the new modeled hardware, significantly enhancing the technical accuracy of instruction. This modernization effort has already delivered a measurable positive impact on the Program of Instruction by providing Soldiers with updated and more advanced, mission-relevant training tools.

These are great initiatives and improvements occurring at the 128th and promise to directly impact training and readiness in CABs across the Army. The Aviation Branch is very proud of the effort being made by the Phoenix Brigade to modernize TADSS, but that is not all. The 128th team is actively blazing a bold new path with the integration of extended reality and virtual reality, or XR/VR, assets into training. The brigade was recently selected to participate in one of four projects that the University of William and Mary selected for their capstone project. The 5-month research capstone titled *Optimizing Aviation Maintenance Training Efficiency: A Comparative*

Analysis of XR and Traditional TADSS Methodologies will focus on the XR/VR program and future implementation across the 128th footprint. The future of the Phoenix Brigade is bright, and it will directly impact training and readiness!

Closing

Again, I am thrilled to join the Aviation Branch command team. I am especially excited to roll up my sleeves and get to work alongside all the tremendous professionals across the branch. The efforts of our Contractors, Civilians, and Soldiers to develop and refine the training for our enlisted ranks has been tremendous, and I know the best is yet to come. I will endeavor to champion every effort and always showcase what our wonderful Soldiers are doing to keep Army Aviation "Above the Best."

CSM Ruben Davila is the Command Sergeant Major of the Aviation Branch at the United States Army Aviation Center of Excellence, Fort Rucker, AL.

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The Aviation Readiness & Risk Dashboard



Aviation battalion commanders operate in an environment where risk is constant, complex and rapidly changing.

Historically, leaders have relied on fragmented systems and retrospective reports to understand readiness and identify indicators of elevated mishap risk. What has been missing is a single, unified source of near real-time, actionable intelligence — a tool that brings together the essential data required to safeguard aviators and strengthen operational readiness.

The U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center (USACRC) has addressed this gap with the Aviation Readiness & Risk Dashboard, a datadriven capability built on the Army Vantage platform. Designed specifically for battalion-level leadership, the dashboard provides an integrated view of the factors influencing aviation safety, experience, operational tempo and aircraft availability. Rather than piecing together separate data feeds, commanders now have

immediate access to the insights needed to make informed, proactive decisions.

At its core, the dashboard enhances three major impact areas. First, it enables proactive risk mitigation by identifying shifts in aviator experience, operational tempo and training activity before they become significant hazards. Weekly trend visualizations allow leaders to intervene early, taking purposeful action to correct emerging risk patterns. Second, the tool strengthens overall unit readiness by centralizing information once scattered across multiple systems. Commanders can now see aircraft availability, experience levels and recent demands placed on the formation in a single location. Third, it supports data-driven leadership. Instead of relying on anecdotal assessments, leaders can justify resources, tailor training and manage talent using objective, authoritative information sourced from the Centralized Aviation Flight Records System (CAFRS), the Army Safety Management Information System (ASMIS) and other validated datasets.

The dashboard's structure is intentionally intuitive, giving commanders a clear view of their battalion's health at a glance. The Overview page functions as an executive summary,

presenting weekly metrics such as average flight hours, average hours per aviator and the percentage of aviators with fewer than 500 total flight hours. It also highlights the unit's most recent Army Readiness Assessment Program (ARAP) score and upcoming Combat Training Center events. A one-click PDF export produces a comprehensive Battalion Monthly Report, simplifying communication across the chain of command.

The Experience page delivers a detailed assessment of the battalion's aviator experience distribution. By categorizing personnel into low, moderate and high experience groups, commanders can readily identify imbalances, monitor trends over time and compare their formation to similar battalions. This visibility supports informed decisions about training priorities, mentorship and crew pairing.

The OPTEMPO page tracks the unit's operational activity by displaying flight hours by mission set, flight conditions and duty position. Leaders gain clarity into how the unit is training and operating over time, helping them recognize potential fatigue indicators or training shortfalls.

For senior leaders responsible for personnel management, the restricted Aviators page provides sortable data on individual aviators, including total flight time, qualifications and projected gains and losses. This allows commanders to manage talent deliberately and maintain balanced experience across companies.

Additional pages expand the dashboard's value across other elements of readiness. The Training page visualizes aircraft and simulator training activity across seven flight conditions, offering insight into training completeness and trends. The Mishap page presents data on flight mishaps, including types and timelines, alongside ARAP scores and debrief dates, helping commanders connect safety outcomes with operational patterns. The Aircraft page tracks hours flown or number of flights by specific airframe types, helping leaders understand demand on particular mission design series.

Looking forward, the Aviation Readiness & Risk Dashboard is evolving toward enhancing the capabilities. The ongoing development of AI-driven risk forecasting will enable the system to produce categorical risk scores for a unit to have a serious flight mishap — ranging from low to extremely high — for all active-duty combat aviation brigades. By training machine learning models on historical and operational data, the USACRC intends to shift the Army from reactive analysis to data-driven intelligence. This advancement will equip commanders with the ability to anticipate elevated mishap risk and act early, fundamentally strengthening aviation safety.

The Aviation Readiness & Risk Dashboard represents a major step forward in empowering Army aviation leaders. By unifying data, enhancing visibility and enabling proactive decision-making, it supports a safer, more informed and more ready aviation force. The Aviation Readiness & Risk Dashboard is available through the USACRC landing page on Army Vantage by utilizing the left-side search feature. Email USACRC-RFI@army.mil with access issues and questions.

This article on the Aviation Readiness & Risk Dashboard was a collaborative effort between the U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center, the Army Analytics Group and Booz Allen.



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Leading the Way to Drone Dominance

By CW3 Jacob Gappmayer

We stand at a historic inflection point in Army Aviation. The Department of War has made it clear that achieving Drone Dominance is not a far-off goal—it is an immediate, operational necessity.

To meet this mandate, PM UAS is approaching tactical uncrewed capabilities with fresh eyes, breaking away from legacy, risk-averse acquisition frameworks. At the core of this transformation is a fundamental shift in how we field and train Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems (SUAS) - trading traditional, vendor-locked contractor models for the lethal agility of uniformed personnel.

Breaking the Vendor Silo

Proprietary walls and single-system statements of work inherently bind traditional defense contractors. When technology shifts overnight, a corporate contract cannot easily pivot. Uniformed personnel bring an entirely different level of flexibility. As a team of certified SUAS Master Trainers, we do not rely on external vendors to scale up; we have the internal agility to train multiple



U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY SGT DEVYN ADAMS

Paratroopers with the Robotics and Autonomous Systems (RAS) Platoon, Company G, 82nd Airborne Division operate small unmanned aircraft systems (SUAS) during Devil Avalanche at Fort Bragg, NC. During Devil Avalanche, instructors from the RAS Platoon acted as the opposing force to evaluate Paratrooper tactics and response to attacks from Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS).

aircraft platforms simultaneously and assist across various programs.

Serving as essential government liaisons, our team bridges the gap between complex engineering requirements and the realities of the tactical edge. Because we view the problem through the lens of institutional ownership rather than corporate profit, we are uniquely positioned to hold civilian vendors to an unyielding standard of accountabil-

ity, ensuring the government receives exactly what the Warfighter requires.

The Power of Peer-to-Peer Connection

The true magic of this model, however, lies in the immediate human element. Wearing the same uniform as the troops we support, we establish a deep, instant connection no civilian contractor can replicate. We understand their administrative constraints, training cycles, and the friction points of their operational environments. When we conduct New Equipment Training (NET), it isn't a transactional handoff—it's a shared investment in tactical readiness.

This profound Soldier connection goes far beyond the classroom. We maintain open lines of communication with units long after formal training, no matter the time of day. Whether answering a midnight text, trouble-



COURTESY PHOTO CAPABILITY PROGRAM EXECUTIVE OFFICE

The U.S. Army expanded the company-level Small Unmanned Aircraft System (SUAS) portfolio for priority Transformation in Contact (TiC) units by selecting three additional vendor solutions. Led by the Capability Program Executive (CPE) Aviation's Project Manager for Uncrewed Aircraft Systems (PM UAS), this capability expansion supports the Department of War's (DOW) Drone Dominance priorities, expedites Army TiC initiatives, accelerates Soldier feedback, and informs requirement refinement.



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shooting a data link, or advising on a pre-dawn flight profile, our round-the-clock availability builds a resilient network of trust. By breaking down geographic and institutional barriers, this approach seamlessly connects Active, Guard, and Reserve components under a unified standard of operational excellence. By maintaining direct lines of communication with operators worldwide, we have created an invaluable 24-hour feedback loop. Hardware malfunctions, software glitches, and novel tactical adaptations bypass bureaucratic delays, feeding real-time data straight back to the PM to refine future requirements.

Triple the Output, Millions in Savings

The metrics speak for themselves. Since transitioning from contractor-reliant pipelines to our dedicated in-house team of Soldiers, PM UAS has fielded and trained more than triple the number of systems and personnel.

This surge in capability has been achieved with staggering fiscal conservation. Our team pulls double duty as primary instructors and on-site Field Service Representatives (FSRs). By absorbing FSR responsibilities, we save the government millions annually

in tech-support contracts. Crucially, instead of allowing priceless technical knowledge to leave with a civilian contractor, that expertise is retained within the uniform, feeding directly into the force's lethality.

The ultimate beneficiary is the line unit. By executing rapid, comprehensive fieldings and standardized NETs, we save units and Soldiers precious time, protecting their training calendars so they can focus on collective readiness.

Conclusion

Achieving Drone Dominance requires more than buying thousands of airframes; it requires radically reimagining how we build institutional capability. The integration of National Guard personnel on Title 10 orders within PM UAS is a proven blueprint for the Total Army. It proves that when you trust Warfighters to train Warfighters, you optimize resources, enforce vendor accountability, and ensure the multi-component Soldier is lethal, capable, and ready for the modern multi-domain fight.

CW3 Jacob Gappmayer is an Army National Guard Soldier, currently serving with the PM SUAS office in Huntsville, AL.



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Rotor Dynamics

By Dr. Thomas L. Thompson

Rotor blade dynamics is one of the more complex aspects of rotorcraft engineering that requires the designer or analyst to understand and model how the aerodynamic, inertial, and centrifugal forces and moments acting on a rotor blade affect out-of-plane (flapping), in-plane (lead-lag), and torsional (twist) blade motion.

The frequency and damping of this motion are carefully studied to ensure that the blade remains stable throughout the aircraft flight envelope and does not transmit excessive vibration to the airframe.

Designers of a new blade consult with the aerodynamics group to define a blade geometry (radius, chord, twist, and tip shape) that meets flight performance requirements. Designers work iteratively with structural and dynamics engineers to develop mass and stiffness properties. They also examine other requirements, such as autorotation, to establish constraints on the blade design (autorotation typically establishes the minimum polar moment of inertia of the blade). The preliminary blade characteristics are then input to an analysis that estimates blade natural frequencies and damping for a given set of boundary conditions, which are determined by the hub configuration to which the blades are attached (the blades may be hinged

to the hub, or they may be cantilevered, where the blade has an “effective” hinge due to its flexibility at the root).

The analysis begins with a set of differential equations that describe blade motion in terms of geometry, aerodynamics (lift, drag, and pitching moment), structural dynamic properties (mass and stiffness), rotor speed (RPM), and control inputs. The assumptions used to derive the equations might vary with the tools available to perform the analysis. For example, engineers working before the availability of digital computers may have chosen to ignore any coupling between blade flap, lag, and torsional motion, and to simplify their analysis by assuming constant blade properties from root to tip. Such assumptions would allow them to solve the equations exactly, or to solve them with approximate numerical methods performed with “hand” calculations. Industry and government analysts today would likely choose to use an established dynamics analysis, such as RCAS (Rotorcraft Comprehensive Analysis Software), which uses a finite-element method to discretize the blade into segments and solve the coupled equations of motion for the hub boundary conditions.

The results are used to generate a plot of natural frequencies as a function of RPM that is used to identify resonant conditions (where a natural frequency is in proximity to a forcing frequency). An example of this kind of plot, often referred to as a “fan plot” because of the way the lines depicting forcing frequencies (or harmonics) spread from the ori-

gin, is shown in Figure 1. The first eight harmonics (1p, 2p, 3p, and so forth, up to 8p) are depicted with dashed lines. For simplicity, the figure depicts only the flapping modes of a hinged blade, consisting of a rigid mode (just above 1p) and three elastic modes (1F, 2F, and 3F). The rigid flap mode is due to the motion of the blade about its hinge, and the three elastic modes are due to the structural flexibility of the blade as it bends in different mode shapes. The frequency of the elastic modes increases with RPM due to centrifugal stiffening.

The analyst uses the plot to determine where natural frequencies are close to harmonics. Of particular concern are resonances near the normal operating speed of the rotor, where the aircraft will operate most of the time. Assuming a normal operating speed of 300 RPM for our example, note that both the rigid and first elastic flap modes are nearly coincident with the first and third harmonics, respectively. However, given that flapping responses are well-damped by aerodynamic forces, the proximity of these modes to harmonics should not adversely affect stability and loads. For modes with less damping, such as the chordwise (lead-lag) mode, designers may need to adjust blade mass and stiffness properties to move the mode’s natural frequency away from the proximate harmonic.

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

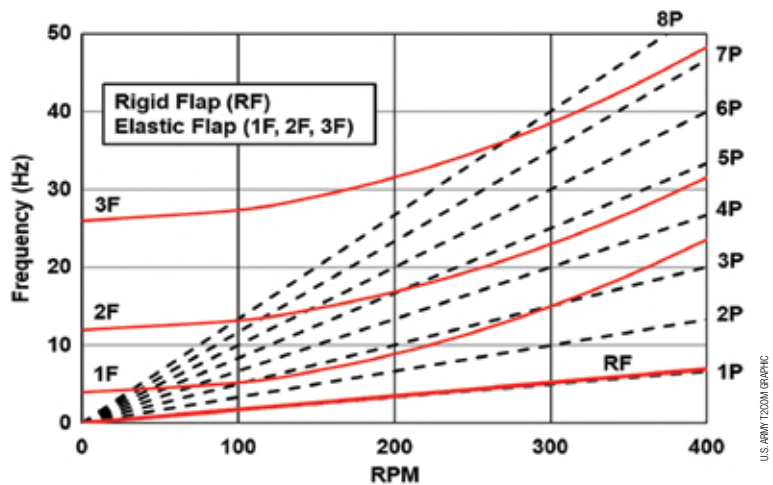


Figure 1. Flapping modes for a hinged rotor blade.



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► Ask the Flight Surgeon

An Incidental Finding: What a Stable Spine Means for Your Aviation Career

By: CPT (Dr.) Emily Hawker and CPT (Dr.) Brian Jiménez

Q: I recently had imaging for a minor injury and was told I have spondylolisthesis. I have no symptoms and feel fine, but I was informed this might require a waiver to continue flying. Why would the Army care about something that isn't bothering me?

FS: This is a more common scenario than you might realize. Modern imaging is sensitive and often identifies spinal conditions that have likely been present for years without causing any issues. It can be unsettling to receive a new diagnosis, especially for something you cannot feel. Even when you feel healthy, these diagnoses raise an important aeromedical question: is your spine stable enough to tolerate the long-term physical demands of aviation?

What Does This Diagnosis Mean to Me?

Spondylolisthesis occurs when one vertebra shifts slightly forward over the one below it, often related to a small stress fracture in the vertebra known as spondylolysis that may have developed earlier in life and gone unnoticed for decades.

The vast majority of these incidental findings are mild and do not cause symptoms. The key aeromedical question is not just how you feel today, but whether the condition is stable and unlikely to become a problem in the cockpit tomorrow.

Why Does the Army Care?

Army aviation exposes your spine to unique stresses that could potentially aggravate an underlying, asymptomatic condition. These stressors include:

- **Repeated G-forces:** Flight maneuvers place significant compressive loads on your spinal column
- **Continuous aircraft vibration:** Constant, low-grade vibration can

contribute to microtrauma in spinal discs and ligaments.

■ **Prolonged, constrained postures:** Sitting for long periods, often with gear, can lead to muscle fatigue and uneven spinal stress.

■ **Potential for high-impact forces:** Hard landings or mishaps may expose the spine to sudden, high-energy forces.

The goal is to ensure your spine is structurally stable and unlikely to cause pain, distraction, or neurologic issues during flight.

Will I Need a Waiver?

Often, yes, but that should not be viewed as a negative. For initial pilot applicants (Class 1), the medical fitness standards are the strictest; a waiver, or Exception to Policy (ETP), is considered on a case-by-case basis.

What Is the Evaluation Process?

Your flight surgeon will need to gather evidence to confirm your spine is structurally stable. This typically includes:

- An Aeromedical Summary (AMS) detailing your history and confirming the absence of symptoms.
- An Orthopedic or Neurosurgical Specialist Consultation to provide an expert opinion on stability.
- Imaging studies, often specific X-rays to visualize stability, or a CT or MRI for a more detailed view.

This evaluation is a necessary safety check, not a barrier. Its purpose is to build a clear case that your condition does not pose a hidden risk to you, your crew, or the mission.

What Should I Do?

Early communication with your flight surgeon is the most important first step. Prompt reporting allows the evaluation to begin early and helps avoid delays. Maintaining spinal health is also important: following medical guidance on core strength, posture, and body mechanics can reduce spinal stress. Just as importantly any new symptoms should be reported immediately, as symptom development is key in aeromedical decision-making.

Final Thoughts

Learning you have a spinal condition can be unsettling, but it is often something you have lived with for years and might never notice. Aviation medicine takes a proactive, long-term approach by considering how these findings may behave under the stresses of flight. The reassuring reality is the vast majority of stable, asymptomatic spinal conditions are compatible with continued aviation service. Early, honest communication with your flight surgeon is the key to keep flying safely.

Fly Safe!

Questions for the Flight Surgeon?

If you have a question that you would like addressed, email it to AskFS@quad-a.org. We will try to address it in the future. See your unit flight surgeon for your personal health issues. The views and opinions offered are those of the authors and should not be construed as an official Department of the Army position unless otherwise stated.

CPT Emily Hawker, M.D. is a Flight Surgeon and Resident in Aerospace Medicine, and CPT Brian Jiménez Alicea, M.D., MPH, is a Flight Surgeon and Aerospace Medicine Specialist, both are with the Department of Aviation Medicine, Fort Rucker, AL.



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Maximizing Readiness through Versatile and Affordable Aviation TADSS

By Brian Bennett

As the cost of live flight hours and physical maintenance continue to rise, the Army Aviation enterprise is undergoing a fundamental shift in its training philosophy. The current trajectory—characterized by a reliance on expensive, high-fidelity physical platforms—is both fiscally and operationally unsustainable. The rebalancing of the aviation rotary wing flight simulator fleet is merely one indicator of the fiscal state of TADSS support. The reductions and redistribution of TADSS mitigate increasing life cycle management resourcing challenges and eliminate inefficiencies resulting from a directed reduction of simulators/training hours required to support aircrew/unit training readiness requirements. To maintain a competitive advantage, the enterprise must pivot toward a lean, sustainable, and task-focused Training Aids, Devices, Simulators, and Simulations (TADSS) framework. Revolutionizing Army Aviation training includes leveraging TADSS as a primary warfighting engine rather than a support function.

This shift in a simulations training philosophy towards a tiered-fidelity model will provide training systems that are more available and as agile as the threat. When we eliminate the gap between aircraft capability and aircrew digital proficiency by streamlining decision cycles, aligning resources, and identifying critical tasks by systems, we will be able to proactively manage risks across the acquisition enterprise.

Leveraging our systems to create a “Virtual Edge” front-loads high-repetition, high-fidelity training into the digital realm. By the time a pilot or maintainer steps onto the flight line, the foundational muscle memory and cognitive frameworks should already be cemented. This approach doesn’t just save money; it ensures that every live hour flown is used for peak-level refinement rather than basic familiarization.

Moreover, the transition from individual task proficiency to collective readiness for multi-domain operations requires a volume of training that is physically and financially impossible

The rising cost of live flight hours and physical maintenance has caused a shift towards digital solutions for training.

to achieve through live flight alone. A single hour in a modern attack or utility helicopter carries a heavy price tag in fuel, parts, and man-hours. The risk associated with training for high-end threats—such as degraded visual environments (DVE) or sophisticated electronic warfare—can often be too high for initial training in a multi-million-dollar airframe.

Point-of-Need Training: The Rise of VR and XR

While the massive “motion-box” simulators remain vital for check-rides and emergency procedures, the most significant gains in affordability come from Virtual Reality (VR) and Extended Reality (XR) solutions. These “Point-of-Need” tools can be deployed directly to the hangar, classroom, or an interactive training area, minimizing the need for units to travel to centralized simulation

centers. VR headsets and high-fidelity haptic gloves provide a level of immersion that was unthinkable a decade ago. For pilots, this means practicing “switchology” and emergency procedures in a 360-degree digital cockpit, from a virtual training room. For maintainers, the benefits are even more pronounced.

As the Army moves toward more multi-capable maintainers, these Soldiers must master a broader array of systems and skills. The 128th Aviation Brigade is conducting 15T XR “pilot” classes to help shape future virtual training. Through the 15T XR pilot experiment, 128th continues to look for cost effective solutions to improve course delivery using VR allowing maintainers to perform a complex maintenance task on a “Digital Twin” of an aircraft. They can make mistakes and reset the task in seconds—all without risking damage to expensive devices or sensitive avionics. This environment builds confidence and competence at a fraction of the cost of traditional hands-on training.

The Maintenance Revolution: High-Fidelity Virtual Classrooms

Maintenance TADSS has evolved from simple static mock-ups into sophisticated, high-fidelity virtual environments that revolutionize how 15-series Soldiers master their craft. By utilizing high-resolution digital twins, maintainers can interact with every bolt, wire, and circuit of an airframe without the physical constraints of a hangar or the risk of damaging operational equipment. This is particularly critical for the integration of complex electronic systems and drivetrain components where physical access is limited. These virtual trainers allow for “non-destructive” failure exploration—Soldiers can troubleshoot catastrophic engine failures or electrical shorts that would be impossible to replicate safely in a live environment. This immersive approach ensures that the first time a maintainer performs a critical task on a flyable aircraft, it is a reinforcement of muscle memory rather than a tentative first attempt.

Versatility For 15-Series Soldiers

The move toward multi-capable maintainers demands a training toolset that is as flexible as the personnel it supports. Maintenance TADSS provides this through modular software packages that can instantly pivot between different aircraft systems on the same hardware platform. A Soldier can spend the

morning mastering the avionics of the AH-64v6 and the afternoon transitioning to the hydraulic systems of a UH-60M, all within the same augmented reality (AR) interface. This versatility is a massive force multiplier for unit commanders, allowing them to cross-train their maintenance sections at the point of need without the logistical nightmare of transporting heavy airframe trainers. By reducing the reliance on physical airframes for technical instruction, these affordable virtual options ensure that fleet readiness remains high while the training throughput for the next generation of aviation maintainers accelerates.

Conclusion: A Future-Proof Enterprise

The primary challenge to maintaining an affordable TADSS fleet is “concurrency”—ensuring the simulator software matches the latest aircraft hardware. If an Apache receives a software block upgrade, the simulator must be updated immediately, or the training becomes “negative training.”

Army Aviation is solving this by moving toward open-architecture software. By owning the data rights and using modular software designs, the enterprise can push updates across the entire

TADSS fleet simultaneously via the cloud. This avoids the traditional, expensive cycle of sending contractors to every installation to manually update hardware.

The future of Army Aviation training is not found in more devices and flight hours, but in better flight hours and more effective training. By aggressively pursuing versatile, affordable TADSS—specifically reconfigurable VR/XR platforms—Army Aviation is building a force that is more lethal, more agile, and more fiscally responsible.

As we look toward Future Vertical Lift (FVL), the integration of TADSS must be even more seamless. These aircraft are being designed with “digital-first” mentalities, meaning the simulator will be developed alongside the airframe, not as an afterthought. The result is an aviation enterprise where we close the gap between synthetic and live training, ensuring that our aviators and maintainers are ready for the first fight, every time.

Brian Bennett is the director of the U.S. Army Aviation Center of Excellence, Directorate of Training and Doctrine (DOTD) at Fort Rucker, AL



Masters of the Terrain: Army Aviation’s Inherent Survivability in the IADS Fight

By LTC Daniel Ball

The modern battlefield presents a formidable challenge to Army Aviation in the form of sophisticated Integrated Air Defense Systems (IADS). A prevailing belief, both in and out of the Branch, is that penetrating these complex networks of sensors and weapon systems necessitates an overwhelming reliance on external enablers, such as dedicated electronic warfare (EW) platforms or extensive Suppression of Enemy Air Defense (SEAD) by other branches and services. Throughout my two-year tenure on Eagle Team, I have heard Division Commanders state they wouldn’t commit aviation, attack or lift, without enablers; I’ve listened to their staffs lament that the requirements introduce excessive procedural friction; I’ve witnessed Aviation commanders remark that SEAD was “Go/No-Go” criteria without regard to mitigation. However, recent training by the 1st Infantry Division’s Combat Aviation Brigade (Demons) at the Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake, CA demonstrated a powerful counter-narrative: Army Aviation doesn’t necessarily need outside enablers to go beyond the Forward Line of Own Troops (FLOT). According to TC 3-04.9, Commander’s Aviation Mission Survivability Program, “understanding the threat, fused mission planning, and tactics,” Army Aviation can not only survive but dominate in contested airspace.

The key to operating successfully within an IADS environment lies in understanding and systematically dismantling the enemy’s kill chain. As outlined in TC 3-04.9, Commander’s Aviation Mission Survivability Program, this process follows a sequence: Find, Fix, Track, Target, Engage and Assess (F2T2EA). The experience of the 1st Infantry Division, Combat Aviation Brigade at China Lake, CA provides a compelling case study in how to break this chain at every stage using capabilities organic within an aviation brigade.

Nested within the first step of the Military Decision Making Process (MDMP) are the sub steps “Alert the staff and other key participants” and “Gather the tools.” While typically referring to maps, SOPs, running estimates, and other products, an oft-overlooked Tactic, Techniques and Procedures (TTP) is melding those participants and tools into a dedicated fused mission planning team at the brigade (and to a lesser extent, battalion) level. This team can take the form of a Strategy, Tactics, and Analysis Team (STAT). As laid out in TC 3-04.9, the STAT consists of the S2 section, Cyber Electromagnetic Activities (CEMA) section, the Master Gunner, and the Aviation Mission Survivability Officers (AMSO) with the expressed purpose of leveraging the given tools to analyze multidomain effects and gain an understanding of the various ways the enemy can affect aviation formations. Recently, the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne) (SOAR(A)) has taken this a step farther with the adoption of their Aviation Denied Area Planning Team (ADAPT)—a specialized group of subject matter experts capable of even

Table 6-1. Kill chain considerations

DETECTION (F2T2EA)	CONSIDERATIONS
FIND	- How does the system search for aircraft? - Is the system active or passive? - Is the system cued from other systems/sensors? - Does this system cue other systems? - Is the system detectable using onboard or off-board electronic systems (for example, ASE, APR-48A)? - If detectable, how will the systems be displayed? - If not detectable, do the search systems need to be added to the JIPTL? - What mission planning considerations can minimize the exposure of the flight? - What tactics can be utilized to minimize exposure?
FIX	- How does the system detect the aircraft? - Are there internal or external assets that can eliminate or reduce detection? - What mission planning considerations can minimize the exposure of the flight?
TRACK	- How does the system track the aircraft? - What tactics can be utilized to lose lock? - Are there internal or external assets that can eliminate or lose lock? - Will ASE countermeasures be effective? - What tactics/evasive maneuvers can be utilized to defeat the track?
TARGET	- How does the system target the aircraft? - What tactics can be utilized to lose lock? - Are there internal or external assets that can eliminate or lose lock? - Will ASE countermeasures be effective? - What tactics/evasive maneuvers can be utilized to defeat the targeting?
ENGAGE	- How does the system engage the aircraft? - Does engagement require electronic means or can it use sensors or line of sight to engage? - Will ASE countermeasures be effective? - What tactics/evasive maneuvers can be utilized to survive the engagement?
ASSESS	- Is the kill a hard kill or soft kill? - If a soft kill, what actions is the aircraft going to take (for example, continue mission, return to base, or perform a precautionary landing)? - If a hard kill, what are the enemy MLCOA and MDCOA for the downed aircraft? - What is the severity of the contact? - What are the impacts to the mission?
Legend: F2T2EA: Find, Fix, Track, Target, Engage, Assess ASE: Aircraft Survivability Equipment JIPTL: Joint Integrated Prioritized Target List MDCOA: Most Deadly Course of Action MLCOA: Most Likely Course of Action	

more granular analysis. An in-depth discussion of these teams is beyond the scope of this article, but I encourage the reader to reach out to their favorite K4 individual for more information. The most effective way to survive is to never be seen. The crews demonstrated this through three separate air assaults containing AH-64s, CH-47s, and UH-60s. Extensive fused mission planning while at home station discovered ingress and egress routes through the IADS that kept them completely unseen by the SA-8 and 2S6 systems. A key element of disrupting the chain is minimizing aircraft exposure time. The unit’s proficiency in Nap-of-the-Earth (NOE) flight, and subsequent ability to maintain an entire air assault serial at <30’ AGL during critical vulnerability windows, prevented the major air defense systems from even finding the lift aircraft until after reaching the landing zone (LZ). Even when detected, Army Aviation is far from defenseless. On several occasions during the training, enemy systems did manage to track and target friendly aircraft. Yet again, pre-

mission planning prevented a shoot down. During the selection of firing positions by the AH-64 unit, they sought to balance the “last one-third of the weapon’s range,” as outlined in ATP 3-04.1, Aviation Tactical Employment with what the terrain provided for cover. Once selected, the S2 and AMSO were able to determine what the times were for the specific enemy systems to acquire, engage and hit an aircraft. The enemy fired multiple missiles at the Apaches, but the crew’s understanding of their maximum unmasking time resulted in each of the incoming missiles impacting the terrain they re-masked behind. During the AAR, one of the senior crewmembers remarked, “Knowing how much time I had to find and kill the target before needing to re-mask was crucial. However, I wish I would have written down the times associated with other distances on my kneeboard so that I could have more effectively maneuvered to different battle positions.”

Similarly, an air assault formation was acquired due to the dust cloud kicked up by their rotor wash. Despite the lock, their disciplined adherence to the plan kept them outside the enemy’s weapon engagement zone (WEZ), rendering the threat ineffective. These examples highlight a crucial point: survivability is more than just avoiding detection. Equally as important is understanding the threat’s capabilities and limitations and using that knowledge to inform our maneuvers and planning. By remaining outside the WEZ or using terrain to break a lock, our crews can defeat the Track and Target phases of the kill chain.

The final links in the kill chain, Engage and Assess, are where an aviator’s training and an aircraft’s capabilities are put to the test. During the final air assault iteration, the unit devised a novel plan to use an AH-64 as a deception event to mask the incoming air assault. Using the time/distance

planning factors for the local threats to engage them, the single Apache unmasked just before the assault serial entered the landing phase of their flight. Once unmasked, the Apache climbed and dispensed chaff — this drew the sensors of every air defense platform in the AO. Immediately, the AH-64 re-masked, and by this time the assault serial had landed and was off-loading troops; the air defense assets had no chance at re-cueing their sensors on the assault, and those aircraft left the area without being found. Throughout each iteration, the common theme observed by both the enemy operators and the OC/Ts was that effective use of terrain was the single most effective survivability measure, resulting in the defeat of multiple enemy missiles.

The lessons from 11D CAB’s rotation through China Lake are clear: Army Aviation possesses the organic tools and TTPs to succeed in the face of a modern IADS. The ability to leverage terrain, manage signatures, execute deception actions and employ AMS maneuvers allows our crews to break the enemy’s kill chain at every link. While we should always welcome the support of external enablers, we must never become dependent on them or beholden to an antiquated Air Tasking Order (ATO) cycle. By continuing to hone our core competencies and ensuring that every crew masters the art of terrain flight (and specifically NOE flight), we can confidently assert that Army Aviation is ready to fly, fight and win anywhere, anytime, in any environment.

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Aviation Tactical Assembly Area Organization in the Next War

By CPT Michael B. Leinen, CPT William S. (Liam) Thies, CPT Calvin L. Smith and MAJ Ronald J. Edwards

Aviation units need to disperse if they want to survive and continue fighting in support of ground forces in future wars. However, as units disperse, their ability to conduct maintenance, sustainment and command and control (C2) become more challenging. This is not a new problem for Army Aviation. In his Vietnam War Air Mobility Study, LTG John Tolson (1999) argued that a dispute between tactical commanders and logisticians caused the U.S. Army to under-resource air mobility, leading to persistent maintenance shortages. While commanders sought flexible, decentralized maintenance for maximum responsiveness, logisticians viewed this as an inefficient fragmentation of scarce resources. The Army decided centralized maintenance enabled efficiency elsewhere, creating large, fixed depots that limited tactical flexibility and the benefits of dispersion. CW4 (Ret.) Robert Howard (1993) recounted a time his maintenance company came under attack from mortar fire, resulting in their personnel, work areas and helicopters being heavily damaged.

As a result, every available Soldier had to scramble to repair all the damage, resulting in one whole day of support to the ground force lost.

The U.S. will never fight the Vietnam War again; however, we faced similar problems in the War on Terrorism, operating out of large forward operating bases and staying in one place for too long, which made us susceptible to enemy attacks. The changing nature of warfare observed in Ukraine has shown us we must disperse to survive in a high-threat large-scale combat operations (LSCO) environment where we can expect heavy surveillance from satellites and drones hunting our formations to attack. The Ukrainian Air Force dispersed its aircraft to secondary and tertiary airfields, dispersed its maintenance and munitions, and trained its personnel to maintain their fleet in these dispersed conditions. This contributed to Russia's inability to establish air superiority at the onset of the war and through the present day (Deptula, 2024).

This article will offer a way to conduct dispersed maintenance, sustainment

Soldiers flying an AH-64 Apache and operating Bradley fighting vehicles join forces at the JMRC.

and C2 for aviation tactical assembly areas to enable us to effectively fight and win in the next war. Additionally, we will recommend Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership and Education, Personnel, Facilities and Policy solutions to identified gaps for this framework.

Current doctrine regarding command post (CP) organization, as it applies to aviation units in Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 6-0.5, *Command Post Organization and Operations*, only prescribes the need for a main CP (MCP), a tactical (TAC) CP, and company CPs (Department of the Army [DA], 2017, p. 1-4). This limited framework lends itself to large, concentrated aviation assembly areas with centralized maintenance, sustainment, and C2 for ease of operations. However, as outlined in Center for Army Lessons Learned Publication Number 26-1118 (Leinen & Cox, 2025) and observed at the

Joint Multinational Readiness Center (JMRC), these large aviation footprints are easily identifiable and exploitable by our adversaries with dire consequences. The paper argues that aviation units gain survivability through dispersion; however, current aviation doctrine does not enable that dispersion by only prescribing an MCP, TAC and company CPs. The Army already has a framework that exists for combined arms battalions requiring the utmost dispersion on the front lines. That same framework, modified to fit the unique maintenance and sustainment requirements of aviation units, while also tying into the larger Army logistical framework, offers a way to improve survivability through dispersion. The framework, depicted in Figure 1, increases dispersion and decreases footprint sizes to increase survivability, while also allowing aviation units to provide continuous support to ground forces during survivability moves. This updated framework, adapted from Figure 3-3 in ATP 4-90, *Brigade Support Battalion*, (2026) can be conducted in short and long durations, based on mission requirements.

The framework in Figure 2 breaks down each node to fulfill a specific function for an attack or assault aviation battalion during LSCO. The framework was designed assuming that we are in a no-growth Army and that it will continue to evolve with improvements to maintenance and sustainment. A brief description by node follows and can be applied to similar aviation formations.

Company CPs: The forward/expeditionary company CPs are positioned forward to offer opportunities for engagement with supported ground forces and speed of response regarding launch criteria, while staying outside of enemy tactical artillery range. The company CP, as outlined above, should be able to operate autonomously with elements from aviation maintenance and forward support to increase the company's endurance. Forward support assets at the company CPs will remain with those company CPs and get resupplied by distribution elements from the combat trains CP (CTCP). When tactically feasible, liaison officers from the company CP can travel to the supported brigade, battalion, or company to coordinate integration of air assets into the ground tactical plan.

MCP: The MCP is comprised of the battalion headquarters and staff to conduct mission planning and provide C2 for current operations. The battalion's

downed aircraft recovery team will be positioned here to provide additional maintenance support to the forward company CPs when necessary. The TAC can push from the MCP to a company CP during operations to aid in C2. When the MCP conducts survivability moves, the TAC can operate autonomously or co-locate with the CTCP or a company CP to maintain C2.

CTCP: The CTCP, led by the battalion S4 and forward support company (FSC) commander, becomes the battalion's ground maintenance collection point to provide maintenance support for vehicles that cannot be fixed by a contact team at the vehicle's organic location. This is also the logistical and administrative hub for the battalion. This will be the Role 1 location (first level of medical care). The distribution platoon will push from the CTCP to company CPs or logistics release points for logistical resupplies, in addition to sending assets back to replenish sustainment in the division support area.

Field Trains Command Post (FTCP): The FTCP, led by the Forward Support Company (FSC) executive officer and the aviation maintenance company commander, would become the battalion's air maintenance

collection point, providing major scheduled maintenance capability, as well as maintenance support for aircraft that cannot be fixed with the DART or maintenance capability at the forward command posts. The FTCP will be near the aviation support battalion (ASB) for additional maintenance support. The FTCP's goal is to communicate aviation maintenance and sustainment requirements and to push sustainment forward into the fight. The FTCP will also have a flight company organized within it to perform maintenance test flights, ferry aircraft forward to company CPs once maintenance is complete, and bring aircraft back from forward company CPs that are almost due for major maintenance. This company will also perform rear area security or join a forward company for a short duration to support a mission when necessary.

Benefits of Dispersion in Sustainment and Maintenance: Decentralized maintenance and sustainment is harder due to the level of synchronization required, and specialized individuals and tools will be spread between all nodes to conduct continuous operations. However, if one company were to be attacked, units would only lose a portion of their sustainment and maintenance capability.

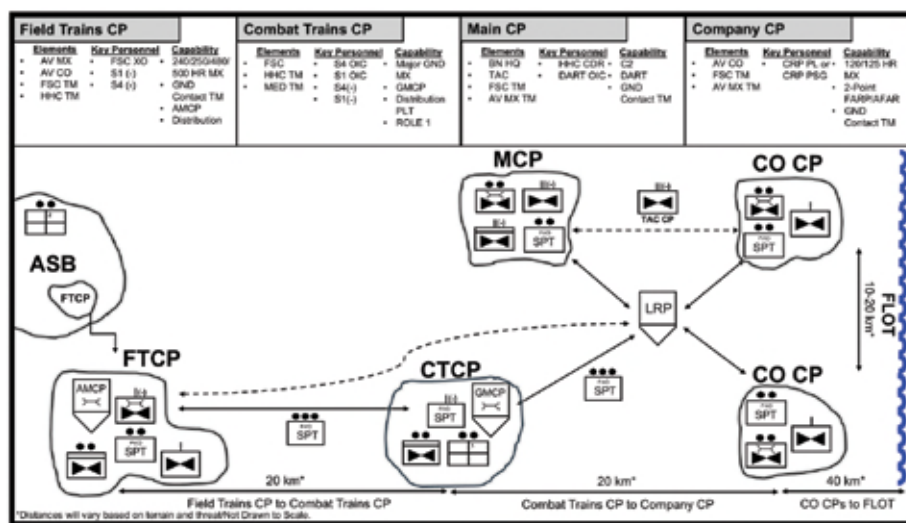


Figure 1: Dispersed aviation assembly area using field, combat, and company trains.

AFAR = Arming and Refueling Area	FARP = Forward Arming and Refueling Point	OIC = Officer In Charge
AMCP = Air Maintenance Collection Point	FLOT = Forward Line of Troops	PLT = Platoon
ASB = Aviation Support Battalion	FTCP = Field Trains Command Post	TAC = Tactical Command Post
BN = Battalion	FWD SPT = Forward Support	TM = Team
C2 = Command and Control	GMCP = Ground Maintenance	↔ = Primary Distribution
CO CP = Company Command Post	Collection Point	--- = Alternate Distribution
CRP = Component Repair Platoon	GND = Ground	
CTCP = Combat Trains Command post	HR = Hours	
DART = Downed Aircraft Recovery Team	LRP = Logistics Rally Point	
	MCP = Main Command Post	
	MX = Maintenance	

ities as opposed to all of them, which prevents catastrophic damage to a unit's endurance. It also presents the enemy with multiple dilemmas trying to target a multitude of nodes as opposed to one location, straining their intelligence gathering resources. This also enables units to maintain the element of surprise by having organic sustainment and maintenance capability at each location to minimize the movement of assets prior to a mission, creating a form of concealment and enabling more survivability and protection. To do this more efficiently, aviation units will have to organize themselves in this manner in garrison and during training to build the relationships and systems necessary to make decentralized maintenance and sustainment more commonplace. Training in this manner will allow them to build the necessary foundation of mutual trust and respect prior to executing in a real-world mission. Enabling flight line companies with low density military occupational specialties and the necessary equipment, allows company commanders to better support ground force commanders.

"I'm increasingly convinced in Aviation operations working up to Corps level, that our ability to sustain operations forward (through enhanced FARPs – incorporating C2, Maintenance, & sustainment) is our center of gravity. It remains a wholly unacceptable reality that these Force Elements are the least invested in for training, equipment, and resources ... collectively, we must make this cultural shift quickly to protect our relevance on the battlefield" – (LTC David Lambert, personal communication, February 3, 2026).

The Way Forward

Doctrine:

- **Update** aviation and CP doctrine (ATP 6-0.5) to incorporate aviation into the combined arms battalion model for CPs.
- **Prioritize** dispersed and decentralized sustainment, maintenance, and C2 in aviation doctrine. This strategy allows for the rapid relocation of command nodes and favors maintenance over centralized hubs.

Organization:

- **Structure** aviation battalions to be self-sufficient and operate independently in the field.
- **Exercise** tactical control over all attached units (senior command in each unit).

Training:

- (Units will) **Train** and task organize (units) within the framework while in garrison to establish the command relationships, build trust, and practice synchronizing the sustainment, maintenance, and survivability moves while supporting continuous operations.
- (Units must) **Train** prolonged operations (units) while conducting maintenance in austere conditions with limited tools and personnel up to the 125/120 hour level.
- (Distribution elements must) **Train** to operate autonomously and defend themselves in austere high-threat environments.
- **Utilize** CP exercises to practice C2 within organic aviation units and with adjacent maneuver units within the same division headquarters.
- **Integrate** portions of the ASB into home station unit training and combat training center rotations in preparation for LSCO. Army Techniques Publication 4-90 outlines how an ASB can supplement aviation units with maintenance, sustainment and C2 capabilities that can support the framework (DA, 2026).

- (Aviation units and ground units must) **Train** Soldiers how to integrate traditional single-channel ground and airborne radio system/Joint Battle Command-Platform/aircraft radios and Blue Force Tracking with the Integrated Tactical Network (ITN). The ITN is backward compatible with systems used by aviation task forces. A solution already exists, but very few people know and understand how to unlock the interoperability between air and ground force C2 systems (Pidcock, 2025).

- (Units must) **Master** the basics to protect themselves. Although we want specialized personnel to focus on tasks within their expertise, each Soldier is needed to provide security within their respective node.

- **Cross-train** skills from low density MOSs across the formation to minimize the effects of not being able to have the full spectrum of specialized jobs at every location.

- **Add** Conduct Unit Defense (63-CO-0727) as a mission-essential task for every company within aviation battalions.

Materiel:

- **Field** aviation units' ITN systems to close the air-ground communication gap.

- **Update** aircraft C2 systems to be standardized across all platforms and ensure their compatibility with ITN.

- **Procure** commercial off-the-shelf military satellite communication systems to enable C2.

- **Procure** additional radar-scattering camouflage nets for concealment and inflatable aircraft decoys with fake tents for deception.

Leadership and Education:

- **Educate** aviation leaders throughout all professional military education courses on historical and modern lessons of dispersion for survivability.

Conclusion

The sacred trust ground forces place in aviation — to *See, Strike, Move, and Extend* in direct support of their scheme of maneuver — is an enduring cornerstone of modern combined arms warfare. Our presence on the battlefield is more than a simple combat multiplier; it is a source of profound psychological strength for the Soldier on the ground. The knowledge that expertly trained aviators are overhead, ready to deliver decisive firepower, evacuate the wounded, or provide critical intelligence often provides the critical edge for ground forces to push a little harder and fight a little longer.

However, we can no longer guarantee this support if we continue to operate from large, centralized aviation assembly areas. In an era of sophisticated satellite imagery, long-range precision fires, and pervasive sensor-to-shooter links, these static, high-value locations are no longer safe havens — instead, they are conspicuous targets. Our adversaries have studied our methods and are actively developing the capabilities to neutralize our airpower on the ground before it can ever influence the battle. To ignore this reality is to cede the advantage we provide and, ultimately, break the sacred trust with the formations we are sworn to support.

The solution is clear: We must disperse. We must fundamentally re-engineer our formations to enable decentralized operations, enhancing our survivability and complicating the enemy's targeting calculus. This will require a significant cultural and doctrinal shift. It means challenging the conventional wisdom that centralizes the warfighting functions

Article continued on page 43



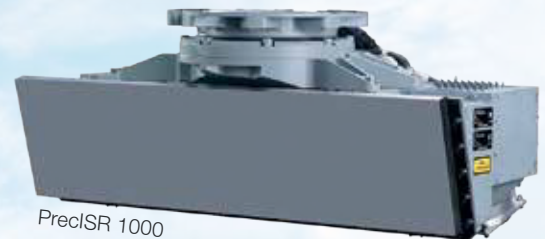
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From the Box to the Branch: How JRTC is Accelerating Army Aviation Adaptation for Large Scale Combat Operations

By LTC Amoreena "Ammo" York

Last year in *"Forging the Future of Army Aviation,"* Alpha Team asserted that units must adapt to the realities of Large-Scale Combat Operations (LSCO). The battlefield is more transparent, the air defense threat more complex and the margin for error significantly smaller. That assessment remains true. If anything, the operational environment has only sharpened. The question is no longer whether Army Aviation will operate in a lethal, contested, and observed environment. It will. The more important question is whether aviation formations can learn, adapt and synchronize combat power fast enough to remain decisive for the ground force. At the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC), that question is tested

repeatedly under pressure. Over the past year, JRTC moved beyond simply replicating the LSCO aviation problem. Alpha Team is now focused on turning rotational friction into branch-wide learning. Through realistic threat replication, 21st Combat Aviation Brigade (CAB) integration, unmanned systems employment, Observer Coach/Trainer trend analysis, AI-enabled observation analysis and deliberate knowledge-sharing efforts, JRTC is helping Army Aviation identify the patterns that matter before they become failures in combat. The result is more than better-trained rotational units. It is a learning environment for the Army Aviation enterprise.

One of the clearest examples of this learning environment is the increasing

transparency of the aviation battlefield. The threat is no longer limited to the route of flight. It now includes persistent reconnaissance, unmanned systems observation, electromagnetic detection and a compressed kill chain that can target aviation formations long before aircraft cross the line of departure. Survivability includes every signature an aviation formation creates before, during and after mission execution. Forward arming and refueling points (FARPs), tactical assembly areas, command posts, maintenance collection points, retransmission sites, aircraft parking plans and habitual routes all generate observable patterns. Those patterns can be detected, fixed and targeted. At JRTC, aviation units are forced to operate under that pressure.



COURTESY PHOTO

JRTC is more than a place where the force learns. It is a place where units are tested.

They must plan routes and timings while considering enemy observation. They must sustain aircraft while protecting FARP from detection. They must communicate while managing electromagnetic exposure. They must synchronize with ground forces while reducing predictability. The result is a training environment that pushes units to see survivability as a formation-wide responsibility, not simply an aircrew technique. It is a planning problem, a command post problem, a sustainment problem, and a discipline problem. Units that treat persistent observation and electromagnetic warfare as an add-on, struggle to protect their formation. Units that incorporate the threat into their planning, rehearsals, displacement criteria, and command-and-control architecture are better positioned to

preserve combat power. In the current environment, the aircraft are not the only thing at risk. The aviation formation itself is targetable.

Rotations repeatedly demonstrate that aviation units do not struggle because they lack skilled crews. They struggle when aviation planning becomes disconnected from the echelon responsible for shaping the conditions in which aviation must operate. Army Aviation is most effective when it is integrated into the broader scheme of maneuver. Task Force Dealer, 21st Combat Aviation Brigade, continues to evolve by providing training units with priorities, authorities, airspace, fires integration, sustainment support, decision points and risk guidance that are nested within division operations. By replicating the CAB and division aviation layer, the training environment forces aviation formations to operate within a broader mission command framework. Battalions no longer plan missions in isolation. Aviation battalions must understand how those missions support operational priorities, where risk is accepted, how sustainment enables tempo, and how the missions fit into the larger Division scheme of maneuver. Task Force Dealer also trains the Brigade Combat Teams. Dealer 6 routinely interacts with BCT Commanders to coach and mentor on the appropriate use of Army Aviation. In the past, a BCT Commander would ask and receive. Now they contend with an entire CAB's maintenance posture, airspace control measures, risk and priorities.

While JRTC provides a realistic training environment, including interactions with the CAB, the scale of observations during a rotation is both a strength and a challenge. Over 14 days, Observer, Coach and Trainers (OCTs) collect thousands of individual observations across command posts, aviation mission planning cells, FARPs, sustainment nodes, during rehearsals, mission execution, and after-action reviews. Each observation has value, but the true power of the CTC model emerges when those observations are connected into patterns. Alpha Team began using AI-enabled analysis to accelerate that learning process. By combining individual OCT observations with standardized team reports, the team can conduct more comprehensive analysis across large volumes of data and identify recurring trends faster than traditional manual review alone. AI-en-

abled analysis allows the team to move beyond isolated anecdotes and better understand where friction is repeatedly occurring across the aviation enterprise.

For aviation formations, this matters. Units receive valuable feedback during after-action reviews and an end-of-rotation report, but the speed and complexity of LSCO demand a tighter learning loop. AI-enabled analysis helps Alpha Team provide feedback that is not only faster, but more comprehensive. It allows the team to identify recurring challenges in mission command, airspace integration, survivability planning, FARP operations, electromagnetic discipline, sustainment, and unmanned systems integration with greater clarity. By using AI to connect thousands of observations into usable insight, Alpha Team is improving its ability to help units understand themselves, adapt during the rotation and carry relevant lessons back to home station. Faster analysis improves feedback to the rotational unit, but the greater opportunity is broader than any single rotation. When the same trends appear repeatedly across formations, those observations should not remain trapped in one unit's AAR. They belong to the branch.

A year ago, the conversation centered on the need to replicate the LSCO environment. Today, the task is larger. JRTC must replicate the environment, observe the trends, accelerate the analysis, coach the unit, and export the lessons. That is how JRTC becomes more than a place where units are tested. It becomes a place where the force learns. Army Aviation cannot afford to relearn the same lessons one rotation at a time. The pace of change is too fast, and the cost of adaptation in combat is too high. By combining realistic threat replication, higher-echelon mission command, AI-enabled analysis, and deliberate knowledge-sharing, JRTC is helping Army Aviation move from observation to adaptation.

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Army Aviation: Directorate of Simulation Training and Simulation Advancements

By MAJ Marc McMenamin



Fort Rucker's Army Aviation Center of Excellence (AVCOE), Directorate of Simulation (DOS), is a leader in Army Aviation training, consistently improving its capabilities for delivering unmatched realism and quality.

AVCOE convened its annual Training Aids, Devices, Simulators and Simulations (TADSS) Summit from 23 to 25 June 2026 at Fort Rucker, AL. What began in 2025 as a reactive triage event to address critical maintenance trainer shortfalls has evolved into something far more ambitious: a proactive, enterprise-wide effort to redesign how Army Aviation trains its aviators and maintainers for the next generation of warfare.

2025: Triage That Revealed a Deeper Problem

Last year's summit brought together stakeholders from Capability Program Executive Aviation (CPE Aviation), CPE Simulation, Training, Test and Threat (ST3), and AVCOE, to confront a set of training device shortfalls that were degrading training effectiveness across all Army Aviation Mission Design Series (MDS). The results were significant. Funding was secured for new CH-47 Chinook hydraulic trainers (15H), which are currently in production. The CH-47 Common Avionics Trainer (CAT) parts crisis was resolved through a new vendor contract for replacement control display units and multifunction displays. Eight Blade Head Rotor Integrated Trainers (BHRITs) were modernized to provide UH-60M task capability, and ten UH-60 CAT-B trainers were retained. For the AH-64 Apache, three of seven legacy devices were placed on contract for upgrade to the v6

Above left: Demonstration of VTE at Eastern Army National Guard Aviation Training Site, Fort Indiantown Gap, PA.

Above right: AR/VR technology enhances the classroom environment by delivering highly realistic, immersive, and interactive maintenance training.

configuration, with the first device already in production.

However, the summit simultaneously exposed a more troubling reality. The approximately \$30.8 million requirement to reset obsolete AH-64 primary trainers (15R) and fund four new 15Y trainers for the Fiscal Year 2028 Program of Instruction (POI) remain entirely unfunded. This was not an isolated budget problem; it was a symptom. Every MDS working group, independently arrived at the same conclusion: the legacy model of platform-specific, hardware-dependent, ad-hoc funding requests is financially unsustainable. The enterprise cannot build readiness with one trainer reset at a time.

2026: A Strategic Pivot to Extended Reality

This year's summit was designed to break that cycle. Rather than addressing individual shortfalls, the 2026 event challenged participants to converge on a single enterprise solution capable of serving all platforms simultaneously; the AH-64 Apache, UH-60 Black Hawk, CH-47 Chinook and the emerging MV-75 Cheyenne II.

The answer that emerged, and that now anchors AVCOE's modernization strategy, is Extended Reality (XR), a term encompassing virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and mixed reality (MR) technologies, integrated with the

Army's Virtual Training Environment (VTE) and a Modular Open Systems Approach (MOSA) acquisition framework.

The strategic foundation for this pivot is established in independent research. A 2019 RAND study examining Army collective simulation training found that physical fidelity does not necessarily produce better outcomes. Instead, psychological fidelity, the degree to which a simulator prompts relevant cognitive and behavioral responses, is a key driver of effective learning. The same study recommended that the Army begin transitioning from expensive physical simulator platforms such as the Aviation Combined Arms Tactical Trainer toward more accessible and cost-effective virtual approaches. [1] That recommendation now finds its direct expression in AVCOE's modernization strategy.

This approach also finds support in international aviation regulatory precedent. European Union Aviation Safety Agency's Certification Specifications for Flight Simulation Training Devices, CS-FSTD(A), Issue 2, formally establishes a tiered qualification framework for flight simulation training devices in which full-motion platforms are not required across all qualification levels for a broad range of training tasks. [2] This regulatory architecture, which separates visual system fidelity requirements from motion platform requirements at multiple device levels, provides meaningful precedent supporting the Army's proposed transition to fixed-base, XR-equipped devices for procedural, instrument and emergency procedure training tasks.

Three Strawman Proposals: Built to Be Broken

The summit's intellectual engine, designed by Mr. Chris Payne, Enterprise TADSS Integrator, was a set of three deliberate proposals, not final solutions starting points designed to be challenged, dismantled, and rebuilt by subject matter experts. Each proposal is built on the enterprise's Feasible, Relevant, Adaptable and Safe (FRAS) mandate and a strict MOSA governance framework to prevent vendor lock-in.

The first strawman proposed a new simulator model: replacing large, expensive, full-motion dome simulators with compact, XR-based Flight Training Devices (FTDs) capable of fitting within an eight-by-ten-foot footprint, operating on standard 110-volt power, and providing 24/7 Common Access Card enabled access without dedicated contractor instructor pilots. Dynamic control loading and high-frequency seat actuators would provide tactile cueing without the six-degree-of-freedom hydraulic platforms that drive maintenance costs and infrastructure requirements into the tens of millions of dollars. The RAND study finds that virtual military equipment is significantly less expensive than legacy physical simulator platforms once utilization is considered, lending direct analytical credibility to this approach. [1]

The second strawman proposed the summit's most significant shift: a formal "No PowerPoint" policy across the entire enterprise POI. Legacy slide-based academic instruction would be supplemented with a XR Academic Model in which subject matter experts teach natively within immersive digital environments, manipulating virtual systems dynamically. XR enabled immersive classrooms equipped with digital sand tables and headsets would provide instructional space, and the model would apply across Flight, Maintenance and Unmanned platforms through platform-agnostic software modules, requiring no hardware overhauls. PricewaterhouseCoopers' widely cited 2020 study on immersive learning found that VR-trained employees were up to four times faster to train,

with significant gains in knowledge retention and learner confidence. [3] For Army Aviation, where procedural mastery in emergency conditions is a matter of survival, this is not a marginal gain; it is a critical improvement.

The third strawman proposed a three-phase restructuring of the 15-Series aviation maintenance training pipeline, driven not only by modernization but by a concrete fiscal requirement. Army Transformation Initiative (ATI) mandates, and a reduction in sustainment funding have made the status quo financially untenable. The proposed model restructures the pipeline so that approximately 60 percent of the POI, Phases I and II, is conducted on the government-owned VTE platform and contractor-owned generic hardware, teaching aerodynamic theory, technical manual navigation, XR-based fault isolation on a "Generic Virtual Airframe," and basic tactile skills such as safety wiring and tool usage. Only the final 40 percent, Phase III, places students on MDS-specific physical trainers for capstone validation. This architecture stops novice students from degrading multi-million-dollar high-fidelity equipment during foundational instruction, recalibrating the sustainment baseline to absorb the mandated funding reductions. It also produces what the enterprise calls a "MOSA Mechanic," a cross-platform maintainer with the foundational mechanical theory required to adapt across current MDS platforms and future architectures such as the MV-75 Cheyenne II.

What Comes Next

The summit's third and final day culminated in a unified enterprise pitch presented to senior Army Aviation leadership for decision. The AVCOE TADSS enterprise are pursuing a release of a Statement of Objectives and a Call for Solutions to formally engage industry and validate the structural cost-savings model underpinning all three proposals. Market research and technology demonstrations are expected to follow in the fourth quarter of Fiscal Year 2026. The urgency is real; ATI cost mandates, obsolescing hardware and constrained budgets mean that inaction is itself a decision, one that cedes the future of Army Aviation training to rising costs and aging hardware rather than deliberate strategy.

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MAJ Marc McMenamin is the Directorate of Simulation Future Operations Officer at Fort Rucker, AL.





U.S. ARMY PHOTO

Building Capability at Speed: How Simulation Strengthens Operational Readiness

By MAJ Cameron Vasquez

In modern special operations aviation, readiness is not measured solely by flight hours or deployment tempo—it is measured by how rapidly aviators and crews can build, maintain, and apply combatcredible capabilities. With evolving threats, constrained budgets, and increasing demands for precision, the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (SOAR) continues to rely on one of its most powerful accelerators: advanced simulation and realworld mission rehearsal. Simulation is no longer just a supporting tool; it is a readiness engine. It enables crews to gain repetitions, refine decisionmaking, and stresstest plans before an aircraft ever leaves the ground.

Simulation: A Capability Accelerator

The Regiment's simulation enterprise—spanning highfidelity aircraft simulators, NonRated Crew Member (NRCM) training devices, and tactical virtual immersion systems—allows Night Stalkers to build capability at a pace no liveflight program can match. Simulation provides highrepetition, lowcost rehearsal; immediate replay and correction; and controlled exposure to stress that would be too dangerous or resourceintensive to replicate in the aircraft. It also enables seamless integration with ground forces and joint partners while offering flexibility to tailor scenarios to any target, in any environment. Together, these systems accelerate skill development by allowing crews to rehearse

By frontloading training with simulation and mission rehearsal, the Regiment preserves live-flight hours for the missions and evaluations that require them.

the most demanding elements of a mission repeatedly—an advantage impossible to achieve within limited flight hours allocations or during complex, highrisk live events.

Simulation: Powering Mission Rehearsals

Realworld mission rehearsal has become a defining feature of the Regiment's training model. Using virtual terrain, joint fires integration tools, and networked simulators, units can run fullmission profiles that accurately mimic the operational environment. The objective is clear: mission rehearsal must reflect how the unit will actually fight.

By the time aircrews ever strap into an aircraft, they have already flown the route in simulation, worked through contingency actions, and validated timing, spacing, and deconfliction in a controlled environment. They have practiced their communications architecture under realistic levels of stress and rehearsed shouldertoshoulder with the ground forces they will support. These repetitions ensure that when they transition to the aircraft, the mission is no longer theoretical—it's familiar, refined, and ready. This “fight the mission before you fly the mission” approach dramatically

increases the likelihood of success on the first live iteration—whether that is an evaluation flight or an operational mission.

Simulation: Reducing Operational Risk

The Regiment's core mission profiles leave no margin for error, and simulation has become essential in reducing that risk. By confronting crews with hazards, friction points, and unexpected developments in a synthetic environment, the Regiment ensures that the first time they face these challenges is not in the aircraft on mission.

In simulation, units can work through realistic threat engagements, navigate degraded visual environments, and manage sensor, navigation, or system failures without consequence. They rehearse complex timingsensitive infiltration and extraction sequences and practice the coordination demands of multiship and multidomain operations. Each scenario exposes crews to the kinds of problems that, if discovered in flight, could jeopardize mission success or safety.

Instead of encountering those problems during a critical moment in the air, crews identify them early—solve them early—and rehearse the refined solution until it becomes instinct.

Simulation: Optimizing Flight Hours

Flight hours are limited. Operational requirements are not. By frontloading training with simulation and mission rehearsal, the Regiment preserves live-flight hours for the missions and evaluations that require them. When crews enter the aircraft, they do so with a clear understanding of the plan, having already worked through the friction points in simulation. This maximizes the value of every flight hour and ensures that the aircraft is used for refinement and confirmation—not discovery and experimentation.

Simulation: Readiness Model for the Future

The combination of simulation training and real-world mission rehearsal represents the future of how the Regiment builds combatcredible readiness. It offers unmatched speed of learning, precision of execution, and risk mitigation. Central to this vision is continued synchronization of simulation platforms across the Special Operations enterprise. The Regiment's approach is deliberate and disciplined: build competence in simulation, refine execution through realistic rehearsal, and step into the aircraft fully prepared to *Own the Night*.

Simulation and real-world mission rehearsal give the 160th SOAR a decisive readiness advantage. They rapidly build capability, reinforce the Regiment's high standards, and dramatically reduce operational risk—all without consuming aircraft hours or putting personnel in harm's way. In an era where precision, integration, and speed matter more than ever, simulation is not just a training tool; it is an operational necessity. It ensures Night Stalkers remain ready to execute the world's most demanding missions—anytime, anywhere, arriving time on target plus or minus 30 seconds.

MAJ Cameron Vasquez is a pseudonym for an active-duty officer serving as the Regimental Simulations Deputy (RSO) for the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne) located at Ft. Campbell, KY.



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Deadline for Nominations is August 1:

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- CW3 Christopher M. Allgaier Aviation Mission Survivability Officers (AMSO) Award
- Avionics Award
- Logistics Technician of the Year Award
- AAAA Outstanding Logistics Support Unit of the Year Award
- Materiel Readiness Award for a Contribution by an Individual Member of Industry
- Materiel Readiness Award for a Contribution by a Small Business Organization
- Materiel Readiness Award for a Contribution by a Major Contractor
- Materiel Readiness Award for a Contribution by an Industry Team, Group, or Special Unit
- Unmanned Aircraft Systems Soldier of the Year Award
- Unmanned Aircraft Systems Operations Technician of the Year Award
- Outstanding Unmanned Aircraft Systems Unit of the Year Award
- Fixed Wing Unit Award

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- ATC Manager Award
- ATC Controller Award
- ATC Maintenance Technician Award
- ATC Facility Award
- ATC Unit Award
- Airspace Manager

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Soldiers from the Alabama National Guard complete hoist operations during Aircrew Combat Equipment (ACE) testing and validation at Montgomery, AL.

U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY SHAWNA LEGAN

Forging the Future: Air Warrior's Commitment to Crew-Centric Modernization

By LTC Brandon Nixon, Mr. Robert Seybold, MAJ Francisco Arocho and MAJ Brandon Bastian

In an era of rapid technological advancement and evolving battlefield dynamics, Product Manager Air Warrior (PdM AW) is at the forefront of delivering innovative solutions directly into the hands of the Warfighter. Now aligned under the Aircraft Survivability Equipment (ASE) Project Office within Capability Program Executive for Aviation (CPE AVN), our mission remains clear: to enhance the safety, lethality and situational awareness of Army Aviation aircrews. Through focused efforts in Transformation in Contact (TiC) and Next Generation Command and Control (NGC2), we are ensuring that our aviators and crew chiefs are equipped with the most advanced tools to dominate in

complex, multi-domain environments. Our iterative approach to technology insertion allows us to field cutting-edge capabilities today while posturing the force for the challenges of tomorrow.

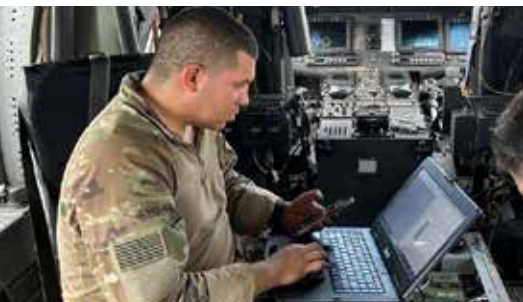
Transforming Contact with a Connected Cockpit: ADK and NW-A

The modern battlespace demands a seamless flow of information from the tactical edge to strategic decision-makers. To meet this need, PdM AW is delivering a powerful capability blending the Aviation Dissemination Kit (ADK), Gateway Mission Router (GMR) and Vehicle Broadband Kit (VBK) with the Nett Warrior-Aviation (NW-A) tablet.

The ADK serves as the digital backbone for rotary-wing assets in the thick of the fight. This roll-on/roll-off, federated system provides unprecedented situational awareness and Command and Control (C2) capabilities. During recent TiC exercises, PdM AW installed 66 ADK 2.0 kits in the Army's most de-

manding operational environments, including rotations at the National Training Center (NTC) and Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC). These efforts culminated in the Army's first Android Tactical Awareness Kit (ATAK)-enabled rotary-wing deployments supporting U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) and U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) operations. By integrating advanced waveforms like civil P25 radios, ADK not only enhances joint interoperability but also proves vital for domestic operations, bridging communication gaps between Army Aviation and partners like the U.S. Border Patrol.

At the heart of this connectivity is the GMR-1000. This device provides encrypted wireless communication and secure Wi-Fi, enabling the secure off boarding of critical aircraft survivability data and other tactical information across the battlespace. In coordination with the UH-60 modernization office, efforts are underway to integrate the GMR-1000 as a permanent, platform-based solution, ensuring robust air-to-ground data sharing for initiatives like Launched Effects.



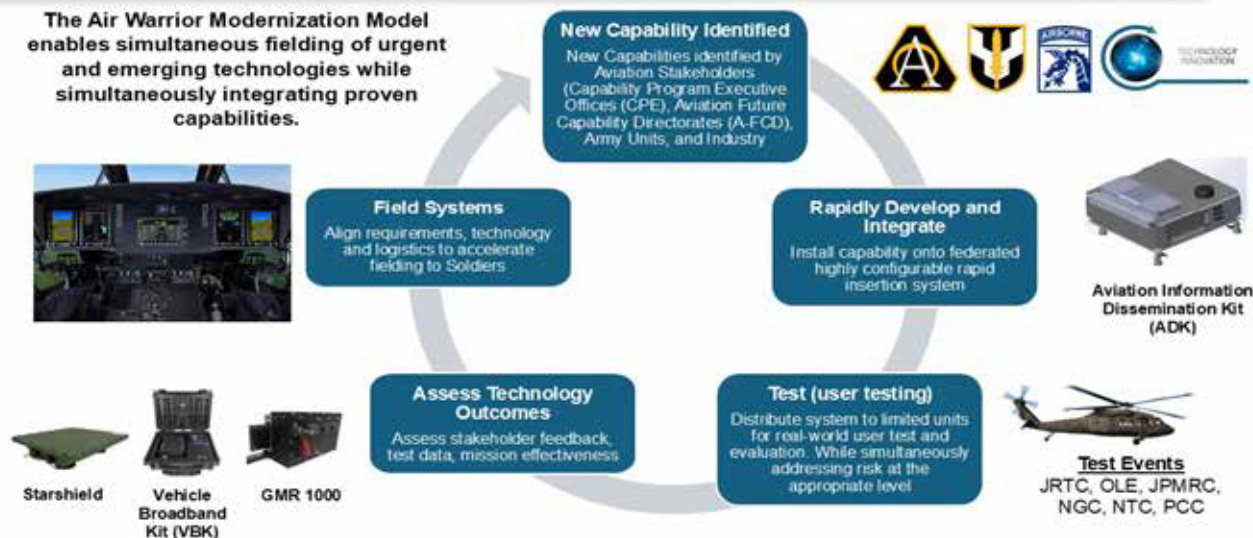
U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY MAJ Brandon Bastian

25th Combat Aviation Brigade Maintainers with AW's Systems Engineer load software to the ADK during lightning Surge III in the Philippines.



Air Warrior Modernization Model: Learning in Contact

The Air Warrior Modernization Model enables simultaneous fielding of urgent and emerging technologies while simultaneously integrating proven capabilities.



GRAPH CREATED BY LTC Brandon Nixon

Completing the ecosystem is the NW-A End User Device, the next evolution of the Electronic Flight Bag (EFB). The NW-A is more than a digital map; it is a critical tool for survival and mission success. With the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) sunseting hardcopy flight publications by 2027, the NW-A ensures our crews maintain access to essential aeronautical data. As a modified commercial tablet running ATAK, it enables aviators to perform detailed tactical mission planning, enhances situational awareness by displaying friendly and enemy positions, and seamlessly aligns air and ground forces. Recent efforts have massively scaled the program, with 1,200 NW-A tablets issued in support of TiC and 525 tablets delivered to Fort Rucker to enable installation-wide aircraft tracking for “Flight School Next”.

A New Vision for Flight: The Color Heads-Up Display (HUD)

Flying in low-light conditions and supporting Heads Up Eyes Out remains one of the most significant challenges for Army aviators. To address this, PdM AW is fielding the new AN/ANVS-7(v)11 HUD with its 2D color-wide display. This next-generation HUD provides pilots with critical flight information, symbology, and video imagery directly in their line of sight, overlaid on the display.

The new color display is a significant upgrade from the monochromatic displays of old. It allows for intuitive and rapid interpretation of flight data, and navigation cues, reducing pilot workload

PdM Air Warrior's model on how they rapidly integrate new technologies. This model allows Air Warrior to keep pace with emerging technologies in support of Army Aviation.

and cognitive fatigue. Where seconds count, the ability to remain heads up and eyes out can mean the difference between mission success and catastrophe. The improved optical clarity and wider field of view significantly enhances safety and operational effectiveness, allowing crews to fly with greater confidence and precision in the most challenging conditions. Following a successful validation and verification event with the Tennessee Army National Guard, the HUD achieved a conditional material release. The fielding of this critical system is well underway, with plans to install the new HUD systems for the 2nd Combat Aviation Brigade (CAB) starting in the fall of 2026 and National Guard Units in Fiscal Year 2027.

Equipping the Modern Warfighter: The Aircrew Combat Equipment (ACE) Vest

The safety and survivability of our aircrews are paramount. The ACE vest, a cornerstone of our Aviation Life Support Equipment (ALSE) portfolio, continues to see crucial upgrades based on direct feedback from the field. To improve hoist operations, the extraction strap was shortened from 18 to 6 inches, giving medics and hoist riders a clearer field of view of their patients during critical extraction maneuvers. Furthermore, the tourniquet and Combat Survivor/Evader Locator (CSEL) pouches were redesigned to better accommodate essential aviation equipment and pro-

vide more secure and accessible storage.

Our commitment to equipping the force is reflected in our aggressive fielding schedule. We are on track to field three CABs annually. In the last year, we successfully equipped the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade (ACB) for their Southern Border Mission, and the 10th CAB. These fielding efforts directly enhance unit readiness and ensure our crews are outfitted with the most capable and ergonomic life support gear available.

Conclusion: Focused on the Future

The mission of Product Manager Air Warrior is clear: provide Army aircrews with decisive advantages through innovative technology and a deep commitment to the user. Our recent alignment under CPE AVN has unified our efforts, allowing us to accelerate the delivery of relevant, near-real-time capabilities. Through the TiC and NGC2 initiatives, we are not just modernizing equipment; we are shaping the future of Army Aviation, ensuring our aviators and crew chiefs are always prepared to fly, fight and win in any environment.

LTC Brandon Nixon is the Product Manager, Mr. Robert Seybold is the Deputy Product Manager, MAJ Francisco Arocho is the Assistant Product Manager (APM) for Air Soldier System, and MAJ Brandon Bastian is the Assistant Product Manager (APM), Mobile Handheld Device for the Air Warrior Product Office located in Huntsville, AL.



The Invisible Shield: Forging Army Aviation's Unseen Armor

By Joseph D. Nispel

In today's highly contested environments, the survivability of Army rotary-wing assets relies more on tactics and technology than on physical armor. To navigate complete threat landscapes, aircrews are supported by proactive, precision-engineered Mission Data Sets that provide instantaneous, automated threat analysis to ensure mission effectiveness.

By instantly recognizing threat signatures, the Aircraft Survivability Equipment provides the critical window necessary to implement evasive tactics. This survivability is not a matter of chance; it is the result of the continuous integration and rapid deployment capabilities of the Army Reprogramming Analysis Team-Program Office and of close partnerships with the Program Manager Aircraft Survivability Equipment and Program Manager Apache.

Over Three Decades of Forging the Shield

The need for a rapid software reprogramming capability arose from lessons learned during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. In the 1980s, the Army's Electronic Warfare and Target Sensing Systems were fielded as static hardware, reliant on direct Original Equipment Manufacturer intervention for updates. When enemy forces shifted to Wartime Reserve Modes, this static posture became a critical vulnerability.

In response, Headquarters Department of the Army established a rapid Electromagnetic Warfare software reprogramming capability, creating what is now the Communications-Electronics Command Army Software & Innovation Center's (formerly Software Engineering Center) Army Reprogramming Analysis Team-Program Office. For over 30 years, Army Reprogramming Analysis Team-Program Office has expanded its support from early Radar Signal Detecting Sets to a comprehensive portfolio of Electromagnetic Support, Target Sensing, and Defensive Electromagnetic Attack systems, shielding Soldiers across an ever-evolving spectrum of threats.

The Pivot: From Routine to Emergency at the Speed of the Fight

In electromagnetic warfare, agility is paramount. Army Regulation 525-24 outlines a routine block cycle for peacetime modernization and software testing. However, this deliberate pace presents a vulnerability against agile, peer-level adversaries in Large Scale Combat Operations.

This limitation was starkly illustrated during the preparation for recent operations. To ensure maximum readiness, the Army Reprogramming Analysis Team continuously optimized the software to match the dynamic regional threat environment. Recognizing that the peacetime cycle was obsolete, the Army Reprogramming Analysis Team shifted to a Rapid Software Reprogramming posture. Operating continuously, teams of engineers and analysts executed

rapid turnarounds at the pace of the fight, ensuring aviation formations maintained optimal threat awareness.

Translating the Threat: Niche Expertise

To achieve this level of responsiveness, the Army Reprogramming Analysis Team relies on a highly specialized convergence of skills — blending intelligence analysis, software engineering and hardware expertise. When a new threat is detected, personnel must translate raw electromagnetic intelligence into precise, compiled code.

The monumental technical hurdle lies in optimizing that code so that legacy processors aboard current fleets can compute it in real-time without latency. It is the digital equivalent of translating a newly discovered language into a dialect that a decades-old machine can process instantly. In the electromagnetic spectrum, precision is non-negotiable; a failure to correctly identify specific signal characteristics can create critical vulnerability.

Forged in the Lab, Proven in the Sky

The true test of the rapid update was validating the new software without degrading existing protections. In classified environments, engineers rapidly injected new threat parameters into closed-loop simulators for exhaustive regression testing. Updating Aircraft Survivability Equipment to recognize a new enemy system cannot inadvertently mask legacy threats; breaking existing signal recognition is a fatal error.

The Strategic Imperative: The Path to Agile Reprogramming

Operations have proven that Electromagnetic Warfare systems on the Apache, Black Hawk and Chinook require dynamic, consistent Mission Data Set development. As the enterprise prepares for MV-75 Cheyenne II and the emergence of Launched Effects, the current fleet must be relentlessly shielded to maintain lethality in contested environments. Software is now as critical to survivability as physical armor plating. Latency from a threat perspective erodes operational readiness.

However, the mission carries a subtle warning. Army Reprogramming Analysis Team analysts were proactively working on a baseline for that region's environment. Had they started from scratch, a timely turnaround might have been impossible. Rapid Software Reprogramming is an insurance policy of vigilance that must be fully established and resourced before forces are called forward. The necessary evolution for Army Aviation is a shift to an agile reprogramming battle rhythm.

Achieving this requires:

- Talent Density: Expanding the cadre of personnel possess-



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ing the rare analytical and engineering skills needed for rapid threat translation.

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- Advanced Simulation: Developing robust, modernized lab environments capable of continuous, automated closed-loop testing at scale.
- Integrating Aircrew Feedback for Operational Overmatch: Implementing a robust, dynamic feedback mechanism that systematically translates real-world pilot experiences from complex and contested environments into actionable Mission Data Set updates, ensuring our digital shield continuously adapts to the nuanced realities of the modern battlespace.

The Silent Vanguard

Communications-Electronics Command Army Software & Innovation Center's Army Reprogramming Analysis Team remains a silent vanguard of aviation survivability. Their mission is relentless, and victories remain largely classified. However, their commitment is absolute: as long as Army Aviation operates in contested airspace, they will adapt and refine the digital shield, guaranteeing that every crew has the unseen armor needed to return safely.

Joseph D. Nispel is the Project Lead for AEW Threat Analysis, Army Reprogramming Analysis Team Program Office, Intelligence, Electronic Warfare & Sensors Directorate, Communications-Electronics Command, Army Software & Innovation Center, Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD.

Special Focus ▶ Training

Aviation Tactical Assembly Area Organization in the Next War *Continued from page 32*

of maneuver, sustainment, and C2 for the sake of efficiency. We must now prioritize protection, understanding that true efficiency is irrelevant if our capabilities are destroyed in a single, catastrophic strike. Embracing a model of distributed sustainment, resilient C2 and agile maneuver from dispersed locations ensures that we continue to execute these functions when they are needed most. If we fail to protect ourselves by dispersing our forces, we will not get the chance to perform any other function. If we choose to cling to outdated models of force concentration, we risk a catastrophic failure — becoming our own single point of failure. The choice is stark, but the path to continued relevance and battlefield dominance is through dispersion.

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From Cockpit to Combat:

How Research is Shaping the Future of Army Aviation

By Dr. Katie Feltman, Jason Gerstner and MAJ Amanda Charlton

Impacted Performance

Aviate

- “Task saturation while performing mission under less than ideal weather.”
- “Mission requirements hindered greatly due to weather impacts.”
- “Pressure to complete staff tasks before and after flights created a higher level of stress.”

Navigate

- “The lack of weather reporting made it very difficult to pick a route.”
- “Weather avoidance became an issue for navigation but rarely were we operating in weather.”

Communicate

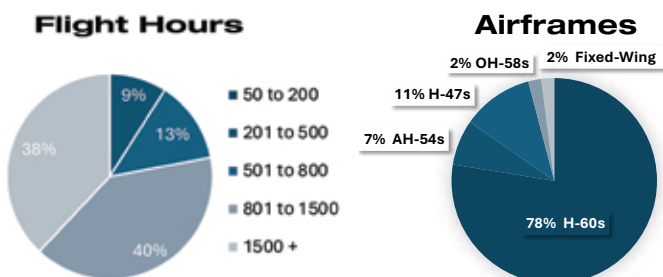
- “When you’re tired and task saturated you can miss communication directions without realizing because there are so many people on the line across multiple radios.”
- “If you are doing 10 things in the aircraft, comms falls off first depending on the environment.”
- “With task saturation in combination with fatigue, my brain seemed to be too fogged to delineate communication related to passenger pick up versus the current conditions/crew coordination.”
- “The ability to communicate within the cockpit, within the flight, with the tactical operations center and the ground forces can sometimes all happen at once.”

An increase in aircraft mishaps raises a critical question: what factors affect aviators’ performance? While post-mishap accident reports offer valuable insights, they often lack comprehensive information. Surveying current aviators provides a unique opportunity to gather first-hand perspectives that identify common factors that affect pilots’ ability to meet mission requirements. It also allows aviators to suggest strategies to reduce future accidents and mishaps. Surveys such as these allow researchers and requirements-writers to identify where to focus their efforts.

The U.S. Army Aeromedical Research Laboratory, located at Fort Rucker, AL, is at the forefront of advancing aeromedical innovation for Army aviators. USAARL consists of teams of researchers who focus on performance, protection and en-route care—delivering scientifically sound solutions to Army aviation. A survey was conducted to identify what positively and negatively impacts aviators’ performance during flight. Here, we report some initial findings and ask that others consider taking part in the survey as well (see the link below this article).

Survey Effort

Respondents were initially recruited in-person at the 2025 Army Aviation Mission Solutions Summit, in Nashville, TN. The figures depict flight hours and airframes represented.



The survey asked aviators about operational stressors and performance in three settings: combat deployments, non-combat deployments and combat training centers. The survey asked

about stressors such as degraded visual environments, fatigue, task saturation, weather and communication. The survey asked how frequently the stressors occur and how each factor impacted their ability to **aviate**, **navigate** and **communicate**. Survey takers also provided open-ended feedback with regard to their ratings.

Initial Findings

When asked how often each factor impacted performance in a **deployment setting**, we narrowed down which stressors had the most ratings of “Often” and “Always.” Fatigue (68%), DVE (52%) and communications (60%) stood out. Survey responses that indicate DVE, fatigue and communications as the most often experienced stressors in a deployed environment are unsurprising, and echo what has been noted in accident reports as contributors to accidents and mishaps.

Survey respondents next reported on the **degree** to which each factor impacted their ability to aviate, navigate and communicate. Responses ranged from “Not at all” to “A great deal,” or “I was unaffected, but my copilot was.”

To identify the most significant factors, we looked at which stressors pilots reported they experienced “Quite a bit” and “A great deal.” The factors found to have the biggest at impact on ability to **aviate** were DVE (32%), task saturation (32%) and weather (52%). Stressors with the biggest impact on ability to **navigate** were identified again as weather (~54%) and task saturation (25%). Finally, the stressor that most impacted pilots’ ability to **communicate** was task saturation (~18%).

Aside from rating the impact of stressors on their ability to aviate, navigate and communicate, the pilots who participated also provided details on how their performance was impacted. These are summarized in the chart, labeled Impacted Performance. The comments provided by the pilots who participated made clear that task saturation has a damaging effect on in-flight communications.

Further, the survey gave respondents a chance to add any additional thoughts. One response theme we noted was relevant to training and confidence.

- “I think the biggest factor to safety in Army aviation is the

lack of relevant experience that flight crews can obtain. It used to be common to find pilots with 3000 plus hours and now that is incredibly rare. Compounding this is how many aviators' terms of service are expiring or who request unqualified resignations. The experience we have is constantly leaving and resetting our overall experience. We need more hours doing real tasks in real helicopters."

■ "Lack of experience in formation would lead to having to be flight lead and Air Mobility Command at same time."

■ "Being able to conduct relevant tasks associated with the mission gave us recency and proficiency that was the absolute best mitigator to many adverse effects. Really being able to practice and having the ability to fly on our own time was a huge benefit. I believe this is the biggest contributing factor to Army aviation mishaps. The crew needs more experience and more relevant practice."

What USAARL Will Do with This Information?

Based on aviators' feedback regarding factors that impact performance, USAARL is now able to better prioritize its research efforts toward solutions. USAARL researchers are already addressing these challenges, for example, USAARL's Dr. Heath Jones and LTC Jennifer Noetzel are operationalizing the use of spatial audio to enhance radio communications. Spatial audio use has already been shown to improve speech recognition in high-workload scenarios, achieving **85% accuracy** compared to just 42% with traditional audio listening conditions when managing **four simultaneous radio streams**. This significant improvement highlights the technology's potential to enhance communication effectiveness in complex and demanding environments. Furthermore, aviators have reported a noticeable decrease in perceived workload when using spatial audio. By spatializing radio communications, USAARL aims to mitigate the effects of task saturation during periods of intense communication activity. Continued input from today's aviators will allow USAARL to further understand the challenges faced and refine research to deliver targeted, impactful solutions.

Interested in Providing Your Feedback and Insight?

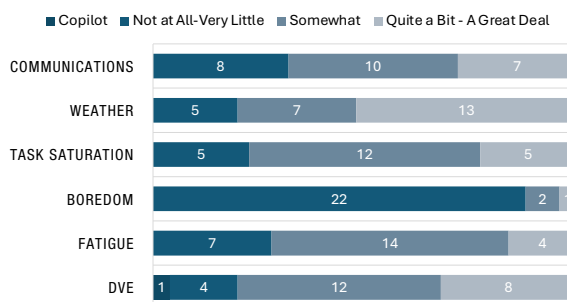
Army Aviators – Your voice matters! Take a few minutes to complete our short survey and share your insights on today's challenges in aviation. Simply scan the QR code below to participate. Your feedback will directly inform current and future research aimed to meet your needs. **Current, rated** aviators **only** please – National Guard, Reservists and Active Duty are all welcome to participate.

This study, USAARL 2025-025, was approved by the USAARL Exempt Determination Officer on 6 May 2025 as exempt human subjects research [32 CFR 219.104(d)(2ii)].

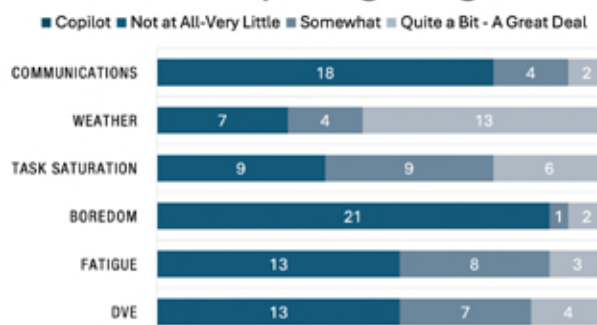
About USAARL

USAARL is a world-class organization of subject matter experts in the fields of operator health and performance in complex systems; the enroute care environment; blunt, blast, and accelerative injury and protection; crew survival in rotary-wing aircraft and combat vehicles; and sensory performance, injury, and protection. USAARL engages in innovative research, development, test and evaluation activities to identify research gaps and inform requirements documents that contribute to future vertical lift, medical, aviation, and defense health capabilities. USAARL is a trusted agent for stakeholders, providing evidence-based solutions and operational practices that protect joint force warriors and enhance warfighter performance. USAARL invests in the next generation of scientists and engineers, research technicians, program managers, and admin-

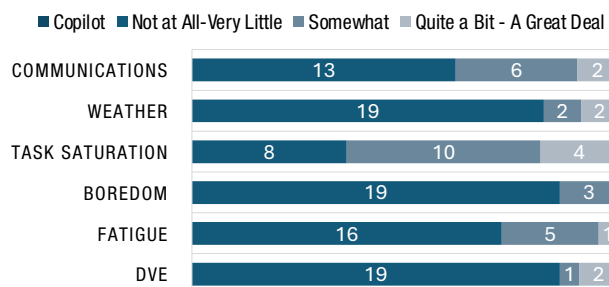
Factors Impacting Aviate



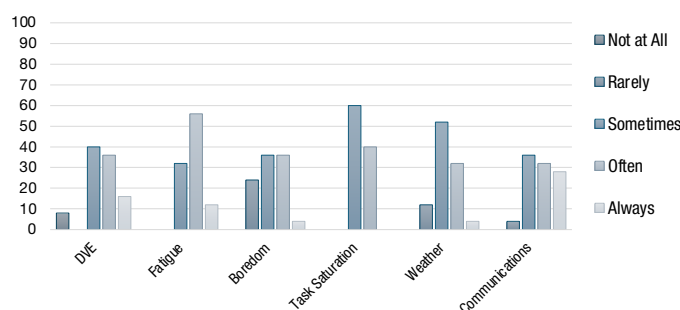
Factors Impacting Navigate



Factors Impacting Communicate



Factors that Impact Flight Performance during Deployments



istrative professionals by valuing and developing its people, implementing talent management principles, and engaging in educational outreach opportunities.

Dr. Katie Feltman is a Research Psychologist, Jason Gerstner is Sr. Research Pilot and Chief of the Flight Systems Branch, and MAJ Amanda Charlton is Deputy Commander at the U.S. Army Aeromedical Research Laboratory, Fort Rucker, AL.



Army Aviators – use this QR code to take the survey.



Soldiers prepare for a night mission on our Southern border.

U.S. ARMY PHOTO

Building Readiness Through Real-World Operations:

Army Aviation on the Southern Border By 1LT Noah Methvin

Border security is national security.” This declaration by Secretary of War Pete Hegseth has defined the Trump administration’s approach since January 2025. In response, active-duty military forces have deployed to secure all 1,954 miles of the U.S. southern border under Joint Task Force-Southern Border (JTF-SB) and its subordinate brigade task forces. Among these forces is an aviation brigade providing lift and Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance assets. For three and a half months, Task Force Spearhead (3rd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment) and Task Force Air Cav (1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division) spearheaded this aviation effort, conducting operations across the JTF-SB joint operations area (JOA). This support has proven essential not only to JTF-SB ground units but also to building readiness within 3-227th Avn.

Mission Execution

Over nearly four months, TF Spearhead flew more than two thousand hours completing hundreds of air mission requests (AMRs) in direct support of Marine Corps and Army ground

maneuver units as well as U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP). These operations were predominately conducted in the southwest but occurred in every type of terrain along the border. Complementing this effort, TF Mustang (3rd Battalion, 140th Aviation Regiment) operated UH-72 Lakota helicopters from El Paso, TX to the Rio Grande Valley. This multi-state National Guard task force—comprising units from Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, and Arkansas—provided detection, monitoring, and reconnaissance assets throughout the JOA. While TF Spearhead focused on air movement operations, TF Mustang delivered critical ISR capabilities to the mission.

Task Force Air Cav addressed challenges of subordinate command and control spread across four states by creating a communication process that established shared understanding and a common operating picture for effective mission command. Using Palantir’s Maven Smart System, commanders at all echelons shared real-time visualization of the operational environment from any location. The task force leveraged a detailed authorities matrix enabling dispersed nodes and subordinate units to act in alignment

with the commander's intent. Forward and rear command posts maintained redundant capabilities, allowing C2 nodes to continue critical touchpoints during degraded communications that mirrored the denied electromagnetic domain in Large-Scale Combat Operations.

Building Partnerships

This mission set differs significantly from typical CAB operations at home station or on rotation. Traditionally, Army aviation supports other Army units within division or installation boundaries. While working with foreign partners abroad offers valuable training, complex coordination often becomes mired in bureaucratic processes. The JTF-SB mission enabled streamlined communication and execution across Department of War branches and with CBP, building lasting relationships and shared understanding of capabilities.

These partnerships yielded tangible results due to the assistance of 3-227th Avn., aircraft:

- TF Gunsmoke gained valuable insight into how Army aviation capabilities complement Marine Corps organic aviation.
- 1st Battalion, 35th Armored Regiment, 1st Armored Division, partnered with CBP to expand border coverage.
- The 130th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, North Carolina Army National Guard, received essential small UAS support for operations across Texas.
- 4th Battalion, 27th Field Artillery and TF Thunder conducted infiltration and exfiltration operations that deterred illegal activity along multiple border hotspots.

This list represents only a snapshot of capabilities provided to JTF-SB during the deployment.

Building Readiness

These operations provided Army Aviation with an opportunity to demonstrate its value while significantly improving readiness for both aviators and non-rated crew members (NRCMs). Recent force structure changes—including Transformation in Contact (TiC) 2.0, Aviation Transformation Initiative (ATI), and Force Design Update 2030—have reduced total aircraft and flight hours at newly designated “heavy” CABs, decreasing overall aviation readiness.

Our real-world border experience not only increased aviator flight hours but also involved profiles uncommonly flown at home station. Mountainous operations, pinnacle and ridgeline considerations, time-on-target constraints, VIP movements, degraded visual environments (DVE), confined areas, various internal cargo configurations, and sling load operations became daily occurrences across vast and varied terrain.

NRCMs—the backbone of assault helicopter operations—benefited equally through dedicated readiness level progression and mission training. This deployment heavily emphasized NRCM training and advancement, directly supporting our battalion's core mission.

Sustaining the Fight

This mission also tested our ability to conduct dispersed sustainment operations across an expansive JOA. The expansive JOA provided opportunities to successfully validate long-range Downed Aircraft Recovery Team (DART) procedures. These operations challenged and validated our air and ground transportation capabilities.

Our forward support company (FSC) maintained continuous fueling operations, sometimes running 24-hour shifts to ensure maximum aircraft availability. Operating from

split locations between multiple outposts from Fort Huachuca, the FSC validated procedures for multiple forward arming and refueling points (FARPs) and rapid refuel operations, often delivering fuel on short notice across the border. Our maintainers and sustainers once again demonstrated their critical value to Army Aviation mission success.

Task Force Air Cav also overcame challenges supporting operations across four states while providing sustainment to both TF Spearhead and TF Mustang. Increased funding allocated to this mission significantly improved procurement timelines for critical equipment and facilities, enhancing overall mission support. The primary logistical challenge was maintaining aircraft readiness across dispersed operating locations; however, effective distribution networks and dedicated maintenance efforts sustained operational readiness throughout the mission.

TiC Integration and Force Generation

This deployment provided a unique opportunity to test innovative equipment and tactics in an operational environment, generating readiness for personnel. TF Air Cav enhanced intelligence operations by integrating Gray Eagle and LUH platforms to cue TF Mustang and CBP agents to specific target areas. Operationally, the task force formalized the Aerial Reaction Force (ARF) concept alongside sister task forces and BORSTAR, enabling rapid ground force maneuverability. TF Mustang evaluated critical technologies including AN/JL NVG laser protection devices and Star Shield communications integrated with NetWarrior Aviation tablets, significantly improving CBP interoperability and aircrew situational awareness. Validating these capabilities in an active operational environment yielded invaluable insights for future operations.

Moving Forward

The JTF-Southern Border mission has proven transformative for Army Aviation, showcasing our ability to support complex multi-service and interagency operations across 1,954 miles of challenging terrain. TF Spearhead and TF Air Cav built enduring partnerships with Marine Corps, Army, and CBP units while executing critical air movement and ISR missions directly supporting border security operations.

This deployment directly addressed readiness challenges stemming from recent force structure changes, providing aviators and NRCMs diverse flight profiles and training opportunities unavailable at home station. As the rotary-wing aviation landscape continues to evolve, we must capitalize on opportunities for self-deployment and high-volume flight operations near home stations. These domestic operations eliminate training time typically lost during overseas deployment and redeployment cycles, as well as adverse weather conditions common in some foreign locations.

Army Aviation emerged from this mission more capable, more ready, and better prepared for future operational challenges.

1LT Noah Methvin is a platoon leader in Company C, 3rd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, Fort Hood, TX.



► Historical Perspective



With the L-4 and L-5 getting long in the tooth, interest in the helicopter as a replacement accelerated going into the late 1940s.

A Bell H-13 flying cover for a column of M4 Shermans during the Korean War.

U.S. ARMY PHOTO

MARK ALBERTSON FILE PHOTO

Bell Model 47/H-13/HTL

By Mark Albertson

When this series on Army Aviation aircraft began, it did so with liaison-type fixed wing birds. Aircraft which epitomized the founding aspect of modern Army Aviation, the Air Observation Post. The Air OPs were an exciting development in Army Ground Forces tactical aviation; but, it was a development, a step in that evolutionary process of the Air OPs becoming Army Aviation. The helicopter portion of the evolutionary process commenced with Igor Sikorsky's R-4, the initial mass-produced rotary wing aircraft. So now we move on to the Bell H-13, the Sioux.

The multi-purpose Bell Model 47 first flew on December 8, 1945. The Model 47 became the first helicopter to be certified by the Federal Government as being safe enough for commercial use. Then on August 5, 1947, General Jacob Devers, Commander-in-Chief, Army Ground Forces, sent a message to General J. Lawton Collins, Deputy Chief of Staff of the Army. Devers sought to replace obsolescing L-4 and L-5 liaison aircraft with helicopters. Collins concurred. The Army Field

Forces ordered 14 YR-13 helicopters.

The YR-13 was the first Army ground forces helicopter. Previous rotary types being Army Air Forces aircraft.[1] In addition to the Army, the U.S.A.A.F. procured two YR-13s, while the Navy procured 10, the HTL-1. Each was a two-seater with a car-type cabin and a 178 hp Franklin O-335-1 power plant.[2]

However it will be with the Model 47D that the popular plexiglas version will come to define the H-13. Four artillery officers were sent to the Bell plant, in Buffalo, NY, to become helicopter pilots. LTC Jack L. Marinelli was the ranking officer; with MAJ Jack Blohm and CPTs Darwin P. Gerard and Hubert D. Gaddis.[3] The initial pair of YR-13s were picked up by Army CPT Kenworthy Doak and LT Robert R. Yeats.

"They accompanied the aircraft via Army Air Forces transport to Ladd Field, Fairbanks, AK for Arctic testing. Another two were retrieved by CPT Thomas J. Rankin and LT Norman Goodwin, who accompanied the aircraft via ground transportation



A Bell H-13 with a pair of litters during the Korean War.

MARK ALBERTSON FILE PHOTO

to Camp McCoy, WI for testing. A fifth was taken to A.F.F. Board One, Fort Bragg, NC for testing. But it later crashed, to be replaced by two more. The remainder were forwarded to the 82nd Airborne Division at Bragg."[4]

Helicopters proved more expensive to maintain than earlier liaison aircraft. Maintenance and supply costs when the Bell H-13 was compared with fixed wing aircraft:

L-4 & L-16	\$6 per hour
L-5 & L-17	\$15 per hour
Bell H-13	\$35 per hour

The rapid obsolescing of the L-4 and L-5 was emblematic of the maturing process ongoing with the Air OPs becoming Army Aviation. Rotary wing aircraft were more sophisticated than

the fixed wing liaison types, to which the expense and sticker price per model became more sophisticated. For instance, in 1945, a P-51 Mustang cost \$50,985 versus an F-86 Sabre jet in 1950, \$2,300,000 per. Waging airpower was becoming more sophisticated in weaponry and price.

It was in Korea where the helicopter came into its own. Medical evacuation being a case in point. Korea was devoid of a modern network of roads. Therefore moving severely wounded Soldiers and Marines to doctor's care could prove costly. Enter the helicopter. By July 1950, the Air Force was using H-5s to pick up pilots of downed aircraft as well as to transport wounded. By the end of 1950, Stinson L-5s had transported 56 cases of wounded, while H-5s had retrieved 618 medical cases.

Army helicopters did not arrive in Korea until December 1950 - two-seat Bell H-13s. These were to be used for artillery fire direction and roles of liaison. They were, though, pressed into MEDEVAC service. Four Bell 47s were assigned to the 2nd Army Helicopter Detachment at Seoul, Korea, January 1951. In command was CPT Albert Seburn. By month end, Seburn's little group had evacuated some 500 casualties, with helicopters which could transport just one to two wounded at a time. Quite an achievement. Seburn and his men were awarded with Distinguished Flying Crosses for their invaluable service.

By February, the 2nd Helicopter Detachment was bolstered by some Hiller H-23, another group was then formed - the 1st Helicopter Detachment. "At this time, all helicopter detachments used in medical evacuations were assigned to the 8085th Army Unit, Eighth Army Flight Detachment, and attached to forward surgical hospitals." [5]

The H-13's storied place has been bolstered by such television shows as the long-running MASH, of course, but also by another, "Whirlybirds," featuring Kenneth Tobey, 1957-1960, produced by Desilu. But more importantly, Bell's early contribution helped to solidify the helicopter's military role and future in Korea. Hence the evolutionary process of both the helicopter and Army Aviation.

Endnotes

[1] See page 2, "A History of Army Logistics, 1935-1961," *The Army*

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[2] See page 2332, "Sioux, Bell H-13," *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Twentieth Century Weapons and Warfare*, Vol. 21, RPG/SKYraid, Phoebus Publishing Company, BPC Publishing Ltd, 1978.

[3] See pages 61 and 62, Chapter Six, "Coming of Age," *Flying Army*, by W.E. Butterworth.

[4] See page 28, "Rotary Wing Aircraft," Part IV, *The Army Aviation Story*, by M/SGT Thomas Lang, *U.S. Army Aviation Digest*.

[5] See page 2, "Helicopter Evacuation in Korea," *U.S. Armed Forces Medical Journal*, Volume VI, No. 5, May 1955, by Lieutenant Colonel Spurgeon H. Neel, Jr.

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



AAAA Cribbins Futures Forum

REGISTRATION OPENS 7/28!

November 16-18, 2026 | Von Braun Center, Huntsville, AL
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AAAA Chapter Affairs By COL (Ret.) John Broam

This month we highlight the Flint Hills Chapter at Fort Riley, KS, and the outstanding support the chapter continues to provide to the 1st Combat Aviation Brigade and the broader Army Aviation community.

The Flint Hills Chapter

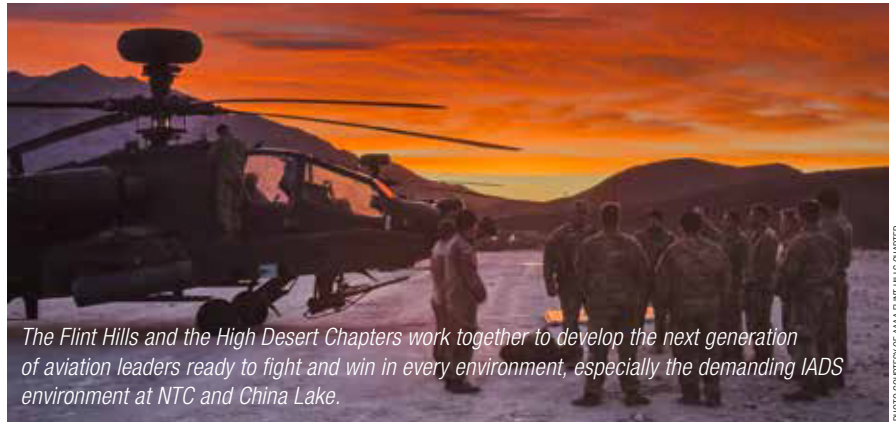


PHOTO COURTESY OF AAAA FLINT HILLS CHAPTER

The Flint Hills Chapter, based at Fort Riley, KS, in the heart of the Flint Hills region, serves as a vital hub for Army Aviation professionals supporting the 1st Combat Aviation Brigade and the broader aviation community.

The chapter brings together Active-Duty Soldiers, Warrant Officers, Enlisted personnel, Civilians, Retirees, Families, and industry partners. It actively embodies AAAA's four pillars—Network, Recognition, Voice, and Support—while fostering camaraderie and professional development in a high-tempo environment.

Key Chapter Engagement and Mentorship Efforts

The Flint Hills Chapter has maintained robust engagement and mentorship programs even during a demanding pre-deployment period. Chapter President COL Eric Megerdooomian hosts monthly networking and mentorship sessions for all Captains and Majors, while CSM Joseph Liverar and CW5 Brad Ash lead parallel programs for enlisted leaders and warrant officers. These sessions focus on professional growth, leadership development, and open dialogue on current challenges facing Army Aviation.

The chapter also held a well-attended social event at High Winds Brewery in Junction City, KS providing a relaxed setting for Soldiers, families, and members to build stronger personal and professional connections.

Recognition remains a top priority. In

May, the chapter held its final meeting prior to the CAB's deployment to EU-COM. Nomination packets for individual AAAA awards were distributed, and a selection board will soon be convened to recognize deserving Soldiers, civilians, and family members. The chapter continues its strong tradition of nominating and presenting Orders of St. Michael while actively supporting AAAA's national scholarship program.

To ensure continuity during the deployment, the chapter identified LTC Jared Maxwell as the new Vice President to lead operations at home station. This thoughtful transition underscores the chapter's commitment to sustained momentum regardless of deployment status.

Operational Support

The chapter provided strong backing to the brigade throughout its pre-deployment training cycle. This included support for a new Flight Lead Program to enhance Warrant Officer professional development and increased rigor in the Air Mission Commander Program. The chapter also helped enable a highly successful IADS-specific training event at China Lake, CA. This event provided realistic training against advanced air defense threats and enhanced combat readiness prior to deployment. Addition-

ally, the chapter played a key role in the pre-deployment 1st Combat Aviation Brigade Ball, which featured a keynote address from AAAA national leadership.

Looking Ahead

The brigade recently deployed to the European theater in support of ongoing U.S. Army commitments. Upon re-deployment, the Flint Hills Chapter is eager to rebuild and expand its activities. Plans include a series of fundraisers and social events to reignite chapter energy. The chapter intends to host aviators from COMPO 2 and 3 across Kansas and provide enhanced networking and mentorship opportunities for officers attending Intermediate Level Education (ILE) at nearby Fort Leavenworth, KS. These efforts will further strengthen the chapter's role as a unifying force for Army Aviation in the region.

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. AAAA chapters remain the backbone of Army Aviation professional engagement. I can be reached at john.broam@quad-a.org. I look forward to working with you and supporting AAAA. Above the Best!

*COL (Ret.) John Broam
AAAA VP for Chapter Affairs*

AAAA Chapter News

Colonial Virginia Chapter Awards \$1000 Scholarship



CHAPTER PHOTO BY LAUREN CRUZ

On June 1, LTC (Ret.) Bob Tamplet, Vice President of Scholarships for the Colonial Virginia Chapter presented a \$1000 scholarship to Peyton Cleary, a recent graduate of Bruton High School, Williamsburg, VA. Cleary is the daughter of COL (Ret.) Mark and Mrs. Stephanie Cleary. Mark is an experimental test pilot stationed at Fort Eustis, VA and a former Night Stalker with the 160th Aviation Regiment. Peyton will attend George Mason University this fall and major in pre-med. She will participate and compete on the swimming team. The Colonial Virginia Chapter awards scholarships annually and this year were successful in awarding 3 other scholarships to worthy students.

Bavarian Chapter Awards \$500 Scholarship



CHAPTER PHOTO

LTC Nicklaus C. Franck, CSM Trenton L. Zaragoza, and CW4 Steven Silva, present Sawyer Baxter with a \$500 scholarship during Hohenfels Middle/High School Senior Awards Night on June 1. The award was presented in front of classmates, families, faculty, and community members. The presentation highlighted the continued commitment of the AAAA Bavarian Chapter and the Falcon Team to supporting young leaders and strengthening the relationship between Army Aviation and the Hohenfels community.

Order of ST. Michael/ Our Lady of Loreto Inductees

Air Assault Chapter



CHAPTER PHOTO BY MAJ (Ret.) Scott Hainingsworth

John S. Smith was inducted into the Bronze Honorable Order of St. Michael on June 15th at Cole Park Commons, Fort Campbell, KY, by COL (Ret.) Henry C. Ruth, Air Assault Chapter President, for his service as a tremendous ambassador to community leaders throughout the Middle Tennessee region.

No Chapter Affiliation



CHAPTER PHOTO BY MAJ JEFFREY ODELL

CW4 Carlos M. Gonzalez was inducted into the Bronze Honorable Order of St. Michael on June 9th at First Army Headquarters, Rock Island, IL, by CPT Albien Eres, Aviation Training Officer, First Army. Gonzalez's service spanned nearly three decades and includes Active Army, Army National Guard and Army Reserve.

Washington-Potomac Chapter



CHAPTER COURTESY PHOTOS

MG Timothy D. Brown was recently inducted into the Silver Honorable Order of

St. Michael by LTG Michelle A. Smith, U.S. Army Deputy Chief of Staff, G-2, HQDA in ceremonies held at Fort Belvoir, VA., on the occasion of his retirement. MG Brown dedicated over three decades to advancing Army Aviation and the Intelligence and Security enterprise.



CHAPTER COURTESY PHOTOS

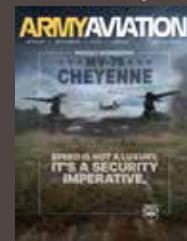
Also recognized during the event was his spouse, **Mrs. Inga C. Brown** who was inducted into the Honorable Order of Our Lady of Loreto for her actions in enriching the lives of Soldiers and families.



CHAPTER PHOTO BY COL DARINNO SANTANDRO

LTC James Bell, Esq. was inducted into the Silver Honorable Order of St. Michael by COL (Ret.) Ron Lukow, Washington-Potomac Chapter President and CW5 (Ret.) Dan Curry, Washington-Potomac Chapter Vice President for Awards in Crystal City, VA at the chapter's Final Friday event. Bell received the award for his significant and long-lasting contributions to Army Aviation.

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AAAA **Membership** Update

By COL (Ret.) Liz Martin

Forged in the Desert: Leadership, Transformation & the Hidden Gem of Army Aviation

While many Soldiers recognize the National Training Center (NTC), Fort Irwin, CA, as the Army's premier desert training environment for rotational units and initiatives such as T2COM's Project Convergence, few realize the critical role the 2916th Aviation Regiment, 916th Support Brigade plays.

Beyond supporting every NTC rotation, 2916th Aviation Regiment simultaneously executes decisive medical evacuation, surveillance, and aviation support missions throughout Southern California while developing some of Army Aviation's most capable professionals.

Under the leadership of LTC James Kelly, the 2916th Aviation Regiment recently provided steadfast mission support while completing a significant transformation aligned with Army modernization efforts. Spread across Fort Irwin, Barstow-Daggett, and Goldstone, CA, the unit integrates diverse capabilities into one cohesive organization. Its companies execute missions ranging from distinguished visitor transport and operational force (or 'Red Air') support to 24/7 MEDEVAC operations and MQ-1C Gray Eagle surveillance.

Simultaneously over the past two years, the unit modernized its fleet by divesting 13 UH-60L Black Hawks and fielding seven UH-60Vs and six HH-60M MEDEVAC aircraft. Kelly personally flew the regiment's final UH-60L to Corpus Christi Army Depot, TX for divestment, symbolizing both the end of an era and the beginning of NTC's more capable aviation force.

Leading such a geographically dispersed organization requires a deliberate leadership approach. Kelly attributes much of the unit's success to empowerment and trust. "Trusting the team to get the mission done is a guiding principle that enables leaders and Soldiers across the formation to operate effectively in one of the Army's most demanding environments," said Kelly.

Often referred to as Army Aviation's "hidden gem," NTC provides unmatched aviation developmental opportunities. The expansive airspace surrounding Las Vegas, NV, Los Angeles, CA, and San Diego, CA, combined with the routine challenges of heavy dust, degraded visual environments, and continuous operational demands, accelerates aviator and non-rated crewmember growth rapidly at every level. "If you can fly at NTC, you can fly anywhere in the world," said Kelly.

Beyond operational excellence, Kelly leaves a lasting impact on Soldier readiness. In addition to battalion command, he designed and oversaw construction of Fort Irwin's \$800,000 "Coliseum," a state-of-the-art Holistic Health and Fitness facility that provides full Army Fitness Test capability indoors and serves Fort Irwin service members.

His commitment to excellence and fitness extends beyond the uniform. A professional natural bodybuilder, he earned first place in the 2022 Men's Physique Masters Professional Division and was awarded the prestigious 'Mr. America' title, one of the highest honors in natural bodybuilding. Additionally, throughout his command he shared his knowledge of fitness, personally mentoring more than 20 Soldiers and helping several successfully overcome body composition challenges.

Following a successful two-year command and concurrent tenure as President of the AAAA High Desert Chapter, LTC Kelly reflects on his ongoing career built upon the enduring principle: relationships matter.



LTC James Kelly at the controls flying over Mazar-e Sharif, Afghanistan in October 2020.



LTC James Kelly winning the 2022 Mr. America Championship and earning the Men's Physique Masters Pro Title in Atlantic City, NJ in 2022

LTC Kelly credits family, trusted teammates, and meaningful professional relationships as the foundation of his success. As he transitions to his next assignment as the 3rd Infantry Division G-3 Air, his legacy will remain evident in a transformed 2916th Aviation Regiment, a stronger Army Aviation community, and with combat-ready aviation professionals prepared to operate decisively anywhere in the world.

COL (Ret.) Liz Martin
AAAA Vice President for Membership



New AAAA Life Members

Aloha Chapter
CSM Raul Renteria
Tennessee Valley Chapter
COL Geoff A. Crawford, Ret.
Zia Chapter
CW4 Michael R. Dowd, Ret.

New AAAA Members

Air Assault Chapter
Mr. Dan Brinlee
Mr. Jon D. Mabry
Mr. Ron White
1SG Dane Wilson-Bass
Aloha Chapter
CPT David J. Block
SSG Anthony Cashmer
SFC Bryan Hinkle
SFC Larry Johnson
CW3 Corey Kidder
SSG Scotty Mckenzie
Aviation Center Chapter
2LT Khalid Alotaibi
2LT Faris Al-Shamrani
WO1 Danson J. Ambrose
MAJ Jinyong Bae
WO1 Julia N. Bakels
WO1 Zachary D. Bates
WO1 Bradley R. Becker
WO1 Hayden L. Bemis
WO1 Christian A. Brown
2LT James W. Brown, III
WO1 Sophia G. Byrd
CW2 Daniel B. Carlin
2LT Bridget N. Correll
WO1 Daniel C. Craig
WO1 Nicholas S. Dalinis
WO1 Chandler A. Dunwell
WO1 Justin E. Duvall
2LT Eli J. Dzurino
2LT Christopher R. Felter
WO1 Zackery W. Frazier
WO1 Jacob A. Gettens
1LT Sylvia Goldsmith
WO1 Nickolas P. Griner
WO1 Derrick P. Hamilton
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2LT Allison L. Hoff
2LT Jaylen M. King
2LT Samantha R. King
2LT Joseph D. Lambert
2LT Darian J. Lipscomb
WO1 Luis F. Llanes Perez
WO1 Nathan R. Lowe
CPT Austin Morock
WO1 David Nervil
2LT Collin A. Roy
WO1 Gabriel J. Santos
WO1 Todd M. Schlegel
2LT Sarah R. Schomaker
CPT Trevor L. Scott
2LT William A. Smedley
WO1 Chase H. Smith
2LT Colin D. Spies
WO1 Mariah M. Stewart

2LT William H. Summer
1SG Jesse Thompson
CPT Peter F. Tomanelli
2LT Ryan Tuchtenhagen
WO1 James P. Tye
CPT R. Tyler Williamson
Badger Chapter
PV2 Nicholas Jerome Freeman
Mr. Alex Harris
Bavarian Chapter
Mr. Lance Clark
CPT Jacob Hanson
SFC Jonathan Osborne
CPT Aidan White
CPT Garrett Wolking
Big Sky Chapter
SSG Randy Scales
Central Florida Chapter
Mr. Levi Berg
Ms. Lexi Horvath
CPT Carlos V. Lopez Aquino
PV2 Austin Eric Martinez
Connecticut Chapter
PV2 Colby Jacob Andryzeck
Desert Oasis Chapter
Mr. Nathaniel Mckeown
Diamond State Chapter
LTC Elton Fowler
Free Dominion Chapter
CDT Cassidy Crittenden
CDT Tony Dedmond
CDT Mohamed Elsafty
CDT Elias Miguel
CDT Callum Reilly
CDT Elizabeth Root
CDT Noah Saunders
CDT Mikias Tariku
Gold Standard Chapter
COL Mark Brozak
LTC Neiland Cota
PVT Alex Kadin Orr
PVT Alexander De Jesus Suarez-Almaguer
Great Lakes Chapter
PFC Cole Milton Blanken
Green Mountain Boys Chapter
Mr. K. J. Carvey
CPT Calli Murphy
Griffin Chapter
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LTC Comador M. Ferguson, III
SFC Cody B. Spangler
SSG Keanu Stephenson
1SG Tyler L. Vermillion
Grizzly Chapter
1LT Robert Taradash
Iron Mike Chapter
Mr. Oquindle Bennett
CW2 Ryan Bowles
SPC Zachary Galusha
1SG Daniel Raymond
1SG Shawn Smith
Jack H. Dibrell/Alamo Chapter
CW4 Brian Hammonds
MAJ Jon Packman
SPC Julie Anne Tesch
PFC Mateo Alexander Turi
Keystone Chapter

CW3 Lucas Diehl
Lindbergh Chapter
SGT Clinton Sacks
Live Free or Die Chapter
SSG Russell Davidson
CW02 Lorna Illerbrunn
WO2 Donald Kilian
Mr. Jonathon Shallow
MacArthur Chapter
Mr. Randy Arboleda
CPT Douglas Francis
Mr. Scott Lewis
SPC Jesued Roman-Cordero
Magnolia Chapter
CW4 Joshua Bradford
SSG Martel Edwards
LTC Kristoffer Gober
SGM Pinocchio Hopson
MSG Markie Moore
CPT Kelli Puckett
Minuteman Chapter
Mr. Ray Colameta
Mohawk Chapter
2LT Colin Watkins
Mount Rainier Chapter
Luke Arant
SFC Sherman Burkhead
Mr. Charles Cummons
SSG Cain Robert
CW2 Roeut Theam
North Texas Chapter
Mr. Jack Somsen
Mr. Danny Strzyzewski
Old Tucson Chapter
CW4 Michael Clagg
Oregon Trail Chapter
PV2 Zachary Thomas Patterson
Phantom Corps Chapter
MAJ Thomas Carr
Pikes Peak Chapter
Capt Megan Bartolotta
SFC Charles Burnett
CPL Emily Ernst
CW3 Jonathan Latta
Mrs. Mary Jane Lenderman
SGT Timothy Mosher
CPT Zachary Truxton
SFC Christian Varga
SGT Lindsey Zak
Rio Grande Chapter
SPC Chadwick Birona Henry
PFC Edward Loyd Moehle
Mrs. Andrea Walker
Savannah Chapter
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CW2 Zulu Meadows
ShowMe Chapter
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Capt. James Brennehan
CSM Claudia Hernandez-Smith
LT Michael Koep
Ms. Talia Landman
SPC Albert Ren
PVT Joshua Adam Valenzuela
Straight Arrows Chapter

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WO1 Parker Lind
Tarheel Chapter
PFC Noah Thomas Stricker
Tennessee Valley Chapter
Mr. Will E. Daniels
Mr. Katelyn Engel
Mr. David Fish
Mr. Gabriel Hale
Mr. Richard Handlon
Mr. Tommy J. Lambert
Ms. Tristen Moulton
CW4 Paul Pedersen
Mr. Alonzo Q. Scarborough
Mr. Cameron Turner
Thunder Mountain Chapter
Mr. Bob Nelson
Thunderbird Chapter
PFC Ayden Lee Ekberg
PFC Zorion Amseth Teref-Ta
Volunteer Chapter
SFC Jason Boyd
COL James Cole
SSG Robert Lacy
Mr. Arthur Pomeroy
Washington-Potomac Chapter
Mr. Bobby A. Bennett
Ms. Michelle Corona-Allen
CDT Cole Cruikshank
CW3 Thomas Hubbard
Mr. Glenn G. Lacre
Mr. Greg J. Lewis
Mr. Mikko Luhtava
Mr. Jonathan C. Parsons
Mr. Jeffrey Reichard
Mr. Jackson Sherrard
Mr. Michael Woodhouse
Winged Warriors Chapter
PV2 Aidan Reid Endee
Wright Brothers Chapter
SPC Andrew Alvin Mambu
PFC Bryan Yahir Torres-Suarez
LTC Matthew Veit
Zia Chapter
WO1 Chase McNamara
No Chapter Affiliation
CDT Andrew Easley
CDT Jack Klein
Miss Chloe McFerran

Lost Members

Help AAAA locate a lost member on this list and receive a FREE one month extension to your AAAA membership:
COL Gerhard Granz, Ret.
LTC Randy K. Jackson
MAJ David A. Jobe
Mr. Charles O. Koons
LTC Jerel E. Pawley
Mrs. Jackie Rudd
LTC Martin Scheld
LTC Friedrich Stern
MAJ L.D. Walker
Mr. Nate Young



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AAAA Family Forum By Judy Konitzer

Fireside Chat with Aviation Career Spouses



PHOTO BY AAAA STAFF

Dr. Fran Gill, our Aviation Center first lady, hosted two very informative panels for our Aviation spouses during AAAA's Summit in Nashville.

Above left: (l to r) Dr. Fran Gill, Christine Obadal, and Mary Bier share lessons learned during a "Fireside Chat" at the AAAA Summit in Nashville, TN.

Above right: (l to r) Dr. Fran Gill, Tia Coley, Brittany Trumbull, Dr. Erin Paulus and Dr. Veronica Hill were spouse panelists sharing "Pivoting with Positivity" at the AAAA Summit in Nashville, TN.

The panel of spouses focused on sharing hard earned lessons while navigating the challenges of military life, which encountered frequent moves, deployments, raising families, pursuing personal career opportunities, while building resiliency.

Resilient by Design featured Christine Obadal, a former Army Intelligence Officer and current Deloitte Executive and Mary Bier, CEO of the Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC). **Pivoting Positivity** featured Dr. Gill, along with Tia Coley, Fort Rucker Education Center Guidance Counselor, Dr. Erin Paulus, U.S. Patent and Trademark Office Patent Examiner, Brittany Trumbull, Fort Rucker Public Affairs Command Information Officer, and Dr. Veronica Hill, Thrive AP Chief Operating Officer.

Panelists explained that during many journeys their personal goals and career paths often got diverted because the Army had a different plan.

Christine shared, "You don't know how you are going to do it until you get there, and then you keep pivoting until you find what works for you and your family."

All agreed that having it all was sometimes unrealistic. When everything seemed to be against them, they found that along with being honest with themselves came the need to be willing to be flexible, adapt, and accept the tradeoffs. Dr. Hill emphasized staying positive when told yes and when told no. All refused to become negative by

not letting the hard times ruin them, but instead these allowed them to grow.

Tia followed a variety of 13 different career paths learning different skill sets through each assignment.

Brittany found joy in volunteering while also gaining experience. She used the gifts God gave her and believed in what God wanted her to be.

When telling your story in a resume, all agreed, "don't underestimate volunteer experience as it should be used to fill in the gaps."

Mary wasn't willing to budge and build a new career path every time she moved. She emphasized the importance of exploring jobs by identifying "non-negotiables." Remote work was flexible and portable and helped her to maintain continuity with her profession.

All agreed that making time to empower themselves required discipline to strengthen their growth mindset. Erin was always willing to continue to learn and not be willing to shut the door before it shut for her. When opportunities were not what they all wanted, they persevered, let them be useful, gave it 100%, became their own advocates, and recommended all do the same. Learning leadership skills from your spouse, learning from other spouses, and never underestimating the value of networking were traits all recommended were also worth pursuing.

Many met their career goals while reconciling having a family. It involved having supportive family members, a nanny, or just waiting until their

children reached school age.

Fran shared that, "as a family with both an ER doctor and Army aviator, their childcare needs were unique, but we always found what worked for us."

The ladies emphasized that you are there for your children, but it also means not neglecting your mental health. You need to soul search to determine what you really need and what you are willing to give up. There may also be times when you must forgive yourself as you pursue your career path.

Discussion evolved around managing finances and was it risky to depend on two incomes while pursuing a career? They agreed looking at it as an investment by trying to live within one and managing it from there.

Parting advice from the panelists of "Pivoting Positivity" was being able to say "Yes" as you are not sure where it is going to take you and always being kind. "Others will remember how you make them feel, and your reputation will follow you everywhere." Saint Mother Teresa of Calcutta, India reminds us all that "Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow has not yet come. We have only today. Let us begin."

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



AAAA Awards



Order of St. Michael

Gold

Air Assault Chapter
BG Travis L. McIntosh

Silver

Air Assault Chapter
LTC Stephanie A. Hartley
CW5 Jason W. Hyer
SGM Eduardo Santiago-Vazquez
CW4 Glenn E. Stewart III
Aloha Chapter
COL Joseph A. McCarthy
CSM Ryan C. Reichard
CW5 Justin B. Watts
Aviation Center Chapter
COL Timothy A. Harloff
CW5 Nigel P. Huebscher
COL Jacob A. Whiteside
Colonial Virginia Chapter
CW4 Kyle M. Klemm
MAJ Michael McConville
Corpus Christi Chapter

LTC Kenneth A. Ferguson
CSM Angelo V. Rickert
Desert Oasis Chapter
CW5 Andrew M. Condon
COL Anthony E. Freude
Gold Standard Chapter
CW4 Derrick M. Llewellyn
Griffin Chapter
CSM Joshua C. Miles
Morning Calm Chapter
CW5 Francois Collard
Mount Rainier Chapter
LTC Justin J. Koenig
CSM Aaron L. Stephens
Phantom Corps Chapter
COL John R. Gunter
CW5 Tobias B. Long
Jeffrey B. Miracle
Rio Grande Chapter
LTC Logan P. Collins
LTC Daniel J. O'Donnell
LTC Ross M. Ridge
LTC Justin S. Thomas
Tennessee Valley Chapter

COL Joseph C. Alexander
LTC Ryan Kelly, Ret.
Joshua S. Kennedy
CW5 William P. Miller, Ret.
Washington-Potomac Chapter
MG Timothy D. Brown
COL Raymond Santiago-Rivera
MG Jami C. Shawley
Winged Warriors Chapter
CSM Steven A. McWilliams Jr.

Bronze

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SFC Travis C. Eddy
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CW3 Brandon J. Kitch
CW4 Charles K. Montgomery
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SFC Brandon K. Parks
CW4 Alexander Pedraza
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1SG Peter R. Pifer
MAJ Jon G. Thompson
SFC Daniel A. Valdiviezo
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Aviation Center Chapter
CPT Brandon Brown
CW3 Joshua T. Hensley
LTC Erik S. Johnson
SFC Edward D. Marshall
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Daniel D. Rawlings
SSG Jocelyne A. Soto
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CW4 Greg Breunig, Ret.
Black Knights Chapter
CW3 Steven Jarrard
Colonial Virginia Chapter
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Delaware Valley Chapter
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SFC Barry I. Johnston
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Flint Hills Chapter
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SSG Bryce Wood
SFC Rodney L. Young III
Ghostrider Chapter
CW4 Joshua Buffham
SSG Joshua W. Eaton
CW3 Caleb M. Hoot
MAJ Troy Koons
CW4 Kyle R. Thomman
Gold Standard Chapter
SFC Nathan A. Wiser

Recently Departed

BG Orlin L. Mullen, Ret.
Deceased 5/10/2026

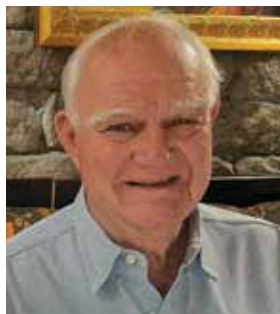
COL Robert E. Filer, Ret.
Deceased 5/2/2026

LTC Dennis Trigg, Ret.
Deceased 1/8/2026

Greater Atlanta Chapter
SFC Nathan T. Carter
SSG Benjamin S. Hunter
High Desert Chapter
CW2 Daethan A. Fletcher
CPT Blaise Hode
CPT Juan Lopez Reynoso
CPT Nathaniel B. Pieringer
CW3 Sergio L. Ramos
Iowa Chapter
MAJ Joshua S. Dunt
CW4 Matthew D. Eccles
Iron Mike Chapter
1SG Jamal A. Maness
Jack H. Dibrell/Alamo Chapter
SGM Jeffrey P. Bragg
MSG Dondi Briones
CSM Michael J. Wick

Continued on page 59

In Memoriam



LASCH FAMILY PERSONAL PHOTO

"Buzz" Lasch

Colonel John Aloysius "Buzz" Lasch III, U.S. Army Retired

June 19, 1937 – June 8, 2026

It is with great sadness that AAAA announces the passing of Colonel (Ret.) John Aloysius "Buzz" Lasch III, of Woodbridge, Virginia, who passed away peacefully on June 8, 2026, after a brief illness and surrounded by his four children. He was 88 years old.

A graduate of Florida Southern College, he began his 28 year Army career as an infantry officer and later as an Army aviator serving two tours in Vietnam;

one in the infantry and another as a helicopter pilot. He went on to hold numerous command and staff positions, from company command to assignments on the Army Staff at the Pentagon culminating as the Director of Aviation for the United States Army Training and Doctrine Command at Fort Monroe, Virginia.

He received the Silver Star with "V" Device, three awards of the Legion of Merit, two Bronze Stars with "V" Device, and the Air Medal with 43 Oak Leaf Clusters and "V" Device, among others.

Following his retirement from the Army in 1988, Buzz began a successful second career with Northrop Grumman, where he spent more than 16 years supporting national defense programs. After retiring from Northrop Grumman, he founded the Lasch Consulting Group and continued consulting for many years.

He also remained a passionate advocate for Army Aviation through his decades of leadership and service with the Army Aviation Association of America (AAAA), serving as a National Vice President from 1987-1990 and on the Scholarship Foundation Board of Governors thru 2019.

A funeral mass was held on June 18 at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Roman Catholic Church and interment will be at Arlington National Cemetery at a later date.

May he rest in peace.



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AAAA TLC

▶ Trade School, Licensing & Certification Foundation



Building better futures, one grant at a time!

From the Ranks to Reform: Why the AAAA TLC Foundation Strengthens America's Workforce

By Congressman Scott Perry, Brigadier General. U.S. Army Retired

I began my Army career as a Private. No connections. No shortcuts. Just a duffel bag, a sense of duty, and a belief that in America, advancement should be earned by merit.

Decades later, I retired as a Brigadier General, having seen first-hand how standards, training, and opportunity transform lives.

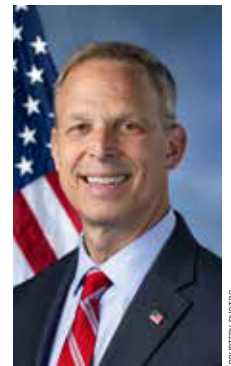
The belief in earned success is why I strongly support the work of the AAAA Trade, Licensing and Certification Foundation - commonly known as the TLC Foundation.

In the Army, no Soldier advances without mastering the skills required at each level. We certify marksmanship. We qualify on equipment. We complete leadership schools. Those credentials aren't symbolic; they signal competence and readiness. They build up confidence - throughout the chain of command. The TLC Foundation brings that same philosophy to America's skilled workforce.

The Foundation provides grants to AAAA members and their families pursuing careers in the trades, helping to cover the costs of licensing, certification, and technical training. The support may fund an electrical certification, a Commercial Driver's License, HVAC credentials, welding qualifications, real estate, cosmetology or other industry-recognized licenses/certifications. In practical terms, it means that a young individual can afford the exam fee that stands between him/her and a better opportunity. It means that a spouse can gain credentials that strengthen a family's financial stability. It means that a Veteran transitioning from military service can convert hands-on experience into a civilian license that employers recognize.

This is not charity. It is an investment.

Across our Nation, we face a shortage of skilled tradesmen. Infrastructure projects stall because we lack certified workers. Small businesses struggle to expand because licensed technicians are hard to find. Meanwhile, countless Americans are eager to work but lack the formal credentials required to step into those roles. The TLC Foundation bridges that gap; by offering grants directly to those willing to pursue trade, licensing, and certification pathways, it empowers individuals rather than expanding bureaucracy. It reinforces a conservative principle I've long championed: opportunity should be



Congressman and BG (Ret.) Scott Perry

accessible, but achievement must be earned.

There is great dignity in skilled labor. A licensed electrician wiring a hospital, a certified mechanic keeping emergency vehicles operational, a credentialed welder reinforcing a bridge - these aren't secondary roles in our society - they're foundational, and the backbone of our Nation.

What makes the TLC Foundation especially meaningful is its focus on families. Military service taught me that when you invest in a Soldier, you must also support the family that stands behind that Soldier. The same is true in the workforce. When a spouse gains a certification, or a child earns a trade license, the entire household is more secure, communities grow stronger, and local economies thrive.

From Private to General officer, while I honed the skills that taught me that advancement is built on discipline, training, and clearly defined standards, I first learned those skills when I attended vocational/technical school - and I've used them throughout the entire course of my life - to this day. Credentialing is an important step towards getting in the door, and today, the trades are more technically oriented and financially rewarding than ever.

The TLC Foundation helps hardworking Americans turn skill into certification, certification into employment, and employment into prosperity.

At a time when America needs skilled tradesmen more than ever, the AAAA Trade, Licensing and Certification Foundation is doing quiet but critical work - strengthening families, reinforcing merit, and investing in the skilled hands that quite literally built and now maintain our Nation.



OSMs

Continued

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CW2 Kyle W. Galloway
1SG Michael C. Holenchick
SFC Martin S. Kovacs, Ret.
CPT Timothy J. Mills
CPT Coty M. Ruether
MAJ Michael R. West
Mount Rainier Chapter
MAJ Omar M. Alens
CW3 Michael Brownfield
SSG Carlos Castellanos
1SG Jonathan A. Dodge
CPT Patrick A. Falk
MAJ Keegan J. Wisheart
North Country Chapter
1SG Justin T. Dosker
CW2 Javon Kelley
CW5 Jason M. Sharp
North Texas Chapter
Thierry Derrien
Phantom Corps Chapter
LTC Benjamin A. McDaniel
MAJ Taylor W. Rammrath
MSG Brody D. Rasor
CSM Rolando A. Reyes
SFC Anthony W. Shively
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SFC Brandon K. Hickey
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SFC Christopher L. Stallings
CPT Abigail M. Wingfield
Savannah Chapter
CW4 Derek Holloway
Southern California Chapter
CW5 Mirko Duvnjak
Tarheel Chapter
CW3 Stephen M. Burns
CW4 Caleb A. Herndon
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CW4 Patrick W. Thompson
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Thunder Mountain Chapter
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Isaac-J W McAlpin
Utah Chapter
CPT Erik Price
Volunteer Chapter
SGT Robert A. De Nise
SFC Charles M. Strasser

SFC William S. Taylor
Winged Warriors Chapter
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Knight

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CW2 Jacob Klein
1LT Christian Ramirez
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LTC Kyle V. Burgamy
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CPT Alex J. Stricklin
Iron Mike Chapter
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CPT Brandon Hill
1SG Maurice Long
1SG John Tobon
North Country Chapter
MAJ Matthew Goble
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CPT Wesley R. Downes
CPT Nathaniel P. Grunert
COL Benjamin C. Pry
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Rio Grande Chapter
SFC David M. Hedinger
Tennessee Valley Chapter
Will E. Daniels Jr.
Tommy J. Lambert
Alonzo Q. Scarborough
Volunteer Chapter
CW4 Thomas J. Mcknight



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Laura J. Hyer
Jennifer Stewart

Jennifer Wells
Christen T. Woolley
Aloha Chapter
Jamilah Brunkalla
Aviation Center Chapter
Susan Carman
Nicole Felts
Kara Gaines
Chelsi L. Stewart
High Desert Chapter
Stephanie May
Erica Klenk
Noel Lopez
Kaileen Owen
Stephany Stricklin
Morning Calm Chapter
Kendel Gratz
Juliana Tobon
Kathryn L. West
Ashlie Westover
Mount Rainier Chapter
Emily A. Alens
Rachael Brownfield
Phantom Corps Chapter
Karen W. Long
Mary-Charlotte Pitman
Pikes Peak Chapter
Jessica Boras
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Kim Valenta
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SIZE OF COMPANY: 100-999 Employees

CATEGORIES: Manufacturing

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Each month, one 2026 ARMY AVIATION Magazine advertiser will be spotlighted. If chosen, your company may submit newsworthy information that will appeal to the Army Aviation community. **To qualify, your company must have a signed 2026 insertion order for print advertising (1 Ad Minimum).** Selected company will be randomly chosen by the 15th of the month prior.

More Than a Scholarship: Expanding Opportunity Through the AAAA Program

By Joanne Hansrote, Executive Director-AAAA Scholarship Foundation

The awardee of the Volunteer Chapter (1LT Thomas Williams, Jr.) Scholarship this year (who wishes to remain anonymous) shared a special connection: “I was excited and appreciative of the initial announcement, but this scholarship is extra special to my family as 1LT Thomas Williams was my husband’s “stick buddy” in flight school.

I only met him briefly at graduation, but many stories were shared regarding their training together. I am not sure whether this connection was made during the evaluation process, but I am honored to receive this scholarship in honor of Lt. Williams.”

What began as a moment of recognition quickly became something far more personal. The recipient, the spouse of an AAAA member, is currently pursuing a master’s degree as a Family Nurse Practitioner, an example that challenges one of the most common misconceptions about scholarships.

Many assume scholarships are reserved for students entering their freshman year of college. In reality, the AAAA Scholarship Program supports applicants at various stages of their academic journey, from undergraduate through graduate study, provided they are enrolled in accredited institutions. (Recipients may not hold concurrent AAAA scholarships.) This flexibility allows the program to meet students where they are, whether just beginning or advancing their education.

Another frequent misconception is that eligibility is limited to children of AAAA members. In fact, the program extends much further. Eligible applicants include current AAAA members; spouses of current or deceased members; children or grandchildren of current or deceased members; and unmarried siblings of current or deceased members. In most cases, the sponsor’s membership must be effective on or before May 1 of

the year prior to application, unless the member is deceased. This requirement is waived for uniformed members of the Active Army, Army National Guard (ARNG), U.S. Army Reserve (USAR), and certain Heritage organizations.

The application process is designed to be thorough, yet accessible. It begins with the Pre-Qualifying Form, which requires the AAAA sponsor’s membership ID number. Eligibility is typically confirmed within one week of submission. Once approved, applicants receive access to the full Scholarship Application Form. Because completing the application takes time—gathering transcripts, securing recommendations, and providing required details—students are strongly encouraged to submit the Pre-Qualifying Form by December 15.

Applicants can begin by visiting the AAAA scholarship webpage and selecting “Apply.” They will be prompted to create an account, or log in if they have applied within the past six years. It is important that the account is created under the name of the student, **not the** AAAA sponsor, and uses the applicant’s primary email address. School-issued email addresses should be avoided, as institutional filters may block important communications.

Once applications are submitted and marked complete, the social security number is removed for applicant security. Each application is then evaluated by a panel of 13 to 15 reviewers. Their combined scores determine placement on the Order of Merit List, which is

used to assign scholarships.

A distinguishing feature of the AAAA Scholarship Program is its inclusive approach to awarding funds. Rather than limiting applicants to a single scholarship opportunity, all qualified students are placed on the Order of Merit List and considered for the highest award for which they are eligible. This ensures that applicants benefit from the full breadth of available funding, including chapter- and organization-based scholarships.

Preparation is key to a successful application. Students should have the AAAA sponsor’s membership number and title (military or non-military), information regarding any heritage organization affiliation or corporate sponsorship, the sponsor’s chapter (if applicable), a non-family recommender such as a teacher or supervisor, and a complete transcript.

Attention to detail can make a significant difference. Applicants should monitor email closely, review the “how-to” videos available on the website, select a recommender thoughtfully and provide ample time for completion, and submit their Fall transcript as soon as it becomes available. Applications missing required transcripts will not be considered unless the student was not enrolled during that term.

The timeline is straightforward: pre-qualification runs from September 1 through December 15, with completed applications due by January 15. Review and verification occur through mid-February, followed by scoring from mid-February to mid-March. Scholarships are awarded in April. The results speak for themselves. Last year, 389 scholarships were awarded, totaling \$688,500 — a success rate of 53 percent.

Scholarships open again on September 1. For many, the opportunity represents more than financial support—it is recognition, connection, and a pathway forward. As this year’s recipient’s story reminds us, sometimes it is also a meaningful link to the past.



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

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 AAAA Aloha Chapter
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 AAAA Aviation Center Chapter
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 AAAA Big Sy Chapter
 AAAA Central Florida Chapter
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 AAAA Delaware Valley Chapter
 AAAA Free Dominion Chapter
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 AAAA Lindbergh Chapter
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 John S. Bolton-IHO Isaac Sheffield
 Jon C. Eidem
 Jon Graft-IHO Joel R. Graft
 Karen & Bill Rettig-IHO Matt Matia
 Karen White-IHO CW5 Frank E. White
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 Marilyn C. Rickmeyer
 Mark Grapin
 Mary Gorman Trust-IHO William H. Gorman
 Michael Hickey
 Michael Nearn
 Michelle Yarborough
 Michelle Yarborough-IHO BG Orlin Mullen
 Nicole Powell-Dunford-IHO Mark Burnett
 Ostovich Enterprises, Inc.
 Patrick F. Curran-IHO Fallen Aviation Brethren
 Peduzzi Associates LTD
 Peter H. Smart
 Rebecca L. Excario-IHO James & Joyce Hesson
 Renee Lomell-IHO John B. Swift
 Rex Gooch
 Richard Dickerson-IHO Erin Dickerson

Richard Palmer
 Rick Rhodes-RPM
 Roger Rettig-IHO Matt Matia
 Ronald Kurowsky
 Rotair Aerospace Corporation
 S3-System Studies & Simulation
 Sabra Davis
 Sandra & Todd Becker
 Scott Wayne Hollingsworth
 Stephen Gayton
 Stephen T. Mauro-IHO COL Paul Kelly
 Steven C. Goetz
 Taffee Cardenas-Scherer
 Tammy & James Reeves
 The OV-1 Mohawk Association
 ThistleGreen Technologies
 Thomas Dickinson-IHO Tim Crosby
 Thomas H. Todd-IHO Tim Crosby
 Thomas O. Graft-IHO Joel R. Graft
 Timothy A. Lunger
 Titos Handmade Vodka
 Tommy Marks
 Utility Helicopters
 Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association
 William & Linda Pohlmann
 William F. Hipple
 Wreaths Across America
 Zachary H. Wenker-IHO Matt Matia
 Zieff Family Fund-IHO Bill Harris & Janis Arena



Where would you like your money to go?

ATTN: MEMBERS WITH REQUIRED MINIMUM DISTRIBUTIONS (RMDs)

Looking for a tax-smart way to give? A direct donation from your IRA to the AAAA Scholarship Foundation may count toward your RMD without increasing your taxable income—even if you take the standard deduction.

Consult your tax advisor to see if this strategy is right for you. For details, contact Joanne Hansrote at **203-268-2450 x130** or scholarship@quad-a.org.






AAAA

NETWORK | RECOGNITION | VOICE | SUPPORT

People On The Move

Aviation General Officer Promotions/ Assignments/Retirements



U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY KELLY MORRIS

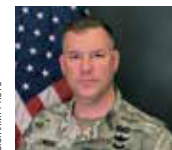
LTG David Francis, Commanding General of the U.S. Army Center for Initial Military Training, and former Army Aviation Branch Chief, concluded 37 years of distinguished service to the United States Army during a June 17 ceremony.

Changes of Command/Responsibility



U.S. ARMY PHOTO

1st Battalion, 14th Aviation Regiment welcomed LTC Cody Killmer as battalion commander, and thanked outgoing commander, LTC Brian Haas, for his leadership and service during a May 27, 2026 change of command ceremony at Ft. Rucker, AL.



U.S. ARMY PHOTO

1st Battalion, 13th Aviation Regiment welcomed incoming commander LTC Kyle Maki and bid farewell to outgoing commander LTC Jeffrey Gaines during a change of command ceremony on June 18, 2026 at Ft. Rucker, AL

Undergraduate Flight Training Graduates

AAAA provides standard aviator wings to all graduates and sterling silver aviator wings to the distinguished graduates of each flight class ...

another example of AAAAA's **SUPPORT** for the U.S. Army Aviation Soldier and Family.



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

33 Officers May 28, 2026 Class 26-015

Commissioned Officers

CPT Powers, Lilian K. – DG
1LT Doshi, Nathan R. – HG
1LT Bautista, Alvaro L.
1LT Gorodysky, Daniel M.
1LT Hawkins, Abigail K.
2LT Lack, Tanner B. *
2LT Lassahn, Owen J. *
1LT Leggett, James P.
1LT Phillips, Garrett D.
1LT Roddy, Michael C.
1LT Visser, Eli J. *

Warrant Officers

WO1 Thomason, Kyle R. * – DG
WO1 Bell, Isaac C. * – HG
WO1 Lents, William C. – HG
WO1 Weeks, Jarad M. * – HG
WO1 Baitel, Benjamin C. *
WO1 Baldwin, Jacob D.
WO1 Carver, Talus A.
WO1 Cuevas, Manuel A.
WO1 Deas, Mason J.
WO1 Gordon, Joseph S.
WO1 Hansen, Timothy D.
WO1 Lewis, Henry A.
WO1 Looye, Matthew W.
WO1 Majors, Holden G.
WO1 McIlveen, Kasey P.
WO1 Parish, Nicholas T.
WO1 Paul, Christopher D.
WO1 Plotnikov, Nikita
WO1 Schumacher, Andrew N. *
WO1 Stanley, Ethan D.
WO1 Weaver, Seth E.
WO1 Williams, Connor M.

34 Officers June 11, 2026 Class 26-016

Commissioned Officers

2LT Dobbs, Jacob M. * – DG
1LT Barhydt, Ethan J. – HG
2LT McCormick, Matthew R. * – HG
2LT Airosus, Andrew A. *
2LT Bordelon, Peyton A.
2LT Carney, Gabriel E. *
1LT Courtney, Caroline M. *
2LT Delgado, Keana M.
2LT Greco, Christopher Q. *
1LT Hines, Austin A.
1LT Macko, Anthony J.
2LT Mendez, Stone C. *
1LT Overton, Aubrie A. *
2LT Reed, Nicholas J.
1LT Sellers, Kerriann K.
1LT Smith, Noah S.
2LT Sweeney, Cole G.

Warrant Officers

WO1 Wittman, Garrison W. * – DG
WO1 Phillips, Payton O. – HG
WO1 Wurst, Jared J. – HG
WO1 Baudin, Geoffrey A.
WO1 Brelpreston, Malcolm L.
WO1 Daniels, Abigail B.
WO1 Glab, Robert E.
WO1 King, James H.
WO1 Luke, Brandon Z. *
WO1 Martin, Nathan M.
WO1 Mills, Kai J. *
WO1 Mooney, Nicholas S.
WO1 Oakley, Henry P. *
WO1 Presnell, Logan W.
WO1 Tinney, Alexander F.
WO1 Villarreal, Kevan L. *
WO1 Webster, Brandon M. *

–DG: Distinguished Graduate

–HG: Honor Graduate

* = AAAAA Member



UFT Class 26-015



UFT Class 26-016



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. Rucker, AL.

AH-64 Attack Helicopter Repairer (15R)

Class 0012-26
PFC Noah Thomas Stricker * – DG
PFC Nathanyal Andre Caballero
PV2 Jeremiah Marquez Craney
SPC Drexel Jake Oligar Delacruz
PV2 Franco Christophe Graffeo
PV2 Skylar Scott Langlais
PV2 Jacobi Kalib Purifoy
PVT Ethan Isaiah Simpson
PFC Jonathan August Col Stead
PFC Isaac Lee Valk
PV2 Antonio Vargas
Class 013-26
PVT Zachary T. Patterson * – DG
PVT Maurisio Favian Garcia
SPC Alexander William Hitt (A Co.)
PV2 Rebekah Lynn Knight
SPC Joel A. Llorens
PV2 Israel Jeremiah Lujan
PVT Andrew Gabriel Martinez
PFC John Walnest Montero
PV2 William Joshua Nieves
PVT Cayden Christopher Pena
PFC Nick E. Pinto
SPC Bradley J. Scannapieco
Class 014-26
PV2 Colby J. Andryzeck * – DG
PVT William Ray Campbell
PVT Charles Landon Gladney
PV2 Josef Donnivon Hartford
PFC Holden Malaki Jackson
PFC Tristan Michael Lutz
PFC Ezekiel Rocky Renteria
PFC Gomerious Dontaviou Smith
SPC Raymond S. Wallace
PV2 Nicholas Shane Williams

CH-47 Medium Helicopter Repairer (15U)

Class 011-26
PV2 Nicholas J. Freeman * – DG
PV2 Cameron J. Berdion-Degrav
PVT Miguel Angel Berrelleza
PFC Zion Arturo Espinoza Boggs
PFC Angel E. Bonilla Moreno
PV2 Austin Keith Clayton
PV2 Patric James McNamee
PV2 Keyshun Josell Moffett
SPC David Cristiano Ortiz
SPC Danis Ulises Ramos Castillo
SPC Albert Antonio Rivera
SGT Jacob Wayne Stroud
Class 012-26
PFC Mateo Alexander Turi * – DG
SPC James Allen Drettwan
CPL Mostafa Ahmed Elgendy
SPC Xander Donovan Johns
PV2 Maya Annalise Milletics
PV2 Isaac Richard Wiechert

UH-60 Helicopter Repairer (15T)

Class 023-26
PV2 Benjamin M. Sinchok – DG
PFC Seth John Daniel Archer
PFC William Patrick Arnold
PV2 William James Brooks
PFC Mariana Georgios Fountas
PFC Tyler Joseph Ganter
SPC Justin Thomas Sutton
PV2 Kaden Michael Tauzier

SPC Sarah Leeann Troxell
PV2 Donovan Cortez Wakley
PV2 Clark Dominick Whittredge
Class 024-26
PFC Edward Loyd Moehle * – DG
PV2 Brandon Ronald Carr
PVT Justin Timothy Donahoe
PFC William Christopher Henry
PFC Michael Landen Jones
SPC Paul Njoro Kibiru
PV2 Hudson Zebedee Mitchell
SPC Thomas Alexander Roche
SPC William R. Leander Ross
PFC Matthew Sedano
SPC Brian James Wilson
Class 025-26
PVT Alex Kadin Orr * – DG
PFC Nikolas Do Prado Diolindo
SPC Paul John McCarl
PFC Jack Matson Palmer
SPC Ezra Chanu Park
PFC Jared Reyes
PVT Tyler Brennan Rose
PVT Kamila A. Shukurova
PFC Ingrid Opal Stautzenberger
PV2 Joseph Eric Vanderbleek
PVT Cameron Matthew Waitkus
Class 026-26
PV2 Austin Eric Martinez * – DG
SGT Simon Lawrence Burnham
SSG Randall Corey Chapman
PV2 Aaron Josiah Clark
PV2 Samuel Alexander Hetrick
PV2 Zachary Michael Krenz
PVT Tyler John Edward Lawrie
PFC Andrew Joseph Marr
PV2 Joseph A. Martins Dunbar
PV2 Mj Moore
PFC Grayson Sean Morris
PFC Tyler Yoshi Yamada Nanpei
Class 027-26
SPC Julie Anne Tesch * – DG
PFC Artis Blums
PV2 James Leroy Hamilton
PVT Cierra Ranae Harvell
SPC Jonathan Seth Hunt
PFC Logan Ray Nelson
PFC Miguel Jesus Phillippi
PFC Ishmael Roy Pitterman
PVT Jordyn Nikole Prescott
PFC Emiliano Josue Sanchez
PVT Justin Andrew Seekford
PFC Wyatt Maurice Williams
Class 028-26
PV2 Garrett Morris Allen * – DG
PV2 Blake Edward Buss
PV2 Ryan Scott Chamberlain
PFC Mason Henri Courmoyer
PFC Garthett Trea Edge
PV2 Noah Joseph Guidi
PFC Joshua Biteng Gurbuxani
PV2 Jaizyon Kahiaualii Kamaunu
PV2 Wesley James Lloyd
PFC Nicholas Alexander Madison
SPC Matthew A. Marlowe
PFC Luke Andrey Morrison
Class 029-26
PV2 Elijah D. Steckling * – DG
PVT Joshua David Aldridge
PFC Ryan D. Calleja Palladino
2LT Rudis Lamberts
PFC Mauricio E. Manzanarez
PV2 Oliver Scott Remus
PV2 Dominick Marcum Robles
PV2 Hunter Cole Royal
PFC Abby L. Sanchez Hernandez
PFC Brandon William Starr
PV2 Jonathan E. Valdez Dipre
PFC Sarah Marie Wolf
Class 030-26
SPC Andrew Alvin Zeebon
Mambu * – DG

PV2 Steven Trevor Dotson
PV2 Landon Raine Godinez
SPC Richard Alexander Hughes
PFC Christopher Inwoo Kim
PVT Mark Melvin Masih
PV2 Jerrell Antonio Morris
PFC Wiley Benjamin Russell
PVT Devin Jayden Sanchez
PFC Jose Francisco Tomas
PFC Fredy Rafael Valdez
PV2 Kaiden Alejandro Vega

Aircraft Powerplant Repairer (15B)

Class 004-26
PVT Alexander Suarez-Almaguer * – DG
PV2 Aiden Lee Brown
SPC Andrew Michael Caldwell
SPC Reese Nolan Clark
PV2 Joshua Paul Olsen
PV2 Jason Yeriell Otero
PFC Abdoul Kader Ouedraogo
SSG Timothy Allen Powers
PVT Jonathon Andrew Ritter
PV2 Shane Campbell Ruggie
SPC Kenneth Lee Schwickrath
SPC Andrew Michael Van Doren

Aircraft Powertrain Repairer (15D)

Class 003-26
SPC Chadwick B. Henry * – DG
PVT Leon Manuel Briones
PVT Andrew Dalton Greb
SPC Benjamin Ames Jackson
PFC Maxwell James Serpe
PFC Yong Wang
SPC Williams Lee Williams

Aircraft Electrician (15F)

Class 005-26
PFC Cole Milton Blanken * – DG
PV2 Nicholas Robert Babin
PV2 Hayden Wesley Breaux
PVT Diego Ruben Cabero
PV2 Unique Shania Mercurius
PV2 Moises R. Salinas Garcia
PV2 Tristin Michael Stagner
PFC Sara Trespalacios
Class 006-26
PFC Zorion A. R.Teref-Ta * – DG
PV2 Jowayne Carlton Crewe
PVT Matthew Kiru Juma
SPC Shreedhar Pangeni
PV2 Jesus Asael Peralta
SPC Samuel Lopez Perez

Aircraft Structural Repairer (15G)

Class 004-26
SPC Hamza Osama Nayef Al-Bzour
PV2 Joseph C. Antoniani
PVT Ayden Kai Chamberlain
SPC Vikramaditya Singh Dadwal
PFC Gabriel Gene Gerritson
PV2 William Bradley Hallmark
PFC Aidan James Hollis
PFC Jacob Tyler Isaacs
SPC Stephen Bryant Martin
PV2 Giovani Daniel Tahjoun Mellis
PV2 Christian James Nelson
PVT Miguel Eduardo Pantoja
PV2 Ayden Matthew Perry
SPC Dylan Ray Simon
PV2 Xavier Dasilva Tavaraz
SPC Carlos Samuel Torres-Berrios
PV2 Ethan Angel Villatoro

Aircraft Hydraulics Repairer (15H)

Class 004-26
PFC Aidan Reid Endee * – DG

PV2 Nelson Josue Avila Gomez
PFC Aayush Badal
PFC Jager Allin Boyd
PV2 Jackson Tyler Gaudette
PVT Gunner Dean Gerbert
2LT Andonis Kocileri
PV2 Evangelina L. Rodriguez
PV2 Izabella Cierra Stoops
PV2 Daymion Allen Strother

Avionic Repairer (15N)

Class 001-26
PV2 Scott Daniel Cunningham
PV2 Ashton Anthony Henry
PFC Christopher Hernandez
PFC Evelyn Lopez-Galaviz
PV2 Jaiden Tajae McIntyre
PV2 Mahdi Mustafa Mohamed
PFC Jennifer E. Munoz-Mejia
PV2 Abril Stephanie Rico
Class 002-26
PFC Bryan Y. Torres-Suarez * – DG
PV2 Aaron Daiz - Ayala
PV2 Ashton J'cory Ganther
PV2 Casey James Forsythe
SPC Dominic Michael Kentish
SPC Gage Christian Mingo
PFC Stone Rowan Sullivan
Class 501-26
PFC Jorjaray Ann Beane
PFC Evelyn C. Bustamante-Mejia
PV2 Jeremiah Amilio Miller
PFC Harikesh Sathiyam Sivam
PV2 Griffin Matthew Starcher
Class 502-26
PFC Ayden Lee Ekberg * – DG
SPC Brandon Alexander Coleman
SGT Jamiel Jamar Graham
PVT Christian Jesus Lopez
PFC Onyemachi O. Ibioha
PFC Derrick Allan Seitz
PFC Kevin Tellez-Perez
PFC Isaiah Isidro Valentin

AH-64 Armament/Electrical/Avionic Systems Repairer (15Y)

Class 005-26
PVT Joshua A. Valenzuela * – DG
WO1 Faisal Salem M. R. Abu-Qaba
PV2 Michael Tyler Cooper
SPC Jack William Ellerd
PVT Elijah Reginald Lash Finely
PV2 Tobias Zayne Hammontree
PV2 Johnathan M. Lauderdale
PFC Angel Oropeza
PFC Anthony Arcos Paulino
PVT Adrien Adam Rios
PFC Alberto Villalobos
PVT Teddy Jovan Wallace

DG: Distinguished Graduate
* = AAAA Member

Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) Graduations

UAS Repairer
AAAA congratulates the following Army graduates of the Unmanned Aircraft Systems Courses at Fort Huachuca, AZ.

RQ-7 Repairer (15E), TUAS Trained (15X)

Course 26-503, 21 May 26
PV2 Pilkington, Hannah – DG
PVT Anderson, Joseph

PV2 Arreguin, Luis
PFC Calva, Roberto
PV2 Castelman, Jack
PFC Covert, Michael
SPC Fogelman, John
PV2 Green, Malachi
PFC Herring, Luke
PVT Holland, Dalton
PFC Lee, Alex
PFC Limoges, Tristan
PV2 Lovely, Gavin
PFC Malcom, Ian
PVT Maxfield, Brandon
PVT McCain-Aldrich, Michael
PFC Mendoza, Kevin
PV2 Perez, Violet
PV2 Smith, Byron
PVT Torres-Mendoza, Miguel
Course 26-504, 5 Jun 26
PV2 Adrien, Terrance
PVT Amat, John
PVT Frias, Jayson
PFC Rydallch, Tyler
PFC Zambrano, Andres

MQ-1 "Gray Eagle" Repairer (15M)

Course 26-002, 4 Jun 26
PFC Kintzer, Ross – DG
PFC Ashley, Abraham
SGT Beale, Dayzie
PVT Medina, Orlando
SPV Smith, Jeruz
PV2 Tomlin, Liam
PFC Wrightman, Colton
PV2 Lin, Isaac

RQ-7 Operator (15W), TUAS Trained (15X)

Course 26-505, 21 May 26
PFC Zwick, Ethan – HG
SPC Boyle, Brendan
PFC Bramlett, Charleigh
PVT Bruyette, Dillan
PVT Denton, Brack
PFC Joseph, Henry
PV2 Kreider, Caleb
PFC Lerma, Hiram
PV2 Searle, Ryker
Course 26-507, 5 Jun 26
SGT Gibson, Dakota – DG
SSG Crossland, Travis – HG
SPC Ross, Larry
SPC Barrero, David
PV2 Benson, Rohan
PV2 Birkicht, Conner
PV2 Brookhouser, Damien
SPC Cheek-Hopper, Devin
PFC Cruzvazquez, Angel
PV2 Feltman, Jillian
SPC Fierro, Jacob
SPC Frutis, Raul
PFC Gabbard, Kayden
PVT Garcia, Seth M
PFC Gonzalez, Esther
SPC Goode, Eric
SPC Khaing, Eikhi
SPC Kitchen, Lindsay
PFC Lamberti, Logan
SPC Salas, Alexander
SPC Sias, Christopher
PV2 Virden, Shelton
SGT Walls, Justin

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



AAAA Legislative Report

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

Congress Gets to Work: What Recent Defense Markups Mean for Army Aviation

Last month, we reported that the arrival of the FY27 Defense Budget Request was a clear indication that Congress had begun its legislative work. In the past several weeks, the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) marked up the FY27 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), the House Appropriations Defense Subcommittee (HAC-D) released its defense spending bill, and the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) passed its version of the NDAA. Taken together, these actions give Army Aviation leaders a much better idea of congressional priorities for the next fiscal year. The bottom line for Army Aviation is simple; Congress continues to support aviation modernization, readiness and the industrial base that supports them both. The Future Long Range Assault Aircraft (FLRAA) was one of the most closely watched items during the HAC-D markup. Congress has shown a continued commitment to the program's long-term vision. The HAC-D approved research, development, test and evaluation (RDT&E) funding for FLRAA. This approval demonstrates that FLRAA continues to be a top priority for Army Aviation modernization.

However, the committee did cut procurement funding requested by the Army for FY27 due to concerns about the immaturity of the program to warrant an investment in production. This reduction in funding will likely delay the procurement process for approximately one year. It also indicates something else, Congress continues to support FLRAA, however, it wants to make sure that production funding is tied to program maturity and acquisition milestones that can be achieved.

Another item of note is the funding that HAC-D chose to provide in lieu of funding cuts to FLRAA. The committee provided additional procurement dollars for legacy/enduring aviation platforms that were not requested by the Army. These additional dollars for aircraft currently in service demonstrate that Congress understands an important fact; modernization cannot occur at the expense of readiness. Apache, Black Hawk, Chinook and their associated industrial bases will remain critical to today's operations and will continue to carry a large percentage of the Army's operational load for years to

come. In essence, Congress is not deciding whether today's force or tomorrow's force is more important. Instead, lawmakers are attempting to find a balance between the two by continuing to invest in transformational capabilities such as FLRAA, while ensuring that the Army has a ready, modernized and sustainable fleet of legacy aircraft.

Beyond rotorcraft programs, however, Congress has developed an increasing focus on autonomy, low-cost unmanned systems and counter-UAS technologies. Lessons learned from Ukraine, the Middle East and recent exercises in the Indo-Pacific region have influenced congressional thinking. Lawmakers and staff view mass, affordability and rapid innovation as key elements of future military capability. This trend was perhaps best exemplified during the Senate Armed Services Committee markup, which included language urging the Department of Defense to speed up the incorporation of robotic/autonomous systems into military operations and evaluate organizational changes to incorporate these systems into future operations.

Congressional debates are becoming increasingly less about whether unmanned systems will be incorporated into aviation formations and more about how rapidly the Army can deploy and scale those capabilities. Lawmakers are asking tough questions regarding acquisition timelines, production capacity, software modernization and the ability of the defense industrial base to deliver affordable systems at scale. Industrial capacity is rapidly becoming one of the defining themes of this year's defense debate. Both HASC and HAC-D have stressed the need to strengthen the defense industrial base through multi-year procurement authority, supply chain resilience and incentives to expand production capacity. Experiences from recent conflicts have convinced many lawmakers that winning future wars will depend on both superior tech-

nology and the U.S.'s ability to develop and sustain capabilities over time. Regardless of whether we're talking about FLRAA, Apache modernization, Black Hawk sustainment, UAS systems or next generation counter-UAS capabilities; Congress is increasingly evaluating programs through two lenses; operational effectiveness and industrial resilience. Can the capability deliver decisive effects? And can the U.S. produce enough of it quickly enough during a crisis? Those questions are influencing almost every major defense program review on Capitol Hill today. The legislative process is still far from over. The House NDAA is scheduled to go to the House floor later this summer and Senate appropriators will continue to develop their defense spending bill.

Ultimately, differences between the House and Senate versions will need to be reconciled before a final bill can be sent to the President. As always, a continuing resolution is a potential problem and highly likely. Congress continues to show support for Army Aviation modernization. It has recently placed greater emphasis on aviation readiness and sustainment. It has requested faster acquisition cycles and greater industrial capacity. And perhaps most importantly, lawmakers are beginning to realize that the future of Army Aviation will ultimately depend on successfully integrating manned aircraft, autonomous systems and the industrial base that supports them. The markups of last month represent more than legislative milestones. They provide an early glimpse into the future force that Congress expects Army Aviation to become.

For the Army Aviation community there is an important lesson in these congressional actions. Modernization is not a choice between legacy and next generation capabilities. To succeed will require sustaining today's fleet while developing tomorrows and Congress seems determined to ensure that Army Aviation accomplishes both tasks.

ARMY AVIATION *Upcoming Special Focus*



August/September Blue Book Issue

Special Report – Future Long Range Assault Aircraft
Blue Book Directory of All Aviation Commands & Activities
AAAA Scholarship Foundation/TLC Foundation Winners

Contact: Erika Burgess or Carmen Tuohy

AAAAindustry@quad-a.org 203.268.2450



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

Army and Industry Make Significant Strides on Building Supply Chain Resiliency



U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY SGT BRANNA BRUDER

The Army is advancing a new sustainment strategy that promises to strengthen readiness across the Army Aviation by expanding access to technical data and accelerating advanced manufacturing capabilities. Working with industry partners, including Lockheed Martin Sikorsky and Wichita State University's National Institute for Aviation Research (NIAR), the Army continues to build a digital twin of the UH-60 Black Hawk, enabling faster repair, reverse engineering, and localized manufacturing of critical components. The initiative also includes improved logistics for frequently replaced parts, such as the Electronic Standby Instrument System control knob, and the launch of the nation's first organic composite rotor blade repair program at Corpus Christi Army Depot, TX. Army Materiel Command has been designated as the lead integrator for advanced manufacturing, helping streamline qualification processes and strengthen supply chain resiliency. With nearly 1,000 digital part files now available, Army Aviation maintainers are gaining new tools to reduce repair times, improve operational readiness, and return aircraft to the fight more quickly.

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

Point Blank Enterprises Inc., Miami Lakes, FL, was awarded a \$13,771,606 modification for the continued development, weight optimization, and final airworthiness qualification of the UH-60M Black Hawk Advanced Crashworthy Armored Pilot Seat.

The modification brings the total cumulative face value of the contract to \$31,881,554. Work will be performed in Miami Lakes, FL, with an estimated completion date of Oct. 31, 2028.

AeroVironment Inc., Simi Valley, CA, was awarded a \$117,306,232 firm-fixed-price contract for procurement and delivery of 82 AeroVironment P550 unmanned aircraft systems to provide organic reconnaissance, surveillance, and target acquisition capability for battalion commanders and their organizations. Work will be performed at locations to be determined, with an estimated completion date of July 23, 2026.

Redwire Defense LLC, San Luis Obispo, CA, was awarded a \$15,857,020 firm-fixed-price contract for procurement of eight Stalker Block 35 systems to provide organic reconnaissance, surveillance, and target acquisition capabilities for maneuver commanders. Work will be performed at locations to be determined, with an estimated completion date of Aug. 30, 2026.

General Electric Co., Lynn, MA, was awarded a \$9,780,000 modification for engineering and manufacturing development of the Improved Turbine Engine for Apache and Black Hawk helicopters. The modification brings the total cumulative face value of the contract to \$889,489,255. Work will be performed in Lynn, MA, with an estimated completion date of December 31, 2029.

Gentex Corporation, Simpson, PA, was awarded a \$44,755,693 firm-fixed-price contract for procurement of Head Gear Unit-56/P Apache Helmet Assemblies, Rotary Wing Helmets, and associated parts in support of the Product Manager Air Warrior program. Bids were solicited online, with one received. Work locations and funding will be determined with each order, with an estimated completion date of May 28, 2031.

Korte Construction Co., St. Louis, MO, was awarded a \$113,852,388 firm-fixed-price contract for construction of the Sentinel Air Education and Training Command Formal Training Unit. Bids were solicited via the internet with two received. Work will be performed in Lompoc, CA, with an estimated completion date of March 6, 2029.

Lockheed Martin Corp., Orlando, FL, was awarded an undefinitized contract action

with a not-to-exceed of \$66,759,431 for the AH-64 Apache Modernized Target Acquisition Designation Sight/Pilot Night Vision Sensor (MTADS/PNVS) performance-based logistics program, including all obsolescence, replacement configurations, and redesigns found only on the AH-64 Apache Attack Helicopter, as well as peculiar ground support equipment in active use by the military in support of the MTADS/PNVS system. The total cumulative face value of the contract is \$382,051,127. Bids were solicited via the internet with one received. Work will be performed in Orlando, FL, with an estimated completion date of Dec. 31, 2026.

KBR Wyle Services LLC, Lexington Park, MD, was awarded a cost-plus-fixed-fee contract to provide systems engineering and technical assistance services including digital transformation, program management, engineering, software, cybersecurity, and logistics support for multiple air and ground-launched weapon systems. The amount of this action is \$35,976,057, with a total cumulative face value of \$207,915,330. Bids were solicited via the internet with four received. Work will be performed in Redstone Arsenal, AL, with an estimated completion date of December 21, 2031.

ADVERTISER INDEX

Amentum	23
Army Aviation Museum Fdn.	51
CAE.....	1
Dallas Avionics.....	13
DigiFlight.....	9
FlightSafety.....	25
HENSOLDT	33
Inter-Coastal Electronics, Inc.....	68
M1 Support Services.....	2
Phantom Products, Inc.....	7
PIC Wire & Cable.....	27
Pivotal.....	6
S.A.F.E. Structure Designs, LLC ..	17
SKEDCO, Inc.	21
Summit Aviation Inc.....	11
Trillium Engineering.....	19
Tyonek	15
Yulista Holdings LLC.....	29

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 July 31, 2001

Briefing

The Experimental Aircraft Association, AirVenture Museum, Oshkosh, Wisconsin, will open a Pearl Harbor exhibit this fall. The museum is seeking artifacts related to the Day of Infamy; in particular, those bearing the phrase, "Remember Pearl Harbor."

Those wishing to lend artifacts are urged to call the museum. Visit the website at <http://museum.eaa.org/>. In addition, the museum will feature its annual airshow, July 24-30. On hand will be many amateur-built experimental aircraft as well as 100 vintage World War II aircraft.

West Point

The top ranked U.S. Military Academy Cadet, and who chose aviation, was Cadet Joseph D. Minor. The second lieutenant was honored at a luncheon sponsored by the AAAA and Black Knights Chapter on May 30, 2001, at West Point.



Army Aviation, Hall of Fame Induction, 1980

There is no individual who has had as much influence and long term impact on Army aviation logistics as Joseph P. Cribbins. For more than two decades he served on the Army staff as the focal point on all matters pertaining to aviation logistics policy, plans and procedures with the other services, the Department of Defense, Congress and the civilian aviation industry. Mr. Cribbins was instrumental in establishing the Department of the Army's Aviation Logistics Office, and in the introduction of a staff that was oriented towards weapons systems—one having full review over all aspects of aviation logistics, . . . For entire commemoration, see page 39, *Army Aviation*, July 31, 2001.



50 Years Ago July 31, 1976

A First!

Flying Cranes from the 478th Aviation Co. (Hvy. Hel.) from Fort Benning, Georgia, combine with the 24th Infantry Divisions, 3rd Engineer Battalion for training. The six CH-54s hoisted everything from pontoon floats to fixed bridge spans

to 27-foot erection boats, the "first time any bridging equipment has ever been sling-loaded at Fort Stewart, Georgia."



Another First!

The Society of U.S. Army Flight Surgeons recently presented the "Aerospace Medicine Specialist of the Year Award." The recipient was Lieutenant Colonel James I. Treanor (M.D.).

Dr. Treanor is with the Army Aeromedical Activity at Fort Rucker, Alabama. He is also a fixed wing aviator and senior parachutist.

Dr. Treanor is the first recipient of this award. Major General Spurgeon Neel (center) was the presenter to Lieutenant Colonel Treanor (left). To the right was Colonel Raphael J. DiNapoli, Commander E.S.A.A.M.C.



342-Foot Monster

Who said lighter-than-aircraft are out of fashion? For Goodyear's reply to the country's heaviest problems: A 342-foot airship, together with four CH-54B helicopters hoisting more weight than the largest U.S. copter now in use. Inflator for Goodyear's dirigible is helium, not hydrogen, reducing the threat of combustion. The airship, then, is seen as offsetting the weight of the helicopters themselves, and which together can hoist some 100 tons, straight up. Even Ferdinand Graf von Zeppelin would be impressed.





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 2027 induction is June 1, 2027

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

Army Aviation Hall of Fame

Lieutenant Colonel James A. Scott III

Army Aviation Hall of Fame 2023 Induction



A Fixed Wing and Rotary Wing combat leader, flight instructor, tactical officer at West Point, Pershing Missile commander, and section, company, and battalion commander, LTC James A. Scott III did it all.

He graduated from the United States Military Academy with the Class of 1961 and was commissioned a Second Lieutenant of Field Artillery. Airborne and Ranger-qualified, he completed flight school at Fort Rucker in 1963.

Among the Army's youngest and most decorated aviators at the time, he was selected as the AAAA Army Aviator of the Year in 1966 for his exploits flying the O-1 Bird Dog during hundreds of missions at tree-top level in South Vietnam.

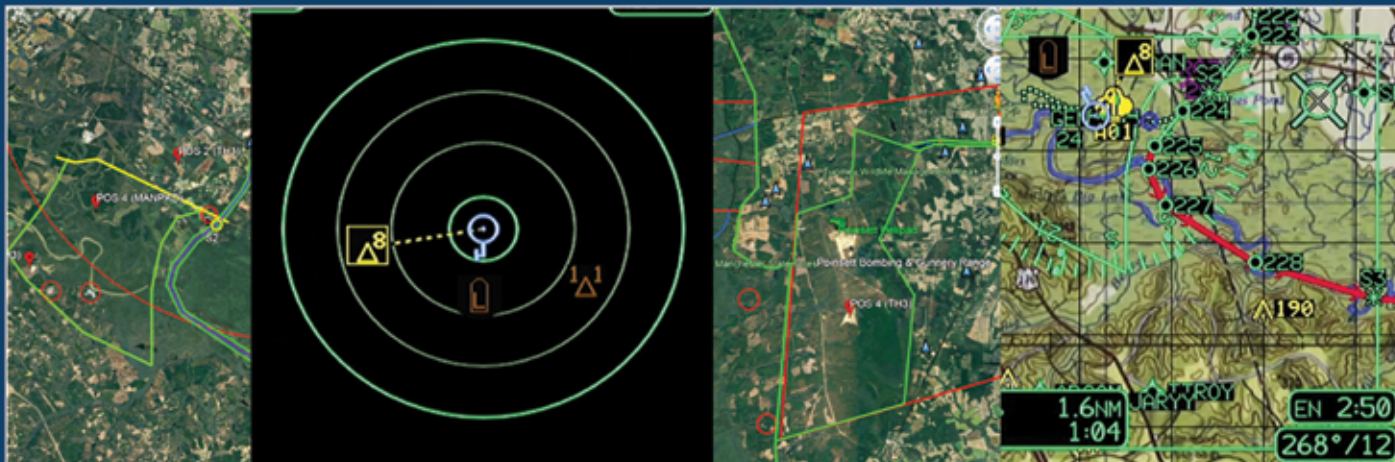
During his second tour in Vietnam from 1967 to 1968, he was wounded on an air assault operation during the TET Offensive. After his aircraft was struck multiple times, he flew back to his base camp, re-armed, re-fueled and returned to engage enemy ground forces until he was forced to successfully execute an emergency landing without anti-torque control. For his actions he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

Less than two months later, after recovering from his wounds less than two months later, he earned the Silver Star for gallantry as lead gunship and fire team leader while deliberately drawing enemy fire by placing his aircraft between enemy positions and a medical evacuation aircraft and ultimately evacuating wounded with his own gunship. His additional combat awards include two Distinguished Flying Crosses, 28 Air Medals, 2 Bronze Stars and 2 Purple Hearts.

He served three years as a company tactical officer at West Point and later culminated his career in 1980 as commander of 6th Battalion, 1st Aviation Brigade at the U.S. Army Aviation Center.

Renowned for personal integrity and moral courage, his inspirational leadership led to many further contributions.

Following his 2019 induction into the Georgia Veterans Hall of Fame for valor, he succumbed to an almost three-decade struggle with Agent Orange related complications in 2022.



TASS-V NLOS VALIDATION MISSION COMPLETE

Works as Advertised!!!

SITUATION: Aircraft Survivability Equipment (ASE) hardware has been removed from conventional US Army aircraft that are not deployed or part of the Global Response Force (GRF). This leaves US Army Aviation units with limited aircraft survivability training options at Homestation. To counter this deficiency, US Army approved an Air Worthiness Release (AWR) 2024E-A23 TTS 263883A dated 28 April 2025, authorizing a software update to TASS hardware supporting the T-IADS CDD dated 28 July 2021.

MISSION

An AH-64Ev6 evaluates the upgraded Training Aircraft Survivability Equipment Stimulation Suite Virtual (TASS-V) NLOS software at Home Station.



KEY ATTRIBUTES EMULATED

- APR-39 (Radar) AVR-2 (Laser)
- CMWS (IR) Countermeasures
- Effective Terrain Masking, credit for proper TTPs
- Hostile Fire Indicator
- Multi-ship collaboration

KEY TASKS

- Validate NLOS operation-DTED
- Validate Training Area Viability
- Validate Software Ease of Use
- Download Player/Event List for AAR Playback

OVERVIEW: The purpose of the mission was to install and validate new TASS-V software uploaded into the current TASS-V LRU (ASMODIM) authorized by the recently released AH-64 AWR dated 28 April 2025. This software update allows crews to train against peer/near peer IADS threats ANYTIME ANYWHERE without requiring a Line of Sight (LOS) networked environment (outside a CTC), and allows Integrated Air Defense System (IADS) Threats to be positioned anywhere in the world. Ground testing concluded the aircraft could receive ASE indications with only the TASS-V LRU (ASMODIM) and no actual ASE B-Kit hardware installed. During both test flights, all ASE Audio and Visual indications were received while operating Beyond LOS from the base station. The LRU takes into account terrain and the configuration of ASE capabilities by the crews, allowing for masking and credit for executing proper TTPs. The crews were able to train against InfraRed (IR), Radar, and Laser-guided threats, and revived by the auto-revive feature for continued training. Onboard recording enables crews to conduct thorough After Action Reviews.

END STATE: Testing confirmed that the TASS-V Software update to the ASMODIM operates as intended outside of a networked environment (CTC). New ASE scenarios developed will support AAR and training of crews and teams on critical tasks necessary to build muscle memory and survivable instincts.



Learn more at:
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