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Dealing with drones

Soldiers learn skills needed to
survive on modern battlefield

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Army Pfc. Benjamin Cosby, an M109A7
Paladin driver, camouflages the mobile
artillery piece during exercise Combined
Resolve at the Joint Multinational Readiness
Center in Hohenfels, Germany.

MATTHEW M. BURKE/Stars and Stripes

COVER STORY

Army brigade learns to deal with drones

New drone-driven fighting concept tested in Germany

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE
Stars and Stripes

HOHENFELS, Germany — Army Staff Sgt. Matthew Daliege's mobile artillery system was exposed for less than a minute as it darted across a dusty road and into thick forest at the sprawling U.S.-run military training area outside this Bavarian town.

The crew covered the M109A7 Paladin with branches plucked from the trees that had wrapped themselves around their tanklike vehicle as they pulled into the brush.

There they awaited their next tasking during the second part of exercise Combined Resolve. They had simulated firing their 155 mm howitzer approximately 100 times in five days.

"The concept is hiding, keeping foliage-covered, keeping the gun covered so drones don't spot us," Daliege said during a brief pause.

The emphasis on the drone threat has not yet reached the military's National Training Center at Fort Irwin in California, added Daliege, the section chief in charge of firing rounds.

Under the Army's new fighting doctrine, which is known as transforming in contact and was born from the lessons of the Russia-Ukraine war, mechanized armor will no longer line up in wedge formations and is always on the lookout for drones, he said.

The Paladin crew members are just a few of the 4,000 troops from the U.S., Italy, Kosovo and Poland participating in Combined Resolve's current phase, running through June 3 at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Hohenfels.

Sleep for the members of Charlie Battery, 1st Battalion, 41st Field Artillery Regiment has been elusive because the opposition force's drones mostly come in at night.

"We get into a firing point, we occupy, then we hide until it's time to shoot; then once we have to shoot, we roll out," Daliege said. "That's been the name of the game and it's been working."



PHOTOS BY MATTHEW M. BURKE/Stars and Stripes

Army Staff Sgt. Richard Levanti and Sgt. Patrick Waters, both drone operators attached to 2nd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment, prepare a first-person-view drone for flight.



A simulated satchel charge confiscated from an eliminated opposition force sits on a tank with 5th Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment.

The first part of the annual exercise, over the winter, included about the same number of troops from the U.S., Poland, United Kingdom and Norway.

For part two, the Army took transforming in contact a step further, indoctrinating its first mechanized brigade in the fighting concept, said Col. Jim Armstrong, commander of 1st Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division.

Poland's 18th Mechanized Infantry Division is operating as the high command for the exercise.

Transforming in contact focuses on fielding mobile, adaptable and tech-



Army Staff Sgt. Richard Levanti, a drone operator attached to 2nd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment, flies a first-person-view drone.

savvy soldiers who both use and combat drones.

For Combined Resolve, the brigade added squads with one-way attack drones, a drone lab that 3D-printed replacement drones in the field and a second electronic warfare platoon that operates alongside reconnaissance.

Field artillery observers, first-person-view drone operators and anti-tank teams were enmeshed together to wreak havoc on enemy armor.

"Typically, in an armored brigade combat team, you have to choose between effective command and control



Capt. Chace Scarboro, with 1st Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, scans the area while holding a Dronebuster jamming gun.

and survivable command and control," Armstrong said. "We have some tools that we've been working with over the past couple days ... that can really get us into the best of both worlds."

Nearby, M1A2 Abrams tank commander Capt. Matthew Lund of the 5th Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment displayed his latest prize, a simulated satchel charge that the opposition force attempted to place on his tank under the cover of darkness.

The crewman on watch spotted the tiger-striped attackers.

"Wake up, boys; it's time to fight," he recalled saying before they eliminated the threat. "It's my satchel charge now."

The crew will soon receive tethered drones that cannot be jammed, Lund said.

All the new measures are necessary on the modern battlefield, loader Cpl. Dalton Suggs added.

We're the "biggest target out there," he said. "Big metal box, you can't really miss it."

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MILITARY

'Largest airstrike' ever from carrier

Attacks on ISIS in Somalia hailed by top admiral

By CAITLYN BURCHETT
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The USS Harry S. Truman and its strike group launched the “largest airstrike in the history of the world” from an aircraft carrier during recent operations near Somalia, the Navy’s top admiral said.

About 125,000 pounds of munitions were launched by the Harry S. Truman Carrier Strike Group into the African country, Adm. James Kilby, the acting chief of naval operations, said while speaking at the Council on Foreign Relations’ Robert B. McKeon Endowed Series on Military Strategy and Leadership. The annual event brings together U.S. military service chiefs to discuss the future of the American defense strategy, military readiness and emerging global challenges.

U.S. Africa Command, which oversees military operations in the region, is launching airstrikes in Somalia at a record-setting pace as the military seeks to counter an influx of Islamic State fighters, military figures show.

Since January, AFRICOM has conducted 25 strikes in Somalia, many of



LOGAN MCGUIRE/U.S. Navy

An aviation boatswain's mate watches an F/A-18E Super Hornet launch from the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman during flight operations.

which were directed at ISIS militants, according to command strike reports.

If the intensity of the bombing campaign continues, AFRICOM will exceed the 63 strikes it launched in Somalia in 2019, the highest tally for the country in the command's history.

The ISIS cell in Somalia has grown from about 500 fighters to 1,500 over the past 18 months, with roughly 60% being foreign, a spokesperson said this month.

“ISIS-Somalia has proven both its will and capability to attack U.S. forces. [U.S. Africa Command], alongside the federal government of Somalia and

Somali Armed Forces, continues to take action to degrade ISIS-Somalia's ability to plan and conduct attacks that threaten the U.S. homeland, our forces and our citizens abroad,” the command said on May 3.

Meanwhile, the Truman strike group, Kilby added, has played a vital role in deterring Iran-backed Houthi militants in Yemen from attacking maritime shipping in the Red Sea. The Truman, he said, conducted 670 strikes and intercepted around 160 enemy drones and missiles during the five months it spent in the Red Sea.

“[The Houthis] are not China, but

they are a threat, and they are hunting our ships,” Kilby said. “Understanding that and not being dismissive about that and being prepared is what we are focused on now.”

Truman left its homeport in Norfolk, Va., on Sept. 23 for a routine deployment to the 6th Fleet. It entered the Middle East on Dec. 14 following the departure of the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln.

The aircraft carrier and its strike group were due to return to the U.S. in the spring, but its deployment was extended in May as part of a U.S. bid to cripple the Houthi by way of daily strikes.

Since March 15, U.S. forces have hit more than 1,000 Houthi targets in Yemen, killing group leaders and fighters and degrading the group's capabilities, the Pentagon said last month.

In declaring a ceasefire on May 6, President Donald Trump said the Houthis didn't want to fight anymore and had agreed to stop attacking ships in the vital waterway.

As of May 19, the Truman, as well as the destroyer USS Jason Dunham and the cruiser USS Gettysburg, had left the Red Sea and were in the Mediterranean Sea to participate in a NATO military exercise.

The Navy has not said when the carrier strike group will return home.

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Space Force set to lose 14% of its civilian workforce

By SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Space Force is losing nearly 14% of its civilian workers to a combination of early retirements, resignations and other incentives as the Defense Department works to slash its civilian workforce.

The downsizing is hitting the Space Force, which depends on civilians for one-third of its 17,000-person force, particularly hard, Gen. Chance Saltzman, chief of space operations, said.

“We understand the desire to reduce the civilian workforce. It's just having a little bit of an outsized impact on the Space Force,” he told the Senate

Armed Services Committee, later adding that even a 10% reduction is a “large hit.”

Many of the civilians who work for the service, the youngest and smallest branch, have highly technical skills and provide expertise that the Space Force does not have among its active-duty service members, Saltzman said.

They “bring corporate continuity across all of our processes and procedures,” he said, and are essential to the acquisition of systems at a time when the Space Force is being asked to take on new responsibilities and missions, including the Golden Dome missile defense program.

“We rely heavily on our civilian workforce,” Saltzman said. “I'm worried about replacing that level of expertise in the near term as we try to resolve it and make sure we have a good workforce doing that acquisition work.”

The Defense Department is aiming to cut 5% to 8% of its 900,000 civilian employees, which could ultimately affect more than 70,000 people.

About 21,000 Pentagon employees volunteered for deferred resignations offered by the Office of Personnel Management earlier this year and tens of thousands more have taken up other incentives to leave offered by the De-

fense Department.

The Army has seen 16,000 civilians sign up for deferred resignations, the Air Force is poised to lose 12,000 civilians, the Navy will shed 10% of its civilian personnel and the Marine Corps is expecting 1,600 resignations, according to testimony provided by personnel chiefs last month.

By the end of 2025, the Space Force was supposed to have a civilian workforce almost 1,000 people larger than it will end up being due to the reductions, Saltzman said.

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MILITARY

Promotion block did not hurt readiness

GAO details how Tuberville's hold affected top officers, families

By SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A 10-month blockade on 447 military promotions initiated by Sen. Tommy Tuberville, R-Ala., in 2023 disrupted the flow of leadership and upended some military families' lives but did not harm readiness, according to a government watchdog.

The Government Accountability Office found the effect of the hold varied based on individual circumstances, with some families experiencing a limited impact while others were unable to move to planned duty stations, enroll children in schools on time and start new spousal jobs.

But the warnings by former defense secretaries and others that the hold risked national security were unsubstantiated, the GAO wrote in a recent report. Data and an interview with a Defense Department official involved in readiness oversight showed the blockade did not stop military units from completing missions.

Tuberville prevented the Senate from approving military promotions due to his opposition to a Pentagon policy that provided travel funds for service members and dependents who

needed to travel out of state to obtain reproductive health care, including abortions.

He lifted his hold after nearly a year, without any concessions by the Pentagon. President Donald Trump's administration reversed the policy earlier this year.

Tuberville in a statement said the GAO report confirmed his longstanding position that his hold on nominations had "zero" effect on readiness.

"If the Biden administration was actually concerned about readiness, they would have reversed the policy and I would have immediately dropped the holds," he said. "But they didn't because they care more about taxpayer-funded abortion-on-demand than they care about our troops."

Tuberville is expected to announce his candidacy for Alabama governor this month.

The report describes a series of cascading effects from Tuberville's blockade, particularly on military families.

The Marine Corps, for example, had to cancel a general officer's planned move because the officer was needed to fill a position for which the nomination was on hold. The officer's

household goods had already been sent to their future duty station.

Another Marine Corps officer was unable to enroll their teenage child in a new school and some Air Force general officers sold their homes, lived in temporary housing and paid for storage out of their own pocket.

"Further, officers with elderly parents, family members with medical conditions, school-age children, and spouses with employment opportunities faced hardships due to the instability as a result of the hold," the report stated.

One Space Force general officer was geographically separated from his spouse for multiple months while his retirement was deferred because his replacement's nomination was on hold.

The nomination blockade also interrupted the military promotion cycle and pay for officers. Some missed out on several months of pay raises ranging from \$350 to \$2,106 per month and others could not accrue time-in-grade requirements.

To mitigate the fallout, the Defense Department deferred retirements, proceeded with planned assignments for some officers and temporarily filled some vacant positions with civilian



JACK SANDERS/Defense Department

The hold on military promotions initiated by Sen. Tommy Tuberville, R-Ala., did not risk national security, the Government Accountability Office wrote in a recent report.

employees to ensure continuity of operations, according to the report.

Special assistant roles were created in several cases to allow officers to move while they waited for their promotions. Such workarounds still required families to live in temporary housing for several months until the stalled nominations were confirmed.

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Soldiers eyeing reenlistment to have less time to decide

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

The Army is giving soldiers less time to decide whether to reenlist or extend contracts amid a recent uptick in recruiting and retention, the service recently announced.

Starting July 1, the Army will reinstate a former policy that requires soldiers to reenlist no later than 90 days from their expiration term of service date. Soldiers less than 90 days from their ETS dates will be unable to reenlist, the Army said in a statement.

"With reenlistment and recruiting exceeding expectations, the Army is in a good position to maintain its end strength and force requirements for the foreseeable future," Master Sgt. Kindra Ford, a senior Army retention operations enlisted official, said in the



DUSTIN REETZ/U.S. Army

A soldier reenlists in Memphis, Tenn., on March 16.

statement. For soldiers weighing whether to reenlist, that means no more last-minute decisions.

Another policy that allowed soldiers to extend their service for short peri-

ods of time without reenlisting also is being curtailed.

Soldiers with an ETS date before Oct. 1 who are not deployed or deploying have until May 31 to obtain reten-

tion extensions, the Army said.

Over the years, the Army has adjusted its policies on reenlistment and retention based on a variety of factors, such as the service's ability to attract new recruits. During recruiting down periods, the Army often is more flexible as it tries to retain soldiers.

Now, after several years of struggles that resulted in failures to meet recruiting targets at times, the service has seen a groundswell of interest.

The Army surpassed its fiscal year 2025 reenlistment goal in April by retaining 15,600 soldiers, exceeding the 14,800 target, according to the service.

"The Army's retention success also coincides with it recently exceeding 90% of its recruiting goals in May as it continues to build on its recruiting momentum," the Army said.

MILITARY

Hegseth boosts pay, oversight for moves

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth recently ordered sweeping changes to the military's household goods moving system, citing frustration among service members with a newly instituted contracting system.

"We know it's not working, and it's only getting worse," he said in a news release May 25. "We've heard your concerns about contractor performance, quality and accountability."

Hegseth ordered the formation of a Pentagon task force to improve the workflow behind permanent change of station moves under the Global Household Goods Contract, or GHC.

Moves under the contract began with a slow rollout more than a year ago but ramped up in earnest this year.

Under the contract, U.S. Transportation Command is transferring oversight of roughly 300,000 to 400,000 annual military and Coast Guard moves to HomeSafe Alliance, a joint venture between Tier One Relocation and KBR, formerly known as Kellogg Brown & Root.

HomeSafe oversees all contracts for packing, trucking, shipping and storage of goods in GHC moves.

The command's legacy system for relocations has continued to operate in

parallel with GHC, which was expected to handle most domestic moves by peak PCS season this summer.

The moving industry in large part has declined to sign on to GHC because, among other issues, the new system's payment rates are on average 30% lower than what the government pays in the legacy system.

Hegseth directed Transportation Command "to develop and implement rates similar to the legacy system with in GHC to increase vendor capacity and ensure enough companies are willing to move military family household goods to the next duty station," according to the release.

GHC was created, paradoxically, because of service member complaints over the performance of the legacy system.

But GHC has been plagued by late pickups and deliveries, and several U.S. senators commenced inquiries this spring into its shortcomings.

In late April, the Army suspended the use of GHC for all moves "pending further leadership review," the service said in an April 30 memo.

The May 25 release said Transportation Command should "fully leverage" both GHC and the legacy tender-of-service program in dealing with peak season.



WESLEY BURGOS/U.S. Navy

Capt. Sean Andrews, commander of Fleet Logistics Center Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, tours a local agent's household goods storage on April 3.

"We're going to split this year's peak moving season between our new and legacy systems," Hegseth said in the release. "[T]hose systems can talk to each other and work together, so we're going to use both in every way possible."

HomeSafe welcomed the move.

"DoD raising our rates to account for significant inflation from the last four years would substantially benefit our ability to facilitate world-class moving services for our nation's heroes," the company said in a May 22 statement.

Federal News Network reported that Andy Dawson, director of the command's Defense Personal Property Program overseeing GHC, was recently removed from his position.

Transportation Command did not respond to questions emailed regarding Dawson and the status of GHC.

Hegseth's memo also requires GHC and the legacy program to provide weekly updates to the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment and establish internal controls within Transportation Command, such as a hotline, "to maintain direct access with global transportation shipping offices to mitigate any GHC or [tender-of-service] interruptions."

The memo also directs that the government's reimbursement rate for do-it-yourself moves increase by 30%.

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Survey: Moving creates angst among military spouses

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

More than half of spouses are unhappy with military life, continuing a downward trend in recent years related to family frustrations over quality-of-life issues such as frequent moves and employment difficulties, according to a new Defense Department survey.

The DOD 2024 active-duty spouse survey, conducted roughly every two years, examined the opinions and attitudes of spouses on a range of issues.

The findings showed one in three spouses would prefer their family separate from the military. The largest source of dissatisfaction was related to

permanent change of station moves.

"The biggest factor related to unhappiness with a PCS is the problem military spouses face in finding employment after the move," DOD said in a statement.

About 49% of spouses who had a PCS move said finding employment proved to be a "large" or "very large" problem, according to the survey. Loss of income and non-reimbursable moving costs also were top concerns.

The National Military Family Association, which analyzed the survey results, said that the findings showed "a record-breaking number" of military spouses who favor leaving the

military.

"That number matters," the organization said in a statement. "Spousal support has long been recognized as a leading factor in a service member's decision to stay or leave military service. When families are unhappy, retention suffers, and ultimately, so does readiness on a national level."

Tim Dill, the acting deputy undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness, said DOD is looking at ways to ease the burden that comes with frequent military moves.

"We're taking a very careful look at when PCS moves are truly needed for the military; and where a PCS move is

not critical for the military, we need to be looking at whether or not that's a move that even needs to happen because we understand geographic stability is a big factor for the household satisfaction," Dill said in a statement.

Financial considerations also factored into overall dissatisfaction.

Sixty percent of spouses described their financial situation as comfortable, but that was a 10-percentage point drop from 2019, and lower than nearly all years going back to 2006, the survey said.

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MILITARY

101st Airborne to be 1st to fly new tiltrotor

BY GARY WARNER
Stars and Stripes

The 101st Airborne Division will be the first to fly the new Future Long-Range Assault Aircraft, which is designed to replace the UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter by 2030, the Army has announced.

Gen. James Mingus, the service's vice chief of staff, revealed the choice at the Army Aviation Association of America conference in Nashville, Tenn., on May 14.

The vertical take-off and landing aircraft built by a partnership of Bell and Lockheed Martin would be designated the MV-75, Mingus said. The MV stands for "multi-mission" and "vertical take-off and landing."

"The number 75 is a homage to 1775, the birth year of the United States Army," said Maj. Daniel Mathews, a spokesman for Mingus.

The aircraft was previously called the V-280 Valor.

The Pentagon has said the aircraft could eventually be operated by the other military services and be sold to allied forces.

Col. Marty Meiners, a spokesman for the 101st Airborne Division, said the Army has not specified yet whether the MV-75 will retain the prototype's Valor name.

The MV-75 is intended to replace the UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter, a de-



DAVID HYLTON/DIVIDS

The V-280 Valor prototype that the Army announced this month would be redesignated as the MV-75 and assigned to the 101st Airborne Division by 2030.

sign that first flew in October 1974, the Army said. It is a tiltrotor aircraft with engine mounts on the wingtips. The engines can counter-rotate, allowing for high level of maneuverability and hovering stability, according to the service.

Mathews said the MV-75 is a tactical assault and medical evacuation aircraft that will provide the Army with long-range, high-speed options "that are survivable in contested environments."

The V-280 Valor prototype was designed to carry 14 troops and a crew of four, the Army said. It has a top speed of 310 mph — much faster than the Black Hawk's operating speed of 183 mph. The new aircraft has a range of 931 miles, compared to 367 miles for the Black Hawk.

Mingus said the Army is hoping to move up the projected 2030 delivery date under the Army's Transformation Initiative, which was announced April 30 by Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth.

"To build a leaner, more lethal force, the Army must transform at an accelerated pace by divesting outdated, redundant, and inefficient programs, as well as restructuring headquarters and acquisition systems," Hegseth said in a memo announcing the initiative.

The V-280 Valor was part of the Pentagon's Future Vertical Lift project to prototype five airframes to replace the UH-60 Black Hawk, CH-47 Chinook, AH-64 Apache and OH-58 Kiowa helicopters.

The replacement for the Kiowa, designated as the Future Attack Reconnaissance Aircraft, reached the point in which the designs for the Bell 360 Invictus and Sikorsky Raider X were designated as finalists in 2020.

In February 2024, the Army canceled the program.

Gen. Randy George, the Army's chief of staff at the time, said in a statement canceling the program that lessons learned by the vulnerability of manned reconnaissance aircraft in the war between Russia and Ukraine had "fundamentally changed" that Pentagon plan.

Mingus said when deliveries of the aircraft begin at Fort Campbell, Ky., they will be assigned to the 5th and 6th battalions, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade.

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Army's new machine gun gets tropical test in Philippines

BY SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

The U.S. Army's newest automatic weapon is getting a workout alongside Filipino forces in the Philippines, according to the 25th Infantry Division.

Photographs released by the Defense Department last month show members of the division using the M250 machine gun, designed to replace the long-serving M249 squad automatic weapon, during Balikatan. The island-defense exercise involved 9,000 American and 5,000 Filipino troops between April 21 and May 9.

The M250 will also be used by members from the division's 2nd Mobile Brigade during training in the islands between May 30 and June 6, the brigade's commander, Col. David Lam-

born, said in comments emailed by 25th ID spokeswoman Stacey Lasay.

The training is part of the Army's Joint Pacific Multinational Readiness Center expansion in the Philippines.

"The XM250 comes equipped with the XM157 Fire Control System, a variable magnification scope with an integrated laser range finder and ballistic computer," he said, referring to the weapon by its former X or "experimental" designation. "Together, these systems provide greater range, greater accuracy, and greater lethality, giving our Infantry Squads a decisive advantage over our adversaries."

The M250, along with the new M7 rifle, was evaluated in March during a live-fire event at Fort Campbell, Ky., according to an April 11 news release



MALIA SPARKS/U.S. Marine Corps

Soldiers with the 25th Infantry Division fire XM-250 light machine guns and M240B medium machine guns during the live-fire event of Exercise Balikatan 25 in Aparri, Philippines, on May 3.

from the 101st Airborne Division.

The weapons were developed by New Hampshire-based defense contractor SIG Sauer and are now part of the Ar-

my's standard inventory.

Designed to replace the M4 and M249, the new weapons offer greater stopping power, extended range, and advanced optics that are expected to reshape small-unit tactics, the Army said.

The M250 offers greater control and concealment than the older system, according to Capt. Evan Myers of 1st Battalion, 327th Infantry Regiment.

"The 250 has semi, which makes it easier to control a single shot or two rounds instead of doing 6-8 rounds," he said in the release. "The suppressor reduces the muzzle flash, which is a huge advantage for maintaining concealment in low-light engagements."

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MILITARY

Unit threatens to fire soldiers for profanity

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

An Army unit at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., has barred its soldiers from cussing and threatened those that repeatedly break the new rule with involuntary separation from the service.

The initial entry training post's 43rd Adjutant General Battalion installed the rare swearing ban for its soldiers last month after the completion of a climate and culture investigation initiated to probe complaints of "extreme use of profanity," Tiffany Wood, a spokeswoman for Fort Leonard Wood, said May 20. The battalion is responsible for accepting new Army recruits into the service and in-processing them before they begin basic training.

The policy bans the use of "profanity, vulgar language [and] rude gestures or remarks" for soldiers while they are on duty, according to an April 17 memorandum that was circulated online via social media. "Vulgar or offensive language" is also barred on clothing and personal items in the battalion's work areas.

"All soldiers, trainees and employees deserve to be treated with dignity and respect when performing their duties or operating in the 43rd AG Battalion (Reception)," the memo reads. "The most productive work environment is one where employees and soldiers treat each other as they would like to be treated."

Wood said unit leadership consulted

"All soldiers, trainees and employees deserve to be treated with dignity and respect."

43rd Adjutant General Battalion memo

with Army lawyers and Army Training and Doctrine Command regulations before implementing the policy. However, she said the policy was under review by leadership at Fort Leonard Wood's Maneuver Support Center of Excellence, which oversees the battalion and other units that train recruits and soldiers at the post.

The policy includes a "four strike" system, which applies punitive actions based on how many times a soldier is caught swearing. Soldiers face verbal counseling the first time, written counseling for a second offense and "removal of favorable actions" — things like pending promotions or awards — for a third violation. A fourth infraction could mean the end of a soldier's Army career, according to the policy, which states that strike four results in "separation for misconduct based on a pattern of behavior."

Wood said that, so far, no soldiers have received official punishment or been kicked out of the Army for violating the no-expletives policy.

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ANTHONY HERRERA/U.S. Army

Rocky the Bulldog, the mascot for the 3rd Infantry Division, attends his patching ceremony on Fort Stewart, Ga.

Army's 3rd ID adds real Dogface Soldier

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

Soldiers serving in the Army's 3rd Infantry Division have been known for decades as Dogface Soldiers, but in the storied unit's century-long history no soldier has been more dog-faced than its newest — Pvt. Rocky.

Rocky, a nearly 2-year-old American bulldog, joined the division's ranks this month at Fort Stewart, Ga., apparently becoming the 3rd ID's first live mascot and bringing to life the division's Rocky the bulldog symbol it has used since the 1960s. In a ceremony, alongside dozens of other incoming Dogface Soldiers, Rocky received his official 3rd Infantry Division patch — known as a Marne patch, for the division's moniker the "Rock of the Marne" — at Fort Stewart on May 9.

"Rocky is more than just a symbol, [and] more than just a mascot," said Maj. Gen. Christopher Norrie, the division's commander. "He's a symbol of the legacy we all carry forward."

Although the 3rd ID traces its history to 1917 and earned its "Rock of the Marne" title for its stand along France's Marne River against a much larger German force in 1918, its bulldog mascot first appeared in 1965.

Rocky was a creation of Walt Disney.

That year, Maj. Gen. Albert Connor, the division commander, sought per-

mission from Walt Disney to use his cartoon bulldog character as the division's symbol, writing to the Disney organization that the unit had "for many years" been searching for an official symbol of the Dogface Soldier. Disney granted the 3rd ID the rights to use the cartoon, and Rocky — the smiling, rifle-toting bulldog in Army fatigues — was born.

Though Rocky has traditionally been a sergeant, the live Rocky enters the division as a private, Norrie said.

"Someday we hope he might achieve the rank of sergeant," the general said.

The live Rocky was a gift of the American Kennel Club, whose officials were surprised to learn the division had no living Rocky the Bulldog mascot while organizing an event on Fort Stewart for soldiers who handle military working dogs, said Lt. Col. Angel Tomko, the division's spokeswoman. The organization found a breeder who donated the bulldog to the division.

Like other new soldiers to the division, Rocky in-processed at Fort Stewart, receiving medical checks and signing in with a stamp of his paw. One of the division's soldiers, after meeting the pup, volunteered to make Rocky his own uniform in the Operational Camouflage Pattern soldiers wear in their day-to-day lives, Tomko said.

Rocky will now be tasked with supporting morale throughout the division, visiting with soldiers and participating in division level events and ceremonies for the foreseeable future, Tomko said.

"Rocky is already a rock star here," she said. "He is loved by everyone who meets him, loves pets and scratches from all the soldiers."



Disney granted the 3rd ID the rights to use the cartoon, and Rocky was born.

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