

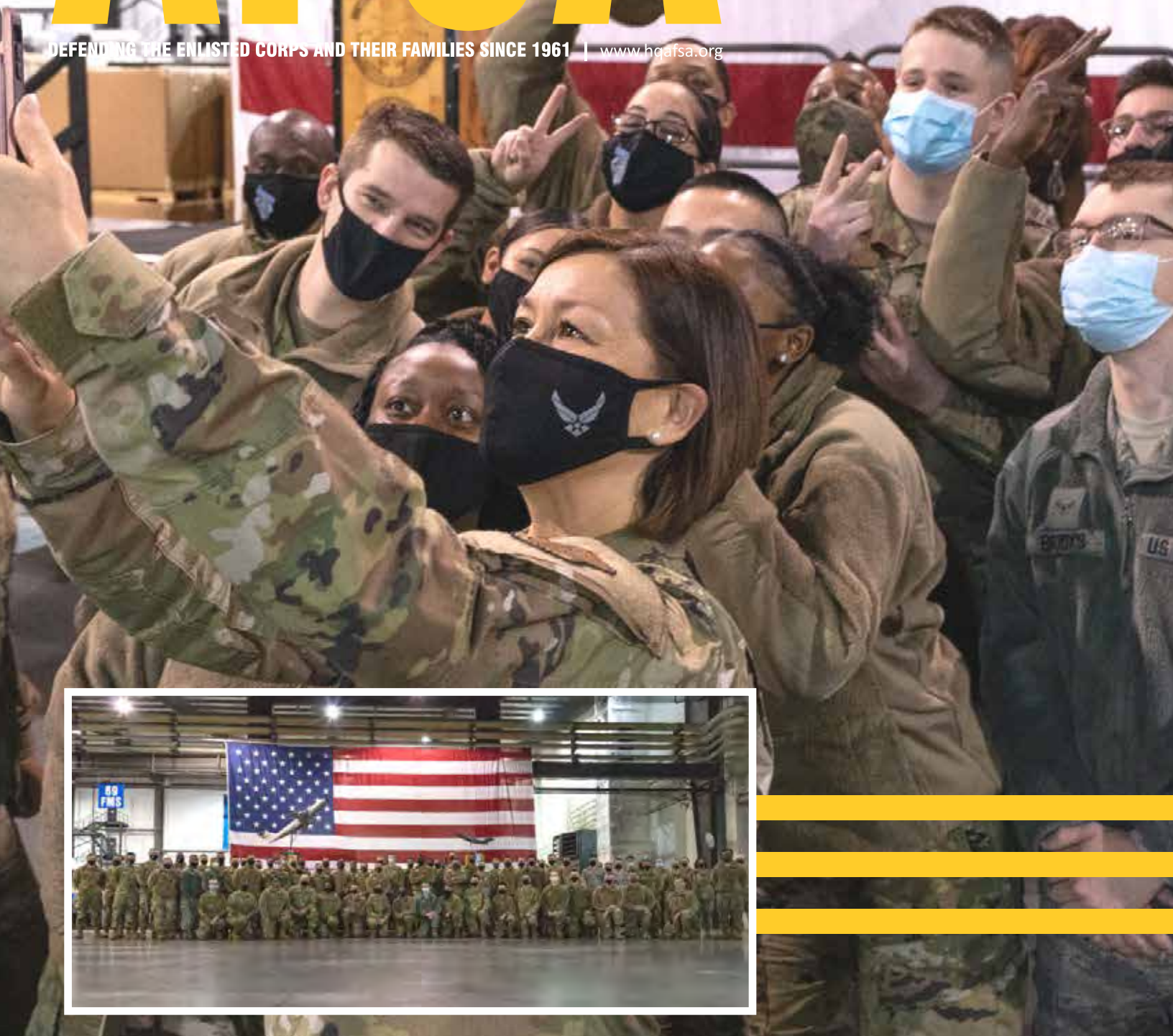
# AFSA

MAGAZINE

WINTER 2021



DEFENDING THE ENLISTED CORPS AND THEIR FAMILIES SINCE 1961 | [www.hqafsa.org](http://www.hqafsa.org)



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## COVER

Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force JoAnne S. Bass takes a selfie with Airmen after an all-call during a base visit Jan. 8, 2020, on Dover Air Force Base, Delaware. This marked Bass' first official visit to Dover AFB since she assumed her position as the 19th chief master sergeant of the Air Force on Aug. 14, 2020. During her visit, Chief Bass witnessed firsthand how Dover AFB supports Air Force priorities such as enhancing full-spectrum readiness and developing innovative, multi-capable Airmen. (U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Faith Schaefer)

Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force JoAnne S. Bass, along with members of the 436th and 512th Maintenance Group pose for a group photo after a MXG all-call Jan. 8, 2021, at Dover Air Force Base, Delaware. Bass spoke to approximately 75 junior Airmen and answered questions they had. This marked Bass' first official visit to Dover AFB since she assumed her position as the 19th chief master sergeant of the Air Force on Aug. 14, 2020. (U.S. Air Force photo by Roland Balik)

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Members: \$20 (4 issues)  
Non-Members: \$28 (4 issues)  
Individual Copies: \$7 each

To subscribe contact:

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AFSA Magazine (ISSN 0360-7364) is published quarterly (Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall) by the Air Force Sergeants Association. Copyright ©AFSA 2020/21, all rights reserved.

### AFSA

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IMPROVED QUALITY-OF-LIFE AND ECONOMIC  
FAIRNESS TO SUPPORT THE WELL-BEING  
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Through its many programs and worldwide chapters, AFSA also reaches out to bases and communities to help those in need and to raise awareness of the sacrifices, concerns and contributions of the men and women and their families who serve.

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### THE ENLISTED FOUNDATION (TEF)

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### EDITORIAL STATEMENT

AFSA Magazine is the only magazine dedicated solely to serving our members and their families.

We are obliged to serve the interests and concerns of our members by striving to report timely and accurate information. The editors reserve the right to edit all submissions but will never materially alter the author's viewpoint. The opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Air Force Sergeants Association or its editors. AFSA does not necessarily endorse products or services advertised in the AFSA Magazine.

Produced in the United States of America.

### AFSA MAILING ADDRESS

Send editorial content, questions  
and address changes to:  
AFSA Magazine - Editor-in-Chief  
5211 Auth Road  
Suitland, MD 20746

Periodicals postage paid at Southern Maryland Facility, MD 20790/additional mailing offices.



Michael R. Carton  
Air Force Sergeants Association  
27th International President

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CONVENTION AND

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CONFERENCE

IN ORLANDO FLORIDA.

AT THE BONNET

CREEK RESORT,

JULY 24-28, 2021.

# PRESIDENT'S COMMENTARY

Seems much of the media and individuals choose to talk and write about COVID-19 and the near- and long-term impacts on individuals and our nation, and the distribution and delivery of the vaccine. COVID-19, and the variants, have devastated and changed us individually and as a nation. When I listen and/or read all the rhetoric, I also see an opportunity to look through a different lens and see how AFSA can “Lead the Way Forward” by accepting and solving some of those challenges around we are encountering. I see some of those grassroots efforts when you post on Facebook. Going forward, our association must make a critical examination of our roles within our society and determine how we can improve and change ourselves and our association to better serve one another.

You, as a member and as a leader in AFSA, have a role to play in how we act and react to the challenges ahead. This past year has presented us with rather unique challenges as well as a window of Unlimited Possibilities (opportunities) for growth and development. For example, a scant 5-6 years ago, Professional Development was a presentation you received at the AFSA sponsored Professional Airmen's Conference. Today, our Divisions and Chapters across AFSA are developing, preparing, and presenting key information and leadership seminars across the entire spectrum of our Air and Space Forces. Every chapter member should also share these “Unlimited Possibilities” with your external partners as you expand your outreach capabilities. I challenge each of you, as “Servant Citizen,” to reach outside your comfort zone and embrace those opportunities which fit into your individual sphere of influence. You can embrace the “Unlimited Possibilities” that exist and “Lead the Way Forward.”

Normally, at this time of year, we see daffodils, crocus and other spring flowers peeking out from a long winter's nap. Soon, we will all experience a new beginning with a brighter future. Spring is just around the corner, the vaccine distribution and delivery is getting better, and we are going to Orlando in July 2021. Service members across the spectrum are being called upon to help with the vaccine delivery to patients; so once again, we are accomplishing our servant duty for our nation in a time of crisis. My thanks to each of you for assisting in some small way to help your fellow man.

AFSA is just like every other organization, we continually face the inevitability of change. Sometimes, change is on a large scale, at other times, it isn't. The constant is that we must adapt to the change and reassess how to go about our daily lives, either at work or at home. The pandemic has created a “new normal” lifestyle and we have adapted. How many of you ever imagined your Air Force would be “working from home” as a normal course of your mission? Yet we adapted to the environment and continued accomplishing the mission, utilizing several of those “Unlimited Possibilities.”

Without change, a flower remains but a seed in the ground; with no opportunity to grow and bloom. Here is some insight into what has changed since your Executive Council met in March 2020.

The Executive Council made a very unpopular, but a necessary decision, which changed AFSA's landscape forever. Soon after we suspended our 2020 AFSA Convention, your International Vice President, Jeff Foreman, chaired a Virtual Task Force to identify the requirements for hosting a Virtual AFSA Convention. The Task Force submitted the requirements and today, we now have a platform which provides AFSA with a virtual capability, but ONLY if necessary. The International Executive Council and Division Vice Presidents received a demo of the platform and we are going to beta test the concept again at our March 2021 Executive Council meeting. While we anticipate some bumps in the road; overall, I was pleased with what we have available to conduct our full range of business. We are also reviewing new virtual specific policy and procedures guidelines to help you better understand the processes that would need to be followed.

One guiding principle adhered to was to retain as much of our in-person processes and traditions as possible. I am pleased to say that we were successful in that effort. However, please understand that each focus area had to be modified for a virtual setting. These focus areas are registration, credentials, business meetings and voting, our caucus, and election of officers. While the processes are slightly different than what you are normally accustomed to, the result is the same. We will accomplish our business, vote on changes, conduct our caucus, and hold elections.

I want to close by saying, I look forward to seeing everyone at our AFSA International Convention and Professional Education & Development Symposium in Orlando, Florida.

We will convene at the Bonnet Creek Resort, July 24 through the 28, 2021.

Our 2021 overall theme is **“Developing Airmen and Guardians... Dominating Air and Space.”**

Kicking off the events we will start with our **“Wonderful World of Disney”** theme party, so plan accordingly (Mickey Mouse ears are optional). Our 2021 AFSA Convention elections will be slightly different as each International Office is up for election this year. You will be electing an International President and Uniformed Services Trustee for a 1-year term. You will be electing an International Vice President, Retired and Veteran's Affairs Trustee and Family Matters Trustee for a 2-year term. If you are considering running for an Internationally elected office, you must submit your resume and letter of intent, for the offices you are considering, no later than 1 June 2021 to the Executive Director.

Our business schedule is also going to be a bit different from previous conventions. The vast majority of the AFSA business will be conducted on July 25-26. AFSA will host the Professional Education and Development Symposium on July 27-28 and close with the Air and Space Honors Banquet the evening of July 28.

I am looking forward to seeing each of you in Orlando.



Michael R. Carton  
AFSA International President



*“For there is always light,  
If only we're brave enough  
to see it, If only we're  
brave enough to be it.”*

– AMANDA GORMAN –  
22 year old,  
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# EYE ON WASHINGTON

## FISCAL YEAR 2021 NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

In a rare New Year's Day session, by an 81-13 margin, the Senate followed the direction of the House of Representatives and voted to override the President's veto of the FY2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). What does this mean? In its simplest form, the FY2021 NDAA is now officially codified in public law.

For those who are unfamiliar, the NDAA is an abundant Congressional authorization of appropriations for the Department of Defense (DoD) and defense-related activities at other federal agencies.

The FY2021 NDAA contained dozens of pivotal quality of life provisions; including, but not limited to:

1. A pilot program for the temporary issuance of maternity-related uniform items
2. Policy for military service academies on separation of alleged victims and alleged perpetrators in incidents of sexual assault
3. Improvements to the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP)
4. 3.0% increase in basic pay
5. Increase in hazardous duty incentive pay for members of the uniformed services
6. Gold Star Families Parking Passes
7. Modification to limitation on the realignment or reduction of military medical manning end strength
8. Modifications to implementation plan for restructure or realignment of military medical treatment facilities
9. Addition of burn pit registration and other information to electronic health records of members of the Armed Forces
10. Expansion of care for veterans exposed to Agent Orange during their time of service

Our Military and Government Relations Team has gone through the 4,500+ page conference report cover to cover and has released an official summary outlining virtually every single quality of life provision that is encompassed within this massive piece of legislation.

To read the summary, please click [here](#).

If you have any additional questions on the FY2021 NDAA or the defense authorization process, please e-mail AFSA's Policy Advisor, Legislative Affairs, at [mschwartzman@hqafsa.org](mailto:mschwartzman@hqafsa.org).

## SENATE CONFIRMS RETIRED GEN. LLOYD AUSTIN III TO SERVE AS SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

On January 22, in an unequivocal display of bipartisanship, the Senate voted 93-2 to confirm retired Gen. Lloyd Austin to serve as the 28th Secretary of the Department of



Defense (DoD). This appointment is historical, as Secretary Austin is the first Black American to lead the Pentagon.

On January 21, both chambers of Congress voted to grant Secretary Austin a waiver from a law that requires officers to be out of the military for seven years before being eligible to serve as the Defense Secretary. Secretary Austin is the third Defense Secretary to require such a waiver to serve, following in the footsteps of Gen. George Marshall (nominated in 1950 by President Harry Truman) and Gen. Jim Mattis (nominated in 2016 by President Trump).

"It's an honor and a privilege to serve as our country's 28th Secretary of Defense" tweeted Secretary Austin after the final vote was tallied. Austin concluded his remarks by saying, "Let's get to work."

The AFSA is looking forward to working with Secretary Austin and DoD to improve the quality of life of the men and women of the U.S. armed forces and their families.

## AFSA'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OUTLINES LEADING LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES FOR THE BIDEN-HARRIS ADMINISTRATION

On January 25, AFSA's Executive Director, Keith A. Reed, authored a letter addressed to President Biden outlining several of the AFSA's leading legislative priorities for the upcoming Fiscal Year and presidential term.

**A transcription of the letter is as follows:**

January 25, 2020

President Joseph R. Biden  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D. C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

My name is Keith A. Reed and I proudly serve as the Executive Director for the Air Force Sergeants Association (AFSA), a 75,000+ member association dedicated to defending the quality of life for service members and their families since 1961. I am also a 20-year Air Force Veteran and retired Master Sergeant.

First, I wanted to say congratulations on becoming the 46th President of the United States of America and Commander in Chief.

Without question, there are many challenges that lie ahead. In tackling these challenges, I wish you nothing but following winds and fair seas.

It is often stated that a President's most prominent window of opportunity to gain momentum in highly prioritized manners of public policy is within the first 100 days of the presidential term. Nonetheless, the AFSA is looking forward to developing and maintaining a collaborative working relationship with the administration for all 1,461 days of this term.

As we live through these unprecedented times together, the AFSA respectfully requests that the administration makes transparency a leading priority at all levels of the Executive Branch and leans on the AFSA for assistance, guidance, and support.

It has not gone unnoticed that the administration has taken swift action to advance its agenda. With that being said, the AFSA urges the administration to take similarly expedient action to protect and improve the quality of life of service members past and present and their families.

Quality of life is not unique to the AFSA's mission. It is also a leading priority of the Department of Defense (DoD) to maintain readiness and preserve the integrity of an All-Volunteer-Force (AVF).

It is in this spirit the AFSA highlights the following actions for the administration to thoughtfully consider:

### **Oppose Budget Cuts and Sequestration**

While the AFSA is concerned with the nation's rapidly increasing budget deficit, the AFSA will firmly oppose any cuts to government spending deemed essential to maintain readiness, improve quality of life, and support the well-being of all military personnel and their families. From this, the AFSA respectfully requests the administration oppose sequestration in any form and reject any budget cut that would negatively impact service members past and present and their families.

### **Judiciously Reverse Upward Trends in VA COVID-19 Cumulative Cases, Active Cases, Convalescent Cases, Known Deaths, and Backlogged Claims**

As of the date this letter was authored, according to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) COVID-19 National Summary, the VA has 199,861 COVID-19 cumulative cases, 14,396 active cases, 177,045 convalescent cases, and 8,420 known deaths. Moreover, COVID-19 is also negatively impacting the VA's capacity to process and handle claims. As of January 16, 2021, the VA has recorded 211,409 rating-related claims backlogged. While the AFSA sympathizes with the difficulties COVID-19 has brought to everyday processes and procedures, it cannot go unnoticed that the adaptations made by the VA have not manifested in positive results. In its simplest form, these numbers are unacceptable. The AFSA respectfully requests the administration remain vigilant and leave no stone unturned in attempting to reverse the upward trends in COVID-19 cumulative cases, active cases, convalescent cases, known deaths, and backlogged claims.





### **End the National Tragedy of Suicide**

It is estimated that anywhere from seventeen to twenty service members and veterans die by suicide each day. According to joebiden.com, in the first 200 days in office, the administration will publish a “cross-sector approach to addressing suicide in veterans, service members, and their families.” The AFSA respectfully requests the administration include the AFSA and the Military and Veterans Service Organization (MSO/VSO) community in the process of creating such an approach.

### **Sustain Military Pay Comparability with the Private Sector**

The Employment Cost Index (ECI) is used to determine pay-raises for each fiscal year. As it currently stands, the ECI is set at 2.7%. In the fiscal year 2022 (FY22), the AFSA respectfully requests the administration support a 2.7% pay-raise as currently set by the ECI or higher.

### **Resist TRICARE Fee Increases**

Recent fee increases for TRICARE Prime and TRICARE Select enrollees have made healthcare services increasingly unaffordable. As a result, beneficiaries have been placed in difficult financial situations that are only exacerbated by the detrimental health and economic impacts of COVID-19. In FY22, the AFSA respectfully requests the administration stifle any consideration into implementing new TRICARE fees and/or increasing existing fees.

### **Fully Fund Military Tuition Assistance**

In late September 2020, the Air Force was forced to temporarily reduce the MilTA annual cap for undergraduate and graduate-level courses to meet an increase in participation rates, the number of courses taken, and course costs. In FY22, the AFSA respectfully requests the administration increase funding for the MilTA program to ensure that no cuts are ever deemed necessary to guarantee programmatic sustainability and solvency.

### **Complete Implementation of Military Housing Privatization Initiative Tenant Bill of Rights**

The FY2020 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) codified eighteen rights of military service members and their families residing in privatized housing units. While fifteen of the rights have been finalized by DoD, there remain three rights yet to be implemented (access to maintenance history, a process for dispute resolution, and the withholding of rent until disputes are resolved). The AFSA respectfully requests the administration remain steadfast in ensuring these remaining three rights are implemented with finality and are done so in such a manner so as not to render them unenforceable.

### **Make Childcare More Accessible and Affordable**

Costs in childcare have increased at a higher rate than inflation. As costs have increased, so too have childcare waitlists and the rate of military spouse unemployment. The AFSA respectfully requests the administration work with DoD to make dependent

care flexible spending accounts (DCFSA's) available to active-duty service members. Moreover, the AFSA also requests the administration be ever so mindful of how DoD's recent childcare policy change impacts childcare accessibility for those in priority groups 1B, 1C, and 1D.

### **Foster a Military Spouse Friendly Employment Arena**

Military spouses face a 24% unemployment rate, much higher than the general population. Employers have practiced discriminatory hiring practices that negatively impact military spouses directly because of the lifestyle that must be adopted following pursuant to enlisting in the military. The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) is a federal tax credit available to employers for hiring individuals from targeted groups who have consistently faced significant barriers to employment. However, military spouses are not covered under the WOTC. The AFSA respectfully requests the administration work with Congress to expand the WOTC's eligibility to include military spouses.

Moreover, the AFSA respectfully requests the administration work with the Defense-State Liaison Office (DSLO) to encourage states to engage in immediate actions to fully implement military spouse licensure laws, near-term actions to at least attain a baseline of getting military spouses a license in 30 days based on minimal documentation, and long-term solutions for reciprocity through compacts.

In closing, we thank you in advance for your thoughtful consideration of these administrative actions.

Contained in this envelope is a hard copy of our Legislative Platform, which further outlines the most important issues the AFSA concerns itself with as voted on by our members annually.

The AFSA is looking forward to working with the administration in a non-partisan, fact-based manner to ensure the security of benefits and protection of the overall quality of life for service members past and present and their families.

In bringing in the new year, I pray for you and your loved ones to have a very blessed and healthy 2021.

Best regards,

Keith A. Reed  
Executive Director

## **AFSA RELEASES LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM SURVEY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In 2020, AFSA conducted its annual Legislative Platform survey. The survey was launched on November 18 and



ran through December 28. The data gathered from this survey will assist the AFSA in identifying the most critical issues to our membership as we navigate the 117th Congress.

The survey was designed to provide respondents with an opportunity to have their voice be heard, share their story, and become an integral member of the AFSA Military and Government Relations team. This year's survey took the form of a questionnaire consisting of 113 questions.

1. Pay / compensation and financial readiness remain among the most prominent issues to the total force and their families.
2. Case-backlog / mismanagement remains a persistent problem encountered by those who file a claim with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).
3. COVID-19 has impacted the type / quality of care received by respondents from their respective healthcare provider(s).
4. After a permanent change of station (PCS), extensive wait times and financial burdens remain persistent issues for military spouses seeking to acquire a new / renewed professional or occupational license / credential.
5. The Military Tuition Assistance Program (MilTA) continues to serve as a pivotal quality of life benefit and useful recruitment / retention tool.
6. Quality of / accessibility to health care provided at military treatment facilities (MTF's) and rising health care costs remain top concerns for beneficiaries encompassed within the Military Healthcare System (MHS).

Shortly after reviewing the responses and analyzing the data, the AFSA's Military and Government Relations team released an executive summary of the Legislative Platform survey.

To view the summary, please click [here](#).

If you have any additional questions about the AFSA's Legislative Platform survey, please e-mail our M&G team at [milgov3@hqafsa.org](mailto:milgov3@hqafsa.org).

## MILITARY TUITION ASSISTANCE RESTORED

As reported in the last edition of the AFSA Magazine, and in numerous modes of correspondence published by the AFSA M&G team, on October 1, 2020, the Secretary of the Air Force enacted a policy change that reduced the

annual tuition assistance cap (for both undergraduate and graduate-level classes) per fiscal year from \$4,500 to \$3,750.

In response, the AFSA's Executive Director, Keith Reed authored a letter to CMSAF JoAnne Bass (and had numerous conversations) emphasizing the AFSA's commitment to ensuring that budget constraints do not negatively impact enrollees of the Air Force's Military Tuition Assistance (MilTA) Program.

### ***A transcription of the letter is as follows:***

Dear CMSAF JoAnne Bass,

The Air Force Sergeants Association (AFSA), representing more than 100,000 service members and their families, would like to emphasize our commitment to attempting to ensure that budget constraints do not negatively impact current and prospective enrollees of the Air Force's Military Tuition Assistance (MilTA) Program.

On October 1, 2020, by order of the Secretary of the Air Force, changes to AFI 36-2670, *Total Force Development*, were enacted that reduced the annual tuition assistance cap (for both undergraduate and graduate-level classes) per fiscal year from \$4,500 to \$3,750.

According to a press release published by the *Secretary of the Air Force Public Affairs*, the intent of this reduction was to "ensure the program remains fully available and fiscally sustainable while meeting an increase in participation rates, the number of courses taken and course costs."

The AFSA shares the sentiment put forward from this overarching policy objective; and, with this goal in mind, we respectfully request the expedient restoration of the MilTA annual cap to \$4,500.

While the changes made to AFI 36-2670 allow members to request a waiver to exceed the newly reduced \$3,750 MilTA annual cap, it is estimated that only twenty percent of the current MilTA enrollees would be eligible to have such a waiver approved.

Moreover, the negative ramifications that may follow pursuant to this eligibility lapse are only exacerbated when considering that this change to AFI 36-2670 is being implemented parallel to steadily rising tuition costs of accredited colleges and universities.

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), between 2007-2008 and 2017-2018, prices for tuition at public institutions have risen by 31 percent, with private institutions lagging slightly behind at 23 percent.



Given that 80,430 airmen had used the \$163.4 million that the Air Force had allocated for MilTA in their fiscal year 2020 budget (*by August 20, 2020*), the AFSA would like to thank the Air Force for their proactiveness in requesting \$17.6 million in additional funds that were necessary to keep the MilTA program solvent until September 30, 2020.

However, historically, when met with a situation where MilTA coverage must reflect increases in utilization rates and inflation in academia, the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Services have responded accordingly by adjusting the level of MilTA coverage **upward**.

Given the current market value of an education, the changes made to AFI 36-2670 divert from long-standing precedent to increase MilTA annual caps in accordance with utilization rates and inflation, hinder the capacity of airmen to enroll in the educational program of their choice, and place enrollees in a less advantageous position to advance their career(s) during their time of service and after.

Furthermore, it is important to note that the MilTA program is not only a vital quality of life (QoL) benefit but is also vital to the integrity of the All-Volunteer Force (AVF).

According to the *Report of the First Quadrennial Quality of Life Review* (hereafter referred to as *the Report*), DoD stated it agreed with the Services that the MilTA Program enhances recruitment, performance, and readiness. As stated in *the Report*, "Not only is TA good for recruitment and retention, but it is also a great job enhancer. Study after study show that TA is the main reason personnel are attracted to and stay in the military. DoD and Service analyses have shown this to have been the case for decades. Service-sponsored, as well as outside studies, show that better-educated Service members perform better on the job, and thus contribute to enhanced unit readiness and mission accomplishment."

As such, the AFSA respectfully requests the expeditious restoration of the MilTA annual cap to \$4,500 and that adequate funding for the MilTA Program is provided to ensure that no cuts are ever deemed necessary to guarantee programmatic sustainability and solvency.

We thank you in advance for your thoughtful consideration of this proposed change to AFI 36-2670 (as it currently stands) and for your relentless commitment to those who have served, continued to serve, their families, and survivors. The Air Force Sergeants Association is looking forward to continuing to work with you and your office to improve the quality of life of all persons within the military network at-large.

Best regards,

Keith A. Reed  
Executive Director

Shortly after this letter was authored, the Department of the Air Force restored military tuition assistance to \$4,500 per fiscal year and Air Force Credentialing Opportunities Online preparatory course funding for fiscal year 2021, effective immediately as of November 19, 2020.

To read more, please click [here](#).

## SENATE CONFIRMS DENIS MCDONOUGH TO SERVE AS SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

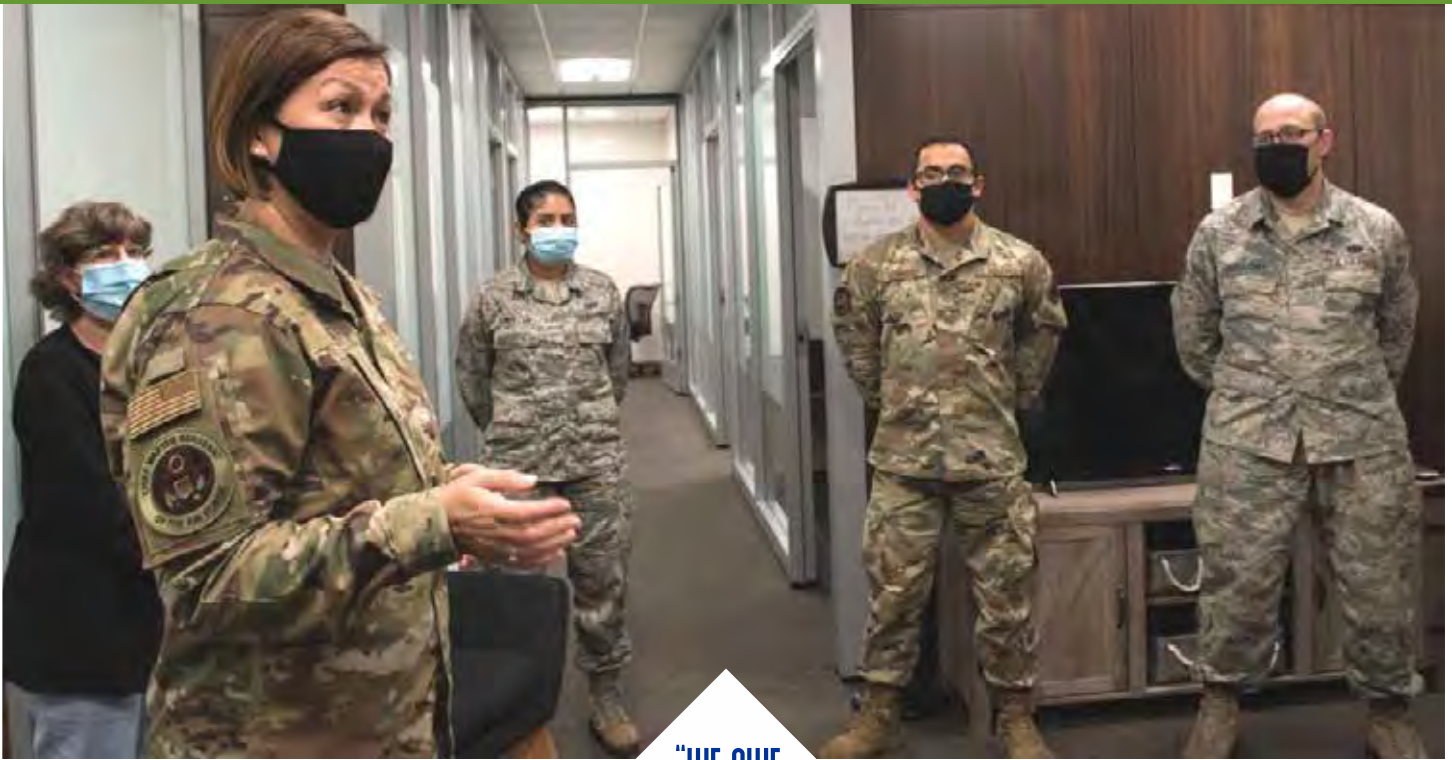
On February 8, by an 87-7 margin, the Senate overwhelmingly voted to confirm Denis McDonough to serve as the 11th Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs. Prior to assuming this role, Secretary McDonough served as President Obama's Chief of Staff, Deputy National Security Advisor, and Chief of Staff of the National Security Agency, and the Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategic Communications.

One day after his confirmation, Secretary McDonough published remarks on the VA's Vantage Point blog to briefly outline the vision he has for the VA and our nation's veterans. "It is the honor of my lifetime to join the VA workforce in serving Veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors," said Secretary McDonough. "Our highest priorities will be VA's three core responsibilities: providing all our Veterans timely, world-class health care; ensuring they and their families have access to the benefits they've earned; and honoring our Veterans with a final resting place that's a lasting tribute to their service. We're going to focus on living our core VA I-CARE values in all our interactions. Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect and Excellence – these values will define who we are, our culture, and how we care for Veterans and other VA colleagues. President Biden gave me a clear mission – to be a fierce, staunch advocate for Veterans and their families. His marching order to me is clear – fight like hell for Veterans. I fully embrace this mission, and I know the VA workforce does, too."

To read the remarks in their entirety, please click [here](#).

The AFSA is looking forward to working with Secretary McDonough and the Biden Administration to improve the quality of life, secure the timely provision of service benefits, and ensure high quality care for veterans and their families.

You can also e-mail the Military and Government relations team at [milgov3@hqafsa.org](mailto:milgov3@hqafsa.org) if you have any additional questions.



*(Top) Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force JoAnne S. Bass, speaks to Airmen at the Silver Plate Center at Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri, November 9, 2020. The Silver Plate Center offers several resources to Airmen and family in one location, including the welcome center and Airmen and Family Readiness Center. (U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Christina Carter)*

**"WE OWE  
IT TO OUR  
FUTURE TO START  
BUILDING THE AIR FORCE  
WE NEED  
TODAY"**

*(Bottom) U.S. AF Tech. Sgt. Shaquil Cobb, a weapons standardization instructor with the 1st Special Operations Maintenance Group, gives a munitions brief to CMSAF JoAnne S. Bass at Hurlburt Field, Florida, Oct. 20, 2020. Air Commandos assigned to the 1st Special Operations Wing briefed Bass on the capabilities of 1st SOW aircraft and how they are employed to accomplish AF Special Operations Command missions any time, any place. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Joseph Pick)*





# WHAT WE OWE *the* FUTURE

By Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, JoAnne S. Bass

**ARLINGTON, VA** | Whenever I'm out visiting Airmen across our Air Force there are two questions I often get asked, other than if we are going to allow beards in uniform (which we aren't, at least not right now).

"Looking back at your career, did you ever think you'd be the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force? And what has helped you along the way?"

Those questions always make me smile. Truth be told, as a young senior Airman, I recall saying that I wanted to be the first female Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force. However, when I became a non-commissioned officer that sentiment changed fast! Along with the increased workload and responsibility, being married to my Army husband (who deployed a lot), and starting a family, my priorities shifted quite a bit. While, I still wanted to make a broader impact in the Air Force, I also wanted to be the best wife and mom that I could be. Trying to juggle all of that was tough. I also realized that being a leader (or at least a good one), wasn't as easy as it seemed. It takes effort, humility, a desire to learn and grow, time, patience, and often times... trial and error.

What was most helpful along my journey was the people I've met along every assignment, and the experiences I've had over the past 28 years, as I went wherever our Air Force needed me to go. It's truly those things that have helped shape me as a person and an Airman.

Let me be honest, as a brand-new Airman, the last thing on my mind was the strategic direction our Air Force. I was most concerned with paying off my Honda Civic, and making sure I did a good job every day. And thankfully for me, I had strong supervision (people) to help me along the

*Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force, JoAnne S. Bass speaks to approximately 75 junior Airmen and answered questions during a 436th and 512th Maintenance Group all-call held in the 436th Aerial Port Squadron Jan. 8, 2021, on Dover Air Force Base, Delaware. This marked Bass' first official visit to Dover AFB since she assumed her position as the 19th CMSAF on Aug. 14, 2020. (U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Faith Schaefer)*



way. They trained and coached me through the basics of Airmanship, never gave up, and taught me what I needed to know at that time in my life.

As an NCO, I started seeing the bigger picture beyond my workstation, but I was still focused on the immediate problems in front of me. And even then, I had great examples of leadership all around me - officers, enlisted, and civilian alike. I also had bad examples that I was able to learn from as well.

It wasn't until I became a senior NCO that I began to see our Air Force from a wholly-different perspective. That change didn't happen as the result of a new policy or program. It happened when I realized that I had to take an active role in developing myself to be my best self. I did that through reading, taking on challenging projects and tasks, seeking out mentorship opportunities, watching other leaders in action, and investing in myself so I could pay it forward to our Air Force. All of these things, along with being a sponge for information and taking tough assignments, helped me to better understand the decisions our leaders were making.

I'm reminded of a quote by Otto von Bismarck, "If you like laws and sausages, you should never watch either one being made."



*Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force JoAnne S. Bass takes a selfie with Airmen at the Bedrock innovation lab on Dover Air Force Base, Delaware, Jan. 8, 2021. Following her tour of the innovation lab, Bass held an open discussion to address Airmen's questions and concerns. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Christopher Quail)*

As much as I can understand what he was saying, I tend to disagree. We may not want to know how the sausage is being made in our Air Force, but for the sake of our collective future – we need to. We need Airmen that don't wait as long as I did to become an active and lifelong learner. We need Airmen now, at all ranks, to broaden their aperture and expand their professional horizons. The big picture is not something that is exclusively owned by senior leaders. It is a mosaic that every single Airman contributes to. The earlier our Airmen understand the bigger picture, the faster we can accelerate the change our Air Force needs.

This is not an arbitrary change, it is an essential one. Far too long, we have kept our heads down and allowed ourselves to become singularly focused at the expense of the world around us. That world has changed.

We are facing a global power competition against near-peer and peer adversaries who are not going to engage us in the way we are used to fighting. They will come at us through new technology and tactics that will shake our very foundations, unless we are ready.

To prepare for this new threat, we need all Airmen to recognize the vital role they play in our national defense. We need them to understand that the choices they make

today will determine the future we inherit. To accelerate this change, we need our Airmen to accelerate their own growth.

Every day is an opportunity for our Airmen to grow beyond what they were the day before. Reading, learning, growing, developing oneself does much more than just prepare Airmen for the next rank or responsibility; it prepares our Air Force for the next phase of modern warfare. The outcome will ultimately depend on how well our Airmen of today are prepared.

I would challenge our Airmen to look beyond the day-to-day and see how they fit into the bigger picture. Take steps today to help us build the Air Force we need to win the high-end fight. Grow beyond who you were yesterday and work with us to shape who we will become tomorrow. We need every single one of you to get after the challenges we will face in the coming years.

We owe it to our future to start building the Air Force we need today. ♦



*Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force JoAnne S. Bass speaks with Tech. Sgt. Eduardo Flores, 436th Aerial Port Squadron noncommissioned officer in charge of air transportation resources, during a C-5M Super Galaxy static display walk-through Jan. 8, 2021, on Dover Air Force Base, Delaware. During her visit, Bass witnessed firsthand how Dover AFB projects the Joint Force and advances the Department of Defense's warfighting capabilities to operate more quickly and with greater agility. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Christopher Quail)*



# 2021- Orlando, Florida



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must enroll in the CSU College course within six months of joining the AFSA.*

[www.hqafsa.org/edconnect](http://www.hqafsa.org/edconnect)

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# UNDERSTANDING AFSA

## AN AIR FORCE SERGEANTS ASSOCIATION FACT SHEET

*If you or a comrade don't completely understand the organization and the benefits that AFSA can provide for our members and their families, take a moment to read this fact sheet. It will tell you most of what you need to know. If you have more questions, find an AFSA chapter nearby or visit [www.hqafsa.org](http://www.hqafsa.org) for additional information.*

### ABOUT AFSA

The Air Force Sergeants Association is a federally chartered, 501(c)(19) nonprofit organization representing the professional and personal interests of our members and their families. AFSA represents over 75,000+ dues-paying members and their families, and we are the largest solely enlisted military association. The members are organized in 7 Divisions and 125 chapters throughout the world. The chapters provide professional development, opportunities for community involvement and a strong sense of fraternalism.

AFSA's mission is to advocate for improved quality of life and economic fairness to support the well-being of the U.S. Air Force enlisted Airmen, Veterans and their families. To achieve this mission, AFSA works closely with the U.S. Congress and the U.S. Department of Defense.

### HISTORY

AFSA was founded in 1961 by four U.S. Air Force non-commissioned officers who recognized the need for an organization to represent all enlisted personnel to America's elected and military leaders. Over the past five decades, AFSA has built a reputation as a stalwart advocate for U.S. Air Force enlisted members and their families. AFSA represents its members by advocating for its members' interests, ensuring the military and Veteran's benefits service members have earned through their service to the nation are maintained. As a federally chartered Veteran Service Organization, AFSA is endorsed by the U.S. Congress to represent Airmen, Veterans and families on Capitol Hill.

### STRUCTURE

AFSA's headquarters is located in Suitland, Maryland. The association is governed by a 14-person Executive Council, which consists of elected presidents from seven geographically organized AFSA divisions, as well as an International President, Vice President, Senior Advisor, Secretary and three Trustees representing Uniformed, Veterans and Family Matters, respectively. Six of the divisions are located throughout the United States, and one in Europe.



## LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Specifically focused on issues that affect our members and their families, AFSA regularly meets with members of the U.S. Congress and U.S. Armed Forces senior leaders to advocate for fair and equitable benefits that matter to all Active Duty, Guard, Retired and Veteran Military Members: Joint Services Enlisted and Commissioned Officers.

Our Legislative priorities include:

- Military Pay and Benefits
- Education
- Military Families
- Air National Guard & Air Force Reserve
- Military Health Care
- Veteran/Retiree Benefits
- Caring for Survivors' Military Benefits & Programs



The complete 2020-2021 Legislative Platform can be found at [www.hqafsa.org/legislation.html](http://www.hqafsa.org/legislation.html)

## AFSA MEMBERSHIP DESCRIPTIONS

- **UNIFORMED:** All Active Duty, Guard, Reserve, Retired and Veteran Military Members (Joint Services Enlisted and Commissioned Officers); Public Health Services (PHS), and National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) staff members.
- **FAMILY:** Family Members of Uniformed Service Members.
- **ASSOCIATE:** DoD Civilians, Civil Air Patrol, JROTC; AFSA Mission Partners, Member Service Providers, Sponsors, Military Supporters.
- **GIFT MEMBERSHIP:** The perfect opportunity to sponsor a new uniformed service member, your children/grandchildren, friends, family or business associates. All categories are eligible.



## JOIN AFSA *or* RENEW *your* MEMBERSHIP NOW

To join or renew visit [www.hqafsa.org](http://www.hqafsa.org) or call 1-800-638-0594, ext. 288.

**AFSA International Headquarters**  
5211 Auth Road, Suitland, MD 20746  
Toll Free: 800.638.0594 | Phone: 301-800-3500  
Facebook/Instagram/Twitter: @hqafsa

## QUICK REFERENCE

### IMPORTANT MILITARY SUPPORT CONTACT LIST

#### LEGISLATIVE

##### CONGRESSIONAL

U.S. Capitol Switchboard: 202-224-3121  
Senate Majority Leader: 202-224-6542  
Speaker of the House: 202-225-4965

##### SCHEDULES: LEGISLATIVE AND EXECUTIVE ACTION

Senate Democrat Cloakroom: 202-225-4691  
Senate Republican Cloakroom: 202-224-6191  
House Democrat Cloakroom: 202-225-7330  
House Republican Cloakroom: 202-225-7350  
Bill Status: 202-225-1772 or [www.congress.gov](http://www.congress.gov)

##### WHITE HOUSE

White House Comment Line: 202-456-1111  
White House Switchboard: 202-456-1414  
[www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov)

#### PAY

##### ACTIVE DUTY/GUARD/RESERVE DFAS

Denver Center Building 444  
6760 East Irvington Place Denver, CO 80279-6000  
1-888-332-7411 option 1  
<https://militarypay.defense.gov/Pay/> or  
<https://www.dfas.mil/MilitaryMembers/>

##### SURVIVOR BENEFITS

Defense Finance and Accounting Service, U.S. Military  
Annuitant Pay – 8899 E 56th Street, Indianapolis IN 46249-1300 | 1-800-321-1080  
[www.dfas.mil/RetiredMilitary/survivors/manage/](http://www.dfas.mil/RetiredMilitary/survivors/manage/)

##### RETIRED

Defense Finance and Accounting Service, U.S. Military  
Retired Pay – 8899 E 56th Street, Indianapolis IN 46249-1200 | 1-888-332-7411, option 7  
[www.dfas.mil/RetiredMilitary/](http://www.dfas.mil/RetiredMilitary/)

#### PERSONNEL ISSUES

##### ACTIVE DUTY

Air Force Personnel Center  
HQAFPC 550  
C Street West, Suite 50 JBSA-Randolph AFB, TX 78150  
1-800-525-0102  
[www.afpc.af.mil](http://www.afpc.af.mil)

##### GUARD/RESERVE

HQ ARPC/DPTOCW (Contact Center)  
18420 E Silver Creek Ave, Bldg. 390 MS68  
Buckley AFB. co 80011 | 1-800-525-0102  
[www.arpc.afrc.af.mil](http://www.arpc.afrc.af.mil)

# QUICK REFERENCE

## RETIREE ACTIVITIES BRANCH

HQ AFPC/DPSIR  
550 C Street West Suite 21, Randolph AFB, TX 78150  
210-565-0102 or 1-800-525-0102  
[www.jbsa.mil/Resources/Retiree-Activities-Office](http://www.jbsa.mil/Resources/Retiree-Activities-Office)

## CASUALTY ASSISTANCE

Air Force Personnel Center (AFPC)  
HQ AFPC/DPFCS 550  
C Street West, Bldg. 499, JBSA-Randolph AFB, TX 78150  
1-800-433-0048 or 210-565-3505 or DSN: 665-3505  
[www.afpc.af.mil/Benefits-and-Entitlements/Casual-Operations](http://www.afpc.af.mil/Benefits-and-Entitlements/Casual-Operations)

## NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR EMPLOYER SUPPORT OF THE GUARD AND RESERVE (ESGR)

4800 Mark Center Drive, Suite 03E25 Alexandria, VA  
22350-1200 1-800-336-4590  
[www.esgr.mil](http://www.esgr.mil)

## ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY

Arlington National Cemetery  
Arlington, VA 22211  
1-877-907-8585  
[www.arlingtoncemetery.mil](http://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil)

## NATIONAL PERSONNEL RECORDS CENTER MILITARY PERSONNEL RECORDS MEDALS AND DECORATIONS

### NPRC/MPR

1 Archives Dr. St. Louis, MO 63138 314-801-0800  
1-866-272-6272  
[www.archives.gov/st-louis/military-personnel](http://www.archives.gov/st-louis/military-personnel)  
(Note: All requests must be submitted in writing)

## USAF WORLDWIDE LOCATOR

### HQAFPC/DPDXIDL

550 C Street West, Suite 50  
JBSA-Randolph AFB, TX 78150-4 752  
210-565-2660 or DSN: 665-2660  
[www.afpc.af.mil/Support/Worldwide-Locator](http://www.afpc.af.mil/Support/Worldwide-Locator)

## SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

Office of Public Inquiries  
1100 West High Rise  
6401 Security Blvd. Baltimore, MD 21235  
1-800-772-1213  
[www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov)

## DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

810 Vermont Ave. NW Washington, DC 20420

**[www.VA.gov](http://www.VA.gov)** — Built with Veterans, for Veterans.

The extensive VA site offers one place to access all VA benefits and health care services. You can sign in with your My HealtheVet, DS Logon, or ID.me account to track your claims, refill your prescriptions, and more:

### Health Care

- Refill and track your prescriptions
- Send a secure message to your health care team
- Schedule and view your appointments
- View your lab and test results
- Apply now for VA health

### Disability

- Check your claim or appeal status
- View your payment history
- Upload evidence to support your claim
- File for a VA disability increase
- File a claim for compensation

### Education

- Check your Post-9/11 GI Bill® benefits
- View your payment history
- Change your current education benefits
- Compare GI Bill benefits by school
- Apply for education benefits

### Records

- Get Veteran ID cards
- Get your VA medical records
- Download your benefit letters
- Apply for a home loan COE
- Request your military records (DD214)

### Phone Numbers

- Veterans Crisis Line 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1
- Bereavement Counseling 1-202-461-6530
- Civilian Health and Medical Program (CHAMPVA) .....1-800-733-8387
- Caregiver Stipend 1-877-733-7927
- Debt Management Center 1-800-827-0648
- Education 1-888-442-4551
- Foreign Medical Program 1-303-331-7590
- Spina Bifda Program 1-888-820-1756
- Camp Lejeune Family Member - 1-866-372-1144
- Headstones and Markers 1-800-697-6947
- National Cemetery Administration: 1-800-535-1117
- Health Care 1-877-222-8387
- Homeless Veterans 1-877-424-3838
- Home Loans 1-888-827-3702
- Life Insurance 1-800-669-8477
- National Cemetery Scheduling 1-800-535-1117
- Pension Management Center 1-877-294-6380
- Presidential Memorial Certificate Program ..... 1-202-565-4964



- Telecommunication Device for the Deaf (TDD) .....1-800-829-4833
- VA Benefits 1-800-827-1000
- VA Combat Call Center 1-877-927-8387
- Women Veterans 1-877-222-8387

## Web Sites

- Mental Health - [www.mentalhealth.va.gov](http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov)
- Burial and Memorial Benefits - [www.cem.va.gov](http://www.cem.va.gov)
- Caregiver Support - [www.caregiver.va.gov](http://www.caregiver.va.gov)
- CHAMPVA .....  
[www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/programs/dependents/champva/index.asp](http://www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/programs/dependents/champva/index.asp)
- Community Care - [www.va.gov/communitycare/](http://www.va.gov/communitycare/)
- eBenefits - [www.ebenefits.va.gov](http://www.ebenefits.va.gov)
- Education Benefits - [www.benefits.va.gov/gibill](http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill)
- Environmental Exposures .....  
[www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures)
- Federal Recovery Coordination Program .....  
[www.va.gov/icbc/frcp](http://www.va.gov/icbc/frcp)
- Health Care Eligibility - [www.va.gov/healthbenefits](http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits)
- Homeless Veterans - [www.va.gov/homeless](http://www.va.gov/homeless)
- Home Loan Guaranty - [www.homeloans.va.gov](http://www.homeloans.va.gov)
- Life Insurance - [www.insurance.va.gov](http://www.insurance.va.gov)
- Memorial Certificate Program - [www.cem.va.gov/pmc.asp](http://www.cem.va.gov/pmc.asp)
- My HealthVet - [www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov)
- National Resource Directory - [www.nrd.gov](http://www.nrd.gov)
- Records - [www.archives.gov/st-louis/military-personnel](http://www.archives.gov/st-louis/military-personnel)
- Returning Service Members - [www.oefoif.va.gov](http://www.oefoif.va.gov)
- State Departments of Veterans Affairs .....  
[www.va.gov/statedva.htm](http://www.va.gov/statedva.htm)
- Women Veterans - [www.womenshealth.va.gov](http://www.womenshealth.va.gov)
- VA Vet Centers - [www.vetcenter.va.gov](http://www.vetcenter.va.gov)
- VA Home Page - [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)
- VA Benefit Payment Rates - [www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/rates](http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/rates)
- VA Forms - [www.va.gov/vaforms](http://www.va.gov/vaforms)
- Veteran Readiness & Employment [www.vetsuccess.gov](http://www.vetsuccess.gov)

## MILLION VETERAN PROGRAM

VA researchers are using MVP data to learn about a range of health conditions affecting Veterans.

To enroll call: 866-441-6075 | [www.research.va.gov](http://www.research.va.gov)

## DEFENSE HEALTH AGENCY REGIONAL CONTACT INFORMATION

7700 Arlington Boulevard, Suite 5101  
Falls Church, VA 22042-5101

Need to Submit a Claim? Send it to the correct claims address. <https://www.tricare.mil/ContactUs/ClaimsAddresses>



## COMMUNICATING WITH CONGRESS

Constituencies' letters, e-mails, phone calls, and meetings are powerful tools to place a spotlight on an issue that impacts you or those you represent. In many cases, a constituent expressing a viewpoint can change a legislator's mind; particularly when a legislator is wavering on an issue. AFSA's Legislative Action Center serves as a forum that allows our members to communicate with members of Congress about the issues they care most about.

To visit the action center the Action Center and communicate with your representatives today, please visit [www.hqafsa.org/takeaction.html](http://www.hqafsa.org/takeaction.html)

Need Technical Help? Find the right contact info for the help you need.

<https://www.tricare.mil/ContactUs/SecureLogin/TechnicalHelp>



## TRICARE

[www.tricare.mil](http://www.tricare.mil) is an official website of the Defense Health Agency (DHA), a component of the Military Health System. For up-to-date information and complete plans and resources, visit: [www.tricare.mil](http://www.tricare.mil)

## TRICARE Regional Offices

The TRICARE Regional Offices (TROs) manage and oversee an integrated health care delivery system in the three U.S. TRICARE regions. In most cases, you'll call your regional contractor first:

TRICARE East: Humana Military: 1-800-444-5445

Tricare West: Health Net: 1-844-866-9378

# QUICK REFERENCE

But, there are times when you will need to call your TRO:  
Approval for the Prime Travel Benefit:  
<https://www.tricare.mil/Plans/HealthPlans/Prime/TravelReimb>

Determination of eligibility requests for TRICARE Prime  
Remote: <https://www.tricare.mil/prime>

If your issue is unresolved with the regional contractor  
call, TRO-East & TRO-West at 1-844-204-9351

## TRICARE Resources

Find resources to better manage your TRICARE benefits.  
<https://www.tricare.mil/Resources>

- Plan Finder: <https://www.tricare.mil/Plans/PlanFinder>
- Claims: <https://www.tricare.mil/FormsClaims/Claims>
- Disaster Resources:  
<https://www.tricare.mil/Resources/DisasterInfo>
- Forms: <https://www.tricare.mil/FormsClaims/Forms>
- Go Paperless:  
<https://www.tricare.mil/Resources/GoPaperless>
- Military Health Records:  
<https://www.tricare.mil/Resources/MedicalRecords>
- Multimedia Center:  
<https://www.tricare.mil/Resources/MediaCenter>
- Recoupment of Overpayments:  
<https://www.tricare.mil/Resources/Recoupment>
- Rights and Responsibilities:  
<https://www.tricare.mil/Resources/RightsResponsibilities>

## Military Health System (MHS) Nurse Advice Line

Available 24/7 by phone, web chat, and video chat.  
Contact the MHS Nurse Advice Line 24/7 to:

- Get evidence-based health care advice from a registered nurse
- Find an urgent care or emergency care facility
- Receive recommendations for the most appropriate level of care
- Schedule same or next day appointments when recommended by a registered nurse and enrolled to a military hospital or clinic
- Get an online "absence excuse" or "sick slip" when medically appropriate--subject to service command requirements

United States, Guam, and Puerto Rico: Visit

<https://tricare.mil/ContactUs/CallUs/NAL> for web chat and video chat, or dial 1-800-TRICARE 874-2273 option 1.

Overseas military hospitals and clinics: Contact your local facility or visit <https://tricare.mil/ContactUs/CallUs/NAL> for web chat, video chat, or to find country-specific numbers.

*If you need immediate medical attention, call 911 or your international emergency number – or, go to an emergency room.*

You can use the MHS Nurse Advice Line unless you are enrolled in the **U.S. Family Health Plan**.

After you reach a nurse, view a secure summary of your health care advice at

<https://tricare.mil/ContactUs/CallUs/NAL>  
<https://tricare.mil/ContactUs/CallUs/NAL>



## APPLY FOR SCHOLARSHIPS NOW!

**NEW THIS YEAR: APPLY ON-LINE AT [WWW.HQAMF.ORG](http://WWW.HQAMF.ORG)**

Founded in 1983, the Airmen Memorial Foundation (AMF) is a not-for-profit charitable and educational assistance organization. Through our Mission Partner Geico and personal contributions, the organization provides funds for worthy causes such as scholarships for enlisted Airmen's children aged 23 and younger.

In addition, the Foundation manages the AFSA scholarship programs and works with its Mission Partners to provide scholarships for special award recipients in support of the AFSA Professional Educational and Development Symposium.

Funding to support AMF program services is derived principally from generous donors like you and during the annual Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) drive.

The AMF is listed under its national charity designation number 10517, permitting DoD personnel a way to support the AMF motto: **Taking Care of Our Own**.

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# SECOND *to* NONE

## AN INSIDE LOOK AT THE CREATION OF THE VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION 75 YEARS AGO

By Katie Delacenserie, Historian, Veterans Health Administration

The year 2021 marks the 75th Anniversary of the founding of the Department of Medicine and Surgery within the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), which evolved into what is now the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). Much like today, America found itself at an uncertain crossroads in 1946. The issue of health care was front and center for many, as 16 million Americans prepared to return to civilian life. United States Army Gen. Omar Bradley and the team of doctors he assembled challenged an antiquated health care system with a stunning and rapid transformation not often seen before or since in the federal government. Though, the path to what would become the largest health care system in the nation was not always clear.

### SOLDIER'S GENERAL BECOMES VETERAN'S GENERAL

Bradley, the architect of the D-Day invasion, was sworn in as administrator of the Veterans Administration, just one day after Victory over Japan Day, August 15, 1945, while the nation celebrated the end of four long years of war. President Harry S. Truman selected his fellow Missourian as the one who could modernize and streamline the practices of the largest independent agency in the federal government and prepare for the largest demobilization in history. Speaking to a group of reporters afterwards, Bradley acknowledged his hesitations as he stated, "I don't think there's any job in the country I'd sooner not have nor any job in the world I'd like to do better. For even though it is burdened with problems, it gives me the chance to do something for the men who did so much for us."<sup>1</sup>

Bradley, who was known during the war as "The Soldier's General" now found himself "The Veteran's General." Once sworn in, he became responsible for 16 million Veterans, including 2.5 million Air Force Veterans, returning from war in a rapid demobilization not seen before or since in this country. Bradley also inherited the VA after it had seen its



*Dr. Paul Magnusen, General Omar Bradley, and General Paul Hawley, M.D. (L-R) were the architects of the Department of Medicine and Surgery and oversaw changes to the way VA doctors were hired, forged partnerships with academic institutions, and changed the location and look of VA hospitals ushering in a 3rd Generation of VA medical care.*

share of scandals and mismanagement, culminating in the Bonus Army Marches of 1932 that were still fresh in the nation's mind. Determined to remake the VA and armed with the unprecedented support of the public, the President, Congress, and the media, Bradley set out with a battlefield mentality towards reforming health care for Veterans. World War II (WWII) was not the first time Americans had come home from war; and it was also not the first time America would lead the world's response to Veteran health care.

### VETERANS HEALTH CARE BEFORE WWII

VHA's original ancestor was the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers. On March 3, 1865, a month before the Civil War ended and the day before his second inauguration, President Abraham Lincoln signed a law establishing the National Soldiers and Sailors Asylum. Commonly known as "Soldiers' Homes," soldiers who fought for the Union Army, including U.S. Colored Troops, were eligible to enter the homes. The first National Home opened near Augusta, Maine, in November of 1866. The National Homes contributed many important firsts in American history: they were the first government homes and hospitals built for volunteer soldiers and not military careerists; they were the first racially integrated federal civilian institutions; and they provided the first national domiciliary, educational, occupational, and recreational programs for Veterans. Occupational and recreational therapies were not

<sup>1</sup>Bradley, O., 1983. *A General's Life*. New York: Simon and Schuster, p.446

recognized programs or professions until the early 20th century; however, their practice at Soldiers' Homes provided the seedbed for later growth and benefited thousands of Civil War Veterans. By 1929, this Federal system of Civil War Soldiers' Homes had grown to 11 institutions spanning the country.<sup>2</sup>

World War I resulted in the second-largest system of Veterans hospitals established by the government. In 1918, Congress tasked the Bureau of War Risk Insurance and Public Health Service (Treasury) with operating hospitals specifically for returning World War I Veterans, which they did for roughly three years. The first consolidation of federal Veterans programs took place when Congress created the Veterans Bureau on August 9, 1921. Public Health Service Veterans hospitals were transferred to the bureau and an ambitious hospital construction program commenced. The second consolidation of Federal Veterans programs occurred on July 21, 1930, when President Herbert Hoover signed Executive Order 5398 and elevated the Veterans Bureau to a federal administration, officially becoming the Veterans Administration. The National Soldiers' Homes became part of the Veterans Administration at that time. A majority of existing VA medical centers began as Veterans Bureau or Public Health Service Veteran hospitals.

With the proliferation of modern warfare during WWII and advances in medical science during the interwar years, the nature of the care Veterans received required dramatic changes as well. For the first time, the U.S. military saw more casualties due to combat injuries than diseases such as trench foot and typhoid. Similarly, implementation of the first battlefield evacuation systems, anesthesia, and infection control enabled more service members to return home with wounds that were not previously survivable. This resulted in a larger Veteran population that required extended medical care for their injuries sustained in battle.

## SECOND TO NONE: HAWLEY'S PLAN

In 1945, when Bradley became the VA's administrator, the G.I. Bill was over a year old. This landmark piece of legislation ensured medical care for both service and non-service-related injuries, as well as rehabilitation for Veterans. What awaited the nearly half a million returning patients needing medical care were 100 existing VA hospitals --often located in rural areas, overcrowded, and understaffed. One of Bradley's first and best decisions was to enlist Dr. Paul Hawley, the former top military medical officer of the European theater, as his top medical advisor. Hawley found the situation dire, saying "It was a mighty sick thing we took over, and there aren't going to be any miracles."<sup>3</sup> Undaunted, Hawley also knew that returning

Veterans deserved a health care system that was "second to none" and pursued that goal, alongside Bradley, to expand access to health care.

Most pressingly, Bradley and Hawley needed to recruit thousands of doctors to meet the growing demand. The War and an outdated process of hiring through the Civil Service System left the ranks of VA doctors depleted and a remaining available workforce for hire that was around 60 years old. Bradley and Hawley also knew that the best doctors were coming out of medical school, so Hawley, along with Dr. Paul Magnuson, a VA orthopedic surgeon, led the charge to create a partnership with America's medical schools. Partnering with schools would allow VA to benefit from the research and teaching talents of these institutions, provide training for Veterans pursuing medical education after the war, and gain a younger and more innovative workforce that could be hired outside the limited confines of the Civil Service System.

In addition, if Hawley and Magnuson wanted to affiliate with the best medical schools, then the location and structure of VA hospitals themselves would need to change. The sprawling Soldiers' Homes that followed the Civil War and campus-like hospitals of WWI were often located in rural areas and subject to being built as congressional projects. Hawley's blunt reaction spoke volumes. "To hell with the scenery, I want the finest doctors," he said.<sup>4</sup> Bradley and Hawley knew that in order to serve the greatest number of Veterans, new hospitals would need to be condensed into taller structures, located near larger cities and medical schools, and incorporate the latest in hospital design. A greater emphasis was placed on innovation in these "Third Generation" hospitals and large amounts of space were dedicated solely to research in what was slated to be the largest hospital construction project at the time.



*The Hines VA Hospital (pictured) in Chicago, IL was the first VA Hospital to partner with a medical school when it announced an agreement with Northwestern University just days after President Harry Truman signed the Department of Medicine and Surgery Act into law on January 3, 1946.*

<sup>2</sup>Department of Veterans Affairs, 2005. VA History in Brief. Washington, D.C.,

<sup>3</sup>Bradley, O., 1983. A General's Life. New York: Simon and Schuster, p.457

<sup>4</sup>U.S. Congress. House. Committee on Veterans Affairs. Medical Care of Veterans. 90th Cong., 1d sess., 1967. H.R. Rep. 90-4. P. 219





Pushing the restructure of VA health care was not easy. Negotiations over legislation grew tense over hiring practices in late 1945, and Bradley and Hawley threatened to resign if their desired plans for change were not met. In the end, with overwhelming support, Bradley and Hawley's ambitious plan prevailed, setting the stage for a year of rapid-fire transformation.

## 1946

Public Law 293 formally established the Department of Medicine and Surgery within VA on January 3, 1946, cementing the proposals Hawley, now the Department's first medical director, introduced. Days after, the first affiliation with a medical school was established between Northwestern University of Illinois and the Hines VA Hospital. Between 1946 and 1947, Bradley and Hawley, armed with a half a billion-dollar budget, continued to change the face of VA health care services, undertaking key initiatives, including:

- Converting 55 former military hospitals into Veteran facilities, increasing the number of hospitals from 97 to 125, and planning for an additional 70 new hospitals, constituting the largest hospital building project in American history through the addition of nearly 40,000 beds.
- Establishing the Office of Academic Affairs and creating partnerships with 63 medical schools.
- Recruiting 4,000 full-time VA physicians, nurses, technicians and other medical personnel.
- Incorporating mental health services and facilities into the design and operations of new VA hospitals for the first time, re-envisioning the concept of the modern general hospital.
- Creating a pilot program known as the "Hometown Plan" to allow Veterans to be treated by local physicians, expanding access to care where VA care was not available, providing payments for services for 6 million Veterans.
- Absorbing VA's research and development capacity, committing to spend more than \$1 million each year, beginning with a focus on improving prosthetics for Veterans with limb loss.
- Establishing the VA Voluntary Service to augment and complement VA's professional health care staff, gaining 72,000 volunteers by the end of the 1940s.
- Establishing the Veterans Canteen Service to provide low-cost goods to Veterans, their families, and caregivers.
- Treating 882,000 hospital patients.
- Expand women's medical care by hiring Dr. Margaret D. Craighill to become the VA's first Chief Medical Consultant on the medical care of women Veterans and appointing the first ten women doctors.

*As part of VA's expansion of women's medical care, VA hired Dr. Margaret D. Craighill (pictured) to become the VA's first chief medical consultant on women Veteran's medical care. She was instrumental in appointing the first 10 female doctors in late 1946.*



- Growing VA staff from 65,000 in 1945 to 200,000 by 1947.
- Dedicating research space into plans for new hospitals to study prosthetics, paraplegia, epilepsy, tuberculosis, spinal cord therapy, blindness and more.

While Bradley and Hawley made enormous strides in transforming Veteran health care, Veterans of color would endure a slower pace than that of white males to fully experience the transformation of their health care. In a mark on his legacy, Bradley chose not to integrate existing VA hospitals, and instead focused on integrating hospitals that were being newly constructed. Ultimately, VA hospitals were not fully desegregated until 1954.

## THE SPLENDID NUCLEUS: THE LEGACY OF BRADLEY AND HAWLEY 75 YEARS LATER

General Omar Bradley left VA in late 1947 to return as Chief of Staff of the Army and Dr. Hawley left shortly thereafter. What they achieved in just two years was the miracle they once thought unachievable. One magazine wrote that, "In two years General Omar N. Bradley has transformed the medical service of the Veterans Administration from a national scandal to a model establishment."<sup>5</sup> In creating the foundation for the modern VHA of today, the spirits of Bradley and Hawley still live on 75 years later, as countless doctors, nurses, volunteers, students, and public servants strive to make their own miracles every day to ensure Veterans health care remains second to none in this nation. Over the years, these collaborations have resulted in groundbreaking innovations in medicine, nursing, and research that have touched Veterans. Hawley's comments upon President Truman signing the legislation creating the Department of Medicine and Surgery still inspire and challenge VA today: "With the signature of the Medical Department Act, our objective is clear—a medical service for the Veteran that is second to none in the world. Around the splendid nucleus of excellent men and women in the VA medical service, we shall build an outstanding service."<sup>6</sup> ◆

<sup>5</sup>Maddox and Miller. Veterans Medicine: Second to None. Readers Digest, September 1947

<sup>6</sup>U.S. Congress. House. Committee on Veterans Affairs. Medical Care of Veterans. 90th Cong., 1d sess., 1967. H.R. Rep. 90-4. P. 213

***As new memorials are being dedicated for the woman known as “the Moses of her people,” historians find that Harriet Tubman indeed does have ties to today’s enlisted U.S. Military men and women.***

She certainly was not treated like an officer. How could she be? The mid-19th century wasn't a great time to be an African-American in the United States. Being a woman also meant she had another “strike” against her. Despite being born a slave, Harriet Tubman showed from very early on in life that a little thing like the color of her skin would not hold her back. Additionally, she wasn't going to let it hold others back either. Her leadership, which parallels so many NCOs (non-commissioned officers) in today's Air Force, was going to help others persevere and —eventually—thrive.

## TUBMAN, SPIES AND AIR FORCE TIES

By Sean M. Miskimins

Tubman was born and raised on Maryland's eastern shore, thus she knew the Del-Mar-Va (the coastal areas of Delaware, Maryland, Virginia) region well, and chose to use this area as one of her pipelines for the Underground Railroad. Many of her runaway “cargo” trekked northward past where today Dover AFB sits in Delaware. The term Underground Railroad is the name given to the network of people, houses and towns that would help escaped slaves make their way out of the Antebellum, slave holding South of the 1840s and 1850's. “Conductors,” or the leaders, on these clandestine night-time journeys were fearless leaders—people like Harriet Tubman, whom although an African-American and a woman, is the best known of all the Conductors on the Underground Railroad.

Harriet became a Conductor first out of necessity. She escaped north to Philadelphia as a 29-year-old in 1849. Word though was leaking to her that various family members, still in bondage near Cambridge, Maryland, were possibly going to be sold, thus she had to find a way to get her loved ones out of slavery and into safety. This would be no easy task as U.S. laws were starting to crack down on the growing numbers of escaping slaves headed to the North.

Slaves were property, and simply put, valuable property. No one was going to let their valuables be taken away easily, thus thanks mainly to the Southerners in Congress, the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 was passed. This law basically stated that all Americans—even those Northerners whom didn't believe in Slavery—were supposed to help Southerners recapture their “lost” (more accurately “fleeing”) property. Proving someone



*Harriet Tubman, circa 1865, around the age of 45. This is the most famous photo of the Civil War scout and spy. Since she was paid by the Union Army during the war, Tubman was in fact a military veteran—a fact often forgotten by most Americans. She even took part on a couple of military raids not far from where Shaw AFB, SC sits today. Library of Congress photo*

was guilty of “not helping” or even aiding these runaway slaves was difficult, but should the courts agree people faced a fine of up to \$1,000 if charged. This was quite a hefty fine for 1850.

Harsh new laws like this, as well as rewards being offered for re-captured slaves that were returned south, meant stopping in Philadelphia wasn't “far enough north,” so Harriet had to come up with a different plan. She decided they needed to go further north—all the way to Canada. By this time, Canada had banned slavery thus it was a desirable target for Tubman and her compatriots. It is said she made around a dozen trips north as a Conductor, saving around 75 slaves in all — including several of her relatives. Like a Sergeant in the Air Force who leads and trains others then is promoted and “moves on,” Harriet Tubman did this as well. She trained other Conductors who could carry on her work as she had new tasks to attend to with war clouds looming.

By 1859 an ardent Abolitionist (one who wants slavery abolished) named John Brown was organizing a raid that he hoped would spark a massive slave uprising/revolt in the U.S. being someone now “known” in the Abolitionist community, Tubman was put in contact with Brown and she

helped him recruit a few Black men to take part in his 1859 raid on the weapon's arsenal at Harper's Ferry, Virginia (today West Virginia). The raid was squashed by Federal troops, and Brown and his men (those who were not killed in the raid) were executed but the gauntlet had been thrown down. Northerners and Abolitionists were not going to sit idly by and continue to watch an institution (slavery) that promoted human bondage exist in the United States. In 1861, following the November 1860 election of Abolitionist Abraham Lincoln as President, the Civil War began.

The Civil War was a huge “step” for African-Americans in the U.S. Military as it was the first war that had formal units of Black soldiers (fighting for the North of course). African-American women too wanted to do their part and due to the chivalrous attitudes of the times, women made the best spies during America's bloodiest war. They were likely not to be searched as thoroughly as a suspected male spy would, thus they were employed by both Union and Confederate forces from 1861-1865. Being an “informal NCO” with huge skills and leadership abilities, it wasn't long until the Union sought out Harriet Tubman.

By the spring of 1862, Union General David Hunter, whom would one day serve on the Military court for the trial of the Abraham Lincoln assassination conspirators, had Tubman serving as a spy for he and his Union forces in Beaufort, South Carolina—not very far from where today Shaw AFB sits. By the following spring, Tubman was not only listed as a Union spy but also “scouts organizer.”

No doubt after only a year, the Union army wanted to put her tremendous planning and leadership abilities she had shown on the Underground Railroad to good use. As an organizer, she sought out contacts within the South Carolina slave communities that she felt could be trusted as well as be of use to the Union. These select few would also become contacts for the Union in South Carolina and the neighboring states.

She was more than just a spy and organizer though! Her skill set was quite diverse. She knew how to Nurse as well as cook and clean. At one time or another she did all these things for Union troops during her wartime service. It is very likely she even participated in military action--the June 1863 Combahee River raid in South Carolina.

Some historians state she was in contact that summer with the famed 54th Massachusetts Infantry—the most famous unit of all the Black Union units in the war.

The prevalent theme of the 1860's was to not acknowledged or even look past the exploits of Blacks in America. Military records from the Civil War were no different. It is difficult to confirm all reports of what Harriet Tubman accomplished during the war. Given her brains and leadership it is likely most of what is reported about her is true despite the lack of paper evidence. While there are many reports that detail the knowledge gained through the work of Caucasian female spies, there is little recorded on the work of Black spies, such as Harriet Tubman. None the less, the few accounts that do remain show excellent work. Major General James Negley wrote in an 1863 report that, “My negro girl scout has seen heaps of Rebels in the gap near Lee's



*This painting titled, The Underground Railroad by Charles T. Weber, shows fleeing slaves, right, that appear to be bedding down for the night at the home of White Abolitionists, left. Thank goodness for the aid and coordination of Underground Railroad “conductors,” who much like today's enlisted Air Force, did much of the “behind the scenes” planning to make these escape missions North a success.*

Mill (Tennessee). (She reports) there is a huge Rebel army there!”

No doubt General Negley's scout was most likely a young lady who chose this job because she was inspired by the likes of Harriet Tubman. Isn't that what today's enlisted leaders in the Air Force do—they inspire others by their own actions. American patriot, war veteran and “un-official NCO” Harriet Tubman died in New York at the age of 93 in 1913. Lest we never forget. ♦

#### SOURCES:

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