

SMA: Army will take better care of Soldiers, standards remain high

By Joe Lacdan, Army News Service 31 October 2022



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Sgt. Maj. of the Army Michael A. Grinston speaks to Soldiers during an AUSA's Annual Meeting and Exposition forum on Oct. 11, 2022. Grinston outlined several Army efforts to improve quality of life for Soldiers. (Sgt. 1st Class Brent Powell)

WASHINGTON — Upgrading living quarters, extending permanent change of station accommodations and enhancing services for military families will be among the quality-of-life improvements the Army will make for its Soldiers, the service's top enlisted leader said.

As part of the Defense Department's ["Taking Care of Our People" initiative](#), Soldiers who PCS to areas with housing shortages could have up to 60 days of temporary lodging exception allowances if they meet qualifications. Additionally, the dislocation allowance for Soldiers in the pay grades of E-1 through E-6 has increased.

Sgt. Maj. of the Army Michael A. Grinston, speaking before an Association of the U.S. Army Annual Meeting and Exposition panel on Oct. 12, added that all Army housing now has a Tenant Bill of Rights to protect residents.

The measures will help alleviate some of the financial burden of Soldiers

struggling to find housing in a competitive market.

“If you cannot find a house you do not need to pay out of pocket for the hotel room that you’re staying in,” he said. “You need to know that.”

Grinston said nearly 100% of the Army’s childcare development centers have not operated at full capacity due to being understaffed, leading to fewer enrollment slots for children. To attract more employees, the branch will offer a 50% discount to childcare workers for their first child enrolled in a CDC. The service announced it will increase CDC staffing by 90%.

The Army will also add new CDCs, with centers scheduled for Fort Bragg, North Carolina; Fort Carson, Colorado; and Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington. Grinston said the service has also tested a 24-hour child care service pilot program at Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

The Army remains committed to plans that will invest \$10 billion to update barracks in all three service components through fiscal year 2030, Grinston said. The branch will dedicate another \$3.1 billion in privatized family housing.

Higher fitness standards

Grinston stated the Army is considering a policy for Soldiers who score 540 or above on the [Army Combat Fitness Test](#) to be exempt from the mandatory height and weight screening.

Grinston further explained that decreasing body fat will lead to Soldier readiness. Using survey results from 1,801 men and 889 women, an Army study found Soldiers who went over the required body fat measurement had a 50% higher injury rate.

Research also showed a clear correlation between lean muscle mass and ACFT scores. Grinston said that there will be no change to the Army’s height and weight tables and that they correlate correctly with different demographics of Soldiers.

“[The tables] are accurate,” he said. “There should be no angst if you get taped.”

Soldiers enrolled in the Basic Leader Course now have the option of taking a Tactical Strength and Conditioning Facilitator Certification, a credentialed fitness program designed to decrease injuries, increase readiness and

optimize overall performance and Soldier holistic health.

Soldiers must have an [Army IgniteED](#) account and must register with the National Strength and Conditioning Association.

Back to basics

In order to help Soldiers prepare for the shift to large-scale combat, the Army will bring back land navigation skills to the Basic Leader Course. Soldiers will once again learn to use maps and coordinate with compasses.

“That skill is extremely important as we look toward large-scale combat,” Grinston said. “You need to know how to navigate from one point to the next without a GPS.”

In addition to land navigation, Army leaders have also added a module known as the Leadership Stakes, an eight-step training model that helps junior Soldiers demonstrate proficiency in the warrior tasks and battle drills. Leadership Stakes, a cross section of the Expert Infantryman Badge, teaches adaptability and agility while encouraging Soldier lethality.

While the Army continues to update its preparation on the battlefield, the service will continue optimizing Soldier nutrition and access to healthier foods.

The Army has added 16 food trucks since 2017, with more nutritious options for Soldiers stationed in locations with limited menus, and has plans to add 27 more. Other upgrades in 2022 include updated software that allows Soldiers to use debit and credit cards to pay for meals at post dining facilities. Grinston also discussed a proposed concept for Soldiers to use their meal cards at on-post restaurants.

Building needed trust

Last month, the Defense Department reported that sexual assaults in the Army increased from fiscal year 2020 to 2021.

“As an Army, that’s not acceptable,” Grinston said. “We have to do better.”

To help eradicate sexual assaults and sexual harassment from its ranks, Grinston said the Army will focus on building trust among its Soldiers, noncommissioned officers and their chains of command.

“We want to be approachable,” Grinston said. “We should never lose the trust of our Soldiers.”

Grinston also encourages Soldiers to download and use the MySquad mobile app, which features a palette of tools that Soldiers can use to update their status, provide leaders with Soldier data and allow troops to schedule and track appointments. The app enables leaders to provide added predictability for Soldiers.

Soldiers can create different types of counseling from their phone, then sign and export their counselings to share with others.

MySquad has features that help commanders track the proficiency and deployability of their Soldiers while also being capable of updating Soldier data.

The app’s development team recently added a readiness feature that allows Soldiers to receive 30, 60 and 90-day notifications of upcoming tasks and training.

“The MySquad app only works if you use it,” Grinston said. “We have changed the features on this app. How do we enable the squad leader to enable and track readiness? You can upload it on your phone. But I need your help.”

The app does not require a common access card-login and can be downloaded on personal devices. For more information on the app, visit the [MySquad website](#).