



THE DENTAL CORPS BULLETIN

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Army Dentistry in the Pacific: Advancing Readiness, Partnerships, and Global Health Engagement

Written by COL Paul Colthirst, Assistant Chief of Staff, Dental Integration, Medical Readiness Command, Pacific

Army Dentistry in the Pacific continues to play a vital role in enhancing readiness, fostering partnerships, and supporting Global Health Engagement (GHE) initiatives. Following the inactivation of the Dental Health Command-Pacific on 30 June, 2025, command and control of dental assets transitioned to installation Medical Treatment Facilities (MTFs). Despite this organizational change, the mission of advancing GHE partnerships endures through the newly established Dental Integration Cell within the Medical Readiness Command, Pacific (MRC, P). Through impactful Global Health missions and strategic planning, Army Dentistry continues to support U.S. national security objectives and contribute to the Army Medicine Transformation Initiative.

Global Health Engagement: A Strategic Imperative

GHE is central to Army Dentistry's mission in the Pacific. By providing care to underserved populations, dental teams contribute to force health protection, medical stability operations, and partnership building. These efforts are directly linked to U.S. national security objectives, fostering trust, enhancing interoperability, and strengthening relationships with partner nations.

The integration of dental expertise into GHE mission planning has proven essential although inclusion was historically underutilized. Dental planners bring specialized knowledge in prevention, detection, and response to oral health challenges, ensuring missions are both effective and sustainable. By actively participating in planning phases, Army Dentistry ensures its capabilities are fully utilized, contributing to the success of GHE missions and advancing strategic objectives. By integrating dental expertise into operational planning and training, Army Dentistry ensures its teams are fully capable of supporting both combat and humanitarian missions, enhancing readiness across the force.

A significant byproduct of GHE missions is the opportunity to effectively employ Individual Critical Task Lists (ICTLs) and Soldier tasks, which significantly enhance readiness by ensuring Soldiers are prepared to support operational missions effectively. These missions simulate deployment scenarios, allowing dental teams to refine their expeditionary capabilities, such as setting up field dental clinics, managing limited resources, and adapting to austere environments. Acquiring ICTLs ensures providers meet standardized benchmarks for essential tasks, including emergency dental care and preventive dentistry, directly contributing to force health protection and overall Soldier readiness. Additionally, GHE missions foster leadership development by challenging dental personnel to solve problems, adapt to diverse cultural contexts, and operate collaboratively in dynamic settings. The meaningful impact of these missions improves morale and job satisfaction, strengthening retention within the Army Dentistry.



GHE Dental Team in Quang Tri, Viet Nam with MG Eugene Cox, CG 18th TMC.



Current Impact: Delivering Results Across the Pacific

In fiscal year 2024 (FY24), Army Dentistry demonstrated its ability to respond effectively to regional needs, executing seven missions across Samoa, the Marshall Islands, Suriname, the Solomon Islands, Palau, and American Samoa, with a site visit to Kwajalein Atoll. These missions required collaboration with partners such as the 9th Mission Support Command (MSC), 18th Theater Medical Command (TMC), and 730th South Dakota National Guard (SDNG). A total of 31 Soldiers (17 officers and 14 enlisted personnel) deployed to provide care, delivering over 3,000 clinical procedures to 1,261 civilians and COMPO 3 Soldiers in remote and austere environments.

With an estimated funding of \$253,000 for travel and supplies, Army Dentistry maximized resources while delivering exceptional care. Collaboration with the 673rd Dental Company Area Support (DCAS) further highlighted the importance of teamwork and field operational capabilities. These efforts not only improved health outcomes but also strengthened relationships with partner nations, contributing to regional stability and security. Fiscal year 2025 (FY25) marked a significant shift in Army Dentistry's approach to GHE missions. For the first time, dental teams actively participated in the Pre-Deployment Site Survey (PDSS) and planning phases, ensuring dental capabilities were integrated into mission planning from the outset. This proactive approach allowed for better coordination, resource allocation, and mission effectiveness.

In FY25, Army Dentistry supported five missions in Guam, the Philippines, Vietnam, Samoa, and American Samoa. Collaborating with partners such as Pacific Fleet (PACFLT), United States Army Pacific (USARPAC), the 9th MSC, and the 18th TMC, 24 Soldiers (13 officers and 11 enlisted personnel) deployed to provide care. These missions were executed with precision and professionalism, supported by an estimated funding of \$178,000 for travel and supplies. Additionally, collaboration with the 618th DCAS and the Navy underscored the importance of joint operations in achieving shared goals.

This shift toward strategic planning has enhanced Army Dentistry's ability to address oral health challenges, support readiness, and strengthen partnerships. By integrating dental expertise into the planning process, Army Dentistry ensures its capabilities align with broader operational goals, contributing to the success of GHE missions.

Looking Ahead: FY26 and Beyond

As Army Dentistry looks to fiscal year 2026 (FY26), the focus is on creating new opportunities and strengthening existing partnerships. With six tentative missions planned across the Indo-Pacific region (or Oceania), the scope of operations is set to grow significantly.

These missions will involve collaboration with a diverse array of partners, including USARPAC, PACFLT, 5th Security Force Assistance Brigade (SFAB), 18th TMC, 9th MSC, Public Health Command-Pacific (PHC-P), and multiple state partners. An estimated 45 Soldiers are expected to deploy, reflecting the increasing demand for Army Dentistry's expertise in the region.

As the Indo-Pacific continues to evolve as a "Region of Consequence," Army Dentistry remains committed to its mission, leveraging its expertise to address oral health challenges, support global health engagement, and advance U.S. national security objectives. With the support of Medical Readiness Command-Pacific and the dedication of its providers and Soldiers, Army Dentistry is poised to continue making a difference in the Indo-Pacific and beyond.

Conclusion

Army Dentistry in the Indo-Pacific exemplifies professionalism, excellence, and service. Through impactful missions, strategic planning, and collaboration with key partners, dental teams have enhanced readiness, strengthened partnerships, and supported the Army Medicine Transformation Initiative.

By addressing oral health challenges, fostering trust with partner nations, and contributing to regional stability, Army Dentistry continues to play a vital role in advancing U.S. strategic objectives. With the unwavering support of Medical Readiness Command-Pacific and the dedication of its Soldiers, Army Dentistry is well-positioned to meet the challenges of the future and sustain its impact across the Pacific.



Innovative Readiness Training in American Samoa

Written by: MAJ David Flanders, Chief of Pediatric Dentistry, Carius Dental Clinic

“Incredibly exhausting, difficult, and pushing me to my limits... when can I go again?”

Life is richest when we embrace challenges. Through them, we learn about ourselves and others, experience transformative growth, and enjoy life to its fullest. The Innovative Readiness Training (IRT) mission to American Samoa was such a challenge: a two-week multi-service operation designed to deliver vital healthcare to a remote island community while providing deployment-like training for active-duty and reserve units.

I worked alongside seven general dentists and a dental hygienist for twelve consecutive clinic days. We transformed a large community gymnasium into our treatment facility, sharing the space with medical, optometry, pharmacy, and behavioral health providers. The open layout brought unique difficulties: limited privacy, constant noise, hot and humid conditions, and loudspeaker-like reverberations if a child cried. Without access to nitrous oxide and with no private treatment rooms, we relied heavily on non-pharmacological behavior guidance techniques, which limited care for some patients. Thankfully, we were well equipped with supplies, except for some pediatric-specific items. Fortunately, I was informed of this in advance and brought along pediatric forceps, stainless steel crowns, kids' toothbrushes and toothpaste, fluoride varnish, and SDF. Through every hardship of the mission, I was truly amazed at the dedication, productivity, and resolve our dental team exemplified every day.



Tri-Service Dental Team

The island was beautiful and the people of American Samoa were welcoming, generous, and deeply appreciative of our efforts. I spoke briefly with the Governor during his site visit, and he asked what the most common dental issue we observed was. My answer: the lack of oral health education for children and parents. Even if every tooth on the island was treated, without changes in daily habits we would return to similar levels of widespread oral disease. Education and prevention, not just intervention, are necessary to produce lasting change; otherwise, we are simply chasing our tails.

This mission reinforced the significance of pursuing challenges in our personal and professional lives. It underscored the importance of triage, treatment prioritization, efficiency, and resource management in austere settings, strengthening my skills in each area. It also allowed me to meet wonderful locals, try new cuisine, and develop professional relationships with our sister services.

In closing, I leave you with this: seek out your next challenge, embrace it fully, and share the lessons you learn along the way.



MAJ Flanders providing treatment for a pediatric patient



AOC Spotlight– 63K Pediatric Dentistry

Written by: COL Leslie Oakes, Consultant to TSG, Pediatric Dentistry

Army Pediatric Dentists fulfill two primary missions in the Army Dental Corps: 1) Provide dental care to pediatric and special health care needs patients located OCONUS and in remote locations and 2) Serve as faculty at AEGD 2 year Comprehensive Dentistry programs. The Army Dental Corps is made up of fifteen Active Duty pediatric dentists that fulfill these missions, in addition to serving in key broadening and leadership assignments. 2025 was a year of success, milestones, and accomplishments for the 63K community.



LTHET: LTC Stephanie Helmus and MAJ David Liberman successfully graduated from residency training at Texas A & M University College of Dentistry. (Pictured on the top right)

Board Certification: MAJ Matthew Keckeisen and MAJ David Flanders successfully achieved board certification. MAJ Keckeisen scored 100% on the oral boards!

Awards: LTC Sheteka Ross-Goodlett earned the Dental Corps Chief Awards of Excellence for Senior Dental Education (Pictured on the bottom right)



Promotions: LTC Debra Church promoted to O5, MAJ Nicole Collins and MAJ Jae Shin (2nd year resident) selected for O5

Leadership: COL Min Kim took Command at JBSA DENTAC

Service: MAJ Flanders completed a Global Health mission to the Pacific this Summer

PME: COL Kim graduated SSC; LTC Loc Dang and LTC Sheteka Ross-Goodlett completed ILE



As we enter the new year, the pediatric dental community is preparing for their biggest month of the year - Children's Dental Health Month (CDHM)! Every February since 1941, dentists nationwide and now abroad at armed forces bases have taken the opportunity to observe this month by performing free dental screenings, oral hygiene demonstrations, health fairs, poster contests and dental office tours to name a few ideas. Please contact any of your friendly 63K Pediatric Dentists if you would like help in starting a CDHM activity for your community!



PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION

Discuss these opportunities with your Command and Professional Development Officer. For convenience, all websites are hyperlinked to the section title.

Issues accessing the hyperlinks through Adobe Acrobat?

Troubleshooting steps:

1. Click to enable all features in Adobe
2. Right click the hyperlink
3. Select "copy link location"
4. Open preferred web browser
5. Paste the copied link in the web address bar

Captain Career Course (CCC)

Phase 1 is no longer required. Submit signed DA3838 to HRC, DC PDO: COL Eric Setter, eric.j.setter.mil@army.mil

MedXellence Course

USU's MedXellence Course provides current and aspiring Military Health System (MHS) leaders 40 hours of continuing education credits and an unparalleled opportunity to expand their leadership and management skill sets, through its robust curriculum consisting of both lecture and hands-on small group exercises that are based on real-world MHS scenarios

Click for the dates, POCs and registration links.

Intermediate Level Education (ILE)

The primary method of completion is distance learning.

Submit signed DA3838 to COL Eric Setter, eric.j.setter.mil@army.mil.

Expert Field Medical Badge (EFMB)

Testing is conducted annually at multiple sites across the Army.

Joint Medical Executive Skills Program

Click for information on the following courses: Healthcare Management Course, JMESI Intermediate Executive Skills, Capstone Course for Military Health System Leaders.

Defense Strategy Course

Army Ignited

Army Credentialing Assistance



Check out the New and Improved Dental Corps SharePoint

New additions include LPD recordings and resources, Dental Corps MILPER updates, Dental Bulletins, operational dentistry training resources, and Policy updates. The SharePoint is continuously being updated with new content to make it a valuable resource that meets your needs.

All health.mil users must join Army 365 DoD Guests to access the Dental Corps SharePoint. Joining can be completed by following this [link](#)

Upcoming Continuing Education Conferences:

24-27FEB2026: Tri-Service Dental Symposium
04-06MAR2026: Senior Leader Strategic Summit
16-19MAR2026: Endo-Perio-Prosth Short Course
31MAR-3APR: Restorative Short Course
8-10APR2026: Operational Dentistry Symposium
18-21MAY2026: Oral Surgery Short Course



Scan QR To RSVP to Operational Dentistry Symposium

Upcoming Leader Professional Development:

19FEB2026: Using the Vantage Dental Readiness Dashboard to Improve Readiness Tracking and Clinic Work flows with Dr. Martin and Mr. Delfs
23APR2026: "From Dental Chair to Strategic Leader" with Col Schwamburger
28MAY2026: Long Term Health Education & Training (LTHET) Discussion with COL Stark

Dental Corps in the News:

Five-day multiservice and multinational dental training held at the [67th Garmisch International Dental Training](#)
CPT (P) Reed McKinney reflects on his recent [Forensic Mission](#)
Three Dental Corps Officers selected as AGD Impact's ["10 Dentists to Watch"](#) (AGD membership required)
Fort Bragg DENTAC provides [Service with a Smile—Literally](#)

Connect with a GDE Ambassador to learn more about a dental specialty (63B-P):

Contact MAJ Eric Hu (eric.c.hu.mil@health.mil) of the GDE Ambassadors Program

General Questions to the Army Dental Corps:

usarmy.jbsa.medical-coe.mbx.dental-corps@army.mil