

**Association of Army Dentistry
(AAD)**



Association of Army Dentistry Spring 2026

Greetings and happy spring to AAD members and friends of Army Dentistry! Happy 115th birthday to the Army Dental Corps. We have a proud legacy, and it is always inspiring to see how our corps continues to adapt and innovate.

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The mission of the AAD is to honor the past, support the present and inspire the future. This forms the foundation for our Strategic Pillars. During the last few months, the Board of Directors has realigned those pillars and introduced a new one – Advocacy. Led by COL (Ret) Joe Wineman, the aim is to ensure Army Dentistry remains relevant and actively engaged within Army Medicine.



In January, I had the pleasure of promoting COL Chris Chang, an oral and maxillofacial surgeon at Fort Carson. Having worked with him years ago at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, it is rewarding to see how his career has progressed. It is a genuine honor to recognize the achievements of so many officers and to have played even a small role in their leadership development.

Recently, COL (Ret) George Hucal and I mentored students who are interested in military medicine. We shared our experiences and advocated for our corps, while supporting the next generation. We hope our lengthy conversations help them select Army Dentistry! Engagements like these help advance our strategic pillars – recruiting, coaching, advocating and honoring our history. I encourage you to look for similar opportunities to engage and share your experiences.

Welcome to our 30th Dental Corps Chief, COL Paul M. Colthirst. We look forward to working with him in support of his vision.

Participating in the AAD is a meaningful way to stay connected and contribute to the growth of our organization. We welcome your membership and encourage you to share your stories.

Karen M. Keith, COL (Ret)
AAD President and Chairman of the Board

Active Component News

The officers and members of the Association of Army Dentistry Congratulate the new Chief of the U.S. Army Dental Corps, COL Paul M. Colthirst!



Colonel Paul M. Colthirst
30th Chief, U.S. Army Dental Corps

COL Colthirst is the 30th Chief of the U.S. Army Dental Corps and serves as the Assistant Chief of Staff for Dental Integration at Medical Readiness Command, Pacific. He received his Doctor of Dental Surgery degree from Meharry Medical College in 2002, completed a Dental Public Health residency, and earned a Master of Science in Dental Public Health from the University of Iowa. He is board-certified in the specialty and holds a Master of Strategic Studies from the Army War College. From 2021 to 2026, he served as the Consultant to the Army Surgeon General for Dental Public Health.

COL Colthirst's command assignments include commander, Dental Health Command Pacific; commander, Fort Hood DENTAC; and commander, Fort Polk Dental Health Activity. Key prior assignments include: brigade dental surgeon, 172nd STRYKER Brigade Combat Team, Fort Wainwright, Alaska; public health staff officer, DENCOP HQ; chief of oral epidemiology, Dental and Trauma Research Detachment (DTRD); deputy director, TriService Center for Oral Health Studies; dental staff officer, Office of The Surgeon General (OTSG); and small group leader for the AMEDD Advanced Officer Course.

He has authored numerous peer-reviewed research papers and military technical reports on disease non-battle injuries and military dentistry and co-authored a chapter in *Military Medicine*. He has lectured on operational dentistry at national and international forums. His military education includes the Intermediate Level Education Course, Army Medical Department Executive Skills Course, Defense Strategy Course, Interagency Institute for Healthcare Executives, Global Health Strategies and Security course, and the Medical Strategic Leadership Program.

COL Colthirst holds the Surgeon General's "A" proficiency designator and is a member of the Order of Military Medical Merit. He is an Army RAND Arroyo Research Fellow and a fellow of the Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies. He has earned the Army Staff Badge and the Advanced Indo-Pacific Experience Personnel Skill Identifier.

Message from the Army Dental Corps Chief

The T-Junction: Army Dental Corps at a Decisive Moment, Forging a New Path in Army Medicine Transformation

To the esteemed members of the Association of Army Dentistry, fellow teammates and colleagues. Over the last few weeks, I have received numerous emails, phone calls and text messages with congratulatory remarks on being appointed as the 30th chief of the U.S. Army Dental Corps. My consistent message to all is one of profound humility and honor for the opportunity to continue serving in this incredible community. It is important to note that my today would not have been possible if my yesterday was not influenced and forged by so many. I stand on the shoulders of giants and am deeply grateful for the leadership and vision of the former corps chiefs and senior dental corps leaders, whose dedication has shaped the very foundation of our corps.

I must offer a special note of gratitude to COL Tanner. Thank you for being a mentor, a colleague and a friend. I can attest, when the "Dream Team," as you called it, was assembled and you had the team running split operations at the Office of The Surgeon General to maintain dental's awareness and equities, I saw your passion for the corps firsthand. Your dedication to making it better has left a legacy. Truly, a big thank you for your service, and I can proudly say ... Mission Accomplished.

Today, we find ourselves at a strategic junction, however, with immense pride in a distinguished legacy, the U.S. Army Dental Corps stands at a pivotal moment, ready to honor its history by boldly writing its next chapter. As the very landscape of conflict shifts and the Army transforms, the corps faces not merely a choice, but a strategic imperative. We cannot stay on our current trajectory. We must evolve. We are at a "T-junction," a decisive point where the previous path has concluded, compelling a definitive turn towards a future integrated with the Army Medicine Transformation Initiative (AMTI).

Defining the Strategic Crossroads

Our current transformation is not a gentle divergence towards the proverbial "fork in the road," which suggests a simple turning from a continuing journey. Rather, it is a precise T-junction. An abrupt, externally imposed decision point where the current trajectory is no longer viable. This framework demands a deliberate pause to assess the new landscape and choose a new direction. It represents understanding the past but acknowledging the need to have a definitive break from past procedures, while deliberately advancing and seeking opportunities to forge a new path grounded in clarity, relevance and collective purpose. The Army's transformation is the up-trace force driving the corps to this T junction, and how we navigate this turn will determine our future relevance and effectiveness.

Aligning with the Army Medicine Transformation Initiative (AMTI)

To secure its operational relevance, the path for Army Dentistry must be deliberately nested within the four priorities of the Army Medicine Transformation Initiative (AMTI): creating **combat-ready medical forces**, ensuring we **sustain health**, fostering a **culture of continuous transformation**, and **strengthening our professions**. As the AMTI aligns all of

Army Medicine with the Army's broader transformation goals, the Dental Corps must fundamentally re-envision its role and value proposition to remain essential.

This requires moving beyond historical roles. For example, while dental officers are proven triage officers in MASCAL situations, our significant expertise in soft tissue management represents a critical, underutilized and underleveraged combat casualty care skill. To truly align with the AMTI, our Individual Clinical Tasks must be updated to reflect and emphasize these advanced capabilities, solidifying our role as a more versatile and indispensable part of a combat-ready medical force.

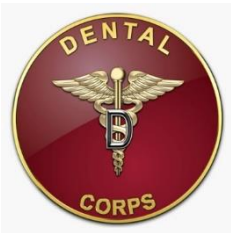
A New Vision: From Individual Proficiency to a "System of Systems"

The tenet of military dentistry, i.e., to provide world-class care to maintain the trust of the American soldier remains unchanged. However, the measure of success is shifting. While clinical skill remains paramount, the future demands an evolution into a true "system of systems," where our expertise and resources are developed and pooled to create a more efficient and operational Dental Corps. Success will be measured not only by individual proficiency in the clinic, but by the collective impact on dental readiness, officer development, strategic billeting and operational relevance. The overarching goal is to ensure that we are equal partners and participants in ensuring the Army remains a lethal and effective force in any environment.

The Dental Corps transformation is an opportunity to demonstrate the corps' mettle, strength and resiliency. It requires a collective effort from every team member:

- Further development of our 68E personnel
- Expansion of opportunities of our NCOs who mentor junior soldiers and officers
- Officer development through timely ICTs, PMEs, LPD, and who must become agile and forward-thinking
- Support of our civilian staff who provide invaluable continuity and expertise

To formalize this new direction, the Dental Corps leadership will distribute its 2026 Dental Corps Strategic Plan. This plan, nested within the AMTI, will articulate the way ahead. By understanding the strategic environment and embracing this T-junction as a moment of opportunity, the Dental Corps is poised to collectively choose its new path, ensuring its enduring relevance and its critical role in Combat Ready Care.



From the Corps Chief's Office

Submitted by COL Scott Rankin, Corps Specific Branch Proponent Officer (CSBPO)

Iron Majors Week provided a valuable opportunity to engage in strategic discussions and thought-provoking briefs that challenged our Dental Corps officers to think critically about leadership, readiness and the future of Army Medicine. The 2026 Dental Corps' Iron Majors consisted of MAJ Jedidiah Allen, MAJ Frederick Dawson, MAJ Brandi Gervais, MAJ Jemi Jacob, and MAJ Kellie O'Keefe. Throughout the week,

there were a series of lectures that reinforced the importance of deliberate professional development, while fostering collaboration and shared perspective among peers. The staff ride to Goliad added a powerful historical dimension, allowing our Iron Majors to reflect on the enduring lessons of leadership, sacrifice and decision-making under pressure.

Equally impactful were the personal conversations and mentorship moments throughout the week, including the opportunity to engage directly with the new Chief, U.S. Army Dental Corps, COL Paul Colthirst. His insights on leadership, vision for the corps and emphasis on developing leaders at every level left a lasting impression. Iron Majors Week not only strengthened our officers' professional foundation, but also renewed their commitment to lead with purpose, serve with excellence and invest in those they are entrusted to develop.



COL Scott Rankin, CSBPO, (4th from left) joins Iron Majors (left to right) MAJ Jeddiah Allen, MAJ Jemi Jacob, MAJ Kellie O'Keefe, MAJ Frederick Dawson and MAJ Brandi Gervais.

Reserve Component News

By COL Anna Lichelle Aldana

MAJ Jemi Jacob, a US Army Reserve (USAR) dentist, was one of five dentists who participated in the Army Medicine Medical Center of Excellence annual Iron Majors Week (IMW) March 16–20, 2026, at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston, Texas. The program brought together leaders from across all corps to discuss key challenges in the Military Health System, with a focus on readiness, transformation and global health partnerships. During the Dental Corps Chief Panel, COL Paul M. Colthirst underscored the need to identify systemic drivers of retention. Additionally, a staff ride to Goliad campaign site reinforced these themes through a practical look at leadership and military medicine.

MAJ Jacob earned her Doctor of Dental Medicine degree with honors from the University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine and completed a two-year General Practice Residency at Montefiore Medical Center, serving as chief resident. She was commissioned into the Army Reserve Dental Corps in 2018 and has since held key roles with the 7238th MSU. Her recent assignments include representing the U.S. at the 2023 NATO Junior Medical Reserve Officer Workshop in Helsinki and serving as dental section OIC for the Mobilization Force Generation



USAR Soldiers at IMW (left to right): MAJ Christopher Lankford (MSC, 807th TMC), MAJ Jacob (DC), and MAJ Gang Lim (NC, AR-MEDCOM).

Installation (MFGI) SRP at Fort Bliss. She currently serves as the dental OIC for the MFGI SRP TMC and is slated to become the next MFGI SRP executive officer in the next rotation.

MAJ Deepa Mehta is this year's recipient of the Dental Corps Chief's Reserve Component Officer Award of Excellence. Her leadership and dedication to Army values made a positive contribution to the U.S. Army Reserve community. MAJ Mehta has also supported the Dental Corps in meaningful ways and continues to



encourage those around her through her steady commitment to excellence. MAJ Mehta directly commissioned with the U.S. Army Reserve Dental Corps in 2018. She currently serves as a 63F prosthodontist, with the 810th Dental Company Area Support in North Carolina. She received her Doctor of Dental Medicine degree and her Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study in Prosthodontics from Boston University Goldman School of Dental Medicine in Boston, Mass. MAJ Mehta is in private practice in Lake Mary, Fla., and a part-time prosthodontic clinical faculty at LECOM School of Dental Medicine.



MAJ Jacob (second from right) proudly represented the reserve component as the only reserve dentist selected, joining four active-duty counterparts.

Voices from the US Army National Guard Dental Corps

By COL Anna Lichelle Aldana



On his very first mission with the National Guard, a young dental officer found himself in a Jamaican hospital, surrounded by locals waiting patiently for care. Years later, COL Malcolm J. Murray still remembers the feeling of providing treatment in a place where every smile mattered. "It was the best of both worlds," he says – meeting people, easing pain and discovering what service truly meant. Today, COL Murray is a seasoned Army National Guard leader who has served as the state dental officer and commander for the Delaware Army National Guard (ARNG). His service includes deployments to Kuwait and Syria. A lifelong aspiring dentist, "I wanted to be a dentist all my life." COL Murray earned

his Doctor of Dental Surgery degree from Virginia Commonwealth University's Medical College of Virginia before joining the national guard as one of its "weekend warriors" providing essential dental care to Soldiers. He currently serves in the Office of the Chief Surgeon for the ARNG at the Joint Forces Headquarters.



COL Murray at Basic Officer Leadership Course.

Mentorship has been a constant force throughout COL Murray's career, beginning with Dr. Gerald Banks, the dentist who first saw his potential long before he wore a uniform. "He inspired me; he looked to the future," COL Murray recalls. "He always said *when* it happens, not *if* it happens." That confidence became a foundation COL Murray carried into dentistry and service. Later, COL (Ret) Jason Showman, a respected leader in Army Dentistry, continued that tradition of guidance. Showman's influence helped shape COL Murray's professional growth and reinforced the belief that service is strengthened by those who invest in others. COL Murray embodies the AAD's Honoring Service pillar through his commitment to caring for others, whether treating communities abroad or supporting soldiers in the field. His question-driven leadership, grounded in humility and mentorship, reflects a lifelong dedication to serving with purpose and lifting others along the way.



COL Murray taking dental impressions on COL Marcinko at Camp Buehring, Kuwait.

Spouses Corner

Finding Your Voice

By Susan Allen

In the earliest years of our country, many women found ways to advocate for what they deemed important despite the common belief at the time that women belonged in the home, cooking, raising children and caring for all things domestic. While John Adams was in Philadelphia in 1767 drafting the Constitution, his wife Abigail sent him a pointed message to "Remember the Ladies." Of course, Adams promptly ignored his wife, responding, "We know better than to repeal our Masculine systems."

Even in those days of limited political influence, however, women found ways to wield subtle, yet considerable, power behind the scenes.

Today, Army spouses of active-duty, reserve component and retired service members have a much greater opportunity to focus attention on issues that affect their lives and those of their families. Army installations have

Ways to Get – or Stay – Involved

Many organizations have an advocacy mission that focuses on raising the level of awareness of the needs of military families. Consider joining their efforts to improve the quality of life of active-duty, reserve and retired soldiers and their families. Here are just a few options:

Association of Army Dentistry (See page 8 for an explanation of the AAD's new Advocacy pillar.)

www.associationofarmydentistry.org

The Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) www.moaa.org

The National Military Family Association (NMFA) www.militaryfamily.org

Our Military Kids www.ourmilitarykids.org

advisory boards to identify problems, help find solutions and develop policies that improve quality of life. Whether it is improved access to healthcare or issues with the commissary, PX, childcare or education, spouses can advocate for what is essential to the military community's well-being.

On a broader level, Army Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) recognizes the importance of community, soldier and family support services to combat readiness. No longer do we hear, "If the Army wanted you to have a wife, it would have issued you one." Now the Army acknowledges that having a family is normal and when families are cared for, a soldier is more focused on his or her job.

While my husband, Gary, was DENTAC commander at Fort Bragg, I was honored to represent Fort Bragg at the Army Family Action Plan in Washington, D.C. The Army established this program in 1983 to allow family members to raise their voices and provide feedback, ideas and suggestions to the highest level of Army leadership. It was an exhilarating time for my daughter (Fort Bragg's teen representative) and me as we joined others from around the world to advocate for soldiers and their families.

As Army spouses and supportive members of Army Dentistry, we have an invaluable opportunity to make a difference. I encourage you to find your voice. Who knows ... your ideas might improve the quality of life for soldiers' families and retirees locally, nationally or even worldwide.

AAD Pillars

Advocacy in Action: Strengthening the Future of Army Dentistry

By Joseph A. Wineman, COL (Ret)

The Association of Army Dentistry (AAD) is committed to fostering excellence and ensuring the long-term success of Army Dentistry. Advocacy plays a vital role in fulfilling the AAD mission – supporting, strengthening and unifying the Army dental community of active-duty and retired service members, reservists, civilian professionals and family members.

AAD Advocacy is our voice for Army Dentistry – forging a common goal to ensure the contributions of the entire Army Dental Care Team are recognized, valued and supported. Through collaboration and engagement, the AAD puts a spotlight on the challenges and opportunities shaping the present and future of Army Dentistry.

AAD Advocacy is a partnership – working alongside Army leadership, the Dental Corps chief's office and key stakeholders to promote awareness, encourage dialogue and support initiatives that enhance the delivery of dental care. These efforts reinforce professional standards, encourage appropriate resourcing and support modernization in technology, infrastructure and administrative processes. The goal is to build understanding and appreciation of the critical role oral health plays in force readiness.

AAD Advocacy supports professional growth and well-being – championing initiatives that provide continuous education, specialized training and opportunities for career advancement. Emphasis on work-life balance, resilience and long-term career satisfaction contributes to sustaining a strong, ready and capable force.

AAD Advocacy fosters a culture of collaboration and respect – working with the office of the chief of the U.S. Army Dental Corps to address systemic issues such as work-life balance, mental health resources and career pathways. Through these efforts the AAD can help create an environment where all dental professionals can excel. In its supportive role, the AAD helps ensure that Army Dentistry remains a sustainable and attractive career choice.

AAD Advocacy embraces our common background and shared purpose – helping to ensure that Army Dentistry remains adaptive, resilient and positioned for continued excellence in service to the nation.

Join us. Advocate. Serve.

Coaching and Mentoring: Former Dental Corps Chief Keynotes ADEA Signature Series on Decision-Making

On March 21, 2026, BG (Ret) Shan K. Bagby delivered the keynote address at the American Dental Education Association (ADEA) Signature Series in Montreal, Canada. The 90-minute session, hosted by the ADEA Leadership Institute Alumni Association (LIAA), brought together mid-to-senior career dental educators and academic administrators for an interactive presentation titled *“The Strategic Mind: Developing Expert Decision-Making in Academic Dental Leadership.”*

The presentation explored the cognitive science behind how leaders actually make decisions, why experienced leaders still fall into predictable cognitive traps, and what they can do about it. Through perception exercises, real-world case studies and facilitated discussion, Dr. Bagby challenged participants to examine their own decision-making habits and walk away with practical strategies they could apply immediately. The central message was clear: expert judgment is not an innate trait but a skill that can be deliberately developed.

The presentation resonated across disciplines. Attendees described the session as “inspiring” and “amazing,” and several healthcare professionals outside of dentistry expressed interest in adapting the content for broader leader development audiences. The cross-disciplinary appeal reinforced what many in the U.S. Army Dental Corps have long understood: the principles of sound leadership and decision-making transcend any single professional community.

Dr. Bagby’s presentation was informed by over three decades of progressive executive leadership across military healthcare, government and the private sector, experiences that shaped and reinforced the decision-making principles he shared with the audience. His continued engagement in dental education and leadership development reflects the values at the heart of the Association of Army Dentistry’s mission.

Honoring Service: Citizen-Soldier and AAD Founder

By Susan Allen and Andy Watson



BG (Ret) Robert Strader

It was Sunday, Nov. 10, 2008. Six retired and one active-duty Dental Corps general officers gathered at the La Quinta Inn in San Antonio, Texas. In attendance were MG (Ret) Bill B. Lefler, MG (Ret) John J. Cuddy, MG (Ret) Patrick D. Sculley, MG (Ret) Joseph G. Webb, MG (Ret) Ron Silverman, BG (Ret) Robert Brady and BG (Ret) Robert (Jerry) Strader. MG Russell Czerw, the chief of the U.S. Army Dental Corps, and COL Larry Hanson joined them. It was an auspicious group with a single goal – establish a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization to support Army Dentistry.

After voting in members of a board of directors and officers, they discussed the name and mission of the fledgling organization and the steps to incorporation. They settled on “The Association of Army Dentistry” and a mission to advance Army Dentistry with activities to promote morale, support recruitment and retention, provide education, foster an historical perspective and appreciation of Army dental history, and provide a means of recognition of those who serve and have served the nation via Army Dentistry. That mission, which has remained mostly unchanged over the last 17 years, is the foundation of today’s AAD Strategic Pillars.

When it came to funding and incorporation, one individual stepped forward – BG Strader. He graciously offered a \$5,000.00 donation to cover initial costs. He also recommended the law firm Brewer Jackson PC of Irving, Texas, to shepherd the incorporation process, which they offered to do pro bono.

BG Strader’s efforts on behalf of the AAD are indicative of the life he has led – one easily characterized as involved and active. His dental and military careers are significant parts of his life, but there is so much more.

BG Strader is a true Texan. He was born in Fort Worth and graduated from Abilene Christian University with a degree in business administration. He is a graduate of the University of Texas Dental Branch in Houston and received a master’s degree in dentistry from Baylor University Dental School in Dallas.

Awards and Recognition

BG (Ret) Strader has held numerous positions and received many awards and recognition for his service to his profession and the community. Among them are:

- Surgeon General “A” Designator
- Order of Military Medical Merit
- Distinguished Service Medal
- Meritorious Service Medal with Oak Leaf
- Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal (Korea)
- Diplomate, American Board of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery
- President, Heart of Texas Dental Society
- President, Texas Society of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery
- President, Medical Staff, West Texas Medical Center
- Senior Vice President, Medical Staff Affairs, and Senior Vice President, Hendrick Medical Center
- Vice Chief Delegate, Interallied Confederation of Military Reserve Officers (NATO)
- National Dental Surgeon, Reserve Officers Association
- Member, University Council, Abilene Christian University
- President, Alumni Association, Abilene Christian University
- President, Board of Trustees, Abilene Christian University
- Outstanding Alumnus, Abilene Christian University
- Outstanding Service Award, Texas Dental Association

From Tank Driver to Oral Surgeon

Although community service, college involvement and business management were continual interests, the Army came first. He began his military career in the Texas National Guard as a tank driver in the 49th Armored Division. In 1951, he enlisted in the Army and, after completing Officer Candidate School, was commissioned as a second lieutenant. He first served as an ordnance officer at Aberdeen Proving Grounds in Maryland and then as the ammunition supply officer at Camp Irwin, Calif. In 1953, he left the Army to complete his dental education and then re-entered the Army as a unit dental officer at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, after graduation. He subsequently completed his oral and maxillofacial surgery residency at Brooke General Hospital, Fort Sam Houston, Texas.

After residency training, BG Strader was assigned as chief, Dental Service, for the 121st Evacuation Hospital in Korea, and was the only military oral surgeon in the country. After Korea, he was assigned as chief, Dental Service, and oral surgeon, Irwin Army Hospital, Fort Riley, Kans.



Continued Service as a Citizen-Soldier

In 1970, Strader returned to civilian life and private practice. He joined the Army Reserve in Abilene, Texas, where he was the medical officer in the 490th Civil Affairs and commander of the 5776th RTU (LOG). During his Army career, he served in every Individual Mobilization Augmentee position in Health Services Command, the last one being special assistant to the commanding general for dental reserve components at Health Services Command. His last assignment was deputy assistant surgeon general for Dental Services, Office of the Surgeon General. He retired March 31, 1991, after 38 years of service.



Jerry Strader with his newly acquired 1977 Cessna 414 with Super RAM Conversion.
Photo credit: *Plane Talk*, Abilene Aero, 1984.

Community involvement has always been important to BG Strader. He is a member of the Boy Scouts of America, having participated as a Cub Scout to the rank of Lion, the Boy Scouts to the rank of Eagle, and the Explorer Scouts to the rank of Ranger. In 1993, he helped start Boy Scout Troop #1 in Kyiv, Ukraine, and established Boy Scout Troop #232 at Highland Church of Christ in Abilene. He attended World Jamborees in France in 1947 and in Holland in 1995. He received the Distinguished Eagle Award in 1994 and the Silver Beaver Award in 2000.

While amassing a long list of military and professional accomplishments, he also managed several businesses and obtained private and commercial pilot licenses.

Throughout his Army career and community service, BG Strader's wife Patsy supported him. After 72 years of marriage, Patsy sadly passed in 2023. Together, they had raised four children and navigated many adventures together. BG (Ret) Jerry Strader: a citizen-soldier, an advocate for his profession and a founding father of the Association of Army Dentistry.

Army Dentistry Chart Notes

The Evolution of Army Dentistry in Europe: Integration and Transformation

By COL Kelley L. Tomsett, Chief Dental Officer, DHN Europe; ACoS, Dental Services, MRC, Europe

Adapting to Change in Army Dentistry

In the words of Bob Dylan, “The times they are a-changin’.” The Dental Corps is no stranger to change and has become adept at adapting over the past few decades, responding to the evolving needs of the Army. The transition from a standalone Dental Health Command to integration within Medical Readiness Command, Europe (MRC, EUR) and Defense Health Network Europe (DHN Europe) marks a significant evolution in Army Dentistry. This transition is part of the broader transformation of the Military Health System, moving toward a joint, integrated and readiness-focused model under the Defense Health Agency (DHA).



COL Kelley L. Tomsett

Shifting Command Structure

Previously, under the legacy model, Dental Health Command (DHC) (and prior to that, the Regional Dental Command) commanders exercised direct command authority over dental units, maintaining a clear, service-specific chain aligned with Army Medicine. With the realignment, the former DHC commander now operates within a division level regional medical command construct, serving in a dual-hatted position as the assistant chief of staff for Dental Services for MRC, EUR, and as the chief dental officer for DHN Europe [ACoS(DS)/CDO].

Manpower and Administrative Transformation

This transformation and realignment also affected manpower structures. Previously, the DHC maintained a dedicated command staff, including positions such as SGM, XO, S1, S3, S4 and unit-level administrative structures. Now, dental personnel are embedded within Medical Treatment Facilities (MTFs) and aligned under DHA-managed staffing models.

Evolving Roles and Responsibilities

Under the old construct, DHC commanders were primarily responsible for unit readiness and soldier dental fitness, the command and control of dental assets, and overseeing training, logistics and deployment readiness. After realignment, these responsibilities shifted to MTF HQ staff elements.

In response to realignment, the roles and priorities for the ACoS(DS)/CDO include:

- Advising the MRC, EUR commander on dental readiness and force health protection
- Overseeing clinical quality and safety across DHN Europe
- Integrating dental services into joint, multi-service healthcare delivery systems
- Synchronizing readiness and healthcare delivery missions across garrison and operational environments

The ACoS (DS)/CDO must balance Army readiness priorities (deployable, dentally fit force) and DHA healthcare delivery standards (access, quality, patient experience)

Strategic Impact and Future Direction

Within MRC, EUR and DHN Europe, the ACoS (DS)/CDO serves as the link between Army readiness and DHA healthcare delivery standards. The dual-hatted structure fosters unity of effort across services, facilitates improved resource allocation and enhances interoperability in both garrison and operational contexts. At the same time, this role requires new competencies in enterprise leadership, joint governance and exerting influence without direct command authority.

The integration of the DHC into MRC, EUR and DHN Europe marks a decisive shift from a service-centric command structure to a joint, integrated system focused on health and readiness. While the loss of traditional command authority presents challenges, the expanded scope of influence allows strategic Army dental leaders to shape dental operations at the enterprise level.

Ultimately, this model strengthens Army Dentistry's ability to deliver a dentally ready force while contributing to a high-reliability, patient-centered joint health system, ensuring ongoing relevance in both competitive and conflict environments.

In Memoriam

If you know of someone who served in or supported U.S. Army Dentistry and who has passed, please send the obituary by email to: assoc.army.dentistry@gmail.com, or mail to: Association of Army Dentistry, 18203 Rim Drive 101 #1146, San Antonio, TX 78257.

Social Media

[AAD Facebook Page](#)

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From the Admin Desk

By Frank Nasser, COL (Ret), AAD Executive Director

We are pleased to welcome the new U.S. Army Dental Corps Chief, COL Paul M. Colthirst, and look forward to continuing our strong partnership with the active component while supporting all elements of Army Dentistry.

The recent membership renewal cycle concluded in March, with final reminders sent to 2024 and 2025 members who had not yet renewed for 2026. While results were modest, overall membership remains steady. We encourage all members to play an active role in growing the AAD by reaching out to colleagues – particularly enlisted soldiers, DA civilians and spouses connected to Army Dentistry.

Our presence continues to expand thanks to the efforts of our social media advisor, Mike Hoffman. The AAD is now active on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn, sharing news and updates relevant to our community. Members can support these efforts by following our platforms and contributing content of interest. If you have something worth sharing, we welcome your submissions.

As the AAD continues to evolve, we have restructured our Strategic Pillars and introduced a new area of emphasis – Advocacy. This addition reflects our commitment to serving as a unified voice for Army Dentistry. In this issue, COL (Ret) Joseph Wineman provides further insight into this important role. The graphic on page 15 highlights our updated Strategic Pillars, designed to better focus our efforts and support achievable goals.

We encourage all members to get involved and share their ideas. Your engagement is essential to the continued strength and success of the Association.

From the Editors

We hope you enjoyed the feature articles about COL Malcolm J. Murray, BG (Ret) Robert (Jerry) Strader and the changes in Army Dentistry in Europe. Do you have ideas for articles or have you written an article that you would like to submit for publication? Please send to: Association of Army Dentistry at assoc.army.dentistry@gmail.com.

Jay Etzenbach, COL (Ret), Editor
Susan Allen, Copy Editor

AAD Officers

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George Hucal, COL, USA (Ret) – Vice President

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David Ferguson, COL, USA, (Ret) – Secretary

Ms. Wanda Kavanaugh, DA Civilian (Ret) – Treasurer

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The AAD is your organization!

*The Association of Army Dentistry is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization.
We are a philanthropic organization dedicated to honoring the past, supporting the present
and inspiring the future of Army Dentistry.*



The Association of Army Dentistry



VISION

The Association of Army Dentistry honors our past, supports the present and inspires the future of Army Dentistry.

MISSION

The mission of the Association of Army Dentistry is to advance Army Dentistry by promoting morale, esprit de corps; supporting activities focused on recruitment and retention; providing dental education, and coaching/mentoring; recognizing those who serve and have served the Nation via Army Dentistry; and fostering an appreciation of the history and accomplishments of Army Dentistry.

AAD STRATEGIC PILLARS

<p>Recruitment Retention Membership <i>Building and Sustaining</i></p> <p>Morale & Esprit de Corps <i>Fostering Pride and Unity</i></p>	<p>Dental Education <i>Advancing Clinical Excellence</i></p> <p>Coaching Mentoring <i>Developing Leaders</i></p>	<p>Army Dentistry History <i>Preserving the Legacy</i></p> <p>Honoring Service <i>Recognizing the Contributions</i></p>	<p>Advocacy <i>Championing Army Dentistry</i></p>
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Association of Army Dentistry

Honoring the Past, Supporting the Present, Inspiring the Future

Past



Present



Future



Join today at associationofarmydentistry.org