

# MEDICAL NEWS

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## Drew Morgan goes to space

By Sharon Holland  
Uniformed Services University

The late Space Shuttle Columbia astronaut Navy Capt. (Dr.) David M. Brown once said, “I remember growing up thinking that astronauts and their job was the coolest thing you could possibly do... But I absolutely couldn’t identify with the people who were astronauts. I thought they were movie stars.”

A lot of people hold today’s astronauts in the same high regard. Within days of being named by NASA officials as one of America’s newest astronaut candidates, USU alumnus then-Army Maj. (Dr.) Andrew “Drew” Morgan was already getting requests for his autograph. Morgan, a USU class of 2002 graduate and Military and Emergency Medicine department assistant professor whose previous experience includes serving as an emergency physician and flight surgeon for the Army special operations community, was among the eight military and civilian astronaut trainees selected out of more than 6,100 applicants by NASA for their 2013 class.

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(Photo by Sharon Holland, Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences)

**Army Col. (Dr.) Andrew R. Morgan launched into space aboard a Soyuz (Union) MS-13 spacecraft July 20 at around 12:28 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time for a nine-month mission aboard the International Space Station. Morgan, a graduate of the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, is the first Army physician and USU grad to head to space.**



(U.S. Army photo by Jason W. Edwards)

**U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Jeffrey Johnson, Regional Health Command – Central commanding general, presents the guidon to U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Wendy L. Harter, Brooke Army Medical Center commanding general, at a change of command ceremony at BAMC, Fort Sam Houston, Texas, July 16, 2019. Harter is BAMC’s first female commanding general.**

## BAMC welcomes first woman commander

By Robert A. Whetstone  
Brooke Army Medical Center Public Affairs

JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO-FORT SAM HOUSTON, Texas — Brooke Army Medical Center experienced a unique ‘first’ during the change of command ceremony at Fort Sam Houston, July 16, 2019. Brig. Gen. George Appenzeller relinquished command to Brig. Gen. Wendy Harter, making her the first woman to command BAMC in its storied history.

History within military units often goes unnoticed

unless passed on by word of mouth. Being the first woman to command BAMC is no secret in the medical community, and it is significant to Harter personally and professionally.

“It is an honor, but just as importantly, it allows others to see themselves and opportunities for their future,” explained Harter. “Diversity is the strength of our Army and military. Everyone brings unique skills and dedication to the fight to contribute to BAMC’s

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# • Commander

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success, and everyone has a leadership role. Being the first woman is historic for all.”

The officiating officer for the ceremony was Brig. Gen. Jeffrey Johnson, Regional Health Command – Central commander. Johnson added another unique aspect to the event. It was just 14 months ago that Johnson relinquished command of BAMC to Appenzeller. Later in the same day, Johnson and Appenzeller once again changed commands with Appenzeller taking over RHC-C. Johnson’s next assignment is yet to be determined.

Johnson recognized the 8,500-strong BAMC staff consisting of military, civilians, contractors and volunteers as being a compassionate team that supports and serves 250,000 beneficiaries in Military City USA. “The hard work that you completed to form an integrated health system, already sounds like the model we are moving toward with the Defense Health Agency,” stated Johnson.

Johnson listed a number of accomplishments achieved during Appenzeller’s tenure as BAMC’s commander, and he also welcomed Harter as the right leader at the right time.

One of those accomplishments was BAMC recently earning the Joint Commission Gold Seal of approval. It is only one of many achievements the organization has worked diligently to maintain as the standard for safe, quality healthcare, and a success shared by the entire BAMC family.

Appenzeller told the crowd that BAMC is the Department of Defense’s premier joint live fire complex. “What you are going to see (at BAMC) are service members exercising every medical battlefield operating system in a phenomenal way,” stated Appenzeller. “This team you (Harter) are going to lead is the best at creating ready medical forces, creating ready medics, and training medicine. You are not going to find a better group; and you’re going to do it in a city that is more dedicated to taking care of service members than any I’ve ever seen.”

‘Standards’ was one of the overarching themes of the remarks given during the ceremony. “As I walk around BAMC, the culture is one of a professional family committed to our mission, action oriented and standards based,” said Harter.

General David Hurley, former Chief of the Australian Defence Force and current Governor-General of Australia, once said, “The standard you walk past is the standard you accept.” Harter talked about the importance standards play for organizations like BAMC.

“We will remain a standards-based organization, transparent and intro-



(U.S. Army photos by Jason W. Edwards)

**U.S. Army Brig. Gen. George Appenzeller, outgoing Brooke Army Medical Center commanding general, Brig. Gen. Jeffrey Johnson, Regional Health Command – Central commanding general, and Brig. Gen. Wendy L. Harter, incoming BAMC commanding general, look on during a change of command ceremony at BAMC, Fort Sam Houston, Texas, July 16, 2019. Harter assumed command from Appenzeller, becoming the first woman to serve as BAMC’s commanding general.**

spective, and will sustain the world-class healthcare our beneficiaries enjoy today throughout this time of transition,” said Harter. “DHA has the same goals, quality care, education and Joint Commission standard that is the pillar for all.”

Harter said she was humbled and deeply honored to join BAMC’s exceptional team. BAMC operates the only Level I trauma center in the Department

of Defense, with cutting-edge research, education, warrior and family care, and training programs.

“BAMC is truly the pinnacle of military healthcare and a producer of ready medical forces for the Department of Defense,” said Harter. “The world remains a dynamic place, and BAMC will continue as the cornerstone of global medical readiness providing critical capabilities for our nation.”

## Military Medical News

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**U.S. Army Brig. Gen. George Appenzeller, outgoing Brooke Army Medical Center commanding general, and Brig. Gen. Wendy L. Harter, incoming BAMC commanding general, stand before the formation during a change of command ceremony at BAMC, Fort Sam Houston, Texas, July 16, 2019. As Harter assumes command at BAMC, Appenzeller will move on to command Regional Health Command – Central.**

## • Space (Continued from front page)

Now, he's headed to space as the first USU graduate and Army physician to do so.

"I am very proud to represent USU, military medicine, Army medicine and the Special Operations medical community," said Morgan. "Military service members make great astronaut candidates because we are taught discipline, perseverance, teamwork and coolness under pressure from the earliest points in our careers. In my class, six of the eight of us are either active duty or had extensive military backgrounds. That says a lot for the type of people in today's military and the experiences that it provides."

Morgan reported to Johnson Space Center in Houston in August, 2013, with his fellow astronaut trainees to begin their two-year technical training in Texas and at space centers around the globe to prepare for missions to low-Earth orbit, an asteroid and Mars.

Morgan's journey towards space began shortly after the final Space Shuttle launch in April 2011. After the launch, many Americans, including Morgan, felt there was some uncertainty about the future of the program, particularly when or if a new class of astronauts would be fielded. "I always had an interest in space and dreamed of becoming an astronaut . . . but I realized that it wasn't a realistic goal that I could plan my career around, so I never thought it would really happen. I took my son to the last Shuttle launch in Florida, and I said to him 'I don't think I'll get to be an astronaut, so maybe you can make it instead.' But within a couple of months, NASA sent out an announcement seeking applicants, so I applied," Morgan said.

Active duty members were directed to apply through their respective service, while an announcement was simultaneously placed on USAJOBS.gov. It took NASA more than nine months to cull through the thousands of applications they received. They eventually narrowed the field to 120 and Morgan received a phone call letting him know he had made the cut. Morgan's background in emergency medicine and Special Operations, along with his diving, airborne, military freefall, and flight surgery qualifications and experience were instrumental in helping his packet stand out above so many others. The applicants were divided into two groups for interviews. Morgan was among the second group and during the three-day process he underwent psychological testing, cursory medical testing, and interviews before a panel made up of astronauts and other NASA employees. Three more months went by without word. In the meantime, Morgan was finishing his civilian deferred sports medicine fellowship at Virginia Commonwealth University/ Fairfax Family Practice, led by USU alumnus ('84) Thomas Howard, MD, and had received orders for his new duty assignment in Germany.

In February, 2013, Morgan got another phone call letting him know that the applicants had been further reduced to 50 and that he was among the finalists. He reported to Johnson Space Center in Houston again, this time for a full week of testing –

more psychological and medical tests, along with language aptitude testing and an extensive physical examination. Afterward, Morgan once again returned to Virginia and resumed his fellowship training, again hearing nothing for more than four months as NASA officials went through the daunting process of narrowing the field down to a mere eight astronaut candidates.

He and his family focused on their upcoming move to Germany, but Morgan held out hope for a change in plans. "My family knew I was applying to the astronaut program," he said. "I told them, 'we're moving to Germany, but there is a small chance we could be moving to Texas.'" In mid-June, he was standing in the hallway of a local area high school having just finished teaching a class on physical examination skills when he got a phone call. It was veteran astronaut and director of NASA Flight Crew Operations Dr. Janet Kavandi, who had served as the chair of the selection board. "She said, 'I want to know if you want to come down to Houston to be a part of our team.' I got a little choked up and said, 'Absolutely!'" Morgan then turned off his phone so that he would not be tempted to call anyone and went home to break the news in person to his wife, Stacey, and their four children.

"They were excited about going to Germany, so I said, 'I have bad news and I have good news. The bad news is that there will be no three-year "vacation" in Germany. The good news is that I'm going to be an astronaut and we'll be moving to Texas and not have to move again for a really long time!'"

Morgan said his wife shed tears of joy and his son simply smiled and gave him a "that's cool" look. Morgan's relatives, colleagues, friends and acquaintances, as well as strangers, also thought it was cool. NASA made the public announcement on June 17, 2013, and Morgan started receiving calls and emails of congratulations and autograph requests from all over the country.

His new celebrity status didn't go to his head, though. He reported for duty at Johnson Space Center, where he was surrounded by dozens of current, veteran and former astronauts serving in a number of different capacities. His class of astronaut candidates reported to the space center in August, 2013, and began their two-year training program to become Mission Specialists.

The training program consists of language immersion (primarily Russian since



(Photo by Ronald Bailey, U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command/Army Forces Strategic Command)

**U.S. Army Col. Andrew R. Morgan, M.D., launches from the Baikonur Cosmodrome, Kazakhstan, aboard a Soyuz (Union) MS-13 spacecraft July 20 at 12:28 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time for a nine-month mission aboard the International Space Station.**

international partners in Russia, Europe, Canada and Japan. After the initial two-year training was completed, Morgan was assigned to a NASA directorate as a "full-fledged astronaut" while he waited his turn to go into space.

Morgan originally estimated it would take about 8-10 years before he would make his first flight, but on May 24, 2018, NASA announced he would be part of the International Space Station Expedition 60/61 crew, launching on July 20, 2019 – the 50th Anniversary of the Apollo 11 launch. Since then, he has been preparing for the launch – first as a member of

all of the missions are now flown on Russian spacecraft), robotics, space walking, and flight training. Morgan and the other the non-pilots were sent to Pensacola to go through the Navy's flight training curriculum, where they used the T-38 Talon twin-engine, high-altitude, supersonic jet to train. The astronaut class did most of their work at Johnson Space Center, but also spent time at Kennedy Space Center and Goddard Space Center in the U.S., and with their

the back-up team for the ISS Expedition 59/60 crew, and now as a member of his own three-man crew. Morgan will be joined on the mission to space by Luca Parmitano of the European Space Agency and Alexander Skvortsov of the Russian space agency, Roscosmos. The second week of June, Morgan left for Russia for his final preparations, including training aboard the Soyuz MS-13 rocket that he will be taking into space. His time in Russia spanned about three weeks and included final exams and several days of ceremonial events in Moscow and Star City.

At the beginning of July, Morgan, Parmitano and Skvortsov flew down to Baikonur, Kazakhstan, to be quarantined for the last two weeks prior to launch. Astronauts use this quarantine time to review the mission, gather their thoughts before the upcoming trip, and to ensure they don't catch any illnesses before their flight.

The trio will board the rocket at the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan for the launch, scheduled for 12:28 p.m. EST. NASA expects they will arrive about seven hours later.

Once on board the International Space Station, Morgan will be busy conducting a variety of scientific studies based on the effects of space on the body, including neuroscience research tied to balance and coordination, and experiments with blood and other body fluids. He will also prepare for spacewalks and assist with routine maintenance of the Space Station.

Morgan's mission is expected to conclude in April 2020.

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# Robotic surgery training takes on 100th surgical team

By Airman 1st Class Kimberly Mueller  
 81st Training Wing Public Affairs

The Institute for Defense Robotic Surgical Education program celebrated a significant milestone, training the 100th team on robotic surgery at Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi, on July 23.

This milestone is significant for Keesler's InDORSE program, showing how far the curriculum has come since the program first stood up in March 2017 with just one robot. Now, InDORSE has acquired a second robot, allowing them to train more military surgical teams across the Department of Defense (DoD), as well as Department of Veteran's Affairs (VA).

The program continues to grow with plans to double its training capacity starting in July, and will also offer additional course curriculum, including more advanced courses. Currently, the federal government owns over 100 surgical robots between the DoD and VA, representing an investment of over \$200 million.

Lt. Col. Josh Tyler, 81st Surgical Operations Squadron InDORSE director, had the vision for the robotic surgery training program, along with assistance from Maj. Scott Thallemer, 81st MSGS InDORSE robot coordinator.

"My idea was to create this site so we could train our military surgeons in-house," said Tyler. "The site was built in collaboration with Intuitive, the DaVinci Xi surgical robot manufacturer. They provide the trainer and teach their curriculum and that comes

at no cost to the federal government. In the current fiscal environment, it is important for us to find sustainable models for surgical education."

According to Tyler, who recently returned from deployment supporting Operation Inherent Resolve, personnel turnover and military operational tempo are the main obstacles to successful robotic implementation in federal sector healthcare. With the InDoRSE setup, these obstacles are directly addressed. There is also tremendous cost savings with the in-house training paradigm. InDoRSE training costs \$3,500 less than industry sites, and with the number of personnel trained the educational savings totals over \$1 million.

The in-house program not only includes affordable training, but also trains nurses and technicians, in addition to surgeons, which makes Keesler AFB's InDORSE training program different from traditional industry sites.

"Good surgery has always been about being a team in the operating room," said Tyler. "This program really lets us train the team, not just the individual, and I think that's what is so important about this site."

Tyler started out with four different coordinators in hopes to get his program started, but the one who matched his passion was the fifth, Thallemer.

"I went up to Dr. Tyler and said, 'They said I'm going to be your new coordinator.' He replied, 'Oh, great,' and kept walking," said Thallemer. "I've had a DaVinci procedure before so I was very interested in the program. I had to chase Dr. Tyler down the hallway a little bit and say, 'No, really, I can

implement this. We can do this.'" On recalling this story, Tyler laughs and notes, "Without Maj. Thallemer, we wouldn't be where we are. His hard work has been invaluable".

Through Tyler and Thallemer's hard work, the program continues to grow and they intend to push it farther, aiming to expand the program and eventually quadruple their capacity for training. With one robot, they have now trained over 100 surgeons and an additional 200 nurses and OR technicians, for a total of over 300 personnel. This includes 37 different facilities spanning Army, Navy, Air Force, and Veteran's Affairs hospitals and surgeons from 10 different specialties. Those surgeons have returned home and done almost 1,500 robotic surgical procedures.

"This site is changing the face of federal sector surgery, particularly with patient outcomes," said Tyler. "We are teaching these teams how to leverage the latest technology to produce the best outcomes for our patients, and with better outcomes come lower costs. We focus on creating a culture of efficiency and patient safety. Additionally, robotics will improve both recruitment and retention, and those are equally important as they improve readiness."

"This is my passion," said Tyler. "I love robotics, and this achievement validates the vision I had so long ago, and all the work Thallemer and I have put into this. It's very exciting to help surgeons and other hospitals have access to the technology to have the best outcomes for our patients."

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# Ramstein hosts first USAFE EMT Rodeo

By Staff Sgt. Kirby Turbak  
86th Airlift Wing/Public Affairs

The 86th Aerial Evacuation Squadron recently hosted the U.S. Air Forces in Europe Emergency Medical Technician Rodeo at Ramstein Air Base, Germany, July 23-24.

Seven teams of four from across Europe competed against each other in an array of situations that medics and combat medics face, like medication overdoses, drownings, gunshot victims, vehicle extractions, and a mass casualty with 30 victims.

“It’s vital for our medics to have the opportunity to train like we fight,” said U.S. Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Jason Oldenburg, USAFE-AFACRICA Command Surgeon chief. “Putting them in stressful situations enhances their critical thinking skills and builds resiliency.”

The teams consisted of members from Incirlik AB, Turkey, Aviano AB, Italy, Royal Air Force Lakenheath, England, RAF Croughton, England, RAF Alconbury, England, Spangdahlem AB, Germany, and Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, Germany.

The challenges these Airmen faced required their endurance, attention to detail, and teamwork.

“When we introduce a competitive spirit and realistic scenarios, training becomes a lot of fun and very impactful,” said Oldenburg. “At the end of the day it’s all about being ready to save lives when the flag goes up, and this competition builds medical skills, teamwork, confidence, and resiliency that will be vital attributes of an Air Force Combat Medic in the future.”

Each challenge was made as real as possible by using scenario actors, prosthetics, makeup, and imitation blood.

“Each team was faced with five very different challenges they may see in combat or otherwise,” said Oldenburg. “They’re scored on how well they meet the objectives of each scenario. At the end, the scores are tallied and a winner is determined.”

On top of that, those competing were required to carry all their necessary medical equipment and wear helmets and body armor in more than 90 degree weather.

After two days of fake blood, real sweat, but thankfully no tears the title of USAFE EMT Rodeo winner went to members of the 48th Medical Group from RAF Lakenheath.

Winners will be going to Cannon Air Force Base, N.M., to represent USAFE in the annual U.S. Air Force EMT Rodeo.

“This was a fantastic event and went as well as we could have hoped for our first one in USAFE,” said Oldenburg. “In the future we hope to get more funding so that we subject our participants to even more immersive scenarios. We’re also looking at involving some of our Joint partners in future events.”



(U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Kirby Turbak)

*Medics respond to a simulated mass casualty scenario during the U.S. Air Forces in Europe EMT Rodeo at Ramstein Air Base, Germany, July 24, 2019. The EMT Rodeo consisted of teams from across Europe including, Incirlik AB, Turkey, Aviano AB, Italy, Royal Air Force Lakenheath, England, RAF Croughton, England, RAF Alconbury, England, Spangdahlem AB, Germany, and Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, Germany.*



*Medics competing in the U.S. Air Forces in Europe EMT Rodeo low crawl between scenarios at Ramstein Air Base, Germany, July 23, 2019. During challenges, members were required to wear the same gear they’d wear in a deployed location.*



*A medic inserts an IV into a training dummy during the U.S. Air Forces in Europe EMT Rodeo at Ramstein Air Base, Germany, July 23, 2019. Prosthetic limbs, makeup and imitation blood were used to make scenarios as real as possible.*



*Medics retrieve a training victim during a vehicle extraction scenario at the U.S. Air Forces in Europe EMT Rodeo at Ramstein Air Base, Germany, July 24, 2019. To make this scenario more realistic, members of the 786th Civil Engineer Squadron Explosive Ordnance Disposal flight used controlled blasts to simulate being in a combat zone.*



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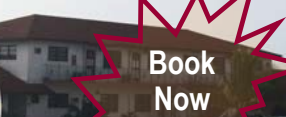


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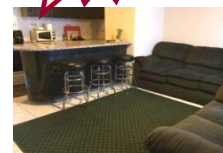
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## PTSD, deployment issues awareness

Courtesy Story  
 7th Bomb Wing Public Affairs

Deployers, we've all imagined it countless times, that sweet, tantalizing thrill of returning to the life you left behind. However, what comes next can be more challenging than the missions, miles, and metal we are returning from. The process of transitioning from garrison to deployment orientation is relatively well defined: establish mission, cut orders, assess readiness, and give it your best until it's time to come home. The opposite is less obvious. It consists of unique phases, each with rewards and difficulties.

Remember that life didn't stop for those who stayed behind. Everyone has changed in some way, including you, and the reintegration process allows you and those close to you, to combine your experiences into an effective tool to live a happy life. The process of reintegration can feel like a journey because you will likely go through several phases. First, is pre-entry. It's the dreaming phase where you imagine your return and what everyone will be like. Sometimes these expectations are based on a movie ending rather than reality. Second is the reunion. It's where you come together with your friends and family and enjoy what might feel like the best day of your life. Third is disruption, in your time away — those close to you have become used to handling things differently (e.g., a family member may have taken on several new tasks, an old friend may have new friends, etc). An important part of the solution, is to recognize the problem and talk about it which brings us to the fourth phase, communication. This ensures everyone's concerns and

needs are addressed and allows for compromise to occur. The final phase is normalcy. This happens after everyone feels content with the situation and their routines become second-nature.

But sometimes, even after fully returning and reengaging, we may realize that what we went through has hitched a ride into our homes. Post-traumatic stress disorder is like an echo in our brain of the events and experiences we survived, but still carry within us. This echo can affect us months and years later.

There are many ways to address trauma, from alcohol, to avoidance, to healing through faith or counseling. Some of these solutions can work for a short period of time, but never address the root of the problem. Think of that echo like a pesky weed, you can rip the stem you see above ground, but the roots are really what you're after to stop it once and for all. For example, substance use and avoidance can feel good in the moment, but it only prolongs the unavoidable echo. Counseling helps us to stand firm, process what happened, and face it head-on, quieting the echo more and more over time. This process can go smoother with help, and the staff of the 7th Medical Group are ready and waiting to assist at (325)-696-5380.

You are not alone. While wearing the uniform of the US military is a privilege relatively few in our country get to experience, even fewer service members actually deploy. You have joined a very special group and are even more deserving of living your best life. By combining who you were before stepping unto that plane or ship with the experiences (good and hard) along the way, you are capable of even greater accomplishments. Welcome back, and we are lucky to have you.



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