

A Resource for the Soldiers and Families of the Army National Guard

# CITIZEN-SOLDIER

ISSUE 2 // VOL 1

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**Mission:** To celebrate and support the Soldiers and Families of the National Guard. To provide today's Army National Guard members with information on becoming a better Soldier and better citizen. To encourage and assist Guard Soldiers in maximizing the benefits of their military career as well as their personal and Family goals.

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# WHAT'S TRENDING

## Enhanced Forward Presence: Protecting Our NATO Allies and Boosting Land Force Capability in Case of Crisis

BY STAFF WRITER Chase Whitlock

Soldiers assigned to 3rd Squadron, 2nd Cavalry Regiment place U.S. and NATO flags on the antenna of their Stryker Combat Vehicle.

**N**ATO's Enhanced Forward Presence is an allied, forward deployed defense and deterrence posture in Eastern Europe to protect and reassure NATO's Eastern member states of their security. Following Russia's annexation of Crimea and invasion of Ukraine in March 2014, NATO member states agreed at the 2016 Warsaw summit to forward deploy four multinational battalion battle groups (BG) to the NATO members who are most at risk of a possible Russian attack. The Enhanced Forward Presence offers continuing security to those members who may feel unsettled by relatively recent events, and offers them an increased sense of confidence in their NATO partners.

"We don't see any imminent threat against any NATO ally, but we see a more assertive Russia," said NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg in a NATO-produced video early last year. "A Russia which has significantly increased its military presence in this region. A Russia which has been willing to use military force against a neighbor – against Ukraine and against Georgia."

The four battalion battle groups are the Poland Multinational Battalion BG, led by the United States and based in Orzysz, Poland; the Estonia Multinational Battalion BG, led by the United Kingdom

and based in Tapa, Estonia; the Latvia Multinational Battalion BG, led by Canada and based in Adazi, Latvia; and the Lithuania Multinational Battalion BG, led by Germany and based in Rukla, Lithuania. Troops serving in the battalions train and operate within their host nations' militaries.

The Poland group is led by the U.S. Army's Wolfpack Squadron, 3rd Squadron, 2nd Cavalry Regiment, stationed in Vilseck, Germany, and commanded by LTC Scott Cheney. The BG consists of 800 U.S. Soldiers equipped with Stryker Dragoon vehicles, 150 Soldiers from the British Army's Light Dragoons Reconnaissance Regiment and 150 Soldiers from the Romanian Army with Air Defense Guns. The Battle Group will be part of the Polish Army's 15th Mechanized Brigade.


"Our formation is an opportunity for us to highlight our NATO resolve and the NATO alliance," said LTC Cheney.

As part of the Total Force, the Army National Guard is a key component in the United States' role in Enhanced Forward Presence. This is illustrated by the inclusion of Guard Soldiers in vital training events such as Saber Guardian and Saber Strike – two U.S. Army Europe-led exercises held in the Baltic region that test the capability of ally nations to act against a threat.

COL John Gentry, Commander of the 648th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, Georgia Army National Guard – which participated in Saber Guardian, held in Romania this past July – had this to say about the importance of the Army National Guard in Enhanced Forward Presence-related exercises, "The integration of the National Guard into the U.S. Army Europe [USAREUR] team plays a vital role in boosting total military land force capability across USAREUR's area of responsibility." He continued, "Participation in joint and combined exercises enhances our professional relationships and improves overall coordination with allied militaries in times of crisis."

U.S. Air Force Gen Joseph Lengyel, Chief of the National Guard Bureau and member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, visited exercise Saber Strike held in Latvia in June of last year. Gen Lengyel began the visit in a conference with Lt. Col. Wade Rutland, commander of 1st Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry; Col. Ilmars A. Lejins, commander of the NATO Latvian Land Forces; and MG Gregory Vadnais, Adjutant General for the Michigan National Guard. In the conference Lt. Col. Rutland briefed Gen Lengyel on development plans for the Latvia Multinational Battalion BG. While at the exercise, the general also met with members of the 1775th Military Police Company, 210th Military Police Battalion, 177th Military Police Brigade, Michigan Army National Guard; and 3rd Battalion, 157th Field Artillery Regiment, 169th Fires Brigade, Colorado Army National Guard, who were there training as part of the exercise.

"It's an important part of the NATO Alliance," Gen Lengyel said. "Any potential scenario that will require a military response is going to be a combined operation." He continued, "[Exercises like] Saber Strike are very important in that we get to work together [with European forces]. We get to make sure our forces are interoperable, and we get to become familiar with the environment in Europe, so that together we can work for the common defense of our partner nations." ●



Rising water levels from Hurricane Maria destroyed this home in Jayuya, Puerto Rico, Oct. 9, 2017.

# AFTER THE STORM

## An update on the National Guard's response to Hurricanes Maria, Harvey and Irma

BY STAFF WRITER Drew Lansbury

**B**eginning in late August, Soldiers and Airmen of the National Guard have been actively responding to the catastrophic series of hurricanes that swept through the United States this year.

With Hurricane Harvey making landfall in Texas on Aug. 26, Hurricane Irma hitting the Florida Keys on Sept. 10 and Hurricane Maria thrashing Puerto Rico on Sept. 20, the National Guard has been in a posture of ongoing activation in response to the devastating natural disasters impacting the Nation.

### HURRICANE MARIA

As relief efforts for Hurricane Harvey and Hurricane Irma were coming to a close, Hurricane Maria was on a dangerous path of destruction in the Caribbean.

Hurricane Maria made landfall in

Puerto Rico as a Category 4 hurricane. It ripped through the island with 150-mph winds and 30 inches of rain. It caused massive damage to the island, leaving it in an almost demolished state.

To compound matters, Puerto Rico was still in recovery from Hurricane Irma when Hurricane Maria hit – with just two weeks between the storms. After Hurricane Irma, approximately 80,000 Puerto Rican residents were without electricity. After Hurricane Maria, Puerto Rico's power grid was completely destroyed, and the number of those without electricity rose to include all 3.4 million of the island's residents.

"All of the power lines were down," said SSG Indhira Duprey of the 783rd Maintenance Company, Puerto Rico Army National Guard. "It was pitch black."

The National Guard's response to support Puerto Rico relief and recovery efforts was wide-scale. A total of 6,700

National Guard members were deployed in response to the storm. Soldiers and Airmen were deployed from Alaska, Alabama, California, Illinois, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Minnesota, North Carolina, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Washington and West Virginia.

Relief efforts on the island were divided into four task forces: rescue, engineering, security and logistics. The National Guard provided trucks, filled with MREs, to deliver food to those in need and used Black Hawk helicopters to deliver meals in areas that were difficult to reach by automobile. Relief efforts also included clearing roadways of debris, delivering fuel and generators, establishing forms of communication that did not require the power grid, creating water distribution points and partnering with local police



PFC Raiquan Wade of Charleston, South Carolina helps clear debris from the roads near Cayey, Puerto Rico in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria.

to provide security. Since the scope of the damage left by Hurricane Maria was so substantial, relief and recovery efforts will continue for the foreseeable future.

“When I got here, we had 25 helicopters and 4,500 troops,” said LTG Jeffery S. Buchanan, commander of ground forces in Puerto Rico. “Now, two weeks later, we have 68 helicopters and 14,300 troops. We’re getting a lot done, but we have a long way to go.”

The night Hurricane Irma made landfall in Puerto Rico, SSG Duprey performed rescue missions and personally experienced the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Maria.

“It was very hectic,” SSG Duprey explained. “We could hear people screaming for help. They were on their roofs, and there were a lot of elderly people who couldn’t get out of their houses. We rescued a lot of people. I can’t say an exact number, but the emergency management center where we took those people said that there were more than 3,500 people there at that time.”

Having been a part of the immediate rescue missions and the subsequent relief and recovery efforts, SSG Duprey has worked nonstop to support Puerto Rico.

“I’ve learned that you have to be prepared for every type of disaster and event,” SSG Duprey said. “In situations like this, you don’t realize how capable you are of reacting. People under stressful situations are capable of doing amazing things. I haven’t had a day off since Irma. We’ve been working the whole month just assisting and bringing people potable water and food.”

Water purification has been a primary focus in the relief efforts. SFC Juan Ortiz, of the 105th Quartermaster Water Purification and Distribution Company, has been heavily involved in the effort to bring clean water to the people of Puerto Rico.

“I’ve been in charge of coordination and making all of the arrangements and RECONs to determine the best area to deploy our equipment in order to produce potable water,” SFC Ortiz said.

To purify water taken from lakes and the sea, the company uses a Reverse Osmosis Water Purification Unit (ROWPU) that filtrates the water by applying pressure on a high level. Using this method, as of Oct. 30, 2017, the unit has produced over 750,000 gallons of purified water. Using this method, as of Oct. 30, 2017, the unit has produced over 750,000 gallons of purified water.

“It’s been a rough ride,” SFC Ortiz said. “The conditions of the roads made it harder to access locations. But after we got ourselves to places where we could start working and deploying our equipment, we could help the people that were in need of water.”

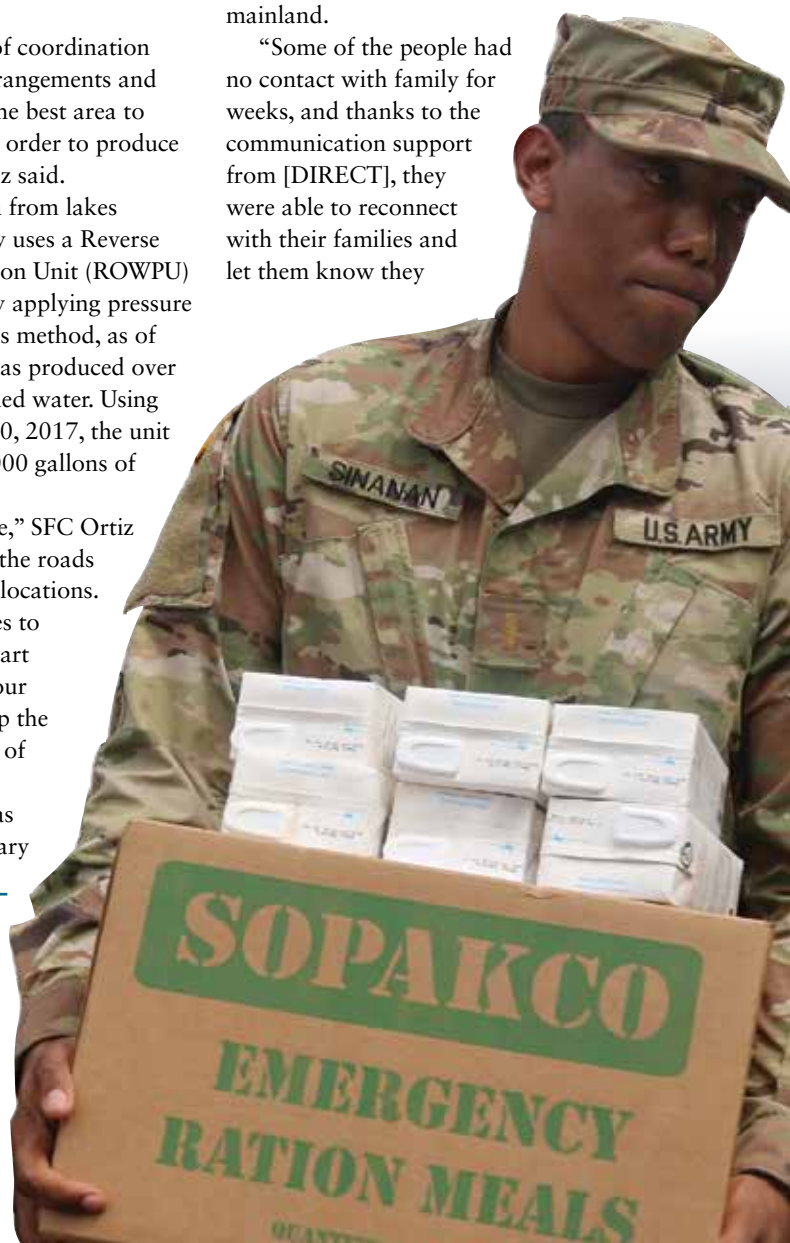
While Puerto Rico was afflicted with extraordinary

2LT Mark Sinanan, Signal Officer, Joint Force Headquarters, Virgin Islands Army National Guard carries a box of Meals-Ready-to-Eat and water for civilians at the St. Croix Educational Complex High School, one of four points of distribution.

damage from Hurricane Maria, progress has been made. On Sept. 29, 2017, 91 percent of cellular service in Puerto Rico was out of commission. According to the Department of Defense, as of Nov. 3, 2017, 90 percent of the population’s cellular services had been restored.

Reestablishing methods of communication has been an ongoing effort. National Guard Soldiers were able to increase communications between the Territory and the mainland by using the Disaster Incident Response Emergency Communications Terminal (DIRECT). DIRECT allows the Army National Guard to provide communication services when local commercial networks are down. During Hurricane Maria relief efforts, DIRECT created a communications bridge to first responders and allowed citizens to contact their families back on the mainland.

“Some of the people had no contact with family for weeks, and thanks to the communication support from [DIRECT], they were able to reconnect with their families and let them know they



are okay,” said SFC Travis Martinelli, a member of the Nevada Army National Guard’s DIRECT team.

The second of the U.S. Territories caught in the deadly path of this summer’s hurricanes, the U.S. Virgin Islands, was still recovering from damage caused by Hurricane Irma when Hurricane Maria pummeled the islands with a second blow. The storm’s powerful winds left St. Croix, the largest of the U.S. Virgin Islands, with damaged infrastructures, downed communications, destroyed power grids, roads covered in debris and an estimated \$200 million worth of repairs.

The National Guard provided storm survivors with food, water, medical treatment, aerial ambulatory transport, shelter and security. States supporting the U.S. Virgin Islands include: Florida, Kentucky, Missouri, Mississippi, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia and Vermont.

One of the

Guard’s larger initiatives during the recovery was the cleaning of mold and debris from schools and public buildings in St. Croix. This effort was part of Operation Island Restore, a domestic operation that brought 1,900 National Guard Soldiers and Airmen from 37 States and Territories to the U.S. Virgin Islands.

“We had the opportunity for [the Nation] to see the National Guard in action and understand why it’s critical for the National Guard to be in every State and Territory,” said BG Deborah Howell, Adjutant General of the Virgin Islands.

As of Oct. 20, 2017, more than 2,800 students and 271 teachers were able to

return to schools in the U.S. Virgin Islands, with more set to return in the following weeks.

Recovery efforts for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands are ongoing. Multiple roads have been cleared, hospitals and stores have reopened, commercial flights are up and running and power is gradually being restored. However, recovery will continue for some time. “Reflecting on the tremendous effort put forth by the National Guard, and by Puerto Rican citizens, SFC Ortiz commented, “I’ve learned that no matter how hard you get hit, we can stand up, come together and help each other.”



**ABOVE:** SPC Raymond Avery of Townville, South Carolina takes a break from clearing roads in Puerto Rico to say hello to a young boy in the vicinity of Cayey. **BELOW:** Soldiers assigned to the Puerto Rico National Guard patrol one of the main highways of the San Juan metropolitan area that was hit by floods after Hurricane Maria.

## HURRICANE HARVEY

This past summer, Hurricane Harvey made landfall as a Category 4 storm near Rockport, Texas, accompanied by heavy rain and fierce winds. The hurricane left more than 300,000 people without electricity, an estimated \$198 billion worth of damages, more than 32,000 people displaced in shelters and at least 90 confirmed fatalities. But amidst the loss and destruction, the National Guard was there, diligently working, facilitating relief and recovery efforts to help bring the affected areas of Texas back to normalcy.

Nicknamed Task Force 56, the 56th Infantry Brigade Combat Team was responsible for coordinating the relief efforts in Texas, which included response missions in the eastern, central and southern regions of the State. These areas included the cities and suburbs of Houston, Corpus Christi and Beaumont. The Task Force, led by COL Carlton Smith, was activated in Texas for a month responding to the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Harvey.

“The relief effort took about four weeks before we could say that we did everything we could to get people out of danger and out of the impacted area,” said COL Smith, commander of the 56th Infantry Brigade Combat Team.



Joint Operations Center at Camp Blanding, Fla.

With the initial dangers stabilized, the National Guard has completed relief efforts in Texas. Currently, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is performing recovery operations. COL Smith noted his pride in the relief efforts the Task Force provided and applauded the National Guard's level of preparedness in responding to Hurricane Harvey.

"I think [relief efforts] went very well," COL Smith said. "Because of our experiences with past hurricanes, we were more prepared to respond to this. Two or three days prior to the hurricane making land, we already had units stationed and had armories ready to receive people once it was safe to start rescue and relief operations."

Having the right equipment was essential to the overall success of the relief efforts. According to COL Smith, high-water vehicles, helicopters and boats were the primary assets used during rescue and relief missions. Approximately 18 DIRECT systems were also on site.

"[The equipment] was critical, especially when we talk about the rescue operations," said COL Smith. "While we were there, close to 1,000 individuals were rescued, particularly in the Orange and Beaumont areas. When we got there six or seven days after the storm hit land, Orange was pretty much still underwater. We had boats, but a lot of citizens had more boats than we did, and they helped with the rescue operations. They allowed us to accompany them on their boats or use their boats when necessary."

COL Smith went on to note his thanks to the citizens and civil authorities in Texas for contributing to the success of the relief

operations. According to COL Smith, the citizens had first-hand knowledge of what areas had a greater need and which areas were easier to access. The Task Force was able to more efficiently respond to the needs of the affected areas and citizens because of this shared information.

"The integration of the Guard, the citizens and the civil authorities stood out," COL Smith said. "The citizens were right there with us. They didn't just stand back and let us do our work. They got in there and did some of the heavy lifting with us. They knew the areas that needed help better than we did. We linked up with civil authorities and citizens who told us where to go and where to set up points of distribution to get the most out to certain areas and get our high-water vehicles into certain neighborhoods."

Reflecting on the Guard's response to Hurricane Harvey, COL Smith attributed its success to the readiness of the National Guard Soldiers and Airmen.

"The initial preparedness and early deployment of troops to those [high alert] locations, wherever we could reach them – that was key in our success."

## HURRICANE IRMA

Hurricane Irma, a record-breaking Category 5 hurricane, tore through the



COL Carlton Smith (right) greets senior leaders to the area of operations for Hurricane Harvey relief efforts.

Army PFC Cody Hughes (left) and team leader SGT Robert Brown with the 753rd Brigade Engineer Battalion's Company B remove a refrigerator with weeks-old food from a Marathon, Fla., home left devastated by Hurricane Irma.



Caribbean and Florida Keys just two weeks after Hurricane Harvey devastated Texas. Irma caused an estimated \$50 billion in damages and caused at least 90 deaths in the United States. On Sept. 12, 2017, almost 4.4 million Florida homes and businesses were without power.

Recovery efforts went in full swing once the immediate dangers of the hurricane subsided. Less than two weeks after Irma barreled through Florida, power was restored to 99 percent of Floridians.

The Florida Keys suffered the worst amount of damage, leaving over 12,000 homes uninhabitable. Being a string of islands, the Keys faced a great deal of challenges following Irma and were a large focus of the National Guard's efforts. Within 24 hours of Irma making land, the Florida National Guard's 753rd Brigade Engineer Battalion utilized their heavy equipment to clear U.S. 1 from Florida City to Key West, allowing first responders and others to gain access to the Keys.

The two-hour minimum travel time from the mainland to the lower Keys made it difficult for many commercial contractors to access the area and assist with the debris clearing and removal. In response, on Sept. 25, 2017, Florida Governor Rick Scott activated a task force, led by the 753rd Brigade Engineer Battalion, to conduct residential demucking and debris clearing for the residents of Monroe County. Monroe County, 99 percent of which sits in the Florida Keys, was hit the hardest by Hurricane Irma. It left the low-lying islands of Monroe County covered in debris.

As of Oct. 5, 2017, the Task Force had completed 244 debris removal and demucking missions in Monroe County. The Keys have since reopened to regular traffic and are continuing to rebuild.

"We [had] the unique opportunity to return and help these fellow Floridians take their first steps towards rebuilding and recovery," said LTC Betsy Evans,

Commander of the 753rd Brigade Engineer Battalion. "This is what we signed up for, and I'm extremely proud to have [had] the opportunity to be a part of this critical mission in support of Monroe County and the State of Florida."

Hurricane Irma also took its toll on the U.S. Virgin Islands, causing immense amounts of damage on the islands of St. John, St. Thomas and Water Island. In support of the U.S. Virgin Islands' recovery, the Virginia National Guard's 116th Infantry Brigade Combat Team was deployed as mission command headquarters for the Joint Task Force Stonewall, a special recovery task force.

Joint Task Force Stonewall was made up of Soldiers and Airmen from 18 different states and the District of Columbia. The task force served to augment the capabilities of the U.S. Virgin Islands National Guard. Joint Task Force Stonewall was assigned to deliver supplies at 16 points of distribution, provide security and traffic control, conduct airfield operations and provide communications support to critical infrastructure sites.

"We are making steady progress," said COL Scott Smith, Joint Task Force Stonewall commander. "We were welcomed with open arms by our gracious hosts from the Virgin Islands National Guard, and I am so proud of our Soldiers and Airmen who answered the call of duty to help our fellow citizens." ●



PFC Mykalob Stephens and members of Oklahoma National Guard's Company D, 1st Battalion, 179th Infantry Regiment, 45th Infantry Division, bandage minor wounds received by residents during Hurricane Harvey in Port Arthur, Texas.

# CITIZEN-SOLDIER

## MAGAZINE

*About Soldiers and Their Families, For Soldiers and Their Families*


Join us in achieving our mission of providing useful and engaging content in every issue!



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# CALIFORNIA'S DEADLY FIRESTORM

***How the California National Guard Ignited Hope Amidst Historic Wildfires***

**BY STAFF WRITER** Tatyana White-Jenkins

**I**n October 2017, a series of life-threatening wildfires broke out in Northern California. More than 2,000 members of the California National Guard answered the call to assist in relief and recovery efforts in response to the third deadliest fire season in California's history.

The series of fires ignited on Oct. 8, burning over 200,000 acres of land and destroying over 8,400 structures throughout the counties of Napa, Lake, Sonoma, Mendocino and Butte. By Nov. 29, there were 44 confirmed deaths from the wildfires. At least 185 people were hospitalized, and 90,000 individuals were evacuated from their homes. The fire series, dubbed the Northern California Firestorm, was made up of several smaller fires including the Nuns, Adobe, Norrbom, Pressley, Patrick, Tubbs, Pocket, Atlas, Lobo and Cascade fires. In an official release by CAL FIRE, California's agency responsible for fire protection, it was announced that the Tubbs Fire in Santa Rosa was the most destructive wildfire on record in the State of California.

Once it became apparent that the wildfires were continuing to grow at what was

becoming an uncontrollable rate, California Governor Jerry Brown issued an emergency proclamation for the counties affected by the massive wildfires. On Oct. 10, California National Guard Soldiers and Airmen were mobilized to join CAL FIRE in the battle against the wildfires.

“It was incredible to see multiple agencies come together,” said 1SG Claudia Ramirez of the 140th Chemical Company. “There was CAL FIRE, the sheriffs, local police, search and rescue and other agencies; I had never experienced something like that where we worked as one to support one mission.”

To say the California National Guard, has had plenty of experience fighting wildfires would be an understatement. California’s hot and dry climate makes it prone to fires ignited by the sun in the State’s many brush areas. California, on average, experiences over 4,000 wildfires a year, according to CAL FIRE statistics. These fires are typically easily managed by CAL FIRE with the help of California Army National Guard when needed. But the historic wildfires of 2017 put the skills of firefighters, even as experienced as those in CAL FIRE and the California Army National Guard, to the test. A mind-boggling two million gallons of water were required to fight the fires. Operating in conjunction with those fighting on the front line of the fires, Guard members used Black Hawk helicopters to drop water and douse flames from above.

In support of emergency management agencies, when gas stations were without power, the California Army National Guard used their trucks to bring fuel to first responders. They assisted in fueling emergency vehicles and bringing fuel into inaccessible areas. The California National Guard provided engineers, military police (MP), infantry, search and rescue and security to assist in the fight against the deadly fires.

“We assisted with search and rescue, decontamination procedures, guarding evacuation shelters and helped with various logistics at the emergency operations center,” said LTC Chris Angle, commander of the 579th Engineer Battalion.

Once the fires settled, Soldiers and Airmen assisted in searching the affected areas for victims and personal items of displaced homeowners.

“Our primary mission was to search the



Soldiers of the California National Guard and members of CAL FIRE clear charred trees and branches in Santa Rosa following the Northern California wildfires.



PFC Vicente Garcia of Echo Company, 1st Battalion, 140th Aviation Regiment, California Army National Guard, pumps fuel into a UH-60 Black Hawk at Coalinga Municipal Airport in Fresno County.

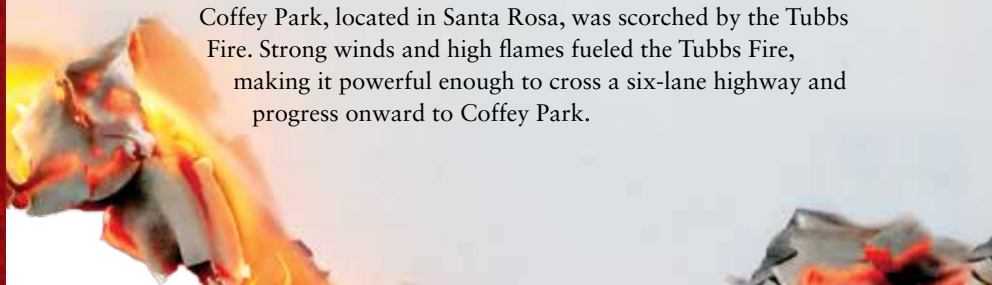
area for any potential victims that didn’t make it out of their homes,” CPT Estelle Hong, commander of the 235th Engineering Company, told *VICE News*. “After [that, our job] was collecting valuables found out in the open around the area. That way we could tag them and get them back to the rightful owners.”

During their searches, California Army National Guard members found jewelry, documents, photos and firearms amongst the rubble. Guard members even found a 150-year-old family heirloom belonging to an elderly couple. The heirloom has since been returned to the grateful owners.

“[Recovered personal items] were handed off to the Sonoma County Sheriff’s Office where deputies worked to find the owner,” CPT Hong went on to explain. “I don’t think I could ever fully understand what [homeowners] were going through. Being out here and seeing everything that they’ve ever owned just gone – that’s very tough.”

Like CPT Hong, 1SG Ramirez saw firsthand the destruction the fires left behind. She completed search and rescue missions in Coffey Park, one of the areas most devastated by the wildfires.

Coffey Park, located in Santa Rosa, was scorched by the Tubbs Fire. Strong winds and high flames fueled the Tubbs Fire, making it powerful enough to cross a six-lane highway and progress onward to Coffey Park.





enforcement in Sonoma County and assist agencies under the California Office of Emergency Services. Making this the first time since the 1992 Los Angeles Riots that the entire brigade had been activated.

“The 49th has become the premier unit for civil support on the ground during times of disaster or civil unrest,” said CSM Richard S. Gibson, 49th Operations Command Sergeant Major. “We are trained to quickly alert and mobilize for all hazard response.”

Soldiers from the 49th provided security at evacuation centers, helped control traffic around restricted areas and searched for lost residents. All together, over 600 California Army National Guard members controlled more than 50 traffic control points (TCPs). They assisted in securing evacuation areas to ensure members of the community and their property remained safe and secure.

“Everyone stayed stern at the TCPs,” felt 1SG Antonio Delgadillo of the 149th CBRN [chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear] Company. “There were some people who got irate, but the Soldiers and Airmen defused the situations with a lot of understanding. We remembered that there were those who had lost everything. We felt for them.”

According to Sonoma County Sheriff Rob Giordano, California Army National Guard’s presence and partnership with local authorities gave law enforcement agencies the additional manpower required to appropriately respond to all areas of need during the massive wildfires.

“The California National Guard was invaluable in our response during the fires,” said Giordano. “They were professional and capable. This was the largest natural disaster our county had ever faced. We absolutely relied on National Guard troops and mutual aid to keep our community safe.”

The National Guard’s presence also helped calm potentially hostile situations at evacuation sites, like the Cavanagh Recreation Center in Sonoma County. While the center usually serves as a space for adults to mentor at-risk youth, during the fires, the center was used as an evacuation site for hundreds of displaced residents.

Deborah Dalton, Executive Director



SPC Mike Nolasco (left) and SPC Gabriel Retana of the 340th Brigade Sustainment Battalion, California Army National Guard, carry furniture and equipment into a loading van at the Sonoma Developmental Center.

“We were tasked with working with the sheriff for search and rescue,” 1SG Ramirez explained. “When we moved into Coffey Park, and I saw the devastation, that stood out to me. It looked like a scene from a film. Everything was completely wiped out. Homes were completely burnt, and vehicles had melted. It was a shocking sight.”

Worse than their own personal reactions to the aftermath, California Army National Guard members saw the reactions of citizens seeing their homes for the first time since the fires started. Thousands of residents were forced to evacuate their homes with nothing but the clothes on their backs. When residents were able to return to what was left of their homes, it was an emotional scene.

“We experienced homeowners first coming back to their houses after the fires,” 1SG Ramirez said. “Seeing the emotion and devastation [on their faces] – that was a powerful moment.”

The entire 49th MP Brigade was activated to support the fire response efforts in Northern California. They were called to support local law



of the Cavanagh Recreation Center, noticed tension amongst the evacuees and worried about impending conflicts. The staff at the center began experiencing complaints of stolen water, medicine and clothes. However, the chaos subsided once the 270th and 870th MP companies arrived at the center.

The Soldiers brought order to the center and gave solace to the local citizens. They assisted in organizing evacuees, providing security, carrying in food and other items and answering people's questions.

"The fact that they were here gave us peace of mind," Dalton said. "We just weren't prepared for [the number of evacuees]. This center had never seen anything like it. With the Soldiers here, we could concentrate on what needed to be done [to run the site]."

Language barriers were a major challenge for many affected by the wildfires. Some of California Army National Guard's bilingual Soldiers served as translators for non-English speaking residents who were in need of public services. Soldiers of the 1040th Quartermaster Company acted as interpreters at Local Assistance Centers (LACs). They explained to victims the process for applying for disaster assistance and answered their questions.

"We were helping put people at ease," said SPC Rafael Estrada of the 1040th Quartermaster Company. "Some people were afraid to come in and get help, but we explained what they could receive. It just made it easier for everyone when [we] all understood each other."

"Their help here was invaluable," said FEMA Region IX representative Eric Simmons. "It's hard to get people to understand what they're eligible to receive when we can't communicate with them. The [National Guard Soldiers] translating bridged the language barrier."

A unique mission in Napa County brought Soldiers of the 185th MP Battalion to the Sonoma Development Center. The Sonoma Development Center is a State-run center that serves individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities. When the fires approached dangerously close to the

facility, the entire center was evacuated.

"The governor's office put a huge emphasis on getting this facility up and running again," said MAJ Andrew Hanson, Executive Officer for the 185th MP Battalion. "The fire got so close, [structures] had minor damage and soot, and every building on the campus reeked of smoke."

Soldiers were tasked with cleaning the walls and ceilings of the development center, transporting furniture and medical equipment and completing any task needed to help get the center ready to pass public health inspection and return to normal operations.

"A job that would [normally] take a couple of weeks, our task force did in about two and a half days," MAJ Hanson explained. "It was an interesting mission, and it was quite striking to see the Soldiers' morale get boosted. It was rewarding because we got to see the residents come back into the facility and back into their home. They were so happy to be back there."

"We couldn't have done it without the help of the California Army National Guard," said Aleana Carreon, Sonoma Development Center Executive Director. "They were so polite and so generous to our staff and to our residents. They were amazing from the first day they got here."

Looking back at the historic response, MAJ Hanson commented that while most fire response missions take two to four days, the severity of these fires required his task force to remain active for two weeks. He went on to say that, despite the tragedy they were facing, residents showed overwhelming encouragement and gratitude to the Soldiers throughout the entire activation.

"The outpour of community support from the local citizens was mind-blowing," said MAJ Hanson. "Every day we had people coming by wanting to give us food and different comfort items. It was a constant flow. We had these awesome restaurant owners come by our staging area and ask if they could cook us a meal for over 500 people. They just wanted to thank us in any way they could."

"I was humbled to help the community," said 1SG Ramirez. "There was a lot of devastation, but the community was united and grateful. They made us want to do our best to get their cities back in order." ●

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CW2 McKayla Dembowski, as assistant pilot from the 1106th Theater Aviation Sustainment Maintenance Group, drops water from her UH-60 Black Hawk as part of the firefight against the wildfires.





# WHAT IT'S LIKE TO FLY

## FOUR HOURS WITH AN IDAHO ARMY NATIONAL GUARD BLACK HAWK CREW CHIEF

Story Provided by CPT Robert J. Taylor,  
IDAHO NATIONAL GUARD

Idaho Army National Guard UH-60 A/L Black Hawk crew chief SGT Marcus Wilson

*Idaho Army National Guard Public Affairs Officer CPT Robert J. Taylor shadows UH-60 A/L Black Hawk crew chief SGT Marcus Wilson on a training flight from Gowen Field in Boise, Idaho to Ontario, Ore. SGT Wilson serves in the 1-183rd Aviation Regiment (Assault Battalion) in the Idaho Army National Guard.*

## 1800 **SHOWTIME**

Showtime for the flight was scheduled for 1800, and UH-60 A/L Black Hawk crew chief SGT Marcus Wilson is already 30 minutes into his second shift of the day. He is finishing his review of the aircraft's logbook as the flight's pilots and other crew chiefs arrive.

SGT Wilson is looking for maintenance faults or anything that could affect the aircraft's mission. The log keeps track of flight hours, upcoming inspections and scheduled maintenance.

"You don't want to fly into an inspection," he says, explaining that he's reviewing the maintenance schedule and comparing it to the aircraft's flight hours to ensure an inspection won't be required during the flight.

He talks briefly with the pilot-in-command of tonight's flight, CW4 Walker Craig, and the other crew chiefs to discuss that night's mission and training objectives.

SGT Wilson and another crew chief, SGT Joshua Gilman, hope

to upgrade from a progression of Readiness Level III to Readiness Level II during the night part of the flight. Both Soldiers have a Readiness Level I progression for day operations, the highest of the three unit-level progressions. Pilots and crew chiefs have separate day and night progressions.

CW4 Craig confirms what tasks must be completed for the crew chiefs to progress.

### **"I FIGURED IT WAS MY TURN"**

SGT Wilson has served in the Idaho Army National Guard for four years. He enlisted three days after his 17th birthday, wasting no time getting started in what he hopes will be at least a 20-year career.

His grandfather was in the U.S. Army and served in Vietnam. "I figured it was my turn," SGT Wilson says. "I joined because I love my country; I wanted to do my duty."

Three weeks earlier, SGT Wilson was hired as a federal

“

***You could be touching the ground and have no idea.*** ”

- SGT Marcus Wilson



technician to work full-time as a Black Hawk mechanic. As a technician, he maintains the same helicopters in which he flies as a traditional Idaho Army National Guard Soldier. Though he wears the same uniform for both jobs at Gowen Field, he has two separate positions.

As a crew chief, he must meet semi-annual minimum requirements to stay current on the aircraft. Every six months, SGT Wilson must fly at least 12 hours, including five hours with night vision goggles and an hour of flying unaided (without night vision goggles) at night.

While crew chiefs can come close to reaching their flight hours training requirements during drill weekends, flight crews are allocated additional flight training periods to help them meet the requirements.

Before he got the full-time position, SGT Wilson was largely limited to flying during drill weekends because of the commute from his home in Emmett, Idaho, to Gowen Field. Tonight, he will fly for the third time in as many weeks.

But before he and the rest of the crew can lift off, there's still a lot of work that must be done on the ground.

## 1818 **I ACTUALLY GET TO FLY NOW**

SGT Wilson stops by his locker and grabs his flight bag on his way to the helicopter.

“Crew chiefs are responsible for everything back of the pilots' seats,” he says as he starts to unload the contents of his flight bag onto his seat.

“This is the most expensive piece of equipment I own,” he says, pulling out his flight helmet. He also unloads a pair of gloves and a cable long enough to let him communicate with the crew from outside the aircraft.

SGT Wilson has been a Black Hawk crew chief for almost a year. He was an AH-64D Apache Longbow crew chief before the 1-183rd Aviation Regiment (Assault Battalion) transitioned to Black Hawks in 2016. SGT Wilson prefers the Black Hawk over the Apache for a simple reason. “I actually get to fly now,” he says.

Apaches have just two seats, with room only for the pilots. Black Hawks hold two pilots, two crew chiefs and up to 11 passengers.

“There definitely has to be unit cohesion,” SGT Wilson says. “Pilots don't see the sling load. That's all on the crew chiefs to put the helicopter where it needs to be.”

## 1828 **PRE-FLIGHT INSPECTION**

SGT Gilman joins SGT Wilson a few minutes later to assist him with getting the aircraft ready to fly. He's brought the crew's night vision goggles and radios. They load the equipment and run through the pre-flight checklist together.

They check the aircraft from the front to the rear before SGT Wilson climbs on top to check the engine compartments. He leaves the engine compartments open so the pilots can verify everything themselves before the flight.

Weather caused earlier flights to be canceled, so it's the aircraft's first flight of the day. Everything must be inspected, and SGT Gilman takes extra care to make sure the windshields are clean so dust isn't magnified through the crew's night vision goggles.

The pilots walk out to the Black Hawk as the crew chiefs finish their inspections. They are joined by SGT Tom Barber, the crew chief flight instructor for the flight. He will oversee SGT Wilson's and SGT Gilman's progression to Readiness Level II.

The three crew chiefs are the same rank, but rank doesn't matter in the aircraft. Experience and qualification levels determine the crew's roles and responsibilities, and when it comes to safety, everyone is on equal ground.

“If anyone is uncomfortable with something that is happening during the flight, then they can ask that it stop – and we are supposed to stop doing whatever we are doing,” SGT Wilson says.



SGT Wilson inspects his aircraft prior to a training flight.

## 2025 **A QUIET FLIGHT TO OREGON**

CW4 Craig and the flight's other pilot, CW2 Thomas Budge, perform their own pre-flight check on the aircraft. While the crew chiefs wait, SGT Barber instructs SGT Gilman to brief the flight's passenger.

When the pilots finish their check, CW4 Craig runs the pre-flight crew brief. He spot-checks the crew while offering his own insight as he makes his way through his checklist. Drawing from decades of experience – he's flown Black Hawks for the Idaho Army National Guard since 1998 – he'll continue to coach and mentor the crew throughout the flight.

CW4 Craig briefs the crew on the route and tasks for the flight. The crew will fly to Ontario, Ore., return to Gowen Field and then practice landing on slopes outside the base while wearing night vision goggles. The two-hour flight has been scheduled to give the crew one hour of flight time during daylight and one hour at night.

The pilots take their seats and go through their run-up checklist. SGT Wilson sits on the right side of the Black Hawk, where the lead crew chief typically sits. SGT Gilman sits on the left side, and SGT Barber sits where he can observe both Soldiers.

SGT Wilson and SGT Gilman exit the helicopter before the pilots start the engine. They visually inspect specific movements the pilots make with the engine control levers. After ensuring the rotor system and engines are operating properly, SGT Wilson

grabs the wheel chocks and climbs into his seat through his window.

The helicopter taxis down the runway. The pilots check the brakes and perform a health indicator test on the engines before making a final call to flight operations to get the all-clear to fly. CW2 Budge lifts the aircraft approximately 10 feet into the air and does a hover power check before heading to Ontario.

SGT Wilson and SGT Gilman watch for other aircraft and birds during the flight. Other than a few jokes among the crew and occasional talk between the pilots, things are pretty quiet once the Black Hawk is finally in the air.

It takes the crew about 25 minutes to reach Ontario. After the crew calculates how much fuel the Black Hawk is burning per hour, there isn't much for the crew chiefs to do on the flight back. That changes quickly once the helicopter lands in Boise.

The sun is down by the time CW2 Budge lands the helicopter just east of Gowen Field. The crew quickly puts on night vision goggles, and the crew chiefs are ready to work.

For the next hour, CW2 Budge lands the aircraft on uneven terrain. He relies on SGT Wilson to his right and SGT Gilman on his left to let him know how far he is from the ground as he lands. Each crew chief puts his head outside the Black Hawk and verbally assists the pilot to the ground, one side at a time.

SGT Barber reminds each crew chief what to look for, and

CW2 Budge lifts the helicopter up and down several times to let the crew chiefs practice.

“You don’t want to get fixated on one spot because your depth perception goes out the window,” SGT Wilson says. “You could be touching the ground and have no idea.”

CW2 Budge flies around to give the crew chiefs new landing spots and alternates landing on the left and right side of the aircraft. Helping land the Black Hawk on slopes isn’t the only task the crew chiefs must perform to progress, but it’s one of the most difficult tasks each must demonstrate during the flight.

While the Black Hawk is in the air, CW4 Craig tells CW2 Budge there is a simulated fire in the engine. CW2 Budge runs through his checklist and lands the helicopter as quickly as possible. The scenario accomplishes major training objectives for both CW2 Budge and the crew chiefs.

Like SGT Wilson, CW2 Budge has transferred from the AH-64 Apache to the Black Hawk. He’s still getting used to having help with landing his helicopter.

“I’m used to clearing my own aircraft,” CW2 Budge says. “With crew chiefs, I have the ability to clear the aircraft, but it’s with the help of the crew chief on the same side. He can see the whole area and can look behind the aircraft. As a new Black Hawk pilot, I just have to slow down a little bit and give them the chance to do so.”

After an hour of flying in the dark and landing the Black Hawk in dirt, CW2 Budge lands the Black Hawk on Gowen Field’s runway and taxis back to where the crew started the flight. After the pilots shut down the aircraft, SGT Wilson and SGT Gilman unload the radios and night vision goggles.

All five members of the crew help chain down the Black Hawk and store their flight bags in their lockers. Once back in the flight operations center, CW4 Craig and SGT Barber log the other crew members’ flight hours.

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CW2 Thomas Budge, left, conducting pilot-in-command training.

## 2240 AFTER-ACTION REVIEW

It’s been almost an hour since CW2 Budge landed the Black Hawk at Gowen Field for the final time, but the crew members don’t seem to be in a hurry to leave. They spend several minutes joking with each other and asking about each other’s families. Pilots and crew chiefs from other flights filter in and join the conversation.

After CW4 Craig and CW2 Budge head home, SGT Barber lets SGT Wilson and SGT Gilman know they both passed their progression flights. He gives them both additional feedback on their performance before SGT Wilson leaves for the night.

It’s after 2300 and SGT Wilson will have to be back to work in the morning. But first, he’ll make a stop on his way home for dinner.

“I’m going to Jack in the Box,” he says. ●

“*I joined because I love my country; I wanted to do my duty.*”

- SGT Marcus Wilson





# Exceptional Families, Exceptional Service

The Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) helps service members gain access to programs and services that can assist in managing the care of Family members with special needs.

## Services offered by EFMP include:

- Non-clinical case management, including individualized service plans;
- Early intervention services;
- The identification of community resources appropriate for specific special needs;
- The identification of local schools with special needs programs or services.

For more information, visit [www.myarmyonesource.com/familyprogramsandservices/FamilyPrograms](http://www.myarmyonesource.com/familyprogramsandservices/FamilyPrograms) or speak to the EFMP manager in the Army Community Service office at the nearest military installation.



HAPPY

# Birthday

Army National Guard

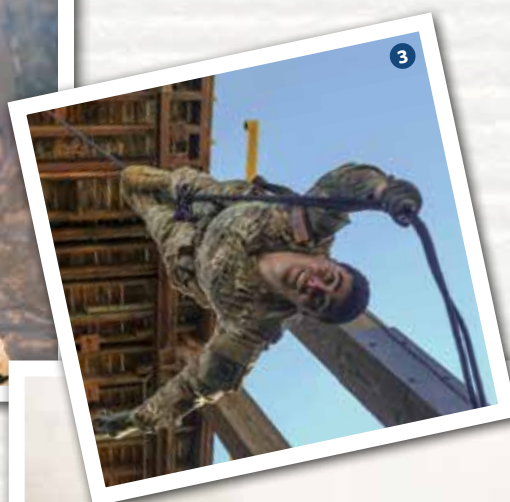
38! Years of Being Always Ready, Always There.

*"Happy birthday to the Army National Guard! I am humbled to serve my country and support my community."*

— 1SG Claudia Ramirez  
140TH CHEMICAL COMPANY,  
CALIFORNIA ARNG

*"Hey Army National Guard—Happy Birthday! Without the Guard, it would be hard to rebuild Puerto Rico."*

— CW5 Israel Alvarado  
PUERTO RICO ARNG



*"I want to wish the Army National Guard a happy birthday and take this time to thank them for the opportunity to go to school and gain knowledge and experience that I couldn't obtain anywhere else with any other organization."*

— 1LT Jerry Rausch  
ALPHA COMPANY, 116TH  
CAVALRY BRIGADE, IDAHO ARNG



*"Happy 38<sup>th</sup> birthday to the Army National Guard! I couldn't be any prouder to wear this uniform."*

— SSG Edward Siguenza  
CALIFORNIA ARNG



*"Happy Birthday! Thank you for the opportunity to serve my community and this country. I am thankful."*

— SPC Robert Baker  
NEVADA ARNG

*"I wish the Guard a happy birthday and many, many more. It's an organization that carries so much importance to our Nation and the States it supports."*

— COL Carlton Smith  
COMMANDER, 56TH INFANTRY BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM, TEXAS ARNG



*"Happy Birthday Army National Guard. I enjoy my life in the National Guard. My unit is my home."*

— SGT Vickie Bailey  
HHC, 170TH MILITARY POLICE  
BATTALION, GEORGIA ARNG



1. SSG Myra Estes (right) of the Maine Army National Guard Medical Detachment mentors PFC Allison Alcantara during a land navigation course at the Bog Brook Training Site in Gilead. 2. Oregon National Guard, HH-60M Black Hawk Helicopter Crew Chief, SSG Jonathon Edwards with Charlie Company, 7-158th Aviation, observes the terrain and fires during an area orientation flight near Baker City, Ore. 3. 1-153rd Infantry Regiment Reconnaissance Soldier, Arkansas ARNG conducts rappel operations at Fort Bliss, Texas. 4. A 1917 New York National Guard regiment walks along railroad tracks toward railroad passenger cars on their way to training camp. 5. 1LT John Dupre (left) and SGT Curtis Bowen, both with the North Carolina Army National Guard's C Company, 1st Battalion, 252nd Armored Regiment, receive instructions during the Tactical Combat Casualty Care event in the GEN Gordon Sullivan Cup. 6. 1LT Monica Porter with the 1230th Transportation Company ground guides a platoon vehicle out of the motor pool. 7. Colombian Army engineers learn about bridging techniques from U.S. Soldiers assigned to the 125th Multi Role Bridge Company, South Carolina Army National Guard, at Clarks Hill Training Center, S.C. 8. In the Louisiana Maneuvers, circa 1916, Signal troops from Troop B, 1st Squadron, 107th Cavalry, Ohio National Guard, discuss strategy amidst the dense woodlands. 9. Georgia Army National Guard CPT Chad Tyson gives his son Chase a piggy-back-ride during a welcome home ceremony for the Georgia National Guard's Agribusiness Development Team III.

**1 state**  
**13 countries**

# IDAHO

## Guard At The Ready

BY STAFF WRITER Tatyana White-Jenkins

**A Citizen-Soldier must always be ready to serve both their State and the country, whenever and wherever duty calls. Soldiers of the Idaho Army National Guard fully embraced this calling when their service took them literally around the world in just one year.**

**I**n 2017, Soldiers of the Idaho Army National Guard collectively deployed to 13 different countries, totaling more than 87,000 miles of travel. Soldiers were offered opportunities for deployments to Bangladesh, Cambodia, Canada, France, Germany, Guatemala, Korea, Malaysia, Nepal, Romania, Taiwan, Tanzania and Thailand. These were Overseas Deployment Training missions, which are dedicated to the development of Soldiers' MOS skills in a foreign environment.

"Overseas Deployment Training missions are a great opportunity for members of the Idaho Army National Guard," said BG John Goodale, commander of the Idaho Army National Guard. "It provides an opportunity to demonstrate [the Soldiers'] tremendous skills and abilities, and allows them to learn from our partner nations and bring that experience and knowledge back to Idaho."

The abundance of training missions gave the Idaho Soldiers the rare experience of training under eight of the military's nine geographic combatants.

"Idaho is known as a respectable, capable and willing partner to support





Soldiers from the 116th Cavalry Brigade Combat Team and soldiers from the Malaysian Armed Forces participate in Keris Strike 2017 in Pahang, Malaysia.

“

It was eye opening to see how the rest of the world views Soldiers of the Army National Guard.”

- 1LT Jerry Rausch



COL Michael Garshak, Idaho Army National Guard Chief of Staff, addresses the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces at the closing ceremony of the Subject Matter Expert Exchange at Kampong Speu, Cambodia.

different combatant commands by providing extremely capable and motivated Soldiers to complete these missions,” said LTC Scott Sheridan, Director of Operations for the Idaho Army National Guard.

Through these deployments, Soldiers participated in missions that spanned from one to three weeks, each with a focus on a different specialty. Soldiers completed a variety of tasks, including providing medical training, mentoring cadets and participating in large training exercises.

“Soldiers that volunteered for these missions had the opportunity to utilize their MOS with our allies and partners,” said LTC Sheridan. “Anytime you utilize your MOS, you increase your aptitude, as well as the interoperability with the host nation’s soldiers and our partners.”

1LT Jerry Rausch of Alpha Company, 116th Cavalry Brigade Combat Team, went on a Cultural Understanding and Language Proficiency (CULP) mission in Tanzania. The CULP program familiarizes Army ROTC Cadets with foreign cultures. 1LT Rausch was one of four Soldiers from the State to be chosen to represent Idaho in the program. He was selected as a team leader and had the task of teaching cadets about cultural- and self-awareness. Through his mission, he was able to work with civilians and instructors from

Tanzania’s armed forces.

“The purpose was to connect cultural awareness training through immersion in a foreign culture to understand how culture and foreign language affects missions,” 1LT Rausch explained. “Part of the program is to provide training and opportunities for Cadets who are going to be the future leaders of our Army. It’s important that they understand the significance of having a good, strong relationship with not only military members of foreign nations, but also civilian members of foreign nations.”

Having never traveled out of the country on a mission, 1LT Rausch volunteered for this mission to grow personally as a Soldier.

“[The mission] was an opportunity to mobilize and deploy in a non-combat status in a foreign country for a short period of time,” 1LT Rausch said. “[Tanzania] is a developing nation in regard to infrastructure, economics and politics. It’s just a totally different experience. I wanted to gain an understanding of what it’s like to work with a host nation and to experience another culture.”

1LT Rausch said part of his development opportunity was teaching Cadets while also building relationships with Tanzanian soldiers and civilians.

“We began to create a bond with the soldiers, students and teachers down there,” 1LT Rausch

said. “It was something I couldn’t have comprehended before I went there and experienced it. It went above and beyond anything I expected. It was a great experience, both professionally and personally.”

1LT Rausch noted his surprise at the reactions of the Tanzanian soldiers and civilians. Seeing how they responded to the presence of the Army National Guard gave him a greater appreciation for the opportunities he had been given.

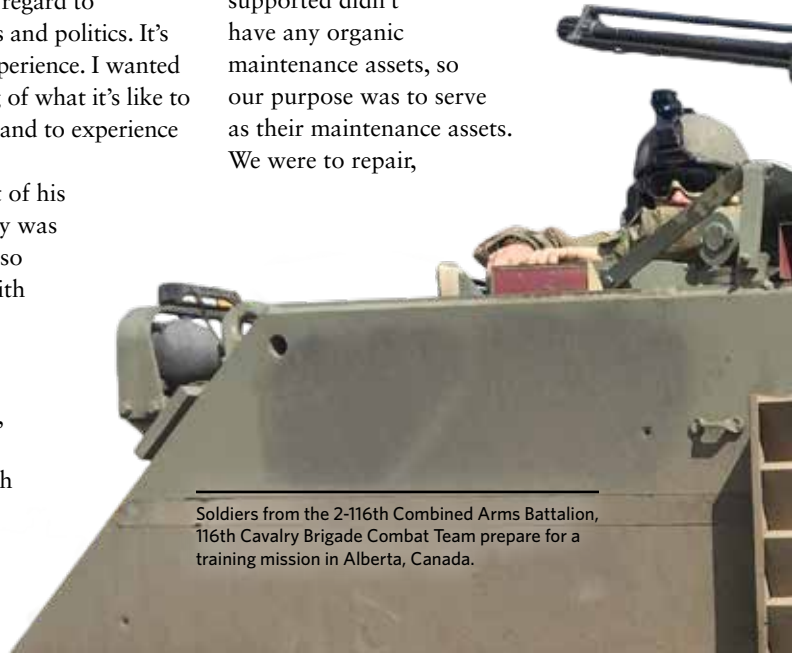
“It was eye opening to see how the rest of the world views Soldiers of the Army National Guard,” said 1LT Rausch. “The people were friendly and open minded. They have almost an idolization of the American lifestyle and culture. I feel that so often we take things for granted in our everyday lives, and that we don’t always understand or appreciate the opportunities that are presented to us.”

SGT Matthew Kessler of Bravo Company, 145th Brigade Support Battalion, volunteered for a three-week mission to Germany, which he said presented an amazing opportunity to gain valuable hands-on experience.

“The training mission is a great opportunity outside of [combat] deployment for Soldiers to see the rest of the world and actually do their job in theater or outside of their normal status,” SGT Kessler said.

With a team of 10 Soldiers, SGT Kessler’s mission was to support a reserve component by conducting services and repairs on vehicles.

“The unit we supported didn’t have any organic maintenance assets, so our purpose was to serve as their maintenance assets. We were to repair,



Soldiers from the 2-116th Combined Arms Battalion, 116th Cavalry Brigade Combat Team prepare for a training mission in Alberta, Canada.

troubleshoot, diagnose and service any type of vehicles they had,” SGT Kessler said.

With any mission, challenges might arise. For SGT Kessler, weathering the challenges presented during his mission involved using available resources and thinking outside of the box.

“There was definitely a language barrier that we had to overcome, but working with some Americans that lived there helped to work it out,” SGT Kessler said. “We also had minimal tools and parts to do the repairs, so a lot of it was trying different things, finding old parts and making do.”

Despite those small challenges, SGT Kessler and his team found the mission to be a positive experience.

“Everybody had a great time,” SGT Kessler said. “We were very comfortable and every question we had was answered. I think it was beneficial to a lot of Soldiers to do the hands-on training and be able to participate in a real-world activity. There was great leadership and we worked on quite a bit of vehicles.”

SFC Rusty Mewes of Foxtrot Company, 145th Brigade Support Battalion, traveled to Malaysia with 21 other Soldiers from the Idaho National Guard for Keris Strike 2017. The exercise gave Soldiers like SFC Mewes the opportunity to train with members of the Malaysian Armed Forces in an intense 10-day training exercise.

“During an exercise where we are there for only 10 days total and the training is only six of those days, you want to make sure all of the information is pushed out so everyone can have a [beneficial] experience,” SFC Mewes explained.

“We had a very knowledgeable team that was able to make things happen and get everything out in time.”

Keris Strike 2017 was based around working with counterparts in a fictional scenario. “The scenario was basically a peace enforcement between two countries and, in the middle of that peace enforcement, we had to incorporate humanitarian aid or disaster relief due to a flood in the area,” SFC Mewes explained.

The inclusion of the flood in the scenario proved to be invaluable training for the Malaysian forces. A few months after the planners of Keris Strike first introduced the disaster relief component in the exercise, Malaysia experienced a large flood. Because they had just trained for this type of disaster, Malaysia soldiers were better prepared to respond.

“They were trained for it,” said SFC Mewes. “Malaysia now requests that every year when we do this exercise, some type of humanitarian disaster relief and flooding is incorporated into the scenario just because of how much that [initial training] helped them [when the real floods came].”

The flood scenario turning into a real-life disaster illustrates how vital these exercises are. SFC Mewes commented on the importance of the knowledge shared through the training exercises – all while fostering positive relationships.

“One of the big impacts was just going over there, training with them and learning from them,” said SFC Mewes. “I think it’s important to train there to bring back some of their practices and let them learn our practices. It helps build relationships and allies.”

Outside of training, SFC Mewes was able to experience the Malaysian culture. The exercise included cultural days where SFC Mewes and his team were given tours of the area, followed by a ceremony. It was a chance for Soldiers to learn more about Malaysian culture and create bonds with their counterparts.



CPT Derek Derkacs explains to members of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces how to splint a fracture.



## Missions by Country



### **Bangladesh:**

UN Peacekeeping mission/training

- Medical Response course
- Language Immersion Training



### **Cambodia:**

State Partnership Program/  
Subject-Matter Expert  
Exchanges



### **Canada:**

Maple Resolve 2017



### **France:**

Language Immersion Training



### **Germany:**

Maintenance Mission

- NATO Intelligence Course/  
Exchange (Norway)



### **Guatemala:**

Cultural Understanding and  
Leadership Program (CULP)



### **Korea:**

Language Immersion Training



### **Malaysia:**

Keris Strike 2017



### **Nepal:**

Cultural Understanding and  
Leadership Program (CULP)



### **Romania:**

Cultural Understanding and  
Leadership Program (CULP)



### **Taiwan:**

Language Immersion Training



### **Tanzania:**

Cultural Understanding and  
Leadership Program (CULP)



### **Thailand:**

Hunuman Guardian  
(RECON for 2018 mission)



LTC George Hansen, commander of the 1-148th Field Artillery Regiment, works with his counterpart from the Malaysian Army giving production of operation orders during exercise Keris Strike 2017 in Pahang, Malaysia.

“[The ceremony] was very extravagant,” SFC Mewes said. “It looked like a big wedding. They had booths with food, music, shows and awards. It was very nice being able to talk to them and get to know them both personally and professionally.”

Developing professional and personal connections with foreign partner-soldiers was a focus for SGT Ray Montes of the Alpha Company, 116th Calvary Brigade Combat Team, during his 10-day mission in Cambodia. However, building and maintaining a healthy rapport with Cambodia’s soldiers initially presented challenges.

“The biggest challenge was trying to break that barrier,” SGT Montes explained. “Not just the language barrier, but showing that I am a Soldier like you, and if we work together we can actually learn from each other. That was the biggest adjustment to make, but it’s important because it creates a foundation between us and other forces.”

SGT Montes traveled with 10 other Soldiers from the National Guard, Air Force and Navy, each of them having a different mission in Cambodia. While SGT Montes

taught convoy, other Soldiers focused on medical, legal and other specialties.

SGT Montes’ mission was to integrate a convoy operation with Cambodian forces. It was important for him to create an open environment where Cambodia’s soldiers could learn from his tactics while integrating their own unique strategies.

“I didn’t necessarily show them the way – I showed them a way,” SGT Montes said. “I wasn’t teaching them how to do convoy operations, but I was showing them how we do it so they could incorporate their SOPs and learn [from ours]. They could see the adjustments that could be made to make improvements and help them whenever they deploy.”

While there were initial challenges with building relationships, SGT Montes noted that those issues quickly subsided once they were all able to better understand each other.

“They were more standoffish at first, but once they understood that I do the exact same thing that they do, they became more comfortable,” said SGT Montes. “That interaction phase helped out quite

a bit. I believe it was important because it creates a foundation between us and other forces, so that we can share our information and create better standard operating procedures.”

Armed with a passion for traveling and encountering different environments, SGT Montes said he appreciated the experiences this mission afforded him, though it was not his first mission of this kind. SGT Montes was previously stationed in Korea, where he went on integration missions with the task of building relationships with foreign soldiers.

“I was familiar with what to expect as far as a language barrier and trying to make them comfortable,” SGT Montes said. “I volunteered to go on this mission to engage with different people in different cultures and expand my knowledge of their lifestyles. It was one of the better missions I’ve gone on overseas. I integrated several of my interaction and communication skills to create the fundamental [relationship-] building that we needed.”

Towards the end of his mission, SGT Montes participated in a combined exercise that simulated everything covered over the course of his training time in Cambodia. SGT Montes said this final exercise showcased all they had learned and the progress they had made building those essential bonds.

“By the time of the combined exercise, the Cambodian soldiers were really comfortable with me and they had become very open to [the entire collaboration],” SGT Montes said.

With each mission, Soldiers from the Idaho National Guard demonstrated how important it is to cultivate relationships with their foreign counterparts. According to LTC Jon Frye, an Idaho National Guard operations officer, Guard Soldiers’ civilian skills and perspectives are what help in creating strong bonds and connections with foreign soldiers.

“It helps build bridges when they are first getting to know each other,” LTC Frye said. “It helps them find a common ground between them.”

These skills and experiences have long-lasting benefits to Guard Soldiers who could be activated and deployed to a foreign country at any time.

SFC Mewes explained, “We never know where we are going to go. If we train in different climates and different parts of the world, you can get an idea of what it’s about before you actually [deploy] there. It helps to strengthen our readiness and the readiness of our host nation.”

“This afforded me the opportunity to go to places I wouldn’t normally go,” 1LT Rausch said. “We got to experience how other armies are training and learn what they see as future threats domestically. These are soldiers that we could potentially run into again [as allies in combat] on another continent.”

When Idaho’s Citizen-Soldiers volunteered for these missions, they had a goal of training and sharing with their counterparts. However, when the missions were completed, the Soldiers found that they were able to bring back a host of specific techniques, training and experiences they could not have received through other means.

“Our Guard [Soldiers] truly benefit from being able to experience other customs and cultures while training with foreign military members,” BG Goodale said. “Participating in these [training experiences] definitely enhances the readiness of our Soldiers and the Idaho Army National Guard.” ●

“

**Overseas Deployment Training missions are a great opportunity for members of the Idaho Army National Guard. It provides an opportunity to demonstrate [the Soldiers’] tremendous skills and abilities, and allows them to learn from our partner nations, and bring that experience and knowledge back to Idaho.”**

- BG John Goodale



SGT Raymond Montes (left) and CPT Robert J. Taylor (center left) run with other members of the Idaho National Guard transporting a patient in a stretcher race against soldiers of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces.

# Introducing the Guard Fit App

Developed by Guard Your Health, a comprehensive health and wellness campaign for Army National Guard Soldiers, the Guard Fit Android mobile app is designed to help Soldiers improve Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT) scores and stay fit and mission ready year-round. It is a one-stop-shop for APFT training, tracking progress toward fitness goals and finding resources on a variety of health topics.

*The Army National Guard's goal is to recruit and retain Soldiers that are, and continue to be, physically fit. Fitness is the primary driver for readiness in our formations. If a Soldier is struggling with fitness, we want to provide resources and tools to help them get on track and stay on track."*

– COL Robert Kuster, Chief, Army National Guard Strength Maintenance Division

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# ARMY TOTAL FORCE in Action

## NEW MULTICOMPONENT UNITS AUGMENT ACTIVE DUTY HEADQUARTERS

BY STAFF WRITER Tatyana White-Jenkins

**E**quipped with a contingent of approximately 70 Georgia Army National Guard Soldiers, the 3rd Infantry Division Main Command Post-Operational Detachment (3ID MCPOD) is a unique unit comprised of both active duty and Army National Guard Soldiers – a new and unique combination for a military unit.

The 3ID MCPOD was activated on Aug. 20, 2016. The new unit combines Soldiers of Georgia Army National Guard's 648th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade with the active Army's 3rd Infantry Division (ID) Headquarters. Leaders from both groups were present at the activation ceremony held at Fort Stewart to celebrate the formation of this dynamic team.

"This is a great day for the 3rd ID," said 3rd ID Commander MG James Rainey who noted that the Georgia Guard Soldiers of the 3ID MCPOD would be part of future division deployments.

BG Tom Carden, commander of the Georgia Army National Guard, praised the teamwork between the 3rd Infantry Division and the Georgia Guard. He noted that the 3ID MCPOD not only benefits the 3rd ID, it also brings opportunities for growth to Georgia Guard Soldiers.

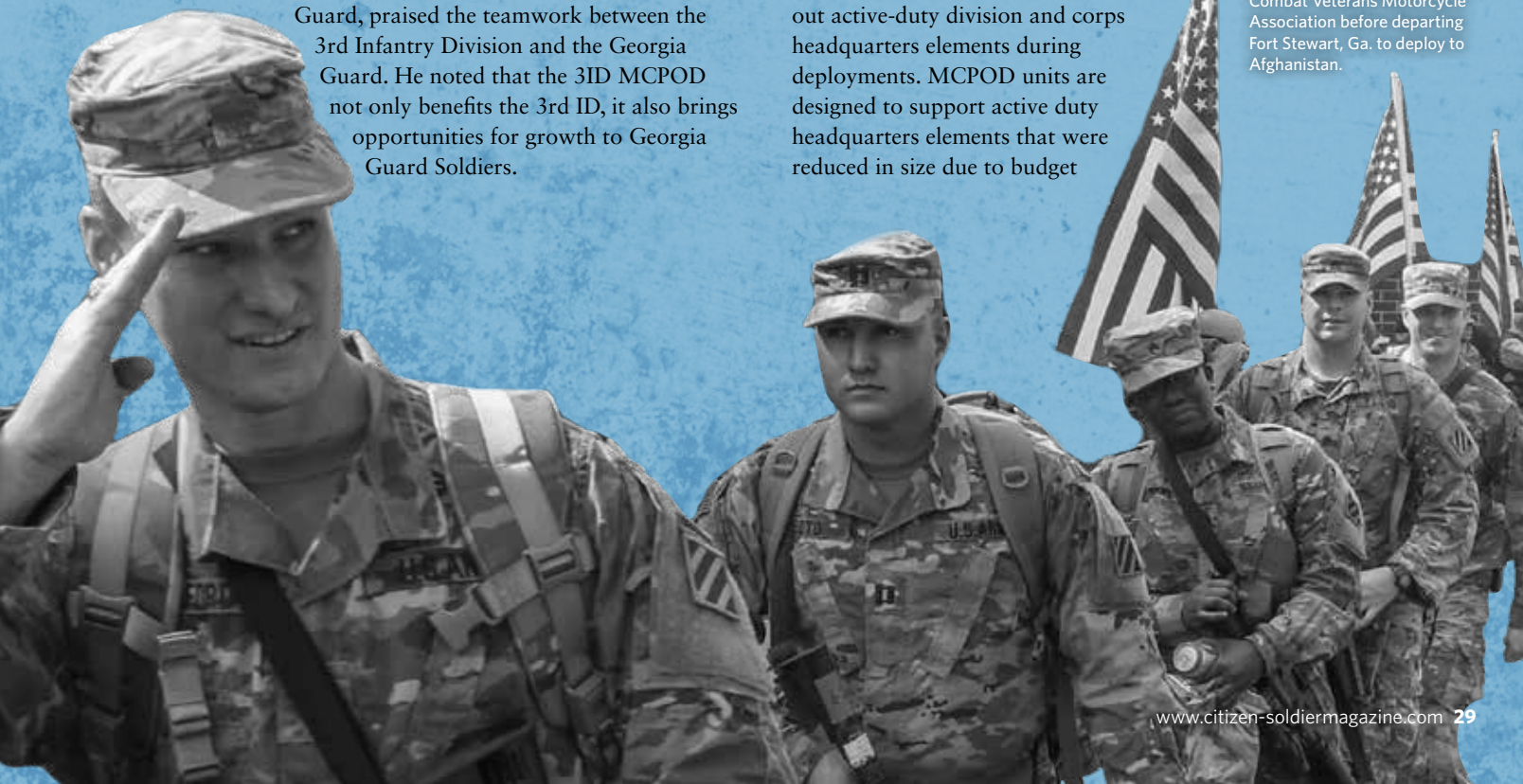
"The Georgia National Guard is a leadership factory," the general, boasted. "What better place to grow leaders than the 3rd Infantry Division?"

At the ceremony, Unit Commander LTC Shawn Workman and Operations SGM Timothy Baker unfurled the 3ID MCPOD guidon, and Soldiers performed the customary act of swapping out their shoulder sleeve insignia, going from the 648th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade to the 3rd ID.

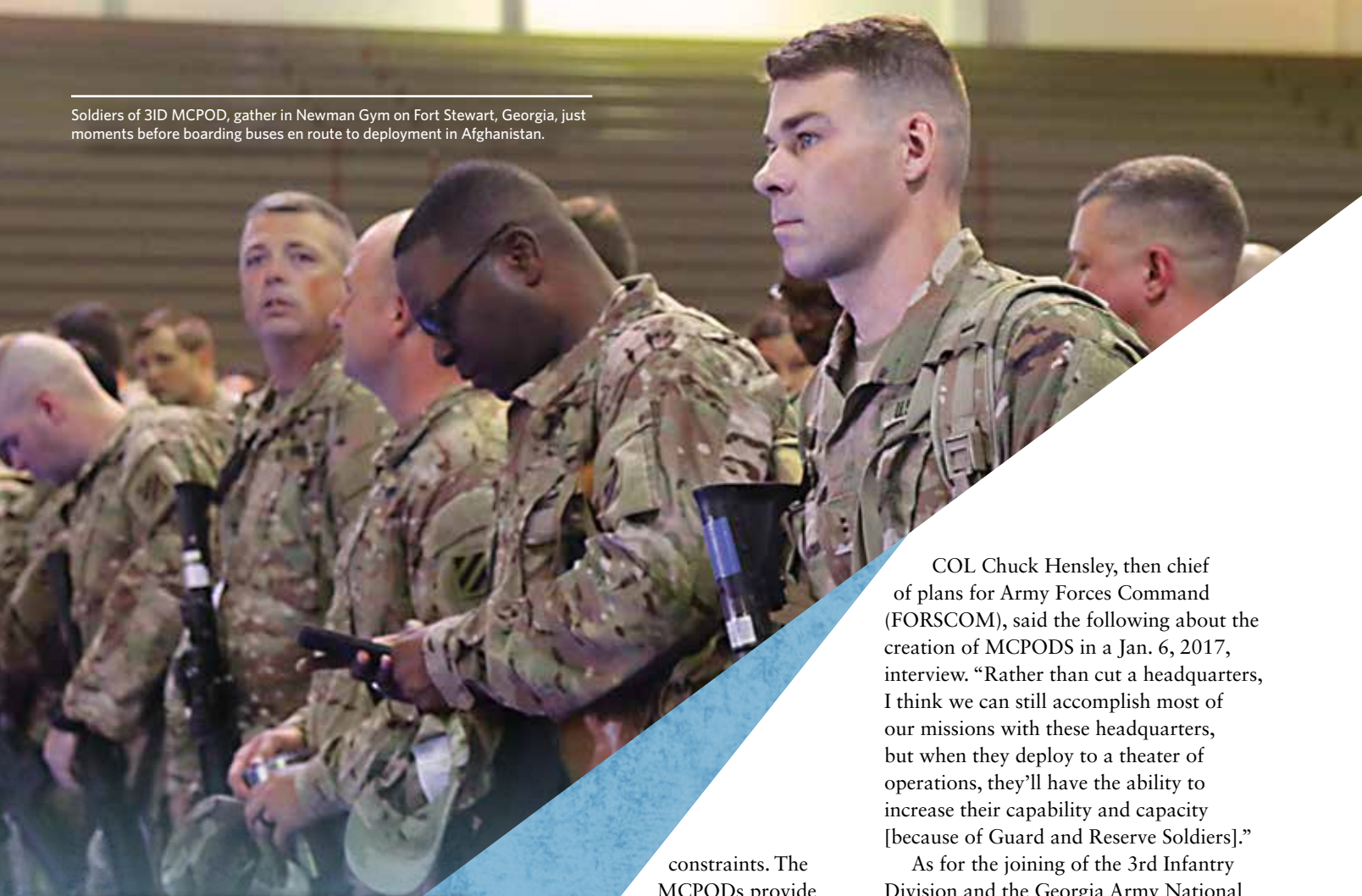
"This is an incredible, historic opportunity. We have Soldiers that embed with each warfighting function within the 3rd Infantry Division headquarters," said LTC Workman. "Putting the 3rd ID patch on is an incredible honor. I am very fortunate to be in command of this unit at this time."

The addition of the Army National Guard Soldiers in infantry divisions is part of an Army initiative to round out active-duty division and corps headquarters elements during deployments. MCPOD units are designed to support active duty headquarters elements that were reduced in size due to budget

A 3ID MCPOD Soldier returns a salute from a volunteer from Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association before departing Fort Stewart, Ga. to deploy to Afghanistan.



Soldiers of 3ID MCPD, gather in Newman Gym on Fort Stewart, Georgia, just moments before boarding buses en route to deployment in Afghanistan.



COL Chuck Hensley, then chief of plans for Army Forces Command (FORSCOM), said the following about the creation of MCPD in a Jan. 6, 2017, interview. “Rather than cut a headquarters, I think we can still accomplish most of our missions with these headquarters, but when they deploy to a theater of operations, they’ll have the ability to increase their capability and capacity [because of Guard and Reserve Soldiers].”

constraints. The MCPDs provide additional manpower for MOSs including intelligence, operations and logistics, civil affairs, law enforcement, medical and aviation.

The concept of MCPDs fully embraces the Army Total Force Policy, which encourages optimal integration of all Army components to foster a balanced and effectual level of readiness across the entire force.

“We are, in fact, one Army,” Army Chief of Staff GEN Mark Milley said in a 2015 speech to the National Guard Association of the United States. “We have three components, but it is one Army . . . We are not 10 divisions. We are 18 divisions. And we’re not 32 brigades. We’re 60 brigades.”

GEN Milley went on to point out the Army is “indivisible,” and every component is necessary for a skilled and well-rounded Army.

“We are not small. We’re big. And we’re very capable. We are capable because of the National Guard. We are capable because of the Reserves.”

As for the joining of the 3rd Infantry Division and the Georgia Army National Guard, the Total Force approach is evident in all aspects of the 3ID MCPD. Army National Guard and active duty Soldiers were chosen for the unit based on the same required level of capability and readiness. When the unit was called up for deployment to Afghanistan this past October, both Army National Guard and active duty members were hand-picked for the mission. Those selected to deploy underwent intense training in preparation for deployment. Working as an equal team, Guard Soldiers trained alongside their active duty teammates, and the active duty Soldiers provided additional training and information to the Guard Soldiers.

“Guard Soldiers underwent additional training provided by the active duty and were able to train with active Soldiers performing their MOS on a full-time basis,” said SGM Williams Alex Hutchins. “We needed to know the tasking and mission concept. We needed to understand the expectations. Active Army identified the positions needed for the mission to come together.”

SGM Hutchins, for whom this is a sixth



Soldiers change their shoulder sleeve insignia from the 648th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade to the 3rd Infantry Division during the 3ID MCPD activation ceremony.

# **“We are, in fact, one Army... We are capable because of the National Guard.”**

- GEN Mark Milley

deployment, went on to note the extreme readiness of the unit. “I am very proud to say that I am deploying with well-prepared Soldiers,” he said. “They are all the best of the best, and I am constantly being impressed. They completed training ahead of schedule with precision. Great teamwork and great attitudes.”

In addition to providing the Soldiers with critical information, the training period also gave unit members time to connect, forge relationships and build a collaborative environment.

“Training with active duty Soldiers has been great,” said 3ID MCPD Intelligence Analyst SSG Darius Fields. “They welcomed us. Everyone is excited about the joint mission and working to make it a great deployment. For me, it has really grown and impacted my military network for overall guidance concerning the Army.”

Being chosen for the 3ID MCPD unit created a rare opportunity for the members from the Army National Guard. Not only do they gain hands-on tactical experience beyond what is typically available to Guard Soldiers, they also have the opportunity to lead the way in demonstrating how the ongoing embodiment of Total Force works in action.

“I will be able to take this opportunity to grow not only as an individual Soldier, but a better leader to other Soldiers around me,” SSG Fields said. “I can take this time to focus on progression on my job as 35G [imagery analyst], learning different languages, working along with other armed forces and surviving in an unfamiliar territory.”

The unit’s mission to Afghanistan is SSG Fields’ first deployment, making it especially important to him. He said he sees this as a significant



A Soldier of the 3ID MCPD gives a thumbs-up as he boards a plane to deploy to Afghanistan.



SSG Heidi McClintock of Nebraska's 1st Infantry Division MCPD waits for a CH-47 Chinook to land at a tactical assembly area near Mosul, Iraq.



**ABOVE:** SSG Heidi McClintock boards the CH-47 Chinook at Qayyarah West Airfield, Iraq

**LEFT:** LTC Erik Flint uncases the colors for Washington's 7th Infantry Division MCPOD at Joint Base Lewis-McChord.

learning opportunity and an influential moment in his military career. He said he believes being a member of 3ID MCPOD will allow him to come back from Afghanistan a better person and a better Soldier.

"I feel honored and blessed to receive this great opportunity; even though it's a risky opportunity, overall it will help me grow as an individual," SSG Fields said. "And I see that a lot of people think highly of me and see the potential in me to exceed any [perceived] limitations, so I can and will do more."

SSG Fields went on to say, "Now I see for myself what kind of Soldier I am while I live and work directly in the middle of a combat zone versus stateside. The best part is I'm not alone on this journey. I'm with a lot of high-speed Soldiers that were hand-selected, like myself, and I don't have to worry so much about my 6 o'clock."

The Soldiers of 3ID MCPOD are from two components of the Army; they have varying backgrounds, tenures and skill sets, yet they have come together as one unit with a common goal of defending our

great Nation.

"I'm surrounded with great people and Soldiers," SSG Fields said. "I think there's nothing better than to go fight a fight with Soldiers that you can sync within a short period of time and know they have similar goals and expectations. We are all different, but will all aim for greatness for ourselves, our brothers- and sisters-in-arms, our homeland and, more importantly, our Families and their secureness. Many of us will come back better than what we were before we left."

According to FORSCOM, the Army plans to stand up a total of 13 MCPOD units – including the 1st Infantry Division that has already combined with 91 Nebraska Guard Soldiers; the 10th Mountain Division that will incorporate a contingent of New York Guard Soldiers; the 82nd Airborne Division that will sync with a contingent of North Carolina ARNG Soldiers; and the 7th Infantry Division, based out of Joint Base Lewis-McChord, that augmented with Washington ARNG Soldiers.

In all, nine of the 13 MCPOD units will

be augmented with Army National Guard Soldiers. Once stood up, MCPODs, which can have up to 100 reserve component Soldiers, are a permanent element. This means Guard Soldiers will drill with their active duty counterparts and become devoted to the unit full-time. For example, while the 3ID MCPOD is administratively assigned to the 648th, the 3rd ID has operational control over the unit during deployments and shapes its missions, staffing and training.

COL Hensley remarked that the logistics of how to keep MCPOD commitments from impacting Guard members required one-to-four dwell time (the requirement for Guard Soldiers with civilian employment to spend four years at home between deployments) is still under review. Though he did provide the assurance that should a MCPOD be called on multiple deployments, "We're not going to increase the demand on the Guard and the Reserve soldiers. They're not going to have an extra burden because they are part of [a] MCPOD." ●

# DISASTROUS FLOODS — HISTORIC RESPONSE



**ABOVE:** Aerial photo of Lemmon Valley, Nev.

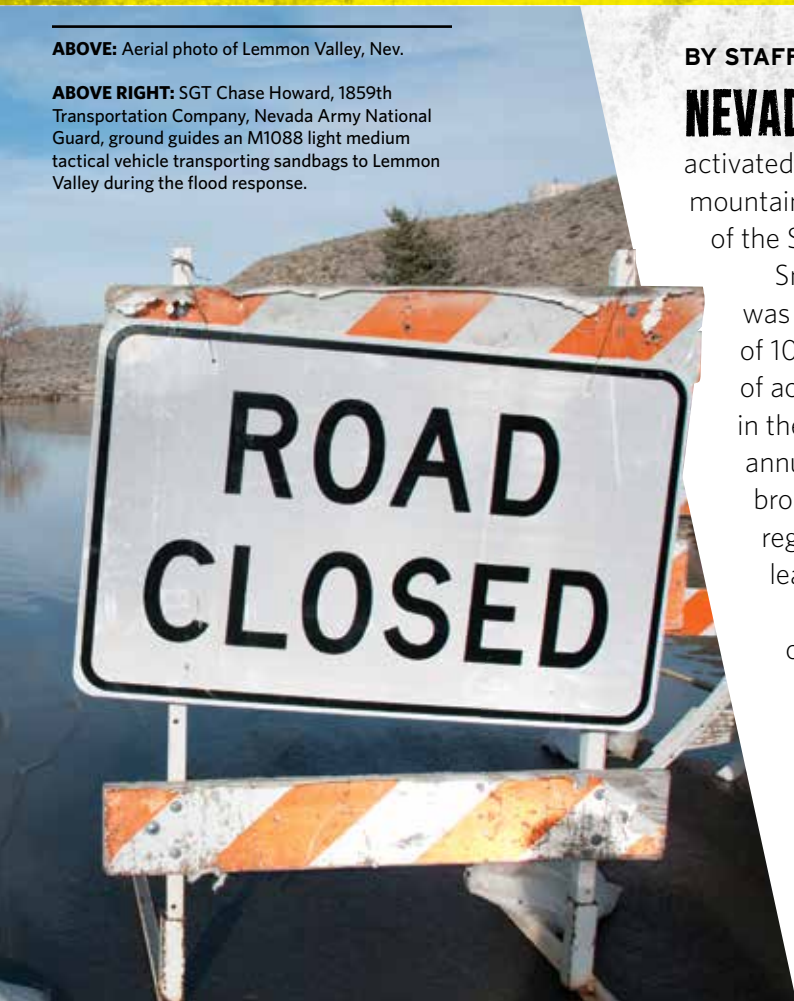
**ABOVE RIGHT:** SGT Chase Howard, 1859th Transportation Company, Nevada Army National Guard, ground guides an M1088 light medium tactical vehicle transporting sandbags to Lemmon Valley during the flood response.

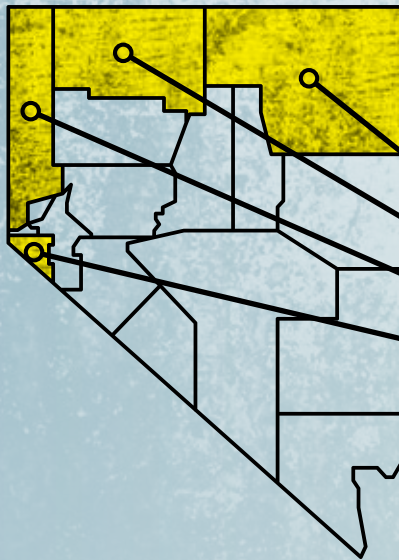
**BY STAFF WRITER** Eric Miller

**NEVADA ARMY NATIONAL GUARD** Soldiers were activated last winter after record-breaking precipitation in the mountain- and valley-flooded communities in the northern region of the State.

Snow in the Sierra Nevada and Carson Ranges last January was 200 percent more than normal. With an average elevation of 10,500 feet, the winter precipitation amounted to thousands of acres of snow. In December 2016, massive amounts of rainfall in the foothills and valleys east of the Sierra broke the century-old annual rainfall record just four months into the season. The rain brought significant, but not yet disaster-level, flooding to the region. This initial flooding caused damage to local water pipes, leaving rural communities without potable water.

Then the disaster came. Unseasonably warm temperatures caused faster than normal melting of the record-breaking snowfall. Water from the snow combined with floodwater from the December rains that had not yet fully subsided and created one of the worst major floods the State of Nevada has ever seen. Water rushed into local streams and rivers, spilled into reservoirs and lakes and descended upon Lemmon Valley, located about 10 miles north of Reno.





## COUNTIES AFFECTED

Elko  
Humboldt  
Washoe  
Douglas

**4 MILES**  
of HESCO walls built, using  
12,000 yards of sand

## NEVADA'S

largest National Guard operation  
of its kind in 20 years

**\$3.5 MILLION**  
in flood response

**140**  
National Guard members  
activated

Nevada normally averages less than 10 inches of precipitation a year and is listed as the driest State in the country. Parts of the State had been experiencing a drought for several years. Ironically, local residents sometimes quipped that droughts end with floods.

President Donald Trump approved Nevada Governor Brian Sandoval's request for a Presidential Declaration of Disaster for northern Nevada in February 2017. The declaration received an extension through March 2017, at which point the National Guard was activated. By mid-March, 140 National Guard members were activated in response to the floods, which is more than the number activated in response to wildfires in the State brought on by the drought. In fact, this was the State's largest National Guard operation of its kind in 20 years. While the entire northern region of Nevada was under the declaration of disaster – including Washoe County, Elko County, Humboldt County and Douglas County – Lemmon Valley in Washoe County sustained the brunt of the flooding.

For three weeks, Guard members filled and placed more than 10,000 sandbags to protect homes. Four miles of HESCO walls, using 12,000 cubic yards of sand, were built in front of homes,

septic tanks and wells to hold back the floodwaters. Units activated were from the Nevada Army National Guard's 757th Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1895th Transportation Company, 609th Engineer Company, 485th Military Police Company and the 150th Maintenance Company, according to *Battle Born*, a publication of the Nevada National Guard. Airmen came from the Nevada Air National Guard's 152nd Security Forces Squadron and the 152nd Civil Engineer Squadron.

building the walls." Army National Guard Soldiers opened miles of the HESCO accordion-like woven material as Air National Guard Airmen operated skid steers to put down sand to fill in the walls. "We did very little with shovels; it was the skid steer that was putting sand in the wall," SGT Cotham noted, adding that his unit constructed about half of the four miles of wall.

Soldiers also drove dump trucks to huge sand piles, loaded up with sand and then dumped it in locations near the HESCO wall construction. Local fire crews, from the Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District, helped the mission by filling sandbags as well. Other agencies involved in the \$3.5 million flood response were the Nevada Division of Forestry and

the Nevada Division of Emergency Management. According to SSG Cameron Sather, the NCOIC of the relief mission, Soldiers and emergency response personnel filled and placed 25,000 sand bags a day for the first seven days of the response.

Once the four-foot-high wall was in place, Soldiers hooked up 10-inch-wide pumps on the residential side and pumped water over the wall and back toward the lake. Some of those pumps currently remain in place. They are turned on and off when needed, as the lake continues to

***"So many Soldiers volunteered to serve that we actually had to turn some away."***

– SSG Cameron Sather

Light Medium Tactical Vehicles, dump trucks and flatbeds were all used for the transportation of equipment, including sandbags. Air National Guard civil engineers provided an additional six vehicles, and two Army National Guard water buffalos were used.

"Our initial mission was to fill sandbags around houses for three days," said SGT Nicholas Cotham of the 609th Engineer Company – one of the few combat units in Nevada. "My unit had experience with HESCO walls, and we got tasked with



**LEFT:** SFC Justin Juliot of the Nevada National Guard's 422nd Expeditionary Support Battalion, unhitches a 400-gallon water buffalo to provide water for the town of Sutcliffe on Pyramid Lake Tribal land.

**RIGHT:** Hesco wall installed by Nevada National Guard members and local first responders.



threaten flooding when heavy rains, which now occur on a regular basis, fall on the region.

Swan Lake, the main conduit of the flooding, sits directly on the edge of Lemmon Valley. Homes and shopping centers are built just yards from its shoreline. Though this same lake has flooded to lesser degrees in the past – once in 1986 and again in 2002 – it had been dried out by the drought, and sat as a barren dust bowl for five years. During the January floods, Swan Lake filled to nearly eight feet deep and began spilling over into the yards of nearby homes. SGT Cotham noted seeing floodwater 10 to 12 inches deep in front of some houses. Nevada National Guard reported that floodwaters moved within proximity of 300 homes.

SPC Robert Baker of the 150th Maintenance Company noted seeing cars halfway submerged in floodwaters and the property around homes completely underwater. “An average civilian vehicle can’t traverse through water that’s two to three feet deep, but the National Guard’s dump trucks were able to move through flooded streets,” SPC Baker said.

While many of the Soldiers knew the dangers of responding to natural disasters, such as wildfires, they learned first-hand that responding to a flood disaster comes with unique risks. Septic tanks had been unearthed during the flooding, and Soldiers were warned not to expose their bare

skin to the water, as floodwater can be contaminated with human waste from storm and sewer drains, runoff from farms and even animal carcasses.

According to SSG Sather, the Nevada Division of Emergency Management distributed rubber gloves and boots to every Soldier and emergency responder. They also had decontamination units on site every day.

“In some areas, the water was so deep the only way we could avoid contact was to stand on top of the flatbed trucks while we built the HESCO walls,” said SSG Sather. “My direction to my Soldiers was simple ‘DO NOT touch the water.’”

Local residents caught in the floods showed their appreciation for the Soldiers’ work and presence however they could. “A lot of people were very thankful when we arrived,” said SPC Baker. “There were 20 of us working together and one lady approached us in tears. She was so thankful for everything we were doing.”

SGT Cotham noted an appreciative couple that put together a backyard barbecue for Cotham’s unit. Others gave the Soldiers bottled water and Gatorade to help them as they worked 12- to 14-hour days.

SGT Cotham also expressed his appreciation for being able to serve his State and his community. “The reason I signed up for the National Guard was to help my community. One of the reasons

a lot of [Soldiers] sign up is to help their local community.”

SSG Sather commented on the extreme preparedness and dedication of the Nevada Army National Guard Soldiers. “For 90 percent of the Soldiers, this was [the] biggest thing they had ever seen. Most of them are too young to remember the last time the lake flooded back in 2002. Their response was phenomenal. So many Soldiers volunteered to serve that we actually had to turn some away. We just didn’t have enough trucks to put all of them to work.” He went on to remark that Nevada is a dry State, with a very high elevation and sits in the valley of some very large mountains. This means the State remains in perpetual risk of fires, floods and dangerous snow. “We must remain exceptionally prepared,” said SSG Sather.

“We train constantly for this. We’ve got the vehicles, the people, the morale. We’re always ready to go.”

“The magnitude of the response, and the way Soldiers and Airmen answered the call on short notice, truly shows the Nevada Guard’s dedication to its State,” said BG Zachary Doser, Director Joint Staff, Nevada National Guard. “This response helped the citizens of Lemmon Valley, and the Guard remains ready to respond to future domestic operations in the face of more potential floods in the region.” ●

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## NEVER GOING DARK

### NEW SYSTEM ALLOWS FOR SMOOTHER COMMUNICATION DURING EMERGENCY RESPONSES



Satellite Transportable Terminals from the 365th Signal Company, aim towards communications satellites at the beginning of the unit's annual training at Camp Navajo, Ariz.

**BY STAFF WRITER** Justin Creech

**I**n the critical hours following a national disaster, fast and clear communication between first responders can be the difference between lives saved and lives lost. To ensure the optimal functioning of vital communication tools in times of disaster, the Army's Program Executive Office Command, Control, Communications-Tactical (PEO C3T) has developed the new Disaster Incident Response Emergency Communications Terminal (DIRECT).

DIRECT enables the Army National Guard to provide collaboration and communication services at incident sites, linking local first responders and emergency managers with State and Federal authorities, even when local commercial services become inoperable.

Lines of communication are often severely limited in the immediate aftermath

of a domestic emergency. Cellular towers and telephone and Internet lines may often be blown down or damaged. In response to these limitations, "DIRECT allows the communication capability between responders to begin immediately," said Kevin Holland, Deputy Division Chief of the National Guard Bureau's Joint Command, Control, Communications and Computers branch.

Holland went on to say, "The capability is critical because you can communicate with anyone anywhere. You can be at a State's Joint Force Headquarters and communicate with a search and rescue team out in the field."

Without compromising the security of the military network, DIRECT utilizes the Army National Guard's Warfighter Information Network-Tactical (WIN-T) to provide commercial 4G/Wi-Fi, commercial



SSG Kevin Henley, an information systems technician with the Joint Force Headquarters, Virgin Islands National Guard, establishes contact with Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency personnel via the DIRECT system during Vigilant Guard 17-03, a natural disaster response exercise held on St. Thomas.

phone and Internet access, and the ability to connect the various types of radios responders bring to an incident site. This means Soldiers and other responders can communicate using cell phones, telephones, radios and even video conferences.

DIRECT, which was fielded to all 54 States and Territories just last year, replaces the Army National Guard's legacy Joint Incident Site Communication Capability (JISCC). Although JISCC was a highly useful first responder communications tool, it did not enable direct communication over the WIN-T network.

The realization of the need for tools like JISCC, and now DIRECT, came after Hurricane Katrina and 9/11. The inability of first responders, military and other critical organizations to effectively communicate became gravely apparent during these historic disaster recoveries. Phone lines and cell towers were completely destroyed or overloaded, and first responders' disparate communications equipment was not fully interoperable, significantly delaying critical emergency response. In some instances, during the 9/11 recovery, too much or too little of certain supplies were delivered to recovery personnel due to these communication issues.

By contrast, when tens of thousands of National Guard Soldiers were activated this past summer in response to Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria, DIRECT systems were onsite during each of the response

missions, providing immediate and vital communication services.

Army National Guard units from Alaska, California, Connecticut, Illinois, Minnesota, Nebraska, Nevada, Oregon, Washington and West Virginia brought their DIRECT systems to Puerto Rico in response to Hurricane Maria. The instant communication capability allowed the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to coordinate flights in and out of a local airport.

"Fiber-optic lines at the airport were severed in the hurricane," said CW3 Israel Alvarado, Signal Officer, Puerto Rico Army

National Guard. "DIRECT allowed the FAA to coordinate incoming and outgoing flights, which was important because some of the incoming flights had cargo that we needed."

The development of DIRECT has ensured that Guard Soldiers and first responders can communicate seamlessly during any major event. Holland summarized the change the system has brought to emergency response missions this way, "It has eliminated the most critical communication gaps that can arise during a domestic emergency response effort." ●



SFC Class Ron Seagraves, left, and SGT 1st Class Ken Hodes, both of Joint Force Headquarters in Carson City, Nev., prepare DIRECT equipment for transport to Puerto Rico.



The Florida National Guard Regional Emergency Response Network provides DIRECT systems in Camp Blanding, Fla.

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How do I  
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# SHOT HEARD ACROSS THE BLUEGRASS



Left to right: CPT Stephen Young; LTC Andrew Bates, Commander, 2nd Battalion, 138th Field Artillery; local residents Robert A. Jones Sr., and Robert A. Jones Jr.; and SGT Jackson Gudgel pose for a photo commemorating the Jones family's cooperation in the battalion's signal operations.

**BY STAFF WRITER** Tatyana White-Jenkins

**T**his summer, Kentucky Army National Guard Signal Soldiers made history when they successfully completed the longest radio retransmission, using standard-issued radio configuration equipment, on State record.

Referred to as the “Shot Heard Across the Bluegrass,” the radio retransmission (RETRANS) event was a joint Kentucky Army National Guard engagement led by CPT Stephen Young and SGT Jackson Gudgel with the 138th Field Artillery Battalion. The team consisted of Soldiers from the 138th Signal Company and the 63rd Theater Aviation Brigade.

For the event, Soldiers established a radio network using the standard unit-issued Single Channel Ground and Airborne Radio System (SINCGARS) to link Fort Knox and the Wendell H. Ford Regional Training Center (WHFRTC). SINCGARS is a combat net radio currently used by U.S. and allied military forces. First developed in the late 1980s, the SINCGARS systems replaced the Vietnam War-era synthesized single-frequency radios. The radios, which transmit voice and data communications, are designed to

be reliable, secure and easily maintained. SINCGARS uses 25 kHz channels, ranging from 30.000 to 87.975 MHz, in the very high frequency FM band. The system has both single-frequency and frequency-hopping modes.

“We did the retransmission during our two-week annual training at Fort Knox,” said SGT Terrence Daniels with the 138th Signal Company. “It was about 135 kilometers [approximately 90 miles]. It’s amazing. There’s no one else in the Kentucky Guard who can say they did this.”

Accomplishing such a feat required intricate planning and precise execution. For a radio to transmit such a long distance, a RETRANS center must be used. A RETRANS center includes antennas and radio setups between two locations – in this case, Fort Knox and the WHFRTC – in order to transmit the signals.

“We all had a team of two or three individuals, and we would set up antennas and radio retransmissions at certain distances in between the locations,” SGT Daniels explained.

To choose the RETRANS sites, Soldiers had to examine the



area between the locations and map out the best positions. Some of the ideal positions fell on private property, so Kentucky's Citizen-Soldiers partnered with the local citizens to get the job done.

"CPT Young, SGT Gudgel and I went out speaking to locals, asking them if it was okay to set up RETRANS on their property," SGT Daniels commented. "Most people were really excited about it and were very open to [being a part of the event]."

"Our first RETRANS site was a private house," said CPT Young. "We knocked and a gentleman came out who was a Veteran and a very nice guy. He said, 'Sure, if you want to set an antenna up, set an antenna up!' So, that was our first site."

SGT Daniels and his team stayed overnight at another RETRANS site. There, they engaged with several curious locals.

"We stayed there with our trucks overnight and it was good to be with the community," SGT Daniels said. "Some kids and their family members came to take pictures by the truck and ask questions. You know, you see this big 10-foot antenna in the air and a lot of people want to know what's going on. It was good to have Soldiers get exposure to the community and have people see what we do."

Creating the historic "Shot Across the Bluegrass" took only two days – one day for recon and the second day for completing the mission.

The RETRANS was especially significant not only because it was the longest radio shot in State history, but also because it was the first time Kentucky's Signal Soldiers tried to achieve this type of network.

"This was our first attempt at it and we [successfully] completed it," CPT Young said.

Accomplishing the mission showed that common problems with communication can be tackled using basic equipment issued to all units. The mission

also illustrated the possibility of extending basic equipment beyond what has been done in the past.

"When we go to mobilization stations, often the very first problem [we encounter] is that 'we can't talk', [the equipment] cannot span the distances," CPT Young explained. "We lose communication and we think this shows that the equipment does not work. But in actuality, we need to have a bit more confidence in the equipment. [Soldiers] need to practice using basic skills and equipment. They know how to use them – they just need to use them more often."

While the connection was successfully made between Fort Knox and WHFRTC, the mission was not without potential roadblocks.

"It's always a challenge when you have that many pieces of equipment and that many Soldiers," CPT Young said. "You always have the safety of the Soldiers to worry about, especially when you are ranging more than 90 miles line of sight. That's about 130 miles given the road and time it takes to get from A to B. Anything can go wrong, but it was planned out very well. We had extra pieces and parts, and we had additional support from the leadership."

SGT Daniels noted that the intricacy of the mission led to a few minor glitches. "It's all about positioning," SGT Daniels



Single Channel Ground and Airborne Radio System (SINCGARS). Image shows two stacked units.



Signal Soldiers of the 138th Field Artillery Brigade commemorate the "Shot Heard Across the Bluegrass" with plaques presented by CPT Stephen Young. Front Row: SGT Jackson Gudgel, SGT Terrance Daniels. Back Row: SPC Dakota Adams, SPC Andrew Huff, SPC Thomas Murton and SPC Darren Cruz.

explained. "Hilltops, trees, anything can be [an obstacle]. We had hiccups like static through the lines and not being able to hear the other [end of the line]. There was a lot of troubleshooting. About 45 minutes before we were going to test, there was a lot of static buildup. We couldn't figure out why, because on our earlier checks everything was crystal clear. It's so funny – when they did the actual RETRANS, it was the clearest it had ever been."

The successful exchange was made by MG Stephen Hogan, Kentucky National Guard Adjutant General, and SGT James Hall with the 63rd Theater Aviation Brigade. To honor the historic exchange, CPT Young rewarded his team with plaques commemorating the mission.

"They were so proud of their accomplishments," CPT Young said. "Their confidence level shot up. They were all smiles and you couldn't have brought them down if you wanted to. They were a part of something big and they didn't know how big until six publications picked up the story. They just didn't realize how big of a deal it was."

"The mission was very important to us. We took it very seriously," SGT Daniels said. "It was something that we trained in and could actively show the impact. To see it promoted the way that it was and have the strength that it did – that was really big."

CPT Young credits the success of the mission to his dedicated team of Soldiers.

"It was really their accomplishment," CPT Young said. "A lot of behind-the-scenes planning went into it that they'll never know

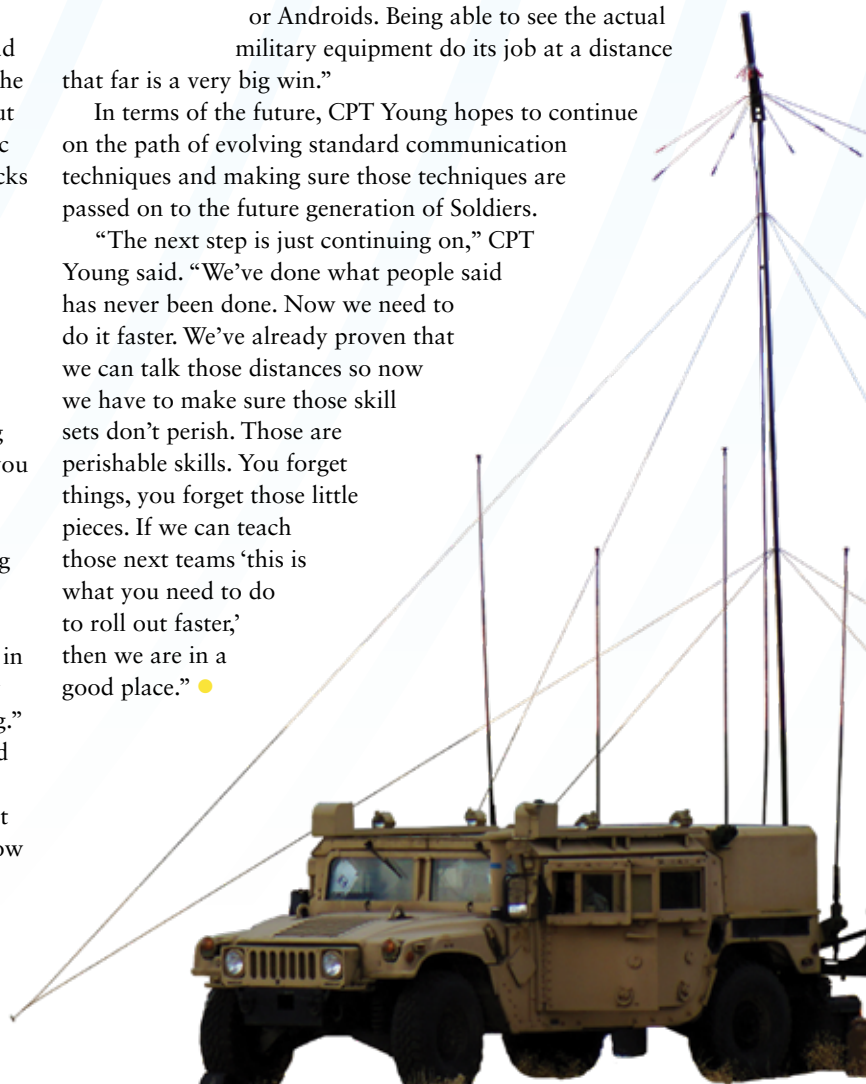
about. But when they are out there beating their heads against some of that equipment, it's for them. Some of them said they had never heard of this, let alone done it. So, when they can go and say, 'I've been a part of this – this is how we did it', the next generation of Soldiers can see that it's been done and want to make things happen."

SGT Daniels said he believes this mission will educate Soldiers about the potential uses this communication development opens up.

"I think it educated different units, that aren't signal units, about how far they can get their communications to go," SGT Daniels explained. "For infantry units or field infantry units who have to go further out from their hub or from their command, they now know that they can get RETRANS to transmit farther and still have a secure line to communicate, as opposed to using cell phones. That way you can create more of an in-country or battlefield environment. If you were out on deployment, you wouldn't have iPhones or Androids. Being able to see the actual military equipment do its job at a distance that far is a very big win."

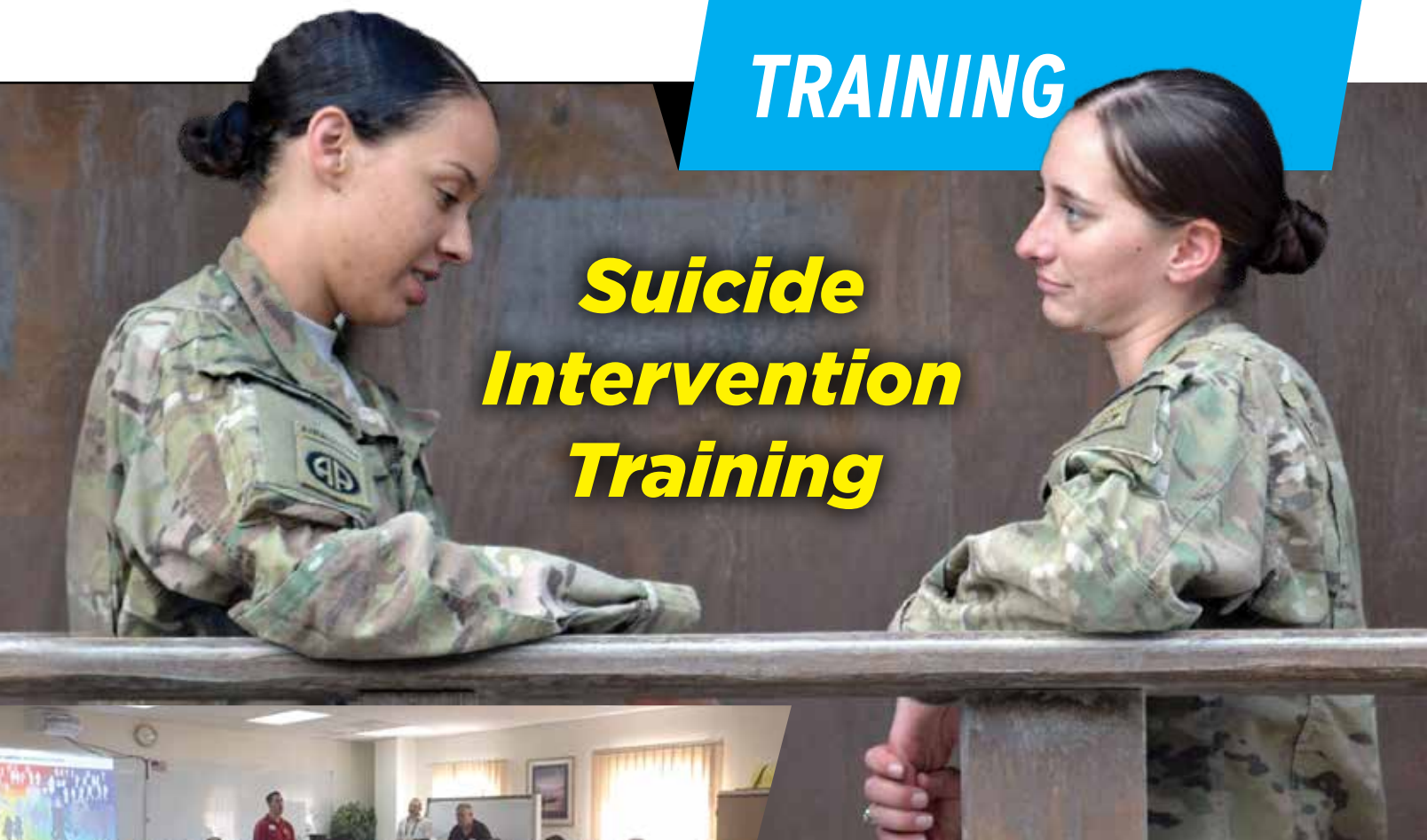
In terms of the future, CPT Young hopes to continue on the path of evolving standard communication techniques and making sure those techniques are passed on to the future generation of Soldiers.

"The next step is just continuing on," CPT Young said. "We've done what people said has never been done. Now we need to do it faster. We've already proven that we can talk those distances so now we have to make sure those skill sets don't perish. Those are perishable skills. You forget things, you forget those little pieces. If we can teach those next teams 'this is what you need to do to roll out faster,' then we are in a good place." ●



# TRAINING

## Suicide Intervention Training



**ABOVE:** SPC Annette Daniel (right), Assistant Chaplain with the Ohio Army National Guard listens to a fellow Soldier and provides encouragement and counsel.



**LEFT:** Chaplains from the 35th Infantry Division conduct Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait.

**BY STAFF WRITER** Tatyana White-Jenkins

**S**uicide continues to be a significant issue nationally and in the military. The Army National Guard has taken substantial steps to educate Soldiers about the resources available for help and counseling. As part of this same initiative, the Guard is also working to educate Soldiers on the importance of connecting with fellow Guard members, on a personal level, in hopes that they might be able to identify and help a friend or colleague in need.

Recognizing that the people often most able to identify individuals presenting suicidal behavior are the Soldiers who work along side them, the Army National Guard is offering Soldiers Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST). A two-day interactive workshop in suicide

first aid, ASIST teaches advanced techniques to understand, identify and connect with people who may be at risk for suicide in both military and civilian situations. The course objectives include teaching Soldiers how to recognize suicidal behavior, safely intervene and then create a support plan to help guard the safety of the individual.

Much like CPR, while ASIST is widely used by healthcare providers, formal medical or mental health training is not required to learn and use the ASIST model. Anyone 16 or older can attend the workshop.

In September 2017, Chaplains from the Kansas Army National Guard – Chaplain MAJ Richard Dunn of the 35th Infantry Division and Chaplain

CPT Ronald Marshall, Army Central Command Operations Chaplain – held an ASIST workshop while deployed to Camp Arifjan, Kuwait. More than 25 Soldiers from the 35th Infantry Division attended the two-day training.

During the course, each participant shared his or her personal thoughts and beliefs about suicide. The goal of these discussions was to help Guard members understand the ways in which personal and societal attitudes can affect a person's view on suicide and the importance of intervention. Soldiers then learned how to detect the numerous warning signs for suicide. They were taught to pick up on small and seemingly insignificant acts that can in fact be signs of suicidal thoughts.



Army National Guard Soldiers discuss suicide intervention during an ASIST workshop.

Soldiers also participated in role-playing exercises to learn how to safely provide guidance after identifying an at-risk individual. By the end of the course, Soldiers walked away prepared to identify and help fellow Soldiers who may be struggling with thoughts of suicide.

“The skills we learned were very useful and helpful,” said SFC Durant Whitlow of the 35th Infantry Division. “It was really great to learn and understand how to assist [those in need].”

In a U.S. Army study that surveyed personnel who had ASIST training, 96 percent agreed that the training should be given to all members of the military who interact closely with Soldiers. The same

study also reported significant increases in the likelihood of Army personnel to intervene when encountering an at-risk individual after participating in an ASIST workshop. While the fear of making a mistake during the intervention phase is common, the ultimate goal of ASIST is to empower Soldiers to feel confident and informed during a real-life intervention.

“I really wish more people would take this training,” said SPC Cierra Murphy of the 35th Infantry Division. “It is very beneficial. The trainers were awesome. It wasn’t ‘death by PowerPoint’. It was very engaging and provided [applicable information].” ●

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

about the Army National Guard’s Suicide Prevention Program or to register for an ASIST workshop, contact your State’s Chaplain Office.

If you think you know of someone who may be experiencing suicidal thoughts, or if you have been struggling with thoughts of suicide, call 1-800-273-TALK (8255). Counselors are available to help 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Soldiers of 3rd Infantry Division Headquarters relax in the terminal at the Hunter Army Airfield, Ga. prior to deploying to Afghanistan. The recreational time is an opportunity for Soldiers to decompress and build connections with one another. Developing these types of connections is a key factor in helping to deter or detect suicidal behavior shown by a colleague.



# CADET BASIC SUMMER TRAINING CAMP

BY STAFF WRITER Matthew Liptak

**I**t is not at all uncommon for young college students to have uncertainty about their ultimate career paths.

For many students still standing at this all-too-common crossroads, especially those who have been exposed to military life by a Family member, the idea of a commission in the Army can be an intriguing possibility. For college students entering their sophomore or junior years, Cadet Summer Training through the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) Basic Camp offers an opportunity to explore the option of a military career by giving them a super-concentrated taste of what it's like to be an Army Soldier.

Basic Camp, held at Fort Knox, Ky., is the ROTC's intense four-week introduction to Army life and leadership training. Successful graduation allows Cadets to join the ROTC program at their college and start at the third-year level of the four-year program.

Cadet Summer Training brought over 8,000 Cadets through Basic and Advanced

Camp this past summer.

Cadets spent their first few days of Basic Camp learning the ins and outs of Army life under the supervision of experienced drill sergeants. The regimen consisted of several training events beginning with the Army Physical Fitness Test. This test required the Cadets to perform push-ups, sit-ups and the two-mile run.

Next, Cadets were introduced to exercises that required them to work in small-group teams, beginning with an obstacle course. This course teaches Cadets how challenges that seem impossible to accomplish as an individual can be successfully achieved when working as part of a team. In the Team Development Course (TDC), team members had 10 minutes to plan how they were going to meet a specified challenge. They then had 20 minutes to execute the plan.

"By presenting a problem to the squad in the form of an obstacle, one person



Cadets attend their graduation ceremony at Fort Knox, Ky.



A Cadet moves through the ropes section of a team development obstacle course.

cannot do it by themselves,” said cadre member SFC William Richards from West Virginia University. “But when you combine all of the different personalities, it creates the cohesiveness of a team.”

With time, Cadets improved their teamwork on the obstacle courses, learning how to effectively communicate and accomplish what was needed by working together.

“With every exercise, we kept building our communication skills and became more effective,” said Cadet Alexis Fitzgerald of Bravo Company, First Platoon, from Princeton University. “We were arguing less and less, and putting people in positions to be effective.”

While the TDC taught the Cadets about teamwork, there were still more lessons to be learned. The Land Navigation course is designed to train Cadets to navigate from one point to another using just a map, a compass and a protractor. The two-person teams are given four hours to find four points on the course.

It is a skill a world away from the convenience provided by today’s navigation and GPS technology. For many Cadets, the notion of only using the computer between your ears to get from point A to point B is completely foreign, but they quickly learned to rely on themselves and their fellow Cadets to overcome the challenges they faced in the field.

“This is the foundation for anything we learn in the future,” said Cadet Joseph Cantu from the University of Texas in Rio

Grande, Texas. “It’s also something every Soldier should know how to do.”

Basic Camp participants were also exposed to a bit of trial by fire, or in this case, gas. During their four-week experience, Cadets underwent Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) Threat Training at the CBRN Chamber on post. They were familiarized with the equipment that would protect them from non-lethal, but misery-inducing, gas. They had nine seconds to put the gear on before the gas hit them.

“It kind of felt like you were putting Icy Hot underneath your eyeballs,” said Cadet Braden Hayes of Bravo Company, Third Platoon, from the University of Scranton.

Then the Cadets were required to take off their masks, say their name, where they were from and how many fingers a cadre member was holding up. It gave them a taste of being on the receiving end of a chemical weapon.

“They finally let you go out of the chamber, and your eyes are swollen and you have snot coming out of every pore in your body,” said Cadre member SGT Emmalee Scaff. “It’s insane.”


In the end, Cadets were taken to new heights through their training. Final exercises included ziplining, low crawling, climbing and hanging to conquer their fears. Again, using teamwork, Cadets were able to overcome these climbing-course challenges. A belayer relayed to the climbers where to go to next, what leg to put weight on, what rope to grab. It was preparation for the future, when these young officers-to-be will be responsible for leading Soldiers through dangerous terrain and daunting opposition.

Upon completion of Basic Camp, Cadets found they had been enriched by the experience. They were more familiar with Army life and able to make an informed decision about becoming a commissioned officer in the U.S. Army. For those who passed, it was back to college – looking forward to attending the Advanced Camp next year.

“I definitely feel more confident now as I go back to university and get ready for Advanced Camp [next year].” said Cadet Lindsey Pulverenti from the University of Central Florida. “I haven’t been in ROTC very long so this was my first Army training, but I’m excited to move forward.” ●



Alpha Company Cadets finish CBRN threat training by braving the gas chamber in the CBRN Defense Mask Confidence Course.



## OPERATION OPPORTUNITY

**West Point Increases Opportunities for Army National Guard Soldiers**

**BY STAFF WRITER** Tatyana White-Jenkins

**F**or Army National Guard Soldiers wanting to earn a degree from the country's preeminent military leader-development institution, The United States Military Academy at West Point has made a way.

Members of the Army National Guard are able to study at West Point to earn their undergraduate degree and a commission as a second lieutenant in the Army National Guard. West Point, which has been educating, training and inspiring the Nation's military leaders for more than 200 years, reserves 85 slots annually for reserve component prior service applicants. This includes Army National Guard, Army Reserve and U.S. Military Academy Preparatory School (USMAPS) Cadets. West Point admissions officials have noted that the academy values the inclusion of reserve component Soldiers, as their prior experience enhances West Point's Corps of Cadets.

There are two unique programs that place Army National Guard Soldiers on the path to West Point. The first is the Soldiers Admissions Program. Soldiers in this program receive a fully funded four-year education at West Point (valued at about \$450,000).

The second program, USMAPS – also known as West Point Prep – is available to Soldiers who have been selected by the West Point admissions staff and who do not qualify for immediate admission, but have scores worthy of further consideration. Established in 1946, USMAPS is a 10-month preparatory program that provides a dynamic curriculum, which closely coordinates with West Point's syllabus. USMAPS offers a second chance for a select number of Soldiers, preparing them for the challenging curriculum taught at West Point. After successfully completing USMAPS, candidates may reapply for admission into West Point.

As prior service applicants, ARNG Soldiers have a unique advantage as their military qualifications separate them from civilian applicants. Pre-existing military credentials – such as awards, platoon or squad experience and/or being an honor graduate from Basic Combat Training, Advanced Individual Training or leadership schools – stand out among West Point's thousands of applicants. Guard Soldiers also have the added benefit of the required nomination letter from a current company commander. Nomination by a military officer also stands out among candidates.

To be considered for admission to West Point, Soldiers must be U.S. citizens, no older than 22 on July 1 of the year entering West Point, not married, not pregnant, have no legal obligation to support a child or dependent, be eligible for re-enlistment and have completed Basic Combat Training. A high school diploma or GED is also required. When

applying, Soldiers must submit high school transcripts and SAT or ACT scores. If a Soldier has not taken the ACT or SAT, it is recommended that they reach out to their State Army National Guard Education Office in order to find the nearest testing center, as scores are a requirement of the application process.

Earning a degree at West Point is an opportunity that can lead to long-lasting, positive impacts on a Soldier's military career and life. With the Soldiers Admissions Program and USMAPS, National Guard Soldiers can become a part of the lasting legacy that is West Point. ●



**LEFT:** U.S. Military Academy Cadets recite the oath of office during their graduation ceremony at West Point.

**RIGHT:** A Cadet from the Class of 2018 conducts Land Navigation Training during Cadet field training.

# BENEFITS SPOTLIGHT

PAY TO THE  
ORDER OF

## PAY BENEFITS

\$

## WHILE ON DEPLOYMENT -

DOLLARS



WHAT TO EXPECT

MEMO BY STAFF WRITER Ruth Ann Replogle

*Uncle Sam*

**Y**ou more than likely know how your basic pay works as an Army National Guard Soldier serving during drill weekends and at training. But are you as familiar with how your pay changes when you are activated and sent on deployment? The summary below offers an overview of pay benefits for Guard Soldiers serving on deployment. For a detailed breakdown of your individual compensation package, talk to your command or visit the military members webpage maintained by Defense Finance and Accounting Services at [www.dfas.mil/militarymembers.html](http://www.dfas.mil/militarymembers.html).

Basic pay for reserve component Soldiers is based on the pay grade and the number of drill periods (at four hours each) served each month. Because regular weekend drills are paid on a two-drill-period-per-day rate, a drill weekend is typically worth four drill periods. For training events longer than a drill weekend, pay is prorated based on the number of four-hour drill periods.

When activated, basic pay is determined by the active duty base salary that is equivalent to one's rank and tenure. However, basic pay is only part of the total income of a Soldier on active duty.

When mobilized to support a contingency operation, additional pay and allowances may be received. These include:

- **Basic Allowance for Housing:** Pay rates depend on the length of time deployed, the pay grade, the marital and Family status and the State residency of a Soldier. It is based upon the cost of adequate housing, for civilians with comparable income levels, in the same area.
- **Family Separation Allowance-II:** This allowance is for Soldiers involuntarily separated from Family for more than one month. Pay is retroactive to the first day of departure and stops the day before returning home.
- **Basic Allowance for Subsistence:** The food allowance normally begins the first day on tour and ends upon completion of active duty. This depends on the availability of a government mess, or if a Soldier is authorized to mess separately when government mess is available. When living in barracks, messing in the dining facilities on base is required, and no food allowance is provided.
- **Hostile Fire/Imminent Danger Pay:** Also known as "combat pay," this allowance is paid monthly when serving in an officially declared hostile fire zone or imminent danger area.
- **Hardship Duty Pay:** If deployed to one of the more than 150 locations in the world designated as hardship areas, additional special pay may be received. Pay rates depend on the area's level of austerity. Some areas, such as Iraq and Afghanistan, qualify for both hardship duty pay and imminent danger pay.
- **Hazardous Duty Pay:** If serving in a hazardous MOS, such as explosive ordnance disposal or pararescue, additional special pay may be received.
- **Foreign Language Proficiency Pay:** This allowance applies for those proficient in the most critically needed languages, such as Arabic, Pashto, Persian-Afghan (Dari) and Mandarin. Pay rates depend on the level of proficiency in speaking, reading and writing.



**All of your allowances and additional pay are tax-exempt.**

**TO ENSURE** you receive all the pay you and your Family are entitled to collect, be sure your information is updated in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS). You will need your CAC to update your information at the nearest military installation.

# GET UP TO **\$4,000** IN EDUCATION ASSISTANCE AS A MILITARY SPOUSE

**My Military Spouse Career Advancement Account Program (MyCAA)** provides career development and employment assistance to military spouses. Financial assistance can be provided to eligible spouses pursuing qualifying licenses, certifications or Associate degrees in high-demand, portable career fields and occupations.

**For more information**, call **1-800-342-9647** to speak with a MyCAA Career and Education Consultant or visit the MyCAA Spouse Portal online at **<https://aiportal.acc.af.mil/mycaa>**



# forever GI BILL

BY STAFF WRITER  
Drew Lansbury

**T**he Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act was unanimously signed into law on Aug. 16, 2017. Named after the former commander of the American Legion and author of the GI Bill of Rights in 1944, the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act, also known as the “Forever GI Bill,” allows more Veterans access to the GI Bill and gives them more time to utilize it.

Passing Congress with overwhelming support, the Forever GI Bill is the largest expansion of college aid for Veterans and service members to take place in a decade. Within that expansion are numerous opportunities for National Guard members. The legislation broadens access to a wider group of National Guard service members who are now eligible for extended education benefits. Additionally, Guard members placed on medical hold status will see that time count toward their eligibility, retroactive to Sept. 11, 2001.

National Guard members called to active duty under sections 12304(a) – when a governor requests federal assistance in responding to a major disaster or emergency – or 12304(b) – when the DoD mobilizes reserve components in support of a combatant command – are now eligible for the Forever GI Bill. Previously, only those called to active duty by presidential order as a result of a national emergency were eligible. This expansion applies to all Guard members mobilized after Aug. 1, 2009. Also, current time restrictions tied to the Post-9/11 GI Bill are eliminated for many service members under the Forever GI Bill. This means qualifying recipients may use their GI Bill benefits for the span of their entire lives.

Under the new bill, National Guard service members who serve on active duty

for less than 36 months, but more than 90 days, will receive increased payable benefits on a tiered system. Those who serve on active duty at least 90 days, but less than six months, receive payment increases from 40 percent to 50 percent. Those who serve at least six months, but less than 12 months, receive payment increases, rising from 50 percent to 60 percent. These increases result in up to \$2,300 more a year in tuition. This provision is also retroactive to National Guard members whose service commenced on or after Sept. 11, 2001.

Honoring this esteemed group of service members, Purple Heart recipients will now be eligible for educational benefits, regardless of how long they served on active duty.

“The signing...marks a new era for all who have honorably served in uniform,” said Charles Schmidt, American Legion National Commander. “This lifetime benefit will allow Veteran [service members], and their Families to earn degrees and begin rewarding careers that can lead our economy. We believe that this legislation...will transform America, as the original [legislation] did following World War II.”

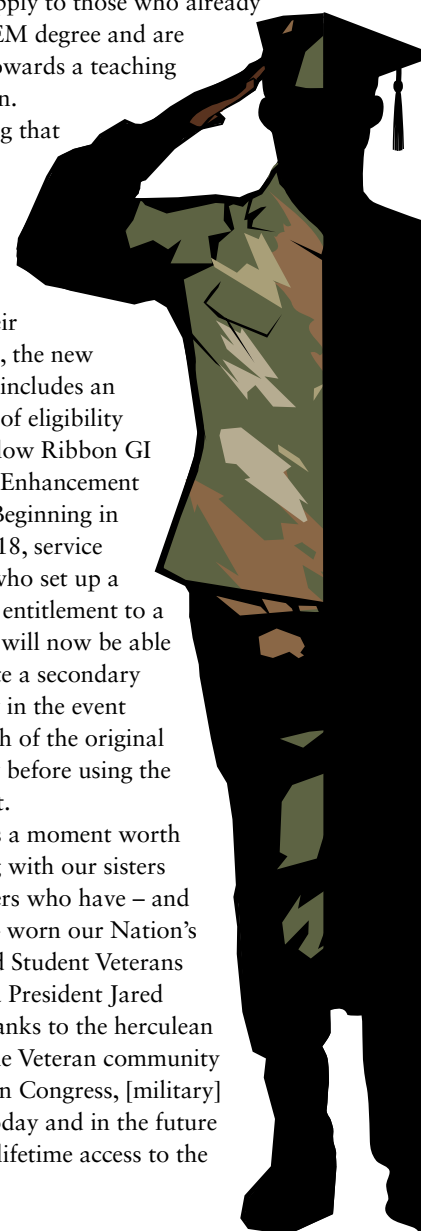
The Forever GI Bill also includes a provision that restores benefits to those impacted by school closures. This particular provision will retroactively apply to GI Bill users whose schools abruptly closed beginning in January 2015. For credits earned from an institution that closed or lost accreditation, GI Bill funds used for those credits will be reimbursed to the service member.

Beginning Aug. 1, 2018, those using the GI Bill to pursue science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) degrees will be eligible for the Edith

Nourse Rogers Scholarship, which gives an additional nine months of tuition benefits to qualifying applicants. The additional scholarship funds could translate to an extra \$30,000 in benefits. The scholarship will also apply to those who already have a STEM degree and are working towards a teaching certification.

Ensuring that surviving Family members have a continued path to their GI benefits, the new legislation includes an expansion of eligibility for the Yellow Ribbon GI Education Enhancement Program. Beginning in August 2018, service members who set up a transfer of entitlement to a dependent will now be able to designate a secondary beneficiary in the event of the death of the original beneficiary before using the entitlement.

“This is a moment worth celebrating with our sisters and brothers who have – and will have – worn our Nation’s cloth,” said Student Veterans of America President Jared Lyon. “Thanks to the herculean effort of the Veteran community and allies in Congress, [military] students today and in the future will enjoy lifetime access to the GI Bill.” ●

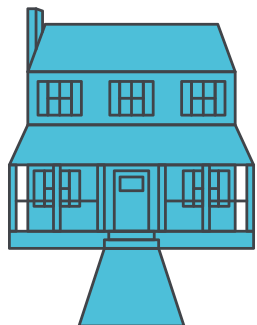


# JUST FOR FUN



## Call to Action:

Have a funny cartoon that you'd like to share? If you have a knack for drawing and would like to see your original cartoon or illustration published in *Citizen-Soldier* magazine, send your drawing to [Editor@Citizen-SoldierMagazine.com](mailto:Editor@Citizen-SoldierMagazine.com).



## THE VA LOAN PROCESS

BY STAFF WRITER Liam Griffin

**A VA LOAN** is a mortgage issued by approved lenders that is guaranteed by the federal government. It allows eligible service members and Veterans to either refinance up to 100% of their home or buy a new home with no money down.

**THE PROCESS OF BUYING A HOME CAN BE TEDIOUS**, especially for first-time homebuyers. While the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has a popular home loan program that helps to make the goal of home ownership more financially attainable for service members, the additional steps required to ensure VA eligibility can add to the process and possibly cause it to feel overwhelming.

Below are six steps to help guide Soldiers through the process of obtaining VA Home Loan approval. Armed with this information, Army National Guard Soldiers and their Families can find peace of mind in knowing what to expect from the home loan process.



### DETERMINE ELIGIBILITY

Members of the National Guard may qualify for a VA loan if they meet one of the following qualifications:

- Served six years and were either honorably discharged, retired or transferred to Standby Reserve; or an element of the Ready Reserve other than the Selected Reserve, after honorable service;
- Served in the Selected Reserve for more than six years;
- Served on active duty for more than 90 days during a wartime period;
- Discharged or released from active duty for a Service-related disability.



### FIND AN APPROVED LENDER

Once eligibility is determined, Soldiers should find a VA-approved lender. This can be done by contacting the nearest VA Regional Loan Center. Loan Center representatives can connect service members with approved lenders and help get them started on the approval process.



## OBTAIN A COE

Once you have found an approved lender, it's time to obtain a certificate of eligibility (COE). The COE confirms eligibility to participate in the program. A COE can be obtained from the VA, using form 26-1880, or from a private lender. Proof of service is required for a COE from a private lender.

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## COMPLETE THE VA APPLICATION

Next, send your application to the VA. The application is available online, and can be submitted through the VA website at [www.benefits.va.gov/homeloans](http://www.benefits.va.gov/homeloans). Alternatively, it's also possible to apply through your lender.

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## COMPLETE THE APPRAISAL PROCESS

When the loan application is approved, the VA will begin an appraisal process. During the appraisal process, the VA will send a qualified appraiser to examine the interior and exterior of the home to determine its appropriate value. This is not a thorough inspection, but a visit to determine the value of the property. The appraiser will then produce a Certificate of Reasonable Value, which will be used when determining the value of the VA loan.

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## BE PATIENT

At this point, patience will become an important virtue. The VA will review the COE, and compare the Certificate of Reasonable Value with the Family's credit score. This process can take anywhere from two weeks to over a month, depending on how quickly the different forms process through the VA.

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**A VA LOAN IS AN INCREDIBLE - AND EXCLUSIVE - BENEFIT** of which eligible service members should take advantage. It can easily save thousands of dollars in the homebuying process! For more information about the VA home loan program and how it applies to Army National Guard Soldiers, contact a VA Regional Office with loan guaranty operations. A directory of regional offices can be found at [www.benefits.va.gov/HOMELOANS](http://www.benefits.va.gov/HOMELOANS) or by calling 1-877-827-3702.

# Operation Santa Claus

BY STAFF WRITER Tatyana White-Jenkins



**S**oldiers and Airmen of the Alaska National Guard are bringing holiday cheer to communities in need.

Through Operation Santa Claus, the Alaska National Guard has partnered with organizations and volunteers to deliver gifts, food and school supplies to children in Alaskan villages.

Operation Santa Claus began in 1956 when spring floods, followed by a local drought, led to drastic reductions in the indigenous wildlife in the western Alaskan village of St. Mary's. The local villagers, who normally hunt and fish for all their food, were forced to pay to have food shipped in to get them through the fierce Alaskan winter. Having only enough money to pay for the food, the villagers' children would have to go without Christmas gifts that season. Not wanting the children of St. Mary's to go without at Christmas time, the mother superior of the village's Roman Catholic mission wrote to the Alaska National Guard for help. The Alaska Air Guard quickly answered the call and delivered gifts, food and a special guest – Santa Claus.



**ABOVE:** BG Laurie Hummel, Adjutant General of the Alaska National Guard, helps 4-year-old Angelo Pasitnak pick out presents at Akiachak School during Operation Santa Claus in Western Alaska.

**RIGHT:** Mr. and Mrs. Claus embrace a local Akiachak child during Operation Santa Claus 2016.

Though he was a child at the time, Bill Alstrom, St. Mary's current mayor, recalls the first operation. "It was awesome," said Alstrom. "They landed on the river – they were in a C-123 Provider [transport plane], and of course they brought Santa Claus." While the village's Roman Catholic mission closed in the late 1980s, the Alaska National Guard's dedication to the program did not cease. Operation Santa Claus has evolved over the years, and is now a large partnership with the Alaska Army National Guard and more than 30 local organizations.

"The Alaska National Guard's Operation Santa Claus began with the Air Guard's 144th Airlift Squadron flying a C-123 Provider to St. Mary's in 1956," said LTC Candia Olmstead, member of the Operation Santa Claus Advisory Board. "Since then, Air National Guard C-130s, Army National Guard C-23 Sherpa, UH-60 Black Hawk and other aircraft have transported Santa and Mrs. Claus, elves, gifts, food, books, school supplies, fruit and ice cream to tens of thousands of children throughout rural Alaska."

Each year, Soldiers and Airmen of the Alaska National Guard, along with volunteers from the local community, come together to make up the Operation Santa Claus advisory board. Dedicated to planning the festive event, the board consists of about 75 members who are separated into several

committees, including volunteers, gifts, transportation and communications. Planning for the event typically begins in March, with deliveries slated between October and early December.

The National Guard rotates the delivery of gifts between small groups of villages in the State. Depending on the year, Operation Santa Claus delivers to between two and six Alaskan villages. To choose which villages will receive gifts, Alaska's Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management assists the Alaska National Guard by identifying the villages that have faced hardships that year. For Operation Santa Claus 2017, deliveries were made to Kipnuk and St. Michaels.

Not all of the gifts given through Operation Santa Claus come from the National Guard. Children's items that are not easily accessible in the villages are donated by partnering organizations and individual community members. Alaska-based commercial vendors donate backpacks for each child in that year's selected villages, and Salvation Army Alaska donates school supplies and toiletries to

fill the backpacks. The Salvation Army also contributes gifts that have been donated by people in the larger Alaskan community. "One local business donates ice cream and toppings for children to have sundaes. In the villages, it is not uncommon to see a half-gallon of ice cream cost about \$20," LTC Olmstead said. "Fresh fruit, which is also expensive and sparse in village stores – especially during winter months – is donated by another local business."

Most villages that receive deliveries through Operation Santa Claus have a runway that can accommodate a C-130 or C-17 to land, permitting about 40 Guard members and volunteers to travel for the mission. However, some villages cannot support a large military cargo aircraft. For these villages, Soldiers and civilian volunteers fly with Alaska Airmen to a larger hub village in a C-130 Hercules or C-17 Globemaster III. From there, the Alaska Army National Guard transports passengers to the village using Black Hawk helicopters. In this scenario, only 10 to 20 personnel can assist with the event due to limited space.



An Akiachak father and son enjoy an ice cream sundae in the Akiachak School gym.



A child from St. Mary's, Alaska, walks away smiling after receiving his gift during Operation Santa Claus 2015.

***“Many of us have lived in Alaska for a long time and Operation Santa Claus is still the first opportunity we have to get to a small, remote Alaskan village. It is enriching to interact with the citizens who live in the villages and to see the uniqueness of each location.”***

- LTC Candia Olmstead

“After the plane lands in the village, locals meet the group at the airplane and transport them to the village’s K-12 school where the Operation Santa event will take place,” LTC Olmstead explained. “The guests, who are ‘Op Santa elves’, are transported in the back of pickup trucks, on four-wheelers and snowmobiles or oftentimes on a dog sled being pulled by a snowmobile.”

During the event, children and their families join ‘Op Santa elves’ in their school’s auditorium, eagerly awaiting the arrival of Santa and Mrs. Claus.

“The children were really excited to learn they were coming. And so were the adults,” said Sam Gosuk, principal of the Togiak School, about Operation Santa Claus 2016. As part of Operation Santa Claus 2016, deliveries were made to Togiak, Akiak, Akiachak, Tuluksak and Grayling. “Op Santa is a huge event in the villages,” LTC Olmstead said. “The children wait in anticipation, full of excitement and energy. As the Op Santa elves work quickly to get all of the gifts, food and supplies into the school gymnasium, Santa and Mrs. Claus are usually in a discreet area waiting for festivities to begin, so they can be introduced at the beginning of the program.”

At the event, stations are set up in a school’s auditorium, and the donated goods are organized into different categories. Children are called up by age group – ranging from infant to 18 – to receive their gifts, a backpack filled with supplies, books and fruit. This is all topped off with an ice cream sundae, which each child receives after getting

their gifts and school supplies. While there, children can take pictures with Santa and Mrs. Claus, interact with Soldiers and Airmen and enjoy performances put on by local civilians. Villagers will often perform Alaska Native dancing and singing to show their appreciation to those who planned and volunteered at the event.

“The children and families are so excited and appreciative,” LTC Olmstead said. “They are full of smiles and gratitude. Many of the children will approach volunteers to talk and ask questions or to take photos. Sometimes Soldiers and Airmen challenge the

kids to do push-ups to see who can do the most. For many years, the Salvation Army has sent an ensemble to play music. Other times, someone plays a piano or keyboard, providing holiday music and leading the crowd in Christmas carols.”

Over the years, Operation Santa has gained support from several local officials. In 2015, per the residents’ request, Alaska governor Bill Walker participated in the event, when deliveries were made to St. Mary’s and Savoogna.



Santa gives a hug to two young sisters at Operation Santa Claus 2016.

*“When we got there, perfect strangers would wrap their arms around you and tell you they love you just because you came to their village.”*

- April Gettys, Event Volunteer

SPC Bridget Lasater passes out cookies to the children of St. Michael, Alaska, during Operation Santa 2017



“Thank you to the Alaska National Guard who flew us out here today, and to the tons of volunteers [that helped] make this happen,” said Governor Walker.

At the heart of Operation Santa is the same underlying goal that drives every National

Guard mission – to assure State residents that the Guard is there for them and always ready to serve and protect their needs.

“Many of us have lived in Alaska for a long time and Operation Santa Claus is still the first opportunity we have to get to a small, remote Alaskan village,” LTC Olmstead said.

“It is enriching to interact with the citizens who live in the villages and to see the uniqueness of each location. The people in the village are very welcoming and hospitable, and it is a true joy to spend a day serving them. All service events are such a wonderful opportunity to show generosity and kindness to others, and this is an extraordinary and unique experience to be part of.”

“I think the community feels loved and appreciated,” said Reyna Hartz, Yupit School District superintendent, when describing the atmosphere of Operation Santa Claus in 2016.

April Gettys, an Operation Santa Claus event organizer, recalls the reaction of villagers during Operation Santa Claus 2015.

“When we got there, perfect strangers would wrap their arms around

you and tell you they love you just because you came to their village,” said Gettys. “I think our Airmen, Soldiers and elves got more out of [the event] than the village did, and that says a lot. Just going there and seeing how much the people appreciated it – that makes it all worthwhile. It’s an eye-opener and it helps you realize what really matters in life.”

Operation Santa Claus allows the Alaska National Guard and volunteer community members to not only provide tangible goods to those in need, but to also deliver a feeling of comfort and joy during the holiday season. LTC Olmstead said she feels honored to be a part of an event that holds great significance to Alaska’s struggling communities.

“The event is important because, though it began in response to a natural disaster, it has continued as a way to reach rural Alaska for building community relationships and serving those in remote areas,” explained LTC Olmstead. “Engaging Alaskan communities is a priority for the Alaska National Guard, and Operation Santa Claus helps us to do that. Many Alaskans in rural communities could go most of their lives without any personal interaction with U.S. military service members, and Operation Santa Claus allows Soldiers and Airmen to reach out to them and show they care in a personal and tangible way.” ●

Children from St. Mary’s, Alaska, test Alaska Army National Guard LTC Joel Gilbert’s strength by sitting on his back while he does push-ups during Operation Santa Claus 2015.



# SHADOW WARRIORS

## Army National Guard Stands Up Its First Cyber Brigade

BY STAFF WRITER Drew Lansbury



Members of the Virginia National Guard's newly activated Bowling Green-based 91st Cyber Brigade receive their new shoulder sleeve insignia at Fort Belvoir, Va.

On Sept. 17, 2017, the Virginia National Guard activated the 91st Cyber Brigade, the Army National Guard's first brigade-level cyber force.

The 91st Cyber Brigade, also known as the Shadow Brigade, was activated at a ceremony at Fort Belvoir attended by LTG Timothy Kadavy, Director of the Army National Guard, MG Timothy P. Williams, Adjutant General of Virginia, Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe, along with other senior military and civilian leaders, Soldiers and Family members.

"Starting today and moving forward, the 91st Cyber Brigade will play a crucial role in our national defense," LTG Kadavy said. "The Citizen-Soldiers of the Shadow Brigade are a prime example of how highly

skilled Army National Guard personnel bring state-of-the-art skills to their part-time service to carry out the Total Army effort. Today's ceremony represents a leap forward for the Army, the Department of Defense (DoD) and our entire country."

The brigade has been assigned to provide training and readiness oversight for cyber units across 30 States. With a motto of "UMBRA BELLATORES," which translates to Shadow Warriors," the brigade will employ skilled personnel to meet the demands of growing cyber mission sets throughout the Army and the DoD.

"We have had capability among the 54 States and Territories for a number of years," said COL William Zana, Commander of the 91st Cyber Brigade.

"The Nation's recognition, and the Army's recognition, that we need to leverage [our combined] civilian and military skill sets is what brought us to forming and placing a brigade."

The 91st Cyber Brigade commands approximately 950 traditional status Army National Guard officers, warrant officers and enlisted Soldiers. Within the brigade, the Army National Guard has stood up five cyber battalions. Each battalion headquarters, which consists of approximately 25 personnel, will have four subordinate units that will consist of 35 to 40 personnel. A cyber security company, a cyber warfare company and two cyber protection teams make up the four subordinate units.

The command team for the 91st Cyber Brigade uncases their new unit colors.



**“There’s a new threat that comes out every day. We have to stay educated and on top of our game so that we can defend against those threats.”**

– SSG Ricardo Forde

“The Cyber Protection Teams are largely focused on Department of Defense information networks,” COL Zana explained. “Our Cyber Warfare Companies are more focused on the full spectrum [of cyber security threats], while our Cyber Security Companies are focused on civilian networks and other networks that may not be as familiar to us.”

General duties for all units of the 91st Cyber Brigade will include conducting cyber analysis, vulnerability assessments and defensive cyberspace operations on military networks. With Gov. McAuliffe deeming cyber-attacks the greatest threat facing the Nation, the creation of the cyber brigade addresses a critical and constantly evolving national security risk.

“There’s a new threat that comes out every day,” said SSG Ricardo Forde of the 133rd Cyber Support Company. “We have to stay educated and on top of our game so that we can defend against those threats.”

“As part of the cyber brigade and the broader element in support of Army cyber, we are at the forefront of technology,” said 1LT Matthew Leybold of the 91st Cyber Brigade. “It’s cutting edge, [the brigade] is directly addressing a lot of problems that [are affecting people today].”

The initial concept of the 91st Cyber Brigade was presented by the National Guard Bureau to the U.S. Army in June 2016 and was approved in February

2017. The brigade was reflagged from the Virginia National Guard’s 91st Troop Command. The 123rd Data Processing Unit, based out of Fairfax, Va., was split into the 123rd and 124th Cyber Protection Battalions. Also serving under the brigade are the 125th and 126th Cyber Battalions stationed in Columbia, S.C., and Hanscom Air Force Base in Bedford, Mass. One additional battalion has yet to be stationed. Additionally, the cyber brigade will provide training and validation management for 10 previously approved Army Cyber Protection Teams that are stationed in various States across the country.

The Shadow Warriors have a unique unit insignia featuring a quartered shield that incorporates a pixelated pattern. This pattern represents technology and its place in the future of warfare. The shield also features a sword to signify the brigade’s defensive and offensive capabilities. Their shoulder sleeve patch also uses a sword to represent military capability, lightning bolts that represent information-technology and signal transmissions, and stars that represent the first five cyber protection battalions.



The unit colors are black, steel gray and gold. The black signifies cyberspace, security and a new frontier; the steel gray signifies fortitude, mettle and endurance; the color gold signifies the excellence, expediency and expertise of the brigade.

The need for traits like expediency and expertise is never more crucial than it is in the field of cyber security. The sheer speed and complexity with which things move in a cyber environment calls for a dizzying level of agile defense layers.

“You have to have a defense everywhere,” COL Zana said. “You don’t know exactly where and when you are going to have adversary forces. Those adversary forces can be anything from a nation state, to a potentially small criminal actor, to an organization within or outside of criminal organizations. That 360-degree perimeter is almost impossible so you have to look at where your priorities are.”

According to COL Zana, when it comes to federal missions, the brigade focuses largely on domestic state actors, nation state actors and extremist organizations. On a State level, however, the type of threat can be broader. The challenge becomes providing a good defense in all spaces and

having the capabilities for a full-spectrum response.

“Vulnerability is a challenge for us,” said COL Zana. “If you look at all of [the] things that are now wired in or somehow connected to the internet, many of those do not have inherent cyber security or protection. There’s just a huge number of different ways that we can be vulnerable to attack.”

A specific area of vulnerability COL Zana highlights is the Army’s weapons systems.

“Our weapons systems and platforms can be dated, and they may be designed prior to us really realizing what a threat could be,” COL Zana said. “That goes from high-end complex systems like an Apache or Black Hawk helicopter or an M1 Abrams, down to communications systems. Even logistical or personnel administration systems where you can have sensitive data or information – all of those present different vulnerabilities for different parts of the force.”

Contrary to popular misconceptions, cyber security is not confined to online Internet activity.


“An enemy’s targets include physical

things [like] power grids, industrial infrastructure, data centers [or] repositories of sensitive data such as financial or medical information. They can also target people directly,” said SPC Abhimanyu Trikha of the 134th Cyber Support Company. “These can be high-profile people, CEOs, commanders, or they can be people that are not as high on the chain, but may have knowledge that can empower them to go after those high-level figures.”

Not only is there a wide range of cyber-attack methods, there is also a large spectrum of actors that could present a threat.

“You have the full range of potential actors,” COL Zana explained. “From an individual who is just sitting on their computer at home or at an internet café to the high-end threat of another nation that has similar capabilities and [is] looking to take their version of the cyber brigade or cyber battalion to really do something much more comprehensive against either Department of Defense information networks, military networks, or potentially civilian infrastructures like banking, utilities or things like that.”

While there are numerous threats in the



COL John Branch, commander of the 780th Military Intelligence Brigade (Cyber) is briefed by Daniel Yeager, a cyber support technician for the Indiana National Guard, on the capabilities of a Cyber Operations Center used in support of tactical and cyber operations.



National Guard Soldiers and Airmen operate as blue team defenders in the Cyber City area of operations during exercise Cyber Shield 2016 at Camp Atterbury, Ind.

world of cyber, thanks to the training and knowledge of the Soldiers of 91st Cyber Brigade, the majority of those threats already have an identified solution.

“We respond to a lot of threats,” 1LT Leybold said. “I’d say there’s an 80/20 rule where perhaps 80 percent of the things we see are threats, vulnerabilities, [or] some sort of problem that we do have a solution for.”

1LT Leybold went on to explain that the cyber brigade is fast, agile and proactive in attending to the 20 percent of threats for which they do not have an immediate approach to solving.

“What I try to do is help solve for the future State threats that we don’t have a solution for,” 1LT Leybold continued. “My responsibility is to be dynamic and reactive, and problem-solve for those new threats.”

According to COL Zana, their team of extremely capable and highly talented Soldiers is the “center of gravity” of the brigade’s success. LTG Kadavy confirmed the linchpin quality the Soldiers bring to the brigade.

“National Guard cyber warriors are not easy to grow,” LTG Kadavy said.

“They possess a unique combination of military training, civilian credentialing and cyber-security certifications. Forming the 91st Cyber Brigade required meticulous planning, relentless hard work and focused recruiting to find qualified Soldiers capable of taking on the constantly evolving mission.”

For those qualified Soldiers, the Army National Guard’s dedication to cyber has created career opportunities that are unlikely to be matched elsewhere.

SPC Malcolm Brown of the 134th Cyber Support Company joined the Army National Guard because of the opportunities the cyber unit presented. “I wanted to see two different aspects of what it meant to work in cyber,” SPC Brown said. “I get the experience of seeing cyber on the side of the military, and also I get to see it on the civilian side. It’s a great way to educate yourself and your peers to have a broader perspective about what you are facing.”

SPC Brown emphasized the importance of having a drive for the cyber field. He explained, “I’ve become a more knowledgeable IT Specialist. I’ve become

more valuable in the market. I’m equipped with a lot more skill sets, and I’ve gotten a lot more passionate about what I want to do. I’ll continue to do this for a long time.”

SGT Bernita Fisher of the 91st Cyber Brigade noted her enthusiasm for finding unexpected ways to battle enemy cyber forces.

“I think a lot of times when people look at the Army, they think that we all fight with our hands, but oftentimes that’s not the case,” said SGT Fisher. “I think being in the cyber world and being able to attack the enemy in such a unique way, is really what makes me excited [about serving with the brigade].”

CPT Tim Schilbach of the 143rd Cyber Warfare Company has seen first-hand how cyber skills can translate in a tactical environment. He has deployed within the United States and overseas in support of Army cyber missions.

“We have been doing a lot of exciting things in protecting the battlefield and protecting our fellow Soldiers on the battlefield,” CPT Schilbach said. “These new emerging cyber warfare technologies are going to save lives and do things where you can’t have boots on the ground. Using all the cyber platforms that we have at our disposal, staying away criminals, foreign actors and terrorist organizations from our shores has [all] been very rewarding in my career.”

The activation of the 91st Cyber Brigade is a significant moment in the history of Army cyber operations. The dedicated Soldiers of the Shadow Brigade are proving that the Army National Guard is always ready and always there, even when “there” is in cyberspace.

“We are the first [military] responders to fires, floods, hurricanes and when infrastructure topples and everything goes away. The National Guard mobilizes and ensures that the population is safe,” said CPT Schilbach. “Army National Guard [Soldiers] are first responders on the digital battlefield [as well], ensuring that our Nation and our infrastructure remain safe.” ●

# ALWAYS READY



## Ambassadors of the 34th

BY STAFF WRITER Tatyana White-Jenkins

The Iowa National Guard's 34th Army Band is using its talented group of Soldiers to ardently represent the Army National Guard while building positive relationships with the local community.

Dating back to 1918, the 34th Army Band is based in Fairfield, Iowa, and currently has 44 members. Each member is seen as a musical ambassador, tasked with representing the Iowa Army National Guard through music and performance.

The band's current focus is on developing their small groups, known as Music Performance Teams (MPTs). MPTs are specialized ensembles that focus on specific genres of music and perform in communities throughout Iowa. The use of MPTs helps to expand the 34th's ability to respond to the many performance requests received for both civilian and Army events in the State. But more than that, the MPTs serve the larger purpose of helping to modernize the image of the Army National Guard within the civilian community, thus building stronger ties.

"As military musicians, we are the musical ambassadors for the National

Guard and for the Army," said 1SG Brian Pappaducas, senior enlisted leader and saxophone player for the 34th Army Band. "Being able to perform for audiences and communicate the message of our leadership – it's an opportunity you don't have anywhere else."

The 34th Army Band receives performance requests for both civilian and military events, with the majority of requests coming from civilians. Performing anywhere from 50 to 75 acts per year, each of the Iowa National Guard's MPTs holds performances at venues all over the State. Performances include military ceremonies, 4th of July celebrations, the Adjutant General's Summer Concert Series at Camp Dodge and the Iowa State Fair. Because MPTs are smaller groups, they are able to perform in a variety of settings including dining halls, hotel lobbies, parks, auditoriums and amphitheaters.

Within the 34th Army Band are four core MPTs, which perform at both civilian and Army events. The core MPTs consist of two rock bands, the Sidewinders and 42 Romeo; a pop ensemble named Scrap

Metal; and a woodwind quintet called Synergy Winds. The 34th also has two subset MPTs, a brass ensemble and a brass quintet instrumental group. The subset MPTs are manned with Soldiers from the core MPTs, but these brass groups only perform at military functions. The largest component of the 34th Army Band is the concert and marching band, which brings together the entire 34th to perform as a single unit.

"It's a pretty wide variety of places that we play and that's really the design of the ensembles," said CW2 Kent Wesselink, Commanding Officer of the 34th Army Band. "[The MPTs] are set up with the capacity to arrive at any type of venue and effectively put on a concert."

CW2 Wesselink went on to explain that embracing the individual strengths and talents of each Soldier in the band is an important part of developing the band as a whole. "Every MPT, from State to State, is unique to the members that are in it. The groups are built around the personnel and their particular skill sets. So as new people come and others leave, these groups evolve



to the shape of the strengths of the Soldiers that are in them. We may need a trumpet player in one location, or a guitar player in another location, but the individual [that fills that opening] is going to bring a different skill set than someone else might bring while playing the same instrument.”

According to 1SG Pappaducas, the 34th Army Band as a whole executed 181 performances during 2016 and 2017, with a projected audience count of just under 100,000. This does not include their estimated televised audience, which 1SG Pappaducas noted could be as high as 675,000 for certain events, such as performing the National Anthem at the Iowa Speedway.

“We support a lot of the anthem requests that we get for the Iowa Speedway, Iowa Barnstormers, Iowa Cubs and other [sports events] in the State,” said CW2 Wesselink. “It’s huge exposure for the Iowa National Guard in a positive way. Just one person singing the anthem – that counts as an MPT.”

The exposure the MPTs garner has also proven to be an effective recruitment tool for the Iowa Army National Guard.

SPC Jacob Welper is a tuba player for the 34th Army Band and plays bass guitar for 42 Romeo. He has a personal connection to the Army National Guard and wanted to serve, but SPC Welper also wanted to pursue his passion for music.

“My dad was in the Guard for 25 years so I always had a military influence in my family,” SPC Welper said. “I always wanted to serve, but I could never find [an] MOS that interested me.”

After seeing an Army MPT perform at a convention in Chicago, SPC Welper did some research and found the 34th Army Band.

“I got in contact with Chief Wesselink and he gave me information about the band and how to audition,” SPC Welper



**TOP:** Music Performance Team, 42 Romeo, makes a guest appearance at the Iowa National Guard’s 7th annual Adjutant General’s Summer Concert Series at Camp Dodge in Johnston, Iowa.

**MIDDLE:** Music Performance Team, The Sidewinders, perform at the Iowa National Guard’s 7th annual Adjutant General’s Summer Concert Series.

**BOTTOM:** The 34th Army Band Concert and Marching Band performs in an Iowa State parade.

It feels *amazing* being the connection between the military and the community. The community gets to see the military in a new light. They get to see that it's not just about push-ups. It's about *serving* the community and being a bridge.

- SPC Jacob Welper



SGT Mark Meier sings a solo with Musical Performance Team, the Sidewinders.

said. "I decided to join and have loved it ever since."

SPC Welper's MPT, 42 Romeo, plays a wide variety of genres. Performing music from the 80s, 90s and current chart toppers, the band appeals to a vast audience and is helping to break the stereotype that Army band musicians do not have opportunities to perform songs outside of marching band music.

"I like the winter tour where we go to different high schools and show what we can do," SPC Welper said. "It's fun to play for them because they are energized about it. We feed off of their energy just like they feed off of ours."

SPC Welper continued, saying that one of his favorite parts of being a member of the 34th Army Band and 42 Romeo is making connections with the community. SPC Welper noted his passion for his role as a musical ambassador and his commitment to serving his community.

"It feels amazing being the connection between the military and the community," SPC Welper said. "The community gets to see the military in a new light. They get to see that it's not just about push-ups. It's about serving the community and being a bridge."

SPC Michelle Monroe, trumpet player and singer for Scrap Metal, was also drawn to the Army National Guard through music. When she first looked into

joining the Guard, she was unaware of the existence of Army Bands. After telling her college band director about a meeting with an Army National Guard recruiter, the band director encouraged her to speak with an unexpected expert – her college percussion instructor Dr. Terry Beckler.

"My initial reaction was confusion because Dr. Beckler was our percussion instructor," SPC Moore said. "Then I learned that he was also CW4 Terry Beckler, the commander of the 147th Army Band in South Dakota."

After speaking with CW4 Beckler and learning more about how she could combine her eagerness to serve with her passion for music, SPC Moore enlisted and served with the 147th Army Band for nine years. She later transferred to the 34th Army Band.

"When I learned that I could join the [Army] National Guard and be a musician, I was sold," commented SPC Moore. "The military bands are a great way to gain experience in the [musical] field that can carry over into a civilian career."

In addition to gaining professional music experience, SPC Monroe shared that she finds significance in each performance that relates back to her pride as a Soldier and as an American.

"I prefer the performances where I can do my job and gain no attention for myself, but know that the tradition of

military honor is being supported and Americans are being uplifted," SPC Moore said. "The Veterans beaming with pride makes performances at Veteran's homes and in city parades memorable. Bringing support to a deployment ceremony is memorable because you are letting those Families know that their Soldiers are a part of something great. Performing at homecoming ceremonies when all the Soldiers come home safe is the greatest joy. Homecoming ceremonies when some Soldiers did not make it home are the most humbling."

While the 34th Army Band affords Soldiers the opportunity to advance their musical abilities, the underlying mission of the unit is the same as any other in the Army National Guard. Soldiers in the 34th are expected to develop leadership skills and complete combat training outside of their MPTs. Soldiers in the unit take their combat-readiness responsibilities very seriously. In fact, according to 1SG Pappaducas, the 34th Army Band has earned the Eisenhower Trophy more than 10 times in the past 25 years. The Eisenhower Trophy, named in honor of Army General Dwight D. Eisenhower, is awarded by the Chief of the National Guard Bureau to the ARNG unit in each State rated the most outstanding during the training year.

Members of the 34th have also excelled



in competitions such as the Iowa TAG Match, an annual three-day marksmanship competition.

“We had a phenomenal year,” 1SG Pappaducas said. “Last year the 34th Army Band took first place across the board in every category [of the competition] except for pistol, where we took second place. In addition to having outstanding musicians, [our unit has] outstanding Soldiers that can do everything you’d expect a Soldier to be able to do.”

1SG Pappaducas continued, “One of the things I really enjoy about our MPTs is that it’s a great way to take a group of Soldiers – each with different individual strengths – put them all together and watch each of the Soldiers, whether it’s a senior E7 or one of the newest E4s, function as a team. We watch the younger

Soldiers develop their leadership skills, their management skills [and] all the different things that we train for. It really gives them an opportunity to expand themselves – to grow. And as they do so, it makes us a better ensemble.”

CW2 Wesselink added to this sentiment, saying, “Our unit mission is [not only] to provide music to the full spectrum of military operations, [but also] to instill in our Soldiers the will to fight and win, foster the support of our citizens and promote our National interest at home and abroad.”

To join an Army Band, Soldiers should contact their unit administrator or commander for more information. Soldiers must audition and perform at Army standard level to join an Army Band. Once in the band, Soldiers are assigned to MPTs

based on their talents.

For Soldiers in Iowa looking to join the 34th Army Band, CW2 Wesselink advises that they reach out to the band directly or go to the band’s Facebook page for inquiries.

“Army Bands across the United States all have the same mission, though we may have different audiences,” said CW2 Wesselink. “Wherever they are in the U.S., these Soldiers come together to create a show that is relatable to their audience, and they make it work to the benefit of the Army National Guard as a whole.” ●

**TOP:** The 34th Army Band Concert and Marching Band

**BOTTOM:** The 34th Army Band’s brass ensemble

**RIGHT:** The Sidewinders perform cover songs of Michael Jackson’s greatest hits.



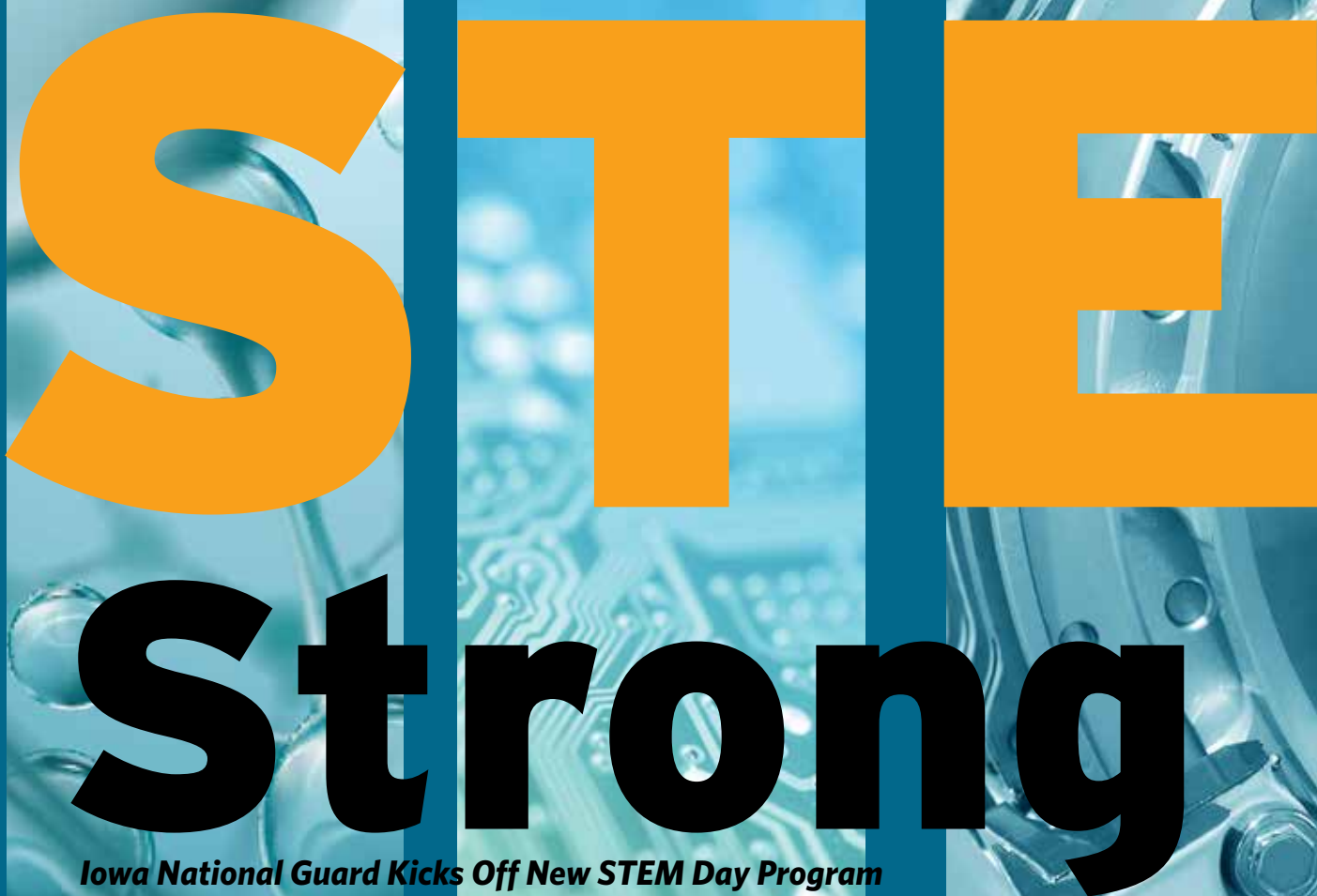
# Helping Soldiers Move Toward **Financial Stability**

Army Emergency Relief (AER) provides Soldiers and their Families interest-free loans, grants and scholarships for a wide variety of situations.



For more information or to find the closest AER location, visit **[www.aerhq.org](http://www.aerhq.org)**.

In the absence of an AER location within 50 miles, assistance is available by calling the American Red Cross at 1-877-272-7337 and then selecting option one for financial assistance.



# STEM Strong

*Iowa National Guard Kicks Off New STEM Day Program*

Story Provided by  
SSG Christie Smith,  
IOWA NATIONAL GUARD

**H**igh school students visited Camp Dodge in Johnston, Iowa, for the Iowa National Guard's inaugural STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) Day event held on Sept. 20, 2017. About 40 students spent the day with Soldiers and Airmen learning about science, technology, engineering and mathematics applications in the military.

Harlan Community High School and Davis County Community High School – the first two schools to participate in what the Iowa National Guard hopes will be a quarterly program – both invited students in their STEM or career technical programs to attend the program.

LTC Dan Maeder, superintendent of the Davis County Community School

District in Bloomfield and the battalion commander of the Iowa Army National Guard's 224th Brigade Engineer Battalion in Cedar Rapids, said STEM Day was a chance for him to make a connection between his civilian life and military service.

"I'd be happy to bring my perspective as a school superintendent and a Guard Soldier to help make this a successful program for the Guard and our schools as well," LTC Maeder said.

Col Justin Wagner, superintendent of the Harlan Community School District in Harlan and the Iowa National Guard's vice chief of the joint staff, was in a similar position to help get the first event off the ground.

During STEM Day, students toured



**TOP:** Maggie Koke, Harlan Community High School senior, learns the difference between night vision and thermal optics at the Sustainment Training Center (STC). **LEFT:** Students from Harlan Community High School and Davis County Community High School watch UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters practice sling load maneuvers. **RIGHT:** SSG Rachael Buck, course coordinator at the Medical Simulation Training Center, shows high school students how the Iowa National Guard uses lifelike mannequins to train combat medics in lifesaving skills.

the Iowa National Guard's state-of-the-art Sustainment Training Center at Camp Dodge, where they learned about plasma cutting, metallurgy and calculating amperage. They also visited the Black Hawk Aircrew Trainer, a flight simulator that uses real UH-60M Black Hawk controls and technology to re-create challenges faced by helicopter pilots.

In addition, they visited the Medical Simulation Training Center, where combat medics are assessed on their ability to handle casualties by treating technologically sophisticated mannequins that breathe, bleed and react to touch.

"One of the most important things we can do is find applications for what kids learn every day in school," Col Wagner said. "This STEM Day here is just one example of what we try to engage our kids in: partnerships that really try to take what the kids are learning in the classroom and apply it to real-world scenarios."

Students practice applying tourniquets while learning about the integration of science, technology, engineering and mathematics for military medics.

Students were also able to watch helicopter crews practice sling load maneuvers on actual Black Hawks, see an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) demonstration, and test their skills in satellite imagery.

"The Army National Guard's STEM initiative is about creating relevance," Col Wagner explained. "Relevance from the classroom to the real world. It's helping students understand that the things they are learning in their classrooms today are the applications they will need to make a difference in their communities tomorrow."

In the past year, the Iowa National Guard has put an emphasis on STEM outreach. MG Timothy Orr, the adjutant general of the Iowa National Guard, has joined the Iowa Governor's STEM Advisory Council.

"MG Orr recognized how the Iowa National Guard could contribute to this state-wide effort and showcase how STEM is part of almost every career field in the Air and Army National Guard," said LTC Maeder. "I'm excited about it. We are full of opportunities for people who may need



“One of the most  
important things we can  
do is find applications for  
what kids learn every day  
in school”

– Col Justin Wagner

some assistance in getting to where they want to go in their life.”

As for the students, STEM Day was a big hit and enlightened them about the numerous STEM-related opportunities in the military. Maggie Koke, a senior at Harlan Community High School, said she was surprised to learn how much STEM plays a role in the military’s day-to-day operations.

“I definitely learned a lot more than I’ve ever known, and I definitely think it will be a great opportunity for other kids,” Koke said.

Koke said watching the helicopter maneuvers was cool. But her favorite STEM Day activities were the Humvee Egress Assistance Trainer (a simulator used to re-create the experience of a vehicle rollover) and the Engagement Skills Trainer (a simulator, similar to a video game, used for weapons training).

“I definitely understand more of what the [military] does with all the STEM applications,” Koke said. “I knew it was a lot of STEM, but I didn’t realize the extent of what they were using the technology [for].”

With the first STEM Day on the books, the Iowa National Guard hopes

to continue the program several more times throughout the school year by hosting schools and students from around the State.

“The National Guard is pursuing this effort to help young people visualize careers and opportunities available all across this great State,” said LTC Maeder. “Emphasis in STEM education through exposure to career opportunities like those found in the Iowa National Guard help students and [potential] service members prepare themselves for the future.”

On last Oct. 2, Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds, the Iowa Governor’s STEM Advisory Council and the Iowa National Guard held a news conference at Camp Dodge to discuss the state of STEM in Iowa. According to federal statistics, Iowa employers are having trouble filling jobs that require education in science, technology, engineering and math.

Through its STEM Day program, the Iowa National Guard hopes to raise student interest in those career fields. Gov. Reynolds said STEM education can provide a path for young citizens to a career that offers a good paycheck while boosting the State’s economy.

“It is really an important part of our overall workforce strategy in Iowa,” she said, citing projections that indicate there will be significant growth of STEM jobs in Iowa. “This is absolutely how we are going to stay innovative and competitive not only as a State, but as a country. And that really represents unlimited opportunities for young people and unlimited opportunities for them to stay here in Iowa.” ●



SFC Chris Jorgensen talks to students about the technology and applications of the RQ-11B Raven Unmanned Aerial Vehicle.



Students had the opportunity to watch a live demonstration of the RQ-11B Raven.



ABOVE: Maggie Koke, Harlan Community High School senior, uses a flameless heater to warm her MRE.

LEFT: CW2 Matthew Tormey talks with students Will Hoffmann and Aaron Porter about the mechanics of the M119A2 105mm Lightweight Towed Howitzer.



# 10

## Ways to MAX Your APFT Run Score

BY STAFF WRITER Ruth Ann Replogle

**W**hen prepping for the Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT), make sure you're ready to run. When it comes to the two-mile run portion of the test, not setting goals or pacing yourself before hitting the pavement can lead to injury and literally put you out of the running.

### So here is what you need to know:

1

#### DETERMINE THE SCORE.

To pass the two-mile APFT run requirement, you need to score at least a 60. That means, if you're between the ages of 17-26, you have to finish running two miles in under 17 minutes or you fail that portion of the test.



Oregon Army National Guard SGT Kenith Landis, Delta Battery, 2nd Battalion, 218th Field Artillery Regiment, 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team, completes his first loop of a 2-mile run during an Army Physical Fitness Test.

**DISCLAIMER:** Consult a trained medical professional before beginning any strenuous exercise program, making any changes in your diet and/or physical activity levels or before implementing any of the recommendations presented in this article. The Army National Guard and Schatz Strategy Group disclaims any liability, personal or professional, resulting from the misapplication of any training procedure, technique, or guidance described in this article, which is for informational purposes only, and does not constitute medical advice or guidance.

2

## SET A GOAL.



The faster you run, the better you score. Find out the minimum time requirement for your age and gender, then aim higher. For example, aim to improve your run by one minute and dedicate your training to shaving off seconds each week for 10 weeks.

3

## BUILD ENDURANCE.



The best way to build endurance is through interval workouts performed at least three times a week for a month. Walk for 90 seconds, then run for 30 seconds. Repeat 10 times for a total of 20 minutes. Feel easy? Switch to walking for 30 seconds and running for 90 seconds. Treadmills have preset interval workouts if you don't feel comfortable doing it on your own. Push to the next level in the following month by jogging for 20 minutes three times a week. Then move up to a 10-minute jog, followed by a one-minute sprint, followed by a two-minute jog. Repeat this routine two times.

4

## VARY THE PACE.



Mixing up your speed and intensity will amp up your endurance. Time yourself running fast in a two-mile run (short distance, high intensity). Then for your next workout, run four miles at an easy pace (long distance, low intensity). Getting comfortable with running a longer distance will make the APFT run feel that much shorter on test day.

5

## PERFECT YOUR RUNNING FORM.



Employing proper running form will make you a more efficient and faster runner.

- ▶ Keep your head straight with your core and hips aligned. Lean forward slightly.
- ▶ Keep your shoulders relaxed and rolled back.
- ▶ Keep your arms bent at the elbow and keep your wrists straight with your hands cupped.
- ▶ Take deep, steady breaths. Breathe in for 3 seconds and out for 2. Repeat.
- ▶ Point your feet directly forward and do not bring your knees up too high.

6

## CROSS-TRAIN.



Adding weight training and other forms of cardio such as biking, swimming, elliptical workouts, or team sports will boost your endurance and strengthen your muscles.

7

## STRETCH BEFORE AND AFTER EACH WORKOUT.



This is a biggie. If you've not been warming up or cooling down, you need to start. Stretches prime your muscles before running and relieve tension afterward. Proper stretching significantly lowers the risk of injury.

8

## PICK THE RIGHT SHOES.



Wearing appropriate running shoes, and ensuring that they fit properly, makes a difference. Most quality athletic apparel stores will have staff educated on how to select the right shoe for your fit and style of running. Don't forget it is also key to properly lace your shoes.

9

## HYDRATE FREQUENTLY.



Drink 16 ounces of water one hour before your run, eight ounces just before you start running, and sip a couple of ounces every 10 minutes during your run.

10

## STAY POSITIVE!



You can do this. If you don't feel motivated, just put on your running clothes. Oftentimes getting suited up is half the battle. Follow these basic steps and get ready to dominate your next two-mile run requirement.



# DRIVEN PRECISION

## A Biathlete's Push for the Olympics

BY STAFF WRITER Tatyana White-Jenkins

"BEING IN THE **NATIONAL GUARD BIATHLON PROGRAM** HAS BEEN A HUGE BLESSING FOR TRAVIS. IT IS ALLOWING HIM TO **PURSU** HIS **PASSION** FOR BIATHLON AND SKIING WITH **COMPLETE FOCUS**. HE ALSO GETS TO **SEE THE WORLD** WHILE DOING IT."

- Leslie Cooper



**W**hen playing a fun game with his Family about which kitchen tool would best describe them, SPC Travis Cooper, Construction Equipment Mechanic with the 207th Engineer Utilities Detachment of the Alaska Army National Guard, was deemed a zester. His Family likened SPC Cooper to the utensil used to precisely scrape fine shreds of peel from citrus fruits because of his knack for precision. It is this same trait that has led to SPC Cooper's success in the National Guard Biathlon program.

The biathlon, a winter sport that combines cross-country skiing and rifle shooting, originated in the skiing traditions of Scandinavia, where early inhabitants revered the Norse god Ullr as both the ski god and the hunting god. In modern times, the activity that developed into the sport was an alternative training

exercise for the Norwegian military. Norwegian skiing regiments organized military contests in the 18th century, divided into four classes: shooting at mark while skiing at top speed, downhill race among trees, downhill race on big hills without falling, and a long race on flat ground while carrying a rifle and a military pack. The current-day biathlon is a civilian variant of the old military combined exercise. The first Biathlon World Championship was held in 1958 in Austria, and in 1960 the sport was included in the Olympic Games.

According to National Guard Biathlon officials, the National Guard has taken the biathlon back to its military roots and uses the program to help Soldiers improve their skiing and marksmanship skills, which advances their overall combat readiness. Throughout the United States, service members from the National Guard

Biathlon Team represent the Guard in national and international competitions, such as the Biathlon World Cup and Winter Olympic events.

"It's an opportunity for Soldiers to put skiing and shooting together to improve their ability to mobilize over snow, which is a skill that Soldiers in northern climates need to have," explained LTC Stephen Wilson, Director of the Alaska National Guard Biathlon Team.

SPC Cooper's path to the National Guard Biathlon program began at a young age, starting with a general interest in skiing.

In the seventh grade, SPC Cooper joined his middle school ski team in Kenai, Alaska, following his older brother who had also skied on the team.

"My brother started skiing in middle school and it just became a winter activity for the whole Family,"

SPC Cooper said. "I started racing at a young age and I loved it."

When his brother's high school ski coach allowed SPC Cooper to participate in their practices, he was able to further develop his skills and got a head start on the competitors his own age.

"The high school team starts the first of November and the middle school starts right after Christmas," said Leslie Cooper, mother of SPC Cooper. "The high school coach at that time was very gracious and allowed Travis to practice with the high schoolers. That set him up for a successful 7th grade ski season and started him on the trail [to bigger things in the sport]."

SPC Cooper later joined his high school ski team and his love for skiing continued to grow. He competed on the varsity team all four years and represented Team Alaska three times at the Junior National Cross-Country Ski Championships.

While in his junior year of high school, SPC Cooper attended an event that would spark his interest in the Army National Guard and the biathlon program.

His mother explained, "We have a friend who is in the National Guard. When Travis was a junior, the National Guard had a regional competition and [our friend] competed. Travis and [his father] went to Anchorage to watch, and that's where the biathlon interest started."

The competition was the National Guard Western Regional Biathlon Competition in Wyoming, and it led SPC Cooper to speak with an Army National Guard recruiter and Soldiers in the biathlon program. Afterward, SPC Cooper decided to join the Army National Guard and enlisted in the summer of 2015 after graduating high school.

According to LTC Wilson, The National Guard often looks to high school and college ski programs for possible athletes for the program. "We are always actively looking for young, fit athletes with the potential to enter the sport at top levels," LTC Wilson said. "We look at the highest level for northern ski racers, and approach top skiers to see if they might be interested in developing their skills with the National Guard."

The Alaska National Guard immediately identified SPC Cooper as a potential world-class athlete, and he began racing for the biathlon team in October 2015. Under the guidance of coaches SSG Sarah Lehto and TSgt Travis Voyer, SPC Cooper follows a strategic training regimen that combines cardio, strength training and shooting. SPC Cooper logged 700 training hours in the 2017 season alone, and that number will eventually grow to 760 hours. The goal? To prepare SPC Cooper to compete at World Cup level.

SSG Lehto explained, "[The training regimen] allows him to make the changes that are necessary to capitalize physiologically and also to recover in between the races. Once the season starts, especially in World Cup, they are pretty much racing every weekend from November until the end of March."

Though SPC Cooper started in the biathlon program with minimal shooting experience, he was determined to elevate

his skill. In the two years that

TSgt Voyer and SSG Lehto have coached SPC Cooper, he has qualified to compete in two Junior World Championships. During the 2017 championship, held



SPC Cooper training at approximately 4,500 feet elevation in the heart of the Canadian Rocky Mountains.

in Osrblie, Slovakia, this past February, SPC Cooper missed the first five targets. Each missed target results in a 150-meter penalty lap, which can take about 30 seconds to complete. SPC Cooper came in last place. It was a hard reality check, reminding him how important marksmanship is to the competition. The following month, SPC Cooper would take that lesson and turn it into a win.

In March 2017, at the National Guard Bureau Biathlon Championship at the Camp Ethan Allen Training Site in Vermont, SPC Cooper only missed five out of 20 available targets in the pursuit race. The pursuit race is the final event in the competition, and biathletes' performance in the prior four events determines their start-times in the pursuit race. SPC Cooper was able to beat every competitor by three and a half minutes. His much-improved shooting performance gave him a critical advantage and ultimately played a vital part in his win.

"I think the highlight [of my racing career] so far was the Junior Worlds," SPC Cooper said. "That was a big eye-opening experience into the world of racing. It was really motivating and made me train harder."

TSgt Voyer added, "Devotion to the sport is what makes you a strong Soldier and athlete, especially in the biathlon. I'd say a hard work ethic is one of [SPC Cooper's] strongest attributes."

When SPC Cooper first started competing on the National Guard team,



SPC Travis Cooper claims his second gold after completing the junior men's 12.5 km mass start in the North American #1 and Calforex #1 Biathlon Cups at the Canmore Nordic Centre Provincial Park in Canmore, Alberta.



other competitors were beating him by 10 minutes. By the end of the 2017 season, he was only three minutes behind the leader in the 2017 U.S. Biathlon National Championships, earning him fifth place overall. He improved his ranking on the U.S. championship team from 37 in his first year, to 16 by the end of his second year. SPC Cooper currently ranks 13th on U.S. team and 73rd in the Junior World Cup.

"I am inspired by the fact that I have the opportunity, provided by the National Guard, to pursue a career as a professional athlete," SPC Cooper said. "The dedication of support I receive from my coaches, teammates and everyone involved in getting me to where I am today, motivates and inspires me to work hard to better myself every day."

"Being in the National Guard Biathlon program has been a huge blessing for Travis," his mother said. "It has allowed him to pursue his passion for biathlon and skiing with complete focus. He also gets to see the world while doing it."

According to SPC Cooper, one of his favorite aspects of the program is the travel required to get to the competitions. During his time in the program, he has traveled to Canada, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Austria, Italy and Germany.

"I get to go all over the world and I don't have to worry about where I'm going to get my funding for those trips,"

said SPC Cooper. "A lot of athletes have to worry about how to fund their travel and how they are going to pay for ammo and [supplies]. Being able to go on the trips without worrying about where my next meal is going to come from or how I'm going to pay for it allows me to keep my focus wholly on my training and competition performance."

With dedicated training and an intense motivation to succeed propelling him into the next season, SPC Cooper has high goals for the 2018 competition season. He plans to make the International Biathlon Cup and World Cup teams. His ultimate goal is to compete in the Olympics.

"It would be very gratifying to make the Olympic team," SPC Cooper said. "It would be a confirmation that I am doing the right thing with my life and that all the hard work is paying off."

According to TSgt Voyer, making the Olympic team for biathlon is much different from other sports. Because the competitions are over an entire season, rather than just one week of trial races like most sports, there are numerous steps that have to be taken in order to make the team. Despite the intricate process, SPC Cooper and his coaches are determined to achieve the Olympic goal.

"It's a really defined team and there's about six separate steps you have to take to make the team," TSgt Voyer said. "[SPC Cooper] is still young in the sport, but I would describe him as one of the strongest and hardworking athletes that we have. Getting him to the next Olympic cycle four years from now – that is his goal so that's also our goal."

SPC Cooper said, "I would be very honored to represent all of the United States, the Army, Alaska and myself on the biggest [competitive] stage in the world" ●

SPC Cooper competing in the North American #1 and Calforex #1 Biathlon Cups.

# HYDRATE

## Your Body and Your Mind

BY: Elaine M Gullotta, MA  
Life Coach, Resident in Counseling, ARNG Officer (Ret)

**I**t's been a long and strenuous drill weekend. You're tired and have been working hard to successfully complete the mission before the final formation and that long drive home. You clean up and head over to the latrine hoping there aren't many others ahead of you who have the same idea. As you exit, you realize how thirsty you are and recall a recent safety briefing about the importance of staying hydrated. "I need to drink more," you say to yourself. "I'm really looking forward to a cold beer or two when I get home."

See anything wrong here? In Basic Training, we were all taught the warning signs of heat exhaustion and about how quickly it can occur. Dehydration can affect anyone, and staying properly hydrated is critical not only to your physical well-being, but also to your mental well-being. Beyond that, the well-being of your unit could also be impacted by your dehydration. "My unit?" you ask. Yes, your unit, and here's why.

The human body is two-thirds water. We all lose water through normal breathing and urination, and the rate of loss increases as we exert ourselves. Dehydration occurs when the body loses more water than it consumes. This loss upsets the delicate balance of minerals in our bodies and has a negative effect on our bodily functions. Most people don't

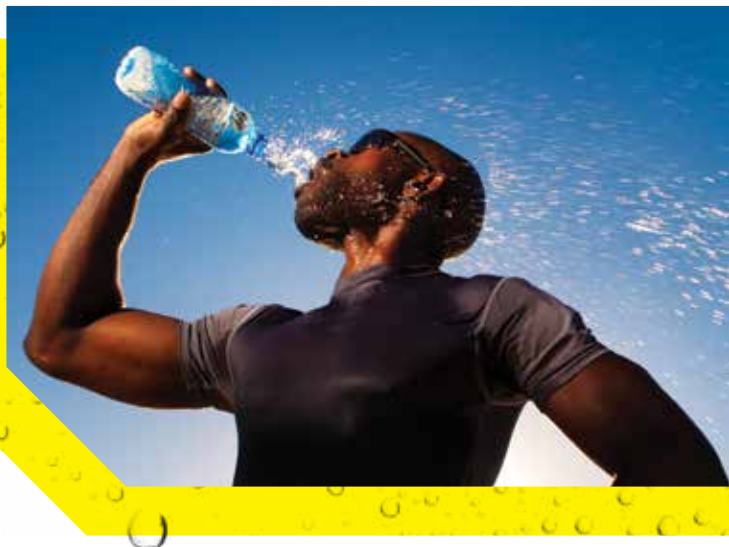
feel thirsty until they are dehydrated to a level of about two percent, at which point the negative effect on your physical performance is likely showing through symptoms such as slow thinking, sleepiness, irritability and aches and pains.

Higher levels of dehydration can produce even more pronounced symptoms such as anxiety, mental confusion and an inability to stay awake. Remember, safety first? If you are severely dehydrated and driving, you are likely a safety risk to yourself and others.

Do you now see how dehydration can impact your unit? As Soldiers, we rely on every member of the unit to do his or her part efficiently and effectively. Staying properly hydrated keeps our minds alert and our bodies functioning properly – both important factors for optimal performance while on duty.

There is, of course, the question of what to do if you find yourself showing signs of dehydration. Should you guzzle water until you feel better? Well, you could and should if this is your only option. A better solution, however, is

to stay ahead of the problem. Carry a water bottle or canteen throughout the day and sip from it frequently. A good goal is to drink an eight-ounce serving of water a minimum of six to eight times each day – more if you are exercising or the temperature is high. Flavored water drinks are acceptable, but plain water does the job, has fewer calories and costs less. If you are wanting variety or to include minerals, try adding a slice of lemon or substituting one eight-ounce serving with coconut water. Remember, water is the best source of hydration, and since caffeine and alcohol typically stimulate urination, it is a good rule of thumb not to count them toward your daily servings goal. ●



# SERVICEMEMBERS CIVIL RELIEF ACT

## (SCRA)

**The Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA)** provides military members with a wide range of legal protections not available to the general public.

SCRA can postpone or suspend financial or civil obligations to protect Guard Soldiers from being negatively affected or while away on active duty.

### SCRA covers such issues as:

- Rental agreements
- Security deposits
- Credit card interest rates
- Automobile leases
- And much more

**For more information** or to locate the nearest Legal Assistance Office, visit <http://myarmybenefits.us.army.mil>, click on Benefit Library - Federal Benefits, then click Soldier Services and select Service Members Civil Relief Act from the dropdown menu.



FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT  
[HTTP://MYARMYBENEFITS.US.ARMY.MIL](http://myarmybenefits.us.army.mil)





# PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD



## **Army air assault**

students learn rappelling techniques during a class at the Army National Guard Warrior Training Center at Camp Dawson in Kingwood, W.Va.





# PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD



## **The 487th Field**

Artillery renders honors during the Hawaii Army National Guard Change of Command ceremony at Wheeler Army Airfield, Hawaii. All Hawaii Army National Guard units and service members were in attendance at the ceremony.





# PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD



## **Instructors of the**

166th Regional Training Institute located at Fort Indiantown Gap, the only live-fire, maneuver military training facility in Pennsylvania, offering more than 17,000 acres and 140 training areas and facilities, train National Guard Soldiers on an M119 Howitzer.





# PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD



## **Army National Guard**

Soldiers assigned to Detachment 1, Company B, 2-238th General Support Aviation Battalion, South Carolina ARNG perform high-altitude flight operations in the Rocky Mountains, aboard a CH-47F Chinook. The crew was attending a week-long training course at the Army National Guard's High-Altitude Aviation Training Site (HAATS) located near Eagle, Colo.





# PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD



## **A Soldier from the**

Idaho National Guard at Gowen Field, “high-fives” a young spectator while participating in the 2017 Boise Veterans Day Parade in downtown Boise, Idaho. The parade theme was “Saluting the Rich Military History of Gowen Field.”





# PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD



## **Tennessee National**

Guard Soldiers push a UH-60 Black Hawk into a C-17 aircraft carrier at Joint Base Berry Field, Nashville, Tenn. The Tennessee Guard deployed to the U.S. Virgin Islands to support disaster relief efforts and provide humanitarian aid in the aftermath of Hurricane Irma.





# PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD

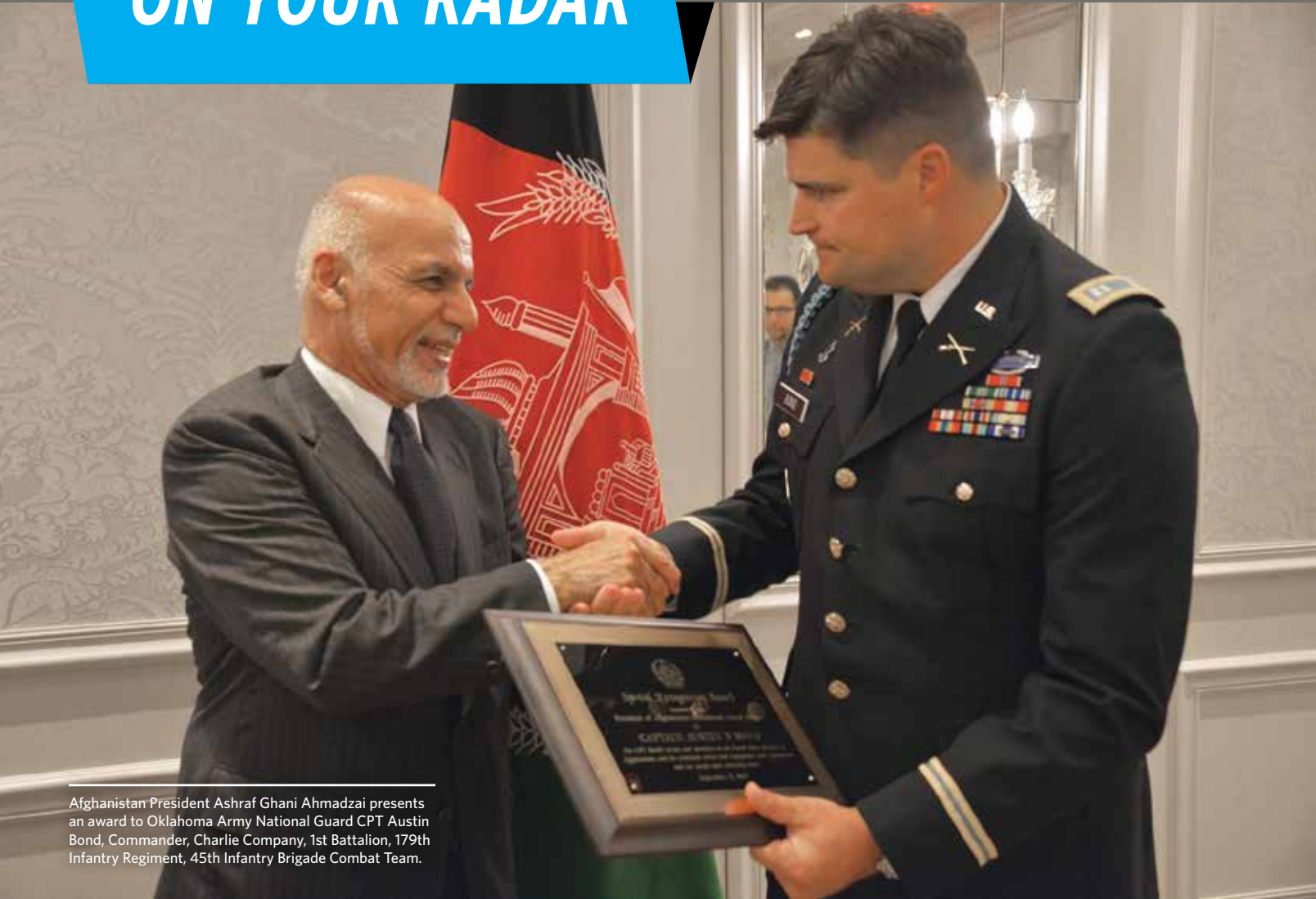


## **Army National Guard**

Soldiers await the arrival of a UH-60 Black Hawk medevac helicopter during the South Carolina National Guard Air and Ground Expo at McEntire Joint National Guard Base, S.C.

# ON YOUR RADAR

ARNG Spotlights From Around the Nation



Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai presents an award to Oklahoma Army National Guard CPT Austin Bond, Commander, Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 179th Infantry Regiment, 45th Infantry Brigade Combat Team.

## STATES FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE

- **ALABAMA**
- **COLORADO**
- **ILLINOIS**
- **KANSAS**
- **MINNESOTA**
- **MISSOURI**
- **OHIO**
- **OKLAHOMA**
- **SOUTH DAKOTA**
- **TENNESSEE**
- **WISCONSIN**
- **WEST VIRGINIA**



## OKLAHOMA

SUBMITTED COURTESY OF THE  
OKLAHOMA NATIONAL GUARD

# Afghan President Presents Award to Oklahoma Guard Soldier

Last summer, Afghanistan Ambassador to the United States Hamdullah Mohib, visited the United States to find out how Americans feel about the war on terrorism. During his travels, the dignitary formed a special bond with a Soldier who had lost a friend on the battlefield.

Witnessing firsthand a U.S. Army Soldier's commitment to a better Afghanistan, the ambassador lobbied to have this Army National Guard Soldier, CPT Austin Bond, formally recognized during the Afghan president's visit to New York for the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly.

The ambassador's effort to honor the Soldier came to fruition. On Sept. 21, 2017, Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai presented an award to CPT Bond, commander of C Company, 1st Battalion, 179th Infantry Regiment, 45th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Oklahoma Army National Guard.

During the event, the Afghan president also honored 22 Veterans and Gold Star Family members with letters of appreciation for their dedication and sacrifice during the war on terrorism.

"I wanted the president to get to know some of these amazing Veterans, and CPT Bond is one of those special individuals who I have come to know personally," Ambassador Mohib said. "Not only did he help his interpreter get a visa, but he put him up in his own house and was there for him. That personal love is an inspiration to many others, and the president was touched to hear this story."

Ambassador Mohib said CPT Bond possesses admirable qualities that are rarely seen. He said Bond's contributions to his U.S. visit made him a prime candidate to be



The 167th Theater Sustainment Command opened its doors for the Central Alabama BEST Robotics Gameday at the Armed Forces Readiness Center, Anniston, Ala.

honored by President Ghani.

"It feels awkward [to be honored] because I know there are so many Soldiers, Airmen, Marines and Sailors who deserve this more than I do," CPT Bond said. "On the ground in a combat environment, there's no time – even over a cup of chai – to really gain the perspective of what you're doing, so to have the Afghanistan president thank us and acknowledge our sacrifice is humbling."

"We're tied in blood, the Afghan and American people, who've fought together against our common enemies," Ambassador Mohib said. "The president's visit is recognition of Soldiers who have put their lives at risk training our security forces, which wouldn't have been possible without people like CPT Bond."

Ambassador Mohib said Afghans and Americans share the same values as hard-working people of faith, family and hospitality. He added that he hopes to see U.S. Veterans break bread with their counterparts.

"This is a small token of what the larger picture is, and it's a small representation of people among the hundreds of thousands of Veterans out there," Ambassador Mohib said. "I hope we keep doing more of these and bring Afghanistan veterans so they can share their stories." ●

## ALABAMA

BY SGT Jeremy Dunkle,  
ALABAMA NATIONAL GUARD

# 167th TSC Hosts BEST Robotics Competition

The 167th Theater Sustainment Command (TSC), Alabama Army National Guard hosted the Central Alabama BEST Robotics Game Day Oct. 21, 2017 at the Armed Forces Readiness Center in Anniston, Ala. Boosting Engineering, Science and Technology (BEST) is an organization that encourages middle school and high school students to pursue degrees in engineering and science-based fields. The organization also holds a national competition each year.

Members of robotics teams from 17 schools in the Central Alabama region competed for trophies in several categories. They were given six weeks to plan and build working robots to compete on game day, with three specific tasks to complete in the allotted time.

The first task was to have a robot move a wooden stick figure to an area designated as a stretcher. The second was to relocate three cans that represented hazardous material to a safe area. The final job was to use pingpong balls to knock down cups stacked at various heights.

SFC Jamie Keith, an Alabama National Guard recruiter, kicked off the event by talking about the new Alabama National Guard Educational Assistance Program (ANGEAP) and the role technology plays in an ever-changing Army.

"It was a good opportunity to talk to these students about the new ANGEAP for Soldiers, which provides up to \$5,080 per semester to in-state colleges," SFC Keith said. "The way the military is evolving, technology and robotics have an important role in helping us accomplish the mission. This event perfectly highlights how technology can help get tasks done. The BEST organization's goal of encouraging students to pursue degrees, and our goal of helping Alabama National Guard Soldiers get their college degrees, go hand in hand."

SGT Rocky Vickery, an Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) sergeant in the 666th EOD unit from nearby Jacksonville, Ala., said there's an obvious comparison between what the students accomplish in the BEST competition and what his Soldiers achieve in their missions.

"They are getting tasks accomplished without having someone physically do it," SGT Vickery said. "That is the exact same thing we do. What they do here is a small-scale, less-intense version of what we do out in the field, but the concept is the same."

SGT Vickery talked about the role of robotics in today's operational environment and the emphasis placed on protecting the lives of Soldiers and civilians through the use of robots.

"Specifically, a huge obstacle we face right now is the use of IEDs [improvised explosive devices]," SGT Vickery said. "We use robots to assess and address any threats, which protects our Soldiers in the field from having to be directly in harm's way."

Hosting the event offered another way for the 167th TSC to be involved in the community and support youth in the region. "It helps give back to the community," said SSG Howard Storey, a training noncommissioned officer at the 167th TSC. "We get to give back to the kids of Alabama and give them the opportunity to show off their skills. We get to provide a platform."

It was the first time the BEST competition was held at the Armed Forces Readiness Center, and SSG Storey would like to see the event return.

"We hope they come back," he said. "It was an exciting event." ●

## COLORADO

BY CPT Ronald Bailey,  
COLORADO NATIONAL GUARD

# Colorado Guard Soldier Donates Gift of Life

"The only gift is a portion of thyself," wrote the famous American poet Ralph Waldo Emerson. For Colorado Army National Guard SSG Atosha McGregor, her gift was truly a portion of herself, in the form of a bone marrow donation.

SSG McGregor, a training noncommissioned officer for Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, Joint Force Headquarters, began her donation journey six years ago when a senior NCO in her section, who suffered from a form of leukemia, hosted a Salute to Life bone marrow donation event.

There, SSG McGregor and other Soldiers took a simple, painless swab test, which helps determine whether potential donors are a match for someone in need of a transplant, and added their information to the registry.

SSG McGregor said that at the time, she knew little about the entire process and her chances of becoming a match.

Six years later, SSG McGregor received a call from Salute to Life telling her a potential match had been found. For privacy reasons, the program told SSG McGregor that she might never know the full identity of the recipient. She only received basic demographic information such as age, sex and the type of disease the person had.

SSG McGregor immediately started to learn more about the disease and made a quick trip to Buckley Air Force Base in Aurora,

SSG Atosha McGregor, a training non-commissioned officer for Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, Joint Force Headquarters, Colorado Army National Guard, underwent a Peripheral Blood Stem Cell process, donating her bone marrow for a cancer patient.



Colo., for a blood draw to ensure her match was close enough for a donation.

About a month later, she received the call. She was a match. She gave an unequivocal yes to proceed with the procedure.

“My fiancé was very supportive of my decision,” said SSG McGregor. “Support from spouses, family and friends is key to the process.”

Now back to work after donating her bone marrow, SSG McGregor said she is a big advocate for the marrow donation program. She said getting involved is as easy as registering on the [salutetolife.org](http://salutetolife.org) website and swabbing your mouth with the kit that’s mailed to a potential donor.

“Considering that marrow donation could potentially save someone’s life, it was one of the easiest things I have ever done,” she said. “I am surprised that more people don’t do it and encourage others to take the initiative. There are no out-of-pocket expenses, and you could save someone’s life.”

She remembers something one of the nurses told her during the process. The nurse said that as a bone marrow match, there was a good chance SSG McGregor was related, albeit very remotely, to the recipient.

“It is a kind of genetic reconnection,” said SSG McGregor. “We were always connected by similar DNA; now, we are much more directly connected as a portion of me is now a part of them.” ●

## ILLINOIS

BY SFC Peter Morrison,  
NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU

# Illinois Army National Guard Takes Third in Gainey Cup Best Scout Contest

A Scout team with the Illinois Army National Guard’s 2nd Squadron, 106th Cavalry Regiment, took third place in the Gainey Cup Best Scout Competition this past May.



SGT Zechariah Johnson finishes the Gainey Cup obstacle course with his team from the Illinois National Guard’s 2nd Squadron, 106th Cavalry Regiment.

The intense five-day competition tested 24 of the best teams from cavalry units around the world. The event featured teams from the U.S. Army, including three from the Army National Guard, as well as two teams from Canada, one from the United Kingdom and one from the Netherlands.

The six-man team representing the Illinois Army National Guard consisted of: 1LT Robert Springer, SGT Zechariah Johnson, SGT Evan Westart, SPC Daniel Delinski, SPC Matthew Runyon and PFC Michael Cates.

The competition tested each team’s knowledge and proficiency in fundamental cavalry scout tasks including area reconnaissance, medical skills, a foot march, physical fitness test, land navigation, live-fire operations, and weapons knowledge and handling.

Johnson, the team leader from Illinois, said they have been working toward the Gainey Cup Competition for years so being there meant a lot to them, as did proving that they belonged on the field.

Last January, teams from throughout the Army National Guard went head-to-head to determine which teams would be chosen to represent the Guard in the competition. After a grueling evaluation of the best teams in the

Army National Guard, they narrowed the field down to teams from Illinois, West Virginia and Nevada.

For Army National Guard teams, the path for competing began with an assessment by cadre from the Army National Guard Warrior Training Center (WTC) at Fort Benning. Teams that made the cut then returned to the WTC for a month-long train-up prior to the competition.

“The guys who trained us were phenomenal. They smoked us, they worked us six days a week, 12-hour days, but they taught us a lot leading up to the competition,” said Johnson. He went on to add that the instructors helped to mentally prepare the team for how hard the competition would be. “We knew it was going to be a tough few days, so we tried to be tough about it. We didn’t let any little mistakes get to us. We just shouldered down and [pushed] through”.

Named after the first senior enlisted advisor to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, retired CSM William J. Gainey, the Gainey Cup has been held every other year since 2013. After the five-day competition of nearly 24-hour operations, the Army National Guard teams performed well in a competitive field.



1LT Bobby Springer, SSG Zechariah Johnson, SGT Mathew Runyon, SGT Daniel Delinski, PFC Michael Cates and SGT Evan Westart participated in the annual Twilight parade held in Springfield, Ill., where they were greeted by congratulatory citizens after placing third overall and first among all National Guard teams in the 2017 Gainiey Cup.

"I have a full-time job, I go to school full time and I am in the Guard part time, I want to show them, 'hey, I can do this too.' I think that's a motivating factor," said Johnson. "We are proud of how far we have come and we are confident in our ability to do what we do. There are people in the Army National Guard that can hold up to Big-Army level. That's one of the things we wanted to prove here."

The West Virginia Army National Guard team placed eleventh and the Nevada Army National Guard team followed in 12th place. ●

## MISSOURI

BY 1LT Phil Fountain,  
MISSOURI NATIONAL GUARD

# Missouri Guard Forges University Partnership for Cybersecurity Training

Several leaders of the Missouri National Guard met with the leadership of the University of Central Missouri (UCM) on Oct. 3, 2017 to formalize a cybersecurity training partnership at the university's Missouri Innovation Campus, a satellite

location in the Kansas City suburb of Lee's Summit.

MG Steve Danner, the adjutant general of Missouri, and UCM President Charles Ambrose signed a memorandum of understanding, or MOU, that paves the way for the Missouri Guard and UCM to collaborate on a cybersecurity curriculum, officer education and the development of future cyber technicians.

MG Danner said the partnership is a win-win for the university and the Missouri National Guard.

"First of all, it will allow our Citizen-Soldiers to work with UCM in order to further their cyber education and degrees as we work together to better our Soldiers," MG

Danner said. "I think it is a great thing for the university, too. I believe the Missouri National Guard Citizen-Soldiers – both Air and Army – bring a lot with them in a student body atmosphere."

The partnership is also expected to allow the university to tailor its cyber programs to the benefit of military needs.

"This is an opportunity to formalize some work that we've been talking about as mission-critical in the State of Missouri for some time," Ambrose said. "There was a lot of effort made in the spring to really put purpose to an MOU that will allow us to demonstrate not only to the region, but to the State, that our work together can cause some great things to happen."

The Guard leaders were also given a tour of the new facility and briefed by Anshuman Singh, an assistant professor of computer science and the coordinator of UCM's academic cybersecurity program. Singh said the Missouri National Guard has an important role in protecting the State's infrastructure and assets while also providing a connection to the business community.

Among the Missouri National Guard leaders on hand was COL Denise L. Wilkinson, the Missouri Guard's director of information management. She said the relationship with UCM and the facility should yield greater partnerships between the Missouri National Guard and civilian agencies while benefiting students.

"[They] are providing a progressive



Charles Ambrose (left), president of the University of Central Missouri, provides a tour of the university's new Missouri Innovation Campus to members and employees of the Missouri National Guard.

student experience where students are eager to learn in the innovative and creative environment that the Missouri Innovation Campus provides,” COL Wilkinson said. “It allows for creative hands-on learning with the most sophisticated and flexible information technology and cyber tools.

“This partnership will benefit the future growth of the Missouri National Guard, specifically in the IT/cyber community, and will provide our Soldiers and Airmen a higher education at a minimal cost.”

MG Danner said the program not only will benefit Guard members, but also private sector businesses with similar cybersecurity needs, as most Guard members have full-time civilian occupations.

UCM is making the path to higher education easier for those serving in the National Guard. The university is implementing accelerated degree paths for Guard students as well as reducing tuition and fee costs not covered by Missouri’s State tuition assistance program or federal G.I. Bill benefits, MG Danner said.

The Missouri Innovation Campus opened last fall and is a joint initiative of UCM and the Lee’s Summit R-7 School District. It places high school and college students under one roof and offers programs that allow students to accelerate completion of their degrees with little or no debt. ●

## OHIO

BY Stephanie Beougher,  
OHIO NATIONAL GUARD

# Ohio Guard Captain’s College Project Helps Combat Suicide

**D**uring his career with the Ohio Army National Guard, CPT Michael Barnes has had many opportunities to lead fellow Soldiers through a deployment as well as numerous training exercises. He’s also taken to heart the leadership philosophy of taking care of his Soldiers’ mental health and well-being.

“I helped my first suicidal Soldier in Basic Training back in 1993,” Barnes said. “When I was in my company command, I counseled at least a dozen Soldiers expressing suicidal ideations. It is then that I truly began to realize how bad the issue was and also how suited I was to help.”

CPT Barnes is channeling his passion for helping Veterans to pursue a master’s degree in nursing, which will allow him to specialize as

a psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner. As part of his coursework at The Ohio State University, Barnes has created a website and mobile app to, as his website states, “bring together a wealth of information and resources to combat the risk factors of suicide.”

“I’ve known Veterans who have committed suicide, and I’ve heard my military brothers and sisters say, ‘I wish that I could have done more.’ I have even said it myself,” CPT Barnes said. “The problem is that we say it in the moment and then move on with our lives. I decided I was no longer going to move on with my life without doing something.”

With CPT Barnes’ Ohio Vet 2 Vet Network, his goal is to create a nonprofit, build a network of peer-to-peer support groups and, eventually, establish transitional housing and a counseling center. For now, he’s gathered resource links related to topics that can be risk factors for suicide, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), homelessness and healthcare issues.

CPT Barnes estimates that he’s put more than 150 hours of work into the project. His professor for the course, Judy Donegan, calls the project “remarkable” and plans to have him present it to health professionals during national conferences.

“He’s done a remarkable job of bringing his own passion for his fellow Veterans to life for those of us who are not military,” she said. “I want my students to do projects that have meaning, not just projects for a class that will go in a cupboard and sit there. My mantra is you can change the world one person at a time, and that is what Mike’s doing.”

According to a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs study, an average of 20 U.S. military Veterans take their own lives every day. CPT Barnes will be marketing his app to military groups, social workers, and shelters and charities that assist Veterans.

“In the military, you’re taught to be strong,” he said. “Veterans are hesitant to reach out and ask for help. I want to provide them with easy access to help when they’re ready to ask.” ●

Ohio Army National Guard CPT Michael Barnes shows the mobile app he created with information and resources for military Veterans and their Families to combat suicide among Veterans.



## SOUTH DAKOTA

BY SGT Austin Pearce,  
SOUTH NATIONAL GUARD

# South Dakota Guard Soldier Receives Medal for Life-Saving Actions

**O**n the morning of June 12, 2017, two South Dakota Army National Guard Soldiers were at the Sioux Park track in Rapid City, S.D., for the Army Physical Fitness Test.

Since joining the Army National Guard more than 13 years ago, SGT David Rodarte had tackled and passed the APFT – which consists of two minutes of push-ups, two minutes of sit-ups, and a two-mile run – at least twice a year. SFC Grant Serna, who trains South Dakota Army National Guard recruits, oversees APFTs at least once a month. He volunteered to administer SGT Rodarte's test that morning.

But after SGT Rodarte, completed the two-mile run to pass another APFT, he didn't feel

right. He decided to take a cool-down lap.

"He went to jog out a lap and on turn number four, he collapsed on the track," said SFC Serna. "I ran over to him [and] he was unresponsive and wasn't breathing. I started chest compressions and began CPR."

SGT Rodarte, who doesn't use tobacco, maintains a healthy diet, and exercises regularly, had suffered a massive heart attack.

Two men working out at the track rushed over to help. The three continued CPR until senior officers Jerred Younie and Mark Weyer of the Rapid City Police Department arrived.

They used an automated external defibrillator on SGT Rodarte, which SFC Serna said undoubtedly helped save his life.

Once emergency medical technicians arrived, they used the LUCAS CPR machine – which delivers automated chest compressions – on SGT Rodarte and loaded him into the ambulance. While he was being transported to the hospital, his vitals returned.

SGT Rodarte's cardiac arrest gave doctors a chance to identify a more serious cardiovascular problem that led to quintuple bypass surgery.

"Doctors found five arteries that were between 60 to 90 percent blocked," he said. "I also had an aortic valve replacement – that in and of itself is a traumatic experience for the body."

Despite the complications, SGT Rodarte returned to fulfill his Army National Guard obligations and completed his two-week annual training in July.

"For me, my decision was to put on the uniform and continue doing what I do," said SGT Rodarte, who trains and mentors SDARNG recruits. "It's been part of the healing process for me."

Since returning to work, SGT Rodarte has had time to reflect on the events of last June and develop a greater appreciation for those involved in saving his life.

"I realize what they did was more than just save my life," said SGT Rodarte, a husband and father of two. "They affected my Family's lives because they brought back somebody my wife and children need, and they also thank them."

This past Sept. 1, the SDARNG awarded SFC Serna with the Army Commendation Medal for taking action to save the life of a fellow Soldier.

"If you look at our Founding Fathers and the documents that were a part of creating our nation, there's an overlying umbrella that if you have the ability to help, you have therefore the responsibility to help," said SFC Serna. "That's my idea of Americanism."

The Army Commendation Medal is awarded to any member of the Armed Forces of the United States other than general officers

who, while serving in any capacity with the U.S. Army after Dec. 6, 1941, distinguished themselves by heroism, meritorious achievement or meritorious service.

"I'm just the guy who keeled over and had a heart attack. He's the guy whose training from the Guard saved my life," SGT Rodarte said. "Most people would've given up within a couple of minutes of chest compressions and said, 'Man, this guy is dead.' But he kept going." ●



SGT David Rodarte (left center) stands with SFC Grant Serna (center right), and Rapid City Police Department senior officers and first responders to the scene Jerred Younie (left) and Mark Weyer (right) at Sioux Park in Rapid City, S.D.

## TENNESSEE

BY MSG Robin Brown,  
TENNESSEE NATIONAL GUARD

# Tennessee Guard Fulfills Wish for Cancer Patient

**M**embers of the Tennessee Army National Guard's 1/230th Assault Helicopter Battalion conducted an orientation flight on Oct. 10, 2017 for Wesley McCall, a 16-year-old boy with brain cancer.

McCall was diagnosed with glioblastoma multiforme (GBM) grade four last May. He previously suffered from craniopharyngioma when he was three. St. Jude Children's Hospital removed that tumor in 2004, but the cancer returned.

"The first tumor was solid and easy to get rid of, but this one branches out and shows up in other areas of the brain," said SSG Angela Kemp, Wesley's mother and member of the Tennessee Army National Guard's 168th

Military Police Battalion in Dyersburg, Tenn.

Wesley had surgery on May 31, 2017 and started radiation therapy at the end of June. "He did five weeks of that to help buy him some more time," SSG Kemp said. "It affected his balance and swallowing; some days, he's even been in a wheelchair. The radiation has made it shrink quite a bit."

She added that the tumor would never go away. All treatment at this point is to continue to buy him more time and give him the best quality of life.

"St. Jude has also been great. They referred him to Make-A-Wish when he was 3, and we went to Disney World," she said. However, Make-A-Wish can only fulfill one wish per lifetime.

James McCall, Wesley's father, has been instrumental in helping him complete his bucket list. One of the things Wesley wanted to do was fly in a helicopter. Coincidentally, McCall used to work with Cory Riley, a first lieutenant in the Tennessee Army National Guard who serves as the squadron medical officer for the 278th Regimental Fires Squadron in Alamo, Tenn.

"I was contacted and asked to assist in securing a helicopter ride for Wesley, as this

has always been a dream of his," said 1LT Riley. The request quickly made it to MG Max Haston, the adjutant general of Tennessee. After the prospective flight received legal approval within the State, and from the National Guard Bureau, it just had to be scheduled.

"We were surprised he got it pulled off so quickly," said McCall. "It was overwhelming that they were able to do this for him. Some Soldiers never get to fly in a helicopter, so the whole experience has been pretty cool!"

The flight crew wore #WesleysWarriors T-shirts for the flight, and a flight suit for Wesley was donated by the Tennessee Air National Guard's 118th Wing in Nashville. CW4 Jayson Keel, a safety officer for Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 230th Aviation Regiment, sewed all the unit patches onto the flight suit so Wesley's uniform would look official.

"It would be easy to sit at home and be depressed, but you can't," said SSG Kemp. "The Tennessee National Guard has been great and very understanding about his weekly doctor appointments and everything that has been going on. I couldn't ask for a better group of people." ●



Wesley McCall (center holding helmet) flanked by his parents James McCall (left) and SSG Angela Kemp (right), is pictured with the flight crew of the 1/230th Assault Helicopter Battalion, all wearing #WesleysWarriors t-shirts on the day of the flight.

## WEST VIRGINIA

BY SGT Zoe Morris,  
WEST VIRGINIA NATIONAL GUARD

# West Virginia Guard Soldier Honored for Life-Saving Actions

**W**est Virginia Army National Guard SGT Zachary Mills received the Division of Natural Resources (DNR) Meritorious Service Medal Sept. 22, 2017 for his actions during the historic West Virginia floods in June 2016. Displaying exceptional bravery and skill, SGT Mills was honored for saving the lives of more than 14 people.

SGT Mills – a cannon crewmember with 1st Battalion, 201st Field Artillery Regiment – in his civilian job, is a law enforcement officer for the DNR as well as a member of its swift water rescue team as an assistant boat operator.

On June 23, 2016, SGT Mills and his DNR partner Sergeant Chris Lester were called to the town of White Sulphur Springs as hundreds of people were stranded in their homes in one of the worst-hit areas in the State. DNR Lieutenant Dennis K. Feazell recounted the actions of SGT Mills and Lester during the award ceremony.

The two quickly got to work using their training as swift water rescue responders and knowledge of rope rescue techniques to start pulling stranded citizens from their homes. They began on Big Draft Road, where they used kayaks and ropes to rescue four citizens from their home.

Moving further into White Sulphur Springs, Lester and SGT Mills rescued four people who had sought refuge in the second story of their house.

Cries for help then drew the two officers' attention to a burning house across the creek from where they were. They could see a woman clinging to a tree beside her burning home, which had been set ablaze by a propane explosion. The distance between the officers and the victim was 180 yards of rushing water, debris, burning structures and darkness.

Putting themselves at great risk, the officers made several attempts to get to the woman with the snout rig. Unable to reach her, they came up with a different plan. Using their trucks, they moved within 75 yards of the victim, then traversed steep, mountainous terrain in extreme darkness to get to the water's edge. With help from a local river guide, the men used a three-man pyramid formation and began to wade in chest-deep water, fighting strong currents to make their way upstream to the victim.

When they reached the victim, they found her clinging to the top of the tree. Her clothes had been melted off, and she had third-degree burns all over her body.

Discovering the tree was too hot to touch, the men splashed water on it to cool it enough so they could get to the victim. After rescuing her from the tree, the men were able to brave the swift currents and move her to the water's edge.

There, they had another obstacle to overcome – getting the woman up the steep, slippery bank. Fighting exhaustion and hypothermic symptoms, the men climbed 50 feet to deliver her to emergency medical units.

"The woman was rushed to the hospital, and our officers went back to work," Feazell said. "They then responded to Mill Hill Road, where they used wading and rope rescue techniques to rescue five more stranded citizens out of the flood-ravaged zone."

Feazell explained that SGT Mills' and Lester's preparedness, work ethic, coolness under pressure and quick thinking were among the deciding factors in saving the lives of over 14 people.

"It's kind of cliché, but I was just doing my job," SGT Mills said. "I signed up for the National Guard, and I signed up for the Division of Natural Resources and the swift water rescue team to help people in that time of need." ●

SGT Zachary Mills

## WISCONSIN

BY SGT Katie Eggers,  
WISCONSIN NATIONAL GUARD

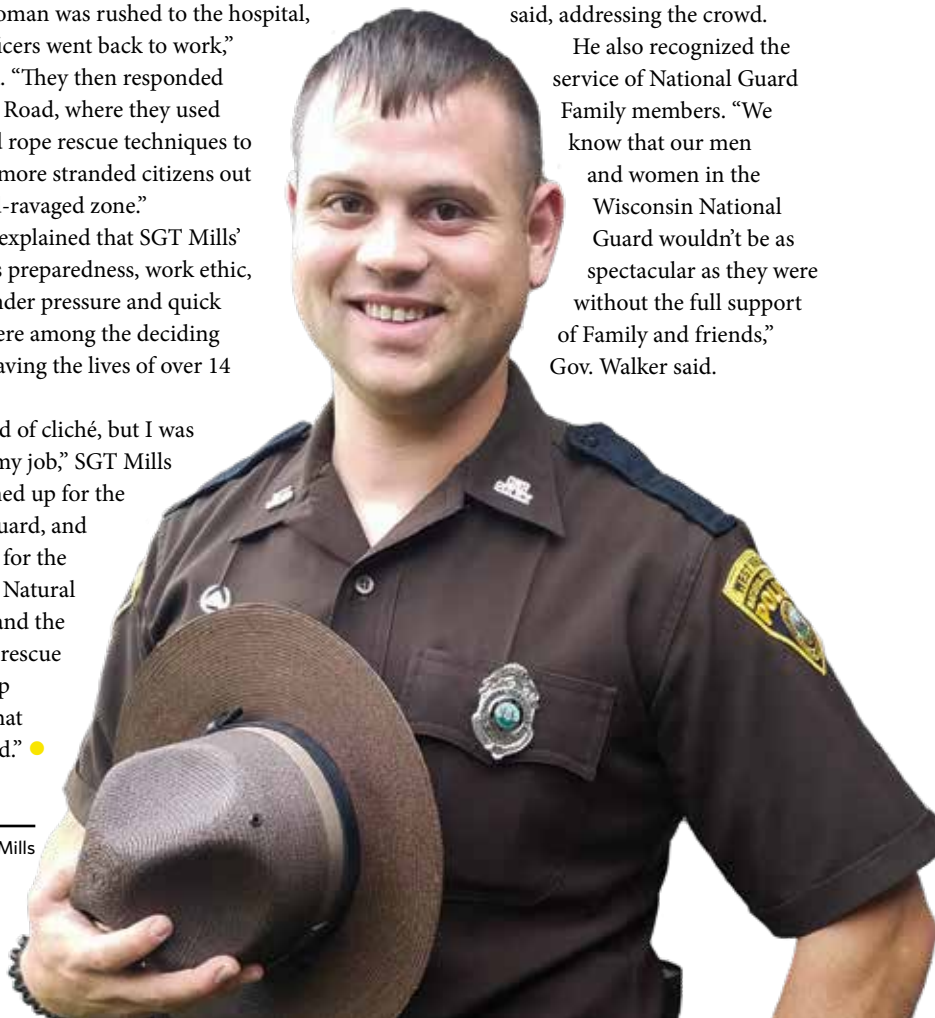
# Governor's Event Celebrates Service of Wisconsin Guard

**W**isconsin Gov. Scott Walker and first lady Tonette Walker hosted more than 750 Wisconsin National Guard Soldiers, Veterans and their Families at the executive residence in Madison last Oct. 1 to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the Wisconsin National Guard's 32nd "Red Arrow" Division and the 70th anniversary of the Wisconsin Air National Guard.

The division's heritage is carried on today by the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team.

"We live in the home of the free because of each and every one of you in uniform and all that you represent – not only in this State, but across this country," Gov. Walker said, addressing the crowd.

He also recognized the service of National Guard Family members. "We know that our men and women in the Wisconsin National Guard wouldn't be as spectacular as they were without the full support of Family and friends," Gov. Walker said.





MG Don Dunbar, Wisconsin's adjutant general, thanked the governor and first lady for opening their home and celebrating the Wisconsin National Guard before explaining the tradition of the National Guard and its meaning.

Invoking both the Soldier and Airman creeds, MG Dunbar made clear that while every member is 100 percent Soldier and 100 percent Airman, they are more.

"If you asked all of them, 'What's it all about?' every one of them will tell you, 'I am the Guard,'" MG Dunbar said. "The same Guard that was there in the earliest communities in 1636, that was there at Concord in 1775. ... Fought to prevent the British [from burning] Washington, D.C., stood aligned in Baltimore, drove the Redcoats out of New Orleans. [Then] the Civil War, where Wisconsin made its first entry in defending the country and did magnificently. World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam."

MG Dunbar emphasized the dual mission of the National Guard, highlighting recent instances where the Wisconsin National Guard responded to State emergencies. He cited the response to flooding in Burlington, Wis., in July 2017 and storm damage in northern Wisconsin over the past three years, as well as recent contributions to hurricane relief efforts in Florida, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

"It's the same National Guard that's on point tonight and will be on point next week, next year and for generations to come as long

as we are blessed to have that flag flying over our country," MG Dunbar said.

The first lady explained how the idea for the event came to her during a visit to Wisconsin Brewing Company, which collaborated with the University of Wisconsin to create a beer commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Red Arrow.

"It was at that moment when I looked back and thought we, Scott and I, really look up to all of [the National Guard members]," Mrs. Walker said. "We appreciate all the work you do, everything that you do for us, that you sacrifice, that you leave your Families."

The day before the event, the 248th Aviation Support Battalion had a formal sendoff for its deployment to the Middle East. Another 150 Soldiers from the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 1st Battalion, 147th Aviation deployed to Kuwait last spring, and 35 Soldiers from Company C, 1st Battalion, 168th Aviation deployed to Afghanistan last winter.

Meanwhile, about 650 Wisconsin National Guard troops recently returned from Florida, where they provided humanitarian relief, security and traffic control support to communities after Hurricane Irma.

The Wisconsin National Guard is commemorating the centennial of the Red Arrow, which formed in 1917 as the 32nd Division as the United States entered World War I, with a two-year campaign called "Dawn of the Red Arrow." ●

## KANSAS

BY SSG Tina Villalobos,  
KANSAS NATIONAL GUARD

# Shadow Run Brings Slice of Kansas City Marathon to Kuwait

**A**s early morning preparations for the Kansas City Marathon got underway in Kansas City, Mo., 34 Soldiers of the Kansas Army National Guard's 35th Infantry Division gathered for a simultaneous 10K Shadow Run on the evening of Oct. 21, 2017 at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait. The run allowed the Soldiers a sense of participation in the Kansas City Marathon and helped them feel at home while deployed half a world away.

As day turned to twilight, each of the participating 35th Infantry Division Soldiers donned a Kansas City Marathon T-shirt and prepared for the run that would lend them a piece of home.

Preparations for the run began in June and coordinating the event was no small feat, said CPT Jennifer Denkler, chief of plans and operations, programs and policies, 35th Infantry Division.

"Our Chief of Staff, COL Timothy W. Bush, asked me to look into different races that were being organized back home that we

could possibly partner with,” CPT Denkler said. “So I contacted Mr. Josh Zabel, one of the Kansas City Sports Commission managers, to coordinate a corresponding Kansas City 10K Shadow Run.”

The Sports Commission did its part to connect the events by sending over T-shirts and medallions for participants.

Many Soldiers participated in helping to plan and implement the run, CPT Denkler said. “2LT Hannah Higgins has done most of the final preparations, with help from SSG Mitchel Jensen and SSG Jamie Wolf,” Denkler said. “We also have many other volunteers I greatly appreciate. We really couldn’t have done it without everyone involved.”

Among those volunteers were several Soldiers from C Company. Their commander, CPT Todd Gessling, took great pride in his Soldiers’ involvement.

“They’re doing a great job out here helping with the run,” said CPT Gessling. “Charlie Company likes to be present in everything that’s going on. I think it’s a little piece of home for everyone who wanted to run in the Kansas City Marathon. I know I’d like to run in the actual Kansas City Marathon next year – so this is just a little taste of it. In Charlie

Company, we take our running seriously.”

MAJ Peter McCann, battalion operations officer, Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, 35th Infantry Division, also appreciated the effort to connect Camp Arifjan to the Kansas City event.

“A lot of folks who have previously run the marathon or half marathon wanted to do the Shadow Run because it is kind of like being home, here in Kuwait,” MAJ McCann said. “It’s not the same as running in Kansas City, but we’re at least commemorating the time, so that when we get back we can maybe go do the run again in the streets of KC.”

Threads of camaraderie and connectedness were woven throughout these runners’ stories as they headed to the starting line. Soldiers of all ranks, from private to general officer, participated in the Shadow Run – and many expressed their gratitude for the run and the spirit that tied the two events together.

“I wanted to participate because my son, Blake Denkler, just won his State cross-country meet yesterday,” CPT Denkler said. “He says he ran the race for me, to keep me strong during this deployment. So I wanted to run this race in honor of him and his strength being a military child.” ●

## MINNESOTA

BY MSG Blair Heusdens,  
MINNESOTA NATIONAL GUARD

# Minnesota Guard Soldier Helps Victims of Sexual Assault

**S**SG Nicquie Neely has been working with victims of sexual assault for four years in the Minnesota Army National Guard and also volunteers as a victim advocate in the community. As an advocate, she supports victims through the sexual assault reporting process, which can often involve extensive medical care and legal proceedings.

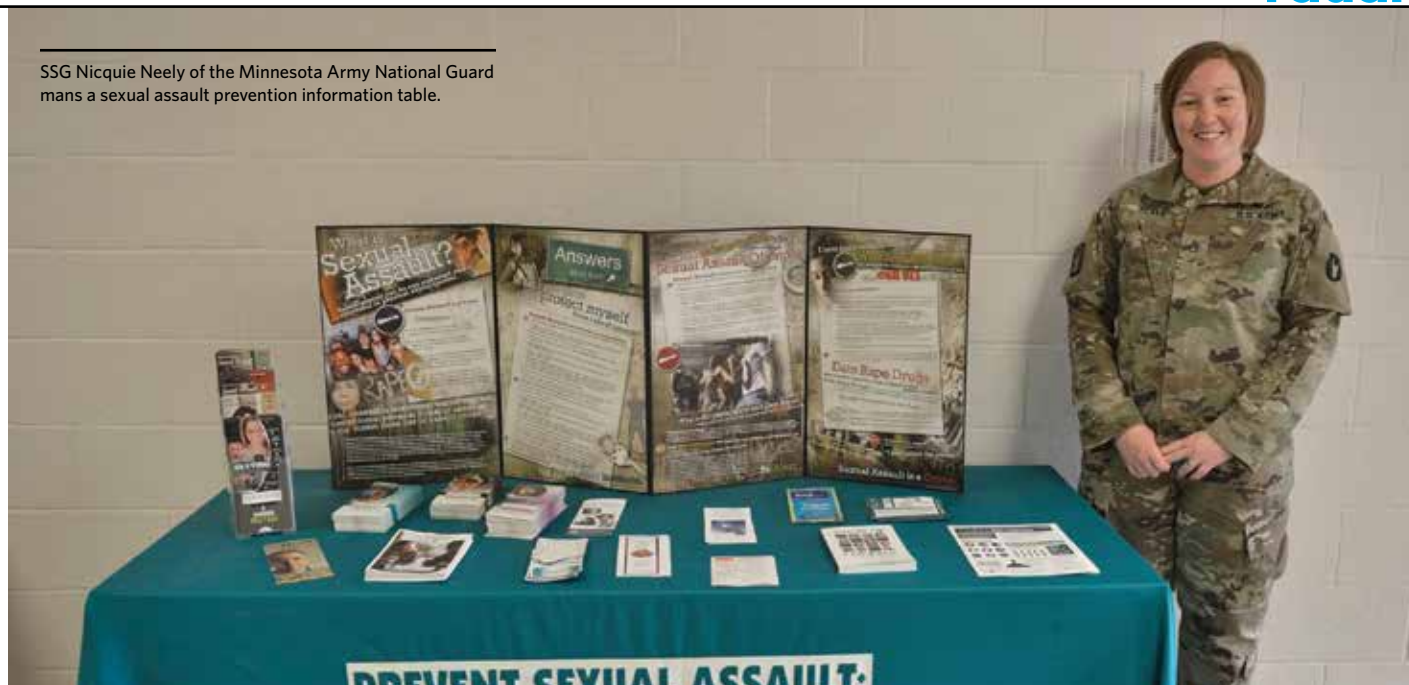
SSG Neely is a combat medic and the full-time training and administration NCO with Company C, 134th Brigade Support Battalion. In addition to attending military victim advocate training, SSG Neely attends regular training as a volunteer with a civilian organization – SOS Sexual Violence Services – in Ramsey County.

Victim advocates in the National Guard play an important role in the Army’s Sexual



Soldiers of the 35th Infantry Division gather with the 'Start Finish' banner at the start of the Kansas City Marathon Shadow 10k run held at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait.

Ssg Nicquie Neely of the Minnesota Army National Guard mans a sexual assault prevention information table.



Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP) Program. They are assigned to victims to ensure they have someone to help them through the entire process. Their primary job is to listen – but not judge – and to focus solely on helping the victim. A victim advocate is one of three people who can take a restricted report; the others are a sexual assault coordinator and a chaplain.

“Our job as victim advocates is to believe everything the victim says – we are not judge or jury – and that’s a really important healing aspect for the victim,” SSG Neely said. “If they go through a process where they go see medical personnel or go see the police, they need someone on their side who believes everything they say and can stick up for them when someone says something that’s not OK.”



SSG Neely says that since she joined the National Guard, the environment and attitude regarding sexual assault and harassment have gotten better and continue to improve. She says more informal training opportunities have made it easier for Soldiers to ask questions and discuss sexual assault.

“I think it’s just become more of an open topic and people are becoming more comfortable talking about it – in turn making it easier for victims to come forward and report or at least reach out and talk to somebody about it if something does happen,” SSG Neely said.

Being a victim advocate can be an emotionally taxing experience. Advocates need to earn the trust of a person who’s in a vulnerable place and provide whatever comfort and assistance they need.

“I think the most difficult thing is listening to their story and not trying to rush in and fix everything for them right away,” SSG Neely said. “It’s understanding that they have a

healing process to go through and knowing that you just play one very small portion. But it can be a very significant portion that contributes to the rest of their healthy healing.”

SSG Neely recently graduated with a bachelor’s degree in individualized studies focused on communication, advocacy and violence prevention. She plans to use her degree both for her work in the Army National Guard as well as for future work to help improve laws and policies involving sexual assault.

“Being a part of that healing process and being hopefully a positive presence – it feels good,” SSG Neely said. “I just continue to be awed and inspired by [victims’] courage and bravery.”

To report a sexual assault anywhere in the country, call 877-995-5247 to speak with a team member from the DoD’s Safe Helpline or visit the Safe Helpline website at [www.SafeHelpline.org](http://www.SafeHelpline.org).



# DOWN THE PIKE

## IN THE NEXT ISSUE

*Citizen-Soldier* will feature Members of the Colorado Army National Guard returning from combat in the Middle East. Supporting Operations Spartan Shield and Inherent Resolve, Soldiers from the 169th Field Artillery Brigade Headquarters and the Target Acquisition Platoon provided fire support during combat operations in the fight against ISIS.





## ESGR IS HERE TO HELP!

**EMPLOYER SUPPORT OF THE GUARD AND RESERVE** (ESGR) is a DoD program established to promote cooperation and understanding between reserve component service members and their civilian employers.

**THROUGH ESGR**, Soldiers receive assistance resolving workplace conflicts that arise due to their military commitments. The program also recognizes employers who have gone above and beyond in supporting employees who serve.

**FOR HELP** with a conflict or to nominate your civilian employer for a Patriot or Freedom Award, speak to an ESGR Customer Service representative at **800-336-4590** or by emailing **OSD.USERRA@mail.mil**. Program information can also be found at **www.esgr.mil**.



Peoria County Sheriff's Office Lt. John Huston accepts the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve's Patriot Award. The award recognizes those supervisors who demonstrate exceptional support towards service members and their families.

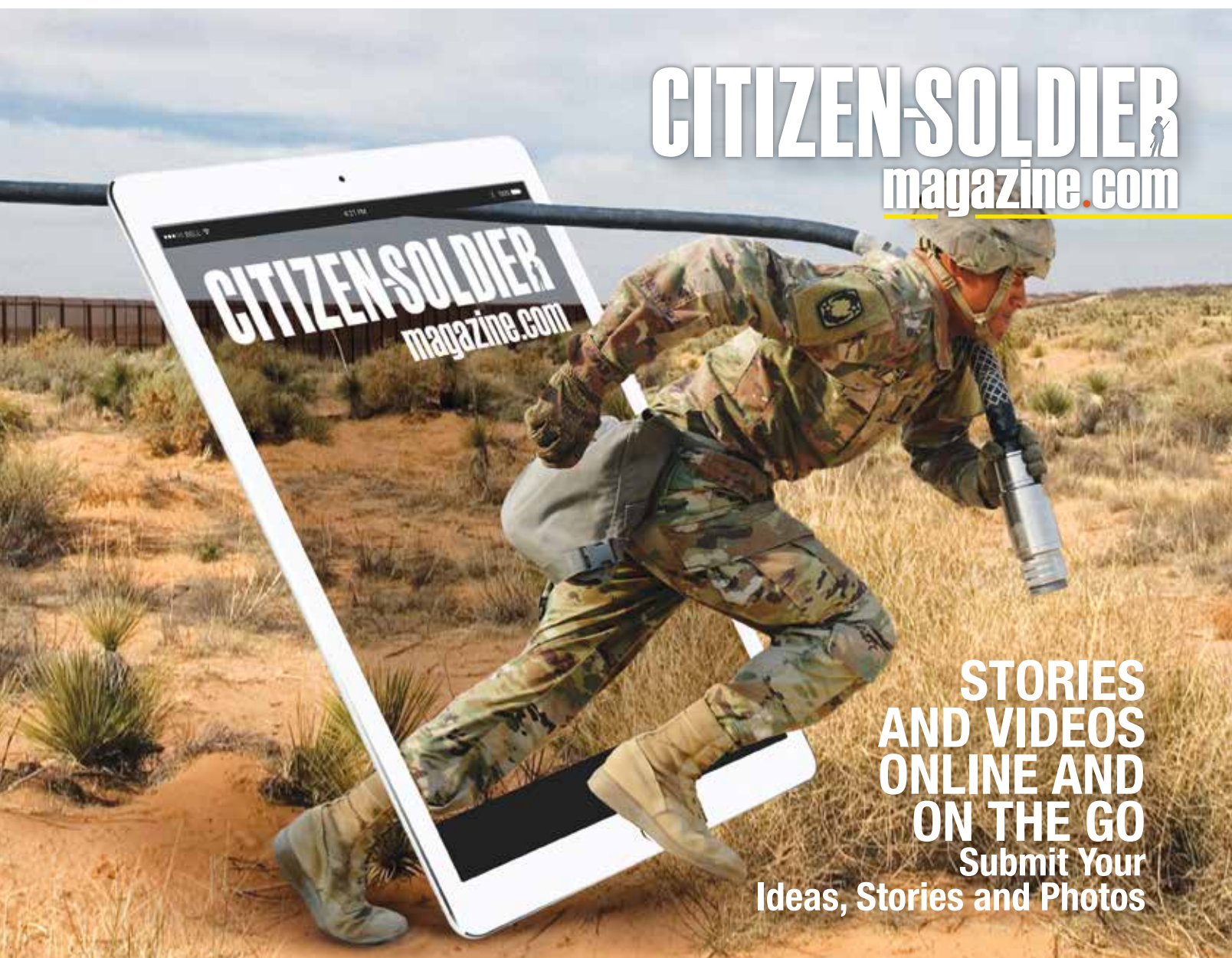
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