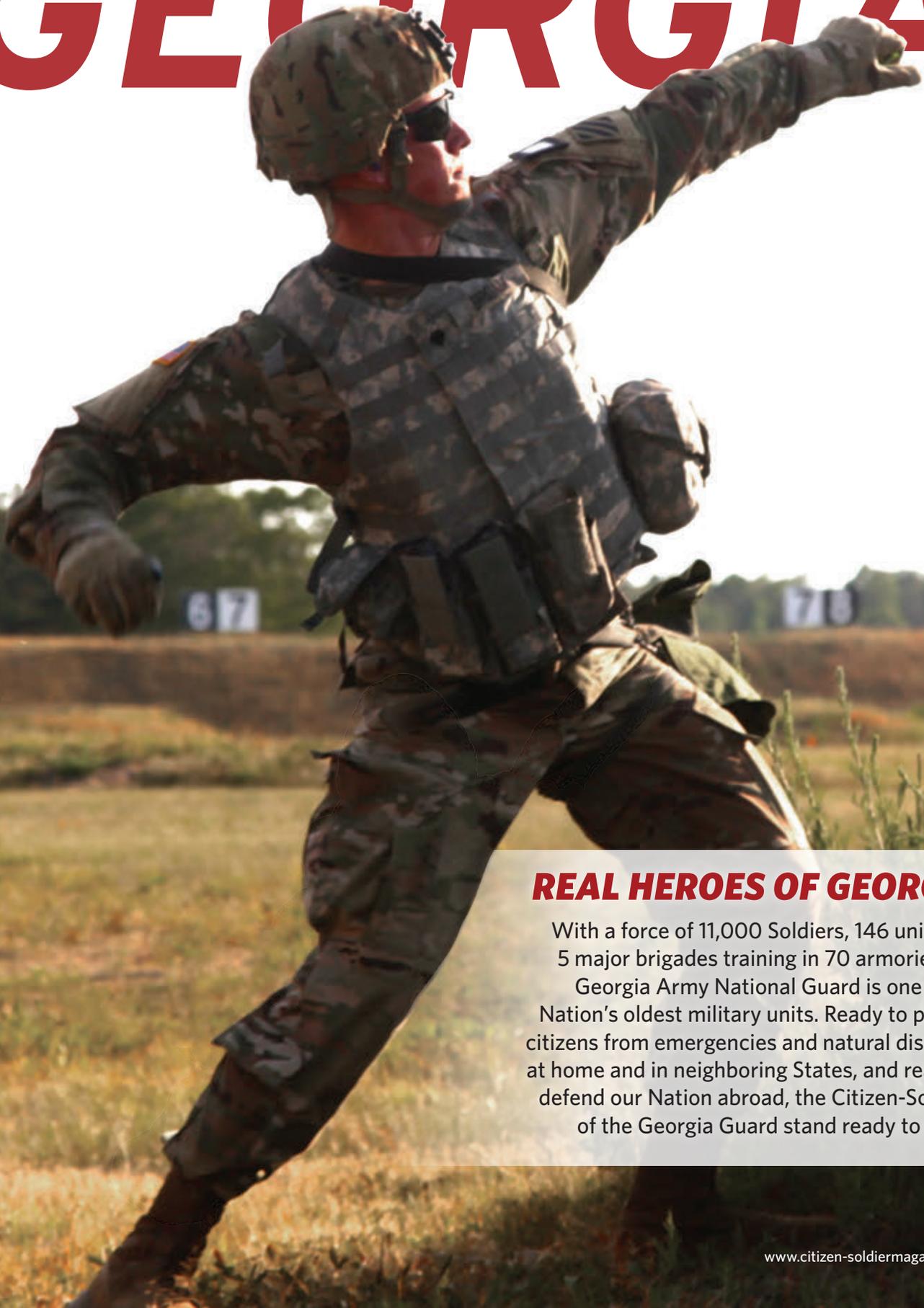


# GEORGIA



## **REAL HEROES OF GEORGIA**

With a force of 11,000 Soldiers, 146 units and 5 major brigades training in 70 armories, the Georgia Army National Guard is one of the Nation's oldest military units. Ready to protect citizens from emergencies and natural disasters at home and in neighboring States, and ready to defend our Nation abroad, the Citizen-Soldiers of the Georgia Guard stand ready to serve.



Soldiers from B Battery, 1st Battalion of the 118th Field Artillery Regiment fire 105mm rounds from an M119 Howitzer at the eXportable Combat Training Capability exercise.

## 48th IBCT Trains With Active-Duty Unit During Exercise

BY SGT Mozelle Blakley, GEORGIA NATIONAL GUARD

Throughout the eXportable Combat Training Capability (XCTC) exercise in June at Fort Stewart, Ga., the Georgia Army National Guard Soldiers of the 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT) worked alongside their active-duty counterparts of the 3rd Infantry Division (3ID) stationed at Fort Stewart. This collaborative effort was the result of a recently established partnership through the Associated Unit Pilot Program (AUPP).

The AUPP is designed to allow National Guard and Army Reserve units to leverage resources and capabilities of the active component of the United States Army. By working and training together, each component is able to leverage the different skill sets and levels of proficiency to build the Total Army effort.

This cohesive combat relationship is nothing new to the 48th IBCT and 3ID. They possess an extensive history of collaboration, dating to the Second Battle of the Marne in World War I, where the 3rd ID earned its nickname, “Rock of the Marne.”

Most recently, the 48th IBCT and 3rd ID worked shoulder-to-shoulder during their 2005 tours in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Now, many of those Soldiers wear the patch of the legendary 3rd ID.

Through the AUPP, the 48th IBCT has gained Task Force First Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment (1-28th Infantry) out of Fort Benning, Ga., as well as its alignment under the command of 3ID.

XCTC served as the 48th IBCT’s first major joint training effort under the AUPP.

The relationships built by these partner units will allow for greater training exposure and more opportunities beyond the minimum of two days a month and two weeks of annual training for traditional Guard Soldiers.

“The Army selected the 3rd ID along with the 48th IBCT to serve as the pilot units for this program, designed to increase readiness across the Total Army,” said Army BG John Richardson IV, the 3rd ID deputy commanding general of operations. “The resources on Fort Stewart and Hunter Army Airfield allow commanders and staff within the 48th IBCT to plan and integrate effects across warfighting functions. It maximizes training time and builds readiness across the 48th IBCT, as well as 3rd ID.”

The 48th IBCT also gained 10 days of additional training time through the AUPP, which has allowed the unit to better utilize and experience more capabilities offered by the XCTC training package.

Comprised of eight battalions and 47 companies, the 48th IBCT deployed from 29 home stations across the state and landed in remote locations throughout the Fort Stewart field training environment. The field training environment is designed to simulate a real-world combat scenario.

“It’s been many years since our Soldiers have trained for a field problem this long, under these types of conditions,” said CSM Matthew Marks, command sergeant major of the 48th IBCT. “It was about getting them comfortable with being uncomfortable.”

Throughout XCTC, the Army National Guard Soldiers of the 48th IBCT immersed themselves in high-speed training with their AUPP partner service members. Some of the high-impact training included attack missions, movement to contact missions, fire support exercises, convoy live fire lanes and logistical support operations.



Mortarmen from 1st Battalion, 121st Infantry Regiment, 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, shoot an M120 Mortar during the eXportable Combat Training Capability exercise.

“Because of the AUPP and division-level support, along with aviation support, the artillery oversight and logistic support from echelons above the brigade, this experience has been absolutely priceless,” said CSM Marks.

Infantrymen from Task Force 1-28, the three battalions of the 121st Infantry Regiment, and scouts from the 1st Battalion of the 108th Cavalry Squadron maneuvered through rough terrain to hone their tactics, techniques and procedures while leading live fire and react-to-contact missions. They also conducted situational training exercises and incorporated fire support operations from the 1st Battalion, 118th Field Artillery.

The level of training that was conducted between each unit during XCTC prepared the Soldiers and units for a Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) rotation next summer.

“With the help of 3rd ID and the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, we’ve tried to replicate what [Soldiers] will see in a decisive action training environment at JRTC,” said COL Matthew Smith, brigade commander of the 48th IBCT.

While the infantrymen maneuvered and seized the objective, combat enablers such as field artillery and engineers provided fire support and route clearance for the infantrymen and scouts. Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 118th Field Artillery Regiment provided fire support using both M119 and M777 self-propelled Howitzers. The howitzer class of towed system weaponry uses a long-range, high-explosive, semi-fixed ammunition that is designed to support the Infantry with direct or indirect fires.

“I think XCTC is a great opportunity for these Soldiers to come over and train with an active-duty unit to share that partnership and knowledge between the two elements,” said SFC Josue Rodriguez, a mortarmen and observer controller trainer (OC/T) with 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment. “This training has definitely given them an opportunity to continue to progress and sharpen their skills as Infantry Soldiers.



Observer Controller Trainer from 2nd Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division provides oversight and guidance for Soldiers of Bravo Battery 1-118th Field Artillery Regiment, 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, who are responding to a mock chemical attack and providing fire support using the towed M119A3 during the eXportable Combat Training Capability exercise.

“I hope when these Soldiers head into JRTC, they take the tools and lessons learned and apply it to the knowledge that they already have to be the best that they can be.”

In addition to combat arms, logisticians play a major role in the success of any operations scenario. Without them, Soldiers would not have the necessary food, tools and supplies to be mission-effective. Throughout XCTC, service members from the 148th Brigade Support Battalion and its forward support companies trained in medical evacuations, convoy operations and live fire exercises. At the same time, they maintained logistics support to ensure that troops in the field had what they needed to sustain combat operations.

“This training has been great,” said 1LT Shanae Thomas, a platoon leader with 3-121IN’s forward support company. “We knew that we had to get into the combat mindset and run through our battle drills so I had to put my trust in my Soldiers to ensure that we worked well together. After each training event, we wanted to take the criticisms of the OC/Ts into the next mission to help us to adjust and improvise.”

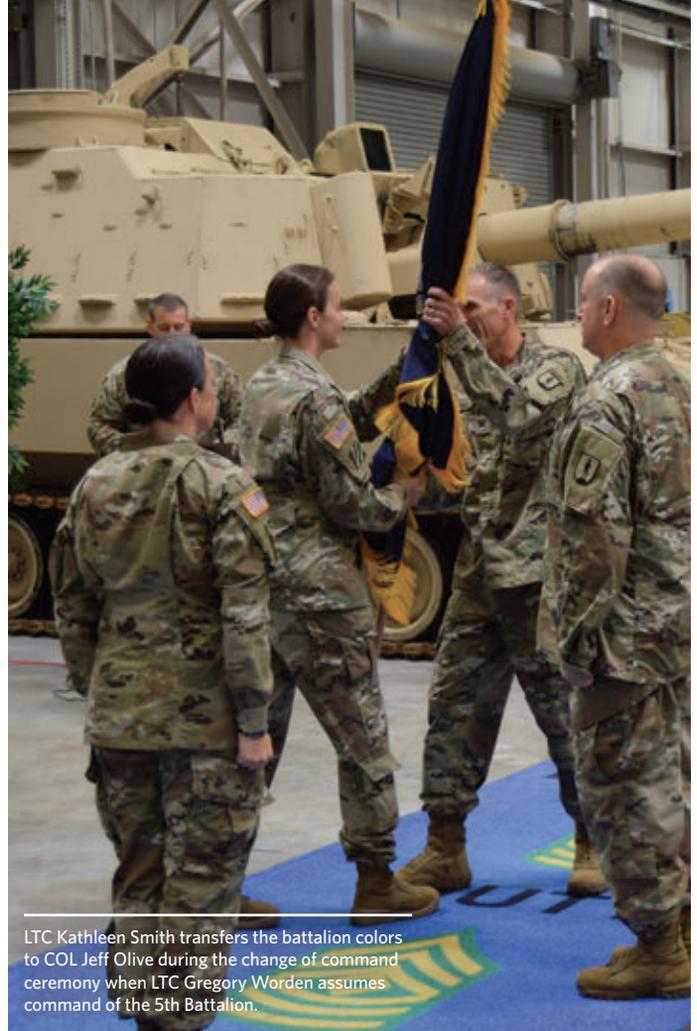
In the fall of 2016, the staff of the 48th IBCT Brigade Headquarters was certified through a Warfighter Exercise at Camp Atterbury, Ind. This XCTC validated the brigade at the operational level, leading it into the JRTC and the final step before a potential mobilization.

The unit also attributes the success of XCTC to the 1st Battalion, 131st Aviation Regiment of the Alabama Army National Guard, the 159th Weather Flight of the Florida Air National Guard, the 165th Air Support Operations Squadron (ASOS) of the Georgia Air National Guard and many more assets that came together for this historic rotation.

“We brought together a lot of entities that we’ve never worked with before,” COL Smith said. “It’s all been very professional in both directions, and very educational for everybody.” ●



MAJ Terence Caple, incoming commander of the 2nd Battalion, 122nd Regional Training Institute takes charge of the battalion colors during a change of command ceremony at the Clay National Guard Center.



LTC Kathleen Smith transfers the battalion colors to COL Jeff Olive during the change of command ceremony when LTC Gregory Worden assumes command of the 5th Battalion.

## Georgia Guard Welcomes New Leaders, New Battalion

BY CPT William Carraway, GEORGIA NATIONAL GUARD

**T**he Georgia Army National Guard had a busy weekend for ceremonies Oct. 21-22, 2017, as two battalions received new leadership and one battalion was officially activated.

On Oct. 21, 2017, BG Thomas Blackstock, commander of the 78th Troop Command, presided over the activation ceremony for the 78th Troop Support Battalion at the Clay National Guard Center in Marietta. Comprised of 11 units with very different missions, the 78th TSB is a unique structure in the Georgia Guard. From the 116th Army Band, whose lineage predates the Civil War, to recently constituted trial defense teams, the units range in size from three to nearly 50 Soldiers.

LTC Catherine Cherry, who recently transferred to the Georgia Army National Guard after a stint in the Inspector General's Directorate for the National Guard Bureau, assumed command of the new TSB. 1SG Courtney Edwards will serve as the command sergeant major of the battalion.

After the activation ceremony for the 78th TSB, the Clay National Guard Center's 122nd Regiment Regional Training Institute bid farewell to LTC Tiffany Sneed, outgoing commander of the 2nd Battalion, 122nd Regiment. LTC Sneed had commanded the battalion

since 2015, overseeing training courses at Fort Stewart and in Marietta. She will continue to serve the 122nd in operations while serving full-time as the supply and division officer in the Georgia National Guard's United States Property and Fiscal Office.

MAJ Terence Caple, who joined the battalion from the information technology services branch at the Joint Force Headquarters, assumed command of 2-122nd. He is a 2004 graduate of the Georgia Military Institute, which serves as the 122nd's Officer Candidate School and is part of the battalion he now commands. In addition to OCS, the 2nd Battalion administers courses in the signal career field.

Meanwhile, at Fort Stewart, another alumnus of the Georgia Military Institute assumed command of the 5th Battalion Regional Training Institute (RTI). LTC Gregory Worden accepted the colors of the 5th Battalion from outgoing commander LTC Kathleen Smith, who had commanded the unit since 2016. LTC Smith transferred to the Maryland Army National Guard, where she will serve as the deputy logistics officer.

The 5th Battalion RTI is a geographically diverse unit, with Ordnance Training Companies at Fort Bragg, N.C., Fort Dix, N.J., and Fort Stewart, Ga. The 5th Battalion teaches courses in the 91 military occupational series, covering wheeled-vehicle maintenance, allied trades and tactical power generation.

Georgia's Regional Training Site-Maintenance also teaches the additional skill identifier course for vehicle recovery. The RTSM teaches up to 1,200 Soldiers per year, including Army National Guard Soldiers from multiple states as well as members of the Active and Reserve components. ●



# Georgia HERO Scholarship

**THE GEORGIA HERO** (Helping Educate Reservists and their Offspring) Scholarship Program was created to provide educational grant assistance to members of the Georgia National Guard and U.S. Military Reservists who served in combat zones or the Children of such members and Reservists.

The grant offers a sum of \$2,000 per award year. The maximum benefit is for four award years for a total of \$8,000 toward tuition at an approved school.

## ELIGIBILITY

Qualifying students must meet all eligibility requirements including all of the specific requirements for one of the following categories of students:

### CATEGORY A:

The eligible student must be a member of the Georgia National Guard or be a U.S. Military Reservist who completed at least one qualifying term of service.

### CATEGORY B:

The eligible student must be the biological Child, adoptive Child or legal ward of a member of the Georgia National Guard or the U.S. Military Reserves who completed at least one qualifying term of service.

### CATEGORY C:

The eligible student must be the biological Child, adoptive Child or legal ward of a member of the Georgia National Guard or the U.S. Military Reserves who was killed or received 100 percent disability as a result of injuries received in an eligible combat zone.

### CATEGORY D:

Be a surviving Spouse of a member of the Georgia National Guard or U.S. Reserves who was killed in a combat zone or died as a result of injuries received in a combat zone.

For list of qualification details and contact information, visit [MyArmyBenefits.us.army.mil](https://myarmybenefits.us.army.mil) and select Benefit Library, then select Georgia under the State/Territory Benefits menu item.



BG Tom Carden, commanding general of the Georgia Army National Guard, along with MG Joe Jarrard, presents a coin to PVT Erica Horan of Headquarters Company, 648th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, in recognition for her efforts during Exercise Saber Guardian.

## New Intelligence Analyst Makes Impact at Saber Guardian 17

BY CPT William Carraway,  
GEORGIA NATIONAL GUARD

**I** imagine you are a new Soldier in the Army National Guard. You have completed basic training and Advanced Individual Training (AIT) and are about to attend your third drill with your unit. But what if that drill is part of a major exercise in Europe?

That was the opportunity presented to PVT Erica Horan of the Georgia Army National Guard Headquarters Company, 648th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade (MEB).

PVT Horan reported to her first drill with the Columbus, Ga.-based 648th MEB in May after completing her training as an intelligence analyst. Upon arrival, she was

approached by MAJ Dan Fall, intelligence officer of the 648th MEB.

“I told Horan that the [648th] was preparing for a significant overseas mission and that we had an opening in the intelligence team [for her] to come along and make an impact,” MAJ Fall said.

MAJ Fall noted that even though PVT Horan had more than enough service time for a creditable year, she was quick to volunteer.

“She didn’t have to go, but she wanted to be part of the team. She came along and did an outstanding job,” said MAJ Fall.

In July of last year, the 648th MEB traveled to Valcea, Romania, for Exercise Saber Guardian 17, a U.S. Army-led multinational exercise involving more than 25,000 service members. The 648th MEB’s mission was to facilitate a crossing of the Olt River by the 2nd Cavalry Regiment under the cover of darkness and in the presence of simulated enemy fire.

PVT Horan was immediately put to work developing digital and analog map products, and helping the intelligence section predict enemy courses of action. MAJ Fall was impressed with how quickly PVT Horan made an impact.

“She came out of AIT with the fundamentals of her analyst skill craft,” said

MAJ Fall. “She was actually better at some of the analog products than some of the other team members because she was so recently trained on them. This gave her opportunities to lead and train others.”

MAJ Fall wasn’t the only leader to recognize PVT Horan’s initiative and skill. On the eve of the river crossing, MG Joe Jarrard, Georgia’s adjutant general, and BG Thomas Carden Jr., Commanding General of the Georgia Army National Guard, acknowledged PVT Horan’s efforts and recognized her with a challenge coin.

But the accolades didn’t stop there. One day after the river crossing, PVT Horan was promoted to private first class by CPT Emilee Rockhill, commander of the 648th MEB Headquarters Company, during a ceremony held in a sunny field in Mihaesti, Romania.

“PFC Horan has proven herself multiple times on this mission,” said CPT Rockhill. “We are very excited to have her on our team.”

When asked about the recognition, PFC Horan expressed her surprise at the entire chain of events.

“I have learned a lot,” PFC Horan said. “I never expected I would end up in Romania and could not see myself briefing a headquarters staff, but now, here I am.” ●

**BELOW:** LTC John Till, Georgia Safety Director of the Parachute Operations Mishap Preventative Orientation Course, instructs a group of participants on the safety guidelines for a UH-60 Black Hawk.



**ABOVE:** SGT Michael Romeo, a parachute rigger of the 165th Quartermaster Company, walks back to the hangar after a jump during the Parachute Operational Mishap Preventative Orientation Course.

## Georgia Guard Helps Set Standards for Parachute Operations

BY SGT Moses Howard II, GEORGIA NATIONAL GUARD

Service members from airborne military units across the country participated in the Parachute Operations Mishap Preventative Orientation Course (POMPOC) held last April 24-28 at Fort Stewart, Ga.

POMPOC is a weeklong course that blends jumpmasters from active duty, reserve and National Guard units into one forum. The program included classes and seminars that discussed new trends, procedures and equipment.

"It allows for an open exchange of information amongst the units as to what are the best practices and what's going on in the airborne community today," said SSG Dean DeAngelo of H Company, 121st Long Range Surveillance, Georgia Army National Guard.

The idea behind the course is to share lessons learned in a forum of like-minded participants. Airborne service members from different states and areas share their experiences in hopes of preventing a

parachuting mishap that could cost lives.

Georgia Army National Guard Operations SGM Joseph Shirer said that accidents, preventative measures and practices used to prevent mishaps are reviewed throughout the year.

"We also do reviews of different aircraft that normal Jumpmaster training programs don't address," SGM Shirer said. "You learn them through your unit on-the-job-training."

Instead of a situation where different units teach their own program and possibly with different methods, POMPOC provides a forum for standardized training.

Jumpmaster instructor cadre reviewed parachute inspections as well as standardized parachutist inspection procedures from the US Army Integrated Logistics Support Center (Natick), the proponent for producing the parachute – the T-11. The standards from Natick bring all the National Guard units across the country together on parachutist

inspections to include those with or without equipment.

"We do it for all National Guard units across the country who have airborne units in their formations," said LTC John Till, the Georgia Army National Guard state safety director. "We cover incidents and accidents that have taken place and try to find ways to mitigate those risks that are associated."

This was the third year the Georgia Army National Guard hosted POMPOC. SSG DeAngelo says that lessons learned from this course will be taken into account during planning of the 2018 event.

"We had some different faces this year. We had some different units. Each year, it seems to keep growing," SSG DeAngelo said. "We keep getting more and more participants coming in. It keeps expanding. Things are getting better every year." ●



SPC Perry plays on the All-Armed Forces Team at the USA Softball Women's Open National Championship.



SPC Corrsia Perry

## Georgia Guard Soldier Selected to All-Armed Forces Softball Team

BY SSG Robert J. Lannom Jr., GEORGIA NATIONAL GUARD

**G**eorgia Army National Guard SPC Corrsia B. Perry, a food service specialist with the 165th Quartermaster Company (Aerial Delivery Support), Dobbins Air Reserve Base, Ga., was selected as a member of the All-Armed Forces Team for the USA Softball Women's Open National Championship held Sept. 29-Oct. 1, 2017.

The All-Armed Forces Team is comprised of women service members from all the branches of the military: Army, Air Force, Navy, Marines Corps and Coast Guard. SPC Perry was selected as a member of the All-Armed Forces Team while playing for the All-Army Women's Softball Team at the 2017 Armed Forces Women's Championship at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston, Texas, in early September.

It was a busy 12 months for SPC Perry. In October 2016, she graduated from the U.S. Army Airborne School at Fort Benning, Ga.

The school introduces Soldiers to airborne operations via parachute insertion and airborne operations.

"Airborne School was tough, but an overall great experience, and I'm looking forward to Air Assault School," SPC Perry said.

This past spring, she was selected by the Ellenwood, Ga.-based 78th Troop Command as Soldier of the Year and represented the brigade at the 2017 Georgia National Guard Best Warrior Competition held last March.

"I really enjoyed my experience during the Best Warrior Competition," SPC Perry said. "I enjoy the physical aspect of it, and I learned so much about individual military tasks."

SPC Perry has an impressive background as an athlete. She was a four-time Georgia High School State Track and Field finalist and was part of a 4x100 relay team that won a state high school championship. And, of course, she plays softball at a high level.

Shortly after the completion of the Best



The 2017 Women's All Armed Forces Softball Team, shown above with trophy and team plaques, placed second in the USA Softball Women's Open National Championship.

Warrior Competition, she began to prepare for her tryout for the All-Army Softball Team. After receiving approval to attend the All-Army softball camp at Fort Indiantown Gap, Pa., she was selected to the All-Army Team.

She stood out in the Armed Forces Tournament, batting .501 with 20 runs scored. But other parts of her game got the attention of the All-Armed Forces Team coaches.

"Her speed on defense and her ability to run the basepaths were what we noticed," said Armed Forces Assistant Coach CMSgt Danielle Hirvela, a squadron superintendent from the North Dakota-based 5th Bomb Wing, Minot Air Base. "During her time on the team, because of her willingness to learn and seek consistent feedback, she was amazing to work with."

SPC Perry said she learned a lot about herself over the course of this last year while attending various training events and putting her skills to the test.

"Patience and trust are the two traits I've had to develop while going through this process," she said. "I've had to trust the process and understand that not everything moves at the speed I want it to and to stay in the moment."

SPC Perry noted wanting more Georgia National Guard Soldiers to understand there are many opportunities available for the traditional weekend Soldier.

"I started looking at other opportunities out there for Soldiers to get more involved," she said. "I could not believe all of the

available sports and Army training programs that National Guard Soldiers qualify for."

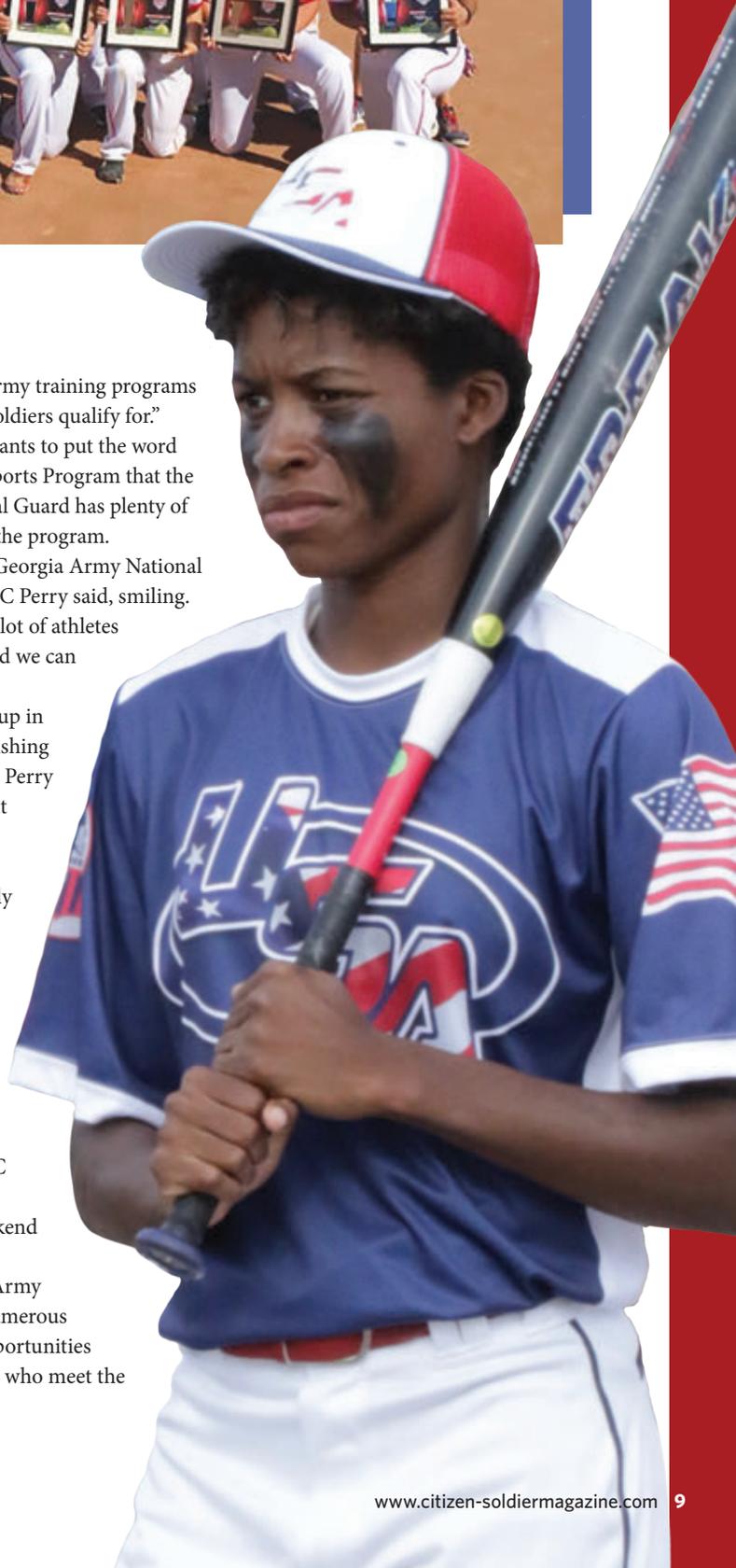
She also said she wants to put the word out to the All-Army Sports Program that the Georgia Army National Guard has plenty of athletes who can help the program.

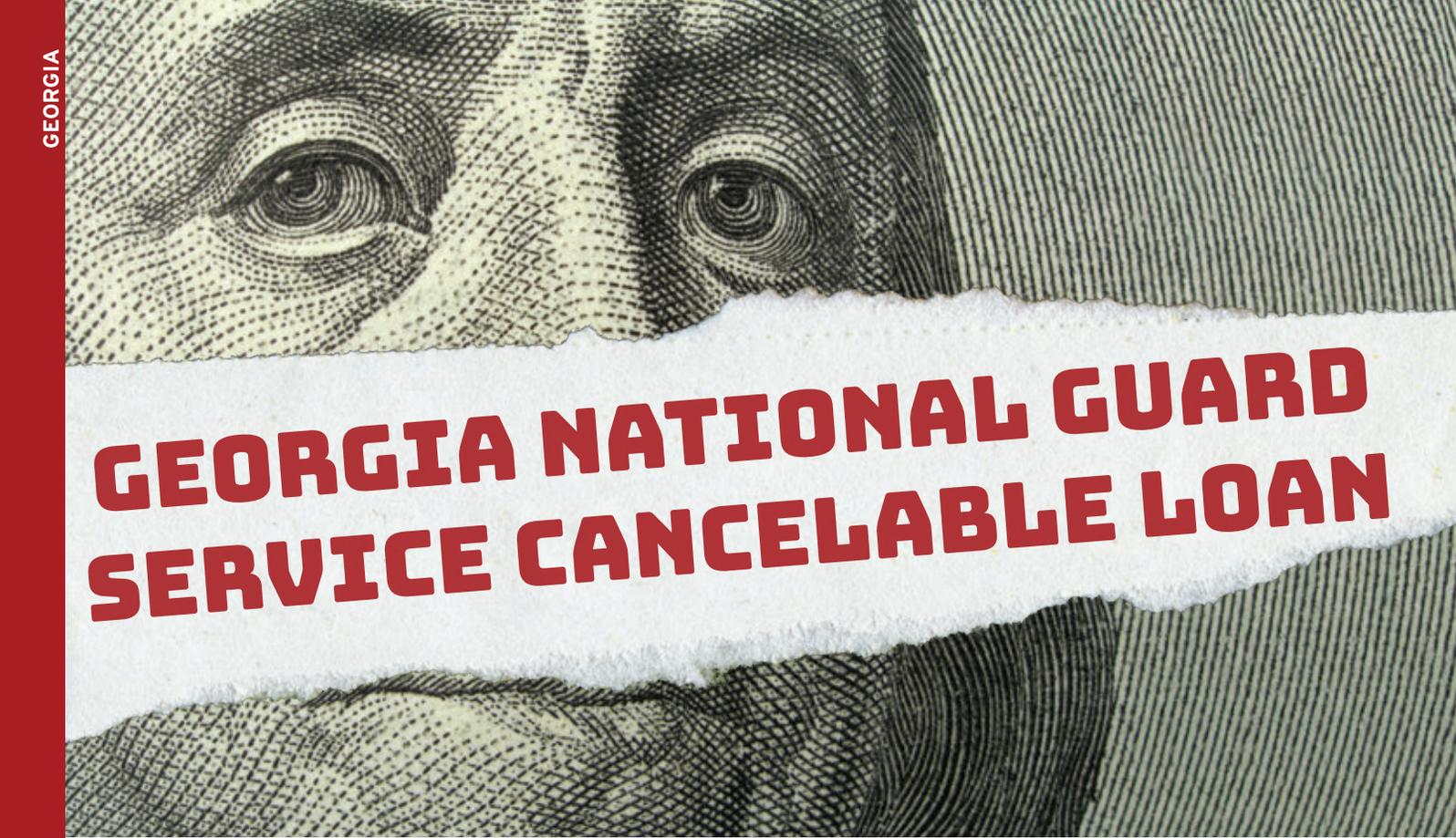
"I want to put the Georgia Army National Guard on the map," SPC Perry said, smiling. "I know Georgia has a lot of athletes in the organization, and we can compete at this level."

With almost no letup in her busy year, after finishing the softball season, SPC Perry attended an Air Assault course in November at Fort Benning.

"I've been extremely blessed over the last year with the opportunities provided by the Army National Guard to attend various training events and improve my military skills," SPC Perry said.

In addition to weekend drills and active duty training, the Georgia Army National Guard has numerous additional training opportunities for traditional Soldiers who meet the training guidelines. ●





# **GEORGIA NATIONAL GUARD SERVICE CANCELABLE LOAN**

**THE GEORGIA NATIONAL GUARD SERVICE CANCELABLE LOAN (SCL) is a student financial aid program that provides loans to members of the Georgia National Guard to be used toward the cost of tuition in an undergraduate program at an eligible university or college.**

Students who maintain a cumulative 2.0 Grade Point Average (GPA) and remain in good standing as an eligible member of the Georgia National Guard may repay 100% of the loan through continued service in the Georgia National Guard.

SCLs award 100% tuition at 28 eligible Georgia public schools and over \$2,000 per semester at 55 eligible Georgia private schools.

**TO LEARN MORE ABOUT APPLYING FOR AN SCL OR  
FOR A FULL LIST OF ELIGIBLE SCHOOLS, VISIT**

[www.GaFutures.org/Hope-State-Aid-Programs/Military/GNG-SCL](http://www.GaFutures.org/Hope-State-Aid-Programs/Military/GNG-SCL)



BG Tom Carden, outgoing commander of the Georgia Army National Guard transfers the colors to MG Joe Jarrard, Adjutant General of Georgia.

## New Leadership for the Georgia Army National Guard

BY CPT William Carraway,  
GEORGIA NATIONAL GUARD

**C**OL Randall V. Simmons Jr. assumed command of the Georgia Army National Guard from BG Thomas Carden Jr. during a ceremony Sept. 28, 2017 at the Clay National Guard Center.

COL Simmons becomes the 15th assistant adjutant general-Army to serve in the Georgia Army National Guard since the position was created by the passage of the Georgia Military Forces Reorganization Act of 1955.

“I have served with or around [COL

Simmons for more than two decades,” said BG Carden. “I am confident that he will lead the team to the next level.”

BG Carden commanded the Georgia Army National Guard from January 2015 until his selection to serve as deputy commanding general, Multi-National Division, Southeast, headquartered in Bucharest, Romania.

“As I step into my new assignment, I feel confident that the Georgia Army National Guard is going to run even faster as a new leadership team steps up to the challenges of tomorrow,” BG Carden said.

To symbolize the change of command, MG Joe Jarrard, adjutant general of the Georgia National Guard, transferred the colors from BG Carden to COL Simmons. COL Simmons then placed the colors in the guardianship of CSM Phillip Stringfield, Command Sergeant Major of the Georgia Army National Guard.

MG Jarrard praised the leadership and character of BG Carden and COL Simmons.

“Team Simmons needs no introduction,” said MG Jarrard, pointing out the long service of COL Simmons and his wife Yetive to the Georgia Army National Guard. “We look forward to [COL Simmons’] leadership, and I am confident he will lead the Georgia Army National Guard to even greater accomplishments.”

COL Simmons is a 28-year veteran of the Georgia Army National Guard. After enlisting in 1989 as a private in the Statesboro-based 2nd Battalion, 214th Field Artillery, COL Simmons subsequently earned his commission from the Georgia Military Institute’s Officer Candidate School.

From 1992 to 2006, COL Simmons served in a variety of assignments with the Savannah-based 1st Battalion, 118th Field Artillery Regiment, a unit whose history predates the American Revolution. COL Simmons deployed to Iraq in 2005 as executive officer of the 1-118th. He commanded the Calhoun-based 1st Squadron, 108th Cavalry Regiment in Afghanistan from 2009 to 2010 and commanded the Macon-based 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team from 2013

to 2015, during which time he served as commander of Task Force Volunteer in Kabul, Afghanistan.

With three combat deployments behind him, COL Simmons is clear on where his command emphasis will fall.

“To our Soldiers and units represented here today, our focus is simple – combat readiness is our top priority,” said COL Simmons, addressing the assembled Soldiers, Airmen and honored guests. “We are a nation at war. It’s our job to be ready and to win when called to action.

“Everything we do will support building and maintaining combat readiness.”

Since 2015, COL Simmons had served as the chief of staff for the Georgia Army National Guard. COL Dwayne Wilson, former commander of the Marietta-based 78th Aviation Troop Command, is the new chief of staff.

“As COL Dwayne Wilson steps up to serve as the chief of staff, COL Simmons will have a steady teammate to help guide the organization,” BG Carden said.

In recognition of his nearly 32 years of service to the Georgia Army National Guard, BG Carden received the Distinguished Service Medal – the highest individual medal awarded by the Georgia Department of Defense. His wife Charlene was presented with the Georgia Meritorious Service Medal in recognition of her long support of the Georgia Guard. The Cardens also received mementos and well wishes from representatives of the Georgia Army National Guard’s command and staff sections.

In his farewell remarks, BG Carden expressed appreciation to his family, MG Jarrard and the Soldiers of the Georgia Army National Guard, with whom he had served for more than three decades.

“Thank you all so much for your patience and investment,” BG Carden said. “I will miss this organization and its great people. I wish you all the best. I step away knowing that I did my best and that the best for this organization is yet to come.” ●



BG Tom Carden, MG Joe Jarrard, COL Randall Simmons

# Two Georgia Guard Cadets Ranked in Top Five in The Nation

PROVIDED BY  
The University of North Georgia

WRITTEN BY Edie Rogers

**T**wo Army Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) cadets at the University of North Georgia (UNG) have ranked in the top five – out of 5,536 cadets – in this year's U.S. Army Cadet Command national Order of Merit List. Cadet 1LT Andrew Gomez of Cumming, Georgia, is ranked second in the nation and Cadet LTC Bryton Wenzel of Albany, Ga., is ranked fifth.

Cadets are ranked on the national OML by achieving superior grade point averages, strong performance in the Army physical fitness test, proving their worth as exceptional leaders in their college ROTC training, and their performance at Advanced Camp at Fort Knox, Kentucky. With more than 5,000 cadets from across the nation ranked on this year's OML, it is extraordinary that two cadets from the same university are ranked among the top five nationally.

“One of only six senior military colleges in the country, UNG has a long-standing national reputation for excellence and has produced more than 50 general officers since its founding,” UNG President Bonita C. Jacobs said. “I am proud that our legacy continues to grow

and that this year we have two cadets who placed among the top five in the nation.”

This is the third time in four years that UNG cadets placed in the top 10 in the nation – Jonathan Strickland of Gainesville, Georgia, was the No. 1 cadet in 2014 and Eric Gleason of Marietta, Georgia, was ranked eighth in 2015.

Each fall, in conjunction with their branch selections, all Army ROTC senior cadets from around the country are ranked in a national OML. A cadet's positioning on the OML can determine his or her priority in being chosen for the branch or occupational specialty of choice; cadets who are ranked highly on the list typically are given their first choice.

“These two young men represent the very best of UNG and our Corps of Cadets, and we are very proud of their accomplishment,” said Col. Brent Cummings, professor of military

science at UNG. “Our cadets

are achieving tremendous results and I'm very grateful for the support of this great institution and our alumni as we train the future leadership of our Army.”

LEFT: Cadet 1LT Andrew Gomez

RIGHT: Cadet LTC Bryton Wenzel





LEFT: Cadet LTC Wenzel prepares to train for night shooting on a .50 caliber machine gun.

ABOVE: Cadet 1LT Gomez (center) stands with fellow cadet lieutenants as they meet with senior officers for briefing on the day's classes and training.

Cadet 1LT Gomez and Cadet LTC Wenzel have shared some friendly competition during their years in UNG's Corps of Cadets that has pushed them to excel. While both said they initially were stunned to get the news, now that reality is starting to sink in, each credits his success to the help and support of others.

"Really and truly, I just sat there and read it a couple of times to make sure that it was my name and the second thing I thought was 'What did Gomez get?' because we've been in some competition," said Cadet LTC Wenzel, who at one time was Cadet 1LT Gomez' commanding officer. "I just reflect on all the hard work that I've done and I thank all of those other people who have helped me along the way."

Cadet 1LT Gomez, a three-year recipient of the federal Army ROTC Scholarship, is majoring in computer science and seeks to commission into the U.S. Army Cyber Corps. Cadet 1LT Gomez has a 3.87 GPA and has been on the UNG Dean's List for five semesters. He serves in the Corps of Cadets Headquarters Company. He graduated from North Forsyth High School in Cumming, Ga., and is the son of Audrey and Albeiro Gomez.

"All the hard work of others who helped

out to get me here has really paid off," Cadet 1LT Gomez said. "Honestly, it's just all the great leaders who are here who have developed others to be better leaders. One of the biggest things I love about the University of North Georgia is that everyone is just trying to help each other."

As a recipient of the ROTC Scholarship, Cadet 1LT Gomez has committed to serve as an officer in the Army, Army National Guard or Army Reserve. The scholarship can pay either tuition and fees or room and meals; a monthly stipend; and \$1,200 per year for books.

Cadet LTC Wenzel is a recipient of the state-funded UNG Georgia Military Scholarship, majoring in nursing and seeking to commission into the Corps of Engineers. Cadet LTC Wenzel has a 3.95 GPA and has been named to the UNG Dean's List and President's Honor Roll throughout his four years at UNG. He serves as the commander of the Corps of Cadets' 2nd Battalion. He graduated from Baconton Community Charter School in Baconton, Ga., and is the son of Tina and Jeff Coalson.

As a recipient of the military scholarship, Cadet LTC Wenzel has committed to serve

four years in the Georgia Army National Guard after graduation. The full scholarship, worth \$70,000 over four years, is offered each year only to full-time UNG students serving as enlisted members of the Guard and pays for tuition, books, fees, room, board, and uniforms.

In addition to Gomez and Wenzel, 10 other UNG cadets also finished in the top 10 percent in the nation: Addyson Albershardt, Cameron Hite, Justin James, Reed Johnston, Hayden Pilgrim, Davis Ponder, Devin Smith, Trevor Smits, Aaron Wallace, and Jack Ward.

The following 25 UNG cadets finished in the top 20 percent: Steven Barfield, Vicky Cheairs, Christopher Dildili, Lydia Eng, Brendan Fowler, Zackary Garner, Jonathan Geller, Timothy Hoell, Colton Hudson, Kristin Kelly, Michael Lockwood, Dylan Martin, William McCray, Todd Miller, William Nase, Dustin Nguyen, Allen Reuter, Jean Philippe Rossy, Taylor Sinclair, Chase Slocumb, Harrison Smith, Zachary Toler, Justin Trammel, Anthony Twitty and Caleb Yarbro. All 37 cadets earn recognition as Distinguished Military Graduates based on their ranking in top 20 percent and above on the OML. ●



SFC Cole of the 138th Chemical Company teaches how to safely remove a HAZMAT suit during the technical decontamination lane during Vigilant Guard 17.

## Massive Exercise Prepares Guard, Civilian Agencies for Disasters

BY SPC Jordan Trent,  
GEORGIA NATIONAL GUARD

Six months after Hurricane Matthew struck the Southeast coast of the United States, the state of Georgia hosted a large-scale training exercise March 23-31 to respond to real-life disaster scenarios.

The event included about 9,000

personnel and followed two years of planning and extensive work. The Georgia Department of Defense and the Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency teamed up to cohost Vigilant Guard 17. United States Northern Command (USNORTHCOM), in conjunction with the National Guard Bureau, sponsored the exercise.

“The purpose of this large-scale and comprehensive exercise is to simulate a real-world natural disaster in order to improve cooperation among local, state and federal stakeholders in preparing for emergencies and any sort of catastrophic event,” said Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal.

During Vigilant Guard 17, more than 50 federal and local agencies joined the Georgia Department of Defense along with units from six other states for a series of real-world

training scenarios.

Everything the Georgia Department of Defense does is for, with and through its interagency partners, said BG Tom Carden, commander of the Georgia Army National Guard.

“Looking back, I believe we work at the speed of trust,” BG Carden said. “These exercises help us build capability and, more importantly, it helps us build trust. Trust is cultivated through relationships. When we can go out and work those relationships and build trust and build capability, the end result is a safer population.”

The exercise was the first Vigilant Guard event held in Georgia and the largest in event history. Georgia’s Homeland Security Task Force began planning the event in 2015. Since then, Georgia and neighboring states have experienced real-world emergencies, from



A Georgia National Guard CH-47 Chinook transports response teams from the Georgia Department of Natural Resources during Vigilant Guard 2017.



BG Tom Carden, commander of the Georgia Army National Guard shakes hands with 1SG Willie Sanders of the 810th Engineer Company while visiting Soldiers of the 201st Regional Support Group at Vigilant Guard 17.

flooding in South Carolina to Hurricane Matthew's impact along the coast.

A state of emergency was declared in six Georgia counties during Matthew. But under the scenarios in the training exercise, 19 counties were in a simulated state of emergency.

The training scenarios included collapsed building search and decontamination missions, search and rescue training, maritime response missions, aerial firefighting, mass-casualty medical evacuation training, and cyber attack defense. The training for each scenario was evaluated to enhance readiness in situations that could arise as a result of a natural disaster. Readiness is a theme of the National Guard and its training program so members are prepared to respond to real-world events.

Local and state agencies have the ability to request support in times of need. The processes

they go through require training for their partners so they can efficiently provide support to civil authorities on short notice.

"The purpose of this exercise is to simulate an event that exceeds our capacity to respond and stresses our systems to the point we have to ask for assistance outside the state," said MG Joe Jarrard, the adjutant general of Georgia. "That assistance could come in the form of other Guard members from other states, active-duty forces from around the country, as well as additional assistance from federal agencies and other States."

Participants learned to coordinate effective disaster response. In the event of a catastrophe, agencies engaged from national to local levels are now better prepared to plan, communicate and take action to protect U.S. citizens.

"To know that we have the Guard standing behind us is great," said Tim Holloway, a

manager for Columbia County Georgia Roads and Bridges Department. "We look forward to working together, whenever it may be."

Teams, leadership and event organizers banded together to complete the monumental training exercise successfully. The competence and commitment of the leadership in all agencies involved and the hard work and dedication of the workers, both civilian and DoD, were visible during the tests and challenges of Vigilant Guard 17.

With the lessons learned in this exercise and the plans in place, authorities are ready to respond to the threats posed to the citizens of Georgia and the United States. ●



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