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Soldiers with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 161st Infantry Regiment, 81st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, Washington Army National Guard fire an 81mm M252 mortar during a live fire mission at the Yakima Training Center, Wash.

Washington Army National Guard photo by SPC Alec Dionne

NOMINATE THE NEXT WASHINGTON NATIONAL GUARD SOLDIER OF THE MONTH

Washington National Guard leadership wants to recognize the outstanding Soldiers of this great State. Each month, one Washington Guard Soldier is selected as Washington's Guard Soldier of the Month.

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Entries must be 250 words or less and submitted no later than 1200 on the **MONDAY** after a drill weekend. Each month's winner is announced on the Washington National Guard website and social media pages.



TO NOMINATE A SOLDIER, GO TO
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2018 Howard O. Scott Citizen-Service Member of the Year, LTC Mike Ake

By CPT Joseph Siemandel

While he's most often seen in his Tacoma Police uniform, it's his successful military career that earned LTC Mike Ake the prestigious Howard O. Scott Award.

"I want to thank everyone that has been a mentor to me along the way," said LTC Ake. "It meant a lot to me."

For 37 years, the Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber of Commerce has presented the award to a deserving citizen-soldier or airmen from the county, named after a man who served the nation when called upon during World War II. Mr. Howard O. Scott returned home and, while he succeeded as a banker, he also gave his time to community service organizations, trusting and enjoying in his belief that doing so is one's responsibility.

A graduate of Spanaway High School, LTC Ake has served his State

and Nation as a member of the military for more than 30 years. In 1987, he joined the U.S. Army Reserve and graduated from the Washington National Guard's Officer Candidate School in 1995. He has served in a number of roles and is currently the Joint Force Headquarters J1 Policy Officer.

While building a stellar military career, LTC Ake has served the people of Tacoma for more than 30 years on the police force. Today, he is the assistant chief of police, leading the Investigations Bureau, into which he was promoted in late 2010.

"No one represents Pierce County better, and the Guard," said COL Gerald Dezsofi, commander, 56th Theater Information Operations Group. "He is very engaged in the strategic mission of the Washington Army National Guard, both domestically and internationally."

Taking part in the National Guard State Partnership Program, LTC Ake has traveled multiple times to the Kingdom of Thailand to lead exercises, as well as teach Incident Command and Response to Thai counterparts. As a member of the Special Operations Detachment-Pacific, he deployed to Afghanistan in 2008 and came home to continue both his military and civilian careers.

Between 2004 and 2006, he was part of the Department of Justice program, Weed and Seed, focusing on minority communities with the intent to establish trust and create open dialogue between disparaged communities and government services.

Through his innovation, a program was developed to reduce street-level prostitution, diverting volunteer "Johns" from the court system along with applying their court fees to fund education and housing for prostitutes. Also a plank member of the Tacoma Project Peace Initiative, efforts of the initiative led to better conversations and opportunities for the Tacoma Police Department to engage with all aspects of the community, reducing the barriers experienced in similar jurisdictions across the nation.

From 2010–2017, LTC Ake helped coordinate with local, regional, State and federal agencies to improve the Tacoma's Homeland Security posture. He also helped spearhead grant opportunities to fund required equipment and training for these special teams. This included improving Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT), Marine Services Unit, Explosives Ordnance Detail (Bomb Squad) and other various specialty teams that are part of the Tacoma Police Department.

An effective leader who motivates others to be their absolute best, many would say LTC Ake is one of the finest citizen-soldiers in the Washington National Guard. All his endeavors represent his unparalleled dedication to the Nation, this State and its citizens, plus those who call Tacoma home.

He fully embodies the vision of the Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber's ideal nominee for the Howard O. Scott Citizen Soldier of the Year. ■



LTC Mike Ake, Joint Force Headquarters, Washington Army National Guard and assistant police chief of the Tacoma Police Department is honored with the Howard O. Scott Citizen-Service Member of the Year award by Jason Lopez of America's Credit Union.

Washington Army National Guard photo by CPT Joseph Siemandel



A Washington Army National Guard Soldier pauses to catch a breath as he fights a wildfire near Northport, Wash., Aug. 5, 2018.

Washington National Guard photo by TSgt Tim Chacon

Washington Guard Members Attack Sheep Creek Fire

By TSgt Timothy Chacon

Waiting at the dozer line, SSG Eric Delaune said he could feel the heat 100 yards away. Then, a huge roar came right at him – except it wasn't a plane, it was flames.

"That flame front that came toward us was 150- to 200-foot flames and sounded like a jet coming straight at us," said SSG Delaune of the 141st Maintenance Squadron. "They were calling evacuation orders over the radio for

some of the other divisions that were farther up, but we were able to hold our position and immediately after it burned, we were able to get in there and clean it up and keep it from encroaching into the green."

This summer, members of the Washington Army National Guard were on the front lines of the fires, actively engaging giant flames. For the past few years, Guard Soldiers and Airmen on the ground had been responsible for mop-up and supporting activities. But with so many fires, BG Jeremy Horn, Washington Air National Guard commander, says that Soldiers and Airmen are needed for a direct attack fighting the fire.

"The foresight that the Legislature had to provide funding to get our folks trained in the preseason is crucial to being able to respond like we did," BG Horn said while in eastern

Washington checking on members of the Army National Guard. "Training our folks before the season hits is always an important point for us. There is always a need for our support, but by the time the Department of Natural Resources needs us, all their crews are engaged and are not able to take the time to train our folks."

Hand crews battled the fire by clearing out burnable materials in the fire's path. Using a variety of different hand tools, the Soldiers and Airmen cleared a space in the forest down to bare dirt to remove fuel for the fire. The crews also used hoses to attack smaller hot spots along the fire's line. With the crews assisting in the initial attack, they were in the thick of fighting the fire from the beginning.

"We were right up close to the fire and we did get to see a pretty nasty flame front," SSG Delaune said. "We were sitting at a dozer line



SPC Derek Price, 176th Engineer Company, Washington Army National Guard, clears hot spots along the fire line of the Sheep Creek fire Aug. 5, 2018, near Northport, Wash.

Washington National Guard photo by TSgt Tim Chacon

and they were doing back-burning operations toward us. Our job was to hold the line as the fire came up toward us. We had to guard the unburnt zone and mop up any spot fires that popped up."

Many of the Soldiers fought what has been named the Sheep Creek fire as it burned its way through the steep and densely wooded terrain of eastern Washington – just 33 miles west of the Idaho border and 5 miles south of the Canadian border – along the Columbia River, near the town of Northport.

The fire began July 30, and within 48 hours, the first members of the Washington Army National Guard were arriving on scene. It is not unusual for Washington Guard members to fight fires, but their quick response and speedy actions made this response notable.

By the nature of their service, guardsmen have varied backgrounds, training and experience, but they all answered the call for support immediately and without hesitation.

"Most of the [Guard members] out here are drill status [service members] so they had to step away from their families, civilian jobs and regular responsibilities to support something they don't normally do, with very little notice." BG Horn said.

All Soldiers responding to the fire were trained to fight the fires, and some have fought fires in the past, but most do not fight fires on a regular basis in their civilian jobs or even their Army National Guard jobs.

"We've got college students, electricians, security guards, personal trainers, all kinds of different jobs, but when they come out here they are able to quickly flip that switch

and get to work," said SSG Peter Schuldt, fire squad boss for the Washington Army National Guard.

The hot weather, difficult terrain, heavy loads of equipment and the physically demanding nature of the job can easily be described as difficult by almost anyone's standard. Yet, despite those factors, the Soldiers and Airmen pressed on day after day, understanding the real impact of their work.

"Everybody is feeling it by now," SSG Schuldt said. "You can't do what we are doing and not feel it, but everyone's attitudes have been fantastic and spirits are high. If I was to say, 'Hey we are going to climb this steep hill for training,' there would be unhappiness, but because there is a reason for it, they just accept it."

More than 350 responders contributed



Washington Army National Guard Soldiers conduct a safety brief prior to commencing firefighting operations clearing combustible fuels such as trees, grass, roots and leaves from the path of the Sheep Creek fire, on Aug. 5, 2018.

Washington National Guard photo by TSgt Tim Chacon

to the firefighting efforts at Sheep Creek, and 102 of them were members of the Washington Army National Guard. Of the 12 hand crews that directly engaged the fire, nearly half were Army or Air Guard crews.

The Department of Natural Resources, which runs the firefighting operations, recognized the Washington Army National Guard's contributions.

"Nationally, we are at a level five preparedness, which means we are short on resources across the country," said Andrew Stenbeck, Sheep Creek fire incident commander. "We could not have got the crews we needed, which would have extended the risk of this fire getting much larger. So, for the [Army National Guard crews] to come in and have us be able to use them as initial attack was huge. This is a type of fire that hand crews are critical to stopping it."



Stenbeck said he considers the Army National Guard's involvement in firefighting operations to be a crucial necessity for the state to adequately battle the yearly fires.

"The [National Guard] training with us and working with us out on the fire line is a huge boost to our ability to fight fires and it benefits the citizens of the State of Washington, because we are here to protect life, property and natural resources, and that's an important mission," he said. ●

Washington Army National Guard Soldiers work to clear hot spots along the fire line of the Sheep Creek fire this past August.

Washington National Guard photo by TSgt Tim Chacon



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2LT Sonya Hood, platoon leader for the 297th Regional Support Group contingent, Alaska Army National Guard, stands at the head of her platoon during a training exercise at Five Hills Training Area, Mongolia.

Alaska Army National Guard photo by SGT David Bedard

Guard Soldier Balances the Many Things That Make Her Unique

by SPC Alec Dionne

SPC Arshia Gill is breaking the mold and has become one of the many new female Soldiers stepping into a combat military occupational specialty (MOS).

But, for SPC Gill, she's become more than just a trailblazer; she's an engineer, a student and a soldier all wrapped up into one. SPC Gill is a combat engineer with Alpha Company, 898th Brigade Engineer Battalion, 81st Stryker Brigade Combat Team.

"If I had an opportunity to do this all over again, even though it's really difficult managing it, I definitely would; it's a cool experience," said SPC Gill.

"She's always the first one wanting to learn and go do something," added SGT Jason Longmire with Alpha Company, 898th Brigade Engineer Battalion, 81st Stryker Brigade Combat Team. "We were doing urban

breaching [training] yesterday and she was right there, right next to the door, maybe five or 10 feet away holding the blast blanket so that no one got hurt."

SPC Gill's company commander, CPT Brandon Buehler, describes her as a warrior and a true combat engineer. Combat engineers are expected to be able to build structures and operate explosives and do the appropriate mathematics to ensure that both are done correctly.

When she's not at drill, SPC Gill is a full-time student at the University of Puget Sound. The two lifestyles are night and day. Her school's trim and manicured



SPC Arshia Gill, Alpha Company, 898th Brigade Engineer Battalion, 81st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, prepares a door for a breaching exercise on a demolitions range at the Yakima Training Center, Wash., during Alpha Company's annual training.

Washington Army National Guard photo by SGT David Carnahan

campus is a world away from the hot and dusty field training at the Yakima Training Center. Transitioning back and forth can be challenging.

"If I have a weekend off, I usually visit home and my family usually puts me back on my feet if I'm having a tough time," she said.

Family is a big motivator for SPC Gill.

"Most of the men in my family have served in different armies around the world, and I am the first in my generation, and also the first female [soldier] in my family."

In January 2016, the Department of Defense opened all MOSs to women.

"I was a little scared after basic because

"If I had an opportunity to do this all over again, even though it's really difficult managing it, I definitely would; it's a cool experience."

- SPC Arshia Gill

drill sergeants try to freak you out about being one of the first women in a combat MOS that just opened up," SPC Gill said. "[I heard] a lot about being able to carry your own weight, and I pride myself in being able to do that."

SPC Gill was nervous about arriving in her first unit, but that concern went away when she got to know her new teammates.

"I honestly feel blessed to be in this unit," she said. "I'm just really happy that I got placed with some of the men that are in this unit because they're very respectful and the transition was very easy. I didn't feel like there were any bumps in the road or anything like that." ●



SPC Arshia Gill (far left), along with her squad mates of Alpha Company, 898th Brigade Engineer Battalion, 81st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, eat dinner after a long day of training at the Yakima Training Center, Wash.

Washington Army National Guard photo by SGT David Carnahan





10th CST Builds Partnerships During Konfitma 18

By SFC Jason Kriess

The Washington National Guard's 10th Civil Support Team participated in an exercise that included an active shooter, biological weapons manufacturing

and hostages on the island of Saipan in the Northern Mariana Islands. Approximately 100 personnel from various government agencies of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) responded to the scenarios in mid-August.

The exercise, called Konfitma, a Chamorro term meaning "confirming with the plans," was designed to test an agency's capabilities, policies and procedures and identify interoperability gaps in its response. The first Konfitma exercise was held in 2010. The Chamorro people are the original

inhabitants of Saipan.

The commercial economy of the Northern Mariana Islands heavily depends on the imported goods that make their way onto the islands by way of commercial ship transport. Even if there were a small-scale attack on one of their ports, there could theoretically be a surge in security requirements at all of their ports, as well as a crippling area-wide disruption of maritime operations.

Washington, along with other CSTs from Guam, Hawaii, Utah and Tennessee, provided chemical, biological, radiological,



Enrique Ngotel, a firefighter with Saipan's Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services, extinguishes a car fire after an improvised explosive device was detonated as part of a training scenario during Exercise Konfitma 2018, a chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosives (CBRNE) training exercise held on the island of Saipan in the Northern Mariana Islands.

Washington Army National Guard photo by Jason Kriess

Survey members of Washington National Guard's 10th Civil Support Team take pictures of raw materials that could potentially be used to create nefarious chemicals, explosives or drugs during a training scenario as part of exercise Konfitma 2018, an all-hazards chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosives (CBRNE) environment threat-based training exercise held this past August on the island of Saipan in the Northern Mariana Islands.

Washington Army National Guard photo by Jason Kriess

nuclear and explosives (CBRNE) support to local first-responders. If there was a need for detection for any kind of hazardous chemicals or materials, the CSTs arrived on site within 30 minutes.

More than merely participating in the exercise itself, LTC Ricky Thomas, the commander of the 10th CST, said that building and maintaining relationships with the other CSTs is crucial for when real-world events happen.

LTC Thomas said that if there was an actual event that occurred in Saipan or other

island in the CNMI, Guam would be the first to respond. If the event proved too much for them to handle, they would reach out to Hawaii first because they're the closest CST. From there, they will call the next closest team—Washington.

"If the incident is large enough, they will be reaching out to us," LTC Thomas said. "But the fact that we've worked with them – they know what we bring to the fight and they know our capabilities – makes the response that much more seamless."

"Participating in exercises like these in the U.S. Army Pacific's area of responsibility allows us to demonstrate our abilities to our counterparts," said MAJ Jonathon Uran, deputy commander of the 10th CST.

"Our involvement in this region just builds those relationships so that when we do get the call to come out here, we know who these teams are, we know their personalities. We can rely upon them and they can rely upon us," MAJ Uran added.

In the waning hours of the 72-hour exercise, the 10th CST was called into action at an abandoned shopping mall where notional perpetrators led SWAT teams to a makeshift laboratory where they were manufacturing a nerve agent intended to be used as a weapon of mass destruction. Two members of the team donned their fully

encapsulated Level A chemical protection suits, complete with self-contained breathing apparatus, and made their way downrange to inspect the contaminated area.

Their mission was to take pictures of any precursors in the area, said TSgt Tara Broad, a survey team member.

Precursors are any raw materials that can be used to create nefarious chemicals, explosives or drugs.

The photos, along with any other data the team collected, would then be brought back to the incident commander in order to help them make more informed decisions during the incident.

Resources were wearing thin at another location 10 miles away. Other CSTs had responded to multiple laboratories at a juvenile detention center earlier that morning. As the day wore on, they were running out of survey members to don the hazmat suit and make entry into the crime scene.

The 10th CST was called upon to send two survey members to the detention center to augment the other teams already on site. The two were able to successfully integrate into the incident and provide the support needed.

All the CSTs combined were able to look at and accurately assess all nine makeshift labs during the exercise. ●

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Cobra Gold 18: Partner Nations Build Community Center At Bankhaotien School

By SSG Jodi Eastham

The 18th Civil Engineering Squadron built a community center at Bankhaotien School in Thailand in February of this year as part of Exercise Cobra Gold 2018. Cobra Gold is an annual exercise to advance interoperability with the United States and partner nations. At Bankhaotien, U.S. Soldiers worked with members of the Royal Thai Air Force, Malaysian Army and the Indian Army.

Bankhaotien is a school that services three small villages. The Engineering Civic Assistance Project helps the communities by

Soldiers of Washington Army National Guard's 21st Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, participate in the opening ceremony of Cobra Gold 2018, a multilateral joint training exercise held at Camp Friendship, Korat, in the Kingdom of Thailand, February 2018.

Washington Army National Guard photo by SSG Jodi Eastham

building multifunctional buildings to use for education and community purposes. Village leaders of Bankhaotien attended several meetings with leaders of the Engineering Civic Assistance Project to determine what was needed for the community.

Planning, coordination and the purchasing of materials to complete the project began months in advance. Nongluk Thumapa, director of Bankhaotien School, is the Thai liaison on this project. He attended several meetings with members of the U.S. Air Force in June when much of the planning started.

2LT Jack Robinson, commander, 18th Civil Engineering Squadron, 18th Civil Engineering Group, said his group joined the planning process in August.

2LT Robinson's makeshift office also doubled as the school's store. All the proceeds from the store benefit the school.

"We had to build a materials list," said 2LT

Robinson. "Also we needed a cost estimate, agree on start and end dates with the other countries, what tools we were going to bring. Purchases of supplies also needed to be made. This project cost was around \$80,000."

Thumapa's responsibilities were to prepare accommodations for the troops, rooms, bathrooms, food and everything the troops would need for the month-long stay.

"A local community organization provided everything," said Thumapa. "The Wang Preung District Administrative Organization provided many necessities to them."

Villagers gave their support with additional supplies for the project. They provided dirt to ensure a strong foundation for the building, and a backhoe to move ground materials around. Many villagers looked on, excited for the new addition to their community. Some of the local children would wait at the site to play soccer with the



Washington Army National Guard Soldiers pose for a picture with staff and students from the Bankhaotien School in the Lopburi province, Thailand where the 18th Civil Engineering Squadron helped build a community center during Exercise Cobra Gold 2018

Washington Army National Guard photo by SSG Jodi Eastham

Soldiers of Washington Army National Guard's 21st Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, stand in formation with soldiers of the 133rd Infantry Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, Royal Thai Army during the opening ceremony of Cobra Gold 2018 at Camp Friendship, Korat, in the Kingdom of Thailand, February 2018.

Washington Army National Guard photo by SSG Jodi Eastham



troops who had developed a rapport with the youngsters.

Forty-six troops came from four different nations: The Royal Thai Air Force-20, USAF-16, Malaysian Army-5 and the Indian Army-5. All shared an excitement to work on the project and tackle unique challenges.

One challenge in partnering with the troops from India and Malaysia was developing a single working plan for the construction given the differing building standards between the participating forces.

"Brands are different in construction technology," said 2LT Robinson. "Thai, Malaysia and India have different standards of construction. We're used to having more technology and advanced tools. Thai's use the string line method and water leveler."

The troop leaders surpassed this hurdle by holding a joint meeting each morning to determine the day's priorities. That meeting was followed by a block of instructions to ensure all soldiers were working on the same page.

In the end, the residents of Bankhaotien received a new community center and the soldiers who helped to make that happen received a sense of pride in both their work and in knowing they had made a difference for people in need.

"My job is for medical reasons and also public health," said SSG Brendon Baez, independent medical technician, 18th Civil Engineering Squadron, 18th Civil Engineering Group. "When I'm not doing medical, I'm hands-on. I've learned to set foundation, dig holes, lay concrete, mix mortar, bend rebar. It's done by hand. It's a humble experience – everybody gets it done and does it right."

"It's a good feeling to get with four other countries to help build," said Maj. Anoof Joshi, 6th Squadron, Royal Engineers Regiment, Malaysian Army. "I like being here to help. I get pleasure from helping others."

"Awesome," said A1C Zion Adkins, structural apprentice, 18th Civil Engineering Squadron, 18th Civil Engineering Group. "This is an opportunity to build from start to finish. It's a really satisfying experience."

A particularly exciting feature of the building is a built-in stage. In the end, the villagers will have a new community center that will double as a classroom for their children. ●



SPC Alex Hartley, an infantryman with Alpha Company, 3rd Battalion, 161st Infantry Regiment takes part in the "Mystery Event" on day one of the 2018 Washington Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition at Camp Murray, Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., Sept. 2018.

Washington Army National Guard Soldiers Take Part in the 2018 Best Warrior Competition

By CPT Joseph Siemandel
Washington Army National Guard Photos
by Joseph Siemandel



SPC Alex Hartley jumps over the swinging log obstacle during the Obstacle Course event of the 2018 Washington Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition this past September.

Soldiers love competition: the struggle against the obstacles, competing against each other to see the best of the best. That's when you see them push to the end of their physical abilities and do things that they never thought they could.

That is what the 2018 Best Warrior Competition was all about. Guardsmen from across the state pushed themselves to their physical and mental breaking points during the four-day competition.

"We created this year's competition to get everything we could out of the competitors," said CSM Bruce Ecclestone, State command sergeant major, Washington Army National Guard. "We had a close finish, separated by only six points."

Competitors, chosen by their units during a board review process, came to Camp Murray this past September to start the multi-day competition, starting with an army physical fitness test and mystery events, which included pull-ups, a shuttle run and goblet squats.

"If you are somebody that wants to test yourself against the best in the State, this is a great lane to do it in," said PFC Nicholas Pannoni, infantryman with Charlie Company, 3rd Battalion, 161st Infantry Regiment and Longview police officer. "This was a good opportunity to compete, understand where your weaknesses are and see what you are all about."

The second day started with a 12-mile

ruck march. Each competitor carried a 40-pound ruck sack and weapon in full battle rattle. As competitors finished, they received medical attention, as needed, and prepared for their next event, which was a test on familiarization on the MK-19 and .50 Caliber Machine Gun. The Soldiers then moved on to tactical combat casualty care lanes before conducting land navigation.

"So far, it's been killing me, but it's been good," said SPC Arbogaste Twizere, combat engineer, Headquarters Company, 898th Brigade Engineer Battalion and a Central Washington University student. "I want to be the best; I don't want to be a regular person. I want to be special."

SPC Twizere and PFC Pannoni, along

with the other competitors, finished day two with a trip to the gas chamber before heading to the woods for night land navigation.

SGT Kevin Chambers, a plumber with 176th Engineer Company and Bellingham resident, recently returned from working on the wildfires in eastern Washington in August. He took the challenge head-on knowing he couldn't give up.

"I was recently on the Sheep Creek fire; it was fun, hard work. You feel accomplished at the end of the day knowing you are helping others," SGT Chambers said. "As the only NCO (noncommissioned officer) in the competition, it's my responsibility to set the standard for the younger soldiers."

On the third day, the competitors completed rifle and pistol ranges, threw grenades and completed Day Stakes lanes.

"I am taking one event at a time," said SPC Kevin Gross, a horizontal construction engineer, 176th Engineer Company. "You get one done and move on to the next. You can't think ahead."

SPC Gross, a general contractor in Tacoma, said he wanted to take part in the Best Warrior competition since finding out about it.

"I want to be the best in my unit, State, region, country," he said. "This is why we do this, right? To be the best."

The competitors started the fourth and final day with an obstacle course and drill and ceremony event before wrapping up.

"Challenges are nothing new to me, I went to basic training at 31," said SPC Robert Levy, automated logistical specialist with

Alpha Company, 181st Brigade Support Battalion and an employee at Wells Fargo in Vancouver. "I'll never be one to blame my age on being beat by soldiers much younger."

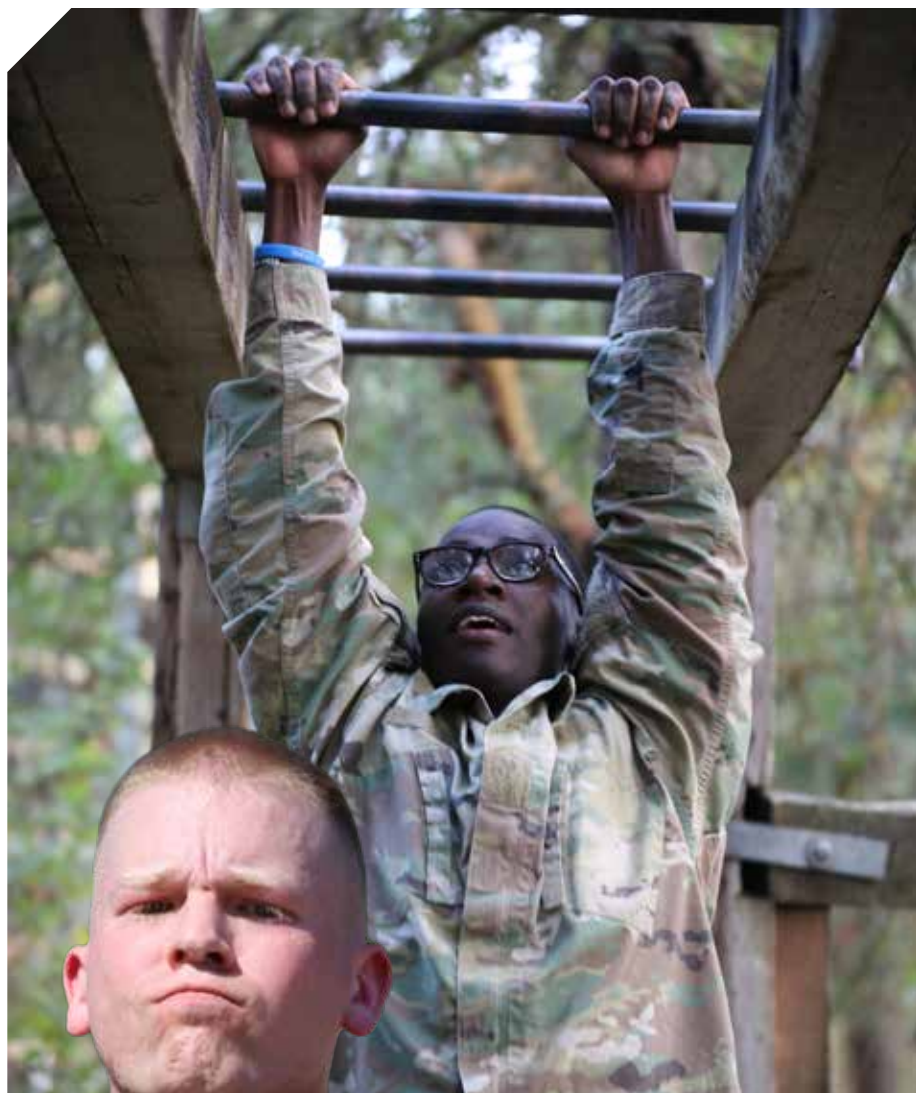
"You all showed mental and physical toughness, and really showed the warrior ethos out there," CSM Ecclestone told the soldiers during Sunday's award ceremony.

This year, SPC Alex Hartley, infantryman, Alpha Company, 3rd Battalion, 161st Infantry Regiment and a student and model from Seattle was named the Best Warrior,

and SGT Chambers was named best NCO.

"I am so happy to be the best warrior," SPC Hartley said. "Many of the events pushed me to my brink, but was fun. My leadership believes in me and knew I could win."

SGT Chambers and SPC Hartley will move on from State to the regional competition in North Dakota next spring to compete against the winners from Alaska, Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Oregon and Wyoming. ●



TOP RIGHT: SPC Arbogaste Twizere, a combat engineer with Headquarters Company, 898th Brigade Engineer Battalion navigates the horizontal ladder obstacle during the 2018 Washington Army National Guard's Best Warrior Competition.

BOTTOM RIGHT: SPC Robert Levy, an automated logistical specialist with Alpha Company, 181st Brigade Support Battalion completes a pullup during this year's Washington Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition.