

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

# CITIZEN-SOLDIER

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ISSUE 5 // VOL 2



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**THE PARTNERSHIP FOR YOUTH SUCCESS** (PaYS) Program is helping Soldiers find jobs after their service in the Army. PaYS is a strategic partnership between the U.S. Army and a cross section of corporations, companies and public sector agencies.

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For information on program eligibility and participating partner companies, visit **Armypays.com** or call the PaYS helpdesk at **502-613-1222**.



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FRONT COVER: A Soldier with 2nd Battalion, 20th Special Forces Group (Airborne), Mississippi Army National Guard, demonstrates the proper use of a "buzzsaw," during a live-fire training as part of Southern Strike 2019.

New York National Guard photo by SSGt Christopher S. Muncy

ON THE BACK COVER: SPC Joseph Ryan, of Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, New York Army National Guard, moves under direct fire during a simulated event of the New York Best Warrior Competition, March 2019.

New York Army National Guard photo by  
SGT Jonathan Pietrantoni

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Learn more by going to [NationalGuard.com](http://NationalGuard.com) and clicking on the Benefits tab.

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SPC Natalie Lajune, a combat medic with Battle Group Poland's Task Force Raider, evaluates her team's execution during a care under fire exercise at Bemowo Piskie Training Area, Poland.

Tennessee Army National Guard photo by SGT Sarah Kirby





## **Army National Guard Bureau Sponsors New Esports Tournaments**

BY STAFF WRITER Chase Whitlock

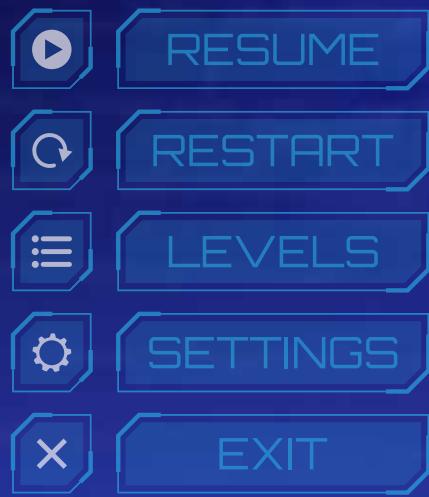
National Guard Bureau (NGB) has sponsored a new multistate community outreach initiative bringing the war of Tekken 7 to fans across the country. Through a collaboration with partners including Army Entertainment and Twitch—the Amazon-owned video gaming streaming service—NGB is offering Soldiers the opportunity to compete in the Road to Twitchcon Esports Tournament.

A series of eight tournaments held in May and June at Army National Guard and active duty garrisons in States across the country, the entire tournament will be broadcast live over Twitch with professional commentators providing live commentary for the events.

The tournament will include 120 competitors per event location battling in the Bandai Namco game, Tekken 7. Hosting States were encouraged to build on the tournament by adding other activities and attractions that would encourage civilians and Soldiers alike to engage with and enjoy the overall event.

“We will have prizes and the States are able to provide multiple enhancers to the tournaments,”

commented MAJ Patrick Farrell, head of the Army National Guard Esports Program. “The Texas Guard is going to be doing a large [tournament] event where they’re going to be rolling out a lot of their assets to showcase—not just the video games, but other things that they’re doing with the community and other events they’re doing as part of the Texas Guard.”



According to MAJ Farrell, the tournaments are part of an ongoing effort by the Army National Guard to connect with millennials in the Army's target demographic of ages 17 to 24 in new and modern ways.

"This is an opportunity to show any prospects out there that Guard Soldiers are normal people. During the week they play video games," said MAJ Farrell. "It offers a live experience for Soldiers to showcase their skills in playing the game and allows for people out there watching Twitch to tune in to our channel and see [a different side of Soldiers]."

While the tournament is not branded as a direct recruitment initiative, there will be recruiters on hand to answer questions from anyone watching the competition live or online.

"There will also be an opportunity for those watching to ask questions about the Guard," MAJ Farrell noted. "On the stream, recruiters will be able to answer any questions that pop up on the chat forum during the [tournament broadcast], whether it be about State education benefits or whatever their question may be about."



"All of these tournaments lead to a championship where the winner from each location goes to perform on the main stage at Twitchcon, which is [Amazon's] big Twitch convention taking place in San Diego in September," MAJ Farrell continued. "So [Soldiers] will compete there in the finals in front of few million people watching at home and couple thousand people in attendance at the actual convention."

The tournament is open to all actively serving Guard and active duty Soldiers. Soldiers may enter by contacting their State marketing NCOs, or by signing up at the tournament locations the day before the competition. Though some of the events were still being scheduled at the time this article was written, dates for the first few events are already locked in.

"The first [tournament] is May 4," said MAJ Farrell. "That will be in Austin, Texas. The second event will be in D.C. on May 18. June 1 is the Fort Lewis, Washington, tournament. And then June 22, will be the tournament at Fort Gordon, Georgia."

The Army National Guard hopes to expand its Esports efforts in the future, said MAJ Farrell. The Esports tournaments are expected to be just the start of a widening campaign for the Army National Guard to reach out to players and fans, both Soldiers and civilians. MAJ Farrell invited any Army National Guard leadership team interested in facilitating an Esports program in their State to reach out to the National Guard Bureau.

For information and updates on the Road to Twitchcon Esports Tournament, visit [ArmyMWR.com/Esports](http://ArmyMWR.com/Esports). ●





Georgia Army National Guard Soldiers conduct live-fire drills using Battlesight Zero settings on their M4 weapons systems during the opening of the Georgia Army National Guard Small Arms Leader Course at Fort Stewart, Ga., March 2019.

Georgia Army National Guard photo by SFC R.J. Lannom Jr.

# HEIGHTENED READINESS ACHIEVED

BY CONTRIBUTING WRITER SFC Jim Greenhill

**R**eadiness is the National Guard's No. 1 priority, the chief of the National Guard Bureau told lawmakers Tuesday.

The Guard's focus on readiness supports the National Defense Strategy, Gen Joseph Lengyel told members of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense.

"Your National Guard's three core missions of fighting America's wars, protecting the homeland and building partnerships directly support the [strategy's] three lines of effort: building a more lethal force, strengthening alliances and attracting new partners, and reforming the [Defense Department] for greater

performance and affordability," said Gen Lengyel, who provided written and spoken testimony to lawmakers who are studying budget appropriations for the 2020 fiscal year.

The Guard's most senior officer, who is also a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, noted that, while counterinsurgency operations remain a core competency, the 2018 National Defense Strategy refocused the Defense Department, including the National Guard, on "great power competition" with China and Russia, and on the security threats presented by Iran, North Korea and non-state actors.

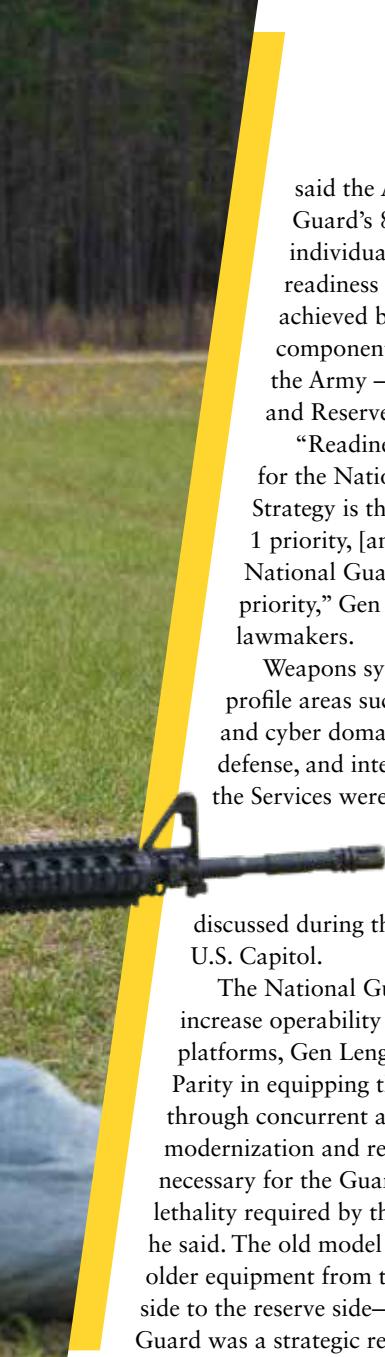
"It is imperative the National Guard

remains an operational force, as part of our Army and Air Force, that helps protect and secure our interests at home and abroad," Gen Lengyel said.

The National Guard is the principal combat reserve of the Army and the Air Force, providing 20 percent of the entire Joint Force.

"There is only one standard of readiness in fighting America's wars," Gen Lengyel said. "This readiness requires the National Guard to be deployable, sustainable and interoperable with our active components."

As an example of the Guard's success in emphasizing readiness, Gen Lengyel



said the Army National Guard's 89 percent individual medical readiness is the highest achieved by the three components that comprise the Army – Active, Guard and Reserve.

"Readiness and lethality for the National Defense Strategy is the Army's No. 1 priority, [and] it's the National Guard's No. 1 priority," Gen Lengyel told lawmakers.

Weapons systems, high-profile areas such as the space and cyber domains and missile defense, and interoperability with the Services were among topics

discussed during the hearing at the U.S. Capitol.

The National Guard must increase operability across all platforms, Gen Lengyel continued. Parity in equipping the Guard through concurrent and balanced modernization and recapitalization is necessary for the Guard to deliver the lethality required by the Joint Force, he said. The old model of cascading older equipment from the active duty side to the reserve side—used when the Guard was a strategic reserve rather than operational force—no longer applies, he said.

Gen Lengyel also said increased full-time support is needed in the Army National Guard, and reversing recruiting shortfalls caused in part by the strong economy is a priority.

"We will look to repurpose under-recruited force structure from a State that simply can't recruit to it anymore into States [that can]," Gen Lengyel said.

Almost 450,000 Citizen-Soldiers and -Airmen comprise the National Guard, and on any given day about 30,000 are on duty across every overseas combatant

command, with another 10,000 typically conducting domestic operations.

Among key missions where the National Guard makes a contribution:

- Domestic response: Last year, the National Guard was called up 195 times to respond to domestic incidents such as wildfires, hurricanes or floods.
- State Partnership Program: About one-third—83—of the world's nations are partnered with one of the 50 States, territories or the District of Columbia in the Defense Department program executed by the National Guard in coordination with geographic combatant commanders, the State Department and host nations. More than 950 events were conducted across every geographic combatant command in the 2018 fiscal year. The National Guard has co-deployed 80 different times with partner nations.
- Space: "The National Guard continues to contribute critical capabilities in space," Gen Lengyel said, "and we stand ready to support any future Space Force."
- Missile defense: In Alaska, California and Colorado, National Guard members support our Nation's missile defense.
- Air defense: 15 of the Nation's 16 alert sites safeguarding our skies are operated by the Air National Guard.
- Cyber: Guard cyber units protect the Department of Defense (DoD)

networks and support gubernatorial needs in the States. This includes 11 Army National Guard and 12 Air National Guard cyber protection teams, and the Guard is experimenting with Cyber Mission Assurance Teams in three States who safeguard non-military infrastructure essential to DoD. "The cyber domain is under attack every single day," Gen Lengyel said.

- Chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) response: About 55 percent of the DoD's CBRN response enterprise resides in the National Guard.
- Youth ChalleNGe: More than 170,000 at-risk teenagers have graduated from the National Guard's Youth ChalleNGe Program since 1993, transforming lives.

• Counterdrug: The National Guard supports law enforcement detecting, interdicting, disrupting and curtailing illicit drug trafficking.

The National Guard has, "the widest presence of any military force in America and the ability to quickly respond to contingencies," Gen Lengyel stated. "The National Guard reinforces the connection between the American people and their military.

"Our skills and experience from the warfight are used to assist first responders and play an important part in a unified response under federal or State command during domestic emergencies." ●

Gen Joseph Lengyel, chief of the National Guard Bureau, testifies at a hearing to review the 2019 Budget Request for the National Guard and Reserve forces before the Senate Appropriations Committee Subcommittee on Defense, in Washington, D.C., April 2018.

U.S. Army National Guard photo by SSG Michelle Gonzalez



# A FORCE AS DIVERSE AS ITS NATION



BY CONTRIBUTING WRITER TSgt Erich B. Smith

The National Guard Bureau was recently named one of the top 25 national organizations in diversity and inclusion.

That ranking comes from the Association of Employee Resource Groups and Diversity Councils, a human resources association that tracks diversity efforts among large-scale organizations.

“Being recognized by this national-level organization as one of the top 25 in the Nation is a substantial validation of the chief’s [Chief of the National Guard Bureau Gen Joseph Lengyel] emphasis on implementing the value of diversity and inclusion,” said Brig Gen Andrew E. Salas, special assistant to the chief of the NGB for diversity.

The Guard has made the association’s top 25 listing in five of the past six years, steadily climbing higher from 14 in 2013 to second in 2016. The final rankings for the past year will be announced at a formal recognition ceremony in early May.

Those who made the top 25 list were evaluated on their organization’s impact, talent management and culture of inclusion as well as leadership commitment and communication efforts involving diversity issues.

Regardless of the ranking, the value of diversity can be seen throughout the Guard, said Brig Gen Salas.

“The National Guard is in such great shape,” he said. “The fundamentals are in place. You have leaders who are bought in and subscribe to the necessity of building a diverse and inclusive workforce.”

That dedication to ensuring a diverse workforce, said Brig Gen Salas, helps forge stronger bonds with the American people – especially with groups who are often under-represented.

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Soldiers of Detachment 1, Company Golf, 1st Battalion, 189th Aviation Regiment, Hawaii Army National Guard, participate in a deployment ceremony at the Kalaeloa Army Aviation Support Facility, June 16, 2018.

Hawaii Army National Guard photo by SFC Theresa Gualdarama

"If we do not look in the mirror and see America looking back at us, we've lost a great deal of credibility with those population groups that are not represented in our ranks," he said. "We want them to see themselves when looking at the National Guard."

It's also crucial for building cohesiveness and unit readiness, while allowing for different approaches to solving a problem or completing the mission, Brig Gen Salas continued.

"When you have a diverse group of people, you have a more innovative way of approaching problems and solving them," he said, adding that an innovative spirit leads to motivated Soldiers and Airmen who are better connected with each other and ready to contribute to mission success.

That's also something young people often seek out, Brig Gen Salas explained.

"Being recognized on a national level for our work in that arena lends credibility to this generation when they are thinking about whether or not they want to be a part of our family," he said.

Though the actual rankings haven't been released, Brig Gen Salas said the award helps validate the Guard's efforts to embrace diversity and grow.

"This will be a fantastic opportunity to tell the Guard story to other organizations," he added, "as well as to help us better understand how we can be even more effective in bolstering our climate of diversity and inclusion." ●

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TOP: PFC Katherine Silva, an avionics specialist with the New Jersey Army National Guard's 1-150th Assault Helicopter Battalion, Army Aviation Support Facility on Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., March 2019.

New Jersey National Guard photo by MSgt Matt Hecht

MIDDLE: Georgia Army National Guard Soldiers participate as color guard in the Women's History Month Observance at Clay National Guard Center, Marietta, Ga., March 2019.

Georgia Army National Guard photo by SPC Tori Miller

BOTTOM: Soldiers of Detachment 1, Company Golf, 1st Battalion, 189th Aviation Regiment, Hawaii Army National Guard, participate in a deployment ceremony before leaving for the Middle East in support of Operation Enduring Freedom—Spartan Shield.

Hawaii Army National Guard photo by SFC Theresa Gualdarama





# FIND YOUR NEXT POSITION IN THE GUARD

For Soldiers looking to transition into a new military occupational specialty (MOS) in the Army National Guard, the National Guard Job Board is a resource to find new opportunities. The job board website allows Soldiers to search by State, MOS or keyword to find job openings that suit their background and/or desired Army career path.

**To begin your search, go to  
[Jobs.NationalGuard.com](http://Jobs.NationalGuard.com)**



# The National Guard's FIRST ALL-FEMALE *Command Team*

## How the Stars Aligned to Create Maryland's Historic Leadership Team

BY STAFF WRITER Tatyana White-Jenkins



Left to Right: BG Janeen Birckhead, Brig Gen April Vogel,  
MG Linda Singh, CSM Perlisa Wilson.

National Guard Bureau photo by Luke Sohl



**H**ow does one make history? Is it a deliberate act fueled by careful planning, or does it occur through a series of seemingly unrelated coincidences, all aligning toward a larger destiny? For the Maryland National Guard's history-making all-female command team, it was a little bit of both.

Maryland is the first State in the history of the United States to have its National Guard completely led by women. The groundbreaking leadership team is made up by MG Linda Singh, the adjutant general of Maryland—both the first woman and first African-American to hold that role; BG Janeen Birckhead, assistant adjutant general for the Maryland Army National Guard; Brig Gen April Vogel, assistant adjutant general for the Maryland Air National Guard; and CSM Perlisa Wilson, senior enlisted advisor for the Maryland National Guard.

The team is a product of deliberate planning and fortuitous timing. Succession planning was ingrained in MG Singh by her predecessors and was a large part of the team's formation.

"You have to look deep in the organization to know the leaders that you have coming into play," explained MG Singh. "About a year and a half ago, I saw that—depending on moves, retirements and national-level assignments—we could potentially have an all-female command team."

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TOP: MG Linda Singh, adjutant general of the Maryland National Guard, speaks at an event in Sarajevo, Bosnia, Nov. 27, 2018, commemorating the 15-year partnership between Maryland and Bosnia in the National Guard State Partnership Program.

National Guard Bureau photo by SFC Jon Soucy

MIDDLE: Army BG Janeen Birckhead (center), the Maryland National Guard's assistant adjutant general for Army, and Brig Gen April Vogel, Maryland assistant adjutant general for Air, speak with Majda Kova of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Agency for Civil Protection, during a visit to Bosnia as part of events commemorating the 15-year partnership between the Maryland National Guard and the Bosnian armed forces as part of the State Partnership Program.

National Guard Bureau photo by SFC Jon Soucy

BOTTOM: Then-Col April Vogel pilots a KC-135 Stratotanker aircraft over the skies of MacDill Air Force Base, Fla., during her final flight in May 2018, before relinquishing command of the 6th Air Mobility Wing and becoming Maryland's assistant adjutant general for Air.

U.S. Air Force photo by A1C Caleb Nunez

When MG Singh felt she had the best team in place, she went to Maryland's governor for approval.

"I said [to Governor Larry Hogan], 'I don't want you to think it's all about girl power and that I'm not thinking about the guys, but these are the right individuals,'" MG Singh said. "It was really about timing and leaders that have the right skill set. I don't think in my whole career I've ever seen it lined up this perfectly."

According to MG Singh, the fact the right individuals were all women was a happy coincidence.

"It is a big deal," she noted. "But regardless of whether you're male or female, it doesn't matter what background you come from—it's about what you are doing. How are you showing up? What are you bringing to the table? When I see talent, I try to figure out how to get that person in the position in which I think they're going to serve well. [The governor] trusted my judgment and was very excited."

MG Singh handpicked each team member based on their background and skills that would align with the needs of the Maryland National Guard. BG Birckhead was chosen for her expert knowledge of logistics and ability to ensure readiness within the force. Brig Gen Vogel's

background as a C-130 pilot made her a surefire leader to assist in Maryland's upcoming transitioning of airframes. CSM Wilson's deep understanding of personnel and compassionate nature provided her with the holistic perspective MG Singh sought for the Maryland Guard's command sergeant major.

Each team member possesses more than 20 years of dedicated service, giving the team a unique combination of experiences and expertise.

"It takes 20 years to grow one of us," commented BG Birckhead. "That's how long it takes to get in this seat, to wear this star. I'm proud to serve on a team with such broad capabilities, competencies and experiences. When we're in a room and people are talking about [what] their team has done before, I can say 'Our team did that too and we did it while having babies because we're all mothers.'

MG Singh acknowledged the progress the National Guard has made over the years when it comes to equality for female service members. She went through basic training in 1981 and said that she quickly noticed the challenges women in the military had to face.

"Think about where we were in 1981 and women coming into the military," MG Singh said. "It wasn't too long after

integration, so there were still challenges in how females were looked at and thought about. But that was never [what] drove me every single day. It was never 'what are my male counterparts thinking of me?' The only thing I kept thinking was 'if they can shoot that way, then I can shoot faster.'"

When MG Singh became pregnant, the challenges of being a woman in the military came fully to the forefront. She only told her male company commander about her pregnancy, initially keeping it a secret from the rest of her company.

"Because I was in a male environment, I didn't want anyone to know," she explained. "If it wasn't for me having to wear a dress uniform, which I couldn't fit, [the company] wouldn't have known until I was seven or eight months. To tell you how it was during those days, they did not want me in the motor pool because I was pregnant."

From once feeling the need to hide her pregnancy to now leading a command team fully comprised of proud mothers, MG Singh can attest that being a woman and a mother does not need to hold anyone back.

"For this particular team, when someone is sick at home, we get the phone calls," explained MG Singh. "We balance our work and then we take care of home.

***"As a young Soldier, I never thought I would make command sergeant major. Today you see females rising to different ranks, levels and achievements. Making it to the rank of E7 or command sergeant major is becoming a reality because it's being shown that we're successful."***

— CSM Perlisa Wilson



CSM Perlisa Wilson addresses reporters during a Pentagon press conference acknowledging the all-female command team.

National Guard Bureau photo by Luke Sohl



It doesn't make us any less valuable because we have other [responsibilities]. Everyone has some [other responsibility]."

MG Singh is a testament to the positive change the Guard has and continues to make.

"Things have changed a lot," MG Singh said. "But [the challenges] helped me become a better leader. You learn how to adapt. But notice I say adapt and not assimilate. I wasn't changing who I was fundamentally."

For Brig Gen Vogel, trusting the advice of her mentors and keeping focused on making valuable contributions, rather than focusing on the male-dominated environment, helped her achieve such a successful career.

"I've been lucky that over the course of my career there have been people who have brought me up, both male and female," noted Brig Gen Vogel. "So, it's just been about making sure that I was contributing. I didn't look around the room and say 'How are they looking at me from a female or male perspective?' It was 'How are they looking at me based on how I am performing?' That has served me well over my career."

Brig Gen Vogel said she feels honored that her career led her to a command team of collaborative and supportive teammates.

"We have great dialogue back and forth about things we may completely agree or disagree about, but it is 100 percent

constructive," she commented. "So, I'm just like 'Let's do this!' I don't think about who's sitting where, but it is something I'm very proud of. When I look across the room, I see people who look like me."

Early in CSM Wilson's career, she noticed the lack of female leadership. When she realized that in the Army, both Guard and active duty, the highest rank of the average female Soldier was an E6, she sought to change that.

"A big dream for a lot of females was just to rise above the rank of E6," CSM Wilson explained. "My thought process was I either need to become an officer or at least make it to E7. When I said that to some of my male leaders, they laughed at me. But they said, 'Well, this is what you need to do. Can you do it?'"

Surpassing her goal of becoming an E7, CSM Wilson achieved a dream she never imagined for herself. She is proud her command team is showing how dreams of the past are now realities.

"As a young Soldier, I never thought I would make command sergeant major," said CSM Wilson. "Today you see females rising to different ranks, levels and achievements. Making it to the rank of E7 or command sergeant major is becoming a reality because it's being shown that we're successful."

For States with leadership wanting to emulate the level of inclusivity present in Maryland's command team, MG Singh

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Left to Right: BG Janeen Birckhead, Brig Gen April Vogel, Governor Larry Hogan, MG Linda Singh, CSM Perlisa Wilson.

Photo courtesy Fox News

stressed the importance of being dedicated to diversity.

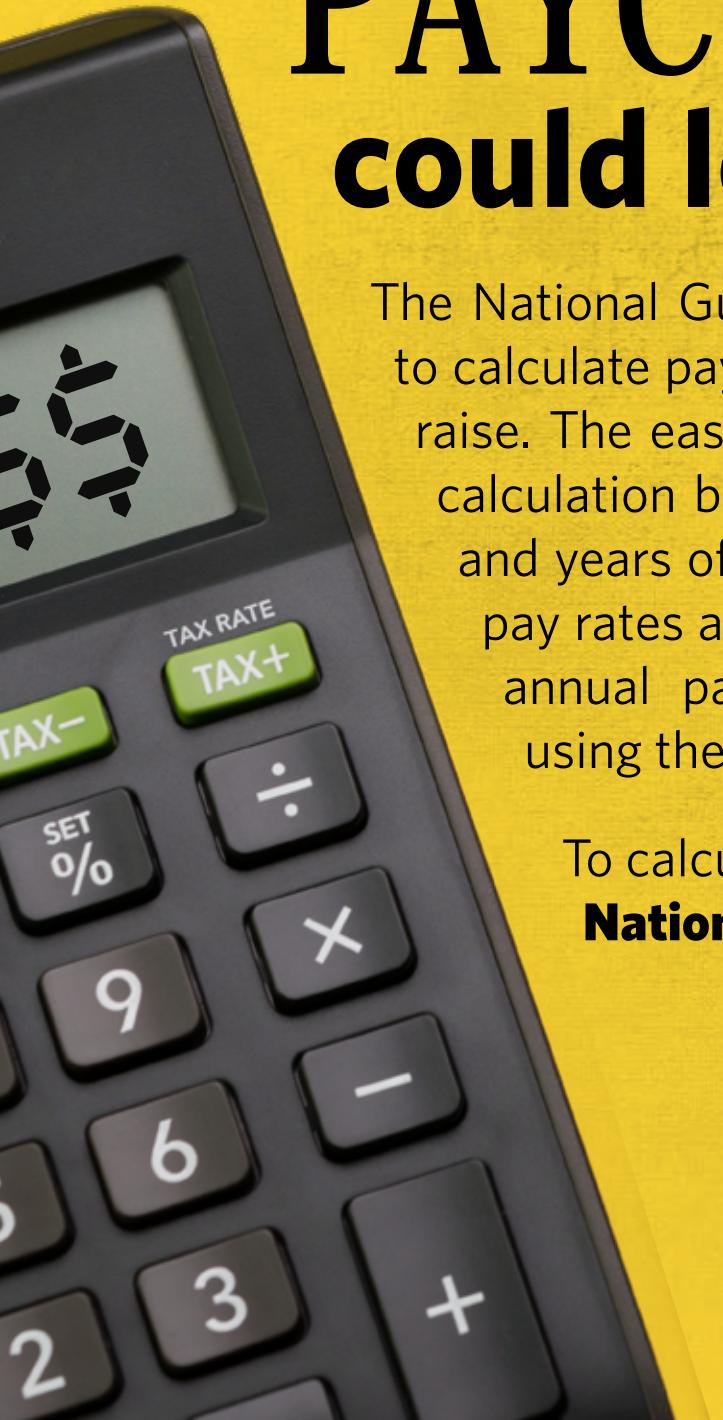
"If [States] want to get more females in senior positions, they shouldn't be striving to have an all-female team—they should be striving to have a competent leadership team that is diverse," MG Singh explained. "That takes being very deliberate, making sure people are getting the right opportunities and sometimes making the hard calls."

All members on the command team encouraged Guard members seeking leadership positions to constantly pursue opportunities for growth.

"It's taking those assignments you're not comfortable with and consistently looking at where you need to be in your career," said BG Birckhead. "[For our team] it was stars aligning, but it was also very deliberate."

"You have to affect your own future," Brig Gen Vogel agreed. "You'd be surprised what people want to achieve, but just don't know how or don't think they can. Young ladies I have spoken with have said 'I just didn't think I could do it.' If there's anything gained by this leadership team, it's that there are people looking up and saying, 'Huh, who knew!'" ●

# Want to know what your next PAYCHECK could look like?



The National Guard Pay Calculator allows users to calculate pay after a recent promotion or pay raise. The easy-to-use tool gives an estimated calculation based on the user's rank, position and years of service. Department of Defense pay rates are always kept current, therefore, annual pay increases can be calculated using the tool as well.

To calculate your pay, go to  
**NationalGuard.com/pay/calculator**



# PROTECTION IN CHAOS

North Dakota's 191st MP Company Runs a PSD in the Heart of Afghanistan

BY STAFF WRITER Matthew Liptak

**F**or Soldiers accustomed to the rolling plains and wide open roads of North Dakota, navigating a strategic defense in the congested and cumbersome streets of Kabul, Afghanistan, required lots of preparation and a significant mind-shift.

"It's very crowded there," recalled CPT John Mazur, commander of the 191st Military Police (MP) Company's forward deployed detachment. "It's tight traffic and there are no traffic laws. We're a unit out of North Dakota where the population of our entire State is not even half [the population] in just that city. Driving in that type of traffic, with no laws, was an adjustment, but our guys did really well with it."

Roughly 30 Soldiers from North Dakota Army National Guard's 191st MP Company were deployed to Afghanistan between February and December of 2018. The unit's forward detachment conducted train, advise and assist missions, but

mostly worked as a protective services detail, providing transportation for Resolute Support headquarters staff and distinguished visitors.

During their deployment, the Soldiers of the 191st carried out 410 separate missions, often conducting multiple missions in a single day. The unit's 9 months in Kabul included security details for several high-profile figures including the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Jens Stoltenberg, then-Secretary of Defense GEN James Mattis and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chair Marine Gen Joseph Dunford.

The unpredictability of travelling through the crowded streets of a major Middle Eastern city—where a multitude of threats could lie around any corner—required the North Dakota MP team to remain on high alert at all times. They fell back on their training to accomplish the mission.

According to CPT Mazur, the unit participated in a week-long evasive driving course at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, prior to deployment.

"We [learned] everything from driving in a team, so if you have a three-car motorcade [we learned] how to make turns where everybody turns at the same time and keeps the group together, to things like high-speed driving around turns. We [trained on] stopping and how to properly control the vehicle when you're coming up on something and how to avoid it at high speeds without locking up the brakes."

CPT Mazur went on to say, "[In addition to] the high-speed driving, we also trained on how to avoid any type of situation that you don't want to be in. [The training] gives you an awareness as well as the skills to drive. So, you know what to look for and how to avoid and get away from situations if you do see it."



Aerial photo of the city of Kabul, Afghanistan.



The 191st Military Police Company (Forward) shown with then-Secretary of Defense, GEN James Mattis for whom the 191st provided protective service during a visit to Kabul, Afghanistan.  
Photo courtesy North Dakota Army National Guard

That training was put to good use on the streets of Kabul. The Soldiers of the 191st ran into situations that ranged from needing to sternly negotiate the entrance of a VIP into an Afghan facility within their 15-minute safety window for getting officials off the sometimes volatile city streets, to dealing with a vandal smashing and stealing the mirrors off the unit's military vehicles.

"This guy ended up getting arrested because he was breaking the mirrors off of our vehicles," CPT Mazur recalled. "[He would] come up with a big knife, break the mirror and cut the cords to take the mirror. You have to think about what you do in that situation. You don't really want to get out of your armored vehicle when all he's got is a knife and he [can't do anything to you]. But he's taking your mirror, and you

evaluate in your head afterwards, 'Okay, was that a probe? Did he just want to see our reaction and the next time he's going to come wearing a vest and lay across the hood of the car?' So, you try to figure out the best way to resolve it in the moment."

CPT Mazur went on to note the sometimes tense interactions with Afghan locals. "There's always that language barrier when you're trying to deal with the





From Left to Right: CPT John Mazur, N.D. Governor Doug Burgum, N.D. Adjutant General MG Al Dohrmann, MSG Cody Johnson and CSM Eric Binstock, N.D. National Guard senior enlisted leader, are shown as Burgum is presented a North Dakota flag February 2019 brought back from Afghanistan by members of the 191st Military Police Company during a welcome home ceremony in Fargo, N.D.

North Dakota Army National Guard photo by SSG Brett J. Miller

## ***"We're a unit out of North Dakota where the population of our entire State is not even half the population in just that city. Driving in that type of traffic, with no laws, was an adjustment, but our guys did really well with it."***

— CPT John Mazur

locals and trying to get into a place. Things might get heated just mainly because of the language barrier and we've got a VIP and we don't want them sitting out on the road very long. We have to get them in and off the X as soon as possible. So those are always touch-and-go situations. You don't want to make anybody angry enough that things go south, but you also need to get your job done."

Several other elements of their missions required Soldiers of the 191st to constantly think intuitively, always trying to anticipate the moves of possible aggressors.

When working the security detail for GEN Mattis, all in the MP unit were well aware how tempting a target such a high-ranking U.S. official would make to the many insider threats on the ground in Kabul. SPC Seth Stein of the 191st explained what it was like to provide security for the top U.S. military official in such a high-risk environment.

"You kind of go into overdrive," SPC Stein said. "Our heads were on swivels. We were looking for everything. This would

be a big American target. You know that there's got to be some kind of [enemy] plan out there. That's kind of what you're always thinking—you've got to almost act as if the enemy knows. Then you have to [think], 'All right, where could they come from? What could they do? How would we get out? What would I do if they shot from there?'"

Once again, the unit's pre-deployment training prepared them for a scenario such as this one. While training at Fort Leonard Wood, members of the 191st spent time learning advanced security procedures at Protective Services School.

"It was a real high-speed type of course," said SPC Stein. "We hit the ground running pretty quickly and got into a lot of the tactics and techniques right away. We learned about VIP protection, so secure and armored transports and close protection for VIPs and other important personnel."

Other tactics covered during Protective Services School involved shooting techniques, including shooting from

vehicles, shooting around vehicles, shooting on the move and shooting from holstered positions.

Training continued even after deployment. The Soldiers would watch video clips from old attacks to study and learn from them. CPT Mazur said he likes to think that may be one of the reasons the MP unit came home with a successful mission record and no injuries to anyone in the unit or any of the officials they were protecting.

"Watching past clips and just researching who got attacked and why they were attacked helped us adjust our tactics," noted CPT Mazur.

Not every NATO group on the ground in Kabul was fortunate enough to lay claim to such a record. According to CPT Mazur, there were multiple attacks around the city during the time of their deployment. Just before the 191st MP Company arrived in Afghanistan, a convoy of British Soldiers stationed in Kabul was hit by a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device, resulting in several British soldiers being injured.

SSG Nicholas Milbrath of North Dakota's 191st Military Police Company is greeted by a four-legged friend upon returning from a yearlong mission in Kabul, Afghanistan.

North Dakota Army National Guard photo by SSG Eric W. Jensen

The North Dakota Guard Soldiers worked with security forces from multiple NATO nations while in Afghanistan. When providing security for foreign dignitaries, the foreign nation's military would send an advance security team to partner with the 191st during the visit.

"Everybody was very open to letting us do our job," noted CPT Mazur. "When they came, they [understood] that we knew the country better than they did and so they didn't try and step on our toes. On our end, we always gave them the maximum security we could offer while they were on the ground. It was good across the board."

#### The 191st Operations

Noncommissioned Officer in Charge SFC Travis Sands commented on the company's overall success during their deployment.

"Our performance was spot on. We first had to learn the terrain, which is always hard when you're going into a new environment. But they did a great job getting all the landmarks, getting to know all the routes, getting to know different personnel. Once we had that, we operated almost flawlessly. [The Soldiers] were extremely professional in their planning, executing and reviewing on every mission."



The Soldiers from North Dakota returned home during the 2018 winter holiday season. CPT Mazur came home to a new daughter who had just been born. SPC Stein said he relished coming home to a white Christmas and leaving the "dust and gravel" of Kabul behind.

"We went over with a great group of Soldiers," said SFC Sands. "We had

great leadership in our master sergeant and in our captain. We had a lot of good young troops that were there for their first deployment. They got a good idea of what it's like being away. It's not just drills every month. They got to see what all their training ultimately goes for. So that's always good." ●

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Soldiers with the 191st Military Police Company form a perimeter around 347th Regional Support Group Commander COL Lowell Kruse during a personal security detail at Camp Ripley August 2017 as part of the unit's combat support pre-deployment training exercise.

North Dakota Army National Guard photo by SSG Patrick Loch



# The Bedford Boys

## **How One National Guard Company Gave Its All on D-Day**

BY CONTRIBUTING WRITER LTC Darrin Haas

**O**n the morning of June 6, 1944, thousands of Allied warships assembled in the English Channel as part of the biggest invasion fleet the world had ever seen. Intent on invading Normandy and breaching the Atlantic Wall as part of Operation Overlord, the largest amphibious assault in history was underway. That morning, roughly 156,000 American, British and Canadian forces were to land on five beaches along a 50-mile fortified coastline in northern France. By the end of the day, the Allies had suffered 10,000 casualties battling the German defenders, but they successfully established a foothold in France. It was one of the most important battles of World War II.

One of the American units at the forefront of the invasion was a National Guard infantry unit based out of the small town of Bedford, Virginia—Company A of the 116th Infantry Regiment, 29th Division. When the company assaulted Omaha Beach that morning, there were 35 Soldiers from the town assigned to the unit. By the end of the day, 19 of the Guard Soldiers would be dead with four more dying before the end of the campaign. On that day, the town of Bedford, located just below the Blue Ridge Mountains, suffered the greatest



Image from National D-Day Memorial

INSET: Bedford Boys in England, 1943.

Images courtesy National D-Day Memorial

proportion of losses of any town in the United States, and the men were forever immortalized as the Bedford Boys.

During World War II, the 29th Division was made up primarily of men from Maryland, Pennsylvania and Virginia, with the 116th Infantry Regiment comprised mostly of Army National Guard companies from Virginia and draftees from across the United States.

Prior to the United States joining the war, these units were drilling in their hometowns preparing for service. But on Feb. 3, 1941, the 116th, to include Company A in Bedford, was mobilized for federal service. After training in the United States at Fort Meade, Maryland, Fort A.P. Hill, Virginia, and Fort Bragg, North Carolina, for various periods of time that spanned over a year and a half, Company A boarded the converted luxury liner *Queen Mary* and sailed for England arriving in October.

Once arriving in England, Company A and the 116th continued to train, even as other U.S. forces began seeing combat in North Africa, Italy and the Pacific. The Bedford Boys would stay in England for the next 21 months.

During those nearly two years, the Bedford Boys became a part of the buildup for the Normandy Invasion. The 116th tirelessly trained to conduct an amphibious assault. As the date for the invasion neared, the training pace intensified. The regiment completed exercises at Slapton Sands in southern England and was the first regiment of the 29th Division to complete training at the U.S. Army's Assault Training Center. For a



time, the unit also took responsibility for coastal defense.

On May 18, 1944, the Soldiers of Company A had finished training and began moving to their marshaling area near Dorchester, England. As they waited to board the British troopship *Empire Javelin*, they were finally briefed on their objective: Normandy. They also learned that they were in the first wave of the initial assault force. By this time, the

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THIS PAGE: Images from National D-Day Memorial  
Photos courtesy National D-Day Memorial

Bedford Boys had been serving on active duty for more than three years. Many of the original members of the company had transferred to different units, been hurt, promoted, etc. For various reasons, there were just 35 original Soldiers from Bedford still with the company.





LEFT: Image from National D-Day Memorial

ABOVE: The Bedford Boys at Camp A.P. Hill in Virginia, 1941

Images courtesy National D-Day Memorial

Company A hit the beach in Normandy on the morning of June 6, 1944. The 29th Division, along with the 1st Division, would land at Omaha Beach and attack German obstacles defended by elements of Germany's 352nd Infantry Division, which covered the entire shoreline. Soldiers in the assault's first wave were responsible for securing draws along the beach that would allow for vehicles to arrive. The Bedford Boys were ordered to land on Omaha Beach at Dog Green to secure the D-1 draw in front of the village of Vierville.

Loaded with equipment, the Bedford Boys climbed down the netting along the side of *Empire Javelin* and boarded a 30-man Landing Craft Assault referred to as LCA. Company A was loaded into seven different LCAs. Once the craft were ready and lined up, they headed toward the beach.

While approaching the beach, 6- to 7-foot waves rocked the boats as naval guns and artillery firing off other transports launched shells overhead hitting the beaches. When the U.S. boats reached within 400 yards of the beach, the German defenders began firing artillery and mortar

rounds at the boats. As the craft came closer to shore, the enemy fire became more effective.

Boat 5 was the first craft sunk before reaching the beach. Six Soldiers of Company A drowned along with the boat crew, but 20 of the Soldiers were later rescued. As the rest of the fleet continued toward the shore, Boat 3 was also hit. Several were killed during the blast and another dozen drowned.

As Boat 2 hit the beach, those aboard realized that the beach was untouched. Allied bombs and artillery were supposed to create shell holes for cover, but the pilots were afraid to hit the Americans. They had, therefore, released their bombs much farther inland resulting in Company A having no cover for protection when they arrived. Once the boats hit the shore and the ramps dropped, there was nowhere for the Soldiers to go, and awaiting German machine guns tore into the Americans.

Many of the men were killed on their craft's ramp as they tried running off. Their initial objective was to get off the beach, but many never made it. As the remaining

craft landed on the beach, Boat 7 drifted toward shore with a dead coxswain at the wheel and a 17-man medical section trapped on board. The Germans opened fire on the medics as they tried to escape. Many were killed.

In less than 10 minutes after the first boat hit the beach, Company A was essentially destroyed. Within an hour, only a few Soldiers from Company A were able to continue. They crawled across the sand and stayed at the seawall trying to survive. Once the day was over, Company A had suffered more than 90 percent casualties, with only 18 Soldiers from Company A's initial 230 men unhurt. Within a few days, four more would die in combat.

Bedford, Virginia, quickly became a national symbol for sacrifice during World War II. To honor all the men that fought on D-Day, the National D-Day Memorial was opened in Bedford on June 6, 2001. Serving as the national memorial for American D-Day Veterans, it was built as a tribute "to the valor, fidelity and sacrifice of Allied Forces on D-Day, June 6, 1944."

The Bedford Boys' sacrifice on D-Day will never be forgotten. ■



# ***INCREASE Your Skills, ADVANCE Your Opportunities***

Army National Guard Soldiers with Veteran status can advance their civilian-employment prospects by mastering a trade or skill through participation in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)'s on-the-job training or apprenticeship program. Training typically involves entering into a contract for a specific period of time with an employer or union. At the end of the training period, participants gain job certification or Journeyman status.

For detailed information on the VA's apprenticeship program, go to  
**[Benefits.VA.gov/gibill/onthejob\\_apprenticeship.asp](http://Benefits.VA.gov/gibill/onthejob_apprenticeship.asp)**

# BAYEX 19

## TESTING TEAMWORK TO COUNTER CBRNE ATTACKS

BY STAFF WRITER Tatyana White-Jenkins

In January 2019, criminal mastermind Dr. Nevil and his Home-Grown Violent Extremist organization, the Brotherhood, made catastrophic plans for the San Francisco Bay Area of Northern California. Armed with improvised explosive devices, radiation dispersal devices, and chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear or explosive (CBRNE-type) dispersion devices, the Brotherhood was determined to induce mass killings throughout California to coerce U.S. government officials and civilians to submit to their political, social and financial demands.

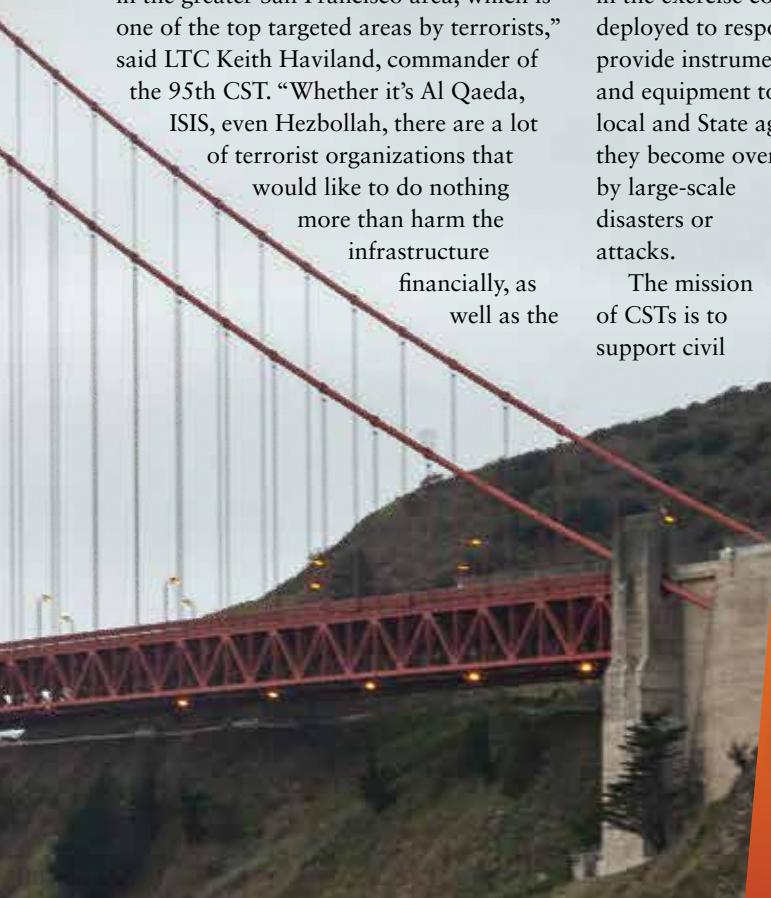
In this simulated terrorist attack, Army National Guard members from Weapons of Mass Destruction Civil Support Teams (WMD-CST) worked with regional first responders to respond to the fictional impending threat. This was the crux of BAYEX 19.

Started in 2002, BAYEX is an annual training exercise that provides participants with training for a multi-jurisdictional and multi-agency response to a complex coordinated terrorist attack. The exercise focuses on onsite management and interoperability of communications networks, with evaluations of response concepts, plans and capabilities.



National Guard civil support team vehicles are parked before a radiological detection scenario near the Golden Gate Bridge as part of BAYEX 19—an interagency chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosives disaster response training, January 2019.

California National Guard photo by SrA Crystal Housman



BAYEX 19 highlighted the potential threat level a terrorist organization could bring to a major metropolitan city—in this case, the San Francisco Bay Area.

"The key objectives were focused on responding to a chaotic environment, resulting from a complex CBRNE attack in the greater San Francisco area, which is one of the top targeted areas by terrorists," said LTC Keith Haviland, commander of the 95th CST. "Whether it's Al Qaeda, ISIS, even Hezbollah, there are a lot of terrorist organizations that would like to do nothing more than harm the infrastructure financially, as well as the

psychological strength of the greater Bay Area."

BAYEX's overall scenario featured a notional, multifaceted CBRNE attack that targeted commerce, modes of mass transit and places of international interest. When real life threats like those simulated in the exercise come to life, CSTs are deployed to respond to the situation. They provide instrumental personnel and equipment to support local and State agencies when they become overwhelmed by large-scale disasters or attacks.

The mission of CSTs is to support civil

authorities at a domestic CBRNE incident site. These highly specialized units identify agents and substances, assess current and projected consequences, advise on response measures and assist with appropriate requests for additional State and federal support.

California's 95th and 9th CSTs, Nevada's 92nd CST, Oregon's 102nd CST and Idaho's 101st CST came together



Civil Support Teams from the California and Oregon Army National Guards bring simulated casualties through the initial decontaminated station after a mock unknown chemical attack at the Richmond Ferry, Richmond, Calif., as part of BAYEX 19.

Oregon National Guard photo by MSgt John Hughel





**TOP:** Oregon Army National Guard Soldiers assigned to the 102nd Civil Support Team search a training area, testing and marking off sections for unknown chemical agents during a BAYEX 19 training scenario at Fort Baker, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, San Francisco, Calif., January 2019.

**MIDDLE:** A team of first responders from the California and Oregon Army National Guard Civil Support Teams participate in BAYEX 19 as they prepare to move into a training area at Fort Baker, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, San Francisco, Calif., January 2019.

Oregon National Guard photos by MSgt John Hugel

**BOTTOM:** SSG Steven Kemp (left) and SGT Anthony Sarmiento, both chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear specialists with the California Army National Guard's 9th Civil Support Team, carry Tactical Android Kit (TAK)-equipped cellphones while looking for radioactive devices during a radiological detection scenario as part of BAYEX 19.

California National Guard photo by SrA Crystal Housman

for BAYEX 19, engaging in realistic scenarios that tested their response techniques and communications skills. As they would in a real attack, the teams worked side-by-side with local, State and federal agencies, including the FBI, U.S. Coast Guard, San Francisco Office of Emergency Management and the California State Office of Emergency.

BAYEX is designed for multiple CSTs, agencies and organizations to collaborate, thus enhancing their mission capabilities. The exercise is unique in its “right of boom” approach to the scenarios that tests the participants’ abilities to collectively respond after an attack.

“A lot of times you work with left of boom, which is the pre-release where you find it before it goes off or the attack was thwarted,” explained MAJ Nathan Serena, deputy commander of the 95th CST and director of BAYEX 19. “But [BAYEX] is all right of boom. It’s all post-release, post-detonation type stuff. We try to train more on response and consequence management.”

The exercise included scenarios at five different sites over the course of four days. The first site was on Alcatraz Island, site of the infamous former prison—now a major tourist attraction. Participants were tasked with evacuating the island after the dispersion of a white powder throughout the facility and across the island. The second scenario took place on a Bay Area Rapid Transit train near

the Millbrae station. This particular scenario tested the participants’ ability to identify and decontaminate an unknown substance while in a mass transit environment. The third site took the participants to Fort Baker in Sausalito, California. Set to be near the Brotherhood’s hideout, participants searched the area for potential radiological signatures.

The Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum, home of the National Football League’s Oakland Raiders, served as the backdrop for the fourth scenario, where a drone dispersed a white powder over a crowd of spectators. The scenario also incorporated a hostage situation where an armed assailant wore a suicide vest. This scenario tested multiagency coordination and response, as well as unmanned aerial system (UAS) capabilities and detection. The fifth and final site took place on the water on a Golden Gate Ferry vessel traveling from San Francisco to Richmond, California. This last scenario tested shore-based response capabilities, decontamination and incident command system integration.

With approximately 1,800 participants from multiple States and entities, teamwork and collaboration was crucial to success during the exercise’s complex scenarios. Though it was challenging, the complex scenarios included as part of BAYEX pushed the CST members to meet multiple training requirements and build readiness while also learning where they needed to improve.

“I would say the most challenging aspect was working as a multi-CST, because we learned that some commanders have different philosophies on how to do these types of missions,” explained MAJ Serena. “But we made [BAYEX] challenging on purpose. We [didn’t make] it easy on them. We discovered quite a bit of interconnectedness that we could definitely improve on. But as the exercise grew towards the latter parts, we were humming right along and working well together.”



SFC Eulizes Montalvo, left, and SGT Taylor Coe, both of the California Army National Guard's 9th Civil Support Team, listen for scenario information while putting on their mission-oriented protective posture suits inside a fire boat docked at Alcatraz Island during a night exercise for BAYEX 19.

California National Guard photo by SrA Crystal Housman

BAYEX 19 fostered the type of collaborative environment that is critical to accomplishing a CST mission. The exercise allowed Soldiers to form the necessary bonds with other team members and first responders that will serve to increase interoperability when and if a real-life attack happens.

"BAYEX was a great experience," said 1SG John Fransler of the 92nd CST. "Not only is it great to work with professionals on other Civil Support Teams, but responding with the San Francisco Bay Area's first responder community made the challenges of each exercise easier to manage. The 92nd CST is the closest CST to the Bay Area so building the relationships with the 95th CST and all the first responders is key to being able to successfully respond to, and assist with, a disaster in the Bay Area."

1SG Fransler went on to say, "The biggest learning point [from BAYEX 19] is how important it is to build and maintain relationships. It's about building trust between agencies and getting

agencies to understand the capabilities we bring to help them when an incident occurs."

Though the scenarios presented during BAYEX 19 were complex, the participating Soldiers and first responders rose to the challenge. Some noted enjoying the dynamic settings that required participants to put their critical thinking and effective communication skills to the test.

"All the exercise sites were set up and managed as close to real-world as possible," said 1SG Fransler. "I personally enjoyed the challenge of working in Alcatraz Island. Being on Alcatraz at night conducting CBRNE operations was surreal."

LTC Haviland noted the scenario at the Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum as the standout event in his opinion.

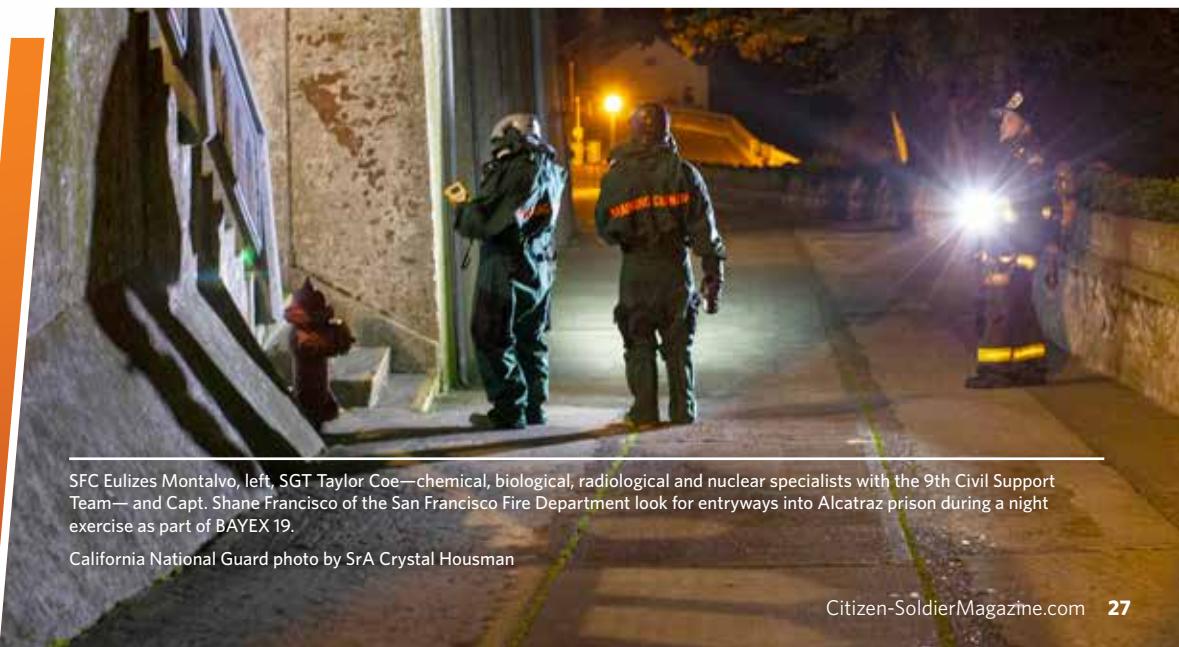
"One of the highlights of the exercise was implementing a unmanned aerial vehicle [UAV] attack on the Oakland Stadium, which required responders to deal with a complex event that they had not exercised in the past," LTC Haviland said. "With the imminent threat and rising potential of suicide UAVs, whether with explosives or CBRNE materials, the need for robust counter-UAS capabilities that are readily available for first responders and the WMD-CST community is very evident."

MAJ Serena noted a similar sentiment, "[BAYEX] exposes [participants] to what the potential threat might be. It shows potential hazards and how big things could get. The drone attack on the Oakland Coliseum only had 25 role players. Could you imagine thousands of people being affected and trying to get out of the Coliseum simultaneously while also having some type of exposure on their bodies? I think exposing [Soldiers] to how these things could go down and how big they could be is important for Guard members."

The exercise ended with a high-speed on-the-water scenario that could be all too real in a coastal city where residents rely on the waterways as part of the city's major thoroughfares.

"On the last day, which we called the finale, I was actually a role player. I got to see the Idaho and Oregon CSTs on the fire department response boats going across the water at 60 miles an hour to do a deck-to-deck boarding of a ferry. It was cool seeing them climb up the side and get over the top of the rail to do what they needed to do."

BAYEX 19 offered participants the opportunity to train in complex scenarios, reinforce vitally important relationships and, ultimately, leave the exercise better equipped with the tools needed to respond to a CBRNE attack. Now, if a real Dr. Nevil threatens the Bay Area, the CSTs and first responders will be even more prepared, armed with the knowledge and training to foil his evil plot. ●



SFC Eulizes Montalvo, left, SGT Taylor Coe—chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear specialists with the 9th Civil Support Team—and Capt. Shane Francisco of the San Francisco Fire Department look for entryways into Alcatraz prison during a night exercise as part of BAYEX 19.

California National Guard photo by SrA Crystal Housman

# MIKE BEATS LIMA

**Newest Black Hawk Outpaces its Predecessor**

BY STAFF WRITER Matthew Liptak

The sky is the limit with the latest addition to the Black Hawk fleet of helicopters. The new model of Black Hawk, the UH-60M, contains multiple capabilities that give it an edge over the older UH-60L, and Soldiers who are flying it can't help but notice the differences.

The California Army National Guard used their new inventory of UH-60Ms during the 2018 Camp Fire—a raging wildfire that killed 86 people and razed 18,000 structures. CW2 Douglas Martine is an instructor pilot with Bravo Company, 1st Assault Helicopter Battalion, 140th Aviation Regiment, California Army National Guard. He operated a UH-60M during the Camp Fire and said the newly designed air frame and other upgrades to the "Mike" (as the UH-60M is referred to) made it more efficient and effective than its forerunner. He highlighted seven advancements in the UH-60M that make the model preferable to the UH-60L.

- **The addition of two multi-band radios in the cockpit:** "The real game changer is that multi-band [allows] us to use two of the common civilian frequencies at the same time. That was quite a hindrance for us in the Lima [UH-60L] model."

- **The addition of an autopilot:** "A lot of the legs [back and forth] from the fire to our refueling points, were pretty long. Firefighting in an aircraft can be a pretty high-intensity activity. You're wearing yourself out throughout the day. Being able to utilize the autopilot function during those legs to get refueled, really extended the endurance of the crew. [It enabled us] to be more effective when we actually got to the firefighting operation."

- **Better use of vibration control:** "Helicopters are very loud. They're very shaky. Long-term, Soldiers develop a lot of back issues associated with flying helicopters because of vibration. The difference between the Lima and the Mike is phenomenal. [Increased] crew endurance



TOP: A UH-60M Black Hawk helicopter assigned to the 1st Assault Helicopter Battalion, 140th Aviation Regiment, California Army National Guard, is flown from Joint Forces Training Base, Los Alamitos, Calif.

INSET: A California Army National Guard UH-60M Black Hawk helicopter is used to drop water on the northeastern edge of the Camp Fire in Butte County, Calif., November 2018.

LEFT: CW2 Douglas Martine, a helicopter pilot with Bravo Company, 1st Assault Helicopter Battalion, 140th Aviation Regiment, California Army National Guard, flies the first fire mission for the California Guard's then-new M-model UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters, November 2018.

California National Guard photos by SrA Crystal Housman



throughout the day because of reduced shaking of the airframe is a very big advantage for us. In the Mike model, [The UH-60M] has an active vibration control system, an AVCS, that has three motorized spinning units placed in different portions of the aircraft. These counteract the vibrations."

- **More ergonomic seats:** "The seats are also designed to lean back farther than in the Lima model. That makes the aircraft much more comfortable for the two pilots up front, and the crew seats in the back [of the chopper] are also significantly improved." These enhancements result in increased endurance for the crew.
- **Redesigned rotor blade:** "The blades in the Mike model are significantly wider and they work better at low-airspeed hover situations, which is when helicopters tend to be power-limited. In our more critical modes of flight, like picking up heavy buckets of water that can weigh close to 6,000 pounds, the new wider blades give us more of a power margin. We're able to lift and carry more water to the active fire."

According to CW2 Martine, the Black Hawk UH-60M takes the functionality of the Black Hawk UH-60L, and refines and improves it. Army National Guard pilots and crew lucky enough to be slated for the newer model can anticipate an overall better flight experience. The UH-60M is quickly becoming the go-to Black Hawk for those units already flying it.

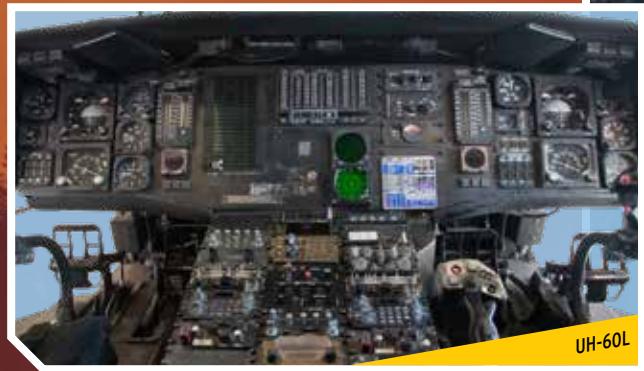
"The Mike model performed outstandingly during the Camp Fire. It was definitely an asset," said CW2 Martine. "Every time I'm in a Lima, I'm looking forward to getting back into a Mike model."

- **New Multi-Functional Displays (MFDs):** "The information displays are all digital now. They are a lot easier to read so you spend less time looking inside the helicopter and more time [looking] outside the helicopter, which leads to a better situational awareness."

In addition to that, it has a moving map display on the MFDs, which allows us to better deconflict [and gives even] more situational awareness, particularly in those low-visibility situations that are so often associated with fires."

- **Reduced maintenance costs:** "The per-hour cost of operating the new Mike models is significantly lower than operating the

Lima models. The new Mike models have brand new airframes. They were redesigned with lower maintenance in mind. Many of the components in the Mike model are machined from single pieces of metal, whereas in the Lima you had more riveting taking place. There are just better technologies available in manufacturing today."



UH-60L



UH-60M

TOP: View of the cockpit of an L-model Black Hawk, showing the analog control system.

BOTTOM: View of the cockpit of an M-model Black Hawk showing new digital control system.

U.S. Army photos by SSG Matthew G. Ryan

In addition to firefighting, the Black Hawk is designed for combat assault, external lift, command and control, combat search and rescue, armed medical evacuation and very important person (VIP) transport missions. The Black Hawk helicopter just celebrated its 40th year in operation, and future models are expected to be commissioned by the Army into the 2070s, according to Black Hawk manufacturer Sikorsky of Lockheed Martin. ●

# A NEW APP'S ON THE MAP

BY STAFF WRITER Tatyana White-Jenkins

**W**hen 1LT James Pistell was unsatisfied with the mapping app available to Soldiers during his last deployment, he sought to create a solution.

A Soldier with New York Army National Guard's Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 2nd Squadron, 101st Cavalry Regiment, 1LT Pistell created the Military Grid Reference System (MGRS)-Mapper App—a free computer program that allows Soldiers to more efficiently create Concepts of Operations (CONOPS).

"It's a tool developed for junior leaders to rapidly create what we call CONOPS," 1LT Pistell explained. "It's a simple tool that interfaces with Google Maps and a program that allows you to search and select for U.S. military map symbols."

1LT Pistell was inspired to independently create the application after a deployment to the Ukraine in 2018. After using a similar, yet out-of-date, application, 1LT Pistell believed he could improve the app's functionality to make a better version.

"I got the idea in my head that when I got back home from Ukraine, I was going to [create an app]," 1LT Pistell said. "After my deployment, I had a couple of weeks to myself. I locked myself in my apartment and worked on [the app] for about a month."

With MGRS-Mapper, users can select their operations area on Google Maps and overlay the region with a standard MGRS overlay. MGRS is the geocoordinate standard used by NATO militaries for locating points on earth. The app allows users to select the proper NATO standard graphic symbol, label it and then place it on the map. Users can place command and control, fire support, maneuver and other graphics on the overlay. The overlay can then be downloaded and emailed to another user,

printed out as a handout or embedded in a slideshow.

1LT Pistell designed the application to be as user-friendly as possible.

"If you're looking for infantry you can choose an infantry symbol, then choose the size and click and drag it on the map," explained 1LT Pistell. "You can update the map, you can put the overlay on, you can take it off and you can have terrain view or satellite. I've made the application as intuitive as possible."

While 1LT Pistell is pleased with his work, he said it did not come without challenges.

"I'm pretty sure I went bald just from the stress," 1LT Pistell said jokingly. "It was very challenging. I would solve one problem, then come up against three or four other [problems] that I didn't even know existed. I thought about giving up many times."

Thankfully, 1LT Pistell did not give up, but instead stuck to his guns and put out a successful application. MGRS-Mapper is now available to assist Soldiers with improved CONOPS.

"It has made the development of CONOPS a lot quicker," 1LT Pistell said. "And if you need to learn what a military map symbol looks like, you can use [MGRS-Mapper] to pull up a symbol and research how it looks."

While 1LT Pistell is a cavalry scout in the Guard, it was his civilian background as a technical marketing manager that gave him the know-how to build the MGRS-Mapper. In the four years he's been building and programming websites, 1LT Pistell has created several web applications. None, however, have garnered the attention and praise of MGRS-Mapper. After sharing the application online, 1LT Pistell gained exposure from some unexpected sources.



Image of the MGRS-Mapper mapping software application.

New York National Guard photo by Eric Durr

"I shared it [with the Army group] on Reddit and it got a couple hundred upvotes there," he said. "It didn't get too much traffic at first, but then I started getting emails from people saying 'Hey, I saw this on Facebook,' and I don't recall ever posting it on Facebook. So, it was Reddit that got the ball rolling and then it all kind of snowballed. I've been getting emails from a bunch of people, which is really nice."

1LT Pistell reports having received positive reviews of the app from fellow Soldiers and some have even offered suggestions on how to improve it.

"I've received emails from Soldiers saying they use the app and they gave me tips or asked questions about the app and new features I could implement," said 1LT Pistell. "A lot of people are actually using it, even people I never thought would use it. A search and rescue team in California is using the app. That's pretty cool. I had no idea they would find any utility in it at all. There's an entire [Basic Officer Leader Course] class using it and that's like 80 people that are using it every day. It's so awesome."

MGRS-Mapper can be accessed for free at [MGRS-Mapper.com](http://MGRS-Mapper.com). 1LT Pistell said he looks forward to implementing improvements to the app soon, including better functionality for mobile devices and various browsers.

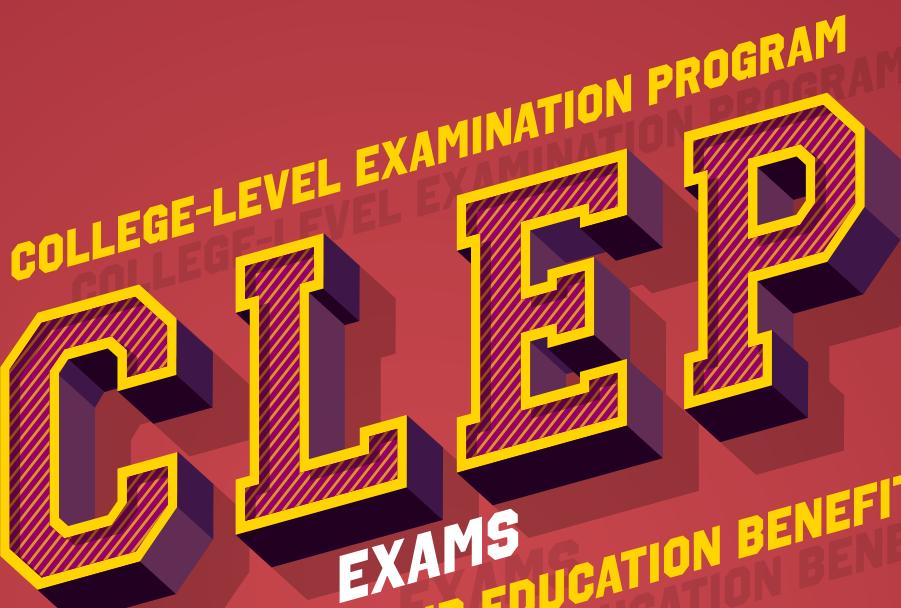
"It's pretty fulfilling," 1LT Pistell said. "After all those weeks I spent pulling my hair out, it feels really good to create something that people actually use. It feels good to help people." ●

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New York Army National Guard's 1LT James Pistell, executive officer of Headquarters and Headquarters Troop 2nd Battalion, 101st Cavalry, poses by a Ukrainian personnel carrier at the Yavoriv Combat Training Center near Livov, Ukraine.

Photo courtesy 1LT James Pistell





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# SOUTHERN STRIKE 19

A STRIKINGLY REALISTIC EXERCISE

BY STAFF WRITER Tatyana White-Jenkins

**W**hen hundreds of Army National Guard Soldiers traveled to Gulfport, Mississippi, this past January, they were presented with a truly unique multicomponent, multidiscipline, multilateral experience.

Hosted annually by the Mississippi Air National Guard and focused on tactical-level training, Southern Strike is a joint, multilateral exercise held across multiple locations, including the Combat Readiness Training Center (CRT) in Gulfport, Mississippi, the Camp Shelby Joint Training Center in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, and the Camp McCain Training Center in Grenada, Mississippi. The exercise integrates active duty and reserve components from every branch of the U.S. military, presenting them with realistic joint coalition scenarios based on current global crises.

“Southern Strike is a joint training exercise based on

operational missions,” said Col Joseph Reid, Mississippi Air National Guard commander of the Gulfport Combat Readiness Training Center and chief of staff for the Southern Strike exercise. “We bring in active duty, National Guard, Reserve and international partners

for two weeks and utilize training sites all across Mississippi and the Gulf Coast to accomplish integrated, realistic, full-spectrum combat training.”

The annual exercise included U.S. service members from 20 States, totaling more than 1,700 participants from the Army National Guard and active duty Army; Air National Guard, active duty Air Force and

Air Force Reserves; Marines and Marine Reserves and active duty Navy.

Representing the Army National Guard at Southern Strike 19 were 300 Soldiers from Pennsylvania, Georgia and Mississippi. The exercise also included service members from four partner nations.

A Soldier of 2nd Battalion, 20th Special Forces Group (Airborne) participates in live-fire training at the Camp Shelby Shoot House as part of Southern Strike 2019, a large-scale, joint-force, multicomponent, multilateral combat exercise emphasizing tactical level air-to-air, air-to-ground and special operations forces training.

New York National Guard photo by SSgt Christopher S. Muncy





A 119th Wing MQ-9 Reaper unmanned aircraft, shown on the flight line at the Gulfport Combat Readiness Training Center, Miss., is used in 2019 for the first time as part of Exercise Southern Strike.

North Dakota National Guard photo by CMSgt David H. Lipp



A Navy Jaguar HSM-60 crew angles their chopper for an M240 ground attack run during Southern Strike 19, held at Camp Shelby, Miss.

Mississippi National Guard photo by MSgt Betsy J. Winstead

"We used the State Partnership Program with Uzbekistan and they brought ten special forces participants," said David Sutherland, program manager and lead planner for Southern Strike. "The Netherlands brought 34 special forces members, Chile brought 74 special forces members as well as their headquarters element, and Canada brought four joint terminal attack controllers."

Unique among large-scale training exercises, Southern Strike is specifically tailored to training needs of the individual units on the ground at the event.

"It's a pretty unique exercise," said Col Billy Murphy, Mississippi Air National Guard director of staff and Southern Strike exercise director. "When units come, they tell us what training they need to get accomplished and we build a scenario

around their training requirements, which is a little bit different from other national exercises where the participants show up and train to whatever their planners have put together."

According to COL James Haynie, Mississippi Army National Guard deputy exercise director for Southern Strike, the exercise is designed to be inclusive and adaptable, making it one of the better events when it comes to ensuring units achieve their commanders' desired training goals.

"Southern Strike is flexible and accommodating to its participants," COL Haynie explained. "I've been to other events where if [the unit] didn't meet its mission-essential tasks [at the event], we had to go somewhere else

to complete those tasks. If I bring units to Southern Strike, I know that if a mission didn't work out right and they didn't get that check mark on an essential task, then we can repeat it [during the event] and sustain it."

Southern Strike is comprised of both land and air operations, including convoy live fire, personnel recovery, surveillance reconnaissance, close air support, mobility lift and electronic warfare. During the exercise, participants completed 316 sorties and 26 full mission profiles (FMPs). The use of FMPs helps to test efficiency

of communication and coordination between ground, naval and aviation assets and is the crux of Southern Strike's realistic operational flow.

In its eighth iteration, Southern Strike 19 incorporated several new assets into the exercise scenarios.

Soldiers and vehicles from the 3rd Special Forces Group prepare to board a Hawaii Air National Guard C-17 Globemaster January 2019 for transport to the Gulfport Combat Readiness Training Center, Miss., during exercise Southern Strike.

Hawaii National Guard photo by SrA John Linzmeier





An Apache AH-64 crew flies enroute while coordinating targets with joint terminal attack controllers from the 148th Air Force Special Operations Command during the Southern Strike 19 training exercise.

Mississippi National Guard photo by MSgt Edward Staton

"Some of the best things we had this year were incorporating all the foreign and U.S. forces, letting them fly or ride on the Mississippi and Georgia National Guard helicopters," said Sutherland.

"We brought in a new asset. Members from the Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron 60 [HSM-60] brought their MH-60R helicopter out of Jacksonville," he continued. "[HSM-60] is a Navy Reserve platform and is primarily used for missions conducting anti-submarine warfare. Within our exercise, [the HSM-60 members] participated in intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance scenarios. It was a great opportunity to bring a new set of capabilities into the exercise."

Another new asset to the exercise was the MQ-9 Reaper, a medium-altitude, long-endurance aircraft capable of precision attack and reconnaissance. This was the first time a remotely piloted aircraft had been used in Southern Strike. Utilizing the MQ-9 in the exercise presented an opportunity to demonstrate the capabilities of the aircraft and how it can successfully integrate into a search and rescue operation.

"This is the first time this aircraft has [been used] in this region," said Lt Col Matt\*, commander for the MQ9 Reaper squadron and member of North Dakota Air National Guard's 119th Wing\*. "The aircraft has been used in California for firefighters and has helped [rescue] hikers. There are a lot of uses for it. It was good

to bring it down [to Mississippi] because they can see how it might be used in the event of a hurricane or two down here. It was awesome to participate and demonstrate this capability."

Participants reported enjoying the utilization of the new assets while working cohesively with foreign partners and different branches of Service.

"They would pair us up with whatever ground force we were assigned

***"The exercise is the highest tempo and close to real-life contingency operation that you are going to find in any annual training or collective exercise."***

– SGT Charles Kitchens

to that day," said CW3 David Button of the Georgia Army National Guard's Charlie Company, 1st Battalion (Assault Helicopter), 106th Aviation Regiment. "There were foreign nation Special Ops and there were some U.S. Special Ops and they would basically pair us up and tell us what they needed. For example, they would need a fast rope insertion into a certain location. We were all stationed out of the airport there, and we would pick up [the Special Ops teams] from another location and take them to where they were doing the mission. It was as close as

you could get to operating in a deployed environment stateside."

CW3 Button went on to say that the resemblance to an actual deployment environment is what he felt made Southern Strike most beneficial.

"I definitely enjoyed it," said CW3 Button. "It was a task like we would do at home, but it was more of the run phase. Basically, at home we're doing the crawl and walk phase. [Southern Strike] is actually going and operating in an operational environment. It's just short of a National Training Center rotation. It's probably the most realistic training you could get next to being deployed."

1LT Harris Bryan of the Mississippi Army National Guard's 1st Attack Reconnaissance Battalion, 149th Aviation Regiment, added that it was the inclusion of multiple elements that gave the Southern Strike training environment its real-world likeness.

"That's how real-world missions are," said 1LT Bryan. "We hardly ever work with just one entity. [Southern Strike] helps make it more cohesive working with other units, understanding each other and how the [other units] operate."

Along with creating an accurate and accommodating training environment, Southern Strike also fostered a space for service members to form bonds with counterparts from other branches of Service and from other nations, ultimately

\* Lt Col Matt's full name has been omitted for security reasons.



Two members of the Chilean military participate in the 2019 iteration of Southern Strike conducting tactical operations training at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center in Hattiesburg, Miss.

Photo courtesy Chilean Government

boosting interoperability through increased familiarity with future fighting partners.

"The connections you make through the exercise are everlasting," said COL Richard Weaver, Mississippi Army National Guard commander of the Camp McCain Training Center. "The more our forces work together with each other and our allied partners, the more prepared we will be for actual combat."

"Southern Strike is a very good opportunity to work with several different entities and branches," said SGT Charles Kitchens, centralization instructor and crew chief for Georgia's 1-106th. "The exercise prepares you for an overseas

contingency operation. Working with different special forces groups and special operations command definitely gives us a sense of what we would be doing in real life."

Leadership from the Mississippi National Guard also noted the opportunity Southern Strike presents to raise awareness, and potentially future utilization of Mississippi's multiple large-scale training facilities.

"Southern Strike showcases what Mississippi has to offer to our national defense," Col Reid said. "It shows the capability we have between the Army and the Air Force in our State, the training resources we have, the facilities that we have and how we can be a national asset for units outside of our State."

"We built a lot of relationships that we typically wouldn't build without an exercise like this," Col Murphy added. "We have folks coming back to our State not necessarily to participate in Southern Strike, but coming to train at Camp Shelby, Camp McCain or CRTC because of the [capabilities] that we provided during Southern Strike."

With its realistic training environment, adaptive scenarios and diverse set of participants, Southern Strike 19 showcased just how beneficial a true-to-life training exercise can be.

"The exercise is the highest tempo and close to real-life contingency operation that you are going to find in any annual training or collective exercise," said SGT Kitchens. "The number of people that participate and the amount of air support [present] – you are not going to find that [in any other training]. That alone makes it worth going every year." ●



Soldiers of C Company, 2nd Battalion, 20th Special Forces Group (Airborne), conduct demo and explosive training on the range at Camp Shelby in Hattiesburg, Miss., January 2019, as part of Southern Strike 2019.

New York National Guard photo by SSgt Christopher S. Muncy



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# THE NATIONAL GUARD TECHNICIAN PROGRAM

***Supporting the Mission of the National Guard Since 1969***

BY STAFF WRITER Tatyana White-Jenkins

**2**019 marked the 50th anniversary of the National Guard's Technician Program, a program dedicated to improving the readiness of the National Guard units.

On Jan. 1, 1969, the U.S. Congress passed the National Guard Technician Act, creating dual-status technicians. These technicians are federal civilian employees who are required to maintain a military membership with a Guard unit as part of their employment. The technicians provide a ready and relevant, highly trained force that provides support to both the State and Nation.

"The program provides continuity of efforts in regards to military and State mission accomplishment," said LTC Daniel Bagley, human resource officer for the Indiana Army National Guard.

Approximately 60,000 technicians throughout the National Guard work in areas like vehicle and equipment maintenance or personnel, with positions ranging from tank mechanics to clerical workers.

"We have the mission of maintaining readiness on equipment and personnel," explained COL LaNita Kuhn, human resource officer for the Georgia Army National Guard. "We maintain facilities, equipment and everything [related], so when Citizen-Soldiers come to drill, they are ready to work, train and support their roles."

Technicians support the dual mission of the National Guard by training, administrating and maintaining the military forces for both State and federal responses. All 54 States and Territories have National Guard technicians on staff. The adjutant general in each State has the ability to structure technician positions to meet the needs of that State's National Guard units. As the program has grown over the years, the assortment of technician positions has also grown. For instance, with the increasing need for

experts in the cyber field over the past few years, cyber-related technician positions were created to fulfill that need.

One of the unique benefits of the technician program is that it allows military members to utilize their Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) to grow their military careers.

"Military members can apply their experience in the military to the technician positions," explained LTC Bagley. "If you have [an] MOS as a lawyer, then you [might] work in the legal office of the Judge Advocate General. It's a benefit of the program in that it enables service members the opportunity to gain promotions for their rank through superior performance. It also enables them to have federal employment, which is a nice thing to have."

A military technician enjoys many of the same benefits, privileges and rights as other federal employees. As a technician for more than 22 years, COL Kuhn is well-versed in the benefits the technician program has to offer.



"It's a very good program," she explained. "The benefits for the program include [excellent] pay, health benefits, insurance benefits and other entitlements. [Some of that] depends on grade, but the benefits are very competitive with the private sector in some respects, and you can make advancements quickly, depending on if you are a top performer or you have education background to support your advancement forward."

MSG Antonette Faison, supervisory human resources specialist with the Tennessee Army National Guard, has been a technician for 13 years. She highlighted the valuable networking opportunities the program presents.

"A major benefit is the opportunity to serve basically both in a civilian and military status because you

have both of those components," she said. "You work with civilian employees, military employees and you get to work with members of other Service branches, such as the Air Force."

"You get to interface with civilian and military so you are a subject matter expert from the military serving in that civilian capacity," MSG Faison continued. "I'm able to relate to other members of the military on issues or tasks or anything they need assistance with on the military side, but if they need assistance on the civilian side when it comes to benefits and entitlements, I can assist with that as well."

To apply for a technician position, an individual must first be a member of the National Guard, and military membership

must be maintained throughout employment as a technician.

"Your technician position is tied to your military affiliation," said COL Kuhn. "[You cannot be one without the other]."

Current members of the National Guard may qualify for technician positions as long as they meet the requirements of the specific position for which they are applying.

Service members who are interested in employment as a technician should visit the job announcements page on any State's National Guard or Military Department website, or go to USAJobs.gov to monitor for announcements about open technician positions in States across the country. ●



Dual-status technicians conduct vehicle maintenance and repairs on M1 Abrams tanks and other tracked vehicles in the maintenance bay at the South Carolina National Guard Unit Training Equipment Site on McCrady Training Center in Eastover, S.C.

South Carolina Army National Guard photo by CPT Jessica Donnelly

# 15W SOLDIERS GO ABOVE AND BEYOND THE ORDINARY

BY STAFF WRITER Mathew Liptak

**F**or Soldiers who feel the need for speed, yet retain a desire to keep their feet firmly planted on the ground, becoming a 15W Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) Operator just might be the right military occupational specialty (MOS). A 15W is tasked with operating aircraft such as the RQ-7 Shadow or MQ-1C Gray Eagle, two of the Army National Guard's more elusive, yet powerful, assets.

UAS operators remotely pilot unmanned observation aircraft, also referred to as drones or Unmanned Arial Vehicles (UAVs). 15Ws are a critical component to the National Guard's dual mission of both serving the Nation domestically and serving abroad in the protection of the United States and its allies from external threats. By

directing the aircraft while on the ground, these pilots gather intelligence used in operational tactics. Drone operators are intelligence specialists who are essential in providing information that increases a command's situational awareness, whether that information is about enemy forces, battle areas or search and rescue efforts after a natural or manmade disaster.

"They can be the eyes for the on-scene commander or whoever is commanding an emergency management center," said Christina Engh, an aviation management and program analyst with the Army National Guard. She said the RQ-7 Shadow recently played an important role in mitigating wildfires in Northern California.

According to Engh, the immediate access to information that the UAVs

offer not only helps to speed recovery efforts, but also increases Soldier safety, as it limits Soldiers' direct exposure to hazardous environmental conditions that may be present after a natural disaster. The UAVs also give the crews on manned helicopters more freedom to focus on transporting civilians to safety, and personnel and materials to areas in need. Engh noted emergency response to be "the perfect opportunity for this type of unmanned aircraft."

Engh added that the Shadow, which requires five Soldiers to operate, can be launched at a safe distance from a disaster area because of its nine-hour maximum flight time. It also has infrared





equipment that can locate firefighters and Soldiers on the ground during nighttime operations.

"If [Soldiers] are close to a fire, they are in harm's way," she said. "For the California fires, they were able to launch the Shadow 30 miles away from the fire, get in to see what's going on and bring it back."

The duties of a 15W operator require the ability to skillfully analyze and organize information. How well those tasks are accomplished can affect the overall outcome of a mission.

"It takes a lot of intellect," said SGT Melissa Baney with D Company, 116th Brigade Engineer Battalion, Idaho Army National Guard. "You can't just sit there and plug numbers. It pushes you mentally. Even to get to the point to just start the engine, you're going through at least 100 steps in a checklist. The technical aspects of it are very complex."

SGT Baney went on to describe what it is like to prepare for and operate a UAS mission. "The flight line is not set up for you when you get there. The only thing you have is a runway. So when we first get out to the flight, we have to place the entire flight line. We have to set up all of our shelters, our runway gear, our launchers—everything that goes into it. And that can be anywhere from a one-day to a three-day operation. So it's a lot of physical labor. Then, once you have your flight line set up, you get into the shelter, and you sit there for hours and hours of flight. The inside of the shelter is basically a cockpit. You crawl inside to the shelter on the back of a Humvee. You've got two chairs, and you've got the person who flies and the person who operates the camera."

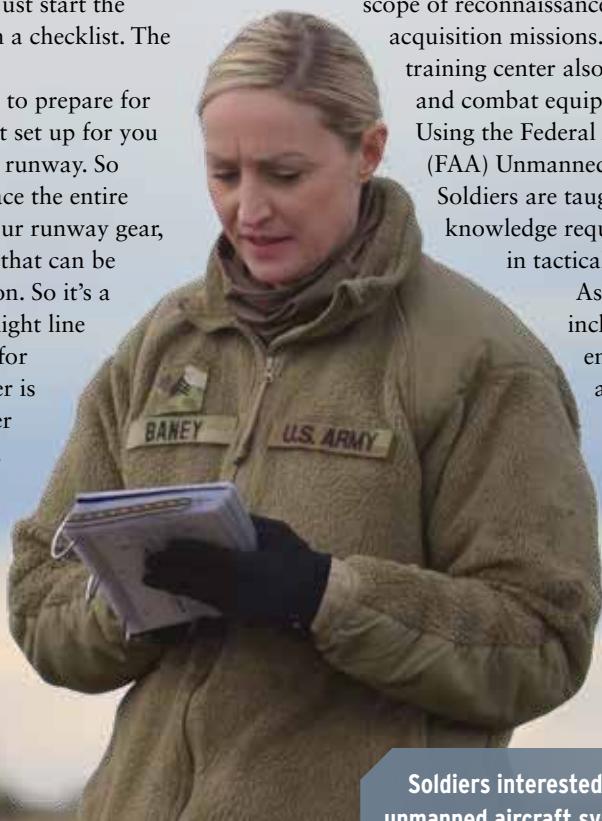
SGT Baney described the duties of a 15W to include preparing for flight missions through planning and analysis; executing preflight, in-flight and post-flight processes on the Shadow; as well as launching and recovering UAVs from airfield runways. 15W duties also include conducting air

reconnaissance, surveillance, targeting and acquisition missions; and performing maintenance on communications equipment, power sources, light/heavy wheeled vehicles and crane operations. Once SGT Baney completes a mission, the video from her aircraft is sent to her brigade headquarters where air recon, surveillance and targeting and acquisition missions are planned.

With over 23 weeks of Advanced Individual Training (AIT) that includes on-the-job instruction, 15Ws are well prepared before piloting an actual mission. Training consists of both classroom and in-the-field instruction. Operated by the 2nd Battalion, 13th Aviation Regiment, the UAS Training Center at Fort Huachuca, Arizona, offers Soldiers instruction not only in the fundamental tasks associated with the completion of UAS missions, but also in the operational role of the UAS within the scope of reconnaissance, surveillance and target acquisition missions. Students enrolled at the training center also learn how to identify targets and combat equipment on the battlefield. Using the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Unmanned Ground School module, Soldiers are taught the basic aeronautical knowledge required to safely operate a UAS in tactical airspace.

As the only Army MOS that includes flight training at the enlisted level, becoming a 15W may also offer advantages in the civilian job market. Since 15Ws train in the FAA ground school module during UAS training, Soldiers who are interested in becoming commercial pilots may have a leg up when attempting to transition into the field.

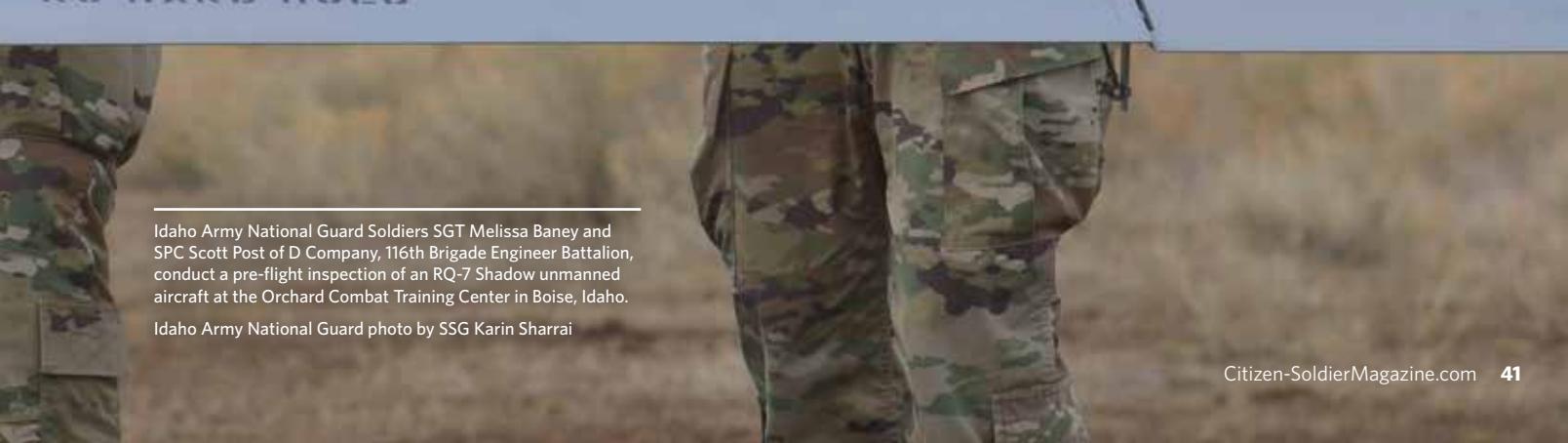
Soldiers interested in learning more about unmanned aircraft systems operation should contact their State's Strength Maintenance Officer or Retention NCO. A list of contact numbers can be found at [NationalGuard.com/contacts/rrnco](http://NationalGuard.com/contacts/rrnco). ■



**Idaho Army National Guard Soldiers SGT Melissa Baney and SPC Scott Post of D Company, 116th Brigade Engineer Battalion, conduct a pre-flight inspection of an RQ-7 Shadow unmanned aircraft at the Orchard Combat Training Center in Boise, Idaho.**

**Idaho Army National Guard photo by SSG Karin Sharrai**

NO HAND HOLD





# A MARK OF SUCCESS



# SUCCESS



**Mississippi Soldiers Successfully Train  
Iraqi Units in Marksmanship**

BY STAFF WRITER Tatyana White-Jenkins  
Mississippi Army National Guard photos by SPC Jovi Prevot

**M**arksman is a basic and essential skill every Soldier needs to master. Soldiers from the Mississippi Army National Guard's 1st Squadron, 98th Cavalry Regiment, 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team (ABCT), are helping soldiers from the 9th Iraqi Armored Division master their marksmanship skills during a deployment to Iraq.

Working in support of Task Force India Bravo, Mississippi Soldiers deployed late in 2018 to train Iraqi soldiers for almost nine months on a variety of subjects. Task Force India Bravo has a goal of working with Iraqi Security Forces and aiding them in the development of an inclusive and sustainable force that can protect the Iraqi population, secure its sovereign borders and ensure the lasting defeat of ISIS. Made up of 43 highly trained U.S. Soldiers, the task force consists of

recon scouts, a maintenance team, a medical team, an intel team and logisticians. Each team supports an Iraqi counterpart during what is an Advise, Assist, Accompany and Enable (A3E) mission.

"Our task is to work side-by-side with the division and brigade commanders and facilitate training, mission planning, modernization and accompanying Iraqi forces when deployed to forward AOs [areas of operation] in the fight against ISIS," said SFC Michael Garner of the 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team.

After being on the ground for just over a month, the positive impacts of the Mississippi task force teams could already be seen in Iraqi force operations. The signal team facilitated the communications training and installation modernization of over 430 Harris radios in Iraqi Humvees, personnel carriers and T72 tanks. The medical team instructed Combat Life Saver courses for over 360 Iraqi soldiers, improved medical conditions within the brigades and provided





Iraqi soldiers conduct dime/washer drills as part of a primary marksmanship instruction course led by Task Force India Bravo at Camp Taji, Iraq, December 2018.

life-saving support to injured Iraqi soldiers. The logistics and sustainment team assisted in streamlining the maintenance parts flow and supply structure of the 9th Iraqi Armored Division. The Maintenance team—in addition to training 92 Iraqi maintenance crews on the forward repair system (FRS)—most notably developed a program of instruction that was approved by North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Iraqi Minister of Defense to be used

as the standard of training across the entire Iraqi military.

Beyond this list of impressive contributions, Task Force India Bravo has been especially impactful in the area of marksmanship. The 9th Iraqi Armored Division, to which India Bravo is assigned, is the only armored brigade in the Iraqi army and currently the most modernized and battle-proven element in the Iraqi military. India Bravo has so far trained with more than 550 Soldiers of the 9th and helped increase the Iraqi soldiers' marksmanship accuracy by more than 50 percent. By helping to improve the Iraqi soldiers' marksmanship accuracy by such a substantial percentage, the Soldiers of India Bravo are directly impacting the overall lethality of the entire Iraqi force.

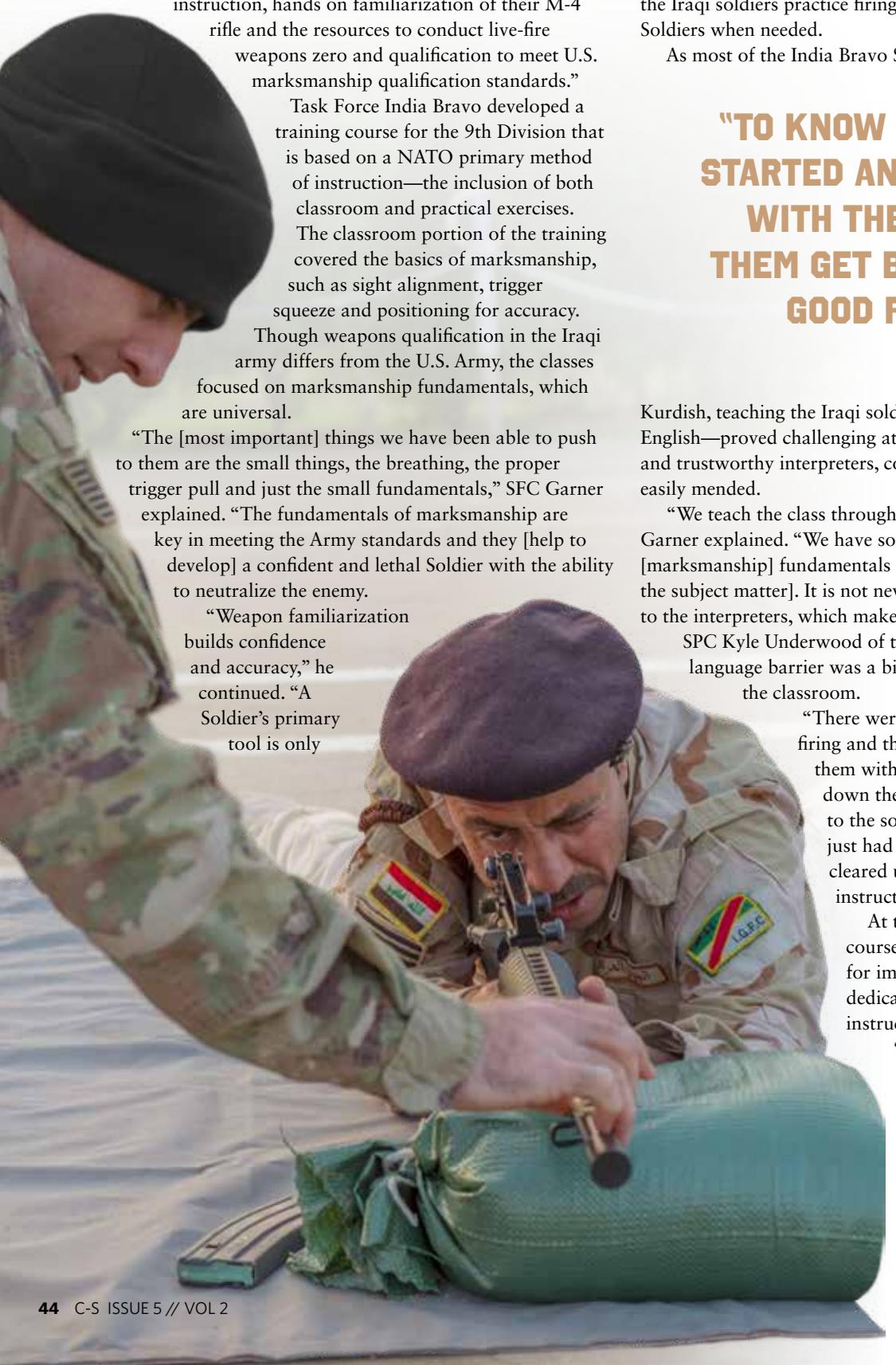
To bring about such dramatic change, the Mississippi Soldiers first established a customized environment in which the Iraqi soldiers could learn the fundamentals in marksmanship. Before they could begin a successful training, the members of India Bravo needed to understand where the Iraqi soldiers stood in relation to marksmanship skills.

"We were requested by [the 9th's] division commander to assist in marksmanship training," said SFC Garner. "We went out and basically assessed their skills, without giving any instruction, just to see where they were and what needed to be improved upon. We then focused on the parts they needed the most help with."

According to SFC Garner, Iraqi soldiers tend to struggle in marksmanship due to a combination of shortages in ammunition and supplies, shortages in training time and shortages in qualified instructors. The Mississippi Soldiers were able to fill those gaps and provide the Iraqi soldiers with the quality knowledge and training they needed to succeed.



SFC Michael Garner (left), security forces platoon sergeant assigned to Task Force India Bravo—a Mississippi Army National Guard unit deployed in support of Combined Joint Task Force – Operation Inherent Resolve works with an Iraqi Security Force soldier while teaching a primary marksmanship instruction course at Camp Taji, Iraq, December 2018.



"Our Task Force was instrumental in providing highly qualified and experienced instructors, [including] range crews to facilitate live-fire practical exercises. Through the use of CTEF [Counter-ISIS Train and Equip Fund], we were able to divest ammunition to support the marksmanship program," SFC Garner said. "This allowed the Iraqi soldiers to receive in-depth classroom instruction, hands on familiarization of their M-4 rifle and the resources to conduct live-fire weapons zero and qualification to meet U.S. marksmanship qualification standards."

Task Force India Bravo developed a training course for the 9th Division that is based on a NATO primary method of instruction—the inclusion of both classroom and practical exercises.

The classroom portion of the training covered the basics of marksmanship, such as sight alignment, trigger squeeze and positioning for accuracy.

Though weapons qualification in the Iraqi army differs from the U.S. Army, the classes focused on marksmanship fundamentals, which are universal.

"The [most important] things we have been able to push to them are the small things, the breathing, the proper trigger pull and just the small fundamentals," SFC Garner explained. "The fundamentals of marksmanship are key in meeting the Army standards and they [help to develop] a confident and lethal Soldier with the ability to neutralize the enemy.

"Weapon familiarization builds confidence and accuracy," he continued. "A Soldier's primary tool is only

as accurate and functional as its operator. Weapon maintenance, target acquisition, shooting positions and weapon malfunction drills are vital to soldier marksmanship fundamentals."

After the classroom portion of the course, the Iraqi soldiers then go through a practical exercise where the Mississippi Soldiers critique them before they go out to the range. Once on the range, the Iraqi soldiers practice firing with adjustments given by the U.S. Soldiers when needed.

As most of the India Bravo Soldiers speak neither Arabic nor

## "TO KNOW WHERE THEY STARTED AND THEN WORK WITH THEM AND SEE THEM GET BETTER, IT'S A GOOD FEELING."

— SPC Matthew Driskill

Kurdish, teaching the Iraqi soldiers—most of whom do not speak English—proved challenging at times. Thanks to knowledgeable and trustworthy interpreters, communication challenges were easily mended.

"We teach the class through the use of interpreters," SFC Garner explained. "We have some great interpreters that know [marksmanship] fundamentals so they have a basic knowledge [of the subject matter]. It is not new terminology to the instructors or to the interpreters, which makes it a bit easier."

SPC Kyle Underwood of the 1-98th noted how the language barrier was a bit more of an obstacle outside of the classroom.

"There were times we would see a soldier firing and there was something we could help them with, but if the interpreter was busy down the line it was hard to explain things to the soldier," said SPC Underwood. "You just had to wait for [the interpreter] to be cleared up so they could come and help instruct the soldier."

At the start of the marksmanship course, the Iraqi soldiers had much room for improvement, but hard work and dedication from both the students and instructors led to impressive results.

"The very first unit we observed

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SPC Matthew Driskill (left), a cavalry scout assigned to Task Force India Bravo, assists an Iraqi soldier with a dime/washer drill as part of a primary marksmanship instruction course at Camp Taji, Iraq.

at the range had about 65 to 70 soldiers, and only four or five of them were able to actually hit the target without us giving the instruction," explained SFC Garner. "They were probably at 15 to 20 percent accuracy. The biggest accomplishment was going back to the range with the same group [after the training] and having 70 to 75 percent of soldiers able to accurately put rounds on targets."

"To [know] where they started and then work with them and see them get better, it's a good feeling," said SPC Matthew Driskill of the 1st Platoon, Comanche Troop, 1-98th.

SFC Garner noted how the training demonstrated to the Iraqi soldiers that marksmanship requires committed training, regardless of the military in which one serves.

"I think [the Iraqi soldiers] have the mentality that we're always just ready to go. They don't grasp the multiple training days we put in before we actually go to the range to qualify," SFC Garner explained. "We train all the time before we go to the range. We go through the same process to make sure that all our Soldiers remember the basics."

This mission with Task Force India Bravo serves as SFC Garner's third deployment to Iraq, his first occurring in 2005. He had the opportunity to work alongside Iraqi soldiers on past missions and he noted the ongoing significance of the role the United States is playing in the long-term advancements being made by the Iraqi military.

"Going from 2005 to now and seeing the progress of the Iraqi forces, it [shows the importance] of what we are actually doing here."

Task Force India Bravo's A3E mission is proving to be a mutually beneficial experience that will have enduring effects for the stability of the Iraqi nation. Not only are the marksmanship skills of the Iraqi soldiers drastically improved, the Iraqi military is also benefiting from improved training standards across its entire operation, thus leading to increased interoperability between U.S. and Iraqi forces when units are together in theater. This group of Mississippi Soldiers will be able to walk away from this mission feeling proud to have made a lasting and positive impact.

"The accomplishment [the Iraqi soldiers] feel within themselves, you can see it written all over their faces," said SPC Driskill. "It's good to know that we were a part of that process." ●

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SFC Michael Garner (right) of the 2nd Battalion, 114th Field Artillery Regiment, 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team, Mississippi Army National Guard and Task Force India Bravo, instructs an Iraqi soldier during a primary marksmanship course led by the task force at Camp Taji, Iraq.



# Maryland Soldiers Are Fit to Serve

## Maryland National Guard Unit Uses Innovative Fitness Tool to Prepare for the ACFT

BY STAFF WRITER Tatyana White-Jenkins

Maryland Army National Guard photos by MAJ Kurt Rauschenberg



The Maryland Army National Guard's 629th Military Intelligence Battalion is utilizing a new fitness tool in preparation for the new Army Combat Fitness Test (ACFT).

Starting in October of 2020, the ACFT will replace the long-standing Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT). The ACFT is a new gender- and age-neutral test featuring six-event readiness assessments, as opposed to the three-event APFT. Since the ACFT tests a broader range of fitness and readiness aptitudes,

Soldiers are encouraged to approach their fitness test preparation with a different mindset than they had when prepping for the APFT.

"For Soldiers preparing for the [APFT], they may wait until a month before [the test] to actually start doing any kind of physical exercise," explained 2LT Delvon Anderson, master fitness trainer for the 629th. "[Much of that time] is only geared towards pushups, sit ups and how to pass the run. With the ACFT, it's a whole integration of different physical aspects such as stability, coordination, balance and power, which a lot of Soldiers don't practice on now."

Thanks to FX Well, a digital fitness company based out of Baltimore, Maryland, Soldiers of the 629th are



Soldiers of the 629th Military Intelligence Battalion receive instruction on proper stretching and warm-up techniques during the Fit Well fitness and physical training event held January 2019 at Camp Fretterd, Military Reservation, Reisterstown, Md., as part of the battalion's preparation for the upcoming Army Combat Fitness

learning how to succeed in their upcoming ACFT by improving their overall fitness and wellness.

FX Well's Fit to Serve program is a voluntary program for Soldiers that utilizes technology to provide them with virtual coaches in fitness and nutrition, tracking devices to monitor physical activity and sleep routines, and physical resources focusing on overall health, wellness and resiliency.

"Fit to Serve is a remote coaching solution designed to support service members in their walk towards improved health and combat lethality," said Chad Ayinde, FX Well director of tactical fitness and head of fitness programs.

Ayinde, a former Soldier with the Indiana Army National Guard, served in the Guard for 12 years. He utilized his military background when developing the Fit to Serve program.

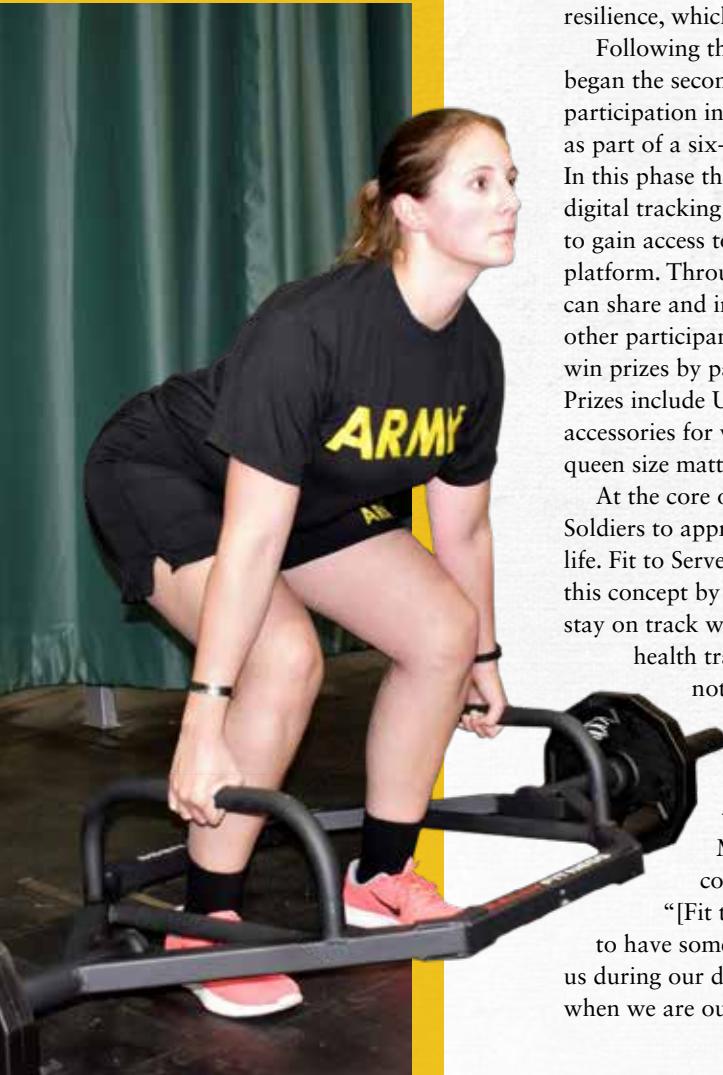
"I have definitely been privy to a lot of the changes with the new Army Combat Fitness Test and the new focus on Soldiers being as fit and lethal as they possibly can be," Ayinde noted.

2LT Delvon Anderson assigned to the 629th Military Intelligence Battalion receives instruction from Chad Ayinde, FX Well director, on how to use a fitness app as part of FX Well's Fit Well training program in which the battalion is participating in preparation for the new Army Combat Fitness Test.

The Maryland National Guard is the second State in the Nation to participate in the Fit to Serve program, the Indiana Army National Guard being the first. SGT Fatai Emiabata, a section leader of the 629th, learned of the program during a physical therapy session and instantly thought of how it could benefit his unit.

"I was having a discussion with a physical therapist about looking for an alternative program to get my Soldiers prepared for a possible deployment," SGT Emiabata said. "I was introduced to the Fit to Serve program and saw the potential to help the entire battalion."





***"It sets Soldiers up for success by integrating best practices and actually giving them a baseline of knowledge for what they need to succeed. It's a good opportunity to hit the reset button for a lot of Soldiers in preparation for the ACFT."***

— 2LT Delvon Anderson

Fit to Serve is structured in two phases. The Soldiers of the 629th started the first phase, called the Kick-Off, in January of this year. The Kick-Off is structured as a boot camp that educates Soldiers on the ins and outs of the program, which is based on the SENSE model.

“It is an acronym for Sleep, Exercise, Nutrition, Stress management and Enjoy life,” said Ayinde. “It’s awesome because it hits all three elements of the Army Performance Triad, but also touches on resilience, which is key as well.”

Following the kick-off, the Soldiers began the second phase of the program—participation in remote coaching sessions as part of a six-month pilot program. In this phase the Soldiers were given a digital tracking device, similar to a Fitbit, to gain access to the FX Well digital platform. Through the platform, Soldiers can share and interact with coaches and other participants, keep track of goals and win prizes by participating in challenges. Prizes include Under Armour apparel and accessories for workout challenges; and queen size mattresses for sleep challenges.

At the core of ACFT is the need for Soldiers to approach fitness as a way of life. Fit to Serve’s digital platform supports this concept by giving Soldiers a means to stay on track with their fitness goals and health training even when they are not drilling or on duty.

“As Citizen Soldiers, we only get [a limited amount of time to train],” said MAJ Michael Bryant, battalion commander of the 629th.

“[Fit to Serve] is an opportunity to have something that not only helps us during our drill weekends, but also when we are out of uniform.”

The mobility of the program app not only allows Soldiers to take their coaches with them wherever they go, but also their fellow Soldiers who are participating in the program—thus increasing accountability and helping to create accountability partners.

“If someone is deployed, TDY, on vacation or at work, they still can communicate with other [participants] using the app,” SGT Emiabata said. “It’s great because it gives Soldiers a digital connection, even from long distances.”

Soldiers from the 629th have reacted positively to the program, praising its ability to accurately prepare them for the ACFT and improve their daily lives.

“It sets Soldiers up for success by integrating best practices and actually giving them a baseline of knowledge for what they need to succeed,” said 2LT Anderson. “It’s a good opportunity to hit the reset button for a lot of Soldiers in preparation for the ACFT.”

After the six-month pilot, there are plans to roll out Fit to Serve to other units in the Maryland National Guard. As for the 629th, members say they plan to utilize their lessons to excel in the ACFT and in other health and fitness challenges.

“Anticipating the new Army fitness test, we are taking an extra step now to not only get our troops physically prepared for the dynamic events it brings, but also to build up their confidence to overcome unforeseen challenges,” said MAJ Bryant. “At the end of six months, we’ll finish the program, then we’re going to sustain it internally through our own mechanisms and tools [provided by] FX Well. We’re learning life lessons beyond just passing the [ACFT] and that is key to total wellness.” ●

A Soldier of the 629th Military Intelligence Battalion practices proper Deadlift technique during a Fit Well fitness and physical training event held by the battalion January 2019 at Camp Fretterd Military Reservation, Reisterstown, Md.



# THE BENEFITS OF ADDING SWIMMING TO YOUR WORKOUT

BY STAFF WRITER Tatyana White-Jenkins

**L**ooking to switch up your workout routine? Moving from land to sea (or rather pool) may be just the thing to add a high-impact change to your workout. Whether a Soldier is looking to prepare for the upcoming Army Combat Fitness Test (ACFT), improve overall health or just try something new, swimming is a great option.

Swimming is highly effective as a fitness technique. With high cardiovascular benefits, low body impact and positive psychological influences, swimming is one of the best forms of exercise available. For Soldiers specifically, swimming can also be a nice change of pace from the typical physical training (PT) routine.

If that's not enough to convince you, here are five reasons to add swimming to your workout:

## 1. ENGAGES THE FULL BODY

Swimming engages more of your body's major muscle groups than other forms of cardio exercise. As both a form of cardio and strength training, swimming helps to improve muscle definition and strength while burning calories. Depending on your intensity, swimming can burn an equal or greater number of calories than running. Swimming also helps improve flexibility, as it requires you to reach, stretch, twist and pull your way through the water, making it a great way to increase agility. So, if you are looking for an activity that engages and benefits your entire body, swimming is the perfect choice.

## 2. BUILDS ENDURANCE

Swimming helps increase your body's ability to take in and effectively use oxygen, which results in an increased endurance capacity. By increasing your endurance, you can sustain more strenuous physical activities, like a long ruck-march, for extended

periods of time. Swimming also trains your hamstrings, glutes, core and shoulders, all of which affect running form and performance. This makes swimming a great way to prepare for the ACFT's two-mile run.

## 3. BUILDS MEDICAL WELLNESS

Research and studies have shown that swimming can lead to a host of medical benefits, including lowering blood pressure and helping to control blood sugar. Swimming regularly can result in strengthened heart and lungs, which works to strengthen your entire cardiovascular system.

## 4. SUPPORTS THE BODY

Water supports up to 90 percent of the body's weight, making swimming a great way to recover after a challenging PT routine. Swimming is also great as a low-impact option for staying active after an injury. Treading water can help loosen knees, hips and lower body muscles. Swimming also allows you to perform cardiovascular exercise while in a horizontal position. This lessens the chance of back pain or injury as there is less of the impact on the back that often comes with other cardiovascular exercises, like running, jumping or rowing.

## 5. INCREASES ENERGY, DECREASES STRESS

Jumping into the pool after a hard workout can cool down your body and help lessen fatigue. This cool down can have a revitalizing effect, producing the extra energy needed to complete a few laps in the pool, or to take on the rest of your day. In addition to relieving stress from your body, swimming can also help relieve stress from your mind. As it can be a relaxing and peaceful form of exercise, swimming has been shown to have mood-boosting tendencies. ●



# Featured Podcast

## AVOIDING HEALTH PRODUCT SCAMS

Miracle cures and “no sweat” body-toning devices are two common scams that target people at their most vulnerable. In this podcast, you’ll learn how to recognize and steer clear of deceptive healthcare claims.

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# SOLDIERS FOR ALL SEASONS

**Westie Avalanche Tests Oregon Soldier's Mettle Against the Frigid Far North**

BY STAFF WRITER Matthew Liptak  
Oregon Army National Guard photos by SFC April Davis

The Central Command theater of operations often gets much of the country's attention as it combats America's enemies in Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan. The Army's attention, however, must always remain spread across the globe to all areas of possible threat. As aggression increases in parts of the world, such as Eastern Europe along the Russian border, U.S. Soldiers must be prepared to fight not only in the arid and hot terrain of the Middle East, but also in regions where snow and cold reign supreme.

"If all we do is reference our last deployment or our last personal experience, then we don't have much forethought to look ahead to where could we fight next," noted LTC Kyle Akers, commander of the 2nd Battalion, 162nd Infantry Regiment, 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Oregon Army National Guard. "The key point is [the same] in the desert as any type of terrain—you have to understand and fight the environment just as much as you have to understand and fight the enemy. If you don't start there, then you're going to have ineffective units that

[are so overcome by the environment] they can't think straight or worry about fighting an enemy."

The type of preparedness LTC Akers spoke of is exactly what 36 Soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 162nd Infantry Regiment, were ensuring when they went to Canada this past January to join in the Westie Avalanche exercise hosted by the Royal Westminster Regiment, 39th Canadian Brigade Group. Designed to teach troops cold-weather survival skills, Westie Avalanche doubles as an opportunity for participating Soldiers to increase North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) interoperability.

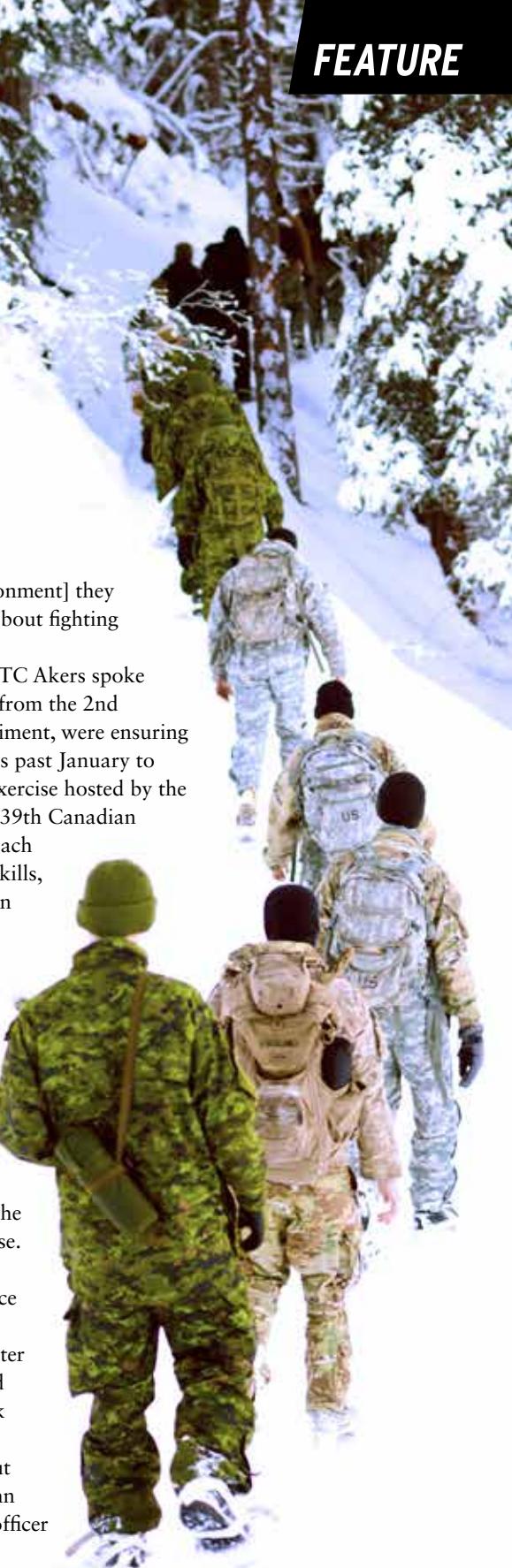
The Soldiers chosen from the 41st convoyed eight hours from Camp Withycombe, Oregon, to Chilliwack, British Columbia, to join more than 90 Canadian soldiers in the yearly extreme-weather exercise.

"[Our commander's] goals for the exercise were to enhance the working relationship we have with the Royal Westminster Regiment, to ensure safety and get all our guys there and back in one piece, and to extract maximum training value out of the event," said 1LT John Rohrer, staff intelligence officer



ABOVE: Oregon Army National Guard Soldiers with the 2nd Battalion, 162nd Infantry Regiment, 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team, march up a snow covered mountain alongside Canadian Army Reserve soldiers with the Royal Westminster Regiment, 39th Canadian Brigade Group, during Westie Avalanche, a basic winter survival skills training held at E.C. Manning Park, British Columbia, Canada, in January 2019.

LEFT: Oregon Army National Guard Soldiers with the 2nd Battalion, 162nd Infantry Regiment, 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team, practices setting up a Canadian army tent kit at the Chilliwack Armory, in Chilliwack, British Columbia, Canada, during Westie Avalanche.





LEFT: Canadian Ranger Sgt. Emily Coombs, with Ucluelet Patrol, 4th Canadian Rangers Patrol Group, teaches fire-starting techniques as part of a training exercise during Westie Avalanche, January 2019.



RIGHT: Oregon Army National Guard's SSG Ryan Wilson (right) and 1LT John Rohrer, both with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 162nd Infantry Regiment, 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team, practice fire-making techniques during a class taught by the 4th Canadian Rangers Patrol Group at Westie Avalanche, a basic winter survival skills exercise hosted by the Royal Westminster Regiment, 39th Canadian Brigade Group.



for the 2-162nd and the unit's officer in charge for the Westie Avalanche exercise. "I think on all three of those fronts, it was a resounding success."

The event took place over the course of five days, with three days in the field. At EC Manning Provincial Park, where the field portion of the exercise took place, temperatures ranged between 0 and 20 degrees Fahrenheit and three feet of snow blanketed the ground.

LTC Akers noted that infantry doctrine states that hostile weather conditions should be seen as a benefit to the infantry Soldier, because it forces them to maximize the advantages of their tactical skill and technical capability. The average Soldier may feel that part of the doctrine is easier said than done.

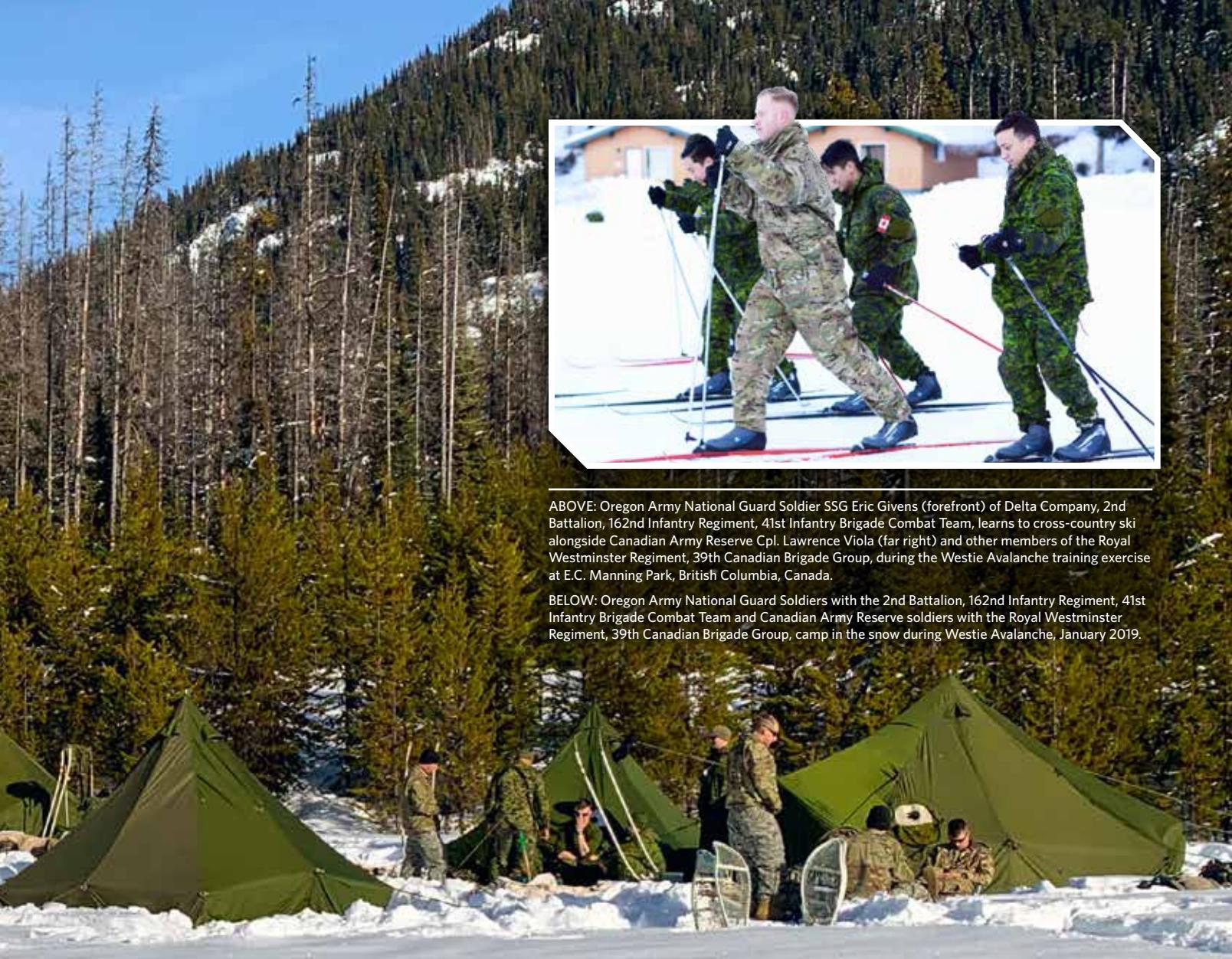
"To experience extreme cold up close and personal like that really gave me a whole new perspective on the immense consideration that needs to be applied to the ability to shoot, move and communicate," said 1LT Rohrer. "When the weather gets that cold, you have [an] entirely different set of considerations. Warfare in that environment really is all about survival. Nine times out of 10, the army that survives longer wins. That's really all arctic warfare boils down to."

When the Oregon Soldiers arrived at the border, they were met by Canadian troops who led them to the armory in Chilliwack and then immediately began training the U.S. Soldiers on cold weather tactics including how to properly layer on cold weather clothing, how to use

cold weather gear and how to treat cold weather injuries.

On day two of the exercise, the troops were in the field at EC Manning Provincial Park. They set up a base near the mountainside, but went to a nearby ski resort to access the ski trails where they practiced snowshoeing and Nordic skiing.

Nordic, or cross-country skiing, is a form of skiing where the heel of the ski boot is not attached to the ski and skiers propel themselves across the landscape using either a classic striding or skating technique. Nordic skis are generally narrower and longer than alpine or downhill skis. The length and shape of the ski, and most importantly the free-heel attachment of the boot, allows the wearer to move uphill—not just downhill



**ABOVE:** Oregon Army National Guard Soldier SSG Eric Givens (forefront) of Delta Company, 2nd Battalion, 162nd Infantry Regiment, 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team, learns to cross-country ski alongside Canadian Army Reserve Cpl. Lawrence Viola (far right) and other members of the Royal Westminster Regiment, 39th Canadian Brigade Group, during the Westie Avalanche training exercise at E.C. Manning Park, British Columbia, Canada.

**BETWEEN:** Oregon Army National Guard Soldiers with the 2nd Battalion, 162nd Infantry Regiment, 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team and Canadian Army Reserve soldiers with the Royal Westminster Regiment, 39th Canadian Brigade Group, camp in the snow during Westie Avalanche, January 2019.

as with alpine skis—easily and quickly. This is an essential function when moving an entire unit into position on a snowy mountainside.

“I’ve done some skiing before, but Nordic skiing is a lot different,” said SSG Eric Givens, a training noncommissioned officer with the 2-162nd’s Delta Company. “It was still a great experience, but definitely a different style of skiing. It was interesting to see all of us pretty much just eating snow all day once we got up to the mountainside.”

SSG Givens recalled how many of the Soldiers gave in to the need for speed on the way down the mountain. It was a chance to build camaraderie as well as gain valuable skills.

“We ended up getting down to the bottom pretty fast,” he said. “[Even if]

we were on our backs—we still got down pretty fast.”

The Soldiers had to ski roughly 10 kilometers (just over six miles) to make it back to their base camp. It was there that Canadian Rangers trained both the American and Canadian troops on additional skills they would need to survive in the cold. Much like U.S. Rangers, Canadian Rangers are part of a special operations force that is called on to conduct complex, covert missions. They are also experts at surviving in the country’s most remote and inaccessible territories.

The rangers trained the multilateral group of soldiers across five stations. Those included fire starting, killing and dressing game, snare construction and placement, and two types of shelter construction.

“The thing that sticks out most in my mind is [when] we built [a shelter] called a quinzhee,” explained SSG Bradley Holbrook, a weapons squad leader with Bravo Company in the 2-162nd. “The other squad leader and I slept in there that night. It was actually more comfortable than the tent that had the heater.”

Similar in concept to an igloo, a quinzhee is a hut made from snow that has been piled then left to settle and harden in the cold. Once the snow pile solidifies, the quinzhee is carved out from the pile. A small tunnel is dug that leads to the hut and allows entrance from below the sleeping area. This unique design allows cold air to escape the shelter through the tunnel while the insulating snow walls trap warm air generated from the body heat of the occupants.

SSG Holbrook said that his experience with the emergency snow shelter was probably the best part of the entire training mission for him.

"I never experienced anything like that and I wasn't really sure that I wasn't preparing for a night of just absolute suck," he said. "But I woke up the next morning and I was like, 'Holy cow this is cool.' I didn't believe it was going to work, but it did. It's probably the best night's sleep I got there."

The Canadian Rangers also showed the soldiers how a species of bird called a Whiskeyjack could be easily snared with a simple piece of wildlife knowledge. While it was a novel nature experience, this bit of information could be critical to Soldiers needing to survive in the northern wilderness.

"[The Whiskeyjack] will come and eat out of your hand," said SSG Holbrook. "The Canadian Rangers were telling us that it's good in a survival situation. They're super easy to trap. A bunch of the guys pulled out beef jerky and [other snacks] and they were getting the birds to come down and land on them. We saw one bird and then as soon as someone held up their hand, they just came out of everywhere—15 birds landing on different guys' hands."

Eventually, it was time for both the Whiskeyjacks and the Soldiers of the 2-162nd to head back home. Looking back over the event, 1LT Rohrer noted the overall benefit to the unit.

"We were embedded down to the team level," said 1LT Rohrer. "Our Soldiers were paired up with Canadian soldiers at close to a one-to-one ratio.



**"Warfare in that environment really is all about survival. Nine times out of 10, the army that survives longer wins. That's really all arctic warfare boils down to."**

– 1LT John Rohrer

"I think they did a great job of training, learning and dealing with the conditions out there," said LTC Akers. "These are Soldiers that are meeting all the expectations that we're asking [of] them as National Guard Soldiers." ●

Oregon Army National Guard Soldiers and Canadian Army Reserve soldiers march with snowshoes at E.C. Manning Park, British Columbia, Canada, as part of the Westie Avalanche basic winter skills training, January 2019.

Our guys work together with the Canadians as a team, and I think they definitely gained proficiency in cold weather operations."

The Oregon Army National Guard Soldiers successfully completed their mission, gaining important new skills along with the approval of their commander.

"I think they did a great job of training, learning and dealing with the conditions out there," said LTC Akers. "These are Soldiers that are meeting all the expectations that we're asking [of] them as National Guard Soldiers." ●

Canadian Ranger Sgt. Edith Carrie, with Dease Lake Patrol, 4th Canadian Rangers Patrol Group, teaches techniques for building snow shelters to Oregon Army National Guard Soldiers with the 2nd Battalion, 162nd Infantry Regiment, 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team, and Canadian Army Reserve soldiers with the Royal Westminster Regiment, 39th Canadian Brigade Group, during the Westie Avalanche training exercise.





# Early Commissioning Program

## *The Fast Track to Becoming a Second Lieutenant*

BY STAFF WRITER Tatyana White-Jenkins

Military junior colleges are providing a unique opportunity for young cadets. By enrolling in the Early Commissioning Program (ECP), cadets are placed on the fast track to becoming commissioned officers in the United States Army.

By completing the ECP, qualified cadets may be commissioned as second lieutenants in two years rather than four. Some schools also cover 100 percent of participating cadets' tuition, room and board. After completing the two-year program and earning their associate degree, ECP second lieutenants go on to complete their education at a four-year institution while simultaneously serving in the Army National Guard or U.S. Army Reserves. After earning their bachelor's degree, officers have the choice of continuing to serve in the National Guard or Reserves, or they may switch to active duty.

"The program is fantastic," said Karen Fluck, recruiting operations officer for Valley Forge Military Academy and College in Wayne, Pennsylvania. "It feeds all of our Services, especially the Reserves and Army National Guard, with officers."

Cadets joining the ECP must be focused and determined, as the program is both academically and physically demanding. It is designed to test students' skills and dedication.

"They get quality, intense training," Fluck explained. "They are at a small school that has a focus first on academics and second on ROTC, versus other distractions they might get at another school."

In addition to top-notch training and education, while enrolled in the program, cadets have the opportunity to take advantage of scholarships, technical training, access military events and more.

"There are a lot of financial and educational benefits," said Jason Garcia, recruiting operations officer for the New Mexico Military Institute ECP. "There's also life experience, physical fitness and getting a leg up on your peers because you are accelerating your career by two years."

Garcia graduated from the New Mexico Military Institute's ECP in 1995 and attributes much of his personal and professional success to the program.

"The [ECP] has given me a lot of experience that I would not have had otherwise," he said. "It's provided me with a structure and framework to be successful [with] things like time management, developing leadership skills and confidence."

Garcia recommends individuals interested in the program take a tour of a military junior college. While each college's ECP is similarly structured, its campus

Cadets from the Marion Military Institute in Marion, Ala., pose for a photo on the school campus.

Photo courtesy Marion Military Institute

environment is unique.

"We encourage folks to visit and experience the campus to get a feel for what the cadets are like and what their daily schedules are like," Garcia noted.

The ECP is offered at Georgia Military College, Marion Military Institute, New Mexico Military Institute and Valley Forge Military Academy and College. ■

For more information about each college's ECP requirements or to find out how to apply, contact:

### GEORGIA MILITARY COLLEGE

(phone) 478-387-4931  
(email) rotc@gmc.edu

### MARION MILITARY INSTITUTE

(phone) 334-302-1409  
(email) dlong@marionmilitary.edu

### NEW MEXICO MILITARY INSTITUTE

(phone) 575-624-8292  
(email) nmmirotc@nmmi.edu

### VALLEY FORGE MILITARY COLLEGE

(phone) 610-989-1445  
(email) rotc@vfmac.edu



# WARRIOR ADVENTURE QUEST

## Countering Negative Actions with Constructive Excitement

BY STAFF WRITER Tatyana White-Jenkins

**F**or thrill-seeking Soldiers looking to channel their need for adventure in a positive manner, the U.S. Army Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) has a program that combines adrenaline-pumping activities with beneficial training.

The Warrior Adventure Quest (WAQ), sponsored and coordinated by MWR, introduces Soldiers to alternatives to aberrant behaviors associated with returning home from deployment. The program serves as a training tool used as part of Army RESET—a system used to restore units to a desired level of combat readiness. WAQ mitigates the negative impact of high-risk behaviors, which are common among Soldiers who are within 90 days of return from combat.

When Soldiers return home from a deployment and leave the adrenaline-inducing environment of a combat zone, they can experience feelings of invincibility or emotional numbness. Some Soldiers will search for activities that give the same high levels of adrenaline they experienced

in combat, leading them down a path of destructive behaviors, such as driving at excessive speeds, alcohol and drug use, and violent acts towards themselves and others.

WAQ presents Soldiers with a healthy and productive outlet. Soldiers can participate in action-packed activities that can evoke the familiar feeling of adrenaline they experienced during deployment. The program combines existing MWR Outdoor Recreation high-adventure activities with a leader-led, after action debriefing (L-LAAD) tool developed by the Army Medical Department. Such activities include rock climbing, mountain biking, paintball, ropes courses, skiing, zip lines, white water rafting and more.

With its first official iteration taking place in 2009, WAQ activities are now available at Army Outdoor Recreation locations around the world. In the first two years of the program, an Army study showed that WAQ participants were involved in 14 percent fewer off-duty accidents, 44 percent fewer injuries resulting in a fatality or permanent disability and 52 percent fewer behavioral incidents resulting in reduction in pay.

Initially designed to expose units to stimulating activities that help Soldiers cope with post-deployment woes, the program has expanded to also include training activities. WAQ helps sharpen outdoor skills that Soldiers use as part of their mission-essential tasks.

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1LT Nick Westendorf, an operations officer with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 8th Engineer Battalion, belays down after climbing a wall in the Boulders Sport Climbing Center in Harker Heights, Texas, as part of a Warrior Adventure Quest event.

U.S. Army photo by SGT Ken Scar

## **The WAQ program consists of five phases.**

- Phase one, Leader Training, is for all participants who hold the rank of staff sergeant and above. In this phase, the unit leaders learn to facilitate an L-LAAD in response to a significant event in an operational environment.
- During phase two, unit leaders are taught to utilize the L-LAAD technique when facilitation surrounds an outdoor adventure activity. Leaders also learn how to assist with identifying Soldiers who may require more intervention.
- Phase three, Soldier Training, presents all participants with concepts such as personal readiness, resilience, bonding, cohesion, post-traumatic growth and Combat Operational Stress Control,

and relates them to the WAQ program.

- In phase four, the unit participates in an outdoor adventure activity where team building is combined with challenging activity skills. The team building and individual activities teach lifelong skills and increase confidence, trust and competence amongst Soldiers.
- Phase five is the facilitation of the L-LAAD by the unit leaders, helping participants to realize connections between the activity they have just experienced and the challenges they may be experiencing in their daily lives.

The WAQ program not only exposes Soldiers to a healthy means of satisfying a need for excitement, it also encourages readiness, leadership development, team

building, and stress management through extreme sports.

The WAQ program is open to all units, with activities generally chosen by the command. Soldiers are encouraged to continue adventurous activities following the program and to include their Families to encourage strengthened family bonds. For more information about the WAQ program and to find your local Army Outdoor Recreation facility, go to [www.armymwr.com/programs-and-services/outdoor-recreation/warrior-adventure-quest](http://www.armymwr.com/programs-and-services/outdoor-recreation/warrior-adventure-quest). ●

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Soldiers with Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 2nd Squadron, 3rd Cavalry Regiment, play paintball during an event with the Fort Hood Warrior Adventure Quest program, January 2014.

U.S. Army photo by SGT Ken Scar





# BREAKING THE LANGUAGE BARRIER

**300th Military Intelligence Brigade Hosts Unique Joint Conference**

BY STAFF WRITERS Chase Whitlock and Matthew Liptak  
National Guard Bureau photos by Luke Sohl

**C**OL Joseph Green wasn't bragging when he said his brigade's Annual Language Conference is the center of gravity for language excellence in the military. Subordinate to the U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command, the Utah Army National Guard's 300th Military Intelligence Brigade is the only linguist brigade in the entire Department of Defense (DoD).

The 300th provides linguistic support to U.S. Army units operating around the globe. With approximately 1,400 members, roughly 90 percent of the brigade is made up of trained Army linguists. The brigade's Soldiers, all trained in human intelligence, counterintelligence and signal intelligence, are fluent in a collective 19 documented languages, with a heavy orientation toward Arabic, Persian and Korean.

The brigade is made up of six Army National Guard battalions, the 141st and 142nd Military Intelligence Battalions, Utah Army National Guard; the 223rd

**"We supported GEN Mark Milley during a mission in Afghanistan when he was commanding the 101st Airborne Division. He said that we were the best intel brigade that he had ever worked with because when you can get through that language and culture barrier on the Soldier level, you're a lot more effective."**

— COL Joseph Green

Military Intelligence Battalion, California Army National Guard; the 260th Military Intelligence Battalion, Florida Army National Guard; the 341st Military Intelligence Battalion, Washington Army National Guard; and the 415th Military Intelligence Battalion, Louisiana Army National Guard.

As the DoD's singular linguist brigade, the members of the 300th are widely regarded as the military experts in the field of linguistics.

"Combining the expertise of language with the MOS [military occupational specialty] is pretty critical because it removes a barrier," said COL Green, commander of the 300th. "We supported [Army Chief of Staff] GEN Mark Milley during a mission in Afghanistan when he was commanding the 101st Airborne Division. He said that we were the best intel brigade that he had ever worked with because when you can get through that language and culture barrier on the Soldier level, you're a lot more effective. If you're doing an interrogation, you can actually ask the questions in the language instead of relying on an interpreter."

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Utah Army National Guard Soldiers SGT Amber Guel (front), of the 141st Military Intelligence Battalion and SFC Brian Andelin of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 300th Military Intelligence Brigade, participate in the Operational Skills Test during the 2019 Polyglot Games at the brigade's 30th Annual Language Conference, March 2019.





Leading the way for collaboration within the DoD linguist community, this year marked the 30th anniversary of the 300th Military Intelligence Brigade's Annual Linguist Conference. The two-day event features lectures, panel discussions and presentations on the significant current issues and topics important to the language community.

Nearly 500 participants—including members from multiple branches of the U.S. military, all six battalions of the 300th, a member of the British Army Reserves and two civilians—were in attendance this past March for the 2019 conference. This year's conference had the theme of "The Language-Intelligence Enterprise," and topics of discussion focused on the strategic importance of language in the collection and analysis of intelligence.

Starting with last year's conference, the brigade has introduced an element of competition into the conference—The Polyglot Games.

"It's like a National Training Center [rotation], but for language," noted COL Green.

CPT Charles Beckman with the 300th Military Intelligence Brigade, Utah Army National Guard, was the planner, chief creator and coordinator for this year's Polyglot Games.

"It's really exciting because this is an event unlike any other language training event out there," he said. "We build it in the guise of a game, but it's really not. It

is an evaluation exercise. We expect [the competitors] to perform to the best of their abilities, and we provide them with a variety of training scenarios that are as diverse as the types of requirements our linguists face [in the real world]."

For the games, 44 competitors—all donned in team jerseys—were divided into six teams of seven players. The teams were divided by branch of Service and component—Army National Guard, active duty Army, Navy and Air Force. Each team had one player representing one of seven languages spoken in regions currently of strategic interest within the DoD. Those languages were Arabic, Chinese, French, Korean, Persian-Farsi, Russian and Spanish. Each team competed in seven language and cultural skill challenges that were designed to test the linguists' functional and operational capabilities. Each event had seven language categories, one for each of the seven linguists to complete.

According to CPT Beckman, the tasks were designed to be immersive, putting the linguists into circumstances that resemble conditions in the field as closely as possible.

"The event scenarios are absolutely [based on real world] examples," noted CPT Beckman. "For the red phone scenario, we took from the training scenario that basically was adapted from the Russian annexation of Crimea. It's that kind of scenario – a hostile nation invades

A joint group of U.S. service member teams from the Army, Air Force and Navy listen, decipher and translate in-field audio during the Operational Skills Test portion of the 2019 Polyglot Games as part of the 300th Military Intelligence Brigade's 30th Annual Language Conference.

an ally and we help, are trying to help de-escalate that situation. For the operational skills tests, the audio is all very real. It's real situations. We've just taken that audio out of context and put it into our own context."

Only in its second iteration, the Polyglot Games have become a major focus of the overall language conference. The games are meant to not only assess the linguists' ability to exercise language, but also their cultural and regional knowledge and understanding.

COL Green noted how the military linguist field has changed since the Cold War era, when an American linguist might only need to know a few hundred key words or phrases that often passed between Russian tank commanders or aircraft and command units.

"We have to understand our language tasks are so much harder now," he said. "Our Soldiers have to understand language, culture, economics and politics well enough to be able to tell a commander what's going on—how the different layers of the society are working. It's a very different environment. [We've gone] from just understanding 200 words in Russian for two intercepting tankers, to understanding a complex society. It's a



TOP: Participants of the 2019 Polyglot Games gather for a photo at the closing of the games held in Draper, Utah, as part of the 300th Military Intelligence Brigade's 30th Annual Language Conference.



MIDDLE: SGT Jordan Lisandrelli from the 341st Military Intelligence Battalion, Washington Army National Guard, sorts through personal items of a fictional target to create a mock profile during the Site Exploration event of the 2019 Polyglot Games at the brigade's 30th Annual Language Conference, March 2019.

BOTTOM: Left to Right: SSG Rose Bowman, 142nd Military Intelligence Battalion, Utah Army National Guard; SMSgt Jacob Hall, 169th Intelligence Squadron, Utah Air National Guard; and SSG Thomas Good, 142nd Military Intelligence Battalion, Utah Army National Guard, mingle during the expo portion of the 300th Military Intelligence Brigade's 30th Annual Language Conference.

big leap for us and we have to be able to handle that challenge."

Evidence of the Polyglot Game's notoriety is building within the military linguist community. Last year all of the game's competitors came from within the 300th, however, this year, the majority of the players were from other units and branches of Service.

"I was actually really surprised to find out how many people are participating this year," said SGT Alicia Meacham of the 142nd Battalion, 300th Military Intelligence Brigade. "To find out that most of our teams are not within the 300th this time is so exciting. It's so awesome. With this year expanding to others like the Navy, active duty, Air Force and Air Guard, it's gotten really big."

The games also served as a reality check for many of the participating Soldiers who had never utilized their skills in environments so much like the real world.

"It was humbling," said SGT Amber Guel with Alpha Company, 141st Battalion, 300th Military Intelligence





Brigade. “I wasn't really aware of my capabilities. I guess I've never applied them in any aspects like these—intelligence kinds of things. It was interesting to see how my language is supposed to work and how much I need to progress to be able to meet mission capabilities.”

SGT Jordan Lisandrelli of Delta Company, 341st Battalion, 300th Military Intelligence Brigade with the Washington Army National Guard, voiced a similar assessment.

“I thought it was wonderful actually,” he said. “It is a nice variety of exercises. It's certainly inspired me and will, I think, inspire others to train more at home and do more research, because it really illustrates where you're weak and where you're strong.”

At the end of the day, in the military, all training roads lead to an ultimate goal of increased mission readiness. The case was no different for the 300th Military Intelligence Brigade's 30th Annual Language Conference.

“As far as really assessing whether they can go on a mission or on a deployment and use their language,” remarked LTC Jeremy Stephenson, brigade operations officer for the 300th, “with the polyglot event, you're using your language in six to eight different ways. So, not only is it a fun competition, but it definitely helps assess mission readiness for linguists.”

After the close of another successful conference, the leadership of the 300th is already in planning for the 2020 event, with a long-term vision of growing the Polyglot Games to reach the level of a Best Warrior-type competition for linguists. ●

## The Polyglot Games Events

**OPERATIONAL SKILLS TEST:** Linguists are required to decipher and translate authentic in-field audio that includes a high level of military chatter and analyze documents that have been partially destroyed or contain higher level military jargon.

**ACCENT EVALUATOR:** Competitors are recorded speaking pre-selected phrases in their assigned language to test the authenticity and accuracy of their accents and pronunciation.

**ON-THE-SPOT REPORT:** Without preparation or prior knowledge of the questions, competitors are required to give two 60-second briefings regarding current affairs, politics and military matters occurring in a region where their assigned language is spoken.

**RED PHONE SCENARIO:** Linguists are required to serve as notional interpreters for a diplomatic negotiation attempting to thwart the start of a war, first translating from the target language to English and then from English to the target language.

**SITE EXPLOITATION:** Competitors are tasked with creating an adversary profile in just 10 minutes, based on 10 to 15 items found in a room recently occupied by the adversary.

**CULTURAL ADVISOR:** Linguists must accurately brief a senior commander, who is unfamiliar with the culture in question, about important cultural norms and relevant current affairs prior to a key leadership engagement.

**CULTURE SHOCK:** Competitors participate in a team-based event where players from each team take turns buzzing in “Family Feud” style to answer cultural and current event questions about the region where their assigned language is spoken.



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SPC Michael Renner of the 341st Military Intelligence Battalion, Washington Army National Guard, uses personal items of a fictional adversary to create a mock profile during the Site Exploration event of the 2019 Polyglot Games at the brigade's 30th Annual Language Conference, March 2019.



# Supporting Our Military Kids

By Staff Writer Tatyana White-Jenkins

The National Guard recognizes that the dedication and commitment of National Guard Families directly contribute to the readiness of the force. Families are the force behind the force. Over the years, the National Guard has demonstrated its commitment to Guard Families by implementing a host of programs specifically geared toward serving Guard Families. One such program is Our Military Kids, Inc., a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization dedicated to recognizing and supporting children of deployed National Guard service members and children of wounded warriors from all Service branches.

Since 9/11, two million children have been affected by wartime deployment. One-third of those children are at high risk for psychological issues such as anxiety and depression. To help children cope with the stress and anxiety that can come with their parents recovering or deploying, Our Military Kids awards grants to military children to be used toward a variety of recreational and academic activities. The grants cover fees for activities such as sports, camps, fine arts programs and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and tutoring programs. Each grant may be up to \$500

and covers up to six months of activity per child.

Founded in 2004, Our Military Kids has given out more than 65,000 grants, totaling \$26 million, to children of service members from across the United States, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Guam. The grants have made positive and lasting impacts on receiving Families. According to Our Military Kids' 2017 survey, 98 percent of Families who received a grant saw an improvement in the entire Family's well-being and 94 percent saw a decrease in their child's stress and anxiety.

Qualifying children must have a parent who is a National Guard service member currently deployed overseas, and the deployment must be at least 180 days (or 120 days for Air National Guard). When applying, there must be at least 60 days remaining on the parent's orders (or 30 days for the Air National Guard). Children must be at least five years old and in grades K through 12 to qualify.

For children of the wounded to qualify for the grant, the service member/Veteran must have sustained combat-related injuries while deployed in support of any post-9/11 overseas contingency operation. The service member must be classified as severely injured in one of the six categories

Soldiers of the 29th Combat Aviation Brigade help children of the unit's deployed Soldiers during a kids' fishing tournament hosted by the 29th and the Army Aviation Association of America Mid Atlantic Chapter, in partnership with the local Family Readiness Support Center, at CAPA Field, Aberdeen Proving Ground, Edgewood Area, Md., May 2017.

Maryland Army National Guard photo by SGT Nancy Spicer

designated by the Department of Veterans Affairs and have a case manager who is able to certify the information in writing.

Grant checks are issued directly to the organization providing the activity or tutoring service. Ineligible programs include school tuition, religious mission trips and childcare. To apply for a grant, eligible Families must complete and submit a one-page application along with all required documents. ●

For a full list of required application documents, eligible activities and detailed information about Our Military Kids, go to **[OurMilitaryKids.org](http://OurMilitaryKids.org)**.

# Safety in the Home:

**FIRE**

BY STAFF WRITER Aryn Kitchell

**A**s the Nation's first responders in times of natural disasters, Guard Soldiers know exactly what to do to evacuate and lead others to safety. Often, first responders are so intently focused on preparing to save others, they forget they must also prepare for their own safety and the safety of their families during unexpected emergencies—like a fire.

Fire can spread and destroy your home quickly. In such an emergency, it's important you and your family know what to do and are able to do it fast. Home fires are preventable, but if the worst happens you should be prepared to get out of your home quickly and safely. The use of a smoke detector and regularly practicing an evacuation plan, will greatly increase the chances of escaping a fire safely.

Most States either require by law or strongly encourage all residents to keep a working smoke detector in the home. It is best to have a smoke detector on every level of the home, and outside all sleeping areas. Check smoke detectors

monthly to ensure they are operational and the batteries are working. Talk to your children about your evacuation plan, making sure they recognize the sound of the smoke detector and know what to do if it goes off. As part of your fire escape plan, determine with your family two ways to get out of the house, if possible, two ways to get out of each room in the house and somewhere that would be a safe distance from the house to go and meet. Practice the escape plan twice a year. Consider practicing escape routes with your eyes closed to simulate the blinding effects of smoke. Teach children not to hide from firefighters if they get trapped in a room.

During a fire, stay low to the ground to avoid inhaling smoke and poisonous gases. Before opening any door, feel the doorknob and the door itself to check if it is hot. If either is hot, do not open the door and, instead, find another way out. After confirming it is safe to do so, open doors slowly and be ready to shut it quickly if there is heavy smoke or fire on the other

side of the door. Once outside at the determined meeting place, call 911 and do not reenter the building. If you or a loved one is injured, or a loved one or pet is still inside the home, tell the 911 emergency operator so they can relay that information to firefighters and other first responders.

If trapped inside during a fire, close the door to the room and try to cover any openings with cloth or tape to keep smoke out of the room. Call 911 and tell the emergency operator where in the home you are located.

After a fire, check with the fire department to determine when and if your home is safe to enter, but remain cautious and aware of any structural damage caused by the fire. The fire department will either make sure that utilities are safe to use or disconnect them. Do not reconnect utilities yourself. Instead, call a professional to do this. Visit Redcross.org/Find-Your-Local-Chapter to contact a local Red Cross office for help with temporary housing, food or medicine. ●



# Coverage for Your Family

The **Family Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance** (FSGLI) is available to spouses and dependent children of National Guard members who are insured under Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI). The service member pays the premium for spousal coverage and dependent children are insured at no additional cost.

## FSGLI offers:

- a maximum of \$100,000 of insurance coverage for spouses (not to exceed the SGLI amount of the insured member)
- \$10,000 for dependent children
- Spousal coverage issues in increments of \$10,000

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SGT David Martinez, team leader with B Company, 1st Battalion, 114th Infantry Regiment, 44th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, New Jersey Army National Guard, holds his godson before boarding a transport to Fort Dix, N.J., for deployment with his unit in support of Operation Spartan Shield.

New Jersey Army National Guard photo by  
SGT Jorge Morales



For more information about FSGLI benefits and rates, go to  
**[Benefits.VA.gov/insurance/fsgli.asp](http://Benefits.VA.gov/insurance/fsgli.asp)**

# Low Profile Protectors

**The Washington, D.C., Civil Support Team**

BY STAFF WRITER Matthew Liptak

The 22 Active Guard Reserve Soldiers and Airmen of the Washington D.C. Army National Guard 33rd Civil Support Team (CST) are by no means the largest unit in the Army National Guard; however, they play a huge role in protecting the Nation's Capital and many of the Nation's most prominent officials. Though they keep a low profile, D.C.'s CST is often in the background of America's most high-profile and high-security events.

When it comes to the work of a CST, most people think strictly of the units' emergency work responding to direct Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) incidents. Many do not realize that these units also play an integral role in assessing threats and providing security well before the occurrence of an actual CBRN event. Like many U.S. Army units, CSTs spend far more time working to detect and prevent threats than they ever do responding to them.

The men and women of D.C.'s 33rd CST, and the D.C. National Guard as a whole, are unique among the hundreds of

thousands of Guard Soldiers in America, in that they are vested with the task of protecting the Nation's Capital and in that they are the only National Guard organization activated solely by the President of the United States for natural and civil emergencies.

"We probably interact more with federal agencies than any other team just based on where we are," said SFC Christopher Miller, hazard modeler and

operations noncommissioned officer in charge for the 33rd.

LTC Joel A. Smith, commander of the 33rd CST, shared a similar sentiment.

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SFC Damien Silva, an information systems specialist for the 33rd Civil Support Team, District of Columbia Army National Guard, checks a digital map of Washington, D.C., in preparation for the 2016 Nuclear Security Summit, held at the Washington Convention Center.

District of Columbia Army National Guard photo by SSG Aimee Fujikawa





ABOVE: SGT Solomon Acevero, a survey team member for the 33rd Civil Support Team, directs a vehicle for an emergency response during the 58th Presidential Inauguration.

District of Columbia Army National Guard photo by SGT Jennifer Amo

INSET: Interior shot of the 33rd Civil Support Team's mobile Common Analytical Laboratory System.

National Guard Bureau photo by Luke Sohl

"I think the uniqueness of D.C. is all the different jurisdictions that we work with. Things here quickly go from local to federal and kind of co-mingle. When you [move] 10 feet over, you're in a different jurisdiction."

To ensure the National Guard, federal and local government assets are always prepared to effectively partner together whenever the need arises, the 33rd CST executes roughly a dozen joint training exercises every year in partnership with local agencies and first responders. LTC Smith said over the years he has seen marked improvement in the interagency interoperability of all organizations involved in the exercises, including the 33rd. According to LTC Smith, both technology and more advanced training are responsible for these advancements.

The 33rd CST is on duty for roughly a dozen high-profile special events a year plus a handful of National Special Security Events (NSSEs), according to LTC Smith. An NSSE is a nationally significant, high-visibility event that, due to its political, economic, social or religious consequence,

has been designated a high-risk target for domestic or international terrorism, requiring the presence of the head of the Secret Service.

"Some States may not see one of those [NSSEs] in an entire year and we're seeing two to three every year," LTC Smith commented. "And then we also have large events like the presidential inauguration, nuclear security summits, or the Papal visit, where we have 7,000 to 8,000 National Guard Soldiers [on duty] here."

For those larger events, the 33rd could be directing over 200-plus CST personnel who have been assigned to the event, LTC Smith said. Just supporting those events and standing up a task force to manage that number of people can be challenging.

"It becomes a personnel issue of doing a lot of stuff with a little bit of people," he explained.

The 33rd CST was on duty during the 2018 Presidential State of the Union Address held in Washington, D.C., at the Capitol building. For such a high-security event, the 33rd calls on the help of CSTs from the Maryland, Delaware, Kentucky

and West Virginia Army National Guards.

"There are 57 [civil support] teams out there, and we work interchangeably with each other," said LTC Smith. "That's pretty standard for everything we do here. We have multiple CST members supporting, just because most of these events require more than a 22-person team can handle."

During high-profile events like the State of the Union, the 33rd and supporting CST units partner with a Joint Hazard Assessment Team (JHAT). The State of the Union JHAT was made up of Army National Guard CSTs—led by the 33rd—the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Washington, D.C. Fire Department, the Metropolitan Police Department, the Capitol Police and U.S. Park Police.

"Our team is the monitoring detection arm of a [JHAT]," said LTC Smith. "In a hazmat incident for a chemical, biological, radiological incident, they would call our team to do the initial assessment—monitoring and detection. It could be technical decontamination, or they might need our mobile laboratory or communication support."



According to LTC Smith, the Army supplies the 33rd CST with cutting-edge equipment and technology. The unit is often fielded with new equipment and systems even before its active duty counterparts.

The unit's rolling equipment includes a command vehicle, operations trailer, a communications vehicle that provides a broad array of secure communications, several general-purpose vehicles and a common analytical laboratory system (CALS). The CALS is a \$2 million mobile laboratory that provides scientific analysis, diagnostic and investigative capabilities on a truck platform. It includes equipment capable of detecting and identifying threatening CBRN agents, enabling field commanders to make more informed decisions concerning risk management for both Soldiers and the public.

The unit is scheduled to receive a new CALS in May of 2019. The new CALS will be larger and packed with even more equipment. It will also feature a more ergonomic environment for the Soldiers.

Another of the unit's newest pieces of technology is the National Guard CBRN Response Enterprise (CRE) Information

**"What's kept me in this field for so long is I see the impact on a day-to-day basis. When we deploy and go overseas, as Soldiers we see the immediate impact of what we do... With the CST, I see it when I'm working with first responders and with agencies. I see the impact of what we're doing every day."**

— LTC Joel A. Smith

Management System (NG CIMS)—a system of record designed to provide CSTs, CBRN Enhanced Response Force Packages (CERFPs) and Homeland Response Forces with a standardized tactical-level common operating picture and situational understanding tool to manage mission operations and information. The NG CIMS also provides a suite of software applications and devices that allow the exchange of secure information between CRE forces and with other Department of Defense and local government first responders.

The 33rd is one of a handful of units to receive the technology. National Guard CST units from Virginia, Hawaii, Massachusetts, California and Oregon are also part of the leading groups using the new system.

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Civil Support Team Soldiers are shown conducting checks on the Command Information Management System prior to the 2019 Presidential State of the Union in support of the 33rd Civil Support Team. Left to right: MSG Gregory Terry and CPT Ryan Hubbs, both of the 41st Civil Support Team, Kentucky Army National Guard; MSG Brandon Helt of the 32nd Civil Support Team, Maryland Army National Guard; SSG Aaron Brady, 1st Civil Support Team, Kentucky Army National Guard.

National Guard Bureau photo by Luke Sohl



"[The NG CIMS] has been eight years of blood, sweat and tears in development," said CPT Keith Hapenney of the 33rd CST. "I love it. Really what it's done is it's allowed for tactical-level command and control, and tactical level management of information. [We can] direct down-on-the-ground. Individuals can integrate together quickly and effectively. We can pull sensor data. We can share pictures through a pack we call the Awareness Kit. It gives us situational awareness, much faster than in previous instances."

Many CST Soldiers are drawn to the work because of the unique and high-tech nature of the missions completed by the units.

On the day of the 2019 Presidential State of the Union Address, SPC Jontarius Clay was the newest member of the 33rd's survey team. In fact, the State of the Union was his first day on the job.

"I'm excited because this is what I want to do," SPC Clay said. "I've heard great things about CST. I've heard that [the 33rd] is the best that the D.C. Guard has to offer. That's what I want to be—the best."

This sentiment was echoed by LTC Smith. "I really love the science and technology," he stated.

The commander started out in field artillery. He said that, like many Soldiers, he enjoyed being able to blow things up, but that the enjoyment placed a distant

second compared to the satisfaction he has gained from being a part of the 33rd CST.

"What's kept me in this field for so long is I see the impact on a day-to-day [basis]," LTC Smith explained. "When we deploy and go overseas, [as Soldiers] we see the immediate impact of what we do. [When we work domestically,] we can go long periods of time without seeing that impact. With the CST, I see it when I'm working with first responders and with agencies. I see the

impact of what we're doing every day."

Working as one of America's low-profile protectors in a CST unit is a unique opportunity for any Soldier. It is even more unique for the members of D.C.'s 33rd CST. Those who have found a home in this incredibly active CST, say there is no better opportunity in the Army National Guard.

"For me, this has been the best job in the Guard," LTC Smith said. ●



ABOVE: SSG Daniel Billingsley (right), communications chief of the D.C. Army National Guard's 33rd Civil Support Team, and SSG Blake Culver of the 41st Civil Support Team, Kentucky Army National Guard, set up and inspect a TALON robot in advance of the 2019 Presidential State of the Union.

BETWEEN: SGT Michael Cohen (right) of the 33rd Civil Support Team, District of Columbia Army National Guard, and SGT Lucas Bagley of the 32nd Civil Support Team, Maryland Army National Guard, perform a systems check prior to the 2019 Presidential State of the Union.

National Guard Bureau photos by Luke Sohl





# Ten Tips to Arm Yourself Against Cyber Threats

BY STAFF WRITER Tatyana White-Jenkins

**W**ith advancements in online technology moving forward with lightning speed, cybersecurity has become one of the Department of Defense's top security concerns. Proper adherence to cybersecurity protocols ensures the Army's defense against online predators, and when one Soldier becomes vulnerable to cyber threats, the entire force can become susceptible.

The Army Cyber Security Campaign is an ongoing effort to promote awareness and cybersecurity best practices for Soldiers, Civilians, contractors and Family members.

From detailed social media posts to unprotected devices, many issues can leave a service member vulnerable to cyber adversaries. Now more than ever, Soldiers need to be armed with tools like those provided by the Army Cyber Security Campaign to remain protected online.

In the spirit of the Army Cyber Security Campaign, the following is a list of 10 simple ways to remain aware and protected while online:

1

## MINIMIZE THE PERSONAL INFORMATION YOU SHARE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

When using social media, limit the amount of personal details shared. Sharing information like a personal address, birth year or phone number can easily compromise privacy and lead to dangerous consequences.

"If your post is out there on social media, it's out there forever and whether [or not] you take it down is inconsequential to the outcome," said Jack Harrison, a division chief with the National Guard Bureau (NGB)'s Office of Public Affairs who oversees the NGB's social media and web presence. "Protecting yourself starts from moment one."

2

## CHOOSE YOUR FRIENDS WISELY

While it's great to be friendly, when it comes to social media, it is important to be critical of potential friendships. Be sure to examine each friend request before hitting accept. Accepting friend requests from people you do not know can be as risky as letting a burglar in your front door.

**3**

### REFRAIN FROM UPDATING YOUR LOCATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

Sharing a current vacation spot or pictures from a recent work event may seem like an exciting thing to do, but it can actually be detrimental to individual security and the security of others.

"Divulging someone's exact location would not only be a personal security concern, but an operational security issue relative to the units in which that person serves," Harrison noted.

A criminal can easily trace a person or learn daily routines if locations are publicized online. Location information can also be saved through the geotagging on apps like the camera on a phone. Be sure to deactivate the geotagging feature on all mobile devices.

**4**

### DO NOT OPEN ATTACHED FILE SENT TO YOUR INBOX IF YOU ARE UNSURE OF THE SENDER

Opening an attachment from an unknown source can result in a hacker gaining access to your information. Be sure to only download attachments from senders you recognize and trust. If the subject matter of the email containing the attachment seems suspicious in any way, confirm the email was actually sent by the noted sender before opening the attachment.

**5**

### READ THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS BEFORE SIGNING UP WITH ANY SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM

Though it may seem tedious, reading the Terms and Conditions section on a social media platform is vital to ensuring security. Knowing the details of the platform's privacy settings and regulations helps to confirm how and when personal information is being protected.

**6**

### BE MINDFUL OF YOUR DEVICE SETTINGS

Bluetooth and other wireless capabilities on cellphones and laptops can leave you vulnerable to hackers. In public settings, be sure to always check your wireless settings and security features so others cannot access your device's information.

"The effort to protect information isn't only about the social media platforms," Harrison said. "It's also about the technology in laptops on desks or the cellphones in hands, [and] it's about making sure to use the technology to protect [oneself]."

**7**

### IF YOU SIGN IN ON A PUBLIC COMPUTER, ENSURE THAT YOU PROPERLY SIGN OUT BEFORE LEAVING

After using a public computer, it is important to sign out from each account you used. Forgetting to sign out may leave account information and passwords accessible to those who use the computer next.

**8**

### CHANGE YOUR PASSWORD OFTEN

Changing passwords at regular intervals is crucial to ensuring accounts are secure. Doing so can deprive hackers the time needed to figure out passwords to break into accounts and steal valuable information.

**9**

### KEEP YOUR DEVICES IN THE RIGHT HANDS

Be careful about who handles your smartphone and other internet-enabled devices. Social media accounts and other personal information can be accessed through these devices, so be mindful of who is allowed to use them.

**10**

### THINK BEFORE YOU POST

When it comes to posting on social media, it is important to think twice not only about the amount of information being posted, but also about the type of information being posted. Posting details that make it easier for hackers to penetrate accounts and steal valuable information is just one concern. Another is posting information that could show you, or fellow unit members, in a bad light.

"You need to ask yourself how much of your life you want to be exposed," noted Harrison. "From a military perspective, what would your commander think? One moment of your life can easily go viral and affect or destroy your career."

"At the end of the day, it's all about common sense overriding the desire to be [noticed on social media]," he continued.

"You can do both, but you have to be safe and protect yourself by taking some common sense steps at the very beginning." ●





# Three Career Paths, One Incredible Example of Service



Chief of Staff of the New York Army National Guard COL John Andonie pins CW3 Albert Thiem, Electronic Warfare Officer for the 42nd Infantry Division, during his promotion ceremony at the Division of Military and Naval Affairs Headquarters in Latham, N.Y., Nov. 9, 2018.

New York Army National Guard photo by CPT Jean Marie Kratzer

BY STAFF WRITER Tatyana White-Jenkins

**A**t just 16 years old, CW3 Albert Thiem joined the Vermont Army National Guard and began on a winding path of unexpected career endeavors. After close to 38 years of dedicated service in the Army National Guard, CW3 Thiem stands as a shining example of how Soldiers can take advantage of the many different avenues of opportunities offered by the Guard to propel themselves to a long, diverse and successful career. It is quite an impressive story for someone who originally joined the Guard on a whim.

"Essentially, I had no idea what I wanted to do," CW3 Thiem explained. "I didn't have much money and needed a break between high school and college. I

was still rather young, too, so I thought I would try something different."

He enlisted in the Vermont Army National Guard on June 6, 1981, the Remembrance Day of D-Day. He went off to basic training at Fort McClellan, Alabama, and became a chemical operations specialist for the 2nd Battalion, 172nd Armor. While still active with the 172nd, he enrolled at Castleton State College in Vermont. During his sophomore year, then-SPC Thiem joined ROTC under the Simultaneous Membership Program (SMP), a program that allows Soldiers to serve in the Guard and their college's ROTC program at the same time.

"I had some time in, so I was able to

become a junior in the ROTC program," CW3 Thiem explained. "Since I had prior service, I was actually commissioned during my junior year of college."

At this point, CW3 Thiem had his sights set on aviation. However, his path to aviation would not be a straight one.

"My hopes and dreams then were aviation," he recalled. "I found out that I was branched armor and I became an armor officer after completing college. Armor wasn't initially what I wanted, but I embraced it and went forward with it. The caveat to that was I had to complete my officer basic upon completion [of school] so I completed my armor officer basic course at Fort Knox, Kentucky, during the



Basic Training graduation, January 1982. Then-PV1 Albert Thiem (circled) is shown 3rd row, second from right.

Photos courtesy CW3 Albert Thiem

summer of 1986.”

From there, CW3 Thiem was assigned to the brigade headquarters of 2nd Battalion, 172nd Armor. Still passionate about aviation, he had his name put on a waiting list for flight school. In 1987, his name was selected.

“I was thrilled once the aviation opportunity came to be,” he noted.

CW3 Thiem attended flight school at Fort Rucker, Alabama. After graduating in 1989, he became a pilot and an aviation platoon leader for the 1-126th General Support Aviation Company in Burlington, Vermont, until June of 1991.

He was then assigned as Detachment Commander of the 150th Air Traffic Control Platoon. As he was living in the neighboring State of New York, CW3 Thiem’s three-hour commute from his hometown in Troy to his Guard unit in Burlington, Vermont, was becoming burdensome for both himself and his family. After serving with the 150th for two years, he learned of a position with the New York Army National Guard’s 42nd Infantry Division, which was based just 30 minutes from his home. CW3 Thiem jumped at the opportunity.

CW3 Thiem was chosen for the Assistant G3 Air position with the 42nd Infantry Division in 1993. After serving in that position for two years, another

opportunity emerged in June of 1995 that allowed him to get back to his roots and utilize his experience in armor.

“An opportunity came up for another command, but it was in armor,” said CW3 Thiem. “From June of 1995 through June of 1998 I [went back to armor and] was an armor company commander. I used my experience in the two branches [armor and aviation] to my advantage, jumping from one to another.”



CW3 Thiem is shown with his former tank crew during their 1998 Annual Training at Ft. Drum, N.Y.—Left to Right: Then-CPT Albert Thiem, Tank Commander/Company Commander; SSG Wulforst, Gunner; SPC Hoffman, Loader; and SGT Woodruff, Driver.



to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. He worked in the 42nd Division Main Headquarters in one of Saddam Hussein’s former palaces in Tikrit, Iraq. Following that deployment, CW3 Thiem remained with the 42nd Infantry Division

until he was approaching his mandatory retirement date (MRD) in June of 2013. When he looked towards retirement and back on his tremendous service, he realized he was not ready to leave it all behind.

“I had held various staff positions up to that point and thought to myself that at the age of 49, I wasn’t ready to get out,” he explained. “I felt I had more to do and more that I could [offer]. The thought of leaving the uniform and the duty after so many years was

very hard.”

To find an alternative route, CW3 Thiem spoke with a warrant officer recruiter who had reverted from an officer to a warrant officer. While the transition was unusual, it was possible. The New York Army National Guard was in need of electronic warfare officers, and while CW3 Thiem did not have direct

## “Every Soldier needs to be their own manager of their career, because you can’t depend on other people to manage it for you.”

— CW3 Albert Thiem

After his role as an armor company commander for the 101st Cavalry Regiment, CW3 Thiem returned to the 42nd Infantry Division in June 1998 as the assistant air operations and planning officer (G3-Air). In 2000, he became the G3-Air and held that role for four years.

It was in 2004, while CW3 Thiem was serving as the G3-Air, that he deployed



LEFT: Then-ILT Albert Thiem shown Fall of 1998 during flight school at Ft. Rucker, Ala., after completing his first solo flight in a UH-1 Huey.

MIDDLE: Then-MAJ Albert Thiem (right) shown summer of 2004 with fellow service members during a Black Hawk transition course at Ft. Rucker, Ala.

RIGHT: Then-MAJ Albert Thiem shown during a 2005 deployment to Tikrit, Iraq, serving as G3-Air.

experience, his technical abilities, top secret security clearance and willingness to dedicate his time to the role made him a perfect candidate.

"I had a pretty good depth of experience, so it was a good fit for both parties," said CW3 Thiem. "It allowed me to continue on and serve in the Guard like I've enjoyed doing for so many years."

In 2014, CW3 Thiem graduated from the Electronic Warfare Warrant Officer Basic Course at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and returned to the 42nd Infantry Division as an electronic warfare technician. That type of transition is rare and can be difficult for Soldiers to complete. CW3 Thiem attributes his success in the transition to his supportive peers and his easy-going temperament.

"For me, it was easy transitioning to warrant," CW3 Thiem said. "I still worked with the same people that I worked with before. In some cases, the people I worked for that I rated, they rated me later. That part was awkward. But I don't carry an ego or anything like that. I'm a pretty low-key kind of person as far as personality, so I had zero issues with the transition."

Since his transition, CW3 Thiem has

participated in four Warfighter exercises—a two-week command and control exercise that tests and evaluates a headquarters reaction and methods of battle—two at division level, two at brigade level, as well as a Joint Readiness Training Center rotation. He is now deployed to Fort Meade, Maryland, as part of Task Force Echo, a cyber unit focused on



Then-WO1 Albert Thiem (left and circled) shown in a class photo during his 2014 Electronic Warfare Warrant Officer Basic Course at Fort Sill, Okla.

supporting cyber operations and carrying out the defense of the Army network, until the spring of 2019.

With a career spanning close to four decades, CW3 Thiem has accumulated a host of awards and decorations, including the Bronze Star, the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal and eight Army Reserve Component



LEFT: Then-MAJ Albert Thiem, shown with fellow officers "The Iron Majors," October 2004, in advance of a deployment to Iraq. Left to Right: MAJ Pat Kern, MAJ John Andonie, MAJ Jim Beagen, MAJ Pat Macklin, MAJ Albert Thiem.

RIGHT: Four of the five "Iron Majors" shown after a dual promotion ceremony Nov. 9, 2018, where CW3 Thiem was promoted to chief warrant officer 3, and BG John Andonie was promoted from colonel to brigadier general. Left to Right: CW3 Albert Thiem, BG John Andonie, Jim Beagen (MAJ retired), COL Pat Macklin.

Photos courtesy CW3 Albert Thiem

Achievement Medals. His time in the Guard has encompassed responding to ice storms, hurricanes, the 9/11 attacks and more. He has experienced the equivalent of multiple military careers within his years of service. From enlisted, to officer, to warrant officer, CW3 Thiem's unique career is characterized by his willingness to adjust, adapt and revel in the opportunities presented to him.

"My purpose initially in the Guard was to buy a little time, get a little experience and to help with education, but it led to so much more than that," he commented. "I never imagined this [career] in my wildest dreams."

For Soldiers looking to grow their careers by leveraging the same approach and opportunities as CW3 Thiem, he recommends staying active and hands on when it comes to looking for new opportunities.

"Every Soldier needs to be their own manager of their career, because you can't depend on other people to manage it for you," he noted. "It is something that you need to take hold of and [do] for yourself."

He also emphasized the importance of persistence and passion for your service, in addition to accepting help from others.

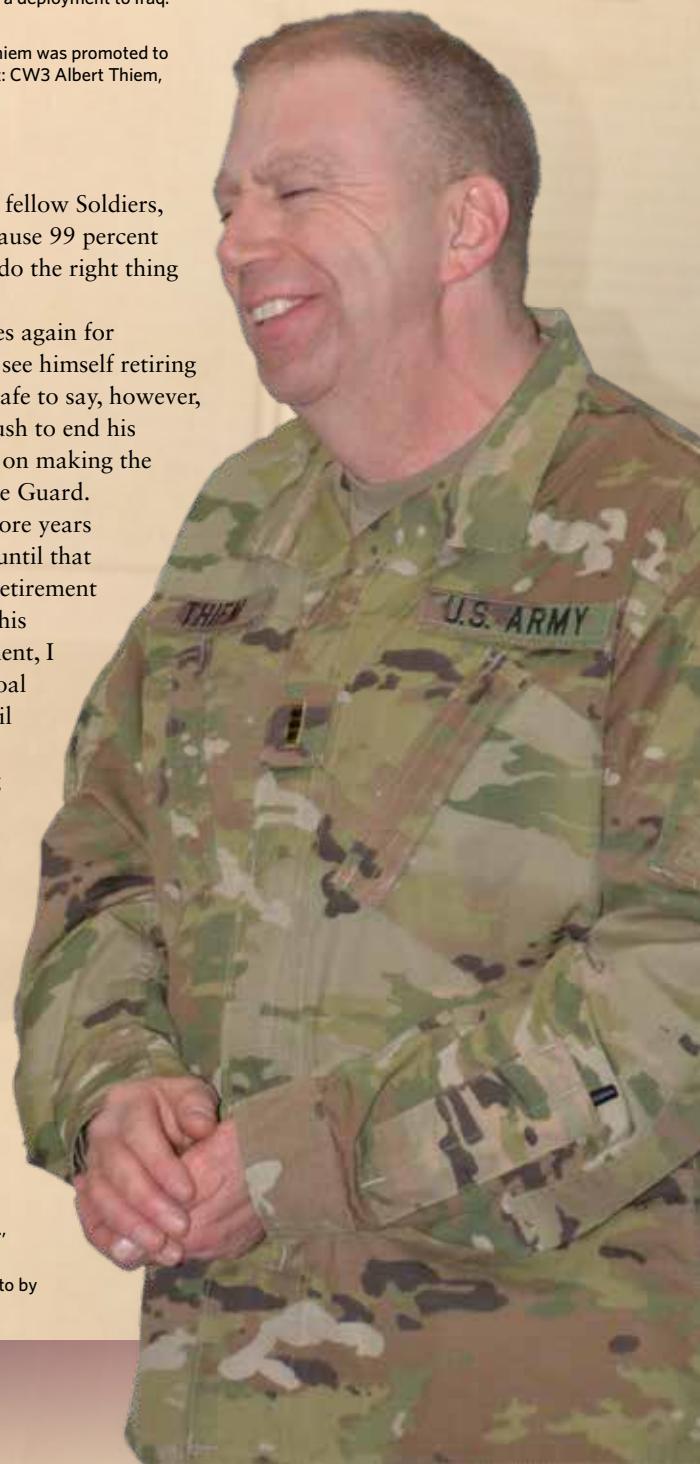
"The key thing is, if it's something you enjoy and love, it's all about perseverance and dedication," he said. "There's going to be some rough times before there are good times and vice versa. Sometimes, you can't see the forest through the trees when you're at the lower grade.

"But there are people who will help you along the way," he continued. "An important lesson

I've learned is to trust your fellow Soldiers, peers and subordinates because 99 percent of the time they will try to do the right thing [to help you]."

As retirement approaches again for CW3 Thiem, he can finally see himself retiring from military service. It is safe to say, however, that CW3 Thiem is in no rush to end his incredible career and plans on making the most of his final years in the Guard.

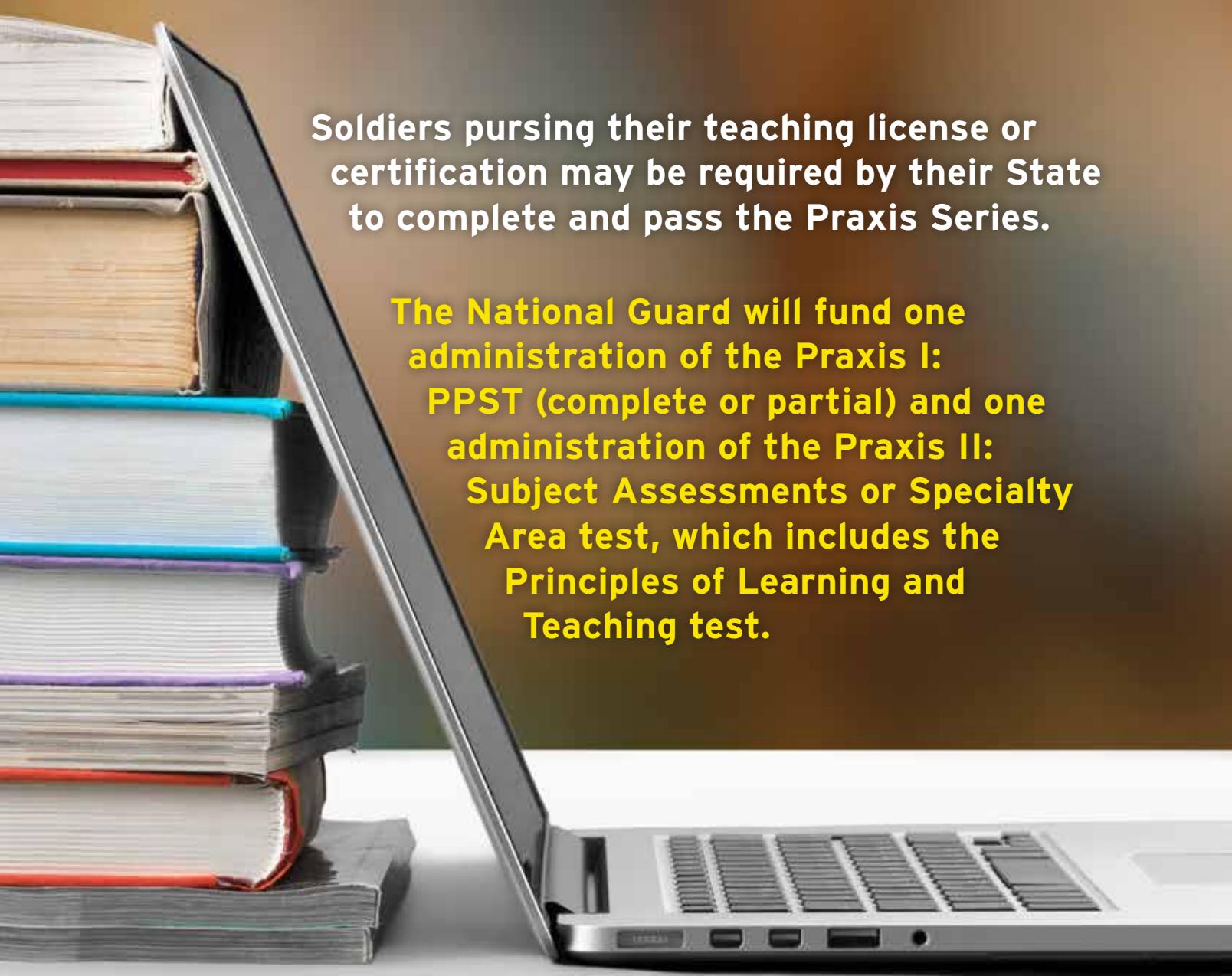
"I could stay for four more years and most likely, I will stay until that point when I can earn my retirement pay," he explained. "After this [Task Force Echo] deployment, I think the age of 59 is my goal for retirement. I can go until that day, and possibly have another deployment during that time. We'll see how it shakes out." ●



CW3 Albert Thiem smiles after his promotion ceremony at the Division of Military and Naval Affairs Headquarters in Latham, N.Y., Nov. 9, 2018.

New York Army National Guard photo by CPT Jean Marie Kratzer

# Taking the Praxis? We've Got You Covered.



Soldiers pursing their teaching license or certification may be required by their State to complete and pass the Praxis Series.

The National Guard will fund one administration of the Praxis I: PPST (complete or partial) and one administration of the Praxis II: Subject Assessments or Specialty Area test, which includes the Principles of Learning and Teaching test.

For more information on National Guard funding of the Praxis exams, contact your State Education Services Officer. Contact information may be found at [NationalGuard.com/Tools/Education-Counseling-Services](http://NationalGuard.com/Tools/Education-Counseling-Services).

For more information about the Praxis tests, go to [ETS.org/praxis/](http://ETS.org/praxis/). To register for a test, go to [ETS.org/praxis/register](http://ETS.org/praxis/register).



# The Kansas Guard LIZARD

BY STAFF WRITER Matthew Liptak

Photos courtesy SPC Efrain Morales



SPC Efrain Morales "La Lagartija (The Lizard)" spars in preparation for a fight in Denver, Colo., February 2018.

**O**n the High Plains in southwest Kansas, a teenaged son of a cowboy walked into an old horse barn about 50 miles west of Dodge City. He was there to help a friend.

There were no horses or cows in the barn. Instead, what greeted him was a handful of boxers, preparing to train in a makeshift gym. Centerstage was a boxing ring made from sections of a wrecked semi-trailer that had been pieced together. Mismatched paint covered the walls, which were constructed from wood that had been salvaged or donated by the local Home Depot.

The young teen had not inherited his father's affinity for life in a saddle. A life in the boxing ring was more his calling. Today that young teen goes by the alias of La Lagartija—The Lizard—in the ring, but his fellow National Guard Soldiers

know him as SPC Efrain Morales of the 731st Trucking Company, 169th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 69th Troop Command, Kansas Army National Guard.

When he entered that gym in Garden City, Kansas, over a half dozen years ago, he did not go in with great expectations. He was there merely as a favor to his former manager, sparring with local boxing hopefuls who were training at the gym.

But SPC Morales' performance in the ring that day can only be described as unexpected. He punished the other men, landing punch after punch. The outcome was startling to both SPC Morales and his former manager, Juan Aldana. SPC Morales had left boxing in his past, but obviously, his talent for throwing punches had not left him.

"I went in there and I [was]

tremendous, and I made a lot of them look bad" SPC Morales joked as he remembered the day. "[Aldana] pulled me aside and he said 'What are you doing? Why aren't you out here still?'

"It just caught me off guard, but this is what I'm, what I'm destined to do. November 22, 2014, I made my professional debut. It's just been a war storm since then."

The build-up to that storm began over a decade earlier. When SPC Morales started boxing, he was just six or seven years old. At first, his motivations for wanting to box were pretty simple. He was the smallest kid in the neighborhood, so his dad, Efrain Morales Sr., introduced him to sparring at a local gym, telling him "You better not cry."

He didn't know it then, but boxing would become the thing for which he

would develop a tenacious passion. It would also be the thing to help keep him off the sometimes mean streets of Garden City and lead him to eventually become a professional athlete. Back then, the rewards were more fundamental.

"I saw a big old smile on my Dad's face and I've fallen in love with [boxing] ever since," he said.

Efrain Morales Sr., a Mexican immigrant and cancer survivor, still spends long days riding in the feedlots in Garden City, tending to herds to put food on his family's table.

The younger Morales learned much from his father's example of strength and tenacity. "My Dad and all his struggles are why I want to be somebody, why I continue to box," said SPC Morales.

There's at least one other man in Garden City that SPC Morales admires—his manager and friend, Aldana, who he met when he was 15. Aldana had started the Garden City Boxing Club and SPC Morales joined.

SPC Morales called Aldana "one of the best dudes I know."



The Kansas State Championship Belt, awarded to SPC Efrain Morales as Kansas State Junior Middleweight Championship in November 2014.

Photo courtesy SARTONK

"The community has offered lackluster support for the sport," Aldana said. "It has been an uphill battle, training kids in civic halls and a series of garages. Exercise regimes for the boxing students sometimes spilled out into the street adjacent to the improvised gyms."

Even as a younger man, SPC Morales was physically gifted, Aldana said. To some extent, that was because he was tall, standing at just under six feet with long arms. His long reach allowed him to deliver blows to his opponents, while avoiding their jabs.

His raw talent earned SPC Morales a spot in the Silver Gloves competition in St. Louis, Missouri, almost immediately after he started boxing.

"We sent him off right away to St Louis and I believe he may have lost in the finals," Aldana remembered. "Then we came back and got to work and started [with the basics]. We took him back to the step one—learning how to throw punches, how to throw certain combinations, how to stand, all of that."

SPC Morales' boxing journey has not been a straight line. He decided to step away from the sport after his junior year of high school when he broke his ankle in a soccer match. He wasn't as driven to get back into the ring. He said his parents were understanding but firm, and that they told him it was okay with them, but if he gave up the sport, he would have to find some other way to be productive.

Then, many months later, he was swept back into the



SPC Efrain Morales (center) displays his Championship Belt alongside fellow members of 731st Transportation Company —left to right: SSG Williams, WO Murphy, SGT Morris and SGT Macias.

SPC Efrain Morales in the ring during a fight in March 2017.

ring when he opened the door on that converted horse barn—the club's new gym—and agreed to spar for Aldana.

SPC Morales won the Kansas State Junior Middleweight Championship in November 2014 by defeating Eric Rosales in his professional debut. He has retained the belt to this day. He has gone on to defeat a half dozen other opponents—three by knockout.

Still fully committed to his boxing career, SPC Morales was compelled to become a U.S. Soldier around the time of the 2016 presidential election. The fierce divisiveness present in the country at the time motivated SPC Morales to take a stand that would demonstrate his love for both his country and his heritage.

"I just wanted to show that my parents are immigrants from Mexico and raised their kids with good values," he explained. "I ran into a SFC Frank Garcia. He said you can box in the Guard, you can be a role model, you can be that face and if you ever want to go back to school, it's free. Yeah, I scratched my head a couple times. I said, 'You know what? If you can make it happen, I'll do it.' I didn't

even think twice about it."

In the Kansas Army National Guard, SPC Morales is a wheeled vehicle mechanic. His commander said the Soldier is serious about his duties and has come to be an integral part of his unit.

"I can't count the times that a truck would come in and the platoon sergeant would holler for Morales and put him on it," said 731st Trucking Company Commander CPT Adam Beckman. "Obviously the E5s are running things, but Morales catches on really quick and they can rely upon him to get the job done."

The 131st participated in Exercise Golden Coyote as their Annual Training last year. CPT Beckman said SPC Morales put in long days and nights during the two weeks—often logging 14-hour shifts. BG Anthony Mohatt, the assistant adjutant general of Kansas, presented SPC Morales with a commemorative coin for his dedication to duty during Golden Coyote.

The Kansas Soldier's last fight of 2018 was a big one. Its outcome only emphasizes the volatile nature of professional sports. One day you're on top, the next day you're fighting to get back on top. In September 2018, he fought Brad Jackson for the American Boxing Federation USA Super Welterweight title. Jackson is a tenured boxer with over 30 bouts under his belt.

SPC Morales lost the fight by knockout. "I would definitely take a rematch any day just to avenge the vendetta," SPC Morales said. "It's a learning experience for me. It ate me

up for a couple months."

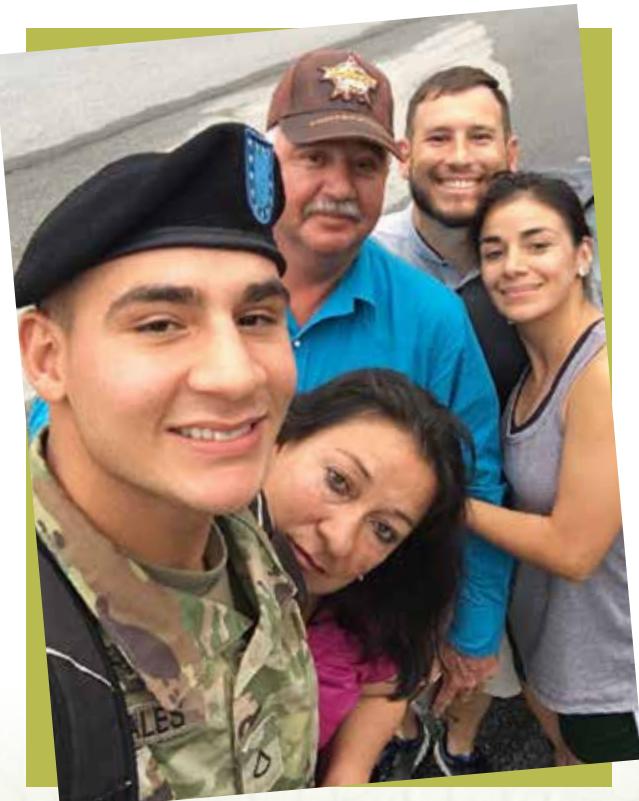
With a 7-1 record, SPC Morales said he sees his window for more boxing glory as somewhat smaller, but he's taking his shot and moving forward. He has another fight scheduled for July 2019.

His window for the Army National Guard, and life in general, remain wide open. SPC Morales said he has aspirations to get into politics some day and will likely take advantage of his Guard service to get a college degree in political science.

His commander said he could see SPC Morales gaining the rank of sergeant in the not-so-distant future, and, with SPC Morales' can-do attitude and outgoing personality, he thinks future political ambitions are not out of reach.

"He's got the right personality for it," CPT Beckman said. "He shows genuine concern for his fellow Soldiers. He's intellectually curious, which is what our Army needs more and more [considering] the complex situations we find ourselves in. I think that would translate well into the political arena, should he go that route."

For now, SPC Morales is focused on the Guard and his boxing career. As he reinvigorates himself, mending and training, both in the ring and in the field, SPC Morales remains confident that his greatest triumphs are yet to unfold. ■



Then-PFC Efrain Morales takes a selfie with his mother, father Efrain Morales Sr., sister and brother-in-law after his boot camp graduation.

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Army COOL (Credentialing Opportunities On-Line) helps service members obtain information on certifications and licenses related to current or desired civilian or military jobs. By using Army COOL, service members may access background information on credentialing and find detailed information about:

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- Credentials related to an Army Military Occupational Specialty
- Potential gaps between Army training and civilian credentialing requirements
- Resources available to fill gaps between military training and civilian credentialing requirements

Learn more about credentialing opportunities and the Army COOL program at [Cool.army.mil](http://Cool.army.mil).







# PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD



## **Virginia National Guard**

flight crews provide aviation support to Soldiers assigned to the West Virginia National Guard's 19th Special Forces Group, Sept. 5, 2018, over Lake Erie in Hamburg, N.Y., just south of Buffalo. The flight crews, assigned to the Sandston-based 2nd Battalion, 224th Aviation Regiment, 29th Infantry Division, dropped operators into the lake as part of an evaluation and pre-deployment train-up while boats from the Hamburg Water Rescue, Hamburg Police Department, U.S. Coast Guard and Department of Homeland Security worked together to retrieve the troops and return to the dry land.

Virginia Army National Guard photo by SFC Terra C. Gatti





## PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD



### Soldiers with the

Kentucky Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Enhanced Response Force Package (CERFP)'s breech and break team use a hammer drill to extract a simulated victim from a rubble pile during an exercise evaluation at Camp Blanding, Fla., January 2019. The CERFP was tasked with responding to a 10-kiloton nuclear explosion, establishing a support zone, searching the hot zone for victims, extracting the victims from the hot zone, decontaminating the victims and providing medical assistance.

Kentucky Army National Guard photo by SGT Taylor Tribble







## PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD



### Members of Alpha

Company, 2nd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment, conduct table six tank crew qualification, February 2019, at the Orchard Combat Training Center in Boise, Idaho. The Idaho Army National Guard Soldiers are preparing for the 116th Cavalry Brigade Combat Team's upcoming rotation at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, Calif., later this year.

Idaho Army National Guard photo by SGT Mason Cutrer







## PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD



### Alabama Army

National Guard Soldiers, with the 1-173rd Infantry Regiment, take part in a live-fire trench warfare exercise at Fort Benning, Ga., March 2019.

Alabama Army National Guard photo by SSG William Frye





# PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD



## Aviators with the

Minnesota, Texas and Utah National Guards, led by the Kansas National Guard's 1st Battalion, 108th Aviation Regiment, practice landing and taking off during deck landing qualification training aboard the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer *USS Mitscher* (DDG 57) in the Arabian Gulf, February 2019.

Minnesota Army National Guard photo by SFC Ben Houtkooper





## PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD



**PFC William Snyder of**  
the 1st Battalion 173rd  
Infantry Regiment, Alabama  
Army National Guard,  
uses sniper camouflage  
techniques as part of a  
woodland stalking training at  
Eglin AFB, Fla., April 2018.

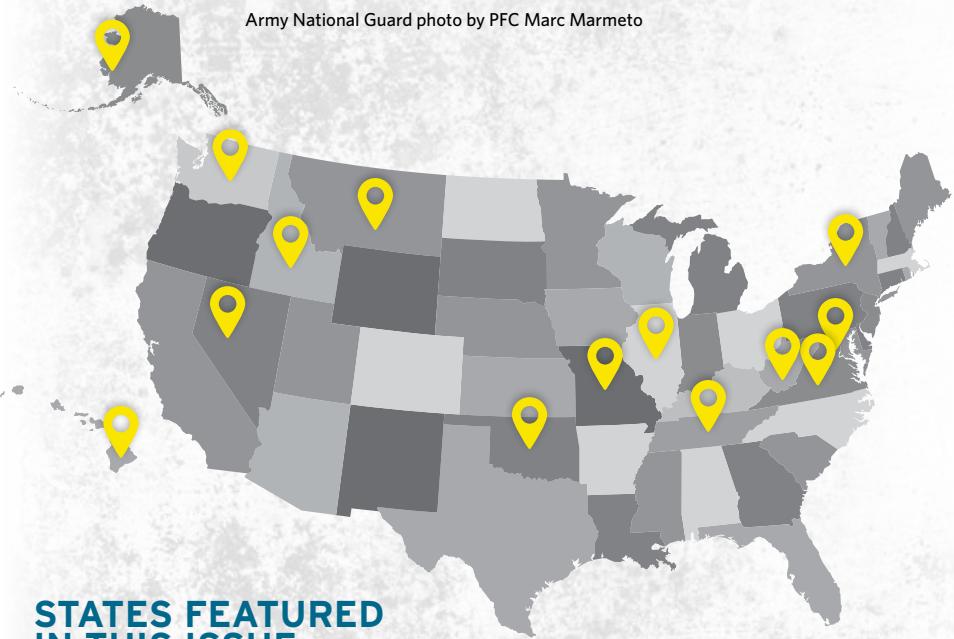
Alabama Army National Guard  
photo by SSG William Frye





Alaska Army National Guard Soldiers from Echo Company, 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment, serve food for the Philip A. Connelly Program for Excellence in Army Food Service on Camp Carroll, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, March 2019.

Army National Guard photo by PFC Marc Marmeto



## STATES FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE

- **ALASKA**
- **DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**
- **HAWAII**
- **IDAHO**
- **ILLINOIS**
- **MISSOURI**
- **NEVADA**
- **NEW YORK**
- **OKLAHOMA**
- **TENNESSEE**
- **VIRGINIA**
- **WASHINGTON**
- **WEST VIRGINIA**
- **WYOMING**

## ALASKA

BY 2LT MARISA LINDSAY,  
ALASKA ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

# Alaska Army National Guard Culinary Arts Soldiers Compete in National Field Feeding Competition

Culinary arts specialist Soldiers assigned to Echo Company, 1-207th Aviation Regiment, competed in the 52nd annual Philip A. Connelly Program for Excellence in Army Food Service in a field environment at Camp Carroll on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, March 2019.

The Connelly Program began in 1968 and is an Army-wide competition seeking the year's best field-feeding team.

throughout the National Guard, Reserve and active-duty components.

The Alaska National Guard's eight-person culinary team won the 2018 Pacific Northwest regional competition in the National Guard category, qualifying them to compete at the national level.

"We all work great with each other and we all love to cook," said SGT Bridget Horton, Echo Company.

Alaska's team is competing against the other National Guard regional winners—Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Minnesota—with a menu that includes chicken parmesan, calico corn, spring salad, wheat rolls, chili and pineapple upside-down cake.

The judges travel to each competing State to evaluate teams based on a points system that accounts for recipe adherence, sanitation, food safety, proper cooking techniques, field layout, culinary knowledge and hospitality in a field environment.

"How does the unit operate in a harsh situation like they have right now with snow on the ground and low temperatures?" asked Jeffrey Kingman, a judge for the competition.

The team performed all required culinary duties using a mobile kitchen trailer, which reflects the realistic conditions of preparing meals and feeding troops in the field.

Quality food has a larger impact than simply providing nutrition to allow Soldiers to accomplish their mission.

"It improves morale," said CPT Christina McCann, Echo Company commander. "So, everybody's out there doing their cold-weather training exercises. They're working hard, long hours during the day and so, to be able to have that warm meal – it's a really great opportunity for everybody to come together."

Due to restructuring, the culinary arts section residing within 1-207th Aviation will be absorbed into other support companies, making this their last opportunity to win the title for their current unit.

As Alaska is the first unit being judged, the Soldiers will have to wait until May to find out if they have won the competition. ●

## DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

BY TSGT ERICA RODRIGUES &  
LT COL MICHAEL ODLE,  
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA NATIONAL GUARD

# State Partnership Program Links D.C. National Guard and Burkina Faso

The country of Burkina Faso has become the 76th nation to join the Department of Defense State Partnership Program, following a formal signing ceremony with the District of Columbia National Guard and the National Armed Forces of Burkina Faso at the Ministry of Defense, this past February.

"Burkina Faso continues to be a U.S. strategic ally and an active partner in the fight against Violent Extremist Organizations," said Commanding General, D.C. National Guard MG William J. Walker. "We are eager to develop our partnership with Burkina Faso through targeted security force assistance programs aimed at building Burkina Faso's

capacity in specific areas such as counter-terrorism, peacekeeping, intelligence and defense institutions building."

A number of dignitaries witnessed the historic signing, including Burkina Faso's Secretary General of the Minister of Defense Justin Som; U.S. Ambassador to Burkina Faso Andrew Young; Brig. Gen. Moses Miningou, the Chief of General Staff for the National Armed Forces of Burkina Faso; and Deputy Director for Strategy, Engagement and Programs Directorate, United States Africa Command, Brig Gen Steven deMilliano.

"D.C. National Guard has demonstrated the capability and capacity to support this new partnership and contribute to its long-term success in Western Africa," said Brig Gen deMilliano.

The Department of Defense State Partnership Program was established in 1991 to provide an equally beneficial relationship between armed forces of partnering U.S. National Guard States and foreign nations. It is administered by the National Guard Bureau, guided by State Department foreign policy goals and executed by each State's National Guard. These partnerships support Combatant Command campaign objectives, strengthen



Commanding General, District of Columbia National Guard MG William J. Walker on an official visit with members of the National Armed Forces of Burkina Faso, the 76th nation to join the National Guard Bureau's State Partnership Program.

District of Columbia National Guard photo by TSgt Arthur Wright

alliances, provide cost-effective training and enhance defense security.

D.C. National Guard's partnership with Burkina Faso will be in addition to the current partnership the district has developed with Jamaica. Since 1999, D.C. National Guard has held a successful and productive partnership with Jamaica. In 2018, D.C. National Guard and the Jamaica Defense Forces conducted 17 key subject matter expert engagements, including work on counter-narcotics and drug-trafficking; military police response and domestic security training; humanitarian assistance and disaster relief response; and training for medical and dental personnel, among other activities.

Similar engagements will be conducted with the National Armed Forces of Burkina Faso to include mission areas related to homeland defense and security; disaster mitigation and response; consequence and crisis management; inter-agency cooperation; border, port and aviation security; fellowship-style internships; and combat medical events.

"This partnership will benefit both sides strategically, tactically and operationally," said MAJ Ricardo Masgonzalez, State Partnership Program Coordinator, D.C. National Guard. "For us, this partnership enhances our readiness, interoperability and regional expertise, while supporting the broader U.S. Government objectives in Africa."

Burkina Faso gained its independence from France in 1960. Although French is Burkina Faso's official language, 90 percent of the population speak various native African languages. The country is slightly larger than the State of Colorado, and the key exports are cotton and gold.

A contingent of D.C. National Guard Soldiers and Airmen will kick off the partnership with Burkina Faso in late February at the Flintlock annual regional exercise, with African, allied and U.S. counter-terrorism forces participating as observers, in preparation for their full participation in 2020. ●

## HAWAII

BY SSG CHRISTOPHER MARTENS,  
HAWAII ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

# Hawaii Army National Guard Soldier Awarded the State Medal of Valor

**A** series of very difficult decisions ... that would save the lives of a family of six, and one family pet." These are the words used by Hawaii Governor David Ige just prior to presenting SSG Gregory A.Y. Lum Ho, Bravo Company, 777th Aviation Support Battalion, with the State Medal of Valor during a ceremony held at Wheeler Army Airfield, Hawaii, on Feb. 9, 2019.

The Medal of Valor is awarded by the Governor to individuals who distinguish themselves through a performance of an uncommon act of personal heroism involving the voluntary risk of his/her own life. Governor Ige presented this medal to SSG Lum Ho in recognition of his life-saving actions while serving as part of the Hawaii

National Guard's emergency response to Hurricane Lane.

Aug. 23, 2018, SSG Lum Ho was assigned to the Lava Support Mission as a member of Task Force Hawaii, which was established in response to the Kilauea volcano eruption on the island of Hawaii. With Hurricane Lane closing in, however, Task Force Hawaii's mission quickly changed from lava support to hurricane support. That evening SSG Lum Ho, along with PVT Justin Dejesus was assigned as a roving security patrol, but when Task Force Hawaii received a request for assistance from the Hawaii County Fire Department, SSG Lum Ho was redirected to assist.

When SSG Lum Ho arrived, he learned that a family of six was stranded in an area where all ingress and egress routes were cut off by high flooding waters, and their house was in danger of potential collapse. The road to their home was flooded and eroded on one side with large pieces of floating debris, limiting the type of vehicle that could be used. This included the first responders, who had already exhausted their resources. Equipped with a firm understanding of the capabilities of his assigned Humvee, as well as his knowledge of the local terrain, SSG Lum Ho quickly worked with first



Governor David Ige stands with State Medal of Valor recipient, SSG Gregory A.Y. Lum Ho Jr., after presenting him a framed award certificate during a ceremony held Feb. 9, 2019, at Wheeler Army Airfield, Hawaii.

Hawaii Army National Guard photo by SSG Christopher Martens

responders to formulate an innovative plan of action. Once the plan was in place, he placed himself in grave danger as he maneuvered the Humvee under extremely dangerous conditions, ferrying Hawaii County firefighters across the flood waters to allow safe rescue of the stranded family.

Speaking at the ceremony, Governor Ige impressed upon those in attendance, the gravity of the situation faced by Hawaii Island-based SSG Lum Ho.

"The hip-high water, the pouring rain, the rushed element of time, the number of first responders, your own security team, your own family – all were taken into consideration when you decided to use your Humvee to ferry the firefighters across swiftly moving water," the governor said, highlighting the weight of the decisions made by SSG Lum Ho. "You displayed self-sacrifice and indisputably contributed to the alleviation of public tragedy."

Finally, before presenting the Medal of Valor to SSG Lum Ho, Governor Ige concluded, "You epitomize the Citizen-Soldier and are a shining example of what Valor is."

Although overwhelmed and greatly appreciative of this honor, SSG Lum Ho believes the credit is best placed elsewhere.

"I think the leadership training we get in the National Guard prepares us for the situation where we need to make on-the-spot decisions," SSG Lum Ho said. More importantly, he attributes the successful rescue to those by his side that night and the other members of Task Force Hawaii.

"Like the general and the Governor said, this is a team effort," said SSG Lum Ho during his speech. "From my co-driver who helped me navigate through the debris, to the mechanics that actually got my Humvee ready every night and kept it safe for me; without those guys, none of this would be possible."

Ultimately, SSG Lum Ho graciously accepted the Medal of Valor, but was sure to emphasize that he was doing so on behalf of the Soldiers and Airmen of Task Force Hawaii, as well as his comrades in Bravo Company. ●



ABOVE: The Sugar-Salem High School Football Team.

RIGHT: Idaho Army National Guard Soldier SSG Tyler Richins (right) alongside his father, Dwight Richins, after coaching Sugar-Salem High School to the Idaho 3A state football championship Nov. 17, 2018.

Idaho Army National Guard photos by CPT Robert Taylor

## IDAHO

BY CPT ROBERT TAYLOR,  
IDAHO ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

# Idaho Army National Guard Soldier Coaches Sugar- Salem to State Football Title

**W**hen Sugar-Salem High School won its first football State title Nov. 17, the win solidified five years' worth of work Idaho Army National Guard SSG Tyler Richins had put into building his championship roster.

"If I've learned anything since I took over as head coach, it's success isn't something that falls into your lap," SSG Richins said. "It's taken a great deal of time and hard work to build a culture of what we want in a program. To be able to win one with this group of kids, coaching staff and school is really special."

SSG Richins didn't have to look far to find an organization with a culture he wanted to duplicate. The high school math teacher has served in the Idaho Army National Guard since he was a junior in high school.

"I use so much of what the Army has taught me as a Soldier to teach and coach my players," he said. "The Army Values in general are a great place to start building a program. We talk constantly about duty, integrity, personal courage and selfless service and about being part of a team."

That's what the Guard is: a team."

Sugar-Salem High School is located in Sugar City, Idaho, and has approximately 530 students. Its athletic teams compete in the Idaho High School Activities Association's 3A classification, which is for schools with 320-639 students. SSG Richins knows more than most about winning football championships at small Idaho high schools.

SSG Richins quarterbacked nearby Teton High School to a State title in 1999. That team was coached by his dad, Dwight Richins, who also coached Shelley High School to four 3A State titles, most recently in 2009.

SSG Richins got into coaching while working on his engineering degree when he studied at Idaho State University and Brigham Young University – Idaho. He found he didn't have a passion for engineering, but he quickly realized he liked coaching young student-athletes. He was able to apply the math classes he took as an engineering student towards a degree in math education and history education. He is currently pursuing his master's degree at Northwest Nazarene University.

While SSG Richins hadn't planned on following his dad into coaching, he did intend to follow him into the Idaho Army National Guard. Dwight Richins retired from the Idaho Army National Guard in 2012 as a lieutenant colonel.

"For me, the Guard was something I grew up around," he said. "My dad was a Guard officer and I got to see his

passion for serving and being part of the organization. When I got to be a junior in high school, I started looking into my future and seeing where I wanted to go and what I wanted to be. The Idaho Army National Guard offered me a way to accomplish some of those goals through education benefits."

SSG Richins' grandparents and several family friends also served in the military. He saw enlisting into the Idaho Army National Guard as a way to give back to those who had served before him.

"The Guard has treated me well," he said. "A lot of what I have, where I've been and who I've met, I can contribute to the Guard."

SSG Richins currently serves as a 13J fire direction controller in A Battery, 1-148th Field Artillery Regiment (FAR), and is a section chief. His brother, 2LT Chase Richins, also serves in the 1-148th FAR as an artillery officer.

"I'm thankful the Guard gives a guy like me a chance to serve and teach and coach," SSG Richins said. "The Idaho Army National Guard has shaped me into who I am." ●

## ILLINOIS MISSOURI

BY SGT EMILY FINN,  
MISSOURI ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

# Guard Members Partner with Iraqi Army Aviation

**N**early three years ago, the Iraqi Army Aviation identified a need for an updated maintenance posture to support its aviation operations. The government of Iraq purchased expandable container shops and specialty support containers filled with aviation maintenance tools and equipment through a foreign military sale.

When the equipment arrived at an Iraqi helicopter hangar in Camp Taji, Iraq, it came with English instructions. Lt Col Ben Grusin, an air advisor with the 370th Air Advisory Group assigned to Camp Taji, had identified a gap. He requested support from the 248th Aviation Support Battalion (ASB), Iowa Army National Guard, which

had similar equipment.

As the 248th ASB's deployment was ending, the partnership was passed onto the 935th Aviation Support Battalion, 35th Combat Aviation Brigade, Missouri Army National Guard.

A small aviation and generator mechanic team, comprised of Missouri and Illinois National Guard members, visited the Iraqi hangar multiple times to ensure a shared understanding of maintenance operations across multiple Iraqi aviation engineer teams.

The Iraqi engineers were eager to learn about the new equipment, said SFC Jason Langhauser, B Company noncommissioned officer in charge, 935th ASB, Illinois Army National Guard. They would quickly jump in to get hands-on experience during every visit.

The 935th ASB team provided insight based on prior experience with similar equipment. Coupled with the Iraqi engineers' willfulness to learn, rapport quickly formed between the teams.

With the newfound abilities, the Iraqi engineers who worked with the 935th ASB Soldiers will now act as the subject matter experts on the shop sets and supporting equipment. They will function as the go-to personnel and continue to share the skillset with other engineers for years to come, said SFC Langhauser.

The Iraqi Air Force and Army Aviation will ultimately provide Iraq with self-sufficient air capabilities.

"To me at least, it felt like it was something that has a lasting effect here," said Illinois Army National Guard SSG

David Johnson, B Company powertrain shop chief. "If we can set them up to sustain their aircraft and to be an efficient support for their unit, then I think that is something concrete we can take away from our time here." ●

SSG David Johnson, the powertrain shop chief assigned to B Company, 935th Aviation Support Battalion, Illinois Army National Guard, explains to Iraqi aviation engineers how to set up the electrical outlets inside a portable maintenance shop container on the Camp Taji Military Complex, October 2018.

Missouri Army National Guard photo by SGT Emily Finn

## NEVADA

BY SGT WALTER H. LOWELL,  
NEVADA ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

# Republic of Fiji; Nevada Guard to Expand Oceania Partnership

The Nevada National Guard and the Republic of Fiji hosted a signing ceremony in February, 2019 at the country's capital of Suva to officially enter the island country into the State's Partnership Program (SPP). This new partnership was formally announced by U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs Randall Schriver on Dec. 14 last year. Nevada has been partners with the Kingdom of Tonga since 2014.

For 26 years, the SPP has remained a Department of Defense joint security cooperation program administered by the National Guard Bureau and executed by the State Adjutants General in support of Combatant Commander and U.S. Chief of Mission security cooperation objectives and Department of Defense policy goals.

Fiji is the 76th country to join the SPP. This new partnership with Fiji is a reflection of the U.S. military commitment to the Oceania region.

The Nevada Guard will work closely to support the Republic of Fiji's military forces and their Ministry of Defense in addition to the Kingdom of Tonga to further the countries' mutual interests throughout the Indo-Pacific Region. The Nevada Guard will maintain a stable, enduring relationship with both Fiji and Tonga based upon the continuity of Nevada Guard members who remain in their respective States/units for their entire careers.

The SPP will continue to work diligently with the U.S. Embassy in Suva, Fiji, when engaging with both the Kingdom of Tonga and the Republic of Fiji. The U.S. Embassy there is one of two Oceanic American Embassies that represent the United States diplomatically



Adjutant General for the State of Nevada Brig Gen William R. Burks (left) and the Commander of the Republic of Fiji Military Forces Rear Adm. Vililame Naupoto display the signed official paperwork entering the island country into the National Guard State Partnership Program as partners with Nevada.

Photo courtesy Nevada National Guard

for the local handful of small island nations. The other embassy is located on the island of Papua New Guinea.

The SPP is set to send a small assessment team this spring, consisting of Nevada Guardsmen, Indo-Pacific Command service members and embassy personnel, to assess the countries' existing capacity for peacekeeping and maritime security.

Fiji is an Island chain located about 1,300 miles north of New Zealand, 3,100 miles southwest of Hawaii and 500 miles northwest of Tonga. Fiji consists of over 330 islands, of which about 110 are inhabited. The two major islands are Viti Levu and Vanua Levu where over 850,000—about 87% of the population—live. ●

Commonwealth of Puerto Rico to conduct marksmanship training this past April.

The Soldiers, who stayed in Puerto Rico for four days, were flown to the island by a pair of C-130 Hercules military transport aircraft operated by the New York Air National Guard's 109th Airlift Wing from Stratton Air National Guard Base in Schenectady, New York.

Upon arriving in Puerto Rico, the Soldiers, who are based at the Lexington Avenue Armory in New York City, traveled to Camp Santiago and set to work honing their warfighting skills.

Camp Santiago, known as Campo Santiago in Spanish, is the primary training site for the Puerto Rico National Guard. The camp has state-of-the-art ranges and other training areas. The camp is named after SPC Héctor Santiago Colón from Salinas, Puerto Rico, who received the Medal of Honor posthumously during the Vietnam War after shielding other Soldiers from a grenade explosion with his body.

"We started at first light and confirmed that the whole company's rifles were zeroed," said 1LT Matthew Canavan, one of the company's platoon leaders. After the zeros were confirmed, the real training began, consisting of a reflexive fire shoot and a stress shoot.

For the reflexive fire, the Soldiers were tasked with identifying and engaging targets at ranges from 5 to 25 meters while stationary and then while turning and walking.

"For the reflexive fire, the Soldiers use facing movements and controlled shots. Instead of taking single shots, they are shooting, moving and communicating," 1LT Canavan explained. "We kept the squads and the fire teams organic with everyone who will be present at annual training, and we had them moving as a team."

The reflexive fire exercise, which reinforces the fundamentals of short-range marksmanship, was followed by the stress shoot, which is demanding both mentally and physically, 1LT Canavan said.

"The stress shoot involves getting a Soldier's heart rate up as it would be in combat," 1LT Canavan continued. "We took each squad and had them run a

## NEW YORK

BY SGT ALEXANDER RECTOR,  
NEW YORK ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

# Soldiers Hone Combat Marksmanship Skills in Puerto Rico

More than 80 New York Army National Guard Soldiers from Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment, traveled to the

New York Army National Guard Soldiers assigned to Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment, conduct marksmanship training, practicing short-range marksmanship techniques, at Camp Santiago, Puerto Rico, April 2019.

New York Army National Guard photo by SGT Alexander Rector



quarter mile and then had them conduct push-ups, flutter kicks and burpees so we could tire out their muscles.”

Once the Soldiers were tired and fatigued, the shooting began. “We took them onto the range and started giving them commands from the tower,” 1LT Canavan said. “So not only are they fatigued, now they need to pay attention to commands.”

During the stress shoot, the Soldiers engaged a variety of targets in quick succession from the standing, kneeling and prone positions.

“It’s designed to mimic the stress of combat,” 1LT Canavan explained. “It boils down to what will happen in a fight. They need to listen to the team leader.”

Traveling over 1,600 miles to a different climate and working in an unfamiliar training environment wasn’t without its challenges, and Alpha Company worked tirelessly to make sure all the moving pieces fit together.

Even though the training conducted could have been accomplished closer to home, there were many benefits for both the unit and the Soldiers to training at Camp Santiago.

“Soldiers going to Fort Drum day in and day out doing the same exercises – it

kills retention,” 1LT Canavan said. “A second benefit is getting Soldiers used to a different type of climate.”

Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry, have deployed to both Iraq and Afghanistan since Sept. 11, 2001. ●

## OKLAHOMA

BY CPT LEANNA MASCHINO,  
OKLAHOMA ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

# Oklahoma Guard Members Utilize Virtual Scenarios as Part of Training

According to a 2018 study by Electronic Entertainment Design and Research, 67 percent of Americans utilized gaming technology, whether for sport, play or training on multiple platforms from smartphones, tablets, gaming stations, computers, handheld gaming systems and more.

But what if that technology could benefit military service members and train

them more efficiently?

In the case of Oklahoma Army National Guardsmen with Headquarters Company, 271st Brigade Support Battalion, 45th Field Artillery Brigade, this virtual system, known as the Virtual Battle Space III (VBS3), enables these Soldiers to train as a team in virtual scenarios in preparation for an upcoming Exportable Combat Training Capability (XCTC), Operation Western Strike.

“Basically it’s a network of up to 50 computers where I create a realistic training environment that unit members get submerged into to replicate the training they’re going to see overseas or in other parts of the world,” said Eric Will, VBS3 Integrator.

“We fall under Global Threat Mitigation Program [GTMP], which covers the active side and the National Guard side,” Will said. “Our side is the Asymmetric Threat Training Support [ATTS] program fully funded through the National Guard Bureau.”

The ATTS program, headquartered at Camp Gruber Training Center, Oklahoma, provides mobile training teams to train both Oklahoma and Kansas Army National Guardsmen.

In this particular scenario, each

## TENNESSEE

BY 1LT KEALY MORIARTY,  
TENNESSEE ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

# Tennessee Guardsmen Visit Ukrainian Special- Needs Orphanage

**U**.S. troops, along with Lithuanian soldiers, visited an orphanage for children with special needs in March, 2019 as part of an ongoing humanitarian support project. Simultaneously, they celebrated International Women's Day.

The visit included performances from the children, gift exchanges, outdoor games and a traditional Ukrainian lunch.

"It is always nice of you to visit and spend some time with you guys because spending time with our American family is always a precious time," said Orphanage Director Natalia Frankiv.

The Soldiers and children interacted through outdoor games such as tug-o-war, relay races and soccer.

Later, they toured the orphanage's newly renovated agricultural program, which is an ongoing charity-funded project. Frankiv plans to incorporate a program that teaches the children the basics of farming and agriculture. This program is intended to prepare children for future job opportunities.

After the tour, Tennessee Guard member MAJ Terry Bell thanked Frankiv and highlighted the importance of International Women's Day and the tremendous accomplishments of women in everyday life.

"Whatever it is you are doing, whether it be leading in the workforce or leading at home with your families, we love you and appreciate everything you do," MAJ Bell said.

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SGT Lawrence Bass, convoy commander with Headquarters Company, 271st Brigade Support Battalion, 45th Field Artillery Brigade, briefs his unit during training on the Virtual Battle Space III (VBS3) system, April 2019, in preparation for team exercises in virtual scenarios that will be held as part of an upcoming Exportable Combat Training Capability—Operation Western Strike.

Oklahoma Army National Guard photo by CPT Leanna Maschino

Guardsman is assigned to a vehicle that is part of a tactical convoy. The unit is given a mission and must execute each step of convoy operations, utilizing the virtual platform, while maintaining radio communications with their Tactical Operations Center (TOC), just as they would in a real-world situation.

"We created scenarios to replicate the environment that they're going to be in [during the XCTC] and to meet the commander's training objectives," Will said. "More specifically, to gain convoy experience and to learn how to react to [enemy] contact in different forms."

To provoke chaos, Will injects challenges throughout the scenario based on actual enemy intelligence their program receives on a weekly basis, forcing individuals to think on their feet. By doing this, Soldiers are able to work out any kinks and re-engage standard operating procedures in order to complete their mission successfully.

The training also included a Counter Improvised Explosive Device (C-IED) class taught by Tommy Crane, C-IED Training Integrator, which educated Soldiers on various Improvised Explosive Devices and effective ways to counter those threats. By combining the two classes, Soldiers are able to react to certain threats that may be catastrophic to their unit.

"An ideal training picture would be to get classroom instruction from the live C-IED integrator as part of the crawl phase, then come to the VBS3 simulator, which would be the crawl and walk phase,

and then to go back to the live integrator and do a walk phase and run phase for the C-IED," Will said.

From seasoned Soldiers to novices, this blended training approach allows unique collaboration and active learning that stems deeper thought behind each scenario rather than focusing solely on tactics.

"The biggest thing is stimulating that thought process," Will said. "Tactics change and enemy tactics change, and we have to adapt."

With this technology, along with the National Guard's training schedule, trainers like Will and Crane are able to teach Soldiers within a matter of hours versus what would normally take months to learn.

"I can take a unit that has little to no experience and in about four hours, running through a couple of scenarios, it will be like they've been deployed for several months already," Will said. "I like to see that development come into play and build that leader's confidence."

As readiness is key for the Oklahoma Army National Guard, utilizing this type of technology helps units better and more efficiently prepare for real-world missions, whether at home or abroad.

"Earlier, a Soldier said that the discussions we had in this class got him to think about things that he never would've thought about before," Will said. "My bottom line is, if I can relay something that saves a life later on, then that means everything." ■





Tennessee Army National Guard Soldier MAJ Terry Bell greets director of the Rehabilitation Center for the Children of Special Needs Natalia Frankiv during a visit to the orphanage in Krakovets, Ukraine, March 2019.

Tennessee Army National Guard photo by SGT Timothy Massey

This is the first time Lithuanian soldiers, who are deployed in Ukraine, joined in visiting this orphanage, and they plan to return later this month to view the progress of the agricultural program.

The 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment, a unit of the Tennessee Army National Guard, is deployed in Ukraine supporting the development and modernization of the Yavoriv Combat Training Center. ●

Virginia. Three Soldiers—SFC Michelle Homer, SGT Christina So and SGT Gella Johnson—administered CPR for approximately six minutes before Johnson regained consciousness.

"If I'd been anywhere else, I probably would never have made it," SFC Johnson said.

Less than a week after his collapse, on Aug. 2, 2018, doctors performed open heart surgery on SFC Johnson to repair the damage to his heart. By October, he was back at work, back with his unit and, a few months after that, on March 10, 2019, SFC Johnson was standing in formation when SFC Homer, SGT So and SGT Johnson were recognized for their life-saving efforts.

"I'm happy for them," SFC Johnson said. "I'm glad to see them get recognized and I'm glad to still be here, to still be able to put on the uniform."

SFC Johnson doesn't remember much from that day, just that he was playing basketball with his Soldiers right before lunch. The area they were in was small, he said — they weren't even running, but he felt like he could not breathe.

"Y'all hang on a second, let me catch my breath," he said.

A few feet away, SGT So was watching.

SFC Johnson just didn't look right, she said, so she kept her eye on him.

"The next thing I knew, he was collapsing," SGT So said. She was just a few feet away when it happened and immediately ran toward SFC Johnson, trying to catch him before he fell to prevent further injury. "Then he was unconscious," she said.

SGT So tried to get SFC Johnson to respond. She's CPR and first aid-certified, has even worked as a CPR instructor, so she knew what to do. She tried talking to him, she rubbed her knuckles along his sternum, tried to get a response, but nothing worked.

"His eyes were fixed wide open, he wasn't breathing and his whole torso started turning white and his neck, up to his ears, started turning blue," SFC Homer said. Fortunately, she had just completed Combat Lifesaver Training and was able to assist SGT So in giving CPR to SFC Johnson.

"We kept going, rotation after rotation," SFC Homer said. "I was



## VIRGINIA

BY SFC TERRA GATTI,  
VIRGINIA ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

# Guard Members Recognized for Quick Thinking, Life-Saving Actions

Last summer, on one of the final days of annual training for the 1710th Transportation Company, Virginia Army National Guard SFC Anthony Johnson collapsed on the drill floor of the readiness center in Emporia,

giving the breaths and she was doing the compressions." Minutes in, SGT So started to tire and SGT Johnson jumped in for a few rounds.

"Everyone was counting out loud, just 1, 2, 3," SFC Homer said. "We had a rhythm."

SGT So swapped with SGT Johnson and started doing chest compressions again.

"That fresh push, just all of a sudden, the color came back," SFC Homer said.

After six minutes of chest compressions and rescue breaths, SFC Johnson started breathing again, his rescuers found a pulse and he woke up.

SFC Johnson was diagnosed with a bicuspid aortic valve. The aortic valve regulates the flow of blood from the heart into the aorta; a normal aortic valve has three leaflets, but SFC Johnson's only had

two. He had deployed three times, spent years in the military and never had a single heart issue before that day.

"Every doctor I saw said I should have never got up, that based on the condition that I had and what happened, that they never should have been able to revive me with regular CPR," said SFC Johnson, who has made some changes since the summer. "I had to quit smoking, I've changed my whole diet, I started going back to church like I should," he said. "It definitely changed my outlook."

At the awards ceremony, SGT So and SFC Homer were awarded Army Commendation Medals while SGT Johnson received a Virginia National Guard Commendation Medal.

Both SFC Homer and SGT So stressed the importance of learning basic first aid and CPR. ■

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SFC Michelle Homer, SGT Christina So and SGT Gella Johnson receive recognition during a ceremony held March 2019, at Fort Pickett, Va., for saving the life of SFC Anthony Johnson.

Virginia Army National Guard photo by SFC Terra Gatti



## WASHINGTON

BY JOSEPH SIEMANDEL,  
WASHINGTON ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

# Washington National Guard Military Intelligence Units Recognized for Language Program

**A**s many military intelligence professionals will tell you, learning a new language isn't easy. Even more difficult is staying proficient to maintain your military occupational specialty.

The 341st Military Intelligence Battalion (MI BN) has taken steps to address that challenge and was recently awarded the best Command Language Program (CLP) among the five battalions in the 300th Military Intelligence Brigade.

"Throughout the past few years, 341st and the State command language program manager [CLPM] have invested many hours in developing a robust and relevant language program, so this award is a reflection of the state CLPM and 341st dedication and efforts," said LTC Teresa Wenner, commander of the 341st Military Intelligence Battalion, Linguist.

The 341st MI BN CLP, managed at the Information Operations Readiness Center, is designed to develop and execute unit language training plans, help support the operational and contingency objectives for linguists and build proficiency among Guard members in the counterintelligence, human intelligence and signal intelligence fields.

"During this past year, the State CLPM has been further developed, adding two on-site computer labs at Joint Base Lewis-McChord and in Spokane at Fairchild Air Force Base," said LTC Wenner. "We also created an on-site library that has over 400 books, movies, interactive software and magazines in multiple languages. The material is being continuously ordered through suggestions from cohort leads and updated monthly."

A shining gem of the program is ensuring linguists have access to materials and resources for self-study, as well as reliable mentorship from a higher level linguist.

"The higher level linguist holds their cohort accountable, as well as provides a network of linguists to share information and upcoming language-related opportunities," said LTC Wenner.

On top of being selected as the best program out of five National Guard battalions, SSG Sergei Corduneanu, a crypto-linguist with Delta Company, was selected as the language professional of the year by the brigade. Proficient in three languages, SSG Corduneanu was selected out of 1,050 linguists.

"Staff Sergeant Corduneanu regularly works with other Soldiers in his unit as part of our battalion's cohort program to improve the language, culture and regional expertise of his fellow linguists," said LTC Wenner. "He also seeks out opportunities to improve his language skills, including taking part in training events at home and overseas. Most recently he served as an interpreter while mobilized, supporting Special Operations Command-Forward Eastern Europe during Operation Atlantic Resolve."

As part of his recognition for the achievement, the brigade language program is providing SSG Corduneanu with a six-week opportunity to attend foreign immersion training for his many languages to enhance his language proficiency later this year. This will include trips to Eastern Europe to immerse in the language, culture and lifestyle.

"The great Soldier he is, Staff Sergeant Corduneanu has turned down the immersion trip because he wants to do airborne school," said MAJ Laura Dutton, executive officer for the 341st Military Intelligence Battalion. "He has always wanted to go to airborne school and is showing his Soldiers that you can do anything you put your mind to." ●



A West Virginia Army National Guard HH-60 Black Hawk crew assigned to Company C, 2nd Battalion, 104th General Support Aviation Regiment, Pennsylvania Army National Guard, prepares to land their chopper in the parking lot of Ritchie County High School in Ellenboro, WVa., after successfully rescuing a stranded motorist Feb. 20, 2019.

Photo courtesy West Virginia National Guard

## WEST VIRGINIA

BY CPT HOLLI NELSON,  
WEST VIRGINIA ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

# West Virginia Army Guard Performs Aerial Rescue Mission

**A**ircrew members of the West Virginia Army National Guard's Company C, 2-104th General Support Aviation Battalion (MEDEVAC), located in Williamstown, West Virginia, provided a successful aerial rescue mission via a U.S. Army HH-60 Black Hawk for a civilian trapped in his vehicle due to flood waters.

Ritchie County contacted the

West Virginia Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (WVDHSEM) Watch Center with a request to rescue a stranded motorist who was trapped on a secondary road near Ellenboro due to flood waters.

Waters were not expected to recede within the next 24-48 hours, and local responders could not reach the stranded motorist without air support. Within an hour of the request, the West Virginia National Guard responded and successfully rescued the individual from the mud and flood waters along Bonds Creek and transported him safely to Ritchie County High School in Ellenboro, where he was evaluated by Emergency Medical personnel.

The aircrew for the mission consisted of CW2 Brandon Koon (command pilot); 1LT Aaron Wood (pilot); SSG Jesse Rickwartz (crew chief); and SGT Joshua Allen (medic).

SSG Sergi Corduneanu, a crypto-linguist with Delta Company, 341st Military Intelligence Battalion, 300th Military Intelligence Brigade, Washington Army National Guard, is awarded a plaque during the brigade's annual language conference where he was selected as the 300th's language professional of the year.

Photo courtesy Washington National Guard

The state mission of the 2-104th General Support Aviation Battalion (MEDEVAC) is to provide aeromedical evacuation and search and rescue capability to the Governor and the citizens of West Virginia in times of emergency. ●

## WYOMING

BY SFC JAMES MCGUIRE,  
WYOMING ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

# Wyoming National Guard Partners with Police in Drug Fight

**T**he National Guard has always been about cooperation and support, and for the last 30 years has partnered with law enforcement in the war on drugs.

The Wyoming Counterdrug Support Program works with law enforcement agencies to pursue criminal organizations and deter illicit drug use in the State by providing analysts and air reconnaissance.

Last year, Wyoming counterdrug personnel assisted law enforcement agencies in making 706 arrests as a result of drug investigations. Those arrests netted nearly \$11 million in drug seizures and more than \$311,000 in non-drug seizures.

Many agencies lack the manpower, technology or training to conduct a full-scale battle with drug dealers. However, the Guard, in all 54 States and Territories, has proven to be a worthy battle buddy.

"The partnership is fantastic," said Wyoming Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI) Director Steve Woodson. "We would have a hard time getting along without them. They are really a force multiplier. If we didn't have them, we would have to try to find people who do what they do, and that would be really difficult. They work like a hand in glove with us. They are all really hard working, excellent people, and we are very happy to have them here."

Wyoming Army National Guard 1SG Diane Smith coordinates the program for the State. She's been with

the congressionally mandated program more than 20 years and has been the coordinator, a job normally held by a major, since July 2015.

"It's only because I've been here so long and held every position," she said of being one of only three noncommissioned officers in coordinator positions nationwide.

She has seen a few changes in her time with the counterdrug program. When she started out, the program placed a lot of emphasis on drug education in schools and communities throughout Wyoming.

Eventually, funding cutbacks and a perception by Washington that the education piece didn't fit into a military job description eliminated the Drug Demand Reduction program. 1SG Smith said the current model provides the State "its best return on investment."

"We just didn't have enough money to work with coalitions or directly with youth," she said. "We can really help the agencies, as long as there is a drug nexus, with our analysts and equipment."

She now has a staff of eight Guard members, who are on long-term active duty operational support orders. They work, primarily, with the State's DCI—some in field offices around the State, but are available to all of the State's law enforcement agencies.

"They all maintain their drill status and contribute back to their units," 1SG Smith said. "Some align their [military occupational specialty] and [Air Force Specialty Code]. Some are Intel and some are prior law enforcement officers. Our analysts are highly intelligent and highly trained."

To maintain that expertise for Guard members and the law enforcement personnel they assist, the National Guard Bureau operates five counterdrug schools that provide training in drug interdiction and counter-drug activities. These schools trained more than 41,400 law enforcement officers, community-based organization members and military personnel in fiscal year 2017.

The Guard members are limited to analyzing evidence collected by law enforcement agencies, but once warrants and evidence are secured, the analysts provide a valuable service with the collected data.

"We have technology and skills that we can use to track trends and make connections to other cases, and hopefully that information leads to arrests and seizures and it goes to trial," 1SG Smith said. "We do not actively participate in the gathering of evidence. We just analyze the information and hand that data back to law enforcement."

Additionally, 1SG Smith said the Guard's UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters and crews may be called upon to support law enforcement from the air. When President Ronald Reagan started the program, military aircraft were often used to eradicate crops of marijuana.

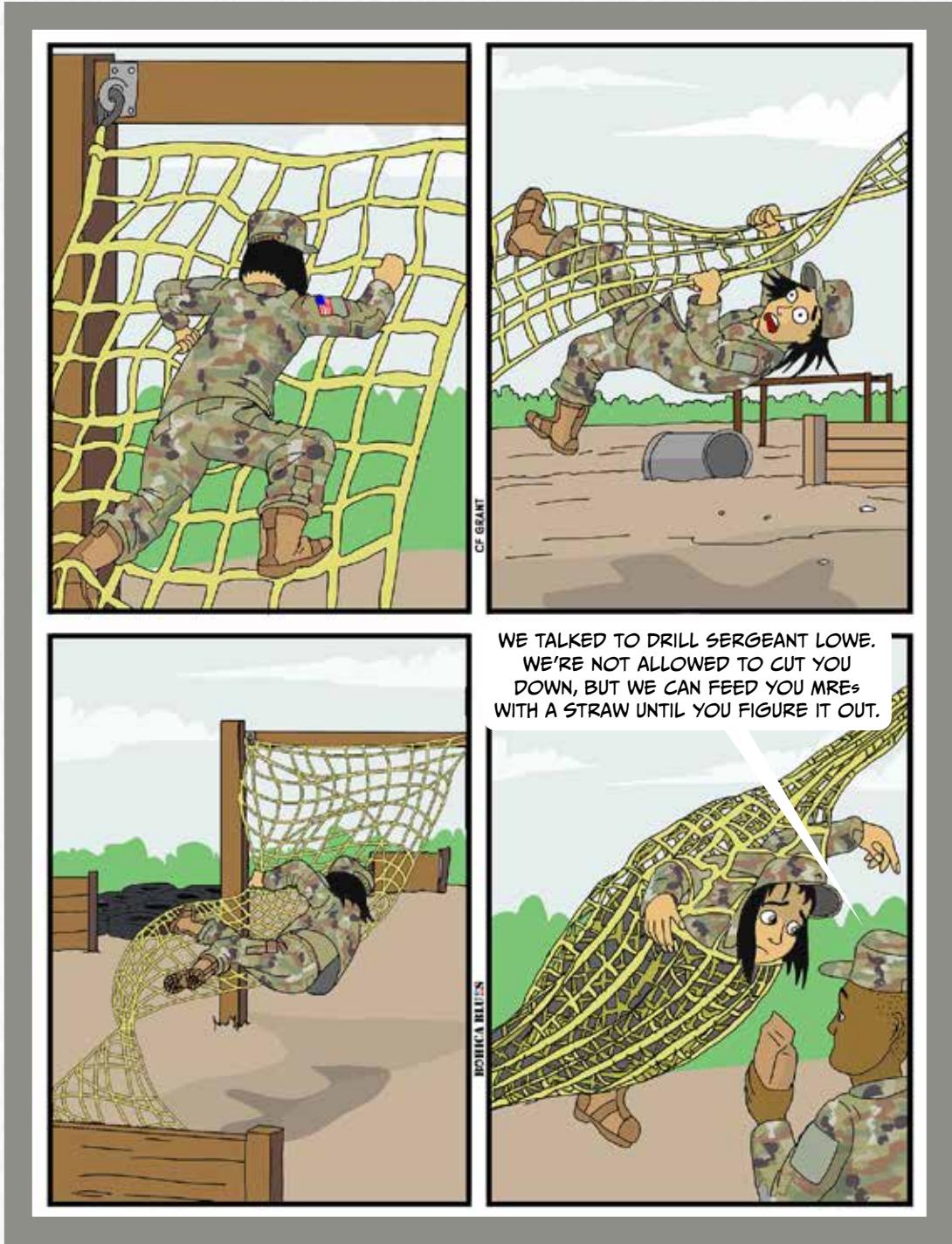
"We no longer do eradication, but we can fly law enforcement officers to perform reconnaissance and allow them to narrow their scopes to identify where they want to further investigate nefarious activities," 1SG Smith said.

According to the National Guard Bureau, in fiscal year 2017, the National Guard counterdrug program employed more than 3,700 personnel who supported law enforcement's efforts to remove more than 3.3 million pounds, or nearly \$11.2 billion, in illicit drugs from U.S. communities. ●



Wyoming Army National Guard Soldier and Coordinator of the Wyoming Counterdrug Program 1SG Diane Smith.

Wyoming Army National Guard photo by  
SFC Jimmy McGuire



Cartoon by SSG C.F. "Arik" Grant

## HAVE A FUNNY CARTOON THAT YOU'D LIKE TO SHARE?

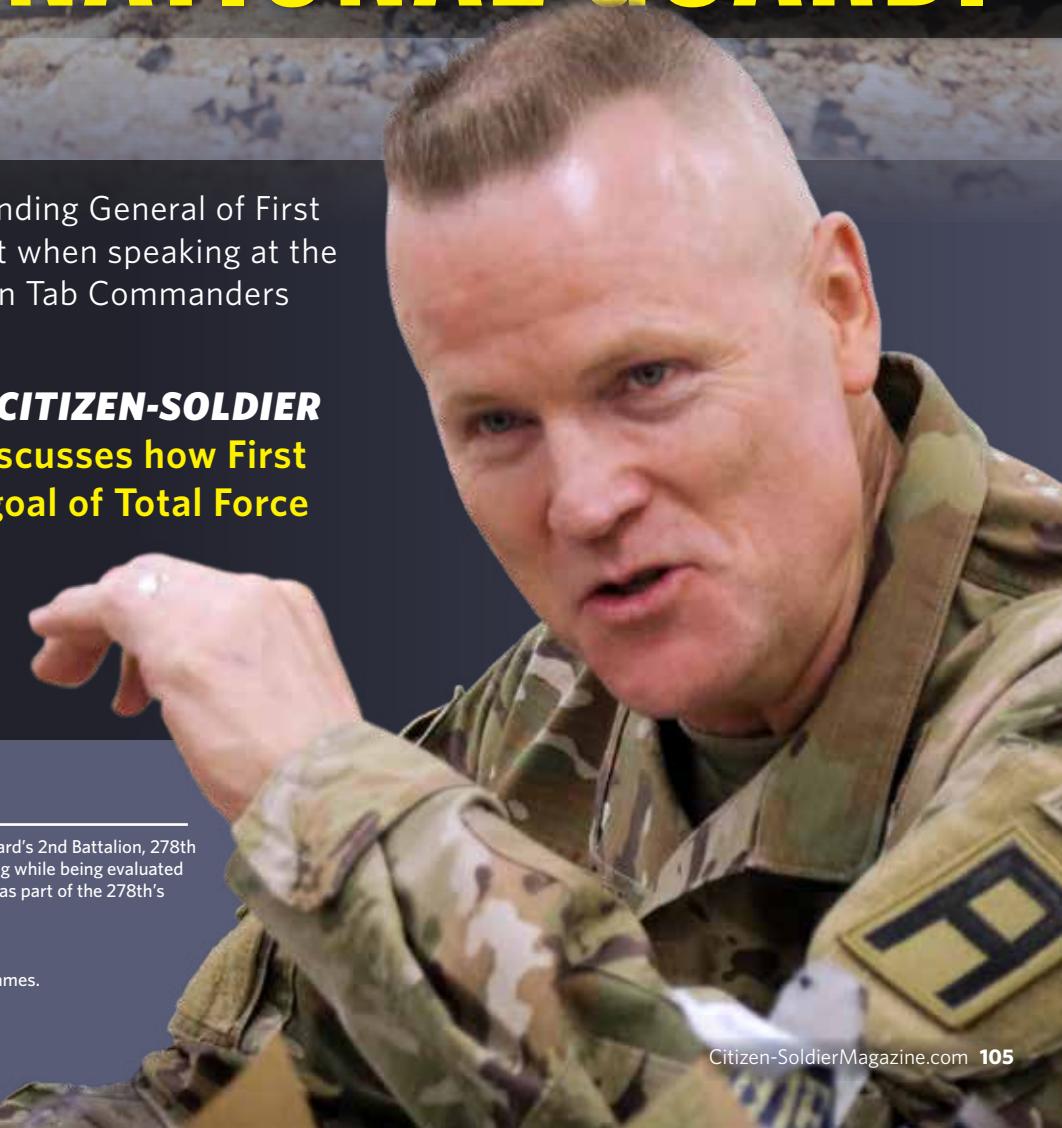
If you have a knack for drawing and would like to see your original cartoon or illustration published in *Citizen-Soldier* magazine, send your drawing to [Editor@Citizen-SoldierMagazine.com](mailto:Editor@Citizen-SoldierMagazine.com).



**"We cannot  
win a war  
without the  
NATIONAL GUARD."**

LTG Thomas James, Commanding General of First Army, uttered this statement when speaking at the Army National Guard's Green Tab Commanders Conference in January 2019.

**IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF *CITIZEN-SOLDIER*  
*magazine*, LTG James discusses how First  
Army accomplishes its goal of Total Force  
mission readiness  
through its vital  
partnership with the  
Army National Guard.**



ABOVE: Soldiers from the Tennessee Army National Guard's 2nd Battalion, 278th Armored Brigade Combat Team, conduct live-fire training while being evaluated by observer-trainers from 1st Army at Fort Hood, Texas, as part of the 278th's preparation for deployment to Poland.

U.S. Army photo by Devon L. Suits

RIGHT: First Army Commanding General LTG Thomas James.

First Army photo by SGT Aaron Berogan

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