

ARKANSAS

ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

Arkansas Guard Soldiers stand ready to accept any challenge. Whether fighting America's wars, serving Arkansas' citizens or assisting neighbors during a domestic response or natural disaster, these dedicated Soldiers will always heed the call to defend the Nation and protect its citizens.

Arkansas Army National Guard Soldier SGT Niall Blasdel of the 87th Troop Command, 106th Army Band, plots his points for the land navigation portion of the 2019 Best Warrior Competition at Robinson Maneuver Training Center in North Little Rock, Ark.

Arkansas Army National Guard photo by SSG Kelvin Green



Road Warrior Senior Officer Candidate David Harris

Story by OC CHARLES DAVIS

A Road Warrior is a Guardsmen who makes extraordinary efforts to make it to drill.

Blue Springs, Mo., a suburb of Kansas City, to North Little Rock is a 413-mile trip. It takes at least six hours to drive with no stops. One can supposedly tell exactly where the midwest ends and the south begins on this trip. Neosho, Mo. is the exact point. Driving through Arkansas, the scenery is trees, the mountains of the Ozarks, and large lakes and rivers. However, further north from the Arkansas and Missouri border, the scenery becomes plains. Fields go on for miles, with power lines being the most visible thing on the highway. A big fat bowl of nothing, according to Senior Officer Candidate David Harris, who travels this route every month for drill.

Harris grew up in Arkansas and joined the Arkansas National Guard while he was lived in Arkansas. He went to college at

the University of Arkansas, however, he had to move out of state for work. He's a producer with KCTV, a CBS television station in Kansas City. "It was a big opportunity to take that next step in my career," said Harris.

Driving to drill doesn't seem like it would be a daunting task if one live close to where one drills, but for those who live out of the state, it can be quite a task to prepare not only for the weekend but for the drive.

"I work from 4:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. However, on drill weekends my boss helps me out with a travel day. So Thursday, I get off work and go get my haircut normally first thing." Harris, who is getting ready to begin phase 3 of Officer Candidate School, said. "After I gather my gear and do a last minute check on my OCS homework, I spend a little time with my wife, namely because she won't see me again until Monday afternoon."

What keeps Harris in the Arkansas National Guard instead of interstate transferring is his dedication to the organization that has helped him be his best and build him into the soldier he is today. "There's a couple of reasons, but the most important is Arkansas is my home state. I was raised here, I went to school here and I joined the Army National Guard here," said Harris. "I joined the Arkansas National Guard when I was 19, and I like to remind myself

that it was Arkansas' NCO's that 'raised' me when I was a private, took care of me in Afghanistan, and mentored me when I got my stripes."

While in OCS, there have been many physical challenges to face during each drill weekend. Having to drive a six hour trip back home after exhausting training can be rough. "Before OCS, it wasn't that bad. However, once we started doing nine and 12-mile ruck marches in OCS, I was a little sore after the trip," said the Houston Astros fan. "When I get home on Sunday, I sleep like crazy. I typically take Monday off from work and act like a kid all day. I play video games, watch SpongeBob, and maybe make it over to the gym to soak in the hot tub."

Harris is expected to finish OCS and commission in September, where he plans to branch Aviation. "I'm excited about my future as a career captain." Said Harris, who surely has the dedication to go far in the Arkansas National Guard. ●

ABOVE PHOTOS: OC David Harris

Photos Courtesy OC Charles Davis





THE ARKANSAS ARMY NATIONAL GUARD OFFERS ITS MEMBERS GREAT OPPORTUNITIES TO GET A COLLEGE EDUCATION.

The Arkansas National Guard Tuition Assistance (TA) Program is open to Arkansas Guard Soldiers who are residents of the State, in good standing, have completed basic training and are currently enrolled in an undergraduate program.

Soldiers are eligible for up to 120 credit hours or until completion of a bachelor's degree, whichever comes first. Arkansas Guard TA funds pay for tuition only, but when used in conjunction with federal TA funding, the National Guard funding is applied first. This allows Soldiers to use federal funding to cover the cost of books, room and board or other expenses.

For more information visit ARGuard.org/Education, or contact the Arkansas National Guard Education Services Office directly at ng.ar.ararnq.list.education-office@mail.mil or **501-212-4045**.

* The Arkansas TA Program applies only to Soldiers pursuing a first-time bachelors degree. The program does not offer funding for post-secondary degrees or for a second bachelors degree. Soldier already possessing an associates degree are eligible to use the program to advance to a bachelors degree.



Arkansas Take Home Top Honors at Lincoln National Guard Marathon

Story and Photos by
SPC Lisa Crawford

More than 170 Army and Air National Guard Soldiers and Airmen from across the United States came together Sunday, May 5, for the Lincoln National Guard Marathon.

These National Guard runners, representing 46 states and two territories, competed in the 42nd Annual Lincoln National Guard Marathon.

According to the National Guard Marathon Coordinator, SFC Class Christopher Sterns, the competition is designed to promote physical fitness and military readiness in the National Guard. The top runners at Sunday's race were selected as members of the 2019 "All Guard" Marathon Team, which travels to promote the

National Guard and assist in recruiting and retention efforts across the United States.

Top winners:

- Arkansas National Guard SPC Derek Yorek, of Bentonville, Arkansas, overall male winner with an unofficial time of 2:30:01
- Kentucky National Guard MAJ Varinka Ensminger, of Lexington, Kentucky, overall female winner with an unofficial time of 3:19:50
- The Arkansas National Guard Team was named the overall National Guard team winner of the Lincoln National Guard Marathon

SFC Sterns said the Marathon Program promotes both local and national levels of the Army and Air National Guard, and the Military Competitions Programs. The Marathon Program additionally encourages and enhances the National Guard Retention Program by instilling physical fitness, self-discipline, and esprit de corps among National Guard members from all 50 states and U.S. territories.

"The Lincoln National Guard Marathon brings Soldiers and Airmen together with the local community to promote health and fitness, while serving as the trials for the 'All Guard' Marathon team," SFC Sterns said. "The All Guard team has a family atmosphere – a family of runners inside the National Guard family. That's what I love most. The marathon

The Arkansas National Guard Team was named the overall National Guard team winner of the Lincoln National Guard Marathon, May 5, 2019, in Lincoln, Neb.

Nebraska Army National Guard photo by
SGT Anna Pongo

and the marathon team instills camaraderie between the runners who come from all over the United States and Territories to compete."

Along with the traditional runners, at least 12 National Guard Soldiers and Airmen ruck marched the half-marathon distance in honor and memory of fallen and deceased service members from across all branches of the military.

"Everybody loves the Guard's presence at the marathon – whether with the runners, the support staff or the ruck marchers," SFC Sterns said. "I often hear from members of the community how much they enjoy their troops being there."

The All Guard team competes in multiple marathon races throughout the year, traveling to different communities and helping local recruiters generate leads and sharing the National Guard story. ●



Arkansas National Guard Wins Big at 2019 WPW Machine Gun Championship

Story and Photos by SPC Stephen Wright

Twenty-two National Guardsmen, eleven different teams, from across the nation gathered at the Robinson Maneuver Training Center near North Little Rock, Arkansas, to compete in the 2019 Winston P. Wilson (WPW) Machine Gun Competition May 6 through 10, 2019.

The overall match aggregate for top machine gunner and top assistant gunner consisted of seven different matches completed over the five days of competition.

All WPW championships promote friendly competition, increases battlefield survivability and enhances unit readiness for both Army and Air National Guard units.

These competitions test shooters physically, mentally, tactically and strategically. They must be proficient in their marksmanship knowledge, skills and abilities to place high in the matches.

Some of the most notable awards given at the ceremony were the Chief's 50 badge, Overall Light Machine Gun Team Champions, Overall Aggregate Machine Gunner Champion and the Overall Aggregate Assistant Gunner Champion.

The WPW championships are hosted annually by the National Guard Marksmanship Training Center.

The Overall Light Machine Gun Team Champions are SSG Joseph Noe and SPC Heriberto Tapia, Arkansas National Guard.

SSG Noe also claimed the prestigious title of "Overall Aggregate Machine Gunner Champion".

The title "Overall Aggregate Assistant Gunner Champion" was awarded to SGT Levi Loomis of the Nebraska National Guard.

The recipients of the Chief's 50 badge include: SSG Joseph Noe and SPC Heriberto Tapia, Arkansas National Guard, and SGT David Dohnal and SPC Lucas Elliott of the Michigan National Guard. ●

The 2019 (WPW) Machine Gun Team Champions

- 1st:** Arkansas Alpha - SSG Joseph Noe and SPC Heriberto Tapia
- 2nd:** Michigan Bravo – SGT David Dohnal and SPC Lucas Elliott
- 3rd:** Michigan Alpha – SSG Cameron Higgs and SPC Calvin Halfacre

Top Overall Aggregate Machine Gunner

- 1st:** SSG Joseph Noe – Ark.
- 2nd:** SGT David Dohnal – Mich.
- 3rd:** SSG Freeman Sandquist – Neb.

Top Overall Aggregate Assistant Gunner

- 1st:** SGT Levi Loomis – Neb.
- 2nd:** MAJ Samuel Freeman – Ark.
- 3rd:** SGT 1st Class Luke Katz – Neb.

Chief's 50 recipients:

- SSG Joseph Noe
- SPC Heriberto Tapia
- SGT David Dohnal
- SPC Lucas Elliott

A full list of match champions can be found at: <https://wpwafsam.weebly.com/machine-gun.html>

Georgia Army National Guardsman, SGT Gavin Walden, representing the Fort Stewart-based 3rd Infantry Division, Main Command Post Operational Detachment, trains on the M240 during training for the Winston P. Wilson National Championship Competition at Fort Stewart, Ga.

Georgia Army National Guard photo by SPC Tori Miller



DID YOU KNOW ***THE ARKANSAS ARMY NATIONAL GUARD...***



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Education Services Officer at
(501) 212-4021
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Any Veteran enrolled in VA healthcare or CHAMPVA beneficiary will have the opportunity to **CHOOSE BETWEEN THREE GREAT DELTA DENTAL PLANS** to meet their needs.

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Two members of the 61st Civil Support Team, 87th Troop Command, Arkansas Army National Guard, don hazardous material (HAZMAT) suits while searching for chemical spills during a training exercise in West Memphis, Ark.

Arkansas Army National Guard
photo by CPT Shannon Haney

Arkansas National Guard Unit Refines Earthquake Plan With Visit and Inter-Agency Training in West Memphis

Story by CPT SHANNON HANEY

The 61st Civil Support Team (CST), 87th Troop Command, simulated their first ever on-the-ground earthquake response on Wednesday, as part of the Arkansas National Guard's ongoing "New Madrid earthquake" planning.

The National Guard unit based out of Camp Joseph T. Robinson, North Little Rock, linked up with other local response agencies as part of the training. Representatives from the Memphis Police Department, the U.S. Coast Guard, Homeland Security, Arkansas Game and Fish, and the Pulaski County Emergency Management were all on-hand throughout the day-long exercise.

"New Madrid" planning references the potential for a repeat of the 1811-1812 series of earthquakes along the Mississippi River (affecting Northeast Arkansas), which remain the most powerful to have ever hit the eastern half of the United States. The historic earthquake, as well as the underlying seismic zone, were named after the town of New Madrid.

"We intend on simulating the completely austere environment we will likely encounter when we occupy a forward position in Crittenden County after a catastrophic New Madrid earthquake," LTC Seth Tolliver, commander of the 61st CST said prior to the exercise.

"Since we are the only Arkansas National Guard assets that will initially be in the county, we have to make sure we can carry out our mission without grid power, cellular or existing radio tower-dependent communications, and be able to self-sustain from days to weeks."

Crittenden County is identified in New Madrid planning as a potentially devastated area, should the fault line produce a repeat. As part of the Arkansas National Guard's overall response plan, the 61st CST is designated as one of the first units on the ground in the Northeast Arkansas affected area.

"Our unit will be one of the first birds out," LTC Tolliver said of the significance.





Members of the 61st Civil Support Team, 87th Troop Command, Arkansas Army National Guard, gather for an entry brief upon arriving in Northeast Ark.

Arkansas Army National Guard photo by CPT Shannon Haney

Widespread flooding is expected to be one of the biggest challenges in a New Madrid earthquake's aftermath. Waterways could re-route and overflow, and the low-lying Delta would be susceptible to complete long-term saturation. This was the 61st CST's first site visit to the county and one of the aims, according to LTC Tolliver, was to find potential sites through which the unit could insert and begin setting up.

Members of the 61st CST simulated just that -- setting up operations and communications in an austere environment.

"None of that blue fleet is going to be here," LTC Tolliver told the unit as they began the day, pointing to the blue fleet of fully-equipped and self-sustaining emergency vehicles the unit typically would respond with. "You're going to get here on a helicopter and survive on what you brought."

With the help of the Arkansas Game and Fish and U.S. Coast Guard, the 61st CST also took their training to the water on Wednesday, exercising on the unit military specialty: identifying and mitigating hazardous materials.

The 61st CST's typical missions are real-world events, not training simulations. They

are often present at large public gathering throughout the state, including stadium games and concerts, where they monitor for chemical, biological, radioactive, and nuclear (CBRN) material. Because the unit is in high demand, not just within the state but as a unit "on-call" within a multi-state regional CST network, all members are full-time active duty National Guard Soldiers. When on-call in their highest status, Gold, the unit must be able to respond in under 90 minutes to any state within the network.

That quick response ability made the unit an integral part of earthquake planning when the New Madrid task force began. Andy Traffenstedt, Director of Pulaski County Emergency Management, on site at Wednesday's training, said his organization also quickly became integrated.

"The task force started up in 2011, so about 8 years," he said of working with the Arkansas National Guard earthquake planning. "We work with them in using their helicopter assets to move our advance team to the site. We would rather go by ground but already know we're going to have to have some assets go in by air."

Traffenstedt said the Pulaski County

Emergency Management's expertise lies in urban search and rescue efforts. In the event of an earthquake, his team will be focused on multi-story, high density, masonry buildings like schools and hospitals.

"Past 5 days, the survivability rate drops significantly," Traffenstedt explained. "So we have to be there, getting people out within the first 72-96 hours. Time is really really critical on our aspect."

At the conclusion of the training exercise, LTC Tolliver said the 61st CST definitely gained new insights, improvements and better familiarization as a result of being on the ground. The unit, he said will take back information that will help refine the National Guard's overall earthquake response plan. He said the will return to the area in the future to continue building on the training they've begun.

"I really appreciate the interagency cooperating," COL Bussell, brigade commander of the 87th Troop Command, said during his observation of the event. "It's important to (practice that) because this is how we'll be operating in the real thing." ●



ARKANSAS NATIONAL GUARD

YOUTH COUNCIL

The Arkansas Youth Council consists of 10 officers, ages 13 to 17, but all youth are encouraged to come to meetings and **become a part of the fun.**

The Youth Council conducts community service and awareness projects and plans youth events - including camps - workshops and symposiums for youth throughout the State.

Register at **JointServicesSupport.org** to receive the Youth Council newsletter.

Be sure to **visit the news and events page** on the website to find local activities and meetings. New events are added throughout the year so **check back often.**



If you have any questions or comments about the Youth Program, please call **Arkansas State Youth Coordinator at 1-800-446-4645.**

2LT Blake Rouse, of the 1st Battalion, 153rd Infantry Regiment, returns to his wife Makenzie and their daughter Elaine after a 9-month deployment to the Horn of Africa.

Photo courtesy Arkansas Army National Guard



Military Family Relief Trust Fund

THE MILITARY FAMILY RELIEF TRUST FUND was established to provide short-term, emergency financial assistance in the form of grants to Arkansas National Guard members and their Families who have been impacted by active duty service.

All funding is received from the State Treasury. This fund provides a valuable means to assist and improve the morale and welfare of Arkansas National Guard Soldiers.

For more information, contact Arkansas
National Guard Joint Services Support at
501-212-4012.

SFC Troy L. Miranda Combat Athletic Performance Center Dedication

The Arkansas National Guard will rename and dedicate the Freedom Hall fitness center to the "SFC Troy L. Miranda Combat Athletic Performance Center."

SFC Troy L. Miranda was a squad leader conducting combat operations in "Grenade Alley" on Haifa Street in Baghdad, Iraq. While on patrol his squad encountered an Improvised Explosive Device (152 mm, artillery shell) that detonated, killing his interpreter and critically wounding four others, including himself. Despite his injuries, SFC Miranda's unwavering leadership and steadfast presence prevented further casualties. SFC Miranda died as a result of his wounds on 20 May 2004. SFC Miranda was posthumously promoted and awarded the Bronze Star and Purple Heart. ●

Arkansas Army National Guard photos by MAJ W.B. Phillips



Family members of SFC Troy L. Miranda are presented with a case of SFC Miranda's service medals, during the dedication ceremony of the SFC Troy L. Miranda Combat Athletic Performance Center.



142nd Field Artillery Brigade Annual Training

In May of 2019, the Arkansas National Guard's 142nd Field Artillery Brigade participated in Annual Training at Fort Chaffee Joint Maneuver Training Center near Barling, Ark. The First Army's 2-305th Field Artillery Battalion provided observer-coach and trainers (OC/Ts), giving mentorship and guidance to the Soldiers of the 142nd. ●

Arkansas Army National Guard photos by
SPC Stephen Wright



2019 Arkansas Best Warrior Competition

Soldiers from the Arkansas Army National Guard competed in a week long Best Warrior Competition February 25, 2019, to March 1, 2019, at Robinson Maneuver Training Center in North Little Rock, Arkansas.

The competitors represented each of the brigades in the Arkansas Army National Guard and had to win at least two competitions to get to the state level. The winners advance on the Region V Best Warrior.

Arkansas Army National Guard photos by SSG Kelvin Green



2019 Arkansas National Guard Employee of the Year

Several Arkansas National Guard Employees were recognized for their outstanding work and dedication as dual-status technicians, AGR, and civilians during a ceremony January 24, 2019, at the Robinson Maneuver Training Center in North Little Rock, Ark. ●

Arkansas Army National Guard photos by
SSG Charles D. Davis





Current and Future

COLLEGE STUDENTS!

Be sure to take advantage of the **25 PERCENT REDUCTION IN COLLEGE TUITION COST** offered through the Arkansas Army National Guard.

Additionally, the Tuition Waivers for National Guard Soldiers and Airmen bill allows colleges, universities, technical schools and other post-secondary institutions to **waive up to 100 percent of that institution's tuition for Soldiers and Airmen of the Arkansas National Guard.**

The Tuition Waivers bill applies in addition to the 25 percent reduction in tuition cost offered through the Arkansas Army National Guard.

While the percentage reduction applies to all Arkansas State colleges and universities, only educational institutions located in the State of Arkansas and in direct receipt of funds appropriated by the State General Assembly fall under the Tuition Waivers bill.

Contact your school for detailed information about its participation level in the Tuition Waivers for National Guard Soldiers and Airmen bill.

To find out more about the 25 percent reduction, contact the **Arkansas Army National Guard Education Services Officer** at (501) 212-4021 or email NA.AR.ARARNG.List.Education-Office@mail.mil.