



# aease

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The pages are designed to print out at 8.5-by-11 inches, giving you the option of reading @ease off-line.

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## on the cover

Master Sgt. Daniel Plantiko, an Airman with the 128th Security Forces Squadron, low-crawls through an obstacle as part of the 128th SFS Defender Challenge Aug. 9. The event tests security forces members' endurance, career field knowledge, and team work. 128th Air Refueling Wing photo by Staff Sgt. Jenna V. Lenski

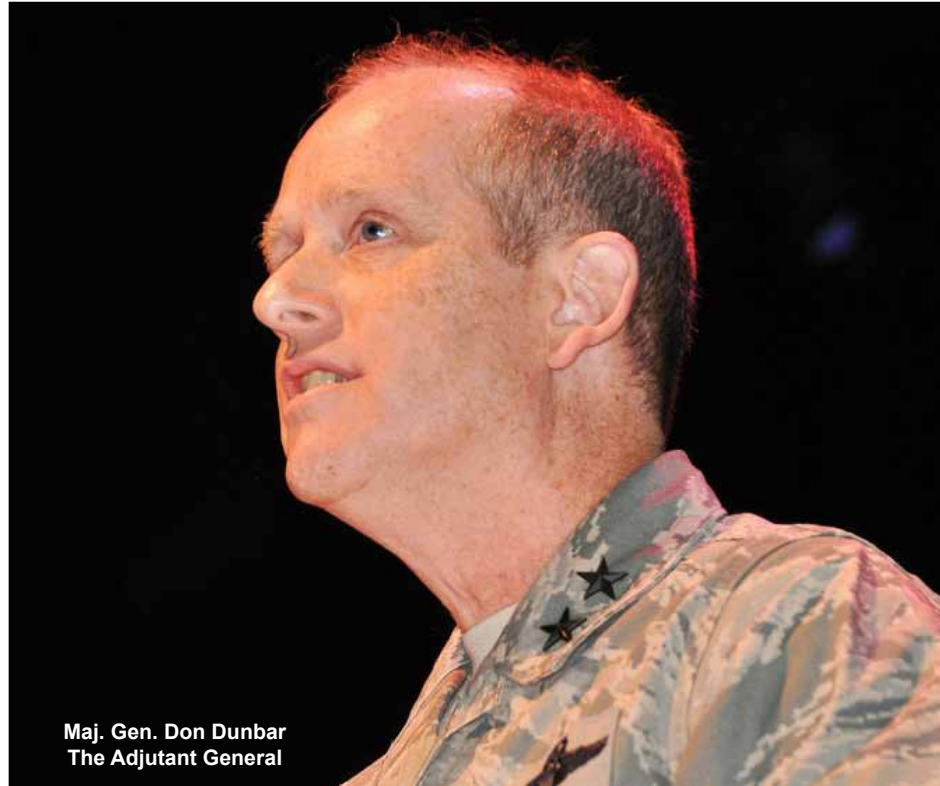
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# From the Adjutant General

ISIS reminds us that we must remain prepared.

In August 2010, the last U.S. combat forces left Iraq and Operation Iraqi Freedom came to an end. Today, we are rapidly approaching the scheduled date for withdraw of combat forces from Afghanistan and, per Presidential direction, Operation Enduring Freedom will likely come to a close. Nobody in the military seeks additional combat actions, and closure of these missions as directed by the national command authority is a good thing because it has been determined that the mission is complete.

However, the world is still a dangerous place and our nation still needs a ready military to meet the known and unknown threats to our country. Over the last nine months, a terrorist organization known as ISIS (also known as ISIL) has dominated the narrative in the Middle East. This group has taken territory, declared itself an Islamic State, and persecuted people in the region for their beliefs. The President recently addressed this threat with a prime-time address to the nation and pledged that America would act against this group.



Maj. Gen. Don Dunbar  
The Adjutant General

It is not clear what the mission will be or how large the United States presence will be within the coalition that our nation's leaders are seeking to form. What is clear from the ISIS threat is that, regardless of the conclusions of Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom, our responsibility as the National Guard has not changed. We have two missions.

First, we are America's primary combat reserve. When threats need to be countered

and Congress determines that the active duty forces are not sufficient, the National Guard is mobilized or called into federal service. It is precisely for this potential call up that our nation funds our training and ensures that we train to the same standard as the United States Army and United States Air Force.

Second, we are America's first military responders. On the occasions when disaster strikes and our first responders need

additional support, our governors call the National Guard to respond and assist.

This unique dual charter makes the National Guard incredibly valuable to our nation and our communities. This day-to-day posture of the National Guard occurs under the command and control of the governor unless and until mobilized for federal service (active duty). Although largely funded by the federal government, we remain a state organization consistent with the constitution until we are called into federal service (active duty).

There is a lot of talk about war weariness lately. I'm not sure who is being referred to by these comments — however, when I am asked, I tell people that the National Guard is not weary of performing its mission. We are prepared to respond here at home or to meet threats overseas — our Soldiers and Airmen are the best trained and most ready force we have ever had — and we remain Always Ready, Always There.



# Guard aviators playing an important role in Afghanistan

**Capt. Joe Trovato**

*Wisconsin National Guard*

Though small in number, a Wisconsin Army National Guard unit is doing big things in Afghanistan.

The seven Soldiers of [Detachment 52](#) of the Operational Support Airlift Command, based in Madison, deployed to Afghanistan in March, and since then the unit has had the important mission of shuttling high-level personnel through the skies of Afghanistan aboard a C26 fixed-wing aircraft.

Every day begins with pre-flight planning, aircraft inspections and then takeoff to various destinations around the country as requested. The destinations could include ceremonies, troop visits, memorials to fallen service members or regional emergencies, but according to Chief Warrant Officer 4 Paul Phelps, the Soldiers of Detachment 52 take pride in completing as many missions as possible.

Phelps, one of the detachment's pilots, said via e-mail that daily operations have been smooth and the unit has gotten into a rhythm since arriving in theater. Each day brings its mission requirements, administrative tasks, unit classes, physical fitness training, and unit bonding, he said.

"The balance of this rhythm produces professional results, positive attitudes and bonding laughter from every unit member," he wrote. "Needless to say, unit cohesion is strong and morale is high."

Some of the best moments of the deployment have been the experiences shared with his fellow Soldiers, Phelps said. From celebrating birthdays and sharing meal times together, the unit has grown close, which takes on an added significance given the distance from family and loved ones.

"The worst/most challenging thing about Afghanistan is being away from our families, friends and loved ones back home," Phelps wrote. "Celebrating hot apple pie topped with Baskin-Robbins



**Detachment 52 Operational Support Airlift Command, left to right: Chief Warrant Officer 3 Paul Phelps, Chief Warrant Officer 4 Alan Massman, Chief Warrant Officer 4 Troy Bittner, Sgt. Travis Brimmer, Chief Warrant Officer 4 Thomas Rogers, Chief Warrant Officer 4 Joseph Zewiske and Chief Warrant Officer 4 Arthur Hebblewhite, in Madison March 6.** Wisconsin National Guard file photo

vanilla ice cream after dinner has been a nightly, morale-boosting ritual for the group."

Detachment 52 Soldiers have kept in touch with their families via Skype, e-mails, care packages and the occasional

telephone call, and Phelps said he and the rest of the unit was grateful for the amount of support from the homefront.

"Support from home has been fantastic," he wrote, noting the care packages and words of encouragement

received from family, friends, churches, schools, veterans organizations and other service organizations.

"It feels great to be appreciated and cared for so much," he said.


As for Afghanistan, Phelps said flying high over the country has given him a unique, reflective perspective on a country where the United States has waged war for almost 13 years.

"It's mind-boggling to see numerous, primitive homes and villages dotting the remote slopes, valleys and landscape throughout the country," he said. "There are no power lines, paved streets, grocery stores, underground water or sewer services. Gravel trails wind to single-story clay homes with small plots containing gardens, animals and outhouses. As we quietly reflect on these observations from high above, it's humbling to realize how fortunate and blessed our lifestyles are back in America."

Asked what was most rewarding about his unit's deployment to Afghanistan, Phelps said, "The inner feeling that we are fulfilling our part of service to our country and to the creation of a safer world for our children and the people of Afghanistan."

Phelps had one more message Detachment 52 wanted to send home.

"We would like to thank everyone back home for the tremendous support they have given us," he wrote. "The success we've experienced so far is due to the combined efforts of our families, employers, the Wisconsin Army National Guard and the Soldiers within our unit. Mission success is truly a multifaceted team effort."

Detachment 52 deployed to Afghanistan last spring where it began flying day and night all-weather airlift missions transporting critical personnel throughout the region in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. The unit conducted its mobilization training at Fort Hood, Texas. 

[Story online](#)

# Big changes in the Wisconsin Army National Guard

Significant changes affecting 17 units and 25 armories in the Wisconsin Army National Guard will begin later this year, as the result of Army-directed unit reorganizations.

Two armories — in Richland Center and Burlington — will be vacated. Two other armories — Merrill and Baraboo — will lose the units currently stationed there but will remain open for Recruit Sustainment Program use.

The biggest changes will occur in the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, whose 32nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion will transform into the 173rd Brigade Engineer Battalion. The 951st “Sapper” Engineer Company, currently assigned to the 724th Engineer Battalion of the 157th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, will become Company A of the 173rd Brigade Engineer Battalion. The 32nd BSTB’s current Company A — already an engineer unit in Onalaska — and B will become companies B and D, respectively, in the new engineer battalion. Company C will remain Company C.

The 132nd Brigade Support Battalion will close its company detachments and consolidate Company D in Madison, Company E in Waupaca, Company F in Neillsville and Company G in Mosinee. In addition, Company E will become Company G, and a new Company E will locate in Antigo. Company F will become Company H, and Company G will become Company F.

The 1st Battalion, 120th Field Artillery will establish a headquarters detachment in the Berlin armory — vacant

since the closing of the 332nd Rear Area Operations Center — and locate a new Battery C in Oconomowoc.

The remaining changes occur in the 157th MEB. The 32nd Military Police Company will close its Oconomowoc detachment and consolidate in Milwaukee.


The 829th Engineer Company will relocate to Spooner and maintain a detachment in Ashland, exiting the armories in Chippewa Falls and Richland Center.

The 824th Engineer Company will also relocate to Spooner, exiting the Richland Center armory. To make room at Spooner, the 950th Engineer Company will consolidate in Superior.

The 457th Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Company will exit the Burlington armory and consolidate in Hartford.

“Change is never easy, but it is necessary,” said Maj. Gen. Don Dunbar, Wisconsin adjutant general. “The close ties that bind us to the more than 60 communities across Wisconsin in which we maintain facilities are our lifeblood.”

A restationing committee, made up of unit commanders and state Army leadership, assessed required changes and identified units to consolidate while working to reduce commutes and costs for Guard members traveling to armories and units traveling to training areas.

The Wisconsin National Guard will maintain ownership, maintenance and security of the vacant armories. 

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**The armories in Richland Center and Burlington will be vacated.**

Richland Center

Burlington

**The armories in Merrill and Baraboo will remain open for the Wisconsin Army National Guard Recruit Sustainment Program, but will have no units drilling at those sites.**

Merrill

Baraboo

**The 32nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion will become the 173rd Brigade Engineer Battalion. The battalion headquarters, currently in Wausau with a detachment in Merrill, will consolidate in Wausau.**

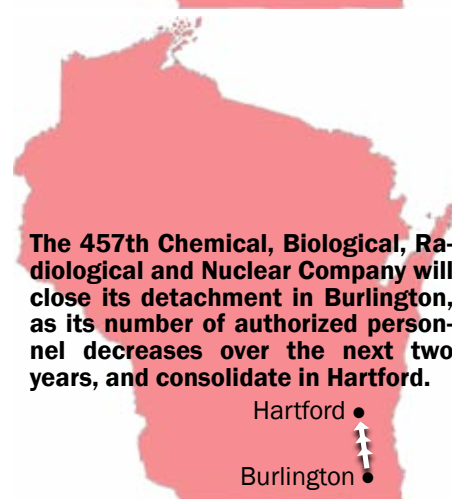
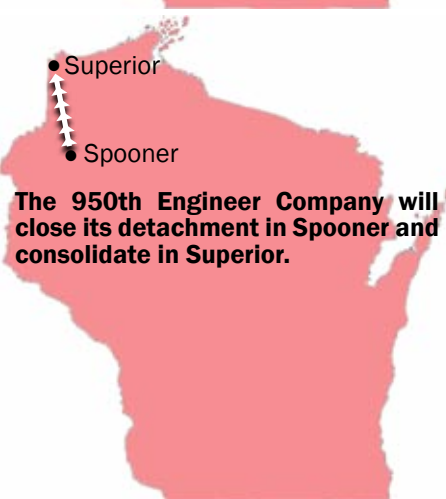
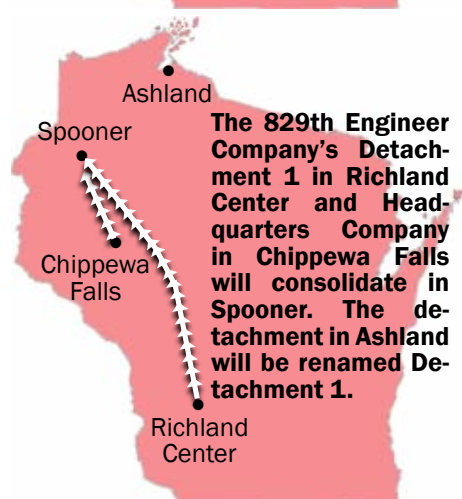
Merrill

Wausau

**The 951st Engineer Company, 157th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, will become Company A, 173rd Brigade Engineer Battalion of the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team. The unit will remain headquartered in Rhinelander with a detachment in Tomahawk.**

Rhinelander  
Tomahawk







**National Guard members brace against rotorwash before loading mock casualties onto a Wisconsin Army National Guard Black Hawk helicopter as part of a training exercise July 23 at Volk Field.** Wisconsin National Guard photo by Capt. Joe Trovato

# Wisconsin Guard plays role in Patriot Exercise

**Capt. Joe Trovato**  
*Wisconsin National Guard*

Members of the Wisconsin Air National Guard and Wisconsin Army National Guard took part in a domestic operations training exercise July 18-25 at Volk Field.

The 115th Fighter Wing Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) team trained with their counterparts from the 104th Fighter Wing and 155th Air Refueling Wing. They learned how to tie proper knots for rappelling, participated in fast rope exercises, climbed a free-falling ladder, worked on hook-and-line

procedures, assembled and disassembled various bomb types and received all-terrain vehicle training certification.

"By bringing everyone to one spot to train, you're operating and exercising with people that you may be deployed with down the road," said Master Sgt. Gilbert Holcomb, 115th EOD flight resources non-commissioned officer in charge. "So, instead of getting tasked for deployment and showing up for your pre-deployment training and not knowing anyone you're working with, getting together for these exercises gives everyone a chance to get to know each other ahead of time. Understanding one another's experience

levels and expertise allows deployments to go a lot smoother."

Air crews from two Wisconsin Army National Guard units flew missions in support of the exercise. Two UH-60 Black Hawk medevac aircrafts from West Bend's 2nd Battalion, 238th Aviation flew medevac training missions while two other Black Hawks from Madison's 1st Battalion, 147th Aviation flew transport missions in support of the exercise.

Lt. Col. Scott Bush, Wisconsin's branch chief for aviation operations, said the Patriot Exercise offers the air crews an opportunity to train for the wide variety of different roles they could face in

real-world disaster scenarios or when supporting civil authorities in a domestic operation.

Bush said National Guard helicopters could be called on to air lift injured civilians from remote areas, provide medical treatment, shuttle emergency managers to disaster areas, or fight wildfires. In natural disaster scenarios, local emergency services could be overwhelmed, or ground transportation infrastructure could be impassable, making the National Guard and its air assets a viable alternative.

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**Tech. Sgt. Erich Sanford, 115th Fighter Wing explosive ordnance disposal flight, solders wire together to make improvised explosive ordnances to use during the 2014 PATRIOT exercise at Volk Field Air National Guard Base July 19. The IEDs were used to test the knowledge of younger Airmen as they were later tasked to safely disassemble them. 115th Fighter Wing photo by Senior Airman Andrea F. Liechti**



## Wisconsin Guard members train on massive domestic ops scenario

**Continued from Page 7**

“What it does for us is it kind of takes us out of our military role and gets us into that domestic environment, which is a little different than what we’re accustomed to,” Bush said. “It also allows us to give the civilian authorities an idea of what capabilities we do have, because they’re basically asking for an asset to provide certain criteria.

“It falls right into our state mission of providing trained individuals, the right resources and the right amount of people to complete that mission.”

In one scenario, a team of Air National Guardsmen parachuted into a remote area of Volk Field and provided first aid medical treatment to two victims and radioed for a medevac aircraft. An air crew from the 238th arrived in minutes, loaded the victims aboard the Black Hawk

and transported them to an aid station for further treatment.

That kind of training is relatively routine for a unit dedicated to medevac, but conducting that same mission in a civil-military environment differs greatly from the day-to-day military training and operations these Soldiers usually encounter.

Civilian first responders use different radio networks as well as different terms and acronyms from those in the military. There are differences too between the Army and Air National Guard forces and a need to understand different capabilities and de-conflict airspace.

“We have a lot of communications issues we need to overcome, because everybody’s on different radio systems,” Bush said. “That’s a huge training

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# National Guard units join forces at Patriot Exercise

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takeaway from this thing.”

And any additional experience in treating casualties and operating the aircraft also proves valuable when it comes time to execute a real-world mission in Wisconsin or in support of a federal mission.

Sgt. Dan Krueger, a crew chief with the 238th, said the experience at Patriot was a valuable one, because it helped him see how other entities, including the Air Force, operate. It helped, he said, to work with organizations outside the Army medical units to which he is accustomed.

“It’s an adventure every time you go out, and you get a positive feeling that you’re helping somebody every time you go and do it,” he said.

The training facilities available at Volk Field Combat Readiness Training Center and nearby Fort McCoy provided extra value for Master Sgt. Jeffery Martin of the Nebraska Air National Guard’s 155th Air Refueling Wing EOD Flight.

“I don’t have these facilities in Lincoln,” Martin said. “There are things I can do here that I can’t do at my home station at all. Take for example the REACT Center — I don’t have anything equivalent to that down there. I don’t have the range capacity that Fort McCoy does so I can’t do large scale demolition like we do up here. I don’t have a training building as complex as this to accomplish indoor explosives training. Being able to come up here and knock out everything I need to do for a year, for all of my guys, in one [temporary duty assignment], without having to pay for lodging, is unheard of.”

Senior Airman Andrea F. Liechti of the 115th Fighter Wing contributed to this report.



**Above, National Guard members prepare to load mock casualties onto a Wisconsin Army National Guard Black Hawk helicopter as part of a training exercise July 23 at Volk Field. Wisconsin National Guard photo by Capt. Joe Trovato**

**At left, Master Sgt. Gilbert E. Holcomb, 115th Fighter Wing explosive ordnance disposal flight resources non-commissioned officer in-charge, teaches EOD Airmen how to tie proper knots during the 2014 PATRIOT exercise at Volk Field Air National Guard Base July 20. The team later used their knot-tying skills to safely lower themselves down a three-story building. 115th Fighter Wing photo by Senior Airman Andrea F. Liechti**

No runway?

# VOLK TIME

No problem!

**Senior Airman Andrea F. Liechti**  
115th Fighter Wing

Pilots and support personnel from the 115th Fighter Wing relocated to Volk Field Air National Guard Base for the month of July.

The relocation allowed fighter pilots to continue their missions and flying requirements, while the Dane County Regional Airport in Madison completed runway repairs and maintenance.

"We needed to keep training our pilots," said Lt. Col. John Kolberger, 176th Fighter Squadron commander. "All of our pilots need a certain number of sorties to remain proficient and qualified in the F-16."

Had the jets stayed in Madison, the pilots would not have been able to meet the flight requirements they needed.

According to Kolberger, the pilots are familiar with the airspace near Volk Field, making it a phenomenal training location.

The move to Volk Field also opened

doors for the traditional Guardsmen who usually only train one weekend per month. F-16 Fighting Falcon maintenance crews were still needed in Madison for the base's alert jets, so the relocation opened several slots for traditional Airmen to work on the jets full-time at Volk Field.

Kolberger welcomed the traditional Airmen to the flightline.

"A lot of the traditionals we have in the Wing — and in the Guard in general — are way more experienced than we could ever hope to have," Kolberger said. "They have a tremendous amount of experience so it's good to have them working on the jets."

From a crew chief's perspective, the operations at Volk Field run similar to those back in Madison.

"The first two days were spent getting everything situated," said Senior Airman Travis Jorgeson, 115th Fighter Wing crew chief. "Now we're back to the same routine as we'd have in Madison. The only



**F-16 Fighting Falcons from the 115th Fighter Wing perform flyover maneuvers and landings at Volk Field July 16. The jets were moved to Volk Field for the month of July, while the Dane County Regional Airport completed runway maintenance and repairs. 115th Fighter Wing photo by Senior Airman Andrea F. Liechti**

difference is the atmosphere. It's so open here that it makes you feel like you're on a TDY."

Varying operation locations can be a positive experience for all.

"It's good to take your operation on the road every now and then because it

helps us simulate a deployed location," Kolberger said. "It lets our people get used to operating in a more challenging and different environment. That just helps us in the long term, if we ever do need to go somewhere different."

[Story online](#)



# Red Flag sharpens critical combat skills



[Click on this image to see a related video](#)

**Staff Sgt. Ryan Roth**  
*115th Fighter Wing*

Approximately 130 Airmen from the Wisconsin Air National Guard's 115th Fighter Wing participated in Red Flag-Alaska, at Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska, Aug. 7-22, where they refreshed skills and faced real-world scenarios to test their abilities in a high-paced environment.

The 176th Fighter Squadron conducted advanced aerial combat training with different aircraft such as the F-22 Raptor, E-3 Sentry, A-10 Thunderbolt II and F-16 Fighting Falcon. Missions included offensive counter-air and defensive counter-air against an advanced enemy integrated air defense system, said Col. Steve Kensick, 176th Fighter Squadron operations group commander.

"It's a great opportunity for the pilots to get a chance to fly in a different environment, drop live munitions and fly against multiple aircraft," said Maj. Tom Nunamaker, 115th Fighter Wing deployed maintenance commander.

By providing scenarios based on worldwide threats and simulated combat conditions, Red Flag-Alaska gives pilots an opportunity to gain experience required for combat. But aircrews were not the only ones who received great training.

"The 115th Fighter Wing maintenance group personnel had a chance to integrate within the active duty wing, and practice building and loading inert, live laser and GPS weapons," Kensick said.

Airman 1st Class Samantha Quesnell, with the 115th Fighter Wing aerospace ground equipment, was one of those maintenance Airmen.

"When I come in for Guard drill, I am working on a piece of equipment and making sure it is ready for monthly inspection," Quesnell said. "It's a fast tempo here, moving equipment around and coordinating with other units to make



**Above, Airmen prepare to load an F-16 Fighting Falcon from the 115th Fighter Wing during the Red Flag-Alaska exercise at Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska, Aug. 12. At left, an F-16 prepares for landing.** 115th Fighter Wing photos by Staff Sgt. Ryan Roth

sure things go smoothly."

Red Flag-Alaska flying exercises were held in the Joint Pacific Range Complex over Alaska as well as portions of the Western Canadian airspace. The entire airspace was made up of military operations areas, special use airspace and ranges, resulting in a flying space larger than the state of Wisconsin. As many as 70 jet fighters can operate in that airspace at any given time.

[Story online](#)



**Above, Airman 1st Class Joseph Stoner, 128th Air Control Squadron, services a generator used to power a Control and Reporting Center at the Alpena Combat Readiness Training Center during Operation Northern Strike, Aug. 6. At left, Airman 1st Class Adam Lichtenberg works on a telephone communications relay system. Air National Guard photos by Tech. Sgt. Dan Heaton**

## **Wisconsin, Illinois Airmen partner to provide communications for Operation Northern Strike**

**Tech. Sgt. Daniel Heaton**  
127th Wing

ALPENA, Mich.— Communications specialists from two Midwestern states provided the critical link connecting aircraft and ground combatants in what may be the largest military exercises to be held in the Great Lakes region this year.

Air National Guard Airmen from the Wisconsin and Illinois Air National Guards are proving a new concept in aircraft control and communications during Operation Northern Strike (ONS), a major National Guard-led exercise centered on two massive military training facilities in northern Michigan.

“We are the hub in the wheel,” said Maj. Chris Divyak, site commander for the Control and Reporting Center created by the 128th Air Control Squadron (ACS) at the Alpena Combat Readiness Training Center. The 128th is an element of the Wisconsin Air National Guard, one of about two dozen units participating in ONS.

A total of 24 units from 12 different states and two coalition partners will participate in ONS, an exercise that will generate more than 300 aircraft sorties in multiple missions, most of them in close coordination with ground forces. The Aug.

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# 128th Air Control Squadron supports large Midwestern military exercise

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4-22 exercise took place at the Alpena Combat Readiness Training Center and the Camp Grayling Joint Maneuver Training Center.

The Wisconsin Airmen worked in conjunction with Airmen from the 264th Combat Communications Squadron of the Illinois Air National Guard to provide communications for the exercise. The exercise marks the first time the two units have worked directly together and is proving a new concept in meshing the technical skills of the two units. The 128th, utilizing radars, secure radio transmissions and various other tools, provided the communications and control to link the aircraft with the ground units in the exercise, while the 264th provided internet, secure network communications and other links to the outside world, including higher-level command elements.

"This is the first time we've been tasked to provide this type of a set-up," explained Tech. Sgt. Candace Pummill, a network administrator with the Illinois unit, which is based in Peoria. "We are the step between the ACS and outside world."

The 264th recently received a modification in its mission, going from a unit that planned to operate a larger, more independent communication center to one that is geared to sending smaller elements to integrate with different units, such as is the case at ONS, explained Master Sgt. Eric McCann, the first sergeant for the 264th.

While at ONS, operators with the 128th were actively controlling aircraft from Michigan, Ohio, Canada and other locations as they were working closely with Army and Air Force ground personnel, simulating a variety of combat scenarios. Utilizing secure operation modules and radio communications trailers, 128th controllers were able to provide pilots with a full update of the battle space as they worked to provide



**Airman 1st Class Adam Lichtenberg 128th Air Control Squadron, Wisconsin Air National Guard, works on a telephone communications relay system at the Alpena**

**Combat Readiness Training Center during Operation Northern Strike, Aug. 6.** Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Dan Heaton

close air support to Joint Terminal Attack Controllers (JTACs) and other ground-based combat personnel.

The Wisconsin unit was set up in two locations at the Alpena CRTC, on opposite sides of the air field, to simulate working in a deployed environment when the unit's ABE – Air Battle Element – and DR – Deployed Radar – units might be located hundreds or even thousands of miles away. In all cases, all of the 128th's communications travel at least 44,000

miles, as the link bounces off an orbiting satellite some 22,000 miles away and then makes the round trip.

"Over the past couple of years, we've had a real influx of newer personnel," said Master Sgt. Benjamin Anderson, a Battle Staff Coordinator (BSC) from Wisconsin. "For many of them, this was their first deployment, their first time riding in a convoy. Being at Northern Strike, there's a lot of aircraft movement, a lot of units involved. It is a great training scenario for

our younger Airmen who are able to really get their feet wet."

Staff Sgt. Edwin Hunter, a Wisconsin Air National Guardsman since 2009, said the new Airmen are not only getting a taste of live training, but are also experiencing something he already knows.

"This is a unit that expects the best out of you," he said, while working in a radio control room. "When you are around people like that, it really makes for an enjoyable environment." 📷

# 54th CST trains hazmat teams across state

**Capt. Joe Trovato**

Wisconsin National Guard

The Wisconsin National Guard's 54th Civil Support Team (CST) lent a helping hand to the state's top hazardous materials (hazmat) teams by validating their skills and equipment to be ready to respond to the most serious chemical spills and events that could occur in Wisconsin.

In early July, the CST conducted three days of intensive training focused on weapons of mass destruction (WMD) scenarios for the City of Milwaukee Hazardous Materials Response Team. This training helped them become certified as a Type I team in the state of Wisconsin. The CST plans to conduct a similar training with the Eau Claire/Chippewa Falls Hazardous Materials Team which is the other designated Type I team in the state.

The 54th CST is the Wisconsin National Guard's full-time response team for emergencies or terrorist events that involve WMDs, toxic industrial chemicals or natural disasters. The unit, based in Madison, is designed to rapidly deploy, assist local first-responders in determining the nature of an attack or hazardous materials scenario, and provide medical, communications, technical support and advice.

Gov. Scott Walker and the Wisconsin Legislature approved changes to the state's hazmat system in July 2013, resulting in a new three-tiered classification system for hazardous materials response based on the National Incident Management System (NIMS) standards. According to Wisconsin Emergency Management (WEM), all hazmat teams in the state are certified to respond to known chemical emergencies such as ammonia, chlorine

or ethanol spills. The difference between the Type I, Type II, and Type III teams is the different equipment, capabilities and training requirements.

Currently, Wisconsin has 15 Type III teams located across the state that are certified. These teams provide protection and detection for releases on known chemical substances. These would include spills from transportation accidents and gas releases from storage tanks.

The Type II teams are not only qualified to respond to known chemical releases but also have training and equipment to respond to unknown substances. They

also have specific equipment that is designed to classify and identify hazardous materials.

For the most serious of spills and releases that requires the highest level of skin and respiratory protective gear, including a response to a WMD event, the state has two Type I teams. The Milwaukee and the Eau Claire/Chippewa Falls Type I teams are able to respond anywhere in the state in less than three hours of notification. The state of Wisconsin Department of Health Services assisted in the development of protocols for the Type I teams in responding to a radiological

event.

To help with the certification of the new Type I teams, WEM requested the CST to assist in the training. According to WEM's Hazardous Materials Coordinator Frank Docimo, the CST is able to help with equipment, standard operating procedures and guidelines as well as training and assessment.

"What we've learned in the last two years is that the CST is one of the best teams in the nation. They are helping tremendously — not only with the training," Docimo said.

Docimo has been working closely with Lt. Col. David May, the commander of the 54th CST to certify the standardized equipment list for the three tiers, develop standard operating procedures and guidelines as well as training and assessment. The involvement has proven valuable for the CST as well.

"Building those relationships is only going to help in the future when we operate together," May said. "The opportunity to go in and train with [the Type I teams] has really renewed some relationships, from the battalion chief level all the way down to the team level."

The relationship has already blossomed to the point where members of Milwaukee's Hazardous Material Response Team have gone on training missions with the CST outside the state, and the unit routinely trains with other first responder agencies. May hopes to continue building relationships with the hazmat teams. The CST's priority is to train with each team in the state once a year and conduct additional exercises and training with the Type II and Type I teams.

"That kind of partnership really deepens the trust and familiarity that allows us to operate together seamlessly," May said. 📷

[Story online](#)



# Red Arrow engineers build home away from home

**Scott T. Sturkol**  
*Fort McCoy Public Affairs*

Construction engineers with the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 32nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion (BSTB) transformed a barren training area into a working forward operating base (FOB) during training on Fort McCoy's North Post.

The Soldiers, from the 32nd BSTB's Company A in Onalaska, used various pieces of earth-moving equipment, and a bit of hard work, to transform Training Area 397 to a FOB complete with a main entrance area and defensive fighting positions.

Prior to the construction of the FOB, the Soldiers prepared a detailed scale model of what they wanted to build, taking into consideration what needed to be done to ensure the base had the proper 360-degree security coverage. Factors such as vehicle parking, operations and billeting tent placement were also built into the design.

"In building a FOB, you have to know how it should be constructed and what you need to do the construction. Here, we were able to hone our skills while at the same time maintain our proficiency in all the equipment we use," said Staff Sgt. Mathew Ashby, equipment section sergeant and horizontal construction engineer with the 32nd BSTB. Horizontal construction falls under the Army's 12N military occupational specialty.

"Being able to train in these conditions helps our Soldiers become more tactically proficient in building a FOB wherever we may go in the world, such as an austere, combat environment," Ashby said.

To build the FOB, the squad-sized group of Soldiers used plenty of heavy-duty equipment, to include a bulldozer as well as a High-Mobility Engineer Excavator (HMEE).

The HMEE is a backhoe loader that carries a two-man crew. It was developed specifically for the U.S. military to replace its small-emplacement excavator, according to manufacturer J.C. Bamford Excavators Limited. The HMEE can be used to clear roads, lay power lines and create obstacles to hinder enemy forces, such as the earthen berms the 32nd BSTB Soldiers built for the FOB.

"The HMEE is a great piece of equipment for doing this type of work," said Sgt. Jacob Ard, team leader and also a 32nd BSTB horizontal construction engineer. "There are only a few excavators like this available in the state. We're fortunate to have one to train on and have available for use."

For Sgt. Tylor Harlan, a horizontal construction engineer who works mainly with heavy equipment, being able to train on multiple pieces of equipment for the FOB



**A combat engineering Soldier with Company A, 32nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, a Wisconsin National Guard unit in Onalaska, uses a bulldozer to build an earthen berm for a training forward operating base on Fort McCoy's North Post.** Fort McCoy Public Affairs photo by Scott T. Sturkol

training proved useful.

"I like being able to use Training Area 397 because the space allows for more creativity in how we build the FOB," Harlan said. "While building this, we wanted to make a real-life FOB that could be considered combat ready, complete with a living area. And, while we do this, we also want our Soldiers to be confident in their ability to build a FOB if called upon to do it."

Necessary skills for horizontal engineers to build a FOB include operation of different types of construction- and rough-terrain equipment, equipment maintenance and repair, soil type identification and grade stake placement.


"We have a great group of Soldiers who are able to complete this mission" of FOB building, Ashby said. "In this training, we get to do things that help us achieve future success. We love being out here, getting dirty and

doing what we do best at a place that best accommodates our training needs."

The FOB built at Training Area 397 was deconstructed when training was complete.

Ard said having Fort McCoy within 40 miles of their unit headquarters in Onalaska is great because they don't have to travel far to have a place that offers training opportunities.

"It's good for our Soldiers to be able to come [to Fort McCoy]," Ard said. "There are a lot of good resources here and lots of area to do this type of training. Additionally, Fort McCoy's Range Control team has taken great care of us and supported us whenever we needed something."

The 32nd BSTB is part of the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team. In addition to Onalaska, the 32nd BSTB has units in several Wisconsin cities. 

[Story online](#)





**Soldiers with the Black River Falls-based 1158th Transportation Company work with Hartford city workers June 16 to move an M60 tank from in front of the former Veterans of Foreign Wars post in Hartford. The unit hauled the tank from the Hartford VFW to the Woodruff VFW. 112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment photo by Pfc. Christopher Enderle**

# 1158th hauls massive tank for second time in 50 years

**Pfc. Christopher Enderle**

*112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment*

Soldiers with the Wisconsin Army National Guard's Black River Falls-based 1158th Transportation Company transported an M60A3 tank from in front of the Veterans of Foreign Wars post in Hartford, to its new home in Woodruff, as part of a training exercise June 16.

The tank-moving venture drew a large crowd of curious onlookers in Hartford.

Staff Sgt. Diana Metz, with the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 229th Engineer Company, explained that the 1158th was required to take a very specific route while transporting the tank. Since it was such a large load to transport, they had to be careful what streets and bridges they took en route to their final destination.

"The tank was one of the largest ones they had made at the time," said Jack Wirth, a Vietnam veteran and

member of the Hartford VFW. "The reason it was retired was its size. It was just too big and heavy to get up hills, or around anywhere really."

The 1158th sent a four-man team to move the tank, with two different military transportation vehicles — a "Wrecker," which is a powerful tow truck, and a heavy equipment transportation vehicle, or HET, which is similar to a flatbed semi truck.

There were some difficulties in moving what was once a 50-ton tank, but the city of Hartford dispatched a small road crew to help in moving the tank onto the HET vehicle trailer.

Mike Eggleston, the Hartford VFW commander, explained that the tank was originally delivered to the post in 1968 by the 1158th, and it was a sad sight to watch it go.

"We would love to keep it, but the old building had to be shut down," Eggleston said while the 1158th worked on

hooking up the tank behind him.

Of his unit's role of moving the tank to the VFW post in the 1960s and moving it away in 2014, Sgt. Jonathan Bohl, of the 1158th, said, "I didn't know about the history behind the tank, but it does give you a sense of pride."

Due to a lack of funding, the old post had to be shut down and relocated, and the VFW ultimately had to sell the tank.

Frank Zogar, commander of the Woodruff VFW, was there as well to see the tank off and thank Eggleston in person.

"It's a wonderful piece of history, and I'm proud to have it be part of our city," he said as the tank was being loaded onto the trailer. "I think it will be a great addition to the post and to the city."

- [Story online](#)
- [Additional Photos](#)





Airmen from the 210th Red Horse Squadron out of Kirtland Air Force Base, New Mexico, finish a concrete project at the 115th Fighter Wing Aug. 14. The group temporarily deployed to the 115th to complete various infrastructure projects on the base, while gaining real-world experience. 115th Fighter Wing photo by Senior Airman Andrea F. Liechti

# Visiting Red Horse Squadron gives 115th Fighter Wing a boost

**Senior Airman Andrea F. Liechti**  
*115th Fighter Wing*

MADISON – Airmen pouring concrete, turning windows into walls and installing doors were active throughout the 115th Fighter Wing Aug. 3-22.

Identified by their red hats, members of the 210th Red Horse Squadron out of Kirtland Air Force Base, New Mexico, came to the 115th to help with various infrastructure projects.

“We brought these individuals here as an initiative to use our limited sustainment repair modernization funds, to get more work accomplished,” said Maj. Daniel Statz, 115th Civil Engineering Squadron commander.

The cost of labor alone would have put a big dent in the budget. By bringing the 210th RHS out to do the infrastructure work, the 115th did not have to pay a civilian contractor for labor costs — they just had to

pay the Airmen for their training days and provide the construction materials needed to get the jobs done.

Maximizing work done on base while staying within budget was one of CE’s goals, but they also had training missions they needed to accomplish.

“We wanted to get real-world training to other units that are tasked to deploy to support base infrastructure,” Statz said. “It also gave us a chance to provide real-world training to our unit by supporting a workforce coming in to do construction.”

Senior Airman Michael Levison, 210th RHS structures, was one of the Airmen who worked on the various construction projects. One of his focuses was to remove a window in Building 500 and replace it with a flat wall.

“That was the first window removal I’ve ever done,” Levison said. “The projects here have given me training opportunities I’ve never had before.”

If the 210th RHS deploys overseas, they will be

expected to know how to set up a forward operating base or complete infrastructure work in existing locations. The experiences they have received in Wisconsin are building blocks they can use in the future.

Because of the high quality and efficiency of the work, the group was offered additional days to do even more projects at the 115th Fighter Wing.

“They were only planning to be here for two weeks,” Statz said. “There were additional resources available, so nine of them agreed to stay longer to help us with more projects.”

The CE commander plans to bring in larger groups to work on bigger projects next year.

“This was a small test on what they could accomplish,” Statz said. “This crew showed up and got everything done that we’ve asked them to do. They’ve exceeded our expectations.”

[Story online](#)



# Wisconsin Guardsman top shooter at regional

**1st Lt. Denise Douglas**

*National Guard Marksmanship Training Center*

CAMP PERRY, Ohio — One of the best rifle marksmen in the National Guard hails from Wisconsin.

Sgt. Brandon Swanson of St. Croix Falls, a member of the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment, 32nd Brigade Combat Team, not only took the top individual spot in the Marksmanship Advisory Council Region Four-Small Arms Championship, but was part of the third-place Wisconsin National Guard team.

Illinois teams took first and second overall, and also claimed the individual pistol champion.

The Wisconsin National Guard fielded two four-person teams this year. Team A consisted of Swanson, Sgt. 1st Class Dustin Zabinski, Recruiting and Retention Battalion; Sgt. Aaron Cobosco, Detachment 1, Company F, 132nd Brigade Support Battalion; and Staff Sgt. Jordan Ceglar, Detachment 1, Headquarters Company, Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team. Team B included Sgt. 1st Class Jacob Iwanski, Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment; Sgt. Tyler Freer, 426th Regional Training Institute; Spc. Max Henrickson, Detachment 1, Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment; and Staff Sgt. Tristan Babl, Company A, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment.

Ceglar placed first in the novice class and third for combat rifle excellence.

“As a shooter, you are never really satisfied,” Swanson said of the final results. “There is always room for improvement and you always need to be pushing yourself.”

Swanson allowed that the Wisconsin shooters did well considering that the state is still building its marksman program, meaning the competitors were largely responsible for their own training and preparation heading into the contest. Pistol marksmanship is an area where Wisconsin shooters can improve, he said.

“The Beretta M9 is a challenge to master, and it can take years,” he explained. “Anyone can stand there and apply good fundamentals slowly, but throw scoring rings and time in there — it changes everything.”

Swanson is also a member of the All Guard Service Rifle Team, which means he represents the National Guard at military and civilian marksmanship competitions across the U.S.

Competitions aren’t just about winning awards though. The ability to shoot accurately is a basic Soldier skill.

“I think fundamentally, it’s the most important thing in the entire military,” Swanson said.

Swanson uses his marksmanship skills to positively affect his fellow Soldiers. He works with other units in Wisconsin to pass along those skills, and will soon be attending the Small Arms Master

**Continued on Page 19**

**Sgt. Brandon Swanson, with the Wisconsin Army National Guard’s 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment, 32nd Brigade Combat Team, prepares to shoot in one of the rifle matches held June 28 at Camp Perry Joint Training Center, Ohio during the Marksmanship Advisory Council Region 4-Small Arms Championship. Swanson took home the title of Combined Arms Individual Champion.**  
Photo by 1st Lt. Denise Douglas





Soldiers from across Illinois, Wisconsin, Indiana, Ohio and Michigan came together to shoot in the recent Marksmanship Advisory Council Region 4 – Small Arms Championship at Camp Perry Joint Training Center, Ohio. There are seven

MAC regions in the U.S. that hold championships throughout the year with the culmination event being the Winston P. Wilson Small Arms Championship at the national level each spring. Photo by 1st Lt. Denise Douglas

# Wisconsin National Guard marksmanship team heading to nationals

Continued from Page 18

Gunner course to become a marksmanship instructor.

Sgt. 1st Class Timothy Glover, of the Ohio National Guard's Master Weapons Training Team, also knows a little bit about training marksmanship skills. He has personally been shooting competitively since 2002, but has been part of the MWTT for the last six years.

Glover has spent a lot of time on the range training Soldiers how to be an effective shooter.

"We have done a lot of support for the pre- and post-mobilization training for deploying units," Glover said. "They bring us in to help them out on the live fire portion of their training."

The primary mission of Glover's team is to provide primary marksmanship instruction for all Ohio units. As the team's assistant noncommissioned officer-in-charge, it is something that he takes a lot of pride in, but he isn't too proud to learn some new tips at the competitions though.

"One of our guys has a different hold on his standing position where he gets his arm fully extended on the front

hand guard," said Glover. "I think it has promise."

The Marksmanship Advisory Council Small Arms Championships occur each year around the nation. There are seven MAC regions in the U.S. that include all 54 states and territories. Ideally, each state conducts their own state matches to find the best teams to send to the MAC regional matches.

The matches are sponsored by the [National Guard Marksmanship Training Center](#) in North Little Rock, Arkansas. Col. Franklin D. Powell, commander of the NGMTC, feels competition is another training tool to strengthen our core of service members.

"These shooters need to take what they learn at these competitions back to their units," said Powell. "If they work hard out here and learn from other shooters, they can bring back a wealth of knowledge that can be invaluable to their units."

First-time shooter Zabinski of Holmen, a member of the Wisconsin Army National Guard's Alpha Company, Recruiting and Retention Battalion, seemed to agree.

"The shooting community is awesome," Zabinski said. "I can talk to anybody from any state and they're willing to give up any information whatsoever. We're all on the same team."

And speaking of teams, Zabinski and Swanson share another trait of excellence — they both represented Wisconsin as Best Warrior competitors. Swanson competed at the [National Guard Best Warrior](#) event in 2011, and Zabinski competed at the [regional event](#) held at Camp Ripley, Minnesota, in May.

Swanson noted that schedules and other factors make it difficult to keep the same competitors on the team from the summer regional competition to the finals the following spring.

"I think this will be the first year we will keep all eight and go to nationals in the spring," Swanson said. "I feel we have two pretty solid, closely matched teams, which is always the goal. It is so much better when your B Team can be as competitive as your A Team and help hand other teams losses."

[Story online](#)

# Program gives developing Airmen chance to spread their wings

**Senior Airman Andrea F. Liechti**  
115th Fighter Wing

The engine is loud. Shadows from the rotor blades are constantly hitting the ground. The Airmen inside are given the go-ahead to exit the UH-60 Black Hawk. One by one they exit, ducking down to ensure they avoid the blades.

Smiles are on all of their faces. For most of the Airmen, this was their first and possibly only Black Hawk ride.

Airmen from around the state of Wisconsin came together for the Junior Enlisted Orientation Program (JEOP) July 29-31. They had an opportunity to meet the state's adjutant general, assistant adjutant general and state command chief. They also learned about the missions the Air National Guard has in the state by traveling to the 115th Fighter Wing, Volk Field Air National Guard Base and the 128th Air Refueling Wing.

"I signed up for the program because I wanted to get a broad perspective on the Air National Guard mission," said Senior Airman Brandon Roddick, 115th Fighter Wing weapons loader. "I learned about that, and I also got to make amazing new friends along the way."

Participants came from all three bases and had a chance to interact with each other during each phase of the three-day program. They had a chance to learn about each of the individual bases' missions. They saw the jets at the 115th Fighter Wing, participated in the Leadership Development Course and got all-terrain vehicle training certification at Volk Field Air National Guard Base. They also flew in a KC-135 Stratotanker and watched the boom operators fuel an F-16 Fighting Falcon during their tour at the 128th Air Refueling Wing.

Staff Sgt. Tyson Krug, 128th Air Refueling Wing boom operator, spoke about his experience attending the JEOP about five years ago.

"The incentive flight I was given through the Junior Enlisted [Orientation] Program really changed the outlook of my whole military career," Krug said. "I was a weapons loader for the 115th with about a year or two left on my original enlistment, and although I loved the opportunities I got being a weapons loader, it just wasn't quite the right fit for me."


Prior to the program, Krug thought he might just get out of the military altogether.

"By participating in the Junior Enlisted Orientation Program and going to all the different bases, I was able to see the different jobs and opportunities available in the Wisconsin Air National Guard," Krug said. "When I went on the refueling mission and saw what the boom operator did, I thought to myself, wow, if there's anything I would stay in the military for, it would be to become a boom operator."

He was told by the recruiters that it may be a challenge to get into Milwaukee, but still pursued his dream.

"Now I'm eight years in and coming up on another reenlistment," Krug said. "There's nothing I'd rather be doing."

The JEOP gave Krug a chance to discover what he wanted to do in the Air National Guard.

"This is a really cool program and allows Airmen to see how widespread the opportunities we have in Wisconsin are," Krug said. "You're never stuck doing the same job. There are a lot of opportunities out there and a lot of different ways to progress in your career." 

[Story online](#)





# Political delegation visits Guard facilities at Fort McCoy

**Capt. Joe Trovato**  
*Wisconsin National Guard*

Members of Wisconsin state government and representatives of the state's congressional delegation visited Wisconsin National Guard facilities at Fort McCoy Aug. 15.

State Rep. Warren Petryk, who represents Wisconsin's 93rd State Assembly District and chairs the assembly's Committee on Veterans, joined representatives from the offices of Sens. Tammy Baldwin and Ron Johnson, and the office of Gov. Scott Walker, as well as those of congressmen Ron Kind, Mark Pocan and Reid Ribble. Others from the Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs and the Legislative Fiscal Bureau also took part.

After a morning briefing about the Wisconsin National Guard Challenge Academy, the Wisconsin Military Academy, and the 426th Regional Training Institute — all housed at Fort McCoy — the 12-member delegation toured the military academy's facilities where they got hands-on experience with several simulators. In one simulator, they fired weapons like the M-16, M-4, M-9, M-240B, and others. The group also used an artillery simulator to call for fire on simulated targets. Each representative also climbed into a Humvee simulator and manned gunner, driver and assistant driver responsibilities.

Many were in for a shock when they donned a Soldier's equipment and felt the weight of body armor, rucksack and a helmet for the first time.

In the afternoon, the group left the simulators and went to the field to fire live field artillery. The M777 155-mm howitzer and the M119 105-mm howitzer were the

weapons of choice as each member of the delegation had the opportunity to pull the lanyard on both guns.

Petryk said he was blown away by the professionalism of the Wisconsin National Guard and its commitment to serving the state of Wisconsin and the nation.

"My first impression is that I am so glad that all of these gentlemen are on our side," he said with a laugh. "I have such an incredible respect for anyone who steps up and serves."


Mark Nielsen, who works in the office

of U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson, described the Wisconsin National Guard as "top-notch."

"I really have to tip my hat to them," he said. "They run a first-class operation, and everyone in Wisconsin should be proud of the men and women that serve."

The commander of the 426th RTI, Col. Gregory Hirsch, said one of his goals for the day was to show that the military academy and its facilities were an asset for not only the Wisconsin National Guard and other state's National Guard units that come to train there from around

the country, but also for other agencies and organizations within the state of Wisconsin. Hirsch said the facilities at the academy have provided opportunities for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the Wisconsin State Patrol and others.

"All in all, it was a tremendous opportunity for us to showcase what we can do," Hirsch said. "We offer more than just what we can do for the National Guard in Wisconsin." 

[Story online](#)



# A second helping of excellence

## ■ Red Arrow food service section is second from state to win regional Connelly Awards Program competition

**Sgt. Alexandria Hughes**  
32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team

FORT MCCOY — When the food service section of the 132nd Brigade Support Battalion's Headquarters Company served chow to about 100 Wisconsin Army National Guard Soldiers July 12, it also reserved a table at the upcoming [Philip A. Connelly Awards Program](#) national food service competition.

For the regional competition, the food service specialists had four hours to prepare 100 meals in a tactical environment. The incentive at the regional competition is \$15,000 to the state food service and equipment budget, and an additional \$25,000 for the winners at the national level.

According to Sgt. Kyle Edwards, the state food program manager, as well as one of the evaluators for the Wisconsin competitors, this is the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team's first participant in the Connelly competition in 20 years.

"It's an evaluation of what a normal food service operation is, of the correct way of doing things, with a little more pomp and circumstance," Edwards explained. "It's a lot of work, and I think a highlight of this team is that they make everything from scratch with fresh ingredients and fresh herbs. It's the thing that sets them apart, and to do that in the field is

**Spc. Joshua Fleming of the 132nd Brigade Support Battalion's Headquarters Company food service team prepares a meal as a part of the Philip A. Connelly Awards Program food service competition July 12 at Fort McCoy.**

32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team photo by Sgt. Alexandria Hughes

quite an accomplishment."

"It's an evaluation of our whole operation, ordering, regulation, from beginning to end," said Sgt. 1st Class Jassen Hinchley, senior food service operations sergeant. "It helps us work together as a team, as a section, and we become more proficient."

Staff Sgt. Aleksandr Simonov, senior first cook, shared his enthusiasm for the competition and for his team.

"It's very challenging, but it's a lot of fun and it's very rewarding," Simonov said. "It's great training for the Soldiers, and they get to see something they normally don't get to in most National Guard units."

Command Sgt. Maj. Rafael Conde, the 32nd Brigade's senior noncommissioned officer, is no stranger to food service with more than 29 years of experience in the food service industry as a district manager for a college food service contractor on the civilian side. He expressed how important this competition, and others like it, is for the Soldiers.

"As a command sergeant major, one of my first questions of Soldiers out in the field is 'How's the food?' Soldiers are happiest when they're fed," Conde said. "Quantity is important, but put a good, quality meal that's healthy and tastes good in front of them — that's what's going to drive our Soldiers and keep them going."

"This competition allows us to see what our mess sections are capable of, especially in the field," Conde continued. "Sometimes people, the Soldiers, forget."

Edwards also mentioned how important it is to recognize the efforts of the food service specialists in the competition.

"It's a lot of work for these guys, but the payoff is great," Edwards said. "First, it's an absolutely great training opportunity. It boosts morale. It generates command interest, and the food service team can get recognition for what they do, and for waking up at two in the morning and not going to bed until the dishes are done at [9 p.m.]

"We hope interest and involvement in this competition keeps growing," Edwards added. "We're hoping to see more and more in the future."

The national competition will be held in early 2015 at the unit armory in Portage. 📷

[Story online](#)

**Click here to see how the 257th Brigade Support Battalion fared in the Connelly Awards Program.**



# WAR, WOUNDS AND WORDS:

## Setting the stage for post-combat life



This reproduction of an antique Greek black-figure amphora depicts Ajax in a crucial scene from the Sophocles' tragedy. Public domain

**Vaughn R. Larson**

*Wisconsin National Guard Public Affairs*

The names from antiquity — Sophocles, Ajax, Tecmessa — may sound strange to modern ears. But the message they bring should resonate as clearly today as when they were first delivered nearly 2,500 years ago.

That is the aim of Theater of War with their traveling production of *Ajax*, a Greek tragedy written by the renowned Greek playwright Sophocles — himself a veteran of the Athenian campaign against the island city-state Samos. The 260th and 261st performances were conducted Sept. 6 at DeForest High School before

military and civilian audiences.

Brian Doerries, founder of Theater of War, said the idea for bringing renditions of ancient Greek plays to military bases and communities across the nation is based on the concept that these ancient works were “a form of storytelling, ritual purification and reintegration for veterans by veterans.” He believes that the ancient works have something meaningful to say to veterans today.

“What I’ve learned from those performances is that these ancient Greek plays, the people who have lived lives of mythological proportions, who’ve faced the stakes of life and death, who’ve loved, who’ve lost, who know the meaning of sacrifice — they have no trouble relating

to these ancient stories,” Doerries said. “In fact, these stories belong to those people who’ve experienced those struggles.”

The tragedy recounts how Ajax, a fabled warrior, struggles to overcome political machinations which rob him of his due glory and honor. He makes rash and reckless decisions and, in their aftermath, decides to end his life. Much like recent studies indicate, Ajax did not directly succumb to the horrors of war, but to external factors for which he lacked sufficient coping skills.

Theater of War’s goal is to translate Ajax’s struggles

**Continued on Page 24**



# Theater of War production suggests post-traumatic stress traces back centuries

Continued from Page 23

as an ancient account of post-traumatic stress. Tecmessa, the wife of Ajax, tells his warriors of Ajax's alarming behavior.

"His rage has been swept away, only to reveal fresh wounds," Tecmessa — portrayed by professional actor Erica Newhouse — said. "He started to make these low sounds, the kind I'd never thought he'd make. For he always told his men that crying was for women and cowards. He now rests in his mess, strangely silent, refusing food or water, planning to do some terrible thing. I can hear it in his voice."

Ajax — portrayed by actor David Strathairn — describes a battle he is ill-equipped to wage.

"I was the bravest in battle — never lost my wits. And now ... what a joke my life has become, my reputation, my sense of honor," Ajax said to his men. "Ajax, Ajax — my name is a sad song. Who would have thought it would become the sound of a man in despair?"

When Ajax announces his plan to take his own life, Tecmessa begs him to change his mind. He sharply rebukes her.

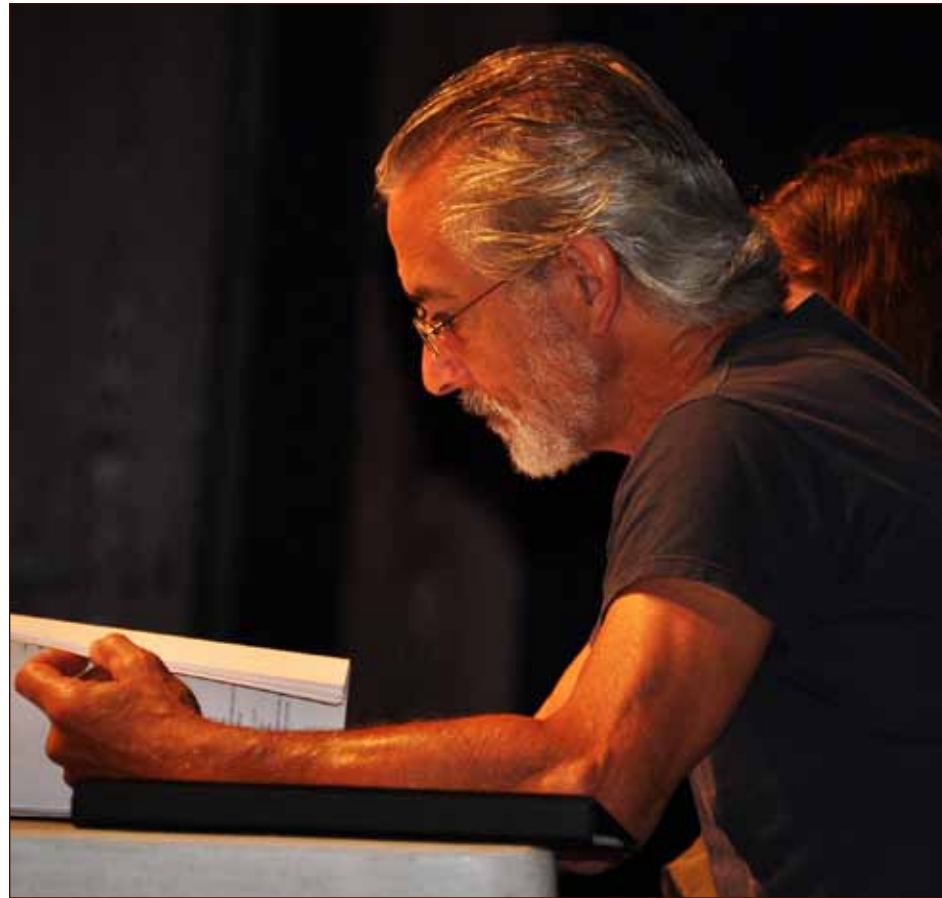
"It is far too late to shape my nature," he barked. "Don't be stupid — leave me alone."

In the play, Ajax deceives his wife and warriors, telling them he has changed his mind and is going to bury his armor and sword. However, he heads to a deserted shoreline, fixes his sword — won from the Trojan warrior Hector — into a sand dune, and impales himself upon it.

But this is not where the drama ended. Four panelists took to the stage to share their own experiences with suicide.

Dustin, a noncommissioned officer in the Wisconsin National Guard, spoke haltingly in a voice choked with emotion as he explained how he related to Ajax struggling with destructive thoughts he could not control.

"It really hit home that somebody could be stricken with something so dark that



they can be driven to do things that they normally wouldn't do," Dustin said. "I was afflicted with severe depression during my first deployment — it basically drove me to attempt suicide."

After swallowing between 40 and 50 painkillers, Dustin said he had a moment of clarity and a sense of deep regret. That clarity led him to go right to his chain of command and tell them what he did.

"And they got me the help that I needed so I could continue through whatever it was I needed to complete," he said. "And what I needed to do was get help."

Rob Kratoska, a peer mentor with Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors

(TAPS), described herself as a surviving significant other. Four years ago she lost Brett, a Wisconsin Army National Guard noncommissioned officer, to what she called "military suicide." She said that Brett's father was himself a veteran, but was unable or unwilling to recognize the danger Brett was in.

Brad, a warrant officer in the Wisconsin Army National Guard, said he was Brett's boss and battle buddy.

"I might have been Brett's boss, but Brett ran the show," Brad said. "He was a very intelligent person."

"We went to war together, we came back together, we shared a lot of



**Actor David Strathairn, left, reviews his lines as the title character prior to the start of Bryan Doerries' adaptation of Sophocles' Greek tragedy "Ajax" at DeForest High School Sept. 6.** Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs photo by Vaughn R. Larson

similarities — we were good friends," Brad continued. "To see someone go through those troubles when there was help there, it was tough on me. Did I reach out enough? Obviously I didn't. There's a lot of finger-pointing after suicide ... but it's never really anybody's fault. It's a disease, it really is."

Benjamin Endres, a licensed clinical social worker with the Veterans Administration outpatient mental health clinic in Madison, said the solutions to very real mental health issues tend to get oversimplified.

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# Theater event helps raise awareness of post-combat struggles

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"You know, there's an app for managing PTSD and there's a list of coping techniques, there's anger management," Endres said. "And a lot of these things can be beneficial, but the intensity of the emotion revealed in the play feels more true to me — it's not as easy as an app or a list of coping techniques."

"Recovering from trauma is a painful process," Endres continued. "Experiencing pain and suffering doesn't necessarily mean things are getting worse — it can be getting better. You can be working through and confronting pain."

Endres said that sharing experiences with someone in a meaningful way can be helpful. Doerries said that may well have been the point behind *Ajax*.

"What do you think this guy Sophocles was doing when he wrote this play and staged it for 17,000 citizen soldiers?" Doerries asked.

Doerries led the audience in a discussion about key points in the play, using Tecmessa's line "twice the pain, twice the sorrow" to encourage an understanding that one person's struggle with post-traumatic stress encompasses family and friends as well.

"It seems like Sophocles is challenging us to share the pain and get in the tent, doing everything we can and putting everything on the line to save people around us, and knowing it's a long road," Doerries explained. "At the same time, maybe he's giving people a pretext, an ability to forgive themselves for what they did or didn't do."

Brad said he could identify with Tecmessa in her anguish after Ajax's death.

"I think eventually, that suffering the family members and the friends go through leads into a similar spiral, which is what happened to me," Brad said. "Like [Dustin], I suffer from depression, anxiety and PTSD, and it wasn't too long ago that I was in that same boat, too. Fortunately, the difference between Brett and I is I reached out."

Strathairn, whose film credits include an Academy Award nomination as Edward R. Murrow in *Good Night, and Good Luck*, said he takes part in these dramatic readings because they matter and they reach people.

"I can't think of a better way to use my craft," he said.

Staff Sgt. Karen Knock, of the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 257th Brigade Support Battalion, validated that statement.

"This is a problem that is not just afflicting our generation or our grandfathers' generation — it's been documented in one form or another throughout history," she said afterward. "I was actually quite surprised by that."



**Brig. Gen. Gary Ebben, the senior officer of the Wisconsin Air National Guard, addresses the audience before a presentation of Sophocles' "Ajax" Sept. 6 at DeForest High School. The Wisconsin National Guard's Service Member Support Division sponsored this Theater of War: Citizens and Soldiers Tour appearance, which featured actors Erica Newhouse, left, as Tecmessa and David Strathairn, center, as Ajax. The play was used as a platform to discuss post traumatic stress in the military.** Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs photo by Vaughn R. Larson

Brig. Gen. Gary Ebben, Wisconsin's assistant adjutant general for Air, told the audience he'd like to state the Air National Guard was immune to suicidal ideation among its members.

"But we're not," Ebben said. "We've had multiple suicides over the years."

One that sticks with him occurred more than a decade ago — a crew chief who took care of his aircraft and buckled him in, someone he joked with and thought he knew reasonably well.

"He committed suicide," Ebben said. "He was a senior noncommissioned officer, 30 years of military service. He was a chief master sergeant, the highest enlisted rank in the U.S. Air Force. It was a complete shock, and to this day I just don't understand it. It's difficult to comprehend."

"This subject is very real and very pertinent today," he continued.

Maj. Gen. Don Dunbar, Wisconsin adjutant general, said he was grateful that service members and citizens in Wisconsin had the opportunity to experience Theater of War.

"These types of creative events bring this very difficult issue to the forefront," Dunbar said, "and provide our service members a safe zone to discuss issues that are obviously very sensitive and vulnerable in nature."

The Sept. 6 performances were the first to use smart phones to encourage immediate, real-time interaction with the audience. The DeForest performances, sponsored by the Wisconsin National Guard's Service Members Support Division, were presented by Outside the Wire in partnership with Massachusetts General Hospital Academy, National Council for Behavioral Health, and Points of Light.

[Story online](#)

# Warrant officer corps reflects on its growing role



**Capt. Joe Trovato**  
*Wisconsin National Guard*

When the Army officially established the warrant officer corps 96 years ago, its original members were billed as subject matter experts in their particular crafts. The role of the warrant officer in the military actually traces its lineage back to early naval history, when boatswains served as the continuity aboard ships when captains moved on to new assignments. The boatswains knew the ship inside and out as well as its limits, capabilities and what it took to run the ship, which allowed for seamless transitions when new captains took the helm.

The Army's first warrant officers, which officially came into existence July 9, 1918, hailed from the Adjutant General corps and served as field clerks. But as the corps grew, so did its role within the Army's force structure.

Today, warrant officers remain subject matter experts in more than 40 different fields ranging from aviation, logistics, maintenance, field artillery or human resources management. But a renewed emphasis on building quality warrant officers in the Wisconsin Army National Guard and across the force seeks to draw heavily on the warrant officers' subject matter expertise as well as their innate leadership abilities.

"I really see them in a dual capacity," Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson, Wisconsin's deputy adjutant general for Army, explained. "In the past, warrant officers were often thought of as strictly the technical expert within whichever field he or she may have had their expertise in. And they were kind of relied on solely from that perspective.

"The evolution of the warrant officer corps has really gone from that feeling alone to one of also being a leader within the organization as a commissioned officer," he said.

As the warrant officer corps in

Wisconsin celebrates its 96th birthday, it stands on the cusp of reinventing itself. Just since its 92nd birthday in 2010, the Wisconsin Army National Guard has reinvigorated its warrant officer corps.

In 2010, the state had 90 warrant officer position vacancies and warrant officer strength managers had only met 42.9 percent of its recruiting mission. As of July 1, the number of vacancies had been cut in half to 42, and in 2013, the corps met 163.6 percent of its mission for the year. In 2014, it's already met 93 percent of its mission.

And perhaps most impressive is the 15 warrant officer candidates currently training at the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 426th Regional Training Institute at Fort McCoy, Wisconsin. The class, which is set to graduate in September, represents the largest National Guard warrant officer candidate school class in the history of all 54 states and territories.

But why such renewed emphasis in Wisconsin in recent years?

"We recognized that this was one of our weaknesses within our organization," Anderson said. "The inability to maintain sufficient strength in our warrant officer corps put our units at a disadvantage, having not only that technical expertise to rely on but that other arm of leadership as well."

The buy-in from the officer corps, commanders, warrant officer leadership and the non-commissioned officer corps has been key to the turnaround in the state.

Command Sgt. Maj. Bradley Shields, the state's senior enlisted officer, said he sees the warrant officer corps as another avenue via which top-notch noncommissioned officers can progress within the organization.

"We have a partnership to identify and develop potential warrant officers early on in their careers, and what that enables us to do is to help ensure that they have the

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# Warrant officer corps celebrates birthday

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right experience and different assignments within their military occupational specialty to be qualified to become a warrant officer,” Shields said.

He noted the importance of demonstrating that the noncommissioned officer corps and the warrant officer corps should work together to develop quality leadership for the Guard, not compete against each other for its best personnel.

As a show of partnership and solidarity, Anderson, Shields and Command Chief Warrant Officer Five John Freeman, the state’s senior warrant officer, all conducted a ruck march in June along with the current class of warrant officer candidates.

“This is another developmental route that good NCOs — the top five-percenters — can take,” Freeman said.

Having quality Soldiers enter the ranks of the warrant officer corps is more important than ever, he said, because the role of warrant officers is changing.

“We’re being broadened in what we do for the Army,” Freeman said. “When we first came around 96 years ago, we were more the subject matter expert. We were only focused on one item, whether that was a maintenance guy or a supply go or even an aviator. They were just concerned with flying the aircraft or managing the part or fixing the truck. But over the years, our capabilities have expanded.”

In some cases, that means warrant officers are filling positions traditionally held by officers. In Wisconsin, a warrant officer commands the 132nd Army Band, and another is currently commanding a group of aviators from Detachment 52 of the Operational Support Airlift Command serving overseas in Afghanistan.

Freeman himself is an example of how warrant officers are now expected to lead at all levels. Serving as a logistics expert with a Stryker brigade in Iraq, Freeman’s brigade commander made him a detachment commander in charge of 120 logisticians, maintenance personnel, transporters, and food service technicians.

“We have morphed into something more than even what a warrant officer thinks he is in today’s environment,” he said.

As the leader of the state’s warrant officer corps, Freeman hopes to continue building that level of professionalism, technical competence and leadership to a point where warrant officers are always at the table with commanders as they plan missions, training or exercises — much like platoon leaders or first sergeants already are.

As part of his overarching strategy to get to that point, Freeman hopes to re-instill a sense of identity amongst



**Staff Sgt. Cynthia Betts, Staff Sgt. Paul Brown and Chief Warrant Officer 4 David Molitor helped the Wisconsin Army National Guard celebrate the birthday of the U.S. Army Warrant Officer Corps by cutting a cake for the occasion at Joint Force Headquarters in Madison. Above, Command Chief Warrant Officer John Freeman shares some of the history of the U.S. Army Warrant Officer Corps.** Wisconsin National Guard photos by Sgt. Oscar Gollaz

the corps, by explaining what it means to be a warrant officer today. He took a big first step in March when he organized the first warrant officer muster in state history — something he hopes will become an annual summit of the state’s warrant officers where they can share best practices and do professional development as a corps.

“What I wanted to do was re-glue ourselves,” Freeman said. “I was talking to Brig. Gen. Anderson, and Col. Mathews, the chief of staff, and they both agreed that we need to reintroduce ourselves to ourselves.”

A big part of the summit was to get warrant officers from all branches together in the same room to build camaraderie and even discuss baseline tasks like officer evaluations and mentorship.

It’s already made a difference to many warrant officers in the force.

“I think we became very separate in this state,” said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Jason Tobias, the state’s warrant officer strength manager.

He became a warrant officer in 2009 after making the rank of sergeant first class, and he’s seen some big changes from then to now.

“What I saw when I first came in as a warrant officer was I knew my technical expertise in the human resources realm, but anyone outside of that was separate from me,” he said.

“We had all these different branches that were separate from me,” Tobias said. “I didn’t know any of those Soldiers. We didn’t really reach out. We really didn’t have any common bond other than walking down the hallway and seeing another warrant officer and saying, ‘Good morning.’”

That culture has changed though, he said.

“Over the last couple of years what I’ve seen though, especially with Mr. Freeman coming in, is pushing that we’re a warrant officer corps,” he added. “We’re not warrant officer individuals.”

[Story online](#)





**A 132nd Army Band brass ensemble performs during an April 2 sendoff ceremony for Battery A, 1st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery in Milwaukee.** Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs photo by Vaughn R. Larson



**"Country Enough," a specialty ensemble consisting of members of the 132nd Army Band, gave its first performance in the Joint Force Headquarters courtyard July 11, 2013.** 132nd Army Band photo by Spc. Alex Lopez

## Band's versatility garners fans, earns awards

**Vaughn R. Larson**

*Wisconsin National Guard Public Affairs*

What do John Philip Sousa, Van Halen, George Strait and Duke Ellington have in common?

Chances are good that the Wisconsin National Guard's [132nd Army Band](#) has played their music.

Technically, the 43-member group is a concert band. But it is also a marching band, ceremonial band, jazz band, brass ensemble, saxophone group, flute choir, rock band and country band.

"We can make lots of smaller groups," said Sgt. Bridgette Kidd, a junior leader with the 132nd Army Band and a member of its music performance team After Action Rock. "We can cover multiple

missions at the same time."

Many times, those missions are to engage the public as ambassadors of the Wisconsin National Guard and the U.S. military.

"Putting us into different musical ensembles appeals to different people's tastes in music," Kidd said.

Other missions include performing at unit sendoff and welcome home ceremonies, and performing for the governor's inauguration ceremonies at the state capitol building.

The Army's School of Music is directing the myriad Army bands to become more mobile, according to Sgt. 1st Class Elizabeth Wold — a senior

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# Versatility, ability strikes chord with audiences, judges

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leader with the 132nd Army Band and also a member of After Action Rock.

"Since Desert Shield/Desert Storm and with 9/11, they've gone down to smaller groups," Wold said. "A brass quintet can go and play for Soldiers. They've brought that down to our level as well, which makes us marketable."

Forming smaller music groups also allows band members to showcase their considerable musical talents.

"A majority of our groups are made of people who are playing secondary instruments or learning secondary instruments, which is highly promoted in the military," Wold continued. "I'm a horn player, too, but I'm playing percussion and a little bit of piano."

In the most recent Army Band Music Performance Team of the Year competition, the 132nd Army Band placed three groups in the top five — the only reserve component band to do so — and one in sixth place.

Forward Brass placed fourth in the Small Brass Music Ensemble category. Soldiers of Sax and Country Enough each placed fifth in the Small Woodwind Ensemble and Small Popular Music categories, respectively. After Action Rock placed sixth in the Large Popular Music Ensemble category.

"We were kind of in a rebuilding stage, but our first sergeant said they submitted our video from annual training [last year]," Wold said, adding that the large popular music category is a crowded field for competition. "We're going to do better next time."

"It's a good starting point," Kidd said.

The music performance teams play a role in concert band performances as well. The 132nd Army Band recently completed a tour of northern Wisconsin, playing several concerts in multiple communities. In Berlin, the concert featured the flute



**Chief Warrant Officer 2 Brad Anderson eyes the governor's podium as he conducts the 132nd Army Band in "On Wisconsin" following the oath of office for Gov. Scott Walker**

**Jan. 3, 2011 at the state capitol. The band has many official and informal functions as ambassadors for the Wisconsin National Guard.** Wisconsin National Guard file photo

section, the concert band and the jazz band.

"My favorite part is definitely seeing all the veterans stand, and getting the audience involved," said Sgt. Megan Koudelka, a flute and piccolo player with the 132nd Army Band. "Every single performance is different, and that's what's

awesome about it."

Having the different ensembles perform also allows musicians to interact with the crowd during the concert.

"That's one of the best parts," Koudelka said. "Every crowd is different."

She recalled an earlier performance that, due to rain, was held in the village

hall.

"We had people standing outside on the steps of the village hall, just listening to our music," she said. "We had people singing, people dancing — those are the moments that touch you and make you never want to leave the band." 📷

[Story online](#)



# Air National Guard completes first hybrid vehicle maintenance course

**Vaughn R. Larson**

*Wisconsin National Guard Public Affairs*

Hybrid vehicles are coming to the Air National Guard, and 10 Airmen are now better prepared to handle their specific maintenance requirements after completing the Air National Guard's very first hybrid vehicle maintenance course Aug. 29 at Volk Field.

Six years ago, the Air Force called for implementing hybrid vehicles to reduce overall fuel consumption by 2 percent annually and increase the vehicle fleet's mile-per-gallon performance as part of its Infrastructure Energy Strategic Plan. Three years ago, a White House [memorandum](#) declared that all new light duty vehicles leased or purchased by government

agencies must be alternative fueled vehicles — hybrids, electric, compressed natural gas or biodiesel — by Dec. 31, 2015.

"Hybrids are pretty new in the field, the government is starting to have them trickle down into the fleets, but there's really no training out there right now except for an active duty base overseas in Spangdahlem, Germany," said Chief Master Sgt. Mike Boyko, vehicle maintenance superintendent at Volk Field. A former active duty Air Force instructor, Boyko has taught fire truck and refueling truck maintenance at Volk Field and saw there would be a need for hybrid vehicle maintenance.

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Above, Staff Sgt. Manuel Gonzalez, of the New York Air National Guard's 109th Air Wing, and Master Sgt. Richard Witkowski, of the Pennsylvania Air National Guard's 270th Engineering and Installation Squadron, reinstall a 275-volt battery pack into a Ford Fusion hybrid vehicle during an Aug. 27 hybrid vehicle maintenance class at Volk Field. Ten Air National Guard maintainers from across the country took part in the Air National Guard's first maintenance class for hybrid vehicles, held Aug. 25-29. Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs photos by Vaughn R. Larson



# First Air National Guard hybrid vehicle maintenance class deemed a success

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Boyko spoke with the active duty hybrid vehicle maintenance instructors in Germany to help build his course, and convinced the National Guard Bureau of the need.

"They felt confident enough to give us some money to purchase some training aids," he said, referring to a Ford Fusion with removable hood and doors, and various cut-away hybrid components. "I sent two of my mechanics to hybrid school, and here we are today."

Those two instructors — Master Sgt. Tom Parrish and Master Sgt. Jon Taylor — completed a thorough civilian hybrid vehicle maintenance course in Massachusetts. They brought that experience to their classroom.

"We seem to be doing a good job of taking the active-duty curriculum and the civilian and blending it," Taylor said. "I think the students appreciate a lot of the hands-on. We actually get to get out and look at the components, take them apart — just what they're going to do in the field."

"Feedback from the students [indicates] they seem to be enjoying it," Parrish added. "Everybody says they're getting a lot out of it."

Senior Airman William Allen, of the Texas Air National Guard's 147th Reconnaissance Wing, said he had received "very good" training during the inaugural course.

"[We're learning] how to deal with high-voltage battery systems, how to disconnect the battery without harming yourself or harming others," Allen said. "[We're] learning the functions of the hybrid system and how they operate. I feel pretty confident I should be able to work on a hybrid system, and show the people back at my unit how to do it, too."

Master Sgt. Adrien Martin, of the



**Above, Master Sgt. Tom Parrish, one of two hybrid vehicle maintenance instructors at Volk Field, observes as Master Sgt. Richard Witkowski and Staff Sgt. Manuel Gonzalez prepare a 275-volt battery back for reinstallation into a Ford Fusion hybrid car during an Aug. 27 class on hybrid vehicle maintenance. At right, Tech. Sgt. Tony Ortiz, of the Texas Air National Guard's 149th Fighter Wing, and Tech. Sgt. Scott Sweely, of the California Air National Guard's 165th Air Wing, reassemble electrical components.** Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs photos by Vaughn R. Larson [Click on image at right to see additional photos](#)

Kentucky Air National Guard's 123rd Air Wing, agreed.

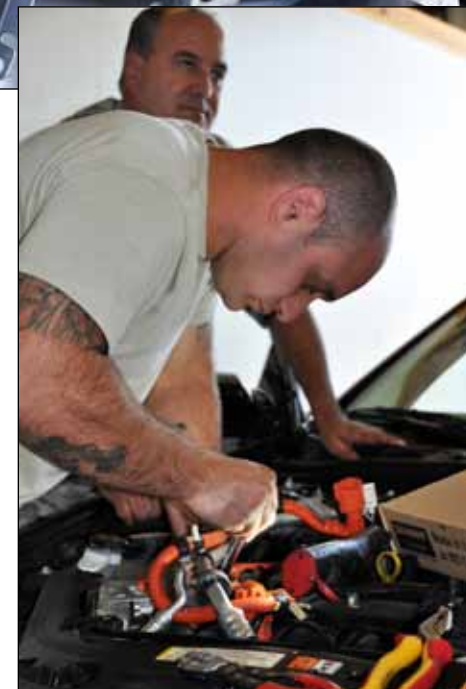
"It's a whole new type of technology," Martin explained. "You have to unlearn a lot of things you've known throughout your career in order to grasp some of the concepts. It's just a totally different animal than a regular vehicle."

Safety is one of the most important tools when working on a hybrid vehicle, Martin said. The battery pack holds 275 volts, and blaze orange high-voltage cables thread throughout the vehicle and engine compartment.

"First and foremost, learning about the safety of the vehicle, and learning about all the new components that come with hybrid vehicles, the theories behind the components and how they work," Martin continued. "With the resources and the training we received here, and understanding the concepts of the vehicle, we can safely maintain it and fix anything that's wrong."

Boyko said he would like to see the hybrid vehicle maintenance course offered on a quarterly basis.

[Story online](#)





# Building bonds that last

**Spc. Kimberly Chouinard**  
112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

"I was terrified," 16-year-old Julliana Barlow of Marshall said of her feelings climbing the stairs to the top of the rappel tower.

Barlow was one of many kids attending the Wisconsin National Guard Youth Camp hosted by the Wisconsin National Guard Family Program at Volk Field and Fort McCoy July 11-13. Campers were divided into three age groups: 8-10, 11-13, 14-17.

According to the camp's mission statement, its purpose is to assemble children from military families and provide them with an opportunity to discover and make new friends while engaging in teamwork. Tina Jeffords, Youth Program Coordinator, believes this is important because it provides a network for military families, which is critical, especially during deployments.

It's important for the youth campers, "to make friends and build a support network so when their family members deploy they have someone who understands and gets it," said Jeffords.

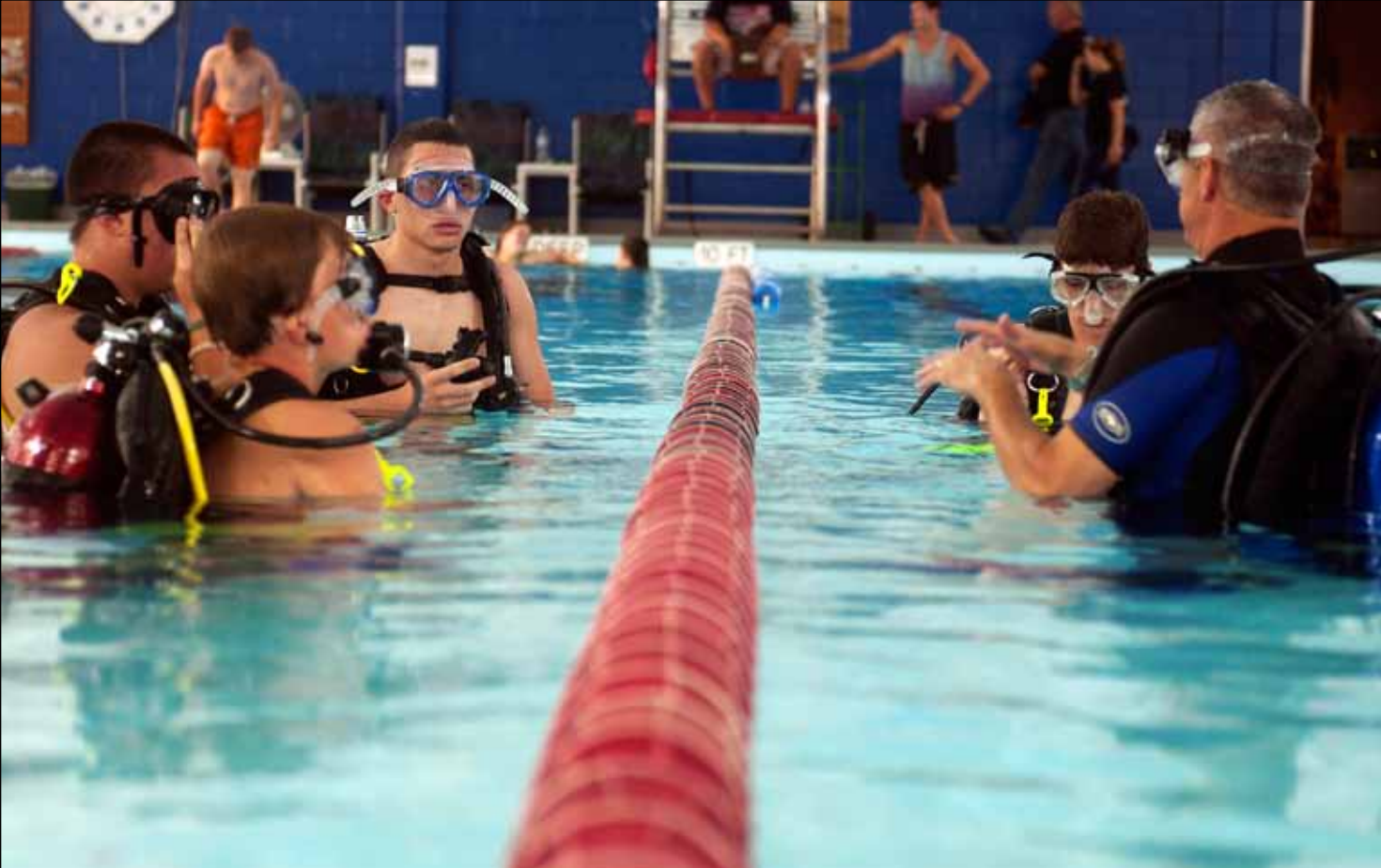
It also helps military children gain an understanding of some of the duties their parents perform as Soldiers or Airmen in the National Guard, which can help ease a child's fear of the unknown when their parent is deployed.

Volunteers are mostly comprised of service members who understand the military lifestyle and duties first hand.

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**A Wisconsin National Guard Youth Camp instructor helps a camper adjust a kevlar helmet for a relay race July 12 at Fort McCoy.**  
112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment  
photograph by Pfc. Christopher Enderle





**Youth campers conduct a scuba diving class while at the Wisconsin National Guard Youth Camp July 11-13 at Volk Field.** 112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment photograph by Spc. Kimberly S. Chouinard [Click on this photo to see additional photos from this year's Wisconsin National Guard Youth Camp](#)



[Click on this photo to see a video about the Wisconsin National Guard Youth Camp](#)



[Click on this photo to see a video about how one Wisconsin National Guard Youth Camper conquers her fear](#)

## Youth Camp fosters friendships, understanding, coping skills

**Continued from Page 32**

"The instructors are very helpful and make you feel safe," Barlow said.

The instructors' level heads and calm demeanor helped her get the courage to make the jump, she added.

Jarrett Goodman, a 15-year-old from Mauston, agreed.

"I was a little scared at first," explained Goodman, "but my first time was a few years ago."

Goodman said each time he attends Youth Camp and participates in the activities he gets a little braver and a little stronger. He hopes these attributes will be helpful as he pursues a career in the military.

Other events included a tug-of-war tournament, an ice cream social, a rock wall, scuba diving, a leadership course and an airplane flight. These events presented puzzles and obstacles the campers had to solve and overcome as a team.

"The tug-of-war is my favorite," Col. Joni Mathews, the youth camp director, said. "There are two age groups that participate and it is so much fun to see their determination and motivation."

In addition to competing and team-building, campers are exposed to aspects of being a Soldier or Airmen, including marching, calling cadence, physical training, eating at dining facilities and basic military customs and courtesies.

"If you have a dad or a parent, relative or a close friend that's deployed someplace, this is a good thing to go to," said 12-year-old Mileana Burmesch. "It calms you down, and you can meet new friends and tell people about your problems, and it's just a fun thing to do."

Now in its 22nd year, the camp staff continuously strives to make the event enjoyable for the campers.

"My favorite thing about camp is doing the obstacles and eating MRE's; I want to come back," 10-year-old Chase Johnson said. 📷

*Pfc. Christopher Enderle, Spc. Katie Eggers, and Sgt. Adam Duffy contributed to this report.*

[Story online](#)

# 157th MEB Soldiers play role in international exercise

**Capt. Joe Trovato**  
Wisconsin National Guard

Soldiers from the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 157th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade played a role in a major international military exercise in August.

The Milwaukee-based unit sent 32 Soldiers to Fort Lewis, Washington, to participate in Ulchi Freedom Guardian, a yearly exercise that simulates a war on the Korean Peninsula. This year's exercise, which occurs annually in August, tested U.S., South Korean and other Allied nations' abilities to execute their battle plans in the event of hostilities. The simulated scenario began approximately 100 days into the notional outbreak of war.

Lt. Col. Steven Sherrod, the 157th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade's administrative officer and officer-in-charge for the exercise, said U.S. forces executed plans for a counterattack after a North Korean invasion of the South. Ulchi Freedom Guardian, which is one of two annual major exercises on the peninsula, tests a different phase of operations each year.

"The purpose is preparation for the day that you might



fight some sort of conflict on the Korean Peninsula," Sherrod said, "and to be better prepared for that eventuality."

The Soldiers of the 157th worked with the 25th Infantry Division's headquarters staff, which played its role from Hawaii and South Korea.

"We had a small battle staff that was basically working and doing all of the communication coordination that we would as a maneuver enhancement brigade for a division," Sherrod said. "So we had charge of the rear area, the mobility, route clearance and route security kinds of issues for the division forces."

In addition, 157th Soldiers played the role of moving engineer, military police and logistics units on the battlefield.

It proved to be a valuable experience for the Soldiers, who hailed from the brigade's headquarters staff, and several subordinate battalions including the Sussex-based 108th Forward Support Company, the Oak Creek-based 257th Brigade Support Battalion, and the 1st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery out of Milwaukee.

Many of the Soldiers experienced a major exercise for the first time and received valuable training on


headquarters processes and the equipment used to command and control battle spaces.

"For a lot of our junior Soldiers, particularly if they were not at annual training, we utilized a lot of our computer systems and so forth for the first time this year in a consolidated fashion," Sherrod said. "So we got a lot of additional training on that — particularly the Command Post of the Future, which is our current platform for conducting operations logistics for the brigade as well as contacts with higher headquarters."

"For the battle staff it was valuable because we had to do all the reporting and briefing and planning and decision-making as far as fighting the battle and supporting the battle," he said.

Ulchi Freedom Guardian provided a rare test for the Soldiers to operate at the corps level and above. Most of the Soldiers had only operated with units at the company, battalion and brigade level prior to the exercise, according to Lt. Col. Tim Skelton, the commander of the 257th Brigade Support Battalion.

Sherrod and Lt. Col. Tim Skelton were both impressed by their team's performance, especially considering many of the Soldiers had not worked together previously.

The exercise kicked off in earnest on Aug. 24, but Soldiers and units arrived in the preceding days and weeks for setup and training. It concluded Aug. 28 and the unit returned to Wisconsin Aug. 30. 

[Story online](#)

## Badger athletes pen their support to deployed Wisconsin National Guard members

**Capt. Joe Trovato**  
Wisconsin National Guard

Even with the kickoff to football, the fall sports season and the start of their collegiate academic careers looming, freshman student-athletes from the University of Wisconsin-Madison found time to write letters of appreciation to deployed Soldiers from the Wisconsin Army National Guard.

Badger freshmen from the men's and women's hockey teams, men's and women's basketball, volleyball, wrestling, women's soccer, and football teams sent 40 letters to Wisconsin National Guardsmen currently deployed to Afghanistan and Kuwait.

"Volunteering is a rich part of the student athlete tradition here at Wisconsin," Kayla Gross, the university's community relations coordinator, said.

"Collectively, our student-athletes volunteered 8,100 hours last year, and they appeared at about 280 events across the state, which is something we're incredibly proud of. And when you talk to our student-athletes, especially some of our older ones, and you ask them what are their favorite events or favorite experiences that they've had, a lot of them bring up the interactions they have with the military."




Gross said the UW athletic department had the opportunity to host two groups of wounded warriors last year, which had a profound impact on many of the Badgers athletes. Over the years, teams have also visited area veterans hospitals as well.

The letters, she said, expressed each student-athlete's appreciation for the military and their role in protecting the nation's freedom.

"There is a general understanding, in reading through them, that they're allowed to play their sport and do the things they love because of the sacrifice of our

Armed Forces members," she said. "And for them to be freshmen and have that understanding and be able to express that in a letter of appreciation is outstanding."

Four units from the Wisconsin Army National Guard are deployed in support of overseas operations. Those serving in Afghanistan include, Madison-based [Detachment 52](#) of the Operational Support Airlift Command, the Chippewa Falls-based [829th Engineer Company](#) and the Sussex-based [Battery A](#), 1st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery. The [32nd Military Engagement Team](#) and Base Defense Operations Center are also deployed to Kuwait and Jordan. 

[Story online](#)



# For his birthday, Wisconsin teen sends gift to deployed National Guardsmen

**Capt. Joe Trovato**  
*Wisconsin National Guard*

When most teenage boys turn 15 years old, they're only thinking about themselves. Not Ben Sampson of Oconomowoc.

Ben, who just entered his sophomore year at Oconomowoc High School, celebrated his birthday Aug. 18, but instead of asking his buddies for presents, he asked them to bring items to send to his neighbor, Maj. Jack Melvin, who is currently deployed with the Wisconsin Army National Guard's [32nd Military Engagement Team](#) in the Middle East.

Ben and his mother, Angela, brainstormed some ideas and ultimately decided to collect snacks, candy, sports memorabilia and other items to show their support for their neighbor and his family.

"We thought this would be great, because Jack has to be away from home for a year," Angela Sampson said. "We wanted to give him a piece of home."

Ben and his friends were up to the task. They bought sunflower seeds, almonds, peanuts, beef jerky, playing cards, granola bars, gum, licorice, pretzels and laundry detergent to name just a few items. Ben and his family also reached out to the Green Bay Packers and the Wisconsin Badgers who both sent their own care packages on Ben's behalf. And Ben's great uncle acquired an autographed football from Packers head coach Mike McCarthy, two baseballs signed by Brewers second baseman Rickie Weeks and a game-used signed jersey from Norichika Aoki, a former Brewers outfielder.

"This is kind of typical of Ben," Mrs. Sampson said. "He usually thinks of other people before he thinks about himself."

Ben and his friends traditionally just exchanged money on their birthdays.

"Instead of asking for presents from all of my friends and exchanging twenties, I decided I wanted to something that was more worthwhile," he said.

His act of generosity may be the start of something bigger among his friends.

"He had a couple friends that were very interested," his mother said. "One of them wants to go into the military and a couple of the moms said, 'I think this is a great idea. I think we're going to run with this too.'"

Ben has an appreciation for military service because his father served in the Army. He felt a special connection to Melvin and his family because he babysits the major's daughters.

"I think it would be really hard to leave your family for a year or more," he said.



**Ben Sampson, 15, of Oconomowoc, stands with items he and his friends collected and shipped to the Middle East for Soldiers of the 32nd Military Engagement Team. Instead of presents for his 15th birthday, Sampson asked his friends to donate items to be sent overseas.** Submitted photo

The 15-year-old's act of kindness was much appreciated by the deployed Soldiers of the 32nd Military Engagement Team, including Melvin.

"It is great to see a boy at this age do something so selfless for people he barely knows," Melvin said. "Seeing a 15-year-old giving up gifts for those overseas is something you don't hear of very often, if at all."

Melvin said it was humbling to have that kind of support back home, and as a token of the Soldiers' appreciation, they collected their own package to send back to Ben.

Some wrote letters, and they're also sending him his own "boonie" hat with captain rank, unit coins and patches as well as rank and other uniform insignia.

Ultimately though, Ben only asked for one thing in return.

"I hope they can come home safe," he said.

The approximately 65 Soldiers of the 32nd Military Engagement Team and Base Defense Operations Center deployed to Kuwait and Jordan last spring. 📷

[Story online](#)

# Company honored for outstanding support of citizen-Soldier employee

**Capt. Joe Trovato**

*Wisconsin National Guard*

When Sgt. 1st Class Cody Krepline returned from Afghanistan after his 2013 deployment with the Wisconsin Army National Guard's Battery B, 1st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery, he began the process of reintegrating back into civilian life.

He found a job with the Ariens Company in his hometown Brillion, and returned to his life as a husband and father of three children under the age of six.

But Krepline's reintegration was far from seamless, and he struggled with a variety of post-deployment issues that ultimately affected his ability to be an effective employee and father figure. However, his new employer — and specifically, his two direct line supervisors — stood by his side and allowed Krepline to get the support and treatment he needed to get his life back to a better place.

Grateful for the company's unwavering support, Krepline nominated his employer for the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve Patriot Award, which recognizes supervisors for outstanding support for reserve component service members and their families. The Patriot Award reflects the efforts made to support citizen warriors through a wide range of measures that may include flexible duty schedules or time off prior to and after a deployment or activation.

In Krepline's case, supervisors Dave Lutterman and Dan Barker allowed the three-time combat deployment veteran and Bronze Star Medal-winner to take the time he needed to get proper treatment and assistance.

"They have actually re-written the attendance policy for me," Krepline said of his supervisors at Ariens. "Technically I should have been terminated from the company, but they made an exception realizing that I had issues. And I'm willing to go and deal with them, so they're working with me on adjusting the policy to keep me an employee because of what I



**Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson, the assistant adjutant general for Army, Ariens Company CEO Dan Ariens, Sgt. 1st Class Cody Krepline, and Jeff Unger, the Wisconsin Transition Assistance Adviser, with the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve Statement of Support during a ceremony at the company's headquarters in Brillion Aug. 11. Krepline nominated his supervisors at Ariens Company to receive the ESGR Patriot Award because of their support after Krepline returned from his third combat deployment last year.** Wisconsin National Guard photo by Capt. Joe Trovato

can bring to the company."

Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson, Wisconsin's assistant adjutant general for Army, and Command Sgt. Maj. Bradley Shields, the state's senior noncommissioned officer joined Krepline at Ariens Company's Brillion headquarters Aug. 11 to present the Patriot Award in front of the entire company and thank them for their support.

When service members are deployed, they rely on the strength of their families back home to allow them to focus on their mission, Anderson said. But another important aspect of ensuring a service member is focused and ready to complete their mission is the knowledge that they have the support of their employer when

they are called to military duty.

"It's with the support of the employers knowing that when they go overseas, first of all that we as a National Guard or we as a reserve component are going to take care of their families the best that we are able," Anderson said at the Aug. 11 ceremony. "But also understanding that when service members go overseas, they can go over with the full confidence that when they come back, they're coming back to their job."

Knowing that their home lives and jobs are secure is critical in allowing deployed service members to focus on their missions.

"Our citizen warriors cannot defend our nation and protect us at home and

abroad without the continued promise of meaningful employment for themselves and their families," Jeff Unger, the Wisconsin transition assistance adviser and an ESGR volunteer said.

Ariens Company CEO Dan Ariens also signed an ESGR Statement of Support during the day's proceedings, which officially pledges his company to act as an advocate for its employees' participation in the military.

"Employers are critical to maintaining the strength and the readiness of our nation's Guard and Reserve," Unger said.

"I know what we do is very small compared to what the women and men like Cody do and what they have to sacrifice," Krepline's supervisor Dave Lutterman said. "Their efforts are what make companies like ours succeed. To me no matter how small anything we can do to help or aid them is part of being a leader and is also an honor. I am proud to work beside them and have them as part of our team."

Krepline's other supervisor, Dan Barker, agreed.

"The men and women like Cody — and there are many of them — do so much, and give so much of themselves, that the least we can do as employers is treat them with the respect and dignity that their sacrifices deserve," he said. "Doing what is right should be a basic part of my job, and I would not deserve my job if I did not at least do that."

In his Freedom Award nomination letter, Krepline wrote of his supervisors, "They recognize my military service and sacrifice. They understand the fact that my disability as a result of my military service puts an additional strain on supervisors and the company, but they have remained steadfast and have supported my family while I rehabilitate. To me, that is the mark of leadership, and on behalf of my family, I sincerely appreciate what they do for us and the company. Their support is priceless." 📸

[Story online](#)



# Meritorious Service

## Former Wisconsin Air Guard chief inducted into Hall of Fame

**1st Lt. Matt Wunderlin**  
115th Fighter Wing

Retired Brig. Gen. Gerald C. Olesen was inducted into the Wisconsin Air National Guard Hall of Fame during a Sept. 6 ceremony at Joint Force Headquarters in Madison.

Brig. Gen. Gary Ebben, Wisconsin's assistant adjutant general for Air, presented Olesen with the award, along with praise for achievements throughout his 41-year military career.

"I got to witness first hand his passion and energy for the Air National Guard," Ebben said.

Olesen enlisted in the U.S. Air Force in 1967. Four years later he transferred to the Wisconsin Air National Guard and was commissioned a second lieutenant in 1978. Olesen was promoted to brigadier general on Oct. 14, 2006. He retired in 2008 after serving as the Wisconsin Air National Guard's top officer.

Retired Maj. Gen. Al Wilkening, former Wisconsin adjutant general, was given the floor following Ebben's remarks to share how Olesen's career affected the Wisconsin Air National Guard.

"The partnership we enjoyed was nothing short of spectacular," Wilkening said. "I can't tell you how happy I was to have this man on my team. He made this National Guard what it is today."

Olesen's superior leadership, devotion to Airmen who served under his command and his dedication to the 115th Fighter Wing and Joint Force Headquarters left a profound impact on the legacy of excellence for those units.

Olesen is the 60th inductee to the Wisconsin Air National Guard Hall of Fame, which was established in 1982 to honor the special contributions officers and enlisted members make to the overall success of the Wisconsin Air National Guard. Each recipient must have



**Retired Brig. Gen. Gerald C. Olesen receives the Wisconsin Air National Guard Hall of Fame induction award from Brig. Gen. Gary Ebben, assistant adjutant general for Air, during a Sept. 6 ceremony at Joint Force Headquarters, Madison. Retired Maj. Gen. Al Wilkening, former Wisconsin adjutant general, was by his side during the presentation. 115th Fighter Wing photo by 1st Lt. Matthew Wunderlin**

the highest caliber of dedication, bring great credit to the United States and the Wisconsin Air National Guard, and contribute to influential programs that significantly improve the Wisconsin Air National Guard.

"This achievement shows his commitment that goes above and beyond our normal exceptional Airmen," Ebben said.

Olesen concluded the ceremony with many thanks to those who have helped and mentored him along the way, and those who have received the award before him.

"I want to thank so many enlisted and officers for making me look good," Olesen said. "I want to share this induction with them because without them I wouldn't be here."

He also had advice for younger military members.

"Do it your way," Olesen said. "What we did worked for us in our time. If it works for you, go ahead and do it."

[Story online](#)

## Wisconsin Army Guard runner-up in competition

The Wisconsin Army National Guard's Headquarters Company, 257th Brigade Support Battalion was named the reserve component food service section runner-up in the Department of the Army Philip A. Connelly Awards Program.

The Oak Creek-based unit won the [Region 3](#) competition last August, and served up an encore performance in [March](#). The winners were announced in June. The food service section from the 443rd Transportation Company, an Army Reserve unit in Elkhorn, Nebraska, edged Wisconsin for the reserve component crown.

"Since we are the top-scoring unit from the National Guard, [Wisconsin has] the right to say they have the top food service team in the country — an important bragging right in many circles," said Sgt. Kyle Edwards, the Wisconsin National Guard food program manager. Edwards was the lead cook with the Headquarters Company's food service section during the competition.

The National Guard Bureau awarded the Wisconsin National Guard \$40,000 to be used for its food service equipment budget in



the next fiscal year. That incentive, and the media coverage resulting from the Wisconsin National Guard's first team to compete in the Connelly Awards in 16 years, appears to have prompted interest in the award from other units. The Headquarters Company of the 132nd Brigade Support Battalion, based in Portage competed in the Connelly Awards regional level July 12 at Fort McCoy, Wisconsin.

"[We] simply broke the ice," Edwards said.

While taking part in a national competition draws the attention of senior Wisconsin National Guard leaders and results in a little extra pomp, Edwards said that the coordination, time and effort involved is essentially the same as a standard field feeding mission.

"Overall it is an evaluation of what right is supposed to look like," he said.

[Story online](#)



**Chief Master Sgt. Thomas Safer, 115th Fighter Wing command chief, presents a state chief coin to new chief master sergeants Jarrett Calhoun, Kevin Bluske and Jessica Maple during their promotion recognition ceremony at Hangar 406 in Madison, Aug. 23. 115th Fighter Wing photo by Senior Airman Andrea F. Liechti**

## 115th Fighter Wing promotes three senior enlisted leaders

**Senior Airman Andrea F. Liechti**  
*115th Fighter Wing*

The Wisconsin Air National Guard's 115th Fighter Wing recognized three outstanding senior enlisted leaders during a recent promotion ceremony.

Kevin Bluske, Jarrett Calhoun and Jessica Maple were promoted to chief master sergeant — the highest enlisted rank in the Air Force — Aug. 23. According to Air National Guard Instruction 38-202, only 2 percent of the Air National Guard force can become a chief master sergeant.

Bluske is the wing weapons manager, Calhoun is the aircraft maintenance superintendent, and Maple — the [2010 Air National Guard senior noncommissioned officer of the year](#) — is the human resources advisor for the 115th Fighter Wing.

"It is the non-commissioned officers with the chiefs leading the way, who must have the intestinal fortitude to recommend what is right, not what is easy," Maple said. "As chiefs, we must and we will epitomize the finest qualities of a military leader. We will ensure the mission is complete to the best of our team's ability and the Airmen are developed and mentored as they are the most valuable resource for mission success."

Bluske launched into his mentoring

role during his speech, when he advised Airmen to complete their military education and career development courses.

"People ask me how you become a chief," Bluske said. "I tell them you need a little luck, but most importantly, you must be prepared. If you say to yourself, 'I will be ready, reliable, relevant and respected,' you will be successful."

These three chiefs know what it takes to be successful. They headed down the ready, reliable, relevant and respected path early on in their careers.

"When I joined this organization over 17 years ago, the first thing I noticed was the phrase 'dedicated to excellence' on the fighter wing patch," Calhoun said. "I soon realized that those words were more than a motto — they were a way of life. The pride and professionalism ran deep in this organization, and I wanted to be part of it."

Years later, Calhoun is still glad to be a part of the organization.

"The last 17 years have been an amazing experience leading to this point," Calhoun said. "I look forward to the future and continuing the standard of excellence set by those before me. Ladies and gentlemen, members of the fighter wing, I am honored to represent this organization as one of its chief master sergeants." 📷

[Story online](#)



**Brig. Gen. Gary Ebben, the assistant adjutant general for the Wisconsin Air National Guard, presents Lt. Col. Gerard Iverson, the commander of the Wisconsin Air National Guard's 128th Air Control Squadron, with the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award at Alpena Combat Regional Training Center in Alpena, Mich., Aug. 13. The 128th earned the award for the fifth time in its history. Wisconsin National Guard photo by Capt. Joe Trovato**

## 128th Air Control Squadron named best in the Air Force

**Capt. Joe Trovato**  
*Wisconsin National Guard*

The Wisconsin Air National Guard's 128th Air Control Squadron earned the right to call itself the best in the Air Force.

The unit, based at Volk Field in Camp Douglas, received the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award for the period ranging from fall 2011 to fall 2013, while participating in its annual training at Operation Northern Strike at the Alpena Combat Regional Training Center in Alpena, Michigan. The award, which identifies them as the top air control squadron in the Air Force, is the fifth in the 128th's history.

Brig. Gen. Gary Ebben, the assistant adjutant general for the Wisconsin Air National Guard, Col. Dave Romuald, the commander of the Volk Field Combat Training Readiness Center, and Command

Chief Master Sergeant Gregory Cullen were all on hand to present the award to the Airmen of the 128th and their commander, Lt. Col. Gerard Iverson.

"To me, these are pretty special," Iverson said, "because it is all of us getting the job done in an exceptional manner. It just shows you the history and the lineage of those individuals that have come before us and the outstanding performance that they have had as an air control squadron."

"There are not a lot of Airmen throughout the Air Force that have an Air Force Outstanding Unit ribbon award, so please be proud of that," he added.

According to the award citation, the unit was selected for its "exceptional" command and control operations while deployed to the Middle East in 2013 in

**Continued on Page 39**



## Wisconsin Guard members earn German Armed Forces Proficiency Badge

**Capt. Joe Trovato**

*Wisconsin National Guard Public Affairs Office*

Thirteen Soldiers and one Airman from the Wisconsin National Guard earned the German Armed Forces Badge for Military Proficiency during testing held at Fort McCoy earlier this year.

The badge is a military decoration of the Bundeswehr, the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Germany, and it is one of the few foreign awards U.S. Soldiers are authorized to wear on the Army's dress uniform. Participants can earn a bronze, silver or gold award based on their performances in each event, as well as their age and gender.

To earn the bronze, participants must complete a first aid course and demonstrate they can properly don all nuclear, biological and chemical protective clothing. They also must complete a 100-meter swim in uniform in less than four minutes, and score at least three of five rounds in a 25-meter target during a pistol marksmanship event.

Participants also complete a series of track and field events including a shuttle run, flexed-arm hang, a 1,000-meter sprint, and a six-kilometer ruck march. Each event's standards become progressively more challenging to achieve silver or gold badges.

Six Wisconsin National Guard personnel earned the gold badge during the competition held May 15-17 at Fort McCoy, while eight earned silver.

"It's not about the medal that we got," Col. Julie Gerety, the director of domestic operations for the Wisconsin National Guard, said. "It's that we worked together and watched people progress and do better in each of those events. That was the most satisfying."

Gerety and other members of Wisconsin's joint staff and the 54th Civil Support Team were presented with the opportunity to complete the testing for the German Armed Forces Badge after building a relationship with the U.S. Army Reserve's 646th Regional Support Group. The Madison-based reserve unit worked extensively with the Guard's domestic operations staff during the [2013 Patriot Exercise](#) at Volk Field in Camp Douglas.

The 646th, along with German proctors, runs testing for the badge and offered 15 of its 100 slots to the joint staff.

Maj. Eric Leckel and Capt. Megan Stetzer organized an ambitious training plan to help the Wisconsin National Guard participants practice their sprints, ruck marching, swimming and flexed-arm hang skills.

"When we talk about being in the Army or the Air Force, we talk about being professional," Gerety said. "It's a profession of arms, and to be able to do that, one



**Master Sgt. Charlotte Koshick and Sgt. Nicholas Kenton complete a 12-kilometer ruck march during testing for the German Armed Forces Badge for Military Proficiency at Fort McCoy May 17.** Submitted photo

of those characteristics of being a professional is really having that winning spirit. It is having the will to win and going through those kinds of challenges that really test your mettle on whether you can do something.

"It really is about being a professional and really testing yourself both physically and mentally," she said.

The final event of the multi-day competition is the ruck march, which requires participants to carry at least 33 pounds over a minimum of six kilometers to earn the bronze, nine kilometers for silver, or 12 kilometers for gold. Finishing that march was the highlight for Gerety.

"We all sat around in a circle drinking water on our rucks, took our boots off, and everyone was comparing blisters," she said. "It doesn't get any better than that. That's what it was all about."

The following service members earned gold badges: Capt. Christopher Robbins, Chief Warrant Officer 2 Douglas Hewison, Sgt. Maj. Douglas Lofreddo, Master Sgt. Charlotte Koshick, Staff Sgt. Dustin McCormick, and Sgt. Jeremy Smith.

The following service members earned silver badges: Col. Julie Gerety, Maj. Eric Leckel, Capt. Megan Stetzer, Capt. Michelle Baer, Staff Sgt. Johnny Ferreira, Staff Sgt. Daniel Sterrenburg, Staff Sgt. Penny Marsh, and Sgt. Nicholas Kenton.

Another group of Wisconsin National Guard Soldiers will try to earn the badge during testing this fall. 📷

[Story online](#)

## 128th Air Control Squadron earns Outstanding Unit Award

**Continued from Page 38**

support of Operation Enduring Freedom. While deployed, the 128th ACS provided airspace surveillance, threat warning capabilities and theater command and control.

The outstanding unit award is the latest in a string of lofty honors for the ACS. The unit also claims the Air Force's First Sergeant of the Year in Master Sgt. Linda Schwartzlow. Schwartzlow recently returned from a trip to Washington D.C., where she was formally presented with the honor.

"A couple times I've been able to observe the air control squadron, and each time I've come away very impressed," Brig. Gen. Ebben said.

Ebben noted how difficult it is to win the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award

"It's very competitive," he told the assembled Airmen of the 128th. "In the state of Wisconsin, we've had some units submitted with extremely good credentials and not be selected. So the fact that you're selected is not a small deal, and it speaks volumes to everything that you've all accomplished for that two-year period."

Each Airman in the 128th will receive a ribbon to wear on their uniform.

Ebben, Romuald and Cullen took the opportunity to see the ACS in action as it performed its mission for Operation Northern Strike, a three-week exercise that concluded Aug. 23, in Alpena. More than 165 Airmen, almost the entire unit, participated in the exercise.

The unit joined others from around the country at Northern Strike, which included bombers, fighters, cargo planes and close-air support assets from the Air National Guard as well as Army National Guard infantry and aviation forces.

The 128th ACS packed up almost all of its equipment and convoyed through northern Wisconsin, upper Michigan and over the Mackinaw Bridge to Alpena — no small logistical accomplishment.

"This exercise — this annual training — speaks volumes to everyone's dedication, perseverance and willingness to get the job done," Iverson told his unit.

The exercise itself tested the unit's ability to support air-to-air combat, air-to-ground combat, dynamic targeting, and other skills required of an air control squadron. 📷

[Story online](#)



# President Obama at the 128th Air Refueling Wing



Gov. Scott Walker and Col. James Locke, commander of the 128th Air Refueling Wing in Milwaukee, greet President Barack Obama upon his arrival Sept. 1. The president spoke at the Laborfest event that day in downtown Milwaukee. 128th Air Refueling Wing photos by Airman Morgan Lipinski





# Parting shot



An Airman with the 128th Air Refueling Wing displays the Force Support Squadron 12th Man award jersey in front of a KC-135R Stratotanker on Aug. 10. Service members with the 128th ARW FSS created the FSS 12th Man award to recognize those who are reaching above and beyond for their fellow Airmen. [Click on this photo to open the related story](#) 128th Air Refueling Wing photo by Airman Morgan Lipinski