

# GMG

Green Mountain Guard | Fall/Winter 2014





# From The TAG



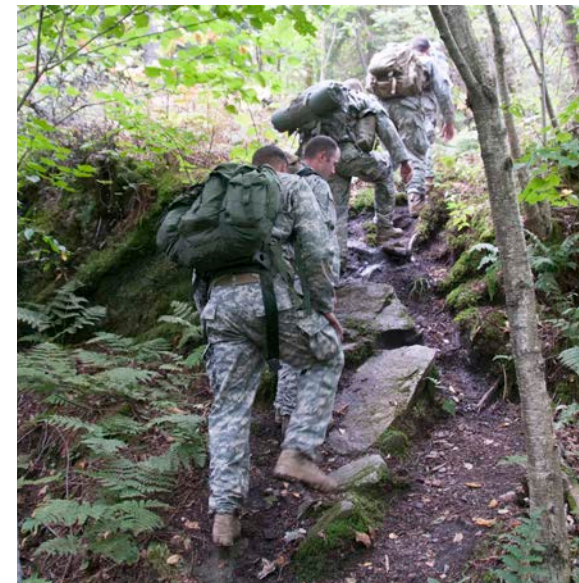
Maj. Gen. Steven Cray  
The Adjutant General

**T**his issue of the Green Mountain Guard reminds me of how hard we work and how well we work together in the Vermont National Guard. We have accomplished many things in the past four months. I am extremely proud of our Junior Enlisted Council and would like to highlight their hard work in leading one of the largest blood drives held with the Red Cross in Vermont. I would also like to mention all the hard work and preparation that went into the visit from the President of Senegal, Mackey Sall. I know everyone from the Honor Guard, to support Staff and many Soldiers and Airmen who always put their best efforts forward. I know there were long hours and I sincerely appreciate everyone on the team coming together to make Pres. Sall's visit memorable.

I want to point out that there are some photos from the TAG Match in this issue and I got all bull's-eyes at every single range when I opened it up for the match! I would like to thank the troops who make sure that happens...the ones who give me pointers and the ones who poke the holes in the targets after I shoot!! All kidding aside, we had more participants this year in the TAG Match than ever before and I am very proud of all our Soldiers, Airmen, and civilians who were able to take part in the competition this year.

We also supported multiple efforts with our SPP office and we sent members of the 172nd PAD to Operation Atlantic Resolve to support the mission of US troops and our Allies in working with members of the Ukrainian military. The Vermont National Guard is out there domestically and internationally supporting many different missions. Our organization has a good name and reputation because you are all well trained, willing and capable of completing your tasks and bringing home more credit to our organization. Keep up the good work!!

INTEGRITY – SERVICE – EXCELLENCE



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# IN & AROUND: VTARNG

RIGHT: 10 Soldiers from D Company (FSC) and Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 1st Squadron, 172nd Cavalry Regiment, 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Mountain), continued the North section of the Esprit de corps hike in Jay, Vt., Sept. 9, 2014. The soldiers hiked more than 6.9 miles in this section of the hike and the 86th IBCT hiked the entire length of the Long Trail in their Esprit de corps hike, with a ceremony on the summit of Mount Mansfield on 9/11. Esprit de corps means, "Spirit of Corps" or the strong shared team spirit of a unit that boosts morale and camaraderie. (U.S. Army National Guard Photo by Staff Sgt. Nathan Rivard)



BELOW: The 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Mountain) concluded it's Esprit de Corps hike at the summit of Mount Mansfield with a 9/11 Memorial Service to pay respect to the victims of 9/11 and to Vermont's Fallen Service Members in Stowe, Vt., Sept. 11, 2014. The hike ended by laying dog tags for each service member on a set of skis on the final mountain for their final climb. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Nathan Rivard)



ABOVE: Soldiers from C Company, 3rd Battalion 126th Aviation Regiment (Air Ambulance) and Detachment 2, Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 224th Aviation Regiment (S&S) participated in a multi-aircraft flight formation training over Central Vermont, Oct. 9, 2014. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Nathan Rivard)

LEFT: Detachment 2, Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 224th Aviation Regiment trained with Vermont State and Town Police Officers from the Vermont Police Academy on helicopter familiarization, Camp Johnson, Vt., Nov. 5, 2014. The reason for helicopter training is for the potential transportation during search and rescue and counter drug operations. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Capt. Dyana Allen)



# IN & AROUND: VTANG



LEFT: Maj. Gen. Steven Cray, the Adjutant General of Vermont, fires the first round to begin the pistol portion of the Vermont Adjutant General's Combat Marksmanship Competition, Ethan Allen Firing Range, September 6th, 2014. Soldiers, Airmen, and military-connected civilians all competed in various forms of marksmanship, including sniper rifle, assault rifle, and pistol. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Roy Mercon)

BELOW: Members of the Vermont Air National Guard and the Red Cross work together during a blood drive held at the 158th Fighter Wing, Sept. 7, 2014. Airmen volunteered donating a total of 226 pints of blood in the third largest drive in the state in 2014. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Airman Jon Alderman)



LEFT: VTANG Civil Engineers coordinate placing the retired F-16C jet 'Lethal Lady' across the 158th Fighter Wing, August 5, 2014. The jet is being mounted upon a stand at the front gate serving as a testament to the dedication and skill of the Green Mountain Boys. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Staff Sergeant Victoria Greenia)





# Légion d'Honneur

By Staff Sgt. Nathan Rivard  
State Public Affairs Office

"The Free World would not stand free, were it not for you." Gov. Peter Shumlin's words ringing true as he spoke on one of the first snowy mornings to begin Vermont's winter season. He was speaking at a moment more than 70 years in the making. Three Vermont veterans appointed to the rank of Knight at the Statehouse in Montpelier on Nov. 17, 2014.

"Mr. Bresland, Mr. Bergeron, Mr. Pilus, we are grateful to you for your heroic actions," said Fabien Fieschi, French consul general. "In spite of constant exposure to danger, you and your fellow Soldiers showed extraordinary courage and bravery throughout your service in France."

All three men received the Légion d'Honneur [Legion of Honour], France's highest military decoration.

This award is presented to U.S. Veterans who risked their life during WWII to fight on French Territory. Those selected are appointed to the rank of Knight of the Legion of Honour. Veterans of all different armed forces must have must in at least one of the three main campaigns of the Liberation of France; Normandy, Provence/Southern France, or Northern France.

The director of the Vermont Office of Veterans Affairs, Robert Burke, spoke briefly about each man.

Harold Bergeron served in Northern France as an infantryman and also received the Bronze Star Medal said Burke. Donald Bresland was also an infantryman who served with the 35th Infantry Division during the Battle of the Bulge and was awarded the Purple Heart for wounds he received. Leonard Pilus was part

of the first wave to reach Easy Red on Omaha Beach where he set up and manned a communications link to support the landing force.

The three men, surrounded by friends and family received their awards from the consul general. While Fieschi speaks fluent English, he stated that the award must be presented in French.

While the veterans were the ones being honored on this day, they were not the only ones that felt honored.

"Thank you for your courage and dedication," said Fieschi. "It is truly a privilege to decorate you today with the Legion of Honour as a token of France's eternal gratitude."





# COMMAND POST TRAINING

By Spc. Roy Mercon  
86th IBCT (MTN)

Soldiers with the 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Mountain), in partnership with active duty servicemembers and DoD civilians preformed a successful Command Post Exercise, or CPX during August's drill weekend.

"In general, a Command Post Exercise is a staff exercise that does not involve troops in the field," said Col. Andrew M. Harris, deputy commander of the 86th IBCT (Mtn) and Title 32 deputy commander during the CPX. "This allows the staff at the brigade or state level to exercise its skills in the military decision making process."

"This particular CPX is an exercise that is focused on defense support of civil authorities (DSCA), which is the portion of our job that relates to the work we do in the state of Vermont," said Harris. "Response to a flood, ice, some problem with a nuclear plant, or some threat to the population in Vermont."

The CPX was indeed a team effort all around. Harris says that, in addition to 86th IBCT servicemembers, the exercise tested the teamwork of multiple entities, including those in Joint Force Headquarters and various civilian agencies. In an emergency, Harris says these groups would be working together, and that it was important to have a good working relationship with one another, hence the exercise.

The CPX occurred at multiple locations simultaneously, with major portions of the operation being the

responsibility of different groups, said Harris. The Joint Task Force, consisting of the majority of the 86th IBCT (MTN) staff, was located at the Ethan Allen Firing Range's Joint Readiness Center, and was augmented with Title 10 (active duty) personnel from U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM).

USNORTHCOM sent a team that assists states with planning missions that involve Title 10 forces under dual-status command authority. This was the exercise scenario that the 86th IBCT (MTN) was practicing, said Harris.

In addition to the Joint Task Force, there were those at Camp Johnson's Joint Force Headquarters, the main post of the Vermont National Guard,

on hand to assist in this exercise.

"This exercise is multi-echelon, multi-component," said Harris. "It's epically useful to be doing this simultaneously with Joint Force Headquarters because we get to work out all of the processes and procedures that we would need to engage in with them for any future event that might occur in Vermont."

As Title 32 deputy commander, Harris' role during the exercise was to direct all National Guard units, working alongside an active duty Col. in charge of all active duty servicemembers. This type of coordination between active and reserve component units is a new effort in ensuring the mission gets done using all necessary resources



in a distinct and cohesive way. In his opinion, the CPX went well.

"I think we started strong," said Harris. "So much of an exercise like this is involved with the preparation that a staff does in advance. Luckily for the brigade, our experience at the Joint Readiness Training Center this past summer brought everyone's skill level to a higher degree. We have a very experienced staff that came to this exercise. The standard operating procedures have already been worked

out. It's a nice way for the brigade to continue the training that began at JRTC and keep our skills strong. I think the CPX is going well. The scenario creates a lot of problems for us to solve."

The exercise is part of a larger model of training, which will result in a large-scale, multi-state, multi-agency training exercise.

"Vermont is preparing for a massive DSCA exercise called Vigilant Guard

16," said Harris. "This CPX was a lead-up event meant to help prepare us for that. Because we're going to do VG16, much like we knew we were going to go to JRTC several years in advance, we've been planning small-scale exercises designed to help prepare the staff and Soldiers for the requirements of VG16."

## VTANG Salutes Lethal Lady

By Airman 1st Class Dana Alyce-Schwarz  
158th Fighter Wing

Sparks fly as a retired F-16C Fighter jet frame is bolted to its display next to the main gate of the Vermont Air National Guard (VTANG). Standing proudly the "Lethal Lady," as the jet is called by pilots, continues to serve the Air Force as it has for nearly 30 years.

Originally commissioned in May of 1985 Lethal Lady was number 1165 of its model to come off the assembly line. The airplane logged over 7,000 flight hours during its career, nearly

double the expected amount of flight time for the model. Maintenance teams went above and beyond to keep the body of the plane from deteriorating, allowing it to achieve such an unprecedented amount of flight time.

Lethal Lady began flying with the USAF as part of the 17th Tactical Fighter Squadron at Shaw Air Force Base in South Carolina. The jet flew more than 40 missions during Operation Desert Storm and in 1994 was passed on to the VTANG.

In Vermont, Lethal Lady flew mostly in training missions, but was deployed in Operation Iraqi Freedom three times from 2004 to 2007. During the time spent overseas it reached a record of over 1,000 combat flight hours and in March 2008 broke 7,000 flight hours total while being piloted

by Col. Thomas Jackman, the Commander of the 158th Fighter Wing.

"She has definitely saved a lot of lives" said Jackman. "A lot of Marines, a lot of Soldiers, a lot of Airmen owe their lives to what this airplane did when she was called upon."

Lethal Lady was originally scheduled to be sent to "The Bone Yard" at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base in Tucson, AZ, the final resting place for decommissioned military aircraft. Members of the VTANG and the local community rallied to save the renowned aircraft from the scrapyard.

Many Vermonters value the history behind the jet and the work involved keeping it operational. Senator Patrick Leahy lent his support to the petition to immortalize Lethal Lady.

Instead of sending the airplane to the scrapyard it now rests comfortably at the front gate of the VTANG, serving as a testament to the dedication and skill of the Green Mountain Boys.





A large photograph on the left side of the page shows President Macky Sall of Senegal, wearing a dark suit and glasses, shaking hands with a Vermont official in a blue suit. Another man in a dark suit and sunglasses stands in the background.

# Presidential Visit

Story By Staff Sgt. Nathan Rivard  
State Public Affairs Office

Vermont completed another successful State Partnership Program event this summer. Normally Vermont Soldiers and Airmen work with military personnel from Macedonia or Senegal. This event focused on someone a little higher in the chain of command; the President of the Republic of Senegal.

The team had less than three months to prepare for the arrival of His Excellency, President Macky Sall. Usually head of state visits require at least six months to plan, coordinate, and execute. For this visit, the timeline was compressed.

Col. Dan Pipes, the J-5 and event Officer in Charge, noted that once confirmation was received, both Air and Army teams came together to make it happen.

“Heads of State visits require coordination through the Department of State, the Secret Service, and many other state and federal agencies,” said Pipes. “Gov. Shumlin formally invited President Sall. We were fortunate to have a team that understood what needed to happen and the importance of getting it right. Protocol, transportation, escorts, lodging, formal arrival ceremonies, public affairs and news releases, all these and more had to be correct. This was President Sall’s first visit to Vermont, and we wanted to make it memorable.”

Vermont has been sending delegations to Senegal and welcoming Senegalese teams in Vermont for over six years. The level of visiting dignitaries made this visit more challenging. More than 30 Senegalese came with President Sall, including the Senegalese Minister of Defense and Chief of Defense, as well as their ambassador to the US.

The State Partnership Program is unique among the many opportunities offered to Vermont Soldiers and Airmen. SPP establishes international relationships between nations to promote international engagement, cultural awareness, and share best practices between militaries.

“The visit went very well and was well orchestrated with all parties involved,” said Staff Sgt. Monty Eller, who has been the plans and operations Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge with the State Partnership Program for more than two years.

Prior to the President’s arrival in Vermont, Maj. Gen. Cray traveled with Lt. Col. Todd Goff, who is now the SPP director, to D.C. to host the General Chief of Staff of the Senegalese Armed Forces, Lt. Gen. Mamadou Sow. Maj. Gen. Cray escorted Lt. Gen. Sow to the Pentagon to meet with Gen. Martin Dempsey, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Gen. Frank Grass, Chief of the National Guard Bureau. Afterwards, Sow traveled to Vermont to assist with final preparations for the

Presidents arrival.

Events in Vermont began two days before the President’s arrival with a tour for Lt. Gen. Sow through the headquarters building at the Camp Ethan Allen Training Site in Jericho, Vt. Gen Sow and his staff were given a brief about the 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Mountain).

Some topics of discussion included how the 86th IBCT stretches across VT the state and also incorporates other parts of New England and units as far as Michigan and Colorado. Lt. Gen. Sow was interested in how Vermont meshes our military forces into support for homeland defense and civil support missions.

After the briefing, the delegation headed to visit Charlie Co. 3/126th Aviation in the South Burlington Aviation Facility for a training flight in Vermont’s new Lakota helicopters. The helicopters had arrived in Vermont less than two weeks before the visit. An aerial perspective of training sites and the lake where the group had enjoyed a dinner cruise the previous day was appreciated by Senegalese senior leaders.

The day finished with a meeting between Vermont’s Adjutant General, Maj. Gen. Steven Cray and Lt.Gen. Sow. Both senior military leaders were confident that the President’s visit would be successful.

The following day, the band was staged, Color Guard was ready to march, and delegations were ready to welcome the President. In the late afternoon the plane arrived from Washington D.C. after departing from the U.S.-Africa Summit. His Excellency Macky Sall, President of the





Republic of Senegal, was met on the tarmac with comments from Maj. Gen. Cray and Burlington Mayor, Miro Weinberger.

A quick press conference was held to welcome the President and answer questions. Then approximately 30 Senegalese joined over 100 Vermont senior military, political, and business leaders on a dinner cruise on Lake Champlain. Old friendships were renewed, and new ones were started as the group enjoyed the scenery, a good meal, and live jazz music from the 40th Army Band.

The next day, Montpelier's Statehouse was the first stop for the delegation. Gov. Peter Shumlin welcomed President Sall, Maj. Gen. Cray, Brig. Gen. Michael Heston, and a few senior leaders to his office to discuss the relationship between Senegal and Vermont. The rest of the party was treated to an informative tour of the Statehouse.

Vermont State government has participated in SPP events, focused on areas that usually include emergency response. The State Partnership Program continues to find common areas of interest to explore across military and civilian agencies and organizations. Gov. Shumlin had several experts in the fields of agriculture, tourism, and emergency response brief the delegation. These presentations were well received, and sparked follow on discussions about future cooperation.

A trip to the Vermont's Department of homeland security, or DMHS, was next. Senegal has regular floods and other predictable events that require military and civilian cooperation to ensure the safety of their citizens. Comparing how Vermont and Senegal organize and prioritize emergency response efforts will remain one of the strong points of their partnership.

After meeting with Vermont's director of emergency response, the delegation travelled to the University of Vermont to address educators, military leaders, and members of the Senegalese diaspora. This provided an informal opportunity for many to discuss issues with senior Senegalese political and military leaders. Several Senegalese who now live in Vermont brought their family to meet President Sall.

President Sall's team was scheduled to be in Paris the next morning, so there was very little free time to enjoy and explore Vermont. There are hopes that will happen in the future.

Maj. Gen. Cray noted that, "We managed to fit many significant events in a short time. I was glad to be able to return the hospitality that the Senegalese show us when we visit their nation. I look forward to the strengthening of ties between our military and our nations."

President Sall took time after his visit to personally write thank you notes to MG Cray, Gov Shumlin, and Mayor Weinberger.

"I am confident that, thanks to our common values, we will continue to strengthen our excellent State Partnership Program while exploring new areas of cooperation and exchanges," wrote President Sall. "In this regard, I thank you again for your important contribution and friendship."

The State Partnership Program led the way in promoting professional and personal relationships at the highest levels.



# Vermont Civil Engineers Receive Deneke Award

By Airman 1st Class Dana Alyce-Schwarz  
158th Fighter Wing

The Vermont Air National Guard (VTANG) has a reputation of a high standard of excellence and received recognition for that effort in the form of the Colonel William L. Deneke Outstanding Civil Engineering Award.

This marks the third time the VTANG Civil Engineering (CE) squadron has received this award. It is given each year to the Air National Guard unit that shows the most outstanding accomplishments and achievements.

"It's more about the recognition, we work to fulfill our mission more than win an award," said 1st Lt. Matthew Lehman, the Deputy Base Civil Engineer. "We've worked very hard this past year and it means a lot to everyone on the team that our efforts have been noticed."

The CE squadron, consisting of approximately 100 members throughout the Fire Department, Emergency Management, Explosive Ordinance Disposal as well as the Civil Engineers, outperformed more than 80 other Air National Guard units in 2013. The VTANG has previously won twice before in 2010 and in 1979, making it the second unit to receive the Deneke Award since its inception in 1978.

To be selected, a CE unit submits a full list of its accomplishments, including deployments, on-base maintenance and construction, base safety, and cutting energy costs. The unit's ability to remain focused and dedicated to its work lead to its success.

"We train to be ready for the mission," said Chief Master Sgt. John Talcott, the Chief Enlisted Manager for CE. "Mission success leads to team success. Our members work hard and we're happy that they can be recognized for that effort."

Winning the Deneke Award served as an extra bonus to the CE team's morale; members can now feel how much they are a part of the bigger picture. Lt. Col. Keith Hodsden, the CE Squadron Commander,

emphasized the importance of the team members who perform their duties and meet their goals every day.

"I always tell my leadership staff that every member of the team is essential," Hodsden said. "If you support them in their mission and their morale, all you need to do is step out of the way and they'll do good work."



Col. Peter Sartori (left) presents the Deneke Award to Lt. Col. Keith Hodsden of the 158th Civil Engineering Squadron on June 6, 2014 at the Vermont Air National Guard. This marks the third time the VTANG Civil Engineering Squadron has been granted this award, it is given each year to the Air National Guard unit that shows the most outstanding accomplishments and achievements. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Airman Jon Alderman)





# Esprit de Corps

Staff Sgt. Nathan Rivard  
Joint Force Headquarters

The 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Mountain) began an Esprit de Corps hike that would span the entire length of the Long Trail in Vermont. Two-hundred and seventy-two miles, a trek that would be completed in only four days. Esprit de Corps is a feeling of pride, fellowship, and common loyalty shared by the members of a particular group. Events like the hike are planned to instill that pride amongst a unit and build a bond that can't always be accomplished during a drill weekend or annual training.

In order to complete the 272 miles in such a short time period, the 86th



IBCT (MTN) divided the Long Trail into different sections. Each excursion ranged from seven to more than 14 miles long. These ruck marches are nothing new to the Soldiers of the Vermont National Guard as they climb throughout the green mountains during drill weekends and many of hikers are combat veterans who had to climb mountains while deployed. The smiles seen on Soldier's faces throughout their journey expressed the attitude of the hike. It also wasn't just Vermonters hiking the trail.

"After talking to Col. Boyd [86th IBCT (MTN) commander], it's typical for Vermont to see a seven state brigade bring most of the New England units together and make it a unity of effort where we combine our forces and we make ourselves proud here in Vermont," said Brig. Gen. Michael T. Heston, assistant adjutant general-Army.

The hike was something would bring the Soldiers together. Alpha Troop, 1st Squadron, 172nd Cavalry Regiment (Mountain) kicked off the hike near the Canadian border in Jay, Vt.

"Any time soldiers accomplish something that is difficult or stressful and they accomplish it together it will always bring the bond stronger because you have met victory as one instead of individuals and each person

will always remember what they did," said Staff Sgt. Jason Fusco, training non-commissioned officer and senior scout, A Troop, 1st Sqdn, 172nd Cav. Regt. "A couple years down the road the Soldiers will still be talking amongst each other about their "WAR" stories of the Saber Journey Hike. This is something the Soldiers will have together to talk about for the rest of their careers."

Fusco and members of A Troop would complete one of the longest sections in the Long Trail hike. They would hike 13.6 miles out of the 43.3-mile section assigned to 1st Sqdn, 172nd Cav. Regt. It may be a long hike, but there were no surprises in the mountains for the Soldiers.

"It was exactly what I expected," said Fusco. "It is like anything we do in the Army from deployments to attending a difficult training environment or school. At first there was the anxious feeling. Then once that feeling had passed and we began on our ruck the jokes and conversing between each other starts. The camaraderie was great every Soldier was looking out for their battle buddy and motivating each other to ensure the highest level of success."

The culminating event for the hike was the 9/11 ceremony held at the summit of Mount Mansfield. A Troop was the

beginning of this journey and it helped bring perspective back to the present day.

"I feel that sometimes units lose their sense of camaraderie and when we come together to do an event as this one, it brings it back," said Fusco. "I liked seeing my fellow soldiers as well as myself feeling a sense of accomplishment that we can feel proud of." Pride, esprit de corps, was one of the driving points to performing the hike. Pride was not the only reason to take part in the hike however.

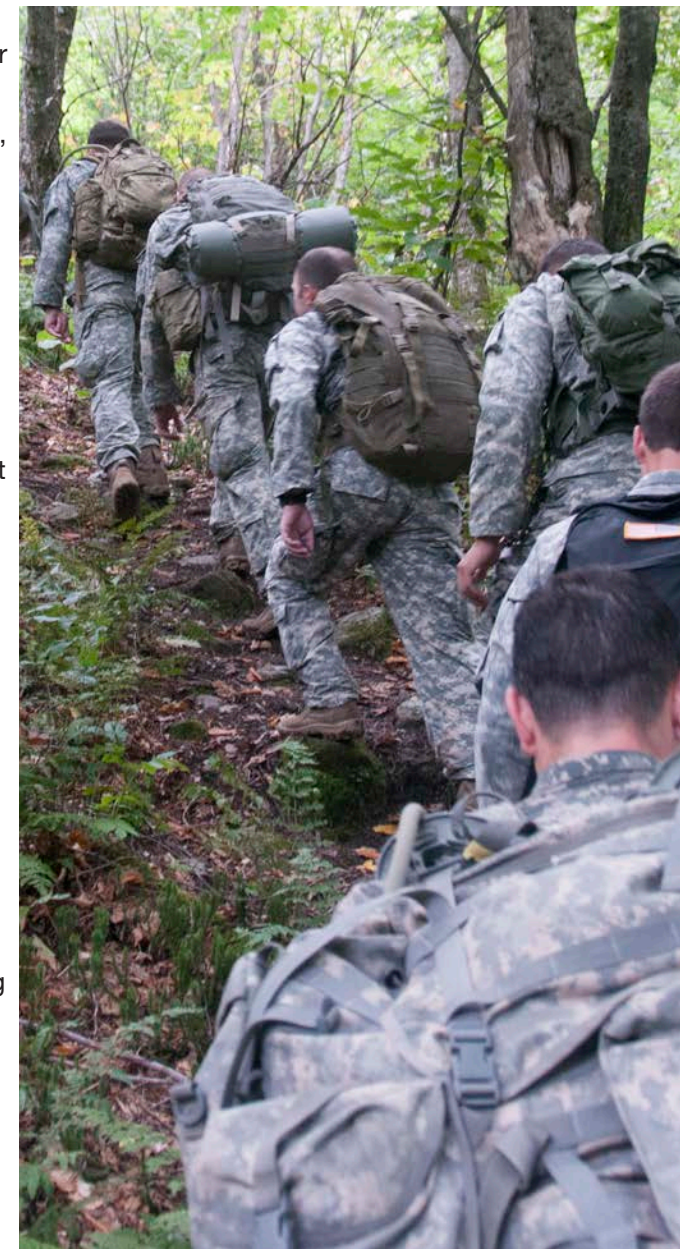
On Sept. 11th, in the early morning rain and fog atop Mount Mansfield, National Guardsmen from different units throughout Vermont stood in 55 miles per hour wind gust. The weather, a reflection of the somber ceremony for Vermont's Fallen and of the tragic event of that happened on that day 13 years ago. These guardsmen stood to reflect, but their journey to that summit began four days earlier in the optimistic bright sun when the hike commenced. The climb through the rolling hills gave soldiers the time to bond and the time to reflect before the 9/11 Memorial Ceremony.

"One of most important things today is that as we look upon the history books of December 7th,

June 6th, 9/11, will be in the annals of history that we will never forget and our soldiers today are a different breed from years ago, but the soldiers remain the same," said Heston. "We are committed to making sure we are taking care of them, we make sure that we never forget our fallen, the ones that paid the ultimate sacrifice, and today is the day as we look upon the green mountains here amongst the fog, but it's something that the brigade has taken seriously as one of the most deployed states in the country and well never forget our fallen soldiers."

It could be for remembrance, it could be for training, it could be for the love of the Green Mountains, but one thing is for certain, the camaraderie of fellow Soldiers is the most important benefit during the miles of ups and downs.

"I would do it every chance I have," said Fusco. "I have done a lot of hiking and been on the Long Trail a few times and have always enjoyed it, but it still doesn't compare to being able to have your fellow troopers with you. I wouldn't pass up any opportunity to doing this again with my fellow Soldiers."





# VTANG Medical Group Pilots Processing Program

By Staff Sgt. Victoria Greenia  
158th Fighter Wing

The 158th Medical Group has become the first Air Guard base to process both Preventative Health Assessments (PHA) and Occupational Health Physical Examinations (OHE) in one large push, improving the medical experience for both the medical staff and patients, while creating a cost-saving and efficient format for other units to emulate.

During a typical drill weekend, the Vermont Air National Guard's medical staff would process a little more than 200 Airmen through yearly PHAs and OHEs, pre-deployment screenings, and profile updates. This system left both care-providers and patients unsatisfied as the process took up so much time. The medical staff had difficulty fulfilling training requirements and attending meetings while patients had, on average, upwards of a two to three hour wait, sometimes just for a 10-minute visit.

Change was needed. A great deal of planning spanning nearly a year including visits to shadow other units during their PHA/OHE process resulted in a complete overhaul of the old system, using the extended June drill to test out the new process.

"I don't know why we didn't do it before," said Lt. Col. Jack Cook, a physician assistant at the 158th Fighter Wing. "In the past our patients would get hung up in the waiting area behind members who needed more extensive testing like audiograms and electrocardiogram testing."

The medical group modeled the process after other Guard bases have previously done, but tweaked it to fit the unique needs of Airmen working on F-16. The medical group took care of more than 900 Airmen's yearly PHAs in just two days. The average time for a patient: 30 minutes from

entering the building to checking out and continuing his or her workday. The quickest was six minutes, and the longest was about 45 minutes. Airmen who went through the process said they were surprised and described it as "quick" and "easy."

The medical staff worked in 12 hour shifts starting at 7:00 a.m., some staying until 9 p.m. the first day. Branching across the base, the medical group assembled Airmen who needed a basic annual PHA in the Snow Barn, a large winter vehicle facility, which was transformed into an elaborate medical station. Here patients were seen for immunizations, laboratory testing, vital and vision screening, dental exams and a visit with a medical provider. Those who required the more involved occupational exams were seen at the base clinic.

To further expedite the process, the medical group contracted a portable dental unit and audiogram unit. Hearing tests are mandatory for Airmen who work around large machines, such as aircrafts, and take 20 minutes to complete. On base there are about 400 Airmen who require having annual hearing checks.

"Normally we can test up to three people at a time," said Master Sgt. Eric Holbrook, the noncommissioned officer in charge of public health.

"So even at our quickest we can only process about nine people an hour. The portable audiogram testing seats eight at a time, so we were able to process 32 people an hour."

Although there hasn't been an official report yet, Cook said he was

certain that if one adds up the cost of the man-hours in the old system against the cost of renting portable units to process a larger amount of Airmen, the wing not only saved money, but also ensured medical readiness for the VTANG.

This is a huge deal for both the medical group and the base, said Holbrook, who said that Air National Guard bases are expected to have 80 percent of its Airmen medical-ready for deployment and that the VTANG has been just shy of the goal, lingering at a 79 percent.

According to Cook, he thought the new system put the base, at least from a medical perspective, at a 90 percent readiness, but didn't have hard numbers to confirm that just yet. They knew they wouldn't be able to get everyone because of scheduling conflicts, but the bulk of the unit has been processed.

"Now that we've completed our new process, we hope to only use a quarter of the time processing Airmen over drill weekends, instead of the eight hours or more that we have in the past," said Cook. "It's a major success because now our nurses and emergency medical technicians will have an easier time working with Fletcher Allen Health Care to keep up with training."

**U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Joseph Greenough of the Vermont Air National Guard receives an eye exam with the 158th Medical Squadron in South Burlington, Vt. on June 7, 2014.(U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Airman Jon Alderman)**



# VTANG Wins Outstanding Unit Award

By Airman 1st Class Dana Alyce-Schwarz  
158th Fighter Wing

The Green Mountain Boys continued dedication and drive for excellence has earned the Vermont Air National Guard (VTANG) the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award for 2013. This marks the third time in the past ten years that the VTANG has received the award and the fifth time in the history of the 158th Fighter Wing.

The Outstanding Unit Award is granted after taking into account the unit's mission success, results of all inspections, the amount of deployments, exercises, readiness trainings and other awards and honors granted to the unit.

The VTANG was noted for several overseas deployments where they achieved overwhelming mission success. Service members also worked in the local community, both as volunteers and when performing missions such as when they provided aid during the disaster of Hurricane Irene.

Col. Thomas Jackman, the unit commander, expressed how proud he was of all the members of the VTANG. Jackman commented that the Green Mountain Boys frequently go above and beyond the call of duty, but that he is humbled by how the guardsmen under his command treat that level of effort as the norm.

"Our Airmen are very humble about what they do," said Jackman. "They work hard because they are so dedicated to what they do here at the VTANG, I feel that's an important part

of the one percent of the nation who serves. That is what makes us able to defend the other 99 percent of the American people."

Moving forward, Jackman hopes to continue to improve operations while still maintaining the strong support network the VTANG is known for. Unit leadership consistently works to balance what is best for the mission with what is best for the team members. Strong motivation

and support leads to an exponential increase in productivity and therefore in mission success, said Jackman. "I'm fond of saying that you have to 'push to failure' in order to improve," said Jackman. "If you aren't willing to push yourself, your team, your unit to the breaking point then you won't find what you need to fix. We train as hard as we do so those concerns can be addressed in a training environment which allows us to be that much more successful in our mission."







# OPERATION ATLANTIC RESOLVE

Story by Staff Sgt. Nathan Rivard  
172nd Public Affairs Detachment

Operation Atlantic Resolve has been a continuous mission occurring over the last five months and has been supplemented by National Guard and Army Reserve components. The active duty may be the boots on the ground, but the citizen Soldiers are their eyes, ears, and mouth.

“The public affairs mission during Operation Atlantic Resolve is telling the story of the activities performed here that are part of the U.S. Army Europe-led Operation Atlantic Resolve land force assurance training,” said Maj. Gookin, mobile public affairs augmentation team



“This is my first overseas assignment,” said 1st Lt. Jeffrey Rivard, commander, 172nd Public Affairs Detachment, Vermont National Guard. “I’ve never actually gotten the opportunity to conduct a real world mission with my MOS [military occupation specialty] training.”

**Sgt. 1st Class Jason Alvarez, noncommissioned officer in charge, 172nd Public Affairs Detachment, gathers video footage of U.S. Soldiers and Estonian Land Forces working together during Operation Atlantic Resolve near Tapa, Estonia, Nov. 5, 2014.**

For other seasoned veterans, it was another assignment to strengthen their skills. Sgt. First Class Jason Alvarez, non-commissioned officer in charge, 172nd PAD, has 24 years of service and is no stranger to overseas assignments. He has been on deployment-training missions in Central America, Europe, Asia, and even that Arctic, but he always finds something new.

“I’ve not been to the region before and was excited to see what it’s like as well as work with our NATO partners,” said Alvarez. “We had many different countries involved with Kosovo Force 15 and it was a great experience. I think we boost morale here for the active components we work with. If we’re getting their story out too, it gives them a sense of recognition.”

Trying to reach that audience and only have three weeks to do it can be quite the challenge. With travel, getting established, and preparing to leave at the end all Soldiers needed to be ready to work and a fellow New England state was right there with Vermont to help.

No Soldier knew this better than Sgt. Angela Parady, public affairs specialist, 121st Public Affairs Detachment, Maine National Guard. She produced six news stories and published 26 photos, which contributed to the public affairs mission and led to thousands of web views.

“This whole mission has a much bigger impact than many may see on the outside,” she said. “We are the link between what the Soldiers do and what the citizens see. We are the eyes and the ears for the people and



**A U.S. Soldier from 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division and an Estonian Soldier fist-bump at the conclusion of an Airsoft match between the two countries at an Estonian training area near Tapa, Oct. 24, 2014. The Soldiers take a break from their traditional military training to engage in a friendly competition where both countries get the chance to practice their tactics. (U.S. Army National Guard Photo by 1st Lt. Jeffrey Rivard)**

we make the difference in how our actions are seen.”

Soldiers are trained to accomplish their mission and getting the word out of the mission is important.

“Without Public Affairs internal and external audiences would have very little idea as to what the U.S. military is doing in Eastern Europe and it’s importance to NATO,” said Rivard.

“It’s a great mission, but if no one knows about it, the point is lost,” said Alvarez.

Telling the Army’s story is the focus for the public affairs Soldiers deployed to their locations. The 1st Cavalry Division replaced the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team in Oct. The 1st Cav. was working hard with their NATO allies in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland to strengthen partnerships and reassure their allegiance to one another.

The training can be difficult, tiring, and exhausting, but the photos and videos taken by the public affairs Soldiers will hold that snapshot in time forever.

Soldiers experienced many firsts on this three-week rotation alone: the first American tank rounds ever fired in Poland and Latvia; the first American

Soldiers participating in Poland’s All Saints Day, similar to America’s Memorial Day, after receiving an invitation from a town’s Mayor; the first time young Estonian Soldiers were able to train side by side with Americans. And National Guard’s public affairs Soldiers were there every step of the way to capture those historical moments. These firsts, however, may not be what is most important to the Soldiers on the ground. What may have the most impact was the cavalry Soldiers helping cut and split wood to heat an orphanage during the coming cold months. It may be the training an Estonian soldier received from a scout that could someday save his life. Or, it could simply be the fist-bump between the Soldiers after a day of training.

The 214th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment and the 362nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, Army Reserve units, replaced the four National Guard public affairs units in Europe. When Soldiers work as professionals, it doesn’t matter if it’s one unit or four units they get the job done. This Army Guard and Reserve rotation in Europe may have ended, but their products will stand the test of time.

“When our children look in history

books and see the photographs from World War I and World War II, the Korean War, Vietnam, they see the world through the eyes of our Soldiers,” said Gookin who is a lifelong history student. “It is the lens of our Soldiers that capture those. Just how we study and admire the photos of our grandfathers is how these photos will be admired in years to come.”

**First Lt. Brian Blair, platoon leader assigned to C Troop, 1st Squadron, 2nd Cavalry Regiment, Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, analyzes mission schematics, highlighting route maneuvers across the line of fire with his Lithuanian counterparts before participating in a react-to-ambush exercise at a Lithuanian training area in Rukla, Oct. 23, 2014. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Seth LaCount)**





# VTANG Bleeds for the Community

By Airman 1st Class Dana Alyce-Schwarz  
158th FW

Members of the Vermont Air National Guard (VTANG) volunteered their time this past drill weekend, along with their blood at the American Red Cross blood drive on base.

"We've been planning this since last December," said David Carmichael, the Red Cross program coordinator. "We frequently have military members donate at our local clinics, but we want to be able to provide as many people as possible the chance to contribute. This is a critical time of year, so having such a large drive is a great help to us."

The VTANG has hosted blood drives in the past, going as far back as 1974, with the most recent drive having taken place in 2009. When asked

**Senior Airman Kayla Sauve**



about the gap in time between blood drives Carmichael explained that because overseas deployments many Airmen were temporarily barred from donating. Overseas duty, vaccinations, or even a recent cold or flu are just some of the reasons why a person may be temporarily unable to donate.

"I was in Germany during the 'Mad Cow' scare in the 80s so I'm not able to donate," said Senior Master Sgt. Michael French, the Communications Flight Quality Assurance Supervisor. "But I enjoyed volunteering and talking with all the Airmen who did give blood. It's an event that everyone is able to contribute to, donating or volunteering."

For this drive the goal was to collect 200 units of blood. Working with the VTANG Junior Enlisted Council, a group of volunteer Airmen who help coordinate base events, the Red Cross was able to surpass the 200 unit goal. A total of 226 productive units were collected, over 70 of them coming from first time donors, making this the third largest blood drive of the year.



**Senior Airman Joshua Anderson**

Carmichael explained that designating a donation as a 'productive unit' refers to the content of that donation. Each productive unit of blood is potentially able to save three people. When whole blood is collected, it is then sent to a lab to be separated into its component parts: red cells, platelets and plasma. This allows each part of the donation to be used as needed and therefore provide the maximum benefit.

"I remember when we held annual drives," French said. "I think it was great having one again and if the base tempo is such that we can keep having regular drives it will be one more way we're able to give back to our community."

