

THE *Maryland* LINE

FY 2017
Issue #2



OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE MARYLAND MILITARY DEPARTMENT

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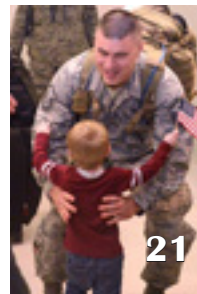
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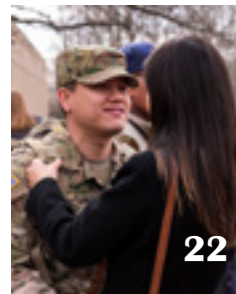
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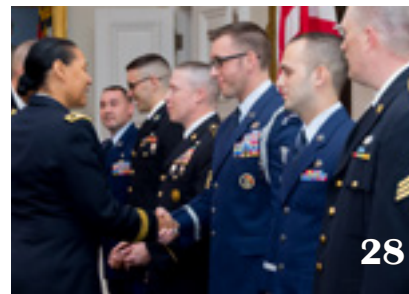
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On the cover:



Warrant Officer Roger Rippeon Jr., a member of C Co., 2-224th Avn. Regt., carries an ammunition crate up a berm in the battle for the MD Best Warrior title at Gunpowder, Md., March 18, 2017.

(U.S. National Guard photo by Spc. Elizabeth Scott)

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To the current and previous members of the Maryland Military Department:

I am pleased to present the second addition of FY 2017 of the *Maryland Line*, our quarterly departmental publication. The magazine covers the events that have occurred in January, February, and March. The intent is to keep you better informed and illustrate the department's activities.

During this quarter, we had the honor of working with the D.C. National Guard to support the 58th Presidential Inauguration with more than 375 members. In March, the 70th Regiment did an outstanding job hosting the best warrior competition. This year was the first time in the nation that a state had a multinational, officer, noncommissioned officer and soldier and airmen competition. The Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Estonia both sent teams to compete. We welcomed home members of the 175th Wing who were deployed to the Middle East with their A-10 aircraft to fight ISIS in Syria and Iraq. We also deployed nearly 200 members of the 29th Combat Aviation Brigade to the Middle East. They will be the headquarters unit for more than 1,500 soldiers from multiple aviation units spanning more than a dozen states.

We continue to face many new challenges this year. We are heading into annual training season; however, now, we participate in more year round Joint Readiness Center exercises. We continue to mobilize and deploy soldiers and airmen for overseas contingency operations. We must always remain a relevant and ready force for our state and federal mission.



Respectfully,

LINDA L. SINGH
Major General, MDARNG
The Adjutant General

29th CAB partners with 3rd CAB during Culminating Training Exercise

Story by 1st Lt. Stephen James, 29th Combat Aviation Brigade



The 29th Combat Aviation Brigade continued its post-mobilization training and deployment validation at Fort Hood, Texas from March 6-14. The 29th CAB received support from 3rd CAB, their partner brigade under the Army's Total Force Partnership Program.

The 29th CAB completed its Culminating Training Exercise on March 14, which consisted of a series of brigade-wide training events aimed at improving communication and cohesion across the brigade to better prepare the unit for its upcoming deployment to Kuwait and Iraq.

The 29th CAB consists of Army and Air National Guard units from over 10 states and Puerto Rico and even included

participation from the 2nd Squadron 17th Cavalry Regiment, from the 101st CAB.

Throughout the exercise, the 29th CAB was able to rely on the expertise of observer/coaches (O/Cs) from both First Army and the 3rd CAB.

"The training was great. The best part is having 3rd CAB here. They provided excellent training and guidance," said the Assistant Adjutant General of the Maryland Army National Guard Brig. Gen. Timothy Gowen.

Gowen, who is also the deputy commanding general for the Army Aviation Center of

“This is a great opportunity to further build relationships across components and share lessons in training both ways so that each organization walks away better than we began.”

-Col. Jeff Becker
3rd CAB commander

Excellence at Fort Rucker, Alabama, was present at the training as a senior mentor to the 29th CAB commander, Col. Mark Beckler.

"The 3rd CAB was able to cover much of the 29th CAB operations. They continuously assessed operations, engaged in after-action reviews and provided honest and timely feedback," said the 29th CAB operations officer, Maj. Nick Kiaunis.

Although the CTE was aimed at preparing the 29th CAB to deploy, the experiences provided throughout the exercise will also benefit the 3rd CAB.

"This is a great opportunity to further build relationships across components and share lessons in training both ways so that each organization walks away better than we began," said the 3rd CAB commander, Col. Jeff Becker.

According to Becker, Soldiers from the 29th CAB were able to improve each day and will be better prepared to deploy and relieve the 77th CAB, which is currently in theater.

"It is rewarding to see a unit grow and see themselves," said Cpt. Derek Murphy, an O/C from 3rd CAB.

"The 3rd CAB personnel came in force and exceeded expectations. The brigade brought key leaders and subject matter experts. Some of the 3rd CAB staff had recently

participated in exercises and held duty assignments at locations such as the Joint Readiness Training Center," said Kiaunis.

This was not the first time the 29th CAB worked with the 3rd CAB, however. The 29th CAB assisted their counterparts at the 3rd CAB for their Warfighter exercise which was held this past fall.

The 29th CAB provided members across the staff sections, including the command team, which augmented the 3rd CAB command post for the exercise, said Becker.

"The 29th CAB was helpful during our Warfighter exercise, especially the S-6 section," said Becker.

Partnership with active duty units, like the 3rd CAB, isn't just for the benefit of both units, but it is in the best interest of the U.S. Army as a whole.

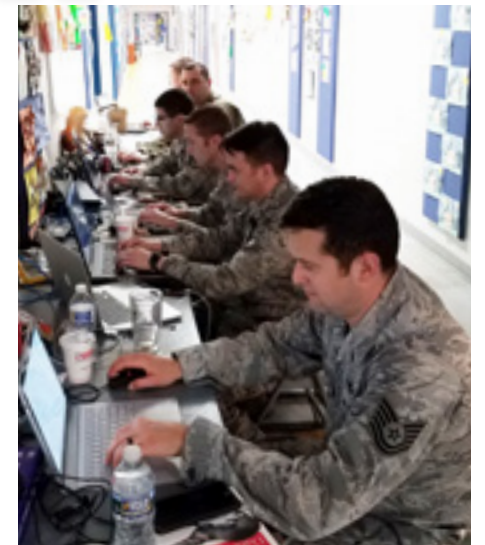
"It takes the total force to accomplish the Army's mission, regardless of component. All of those wearing the Army uniform are members of that team," said Becker.

The lessons learned from both sides will create better interoperability and understanding amongst both units which have similar capabilities and mission sets.

"From a 3rd CAB perspective it is a great opportunity for us to be a part of the 29th CAB's train-up to deploy as part of our partner force, but more importantly as fellow Soldiers going to fight," said Becker.

58th Presidential Inauguration

Story by Spc. Elizabeth Scott, 29th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment



At 11:30 p.m. the first stirring of activity began. Sporadic alarms sounding, as individuals prepped for the upcoming day. At midnight on Jan. 20th, the lights of FedEx Field switched on, as alarms started sounding off more frequently.

Cots creaked and bedding rustled from both those on the morning and afternoon shift. National Guard members who were waking up for the morning shift slowly got up, carefully getting ready for work. The afternoon shift readjusted in their cot, moved to shield themselves from light and sounds to get as much sleep as they could before a long day.

Maryland National Guard members provided support to local civilian authorities for the 58th Presidential Inauguration in Washington D.C., Jan. 20, 2017.

Approximately 375 Maryland National Guard members arrived at FedEx Field, in Landover, Md., Jan. 17, 2017, where they would be living for the next few days.

The next two days, the soldiers and airmen prepared to provide support. Service members went to scout the traffic control points that they would be stationed during the inauguration. Different briefings and planning meetings occurred to get ready.

Their unit was out to help assist the civilian authorities and to ensure that

everyone has a safe and enjoyable time, said Spc. Richard Bell, 244th Engineer Company.

Teams from the Maryland National Guard were stationed at traffic control points, most with at least one District Department of Transportation officer for over 19 hours. They were there to help traffic and crowd flow, as well as notifying civilian authorities of any suspicious behavior.

Down near Union Station, a few traffic control points had larger crowds especially with the different protests that were occurring through the day.

At one point there was an issue closer to the Capital building, said Spc. Andre Questel, 253rd Engineer Company. The crowds were being pushed further out, so the National Guard assisted local police with the directing and disbursing the crowd.

Most Maryland National Guard members generally had positive experiences when out at the points.

The public has been really receptive about our presence here, said Spc. Edwin C. Garcia, 244th Engineer Company.

“Everybody loves the National Guard,” said Questel. “So we have been really received well.”





One of the toughest tests of a soldier or airman's resolution and training is the Best Warrior Competition, a multi-day marathon of mental and physical trials that push these elite service members beyond their limits.

2017

Maryland National Guard's

BEST WARRIOR

bigger & badder then ever

Story by Staff Sgt. Margaret Taylor, 29th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Blisters. Aching, stiff muscles. Ibuprofen. Water – lots of it. Weapon smoke. Tear gas. Piles of laundry. Miles of foot traffic. Brains crammed to bursting with military trivia from every Army regulation imaginable.

Best Warrior competitions were never meant to be easy.

The Maryland National Guard's 2017 competition, which lasted March 16-19 at Edgewood and Gunpowder Military Reservation, brought together 18 competitors from three different countries and four different military services – all of whom were seeking more than a souvenir collection of aches and pains. They sought to push themselves harder than ever before, to compete against themselves and each other, and maybe – just maybe – come out a victor.

Unlike many other state Best Warrior competitions, Maryland allows officers to compete as well as junior enlisted soldiers and noncommissioned officers, said Maryland Army National Guard Command Sgt. Maj. Thomas Beyard, the state's senior enlisted leader. Additionally, this year teams from both of Maryland's state partner countries, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Estonia, and a representative from the Maryland Air Guard joined the competition.

"The competition this year was very unique," Beyard said.

It all started with a written test on Thursday, March 16. Later, the 18 competitors tackled weapons assembly and marksmanship task, land navigation during the day and night, casualty



care, radio communication, an Army Physical Fitness Test, and various other demanding exercises that tapped into every ounce of strength and skill the competitors had. An appearance board capped things out on Sunday.

None of the 18 had an easy time.

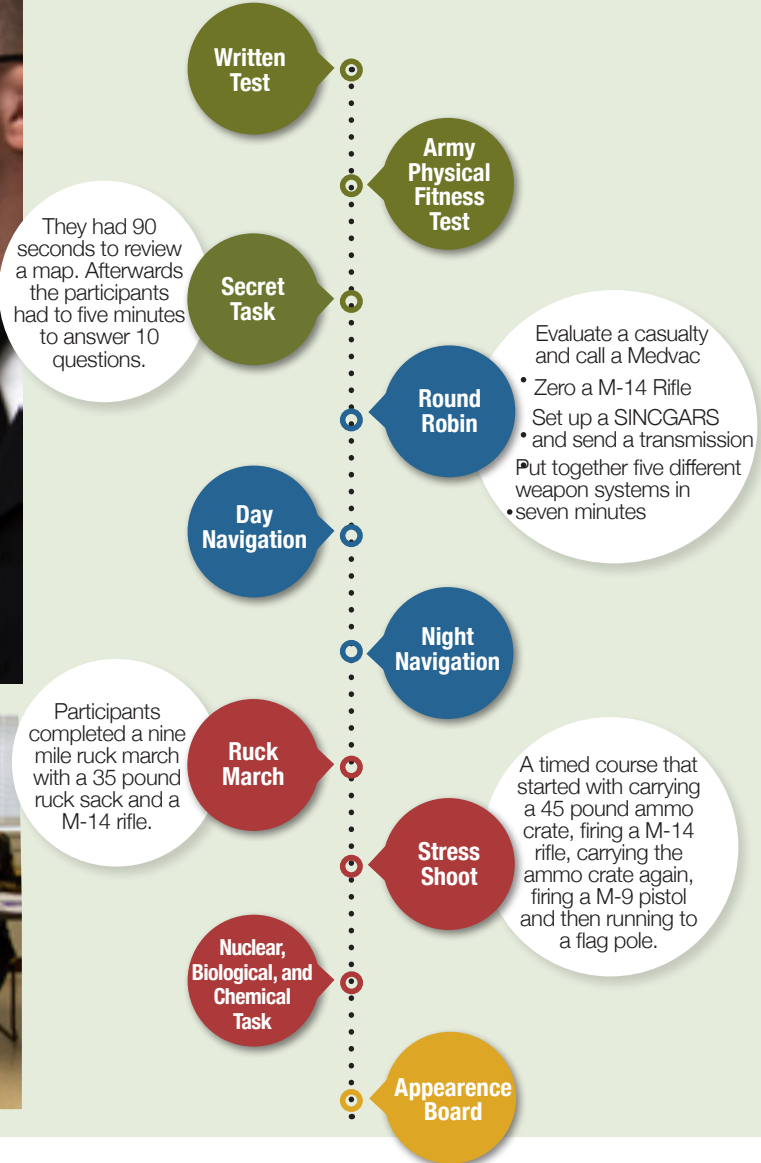
Competition organizers increased the difficulty of several traditional tasks this year and added a few new ones to better prepare Maryland service members for the regional and national Best Warrior competitions

"It was intense, challenging; it was very interesting," said Maj. Vladimir Kuznetsov, the officer competing for the Estonian army contingent.

Though snowy weather caused an obstacle course to be scratched from the list of challenges and other events to be modified, the 18 still toughed out the weather for the 9-mile ruck march on Saturday.



Best Warrior TIMELINE



“The ruck march: it’s a steep hill, icy roads, heavy weight, cold day, wet boots – just a lot of challenges,” said MDARNG Capt. Alexi Franklin, the officer representing Joint Force Headquarters and the 70th Regiment.

Though the ruck was no one’s favorite, one of the new events, a stress shoot, was warmly received by several of the competitors. The shoot was a timed race that alternated ammunition crate carries with accuracy drills on the M16 rifle and the M9 pistol.

“It was a lot of fun running around, shooting, transitioning between weapons – it was pretty fun,” Franklin said.

When all was finished on Sunday, Maryland named its top warriors, those

in each category whose scores tallied highest across all events. Winning the soldier category was Spc. Philip Flint, who represented the 58th Troop Command. Sgt. Charles Contic, representing JFHQ and the 70th, won the NCO category. And, for the second year in a row, Capt. Alexi Franklin won the officer division. State partners came in a close second in both the NCO and officer divisions.

No matter how the scores tallied, each competitor walked away

with more than he had before the competition started.

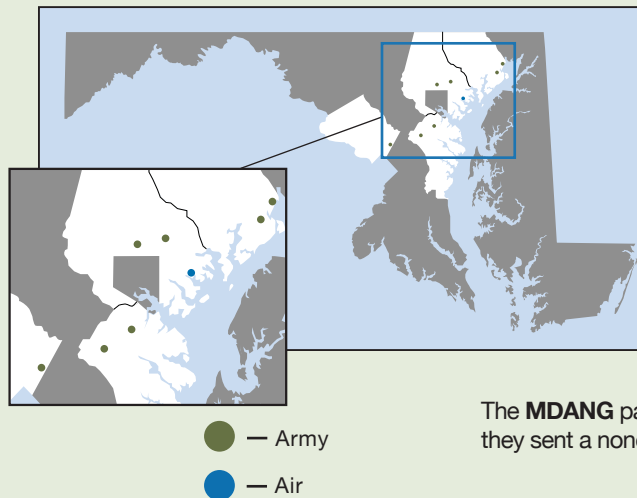
“I did better in a lot of the events where I expected to struggle, and I struggled in some of the events where I expected to do well,” said Tech. Sgt. Brenton Deal, who represented the 175th Medical Group and was the first Maryland Air National Guard member to compete for Best Warrior. “I’m glad I got to go through it, and I’ll be able to pass on all these details to the airmen at my unit.”

“It was a lot of fun running around, shooting, transitioning between weapons – it was pretty fun.”

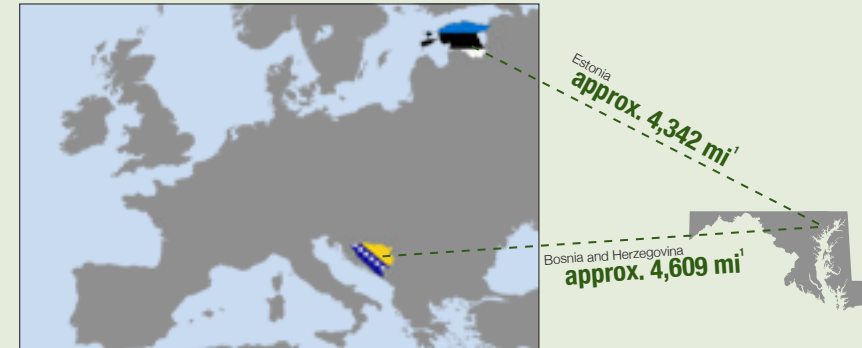
- Capt. Alexi Franklin

Officer competitor representing JFHQ and the 70th Reg.

MDNG units that sent competitors:



MD’s state partner countries - Estonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina



The **MDANG** participated for the first time, they sent a noncommissioned officer.

Both of Maryland’s **state partner countries** sent an officer, noncommissioned officer, and junior enlisted.



Maryland allows officers to compete as well as junior enlisted soldiers and noncommissioned officers.



- JFHQ/70th Reg.
- 29th CAB
- 58th EMIB
- 58th TC

¹ Figures are from Google Maps





Maj. Gen. Singh addresses the International Women's Conference

Story by Col. Charles Kohler, Maryland National Guard Public Affairs Office

Hosted by the Estonian Atlantic Treaty Association, the International Women's Conference, in Tallinn, highlights the importance of women and their contributions to peace and security. Maj. Gen. Linda Singh, the adjutant general of Maryland, discussed her unique experiences as a woman, mother, soldier, and contractor on March 10, 2017.

"While women have played a role in military and security operations for hundreds of years, it has only

been codified in the mission of the United Nations in the last two decades," said Singh. "Thanks to those women and men who have come before us recognizing the important role that women play globally, we are seeing an increase in the number of women in peacekeeping and security operations."

The United Nations Resolution 1325 was adopted in October 2000 and it was the focus of the conference. The resolution reaffirms the important role of women

in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction. It also stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. The conference participants discussed the progress women have made and how much more needs to be done.

"Without the equality movements, I would not have been able to serve in the military or even as a leader in the civilian sector," said Singh. "When I think about the changes that have occurred...it has been monumental. We need to recognize and give credit for the progress, but we should not lose sight that globally, we still have progress to be made."

Singh reflected on her deployments to Kosovo and Afghanistan and the different roles women have in their societies. She worked as a mentor for a male Afghan general and with other male members of the military. She knew that she could earn their respect through hard work. She felt that she was constantly being scrutinized as a female soldier and leader. Her greatest joy was getting the opportunity to interact with local civilians.

"We would visit with schools to engage with the students," said Singh. "Watching the young girls' faces as the women soldiers came into the room was the highlight of the visit. You knew that even a small interaction presented a level of hope and aspiration for them that things can be different."

She discussed her current role as adjutant general and working with Estonia as a part of the National Guard's State Partnership Program. She is working with the senior leadership in Estonia to assist them in accomplishing their goals and objectives. Since 1993, the Maryland National Guard has been partnered with Estonia. The SPP is part of the initial outreach by the United States toward new democracies in Eastern Europe and former Soviet Union. The program emphasizes civil and military cooperation to foster democracy, encourage market economies and promote regional cooperation and stability.

"General Singh is an excellent example and role model everyone should follow," said Gen. Joseph L. Lengyel, chief of the National Guard Bureau. "She has overcome many obstacles in her life to become the commanding officer of the Maryland National Guard. She is the first woman and African-American to hold that position.

"With less than 100 days on the job," Lengyel continued, "she marshaled all of her skills and talents to manage the civil unrest in Baltimore. We are fortunate to have leaders like General Singh."

Singh ended her remarks on how important it is to achieve diversity at all levels within an organization. She also stated it is also just as important to understand

our role in achieving diversity. For her, to serve it is her passion. She recognizes that the fact she is serving something bigger herself and that she must pave the way for those who will prosper as a result of her efforts. She serves to show others the way.

“When I think about the changes that have occurred...it has been monumental. We need to recognize and give credit for the progress, but we should not lose sight that globally, we still have progress to be made.”

-Maj. Gen. Linda Singh
the adjutant general of Maryland

Success Leaves Footprints

29th Infantry Division First Sgt. Murdock shares thoughts for younger Soldiers

Story by By Staff Sgt. Francis O'Brien,
29th Infantry Division

First Sergeant Harold Murdock of the currently deployed 29th Infantry Division Army National Guard, and responsible for the care, welfare and development of 220 Mid-Atlantic Soldiers, carries a book of wisdom with him wherever he goes. Inside, as a bookmark, are hand-written inspirational quotes from great minds throughout history. Murdock is thoughtful as he and his Soldiers, at their new home – Camp Arifjan, Kuwait – come to the end of African-American History Month. The theme of this year's commemoration – “Success Leaves Footprints” – has Murdock reaching for something profound to say to motivate and inspire the Soldiers who will follow in his footprints.

“Take advantage of every opportunity that comes your way,” he says. “Learn as much as you can. Get as much experience as you can. Don't run from the work, run to it.”

Murdock has been running and marching towards hard work all his life.

Murdock, 35, is a life-long Baltimore native who grew up on the east side of the city never realizing how poor he was or the poverty of the other families around him. He had his mom, Sheila, a now retired social services worker, and dad, Harold, a now retired department of recycling employee, and they had each other. But Murdock had something special that set him apart from his peers: a drive to succeed nurtured by his high school wrestling coach.

“Before he died, my wrestling coach, Larry Brown instilled in me to never give up, never quit. Have a can-do mindset,” said Murdock.

Following the footprints down a path trod by many who had gone before, Murdock enlisted in the Army, parlaying his athleticism and resiliency into a momentum of upward success. At 35, Murdock is one of the younger first sergeants in the Army National Guard.

Murdock credits many blessings and mentors along the way that allowed his career to advance through the mortuary affairs to an assignment as military policeman and ultimately, the infantry.

“I just couldn't get promoted in 92M (mortuary affairs),” said Murdock. “I transferred to military police and was a police officer for the Maryland Transportation Police for eight years. Later, I was able to get a full-time position with the Maryland Honor Guard handling over 300 funerals per year for vets age 18 to 80,” he added.

The Maryland Honor Guard provides ceremonial funeral support for veterans – active duty, National Guard and Reserves – in Maryland and Delaware. The high visibility assignment, a deployment in 2006, and the mentors he attracted along the way, gave Murdock the opportunity to compete in the 2012 Best Warrior competition.

Murdock says that along the way, senior enlisted leaders kept encouraging him to go to school. At the Best Warrior competition, he was closely watched by several Sergeants Major,

who recognized his potential, drive and embodiment of the Total Soldier concept. Soon he was promoted again to his current position.

“I don't take the credit,” said Murdock. “Thank them. My leaders put me in this position and I am grateful for their mentorship.”

In his spare time, Murdock has attended Army Combatives school, the Air Assault course, master resiliency training, combat lifesaver certification, the First Sergeant command course and earned an Associate's degree in criminal justice. Currently he has joined Toastmasters International to work on his public speaking skills and is studying for the prestigious Audie Murphy board.

Said colleague 1st Sgt. Dwayne Carter: “You always movin'...so busy.”

Murdock responded, “I'll sleep when I die. I feel like there's so much life to be lived. I want my Soldiers to succeed; everything rises and falls with leadership. I can't be stagnant. You either growin' or dyin'. If I set the standard, then my Soldiers are going to follow me.”

Setting a standard is a theme of Murdock's life as he enters his prime years. He is a married father of two, who still competes in open age 18 and above wrestling tournaments, and coaches wrestling at Forest Park High School in Baltimore, Md. One of his slogans, from a former mentor and NFL football player, is that the character of a team is set by the standards it places upon itself.

“My kids are going to follow me,” said Murdock. “If I'm out there cussin' and fussin' they're gonna do as I do.”

As a wrestler and coach, there's one thing that Murdock learned that he can share with his Soldiers and it contributed to one of his few regrets in life: Your mind breaks first before your body.

Murdock spoke about how he was once invited to try out for the Army World Class Athlete Program at Fort Carson, Colorado. The program provides any Army Soldier who has excelled in their sport the opportunity to train and compete at national and international competitions while still continuing to serve. The intended goal of the program is for athletes be selected to for the U.S. Olympic team. Murdock's former commanding officer offered him that opportunity.

“Fear got a hold of me and paralyzed me. I declined it. Ultimately it wasn't risk, it was fear that held me back – do I get outside of my comfort zone? That's one of my few regrets. When I die, I want to be known as a man who took risks, and lived life to the fullest,” he said.

When asked how he would mentor his own Soldiers when facing that kind of challenge, of what type of path he would like to lead for those who would follow in his footsteps, Murdock opened his ever-present book filled with quotations and said:

“Life begins at the end of your comfort zone, so start living.”

Recipe for Success

By Sgt. Kelly Gary, 29th Infantry Division



For Maryland National Guard member Cpl. Tramel Peterson, the month of February brings memories of the beads, dancing, glitter, King Cake, and masquerade balls of Mardi Gras in his native New Orleans. Although this year marks the 160th Mardi Gras parade in the Big Easy, for Peterson this is another year that will go by without the carnivals, the costumes and the gumbo while deployed to Camp Arifjan, Kuwait. Mardi Gras is a big party, but the celebrations and the spread are part of what Peterson believes brings the whole event together.

"It's all about the festivities, the camaraderie," said Peterson, reminiscing. "The coming together, oh, and the food," he said, leaning back and closing his eyes as if he could smell a freshly baked dish.

This year instead of celebrating with his Creole family back in Louisiana, Peterson, a Current Operations Noncommissioned Officer for the 29th Infantry Division, has only photos and shoutouts from friends and relatives partaking in the revelries.

Peterson grew up in a military family, bouncing from base to

base at home and abroad. Although the family of five spent periods of time in Germany, Italy, France, and several locations within the United States, none were what Peterson called home. Home to the now-Maryland resident meant the soulful music and authentic gumbo of New Orleans. His family's Creole roots instilled a love for good southern foods and culture.

He loves to sing, play piano, dance, and has also done some modeling. Growing up, Peterson took classes in everything from hip-hop to ballroom dancing and currently sings tunes ranging from John Legend to Whitney Houston in his free time. Yet, more than anything Peterson loves cooking. The aspiring chef earned his Bachelors' Degree from the Baltimore International College for Culinary Arts.

"When I am cooking or baking it's just me," said Peterson, noting what great stress relief being in the kitchen can be. "It's nice to tune out the world where my only worry is not burning my cake."

Although Peterson thinks the best desserts are a fresh praline or the unique French donut sprinkled with powdered sugar from

the French Quarter of New Orleans called a Beignet, he believes he makes the best seafood stuffing. He was clear that quality ingredients are the key to a good dish. Getting fresh shrimp and crab and a great many additional fixings.

"You have to get all the ingredients cut really fine," he said, moving his hands in a chopping motion. "You are essentially making a gourmet seafood cornbread."

He then outlined his rituals for making the cornbread. First, he dons his chef's hat with "Chef Melly" emblazoned upon the front, a Christmas gift from his sister. Then he bakes the cornbread. Then cornbread is crumbled and mixed with the finely chopped seafood mixture and baked once more.

Even though he thoroughly enjoyed cooking and baking, after ten years working in the culinary arts and hospitality industry, Peterson felt like it was time to hang up his chef hat, at least professionally, and don the camouflage cover to continue the military tradition of his family. With his father, great-grandparents and multiple aunts and uncles having also served in various branches, the military was a familiar trade.

"Neither of my older brothers joined the military," said Peterson. "I realized it was my duty to continue the legacy."

Peterson currently works for the Department of Permitting and Inspections Enforcement Division in Prince George's

County in the civilian world. He hopes to work his way up in the Department and become an Assistant Associate Director. The 28-year-old is going on his fourth year in the Maryland National Guard and plans on a full 20 year career. With the military occupation, civilian job, and cooking hobby, Peterson is putting even more on his plate by pursuing a second Bachelor's degree in Environmental Science. He is considering rising higher in the National Guard by either becoming a Warrant Officer or going to Officer Candidate School.

Others are inspired by Peterson's example. Staff Sgt. Natasia Brown, aviation operations NCO for the 29ID and friend and colleague of Peterson's, believes Peterson's willingness to grow and ability to adapt to new situations spell success for the junior NCO regardless of what route he takes.

"Cpl. Peterson is always asking questions," said Brown. "As he progresses in rank those questions may get more complicated, but they need to continue to be asked."

Rarely can you catch Peterson without a smile on his face. Brown said she truly respected that even though Peterson is able to adapt to any situation that he still remains true to himself. For Peterson this means keeping up with his family, namely his three year-old son, and putting his artistic talents to use. Even though he doesn't have the means to whip up any of his favorite dishes here in-country, Peterson has been singing in the Camp Arifjan church choir and has quite the cookout extravaganza planned when he returns to Maryland. In Peterson's cookbook good people and good food are the recipe for health and happiness.

Leading the double life of a citizen soldier



Fresh out of high school, Reanna Alvarez didn't go off to college the following fall like the rest of her friends after graduation. If she wanted to pursue a degree, she was going to have to find a way to pay for it herself.

A friend mentioned that he was getting his school paid for through the Army National Guard, a branch of the military

Alvarez hadn't heard of, where soldiers serve one weekend a month and two weeks in the summer.

The fact that National Guard service was a part-time commitment carried a lot of appeal for Alvarez while she was mulling her options at age 19.

"You could be in the military, choose an MOS [military occupational specialty] that you're interested in, and then on the civilian side, you could do the same thing," explains Alvarez. "You have the experience from the military that you could utilize as a civilian. Then, while you're a civilian, you can be going to school."

Now a specialist with the Maryland Army National Guard for the past five years, Alvarez's MOS is 92A, automated logistical specialist. In her engineering unit, she is responsible mainly for vehicle dispatch, keeping track of keys and personnel paperwork. She also tests her unit's equipment, like gas masks, to make sure they are working properly. On the civilian side, Alvarez says the job is comparable to working at a distribution center.

When she's not at drill, at home with her two kids, or doing homework for college, where she studies psychology, Alvarez is a waitress, where her co-workers marvel at her ability to stay calm in any situation.

"The Guard gives you so many traits you can use as a civilian," Alvarez explains. "I've gone through Basic [Training], where you have so much going on, there's people yelling, and so much thrown at you that it makes civilian life look like a piece of cake."

Alvarez had a harder time at Basic Training than others might. She was battling an eating disorder, and a Drill Sergeant had found out. That led to a meeting with the commander who could have easily sent her home.

Instead, she received encouragement.

"He told me he saw a lot of potential in me and that I shouldn't let [the eating disorder] define me, and he really wanted me to push myself."

Part of the reason she chose psychology for a major is because of her struggle with an eating disorder that started when she was 16, and partly because she wants to be able to help veterans someday.

In the meantime, she helped out at two major events close to home in her capacity as a National Guard soldier – the Baltimore riots, which took place in spring 2015, and more recently, the Presidential Inauguration January 2017.

"I think it's very cool knowing that I'm going to be able to tell my kids someday, whenever they can understand, that I was part of that experience."

Another cool thing she can tell her kids is that she was in a National Guard commercial that tied in to the 2013 "Man of Steel" Superman movie. Alvarez was one of about 20 soldiers who were chosen out of thousands of applicants to fly out to Hollywood to shoot the commercial and meet the director of the film. You can spot Alvarez walking on the sidewalk in a gray and black striped sweater at the 6-second mark:



Alvarez says the connection between Superman and the National Guard is, that like Clark Kent/Superman, the Guard soldier also leads a double life as part-time citizen/part-time soldier.

Even in stressful circumstances, like the Baltimore riots that lasted for several days, Alvarez says people were grateful to have soldiers on hand.

"People were constantly telling us, 'thank you for being here, thank you for making us feel safe,'" said Alvarez. "At the end of the day, that's all we try to do."



Annapolis-based unit changes command

Story by Capt. Aaron Testa, 110th Information Operations Battalion

Lt. Col. Kristine Henry assumed command of the 110th Information Operations Battalion from Lt. Col. Daniel Williams, during a change of command ceremony at the Maryland National Guard's Annapolis Readiness Center, Annapolis, Md., March 11, 2017.

Presiding over the day's event was Col. Brian Connelly, the commander of the 58th Expeditionary Military Intelligence Brigade, the higher headquarters for the 110th Information Operations Battalion. He shared his thoughts about the quality of the battalion's soldiers and the privilege for Henry to join a unit like the 110th.

"None of the soldiers before you started their career in information operations," Connelly said speaking to Henry, "They all mastered their fields in intelligence, targeting, communications and a myriad of other specialties before they had the privilege to join this unit. They're best described as orchestra conductors—coordinating, synchronizing and deconflicting all of the various elements of information operations throughout the battlespace."

Information operations is a complex and constantly evolving field. Connelly defines information operations as "the integrated employment of electronic warfare, computer network operations, psychological operations, military deception and operations security."

The honor to lead a unit like this is not lost on the incoming commander. Henry believes the unit is postured to remain active and relevant against enemies now and in the future, both abroad and domestic.

This bright future is thanks in part to the leadership of outgoing commander, Lt. Col. Dan Williams. When Williams took command 26 months ago, his top priority was to make the unit ready to respond to any mission.

"I wanted to make sure we were ready for any type of action we might see," said Williams. "That means being ready to defend Baltimore when the governor calls or move the Governor around, which was our mission during Blizzard Jonas."

While fulfilling these domestic missions, the unit maintained its overseas deployment to the Horn of Africa for the past two years.

The unit has also established itself as a leader in the field of information operations by providing training courses at the Army's Information Operations Qualification Course.

"I feel like we have achieved what I set out to achieve: be ready for any mission, foreign or domestic," said Williams.

During the ceremony, Henry recognized Williams for his contributions and congratulated him on the unit's success under his leadership.

"You have brought this unit to the next phase in its evolution," said Henry. "I am excited to see what the future will bring."

The 110th Information Operations Battalion provides trained, deployable, culturally aware and regionally focused information operations soldiers to support the Army mission here at home and around the world.

The unit regularly deploys small, highly specialized teams to places like Djibouti and Afghanistan. Leaders expect the unit to increase its role in the cyber domain, supporting combatant commands in global operations as well as the state of Maryland during domestic operations.

According to Williams, information operations is becoming more important than ever with reports of foreign involvement in our recent election and the cyber field becoming an official Army branch.

"We are seeing an influence across the board," said Williams. "Public affairs, civil affairs, cyber operations ... all the information-related capabilities matter and this unit is more in need now than ever before."



Airmen return home

Jan. 19, 2017

More than 250 members of the 175th Wing, Maryland Air National Guard, who were deployed to Incirlik Air Base, Turkey, reunite with family and friends at Baltimore Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport. For 3 months these service members supported Operation Inherent Resolve by providing over 900 combat sorties and 5,400 flight hours.



29th Combat Aviation Brigade deploys

Jan. 29, 2017

Nearly 200 members of the Maryland Army National Guard's Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 29th Combat Aviation Brigade deploy from Edgewood Md, to provide full-spectrum aviation capabilities in support of ongoing operations in the Middle East. The unit will serve as the headquarters element for the 29th CAB, which will consist of more than 1,500 soldiers from multiple aviation units spanning more than a dozen states.

The brigade deployed units in support of Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom, Kosovo, and Bosnia. It supported Hurricane Gustav relief operations in Louisiana and the 2009 Presidential Inauguration. The 29th CAB returned from supporting the end of Operation New Dawn in Iraq from 2011-2012. After Operation New Dawn, the brigade established the first aviation brigade operation, supporting Army Central Command in Kuwait, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia. The unit had the Army's only deck landing qualified attack battalion while it supported stability in the Arabian Gulf.





March 10, 2017

A MDNG chemical biological Radiation nuclear specialist helps a patient with a simulated injury walk during a U.S. Army North (Fifth Army) medical, joint training exercise with South Carolina National Guard at Rosewood Center, Owings Mills, Md.



70th Regiment Change of Command

March 25, 2017

Brig. Gen. Timothy McGowen passes the 70th Regiment (LDR) guidon to Lt. Col. Michael Duplechain at a change of command ceremony at Aberdeen Proving Ground (Edgewood Area) in Edgewood, Md.

During the ceremony, Col. Janeen Birkhead, the outgoing commander, was recognized for all that she had done for the 70th Regiment.



Honoring the Monumental City Guard's Service and Legacy

Feb. 14, 2017



Maj. Gen. Linda L. Singh, the adjutant general of Maryland, and the Maryland Museum of Military History host a Black History Month event in recognition of the historic Monumental City Guard's service in the Maryland National Guard in World War I and the Korean War, at the Fifth Regiment Armory in Baltimore, Md.

"We need to honor those who paved the way for change," said Singh to members of the 231st Transportation Truck Battalion and members of the Maryland Military Department during the event.

The event included a chance to visit the Maryland Museum of Military History and see the different artifacts and exhibits, including an exhibit about the 231st Transportation Truck Battalion.

Monumental City Guard's legacy



The Monumental City Guard was formed in 1879 as a patriotic African American social club that competed in military drill ceremony with the reputation as being one of the best units in the art of Soldiering and marching. In 1882, they would become part of the Maryland National Guard as the First Separate Company. In World War I the First Separate Company was activated and were renamed the Company I in the 372nd Infantry Regiment of the 92nd Infantry Division.

The unit legacy would continue when they were renamed 231st Truck Battalion and were activated to support the Korean War. It is the only unit in the Maryland National Guard that carries Korean War battle honors.

Staff Sgt. Musselman awarded Maryland Distinguished Service for Valor



Dec. 14, 2017

Staff Sgt. Kenneth N. Musselman receives the Maryland Distinguished Service for Valor.

On Aug. 20, 2016 Musselman was traveling when he observed a vehicular accident in Bel Air, Md. The vehicle had burst into flames, and he risked his life to rescue the occupants trapped inside.

“Staff Sgt. Musselman's complete disregard for his own safety and his subsequent heroic actions are in keeping with the finest traditions of the citizen soldier.”



Storytime with the adjutant general



Members of the Maryland National Guard and their children enjoy storytime with the adjutant general at the Barnes & Noble in Ellicott City, Md. Maj. Gen. Linda L. Singh, the adjutant general of Maryland, read Hero Mom to the children in honor of Women's History Month as a part of the Maryland National Guard Child & Youth Program.

“This is important for our families and their children to have the opportunity to spend time together. Many of these parents have deployed and their children have had to deal with the separation. This is our next generation, we need to make sure that we are giving them positive role models and examples to follow.”



Brig. Gen. Kelly awarded Chaplain (Capt.) Eugene P. O'Grady Award



Jan. 31, 2017

Maryland Military Department chaplains, chaplain candidates, and assistants conclude their annual training conference and presents the Order of Chaplain (Capt.) Eugene P. O'Grady Award at Camp Fretterd Military Reservation near Reisterstown, Md.

Brig. Gen. Scott L. Kelly, assistant adjutant general – Air, was awarded the O'Grady award for 2017. The award was established in 2011 to recognize anyone who showed particular efforts to provide for the religious and spiritual support for Maryland Military Department members.



Tribute to Fallen Heroes

March 22, 2017

Members of the Maryland National Guard Honor Guard present the flag during the Tribute to Fallen Heroes in front of both the Maryland House of Delegates and Senate at the Maryland State House in Annapolis, Md.



Maryland Freestate ChalleNGe Academy

Jan. 8, 2017

Nearly 190 cadets in-process into their 22-week military oriented residential program at Edgewood Area of Aberdeen Proving Ground, near Edgewood, Md.



Feb. 10 2017

Gen. Joseph L. Lengyel, the 28th Chief of the National Guard Bureau, mentors a cadet from the Maryland National Guard's Freestate ChalleNGe Academy.

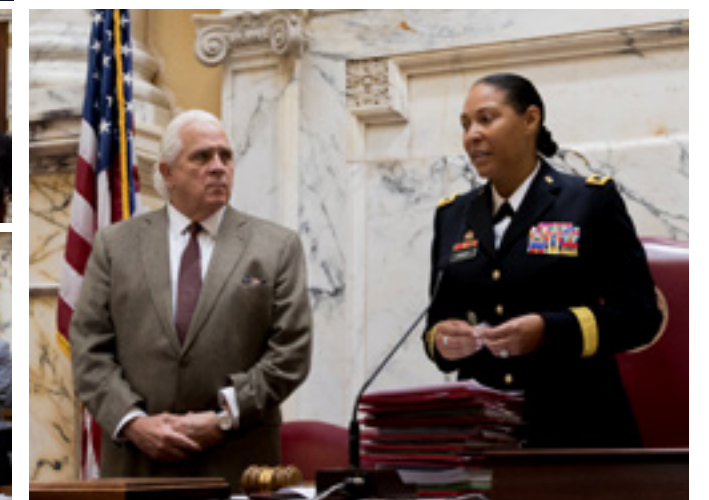


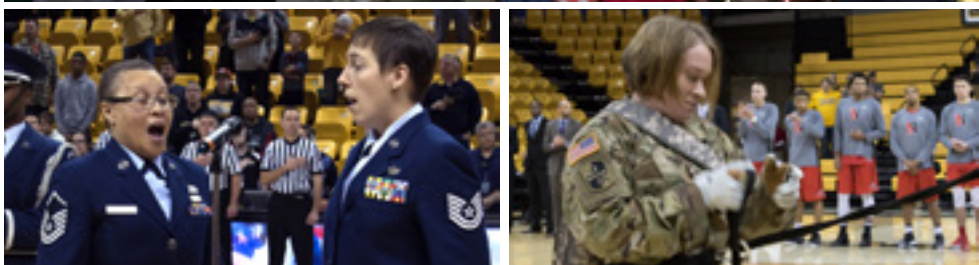
MDNG recognized in Annapolis

March 23, 2017

Maryland's Best Warriors, Airmen of the Year, Honor Guardsman of the Year, and Maryland Defense Force Soldier and NCO of the Year are recognized by Governor Larry Hogan, the Maryland House of Delegates, and the Senate at the State House in Annapolis, Md.

Maj. Gen. Linda Singh was also recognized and spoke in front of the Maryland Senate.





Towson University

Military Appreciation

Men's Basketball

Jan. 14, 2017

Pre-game activities begin with the presentation of the colors, the singing of the National Anthem, and the rapping of the game ball. During half-time the Marchanti family was present as the arena recognized the service and sacrifice of Maj. Robert J. Marchanti.

Women's Basketball

Jan. 15, 2017

During half-time, Spc. Donita Adams is recognized. Adams was part of the All Army's Women's Basketball team.

Men's Lacrosse

March 25, 2017

Before the men's lacrosse game, Command Sgt. Maj. Thomas Beyard tosses the coin at midfield and the Maryland National Guard Honor Guard presents the colors.

After the first quarter of the men's lacrosse game, 1st Lt. Meghan Landmore, Sgt. Denajah Prescott, 1st Sgt. Tyler Thomas, Staff Sgt. Rachel Walter, and Tech. Sgt. Derek White were honored on the field. Landmore, Thomas, and Walter were on the 2016 All National Guard Marathon Team. Prescott leads her unit's fitness program and personally helps struggling Soldiers who are struggling with physical training. White was selected as the winner of the naming contest for the new Air Force Long-Range Bomber, the B21, and was selected as the 2016 Maryland Air National Guard NCO of the Year.

Women's Lacrosse

March 25, 2017

Before the women's lacrosse game, Maj. Gen. Linda Singh is honored along side first responders and emergency medical personnel at midfield.



Final Frame



PHOTOGRAPHY BY MAJ. RICK BREITENFELDT

Best Warrior competitors complete in the nine-mile march with a 35-pound ruck sack and an M4 rifle at Glen Arm, Md., March 18, 2017. The Best Warrior Competition is a multi-day marathon of mental and physical trials that push these elite Soldiers and Airmen to their limits. This year's competition, included members of the Maryland National Guard as well as soldiers from the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Estonian Defense Forces.

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