

FALL/WINTER 2017

GUARD DETAIL

A CHRONICLE OF THE MISSISSIPPI ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD

NATURAL DISASTER RESPONSE

Mississippi Guardsmen
Provide Hurricane Support 8

186TH SIMULATOR 16 | ARMED FORCES MUSEUM 20

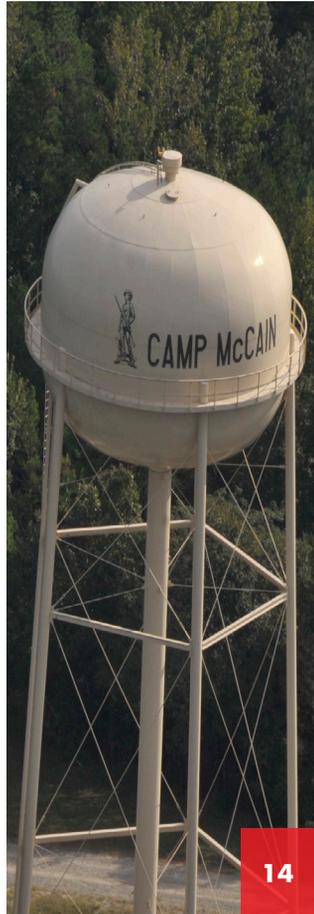
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The Mississippi National Guard Counterdrug Program assists local law enforcement in what is being called the largest drug bust in recent memory in Mississippi, confiscating more than \$24 million worth of marijuana.

The Guard Detail is the official magazine of the Mississippi National Guard. It is published three times a year with a circulation of 12,300 copies and is distributed online via the Mississippi National Guard web and Facebook pages. Opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Army, Air Force, Army National Guard, Air National Guard or the Department of Defense.

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All submissions should pertain to the Mississippi National Guard and are subject to editing. Contributions and reader comments should be sent to: scott.a.tynes.mil@mail.mil.

COVER PHOTO: Mississippi Army National Guard Spc. Tamika L. Jefferson, a petroleum supply specialist with the 185th Aviation Regiment, refuels a 500 gallon generator fuel tank at the Leonard B. Francis Armory, St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands, Oct. 3, 2017, while providing hurricane relief to affected areas of the region. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Jovi Prevot)

Letter From **THE EDITOR**

R&R, It's No Vacation



I've been a member of the Mississippi National Guard for almost 24 years.

During that span, there have been a few things one can always count on within the force each year. First, the possibility of performing state active duty is always there. Second, it's guaranteed everyone will have the opportunity to serve alongside very talented Soldiers, Airmen, and civilians. And finally, the recruiting and retention mission will always be a top priority.

The MSNG is blessed to have a dedicated and successful R&R force. These Soldiers and Airmen invest countless hours meeting with thousands of recruits and their families throughout the year. Furthermore, they spend a tremendous amount of time in

government vehicles, logging thousands of miles statewide to fill slots and strengthen readiness.

The R&R mission is a tough task and one our recruiters must not face alone. A "whole force" effort is needed to attract the best and brightest recruits to the MSNG and convince our seasoned veterans to stay.

So how can this be accomplished? From a recruiting perspective, every service member must know their unit's assigned recruiter, find possible recruits, and pass along lead information. In regards to retention, collectively, the force must maintain an ideal Guard experience across the board to encourage every Soldier and Airman – regardless of whether they're up for reenlistment or not – to remain in uniform. This means enhancing the sense that every service member feels they are being taken care of and valued, along with their families and employers.

The quest to fill and maintain a ready and resilient force continues. There are no days off as we recruit new Guardsmen and work to retain those we value in the days ahead.

We hope that you enjoy this issue!

Lt. Col. Christian Patterson, APR+M
Editor-in Chief



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U.S. and Chilean Army Special Forces Soldiers perform a helocast over Big Lake in Gulfport, Miss., during Southern Strike 18, Oct. 25, 2017. Southern Strike 18 is a total force, multi-service training exercise hosted by the Mississippi Air National Guard's Combat Readiness Training Center - Battlefield Airmen Center in Gulfport, from Oct. 23 through Nov. 3, 2017. The exercise emphasizes air-to-air, air-to-ground and special operations forces training opportunities. These events are integrated into demanding hostile and asymmetric scenarios with actions from specialized ground forces and combat and mobility air forces. (U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Kristen Heller)



Use the QR code here to check out a Southern Strike 18 video.



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Colonel

Ed Evans

Resilience is a Readiness Issue

Since joining the Air Force in 1992, I have been constantly reminded that people are our most valuable resource.

I was advised by many to “take care of your people, and your people will take care of you.”

People must be the focus. Although military commanders are ultimately responsible for the readiness of their units, without people there is no mission. Our leaders must balance mission, training and personnel requirements to maintain effective organizations. Mission objectives are achieved by people who are fit to fight, both physically and mentally.

Chief Master Sgt. Ronald Arthur, the Key Field wing command chief, promotes the significance of service members who are “Ready, Responsible and Resilient.” Chief Arthur’s “Three R’s” are accurate and the emphasis is placed on service members who have the emotional and mental fortitude to handle every day stress, surge when necessary, and employ recovery tools for the next operation.

We easily glean the importance of military training to perform our many missions that are important to the safety and security of our nation. But, how do we integrate resiliency into our daily focus? Are we accounting for the stress and strain placed on our service members? We have mastered protocols to initiate preventive maintenance on aircraft and vehicles. What indicators do we use to predict when our people need a tune-up or a break from the stress from work? We are so focused on executing the mission that we sometimes lose track of

who is performing the mission.

I encourage every commander and leader to take the time to promote awareness of intervention programs already in place. Each service invests time and resources in people programs. The Air Force and Army National Guard programs all exist to place focus on our service members’ emotional and psychological readiness to deploy. These programs stress the importance of personal readiness, faith, and healthy relationships. Service members must work to build strong relationships and habit patterns in the good times to handle the storms and stresses of the bad times.

Personal preparation is essential. The question is not “if” something will go wrong, but “when” will something go wrong. Take the steps to prepare your units now. Our service members do not learn these strategies by chance. They must be taught.

A resilient force demonstrates the ability to adapt and overcome adversity and maintains sustainable methods to learn from its mistakes and recover to perform its tasks. The military structure has been tested, and warfighters have felt the stress of multiple deployments and high operational tempo. “Do more with less” has become a way of life. We cannot discount the cumulative effects our environment takes on our service members and their families. Requirements and new challenges never stop. Resilience is a readiness issue. Are your people prepared to bounce back and recover?

Col. Ed Evans
186th Air Refueling Wing
Commander

Jesse R. Lindsey

Guard Nation

Serving as Soldiers, Airmen, and military families, we face stressors that have the potential to take their toll on all of us. Everyone faces adversity, and we all have things in life to overcome. It's not if, but when and how we respond to those challenges that determines the way ahead. Maintaining a resilient force assures us that we can and will bounce back from whatever life throws at us.

As service members, it is instilled in us that we must adapt to ever-changing mission requirements in a world where the circumstances are as dynamic and fluid as ever.

We are parents, spouses, siblings, coaches, volunteers, teachers, leaders, and many other professions on literally every front you can think of. The demands of life and our professions weigh heavy on us. We work long non-traditional hours and are constantly tethered to electronics. We often think about the unknowns and have to be ready to accommodate mission requirements. We are busy enhancing our readiness levels, preparing to deploy, or deploying, all while working on or thinking about military and civilian education.

We maintain and accomplish all of this while trying to climb the success ladder. All too often, we overload our rucksacks and leave very little space for personal maintenance.

One of the attributes great leaders possess is the ability to compartmentalize things. It's a delicate balance, but by doing so we can ease stressors and focus on priorities. It also enables us to look at issues from a "big picture" perspective or from "outside the

box." Staying organized, being proactive instead of reactive, striving to maintain a positive attitude, and sustaining strong spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical health will all positively influence overcoming the challenges life throws at us.

It's also important that we apply discipline, consistency, and mental toughness in our daily routines. Service members have to make themselves and their overall health a sacred priority. We need to maintain the same level of health and readiness in our military service within our families and jobs.

There is a proverb that says, "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another." It is important to constantly surround ourselves with family, friends, and strong positive people. Likewise, we have all been taught the signs of distress. We need to make sure we reach out to others as well. Good attitudes, healthy living, and empathy are contagious. We are privileged to serve with the greatest people in the finest military in the world. We are indebted to each other to never give up, stay engaged, involved, and committed to each other's well being, as well as our own.

I count it a privilege to be able to address my fellow service members and families of our Guard Nation. I appreciate the invitation and opportunity to do so.

Chief Warrant Officer 3
Jesse R. Lindsey
Joint Force Headquarters
Property Manager Officer



Mississippi Guardsmen Respond

Mississippi Air National Guardsmen of the 248th Air Traffic Control Squadron provided support at Henry E. Rohlsen Airport, St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands after Hurricanes Irma and Maria damaged the islands' air traffic control towers. The 248th ATCS, headquartered in Meridian, Miss., deployed to the U.S. Virgin Islands in October, alongside Mississippi Guardsmen, to provide relief to affected areas in the region.

Right: Mississippi Army National Guard Spc. Montana J. McMormore, a petroleum specialist of 1st Battalion, 149th Aviation Regiment, unloads cases of water for distribution to people affected by Hurricanes Irma and Maria in St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands Oct. 12, 2017. (U.S. Army National Guard photos by Spc. Jovi Prevot)





SERVICE MEMBERS DELIVER IMMEDIATE HURRICANE RELIEF

Story by Staff Sgt. Michael Williams
JFH-MS Public Affairs Office

Nearly 400 Mississippi Guardsmen deployed to locations in Florida, Georgia, Texas, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands within a six-month period to assist with hurricane recovery efforts. Others were activated to help their fellow Mississippians recover from damage along the Gulf Coast.

Hurricane Harvey, the first of the three hurricanes, made landfall in southeast Texas August 25. The Mississippi National Guard rapidly deployed nearly 40 Soldiers and Airmen to the region heavily damaged by the storm.

Tupelo's Company D, 2nd Battalion, 151st Aviation Regiment, provided search and rescue support by utilizing its LUH-72A Lakota helicopters, and the 186th Air Refueling Wing, based in Meridian, assisted with relief planning and coordination efforts.

Flowood's 172d Airlift Wing was also called upon to help with hurricane relief efforts in the Houston area. The unit supplied communications support and provided Kentucky National Guardsmen overnight transport to Texas.

"Our joint force will provide support as long as we are needed," said Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles, the adjutant general of Mississippi.

"They're taking everything they can to help sustain and improve life for other individuals," said Col. Jody M. Smith, director of the MSNG Directorate of Military Support. "The Air Force is doing a huge lift capability. There's a lot of equipment actually being sent and there are multiple states and our Air National Guard is involved with that."

Only days later, as Hurricane Irma made



its way through the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico September 6, Fort Rucker's Army aviators assessed the safety of their aircraft. As Irma took a Northwest turn along the west side of Florida, aviators of the 110th Aviation Training determined they needed to stage their helicopters in safe locations to avoid potential damage.

They reached out to the MSNG's Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, south of Hattiesburg, and Key Field, in Meridian, which became staging areas for nearly 30 UH-60 Black Hawks and CH-47 Chinooks.

While Guardsmen were knee deep in water responding to Hurricane Harvey in Texas and only just beginning to make progress on the islands, a third threat loomed on the horizon. Two weeks after Irma tore through Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, Hurricane Maria followed, destroying what Irma left behind.

The widespread destruction caused blackouts and left many areas throughout the Caribbean without drinkable water.

"As Hurricane Irma started rolling off the coast, we started our planning and preparatory tasks to ensure that the Guard would be ready and prepared to do whatever might come," said Brig. Gen. Deborah Howell, the adjutant general of the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The U.S. Virgin Islands National Guard faced a significant logistical threat that stretched it to its limits. Prepared to respond to one hurricane, it found itself in the path of another.

"The storm hit St. Thomas and we went over to provide support.

As Hurricane Maria started to come, we retrograded our forces from St. Thomas and back to St. Croix," said Howell. "This became an interesting challenge for us because of the small size of our force. Now we are supporting two category-5 destructive hurricane relief efforts and supporting our community."

The MSNG offered its support to the islanders by sending more than 200 Soldiers and Airmen for hurricane relief duty. One hundred Soldiers of the 298th Support Battalion were sent to St. Thomas and St. Croix as part of the MSNG's Task Force Crazy Train.



Mississippi Air National Guard Master Sgt. Megan Martin, a 183rd Airlift Squadron loadmaster, secures a logistic rail lock retraction tool to a C-17 Globemaster III Oct. 17, 2017, at Henry E. Rohlsen Airport, St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands while transporting Guardsmen and equipment to the U.S. Virgin Islands.

"We designed our task force around our extensive experience from disaster response from our own state," said Lt. Col. William Henry, 298th SPT BN commander. "We were able to put together a multi-functional task force that provides all types of classes, supplies and logistical support to any type of organization that requires it."

The task force consisted of guardsmen from the 172d Airlift Wing, 184th Sustainment Command, 168th Engineer Brigade, 185th Aviation Brigade, and the 248th Air Control Squadron. They assisted in logistics, maintenance, and provided general operational support to sustain hurricane relief efforts of MSNG members and Guardsmen from other states.

Henry said the task force supplied over 20,000 gallons of fuel resupply and manned commodity distribution points on the flight line and Federal Emergency Management Agency areas.

"This is what we do for the Army and the forces we support," said Henry. More than 18,000 Guardsmen from 34 states supported relief efforts and recovery operations.

"It makes me feel great knowing that I'm part of the recovery efforts and that I can actually make a difference around here," said Spc. Hayden Warner, a petroleum supply specialist of the 1st Battalion, 185th Aviation Regiment.

Many local residents were grateful for the military presence and support throughout the islands, including Ede Deller, an animal nurse for a veterinarian.

"I'm very happy that you guys have helped us," said Deller when Soldiers helped her obtain food for her animals. "I'm very appreciative and grateful that you all are here."

More than 450,000 National Guard Soldiers and Airmen nationwide are available to support response efforts.

MSNG HURRICANE RESPONSE EFFORTS



16 FEMA Commodity Distribution Points

172d Airlift Wing Response Efforts



Airmen from the 172d Airlift Wing and Soldiers of 1st Battalion, 230th Aviation Regiment, load a UH-60 Blackhawk Sept. 13, 2017, onto a C-17 Globemaster III assigned to the 172d. The two Mississippi National Guard units worked together to transport necessary supplies to the U.S. Virgin Islands, for Hurricane Irma relief.

**Story and photos by
Senior Airman Kiara N. Spann
172d Airlift Wing**

Following a devastating series of hurricanes that struck the U.S. and its territories during the 2017 hurricane season, the 172d Airlift Wing responded with a long series of relief missions to provide needed supplies and equipment.

The Mississippi Air National Guard worked with other National Guard components to assist the ravaged areas in Texas, Florida, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, where Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria caused the most extensive damage. The 172d AW played a key role in transporting equipment to hurricane-ravaged areas. The wing's fleet of C-17 Globemas-

ter III aircraft flew Heavy Expanded Mobility Tactical Trucks and Family Medium Tactical Vehicles to the Caribbean.

"We have integrated with the Army National Guard to transport their Soldiers and equipment to areas like the U.S. Virgin Islands so they will be able to conduct relief missions and search and rescue missions in these areas," said Capt. Joshua Stoll, a pilot for the Jackson-based 183d Airlift Squadron.

The 1-2-3 punches of the massive storms created a fast tempo for hurricane relief missions that were often launched with short notice. The need to rush supplies to devastated areas created around-the-clock schedules for Airmen and Soldiers, whether they were supporting the air mis-

sions from a home base or flying directly into the destruction.

The successful coordination between Army and Air components, as well as other state's National Guards, to carry out these essential relief missions further emphasized the joint force concept.

"There is no blue and there is no green with these events," said Maj. Gen. Max Haston, adjutant general of Tennessee. "There is purple with these events. It has taken the Army National Guard and the Air National Guard to get this mission completed."

The massive military hurricane response also echoed the importance of the National Guard's varied missions, which include warfighting and domestic response.

"This is the National Guard and working together is what we should be doing," said Haston. "There are the warfighting aspects of our job and homeland aspects of our job. This is the homeland part of our job and jointly we are always ready and always there."

Helping others recover from devastating hurricanes reminded Mississippians of the incredible assistance they received from their fellow Guardsmen when tragedy struck the state in 2005 during Hurricane Katrina.

"It's very important to help the areas and the people affected by these hurricanes," said Stoll. "Especially when all of these folks came together to help us when Hurricane Katrina hit Mississippi so hard 12 years ago."



Capt. Colin Newell, a pilot with the 183d Airlift Squadron, prepares to land a C-17 Globemaster III at Thompson Field Air Base, Jackson, Miss., Sept. 14, 2017. The flight crew flew overnight making two stops in order to transport Hurricane Irma relief supplies to St. Croix before returning to Jackson.



Drill Sgts. Sylvester Brookins, Alec Donahoe and Todd Owens get up close and personal with a Warrior during a “shark attack” at the Recruit Sustainment Program in Senatobia. The shark attack is how drill sergeants greet young Warriors in the program. (U.S. Army National Guard photos by Staff Sgt. Scott Tynes)

Mississippi Citizen-Soldiers Don Drill Sergeant Hats

Story by Staff Sgt. Michael Williams
JFH-MS Public Affairs Office

The brown-felt campaign-hat is an iconic image in the military, and to be an Army drill sergeant in the Mississippi Army National Guard is a rare honor.

Sgt. 1st Class Sylvester Brookins and Sgt. Jered Meeks are two of five Mississippi Army Citizen-Soldiers who currently wear the iconic campaign hat.

Meeks, a MSARNG recruiter in Yazoo City, recently graduated from the U.S. Army Drill Sergeant Academy in August, earning the right to don the drill instructor hat.

“I think that it’s a cool honor to become the most recent Mississippi National Guardsman graduate,” said Meeks. “It was a long road getting here to this point and there were a lot of obstacles I had to overcome.”

According to Brookins, a MSARNG State Inactive Duty Training manager and senior drill sergeant, there are only five Mississippi Guardsmen who are actively serving in the Recruit Sustainment Program, or RSP, in a drill instructor capacity.

“It’s a big opportunity and it means a lot because we are few and far between as National Guard drill sergeants,” said the Yazoo City Army recruiter. “I was speaking with other Soldiers from other units and they said their states don’t have drill sergeants. So, to be one in the Mississippi National Guard, it’s a great experience.”

In 2008, Brookins became the first traditional Mississippi National Guardsman to attend and graduate from drill sergeant school. Meeks, who is also a traditional Guardsmen, is following the footsteps of his senior drill sergeant.

Meeks recalled that becoming a drill sergeant wasn’t easy. Only the most qualified non-commissioned officers are chosen to attend drill sergeant school at Fort Jackson, South Carolina,

where they are trained to fulfill a unique and important role.

Meeks transformed himself physically and mentally to set himself up for success before the nine-week school.

“You hear horror stories about how the school is and how they send you home for not doing the push-ups properly,” said Meeks. “So I worked out every day, except on Sundays. I worked on my push-up form and sit-ups.”

“Drill Sergeant School was intense,” he said. “It was physically, mentally, emotionally, and academically (tough), with academically being number one. We started out with 100 candidates and we only graduated 58.”

As a drill sergeant, Meeks manages the RSP site in Greenwood. The Army National Guard RSP prepares Soldiers for the successful completion of Basic Combat Training and subsequent military occupation specialty qualification. The RSP provides full visibility on the preparation process and ensures the Soldiers ship to training mentally prepared, physically ready, and administratively correct.



Sgt. 1st Class Sylvester Brookins, senior drill sergeant, leads troops on a road march in preparation for basic training.

Other RSP sites throughout the state are in Senatobia, Amory, Jackson, Monticello, Philadelphia, Wiggins and Hattiesburg.

"It is huge to have drill sergeants in the ranks of the Mississippi National Guard," said Brookins. "You hear talks in the Army Times and throughout the ranks about how Soldiers come back from Basic Combat Training or Advanced Individual Training on how undisciplined and out-of-shape they are. With the Recruit Sustainment Program, Soldiers are put in the Guard, they attend the Recruit Sustainment Program for a time period, they go to training and then come back to the Recruit Sustainment Program site to be battle-handed off to their unit."

Brookins said if you want to be called a 'Soldier,' it will take physical and mental toughness. These are just basic requirements, but he said the RSP will set young recruits up for success.

"I tell all my privates they have the keys to success for initial entry-training and it's right here in the Mississippi Army National Guard," said Brookins. "I tell them the Reserves and the Active Component don't have Recruit Sustainment Programs. When you sign up, you go straight to basic training. Whereas in the Mississippi Army National Guard, we have Recruit Sustainment Program sites where we are doing strength training, we teach them rank structure, how to march, and field tactics."

"The sites that have drill sergeants, they are getting that face-time with their drill instructors so they won't have that shock-and-awe when they get to basic training and want to back out when they think they can't handle it," he said. "We are building their foundation and giving them the tools to be successful."

As a U.S. Army drill sergeant, Meeks and Brookins are responsible for coaching, counseling, and mentoring of hundreds, if not thousands, of warriors as they transform from a civilian to a combat-ready Soldier.



Sgt. 1st Class Sylvester Brookins, senior drill sergeant, yells out commands to Pvt. Karmisha McCurley during an event at the Senatobia Recruit Sustainment Program.

According to Brookins, drill instructors are all the recruits know of the Army and so they emulate everything a drill sergeant does.

"Once I put that hat on, it's game on," said Brookins. "I'm always spot checking myself, I'm making sure I'm doing the right thing because warriors are looking at you even when you don't think they're looking at you."

Being a drill sergeant is one of the most demanding and difficult jobs in the Army, and according to Brookins, it's also one of the most rewarding. It's up to the drill instructors to provide a positive and rewarding experience as young Soldiers

begin their journey in the Army, he said.

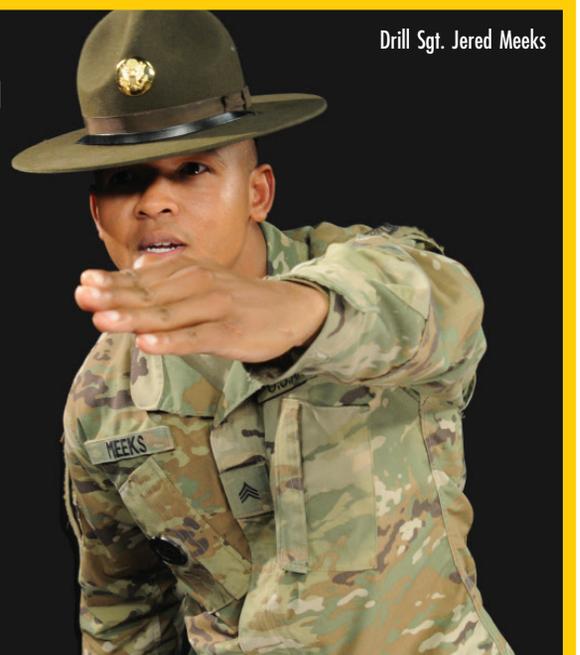
"When I'm in public and some kid or adult walks up to me and says 'I know you don't remember me, but thank you for what you did,' that's the rewarding part for me," said Brookins. "That means I did my job. It's about these kids because they are the future of our Guard, our Army."

"This is probably the most rewarding thing I've done in my career in the Mississippi National Guard."

- Sgt. 1st Class Sylvester Brookins

Requirements to become a Drill Sergeant Candidate:

- Must hold the rank of E-5 through E-7
- Must be 40 years of age and under
- Minimum physical profile (PULHES) 111221
- Minimum GT Score of 100
- Meets the height/weight criteria of AR 600-9
- No record of misconduct during current enlistment or in the past five years
- Display good military bearing
- Be able to pass the Army Physical Fitness Test
- Undergo a thorough background screening



Drill Sgt. Jered Meeks

Camp McCain Celebrates 75th

**"Congratulations on 75 years, but I will tell you the next 75 years are just as important."
- Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles, the adjutant general of Mississippi**



Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles, Col. Michael Cleveland, and Command Sgt. Maj. John Thomas cut the cake during Camp McCain's 75th anniversary.



Staff Sgt. Robert Knight of 2d Battalion, 20th Special Forces Group, and Sgt. 1st Class (Ret.) Eugene Good discuss weapons during the anniversary celebration.



Col. Michael Cleveland and Command Sgt. Maj. John Thomas present Command Sgt. Maj. John Raines with the Maj. Gen. H. Pinckney McCain Distinguished Award of Merit.

**Story by Spc. Newman Kazery
Photos by Staff Sgt. Scott Tynes
JFH-MS Public Affairs Office**

Born in the drive to supply troops to Europe to stop the advance of the Axis Powers, the Camp McCain Training Center has remained a vital component to maintaining national defense for 75 years.

Mississippi National Guardsmen, retirees, and civilians celebrated the camp's 75th anniversary December 7 with a ceremony featuring artifact displays from its history, special award presentations, a monument dedication, and cake cutting.

During the ceremony, Col. Michael Cleveland, Camp McCain commander, spoke about the legacy of the installation on preparing Soldiers for overseas deployments and dedicated a monument located on the parade field to past, present, and future Soldiers.

At its peak in WWII, Camp McCain trained two divisions to preserve freedom in Europe as a federal installation. Although it is now a state facility, it provides training year-round, not only to MSNG units, but also for active and reserve components from throughout the U.S.

The post, which comprises approx-

imately 13,027 acres in Grenada and Montgomery counties, was established December 15, 1942.

In the early 1940's, the War Department acquired 42,073 acres for the Army to use as a training base. Once the camp was established, its name was changed from Grenada Triangular Division Camp to the present day Camp McCain in honor of Maj. Gen. Henry Pinckney McCain. The general came from a famous family of military men from neighboring Carroll County, but distinguished himself as the father of Selective Service after establishing the World War I draft. He is also a forebear of John McCain, a current U.S. senator from Arizona and a former prisoner of war.

Camp McCain was one of several training camps opened in Mississippi during WWII and served approximately 50,000 troops at its peak.

The post held active training for the 87th Infantry Division until December 1943 in preparation for the European War. The 94th Infantry Division arrived at Camp McCain soon after the 87th and trained there until July 1944, when the unit staged at Camp Shanks, New York, and also deployed to the European Theater.

In addition to training troops for the

war, the camp became home to more than 7,700 German POWs.

The camp's mission ended with the conclusion of the war and was closed in October 1944. Most of its land was sold or returned to other agencies. It was declared surplus in January 1946, but the state claimed the remaining 3,000 acres and some rifle ranges.

Mississippi reopened the camp, expanded and developed it as a National Guard training facility, and that mission continues today. The camp can house 1,200 troops and has a number of tactical training facilities.

Camp McCain is more than a training site, however. It is also a key component in the state's disaster response plan.

Jimmie B. Pinnix, Camp McCain's environmental officer, remembers when Hurricane Katrina hit Mississippi in 2005.

"Camp McCain had a lot of movement from states like Wyoming and Pennsylvania heading down for disaster relief," he said. "It was used for units traveling through to fuel up because our new fuel facility had come online."

Whether through training or disaster response, Camp McCain continues to serve the people of Mississippi.



40 Years in Clinton

**Story and photos by
Staff Sgt. Tim Morgan
JFH-MS Public Affairs Office**

The Mississippi National Guard provides lasting friendships and memories for its members, but only a few of those bonds can match the sootrength shared between Military Police.

“Once an MP, always an MP,” said Stan Wood, one of several retired MP’s who came out to a celebratory event in Clinton recognizing 40 years of Mississippi National Guard presence in the city. “There’s a camaraderie among law enforcement and MP’s fall in that category,” said Wood.

The event, hosted at the 114th Military Police Company, brought together retired and current Soldiers, most of which were MPs. Retired Soldiers connected with old friends and reminisced of times in the past, while current Soldiers listened in and shared the latest tools, technology, and other equipment in current use.

“Technology has changed a lot,” said Otto Neal, a retired MP who spent over 20 years in the 112th Military Police Battalion.

Neal said everything has changed, even down to having his voice being recorded on a smartphone.

He enjoyed interacting with new-generation Soldiers at the event. His favorite moment was seeing Soldiers react to a cross pistols tattoo that his long-time



114th Military Police Company retirees, including Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Jimmy W. Stigletts (center), connected with old friends during a celebration recognizing 40 years of Mississippi National Guard presence in Clinton, Nov. 4, 2017.

friend Richard Norton had on his shoulder. Norton is a retired MP who spent time in the 112th MP Battalion, 114th MP Co., and the 113th MP Co.

Wood was a senior technician at the 113th in Brandon when the 112th was organized. He had not seen some of the retired MP’s at the event in nearly 40 years.

“Lots of friends and a lot of good memories,” said Wood.

Wood said he has a special connection to the 114th, having played a small part in the initial creation of the unit.

The 114th began as a detachment from a platoon in the 113th MP Co. on May 1, 1977, when it was federally recognized in the MSNG at Clinton City Hall. It was then reorganized and re-designated as the 114th MP Co. in 1978. In 1984, the unit’s armory was built on East Northside Drive.

The event included special guests and comments by Mayor Philip R. Fisher and Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles, adjutant general of Mississippi.

The MSNG and the MP way of life played vital roles in the lives of the Soldiers who have and still serve, the

“There are two types of Soldiers, Those who are MPs and those who wish they were MPs.” - Sgt. Maj. (Ret.) Richard Norton

state, and the nation. It continues to be a large aspect of Wood’s life.

“I’m still a strong supporter of the Guard and the military in general,” said Wood. “Maintain your focus. Decide what you want to do and go after it,” he said.

Simulators Shape the Future at the 186th Air Refueling Wing

Story and photos by Capt. Sabrina Dalton
186th Air Refueling Wing

Virtually within minutes, one can step foot off the ground at the 186th Air Refueling Wing in Meridian, Mississippi, and be transported to an entirely different region of the world.

This sounds like a scene out of a science fiction movie, but at Key Field, the simulators on the base make this futuristic idea a “virtual reality.”

Currently, the base has three different simulators that provide VR training for the 238th Air Support Operations Squadron, 248th Air Traffic Control Squadron, and the 153rd Air Refueling Squadron.

In years past, the base also housed a KC-135R aircraft simulator that was moved off-station shortly after 2005, with the U.S. Department of Defense’s base realignment and closure decision which reorganized military installations.

The three remaining simulators save the Mississippi Air National Guard money and offer invaluable training opportunities to the Guardsmen who use them. In addition, they provide unique VR scenarios for the men and women at Key Field, which open up a wide range of experiences that would not otherwise exist due to funding constraints and safety issues.

The newest simulator on base is the Air National Guard Advanced Joint Terminal Attack Controller Training System used by JTAC specialists with the 238th ASOS.

“The AAJTS builds almost a 360-degree picture of the battlefield. So, you can look left and right, up and down, and you’re more immersed in the situation,” said Tech. Sgt. Aubrey Pogue, 238th ASOS JTAC. “You can see the enemy advancing at different angles, and you can see aircraft coming in. You can assess if he is pointing right at you, or if he’s offset. It really helps with the situational awareness of the entire battlefield.”

JTACs are the Airforce’s battlefield Airmen who imbed with other military service branches and call in air strikes.

“It’s challenging and imperative that they train in a variety of realistic environments,” said Tech. Sgt. Kole Nail, 238th ASOS JTAC, “It really helps out with the efficiency of not having enough pilots Air Force-wide, and it helps with the budget constraints of having to get personnel to a range to fly an aircraft burning fuel, to drop munitions.” He said “This saves money and eases the burden across the board to be able to check off those training blocks using the simulator.”

In addition to the AAJTS simulator, the base is home to the Tower Simulator System used by the 248th ATCS. Guardsmen from the 248th operate the Key Field air traffic control tower, which is used not only by the military, but also by the Meridian Regional Airport and has a regulated air space responsibility of approximately five miles.

“This is exactly like it will be up in the control tower,” said retired Air National Guard Karl Springer, 248th ATCS chief of training and standardization. “You have each operating position. Here we have local control on the left side, which coordinates

with aircraft in the air, and ground control on the right side that includes a binocular simulator. Center is flight data, which coordinates with other agencies such as airfield management. Left communicates with aircraft in the air. Ground control deals with everything on the ground that moves and is not on runways.”

Springer, who has worked at Key Field since 1994, retired from the MSANG in 2007, and returned as a civilian to run the simulator.

“The simulators here can help you respond by training ahead of time on how to respond to unusual events,” Springer said. “They’re fully day and night capable with visibility variances. Weather, storms and snow can have an effect. Surface friction can be reduced which makes pilots respond differently. This system can simulate that for you, so you can know about all those unusual events.”

The 153rd ARS also reaps the benefits of having a boom operator simulator system on-station, also known as the BOSS. The BOSS replicates the boom pod of the KC-135R tanker and allows boom operators to practice air-to-air refueling of numerous types aircraft. The 186th ARW, which has had its BOSS since April 2014, is lauded as the first in the ANG to receive this type of system. To date, every wing in the ANG has its own BOSS.

Training boom operators to do their jobs on the BOSS leads one to the obvious – tanker pilots also have currency requirements that a simulator can provide safely and affordably. Pilots use the KC-135 Aircrew Training Simulator to stay current on their training requirements. Yet, it’s the one simulator that’s missing at Key Field.

“Simulators are an issue, because right now we do not have one,” said Lt. Col. Sam Degeneres, a 153rd ARS KC-135 pilot. “We used to go to Grissom Air Reserve Base in Indiana, but they’re going through a conversion. So, now we’re dependent upon other simulators having openings for aircrew.”

Aircrew members travel to wherever there is an opening for simulator training, which is costly and time consuming.

With aircraft availability, deployments and operations tempo, resources are limited in keeping crews trained on-station. Having a KC-135 simulator at Key Field would alleviate these issues.

“They can fly an entire mission, hook up, refuel and train without ever taking off the ground and without ever spending the money it costs in gas to do so. That is the future.”

- Brig. Gen. Mike Nabors

Nabors, a former wing commander of the 186th ARW, was at the base during the years that the KC-135 ATS was located at Key Field.

“Obviously, we’re the cheapest location,” Nabors said. “That’s



Tech. Sgt. Aubrey Pogue, a joint terminal attack controller of the 238th Air Support Operations Squadron, sits in the role playing station of the Air National Guard advanced JTAC training system at Key Field Air National Guard Base, Meridian, Miss., June 22, 2017.



Jessie Fairchild, of the 248th Air Traffic Control Squadron, trains Airman 1st Class Kyle Austin, a 248th ATCS apprentice, on the Tower Simulator System at Key Field Air National Guard Base, Meridian, Miss., July 11, 2017.



Tech. Sgt. Kole Nail, a joint terminal attack controller of the 238th Air Support Operations Squadron, sits in the first-person student station of the advanced JTAC training system at Key Field Air National Guard Base, Meridian, Miss., June 22, 2017.

been argued several times in different studies. The fact is, we're the only location in the country that has a building that was built specifically for this simulator. It is the model building for all other buildings in the Air National Guard and active duty Air Force."

The KC-135 ATS building housed the simulator for 17 years and sits empty today.

"The fact that they would potentially build another building with a cost of \$7 million plus by the last estimate I saw, when they have a building sitting vacant to house a simulator, makes us the cheapest location," Nabors said. "Plus, we're used to folks coming here for training. We were able to work that process flawlessly in the past."

Looking in the future, the new KC-46 Pegasus will be the primary aircraft for active duty air-to-air refueling, and all KC-135s will be primarily operated by the ANG, Nabors said.

"At some point, the active duty will want to vest the training for KC-46 platform at Altus Air Force Base," Nabors said. "Once that happens, we'd be a plausible candidate to provide KC-135

training to the Air National Guard and foreign military partners. But without the simulator, we won't be able to provide that training. This means we're off the table for any future training missions."

Not only can Key Field benefit by having the KC-135 ATS return, but the community benefits as well.

"Having the simulator here will bring anywhere from four to six pilots a week into Key Field, who will stay on the local economy," Nabors said. "Without the simulator, we can't compete for any of that."

The boom operator simulator is built to tie into a pilot simulator. With both of those assets tied together, with fiber optics they can tie into a training base like Tyndall AFB where a pilot can be in a simulator learning how to fly a fighter, Nabors said.

The 186th ARW's primary mission is to provide rapid global mobility and agile combat support. The KC-135 tankers augment Air Mobility Command for worldwide contingency operations. Air Mobility Command, headquartered at Scott Air Force Base, Illinois, is one of ten major Air Force commands.



Armory Returns

Giving Back to the Community

Fire trucks fill the drill hall at the former Prentiss Readiness Center. The town repurposed the facility returned to them in 2012 by converting it to the Ronald W. Jones Memorial Public Safety Complex. It houses the town's fire and police departments.

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Scott Tynes
JFH-MS Public Affairs Office

Five years ago, the small rural town of Prentiss in Jefferson Davis County faced a dilemma. City hall not only housed its government, but also the police and fire departments, as well as other services.

"It was very crowded," said Mayor Charles Dumas. "We have a fairly small hall and we were all under one roof. The fire department didn't even really have an office. They had a dispatcher."

The city council explored the possibility of constructing a building to house the police and fire departments, but with a population of approximately 1,160 residents, they could not find the funding. Fortunately, they learned the Mississippi National Guard was looking to downsize its facilities by releasing Readiness Centers, or RCs.

"We reached out and said if this was going to happen, could we have ours," Dumas said. "It's been a huge benefit for us."

The former RC, often called an armory, required very minimal renovation to meet their needs as a home for both the fire and police departments, he said. It provided necessary office space and the drill hall became a bay for the fire and rescue vehicles and equipment. Some town meetings and community

events are even held in the facility.

"I'm not sure what we would have done had this not happened," said Dumas, who has served as mayor for two decades.

The release of the Prentiss RC is part of a national strategic plan to decrease the number of RCs, said Col. Paul McDonald, the facility management officer for the Mississippi Army National Guard. The MSARNG still has 76 RCs statewide with the long-term goal of reducing that number to approximately 55.

The return of RCs to their local communities is a benefit to both the National Guard and the state, McDonald said. The average age of a RC in Mississippi is 32 years old, but many are much older. Select facilities are being returned based upon the MSARNG's operational priorities.

"We're returning a 1950s or '60s building that is solidly built and generally on a three-acre plot of land with a replacement value of \$2-5 million. It's a valuable piece of property the community wouldn't generally be able to afford," he said.

However, the reduction in force structure, technological advances, ability for fast domestic response, and other factors have changed the military's demands placed on RCs.

"The armory plan of the '60s, of an armory in every community, is no longer feasible,"

McDonald said. "Even at 50 readiness centers, no city in Mississippi will be more than 40 miles from one. We're not leaving your community. We're simply consolidating."

New RCs require 15-20 acres and are much larger to accommodate more units and lower upkeep costs.

"It won't happen overnight, but that's the direction we're moving," McDonald said. "I think we'll be working towards this plan for at least the next 10 years. I can't go too fast because it takes time to build. We have to plan our facilities for the long-term. If we're not looking far down the road then we're failing."

The average time for a new RC to be built is between five and 10 years, he said. The state has a 25 percent stake in construction costs and must provide 100 percent of the property with the federal government meeting other costs.

In Carthage where the RC is located near softball fields, a community center, and other public facilities, the MSARNG is working with local leadership to return the armory there. Land has already been set aside for a new RC.

"(The Carthage RC) is too small to develop and expand, but it's perfect for them," McDonald said.

A similar result was achieved last year in Grenada where the former RC has been turned into a junior and high school.

"We handed the building over to them on a Friday and by Monday they were having classes there," McDonald said.

Dr. David Daigneault, superintendent of the Grenada School District, said he and the school board are very grateful for the return.

The district, which has more than 4,000 students, has big plans for the still unnamed school, which they continue to refer to as

"the armory." The name will reflect the facility's origins, he said, because they want to retain that legacy. To reinforce that legacy, as well as emphasize one of the building's main programs, the district also plans to retain the artillery piece in front of it.

The former RC will be able to keep its military roots as the home of the district's Naval Junior Officer Reserve Training Corps and Navy National Defense Cadet Corps.

In addition, the building is also used for school dances, an indoor practice area for cheerleaders and the band, and the kitchen area will soon host a culinary arts program. Outside, an open area has been converted into a bus yard.

A Quonset hut on the property is also being used for the district's archery program, which is one of the top-rated in the state, and shooting range for the ROTC cadets. Plans are also being made to modernize the facility to make it more visually appealing.

"We want to be able to help our community by offering this as a meeting place as well," Daigneault said. "It's going to be pretty spectacular. It's going to impact thousands of students each year."

Editor's Note: Select Mississippi Army National Guard facilities are being returned based upon the organization's operational priorities.



Top: Prentiss, Miss, has made good use in repurposing the readiness center returned to them in 2012 by converting it to the Ronald W. Jones Memorial Public Safety Complex, which houses the town's fire and police department.

Bottom: Superintendent of Grenada High School Dr. David Daignault is pictured with the seniors of the NJROTC and Program Leader Chief Newtroin Forman in front of armory.





“It’s been a real honor and a very special place to me. So
- Chad Daniels, former Mississ

Preserving the Past, Building for the Future

Story by 2nd Lt. Terry Hill II
JFH-MS Public Affairs Office

Y2K was creating a national panic and September 11th was just another day on the calendar when Chad Daniels started working at the Mississippi Armed Forces Museum in 1999. Little did he know that almost two decades later he would be leaving the museum as one of the biggest catalysts for its growth.

“It’s been a real honor and a privilege to work here, to work with Mississippi Veterans, to work at Camp Shelby, which is a very special place to me,” said Daniels. “So it’s a little bittersweet, but it’s time to turn the keys over and have some new leadership here.”

Daniels will be moving on to become

the director of federal programs of the Vermont Agency of Education. Since 1999, he spent the majority of his time growing the stewardship side of the museum as its director, which mostly involved the collection and preservation of artifacts. Now, the museum is shifting focus to its programs, which will facilitate getting more people in the door to experience the rich military history of Mississippi.

“The major part of my time at the museum was to make sure that we were good stewards of the material we have custody of. Those materials tell the stories of the veterans. We leave those things to survive for future generations to see,” Daniels said.

Telling the story of Mississippi’s heroes has been one of Daniels’ pas-

sions, so leaving the museum in the hands of a kindred spirit was important to him.

“I’m excited about the new director. I think we couldn’t have found a better person to take over the role and I look for really great things to happen,” he said. “There’s a super staff here for him to work with. I think everything is looking very bright for the future.”

Tommy Lofton, a Warren County native, replaced Daniels as the museum’s director in October. Lofton has worked at the World War II Museum in New Orleans for the past 11 years and the Vicksburg’s Old Court House Museum during college. He is excited about the opportunity at the Mississippi Armed Forces Museum.

“I have some big shoes to fill fol-

privilege to work here, to work with Mississippi Veterans, to work at Camp Shelby, which is a little bittersweet, but it's time to turn the keys over and have some new leadership here." Mississippi Armed Forces Museum director



Mississippi Armed Forces Museum

Following after Chad Daniels," said Lofton. "But it's an honor for me to do this. I spent a lot of time around here when I was at Jones County Junior College and the University of Southern Mississippi. It's been great to see the museum grow and become what it is now, and I'm hoping that I can do the best I can to make this place grow even further."

Lofton wants to pick up where Daniels left off and help fellow Mississippians connect with the museum.

"I plan to do as much outreach as I can and get more people familiar with this museum," said Lofton. "I would like to get more people visiting, and try to do some traveling exhibits... try to find ways to get the museum into classrooms throughout the

state."

Lofton wants to do more work with education by getting more teachers and field trips to visit the museum. There are 28 Medal of Honor recipients that hail from the Magnolia State. Lofton would like to get their stories into every classroom in the state.

"I'm hoping that we can bring some of the personal stories and histories of Mississippians and folks that we feature in this museum to classrooms all over the country and in the state of Mississippi," he said. "Chad brought this to a great place," Lofton said. "He got this place off the ground... I'm honored to be working here. I will do my best to make Mississippians proud, proud of the military history and our military culture."



Mississippi Gov. Phil Bryant prepares to cut the ceremonial ribbon at the reopening ceremony for the Mississippi Armed Forces Museum Oct. 27, 2016. (Photo Courtesy of the Mississippi Armed Forces Museum)

Left: Former MAFM Director Chad Daniels and new director Tommy Lofton discuss an exhibit at the museum. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by 2nd Lt. Terry Hill)



COUNTERDRUG

Joint Eradication Teams Trim “Grass” Production in State

Story by Staff Sgt. Scott Tynes
JFH-MS Public Affairs Office

The Mississippi National Guard played a vital role in what has been called the largest marijuana bust in recent memory by Mississippi state law enforcement officers. In August, the MSNG Counterdrug Program assisted state agencies in the location and seizure of more than 20,000 marijuana plants with a street value exceeding \$23 million in Jefferson Davis County.

“This is hands down the biggest marijuana grow operation we’ve seen in the state in probably 35-40 years,” said Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics Director John Dowdy.

Created by statutory authority in 1971, the Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics enforces the Mississippi’s Uniform Controlled Substances Law. As the state’s primary drug enforcement agency, the MBN accomplishes its mission by confiscating drugs and other contraband, and by arresting suspected drug violators for prosecution under applicable state and federal laws.

The MBN partners with the MSNG and other agencies to accomplish this mission. The counterdrug program, and specifically the seasonal marijuana eradication effort, is a unique aspect of the National Guard’s mission and, according to the National Guard Bureau, a part of the national drug control strategy.

According to NGB, the program was started with a presidential authorization in 1989, and provides funds from the Department of Defense on a yearly basis to governors. They submit plans specifying the usage of each state’s National Guard to support drug interdiction and counterdrug efforts.

Acting on a tip August 17, 2017, the MBN requested the MSNG counterdrug team conduct aerial reconnaissance

near Polk Oatis Road in Jefferson Davis County.

“The mission supported the nationwide and state Domestic Cannabis Eradication/Suppression Program,” said Lt. Col. Gary Crist, MSNG Counterdrug Program coordinator. “The Mississippi National Guard’s Counterdrug Program stands ready to provide support to our law enforcement partners and communities to deter illicit narcotics activities in our state.

“Our law enforcement partners have a tough job to do in the fight against illicit narcotics production, trafficking and distribution,” he said. “We are proud to provide support when requested.”

The reconnaissance identified a target area for state agents. On six fields covering 4-6 acres, growers had installed an elaborate setup that included irrigation, living-quarter tents and plant processing areas.

“I don’t know that we have an average, but there’s been a definite increase (in the number of finds),” said Lt. Col. Jody Smith, director of military support for the MSNG.

The Jefferson Davis County eradication is one of many for the counterdrug task force this year, Crist said. The task force includes 25 full-time Guardsmen ranging from pilots to program management, which is conducted at the Regional Counterdrug Training Academy at Naval Air Station Meridian. The number of participating Guardsmen is increased during the marijuana eradication program’s key season from March to October.

Pilots participating in the program from the MSNG’s 185th Aviation Regiment are specially trained for aerial marijuana identification.

“They have to go through a special course to be able to identify what they’re seeing, Crist said. “Additionally, they’re honing their skills throughout the year, so the skills they are employing here can help downrange as well.”

The MSNG Counterdrug Program employs National Guard Soldiers and Airmen from all major support commands within the MSNG. Its personnel use their unique military skills to support domestic counterdrug operations. This also further prepares them for missions outside the U.S. with their assigned units.



Story by 1st. Sgt. John B. Melson
1st Battalion, 155th Infantry Regiment

PREPARING FOR PITFALLS

A deployment can be a stressful time for Service members and their families. Here are a few tips to help troops be more resilient before, during, and after a deployment.

Financial and Legal Preparations

Don't wait until the last minute to get your personal and private matters in order. Take steps to lessen stress for you and your loved ones. Make sure your financial obligations are in order before you leave. Things like auto bill pay and planning a budget can help prevent many financial issues. It's also a good idea to prepare for potential legal issues by designating a power of attorney and completing a will.

Fitness Plan

Being physically fit and having a training regimen is a healthy outlet to relieve stress. Throughout my deployments, working out with others in a group made physical training more than just exercise. It allowed us to vent, talk to each other, joke with each other, and push each other to achieve our fitness goals, which in turn kept us more positive.

Educational Goals

If the resources are available, continuing your education can be another great way to take advantage of down time. There are plenty of academic and professional courses online you can work on while deployed. I enrolled in online col-

lege courses while deployed and kept it realistic with my workload as well as Internet access. I limited my enrollment to one class per semester and each day or night I put aside an hour or two to work exclusively on the course.

Hobbies

A deployment can be a great opportunity to acquire that skill or certification you've been putting off. Learn a new language, read a book, or learn to play an instrument. There are times when your schedule or mission tempo will not allow this, but have a plan and goals in place should the opportunity be available.

Spiritual Connection

The chaplain is always a great resource for someone to talk to. One of their roles is to listen and provide support to Service members, both spiritually and emotionally. There are also many resources back home that can help families for just about any situation. The chaplain is a great source to get connected with those family programs.

Family Communication

The worst thing we can do is shut out our families. It can make it harder on them and you if there's poor communication. This doesn't mean calling home every chance you get. It means having a healthy balance and realistic expectations for how often you can talk. Do your best to make the conversations positive and constructive.

These are several ways I have personally built resiliency over eight combat deployments. Each has helped me along the way to keep moving in a positive direction.





Citizen Soldier

Pfc. Oneal Cummings, a medic with the 1st Squadron, 98th Cavalry Regiment, 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team, saved the life of a Mississippi man after coming upon a motorcycle wreck. Cummins rendered life-saving aid to the man, including applying a tourniquet to stop blood loss. He also directed other bystanders in how they could assist.

“Oneal was the first person to get there,” said Jeff Palmer, Baldwyn High School principal and former medic himself, who arrived after Cummings started aid. “The kid would have bled to death had Oneal not been there... He handled himself like a veteran, not somebody who had just graduated from his initial Army training.”

“My basic and advanced individual training was tough,” said Cummings. “But they made sure you knew how to do your job when you left there.”

Cummings is scheduled to deploy with the 155th ABCT next year.

#155ABCT

New Beginnings

Reid Takes Command

Col. Paul Drake, located on right of top photo, relinquished command of Gulfport’s Combat Readiness Training Center – Battlefield Airmen Center to Lt. Col. Joseph Reid Nov. 1, 2017. Drake accepted a position as an instructor at the U.S. Army War College in Carlisle, Penn.

Reid hit the ground running, immediately forging relationships with U.S. active duty and foreign military personnel.

He spent time with U.S. Air Force Col. Debra Lovette, commander of the 81st Training Wing at Keesler Air Force Base, Biloxi, Miss., and Chilean Air Force Capt. Javier Salinas, Chilean Air Force Special Forces, at the air-to-ground range during the Southern Strike 18 training exercise Oct. 27, 2017, at the Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center.



Photo by Public Affairs Specialist A. Danielle Thomas



U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Michael Needham



Story by Capt. Dusty Culpepper
186th Air Refueling Wing

Auditing Airmen Morale

In Aug. 2017, Capt. Stacey Pickering, of the 186th Air Operations Group, was asked to serve as chaplain to more than 520 Service members in support of Operation Ulchi Freedom Guardian 17 at Osan Air Base, South Korea. Pickering, a chaplain at Key Field in Meridian, Miss., worked at the Life Support Area, nicknamed “tent city,” performing as chaplain for the Seventh Air Force.

“These people brought real problems when they came with them...

S. Korea Deployment

People in a deployed situation search for meaning and purpose, and it allowed me the opportunity to present my faith to them in a non-threatening way,” Pickering said.

He was one of 30 Air National Guardsmen from Key Field tasked to support the exercise. There were approximately 17,500 U.S. Service members who participated. Pickering serves as a state auditor in Miss. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Jacob Skovo)



CW3 Russell Williams

Eagle on the Rise

Chief Warrant Officer 3 Russell Williams is the 2017 recipient of the Eagle Rising Award for Warrant Officers. The recognition is awarded each year by the National Guard Association of the United States to a National Guard warrant officer that exemplifies the values of the warrant officer corps.

Williams has been in the National Guard for over 17 years and currently serves as a maintenance test pilot in Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 111th Aviation Regiment.

He learned of his nomination for the award during his most recent deployment in support of Operation Inherent Resolve.

“Just to be recommended was an honor in itself. Having 17 years in the guard, and nine of those being an aviator, I have worked with or met many warrant officers in the state, and I never once imagined that I would have

#GirlPower



Chief Master Sgt. Lynn R. Cole assumed the responsibility of command chief of the Mississippi Air National Guard at the Joint Force Headquarters, Jackson, Miss., Dec. 2, 2017. Cole is the first female state command chief of the MSANG. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Marvin Monroe)

a chance to be selected amongst my peers,” said Williams.

Williams has over 2000 flight hours under his belt, with over 900 of those in combat. His extensive technical experience and strong leadership capabilities are some of the characteristics that helped him not only achieve a nomination from his Mississippi National Guard unit, but to win the overall award at the national level.

“I’m thankful to my leadership for taking the time and effort to nominate me. Winning at the state level was great, and having the opportunity to be recognized at the national level was something that I will never forget and will cherish for the rest of my career,” said Williams. (Photo courtesy of Williams)

Mission First, People Always

255th Air Control Squadron, Gulfport, Mississippi

The bulldog represents the unit's mission and "Guard Dog" call sign.



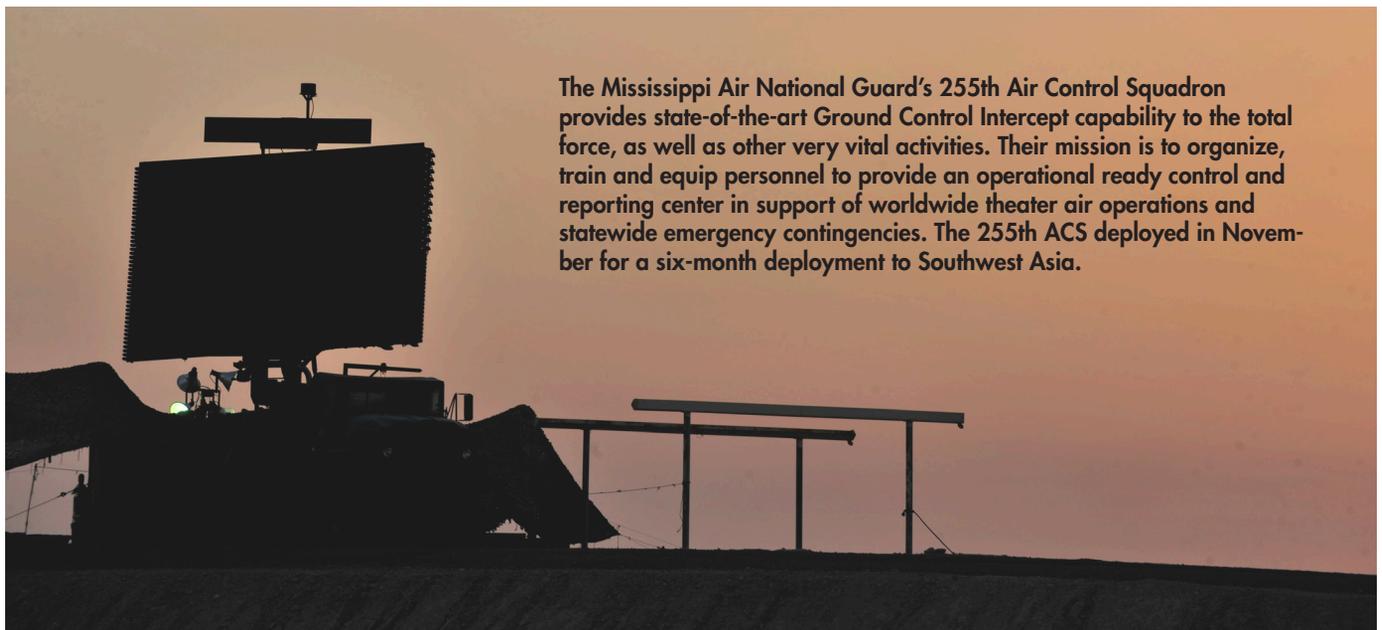
The radar symbolizes the unit's current role as the "eyes in the sky" for both air and ground components.

The lightning bolt represents the unit's origins in 1971 as the 255th Combat Communications Squadron. It became the 255th Air Control Squadron in 1998.

The two stars denote the unit's dual roles for Federal and State service.

"It's always difficult to leave your loved ones behind - your friends, family, your civilian job - but **it's the job that we're called upon to do by our country and that's what I'm here for."**

- Senior Master Sgt. Daniel Blethen 255th ACS



The Mississippi Air National Guard's 255th Air Control Squadron provides state-of-the-art Ground Control Intercept capability to the total force, as well as other very vital activities. Their mission is to organize, train and equip personnel to provide an operational ready control and reporting center in support of worldwide theater air operations and statewide emergency contingencies. The 255th ACS deployed in November for a six-month deployment to Southwest Asia.

BURNING QUESTIONS

Blended Retirement

Sgt. 1st Class Essie Graves
Joint Force Headquarters

Q1. What is the military's new retirement system?

A1. The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016 established a modernized retirement plan for the uniformed services. The new Blended Retirement System, or BRS, combines the legacy 20-year military retirement system, a defined annuity, with a defined contribution plan, known as the Thrift Savings Plan, or TSP. The TSP includes automatic one percent Department of Defense contributions after 60-days and up to four percent additional matching contributions after two years of service to the service member's TSP account.

* annuity – an investment entitling the investor to a series of annual sums.

Q2. What options about the new system are most impactful specifically to Guardsmen?

A2. The new BRS will ensure nearly 85 percent of military service members leave the service with retirement benefits. That means service members can keep their TSP contributions even if they don't reach 20 years of service. The trade-off, as we incorporate matching TSP contributions, is that under the BRS the annuity is lowered. The formula for calculating retired pay will use a two percent multiplier for each year of service rather than two point five percent under the legacy system.



Q3. Do service members have to decide now which is best or can they change their mind later?

A3. The opt-in or election period for BRS will begin January 1, 2018, and conclude December 31, 2018. Traditional Guardsmen can decide to switch to the BRS prior to December 31, 2018, but it is irrevocable. In other words, it cannot be changed at a later date. Active Guard Reserve Guardsmen or service members with prior active duty service that equals less than 12 years can also opt-in to the BRS, but those with over 12 years of active duty service have to maintain the legacy retirement system.

For further information, you can contact Sgt. 1st Class Essie Graves at 601-313-6383 or essie.l.graves.mil@mail.mil. Professional financial counselors can also answer complex financial questions or refer you to a qualified counselor that can clarify things the military cannot.



Joint Force Headquarters
Mississippi National Guard
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President Donald J. Trump steps off Air Force One to greet supporters at the 172d Airlift Wing in Flowood, Miss., Dec. 9, 2017. The commander in chief visited the Magnolia State to celebrate the grand openings of the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum and Museum of Mississippi History in downtown Jackson. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Tech Sgt. Ed Staton)

