



# NORTH DAKOTA GUARDIAN

Volume 11, Issue 3

Fall 2018



## ONLY THE STRONG

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It's an annual contest that tests the will and durability of Soldier-competitors from across the state. The Best Warrior Competition long has been the proving grounds for the North Dakota Army National Guard's most skilled members. See how this year's attendees fared during the 4-day event, held at Camp Grafton Training Center.



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A native of Ghana, Spc. Dennis Duku's family made the U.S. their home in 2008. Almost a decade later, Duku would have the opportunity to return to his country through his service in the North Dakota National Guard. In doing so, he was able to assist the community in which he grew up, including his former school.



### 16 Locked and Loaded

After the Happy Hooligans of the 119th Wing stormed the 2018 Adjutant General's Combat Marksmanship Match by taking top honors in team competition, a joint team — both North Dakota Army and Air National Guard — also would secure first place at a regional shooting competition in Wyoming.

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# NORTH DAKOTA GUARDIAN

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- Editorial content of this publication is the responsibility of the Joint Force Headquarters, N.D. National Guard (JFND) Public Affairs Officer.
- Printed by Quality Printing, a private firm in no way connected to the U.S. Government under exclusive written contract with the JFND. Reproduction is by the offset method with a circulation of approximately 4,900.
- The *North Dakota Guardian* is published by the JFND Public Information Office, Box 5511, Bismarck, N.D. 58506-5511, 701.333.2007

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Digital photos should be 300 dpi, if possible.

## On the Cover



Spc. Grant Schaefer, of the 816th Military Police Company, runs across a prairie trail Aug. 10 during a more-than-6-mile physical challenge event for the Best Warrior Competition at Camp Grafton South, near McHenry, North Dakota.

Photo by Sgt. Ashley Johlfs,  
116th Public Affairs Detachment

# VIEW FROM THE TOP

## A MESSAGE FROM THE ADJUTANT GENERAL

### READY TODAY, MORE LETHAL TOMORROW

I just returned from the Association of the United States Army's annual meeting and conference. The theme of this year's conference was "Ready Today, More Lethal Tomorrow." It was the same message we heard from the Secretaries of Defense, Army and Air Force over the last several years. We all need to consider "more lethal tomorrow" as our command guidance when we look to our future.

Our successes during this summer's annual training and our performance during operational missions confirm that we are ready today. Units from the Army and Air National Guard participated in rotations at the National Training Center, worked as part of multinational teams in Africa and Germany, deployed to Afghanistan and other areas within the Central Command area of operations, supported combatant commanders every day from our base in Fargo, and executed tough, realistic training at Camp Grafton and other training areas. While we are ready now, there is more work to be done in order to be more lethal, as we prepare to deter, and, if necessary, fight a near-peer competitor in the future.

First and foremost, we must fill our ranks. We need to share our story and share the benefits of our organization with America's youth. We all need to work at this by considering ourselves as recruiters and retainers. This is not just a job for commanders, senior enlisted leaders and recruiters; it is everyone's job!

Second, we need to get ourselves ready. We need to strengthen our resiliency and work on our physical, mental and spiritual fitness. The new Army Combat Fitness Test will require us to embrace a whole new culture of fitness. We will no longer be able to prepare for the old annual fitness test by practicing push-ups, sit-ups and doing a little running a month or two before the event. The new test will require a daily commitment to fitness. The good news is we have a couple of years get ready, but now is the time to start. I personally started in early October

and plan to share more on my progress as time goes on.

Third, leaders need to know their members' and unit's strength and weaknesses to design the appropriate training plans. We need personnel and medical readiness before we will ever reach proficiency in our training requirements. Our training needs to be tough, realistic and mission-driven. Soldiers and Airmen want to be challenged; junior leaders want to be empowered. No one has ever bragged about the weekend they spent in an armory receiving PowerPoint presentations and performing online training.

At the state headquarters, our time and effort is focused on providing the resources, policies and laws needed to be more lethal. We are working hard to expand Camp Grafton and build new, ranges allowing us to qualify on all assigned weapons. We may fall short in the near term, but we will continue to push in the out-years to expand training facilities. Lethality requires proficiency on our weapons; proficiency will be enhanced with quality training areas closer to our units.

We are pursuing policy and law changes, ensuring our state and nation provide the benefits needed to maintain our operational



**Maj. Gen. Al Dohrmann**

force. We will fight to maintain our tuition assistance program and work with the Army and Air Force to put an "operational force" benefit package in place for a more lethal future force. We will continue to prioritize behavioral health resources, ensuring members and their families have the resources needed to address challenges early, before they impact our individual and collective readiness.

I'll close with gratitude. Thank you for all your hard work over the past few months. I was able to personally witness much of our annual training at Camp Grafton and in Ghana and could not be more pleased and proud of your accomplishments. As we enter the holiday season, be sure to take time to be with family and friends and prepare your mind and body for the work ahead. Stay fit!

MG Al Dohrmann  
*"Always Ready"*



**Maj. Gen. Al Dohrmann, North Dakota adjutant general, visits with Soldiers from the 188th Engineer Company in July during United Accord in Ghana, Africa. The multinational joint exercise was developed to allow the U.S. and its African partners to train together and build readiness across 22 different countries.**

Photo by Chief Warrant Officer 4 Kiel Skager, Joint Force Headquarters





Maj. Gen. Al Dohrmann, the North Dakota adjutant general, left, presents the 119th Wing unit flag guidon to Col. Darrin Anderson in a symbolic gesture, the flag representing the organizational command of the 119th Wing Col. Britt Hatley, far right, has been the 119th Wing commander since Feb. 4, 2017.

## FINAL FORMATIONS, NEW ERAS

# 119TH WING WELCOMES NEW COMMANDER

By Maj. Amber Schatz,  
N.D. National Guard Public Affairs Office

**T**he 119th Wing, North Dakota Air National Guard, also known as the Happy Hooligans, welcomed its newest commander during a change of command ceremony Aug. 4 at Hector Air Base in Fargo.

Col. Darrin Anderson became the new Wing commander during a ceremony held in the base's aircraft maintenance hangar. He assumed duties from Col. Britt Hatley, who has commanded since February 2017. Hatley's next assignment is with the National Guard Bureau at the Pentagon.

Anderson is the first non-pilot to command the 119th Wing, which comes on the heels of another first when Hatley was the first commander who had not previously served in the N.D. Air National Guard.

"It is an honor to be here and witness the change of command ceremony," said Gov. Doug Burgum. "I want to express my gratitude to Col. Hatley for his outstanding leadership and wish him well in Washington D.C. Col. Anderson is the right Airman for the job and will ensure the North Dakota Air National Guard continues its tradition of excellence in mission performance and supporting our state and nation."

Anderson began his career in the N.D. Air National Guard in 1983 as an enlisted member in the 119th Security Forces Squadron. He was commissioned in 1995 as a second lieutenant intelligence officer supporting the 119th Fighter Wing and the 178th Fighter Squadron. In 2003, he transitioned to aircraft maintenance and held various positions supporting the flying missions of the F-16 Falcon, C-21 Lear Jet and MQ-1 Predator. In 2007, he assumed command of the 119th Maintenance Group. In 2013, he returned to his intelligence officer roots and was selected to lead the brand new 119th Intelligence Surveillance Reconnaissance Group.

"With our current missions, Darrin's many years of experience as an intelligence officer, coupled with his group-level command experience in both maintenance and intelligence, make him the right officer at the right time to lead the 119th Wing into the future," said Maj. Gen. Al Dohrmann, North Dakota adjutant general.

Anderson is a graduate of North Dakota State University and earned a Master of Science degree from the Air War College, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama.

"I am humbled and grateful for the opportunity to lead this incredible organization," Anderson said. "I want to thank Col. Hatley for his leadership and accomplishments during his time here. He stepped in and did a wonderful job carrying on the Hooligan tradition of excellence and I hope to do the same." ■



# SECOND COMMANDER IN 219TH'S HISTORY TAKES HELM

By 2nd Lt. Jeremiah Colbert,  
119th Wing

The 219th Security Forces Squadron (SFS), North Dakota Air National Guard, welcomed a new commander Sept. 8 during a change of command ceremony at Minot Air Force Base.

Maj. Greg Goodman was sworn in as the second commander in the unit's existence. He assumed duties from Lt. Col. Tad Schauer, who had been with the 219th SFS since 2007 and has commanded since the unit's activation in 2008. Schauer now will transfer to a position at the North Dakota National Guard's Joint Force Headquarters in Bismarck.

"I'm looking forward to carrying on the tradition of excellence that Lt. Col. Schauer started and has maintained since the very beginning," said Goodman, who also has been with the unit since 2007.

Goodman began his military career in the U.S. Army as an infantryman, eventually transferring to the N.D. Air National Guard and serving in both the 119th Security Forces Squadron and 219th Security Forces Squadron. After being

commissioned in 2009, Goodman was assigned to the 219th Security Forces Squadron. Within the unit, he has been assigned as an operations officer and security support officer and is the only Air National Guard member ever certified as an off-base nuclear convoy commander within Air Force Global Strike Command.

The 219th Security Forces Squadron is geographically separate from the N.D. Air National Guard headquartered in Fargo. Since 2007, the unit has been providing

security to the missile fields of Minot's 91st Missile Wing while working jointly with its active-duty counterparts. In 2013, the 219th was the first ever reserve component squadron to assume complete control of missile field security.

"Our unit has done something that no other Guard unit in the country has done and I'm excited to lead our team into the next 10 years as we continue to pioneer," Goodman said. ■



Photos by Senior Master Sgt. David H. Lipp, 119th Wing



Top, Senior Airman Tanner Hart, left, and Staff Sgt. Joseph Brunell, both of the 219th Security Forces Squadron, conduct a site routine inspection of a launch facility in the Minot Air Force Base missile field complex. Above, Col. Darrin Anderson, 119th Wing commander, left, presents the 219th Security Forces Squadron unit flag guidon to Maj. Greg Goodman as Goodman assumes command of the unit. Goodman replaced outgoing commander Lt. Col. Tad Schauer, far right, who has led the squadron since it was formed Oct. 18, 2008.





Right, Weston Putz, son of Chief Warrant Officer 4 Zach Putz, tours the C-12 Huron airplane during a unit meet and greet prior to his father's mobilization. Inset, Chief Warrant Officer 2 Daniel Fitzner explains to his girlfriend, Beth Waters, how different parts of the C-12 Huron aircraft work.



# Farewell ... for Now

## ARMY AVIATORS TAKE OFF FOR AFRICA

Story and photos by Sgt. Brandi Schmidt,  
116th Public Affairs Detachment

Seven North Dakota Army National Guard aviators with the Bismarck-based Detachment 7 (Det. 7), Company C, 2nd Battalion, 245th Aviation Regiment, Operational Airlift Support (OSA) were honored at a pre-deployment open house event Aug. 17 at the National Guard's Army Aviation Support Facility in Bismarck. The Soldiers later embarked on a 9-month mission to the Horn of Africa area of operations, including Djibouti, in support of U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM).

Formerly known as Det. 42, OSA, a portion of the unit was re-designated as Det. 7 on Sept. 1, 2016. This is the unit's fourth mobilization. Det. 42 served in Afghanistan from January 2013 to November 2013 and September 2004 until March 2005; and Djibouti, Africa, from April 2009 to February 2010.

The small but highly-specialized aviation unit operates one C-12 Huron aircraft. Its mission is to provide fixed-wing aircraft for cargo and personnel transport. The Soldiers will operate aircraft already on location and will serve alongside members of the Michigan Army National Guard.

The unit is commanded by Chief Warrant Officer 3 Rob Smette. He will hand off commander duties to Chief Warrant Officer 4 Zach Putz about midway through the deployment. Smette and Putz are joined by two other pilots, Chief Warrant Officer 2 Daniel Fitzner and Warrant Officer Christian Thorson, as well as Sgt. 1st Class David Dreher and Sgt. Cassandra Mosbrucker, who both will

serve in administrative roles.

"We'll be in a new operational environment with new challenges and for all of us, this is the first time deploying with the C-12 aircraft," Putz said.

For many of the members, this is their second or third deployment, since they have previously deployed with aviation units flying UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters to various locations. Mosbrucker said this will be her first deployment.

"I'm looking forward to it and excited to go," she said. ■



Maj. Gen. Al Dohrmann, North Dakota adjutant general, right, visits with Chief Warrant Officer 3 Rob Smette, commander for the Bismarck-based Detachment 7, Company C, 2nd Battalion, 245th Aviation Regiment, Operational Airlift Support, during the unit's open house.



# GOLD STANDARD

## ARMY GUARD COMMISSIONS NEW OFFICERS

By Staff Sgt. Eric W. Jensen,  
Joint Force Headquarters

Members of the 61st Officer Candidate School (OCS) class officially joined the North Dakota Army National Guard's officer ranks during a graduation ceremony on Aug. 18 at the 164th Regiment Regional Training Institute (RTI). Seven Soldiers were awarded diplomas for completing the intensive officer training program, which is administered by staff and cadre from the RTI's 2nd Training Battalion (Modular) at Camp Grafton Training Center, near Devils Lake.

"You are a special group that has an awesome responsibility of leading within the North Dakota National Guard. Trust your training and empower your subordinates to allow them to perform to the best of their abilities," said Maj. Gen. Al Dohrmann, North Dakota adjutant general, while addressing the OCS graduates.

Officer candidates may elect to defer their commission upon graduating OCS, dependent on personal preference or the availability of an officer position within a unit. Four graduates of this OCS Class accepted their commissions as second lieutenants. They will now go on to lead platoons in Guard units across the state.

The keynote speaker for the event, Col. James Olson, commander for the Bismarck-based 68th Troop Command, rendered remarks and offered advice to the graduates. Olson began his military career in 1986 when he enlisted into the 164th Engineer Battalion as a unit armorer. He received his military commission through the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) program at North Dakota State University in 1990.

"I am tremendously proud of this program and the officers it produces. I am honored to welcome you to the officer corps," Olson said to the graduates. "Accept the challenges that face you, do so willingly and continue to learn."

Dohrmann later presented the graduates with their diplomas, while Brig. Gen. Robert Fode, former Land Component commander, administered the oath of office to the newest second lieutenants in the state. Lt. Col. Walyn Vannurden, commander of the RTI's 2nd Training Battalion, presided over the "Pinning Ceremony," where the new officers donned their gold-colored second lieutenant bars. The graduates were joined by family and friends during the ceremony.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Brett Miller, 116th Public Affairs Detachment



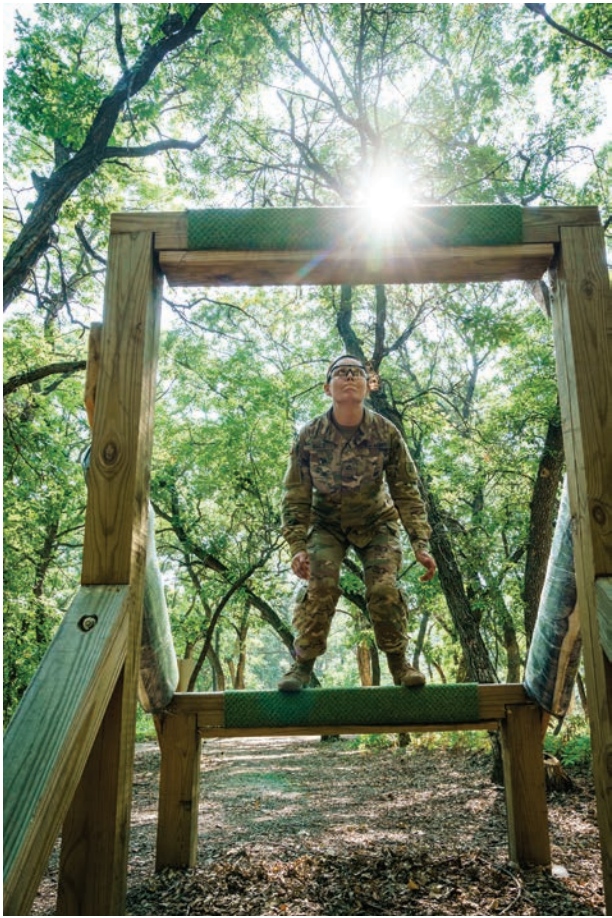
Newly-commissioned 2nd Lt. Tony Kuhn is presented his second lieutenant rank by his wife and children Aug. 18 during the graduation ceremony for Officer Candidate School Class #61 at the 164th Regiment Regional Training Institute on Camp Grafton Training Center.

The 2nd Training Battalion's (Modular) 61st OCS graduating class includes:

- \* Gerald M. Bond, of Minot, North Dakota
- Daniel P. Carpenter, of Bismarck, North Dakota
- Mitchell A. Evink, of Moorhead, Minnesota
- \* Toby C. Kuhn, of Mandan, North Dakota
- \* Christopher A. Roach, of Fargo, North Dakota
- Timothy Simmons, Mandan, North Dakota
- \* Evan C. Thomas, Felton, Minnesota

(\*) indicates acceptance of commission ■







# TRUE GRIT

## NORTH DAKOTA SOLDIERS CHASE STATE 'BEST WARRIOR' TITLES

By Staff Sgt. Eric W. Jensen,  
Joint Force Headquarters

**T**he North Dakota Army National Guard's top Soldiers slogged through an intense, sweltering four-day competition in 100-degree temperatures at Camp Grafton Training Center. Fourteen Army Guardsmen representing the National Guard's major commands contended with an array of military challenges and Army skills tests to gauge their competency and grit Aug. 9-12 during the state's Best Warrior Competition.

When the winners were announced during the final day's awards ceremony, two Army Guardsmen had earned the opportunity to advance and represent North Dakota in future competitions. Staff Sgt. Justin Valenti, of Fargo, a member of the Fargo-based 191st Military Police Company, was the winner of the Best Warrior Competition in the noncommissioned officer category. In the enlisted-level competition, Spc. Casey Drege, of West Fargo, a member of the Bismarck-based 957th Engineer Company (Multi-Role Bridge), took top honors.

"This competition is my favorite weekend of the year. I get to see great Soldiers come here and do great things. They give it their all, and even if they are not successful, they have a positive attitude. They move on with so much more knowledge, they are mentally and physically exhausted, but at the end of the weekend, they are always smiling," said Command Sgt. Maj. David Lien, state command sergeant major.

Soldiers began the Best Warrior Competition this year by testing their endurance during an Army Physical Fitness test, or APFT. From there, they donned their Army Service Uniforms to be inspected while answering a series of military-related questions posed by a board of sergeants major. The Guardsmen's first day of competition culminated by locating positions using a compass on a land navigation course at night.

The following days continued to be filled with difficult events and challenges. Competitors fired weapons for qualification scores at Camp Grafton's southern training area, near McHenry, North Dakota. They also completed another land navigation

course, this time being inserted into the training area by UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters. The remainder of the weekend tested the Soldiers' physical and mental toughness with road marches, a confidence course and rappel tower, a written exam and evaluations on a number of Warrior Tasks (general military tasks all Soldiers must know).

Lien said the Best Warrior Competition planners do their best to keep things challenging for the Soldiers. This year an event was added during the final day of competition when competitors were shuffled into a dark theater room wearing night vision goggles to assemble an M9 pistol, M4 rifle and M249 Squad Automatic Weapon, or SAW.

"After every competition, myself and all of the evaluators and coordinators will get together and see what is working and what is not, and will adjust accordingly. We will even try to incorporate things we see from regionals (competitions), if it is deemed popular enough, and go from there," Lien said.

Soldiers representing their units must first win in their respective major commands in order to vie for the "Best Warrior" title during the state-level competition. That preparation can include months of physical training and poring over various military manuals and study guides.

"I loved it. It was a challenge, I can't wait to do it again and I am going to encourage all of my Soldiers to try this," Valenti said. "I didn't think I was going to win. Everybody did great and everybody supported each other throughout the competition, and I plan on bringing that mentality with me to regionals."

The regional competition, scheduled to be held in May 2019, will be hosted by staff and cadre at Camp Grafton Training Center here in North Dakota. Army Guardsmen from seven other states will compete, including Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, South Dakota, Washington and Wyoming. Regional winners advance to compete in the All-Guard Competition and, if they win there, have the opportunity to compete in the All-Army Competition.

Should the winners not be able to compete, they will be replaced by the runners-up from the state competition. This year, Spc. Dakota Brown, of Ryder, North Dakota, a member of the 957th Engineer Company, was the runner-up in the enlisted category. Staff Sgt. Adam Walsvik, of Washburn, North Dakota, a member of the Fargo-based 141st Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, took the runner-up position at the noncommissioned officer level. ■



Photos by Staff Sgt. Brett Miller, 116th Public Affairs Detachment

Staff Sgt. Justin Valenti, of Fargo, a member of the Fargo-based 191st Military Police Company, right, was the winner of the Best Warrior Competition in the noncommissioned officer category. In the enlisted-level competition, Spc. Casey Drege, of West Fargo, a member of the Bismarck-based 957th Engineer Company (Multi-Role Bridge), took top honors.



# RUNNING REVIVAL >>>>

## WALSVIK RETURNS TO MARATHON, BEST WARRIOR COMPETITION FOLLOWING HORRENDOUS ACCIDENT

*By Staff Sgt. Eric W. Jensen,  
Joint Force Headquarters*

**B**y the closing of the North Dakota National Guard's Best Warrior Competition, Staff Sgt. Adam Walsvik had pressed himself through a litany of military challenges, often testing the boundaries of his mental and physical durability. Despite blisters on his hands from grappling with Camp Grafton Training Center's obstacle course and a sore leg from trudging through a 6-mile road march, he felt good. At the awards ceremony during the final day of competition Aug. 12, Walsvik flashed a satisfied and gracious smile as he accepted the runner-up award in the noncommissioned officer category from Command Sgt. Maj. David Lien, state command sergeant major. Because exactly two years to the day before that, he lay in a hospital bed not knowing if he'd ever walk again.

Walsvik, whose peers said has always displayed a strong work ethic and never-give-up attitude, would demonstrate extraordinary resiliency over a 2-year span of time. Facing what he called "the biggest challenge I ever had to get through," Walsvik would recover from grievous injuries with a tenacious resolve to heal, and would inspire others while doing so.

### FATE COLLIDES

Ever searching for a challenge, Walsvik was celebrating his 29th birthday on July 23, 2016, by pedaling down a highway between West Fargo and Oakes, North Dakota. He had embarked on a 115-mile bike ride in preparation for an upcoming Ironman triathlon. About 20 miles into his journey, a truck traveling at about 70 miles per hour, struck Walsvik from behind. The driver reported not having seen the Guardsman on the roadway.

"I hit the hood, then the windshield and rolled off into the ditch. According to the Highway Patrol, my body ended up landing 208 feet from where I was hit," Walsvik said.

Sinew and bone had given way under the impact of the crash and Walsvik's injuries were wide-ranging. He first was stabilized at Essentia Health in Fargo and was later airlifted to Hennepin County Medical Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota. When he came to, medical staff were discussing the possibility of amputating his left leg. The popliteal artery in the limb had been crushed and hadn't delivered a pulse for hours. In order to restore function to it, doctors had to reroute the vein from Walsvik's groin. In addition, they performed a fasciotomy to his leg to relieve the pressure and tension, which was increasing due to the loss of circulation from the non-functioning vein.

"I wasn't sure I'd be able to stay in the military," Walsvik said.

Adding to his list of injuries, Walsvik suffered a broken ankle and





fibula, three cracked ribs and road rash to his arms hands and head. He had a small chip in his vertebrae and had to wear a back brace for the next 12 weeks. Ultimately, he would spend nearly a month in the hospital, and for weeks after, he would ponder what his future held.

## BACK ON TWO FEET

Since he joined the N.D. National Guard in 2005, Walsvik has been a wildly active and productive Soldier in the units in which he's served, as well as his professional career. He enlisted as a carpentry and masonry specialist while pursuing a civil engineering and surveying technology degree at the North Dakota State College of Science in Wahpeton. In 2011, he had the opportunity to serve overseas with the 188th Engineer Company (Vertical) in Kuwait. Walsvik currently serves in the 141st Maneuver Enhancement Brigade while working as a surveyor/drone pilot at the Falkirk Mining Company. He's always managed to keep his schedule flush with physical events and competitions, as well, including being a competitor on the N.D. National Guard's Marathon Team, a group he's ran with since 2013.

Capt. Robert Meland, who also is a member of the team, said Walsvik has always been an important cog in the team's machinery, an excellent runner with stubborn ambition.

"He's really passionate about fitness and nutrition," Meland said. "He's just an animal. He comes up with great training plans and has a great work ethic. He's done progressively better every year (with the marathon team) to the point where he was close to making the All-Guard Team, right before his accident."

After his stay in the hospital, the prospects for Walsvik's full recovery from his injuries were daunting. But he knew he had to get back on his feet, just to see if he was still capable of participating in the physically demanding endeavors he loves.

"My physical therapists said I would never run more than three miles again, and nothing faster than a 10-minute pace," Walsvik said.

Fortunately, Walsvik's support system of family, friends, Guard members and his employer kicked into overdrive. His parents drove him to medical appointments, helped him take care of his house and change out his bandages. And only four months after the accident, Walsvik was able to return to work on light duty. He even received a card in the hospital from J.C. Butler, Jr., the president and chief executive officer of the North American Coal Corporation. Walsvik's platoon sergeant and readiness noncommissioned officer helped him through Guard drills. The staff sergeant was able to come in and make up time, despite being on crutches, to allow him to have a "good year" of service by meeting training requirements.

Eventually though, the daily customs of static confinement became unbearable. After multiple physical therapy sessions and occupational health and doctor visits, Walsvik started doing what he always had done, both in and out of competition: he started training.

With help and encouragement from his friends, he started swimming, playing racquetball and skiing. In June 2017, he was able to complete a half marathon. And after that, Walsvik ran a full 26.2 miles.

"I ran my own marathon around Bismarck exactly one year afterwards (the accident) on my 30th birthday. My dad biked the whole thing with me and I had a lot of friends running or biking with me



Opposite page, Staff Sgt. Adam Walsvik runs the 2-mile portion of the Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT) Aug. 9 during the Best Warrior Competition at Camp Grafton. During his first APFT, taken in the fall of 2017, about a year after his accident, he was still running a time of about 11 minutes and 50 seconds. Top, Walsvik, second from right, is pictured with the North Dakota National Guard Marathon Team at the Lincoln National Guard Marathon with team members, from left to right, Maj. Nathan Dicks, Capt. Aaron Kramer and Capt. Robert Meland. Above, left, Walsvik remains in good spirits during recovery from his injuries. Right, the bicycle helmet Walsvik wore when he was struck by a vehicle is obliterated, however he credits the piece of equipment with "saving his life."

along the way. It was the slowest 26.2 miles I've ever run, but it felt real good just to be able to do it," Walsvik said.

Members of his marathon team were there to help Walsvik get back into running shape, too. Meland had been checking in with his teammate every few months, seeing how he was doing and making plans for future training. The pair would meet up to go out for 7- to 8-mile runs with Meland encouraging him through the paces.

"(Adam) had told me he didn't know if he would be able to compete in running again, as it was going. He was pretty down in the dumps. We (the team) just told him to listen to his physical therapist and, if they allow it, we'd be there to help him train for competition and get him whatever he needed to do it," Meland said. "I know it's not been easy at all for him, especially when you're going from doing 26 miles easily to where it's hard to just get out of bed."

Walsvik's tenacity and constant training paid off, though. He would make it to the Lincoln National Guard Marathon this year in May. It was a big day for the North Dakotans, as team members Capt. Aaron Kramer, of the 136th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, and Maj. Nathan Dicks of the 231st Brigade Support





Left, Walsvik fires at range silhouettes during marksmanship qualification at the Best Warrior Competition at Camp Grafton's southern training area. Right, he takes the lug nuts off a Humvee tire during one of the competition's "Warrior Stakes" events. Walsvik finished the Best Warrior Competition as the runner-up in the noncommissioned officer category.



Battalion, would earn spots on the All-Guard Marathon Team. Walsvik would finish the half-marathon with a respectable time of 2 hours and 2 minutes. Meland was there to pace him all the way to the finish line.

"His determination and overall character is amazing. It's pretty cool to see something like that, to witness it right in front of you. Usually it's something you'd see on TV or a movie; you don't see it first-hand. And he's just so humble about it," he said.

## WARRIOR SPIRIT

Despite being reserved about his accomplishments, Walsvik's appetite for a challenge steered him towards the Best Warrior Competition. He'd run through the gauntlet before: a 4-day trial of mental and physical tests designed to assess the abilities of the state's top Army Guardsmen. In 2009, Walsvik competed in the enlisted category and progressed all the way to the national "All-Guard" competition. He's also competed as a noncommissioned officer and had the opportunity to do it again this year at Camp Grafton Training Center. The competition's planners and attendees were astonished by what they saw.

"Just for the average competitor, Best Warrior is very grueling. You could see his leg and it still looked like it would be very painful," Lien said. "I thought maybe he was there to run a couple events to see how it went. Then, of course, we start with an APFT (Army Physical Fitness Test) and he runs his two miles in 10 minutes, or something like that. It was so inspiring to see him compete. It's just indescribable because he didn't use his injuries as a crutch."

Walsvik said the entire competition went well for him, although during the 6-mile road march event, his leg started giving him fits.

"I was hurting, but I was able to make it through," Walsvik said. "The medics did a real outstanding job watching out for me. And Staff Sgt. Justin Valenti helped me push through the road march to complete it."

Valenti was the eventual winner of the competition in the noncommissioned officer category. Walsvik, however, placed right behind him as the runner-up. If Valenti should not be able to compete at the regional competition this spring, Walsvik will be ready to represent North Dakota.

Lien said Walsvik's not only a great representative for Best Warrior, but an example for all Soldiers within the N.D. Army National Guard's ranks to mirror.

"I hope some of the other competitors had a chance to visit with him, to learn about what he's gone through. The guy is very passionate about the Guard; I think he's just really passionate about everything he does," he said. "When I was the battalion sergeant major in the 164th Engineer Battalion, Adam was one of my Soldiers. He was like that back in the day and even more so now. You always like to see that in any of your Soldiers. He's just a very inspiring guy."

For Walsvik, the more things change, the more they stay the same. He still plans on competing in that Ironman triathlon he was training for prior to his accident. It seems like the obvious thing to do. But he also has a new outlook on life after the trials he's gone through.

"I think the fact that I'm alive and still able to do what I do is a miracle. Every day is a gift from God," Walsvik said. "A lot of motivation for me (during recovery) was knowing there are Soldiers who were wounded way worse than me or never made it home. So I try to live the best life I possibly can. I have some really awesome friends and family. They've helped me more than they will ever know. If I didn't have them, I'm pretty sure I would not be where I am now."

And as Walsvik continues to train and persevere in the National Guard and life, there's no telling where he'll be in the years beyond. ■





Left, Col. Leo Ryan passes the Land Component Command guidon to Command Sgt. Maj. David Lien, state command sergeant major, after assuming command of the North Dakota Army National Guard's nearly 3,000 Soldiers during a ceremony Sept. 16 at the Raymond J. Bohn Armory in Bismarck. Below, Brig. Gen. Robert Fode is presented the North Dakota Distinguished Service Medal for his more than 40 years of service with the North Dakota National Guard. Fode handed off duties for the organization's Land Component Command to incoming commander Col. Leo Ryan.

# WINDS OF CHANGE

## RYAN TAKES COMMAND OF LAND COMPONENT, FODE RETIRES

By Staff Sgt. Eric W. Jensen,  
Joint Force Headquarters

The North Dakota National Guard's Land Component Command (LCC) welcomed a new leader Sept. 16 after wishing a former commander well upon his future retirement. Brig. Gen. Robert Fode was honored prior to his official retirement in October in front of an audience of friends, family and fellow Guardsmen. He then relinquished duties as Land Component commander to Col. Leo Ryan during a change of command ceremony at the Raymond J. Bohn Armory in Bismarck. The LCC of the N.D. National Guard is assigned nearly 3,000 N.D. Army National Guard Soldiers.

"It's been my honor to serve with Brig. Gen. Fode. He has left an incredible legacy, one that can be emulated by all leaders in our organization. The care he has shown for his Soldiers has been inspiring and we wish him well in the future," said Maj. Gen. Al Dohrmann, North Dakota adjutant general. "I know that our Army Guardsmen will continue to benefit from strong, competent leadership under Col. Leo Ryan. He is the right person, chosen at the right time, to lead our Soldiers in the North Dakota Army National Guard."

Fode has commanded the Land Component since April 2014. In October, he culminated a four-decade-long military career. A native of Mobridge, South Dakota, Fode enlisted in the N.D. Army National Guard in 1978 as a motor transport operator. In 1985, he was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the engineer branch after attending Officer Candidate School. He has held myriad key leadership positions throughout his career, including serving as a platoon leader, executive officer and commander within units of the 164th Engineer Battalion. Additionally, he served as the operations officer for the 142nd Engineer Combat Battalion.

From December 2003 – February 2005, Fode commanded the 141st Engineer Combat Battalion during the unit's deployment to Iraq. He mobilized again for a NATO-led peacekeeping mission in Kosovo in 2009, serving as the deputy commander, Multinational Battle Group East with Kosovo Forces, or KFOR 12. Upon his return, Fode was assigned as the director of the Joint Staff for the N.D. National Guard before assuming duties as the Land Component commander.

Ryan brings more than three decades of experience to his new assignment as land component commander. He enlisted in 1985

as a bridge crewman in the 957th Engineer Company. In 1992, he completed Officer Candidate School and was commissioned as a second lieutenant. He has held a number of leadership positions throughout his military career, to include commanding the 1st Battalion, 188th Air Defense Artillery Regiment; the N.D. Army National Guard's Officer Candidate School and the 164th Regiment Regional Training Institute.

Ryan twice has served overseas during federal mobilizations. In 1990, he deployed to Southwest Asia in support of Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm as a squad leader in the 132nd Quartermaster Company. He deployed again in 2007 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom as the executive officer for the 164th Engineer Battalion. ■



Photos by Staff Sgt. Brett Miller, 116th Public Affairs Detachment





# Happy Homecoming

## DUKU RETURNS TO NATIVE GHANA, ASSISTS COMMUNITY SCHOOL

By Maj. Amber Schatz,  
Joint Force Headquarters

When he first left Ghana for the United States at age 20, Spc. Dennis Duku had no idea that his life would come full circle. Or that he would find himself giving back to his elementary school, a place which helped him become who he is today: a Soldier in the North Dakota National Guard.

The story began in 2008 when Duku and his family left Ghana to join his father in the United States. His father was living in Virginia to finish his education. When the family later moved to Moorhead, Minnesota, Duku decided to join the National Guard.

"I always knew I wanted to join the military," Duku said. "I joined the North Dakota National Guard after I found out I could serve my country, my state and still work full time."

Duku would join the 188th Engineer Company, out of

Wahpeton, as a heavy equipment operator and plumber.

He later learned about the State Partnership Program (SPP) between Ghana, Togo and Benin and North Dakota. He was asked to participate in a SPP event in Ghana in 2017. It was then he determined there was more he wanted to do for his home country.

The opportunity came when his unit, the 188th Engineer Company, was chosen to participate in United Accord. The multinational joint exercise was developed to have the U.S. and its African partners train together and build readiness across 22 different countries.

"When I found out it was my team that was going, I wondered if I could do something for my people," Duku said.

He spoke to his wife (also from Ghana) and they decided to purchase backpacks and crayons for the students at his old school — 400 backpacks to be exact. When packed, the items filled 12 suitcases.

"I learned that when I travel on official capacity (in the military), I can have up to five pieces of luggage. That's when I needed to ask





Photo by Chief Warrant Officer 4 Kiel Skager, Joint Force Headquarters



Photo courtesy of U.S. AFRICOM

Left, Spc. Dennis Duku poses with children from the Dadwen Schools Complex in Western Ghana. A former student at the school, he donated 400 backpacks and 150 sets of crayons for the school children and 100 bags of cement for a construction project at the school. Above, Duku hands out backpacks to school children at the Dadwen Schools Complex. Top, the historic James Town in Accra, Ghana, is a seaside fishing community with substantial British and French ancestry and influence.

others to help me with the remaining seven,” he said.

Members of the 188th Engineer Company were more than happy to help with anything they could. One of those Soldiers was Staff Sgt. Rachelle Barendt Klein, a squad leader in the unit, who first heard about what Duku was doing when he was unloading the extra bags at the armory.

“The unit was supportive. They helped load and unload the extra bags and haul them through the airport. The suitcases were packed light so they could check the bags without paying the airport fees. Duku and the rest of us spread and shared his story, with pride, when anyone in line would ask,” Klein said.

Once in Ghana, the entire company wanted to help at the school, although plans had to change. Logistically, it was going to be more challenging than expected. In the end, a team of three made the trip.

“Everyone wanted to come with me. I was overwhelmed; I wanted to help my school and everyone in my unit wanted to help my school, too, and it was really surprising to me. I was really excited,” Duku said.

It was about a 6-hour drive to Duku’s school, Dadwen Schools Complex, in the western part of Ghana. When the team arrived, they were greeted by Ghana’s municipal chief executive and hundreds of excited school children.

“The level of excitement was surreal. I look back and I am not sure who was more excited, us or the kids. Duku talked to the kids, old classmates and teachers. School songs were sang, (there were) prayers, hugs, so many smiles, happy tears,” Klein said. “Spc. Duku was so humble. He repeatedly pointed out how he just wanted to give back.”

“In terms of class, my school would be considered third class. They lack certain things. They have good infrastructure, but as far as student amenities, they do not have basic things,” Duku said.

The children at his school were walking a very long distance to use the washroom, so Duku also bought and donated 100 bags of cement to begin construction of a new wash room closer to the classrooms.

“I left there (Ghana) in 2003 and have never been back since. When I saw it again, it was the same as when I was there. Nothing had changed in those years. It looked like no one was helping,” Duku said. “I became the local hero; they were really happy to see me and my guys.”

During the same trip, the 188th Engineer Company, with the help of Soldiers from the 353rd Civil Affairs Command, Ghana Armed Forces and the Royal Netherlands Army, also built and donated 40 desks to L&A Memorial Academy, another school in Accra, Ghana. ■



# HITTING THEIR MARKS

## HAPPY HOOLIGANS TAKE STATE SHOOTING COMPETITION

*Stories by Staff Sgt. Eric W. Jensen,  
Joint Force Headquarters*

**A**fter snapping a three-decade-long winning streak by besting perennial winners from the Jamestown-based 817th Engineer Company (Sapper) last year, the Fargo-based 119th Wing “A” team again captured top honors at the 2018 Adjutant General’s Combat Marksmanship Match. The 3-day event this year was held July 7-9 at the Camp Grafton Training Center firing complex, near McHenry, North Dakota.

The North Dakota Air National Guard shooters attained the highest aggregate score from multiple shooting matches to be recognized as the best overall team. The marksmen are Senior Master Sgt. Wade Swenson, Senior Airman Gavin Rook, Senior Airman Tyrel Hoppe and Senior Airman Cody DeWandeler. The team also had the highest scores in the “Pistol Team” and “Rifle Team” categories.

About 60 North Dakota Guard marksmen fired at an assortment of targets over the weekend using pistols, rifles and shotguns in a number of distinct shooting matches. The shooters competed in singles competition or in a 4-man team to earn the accolades of their peers, prepare for future regional and national competitions and develop new shooters within the state’s marksmanship program.

“I am convinced that a strong marksmanship program makes our National Guard members a better fighting force, and the training they have received at this competition is proving that to be true, just by looking at the scores on the range,” Maj. Gen. Al Dohrmann, North Dakota adjutant general, told the competitors on the final day of the event. “By dedicating yourselves to becoming disciplined shooters, you can take that knowledge back to your units to share with your battle buddies and wingmen to develop better-trained marksmen within our ranks.”

Following the 119th Wing team in the overall aggregate rankings was a group of shooters from the 817th Engineer Company. The second place winners are Staff Sgt. Jason Dittus, of Mandan, North Dakota; Sgt. Andrew Maley, of Enderlin, North Dakota; Spc. Austin Mittleider, of Fargo, North Dakota; and Spc. Tanner Coquette, of Fargo.

In individual competition, Rook, of the 119th “A” team, was named the best overall marksman, or “top gun.” He was followed by Dittus, who came in second, and Maley, who finished third.

Rook is part of a father-son tandem competing with the 119th Wing. Senior Master Sgt. Brian Rook, who has competed with the N.D. Air National Guard team for almost a decade, has had the opportunity to see his son develop into a competitive marksman at the state competition over the last three years. However, shooting has been a shared enthusiasm for the pair for much longer than that.

“I started Gavin shooting when he was only 4 or 5 years old, and he has always loved it. He used to come with me to practice before he ever joined the Guard. It was always a dream of his to be on the Wing Alpha team,” Senior Master Sgt. Brian Rook said. “Of course, I am very proud of all that Gavin has done (with his shooting). He has progressed a lot faster than I ever expected, but we practice a lot. We shoot trap all summer, and we shoot at ranges all year round.”

Developing new shooters for competition is a core aim for North Dakota National Guard Marksmanship Program planners. Tech Sgt. Josh VonBank, shooting team coach for the 119th Wing, said seeing novice marksman like Senior Airman Rook attain such notable achievements during competition has validated the mentor/mentee approach adopted within the program.

“We wanted to engage and train the new shooters in a way we haven’t been able to in previous years. We conducted weapons familiarization on all the assigned weapons before the weekend’s events, went through the matches, scoring and commands, as well. Shooters were then given the opportunity to zero their weapons at 100 and 300 yards with the best coaches and instructors we have in our program,” he said. “It is encouraging to see the men and women participating throughout the weekend come up to the experienced shooters with questions, looking for ways to get better.” ■

Photo by Senior Master Sgt. David H. Lipp



Senior Airman Gavin Rook, of the 119th Wing, prepares to take aim at his targets July 9 during the 2018 Adjutant General’s Combat Marksmanship Match at the Camp Grafton firing complex, near McHenry, North Dakota. Pictured in the background is his father Senior Master Sgt. Brian Rook, who also is assigned to the 119th Wing.





## NORTH DAKOTA TEAM WINS REGIONAL MATCH FOR 7TH STRAIGHT YEAR IN A ROW

**T**he North Dakota National Guard's competitive marksmen continued their winning ways by besting multiple shooting teams Aug. 17-19 during the Marksmanship Advisory Council (MAC) Region VI Combat Marksmanship Training Sustainment Exercise at Camp Guernsey Joint Training Center in Wyoming.

A joint team — both N.D. Air and Army National Guard — captured first place in the “Overall Aggregate” category during the competition, which also welcomed Guard shooters from South Dakota, Alaska, Wyoming, Montana and Idaho. This is the seventh year in a row North Dakota has won the team match. The team members are: Senior Master Sgt. Wade Swenson and Senior Airman Gavin Rook, of the N.D. Air National Guard, and Sgt. Tyler Goldade and Sgt. Brendan Dean, of the N.D. Army National Guard.

According to a Wyoming National Guard news release, North Dakota scored 916 points to top South Dakota's Alpha team, which scored 892 points.

North Dakota's shooters had a tremendous showing in individual competition, as well. Rook took top honors in the “Overall Aggregate” category and was followed by Goldade, who took second place overall. Rook also took first in the “Overall Pistol,” “Pistol Excellence-in-Competition” and “Pistol Combat Barricade” categories.

North Dakota's “A” team took top honors in the “Overall Aggregate” category during the Region VI Combat Marksmanship Training Sustainment Exercise at Camp Guernsey Joint Training Center in Wyoming. They are, from left to right, Sgt. Tyler Goldade, Sgt. Brendan Dean, Senior Airman Gavin Rook and Senior Master Sgt. Wade Swenson.

Goldade added to his achievements by securing first place in the “Overall Rifle” and “Reflexive Fire” categories.

“This is the second year in a row ‘NoDaks’ have run the pistol range for the Marksmanship Advisory Council range cadre. We compete and support every level of competition, fielding some of the finest marksmanship and battle-focused competitors, coaches and cadre within the region, and the Guard as a whole,” said Tech. Sgt. Josh Von Bank, shooting team coach for the N.D. Air National Guard's 119th Wing.

Sgt. 1st Class Russel Gerhardt also reached a competitive milestone by becoming a “Double Distinguished” shooter. Fewer than one percent of all shooters ever reach “Double Distinguished” status. The achievement is earned by accruing compounded “leg points” during state, regional and national marksmanship competitions. A marksman acquires “leg points” by finishing in the top 10 percent of shooters in rifle and pistol “Excellence-in-Competition” matches. Gerhardt “legged out” during the MAC Region VI rifle competitions.

VonBank said, with its MAC VI region title, the North Dakota Alpha team earns a bid to compete at the U.S. All-Army Small Arms Championships at Fort Benning, Georgia, held next spring. ■





Photo by Senior Master Sgt. David H. Lipp, 119th Wing

## FAMILY FUN

Master Sgt. Todd Ouradnik, of the 219th Security Forces Squadron, shows his son and daughter around the turret of a High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle (Humvee) and lets his son handle the unarmed M2 .50 caliber multi-role heavy machine gun during 219th Security Forces Squadron Family Day events Sept. 8 at the Minot Air Force Base. Family Day is a semi-annual event when family members of N.D. Air National Guard personnel get a chance to visit the base during a unit training assembly and are treated to some entertaining activities to show appreciation for their sacrifice and support.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Brett Miller, 116th Public Affairs Detachment

# GUARDIAN Snapshots



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## CULTURE FEST

Attendees at the Bismarck State College Culture Fest visit with vendors representing various cultures Sept. 26 at the school's Student Union in Bismarck. "Tourists" were given a passport stamped at each country they visited to win prizes while tasting international food, enjoying music and learning more about the countries' various cultures. The event was sponsored by both Bismarck State College and the North Dakota National Guard's Diversity Council.





Photos by Sgt. Taryn Stoen, 188th Army Band



## FIRE UP THE BAND

Top, members of the 188th Army Band perform Aug. 12 in the Jazz Festival Big Band at the 24th Annual Jazz Festival in Fargo. The band also includes musicians from the Fargo-Moorhead area. The goal of the Jazz Festival is to promote and showcase jazz in the Red River Valley area with local jazz groups, combos and big bands performing free concert, which is open to the public. Above, left, Spc. Brian Lydeen, of the 188th Army Band, directs the Jazz Festival Big Band. In his professional occupation, Lydeen is the associate professor of woodwinds at the University of Mary. Above, right, Sgt. 1st Class Kate Naujokas sings "Night and Day" with the Jazz Festival Big Band. As a French horn player and vocalist for the 188th Army Band, Naujokas is involved in multiple musical groups and uses her voice to bring a different sound to the band.





## WELCOME ABOARD!

Maj. Roy Thomsen administers the enlistment oath for several members of the 119th Wing Student Flight, who participated in a commitment ceremony July 12 on the grandstand at the Red River Valley Fair, West Fargo, prior to some musical performances.



Photos by Senior Master Sgt. David H. Lipp, 119th Wing

## FIELD DAYS

The 219th Security Forces Squadron and 119th Medical Group joined forces July 11-15 for an annual training exercise at Camp Grafton Training Center. While the 219th security Forces Squadron sharpened its edge with annual weapons familiarization, training and qualification, 119th medical professionals were embedded into security forces squads to train and to provide medical assistance, if necessary. Senior Airman Maggie Swenson, of the 119th Medical Group, scans the wooded surroundings as she awaits a signal to proceed with a training squad during force-on-force training. Above, right, Swenson, left, and Tech. Sgt. Katherine Robbins, both of the 119th Medical Group, assist Staff Sgt. Michael Heinz, middle, during force-on-force training in a military operations in urban terrain (MOUT) village at Camp Grafton Training Center.





Photos by Sgt. Ashley Johlfs, 116th Public Affairs Detachment

## NEVER FORGET

Maj. Gen. Al Dohrmann, North Dakota adjutant general, hosted a Remembrance Prayer Service Sept. 11 to honor North Dakota's fallen service members and their families. The ceremony was at the Memorial to the Fallen in the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT), which is located at the entrance to Fraine Barracks in Bismarck.

The memorial at Fraine Barracks was dedicated on Sept. 11, 2009, and honors 28 North Dakota service members who lost their lives in the Global War on Terrorism. It was established to provide a place where families, friends and fellow citizens could reflect and remember the service of the fallen. The memorial is a joint venture between the City of Bismarck and the North Dakota National Guard and is funded through private donations.

Prior to the formal remembrance ceremony, attendees also were invited to participate in an "Old Glory" run/walk/bike/blade, which spanned over the biking trail extending from Pioneer Park to the GWOT memorial.



## HAPPY RETIREMENT!



Photo by Mr. Jonathan Haugen, Joint Force Headquarters

Maj. Gen. Al Dohrmann, North Dakota adjutant general, right, presents Col. Gordon "Gordy" Leingang the Legion of Merit during his retirement ceremony Sept. 16 at the North Dakota Army National Guard's Army Aviation Support Facility in Bismarck. Leingang is credited with more than four decades of service with the N.D. National Guard and U.S. Marine Corps.

## Share your photos!

Submit your photos to be considered for inclusion in the N.D. Guardian!

Email high-resolution photos to Staff Sgt. Eric Jensen, N.D. Guardian editor, at [eric.w.jensen.mil@mail.mil](mailto:eric.w.jensen.mil@mail.mil).







## Fifth Annual Fit Fair Held in Bismarck

By Sgt. Ashley Johlfs,  
116th Public Affairs Detachment

The North Dakota National Guard partnered with Bismarck State College, MDU Resources and local baseball team the Bismarck Larks Aug. 25 to hold its 5th Annual Fit Fair at the MDU Resources Bowl.

"The Fit Fair is an opportunity for Guard members, their families and friends to enjoy an activity-filled day for free," said Lt. Col. Patrick Flanagan, Service Member and Family Support director for the N.D. National Guard.

This year's event hosted an array of vendors, such as gyms, chiropractic care experts and nutritionists from around the community, bringing their knowledge and expertise together to show Fit Fair attendees locally-offered wellness resources and services.

One of those vendors was [solidcore], a boutique fitness establishment that's focus is on slow, controlled strength and resistance training. Their representatives joined more than 15 vendors at the Fit Fair this year.

"This was our first year attending and having a booth. Having the event over the weekend allowed for our team to participate and for the public to enjoy a beautiful Saturday and not feel rushed like so many families do during the week," said Wendy Schmidt, studio manager for [solidcore]'s Bismarck and Mandan locations. "The Fit Fair, for us, represented community and connection, breaking down a wall for so many who have heard about [solidcore] (or the other vendors represented) but have wanted to know more."



Photo by Sgt. Brandi Schmidt, 116th Public Affairs Detachment

**Capt. Janet Nitschke, of Joint Force Headquarters, instructs participants at the obstacle course Aug. 25 during the 5th Annual Fit Fair at the MDU Resources Community Bowl. MDU Resources celebrated 50 years of being headquartered in the Bismarck area by partnering with the National Guard on a community day lineup of family-friendly events.**

In addition to wellness vendors, the Fit Fair offered an obstacle course at which attendees could test their fitness. The course consisted of 20 different challenges for a number of four-man teams, which tested their agility, speed and endurance. Some of the challenges at the course included a ruck sprint, where competitors wore a weighted ruck sack and sprinted 50 meters, and a low crawl in which they crawled under a heavy-wheeled military vehicle. There was additional fun for kids at their own obstacle course and also a rock wall and bouncy houses.

The Fit Fair was established in 2014 to promote health and wellness exclusively for National Guard members and their families. The event has transformed into a large community event bringing all types of people together.

"It's become a community outreach event and a way for the Guard to build relationships within the community," Flanagan said.

In addition to the physical aspect of the Fit Fair, attendees this year could enjoy a live band and food from different vendors around the community. People of all ages enjoyed the night.

"When people hear the terms health and wellness, they might tend to think of physical health and eating right. While those are certainly in line with the concept, health and wellness encompasses so much more. Total body health and wellness includes things like healthy social activity, healthy relationships with those closest to you, being mentally and physically active, as well as eating well-balanced meals," Schmidt said. ■

## Bismarck Cyber Unit Receives Mobilization Alert

By Mr. Bill Prokopyk,  
N.D. National Guard Public Affairs Office

A North Dakota Army National Guard unit has received an alert notification for possible mobilization. Based in Bismarck, the unit has about seven Soldiers who were placed in an alert status. The decision to mobilize this unit has not yet occurred, but upon a final decision, an official U.S. Army mobilization order will be issued.

Detachment 1, 174th Cyber Protection Team was established in January 2017 and is a part of Army National Guard units from Colorado, South Dakota and Utah.

If mobilized, the unit will provide network security and cyber defense operations in support of the Department of Defense early next year at Fort Meade, Maryland.

"This unit's potential mission marks a new era within the North Dakota National Guard, as it engages in cutting-edge cyber operations technology," said

Maj. Gen. Al Dohrmann, North Dakota adjutant general. "If mobilized, we will rely on the continued strong support of our Soldiers' families, friends and employers, which will ensure mission success."

The Soldiers were notified of their alert status by their leadership. The unit is led by 1st Lt. Charles Werner, of Upham, North Dakota.

Currently, about 50 North Dakota Guardsmen are mobilized for stateside and overseas missions. ■



# Chaplains' Corner:

## Faith, Snake Oil and a Life Well Lived

By Chaplain (Capt.) Dellas Herbel,  
119th Wing

If I told you there was one thing that would drastically reduce suicide, sexual assault, domestic violence and addiction — while simultaneously improving recovery rates, if addicted — decrease recovery time from medical procedures and increase your life expectancy, would you be interested? Would you think I had a bottle of snake oil to sell? Both reactions are valid, the second one especially. This all sounds too good to be true. How can this be?

Well, U.S. Air Force Chaplain (Maj. Gen.) Dondi Costin, chief of chaplains, dug into the most recent research that has been done over the last several years regarding faith and its connection to mental and physical health and found that there is much to be reexamined. What the latest research shows is that people are significantly more resilient and healthier (physically and mentally) when they are active in practicing a faith. For example, practicing your faith has been linked to lower mortality rates (by 30 percent), shorter recovery time after heart surgery, lower levels of mental illness, lower levels of suicide (in one study 500 percent lower) and stable marriages. This is research that is reviewed, published and cross-checked. A major researcher in this area is Dr. Harold G. Koenig at Duke University, though he is hardly alone. Across the studies, done by researchers from many institutions, we are finding that being a regular practitioner of a religion is the surest way to be healthier and more resilient.

More than that, the research suggests that people who would



Chaplain (Capt.) Dellas Herbel, chaplain for the 119th Wing, conducts a non-denominational chapel service Aug. 5 in the heritage park gazebo area at the North Dakota Air National Guard Base, Fargo.

call themselves “spiritual but not religious,” or who would claim to have a faith but rarely attend services, do not have any higher levels of resiliency than those who would claim to have no faith commitments. The general take away is that no matter what one’s faith might be — Protestant, Catholic, Eastern Orthodoxy, Jewish, etc. — actively participating in that faith taps into something that is spiritually necessary and important to being a robustly resilient person. So, the next time your wife, girlfriend, mom, grandmother, father, brother, sister or anyone else tells you to “go to church,” listen to them! Actively living your faith is not just about checking a box or making some other person happy. It does you a lot of good, too! ■

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Photos by Senior Master Sgt. David H. Lipp, 119th Wing

## Flowers Retires After 27 Years of Service

Col. John Flowers receives the Meritorious Service Medal from Maj. Gen. Al Dohrmann, North Dakota adjutant general, during his retirement ceremony Oct. 6 at the North Dakota Air National Guard Base, Fargo. Flowers, who served as the state chaplain for Joint Force Headquarters, has been a member of the N.D. National Guard for more than 27 years. He first served as a member of the N.D. Army Guard, receiving a direct commission in 1991 as a chaplain (first lieutenant) in the 142nd Engineer Combat Battalion. He also was a chaplain for the 141st Engineer Combat Battalion before being assigned as staff chaplain for the 119th Wing in Fargo in April 2002.

As state chaplain, Flowers developed and executed training plans, budgets, programs, recruitment and supervised a staff of chaplains and chaplain assistants. He also advised commanders on ethical, moral and religious issues affecting the emotional and spiritual health of all N.D. National Guard members.





Photo by Senior Master Sgt. David H. Lipp, 119th Wing

U.S. President Donald J. Trump shakes hands with well-wishers gathered to greet him Sept. 7 upon his arrival at the North Dakota Air National Guard Base, Fargo. It was the second visit to Fargo by President Trump this year, with the first stop being June 27. Vice President Mike Pence also stopped at the N.D. Air National Guard Base for a short visit to Fargo March 27. About 120 people were allowed to gather to greet the President upon his arrival. This is the fourth U.S. President out of the past five photographed by Senior Master Sgt. David H. Lipp during his career at the N.D. Air National Guard.