

# Bluegrass Guard

Vol. 23, Issue 1 - October 2019

Serving the men and women of Kentucky's Army and Air National Guard

## TOP DOG

CANINE CALLIE

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UNIT VISITS  
ECUADOR  
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**YOU'VE GONE  
GUARD, NOW  
GO FULL-TIME**

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# AROUND THE GUARD

## AND IN OUR PAGES



**ON THE COVER** - Master Sgt. Rudy Parsons, a pararescueman with the Kentucky Air National Guard's 123rd Special Tactics Squadron, and Callie, his search and rescue dog, participate in an natural disaster-response training exercise at Volk Field, Wis., July 17, 2019. Photo by Staff Sgt. Joshua Horton.



**JFHQ** - Brig. Gen Scott A. Campbell stops to pose with a child during the Kentucky National Guard's Child and Youth Camp in Nancy, KY., July 30, 2019. The camp is designed to enhance resiliency in military kids through fun and challenging activities.



**238th RTI** - Warrant Officer Candidate School Class 19-001 and members of the Djiboutian Military stand beside the class sign on July 21, 2019 at Wendell H. Ford Regional Training Center in Greenville, KY. The sign was presented to the 238th by the class.



**138th FAB** - A Soldier with 1st Battalion, 623rd Field Artillery Battalion, applies camouflage face paint on a girl's face during the battalion's joint family day shoot on Fort Knox, Ky., Aug. 10, 2019.



**75th TC** - Kentucky National Guard Soldiers assigned to Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 149th Infantry Regiment and Arkansas National Guard Soldiers breach and assault an objective on the Infantry Platoon Battle Course at Fort Pickett, Va., July 23, 2019.



**123rd AW** - Brig. Gen. Jeffrey Wilkinson receives his first salute as Kentucky's new assistant adjutant general for Air during a transfer-of-responsibility ceremony at the Kentucky Air National Guard Base in Louisville, Ky., Aug. 11, 2019.



**63rd TAB** - B Co 2-147th AVN participated in the first multinational mission under Task Force Gunfighter. The mission consisted of 1-UH60M and 1-NH90 from Task Force Griffon out of Italy.



**149th MEB** - Soldiers from the 1103rd Military Police Detachment participate in training exercises with their Romanian counterparts in Afghanistan.



## BLUEGRASS GUARD

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## IN THIS EDITION

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# 206TH ENGINEERS DEPLOY OVERSEAS

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Benjamin Crane

Hundreds of family and friends joined Lt. Gov. Jenean Hampton and Kentucky National Guard leadership in a departure ceremony at the Owensboro Convention Center to say farewell to the 206th Engineer Battalion today who are scheduled to deploy to the Middle East for the next year.

"I am extremely confident in the abilities of each Soldier to accomplish our mission. We have worked hard over the last 20 months to prepare for this deployment and the dedication to mission accomplishment these Soldiers have shown is noteworthy," said Lt. Col. Michael Lawson, commander for the 206th.

More than 150 Soldiers will

be headed to the US Central Command Area of Operations to conduct construction mission in support of Operation Inherent Resolve.

The feeling of readiness came from each Soldier, including the leader of one of the two companies attached to the 206th Engineers.

"The Soldiers of the 206th have participated in a rigorous training schedule in the lead up to our mission. I can confidently say we are ready for the task at hand," said Capt. G. Robert Meachem Jr., Headquarters Company commander. "We are well prepared to uphold the stellar reputation of the Kentucky Army National Guard."

The 206th mission while deployed will be managing construction and facilities maintenance projects focused on force protection across the region.

"The work you have done to prepare yourselves and to prepare each other has made a great team," added Lawson. "I look forward to serving with each one of you."

The unit was last deployed in 2006 to Kuwait during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Since Sept. 11, 2001, the Kentucky National Guard has mobilized more than 18,000 Soldiers and Airmen in support of the Global War on Terror.

## LETTER TO EDITOR POLICY

The Bluegrass Guard values opinions

To comment, keep remarks under 150 words, include your name, rank and address and send them to:

Mail The Bluegrass Guard  
KYNG Public Affairs  
100 Minuteman Parkway  
Frankfort, KY 40601

E-Mail KYNG.PAO@mail.mil

• • • •

We reserve the right to edit letters for tone, length, clarity, and factual accuracy.

## CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Don't miss an issue

All change of address requests should be made by the unit clerk using RCAS for all current Army or Air National Guardsmen. The Bluegrass Guard is mailed out via alert roster addresses at the unit level.

Army Retiree address changes should be made through the Kentucky National Guard Personnel Services Branch at 502-607-1497.

Air Retirees should request changes through retired Chief Master Sgt. James Turpin at jturpin1945@gmail.com.

# 223RD MP COMPANY DEPLOYS TO CUBA



Story and photos by Sgt. Cody Cooper

Hundreds of friends and family members joined Kentucky National Guardsmen to say farewell to one of our Military Police Companies at the United Auto Workers Union Hall in Louisville, Ky., August 23, 2019.

The Soldiers of 223rd Military Police Company will be deploying to Guantanamo Bay in support of U.S. Southern Command.

"I am encouraged by the dedication of the Soldiers of this unit to the task at hand," said Capt. Jeremy Hendrick, unit commander. "The characteristics of these men and women make me so proud to serve alongside of them. They are trained and they are ready."

Months of training, extended drill weekends and time away from family have all paid off the unit in terms of their readiness.

"We are excited to get on with the mission," said Sgt. 1st Class Nicholas Vaughn. "We have endured months of training and I can promise you we are fully prepared for this mission."

Deputy Adjutant General, Brig. Gen. Scott Campbell ceremonially signed a memorandum for deployment entrusting the mission and welfare of the unit to Hendrick and 1st Sgt. Sherman McCoy. Campbell thanked families and employers for their support of the unit and echoed the readiness of the unit.

"These Soldiers are some of the best the commonwealth has to offer," said Campbell. "I am confident that they will do their jobs and make us proud."

The unit was last deployed in 2008-2009 to Baghdad, Iraq in Support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.



## HAZING: NOT AN ARMY VALUE

### What is your Military rite of passage?

Without exception, hazing and bullying goes against our core values. All Soldiers & Airmen as well as our civilian counterparts should be treated with dignity and respect. When these acts occur, our organization is weakened and we jeopardize our overall readiness.

Hazing can also be known as a 'Rite of Passage' or initiation, horseplay or induction into the unit or section. When a service member completes their basic combat training or officer candidate school, they have been initiated into our military organization and require no more effort to prove themselves.

Hazing, recklessly or intentionally can cause another member of our organization to suffer or be exposed to any activity that is cruel, abusive, humiliating, oppressive, demeaning or harmful.

Bullying excludes or rejects another Soldier through behavior which results in diminishing the other individual's dignity, position, or status.

We have no place for this in our military. If you lay your hands on another person and it's unwanted, that action can be considered assault.

Remember, when it comes to hazing, consent can neither be given nor implied; full responsibility and fault for acts of hazing rests with the perpetrator.

We have an obligation to our organization, our state & our country. We must be strong, resilient and always ready to take the fight to the enemy. This means keeping and maintaining the best on our team.

REF: TAG Policy LOG # P16-016 Treat of Persons (Hazing and Bullying)

**STOP  
BULLYING**





# THE DEADLIFT

**SPC. RYAN SOWDER**

## BIO:

I have played sports my whole life and exercise has always been a way to separate myself in the sport I was playing. It helped me earn a scholarship to play collegiate level football.

I played football at Georgetown College with my brother Zach. He graduated two years before me and started CrossFit when he graduated. I saw the success he was having and knew that when I finished my last season of football I was going to start CrossFit. I had competed my whole life and didn't

want that to end when I graduated college. I have been doing CrossFit for almost 4 years now and have far surpassed any expectations I had for myself.

Since graduating college I have been competing worldwide in CrossFit. I recently placed 30th in the world at the CrossFit Games.

I qualified for my first CrossFit Games by winning the CrossFit Lowlands Throwdown, a three day competition in Europe.



## TIPS:

**1 BRACE ABS AND  
GLUTES BEFORE  
LIFTING**

**2 DO NOT YANK THE  
BAR ON YOUR  
FIRST REP**

**3 KEEP BACK FLAT AND  
THINK ABOUT PRESSING  
FEET THROUGH THE FLOOR**



# HEROIC AIR GUARDSMAN PREVENTS MAJOR CATASTROPHE

*Story and photo by Lt. Col. Dale Greer*

U.S. Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. David L. Goldfein bestowed the Distinguished Flying Cross on Lt. Col. John “J.T.” Hourigan during a ceremony at the Kentucky Air National Guard Base here yesterday, praising the pilot’s “exceptional airmanship under duress.”

Hourigan distinguished himself by extraordinary achievement while serving as commander of a C-130 Hercules aircraft on July 15, 2016, narrowly recovering the aircraft from a potentially fatal descent following a catastrophic mechanical failure.

“This is a big day, and this is a big deal,” Goldfein told an audience of nearly 800 Airmen, friends and family. “This is the Distinguished Flying Cross. We don’t hand many of these out.

“Every aviator here has burned into our psyche three lines that drive our response to every emergency: maintain aircraft control, analyze the situation and take proper action. This is a story I am going to use as chief for the remainder of my tenure when I talk about those three key attributes. This is a story about how all of J.T.’s training, his upbringing, his heritage and his competence all came together when lives were on the line. He performed each

one of these steps, and recovered an aircraft that was heading to a possibly tragic end.

“So we’re really proud of J.T., and his team and his unit. For his steady hand under the worst conditions. Because today we celebrate the safe return of an entire crew, so that you all can continue this wing’s incredibly important mission.”

Hourigan, who held the rank of major at the time of the incident, “prevented a catastrophic aircraft mishap using superior aviation skills, expeditious problem-solving and vast knowledge of the airframe, saving five crew members’ lives, himself and a \$30 million aircraft,” according to the award citation.

“At low altitude in the Owensboro, Kentucky, area, the aircraft began to vibrate with such ferocity that crew members could not interpret the flight instruments or engine gauges, and were unable to communicate normally due to extreme noise. Rapidly losing altitude and airspeed, the aircraft was shaking so violently that crewmembers thought it was coming apart.

“Lacking any instrumentation information

available during training and simulator profiles, Maj. Hourigan quickly eliminated all plausible causes for the condition while simultaneously preparing for a forced landing,” the citation continues. “Without recourse to any codified procedures, he bravely exercised independent judgment and directed a shutdown of an engine based on the throttle variation he felt in his hand. With the aircraft continuing to decelerate and losing altitude, the engine shutdown was accomplished flawlessly 277 feet above ground.”

Maj. Hourigan then successfully recovered the aircraft and performed an emergency landing, after which the crew discovered the aircraft had suffered a catastrophic propeller failure of the engine for which Major Hourigan had directed a shutdown.

“Maj. Hourigan actively participated in the safety investigation to determine the root cause of the malfunction, resulting in a safety supplement to the C-130 aircraft operating manual,” the citation concludes. “The magnitude of the mechanical malfunction was elevated to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, resulting in modifications to depot- and unit-level Technical Orders affecting the global C-130 fleet.”

Goldfein also praised the dedication of Airmen from the 123rd Airlift Wing, one of the most decorated units in the U.S. Air Force.

“This wing has a rich history, evolving from the times of tactical fighters in your past to tactical airlift today, along with aeromedical and special operations,” he noted. “This great wing also contributes critical, unparalleled capability (with the Air Guard’s) only contingency response group.

“To the members of this wing, where excellence is the standard, our Air Force continues down the path of Total Force integration – active, Guard, reserve and civilian. We truly are one Air Force, 685,000 strong. Part of a long blue line, working together in perfect formation, and ready to face the challenge and meet the needs of 21st-century warfare.

“Never underestimate the importance of your contribution to the defense of this nation. America sleeps well at night because we don’t. We stand the watch, and we will continue to do so. May God bless this nation that we love, and those from the 123rd who always have, and always will, defend it.”





# Right, Then Forward

## *Kentucky Inspectors General a force-multiplier & command tool*

By Sgt 1st Class Gina Vaile-Nelson, Assistant Inspector General

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In 1777, the Continental Congress supported General George Washington's desire to incorporate an Inspector General to improve the disorganization of the Continental Army, enforce a training standard, and ensure that officers commanded properly and treat Soldiers with justice. The IG's duties, as outlined by Congress included "to report all abuses, neglect, and

deficiencies to the Commander-in-Chief."

Two-hundred and forty-two years later, the principles and mission of the IG has barely changed. The

Kentucky National Guard's IG Team is the eyes, ears, voice and conscious of our Army and Air Guard's spectrum of operations. The

KYNG-IG advises and assists leaders at all levels to maintain their service Values, readiness and effectiveness through teaching and training opportunities in an effort to prevent small issues from becoming systemic.

"Prior to my assignment as an IG, I shared the misconception that the inspectors general office was a black-hat, white-gloved group that purposefully intimidated leadership and hindered a unit's readiness through forced inspections," said Command Inspector General, Lt. Col. Todd S. Reed. "Since being in this office, I understand better the role the IG plays as a true force-multiplier for commanders."

The KYNG-IG office is comprised of both Air and Army professionals with decades of experience in their primary field(s). "We have an excellent team that truly does its due diligence with fact-finding to ensure the organization and its people are represented fair, and impartially through diligent fact-finding," Reed said.

"Our office receives multiple calls that affect a Soldier or Airman's morale: everything from late pay for duty, or improperly requesting transfer to another unit. Each of these things impacts that commander's readiness," he said. "We use these issues to conduct teaching and training for the complainant, and the unit leadership to ensure everyone understands the standards for getting things done properly and efficiently."

Reed hopes that commanders, and leaders at all levels, proactively seek the KYNG-IG assistance to prevent injustices or perceived injustices. Doing so, he said, "increases the Soldier's and Airmen's confidence in our leadership, which ultimately reduces the number of IG complaints."

In Fiscal Year 2018, the KYNG-IG office handled multiple pay assistance requests due to the migration of pay systems at the

national level. A lesson learned from the influx of complaints is commander knowledge is key. One way commander's can stay proactive is to monitor military pay reports from USPFO, and maintain contact throughout the month with the unit Readiness NCO or pay certifier to maintain situational awareness of any pay rejects or mismatches. Most of KYNG-IG's assistance with personnel actions are caused because the Soldier, or unit, did not follow proper procedures when filing personnel actions. The Army directorates have desktop references located on the GKO for commanders, first sergeants and RNCOs to help their subordinates navigate through transfer requests, changes of addresses or requests to enroll or cancel a training course properly.

Reed said the goal is for commanders and Soldiers or Airmen to utilize the IG before problems arise that turn into complaints. "I hope that commanders ask for us to conduct Staff Assistance Visits (SAV) to help them with internal program reviews, or to conduct sensing sessions with their Soldiers or Airmen to determine climate issues within the ranks. Proactive approach is always the best approach, and if we can teach Guardsmen at all levels what 'right' is first, then they can go forward successfully."

### Complaints & Assistance FY 18 Trends

44%  
Finance &  
Pay

10%  
Personnel Actions

Misconduct

Leadership Issues &  
Improper Actions

20%

7%





# KENTUCKY SOLDIERS PREPARE FOR NEW MADRID EARTHQUAKE

Story by Maj. Gus LaFontaine



"I felt the building swaying side to side. I could hear the building creak underneath me. I was scared."

This was my wife's experience from the 12th floor of a Los Angeles hotel in early July. The headline of the next day's Los Angeles Times read, "Biggest earthquake in years rattles Southern California."

Luckily, the effect of the magnitude 6.6 earthquake was significantly decreased because it was centered in a sparse valley 125 miles away. Earthquakes are frequently associated with southern California however, Kentucky's western tip sits atop the New Madrid fault line, also known as the New Madrid Seismic Zone.

Recently, Kentucky Army National Guardsmen prepared for an event in the New Madrid Seismic Zone.

Col. William Denny, Director of the Joint Staff, spearheaded the training exercise. When asked about the consequences for Kentucky of a New Madrid earthquake similar in size to the one in Los Angeles, he responded that such a quake would have significant statewide effects.

"I can't overemphasize this, this is going to be an event that will really boggle the mind with the degree of destruction." He said. "The term for this would be 'landscape disaster.' Landscape disasters are events that change the American way of life. If this happens, the United States won't be the same."

The Kentucky Army National Guard involved more than 200 Soldiers for a training exercise that focused on the fallout of a New Madrid earthquake.

Denny spoke about the value of training for such a catastrophic event.

"By planning and organizing for the worst case scenario that we can think of we can be more assured that we can adjust downward and handle any emergency that would arise."

The planning centered on actions that the Kentucky Guard would take following an earthquake. Those actions are similar to steps that the force would take

in the wake of other natural disasters.

"We have an overall concept of how we would organize and operate. Providing security is generally providing security. Driving a truck is driving a truck. Setting up a point of distribution or assisting first responders with doing wellness checks is a task that has a variety of applications. Those tasks at the lower level are essentially the same as we would perform during any response in support of civil authorities," Denny said.

One of the more significant challenges is ensuring relief efforts move forward despite a variety of obstacles such as broken communication channels.

Lt. Col. Kris Morlen, Domestic Operations Branch Planning Chief, was part of the training exercise. He discussed the importance of front-line leaders being proactive in such an event.

"Our thought process with the entire plan was to give commanders in the field flexibility. They just have to know what their broad missions are. In a catastrophic plan, we rely on leaders at the lowest level to use disciplined initiative, act under very broad guidance, and do something that saves lives, prevents suffering, and contributes to the security environment."

Morlen has been involved with this training exercise since it began almost one year ago. He reflected on the effectiveness of the training exercise. "I think this was very successful. We brought together a joint planning group that was full of representatives of every staff section. Each of them had worked in numerous commands throughout the state. It was a conglomeration of a multidisciplinary group of professionals that resulted in a good start to a strong plan."

Denny offered a more sobering reflection. "If the goal is to say that we're ready for this tomorrow, then we are more ready than we were. However, I really don't ever want to know how ready we are."

## MAKE A PLAN

Your family may not be together if a disaster strikes, so it is important to know which types of disasters could affect your area. Know how you'll contact one another and reconnect if separated. Establish a family meeting place that's familiar and easy to find. Make a plan today.

### ASK 4 QUESTIONS

1. How will I receive emergency alerts and warnings?
2. What is my shelter plan?
3. What is my evacuation route?
4. What is my family/household communication plan?

### TAILOR TO YOUR NEEDS

As you prepare your plan, tailor your plans and supplies to your specific daily living needs and responsibilities. Keep in mind some these factors when developing your plan:

- Different ages of members
- Locations frequented
- Dietary and medical needs
- Pets or service animals
- Households with school-aged children
- Cultural and religious considerations
- Languages spoken
- Responsibilities for assisting others
- Disabilities or access and functional needs including devices and equipment

### PRACTICE YOUR PLAN WITH YOUR FAMILY

Practicing your plan is crucial to having a plan that will be successful when a disaster occurs. You have heard it before; train like you fight, fight like you train.

### RESEARCH

For more information on how to plan for a disaster, please visit: [ready.gov/make-a-plan](https://ready.gov/make-a-plan)



# GO GUARD FULLTIME

The Kentucky National Guard has a full time mission to ensure the readiness of its Soldiers and Airmen. The Army National Guard employs over 1000 full time employees across the state. About half are AGR and the other half are Title 32 (Dual Status) or Title 5 Civilian. The Air National Guard employs over 350 full time employees in Louisville, KY. About half are AGR and the other half are Title 32 (Dual Status) or Title 5 Civilian.

## FEDERAL HIRING MYTHS

### A FEDERAL RESUME SHOULD NOT EXCEED TWO PAGES

**FALSE.** A federal resume requires more information than a civilian resume, therefore, it is typically longer than two pages. Some of the things that should be included are your educational and work experience. This includes job titles, salary, employment dates, duties and accomplishments, and how it relates to the 1) minimum, 2) specialized and 3) experience requirements in the job announcement.

### RESUMES ARE SCANNED FOR KEYWORDS BY AN AUTOMATED SYSTEM

**FALSE.** Real people, Human Resource (HR) specialists, look at resumes and validate whether the individual meets the 1) minimum, 2) specialized and 3) experience requirements that are lined out for the position.

### THE JOB ANNOUNCEMENT LOOKS LIKE IT HAS BEEN WRITTEN WITH SOMEONE IN MIND

**FALSE.** The job announcement is written by the hiring manager with the assistance of the Human Resource (HR) Specialist. It is written to include the 1) minimum, 2) specialized and 3) experience requirements required to perform the duties of the position. While there may be a perceived candidate in the running, quite often that person doesn't get the position advertised. Either they're not selected, they did not get through HRO's vetting process or they did not submit an application.

**APPLY - APPLY - APPLY.** It demonstrates your desire to serve full time.

## HELPFUL LINKS

**TECHNICIAN:** [usajobs.com](https://usajobs.com)  
(Search Kentucky National Guard)

**AGR:** <https://gko.portal.ng.mil/states/KY/SitePages/Home.aspx>

-Requires CAC reader

-HRO / KY Army Guard / Libraries / AGR FTNGD Vacancy announcements

**STATE:** [personnel.ky.gov](https://personnel.ky.gov)

You can find these links on: <https://kentuckyguard.dodlive.mil/join-us/>



**Tech Title 32 Permanent** - Dual Status Federal Technician. Requires membership in the Kentucky National Guard. Permanent Civilian employee of the Federal Government with "career" status.

**Tech Title 32 Indefinite** - Dual Status federal technician. Requires membership in the KYNG. Provides full benefits but the position is subject to termination at any time at the will of the appointing official (with 30 days notice).

**Tech Title 32 Temporary** - Dual Status federal technician. Requires membership in the KYNG. Employment for a short period of time with no benefits and are subject to termination at any time at the will of the appointing official.

**Title 5 Permanent** - Federal Employee. Does NOT require any membership in the KYNG or military. Permanent Civilian employee of the Federal Government with "career" status.

**Title 5 Term** - Federal Employee. Does NOT require any membership in the KYNG or military. Provides full benefits but the position is subject to termination at any time at the will of the appointing official (with 30 days notice).

**AGR** - 'Active Guard Reserve's receive the same active duty pay and benefits that Soldiers or Airmen on active duty receive with their positions being confined to the state of Kentucky.

**ADOS** - Active Duty Operational Support. Limited opportunities to come on fulltime orders for a specified period of time. During the time of the orders, service member receives the same active duty pay and benefits that Soldiers or Airmen on active duty receive.



# 5 REASONS TO GO FULLTIME



## HIGH COMPENSATION INCREASE

Federal employees receive competitive salaries with the added benefit of high cost of living compensation increases.



## MORE VACATION & HOLIDAYS

Over the course of a career, federal civilian employees receive nearly 1.5 years more in paid vacation and holidays than the average private employee. Increased vacation time means that employees are given ample time and resources to properly recharge so as to better function in their jobs.



## JOB SECURITY

The National Guard will always have a mission within the military. The Title 32 (Dual Status) program must be able to maintain military membership to continue as a Federal Technician. Title 5 employees have no requirement to maintain a military membership. Private employees are at a much higher risk for being terminated than employees of the federal government.



## GENEROUS HEALTH BENEFITS

The Federal Healthcare Benefits Program, or FHBP, provides the widest selection of health care plans of any U.S. employer. Though government health care benefits tend to pale compared to those offered by private employers while an employee is working, most government health care plans provide superior benefits to retirees than do private health care plans.



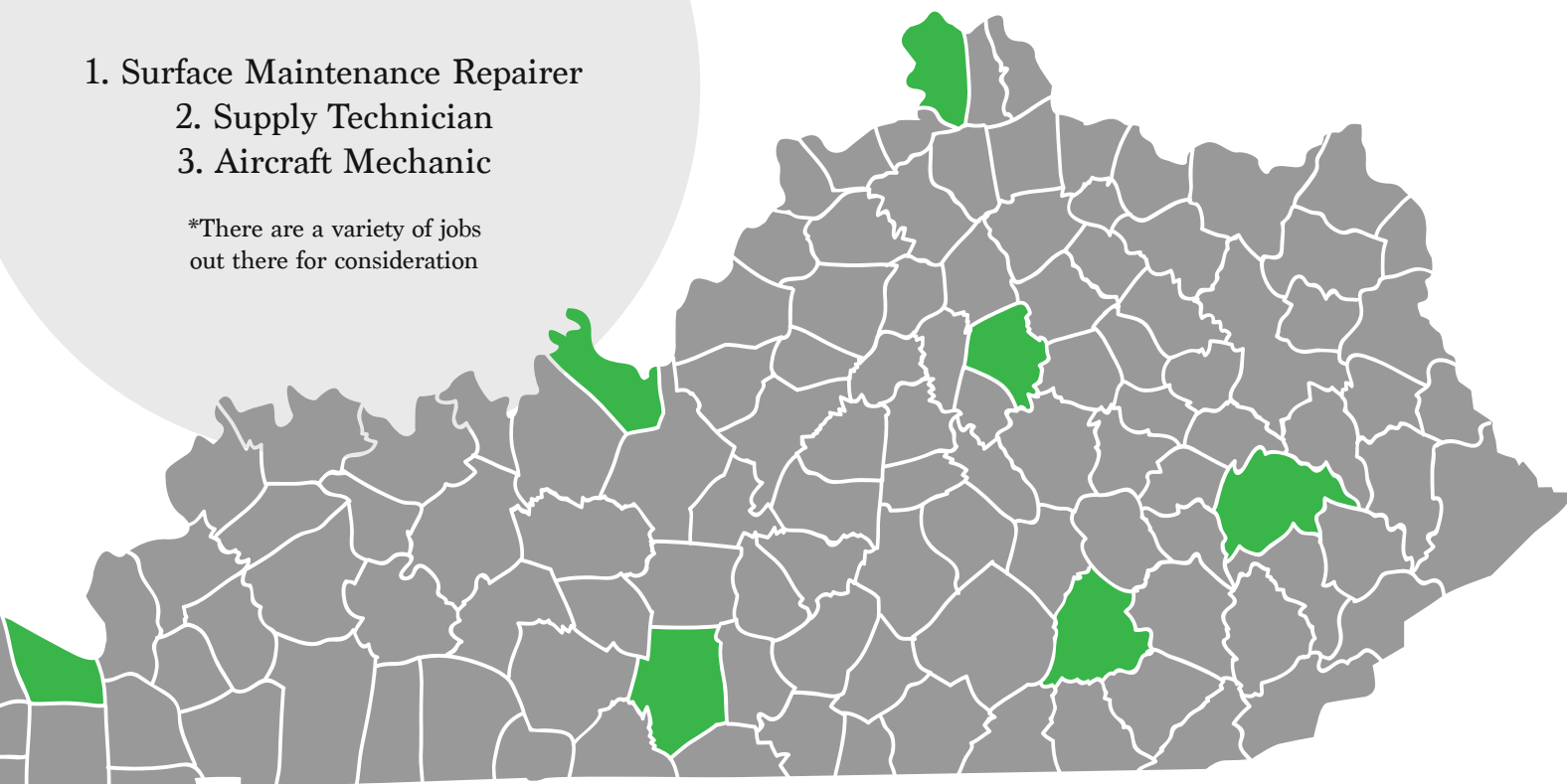
## GENEROUS RETIREMENT BENEFITS

Retired employees receive an annuity, complemented by Social Security benefits and participation in the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP), which offers 401(k)-type investment options. Retired federal employees also have the option of continuing health benefits at the same monthly cost that they paid before retirement.

## TOP 3 MOST COMMON JOB OPENINGS\*:

1. Surface Maintenance Repairer
2. Supply Technician
3. Aircraft Mechanic

\*There are a variety of jobs out there for consideration



## COUNTIES WITH KEY FULLTIME EMPLOYMENT POSITIONS



# THE ONLY SEARCH AND RESCUE DOG IN THE DOD

*Story and photo by Staff Sgt. Joshua Horton*

In 2010, Airmen from the Kentucky Air National Guard deployed to Port-au-Prince, the capital and most populous city of Haiti, in response to a magnitude 7 earthquake that impacted millions.

"With the destroyed airfields, it was difficult for many government organizations to land aircraft and provide assistance," said Master Sgt. Rudy Parsons, a pararescueman with the Kentucky Air Guard's 123rd Special Tactics Squadron.

The Airmen were able to get on the ground and assist in clearing the airfield thanks to their special capabilities, but they soon faced more complications.

"Local sources were telling people that there was a schoolhouse that had collapsed with about 40 children inside," Parsons said. "A team of special tactics Airmen went over and started looking through the rubble, just carrying these rocks off, looking for these missing kids. A few days into the search, (the Federal Emergency Management Agency) was finally able to land. They brought a dog to the pile and were able to clear it in about 20 minutes. There was nobody in that pile.

"It had been a couple days of wasted labor that could've been used to help save other lives," Parsons continued. "It was at that time that we kind of realized the importance and the capability that dogs can bring to search and rescue. Every environment presents different difficulties, but it's all restricted by our human limitations. Our current practice is: Hoping that we see





Photo by Staff Sgt. Benjamin Crane



Photo by Staff Sgt. Benjamin Crane

or hear somebody.”

In response to scenarios like the Haitian earthquake, Parsons spearheaded a new approach, developing the squadron’s Search and Rescue K-9 program. The effort, launched in 2018, is designed to increase the capabilities of disaster response teams in locating and recovering personnel through the use of specially trained canines.

After several months of preparation, the unit acquired its newest member, Callie, a 26-month-old Dutch shepherd, making her the only search and rescue dog in the Department of Defense. She has now earned multiple qualifications to accommodate the specific skillset of the 123rd STS, including helicopter exfiltration and infiltration, mountain rescue (rappelling plus ice, snow and alpine maneuvers), static line and freefall parachute insertion.

“Callie is trained in live find,” Parsons said. “She goes into wilderness, collapsed-structure or disaster situations. She’s trained to detect living people, find them, and alert me when she’s located them. We react accordingly, mark the spot and begin the extraction of those people.

“The unique function that we can provide by developing Callie is that we can get her to places that nobody else can get to,” Parsons added. “That’s the biggest benefit that we really saw value in. In the situation like the earthquake in Haiti, we can get her in there, and those days in difference could be the difference in somebody’s life.”

Before Callie’s introduction to the unit, the method of search and rescue in urban settings involved probing and digging with drills and cameras. According to Parsons, this slow and sometimes unreliable method only added tools, weight and difficulty to the process.

“Our current method involves carrying around a bunch of extremely heavy equipment. Callie weighs 50 pounds, and she gets herself around. She beats any type of equipment or machine with just her capabilities, her nose and her intelligence. She’s just really good at her job.”

According to Chief Master Sgt. Karl Grugel, the squadron’s chief enlisted manager, dogs are a “secondary

requirement” for search and rescue on the civilian side.

“Pararescue is the only DoD asset dedicated to search and rescue, which is why Callie is such a mission-enhancing asset,” Grugel said. “Search and rescue dogs have already been proven time and time again on the civilian side. They have such an immense capability. When they do side-by-side testing, there’s nothing that even comes close to a canine.”

According to Parsons, the dog’s “stability and need to bond with her handler” makes the Guard uniquely suited to pioneer this initiative.

“It makes sense that the Guard would establish this because it’s such an intensive program,” Parsons said. “If you were to do this in an active duty squadron, you’d have personnel switching over all of the time. Her working life is anywhere from four to six years, so you could have multiple people go through and try to be her handler. In the Guard, we have people who are here for that whole time or longer.”

The experience level of Guard Airmen also helps make it more suited for innovations like this.

“The Guard and Reserve own 70 percent of the seven levels of Total Force special tactics,” Grugel said. “The Guard is more likely to lean forward on new innovations just because of the experience levels of its members.”

Looking to the future, Parsons hopes the SAR K-9 program will develop into a full-fledged military working dog program that can regularly deploy with special tactics personnel recovery teams and global access teams.

“We’re continuing just to develop her just so she can interact and function in every capability that the U.S. military could be in and there could be a need to save life,” Parsons said.

Beyond increasing the capabilities of the unit, Callie is an important teammate for members of the 123rd STS.

“When she got here, one of the biggest things I wanted was for her to be a teammate,” Parsons said. “She definitely does that. A lot of the guys think of her as family. Everybody looks forward to seeing her, and she looks forward to seeing everybody else.

“We have a very strong connection,” Parsons continued. “We spend 24/7 together and we’re always training together. I have to be consistent with her because she is a very beautiful dog, and I have to remember that she’s not a pet; she’s definitely a working dog.”

The 123rd SAR K-9 program was funded by the Air National Guard innovation program, meant to enable Airmen to make positive, meaningful change and drive a culture shift toward innovation. 🐾



Callie, a search and rescue dog for the Kentucky Air National Guard’s 123rd Special Tactics Squadron, alerts Master Sgt. Rudy Parsons, her handler, after locating a simulated casualty July 17, 2019, during a natural disaster-response exercise at Volk Field, Wis. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Joshua Horton)



# KENTUCKY GUARD SOLDIER POSTS **HIGHEST** ACFT SCORE TO DATE

*Story by Maj. Stephen Martin*

The U.S. Army is transitioning to a new physical fitness test, the Army Combat Fitness Test (ACFT), to better prepare Soldiers in readiness and lethality. To date, no Soldier yet has achieved a perfect score.

On June 18, Spc. Ryan Sowder from the 2112th Transportation Company out of Burlington, Kentucky scored 597 out of a possible 600 points. This is the highest score recorded in all of the U.S. Army so far – Active, Guard or Reserve.

“I didn’t think I would do as well (on the ACFT) as I did that day. I’d been sleeping on a cot and was out of my normal training routine for our unit’s summer training, but I just knew I was going to give it everything I had,” remarked Sowder. “The idea of giving all I have to something, particularly fitness, is really gratifying and I hope everyone can experience what it feels like to give 100% to something.”

Col. Joe Gardner, G3 Chief of Operations for the Kentucky National Guard, was surprised to hear that he took the ACFT after being in the field for two weeks with his unit.

“The accomplishments of this young man cannot be overstated,” said Gardner. “SPC Sowder’s score on the new Army Combat Fitness Test are impressive to say the least, especially after participating in his unit’s annual training leading up to the test.”

The ACFT is comprised of 6 events over the course of an hour to measure the muscular strength and endurance of a Soldier. The events include the deadlift, the standing power throw, the hand-release push-up, the sprint-drag-carry, the leg tuck and a 2-mile run.

According to Command Sergeant Major of the Army National Guard John Sampa, the new program better prepares a Soldier’s readiness for the demands of the modern battlefield.

“Spc. Sowder represents the thousands of quality Soldiers that are in today’s entire Army National Guard and the steadfast strength the Guard brings to the Army’s total force in protecting the United States of America,” said Sampa. “He represents full and part-time Soldiers that are physically and mentally prepared for combat operations and homeland responses at any given moment. America is secure because it has Citizen-Soldiers such as this one who is always ready and is always there.”

Sowder has taken the ACFT twice now, once at the school house in Fort Eustis, Virginia

when he was getting trained as a level II grader for the test and the second time with his unit at Camp Atterbury, Indiana. The first time he scored a 592 which at the time was the highest recorded score in the U.S. Army. This second time around, he bested his own score and missed the mark for 600 points by only five hand-release push-ups.

“I grew up playing sports year-round and have always been incredibly competitive. I realized early on that I could be really good (at athletics) if I put in the work,” commented Sowder. “I was fortunate to play football at Georgetown College while going to school and when that season began coming to a close, I realized I wanted to continue competing.

My brother who is two years older than me also played football for Georgetown College and after graduation started intensive muscular strength and power development in order to compete outside of football. I knew when he made that jump that I would be following him.”

Sowder credits his physical accomplishments to his tenacity and drive to succeed. This year, he was hoping to qualify for the 2019 Reebok Crossfit Games taking place Aug 1-4 in Madison, Wis. In order to make it, he had to win at the ‘Crossfit Lowlands Throwdown’ competition, one of only 15 regional competitions held across the world. He did what he set out to do and will be headed to Wisconsin in August. 🇺🇸







# KENTUCKY GUARDSMEN EXCHANGE BEST PRACTICES WITH ECUADORIAN AVIATORS

Story and photos  
by Staff Sgt. Alexa Becerra

*Seven Kentucky Army National Guard Soldiers participated in an engagement focused on Aviation capabilities in Quito and Guayaquil, Ecuador, August 25-30.*

The team consisted of two UH-60 Pilots, a Senior Flight Medic, the State Partnership Program coordinator for Kentucky, the Kentucky Army National Guard J5 Deputy Plans Director, an Avionics NCO/Interpreter, and a Public Affairs NCO/Interpreter.

The Kentucky National Guard has partnered with Ecuador for more than two decades as part of the National Guard Bureau's State Partnership Program (SPP). The goal of the SPP is to develop and maintain important security relationships between the United States and other nations sharing a long-term view of common interests.

"The Ecuadorian Army and Air Force wanted to discuss helicopter aviation operations and learn the Kentucky National Guard's best practices for Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster response," said Maj. Stephen Martin, Operations Officer for the 751st Aviation Troop Command and UH-60 Blackhawk Pilot in Command. "This included formation flying, night vision goggles and high altitude training."

According to the Ecuadorian Geophysical Insti-

tute, Ecuador is an area of intense seismic activity putting them at risk for earthquakes, tsunamis and volcanic eruptions. Other natural disasters Ecuador is prone to are flooding, landslides and forest fires.

"Sharing their knowledge on Search and Rescue operations, Bambi buckets, and formation flights will assist us in our training," said 2nd Lieutenant Jurado Andres, Army Aviation Group 45 "Pichincha" Helicopter Pilot. "The knowledge gained on Night Vision Goggle operations will be very valuable, because we are starting our program once again after 12 years."

Many of the practices learned will be taken into account as the Ecuadorian Army Aviation continues to develop their doctrine and training of NVG and search and rescue operations, said Andres.

The Guardsmen also had the opportunity to visit with the Ecuadorian Air Force in Guayaquil to discuss their techniques and procedures.

"Having the opportunity to share our experiences when it comes to Search and Rescue and Natural Disaster Response assists us in refining our procedures and training," said Maj. Luis Fernando Armas Baez, Combat Squadron Commander for the 22nd Air Wing of the Ecuadorian Air Force. "Renewing the partnership we've had with the United States has been the most productive part of this visit."

"We bring a wealth of knowl-

edge on operations under night visions goggles, while we found that our Ecuadorian Army Aviators had much more experience with mountain operations than we have," said Martin.

Moving forward, the goal is to continue growing the enduring relationship between Kentucky and Ecuador.

**"KENTUCKY HAS HAD A LONG AND STORIED HISTORY WITH ECUADOR GOING BACK TO 1996. WE'RE EXCITED TO BREATHE NEW LIFE INTO THIS PROGRAM"**

**-MAJ STEPHEN MARTIN**





# KENTUCKY'S TOP WARRANT OFFICER

By Staff Sgt. Benjamin Crane, 133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment



The Kentucky National Guard selected its top warrant officer for 2018. The Warrant Officer of the Year is an award that recognizes individuals who exemplify the warrant officer creed as well as, making significant contributions to the Guard and their community.

Chief Warrant Officer 2 Jeff Valentine is a construction engineering technician (120A) and works full time as a contract specialist for the United States Property and Fiscal Office (USPFO). He has served 24 years in the military with 19 of those served as an enlisted Soldier.

His professionalism, leadership, attention to detail and performance has brought great credit on himself, the 201st Engineer Battalion, the 149th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, and the KYARNG Warrant Officer Corps.

"I was surprised to be recommended," said Valentine. "I had just gotten back from deployment and hit the ground back in Kentucky pretty much but I was honored to be chosen."

But for those who work with him, hearing that he was this year's choice for the honor came as no surprise.

"Mr. Valentine is a true 'Quiet Professional'," said Chief Warrant Officer 5 Dwight Harlan, State Command Chief Warrant Officer, who has known Mr. Valentine for about five years. "He sets the standard for MOS expertise, physical fitness, and tactical proficiency; He has been very active in mentoring Engineering Warrant Officer Candidates as they progress through the 238th RTI (Regional Training Institute) WOCS (Warrant Officer Candidate School) program. His influence has been instrumental in developing candidates in

our current class."

Valentine brings a lot of experience to the table. From an early age he learned about construction and project management from his father and grandfather and it was that experience that led him to the guard. CSM Harold Disney himself basically recruited him and soon was put in charge of maintaining the Harold Disney Training site in Artemis, Kentucky as the site's construction engineer.

When he was growing up his dad taught carpentry at the Knox County Vocational School and he sat in on those classes. When he was a freshman in college, he even built a house for his parents to sell.

Even as an enlisted Soldier he held two

engineer military occupation specialties: Heavy equipment operator (62E) and carpentry masonry specialist (12W).

"As a 120A engineer warrant officer, your MOS covers all the 12 series and is a massive amount of information to know and we are supposed to be technical experts in the field," added Valentine.

But as an engineer warrant, Valentine admits it's not possible to know everything that is to know and is thankful he has other warrants to turn to for their expertise.

"The great thing about being a warrant officer though is the vast infrastructure of other warrant officers that you've met through school or annual trainings that you can pull information and knowledge from," said Valentine.

He has been a warrant officer since 2014 and has thoroughly loved it.

"My only regret is that I didn't do it 10 years sooner," said Valentine. "It's been a good experience for me."

His professionalism and leadership doesn't stop when he leaves work. He is active in his community and is a family man.

Valentine is married to his wife, Whitney, and has three children who range in age from 10-16. He makes sure that they are involved in the community with him as well. Every year they all go to the state Special Olympic Games and volunteer their time as well as volunteering at the Kentucky National Guard Kids Camp the last three out of four years. The only reason he missed one was due to his deployment to Kuwait.

"Mr. Valentine does not stop helping others when he takes the uniform off. He is active in his church, Frankfort Soup Kitchen, and the Special Olympic State Games in Richmond, Ky.," said Harlan.

Valentine has served two overseas deployments and has overseen many successful projects that have helped the infrastructure for those Soldiers and civilians in the Middle East.

"It is very important to have Warrant Officers like him," said Harlan. "We need Warrant Officers who are willing to support the cohort and give back to subordinates and their community."

Valentine's advice to anyone who is thinking about furthering their career and is in an MOS that has warrant capabilities, is to start working toward sharpening your skills and make the jump.

"Start working toward the next level, whatever that would be; a commissioned officer or a warrant officer, but if you have the knowledge and the skills in your particular field, don't wait like I did," said Valentine.







# SOLDIERS SAY GOODBYE MP COMPANY INACTIVATED

*Story by Staff Sgt. Benjamin Crane; photo by Pvt. Alexander Hellman*

Soldiers of the 940th Military Police Company gathered for the final time as a unit for an inactivation ceremony at the National Guard Armory Aug. 11, 2019.

Due to realignment within the Kentucky National Guard's force structure, military police units across the state were re-organized.

The Casing of the Colors ceremony is held to commemorate the unit's service and history, signifying the end of the command.

"They're divesting the company," said Capt. Cory Lane, commander of the 940th. "What that means is they are restructuring the force so all the Soldiers will be going to different units at this point."

Soldiers of the 940th have

played vital roles in domestic operations in Kentucky as well as deploying with the 149th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade to Iraq in 2011 and to the U.S. Virgin Islands in wake of Hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017.

Despite knowing about the possibility of the unit being inactivated, today's ceremony still brought out a lot of emotion for leaders and Soldiers alike.

"It's very emotional for me, it's like seeing your kids going away," said 1st Sgt. Ronald Peppi, who was their first sergeant for the past 18 months. "The Guard is one big family. This company was a family and those were my Soldiers, but they were also like my children."

Some Soldiers in the unit have only known the 940th, which made today a little tougher.

"I've been with this unit since 2010 and I haven't been to another unit, it's been my home," said a teary-eyed Sgt. Jessica Jenkins. "We're a family and the camaraderie here is amazing and a lot of us are going to try to get in the same unit again."

Of those in attendance, many were former Soldiers in the unit in some fashion and those who have retired but wanted to show their support for those currently still a part of the unit.

Following the guidon being cased for its final time, Maj. Robbie Anderson, commander of the 198th Military Police Battalion declared to the unit, "Mission Complete."

This type of restructure doesn't happen a lot in the National Guard according to Lane and despite the somber nature of the event, its

uniqueness couldn't be overlooked.

"It is one of those times where you have to sit back, and know it's a sad time for all the Soldiers involved, but it's kind of a unique thing going forward," added Lane.

The 940th is made up of roughly 150 Soldiers and has served the commonwealth as part of the 198th Military Police Battalion since 2001. These Soldiers have the opportunity to either move to a new position within another military police unit or re-classify into a new Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) based on the needs of the organization and the preferences of the service member.

While the 940th will case their colors, the Walton Armory will continue to operate as a home for the Kentucky Guard's Detachment 1, 223rd, MP Company.

# GRAY AREA RETIREES: LOOKING TO MAKE A WITHDRAWAL FROM YOUR TSP ACCOUNT?

*You now have more options for how and when you can access money from your TSP account. These changes are associated with the passage of the TSP Modernization Act (PL 115-84).*

*The new options fall into the following categories:*

- After you separate from service, you can take multiple post-separation partial withdrawals.*
- If you're 59 ½ or older and still working in federal civilian or uniformed service, you can take up to four in-service withdrawals each year.*
- You'll be able to choose whether your withdrawal should come from your Roth balance, your traditional balance, or a proportional mix of both.*
- You will no longer need to make a full withdrawal election after you turn 70 ½ and are separated from federal service. (You will still need to receive IRS required minimum distributions – RMDs.)*
- If you're a separated participant, you'll be able to take monthly, quarterly, or annual payments.*
- You'll be able to stop, start, or make changes to your installment payments at any time.*
- You'll have enhanced online tools to help you make withdrawals in the My Account section of [tsp.gov](https://tsp.gov).*

*You will continue to have the same existing withdrawal options available before the law passed in addition to the new ones.*

**For more information, visit the TSP Fact Sheet at <https://www.tsp.gov/PDF/formspubs/tspfs10.pdf> and the MyArmyBenefits Fact Sheet: [https://myarmybenefits.us.army.mil/Benefit-Library/Federal-Benefits/Thrift-Savings-Plan-\(TSP\)](https://myarmybenefits.us.army.mil/Benefit-Library/Federal-Benefits/Thrift-Savings-Plan-(TSP))**

**To learn more about retiree benefits, come to the next Gray Area retirement program on Oct. 20, at Boone National Guard Center's, Fleming Armory in Frankfort. The event begins at 1:00 p.m. POC: 502.607.1497**





Sgt. Robert Rogers, Fire Directions Sgt. Charlie Battery, 1st Battalion, 623rd Field Artillery demonstrates a communications system to children during the battalion's joint family day shoot at Fort Knox, Ky., Aug. 10, 2019.

Soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, 138th Field Artillery, and 1st Battalion 623rd Field Artillery demonstrated their capabilities to family and friends during the battalions' joint family day shoot, Aug. 10, at Fort Knox

Family and visitors were bused to St. Vith Range where they could safely watch an artillery live-fire exercise. The battalions set up static displays of vehicles, weaponry, High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS), M109A6 Paladin howitzers, containerized kitchen and other field artillery equipment for the visitors to see, touch and take pictures in.

Staff Sgt. Jeremy Bryant, a HIMARS Chief with 1/623, brought his wife, Melissa and son to the event. "I want them to experience this for themselves," he said.

Soldiers explained how the equipment worked as well as demonstrated their use at the various static displays.

"To actually see the equipment and for our son to climb in the vehicles he drives, I love it," said Melissa Byrant. "This event gives me a sense of what he does at his unit and what he would be doing if he was deployed."

The outreach to family members provides a unique opportunity to witness what their loved ones do while training in the field.

"The joint family day and retention event is something all MSC's (Major Subordinate Command) could learn from," said Command Sgt. Maj. Ernest Conyers, Command Sgt. Maj. of

# ARTILLERY BRIGADE PUTS ON SHOW FOR FAMILIES

Story and photos by Capt. Michael Reinersman



the 2/138th. "The fact that two battalions are doing a family day event together to get families involved and keep their love ones connected in our great organization is very important."

During the event, Command Sgt. Maj. Kevin King, Command Sgt. Maj. of the U.S. Army Field Artillery Branch and Artillery School at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, presented the **Alexander Hamilton Award** to Alpha Battery, 2/138th. The Hamilton Award recognizes the most outstanding U.S. Army National Guard Field Artillery Battery of the year for superb mission accomplishment and overall unit excellence.

The main event of the day was the live-fire exercise of four M109A6 Paladin howitzers operated by 2/138th and four M142 HIMARS ran by 1/623. More than 200 hundred Soldiers, families and friends were given a pair of ear plugs as they made their way to viewing area.

Maj. Chris Fitzwater, Executive Officer with the 2/138th narrated the event as the command "fire" was given into the radio to signal the battalions to commence. The demonstration was met with amazement and cheers from the crowd as they watched howitzer rounds and rockets launch in the air leaving plumes of white smoke and a roaring concussion.

"We owe our families a debt of gratitude" said Fitzwater, "We are very happy that we can share a little of our job with you all today."



# HOMECOMING

Story by John Trowbridge

2019 marks the 50th anniversary of the return to the Commonwealth of two Kentucky National Guard units which had been activated for Federal service, one Air and one Army unit.

On June 8, 1969, members of the Kentucky Air National Guard's 123rd Tactical Reconnaissance Wing, stationed at Shewmaker Air National Guard Base in Louisville, returned following 16 months of duty in support of the Pueblo Crisis.

January 26, 1968, the Pueblo Crisis off the coast of North Korea precipitated the recall to Federal service of the Wing. In July 1968, Wing Headquarters and an enlarged 165th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron were moved to Richards Gebaur Air Force Base near Kansas City, Missouri. During this call-up, the 123rd units flew approximately 20,000 tactical flying hours and delivered almost 320,000 reconnaissance prints to requesting agencies. The command was deployed on important missions to the Panama Canal Zone, the Alaskan Air Command and to Itazuke Air Base, Japan. Performance during the period attained for the unit its first Air Force Outstanding Unit Award (AFOUA).

On October 24, 1969, the men of the 2nd Battalion, 138th Field Artillery were officially released from active Federal service and reverted to state control. These men had just completed their tour of duty in Vietnam.

On April 19, 1968, the 2nd Battalion, 138th Field Artillery, Kentucky National Guard, with units in Louisville, Bardstown, Elizabethtown and Carrollton, were ordered to active duty by President Lyndon B. Johnson. Among 24,500 men ordered to active duty in 88 units across the United States were 570 Kentucky Guardsmen and 750 Kentucky Air Guardsmen.

Following three weeks of processing at home station, the Kentucky Artillerymen were flown to Fort Hood, Texas, for concentrated field training and combat qualification. Following the heritage, which had been passed down through the generations of the Kentucky

National Guard, these men performed their duties with the utmost of expertise. These were civilian soldiers taken from their civilian jobs to perform the task of liberating from Communist tyranny a tiny country practically on the other side of the world. Even though such was quite unpopular with many U. S. citizens, these modern-day centurions carried the torch of freedom for posterity. During the months before deployment to the Republic of Vietnam, 105 men sought an injunction from shipping the unit to a hostile zone without a declaration of war by the U. S. Congress. The U. S. Supreme Court refused to issue the injunction. These men had their day to be heard and never once complained of being sent to Southeast Asia. Not one man failed to do his duty commendably.

The Kentucky men showed much spirit. This was indicated by their disregard for a Department of Defense policy, which disallowed two brothers serving together in a combat zone. The 2nd Battalion had numerous pairs of brothers serving in combat, as well as many who had brothers serving with the U. S. Regulars in South Vietnam. Such concern truly brought out the inbred motto of Kentuckians, "United We Stand, Divided We Fall."

In Vietnam, the battalion established its headquarters at Gia Le Combat Base. The firing batteries occupied such famous bases as Fire Base Anzio, Bastogne, Tomahawk, and Hill 88. The battalion was responsible to provide fire support for the "Screaming Eagles" of the 101st Airborne Division, whose home is Fort Campbell, Kentucky. Together they were to keep North Vietnamese Army (NVA) regulars from destroying neighboring villages that were located along the China Sea.

In this endeavor the Kentucky National Guardsmen had provided such superior fire support that NVA sappers, demolition experts, were given the life-or-death mission of destroying Charlie Battery of Bardstown. Charlie Battery had created utter destruction for the NVA and the only possible hope was an attempt to destroy her. Later, gathered intelligence indicated that the NVA had practiced their mission of destruction for some time, because they were aware of Charlie Battery's battle adeptness.







The Kentucky artillerymen earned five battle streamers for the battalion's colors while in Vietnam:

1. Counteroffensive, Phase IV, 02 April 1968 – 30 June 1968.
2. Counteroffensive, Phase V, 01 July 1968 – 01 November 1968.
3. Counteroffensive, Phase VI, 02 November 1968 – 22 February 1969.
4. Tet 69/Counteroffensive, 23 February 1969 – 08 June 1969.
5. Summer – Fall 1969, 09 June 1969 – 31 October 1969.

The evening of June 19, 1969 was a quiet one for Charlie Battery at their Firebase on Tomahawk Hill. There had been few attacks by the enemy in the previous days and fire missions were at a minimum. A heavy rain was pouring down on Firebase Tomahawk. South Vietnamese rainstorms are much different from those in the States. It comes down with such force that one would think a dam had broken. The rain numbs all hearing senses and limits visibility to one foot. The NVA infiltrators were pleased with such conditions as it allowed them freedom of movement, which, on a quite night would be checked. Many of the off-duty men of Charlie were watching a James Bond movie or thinking about their loved ones back in Kentucky.

Meanwhile, approximately 150 NVA sappers were massing outside the perimeter of the compound. Twenty-two infantrymen from the 101st Airborne Division were manning the perimeter. At approximately 1:45 a.m., 75 NVA sappers, clad only in loin cloths and skullcaps with satchel charges strapped to their bodies and carrying rocket propelled grenades [RPG's] (shoulder-firing rocket launchers), proceeded to snake through the barbed concertina wire barricade. Supported by a mortar unit the sappers completely overran the defending infantry, killing and wounding most of them.

One of the Bardstown soldiers shouted the first alarm to his comrades and the destruction was on. The deadly sappers, who were, as would be later confirmed, on drugs, moved around devilishly free with no fear of death. They threw satchel charges into the bunkers, killing and wounding many. The wounded, as well as those unharmed Kentucky artillerymen, fought back with every ounce of life to drive the fanatical enemy from the firebase. At the same time, the other batteries of the battalion, located at other firebases nearby, were being shelled by the NVA so that they were unable to

provide little or no fire support for Charlie Battery.

The sappers delivered approximately 150 satchel charges and RPG's, during the battle. After destroying an ammunition storage area, three howitzers, nine bunkers, the mess hall, dining tent, maintenance building, four ammunition carriers, three 2 ½-ton trucks, two ¾-ton trucks, and three jeeps, the marauders were forced to retreat. U. S. Army C-47 gunships zeroed in on NVA positions and forced the surviving NVA to run for their lives.

After a two-hour fight the Kentucky artillerymen held the hill, stopping the NVA's mission of the destruction of Firebase Tomahawk, but at a high cost. There were nine U. S. casualties on the battlefield, five of which were Kentuckians, 28 of the enemy were killed. Other dead and wounded were carried off by the enemy in their retreat. The Kentuckians took one prisoner, from which they learned much so that no such attack could occur again.

Senior Commander in Vietnam, General Creighton Abrams, said the 2nd Battalion 138th Field Artillery, was "one of the best trained, and absolutely the best maintained battalion-sized unit in Vietnam."

In October 1969, a welcome home ceremony was held for the returning Kentucky artillerymen from Vietnam. Members of the battalion stood proudly in honoring its achievements.

Approximately 125,000 Kentuckians served in the Vietnam War. One thousand seventy-seven gave their lives.

Today, the men and women of the 2nd Battalion, 138th Field Artillery, Kentucky National Guard are still serving our Nation and the citizens of the Commonwealth. Its ranks are filled with soldiers who carry on a proud tradition of service, some of these currently serving are the sons or grandsons of the Kentucky Vietnam Veteran Guardsmen. 🇺🇸

**125,000**  
SERVED IN VIETNAM

**1,077**  
GAVE THEIR LIVES



# KENTUCKY GUARDSMEN RACE IN ANNUAL **MARATHON**

Story By Staff Sgt. Benjamin Crane



Kentucky Marathon Team consisted of: Sgt. 1st Class Michael Embury, Maj. Varinka Ensminger, Staff Sgt. Michael Simpson, Capt. Ron Shashy, CW3 Allen Davis, Spc. Korey Johnson, 2nd Lt. Donald Furman, Sgt. 1st Class Amy Parker, Sgt. Angela Sullivan and Staff Sgt. David Sullivan.

A group of ten Soldiers from the Kentucky National Guard took part in the 42nd annual Lincoln (NE) National Guard Marathon May 5.

They joined the nearly 170 Army and Air National Guard Soldiers and Airmen from across the United States to compete in the marathon. These National Guard runners represented 46 states and two territories.

All of the ten Kentucky runners finished the race and won 5th place in the overall competition but there were a several standout single accomplishments.

The top runners at Sunday's race were selected as members of the 2019 "All Guard" Marathon Team, which travels to promote the National Guard and assist in recruiting and retention efforts across the United States. Five of the Kentucky runners qualified for the "All Guard" team. Two were rookies of the event: Shashy and Johnson. The other three were veterans of the race: Ensminger, Parker and Embury.

Maj. Varinka Ensminger, with the Medical Detachment, was the top female finisher in the 35-39 year old age group.

"It was an honor to represent my state and return to the podium,"

**"SHE CHEERED SO LOUD  
AND WHEN I SAID I WAS  
TIRED, SHE JUST YELLED,  
SHUT UP AND RUN!"**

said Ensminger. "I hope it inspires younger runners, especially females in the Guard to take on the marathon. This is my thirteenth year representing the National Guard Marathon and I have podiumed every year (1, 2 or 3rd)."

But for the long time participant in this race, this year was a little harder. She lost the person who inspired her to run.

"This year was hard and not just from the hot, humid weather," added Ensminger. "I ran with a heavy heart. My father passed away March 1st. He was there for me when I ran my first road race and we've been running marathons together since 2001."

Although the team members all finished, there was a little bit of drama for one of the members. During the race, Chief Warrant Officer 3 Allen Davis was admitted to the ER at mile 19 and came back and finished in an unofficial clock time of 6:08 (He was cleared and released-indigestion caused him chest pain).

Overcoming adversity is a common thread amongst this team. Sgt. Angela Sullivan lost her leg in 2017 due to Osteosarcoma, a bone cancer that typically develops in the shin bone near the knee, but she didn't let that stop her from running and now her teammates look to her for inspiration.

"The most profound thing I experienced during the Guard Marathon weekend was during the Roll Call of States when Angela, (SGT Sullivan) stood up and spoke about her experience over the last year with her

amputation and to see the reaction of the room," said Staff Sgt. David Sullivan. "To see all states present stand up and applaud in support, as well as a few misty eyes. It really demonstrates that this is a family, not just within the borders of our state, but reaches out to wherever the National Guard is present."

The team captain echoed those sentiments.

"I run because I can," said Ensminger. "When I get tired I remember those that can't run and what they would give to have this simple gift and I run harder for them, like my teammate SGT Angela Sullivan who was sidelined this past year with cancer. She cheered so loud and when I said I was tired, she just yelled, shut up and run! All I could think about was that she wished she was out here with us hot and tired and knew I must do this for her!"

For the newcomers to the team, being a part of this event was a good experience and gave them opportunities to be with other Guard members doing something they love.

"As a rookie to the Marathon, I was unsure of what to expect. Since leaving the Marine Corps and attending medical school it was difficult to find the motivation and excuses to leave the books and get back to fitness," said 2nd Lt. Don Furman. "Having this marathon and the teams support made it possible to achieve a personal best. It is exactly the support and camaraderie, not just from other Kentucky team members, but from all of the members of the National Guard teams that I love about the military."

The competition is designed to promote physical fitness and military readiness in the National Guard. For more information about the team, contact Maj. Varinka Ensminger at [varinka.b.esminger.mil@mail.mil](mailto:varinka.b.esminger.mil@mail.mil)



MORE  
THAN

# 60

Airmen with the 123rd Airlift Wing  
returned home from four month deployment to  
the Persian Gulf as part of Operation Inherent  
Resolve July 4th.

*U.S. Air National Guard photos by Lt. Col. Dale Greer*



*Dayton Schmidt hugs his father, Lt. Col. Jason Schmidt, during a homecoming ceremony at the Kentucky Air National Guard Base in Louisville, Ky., July 4, 2018*



*Master Sgt. Braden Sikkema hugs his daughter on the flight line of the Kentucky Air National Guard Base.*



"MAKING SURE MY  
FAMILY WAS SUP-  
PORTED WEIGHED  
HEAVILY ON ME  
DURING THE DE-  
PLOYMENT, BUT  
KNOWING I WAS  
COMING HOME TO  
THEM GAVE ME  
STRENGTH"

-1ST LT. NICK ANDERSON







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