

# Prairie Soldier

THE JOINT NEWSPAPER OF THE NEBRASKA ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD

## Joint emergency extraction training aims to save lives

By **Spc. Lisa Crawford**  
Editor

About two dozen members of the Nebraska Army National Guard and Nebraska Task Force One, Urban Search and Rescue, conducted structural extraction training, May 23, at the Camp Ashland Training Site in Nebraska. The training incorporated flight and hoist rescue methods using Army National Guard helicopter crews who supported rescue personnel from civilian partner agencies.

“Integrating our two units provides an asset into the state that we haven’t had before,” said Chief Warrant Officer 3 Richard Davis, state aviation training officer.

The purpose of this training was to simulate conditions both crews encountered during March of this year, when historic flooding swept across the state. Camp Ashland buildings – damaged by the floods when 5-10 feet of river water rushed into



Photo by Spc. Lisa Crawford

**Prepare For Lift:** A Task Force One Urban Search and Rescue member positions himself on a second-story window, May 23, at Camp Ashland during a training exercise.

the military camp, and now slated for future demolition – were used to simulate residences for the training.

“The 100 year flood has occurred again and it came back

**See EXTRACTION on 8.**

## NEBRASKA STRONG

### Guard, NEMA respond to historic March floods

By **NE National Guard**  
Prairie Soldier Staff

On March 14, 2019, the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency activated the State Emergency Operations Center after a weather phenomenon referred to as a “bomb cyclone” hit the state causing severe blizzard conditions in the western panhandle and extreme thunderstorms in the east. Due to frost-depth levels, and heavy snowpack from a nearly record snow-



Photo by Spc. Lisa Crawford

**Nebraskans Helping Nebraskans:** Nebraska Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Matthew Hawke, crew chief, lowers Sgt. Brad Wardyn with a hoist from a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter onto the roof of a flooded house, March 14, near Columbus, Nebraska, while conducting rescue missions of citizens and pets identified as stranded or isolated due to historic flooding.

fall winter, the snowmelt and rain immediately inundated Nebraska’s waterways, causing catastrophic flooding for the eastern half of the state, as rivers crested to new record

highs, and dams and levees began to fail.

In anticipation of the severe weather issues Nebraska Gov. Pete Ricketts issued an emergency decla-

ration effective March 12, 2019, which allowed local jurisdictions who require assistance with capabilities and resources to direct

**See FLOODS on 8.**

## Women join ranks of cavalry scouts in Nebraska Guard

By **Staff Sgt. Herschel Talley**  
Staff Photojournalist

Every Soldier in the Nebraska Army National Guard has a story, the reasons why they joined the military, picked their particular military occupational specialty (MOS) job, or serve in their military unit of choice.

For two Soldiers serving in the Nebraska Army National Guard’s Troop B, 1-134th Cavalry, the stories are particularly different than those around them. That’s because Sgt. Nicole Havlovic and Sgt. Danielle Martin are two of only a very few women serving in

the Nebraska cavalry squadron. In fact, the two Nebraskans are only a few women in the nation who have successfully graduated from the Army’s tough combat arms MOS school and earned the title of “cavalry scout.”

Havlovic originally joined the Nebraska Army National Guard as a water treatment specialist. However, after serving for six years, she decided to leave the Guard for a year. “I got out because I was bored,” Havlovic said. “I really didn’t have any guidance about what I could do or what the possibilities were. I wanted to do something different and fun and be out there training.”

It was that desire to do something differ-

ent that drove Havlovic to join the Nebraska Army Guard cavalry squadron. “I felt like it would be a really good fit. I’m pretty outdoorsy and this -- being out in the field -- doesn’t bother me at all,” Havlovic said.

Sgt. Danielle Martin’s route to being a cavalry scout was not a direct one, either.

“I’ve always wanted to go into combat arms,” Martin said. “It really was a year before joining the military that I knew combat arms was what I wanted to do. However, I was still junior enlisted and so I really couldn’t do much about it.”

The last restrictions against women serving in combat roles were lifted in 2013.

However, Army regulations specified that units were first required to have two female cavalry scouts in leadership positions before other female Soldiers would be allowed to join their ranks. This made integrating junior-ranking women into the units all that much more difficult.

So, Martin began her career in the Nebraska Army National Guard as an automated logistical specialist before joining a military police unit. After rising to the rank of sergeant, Martin said she finally saw a way to reach her combat arms goal.

**See SCOUTS on 6.**

## Deployed Airmen honored at welcome home ceremony

By **Staff Sgt. Jason Wilson**  
Staff Photojournalist

Airmen, family members and friends gathered, Sept. 7, 2019, at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Nebraska, to welcome home the many members of the 155th Air Refueling Wing who deployed in support of the war efforts over the past two years.

“For the last two years we have focused on lethality and readiness,” said Col. Robert Hargens, commander of the 155th ARW. “Today we celebrate the culmination of that effort. The deployment of over a third of the wing, 336 Airmen, 12 countries and multiple theatres.”



Photo by Staff Sgt. Jason Wilson

**Rainy Welcome:** Col. Robert Hargens addresses family and friends of the 155th Air Refueling Wing during a rain-drenched homecoming ceremony Sept. 7 at the Lincoln air base.

Hargens praised the Airmen for their dedication and efforts over the past two years.

**See AIRMEN on 15.**

### Staff ride commemorates Saint Lo’s 75th liberation

By **Spc. Lisa Crawford**  
Editor

On July 14, 2019, 33 Nebraska National Guard Soldiers traveled with Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, Nebraska adjutant general, from the cornrows of Nebraska back across the Atlantic Ocean to England before making their way into Normandy, France.

The mission path was reminiscent of another voyage hundreds of Nebraskans took 75 years earlier when Soldiers with the 134th Infantry Regiment moved to the European Theater of Operations, stepping ashore first in England, before crossing the English Channel to Normandy, nearly a month after D-Day, and then pushing south toward Saint Lo.

As part of a 5-day staff ride, the Nebraska National Guard Soldiers of this century embarked on a journey to learn more about the



Photo by Spc. Lisa Crawford

**Proclamation:** Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac (left) and Nebraska State Senator Mark Kolterman (right) present a framed proclamation to François Brière (center), the mayor of Saint Lo, on behalf of Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts which declared the date July 18, 2019, Saint Lo Liberation Day in the state. The proclamation honored the 75th anniversary of the World War II battle in which Nebraska’s own 134th Infantry Regiment fought bravely and prevailed despite heavy casualties.

**See LIBERATION on 14.**

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# NEWS DIGEST

## ■NGB Vice Chief Hokanson takes over as Army Guard director

ARLINGTON, Va. (ARMY.MIL) – Army Lt. Gen. Daniel Hokanson took the reins as director of the Army National Guard in a ceremony Friday at the Herbert R. Temple Army National Guard Readiness Center, Arlington Hall Station in Arlington, Virginia.

The outgoing director, Army Lt. Gen. Timothy Kadavy, is set to become the vice chief of the National Guard Bureau, pending Congressional confirmation.

“I’ve watched [Lt. Gen. Kadavy] work hard for the United States Army, work hard for the Army National Guard,” said Air Force Gen. Joseph Lengyel, chief of the National Guard Bureau, who hosted the ceremony. “He did a great job.”

Hokanson served as the NGB’s vice chief prior to taking on his new duties as director of the Army Guard.

“Dan [Lt. Gen. Hokanson] has trained his whole life to be here and to know everything about the Army National Guard, to know everything about the joint force, to know everything about the National Defense Strategy to come here and make the biggest contribution we can as the operational combat reserve of the United States Army,” said Lengyel.

A 1986 graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point, Hokanson served in the active component as a helicopter pilot and took on a variety of leadership roles before transitioning to the Oregon Army National Guard in 1995.

“[He is] an academy graduate, deployed to Panama, deployed to Iraq, led a brigade in Iraq, led a brigade in Afghanistan. He’s done all that and had the strategic jobs,” said Lengyel.

Hokanson served as the adjutant general of the Oregon National Guard as well as the civil affairs officer and then deputy commander of U.S. Northern Command.

But, he said, he’s looking forward to the challenges ahead as director of the Army Guard.

“Gen. Lengyel, I want to personally thank you for allowing me to serve as the 21st director of the Army National Guard and for all I have learned from you over the past three-and-a-half years as your vice,” Hokanson said during the ceremony. “I am sincerely humbled by this incredible opportunity and look forward to continuing to serve the Soldiers, civilians, and families of our Army National Guard.”

For Hokanson, many of those challenges are very different from what were faced in the past.

“As the Army Guard approaches its 383rd birthday later this year, I cannot help but notice our ties to that history,” he said. “From the first muster in 1636 to today, our

world has seen an incredible transformation and the introduction of new frontiers never imagined by those who gathered that December day in Salem, Massachusetts.”

But many things remain the same.

“With all the changes nearly four centuries have brought with them, what has made the National Guard great remains the same -- that’s our people,” Hokanson said, adding that close to 30,000 Army Guard Soldiers are currently deployed worldwide.

“Nearly 5000 more are directly supporting homeland defense and emergency response missions [at home],” he said. “Our units compose 39 percent of the Army’s operational force and we’ll continue to engage across the full spectrum, performing our missions of homeland defense, [supporting the] warfight and building partnerships.”

Hokanson said one of his primary focuses as the director is to provide support for the Soldiers of the Army Guard.

“For all of us here in the Army Guard directorate, we must continue to do everything we can to support Soldiers and their formations throughout the 54 [states, territories, and the District of Columbia],” he said.

But, he said, it’s the leaders and commanders of the Army Guard who ensure success and mission completion.

To our leaders and commanders at every level, thank you,” he said. “Your leadership and dedication, your selfless service directly contributes to our readiness and lethality and ensures mission success.”

Those leaders also take on one of the most important roles in the Army Guard, said Hokanson.

“You are charged with one of our greatest responsibilities, to manage our talent and develop the next generation of leaders who will take our places and continue to serve and protect our states and nation,” he said. “This awesome responsibility cannot be taken lightly.”

And with that, Hokanson said it was time for him to get to work in his new role.

“I’d like to share the simple observation that people may not remember what you say, but they will never forget what you do,” Hokanson said.

“It’s time for me to get to work with all of you to support the 54 states, territories, and the District of Columbia and ensure our nation’s Army National Guard remains Always Ready, Always There.”

Lengyel added that Hokanson is certainly up to the task.

“I think he’s going to be a great director of the Army National Guard,” he said.



HOKANSON

## Lengyel: National Guard at highest state of readiness ever

WASHINGTON (ANG.AF.MIL) – Readiness is the National Guard’s No. 1 priority, the chief of the National Guard Bureau told lawmakers Tuesday.

The Guard’s focus on readiness supports the National Defense Strategy, Air Force Gen. Joseph Lengyel told members of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense.

“Your National Guard’s three core missions of fighting America’s wars, protecting the homeland, and building partnerships directly support the [strategy’s] three lines of effort: building a more lethal force; strengthening alliances and attracting new partners; and reforming the [Defense Department] for greater performance and affordability,” said Lengyel, who provided written and spoken testimony to lawmakers who are studying budget appropriations for the 2020 fiscal year.

The Guard’s most senior officer, who is also a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, noted that – while counterinsurgency operations remain a core competency – the 2018 National Defense Strategy refocused the Defense Department, including the National Guard, on “great power competition” with China and Russia, and on the security threats presented by Iran, North Korea and non-state actors.

“It is imperative the National Guard remains an operational force, as part of our Army and Air Force, that helps protect and secure our interests at home and abroad,” Lengyel said.

The National Guard is the principal combat reserve of the Army and the Air Force, providing 20 percent of the entire Joint Force.

“There is only one standard of readiness in fighting America’s wars,” Lengyel said. “This readiness requires the National Guard to be deployable, sustainable, and interoperable with our active components.”

As an example of the Guard’s success in emphasizing readiness, Lengyel said the Army National Guard’s 89 percent individual medical readiness is the highest achieved by the three components that comprise the Army – Active, Guard and Reserve.

“Readiness and lethality for the National Defense Strategy is the Army’s No. 1 priority, [and] it’s the National Guard’s No. 1 priority,” Lengyel told lawmakers.

Weapons systems, high profile areas such as the space and cyber domains and missile defense, and interoperability with the services were among topics discussed during the hearing at the U.S. Capitol.

The National Guard must increase operability across all platforms, Lengyel said. Parity in equipping the Guard through concurrent and balanced modernization and recapitalization is necessary for the Guard to deliver the lethality required by the Joint Force, he said. The old model of cascading older equipment from the active duty side to the reserve side -- used when the Guard was a strategic reserve rather than operational force – no longer applies, he said.

Lengyel also said increased full-time support is needed in the Army National

Guard and reversing recruiting shortfalls caused in part by the strong economy is a priority.

“We will look to reposture under-recruited force structure from a state that simply can’t recruit to it anymore into states [that can],” Lengyel said.

Almost 450,000 Citizen-Soldiers and -Airmen comprise the National Guard, and on any given day about 30,000 are on duty across every overseas combatant command, with another 10,000 typically conducting domestic operations.

Among key missions where the National Guard makes a contribution:

- Domestic response: Last year, the National Guard was called up 195 times to respond to domestic incidents such as wildfires, hurricanes or floods.

- State Partnership Program: About one-third – 83 – of the world’s nations are partnered with one of the 50 states, territories or the District of Columbia in the Defense Department program executed by the National Guard in coordination with geographic combatant commanders, the State Department and host nations. More than 950 events were conducted across every geographic combatant command in the 2018 fiscal year. The National Guard has co-deployed 80 different times with partner nations.

- Space: “The National Guard continues to contribute critical capabilities in space,” Lengyel said, “and we stand ready to support any future Space Force.”

- Missile defense: In Alaska, California, and Colorado, National Guard members support our nation’s missile defense.

- Air defense: 15 of the nation’s 16 alert sites to safeguard our skies are operated by the Air National Guard.

- Cyber: Guard cyber units protect DOD networks, support gubernatorial needs in the states. The Army Guard includes 11 cyber protection teams; the Air Guard has 12; and the Guard is experimenting with Cyber Mission Assurance Teams in three states that safeguard non-military infrastructure essential to Defense Department operations.

- Chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear response: About 55 percent of the Defense Department’s CBRN response enterprise resides in the National Guard.

- Youth ChalleNGe: More than 170,000 at-risk teenagers have graduated from the National Guard’s Youth ChalleNGe Program since 1993, transforming lives.

- Counterdrug: The National Guard supports law enforcement detecting, interdicting, disrupting and curtailing illicit drug trafficking.

The National Guard has, “the widest presence of any military force in America and the ability to quickly respond to contingencies,” Lengyel said. “The National Guard reinforces the connection between the American people and their military.

“Our skills and experience from the warfight are used to assist first responders and play an important part in a unified response under federal or state command during domestic emergencies.”

## Nebraska fire fighters douse emergency landing fire

By Senior Master Sgt. Shannon Nielsen  
Staff Photojournalist

An American airborne early warning and control aircraft from Tinker Air Force Base, Oklahoma, made an emergency landing at the Lincoln Airport July 11.

The Boeing E3 AWACS aircraft was performing routine touch and goes on the Lincoln runway when at 7 p.m. an engine fire light came on. It’s not rare to have an engine fire warning light come on, but for an engine to catch fire, is extremely rare.

The Nebraska Air National Guard’s fire department received a call and responded on scene within 30 seconds and put out the fire within 45 seconds. The onboard crew of six safely evacuated using the slide. The fire was out but the engine kept smoking and the fire team diligently smothered the smoke within minutes.

“It was almost like a training exercise, where everyone does everything perfect,” said Scott Osander, assistant fire chief. “They extensively train on situations like this, and they did what they were trained to do. The aircraft crew members onboard the plane did everything correctly in this situation, landed, handed it over to us, and then we did what we were trained to do.”

John Williams, a crew chief with the Nebraska Air National Guard’s fire department, expressed the importance of required annual training.

“I have never responded to an aircraft fire before, this was my first time,” Williams said. “This was

like second nature because we practice it so much, it was going through all the steps we are trained to do in order, while making sure the other two people that were with me were okay.”

Williams said the real-world event reinforced the training the fire fighters already do.

“It’s hard to simulate a fire, but we annually train on simulated aircraft fires, which doing this training makes this second nature,” Williams added.

A specialized rescue crew and the airport rescue firefighters go through extra certification for situations as this. These crews have to be familiar with different types of aircraft, weapon systems on board and any other cargo the plane could be carrying. The airport firetrucks have to be equipped with specialized turrets to deliver the foam. The other major part of training includes dispersing foam correctly onto fuel fires to minimize high explosive possibilities.

“I trust them completely,” Osander said. “It is my job to direct the operations and truck placement and I did not have a lot to do. This team set up on the aircraft just like they are trained to do, they hit the fire and the rescue team got out and pulled the hand line. While they were doing that, another guy checked on the aircrew. Everyone was doing it exactly like they were supposed to. It makes me proud.”

The aircraft was towed to a safe location for an investigation into the cause of the fire. All aircrew aboard was transported to Offutt Air Force Base.

## Prairie Soldier

2433 NW 24th St, Lincoln, Nebraska 68524-1801  
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**Commander-in-Chief**  
**Adjutant General**  
**State Public Affairs Officer**  
**Editor**

Gov. Pete Ricketts  
Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac  
Maj. Scott Ingalsbe  
Spc. Lisa Crawford

### STAFF

#### Nebraska Army National Guard

Capt. Edward Bosland  
Staff Sgt. Koan Nissen  
Staff Sgt. Herschel Talley  
Sgt. Anna Pongo  
Spc. Travis Williams  
Spc. Daniel Balkovic

#### Nebraska Air National Guard

Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes  
2nd Lt. Natasha Hilsen  
Senior Master Sgt. Shannon Nielsen  
Tech. Sgt. Denise Mommens  
Staff Sgt. Jason Wilson  
Senior Airman Class Jamie Titus

*Special thank you to Mrs. Amy Givens, Mrs. Kelle Lambert and Ms. Wanda Jenny.*





**Extraction Training:** Firefighters from the Army of the Czech Republic air forces remove a door from a vehicle during training with the 155th Air Refueling Wing fire department, June 6, at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Nebraska.

# Czech firefighters train in Nebraska

By Senior Master Sgt. Shannon Nielsen  
Staff Photojournalist

Members of the 155th Air Refueling Wing's fire department collaborated in training with their counterparts from the Czech Republic air forces June 4-6, 2019, at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln.

The State Partnership Program provides the avenue for this valuable exchange by bringing members of the Czech Republic armed forces to Nebraska for hands-on training. During the visit, the 155th Air Refueling Wing's fire department provided specialized training that enhanced their partners' awareness of aircraft and vehicle extraction procedures.

"We taught egress training on the KC-135 and while doing so we shared techniques, procedures, and different safety concerns from both sides," said Master Sgt. Rene Arriola, 155th Air Refueling Wing Fire Chief. "We bounce ideas off each other. They tell us how they do things in their country, and we show them how we do them in ours."

The Czech contingent included commanders, deputy commanders and firefighters from different Czech fire departments of military air force bases.

Capt. Jan Smetana, chief of the Czech Republic delegation, discussed the importance of sharing collaborative training and preparing firefighters for a variety of emergency situations.

"Our firefighter's main job is to protect people after a plane crash and support them," Smetana said. "We often see similar planes like this landing in Czech bases during international exercises like Ample Strike and Dark Blade. We have to be able to give support to American and other colleagues who use different aircraft."

Training on the KC-135R Stratotanker was part of the specialized training with the 155th ARW. The firefighters all agreed that it is essential to know how to approach the aircraft if it is on fire, as well as correct egress procedures from inside.

"The program is very important for both of us at the 155th, as well as the Czech Fire Department, because we land our aircraft on their runways often," Arriola said.

Training like this familiarizes them with the KC-135R and puts them more at ease knowing how to properly and safely egress personnel in case of an incident, Arriola said.

In addition to training on aircraft, the 155th firefighters also set up scenarios using ground vehicles for firefighting and victim extraction. After training on various tools and



Photos by Senior Master Sgt. Shannon Nielsen

**Teamwork:** Firefighters from the Army of the Czech Republic air forces pause for a photo during training with the 155th Air Refueling Wing's fire department, June 4-6, at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Nebraska. This Nebraska National Guard and Czech Republic armed forces training exchange is one of many facilitated by the National Guard's State Partnership Program.

procedures, the firefighters were put to the test as two-man teams competed in taking off vehicle doors using tools and procedures of their own choosing.

Smetana also talked about how firefighters were able to overcome challenges such as a language barrier.

"In the fire world a lot of things are familiar, and the languages are sometimes the same especially when you use actions and pictures to explain," Smetana said. "Therefore, the overall objectives were all the same so we were able to accomplish all the training we set out to do."

As the three day joint training came to an end, Smetana expressed how important it is for them to visit the United States and to have a State Partnership with Nebraska.

"This was fantastic for us. It's a special occasion to train with multi-national colleagues and learn how our colleagues do the same thing as we do," Smetana said. "This is also part of our education in general, because it is not only firefighting but connecting with foreign cultures."



**Hose Out:** A firefighter from the Army of the Czech Republic air forces feeds hose to firefighters battling a simulated fire on a KC-135 Stratotanker during training with the 155th Air Refueling Wing fire department June 6, at the Nebraska Air National Guard base in Lincoln, Nebraska.



**Seal Check:** Firefighters from the Army of the Czech Republic air forces check the airtight seal on their self-contained breathing apparatus masks during training with the 155th Air Refueling Wing's fire department June 6, at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Nebraska.



## NO SECOND CHANCES: Airmen train on demolition skills

By Senior Airman Jamie Titus  
Staff Photojournalist

Unlike most jobs, making a mistake in the Explosives Ordnance Disposal Career field can be fatal. That's why practicing different techniques on a training range is so important for EOD Airmen.

The EOD flight is part of the 155th Civil Engineer Squadron and has the mission of destroying unserviceable munitions or rendering safe munitions that are considered unsafe both in the United States and overseas.

On Aug. 29, 2019, the EOD flight conducted demolition training at the Army National Guard's Greenleaf Training Center near Hastings, Nebraska.

On Wednesday the Airmen practiced with specialized explosive tools and Thursday they practiced demolition skills to make sure they were familiar with demolition techniques.

"It's not every day you get to leave the base and go to real demolitions training," said Staff Sgt. Brandon Robla, an EOD technician with the 155th CES. "This is the time where you can practice different shots, different techniques and just learn a whole lot before you actually go overseas and have to do it."

Robla said the EOD Airman try not to make mistakes, but making mistakes on the training range is far better than making them in the real world where miscalculations can have deadly results.

"In real life you don't get a second chance," said Robla.

Master Sgt. Bradley Siegersma, the EOD flight chief, explained that an EOD Airman's skills are perishable, so conducting realistic training allows them to brush up on techniques needed to conduct their dangerous job.

"Working with explosives and especially the specialized explosive charges, there's a high level of

detail that comes into play," said Siegersma. "Without doing that on a regular basis, we lose those fine motor skills."

Attention to detail, he said, is everything.

"It's very specific and there's no room for error, otherwise you run the



Photo by Senior Airman Jamie Titus

**Smoke Cloud:** Nebraska Air National Guard Staff Sgt. Micah Buscher and Staff Sgt. Brandon Robla, Explosive Ordnance Disposal technicians with the 155th Civil Engineer Squadron, detonate Composition C4 Aug. 29, at the Greenleaf Training Site, near Hastings, Nebraska.

risk of getting somebody seriously hurt or killed," said Siegersma.

One of the techniques the Airmen practiced, was getting a buried water jug filled with explosives out of the ground by detonating a block of Composition C4 underneath it, something Robla had never done before. He explained this process allows the EOD technicians to uncover other hazards that might be associated with the jug while at a safe distance. The water jug filled with explosives is one example of an Improvised Explosive Device that EOD technicians may encounter while deployed overseas.

The training on the range helps the EOD Airmen, and those looking to them for protection, to have confidence in their skills.

Siegersma added, "Overall, refreshing the skill set of working with significant quantities of explosives was probably the single biggest takeaway."

## Aviation units depart for latest overseas mission

By Spc. Lisa Crawford  
Editor

Around 50 Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers assigned to two aviation units were wished good luck on the afternoon of Jan. 5 at Grand Island's Heartland Events Center before starting an overseas mission in support of Operation Freedom Sentinel by a reported crowd of 1,000 family members, friends, and local citizens.

The Soldiers are primarily assigned to Company B, 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion (GSAB), a CH-47 Chinook helicopter unit stationed at the Nebraska Army National Guard's Army Aviation Support Facility No. 2 in Grand Island. Soldiers from Grand Island's Detachment 1, Company D, 2-135th GSAB, are also assigned to the mission.

The send-off ceremony included comments by Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, Nebraska adjutant general,



Photo by Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes

**Family Farewell:** Chief Warrant Officer 4 Marcus Groetzinger and family attend his unit's send-off ceremony Jan. 5 at Grand Island's Heartland Events Center.

"It's important that we let our Soldiers know that we've got their back, and we do," Ricketts said.

As a Chinook helicopter unit, the Soldiers are responsible for providing aerial movement of troops, supplies and equipment, and supporting U.S. military and allied operations.

Capt. Brad Larson, Co. B commander, shared with the crowd the company's mission, and their intent to accomplish it.

"That is the Bravo Company way," Larson said. "We may laugh and joke with each other like nothing is going on, but when it's time to execute the mission, it's all business."

Larson added that while most of the Soldiers have multiple deployments under their belts, it doesn't make this one any easier, as families continue to grow and more holidays and birthdays are missed with each deployment.

"The men sitting in the crowd with you are truly warriors," he said.

The unit deployed to the U.S. Central Command area of operations after several weeks of training in Texas. They are expected to return by the end of 2019.



**Heartfelt Hugs:** Chief Warrant Officer 2 John Nicola gives and receives a hug during the Jan. 5 send-off ceremony in Grand Island for Co. B, 2-135th (GSAB).

Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts, and more, all of whom stated how impressed they were with the event's turnout.

## Hansen replaces Baker as state's senior Army NCO

By Spc. Lisa Crawford  
Editor

After four years, Nebraska State Command Sgt. Maj. Marty Baker relinquished responsibility Aug. 10, to Command Sgt. Maj. Scott Hansen during a ceremony at the Joint Force Headquarters in Lincoln.

Baker was sworn in as the eighth State Command Sergeant Major in August 2015, after holding a variety of leadership positions throughout his career, including four previous command sergeant major assignments. His insight and advice on enlisted personnel related matters, training, and quality of life have been valuable to the success of the Nebraska National Guard.

Following the change of responsibility, Baker celebrated his retirement from the Nebraska National

Guard after more than 39 years of military service.

Representatives from his employer, Nebraska Farm Bureau, presented Baker with a Quilts of Valor quilt for his service. Baker, with assistance from the Nebraska ESGR, presented the Seven Seals Award to the company for their support to Baker during his time in uniform, as well as the many other service members they employ.

Baker received many retirement awards and gifts from various organizations, including an "Enlisted Guardians: Our Legacy, Our Future," framed print from the Nebraska Na-



Photo by Spc. Lisa Crawford

**New CSM:** Command Sgt. Maj. Scott Hansen takes the guidon from Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac Aug. 10 during the change of responsibility ceremony.

his own challenge coin.

Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac also spoke on Baker's behalf, speaking highly on their time together as battle buddies – and friends – over the past four years.

tional Guard Enlisted Association; a "Cornrows to Hedgerows," framed print from the 67th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade; an engraved sword from all the sergeants major of the state; and the Keeper of the Colors Award from the Army National Guard Command Sergeants Major Advisory Council. Speaking at the ceremony was Governor Pete Ricketts, who presented Baker with

## A Soldier's Soldier: Remembering Maj. Gen. Edward Binder's life, service, legacy

By Spc. Daniel Balkovic  
Staff Photojournalist

In a career that spanned 40 years, including being Nebraska's adjutant general from 1977 to 1983, Maj. Gen. Edward Binder was by all accounts, the epitome of the Nebraska National Guard's core values and was best exemplified by his dedication to state and country.

"He was always working towards readiness, being right and ready to go," said retired Brig. Gen. Dayle Williamson, who worked with Binder as assistant adjutant general. "He was always thinking forward to the potential missions of the Army and Guard," Williamson added. Binder passed away at his home in Lincoln on Jan. 7, he was 95.

Binder was born Aug. 11, 1923 to Clarence and Myree Binder. Growing up in Omaha during the Great Depression, he worked with his grandfather delivering ice from a wagon in the summer, and coal in the winter.

After graduating from Omaha Central High School in 1941, he attended the Kemper Military School in Booneville, Missouri where he graduated in 1943 and immediately enlisted in the Army at Ft. Crook, Nebraska that June.

He was trained as an infantryman and arrived in Europe in late 1944. As a sergeant, he served in a corps level staff position that took him all over the continent, including France, Belgium, Germany and Austria.

After being discharged in 1946, Binder returned to Omaha, and was assigned to the

Enlisted Reserve Corps. It was during this time, where through mutual friends, he met and eventually married Roma Chilcott. The couple would raise two children, Gary and Nancy, and were married 50 years until her passing in 1997.

After World War II, he sold cars for a time until he started Chamber of Commerce work in Colorado and later New Mexico. After being commissioned as a 2nd Lt. in 1948, he would serve in the Army National Guard for both states.

He returned to Omaha's Benson neighborhood in 1950 and started to rise through the ranks of the Nebraska Army National Guard. He studied radar and communications, ordnance, and artillery, eventually becoming the state's senior maintenance officer.

"Very early in my career is when I first met him, I was with the 568th field artillery in Crete. I remember he was always so good with troops," Williamson said.

On the civilian side, Binder was the State Director of the Selective Service in the early 1970's, the agency responsible for drafting young men into military service. When the

draft was abolished in 1975, the Nebraska agency closed its doors on September 1, 1976. Binder described himself at the time as the "last lonesome survivor."

On January 1, 1977, despite being a colonel for less than three months, Gov. J. James Exon appointed Binder as the state of Nebraska's adjutant general. A role that tested him greatly in June of 1980, when several tornadoes ripped through Grand Island devastating the community. Binder made sure the guard was prepared and ready to help. During which time, he met with President Jimmy Carter to survey the area.

"He had a strong support of the people, the guard, and the governors highly appreciated him," Williamson said.

Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Roger Lempke who served as Nebraska's adjutant general from 2000 to 2007 said Binder was "a kind and considerate leader" who was able to steer the Nebraska Guard through the difficult time directly following the Vietnam War.

"The 1970's was a tough time for the National Guard. Because it was never called to serve in Vietnam, many grew resentful of 'Citizen Soldiers'. It became a haven for draft avoiders; it was a broken force. General Binder started our climb to respectability and relevance," Lempke said.

On Oct. 27, 1983, Nebraska Governor Bob Kerrey promoted Binder to Lieutenant General. The promotion went into effect on the date of his retirement Nov. 1, 1983. Governor Kerrey selected Binder for the promotion due to his "distinguished record as Adjutant



BINDER

the ranks of the

General of the State of Nebraska."

After retiring in 1983, Binder became very active in a variety of organizations; including the Shriners, Masons, Cornhusker Boys' State and the American Legion, of which he was eventually selected to be the state commander.

"The guys there at the American Legion were very loyal to him. They even had a nickname for him, 'half-track' and I have no clue where that name came from," Williamson said.

In 2016, Binder received a guided tour of the National Guard Museum in Seward from current adjutant general, Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac.

"It was very clear to me how much he loved the Guard. I relied on him for guidance and counsel," Bohac said.

Binder lived independently and kept busy remodeling, wood working, and going to church at Grace Lutheran in Lincoln, where he had been a member for 60 years. He loved spending time with his two children, three grandsons and six great-grandchildren.

"He enjoyed interaction with people and his small contribution to making life a little bit easier for others. He was dedicated to service to others until the very end," Lempke said.

"You're always honored to serve with someone like that, he was a great Soldier; a Soldier's Soldier and he did his job well," Williamson said.

Binder was laid to rest with full military honors Jan. 14, 2019, at Lincoln Memorial Park.



# ‘Ready and Able’ Nebraska Airmen conduct chemical warfare training

By Senior Airman Jamie Titus  
Staff Photojournalist

Approximately 271 Airmen participated in an Ability to Survive and Operate exercise during an on-site visit March 8-10, 2019, at the 155th Air Refueling Wing, Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Nebraska.

The Airmen learned how to put on and take off each level of their Mission-Oriented Protective Postures gear, how to decontaminate it and continue doing their job while in MOPP four gear.

Four is the highest level of MOPP gear and consists of a gas mask, a specialized suit, rubber boots and rubber gloves that they must put on in a limited amount of time in the event of a chemical or biological attack.



Photos by Senior Airman Jamie Titus

**Hide And Seek:** Staff Sgt. Angela Pedersen, paralegal with the 155th Air Refueling Wing Judge Advocate office, participates in an exercise, March 9, which allowed Airmen to practice their normal jobs while wearing chemical gear in the event of a chemical or biological attack.



**Worst Tax Season Ever:** Tech Sgt. Tuan Cong Phun, installation personnel readiness technician with the 155th Comptroller Flight, works at his desk in MOPP gear during an Ability to Survive and Operate exercise March 9.

With the threat of chemical warfare becoming more relevant to our Airmen nationally, knowing how to use MOPP gear is a life-saving skill.

“It is extremely important that our Airmen have the ability to be able to use that gear should we face that adversary,” said Lt. Col. Bryan Scholtes, 155th ARW inspector general. “It comes down to readiness. We want to make sure that when the Wing gets the phone call and we deploy people, that when they get their gear, they know how to use it and they are ready and able when that happens.”

The participating Airmen went through three, hour-long ATSO skills classes with the goal to return to their units with the knowledge to teach others who have never gone through the exercise before, or who are in need of a refresher.

In these classes they practiced going from different MOPP levels, how to set up zone transition points as a post-attack reconnaissance team and evaluate M8 paper results as well as cover up equipment outside correctly to avoid contamination.

M8 paper is paper that, when exposed to a chemical agent, will change colors according to what type of agent is present. The more saturated the paper, the more contaminated the area is where the M8 paper is located.

Another area of concern is coming from a higher MOPP level location through a transition point to a lower level of contamination. Airmen must know how to decontaminate



**The Dream Team 2K19:** Airmen search the surrounding area for any unexploded ordnances and contaminated areas as part of an exercise, March 9, at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln.

their gear before entering these areas to posture the correct gear to survive.

Next the Airmen performed how to operate in wartime conditions where alarms alert base members of the type of condition they respond to by donning the correct gear according to each level.

“[The MOPP Gear] is hot, it’s heavy,” said Senior Airman Mersades Clingenpeel, a finance technician with the 155th Comptroller Flight. “You have to be fast.”

One goal of the ATSO training is for Airmen to continue to do their specific jobs while in their gear and get familiar with all of the equipment.

Scholtes said while he was getting ready to deploy for Afghanistan he realized how

many Airmen have never done this training before or it has been so long that they may have forgotten parts of this training.

“I’m going through my bag and I’m pulling stuff out and there was this vacuum-packed square of an item that I pulled out of my bag and I had no idea what that was,” Scholtes said. “I looked at it and it was M8 tape and I’m like ‘oh crap,’ I’ve been doing that for so long and I didn’t even know what that thing was inside my issued gear. So if I don’t know that, I’m sure there’s a [billion] young Airmen that don’t have the foggiest idea what that is.”

Col. Robert Hargens, 155th ARW commander, summed up the reason behind this training with one phrase: “Being ready to go when the nation calls.”

## TRADOC general visits Nebraska’s regional training institute

By Staff Sgt. Herschel Talley  
Staff Photojournalist

The U.S. Army’s number two general in charge of training traveled to Camp Ashland, Nebraska, in mid-January to learn more about the Nebraska Army National Guard’s regional training school while also looking to solicit instructors and Guard official’s thoughts on how difficult it will be to implement the Army’s new combat fitness test.

Maj. Gen. Mark E. Anderson is the deputy commanding general of the U.S. Army’s Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC). Based out of Fort Eustis, Virginia, the TRADOC has oversight over Army component schools, including the Camp Ashland-based 209th Regiment (Regional Training Institute).

Anderson’s Jan. 12 visit to Camp Ashland was part of a tour of training sites throughout several states, where he hoped to have conversations with local training officials with regard to the opportunities and challenges facing the school houses.

“Across the TRADOC portfolio, we have about 270 National Guardsmen on Title 10 or ADOS positions that are really here to service the 54 states and territories,” Anderson said. “As an RTI, you are part of the One Army School System.”

The One Army School System is comprised of active and reserve component schools dedicated to providing realistic and relevant training to support the Army’s mission, stateside and abroad. The



Photo by Staff Sgt. Herschel Talley

**TRADOC General Visits Nebraska RTI:** Col. Shane Martin (middle left), 209th Regional Training Institute regiment commander, discusses courses and training opportunities with Maj. Gen. Mark Anderson (middle right), deputy commanding general of the Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), Jan. 12, at Camp Ashland, Nebraska.

RTI at Camp Ashland teaches the Basic Leadership Course (BLC), Warrant Officer Candidate School and Officer Candidate School as well as a Motor Transport Operators Transition Course and Recruit Sustainment Program.

While meeting with the Nebraska National Guard instructors, the general asked the BLC cadre about their

thoughts on the Army’s new fitness test, the Army Combat Fitness Test (ACFT), and how best to execute it in the school environment.

“This is the pilot year for the ACFT implementation,” Anderson said. “We have eight National Guard battalions between the states that are a part of the pilot. The focus right now is changing the culture

of fitness.”

The six-event test is gender and age neutral, and is focused on three categories of fitness: black, gray, and gold based on an individual Soldier’s military occupational specialty.

The Army Physical Fitness test is currently a requirement to attend and graduate from BLC. Anderson was interested in the cadres’ opin-

ions regarding if the ACFT should be included as a requirement to graduate from BLC.

“It’s a discussion that’s being had with the senior (noncommissioned officers) within TRADOC and to be honest, I’ve been an advocate for eliminating it from the school requirements because I’m thinking of the demands being put on the RTIs and the units,” Anderson said.

Talking with the BLC instructors, Anderson also spoke to Col. Thomas Mortimer, Nebraska Army National Guard recruiting and retention commander, as well as Capt. Matthew Wolff and Capt. Jeremy Ham, who each command an Enlisted Strength Management unit.

Mortimer talked to Anderson about the advantages of the Recruit Sustainment Program and how the addition of using drill sergeants from the U.S. Army Reserve has benefited the students by adding more rigor to their initial training. Mortimer said that by incorporating U.S. Army Reserve drill sergeants, National Guard Soldiers attending RSP are receiving a level of training that is better preparing them for the difficulties of basic.

“We are getting them better prepared physically and we are having a higher percentage of distinguished honor graduates and that’s thanks to the RSP,” Mortimer said.

The concept was a surprise to the general and he encouraged the partnership.

“I’m unaware of any other state doing this,” Anderson said. “This is brilliant.”



**Low Profile:** Sgt. Nicole Havlovic crawls under a barbed wire obstacle, June 17, during the 1-134th Cavalry Squadron's Spur Ride conducted in the Republic of Korea. She said her fellow Soldiers don't treat her differently than any other member of the unit.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Herschel Talley

*"I know I can physically and mentally handle it, and I want to do the job."*  
— Sgt. Danielle Martin



Photo by Sgt. Anna Pongo

**Up And Over:** Sgt. Danielle Martin negotiates an obstacle during the 1-134th Cavalry Squadron's spur ride during annual training in the Republic of Korea June 17. Martin and Sgt. Nicole Havlovic are two of only a very few women serving in the Nebraska cavalry squadron.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Herschel Talley

**Feeling The Weight:** Sgt. Danielle Martin (left) hoists her rucksack above her head during a shakedown, June 17, as part of the 1-134th Cavalry Squadron's Spur Ride held in the Republic of Korea.

## SCOUTS continued from page 1.

"It was already on my radar that I had just gotten my E-5 [sergeant] and I wanted to go to 19-Delta [cavalry scout] school," Martin said.

Both sergeants attended a cavalry scout reclassification school, an Army school designed to train Soldiers from other MOS in the skills needed to become operational cavalry scouts. Martin attended the November reclassification course in Boise, Idaho. After completing the course, she reported to the Mead, Nebraska-based Troop B this past January.

Martin said the reception she received from her new unit let her know that they respected her newly-earned skills. It wasn't about changing who anyone was, she said, but having a mutual respect between Soldiers.

"They don't treat me any differently just because I'm female," said Martin. "I'm one of the guys and I think it needs to be that way... I'm not coming in here to change them. I'm coming in here because I know I can physically and mentally handle it, and I want to do the job."

Havlovic attended the cavalry scout transition course in Smyrna, Tennessee, and reported to Troop B in April 2019. She said her fellow Soldiers don't treat her differently than any other member of the unit.

"They really don't treat me any differently," Havlovic said. "I don't expect them to... I expect them to believe that they can trust me with the mission and what we have to do and be able to keep up and be trustworthy and dependable... Everyone has actually been really welcoming to me."

With Havlovic and Martin completing their transition courses, Nebraska National Guard's 1-134th Cavalry Squadron became the ninth Army National Guard unit, fourth

Cavalry Troop and second Infantry Brigade Combat Team Cavalry Troop to be opened for junior enlisted female cavalry scouts.

1st Sgt. Andrew Filips, Troop B's senior enlisted Soldier, has spent 15 years in the squadron. He said the change of policy wasn't an issue.

"What it really comes down to is that we're a combat arms unit and there's only one standard," Filips said. "You either perform or you leave. You either make the cut or there are other units for you to go to."

1st Sgt. Christopher Marcello of Grand Island's Troop A, 1-134th Cavalry Squadron, is a 22-year veteran of the cavalry squadron. He has also been a member of the Grand Island Police Department for six years. He echoed Filips' thoughts.

"I work with women every day as a police officer and that's a tough job where you can get punched in the face, or shot or beat up and you have women doing that every day. So combat arms isn't any different," Marcello said. "You have to have the right fit. It doesn't matter if you're a man or a woman. It doesn't matter. You have to be the right kind of person to be a scout."

The Nebraska Army National Guard's 1-134th Cavalry Squadron is part of the larger 39th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, which is headquartered in Arkansas. The brigade is responsible for providing training and readiness oversight of its subordinate units. According to Command Sgt. Maj. Gregory White, the 39th IBCBT senior enlisted leader, the way the brigade finds the right Soldiers for their difficult job has changed from looking at who can physically do it to those who want to do it.

White also said that women who hold a combat arms MOS are the best representatives to recruit other



Photo by Staff Sgt. Herschel Talley

**Overcoming Obstacles:** Two months after attending the cavalry scout transition course Sgt. Nicole Havlovic completed the 1-134th Cavalry Squadron's Spur Ride in the Republic of Korea.

women into the field.

White spoke with Martin during a visit to B Troop's recent annual training in the Republic of Korea. They both agreed the focus should be on reaching out to women who want the challenge of serving in combat arms positions, and once they do, give them the tools they need to become advocates.

"Having her [Martin] talk to them is going to be so much better than a guy who has been in for 30 years," White said. "A 50-year-old man talking to these young women just is not going to reach them in the same way as when she talks to them."

Filips says the physical demands are not the only aspect of combat arms that new recruits need to consider. The relatively demanding training pace also makes combat

arms units different. Troop B regularly trains in the field and spends most drill weekends training throughout the night. That is often one of the bigger reasons why some Soldiers eventually choose to transfer into the squadron.

"If you want to come into the Guard and feel like this is what I want to do; (that) I want to... be awesome and be the baddest dudes and wear the cool hats and do all that, then yes, go for it," Filips said. "But if you are, I want to try this because it would be neat, there's other places to be neat. Come here because this is what you always wanted to do in life. You have to want it."

Marcello seconded those comments, adding that Troop A is willing to let Soldiers -- male or female -- try being a cavalry scout for their drill weekend.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Herschel Talley

**Meeting With The Top:** Command Sgt. Maj. Gregory White (center right) of the 39th Infantry Brigade Combat Team along with Chief Warrant Officer 5 Teresa Domeier, Command Chief Warrant Officer of the Army National Guard, speak with Sgt. Danielle Martin (center left) and Command Sgt. Maj. Bruce Nakai (far left) of the 1-134th Cavalry Squadron, June 6, about females serving in combat arms during the squadron's annual training in the Republic of Korea.

"We're more than happy to let people come in, try it out and if it doesn't work for you, we get it," he said. "It doesn't have anything to do with gender, doesn't have anything to do with sex; it has to do with can you do the job."

Both Havlovic and Martin said they realize they are now mentors and role models for those around them. They are also quick to encourage other Soldiers to give it a try.

"It's definitely something I would sit down, explain to them and educate them on," said Havlovic, who now works for the state recruiting office.

"It's not for everybody. It really isn't. I don't believe that just because combat arms has been opened up to females mean that all females belong here. But if you can do it, then do it."



# From Nebraska to South Korea

By Sgt. Anna Pongo  
Staff Photojournalist

Seventeen hours from home and across the International Dateline, 300 Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers left the grassy plains of Nebraska and traveled to the forested mountains of the Republic of Korea for this year’s annual training, where they were given the opportunity to test the basic Army and cavalry skills in an environment that few – if any – had experienced in their military careers.

The 27-day annual training, named Operation Kouma, began on June 3. It was the culmination of more than a year of careful and often stressful planning and coordination that began when Army National Guard leaders at the National Guard Bureau in Washington, D.C., asked if the Nebraska cavalry squadron would be interested in participating in the multinational exercise.

After an enthusiastic and resounding ‘Yes,’ the 1-134th immediately began the logistical planning required to move all the squadron’s equipment and Soldiers to South Korea, do a training event and then move it back. It was a monumental endeavor, to say the least.

Typically when a National Guard unit prepares for a large movement to another country, it relies on an active duty unit and their resources to move equipment and personnel. In fact, the training and experiences gained while planning for such a large movement of equipment, supplies and personnel is just as important as those gained during the exercise itself.

According to 1st Sgt. Andrew Filips, the senior enlisted leader for the Mead-based Troop B, 1-134th Cavalry who was one of the main logistical coordinators for the exercise, the goal is to provide units with the skills they need to be able to more effectively deploy – if needed – directly from a readiness center into a combat zone without having to move through a mobilization center. “

In this particular case, the exercise called for the movement and tracking of 100 vehicles, 40 trailers and 21, 20-foot containers full of equipment from Nebraska to South Korea.

“The hardest part was learning everything,” said 1st Lt. Hunter Crossley, squadron unit movement officer. “Because there were very few people in the state who had ever done something like this before... (we had to make sure) we were asking the questions we should be asking.”

After landing in South Korea, the Nebraska cavalry Soldiers hit the training ground running. Within just a few days of moving into their bunks at the Rodriguez Live Fire Complex, the Soldiers from Troop A and B headed to the Twin Bridges Training Area (TBTA) for eight days of training in the field. The training was unlike anything the Nebraskans typically experience during their normal annual training exercises at places like Fort Riley, Kansas.

From the beginning of July through the end of September, the Korean peninsula experiences its monsoon season, bringing heavy rains and muddy terrain. Because of the training they received prior to the exercise, when the squadron landed in early June, it wasn’t surprised to learn that the Soldiers were about to experience a few rainy days and nights.

The Troop A and B Soldiers didn’t let a little downpour stop them as they trained, ate and slept in the mud. Yet, even though the rain didn’t much dim the trooper’s enthusiasm, it did make the mountainous terrain more hazardous.

As they trekked through the forest, the Nebraska Soldiers had to be increasingly cautious in the sometimes almost vertical hillsides.

The Korean landscape created challenges for more than just the Soldiers who were sleeping and training in it at TBTA. For example, cavalry mortar crews quickly discovered that Korea offered them some pretty significant tests as well.

“Last year they went to Fort Chaffee, Arkansas, for their first initial live fire,” said Capt. Travis Wahlmeier, 1-134th Cavalry Squadron. “This year, with the uneven terrain of South Korea, it helps to hone those skills and build in a lot better training for what they might see on a battlefield.”

Despite the topography challenges, the mortar crews fired almost 1,000 training and high explosive rounds while training in the field. These rounds were fired into a mountainside located about 1,800 meters away.

The cavalry squadron’s snipers also appreciated Korea’s unique challenges.

“I think the terrain is probably the first thing that you notice when you first come



Photo by Sgt. Anna Pongo

**Fire From The Peninsula:** Mortar crews from Troops A, B and C, 1-134th Cavalry Squadron, fire their 120mm mortars, June 10, during their 27-day annual training for 2019, Operation Kouma, at the Rodriguez Live Fire Complex, Republic of Korea.



Photo by Sgt. Anna Pongo

**Convoy Care:** Soldiers of Company D, 1-134th Cavalry Squadron, practice a casualty rescue during a convoy operation, June 11, during their annual training, Operation Kouma, at the Rodriguez Live Fire Complex, Republic of Korea.

(to Korea),” said Staff Sgt. William Stollberg, team leader for the 1-134th Cavalry sniper teams. “It’s kind of hard to miss all of the hills and you start thinking about... mission planning and how you’re going to get troops from (points) A to B. A lot of these guys are used to the...flat ground of Nebraska.”

Each day of Operation Kouma brought the Nebraska Soldiers new and sometimes unexpected challenges. For example, while Soldiers assigned to Troops A and B were training in the mud of TBTA, members of Company D, 1-134th Cavalry, were conducting convoy lanes at Rodrigues Live Fire Complex.

Co. D is a mounted infantry company, so rather than climbing through the woods, their training consisted of practicing maneuvering through several long courses filled with pop-up targets to shoot at, difficult terrain to drive through and role players who did their best to halt the convoy.

“(This training is) important because it’s not what we get back home,” said Capt. Jessica Pan, Co. D commander. “They get to see more what it’s like in a combat environment.”

Co. D’s training wasn’t confined to Rodriguez Live Fire Complex, either. For three days unit Soldiers moved into the field at Story Live Fire Complex so they could drive through additional convoy lanes, while also sharpening their shooting skills at the range.

For the members of Troop C, the Korean exercise gave them the opportunity to practice working in the peninsula’s unique terrain. Part of their training consisted of conduct-

ing Infantry Platoon Battle Courses, which included moving through dense brush, up and down the mountainsides, while engaging targets as they popped up.

According to 1st Lt. Dalton Boden, the platoon leader for Troop C’s Detachment 1, one of the biggest challenges was making sure good communication was maintained as his teams maneuvered through the rain and thick forests.

“I can defiantly see where the terrain would be a factor, lots of ups and downs,” said Boden. “And so far the guys are really loving being able to train in an actual environment as opposed to just some flat land.”

“This is a really good training opportunity for us,” Boden added, saying that after having recently transitioned from a long range surveillance unit into a new cavalry troop it felt good to get back into the field and brush up on some new and old skills. “Coming from the Long Range Surveillance to being able to execute these infantry tasks...we’re very excited to be able to do this.”

After all the units had finished up their training, they were given a couple days to recover, and then jumped into the next challenge: The Spur Ride.

“The Spur Ride is a measure of a Soldier’s ability to be a cavalryman,” said Lt. Col. Robert Ford, 1-134th Cavalry Squadron commander. “It goes back to the days when new cavalymen were not allowed to wear spurs until they had proven their horsemanship.”

Upon successfully completing the Spur Ride, the Soldiers become official members of



Photo by Staff Sgt. Herschel Talley

**Weathering The Storm:** Soldiers of 1-134th Cavalry Squadron dig drainage ditches around their tents, June 6, after 12 hours of rainfall during the unit’s annual training in the Republic of Korea.

the Order of the Spur. It is up to the individual cavalry unit how strenuous the challenge is.

“Just the sheer number of tasks that we tested on, (it was) way harder than the one that I did,” said Ford. “These Soldiers need to be extremely proud that they earned their spurs during this event, here in Korea.”

The Spur Ride consisted of a series of events that included an Army Physical Fitness Test, obstacle course, land navigation, and a large number of individual tasks. These tasks involving weapons, communications, first aid and physical fitness, provided them the opportunity to prove that they belong in the Order of the Spur.

After being awake for almost 48 hours straight, pushed to their limits both physically and mentally, the ride culminated with a final ruck march to the top of a nearby hill where the triumphant new spur holders walked through clouds of colorful smoke to be inducted into the Order of the Spur.

After the Spur Ride, the squadron’s days in Korea were numbered, with the final days spent packing containers and washing vehicles as they were prepared for a long ship ride that would eventually lead them back to Nebraska.

On June 26, the 1-134th Cavalry Squadron returned home to the Atlas Armory in Mead, Nebraska. After weeks of hard work, sleepless nights and numerous slips on muddy hillsides of Korea, they were finally home. According to Filips, the exercise helped propel them forward in many different important ways.

“A lot of these guys put a lot of extra time, a lot of extra work and really stepped outside of their comfort zone to get this done,” said Filips. “[They] had to step in and put in a lot of effort, a lot of time, and learn a lot of things that they wouldn’t necessarily be doing...As you can see, we’re here. So they stepped up, they excelled... And that’s probably why they asked us to do it. We get stuff done.”





**Moving Water:** Master Sgt. Robert Kozisek, fleet management and analysis craftsmen with the 155th Logistics Readiness Squadron, Nebraska Air National Guard, unloads water pallets from a semi-trailer, March 26, at the LifeSpring Church in Omaha.

# Nebraska Airmen deliver water to Omaha, Fremont after historic state flooding

By Senior Airman Jamie Titus  
Staff Photojournalist

Airmen with the 155th Logistics Readiness Squadron from the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln delivered pallets of water to Fremont and Omaha, Nebraska, March 26-27, 2019.

The pallets of water were part of relief efforts after historic flooding affected much of the state.

Eight pallets were delivered to Omaha and two pallets were delivered to Fremont, Nebraska on March 26. The next day, another 40 pallets of water were delivered to Fremont.

In total, the Airmen delivered about 10,000 gallons of water. For some residents, the water supplied was the only source safe enough to cook with or drink.

“I think it’s great,” said Senior Airman Jacob McNeese, a transportation management journeyman with the 155th Logistics Readiness Squadron. “I think it’s awesome to help volunteer and give back and help out everyone with what they need.”

The missions were an opportunity for Airmen from the 155th LRS to put the 40 plus hours of training required to drive a semi-trailer and build pallets into action while helping local Nebraskans.

“This is my first state activation that I was able to help in our community as a National Guard member,” said Master Sgt. Brian Welch, the noncommissioned officer-in-charge of ground transportation with the 155th LRS. “We train to help emergency managements and local people all the time but this is the first time we were actually able to deploy that training.”



Photos by Senior Airman Jamie Titus

**Relief Hand-Off:** Staff Sgt. Wade Ulmer, a vehicle maintenance specialist with the 155th Logistics Readiness Squadron, Nebraska Air National Guard, unloads donated water from a semi-trailer March 26, in Fremont, Nebraska, after flooding caused a lot of people to not have access to safe drinking water.

Each day consisted of loading the pallets, driving to each location, unloading the water, driving back and then fueling and inspecting each vehicle.

“Being able to help the local community was huge and being able to give back to the people is much more rewarding,” Welch said.

Disaster relief and recovery is one part of the Nebraska Air National Guard’s mission for the state. Air National Guard units throughout the United States serve both its own state and the nation by being ready to respond when disaster hits.

## FLOODS continued from page 1.

requests for assistance to the State of Nebraska. By Thursday, when flood waters began to rise rapidly, it was apparent that declaration was necessary, and it allowed the National Guard and other agencies to provide necessary rescue, response and relief efforts immediately.

“As I always am, I was struck by how quickly the National Guard, the state first responders, the local police came together to immediately get to saving lives and mitigating suffering throughout the impacted area,” said Gen. Joseph Lengyel, the chief of the National Guard Bureau, to members of the Nebraska National Guard during a visit to get a firsthand look at response efforts.

Lengyel said he was impressed by the response efforts he’s seen.

“Clearly, the response phase of this thing was really well done,” he said. “This says so much. It just demonstrates who we are and what we do as Guard [members].”

More than 450 Nebraska National Guard Soldiers and Airmen executed 113 flood-related missions between March 13 – April 13, the largest response in state history to date.

Ricketts signed an expedited request for federal disaster assistance, March 19, and President Donald J. Trump two days later on March 21, ordering federal aid to supplement state, tribal, and local recovery efforts in the areas affected by a severe winter storm, straight-line winds and flooding that began March 9.

### Search and Rescue

The evening of March 14, the Nebraska National Guard began conducting search and rescue operations over some of the hardest hit areas. Using UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters, a UH-72 Lakota helicopter, and high-water vehicles, the Nebraska National Guard helped rescue 112 people and 13 pets. Of those rescues, 66 were performed



Photo by Spc. Lisa Crawford

**Two Rescues In One:** Staff Sgt. Matthew Hawke helps guide a woman rescued from her flooded home near Columbus, Nebraska, March 14, into the belly of the UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter. Once secured, the crew learned she had saved her small dog in the black bag that accompanied her on the hoist.

using hoist mechanisms—something the Nebraska National Guard Soldiers are highly trained to execute, with many experiences supporting other states during hurricane response efforts, but virtually unheard of before within Nebraska.

“In the first few days of our response to the flood, the most immediate concern was preserving life, and the speed at which the flood waters were moving and the number of rivers that were flooding simultaneously certainly presented challenges to us all,” said Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, Nebraska adjutant general.

One of the rescue missions a Nebraska Blackhawk helicopter crew completed included pulling seven fire rescuers from icy floodwaters near the Elkhorn River after two airboats capsized during a rescue attempt in Dodge County. The helicopter crews took the extracted rescuers—from Fremont and Cedar Bluffs—to the hospital where they were treated for hypothermia and released.

“We’ve never used the National Guard before, and those guys saved us,” Fremont firefighter Nick Morris said during an emotional press conference a few days after the rescue. “Forever grateful for those guys.”

“I’m very proud of what we were able to accomplish,” Bohac said. “To be here to help our neighbors... Nobody else gets to do that in the Armed Forces like we get to do it. To be America’s military first responder; to be Nebraska’s military first responder. To help. It’s a good thing.”

### Delivery Missions

The Nebraska National Guard worked with state and local officials to distribute food, bottled water, medical supplies and more to affected areas. The largest transport of items occurred March 17, when the Nebraska National Guard joined with the Department of Transportation, Nebraska State Patrol and

Hy-Vee to deliver eight truckloads of food donated by Hy-Vee, and two fuel tankers to support three shelters in the isolated town of Fremont. To access Fremont, which had essentially become an island after floodwaters closed all roads surrounding the town, the Nebraska Department of Transportation used snowplows to push enough mud around to create a central access road open only for official vehicles. Nebraska National Guard Soldiers joined the convoy, driving Light Medium Tactical Vehicles, carrying pallets of food and water, as well as medical supplies for the Fremont Health Medical Center.

The Nebraska National Guard would help deliver 109 pallets of water, 11 pallets of medical supplies and many other essentials to community members in need during the month-long flood response. The Guard also provided transportation of first responders and essential personnel to affected areas.

### Sandbag Operations

Soldiers assigned to the 134th Cavalry and the 195th Forward Support Company, Nebraska National Guard, performed sling load operations to help fight overflowing floodwaters during the 2019 Nebraska flood.

The Soldiers prepared more than 1,000 vertical lift sandbags to be sling loaded by CH-47 Chinook and UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters and placed in critically threatened areas to prevent greater flood damage.

“If you look back to the history of the guard, we were always meant to help our homeland,” said Sgt. 1st Class Michael Belleci, a platoon sergeant assigned to the 134th Cavalry in Hastings, Nebraska. “When the state has such a horrible thing happen to it, such as the floods, it is really nice to lend a hand and let the people of Nebraska see that their National Guard really supports them and is behind them 100 percent.”

See FLOODS on 9.



Photo by Spc. Lisa Crawford

**No Calm Before The Storm:** Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts (left) confers with state agency leadership regarding flooding prior to a news conference, March 13, at the Nebraska State Capitol.

## EXTRACTION continued from page 1.

worse than the time before, so we anticipate another issue soon,” said Michael Meyer, fire chief for the Ashland Fire Department. “We’re looking for alternate ways of being able to come out and pick someone up and rescue them. Conventional boats aren’t doing the trick. The water currents are way too fast, way too strong. Also, roads are taken out so vehicles don’t travel very well with no roads. So we walk, or we use a helicopter.”

The May training was a first for many involved, including Sgt. Taylor Quinn, 209th Regiment (Regional Training Institute), who acted as a victim inside the first building.

A rescue team was first lowered onto the roof of a building by a UH-72 Lakota helicopter. The Task Force One first responders then used a chainsaw to cut a hole in the roof to gain access to the interior. Once inside, they located and secured Quinn and then hoisted him safely into the helicopter.

“The crews, they did an amazing job coming in,” Quinn said. “When they got through the roof, they got into the house, they immediately assessed what was going on. They checked over everything to make sure I was ready to go. It was exciting.”

For the second task, a UH-60 Blackhawk

helicopter hovered over a building surrounded by trees and near powerlines to extract a victim from an open second-story window. The first responder was lowered from the helicopter near the window, and was expected to reach the window, pull himself inside and then secure the victim for extraction. This task was repeated twice for affect.

One of the “victims” extracted from the second building was Sgt. Zach Smathers, who said he enjoyed being part of the training, to see “how both sides operate, civilian and Guard-wise; how they come together



Photo by Spc. Lisa Crawford

**Hoisted To Safety:** Sgt. Zach Smathers is hoisted out of a window of a two-story building, May 23, up into a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter while assisted by a Task Force One Urban Search and Rescue member during a joint extraction training exercise at the Camp Ashland Training Site.

to complete one critical mission.”

Smathers, who also works full-time at the Regional Training Institute, was one of the first people on ground at Camp Ashland when the flooding occurred.

“It was devastating when the flood happened,” Smathers said. “You hate to see that happen to your workplace and your community. But it also gives us an opportunity to train for the next one and hopefully have a better outcome next time.”

He said seeing the cabins marked for demolition was sad, but “we might as well get some use out of them, and I think this was the best use we could get out of them.”

“They’ve been a piece of Camp Ashland for as long as I can remember so it’s going to be sad to see them go but, at the same time, we’ll rebuild,” he added.

This was a unique training experience for both the Nebraska National Guard aviators and Nebraska Task Force One crew members. Both teams anticipate the joint training to become standard practice.

Mark Majors, a rescue team manager with Nebraska Task Force One, said the marrying of the two services’ skillsets—rescue training with aviation hoist capabilities—will allow both teams to accomplish more.

“With the floods that we had up in Columbus, quite frankly we got into a couple of spots where we couldn’t get to by boat,” Majors said. “And when we called in the (Guard) helicopter... they didn’t have some of the swimmers and some of the rescue capabilities to kind of pair up. So there were situations where we just couldn’t get to either by air or water.”

Now with this merged training, in the future the teams will be able to execute missions cooperatively, allowing for trained boat and air assets to perform search and rescue in land or water environments.





Photo by Staff Sgt. Koan Nissen

**Hook Up, Head Out:** Nebraska Soldiers, Spc. Cooper Rasmussen (front) and Pfc. Jacob McCarthy (back), move to safety after hooking up sandbags to a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter during flood relief operations, March 23, at the Loup Canal near Genoa, Nebraska.

## FLOODS continued from page 8.

The aerial delivery operations allowed the 1,500-pound sandbags to be placed directly into river systems to reinforce levees or to act as barriers to help prevent or limit more damage to property. Throughout Nebraska’s flood support, riggers performed multiple sling load operations across the state, including preparing and placing sandbags at the Cooper Nuclear Station near Brownsville, Nebraska, and near wells on the Platte River, which supply some of Lincoln’s water.

### Operation Prairie Hay Drop

On March 20, the Nebraska National Guard made history when it used a CH-47 Chinook helicopter with Company B, 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion, to secure and deliver 10 bales of hay, and airdrop them near Richland, Nebraska, to cattle isolated by historic flooding across the state.

Nicknamed Operation Prairie Hay Drop, the aerial hay drop took place on a fifth-generation family farm. Wende Settles, a cattle producer with Wolfe Ranch, said it’s hard to ask for help. But this time there were no other options.

“We’re used to helping other people, we’re not used to having to ask for it,” Settles said. “The (agricultural) community from one end of the state to the other end of the state has just been hit so hard ... but we’re fortunate everybody got out safe ... we just want to do what we can to help the animals... We calf all night long and check every two to three hours, and so not being able to get to them has just been really hard.”

Settles said her family appreciated all the assistance they have received. “(The) community has been wonderful. They’ve reached out, we’ve got cows at neighbors and other neighbors ... Everybody has just been trying to help.”

Chief Warrant Officer 4 Jeff Caniglia, Nebraska National Guard, said the mission was critical, considering that Nebraska’s farmers are the “lifeblood of Nebraska.”

While speaking to Settles, Caniglia said: “That’s why we’re here, to help ... don’t hold back, if you need resources, if you need help, please ask.”

The Nebraska National Guard would continue to conduct hay delivery operations using CH-47 Chinook helicopters through early April, with maintenance assistance by the Minnesota Army National Guard’s Company B, 2-211th General Support Aviation Battalion, who were brought in with an emergency management assistance compact.

At the conclusion of the response effort, the National Guard helped deliver 94 round hay bales, or approximately 113,000 pounds of hay by air 80 square hay bales by ground vehicles to help feed more than 900 head of livestock.

“It pretty much wiped everything out,” said James Palmer, a Nebraska farmer whose Winslow home and farm were nearly destroyed March 14. “It killed half my livestock; it took all my feed; it took all my fences; it gave me a lot of debris and trash that I don’t really need.”

Born three miles from where his flood-ravaged farm is now, Palmer has been farming this area of Nebraska for 20 years. It’s what he does, and with the help of the Nebraska Army National Guard, which delivered much-needed hay by truck for his remaining livestock on March 25, and other private and government organizations, it’s what he’ll continue to do.

Palmer, who nearly lost his farm once before in 2017 after a tornado came through the area, said he was grateful for all the help.

“I’ve had more help than what I ever expected,” Palmer said. “This time here, you know what, people came together—that’s what this country’s all about.”



Photo by Staff Sgt. Herschel Talley

**Under Water:** An aerial view of flooding at the Camp Ashland Training Site, March 17, after the levee to the north broke, pouring thousands of gallons of water from the swollen Platte River into the low-lying areas of the camp. Floodwaters damaged 51 of the camp’s 62 buildings, sparing only those on stilts.

### Traffic Control Points

Nebraska National Guard Soldiers also provided traffic control security support in eight counties during the month-long flood response and relief efforts. Soldiers were tasked to police closed roads, provide security checkpoints to evacuated areas and control traffic around construction zones, allowing local authorities to focus on other critical tasks. Monitoring and securing residential areas was a main concern for safety and security.

“We are here to help support the police,” said Spc. Dylan Stolzer, a mechanic with the 267th Small Maintenance Company, during an interview at a mobile home park, March 19, in Fremont. “The police have worked to get people out of the area and they do not want them coming back in for safety reasons.”

The checkpoints play an important role in providing safety and security for area residents and their belongings, after the mobile park had reported issues with looting and fires.

“I just want everyone to be safe in the community,” Stolzer said. “Since we have been down here the community has treated us like family.”

The additional security provided by the Soldiers to the community allowed local authorities to concentrate on areas that still needed assistance.

### Camp Ashland Training Site

The damage to levee systems was extensive – 41 breaches to federal and non-federal levees according to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – and in many cases had a significant impact on the amount of flooding in nearby communities. The Camp Ashland Training Site, a Nebraska National Guard base located along the Platte River, was initially flooded by excess water from the Salt Creek, but became engulfed when the river’s levee breached, causing water damage to 51 of 62 buildings.

The flooding was worse than anything the camp had experienced in the last century, according to Col. Shane Martin, Nebraska Army National Guard construction and facilities management officer. It prompted a full evacuation of the training site, including 225 Soldiers attending classes at the 209th Regional Training Institute. Fortunately, no training courses cancelled as the Nebraska Guard shifted classes to the nearby Mead Training Site and the Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings, Nebraska, for two months before officially reopening Camp Ashland July 14 with a summer “Reoccuparty” celebration.

Looking back on the month-long response to the historic floods, Bohac said he was proud of his fellow Nebraskans.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Natasha Hilsen

**Plugging the Loup:** A Nebraska Army National Guard UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter prepares to lower the 1,500-pound sandbags into place on the levee, March 23, at the Loup River, Nebraska. The sandbags helped to prevent erosion and divert water flow away from the power plant near that area.



Photo by Spc. Lisa Crawford

**Operation Prairie Hay Drop:** Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers used a CH-47 Chinook helicopter with Company B, 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion, to secure multiple bales of hay, March 20, and airdrop them to cattle isolated by historic flooding across the state. This was the first confirmed aerial hay bale drop the Nebraska Guard executed since a blizzard in 1949.



Photo by Spc. Lisa Crawford

**Bombs-A-Hay:** A CH-47 Chinook helicopter drops a hay bale out the back to feed isolated livestock.



Photo by Spc. Lisa Crawford

**Ready To Roll:** Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers secure multiple 1,200-pound bales of hay, March 20, in the back of a Company B, 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion CH-47 Chinook helicopter. The hay was then airdropped to cattle isolated by historic flooding across the state.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Koan Nissen

### Fighting Floods With Sand:

A Nebraska Army National Guard CH-47 Chinook helicopter hovers over sandbags as a ground crew prepares the sling load, March 18, in Nemaha, Nebraska. The Soldiers prepared more than 1,000 vertical lift sandbags to be placed in critically threatened areas to prevent greater flood damage.



Photo by Senior Airman Jamie Titus

**Helping Hands:** Soldiers unload boxes of medical supplies at the Fremont Hospital March 17, in Fremont.

“Their resilience and their courage and their spirit as they faced some very daunting conditions out there... I know that I speak for my fellow Soldiers and Airmen of the Nebraska National Guard when I say this is what we signed up for,” he said. “This is the other part of our oath...where when we



Photo by Staff Sgt. Natasha Hilsen

**Supporting Communities:** Sgt. Nick Rucker, small arms repairer, and Sgt. Jake Berry, a wheeled vehicle mechanic, 267th Small Maintenance Company, Nebraska Army National Guard, provide checkpoint security, March 19, in Fremont, Nebraska.


swear to protect and defend the constitution of the United States and the constitution of the State of Nebraska. And what that means to everyone of us is that we will be ready and we will respond when our fellow citizens safety and welfare is threatened, here in Nebraska or elsewhere.”



10 Guard Happenings


Prairie Soldier 2019

A busy first half of 2019...



Photos by Pfc. Gauret Stearns

The 67th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade conducted a change of responsibility ceremony from outgoing Command Sgt. Maj. Dean Reicks to incoming Command Sgt. Maj. Jeremy Ten Kley, June 9, at the Spirit of '76 Armory in Lincoln.



Thank you CSM Reicks for your service to "Nebraska's Brigade," and welcome to the 67th MEB, CSM Ten Kley!



Photo by Capt. Dustin McKenna

Congratulations to "Wolf Team", Troop B, 1-134 Cavalry Squadron - IBCT for being officially identified as the 14th best Scout Squad in the entire U.S. Army and its allied partners, after completing the Gainey Cup - Best Scout Squad Competition in April. They were also identified as the top call for fire squad.

Great job Scouts! Way to represent Nebraska, The National Guard and the 39th Infantry Brigade Combat Team.

On April 13, first responders from across the state, Nebraska Emergency Management Agency personnel, Nebraska National Guard Soldiers and Airmen, and others who assisted with flood response and relief were invited to attend the Nebraska Huskers 2019 Spring Game at Memorial Stadium.




Photos by Sgt. David Mueller




Many helped form the traditional tunnel walk as the football players hit the field for the first time this year.





On April 7, Col. Thomas Mortimer III relinquished command of the Nebraska Army National Guard's Recruiting and Retention Battalion to Lt. Col. Daniel Benes during a ceremony at the Joint Force Headquarters in Lincoln.



Photos by Spec. Lisa Crawford



Photos by Spec. Lisa Crawford



The 157th Annual Col. John Milton Thayer Chili Cookoff Championship took place Feb. 14 at the Nebraska National Guard Joint Force Headquarters in Lincoln. Soldiers, Airmen and Nebraska Military Department civilian employees competed for numerous awards for both traditional Nebraska chili and non-traditional chili. Attending the event for the first time in more than 150 years was Col. Thayer himself, (portrayed by Col. Craig Strong, Nebraska National Guard human resources officer).



Photos by Spec. Lisa Crawford

The Nebraska National Guard rededicated the Army Aviation Support Facility No. 1 in Lincoln on June 18 after 37,000 sq. ft. of renovation. The renovation and remodel of the interior spaces was to include office space, classrooms, workshops, supply areas, a fitness facility, latrines and a break area. The project replaced an aging HVAC with a geothermal system to include 54 new wells with 18,000 feet of new pipe.

Thank you to Kingery Construction Co., CooverClark Architects, the Nebraska National Guard's Construction and Facilities Maintenance Office and the United States Property and Fiscal Officer for making the renovation and remodel project a reality.



Photos by Spec. Daniel Balkovic



The 126th Chemical Battalion bid farewell to outgoing commander Lt. Col. Brian Medcalf on Jan. 13.

The change of command ceremony welcomed Lt. Col. Charles McWilliams as the new battalion commander.





Courtesy Photo

Deployed Nebraska National Guard Airmen from the 155th Air Refueling Wing sent a good morning message to the Nebraska Huskers prior to the Spring Game on April 8. Even miles away, they cheer the Huskers on!



Photos by Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes

Five officer candidates from Class No. 62 completed the Nebraska Army National Guard's Officer Candidate School and were recognized for their achievements April 6 at the State Capitol in Lincoln.

Receiving their commission and pinning on the rank of second lieutenant in the Nebraska Army National Guard was Aaron Dugick, Todd Garrett and Colin Lauenroth.

Erika Dixon and Jordan Hopwood both accepted certificates of eligibility and will commission at a later date.

Please join us in congratulating all five on their accomplishments.



On Jan. 10, Nebraska National Guard Soldiers and Airmen participated in the 2019 Inauguration for Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts and other members of the legislature by providing escorts across the Capitol rotunda to the George W. Norris Legislative Chamber for the swearing-in ceremony.



Photos by Spc. Lisa Crawford

Ricketts was sworn-in for his second term in office as the 40th governor of Nebraska, and delivered his second inaugural address. A two-person color guard, consisting of one Nebraska Army National Guard Soldier and one Nebraska Air National Guard Airman, also assisted with the inaugural event.



Photos by Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes and Spc. Lisa Crawford

On Jan. 12, Nebraska National Guard Soldiers and Airmen provided an honor cordon and color guard for the 2019 Inaugural Ball for Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts, held at the Pinnacle Bank Arena in Lincoln.

The inaugural ball's theme, "A Celebration," celebrated not only the re-election of the governor for a second term and other state officials, but the State of Nebraska as a whole.

The program included a 12-minute video presentation with photos from various Nebraska communities and events from the past year.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Natasha Hilsen

Chaplain (1st Lt.) Michael Zimmer, baptizes Equal Opportunity Director Capt. Phillip Tran's son, Jacob Tran, Feb. 3, 2019 at the 155th Air Refueling Wing in Lincoln. Zimmer performed the first baptism since the 155th ARW was established in 1946.



Members from the 155th Air Refueling Wing, Lincoln, received an icy welcome home, Jan. 18.

We were glad they returned home after being gone over the holidays from their family and friends.



Courtesy Photos



Photos by Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes


After his promotion to the rank of major general in December 2018, Richard Dahlman assumed the new post of mobilization assistant to the deputy commander of U.S. Strategic Command, while remaining the deputy adjutant general for the Nebraska Military Department in his full-time capacity. On May 9, Dahlman received the Distinguished Service Medal for his exceptionally meritorious service to the Nebraska National Guard in a ceremony at STRATCOM.



12 Guard Happenings

Prairie Soldier 2019



...and a summer to match



Photos by Maj. Scott Ingalsbe

The Nebraska National Guard was honored to participate in Game 5 of the College World Series on Monday (posted June 20) with a two-aircraft flyover at the start of the game.

The Nebraska Army National Guard flew a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter and a UH-72 Lakota helicopter over TD Ameritrade Park at the conclusion of the National Anthem which was sung by USAF Heartland of America Band Master Sgt. Amber Grimes.



The NCAA invited and recognized many Nebraska first responders who aided in the flood relief efforts earlier this year during Game 5 of the College World Series in Omaha.

The Nebraska National Guard's 209th Regiment (Regional Training Institute) celebrated its return to Camp Ashland Training Site July 14, 2019, with a day of family fun events and a color run. Maj. Gen. Richard Dahlman and Col. Shane Martin thanked everyone in attendance for their efforts to quickly restore Camp Ashland Training Site to mission capable after it was flooded in March 2019. Operations shifted temporarily to other sites, but no training courses were cancelled. The Basic Leader Course resumed at Camp Ashland in June with 200 Soldiers from the active component, Army National Guard and Army Reserve attending and graduating as scheduled.



Courtesy Photos




On July 8, the 72nd Civil Support Team completed a change of command ceremony as outgoing commander Lt. Col. Spencer Giles passed the unit's guidon to incoming commander Lt. Col. Scott Henrickson at the East Campus Readiness Center in Lincoln.


Please join us in thanking Lt. Col. Giles for his service to the 72nd CST and help us welcome Lt. Col. Henrickson to his new position.



Photos by Spc. Lisa Crawford



Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Todd Bretey and Command Sgt. Maj. Dennis Krecklow



This year, Soldiers with the 128th Engineer Battalion and the 623rd Engineer Company completed Annual Training at Camp Grafton, North Dakota.

They worked on several construction projects that will improve the camp for years to come, including an ACFT equipment storage facility, interior of new living quarters, and construction of a road along the camp perimeter.

The Soldiers also completed their annual weapons qualification, participated in a leadership training obstacle course and trained on the rapel tower.





Photo by Spc. Lisa Crawford

Soldiers with the 1075th Transportation Company held a weeklong annual training, June 10-15, at the Greenleaf Training Site which included a truck rodeo, round-robin driver's training, an Army Physical Fitness Test and individual weapons qualifications -- including a plate match. The unit focused this year's training on building team comradarie since many of the Soldiers are spread out across much of Western Nebraska.




Photos by Maj. Scott Ingalsbe & Spc. Lisa Crawford

Soldiers with the Nebraska Army National Guard's 195th Forward Support Company (Special Operations) (Airborne) complete a jump, June 24, 2019, from a C-130 Hercules aircraft out of Wyoming, at the Husker Drop Zone at the Mead Training Site near Mead, Nebraska.



Photos by Staff Sgt. Herschel Talley

Soldiers of the 1-376th Aviation and firefighters from the Nebraska Task Force One conducted open water rescue training at Branched Oak Lake State Recreation Area, near Raymond, Nebraska on July 13, to increase readiness for life-saving evacuations during disasters.





Courtesy Photo

Congratulations to Nebraska Army National Guard Chaplain (Capt.) Kyle Ballard for being honored with the 2019 Military Chaplains Association Distinguished Service Award for an Army National Guard Chaplain.



# HONOR & PRIDE: Bronze Star awarded to Nebraska Airmen

By Senior Airman Jamie Titus  
Staff Photojournalist

With rain pouring down, three Airmen with the 155th Civil Engineer Squadron were awarded the Bronze Star Medal, Sep. 7, at the Nebraska National Guard air base, Lincoln, Nebraska.

The awards were given to Lt. Col. Barry Veen, Maj. Ryan Watson, and Master Sgt. Thomas Thompson for the service they rendered while deployed to Afghanistan from late 2018 until early 2019.

The Airmen were presented the awards by Lt. Gen. L. Scott Rice, director of the Air National Guard, Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, Nebraska adjutant general, and Col. Robert Hargens, 155th Air Refueling Wing commander, during the Welcome Home ceremony for all

those who deployed overseas this past year.

Veen is the commander of the 155th Civil Engineer Squadron, Watson is the deputy base civil engineer and operations branch chief with the 155th CES, and Thompson is the Pavements and Equipments Supervisor with the 155th CES.

Each humbled by the honor of being awarded the Bronze Star Medal, Veen said they were just doing their job.

“Quite frankly, we just went out there and did the job that we were asked to do,” said Veen. “I think that in totality of all the accomplishments of the Airmen under my command, all the credit goes to them.”

Veen added that the Nebraska civil engineer Airmen faced challenges overseas but in the end it came down to overcoming those

challenges and completing the mission.

“Overseas it becomes a challenge because you’re in a foreign country, you can’t just go to a Walmart or a Home Depot or a Lowe’s or whatever and get what you need,” said Veen.

“There’s always challenges with the creature comforts of life that we take for granted here in America, but those quickly fade once you get on task and mission and know what your job is to do and the people around you.”

Watson said that he was proud of each and every Nebraska Airman who deployed.

“I’m proud of my unit, I’m proud of the squadron who went all downrange with some level of danger and couldn’t be more proud to stand in front of them,” said Watson.

“This energy out here, even with the rain and everything, is just incredible.”



Photo by Senior Airman Jamie Titus

**Salutes And Smiles:** Master Sgt. Thomas Thompson, 155th Civil Engineer Squadron, salutes Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, Sept. 7, after receiving the Bronze Star Medal.

## Nebraska trainees battle to be the best

By Senior Airman Jamie Titus  
Staff Photojournalist

Thirty-one members of the Nebraska Air National Guard student flight competed against members of the Nebraska Army National Guard’s Recruit Sustainment Program, Aug. 3, at the Army National Guard’s Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings, Nebraska.

The Student Flight-RSP Challenge was designed to bring together the two groups of newly-enlisted Nebraska Army and Air National Guard Soldiers and Airmen and give them a chance to compete in a physically competitive event.

The Nebraska Air National Guard’s Student Flight is made up of newly enlisted trainees who have not yet attended basic training, who spend their monthly drill weekends preparing for the challenges they will face as basic trainees. The Nebraska Army National Guard’s RSP is similarly organized for newly-enlisted Army trainees.

“Our main goal is just to get our newer Airmen trainees ready to be successful, not only in basic training and tech school, but ultimately in the Air National Guard,” said Tech. Sgt. Joshua Peavy, a Nebraska Air National Guard production recruiter and retainer.

The challenge consisted of a 5K ruck march, obstacle course, and a modified physical fitness test.

The competition kicked off at 10 a.m. as the Student Flight and



Photo by Senior Airman Jamie Titus

**Army VS Air:** New trainees from the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard compete, Aug. 3, in a friendly challenge to see which recruit sustainment program is “best.”

RSP trainees broke up into teams of six. The Student Flight teams and several Army RSP teams started at the ruck march, while the remaining Army teams started with either the PT test or the obstacle course.

According to the competitors, each event had its own challenges.

“[It was] more mental than anything, to push yourself and if you still don’t feel like you can do it, just maybe take a breath or two and just keep pushing forward,” said Branden Prestridge, a student flight member who will soon be working as a Nebraska Air National Guard fuel systems specialist.

Keagan Ruth, a student flight member going into supply, said this challenge gave her an opportunity to test her limits.

“It made me feel a lot stronger than I was. I didn’t think I would be able to do as much as I could,” Ruth said. “It pointed out the things that I need to work on the most, like the pushups.”

For the ruck march, the Student Flight members each carried a

35-pound ruck sack. The Airmen then worked their way through four selected obstacles before completing the final PT test. The test consisted of a minute of pushups and sit-ups and a one-mile run.

Although this event was a competition between the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard, it was also a chance for the two branches to work together.

“A lot of our operations throughout the globe, as well as here in Nebraska for our state missions -- floods, fires, things like that -- require joint operations,” Peavy said. “So, getting to know each other at the entry-level ultimately will make us more successful later on.”

Before finding out the results of their hard work that day, the look on the faces of each trainee was that of pride and exhaustion.

“I think we have mixed emotions,” Peavy added. “I think some people are very exhausted, not expecting the physical activity of it, and then I think other individuals really were able to embrace it. If you look around most people are pretty happy; they’re talking, they’re tired, but I think they’re really proud of themselves, that they were able to complete everything here.”

With the Army’s RSP taking 2nd and 3rd place, it was the Nebraska Air National Guard’s student flight that won the overall challenge by just one point.



Photos by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Devin Nothstine

## AMPLE STRIKE ‘19 NE ANG KC-135 Stratotanker supports Czech Republic exercise

U.S. Air Forces in Europe and Air Forces Africa Public Affairs Story by Master Sgt. Renae Pittman

KC-135 Stratotanker aircraft assigned to the 155th Air Refueling Wing, Nebraska Air National Guard arrived at Pardubice Air Base, Czech Republic for Ample Strike 19: a Czech Republic-led exercise with aircraft and participants conducting day and night operations to improve NATO and partner nation interoperability. The refueler also participated in NATO Days in Ostrava, Czech Republic, from Sept. 21-22. This two-day event highlights heavy military hardware, police and rescue equipment, dynamic displays of Special Forces training, flying displays and presentations of armaments, equipment and gear from individual units. Participation in multinational exercises enhances professional relationships and improves overall coordination with U.S. allies and partner nations during times of crisis.

## AIRMEN continued from page 1.

“You have served as ambassadors; the best this nation has to offer. You have inspired hope for a better world.”

As Hargens addressed those who deployed this past year, he commented on the importance of the support from both loved ones and wingmen here at home.

“To our family members, we know there were a lot of challenges while your loved ones are deployed,” said Hargens. “Thank you for your tremendous sacrifice and know that you, too, played a critical role in the accomplishment of our mission. To the Airmen that remained in garrison, your service has been no less critical in our success.”

U.S. Senator Deb Fischer gave praise to not only the Airmen but also their families.

“The men and women of this wing have done their duty with honor, commitment and dedication,” said Fischer. “It is always a pleasure to be here with the men and women that served and

with the families that served as well. It is not an easy job.”

Senior Airman Richard Bushnell, a sortie generation crew chief with the 155th Maintenance Squadron who returned from deployment after 132 days, expressed gratitude for the ceremony. “It is appreciated,” said Bushnell. “People come out and show their appreciation, they tell us how they appreciate and support what we are doing. It is a day to day job and we know what we signed up for.”

Senior Airman Stephan Martin, an air transportation personnel with the 155th Logistic Readiness Squadron, returned home from his first deployment. He spoke with a huge smile on his face over the turnout for the “Welcome Home” ceremony.

“It feels really good having members of Congress and their representatives come to Nebraska to see all the men and women in the National Guard,” said Martin. “They are giving you that honor and it feels really good.”

## Home Again: Vietnam Veteran returns to KC-135 Stratotanker at Lincoln National Guard air base

By Senior Airman Jamie Titus  
Staff Photojournalist

What is the perfect gift for a Vietnam War veteran on his 85th birthday?

For Lt. Col. (Ret.) Lawrence Field, it was a visit June 14, 2019, to the 155th Air Refueling Wing at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln with his son and grandson.

The idea first came about after Field’s son David met Senior Airman Connor Comstock, an aircraft medials technology journeyman with the 155th Maintenance Group, through Comstock’s business.

David shared with Comstock that his father had been a navigator on the KC-135R Stratotanker during the Vietnam War.

In fact, Lawrence led one of the first refueling missions over Vietnam during the war.

David also mentioned his father’s 85th birthday was coming up and Comstock thought of inviting him to



**All Grins:** Lt. Col. (Ret.) Lawrence Field, a former navigator for the KC-135R Stratotanker, sits in his old navigator seat on a KC-135R June 14, 2019, at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln.

### Feel Good Feature

the Air National Guard base to see the same planes he used to fly to mark the special occasion.

“Instantly, from the first time he got out of the car, his demeanor just seemed like he was home,” Comstock said.

“And then once he got up in the jet, that was pretty cool, just his face lighting up. It was crazy.”

Nebraska Air National Guard pilots came out to meet him, share stories and talk about the changes that have occurred to the KC-135R since Lawrence was last in the United States Air Force.

“It was cool. You can tell he still has a love of airplanes and was proud of what he did,” said Lt. Col. Randy Douglas, the chief of standards and evaluations with the 155th Operations Group.

“You can kind of see even the rest of the base knows how important it is to acknowledge and appreciate the guys that went before us.”

Douglas talked about the importance of what Lawrence and his fellow Airmen



Photos by Senior Airman Jamie Titus

**Three Generations Of Smiles:** (From Left) David Field, Cameron Field and Lt. Col. (Ret.) Lawrence Field stand in front of a KC-135R Stratotanker, June 14, 2019, at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Nebraska. “I haven’t seen him smile like that in years,” said Cameron Field, the retired lieutenant colonel’s grandson.

did during the Vietnam War.

“Those guys led the way for when the tanker kind of left its nuclear mission and started doing its conventional mission,” Douglas said.

“The use and strategy of the tanker came into huge play with getting bombers and fighters to their targets. More importantly, getting them home when they were hit with bullet damage and stuff like that and leaking fuel.”

The fuel the KC-135Rs delivered didn’t just keep the aircraft in the air, but for some Vietnam servicemen, it brought them home.

“Without guys like that there would have been a lot more guys that got captured or killed in Vietnam,” Douglas added.





Courtesy Photo

**Nebraska History:** Staff ride participants pose for a photo, July 16, in the Higgins Boat Monument, a memorial to Nebraska-native Andrew Higgins, at Utah Beach.

## FROM D-DAY 1944 TO ST LO 2019

# Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers journey to France for 75th commemorative staff ride

By Maj. Andrew Nelson  
Staff Photojournalist

In the early morning hours of June 6, 1944, 1st Lt. Richard Winters was acting company commander of Company E, 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment.

His company commander was dead. Members of his unit were scattered across the countryside following a chaotic nighttime drop. He had 13 men available.

A battery of German artillery was raining down shells on Utah Beach, only three miles away. For the invasion to be successful, that battery had to be taken out.

Winters' battalion commander had few options. He assigned E Company (Easy Company, using the World War II era phonetic alphabet) the job.

"The battalion commander didn't say, 'How many men do you have in Easy? What's your force strength?'" said retired British Army Maj. Tim Kilvert-Jones to a group Nebraska National Guard Soldiers, overlooking the treeline where the German guns fired on D-Day.

"He just said, 'Can Easy take it on?' And Dick Winters said, 'Yep. No problem.'"

On July 16, 2019, Kilvert-Jones led about 30 members of the Nebraska Army National Guard on a D-Day focused staff ride as part of the Guard's commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Saint Lo.

The D-Day staff ride was important to the Saint Lo mission because the June 6 landings in Normandy were a key precursor to the Saint Lo battle, where the 134th Infantry Regiment of the Nebraska National Guard helped liberate the city about six weeks after D-Day. A staff ride is a historical study of a battle, ideally done where the battle occurred.

During the staff ride, Kilvert-Jones repeatedly returned to a central theme: "Free men fought here," and the multi-national nature of Operation Overlord. While the Americans landed at Omaha and Utah beaches, the British landed at beaches codenamed Juno and Sword, while the Canadians landed at Gold Beach.

The invasion was controlled by a united U.S./U.K. chain of command, with British Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery commanding all land forces, including those of the United States.

The morning portion of the staff ride focused on the U.S. Airborne landings behind Utah Beach.

Winters' action, portrayed in episode two of the HBO miniseries "Band of Brothers," was one of several examples of decisive, small-unit, initiative and leadership paving the way to victory.

That day, despite daunting odds, Winters' team, part of the 101st Airborne Division, successfully assaulted the battery of four guns, arranged in an L-Shape at a farm called Brecourt Manor, destroying the guns, allowing the 4th Infantry Division to advance inland from Utah Beach.

Winters, who had never been in combat before that morning, used



Photo by Spec. Lisa Crawford

**Map & Stick:** British Army Maj. (Ret.) Tim Kilvert-Jones prepares Nebraska National Guard staff ride participants, July 16, for their 75th D-Day Anniversary tour of Normandy's beaches.

his extensive training to perform a quick reconnaissance, direct his men into the German trench system, defeat the German defenders and use TNT to wreck the guns.

"It's just a classic case of a really, really, good tactical action by a brilliant young tactical commander, who followed battle procedure, got it right, and was able to take on a much more, significantly stronger, force," Kilvert-Jones said.

Winters' actions and the destruction of the Brecourt garrison also exemplified another theme touched on by Kilvert-Jones: that of a well-planned operation repeatedly going wrong but with individual soldiers – ranging in rank from private to general – adjusting on the fly, making key decisions and taking action in the midst of chaos.

Maj. Clayton Engelman, a native of Beatrice-Nebraska, was selected for the staff ride as a legacy family member of the Nebraska Army National Guard. Engelman's great uncle, Charles Stevens, served with Company C, 134th Infantry Regiment during World War II, and died in the Battle of Saint Lo on July 16, 1944, at the age of 31. Engelman said those decisions-making skills in action were his big takeaway from the D-Day staff ride.

"There (were) a lot of individual soldiers that, when they ended up in a place or a location where they weren't necessarily supposed to be, they were able to overcome and seize an opportunity when it presented itself," Engelman said. "Those were the things that made the operation succeed."

In the afternoon the Nebraskans visited Utah Beach, including the memorial to Nebraska-born Andrew Higgins, builder of the so-called Higgins Boats that took so many troops to shore in the amphibious operations of World War II.

After that came Pointe-du-Hoc, the National Guard Memorial on Omaha Beach (at the landing site of the 116th Infantry Regiment of the Virginia National Guard) and the American Cemetery at Colleville-sur-Mer, where the Nebraskans looked at endless rows of the graves of fallen soldiers in silence.

The Nebraska Soldiers on the staff ride would spend the next two days continuing to explore the history of the 134th Infantry's advance through the Norman countryside, culminating in the liberation of the town of Saint Lo, France on July 18, 1944.

## LIBERATION continued from page 1.



Photo by Spec. Lisa Crawford

**Vive l'Amitié:** Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac (center right), and a small contingent of Nebraska National Guard Soldiers render honors, July 16, at the site of a monument outside the church in Conde sur Vire dedicated to the sacrifices made by Soldiers of the 35th Infantry Division, July 11-18, 1944, during World War II. The Soldiers at the ceremony visited France as part of a staff ride to learn more about the history of the 134th Infantry Regiment's involvement in World War II, including assisting with the liberation of the town of Saint Lo.

legacy their forefathers created World War II. Many of the Soldiers selected for this commemorative 75th Anniversary staff ride were direct descendants of Soldiers who participated in the liberation of France, including many from the 134th Infantry.

On July 19, 1944, after 134th Infantry had entered the outskirts of Saint Lo, the 29th Infantry Division would enter and formally liberate the town.

While the main body of the 75th Commemoration staff ride explored the beaches and hedgerows of Normandy together guided by Nebraska's own leadership – including the 105th Military History Team – a smaller contingent of the Soldiers and Bohac served as an honor guard, visiting the same locations while attending multiple ceremonies on the "Road to Saint Lo," sponsored by the 35th Santa Fe Division Association in Normandy. The following is a summary of the events the honor guard attended while guests of the association.

### Day One:

On the first day of the commemorative visit, the honor guard joined with members of the 35th Santa Fe Division Association to lay flowers and honor the fallen at multiple 35th Infantry monuments in Conde sur Vire, Domjean and Pont-Farcy. The ceremonies began outside the church in Conde sur Vire where a 35th Infantry Division Memorial was placed in 2004 with the inscription, "THEY GAVE THEIR LIFE FOR FREEDOM," where Bohac helped lay a wreath and rendered honors to the fallen.

The honor guard was later treated to lunch across the way where a small exhibit showcased photographs of the church after it was nearly destroyed during World War II. At the lunch, one of the association members shared a story about how he was only a child but remembered the American Soldiers giving him candy as they walked the streets of rubble during the liberation.

# Nebraska Soldiers explore hedgerows, Battle of Saint Lo history at Hill 122

By Staff Sgt. Sherri Maberry  
Staff Photojournalist

As you look down the narrow road, you can only see a few feet in front of you. The road curves and on either side is vegetation grown well over the heads of the people walking through. As you walk, you imagine how the Soldier felt 75 years earlier as he walked down this same road. Was he thinking of the mission? His family back home? When his next hot meal might be? Was he scared? The sense of surrealism is strong as not much has changed – and yet everything has changed – in the 75 years since that Soldier came through.

In July 1944, the 134th Infantry Regiment was given the mission of a frontal assault on Hill 122 in France, where German defenses were set up to defend the town of Saint Lo. Although a slow and difficult process thanks to fortified hedgerows, minefields and other German defenses, the 134th was able to route the Germans from the area and helped liberate the town.

Their heroism during this battle won them a Distinguished Unit Citation, one of four they would earn during their European Theater tour. Unfortunately, the price was high with a 35 percent casualty rate: 102 men killed, 589 wounded and 102 missing.

Following in their ancestors' footsteps, on July 17, 2019, Soldiers from the Nebraska Army National Guard traveled down roads Soldiers from the 134th Infantry Regiment traveled during a similar July day in 1944.

Led by Capt. Cody Cade, a former Nebraska National Guard Museum

curator, about 30 modern-day Nebraska Soldiers participated in a staff ride honoring and commemorating the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Saint Lo.

A staff ride consists of systematic preliminary study of a selected campaign or battle, an extensive visit to the actual sites associated with that campaign or battle, and an opportunity to integrate the lessons derived from each. The Soldiers visited sites in and around Saint Lo including what they believe to be Hill 122 and learned about what the 134th did to help liberate the town as Cade told stories of the heroism and bravery of the men as well as educated them on the movements and tactical operations of the mission.

Among the staff ride Soldiers was Staff Sgt. Koan Nissen, 105th Military History Team, whose grandfather fought in the Battle of Saint Lo with the 134th Infantry Regiment. Nissen's grandfather, Staff Sgt. Henry Perkinton, helped raise him and Perkinton's service in the Army National Guard is what inspired Nissen to join the Army himself.

A Lincoln native, Perkinton served in the 134th during World War II and was wounded by a



Photo by Spec. Lisa Crawford

**Tangled In Time:** Sgt. 1st Class Lillie Chambers (left) and Sgt. 1st Class Josh Meyers (right) explore the modern-day hedgerows at Le Carillon for an up-close look at the types of conditions the Soldiers of World War II had to face.

German 88mm anti-tank and anti-artillery gun during heavy fighting at Saint Lo. He received the Purple Heart and was awarded the Combat Infantry Badge.

"Retracing the 3rd Battalion, 134th Infantry's steps means I'm retracing his steps," Nissen said, overlooking Saint-Georges-Montcocq.

"I can think of no greater honor than for a grandson to stand where his grandfather stood and fought." Although others on the staff ride may not have had family members fighting with the 134th at Saint Lo, almost all had family who fought during World War II.

But one thing was certain, not a single Nebraska Soldier who walked down that road today wasn't moved in some way thinking about those brave souls who marched down that same road 75 years earlier.

See LIBERATION on 15.





Photos by Spc. Lisa Crawford  
**Honor To Honor:** Ralph Hansen, a WWII Army Air Corps veteran from Nebraska, renders a salute in the heart of Saint Lo, France, July 18, at the site of a memorial dedicated to Maj. Thomas Howie, 29th Infantry Division, during the town's 75th commemoration of its liberation. Hansen was one of 45 members of the "Nebraska Delegation" from the Nebraska National Guard Historical Society's Liberation Tour which overlapped the Nebraska National Guard's staff ride to the Saint Lo, allowing all to participate in this historic commemorative ceremony.



**'To Saint-Lo':** Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac (left), Nebraska adjutant general, attends a ceremony in Saint Lo, France, July 18, at the site of a monument dedicated to Maj. Thomas Howie during the town's 75th commemoration of its liberation during World War II. The monument reads: "He fell at the head of his troops as he was liberating our city. His last words were... 'To Saint-Lo.'"

**LIBERATION** continued from page 14.

unit today received its lineage. Long was visibly moved by the gesture.

Moving on from Pont-Farcy, the honor guard stopped next to visit the William Notley memorial orchard in Guilberville. The orchard, named after a 35th Santa Fe American Soldier who fought for the town's liberation, was planted in 2008 and is an important space for educating children. The final event for the honor guard included another flower presentation – this time presented by Command Sgt. Maj. Marty Baker, state command sergeant major, at the freedom marker and museum in Giéville. The stone marker – one of many placed at each of the 1,146 kilometers stretching "Liberty Road" – was the commemorative way to mark the route of the Allied forced from D-Day in June 1944, from Sainte-Mère-Église to Bastogne. The design of the milestones is symbolic, with the flaming torch of Liberty being carried eastward, on a dome that bares 48 stars representing the (then) 48 United States which took part in the Liberation of France.



**In Remembrance:** The Nebraska honor guard poses for a photo, July 17, on steps by a bronze plaque dedicated to the 134th Infantry, 35th Division, "In Remembrance of French and American Patriots in the Liberation of St. George Montococq en route Saint-Lo." This was one of the few memorials in Normandy specifically naming the 134th Infantry and the National Guard.

**Day Two:**

On the second full day of the 75th Commemoration of the Liberation of Saint Lo staff ride, the small contingent of Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers serving as an honor guard attended more ceremonies with the 35th Santa Fe Association. However, unlike the events of the preceding day, the ceremonies and memorials this day were more closely tied to the history and lineage of the Nebraska National Guard's 134th Infantry Regiment, and the decades of emotions were present amongst all parties involved.

The first event included laying flowers at the memorial at Le Mesnil Rouxelin for Nebraska National Guard Lt. Col. Alfred Thomsen of Omaha. Thomsen, the 3rd Battalion commander, led the battalion in intense and decisive combat from Viller Fossard into Saint Lo, and was later mortally wounded on "Bloody Sunday" July 30, 1944, and died shortly after.

Following the ceremony, the honor guard joined members of the community for lunch and viewing of "Following My Father's Footsteps: The Longest Day," a video by the daughter of a 35th Santa Fe Soldier who had traced her father's path of war through Normandy – including to Saint Lo and the small towns nearby. The lunch allowed time for the Nebraska Soldiers to mingle with members of Association and exchange stories. Sgt. 1st Class Lillie Chambers and Sgt. Libby Henschke – who both accompanied the honor guard on the second day as representatives of the 110th Multifunctional Medical Battalion, had the opportunity to hear from locals who remember being children and helped by American Army medics during the war – possibly from the Nebraska's 110 Medical Battalion. After one gentleman shared his story with Chambers, she presented him with the 110th unit crest, and he was overcome with emotion as he thanked her for her gesture.

After lunch, the contingent traveled to La Meauffe for the site of another 35th Infantry Memorial located in the center of the municipal cemetery, where honors were again rendered. At most of the ceremonial sites, a sound system played first the American National Anthem

followed by La Marseillaise (the French National Anthem). At the cemetery, however, the speaker system was unavailable, but it allowed for a poignant exchange where all present sang both songs proudly.

The next stop was perhaps most meaningful for the Nebraska Soldiers as they ventured down modern-day hedgerows at Le Carillon for an up-close look at the types of conditions the Soldiers of World War II had to face. For many, it was as if the Soldiers had stepped into Keith Rocco's heritage painting "From Cornrow to Hedgerow" which depicts Nebraska's 134th Infantry regiment fighting within the hedgerows during World War II. The Soldiers also visited with the owner of the land adjacent to Hill 122 – the scene of a tremendous battle on which hinged the capture of Saint Lo.

The second day concluded at St. George Montococq, where on the right side of the staircase leading



**Bridging Conversation:** Col. Chad Stevens (right), 67th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade commander and a former bridge engineer, talks July 16, with Christopher Long, a British journalist who helped save and create the WWII Bailey Bridge memorial at Pont-Farcy.

from the main street corner to the church hangs a bronze plaque in French and English honoring the 134th Infantry Regiment, 35th Division, who liberated the town from 13-18 July, 1944. Dedicated in 1994, the plaque bears the same unit crest worn by many Nebraska National Guard Soldiers today.

**Day Three:**

On the final full-day in Normandy, July 18, the small contingent of Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers spent the majority of time



**Staff-Ride Pride:** Soldiers selected to participate in the 75th Commemoration Liberation of Saint Lo staff ride pose with Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, July 17, in Saint Lo, France, at the site of a monument dedicated to the sacrifices made by the 35th Infantry Division during the town's liberation in 1944.

commemorating the 75th anniversary of the Liberation of Saint Lo.

The first ceremony of the day was at the site of a plaque dedicated to the sacrifices made by Soldiers of the 35th Infantry Division, July 11-18, 1944, during World War II. The plaque is affixed to the old stone ramparts near Notre Dame in Saint Lo, and two towering flag poles fly both the American flag and the French flag high above a beautiful flower garden.

The second ceremony took place at the site of a monument dedicated to Maj. Thomas Howie during the town's 75th commemoration of its liberation during World War II.

Howie was an Army infantry officer and battalion commander in the 29th Infantry Division who was killed in action during in World War II while leading his unit in an effort to take the strategic town of Saint Lo.

A photo of his flag draped body on the rubble of the St. Croix Cathedral in Saint Lo was widely circulated and became one of the most iconic images of the cost of war. The monument reads:

"He fell at the head of his troops as he was liberating our city. His last words were... 'To Saint-Lo.'"

The final ceremony for our

Nebraska Soldiers attending the commemorative events, took place in the heart of the town of Saint Lo, near a plaque dedicated to Howie, at the site where his body once rested. Also attending this ceremony were 45 individuals from the Nebraska National Guard Historical Society's Liberation Tour, including Nebraska State Senator Mark Kolterman of Seward.

During this larger ceremony, Bohac and Kolterman presented a framed proclamation to the mayor of Saint Lo on behalf of Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts which declared July 18, 2019, Saint Lo Liberation Day in the state. The proclamation honored the 75th anniversary of the World War II battle in which Nebraska's own 134th Infantry Regiment fought bravely and prevailed despite heavy casualties.

Bohac also accepted a medallion commemorating the 75th anniversary of D-Day and the liberation of the town of Saint Lo from the town's mayor, Francois Briere, on behalf of the Nebraska National Guard.

While brief and fast-paced, the 75th Commemoration Staff Ride visit to Saint Lo, France was a one-in-a-lifetime opportunity for all the Nebraska Soldiers involved – regardless of if they were with the main body or the honor guard.

When interviewed about the trip after its conclusion, one consistent message emerged: the desire for every Nebraska National Guard Soldier and Airman to one day experience Normandy and the "Road to Saint Lo" for themselves.

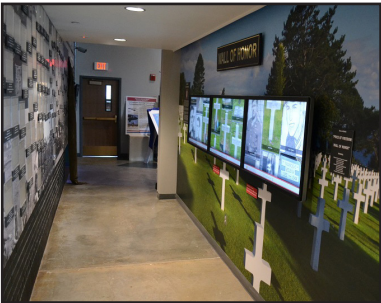


# Museum continues to improve exhibits, draw crowds

By Gerald “Jerry” Meyer  
NENG Historian

On July 4, the Nebraska National Guard Museum unveiled its’ most ambitious exhibit to date with the “Cornrow to Hedgerow 4D Experience.” The exhibit was based on the Keith Rocco painting of the same name that honored the exploits of the 134th Infantry Regiment at Hill 122 outside Saint Lo, France in July 1944. The painting was transformed into a display featuring the twelve soldiers and Jeep in the hedgerows of France outside the Emilie. The Nebraska National Guard Historical Society raised the \$232,000 to fund the exhibit that was designed and built by Hartman Historical Services of Omaha.

The three box design features a command post tent, the hedgerow scene from the painting and a “Victory Room” at the end of the display. The command post tent features Colonel Butler Miltonberger reading the operations order for July 15, 1944, on a monitor overlooking his actual typewriter and kit from the war. The tent will include maps of St. Lo and the officer command structure pictures on a wall (to include Francis Greenleaf of Hastings). The patrons listen to and ob-



**Price Of Freedom:** A new exhibit honors the 118 Nebraska Soldiers lost during WWII with a display of replica Western Union Telegrams and three touchscreen monitors.

serve graphics for a five paragraph operations order and then proceed into the main Hedgerow room. The Hedgerow contains the twelve soldiers in the position you see them in the Keith Rocco painting (except for the NCO is moved back). So the room is divided into groups of 3 soldiers (Machine Gun crew and ammo bearers, Rifle squad M-1 and BAR, Medic and wounded, and Officer/NCO/RTO). The jeep is also a main feature and was modified to replica the one in the painting (includes a “Shepherd’s Hook” to cut German wires across the hedgerows). In the room are hedgerow vegetation and a large screen and sound dome

with images and sounds from the battle. The final room is the “Victory Room” which features the large version of the Keith Rocco painting to allow patrons to look back into the room and realize they just walked through it. The room also contains the 118 Gold Stars of those Nebraskans who served in the regiment that were killed in the war. The monitor and graphics show the route from Omaha Beach to the Elbe River of the regiment in World War II. Along the route Gold Stars appear where battles were fought. The room also contains valuable artifacts from the war and a display of memorials dedicated to the orphans of the regiment.

The room is going through another transformation in the coming year with a grant to purchase more 4D equipment and hedgerow material for the display. This \$100,000 addition will allow the patron to experience the feeling of being in the hedgerows, from air systems that will simulate the explosions of battle. The exhibit is the cornerstone exhibit to the story of the Nebraska National Guard in World War II.

Another new exhibit – “Price of Freedom – Wall of Honor” was also dedicated on July 4. The exhibit tells the stories of the 118 Nebraska Na-

tional Guard soldiers that were killed in World War II. The display features 118 replica Western Union Telegrams across from a bank of three touch screen monitors. The monitors are the featured part of the Wall of Honor in which the stories can be told to visiting patrons.

The Western Union Telegram Wall was completed in 2018 and contains the replica telegrams for each Nebraska National Guard soldier killed in World War II. Under the telegrams is a plaque that tells where the soldier is buried. Just about half of the total number are buried overseas (Normandy, Brittany, Lorraine and Luxembourg American Cemeteries). The telegrams are considered to be a graphic representation of the cost of war. The display was created by interns from Concordia University and the University of Nebraska-Omaha. The Wall of Honor tells more de-



**Living Art:** An inside look at the new Cornrow to Hedgerow 4D Experience exhibit the Nebraska National Guard Museum in Seward.

tails to each telegram on the wall. The monitor has 10 items in which we can show to tell the story of the person. Most of the soldiers have a picture of their grave-stone (here in Nebraska or overseas).

Some families have given the Museum letters and pictures to include in the exhibit. Intern, Nick Tuma from the University of Nebraska at Omaha, was able to go into files and post additional information on the soldiers. The monitor system was installed by NanoNation in Lincoln. The background for the wall is a wrap (Revolution Wraps in Lincoln) that shows the Normandy-American Cemetery just off Omaha Beach in France. Storyboards tell about the Gold Stars and what they represent. The Nebraska National Guard Historical Society raised the \$30,000 to complete the display. The future of the display will include our service-members who were killed in recent conflicts.

## Retiree Council active in community

Greetings from the Nebraska Military Retiree Council! Great news for retirees! LB 153 (50 percent military retirement state tax exemption) sailed through the first round of the Legislature on a 49-0 vote! Now on to the second round for more consideration. Here’s hoping for a great tax benefit for all retirees. Keep contacting your senator asking for their continued support.

The Spring Social will be held on May 23, 2020 at the National Guard Museum in Seward once again. Social time will begin at 6 p.m. Hors D’ouvres and beverages will be available. Watch for the flyer and plan to attend! We’ll recognize recipients of the Founders Award as well.

Our quarterly NMRC meeting will be on Wednesday, April 8, 2020, at the East Campus Readiness Center starting at 9 a.m. All retirees are welcome to attend the meeting and bring input or ideas. Hope to see you there!

The next retiree briefing will be Aug. 29, 2020, at the Sesostris Shrine Center, 1050 Saltillo Road in Roca, Nebraska. Stay tuned for more information on this important event where representatives will provide updates on the National Guard, benefits, TRICARE, and a host of other exciting information for retirees. We’ll also have tables set up so you can visit with the various providers attending, for more detailed information. Save the date and plan to attend. More details will be sent out via email when everything is finalized. Hope to see you there!

### Join the Email List

With the advent of electronic media, it’s easier for us to spread the word via email. But, we do have a number of retirees who do not use computers, so we still mail out hard copy information to them on a regular basis. If you’d like to be included on the email list, let us know.

### Got Questions?

Got questions and don’t know who to contact? Call or email us and we’ll get you to the right office to assist. Have you moved, changed a phone number or added an email address? Please contact us to update your information so we can keep our information current.

## Nebraska National Guard Retiree News & Notes

By retired Chief Warrant Officer 5 William Nelson

## DEERS/ID Card Stations

- ♦ G1 – 2433 N.W. 24th Street, Lincoln, NE 68524: 402-309-8192/8168/8158;
- ♦ “Spirit of 1776” Armory 1776 N. 10th St. Lincoln, NE 68508 402-309-7359/7373;
- ♦ Pentnerman Armory at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln 402-309-1724/1719;
- ♦ Air Guard (Lincoln Air Base) Bldg 600, Room E209: 402-309-1542;
- ♦ Norfolk Armory 817 S. 1st St. Norfolk, NE 68701 402-309-8900/8908;

Remember, you need two forms of ID when you arrive for your appointment.

- ♦ Kearney Armory 5710 Airport Road Kearney: 402-309-7758/7752;
- ♦ 209th Regiment (Regional Training Institute), 220 County Road A, Bldg. 508, Ashland, NE 68003, 402-309-7809/7628;
- ♦ Offutt Air Force Base: (402) 294-2374;
- ♦ The number for DEERS is 1-800-538-9552.

## Area Retiree Events

- ♦ Lincoln, Army National Guard retirees: **First** Monday of each month, 7 a.m., Virginia’s Travelers Café, 3820 Cornhusker Highway
- ♦ Lincoln, Air National Guard retirees: **Last** Monday of each month, 7 a.m., Stauffer’s Café, 5600 S. 48th Street
- ♦ Lincoln, Retiree Lunch: **Third** Wednesday of each month, 11 a.m., Patty’s Pub, 311 N. Cotner Boulevard
- ♦ North Platte area retirees: **Second** Saturday of each month, 8 a.m., Lincoln Highway Diner, 320 Rodeo Road, North Platte

If any other towns have retiree breakfasts, coffee gatherings or evening meals and want to share that information, please let us know and we’ll add you to the list so others can join you.

- ♦ Kearney area retirees: BattleGrind Coffee group meets every Saturday at various locations. Contact Garth Scism for more information.
- ♦ Omaha retirees: Meeting on the **Second** Wednesday of February, April, June, August, October and December at 5:30 p.m., VFW Club, 5083 S. 136th Street

## From the Retirement Services Sergeant

Greetings! My name is Sgt. 1st Class Amber J. Gralheer and I have taken over the role of the Retirement Services Officer for Nebraska. I look forward to meeting those of you who I have not yet met! We’re busy planning the retiree brief for spring time and I look forward to seeing you all there.

Also, I will be in Omaha at the North Omaha Readiness Center on April 8 and will be in Grand Island



**Coming Soon:** The National Museum of the U.S. Army is now under construction at Fort Belvoir, Va., and will be the first and only museum to tell the 244-year history of the U.S. Army. Admission to the museum will be free and open to the public.

## U.S. Army Museum to open in June 2020

WASHINGTON (ARMY.MIL)—The U.S. Army announced today that the National Museum of the United States Army will open to the public on June 4, 2020.

The National Museum of the United States Army will be the first and only museum to tell the 244-year history of the U.S. Army in its entirety. Now under construction on a publicly accessible area of Fort Belvoir, Virginia, admission to the museum will be open to the public with free admission.

The museum will tell the Army’s story through Soldier stories. The narrative begins with the earliest militias and continues to present day.

“The Army has served American citizens for 244 years, protecting the freedoms that are precious to all of us. Millions of people have served in the Army, and this museum gives us the chance to tell their stories to the public, and show how they have served our nation and our people,” said acting Secretary of the Army Ryan D. McCarthy.

In addition to the historic galleries, the museum’s Army and Society Gallery will include stories of Army innovations and the symbiotic relationship between the Army, its civilian government and the people. The Experiential Learning Center will provide a unique and interactive learning space for visitors of all ages to participate in hands-on geography, science, technology, engineering and math (G-STEM) learning and team-building activities.

“This state-of-the art museum will engage visitors in the Army’s story -- highlighting how the Army was at the birth of our nation over 240 years ago, and how it continues to influence our everyday lives,” said Ms. Tammy E. Call, the museum’s director. “The National Museum of the United States Army will be stunning, and we can’t wait to welcome visitors from around the world to see it.”

The museum is a joint effort between the U.S. Army and the Army Historical Foundation, a non-profit organization. The Army Historical Foundation is constructing the building through private funds. The U.S. Army is providing the infrastructure, roads, utilities and exhibit work that transform the building into a museum.

The Army will own and operate the museum 364 days a year (closed December 25). Museum officials expect 750,000 visitors in the first year of operation. A timed-entry ticket will be required. Free timed-entry tickets will assist in managing anticipated crowds and will provide the optimum visitor experience. More information on ticketing will be available in early 2020.

For more information visit: [www.theNMUSA.org](http://www.theNMUSA.org).







# Guard Family NEWS

You Can Use



## Deployment tips from former Spouse of the Year

By **Cara Loken**  
Yellow Ribbon Support Specialist

National guardsmen sign up for one weekend a month and two weeks a year. In the coming years the national guard could deploy anywhere from two weeks to a year, this will be the normal for our guard. Our recent deployment cycle sent Air Guard members on deployments for 90 days and even up to 300 days. This has been the first long deployment in the history of the Nebraska Air National Guard. Over half of the air guard base deployed and of those, more than 50 percent were first time deployers.

As a military spouse I have experienced over four deployments, and three of those deployments were six months or longer. This is my family's new normal. **How can we embrace this new normal?**

**Support:** Make sure to support your family member before, during and after deployment. Be there for them when they need to talk. It's not always easy for the service member to leave, but they have a duty to the United States to uphold.

**Be proud:** Make sure you tell them how proud you are of them. They should share with you how proud they are of you for taking care of everything while they are gone. Be proud you are a military family.

Attend Yellow Ribbon Events and Visit Family and Readiness Centers:



CARA LOKEN

Yellow Ribbon events are available to servicemembers and their family and support system before they deploy and when they return home. The goal of the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program is to connect Guard and Reserve service members, their families and loved ones with local resources before, during, and after deployments, especially during the reintegration phase that occurs months after service members return home.

Family and Readiness Centers are located on each base: They are available to provide information, outreach and referrals to services in your community and serve all active and reserves service members and families.

**Some helpful tips before your servicemember deploys:**

**Family or spouse time:** Make time for family. Take a vacation or a short trip. Spend the day at the zoo. Find what works for you and your family.

**Talk about it:** Make sure to talk about deployment. This will help ease stresses on both you and your family during deployment.

**New Roles and Responsibilities at home:** It is good to have a list of what new roles and responsibilities the family member will take on while the servicemember is deployed. This can be anything from how to change the furnace filter to paying bills.

**Some tips to help while your servicemember is deployed:**

**Stay connected:** It is now much easier

to stay connected with your loved one during deployment. There are apps such as; Skype, What's App, Viber, Facetime, etc. These are great tools for communicating. Make sure to share things you are doing at home. Remember the servicemember cannot talk about his mission while on deployment.

**Volunteer:** Keep busy by volunteering. There are volunteer opportunities available to you, including ones at your base. Find what works for you and what you're passionate about.

**Family Activities:** Make a countdown clock, send care packages and prepare for homecoming. Deployment Support Deck, Family Relationship Conversation Cards are a cool deck of cards that can help with deployments created by a military spouse. My favorite is to write in a journal each day while they are away.

**Find your tribe.** Find your support system. This can be your family, neighbors, friends or military spouses.

Deployment can be hard on everyone. Remember to find what works for you and your family.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**

Cara Loken is a Yellow Ribbon Support Specialist for the 155th Air Refueling Wing. The spouse of Lt. Col. John Loken, maintenance squadron commander, Cara was named the National Guard Spouse of the Year in 2016 by Military Spouse magazine. Cara will be contributing to future editions of the Prairie Soldier, sharing advice for military families. Email your questions for Cara to [nenation-anguard@gmail.com](mailto:nenation-anguard@gmail.com).

## Memorable Moments



Photo by Sgt. Charlie Wilkins

**Be It So Proclaimed:** On April 8, Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac joined together with many of the younger members of the Nebraska National Guard family at the Capitol in Lincoln as Governor Pete Ricketts signed a proclamation recognizing April as Month of the Military Child. Month of the Military Child helps to honor the service and sacrifice of all military children.



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Denise Mommens

**Yellow Ribbon:** In the midst of all that was going on in the state with floods and a blizzard, spouses and families of deployed members from the 155th Air Refueling Wing attended a Yellow Ribbon Reintegration support event at the Graduate Conference Center in downtown Lincoln on March 16. Children of the members were recognized and thanked for their sacrifice by Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac's spouse, Rev. Kristie Johnson Bohac, who also offered insights into how we have dealt with deployments as a family. Kris also offered opening comments and provided an invocation to start the event. "She did all this in my absence since I was consumed with my responsibilities with helping managing Nebraska's disaster response to the floods," Bohac said. "Once again proving that none of us serve alone and our spouses, family members and others in our communities continually step up so we can do what we are called to do!"

## New security forces welcome annex open on base

By **Staff Sgt. Jason Wilson**  
Staff Photojournalist

The gate annex, located at the Nebraska National Guard air base main gate in Lincoln, Nebraska, officially opened in June of 2019.

The gate annex will be open Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. and will provide assistance with entrance into the base.

"The annex will assist security forces, the Nebraska National Guard and visitors to the base by having everything needed for entry on to the base under one roof," said Senior Master Sgt. Jon Quissell, 155th Security Forces Squadron operations superintendent.

"The main purpose of the gate annex is to issue visitor passes, Defense Biometric Identification System cards,

and to authenticate any Entry Authorization List that are sent for base access," said Quissell. "The personnel in the annex will also assist in conducting vehicle searches and entry."

Individuals who want to access the base will be required to present proper documentation for entry onto base.

"Anyone arriving at the base who requires access will

go through the annex to be vetted," said Quissell. "When a visitor access request is submitted from someone on base, the individual on the request must have their drivers license, vehicle registration and current insurance card with them to make processing go smoother."

The gate annex has already been used extensively in the short period of time it has been open.

# Warrior & Family Support

Scan the QR Code to Download the WFS App!

**App Features:**

- Resource Directory
- Resource Locations via Google Maps
- Events Calendar
- Real Time Responses to Inquiries

**Don't have a smart phone?**

Text "NEWFS" to 95577 to receive text messages about program updates.

**Your new one-stop shop for information and resources.**

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## NEBRASKA NATIONAL GUARD SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION & RESPONSE PROGRAM (SAPR)

**IF YOU HAVE BEEN SEXUALLY ASSAULTED:**

**Go to a SAFE location away from the attacker.**  
**Call 9-1-1** or locate the nearest local rape crisis center.

**HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT SEXUAL HARASSMENT, SEXUAL ASSAULT, OR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?**

National Guard service members are encouraged to seek the support and care they deserve. Professional resources are needed and are available to help you.

**CONFIDENTIAL SAPR SUPPORT:**

JFHQ SARC.....402-309-8179  
155 ARW SARC.....402-309-1115  
NENG SAPR 24-Hour Helpline ..... 402-525-0078

**OTHER CONFIDENTIAL SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE:**

NE ARNG State Chaplain ..... 402-309-8491  
Army Psychological Health Coordinator ..... 402-309-7434  
DOD 24-Hour Safe Helpline.....877-995-5247  
Local or National Rape Crisis Number (RAINN).....800-656-HOPE

Find us on Facebook at... **Nebraska National Guard SAPR**



# Street Talk

“What military themed movie is your favorite, and why?”



**Maj. Russell Bartholow**  
Joint Force Headquarters

*“Band of Brothers because it just shows aspects of war and what you need to train up and be prepared and come home and it also shows the comradery amongst soldiers while in battle. It shows 360 degrees.”*



**Spc. Zachary Faraj**  
67th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade

*“Restrepo because you get to see what happens through the eyes of a camerader and know that it was real. The realism of this movie is great.”*



**Tech. Sgt. Abbie Ford**  
155th Logistics Readiness Squadron

*“12 Strong because it is based on a true story and it involves horses, and I am a horse owner and lover.”*



**Sgt. 1st Class Kevin Hunter**  
Defense Cyber Operations Element

*“I liked We Were Soldiers. I think it is funny and it reminds me of my first duty station in Bamberg, Germany with the 630 Military Police Company.”*



**Sgt. 1st Class Dennis Hartman**  
Joint Force Headquarters

*“Saving Private Ryan because it reflects the reality of part-time soldiers and the sacrifice they make for this nation, and how regular citizens can answer the call to defend the nation.”*

## Editor's Note:

We want to hear from you! If you are reading this newspaper, please send us an email to [nenationalguard@gmail.com](mailto:nenationalguard@gmail.com) and let us know your thoughts. Do you have an idea for a Street Talk question? Do you have an idea for a story we should cover? What about suggestions for improving the newspaper overall? We welcome your feedback - positive reviews or constructive criticism. We look forward to hearing from you!

## Scott's Thoughts: An Introduction

Hello! My name is Maj. Scott Ingalsbe, and I am excited to return to my native Nebraska as the state public affairs officer. I want to thank the Adjutant General, Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, for the opportunity to lead and further develop his communication strategy. I also want to thank my predecessor, Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes, for his many years of dedicated service that have left Nebraska with a strong public affairs program that is well known and highly regarded throughout the National Guard.

The Nebraska National Guard has compelling stories to tell, and I aim to empower our most effective messengers – Nebraska's 4,500 Airmen and Soldiers – to tell our personal stories to anyone and everyone who might read or listen.

Public affairs' role is to support the commander in fulfilling our obligation to keep our service members, families, and communities informed. We traditionally carry this out through public information, command information, and community engagement efforts. However, I personally believe we must add a fourth broader effort: promoting storytelling culture within the Nebraska National Guard.

“If we don't tell our story, someone else will (and we won't like their version)” is a sentiment that has been shared widely, with a few variations, by leaders in the military as well as the corporate world in recent years. I agree with this sentiment, and I offer a

### Scott's Thoughts

State Public Affairs Officer

**Scott Ingalsbe**



related question as a challenge: If we don't tell our own story, why would anyone else?

In our daily lives, we are bombarded with information. Some of it still comes from personal interaction with family, friends, and coworkers. But an overwhelming amount also comes to us via traditional and social media or an increasing variety of smart devices. It is a noisy information environment.

Still, research shows that the most effective communication happens through personal interactions, digitally or in person, with people you already know. Relationships matter.

Nebraska's Airmen and Soldiers, through their interactions with family, friends, and community, shape the public knowledge and understanding more than our official presence online or through traditional media. On social media, this effect can even be measured in vast amounts of data. A recent study found that personal posts received 20 times more engagement (likes, comments, etc.) than similar posts by “brand” or official accounts. We want to engage with other people, not faceless organizations.

While it can be rewarding to see our units in the news, to truly inform people about the Nebraska National Guard in such a way that they will remember, we also have to tell the story ourselves in our personal lives.

Be proud of what you do in the Guard, and post about it on social media – responsibly – in your own authentic way. Where you're from, your unit of assignment, and your military occupational specialty are always okay to talk about. Specific operations and activities may be off-limits for security, but there is plenty that you can share about your experiences in the military without going into that.

At a friend's wedding, I was getting to know someone seated at the same table, and when I told him I am a public affairs officer he quipped, “Oh, so you're the guy who gets to say ‘No Comment!’”

While it was tongue-in-cheek, it has stuck with me ever since. I have never said, “No comment,” and I never will. Nonetheless, we have a reputation for avoiding difficult subjects or being excessively coy about what we do. We should never pass up opportunities to responsibly tell our story, because if we don't there is no reason to expect anyone else will.

Nebraska is a good place to live, and a great place to serve. I look forward to telling our story together.

#GoodLifeGreatStrength  
#NEGuard

## The night I learned to put the camera down

On the late afternoon of March 14, 2019, instead of shutting down my computer and preparing to head home for the night, I found myself standing in a small conference room on the lowest level of Joint Force Headquarters listening to both military and civilian emergency management leaders diligently – yet calmly – discuss life-saving procedures as flood waters rose in the Columbus, Nebraska area.

Because I chose to stay, to listen and observe, as conversations flurried around me, I was present when our lead aviation officer announced they were spinning up two UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters to recon a submerged home which local first-responders had been unable to reach by swift water rescue crafts.

I don't remember thinking through any of the details – the temperature, the water, the timing, I just simply asked, “Can I go?” Less than 10 minutes later I was on the first helicopter out of the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, with my camera, headed in the direction of the distress call near Columbus with the search and rescue crew.

I flew over flood waters in Florida in 2017 after Hurricane Irma, but this was entirely different. The strong winds battered the helicopter back and forth, and when we flew in closer to the submerged homes, the water whipped up against the windows.

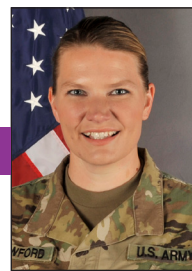
Between the trees, the powerlines, the high winds and racing water current, the severity of the situation quickly set in, and I listened intently to the communications on the headset. This wasn't Florida. This was my backyard. The water was still rising, the situation was dangerous for civilians and emergency responders alike, and the sun was going to set in a few hours.

Eventually, the air crews found a house deemed safe for the air crews to attempt an extraction. The crew chief used the hoist to lower a Soldier down onto the roof of the house below. I watched the events unfold through the viewfinder of my camera, recording every moment.

### A Different Perspective

Editor, Prairie Soldier

**Lisa Crawford**



But when the first civilian came into view, clutching to the hoist with terrified eyes and with the winds twisting her about in the air as the crew chief struggled to reel her into the helicopter, I felt compelled to do something completely foreign to me: I put my camera down.

I unbuckled from my seat and reached out to help pull the woman onto the floor of the helicopter. With the crew chief, I assured her that she was safe, helped loosen her panicked grip from the hoist and eventually moved her to her seat. As I went to fasten her seatbelt, I realized the bag she had placed on the front of her body had our second rescue passenger inside – a small dog. I latched the belt gently around the bag and tried my best to calm her down. She may not have been able to hear my words over the roar of the helicopter blades, but I hoped my smile would set her at ease.

After that first house, we hoisted up two other individuals before flying back to a large parking lot in Columbus – ironically belonging to a water park. I ended up riding back in the crew chiefs' seat as he sat on the floor. When we landed and helped the civilians off the Blackhawk, the woman reached back in toward me, grabbed my arm hard and mouthed the words, “Thank you,” – the terror in the eyes now turned to gratitude, a visual I had never seen before.

Our helicopter picked up another 10 people and three dogs that night. I took some photos and some video, but it was darker than I was used to and I spent most of the night acting in a supportive role: helping to pull the hoist onto the helicopter's floor, securing the passenger into a seat and calming them and the dogs, as best I could.

The helicopter returned to the air base shortly after midnight that evening, and when I stepped off, I

felt the night's events as my knees were sore from crawling around, securing the passengers and my muscles ached from being blasted by 50 mile per hour winds over raging icy waters, even though the doors were only open a few moments. I was physically

and emotionally exhausted having seen firsthand the devastation water can do. I was still trying to wrap my brain around knowing that this wasn't a coastline or swampland under siege by tropical storms or hurricanes, but humble Midwestern communities overtaken by floods never before seen in this part of the country.

As a journalist, I know the power of photography, videography and storytelling. “Strength Through Truth” is the motto of the Defense Information School at Fort Meade, Maryland, where all military mass communication specialists are trained. My job is to collect the images and the stories – the truths – and share them with the world. That is why I asked to be on that first helicopter out, to capture those moments for the world.

I am also a Soldier – and a Citizen Soldier at that. Regardless of our job title, we are always told to remember that we need to be “Soldiers first.” That first day of the flood, in the helicopter, being a Soldier and doing my job, meant lending a helping hand and a reassuring smile to neighbors, instead of staying behind my camera.

Overall, the Nebraska National Guard public affairs team was successful in documenting the flood response efforts. The Nebraska Broadcasters Association honored us with the Chairman's Award this year for the visual documentation and media access provided in the early stages of the flood which helped mobilize relief efforts. But that first day in the helicopter – that “Thank you,” – was why I proudly wear a uniform every day. Being a photojournalist with the Nebraska National Guard – documenting the brave men and women of my home state as they help my neighbors – has been the most rewarding experience of my life, and sometimes that's worth putting a camera down for.





**Stressful Scenarios:** An Army combat medic carried a simulated patient on a litter over a 6-foot wall during the Jameson Medic Challenge, Aug. 17, near the Camp Ashland Training Site, while purple smoke obstructs the scene.



Photos by Spc. Lisa Crawford

**Accident Extraction:** Nebraska Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Isvi Machuca, 195th Forward Support Company medic, helps secure a simulated patient for extraction from a humvee during the Jameson Medic Challenge, Aug. 17, near the Camp Ashland Training Site. The competition pitted eight squads of four Soldiers against one another as they rotated through six lanes, testing teams on tactical combat casualty care, casualty evacuation, communication, and warrior skills.

# Competition honors fallen medic’s legacy

By **Spc. Lisa Crawford**  
Editor

The 110th Multifunctional Medical Battalion hosted the Tricia Lynn Jameson Medic Challenge Aug. 16-18, near the Camp Ashland Training Site. The annual challenge tests teams of National Guard and Reserve Soldiers on the skills required to operate as an Army combat medic by replicating frontline trauma on the battlefield and stressing medics to work under pressure. The challenge included eight squads of four Soldiers from three units: the Nebraska Army National Guard’s 313th Medical Company (Ground Ambulance) and 195th Forward Support Company (Special Operations) (Airborne), and the U.S. Army Reserve’s 7246th Medical Support Unit. More than 100 Soldiers total were present for the challenge either as a participant or in a support role. The competitors rotated through six lanes, testing teams on tactical combat casualty care, casualty evacuation, communication, and warrior skills. All Soldiers completed a timed, 6-mile foot march and a written test. The challenge tests medical knowledge through practical application in preparation

for Expert Field Medical Badge training and to develop confidence in an operational environment. “This whole exercise and what we’re doing is all about what we do,” said Sgt. Maj. Tomas Ortiz, 110th Multifunctional Medical Battalion operations sergeant major. “It’s about saving lives and it’s about being medics.” Formerly known as the Squad Medic Challenge, it was officially renamed last year in honor and memory of Sgt. 1st Class Tricia Jameson, 34, a Nebraska Army National Guard medic assigned to the 313th Medical Company, who was killed when a roadside improvised explosive device exploded near her Humvee ambulance on July 14, 2005, while trying to treat wounded Marines in western Iraq. “That’s why we do this in her memory,” said Col. Gary Ropers, commander 92nd Troop Command. “She gave everything she could possibly give to take care of Soldiers, and that’s what you as medics do... So keep her in mind as you move forth, as you go out and you do your missions... Never ever, ever will we forget her.” The 313th Medical Company deployed to Iraq in late 2004. Midway through the deployment, the unit requested replacements and Jameson volunteered. Prior to the deployment, she was a full-time healthcare specialist at the Medical Clinic at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln. Pfc. Isabell Sheets, a combat medic with the 313th Medical Company, said she had a pretty good experience for her first competition. “It was definitely physically demanding,” Sheets said. “But I got to bond with my squad pretty well and got to know them on

a more personal level because we had to endure the pain together, and I got to learn quite a bit.” The Trenton, Nebraska-native just recently completed her advanced individual training, and was eager to put her schoolhouse knowledge to use during the competition – even if it was stressful. “Each lane was supposed to be stressful yes, but as a medic you’re supposed to stay calm so it was pretty easy for me to think this is what I need to do and this is how I am going to take action,” she said. Sheets said she really enjoyed the care under fire lane which included live-fire paint ball rounds. “We always talk about care under fire, and this was a great experience to actually have care under fire,” she said. “And when we get hit, we realize we are Soldiers first and medics second. That was a great experience.” Sheets said even with the transition happening in the state, and the 313th Medical Company slated to deactivate later in the year, the competition made her extra excited about new opportunities with the infantry battalion.

Sgt. Aaron Pohlman, a more experience combat medic with the 313th Medical Company, said this year’s competition was physically a lot more demanding than previous years, mostly because of the requirement to carry as close to a combat load as possible for the entire event. A prior active-duty infantryman, Pohlman said he is also looking forward to the new opportunities awaiting Soldiers in Nebraska’s new infantry battalion. In the meantime, he suggests all medics continue to push themselves to improve their skills, not just for competitions, but for real-world scenarios too. “The EFMB is posted for what you need to accomplish online so pull those out, start reviewing the skills step by step, because medics will get used to their own ways of doing things that sometimes you need to go back to the basics and read the actual sheet so you don’t miss a step because you’re used to doing it a certain way.” This year’s top team for the Jameson Medic Challenge went to the squad from the 195th Forward Support Company (Special Opera-



**Managing Chaos:** A Nebraska Army National Guard Soldier treats a simulated patient on the mass casualty lane of the Jameson Medic Challenge, Aug. 17, near the Camp Ashland Training Site. The rowdy patient had a life-threatening leg-wound.



**Honor Before Glory:** A memorial for Sgt. 1st Class Tricia Jameson, a Nebraska Army National Guard medic who was killed in Iraq in 2005, is displayed, Aug. 18, during the awards presentation of an annual medic challenge named in her honor. The winning squad from the 195th Forward Support Company is seen in the background of the photo.

## Nebraska Soldier competes in Oklahoma for national Best Warrior title



Photos courtesy of 145th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

**Marching On:** Sgt. Bryan Kummer carries a 35 pound ruck and a rifle, July 18, as he takes on the 15 mile ruck march event of the 2019 Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition.

By **Spc. Lisa Crawford**  
Editor

Sgt. Bryan Kummer, 623rd Engineer Company, Nebraska Army National Guard, represented Nebraska and all of Region V (NE, KS, OK, TX, MO, AR, and LA) competing in the 2019 Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition at Camp Gruber Training Center, Oklahoma, July 15-19. The Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition is the culminating test for the top 14 noncommissioned officers and Soldiers from seven regions across the nation who compete in a week-long test of soldiering skills and abilities to take home the title of 2019 Army National Guard Soldier

and NCO of the Year. After winning at the state and regional level, Kummer advanced to the national level to join 13 other Soldiers and noncommissioned officers from across the country. Early in the competition, he sustained a painful injury, but Kummer found the strength to power through to finish. Ultimately, Staff Sgt. Erich Friedlein of Pennsylvania and Spc. Hunter Olson of Maryland advanced to the U.S. Army Best Warrior Competition. Kummer was the second Nebraska Army National Guard Soldier in the past four years to compete at the national Army National Guard level after Sgt. Calvin Koziol won the Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition in 2016.



**Raising The Bar:** Sgt. Bryan Kummer takes part in a modified ACFT, July 17, during the 2019 Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition at Camp Gruber Training Center, Oklahoma. For the first time in history, the 14 Best Warrior Soldiers performed a modified version of the six-event ACFT. While the standard test is conducted in physical training uniforms, the competitors completed the tasks in their Operational Camouflage Pattern uniforms.



20 Sports

Prairie Soldier 2019

Nebraska marathon team competes for national honors in Capital City race

By 2nd Lt. Natasha Hilsgen  
Staff Photojournalist

The Nebraska National Guard Marathon Team came prepared to compete against National Guard runners from 47 other states and territories in the 42nd Annual Lincoln Marathon, May 5, 2019, in Lincoln, Nebraska. Each Nebraska runner sought to earn a spot on the All-Guard National Guard Marathon Team, and to contribute to the team score. Ultimately, one Nebraskan would earn a top spot on the All-Guard team, and the total score placed Nebraska in the top-half at 11 out of 27 teams.

“Members of our marathon team serve as fitness ambassadors to their units, members and commanders,” said Lt. Col. Karl Duerk, chief of Wing Plans with the 155th Air Refueling Wing, and the only Nebraska runner to make the All-Guard team this year. “Running is a common thread to success on the fitness assessment and in combat.”

The Nebraska National Guard Marathon Team is a group of Air and Army Guard members who share a passion for running. The Soldiers and Airmen not only balance their civilian lives, military careers and other commitments, they also represent the National Guard by running marathons.

To be eligible to make the team, males under 40 must have run a prior marathon in less than four hours and females under 40 in less than four hours and thirty minutes, or a half-marathon pretty competitively, said Capt. Amanda Schmid, the Nebraska National Guard Marathon Team coordinator, and the assistant flight operations officer for Co. D, 1-376th Aviation Battalion, Nebraska National Guard.

Trying to coordinate training schedules between the team members is very hard to do. Members are from different units and different geographical locations across the state. Therefore, training is up to the individual member to ensure they are ready to compete in the 26.2 mile race and earn a spot on the All Guard National Marathon Team.

“A huge core group of people come back every year and do it,” Schmid said. “It is something they look forward to and work for every year, just to have the chance to compete for a spot on the national team.”

Each year, the top 40 male and the top 15 female guardsmen’s race times from the Lincoln National Guard Marathon are selected for a spot on the All-Guard Marathon Team. This means the members of the national team vary year-to-year, allowing runners to accommodate for deployments, other military obligations and life events.

“What makes the national team fun is we



Photo by Sgt. Anna Pongo

**Run With Purpose:** Capt. Amie Sughrue crosses a bridge during the 2019 Lincoln National Guard Marathon on May 5. Sughrue, whose head band reads, “Run With Purpose,” runs the marathon each year as part of the Nebraska National Guard Marathon Team.

get to be used as a recruiting tool throughout the year all over the country,” Schmid said.

Schmid has been on the Nebraska National Guard Team for four years, and has made the All-Guard team for the past three years. This year, Schmid did not compete for the national team as she is currently expecting her first child, but she continues her support by being Nebraska’s team coordinator.

The team manages recruiting and retention booths throughout the year at different running events, giving out information about the Air and Army National Guard.

“It provides an opportunity for us to recruit some of the healthiest and fittest people, who may be interested,” Duerk said. “Fitness is a form of readiness for our Airmen and Soldiers. If we are fit, then it provides extra readiness to the organization and it also makes us more resilient.”

Duerk was a member of the 2013 and 2014 Nebraska National Guard Marathon teams and the National Guard Marathon teams. He took some time off from running marathons but decided to rejoin the



Photo by 2nd Lt. Natasha Hilsgen

**Return To The Road:** Lt. Col. Karl Duerk, chief of Wing Plans, 155th Air Refueling Wing, runs May 5 during the 2019 Lincoln National Guard Marathon. Duerk returned to the Nebraska National Guard Marathon Team in 2019 after taking a few years off from running and earned a spot on the 2019 All-Guard Marathon Team.

Nebraska National Guard team in 2019 and didn’t miss a beat.

He placed fifth in his age group against the other National Guard runners. He has also used this opportunity to encourage more Nebraska National Guard members to participate in running events.

Soldiers, Airmen ruck march 13.1 miles to honor fallen



Photos by Staff Sgt. Jason Wilson

**Keeping Pace For A Purpose:** (From Left) Sgt. Daniel Roland, 1st Sgt. Daniel Malizzi and Sgt. Audrey Novotny march with weighted rucksacks 13.1 miles of the 2019 Lincoln National Guard Marathon. They were three of more than a dozen Nebraska National Guard Soldiers and Airmen that ruck marched the half-marathon distance in remembrance of fallen service members.

By Staff Sgt. Jason Wilson  
Staff Photojournalist

A group of Nebraska National Guard service members chose to wear their full military uniform and weighted rucksacks to complete the 13.1 mile half-marathon during the 42nd Annual Lincoln National Guard Marathon, May 5, 2019, in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Nebraska Army National Guard Chief Warrant Officer 5 Kenneth Henderson, state command chief warrant officer, carried a 38-pound pack and rucked alongside fellow military members and friends.

“This is my first time participating in the ruck,” Henderson said. “I have ran the full marathon twice and the half marathon around 10 times.”



**Memorial Miles:** A memorial banner for Spc. Blake Kelly (KIA 2003) is seen worn on the rucksack of a Soldier who marched the half-marathon May 5.

After talking to members that participated in the event last year, he decided that he would join the team and started working out with them this past January.

“During the winter we would workout inside the building twice a week,” Henderson said. “We would walk multiple laps around the building and walk multiple flights of stairs.”

At times they would train outside and would have to deal with the snow, wind or rain.

“One morning it was really cold,” he said. “We were hiking the trails at six in the morning with snow and ice on the ground.”

Once the weather permitted they would train regularly outside.

“Once we took our training outside we were averaging around 3.7 miles per hour,” he said. “Sometimes we would walk three miles, eight miles, 10 miles and recently we did 12 miles. We could have easily done one more mile. We think the stairs really helped.”

Although a great exercise, the ruck march is an event to honor and remember the fallen Soldiers and Airmen of the Nebraska National Guard that made the ultimate sacrifice.

“This is a ruck march for our fallen warriors,” Henderson said. “I have had three Soldiers that I have deployed with over the years that I am doing this for.”

An event such as this is more than just a race. It can help bring awareness to the public that individuals in their communities have sacrificed for their freedom.

“This is a team event that has a purpose rather than running as an individual,” Henderson said.

Rewarding Mission: Nebraska Soldiers, Airmen support local marathon

By Staff Sgt. Herschel Talley  
Staff Photojournalist

As runners of the 2019 Lincoln National Guard Marathon stood at the start line, ready to begin their 26.2 mile trek, another group was preparing to help those runners make it to the finish.

Members of the Nebraska Air and Army National Guard manned two aid stations at roughly the 13 and 20 mile markers, providing water, Gatorade, oranges and energy gel packets to assist runners during their grueling marathon route throughout the May 5 race.

Master Sgt. Danelle Nelson, an admin-



**Orange Duty:** Two Nebraska National Guard Airmen slice oranges at an aid station May 5 during the 2019 Lincoln National Guard Marathon.

istration noncommissioned officer with Nebraska’s Joint Force Headquarters, said this was her third year of being in charge of the mile 20 aid station, and to her the experience was still very rewarding.

“It’s a ton of fun to come out and support the civilians and then of course the National Guard members,” Nelson said. “People have fun and it’s a great team-building experience for everyone in the Air Guard and working with the Army. It’s a great joint effort.”

As well as providing fuel to the runners, Soldiers from the Nebraska Army National Guard medical units were on site to assist paramedics with any medical issues runners came down with. One runner was evaluated at the 20 mile marker water point by the soldiers and medical staff and later taken to a local hospital.

2nd Lt. Jared Washa of the 67th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade said it was a good community integration and presence for the Guard.

“This is where (mile 20) people start to get tired,” Washa said. “I’m glad we were able to come here and support.”

Washa added this was a great reflection of the Guard and hopes more Guardsmen



Photos by Staff Sgt. Herschel Talley

**Support And Cheers:** Nebraska National Guard Soldiers cheer on marathon runner Christopher Sinnett, an Indiana National Guardsman, as he runs through an aid station located at Holmes North Shore Road and Normal Blvd., May 5, during the 2019 Lincoln National Guard Marathon.

volunteer next year.

“Having the community out here and all the runners being able to see us, knowing that we care about them and like to participate,

help out and volunteer in these events,” he said. “It’s good for us to be able to get out into the community and be able to help out with these events.”





Photo by Staff Sgt. Herschel Talley

**Go Guard:** Maj. Bill Dycus, Oklahoma National Guard, and Maj. Varinka Ensminger, Kentucky National Guard, run through the the mile 20 aid station of the Lincoln National Guard Marathon, May 5.

# Arkansas, Kentucky take top marathon honors

**By Spc. Lisa Crawford**  
Editor

If the National Guard is a family, then the National Guard Marathon is the annual family reunion.

More than 170 Army and Air National Guard Soldiers and Airmen from across the United States came together Sunday, May 5, for the Lincoln National Guard Marathon. These National Guard runners, representing 46 states and two territories, competed in the 42nd Annual Lincoln National Guard Marathon.

According to the National Guard Marathon Coordinator, Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Sterns, the competition is designed to promote physical fitness and military readiness in the National Guard. The top runners at the 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.

This year’s top winners were:  
-Arkansas National Guard Spc. Derek Yorek, of Bentonville, Arkansas, overall male winner with an unofficial time of 2:30:01

-Kentucky National Guard Maj. Varinka Ensminger, of Lexington, Kentucky, overall female winner with an unofficial time of 3:19:50

-The Arkansas National Guard Team was named the overall National Guard team winner of the Lincoln National Guard Marathon.

“The Lincoln National Guard Marathon brings Soldiers and Airmen together with the local community to promote health and fitness, while serving as the trials for the ‘All Guard’ Marathon team,” Sterns



Photo by Spc. Daniel Balkovic

**Razorbacks To Cornhuskers:** Maj. Adam Rose with the Arkansas National Guard Marathon Team runs past the Lincoln Capitol Building, May 5, during the Lincoln National Guard Marathon.

said. “The All Guard team has a family atmosphere – a family of runners inside the National Guard family. That’s what I love most. The marathon and the marathon team instills camaraderie between the runners who come from all over the United States and Territories to compete.”

Sterns said the Marathon Program promotes both local and national levels of the Army and Air National Guard, and the Military Competitions Programs. The Marathon Program additionally encourages and enhances the National Guard Retention Program by instilling physical fitness, self-discipline, and esprit de corps among National Guard members from all 50 states and U.S. territories.

Ensminger’s first-place win this year was personally motivated, family driven and team oriented. A veteran of the Lincoln Na-



Photo by Sgt. Anna Pongo

**Top Team:** The Arkansas National Guard Team was named the overall National Guard team winner of the Lincoln National Guard Marathon, May 5.

tional Guard Marathon, having run the race at least a dozen times before and almost always making the podium, she had been the first female National Guard runner to cross the finish line in 2018, but the second runner to cross actually had a better overall time than her by nearly 45 seconds, and was crowned the champion.

Originally, this year’s race was looking to be about redemption, but ultimately she arrived at the starting line undertrained, with a heavy heart – but with new motivation – after losing her father in February just before the Boston Marathon.

“It was very unexpected,” Ensminger said of her win. “But very gratifying.”

Ensminger said she ran both the Boston Marathon and the National

Guard Marathon with a photo of her father behind her race bib and would turn to him for support and strength when she needed a push along the route.

She would also turn to her teammates, including Sgt. Angela Sullivan, a combat medic with the Kentucky Army National Guard’s Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 201st Engineer Battalion.

In February 2018, Sullivan lost her left leg to osteosarcoma, a common type of cancer that begins in the bones. Now with a prosthetic, Sullivan hopes to someday run the marathon again, Ensminger said.

“Angela has been an inspiration the entire year,” she said. “We’ve watched her journey, and we’ve been supportive of her.”

Angela posted herself at mile 13 to cheer on her teammates, and to hand them water when they came through the halfway point.

“I have a no-quit attitude thanks to her,” she said. “Even if I was in pain, I knew it was nothing in comparison to what she had to endure.”

When Ensminger ran by, she said Angela gave her a water bottle and told her to keep going.

“I complained about my hip and she told me to, ‘Suck it up! Shut up and run!’ Roger, I got it!” Ensminger said. “Having her here is an inspiration and it makes this team even more special.”

When Ensminger crossed the finish line as the first place National Guard female this year – officially this time – she again wasn’t able to really relish in a victory. Instead, she was immediately notified one of her other teammates had been taken to a local hospital, and she rushed to be by his side.

“He refused, refused, not to come back on to course,” she said about the Kentucky National Guard runner after he was released from the ER. “So we dropped him off at mile 18 and he went and ran to the finish.”

“Our team is resilient,” she added. “They’ve got guts, and nobody will quit, especially when we’ve got Angela with us.”

Yorek also ran with the strength of his team behind him. A recruiter in Arkansas, this was his first time in Lincoln and his first time running for the Guard.

“The Guard has been great, not only for me, but for my family,” he said. “The Guard has really provided for all of us. I wouldn’t trade it for anything.”

New to the Army National Guard, Yorek graduated from basic combat training in April 2018 as a 34-year-old specialist looking to pay off student loan debt. Now knowing first-hand what the Guard can provide, he serves as a recruiter, and shares his passion for the National Guard everywhere he goes – including while running with the marathon team.

“The team here has really got me to understand what it is to be a part of something bigger than yourself,” he said. “The fact that we could win here as a team this weekend is much more monumental to me than anything I did individually.”

“I really took that ‘one team, one fight’ to heart,” he added.

The All Guard team competes in multiple marathon races throughout the year, traveling to different communities and helping local recruiters generate leads and sharing the National Guard story.



Photo by Sgt. Anna Pongo

**Fuel From Friends:** Kentucky National Guard Maj. Varinka Ensminger, of Lexington, Kentucky, receives fuel from a supportive friend, May 5, near mile 25 of the Lincoln National Guard Marathon. Ensminger won the National Guard’s overall female category with an unofficial time of 3:19:50.



# Nebraska earns top honors (again) at Leapfest

By **Spc. Lisa Crawford**  
Editor

Each year on the 16th day of August, many paratroopers take to the sky to jump out of perfectly good airplanes and helicopters to celebrate National Airborne Day – the anniversary of the first official parachute jump by the U.S. Army Parachute Test Platoon in 1940. This year was no different for Airborne members of the Nebraska National Guard as approximately 30 paratroopers with the Nebraska Army National Guard’s 195th Forward Support Company (Special Operations) (Airborne) jumped from a CH-47 Chinook helicopter the morning of Aug. 16 and landed near the Seward Municipal Airport runway. However, some Nebraska National Guard Soldiers had



Courtesy photo

**Target X:** Nebraska Army National Guard 1st Sgt. Sean McMahon leaps toward the official landing zone target, Aug. 3, during the Rhode Island National Guard’s annual Leapfest International Airborne Competition.

already jumped earlier that month – and proved to be a few of the best paratroopers in the world. Three teams of Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers leapt past the competition at the Rhode Island National Guard’s annual Leapfest International Airborne Competition, Aug. 3, taking the top three spots among National Guard teams, and earning a third place individual award and third place team overall. Sgt. Christopher Schmid finished third place overall out of 262 jumpers, and the Nebraska teams earned third, fifth, and sixth place overall out of 53



Photo by Spc. Rafael DiCristina

**Gearing Up:** A Nebraska National Guard paratrooper (right) receives a Jumpmaster Personnel Inspection prior to his jump during Leapfest 2019 at West Kingston, RI.

teams total. All the Nebraska Soldiers are from the 195th Forward Support Company (Special Operations) (Airborne). The Nebraska paratroopers completed 43 cumulative jumps and earned foreign wings from the Dominican Republic, Mexico, and South Africa. Hosted by the 56th Troop Command, Leapfest is the largest, oldest, international static line parachute training event and competition. Held in West Kingston, Rhode Island, it’s routinely attended by military parachutists from the active Army, Army Reserve, Army National Guard, Air Force, Marines, Navy, and teams from around the world. The Nebraska National Guard has participated in Leapfest on and off since the early 1990’s due to deployments and consecutively since 2015. Last year, a team from the 195th FSC (SO) (A) earned third place, and in 2016, a team from Detachment 2, 165th Quartermaster Company placed first overall.

## REGION’S BEST SOLDIER CHEFS

■195th Forward Support Company culinary specialists win annual regional Connelly Competition

By **Staff Sgt. Herschel Talley**  
Staff Photojournalist

The culinary specialists of the 195th Forward Support Company (Airborne) competed in the 52nd Annual Philip A. Connelly Competition which was held at the Mead Training Site on Saturday Aug. 10 in Mead, Nebraska. The 195th Forward Support Company (Airborne) first won the State level award and hoped to win at the Regional level. The Philip A. Connelly Competition was established in 1968 to recognize excellence in Army Food Service. National Guard units across the United States participate in the National Guard category of the competition, first at the State level before moving on to the Regional level where they compete against other states. During the Reserve and National Guard categories, one meal (lunch) is evaluated consisting of line item A-rations. For these culinary specialists of the 195th Forward Support Company (Airborne), this competition is the pinnacle of their military occupational specialty. Sgt. 1st Class Brody Mayberry, the culinary management noncommissioned officer, said this competition is very important to the Soldiers. “This competition is our bread and butter,” Mayberry said. “Supply has the Supply Excellence Award, Maintenance has the AAME Award (Army Award for Maintenance Excellence), so for food service this is our way to showcase our talents. We come to a field environment, put our skills to the test and get to compete against our peers from across the United States.”



Photo by Staff Sgt. Herschel Talley

**Lunch Is Served:** Spc. Daniel Barrios (center left) and Spc. Jaiden Thomas (far left), 195th Forward Support Company (Airborne), begin serving their prepared meal, Aug. 12, for the 52nd Annual Philip A. Connelly Competition at the Mead Training Site.

to ensure fair competition. The evaluator, Chip Johnson, travels from state to state to judge each unit. Johnson, who spent 37 years in the Army food service, said that most people think the Connelly Competition is just about cooking but it’s more than just that. “They (the unit) are graded on maintenance, field sanitation, food safety and protection,” Johnson said. “They are also graded on administrative stuff and yearly training.” Johnson said following the recipe cards were also important. “We also look to make sure they are doing the correct knife cuts dictated by the card,” Johnson said. “There is always something in the menu you have to pay attention to.” Cooking food for large numbers is not an easy task. For serving 80 Soldiers, the cooks must prepare 80 pork chops, 31 pounds of potatoes, and 16 pounds of green beans, 16 pounds of spring salad, 10 pounds of corn bread, 12 pounds of bread pudding and two gallons of gravy. Time is crucial as the Soldiers must have everything ready to begin serving by a certain time. Sgt. Will Cozad, shift leader for the culinary specialists, is responsible for the management of the cooks and their time. “We do what is called progressive cooking,” Cozad said. “We have to have at least one serving of everything ready by our allotted time.” Calling out the time every so often, Cozad does this to ensure the cooks are on schedule to deliver their food all at the same time. “After that we can keep cooking and preparing the rest of the food,” Cozad said. “Usually we can have 10 to 20 servings ready every 10 minutes. It’s a harder way, but it’s a better way. It’s fresh this way.” In spite of these difficulties cooking in a field environment, the Soldiers completed their mission of having the meal prepared. “I’m really proud of the team coming together,” said Mayberry. “We are a well-oiled machine... It’s really fun to be a part of a group of guys that are willing to work as hard as they are.” Mayberry says his Soldiers would not have performed as well as they did without the support from the unit. “This is an entire unit competition and it’s just awesome that this unit could come together, ‘one team, one fight,’ and execute it,” said Mayberry. After learning of their regional win, the unit is now preparing to compete at the national level in March 2020.

## Nebraska Soldiers lead way at regional competition

By **Sgt. Anna Pongo**  
Staff Photojournalist

“The Best Warrior Competition is important because it helps test you against yourself, and test you against other soldiers,” said State Command Sgt. Maj. Marty Baker. “And I think you against yourself is probably the most important thing because competition breeds excellence.” The Region V Best Warrior Competition was 48 grueling hours where the Soldiers and non-commissioned officers from seven different states came together to test their physical and mental endurance against each other. Two Guard members from Nebraska competed for the title of Best Warrior. Staff Sgt. Freeman Sandquist, from the 209th Regimental Training Institute, and Spc. Bryan Kummer, from the 623rd Engineer Company fought for the title of “Best Warrior.”



Photo by Sgt. Anna Pongo

**Finishing Strong:** Spc. Bryan Kummer, 623rd Engineer Company, pushes through the unknown distance ruck march, the final event of the Region V Best Warrior Competition, May 16, at the Greenleaf Training Site. Kummer earned the Region V Soldier of the Year title.

For Sandquist and Kummer, this competition was a lot more intense than the Nebraska State Best Warrior Competition, where they both won first place in their respective Enlisted and NCO (Non-commissioned Officer) categories. “The last one I won because I was head and shoulders above everyone else physically,” said Sandquist, who is a ranger and full time instructor for Nebraska’s Basic Leader Course. “But this (competition) everyone is a stud. I wasn’t anything special this time around.” Despite the fierce competition, Sandquist distinguished himself by winning second place in the NCO category. Kummer also understood the stakes and challenges would be much higher this time around. “My strategy was to just focus on the events that I knew I could compete very well in,” Kummer said. “I knew that everyone here would be a very good competitor. I knew... I would kind of be below the bar in some events, so I just focused where I knew I was good at.” This strategy worked well for

Kummer, who won first place in the enlisted category. Though the events challenged the Soldier’s resolve and pushed them to their physical limits, they also brought them together as a group. “I really liked in between events, joking around during the down time,” Sandquist said. “Talking about how miserable we are and having something to relate on; finding that common ground. The backgrounds of everyone are just so varied... Everyone is fun to talk to and get to know.” “I met a lot of really cool people this week,” Kummer said. “I hope to keep some strong friendships. And I get to see their strengths, their skills that they bring to the table, and it’s just a lot of fun.” Kummer’s win sends him on to compete in the National Best Warrior Competition in Oklahoma later in 2019. “When I go to nationals they are going to associate me with the state of Nebraska so I want to make sure I represent them well and make sure I put the right image out there for our state,” Kummer said.

## Shorttakes

### Dual-service deputy earns top honor at annual marksmanship competition

By **Spc. Lisa Crawford**  
Editor

Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, Nebraska adjutant general, officially wrapped-up the 2019 Adjutant General’s Marksmanship Sustainment Exercise

(AG-MSX), Aug. 13, when he presented the Gary Anderson Trophy to Nebraska Army National Guard 1st Lt. Jonathan Lintz, 1st Infantry Division, Main Command Post - Operational Detachment. A deputy with the Seward County Sheriff’s Office, Lintz was

able to participate in the three-day competition (Aug. 9-11), but had to report for duty to his civilian employer prior to the awards ceremony. As a show of appreciation to the Sheriff’s Department for supporting Lintz’s dual-service roles, Bohac traveled to Seward this morning to thank Sheriff Michael Vance in person for supporting his National Guard Soldier, and to award the trophy directly to Lintz. The Gary Anderson Trophy

is awarded to the top individual Excellence in Competition shooter at the AG-MSX, or more commonly referred to as the TAG Shoot. The prestigious award is named after Gary Anderson, a Nebraska National Guard shooter who competed in three Olympic Games and became the director of the Civilian Marksmanship Program. Lintz’s name will be engraved on a larger version of the trophy kept on display at the Greenleaf Training Site.



Photo by Spc. Lisa Crawford

**Award-Winning Pose:** Deputy sheriff and Nebraska Army National Guard 1st Lt. Jonathan Lintz receives the Gary Anderson trophy.





**Focused Eyes:** Sgt. Audrey Novotny, Joint Force Headquarters, takes direction from her sponsor, Sgt. 1st Class Alisha Welch, April 12, as the two try to block out the cold and focus on the next challenge in the 2019 Nebraska Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition.

# COMPETING FOR BEST

## Nebraska Soldiers overcome obstacles, weather to crown state’s Best Warriors

By **Sgt. Anna Pongo**  
Staff Photojournalist

“Competitions breed excellence. When you’re competing against each other, you’re also competing against yourself. So keep that in mind as you’re going through this... be the best you can be.”

These words of wisdom were imparted by Nebraska State Command Sgt. Maj. Marty Baker to 15 Nebraska Soldiers and two Czech Armed Forces partners as they received their in brief prior to starting the 2019 Nebraska Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition, April 11, at the Greenlief Training Site near Hastings, Nebraska.

The annual competition brings together enlisted Soldiers from Nebraska and the Czech Republic to compete in a number of mentally and physically taxing contests over three days.

“This is a test of your will,” said incoming State Command Sgt. Maj. Scott Hansen. “You’re representing your unit and state... This is a good litmus test for what we stand for as an NCO corps.”

These challenges were enhanced this year as the competitors faced some extremely cold conditions. The competition lived up to its goal of providing the competitors with chances to show their endurance and knowledge of their warrior tasks and battle drills.

“I’m looking forward to seeing

the energy and motivation,” Hansen said. “And of course the weather is going to challenge it, but if it was easy, we wouldn’t like it... The crappier it is, the better the story is later.”

The Soldiers started the first day of the competition by listening to the in brief from Baker and Master Sgt. Chris Roemig, the non-commissioned officer-in-charge of the event.

“The way the last couple years have went, we’re thinking about renaming this the Nebraska Arctic Challenge because of the weather,” Baker said jokingly. “But let me tell you, it’s called the Best Warrior Competition for a reason. It’s not the Mediocre Warrior



**Casualty Care:** A Nebraska Army National Guard Soldier drags a simulated casualty on a sked stretcher near Hastings, Nebraska, April 12, during the 2019 Nebraska Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition.

# Czech partners tackle Best Warrior Competition for third consecutive year

By **Staff Sgt. Herschel Talley**  
Staff Photojournalist

The 2019 Nebraska Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition had some special guests attend this year’s competition held at Greenlief Training Site near Hastings, Nebraska.

Four Soldiers, two competitors and two sponsors, traveled from Nebraska’s state partnership program country, the Czech Republic, to participate in this year’s grueling three-day competition.

This marks the third year members from the Czech Armed Forces have joined in the Nebraska Best Warrior Competition. For the past two years, the competitors have been Airmen. This year, the most senior noncommissioned officer of the Czech Armed Forces, Command Sgt. Maj. Petr Seifert, selected Soldiers to participate.

“When I was making the decision which command would select the Soldiers, I was deciding between the Air Force and between other units,” Seifert said. “In the past, the Air Force took the slots and this year I wanted to have somebody else. So I selected our garrison command, which the Honor Guard is a part of, and sent a message asking if they were willing to send their Soldiers to compete and they said yes. The reason was the honor guard does the hard service but they don’t get the recognition, so I thought it was about time they got the opportunity and be recognized for it.”

With only 14 days to prepare and pack, Pfc. Lukas Koukola and Master Sgt. Pavel Knotek of the Honor Guard of the Czech Republic were selected and, along with Seifert and his successor, Command Sgt. Maj. Peter Smik, traveled to Nebraska to attend the competition.

The sharp dive in temperatures into the low 30s and gusting winds were an unexpected trial the Czech competitors were forced to endure. Knotek, a 15-year veteran of the

Czech Army, said the toughest aspect of the competition was not the events, but the addition of the climate.

“The (Army) physical fitness test was the toughest and that’s because it was the windy weather here and so cold during the morning,” Knotek said.

As the competition continued into its second day, the Czech Soldiers were exposed to multiple weapons systems and hand grenades that they had no prior experience with.

“They didn’t expect to shoot so many types of weapons such as machine guns, but they did pretty well,” Seifert said. “They really didn’t expect to do hand grenade throwing. So many ways of throwing grenades; they don’t do that in the Czech Republic, so for them it was a surprise, but it was also a very positive surprise.”

Even though Koukola has only been in the Czech Army for two years, he was selected to attend the competition.

“There was so much experience,” Koukola said. “Everything was hard and interesting, but the best experience for me was being able to shoot the M240 machine gun.”

When asked what he felt was the toughest aspect of the competition, Koukola did not hesitate.

“For sure the ruck march,” he said. “No question. It was so long. We only do one once per year (in the Czech Army).”

Seifert hopes these Soldiers share the experiences they have learned to better themselves and other Soldiers back home.

“They are going to use the experience when they come back to their units because they can apply it to their training,” Seifert said. “For example, the grenade training. I’ve already talked to them and told them... when you come back and it comes time to do grenade training, use it... They can use, train and modify... when creating new conditions for new soldiers and new units.”

After three days and 16 events designed to push the competitors to their physical and mental limits, the competition came to a close.

Competition.”

After learning more about the competition’s events, the Soldiers moved on to height and weight checkups, zeroing their M16 rifles and M9 pistols, and completing the M16 rifle individual weapons qualification.

That evening the competitors had to appear before a board of the state’s sergeants major and answer a number of questions pertaining to everything from Nebraska history to reciting the NCO Creed.

Beginning the second day of the competition, the warriors braved freezing cold winds to take an Army Physical Fitness Test consisting of pushups, sit-ups and a two mile run.

Following the APFT the competitors ran the Danger Half Mile which included stations of pullups, leg raises, half jacks, V-ups, lunges and more pushups as they ran around the half-mile track.

To continue the strain on the competitors’ physical and mental capabilities, their next challenge was the obstacle course. This included challenges such as the reverse climb, island hopper, monkey bars and balancing logs.

The freezing weather and windy conditions posed a painful additional hurdle that the competitors had to overcome as they crawled under barbed-wire, across the semi-frozen ground and attempted to grip a swinging rope with frozen fingers.

These obstacles posed a particular challenge and satisfaction of overcoming to Sgt. Audrey Novotny, the only female competitor this year.

“All the guys are so much taller than me and I am like 5-foot-2, and so being able to get over those obstacles was like, ‘Oh my goodness, look what I can do,’ so that was very empowering,” Novotny said.

Spc. Bryan Kummer agreed.

“The hardest part is probably just mentally telling yourself to keep going,” Kummer said. “When you’re in the second day and you’re in the PT test, followed by the Danger Half Mile and then followed by the (obstacle) course; that was a mental challenge, to tell yourself to get over it and keep going.”

The morning’s events for the second day concluded with the competitors displaying their skills with radios, simulated casualty care, calling in a 9-line medical evacuation after donning a protective mask and grenade throwing.

Following that, the competitors once

again aimed their weapons at targets for an afternoon M9 Patton pistol match and M16 Pershing rifle match.

To make the next shooting iteration more intense, the Soldiers had to run through a Stress Shoot where they pushed past smoke, distractive machine gun fire and CS gas to shoot at multiple targets with their rifles and pistols. They then fired a 249 squad automatic weapon, M320 grenade launcher, and M26 modular accessory shot-gun system.

As the sun set, the competitors prepared for their final grueling task for the day: limited visibility land navigation. It was cold. It was dark. And it was uncomfortable. But the competitors still kept their heads up and pushed through.

“It pushes you outside your comfort zone,” said Novotny. “It’s only a couple days, and it sucks, but afterwards, you’re done. You did it. And it’s a huge empowerment. I did that, I can do anything.”

The morning of the last day commenced with the Soldiers getting up well before the sun to participate in a ten mile ruck march around the Greenlief Training Site.

As the competitors tested their shoulder and boot durability, the judges tallied up

the points to determine the winners. For the 15 competitors, the demanding and exhausting three day event was finally over. But the warriors came out with a sense of accomplishment and solidarity.

“The camaraderie from this weekend is something that you can’t get anywhere else,” said Kummer. “Units should put more emphasis on this competition. Try to get more Soldiers involved in it... the more we have, the better the competition is and the more experience the Soldiers get.”

Winning the enlisted category was 1st place: Spc. Bryan Kummer; 2nd Place: Pfc. Irvin Audelo-Rios; and 3rd place: Pfc. Kyle Young. In the noncommissioned officer category, 1st place: Staff Sgt. Freeman Sandquist; 2nd place: Sgt. Eric Wills; and 3rd place: Staff Sgt. Troy Thielke.

“You should strive to be the best you can be,” Kummer said. “Last year I competed and I placed second. I wasn’t happy with that so I came back this year and made sure to do better.”

Kummer and Sandquist continued on to compete in the Region V Best Warrior Competition in May.



Photos by Sgt. Anna Pongo

**One Hand At A Time:** Staff Sgt. Freeman Sandquist tackles the obstacle course at the Greenlief Training Site, April 12, in freezing temperatures and with high winds during the second day of the state’s Best Warrior Competition.



**Foreign Obstacles:** A Soldier from the Czech Armed Forces navigates the obstacle course at the Greenlief Training Site near Hastings, Nebraska, April 12, during the 2019 Nebraska Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition.

Koukola placed second place in the Soldier category, while Knotek placed fourth among the NCOs. While not placed on the podium among their Nebraska counterparts, the Soldiers were each awarded the Nebraska National Guard Individual Achievement Medal for their efforts in the competition.

“They did pretty well,” Seifert said. “Our Private (Koukola) did very well. They were both very skillful in certain areas. Our Sergeant (Knotek) also did pretty well... and he didn’t quit. I’m pretty happy with that.”

It doesn’t end here for these competitors or the ones from previous years, as the Czech Army is planning to use the experience of those who have competed for their own Best Warrior Competition.

“From the 12 competitors and four observers, these guys will be part of the staff preparing the competition in the Czech Republic,” Seifert said. “It’s going to be their responsibility to help Peter (Smik), my successor, to prepare this competition. On our terms, but apply the experience they got here.”



# Nebraska hosts Region V Best Warrior

By Staff Sgt. Herschel Talley  
Staff Photojournalist

The Region V Best Warrior Competition 2019 was a three day event, May 14-16, hosted by the Nebraska National Guard at the Greenlief Training Site near Hastings, Nebraska. The competition challenged the best Soldiers and Noncommissioned Officers of the states in the region – Arkansas, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma and Texas- against each other in various physical fitness challenges, weapons exercises, a 12-mile ruck march and other Army warrior tasks. The winners will move on to compete in the National Guard’s national competition later this year.

DAY 1

The competition began Tuesday afternoon with the competitors weighing in and receiving their welcome and in brief from the Nebraska State Command Sgt. Maj. Marty Baker. Baker encouraged the participants to give it everything they had and to represent their state to the best of their ability.

“This is a competition where Soldiers come together and test their skills against each other. It’s all the battlefield skills; shoot, move and communicate,” Baker said.

Baker also added that what lay ahead for the competitors was not going to be easy.

“This is the Best Warrior Competition,” Baker said. “Not the Mediocre Warrior Competition.”

Afterwards, the competitors changed and quickly moved out to the rifle range to begin zeroing their M16 rifles and competing in their first scored event, the M9 Patton Match. Firing their pistols at the paper targets, the Soldiers were scored on accuracy and time completion. While the scores were being calculated, they attended a block of instruction on the M500 shotgun, the M203 grenade launcher and the M240 machine gun which were to be utilized later in the competition.

The competitors were not finished for the night just yet. Once shuttled back from the ranges, they had to quickly change into their service uniform and present themselves for the Command Sergeants Major board. Comprised of three command sergeants major from the states in the region, the competitors answered questions to display their knowledge of the proper wear of the dress uniform, military history, current events and military rules and regulations. The boards were an intense part of the competition leaving many competitors rattled and just hoping to move on to more physical events. That chance was to come soon enough.

DAY 2

With the competition into its second day, the Soldiers rose before the sun to begin their day at the



Photo by Staff Sgt. Herschel Talley

**Crawling Toward Victory:** Staff Sgt. Ryan Houk, Missouri Army National Guard, low crawls under barbed wire, May 15, as part of the obstacle course at the Greenlief Training Site near Hastings, Nebraska, during the 2019 Region V Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition. Houk would go on to be named the top noncommissioned officer and selected to compete nationally to represent all NCOs from Region V.

Greenlief Training Site’s track. Starting their first event of the day was the Army Physical Fitness Test which consisted of push-ups, sit-ups and a two mile run. After a brief break and an opportunity for a small breakfast, the competitors were at it again in the Danger 1/2 mile. The timed event required the Soldiers to first perform two leg tucks before entering the track which also included stops at other stations to perform five lunges, five power jumps, five hand release push-ups, five quadruplexes, five bent leg raises, and finishing the event with two more leg tucks. Upon completion of the Danger 1/2 Mile, with little time to think about the past events, the competitors moved on to the next event, the obstacle course.

The obstacle course boasted 17 hurdles to navigate including the rolling logs, belly crawl, swing-stop-jump, incline wall, and the island hopper. The Soldiers quickly moved from obstacle to obstacle knowing their time was critical in this scored event. After the obstacle course, the contestants loaded their packs, picked up their weapons and began the trudge out to their next station where they showed their knowledge in radios, weapons, casualty evaluation and donning a pro-mask.

The next leg for the competitors required them to trek a mile and a half further into the training site to the grenade range. There they were given seven grenade simulators to get within the minimum effective range of their targets as they moved through. Once completed, the



Photo by Staff Sgt. Herschel Talley

**Stress, Strain, Shoot:** Sgt. Colby Siegler, Arkansas Army National Guard, carries multiple gallons of water, May 15, from one location to another after being exposed to tear-gas during the stress-shoot portion of the 2019 Region V Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition near Hastings, Nebraska.

competitors threw on their packs again and moved down for a brief lunch and then moving towards the known distance range for the M16 Pershing Match.

The M16 Pershing Match is a marksmanship competition where competitors use their skills with their M16 rifles and agility to race from the 400 meter berm to 100 meter berm to have the most accurate score on their target. As the scores were being tallied, the competitors received their next block of instruction for their most grueling event of the day, the Stress Shoot.

Utilizing the known distance range again, the Soldiers had to race through concertina wire, stop at the 300 meter berm and begin to engage their targets while M240 machine guns fired blanks beside them and the range officials threw smoke grenades to increase the competitor’s difficulty shooting.

After expending their first rifle magazine, the contestant moved to the next berm, flipping a large tractor tire midway, before being able to fire at their target again while the smoke and machine gun noise continued to roll over them. Once their second rifle magazine was depleted, they moved to the next berm to fire their last rifle round. They were promptly met with a canister of CS gas causing the competitors’ eyes to water and sinuses to run as they tried to regain themselves to fire their last shot and then continue to the next station by moving 5 five gallon water jugs one hundred meters down the berm.

Here, the competitors switched weapons to their M9 pistols and began shooting at swinging targets which made things more challenging. Once they finished with the pistol targets, another sprint of 200 meters was required to the next shooting lane where the competitors put their new knowledge of the M500 shotgun, M203 grenade launcher and M240 machine gun to use, firing at targets and finishing the Stress Shoot.

Once all competitors had made it through the Stress Shoot, they enjoyed their evening meal, and despite being exhausted and sore from the day’s activities, they still had one more event to accomplish before they could sleep: night land navigation. The Soldiers, with their headlamps, maps and compasses were given five points to find in the inky blackness of Greenlief Training Site before they could rest from their arduous day.

Spc. Tylor Lawrence, from the Arkansas Army National Guard’s 1036 Combat Engineers, said the night land navigation was no joke.

“I got a little turned around on land navigation and that’s usually my best one,” said Lawrence.

“I think I got hit hardest on that.”

DAY 3

On the final day of the competition, the Soldiers rose before the sun to finish their day with a 12 mile ruck march around the training site and a quiz. Loading their packs with 35 pounds, the competitors took off in the predawn light.

Spc. Bryan Kummer, representing the Nebraska National Guard’s 623rd Engineer Company, said the competition was all a challenge while trying to mentally tell himself to keep going, but the ruck march was his weakness.

“I always have a little struggle with the ruck march,” Kummer said.

Finishing the last turn of the ruck march, the competitors were met by their state command sergeant major who grabbed their state flag and ran the last quarter mile with their state’s competitors.

Once they set their ruck sacks aside, the competitors completed their final event with a quiz and just like that the Region V Best Warrior Competition 2019 was over.

Three days of intense physical and mental challenges which lead the competitors over 30 miles around Greenlief Training Site, firing over 200 M16 rounds and 100 M9 rounds had brought them to the Awards banquet.

The winners in the NCO category were First place: Staff Sgt. Ryan Houk of the Missouri Army National Guard, Second place: Staff Sgt. Freeman Sandquist of the Nebraska Army National Guard and Third place: Sgt. Colby Siegler of the Arkansas Army National Guard.

In the Enlisted Category, the winners were First place: Spc. Bryan Kummer of the Nebraska Army National Guard, Second place: Spc. Hunter Haskin of the Texas Army National Guard and Third place: Spc. Brendan Freeman of the Missouri Army National Guard.

The winners were presented with plaques declaring them the Regional Best Warriors in their category and were even present with the sergeant major of the Army’s coin presented by Command Sgt. Maj. Kannon John, the Missouri National Guard state command sergeant major.

Staff Sgt. Ryan Houk, as the winner of the NCO category, said you just have to have fun with the competition.

“The Army tries to take the fun out of everything and I’m going to fight it. So I’m going to put a smile on and grit my teeth and find a way to get through it,” Houk said.

Houk added the comradery was very special in this competition.

“The competition is what a lot of people focus on, but I think the comradery was neat,” Houk said.

“To meet people from different states, to hear about their experiences; it was a neat experience.”

Kummer, the enlisted category winner, also said the comradery was his favorite part of the competition.

“I met a lot of really cool people this weekend. Hopefully keep some friendships for a while with them and I get to see their strengths and skills that they bring to the competition,” Kummer said.

“It’s just a lot of fun.”

Even the competitors who did not place said the Best Warrior Competition was something every Guardsman should try.

Sgt. Joel Murphy of the Louisiana Army National Guard placed fourth in the NCO category. Murphy said he wasn’t sure if the competition was something he wanted to do but ended up enjoying it.

“I kind of got thrown into it at the battalion level, but it ended up being fun. I’m glad I did it. It’s a learning experience. It’s something that if you have the opportunity to do, it is worth trying,” Murphy said.

Lawrence, of the Arkansas Army National Guard, also placed fourth but in the enlisted category and echoed Murphy’s feelings.

“It’s fun. More people should do it and go up for it because it’s a great experience and you learn a lot,” Lawrence said.

“You never know everything and there’s always something to learn.”

The winners move on to the National Best Warrior Competition held in Oklahoma later this year.



Photo by Sgt. Anna Pongo

**Red Lights Only:** A Soldier competing in the 2019 Region V Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition uses a compass to determine bearings, orient a map and then follow a course during the night land navigation portion of the competition, May 15, at the Greenlief Training Site near Hastings, Nebraska.