



The HORNET

NCNG LEADS IN CYBER

**FROM ELECTION SUPPORT TO
COMPETITION WINNERS**



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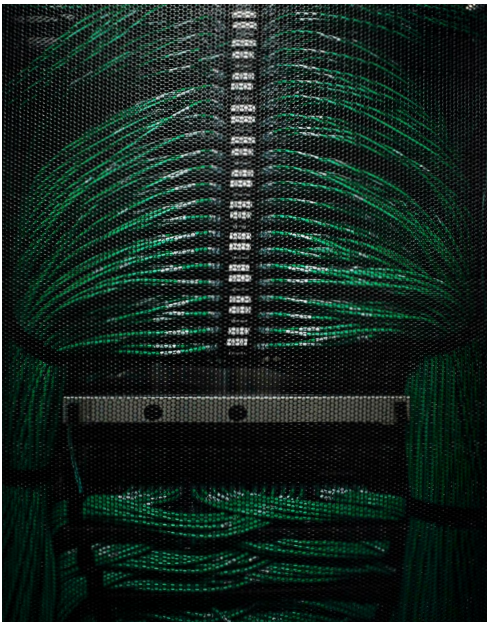
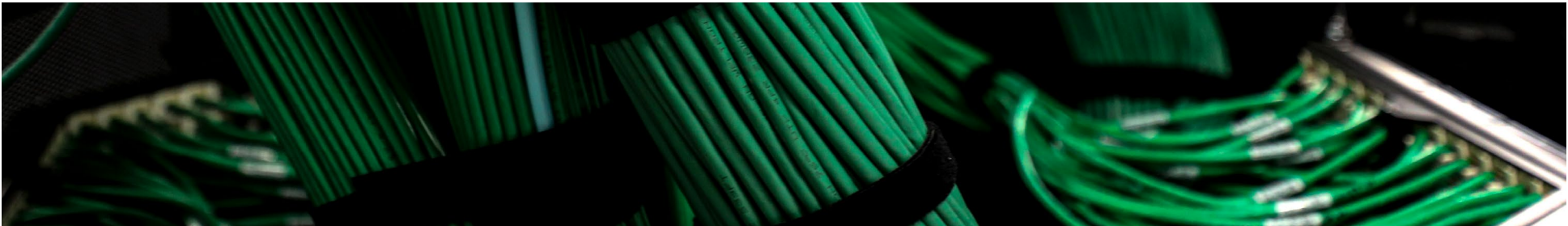
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Layout and design by Staff Sgt. Mary Junell

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- part of the cyber
environment where
every day NCEM,
NCDIT and NCNG
and other agencies
battle to protect and
deter malicious cyber
attacks to North
Carolina's cyber
infrastructure.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Brendan Stephens

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Facebook and Twitter!**

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You can click on the story descriptions above
to go directly to that story! Than click the
home button to return here!

Where is SFC Jordan?

Can you find the tiny version of
Sgt. 1st Class Robert Jordan hidden
among these pages? Our well loved
photojournalist is hiding somewhere
in the Hornet!



Although it may look a little different this year, the people of the North Carolina Air National Guard gather at Oakboro Elementary School in Stanly County, N.C. to hand out food baskets and presents to students and their families of the elementary school during an annual Operation Santa Claus Celebration put on by the Chapter 7 organization, Saturday, Dec. 13th, 2020.

The N.C. National Guard has received the first allocation of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine, our Army and Air Guard medics will receive prescribed vaccination training in the coming week.

The 449th Combat Aviation Brigade hosted the annual North Carolina Army National Guard Aviation and Safety Office conference, Raleigh, N.C., Dec. 5, 2020. The NCARNG Aviation and Safety Office provides awareness, training, and a collaborative forum on safety, procedures, and training for rated and non-rated crew members within the aviation community.

North Carolina National Guard celebrated the 384th National Guard Birthday at a ceremony held at NCNG headquarters in Raleigh, North Carolina, Dec. 11, 2020.



North Carolina National Guard 113th Sustainment Brigade held a Change of Responsibility Ceremony at the unit's readiness center in Greensboro, North Carolina, Dec. 5, 2020. The unit welcomed Command Sgt. Maj. William Bullins as new brigade command sergeant major replacing Command Sgt. Maj. Timothy James.

The North Carolina Army National Guard welcomes 19 new second lieutenants into its ranks during a commissioning ceremony for the Officer Candidate School Class 62 and Accelerated Office Candidate Class 30 held at the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, October 17, 2020.

North Carolina National Guard Soldiers of 30th Armored Brigade Combat Team participate in a homecoming ceremony from Operation Spartan Shield at the Joseph S. Koury Convention Center in Greensboro, North Carolina, November 7, 2020.

North Carolina National Guardsmen work alongside volunteers to prepare food at the Food Bank of Central and Eastern North Carolina in Raleigh, North Carolina on November 12, 2020.

NEWS FROM AROUND THE NEST

NCNG Soldiers Support Food Distribution Ahead of Thanksgiving Holiday

By Mary Junell



Staff Sgt. Felipe Godinez uses a forklift to move pallets during a mass food distribution sponsored by the Second Harvest Food Bank of Southeastern North Carolina at the Crown Coliseum in Fayetteville, North Carolina on November 24, 2020.

North Carolina National Guard Soldiers and Airmen worked with the Second Harvest Food Bank of Southeastern North Carolina during a drive-thru food distribution event at the Crown Coliseum in Fayetteville, North Carolina, Nov. 24, 2020.

The team of 27 Soldiers and Airmen came from multiple units across the state and are part of the 177 Guardsmen who were activated in September to continue supporting the North Carolina Department of Public Safety and the Department of Health and Human Services during their response to COVID-19.

A large-scale distribution like this was not a simple task, and David Griffin, an emergency services administrator for the food bank, said he was thankful for the Guard's support.

"We couldn't do it without the North Carolina National Guard," Griffin said. "Without them and their expertise in logistics and things of that nature, we couldn't do the job we are able to do."

The Guardsmen worked with other volunteers to unload trucks, moved pallets of food with a forklift, divided produce into boxes, directed traffic, and loaded food into vehicles.

Although the large event was a challenge, 2nd Lt. Hunter Maynor, assigned to the North Carolina Army National Guard's 236th Brigade Engineering Battalion, 30th Armored Brigade Combat Team, said he genuinely enjoyed supporting the food bank.

"I just commissioned about two months ago, so this was my first experience ever, and

I signed up for this because I knew how important it was," Maynor said. "We live in this community too. We care about our neighbors too, and we want to help."

Maynor, who graduated from N.C. State University in May, was born only five minutes from where the food distribution took place.

"You hear about all the things we do abroad, but I don't think we shine enough spotlight on what the guard does at home, especially during times of crisis," Maynor said. "This probably means the most to me because I get to help my own community; I was born and raised here."

The event came two days before the Thanksgiving holiday and is the largest food distribution in Cumberland County to date, handing out food to more than 1300 families in the span of a few hours.

Although the food bank gets food from multiple sources, the 70,000 pounds of food about for this

distribution was bought to ensure families could have a Thanksgiving meal.

"We purchased food specifically to make sure we do stuff for the holidays because we understand, at these holiday times, the value of sitting across the table and having a meal with your family," Griffin said. "It's even more important these days when you have all this COVID-19 going, you're afraid, you might not have the resources, so to provide to a family the meals and food they need is important to us."

Each family received a mixed produce box, a bunch of collard greens, a frozen hen, and a holiday box with items specific to a holiday meal, like cranberry sauce.

In addition to this food distribution, the team of Guardsmen have worked in the food bank's warehouse, supported 20 other food distributions, delivered over 1000 meals for Cumberland County students and 1000 more meals to senior citizens.

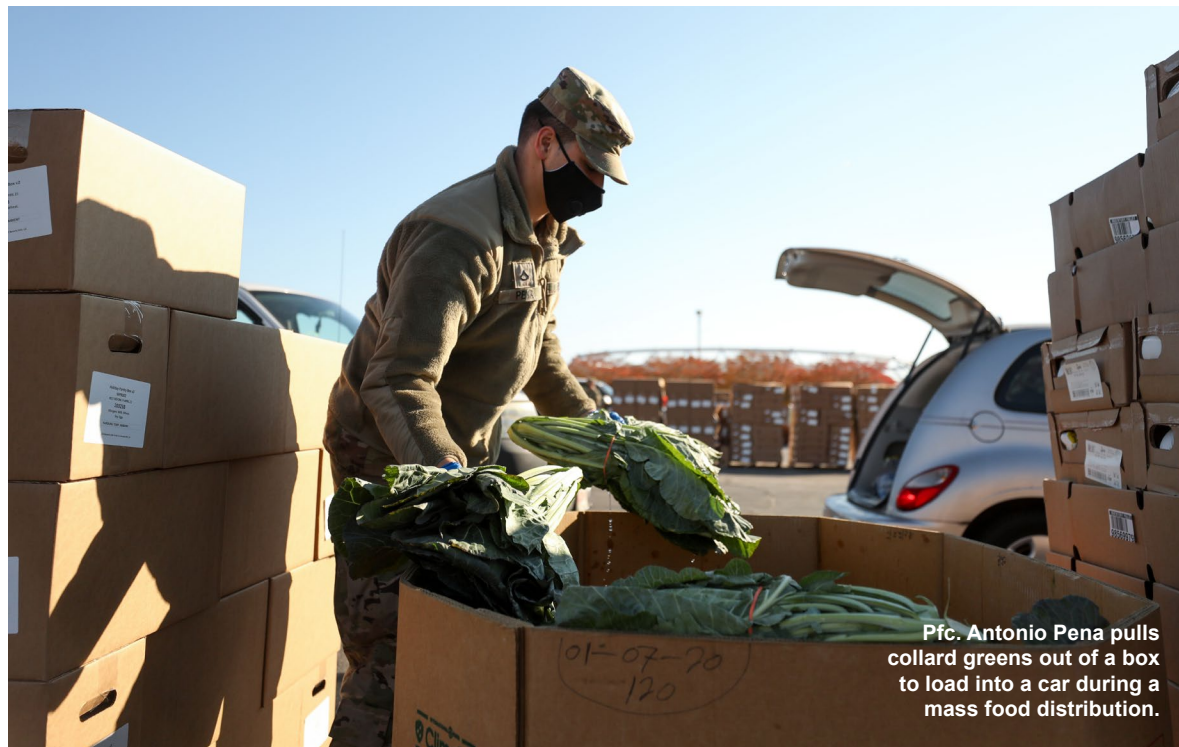
Capt. Phanat Senesourinh,

with the North Carolina Air National Guard's 156th Airlift Squadron, 145th Airlift Wing, said altogether the team has helped process more than 1.5 million pounds of food through the food bank.

He also said that the Soldiers and Airmen on the team welcomed the opportunity to serve.

"They do it because they want to do it," Senesourinh said. "They have a passion for it, just to serve in any aspect, regardless if it's for the country or the community. I've worked with them for two months now, and I can contest that all these [service] members are out here on their own accord because they want to serve the community and serve their country."

The North Carolina National Guard began supporting the COVID-19 response on March 6, 2020. Since then, Soldiers and Airmen have supported the distribution of more than 6.3 million food bank meals, helping communities across the state.



Pfc. Antonio Pena pulls collard greens out of a box to load into a car during a mass food distribution.



Pfc. Douglas Chanda separates onions into produce boxes during a drive-thru food distribution sponsored by the Second Harvest Food Bank of Southeastern North Carolina.

The Conclusion of Conversion



Four C-17 Globemaster III Aircraft belonging to the 145th Airlift Wing are parked in a row at the North Carolina Air National Guard Base, Charlotte Douglas International Airport, October 14, 2020. The 145th Airlift Wing began converting from C-130 Hercules to the C-17 in October of 2017 and officially exited conversion in October 2020. Photos by Master Sgt. Nathan Clark

Three years ago the 145th Airlift Wing embarked on a journey, the likes of which the Charlotte base had not seen in over forty years. In October of 2017, the unit started the process of conversion, moving from the C-130 Hercules, to the C-17 Globemaster III aircraft, a process that formally concluded on October 1st, 2020.

Aircraft conversion is the process of divesting one type of airframe from a base and introducing a new one. “This involves not only switching planes, but getting personnel trained to operate and maintain a new aircraft,” explains Lt. Col. Robert G. Gatti of the 156th Airlift Squadron and the Officer in charge of overseeing the Wing Conversion. “Additionally, we updated our facilities to support the new plane, and purchased new equipment required to operate them.”

The mission of the 145th Airlift Wing is to provide operational support to Air Mobility Command and the Air National Guard via strategic airlift. Because of this mission, the type of aircraft used plays a key role. The C-17 Globemaster III has a larger cargo area than the C-130 Hercules, with almost a 300% increase in carrying capacity. Moreover, the globemaster, true to its name, can make cross-oceanic trips in a non-stop single flight, which allows for worldwide employment.

While the process is worth it, it has not all been easy. “Transition has presented plenty of challenges along the way,” said Lt. Col. Gatti. “One of the biggest challenges to aircrew readiness has been the eighteen-month arrival delay of our new simulator.”

The simulator is, or rather will be upon completion, a state-of-the-art replica of a C-17 Globemaster III cockpit, that pilots

can use to train without requiring the use of an actual aircraft. It is a feature that increases training safety for new pilots and saves on resources in the long run. The simulator is estimated to be complete sometime in 2021; until then, the unit has been able to utilize a similar facility in Charleston Air Force Base, South Carolina, for their aircrew and maintenance technician training.

People might assume that aircraft conversion might only affect the pilots and the aircrew but that is certainly not the case for the 145th Airlift Wing.

“Technicians were greatly impacted by conversion due to the new/advanced requirements, procedures, and support associated with the C-17,” said Lt. Col. Gatti. “The rest of the wing truly has developed an entirely new mindset toward aircraft operations, maintenance, and support. Deployments, and the associated medical and training readiness requirements, processes, and procedures are now constant in order to accommodate the strategic airlift mission.”

Despite construction delays, and training challenges, not even the introduction of COVID-19 in early 2020 was able to stop the units exit from conversion. The aircrew and maintenance technicians responded to reduced training opportunities by advocating for Tanker Airlift Control Center (TACC) missions in an effort to ensure that their aircrews were still operating in the worldwide airlift system. By doing this, the 145th maintenance technicians gained invaluable experience through TACC support, and the aircrew remained on track with their training requirements, despite a global pandemic shutting down

a significant amount of international travel.

For some it has been a seamless transition, for others it has been a long three years, and for Lt. Col. Gatti one thing he would change if he could go back to day one is to have a more pragmatic approach to budget and costs associated with the new facilities. “In the end they required more resources than originally planned, which did cause delays and impacted the original progression,” said Gatti. For those who would follow from other units in the future he imparts this advice, “Identify key requirements for equipment, construction, manning, and training. Visit other bases with the similar airframe to see what works and what doesn’t. Engage with other bases who have also recently converted to a new airframe or mission, to evaluate lessons learned.”

By converting to the C-17 Globemaster III, the 145th Airlift Wing has increased its strategic viability and capability in the support and defense to the State of North Carolina and of course the United States. The Wing has also enhanced and bolstered its strategic and operational relevance to the National Guard and Air Force as a whole and being finished with conversion is only the beginning of what lies ahead for the Wing.

“We will continue to grow and become more experienced in this new mission,” said Gatti. “While we have exited conversion, change and challenge are constant. Therefore, a unified focus and cohesive support from all the Airmen of the 145th is even more vital now than ever before to our continued success; we are at the end of the day, one team, one fight.”



HEAVY EQUIPMENT TRANSPORT

NC Guard Transportation Company Trains with Airborne Peers at Fort Bragg

Story and photos by Sgt. 1st Class Robert Jordan



NCNG Sgt. 1st Class Derek Winfree, a truck driver assigned to the 1452nd, ground guides a vehicle helping move heavy equipment.

VALUABLE EXPERIENCE

North Carolina National Guard 1452nd Combat Heavy Equipment Transporter Transportation Company supported the Soldiers of the U.S. Army's 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, Oct. 15, 2020.

The logistics experts helped their Army peers move heavy equipment from training sites across the fort that allowed for more flexible training redeployment for the Airborne Soldiers and valuable experience for the Guard Soldiers.

"It is simple, one call and we can count on it, It makes it easier," U.S. Army Capt. Hardy Temoney, assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, 82nd Airborne Division, said.



One recent mission highlights their cooperation. The Holland Drop Zone is a sandy expanse surrounded by pine covered hills at one of the many training sites on the huge base.

Airborne Soldiers finish packing the last of gear into smaller trucks and prepare to move back to their base. One item remained to be moved, a 400 horsepower, 47-foot-long Kalmar RT-240 Rough Terrain Container Handler (RTCH) weighing 118,000 lbs. The Soldiers used the RTCH to pack the large shipping containers loaded with the equipment used for the just completed training mission.

A challenge to move back to base unless you happen to have an even bigger vehicle and those who can operate it safely.

“It is a specialized skill,” said North Carolina National Guard Sgt. 1st Class Derek Winfree, a truck driver assigned to 1452nd.

The crew of three 1452nd Soldiers readied their 700 horsepower M1070 Truck Tractor with M1000 Heavy Equipment Transporter Semi-trailer.

They swarmed over the 80-foot-long vehicle that can carry more than 70 tons.

The RTCH driver started the engine and slowly rolled toward the HET trailer ramps. Two of the NCNG Soldiers took positions at either end of the trailer to guide the driver of the RTCH by hand signals onto the trailer. It is a ballet of tons of equipment with inches of clearance on either side of the trailer.

Airborne and NCNG leaders checked and rechecked the RTCH portion as it crept closer to the front of the trailer. With the RTCH in place, Winfree raised both fists in the air, the signal to the driver to cut power and set the brakes. In a matter of minutes the NCNG Soldiers secured the RTCH by chain and next stop a motor pool.

The 1452nd, headquartered in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, is one of five HET transportation companies in the entire Army.

“IT IS SIMPLE, ONE CALL AND WE CAN COUNT ON IT”

-Capt. Hardy Temoney, 82nd Airborne

80 FEET LONG, 700 HORSEPOWER

When paired with NCNG's 700 horsepower M1070 Truck Tractor, the M1000 Heavy Equipment Transporter Semi-trailer makes for an 80-foot-long vehicle that can carry more than 70 tons.

HEAVY EQUIPMENT

At 47-foot-long and 400 horsepower the Kalmar RT-240 Rough Terrain Container Handler (RTCH) weighing in at 118,000 lbs. is capable of lifting up to 24 tons.

Sgt. 1st Class Derek Winfree, a truck driver assigned to the 1452nd, ground guides a vehicle helping move heavy equipment from training sites across the fort that allowed for more flexible training redeployment for the Airborne Soldiers.



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**Brenda
Monforti**

Director, NCNG SBIRT Voucher Program
Alcohol/Drug Council of NC

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Partnership for
Early Intervention
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NC DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES
Division of Mental Health,
Developmental Disabilities
and Substance Abuse Services

The Alcohol / Drug Council of North Carolina
is partially supported by the Division of Mental Health,
Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse
Services through a Substance Abuse and Mental Health
Services Administration Grant.

YOU HAVE A
SPOT

TAKE YOUR
SHOT



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- ** Stop the Spread of COVID-19 ****
- ** Maintain Unit Readiness ****

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- FACT: Per CDC, over 2.8M Americans have gotten the Vaccine**
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NC SOLDIER PART OF GUARD CHAMPIONSHIP CYBER TEAM

BY STAFF SGT. ROBERT JORNDAN

A North Carolina National Guard (NCNG) Soldier earned top national honors as part of an all National Guard team at the 5th Annual SANS Institute NetWars DoD Services Cup Championship, a virtual cyber problem-solving competition held online at various locations through Dec. 17 - 18, 2020.

Sgt. Michael Gibbs, a cyber security analyst with the North Carolina Army National Guard's 883rd Combat Engineer Company, with five other Army and Air

National Guard members beat teams from the U.S. Air Force, Air Force Reserves, Space Force, Navy, Marines, Coast Guard and the Defense Information Systems Agency.

"Cyber is always interesting," said Gibbs.

Gibbs was chosen for the six-member team due to years of civilian acquired skills from working at Bank of America, military training and multiple state and federal real-world cyber missions

including incident response, state board of elections, and Republican National Convention duty.

Gibbs is also a member of the NCNG's Cyber Security Response Force who deploy as needed supporting local, state and national agencies.

"Gibbs is a great example of the cyber talent pool that resides in our force," said NCNG Army Lt. Col. Robert Felicio, the NCNG's Chief Information Officer.

The Services Cup is a defense-focused



Sgt. Michael Gibbs monitors networks while assisting the Cyber Security Response Force in their support of the State Board of Elections before Election Day. Photo By Staff Sgt. Mary Junell



North Carolina National Guard cyber professionals, test equipment to protect the North Carolina electoral system from cyberattack before and during the "Super Tuesday" election.

competition testing skills in computer and systems administration, threat hunting, analysis, cryptography, and more. As the teams progressed, the problems became increasingly more complex with real-world attack scenarios from simplistic, brute-force attacks to complex ransomware campaigns.

"Basically, it is a cyber puzzle and you have to figure it out," said Army Col. Teri D. Williams, the commander, 91st Cyber Brigade who chose Gibbs and the rest of the National Guard Services Cup team.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions and the remote nature of cyber defense the event was held virtually with teams coordinating online and not at a central location.

The National Guard team took an early

lead in the competition the first day. The second day had several lead changes, but the National Guard team pulled ahead toward the end of the competition earning the win.

"Gibbs is a big winner, I am super stoked," said Eric R. Gladman, SANS Institute Army national account manager.

It is not just bragging rights, the competition honed skills needed to meet

current and future cyber challenges that Guard professionals meet every day.

"People are amazed we can do this in the Guard," said Gibbs.

The SANS Institute was established in 1989 as a cooperative research and education organization. Its programs now reach more than 165,000 security professionals around the world.

**"PEOPLE ARE
AMAZED WE CAN DO
THIS IN THE GUARD,"
SAID GIBBS.**

CYBERSECURITY TIPS

Help prevent you and your company from being victimized by cyberattacks.



1. Emails: Check header information and the address. Are there misspellings? Does the wording of the message seem right? When in doubt, call the person sending it to ensure the message is legitimate.



2. Pop-ups: These often warn that a security upgrade or a program needs to be installed. If your computer is prompting you to approve the download, make sure it's legitimate.



3. Home routers and/or modems: Check with your company's IT department and/or your internet service provider to find out how to make sure they are set properly and you have the latest software.



4. Passwords: Should be at least 16 characters in length, using letters, numbers and symbols. A favorite Bible verse or quote from a movie can be helpful.



5. Multifactor authentication: Use when possible. This requires users to provide two or more credentials to authenticate their identity, such as a code sent to the user's cellphone or email.

Check the North Carolina Department of Internet Technology's website at <https://it.nc.gov/> for more tips on protecting yourself from cyberattacks. Source: Capt. Steven Schmidt, current operations leader for the N.C. National Guard's Cyber Security Response Force.

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NORTH CAROLINA NATIONAL GUARD EMPLOYMENT CENTER

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NC Guard Employment Center Celebrates 3,000th Hire

By Sgt. 1st Class Robert Jordan

“I am so glad to do something I never thought I could do, and here I am.”

The North Carolina National Guard (NCNG) Employment Center celebrated its 3,000th hire at a ceremony held at the NCNG Joint Force Headquarters in Raleigh, North Carolina, Oct. 19, 2020.

The center's purpose is to increase career opportunities for serving and veteran members of the Reserves, National Guard, and qualifying family members.

“I am proud of what we have accomplished,” said NCNG Employment Center Program Director Eric Burgos.

Gladys Ngari learned about the employment center during an employment opportunity class as part of the NCNG Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program (YRRP) during her husband's deployment. The YRRP connects NCNG members, their families and communities with information about healthcare, education, employment, and financial and legal benefits throughout the deployment cycle.

“After he came back, I thought let me try {the employment center} and see how it goes,” said Ngari.

Ngari earned the honor of being the 3,000th hire after completing the Experience Talent Incubation Program (XTIP), a very competitive certification from Cisco Systems, Inc. It is a rigorous 20-week development program focused on technical and consultative skills.

“As I got to know Gladys more, it was clear that not only was she hardworking, but that she had a collaborative and kind approach to everything she does,” said Jessica Burke, Cisco Talent Incubation Programs Manager. “She's going to make an excellent addition to the Cisco family and we're lucky to have her.”

Those who pass the course and exams are eligible to receive a full-time offer as a Customer Experience Technical Consulting Engineer.

“I am so glad to do something I never thought I could do and here I am,” said Ngari.

Ngari with her mother Purity Mwangi, Ngari's husband, NCNG Army 1st Lt. Joseph Muraguri, their children James, Bob, Shishi, and their nephew Bob, came to NCNG Headquarters to officially recognize her as the 3,000th hire and her graduation from the XTIP program.

Ngari was the first military spouse to complete XTIP.

“I called my family and said I passed; it was exciting,” said Ngari.

The celebration marked one day's triumph and seven years of effort. The center began in June 2013 with four employees in one office and has grown to 12 full-time staff in eight offices in Raleigh, Wilmington, Winterville, Lenior, Asheville, Fayetteville, Greensboro and Charlotte.



Gladys Ngari is hugged by her family after being honored for her being the North Carolina National Guard (NCNG) Employment Center Program 3,000th hire at a ceremony held at NCNG Joint Force Headquarters in Raleigh, North Carolina, Oct. 19, 2020.

NCNG Continues COVID Response Efforts

By Staff Sgt. Mary Junell



Pfc. Keyante Anthony, assigned to the North Carolina Army National Guard's 883rd Engineer Company, enters a patient's information into a computer at a COVID-19 test site in High Point, North Carolina on Nov. 13, 2020. More than 170 North Carolina National Guard Soldiers and Airmen are activated across the state to support N.C. Emergency Management's response to the pandemic.



Cars line up at a COVID-19 test site where a team of five North Carolina National Guard Soldiers and Airmen are assisting medical team in High Point, North Carolina on Nov. 13, 2020.

For some Americans, life is slowly getting back to normal with more people returning to work and school across the country.

Despite that, many states are still responding to problems brought on by the pandemic, including an increased need for COVID-19 testing and a larger population now relying on assistance from food banks.

That is where the North Carolina National Guard steps in. In late September more than 170 Army and Air

Guardsmen were activated to support their state and ease the pressure of responding to a crisis.

One of the largest areas where guardsmen are supporting North Carolina is at food banks across the state.

Mary Maxton, the manager of volunteer engagement at the Food Bank of Central and Eastern North Carolina, said they have seen an increase from 600,000 people in need to 800,000 across the 34 counties they support.

The Raleigh-based food

bank where Maxton works now has a team of five N.C. Guardsmen filling the gaps where their volunteer base has decreased from around 90 volunteers a day to an average of 20.

"It's challenging to be here all day for any volunteer, and I know five days in a row is a lot, so we really appreciate the [N.C. National Guard] and all they do," Maxton said. "It's been a tremendous help. It's very nice to have a consistent five people coming in every day."

For many of the Soldiers,

including 1st Lt. Charles Brown, a platoon leader with the 878th Engineer Company, working at the food bank is a fulfilling experience that led them to join the N.C. Guard in the first place.

"I'm glad me and my guys could help out here," Brown said. "This is really what I signed up for 6 years ago, to serve my community."

The five-man team works on all the projects that come through the food bank including distribution, which brings the Soldiers face-to-face with the people they are

supporting.

"It's really great to see some of the faces light up when they get the food that they need," said Cpl. Dakotah Teter, a combat engineer with the 151st Mobility Augmentation Company.

But food insecurity isn't the only need Guardsmen are supporting. Several teams are stationed at COVID-19 test sites across North Carolina, including a site in High Point where a team of four Soldiers and one Airman are working together with Rhino Medical Services at a drive-thru test

site.

The team of Guardsmen register patients to get tested and help with the logistics of operating the site.

Burneta Barley, a registered nurse and team lead with Rhino Medical Services said having the guardsmen supporting means the nurses can focus on doing more tests.

"We're averaging between 80 and 90 a day," Barley said. "Everyone works well together, it's almost like a family to be honest because we spend almost 6 to 7 hours together a day."

Although it is not uncommon for Guardsmen to support their communities during times of need, the work they do when responding to a hurricane or winter storm more closely resembles their military jobs than the work many of them are doing to support the COVID-19 response.

"Going from our regular military jobs of digging in the dirt to helping out with COVID tests, it's an entirely different monster in my opinion," said Spc. Bennie Kinley with the 875th

Engineer Company. "It's a different experience when you've got people you know in your local community showing up."

As long as North Carolina has a need, Army and Air Guardsmen will continue to be activated to support the pandemic response across the state. Since March of this year, guardsmen have supported the distribution of more than 6.2 million food bank meals and assisted with the testing of close to 21,000 citizens.



NCNG SECURITY FORCE HELPS SECURE NC ELECTIONS

By Staff. Sgt. Mary Junell

NORTH CAROLINA NATIONAL GUARD'S (NCNG) CYBER SECURITY RESPONSE FORCE (CSRF) IS WORKING AROUND THE CLOCK TO PROTECT NETWORKS RELATED TO THE ELECTION PROCESS IN NORTH CAROLINA, AHEAD OF AND DURING THE ELECTION ON NOV. 3, 2020.

The team, made up of Army and Air Guardsmen, is working with their department lead, the N.C. Department of Public Safety (DPS), as well as the Division of Emergency Management (NCEM), N.C. Department of Information Technology (NCDIT), the State Bureau of Investigation, the Department of Homeland Security, FBI, and U.S. Cyber Command to monitor systems for malicious activity.

"We greatly appreciate the assistance of the North Carolina National Guard and all of our state and federal partners in monitoring our election infrastructure," said Karen Brinson Bell, executive director of the State Board of Elections. "Successful elections take a team effort, and they are integral members of our election security team."

In 2017 the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) identified election infrastructure as critical infrastructure.

"The Department of Public Safety has been working tirelessly to ensure the safety and security of the 2020 General Election," DPS Secretary Erik A. Hooks stated. "To ensure the state public safety and cybersecurity apparatus remains appropriately positioned to respond to a variety of threats surrounding the elections, a multi-faceted all-hazards approach to preparedness and response was utilized. The combined team within DPS that includes the

NCNG Cyber Unit, Emergency Management Cyber Unit, and homeland security experts, as well as its local, state and federal partners is well positioned to respond quickly and decisively to address threats and incidents potentially affecting our election infrastructure before, during and after election day."

NC Guard's primary role is to monitor security systems for the State Board of Elections to receive timely information to defend their network.

"We're looking at everything that's happening on the networks, and we're identifying if there's anything that should not be there so we can go ahead and essentially stop it or prevent it from occurring in the first place," said NC Guard's CSRF team leader, Capt. Alexander Reinwald. "To us, a successful mission means that our state and county networks are protected from malicious activity and network disruptions so that we can maintain the integrity of the electoral process."

The CSRF and NCDIT can provide services and assistance, both proactive and reactive, whenever there's a cyber incident in the state, according to the State Chief Risk and Security Officer with the NCDIT, Maria Thompson.



“Without [the NCNG] it’s safe to say that we would definitely have a deficit within the state,” Thompson said. “It’s crucial that we have this partnership, and they are part of the team that helps to secure our elections infrastructure.”

This is not the first time the CSRF has worked with NCDIT and NCEM. They have worked together to support the State Board of Elections and other agencies with five elections before this one and have trained together during events like the one involving K-12 school systems in early October of this year.

“Working with state partners before events happen helps us be more proactive,” Thompson said. “Whether it’s K-12 or a local county, getting to know who those people are and building those relationships as well as understanding what their networks look like and what type of systems they have helps us to understand, if there is an incident, what to expect.”

The NC Guard and the rest of the state’s cyber force will be on duty for the next few days at a minimum.

A SUCCESSFUL MISSION MEANS THAT OUR STATE AND COUNTY NETWORKS ARE PROTECTED FROM MALICIOUS ACTIVITY AND NETWORK DISRUPTIONS SO THAT WE CAN MAINTAIN THE INTEGRITY OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS.

“We are very fortunate to have a highly trained and professional cyber team which helps guard the infrastructure and networks keeping our citizens safe,” said Maj. Gen. Todd Hunt, adjutant general of North Carolina.

Capt. Reinwald says the team’s ability to build lasting relationships is because they are not just N.C. Guardsmen, but also North Carolina citizens with most on the team having IT jobs in their civilian careers.

“Because we’re in the guard and we’re all from the communities that we’re working to protect, we have the ability to build and establish long term relationships

with the counties and the state networks,” Reinwald said. “Because this is our home state, we have a vested interest in protecting it and working with the community leaders. When this election is over, the job’s not done, it’s a whole process, and we’re going to continue working to secure the networks of our state, local, and county infrastructure.”

NC Army National Guard Capt. Steven Schmidt, the CSRF Chief Deputy who also serves as the commander for the 29th Signal Company, compares the event to a marathon; after a lot of hard work and excitement, they will simply cross the finish line, and it will be over.

“It’s very exciting to be a part of this because it’s [elections] an important process,” Schmidt said. “A year down the road, when we’re looking back at everything that happens today after the 3rd of November, and just having a very boring week is what we want to see. The more boring, the better.”

Although the goal is to have a dull day on election day, the NCNG’s Cyber Security Response Force is still vigilant, ensuring the security of the election for North Carolina citizens.





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The Mission of the Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP) Program

The SHARP program helps to achieve the goal of the Secretary of Defense to eradicate sexual assault and sexual harassment from the military. SHARP helps to create an Army culture where all Soldiers have the values, tools, and skills to prevent sexual violence. SHARP also provides sensitive care and confidential reporting for victims of sexual assault while holding offenders accountable for their actions.

The goals of the SAPR Program are to:

- (1)** Create a climate that minimizes sexual assault incidents, which impact Army personnel, Army civilians, and Family members, and, if an incident should occur, ensure that victims and subjects are treated according to Army policy.
- (2)** Create a climate that encourages victims to report incidents of sexual assault without fear.
- (3)** Establish sexual assault prevention training and awareness programs to educate Soldiers.
- (4)** Ensure sensitive and comprehensive treatment to restore victims' health and Well-being.
- (5)** Ensure leaders understand their roles and responsibilities regarding response to sexual assault victims, thoroughly investigate allegations of sexual assault, and take appropriate administrative and disciplinary action and subjects are treated according to Army policy.