

FALL/WINTER 2021

GUARD DETAIL

A CHRONICLE OF THE MISSISSIPPI ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD



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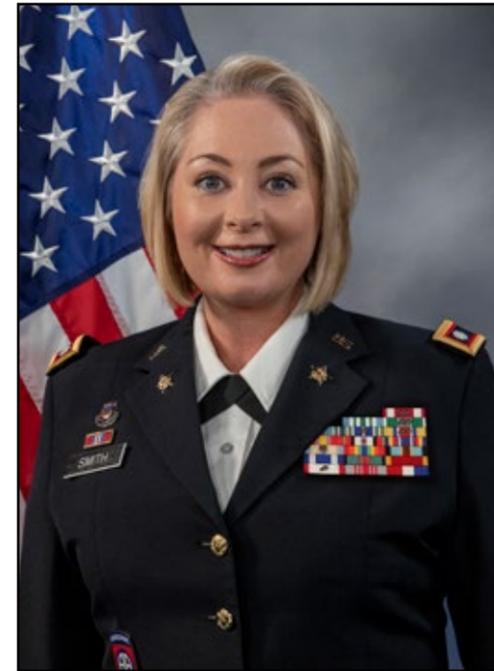
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Many changes of command took place throughout the Mississippi National Guard this fall, including the 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team, 186th Air Refueling Wing, and the 102d Public Affairs Detachment.

Letter From THE EDITOR

HONORING MILITARY VETERANS



“Our Debt To The Heroic Men and Valiant Women In The Service Of Our Country Can Never Be Repaid, They Have Earned Our Undying Gratitude. America Will Never Forget Their Sacrifices.”

~ President Harry S. Truman

As I was standing on the Camp Shelby parade field with my daughter by my side, we watched together as members of the Greatest Generation were honored by receiving the French Légion d'honneur award. A note of humble gratitude and compassion swept over me as I watched a tear roll down my daughter's cheek knowing that in that very moment, we were witnessing history as two American heroes received recognition for a debt that can never truly be repaid.

This award is the highest decoration presented by France that can be bestowed upon a citizen of France or a foreigner who has done great deeds for the Republic of France. Mr. Vincent Hommeril, the Consul General of France, based in Atlanta, served as the distinguished representative presenting the awards to two World War II veterans, Cpl. Norvin D. McClure of Fort Wayne, Indiana, and Pfc. Arthur M. Newell of Struthers, Ohio. It was a rare opportunity to witness, in person, the honorable recognition on behalf of a grateful

allied nation.

During the ceremony, it was not lost on me the age and health of these gentlemen who traveled with their families back to Camp Shelby, Mississippi, to the same parade field location where their unit was first activated nearly 80 years ago. Their training at Camp Shelby prepared them for battle, and a grateful nation continues to honor their service and the sacrifices of so many service members and families who have paid the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom.

As we begin a new year with renewed hope and a determined spirit, I encourage you to continue your legacy of service by empowering the next generation of heroes through mentorship, training and educational opportunities. What adventures will 2022 bring? There is no time like the present to encourage those around us to strive for success and promote career advancement in the Mississippi Army and Air National Guard.

Our formation is full of talented professionals from every military occupational specialty, representing every county of our great state. I encourage you to share your story of service with those around you, in your unit and your community. ‘Recruiting and Retention’ are best achieved by the contributions and service of our men and women in uniform. Our formation requires a vast amount of diverse skills and educational backgrounds to achieve the goals of our state and nation during times of peace, conflict and natural disaster emergency response.

You are the absolute best example to celebrate our service and promote recruiting for the next great generation of Mississippi National Guard dynamic leaders and quiet professionals. Who do you know that would be an amazing member of our team?

The Mississippi National Guard continues the legacy of service by maintaining training requirements, ensuring our personnel and equipment are always ready as a combat reserve force for our state and nation.

You are the foundation that makes the National Guard a Family! Thank you Mississippi National Guard Soldiers, Airmen and Families for your devotion to duty and continued exemplary service.

Lt. Col. Deidre D. Smith
Editor-in Chief



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All submissions should pertain to the Mississippi National Guard and are subject to editing. Contributions and reader comments should be sent to: ng.ms.msarng.list.public-affairs@army.mil.

COVER PHOTO: A WWII veteran from the 65th Infantry Division rides through downtown Hattiesburg during the city's Veterans Day Parade, Nov. 11, 2021. World War II veterans were honored guests at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center during the 65th ID's reunion, marking 78 years since the unit's formation in 1943. (U.S. National Guard photo by Mr. Justin Dixon)



Command Sgt. Maj. Gary E. Graham

As I leave the force after 43 years of continuous service, three deployments, numerous natural disaster missions along with an untold number of training exercises, I would like to extend my thoughts on leadership, career success, and adapting to the challenges of today.

My priorities in life have always been in this order; God, Family, and Country. Faith gives you a sense of safety and security and something you can always rely on in the darkest of times. Your family is the cornerstone of your life and the very thing you serve for and aim to protect. You would not be where you are without that family sacrificing for you and the nation. Your faith in your country is what drives you to serve and to protect so we can continue to have a free way of life.

You are only as successful as those who are with you. Teamwork has been the motivation for my leadership style and has proven to be the number one reason for my many successes. No one person can accomplish the great missions alone, but as a team you can accomplish the unthinkable.

I have always considered it an honor and a privilege to serve this nation and I believe if you don the uniform for America's freedom each day, you should share this belief. There should be a sense of pride for being able to protect America's freedom. Command Sgt. Maj. Gene Maske once told me, *"Always put those around you first and you will be the member of the team everyone will follow."* Another one that has stuck with me through the years is, *"If you don't worry about who gets the credit, there is no limit to what you can accomplish."*

My advice to our future and junior leaders is: If you want a sense of purpose with a longing to be a member of a team, you have made the right choice in

choosing the military. You can truly be all you want to be and much more with hard work and dedication. To the junior leaders, I would advise you to put others first but always be the first in whatever you do. Treat others as you would have them treat you. Also, have the moral courage to stand up to what is right. Be the standard bearer for the Army; live the Army values on and off duty.

One of the most successful lessons I have learned over the years is just how valuable building relationships is. I have found myself in numerous training events, combat missions and natural disasters, and each time I find a lot of my success is in the relationships I had made in the past. These relationships have a sense of trust and an attitude of willingness to help. They have knowledge from different branches and agencies that will get you and your team the help that makes mission success.

I have now entered the retirement ranks; I would like to relay to each of you how rewarding it truly is. It is your reward for all the great things you have done and all the sacrifices you and your family have made. It is all I expected it to be and more. Julie and I would like to extend our gratitude to each and every one of you. If I can ever be of assistance to you, please don't hesitate to call. I may be retired, but I am a Soldier for Life.

Keep your powder dry and Godspeed in all your endeavors.

Gary E. Graham
Command Sgt. Maj. (Ret.)
Mississippi Army
National Guard

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER



The Mississippi Air National Guard is made up of dedicated individuals who strive to keep three things at the center of everything they do, both in the guard and their personal life, which are: Integrity first, service before self and excellence in all we do. These three weighty statements help keep our Airmen focused by ensuring mission readiness and success. A few years ago, the Air Force developed the Comprehensive Airman Fitness with four pillars that keep airmen fit. Those pillars are mental, physical, social and spiritual. The last pillar is where the men and women of the Air Force Chaplain Corps strive to ensure our Airmen are spiritually fit so that our core values are realized in all aspects of our lives.

In our state, our Airmen, who are spread out from Jackson over to Meridian down to Gulfport, are fortunate to have the most enthusiastic and dedicated chaplains and religious affairs Airmen in the entire Air National Guard. The devoted and steadfast team serving Jackson and Gulfport consists of Chaplains Lt. Col. Seth Still, Maj. Caleb Clark, Capt. Ken Thomas, and Chaplain Assistants Master Sgt. Fred Hart and Tech. Sgt. Ashley Smith. The faithful and committed team serving Meridian consists of Chaplains Maj. Matthew Nansel, Maj. Shane Moore, Maj. Stacey Pickering, and Chaplain Assistants Master Sgt. James Conner, Staff Sgt. David Famer, Senior Airman Carrie Vance

and Airman 1st Class Samantha Ranger. From hosting Strong Bonds marriage events (which by the way, if you have never been to one, reach out to the chaplain's office – they are fantastic!) to counseling or conducting chapel services, each one of us stands ready to respectfully assist you in any way we can.

From Chaplain Samuel Stone, the first recorded militia chaplain to serve the first minutemen of Colonial America, to the Chaplain Corps members of the Mississippi Air National Guard, we share in a rich and distinct honor of serving today's minutemen. In everything we do as chaplains and religious affairs airmen, our aim is to ensure the Mississippi Air National Guard is prepared to answer the call when it comes. Our humble responsibility as the Mississippi Air National Guard chaplains and religious affairs team is inspiring resilient Airmen to continue living and upholding our core values.

Chaplain, Lt. Col.
John M. McCay, III,
Wing Chaplain,
186th Air Refueling Wing
Key Field Air National Guard
Base, Meridian





Soldiers with 1st Battalion, 185th Aviation Regiment, Mississippi Army National Guard, receive recognition at the University of Mississippi football game in Oxford, Sept. 11, 2021. The flight crew conducted a flyover to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Sept. 11th terrorist attacks. (Photo courtesy of Joshua T. McCoy, University of Mississippi Athletics Photography)



**SCAN
HERE**





Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles, adjutant general of Mississippi, Ms. Carolyn Hicks, Gold Star mother of Lt. Col. Jerry D. Dickerson, Jr., and Command Sgt. Maj. Silvester Tatum, senior enlisted leader of the Mississippi National Guard, honor fallen servicemembers during a Veterans Day ceremony hosted by The Museum of Mississippi History and Mississippi Civil Rights Museum in Jackson, Nov. 10, 2021. Boyles served as the keynote speaker and Tatum delivered the invocation. Dickerson, a Durant, Mississippi native and graduate of Mississippi State University, was working in the Pentagon when it was attacked Sept. 11, 2001. (U.S. National Guard photo by Mr. Justin Dixon)

VETERANS WEEK

Story by Staff Sgt. Connie Jones
JFH-MS Public Affairs Office

Veterans Day, observed nationally on November 11 every year, is a chance to honor those who have served to protect the country and maintain the freedoms enjoyed by the citizens of the United States. Beginning Nov. 9, the Mississippi National Guard celebrated Veterans Day 2021 with a whole week of events throughout the state.

Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, near Hattiesburg, hosted the annual MSNG Retiree Day at the Mississippi Armed Forces Museum, Nov. 9, 2021. Holly Brand, Miss Mississippi 2021, led the National Anthem and Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles, the adjutant general of Mississippi, and Command Sgt. Maj. Silvester Tatum, senior enlisted leader of the MSNG, delivered words of gratitude for the retired service members in attendance and addressed the current

state of the MSNG.

The Museum of Mississippi History and the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum in Jackson hosted a special Veterans Day Ceremony November 10, as a tribute to those who serve and have served in the United States Armed Forces. Boyles served as the keynote speaker of the ceremony and Tatum delivered the invocation. The program included a performance by the Mississippi National Guard's 41st Army Band, a moment of silence, recognition of the veterans in attendance, a memorial volley and a wreath laying event.

On Veterans Day, the City of Hattiesburg hosted a parade which included and celebrated members of the 65th Infantry Division. The 65th ID has roots at Camp Shelby, forming there in 1943. Their last reunion was held in 2015. Col. Rick Weaver, post commander of Camp Shelby, spoke to the audience and members of the MSNG shared treats with the crowd.

The week concluded with two members

of the 65th ID receiving the French Legion of Honor for their actions during World War II. Presented by Vincent Hommeril, the Consul General of France, the Légion d'honneur is the highest decoration presented by France that can be bestowed upon a citizen of the country or a foreigner who has performed great deeds for the Republic of France. Cpl. Norvin D. McClure of Fort Wayne, Indiana, and Pfc. Arthur M. Newell of Struthers, Ohio, both received the prestigious award on the Camp Shelby parade field, November 13.

While the holiday is only one day, the ceremonies hosted throughout the week allowed members of the MSNG, and the communities in which they serve, to honor service members both past and present.

"Let's just always remember that it's about the country and about its freedoms and about the prosperity we protect," said Boyles. "Thank you, Veterans, for being a part of that and protecting those values."



Norvin D. McClure, front passenger, a WWII veteran who served with the 65th Infantry Division, rides through downtown Hattiesburg during the city's Veterans Day Parade, Nov. 11, 2021. World War II veterans were honored guests at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center during the 65th ID's reunion, marking 78 years since the unit's formation in 1943. (U.S. National Guard photos by Mr. Justin Dixon)



Arthur M. Newell, front passenger, a WWII veteran who served with the 65th Infantry Division, rides through downtown Hattiesburg during the city's Veterans Day Parade, Nov. 11, 2021. World War II veterans were honored guests at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center during the 65th ID's reunion, marking 78 years since the unit's formation in 1943. (U.S. National Guard photos by Mr. Justin Dixon)

RETIREE DAY

Retirees and distinguished guests visited Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center for the Mississippi National Guard's Annual Retiree Day at the Mississippi Armed Forces Museum, Nov. 9, 2021. Each year, the MSNG honors its retirees with a special event including guest speakers and followed by a social gathering with refreshments so guests can reunite with retirees they've served with as well as a special invitation to tour the museum at their leisure. This year's event featured Holly Brand, Miss Mississippi 2021, singing the National Anthem. Speakers of the event included Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles, adjutant general of Mississippi, Command Sgt. Maj. Silvester Tatum, senior enlisted leader of the MSNG, Col. (Ret.) Mark Prine, the Museum Foundation president, Tommy Lofton, director of the Mississippi Armed Forces Museum, Col. Rick Weaver, commander of Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, and Lt. Col. Deidre D. Smith, Director of Public Affairs for the MSNG. The invocation and benediction were delivered by Chaplain (Col.) Terry Partin.



MSNG SUPPORTS IDA RESPONSE IN LOUISIANA



Mississippi Guardsmen clear debris from a park in Hammond, Louisiana, Sept. 8, 2021. The Soldiers are part of the Mississippi Army National Guard's Hurricane Ida response in Tangipahoa Parish, Louisiana, led by the 289th Engineer Company, headquartered in Bruce, Mississippi. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Jovi Prevot)

Story by Sgt. Jovi Prevot
Gulfport CRIC Public Affairs Office

The National Guard motto, "Always Ready - Always There" means the Guard has to be ready for many contingencies that will likely never occur. One threat that is seemingly ever present in the southeastern region of the United States is the destructiveness of hurricanes. When Hurricane Ida devastated Louisiana as it made landfall on August 29, more than 200 Mississippi Army and Air Guardsmen from throughout the state deployed to central and south Louisiana to assist in response efforts.

"When I first got here, it literally broke my heart to see all these houses in the floodwaters and just all the damage and everything," said Sgt. Chris Bounds, a military police assigned to the 113th Military Police Company, 112th Military

Police Battalion. "I'm just happy that they called us because Louisiana came out and helped Mississippi when we needed them. It warms my heart that we were able to come out and help them as much as we could."

Members of the 168th Engineer Brigade, the 112th Military Police Battalion, 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team and the 255th Air Control Squadron supported local task forces throughout Louisiana in various parishes including Tangipahoa, Jefferson, St. John the Baptist, Terrebonne, and St. Tammany as part of an interstate mutual aid agreement known as an Emergency Management Assistance Compact. The EMAC program allows for rapid deployment of troops to affected areas from one state to another.

"We are grateful to all of the organizations that partnered with us and brought experienced teams of first responders from around the country to help us on our road to recovery after Hurricane Ida," said Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards.

After Hurricane Ida passed through Louisiana, EMAC coordinators worked quickly to plan an effective response and get Mississippi troops deployed.

"We were able to deploy 116 MPs and support personnel in less than 48 hours - move those Soldiers, weapons, and equipment into another state, and perform our military duty in areas devoid of electric power and basic utilities," said Capt. William Everett, commander of the 113th Military Police Company. "This was a wonderful opportunity for myself as well as the unit, and I feel it is a credit to the Soldiers and the Mississippi National Guard as a whole."

Even with long hours, Everett said morale was high for the MP Company.

"The MPs were honored and excited to be able to go help a neighboring state in a time of need. They really took pride in their job and went to great lengths to ensure the local population was taken care of," he said.

In addition to the military police support provided by the 112th, the 255th ACS provided communication support to remote points-of-distribution.

"We started in LaPlace, and after four days, we moved down to Theriot; there we provided Wi-Fi, radio coverage, and we also provided details to assist in providing water, tarps and food," said Master Sgt. Thomas Farragut, 255th ACS. "Going around and helping with that community, that is the most rewarding part of a mission like this."

Though flooding was one of the biggest issues in south Louisiana, central Louisiana needed heavy equipment to remove debris caused by Ida; Soldiers from the 168th Engineer Brigade provided that support.

"The Louisiana National Guard had all-hands-on-deck for the Hurricane Ida response," said Brig. Gen. Thomas Friloux, LANG's director of joint staff and dual-status commander for Hurricane Ida relief. "The assisting states, territory and Title 10 partners brought their own operational experiences and assets to the response efforts, giving us much more capability to protect lives and property in Louisiana when it mattered most."

For their service in response to Hurricane Ida, the Soldiers and Airmen were awarded the Louisiana Emergency Service Medal.



Staff Sgt. Amber Turner, a military police assigned to the 114th Military Police Company, 112th Military Police Battalion, stands guard at a security post in Jean Lafitte, Louisiana, Sept. 6, 2021. Turner is part of the Mississippi Army National Guard's Hurricane Ida response in Jefferson Parish, Louisiana led by the 113th Military Police Company, headquartered in Brandon, Mississippi. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Jovi Prevot)



Soldiers with the 112th Military Police Battalion assemble a tent at a point-of-distribution site in Jean Lafitte, Louisiana, Sept. 6, 2021. The Soldiers are part of the Mississippi Army National Guard's Hurricane Ida response in Jefferson Parish, Louisiana led by the 113th Military Police Company, headquartered in Brandon, Mississippi. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Jovi Prevot)



Sgt. Jasmin May, left, and Spc. John Herring, both military police assigned to the 114th Military Police Company, 112th Military Police Battalion, stand guard at a security post in Jean Lafitte, Louisiana, Sept. 6, 2021. The Soldiers are part of the Mississippi Army National Guard's Hurricane Ida response in Jefferson Parish, Louisiana led by the 113th Military Police Company, headquartered in Brandon, Mississippi. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Jovi Prevot)

"WHEN I FIRST GOT HERE, IT LITERALLY BROKE MY HEART TO SEE ALL THESE HOUSES IN THE FLOODWATERS AND JUST ALL THE DAMAGE AND EVERYTHING."

-SGT. CHRIS BOUNDS

AIRMAN SAVES LIVES IN WAKE OF IDA

Story by Lt. Col. Deidre D. Smith
 MSNG Director of Public Affairs
 1st Lt. Kiara N. Spann
 172d Public Affairs Officer and
 SMSgt Jeannine M. Smith
 172d Public Affairs Superintendent

Maj. James Kevin Polk, a flight nurse assigned to the 183rd Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron of the 172d Airlift Wing, saved two lives in Bolton, Mississippi, in the wake of Hurricane Ida. In the early morning hours of Sept. 5, 2021, Dustin and Ashley Smith, evacuees from Lafitte, Louisiana, welcomed a new baby girl in the bathtub of a friend's house; then everything took a turn.

Most people are not surprised when they hear of National Guard forces responding with support efforts including engineers, aviation capabilities, military police and communication support, but sometimes, when you least expect it, a hero emerges when you need them the most. That is exactly what happened to the Smith family when Polk delivered their baby and saved the lives of the mother and the newborn child.

The journey began Aug. 27, 2021, as the city of Lafitte was preparing for the wrath of Hurricane Ida. Ashley was expecting her fourth child and deliberating over the best course of action to safely evacuate her family while preparing to deliver her baby during the global pandemic of COVID-19. Ashley's family is from Indiana and, anticipating a difficult drive to reach them at 38 weeks pregnant, she realized she needed to explore other options. That was when a good friend, Brandi Arcement of Barataria, Louisiana, called and invited Ashley, Dustin, their three children and the family dog to stay with her parents, Craig and Karry Degruise of Bolton. The following day, the Smith family, along with Brandi and her children, arrived safely to the Degruise family home to wait out the storm.

On August 29, Hurricane Ida made landfall at Port Fourchon, Louisiana, as a Category 4 hurricane, just miles from where Hurricane Katrina left its mark exactly 16 years earlier. The storm devastated



Maj. James Kevin Polk, a Mississippi Air National Guard flight nurse with the 183rd Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, delivered a baby in the wake of Hurricane Ida and provided lifesaving assistance to the newborn and her mother, saving both of their lives in Bolton, Mississippi, Sept. 5, 2021. (Photo courtesy of Karry Degruise Photography)

the Smith's hometown and caused severe damage to their home, leaving them in Mississippi, where thankfully, they were safe with friends and anxiously awaiting the time to welcome their new baby.

In his civilian capacity, Polk is a surgical recovery room nurse at Baptist Hospital in Jackson and a neighbor of the Degruise family of Bolton. Karry invited Polk over on September 2 to visit with Ashley and Dustin to answer their questions, offer reassurance and discuss options for a birth plan in case she went into labor. Ashley was considering a home birth due to her fears of COVID-19 and the restrictions in an unfamiliar hospital. It was her fear that the family would be separated or prevented from seeing each other due to the pandemic.

Ashley went into labor the night of September 4. She started timing her

contractions a little after 11:00 p.m. and woke up her husband just before midnight to tell him the contractions were coming faster – less than two minutes apart. She woke up the host family and explained that she didn't think she would make it to the hospital in time. Karry sprang into action, called Polk and started bath water; Ashley's home birth plan included a water birth.

"[Polk] just rolled up his sleeves and jumped into action," Karry said. "He knew exactly what he needed to do and he got to work."

Polk had experience with labor and delivery while serving on active duty as a nurse at Keesler Air Force Base in Biloxi. His medical experience under pressure while deployed to Iraq as a Critical Care Air Transport Team nurse, prepared him for the events that happened that day.

"My military training helped me stay calm," said Polk. "My job as a critical care air transport team nurse during deployment was the best job I've ever had in the military. There is no higher honor than treating someone who is protecting our freedom. It is rewarding knowing you made a difference."

Polk sat on the side of the bathtub and calmly talked Ashley through the birth. The labor was fast and at 12:30 a.m., baby Julia Lane Smith was born.

Ashley was anxiously awaiting the sound of the first cry of her newborn baby girl. When the infant was born, Polk immediately assessed her well-being without causing alarm for the new parents. The baby's color was blue and Polk was doing everything he could to get the baby to breathe. He began giving her rescue breaths and was able to stabilize the newborn.

"The baby took a little while to start breathing, probably because it was such a fast birth," he said. "I started rescue breathing when she didn't start breathing on her own. A clear airway is the most important thing after the baby is born. I covered the baby's mouth and nose with my mouth and gave her three rescue breaths. Then she started breathing on her own."

Polk explained that everything was going like it was supposed to after the baby started breathing. They used a zip-tie to clamp the umbilical cord and kitchen shears to cut the cord. He got everyone cleaned up and was letting Ashley relax in the tub before trying to get her out.

Ashley rested in the tub for about an hour, but when she tried to get out of the tub, she got weak, explained Polk.

"Ashley's pulse was faint and thready. She started turning blue and she passed out," said Polk. "She was slipping down into the tub. Dustin grabbed her and was holding her while I gave her five rescue breaths. I remember saying before I gave her the rescue breaths, 'I am not trying to kiss you. Come on, you can do this.' At first she was not responding. I was getting ready to start CPR when Ashley came-to, saying, 'I was only taking a nap.'"

Polk stayed with the family for a while to monitor Ashley and her newborn. He continued to check on the Smith family the following days to ensure everyone was doing well. During one of the follow-up visits with the family a few days later, Ashley told him about her fear before the birth.

"It was a wish of mine to do an at-home birth in the midst of the COVID pandemic," said Ashley. "Before the birth, I had a feeling and was so afraid that we wouldn't make it through this. Kevin showed up 100%.

He was calm and at no point did I feel stress or worry. He did a phenomenal job keeping me calm."

The Smiths and the Degruises are extremely grateful for the exceptional outcome.

"I believe things happen for a reason," Ashley said. "I am good friends with their daughter Brandi, and Karry and Craig welcomed us like family. This was the best birth experience my husband and I had out of all four of our children. There is no monetary value, enough gratitude, or gifts that I can ever give Kevin, Karry and

"ANYTIME YOU FEEL LIKE YOU ARE A PART OF SAVING A LIFE, IT IS THE BEST FEELING IN THE WORLD."

-MAJ. JAMES POLK

Craig to express how thankful my husband and I are for that whole experience. I feel like angels were put in my path to help in a situation that was crazy all around us."

Polk summed up his experience saying, "Anytime you feel like you are a part of saving a life...it is the best feeling in the world."

The Smith family is currently in the process of rebuilding their home due to the damage caused by Hurricane Ida.



Maj. James Kevin Polk, left, poses with Julia Lane Smith and her parents Dustin and Ashley Smith at the home of Karry Degruise in Bolton, Mississippi, Sept. 6, 2021. Polk, a Mississippi Air National Guard flight nurse with the 183rd Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, delivered a baby in the wake of Hurricane Ida and provided lifesaving assistance to the newborn and her mother, saving both of their lives, Sept. 5, 2021. (Photo courtesy of Karry Degruise Photography)

MISSISSIPPI NATIONAL GUARD ENVIRONMENTAL TEAM RECEIVES NATIONAL CONSERVATION AWARD



The Mississippi National Guard's Environmental Team was presented the 17th Annual Military Conservation Partner Award by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in recognition of excellence and exceptional leadership in natural resource conservation. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Jovi Prevot)

Story by 2nd Lt. Michael Needham and Sgt. Jovi Prevot

Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles, the adjutant general of Mississippi, received the 2021 Military Conservation Partner Award for excellence and exceptional leadership in natural resource conservation, presented by Leopoldo "Leo" Miranda-Castro, the southeast regional director for the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, at the Grand Gallery of the Mississippi Armed Forces Museum, Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, Nov. 2, 2021.



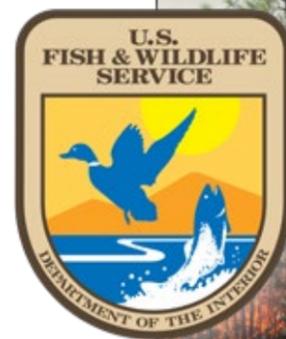
"We are now really, truly protecting the environment and protecting the animals who live in that environment," said Boyles. "We have the right processes in place to continue to grow that environment."

This prestigious award is significant for Camp Shelby because this is only the third time a National Guard installation has been recognized on a national level for their conservation achievements.

"As part of the DoD, we do a lot of conservation work because we are one of the biggest landowners in the U.S.," said Bryan Fedrick, Natural Resources Manager, Mississippi National Guard. "This is a culmination of several years of hard work."

There is a direct relationship between military training and protecting the environment. Environmental considerations have an impact on military missions, whether it's training or real world missions.

"This award proves the stewardship of Camp Shelby. It shows that military missions and land conservation, and conservation of wildlife are totally compatible," said Miranda-Castro. "What



is good for the critters is good for the Soldiers."

The annual award recipient is selected from a pool of nominees representing all of the DoD military branches and is composed of all components of military service.

The Mississippi National Guard Soldiers and Airmen continue to serve with honor and integrity in diverse missions throughout the state and nation, always ready and always there.



MISSISSIPPI NATIONAL GUARD HELPS BATTLE CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES

Story by Mr. Daniel Szarek
JFH-MS Public Affairs Office

A team of Aviators from the Mississippi Army National Guard deployed to California in September 2021, to assist local agencies in fighting the massive wildfires spreading across the state.

After a Presidential Major Disaster Declaration was approved for California, the state requested Mississippi National Guard personnel and equipment through an Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC), a national interstate mutual aid agreement that enables states to share resources during times of disaster. An EMAC acts as a complement to the federal disaster response system, providing timely and cost-effective relief to states struggling to preserve life, the economy and the environment.

The team consisted of a CH-47 Chinook heavy-lift helicopter crew from Company

B, 1st Battalion, 111th Aviation Regiment based in Meridian, as well as support personnel from throughout Mississippi. The 10-Soldier crew worked alongside the California National Guard (CANG) and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CALFIRE), providing aerial water bucket operations and aviation maintenance support.

"The aircrew we are providing to fight wildfires in California is very experienced and extraordinarily qualified to perform this mission," said Col. Bradley Howe, the state aviation officer for the Mississippi Army National Guard. "I know they will provide outstanding support to help the people of California, just as they always do here in Mississippi."

Interagency coordination between the California Office of Emergency Services, the CANG, the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency and the MSNG, played a vital role leading up to the deployment.

"These Chinook flight crew members and maintainers are among the best and most versatile of Army Aviation," said Capt. Lewis Howard, commander of Company B. "They have trained in many different Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA) scenarios including hurricane response, search and rescue and local law enforcement aid. We include water bucket and fire response in our annual training plans, so CALFIRE assistance is something every crew member is adequately prepared to conduct."

The Soldiers who served in support of the MSNG CALFIRE mission came from the 185th Aviation Brigade; the 1st Battalion, 185th Aviation Regiment of Jackson; Army Aviation Support Facility 3 of Meridian; Company B of 1st Battalion, 111th Aviation Regiment of Meridian; and A Company, 1108th Theater Aviation Support Maintenance Group of Gulfport.



A CH-47 Chinook helicopter, operated by aviators from Company B, 1st Battalion, 111th Aviation Regiment, Mississippi Army National Guard, conducts water bucket operations to assist the California National Guard and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, in fighting wildfires throughout the state. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Capt. Lewis Howard)

9/11 TRIBUTE

Story by Tech. Sgt. D'Markus Burrell
JFH-MS Public Affairs Office

On the 20th anniversary of the horrific September 11th attacks, many units across the Magnolia State remembered the tragic events as well as those who passed away, and honored first responders.

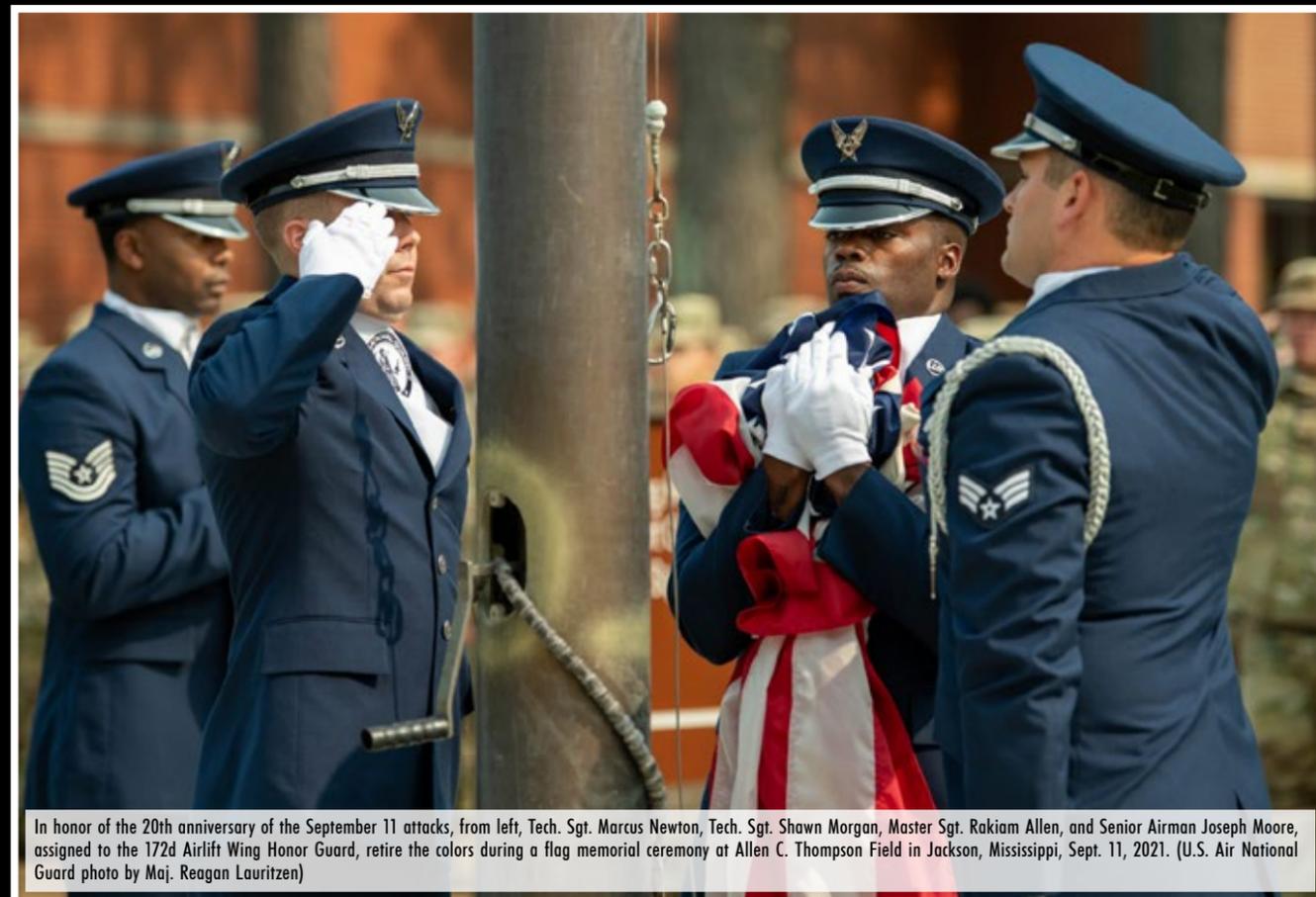
At Joint Force Headquarters in Jackson, Soldiers, Airmen, and loved ones came together for a 9/11 "Never Forget" 20th Anniversary Memorial 5K Run, Walk/Ruck Event. The public was invited out to cheer on service members as they took off around 7:30 that morning. After the event, everyone gathered around the building's flagpole for a moment of silence at 8:46 a.m., the exact time the first plane hit the north tower of the World Trade Center.

A public memorial event was hosted at the Mississippi Armed Forces Museum at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center to commemorate the fallen service members from Mississippi who fought during the Global War on Terrorism.

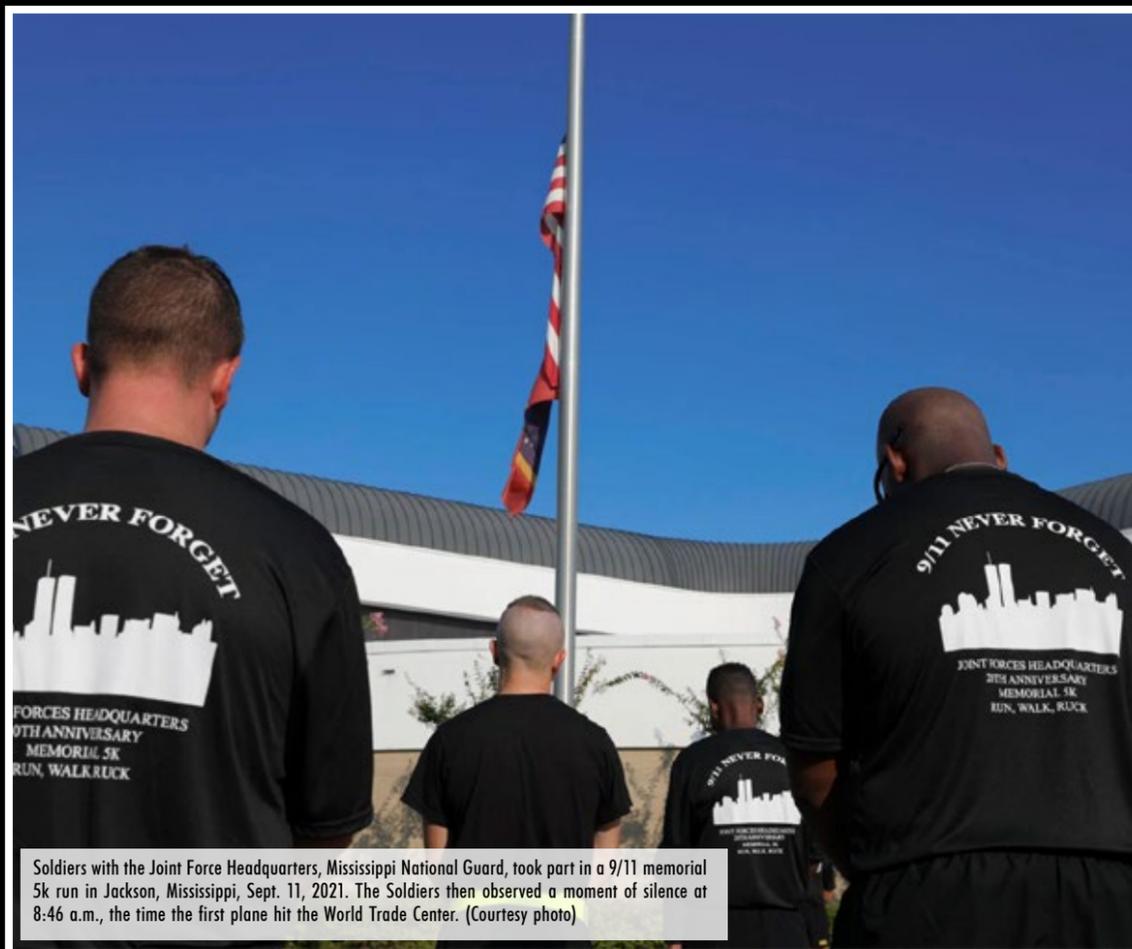
With almost 50,000 people in attendance, The University of Mississippi invited Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 185th Aviation Regiment, onto the field to be recognized during their military appreciation night football game against Austin Peay State University. The MSARNG also conducted a flyover including three UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters prior to kickoff.



Col. (Ret.) Butch Teston, right, and Command Master Chief Petty Officer (Ret.) Bob Miller, both of the U.S. Coast Guard Pipe Band, play during a September 11 remembrance ceremony at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, Mississippi, Sept. 11, 2021. Teston, a Mississippi native and U.S. Army retiree, came from Florida to honor the fallen servicemembers from the state. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Connie Jones)



In honor of the 20th anniversary of the September 11 attacks, from left, Tech. Sgt. Marcus Newton, Tech. Sgt. Shawn Morgan, Master Sgt. Rakiem Allen, and Senior Airman Joseph Moore, assigned to the 172d Airlift Wing Honor Guard, retire the colors during a flag memorial ceremony at Allen C. Thompson Field in Jackson, Mississippi, Sept. 11, 2021. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Maj. Reagan Lauritzen)



Soldiers with the Joint Force Headquarters, Mississippi National Guard, took part in a 9/11 memorial 5k run in Jackson, Mississippi, Sept. 11, 2021. The Soldiers then observed a moment of silence at 8:46 a.m., the time the first plane hit the World Trade Center. (Courtesy photo)



The 172d Airlift Wing hosts a flag memorial ceremony in honor of the 20th anniversary of the attacks on 9/11, at Allen C. Thompson Field in Jackson, Mississippi, Sept. 11, 2021. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Maj. Reagan Lauritzen)

"NEVER FORGET"



Col. Michael Honeycutt, right, presents a shadowbox to Brig. Gen. Amos Parker, as a retirement gift during the Mississippi Rifles Chapter's Annual Infantry Symposium in Natchez, Mississippi, Sept. 18, 2021. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Christian Hayes)

A SOLDIER'S SOLDIER



Col. Jody M. Smith, left, presents a wooden trident to Brig. Gen. Amos Parker as a retirement gift, during the Mississippi Rifles Chapter's Annual Infantry Symposium in Natchez, Mississippi, Sept. 18, 2021. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Christian Hayes)

Story by Sgt. Jovi Prevot
Gulfport CRTIC Public Affairs Office

The Mississippi National Guard celebrated the service and legacy of Brig. Gen. Amos P. Parker, Jr., as he retired after serving as the Assistant Adjutant General - Army since April 2019. He served with honor and dedication at every command level from Lieutenant to Brigadier General in the MSNG.

"This is a lifelong endeavor. I don't look at it as necessarily a retirement; it's more

of a transition," said Parker. "You don't ever really quit serving, you just serve in a different capacity."

Parker served as an Infantryman for more than 35 years. He deployed with the 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team in 2005 and 2009 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, and served as the commander of the 154th Regiment Regional Training Institute before being appointed as the Assistant Adjutant General - Army. He has received numerous awards and decorations for his exemplary service to our state and nation.

The "Mississippi Rifles" Chapter of the National Infantry Association recognized Parker's contributions to the organization during the Chapter's Annual Infantry Symposium Sept. 18, 2021.

During the event, Parker was presented with the Order of Saint Maurice - Primicerius Level.

The Order of Saint Maurice was established in 1996 and is awarded by the National Infantry Association with a certificate signed by Brig. Gen. Larry Q. Burris, Jr., the Chief of Infantry of the United States.

The Award is named after Saint Maurice, the leader of the Roman Theban Legion in the 3rd century. The Primicerius Level is the highest level of the Order of Saint Maurice and is for those who have made



Brig. Gen. Amos Parker, left, inducts Lt. Col. Kenneth Anthony into the National Infantry Association's Order of Saint Maurice during the Mississippi Rifles Chapter's Annual Infantry Symposium in Natchez, Mississippi, Sept. 18, 2021. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Christian Hayes)

a significant and lasting contribution to the entire infantry.

"It has been an honor to serve as long as I have," said Parker. "Not everyone does this or wants to do this. Something I have realized is that the tangible things that were most important to me when I joined are not as important to me now. The camaraderie and the support of my family, mentors, peers, and noncommissioned officers have helped me get to this point and are some of the most important benefits I received from service."

WALKER PROMOTED TO MAJOR GENERAL

Story by Staff Sgt. Connie Jones
JFH-MS Public Affairs Office

Mississippi National Guardsmen, family and friends came together to celebrate the promotion of Brig. Gen. Clint E. Walker, former director of joint staff of the MSNG, to the rank of major general at Joint Force Headquarters in Jackson, Mississippi, Nov. 8, 2021.

"I am truly humbled by this promotion," he said. "My goal is to positively represent the Mississippi National Guard at the Joint Staff and to provide input on joint issues important to our organization."

In his new role as Deputy Director for Logistics Operation, J4, Joint Staff, Walker will work at the Pentagon with a team of around 120 professionals in the integration of the Joint Logistics enterprise, where they work issues such as interagency support, joint logistics doctrine, supply chain resiliency, and joint warfighter concepts.

During the ceremony, Walker took an oath of office, given by Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles, adjutant general of Mississippi, as a symbol of his renewed commitment to the mission. He was then pinned his new rank by his wife, Brenda, and Maj. Gen. Boyles.

Walker has an extensive career in the military, beginning as a private nearly 37 years ago. He received his commission in 1988 and has since served in Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Spartan Shield. He also had the opportunity to command a unit as a company commander, field grade officer, and general officer. Walker's most recent command was of the 184th Sustainment Command from October 2017 to October 2020.

Walker, a lifelong logistician, said that this opportunity was possible because of the support of those he's served with.

"Our most important resource is our people," he said. "Throughout my career, I've strived to treat everyone with dignity and respect. I've learned something from each of the leaders that I have served with and have tried to use lessons learned and my experience to mentor officers and Soldiers to help them achieve their goals and to improve our organization."



Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles, the adjutant general of Mississippi, and Brenda Walker, wife of Clint E. Walker, the deputy director for logistics operation, J4, Joint Staff, pin Walker's rank, major general, during his promotion ceremony at Joint Force Headquarters in Jackson, Mississippi, Nov. 8, 2021. (U.S. National Guard photo by Mr. Justin Dixon)



Maj. Gen. Clint E. Walker, the deputy director for logistics operation, J4, Joint Staff, stands with his family following his promotion ceremony at Joint Force Headquarters in Jackson, Mississippi, Nov. 8, 2021. (U.S. National Guard photo by Mr. Justin Dixon)

155TH ABCT CHANGES COMMAND

Story by Capt. Micah Welch
155th Public Affairs Officer

Fresh off the heels of a training rotation at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, California, the 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team (ABCT), continues to move forward with new chapters and new changes; and with these new changes comes new leadership.

The brigade conducted a change of command ceremony on the Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center parade field, Oct. 9, 2021.

Col. Jason P. Nelson, the outgoing brigade commander, relinquished command to Col. Michael G. Dykes during the ceremony. Nelson has been in command since mid-2019.

A unique feature of the brigade is that it consists of units from not only the Mississippi Army National Guard but also the Kansas Army National Guard – Nelson is a member of the KSARNG while Dykes is a member of

the MSARNG.

Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles, the adjutant general of Mississippi and key speaker at the change of command, thanked Nelson for a job well done and welcomed Dykes into his new position. During the ceremony, Nelson was awarded the Legion of Merit for exceptionally meritorious service while assigned as the commander of the 155th ABCT.

“To the men and women of the 155th, no one could have asked for better individuals to serve with,” said Nelson. “I’ll miss it, definitely, but it’s nice to be able to pass off the brigade to such a quality officer.”

After the ceremonial passing of the brigade colors, Dykes spoke to his formation.

“Well, this brigade has always been home,” said Dykes. “I look forward to getting back with the Soldiers and preparing them to move forward with their future operations. The success of future missions depends on you.”



Col. Jason P. Nelson, outgoing commander of the 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team, receives the Legion of Merit medal during a change of command ceremony at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, Mississippi, Oct. 9, 2021. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Victoria Smith)



Col. Michael G. Dykes, incoming commander of 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team, accepts the brigade colors from Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles, adjutant general of Mississippi, during a change of command ceremony at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, Mississippi, Oct. 9, 2021. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Victoria Smith)



The 41st Army Band, Mississippi Army National Guard, performs during a change of command ceremony at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, Mississippi, Oct. 9, 2021. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Victoria Smith)



Capt. Heather Bennett, incoming commander of the 102d Public Affairs Detachment, holds the unit colors during a change of command ceremony at the Raymond Road Armory in Jackson, Mississippi, Nov. 6, 2021. Bennett comes to the unit following the end of her command of Headquarters Company, 184th Sustainment Command. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Victoria Smith)

102D MPAD CHANGE OF COMMAND & CHANGE OF RESPONSIBILITY

Story by Staff Sgt. Connie Jones
JFH-MS Public Affairs Office

The 102d Public Affairs Detachment (MPAD) conducted a change of command ceremony and a change of responsibility ceremony at the Raymond Road Armory in Jackson, Mississippi, Nov. 6, 2021.

“It has been an honor and privilege to serve for over three years as the commander of the 102d MPAD,” said Lt. Col. Andrew Adcock, outgoing commander. “Public affairs is a passion for me. I believe that the core public affairs mission of keeping the American people informed is of immeasurable value to the accomplishment of our diverse mission sets.”

Adcock relinquished command to Capt. Heather Bennett, former commander of Headquarters Company, 184th Sustainment Command.

“I am ecstatic about the opportunity to leave one position of servant leadership and into another,” Bennett said. “The ability to take care of Soldiers is why I became an officer. Nothing I do is for myself, it’s always for others.”

Bennett, a Georgia Military College graduate, looks forward to the role of commander with a smaller unit because of the opportunity to get to know her Soldiers

more personally and the unique ability to create team building experiences for unit cohesion. She is also looking forward to developing her public affairs skill set.

“I am beyond excited about the public affairs mission. We are a critical element to supporting the warfighter,” she said.

The unit also said their goodbyes to 1st Sgt. Bill Valentine, a member of the MPAD since 2007 and first sergeant for the past four.

“I’m very thankful for my time with the 102d MPAD. It will always be a big part of who I am,” Valentine said.

He feels the new first sergeant will bring a fresh perspective to the unit.

1st Sgt. Fred McCollum, incoming first sergeant, says that he embraces the responsibility that comes with the role and by working to learn about the unit while simultaneously taking care of his Soldiers, the unit will continue to reach their goals.

Bennett anticipates that their work together will be beneficial to the unit.

“I believe that by us both coming from two different very diverse backgrounds, we will be able to collaborate as a resourceful team,” she said. “With our outside connections, we’ll be able to continue the work of the previous command team: accomplishing the mission and taking the MPAD to the next level.”



1st Sgt. Frederick McCollum, incoming first sergeant of the 102d Public Affairs Detachment, receives the colors from Capt. Heather Bennett, commander of the 102d MPAD, during a change of responsibility ceremony at the Raymond Road Armory in Jackson, Mississippi, Nov. 6, 2021. Bennett handed McCollum the unit colors to signify the trust and confidence she has in him. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Victoria Smith)



Lt. Col. Andrew Adcock, outgoing commander of the 102d Public Affairs Detachment, receives the Meritorious Service Medal from Brig. Gen. Michael Cleveland, commander of the 66th Troop Command, for his outstanding leadership and service during a change of command ceremony at the Raymond Road Armory in Jackson, Mississippi, Nov. 6, 2021. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Victoria Smith)



1st Lt. Zachary Conn and 1st Lt. Austin Conn, Mississippi Medical Detachment, Mississippi Army National Guard, pose outside of the Raymond Road Armory in Jackson, Mississippi, Nov. 8, 2021. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Benjamin Tomlinson)

Story by Staff Sgt. Connie Jones
JFH-MS Public Affairs Office

Families help keep the morale high for those serving in the military, supporting their loved ones as they sacrifice much of their time for the nation. In some cases, there are service members who are fortunate enough to even serve alongside their family.

First Lieutenants Austin and Zachary Conn currently serve together as registered nurses with the Mississippi Medical Detachment, located on Raymond Road in Jackson. Some twins have separate interests but according to the Conns, they've generally had similar interests their entire lives.

"We've really done everything together.

Every grade school class was together. We played football and went to junior college together, and we were around the same friends, we're just super close," said Austin. "Whenever we committed to taking nursing as our career path on the civilian side, we were looking for a way to pay for that. So why not join the military together?"

In an effort to fund their education, the brothers, who enlisted in 2012, decided to commission through the ROTC program at the University of Southern Mississippi, which is ultimately how they decided to become officers, Zach said.

The 28-year-old twins decided to continue their education by attending the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB), studying to become Certified

Registered Nurse Anesthetists.

"We're currently full-time students at UAB, and we're in our clinical phase of our training so we're in the hospital at UMMC, four days a week," said Zach.

Although they are currently working on their degree together, there was a period where they were apart during their undergraduate program. That was a challenge.

"So I actually ended up failing a class our first semester of nursing school by like a half a point, and so the way the curriculum was set up, you couldn't catch back up," said Zach. "And so [Austin] was ahead of me the whole rest of the time. So that was shell shock, even though we lived together, that was just the first time we've actually had classes apart from each other.



1st Lt. Zachary Conn and 1st Lt. Austin Conn, Mississippi Medical Detachment, Mississippi Army National Guard, work in a lab at the Raymond Road Armory in Jackson, Mississippi, Nov. 6, 2021. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Benjamin Tomlinson)



1st Lt. Zachary Conn and 1st Lt. Austin Conn, Mississippi Medical Detachment, Mississippi Army National Guard, prepare a turkey for a family dinner in Pearl, Mississippi, Nov. 26, 2021. Grilling is one of the hobbies the twins share. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Connie Jones)

I mean, you spend 24/7 with somebody for 24 years of life, and then that changes, you know, it was definitely an adjustment, but it was cool because he started a job and I knew I was going to eventually be right beside him."

Now that they are both working and living in the same area again, they are able to enjoy some of their hobbies together when they are not busy with school and military assignments.

"We don't have a lot of free time in grad school. So we use Saturday evenings, especially during football season, for getting together with friends to be able to de-stress and kind of unwind a little bit," said Austin. "Outside of that, we like hunting, fishing, bowling, stuff like that. But in the real world, you know, you can't do those things every day."

The brothers have always looked up to each other, using the other as a sense of encouragement and motivation to continue improving their skills in life and the military. When asked to describe the other in one word, they were both quick to answer.

"I'm going to say solid," Austin said. "He's just always been there. Anytime during training, and one of us just got down or something like that, just hearing his voice or seeing him if we weren't in the same platoon or we weren't around each other at all, we'd meet each other at the water buffalo, you know, just by chance and just seeing him would give me strength. He's always been there."

Zach described his brother as a leader.

"I'm not married, so I've [had] the privilege of watching the relationship that he's cultivated with his wife and the relationship he cultivates with me and all of his friends, the selflessness that goes into building a family. He's still able to pick me up when I'm down and somebody I can lean on throughout grad school or training. He's definitely my role model," Zach said.

The Conns have set several traditions within their family and their loved ones are overjoyed with how much they have done.

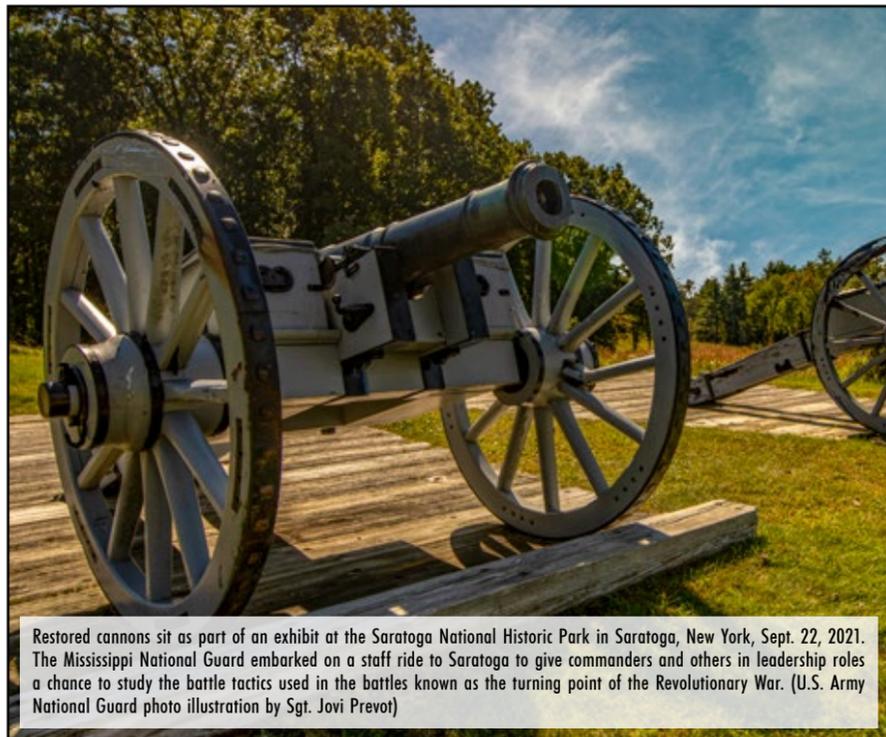
"We were some of the first to go to college and then some of the first to join the military and then become officers. Now being in grad school, they're super proud of us for all of our accomplishments."

The Conns are projected to graduate in April 2022 and, for now, plan to continue their dedicated service in the Mississippi National Guard.

MISSISSIPPI NATIONAL GUARD HOSTS SARATOGA STAFF RIDE



Glenn Williams, center, lead historian for the U.S. Army Center of Military History, Fort McNair, D.C., facilitates a group of Mississippi National Guard officers and noncommissioned officers during a staff ride in Saratoga, New York, Sept. 22, 2021. The Saratoga National Historic Park features key locations throughout the Battles of Saratoga, which provides a unique experience for visitors, including the MSNG staff. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Connie Jones)



Restored cannons sit as part of an exhibit at the Saratoga National Historic Park in Saratoga, New York, Sept. 22, 2021. The Mississippi National Guard embarked on a staff ride to Saratoga to give commanders and others in leadership roles a chance to study the battle tactics used in the battles known as the turning point of the Revolutionary War. (U.S. Army National Guard photo illustration by Sgt. Jovi Prevot)

Story by Staff Sgt. Connie Jones
JFH-MS Public Affairs Office

A staff ride is the study of a historical campaign or battle that breaks down the event into three phases - a preliminary study phase, a field study phase and an integration phase, which captures the lessons derived from the study and gives attendees a hands-on grasp of the event. Generally, attendees consist of officers, usually commanders, and enlisted personnel in senior leadership roles.

The Mississippi National Guard hosted a staff ride to cover the Battles of Saratoga at the Saratoga National Historic Park in New York, Sept. 20-22, 2021. The staff who attended the ride were led by military historians and were able to have conversations about battle strategies used at Saratoga and network with each other during the campaign.

“This is a staff ride put on by the Mississippi National Guard, both Army and Air Force are participating,” said Capt. Caleb Mabry, commander of Battery B, 1st Battalion, 204th Air Defense Artillery Regiment. “It is to bring leaders together, to get to know each other, across the different spectrums of Army and Air Guard, to learn key battlefields and discuss different techniques and how it applies to us today. It’s always good to look back on history.”

The Saratoga National Historic Park features key locations from throughout the various battles of Saratoga, providing a unique opportunity to learn about the events while seeing where they took place.

“I think it’s really interesting to get boots on ground and to see how, you know, we read about it in textbooks, ‘Oh they climbed this hill, they went down that hill, they went through the river’, and to me it’s really interesting to get hands-on experience and to actually see where the hills were,” said Capt. Molly Hartfield, Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center.

The next MSNG staff ride will cover Operation Overlord, also known as the Battle of Normandy and the D-Day Invasion, during spring 2022.



Col. Rick Weaver, commander of Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, Mississippi, awards Command Sgt. Maj. Gary Graham with the Legion of Merit Medal during a retirement ceremony at the Mississippi Armed Forces Museum, Camp Shelby, Nov. 19, 2021. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by 2nd Lt. Michael Needham)

CSM GARY GRAHAM RETIRES AFTER 43 YEARS OF SERVICE

Story by 2nd Lt. Michael Needham
Camp Shelby Public Affairs Office

After 43 years of service in the Mississippi Army National Guard, Command Sgt. Maj. Gary Graham was honored during his retirement ceremony at the Mississippi Armed Forces Museum, Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, Nov 19, 2021.

Col. Rick Weaver, commander of Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, awarded Graham with the Legion of Merit Medal, given for exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services and achievements, in a room filled with Graham’s peers, family and friends. Graham was also awarded the Mississippi Magnolia Cross. The distinguished award honors Mississippi National Guard members who demonstrate excellence in carrying out duties of particular responsibility or significance on behalf of Mississippi and its welfare, in such a manner as to set themselves apart from their peers.

“It’s been a true honor of a lifetime to be able to serve the state of Mississippi and our great country,” said Graham. “To be able to serve over twenty years as a command sergeant major and senior enlisted advisor in itself is a blessing from

God.”

Weaver expressed appreciation for Graham’s exceptional leadership, dedication to duty and outstanding technical and tactical expertise during the ceremony.

“To have the privilege of the guidance given to me from his 43 years of experience was essential in helping ensure that the best decisions were made for the team at Camp Shelby,” Weaver said.

Since 1986, Graham has worked full time for the MSNG in positions of increasing responsibility, ending as the Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center command sergeant major.

“My most rewarding and memorable times in the guard were on state active duty working to support the citizens of Mississippi in recovery operations in the aftermath of natural disasters,” Graham said. “Hurricane Katrina tested the men and women of not only the guard but also the state of Mississippi. Watching the young Soldiers mature and accomplish the mission at hand so our state could move forward, I am confident the young leaders in our organization today have the ability and leadership to face any challenges thrown their way.”

Graham held duty assignments at various organizations throughout the

state. He served as a light wheeled vehicle mechanic, squad leader, and the operations/detachment sergeant for the 298th Core Support Battalion in 1996. Graham was promoted to command sergeant major in 2001 while assigned to the 298th CSB in Philadelphia, Mississippi.

From December 2003 to August 2005, Graham deployed as command sergeant major of the 298th CSB to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom II. In August 2011 through August 2012, Graham served as the senior enlisted leader to Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe NATO in the Balkans.

“The greatest reward in my career was leading a battalion into combat operations,” Graham said.

Throughout his military career, Graham attended many military education schools, including the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy, National Defense Keystone Course at the National Defense University, and the NATO Senior Enlisted Leaders Course.

For a job well done, Graham has more than earned his retirement.

“Retirement is the opening of a new chapter in our lives,” said his wife, Julie. “I am looking forward to the time that we will be able to spend together with our daughter Layla.”



Air Force Special Warfare Tactical Air Control Party (TACP) *'Precision isn't optional'*

The Air Force sees the TACP Weapon System providing the multi-domain command & control, counter-land, precision strike, joint integration piece of any battlespace. TACPs are always on the cutting edge of 'Precision Strike'. TACPs bring the Air Force firepower to the ground forces in any theater of war. TACPs are most often embedded with Army infantry units and are the Joint Fires Experts who are tasked with eliminating ground and air threats. TACPs are considered one of the most valuable members of any combat team, utilizing advanced technologies and subject matter expertise in employing joint firepower. Air Force TACP integrate seamlessly with conventional and SOF teammates, regularly training together as an integrated joint unit. TACPs find, fix, track, target, and engage enemy forces in close proximity to friendly forces and often shoulder the responsibility of calling in precise 'Danger Close' airstrikes. Special Warfare TACPs are highly trained, highly regarded, and always respected throughout the entire DoD, providing the pivotal difference between success and defeat on the battlefield.

Skills Include:

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- Air/ground infiltration, surface movement, and air/ground exfiltration

Initial Requirements:

- Must score 49 in General Category of the ASVAB
- Must have normal hearing, color vision, and depth perception
- Must not have speech impediment
- Must be able to obtain a SECRET security clearance

Must be able to do in order:

1. Do 8 pull-ups in 2 minutes
2. Do 50 sit-ups in 2 minutes
3. Do 40 push-ups in 2 minutes
4. Run 1 1/2 miles in less than 10:20 minutes
5. Swim 25 meters under water twice
6. Swim 500 meters in less than 12:30 minutes

ADDITIONAL TRAINING

- Advanced SERE courses
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- Army Air Assault Course
- Advanced JTAC instructor course
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ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

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- Professional Military Educational Opportunities
- Credit towards Community College of the Air Force
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238th Air Support Operations Squadron (ASOS)



The 238th ASOS is located in Meridian, MS on Key Field Air National Guard Base. The 238th supports two Army Guard units, which include Heavy Armor and Armored Cavalry units with close air support and JTAC expertise.

The 238th ASOS provides the Department of Defense and partner nations with premier, worldwide deployable JTACs whose expertise is unmatched.

Training Timeline (21 Months)



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65TH ID VETERANS RECEIVE LEGION OF HONOR

Arthur M. Newell, a WWII veteran who served with the 65th Infantry Division, receives the The Légion d'Honneur presented by Vincent Hommeril, the Consul General of France, based in Atlanta, during a ceremony at Camp Shelby. The French government gives the Legion of Honor awards to both French and foreign nationals, based on a recipient's exemplary services rendered to France or to the causes supported by France. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by 2nd Lt. Michael Needham)



Norvin D. McClure, a WWII veteran who served with the 65th Infantry Division, receives the The Légion d'honneur presented by Vincent Hommeril, the Consul General of France, based in Atlanta, during a ceremony at Camp Shelby. The French government gives the Legion of Honor awards to both French and foreign nationals, based on a recipient's exemplary services rendered to France or to the causes supported by France. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by 2nd Lt. Michael Needham)



COL. SMITH ASSUMES COMMAND OF 186TH ARW



Col. Cynthia L. Smith assumes command of the 186th Air Refueling Wing from outgoing commander, Col. Edward H. Evans, during the change of command ceremony at Key Field Air National Guard Base, Meridian, Mississippi, Aug. 7, 2021. Smith will serve as the Wing's 21st commander. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Adam Vance)

Story by Master Sgt. Adam Vance
186th Air Refueling Wing,
Key Field ANG Base

The 186th Air Refueling Wing (ARW) welcomed a new commander in a change of command ceremony at Key Field Air National Guard Base, Meridian, Mississippi, Aug. 7, 2021.

Col. Cynthia L. Smith, who is the 21st commander of the unit, replaced Col. Edward H. Evans, who served as the commander since April 2017.

"It is an honor to serve as the commander of this outstanding Wing," said Smith. "This achievement in my career wouldn't have been possible without the support of my family, senior military leadership, and the men and women who proudly serve here. The 186th Air Refueling Wing has such rich history, and an outstanding record of dedicated service to the local community, the state of Mississippi, and to this country."

Smith is a KC-135R Stratotanker aircraft pilot with more than 3,200 flight hours, including more than 450 combat/combat support hours. In 2014, she became the 186th Operational Support Squadron commander. She assumed command of the 153rd Air Refueling Squadron in 2018. Smith served on multiple tours overseas in support of operations Deliberate Forge, Joint Endeavor, Deny Flight, Allied Force, Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom, Inherent Resolve, and Freedom's Sentinel. Prior to taking command of the 186th ARW, Smith served as the Director of

Operation of the Mississippi Air National Guard at Joint Force Headquarters in Jackson, Mississippi.

Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles, adjutant general of Mississippi, was the guest speaker of the event, and Maj. Gen. Billy M. Nabors, assistant adjutant general-Air, Mississippi National Guard, was the presiding official. The ceremony included the time-honored tradition of the guidon/flag exchange, symbolizing the transfer of the mantle of leadership.

"I look forward to serving the members of this wing to the best of my ability while ensuring we remain mission ready to better serve the Mississippi Air National Guard," Smith said.

The 186th Air Refueling Wing provides over 1,100 personnel and eight KC-135R aircraft to the Air Mobility Command for worldwide operations. The Wing also supports domestic counter-drug and emergency response missions as well as overseas combatant commander requirements with an RC-26B aircraft. Additional units at Key Field include the 238th Air Support Operations Squadron, the 248th Air Traffic Control Squadron, and the 186th Air Operations Group.



Command Sgt. Maj. Georgett Hall, command senior enlisted leader (CSEL) for the Wisconsin National Guard, participates in the sprint, drag, carry event of the Army Combat Fitness Test at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, Mississippi, Oct. 27, 2021. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Connie Jones)

Command senior enlisted leaders (CSEs) throughout the U.S. National Guard tour the Mississippi Armed Forces Museum at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, Oct. 27, 2021. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Connie Jones)

MSNG HOSTS CSEL TRAINING FORUM

Story by Staff Sgt. Connie Jones
JFH-MS Public Affairs Office

The 2021 Command Senior Enlisted Leader Training Forum was held at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, Mississippi, Oct. 25-29, 2021.

The conference featured the most senior enlisted National Guard leaders from across the 54 states and territories. During the four-day event, the leaders were able to connect, update the group on the progress of their respective states, tour the Mississippi Armed Forces Museum and explore the capabilities of Camp Shelby, said Senior Enlisted Advisor, Tony L. Whitehead, senior enlisted advisor to the chief of the National Guard Bureau.

"Sometimes we don't know those synergies and those capabilities that we have from one state to the next and during natural disasters and when emergencies arise, that is not the time to connect," said Whitehead. "We need to use this time to find out who we are, what the capabilities are from one state to the next and we need

to find out some of the things you can bring to the table that can help us get after taking care of our citizens, taking care of our communities and again, making us a stronger National Guard."

The leaders also had a chance to challenge themselves physically by taking the Army Combat Fitness Test (ACFT).

"Anytime we get together as senior enlisted leaders, we're thinking about one thing and that is the readiness of our Soldiers and Airmen. So what better way to do the physical fitness component, which makes you more mentally fit, to get out here and challenge yourself," said Sgt. Maj. John T. Raines, executive assistant to the Senior Enlisted Advisor.

Taking the ACFT was a way for the leaders to have a friendly competition while also working toward Total Force Fitness, which is a holistic concept for building and maintaining health, readiness and optimal performance, Raines said.

While he was still the command senior enlisted leader for the Mississippi National Guard, Raines applied for the conference to be held in the state to showcase the

resources available to the National Guard and all branches and components of the armed forces.

"I wanted to bring people here and show what our capabilities are. Show how professional our force is, how ready our force is, but also to show the capabilities that a state may not have... a place where they could come if they don't currently have those facilities," said Raines.

While the leaders were able to spend time in Mississippi and challenge one another, the conference provided an opportunity for the senior enlisted leaders to do what they do best – share ideas for caring for their Guardsmen.

"The energy that we've developed as a command senior enlisted leadership team is going to be a force multiplier as we go forward as a National Guard enlisted force. I am so proud of what they have done for their Soldiers, Airmen, and their families, but more importantly, I'm excited about the ideas that they have about how we can get after doing things in the future," Whitehead said.



NATIONAL GUARD CELEBRATES 385 YEARS

Senior leaders of the National Guard prepare to cut a cake in celebration of the National Guard's 385th birthday at the National Guard Association of the United States (NGAUS), Dec. 13, 2021. From left, Senior Enlisted Advisor (SEA) Tony L. Whitehead, SEA to the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, Lt. Gen. Marc H. Sasseville, Vice Chief, National Guard Bureau, Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles, the adjutant general of Mississippi and Chairman of the Board of Directors for NGAUS, Gen. Daniel R. Hokanson, Chief, National Guard Bureau, Lt. Gen. Michael A. Loh, Director, Air National Guard, and Brig. Gen. (ret.) J. Roy Robinson, President, NGAUS. (Courtesy Photo)

SUICIDE PREVENTION AND AWARENESS



RESOURCES

Command Chaplain Col. Terry Partin

601-558-2033 • terry.w.partin2.mil@army.mil

Military One Source

1-800-342-9647

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

1-800-273-8255, Press 1 for the Military Crisis Line

National Alliance on Mental Health

1-800-950-NAMI (6264) or text "NAMI" 741741



UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF ARMY BRIGADE COMBAT TEAMS



Soldiers assigned to Company A, 1st Battalion, 155th Infantry Regiment, 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team, Task Force Spartan, bound toward an objective during a rehearsal for a combined live-fire exercise near Alexandria, Egypt, Sept. 10, 2018. The 155th ABCT consistently trains to pursue better ways to address specific threats to regional security at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. James Lefty Larimer)

Article by Master Sgt. Beau Graham,
1st Battalion, 155th Infantry Regiment

"I'm not reenlisting because the 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team (ABCT) spends too much time in the field."

I have heard this statement and many similar for more than 20 years and generally accepted it until I was able to understand the driving factors behind the high operational tempo that Soldiers in the 155th ABCT live in.

Before we can understand our personal situations, we must first understand the importance and uniqueness of an ABCT.

The total Army consists of the Regular Army, National Guard and Army Reserves. The National Guard is often recognized as a strategic reserve and is only called upon in the case of national emergency or as a last resort in a global conflict. This ideology is misleading and frequently serves as the root cause for misunderstanding by Soldiers, their families and employers alike.

In the years following the Vietnam War, a shift began to distribute the burden of service across the three

components. Today, the National Guard is considered an operational reserve force and has greater resources, more training, higher readiness levels and is used on a continuous, rotational basis. For better or worse, the National Guard has changed as it now routinely provides capabilities to the Department of Defense and its combatant commanders.

Various elements of the operating force give the Army the greatest variety of capabilities compared to all other branches. These capabilities are spread across tactical units of Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs). Infantry Brigade Combat Teams (IBCTs) are smaller and much more flexible while Armored Brigade Combat Teams (ABCTs) have a larger footprint and require deliberate and planned movements. Stryker Brigade Combat Teams (SBCTs) provide unique capabilities to cover the gray area between IBCTs and ABCTs. BCTs serve as the foundation, joined with various attached enabling units, for tailor-made expeditionary forces to deploy.

The Army has 16 ABCTs, five of which are National Guard units. Each of the three ongoing deterrence missions requires one element to conduct the mission, one

mobilizing to rotate in and relieve the standing unit, and a recently returned group in a reset and equipment modernization period. This equals nine elements of ABCTs to be earmarked at any one time, with the remaining seven preparing to enter the mobilization window. This leaves little time to progress from the reset/modernization phase to the mobilization window, so it is understandable that the operational tempo of an ABCT is intense.

I hope this offers insight to the factors that drive the training and deployment cycles of ABCTs in the National Guard so that it can better be understood and therefore explained to family, friends, and employers outside our formation. While knowledge does not make hardships any easier, at least it may refute some of the misinformation that is so abundant amongst our ranks today. The nation depends on all 16 ABCTs and each ABCT depends on its Soldiers and their families to be the most critical link in the chain. Service to the 155th ABCT is not easy, but it is necessary to the nation, and its Soldiers should know their purpose and stand tall.

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Spc. John Herring, a military police assigned to the 114th Military Police Company, 112th Military Police Battalion, assesses the damage of the Kerner Swing Bridge in Jean Lafitte, Louisiana, Sept. 6, 2021. Herring is part of the Mississippi Army National Guard's Hurricane Ida response in Jefferson Parish, Louisiana led by the 113th Military Police Company, headquartered in Brandon, Mississippi. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Jovi Prevot)

