

SUMMER 2023

GUARD DETAIL

A CHRONICLE OF THE MISSISSIPPI ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD



100 YEARS OF AIR REFUELING 8 | CAMP KAMASSA 22

FEATURES



8

Mississippi's Century of Excellence

After 12 years of working on the concept of air-to-air refueling, the Key brothers of Meridian, Mississippi, maintained continuous flight for more than 52,000 miles over 27 days, cementing their name in history and launching aircraft effectiveness into the future.

The Guard Detail is the official magazine of the Mississippi National Guard. It is published three times a year with a circulation of approximately 13,250 copies and distributed online via the Mississippi National Guard web and Facebook pages. Opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Army, Air Force, Army National Guard, Air National Guard, or the Department of Defense.

Editorial content is edited, prepared and provided by the Office of Public Affairs, Joint Force Headquarters, Mississippi, State of Mississippi Military Department.

Unless otherwise indicated, all photographs and graphic devices are copyrighted to the State of Mississippi Military Department.

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:

U.S. Army Capt. Brennan Laird, Task Force Reaper communications officer, conducts a radio check before the beginning of maneuver training during Exercise Bright Star 2023 at Mohamed Naguib Military Base, Egypt. Bright Star 2023 is a multilateral U.S. Central Command exercise held with the Arab Republic of Egypt across air, land, and sea domains that promotes and enhances regional security and cooperation and improves interoperability in irregular warfare against hybrid threat scenarios. (U.S. Army photo by 1st Lt. Michael Needham)



12

Mission Complete for Mississippi Leader

Mississippi native Maj. Gen. John M. Rhodes closes out three years of command of the Virginia-based 29th Infantry Division during a change of command ceremony in August. Rhodes is continuing his out-of-state service working for the storied 18th Airborne Corps.



22

Camp-ing with Engineers

The DoD's Innovative Readiness Training (IRT) pairs units with construction projects for needed infrastructure nationwide. One Mississippi engineer unit spent the summer building hope, faith, and happiness from the ground up.



27

Sacrifice to Save a Life

Years have passed since one infantryman made a split-second decision that resulted in saving a life. Sgt. 1st Class Dustin Cooley and a friend never hesitated to take action when a neighbor and fellow Mississippian was in need, breaking down doors in the process.

Letter From THE EDITOR

2023: A SUMMER OF MILESTONES



"The strongest people are those who win battles we know nothing about."

~ Unknown

The United States military is a distinct model of lethality, precision, and unparalleled determination when battling against any enemy, both foreign and domestic. We are the blueprint for other partnership nations and the example of excellence in the profession of military arms. The summer of 2023 marks historic milestones for our armed forces and the volunteers who fill our ranks.

The All-Volunteer Force celebrates 50 years of service members dedicating their lives to our pursuit of freedom and liberty. In today's military, we take pride in the diversity of culture, backgrounds, and skill sets of our service members and we celebrate the families and friends who support them.

"I have watched over the decades as the U.S. Military has grown into the outstanding and incredibly professional fighting force that it is today. America's All-Volunteer force is the strongest military in human history. And the power of today's military is a testament to every American patriot who freely volunteers to keep our republic safe."

~ Defense Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III

The promise of an integrated U.S. Armed Forces initiated by President Truman in 1948 celebrates 75 years of unity since Truman signed two important documents, opening doors of diversity in our military, including the Women's Armed Services Integration Act, signed June 12, 1948, and an executive order abolishing segregation in the U.S. Armed Forces signed July 26, 1948.

The introduction of diversity including race, gender, religion, and national origin shattered the glass ceiling for equality in our military and our country. These changes set a new standard of military service allowing various degrees of talent and skill sets to further evolve our military strength, resiliency, and scope of work.

Members of the Mississippi National Guard continue to excel in exemplary service to our state and nation. I am constantly reminded of the superior dedication and unwavering patriotism expressed by our service members and their families living in every county of our state.

Each one of us has a voice to inspire, encourage, celebrate achievement, and stand with our brothers and sisters in the Mississippi National Guard. Our diversity is our strength. It allows us to use the resources and talents within our ranks to accomplish any mission placed before us.

Thank you, Mississippi National Guard Soldiers, Airmen, and families, for your devotion to duty and continued exemplary service supporting our great state and nation!

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



PUBLISHER
THE ADJUTANT
GENERAL
Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles

EDITOR

Lt. Col. Deidre D. Smith
Director of Public Affairs

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Mr. Daniel Szarek
Dep. Director of Public Affairs

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Mr. Joseph Cooley

STAFF

Capt. Kandi Murphy
2nd Lt. Desmond Jones
2nd Lt. Jarvis Mace
Staff Sgt. Shawn Keeton
Sgt. Madisone Hatten
Spc. Amber Milsap
Senior Airman Angelina Stokes

FOR COMMENTS OR SUGGESTIONS
PLEASE PHONE: 601 313 6349



VISIT US AT

ng.ms.gov
or the following Social
Network sites under
Mississippi National Guard





A SPECIAL THANK YOU FROM GOVERNOR TATE REEVES

The Mississippi National Guard is helping to lead and move our state forward. Through your unwavering dedication to the people of Mississippi, you continue to make our state stronger every single day. For that, we will always be grateful.

Mississippi is fortunate to have brave Guardsmen who stand ready to serve at a moment's notice. When Mississippi needs you most, you never hesitate to jump into action. Know that our entire state remains committed to supporting you, just as you have remained committed to supporting our entire state.

You and your families are an integral part of Mississippi, and we are lucky to have you here. On behalf of every Mississippian, thank you for serving and defending our great state.

We're proud of you.

Sincerely,
Governor Tate Reeves

Commander, 186th Air Refueling Wing,
Mississippi Air National Guard

COL. CINDY SMITH

My leadership philosophy is best summed up by a quote from Gen. Colin Powell. "*Leadership is about solving problems.*" It is the essence of a leader's purpose.

We face many challenges in our current threat environment. We deter these threats by changing our schemes of maneuver, force presentation, and the way we train to execute. We further deter threats by creating multi-capable Airmen focused on the overarching mission, and by constantly modernizing our aircraft.

One way we confront problems is maintaining readiness to execute a mobilization at a moment's notice. The mission of the 186th Air Refueling Wing is to "provide rapid global mobility and agile combat support to our state and nation," a feat accomplished with our 1,100 Airmen and eight KC-135R Stratotanker aircraft that stand ready for world-wide operations. We must spend every opportunity to train and be ready to execute.

Our vision is to be the "best Air Mobility unit, the standard by which others are measured." We set our bar extremely high and consistently perform in the top tier of tanker units in the Air National Guard. Key Field has twice been nominated for the prestigious Collier Award, second only to the International Space Station, and received the first-ever "outstanding" rating among all refueling units. We strive to be the very best and accept nothing less.

Over the past year, our tankers flew over 3,200 hours and offloaded more than 11.8 million pounds of fuel. The recently retired RC-26 aircraft also flew 700 hours supporting law enforcement agencies, emergency response support, and disaster relief operations. Notably, Airmen from the 186th deployed to areas across the globe supporting our nation's security.

I reflect on how Key Field played such a role in the pioneering days of air-to-air refueling. In 1935, Meridian natives, Al and Fred Key took off from a grass

runway on a historical endurance mission that required 438 contacts for air-to-air refueling, all utilizing a revolutionary "spill-free" valve designed by a local engineer, A.D. Hunter. After two unsuccessful attempts, the flight set the record for the longest unbroken conventional flight at over 27 days and the Key Brothers cemented Meridian's place in the history of aerial refueling.

This past summer, we were a participant in Operation Centennial Contact, a celebration of 100 years of aerial refueling. This world-wide event partnered one of our KC-135 tankers flying in formation with other airframes across a three-state area. The low-altitude flyovers showcased the capabilities and prestige of the tanker mission and served to publicly reinforce our shared security commitments with Allies and partners.

The U.S. Air Force has begun the process of selecting the next two Air National Guard bases to house the KC-46 Pegasus. The Pegasus is the next generation aerial refueling platform, which will eventually replace the KC-135s. Working together with our community and political partners, this new aircraft would sustain the air-to-air refueling mission at Key Field for the foreseeable future.

Rest assured that we will rise to meet all future challenges facing our nation and state. In order to accomplish this mandate, our Airmen should look to the Key brothers for inspiration. Fred and Al Key encountered many problems, found novel solutions to problems, and adapted to a changing environment to accomplish something never before thought possible. I believe the initiative and drive of our predecessors are in our unit's DNA. We can and will overcome all adversaries to keep our fellow Americans safe.

Col. Cindy Smith
Commander,
186th Air Refueling Wing
Mississippi Air National Guard



SNAPSHOTS



A KC-135R Stratotanker from the 186th Air Refueling Wing, Meridian, Mississippi, flies in formation with an F-15 fighter from the 159th Fighter Wing, New Orleans, Louisiana, over Louisiana State University's Tiger Stadium, June 27, 2023, during Operation Centennial Contact, a celebration of 100 years of military aerial refueling. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Airman Dakota Strait).



**SCAN
HERE**





100 YEARS OF AERIAL REFUELING

A C-17 Globemaster III aircraft belonging to the 172nd Airlift Wing, Mississippi Air National Guard, based in Flowood, Mississippi, is viewed through the boom operator's window of a KC-135R Stratotanker belonging to the 186th Air Refueling Wing, Mississippi Air National Guard, based in Meridian, Mississippi, during Operation Centennial Contact, June 27, 2023. The two Mississippi aircraft partnered up with aircraft from Louisiana and Arkansas as they performed flyovers of major landmarks in each of the three states during a celebration of 100 years of military aerial refueling. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Airman Dakota Strait)

Story by Maj. Dusty Culpepper, 186th ARW Public Affairs

If you happened to be in the states of Mississippi, Arkansas, or Louisiana on June 27, 2023, while being treated to a good shot of humidity and thunderstorms, you may have witnessed a historic aviation event – Operation Centennial Contact.

A KC-135R Stratotanker from the 186th Air Refueling Wing (ARW), Key Field Air National Guard Base, alongside other tankers from across the globe, participated in low-altitude flyovers of major landmarks in celebration of 100 years of aerial in-flight refueling excellence. With nearly 90 years of legendary air-to-air refueling history tied to Key Field, the unit remains committed to providing agile support to our state and nation.

“Meridian native A.D. Hunter, with only a ninth-grade education, was the mechanical genius behind the design of a spill-free fueling valve that was used for 438 air refueling contacts made during the Key brothers historic 27-day endurance flight in 1935,” said Col. Cindy Smith, commander of the

186th ARW.

A.D. Hunter’s fuel valve design concept, later adopted by the U.S. Army Air Corps – predecessor of the U.S. Air Force, is still in use today with minor modifications on the present-day KC-135R Stratotanker platform.

The flyovers for the Mississippi leg of the celebration started at Key Field and included a KC-135 from the 186th ARW and a C-17 Globemaster from the Flowood, Mississippi-based 172nd Airlift Wing. The historic landmarks included in the Mississippi flyovers were the Threefoot Hotel in Meridian, a flight down the Mississippi Gulf Coast, the Vidalia Bridge in Natchez, the Vicksburg National Military Park, and a pass over the State Capitol building in Jackson.

In Arkansas, the tanker joined C-130s from the 19th Airlift Wing of Little Rock and performed flyovers of the Razorback Stadium in Fayetteville, the Fort Smith National Historic Site, and the State Capitol building in Little Rock.

The KC-135 then moved to Louisiana where F-15s from the 159th Fighter Wing of New Orleans joined in as

they flew over USS Kidd in Baton Rouge, the Superdome in New Orleans, and Jackson Square in the French Quarter, before returning to Meridian.

“It was amazing to be a part of history,” said Maj. Jacquelyn Aycock, KC-135R pilot from the 186th ARW. “To be a part of what the Air Force, specifically the Air Mobility Command, was doing across the globe is very special.”

With 100 years of experience, today’s U.S. Air Force air refueling capabilities deliver unrivaled rapid global reach for U.S. forces, our allies and partners through the mobility fleet of KC-46, KC-135, and KC-10 tankers. Aerial refueling serves as a force multiplier, increasing the speed, range, lethality, flexibility and versatility of combat aircraft. Tankers also carry cargo and passengers, perform aeromedical evacuations, and enable strategic deterrence for the United States.

“Air refueling propels our nation’s air power across the skies, unleashing its full potential,” said Gen. Mike Minihan, commander of U.S. Air Force Air Mobility Command. “It connects our strategic vision with operational reality, ensuring we can reach any corner of the globe with unwavering speed and precision.”

The critical capability of air-to-air refueling is essential for the Department of Defense’s most vital missions. To remain relevant in the current and future security environments, the Air Force is in the process of recapitalizing its tanker fleet with the ongoing acquisition of the KC-46A and accelerating its pursuit of the next-generation air refueling system.

“Air refueling embodies our resolve to defend freedom and project power, leaving an indelible mark on aviation history,” said Minihan. “As we embark on the next 100 years of air refueling, we will continue to strengthen our air mobility excellence.”



Maj. Jacquelyn Aycock, KC-135R Stratotanker pilot from the 186th Air Refueling Wing, Meridian, Mississippi, waves from the cockpit of a KC-135 prior to the Operation Centennial Contact flyover mission, June 27, 2023. The flyover mission was in celebration of 100 years of military aerial refueling and included major landmarks in Mississippi, Arkansas, and Louisiana. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Airman Dakota Strait)



The flight crew for Operation Centennial Contact pictured left to right are Maj. Jacquelyn Aycock, Lt. Col. James Duncan, Lt. Col. Jason Putman, Senior Master Sgt. Joel Jones, Master Sgt. Tim Garrison. The crew participated in the 100-year celebration of military air-to-air refueling by flying in formation over major landmarks with other military aircraft across a three-state area. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Airman Dakota Strait)

TASK FORCE RIFLES MOBILIZES TO FORT BLISS IN PREPARATION FOR DEPLOYMENT IN SOUTHWEST ASIA

Story by 1st Lt. Michael Needham,
Task Force Rifles Public Affairs Officer

More than 700 soldiers with the Mississippi Army National Guard's 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team were honored during a deployment ceremony at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center this past summer. Operating under the command of the 40th Infantry Division, these Mississippi Guardsmen will be known as Task Force (TF) Rifles for their upcoming mission in the Middle East in support of Operation Spartan Shield and U.S. Central Command's mission of increasing regional security and stability.

"These soldiers are professionals that love their country, and believe in the American values and what our country stands for, which is freedom," said Lt. Col. Frank Querns, the commander of Task Force Rifles. "Over the past eight months, these citizen soldiers have trained hard and are ready and prepared for this mission. It is a true testament to their willingness to sacrifice, to defend, and protect the American way from tyranny and to ensure our nation's freedom."

While performing mobilization training at Fort Bliss, Texas, TF Rifles received additional soldiers from the California, Arkansas, and Missouri National Guard. The two additional infantry companies further enhance lethality and provide additional skill sets to Task Force Rifles.

"The diversity in our formation is the keystone to the strength of the National Guard. This formation of citizen soldiers is made of carpenters, cops, accountants, mechanics, truck drivers, and teachers from across every culture, color, and background," said Capt. Garrett Miller, commander of Company A, 1st Battalion, 153rd Infantry Regiment, Arkansas Army National Guard. "We're looking forward to building partnerships with our brothers and sisters in arms across state lines."

After a month of training at Fort Bliss, the soldiers from TF Rifles received and completed their culminating training exercise (CTE), a dynamic evaluation comprised of various mission simulations and soldier readiness tasks guided by First Army's Observer - Coach/Trainers (OC/Ts).

"The soldiers and leaders in our company, as a whole, are very young in experience. We came together in the month of February for pre-mobilization training



Lt. Col. Frank Querns, commander 1st Battalion, 155th Infantry Regiment, address the crowd after uncasing the unit colors during a transfer of authority ceremony at Camp Buehring, Kuwait. (U.S. Army photo by 1st Lt. Michael Needham)

at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center," said 1st Sgt. John Rotner, first sergeant for Company C, 1st Battalion, 160th Infantry Regiment. "In that short six weeks from Camp Shelby to Fort Bliss... our young Non-commissioned Officers received the training they needed to complete this mission and then some."

The training completed will prepare soldiers to maintain readiness across the formation while achieving personal and professional goals.

"Our goal for Task Force Rifles is to establish and build partnerships as well as increase the readiness and experience in our formation," said Querns. "Over the next few months, we will be conducting multinational and joint training exercises throughout the region, strengthening the U.S. Military interoperability and building unit readiness."

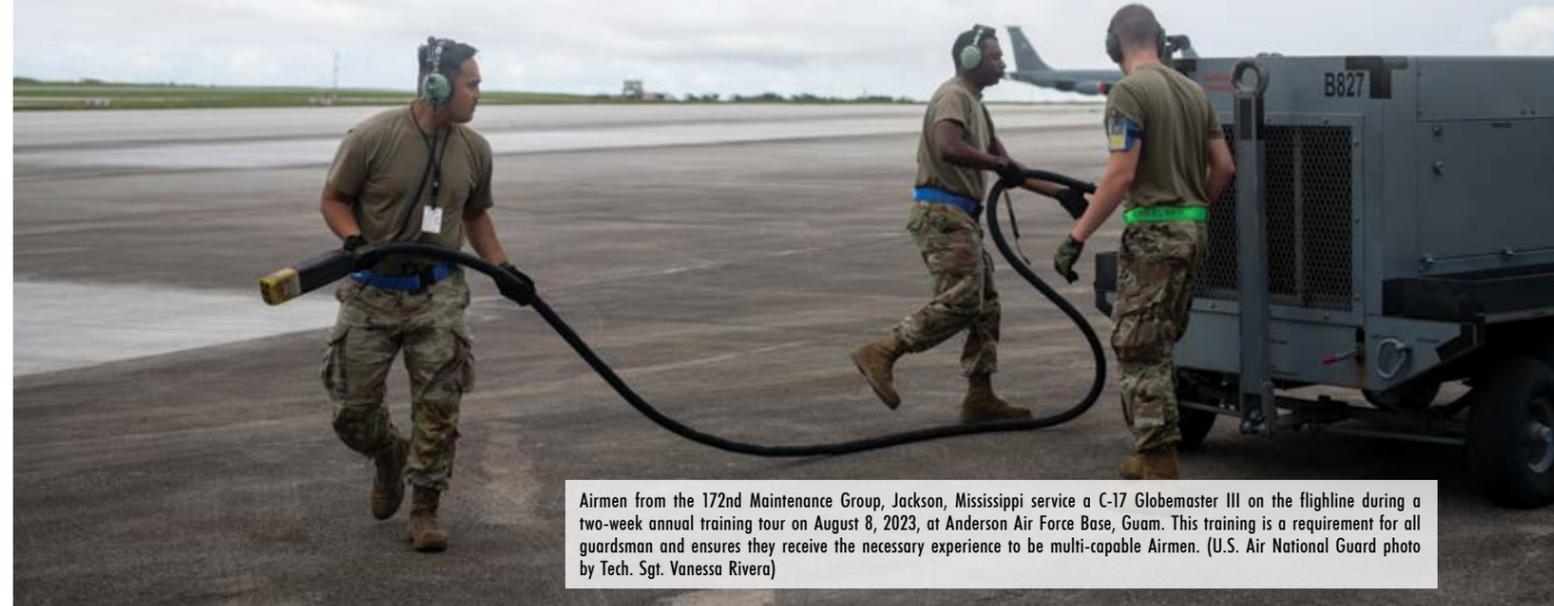
The experience gained by the soldiers of

TF Rifles is more than just warfighting skills, they will have the opportunity to grow both personally and professionally. For many soldiers in the task force, this is an opportunity to gain skills needed both in the military and in the civilian workforce.

Career advancement opportunities are available for soldiers to take certification courses advancing their military and civilian careers. Other soldiers will have the chance to attend professional military education also known as PME schools such as the air assault course or pre-ranger course.

"Soldiers will have the opportunity to cross-train in their military jobs and travel to foreign countries building partnerships with other military professionals to broaden their experience and knowledge during this deployment," TF Rifles leadership explained.

172ND MAINTENANCE GROUP IN GUAM



Airmen from the 172nd Maintenance Group, Jackson, Mississippi service a C-17 Globemaster III on the flightline during a two-week annual training tour on August 8, 2023, at Anderson Air Force Base, Guam. This training is a requirement for all guardsman and ensures they receive the necessary experience to be multi-capable Airmen. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Vanessa Rivera)

Story by Tech. Sgt. Vanessa Rivera
172nd Airlift Wing Public Affairs Office

Thirty-three National Guard Airmen from the 172nd Maintenance Group (MXG), 172nd Airlift Wing, Flowood, Mississippi, completed their annual training during a two-week mission to Anderson Air Force Base (AFB), Guam.

Airmen from six career fields across the Maintenance Group trained in servicing, launching, and receiving C-17 Globemaster III aircraft and other enroute aircraft alongside Airmen from the 734th Air Mobility Squadron (AMS), an active-duty tenant unit of the 36th Wing at Anderson AFB.

2nd Lt. Barry Bradshaw, maintenance operations officer for the 172nd MXG, led this training mission and spoke about his plan for the trip.

"We're going to be training specifically on C-17 aircraft," he said. "But we're also going to have an opportunity to do some minor maintenance on other airframes."

Bradshaw also spoke about his goals for the tour, and how he hoped the maintainers from the 172nd MXG would benefit from working alongside maintainers from the 734th AMS.

"We're seeing how an active-duty aircraft maintenance unit operates," said Bradshaw. "We don't have the same structure as an aircraft maintenance



Airman 1st Class Kendall Reed from the 172nd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, Jackson, Mississippi marshals a C-17 Globemaster III onto the runway during a two-week annual training tour on August 8, 2023, at Anderson Air Force Base, Guam. This training is a requirement for all guardsman and ensures they receive the necessary experience to be multi-capable Airmen. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Vanessa Rivera)

unit, so our folks have the opportunity to see how things work here, experience this type of structure, and gain critical experience."

With Anderson AFB located 7,521 miles away from 172nd Airlift Wing hangars, Bradshaw stated how this annual training mission gave Airmen a small look into some of the challenges that they may face during a deployment, including adjusting to a different time zone and acclimating to the tropical climate.

"Our maintainers benefited by acquiring and practicing skills that

will be used if we're deployed to the Pacific theater. When deployed, all maintainers are crew chiefs," said Senior Master Sgt. Angel Padilla, production superintendent for the 172nd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron. "Most of the experience gained was training our specialists in crew chief tasks, which they normally don't perform at home station."

Bradshaw illustrated how his goal is to cultivate an environment that fully embraces the well-rounded, total Airmen concept within his unit.

"One of the things we want to have moving forward is multi-capable Airmen," said Bradshaw. "So, what this trip is going to give them is an understanding of different aircraft and how other units operate, as well as the confidence to go out and help those units in a time of need."

On the topic of moving forward, Padilla discussed future mission sets as the current missions change from across the Atlantic, to locations beyond the nation's west coast.

"The Pacific theater is shaping up to be the military's next focus point," said Padilla. "It's extremely important for us to be trained, prepared to answer our nation's call and hit the ground running if we are called."

MISSISSIPPI LEADER RELINQUISHES COMMAND OF THE 29TH INFANTRY DIVISION



Maj. Gen. John M. Rhodes (right), outgoing commander of the 29th Infantry Division, salutes Maj. Gen. James W. Ring, the adjutant general of Virginia, after receiving the Virginia National Guard Legion of Merit for exemplary service while leading the storied division for nearly three years. The award presentation followed the change of command ceremony where Rhodes relinquished command to Brig. Gen. Joseph DiNonno at the 29th ID headquarters on Fort Belvoir, Virginia, Aug. 5, 2023. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Lt. Col. Deidre D. Smith)

Maj. Gen. John M. Rhodes (right), the outgoing commander of the 29th Infantry Division, passes the unit colors to Maj. Gen. James W. Ring, the adjutant general of Virginia, signifying his transfer of authority during a change of command ceremony at the unit's headquarters on Fort Belvoir, Virginia, Aug. 5, 2023. After nearly three years of leading the storied division, Rhodes transferred command to Brig. Gen. Joseph DiNonno, the unit's deputy commanding general for operations since September 2020. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Lt. Col. Deidre D. Smith)

Story by Lt. Col. Deidre D. Smith, MSNG Director of Public Affairs

Maj. Gen. John M. Rhodes, a native of Corinth, Mississippi, relinquished command of the 29th Infantry Division to incoming commander Brig. Gen. Joseph A. DiNonno at the 29th ID headquarters in Ft. Belvoir, Virginia, Aug. 5, 2023. Maj. Gen. James W. Ring, the adjutant general of Virginia, hosted the change of command ceremony.

Rhodes had a successful tour as commander leading the 29th ID through a federal active-duty mobilization in support of Operation Spartan Shield. His efforts prepared the division for potential conflict as the Army shifts focus from using modular brigade combat teams in counterinsurgency operations to division-centric operations supporting large-scale combat missions.

Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles, the adjutant general of Mississippi, knew that Rhodes was the perfect selection for the job when he took command of

the division in October 2020.

"Maj. Gen. Rhodes exemplifies everything a National Guard soldier or airmen represents," said Boyles. "As a former 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team commander, John possessed the talent and unique skills to compete at the national level for a National Guard Maneuver Division position. He was selected to serve on the 29th Division Staff and subsequently serve as the 29th Division Commander."

Rhodes' next duty assignment is as the special assistant to the Director of the Army National Guard for the 18th Airborne Corps, beginning Sept. 1, 2023. Reflecting on his time as commander of the 29th ID, Rhodes said he's proud to have been a part of such a storied division.

"First, I am forever grateful to the dedicated Citizen-Soldiers and families of the 29th Infantry Division. The Blue and Gray patch worn on their left shoulders reflect the history and tradition of the 29th Infantry. It is a

true honor to be a 29er and to have served as their commanding general for three years," said Rhodes.

Rhodes expressed his gratitude to Boyles and many others who supported him and opened opportunities for broadening assignments that stretch outside of Mississippi's direct area of responsibility.

"I thank Maj. Gen. Boyles for his enduring support and encouragement during my five years of service with the 29th Infantry Division. I also want to thank Maj. Gen. Tim Williams, the former adjutant general of the Virginia National Guard and Maj. Gen. John Epperly, the former commanding general of the 29th Infantry Division," said Rhodes. "Their commitment to the Army National Guard's division alignment and talent management initiatives offered me the opportunity to serve as the deputy commanding general for two years before being selected as the 29th Infantry Division's commanding general before our deployment in support of Operations

Spartan Shield, serving [with] the U.S. Army Central Command, Task Force Spartan from July 2021- March 2022."

Rhodes discussed his memorable moments as the 29th Infantry Division commander.

"As Task Force Spartan, the 29th played a vital role in the evacuation of at-risk Afghans from Afghanistan as part of Operation Allies Refuge. In addition, the 29th established lasting relationships with our partner nations and greatly enhanced the region's combat capabilities through multi-national training exercises and conferences," he said.

The Army National Guard has implemented a division alignment concept under the direction of Lt. Gen. Jon Jensen, the 22nd director of the Army National Guard and Gen. Daniel R. Hokanson, the 29th Chief of the National Guard Bureau. The concept has proven effective in preparing units for deployments and training center rotations and is considered a best practice to fill key positions in a division's footprint and

offer Guardsmen career opportunities outside of their assigned state.

"With the Army National Guard's implementation of the division alignment, the 29th ID expanded across multiple states requiring agreements from all of the adjutant generals from Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. We established a working relationship and solved issues to enhance the division's overall combat readiness," said Rhodes.

In most circumstances, it is a unique opportunity for a National Guard soldier to command at the Division level for another state.

"His service reflects that our Mississippi Guardsmen are some of the best, most talented Guardsmen in the nation," said Boyles. "And that our experience here prepares us for opportunities in Mississippi, but also across the nation; wherever that duty calls."

"MAJ. GEN. RHODES EXEMPLIFIES EVERYTHING A NATIONAL GUARD SOLDIER OR AIRMEN REPRESENTS,"
- MAJ. GEN. JANSON D. BOYLES THE ADJUTANT GENERAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI NATIONAL GUARD



Special Operations Detachment-South of the Mississippi National Guard led the Operation PANAMAX effort with their Special Operations Command-South counterparts. SOD-S fully integrated a multi-national staff from 20 different countries and successfully supported the operations process with their Joint, International, Inter-Agency and Multi-National partners. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Maj. Daymian Hale)

SOD-SOUTH

OPERATION PANAMAX 2022

Story by Lt. Col. Michael Mailloux,
Special Operations Detachment-South
Plans Officer

One way the Mississippi National Guard is addressing strategic challenges in the global environment is through its unique capabilities alongside like-minded international partners. To support the state in that mission, Mississippi National Guard Special Operations Forces (SOF) bring specialized capabilities for international engagement. Special Operations Detachment-South (SOD-S), a component of the U.S. Special

Operations Command (SOCOM), is a unique Task Force-level command that is organized to lead special operations anywhere in the world with an operational and training emphasis on Central and South America.

SOD-S led the execution of PANAMAX 2022 at Homestead Air Reserve Base in Homestead, Florida, Aug. 1-12, 2022. PANAMAX is an annual U.S. Southern Command multinational exercise that brings together the Joint, Inter-agency, Inter-Governmental, Multi-National (JIIM) community to plan, prepare, rehearse, and exercise

support activities to guarantee the security of the Panama Canal. The first PANAMAX exercise began in 2003 to solidify regional support for the defense of the key shipping channel, which is critically important to global shipping, commerce and U.S. security.

PANAMAX '22 enhanced regional interoperability, reinforced regional security ties and refined combined campaign planning with coalition partners through the sharing of practices and battle staff procedures. The exercise was an opportunity for SOD-S to test its training and operational focus of



Special Operations Forces (SOF) personnel from more than 20 countries participated in Operation PANAMAX 22 where members of the Special Operations Detachment-South, Mississippi National Guard, led the effort and fully integrated a multi-national staff, successfully supporting the SOF operations process in the Central and South America areas of responsibility. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Maj. Daymian Hale)

battle staff management and execution for global contingencies, learn from partners, and mentor allies on key skills. The regional expertise and cross-cultural skills SOD-S brings deepens relationships, develops trust, enhances mutual understanding and exposes shared values that serve as the foundation for enduring partnerships.

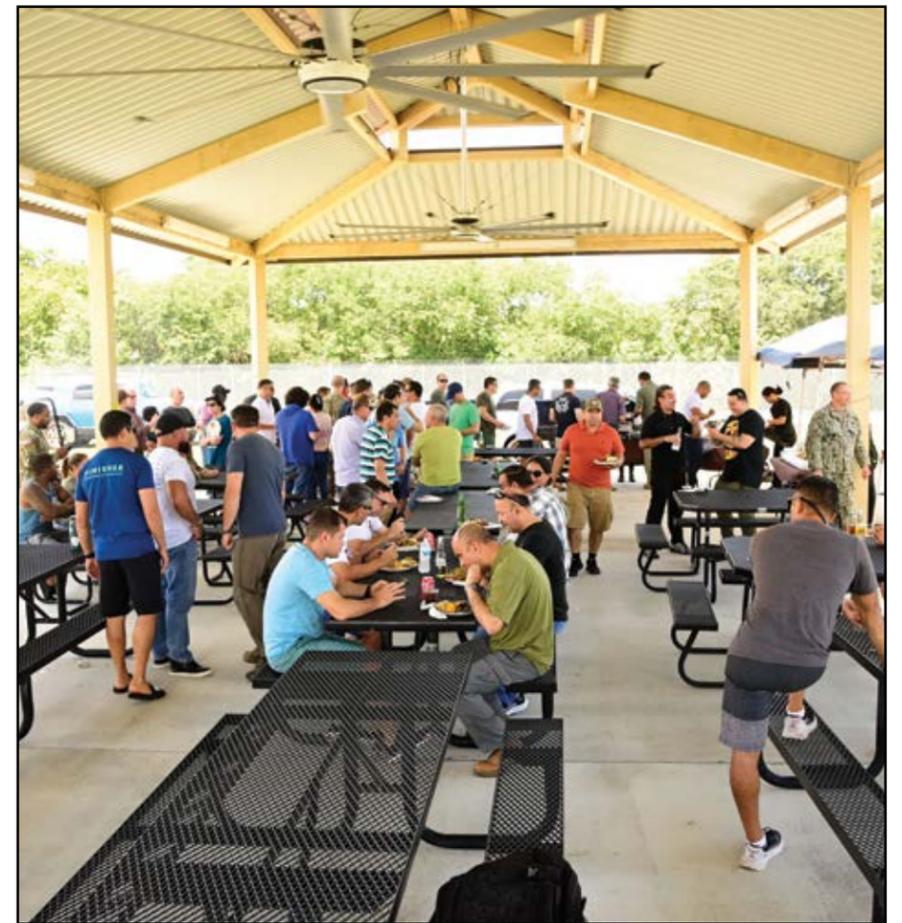
SOD-South played a key role in SOCOM's mission to organize, plan and execute combined special operations throughout the approximately 40-country task force. During the exercise, the command was led by a Peruvian Special Operations Senior Officer and an Argentine Chief of Staff, with a headquarters composed of officers from several Central and South American countries, the U.S. and Spain.

SOD-S personnel served in positions from Component Deputy Commander and Senior Enlisted Advisor to liaison officers with other component commands and every staff section in between, including logistics and sustainment, intel, operations, and information operations. SOD-S personnel were spread between the Theater Special Operations Command in Homestead, Florida, the Land Component Command at U.S. Army South, Fort Sam Houston, Texas, and the Air Component Command at Davis Monthan Air Force Base in Arizona. Army Gen. Laura J. Richardson, commander of U.S. Southern Command, joined by the Peruvian Component Commander and Marine Brig. Gen. Peter D. Huntley, commander of Special Operations Command – South visited the command headquarters for a mission brief and to learn about the capabilities of the multi-national force.

Multinational exercises like Operation PANAMAX provide outstanding opportunities for Mississippi to highlight its capability for global engagement. The state's capabilities were on display at the Joint Staff level and reinforced confidence in leadership at the Theater Special Operations Command. Through value-added international partnerships and integrated participation with warfighting combatant commanders, Mississippi stays engaged in the competitive strategic environment, relevant in global competition and ready for next-generation challenges.



A Peruvian Navy Captain (O-6) briefs the Combined Forces Special Operations Component Command, U.S. Southern Command, and Special Operations Command-South commanders on day five of the Operation PANAMAX 22 exercise to show the coalition's progress and understanding of the threat's capabilities. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Maj. Daymian Hale)



Operation PANAMAX participants share important time bonding after long days in the tactical operations center and were able to have a traditional Argentinian BBQ to build esprit de corps. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Maj. Daymian Hale)



LEADER DEVELOPMENT IN ACTION



JB McBride (center), a retired field artillery officer, tells the story of his time with the 101st Airborne Division during the Vietnam War in the early 1970s to members of the 2-114th Field Artillery Regiment, Mississippi Army National Guard. McBride visited the 2-114th FA during a leader development day as part of the unit's annual training in June 2023. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Lt. Col. Dennis Bittle)

JB McBride, a retired field artillery officer and member of the 101st Airborne Division during combat operations in Vietnam, visits with howitzer crews on the "gunline" during the 2-114th Field Artillery Regiment's annual training in June 2023. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Lt. Col. Dennis Bittle)

Story by Lt. Col. Dennis R. Bittle, Commander, 2-114th Field Artillery

Great organizations grow great leaders through all-encompassing leader development plans. The 2nd Battalion, 114th Field Artillery Regiment (FAR) is one of those great organizations and has a proven track record of producing outstanding leaders.

One way our organization sets conditions for leader development is through what Field Manual 6-22, Developing Leaders, calls "enhanced learning opportunities." These opportunities include mentoring, training, reflection, and study.

The 2-114th FAR recently completed its annual training for 2023, which included a live-fire exercise and crew certifications on the M109A6 Paladin self-propelled howitzer. The live-fire exercise provided a challenging event that allowed soldiers and leaders to hone their skills. During the training event, the Dragon Battalion also incorporated a day of Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) and Officer Leader Development that provided the mentoring and

reflection portions of the enhanced learning model described above.

Battery and section leaders hosted JB McBride, an Army veteran and retired Field Artillery Officer, who spent several months conducting low-level reconnaissance missions for the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) during the Vietnam War in the early 1970's. He shared stories of his time in the conflict with the NCOs and officers – stories of spotting enemy locations and marking targets for Cobra gunships. He also shared his philosophy on leadership and dedication to the unit, paralleling his lessons with the Army Values. McBride visited several of the battalion's crews, sharing lessons, answering questions, and observing the live-fire exercise.

The battalion was also joined by retired Sgt. Maj. Kenny Joiner, a former Operations NCO and Fire Direction NCO for the 2-114th FAR, who deployed in support of Operation Desert Storm and Operation Iraqi Freedom. Reflecting on his experiences both in combat and training, Joiner discussed the NCO's role and taking ownership of their crew and equipment.

He drew from lessons observed on topics of how to motivate soldiers through challenging and rewarding training, bettering the organization, and developing soldiers into leaders.

Both visitors received battalion coins as a show of appreciation.

The Army tells us that there is "no more important task ... than developing its people to lead others to defeat any enemy, anywhere." In fact, the Army intends for its leaders to be challenged through training opportunities that enhance learning and that purposeful learning occurs when leaders are compelled to practice mastery of their craft. The 2-114th Field Artillery Regiment encourages leader development at every level, and solid leaders are a scarcity that are more valuable now than ever.

If you are interested in becoming a member of the Dragon Battalion and enhancing your leadership skills, accept the challenge and call the 2-114th FAR staff at (662) 323-5922.

Steel Rain!



Retired Sgt. Maj. Kenny Joiner, a former operations NCO and fire direction NCO for the 2-114th Field Artillery Regiment, Mississippi Army National Guard, discusses fire-mission processing with Staff Sgt. Christopher Carter, a training NCO with the 2-114th FA, at a leader development day during the unit's annual training in June 2023. Joiner visited the unit to provide leadership guidance and discuss the NCO's role in conducting successful training that translates to wins in combat. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Lt. Col. Dennis Bittle)

"HE DREW FROM LESSONS OBSERVED ON TOPICS OF HOW TO MOTIVATE SOLDIERS THROUGH CHALLENGING AND REWARDING TRAINING, BETTERING THE ORGANIZATION, AND DEVELOPING SOLDIERS INTO LEADERS."



172ND AIRLIFT WING CHAPLAIN RECEIVES DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

Maj. R. Caleb Clark, deputy chaplain with the 172nd Airlift Wing in Jackson, Mississippi, performs a baptism while deployed as the deputy wing chaplain at Prince Sultan Air Base, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Clark received the MCA Distinguished Service Award this year which recognizes the excellency of chaplains across the Department of Defense within ministries of active duty and reserve units across the Army, Air Force and Navy. (Courtesy Photo)

Story by Airman 1st Class Sharda McAffee, 172nd Airlift Wing Public Affairs

Maj. R. Caleb Clark, deputy chaplain with the 172nd Airlift Wing in Flowood, Mississippi, received the Military Chaplains Association (MCA) Distinguished Service Award for the U.S. Air National Guard, July 28, 2023.

The MCA Distinguished Service Award is presented each year at the MCA National Institute Conference to recognize the excellence of top chaplains across the Department of Defense, and within ministries of active duty and reserve units across the Army, Air Force, and Navy.

“I am honored to be this year’s Air Guard representative,” said Clark. “I know many excellent chaplains in our service, and to be named among them brings me great satisfaction in my work.”

The 172nd AW chaplain shares Clark’s sentiment of excellence across the Air Force and knows just how valuable Air Guard chaplains are to the Airmen and families of the 172nd.

“Chaplain Clark is full of joy,” said Lt. Col. Seth Still, 172nd AW Chaplain. “He cheers people up and brings smiles to people’s faces. He’s made a huge impact and brings great value to our base, especially having a full-time chaplain for Airmen here at

the 172nd Airlift Wing.”

The nomination by Chaplain (Col.) Leah Boling, director of the Air National Guard Chaplain Corps, was based on opportunities of service at Clark’s home base and as the Deputy Wing Chaplain at Prince Sultan Air Base in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

“We had an excellent team (at Prince Sultan Air Base), and I had a great active-duty partner in Religious Affairs, Staff Sgt. Lexi Macanas, who really helped our team thrive,” said Clark. “That success led to me being named the U.S. Air Force Central Chaplain of the Quarter and was a component of why I was selected for this award, as well.”

Chaplains aren’t the only service members whose sole job is serving those who serve and must routinely reflect on and rely on their strong spiritual fitness.

“Caring professions such as chaplains, medical personnel, judge advocates and the director of psychological health are jobs asking other people how they are doing,” said Still. “But that very rarely gets reciprocated to those caring individuals, so it’s very important for chaplains to have strong resilience because so many people are dependent on the chaplain.”

Chaplains, as a group, carry many peoples’ burdens willingly. Learning to help others while living a mentally, spiritually and physically resilient lifestyle is a necessity.

“The chaplain’s role is unique to us, but a military chaplain is even more unique with our one hundred percent confidentiality promise,” said Clark. “We carry people’s secrets. Often their worst days on this earth eat and gnaw at their hearts and souls until they finally tell someone, and that someone is usually the chaplain.”

Although there are challenges, chaplains benefit in knowing they have helped strengthen service members’ lives.

“I think we unbind and let loose people who are hurting,” said Clark. “We don’t always get to see the fruits of our labor. Hopefully, I can stack enough good days and deeds to help people and strengthen the mission of sustained freedom.”



Master Sgt. Aaron J. Williams, religious specialist from the Air National Guard Readiness Center, Joint Base Andrews, Maryland, and Maj. R. Caleb Clark, deputy chaplain of the 172nd Airlift Wing, Jackson, Mississippi, receive Military Chaplains Association awards in Columbia, South Carolina, July 28, 2023. The MCA presents annual awards that reflect ministry profession advocacy and ministry profession support. (Courtesy Photo)



Maj. Gen. Randall Kitchens, U.S. Air Force Chief of Chaplains, and Maj. R. Caleb Clark, deputy chaplain of the 172nd Airlift Wing, participate in the MCA National Institute Conference in Columbia, South Carolina, July 28, 2023. Kitchens presented Clark with the MCA Distinguished Service Award this year which recognizes the excellency of chaplains across the Department of Defense within ministries of active duty and reserve units across the Army, Air Force and Navy. (Courtesy Photo)

“CHAPLAIN CLARK IS FULL OF JOY”

- LT. COL. SETH STILL, 172ND AIRLIFT WING CHAPLAIN

Sgt. 1st Class James Loper talks to the campers at morning formation during Kids Annual Training at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, Mississippi, June 30, 2023. (Courtesy Photo)



KIDS AT 31ST ANNIVERSARY

“IT ALLOWS THE KIDS AND THE DEPENDENTS TO ACTUALLY SEE WHAT THEIR PARENTS AND FAMILY MEMBERS DO IN THE MISSISSIPPI NATIONAL GUARD”

**- LT. COL. DAVID ALEXANDER,
ASSISTANT CAMP DIRECTOR**

Story by Senior Airman Angelina Stokes, CRTC-Gulfport Public Affairs Office

The Mississippi National Guard's Family Programs directorate offers an annual, volunteer-led summer camp for dependents of Mississippi National Guard service members. Kids AT, hosted at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, near Hattiesburg, Mississippi, is a week-long summer camp where approximately 120 campers get a taste of the National Guard life. This year marks the 31st iteration of the unique camp.

“It allows the kids and the dependents to actually see what their parents and family members do in the Mississippi National Guard,” said Lt. Col. David Alexander, assistant camp director for Kids AT.

Campers participate in a variety of activities that educate them on military service. They learn about the Air and Army Guard values and gain an understanding of drill and ceremony, flag etiquette, and group discipline.

“It’s just a great opportunity for them to learn teamwork, learn to work as a group, to make new friends, and learn

some skills that will help them throughout the rest of their lives,” said Maj. Gen. Trent Kelly, assistant adjutant general – Army, Mississippi National Guard.

Throughout the week, the campers participate in arts and crafts, conduct weapons simulation training, and enjoy water activities to help cool off from the summer heat. They visit the Mississippi Armed Forces Museum and the Camp Shelby ‘White House.’ The campers ride in tanks at Camp Shelby’s Maneuver Area Training Equipment Site (MATES) and explore a variety of tanks and trucks and learn about their functions.

The 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team let the campers fire weapons in their simulation building and explore their static display of military vehicles. The kids had an action-packed day with the 184th Sustainment Command, playing kickball, baseball, and other field day activities. While the 66th Troop Command brought a CH-47 Chinook helicopter for the campers to explore and learn about and ride in Polaris MRZR-4 vehicles used by Mississippi’s 2-20th Special Forces Group.

The campers get to fire blanks from a military police pistol, get taught by military police on the use of handcuffs, and watch as Soldiers prepare their parachutes before an airborne demonstration jump from a Chinook. The camp visits “Rattlesnake Range,” Camp Shelby’s Air to Ground Range, where campers get to see a variety of aviation assets from different military branches, explore the aircrafts, and see them fly.

At the end of the week, the campers graduate in a ceremony for their family members to attend and select campers are recognized and awarded for their accomplishments during the week. Michela Haggerty, camp director and Child and Youth Services coordinator, sums up the week and the uniqueness the campers experience.

“They create friendships with other kids; that’s one of our number one goals, is military kids being able to bond together and have somebody that understands their situation.”



Maj. Gen. Trent Kelly, assistant adjutant general – Army, Mississippi National Guard, watches as campers control an Avenger Air Defense System during Kids Annual Training at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, Mississippi, June 30, 2023. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Airman Angelina Stokes)



The Tanks group, a part of Kids Annual Training, poses with members of the 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team in front of a Bradley Fighting Vehicle displayed at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, Mississippi, June 27, 2023. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Airman Angelina Stokes)

CAMP KAMASSA

MISSISSIPPI'S TOUGHEST KIDS

Story by Mr. Daniel Szarek,
MSNG Deputy Director of Public Affairs

In 1977, Mary and Jim Kitchens of Crystal Springs, Mississippi, were given the devastating news that their three-year-old child had cancer. Instead of letting this news put the brakes on their lives, it provided a vision to help other kids and families living with illnesses, diseases, or any other special needs, by constructing a space just for them to get out and enjoy life. This was the focus the Mississippi's Toughest Kids Foundation used to build Camp Kamassa, Mississippi's first and only

year-round accessible camp for those in need.

The camp's vision, according to Mary Kitchens, founder of Mississippi's Toughest Kids Foundation, is "To provide a place where all campers will experience the fun, adventure, educational, and therapeutic benefits of traditional camping experiences regardless of their unique abilities."

In 2008, Mississippi's Toughest Kids Foundation was declared a public nonprofit under section 501(c)(3). With the organization established, Mary and her team needed to find where the perfect location for the camp would be.

"The land needed to be relatively flat because we knew there would be children moving around on walkers and wheelchairs, as well as children with blindness, so we needed level terrain," she said.

In 2013, they found 326 acres to purchase, and by 2017, the land had been paid in full. The next big step in the camp's progress was finding a name. Copiah County, where the camp is located, is derived from a combination of two Choctaw words, which together mean 'calling panther.' The Kitchens felt the best way to honor the location would be to reach out to the Mississippi

Band of Choctaw Indians to ask for their help. They wanted a name for their camp that meant tough, to persevere under difficulties, and not give up; the word – Kamassa.

After finding the location and establishing a name, it was time for construction. To help reach their goal, Mary reached out to the Department of Defense after learning about the military's Innovative Readiness Training (IRT), a program that teams service members from the Army and Air National Guard, and reserves from the Army, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Navy from all across the country to help with needed infrastructure projects in communities nationwide.

In 2018, Camp Kamassa had its groundbreaking ceremony, and military members began preparing the land.

"Everything was covered in pine trees and brush; they opened and cleaned up about 60 acres where the main camp would be built," says Mary. "We didn't have any roads out there, so they opened it up and built roads."

Units from across the country would continue to assist in building the camp over the next five years. During the summer of 2023, Mississippi National Guard's 890th Engineer Battalion spent their annual training (AT) assisting in the camp's construction.

"Normal ATs consist of either being on a military installation doing some sort of FTX (field training exercise) or learning more battle drills," said Army 1st Lt. Daniel Coats, project OIC from the 890th EN BN. "Over here at Camp Kamassa, it is a construction project primarily, so it allows our operators and engineers in general to be able to flex on their MOSs (military occupational specialties) that they don't normally get to do during AT."

Technical skills learned at advanced individual training are just the basic building blocks of becoming a competent and confident engineer. Using those skills on a regular basis helps individuals increase their knowledge of the job and grow as an engineer. Unless their civilian job aligns with their MOS, engineers in the Reserves and National Guard don't often get the chance to grow.

"What's great about Kamassa is it allows them to learn and build on that skill set that they have," said Coats. "It allows the junior NCOs to develop themselves in leadership positions and it allows the incoming Soldiers that just have that experience from AIT to



A giant teddy bear sits in a wheelchair in one of the completed cabins of Camp Kamassa in Crystal Springs, Mississippi, July 13, 2023. This cabin is just one of 14 to house kids and families during their stay at the camp. Camp Kamassa is Mississippi's first and only year-round fully handicap accessible facility for children and adults and is designed with features to accommodate any camper regardless of their physical, mental, or other special need. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Connie Jones)



Warrant Officer Bobby Rice, an engineer from the 890th Engineer Battalion, Mississippi Army National Guard, discusses blueprints of Camp Kamassa facilities to state leaders and local business owners during a tour of the camp in Crystal Springs, Mississippi, July 13, 2023. The Camp Kamassa construction project is part of the DoD's Innovative Readiness Training where service members from the Army and Air National Guards and Reserve units from all branches of service, gain essential skills while teaming up to complete needed infrastructure projects in communities nationwide. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Connie Jones)

actually be able to apply it."

Soldiers from two companies of the 890th partnered with units from Wisconsin and Montana during this summer's AT. Members of an Air Force Reserve unit joined in to provide logistical and operational support.

"This has been a great project to be a part of. It's great to be able to work with a lot of these Soldiers over here," Coats says. "For me as a leader, it's been beneficial to experience different leadership styles and tactics and to see my Soldiers get developed, being able

to learn and build themselves overall. I wouldn't be able to do it without them."

As of the writing of this article, eight duplex cabins, six family cabins, a maintenance barn, an open-air recreation building, and a multipurpose building have been completed. The engineers of the 890th most recently finished a cement foundation for the camp's chapel. Once completed, Camp Kamassa will also feature a five-acre lake for canoeing and fishing, an equestrian center, a ropes course, a rock-climbing wall, and more.



Soldiers of the 890th Engineer Battalion, Mississippi Army National Guard, pose with a Heavy Type II Skid Steer Loader, an essential piece of equipment for horizontal construction projects, at Camp Kamassa in Crystal Springs, Mississippi, July 13, 2023. With multiple attachments and variants, the loader is considered the "Swiss army knife" of the U.S. Army's construction fleet and has been crucial in the success of the 890th EN BN's annual training this year. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Connie Jones)



CHAPLAIN'S CORNER



My wife Traci and I are blessed to be the parents of three boys. As parents, we embedded in them a passion and love of sports. Our favorite has always been football. All three of our boys have played since they were in pee-wee leagues. I love to watch the mental toughness of each of them as they force themselves to succeed against overwhelming odds. There are times when they are knocked down but jump right back up. They can hear both the cheers of fans and teammates and the boos of their foes and never lose focus. It, indeed, to me mimics life.

Throughout our journey in life, we have had to push ourselves to continue influencing others. We will all face setbacks in life. Will we allow our setbacks to define us, or will we accept the setback as an opportunity to let God help us leverage it into a comeback? Every setback is a battle we can ask God to help us win. In battles, we have tension or conflict. The battle for our minds, our time, and our families are a series of battles that are at work in our world. You and I just happen to be on the front line of the battle.

We can learn from every battle that we face. There are some battles we've lost, but the good news is that the war is not over. God is not through. He is not finished.

Maybe you are stuck, and you need a breakthrough. Real change can only happen when we get specific. Are there areas of neglect? Are you experiencing regret? Take courage that this is not the end of the story.

Don't settle for imitations. Seek out real change. Weed it out. Be confident. Determine to have faith that God is going to take your set back

and use it as a setup for your comeback. Understanding how to access God's truth ushers us into a place of peace and into increased God-confidence. As we step into new territory by faith, we can move forward from setback to comeback.

Today, I encourage you to show kindness to a stranger, send a note to a friend, and call someone you love and let them hear your voice. In football and the Army, you are a part of a team, and we win or lose together. We may have to help each other up from time to time and push ourselves a little harder, but it is worth it in the end. I want to leave you with this from the Apostle Paul from 1 Corinthians 2:9.

"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him."

As a dedicated Mississippi Army National Guard Chaplain, it is an honor to serve with you and to walk with you through our successes and, at times our disappointments. The fact still remains that we are one team and it is one fight, and we are all in this together.

Chaplain (LTC) John Branning
CSJFTC Chaplain

CHAPLAIN CORPS BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION



Chaplains of the National Guard, retired and currently serving, stand with Mississippi National Guard leadership after the Mississippi National Guard's Chaplain Corps 248th Birthday celebration at the Mississippi Armed Forces Museum, Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, July 25, 2023. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Connie Jones)

Story by Spc. Amber Milsap,
CSJFTC Public Affairs

Mississippi National Guard chaplains and religious affairs specialists celebrated 248 years of the Army's Chaplain Corps during a ceremony at the Mississippi Armed Forces Museum at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, Mississippi, July 25, 2023. The ceremony included remarks by Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles, the adjutant general of Mississippi, and Chaplain (Col.) Cregg Puckett, State Command Chaplain, with the history of the Chaplain Corps delivered by Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Jason Bird, chaplain for the 66th Troop Command.

The Continental Congress established chaplains as an integral part of the Continental Army July 29, 1775. Over the years, more than 25,000 chaplains have served in the U.S. Army as religious leaders. From military installations to deployed combat units, chaplains, and religious affairs specialists (formerly known as chaplain assistants) perform their ministries in the most religiously diverse organization in the world. Currently, more than 2,700 chaplains serve the Army, representing 140 different religious organizations.

"The chaplain has a role to play in our military. It's constitutional. It's a first amendment right that soldiers are able to practice their religion no matter where they are in the world," said Boyles.

Chaplains practice religious diversity while preparing to aid soldiers with their needs. A chaplain observes the distinctive doctrine of their specific faith



From left, Cpl. Austin Manning, a religious affairs NCO and the youngest chaplain in attendance, Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles, the adjutant general of Mississippi, Chaplain (Col.) Cregg Puckett, the Mississippi Army National Guard command chaplain, and retired Chaplain (Col.) Tom Fuller, the oldest chaplain in attendance, during the traditional cake cutting at the Mississippi National Guard's Chaplain Corps 248th Birthday celebration. The celebration was held at the Mississippi Armed Forces Museum on Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, July 25, 2023, and included remarks by Boyles and Puckett, with the Chaplain Corps history delivered by Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Jason Bird, 66th Troop Command Chaplain. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Connie Jones)

while honoring, respecting, and ensuring the right for others to observe their own.

"We have a responsibility to provide for every Soldier, Airman, Sailor, and Marine," said Puckett. "We have a responsibility to provide for their religious and spiritual needs, no matter what denomination they may be."

Army chaplains have served in all major wars and combat engagements involving the U.S., from the colonial years through the present day. Nearly 300 Army chaplains have laid down their lives in battle, and seven Chaplain Corps members were awarded the Medal

of Honor.

When asked about being a non-combatant, Bird said, "I remember when I deployed to Afghanistan, I had several soldiers that would say 'so you're not allowed to carry a weapon?' I'd say 'I have a better weapon than that rifle. I'm not worried about it.'"

The birthday celebration concluded with the traditional cake cutting by Chaplain Col. Puckett, Maj. Gen. Boyles, retired Chaplain (Col.) Tom Fuller, the oldest chaplain in attendance, and Cpl. Austin Manning, the youngest chaplain in attendance.

183RD AES PARTICIPATES IN JOINT MISSION READINESS DURING AT



Capt. Paul Harvey (left), a flight nurse from the 183rd Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron of Jackson, Mississippi, and Staff Sgt. Cody Garton, a military working dog trainer from the 81st Security Forces Squadron, Keesler Air Force Base in Biloxi, participate in a canine demonstration during annual training in Gulfport, Mississippi, July 20, 2023. The 183rd Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron's annual training this year also included tactical combat casualty care and simulated search and rescue missions with the 189th Medical Group, Arkansas Air National Guard, U.S. Coast Guard Station New Orleans and U.S. Coast Guard Station Gulfport. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Airman 1st Class Shardae McAfee)

Story by Airman 1st Class Shardae McAfee and Staff Sgt. Jared Bounds, 172nd Airlift Wing Public Affairs

The 183rd Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron (AES) out of Jackson, Mississippi, trained alongside Airmen of the 189th Medical Group (MDG), Arkansas Air National Guard, and Coast Guardsmen from U.S. Coast Guard Station Gulfport and U.S. Coast Guard Station New Orleans for annual training in Gulfport, Mississippi, July 16-28, 2023.

The training included search and rescue demonstrations, medical evacuation response and familiarization with military working dogs.

"As we transition our warfighting environments, joint familiarity with other components, like the U.S. Coast Guard, is essential as we anticipate future missions," said Capt. John Hughes, 183rd AES joint force training liaison officer-in-charge.

Airmen from the 183rd AES stand ready to deploy at a moment's notice in support of military operations, natural disasters, and humanitarian missions across the globe.

"We are capable of providing support when partners like the U.S. Coast Guard need patients transported to a hospital, or if patients need additional support at a higher level," said Master Sgt. Mark Goss, 183rd AES health specialist.

This year, Airmen from the 183rd AES collaborated with the 189th MDG critical care team on transporting critically injured patients and air-to-ground equipment operation.

"If you're downrange and you haven't flown with these teams, then you're not familiar with how they operate on the plane, or how that will affect your mission," said Goss. "This controlled training environment allows us to figure out how each unit operates in flight, while bringing every detail together."

The 183rd AES consists of more than in-flight critical care specialists. Other team members such as logistics and medical administrators play an equally significant role for mission support during aeromedical evacuations. This year's training environment allowed non-medical members of the 183rd AES to receive training on basic in-flight medical skills.

"We have reached out to all branches and different AFSCs (Air Force Specialty Codes) to gain as much unique and different training as possible which truly makes us Multi-capable Airmen," said Col. Terri Neely, 183rd AES Commander. "We're one of the few squadrons who have sought out and trained with the Army, Coast Guard, Active Duty, Reserve and Guard service members."

A special part of the 183rd AES's mission is to support natural disaster response and aeromedical evacuations, including potentially treating military working dogs.

"We trained with military working dogs because we have the capability to treat and transport those service members frequently," said Goss. "If they need medical attention, we need to know how to treat them."

Neely said the Airmen in the 183rd AES are always looking for new opportunities, and conducting training that is only being talked about at other units.

"We are one of the few squadrons who are on the cutting edge for truly developing Multi-capable Airmen," said Neely. "This generation has some of the most innovative Airmen who are smarter than ever."

Story by Capt. Micah Welch, 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs

MISSISSIPPI RIFLES HEROISM AWARD

A 1st Battalion, 155th Infantry Regiment Soldier received and award for the heroic actions during a recent awards presentation. Sgt. 1st Class Dustin Cooley, an infantryman with Bravo Company, was presented with the Soldier's Medal during a ceremony in Poplarville, Mississippi, July 15, 2023.

The Soldier's Medal is for service members of the U.S. Armed Forces, as well as friendly forces, who have distinguished themselves by heroism not involving actual conflict with an enemy. Established by an Act of Congress July 2, 1926, the medal is awarded for acts of heroism that resulted in an accomplishment so exceptional and outstanding as to clearly set the individual apart from their peers in similar circumstances and must have involved some clear personal hazard or danger as well as the voluntary risk of life.

Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles, the adjutant general of Mississippi, Col. Michael Dykes, commander of the 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team, Col. Robert Enochs, J5 director of plans and training for the Mississippi National Guard, and members of the Cooley family were in attendance for the ceremony.

The event that led to the presentation ceremony occurred in April 2019, when Cooley and a friend saved a 74-year-old neighbor from her burning home. The two were able to locate the woman in the back part of her house, breach the door to rescue her and were then able to get her to a safe location away from the flames.

Cooley remained humble when speaking to the crowd and commented on how it felt to receive the award, thanking God for keeping him safe in the moment of his heroism. However, when Cooley is asked about the situation and how he feels being called a hero, his humbleness comes further into light.

"To me, something like this should be instinct; should be something you just do. I'm honored and I thank God for his protection on us," he said. "I couldn't put myself in the same bracket as the people I consider a hero. So [when asked], the only thing I could think of was 'No sir, just a man of action.'"



Col. Robert Enochs, J5-plans and training for Joint Force Headquarters, Mississippi National Guard, presents the Soldier's Medal to Sgt. 1st Class Dustin Cooley, of Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 155th Infantry Regiment, for his actions in April 2019 when he and a friend saved his neighbor from their burning house. Cooley was recognized during a presentation ceremony July 15, 2023, in Poplarville, Mississippi. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Capt. Micah Welch)



Left to right, Col. Michael Dykes, 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team commander, Sgt. 1st Class Dustin Cooley, of Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 155th Infantry Regiment, and Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles, the adjutant general of Mississippi, pose for a photo following a Soldier's Medal presentation ceremony in Poplarville, Mississippi, July 15, 2023. Cooley was awarded the medal for his heroic actions in April 2019 when he and a friend saved his neighbor from their burning house. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Capt. Micah Welch)

COMMERCIAL DRIVING LICENSE COURSE

A Commercial Driving License (CDL) Course and Industry Fair was hosted by the Mississippi National Guard in coordination with Work for Warriors Mississippi at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, August 5, 2023. A total of 37 service members and veterans met the requirements to complete their CDL packet.

This event was made possible through the coordinative efforts of the MSNG Outreach Services Team, the MSNG Education Office, Work for Warriors Mississippi, the Mississippi Department of Public Safety, MSNG Family Programs, Total Transportation of Mississippi, ACE Trucking Academy, Morgan Van Lines, and the Camp Shelby Garrison Team. The CDL course allows military professionals to utilize their military training to transition skills into their civilian

career.

Work for Warriors is a comprehensive career development service offered to all current and retired military members, military spouses, and dependents. The program is dedicated to assisting the MSNG military professionals and their families in accomplishing professional career goals in the civilian job market. The Work for Warriors team specializes in career guidance, resume development, interview preparation, job sourcing education, employer and resource connections, and also host hiring events for job seekers.

If you are interested in participating in a future CDL course or would like more information about how Work for Warriors can help you accomplish your employment goals, please visit www.wfwms.org or call 601-313-6598.



A Mississippi National Guard soldier receives instruction from a Commercial Driver's License Instructor during a CDL course hosted by the Work for Warriors Mississippi professionals at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, August 5, 2023. The CDL course allows military professionals to utilize their military training to transition skills into their civilian career. (Courtesy photo by Work for Warriors Mississippi)

YOUTH CHALLENGE GRADUATION



The Mississippi National Guard Youth Challenge Academy hosted the Class 58 graduation ceremony at Temple Baptist Church in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, June 17, 2023, with special guest speaker Mississippi Congressman Mike Ezell.

The YCA mission is to intervene in the lives of 16-18-year-old teens who have not been successful in the traditional educational environment. The academy produces program graduates with values, life skills, education, and the self-discipline necessary to become productive citizens of their communities.

Cadet Tyler A. Schipper was honored as the Class 58 Valedictorian, and Cadet Landen W. Miller as the Class 58 Salutatorian. The YCA Class 58 graduated a total of 157 cadets.

(U.S. Army National Guard photos by Spc. Amber Milsap)

168TH ENGINEER BRIGADE GRADUATION



The Area Support Group - Kuwait and the Army Education Center of Camp Buehring recognized college graduates who are currently deployed to Camp Arifan and Camp Buehring, Kuwait, July 17, 2023. The event honored and celebrated soldiers who attained degrees during the 2022-2023 school year while deployed in theater. The 168th Engineer Brigade, Task Force Southern Castle, had a total of four graduates walk across the stage during the ceremony. Congratulations to the following 168th EN BDE graduates, from left: Sgt. Craig Stuckey, A.S. in Applied Science, Itawamba Community College; Spc. Andrew Canon, B.S. in Criminal Justice, University of Mississippi; Chief Warrant Officer 3 Jarvis Parker, B.S. in Geography I, Park University; and Master Sgt. Guy Bounds, M.S. in Occupational Safety and Health, Columbia Southern University. (U.S. Army National Guard photos by Sgt. Edward V. Lee)

MEDICAL BATTALION CHANGE OF COMMAND

The Medical Battalion Training Site of the 154th Regiment Regional Training Institute, conducted a change of command ceremony at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, July 15, 2023. Lt. Col. Brent J. Lindley relinquished command to Lt. Col. Chad A. Stricker during the ceremony. Col. Chris Thomas, 154th RTI commander, presented Lindley with the Meritorious Service Medal for three years of exceptional service and leadership provided to the students and staff of the 154th RTI.

During an interview in early 2021, Lindley reflected on his change of command ceremony as he was coming in as the new Medical Battalion commander in mid-2020. "As an officer, it was always a goal of mine to be a leader and be the most effective leader that I can. To achieve that position is a dream come true, really. Everything I had done previous to that day, I feel had led up to that moment."

(U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Amber Milsap)



STATE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM 30TH ANNIVERSARY



Senior leaders from the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Mississippi National Guard attended the 30th Anniversary Celebration of the State Partnership Program hosted by Gen. Daniel R. Hokanson, Chief of the National Guard Bureau, in Maryland, July 17-20, 2023.

From left, Lt. Col. Shakhobov, Deputy of Information Department of Uzbekistan National Guard, Col. Rakhmatullaev, Military Attaché for Uzbekistan to the U.S., Col. Ganiev, Deputy Commander of the Uzbek National Guard, Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles, the adjutant general of Mississippi, Ambassador Sidikov, Uzbek Ambassador to the U.S., Lt. Col. Amanda Villeret, director of the Mississippi National Guard State Partnership Program, and Command Sgt. Maj. Silvester Tatum, senior enlisted leader of the MSNG.

(Courtesy photo)

VBOC AT MSU

HELPING MILITARY VETERANS AND SPOUSES SUCCEED IN BUSINESS

Story by Lt. Col. Deidre D. Smith, MSNG Director of Public Affairs

What is the next life chapter after military service? This question is front-and-center on the minds of service members and their families as their time in the military is ending. For some, follow-on education and new ambitious careers in the civilian sector is the way to go. For others, life as your own boss while running your own small business is a perfect fit for future entrepreneurship. With a dream in hand, how do you get started in building your own business from scratch?

Mississippi State University's, Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC), established in May 2015, is assisting service members, Active-duty, National Guard and Reserve components, military veterans, and spouses from all branches of service by offering free courses on how to grow an ambitious hobby or idea into a thriving business and new career. For many service members, the chance to start a small business after service is the perfect career choice.

What is VBOC?

The 28 VBOCs around the country are funded by the Small Business Administration's (SBA) Office of Veterans Business Development (OVBD). The VBOC program is designed to provide entrepreneurial development services such as business training, counseling, and resource partner referrals, to service members, veterans, National Guard & Reserve members, and military spouses interested in starting or growing a small business. The VBOC at MSU serves Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana. For more information and to schedule for FREE upcoming Training Events visit: www.vboc.msstate.edu

In a recent interview with VBOC coordinators, they explained the program and its benefits to assist military veterans and spouses with small business development.

"Boots to Business (B2B) Introduction to Entrepreneurship is a two-day no-cost education and training course offered by a VBOC as a component of



The Veterans Business Outreach Center at Mississippi State University hosted a Boots to Business course at the Military & Family Readiness Center, Keesler Air Force Base, Biloxi, Mississippi, June 21-22, 2023. The course is designed to offer military service members, veterans, and military dependents an understanding and educational foundation of business ownership. Pictured left to right: Mark Scott, director of Veterans Business Outreach Center at MSU; Deborah Scott, director of Boots to Business Revenue Readiness at MSU; Holly Fisher, community readiness consultant at Keesler AFB; and Bob Blakely, instructor and counselor Boots to Business at MSU. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Lt. Col. Deidre D. Smith)

the Department of Defense's Transition Assistance Program," said Mark L. Scott, director of the VBOC at MSU. "B2B's class goal is to help provide transitioning service members and their spouses with the business knowledge necessary to pursue entrepreneurship in their shift to civilian life. B2B Reboot is delivered off installations or virtual with the same training goal as B2B. The VBOC at MSU conducts forty-eight B2B courses annually as well as monthly live virtual B2B Reboots to support veterans who have transitioned out of the service as well as active guard and reserve service members and their spouses."

What is Boots to Business Revenue Readiness?

"After completing the B2B or B2B Reboot 'Introduction to Entrepreneurship' course, participants can elect to continue the path towards small business ownership by enrolling in the B2B Revenue Readiness virtual course, delivered through a partnership with SBA and Mississippi State University (MSU). This six-week course is offered at no cost to veterans and military spouses who are ready to refine

their Business Concept into a Business Plan," explained Deborah Scott, director of the B2B Revenue Readiness program.

The B2B Revenue Readiness program has graduated over 3,000 veterans, spouses, national guard, and reserve service members since its inception in 2017.

Boots to Business and Reboot Stats:

- FY 22 SBA/VBOC delivered B2B to more than 17,000 veterans and spouses.
- FY 22 SBA/VBOC delivered B2B Reboot to more than 2,800 veterans and spouses.
- FY 22 SBA/VBOC at MSU delivered B2B Reboot to more than 850 veterans and spouses.
- Since inception in 2017, SBA/VBOCs have delivered B2B and B2B Reboot to more than 185,000 veterans and spouses.

What percentage of military veterans are represented in the business world today?

"According to the U.S. Census Bureau 2018/2019 Annual Business Survey (ABS), Veteran-owned businesses made up about 5.9% (337,934) of all businesses, with an estimated \$947.7 billion in receipts, approximately 3.9 million employees, and about \$177.7 billion in annual payroll. In FY 22 VBOC at MSU counseled 44 veterans who were listed as national guardsmen," said Bob Blakely, VBOC Counselor. VBOC also provides outreach to promote awareness of SBA resources available to veterans and spouses. All services and training conducted by the VBOC at MSU is at no cost to the veteran or spouse."

Why are veterans suited for entrepreneurship?

"Veteran business owners and entrepreneurs make important contributions to business creation and growth in the American economy. Their active duty, national guard, and reserve military service members often provide important skills, maturity, and leadership abilities that are directly relevant to becoming successful small business owners, compared to non-veterans," said Blakely.

Visit the website below for more information and to enroll in the FREE Boots to Business and Revenue Readiness Classes for veterans, service members and military spouses.

<https://www.bootstobusiness.msstate.edu/>

<https://www.vboc.msstate.edu/>



Fameika Thomas, LCSW
Psychological Health Program Manager,
Jackson, MS

What is the mission of the psychological health program?

To advocate, promote and guide National Guard members and their families by supporting psychological fitness for operational readiness. We achieve this mission by ensuring National Guard Soldiers and Airmen have the resources needed to master psychological health challenges in their lives.

Can family members receive services?

We are unable to provide direct services to family members, but we do serve as a referral source for family members to see community providers.

Do I have to go to Jackson to receive help?

Our team provides services throughout the state. Soldiers in need of assistance can contact us via telephone at (601) 896-8480 or see one of the licensed clinical Social Workers located in Jackson, Tupelo, and Camp Shelby.

If I seek services, will I be removed from service?

Absolutely not. Service members are encouraged to seek behavioral health treatment early to address current challenges

BURNING QUESTIONS

PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH PROGRAM

before they worsen. Just as you would seek services for your physical health, you should do the same for your mental health.

How can I get help for another service member?

If you or someone you know needs immediate care, call 911 or get to the nearest emergency room. If you are not in need of emergency care, call or text 988 or chat 988lifeline.org. The crisis lifeline is available 24/7.

Are these services confidential?

Confidentiality is a respected part of Social Work's Code of Ethics. We take your privacy seriously. However, common exceptions occur when Social Workers MUST share information: to protect the client or the public from harm, ongoing abuse or neglect of children, the elderly, or people with disabilities, or if requested from a court order during legal proceedings.

How much does this cost?

Services provided by the Psychological Health team are no cost to National Guard Soldiers and their families. Soldiers in need of psychiatric evaluations, substance abuse assessments, and brief counseling can receive those services free of charge.

Who will have access to my record?

Behavior health records are labeled restricted and only those who have a need-to-know can access these records. Anyone else who attempts to access a restricted behavior health record would have to "break the glass," which results in a real-time notification to the Deputy State Surgeon of the name, location, and record accessed.

Providers:

Fameika Thomas, LCSW
Psychological Health Program Manager,
Jackson, MS
(601) 313-4534

Leslie Bensieck, LCSW
Psychological Health Coordinator-North,
Tupelo, MS
(662) 891-4462

James Coleman, LCSW
Psychological Health Coordinator-South,
Camp Shelby
(601) 558-2029

Jean Whaley, RN
Psychological Health Case Manager
(601) 297-7509



Joint Force Headquarters
Mississippi National Guard
P.O. Box 5027
Jackson, MS 39296-5027

Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 20th Special Forces Group, Mississippi Army National Guard, load onto a CH-47 Chinook helicopter prior to an airborne demonstration for campers on the last day of Kids AT (annual training) at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center near Hattiesburg, Mississippi, June 30, 2023. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Chief Warrant Officer 4 Jesse Lindsey)

