

# OREGON SENTINEL

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE OREGON NATIONAL GUARD

Story by Senior Airman, Yuki Klein,  
142nd Wing Public Affairs

PORTLAND, Ore. – Don't mess this up. Those words raced through 142nd Wing fighter pilot, Major Calvin Conner's head as he landed the first F-15EX Eagle II at the Portland Air National Guard Base, Oregon on June 5, 2024.

The day was significant, not just for Conner, but for the entire base and the neighboring community of Portland. The arrival of the novel aircraft was a landmark event, and Conner was at the center of it all.

Conner, known as "Knife" among his peers, is a fighter pilot with more than a decade of experience. He has accumulated over 1,500 hours in the F-15E Strike Eagle, 100 hours in the F-15C Eagle, and 100 hours in the EX.

Before joining the Oregon Air National Guard's 142nd Wing, Conner had the opportunity to fly the EX while serving under the 85th Test and Evaluation Squadron at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida.

On the morning of the EX's debut flight into Portland, Conner was accompanied by fellow 142nd Wing fighter pilot, Maj. Brandon "Wiggles" Wigton, who sat in the back seat of the new EX jet.

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## Novel F-15 EX Eagle II makes its debut landing in Portland



Photo by Aaron Perkins, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

Oregon Air National Guard Majors, Calvin "Knife" Conner and Brandon "Wiggles" Wigton, assigned to the 142nd Wing, 123rd Fighter Squadron, in Portland, Oregon, prepare for takeoff with the newest U.S. Air Force F-15EX in Berkeley, Missouri on the morning of June 5, 2024. This is one of eighteen new EX model jets being finalized at the Missouri facility. Once finished all of the aircraft will be assigned to the Oregon Air National Guard's 142nd Wing located at the Portland Air National Guard Base, in Portland, Oregon.

## Oregon Army National Guard's 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment honored with Meritorious Unit Commendation



Story & photos by Maj. Chris Clyne,  
Oregon Military Department  
Public Affairs

ORCHARD, Idaho – The 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment of the Oregon Army National Guard received the Meritorious Unit Commendation on May 8, 2024, during their annual training at the Orchard Combat Training Center in Idaho, distinguishing the unit for exceptional service during their 2010-2011 deployment to Iraq in support of Operation New Dawn. It was the longest continuous deployment to the border to date.

Oregon Army National Guard Col. Russell Gibson, commander of the 82nd Troop Command Brigade, presented the battalion with the unit honor during a ceremony at OCTC. The commendation recognized the unit's "exceptionally meritorious service," providing convoy security and personal protection details throughout two-thirds of Iraq from September 2010 to September 2011.

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Oregon Army National Guard Sgt. Garrett Johnston, serving as the regimental guidon bearer, and Maj. Justin Symons, acting as the commander of troops, stands at parade rest with the 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment in formation behind them during the unit's Meritorious Unit Commendation ceremony on May 8, 2024 at Orchard Combat Training Center. The Oregon Army National Guard battalion received the honor for exceptional convoy security operations during its 2010-2011 deployment to Iraq.

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**COMMAND**

## Summer training highlights a focus on operational readiness

As we approach the summer Annual Training season, I am filled with immense pride at the dedication and professionalism of our Oregon National Guard members. This summer, our organization will engage in critical training exercises that sharpen our skills and prepare us for the diverse challenges we may face both at home and abroad.

The Oregon Army National Guard's 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team is gearing up for an intensive rotation at the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) at Fort Johnson, Louisiana. This rigorous training will simulate real-world combat scenarios, testing our Soldiers' tactical skills, leadership abilities, and unit cohesion. The JRTC experience is invaluable, especially as the 41st prepares for upcoming deployments to Kosovo, Egypt, the Horn of Africa, and Syria. Our Soldiers' readiness and resilience will be paramount as they train to meet these global commitments.

Our Air Guard units are equally busy. The 142nd Wing in Portland will conduct alert missions, ensuring the safety of our Pacific Northwest skies while also participating in joint exercises to enhance interoperability. The 173rd Fighter Wing in Klamath Falls continues its crucial mission of training the next generation of F-15 pilots while they prepare to transition to training aircrews for the F-35 Lightning II. Recently, the 142nd received the first F-15EX Eagle II, and we will have a formal unveiling on July 12 at the Portland Air Base, marking a significant milestone in our operational capabilities.

Speaking of domestic operations, our entire force remains ready to respond to state emergencies. With the wildfire season approaching, many of our units will receive specialized firefighting and emergency response training. We have incorporated the lessons learned from past wildland fire seasons into our preparation, making us more effective partners to our state's civilian first responders. Our readiness to support Oregon during natural disasters is a testament to our commitment to the community.

As we embark on this journey of training and preparedness, safety must always remain at the forefront of our minds. The well-being of our personnel is paramount, and we must never compromise the safety protocols and procedures in place to protect each member of our Guard family. Whether conducting live-fire exercises, maneuvering in challenging terrain, or executing complex logistical operations, safety precautions must be diligently followed to ensure everyone returns home unharmed.

In the coming weeks and months, let's approach our training exercises with a sense of purpose, determination, and unity. Support and remain committed to one another, striving for continuous improvement and competency in all we do. Our success is not measured solely by the simple completion of tasks but by how we conduct ourselves—with professionalism, respect, and a deep sense of camaraderie that binds us together as one connected team.



**Brigadier General Alan R. Gronewold,**  
Adjutant General,  
Oregon National Guard



I am immeasurably proud of your dedication and commitment. Your unwavering resolve and steadfast determination inspire confidence and instill pride in our organization. Together, let's embrace the challenges of the upcoming Annual Training season with optimism, enthusiasm, and a shared sense of purpose. By training diligently, safely, and together, we will emerge stronger, more resilient, and better prepared to fulfill our mission of service to the people of Oregon.

The skills you hone and the relationships you build this summer will serve you well, whether responding to a natural disaster here in Oregon or representing our nation overseas.

The Oregon National Guard is the military service of choice for Oregonians, and your dedication proves why every single day. Continue to exemplify the highest standards of excellence and readiness as we serve our state and nation. Stay safe, train hard, and stand ready.

## For Army National Guard Soldiers, a few items of importance

First, it all begins by integrating new Soldiers into your formation by making them part of the team and feel part of your Army family. We as an organization created a program called Integrate, Council and Retain Soldiers (ICRS). It is used statewide for the sole purpose of integrating Soldiers returning from basic training and AIT into your formations. First impressions count! Make the new soldier's first impression of your unit be a good positive experience. Follow the checklists in the program, which is very simple to use and you cannot go wrong on the first step to creating a cohesive team.

Second, I cannot stress the importance of being individually ready. What does that mean, it means to focus on each Soldier being ready to deploy to include; having your medical situations sorted out, having your dental records up to date, having your financial documents in order at your unit, trying to get your military schools done, pass your ACFT, complete your annual PHA, update your security clearance, etc.

I am not talking about a list of advanced items; I am talking about getting the basic Soldier required items done and out of the way and then just maintain those items.

Third, focus on building your team. Battalion Commanders and Command Sergeants Major. I encourage you to empower the Company Command Teams to

develop training schedules that are solely focused on training at the platoon and below level. It has been proven time and time again that squads who are very proficient in their skillset that train together a lot are a tight cohesive team. Tight cohesive teams, stay in the guard. Tight cohesive teams can function at higher levels of mission accomplishment. If all your squads or sections in your company/battery or troop are proficient and a cohesive team, you could accomplish platoon and company level missions proficiently. Try to train on your Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) specific skills in a field environment as much as possible. Soldiers did not join the military to do recruiting events, they joined to do their MOS. When a Soldier goes to drill, trains on their MOS and has fun doing it while doing challenging tasks associated with their MOS, that builds teams.

That is when Soldiers naturally recruit their friends. We have been talking about this for years, it's time to do it. Training in the field at platoon level and below should be everyone's focus. I understand there's higher level requirements for CTC rotations however, we as command teams need to scrutinize what is absolutely necessary and what is not. We need our individual Soldiers and our squads to master the basics and be subject matter experts in their MOS field.



**Command Sergeant Major Lee G. Smith,**  
Command Senior Enlisted Leader,  
Oregon National Guard



Lastly, for this article, be the leader that everybody wants you to be. Do you have a leader that you look up to that kept you in the Guard and conducted awesome training? Be that Soldier, be that leader to other Soldiers. Don't walk by a soldier and not talk to them about their lives, and career, you might be that person that makes a difference to them.

Never forget that you are a leader of Soldiers, and don't get caught up in being selfish and solely focusing on your career, do the best job you can possibly do in the position you are currently assigned and your career will take care of itself. When you are at JRTC, overheated, week of energy, wanting to sit down and just take a nap, remember you have Soldiers who feel the same. You are their leader. I appreciate the leaders in our organization, and I thank everyone for dedicating part of your lives to this organization. I will see you down range.

## COMMAND

## Hokanson: Nation's investment in National Guard comes at pivotal moment

Story by Army Sgt. 1st Class Zach Sheely,  
National Guard Bureau Public Affairs

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The National Guard is a dynamic operational force integral to the National Defense Strategy, the Guard's most senior officer told lawmakers April 30, emphasizing that sustained mission readiness requires continued and deeper investment in the Guard.

In his annual testimony to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, Army Gen. Daniel Hokanson, 29th chief of the National Guard Bureau and a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, stressed the need to reform Guard and reserve duty statuses, modernize the federal military technician program, revisit the cap on Active Guard Reserve positions, and overhaul the health care program available to Reserve component service members serving on part-time orders — about 80% of the National Guard.

"Our nation's investment in the National Guard comes at a pivotal moment," Hokanson said. "Our strategic competitors are seeking advantages in every domain: land, sea, air, space and cyber.

"Meanwhile, longstanding adversaries are adopting destructive new methods," he said. "The Tower 22 drone strike, which killed three service members and injured 41 National Guard Soldiers, is just one example of the emerging character of war.

"If we are to compete and deter successfully — and if necessary, prevail in combat — we must invest in our people."

The National Guard is the primary combat reserve of the Army and the Air Force, delivering 20% of the Joint Force manning structure.

About 430,000 Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen comprise the National Guard. On any given day, about 25,000 are on duty across every overseas combatant command, with another 20,000 typically supporting domestic and steady-state operations.

"Our people — our Soldiers, Airmen and the families who support them — are the ones who carry out these missions," Hokanson said. "They stand watch in the turbulent corners of the world, they monitor our airspace, they train with our allies and partners, and they respond to communities in crisis."



Nat'l Guard photo by U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Zach Sheely, NGB Public Affairs  
Gen. Daniel Hokanson, chief, National Guard Bureau, talks with Soldiers of the Alabama National Guard's 115th Expeditionary Signal Battalion, Fort McClellan, Ala., on April 20, 2024.

"It is our people who make the difference — they make us lethal, resilient and responsive," he said.

It's why Hokanson, in his final few months of a four-year assignment as the Guard Bureau's chief, is acutely focused on addressing pay, benefits and quality of life for the Guardsmen he represents at the highest levels of the government.

The Chief of the National Guard Bureau also expressed the need to preserve all 25 Air Guard fighter squadrons to keep pace with global demands, deter adversaries,

and — if necessary — prevail in conflict.

"Our people — our pilots, maintainers, and support personnel working in our Air National Guard fighter squadrons — have experience, capability and capacity we must retain at a time when the global demand for fighters grows ever louder," he said.

"In an Air Force with significant fighter pilot and maintainer shortages, we believe through temporary cross-component



National Guard photo by U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Zach Sheely, NGB Public Affairs  
Chief of the National Guard Bureau General Daniel R. Hokanson testifies at a House Appropriations Committee Subcommittee on Defense hearing on the Fiscal Year 2025 Request for the National Guard and Reserves Forces, April 30, 2024.

aircraft transfers, we can retain the critical fighter capability our Joint Force needs until aircraft procurement efforts can replenish these units with more modernized aircraft," he said. "In so doing, these squadrons maintain a vital capability for the Total Force — namely pilots and maintainers — that cannot be rapidly replaced or regenerated."

Hokanson testified alongside Reserve component chiefs at the U.S. Capitol and fielded questions about the Guardsmen performing space missions, and a recent letter to the secretary of defense signed by 53 governors asking him to withdraw an Air Force proposal to transfer Air National Guard units to the Space Force.

The CNGB said this action would counter 100 years of precedent and ignore the non-federalized role of the Air Guard, to include space formations. Unique among the Armed Forces, the National Guard has dual state and federal roles, and Guard functions are present in every ZIP code in the United States.

More than 1,200 members spanning seven states have been performing critical space missions for over 28 years. Guard units operate some 34% of Space Force Operations Squadrons, which provide space domain awareness, missile warning, defense electronic warfare and more. Some units are on duty around the clock.

Hokanson underscored that the Guard delivers capabilities and functions at the unit level, and moving individual part-time service members and units to the Space Force would hurt retention and degrade capabilities.

"As I've been very clear in all of my testimonies since I became the chief, I feel the best option is no cost to our nation," the general said. "Our Air Guardsmen who are currently serving in space missions, if they want to serve in the Space Force, we can just change their name tapes. They would still be in the National Guard.

"They would still have their same civilian job," he said. "Same location. Same mission. All we do is change the signs and their name tapes."

Hokanson said the administrative and staff support elements are already present in Air Guard space units, and moving these units to the Space Force would fracture that. He cited that 70% of Air Guardsmen involved in space missions have expressed their preference to stay in the Guard, even if it means changing job function or specialty.

"Right now, our country can't afford to lose

our level of experience in the space field," he said. "Our units have been doing this for almost 30 years. They are extremely good, and I would argue some of the best at what they do. I'm trying to retain that capability because our nation absolutely needs it.

"Whatever decision is made, it's my responsibility to ensure we provide the best space capabilities we can," he said. "And we do that."

Hokanson and other Reserve component chiefs answered questions about duty-status reform.

Since the 2010s, the Guard and Reserve components have been working with Congress on an initiative to streamline the number of duty statuses reservists can serve under. Now, reservists can be called to duty under 27 statuses.

"Whether the person is on active duty, Guard or Reserve, if they're working side-by-side at the same time, same location and performing the same duties, that they're eligible for all the same benefits," Hokanson said.

"It would also ensure we would no longer have disparity between our service members," he added.

The Army, Air Force and Navy Reserve chiefs also voiced their support for duty-status reform.

Throughout his tenure, Hokanson has worked to improve the health care options available to part-time Guardsmen.



Nat'l Guard photo by U.S. Army Master Sgt. Jim Greenhill, NGB Public Affairs  
Gen. Daniel Hokanson, chief, National Guard Bureau, visits Hanoi, Vietnam on May 18, 2023, to help reinforce the mutually beneficial, successful security relationship with the Oregon National Guard established in 2012 under the DoD National Guard State Partnership Program which strengthens the partners' capabilities to respond to natural disasters.

"We have about 30,000 Guardsmen that don't have health care," he said. "We need them 24/7 for overseas deployments and for emergencies in their communities. We need them to be medically ready. If they don't have health care or access to health care, they can't be ready and perform the job we've trained them to do."

The CNGB also updated lawmakers on the Defense Department National Guard State Partnership Program and how the increase in program funding approved for fiscal year 2025 will be implemented.

"We've leveraged Russia's invasion of Ukraine in speaking with many former neutral countries," Hokanson said. "Sweden and Finland became NATO allies, and they also became members of the State Partnership Program. Switzerland has applied to become a state partner.

"No one thought there would be another war in Europe; there is now," he said. "They have expressed an interest that they need to develop additional capability based on what they saw. They realize the benefit they can get by training with our Guardsmen, and we see the benefits of training with them."

LEADERSHIP

# Air National Guard Command Chief visits Airmen at Klamath Falls

Story and photos by  
Staff Sgt. Emily Copeland,  
173rd Fighter Wing Public Affairs

**KLAMATH FALLS, Ore.** - U.S. Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Maurice Williams, Air National Guard command chief, and spouse, Mrs. Gwendolyn Williams, visited with Oregon Air National Guard leadership and enlisted members of the 173rd Fighter Wing at Kingsley Field, in Klamath Falls, Oregon, April 6, 2024.

Williams' first trip to Oregon was spent learning about the Oregon Air National Guard's current missions, as well as the future missions of the 173rd Fighter Wing and 142nd Wing, Portland Air National Guard.

Williams is the thirteenth Command Chief Master Sgt.



ANG Chief Master Sgt. Maurice Williams, command chief, Air National Guard, hosted an enlisted all-call during his visit to Klamath Falls, Oregon, April 6, 2024. During the enlisted all-call, Williams discussed the future and changes in the Air National Guard.

of the ANG, and his role is to ensure all matters influencing the health, morale, welfare, quality of life, and professional development of the enlisted Air Guard members are met or exceeded.

"As the enlisted members, you empower others to make changes, make decisions and understand the commander's intent to follow out the mission," said Williams. "That is the uniqueness that

we have over any other nation - you make the difference."

During the visit, Williams heard wing mission briefs from the command chiefs of the 173rd Fighter Wing and the 142nd Wing out of Portland, Oregon, held an all-call for the enlisted members of Kingsley Field, spoke with the senior enlisted noncommissioned officers, Rising 6 and Chiefs Advisory Council, and presented five outstanding Airmen with a coin.

Mrs. Williams also had the opportunity to tour the Kingsley Field Resiliency Operations Center and learn about the helping resources and programs the base has to offer Team Kingsley members.

"She is such a strong advocate for Airman and family care, and it was such a great opportunity to share any concerns or gaps that we felt need to be addressed at a higher level," said Cecily Gaudinski, 173rd Fighter Wing Military and Family Readiness Program coordinator.

On the other side of the base, Williams spoke words of motivation and leadership at the all-call while addressing the need for change.

"I believe every single person was appointed here to this place and this time to serve our nation," he said. "Our nation needs you, and this is your time. I want you to be forward thinking so you can be the leading edge of this organization. We must change even if it's uncomfortable."



Mrs. Gwendolyn Williams, center, spouse of U.S. Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Maurice Williams, command chief, Air National Guard, speaks with members of the Resiliency Operations Center at Kingsley Field in Klamath Falls, Oregon, April 6, 2024.



ANG Chief Master Sgt. Maurice Williams, left, command chief, Air National Guard, is greeted by Chief Master Sgt. Bobbi Bennett, human resource advisor, 173rd FW during a visit to Kingsley Field in Klamath Falls, Oregon.

## Southern Oregon civic leaders fly with Team Kingsley Guardsmen

Story by  
Senior Master Sgt. Jennifer Shair,  
173rd Fighter Wing Public Affairs

**KLAMATH FALLS, Ore.** - The 173rd Fighter Wing hosted a civic leader flight offering a group of local leaders an opportunity to view an aerial refueling mission over Eastern Oregon, April 7, 2024.



Photo by Senior Master Sgt. Jennifer Shair, 173rd FW Public Affairs  
Local civic leader, Glen Szymoniak, Klamath County School District superintendent, shows off his hand of cards during a quick card game while waiting to take off for a flight in a KC-135 Stratotanker from the 141st Refueling Wing.

"Flights like these are a great way to showcase our mission," said Lt. Col. Nikki Jackson, 173rd FW Public Affairs chief. "These community leaders learn more about what we do every day and can then share that information with those they interact with in the community."

The leaders boarded a KC-135 from the 141st Air Refueling Wing out of Spokane, Washington and were able to watch as visiting F-35 Lightning II aircraft from Luke Air Force Base refueled.

"Because we work with the 141st on a regular basis, we have a fantastic relationship with them," said Jackson. "We have the same priorities in mind when telling our Air Force and Air National Guard story, so partnering with them for the civic leaders flights is a great experience."

The members aboard had the unique opportunity of flying on a military aircraft, saw the pilot's cockpit during flight, and witnessed up close the refueling fighter aircraft.

"The opportunity to fly in the KC-135 was a once in a lifetime opportunity and a civilian's dream," said Abbie McClung, Klamath Falls City Councilor. "This experience provided a deeper understanding of the sacrifice, commitment, and expertise that our U.S. Air Force brings to the skies. Living here I believe many of us take for granted



Photo by Lt. Col. Nikki Jackson, 173rd Fighter Wing Public Affairs  
Abbie McClung and Kelsey Mueller Wendt, Klamath Falls City Councilors, pose for a photo with members of the 141st Air Refueling Wing and the 173rd Fighter Wing during a flight in a KC-135 Stratotanker from the 141st ARW out of Spokane, Wash., on April 7, 2024.

the importance of the F-15s, and now the visiting F-35s, in our skies and encourage everyone to go outside and look up. Our entire community should be so proud of the work being done at Kingsley Field."

Originally, the flight was scheduled to take place on Friday, April 5, but a maintenance issue forced the flight to cancel just

before take-off. Unfortunately, only five of the original 12 civic leaders were able to return on Sunday to complete the flight.

"We look forward to hosting the remaining community leaders and plan to give them the opportunity to fly with us in the near future," said Jackson.

The 173rd Fighter Wing is home to the sole F-15C training schoolhouse for the U.S. Air Force.



Photo by Senior Master Sgt. Jennifer Shair, 173rd FW Public Affairs  
173rd Fighter Wing leadership and a group of local civic leaders prepare to board a KC-135 Stratotanker from the 141st Refueling Wing April 7, 2024 at Kingsley Field. This was an opportunity for the civic leaders to view F-15s form Kingsley Field and F-35s from Luke Air Force Base refuel inflight and develop a better understanding of their missions.

**LEADERSHIP**

**Oregon Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen take part in Memorial Day events**

Story by John Hughel,  
Oregon Military Department  
Public Affairs

**BEAVERTON, Ore.** – Oregon National Guard Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen took part in Memorial Day services and community events around the state of Oregon on Monday, May 27, 2024, pausing to remember fallen service members who have given their lives in defense of the nation.

Beaverton Mayor Lacey Beaty, an Army veteran, along with her husband, Oregon Army National Guard Maj. Ian Beaty, spoke to those in attendance about their own family experiences in uniform before introducing Oregon Army National Guard Col. Russell Gibson, 82nd Troop Command Brigade Commander, who was the Keynote speaker for the Memorial Day service at the Veterans Memorial Park in Beaverton.



Photo by Maj. Chris Clyne, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

Two F-15 Eagle fighter jets from the Oregon Air National Guard's 142nd Wing conduct a flyover during the 2024 Oregon Remembers Memorial Day Tribute at the Oregon World War II Memorial in Salem, Oregon on Monday, May 27, 2024. The flyover was part of the annual ceremony paying tribute to fallen U.S. service members at events around the state of Oregon and SW Washington.

“Through their selfless service, they portray the values and ideals for which this country was founded.”

Gibson, who has deployed twice to combat areas of operations, spoke about those who have been lost in recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

“I know that many of you have stories of loved ones, friends and fellow service members you hold

in your memory and in your hearts,” he said. “I would also be remiss during this solemn day of reflection to not also recognize and honor those providing support from the home front. Those that paid the personal sacrifice for us and our nation—our Gold Star Families.”

U.S. Congresswoman Suzanne Bonamici (Oregon 1st Congressional District) also spoke and the American Legion Post 185 Band provided patriotic music throughout the event in Beaverton. The 142nd Wing and the West Coast Ravens conducted two separate flyovers during the ceremony.



Photo by Maj. Chris Clyne, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs  
Brig. Gen. Alan Gronewold, Adjutant General, Oregon National Guard, speaks during the 2024 Oregon Remembers Memorial Day Tribute at the Oregon World War II Memorial in Salem, Oregon on Monday, May 27, 2024.



Photo by John Hughel, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs  
Oregon Army National Guard Specialist Michael Banks, assigned to the 234th Army Band, plays TAPS at the conclusion of the Memorial Day ceremony held at the Veterans Memorial Park in Beaverton, Oregon.



Photo by John Hughel, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

Oregon Army National Guard Col. Russell Gibson, 82nd Troop Command Brigade Commander, addresses those attending the Memorial Day ceremony in Beaverton, Oregon, on May 27, 2024, and was the keynote speaker for the ceremony held at the Veterans Memorial Park in Beaverton. Oregon National Guard members and other elected officials took part in ceremonies held around the state of Oregon on Memorial Day.

“I welcome any opportunity to gather with my brothers and sisters in arms, and it is truly a gift to have the opportunity to honor those that gave the ultimate sacrifice in service to our great nation—may their memory be a blessing,” said Gibson, during his opening remarks.



Photo by Maj. Chris Clyne, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs  
World War II veteran Vern Staley, a former combat medic, talks with Oregon Gov. Tina Kotek during the 2024 Oregon Remembers Memorial Day Tribute at the Oregon World War II Memorial in Salem on Monday, May 27, 2024. Staley shared his experiences from the war with the governor at the annual event honoring fallen service members.

The Memorial Day holiday can be traced back to the conclusion of the Civil War. On May 5, 1868, John A. Logan, as Commander-in-Chief of the Grand Army of the Republic, issued General Order No. 11. This order was designated May 30, 1868, “for the purpose of strewing with flowers or otherwise decorating the graves of comrades who died in defense of their country during the late rebellion.”

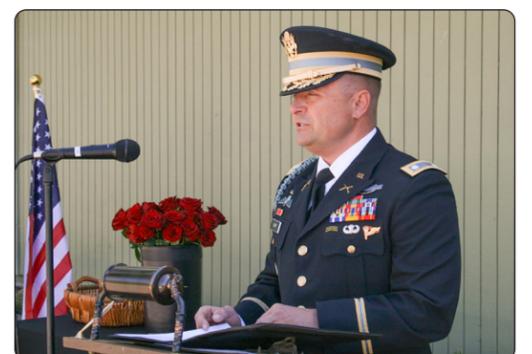
Since 1971, Memorial Day has been observed on the last Monday of May, marking a solemn time each year to mourn those who have died while serving in the U.S. military — while reflecting on their ultimate sacrifice to our nation.



Photo by John Hughel, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

Veterans, families of fallen service members, and other supporters of the military community stand for the Posting of the Colors during the Memorial Day ceremony in Beaverton, Oregon, on May 27, 2024, during the opening of the ceremony held at the Veterans Memorial Park in Beaverton.

In Salem, Oregon Governor Tina Kotek and Brig. Gen. Alan Gronewold, Adjutant General of the Oregon National Guard, spoke at the Oregon World War II Memorial. Both the 142nd Wing and the 173rd Fighter Wing conducted flyovers around the state as well as in SW Washington at parades, memorial services and other gatherings.



Courtesy photo by ORARNG Chief Warrant Officer 3 Klare Rapp  
ORARNG Lt. Col. Joshua Rapp, commander of the 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry Regiment, delivers a speech during the Memorial Day Celebration at Memory Gardens Memorial Park & Mortuary in Medford, Oregon.

NEWS

# ORANG's 142nd Wing first National Guard unit to field a new aircraft

Continued from Front Page

As the duo prepared to take off from Boeing's airfield on June 5th, en route to Portland, Conner couldn't help but feel a mix of excitement and apprehension.

The 142nd Wing is the first operational unit to receive the EX. This is made all the more notable by the fact that the 142nd Wing belongs to the Air National Guard, as opposed to the Active Duty Air Force, which traditionally would be the first to field a new aircraft.

This is a fact that 142nd Wing Commander, Col. Michael Kosderka, commented on during a recent interview.

"I think we got selected because we have the best Airmen [of] anywhere in the world," said Kosderka. "The 142nd is leading the charge in all things that we do, and the Air



Photo by U.S. Air National Guard Staff Sgt. Nichole Sanchez  
F-15 EX Eagle II, tail 008 makes its descent into Portland Air National Guard Base, Oregon as Mount Hood looms in the distance, June 5, 2024. The arrival of the first EX model marked a historically significant moment for the 142nd Wing.

Force knows that this airplane will be maintained by the best maintainers, it'll be fueled by the best fuelers, and flown by the best pilots. We'll be able to do the job better than anybody, and they know it."

The 142nd Wing is one of three Air National Guard units that are set to operate the EX. These units include the 144th Fighter Wing, Fresno Air National Guard Base, California and the 159th Fighter Wing, New Orleans Air National Guard Base, Louisiana.

The F-15EX, gleaming in the mid-morning light, was ready. Conner strapped in, ran through his pre-flight checks, and soon, the roar of the twin engines filled the air.

The flight to Portland was smooth that morning. The EX handled beautifully, a testament to its advanced design and capabilities.

"EX 008 performed exactly as expected," said Conner. "As far as the aircraft's performance goes, it is fast. Very fast."

With the EX's advanced radar, new self-defense suite, bigger motors, and fly-by-wire controls, this aircraft is a formidable addition to the U.S. Air Force's arsenal.

"The F-15EX is a game-changer," said Conner. "It enhances our lethality and survivability while expanding our mission capabilities."

As Conner approached Portland Air National Guard Base, he couldn't help but notice how clear the day was and how beautiful Mount

Hood looked in the distance. It was the perfect day for this momentous event. At approximately 12:30 pm, Conner landed the EX at its new home, where he was met by a crowd of excited spectators.

Upon shutting down the engines, Conner and Wigton were greeted with cheers and applause. The significance of the historic moment was not lost on them.



Photo by U.S. Air National Guard Staff Sgt. Nichole Sanchez  
A USAF F-15 EX Eagle II, tail number 008 touches down at the Portland Air National Guard Base, Oregon on June 5, 2024, making history as the first EX aircraft to be delivered to an operational unit.

"It felt surreal," said Conner, recalling how he felt as he disembarked the aircraft. "I'm just glad I could be a part of it."

The 142nd Wing will ultimately receive a full fleet of EXs over the next year or two, replacing the unit's existing fleet of C-model F-15s. The next EX is due to arrive in Portland this July.

To commemorate the arrival of the first EX, the 142nd Wing will be hosting an unveiling ceremony at the Portland Air National Guard Base on July 12th.



Photo by Aaron Perkins, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs  
U.S. Air Force Maj. Gen. Duke Pirak, Deputy Director of the Air National Guard, pauses for a group photo with Boeing employees. Pirak visited the plant to watch the first of eighteen F-15EX fighter aircraft to be flown to Portland, Oregon, on June 5, 2024.

# ORARNG strengthens community ties through school partnerships

Story by Sgt. 1st Class Cory Grogan, Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs

Photo courtesy of Tom Johnson

SALEM, Ore. - The Oregon Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention Program has spearheaded an initiative to deepen the Guard's connections with local schools. Collaborating with the Oregon Schools Activities Association (OSAA) and Oregon Athletic Coaches Association (OACA), the Oregon National Guard continued efforts to foster positive relationships between the Oregon National Guard and educational institutions.

That partnership was evident at the 38th annual Oregon Athletic Coaches Association Awards Banquet held on May 18, 2024 at the Club Level of Autzen Stadium at the University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon. The event served as a platform to honor exceptional coaches and celebrate their contributions to youth development.

More than 300 were in attendance to honor coaches in Oregon and announce \$25,000 in scholarships to graduating seniors for the



Tom Johnson proudly accepts the Oregon Army National Guard Boys Coach of the Year award during the OACA Awards Banquet held at Autzen Stadium at the University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon on May 18, 2024. Jennifer Teeter of Imbler High School will also be honored as the Girl's Coach of the Year at their upcoming 'Back to School' assembly in September.

class of 2024.

Among the distinguished awardees was Tom Johnson, recognized as the Oregon Army National Guard Boys Coach of the Year. Colonel Dustin Ballard, commander of the Oregon Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention Command, presented Johnson

with the accolade. Johnson and others were recognized at the ceremony which underscored the crucial role coaches play in shaping the character and future of young athletes. Jennifer Teeter of Imbler High School will also be honored as the ORARNG Girl's Coach of the Year at an upcoming

'Back to School' assembly in September.

Reflecting on the significance of the partnership, Chris Knudsen, Associate Director of the Oregon Athletic Coaches Association, expressed gratitude for the support extended by the Oregon National Guard.

"This collaboration is a testament to the Guard's commitment to recognizing and supporting the invaluable work of coaches in nurturing our youth," Knudsen said.

The work continues to strengthen the bonds between the National Guard and local communities and to elevate the Oregon National Guard as the 'Service of Choice' in Oregon, as a proactive contributor to youth development initiatives.

Through continuing partnerships with organizations like Oregon Schools Activities Association and Oregon Athletic Coaches Association, the National Guard continues to demonstrate its commitment to serving communities across Oregon and sponsoring events that recognize the important individuals who work to mentor and educate youth.

## NEWS

**Meritorious Unit Commendation honor for Oregon Guard cavalry unit***Continued from Front Page*

“Despite enduring over 45 improvised explosive device attacks and 100 indirect fire attacks, the battalion’s mission preparedness ensured these attacks resulted in no significant casualties,” Gibson said before hanging the unit streamer on the battalion’s colors.

The Meritorious Unit Commendation, a prestigious

award for outstanding service during armed conflict, was bestowed upon the 3-116th Cavalry Regiment. ORARNG Lt. Col. Christopher Miller, the current commander, underscored the magnitude of this honor, stating, “The degree of achievement required for this commendation is the same as that which would warrant the award of the Legion of Merit to an individual.”

Miller elaborated on the unit’s achievements, which led to the Meritorious Unit Commendation. In describing their commitment to the mission and each other, Miller said the challenging deployment conducted over 1,500 convoy missions and 100 personal security details, covering a staggering 140,000 miles during the assignment.

Miller expressed pride in the unit’s dual role, serving their local communities and the country. He stated, “Eastern Oregon can be proud of its National Guard members. They have a record of meritorious service in helping their local communities during disasters and serving overseas to defend our country. This is why the Oregon National Guard is seen as the military ‘Service of Choice’ for Oregonians.”



ORARNG Lt. Col. Christopher Miller, commander of the 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment, presented the Meritorious Unit Commendation to his soldiers during a ceremony on May 8, 2024. Every member of the Oregon Army National Guard battalion received the prestigious unit award.



ORARNG Col. Russell Gibson, hangs the Meritorious Unit Commendation streamer on the 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment's colors during a ceremony on May 8, 2024 at Orchard Combat Training Center in Idaho. Lt. Col. Christopher Miller (left) and Maj. Justin Symons hold the battalion's guidon as Gibson affixes the honor for the unit's exceptional service providing convoy security in Iraq from 2010-2011.

The 3-116th Cavalry, with units across eastern Oregon, traces its lineage to 1888 militia cavalry companies. Since the 2010-2011 Iraq deployment, the battalion has frequently mobilized for state missions overseas, including Ontario’s Adder Company’s recent 2023 deployment, providing rapid reaction forces for the U.S. Central Command in the Middle East.

**173rd FW collaborates with ANG innovation team and local universities**

Story and photos by  
Airman 1st Class Adriana Scott,  
173rd Fighter Wing Public Affairs

**KLAMATH FALLS, Ore.** - In early April, Team Kingsley hosted a group of academics and U.S. Air Force Innovation and ARCWERX members on base to discuss current and future innovation projects.

The ARCWERX team, as well as students and professors from Oregon Institute of Technology in Klamath Falls and George Fox University from Newberg, met with Team Kingsley project leaders and toured various shops around the base discussing ways they can partner for future innovation projects.

Team Kingsley has Drill Status Guardsmen who are also students at these schools working on some of these projects, and that relationship can bring opportunity says Master Sgt. Dana Garrett, ARCWERX, Accelerator Team Lead.

“I love the hidden treasure we have within the Air National Guard, which is our DSGs,” said Garrett. “They have so much knowledge, skills, and networking opportunities to bring to the table. Academia has a huge influence on innovation and problem scoping from a different outlook.”

Mr. Paul Shelton, Business and Analytics Professor at George Fox University and prior service member,



ORARNG Master Sgt. Joshua Fuhrer, 173rd Maintenance Group, and Master Sgt. Dana Garrett, ARCWERX and Innovation, discuss 3D printing projects at Kingsley Field in Klamath Falls, Oregon, April 6, 2024.

expressed excitement for the growing alliance.

“By partnering with Kingsley Field Air Guard, we have the wonderful opportunity to serve our community, state and country with these projects,” said Shelton.

ARCWERX is the Air National Guard innovation office that helps wings foster a lasting culture of innovation throughout the ANG enterprise. They drive culture change towards innovation through education, training and opportunity.

Air Force Innovation has a role of taking feedback from Airmen where challenges are present and then helping them to fund and update processes, technology, and equipment.

At Kingsley Field, ARCWERX has made it possible to

procure innovative projects such as RunDNA, virtual reality training programs, Additive Manufacturing to include 3D printers, 3D scanners, and press machines to name a few.

ARCWERX has been able to fund over \$1.4 million in innovation funds for Kingsley Field alone since 2018 through their Innovation Funds Campaign they host annually. They continue to help accelerate projects here at Kingsley Field, helping cut mission costs and make work for Airmen more efficient.

Engineering students and professors saw how past projects have directly impacted the base’s mission for the better.

Dr. Neslihan Alp, Dean at Oregon Institute of Technology’s College of Engineering, Technology, and Management says the relationship is truly a win-win scenario.

“Our students eagerly embrace the opportunity to apply their knowledge and skills to practical challenges gaining hands-on experience that enriches their academic journey,” said Alp. “Meanwhile, the Kingsley Air National Guard benefits from the fresh perspectives and innovative solutions our students bring to the table, bolstering their ability to tackle complex projects effectively.”



Adam Newert Oregon Institute of Technology Manufacturing, Mechanical Engineering, and Technology Lab Manager, Graeme Wiltrout OIT electrical engineering and applied mathematics student, and U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. David Butler, 173rd Maintenance Group, discusses the topic of F-15 engines at Kingsley Field at Klamath Falls, Oregon, April 6, 2024.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

ORNG supports the University of Oregon Spring Football Game

Story and photos by John Hughel,  
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

EUGENE, Ore. – The renowned and popular University of Oregon spring football game brought together over 35,000 fans to Autzen Stadium, giving fans an early preview for the upcoming season during the team’s annual scrimmage on April 27, 2024. The yearly spring event also serves as a beloved community event; highlighting members serving in the military, first responders, veterans and their families with Oregon connections.

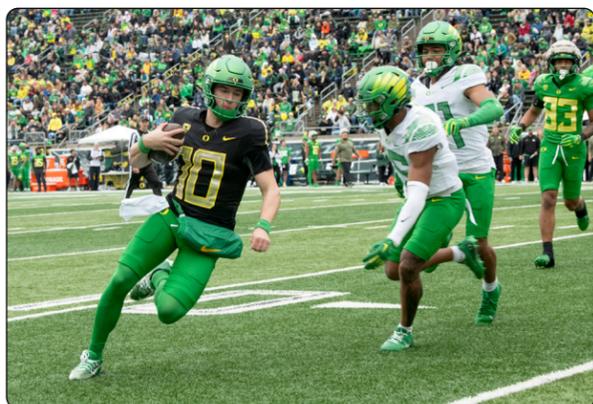
As the ‘Green’ and ‘White’ teams squared off on the field, activities throughout the game paid tribute to various groups and individuals that have served the nation, state and local community.

Prior to kickoff, many members of the Oregon National Guard, along with military veterans and first responders carried a large American flag to the center of the field for the playing of the National Anthem, sung by Oregon Army National Guard Sgt. 1st Class Duane Reno, a member of the 234th Army Band. Just as Reno finished singing, two F-15 Eagles assigned to the 173rd Fighter Wing at Klamath Falls, Oregon flew a perfectly timed patriotic flyover to a cheering crowd.



ORARNG Sgt. 1st Class Duane Reno, a member of the 234th Army Band, sings the National Anthem at the annual University of Oregon Spring Football Game on April 27, 2024 at Autzen Stadium.

For the football faithful, the biggest question revolved around the team’s next number one quarterback for the upcoming season, as former Pac-12 Player of the Year Bo Nix had just been selected as the 12th overall pick by the Denver Broncos in the 2024 NFL draft. Duck signal callers Dillon Gabriel, Dante Moore, Austin Novosad and Luke Moga gave the fans reason to be optimistic for the fall campaign as the University of Oregon will join the Big Ten Conference for the 2024 regular season. The spring game also served as a way to say goodbye to the PAC-12 conference, where the Oregon Ducks success on the gridiron garnered four football conference titles since 2011.



University of Oregon ‘Green Team’ quarterback Luke Moga avoids a tackle as he runs to the end zone for a touchdown during the fourth quarter of the Spring Game.

The game had several scheduled breaks between quarters to acknowledge Oregon resident heroes in attendance. One of the highlighted moments revolved around two men of ‘The Greatest Generation.’

U.S. Air Force Col. (ret.) Richard Hyman and Marine Corps Private 1st Class Larry Rosenmiller, along with several members of their families, were recognized on the field during a break in the action.



World War II veterans Air Force Col. (ret.) Richard Hyman and Marine Corp Private 1st Class Larry Rosenmiller, along with their family members are recognized during the annual University of Oregon Spring Football game.

The two men served during World War II and are turning 100 years of age in the coming weeks. The boisterous round of applause from the fans served as an early birthday present, as players and coaches on both sidelines also paused for a long ovation for the honored centenarians.

During the second quarter, two Oregon Gold Star Families were recognized at midfield.

The parents of U.S. Marine Corps Sergeant Ian M. Tawney, from Dallas and U.S. Army Private 1st Class Andrew J. Keller, from Tigard, stood for a heartfelt acknowledgement as their son’s stories of heroism were recounted to those in attendance. Sergeant Tawney, a Dallas High School graduate from the class of 2003, joined the Marine Corps in March of 2005, and would become a firearms instructor and squad leader. He was killed on October 16, 2010 in the Helmand Province of Afghanistan during his fifth deployment. Private Keller had been assigned to the 1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment, and 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team when he succumbed to wounds from small-arms fire on August 15, 2012 in Charkh, Afghanistan.

These distinct segments, mixed in with music, and highlighting returning Oregon football alumni, and various military activations on the Autzen video scoreboards, gives the Oregon Spring Game a unique sentiment for everyone participating.

While the two teams played a close game and the fans had plenty to cheer about, the final score favored the Green team



The 173rd Fighter Wing are acknowledged for the game day flyover on a large video scoreboard during the University of Oregon Spring Football Game on April 27, 2024 at Autzen Stadium in Eugene, Oregon.

prevailing over the White squad 28-23. At the conclusion of the contest, over 125 members of the University of Oregon Football team lined one side of the field and then met at midfield with another 125 service members from the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corp, National Guard and ROTC students taking part in the coveted gift exchange. This gave way for trading memorabilia, creating time for lively dialog, and pausing for a few selfies – bringing to close a ‘picture-perfect’ afternoon.



University of Oregon Football team greet service members from the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corp, National Guard and ROTC students following the end of the University of Oregon Spring Game.



Over 125 members of the University of Oregon Football team greet service members from the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corp, National Guard and ROTC students take part in an End of Game Exchange between following the University of Oregon Spring Game, on April 27, 2024 at Autzen Stadium in Eugene, Oregon.



Members of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corp, National Guard and ROTC students hold a large American Flag during the National Anthem during the University of Oregon Spring Football Game.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

# Oregon National Guard builds on partnership with SkillsUSA

Story by John Hughel with  
Lt. Col. Charles Patzner,  
Oregon National Guard

ALBANY, Ore. – The Oregon National Guard connected with over 700 technical education students during the SkillsUSA Oregon State Conference on April 18-19, held at the Knife River Training Center in Albany, Oregon.

SkillsUSA is a partnership of students, teachers and industry working together to ensure America has a skilled workforce. During the two day conference, students from 30 participating schools from across the state competed in 64 job skill specialties in this year’s competition.



Photo by John Hughel, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

Oregon students begin to create a news story as part of their assignment during the 2024 SkillsUSA Oregon State Conference, held at Knife River Training center in Albany, Oregon from April 18-19, 2024.

With this year’s conference motto of “No Limits,” the 821st Troop Command Battalion served as the host, connecting with 28 industrial partners with exposure to the Oregon Army National Guard. The Recruiting and Retention Command from Detachment 5 in Salem and Detachment 7 in Albany played an important role with assisting many events for the conference.

Several other participating units help provide equipment displays and Military Occupation Skills demonstrations. This

included presenting the Light Medium Tactical Vehicle with trailer, as well as the Styker vehicle, by Staff Sgt. Trevor Fillis from the 1st Squadron, 82nd Cavalry, part of the 81st Stryker Brigade Combat Team. The All-Terrain Vehicle, which highlighted the Mine-resistant ambush protection, was performed by the Sgt. 1st Class Casey Johnson from the 1186th Military Police Company. In addition to these vehicles, Chief Warrant Officer 4 Gregory West, with G/1-189th Aviation demonstrated the UH60 Blackhawk Helicopter.

Other technical chairs and judges from the Oregon Military Departments Joint Force Headquarters (two members), the Public Affairs Office (three members), along with 18 members of 821st Troop Command Battalion units (HHD TCB, 1186th MP and 115th MPAD) helped with this year’s conference.

As part of their commitment towards the program, students pledge themselves to “diligent study and ardent practice to become a worker whose services will be recognized as honorable by my employer and fellow workers.”

The rewards are based on expectations focused on a solid foundation of service and respect towards their vocation. These help “uphold the ideals of SkillsUSA.”

The competitive activities in which students strive to achieve are found in a variety of occupational skills and leadership areas at all levels.

Occupational skill contests include the building trades, health occupations,

automotive technology, photography and video trades, the electrical and electronics industry, and personal services careers. Leadership contests include public speaking, job interviewing, safety and other areas.

SkillsUSA has been serving students, educators and business and industry since 1965 by keeping up with both employers’ needs and education mandates and trends. Business, industry and education partnerships thrive in curricula programs that require industry input in classroom standards. The mission of SkillsUSA is accomplished through a variety of skill sets in personal, workplace, technical and academics, which is integrated into the classroom curriculum.



Courtesy photo by Lt. Col. Charles Patzner, Oregon National Guard

The opening ceremonies take place for the 2024 SkillsUSA Oregon State Conference, held at Knife River Training center in Albany, Oregon from April 18-19, 2024. Members of the Oregon National Guard supported the two-day conference.



Courtesy photo by Lt. Col. Charles Patzner, Oregon National Guard

Students take part in the automotive competition during the 2024 SkillsUSA Oregon State Conference held at Knife River Training center in Albany, Oregon from April 18-19, 2024.

## Honoring fallen military members during annual ‘Run to Remember’

Photos by Maj. Leslie Reed,  
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

SALEM, Ore. – The annual ‘Run to Remember’ was held along the Riverfront Park in Salem, Oregon on May 18, 2024. The event brings together members from the community, to honor fallen military personnel from all services. Oregon National Guard Chaplain (Col.) Jacob Scott opened this year’s ‘Run to Remember’ with a prayer and members of the ORNG Teen Panel assisted runners and walkers stay on the 5-kilometer race course.



Joe Mah, a campus veteran coordinator with the ODVA gives opening remarks ahead of the start of the 2024 Run to Remember.



Runners and walkers participating in the Oregon National Guard’s 2024 Run to Remember 5-kilometer race move towards the finish line on May 18, at Riverfront Park, in Salem.



Oregon Army National Guard State Sgt. Maj. Jeremy Carver, Oregon National Guard Command Senior Enlisted Advisor, Command Sgt. Maj. Lee Smith, and Sgt. Maj. Adrian Gonzalez connected ahead of the start of the 2024 Oregon National Guard Run to Remember, May 18, at Riverfront Park in Salem, Oregon.



Participants in the 2024 Run to Remember write the names of loved ones who gave the ultimate sacrifice on race bibs to wear during the 5-kilometer race.



Oregon National Guard’s Teen Panel program volunteers during the 2024 Run to Remember helping participants during the 5-kilometer race stay on course.

## TRAINING

## Oregon Infantry scouts sharpen battlefield edge at shooting competition

Story and photos by Maj. Chris Clyne,  
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

**CAMP ROBINSON, Ark.** — The sweltering Arkansas sun baked the soaked soil at Camp Robinson, and the moisture rose into a thick, humid haze. Sgt. Trahern Fox, Sgt. Kevin Martin, and Spc. John Adamson stepped onto the range; every stride felt like walking on a soaked sponge, and the oppressive 80 percent humidity enveloped them like a sauna.

The trio of Oregon National Guard scouts remained laser-focused amid the swampy conditions. They were all first-time competitors at the Winston P. Wilson Small Arms Championship - the National Guard's most prestigious and grueling rifle and pistol marksmanship event.

Originally a four-man team from the 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry Regiment's scout sniper section in Ashland, their fourth shooter had an unfortunate last-minute family emergency that prevented him from attending. It derailed their chances at the coveted team championship, but the three Oregonians were undeterred in their goal of personal growth.

The competition was established in 1971 by the then-Chief of the National Guard Bureau, Maj. Gen. Winston P. Wilson. The annual championship promotes sustained combat marksmanship mastery with individual weapons. It challenges the nation's top Guard sharpshooters across dayslong, battle-focused courses involving rifle and pistol ranges.

After an overhaul in 2007, which implemented new strenuous, reality-based courses, the Winston P. Wilson event became one of the Army and Air National Guard's most intense tests of individual marksmanship skills. Camp Robinson's National Guard Marksmanship Training Center hosts the annual event, where the nation's elite convene yearly to improve their shooting prowess.



Spc. John Adamson, a scout with the Oregon Army National Guard's 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry Regiment, fires his M4 carbine from a seated position during the Winston P. Wilson Small Arms Championship at Camp Robinson in North Little Rock, Ark., on May 1, 2024.

"It's a cool, humbling experience to shoot with some of the best in the country and test your abilities against them," said Martin, a detective with the Medford Police Department balancing his civilian career with National Guard service. "You learn a lot about yourself as a shooter - where you need to improve and where you're succeeding."

For the citizen soldiers juggling jobs, families, and military obligations, the championship presented a rare opportunity for focused immersion in honing critical shooting skills. As part of the infantry battalion's reconnaissance element, their scout sniper section's



Sgt. Kevin Martin, a scout sniper with the Oregon Army National Guard's 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry Regiment, fires his M17 pistol steadily on a post during a competition range at the Winston P. Wilson Small Arms Championship in North Little Rock, Ark., on April 30, 2024.

long-range shooting proficiency is vital for gaining intelligence ahead of combat operations.

The scouts' ability to observe and precisely engage enemy targets from exceptional distances could mean the difference between success or failure for their battalion's missions. This ability allows the infantry to fix and destroy the enemy with surgically applied fire and maneuver based on their reconnaissance.

Fox, a network engineer for a California tech company, relished the freedom to devote himself entirely to sharpening his

marksmanship skills without distractions.

"There's a lot more coordination and complexity that eventually when you wrap your head around it, it's actually really good skills refinement," Fox said. "Lots of consistent, deliberate trigger time too - back-to-back days drilling the fundamentals that you just don't get at home station."

Adamson, a 12-year police officer working drug cases in Medford, joined the unit only four years ago. He joined seeking training like this and welcomed the chance to elevate his skills against the nation's most elite shooters.

"These are the best marksmen in the country," said the 34-year-old. "If you think you're a decent rifle or pistol shooter, and you go against these guys, they'll show you there's a lot you can improve on. It's incredibly humbling."

According to Martin, a prior combat-deployed trained sniper, injecting stressors to simulate combat conditions was a core premise. Dynamic drills involving moving targets, obstacle negotiation, and skewed shooting positions and environments,

all under grueling time constraints, created intense pressure to replicate scouting a hostile objective.

"With ranges designed around realistic combat scenarios, they induce that same sense of urgency as when you're experiencing the stressors of a hostile environment," Martin explained. "Time restraints and competition are the best ways to induce stress into a shooter. And you have both of those things here."

The Oregonians' fatigues told the story as the orchestra of ringing steel and dust-kicking impacts

grew louder with each passing range. Their sweat-soaked uniforms and sunburned skin showed that these warriors were honing their combat effectiveness through a challenging course.

When finalized, their scores would

memorialize new shooting milestones with rifles and pistols. But the trio's greatest prize was incalculable - fortified skills to elevate their scout sniper section's operational lethality.

The ability to leverage high-level marksmanship from exceptional distances, gleaned through the National Guard's

premier shooting crucible, could prove invaluable in combat. Overmatch against any future foe; their heightened ability to shoot and move will pave the way for defeating any enemy.

While disappointed to lose their fourth shooter, the Oregonians focused on the invaluable skills they'd absorbed. The Marksmanship Training Center's rifle and pistol experience will burn bright when passed from Camp Robinson's ranges to their scout sniper section's training.



Sgt. Kevin Martin, a scout sniper with the Oregon Army National Guard's 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry Regiment, scores a target by placing a feedback disk in a target pit at Camp Robinson in North Little Rock, Ark., during the Winston P. Wilson Small Arms Championship on May 2, 2024.



ORARNG Sgt. Trahern Fox (left), Sgt. Kevin Martin (center), and Spc. John Adamson (right) from the Oregon Army National Guard's 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry Regiment scout sniper section before taking the firing line at the Winston P. Wilson Small Arms Championship.

## TRAINING

## 142nd Wing Airmen support Weapons Instructor Course at Nellis AFB

Story by Master Sgt. Steph Sawyer,  
142nd Wing Public Affairs

NELLIS AIR FORCE BASE, Nev.—For two weeks in April, 140 Airmen from the 142nd Wing trained and supported the U.S. Air Force's Weapons Instructor Course at Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada.

WIC is the schoolhouse for future weapons officers of the U.S. Air Force. The six month course is attended by Airmen from a variety of backgrounds, from pilots to Intel officers, Air Battle Managers, cyber, and more. WIC enhances skill sets and prepares those who attend to fulfill the role of lead instructor for their squadron.

For pilots, the flying training portion of WIC is extremely challenging as it is designed to provide pilots with a level of realism that is unattainable at their home stations given the number and types of aircraft involved, combined with access to the unique surface-to-air threats that are generated at the Nevada Test and Training Range.

Though 142nd Wing Airmen were fulfilling a supporting role for WIC, the mission provided opportunities for Airmen to gain new experiences and knowledge through their participation in training.

123rd Fighter Squadron pilot, Capt. Jordan Zamora supported WIC along with several other pilots from his squadron. He remarked on the uniqueness of the training and the opportunities it has presented.

"It's been mine and a few other young guys' first time flying and fighting with so many other aircraft in the sky," said Zamora. "It's been great to see the

interoperability and integration with us and other fighters like the F-15E and F-22. It's easily been the best training and learning opportunities I've had in my young career."



Courtesy photo provided by the 142nd Wing  
142nd Wing Airmen gather for a group photo at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., on April 19, 2024. These Portland based Air Guardsmen supported the U.S. Air Force's Weapons Instructor Course for two weeks in April.

Lt. Col. Jonathan Friedman, 123rd Fighter Squadron Commander and Detachment Commander for this temporary duty assignment emphasized the importance and impact of WIC, given the continuous emergence of novel threats as well as the anticipated arrival of the F-15EX at Portland Air National Guard Base, Oregon.

"The Weapons school is at the leading edge of developing and refining tactics against ever-increasing threats. Our missions here enable us to get a front row seat as many of these tactics are developed and refined by the best instructors in the Air Force," said Friedman. "The heavy integration with the F-15E Weapons School during this trip is especially helpful as the Air Force begins the process

of merging the F-15C, F-15E, and F-15EX communities."

While the pilots were training in the skies over Nellis, Maintenance Airmen worked hard to support these operations by launching and recovering aircraft, arming and disarming jets, and maintaining weapons and aircraft.

In supporting WIC, Munitions Airmen from the 142nd Maintenance Squadron had the opportunity to train on multiple air-to-ground munitions, including build-up, inspection, and tear-down of the various munitions used throughout the training.

Master Sgt. Terry Wise, a material and systems section chief with the 142nd Maintenance Squadron, explained that because Portland Air National Guard Base does not currently employ air-to-ground

munitions, training on this type of munitions is rare for Portland-based Guardsmen to come by. However, this training is made all the more valuable with the pending arrival of the EX.

"With the upcoming transition to the F-15EX for PANG, the hands-on training is extremely valuable," said Wise. "Our ammo troops got to see and work with air-to-ground munitions and are more prepared for the transition, having had the training opportunity while at WIC."

At the end of this training, these Oregon Guardsmen walked away with an enhanced understanding and competency which will give pilots and maintenance Airmen alike the ability to perform at the highest possible level.

## 142nd Wing enhances physical performance via Sparta Science Program

Story by Staff Sgt. Sean Campbell,  
142nd Wing Public Affairs

PORTLAND, Ore. – In a bid to strengthen unit preparedness for its members, the 142nd Wing has taken up the Sparta Science Program. The program is a physical health assessment that utilizes proprietary force plate technology.

Explaining the program's mechanics, Master Sgt. Lewis Phillips, a physical training leader with the 142nd Comptroller Flight, detailed how users are meant to engage with the force plates to collect data and evaluate various facets of their physical ability. Following their assessments, participants receive the results in an easy-to-understand document.

"[it] is important as it can help improve a subject's physical performance in many, if not all activities," said Phillips. "Its ability to identify strengths and weaknesses in its users is also very valuable and serves as a basis for improvement."

The system operates via force plates that scan and assess relay test data before sending it to an attached tablet. The equipment is research-grade and focuses on making the assessment quick, easy, and effective.

Capt. Daniel Delgado, a data analyst for the 142nd Civil Engineer Squadron, reflected on his impression of the Sparta assessment after a recent evaluation.

"I was pleasantly surprised by how simple the setup was. I was expecting a lot of sensors and some wearable device, but it was a platform with all the sensors inside," said Delgado. "Overall, I think this could be a really fun way to gamify fitness improvement amongst the Airmen on base. It adds a fun element of friendly

competition to our own individual fitness aspirations."

The assessment is comprised of several tests: a jump scan, a balance scan, and Isometric Mid-Thigh Pull (IMTP) Scan, which assesses absolute strength, rate of force development, and fatigue. Each portion targets different, specific aspects of physical ability.

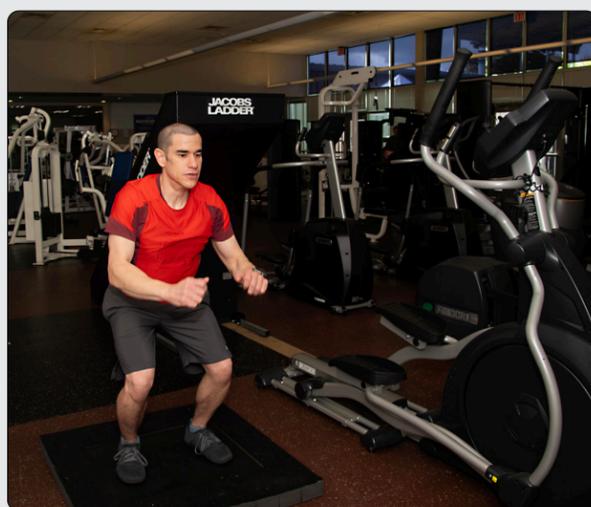


Photo by Master Sgt. Steph Sawyer, 142nd Wing Public Affairs  
ORANG Capt. Daniel Delgado, a data analyst for the 142nd Civil Engineer Squadron, prepares to jump during a Sparta Science Program evaluation at Portland Air National Guard Base, Ore., May 7, 2024. The program uses proprietary force plate technology to assess physical performance in an effort to help athletes prevent sports-related injury.

"It has helped identify strengths and areas for improvement for all users," Phillips said. "Additionally, its personalized workouts offer approachable and easy-to-follow exercises tailored to all fitness levels and specific to your goals. Its ability to identify imbalances within the body has helped our users focus our training on our weak points, which should reduce the probability of injuries occurring."

Caryn Robbins, a Customer Success Director for the Sparta Software Corporation, explained that the Sparta jump scan can provide information which is meant to help users identify and understand areas of their bodies' performance that need improvement. Assessment scores can give users an indication of where they are currently and help them track and improve their scores over time.

"A great goal to start with is to train for load, explode, and drive to all exceed 50, and fall within 10 points of one another," said Robbins.

When taking Sparta scores into consideration, Robbins notes that fewer overuse injuries have been observed in those with higher (87+) scores compared to those with lower scores.

There are various incentives for members of the 142nd Wing to engage with the program, including assessing fitness goals which could include improving Air Force fitness scores or enhancing sports performance and general health and wellness.

In terms of overall unit readiness, Phillips emphasized the program's contribution through actionable data for injury prevention, optimized training, and objective assessment of personnel.

"By leveraging this technology, commanders can ensure their units are physically prepared for mission demands," he concluded.

The adoption of the Sparta Science program underscores the unit's commitment to leveraging innovative solutions to enhance operational readiness and individual performance.

## FEATURES

Story and photos by  
Senior Master Sgt. Jennifer Shirar,  
173rd Fighter Wing Public Affairs

**KLAMATH FALLS, Ore.** – When someone says fighter pilot...what do you picture? Perhaps a mustached doppelganger of Val Kilmer and Tom Cruise clad in aviator sunglasses strutting on to the flightline. And while there may be more than a few “Maverick” and “Ice Man” fighter pilots in the Land of No Slack, that is not the only persona one sees.

At this moment, there are two female fighter pilots assigned to the 114th Fighter Squadron, with one more waiting to join their ranks shortly. All three of them are playing different roles within the squadron.

1st Lt. Annalisa Sanfilippo is a current F-15 B-course student. She commissioned out of the Air Force Reserve Officer's Training Corps at University of Oklahoma in 2022.

Sanfilippo says she initially did not plan to become a fighter pilot. “I have always been obsessed with the sky between weather and aviation. I didn't come from a military or aviation family, so I never really knew flying was an option for me.”

Sanfilippo says she had planned to become a weather officer, but after shadowing a fighter pilot her sophomore year, she knew this was exactly what she wanted to do.

“The Eagle is a beast!” she adds. “It can be the most exhilarating, exciting, fun, stressful, confusing, and painful experience all at once. It is an absolute blast to fly.”

Once she completes the B-Course, Sanfilippo will be assigned to the 144th Fighter Wing in Fresno, California.

On the other side of the coin is Major Shanae Coker. Coker is a permanent party member of the 114th FS and is assigned as the chief of scheduling and safety liaison for the unit. Additionally, she flies as a two-ship flight lead for student training.

Coker initially commissioned through Officer Candidate School at the Coast Guard Academy in 2013. She began flying for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration as part of the Hurricane Hunter unit until 2020 when she decided to transfer to the Oregon Air National Guard.



USAF Major Shanae Coker, an F-15C Eagle pilot with the 114th Fighter Squadron, inspects the aircraft prior to flight on Oregon June 15, 2023. Coker is part of a small group in the Air Force where only three percent of female pilots fly fighter aircraft.

“I didn't know that aviation was something I'd become passionate about and certainly didn't think I would become a fighter pilot,” says Coker. “During my first flying lesson I was hooked and knew aviation was a career I would be passionate about.”

Coker will continue to fly the Eagle until she heads off to become an F-35 instructor pilot as part of the initial pilot cadre for Kingsley Field as they plan to transition to the F-35 when the Record of Decision is signed in 2026.

Another future F-35 Instructor pilot in the squadron is Capt. Deborah Guthmann.

Guthmann commissioned into the active duty Air Force as a physical therapist. While at Luke Air Force Base, she worked in the fighter squadron and closely with the fighter pilots there. After being exposed to the flying community, she realized she

## Shattering the Glass Ceiling at Mach 2.5



U.S. Air Force 1st Lt. Annalisa Sanfilippo, Capt. Deborah Guthmann, and Major Shanae Coker, all of the 114th Fighter Squadron, pause for a group photo with an F-15 Eagle at Klamath Falls, Oregon on May 9, 2024. The three pilots highlight the unique role women in aviation play, and encourage young women to pursue a career as a fighter pilot.

belonged in the air.

“I wanted to be at the forefront of the mission,” says Guthmann. “I've served Army special forces, Air Force EOD, and fighter pilots and knew I fit the personality and desire of someone who wants to protect, grow, and do what others cannot.”

Guthmann was hired by Team Kingsley in 2023 and is currently waiting for her pilot training dates. In the meantime, she takes every opportunity she can to fly in the backseat of the Eagle.

“It is like alternating between a roller coaster and the most intense peace you've ever experienced,” she says.

Sanfilippo, Coker, and Guthmann are not the first female pilots at Kingsley Field.

Col. Carol Kohtz was the first permanent party female F-15 pilot, as well as the 173rd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron commander in 2016. She has since moved on and is now the wing commander at the 149th Fighter Wing in San Antonio Texas.

Multiple female student pilots have tested their mettle in the F-15 B-course. In fact, the 114th FS trained four female Eagle Drivers over the last year.

“While the initial look at those numbers, it may not seem like a lot, but when you compare them to the number of female pilots in the Air Force, it's huge,” said Lt. Col. Thomas McGee, 114th Fighter Squadron commander.

In 2023, there were only 103 female fighter pilots across the entire U.S. Air Force. Of the 10,964 rated pilots total in the Air Force today, only 708, or 6.5 percent, are women. The majority of those women fly mobility aircraft, and fewer than three percent fly fighters.

“There's not a ton of lady pilots,” said Guthmann. “So, it's a tight knit group who absolutely want to raise each other up.”

Shattering that proverbial glass ceiling into the fighter pilot world has taken some time.

In 1948 President Harry S. Truman signed the Women's Armed Service Integration Act allowing women to receive regular permanent status in the armed forces.

It wasn't until 1976 that they were allowed enter into the aviation career field in the Air Force. The first class of ten women earned their pilot wings from undergraduate pilot training in September 1977.

However, it wouldn't be until the early 1990s that a woman would hold the title of fighter pilot. Jeannie Leavitt became the first

female Air Force fighter pilot in 1993, flying the F-15E Strike Eagle.

While the road for these trailblazers has often been fraught with contention and skepticism by some, Coker says today's culture is much different.

“I haven't found any hurdles or things to ‘overcome’ as a female pilot that would be different for anyone else going through this program,” she says. “I enjoy being a part of my squadron and have felt a part of the fighter pilot culture and community since day one.

I am thankful for women who were pioneers in this career field so that my experience could be what it is today.”

Guthmann concurs. “The jet doesn't care who you are; neither does any enemy,” she says. “Therefore, being a female fighter pilot is being a fighter pilot--work hard and be a good human.”

McGee says these women represent a trailblazing force in aviation, shattering stereotypes and proving their exception skills in the demanding field of aerial combat. “Ultimately, their

presence underscores the diverse talents that contribute to the success and safety of every mission, enriching the dynamics of the aviation community,” he adds.

For all three of these women, flying a fighter jet was not their original plan. Perhaps because fighter pilot is not considered a traditional female occupation, but that is something all three of them hope to change.

Guthmann wants to encourage all women who have an interest in aviation to consider the fighter pilot trajectory. “Don't count yourself out; don't make excuses; don't use your age, situation, or current trajectory as a reason not to,” she says. “If you have a desire, find a mentor and get exposed to the life of a fighter pilot.”

Coker and Sanfilippo agree.

“Go for it,” Coker says. “There's great camaraderie within the fighter pilot culture and it's an amazing profession within the bounds of aviation.”

“I can't wait to be your wingman one day!” adds Sanfilippo.

A traditional fighter pilot embodies the blend of confidence, precision, and fearlessness. Clad in a classic flight suit, with the iconic helmet and visor, they exude a sense of adventure and mastery over the skies. With a history steeped in valor and daring exploits, the traditional fighter pilot represents the epitome of courage and skill in the field of aviation.



USAF 1st Lt. Annalisa Sanfilippo, an F-15C Eagle student pilot with the 114th Fighter Squadron, checks the maintenance forms before a training mission at Kingsley Field in Klamath Falls, Oregon, on May 9, 2024.

## FEATURES

# Guardsmen celebrate unity and cultural awareness at Diversefest 2024

Story and photos by Maj. Chris Clyne,  
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

SALEM, Ore. – The Oregon National Guard hosted its second annual Diversefest on June 18, 2024, at the Maj. Gen. George White Building Foyer in Salem, Oregon. The event, organized by the Joint Diversity Executive Council, aimed to celebrate diversity, equity, and inclusion within the organization and the local community.

Brig. Gen. Alan Gronewold, Adjutant General, Oregon, commenced the event with a speech highlighting the significance of diversity and inclusion in the National Guard. Following his remarks, Mr. Pedro Velasquez, the State Equal Employment Manager, described Diversefest as “the Oregon National Guard’s efforts at a broad look at all of the special observances and being able to bring our local community affiliates and in different vendors to be able to provide samplings, performances

and speak on tough conversations regarding diversity, equity inclusion, and to help us move towards a more unified organization and to develop cultural awareness for each other.”

This year’s Diversefest incorporated feedback from the previous year, including new partners and performances. “Last year we had a mariachi band; this year, we have a Nigerian dance group,” Velasquez explained. Brig. Gen. Jenifer Parry, JDEC Chair, also delivered remarks emphasizing embracing diversity and fostering an inclusive environment within the Oregon National Guard.

One of the highlights of Diversefest 2024 was the remote appearance of Sarah Jane, a TED Talk speaker and President and CEO of World Unity Inc. “Having her there on Zoom with us talking about her experiences, how important it is for us as an organization, and why diversity matters. That was a massive highlight,” Velasquez remarked.

The event also featured captivating performances showcasing various cultures, including Persian music and Celtic heritage. Velasquez emphasized the transformative power of self-awareness and sharing experiences, stating, “We all have different upbringings, different cultures, and the more we can share with each other and seek to understand one another, the more

enlightened and inspired we become. This actually brings us closer together and makes us a more unified, connected organization where we all have a specialty, a theme that we’ve experienced



Members of the ArtMax Academy, a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting world music, arts, and languages, perform a captivating musical piece during the Oregon National Guard’s Diversefest 2024 on June 18, 2024. The trio’s performance showcased the rich cultural diversity to attendees and highlighted the importance of fostering understanding and appreciation for different traditions and backgrounds.



Enendeni Nigerian dance group members deliver a vibrant performance during the Oregon National Guard’s Diversefest 2024 at the Maj. Gen. George White Building Foyer in Salem, Ore., June 18, 2024.

in our youth that we educate others, and then they would educate us. That’s what diversity is really about: opportunity for us to step outside, learn more, and experience something new.”

Diversefest 2024 was a resounding success, not just because of the efforts of the organizers but also because of the active participation and support of the members of the Oregon National Guard and the local community. The event celebrated the rich tapestry of cultures and experiences that makes the entire organization stronger and more united. It showcased the power of understanding, sharing, and embracing the diverse backgrounds and integral role of each event member in this celebration.

## Commander’s Key Support Program aims to make a difference for Portland Airmen

Story and photo by Tech. Sgt. Alexander Frank,  
142nd Wing Public Affairs

PORTLAND, Ore. – Whether dealing with the stressors of deployment or simply juggling the various responsibilities that come with being a drill-status guardsman, navigating military life can be a challenge.

At the 142nd Wing, The Commander’s Key Support Program seeks to pair Airmen with volunteers within the military community who can help guide them through the noise of military service.

The program consists of military-connected volunteers who have first-hand experience navigating issues Oregon guardsmen are likely to encounter during their time in service. According to Anndi Moore, a Key Support Liaison and military spouse, the program is designed to be a communication bridge between command teams and Airmen.

“The Key [Support] Program is a program where each unit command appoints a person that is a liaison that provides information,” said Moore. “The overall goal is to provide support and resources to our families and Airmen.”

Program volunteers work in a variety of capacities; from helping set up base-wide events, to working closely with an assigned squadron. It works to create a blanket of support in hopes of bringing the local military community together.

“At the unit level we provide services to assist during deployments, keep up-to-date resources, and be the first line of information to the families from the Command Staff,” Moore said. “We [also] assist with base events...such as back-to-school supply drives, Easter egg hunts, and Family Day that [works] to bring everyone together.”



Volunteers with the Commander’s Key Support Program (CKSP) pose for a group photo at the Resiliency Center on Portland Air National Guard Base, Portland, Oregon on May 4, 2024. The CKSP is a volunteer organization where service-connected volunteers work to provide support and resources to our families and Airmen.

Oregon Air National Guard Col. Michael Kosderka, 142nd Wing commander, champions the pivotal role of the CKSP as a way to foster a more connected and supportive military community.

“As the commander of the 142nd Wing, I recognize the indispensable role of the Key Support Program in fostering a resilient

and connected community among our personnel. [They’re] dedicated to providing vital support and resources to ensure our Airmen and their families thrive on and off duty.”

Recently, the U.S. Air Force rebranded the program from the “Key Spouse Program”, to the current “Commander’s Key Support Program”. The move was done to encourage volunteers from a variety of military-connected backgrounds to offer their expertise to help service members.

“We want to strengthen the sense of family readiness and resilience across our force,” said Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. David Allvin. “While spouses remain central to the program, opening the aperture for others to fill these important roles increases our ability to get information on resources and support programs to families.”

As the program evolves and expands to capture more volunteers within the local military community, Moore hopes that new volunteers find the same fulfillment she’s had during her years of service within the program.

“My hope is that the program continues to grow and that more people will be willing and able to volunteer,” said Moore. “I have seen many families helped during their time of need and enjoyed watching them all participate in various base events, [and] that is success to me.”

## FEATURES

## Getting the job done, he's 'Killen it'

Story and photos by Sgt. 1st Class Anita Stratton,  
 Joint Forces Headquarters Public Affairs

SALEM, Ore. – “I always knew I would do one of two things – I was going to be in the military or I was going to be a medical provider,” said Oregon Army National Guard Maj. Christopher “Doc” Killen, unit commander 102nd Civil Support Team. He managed to achieve them at the same time. Growing up watching “G.I. Joe,” Killen decided “That’s what I want to do!” After graduating from high school in North Wilkesboro, North Carolina, Killen enlisted in the North Carolina Army National Guard as a logistical specialist.

His medical education began at age 13.

“I was part of a state program that gave opportunities for kids to be exposed to the field they want to work in as adults,” Killen said. “I started at my hometown hospital pushing a mop bucket, cleaning bathrooms, and waxing floors. Later, I was offered a position in the radiology department transporting patients and making copies of x-rays.”

He deployed in 2002 with the 505th Engineer Combat Battalion, 130th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade.

“I liked being a noncommissioned officer. It was a lot of fun,” he said, “but I wanted to have more input at the table about leadership. I felt there were some things I could provide to the National Guard.”

Killen attended Officer Candidate School in 2008. He participated in the traditional year-long program at Fort Liberty, North Carolina. While at OCS, he also completed his Bachelor of Science degrees in Chemistry and Molecular Biology, receiving Honors College for both, and graduated in May 2009.

Serving as a platoon leader and detachment commander for the 505th Engineers in 2010, he was commissioned as a U.S. Army Engineer. During that time, he decided to apply for Physician’s Assistant school.

Accepted at Duke University, Durham, Killen graduated in 2012 with a Master in Health Science degree while serving as the Medical Service Officer with their Medical Detachment. He was the first resident to do a one-year physician’s assistant internal medicine residency program through the Veterans Administration.

In 2013, Killen transferred from the North Carolina Guard to the ORNG when he moved to the Pacific Northwest for a new civilian job and a position at Medical Command.

He deployed to Afghanistan in 2014 with the 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry Regiment. After returning home, Killen worked at Oregon Health & Science University as an Infectious Disease and Cardiology PA. He then deployed to Kuwait in 2016 as a PA and officer-in-charge of the battalion aid station with the Arkansas Army National Guard’s 77th Combat Aviation Brigade.

Killen believes it is important to experience a deployment at least once. “You should, at least, be on one tour overseas to get out of your comfort zone,” he said. “You get this whole broadening experience that you don’t get if you don’t do it. It gives you a huge appreciation of the people back home – This is what I am doing this for, right here.”

After returning from deployment, Killen wanted a full-time position with the Oregon Guard, “My family is my priority,” he said. The Civil Support Team had an opening, so he interviewed and was hired. “It was perfect timing.”

A CST is a first responder team and a liaison between military and civilian agencies during emergency response events. They can respond to either intentional or

unintentional hazardous materials threats. “We ask what they need and what we tailor our response to that,” he said. His team duties include being on-call as the incident OIC but he is mainly the team PA. As PA, he also conducts flight physicals.

Killen was not qualified to give flight physicals however, he attained his Aeromedical Physician’s Assistant Certification to support operations.



ORARNG Maj. Christopher “Doc” Killen, a physician’s assistant with the 102nd Civil Support Team, conducts a physical health assessment (PHA) for 102nd Civil Support Team, a personnel specialist with the 1249th Engineer Battalion, both with the ORARNG, April 4, 2024.

“He got certified as a flight surgeon and volunteers to provide flight physicals to our flight crew Monday-Friday so that our drilling and technician aviators can get their flight physicals done during non-drill weekends,” said Lt. Col. Adam Lulay, 102nd CST Commander. Killen is the only full-time PA in the ORARNG and the only flight surgeon in the State.

“My CST duties come first because that is my actual position,” Killen said. “My commander allows me to help the aviation side of the house unofficially.”

His duties include preparing for the Standardization, Evaluation, and Assistance Team inspection, which is the unit’s emergency response and readiness. Evaluations are given and training proficiency to support civil authorities in a domestic incident is reviewed. They look at how well the unit deploys the team and conducts interagency coordination. Killen received 100% on all the SEAT requirements and the highest score for all Training Proficiency Evaluation.

“The outside evaluators check your books to see if you are doing things correctly: keeping accurate logs of personnel, equipment, and reports, and following all the national guidelines for CSTs,” Killen said. “I’ve always done well in those. Working as a logistical specialist there was always attention to detail,” he added.

Killen said preparation is necessary for success. “It’s not hard if you prepare,” Killen said. “Look at what is required for success then work backward figuring out what you need to do. You don’t have to do it all at once. Figure out what your resources are.”

Teamwork leads to success, he added. “The 102nd team has been great,” he said. “I can depend on them for their part of the SEAT inspection and the evaluations for my success.

They can depend on me to provide full physicals for them to be successful in theirs.”

Successful evaluations with the CST motivated his return to North Carolina to help his former state with their 2-year SEAT inspection. His expertise aided the unit in achieving top scores and set them up for success.

Killen is passionate about all Soldier care and uses opportunities to volunteer, ensuring the Oregon National Guard remains successful.

“He’s been a great PA for the 102nd CST, but he is also very generous with his time to the rest of the Oregon Army National Guard,” Lulay said. “He volunteers time to support MEDCOM during physical health assessments on drill weekends to help them get our Soldiers deployable-ready.”

CST units are not required to do drill weekends because they spend most of their time on-call. However, Killen considers his service a personal enjoyment.

“I think it’s helping MEDCOM, but I can do what I want: talk to ‘some Joe’ and figure out if he has a medically disqualifying condition for an upcoming deployment,” he said. “It doesn’t feel like volunteering-it’s just fun.” Killen was requested to assist with other medical-related issues outside of the CST. He has participated in 126 assists for training year 2024 so far. His assistance and the level of care encourage other service members. “He is always available, always volunteering to help,” said Sgt. First Class Daniel Huynh with the 1249th Engineer Battalion. “He’s one of the best providers we’ve got, hands down.”

He volunteers more off-duty time at local free clinics in Salem and Dallas. “I feel like volunteering is necessary for the community,” Killen said, “but also for your personal growth and keeping a good character.”

“It’s a blessing--a labor of love,” he said. “I still get to use my primary care skills and keep on top of those while at the clinics.”

He also volunteers one day a week at the Willamette Valley Endocrinology Clinic in Salem. “He is a great provider. He takes on new patients which opens the schedules for the other providers,” said Ave Ross, office manager for the endocrinology clinic. “He is empathetic, gentle, and gives very effective inpatient care,” she said.

“Endocrinology is a lot of internal medicine. It’s tough medicine for me but a good challenge,” he added. “It helps my team members if I am challenged like that and to grow.”

Killen avails himself to his team and colleagues. “There were times we were able to collaborate and I have contacted him with questions about certain medical conditions,” said Maj. Naomi Shantz, chief nurse at MEDCOM.

Maj. Killen provided a class at the local Indian Health Services with the Chemawa Clinic in Salem where Shantz is the primary caregiver at the clinic. She provides professional development to her staff through a ‘lunch and learn’ program. “Major Killen was able to come and teach a class on thyroid disease and management, making sure we are managing that specific endocrine issue,” Shantz said. “We learned a lot.”

“His generosity of time will be a great motivation and inspiration of Selfless Service for our Soldiers and Airmen in the Oregon National Guard,” Lulay said.



Christopher “Doc” Killen, a physician’s assistant with the Oregon Army National Guard, consults with a patient at the Willamette Valley Endocrinology Clinic in Salem, on April 12, 2024.

## FEATURES

## Strength beyond service: Oregon Guardsman wins bodybuilding competition

Story by Staff Sgt. Sean Campbell,  
142nd Wing Public Affairs

PORTLAND, Ore. – Around a year and a half ago, Senior Airman Michaela Thompson, 142nd Civil Engineer Squadron firefighter, was training for a marathon and then decided to switch gears and get into weight training. She found a powerlifting gym and a coach and after a little while of training, her coach recommended she compete because of her enthusiasm and natural skill.



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Alexander Frank, 142nd Wing Public Affairs

Oregon Air National Guard Senior Airman Michaela Thompson, 142nd Civil Engineer Squadron, pauses for a photograph in front of an F-15 Eagle static display at the Portland Air National Guard Base, Portland, Oregon on April 17, 2024.

As an individual inclined towards diving headfirst into challenges, Thompson embraced the opportunity. She started training in December and in April, dedicated herself to preparing for competition. On September 2nd, she made her debut in a show, marking approximately 20 weeks of intense preparation. Competing in the bikini class at the Washington State Olympic Naturals in Seattle, Thompson emerged victorious, clinching first place.

Thompson's coach was shocked when she won, but both he, her gym community, and

her fellow guard members were excited and thought highly of her accomplishment.

"I didn't expect to win," said Thompson. "It was supposed to just be like a feeler show. And then because of that win, I got an invite to a show in the UK this year. And then I'm chasing my pro card for the bikini and figure division this year. So I'm excited."

Thompson found the allure of weightlifting after giving birth to her first child. She was looking for a way to better prioritize herself in a way that was healthy so she started getting into lifting.

"I liked that there is this really big mental challenge behind lifting, especially with bodybuilding training in particular," said Thompson. "You train till failure every time. It was surprising to recognize when I thought I was at failure versus what true failure was."

In pushing herself to the point of absolute failure, she realized she could get 5, 6, 7 more reps than what her mind was telling her. This increased her self-confidence and trust in herself, allowing her to push just as hard and with the same vigor in other aspects of her life.

When prepping for a competition, Thompson looks at it as more of a mental endeavor than a physical one. When she was preparing for her first competition last September, she ended up going on a two-week temporary duty assignment or TDY with her firefighting team to Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada. During this trip, Thompson had to

maintain her strict diet which included figuring out how to meal prep at the fire station and abstaining from alcohol.

Thompson wears two hats in the guard. Working both as Commander Support Staff for the 142nd Maintenance Group as well as a firefighter for the 142nd Civil Engineer Squadron.

"What I want to do and what I love to do is being a firefighter," said Thompson. "Another one of the things I'm good at is working with people. CSS allows me to have a customer service side working with people as well. I'm really good on the administrative side so I can help solve problems as they come."

Thompson's father, an Aerospace Ground Equipment supervisor serving in the 142nd Maintenance Squadron, showcased just how hard bodybuilding can be through his own dedication to physical fitness.

"My dad was a bodybuilder back in the day," said Thompson. "So he has understood the sacrifices that are needed and how hard it is mentally. You get really tired towards the end, but you still have to hit every single target."

Starting in mid-April, Thompson will begin prepping again for her next competition in July. This competition will be in Vancouver, Washington. After that, she will be competing in the United Kingdom in October. Depending on how both of these competitions go for Thompson, she is hoping to get an invite to the World's Competition in Boston.



Photo courtesy from Michaela Thompson  
Senior Airman Michaela Thompson strikes a pose with her father, Senior Master Sgt. Jay Thompson, during the Washington State Olympic Natural 2023 bodybuilding competition, in Seattle, where she took 1st place in the bikini class, on Sept. 2, 2023.

## Ensuring F-15 Eagle readiness with the practice of 'parts cannibalization'

Story and photos by  
Airman 1st Class Adriana Scott,  
173rd Fighter Wing Public Affairs

KLAMATH FALLS, Ore. – In the heart of Kingsley Field's Maintenance Group a crucial role is being played by a single individual, Staff Sgt. Boua Her of the 550th Fighter Squadron, whose efforts ensure the continued readiness of the F-15 Eagle fleet. Recently appointed as the 173rd Maintenance Group "CANN" Manager, Her has quickly shown his capabilities of filling a position typically held by someone of a much higher rank.

"In the three months Her has been working as a cannibalization manager, we have processed more than 20 CANN actions to facilitate 747 flying hours and saved the Air Force approximately \$614,000 in high demand low density assets," said Senior Master Sgt. Casey Rietdyk, 173rd Maintenance Squadron production superintendent. "That's huge!"

Cannibalization - a term that might sound dramatic but is a vital practice in aircraft maintenance - describes the process of salvaging parts

from one aircraft that already has a problem to revive a different aircraft.

Instead of two broken aircraft with two different problems, the unit now only has one aircraft awaiting parts for two issues. This method not only saves time but also saves the Air Force a considerable amount of money.

"If I take one of my parts and give it to them, then they will be able to fly the next day or so, depending on how major the maintenance," Her said.

With airplanes that are older than the pilots who fly them and the maintainers who fix them, receiving parts from the supply system can be extremely difficult and time consuming.

For example, in a recent "CANN" there was an F-15 that had a leak on the nose of the jet. Luckily, Her was able to replace it using the part from the CANN jet. However, Her says to get that part from the supply system could take up to seven months or longer.

Her's placement into the "CANN" Manager position was not an accident, his supervisors Senior Master Sgt. Zack Stone, Aircraft Maintenance Squadron production superintendent and Rietdyk had a major part in his placement.



U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Boua Her, 550th Fighter Squadron, sorts through cannibalized parts from a broken F-15 at Kingsley Field in Klamath Falls, Oregon, April 24, 2024. Her was hand-selected as the 173rd Maintenance Group "CANN" manager, a position responsible for pulling useable parts from a broken jet to revive a different aircraft quickly.

"We hand selected Boua for his attention to detail, dedication, knowledge base, and prior R&R experience," said Rietdyk, highlighting the unique blend of qualities that make Her an ideal fit for the critical position.

Her is originally from Alaska and has been in the active-duty Air Force for 11 years. Prior to becoming the CANN Manager, he was a flightline crew chief at Kingsley Field. When Her first heard of the opportunity he thought the job was interesting, and was excited to jump right in.

"I like the job because knowing that I can help someone by providing them an aircraft part, and having that jet fly within the next day, is a great feeling," Her said.



U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Boua Her, 550th Fighter Squadron, pulls apart from a "CANN" F-15 Eagle at Kingsley Field, Klamath Falls, Oregon.

## AZUWUR

## HONOR AND REMEMBER: MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR ARMY MAJOR (RET.) CHARLES LARRY DEIBERT

## AZUWUR

Oregon &amp; Military History

Feature story and photos by John Hughel,  
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

**CLACKAMAS, Ore.** – A memorial service with full military honors was held for U.S. Army Major (ret.) Charles Larry Deibert at Willamette National Cemetery in Clackamas, Oregon on May 17, 2024. A recipient of The Distinguished Service Cross for his service during combat operations in Vietnam, Deibert served in the Oregon Army National Guard for 15 years and would later serve for five years in the Army Reserves.

Initially enlisting in the Marine Corps in 1956, he joined the Oregon National Guard two years later in 1958. He attended Officer Candidate School, flight school, jump school and jungle survival school before volunteering for service in Vietnam in 1966. Assigned as a platoon leader to the 220th Reconnaissance Airplane Company, he would fly over 570 missions in the Cessna O-1 Bird Dog, directly saving hundreds of U.S. troops, making him one of the most decorated Oregon military aviators.

Describing Deibert's exemplary military service, Maj. Gen. (ret.) Raymond F. Rees, the former Adjutant General of the Oregon National Guard, offered a fitting eulogy for his long career of service to the United States Army.



Maj. Gen. (ret.) Raymond F. Rees, the former Adjutant General for the Oregon National Guard, delivers the Eulogy during the Memorial Service for Major (retired) Charles L. Deibert, held on May 17, 2024 at Willamette National Cemetery.

"To me as a fellow Vietnam veteran, Larry was representative of the vast majority of Vietnam veterans," Rees said. "That tens of thousands of those veterans served their nation, and returned to become productive members of society and leaders in their community."

During the eulogy, Rees described the accomplishment of years of military service but also touched on his impacts in the business community and the importance of family and faith.

"I hope to capture in a few words, the scope and breadth of a well lived life and the essence of a man who lived each day as a new day, a new opportunity and new adventure," Rees said, describing his all-embracing life. "He was successful in a wide ranging business career and as an entrepreneur...and was a caring and loving husband, father and patriarch. In all those roles he exhibited the same rock solid characteristics – (he was) creative, kind and adventurous."

In recounting his personality and military accomplishments, Rees revered the photo of Deibert on the remembrance program cover that reflects, "his gregarious nature, his self-confidence...and along with an impressive array of awards and decorations."

In describing his military awards, Rees said that those



The Presentation of the American Flag is performed by the Oregon Army National Guard Funeral Honor Guard members during the Memorial Service for Maj. (ret.) Charles Larry Deibert held at Willamette National Cemetery, Clackamas, Oregon. During his military career, Maj. Deibert was awarded The Distinguished Service Cross during combat operations in Vietnam.

with military experience, "would be drawn to the first award on the top row – that's The Distinguished Service Cross, second only to The Medal of Honor for courage and gallantry, extraordinary heroism."

Recounting the missions that Deibert mounted, Rees said the aviators who flew O-1 Bird Dogs or otherwise known as the 'Myth Makers,' "flew just a few hundred feet above the jungles of Vietnam. Flying virtually alone, vulnerable to every weapon and seeking out the enemy and calling in badly needed air and arterial support."

In Deibert's official citation for his Distinguished Service Cross, for his actions on September 10, 1967, in the Republic of Vietnam, he "distinguished himself with extraordinary heroism with operations against an armed hostile force with exceptional gallant actions," as he supported a Marine battalion engaged in battle with an estimated two-regiment North Vietnamese Army force.

The excerpt also stated that "facing extreme dangers of being shot down by friendly artillery barrages and hostile anti-aircraft fire, [then] Captain Deibert flew into the area, making several low passes through a curtain of continuous fire, helping locate enemy troop concentrations."

After advising the Marines of the enemy situation, Deibert called for tactical air support and continued making low level flights over enemy strongpoints.

Among his other military awards, Deibert was recognized with The Distinguished Flying Cross [two awards], The Bronze Star, The Meritorious Service Medal, Air Medal, The Army Commendation Medal, Presidential Unit Citation, Army Parachute Badge, and Army Senior Aviation Badge and other accolades.

In reminiscing about his life-long friend, David Winterholler called Deibert, "a brother from a different mother," during remembrance remarks. The two attended Officer Candidate School together and then on to flight school at Fort Novosel (formerly Fort Rucker), Alabama.

"Whatever the mission he was assigned, he would not only perform it, but go the extra mile in areas they didn't expect him to go to and with all the energy available to him," Winterholler said, describing his longtime friend. "Cruising at 95 miles per hour in the single engine Bird Dog, with 578 missions completed – shows that he was a man of dedication and courage."

Winterholler said his outlook on life, despite personal setbacks, only made him a more determined leader.

"I never saw him down, he always had a positive attitude as a leader in both the military and the business world. Taking on many endeavors, he retired at the rank of Major, with all his accomplishments and became a successful businessman."

Deibert served as the National Commander of the Legion of Valor from 2001-2002. After his retirement from the military, he was appointed as the Civilian Aide to the U.S. Secretary of the Army from 2003 to 2017. On August 28, 2010, the Charles L. Deibert Operations Facility was dedicated in his honor, which is located adjacent to McNary Field in Salem, Oregon. The new facility became the Headquarters for the Oregon Army National Guard's 2-641st Aviation Battalion and 102nd Civil Support Team.



Former Oregon National Guard Adjutants General Maj. Gen. Raymond F. Rees, with wife Mary Lynn (left), Maj. Gen. (ret.) Michael Stencel and wife Sue (center) and Maj. Gen. Alexander Burgin (right) stand for the Presentation of Colors during the Memorial Service for Army Major (ret.) Charles Larry Deibert.

In closing his remarks, Winterholler quoted a passage from the writer Daniel Taylor, which he said defined Deibert's life and faith.

"We die because we have lived. We live in order to know and love the God who made us. In dying we become more real than we ever can be while part of this sorrowful world."

As he paused at the end of the eulogy, Rees summarized Deibert's remarkable list of feats, noting that his career was always about the next challenge, never looking back, and learning new lessons.

"He was a legend – and I wish I could be there today to honor a great American Soldier, aviator, Oregon Guardsman, Marine, public servant and yes, legend."



Maj. Gen. (ret.) Raymond Rees (left), along with former Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski (center-left), Brig. Gen. Alan Gronewold, Adjutant General, Oregon (center-right) and Susan Malone pause for a photo prior to the Memorial Service for Major (ret.) Charles L. Deibert.



File photo by ORARNG Sergeant Zachary Holden, 115th MPAD Oregon Gov. Ted R. Kulongoski (center), Maj. Gen. Raymond F. Rees, the Adjutant General, Oregon (center-right), Charles L. Deibert, civilian aide to the Secretary of the Army (center-left), Lt. Col. (ret.) Keith D. Bauder, Division Chief of the Combating Weapons of Mass Destruction Division (right), and Warrant Officer-1 David McPherson, cut the ceremonial cake during the dedication ceremony for the Charles L. Deibert Operations Facility, in Salem, Oregon on Aug. 28, 2010.