

ILLINOIS NATIONAL GUARD

PRAIRIE SENTINEL

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ILLINOIS NATIONAL GUARD PRAIRIE SENTINEL

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Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, The Adjutant General of Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National Guard, spoke to Legionnaires at the 105th Department of Illinois American Legion Convention July 12 at the Bank of Springfield Center, Springfield, Illinois. Boyd highlighted the American Legion's "Be the One" initiative, a program aimed at reducing veteran and service member suicide. Boyd urged the members to remain vigilant when talking to other veterans or service members because they may "Be the One" to save someone from suicide.

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Take it From the Top:

Senior Leaders' Corner

Illinois National Guard must reflect 'colorful tapestry' which makes up state and nation



Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, Adjutant General of Illinois, and Commander of the Illinois National Guard

"Americans are a unique people, a colorful tapestry of traditions and cultures woven into one vibrant society. The motto graven on our coins -- E Pluribus Unum -- reflects the rich diversity from which America draws its strength and vitality."

– President Ronald Reagan, September 20, 1986, Proclamation for Ethnic American Day.

The Illinois National Guard must reflect the diversity of both the State of Illinois and the United States of America. As President Reagan put it so eloquently, our nation's diversity is also our strength. "E Pluribus Unum" – From Many, One.

After I became The Adjutant General in May, you may have heard me say that I'm coming to a high school – or college – or vocational school – near you. The message I'm spreading is that if you are eligible or can become eligible for military service – no matter what your color, race, religious background, gender, or sexual orientation – then the Illinois National Guard has an opportunity for you.

Diversity is about including people from many different backgrounds and cultures – and their ideas and observations – into the defense of our state and nation. It ensures all have an equal opportunity to compete for advancement or specialized training. It is about the organization taking full advantage of our "colorful tapestry."

If you put the work in, this organization will offer continued opportunities for you to grow and develop. We will help you in your military and civilian careers and aspirations. We will recognize the time that your military commitment takes from your family by offering unique ways to enrich and strengthen your family life.

The data has shown that the Illinois National Guard for multiple years has done a fairly good job reflecting the State of Illinois in recruiting. There is still some work to be done, but, all-in-all, we are getting a good cross section of Illinois in our formations.

But recruiting is only one part of the equation. Retention is equally important. To retain talented people, we need take a good look in the mirror. The data has shown that as we move up in rank, we become less diverse. We are making progress in that area. If you look at the senior leadership now, we are more diverse than we were only a few years ago.

But there is still work to be done. Why do people of color and women leave the Illinois National Guard at greater percentages than white men? And what are those issues that lead people to leave the Illinois Army National Guard and the Illinois Air National Guard?

Some issues are at the national level, such as the lag in Army retention bonuses or student loan repayments. We must continue to do everything we can to address those issues here in Illinois and push our national leaders to help us resolve those problems. We recognize that

reliable and expedient pay – no matter what type of pay – is vital to Soldier and Airman morale.

There are also many things unit commanders and senior enlisted leaders can do to retain Soldiers and Airmen. They can offer challenging and interesting readiness training every day you are in uniform. They can take steps to ensure you are part of the team and have opportunities based on your talent and work ethic regardless of your color, race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or national origin.

They can help create a command climate free of sexual harassment and sexual assault. They can help create a supportive climate that helps address mental health issues free of stigma. They can help draw on community resources to help a Soldier or Airman struggling with addiction get back on the path to recovery.

And they can hold Soldiers and Airmen accountable for their actions. There also needs to be consequences for those who break the rules. Those consequences should be administered without malice and should be corrective. And they should be administered similarly and fairly – regardless of what the individual looks like.

In a 2019 study, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) found "that Black, Hispanic, and male service-members were more likely than White or female members to be the subjects of investigations...and to be tried by general and special courts-martial in all of the military services when controlling for attributes such as rank and education."

This study spurred multiple studies by the military services that found the same discrepancies throughout the DoD. It would be naïve to think the Illinois National Guard is immune to the same type of discrimination.

Maintaining discipline and good order is vital to being an effective

military. Unit commanders and senior enlisted leaders must hold their Soldiers and Airmen accountable. At the same time, take a good look at how you discipline and ensure you are being fair and unbiased.

We encourage Soldiers, Airmen, and civilian employees to maintain their individual readiness, build their resiliency skills, keep after their professional education, and uphold the Army and Air Force Values. One of the most important things they can do is tell their leadership how the

Illinois National Guard is doing and what it will take to have them stick with the organization.

Soon you will be asked to take part in the Defense Organizational Climate Survey or DEOCS. We need to know your thoughts, no matter what your background might be.

When you are asked, TAKE THE SURVEY! The more information we have, the better we can address issues and build on strengths.

Your leaders will read and act upon those survey results. I am a great

believer in servant leadership, and I know Maj. Gen. McDonough and Brig. Gen. Williams feel the same way. With all the years of experience and wisdom we've accumulated and even with the support of competent and knowledgeable staff and subordinate commanders, we don't always get it right all the time.

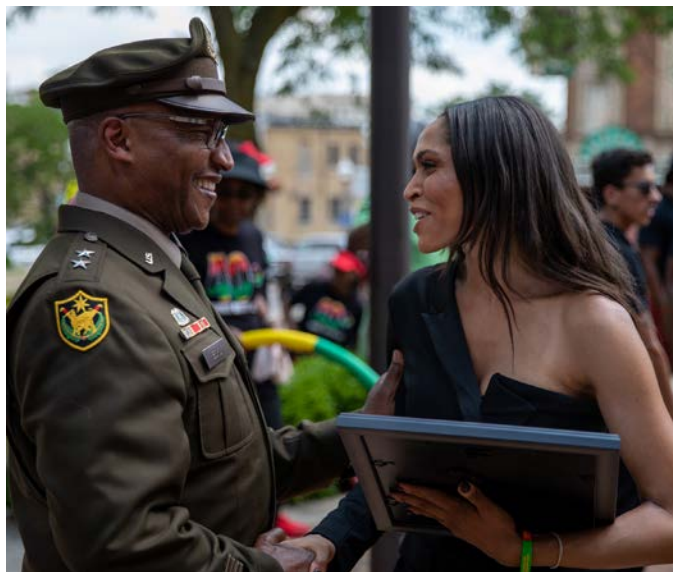
We need your feedback. With it, we can continually improve and prepare to accomplish our state missions and to fight and win our nation's wars.

TAG presented with Juneteenth Heritage and Excellence Award

Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, the 41st Adjutant General of Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National Guard, was presented the City of Aurora's Juneteenth Heritage and Excellence Award by Richard Irwin, the Mayor of Aurora, during the Scheketa Hart-Burns Juneteenth Flag Raising Ceremony in Aurora, June 19.

The ceremony featured performances from the 40+ Double Dutch Club and Dream Contemporary Dance and speeches from Maj. Gen. Boyd and Jasmine Minor, an ABC 7 Chicago news reporter. The ceremony ended with the raising of the Juneteenth flag.

Celebrated on June 19, Juneteenth commemorates the effective date of the emancipation of enslaved people in the United States. On that day in 1865, the Union Army announced to the people of Texas that all slaves were free under the terms of the 1862 Emancipation Proclamation.



Jasmine Minor, an ABC Channel 7 news reporter, congratulates Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, the Adjutant General of Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National Guard, for receiving the Juneteenth Heritage and Excellence Award during the city of Aurora's Juneteenth celebration June 19.



Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, the Adjutant General of Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National Guard, is pictured with Mayor Richard Irwin, Mayor of the city of Aurora, following the presentation of the Juneteenth Heritage and Excellence Award June 19.

***Photos by Pfc Charles Michaels
139th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment***



U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Erica McCrary, the State Equal Opportunity Advisor, Illinois National Guard; U.S. Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Rebecca L. Velazquez, Command Chief Master Sergeant, 183d Air Wing, Illinois Air National Guard; U.S. Army Col. Jason Carter, Director of Plans, Operations, and Training, Illinois Army National Guard; Staff Sgt. Andrea D. Warden, the Joint Force Headquarters Assistant Operations Noncommissioned Officer; U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Mathew V. Cain, Commander of Air Mobility Operations for the 183d Air Mobility Operations Squadron, 183d Air Wing, Illinois Air National Guard; and Mrs. Kelly Wood, Illinois National Guard Executive Assistant (retired) (left to right) participate in a discussion panel in celebration of Women's Equality Day at the Illinois Military Academy on Camp Lincoln Aug. 26.

Equal Employment Management Office Hosts Women's Equality Day Panel Discussion

By 2nd Lt. Trenton Fouche, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

As a young Soldier, U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Andrea D. Warden had no idea that she'd one day be making history. Graduating from the U.S. Army 92G Food Service Specialist Course in 2013 would be the beginning of a new journey. Although her career would start as a cook, three years later she'd find her true calling when the U.S. Army opened all combat arms positions to women in 2016.

Warden would take this opportunity to forge a new and

unlikely path as a 13B Cannon Crewmember. A role new to women at the time. Although she faced doubters, she proved them wrong, graduating second in her class and becoming the first, and currently the only, female Howitzer section Chief in the Illinois Army National Guard.

Today, Warden hopes to inspire other women who may be interested in pushing the envelope and defying expectations set on them by others.

"Whenever you challenge yourself

against adversity, there is nothing that is unattainable," Warden said. "It's important that women are given opportunities to try different careers and be there to support and mentor each other along the way."

In celebration of Women's Equality Day, the Illinois National Guard State Equal Employment Management Office hosted a panel discussion at the Illinois Military Academy on Camp Lincoln Aug. 26.

Facilitated by Sgt. 1st Class Erica



Col. Randy Edwards, Chief of Staff, Illinois Army National Guard, gives remarks during a discussion panel in celebration of Women's Equality Day at the Illinois Military Academy on Camp Lincoln Aug. 26. The discussion panel highlighted the passage of the 19th Amendment, the brave men and women who fought for universal suffrage, and the steps that our organization can continue to take to ensure gender equality.

McCrary, the State Equal Opportunity Advisor, the open discussion allowed panel members and the audience to share advantages and challenges within our organization.

Mrs. Kelly Wood, Illinois National Guard Executive Assistant (retired); U.S. Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Rebecca L. Velazquez, Command Chief Master Sergeant, 183d Air Wing, Illinois Air National Guard; U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Mathew V. Cain, Commander of Air Mobility Operations for the 183d Air Mobility Operations Squadron, 183d Air Wing, Illinois Air National Guard; U.S. Army Col. Jason Carter, Director of Plans, Operations, and Training, Illinois Army National Guard; and Staff Sgt. Andrea D. Warden, the Joint Force Headquarters Assistant Operations Noncommissioned Officer were selected to sit on the panel.

"We wanted to ensure that this panel was diverse and consisted of representatives across the force," McCrary said. "Not only have these individuals mentored women, but they have been mentored by women and seen how our organization has continued to change over the years."

U.S. Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Rebecca L. Velazquez began serving in August 1998 and graduated as a

Personalist in April 1999. Her career has taken her many places within the Active, Reserve and Guard components of the Air Force. She said that it's important to have a voice to

help continue to break barriers.

"Women's equality to me means recognizing and valuing the rights and capabilities of every woman," said Velazquez. "We must ensure that women have equal opportunities, representation, and respect in all aspects of life."

The discussion panel highlighted the passage of the 19th Amendment, the brave men and women who fought for universal suffrage, and the steps that our organization can continue to take to ensure gender equality. Although the Illinois Army National Guard has continued to change for the better, there are still limitations women face due to bias.

"Seeing Staff Sergeant Warden on the gunline did a lot to change the perception of women for a lot of male Soldiers," said U.S. Army Col. Jason Carter. "I think the Illinois National Guard, in particular, does a lot to break barriers. It's incredible to see. I have daughters and I tell them if they want something they have to go after it. Our Soldiers and Airmen in the Illinois National Guard make it happen."



Audience members listen during a Women's Equality Day discussion panel in celebration of Women's Equality Day at the Illinois Military Academy on Camp Lincoln Aug. 26. The discussion panel highlighted the passage of the 19th Amendment, the brave men and women who fought for universal suffrage, and the steps that our organization can continue to take to ensure gender equality.

Gov. Pritzker Names Colonel Lenny Williams as Commander of Illinois Army National Guard, Assistant Adjutant General – Army

Governor JB Pritzker has selected former Illinois Army National Guard Chief of Staff Colonel Lenny Williams as the next Assistant Adjutant General – Army of the Illinois National Guard and Commander of the Illinois Army National Guard.

With the selection, Colonel Williams will be promoted to Brigadier General and will serve as one of two Governor-appointed deputies to Major General Rodney Boyd, the Adjutant General of Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National Guard. The other deputy is Brigadier General Daniel McDonough, the Assistant Adjutant General – Air and Commander of the Illinois Air National Guard. Governor Pritzker promoted General Boyd from Assistant Adjutant General – Army to Adjutant General in May, leaving the vacancy to lead the Illinois Army National Guard.

“Colonel Williams understands the Illinois Army National Guard like no other. He spent nearly a decade as an enlisted Soldier and then rose through the ranks to Illinois Army National Guard Chief of Staff serving under General Boyd,” said Governor Pritzker. “He is well-respected throughout the organization as well as within Illinois’ emergency response and veteran communities.”

“Colonel Lenny Williams is an effective officer who leads with honesty and authenticity,” said Major General Boyd. “I’m honored and pleased that he chose to continue his service in the Illinois National Guard as Assistant Adjutant General – Army.”

“I am deeply grateful and humbled to be selected to lead the Illinois Army National Guard,” said



Col. Lenny Williams

Colonel Williams. “The greatest honor of my career is to continue to serve alongside our Soldiers, employees, and their families in this new capacity. Their service, commitment, and dedication to our organization, and our citizens never ceases to amaze me.”

Colonel Williams served as Illinois Army National Guard Chief of Staff from May 2020 to March 2024. The Chief of Staff is the state’s

senior federal Army National Guard management official, and the principle executive assistant and advisor to the Adjutant General. As Assistant Adjutant General – Army, he will serve as the advisor to the Adjutant General in all matters pertaining to supervision and management of the Illinois Department of Military Affairs and the Illinois Army National Guard, which consists of over 1,400 full-time



Left, Col. Lenny Williams, then-Chief of Staff of the Illinois Army National Guard, speaks at the Commander's Guidance Conference. Gov. JB Pritzker named Williams as the new Commander of the Illinois Army National Guard and Assistant Adjutant General - Army.

Soldiers and employees and over 10,000 citizen-Soldiers.

Colonel Williams joined the Illinois Army National Guard in 1991 and spent nine years as an enlisted Soldier and noncommissioned officer, reaching the rank of staff sergeant. In 2000 he earned a commission as a Field Artillery Second Lieutenant through the Officer Candidate School at the Illinois National Guard's 129th Regional Training Institute. He has held a variety of commands from company and battery-level commands to command of the 232nd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion and command of the 129th Regional Training Institute.

Colonel Williams has deployed overseas twice, to include deployment to Afghanistan as a Company Commander and Afghanistan Police Mentor Team Chief with the 27th and 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Teams under Joint Combined Task Force Phoenix.

Colonel Williams has numerous awards and decorations, most notably including the Combat Action Badge, Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star Medal, four Meritorious

Service Medals, and the Afghan Campaign Medal with Campaign Star, and various other federal and state awards.

He has served in key staff positions including officer-in-charge of the 2nd Battalion, 122nd Field Artillery Regiment; officer-in-charge of the 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team; officer-in-charge of the 108th Sustainment Brigade; Director of Logistics (G4); Director of Plans, Operations and Training (G3); and Illinois Army National Guard Chief of Staff.

Colonel Williams has completed multiple military education courses as a noncommissioned officer and officer. As a senior officer, he completed the Strategic Plans and Management Course, Joint Domestic

Operations Course, Dual Status Commander Course, Command and General Staff College, and the United States Army War College, where he earned a master's degree in strategic studies. He graduated from Southern Illinois University in Carbondale with a bachelor's degree in administration of justice. Colonel Williams is a qualified Field Artillery Officer, Military Police Officer, Logistics Officer and has successfully completed assignments in all these branches.

Colonel Williams grew up in central Illinois. He has served throughout Illinois during his career in the Illinois Army National Guard. He is married to Liane, and they have one daughter, Morgan and son-in-law Jimmy.



Col. Lenny Williams, then-Chief of Staff of the Illinois Army National Guard, speaks at the Illinois National Guard's 300th Anniversary event in Cerro Gordo in 2023. Gov. JB Pritzker named Williams as the new Commander of the Illinois Army National Guard and Assistant Adjutant General - Army.



Illinois Army National Guard Soldiers who served in the 1544th Transportation Company's 2004 deployment to Iraq unveil the road sign designating Highway 40 through Casey as the Army Specialist Charles Lamb Memorial Highway at a ceremony June 26 at Casey Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 5762 in Casey.

U.S. Highway 40 Through Casey Honors Fallen Illinois National Guard Soldier, Hometown Hero

By Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs Office

U.S. Highway 40 through Casey, Illinois, is now the "Army Spc. Charles Lamb Memorial Highway" after a ceremony on June 26 at the Casey Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 5762 nearly 20 years after the Illinois Army National Guard Soldier was killed during a mortar attack on a logistical base southwest of Baghdad, Iraq.

Lamb was assigned to the Illinois Army National Guard's 1544th Transportation Company, based in Paris, Illinois, which deployed to Iraq in 2004 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The 2004 deployment was among the toughest in modern history for the Illinois National Guard with five Soldiers killed in action and

several others wounded.

"As we gather here today, let us not only remember and honor Specialist Charles Lamb, but also all the brave men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to our country," said 1st Sgt. (ret.) Tyler Heleine, who grew up with Lamb in Casey and deployed with him to Iraq. "We had five heroes who were killed in action during the 1544th's 2004 deployment. Their families, friends, and fellow Soldiers, know we remember them and continue to say their names."

Heleine said some in attendance at the ceremony knew the five – Shawna Morrison, who died with Lamb on

Sept. 5, 2004, Jeremy Ridlen, Ivory Phipps, and Jessica Cawvey. "For those who did not, know each of them were special and the world is less without them in it," he said. "We must never forget the debt of gratitude we owe them, and we must strive to live our lives in a way that honors their memory and upholds the values they fought to protect."

Illinois Army National Guard Spc. (ret.) Aaron Wernz, who was wounded in the same mortar attack which claimed Lamb's life, said it was proper to dedicate this highway in honor of Lamb.

"As a fellow Soldier, we shared a battlefield with Charlie at the time of

his passing," he said. "I, as I would imagine like most fellow Soldiers who experience the loss of a fellow Soldier, hope that such a loss would be for the greater good. As a combat veteran, I know that Soldiers do not choose battles or wars. That is usually reserved by people far from where the actual fighting takes place."

Wernz said it becomes apparent very quickly you, as a Soldier in combat, ultimately end up fighting for each other.

He recalled the last time he saw Lamb.

"We were both in a small room, together after both being wounded at the same time," he said. "As our fellow Soldiers fought desperately to save our lives, I remember looking over at Charlie as he looked over at me. I imagined by the looks we exchanged we had the same mutual concern for each other's situation and worry for each other's condition."

Wernz said he does not know what Lamb's last thoughts or words were.

"I do know that when I started to regain consciousness at the Baghdad Hospital and even though I could not yet speak, one of my first thoughts were of Charlie," he said. "And

although I couldn't speak, I wrote down on a piece of paper Lamb's name and a question mark."

Wernz said it was at that moment he learned of Lamb's death.

"Although I will never know the final thoughts Charlie had on this earth, I imagine they were not all that different from mine that day," he said. "The concern of the condition of a fellow Soldier, a friend, that I knew was also injured and the desire that my family knew I loved them and always would."

Wernz said, as survivors, Soldiers must show respect to the sacrifice of our fallen Soldiers by standing watch over their memory and continuing on, as hard as that might be.

"Those of us who shared the battlefield that our friends gave their lives on and the family and friends they left behind, must go on and live the best life we can as a tribute to the lives our fellow Soldiers were denied the opportunity to live," he said. "Maybe someday if we can give the good life as a tribute to our fallen, maybe we will get to see that mischievous Charlie Lamb smile and he'll be there to greet us as a friend."

Sgt. 1st Class (ret.) Tony Edwards,

who retired from the 1544th Transportation Company after 24 years of service, said Lamb deserves the recognition.

"I never served as Lambchop's platoon sergeant, but I remember him," he said. "It probably doesn't feel like it's been 20 years for a lot of people. They say time heals all – but it never completely heals."

Heleine, who knew Lamb and his family since he was a child, said Lamb was a hero.

"The definition of a hero is a person who is admired or idealized for courage, outstanding achievements or noble qualities," he said. "We can easily insert Charles "Chuck" Lamb into that description."

Heleine said Lamb had a calmness about him with a smile that would light up a room and a presence that was always comforting to those around him.

"When I joined the 1544th in 2001, it was Chuck who made me feel comfortable right away," he said. "When we deployed to Iraq, I was a nervous 18-year-old kid who wasn't sure what I was getting myself into. But, again, it was Chuck who through his smile, confidence, calmness



Illinois State Sen. Chapin Rose presents copies of Joint House Resolution 50 to fallen Illinois Army National Guard Spc. Charles Lamb's family during a highway dedication ceremony June 26 at Casey Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 5762 in Casey. The resolution renames the section of Highway 40 which runs through Casey the Army Spc. Charles Lamb Memorial Highway.

and short conversations made an uncomfortable situation a little easier for me.”

Heleine said Lamb left a lasting mark on all who knew him, whether it was a friend, a brother-in-arms, or a loved one.

Heleine said the dedication of the Specialist Charles Lamb Memorial Highway must serve as a symbol of eternal gratitude, respect and remembrance for his sacrifice. “Thank you, Chuck for your service, your sacrifice, and your legacy,” he said. “You will never be forgotten.”

“There are no words to convey the immense appreciation and gratitude this state and nation owes Charles and his family members,” said State Sen. Chapin Rose, who represents Illinois’ 51st Senate District. “It is poignant House Joint Resolution 50 passed on Memorial Day weekend. This is some small way to honor Charles’ sacrifice to this country.”

State Rep. Adam Niemerg, who represents the 102nd Illinois Legislative District, said it was an honor and privilege to pass Joint House Resolution 50, renaming the road in honor of Lamb.

“I’m passionate about veterans and sacrifices they make on a daily basis for freedom and liberty, so I can live in a free country and pursue my dreams,” he said. “It’s all because of you guys. It’s because of the men and women in uniform who serve our country.”

Lamb’s family described him as a fun-loving person with a mischievous smile.

“When Uncle Charlie passed, I was three years old, Ambrosia was four, and Macy was one year old,” said Boston Ridgley, Lamb’s niece. “Our memories are very vague, but the ones we have, we continue to cherish. When we were little our Uncle Charlie loved to hide our most precious items on top of a curio cabinet in our house. One of our favorite items was our little Mickey Mouse watches.”

Ambrosia Branson, Ridgley’s sister and Lamb’s niece,” continued with the memory.

“We would jump for what seemed like hours to get our watches, and all the while our Uncle Charlie laughed and laughed and thought it was the funniest thing in the world,” she said.

“It is memories like these that

are the most precious to us,” said Ridgley’s and Branson’s sister Macy Roberts.

The three sisters thanked several people who made the ceremony possible.

“Thank you to Aunt Dixie (Clark) for being so persistent and getting a highway named in memory of Charlie, to Adam (Niemerg) and Chapin (Rose) for making this dream a reality, to our mamie and grandpa for raising such a great and selfless person,” Ridgley said. “Thank you especially to Uncle Charlie for making the ultimate sacrifice for our country and all of us. Although he can’t be here today, we extend a thank you to all of you for always remembering him and sharing all the memories you have of our Uncle Charlie.”

The three also read a special note from Lamb’s aunt, Dixie Clark.

“Thank you to all who helped along this journey,” Ridgley read. “Thank you to all who made this possible and to all who are in attendance today to honor Charlie’s memory. Thank you to the Casey VFW and its Auxiliary for all they have done to make this day memorable.”



Current and former Soldiers serving in the 1544th Transportation Company, based in Paris, gather for a group photo during a ceremony June 26 redesignating Highway 40 through Casey as the Army Specialist Charles Lamb Memorial Highway. Lamb, who grew up in Casey, was killed Sept. 5, 2004 during a mortar attack in Baghdad, Iraq. During the deployment, the unit lost five service members.



Kim and Bob Southworth unveil the highway sign honoring their son with family during a dedication ceremony on July 6 as a section of State Highway 133 through Oakland, was named the 1st Lt. Jared W. Southworth Highway. The dedication ceremony included Southworth's family and friends, among them more than a dozen of those who served with Jared in the Illinois Army National Guard's 2nd Battalion, 130th Infantry Regiment, 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team. Southworth, who was also an Oakland Police officer, was killed in action on Feb. 8, 2009 in Afghanistan.

State Highway 133 Through Oakland Honors Fallen Illinois National Guard Soldier, Hometown Hero

By Lt. Col. Brad Leighton, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

As Kim Southworth looked across the town park filled with people who came to honor her son, Illinois Army National Guard 1st Lt. Jared W. Southworth, she was filled with pride.

"This is an example of how small-town America honors one of our own," Kim told those who gathered on July 6 in the park to see State Highway 133 named the 1st Lt. Jared W. Southworth Memorial Highway as it passed through the family's hometown of Oakland, Illinois.

"Jared loved this community."

1st Lt. Southworth was killed with Staff Sgt. Jason Burkholder by an improvised explosive device on Feb. 8, 2009 in Helmand Province, Afghanistan. Southworth was serving as a platoon leader with

the 2nd Battalion, 130th Infantry Regiment, 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team.

Kim Southworth recalled how people lined the streets all the way from the airport to the cemetery on the cold February day when Jared came home. She said that she could not express it at the time, but the public support was a great comfort to her family then, and now.

"Thank you for the love and compassion you showed to our family," she said.

"If there is a more patriotic town in America, I don't know if I could find one," said State Sen. Chapin Rose, who helped shepherd the legislation dedicating the highway through the Illinois State Senate whereas State Reps. Adam Niemerg and Chris Miller

pushed it through the House of Representatives.

1st Lt. Southworth was also a part-time police officer in Oakland. The small town of about 730 people was joined by police departments from across Illinois in February 2009 when Jared returned home, Rose said. "They all came to Oakland, Illinois."

More than a dozen of those at the July 6 dedication ceremony couldn't attend Southworth's funeral in 2009 - those who served with Jared overseas in the Illinois Army National Guard's 2nd Battalion, 130th Infantry Regiment, 33d Infantry Brigade Combat Team.

"He was always on. He couldn't shut it off," said Sgt. 1st Class (retired) Heath Clark, who served as Southworth's platoon sergeant



Kim Southworth talks about her son's love of the community during a dedication ceremony on July 6 as a section of State Highway 133 through Oakland was named the 1st Lt. Jared W. Southworth Highway.

and helped the lieutenant prepare his Soldiers to deploy. "Sometimes he'd call in the middle of the night. He had so many ideas."

Clark said Southworth, who earned a Ranger Tab himself, worked very hard to ensure his Soldiers had the education they needed for combat. "He demanded a lot," and wanted his Soldiers to be the best they could be, Clark said.

"He strived to be the best in his field and was dedicated to the nation," State Rep. Miller said. Miller said it was Soldiers like Southworth that earned our nation's independence, freed the slaves, drove the Nazis from power, and fought against tyrants. "Freedom is often defended by citizens from small towns like Oakland," Miller said. "He served on the streets of Oakland as well as in far-off lands. He will not be forgotten."

State Rep. Niemerg said



The Illinois Army National Guard Funeral and Honors Team prepares to fire a volley during a dedication ceremony on July 6 as a section of State Highway 133 through Oakland, Illinois, was named the 1st Lt. Jared W. Southworth Highway.



Illinois Army National Guard Veterans listen to speakers during a dedication ceremony on July 6 as a section of State Highway 133 through Oakland was named the 1st Lt. Jared W. Southworth Highway. The dedication ceremony included Southworth's family and friends, among them more than a dozen of those who served with Jared in the Illinois Army National Guard's 2nd Battalion, 130th Infantry Regiment, 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team.

Southworth lived by his motto - God, Family, and Country. "Lieutenant Jared Southworth was a true hero."

Tony Crouch, the Senior Minister of the First Christian Church of Tuscola, spoke of sacrifice and the Army Values - Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity and Personal Courage. "Jared epitomized each of those values," he said. "Now there will be a reminder to whoever travels this section of road."

1st Lt. Southworth was a member of the Oakland Christian Church. He graduated from Oakland High School in 2000 and later earned degrees from Lakeland College and Eastern Illinois University, where he was in the Army ROTC program. He married Chrissy Lynn Royer on March 24, 2001 and the couple had four children, now in their late teens and early 20s.

A friend and neighbor of the Southworths, Linda Tabor, helped push for the legislation and helped with the dedication ceremony.



Students Braelyn Lee, Adlee McQueen, and Joey Goodacre sing the National Anthem during a dedication ceremony on July 6 as a section of State Highway 133 through Oakland was named the 1st Lt. Jared W. Southworth Highway in honor of the fallen Illinois Army National Guard Soldier.

Colonel Shawn Strahle to Command 183rd Wing

Colonel Robert Gellner Leaving for Opportunity in Germany

By Lt. Col. Brad Leighton, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

Col. Shawn Strahle of Chatham has been selected as the Commander of the Illinois Air National Guard's 183rd Wing based in Springfield.

Strahle, who has served as the wing's deputy commander since September 2023, will assume command of the wing on June 3 from Col. Robert Gellner of Sherman. Gellner has served as the wing's commander since July 2021. He has accepted a position as the vice commander of the 603rd Air and Space Operations Center in Germany starting around July 1.

"Bob Gellner has done outstanding work and has helped give the 183rd Wing strategic direction," said Brig. Gen. Dan McDonough, the Assistant Adjutant General - Air of the Illinois

National Guard and Commander of the Illinois Air National Guard. "Shawn Strahle has the leadership and the experience to bring the 183rd Wing into the modern era of great power competition."

Strahle said he was "humbled and honored" to be selected as the wing commander. "The wing is doing great things and I aim to push it even further," he said. "We will embrace the Agile Combat Employment and the Multi-Capable Airmen concepts" - the Air Force's strategy to meet the challenges posed to the nation's defense by "near peer" rivals.

The new commander also plans to help push the wing's community presence in the Springfield area, both for recruiting and retention as well

as to build local connections. Since the wing lost its F-16s due to the federal Base Realignment and Closure Process in 2008, some are unaware of its current high-tech missions, Strahle said.

The wing has about 260 full-time positions and about 920 traditional National Guard Airmen with valuable skills in command and control, maintenance, communications, security, engineering, medical, and cyber, among others. "Some of these jobs require a top-secret security clearance, which is a valuable commodity," he said.

Many outside

the National Guard do not realize that the 183rd Wing includes an Air Operations Group, Strahle said. The AOG runs an Air Operations Center, the senior agency of an Air Force component commander to provide command and control of major air operations. It is a vital mission within the modern Air Force and requires a wide variety of highly skilled Airmen, he added.

Several of the part-time Airmen are pulling in six-figure salaries with the skills and certifications they earned in the Air National Guard, and they choose to re-enlist to remain part of the team that defends both their state and nation, Strahle said. He is looking to grow the wing's cyber community and to partner with local colleges and universities. In January, the wing's communications flight was redesignated as a larger communications squadron and Strahle sees the unit's cyber mission as expanding further in the coming years as cyber becomes more and more critical to the nation's defense. The wing's Joint Cyber Range can be used to help train Airmen, Soldiers, and civilians in responding to a cyber-attack and the wing has other facilities that could be used for both military and civilian education and operations, Strahle said.

Strahle was enlisted for the first decade of his career, serving as a crash rescue firefighter with the Indiana Air National Guard's 181st Fighter Wing in Terre Haute, Ind., from 1987 to 2003. After receiving a master's degree in from Indiana State University in 2000, Strahle delved into information technology. He became a Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer in 2001 and followed that with a long list of cyber and information technology certifications including the Certified Information Systems Security Professional as well as communications, domestic operations, and military planning and leadership courses. In 2022, he completed the Dual Status Commanders



Col. Shawn Strahle, the new commander of the Illinois Air National Guard's 183rd Wing, based in Springfield, thanks fellow Airmen for their support during his career during the Wing's change of command ceremony.



Brig. Gen. Dan McDonough, Assistant Adjutant General-Air and Commander of the Illinois Air National Guard, passes the 183rd Wing's flag to Col. Shawn Strahle, of Chatham, during the Wing's change of command ceremony in Springfield. (Photos by U.S. Air National Guard Master Sgt. Shelly Stark and Staff Sgt. Katherine Jacobus)

Course, enabling him to command both National Guard and active-duty military in a major domestic emergency.

He commissioned as an Air Force second lieutenant in 2003, transferring into the 183rd Wing's Communications Flight as the flight's executive officer. One of his first bosses in the Illinois National Guard was a Maj. Rich Neely, who went on to become a major general,

The Adjutant General of the Illinois National Guard, and the first master cyberspace officer to command the entire Illinois National Guard.

On the civilian side in 2003, Strahle became the Associate Director of Information Technology at the School of Informatics at Indiana University in Bloomington, Ind. In 2006, he deployed to Iraq as the Chief of Maintenance for the 332nd Communications Squadron in Balad. In 2016 he would be activated again,

serving as a Cyberspace officer and Division Chief at Air Force Central Command's A2 (Intelligence) headquarters at Shaw Air Force Base in South Carolina.

Strahle rose through the ranks in the 183rd, holding multiple key staff and command positions. From 2017 to 2020, he served as the commander of the 217th Engineering Installation Squadron, 183rd Wing. In May 2019 he accepted the fulltime position as the Illinois National Guard's "J6/G6/A6 Communications Director" – commonly referred to as the Chief Information Officer in civilian lingo. He was responsible for all computer network, electronic and radio communications for the 13,000-member Illinois National Guard.

During his time as communications director, Strahle helped the organization address challenges posed by the National Guard's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, multiple civil disturbance responses and other domestic operations including cyber election defense while still deploying thousands of Soldiers and Airmen on federal missions throughout the world.

Strahle's experience in both domestic operations and combat missions helped set him apart from the field of well-qualified candidates for the job, McDonough said. "The 183rd Wing, along with the Illinois Army National Guard's 65th Troop Command, is often called upon to lead and staff our Joint Task Force during domestic emergencies. Shawn has great experience and is well respected on both our Army and Air sides and has been intricately involved in both our state and federal missions," McDonough said.

After accepting the job as deputy commander of the wing in Sept. 2023, Strahle has also had nine months to serve as an understudy to Gellner, who had extensive experience in strategic planning at National Guard Bureau prior to taking command of the wing.

Strahle's wife, Dr. Ann Strahle, is an associate dean and professor at the University of Illinois Springfield. Their two sons, Phillip and Benjamin, are attending college in Illinois.

Jacobs Tours 183rd Wing, Gets Inside Look at \$13.8 Million Base Civil Engineer Complex

Brig. Gen. Kevin Jacobs, Chief of Staff – Air, Joint Force Headquarters, Illinois Air National Guard toured the 183rd Wing and met with Wing senior leaders and airmen from the 183rd Civil Engineer Squadron and 183rd Security Forces Squadron (183rd SFS).

Brig. Gen. Jacobs toured the “shoot house”, a facility designed to let 183rd SFS defenders practice tactical and domestic operations.

He also got an inside look at the new Base Civil Engineer Complex project, a \$13.8 million military construction project to construct two new facilities, that will lead to the demolition of seven disjointed and dated facilities.

Currently, the project is 65 percent complete with final completion scheduled for June 2025.



A Leader Who Empowers Others

For Col. Bob Gellner, leadership is not about giving orders or being in charge

By Staff Sgt. Paul Lauricella, 183rd Wing Public Affairs

For Col. Bob C. Gellner, Commander of the 183rd Wing, Springfield, leadership is not about giving orders or merely being “in charge.” Instead, his sense of achievement comes from witnessing the success of those he leads. “Seeing individuals succeeding in what they came here to do has always been a highlight [in my career],” Gellner says.

The core of Gellner’s leadership philosophy is about creating an environment based on merit and opportunity.

“I value the concept of everyone having a chance, everyone being on equal footing, assuming that they all come in and are willing to embrace a positive culture,” he explains.

This belief was reinforced during his time as a National Security Fellow at Harvard, where he learned to better accept and perceive human behavior.

“Where Harvard has helped me the most was being able to understand where individuals are coming from, and to give trust in their view on things,” said Gellner.

Gellner’s career has taken him around the world, with Florida, Japan, and Washington D.C. as stops along the way. He has been in command four times at the squadron and group level, he has deployed three times, and he has served in four staff assignments at the Pentagon. He is a joint qualified, total force officer with expertise in field maintenance on the F-15 C/D, F-16 C/D, E-3 B/C, C-5M, and C-17A aircraft. As commander of the 183rd Wing, he oversees a budget of over \$26 million and leads a force of over 900 airmen.

As Gellner’s time as commander of the 183rd Wing, a position he has held since 2021, comes to a close, his hope for the wing is that it becomes a model of inclusivity where all airmen feel



Col. Bob Gellner

valued for their unique experiences and capabilities.

“If we’re aware of it, we can appreciate each other’s experiences and differences. And we can realize [our differences] are what makes us stronger,” he says.

For the next generation of wing leadership, Gellner emphasizes the importance of servant leadership and empowering others. Gellner believes

that commanders and senior officers lead the way in empowering junior ranks to reach higher. “We are the servant of every other person in this wing,” he says with pride about his duty to uplift those under his command.

He has accepted a position as the vice commander of the 603rd Air and Space Operations Center in Germany starting around July 1.

Seven-Year-Old Made Honorary First Sergeant in Illinois Army National Guard for Courage Against Cancer

By Lt. Col. Brad Leighton, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

Editor's Note: After a courageous fight with cancer, Honorary 1st Sgt. Jamir Gibbs died on Labor Day.

Several months ago, 7-year-old Jamir Gibbs was suffering from bacterial meningitis related to his struggle with leukemia.

It was hard, and painful, and her son was tired and getting discouraged, said Jamir's mother, Amanda Miller. "He's a child and

having to fight through this illness... a child has no choice but to fight through it."

And then Jamir received a 49-second video clip from Illinois Army National Guard 1st Sgt. Beau Detrick, then a sergeant first class. He asked Jamir to "stay in the fight" and said his courage, perseverance, and bravery are just what they look for in Soldiers.

Detrick had learned that Jamir needed encouragement from his friend, Longfellow Elementary School teacher Cayenne Hasseker.

"When you get back to Marion, I'm going to make you an honorary first sergeant of our company and I'm going to have you lead some Soldiers through some exercises," Detrick said on the video. He wanted to give him



Seven-Year-Old Jamir Gibbs of Marion "smokes" a formation of Soldiers with 1st Sgt. Beau Detrick of November Company, Recruit Sustainment Program, Illinois Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention Command. Jamir was promoted to "Honorary First Sergeant" of November Company during a ceremony June 8 at the Illinois Army National Guard's Marion Readiness Center in honor of his courageous fight against cancer.



Seven-Year-Old Jamir Gibbs of Marion, Illinois, stands in front of the formation with Lt. Col. Lance Frail, of Sherman, Commander of the Illinois Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention Battalion during his “honorary” promotion to first sergeant June 8..

something to look forward to, some hope.

On Saturday, June 8, Detrick kept that promise. The Illinois Army National Guard’s November Company, Recruit Sustainment Program, Recruiting and Retention Battalion had three ceremonies in one on June 8 at the Marion Readiness Center. Detrick assumed responsibility for the unit, 1st Sgt. Graham Young retired after nearly 29 years of military service, and 7-year-old Jamir Gibbs became the youngest honorary first sergeant in the history of the Illinois Army National Guard.

And, yes, 1st Sgt. Gibbs did “smoke” the troops during his “First Sergeant for a Day.” He guided the company’s Soldiers through multiple push-ups.

“Sergeant Beau sending that video...it was something positive in something so negative,” Miller said. “He talked about what it is to fight. Jamir has watched it a few times. It was really uplifting to him.”

Jamir is back home in Marion for

a few weeks until he must return to the St. Louis Children’s Hospital for more cancer treatment. It seemed like a good time to promote him, Detrick said.

In the couple weeks leading up to the ceremony, it grew.

The Illinois National Guard’s friends in the first responder community learned about the plans to honor Jamir and decided to get involved.

“Southern Illinois is family,” Miller said. “We’ve got each others’ backs. The whole school district in Marion - they know Jamir. They know his story. We are truly blessed in our community.”

On Saturday, Jamir got to crawl inside an Illinois State Police SWAT vehicle, try on their tactical gear, play fetch with a police dog, try out an ISP motorcycle and a Marion Fire Department fire engine, use the “Jaws of Life” to crush a water bottle, spray a fire engine hose in firefighter gear, carry a firefighter axe (under supervision, of course) and he received several gifts from an Illinois Army National Guard football jersey to eight different military challenge coins.



Illinois Army National Guard leaders pose for a photo with 7-year-old Jamir Gibbs of Marion, Illinois, after Jamir’s “promotion” ceremony. Jamir was promoted to “Honorary First Sergeant” of the Illinois Army National Guard’s November Company, Recruit Sustainment Program, Recruiting and Retention Battalion during a ceremony on June 8 at the Illinois Army National Guard’s Marion Readiness Center in honor of his courageous fight against cancer.

"It means everything," Miller said. "To have made these memories with him...To see him smiling like that. We've had some dark times this year. These moments, are beautiful."

What was it like to see her son in a military her son in a military uniform?

"Oh, he's just so handsome!" Miller said.



Illinois Army National Guard 1st Sgt. Beau Detrick talks to 7-year-old Jamir Gibbs of Marion, Illinois, after Jamir's "promotion" ceremony. Local and state first responders also participated in Jamir's "First Sergeant for a Day" event at the readiness center.



Seven-Year-Old Jamir Gibbs of Marion, Illinois, shows off the football jersey he received with 1st Sgt. Beau Detrick of November Company, Recruit Sustainment Program, Illinois Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention Command.



Seven-year-old Jamir Gibbs of Marion, Illinois, uses a Marion (Illinois) Fire Department "Jaws of Life" to crush a water bottle after his "promotion" ceremony June 8.



A House Undivided

Fire-team members from the Illinois Air National Guard's 126th Security Forces Squadron approach a shoot house during training at Scott Air Force Base, Illinois, June 2. Shoot houses are training facilities which provide small tactical units a place to practice working together to clear areas from potential threats. (Photos by Staff Sgt. Aaron Rodriguez, Illinois Air National Guard)



Recruiting Company First Sergeant from Marion, Illinois, Retires After Nearly 29 Years

By Lt. Col. Brad Leighton, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

Illinois Army National Guard 1st Sgt. Graham Young of Marion, Illinois, passed responsibility for the Illinois Army National Guard's November Company, Recruit Sustainment Program, Recruiting and Retention Battalion to 1st Sgt. Beau Detrick on June 8 at the Illinois Army National Guard Readiness Center in Marion.

After the Change of Responsibility, Young retired from the Army after more than 28 years and eight months of military service. Young either recruited or supervised the recruitment of 1,999 Soldiers during his career, including Detrick, who he directly recruited and recommended as a full-time recruiter.

Young enlisted in the Illinois Army National Guard in November 1995 as a light wheeled vehicle mechanic and his career culminated as the first sergeant of November Company, made up of new recruits and Soldiers from the greater Marion, Illinois, area. Young also holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Administration of Justice from Southern Illinois University in Carbondale.

Young was awarded his second Meritorious Service Medal during the ceremony adding to as long list of medals earned during his military career including four Army Commendation Medals and four Army Achievement Medals.

The Illinois Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention Commander, Lt. Col. Lance Frail, said recruiting is a tough job and Young was an excellent recruiter for a long time.

Also, as part of the ceremony, the Illinois Army National Guard "promoted" 7-year-old Jamir Gibbs to honorary first sergeant. Jamir, also of Marion, has been in a tough fight with cancer and the Illinois National Guard along with both local and state first responders honored his bravery, perseverance, and toughness in his fight.



First Sgt. Graham Young of Marion, Illinois, passes the November Company, Recruit Sustainment Program, guidon to Illinois Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention Battalion Command Sergeant Major, Command Sgt. Maj. Chad McDannald, during the company's Change of Responsibility from Young to 1st Sgt. Beau Detrick on June 8.



Illinois Army National Guard 1st Sgt. Graham Young of Marion, Illinois, describes the passion needed by military recruiters during his retirement ceremony June 8.

Deputy Director of Air National Guard visits 183rd Wing



U.S. Air Force Maj. Gen. Duke Pirak, center, deputy director, Air National Guard meets with top leaders from the 183rd Wing and the Illinois National Guard, June 2, Springfield. During his visit, Pirak met with Airmen at all levels to gain first-hand knowledge of the wing's capabilities and role in combating emerging global threats. (Photo by Airman Danielle Dillard, 183rd Wing)

At right - U.S. Air Force Maj. Gen. Duke Pirak, right, inspects building progress of the new base civil engineering facility with Senior Master Sgt. Eric Horn, Operations Superintendent, 183rd Wing, Springfield. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Paul Lauricella, 183rd Wing)



Below - U.S. Air Force Maj. Gen. Duke Pirak, center left, speaks with Security Forces Airmen of the 183rd Wing, Illinois Air National Guard, June 2, Springfield. (Photo by Airman Danielle Dillard, 183rd Wing)





Pvt. 1st Class Mason Morgan of Pinckneyville, Illinois, smooths out asphalt along a trail on Camp Lincoln in Springfield. Morgan's father once served in the Illinois Army National Guard 2118th Asphalt Detachment "He served in this unit when I was young, and a lot of the NCOs I have now were privates when he was in," said Morgan. "It makes it feel like a family. Him seeing me wear the uniform and follow in his footsteps makes our family very proud. I'm 18 years old and I feel that the 2118th will help me get on track to a good career, whether I decide to go to college or a trade school, the Illinois Army National Guard will help pay for my education."

2118th Asphalt Detachment Conducts Annual Training by repairing roads on Camp Lincoln

By 2nd Lt. Trenton Fouche, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

Soldiers from the Illinois Army National Guard 2118th Asphalt Detachment were on Camp Lincoln June 1 to 15 for annual training,

putting their skills to work, repaving roads on the installation.

"We do a lot of traveling, working on Illinois National Guard

installations throughout the state," said U.S. Army 1st Lt. Lacey Jones of Tamaroa, Illinois, commander of the 2118th Asphalt Detachment Team.

"Our Soldiers have an opportunity to work on driveways, parking lots, even PT (physical fitness) tracks."

As one of a handful of asphalt teams in the entire U.S. Army, Soldiers from the 2118th bring a unique set of skills to the force that translate over to the private sector. Many within the unit receive excellent benefits, not just from the ILARNG, but from civilian employers like IDOT and nVent.

"A lot of our Soldiers do construction and project management in the civilian world," said Sgt. 1st Class Chelsie Bollmann-Setzekorn of Belleville, Illinois, detachment readiness noncommissioned officer and noncommissioned officer in charge.

"We have a lot of experience and expertise to go around. It makes it useful that we can apply these skills

and troubleshooting tactics out onto the job site. I think that helps to keep us so efficient."

The unit consists of 44 Soldiers ranging in rank and age, and demonstrating vast levels of experience. Pvt. 1st Class Mason Morgan of Pinckneyville, Illinois arrived from basic combat training in February and said the skills he's learned have been invaluable.

"I found out about the 2118th Asphalt Detachment because of my dad," said Morgan.

"He served in this unit when I was young, and a lot of the NCOs I have now were privates when he was in. It makes it feel like a family. Him seeing me wear the uniform and follow in his footsteps makes our family very proud. I'm 18 years old and I feel that

the 2118th will help me get on track to a good career, whether I decide to go to college or a trade school, the Illinois Army National Guard will help pay for my education."

"It's great to have new, young Soldiers that bring a fresh perspective," said Bollmann-Setzekorn.

"There's also tremendous value in our NCOs who began here as privates and have gone on to become mentors to our junior enlisted. We all love to do our job. I've never seen a group work as hard as they do and complain so little. Our Soldiers don't mind working a site for long hours. It's such a great feeling returning to a training installation later and being able to see the work and know you helped do that."



Soldiers from the Illinois Army National Guard 2118th Asphalt Detachment lay asphalt along a trail on Camp Lincoln in Springfield, Illinois June 10 as part of their annual training. The unit works throughout the state to ensure Illinois National Guard installations are paved.



Soldiers with B Battery, 2nd Battalion, 123rd Field Artillery Regiment, Illinois Army National Guard load a 155mm artillery shell into the breach of an M777 howitzer while executing a fire mission during exercise Immediate Response in Ustka, Poland, May 10, 2024. More than 10,400 U.S. military members and 12,750 service members from Allied and partner nations are participating in the exercise, which includes live-fire exercises, wet gap crossings, and other training to strengthen interoperability among participants. U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jon Soucy)

Illinois Army National Guard Takes on Exercise Immediate Response in Poland

By Sgt. 1st Class Jon Soucy, National Guard Bureau

The seaside location couldn't have been more idyllic. Gentle rolling sand dunes sloped gracefully to the water as the waves rhythmically lapped the coastline. A meandering breeze occasionally fluttered past, carrying a hint of the sea through the nearby pine trees and beachside scrub brush.

The beach was quiet. Peaceful. Relaxing, almost. If not for all the artillery fire.

That came from B Battery, 2nd Battalion, 123rd Field Artillery Regiment, Illinois Army National Guard, whose firing position stretched along the sandy shoreline of the Baltic Sea, a few sand dunes or so below their location. The battalion's other batteries were set up nearby, slightly inland but still along the coast.

The firing was part of the

battalion's role in providing artillery support during Immediate Response 24, a training exercise in Poland and the Czech Republic running throughout May that included more than 22,000 service members from the United States, Poland, the Czech Republic and the United Kingdom.

The battalion, set up in a training area near Ustka, used the exercise to build readiness in two ways.

"One thing that we're building that's key here is our continued relationship with Poland," said U.S. Army Lt. Col. Jeremy Miles, the battalion commander. They also built internal battalion readiness by firing artillery qualification tables in an austere environment.

Building relationships and strengthening interoperability with

partner nations was one of the key goals of the exercise. For the unit, doing that in Poland was the easy part.

The Illinois National Guard and Poland have been paired together in the Department of Defense National Guard State Partnership Program for 30 years – one of the earliest pairings in the program, which began in 1993.

The program links National Guard elements with partner nations worldwide for military-to-military exchanges and mutual training events.

For Miles, who previously served as the officer who coordinated those exchanges between the Polish military and the Illinois Guard, being back in Poland is "like a friendly hug," he said.

"It's kind of an easy transition to

come over here,” said Miles. “We work well together. And we have for so long, to include multiple years of co-deployments with the Polish.”

Forward observers with the Polish army’s 6th Airborne Brigade have been working with the battalion’s forward observers during the exercise, calling in fire missions.

“That builds the generational readiness that we’re talking about,” said Miles, adding that exercises like this help junior leaders gain experience, which they can apply as they advance to higher positions.

“Seeing the Polish soldiers and working with them is great,” said Spc. Austin Rodriguez, an artillery crewmember with the battalion’s B Battery.

The exercise marked Rodriguez’s first time in Poland.

“The best part about being here, I would say, is just being here,” he said. “This is my first time in Europe. I haven’t been across the Atlantic



Spc. Michael Hawkins, with B Battery, 2nd Battalion, 123rd Field Artillery Regiment, Illinois Army National Guard, adjusts the elevation of an M777 155mm howitzer while executing a fire mission during exercise Immediate Response in Ustka, Poland, May 11.



Spc. Megan Cox, with B Battery, 2nd Battalion, 123rd Field Artillery Regiment, Illinois Army National Guard, pulls the lanyard to fire an M777 155mm howitzer while executing a fire mission during exercise Immediate Response in Ustka, Poland, May 10.

before, so it's a real big treat for me."

According to some, Rodriguez's gun crew is the best in the Army.

"I'd put these guys up against any gun crew anywhere in the Army," said U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Terry Rutherford, the gun chief of Rodriguez's crew. "Active component, Guard, it don't matter."

Rutherford may be biased, but he's also quick to point out what makes them so good.

"They're a solid group," he said. "There's not one person that can't do everything in this gun section right now. If somebody slips, it's not a big deal. We just pick each other up."

And they put rounds downrange. Fast. And accurately.

"They are the absolute best," said Rutherford, who enlisted in 1982. "I've done this for a long time. I've been a gun chief for about 12 years, and this is the best section I've ever been associated with and, in my opinion, best section anywhere."

And taking part in Immediate Response makes them that much better, said Rutherford.

"It gets them shooting in a different environment, in a way and a means



U.S. Army Cpl. Nolan Simonds, left, a forward observer with Detachment 2, 2nd Battalion, 122nd Field Artillery Regiment, Illinois Army National Guard, prepares to call in adjustments to a fire mission as forward observers with the Polish army's 6th Battalion, 6th Airborne Brigade watch for the impact of the initial rounds fired as part of the mission during Immediate Response in Ustka, Poland, May 11



Soldiers with B Battery, 2nd Battalion, 123rd Field Artillery Regiment, Illinois Army National Guard execute a fire mission using an M777 155mm howitzer during exercise Immediate Response in Ustka, Poland, May 10.

that they've not done before," said Rutherford. "And you take a gun crew like that, as good as they are, and all it's going to do is elevate them to the next level."

During the exercise, the battalion worked with Soldiers of the U.S. Army's 1st Battalion, 14th Field Artillery Regiment, which operates the M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket System, or HIMARS.

"So that's one aspect that we don't get to see very often," said Miles about working with the HIMARS unit. "Working internationally, with our international partners, synchronizing our fires, it's just a whole gamut of opportunities these guys get to experience."

He said it required a lot of teamwork and coordination, including moving the battalion and all its equipment across the Atlantic.

"There is lots of equipment, lots of moving parts requiring coordination all the way up to the theater level down to individual batteries," he said. "And it's just been amazing to watch it come together. There have been

hiccups and trials and tribulations, but persistence and perseverance will get you to the end of the day."

Miles credits the Soldiers of the unit for making the mission a success.

"They are so proud of what they do, and I couldn't be prouder of what they're doing," he said. "They have just crazy-high morale being out here on this mission. It's really refreshing to

watch them operate."

Rodriquez agreed.

"I'm coming up to the end of my [enlistment] contract," he said. "I believe this is a real big ticket to probably persuade me to stay in."

Rutherford said he's not surprised by any of it.

"We're the king of battle," he said. "There's none better than us."



Members of B Battery, 2nd Battalion, 123rd Field Artillery Regiment, Illinois Army National Guard conduct a field artillery fire mission with an M777 howitzer May 11 as part of Immediate Response 24 in Ustka, Poland.



Soldiers with B Battery, 2nd Battalion, 123rd Field Artillery Regiment, Illinois Army National Guard toast the end of a fire mission with shots of water from expended primer shells during exercise Immediate Response in Ustka, Poland, May 11, 2024. The primer shot is an artillery tradition undertaken after pulling the lanyard and firing a howitzer for the first time or marking the conclusion of a fire mission or day of firing.

Visiting the Troops at Marseilles Training Center

Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, the Adjutant General of Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National Guard, and Command Sgt. Maj. Phillip Barber, State Command Sergeant Major, Illinois Army National Guard, visited Marseilles Training Center in Marseilles, Illinois, June 7.

During the visit the command team visited Company B, 766th Brigade Engineer Battalion, the 404th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, 433rd Signal Company, the 34th Division Sustainment Brigade, 232 Command Support Sustainment Battalion, 1844th Transportation

Company, 733rd Field Feeding Platoon, and 129th Regional Training Institute Officer Candidate School.

While at Marseilles, Boyd and Barber presented coins to Soldiers in each unit who were selected by their peers and leadership for outstanding performance.







Marion Soldier promoted to First Sergeant, becomes senior enlisted leader of Company N

Beau Detrick of Marion, team leader for the Illinois Army National Guard's Company N, Recruiting and Retention Battalion (RRB), was promoted to the rank of first sergeant in a ceremony at the Illinois State Military Museum, May 24.

"Everyone in this room has, in some capacity, influenced me, inspired me, and motivated me, and I'm here as a result of that," Detrick said. "This promotion is a culmination of a lifetime of relationships."

Detrick enlisted in the Illinois Army National Guard in July 2005, serving in Company C, 33rd Brigade Support Battalion, based in Carbondale. Soon after, Detrick was selected as a recruiting assistant for Company N, RRB, and in July 2007, as a recruiter. Detrick was selected team leader for Company N in 2018 and now will become the company's first



Newly promoted First Sgt. Beau Detrick, of Marion, the senior enlisted leader for Company N, Recruiting and Retention Battalion, Illinois Army National Guard, thanks friends and family for their support during a promotion ceremony May 24 at the Illinois State Military Museum, Camp Lincoln, Springfield, Illinois.

sergeant.

"This promotion is a really big deal," said Lt. Col. Joseph Harris, Commander, RRB. "This is significant because as the first sergeant, he is the senior enlisted leader in Company N."

Harris thanked Detrick's family for their support.

"We appreciate all you have done to prop him up in his career," Harris said. "With this promotion, he has a lot of

responsibility ahead of him."

Harris said Detrick is up to the task before him.

"He's going to make every Soldier and noncommissioned officer under him and every applicant walking through the door, the very best version of himself," Harris said. "That's huge because he's taking development to a whole new level. This promotion is very deserving. He's been doing the job for a long time, now it's time to get you the rank you deserve."

Detrick thanked his family for their support.

"I'm here today as a direct result of my relationship with my wife, Sarah," Detrick said. "Every day I talk with her, and I bounce ideas off her. This job is anything but ordinary, and I couldn't do it without my support team."

He also thanked his fellow Soldiers for their support.

"I couldn't be prouder of the group of Soldiers I represent because they are one of the most energetic, passionate group of people I've ever worked with," Detrick said.



Sarah Detrick, along with sons, Hunter and Hayden, family of newly promoted First Sgt. Beau Detrick, of Marion, senior enlisted leader of Company N, Recruiting and Retention Battalion, Illinois Army National Guard, secures the new rank during a promotion ceremony May 24 at the Illinois State Military Museum, Camp Lincoln, Springfield.



Participants from Poland's 31st Soldiers' Walking Pilgrimage to Jasna Góra prepare for a final prayer upon their arrival to the Black Madonna of Częstochowa painting at Częstochowa, Poland, Aug. 14.

ILNG Members Join Polish for 200-Mile Pilgrimage

By Pfc Charles Michaels, 139th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Seven Soldiers and three Airmen from the Illinois National Guard joined service members from Polish, Slovakian and German armed forces in Poland's 31st Soldiers' Walking Pilgrimage to Jasna Góra from Warsaw to Częstochowa, Aug. 5 to 14.

The pilgrimage lasted 10 days and consisted of service members walking more than 200 miles across Poland, singing and praying along the way. The Polish military's group, which consisted of hundreds of people, was one of numerous groups making the long trek to Częstochowa.

With more than 90 percent of the Polish population identifying as Catholic, the Jasna Góra Monastery has been an important pilgrimage destination in Poland since the Middle Ages. Founded in 1382, the site, now one of Poland's National Historic Monuments, is home to an image known as the "Black Madonna" or "Our Lady of Częstochowa" to the locals.

The ornate image depicts the Virgin Mary holding a baby Jesus, and is credited with many miracles, the most famous being the protection of the monastery from Swedish invaders during the 17th century.

"The experience was very unreal. I had always seen the pictures of the Black Madonna in my church and around my school. But to see it in real life was amazing," said Illinois Army National Guard Spc. Damian Banka of Rockford, a combat medic with the 708th Medical Company.

In addition to the life experience, the pilgrimage gave lower-enlisted Soldiers experience in working in the field, in an unfamiliar environment, as part of a small team.

"As a lower enlisted

Soldier, I learned no matter the rank, uplifting each other, pushing each other, and being there for each other is the most important thing to focus on when going through difficult



Illinois Air National Guard Staff Sgt. Thomas Tate, of Mascoutah, a material management specialist with the 126th Logistics Readiness Squadron, and Illinois Army National Guard Spc. Damian Banks, of Rockford, a combat medic with the 708th Medical Company, pose for a photo with a Polish civilian after gifting her a patch during Poland's 31st Soldiers' Walking Pilgrimage to Jasna Gora in Poland, Aug. 10.



Illinois Air National Guard Staff Sgt. Piotr Iwaszek of Darien, an aerospace propulsion specialist with the 183rd Maintenance Squadron based in Springfield, stands with an American flag over his shoulder alongside service members from Slovakia, Germany, and Poland during Poland's 31st Soldiers' Walking Pilgrimage to Jasna Góra at Częstochowa, Poland, Aug. 14.



Illinois Army National Guard 1st Sgt. Veronica Hernandez, first sergeant of Company B, Recruit Sustainment Program, Illinois Army National Guard, interacts with Polish Soldiers during Poland's 31st Soldiers' Walking Pilgrimage to Jasna Góra at Warsaw, Poland, Aug. 5.

times," said Illinois Army National Guard Spc. Jakub Sokol of Chicago, a cannon crewmember with the 2nd Battalion, 122nd Field Artillery Regiment.

Banka, Sokol and Illinois Air National Guard Staff Sgt. Piotr Iwaszek of Darien, an aerospace propulsion specialist with the 183rd Maintenance Squadron, served as the Polish interpreters for the Illinois National Guard on the pilgrimage. All three are of Polish heritage.

"As a devoted Catholic and a Polish native the trip was a bit more special to me. I had the opportunity to walk the land of my home country and participate in Catholic masses, prayers and traditions daily," Iwaszek said.

Service members' participation strengthened the bond between the Illinois National Guard and the Polish Army, said Illinois Army National Guard 1st Sgt. Veronica Hernandez of Chicago. Hernandez is the first sergeant of Company B, Recruit Sustainment Program, Recruiting and Retention Battalion.

"By walking alongside our Polish counterparts and engaging with the local community, we sought to deepen our mutual understanding, reinforce our friendships, and gain a richer



Polish civilians wave to passing service members from the United States, Poland, Slovakia, and Germany during Poland's 31st Soldiers' Walking Pilgrimage to Jasna Góra at Warsaw, Aug. 5.

appreciation of Polish culture and traditions," Hernandez said.

The Illinois National Guard has

maintained a longstanding state partnership with Poland, fostering military and diplomatic ties since 1993. This partnership, one of the oldest and most active under the U.S. National Guard's State Partnership Program, has facilitated joint training exercises, disaster response collaboration, and strategic military exchanges. The relationship has grown over the years, strengthening not only military readiness but also cultural and educational ties between Illinois and Poland, contributing to broader NATO objectives and enhancing bilateral cooperation.



Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, The Adjutant General of Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National Guard, and Command Sgt. Maj. Kehinde Salami, Senior Enlisted Leader, Illinois National Guard, pose with Soldiers and Airmen from the ILNG after they completed Poland's 31st Soldiers' Walking Pilgrimage to Jasna Góra at Częstochowa, Poland, Aug. 14.

Illinois ESGR Awards Banquet Honors Employers Who Support Their National Guard and Reserve Employees

Brig. Gen. Dan McDonough, the Assistant Adjutant General - Air of the Illinois National Guard and Commander of the Illinois Air National Guard, was the keynote speaker for the Illinois Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve Awards Banquet, May 17, at the Marriott in Normal, Illinois.

The banquet honored employers throughout the state who have helped their National Guard and Reserve employees serve and defend their communities and nation. By supporting their service members, these employers are also defending our nation, McDonough said.

Illinois ESGR State Chair Laurie Silvey presented the Pro Patria Award to Jennifer Brumbick of East St. Louis School District 189 - James Avant Elementary School. The Pro Patria Award is one of the highest-level Illinois ESGR awards. The school was nominated by one of its teachers, Army Reserve Lt. Col. Nina McLean, who received a tremendous amount of support from the school and its leadership during a recent deployment.

Also honored this year with the Pro Patria Awards were JD Brown Pharmacy and Discover Financial Services.

Silvey presented ESGR Above and Beyond Awards to:

- City of Genoa City Water Light and Power for its support of U.S. Coast Guard Reserve Commander Dan Godiksen's military service. Godiksen accepted the award on his employer's behalf. In the award nomination packet, Godiksen said "I have had the greatest level of support that an employee could ask for. My pay and benefits never missed a beat. When you have family at home, especially young children, you are always worried about their well-being. I never had that worry. My supervisor reached out to the other departments to make sure they were up to speed



ESGR State Chair Laurie Silvey presents Tazewell County Sheriff Jeffrey Lower with the Above and Beyond Award for his office's support of Illinois Army National Guard Sgt. 1st Class Nicholas Copeland's military career. The banquet honored employers throughout the state who have helped their National Guard and Reserve employees serve and defend their communities and nation.

and my family was amazed to never have any worries about benefits. When I returned, I was afforded as much time as necessary to familiarize myself with new systems and procedures. I can't thank them enough for the extra effort they showed me when I was the one to leave them."

- Elizabeth Cruz of Accertify, an American Express Company, for its support of Army 1st Lt. James Williams' military career. While Williams was away for four months at a leadership course, Cruz had the challenge of working with a smaller

staff while he was away. "While away, she respected my time on orders and it was if I never left when I returned. While away I received my normal compensation for the entire time away. Accertify is truly a Patriotic company."

- Tazewell County Sheriff Jeffrey Lower for his office's support of Illinois Army National Guard Sgt. 1st Class Nicholas Copeland's military career. Copeland said the Tazewell County Sheriff's Office checked on him regularly during a deployment to the Middle East and a co-worker

even mowed his lawn while he was deployed so his spouse wouldn't have to.

- Pete Arechevala of John Crane for its support of Illinois Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Brandon Cabrera Rojas' military career. Staff Sgt. Cabrera Rojas said the provider of engineered technology consistently checked in on his well-being when he was deployed in 2020. "They have always been outstanding at supporting my military career," Cabrera Rojas said. "They, like my family at home, are part of my Army family."

- Mark Reddy of Olivet Nazarene University for its support of Army Reserve Maj. Landon Miller's military career. "I was actively hired because I was in the military," Miller said. "The university created the Director of

Military and Veterans Affairs position for me so they could better support the military who are on campus. Other employees within my department have provided support to my family when I am away for military training. There has been assistance with childcare or providing my family with meals when I am away for extended periods."

Also honored with Above and Beyond Awards this year were Burns & McDonnell, ENTRUST, Heritage Life Insurance Co., Joliet Fire Department, Menards, Quality Network Solutions, and Rolling Meadows Library.

Silvey presented the ESGR Seven Seals Award to Bob Nachman of Pearl Technologies to honor a wide array of support for service members from all seven reserve components. It is

the only Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve award that bridges both the employer and volunteer recognition programs.

Also receiving Seven Seals Awards this year were Auffenberg Dealer Group, Brieser Construction, Horizon Therapeutics, Illinois State Police BAO Section, Microsoft, and Veterans Affairs Illiana Health Care System.

ESGR, a Department of Defense program, was established in 1972 to promote cooperation and understanding between Reserve Component service members and their civilian employers and to assist in the resolution of conflicts arising from an employee's military commitment. ESGR is supported by a network of more than 3,750 volunteers in 54 committees across all 50 states and four U.S. territories.



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ILARNG 'Hallmark' Company Presents Plaque with Names of Soldiers Activated for Vietnam Service to Illinois State Military Museum in Springfield

The Illinois State Military Museum's Armed Forces Day Military Vehicle Show on May 18 included a special presentation by veterans of the Quincy, Illinois-based 126th Supply and Services Co. at the museum in Springfield, Illinois.

The unit was the only Illinois Army National Guard unit to deploy to Vietnam. The unit deployed in September 1968 and returned to a

parade and celebration in Quincy in August 1969.

Veterans of the unit presented the Illinois State Military Museum in Springfield with a plaque containing the names of the 183 Soldiers who were activated in 1968 from "The Hallmark Company." The unit was dubbed "The Hallmark Company" because "they cared enough to send the very best," said Bill Waters, who

served with the unit in Vietnam.

Of the 183 names on the plaque, 144 deployed to Vietnam with the Army assigning 39 Soldiers to stateside duty based on their military occupational skills. In Vietnam, another 16 to 18 Soldiers were taken from the unit to fill needs in other parts of the theater. The core of the unit served in Chu Lai.

On their second night in Chu Lai, the base was attacked. "That made us get very serious about our defenses very quickly," said Jerry Rousch, a veteran of the unit. "We didn't even have our weapons yet when we got hit. But we came together."

As part of setting up better defenses, the unit traded two cases of beer for use of a bulldozer, which helped them bolster defensive barriers.

The military vehicle show included a Jeep restored to look like "Boogie" the 126th Supply and Services Company Jeep driven by Dave "Boogieman" Neiswender. None of the 126th veterans could remember why Neiswender was nicknamed Boogieman. He is now retired and living in Florida.

Waters said the company was a slice of the Quincy, Illinois, community and included a lawyer, construction workers, a barber, a salesman, and many other professions.

The 126th veterans are proud that all those who left Quincy in September 1968 came home to their families. "We survived, thank God," Rousch said. "We saw a lot of unpleasant things, but we survived."

The veterans from the unit remain close and meet at least once a month at a Quincy restaurant. They have also raised funds for veteran programs such as the Honor Flight. "We are a good unit that wants to do good things for other people and help them," Waters said.

The Illinois Army National Guard's 126th Quartermaster Co., still based in Quincy, holds the lineage and honors of the 126th Supply and Services Co.



Vietnam Veteran Bill Waters talks about the attack on Chu Lai on the second day the 126th Supply and Services Co. was in Vietnam. The Illinois State Military Museum's Armed Forces Day Military Vehicle Show on May 18 included a special presentation by veteran of the Quincy, Illinois-based 126th Supply and Services Co.

Springfield Soldier Pins on Major Oak Leaves During Promotion Ceremony at Camp Lincoln

Tarah McClain of Springfield, the Executive Officer for the Illinois Army National Guard's Recruiting and Retention Battalion was promoted to major during a ceremony May 31 at the Illinois Military Academy, Camp Lincoln, Springfield.

"I didn't do this alone," McClain said. "There's a lot of people in this room who helped me along the way."

McClain enlisted in the Illinois Army National Guard in 2001. She deployed to Iraq in 2004 with the Illinois Army National Guard's 1644th Transportation Company based in Rock Falls as a motor transportation specialist and conducted long distance transportation of equipment and supplies through Iraq and Kuwait.

From 2006 to 2012, McClain served as a recruiter in the Chicago area and earned the Master Recruiter Badge.

In 2013, McClain received her commission through the Illinois Army National Guard Officer Candidate School and has served in key multiple developmental positions as a training officer, personnel officer, and administrative officer.

"This is an exciting day for Tarah," said Col. Randy Edwards, Chief of Staff, Illinois Army National Guard. "This is a well-deserved promotion."

Edwards said he knew the first time he met her; McClain was a leader.

"She cares deeply for Soldiers," Edwards said. "She's a team player. No matter the tasking, she was all-in to ensure Soldiers were ready to mobilize for whatever operations came up."

McClain also served as the commander of Company C, 766th Brigade Engineer Battalion.

"The command of Company C came open about 30 days before our annual training, and we were wondering who we were going to put in that position," Edwards said. "Tarah volunteered and did a phenomenal job. From that point, we knew who the commander was going to be."

Edwards also described McClain as



Guided by their father, Maj. Anthony McClain, Amelia and Olivia McClain, daughters of newly promoted Maj. Tarah McClain, Executive Officer, Recruiting and Retention Battalion, Illinois Army National Guard, secure the new rank during a promotion ceremony May 31 at the Illinois Military Academy, Camp Lincoln, Springfield.

a mentor and coach.

"She has led and made things happen," he said. "Not ruling with an iron fist, but by being a coach and mentor, challenging Soldiers and the unit collectively to complete the mission."

Edwards thanked McClain's family for their support.

"Tarah is the rock of your family," Edwards said. "She is very proud of each of you and praises you every chance she gets. Tarah, I'm excited to see what your future holds."

McClain thanked her husband Tony, who is also a major in the Illinois Army National Guard, for his support of her career.

"Thank you for your understanding and support of the late nights and time away from home," she said. "You are my number one cheerleader."

She also thanked her children, daughters, Amelia and Olivia, and sons, Stephon and Josh.

"Your unwavering faith in me is my greatest source of motivation," she said. "When I'm gone and return home, I appreciate you welcoming

me home with open arms. You are resilient and forgiving and you inspire me every day."

McClain encouraged her fellow Soldiers to be mentors to their Soldiers.

"In my earlier years, as a recruiter, I began to understand how mentorship works and why it's so important. My mentors offered guidance and encouragement to move forward and believe in my own potential. In my later years, I try to use everything I learned to give back. My mentors taught me that with the right support you can transform anyone's career."

McClain said positive experiences have outweighed the negatives she experienced in her own career.

"I have experienced being undervalued by superficial leadership," she said. "I couldn't be happier to be part of this generation of Soldiers. Always strive to improve yourself and be open to different things, different people, and different styles. Challenge yourself by serving with people who are your opposites. It will help you grow as a person, a mentor, and as a Soldier."

Illinois Guard Completes Emergency Response Training

By Spc. Justin Malone, Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs

The Illinois Army and Air National Guard completed a comprehensive Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and Explosive Enhanced Response Force Package training exercise May 5 in Sparta, Illinois. The exercise focused on enhancing the readiness and capabilities of CERFP units to respond effectively to complex emergency scenarios.

CERFP is comprised of five operational elements staffed by personnel from already established National Guard units. Elements include incident site search of collapsed buildings and structures,

conducting rescue tasks to extract trapped casualties, providing mass decontamination, performing medical triage and initial treatment to stabilize patients for transport to medical facilities by the Incident Commander, and the recovery of Chemical Biological Radiological and Nuclear incident fatalities.

"The mission increased in difficulty as the exercise went on," said Sgt. 1st Class Paul Bond, Assistant Operations Noncommissioned Officer of the Illinois Army National Guard's 44th Chemical Battalion out of Macomb. "It gave us the opportunity to crawl,

walk, run. I had the chance to learn from others and teach the younger joes. This was a good experience, and we were able to function with confidence."

Illinois Air Force National Guard Capt. Travis Wilkinson, the officer in charge of the Fatality Search and Recovery Team, emphasized the importance of exercising to maintain readiness.

"A lot of the skills are perishable, and if you don't get that muscle memory back, should the call come and we have to respond to a hurricane, tornado, or a man-made



The Illinois National Guard's Chemical, Biological, Radiological/Nuclear, and Explosive Enhanced Response Force Package (CERFP) Search and Extraction Team medically evacuate a wounded casualty from a collapsed structure during a training exercise in Sparta, Illinois, from May 2 to May 5. The exercise focused on enhancing the readiness and capabilities of CERFP units to respond effectively to complex emergency scenarios. Elements include incident site search of collapsed buildings and structures, conducting rescue tasks to extract trapped casualties, providing mass decontamination, performing medical triage and initial treatment to stabilize patients for transport to medical facilities by the Incident Commander, and the recovery of Chemical Biological Radiological and Nuclear incident fatalities.

event, we want to be able to be lock step together as a joint force from the Army and Air Force side.”

Participants praised the exercise for providing valuable learning experiences and enhancing their ability to respond effectively to real-world emergencies.

“Experiences like this are incredibly important for operational readiness,” said Army 1st Lt. Andrew Martin, Protection Branch Chief and Safety Officer working with command and control. “Without this training, I would not have been nearly as prepared as I needed to be to perform these types of tasks in the real world. I showed up brand new but by the end of the exercise, I feel like I have a really good handle on things.”

At right, The Illinois National Guard’s Chemical, Biological, Radiological/Nuclear, and Explosive Enhanced Response Force Package (CERFP) Search and Extraction Team setup a brace to safely enter a compromised structure during a training exercise in Sparta, Illinois, from May 2 to May 5.



The Illinois National Guard’s Chemical, Biological, Radiological/Nuclear, and Explosive Enhanced Response Force Package (CERFP) Search and Extraction Team build a protective barrier to treat the wounded during a training exercise in Sparta, Illinois, from May 2 to May 5.



The 139th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment (MPAD), based in Chicago, gather for a unit photo during a mobilization ceremony July 12 at the General Jones Armory in Chicago. Approximately 10 Soldiers from the unit will deploy for up to a year to Germany, where they will provide crucial public affairs support to Special Operations Command Europe.

Chicago-based 139th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment Deploys to European Command

By Sgt. 1st Class Robert Adams, 139th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

The 139th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment (MPAD), based in Chicago, conducted a deployment ceremony July 12 at the General Jones Armory in Chicago.

The unit will deploy for up to a year to Germany, where they will provide crucial public affairs support to Special Operations Command Europe.

Led by Capt. Patrick Clark, who brings over 30 years of service in the Illinois Army National Guard and three prior deployments, the 139th MPAD is eager to embark on this mission.

"This deployment presents a rare opportunity for our Soldiers to hone their craft in a real-life,

active duty setting," Clark said.

"Working alongside the special forces community to tell their stories is an honor we deeply cherish."

Clark emphasized the pivotal role of family support in enabling their mission.

"The dedication of our families, friends, and loved ones back home is fundamental," said Clark. "Their unwavering support not only sustains our Soldiers overseas but also inspires them to excel both in and out of uniform."

Spc. David Ervin, a member of the 139th MPAD from Chicago with three years of service, expressed both anticipation and nervousness about his first deployment.

"I'm young in my Army career and venturing into the unknown," Ervin said. "I am however excited to contribute to our mission in Germany alongside my teammates and owe a lot of my ability to do so to my family's support."

Staff Sgt. Kyle Odum from Seneca, Illinois, and serving with over six years in the Illinois Army National Guard, highlighted the unit's objectives in Germany. "We'll leverage our expertise in media relations, photography, videography, and social media to portray the authentic narrative of Special Operations in Germany," said Odum. "Combatting misinformation and disinformation while promoting transparency is

crucial to our mission.”

Odum much like others in his unit also acknowledged the pivotal role of family support.

“My family’s pride and support in me goes a long way in any mission I do and this will be the biggest test of them all,” said Odum. “We have a great group of junior enlisted Soldiers going over with us who have a great opportunity on their hands, one I wish I had when I was the rank of specialist,” said Odum. “An opportunity to learn on the job on a day-to-day basis and gain some skills which will be invaluable to the unit for years to come.” said Odum.

The deployment ceremony was a moment of pride and reflection for the 139th MPAD Soldiers, their families, friends and loved ones as the unit prepares to depart for Germany and embark on this vital mission. The unit remains committed to upholding the highest standards of service and professionalism throughout their deployment.



Brig. Gen. Justin Osberg, Deputy Assistant Adjutant General - Army, Illinois National Guard and Command Sgt. Maj. Phillip Barber, State Command Sergeant Major of the Illinois Army National Guard, present the Illinois Flag to Capt. Patrick Clark, Commander of the 139th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, during the 139th’s deployment ceremony July 12th at the General Jones Armory in Chicago.



The 139th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment (MPAD), based in Chicago, conducted a deployment ceremony July 12 at the General Jones Armory in Chicago. The unit will deploy for up to a year to Germany, where they will provide crucial public affairs support to Special Operations Command Europe.

Retiring Illinois Guard Artillery Gun Chief Fires Final Rounds, Bookending Career Where It Started

By Sgt. 1st Class Jon Soucy, National Guard Bureau

When U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Terry Rutherford enlisted in 1982, the idea of taking part in a training exercise in Poland was a seemingly ludicrous one – something that would never happen. After all, the Cold War was in full swing, and Poland was an Eastern Bloc nation aligned with the Soviet Union.

At the time, he was stationed in what was then West Germany, his unit continually training to defeat a possible Soviet foe.

And yet, 40-plus years later, Poland is exactly where he is.

Now a gun chief with B Battery, 2nd Battalion, 123rd Field Artillery Regiment, Illinois Army National Guard, Rutherford and the rest of his battalion are training alongside Polish army units in Ustka, providing artillery support during Immediate Response, a multinational training exercise that includes more than 22,000 participants from the United States, Poland, the Czech Republic and the United Kingdom.

The exercise is also Rutherford's last, as he's retiring this year, and it marks a bookend of sorts – he's only a few hundred miles from his first training exercise 40-plus years ago while he was stationed in Freiburg, Germany.

"I fired my first rounds in Europe and I'm going to fire my last rounds in Europe," he said.

"It's sort of bittersweet," he said.



U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Terry Rutherford, a gun chief with B Battery, 2nd Battalion, 123rd Field Artillery Regiment, Illinois Army National Guard, watches as his gun crew prepares their M777 howitzer to execute a fire mission during exercise Immediate Response in Ustka, Poland, May 11, 2024. Rutherford enlisted in 1982 and fired his first rounds while assigned to a unit in Germany. The exercise is Rutherford's last – he retires later this year – where he'll bookend the beginning of his military career by also firing his last round in Europe.

"I'm not sure how to be."

He said his current gun crew is perhaps the best he's ever worked with.

"I guess the hardest part is knowing it would be the last time I'm firing with this group of gentlemen," Rutherford said.

He said the time between that first round and the final round was filled with memorable moments, such as the time his crew fired nine rounds during an eight-round fire mission. Higher unit leadership pulled him aside to answer for the extra round, which was fired based on a miscommunication.

Added measures were put in place to ensure clearer communication, but he said he noted to the leadership team that they should really be upset with the other crews.

"Well, we fired nine rounds in the

same time it took them to fire eight," he said, adding the other crews were running noticeably slower.

But the most impactful and significant parts of his career, Rutherford said, were serving along the Southwest border as part of Operation Jumpstart, the 2006-2008 National Guard mission to support U.S. Customs and Border Patrol, and deploying to Iraq.

"It means a lot," he said. "There's a group of guys that I got to be friends with, and they're my brothers. Those are the kind of relationships and camaraderie and brotherhood that people who

have never been in the military, they don't understand it. They'll never understand it. But it's what means the most."

Rutherford's path to the artillery began with the father of a high school friend who was the first sergeant of a Tennessee Army National Guard artillery battery.

"It was a 109 (M109 Paladin, self-propelled howitzer) artillery unit," he said. "That's what I wanted to do, and we (he and his friend) joined together."

After serving four years, he chose to leave the Army when his enlistment contract was up in 1986. Though, something nagged at him in the ensuing years.

"It just felt like I hadn't finished what I started," he said.



U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Terry Rutherford, a gun chief with B Battery, 2nd Battalion, 123rd Field Artillery Regiment, Illinois Army National Guard, verifies the targeting data on an M777 155mm howitzer high while executing a fire mission during exercise Immediate Response in Ustka, Poland, May 11, 2024.

In 2000, then in his late 30s, he enlisted in the Army National Guard.

And now, with retirement nearing, he said he feels like he's finished what he began in 1982.

"Watching these young guys step up shows me that maybe I've done

something right from time to time," he said. "I've watched some of these young guys since we've been here, how they've elevated what they do, and it makes you feel pretty good."

The gun crew and unit wouldn't be what it is today without Rutherford's guidance and mentorship, said Spc. Austin Rodriguez, a member of Rutherford's gun crew.

"He's honestly been the rock and guidestone for a lot of our guys," he

said.

For Rodriguez, Rutherford's upcoming retirement has been the most daunting part of the exercise.

"The most challenging part for me is knowing that my chief is retiring," he said. "I've been with him since I got

from our battery is going to be sorely missed."

But Rutherford said he feels the gun crew will be just fine.

"Here, the only challenge for me is walking up that motor pool hill in the morning," he said. "I mean, I got

these guys here. My section is just, they're just badass. Period."

And as his retirement nears, Rutherford has one last piece of advice for his crew.

"I suggest anybody stay 20

years," he said. "Just don't break it up over 40 years like I did. Just do it straight through."

But had he not done it that way, he may not have ended up back in Europe for his final training exercise.

"To finish where you started, that's pretty cool," said Rutherford.

"I fired my first rounds in Europe and I'm going to fire my last rounds in Europe. It's sort of bittersweet. I'm not sure how to be."

Staff Sgt. Terry Rutherford

into the unit."

Rodriguez added that Rutherford's retirement gives him mixed emotions.

"It's bittersweet," he said. "I'm happy for him to finally get some time to relax and enjoy life and just have a good time, but the amount of knowledge going out with him

182nd Airlift Wing in Peoria hosts Breakfast With the Boss Event through ESGR Program



Military and civilian employees pose for a group photo during a “Breakfast with the Boss” Boss Lift at the 182nd Airlift Wing in Peoria, Illinois, June 18. ESGR was established in 1972 to promote cooperation and understanding between Reserve Component Service members and their civilian employers.

Civilian employers learned about Air Force occupational specialties during a “Breakfast with the Boss” Boss Lift at the 182nd Airlift Wing in Peoria, Illinois, June 18.

ESGR was established in 1972 to promote cooperation and understanding between Reserve Component Service members and their civilian employers.



*Photos by
Master Sgt. Lealan Buehrer, 182nd Airlift Wing Public Affairs*



U.S. Air Force Col. Rusty Ballard, the commander of the 182nd Airlift Wing, Illinois Air National Guard, speaks to civilian employers during a “Breakfast with the Boss” Boss Lift at the 182nd Airlift Wing in Peoria, Illinois, June 18.



Civilian employers also experienced a C-130H Hercules orientation flight during a “Breakfast with the Boss” Boss Lift at the 182nd Airlift Wing in Peoria, Illinois, June 18.





Employers of Soldiers serving in the 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team participating in the unit's first "boss lift" gather for a group photo next to the employers' mode of transportation June 18 to Camp Atterbury, Indiana, where units of the 33rd IBCT were conducting annual training. About 30 employers joined the Illinois Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve to get a firsthand view of what their employees do during Army training.

33rd IBCT, Illinois ESGR Hosts Unit's First "Boss Lift" to Give Employers Insight on Army Training

More than thirty employers throughout the Illinois got the chance to fly from the Peoria, Illinois, Regional Airport to Camp Atterbury, Indiana, aboard Illinois Army National Guard aircraft and see, firsthand, some of what their employees do when they leave for Army training.

The Boss Lift event was hosted by the Illinois Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) and was facilitated by the 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team. This event afforded the employers the opportunity to better understand what their Citizen-Soldier does during their two-week annual training.

On the morning of June 18, the employers began their day with a quick safety brief, then loaded on two UH-60 Chinook helicopters, courtesy of the Illinois Army National Guard's 238th General Support Aviation Battalion.

After arriving at Camp Atterbury, the employers were welcomed by both

the 33rd IBCT Commander, Col. Seth Hible via video and 33rd IBCT Brigade Executive Officer, Lt. Col. Nicholas Miller, followed by an ESGR brief. Each employer was given a Meal, Ready-to-Eat (MRE) as their lunch if they chose. The MRE was broken down and a demonstration was given on how to heat and enjoy the meal. Box lunches were available for those who opted to save their MRE.

The employers were able to get up close and personal with their employees in the field. The first stop was the M240B machine gun range. The employers received a brief class on the operation and capabilities of the M240B Machine Gun, and even got to pick up and hold the weapon. They were then moved to the range tower to witness a firing demonstration by four teams.

Part of the group proceeded to the location where the combat engineers were training on various pieces of excavation equipment. The employers were given a brief overview of the

equipment and its capabilities, then jumped into the driver's seat.

The last stop of the day was the Crew-Served weapons location. The employers were introduced to a M777A2 Howitzer, MK19 Grenade Launcher and AN/TPQ-53 Radar System. Subject matter experts were on hand to explain the operation and capabilities of each piece of equipment, along with conducting simulations and answering any questions.

The success of the Boss Lift event is thanks to the coordination of many people across different organizations. The experience serves to showcase the hard work and training these Citizen-Soldiers go through year-round, leading to this culminating event. It is a way to not only give back to the community, but also to better explain to employers what they do and why. This knowledge sharing event helps build an appreciation for the sacrifices of both the employers and their employees.



Air Guard Partners with U.S. Navy During Medical Training in Italy

By Staff Sgt. Vincent Lang, 126th Air Refueling Wing

Illinois Air National Guard members assigned to 126th Medical Group, 126th Air Refueling Wing at Scott Air Force Base, Illinois, trained alongside U.S. Naval Hospital personnel, U.S. Navy Medicine Readiness Training Command in Naples, Italy for their annual training in June.

During their time at U.S. Naval Hospital, members of the 126th who work in 12 different Air Force specialties were partnered with U.S. Navy personnel to train side by side for two weeks.

"As we think about future deployments and our overall capabilities this training allows our forces to generate quickly and embed in a joint force environment," said Colonel Troy Compardo, 126th Medical Group Commander.

One component of the National Military Strategy states that joint forces have the capabilities necessary to prevail.

"As an organization on the medical side we need to be multi-capable, which is very important," said



U.S. Air Force Maj. Emily Audrain and 1st Lt. Rebecca Romanchek, 126th Medical Group bioenvironmental engineers, speak with industrial hygienists Sean Wright, Civilian and Chiara Scalera, local nationals of U.S. Navy Medicine Readiness and Training Command. The engineers were conducting a assessment of hazardous noise levels during a visit to the dental prosthetics lab at U.S. Naval Hospital Naples, Italy, June 5

Compardo, "This shows that both the medical group and the wing have capabilities that can be shared across the Air Force and DOD enterprises."

This interoperable training mission

in Italy is just one of the many ways the 126th Air Refueling Wing prepares its Airmen to respond at anytime, to anywhere in the world when called upon.

"The hospital is operated by U.S. Navy forces but a big part of the operations are built upon local national support," said Compardo. "For us to understand how local nationals

support a facility and how we need to work with them differently, is very important for us."

The Air Force Ready Airman Training requires all Airman to be trained in culture competency.

"This is very important for all Airman," said Compardo, "It's not about computer based training, it is about real world experiences."

"This is very hands on," said Compardo. "You go and experience a different culture and embed within that culture and also get the experience of the naval hospital team and how they have embedded within the Italian culture."

U.S. Navy Chief Petty Officer D'Athony Brown, Senior Enlisted Member - Dental, said "This is a good opportunity for everyone to grow their skills and understand the big picture of our mission."

"It is becoming more across services - Air Force, Navy, Army - that we need to be able to operate cohesively," said Compardo. "We are using similar technology and patient care modalities which makes the total delivery of healthcare across our system seamless and ties into the Defense Health Agency's vision of interoperability."



U.S. Air Force public health technician, Tech. Sgt. Alexandria Fernando, 126th Medical Group, 126 Air Refueling Wing Scott Air Force Base, Illinois and U.S. Navy Petty Officer William Fields, preventive medicine corpsman, U.S. Naval Hospital Naples Italy, June 5, 2024. Fernando and Fields took a brief moment to talk through some of their observations found during a monthly inspection of the Navy Exchange food court restaurants at Naval Support Activity Capodichino, Italy.

Cuba, Illinois, Soldier Who Taught Lessons Learned from Iraq, Afghanistan Retires with 20 Years of Service

Master Sgt. David Berry of Cuba, Illinois, who enlisted in the Illinois Army National Guard in 2004 - a dozen years after graduating from Rushville High School in 1992 - retired from the Army after 20 years of service on May 18.

Berry's two decades of service included two combat tours overseas. A motor transport noncommissioned officer, he deployed to Iraq from 2006 to 2007 with the 1744th Transportation Co. and then to Afghanistan from 2008 to 2009 with Co. E, 634th Brigade Support Battalion.

After returning from his deployments, Berry would teach the lessons he learned to a new generation of Soldiers as a chief instructor in the Springfield-based 129th Regiment (Regional Training Institute.) Berry's last duty position was as the unit's Quality Assurance Operations Noncommissioned Officer.

He helped build the foundation of the 129th Regiment's 88M (Motor Vehicle Operator) Course and worked within the Regional Training Institute for a little more than half his Army career.



Master Sgt. David Berry speaks during his retirement ceremony May 18 at the Illinois Military Academy, Camp Lincoln, Springfield. A man of few words, Berry encouraged his fellow Soldiers to re-enlist.



At left, Capt. Makiya Thomas (right) presents Master Sgt. David Berry with his retirement certificate. Master Sgt. David Berry of Cuba, Illinois, a motor transport noncommissioned officer and a chief instructor in the Springfield-based 129th Regiment (Regional Training Institute), retired May 18 at the Illinois Military Academy on Camp Lincoln in Springfield, Illinois.

Medal of Honor Recipient, Glass Ceiling Shattering Coast Guard Admiral, and U.S. Senator Honor Fallen at Chicago Memorial Day Wreath-laying Ceremony

Two Illinois Army National Guard retirees - Medal of Honor Recipient Allen Lynch and U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth, joined Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson and Chicago Memorial Day Grand Marshal Coast Guard Rear Admiral Zeita Merchant, in honoring fallen U.S. service members at the Chicago Memorial Day Wreath-Laying Ceremony on Saturday, May 25, on Daley Plaza in Chicago.

Lynch, of Gurnee, Illinois, and born in Chicago earned the Medal of Honor on Dec. 15, 1967 in Vietnam while serving with the U.S. Army's Co. D, 1st Battalion (Airmobile), 12th Cavalry, 1st Cavalry Division for incredibly valorous actions saving wounded comrades.

His Medal of Honor citation reads: "For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action at the risk of

his life above and beyond the call of duty. Sgt. Lynch (then Sp4c.) distinguished himself while serving as a radio telephone operator with Company D. While serving in the forward element on an operation near the village of My An, his unit became heavily engaged with a numerically superior enemy force. Quickly and accurately assessing the situation, Sgt. Lynch provided his commander with information which subsequently proved essential to the unit's successful actions. Observing three wounded comrades lying exposed to enemy fire, Sgt. Lynch dashed across 50 meters of open ground through a withering hail of enemy fire to administer aid. Reconnoitering a nearby trench for a covered position to protect the wounded from intense hostile fire, he killed two enemy soldiers at point-blank range. With

the trench cleared, he unhesitatingly returned to the fire-swept area three times to carry the wounded men to safety. When his company was



U.S. Sen. Tammy Duckworth speaks at the Chicago Memorial Day Wreath-Laying Ceremony, talking about her mentor and friend Sgt. 1st Class William Chaney, who died May 18, 2004 while deployed with the National Guard unit after undergoing emergency surgery in Landstuhl, Germany.



Spc. Syed Bukhari of the Illinois Army National Guard's 34th Division Sustainment Brigade stands at attention with teammates prior to firing a ceremonial rifle volley at the Chicago Memorial Day Wreath-Laying Ceremony.



Jean Harris, Survivor Outreach Services Coordinator and the Gold Star Step-Mother of Illinois Army National Guard Sgt. Joshua Harris, speaks at the Chicago Memorial Day Wreath-Laying Ceremony. Harris said Gold Star Families are a club that doesn't want any more members but does lean on each other for support. Sgt. Harris was killed in Afghanistan on Sept. 17, 2008, when his vehicle hit an improvised explosive device.

forced to withdraw by the superior firepower of the enemy, Sgt. Lynch remained to aid his comrades at the risk of his life rather than abandon them. Alone, he defended his isolated position for two hours against the advancing enemy. Using only his rifle and a grenade, he stopped them just short of his trench, killing five. Again, disregarding his safety in the face of withering hostile fire, he crossed 70 meters of exposed terrain five times to carry his wounded comrades to a more secure area. Once he had assured their comfort and safety, Sgt. Lynch located the counterattacking friendly company to assist in directing the attack and evacuating the three casualties. His gallantry at the risk of his life is in the highest traditions of the military service. Sgt. Lynch has reflected great credit on himself, the 12th Cavalry, and the U.S. Army."

After his service in Vietnam, he joined the Illinois National Guard and retired with 21 years of service from the Army National Guard in 1994.

Duckworth was severely wounded in Iraq on Nov. 12, 2004, when the Black Hawk helicopter she was piloting was hit by a rocket-propelled grenade some 50 miles north of Baghdad. She would continue her service in the Illinois Army National Guard and reached the rank of lieutenant colonel retiring in 2014 with 23 years of service.

She spoke about Vietnam Veteran



The Illinois Army National Guard's 144th Army Band marched in the 2024 Chicago Memorial Day Parade on May 25. Trumpet player Staff Sgt. Sebastian Guerra is shown as the band marches down State Street in Chicago.

Sgt. 1st Class William Chaney, a mentor and friend who served with her in the National Guard's Chicago-based Co. B, 1st Battalion, 106th Aviation Regiment. Chaney would mentor Duckworth as a new officer in the unit guiding her toward making the right decisions.

Chaney, 59, of Schaumburg, Illinois, died on May 18, 2004 while deployed following emergency surgery in Landstuhl, Germany.

Merchant, who was born in

Chicago, attained the rank of rear admiral this year becoming the first African American woman in the 233-year history of the Coast Guard to attain the rank of admiral.

Jean Harris, a Survivor Outreach Services coordinator and Gold Star step-mother to Illinois Army National Guard Sgt. Joshua Harris, spoke during the ceremony about how Gold Star Families are a club that doesn't want any more members but lean on each other for support.

Korean War Veteran André Richardson King was awarded the General John A. Logan Award during the ceremony. King is an African American designer and architect and the Honorary Consul of Barbados. Major General Logan was a general in the Illinois Militia, today's Illinois National Guard, during the Civil War. Logan is credited with starting the first Memorial Day commemoration.

Also honored during the ceremony were two Chicago Public School JROTC Cadets, Lorena Mozo and Fernando Gonzalez, both whom showed exceptional leadership in the program.

The Illinois National Guard's 34th Division Sustainment Brigade provided a ceremonial rifle squad for the ceremony and the U.S. Navy's Navy Band Great Lakes provided music for the ceremony.



Medal of Honor Recipient Allen Lynch sits with Rear Admiral Zeita Merchant at the Chicago Memorial Day Wreath-Laying Ceremony.



Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, The Adjutant General of Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National Guard listens as Kristin Romines and Randy Romines share their stories of Sgt. Brian Romines. Romines served with 2nd Battalion, 123rd Field Artillery, Illinois Army National Guard, based in Milan. A 15-mile stretch of Highway 146 from Anna to Vienna was renamed the Sgt. Brian Romines Memorial Highway 17 years after the Soldier from Simpson was killed in action when an improvised explosive device detonated near the vehicle he was travelling in near Baghdad, Iraq.

Keeping the Memories Alive

Illinois, Missouri National Guard Leaders Cruise Mississippi With Gold Star Families

By Spc. Justin Malone, Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs

Survivor Outreach Services of Illinois and Missouri hosted the 4th Annual Mark Twain Riverboat Cruise in Hannibal, Missouri, June 2, 2024. The cruise on the Mississippi River served as a way to bring together Gold Star families from both sides of the river. The 3-hour cruise included live music, fun activities, prizes, food, and a place for fellowship for the surviving families.

"Today is a day of celebration,"

said Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, The Adjutant General for Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National Guard. "This is an opportunity to live by the motto, 'Always Remember, Never Forget.' This forum allows us to sit down and have a face-to-face chat with those who have paid the price of losing a loved one. They deal with it every day, but we encourage them to tell us their story. I always enjoy attending the riverboat cruise and I

look forward to attending many more in the future."

This year's cruise was a special one as 18 other Survivor Outreach Services around the country also hosted cruises, said Michelle Rutherford, the support Coordinator for Illinois Survivor Outreach Services.

"This was our biggest one yet," Rutherford said. "We all embarked at the same time around the country today on behalf of our loved ones who

are no longer with us.”

The survivors received encouraging words from the Illinois and Missouri National Guard leadership.

Brig. Gen Matthew. M. Bacon, the Assistant Adjutant General of the Missouri National Guard, expressed his gratitude for the surviving families’ support and encouraged them to keep their loved one’s memories alive.

“There are two deaths, one when they die and one when we stop telling their stories.”

Command Sgt. Maj. Kehinde Salami, the Senior Enlisted Advisor for the Illinois National Guard, Command Sgt. Maj. Phillip Barber, the State Command Sergeant major for the Illinois Army National Guard and Command Sgt. Maj. Peter Moeller, Casualty Operations Program Manager at National Guard Bureau, also attended the cruise and enjoyed fellowships with the families in attendance.

Rutherford described the importance of the event that SOS provides.

“Survivor Outreach Services



Gold Star families who participated in the 4th Annual Mark Twain Riverboat Cruise in Hannibal, Missouri June 2, 2024 hosted by Survivor Outreach Services of Illinois and Missouri enjoyed a free buffet as they cruise down the Mississippi River.

continues to honor those who are no longer with us,” Rutherford said. “Some of our survivors experienced loss recently and for some it was or over 20 years ago. It’s those little

things that keeps their memories alive. Like General Bacon said earlier, ‘There are two deaths, one when they die and when you forget them.’ So, we always remember and never forget them.”



Gold Star families who participated in the 4th Annual Mark Twain Riverboat Cruise in Hannibal, Missouri June 2, enjoy the afternoon as they cruise down the Mississippi River.



Command Sgt. Maj. Phillip Barber, the State Command Sergeant Major for the Illinois Army National Guard, Brig. Gen Matthew. M. Bacon, the Assistant Adjutant General of the Missouri National Guard, Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, The Adjutant General for Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National Guard, Command Sgt. Maj. Kehinde Salami, the Senior Enlisted Advisor for the Illinois National Guard, and Command Sgt. Maj. Peter Moeller from the National Guard Bureau pose for a picture with Boyd who won a tomato that went to space.



Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, Adjutant General, Illinois National Guard, Commander of the Illinois National Guard, addressed the crowd during the 4th Annual Mark Twain Riverboat Cruise in Hannibal, Missouri on June 2, hosted by the Survivor Outreach Services of Illinois and Missouri.



Michelle Rutherford, an Illinois Survivor Outreach Services Support Coordinator, Heather R. Donnelly, a Missouri Survivor Outreach Services Support Coordinator and Shelly Volz-Hazel, a Missouri Survivor Outreach Services Support Coordinator pose for a picture before boarding the Mark Twain Riverboat Cruise in Hannibal, Missouri June 2.



Brig. Gen Matthew. M. Bacon, the Assistant Adjutant General of the Missouri National Guard expressed his gratitude for the surviving families' support and encouraged them to keep their loved one's memories alive. Survivor Outreach Services of Illinois and Missouri hosted the 4th Annual Mark Twain Riverboat Cruise in Hannibal, Missouri June 2.



Airmen with Student Flight at the 182nd Airlift Wing Fly on a C-130H3

U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Elizabeth Claerhout and Airman 1st Class Kyras Ehlers, both trainees with student flight at the 182nd Airlift Wing, Illinois Air National Guard, participate in an orientation flight on a C-130H3 as new service members at the 182nd AW, Peoria, Illinois, June 8, 2024. Claerhout and Kyras were taken on an orientation flight to better familiarize themselves with the 182nd Airlift Wing. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Paul Helmig)



Peoria Contracting Superintendent Honored with Outstanding Guardsman in Contracting Award

By Master Sgt. Lealan Buehrer, 182nd Airlift Wing Public Affairs

U.S. Air Force Senior Master Sgt. Ben Yeutson, a contracting superintendent with the 182nd Mission Support Group, has been awarded the Fiscal Year 2023 Outstanding Guardsman (Enlisted) in Contracting Award by the Department of the Air Force.

The award, bestowed upon exceptional individuals within the Air National Guard who have demonstrated outstanding performance in the field of contracting, highlights Yeutson's high level of dedication and expertise to the Peoria's 182nd Airlift Wing and the Illinois National Guard. He and fellow Total Force contracting award recipients were recognized at the 2024 Department of the Air Force Contracting World-Wide Training Summit this April in Orlando, Florida.

The contracting career field encompasses all purchasing activities essential for an installation's operations, including supplies, services, construction, and architect and engineering services. This role ensures that mission requirements are met efficiently, providing support for various units, deployments and facility maintenance.

"For us, it's like sprinting a marathon every day, especially in the third and fourth quarters," Yeutson said of the demanding nature of his role.

With numerous requirements to fulfill, each involving extensive documentation and compliance with federal regulations, Yeutson's commitment to excellence was evident to his superiors.

"Senior Master Sgt. is the embodi-

ment of service before self," said 2nd Lt. Nicholas Marzinzik, a contracting specialist with the 182nd Mission Support Group. "He defines what hard work looks like professionally and personally – both at work and at home. There is a reason he continues to receive recognition by state, national and now by the Department of the Air Force levels."

Col. Steven Rice, the Director of Staff – Air at Illinois Joint Force Headquarters, noted Yeutson's ability to navigate the complexities of budgeting, procurement and fiscal accountability during the recent construction of the 182nd Airlift Wing's new firehouse.

"This is a task that would typically require a team however we were



U.S. Air Force Senior Master Sgt. Ben Yeutson, a contracting superintendent with the 182nd Mission Support Group, poses for a portrait in his office in Peoria, Illinois, May 17, 2024. The Department of the Air Force awarded Yeutson the Fiscal Year 2023 Outstanding Guardsman (Enlisted) in Contracting Award for demonstrating outstanding performance in the field of contracting.

down two fulltime positions,” Rice said. “So, despite being a one-man shop, he managed the contracting office’s responsibilities during the Wing’s fiscal closeout singlehandedly.”

With 15 years in contracting and 26 years in military service, Yeutson’s experience underscored his qualifications for the award. Despite the challenges, including long hours and significant responsibilities, Yeutson’s passion for his work remains unwavering.

For him, the job serves as a dual commitment to fiscal responsibility and facilitating opportunities for external partners.

“I liked the idea of being able to

save our money but then also providing an opportunity for contractors to do business with the federal government,” he said.

Providing high quality service was no small challenge.

Despite singlehandedly managing a workload typically handled by multiple individuals, Yeutson also oversaw the wing’s government purchase card program, ensuring meticulous oversight of purchases totaling over a million dollars.

His contributions weren’t limited to the military sphere. Yeutson and his wife devote their time and skill sets to community service, organizing and providing meals for up to 750 individuals during Thanksgiving. Through

meticulous planning and fundraising efforts, they have expanded their impact over the years, exemplifying Yeutson’s dedication to serving others.

Reflecting on his career, Yeutson emphasizes the importance of proactive preparation in public procurement, a philosophy that has guided his success.

“I think anyone can probably be successful in providing packages for public procurement as long as you train your customers and your individuals to be prepared ahead of time,” he said.

As Yeutson’s remarkable career continues, his ongoing legacy of dedication and service undoubtedly serves as a shining example of The Peoria Way.



182nd Airlift Wing hosts Sexual Assault Prevention Response awareness one-mile walk/run

Above, Members of the 182nd Airlift Wing, Illinois Air National Guard, gather and prepare to start the 2024 annual Sexual Assault Prevention Response awareness one-mile walk/run at the 182nd Airlift Wing in Peoria, Illinois, May 3. The annual SAPR run was to recognize April as Sexual Assault Awareness Prevention Month and had over double the participants from last year.

At right, U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Cynthia Niles, the director of complaints and resolutions with the 182nd Airlift Wing’s Inspector General section, Illinois Air National Guard, gives a speech before the 2024 annual Sexual Assault Prevention Response awareness one-mile walk/run at the 182nd Airlift Wing in Peoria, Illinois, May 3.

(U.S. Air National Guard photos by Staff Sgt. Wynndermere Shaw)





Governor JB Pritzker addresses family and friends of the approximately 125 Soldiers from the Kankakee-based Company C, 1st Battalion, 178th Infantry Regiment during the unit's mobilization ceremony June 4 at Olivet Nazarene University in Bourbonnais. The unit is part of a 550-Soldier Illinois Army National Guard deployment to the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility.

Approximately 550 Illinois National Guard Soldiers Activated for Overseas Mission

Units Hold Mobilization Ceremonies as They Head to U.S. Central Command Area of Responsibility

Approximately 550 Illinois Army National Guard Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 178th Infantry Regiment and Company B, 766th Engineer Brigade, based in Marseilles, were joined by family and friends at mobilization ceremonies in various locations June 3-6 as they prepare to deploy for an overseas mission in the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility.

"As we send these Soldiers off, I take great comfort in knowing the steady hands of their leaders will be guiding these units," said Governor JB Pritzker, during the mobilization ceremony for the Kankakee-based Company C, 1st Battalion, 178th Infantry Regiment June 4 at Olivet Nazarene University in Bourbonnais. "Serving as the Commander-in-Chief of Illinois' Citizen-Soldiers is a humbling responsibility and one I do not take lightly. You embody our very highest values. Citizens who have gone beyond the call of duty to serve your community, state, and country in extraordinary fashion."

Governor Pritzker called the Soldiers' service "heroes work."

"That call of service takes you



U.S. Army Capt. Matthew Rowe, center, the commander of Company A, 1st Battalion, 178th Infantry Regiment, Illinois Army National Guard, is presented a state of Illinois flag to take overseas during a mobilization ceremony in Peoria, Illinois, June 4. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Lealan Buehrer)

around the world to a region in need of your strength and courage," he said. "In many cases you may be the difference between life and death for your fellow Americans. That's heroes work."

Governor Pritzker thanked friends, families, and loved ones for being the support system for their Soldier.

"Thank you for your sacrifice. You are the support system for those who protect us," he said. "As you count down the days until they return, our sacred promise is to keep you safe and comforted."

Governor Pritzker also offered words of encouragement to the approximately 125 Soldiers from Company C who will deploy.

"I hope you carry the entire strength of this state with you, knowing we stand behind you every step of the way," he said.

Nemo Resideo or "leave no one behind" was the message shared by Elgin Mayor David Kaptain during the mobilization ceremony June 3 at Elgin Community College for Elgin-based Company B, 1-178th.

"This is a family. We take care of each other. We will not leave anyone behind," he said. "That's your commitment to the Soldiers standing next to you – to not leave anyone behind. That's the commitment from the city of Elgin – we're not going to forget you and we're not going to forget your families."

Kaptain assured the Elgin-based Soldiers their families will be taken care of while the unit is deployed.

"If they need help, they need to ask," Kaptain said. "If you need help, you need to ask."

Brig. Gen. Michael Eastridge, Deputy Assistant Adjutant General – Army, expressed his gratitude to the Soldiers and families for their selfless service to this great nation.

"Today, we stand together to honor the brave men and women of Company B as they prepare to deploy in support of Operation Spartan Shield," he said. "This deployment is not only a testament to their dedication and courage but also to the crucial contribution to our nation's national security and international stability."

Eastridge addressed the families'



Soldiers with Company A, 1st Battalion, 178th Infantry Regiment, Illinois Army National Guard, are mobilized for deployment during a ceremony in Peoria, June 4. The battalion's mission while forward deployed to six different countries within Southwest Asia will be to secure and protect U.S. and allied forces, as well as to train with allies in the region. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Lealan Buehrer)

concerns for their Soldiers.

"We understand this mission raises concerns for their safety," he said. "To the families, know the military has implemented comprehensive measures to ensure their security. Your Soldiers have the best training, best equipment, and best support system available. Your support is crucial. They will carry the strength of knowing their families stand behind them. Your resilience and encouragement are as crucial to their success as their training and equipment."

Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, The Adjutant General of Illinois, and Commander of the Illinois National Guard, emphasized four things the Soldiers need to do during the deployment.

"Things are going to be busy during this mission," he said. "But they will be busy at home as well. So, the first thing, keep communications open with your families."

Boyd told the Soldiers they will need to remain flexible.

"Things will get stagnated at

times, but it's up to you to use the opportunity to learn something and do something," he said. "Challenge yourself to come back a better person than before you left."

He encouraged the Soldiers to trust their leadership.

"The battalion will be spread out for this mission and some of the units will fall under different authority," he said. "Trust that authority."

Lastly, Boyd encouraged the Soldiers to represent the Illinois National Guard to the best of their ability.

"It's not about you, it's about the team," he said. "It's a team effort."

State Rep. Jackie Haas representing legislative District 79 told the Soldiers from Company C that serving our nation is a challenging yet rewarding task that only a select few have the honor of doing.

"It requires the bravest and strongest amongst us to rise to the challenge and fight to defend our rights and liberties while sacrificing so much," she said. "Without individuals like you, our country and world



Soldiers with Company A, 1st Battalion, 178th Infantry Regiment, Illinois Army National Guard, are mobilized for deployment during a ceremony in Peoria, Illinois, June 4, 2024. The battalion's mission while forward deployed to six different countries within Southwest Asia will be to secure and protect U.S. and allied forces, as well as to train with allies in the region. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Lealan Buehrer)

Brig. Gen. Justin Osberg, Director of the Illinois National Guard Joint Staff, told Marseilles-based Company B, 766th Brigade Engineer Battalion, he was honored to send them off for their overseas mission during the June 6 Coal City High School ceremony.

"You are the best of not only the Illinois National Guard, but the U.S. Army," he said, while also noting the 80th anniversary of the D-Day landings during World War II. "Could this generation do what those Soldiers did on D-Day? There are 99 reasons standing in front of me that prove the answer is yes. Thank you for answering our nation's call."

Osberg gave the Soldiers three goals to accomplish during the mission.

"Stay in regular communication with your family, friends and employers," he said. "Set goals for yourself and lastly, keep each other safe and look out for one another."



Capt. Benjamin Klingberg, commander, Company B, 1st Battalion, 178th Infantry Regiment, based in Elgin, addresses Soldiers and families during the unit's mobilization ceremony at Elgin Community College June 3 in Elgin.

State Sen. Tom Bennett, representing District 53, said he was honored to be at the Coal City mobilization ceremony.

"This deployment is about protecting our families, community, state, and the great country we love and are part of," he said.

Capt. Bryce Sesemann, Commander, Company B, 766th BEB, said the unit is like a second family.

"I grew up as an officer in this company," he said. "As a platoon leader, I had outstanding noncommissioned officers to mentor me and then I had two great company commanders. When it came time for company command, there was only one company I wanted to command - Bravo Company of the 766th BEB. Thank you for answering the call to ensure our nation's liberties are protected."

Approximately 130 Soldiers from the Bartonville-based Company A, 1-178th, formed on the football field at Limestone Community High School in Peoria June 4 for the unit's mobilization ceremony.

"Your mission will take you to the leading edge of today's ever evolving and challenging operating environment. I have the highest confidence you will be successful," said Command Sgt. Maj. Philip Barber, State Command Sergeant Major. "Each of you have prepared your minds, bodies, and personal equipment. Your leadership has built the team or manned the formation to



State Rep. Jackie Haas representing legislative District 79 told the Soldiers from Company C that serving our nation is a challenging yet rewarding task that only a select few have the honor of doing.



Soldiers stand in formation during the mobilization ceremony for Company B, 1st Battalion, 178th Infantry Regiment at Elgin Community College June 3 in Elgin, Illinois.



Approximately 125 Soldiers from Company C, 1st Battalion, 178th Infantry Regiment are part of a 550-Illinois Army National Guard Soldier deployment to the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility.



Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, The Adjutant General of Illinois, and Commander of the Illinois National Guard, talks to the families of Soldiers from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 178th Infantry Regiment during the unit's mobilization ceremony June 6 at Carver Military Academy in Chicago.

meet the mission requirements of the combatant commander."

Barber offered the Soldiers advice.

"During your communications on both sides, both the Soldiers and the families, always take a minute to think before you say something," he said. "Neither person will be able to fully understand the full picture of what is going on both at home and overseas. Don't let the small stuff become unnecessarily contentious."

He also encouraged the Soldiers to improve themselves.

"While you're deployed, work on improving yourselves. Work on your physical fitness, read a few books, get an accountability partner and work towards some goals while holding each other to the task," he said. "Keep in mind you are all wearing the golden cross on your shoulders. A lot of eyes will be on you."

Command Sgt. Maj. Daniel Butte, 1-178th, said Company A is ready to tackle the missions that will come their way during the deployment, and thanked the Soldiers' families and friends for their support.

"The sacrifices of families and



Spc. Stephon McClain poses with family after the mobilization ceremony for B Co., 766th Brigade Engineer Battalion at Coal City High School on June 6 in Coal City, Illinois. The approximately 100 Soldiers in the Marseilles-based company will perform an overseas security mission in the U.S. Central Command Area of Responsibility. The company's deployment is part of a 550-Soldier Illinois Army National Guard deployment to U.S. Central Command that includes four companies from the 1st Battalion, 178th Infantry Regiment. (U.S. Army photo by Master Sgt. Cassidy Snyder)



The Soldiers salute during the mobilization ceremony for B Co., 766th Brigade Engineer Battalion at Coal City High School on June 6 in Coal City, Illinois. The approximately 100 Soldiers in the Marseilles-based company will perform an overseas security mission in the U.S. Central Command Area of Responsibility. The company's deployment is part of a 550-Soldier Illinois Army National Guard deployment to U.S. Central Command that includes four companies from the 1st Battalion, 178th Infantry Regiment. (U.S. Army photo by Master Sgt. Cassidy Snyder)

friends should be recognized," he said. "The burdens you carry at home while your Soldiers are deployed is shared in our hearts. Thank you for what you do here as it allows us to do what we must do."

Capt. Matthew Rowe, commander, Company A, said now is the time for the unit to put their training into action.

"This week, we embark on a mission that demands our utmost dedication, discipline, and courage," he said. "We will take on this role diligently and stay the course until our mission is complete. Each of you has trained hard and shown unwavering commitment to our cause. Now is the time to put that training into action and answer our nation's call to service."

Rowe said it's time for the Soldiers to stand firm as they face their next challenges.

"Support one another and uphold the values that define us as Soldiers," he said. "Stay vigilant, stay focused, and stay true to each other."

Lt. Col. Andrew Salmo, commander, 1st Battalion, 178th INF, took the time to thank four groups of people during the mobilization

ceremonies.

"Thank you to our Soldiers' employers. Your support before, during, and after a deployment is critical to the morale and success of the mission," he said. "To our veterans in the audience, the leadership

you've shown and the standards you set for us to follow is the reason we're successful. To the Soldiers of the battalion, you are ready for any mission. And to our families, long days lie ahead. You can't stop the clock and we will reunite again."



Cpl. Morgan Crowther poses with family after the mobilization ceremony for B Co., 766th Brigade Engineer Battalion at Coal City High School on June 6 in Coal City, Illinois. (U.S. Army photo by Master Sgt. Cassidy Snyder)

Standing Watch



Soldiers from the Illinois National Guard's 233rd and 333rd Military Police Companies provide perimeter security along the Mississippi River on Camp Ripley, Minnesota for the 1437th Multi-Role Bridge Company, Michigan National Guard.

Multi-State National Guard Training Opportunity Bridges More Than Rivers

Illinois Guard Military Police Provide Security for Michigan Guard project

Michigan National Guard Engineers of the 1437th Multi-Role Bridge Company, (MRBC) worked, through the night, to unload trucks carrying boats and bridge sections during training on Camp Ripley June 11.

"Our task is to span the Mississippi River and make our bridge safe for armored vehicles to cross," said Army 1st Lt. Jame Hunter, 1437th commander.

This culminating event for the bridging company is taking place during hours of darkness and is currently online to help facilitate the drivers training and hands-on experience for other units training on Ripley.

"Our coordination with several units has brought us to a multi-state training opportunity which is not

unrealistic in a possible forward, deployment scenario," added Hunter.

For the engineers, this nearly wraps up a two-week annual training event for the Sault Ste. Marie based unit from Michigan. Part of their final training effort include the drive back across state lines before returning to their homes.

During the gap crossing the 1437th incorporated local security support from the Illinois National Guard 233rd and 333rd Military Police Companies. These units, who recently completed their own training event on Camp Ripley, provided perimeter security to include the overall cordon, traffic control points and job site overwatch along the river.

"Getting the call and to be able to offer my unit's specific skillset as MPs was a great chance to broaden

everyone's training knowledge," said Army Capt. Chad Harris, Company Commander for the 333rd MP Company. "It was a thrill to use our normal practices in a unique scenario like this," he added.

In a real-world scenario bridging units would have support from higher echelons to defend their area of operations. Additionally, their effort to span an obstacle would be to allow the spearhead advancement of combat formations. These assets were also coordinated with the support of the 1437th to take part in a rare, mutually beneficial training occasion. Welcoming self-propelled artillery and support vehicles of the Minnesota National Guard's 1st Battalion - 125th Field Artillery to cross once the bridge is in place and inspected.

"Opportunities like this are rare

during annual training, making this experience exceptionally rewarding for our Soldiers. They unanimously agreed that it was among the best training sessions they have ever had. Conducting a ribbon bridge crossing at night and holding a reenlistment ceremony on the bridge created an unforgettable and highly impactful training moment,” said Army Lt. Col. Mark Gile, battalion commander, 1st Battalion - 125th Field Artillery Regiment.

The exercise kicked off around 9 p.m. and later that night, vehicles were safely moving across the river incorporating night time drivers training as well as risk mitigation steps to ensure safe crossing of light and heavy vehicles over the bridge.

In addition to bridging operations, the engineers as well as the military police security elements engaged the opposing force or OPFOR in several mock battles that involved quick firefights and deliberate maneuver to

challenge the security of the area of operations while working to build the bridge.

Another unique element that was added was a sudden water-borne bomb scenario from the OPFOR. Utilizing one of the engineer’s boats, an OPFOR unit tried to simulate damaging the bridge while engaging Soldiers with small arms blanks.

Wrapping up the crossing including several units of wheeled vehicles, the tracked self-propelled howitzers of the field artillery lumbered across the bridge under the control of a team of ground guides. Halting the last M109A7 Paladin howitzer before finishing their crossing to allow several reenlistments to take place in front of this unique backdrop.

“These units made our training event a terrific scenario from beginning to end. Working realistic communications and coordination along with physical and area security

to produce the best methods of Wet Gap Crossing,” concluded Hunter.

The use and overall training success of bridging the Mississippi River has been one of Camp Ripley’s strongest tributes since its establishment in the early 1930s. Fourth Army maneuvers prior to World War II confirmed the need for rapidly buildable crossings for vehicles and personnel. The use of Camp Ripley to training, develop and implement these bridges was ideal for Army Engineer units as well as other bridging organizations. Since then, Camp Ripley has built two water or ice crossing training areas; Whisky One or W1 where units start easy securing and constructing their crossing over a long, moderately narrow lake with no rapid current. The second, know as Whiskey Two or W2 is 116-meter fast water site with support ramps on both banks and a large vehicle turn around on the far side.



Soldiers from the Illinois National Guard’s 233rd and 333rd Military Police Companies provide perimeter security along the Mississippi River on Camp Ripley, Minnesota for the 1437th Multi-Role Bridge Company, Michigan National Guard.



Soldiers from the Illinois Army National Guard's 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team were among approximately 5,000 Soldiers from across the United States and Canada participating in an exercise at the Joint Readiness Training Center, Fort Johnson, Louisiana. The exercise, led this year by the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Wisconsin Army National Guard, is designed to bring the Soldiers together to work as cohesive teams. (32nd IBCT Photo by Staff Sgt. Kati Volkman)

33rd IBCT Participates in Joint Training Exercise

Illinois Army National Guard Soldiers from the 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT) were among the more than 5,000 Soldiers from across the United States, along with support elements from Canada, to participate in a month-long training exercise led by the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Wisconsin National Guard.

Training exercises at the JRTC allow brigade combat teams (BCT) to experience simulated large-scale combat operations (LSCO). For the National Guard, these opportunities are hard to come by, with only two rotations each year being set aside for National Guard BCTs.

Col. Matthew Elder, commander of the 32nd IBCT, believes it is important to make the most of these multi-echelon training events.

"For guard units specifically, this is what we call a generational training opportunity," elaborated Elder. "As the army transitions from the global war on terror and trains to build



readiness towards large-scale combat, that's how we need to be prepared to fight in the future."

Though troops will be at the JRTC for about a month, the main training exercise takes place over the course of two weeks, with live fire exercises and simulated force-on-force engagements that will put the 32nd IBCT and their enablers from the other states and countries to the test.

Command Sgt. Maj. Aaron Johnson, the Senior Enlisted Leader of the 32nd IBCT, emphasized that it takes a team effort, with good communication and collaboration, to accomplish an exercise of this size.

"As the main BCT of this exercise, the 32nd is the headliner, but any success we have here can be attributed to those across the National Guard,



Soldiers from the 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, headquartered in Urbana, participate in a training exercise at the Joint Readiness Training Center, Fort Johnson, Louisiana.



Soldiers from the 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team participate in an exercise at the Joint Readiness Training Center, Fort Johnson, Louisiana. They completed blank and live fire training exercises that put their skills to the test while bringing Soldiers from across the United States and Canada together to work as cohesive teams.

from the highest levels of leadership to the individuals from all 24 states who came here to support this exercise.”

According to the U.S. Army website, the JRTC and Fort Johnson prepare multi-component units and Soldiers for combat. Due to operational requirements and the size of the force, the Army depends on the National Guard and Reserve components to complete its missions around the world. Training sustains the Total Army force’s readiness, while reassuring the nation’s allies and deterring potential adversaries. The JRTC forges alliances and partnerships and provides a lethal force that is ready to fight today and in the future.



Soldiers from the 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, headquartered in Urbana, conduct a tabletop exercise during training at the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Johnson, Louisiana. Training exercises at the JRTC allow brigade combat teams to experience simulated large-scale combat operations.





Chatham Soldier Promoted to Lieutenant Colonel

Illinois Army National Guard Maj. Zachary DeGroot, of Chatham, the Illinois Army National Guard's state training officer and commander of 1st Battalion, 106th Assault Helicopter Regiment, was promoted to lieutenant colonel in a ceremony July 16 at the Illinois Military Academy, Camp Lincoln, Springfield.

DeGroot commissioned into the active component of the U.S. Army as an aviation officer in 2006 through Southern Illinois University-Carbondale's Reserve Officer Training Corps and served in a variety of command and staff positions before transitioning into the Illinois Army National Guard in 2022.

"I remember when Zach came to the Illinois National Guard in 2022," Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, the Adjutant General of Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National Guard, said. "He came to my office as sort of an introduction. When he left my office, I thought that guy is sharp. If he sticks around long enough, he'll have a future in our organization."

Since becoming a member of the ILARNG, DeGroot has served as an Active Guard and Reserve Soldier as the officer in charge, 1-106th Assault Helicopter Battalion, and assistant to the ILARNG Chief of Staff, before becoming the ILARNG state training officer (G-3/7).

Boyd said he has had the privilege of working with DeGroot as he served as the assistant to the Chief of Staff.

"He was always on point and very much detail oriented," he said. "As he accepts this promotion, it's going to be even more important that he stay detailed oriented and specific as he is. When you're a commander, people listen. You must be specific in how you communicate and detail the missions you give to people who serve under you."

Boyd said he has no doubt DeGroot will excel as a leader.

"When I talk to Zach, I see a genuine heart to take care of those who will eventually serve under him," he said.

Boyd also thanked DeGroot's family, wife Bo, and sons, Zachary, and Gabriel, for their support.

"Because of your support, we get to do what we love and that is wear this uniform and serve this great state and nation," Boyd said. "Zach will need



Bo DeGroot, right, and Zachary DeGroot, left, pin lieutenant colonel rank on newly promoted Lt. Col. Zachary DeGroot, of Chatham, the Illinois Army National Guard's state training officer, during a promotion ceremony July 16 at the Illinois Military Academy, Camp Lincoln, Springfield. Looking on is DeGroot's youngest son, Gabriel.

your continued support as he moves forward in his career."

DeGroot said his promotion was made possible by the unwavering support of several people.

"To my wife, Bo, and sons, Zachary and Gabriel, your constant encouragement, understanding and sacrifices have been the backbone of my strength and determination," he said. "It has fueled my dedication and commitment to serve our great nation."

"From several active-duty assignments to back home in Illinois, you and the boys have always been by my side," he said. "Thank you for standing by me during two Afghanistan deployments, countless field training exercises and schools. Thank you for being a pillar of support."

DeGroot also thanked his parents, mother, Dorothy, and father, C.A. for their support.

"I have the deepest gratitude for my parents, whose values and teachings have shaped me into the person I am today," he said. "Their steadfast support and wisdom have been invaluable throughout my career. Without their upbringing and guidance, I would not have joined the Army nor have my beautiful family."

DeGroot said he still has fond memories of he and his father, who

was drafted into the Army in 1968, discussing career routes as he signed the scholarship through SIU-C.

"Who would have known that one decision would have set the course for where I am at today," he said. "Thank you to my father for sharing stories of his time in the Army as a draftee during Vietnam and the challenges he faced. His stories inspired me to join the Army and start a new family tradition of service to this nation."

DeGroot also thanked military leaders and mentors who have guided him along his journey in the U.S. Army.

"Your wisdom and guidance have been instrumental to my development as an officer," he said. "Your leadership has inspired me to strive for excellence. I am deeply grateful for the opportunities and responsibilities entrusted to me."

DeGroot called his two deployments to Afghanistan as among the most challenging, rewarding, and exciting experiences of his career.

"These assignments tested my abilities to underscore the importance of teamwork, resiliency, and dedication," he said. "I am filled with gratitude and a new sense of purpose. I am honored to serve alongside each and everyone here today. I look forward to the new opportunities and challenges that lie ahead."

Roxworthy Pins on Colonel Rank with Assistance from Parents, Gold Star Family of Fallen Illinois Army National Guard Soldier

Col. Beth Roxworthy learned lessons throughout her life and military career.

From her parents, she learned her core morals and to treat other people with dignity and respect. During her 13 years as an enlisted Soldier, she learned the values of friendship, camaraderie, and working as a team. With each level of command, she learned new lessons on leadership, accountability, empathy, and compassion.

And from the family of Simone Robinson, she learned the meaning of sacrifice.

Roxworthy, the Commander of the Illinois Army National Guard's Chicago-based 34th Infantry Division Sustainment Brigade, was promoted to colonel on Friday, June 21, in Chicago.

Her parents, Donald and Jo Ellen Roxworthy of Crystal Lake, pinned the colonel rank on their daughter's left side. Gold Star mother, Regina Byther, and daughter, Nyzia Wilson, pinned the rank on Roxworthy's right side. Nyzia's mother, Sgt. Simone Robinson of Dixmoor, Illinois, died on March 1, 2009, at Brooke Army Hospital in San Antonio, Texas, from wounds suffered when her security post was attacked with an explosive device on Jan. 17, 2009, in Kabul, Afghanistan.

Sgt. Robinson served under Roxworthy's company command in the 634th Brigade Support Battalion before her deployment. At the time, Roxworthy just knew her as a good Soldier.

After Simone's death, Roxworthy assisted her family and they got to know each other. She learned about Simone's dedication to her family, especially her daughter, Nyzia. Roxworthy became close with both Regina and Simone's sister, Sharmonique Robinson.

As the years passed, they have remained close. When Roxworthy was promoted to lieutenant colonel, she wanted Simone's family to be a part of it, but the COVID-19 pandemic



The parents of newly promoted Col. Beth Roxworthy, Donald and Jo Ellen Roxworthy of Crystal Lake, pin the colonel rank on their daughter's left side while Gold Star mother, Regina Byther, and daughter, Nyzia Wilson, pin the rank on Roxworthy's right side during a promotion ceremony June 21 in Chicago. Nyzia's mother, Sgt. Simone Robinson of Dixmoor, Illinois, died on March 1, 2009, at Brooke Army Hospital in San Antonio, Texas, from wounds suffered when her security post was attacked with an explosive device on Jan. 17, 2009 in Kabul, Afghanistan. Sgt. Robinson served under Roxworthy's company command in the 634th Brigade Support Battalion.

curtailed a ceremony. Roxworthy's unit was also a major part of the Illinois National Guard's response to the pandemic.

Her promotion to colonel gave her another opportunity to involve her friends and her family in the celebration.

Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, the 41st Adjutant General for Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National Guard, promoted Roxworthy and administered her Oath of Office. The promotion was held in the conference rooms of Jenner & Block Law Firm on the 45th Floor of 353 North Clark Street in Chicago, overlooking Lake Michigan.

Roxworthy has more than 31 years of military service. She enlisted in

the Illinois Army National Guard in 1993 as an automated logistics specialist with B Co., 634th Brigade Support Battalion. After 13 years of enlisted service, she received a direct commission to second lieutenant in 2006. She deployed to Iraq from 2006 to 2007 as a platoon leader with A Co., 634th BSB. Following her deployment, she served as commander of G Co., 634th BSB, which was Sgt. Robinson's unit in Crestwood, Illinois. She went on to serve as the battalion's support operations officer and then commanded A Co., 634th BSB. She served as the operations officer for the 766th Brigade Engineer Battalion, the personnel officer for the 108th Sustainment Brigade, and the executive officer for the 198th

Combat Sustainment Support Battalion. She then took command of the 634th BSB. In 2022, she deployed to Djibouti, Africa, as the deputy commander of the 404th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade and while deployed served as the executive officer to the Commanding General, Combined Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa.

Her awards and decorations include the Bronze Star, the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, the Meritorious Service Medal (3rd award), the Army Commendation Medal (6th award), the Army Achievement Medal (3rd award) and several others.

She holds a bachelor's degree in Finance from Illinois State University and a master's degree in Logistics and Supply Chain Management from the University of Kansas. Her military education includes Quartermaster Officer Basic Course, Quartermaster Captain's Career Course, University of North Carolina Institute for Defense and Business Strategic Studies Fellowship, Engineer



Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, the Adjutant General of Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National Guard, administers the oath of office to newly promoted Col. Beth Roxworthy, Commander of the 34th Division Sustainment Brigade, during her promotion ceremony June 21 in the conference rooms of Jenner & Block Law Firm on the 45th Floor of 353 North Clark Street in Chicago.

Captain's Career Course, Human Resource Management Course, and Command and General Staff College. She is attending the U.S. Army War College and will earn a master's degree in Strategic Studies in July.

As a civilian, she is employed as the Legislative Liaison for the Illinois Department of Military Affairs.

She lives in Rochester, Illinois, with her two unruly dogs, Leonard and Olive.

Lyon earns Commendation Medal

The Illinois Army National Guard's logistics directorate (G-4) took time June 2 to present one of their own with an Army Commendation Medal at the Illinois National Guard's headquarters on Camp Lincoln in Springfield. Lt. Col. Tim Barnhart (left) presented the medal to Maj. Michael Lyon of Bradley, for his work as the Field Services Officer with the 34th Division Sustainment Brigade. Lyon helped prepare what was then called the 108th Sustainment Brigade for its Warfighter Exercise in 2022. He developed the brigade's mortuary affairs capabilities and increased the unit's capabilities in multiple other areas.



Illinois National Guard Celebrates America's Birthday by Participating in Local Parades



The 144th Army Band marches in the City of Blue Island Fourth of July Parade. The Illinois Army National Guard's 2nd Battalion, 122nd Field Artillery Regiment and 144th Army Band helped Blue Island, Illinois, celebrate our nation's independence on the Fourth of July.



Spc. Rory Fritts, a vocalist, marches in the City of Blue Island Fourth of July Parade.



Spc. Ivan Albor, Sgt. Giovanni Innocenti, Sgt. Mateo Eib, and Sgt. Issac Hayslett, all with 2nd Battalion, 122nd Field Artillery Regiment lead the City of Blue Island Fourth of July Parade as the color guard.



Spc. Rodolfo Hill, 1970th Quartermaster Company, waves from the back of an Army truck to a little girl during the North Riverside Independence Day Parade.



Sgt. Eduardo Serna, 1970th Quartermaster Company, looks out from the cab of an Army truck during the North Riverside Independence Day parade.



Sgt. Eduardo Serna and Spc. Rodolfo Hill, both with the Illinois National Guard's 1970th Quartermaster Company, based in Chicago, wait in the North Riverside Independence Day parade lineup. Each year the Illinois National Guard supports Independence Day events across the state.



A veteran carries the U.S. flag during the North Riverside Independence Day parade.



Spc. Rodolfo Hill, 1970th Quartermaster Company, waves from the back of an Army truck during the North Riverside Independence Day parade.



U.S. Air Force Col. Nicolas Henschel (foreground), the 126th Air Refueling Wing commander, and Tech. Sgt. John Bowers, with the 126th Maintenance Squadron's Repair and Reclamation shop, inspect a right outboard aileron scheduled for removal from a KC-135 at Scott Air Force Base, Illinois, July 10. Henschel assisted the Illinois Air National Guard team as they performed routine maintenance work. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Mr. Ken Stephens)



Col. Nick Henschel, 126th Air Refueling Wing commander, went undercover July 3 in the 126th Security Forces Squadron (SFS) to learn how they train and equip to defend USAF and ANG assets against all aggressors. Master Sgt. Alexander Cairry, non-commissioned officer in charge of combat arms, had the colonel inspect, break down, clean, reassemble, and validate operation of the M249 Squad Automatic Weapon (SAW).



U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Moria Tart, 126th Force Support Squadron, left, shows Col. Nick Henschel how to input training line numbers at Scott Air Force Base, Illinois, July 17. Henschel spent the morning working in the Base Education and Training Manager office. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Brian Ellison)



Team 18, made up of Illinois Army National Guard Chief Warrant Officer 2 David Henzler and Spc. William Gogo, watch teams competing in the International Best Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear Warrior Competition at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, May 29-June 3. At 47, Henzler was the oldest competitor, while Gogo was the youngest at 22.

Dragon-head Soldiers Compete to be the Best

Two Illinois Army National Guard Soldiers competed in the International Best Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) Warrior competition at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, May 29-June 3.

Chief Warrant Officer 3 David Henzler, of Romeoville, a CBRN Warrant Officer with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 44th Chemical Battalion, based in Bloomington, and Spc. William Gogo, of La Grange, a CBRN noncommissioned officer assigned to the 5th Civil Support Team, based in Bartonville, were among 30, two-person teams, who were tested on technical and tactical CBRN tasks, ranging from land navigation and Soldiers skills, to written exams and site characterization and decontamination techniques.

However, the Henzler-Gogo team

established a few firsts in entering the competition.

"We were the first National Guard team to compete for the title," Henzler said. "In addition, there had never been a Chief Warrant Officer 3 in the competition until our team entered."

Henzler's original partner, another chief warrant officer, had to drop out before the competition, opening the door for Gogo's participation.

"We reached out to the commands and asked for the names of their top two picks, based on readiness and availability," Henzler said. "So once we were notified we could enter, we had to scramble a bit."

Henzler said training for this competition included brushing up across the spectrum on CBRN tasks, running, ruck marching, and hitting the gym every day.

In total, the teams covered 45 miles,

and 27 teams made it to the finish.

At 47, and the oldest person in the competition, Henzler sustained an injury forcing him to drop from the competition, but Gogo, who at 22 was the youngest competitor, was able to partner with another Soldier who's partner also sustained an injury.

Despite the injury, and that he's preparing to retire from the Illinois National Guard, Henzler said plans are to try and send a team to compete each year.

"We're going to get the word out about this international competition and urge our Soldiers to compete," he said. "We always encourage them to find ways to always challenge, and improve, themselves. What better way to challenge yourself than to compete in an event geared toward your military occupational specialty?"



Gold Star Families Bond During Fire Boat Tour





Mead Earns Gen. MacArthur Leadership Award

Illinois Army National Guard Officer Led East St. Louis Unit's Mission to the Southwest Border

Capt. Elizabeth Mead of Williamsville, the commander of the Illinois Army National Guard's East St. Louis-based 1844th Transportation Company, was awarded the U.S. Army's General Douglas MacArthur Leadership Award, one of only seven National Guard officers to receive the award nationwide.

Mead led her unit's deployment to the Southwest Border from October 2022, returning just two days before Thanksgiving 2023. As Mead, her husband, Matthew, and their five children gathered around a 20-pound turkey at her in-laws in 2023, she knew she had a lot to be grateful for.

She was home after a year full of leadership challenges, both foreseen and unforeseen. And still the 1844th Transportation Co. Soldiers pulled together behind their commander, backed by a core of strong NCOs.

"She built a cohesive 125-Soldier team that did excellent work in its assigned missions and also volunteered in the communities where they were situated," said Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, The Adjutant General of Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National Guard. "The 1844th Soldiers accumulated more than 4,500 volunteer hours during the deployment. She guided her Soldiers' military and personal development. Her Soldiers completed more than 40 military certifications and 780 college credit hours. Ninety-six percent of the unit emerged from the deployment completely debt-free."

Capt. Mead was "met with many challenges during her deployment that no officer should have to face," Col. Beth Roxworthy, the 34th Infantry Division Sustainment Brigade Commander, wrote in the MacArthur award nomination packet. She "is what General Douglas MacArthur stood for: Duty, Honor, and Country. She is the epitome of the citizen



Capt. Elizabeth Mead is shown at the 1844th Transportation Co.'s Welcome Home Ceremony following the unit's October 2022 to November 2023 Southwest Border mission. (U.S. Army photo by 2nd Lt. Trent Fouché, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs)

Soldier."

The transportation company thrived in its 24-hour a day, 7-day a week mission of being the eyes and ears of the U.S. Border Patrol.

But "the first 90 days were hell," Mead said.

Mead knew the Southwest Border mission was going to be a challenge, both personally and professionally. Her heart broke leaving then 1-year-old Maizie and her four other children at home with her husband, Matthew, in Williamsville.

About 40 percent of her Soldiers were coming from other units and they were about to deploy to a tough politically charged mission splitting her Soldiers across both shifts and geography. They were seeking out thousands of desperate people trying to cross the border, including children,

each with their own, often heart-rending, story. Some were also dangerous, leading to restrictions on what could be publicly said about the 1844th until they returned home. Mead also knew from the after-action reports of previous Southwest Border rotations that "there were a lot of opportunities for trouble."

Mead spent 13 years as an enlisted Soldier prior to earning her commission through the Accelerated Officer Candidate School at Fort McClellan, Alabama. She knew how good NCOs could help her build a team and she used her NCOs to develop a safety and wellness plan for the unit.

Mead and 1844th 1st Sgt. AJ Huston both followed radio personality and author Dave Ramsey and integrated some of his principles into the unit's program for personal, physical, financial, and spiritual fitness.

"She a very 'Soldiers-first' commander," said Huston, who has known Mead for 20 years dating back their time as enlisted Soldiers in the Quincy-based 126th Maintenance Co., now the 126th Quartermaster Co. "She's very involved. She really works in mentoring her platoon leaders."

It wasn't easy pulling the unit together. "We all came together only 30 days out from the deployment and we didn't have an (annual training) together," Huston said. The command team had to make a lot of decisions on who would be best suited for each position. "We made a lot of people mad in the beginning, but as the deployment went on, I think most decided that we weren't as bad as they might of thought at first. Some of the decisions we made turned out to be the right ones," Huston added.

Mead and Huston also had their "fair share" of disagreements. "We didn't make any major decisions unless we were on the same page," Huston said. Sometimes that meant



Capt. Elizabeth Mead is shown with her Soldiers on the Southwest Border wearing Texas-style headgear near the end of the unit's mission on the Southwest Border. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Jaylin Bower, 1844th Transportation Co., Illinois Army National Guard)

"pausing" the decision to get more input before deciding how to go forward.

The operations NCO, Master Sgt. Jessie Jump, aside from running the unit's operations went into the community and found opportunities for the Soldiers to do volunteer work in their off-hours.

"There were some growing pains," said Jump, who is now the first sergeant for the Milan-based 2-123 Forward Support Co. "She did teach me quite a bit, which, after 25 years in the Army, is no small feat." Mead taught him how to "trust but verify" in delegating tasks and a more personable and effective way to write awards, among other things. "She took time with all her Soldiers," Jump said. "The NCOs put our faith in her."

Sgt. 1st Class Tristan Booker took care of the Soldiers' pay and entitlements ensuring that they had few worries during the year-long deployment.

"Captain Mead is a compassionate leader that fostered an environment of change through a purpose-driven

vision. While on the border Captain Mead leveraged multiple avenues to enhance the unit's mission and impact on the community in which the 1844th Transportation Company was immersed," Booker said. "Captain Mead displayed transparency and authenticity, which influenced Soldiers at all levels to focus on self-improvement activities."

"She was a very good leader – one who adversity made stronger," said Staff Sgt. (ret.) Philip Powe, who was pulled from his platoon sergeant position in favor of a higher-ranking Soldier as the unit reorganized in the beginning. While Powe did not like that decision, he appreciated the authentic and straightforward way his commander delivered her decision.

"People don't always agree," Powe said. "When you are younger, you sometimes don't see the bigger picture. With experience, you see it."

Mead said that Powe was a good NCO and a wise friend who "took her out for lunch" when he saw she needed it.

"Sometimes you just need to step

away for a bit," Powe said. "It wasn't captain to staff sergeant then. We were just people. She did the same for me when I needed it. It was a door that swung both ways with two Soldiers looking out for each other."

Mead did everything you would expect from an officer, Powe said. She was physically fit. She led from the front. "During ACFT, she was right out there with the Soldiers." When the unit did the 18-mile Norwegian Ruck March, again, Mead was out front.

She also provided top cover for her NCOs and Soldiers and still held them accountable. "She persevered," Powe said.

"You can't be a good leader without good leaders under you," Mead said. "I'm not a leader by myself." Her Soldiers gelled into what Mead calls a "forever family" – a supportive group that knows they can call on each anytime despite many leaving the unit after the deployment.

It wasn't anyone in the unit that made the first 90 days of the deployment so difficult. It was the deployment's original battalion

commander.

Mead said her battalion commander back in Illinois, Lt. Col. Mike Barton, was “hands down the best leader I’ve ever had, He showed me grace, confidence in me, support and mentorship throughout my entire command without hesitation.”

But her original battalion commander on the Southwest Border was what the Army now refers to as a “counter-productive” leader – formerly referred to as “toxic” leadership. Mead found that she, and her unit, were being treated differently because she was a woman. “Some of the things he said and did were not how men are supposed to treat women – not how Soldiers are supposed to treat other Soldiers.”

And he was her boss. “It was hard, trying time,” Mead said. She talked to some other senior leaders she knew and respected, Barton and Arkansas Army National Guard Lt. Col. Travis Eddleman. They “helped me find the strength and courage to go forward and file the complaint when I did.” She thought about the Army’s Values and realized she needed to report her battalion commander’s behavior. “I realized that I didn’t have the luxury anymore. If he’s doing this to me, then there are likely other women being treated this way.”

Eddleman said Mead “stood out as a mature and well-qualified officer” early on. “During the hardships she faced with her commander and the subsequent investigation, she continuously demonstrated the resolve, maturity, courage, and dedication we expect of Army leaders. She never retreated. She forged ahead, took care of her Soldiers, and developed several command initiatives within her company, at least two of which I know were adopted by the entire brigade-level task force.”

“It took a great amount of personal courage just to come forward with her challenges with her battalion commander,” said Pennsylvania Army National Guard Col. Brad Pierson, commander of the 55th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade and Mead’s brigade commander during the deployment. “She remained focused on the mission and her Soldiers even when she was going through those



Capt. Elizabeth Mead shows Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, The Adjutant General of Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National Guard, the 1844th Transportation Co’s area during training at Marseilles Training Area this year. Mead will receive the General Douglas MacArthur Leadership Award, one of only seven National Guard officers to receive the prestigious leadership award nationwide. (U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Charlie Michaels, 139th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, Illinois Army National Guard)

challenges.”

Mead instituted several different Soldier-care programs at the company level, some of which were brought up to the brigade level, Pierson said. For example, a program based on the Illinois National Guard’s “Restore Trust” initiative to prevent harmful behaviors such as suicide and sexual assault were implemented by the task force.

“The mission itself is very demanding on leadership” with the challenges of bringing several ad hoc units together as a team with a unique and difficult mission, Pierson said. Mead addressed the difficulties of the mission while also coming forward to Pierson with her concerns about the battalion commander.

The ensuing Army investigation revealed dozens of complaints from other women and the battalion commander was relieved of command. In January 2024, her former battalion commander plead guilty at Court Martial to assault consummated by a battery, sexual harassment, conduct unbecoming an officer, violation of a general order and other charges. While the investigation was

underway, Mead did her best to shield her unit and her Soldiers from the battalion commander and his actions.

She didn’t even tell her husband, Matthew, a teacher and basketball coach at Riverton High School, about the investigation for a while. “He was taking care of five kids by himself,” she said. “Besides, I was a little afraid that he’d travel down” to the border to support her, she added.

“She was extremely resilient,” Huston said. “She was steadfast in what she wanted to do as a commander” despite the adversity she faced.

Mead will relinquish command of the 1844th Transportation Company to Capt. Teza Simunyola in September. While she is confident that Capt. Simunyola will do a great job, she admits to being a bit torn about leaving command of the 1844th. “Our Soldiers didn’t just meet the standard, they excelled past it,” she said. “I do get emotional when I think about it. I’m happy because being in command is exhausting and takes a lot of time away from my family. But I also feel like I’m letting go of a piece of me. Not being part of the 1844th is going to be difficult.”

Womack Promoted to First Sergeant

Anthony Womack of Highland, Illinois, was promoted to the rank of first sergeant during an Illinois Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention Command regional meeting, Aug. 2, in the National Guard's Shiloh Armory.

Womack is the first sergeant for the command's L Company based in Mattoon. His new rank was affixed to his uniform by his spouse, Lindsey Womack, and son, 12-year-old Hunter Krimminger, with assistance from 3-year-old Lydia Womack and 2-year-old Oliver Womack. Lt. Col. Lance Frail, the Commander of the Illinois Army National Guard's Recruiting and Retention Command and the battalion's Command Sergeant Major, Command Sgt. Maj. Chad Mcdannald, presided over the ceremony.

Womack has nearly 16 years of military service and has several awards and decorations including two Army Commendation Medals and an Army Achievement Medal.

He is a graduate of Collinsville (Ill.) High School and holds a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice from Southern Illinois University – Edwardsville.

He is affiliated with the Collinsville Police Explorers, the O'Fallon Chamber of Commerce, and the National Guard Association of Illinois.



1st Sgt. Anthony Womack's 12-year-old son, Hunter Krimminger, firmly affixes his father's new rank to his chest. Anthony Womack of Highland, Illinois, was promoted to the rank of first sergeant during an Illinois Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention Command regional meeting, Aug. 2, in the National Guard's Shiloh Armory. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Kierra Harris, Illinois Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention Command.)



At left, three-year-old Lydia Womack stands next to her father during his promotion ceremony as Lt. Col. Lance Frail removes his old rank. Anthony Womack of Highland, Illinois, was promoted to the rank of first sergeant during an Illinois Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention Command regional meeting, Aug. 2, in the National Guard's Shiloh Armory. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Kierra Harris, Illinois Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention Command.)



More than 50 Illinois National Guard Cyber Soldiers and Airmen participated in Cyber Shield 2024 from May 31 to June 15 in Virginia Beach, Va. Civilians from the Illinois Department of Innovation & Technology and the Illinois State Board of Elections joined the Illinois National Guard along with the Illinois Guard's State Partnership Program partners in the Polish military.

Illinois National Guard Trains with Partners in Major Cyber Exercise

More than 50 Illinois National Guard Soldiers and Airmen along with civilians from the Illinois Department of Innovation & Technology and the Illinois State Board of Elections returned recently from a major cyber training exercise sponsored by the National Guard Bureau.

Close to 1,000 military and civilian local, state, and federal cyber experts from across 41 states and territories as well as 13 international partners participated in Cyber Shield 2024 held May 31 to June 15 at the Virginia National Guard State Military Reservation in Virginia Beach, Va. The Illinois National Guard has shared a State Partnership Program with the Polish military since 1993. The Polish participated in Cyber Shield again this year along with cyber experts from Ireland, who have forged ties with the Illinois National Guard cyber community in the last couple years.

The National Guard-sponsored exercise is the longest-running and

largest Department of Defense cyber defense exercise. Because it is unclassified, it allows service members from the Army, Air Force and Coast Guard to train with experts from the private and government sectors as well as some U.S. allies. Eleven other U.S. allies participated in the exercise along with Poland and Ireland.

"We have a great group of cyber experts in the Illinois National Guard, but we need more," said Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, The Adjutant General of the Illinois National Guard. "These are skills and training opportunities that are very marketable outside the military. The National Guard will pay you, train you, and you can put those skills to use in a high-paying civilian job."

"This exercise underscores the importance of collaboration between military and civilian cyber experts," said Illinois Department of Innovation & Technology Secretary and State CIO Sanjay Gupta. "The skills and knowledge gained here are invaluable

as we work together to protect our state's information."

The Illinois Army National Guard's Bloomington-based 176th Cyber Protection Team re-certified during Cyber Shield 2024. The Illinois National Guard also has cyber positions in units across the state including multiple Army units and all three Illinois Air National Guard wings in Peoria, Springfield, and Scott Air Force Base.

"Our overall goal for Cyber Shield is to train and learn on the cyber domain," said N.C. Army National Guardsman Lt. Col. Brian Dodd, Cyber Shield's defensive cyber team chief. "We learn how to better respond to incidents in the cyber domain and how to better react to the problems that we see."

This cumulative event was designed to increase an individual's ability to defend and enhance the cybersecurity network for global defense measures. "We continue to see increased severity and increased

frequency of cyber-attacks regularly,” Dodd said. “There are more threats than there have ever been in the cyber domain, so we need to come to an event like this and train together.”

Cyber Shield started with “training week” where cyber warriors have the opportunity to learn new skills such as Pen+, Security+, Linux+, and CISSP, along with several others. Training week concluded with the NetWars competition. Think of NetWars as a giant video game where teams of Cyber experts are pitted against each other in a test of hacker knowledge and skills.

The cyber experts then put their new skills to the test on the cyber range in week two when they were tasked with protecting networks against a nefarious group of experienced hackers called the “Red Team.” Nearly 30 “Blue Teams” (the good guys) saved “Mud Dog Water Corporation” from both nation-

state and cyber criminals intent on disrupting critical infrastructure through cyber attacks, disinformation campaigns, and general bad behavior. Each threat needed to be identified, assessed, and mitigated through a coordinated response.

“This year blue teams defended Mud Dog Water Corporation against low skilled access brokers up through advanced persistent threats (APTs) and had to navigate social media disinformation campaigns and deepfakes,” said Illinois Army National Guard Col. Jeff Fleming, the officer-in-charge of the exercise for the last two years.

Fleming, the Illinois Army National Guard’s Director of Information Management (G6) and has been actively involved in the exercise for about a decade. “It is exercises like this that are critical to continuing to strengthen the whole of government response with our partners and allies,

to defend against and respond to cyber incidents, regardless of what critical infrastructure is targeted. The folks that participate in Cyber Shield leave better trained and more prepared to respond to their state’s or nation’s call.”

At the conclusion of Cyber Shield 2024, Brig. Gen. Teri Williams, the Vice Director of Operations (CYBER) for National Guard Bureau presented Fleming with the Military Cyber Professional’s gold Order of Thor.

The Order of Thor is presented to The Order of Thor recognizes “excellence in and special contributions to the American military cyber community. These recipients demonstrate duty, loyalty, and excellence.” Recipients must be members of the association and have made special contributions to the military cyber profession and/or the MCPA.



Ten members of the 183rd Security Forces Squadron (183 SFS) traveled to Oshkosh, Wisconsin, to assist with security support for various aircraft at the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) AirVenture, the largest Air Show and Fly-In in the world. This year, the total attendance of individuals included 686,000 people and 10,000+ aircraft. The EAA Airshow and Fly-In combine modern military aircraft, retired military aircraft, civilian aircraft, and foreign aircraft displays to accurately depict the evolution of aircraft over time. During the security support at the air show, the 183 SFS defenders secured multiple Air Force demo teams, which included the F-22 Raptor, F-35 Lightning II, F-16 Fighting Falcon, A-10 Thunderbolt II, F-15EX Eagle II, F-18 Hornet, C-17 Globemaster III, C-130 Hercules, KC-135 Stratotanker, and the B-52 Stratofortress. This is the fifth year 183 SFS have been called on to support the Experimental Aircraft Association AirVenture.



Above left, Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, The Adjutant General for Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National Guard, and above right, Jim Derwinski, the Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director of Metra sign a U.S. Army PaYS partnership on July 22 at Metra's 47th Street support facility in Chicago. The Army (PaYS) Program, established in 2000, is a strategic partnership between the U.S. Army and a cross section of corporations, companies, and public sector agencies. The program provides America's Soldiers with an opportunity to serve their country while they prepare for their future. PaYS partners guarantee Soldiers an interview and possible employment after the Army.

PaYS Signing Creates Partnership Between Illinois Army National Guard and Metra

Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, The Adjutant General for Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National Guard, and Jim Derwinski, the Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director of Metra signed a U.S. Army PaYS partnership on July 22 at Metra's 47th Street support facility in Chicago.

Derwinski, a U.S. Navy veteran who served as an electrician in America's nuclear submarine fleet, said it wasn't easy for him to join the civilian workforce after his service. "Coming in, you start talking about all the great things you've done in the military, and it doesn't equate," Derwinski said. "We've now been able to find, with this program, ways to bridge that gap and this is our first very deliberate move to work with the military."

"We as an organization couldn't be more excited about this partnership with Metra," Boyd said. "I have

personally seen the benefits of the Army PaYS program and the positive impact it can have on a Soldier's future."

The Army (PaYS) Program, established in 2000, is a strategic partnership between the U.S. Army and a cross section of corporations, companies, and public sector agencies. The program provides America's Soldiers with an opportunity to serve their country while they prepare for their future. PaYS partners guarantee Soldiers an interview and possible employment after the Army. This unique program is part of the Army's effort to partner with America's business community and reconnect America with its Army.

Boyd said he has seen some of his most skilled Soldiers struggle to land jobs in the civilian workforce even though they are often more than qualified.

"We hope to get more corporations and businesses on board with the Army PaYS program to directly impact the success of our Soldiers looking for employment and trying to provide for their families," said Boyd. "Our National Guard men and women are highly skilled and I have no doubt they will bring great value to Metra and any other employers looking to hire them."

Derwinski said veterans bring an untapped resource to the workforce.

"The benefits that we get when we bring in veterans, soldiers, sailors - it's been huge," Derwinski said. "The transition is the hard part. It's always been the hard part of trying to figure out what they've done, what they've contributed in the military, and translating that to something in the civilian workplace."

Metra Chief Financial Officer John Morris served in the U.S. Army and

the Illinois Army National Guard's Chicago-based 1st Battalion, 178th Infantry Regiment. He said a person can have an outstanding military background, but it's meaningless to an employer unless they understand it.

"There's a gap between the language that employers are familiar with and the military language," Morris said. "This helps bridge the gap so that we can help identify people. We can directly bring in the skilled positions and also help people who are in those positions, civilianize their resume so that they can communicate better to potential employers."

Morris said he would encourage other corporations to look into the Army PaYS program and consider hiring more veterans.

"They're missing out on quality people. People who may have the skills you need already in the technical area," Morris said. "Teamwork, motivation, discipline are ingrained in the DNA of military veterans. The kind of corporations need today in today's environment."



Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, the Adjutant General of Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National Guard, and Jim Derwinski, the Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director of Metra.



Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, the Adjutant General of Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National Guard, talks about the importance of the Army PaYS program during a signing in Chicago July 22.

6th Battalion, 54th Security Force Assistance Brigade Deploys Small Team to Africa

Illinois National Guard Unit Welcomes Two Other Teams Home From Europe and Asia

The Illinois Army National Guard's 6th Battalion, 54th Security Force Assistance Brigade (SFAB) will extend its influence into another continent as it deploys Logistics Advisor Team 6620 and its seven Soldiers to Djibouti, Africa, for about six months after welcoming home Battalion Advisor Team 660 from Romania and Logistics Advisor Team 6622 from the Philippines.

A combined mobilization and welcome home ceremony for the three teams was held Aug. 4 at Heritage Hall on Rock Island Arsenal, where the battalion is based.

"The mission of the SFAB teams is invaluable to our allies and partner nations," said Col. Beth Roxworthy, the Commander of the 34th Infantry Division Sustainment Brigade. Roxworthy said the teams are mobile, modular, and interoperable and they build the defensive capacity of our friends and allies in the world. "The strategic impact of your work is often

overlooked because we tend to focus on adversaries when the balloon goes up. Your soft power strengthens our partners and allies now. You have a lasting and dynamic impact that is vital to our national security."

Battalion Advisor Team 660, led by 6th Battalion Commander Lt. Col. Matthew Kreiter, deployed approximately 20 Soldiers to Romania for six months returning in April. The team conducted security cooperation activities with Romania's 2nd Infantry Division strengthening NATO alliances, increasing interoperability, and improving logistics.

The team conducted more than 350 military engagements, provided 26 recommendations to



Maj. Walter "Kyle" Brown speaks to the Soldiers and their family and friends during a combined welcome home and mobilization ceremony, Aug. 4, in Heritage Hall on Rock Island Arsenal, Illinois. Maj. Brown is leading five Soldiers on a deployment to Africa.



Brig. Gen. Justin Osberg presented the Soldiers of Logistics Advisor Team 6620 with an Illinois State Flag to carry with them on the team's deployment to Africa. Pictured from left is State Command Sgt. Maj. Phillip Barber, Logistics Advisor Chief Warrant Officer 2 Christopher Fitch, Team Leader Maj. Walter "Kyle" Brown, Osberg, and State Command Chief Warrant Officer CW5 Tom Black.

improve the Romanian Traumatic Combat Casualty Care course, supported a two-week intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) academy, taught a noncommissioned officer (NCO) leadership course, facilitated decision-making planning to develop and execute a logistics command post exercise, and presented at the War and Disaster Medicine Conference in Estonia on how physical therapy could expedite Soldiers' return to the battlefield.

The five Soldiers of Logistics Advisor Team 6622, led by Maj. Thomas Brooks, also deployed for six months and returned earlier this year, but from the Philippines. There they worked with the Philippine Army to increase their capacity to fight and deter foreign aggression. While in the Philippines, the team conducted more than 60 engagements, conducted interoperability sustainment training with 200 Filipino Soldiers, advised Filipino officers on planning and executing their first brigade-level combined arms training exercise and advised and assisted the Filipino Chief Surgeon on planning and executing

the first medical subject matter expert exchange between the U.S. and the Philippine Army.

Before the two teams deployed, Kreiter asked that they train hard and prepare themselves to conduct their mission, but also they "tell the story of how we are building up nations improving our military" to defend freedom and democracy. "Both these teams, 660 and 6622, did just that. We told our stories to multi-national partners across Europe and Asia, the highest levels of both Romanian Land Forces Command and Philippine Strategic Command, U.S. and foreign embassy staffs and security force operators throughout theater," Kreiter said. "Everyone knew and wanted to join the SFAB's cause on improving foreign militaries and interoperability and helping advance U.S. interests abroad."

Those Soldiers who have returned and the rest of 6th Battalion, 54th SFAB have "to pick right back up and support our team going to Djibouti, Africa, Team 6620," Kreiter said. "These seven individuals are ready. I can already see the success

they will have. I've seen the trust, professionalism, and team comradery they have already built and will carry on to their partner force."

Kreiter encouraged Team 6620 to get to know their Djibouti counterparts. "Understand their life, use phrases from their language, and honor their customs and laws." He said the team should stay engaged every day and "tell your story to the foreign partners and the rest of the active military about all the good things you are doing. Telling your story helps inspire and creates a stronger partnership with those nations."

Team 6620 is being led by Maj. Walter "Kyle" Brown, who addressed the families of the deploying Soldiers. The Soldiers "underwent a rigorous selection and were chosen not only based on their expertise in their field and ability to build relationships, but also for their character and integrity," Brown said. "As a military leader I can teach technical and tactical expertise. But I cannot make someone a person of character." Families and friends help build character, he said.

Brig. Gen. Justin Osberg, the Director of the Illinois National Guard Joint Staff, thanked the Soldiers' families and employers for their support as their Soldier deploys and when they return. He described a Soldier's ability to perform his or her missions both in Illinois and throughout the world as a "three-legged stool" with one leg being the Soldier with the training they've received and the other two legs being their family and their employer. "It cannot stand without the support of all three legs," Osberg said.

The general presented the team with a State of Illinois Flag to carry with them to Africa, symbolizing the state's support of the deploying Soldiers.



Lt. Col. Matthew Kreiter, Commander of the 6th Battalion, 54th Security Force Assistance Brigade, stands in front of a formation of his Soldiers facing the American Flag as the National Anthem plays during a combined welcome home and mobilization ceremony, Aug. 4, in Heritage Hall on Rock Island Arsenal, Illinois. The logistics advisor battalion welcomed home the approximately 20-Soldier Battalion Advisor Team 660 from Romania and the five-Soldier Logistics Advisor Team 6622 from the Philippines.



U.S. Army Soldiers assigned to the 34th Division Sustainment Brigade, prepare to receive their right sleeve insignia during a patching ceremony in Southeast Asia, June 8, 2024. The history of wearing the patch of a unit in which a Soldier had previously served in combat is a tradition that dates back to World War II. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Brianne Maze)

Deployed Soldiers Conduct Patching Ceremony

The 34th Division Sustainment Brigade (DSB), based out of Chicago, along with the 811th Ordnance Company (OD Co), headquartered in Rainelle, WV, conducted a patching ceremony on June 8 during their deployment to the United States Central Command (USCENTCOM) area of responsibility.

Over the course of their deployment, Soldiers from the 34th DSB and 811th OD Co have conducted operations in Jordan in support of Operation Spartan Shield. They can now permanently wear their respective patches on their right sleeve below the American flag. This is more commonly known as the combat patch.

The history of wearing the patch of a unit in which a Soldier had previously served in combat is a tradition that dates back to World War II. Soldiers would transfer the patch of a previous unit after they had been transferred to a new unit as a form of remembrance and to show they were combat veterans. The Department of the Army adopted this tradition in 1945.

The combat patch is one of the

few widely recognized Army awards and is a mark of dedication and distinction. It makes a Soldier who has deployed in defense of their country instantaneously recognizable.

The 34th DSB deployed to the USCENTCOM area of responsibility in early 2024 to provide mission command of theater distribution

under the direction of the 1st Theater Sustainment Command to provide tactical daily expeditionary sustainment that enables freedom of action, extended operational reach and prolonged endurance in the USCENTCOM area of responsibility in support of Operation Spartan Shield and Operation Inherent Resolve.



U.S. Army Col. Eric P. Smith, commander, 34th Division Sustainment Brigade, presents the right sleeve insignia to U.S. Army Spc. Matthew G. Rasmussen, petroleum supply specialist, assigned to the 34th DSB, during a patching ceremony in Southeast Asia, June 8.

Moving Up the Ladder of Success

ILNG Manpower and Readiness Branch Chief promoted to Lt. Col.

Kerri A. Irvin of Springfield, Illinois, was promoted to lieutenant colonel during a ceremony at Camp Lincoln Aug 3.

Irvin is assigned to the Illinois National Guard's Joint Force Headquarters where she serves as the Manpower and Readiness Branch Chief.

Irvin enlisted in the U.S. Army Reserves in 1999 and joined the Illinois National Guard in 2010.



Lt. Col. (ret.) Jeremy Irvin customarily punches new rank onto the uniform of his wife, Lt. Col. Kerri Irvin during a promotion ceremony at Camp Lincoln in Springfield Aug. 3.

ILNG Counter-Intelligence Officer promoted to Lieutenant Colonel

Casey B. Steiner of Cary, Illinois, was promoted to lieutenant colonel during a ceremony at Camp Lincoln Aug 3.

Steiner is assigned to the Illinois National Guard's Joint Force Headquarters where he serves as the Counter-Intelligence Officer.

Casey commissioned into the U.S. Army through Western Illinois University's Reserve Officer Training Corps in 2002. He joined the Illinois National Guard in January 2024 after serving nearly 22 years in the active Army and Missouri National Guard.



Lt. Col. Casey Steiner's wife Brittany and their children Quinn, Sheelin, and Bronwyn pin new rank on his uniform during a promotion ceremony at Camp Lincoln in Springfield Aug. 3.

Illinois National Guard Officer Candidate School Graduates 20 New Army Leaders

Twenty Illinois Army National Guard (ILARNG) Soldiers graduated from the most recent ILARNG Officer Candidate School course through the 129th Regiment (Regional Training Institute) with 15 Soldiers taking the oath of office as newly-minted second lieutenants during a ceremony at Heartland Community College's Astroth Community Education Center in Normal Aug. 18.

"What a great day," said Col. Randy Edwards, ILARNG Chief of Staff. "I'm proud of each of the candidates having passed each of the three phases of the school's eight-month realistic, demanding, and challenging curriculum. It is a very rigorous program and you stuck with it. Outstanding job."

Edwards said he was equally in awe of how each Soldier successfully balanced the demands of school, along with full time careers and family and friends.

"I know firsthand none of that was easy, but you did it," he said.

Col. Shawn Nokes, commander, 129th RTI, said he was honored and humbled to participate in the graduation and commissioning ceremony.

"It was almost 20 years ago I sat where you are today," he said. "This is merely a gate you will pass through. What you do in the beginning phase of your military career will be the foundation of who you are as a leader."

Nokes urged the second lieutenants to have fun in their new roles.

"If you're not having fun, then you're working

and no one likes to work," he said. "There will be many challenges that will come with this position. I'm sure you are up for it. We have high expectations for you. What will your legacy be? You get to decide that with your leadership style, your actions, and your character. You will do great."

Edwards thanked the OCS cadre for their work ensuring the candidates received the training needed to graduate.

"The staff worked around the clock to ensure the candidates had the tools necessary to successfully lead this organization," he said.

Edwards also thanked family, friends, mentors, and employers of the candidates.

"Your encouragement, sacrifice, compassion, and patience, kindness, and understanding were critical to the candidates successfully graduating this course," he said. "There is no way any of them are here without you. They owe you so much."

Edwards said he is excited to see what the newly commissioned officers will bring to the Illinois Army National Guard.

"Now go and make things happen," he said.

Class 69-24 is the 69th class to graduate from the 129th's Officer Candidate Program, which transforms enlisted noncommissioned officers and qualified civilians into U.S. Army officers. The future leaders complete

more than 610 hours of classroom and field instruction, must meet the commissioning standards of the U.S. Army, and be examined, and approved by a federal recognition board.

The newly commissioned second lieutenants are:

- 2nd Lt. Collin P. Brennan of Pleasant Plains
- 2nd Lt. Joshua Cedergren of McHenry
- 2nd Lt. John Chambers of Saint John, Indiana
- 2nd Lt. Michael Donelly of Chicago
- 2nd Lt. Yves Doumen of Springfield
- 2nd Lt. Funsho Falode of Chicago
- 2nd Lt. Trenton Fouche, Jr. of Springfield
- 2nd Lt. Johnathan Gonzalez of Streamwood
- 2nd Lt. Jacob Harris of Springfield
- 2nd Lt. Nurudeen Hassan of Chicago
- 2nd Lt. Juan Navarro of Arlington Heights
- 2nd Lt. Ryan Pinter of Westville
- 2nd Lt. Christopher Pirrello of Peoria
- 2nd Lt. Alexander Stern of Valley Park, Missouri
- 2nd Lt. Ethan Steury of Xenia

Graduates choosing to "hip-pocket" their commissions and seek federal recognition as Army officers at a later date are:

- Sgt. Drew Corbin of Champaign
- Staff Sgt. Graham Garrey of Oregon
- Sgt 1st Class Thomas Luca II of New Berlin
- Sgt. 1st Class John Russell of Glenarm
- Staff Sgt. Bryce Stotler



Col. Randy Edwards addresses the Illinois Army National Guard Officer Candidates during the 129th Regiment (Regional Training Institute) OCS graduation and commissioning ceremony Aug. 18 at Heartland Community College in Normal.

of Davenport, Iowa Class 69-24 awards went to:

- Staff Sgt. Bryce Stotler of Davenport, Iowa was awarded the prestigious Maj. Gen. Edgar C. Erickson Trophy as the Distinguished Honor Graduate of Class 69-24. Stotler was presented with

an Army Commendation Medal. He also led the class with an academic average of 98.3 percent, earning the class Academic Award as well.

- 2nd Lt. Ryan Pinter of Westville was the 2nd Honor Graduate. He led the class through the leadership evaluation

process, earning the Class Leadership Award. He was presented an Army Achievement Medal.

- Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Luca II of New Berlin was the 3rd Honor Graduate of the class for achieving high academic, leadership, peer evaluation, and physical fitness scores. He was presented with an Army Achievement Medal.

- 2nd Lt. Juan Navarro

of Arlington Heights was presented with the Physical Fitness Award for achieving the highest average Army Combat Fitness Test scores in the class. Candidates must also successfully pass three-foot marches (6-mile, 9-mile and 12-mile) and the 4-mile release run without requiring retesting. He was presented with the Army Achievement Medal.



Col. Randy Edwards, Illinois Army National Guard Chief of Staff, presents a certificate of completion to 2nd Lt. Collin Brennan of Pleasant Plains.

Col. Randy Edwards' leadership tips

1. Maintain a good moral compass. Choose the hard right over the easy wrong. Some leadership style hats you try on in your assignments will be right, some will be wrong. Stay true to yourself and maintain a good moral compass. You know the difference between right and wrong.

2. Stay on top of your professional military education. Complete the next course as soon as you are eligible and don't wait. There will never be a perfect time to go to the next course. Life will happen.

3. Enjoy and learn as much as you can at each assignment and rank. Remember one day you will be those on this stage. They will be looking to you for experiences and guidance. More often than not the bad leadership experiences will be the ones you look at as learning the most.

4. Continue to challenge yourself. Don't shy away from different assignments.

5. Don't isolate yourself in leadership positions. You are not an island. Reach out to peers, supervisors, and mentors for assistance.

6. There is no simple solution to work-life balance. You'll make a career of trying to make that happen. Never stop. Keep trying.



Col. Randy Edwards, Illinois Army National Guard Chief of Staff, presents a certificate of completion to 2nd Lt. Joshua Cedergren of McHenry.



Col. Randy Edwards, Illinois Army National Guard Chief of Staff, presents a certificate of completion to 2nd Lt. John Chambers of Saint John, Indiana.



Col. Randy Edwards, Illinois Army National Guard Chief of Staff, presents a certificate of completion to 2nd Lt. Michael Donnelly of Chicago.



Col. Randy Edwards, Illinois Army National Guard Chief of Staff, presents a certificate of completion to 2nd Lt. Yves Doumen of Springfield.



Col. Randy Edwards, Illinois Army National Guard Chief of Staff, presents a certificate of completion to 2nd Lt. Funsho Falode of Chicago.



Col. Randy Edwards, Illinois Army National Guard Chief of Staff, presents a certificate of completion to 2nd Lt. Trenton Fouché, Jr. of Springfield.

Col Shawn Nokes' Leadership Recommendations

1. Be a servant leader – Leaders are about serving others. Rank worn by leaders are a symbol of servitude – servitude to Soldiers. Caring for Soldiers and families is a mission essential task for all leaders.
2. Be an empathetic leader – A great leader must care about the people they are assigned to lead.
3. Take initiative. A lack of orders is no excuse for inaction. Don't be afraid of failure. Embrace your chances and learn from it. Take calculated risks. Be decisive and confident. The worst decision is no decision.
4. Teamwork. Officers and noncommissioned officers complement each other. Their roles are different, but they do overlap. Work with each other

- to ensure maximum effectiveness. Lead by example.
5. Character. On and off duty, good character is not negotiable. Be willing to put in hard work in the hardest of times. Assert yourself by example and voice.
6. Loyalty. Loyalty to superiors is a must. Loyalty to subordinates is even more important.
7. Legacy. Your legacy as an Army leader will not be what you accomplish. Your legacy will be those who you mentor and what they accomplish. Take great pride in taking care of your people.
8. Advice to young lieutenants. Know what you don't know and do something about it. Be the leader who is always looking to learn from those you serve. Lead through your noncommissioned officers.



Col. Randy Edwards, Illinois Army National Guard Chief of Staff, presents a certificate of completion to Staff Sgt. Graham Garrey of Oregon, Illinois.



Col. Randy Edwards, Illinois Army National Guard Chief of Staff, presents a certificate of completion to 2nd Lt. Johnathan Gonzalez of Streamwood.



Col. Randy Edwards, Illinois Army National Guard Chief of Staff, presents a certificate of completion to 2nd Lt. Jacob Harris of Springfield.



Col. Randy Edwards, Illinois Army National Guard Chief of Staff, presents a certificate of completion to 2nd Lt. Nurudeen Hassan of Chicago.



Col. Randy Edwards, Illinois Army National Guard Chief of Staff, presents a certificate of completion to Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Luca II of New Berlin.



Col. Randy Edwards, Illinois Army National Guard Chief of Staff, presents a certificate of completion to 2nd Lt. Juan Navarro of Arlington Heights.



Col. Randy Edwards, Illinois Army National Guard Chief of Staff, presents a certificate of completion to 2nd Lt. Ryan Pinter of Westville.



Col. Randy Edwards, Illinois Army National Guard Chief of Staff, presents a certificate of completion to 2nd Lt. Christopher Pirrello of Peoria.



Col. Randy Edwards, Illinois Army National Guard Chief of Staff, presents a certificate of completion to Sgt. 1st Class John Russell of Glenarm.



Col. Randy Edwards, Illinois Army National Guard Chief of Staff, presents a certificate of completion to 2nd Lt. Alexander Stern of Valley Park, Missouri.



Col. Randy Edwards, Illinois Army National Guard Chief of Staff, presents a certificate of completion to 2nd Lt. Ethan Steury of Xenia.



Col. Randy Edwards, Illinois Army National Guard Chief of Staff, presents a certificate of completion to Staff Sgt. Bryce Stotler of Davenport, Iowa.

General Returns to South Side Chicago to Inspire Youth at 8th Infantry Association Scholarship Ceremony

Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, The Adjutant General of Illinois and the Commander of the Illinois National Guard was the keynote speaker at the 8th Infantry Illinois National Guard Association annual scholarship ceremony on Aug. 10 at the Illinois Army National Guard's General Richard Jones Armory on Chicago's South Side.

The 8th Infantry Association keeps the memory of the Illinois National Guard's all-African-American "Fighting" 8th Infantry alive and awards multiple scholarships each year.

Boyd told the 14 scholarship recipients how he grew up just down the street on the South Side in a family with eight children in public housing and on public assistance.

"One day I just decided, I'm going to change my trajectory," he said. He added that the scholarship recipients are also changing their trajectories. "Don't give up on yourself. It gets tough. It gets tough, but you are up for the challenge," the general said.

The lineage and honors of the 8th Infantry Regiment is with the 1st Battalion, 178th Infantry Regiment with its headquarters in the General Jones Armory on the South Side.



Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, The Adjutant General of Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National Guard, tells 8th Infantry Illinois National Guard Association scholarship recipients to not give up on themselves.



Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, The Adjutant General of Illinois and the Commander of the Illinois National Guard, speaks with 8th Infantry Regiment Illinois National Guard Association President Ron Murdock prior to the 8th Infantry Scholarship ceremony.



183d Air Operations Group helps ensure Coalition Exercise Success

Members of the 183rd Air Operations Group (AOG) played an integral role in the success of Exercise PANAMAX 2024. PANAMAX is a large, joint, and multinational exercise that focuses on ensuring the free flow of commerce through the Panama Canal. The exercise, in which a fictional Central American country is threatened by a violent extremist organization, involved over 1,450 U.S. military personnel and 11 partner nations. The 183rd AOG had 81 members participate in 3 different locations: Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona; Homestead AFB, Florida; and the Joint Warfighting Center in Suffolk, Virginia.



The 1544th Transportation Company, based in Paris, held a change of command ceremony Aug. 25, 2024. After two years in command, culminating with an xCTC



rotation at Camp Ripley, Minnesota, Capt. Madison Jolley, of Argenta, Illinois, relinquished command to incoming commander, 1st Lt. Jason Grover, of Chatham.



U.S. Air Force Illinois Air National Guard Col. Michael Mihalik, Commander of the 126th Supply Mission Support Group, hands the squadron flag to new Supply Chain Operations Squadron commander Lt. Col. Brad Kahrhoff at Scott Air Force Base, Illinois, Aug. 3. The flag is symbolic for the responsibilities of the role being passed on. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Aaron Rodriguez)

Lt Col Phillip Surrey assumed command of the 183rd Air Component Operations Squadron (ACOS) during an assumption of command ceremony on Aug. 3, at the 183rd Wing in Springfield.

Prior to accepting command of the 183rd ACOS, Surrey served as ACOS Deputy Commander, Intelligence & Communications, and ACOS Intelligence Surveillance Reconnaissance Directorate Staff Director. Surrey has served honorably for over 22 years.

The assumption of command ceremony is a military tradition deeply rooted in history and dates back to the time of Frederick the Great of Prussia. The formal assumption of command ceremony affords troops the opportunity to witness a new leader assuming their dutiful position.



A Commitment to Service



At left, U.S. Air Force Maj. Gen. Duke Pirak, center, deputy director, Air National Guard, administers the oath of office to five Airmen at the 183rd Wing, Illinois Air National Guard, Springfield, Illinois, June 2. During his visit, Pirak met with Airmen at all levels to gain first-hand knowledge of the wing's capabilities and role in combating emerging global threats. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Patrick Kerr)

At right, U.S. Air Force Brig. Gen. Daniel R. McDonough, assistant adjutant general of the Illinois Air National Guard, speaks with 126th Air Refueling Wing recruiters at Busch Stadium, St. Louis, Missouri on July 28, 2024. The Illinois Air National Guard is partnered with St. Louis Cardinals, spreading the word about the countless opportunities in the Illinois Air National Guard. While at Busch, McDonough had the opportunity to visit with 11 new members of the U.S. Air Force. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Airman Troy Barnes)



At left, Col Shawn Strahle, Commander, 183rd Wing, administered the oath of enlistment to 10 new members of the Illinois Air National Guard, during a mass enlistment ceremony Aug. 3 in Springfield. The ceremony was attended by family members and friends, as well as many current members of the Wing. Prior to administering the oath, Strahle applauded the new members for their commitment to the service of the United States and the state of Illinois, and thanked the their families for their support of their enlisting member.



1544th Supports xCTC in Minnesota

The 1544th Transportation Company, based in Paris, participated in xCTC for their Training Year 24 Annual Training.

The Soldiers were among more than 5,000 Soldiers from eight states - Iowa, Minnesota, Ohio, North Carolina, South Carolina, Oregon, Illinois and South Dakota.

During their time at Camp Ripley, Minnesota, the 1544th successfully completed more than 50 troop transportation and logistics package missions in support of Iowa's 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry Division.

The company trained on a wide array of tasks, to include field maintenance and recovery operations, field craft, mounted land navigation, and a Rough Driver's confidence course.



Determined to Serve: Spc. Alvaro Rodriguez's Commitment to Education and Duty

By Spc. Joshua Maxie, 22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Camp Kościuszko is home to Soldiers from all three components of the U.S. Army, all supporting V Corps' mission to support partners and allies across Europe.

The V Corps' headquarters stands ready to address a multitude of crises and conflicts arising within the ambit of the U.S. European Command. To accomplish this mission, V Corps needs Soldiers from a variety of specialized military backgrounds and with a diversity of skills and capabilities.

Among these Soldiers is Spc. Alvaro Rodriguez, a financial management technician with the Illinois National Guard's 1863rd Financial Management Support Detachment.

Rodriguez is a first generation American whose parents immigrated from Mexico to Chicago in pursuit of a better life. He is the youngest amongst his siblings, and is the first in his family to serve in the military.

Currently, Rodriguez is on deployment in Europe at Camp Kościuszko in Poznan, Poland, as part of Operation European Assure, Deter, and Reinforce in support of V Corps' commitment to maintaining a combat-ready force while increasing the interoperability with NATO allies and partner nations.

Rodriguez joined the military to further his education. Even while deployed, Rodriguez continues his coursework toward an associate degree in applied science and

accounting from Elgin Community College. After earning his degree, Rodriguez plans to pursue a bachelor's degree in aviation at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University or the University of Illinois at Chicago.

"When I start my bachelor's, it will be a completely different field," said Rodriguez. "My major will be in aviation because I want to be a pilot. I plan on continuing my military career by going to the Warrant Officer Candidate School." Alvaro's ambition to become a pilot and a warrant officer demonstrates his long-term commitment to the military and his dedication to advancing his career and skills.

At Camp Kościuszko, Rodriguez works in the disbursing support

office in the U.S. Army Garrison Poland building. This office provides essential services, including disbursing zloty and euros without fees, issuing Eagle Cash Cards, cashing checks, and exchanging USD for local currencies. This is important because it helps Soldiers maintain financial strength and resolve pay issues while they are stationed here in Poland. Rodriguez also supports the limited military pay support and the paying agent support office, ensuring that all financial transactions are conducted smoothly.

"Specialist Rodriguez is an outstanding Soldier," said Sgt.1st Class Connie Huff, the noncommissioned



U.S. Army Spc. Alvaro Rodriguez, financial management technician assigned to 1863rd Financial Management Support Detachment, at his workstation in the disbursing office in the U.S. Army Garrison - Poland building on Camp Kościuszko, Poznan, Poland. Rodriguez works in the U.S. Army Garrison Poland's finance office with fellow finance Soldiers exchanging currencies and fixing pay issues.



U.S. Army Spc. Alvaro Rodriguez, a financial management technician assigned to 1863rd Financial Management Support Detachment, poses for a picture in front of the U.S. Army Europe and Africa insignia in Camp Kościuszko, Poznan, Poland. Rodriguez has been in the Army for two years and this is his first deployment since joining.

officer in charge of the 1863rd Financial Management Support Detachment. "This mission wouldn't have been possible without his knowledge and ability to think under pressure while performing his disbursing and cashier duties."

While on this deployment, Rodriguez has immersed himself in the people, culture and customs of the countries he has visited. During his seven months in Europe so far, Rodriguez has seized every opportunity to participate in training, earn promotion points, take part in military schools, and earn medals and awards that aren't typically available in the National Guard.

The financial office provides financial support to all the Soldiers in the V Corps area of responsibility. Rodriguez directly contributes to the daily lives of Soldiers both on and off Camp Kościuszko and plays an important role in maintaining a combat ready force while increasing the interoperability of U.S. forces with partner and allied militaries across Europe.



David Boreanaz, an actor who stars on the television show, SEAL Team actor, visits the U.S. Air Force, Illinois Air National Guard 126th Air Refueling Wing to tour a KC-135 Stratotanker at Scott Air Force Base, Illinois, Aug. 5. Boreanaz spent the day visiting members of the military around the installation. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Aaron Rodriguez)

A Cyber Arsenal at the Ready

As the landscape of cyber conflict evolves, America's cyber arsenal remains vigilant, prepared to defend and neutralize threats from near-peer adversaries.

To counter these threats, U.S. cyber warriors are deepening their training through advanced cyber warfare simulations across the country. The Illinois National Guard stands at the forefront of America's cyber defense strategy, leveraging the full force of integrated Joint Force cooperation.

In a display of integration between statewide entities, 20 cyber professionals from the 126th Air Refueling Wing, the Illinois Defensive Cyber Operations Element, and the Illinois Joint Force Headquarters A6 conducted a Joint Capture the Flag Challenge training at the Illinois Joint Cyber Range at the 183rd Wing in Springfield Aug. 4.

The exercise furthered the collaboration between cyber capabilities within the state of Illinois. The primary objective of the training was to expose participants



Spc. Austin Houberg, left, and Spc. Sevin Sheridan, both members of the Illinois Army National Guard Defense Cyber Offensive Element, undergo training during a Cyber Range exercise at the 183d Wing, Springfield, IL on August 4, 2024. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Paul Lauricella)

to emergent cyber challenges testing multiple disciplines across the cyber warfare spectrum.

Working in teams of two, the participants challenged themselves, and each other, to a competition which included reviewing adversarial cyber tactics designed to prompt participants to develop new strategies to defend against cyber incursions. Joint operations training, such as the Joint Capture the Flag Challenge, highlight the ongoing commitment the U.S. military installs on cyber threat deterrence and defense.



At left, Tech. Sgt. Randall Ambrow, left, and Senior Airman Maximilian Bremer, right, members of 126th Air Refueling Wing, undergo training during a Cyber Range exercise at the 183rd Wing in Springfield on Aug. 4. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Paul Lauricella)



183rd Civil Engineer Squadron sent 33 engineers to participate in an Innovative Readiness Training project in June at Pu'uuhonua o Wai'anae, Ohau, Hawaii.

183rd Civil Engineer Squadron Members Work Phase I on Housing Project in Hawaii

The 183rd Civil Engineer Squadron, based in Springfield, sent 33 engineers to participate in an Innovative Readiness Training (IRT) project June 2-15, at Pu'uuhonua o Wai'anae (POW), Oahu, Hawaii.

The Air National Guard partnered with local contractors and donors to build tiny homes for approximately 200 individuals living near Wai'anae. These houseless Hawaiians are currently residing in pallet and tarp type homes on state property.

The 183rd CES was the

first rotation of units for the ANG. The homes are nearing completion of Phase 1, which consists of six haies (duplexes) and one health building that contains restrooms, a kitchen and a laundry facility.

Engineers from the 183rd CES completed roofing, sheathing, windows, doors, trim, formwork, rebar, electrical, plumbing, HVAC, excavation and various other tasks at the project site.

The totality of the project includes four phases scheduled for completion in 2026.





183rd Wing's Incentive Flight Rewards Airmen for Excellence, Contributions to Unit Mission

By Illinois Air National Guard Senior Airman Alexandria King

The Illinois Air National Guard's 183rd Wing, based in Springfield, conducted an Incentive Flight in collaboration with the Illinois Army National Guard's Company B, 2nd Battalion, 238th Aviation Regiment, based in Peoria, June 2.

This event aimed to recognize and reward airmen for exceptional behavior and achievements.

Selected Airmen, based on their performance, recent awards, and contributions to the unit's mission, were granted the opportunity to participate in the Incentive Flight.

The flight used Army Chinook helicopters, known for being the largest, and fastest helicopter in the Army fleet due to its dual rotors.

The flight provided



participants with a unique perspective of the local landscape, offering a bird's-eye view of Springfield and its surrounding areas. This initiative not only served as an incentive for accomplished behavior but also aimed to foster camaraderie and boost morale among the airmen.

As the helicopters landed, marking the conclusion of the flight, the airmen disembarked with a sense of excitement and motivation. The Incentive Flight highlighted the commitment of the 183rd Wing to uphold excellence and recognize the contributions of its personnel within the Illinois Air National Guard.

Photos by
Senior Airman Dillon Ballowe
and
Master Sgt. Shelly Stark
183rd Wing Public Affairs



Illinois Air Wings Work Alongside New Jersey Fighter Wing to Complete Improvement Projects

The Illinois Air National Guard's 126th Air Refueling Wing and 183rd Wing Civil Engineer Squadron Airmen assisted the New Jersey Air National Guard's 177th Fighter Wing to repair an unimproved fire-break road at Warren Grove Air to Ground Gunnery Range in Warren Grove and the completion of facility modernization projects at Atlantic City Air National Guard Base in Egg Harbor Township. (Photos by Staff. Sgt. Vincent Lang, 126th Air Refueling Wing Public Affairs)



Airman 1st Class Johnathan Enriquez, engineering journeyman, 126th Civil Engineering Squadron, operates a Trimble R12i Global Navigation Satellite System rover at Warren Grove, New Jersey, Aug. 2. Enriquez performed a topographic survey to capture the grade of the repaired road.



Senior Airman Todd Schulte, pavements and construction equipment operator of the 126th Civil Engineering Squadron, operates a 670D Grader on Aug. 2, as he applies the final grade on an unimproved road to ensure proper water drainage.



Tech. Sgt. Jeremy Reith, noncommissioned officer in charge of heating, ventilation and air conditioning, 126th Civil Engineering Squadron, secures a flexible duct air supply to a drop ceiling air diffuser on Aug. 2, at the Atlantic City Air National Guard Base in Egg Harbor Township, New Jersey.



Senior Airman Jacob Maas, electrical, 126th Civil Engineering Squadron, installs wiring that will provide power to receptacles in the 177th Fighter Wing's egress shop Aug. 3, at Atlantic City Air National Guard Base in Egg Harbor Township, New Jersey.

725th Transportation Company Conducts Training as Soldiers Prepare for Upcoming Deployment

The 725th Transportation Company, based in Machesney Park, conducted their Road to War Annual Training at Marseilles Training Center, Aug. 10-24, in preparation for their overseas deployment. During this event, units from across the state send some of their best Soldiers to augment the 725th TC as they prepare for deployment.

The training is intensive and consists of Soldier Readiness Processing, Driver's Training Phases I, II, & III, Individual Weapons Qualification, Mounted Operations in Urban Terrain, and Land Navigation. The training also consists of a plethora of classes including Counter IED/Counter UAS, Tactical Combat Casualty Care, Communications, Chemical Radiological Biological Nuclear Response, and many hip-pocket trainings led by the noncommissioned officers in the unit.



THIS DAY IN HISTORY

May

1 Four Illinois regiments took part in attack on Port Gibson, Mississippi

1863: Port Gibson, a vital Confederate supply depot on the Mississippi River, needed to be captured before any further advance could be made on Vicksburg 30 miles to the north. While advancing over hilly swampland, the Union troops under Generals Ulysses S. Grant and John A. McClernand came under attack on their flank. Confederate Brigadier General John S. Bowen failed to stop the Union advance, and he retreated from the field. The Federals reached Port Gibson at midnight. A heavy Confederate counterattack at 5:30 am failed to turn the tide, and the rebels withdrew with 787 casualties. The North sustained 861 casualties. The 20th, 33rd, 45th, and 99th Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiments participated in the heavy fighting. This sword was used by Captain William B. Seymour of Company H, 45th Illinois Volunteer Infantry and is in the collections of the Illinois State Military Museum.



6 The National Guard at U of I: "They're not playing games."

1970: Calamity broke out on college campuses across the country in response to the Vietnam War and the Kent State shootings of May 4. Student mobs forced a shutdown of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. American flags were burned, and storefronts vandalized forcing Champaign Mayor Virgil C. Wikoff to institute a state of emergency. An 8 p.m. curfew closed all taverns, gas stations, liquor stores and gun stores. Students were warned by the faculty, "They're bringing the National Guard at 10:30, and they've issued live ammunition. They're not playing games." 1st Battalion, 123rd Infantry arrived on May 6. Illinois Governor Richard Ogilvie called in an additional 3,800 Soldiers on May 9, to gain control of the ten colleges that were shut down around the state.



May

21 Army Signal Corps authorized the construction of Chanute Field

1917: The U.S. Army Signal Corps gave approval for the construction of Chanute Field. Named after the French aviator Octave Chanute, the field took twelve weeks



to build at the cost of \$1 million. In July, Air Force Major Hap Arnold inspected the facility and deemed it one of the best airfields in the country. Flight classes began shortly thereafter, among those first to enroll was Captain Reed G. Landis, who became an ace in WWI for downing twelve enemy planes. In 1921, the Air Service Mechanics School transferred to Chanute from Texas. The following year it became the home of the Air Service Photographic School and the Air Service Communications School. By the Korean War, the airfield had expanded by 2,000 acres, and was renamed the Chanute Technical Training Center in 1959. Already one of the top aircraft technician training bases in the nation, it received full accreditation by the North Central Association of Colleges and Universities in 1972.

June

4 President Theodore Roosevelt dedicated the Springfield Arsenal

1903: In what marked his third visit to Springfield, President Roosevelt dedicated the old state armory at Second and Monroe Streets in Springfield before 8,000 spectators. In his



remarks he stated, "It is a good thing for us, by speech, to pay homage to the memory of Abraham Lincoln, but it is an infinitely better thing for us in our lives to pay homage to his memory in the only way in which that homage can effectively be paid, by seeing to it that this republic's life, social and political, civic and industrial, is shaped now in accordance with the ideals which Lincoln preached, and which all his long life he practiced." Roosevelt had previously been to Camp Lincoln in 1901, for a dinner as Vice President. Within fifteen days of this visit, President McKinley would be assassinated, and Roosevelt would assume the office of President of the United States. Fire destroyed the building in 1934. The Illinois State Military Museum stands today as a mini replica of the old Springfield Arsenal.

June

22 The 131st, 132nd and 130th Restore Order in Herrin, Illinois

1922: The Southern Illinois Coal Company attempted to operate a strip mine with non-union labor a few miles from Marion. By the 22nd law and order could no longer be maintained. An armed mob attacked the employees, killing and wounding several. Five companies of the 130th Infantry, three of the 131st Infantry and the entire 132nd Infantry spent 48 hours restoring order in Herrin, Illinois.



29 The 106th Cavalry left England for France

1944: The WWII service of the 106th Cavalry Group began with a one-day trip to Utah Beach in Normandy, France. The unit entered combat on July 4th attached to the 1st Army, VIII Corps under General Dwight Eisenhower, the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe. As part of the campaign they mopped up pockets of German resistance in the Normandy peninsula. Though their light armored vehicles were not fitted for the rugged Normandy hedgerows, the unit fought well. The 106th finished the campaign by helping to close the Falaise Gap. The unit went on to see combat in northern France, the Rhineland, and Central Germany. Prior to liberating King Leopold of Belgium, the 106th had the honor of being the first allied armored unit to enter Salzburg, Austria in May 1945.

July

1 Army Aviation emerged in the ILNG

1927: The largest and oldest of the three Illinois Air National Guard units, the 126th Air Refueling Wing, traces its history and lineage back to 1927 when the 108th Observation Squadron, 33rd Division Aviation, Illinois National Guard organized at the 131st Infantry Armory at 16th Street and Michigan Avenue. On July 1, 1927, the unit obtained federal recognition and received its first aircraft, PT-1's, during its first encampment later that year at Camp Grant, near Rockford, Illinois. The unit had an initial compliment of 16 officers and 74 enlisted men from among the hundreds of World War I veterans in Chicago.



July

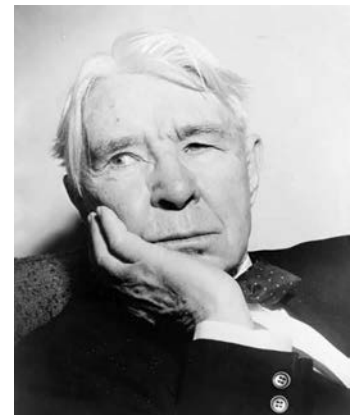
21 Camp Lincoln played host to public open-air military mass

1895: Ten thousand people attended a church service on the grounds of Camp Lincoln in Springfield. The choirs of the Springfield based churches St. Josephs and the Immaculate Conception sang hymns for Illinois troops and citizens, as well as for Illinois Governor John P. Altgeld and his wife. The 7th Regimental Band provided additional music.



18 Famous Guardsman: Carl Sandburg

1898: Born in Galesburg, Illinois, in 1878, Carl Sandburg began his writing career as a columnist for the Chicago Daily News. As a Private in Company C, 6th Illinois Infantry he shipped out with his comrades in the Spanish-American War. While in camp before shipping out, the troops took a trip to D.C. where Sandburg first saw Ford's Theatre and the



Peterson house where Lincoln died. On July 25, 1898, he landed at Guanica, Puerto Rico. He saw no combat. Following his war service, he attended West Point for two weeks before dropping out and began an esteemed writing career. Sandburg became one of the most noted biographers of Abraham Lincoln. His 1926 book *Lincoln: The Prairie Years* made him a household name. In 1940 he won his first Pulitzer Prize for *Lincoln: The War Years*. He later earned two more Pulitzers for *Sandburg's Complete Poems* in 1951, and *Corn Huskers* in 1918, a collection of poetry. Sandburg died in July of 1967 at his North Carolina home. The 123rd Field Artillery now holds the lineage of the 6th Illinois Infantry. Did the Illinois National Guard jump start Carl Sandburg's very famous career? What do you think?

August

5

The Ninth Infantry IRM Restores Order After Riot in West Frankfort

1920: On Aug. 5, hunters came across a grisly sight. The men found the bodies of two murdered teenaged boys. The police took three suspects into custody. A mob gathered outside of the jail. The police took advantage of a quickly devised press conference to move the suspects. When the locals discovered the rouse, they took their anger out on the Italian community, burning houses and businesses and assaulted anyone who fit the Italian nationality. The sheriff of Franklin County and the Mayor of West Frankfort called the Governor for help. Four companies of the 9th Infantry (Illinois Reserve Militia) responded. The mission ended Aug. 12.

15

Illinois Soldier maintained solo defense of outpost during the Somme Offensive

1918: Heavy shelling blasted the 131st Infantry during the Somme Offensive in central France. Sergeant Alvin Wiberg of Company C arose after having been blown from his trench by a direct hit. Shaken, he helped get the wounded men to safety. Heavy machine-gun fire tore up the ground around him as he completed his mission. After confirming all the wounded had been rescued, he armed himself with a Browning Automatic Rifle and took up a position at an abandoned forward outpost. He remained there for 14 hours under concentrated artillery and small arms fire, successfully holding off repeated enemy attacks. For his selfless heroism he received the Distinguished Service Cross.



23

Task Force Able Sentry

1997: As part of Task Force Able Sentry, the United Nations peacekeeping mission in Macedonia, 21 Soldiers of 1st Battalion, 106th Aviation voluntarily deployed to the border of Macedonia and Serbia. During the 270-day deployment, the air crews flew numerous VIP missions, and continued their extensive flight training. The small contingent of the 106th returned to state control on Feb. 27, 1998.



Ralph Metcalfe, 1932, 1936 Olympian is Former Private of ILNG Eighth Regiment

Ralph Metcalfe, the Marquette University speed demon and record smasher of the Intercollegiate meets and in the recent International Olympic races, really started out on his spectacular career by winning the 33rd Division 400 and 220 yard relays, and the 100 yard dash championship for 1930. He was at that time a member of Company H.

To Capt. Anderson F. Pitts, 8th Regiment Athletic Officer, goes the credit for this "scoop" in the field of track men. It was Pitts, who after many weeks of argument with Metcalfe and others, finally convinced all concerned that the National Guard offered an attractive inducement. Within a very short time, under the direct supervision of Coach Hamilton and Asst. Athletic Officer Lt. Clifton E. Jones, Metcalfe went into top-notch form and became the outstanding athlete in the history of the regiment.

Metcalfe left us in 1931 to enter Marquette University. His record from that time on is a matter of brilliant history. Each time he shattered another track record the 8th Regiment went wild with joy and showered him with messages of congratulations.

When he ran in the Olympics, pitted against the great Eddie Tolan and many other international stars, it was a gala day for the 8th. All official and "unofficial" business came to a standstill from the time the race began until it was over.

Editor's Note: This article first appeared in the Nov. 1933 issue of the Illinois Guardsman.

Did You Know?

Do you know about the tie between the Illinois National Guard, a state active duty and Labor Day?

After the height of the industrial revolution, in the late 1800's Americans worked an average of 12 hours a day, 7 days a week. In May 1886, workers held a rally to bring national attention to the plight of the industrial worker in Haymarket square in Chicago. Tensions between labor and capital grew exploding into violence. Several people were killed. After the Hay Market Riot, many around the world began to celebrate May 1 as, "workers day."

In 1893, during a national economic recession, George Pullman of Pullman Railroad laid off hundreds of workers in Chicago and cut the wages of the remaining workers. Adding insult, he refused to cut rent or lower store prices in Pullman, Illinois. As a result, 125,000 workers walked off the job. The Pullman strike halted rail traffic in 27 states. Cattle died from the heat and produce, and goods rotted in rail yards. The Illinois National Guard responded to the Governor's call to prevent violence.

Rioters acted out against the Soldiers. Not even 6,000 federal and state troops, 3,100 police officers, or 5,000 deputies could stop the violence. Strikers destroyed hundreds of rail cars, one of which was filled with U.S. mail, set fires, and overturned barricades to prevent troops from reaching them. On July 7, after being assaulted, Illinois National Guard Troops fired into the mob killing several of the rioters. The workers lost public sympathy, farmers worried about getting their crops to market, many worried about their mail and consumer goods. Before the violence ended, President Grover Cleveland acknowledged the plight of the industrial worker and signed the Labor Day act, creating the National Holiday on the 1st Monday in September. The holiday is meant to be a day of rest to both recognize and honor the American worker.



JUN 19

Staff Sgt. Joshua A. Melton

2009: Staff Sgt. Joshua A. Melton, 26, of Carlyle, died June 19 in Kandahar, Afghanistan, of wounds sustained when his vehicle was hit by an improvised explosive device. He was assigned to 2nd Battalion, 130th Infantry, Marion.



JUL 6

1st Lt. Derwin I. Williams

2009: 1st Lt. Derwin I. Williams, 41, of Glenwood, died July 6 in Konduz, Afghanistan of wounds sustained when his vehicle encountered an improvised explosive device. He was assigned to Troop B, 2nd Battalion, 106th Cavalry based in Dixon.



JUL 6

Sgt. Chester W. Hosford

2009: Sgt. Chester W. Hosford, 35, of Ottawa, died July 6 in Konduz, Afghanistan of wounds sustained when his vehicle encountered an improvised explosive device. He was assigned to Troop B, 2nd Battalion, 106th Cavalry based in Dixon.



JUL 7

Sgt. Christopher M. Talbert

2009: Sgt. Christopher M. Talbert, 24, of Galesburg, died July 7 in Shindad, Afghanistan of wounds sustained when his vehicle encountered an improvised explosive device. He was assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 130th Infantry based in Marion.



JUL 29

Sgt. Gerrick D. Smith

2009: Sgt. Gerrick D. Smith, 19, of Sullivan, died July 29 in Herat, Afghanistan, of wounds sustained from a non-combat related incident. He was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 130th Infantry, Marion.



AUG 8

Spc. Brandon Ramsey

2003: Specialist Brandon Ramsey, 21, Calumet City, died Aug. 8 in a vehicle accident in Tallil, Iraq while performing convoy security operations in pursuit of a suspicious vehicle. Specialist Ramsey was assigned to the 933d Military Police Company of Chicago.



MAY 10

Sgt. Lukasz D. Saczek

2009: Sgt. Lukasz D. Saczek, 23, of Lake in the Hills, died May 10 in Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan, of wounds sustained from a non-combat related incident. He was assigned to 1st Battalion, 178th Infantry Regiment, Woodstock.



MAY 18

Sgt. 1st Class William D. Chaney

2004: Sgt. 1st Class William D. Chaney, 59 of Schaumburg, died May 18, in Landstuhl, Germany due to a non-combat related injury. Initial reports indicate that Chaney was medically evacuated from Iraq to Germany for surgery due to appendicitis. He died from complications after surgery. Chaney was assigned to Company B, 1st Battalion, 106th Aviation Regiment, Chicago.



MAY 23

Spc. Jeremy L. Ridlen

2004: Spc. Jeremy L. Ridlen, 23, of Paris, died May 23 in East Fallujah, Iraq, of wounds sustained from small arms fire after a dump truck on the side of the road was detonated as his military convoy passed by and Ridlen and his fellow Soldiers engaged the enemy. Ridlen was assigned to the 1544th Transportation Company, Paris.



JUN 6

Spc. Brian Romines

2005: Spc. Brian M. Romines, 20, of Simpson, died June 6 in Baghdad, Iraq, of wounds sustained when an improvised explosive device detonated near his HMMWV. Romines was assigned to 2nd Battalion, 123rd Field Artillery, Milan.



JUN 19

Sgt. Paul G. Smith

2009: Sgt. Paul G. Smith, 43, of East Peoria, died June 19 in Kandahar, Afghanistan of wounds sustained when his vehicle was hit by an improvised explosive device. He was assigned to 2nd Squadron, 106th Cavalry, Aurora.



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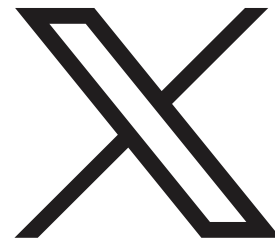
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