

2023



SERVE HERE

Page 04

Find out how and why joining the Minnesota National Guard can expand your horizons by serving with us.

PARTNERSHIPS

Page 06

The State of Minnesota and the Minnesota National Guard are proud to partner with a wide variety of government and civilian organizations here and abroad that strengthen their abilities to serve.

PEOPLE

Page 26

Our greatest asset in the Minnesota National Guard are the citizen-Soldiers and Airmen. Learn more about all of their accomplishments throughout 2023.

MODERNIZATION

Page 34

The Minnesota National Guard strives to be at the cutting edge of training, using equipment, and implementing infrastructural improvements best to serve our state, nation, and its partners. Find out what has been done in 2023 and our goals for the future.

ACTIVATIONS

Page 42

The Minnesota National Guard is an expeditionary force that serves our state, nation and our partners across the globe. Find out how their global presence served the greater good.

MAJOR COMMANDS

Page 44

The Minnesota National Guard, headquartered in Saint Paul, consists of 11 major commands located throughout the state. Their shared success in 2023 is highlighted in this section along with their objectives for 2024.

MILITARY AFFAIRS

Page 74

The Minnesota Department of Military Affairs strives to provide the highest standards of support and resources for the members of the Minnesota National Guard past and present. Find out what has happened in 2023 and their future goals.

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Page 76

The Minnesota National Guard is an integral part of the state's plan for defense and civil support. Find out how they work with our elected officials to provide the highest level of service to our state and nation.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

Page 78

The Minnesota National Guard thoughtfully utilizes state and national funding for its facilities, equipment and member benefits. The full financial report can be found here.



To the Citizens of Minnesota,

Since August 2020, I have been honored to serve as the 32nd Adjutant General of the Minnesota National Guard. Each year, I am excited to share with you the story of the tremendously talented men and women of your National Guard.

Across the nation, each branch of service has felt the struggles of recruiting, but I can proudly report that with your assistance, the Minnesota National Guard met its recruiting goals in our Army and Air branches for fiscal year 2023. Why is this important to you? When you need us, we are Always Ready, Always There, to support and defend our state and nation. As we start the new year, please keep providing us with your leads - Minnesota citizens who want to give back to the community, expand their life experiences, and obtain career skills or benefits such as healthcare or funding for higher education - Minnesotans who want to be part of something bigger than themselves.

Our organizational priorities remain unchanged since the fall of 2021 and focus on People, Modernization, and Partnerships. Each priority is important, but as you read our report, please pay particular attention to how your Guard is modernizing. The 9/11 attacks and the Global War on Terror changed your Guard from a strategic to an operational reserve. This change necessitated having the same training, education, and equipment as our active-duty counterparts. Now, more than ever, we are integrated with our active-duty brothers and sisters, allies, and partners. We must keep pace with force modernization, which allows us greater interoperability with our active component military branches and our partners to face global threats.

To face these threats, we benefit from having two partners – Croatia and Norway, through the Department of Defense's State Partnership Program. We have shared a partnership with Croatia for 27 years, and this past spring, we formalized our partnership with Norway. This year, we celebrated our 50th anniversary of the Norwegian Reciprocal Troop Exchange, and the State Partnership Program provides additional means to further train with our Norwegian friends.

Today, your Guard is 13,000 Soldiers, Airmen, and civilian employees strong. When we add the service members' families and the civilian employers, we are in the tens of thousands- all part of our extended military family. Without your support, we could not accomplish our state and federal missions. Thank you for your contributions to keeping our nation safe!

Shawn Manke

Maj. Gen. Shawn P. Manke
Minnesota National Guard
Adjutant General





LIVE HERE . WORK HERE . SERVE HERE .

In the Minnesota National Guard, we live here, we work here, and we serve here. That service extends not only to the nation, but to the communities we call home in ways only the Guard can. Becoming a member of the Minnesota National Guard is an opportunity to join a team of skilled professionals who are committed to serving a greater purpose. With hundreds of job specialties available and chances to gain leadership experience, members can serve in ways that align with their interests, which can also help accelerate their civilian careers and set them up for a successful future. With career and leadership opportunities, healthcare and education benefits, and the freedom to choose how you serve, you can become the best you can be in the Minnesota National Guard.



MINNESOTA FACT: *Lake Superior is the world's largest freshwater lake by surface area. In fact, it contains 10% of all the earth's fresh surface water. It's at the end of the Saint Lawrence Seaway, which brings boats from around the world to the port of Duluth, Minnesota.*

BENEFITS OF SERVING

EDUCATION BENEFITS

Joining the Guard gives you more than the pride of serving your state and nation. The National Guard offers benefits to help pay for your education and expenses, so you can complete your education while you serve. The National Guard offers many programs for every type of student, whether you're still in high school, attending college, or working toward a vocational certification.

PAY BENEFITS

Gain competitive skills while earning competitive pay. You will be paid for every day you serve, whether in training, weekend drills, annual training, or deployment. Your rank, job, and education will determine your pay level. The higher you go, the more you make. And the more time you serve, the more you can earn.

RETIREMENT BENEFITS

Whether you plan to serve in the Minnesota National Guard for a few years or until you reach retirement age, there are financial planning options available to get you closer to your goals. Similar to a 401(k) plan, the Thrift Savings Plan puts a percentage of every paycheck into your retirement fund. After you leave the service, your account stays open which means your funds will continue to build and you can add money for other qualifying retirement plans. Additionally, after 20 years of service, you'll be eligible for a pension which offers the rare opportunity to earn a fixed paycheck for the rest of your life, even after you stop working.

CAREER TRAINING

Members can find career training for hundreds of unique jobs across various fields. The skills and knowledge gained from military training can seamlessly transfer to various similar civilian career paths. This allows you to gain the experience and expertise needed to succeed as a civilian paramedic, aerospace engineer, truck driver, machinist, cyber information technology expert, and more.

HEALTHCARE & LIFE INSURANCE

Airmen, Soldiers, Veterans, and their families have access to inexpensive healthcare through the TRICARE system and low-cost life insurance that pays up to \$500,000. Take care of your health, your family, and your future.

INCENTIVES

The Guard offers an exciting future and enormous benefits, including an enlistment bonus of up to \$20,000 for recruits who meet education and contracting requirements. Members may also be eligible for re-enlistment, job-skill retraining, and other bonuses. In 2023 alone, more than \$34.5 million in state and federal bonuses were given to more than 3,200 members of the Minnesota National Guard.



REQUIREMENTS

Air: 17-42 years of age

Army: 17-35 years of age

Medically and physically fit and in good moral standing

A U.S. citizen or permanent resident with a valid Green Card

A high school graduate or equivalent

A minimum score on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery Test, also known as the ASVAB





RELATIONSHIPS STRENGTHENED

The State of Minnesota and the Minnesota National Guard are proud to partner with a wide variety of government and civilian agencies here and abroad that strengthen their abilities to serve.



COMMON LOON: *Known for their distinct calls, Minnesota's state bird, the common loon, is more at home in the water than on land. While most birds' bones are hollow and light, the extra weight of the loons' solid bones help them dive as deep as 250' and for as long as five minutes. Loons can fly up to 75 miles per hour.*

MINNESOTA, CROATIAN PARTNERSHIP THRIVES IN 2023

Army Staff Sgt. Sydney Mariette

The bond between members of the Minnesota National Guard and the Croatian Armed Forces continued to grow during 2023 with 33 engagement events – eight more than in fiscal year 2022. Ninety Minnesota National Guard members and four Minnesota civilians partnered with their Croatian counterparts, learning from each other’s expertise in disaster management, aviation, cyber, field artillery, medical practices, and more.

“During this fiscal cycle, we wanted to broaden our horizons and establish hands-on learning in new areas related to military equipment, national security, and leadership,” said Army Lt. Col. Christopher Staples, Minnesota National Guard’s international affairs officer.

Unique to this training year was the inclusion of a water purification exercise. In December, eight Soldiers from A Company, 134th Brigade Support Battalion’s water purification section traveled to Split, Croatia, to train with Croatian Armed Forces’ Soldiers on the production of drinking water using a Reverse Osmosis Water Purification Unit. The military partners were able to produce drinking water from seawater. This exchange was the first time the Minnesota and Croatian Soldiers had worked together to purify seawater and was a key event in advancing Defense Support to Civil Authority capabilities.

“This exchange between Minnesota and Croatian Soldiers has been a once-in-a-lifetime experience,” said



Army Staff Sgt. Halee Baratto, the water purification team’s noncommissioned officer-in-charge. “We spent three days working through the diagnostics and testing, and once we achieved safe drinking water, we ran to the sea, hugging one another and cheering for water!”

These exchanges are part of the U.S. Department of Defense’s State Partnership Program. Led by the U.S. National Guard Bureau, the program pairs states with nations worldwide, including Minnesota and Croatia, beginning nearly 30 years ago. The program fosters



mutually beneficial relationships by building trust and understanding of partner-nations’ tactics and capabilities.

The State Partnership Program facilitates global change at a personal level. It enables states and countries to support one another through simple tasks such as establishing aviation standard operation procedures, which has the ripple effect of bolstering a NATO partner’s security capabilities.



NORWAY STATE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM PROCLAMATION

Army Staff Sgt. Sydney Mariette

On February 15, 2023, leaders from the National Guard Bureau, Minnesota, and Norway signed an official State Partnership Program agreement in Trondheim, Norway to further expand their 50-year relationship.

“As a Minnesotan and a member of the Minnesota National Guard, I am grateful the Department of Defense has officially approved our partnership with Norway,” said Army Maj. Gen. Shawn Manke, Minnesota National Guard’s adjutant general.

After 50 years of a partnership between the Minnesota National Guard and the Norwegian Home Guard through the U.S.-Norwegian Reciprocal Troop Exchange, known as NOREX, Minnesota will broaden its partnership to the entire Norwegian armed forces agencies through the State Partnership Program. This partnership will increase the Minnesota National Guard’s interoperability with a NATO ally and build upon already established ties.

“I am humbled and honored to be here today to dedicate this [State Partnership Program] agreement to all the people who started [NOREX] in 1973 and followed up through 50 years,” said Norwegian Army Gen. Eirik Kristoffersen, Norway’s chief of defense. “I think they would be very proud to see what we have accomplished.”

The Department of Defense’s State Partnership



Program pairs the National Guard of a U.S. state or territory with a partner-nation’s military, security forces, and government agencies responsible for emergency and disaster response. The program began in 1993 with 13 partners and is known for its low-cost yet high-payoff application to security cooperation efforts. Thirty years later, the program has grown to 100 partner-nations and is a key U.S. security cooperation tool that facilitates collaboration across all aspects of civil-military affairs.

Minnesota hosted a letter of intent signing ceremony at the Minnesota State Capitol in Saint Paul on February 4, 2023, with Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, Norway Ambassador to the U.S.- Her Excellency Anniken Krutnes, U.S. Ambassador to Norway - His Excellency Marc Nathanson, U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar, Congresswoman Betty McCollum, Norwegian Home Guard’s Chief - Maj. Gen. Elisabeth Michelsen, and Maj. Gen. Shawn Manke presiding.



NORWEGIAN EXCHANGE 50TH ANNIVERSARY

Army Staff Sgt. Bill Boecker

More than 100 Minnesota National Guard Airmen and Soldiers partnered with the Norwegian Home Guard, known as the Heimevernet, for two weeks of winter-warfare training during the 50th U.S.-Norway Reciprocal Troop Exchange, Feb. 2-16, 2023. More commonly known as NOREX, it remains the U.S. Department of Defense's longest-running troop exchange.

"When I was selected to attend NOREX, I had two goals," said Air Force Master Sgt. Megan Shaner of the 148th Fighter Wing. "First, to see Norway's beautiful land and culture; it has been a life-long dream to visit where my family came from. Second, to build lasting friendships with our Norwegian Home Guard partners and strengthen the connection between Minnesota and Norway."

Norwegian Home Guard trainers prepared the Minnesotans and began a five-day field exercise deep in the Norwegian mountains. Learning to use Norwegian equipment, they relied on each other for survival. The exercise included skiing, camp setup, and avalanche and cold-water rescue training. Despite severe weather, they were able to test their skills and complete the training successfully. After the training, the group was warmly welcomed by the Saint Paul-based Serving Our Troops, which provided a steak dinner for them.

Guard members were invited into the homes of



Norwegian host families for a weekend of activities, offering an opportunity for the Minnesotans to experience and learn from Norwegian culture and history. The troops also visited the village of Stiklestad and city of Trondheim.

"Our Home Guard hosts provided us with deeply meaningful experiences," said Shaner. "I will be forever grateful for the time they invested."

Simultaneously, members of the Norwegian Home



Guard and their youth program participated in similar training and cultural experiences in Minnesota.

"I think I will draw from every experience here when I return to my unit," said Shaner. "I have enjoyed every minute of the trip."



SERVING OUR TROOPS

Army 2nd Lt. Linsey Williams

Serving Our Troops is a Saint Paul-based organization of community and business leaders who have been on a mission to support members of the Minnesota National Guard for nearly two decades. Their care comes in the form of steak dinners for service members and their families. Whether at home or overseas, the goal of Serving Our Troops is to bring

families together for a simple thing – dinner with the family.

“The beauty of Minnesota is that we care about our Minnesota National Guard members,” said founding member of Serving Our Troops, Pat Harris. “What happens is people come together. Our sponsors come together, businesses come together, restaurants, everybody just comes together to say, ‘thank you.’”

Businesses and organizations of all kinds join

Serving Our Troops for their projects. From corporate organizations to restaurant owners, labor organizations to Veteran service organizations – volunteers from across the spectrum come together to cook and serve meals to service members and their families.

Since 2004, Serving Our Troops has served more than 110,000 steak dinners to Minnesota’s military and their families. They have supported over 15 events, including overseas projects in Kosovo, Iraq, Kuwait, and Djibouti. In the U.S., they have served troops and their families in Minnesota, Ft. McCoy, Wisconsin; Ft. Sill, Oklahoma; and Camp Shelby, Mississippi.

Not only have Serving Our Troops been there for deployment ceremonies and reunions, but they have also supported the cultural meals of the Norwegian Exchange. In 2013, Serving our Troops took their brand of service member support to Værnes Garrison in Trondheim, Norway, to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the program. In 2023, the team again prepared more than 755 meals at two Minnesota venues and the Værnes Garrison to celebrate the 50th anniversary.

“It has been a fantastic experience. Serving Our Troops is rooted in close partnerships with the National Guard, and these relationships are important,” said John Marshall, Serving Our Troops co-founder. “We’ve been serving service members with the Minnesota National Guard for about 20 years, and we are humbled and honored to be serving at an event like NOREX.”



CAMP RIPLEY'S FIRE DEPARTMENT

Army Capt. Will Hermanson

The Minnesota National Guard's Camp Ripley has one of the few full-time fire departments in central Minnesota, with 17 full-time firefighters supporting the post and its surrounding communities.

The department responds to on, and off-post calls and has mutual aid agreements with three surrounding communities; Morrison County, Brainerd, and the City of Pillager. This agreement allows the team to work with local first responders and assist in emergency calls, increasing the chance to save lives.

"Camp Ripley's fire department is one of the state's most dedicated, hardworking, and passionate," said Minnesota National Guard's Assistant Adjutant General Army Brig. Gen. Lowell Kruse. "This department and fire hall is not only for Camp Ripley but also for our community partners."

The Camp Ripley Fire Department assists in training local, state, and federal organizations in fire and medical scenarios. Camp Ripley works with local volunteer fire departments' off-post training for house burns, car accidents, water rescues, and more. When these organizations conduct training on Camp Ripley, they reach out to fill any training voids they might have.

"Whenever we conduct training that could benefit our partners, we try to open our gates and invite them to join us," said Camp Ripley's Fire Department Chief Pat Boone.



Camp Ripley's Fire Department also houses a full-time Emergency Medical Team and an ambulance with a cooperative agreement with Mayo Clinic and trains in medical situations, working with local law enforcement, first responders, and even game wardens on basic CPR, drug overdose response, and first aid.

"We share our knowledge and resources, so our community is confident that Camp Ripley and our

partners are ready to respond to any situation," said Boone.

"Whenever we conduct training that could benefit our partners, we try to open our gates and invite them to join us," said Camp Ripley's Fire Department Chief Pat Boone.



NEW YELLOW RIBBON ORGANIZATIONS IN 2023

Minnesota Department
of Transportation

Mille Lacs Corporate
Ventures' Grand Casino

Ryan Companies

YMCA of the North

LEARN
MORE



BEYOND THE YELLOW RIBBON

Cristina Oxta

The mission of Beyond the Yellow Ribbon, also known as BTYR, is to establish and sustain a comprehensive community and corporate support network that connects and coordinates agencies, organizations, and resources to meet the needs of Minnesota's veterans, service members, and families in all military branches. There are 53 cities and counties and 79 active companies and organizations in the BTYR network, which began in 2007. The combined efforts of the community and corporate networks make a significant impact. In 2023, they contributed more than \$511,000 and 659,000 volunteer hours in support of the state's military community.

Corporate networks

BTYR companies and organizations support the military community in many ways, including employment opportunities, benefits, recognition, and assistance. For example, in 2023, Thomson Reuters donated turkeys to service member and Veteran families for holiday meals. Ryan Companies donated baby items for families at the 133rd Airlift Wing. The Minnesota Twins, Minnesota Vikings, and Minnesota Wild hosted military appreciation days. General Mills hosted the Minnesota National Guard Women's Leadership Forum. USAA sponsored Military Appreciation Day at the state fair. Allianz Life and Capital One hosted conferences where companies and organizations shared best practices in supporting military connected employees and families.



Community networks

From January to September 2023, the network, comprised entirely of volunteers, coordinated more than 164 events, served at least 13,791 volunteer hours, and supported over 16,144 military community members. For instance, the Northern Dakota County network provided 170 boxed lunches for a deploying unit. The Pine City network donated presents for Veterans in need while the Big Lake



network provided 140 birthday gifts for Gold Star mothers. The Hugo network hosted a free pheasant hunt for service members and Veterans. Community networks also helped homeless Veterans transition to permanent housing, volunteered at unit events, attended the Joining Community Forces conference, sent care packages to deployed service members, assisted with necessities, and recognized high school students joining the military.

MINNESOTA PROFESSIONAL SPORTS

Army Capt. Kristin Ohrt

Over the past twenty years, the Minnesota National Guard has built and maintained partnerships with Minnesota's professional sports teams. These partnerships with the Minnesota Wild, Minnesota Twins, Minnesota Vikings, Minnesota Timberwolves, and the Minnesota United have created enduring relationships that allow service members to openly

share our stories and showcase our values and commitment to the communities in which we live, work, and serve.

2023 marked the 20th anniversary of the Minnesota Twins Armed Forces Appreciation Day. Together, the Twins and the Minnesota National Guard recognized Soldiers returning home from deployments, paid tribute to Gold Star Families, and welcomed home Vietnam Veterans in recognition of the fiftieth anniversary of the withdrawal from Vietnam. The

event included a flyover of two F-16 Fighting Falcon jets from the 148th Fighter Wing.

The Minnesota National Guard has supported professional sports teams with color guards, flyovers, static displays, service member re-enlistments and homecomings, first pitches thrown, families being re-united, Veterans thanked, Gold Star Families honored, and so much more. The stories we have shared are endless, and the memories and connections we have built through the years have impacted both our service members and those attending the games.

The partnership of sports teams in Minnesota has proven to benefit all organizations involved. Whether a U.S. Flag raiser at the Minnesota Twins, 'Guardian of the Game' for the Wild, 'Hero of the Pack' for the Timberwolves, or 'Eye of the Loons' for the United, service members are privileged to be highlighted at home games.

As Julie Vavruska, the Minnesota Twins director of community engagements and events, stated, "I want us to continue telling stories that need to be told, to craft meaningful themes, to give a day to those who deserve it most, and to educate and inspire younger generations. Most of all, I want the Twins and the Minnesota National Guard to do what we do best – create and deliver magic moments."

We sincerely appreciate each of our professional sports teams and the relationships we have with them. We hope to continue to have them as enduring partners.



MINNESOTA STATE FAIR HONORS VIETNAM VETERANS

Cristina Oxta

The 12th Annual Military Appreciation Day at the Minnesota State Fair, Aug. 29, 2023, featured 50 educational and military-connected booths at Dan Patch Park, along with on-stage entertainment, recognition ceremonies, family-friendly activities, and a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter flyover.

In observance of the 50th anniversary of the last service members leaving Vietnam, more than 175 Vietnam and Vietnam Era veterans marched through the state fair. Then, led by an all-service Color Guard, they entered Dan Patch Park amid loud cheers and thunderous applause from hundreds of military veterans, service members, families, guests, and fairgoers. Flags waved and the song “Proud to Be an American” played as many people shook the veterans’ hands to thank them for their service or hugged them and greeted them with a heartfelt, “welcome home.”

On stage, retired Capt. Kay Bauer who served 35 years as a Navy nurse, addressed her fellow veterans. Bauer was part of a forward surgical team at a hospital in Vietnam and received the Humanitarian Medal of Honor from the South Vietnamese government.

“The Vietnam war was a time of uncertainty, but it also revealed the strength of our human spirit,” Bauer said. “We faced challenges that tested us, and we found light in camaraderie, shared purpose, and the determination to protect the values we hold dear.”



The Vietnam War was the United States’ longest and costliest conflict of the Cold War. More than 8.7 million Americans served in the Armed Forces during the Vietnam era from 1964 to 1973. More than 3.4 million were deployed to Southeast Asia and approximately 2.7 million of those served in the Republic of Vietnam. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., is inscribed with the names of 58,279 service members who died in theater from 1957 to 1975. There are more than 5.8 million



Vietnam veterans living in the United States, with an estimated 97,000 in Minnesota.

“It was thrilling going down the street and seeing and hearing all the applause that we received from the crowds along the street,” said Marine Cpl. Don Heuer, in Vietnam Nov ‘66 to Nov ‘67

SERVICE MEMBERS PROVIDE HEALTHCARE IN REMOTE AREAS

Sgt. 1st Class Serrina Martinez

Soldiers with the Minnesota National Guard's 204th Medical Company Area Support participated in Operation Walking Shield on the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe Reservation in northern Minnesota, July 21 - 28, 2023.

Throughout the almost two-week exercise, Soldiers

received real-world training while providing medical care to tribal residents in multiple areas, including essential medical examinations, behavioral health, dietary consultation, and dentistry.

The 204th brought a variety of occupational specialties to the exercise, including medics, mechanics, generator mechanics, cooks, behavioral health technicians, dental technicians, and dentists. Partners who helped to coordinate the mission included the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, Cass Lake -

Bena school, Indian Health Services, National Guard Bureau, and the U.S. Army Reserve.

Army Maj. Jake Redding, the commander of the 204th, said that Soldiers within the unit were happy to help their fellow Minnesotans by directly impacting their communities and showing them what the Guard can do.

"We can take care of simulated patients in a training center all day, every day," he said. "But without having the actual patient there with a problem and the immediate changes that happen, we see the training value in this is exponentially better."

The program brought in 296 patient visitors, and 1,875 patient procedures were conducted. Patients were seen through scheduled visits and walk-in appointments. The total estimated amount of care provided at no cost to the public was more than \$136,000.

For many Minnesotans in remote areas, such as the Leech Lake Reservation, it is difficult to find available health care services. Dorris Wittner, a Cass Lake resident and member of the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, said that dentist chairs in the region are booked out for weeks, months, or longer.

"I love this program. It would be nice if they had it yearly," she said. "We were here the first time they were here, and it worked out so fantastic. Keep coming back, please; we appreciate it."



COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Cristina Oxta

The Minnesota National Guard received the nationwide fiscal year 2022 Exemplary State, Territory, or District of Columbia - Excellence in Diversity Award. This award is presented to a state that stands out by consistently contributing to diversity and inclusion initiatives and ideas, institutionalizing best practices, building measurable milestones, and attaining individual or group diversity and inclusion goals.

The diversity and inclusion initiative achieves its goal of diversity through inclusion by:

- Valuing individuals
- Identifying, recruiting, and retaining the best available talent
- Providing resources, education, and training on matters related to diversity and inclusion

Within Minnesota's diversity and inclusion initiative is the special emphasis program. The special emphasis program is made up of Airmen, Soldiers and Civilians from across the Minnesota National Guard who volunteer their time on various special emphasis councils, each focusing on a particular topic including:

- African American and Black Heritage
- Asian American and Pacific Islander
- Disability Employment Awareness
- Hispanic and Latinx Heritage
- Holocaust Remembrance



- Indigenous Heritage
- LGBTQ+
- Women's Leadership

These councils partner with organizations in the community, highlighting national observances, attending and supporting local events, representing the Minnesota National Guard, and hosting special events.



“Having diverse partnerships within our community ensures we are in step with the cultures and traditions of our service members and reinforces our commitment to the communities in which our service members work and live,” said Air Force Lt. Col. Corey Robinson, Minnesota National Guard’s director of diversity & inclusion

INSPIRING FUTURE AVIATORS

Amy Lovgren

On June 20, 2023, the 133rd Airlift Wing hosted an aircraft tour for middle and high school students to demonstrate the opportunities available to them with a military aviation career.

“Throughout my career, I have been inspired by other pilots, such as my World War II Veteran grandfather who flew for the 133rd,” said Air Force Maj. John

Sjoblom, a C-130 Hercules aircraft pilot at the wing. “I have worked this event for many years, and it’s exciting to see the returning students and see how their interest in aviation has grown.”

The Minnesota National Guard hosted 25 students from the Organization of Black Aerospace Professional’s, known as OBAP, during their Aviation Career Education, or ACE, program. The academy visit has occurred more than ten times at the wing and has grown over the years. The 2023 event was the first

time the Duluth-based 148th Fighter Wing provided an F-16 Fighting Falcon jet. The participants had lunch at the base and heard about various careers in aviation before touring both air frames.

“I believe our younger generation becomes what they see,” said Floyd Balentine, director of OBAP’s Twin Cities ACE Academy. “This is why the Twin Cities ACE Academy volunteers its time in motivating, cultivating, and inspiring the next generation.

The OBAP’s ACE Academy is a nationally recognized program co-sponsored by the Federal Aviation Administration and the National Black Coalition of Federal Aviation Employees. The purpose of Aviation Career Education is to offer first-level exposure to the aviation industry by providing aviation career exploration for middle and high school students. In 2014, Balentine along with Capt. Victor Smith and First Officer Donald Gardner founded and launched the OBAP Twin Cities ACE Academy.

“I hope that the youth here today will be inspired to pursue careers in aviation,” said Sjoblom, “And know that military service can support those aspirations.”

“Throughout my career, I have been inspired by other pilots, such as my World War II Veteran grandfather who flew for the 133rd,” said Air Force Maj. John Sjoblom



MONTH OF THE MILITARY CHILD

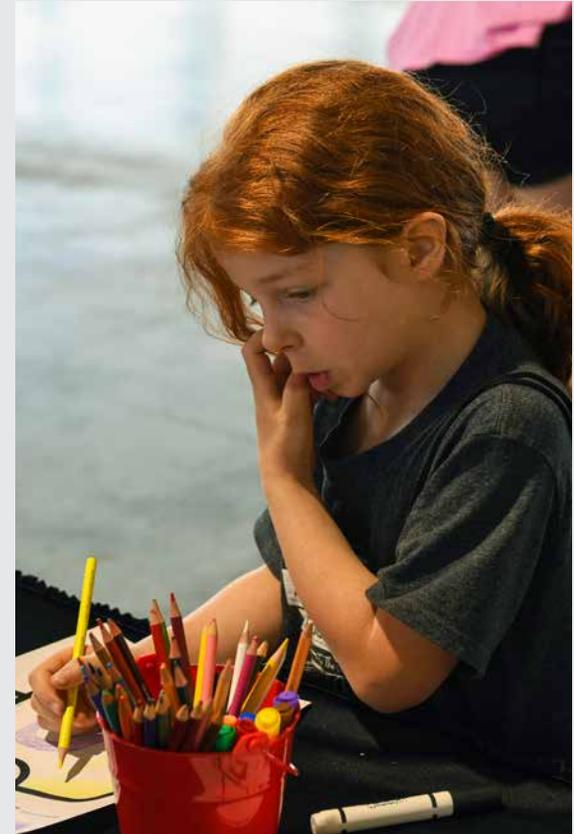
Cristina Oxta

The Minnesota National Guard's Child & Youth Program, in partnership with Mall of America, hosted an open house on April 14, 2023, to recognize the commitment, contributions, and sacrifices military youth make for the nation.

There are more than 15,000 children in Minnesota who have at least one parent serving in the military.

"They are there every step of the way through a parent's deployment and military service. They know when it is time for mom or dad to prep, pack, and leave for a weekend drill, monthly training, or year-long deployment," said Laura Groeneweg, lead Child & Youth Program coordinator. "Military connected children share the burden of service when their family member miss important events in their lives or when frequent moves force them from what they know into new and different experiences. It's a treasure when there are events military families can enjoy as a family, make memories, and relish their time together."

The open house included music, face painting, games, character appearances, giveaways, treats, rides at the mall's Nickelodeon Universe, and a Build-A-Bear experience provided by USAA and the Minnesota National Guard Association. As part of the Month of the Military Child celebration, the Minnesota National Guard's Child & Youth Program also hosted both an art and photo contest. Additionally, families could request a letter from Gov. Tim Walz thanking military youth.



"The Mall of America is proud to be one of the many Minnesota businesses that fully support and recognize Month of the Military Child," said Sara Durhman, director of community relations at the Mall of America. "At our core, the mall is about creating memorable experiences and leading from the heart. A large number of our team members are veterans or active members of the Reserve and Guard. They lead with heart and go above and beyond every day. They are key to our success."

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MINNESOTA MILITARY RADIO

Army 2nd Lt. Linsey Williams

At the heart of Minnesota Military Radio are the partnerships it has formed with the Minnesota National Guard, Beyond the Yellow Ribbon, Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Minneapolis VA. In 2010, when Vietnam Veteran Tom Lyons was asked to host a weekly program to discuss topics relevant to Minnesota's military and Veteran communities, his first call was to the Minnesota National Guard's adjutant general.

Since the first show the Minnesota National Guard's voice expanded across the state with weekly messages from the adjutant general, monthly updates from the command senior enlisted leader, and unique stories of service and support from Minnesota National Guard members and Beyond the Yellow Ribbon networks.

A program unlike any other, Minnesota Military Radio joins multiple state and community partners to provide information to listeners on 66 live radio stations across the state and worldwide via podcast.

The show began with a small footprint but had a considerable investment of studio and staff time, equipment, and technical expertise from iHeart Media Minneapolis. This investment has allowed the show to grow and flourish, reinforcing its role in Minnesota's military and Veteran community.

Whether recording from the Twin Cities, Camp Ripley, or beyond, Minnesota Military Radio goes wherever it can amplify information for the state's



military community. In 2011, the show visited the 1st Armored Brigade Combat Team in Kuwait to capture their stories. In 2016 and 2019, the program joined the Saint Paul-based organization Serving Our Troops to bring a piece of Minnesota to deployed service members. In 2017 and 2023 the show traveled to Norway, capturing the excitement of the Norwegian Exchange.

In 2023 Minnesota Military Radio hit a milestone when it reached 13 years on the air and 700 unique



shows recorded. Until this year, Tom Lyons has been the program's sole host. On Memorial Day 2024, he will make way for a Veteran of another generation. Retired Army Command Sgt. Maj. Doug Wortham, former Senior Enlisted Advisor of the Minnesota National Guard, will take the helm.

**LISTEN
NOW**



MINNESOTA BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION TRADES COUNCIL

Army Spc. Andrew Nayenga and Army Staff Sgt. Mahsima Alkamooneh

On July 23rd, the 34th Infantry Division “Red Bulls” Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion hosted a family day to honor the support system of their service members. To kick off the event, Red Bull

Soldiers gathered for a time-honored tradition with a twist, a formation in front of their families and friends.

“Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion’s family day is the most important ‘people-first focused’ event we run,” said Army Lt. Col. Jay Hackett, battalion commander.

The site of the new headquarters building was buzzing with activity, with this year’s event including a bounce house, face painting, rock climbing, a petting zoo, and more.

The Minnesota Building and Construction Trades Council, a Yellow Ribbon organization, supported the event with more than 30 volunteers. The council has developed a close relationship with the Minnesota National Guard, dating back to 2019.

In 2022, Minnesota Building Trades, which represents more than 70,000 construction workers in the state, became a Beyond the Yellow Ribbon organization, showcasing their support for veterans, service members, and their families. With the new partnership, they provided volunteers to cook at the Red Bull family day and a similar event hosted by the 133rd Airlift Wing that year.

“Our intentions are simple: to use our power, resources, and influence to do good things for others,” said Joe Fowler, Minnesota Building and Trades Beyond the Yellow Ribbon committee member. “Participating in these events is a way for [us] to give back. It selfishly feeds the soul and lightens the heart, leaving a long-lasting smile on my face for days.”



NATIONAL ENLISTED CONFERENCE

Sgt. 1st Class Elizabeth Peña

Top leaders of the National Guard Bureau emphasized the importance of empowering enlisted personnel during the 52nd Annual Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States conference in Rochester, Minnesota, August 13-17, 2023.

In an opening statement, Air Force Lt. Gen. Marc H. Sasseville, the vice chief of the National Guard Bureau, hit on the crucial impact the enlisted force has on military combat power.

“You are the envy of militaries worldwide,” said Sasseville. “The National Guard noncommissioned officer, is the envy of every foreign senior leader I talk to.”

The National Guard currently has about 440,000 Guard members, serving across the fifty-four states, territories and the District of Columbia. The association represents all the enlisted Airmen, Soldiers, retirees, and their family members from these areas. Headquartered in Alexandria, Virginia, they maintain a full-time staff to represent the interests of enlisted service members in legislative matters at the Pentagon and on Capitol Hill.

The national conference serves as a vital forum where senior National Guard leaders can engage in open, meaningful dialogues with enlisted members, fostering a deeper understanding and stronger bond between the ranks.

The 2023 conference agenda featured speed



mentoring sessions, breakout discussions, and panels led by senior enlisted leaders. These sessions tackled a broad spectrum of compelling questions, delving into areas from professional advancement and skill enhancement to methods for tapping into one’s innate potential.

“Engaged leadership – we didn’t get in these seats without being engaged, and we didn’t get here alone,” said Command Chief Master Sgt. Lisa Erikson, the command senior enlisted leader of the Minnesota



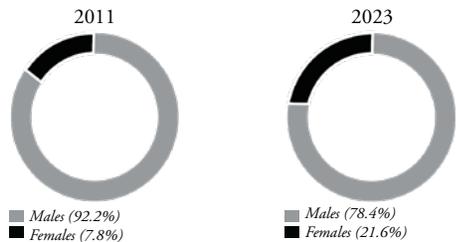
National Guard. “A team has worked with us, beside us, and behind us the entire way. Always surround yourself with those that challenge you and lift you. That is part of being an engaged leader.”



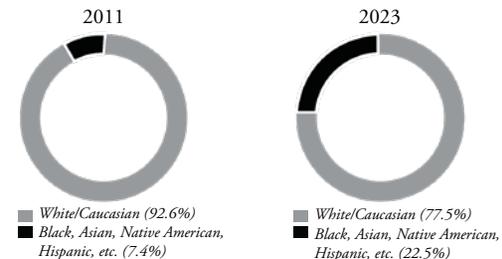
OUR GREATEST ASSETS

Our greatest asset in the Minnesota National Guard are the citizen-Soldiers and Airmen. Learn more about all of their accomplishments throughout 2023.

GENDER



RACE



MINNESOTA NURSE RECEIVES DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS

Air Force Maj. Andrea Kostiuk

Air Force Maj. Katie Lunning made history as the first Air National Guard flight nurse to be presented the Distinguished Flying Cross, in front of family, friends, and members of the 133 Airlift Wing in Saint Paul, Minnesota, Jan. 7, 2023.

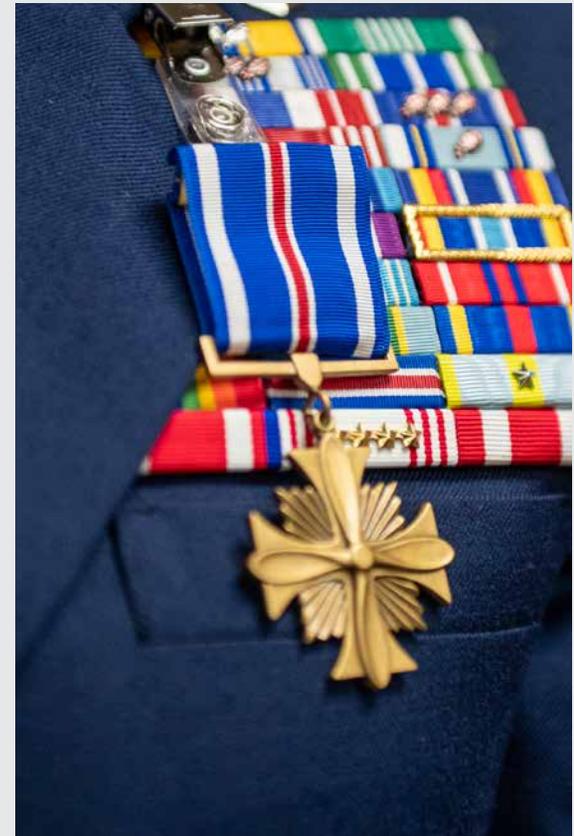
She was recognized for her actions as a critical care air transport team nurse in support of Operation Allies Refuge and the evacuation of Kabul, Afghanistan, Aug. 26, 2021.

Less than a month after she arrived at Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar to serve with the 379th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, the transition of power in Afghanistan was announced. Around the same time, the two teams assigned to the 379th decreased to one: Lunning became the only critical care air transport nurse in the region and thus assigned to every medical mission.

Lunning had already completed the day's missions when she got a call to report back at the hangar and was briefed on the situation in Kabul. A suicide bomber attacked the airport, killing dozens, with more injured. While under fire, with the threat of a second suicide bomber looming, Lunning recalls focusing her mind on the patients who needed her. She performed triage and intake for 22 patients before they embarked on an eight-hour aeromedical evacuation flight to Landstuhl, Germany.



From gaining intravenous access to an 18-month-old patient without pediatric-specific supplies to mitigating the life-threatening blood loss of a post-operative patient while in flight, the skills from her civilian career kept her fighting for the patients who needed her expertise. At the end of that mission, Lunning saved 22 lives during the single largest aeromedical evacuation in Kabul Coalition Hospital's history.



“Thank you, Major Lunning, for your dedication to the mission, for your bravery under fire, serving our nation with your medical expertise, and your care for humanity,” said Air Force Lt. Gen. Michael Loh, director of the Air National Guard. “You make us very proud.”

PUTTING ON THE MILES

Army Staff Sgt. Mabsima Alkamooneh

The Minnesota National Guard Marathon Team is made up of four Soldiers. Army Staff Sgt. Jennifer St. Amand, Sgt. 1st Class Adam Walton, Army Maj. Tim Gears, and Army Lt. Col. John Zimmerman. In May, the group traveled to Nebraska to compete in the Lincoln Marathon. The event doubles as



the National Guard's qualifying marathon, where only 25 men and 15 women can be selected for the following year's National Guard Marathon Team. The Minnesota team placed third overall, with both St. Amand and Walton qualifying for the 2024 national team.

"When we go to the qualifying event, we represent the state of Minnesota," said St. Amand. "If we



make it on the national team, there's different events throughout the year you can participate in, and everything is paid for."

Walton has been a runner since childhood and a member of the team since 2019. He recently became the state coordinator.

"It's a forever activity," said Walton. "Be patient with yourself and continue to invest in your health. The marathon game is a long game. It's not something you're going to win when you're 20 years old."

Walton began training for his first marathon when he was just 16 years old and has qualified for the national team three times. Being part of the team provides a platform for encouraging other service members to be the best versions of themselves and allows him to mentor runners of varying ranks.

"When I look to my left and to my right and out into the ranks, it's the people, you know; it's serving the community and all of us having shared goals and shared vision," said Walton. "And working towards making Minnesota better and the country better as a whole."

Running also allows them to promote the National Guard as an organization along with health and fitness.

"The implementation of the [U.S. Army's Holistic Health and Fitness] program really lines up with what we are doing on the team," said Walton. "We are moving in a direction as a force more towards caring about our health in general. The team represents that."

GENERAL MACARTHUR LEADERSHIP AWARD

Army 1st Lt. Katarina Sulzle

On June 5, 2023, Army Chief Warrant Officer 2 Derrien Meixell, a member of the Minnesota National Guard's Camp Ripley-based Fox Company, 1st General Support Aviation Battalion of the 189th Aviation Regiment, was notified that he would receive the General Douglas MacArthur Leadership Award.

The award recognizes company-grade commissioned and warrant officers who demonstrate the ideals for which General MacArthur stood: duty, honor, and country. Only seven National Guard members, six commissioned officers, and one warrant officer receive this prestigious award each year. Recipients have demonstrated their dedication to the Army values, possess exceptional technical and tactical proficiency, and have a well-developed understanding of their leaders, subordinates, and peers.

Meixell was nominated for this award by his commander, Army Capt. Logan Benda. During pre-mobilization, Meixell's efforts directly improved company readiness levels from 6% to 88%, the highest of any National Guard air traffic company in 10 years. Before deployment, Meixell led his unit to set up small operations for air traffic controllers to practice setting up their equipment and running through simulations to increase their readiness.

"Some of the most important qualities that a leader should possess are dependability and open-mindedness," noted Meixell as he reflected on how he



strives to show these qualities continuously. "...I want my team to know I will do my fair share of the work, follow through with them, and support them...while understanding there is no 'right' way or 'one' way to do a task."

As a young warrant officer, Meixell held numerous positions: platoon leader, safety officer, airfield manager, and contract officer representative. In addition, Meixell had many of these positions simultaneously during his first deployment. While



deployed, he was responsible for working with many organizations, ensuring projects were completed to accomplish missions for his team.

"His innate ability to empathize with the Soldier and recognize what drives them," said Benda. "That shapes the direction of any organization and achieves extraordinary results."



THE MINNESOTA NATIONAL GUARD'S OUTSTANDING AIRMEN

COMPANY GRADE OFFICER

Capt. Justin Boucher
148th Fighter Wing

FIRST SERGEANT

Master Sgt. Benjamin Riordan
148th Fighter Wing

SR. NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICER

Master Sgt. Matthew Carlson
133rd Airlift Wing

AIRMAN

Senior Airman Timothy Rowe
148th Fighter Wing

NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICER

Tech. Sgt. Morgan Johnson
133rd Airlift Wing

MINNESOTA OUTSTANDING AIRMEN OF THE YEAR

Amy Lovgren

Minnesota National Guard leaders recognized five Airmen for their outstanding performance at Saint Paul's Veterans Service Building in 2023.

“Taking a moment to recognize the individual Airmen who have gone above and beyond in their primary duties is vital as people are the center of any successful organization,” said Command Chief Master Sgt. Lisa Erikson, the Minnesota National Guard's command senior enlisted leader.

Members of the Minnesota National Guard's Saint Paul-based 133rd Airlift Wing and Duluth-based 148th Fighter Wing gathered to support their 2023 Outstanding Airman of the Year recipients. Each unit selected candidates based on job performance, leadership ability, community involvement, and personal achievement during the previous year. The awards honored the Airmen's accomplishments and highlighted their dedication and devotion to duty.

“These Airmen are being recognized as the Outstanding Airmen of the Year for 2023 because they have led, trained, and supported our fellow Airmen and communities to the highest level,” said Erikson. “This ceremony provides us a platform to recognize the achievements of our Airmen and show gratitude for what they have done as they become future leaders within our organization.”

The selecting board consisted of the 133rd Airlift



Wing and 148th Fighter Wing Command Chiefs and the State Command Chief. These Airmen will advance to compete at the regional level.



“Taking a moment to recognize the individual Airmen who have gone above and beyond in their primary duties is vital as people are the center of any successful organization,” said Command Chief Master Sgt. Lisa Erikson



THE MINNESOTA NATIONAL GUARD'S BEST WARRIORS

NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICER

Staff Sgt. Leo Kerfeld
C-Co. 2nd Battalion, 135th Infantry Regiment

SOLDIER

Spc. Gabriel Senf
HHC, 2nd Battalion, 135th Infantry Regiment

NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICER
RUNNER-UP

Sgt. Matthew Eberhardt
Minnesota Medical Detachment

SOLDIER
RUNNER-UP

Pfc. Nicholas Miska
Charlie Battery, 1-151 Field Artillery Battalion



STATE BEST WARRIOR COMPETITION

Army Capt. William Hermanson

Select Minnesota National Guard Soldiers and guests from the Croatian and Canadian Armed Forces competed for this year's best noncommissioned officer and Soldier during Minnesota's 2023 Best Warrior Competition held on Camp Ripley last March. The event bolstered the Minnesota National Guard's 27-year relationship with Croatia through the U.S. Department of Defense's State Partnership Program and maintained the long-standing relationship with Canada while building personal rapport at the individual Soldier level.

The four-day competition tested the participants' knowledge of Soldier skills. The competition included an appearance board, written exams, essays, a physical fitness event, weapons qualifications, a medical evacuation simulation, an obstacle course, and a live fire exercise. In addition, this year's competition featured the "Valor Ruck," which included five stations, each highlighting the story of a Medal of Honor recipient.

Day one of the competition started with the Soldiers taking on the vehicle preventive maintenance checks and services and a tire changing event followed by a live fire exercise. Simultaneously, the noncommissioned officers took on the valor ruck march around Camp Ripley's cantonment area and various lanes that tested their knowledge of Army tasks and drills.



Throughout the competition, Soldiers and non-commissioned officers battled harsh winter conditions and challenging tasks, which included vehicle preventive maintenance checks and services, emergency tire changing, and live fire exercises. The valor ruck around Camp Ripley also tested participant skills and knowledge of Army tasks and drills. Competitors also encountered new events, such as treating a casualty at Camp Ripley's state-of-the-art Medical Simulation training center and low-light



land navigation with snowshoes. Kerfeld continued to represent the State, winning both the National Guard Region IV competition and advancing to the All-Guard competition, winning selection to compete at the all-Army level, continuing the three-year streak of Minnesota representatives at the National level competition.



MODERNIZATION

The Minnesota National Guard strives to be at the cutting edge of training, using equipment, and implementing infrastructural improvements best to serve our state, nation, and its partners. Find out what has been done in 2023 and our goals for the future.



MINNESOTA INVESTS IN THE ARCTIC

Army Staff Sgt. Sydney Mariette

“We are an Arctic nation,” explained Chief Master Sgt. Jeremiah Wickenhauser, superintendent for the 133rd Contingency Response Flight. “There are only five countries that border the Arctic, with the U.S. being one of them by way of Alaska.”

While the Arctic has its own Indigenous people and interests, it is not an independent country. Under international law, the North Pole and the region of the Arctic Ocean surrounding it are not owned by any one country. Therefore, the United States and the other members of the eight Arctic nations (Russia, the United States, Canada, Norway, Denmark, Iceland,

Finland, and Sweden) must collaborate through the Arctic Council to ensure fair use of resources and the protection of security interests for all.

“To shape that security environment, we have to posture ourselves to be a force in the Arctic,” said Wickenhauser.

To maintain readiness, the National Guard took steps to prepare for Arctic operations in the event that Alaskan active-duty personnel were called up. Established in 2017, the Arctic Interest Council brings together 17 National Guard states: Alaska, Colorado, Connecticut, Idaho, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, New Hampshire, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Washington, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. The aim is to share knowledge of Arctic issues and bolster their cold

weather operations to support the National Guard’s mission to always be ready.

While most of these states call the north their home, Minnesota maintains a distinct pleasure in training throughout the winter and fostering partnerships with other Arctic nations, such as Canada and Norway. While not a coastal state, Minnesota is geographically one of the most strategic – and affordable – training areas for Arctic operation exercises in the continental United States.

“I think Minnesota is one of the best places for Arctic training,” said Wickenhauser. “Air Guard, Air Reserve, and active-duty units could train at Camp Ripley as it is more fiscally responsible for many of the lower 48 states and gets just as cold as Alaska.”

133RD CONTINGENCY RESPONSE FLIGHT OPERATIONS

Army Staff Sgt. Sydney Mariette

Minnesota is one of five National Guard states to host a Contingency Response Flight – a group of elite Air Guard members capable of short-notice worldwide deployment to any airfield to set up a mobile command and control of contingency, humanitarian, or exercise missions. The 133rd CRF, located at the

133rd Airlift Wing in Saint Paul, Minnesota, is the only northern tier state to have a CRF and, thus, have the natural training ground to survive and operate in an Arctic landscape.

Because of these credentials of both climate and commitment, in 2020, the National Guard Bureau designated the 133rd CRF as the lead Arctic unit and asked them to put together a training plan for what contingency operations look like in the Arctic.

The 133rd CRF is continuously improving its training operations and providing opportunities to train others in the art of Arctic survival. 2023 saw their second year hosting Operation Arctic Butterfly – a homegrown training exercise that brought together approximately 40 service members (open to all Air, Army, National Guard, Reserve, and Active-Duty personnel) and taught them how to operate for five days in an Arctic landscape.

The 133rd CRF plans to propose the third iteration of Operation Arctic Butterfly as a National Guard Bureau-supported event and continue expanding the training capabilities that the bold north of Minnesota offers to the rest of the United States. In addition to increasing training, the 133rd CRF is expanding its membership. As of April 1, the 133rd Contingency Response Flight transitioned to a Team, which allowed them to increase their personnel manning to 31 individuals with a diverse skill set, including security forces, communications, aircraft maintenance, and more. This transition increases their capabilities to be a fully self-sufficient team, meaning they can be dropped north of the Arctic Circle and survive, operate, and thrive for up to five days unsupported.

Being the Land of 10,000 has advantages, especially when said are frozen for a third of the year.



NEW ALL-WEATHER RADAR POD TESTED FOR F-16 IN DULUTH

Audra Flanagan

Subject matter experts from the Air Force, Air National Guard, Air Force Reserve and the 148th Fighter Wing gathered at the Duluth-based Air National Guard flying unit to exercise the end-to-end employment of the recently fielded AN/ASQ-236 radar pod and create a plan how the National Guard will operationalize the pod for all F-16 fighter aircraft, January 24-26, 2023.

The AN/ASQ-236 pod is an externally mounted Active Electronically Scanned Array (AESA) pod that provides detailed maps for surveillance, coordinate generation and bomb impact assessment purposes. The pod provides Combat Air Forces with the ability to geo-locate points of interest day or night, in adverse weather conditions and compliments the recent fielding of the APG-83 AESA fire control radar by the 148th Maintenance Group.

The Air Force recognized the need for an all-weather precision geo-location and reconnaissance system with the reliability inherent in active electronically scanned array radars. The Air Force and Northrop Grumman designed, fabricated and tested the new system. The 148th Fighter Wing was designated as the Air National Guard's center for Excellence for the AN/ASQ-236.

“As the center of Excellence, the 148th will retain expertise in the loading, distribution, training and employment of the AN/ASQ-236 and the capabilities



it brings to the warfighter,” said 148th Fighter Wing commander, Col. Nathan Aysta.

The team of experts had a clear set of objectives for the week-long visit.

“Pilots were trained by subject matter experts on the pod’s software and aircraft systems integration, including troubleshooting and emergency procedures management,” said Maj. Michael Kuzmuk, Chief of Wing Weapons. “Additionally, we trained and refined

best practices for mission planning and post flight analysis.”

The objectives were met, and the team saw Kuzmuk fly the first Post-Block F-16 with the AN/ASQ-236 on January 26, 2023.

The 148th Fighter Wing is a multi-purposed Suppression/Destruction of Enemy Air Defense and NORAD Aerospace Control Alert-trained flying unit.

MULTI-STATE ARCTIC EVENT AT CAMP RIPLEY

Army 1st Lt. Balinda O'Neal

In the Arctic, steel becomes brittle at -22 degrees Fahrenheit, continuous connectivity at the bandwidth needed for modern military operations lags, and more than 80 percent of Alaska communities are not connected to the road system. These challenges were among the many topics discussed at the National

Guard Arctic Interest Council's quarterly meeting at Camp Ripley, Jan. 24-26, 2023.

The Minnesota National Guard hosted the event, bringing together subject matter experts from the Coast Guard, Navy, Air and Army National Guard, Ted Stevens center for Arctic Security Studies, academic professors, and industry partners to discuss the advancement of Arctic and cold weather capabilities.

“With all the changes that are going on around the world, to include climate change and the increasing activity in the Northwest Passage area, it has become very important for all of us to recognize that we have to have the right capabilities and gear to operate,” said Army Brig. Gen. Wayne Don, director of the Alaska National Guard's Joint Staff, referencing one of the world's most rapidly changing environments.

During the event, attendees had the opportunity to observe and visit with Airmen from the Minnesota Air National Guard's 133rd Contingency Response Flight who were completing their cold-weather-focused annual training where the members sheltered in tents, igloos, and snow caves to simulate an Arctic mobilization.

“One step in the Arctic is two steps anywhere else,” noted Chief Master Sgt. Jeremiah Wickenhauser, 133rd CRF superintendent on the difficulties of cold weather operations during his presentation to the council members on his unit's capabilities and their training on how to stay warm in freezing temperatures while performing different aspects of their jobs. From diving and explosive ordnance disposal in the Arctic to cold adaptation and winter equipment maintenance, council members learned from multiple experts who shared experiences from their career fields.

Since its inception in 2017, the National Guard Arctic Interest Council has advocated for advancing arctic and cold weather capabilities as part of the U.S. defense strategy. Approximately 50 representatives from nine states participated in the event.



NEW MINNESOTA MILITARY AND VETERANS' MUSEUM

Army Capt. William Hermanson

The Minnesota Military and Veterans Museum broke ground this fall on a new \$32 million facility outside of Camp Ripley Training center.

“When complete, this project will honor all branches of service, both past and present,” said Randal Dietrich, Minnesota Military and Veterans Museum executive director. “It will also truly represent a community effort, encompassing funds and support from federal, state, community, and private sources.”

The 40,000 square-foot museum will sit on a 30-acre plot of land donated by a local landowner, just off Minnesota Highway 371 near the Minnesota State Veterans Cemetery and the installation.

The museum aims to show how Minnesota service members and Veterans have been involved in shaping our nation’s military growth and development. Stories from the 1st Minnesota’s role in the Civil War and the 34th Infantry Division’s “Red Bulls” significance in WWII will be prominent, with a renewed focus on the Vietnam and Korean Wars, Post 9/11 era, and many more displays to help guests understand the rich military history.

The current museum on Camp Ripley, has grown beyond its allowable footprint to such an extent that it needs a larger facility to fully tell Minnesota’s military history. The museum will also host Veteran and service member resources, Minnesota National



Guard ID card offices, and recruiters. Slated to join the museum will be the Camp Ripley environmental classroom which has also grown beyond its ability to showcase their wildlife and conservation efforts.

The State of Minnesota provided \$32 million to design and construct the 40,000-square-foot facility. The museum’s board of directors continue to raise private funds to fill the facility with galleries, classrooms, and public programming that will honor Minnesota’s Veterans and service members.



“Ultimately, the quality and character of the museum’s education classrooms, exhibit galleries, and public programming rests with companies, foundations, Veteran organizations, and Minnesotans who see the value of investing in a future that is as bright as our past,” said Dietrich.

RED BULLS IN FRANCE

Army Capt. Eric Jungles

In April, Soldiers of the 34th Infantry Division “Red Bulls” and 1st Armored Brigade Combat Team performed battlefield command operations out of Camp de Mailly, France, supporting a NATO exercise.

The Red Bulls participated in the fourth and final phase of Orion 23 – the largest military training event

organized and led by France in over three decades. It culminated in a large-scale multinational and multi-domain operation.

“Exercises like these provide an excellent opportunity to strengthen partnerships and enhance interoperability between U.S. and European allies,” said Brig. Gen. Stephen Schemenauer, assistant division commander for sustainment. “Further, realistic scenarios like what unfolded across the mock battlefield in Orion 23 allow us to develop collective

warfighting capabilities.”

The exercise was designed to prepare participants for significant conflict and is based on NATO’s Skolkan scenario, which includes a conceivable, albeit fictitious, narrative to fend off simulated invading forces and restore security in a mock theatre. Minnesota Soldiers modeled the capabilities and operations of a U.S. Army division under Rapid Reaction Corps – France.

Service members from Belgium, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Spain, the United Kingdom, the United States, and other allied nations convened for the exercise intended to present challenges of hybrid, conventional, and unconventional warfare. In its final phase, Orion included 12,000 troops on the ground and around 2,600 tactical vehicles, 60 aircraft, 30 ships, and 100 unmanned aerial systems.

“Minnesota Soldiers have a long history of training and building relationships with NATO allies, including our official partnerships with Norway and Croatia,” Schemenauer said. “These exercises are great opportunities to sharpen our warfighting acumen and demonstrate an enduring commitment to our European partners.”

Red Bull Soldiers also participated in an exercise known as Immediate Response 23 this spring. Immediate Response 23 and Orion 23 were part of a more extensive combination of coordinated field training and live-fire exercises known together as Defender Europe 2023.



RED BULLS IN THE BALKANS

Sgt. 1st Class SIRRINA MARTINEZ

Nearly 750 Minnesota Red Bulls participated in the multinational exercise Immediate Response 23, or IR23, last May. Soldiers with the 34th Infantry Division “Red Bulls” were stationed in Croatia and North Macedonia and worked alongside several European partner nations.

“As part of the exercise, the division headquarters commanded and controlled over 8,000 personnel from 10 countries comprising three multinational task forces,” said Brig. Gen. Steven Schemenauer, deputy commanding general for maneuver of the 34th Infantry Division “Red Bulls”.

The central theme of the exercise was to increase interoperability and partnership between partner nations, and the division staff worked to incorporate those themes into their daily operations, Schemenauer said.

“As examples of our interoperability and integration, we incorporated some of our partners directly into key positions of the division staff,” he said. “We also incorporated the NATO logistics system into our division logistics common operating picture.”

The multinational training exercise held in the Balkans included international forces totaling 7,000 personnel from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Slovenia, and 2,800 participants from the United States.



Relationship building was integral to the success of IR23. A key example being the official state partnership between the Minnesota National Guard and Croatia that began in 1996. These partnerships are critical to security in the Balkan region.

Immediate Response 23 is one of three major exercises under the umbrella of a more significant exercise known as Defender 23, which focuses on the strategic deployment of the continental United States-based



forces, the employment of Army prepositioned assets, and the interoperability with Allies and partners.

The overall intent of the exercise was to assess the integration of combat power from USAEUR-AF and U.S.-based units in Eastern Europe, and increase the operational reach and effectiveness of the NATO Alliance environment while leveraging host nation capabilities.



JANUARY

32 Airmen of the 133rd Airlift Wing deploy to Europe & Southwest Asia.

FEBRUARY

80 Soldiers of the 347th Regional Support Group return from Kuwait.

FEBRUARY

133 Airmen of the 133rd Airlift Wing participate in Operation Snowbird in Yuma, Arizona.

APRIL

3 Airmen of the 133rd Airlift Wing deploy to Middle East.

MAY

20 Soldiers of the 147th Human Resources Company deploy to Kuwait.

JUNE

32 Airmen of 133rd Airlift Wing return from Europe and Southwest Asia.

JULY

5 Soldiers of the 34th Expeditionary Combat Aviation Brigade deploy to Bogota, Columbia.

AUGUST

3 Soldiers with the 434 Firefighting Team returned from Romania.





AUGUST

140 Airmen with the 133rd Airlift Wing deploy to Djibouti.

AUGUST

5 Soldiers with the 1903rd Acquisition Team deploy to Djibouti.

OCTOBER

5 Airmen from the 133rd Airlift Wing deploy to Qatar.

OCTOBER

2 Airmen from the 133rd Airlift Wing deploy to Saudi Arabia.
2 Airmen from the 133rd Airlift Wing deploy to Antarctica.

NOVEMBER

434 Soldiers from the 84th Troop Command return from Southwest Border mission.

NOVEMBER

1 Airmen from the from the 133rd Airlift Wing deploys to Japan.

DECEMBER

140 Airmen from the 133rd Airlift Wing return from Djibouti.

DECEMBER

2 Airmen from the 133rd Airlift Wing deploy to Antarctica.



MAJOR COMMANDS

The Minnesota National Guard, headquartered in Saint Paul, consists of 11 major commands located throughout the state. Their shared success in 2023 is highlighted in this section along with their objectives for 2024.

MINNESOTA FACT: *Minnesota is home to 16 renowned Fortune 500s, including 3M, General Mills, U.S. Bancorp, Target and Best Buy. Our Twin Cities ranks 1st per capita among the 30 largest metros – and Minnesota ranks 5th – in Fortune 500 concentration per capita.*



PHOTOS BY: far left, top left & top right, Air Force Staff Sgt. Austen Adriaens; top & bottom center, bottom right, Amy Lovgren; center left, Sgt. 1st Class Serrina Martinez; center, Army Staff Sgt. Mabsima Alkamooneh; center right, Army Sgt. Jordan Newbanks; bottom left, Audra Flanagan



JOINT FORCE HEADQUARTERS

Located in Saint Paul, the Minnesota National Guard's Joint Force Headquarters is a joint Army and Air unit tasked to oversee operations for all state National Guard forces. The unit coordinates military support at the request of the Governor in the event of a disaster or state emergency.



MINNESOTA FACT: *Water skiing was invented in 1922 in Lake City, Minnesota by local teen Ralph Samuelson. Samuelson took a homemade pair of skis and his daredevil determination, and got behind a boat on Lake Pepin making history.*

2023 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

After months of planning, this year kicked off with the Joint Force Headquarters staff supporting the State Partnership Program letter of intent signing ceremony, the 50th anniversary of the U.S.-Norwegian Reciprocal Troop Exchange, and activity day for more than 100 Norwegians. During activity day, they had the opportunity to shop and to experience the Saint Paul Winter Carnival.

The unit staff continues to focus on modernization with the renovation of various armories across the state. The staff held stationing working groups – planning meetings to determine where Soldiers train while their armory is renovated. This working group continually reviews the age of our armories and the feasibility of renovating them.

Modernization occurred with the addition of the Joint Prevention and Support Services Directorate consisting of the Integrated Primary Prevention Workforce, Holistic Health & Fitness Program, Resilience, Risk Reduction, & Suicide Prevention Program, and Family Programs. These programs are vital to the health of the force.

The third release of the Integrated Personnel and Pay System-Army began in 2023 and took six months to complete. This was the largest fielding in military

history across the U.S. of a human resource system with 1.5 million users. As this new program rolled out, the staff ensured the new system was integrated and training provided across the organization.

2024 OBJECTIVES

The Joint Force Headquarters staff will continue to foster and maintain our relationships with our State Partnership Program countries. The program is known for its low-cost yet high payoff application to security cooperation efforts, such as the communication section conducting its annual cyber engagement with Croatia. Now that Norway is an official partner of Minnesota, this section will also begin cyber engagements with Norway, which is very important to foster and maintain our strong relationship with both countries.

We will continue to build upon our relationship with our interagency partners, such as the FBI and Minnesota's Bureau of Criminal Apprehension. The staff builds on these relationships every year through counterintelligence sharing and with our counter-drug program. The Minnesota National Guard counter-drug program provides trained professionals from the National Guard to work alongside local law enforcement to support the detection, interdiction, disruption, and curtailment of drug trafficking activities.





34th Infantry Division “Red Bulls”

The Arden Hills-based 34th Infantry Division provides training and readiness oversight for nine National Guard brigades with more than 27,000 Soldiers across Minnesota and 14 other states. In Minnesota, the 34th includes the 1st Armored Brigade Combat Team, the 34th Expeditionary Combat Aviation Brigade, the 34th Division Artillery, the 84th Troop Command, and the 347th Regional Support Group

2023 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In 2023, the 34th Infantry Division, known as the “Red Bulls,” participated in several exercises, creating and maintaining partnerships with multiple nations. Immediate Response 23, known as IR23, was part of a more extensive combination of linked field training and live-fire exercises, collectively known together as Defender Europe 2023. During the exercise, the Red Bulls successfully commanded and controlled three multi-national brigade task force elements with over 7,000 service members from a dozen NATO and European partner countries, including Croatia – Minnesota’s state partner since 1996. IR23 enabled the division to continue to build upon its rich heritage and legacy in Europe.

The command and staff planned and executed nested training events in Europe leading up to IR23. The division’s 1st Armored Brigade Combat Team headquarters and assistant division commanders served as a division response cell for Orion 23, a European exercise focused on preparing France to serve as a rapid reaction corps supporting large scale combat operations. Red Bulls operated as part of a NATO force, which provided unique opportunities for the command and staff to build competency across all warfighting functions in a multi-national environment. Another exercise was held in Udbina, Croatia with U.S. Army Europe and Africa, U.S.

Army V Corps, and the Croatian Armed Forces to develop interoperability with NATO members and partners at the corps and division levels.

These exercises enabled the Red Bulls to take meaningful steps towards operational alignment with U.S. Army Europe and Africa and U.S. Army V Corps, as a combat-credible divisional unit of action. The division will continue to build upon our longstanding partnership with Croatia and our new relationships across Europe. The Red Bulls are proud to have trained with the militaries of over a third of the members of NATO in 2023.

2024 OBJECTIVES

In early 2024, the division headquarters will mobilize and deploy to Kuwait in support of Operation Spartan Shield and Operation Inherent Resolve, acting as the United States Army’s tactical division headquarters for U.S. Army Central. Operation Spartan Shield is an ongoing operation to deter aggression and malign influences across the Middle East. The Red Bulls will provide security and conduct combined exercises with partner-nation militaries to build interoperability and increase capacity while remaining ready to respond to contingency operations in the region.

In support of the ‘Army of 2030’ vision, the 34th continues realignment to an armored strike division.



Alongside two active-duty divisions, the Red Bulls will be at the tip of the Army’s reorganization efforts designed to develop a force-wide capability to converge effects on land, in the air, sea, space, and cyberspace. The new structure will optimize the division’s ability to neutralize enemy defense systems and seize key terrain and provides a unique gap-crossing capability which helps to sustain the fight across contested terrain over time.

“The Red Bulls of the 34th Infantry Division have a storied history of commitment, resilience, and excellence, and I have full confidence that each member of the division will honor that legacy,” said Army Maj. Gen. Charles Kemper.



34TH DIVISION ARTILLERY

The 34th Division Artillery, known as DIVARTY, is the first of eight such National Guard units. The unit increases capabilities at the division headquarters by providing long-range precision fires, command, and control of division-level artillery assets, fire support, and synchronization of joint fires. The unit will continue to build organizational and operational capacity over the next few years, formally reporting in 2025.



MINNESOTA FACT: *The many famous people from Minnesota include U.S. Vice Presidents Walter Mondale and Hubert Humphrey, Jesse Ventura, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Prince, Judy Garland, Jessica Lange, Bob Dylan, Tippi Hedren, Charles M. Schulz, Vince Vaughn, Lindsey Vonn, Adam Thielen, Winona Ryder, Phil Housey, Michele Norris and Sinclair Lewis.*

2023 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

This year the 34th Division Artillery's uncasing ceremony highlighted the tremendous history of field artillery in Minnesota and the lineage of the brigade dating back to World War II.

The unit made significant strides toward meeting the commander's goals for staffing, equipping, training, and integrating with other units. Staff members joined the 34th Infantry Division in support of U.S. Army Europe and Africa's exercise, Defender Europe 23, held in Croatia.

Following the aligned-for-training model designated for the division, the unit continued training relationships with their aligned units, which included advisement and support to the 30th Armored Brigade Combat Team's Exportable Combat Training center exercise at Fort Stewart, Georgia.

After the completion of successful events in 2022, the team held a symposium in 2023 focused on "The Division of 2030" which integrated intelligence, maneuver, and artillery leaders to share best practices and provide a forum for professional development. They also held a workshop for master gunners from aligned-for-training units. This event advanced the brigade's previously established 'Red Book' and introduced an additional digital standard operating procedure, which enables units to conduct digital

training in coordination with the brigade in the future.

2024 OBJECTIVES

The 34th Infantry Division headquarters' notification of sourcing impacted the brigade's implementation with approximately half of their staff sourced in support of Operation Spartan Shield. Deploying Soldiers will have a unique learning environment working on the division's staff. Soldiers not deploying will be part of the rear detachment and focus on individual skills and basic Soldier readiness.

Standardization and certification will remain a priority for the rear detachment as key personnel are tasked to maintain the aligned-for-training concept across the Fires War Fighting Function with the division's aligned organizations. The rear detachment will emphasize support for Iowa's 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry Division "Red Bulls" 's Exportable Combat Training center exercise at Camp Ripley. In the year ahead, both the deployed brigade Soldiers and rear-detachment team will continue honing their skills that will build operational capacity upon return from mobilization and integration into future division events and exercises.



“Training year 2024 brings a unique opportunity for DIVARTY to train individual skills in support of the division deployment, while providing support to operational division aligned units,” said Army Col. Eric Wieland, commander



34TH EXPEDITIONARY COMBAT AVIATION BRIGADE

The Inver Grove Heights-based 34th Expeditionary Combat Aviation Brigade is a National Guard unit that supports the 34th Infantry Division “Red Bulls” and the State of Minnesota. They provide UH-60 Black Hawk and CH-47 Chinook helicopter aviation capabilities for federal and state missions.



MINNESOTA FACT: *On May 21, 1927, Minnesota’s 25-year-old Charles A. Lindbergh landed his airplane, the Spirit of St. Louis, in Paris, France. It was a record-breaking 33.5-hour, nonstop, solo flight from New York City.*

HEADQUARTERS*Inver Grove Heights, Minnesota***COMMANDER***Col. Kevin O'Brien***SENIOR ENLISTED LEADER***Command Sgt. Maj. Marc Dempsey***STRENGTH***HQ - 142 | Subordinate units - 1,000***2023 ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

The 34th Expeditionary Combat Aviation Brigade conducted multiple training missions throughout 2023, culminating with exercises at the Joint Readiness Training center and the Sustainment Training center. In addition, the brigade began building command relationships with units that will soon fall under its command as it prepares to transition to a Combat Aviation Brigade in 2024.

The 2nd Assault Helicopter Battalion of the 147th Aviation Regiment completed a rotation at the Joint Readiness Training center as the aviation support for the New Jersey National Guard's 44th Infantry Brigade Combat Team. The battalion led a multi-state effort to provide air movement, medical evacuation, and air assaults under complex and hybrid threats. The unit also conducted cross-border operations with the Canadian Lake Superior Scottish Regiment, performing an air movement of 73 Canadian Soldiers from Thunder Bay, Canada, to Camp Ripley, Minnesota.

The 834th Aviation Support Battalion went to the Sustainment Training center at the Iowa National Guard's Camp Dodge to enhance the unit's medical, maintenance, and administrative

skills. The battalion also sent their intermediate-level aviation maintenance company to train with the Missouri National Guard's 1107th Theater Aviation Support Maintenance Group, gaining hands-on military occupational specialty training.

2024 OBJECTIVES

In September, the 34th Expeditionary Combat Aviation Brigade will convert to a Combat Aviation Brigade, gaining the North Carolina National Guard's 1st Attack Battalion, 130th Aviation Regiment, and South Carolina National Guard's 1st Attack Battalion, 151st Aviation Regiment. The conversion to a Combat Aviation Brigade will bring additional fires and warfighting capability to the 34th Infantry Division. The brigade and 151st will also provide aviation support to the Iowa National Guard's 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team during their upcoming exportable combat training capability exercise.



“The brigade is entering a critical year as we transition back to being a Combat Aviation Brigade headquarters, restoring our fires and maneuver capability in support of the 34th Infantry Division Red Bulls,” said Army Col. Kevin O’Brien.



1ST ARMORED BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM

The Rosemount-based 1st Armored Brigade Combat Team of the 34th Infantry Division consists of a headquarters and eight major subordinate commands. More than 4,800 Soldiers comprise the brigade's combined arms, armor, cavalry, infantry, artillery, engineer, and brigade support battalions. They constitute more than half of the Minnesota National Guard's total Soldier force. The brigade provides subordinate commands with timely and effective guidance to support state and federal requirements.



MINNESOTA FACT: *Minnesota's rolling plains are covered by fertile topsoil, giving the state some of the nation's richest farmland, which, along with the 17 million acres of forest that cover about one-third of the state's land area, provide Minnesota with ample biomass resources.*

2023 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In April, nearly 60 Soldiers of the 1st Armored Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry Division, performed battlefield command operations out of Camp de Mailly in north-central France in support of NATO exercise Orion 23 — the largest military training event organized and led by France in over three decades. It culminated in a large-scale multinational and multi-domain operation that included 12,000 troops on the ground and approximately 2,600 tactical vehicles, 60 aircraft, 30 ships, and 100 unmanned aerial systems. Minnesota Soldiers supported the NATO alliance exercise by modeling the capabilities and operations of a U.S. Army division under NATO Rapid Reaction Corps – France.

In May, in addition to demolitions training across an annual training period at Camp Ripley, the 334th Brigade Engineer Battalion, in collaboration with the 84th Troop Command's 682nd Engineer Battalion, hosted the first-ever Engineer Career Development & Talent Management Forum. The forum was designed as the first phase of a broader talent development program for engineers across the Minnesota National Guard.

From May into June, Red Bull Soldiers returned to U.S. European Command's area of responsibility

to participate in a U.S. Army V Corps-led global exercise conducted by U.S. Army Europe and Africa. The exercise, Immediate Response 23, included more than 670 Soldiers of 2nd Battalion, 135th Infantry Regiment, and was part of a more extensive combination of coordinated field training and live-fire exercises known together as Defender Europe 2023, which focused on the strategic deployment of continental United States-based forces, the employment of Army prepositioned stocks and interoperability with Allies and partners. Minnesota Soldiers deployed throughout Croatia and North Macedonia while working alongside several European partner nations.

Later in June, the 1st Battalion, 125th Field Artillery Regiment, fired new weapons systems, following a year of enhanced modernization efforts that saw the unit receive 18 of the Army's newest M109A7 Paladin howitzers. Fielding and training on the systems marks one of the most significant equipment upgrades for Minnesota's field artillery community in more than two decades. The first precision guidance kit round shot by a battalion crew was fired at Camp Ripley on June 20, highlighting capability and weapons enhancements.

1st Battalion, 194th Armor Regiment, capped off the brigade's summer activities with annual training that included individual weapons qualifications, tank and Bradley Fighting Vehicle gunnery, and wet-gap

crossing training on the Mississippi River with the Army Reserve's Wisconsin-based 652nd Multi-Role Bridge Company.

2024 OBJECTIVES

In 2024, the 1st Armored Brigade Combat Team will continue modernization efforts, focusing on fielding Joint Light Tactical vehicles and enhanced Bradley fighting vehicles.

In March 2024, the brigade will provide mission command as a maneuver brigade response cell in support of the 1st Infantry Division's warfighter exercise, Austere Challenge 24, at Fort Riley, Kansas.

Also in 2024, four platoons of Red Bull Soldiers from across the brigade, led by C. Company, 1st Battalion, 194th Armor Regiment, will be supporting 2nd Brigade, 34th Infantry Division training as an opposing force for an exportable combat training center exercise at Camp Ripley. Soldiers of the 334th Brigade Engineer Battalion will participate in National Guard Reaction Force training, which allows the Minnesota National Guard to provide the State of Minnesota with rapid response capabilities focused on incidents requiring law enforcement or security support.



347TH REGIONAL SUPPORT GROUP

The mission of Minnesota's 347th Regional Support Group is to deploy and provide life support and command and control of military base operations. The unit's responsibilities include leading the reception, staging, onward movement, and integration of supporting forces as they arrive, managing facilities, and providing administrative, medical, and logistical support for troop services on a base camp. The 347th is higher headquarters to the 1347th Division Sustainment Support Battalion and eight separate units with distinct mission sets. The brigade's companies also provide support for units during homeland security, homeland defense, and other civil support missions.



2023 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In 2023, the 347th Regional Support Group deployed multiple units to various locations. Soldiers from the Headquarters Company returned from Iraq and Kuwait in support of Combined Joint Task Force – Operation Inherent Resolve, providing support for base operations. Soldiers from detachments one and two of the 147th Human Resources Company returned home from Kuwait, providing personnel support services and theater gateway operations support while detachments three and four mobilized as their replacements. Soldiers from the 434th Support Maintenance Company continued their mobilization to the United States’ Southwest border. Soldiers from the 147th Finance Detachment also returned from Poland, where they provided financial support and services. The 1903rd Acquisition Team mobilized to the Horn of Africa in support of Operation Inherent Resolve.

The unit headquarters completed its transition home with the merging of forward and rear elements and completion of two reintegration events. The brigade participated in multiple training exercises: Golden Coyote in South Dakota; Diamond Sabre at Fort Dix, New Jersey; and Operation Walking Shield in Cass Lake Minnesota.

This year the 347th went through a significant

reorganization with the activation of the 1347th Division Sustainment Support Battalion and deactivation of the 1347th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion. With the activation of new unit, it retained its headquarters company, gained Alpha Company and Bravo Company from the Iowa National Guard, formerly 1034th Composite Supply Company and 3654th Support Maintenance Company, and 114th Transportation Company was redesignated as Charlie Company. The 224th and 324th Transportation Companies, and 434th Support Maintenance Company were officially assigned under 1347th. The six separates previously assigned to the 1347th, now directly report to the 347th.

2024 OBJECTIVES

2024 brings additional deployments for units of the 347th Regional Support Group. Soldiers from the 247th Financial Management Support Detachment and 204th Medical Company Area Support are mobilizing to the Middle East in support of Operation Inherent Resolve. The 1904th Acquisition Team is mobilizing to the Middle East in support of Operation Spartan Shield. The 347th is also preparing for an upcoming mobilization force generation installation mission, a mission that aligns well with a Regional Support Group headquarters core training tasks.



“Our organization’s success in 2023 and readiness for 2024 mobilizations are attributed to the professionalism of our Soldiers, along with the invaluable support from their families and employers,” said Army Col. Jesse Johnson.



84TH TROOP COMMAND

The 84th Troop Command, headquartered in Cambridge, maintains control of field artillery, engineer, military police, and civil support forces, providing a force capable of performing a wide variety of missions. A specialized command with a unique mission, the 84th Troop Command maintains training standards to remain ready to support federal missions in addition to conducting domestic operations throughout the state.

2023 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In 2023, the 84th Troop Command supported a wide range of federal and domestic missions.

The headquarters of the 682nd Engineer Battalion, the 850th Horizontal Engineer Construction Company, and the 257th Military Police Company completed a year-long mission located at the Southwest border assisting U.S. Customs and Border Protection. Known as “Task Force Castle,” their mission spanned the border from California to Arizona. In addition to a highly successful and unique mission, Task Force Castle service members volunteered over 1,636 hours in surrounding communities.

The 1st Battalion of the 151st Field Artillery Regiment returned to a standard training year after two years of supporting domestic operations. They completed the M777 towed 155mm howitzer tables throughout the year culminating in a live-fire exercise during annual training. The battalion’s competitors won both the brigade soldier and noncommissioned officer of the year in the 84th Troop Command best warrior competition.

The 34th Military Police Company supported the 50th U.S.-Norway Reciprocal Troop Exchange in February at Camp Ripley. The company remained assigned to the metro area’s National Guard Reaction

Force with 147 Soldiers meeting all necessary qualifications to support the state when needed. Additionally, the company was fielded the Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected All-Terrain vehicle.

The 55th Weapons of Mass Destruction-Civil Support Team conducted 11 field training exercises during 2023 working with over 40 interagency partners. This year the team provided support to all Minnesota Vikings and Golden Gophers home football games, the PGA 3M Open, the Twin Cities Marathon, the Minnesota State Fair, and visits from the President and Vice President of the United States. In addition to their domestic operations, the team supported the State Partnership Program by sending two service members to the Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear Science and Consequence Management World Congress Conference in Dubrovnik, Croatia.

2024 OBJECTIVES

84th Troop Command’s vision for 2024 includes a broad spectrum of capable units ready to deploy at home or abroad. The 682nd Engineer Battalion will focus on reintegrating their recently returned units and on mission essential tasks. The 851st Vertical Engineer Company will support the 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team of the 34th Infantry Division at their Exportable Combat Training Capability exercise this summer. The 1st Battalion of the 151st



Field Artillery Regiment will serve as the U.S.-Norway Reciprocal Troop Exchange home team in 2024 and prepare for a conversion from the M777 towed 155mm howitzer to the M109A6 Paladin howitzer. The 34th and 257th Military Police Companies’ training focus will be National Guard Reaction Force tasks and squad level tactics. The 55th Weapons of Mass Destruction-Civil Support Team intends to expand on State Partnership Program relationships with partners in Croatia and Norway. The 55th Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and high-yield explosive Enhanced Response Force Package will continue their interagency training and partnerships while preparing for an external evaluation in 2025. The 34th Military Police Company’s primary focus will be on licensing its Soldiers for their new Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected All-Terrain Vehicle over the next 12 months.



175TH REGIONAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

The 175th Regiment's mission is to develop, educate and train Soldiers, leaders, and technical advisors in a premiere training environment to be prepared for large scale combat operations and multi-domain operations. The Camp Ripley-based 175th Regiment Regional Training Institute provides combat arms, military occupational specialty, and leadership training to the U.S. Army to prepare Soldiers and units for deployment at maximum combat readiness levels. It is unique within the Total Army School System by overseeing two schoolhouses, the Officer Candidate School and Warrant Officer Candidate School, and the 2nd Battalion 175th Regiment including School 997 and the Regional Training Site – Maintenance, School 971.



MINNESOTA FACT: *Two Minnesotans have received the Nobel Prize for Literature, Bob Dylan of Hibbing in 2016, and Sinclair Lewis of Sauk Centre in 1930. Lewis' boyhood home is now a museum.*

2023 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Each year, hundreds of Soldiers from the National Guard, Reserve, and Active Components travel to Camp Ripley to attend one of more than 30 courses offered by the 175th Regional Training Institute. The unit ensures that all courses meet the requirements of all components, supporting the ‘One Army School System’ standard.

The regiment offers the infantry advanced leader course, maneuver senior leader course, and more than ten functional area courses. The unit also contributes to the commissioned officer ranks by offering phases one and two of officer candidate school and phase two of warrant officer candidate school.

The Regional Training Site Maintenance focuses on instructing the 91H tracked mechanic conversion course and advanced leader course. Two additional courses offered are the wheeled and tracked vehicle recovery additional skills identifiers courses. All courses conducted at the Regional Training Site Maintenance are vital competencies for all components of the U.S. Army.

In 2023, the 175th instructed 937 Soldiers from across the country. The institute’s officer candidate school graduated 12 candidates with 11 commissioning and one candidate receiving an eligibility certificate. Phase one of the school

comprised 60 officer candidates from four states, resulting in 48 officer candidates advancing to phase two in their respective states. The warrant officer candidate school graduated 10 candidates with all commissioning.

2024 OBJECTIVES

In 2024, the 175th Regiment, Regional Training Institute, will maintain and enhance the ‘One Army School System’ standard as part of the triennial U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Commands accreditation process. This process involves reviewing and improving the Regional Training Institute’s professional military education courses. Throughout the year, the unit will prepare and train more than 1,000 Active Duty, National Guard, and Army Reserve Soldiers representing diverse units within the U.S. Army.

Lastly, the regiment will provide realistic and valuable learning experiences, utilizing the most experienced and professional cadre to produce skilled, professional, and adaptive leaders.



“The Regiment consistently receives high praise from Soldiers worldwide due to the outstanding instructors who make the curriculum come to life, coupled with Camp Ripley’s excellent facilities,” said Col. Brian Malecha, 175th commander



CAMP RIPLEY

Camp Ripley is a 53,000-acre regional training center hosting numerous ranges, state-of-the-art training facilities, and ample accommodations designed to support the training needs of all branches of the military, first responders, and civilian agencies. Located near Little Falls, Minnesota, the training center provides services, resources, and facilities that empower organizations to conduct essential training. Camp Ripley is a primary training facility for all Minnesota National Guard units.

MINNESOTA FACT: *Home to a rare, three-way continental divide, and located in the center of the country on the Canadian border, Minnesota is the only state that water flows out of and not into, with the exception of a few border streams that cross into the state and leave again.*

2023 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In 2023, Camp Ripley welcomed a new Garrison Commander, Army Col. Troy Fink, and Command Sgt. Maj. Rian Hofstad. Camp Ripley hosted 395,448 person-days of training for DoD personnel of all military branches. Camp Ripley hosted many state interagency partners, such as the State Patrol Trooper's Academy, local law enforcement, and first responders, for another 83,902 person-days.

Camp Ripley's environmental team was awarded the 2023 Secretary of Defense Large Installation Environmental Award. Camp Ripley continues to work with local landowners to conserve natural habitat with a \$400,000 Natural Resources Conservation Service grant infusion that will expand local, state, and federal partners' capacity within the team's Sentinel Landscape project.

Camp Ripley was proud to host the Norwegian Prime Minister and Land Forces Commander as we celebrated the official signing of Norway, becoming our newest state partner and the 50th anniversary of the U.S.-Norwegian Exchange Reciprocal Program. Camp Ripley was also honored to host the Croatian Minister of Defense and the Chief of Defense as we continue our 27th year as a state partner, working together to strengthen our allies.

2024 OBJECTIVES

In 2024, Camp Ripley will focus on the Minnesota National Guard's first priority of 'People First' by improving the morale, welfare, and recreation opportunities available for our employees, families, service members, and veterans by adding more programs. Camp Ripley will improve the Area 5 battalion headquarters by adding dining facilities and additional training space. Construction will begin on four more rail spurs, which will increase the efficiency of troop mobilization and offloading of equipment. Camp Ripley will also modernize its infrastructure by continuing to upgrade the fiber optic network downrange, ensuring unit training can meet modern requirements.

Camp Ripley's ongoing objective is to increase our winter operations opportunities through training with our international allies via our State Partnership Program and working to advance cold weather training with the National Guard Arctic Interest Council. Camp Ripley will continue to increase our winter training capabilities through other Department of Defense branches, such as the Navy, Coast Guard, and the Air Force, both active and reserve components.

In 2024, Camp Ripley will focus on sustaining and strengthening community partners. Camp Ripley

command participated in over 120 community engagements in 2023 and will increase engagement, cooperation, and transparency with our state and community leaders.



“Camp Ripley is an ideal site to train year-round, and we welcome our partners both military and civilian, such as our NATO allies from the Canadian Armed Forces,” Col. Fink Garrison Commander, Camp Ripley Training Site.



TRAIN HERE



Camp Ripley: A leading training center for DoD personnel, international military partners, and first responders worldwide

With over 400,000 person-days of training planned for 2023, Camp Ripley is a world class training center for military and civilian personnel of all military branches, international military partners, and first responders worldwide. The team at Camp Ripley is devoted to providing its customers with the ultimate training experience.

Facilities across the base continue to be modernized, keeping pace with the latest training needs while supporting many morale, welfare, and recreation opportunities.

45 LIVE-FIRE RANGES

- M1 Abram Tank ranges
- M2 Bradley fighting vehicle ranges.
- Artillery Firing
- Rifle ranges
- Pistol ranges
- Automatic weapon ranges
- Shotgun ranges
- Demolition ranges
- Metal cutting
- Cratering
- Bangalore torpedoes
- Convoy Protection Range provides platoon-level convoy live fire training

23 NON-LIVE-FIRE RANGES

- Land navigation courses
- Driving courses
- Nuclear Biological Chemical range
- Gap crossing (bridging) ranges
- Rappel tower
- Confidence course
- Field leadership reaction course
- Combined Arms Collective Training Facility (CACTF) with 23 buildings ranging in size from single room to multiple floors and underground training options

SIMULATIONS

- 5 Engagement Skills Trainers
 - Rifle, pistol, and automatic weapon systems in a controlled environment
 - 3 permanent Engagement Skills Trainers
 - 2 portable Engagement Skills Trainers
- 4 Close Combat Tactical Trainer
 - Realistic synthetic battlefield that allows service members to operate combat vehicles
- Virtual convoy operations center
- UH-60 Black Hawk simulator
- CH-47 Chinook simulator



MEDICAL SIMULATIONS

- Continuing education units able to provide up-to-date training to military medical technicians
- CPR recertification
- Combat lifesaver initial and refresher training
- Instructor ran simulation training lanes with realistic combat environment.

CAMP RIPLEY-OWNED RAIL LINE

- Approximately four miles of track with a capacity to unload/load 60 railcars at one time
- Four additional future rail spurs designed to double railcar capacity and allow for smoother movement

EDUCATION CENTER

- 48 individual rooms
- Nine classrooms capable of holding more than 425 students
- 200 person-stepped theater
- 400-person dining facility capable of feeding 1,600 people during a single mealtime period



AIR TRAVEL - MILLER ARMY AIRFIELD

- Supports parking for up to 7 C-130's
- All weather runways
 - 1 - 6,100' x 100' asphalt runway
 - 1 - 3,500' x 80' gravel assault runway
 - 1 - 1000' x 50' UAS runway
- Heated bays for maintenance and storage
- 1000' by 50; tactical strip located in training area
- Rotary wing pads
 - 21 in cantonment
 - 17 in training area

MORALE WELFARE & RECREATION

- Sports
- Backpacking
- Fishing
- Cross-country skiing
- Kayaking
- Indoor fitness centers
- Volleyball courts
- Basketball courts
- Video games
- Viking Club
- Museum & Library



LODGING

- 385 total maid service rooms
- 174 standard with shared bath rooms
- 32 VIP rooms with private baths
- 88 suites with private bath
 - 2, 4, or 6 bedroom models
 - Private deck with grill
 - Private bathrooms
- 4,057 year-round housing capacity
 - 3,256 beds
 - Each T-building has 8 bays, orderly rooms, supply and kitchen facilities, 140-184 total beds
 - 1 Super T-Building
 - 200 beds
 - 15 officer quarters
 - 6 Longhouses
 - 600 total beds
 - 201 officer quarters
- 3,789 seasonal housing capacity
 - 3,094 capacity in historic buildings
- 695 capacity in seasonal long houses



133RD AIRLIFT WING

The 133rd Airlift Wing is a Minnesota National Guard flying wing headquartered at the Minneapolis -Saint Paul International Airport. Utilizing the C-130H3 Hercules aircraft, the wing provides the U.S. Air Force with tactical airlift capabilities to transport troops, cargo, and medical patients across the globe in addition to providing the citizens of Minnesota with domestic operations and disaster response support.



MINNESOTA FACT: *Boasting more than 5.6 million square feet of leaseable space, the Mall of America in Bloomington is large enough to hold 32 Boeing 747 airplanes and is the largest in the nation.*

HEADQUARTERS

Saint Paul, Minnesota

COMMANDER

Col. Jesse Carlson

SENIOR ENLISTED LEADER

Command Chief Master Sgt. Richard Schumacher

STRENGTH

1,168 Airmen

2023 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Minnesota’s Saint Paul-based 133rd Airlift Wing has a long-deserved reputation as a unit ready to answer the state and nation’s call. In 2023, the 133rd strengthened its reputation as a premier National Guard airlift wing. This year alone, they deployed 507 Airmen to 26 locations worldwide for 28,042 deployment days.

The year started with excitement in January as Air Force Maj. Katie Lunning became the first Air National Guard Flight Nurse in history to receive the Distinguished Flying Cross. Air Force Lt. Gen. Michael Loh, director of the Air National Guard, presented Lunning with the award for her extraordinary actions during the evacuation of Kabul, Afghanistan, on Aug. 26, 2021. Later in the year, Lunning was named the Military Times’ 2023 Airman of the Year.

In March, Air Force Col. Jesse Carlson took command of the 133rd Airlift Wing from Col. James Cleet. In September, Chief Master Sgt. Richard Schumacher assumed responsibility for the 133rd Airlift Wing from Chief Master Sgt. Mark Legvold.

The biggest news of the year came in September when it was officially announced the 133rd Airlift Wing will receive eight new C-130J Super Hercules aircraft to improve mission efficiency further, utilize

new technologies, and increase their ability to deliver logistics anytime, anywhere for the state and nation.

The 133rd continued participating in the Norwegian Reciprocal Troop Exchange and Operation Snowbird in Yuma, Arizona. Meanwhile, Airmen from the 210th Engineering Installation Squadron, 133rd Medical Group, and 133rd Civil Engineering Squadron utilized training deployments in North Dakota, Idaho, and Oklahoma.

The 133rd Airlift Wing also participated in German Air Defender 23, the largest air exercise in NATO’s history.

In December, the wing welcomed back over 100 Airmen and four C-130 Hercules aircraft that deployed as an aviation package to the U.S. Africa Command area of responsibility at the end of August, executing the wing’s primary federal mission.

2024 OBJECTIVES

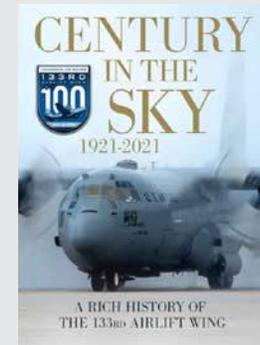
A major focus for 2024 will be developing a transition plan for the new C-130J Super Hercules aircraft. Training, infrastructure, personnel, and equipment must all be addressed to ensure a successful, timely conversion.

In the summer, the 133rd Airlift Wing will participate in a unit-wide large-scale readiness exercise evaluating

the readiness of multi-capable Airmen preparedness to face the nation’s adversaries. The training will span seven days and five locations, with over 1,000 Airmen participating with integrated support and cooperation from Minnesota National Guard units across the state.

CENTURY IN THE SKY

Also, in 2023, current members and veterans of the 133rd helped to produce “Century in the Sky: A Rich History of the 133rd Airlift Wing.”





148TH FIGHTER WING

The Duluth-based 148th Fighter Wing is an F-16CM 'Block 50' Fighting Falcon aircraft equipped National Guard flying wing comprised of more than 1,000 Airmen. The 148th provides mission-ready Airmen and equipment to meet state and federal missions while promoting critical partnerships. The 148th Fighter Wing flies the Air Force fleet's newest and most capable F-16 model. The 148th is one of only two National Guard wings trained to provide suppression of enemy air defense support and suppression of enemy surface-based air defenses. The 148th is a North American Aerospace Defense Command, or NORAD, aerospace control alert-trained flying wing capable of defending the air sovereignty of North America.

2023 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Minnesota National Guard's Duluth-based 148th Fighter Wing met its recruiting and retention goal of reaching 100% end-strength. This was thanks to a wing-wide effort, which included two large career fairs, an increased emphasis on the youth tour program, referrals from unit members, and public visibility via flyovers at 28 patriotic events, air shows, and professional sporting events.

148th Fighter Wing personnel worked with experts from Air Combat Command, Air Force Materiel Command, National Guard Bureau, Air Force Life Cycle Management center, and Air Force Reserve Test center to exercise end-to-end employment of the recently fielded AN/ASQ-236 Dragon's Eye radar pod. The team also helped plan how the entire National Guard would operationalize the new pod. The 148th was the first to complete all required software and hardware modifications and was the first F-16 unit in the entire fleet to fly with the pod.

148th Fighter Wing pilots and F-16s shot down an unidentified object over Lake Huron on Feb. 12, 2023, while conducting a North American Aerospace Defense Command, or NORAD, aerospace control alert.

The 148th recertified its Occupational Health and Safety Administration, or OSHA, Voluntary

Protection Program 'Star' status. The 148th was the first unit in the Air Force to receive this recognition of achievements for employers and employees in preventing and controlling occupational safety and health hazards.

In June, the 148th participated in the German-led Air Defender 2023 defense exercise alongside 10,000 service members from 24 countries. Among the 220 aircraft involved were 23 different types, including F-16s from the 148th Fighter Wing. This event was NATO's largest air power exercise, leveraging and strengthening vital partnerships to deter aggression worldwide.

In August, the 148th participated in the Northern Lightning 2023 exercise at Volk Field in Wisconsin. Northern Lightning, a joint training exercise integrating 4th and 5th generation aircraft, featured 60 aircraft and 1,000 personnel from the National Guard, Reserve, and Active components.

In September, the 148th Fighter Wing celebrated 75 years of supporting our state and nation. In honor of the occasion, the 148th Fighter Wing painted a heritage jet showcasing the prominent elements in both the 148th Fighter Wing and National Guard emblems. The jet features a winged arrowhead, the Ursa Minor constellation, and a phoenix on top of the jet. Under the wing is a minuteman and two fighter jet silhouettes. A heritage jet is an authorized,

designated aircraft with non-standard paint and markings representing a unit's history and enhancing unit morale.

2024 OBJECTIVES

In 2024, the 148th Fighter Wing will focus on recruiting and retaining Airmen, modernizing facilities and aircraft, military operating airspace, and building crucial community partnerships. The 148th will also continue to build a team reflective of the community. The unit will continue to be ready to succeed against current and future threats.





148TH FIGHTER WING 75TH ANNIVERSARY

Today's 148th Fighter Wing traces its roots to the 393rd Fighter Squadron, initially flying the formidable P-38J Lightning during World War II. The 393rd flew its last war mission in 1945 and was deactivated.

The unit was reactivated on September 17, 1948, as the Minnesota National Guard's 179th Fighter Squadron in Duluth and has grown from the original 50 members into the 148th Fighter Wing that we know today. The unit has upgraded aircraft many times throughout its history, from the F-51D Mustang (above) to the most modern Block 50 F-16CM Fighting Falcon (right)



MINNESOTA FACT: *In 1938, a group of Minnesota's Mayo Clinic doctors developed the Boothby, Lovelace, and Bulbulian Mask, which helps prevent pilots from blacking out at heights above 10,000 feet. The same research lab goes on to introduce the G-suit, which enables WWII fighter pilots to push the bounds of gravity.*



“During their drill weekend, June 25, 2023, the 148th Fighter Wing unveiled their 75th Anniversary Heritage F-16 Fighting Falcon.

“In honor of this milestone, the heritage jet was designed and painted to reflect our unique history,” said 148th Fighter Wing Commander, Air Force Col. Nate Aysta. The 148th Fighter Wing celebrated 75 years of service on September 17, 2023.

A heritage jet is an authorized, designated aircraft with non-standard markings that represent the history of a unit and enhance unit pride. The jet, designed by Airmen from the 148th, coordinates with the Wing’s official emblem, using blue, yellow, white, and red, and features the winged arrowhead, the Ursa Minor constellation, and Phoenix on top of the jet. Other features include 75 years on the tail, the years 1948 and 2023 on the horizontal stabilizers, and two fighter jets and a Minuteman located on the lower side of the wings.”



MEDICAL DETACHMENT

The Minnesota Medical Detachment oversees the ‘health of the force’ for Minnesota National Guard Soldiers. They provide case management, behavioral health, licensed drug and alcohol support, and conduct Soldier Readiness Processing for the state. The Medical Detachment and Office of the State Surgeon merged to become a major support command on October 1, 2023.

MINNESOTA FACT: *The Mayo Clinic is an American nonprofit academic medical center based in Rochester, Minnesota. The facility employs more than 60,000 people including scientists, physicians, administrators, and allied health staff. Surgery at Mayo Clinic began with the frontier practice of Dr. William Worrall Mayo, who moved to Rochester in 1863. The first open-heart surgery and bone marrow transplant took place here.*

2023 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Minnesota Medical Detachment became a separate unit on October 1, 2023. The team conducted readiness processing for over 1,000 mobilizing Soldiers during training year 2023. During Friday Clinic Operations and MED-DET drill weekends they conducted 1,000 Periodic Health Assessments, 60 Chapter 2 Physicals, 600 Dental Exams, 600 HIV draws, 800 hearing exams, and 250 immunizations, directly resulting in the Minnesota National Guard being one of the top five in the nation for medical readiness compliance.

The detachment's Case Management Team ensured continuity by processing 240 line-of-duty investigations, 76 integrated disability evaluation cases, and 46 incapacitation pay packets. The Behavioral Health Team remained engaged in supporting 4,152 Soldiers.

In February, the unit hosted the first in-person Joint Military Medical Summit since the COVID-19 pandemic. Army Maj. Gen. Jill Farris and Army Col. Sandra Fondy from the National Guard Bureau's Surgeon's Office attended. The summit brought National Guard medical personnel, both Soldiers and Airmen, together for leader development topics, including joint medical operations, critical care air support, traumatic brain injuries, the pregnancy post-

partum parental policy, the Afghanistan evacuation and humanitarian missions, and Holistic Health and Fitness.

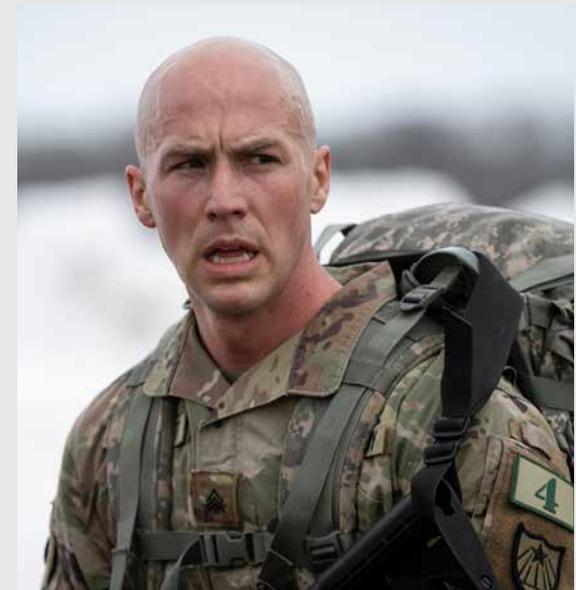
In April, the unit's Army Sgt. Matthew Eberhardt took first runner-up in the Minnesota Best Warrior Competition, earning him a slot to compete in the Croatian Best Warrior Competition, where he placed first for the American competitors in a challenging 26-mile foot march event.

The team coordinated two Hearing Conservation Technician courses in July and September, certifying 28 medics on conducting audiograms at armories. This saved the organization over \$40,000 compared to sending medics to in-person classes.

2024 OBJECTIVES

MED-DET looks forward to another successful year supporting state medical readiness events and goals. The team plans to facilitate limited dental treatment starting in 2024. This will allow organic dental providers and support staff the opportunity to treat Soldiers while saving the organization over \$100,000. The unit will continue working with Minnesota's State Partnership Programs partner nations, Croatia and Norway, with their first projected medical training event planned in the summer of 2024.

The Case Management, Behavioral Health, and Licensed Drug and Alcohol Counselor teams will continue collaborating, developing and updating their standard operating procedures, creating a shared understanding of how the team can best serve the Minnesota National Guard.



“The Minnesota Medical Detachment continues to focus on the medical operations, medical logistics, and physical readiness of the state,” said Army Col. Conrad Ross. “We stand always ready to heal the warrior.”



MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AFFAIRS

The Department of Military Affairs is the state agency that oversees and supports the military operations of the National Guard when it is operating under state control by the authority of Title 32, United States Code (USC). The department is comprised of and includes the military forces of the state, the Office of the Adjutant General, all military reservations, military installations, armories, air bases, facilities owned or controlled by the state for military purposes, and civilians employed by the state for the administration of the military department.



MINNESOTA FACT: According to state statute, chapter 1, section 1.1496, the blueberry muffin was adopted as the official muffin of the state of Minnesota in 1988. A recipe by Shari Baker of Grand Marais' Gunflint Pines Resort and Campground can be found on the Minnesota Secretary of State's official website.

STRATEGIES

The Minnesota Department of Military Affairs integrates state resources to support the Adjutant General's priorities of People, Modernization, and Partnerships. We accomplish this by actively engaging with the predominantly federally focused staff sections of the Minnesota National Guard to collaboratively assist and inform regarding opportunities and constraints that the state agency perspective lends to mission support. When units of the National Guard are called into state service, the agency provides direct logistical and contracting support to ensure the units have the resources necessary to provide the desired support to local authorities as directed by the governor. Additionally, the department is the primary conduit for communication with other State of Minnesota executive branch agencies and the Minnesota Legislature.

FOUR MAJOR PROGRAMS

- The Incentives Program supports enlistment and retention incentives and tuition reimbursement programs, which provide incentives for membership in the National Guard.
- The Maintenance of Military Training Facilities Program maintains the state's facilities used to train and house the Minnesota National Guard and protect the state's investment in facilities.

- General Support provides the general administrative, financial, accounting, budgeting, project management, strategic planning, and human resource support necessary for the department's operation.
- Emergency Services funds emergency response activities at the governor's order when the National Guard is activated in response to state emergencies.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In addition to gaining increases in the Incentives Program, the agency worked with the legislature to create three new initiatives: the Cyber Coordination Cell, the Holistic Health and Fitness team, and an emergency communications replacement program.

The Cyber Coordination Cell program adds three uniformed cyber professionals who will interact and coordinate with federal, state, and local officials. The team will work to ensure that the Minnesota National Guard can assist in the cyber realm when and where appropriate.

The Holistic Health and Fitness program adds five employees to provide services currently available to active-duty service members but unavailable to the reserve component. The team will provide programs designed to enhance readiness through education across five domains: mental, sleep, nutritional,

physical, and spiritual health. The program focuses on preventing injuries and fitness failures and preparing Guard members to support state and federal missions.

The emergency communications replacement program allows the department to update communications systems primarily for our state mission. These updates improve our ability to communicate in state missions and Emergency Management Assistance Compacts.

The legislature provided more than \$26 million in bonding requests to initiate or complete renovations on the Rosemount, Moorhead, Marshall, and Fergus Falls armories. The legislature provided nearly \$20 million of additional funding to its previously appropriated \$13 million to construct the new Minnesota Military & Veterans Museum at Camp Ripley. The museum honors the service and stories of Minnesota service members and is expected to open in 2025.

Additionally, \$17.6 million was appropriated to design and construct an Army Combat Fitness Testing, known as ACFT, facility at Arden Hills. The construction of this facility will allow Soldiers to train and properly test year-round. It will also serve as the base location for the Holistic Health and Fitness program.



2024 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES FOR THE 2025 NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

OVERVIEW

Minnesota's elected officials are strong supporters and advocates in advancing our Minnesota National Guard organizational priorities.

Gov. Tim Walz continues to serve as a Co-Chairperson of the Council of Governors and leads the Military Matters Committee.

Minnesota's members of the United States Congress represent a bi-partisan delegation actively engaged in efforts to improve military service, our missions, and our partnerships. In 2023, their unwavering support ensured that the 133d Airlift Wing would receive new C-130J Super Hercules aircraft.

Several representatives serve as members of legislative caucuses that align with the Minnesota National Guard and military service. These include the:

- National Guard Caucus
- Army Caucus
- STARBASE Caucus
- Joint Strike Fighter Caucus
- Friends of Norway Caucus
- USO Caucus

The 2024 National Defense Authorization Act, known as the NDAA, includes several sections that directly support the Minnesota National Guard's campaign plan and established legislative priorities.

IMMEDIATE PRIORITIES

The Minnesota National Guard has three immediate legislative priorities for 2025:

The most critical priority is to improve recruiting future Minnesota National Guard members. There is currently a barrier to entry for many applicants if they must return to their civilian doctor to re-assess a previous ailment. The Department of Defense should cover applicant expenses for civilian provider co-pays and associated travel, and we recommend mitigating this barrier through congressional legislation.

Recapitalizing the National Guard's fighter aircraft units is an immediate priority that directly serves our National Defense Strategy through defending the homeland. The average age of our fighter aircraft fleet is nearly 30 years old, and we no longer have a competitive advantage over peer adversaries. Across the country, 25 National Guard fighter squadrons must be recapitalized with next-generation aircraft over the next 10 years.

Minnesota has a robust State Partnership Program with the countries of Croatia and Norway. In these partnerships, we conduct military-to-military engagements to promote defense security goals, relationships, and capabilities. Although this program is annually funded by the Department of Defense, the program is not funded for subsequent years, which leads to tight timelines to plan and execute partner engagements.

ENDURING PRIORITIES

The Minnesota Guard has three enduring priorities:

First, we seek continued C-130H3 Hercules aircraft modernization until the C-130J Super Hercules is fielded across the National Guard. Although the 133rd Airlift Wing was selected to receive these new aircraft, they may not arrive until fiscal year 2028. Until then, the unit's current legacy C-130H Hercules aircraft will require continued modernization.

Second, sustaining the nationwide total inventory of 271 C-130 Hercules aircraft is essential. This priority ensures that the 133rd Airlift Wing maintains its ability to support flying missions both within the state and worldwide.

Third, military healthcare reform has been an enduring priority across the reserve component. The primary goal is to provide zero-cost TRICARE healthcare coverage to all service members, regardless of their service status. This would help ensure medical readiness, keeping the National Guard "Always Ready."

ECONOMIC IMPACT

MINNESOTA NATIONAL GUARD 2023 ANNUAL REPORT / 2024 OBJECTIVES

	ASSIGNED PERSONNEL	FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT	STATE LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT	STATE TUITION REIMBURSEMENT (PEOPLE)	STATE TUITION REIMBURSEMENT DOLLARS	STATE FUNDING	FEDERAL FUNDING	TOTAL	
Albert Lea	93	1	27A	10	\$55,753	\$185,127	\$3,047,467	\$3,232,595	
Anoka	108	7	08B	17	\$63,304	\$311,179	\$3,412,895	\$3,724,073	Alexandria
Arden Hills	126	6	35A	11	\$39,933	\$62,647	\$3,401,394	\$3,464,041	Appleton
Bemidji	65	7	20A	15	\$49,284	\$143,869	\$2,095,678	\$2,239,547	Austin
Brainerd	1147	4	42A	85	\$337,148	\$1,478,468	\$45,171,930	\$46,650,398	Bloomington
Cambridge	75	1	27B	15	\$64,154	\$162,147	\$2,189,495	\$2,351,642	Brooklyn Park
Cloquet	103	7	05A	3	\$9,813	\$104,492	\$2,805,791	\$2,910,283	Chisom
Crookston	337	3	50B	176	\$691,980	\$1,068,463	\$12,542,133	\$13,610,596	Cottage Grove
Duluth	191	8	10A	69	\$289,477	\$755,883	\$6,688,837	\$7,444,720	Detroit
Fairmont	100	3	36B	19	\$59,916	\$91,725	\$3,943,899	\$4,035,625	Duluth (Air Base)
Fergus Falls	250	8	32A	26	\$99,171	\$363,220	\$23,394,247	\$23,757,466	Faribault
Hastings	132	8	06A	11	\$31,542	\$252,246	\$3,857,726	\$4,109,971	Grand Rapids
Hutchinson	96	8	11A	14	\$52,148	\$275,275	\$2,971,531	\$3,246,806	Hibbing
Jackson	197	2	54A	62	\$214,633	\$488,908	\$7,883,586	\$8,372,495	Inver Grove Hts.
Little Falls (CRTG)	107	7	01B	16	\$52,335	\$226,217	\$3,532,355	\$3,758,572	Litchfield
Madison	63	7	04B	7	\$26,674	\$135,939	\$2,206,077	\$2,342,015	Luverne
Marshall	130	8	03B	22	\$85,513	\$248,814	\$4,999,563	\$5,248,377	Mankato
MSP (Air Base)	1027	8	03B	25	\$141,796	\$2,644,990	\$126,680,621	\$129,325,610	Minneapolis
Monticello	93	1	23A	28	\$112,398	\$314,805	\$2,632,183	\$2,946,988	Montevideo
Morris	189	1	24B	11	\$38,538	\$329,737	\$5,767,816	\$6,097,552	Moorhead
Olivia	74	7	08A	9	\$21,065	\$136,855	\$2,022,890	\$2,159,745	New Ulm
Owatonna	54	8	05B	3	\$11,141	\$130,624	\$1,732,775	\$1,863,399	Ortonville
Pipestone	122	2	21A	62	\$255,065	\$394,952	\$3,705,566	\$4,100,518	Pine City
Redwood Falls	85	8	06A	17	\$82,299	\$226,969	\$2,785,653	\$3,012,622	Red Wing
Rosemount	138	7	18B	24	\$112,378	\$338,246	\$3,857,609	\$4,195,855	Rochester
Saint Cloud	136	2	52B	23	\$155,198	\$299,568	\$4,215,506	\$4,515,074	Sauk Centre
Saint James	88	1	23A	13	\$40,511	\$242,393	\$3,218,557	\$3,460,950	Saint Peter
St Paul & E. StP	125	7	18A	22	\$113,211	\$243,492	\$3,541,981	\$3,785,473	Thief River Falls
Stillwater	1598	8	09B	206	\$879,156	\$9,469,655	\$116,568,651	\$126,038,306	West St Paul
Wadena	45	1	22A	10	\$42,324	\$102,373	\$1,440,627	\$1,543,000	Winona
Willmar	75	7	16A	18	\$74,709	\$192,325	\$2,432,920	\$2,625,244	
	216	1	19B	62	\$271,283	\$472,387	\$6,897,681	\$7,370,069	
	85	7	16A	10	\$31,228	\$159,219	\$2,663,291	\$2,822,510	
	204	5	60A	10	\$31,115	\$177,684	\$25,845,763	\$26,023,447	
	1214	5	63B	35	\$171,620	\$865,090	\$92,625,427	\$93,490,516	
	96	7	17A	17	\$51,113	\$336,105	\$3,891,102	\$4,227,208	
	132	6	29B	59	\$232,431	\$285,258	\$19,009,895	\$19,295,153	
	134	7	04A	14	\$27,240	\$3,762,178	\$5,365,674	\$9,127,853	
	47	7	12A	37	\$157,315	\$1,342,567	\$1,250,361	\$2,592,928	
	103	1	16B	23	\$107,641	\$317,695	\$25,370,358	\$25,688,054	
	34	7	17A	3	\$17,927	\$91,884	\$1,367,048	\$1,458,932	
	70	7	12A	17	\$74,223	\$246,826	\$2,305,817	\$2,552,643	
	22	1	24A	3	\$10,282	\$124,202	\$901,471	\$1,025,674	
	96	8	11B	28	\$129,294	\$274,791	\$2,930,216	\$3,205,007	
	49	7	22A	10	\$44,674	\$159,221	\$1,556,643	\$1,715,864	
	34	2	21A	14	\$65,038	\$150,005	\$1,180,186	\$1,330,191	
	94	7	16B	6	\$34,020	\$131,610	\$2,646,946	\$2,778,556	
	144	1	26A	26	\$85,031	\$201,033	\$4,698,843	\$4,899,876	
	378	2	57B	128	\$466,205	\$924,712	\$13,243,465	\$14,168,177	
	362	7	15B	6	\$15,371	\$218,765	\$20,966,625	\$21,185,390	
	61	1	23B	216	\$846,868	\$1,385,901	\$1,803,760	\$3,189,661	
	795	4	65B	15	\$51,552	\$6,718,501	\$52,457,348	\$59,175,849	
	106	1	19A	12	\$43,558	\$125,380	\$3,145,135	\$3,270,516	
	54	6	14B	34	\$88,421	\$421,905	\$2,117,763	\$2,539,669	
	456	6	39B	67	\$306,482	\$995,858	\$13,485,747	\$14,481,605	
	50	7	01A	10	\$25,694	\$104,431	\$1,385,054	\$1,489,485	
	57	8	09A	6	\$20,820	\$146,936	\$2,000,877	\$2,147,813	
	158	2	52A	19	\$81,231	\$366,148	\$4,545,333	\$4,911,481	
	75	7	17B	33	\$120,901	\$231,793	\$2,422,676	\$2,654,469	
	132	1	28A	27	\$125,343	\$270,622	\$4,232,039	\$4,502,661	

*Financial figures are based on the state fiscal year ending June 30 and federal fiscal year ending Sept. 30. 2023 federal tuition data not included due to system outage. Some by-location data is estimated based on the number of assigned personnel.

2023 IMPACT TOTALS

FEDERAL FUNDING 96%

STATE FUNDING 4%

ASSIGNED MEMBERS 12,576 *

* Soldiers: 10,386 | Airmen: 2,190

FEDERAL FUNDING \$736,260,506

STATE FUNDING \$30,887,809

IMPACT PER MEMBER \$61,001

TOTAL IMPACT
\$767,148,315

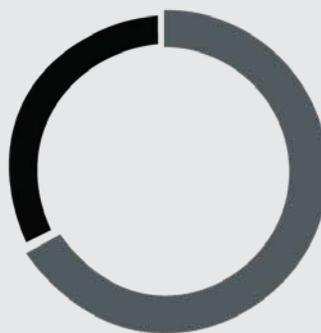
STATE TUITION REIMBURSEMENT DEMOGRAPHICS

RANK



■ Junior Enlisted - 64% ■ Officer - 7%
■ Mid-grade NCO - 25% ■ Sr. Grade NCO - 4%

GENDER



■ Males - 67%
■ Females - 33%

RACE



■ Asian - 8% ■ Black, Other - 10%
■ White, Hispanic - 5% ■ White, Other - 75%
■ Other/unspecified - 3%

State Funding: Services and purchases that are paid for using funds appropriated by the Minnesota's Legislature to the Department of Military Affairs in the State General Fund, including the state share of maintenance costs for facilities jointly supported by the federal and state governments.

Federal Impact: Direct federal funding of operations and maintenance, Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, federal technician salaries, active guard and reserve salaries, and pay to service members for military training. While individual lines of this chart are broken out by location, the total is inclusive of several other federal funding subcategories, such as federal education benefits used by members and federal dollars that are not location specific.





MINNESOTA NATIONAL GUARD

2023 ANNUAL REPORT TEAM

*Army Staff Sgt. Mahsima Alkamooneh
Bob Brown*

*Cristina Oxta
Tony Housey
Amy Lovgren
Audra Flanagan*

*Army Staff Sgt. Sydney Mariette
Sgt. 1st Class Serrina Martinez*

*Army Sgt. Jordan Newbanks
Air Force Master Sgt. Megan Shaner
Army 1st Sgt. Beth Dedic
Army 2nd Lt. Linsey Williams*

*Air Force Master Sgt. Paul Santikko
Sgt. 1st Class Ben Houtkooper*

*Army Capt. Will Hermanson
Army Capt. Kristin Ohrt
Army Maj. Jackie Stenger*



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