

ILLINOIS NATIONAL GUARD

PRAIRIE SENTINEL

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ILLINOIS NATIONAL GUARD PRAIRIE SENTINEL

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Did You Know?

In its more than 300 year history, many notable men and women have served in the Illinois National Guard including:

Frederic McLaughlin, the Harvard educated son of WF McLaughlin Coffee Company founder. McLaughlin was the captain of the 1915 American Polo Team at the Panama-

Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco and commanded the 333rd Machine Gun Battalion in World War I.

He purchased the Portland Rosebuds of the Western Hockey League and moved them to Chicago and was inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame in 1963.

Take it From the Top:

Senior Leaders' Corner

Thank you for efforts in supporting the Illinois National Guard mission during Fiscal Year 2024



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

To the Soldiers, Airmen, Families, and Civilian Employees of the Illinois National Guard and Illinois Department of Military Affairs:

Thank you for your service!

We often hear this when we are with the public in uniform, especially around Veterans Day and other patriotic holidays, but how often do we hear it from each other?

Service members are ingrained with a mentality of constant improvement. From the day we enter basic training we are told to keep improving our foxholes and to pay attention to details. We learn about after-action reports and inspections, both focused on making us better.

This is vital to "Be All You Can Be" and "Aim High, Fly, Fight, and Win." We are in a serious business. We *must* win – the fate of the free world depends upon us.

However, too often in this constant grind to improve, we forget to show our Soldiers, Airmen, Families, civilian employees, and civilian employers

that we appreciate them. Too often we just move on to the next problem to solve, the next mission to accomplish, and the next project to finish.

When was the last time you wrote an award recommendation or let a member of your team know that you value them? I'm not talking about empty praise. If you truly appreciate someone's effort, let them know. If you don't truly appreciate someone's effort, I'd ask you to take a serious look at yourself.

Let me start. On November 1st, we published the Illinois Department of Military Affairs 2024 Annual Report. The report gives both the state and federal financials for Fiscal Year 2024 and it lists the Illinois National Guard's major accomplishments this past fiscal year.

You can read the report yourself, but to summarize, the Illinois National

Guard was at the top or near the top in multiple categories. We accomplished state and federal missions and did so with excellence.

This type of performance is expected. We are a winning team. Winners constantly set the bar higher. And it took dedication, commitment, innovation, and hard work to get us to the top. It will take all of that to keep improving.

I am tremendously grateful for everything you did this past year to make our outstanding organization better and for your continued efforts going forward.

Thank you for your outstanding leadership and for upholding your oath to "support and defend the Constitution of the United States of America."

Always Ready, Always There!



Williams Promoted to Brigadier General

By Barbara Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

Twenty-four years after commissioning as a second lieutenant through the Illinois Army National Guard's Officer Candidate School, Lenny Williams, Assistant Adjutant General-Army and Commander of the Illinois Army National Guard, was promoted to brigadier general in a ceremony at the Illinois Military Academy, Camp Lincoln, Springfield, Oct. 11.

"Today is a special day for Colonel Williams, his family, and for this organization," said Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, The Adjutant General of Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National Guard. "I know this organization is going to be better with you at the helm of the Army. You earned this promotion."

Williams enlisted in the ILARNG in 1991 as an infantry Soldier, rising to the rank of staff sergeant before commissioning as a second lieutenant in Field Artillery in 2000.

Williams was appointed Assistant Adjutant General-Army, Illinois Army National Guard, on Aug. 30. His previous assignment was as the Chief of Staff, Illinois Army National Guard from May 2020 to March 2024 where he served as the state's senior federal Army National Guard management official, and the principle executive assistant and advisor to the Adjutant General. In his current role, he serves as the advisor to the Adjutant General in all matters pertaining to supervision and management of the Illinois Department of Military Affairs and the Illinois Army National Guard, which consists of over 1,400 full-time Soldiers and employees and over 10,000 citizen-Soldiers.

Boyd thanked Williams' family, wife, Liane and daughter, Morgan, for their support throughout his career.

"Thank you for the support you've provided him over the years," Boyd said. "Without the support of the family he doesn't get to this level."

Boyd described when he met Williams.

"I met Lenny in 2015. I was a brand new brigade commander and Major General Zerbonia told me he



Newly-promoted Brig. Gen. Lenny Williams, Assistant Adjutant General - Army and Commander of the Illinois Army National Guard, and wife, Liane, unfurl Williams' general officer flag during a promotion ceremony Oct. 11.

was sending me an officer-in-charge, someone really sharp," Boyd said. "I was a part time Soldier with a full time job, so as a brigade commander, you really relied on your officer in charge."

"I'm a logistician and I know all the logisticians, so I asked who is he? Major General Zerbonia said he's an artilleryman. I said sir, you're sending someone normally shooting cannons to a logistics brigade," Boyd said. "He said trust me Rod, he's going to be good. Lenny came in, put together an awesome staff, many who are senior leaders today. That's the type of power he brings to a position."

Boyd described Williams as a Soldier who lives selfless service.

"A few years ago, Lenny was getting ready to retire. He believed in doing a job and getting out of the way for the next person," Boyd said. "I asked him to stay one more year. He still came in and worked as he had previously done. That is the definition of selfless service. Because he did that, this organization is in a better place today."

Williams said he is proud to keep serving in the Illinois Army National Guard.

"34 years ago I joined the ILARNG for money for college," he said. "My

service has given me every other opportunity after that though. I owe this organization more than it could ever owe me. I am proud to keep serving."

Williams said each Soldier is responsible for credibility in their military service.

"We must protect the Illinois National Guard's reputation and brand at all costs," he said. "Our citizens, veterans, state, and nation place their confidence, faith and trust in us and we have to protect it at all costs."

The newly-promoted brigadier general encouraged Soldiers to ask what will be their legacy? What will Soldiers remember them for? Did they make a difference?

"If you're in uniform, please ask yourself that. I hope the answer is yes," he said. "Did we make a difference as a group? To those in uniform – we're here for one thing and that is to fight and win our nation's wars and we're here to defend our nation and its citizens. In this profession, winning matters. It's all that matters. If we do not win, it's a nightmare."

Williams said it doesn't matter what one does in the organization whether they are a Soldier or civilian employee.

"It doesn't matter what you do in this organization, whether you're an employee or Soldier," Williams said. "Your role in its own way is to help ensure we're prepared to do what I'm talking about. You are all part of a team and critical to its success."

Williams said a test of true leadership is to turn around to see if anyone is following.

"They'll do what you say because of your rank, but are they doing what you say because they want to do it?" Williams asked. "If they are doing what you ask because they want to, that's leadership."



Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, The Adjutant General of Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National Guard, administers the oath of office to newly-promoted Brig. Gen. Lenny Williams, Assistant Adjutant General – Army and Commander of the Illinois Army National Guard.



Liane Kelly, left, and Morgan Kelly, wife and daughter of newly-promoted Brig. Gen. Lenny Williams, Assistant Adjutant General – Army and Commander of the Illinois Army National Guard, pin brigadier general stars on his uniform.

HIGHLIGHTING DIVERSITY

Celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month

Spc. Sara Araiza

**A Company
2nd Battalion, 122nd Field
Artillery**

Araiza, a Guardsman since 2021, is the first in her family to join the military. "I love how some people in the U.S. love to learn about our community, heritage, culture and language. I also enjoy how we are able to show how proud we are of being Hispanic."



Col. Jorge Fonseca

Col. Jorge Fonseca, originally from Mexico, serves as the Chief of Staff in the Middle East/Africa Regional Center of the Defense Intelligence Agency. With over 33 years of service, Col. Fonseca is proud to be the highest-ranking Latino officer in the Illinois National Guard. Throughout his career, he's led critical missions across Europe, Iraq, and Afghanistan, and values his role as a leader and mentor.

"Hispanic Heritage Month is an opportunity to highlight our rich Latino



history, culture, and contributions of American citizens of Hispanic descent to the United States."

1st Sgt. Veronica Hernandez

**B Company,
Recruiting and Retention
Battalion**

Hernandez has served since 2002, inspired by her enlisted older brother. She loves seeing Soldiers she recruits achieve great things. Hernandez recently participated in a State Partnership Program mission in Poland. "Hispanic Heritage Month is a time to celebrate and honor our cultures, histories and contributions of the Hispanic and Latino communities. It's an opportunity to recognize and appreciate the rich traditions and achievements that we have made as a group."



Sgt. Omar Castro

**Company B
1-106th Assault Helicopter
Battalion**

Castro has served more than 10 years, including deployments to the Middle East in 2018-19 and 2023-24. His parents immigrated from Mexico in the 1970s. "I love that it's a brief moment out of the year where Hispanics get to highlight our importance to this country and our contributions to the success of the country through our military, politics, science, medicine, sports, education and arts. The USA would not be what it is today



without the contributions and success of the Hispanic community and culture that we provide, in my opinion."

2nd Lt. Eliana Martinez

**34th Infantry Div
Sustainment Bde**

Martinez, a military intelligence analyst, has served since 2021. The highlight, she says, are the endless opportunities. "This observance is about more than just highlighting someone's heritage, it's about recognizing how our backgrounds contribute to shaping who we are.

While being Latina is part of my identity, I believe it's my mindset, actions, and values that truly define who I am. My culture has certainly influenced my outlook, but it's the personal experiences, like watching my family persevere through hardship, that have helped me grow into the person I am today. Ultimately, it's our mindset that drives us, regardless of our race, and that's something I strive to embody every day."



Combat Veteran, Chicago Police Officer chosen as Illinois Army National Guard's Top NCO

Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Kelly, an experienced combat leader and Chicago Police Officer, has been selected as the 15th State Command Sergeant Major for the Illinois Army National Guard. He replaced Command Sgt. Maj. Phillip Barber who accepted a Senior Enlisted Leader assignment with First Army at Rock Island Arsenal.

"Command Sergeant Major Barber has done a stellar job since November 2022 and I'm confident he will excel at First Army. Command Sergeant Major Kelly has decades of experience in combat, humanitarian operations, and domestic response. I'm confident in his ability to lead our Soldiers in the Illinois Army National Guard," said Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, The Adjutant General of Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National Guard. "He has served in every leadership role within our organization and will be instrumental in placing our people first."

As the State Command Sergeant Major, Command Sgt. Maj. Kelly will serve as the primary advisor on all enlisted matters to the Assistant Adjutant General - Army and Commander of the Illinois Army National Guard Col. (promotable) Lenny Williams. He is currently the Command Sergeant Major of the 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team.

"I have known Command Sergeant Major Kelly for many years. He has excelled throughout his military career in all that he does. He is well equipped to mentor and lead the enlisted Soldiers of the Illinois Army National Guard and to advise our officers of every rank," Williams said.

"Our Soldiers and their families are the heart of our organization. I am deeply honored and excited to take on this responsibility and will strive to ensure Soldiers receive tough and realistic training," Command Sgt. Maj. Kelly said. "At the same time, we must continue to recruit the best qualified individuals into the Illinois Army National Guard while retaining the exceptional talent already serving in our ranks. I am extremely proud of all that our Soldiers do on a daily basis and will continue to represent them to the best of my ability."

Command Sgt. Maj. Kelly has been in the Army for 35 years and has served the community as a Chicago Police Officer for the past 24 years. His latest police assignment was in the Mounted Patrol Unit used in crowd control and directed missions. He previously served as part of the 7th District Tactical Team in the Englewood neighborhood of Chicago and as a patrolman.

Command Sgt. Maj. Kelly enlisted in the Army Reserves in February 1989 and completed basic training, Airborne School and Parachute Rigger School. Shortly after completing his initial training, he enlisted into active duty and was assigned to the 5th QM Detachment (Aerial Delivery) in Kaiserslautern, Germany. Following Desert Storm, he deployed twice to Operations Provide Comfort I and Provide Comfort III, conducting one of the largest humanitarian air drops in history along with sling load operations in Turkey and Northern Iraq to assist Kurdish refugees fleeing Iraqi forces under Saddam Hussein.

After his tour of duty in Europe, Command Sgt. Maj. Kelly was then assigned to 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) at Fort Lewis, Washington, where he served in Asia assisting forward deployed high altitude-low opening (HALO) insertion and scuba teams. Upon completion of active duty, he joined the Washington Army National Guard as a Bradley Dismount Infantry Team Leader with the 161st Infantry (Mechanized).

Command Sgt. Maj. Kelly then returned to Illinois and served in every leadership position from team leader to Command Sergeant Major with the 131st Infantry Battalion, the 178th Infantry Battalion and as the Chief Operations Sergeant Major of the 244th Digital Liaison Detachment.

He deployed in 2008 to 2009 as



**Command Sgt. Maj.
Michael Kelly**

the First Sergeant of C Co., 1st Battalion, 178th Infantry Regiment where the unit served at Combat Outpost Najil and Forward Operating Base Mehtar Lam in Afghanistan. Command Sgt. Maj. Kelly redeployed to Afghanistan in 2019 to 2020 where he was the Task Force Southeast Command Sergeant Major at AP Lightning covering seven provinces. He served in multiple

roles with 1st Armored Division Train, Advise and Assist Commands, the 1-178th Infantry Battalion Command Sergeant Major and as an advisor to the 203rd Afghan National Army Corps' Command Sergeant Major.

Command Sgt. Maj. Kelly graduated Magna Cum Laude from Excelsior College with a bachelor's degree in Liberal Arts. He also graduated from dozens of military courses including the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Course, the Jungle Warfare School, the Brigade Pre-Command Course, the Pathfinder Course, the Jumpmaster Course, Air Assault School, and Airborne School.

He is a member of the National Guard Association of Illinois, the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the Golden Key National Honor Society, which he earned while attending the University of Illinois at Chicago.

He also has multiple awards and decorations including two Bronze Star Medals and two Meritorious Service Medals.

Command Sgt. Maj. Kelly lives in Chicago with his spouse, Alaina. They will celebrate their 15th anniversary in December. Command Sgt. Maj. Kelly has two adult step-children, Racquel and Alec, and three children, 13-year-old Abigail, 12-year-old Liam, and 11-year-old Ava.

Illinois Army National Guard Soldier Laid to Rest Nearly 82 Years After His Death in POW Camp

By Barbara Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public

With the thanks of a grateful nation, Illinois Army National Guard Pfc. Harry Jerele was laid to rest with full military honors at the Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery Oct. 4.

Jerele's primary next of kin, his 89-year-old niece, Rosemarie Dillon of Batavia, said the day was a miracle. Dillon was about five years old when her uncle was activated for federal service.

"This is a miracle," said Dillon, Jerele's primary next of kin, about the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency's (DPAA) accounting for Jerele's remains. "It's been a long time coming. What a joyous occasion it was to lead our family as he was laid to rest in his home country."

Dillon said the family had been trying for about 10 years to positively identify his remains.

"We were like, did we really hear this right?" Dillon said, of the call the family received of the positive identification of Jerele's remains. "I'm just glad I'm still alive to witness this."

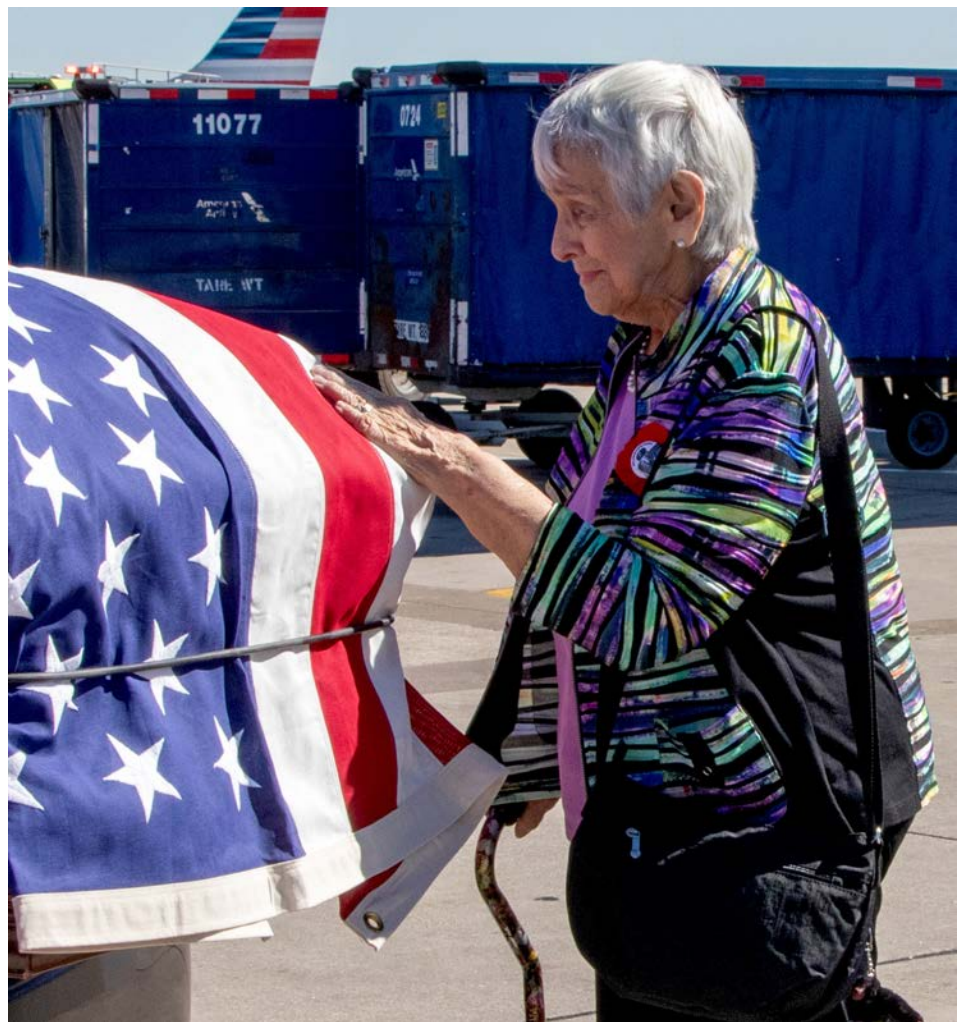
Jerele's remains arrived in Chicago Oct. 1, nearly 84 years after Company B, 192nd Tank Battalion, based in Maywood, was activated for federal service, Nov. 25, 1940.

The flag-draped coffin containing his remains arrived at Chicago O'Hare International Airport, aboard American Airlines Flight 2412.

A Military Funeral and Honors team conducted the dignified transfer of remains from the airline to a hearse from Russo's Hillside Chapels.

Jerele was serving in Company B, 192nd Tank Battalion, based in Maywood, when the unit was activated for federal service in November 1940. After training stateside, the unit arrived in the Philippines just days before Japanese forces bombed Pearl Harbor and just hours later, the Philippine Islands.

Intense fighting continued until the surrender of the Bataan peninsula on April 9, 1942, and of Corregidor Island on May 6, 1942. Thousands of U.S.



Rosemarie Dillon, of Batavia, the 89-year-old niece and primary next of kin of Illinois Army National Guard Pfc. Harry Jerele, touches his flag draped casket after it arrives at O'Hare International Airport, Chicago, Oct. 1.

and Filipino service members were captured and interned at POW camps. Jerele was among those reported captured when U.S. forces in Bataan surrendered to the Japanese.

They were subjected to the 65-mile Bataan Death March and then held at the Cabanatuan POW camp. More than 2,500 Prisoners of War perished in this camp during the war.

According to prison camp and other historical records, Jerele died Dec. 28, 1942, and was buried along with other deceased prisoners in the local Cabanatuan Camp cemetery in Common Grave 804.

Following the war, the remains

of those buried at the Cabanatuan cemetery were exhumed and relocated to a temporary U.S. military mausoleum near Manila. In 1947, the unidentified remains were buried at the Manila American Cemetery and Memorial as Unknowns.

The Defense Prisoner of War-Missing in Action Accounting Agency announced April 18 Jerele's remains had been accounted for, and on Oct. 1, Jerele's remains were repatriated to his family in a ceremony at O'Hare International Airport.

Dillon said she remembers her uncle as a very quiet man whom she saw on weekends.



A Military Funeral and Honors team conducts the dignified transfer of remains from United Airlines to a hearse from Russo's Hillside Chapels.

"He liked to sing and play guitar," she said. "He was an unassuming man, but he had great friends who joined up with him."

Dillon said the only thing which makes this homecoming bittersweet is her mother and grandmother, Jerele's sister and mother, are no longer alive to welcome him home.

"It's a great feeling to finally accomplish this identification," Dillon said. "I only wish my mother and grandmother were here to witness his homecoming."

Dillon says she can't say enough about DPAA's important work in identifying remains of missing service members.

"It is of utmost importance their work continues," she said. "Years ago,

DPAA had to rely on little things that were found with the remains, like dog tags, to help with the identification. Oftentimes, it left families with no real ending. Now that DNA is used, it's amazing. I'm so glad my family and I decided to give DNA samples. It definitely gives us closure."

Company B, 192nd Tank Battalion, included 104 Soldiers from Illinois. The unit experienced 43 casualties during World War II, including 28 who died from diseases, illnesses, and wounds. Seven were killed when aboard various Japanese POW ships, called "Hell ships" by U.S. troops, which sank. Eight were killed in action, and five were declared missing in action.

Headquarters Company, 192nd

Tank Battalion, included 31 Soldiers from the Illinois Army National Guard, of which 19 died due to diseases, illness, and wounds, one died aboard a Japanese ship, and one killed in action.

The men of Company B, 192nd Tank Battalion, many from Maywood, were mostly kids from the same high school. In 1940, a federal draft act had passed, and they knew that it was just a matter of time before they would be drafted into the Army. Having heard that the federal government was going to federalize National Guard units for a period of one year of military service, these men decided to join the National Guard to fulfill their military obligation.

Arriving in the Philippine Islands



Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, The Adjutant General of Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National Guard, presents Illinois Army National Guard Pfc. Harry Jerele's funeral flag to Rosemarie Dillon, the 89-year-old niece, and Jerele's primary next of kin at Jerele's internment at the Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery in Elwood Oct. 4. DPAA announced in April his remains had been identified. His remains were repatriated to his family at O'Hare International Airport Oct. 1.

at Manila on Thanksgiving Day, Company B had barely settled in at Clark Field when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor days later. A mere 10 hours after the enemy raid at Pearl Harbor, the Japanese followed with a surprise attack at Clark Field. The attack wiped out the American Army Air Corps, and the first member of the battalion, Pvt. Robert Brooks, of Kentucky, Company D, 192nd Tank Battalion, was killed during the attack. The main parade ground at Fort Knox, Kentucky, bears his name.

At Lingayen Gulf on Dec. 22, 1941, a platoon of the battalion's tanks engaged enemy tanks for the first time in World War II. Another Soldier died during the engagement and four other Soldiers in the battalion became

Prisoners of War. A little under two weeks later, another platoon of 192nd tanks would engage and destroy a platoon of Japanese tanks. For the next few weeks, the members of the battalion fell back toward the Bataan Peninsula with the other Filipino and American troops. At Plaridel, the tankers fought a frantic battle against the Japanese. As they fell back, they were constantly strafed and shelled. Since they had no air force, enemy planes could destroy the tanks at will.

The 192nd Tank Battalion was the last American military unit to enter the Bataan Peninsula just moments before the last bridge into the peninsula was blown up by the engineers. There, they fought without food, without adequate supplies,

without medicine, and with only the hope of being reinforced.

Prior to the funeral Oct. 4, Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, The Adjutant General of Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National Guard, presented Dillon with a proclamation signed by Gov. JB Pritzker, highlighting Jerele's service and sacrifice. In addition, Maj. Gen. (ret.) Antonio Taguba, chairman, Filipino Veterans Recognition and Education Project, presented Dillon with a replica of the Filipino veterans of World War II Congressional Gold Medal, honoring Jerele's service in the Philippines.

During the ceremony at the Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery, Boyd presented Dillon with the flag which draped Jerele's casket.



Members of the Polish Armed Forces joined members of the Illinois Army National Guard for the third annual Illinois National Guard - Polish Armed Forces General Command Partnership Symposium at Camp Lincoln Sept. 25.

ILNG, Polish Armed Forces conduct annual General Command Partnership Symposium

Six members of the Polish Armed Forces joined about 25 members of the Illinois Army National Guard for the third annual Illinois National Guard - Polish Armed Forces General Command Partnership Symposium at Camp Lincoln Sept. 23.

Prior to the start of the symposium, Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, The Adjutant General of Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National Guard, met with Maj. Gen. Stawomir Owczarek, First

Deputy General Commander, General Command of the Polish Armed Forces, and Chief Warrant Officer Waldemar Malinowski, Command Sgt. Maj., General Command of the Polish Armed Forces, along with Command Sgt. Maj. Philip Barber, State Command Sergeant Major, Illinois Army National Guard, and Maj. Anthony McClain, Security Cooperations Officer, Illinois National Guard.

Boyd said the purpose of the meeting was to exchange ideas on how to increase collaboration between the Illinois National Guard and Polish Armed Forces.

Both leaders agreed it is important for the 31-year State Partnership to continue.

"We want to know how better to support and develop our partnership in the future," Boyd said.



Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, The Adjutant General of Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National Guard, meets with Maj. Gen. Stawomir Owczarek, First Deputy General Commander, General Command of the Polish Armed Forces, and Chief Warrant Officer Waldemar Malinowski, Command Sgt. Maj., General Command of the Polish Armed Forces



Members of the Polish Armed Forces visit the Illinois State Military Museum.



Soldiers from 2nd Squadron, 106th Cavalry Regiment, salute as the national anthem plays during a mobilization ceremony Sept. 7. Approximately 155 Soldiers will deploy to the U.S. Africa Command area of responsibility.

‘Guardians of Nation’s Liberty’ mobilize for mission to U.S. Africa Command area

“It’s go time.”

With those three words, approximately 155 Soldiers from 2nd Squadron, 106th Cavalry Regiment were mobilized to deploy to the U.S. Africa Command area of responsibility in support of Operation Enduring Freedom at a ceremony Sept. 7 at the Pontiac Township High School, Pontiac.

“Thank you for your unwavering service, support, and dedication to our nation, our state, and our citizens,” said Col. (P) Lenny Williams, Assistant Adjutant General – Army and Commander of the Illinois Army National Guard. “Thank you for all you’ve done to prepare for and execute this critical mission.”

Williams told family and friends gathered for the ceremony that while each deployment mission has its own unique requirements, each mission starts with the same thing – Soldiers

“Each mission starts with Soldiers standing up raising their right hand to serve something greater than themselves,” Williams said. “Not everyone is willing to do that. You

are part of the select few. You already answered the most sacred call – that is to serve, defend, and protect our nation. Be proud of that because we’re proud of you.”

Williams asked three things of the deploying Soldiers.

“All of you Soldiers at the individual level, I encourage you to do more than is asked of you. Use this opportunity to seize greatness,” he said. “Ask yourself throughout this deployment what do you want your legacy to be as an individual, a Soldier, a leader, and a Soldier from Alpha Troop?”

“To the officers and noncommissioned officers, I ask one thing of you and that is to lead. When in charge, be in charge,” Williams said. “Take care of your Soldiers, make the hard right decisions, uphold the standards and lead.”

Finally, Williams asked each Soldier deploying to take care of each other and go crush their mission.

“You’re trained. You’re ready. You’re professionals,” he said. “It’s go time. Go be great.”



Col. (P) Lenny Williams, the Assistant Adjutant General – Army, and Commander of the Illinois Army National Guard, issues three challenges to the Soldiers of 2nd Squadron, 106th Cavalry to accomplish during their deployment to the U.S. Africa Command area of responsibility.

Williams also thanked the families. "These amazing Soldiers cannot do what they are about to do without your sacrifices and support," he said. "As someone who has deployed multiple times, my wife has had to do everything while I was gone. So, it's not lost on us what your sacrifices are. Know you have the full force and weight of our organization and its resources to support you while they are gone."

State Sen. Tom Bennett, District 53, thanked the Soldiers for answering their nation's call.

"You are the guardians to our nation's liberty, defending her values both at home and abroad," he said. "Your commitment ensures that we live in a country where freedom is cherished, where it is valued and accepted. Today we stand in deep appreciation of our military and are grateful for your sacrifices."

Bennett also thanked the families.

"Behind every Soldier, there are families and friends who also serve. Waiting and worrying and sacrificing every day," he said. "We owe a debt of gratitude to them as well for without their support, the strength of our military would not be as strong."

Bennett reminded the Soldiers freedom is not free.

"As you mobilize, we recognize the strength and resilience it takes to leave family and loved ones," he said. "Let us remember freedom is never free. It's paid for by the dedication and sacrifice of those who wear the uniform. The history of the 2nd Squadron, 106th Cavalry Regiment is long and distinguished. We are very proud of you, and we support you as you prepare for this very important mission."

State Rep. Bradley Fritts, District 74, also thanked the Soldiers for their willingness to serve.

"Serving our nation requires the bravest and strongest to rise to the challenge to fight for the rights and liberties while sacrificing so much," he said. "You are protecting America's interests for the American people. Without you our country and world would be far less safe. We are truly appreciative of your dedication to our nation and your desire to serve. Your work does not go unnoticed."

Fritts also thanked the family for their sacrifices while their Soldier serves.

"You are also making sacrifices and that doesn't go unnoticed," he said.

The unit received a notice of sourcing in September 2023 to provide security force capabilities and response to multiple contingencies and is expected to be mobilized for approximately one year.

"This has been a long road since last September when we received notification of this mission," said Capt. Andrew Mix, commander, Troop A, 2nd Squadron, 106th Cavalry Regiment. "Over the course of that year, our Soldiers have accomplished

the tasks and exceeded all the standards presented to them that our fellow Task Force members has had three years to do. I have seen our Troop go from a hodge podge group of Soldiers from across the state to a cohesive fighting force that can accomplish any problems encountered. I couldn't be prouder of the Troop we're taking overseas."

Mix thanked the families of the deploying Soldiers

"Without your support, we would not be what we are today," he said."

Williams presented Nix with a State of Illinois flag to carry with them to Africa, symbolizing the state's support of the deploying Soldiers.



Col. (P) Lenny Williams, the Assistant Adjutant General - Army, and Commander of the Illinois Army National Guard, presents Capt. Andrew Mix, commander, Troop A, 2nd Squadron, 106th Cavalry Regiment, with a State of Illinois flag to carry with them on their deployment to the U.S. Africa Command area of responsibility.



Sgt. 1st Class Melissa Brooker the S4 Officer and Maintenance Officer of the 44th Chemical Battalion, who began her career in 1989, credited the Army with helping her grow both professionally and personally. Brooker told the crowd of Soldiers that she hopes her time in service will leave a lasting impact on the Soldiers she has worked with and mentored.

Rockford Resident Retires After 28 Years in the Illinois Army National Guard

Story and photos by Spc. Justin Malone, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

Sgt. 1st Class Melissa Brooker of Rockford retired from the Illinois Army National Guard after 28 years of service but told those at her Sept. 13 retirement ceremony in Bloomington that she was “not done being young.”

“The Army gave me the confidence to go into the unknown,” said Brooker during the ceremony at the 44th Chemical Battalion’s headquarters in Bloomington. “I hope I left an appreciation for doing things well. I’ve tried really hard to share my knowledge. I hope I’ve empowered Soldiers to feel confident and feel more empowered because of the knowledge I left.”

Brooker credited the Army with helping her grow both professionally and personally. She hopes her time in service will leave a lasting impact on the Soldiers she has worked with and

mentored.

She was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal for her decades of military service.

Brooker began her career in 1989 at the 404th Chemical Brigade as a Graphics Documentation Specialist. During her initial enlistment, she took full advantage of available opportunities, including a deployment to Panama for counter-narcotics operations and volunteering with the 244th Smoke Company for flood relief during the Great Flood of 1993. She later accepted a position as a Chemical Specialist with the 244th Smoke Company and subsequently served with the 44th Chemical Battalion’s Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical cell.

In 1997, Brooker decided to step away from the military. Her break in service lasted about six years before

she returned. Brooker reenlisted as a Supply Specialist with the 404th Chemical Brigade in 2003 and was quickly promoted to sergeant.

In 2004, she was selected for an Active Guard Reserve role with the 404th Chemical Brigade logistics section (S4), marking the beginning of her active-duty service with the Illinois Army National Guard. During her military career, Brooker participated in overseas exercises such as PeaceShield, a 21-nation peacekeeping enforcement exercise at the National Defense Academy in Kiev, Ukraine, and Lion Challenge, a high-command training exercise in the Grafenwoehr Training Area in Germany.

Promoted to staff sergeant in 2005, Brooker served as a full-time unit supply sergeant with the 135th



Sgt. First Class Melissa Brooker of Rockford, Illinois smiles and points to her friends and fellow service members in the crowd as she gave remarks during her retirement ceremony Sept. 13 in Bloomington, Illinois. She retired from the Illinois Army National Guard after 28 years of service but told those at her that she was “not done being young.”

Chemical Company. Two years later, she was promoted to sergeant first class and served as the Assistant Operations Noncommissioned Officer for the 33rd Brigade Special Troops Battalion.

In 2008, Brooker deployed to Afghanistan as the 33rd Force Protection Battalion Senior Supply NCO and mentor for Afghan National Army logistics. Later, in 2012, she transferred to the 135th Chemical Company as Readiness and Operations NCO, where she supervised unit operations, mentored Soldiers, and handled legal and medical matters. After seven years, she transferred to the 44th Chemical Battalion as NCOIC of the battalion staff supply section, later serving as S4 Officer and Maintenance Officer before concluding her 28-year career.

“Melissa has always impressed me with her dedication, hard work, and willingness to put in long hours,” said retired Brigadier General Steven P. Huber. “I’ll always value our camaraderie, our friendship, and the time we spent together. I congratulate you on a job well done.”

Master of ceremonies for the event and longtime friend, Maj. Phyllida Shoudel, the 404th MEB Executive Officer, agreed with Huber’s description of Brooker’s work ethic.

“Her level of dedication will be hard to replace,” said Shoudel. “There are a lot of good people, but she is just above and beyond. She will be missed. It’s not like we’ll lose touch, but knowing that through the rest of my career, she’s not going to be one of the faces I see in uniform is a little hard.”



Twin sister Julie Berry (left), mother Janet Brooker (middle) and Sgt. 1st Class Melissa Brooker (right) smiled for a group pose. Brooker told a story about her twin sister wearing her uniform and pretending to be her to prank her drill sergeants during the end of her basic training. Brooker credited her family with a lot of love and support during her long military career.

Now that she is retired, Brooker plans to continue rowing in her spare time and pursue long-standing passions, including learning more about music and songwriting.

“I’m not done being young. I have things I want to do,” said Brooker. “I sing at my church on the worship team and I’m hoping to pursue

growth in piano and songwriting. I’ve always sung by ear and eventually want to master piano and the theory behind music.”

Brooker also plans to use her educational benefits to enroll in a program offering a bachelor’s degree in Worship Arts.



Chief Warrant Officer 4 Richard “Trey” McCormick of Springfield, serving with Detachment 5, Company A, 2nd Battalion, 245th Aviation Regiment based in Springfield, alongside Chief Warrant Officer 3 Robert Childers of Jacksonville, also serving in the 245th, walk towards friends and family members of McCormick’s after he flew a Boeing CH-47 Chinook Helicopter at the Abraham Lincoln Capital Airport in Springfield.

Soldier wraps up distinguished aviation career with final flights in Chinook, C-12 aircraft

By Mr. Robert Adams, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

Chief Warrant Officer 4 Richard “Trey” McCormick of Springfield, Illinois, serving with Detachment 5, A Company, 2nd Battalion 245th Aviation Regiment based in Springfield, Illinois, took his final flights on Sept. 6 in a Boeing CH-47 Chinook helicopter and a Beechcraft C-12 Heron, marking the end of a distinguished aviation career in the Illinois Army National Guard. Family and friends gathered at the airfield to witness the occasion.

McCormick, a Sacred Heart-Griffin High School graduate, began his military service in June 1995 with the active-duty Army. He transitioned to the Illinois Army National Guard in October 2000. In addition to his military service, McCormick retired from the Springfield Fire Department six years ago and currently works full-time for Envoy Air out of Chicago.

“I haven’t slowed down enough

to really think about retirement yet,” McCormick said. “I’m still working with Envoy, and my oldest son, who is a Chief Warrant Officer 2, flies the Chinook now and then. I also have two kids in high school.”

McCormick began his military career as an 11 Bravo infantryman and was assigned to the 1st Ranger Battalion at Hunter Army Airfield, Savannah, Georgia, from 1995 to 1998. He later became a CH-47 pilot for 18 years and a C-12 pilot for six years. Notably, he deployed to Afghanistan several times, with his 2009 missions to Combat Outpost Keating and Afghanistan being among his most memorable experiences.

Reflecting on his career, McCormick offered advice to soldiers considering a future in aviation with the Illinois Army National Guard. “Now’s the time because there are openings,” he said. “It’s as awesome

as it looks. I enjoyed every moment.”

Lucas Bohm, a fellow pilot and long-time friend from Havana, Illinois, praised McCormick’s skill and character. “I’ve known Trey since the day he joined,” Bohm said. “We’ve flown on a lot of missions together, both overseas and in domestic operations. He’s one of the smartest people I’ve ever known and an incredible pilot.”

Bohm recalled missions where they flew Chinooks for flood relief efforts, levee-building, and firefighting. Despite Bohm’s retirement, their bond remains strong.

“Trey just has a knack for it. His personality is like a magnet; everyone wants to be around him,” Bohm added.

Anthony McCormick of Chatham, Illinois, serving with the B Company, 238th Aviation in Peoria, Illinois, said he and his father have flown a



A Beechcraft C-12 Heron being flown by Chief Warrant Officer 4 Richard “Trey” McCormick of Springfield, Illinois, serving with Detachment 5, A Company, 2nd Battalion 245th Aviation Regiment based in Springfield, gets sprayed down after his last flight at the Abraham Lincoln Capital Airport in Springfield on Sept. 6.

few times together since he joined the Illinois Army National Guard six years ago. Anthony’s father Chief Warrant Officer 4 McCormick gave his son some advice when he entered the ILARNG.

“I told him at the beginning of being a soldier is pretty easy. If you get a 300 on your PT test, you show up on time ready to work, and you work hard, take instruction. Then the military is going to lay the world out

in front of you,” said Chief Warrant Officer 4 McCormick. “If you’re the soldier that a commander wants, he’s going to let you do whatever you want.”

Chief Warrant Officer 3 Robert Childers, a colleague from Jacksonville, Illinois, commended McCormick’s calm demeanor in high-stress situations.

“He’s great in the cockpit – calm

in the storm,” Childers said. “When things go south, his demeanor doesn’t change. He’s just a solid pilot.”

McCormick plans to continue his aviation career with American Airlines starting in March, and he looks forward to flying until he’s 65. His more than 29 years of service include deployments to Djibouti, Africa (2019-2020), and Afghanistan (2009, 2013-2014, and 2017).



A Boeing CH-47 Chinook helicopter flown by Chief Warrant Officer 4 Richard “Trey” McCormick of Springfield, serving with Detachment 5, Company A, 2nd Battalion, 245th Aviation Regiment based in Springfield, lands after his last flight at the Abraham Lincoln Capital Airport in Springfield on Sept. 6



Col. Jason Carter, the Director of Plans, Operations and Training, Sgt. Maj. Russell Creviston, the Illinois Army National Guard Plans, Operations and Training sergeant major, and Chaplain (Maj.) Kip Troeger, at Creviston's retirement ceremony Sept. 18. (Photo by 2nd Lt. Trenton Fouche, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs Office)

'A Leader of Soldiers'

Sgt. Maj. Russell Creviston Retires After 32 Years of Service in Illinois Army National Guard

By Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

"No one is more professional than I. I am a noncommissioned officer, a leader of Soldiers."

Command Sgt. Maj. Philip Barber, State Command Sergeant Major, Illinois Army National Guard, said that first sentence of the U.S. Army's Noncommissioned Officer's creed fittingly describes Sgt. Maj. Russell Creviston, the ILARNG's Plans, Operations and Training (G-3) sergeant major, who was honored for 32 years of service during a retirement ceremony Sept. 18 at the Illinois Military Academy, Camp Lincoln, Springfield.

"I haven't known Russ the entire 32 years, but we started working together in the Blackhawk Battalion, 2nd Battalion, 130th Infantry Regiment," Barber said. "When I was thinking about what to say today, I thought of the NCO creed – that's it right there and that means a lot."

Barber said they had a lot of great years in the Blackhawk Battalion.

"That was the beginning of my appreciation for him," he said. "Thank you for all you have done for the Illinois Army National Guard."

Col. Jason Carter, the Director of Plans, Operations and Training, called

Creviston's retirement a bittersweet day for the Illinois Army National Guard.

"It is not often you get to recognize someone who is so well respected in the organization," Carter said. "But today we're here to recognize 32 years of accomplishments, service and dedication to the Illinois National Guard. It is a bittersweet moment for us in the organization, specifically the G-3 and the operations community where he has impacted so many."

Creviston enlisted in the Illinois Army National Guard in April 1992 and spent the past 28 years in the

Active Guard Reserve Program.

Throughout his career, he has served in a variety of assignments, including, Battalion Command Sergeant Major for 2nd Battalion, 130th Infantry Regiment, Brigade Operations Sergeant Major for 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Battalion Operations Sergeant Major for 2nd Battalion, 130th Infantry Regiment; First Sergeant, C Troop 2nd Squadron, 106th Cavalry Regiment; Regimental Operations NCO, 129th Regional Training Institute; Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chief of the Joint Staff - ILNG; Assistant Operations NCO, 65th Troop Command; Platoon Sergeant, A Troop 2-106th CAV; Section Leader, A Troop 2-106th CAV; and Squad Leader, D Company 1st Battalion, 131st Infantry Regiment.

Carter thanked Creviston's family for their support during his 32 year career.

"It's an exciting moment for the sergeant major and the Creviston family, and for us in the organization getting to celebrate a phenomenal noncommissioned officer's accomplishments and show appreciation for all his hard work," Carter said. "He gets his weekend back. That's a huge reward. He joined when he was 17 years old, so he's had drill or to carve out two weeks every year since then. It'll be a huge difference but definitely a win to get his weekends."

Carter said there is no way someone can serve 32 years without the support of their family.

"There is no way you can make it 32 years in this organization balancing both job and family requirements without a strong village to support you along the way," Carter said. "Thank you for loaning him to us

the past 32 years. It has meant a lot. I know it's been a long lease, but we'll be giving him back hopefully in about the same shape he was 32 years ago with a couple of added bumps and bruises and a few more pains here and there."

Carter said often when someone serves, they ask themselves what legacy they will leave behind.

"Sergeant Major Creviston is a



Sgt. Maj. Russell Creviston, Sergeant Major, Operations, Plans and Training, Illinois Army National Guard, offers humorous advice to fellow Soldiers during a retirement ceremony Sept. 18 at the Illinois Military Academy, Camp Lincoln, Springfield. (Photo by 2nd Lt. Trenton Fouche, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs Office)

natural leader, a model leader who has street credibility within the Illinois National Guard," he said. "He has led Soldiers through some of the most challenging and rigorous training events, and real world mobilizations, all while maintaining an emotional intellect and exuding a calm demeanor."

Carter called Creviston a confident professional.

"He takes pride in being an expert in his craft, both as an NCO and AGR trainer," Carter said. "In every echelon he has leveraged his knowledge and experience to improve both processes while driving the NCO Corps to live

up to its intended purpose as the backbone of the organization, while also challenging superiors through candid and honest feedback to facilitate better decisions and support to our Soldiers and the mission."

Carter said Creviston is well respected by his superiors, peers, and subordinates.

"Like I said he has street credibility," Carter said. "Sergeant Major has been sought out for his expertise at every echelon. That is a true testament that everyone values his leadership abilities, professionalism, and his ability to apply sheer common sense at everything he does."

Creviston said serving as the G-3 sergeant major has been one of the most rewarding assignments of his career.

"Colonel Carter, you gave me the latitude to impact the things I thought was important to the organization," Creviston said.

Creviston also thanked his family, including daughters, Anna and Charlotte, and son, Joshua.

"Not just today, but throughout my career, you have supported me," he said. "I couldn't do any of this

without you."

Creviston said he is incredibly passionate about being a noncommissioned officer.

"I take a lot of pride in my Corps," he said. "I'm even more proud of the Soldiers with whom I serve."

Creviston offered advice to his fellow Soldiers through his list of 10 things he's learned during his military career.

"Volunteering comes in at number 10," he said. "Many of you wear or have worn the military uniform, meaning you raised your right hand and swore an oath to protect and defend something greater than

yourself. Throughout your career, your leaders will try to persuade you to volunteer for other things, even entice you with cool, sexy sounding acronyms. Don't fall for it. You volunteered once and once is enough."

Creviston said there is a decline in Americans' pride in a national identity.

"Patriotism is uncommon in this country," he said.

"That's why it's important to have true patriots like you and for you to be that example to others whether you're in or out of uniform."

Creviston said the U.S. Army is the best in the world at hurry up and waiting.

"We excel at this very thing. It is a statistical fact you will spend one third of your military career just waiting for something to happen," he said. "If you're in the military, be prepared to hurry up and wait. Bring a book or a sketchpad. You may not know what you're waiting for, or for how long, just know it will not be worth the wait, so just make the wait worthwhile."

Creviston told his fellow Soldiers that in 1998 the Army adopted its current version of Army Values.

"At the time I viewed it as just something else to memorize for a board. I did not see the big picture," he said. "When you get to the end of your career and look back, you will see these values have helped shape you. They have built a character within you that doesn't just make you a better Soldier or leader, but also a better human. The deeper you look at them, the more significance they will have for you, or impact they will have on your life."

Creviston said he has learned a lot about military grade during his career.

"The Army will issue you a lot of military grade equipment throughout your career," he said. "Just remember that it's made by the lowest bidder, the equipment has to be able to be dropped from an aircraft, and without a doubt it will break the moment you need it most. You can do two things about it. You can become as proficient

as possible with your equipment and meticulously maintain it, or you can get yourself promoted out of the equipment operator position."

As a Soldier who has served in various leadership positions in 32 years of service, Creviston said leadership boils down to three things.

"You have to care about the mission and your Soldiers more than

ranks third.

"Some say it should be number one on the list," he said. "I agree, but the reality is if you wear the uniform, you know when your nation calls, you answer, and the family is put on hold. No one knows this better than families."

He said there are things important to those who serve in the military – order, structure, and hierarchy.

"Ranks, titles, positions, awards, accolades, and evaluations help to characterize and even define us," he said. "To our families, those things mean very little. Those you

come home to care about one thing and that is that you come home. Strive to excel in whatever position you hold, but never pass up the opportunity to come home to your family."

Creviston said anyone who has spent time in the field knows the value of finding a pack of skittles in a Meal, Ready to Eat.

"You've struck gold if you find a pack of skittles in an MRE," he said. "They are the ultimate trading tool. You can trade skittles for anything."

Creviston said the number one item on his list is people.

"When you leave, you don't always miss the work. It's the people," he said. "The people around you are what makes the work worth it. It's not the pay or benefits just simply the person to your left or right."

Creviston urged his fellow Soldiers to invest their time in the people around them.

"Be a good mentor and seek mentorship from others," he said. "Be a good coach to someone and coachable to others. Surround yourself with true blue, ride or die, bury the bodies lifelong friends and your name will be spoken for generations. Let that be your legacy."

"It is impossible to sum up what 32 years means to mean," he said. "I've lived with, worked with, laughed with, and cried with people who have stood behind me and fought beside me. You all pretty much sum it up."

”
Strive to excel in whatever position you hold, but never pass up the opportunity to come home to your family.
“

about yourself," he said. "Sometimes you have to oppose self-preservation to take care of your Soldiers."

"You also have to try to lead. Sometimes you'll fail," he said. "Let your Soldiers see you fail and then try again. Soon they will take notice and try to help you and that is what builds Army teams."

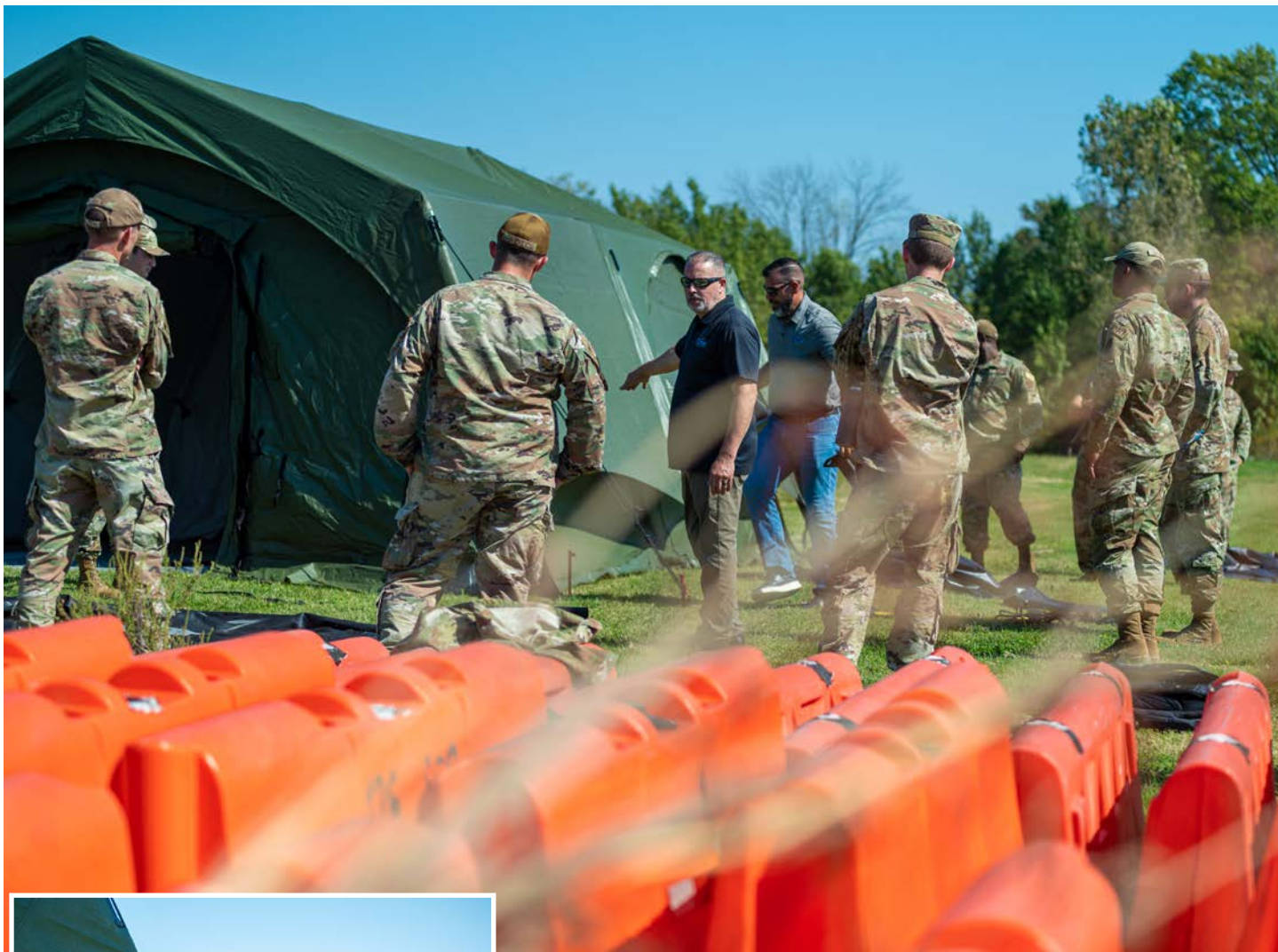
Creviston said leaders must be prepared to make sacrifices.

"Be prepared to sacrifice your time, energy, and if necessary, your life for those of your Soldiers," Creviston said. "I've known many great leaders throughout my career, and I characterize them by how much they care, try, and sacrifice. That's how you make a great leader."

Creviston, who has deployed multiple times during his career, including a deployment to Afghanistan, urged his fellow Soldiers to not fear deployments rather seek them out.

"We've been practicing for many years to get into the big game so to speak. Some Soldiers are excited while others are terrified," he said. "Deployments will build your resiliency like nothing else. It's dealing with the mundane, repetitive yet unfamiliar and horrifying events which occur daily and doing it every day for nine to 12 months. That makes you more adaptive and resilient as a Soldier."

Creviston said on his list, family



Preparing for Emergencies

Members from the 126th Civil Engineer Squadron train on tent set-up, Oct. 5, at Scott Air Force Base. Some civil engineer responsibilities include site surveying, emergency repairs, force beddown and disaster preparedness. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Ari Freeman)



ILNG Joint Staff's Director of Military Support pins on new rank during Urbana ceremony

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

A native son of Cary, Illinois, and a resident of Champaign was promoted to colonel Oct. 19, at the Illinois Army National Guard's Urbana Armory.

Col. Bart J. Daly serves within the Illinois National Guard's Joint Staff as the Director of Military Support and has been selected as the Illinois National Guard's Human Resource Officer at the beginning of next year.

"A true test of a leader is whether people follow you," Brig. Gen. Lenny Williams, the Assistant Adjutant General - Army of the Illinois National Guard and Commander of the Illinois Army National Guard said during Daly's promotion ceremony. "You, my friend, are a true leader. People follow you."

Daly said his leadership style was

"baked" into him by his father, Bart W. Daly, a Vietnam Veteran who loves woodworking. "When we were working, my father would say 'Let the tool do the work.'" He applies that concept to Soldiers. "You buy the tool, you maintain the tool, you sharpen the tool, but, ultimately, it is about letting it do its job."

Daly was commissioned into the active-duty Army in 2004 as an Infantry Officer through Illinois State University's Army ROTC program. After Infantry Officer training at what is now Fort Moore in Georgia, he was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 509th Parachute Infantry Regiment at Fort Johnson, Louisiana, where he served as a platoon leader, company executive officer, and mortar platoon

leader. From 2007 to 2009 he served with the 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division on a Military Transition Team. He deployed to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom from 2008 to 2009.

Following that deployment, he transitioned into the Illinois Army National Guard. Following service in the 404th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, he commanded B Co., 1st Battalion, 178th Infantry Regiment based in Elgin from 2011 to 2013. Following company command, he served in various staff positions within the 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team. In 2019, he deployed for a year to Afghanistan as the executive officer of the 1st Battalion, 178th Infantry Regiment. Following

the deployment, he served as the brigade executive officer from 2020 to 2021.

In June 2021, he took command of the 1st Battalion, 178th Infantry Regiment based in Chicago. Following command, he served again as the executive officer of the 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team before beginning his current assignment as the Illinois National Guard's Director of Military Support in April 2024.

His military awards include the Bronze Star Medal, four Meritorious Service Medals, nine Army Commendation Medals and the Expert Infantryman Badge. He is a graduate of the U.S. Army's Ranger Course, Basic Airborne Course, Jumpmaster Course, Pathfinder Course, and Infantry Mortar Leader Course.

He is the proud father of 12-year-old daughter, Hanna, and 2-year-old son, Jai. He lives in Champaign with his spouse, Dr. Jennie Monaikul, an expert in toxicology who holds a doctorate in Neuroscience from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.



Col. Bart Daly speaks about how the 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team staff could "solve any problem" during his promotion ceremony, Oct. 19, at the Illinois Army National Guard's Urbana Armory.

183rd Wing Centralized Repair Facility Team Collaborates with Tinker AFB Engineers to put F110-129 Turbofan Engine Through Paces

Being mission-ready is crucial for the U.S. Air Force as it ensures rapid responses to emerging threats, safeguarding national security, and maintaining global stability in an increasingly unpredictable world.

With the help of the team that brings the Centralized Repair Facility (CRF) at the 183d Wing, Springfield, alive, our nation's aircraft stand at the ready to take to the skies and complete the mission.

In a collaborative effort with civilian aviation engineers from Tinker Air Force Base, 183d Maintenance Squadron engineers

at the CRF are putting the F110-129 turbofan engine through its paces. The Accelerated Mission Test (AMT) program aims to enhance the powerplant's performance throughout its operational life. The F110-129 engine, a cornerstone of U.S. Air Force propulsion, powers two of America's most important fighters: the agile F-16D Fighting Falcon and the newly inducted F-15EX Eagle II. With nearly 30,000 pounds of thrust, this General Electric-built engine has been a reliable force in the sky for over two decades. Its robust design and continuous improvements have kept

it at the forefront of military aviation technology.

The AMT program is an important mission in order to maintain the Air Force's combat readiness, and thus ensuring that the F110-129 continues to meet the demanding requirements of modern aerial warfare. This critical role is managed by the 183d Maintenance Squadron (MXS), which was recognized for their superior performance with the ANG Maintenance Effectiveness Award for 2020.

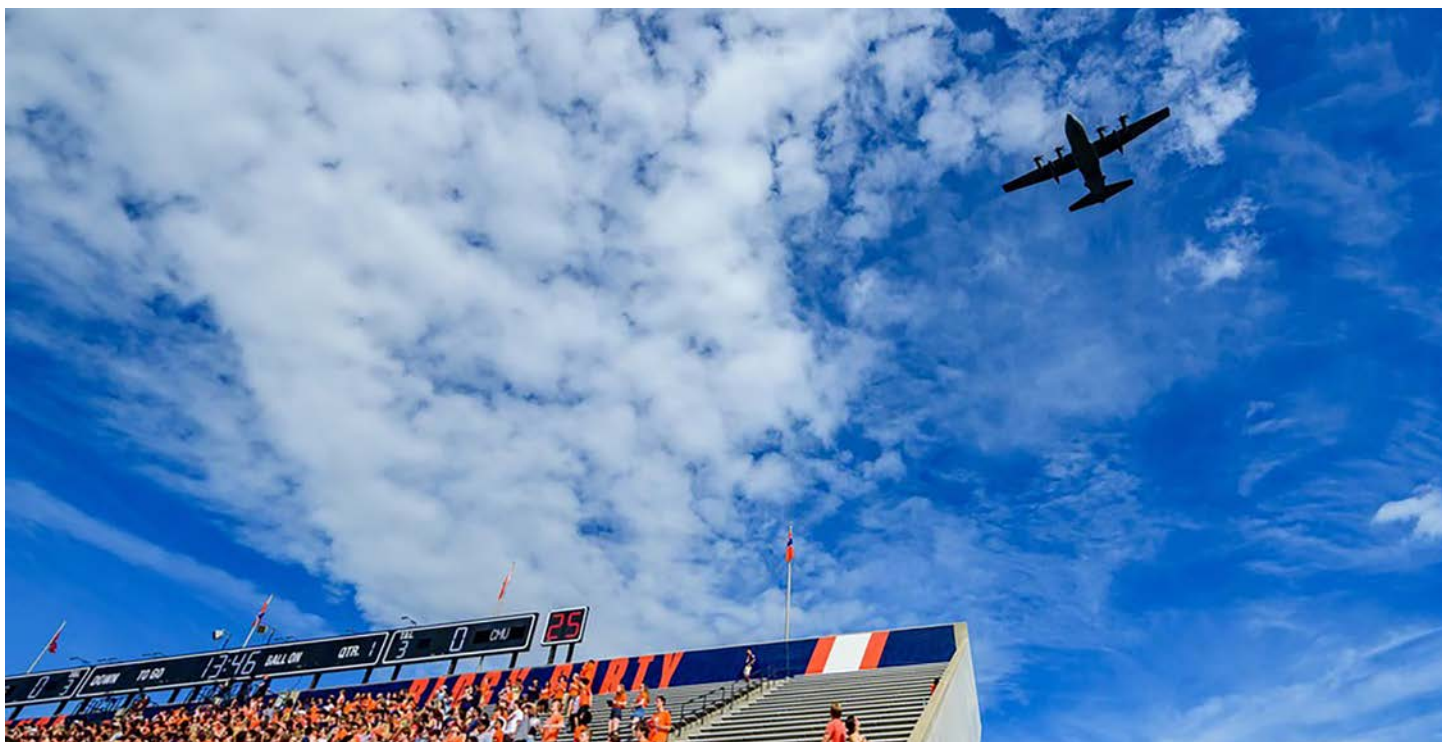
(Illinois Air National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Paul Lauricella)





Fall Football Flyover

A C-130 from the Illinois Air National Guard's 182nd Airlift Wing C-130s got things going for the University of Illinois with a beautiful flyover before a solid victory on the field, Sept. 14. (Photos by University of Illinois/ Fred Zwicky)





Approximately 100 Illinois Army National Guard warrant officers pose for a photo while in attendance at the Illinois National Guard Warrant Officer Symposium on Camp Lincoln in Springfield, Illinois Sept. 11-12.

Symposium Underscores Importance of Future Development of Warrant Officer Corps

The Illinois National Guard hosted a Warrant Officer Symposium on Sept. 11-12 at the Illinois Military Academy on Camp Lincoln, Springfield, Illinois.

The event brought together warrant officers from across the state to receive guidance from senior military leaders and discuss key issues affecting the Warrant Officer Corps.

Senior leaders in attendance included Illinois State Command Chief Warrant Officer 5 Thomas Black, Col. Brian Gerber, Senior Army Advisor for the Illinois Army National Guard, Command Chief Warrant Officer 5 Brian Searcy, Command Chief Warrant Officer of the Army National Guard, Command Chief Warrant Officer 5 Wendy Robinson of the Indiana National Guard, Command Chief Warrant Officer 5 Charles A. Mattison of Wisconsin National Guard, Col. (P) Lenny Williams, Assistant Adjutant General-Army of the Illinois National Guard and Commander of the Illinois Army National Guard, and Command Sgt. Maj. Kehinde Salami, Senior Enlisted Leader of the Illinois National Guard.

The symposium covered a wide range of topics, including recruiting and retention efforts, the future of the Warrant Officer Corps, and ongoing improvements at the National Guard Bureau. Leaders also emphasized the critical role of warrant officers in the modern Army National Guard.

"The Warrant Officers in the Illinois National Guard have a unique ability to inspire and guide

our Soldiers," said Col. Williams.

"They are recognized as subject matter experts and have always been innovators within the Illinois Army National Guard."

Williams underscored the importance of continuing to develop the Warrant Officer Corps to ensure future battlefield readiness. "As an organization, we must continue to seek out senior noncommissioned officers and high-performing enlisted Soldiers to become the warrant officers of tomorrow," said Williams.

Chief Warrant Officer 5 Black highlighted the value of the symposium as a forum for warrant officers to collaborate and discuss important issues.

"By focusing on experience, education, and relationships, we will strengthen the Illinois Army National Guard Warrant Officer Corps," Black said.

Black also announced plans to implement the Warrant Officer Candidate Advisement Program (WOCAP) in Illinois, a successful initiative already in place in the Indiana National Guard.

"The program has a success rate of over 90% in transitioning Soldiers from enlisted to warrant officer, and we are excited to bring it to Illinois," said Black.

Chief Warrant Officer 5 Searcy provided insight into the future of the Warrant Officer Corps, including upcoming training requirements and deployment considerations, drawing on his experience as principal advisor to the director of the Army National Guard.

"The positive feedback from attendees was encouraging, and we plan to hold this symposium in the future to continue fostering leadership and strengthening our Warrant Officer Corps," Black concluded.



Command Chief Warrant Officer 5 Brian Searcy, Command Chief Warrant Officer of the Army National Guard, speaks to the approximately 100 warrant officers in attendance at the Illinois National Guard Warrant Officer Symposium on Camp Lincoln in Springfield, Illinois Sept. 12.



Senior Airman Courtney Nofsinger, a crew chief with the 182nd Airlift Wing, Illinois Air National Guard, conducts a pre-flight maintenance check during Exercise Proptoberfest on Sept. 12, at San Diego, California. The joint training in Exercise Proptoberfest between the Illinois Air National Guard's 182nd Airlift Wing C-130s and the German Air Force A400Ms reinforces the NATO alliance, building on the successful collaboration during the Air Defender 23 exercise and emphasizing the strategic importance of partnerships in maintaining global security, consistent with the 2022 National Defense Strategy.

182nd Airlift Wing Conducts Successful Interoperability Training in Exercise Proptoberfest

By Staff Sgt. Katherine Jacobus, 182nd Airlift Wing Public Affairs

The Illinois Air National Guard's 182nd Airlift Wing successfully executed a cross-country training mission, Exercise Proptoberfest, with the German Air Force from Sept. 3 to 14, 2024. The collaboration reinforced the existing alliance between the two NATO nations and further advanced joint interoperability.

The 182nd Airlift Wing's C-130H

At right, U.S. Air Force pilots with the 169th Airlift Squadron, attached to the 182nd Airlift Wing, Illinois Air National Guard, perform a high altitude flying training in Colorado Springs, Colorado, on Sept. 9.



Hercules aircraft flew with an A400M Atlas aircraft from the Bundeswehr's Air Transport Wing 62 throughout the duration of the exercise. The team-up reflects the U.S. initiative to develop warfighting capabilities between allies by exchanging perspectives, competencies and advantages.

The exercise included four phases in four different states, including Illinois, Arizona, Colorado and California. Exercise Proptoberfest kicked off with phase one in Peoria, Illinois, with the landing of the A400M Atlas aircraft from the Bundeswehr's Air Transport Wing 62. The German A400M flew with two 182nd Airlift Wing C-130H Hercules while in Illinois to execute formation flying before the next phases of the exercise.

Phase two of the exercise took place in Arizona and included low level awareness training, landing zone operations, dissimilar air combat training and cargo drops with instructors from the Advanced Airlift Tactics Training Center.

The two C-130H Hercules and the A400M then flew to Colorado for phase three, where they were met by an additional C-130H Hercules from the 182nd Airlift Wing. Phase three consisted of training on a high-density altitude mountain flying course in Colorado, which included executing landings, take offs and low approaches at a tactical landing zone.

Exercise Proptoberfest's final phase took place in California, where two



A German Air Force A400M from the Bundeswehr's Air Transport Wing 62 performs a low pass at a tactical landing zone at Camp Red Devil during Exercise Proptoberfest Sept. 10, 2024, at Colorado Springs, Colorado. The joint training in Exercise Proptoberfest between the Illinois Air National Guard's 182nd Airlift Wing C-130s and the German Air Force A400Ms reinforces the NATO alliance, building on the successful collaboration during the Air Defender 23 exercise and emphasizing the strategic importance of partnerships in maintaining global security, consistent with the 2022 National Defense Strategy.

C-130H Hercules and the A400M executed personnel drops.

Exercise Proptoberfest came to be after the 182nd's highly successful collaboration with the German Air Force in Germany's Air Defender 23 exercise in June 2023, the largest

deployment exercise of air forces in NATO's history. This initiative gave both American and German forces an opportunity to train in a diverse variety of tactical scenarios and terrains, made possible by traveling across the United States.



A German air force A400M lands at the 182nd Airlift Wing, Peoria, Illinois, Aug. 31, 2024, prior to the start of Exercise Proptoberfest.

Chief of Illinois National Guard's Joint Staff Promoted to Colonel

Twenty-four years after receiving his commission through the University of Illinois - Chicago's ROTC program, Matthew Garrison of Carlock was promoted to colonel at the Cantigny Park Welcome Center in Wheaton.

Garrison is the Chief of the Illinois National Guard Joint Staff, a role he assumed in May.

"This is an important day for Matt and his family," said Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, The Adjutant General of Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National Guard. "Not everyone gets promoted to colonel. It gets very competitive at the top so getting promoted to colonel is pretty special."

Boyd took the opportunity to thank Garrison's family for their support.

"Thank you to Matt's family, wife, Magda, daughter Elyssa and son, Jacob, for the support you have given to him throughout his career," Boyd said. "Your support allows him to do what he does each day."

Boyd said there are three things to remember as Soldiers and Airmen progress to roles as senior leaders.

"You are responsible for the people you're in charge of. If you put the people who work for you first, you'll never go wrong as a senior leader," Boyd said. "They are the ones who are going to execute the mission for you. I can honestly say after working with Matt over the last three plus years, Matt cares about the people who works with him. They go out and execute (the missions) because he has shown he's a great leader. He is concerned about their well-being."

Boyd said senior leaders must be proficient in their craft.

"Matt became Chief of the Joint Staff in May," Boyd said. "He was doing more in joint operations, the J-3, for the organization than normal during some very tough times. We had COVID missions, civil unrest missions, and most recently, the Democratic National Convention in



Elyssa and Jacob Garrison, children of newly-promoted Col. Matthew Garrison, of Chicago, Chief of the Illinois National Guard Joint Staff, pin on colonel rank during a promotion ceremony Oct. 4 at the Cantigny Welcome Center in Wheaton.

Chicago. We had a part in the DNC, and the Joint Staff led those efforts. Matt attended several of the meetings to make sure we understood our mission as the Illinois National Guard and that we execute that mission to the fullest."

Boyd said Garrison's promotion ceremony was just a formality, as he had been doing the work all along.

"Matt has proven time and time again he is ready for this rank," he said. "I know you will wear this rank well and continue what you've always done."

Garrison thanked his family for their support.

"Today is about the family," Garrison said. "I couldn't do this

without the unwavering support of my family. Magda, I can't express how much I love you and appreciate all you do for the family. The flowers are only a small token of my appreciation of how much you have done. Elyssa, I couldn't be prouder of you as you graduate this year and make your way in the world. Jacob, you are talented and multi-faceted unlike anyone I've ever met. I continue to be amazed by all that you do. I know you both are going to do great things."

Garrison also thanked his parents, Dave and Rita for their support throughout his life.

Garrison also acknowledged the support of the Soldiers and Airmen he serves alongside as well as the leaders



Newly promoted Col. Matthew Garrison, Chief of the Illinois National Guard Joint Staff, thanks family, friends, and mentors for their support throughout his years of service.

of the Illinois National Guard.

"I would not be here without the Soldiers, Airmen, and leaders of the Illinois National Guard," he said. "This is not an individual accomplishment. Major General Boyd, thank you for your confidence in me in appointing me to this position, and for the promotion. Working directly for you the last two months has been a great way to start the assignment.

Garrison said he first enlisted in the military to make some extra cash, and for the opportunity to work on Humvees.

"Looking back to where my military service started – back in high school a buddy of mine told me I could make some extra cash, and maybe some money for college if I joined the Army Reserves and I could learn to work on Humvees," he said. "What could be cooler to a farm kid than working on a diesel engine. I thought it was great. I got to MEPS which is the entrance station and I was

given one option and one option only – 75 bravo. They had a typewriter and they type up awards and orders."

Garrison said he switched over to the Illinois National Guard and contracted through ROTC, commissioning in 2000.

"My plan was to do six years and get out," he said. "When I got into the Guard, I started to build relationships with my friends and colleagues. During that first term, my thinking evolved. Maybe I can keep doing this. This seemed like the right place for me to be in, so I continued to serve."

He said he appreciates those who inspired him, mentored him and taught him throughout his career.

"There are so many who have inspired me, mentored me, and taught me along the way and many are in this room today," he said. "I appreciate your role in my life."

Garrison said throughout his career he's learned a lot of things, but the fundamentals of leadership haven't changed.

"These fundamentals are worthwhile to me to keep me grounded as to why I'm here and what's my purpose," he said.

"The first is take care of my family," he said. "If I don't have my family then I don't have a good point of life and my career isn't going to be worthwhile."

"Second, take care of Soldiers and Airmen and their families," he continued. "We can't accomplish a mission if we don't have Soldiers and Airmen ready to accomplish that mission."

Third, to accomplish the mission you must accomplish it as a team. It's not about me, it's about everyone behind me who got me here today."

Garrison said lastly, leaders must work hard and have ethical and moral character.

"It's simple, but not always easy to do," he said. "I may not have taught anyone something new today, but these have served me well throughout my career."



Newly-promoted Col. Matthew Garrison, of Chicago, Chief of the Illinois National Guard Joint Staff, is administered the oath of office by Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, The Adjutant General of Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National Guard, during a promotion ceremony Oct. 4 at the Cantigny Welcome Center in Wheaton.

Undercover Colonels

126th Medical Group

Colonel Nick Henschel went undercover in the 126th Medical Group with one of our newest medical technicians.

Airman Katherine Nee walked the colonel through several different Tactical Combat Casualty Care, also known as “T triple C”, techniques and procedures. Using a state-of-the-art patient simulator, they opened a nasal airway, checked for vital signs, diagnosed lung issues, applied a tourniquet, packed an open wound, and inserted a peripheral venous catheter! This real-world experience aligns perfectly with Airman Nee’s college courses at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville.

“In addition to providing medical readiness, the 126th Medical Group also offers training to our airmen so they can provide first response medical care during combat related injuries. I was incredibly impressed by Airman Nee’s medical knowledge and professionalism...the future is bright for the 126th as we bring on talented students from our local communities!” said Col. Henschel.



126th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron



Colonel Mike Mihalik, 126th Mission Support Group commander, went undercover in the 126th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron to learn how Crew Chiefs launch a KC-135 Stratotanker.

Staff Sgt. Kyle Gilstrap, 126th AMXS took Mihalik through the experience of doing a preflight inspection, calling flight controls, and marshaling a plane for take off.

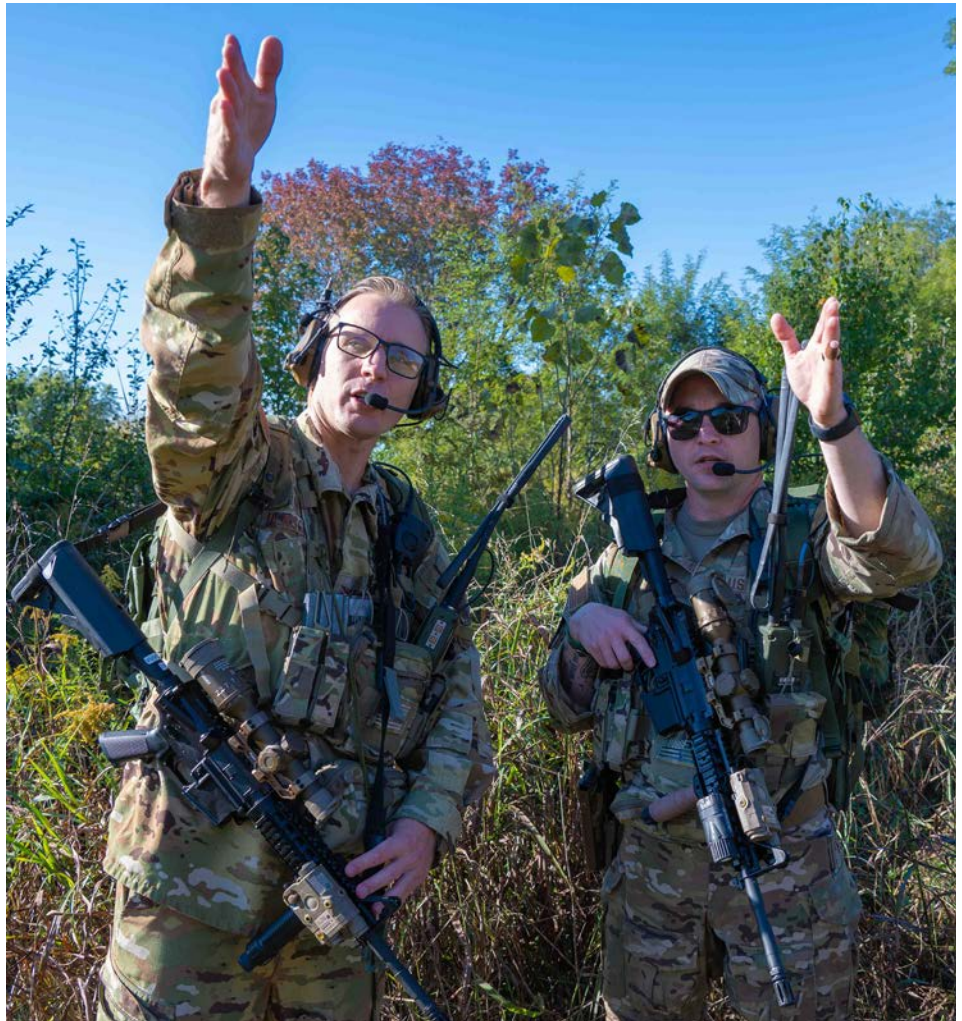
“I had an amazing time spending part of the day out on the flight line, witnessing the sharp end of the spear and celebrating the Air Force’s birthday!” said Mihalik.

126th Security Forces Squadron

Colonel Nick Henschel, 126th Air Refueling Wing commander, went undercover in the 126th Security Forces Squadron to learn how they train and equip to conduct Air Base Ground Defense in protection of United States Air Force and Air National Guard assets against threats.

Master Sgt. Jared Clauser, 126th Security Forces Squadron training instructor, joined Henschel on a dismounted tactics exercise through the backwoods of Scott Air Force Base Oct. 9. They used map and compass to plot an area reconnaissance patrol route. Using azimuths, distance, and direction, they conducted a two man patrol maintaining constant communication with the Tactical Operations Center manned by Master Sgt. Alexander Cairy.

"In addition to multiple weapon qualifications, our defenders are trained in a wide spectrum of military operations including land navigation. These skills are critical as we maintain readiness to deploy anywhere in the world, against any adversary, in any terrain. The defenders serving in our wing are battle-hardened professionals and I'm honored to serve alongside them," said Henschel.



126th Communications Flight



Colonel Matthew Kopp, 126th Air Refueling Wing's Deputy Commander, went undercover in the 126th Communications Flight to learn about the Global Aircrew Strategic Network Terminal system.

He joined cyber professionals Master Sgt. Nathan Zeisset, Tech. Sgt. Michael Raatz and Tech. Sgt. Bryant Adams, along with Chief Master Sgt. Bryan Hatfield from the 126th Command Post, to learn how this critical equipment provides protected communication capabilities to our tanker fleet and supports the aircrew in operational environments.

This system's resilient communication capability allows the 126th ARW to send and receive special alerts to support our nuclear forces called Emergency Action Messages enabling our mission.

Chatham Soldier Assumes Command of Aviation Battalion during Oct. 5 ceremony

In a ceremony steeped in rich military tradition, Lt. Col. Jason Celletti, of Springfield, relinquished command of 1st Battalion, 106th Aviation Regiment to Lt. Col. Zachary DeGroot, of Chatham, Oct. 5 at the battalion's headquarters in Peoria.

"Lieutenant Colonel Celletti, a couple of years ago, I gave you not only an assignment but a big assignment," said Col. Max Casteleyn, commander of 65th Troop Command. "We asked you to change air frames, lead the battalion in a very complex environment, and to bring everyone home. Typical people would accomplish one of the three. You accomplished all three. Thank you for the phenomenal job you have done."

Casteleyn thanked Celletti's family for their support.

"I want to recognize your family because you cannot do what you do without their support," he said.

He also addressed DeGroot.

"This job is not easy. This is a unit with four airframes. They just came back from a war zone," Casteleyn said. "This is a tough task, but you can do it."

Casteleyn reminded the 106th that the success of the unit does not rest with just one individual, but everyone.

"You are the Blackhorse Regiment," Casteleyn said. "I ask you to support the unit and the leadership to get to that next level of readiness that is required in today's complex environment."

Celletti thanked his family for their support throughout his military service.

"Milana, our representative of the Celletti family today, you are the one who has taken the brunt of all the missed soccer games and school events in the past 13 years," he said. "Thank you for always being the strong one in the family."

Celletti reflected on his service in the battalion.

"It struck me when listening to Colonel Casteleyn's remarks that today will be my last day of my 20 years serving



Col. Max Casteleyn, commander of the 65th Troop Command, passes the 1st Battalion, 106th Aviation Regiment's flag to Lt. Col. Zachary DeGroot, of Chatham, signifying his assumption of command during the battalion's change of command ceremony Oct. 5 in Peoria.



Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 106th Aviation Regiment, salute during the battalion's change of command ceremony Oct. 5 in Peoria.

here in the 106th," he said. "From E-4 to O-5, it was 20 years ago I received my first coin right here in this hangar at the change of command ceremony taking place that day."

Celletti said the Blackhorse Battalion is a family.

"The Blackhorse Battalion has always been a family to every service member who served in it," he said. "We've witnessed the successes and failures but as a family we've rallied around each other. The Soldiers of Blackhorse have prevailed. Continue to tell your story. Don't let distractions deter your accomplishments."

Celletti enlisted in the Illinois Army National Guard in 2001, spending his first three years as an enlisted UH-60 Blackhawk mechanic and crew chief. In 2003, he commissioned through the Officer Candidate School and became an Aviation Platoon Leader in the battalion. He has served in multiple command and staff positions throughout his career. His Active Guard and Reserve assignments include Army Medical Officer Strength Maintenance; Battalion Officer in Charge, 1st Battalion, 106th Aviation Regiment; Brigade Training Officer for the 404th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade; and as the State Aviation Officer. He is completing his Masters of National Security Studies with American Military University and in April began a follow on Master's Program with the U.S. Army War College in Strategic Studies.

DeGroot thanked his wife, Bo, and sons, Zachary and Gabriel, for their support.

"My wife, Bo, your understanding has been the backbone and strength of my service," he said. "Thank you for standing beside me all these years. You are a pillar of support and I'm grateful for the love you bring to our family."

DeGroot said the change of command represents another milestone in the battalion's history.

"I have the honor and privilege to stand before you today as your new battalion commander," he said. "Together we will continue to uphold the tradition of readiness. My two goals are mission success and taking care of the Soldiers and their families. I look forward to serving as your leader as we continue to soar to new heights and set new standards for Army aviation."



Lt. Col. Jason Celletti, of Springfield, passes the 1st Battalion, 106th Aviation Regiment's flag, to Col. Max Casteleyn, commander of the 65th Troop Command, signifying his relinquishment of command during the battalion's change of command ceremony Oct. 5 in Peoria.



Col. Max Casteleyn, commander, 65th Troop Command, presents outgoing 1st Battalion, 106th Aviation Regiment commander Lt. Col. Jason Celletti with a gift during the battalion's change of command ceremony.



Lt. Col. Zachary DeGroot, the new commander of 1st Battalion, 106th Aviation Regiment, salutes at the end of the battalion's change of command ceremony Oct. 5 in Peoria.

Machesney Park-based Transportation Company readies to “Fuel the Fight” during deployment

By Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

“Go show the world you are trained, disciplined, and Soldiers proudly representing the state of Illinois.”

With those words from Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, The Adjutant General of Illinois, and Commander of the Illinois National Guard, approximately 160 Soldiers from the Illinois Army National Guard’s 725th Transportation Company, based in Machesney Park, were mobilized to deploy to the U.S. European Command area of responsibility in support of Operation Atlantic Resolve at a ceremony Oct. 24 at the Harlem High School, Machesney Park.

“You are members of a storied unit that has received numerous prestigious accolades and recognition for logistical support and operational readiness,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “Today you continue that legacy as your call to service takes you to Europe to assist U.S. and allied forces in their work to promote



Gov. JB Pritzker and Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, The Adjutant General of Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National Guard, present a state of Illinois flag to Capt. Charles Smith III, Commander of the 725th Transportation Company to carry with them on their deployment to the U.S. European Command area of responsibility.

stability and security in the region.”

Pritzker recognized the Soldiers’ families for the sacrifices they make during deployments.

“Families bear a great burden for our Soldiers and our state,” he said. “The entire state of Illinois is standing with you. As you count down the days when these brave Soldiers return home, our sacred promise is to keep you safe and comforted.”

Pritzker thanked the Soldiers for their commitment to service.

“Soldiers, you have answered a truly extraordinary call,” he said. “You are going above and beyond to serve not just our country and our fellow citizens, but our alliances in the global

community of nations. In undertaking this important mission, you are making us all safer, freer, and stronger. Thank you for your service. Know that you carry the strength of this state and our people with you.”

State Sen. Andrew Chesney, 45th District, said it was a profound honor to attend the ceremony.

“To all of you preparing for this mission, I express my deepest respect and admiration,” he said. “Your courage in the face of uncertainty exemplifies the greatest qualities of our Armed Forces.”

Chesney said the approximately 160 men and women standing in formation are more than Soldiers.

“You are sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews,

and cherished grandchildren,” he said. “Each of you carry the love and support of family and friends who endure their own sacrifices while you serve our nation.”

Chesney acknowledged the Soldiers’ families as well.

“Your families stand behind you. Their unwavering support and resilience are vital to your success,” he said. “They are also heroes in this journey. Their strength deserves our recognition and gratitude.”

Chesney reminded the Soldiers they are part of a legacy.

“You are part of a legacy that has defended freedom and democracy around the world,” he said. “Your commitment to protecting these ideals is not only admirable but essential to ensuring the future where liberty prevails over tyranny. Your willingness to serve our country and our allies inspires us all.”

State Rep. John Cabello, 90th District, challenged the 725th



Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, The Adjutant General of Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National Guard, issues four challenges to the Soldiers of the 725th Transportation Company during the unit’s mobilization ceremony Oct. 24 at Harlem High School in Machesney Park.

Transportation Company to view the deployment as an opportunity to write a new chapter in the state's history.

"Each of you carry the legacy of those who came before you," he said. "You're putting your careers on hold and stepping away from your family responsibilities to venture into the unknown. You do so willingly and that embodies the best traditions of the Illinois National Guard."

He said the men and women in uniform are not only Soldiers, but also ambassadors of freedom and justice.

"The road ahead will be challenging. There will be long days and even longer nights, and moments when your resolve will be tested," he said. "I have no doubt that you will rise to every challenge."

He also acknowledged the families these Soldiers leave behind.

"Your sacrifice is equally significant," he said. "While your loved ones serve abroad you will

serve at home. Your strength and support are the foundation upon which our military stands. We honor your commitment and pledge our unwavering support during their deployment."

Chesney said the deployment



Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, The Adjutant General of Illinois, and Commander of the Illinois National Guard, talks with Capt. Charles A. Smith III, commander, 725th Transportation Company, based in Machesney Park, prior to the unit's mobilization ceremony Oct. 24 at Harlem High School.

should remind each person that citizenship comes at a price.

"Citizenship comes with a responsibility," he said. "Freedom requires vigilance, but ordinary people can rise to extraordinary challenges. Soldiers, as you deploy you do not go alone. You carry with you the gratitude of this state and nation, pride of your community, and the love of your family."

Boyd challenged the Soldiers to accomplish three additional things while deployed.

"I ask you to be flexible," he said. "You'll be asked to be certain places at certain times. But then you might be standing around. Be flexible. Read a book during that time. Do pushups to pass the time. Just be flexible."

Boyd also asked the Soldiers to be team players.

"There is no 'I' in team,"

he said. "This mission is a team effort. As you strive as a team, so you will succeed as a team. Lift your team members up. Have their back. There may come a time when you need them to have your back."

Lastly, Boyd asked the Soldiers to communicate with their families at home.

"They will worry about you every day," Boyd said. "Make sure you take the time to reach out to them."

Boyd thanked the families for their support.

"Because of what you do, we are able to do what we love to do and that is wear this uniform and serve this great state and great nation," he said. "We are here for you. It is our responsibility to be here for you as your warriors go forward. Don't suffer in silence. Pick up the phone and let us know what is going on. As someone who has deployed three times, I know how hard it gets."

Boyd thanked the Soldiers for accepting the mission.

"Thank you for taking on this mission," he said. "Go there, do your job and make us proud. When you come back, we'll welcome you back with open arms."

Capt. Charles A. Smith III, the 725th Transportation Company's commander, said for the past five months the Soldiers have been training and preparing for this short notice mission.

"From our first notice, through intensive training and now final preparation, our Soldiers have proven their readiness to be called to duty," he said. "In August, we transitioned into field training missions, perfecting our mission essential tasks and honing our tactical and operational skills. Now we have completed our final pre-deployment check with every detail precisely managed to ensure a seamless transition to our mission."

Smith said the preparation shows the unit's commitment.

"I stand here today with absolute confidence that we are ready to succeed in our mission," he said. "Soldiers, you put in the work, embraced the training, built a team, and showed the highest level of discipline. As we prepare to deploy, I know each of you will uphold the



Gov. JB Pritzker thanks the families of the approximately 160 Soldiers from 725th Transportation Company deploying to the U.S. European Command area of responsibility for their support during the unit's mobilization ceremony Oct. 24 at Harlem High School in Machesney Park.



Soldiers from the 725th Transportation Company stand at attention during the unit's mobilization ceremony at Harlem High School, Machesney Park Oct. 24.

values and honor of the U.S. Army."

Smith also thanked the families, including his own, for their support.

"Thank you to the families of our Soldiers, especially my wife who supports me during this deployment, even with the likelihood of me missing out on the birth of our second child," he said. "Families, none of this would be possible without your support. Throughout the past five months, you stood by us, understanding the demands placed on your Soldiers while we are focused on the mission. We are always mindful of the sacrifice you make. You are our foundation,

and we carry your strength with us."

Lastly, Smith addressed his Soldiers.

"As we go forward let us hold true to our Army values," he said. "These values will guide us through every situation, ensuring we not only accomplish our mission, but return home stronger than ever. We will execute our mission with excellence and when we return, it will be with pride, knowing we represented ourselves, our unit, family, state, and nation with honor."

The 725th Transportation Co., based in Machesney Park, traces back

to Alpha Company, 405th Brigade Support Battalion. In 2018, a strategic realignment led to the redesignation of Alpha Company, 405th BSB as the 725th Transportation Co. This specialized the unit's capabilities, focusing on fuel hauling and supply.

From Jan. 26, 2021, through March 31, 2021, the 725th Transportation Company mobilized to support Operation Capital Response II in Washington DC. The unit played a significant role in providing essential security for the entry control point around the Capitol Building as well as the general area. Additionally, the 725th was responsible for cataloging and distributing supplies to all manned areas.

The 725th Transportation Company won first place in the Army Award for Maintenance Excellence (AAME) in the Army National Guard Medium MTOE category in 2024. This award highlighted the unit's commitment to maintaining the highest levels of unit readiness and logistical efficiency. The 725th also participated in the Quartermaster Liquid Logistics Exercise (QLLEX) in 2023. The 725th's successfully executed the accident-free transfer of 56,000 gallons of bulk petroleum over 17,300 collective miles.

The 725th's specialized fuel hauling and supply services will be integral to maintaining the operational effectiveness of U.S. and allied forces, ensuring a continuous supply of necessary resources. The 725th Transportation Company will conduct fuel transportation operations in the U.S. European Command Area of Responsibility in support of Operation Atlantic Resolve.



Students from Harlem High School in Machesney Park cheer Soldiers from the 725th Transportation Company as they enter the gym during the unit's mobilization ceremony Oct. 24.



Peter Nieuwenhuis, Military Attaché of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in the United States, speaks during a presentation of the Orange Lanyard in honor of Capt. Anthony Stefanich, a former Illinois National Guardsman, who was killed in action during World War II.

Netherlands honors Guardsman from WWII

Brig. Gen. Justin Osberg, the Director of the Illinois National Guard Joint Staff, and Peter Nieuwenhuis, Military Attaché of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in the United States, presented the Orange Lanyard to Matt and Lyla Stefanich in honor of their relative, Capt. Anthony Stefanich, a former Illinois National Guardsman.

Capt. Stefanich was killed in action during World War II while fighting

for the freedom of the Netherlands. The Orange Lanyard, a symbol of the Military Order of William—the Netherlands' highest military honor—recognizes exceptional bravery, leadership, and loyalty, all qualities Capt. Stefanich demonstrated throughout his service.

Capt. Stefanich was remembered as a courageous leader whose heroic actions in the Netherlands were

remarkable. Despite being wounded and under enemy fire, he led his patrol to rescue others, ultimately sacrificing his life in the process. His unwavering dedication to the liberation of the Netherlands earned him lasting recognition for his bravery.

"It is thanks to men like him that we enjoy the freedoms we have today," Nieuwenhuis said during the ceremony.



Brig. Gen. Justin Osberg, the Director of the Illinois National Guard Joint Staff, speaks during the presentation of the Orange Lanyard to the family of Capt. Anthony Stefanich, who was killed in action during World War II.



Peter Nieuwenhuis, Military Attaché of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in the United States, presented the Orange Lanyard to Matt Stefanich.



Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Browning, Maintenance Control NCO (Non-Commissioned Officer), is pinned by his daughter, U.S. Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Ashley Harris Oct. 2 at the Illinois Military Academy on Camp Lincoln in Springfield.

Jacksonville Native Promoted to Sergeant First Class

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

Staff Sgt. Christopher Browning, a Jacksonville, Illinois native, was promoted to sergeant first class on Oct. 2 at the Illinois Military Academy on Camp Lincoln in Springfield.



Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Browning, a Jacksonville, Illinois native, gives remarks during his promotion ceremony Oct. 2.

Surrounded by a close group of friends and colleagues, his promotion ceremony highlighted his 18-year career and the impact he has made on those around him.

"His family is extremely important to him," said Maj. Andrew Trine, the Deputy Surface Maintenance Manager for the Illinois Army National Guard. "He didn't want to have a big formal promotion ceremony but wanted to ensure his family was present."

"I wanted to celebrate this special moment with my daughter, U.S. Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Ashley Harris, while she is in between changing duty locations from Italy to Hawaii," Browning said.

Browning enlisted in the Illinois Army National Guard in September 2006 and has completed two overseas deployments. He deployed with the 1244th Transportation Company to Iraq and Kuwait in support of

Operation New Dawn from October 2010 to September 2011 and again with the 232nd Combat Sustainment Battalion (CSSB) to Iraq and Kuwait from May 2020 to January 2021 in support of Operation Inherent Resolve.

He has held various military and technician assignments throughout his career. His current military assignment is as a maintenance control non-commissioned officer with the 232nd CSSB.

"I want to first and foremost thank God," said Browning. "I'm also extremely grateful for my family and everyone who came out today to celebrate this moment with me. You all have had a tremendous impact on my career."

Browning currently resides in New Berlin with his wife, Sheri, and two of his children, Christopher and Kayle.



A Grove manlift sits on the back of a truck ready to be turned into the Defense Logistics Agency, Aug. 27, 2024 at Scott Air Force Base, Illinois. The manlift will be shipped to Fort Riley, Kansas for turn in with the Defense Logistics Agency.

Out With the Old

126th LRS turns in 89.5 tons of unused items to Defense Logistics Agency Disposition Services

by Master Sgt. Brian Ellison, 126th Air Refueling Wing Public Affairs

The 126th Logistics Readiness Squadron loaded nine trucks with more than 179,000 pounds of unused items from around the 126th Air Refueling Wing.

A team loaded nine, 53-foot trucks over three days. The 153 pallets included a sewing machine, printers, systems furniture, guard shacks and a man lift. Some of the equipment dates back to before the unit moved from Chicago in 1999.

"The process went smooth," said Tech. Sgt. Andrew Friess. "We worked well as a team."

The equipment is being turned into Defense Logistics Agency Disposition Services at Fort Riley, Kansas, where the items will be sold off, stripped of hazardous material if needed or recycled.

"To put it in a major graded area perspective this provides resource accountability and stewardship of

Air Force property which is a tenant of managing resources," said Lt. Col. Jenn Luebeck, 126th Mission Support Group program manager, "and also incorporates improving the unit by clearing superfluous clutter, freeing up space for better utilization and keeps 8,165 sq ft of storage space

available for expanded mission capabilities."

The turn-in saved the wing more than \$13,000, which the unit will have to pay out of pocket to do the same thing next year, and more than 130 hours of driving time.



Tech. Sgt. Andrew Friess, left, 126th Logistics Readiness Squadron, guides Staff Sgt. Thomas Tate, 126th LRS, on to a 53 foot truck.

PERSCO: First in last out at the Alpena CRTC during Exercise Northern Strike 24-2

By 2nd Lt. Elise Wahlstrom, Michigan National Guard

A 10-member personnel support team from the 182nd Airlift Wing, Illinois Air National Guard, played a critical role in maintaining accountability, and coordinating meals, lodging and transportation, for the more than 700 personnel at the Alpena Combat Readiness Training Center during Exercise Northern Strike 24-2, which took place Aug. 3-17.

The Illinois Guardsmen were in Michigan as part of NS 24-2, a premier reserve component training event designed to build readiness with joint and international partner forces in all-domains of warfare. Michigan's unique geography, airspace, ranges and connection to the defense industry make it an ideal environment for all-season training and operations.

"Several of the airmen have not been deployed and have not gotten the opportunity to apply what they learned in tech school in a real-world environment. Northern Strike allows them the opportunity to work in a joint high-tempo environment and the chance to run the exercise as if deployed," said U.S. Air Force Capt. Cecilia Prince, a security forces officer

with the 116th Wing Georgia Air National Guard, Robins Air Force Base, who was the officer in charge of the team.

NS 24-2 is one of the Department of Defense's largest reserve exercises, involving over 6,300 participants from across the globe. The training takes place at multiple training sites throughout Michigan's northern Lower Peninsula, collectively known as the National All-Domain Warfighting Center. The NADWC includes the Alpena CRTC, Camp Grayling, and their combined ranges and airspace.

The personnel team faced unique challenges in this joint environment, particularly in working with international partners.

"Coming here and being forced to think outside the box was very valuable," said U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Tatiyana Prince, a personnel specialist at the 182nd AW. "Northern Strike allowed us to get that joint experience, and we learned how to improvise in new situations with foreign nationals, and NATO."

Once the exercise began, the team was available from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00

p.m. and frequently worked 12-hour shifts to meet the mission's needs. As tiring as it may seem, when asked what the most rewarding aspect of her job was, Master Sgt. Prince's answer was simple, helping people.

"I love it. I wake up at 5:00 a.m. and I'm happy to be here. It's just natural for me," said Master Sgt. Prince.

Airman Alexa Malagon, a personnel specialist with the 182nd AW, on her first annual training assignment, agreed with Master Sgt. Prince and added that the challenge of working long hours was offset by personal connections she was able to make.

"The interactions with people. You get to see first impressions of people when they check in and when you see them on base they recognize you," said Malagon.

The PERSCO team's role was not just about logistics; it was about ensuring the seamless operation of an exercise that is crucial to maintaining the readiness of U.S. and partner nation forces. Their work underscored the importance of detailed planning, coordination, and adaptability in military operations, particularly in large-scale, multinational exercises like Northern Strike. This experience not only bolstered the team's skills but also highlighted the strategic value of joint training efforts in preparing for real-world missions.

"The value was fantastic. Learning accountability for a joint force is way different than accounting for people at an Air National Guard Base. We had to think about the best way to get organized and track all of the other branches," added Master Sgt. Prince.

The Alpena CRTC provides premier support, facilities, instruction, and airspace to the Department of Defense, Department of Homeland Security, coalition and emergency responders to meet mission requirements of combatant commanders and civil authorities.



U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Tatiyana Prince, Airman Alexa Malagon, personnel specialists with the 182nd Airlift Wing, Illinois Air National Guard, and Airman 1st Class Ana Merrell, a services specialist with the 182nd AW, pose for a photo at the Alpena CRTC during Exercise Northern Strike 24-2 on Aug. 16.

ANG Contingency Response Senior Leadership Summit Promotes Global Perspective

Story by Maj. Matt Murphy, 156th Wing, Puerto Rico Air National Guard

The 156th Wing, Puerto Rico Air National Guard, hosted the first-ever ANG Contingency Response Senior Leadership Summit, at Muñiz Air National Guard Base bringing together key personnel from active-duty and contingency response units from ten states — California, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, Minnesota, Missouri, Texas, Washington, and Puerto Rico, Oct. 8-9.

The summit was created to standardize and learn how to better organize, train, and equip contingency response units across the ANG enterprise, focusing on expanding and enhancing CR's global capabilities for future opportunities by exchanging best practices across the spectrum of air operations, from humanitarian disaster response to contested combat environments.

"The opportunity to host this event underscores Puerto Rico's vital role in national defense and global readiness," said U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Miguel A. Mendez, the adjutant general of Puerto Rico. "It is a testament to the professionalism and readiness of our Airmen, and we are proud to be at the forefront of such an important initiative for the Air National Guard."

During the two-day summit, experts shared best practices, experienced hands-on demonstrations, and served as an opportunity to meet

face-to-face to discuss funding challenges.

"We need to strengthen the guard's ability to respond to global and national contingencies, showcase interoperability with each other and the active-duty Air Force and show America contingency response units are the backbone of rapid deployment, ensuring readiness for both military and humanitarian crises," said U.S. Air Force Brig. Gen. Humberto Pabon Jr., assistant adjutant general - air, Puerto Rico Air National Guard.

Pabon created the summit with support from other state leaders to promote a national-level conversation about contingency response needs across the Air Force enterprise.

"This summit is what it's all about," said U.S. Air Force Col. Barton Kenerson, A/4 director of logistics infrastructure and support for Air Force Southern Command. "Establishing relationships ahead of the fight is critical. In times of crisis, you can't win. This event sets the conditions for success. It makes stronger, more effective teams."

Kenerson also emphasized the importance of the additional capability and quality of force the Air Guard



Brig. Gen. Daniel McDonough, Assistant Adjutant General Air, and Commander of the Illinois Air National Guard, and Col. Joelee Sessions, 182nd Air Support Operations Group commander, speak with Senior Airman Laura Salgado, a security forces journeyman with the 156th Security Operations Squadron, Puerto Rico Air National Guard, during the Contingency Response Senior Leadership Summit.

brings to the CR fight. "We can't do it without the Guard. Our advanced strategy in South America and the Caribbean depends on the established relationships and consistency of operations in other countries through National Guard State Partnership Programs."

Summit participants also used this time as a mentoring opportunity with cross-unit collaborations, sharing critical tactics and strategies that will bolster the Guard's overall readiness and response capabilities.

"We are just getting into the CR business. Having the ability to get an education and to network is extremely important," said U.S. Air Force Brig. Gen. Dan McDonough, Illinois assistant adjutant general - air, while touring a display of CR tools and equipment. This summit is a huge success because events specific to contingency response have never happened before and this showcases its importance at the national level."

Leaders and participants left the summit with a collaborative understanding on how to elevate the importance of contingency response to their state and its impact on the national defense strategy.



Lt. Col. Hector Roman, the 156th Contingency Response Support Squadron commander, Puerto Rico Air National Guard, left, and Col. Rusty Ballard, the 182nd Airlift Wing commander, Illinois National Guard, speak with an Airman assigned to the 156th Contingency Response Group, Puerto Rico Air National Guard, during the Contingency Response Senior Leadership Summit at Muñiz Air National Guard Base, Carolina, Puerto Rico, Oct. 9.

Illinois and Ohio National Guard Teams Join U. S. Air Forces Europe in Polish Base Survey

Members from the Illinois Air National Guard, Ohio Air National Guard and U.S. Air Forces in Europe (USAFE) conducted expeditionary site planning surveys at three Polish military airbases and one commercial airport during a two-week mission in October.

The expeditionary site planning survey (ESS) team included members from the Illinois Air National Guard's 126th Air Refueling Wing and 182nd Airlift Wing as well as a contingency airfield pavement evaluation team from the 200th Rapid Engineer Deployable Heavy Operational Repair Squadron Engineer (REDHORSE), Ohio Air National Guard.

"This is the first time that anyone in the directorate can remember National Guard members augmenting the mission," said Maj. Jason Chisolm, USAFE expeditionary site plan survey chief.

An expeditionary site planning survey consists of a team that travels

across Europe, looking at airbases important to the United States and NATO and collecting data to determine their capabilities, runway strength and equipment to support aircraft and forces.

The survey information is collected in a database to streamline planning for future exercises or contingency operations. This allows senior leaders and planners to know what capabilities are available to execute missions in the future.

"This directly supports the ACE [Agile Combat Employment] concept," said Chisolm. "This gives us additional locations and airfields to rapidly distribute and protect our assets."

The information is shared not only with senior U.S. leaders, planners and embassy personnel, but also with the Polish Ministry of Defense.

Some of the areas considered were security, intelligence, services, ammunition storage, maintenance



U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Brad Kahrhoff, 126th Supply Chain Operation Squadron, explains the State Partnership Program during a briefing at Malbork, Poland Oct. 17.



U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Matt Boice, 126th Civil Engineer Squadron, commander, discusses the fire departments capabilities during an expeditionary site survey at Malbork, Poland, Oct. 17.



Members of the Expeditionary Site Survey team stand with their Polish counterparts for a group photo in Malbork, Poland, Oct. 17. The 126th CES was in Poland as part of an Expeditionary Site Survey that checked Polish bases for their capabilities and runway strength for future use by U.S., Allied and partner forces.



Master Sgt. Jordan Deady, 200th Rapid Engineer Deployable Heavy Operational Repair Squadron Engineer, drills a hole on a runway in preparation for a penetration test at Gdynia, Poland, Oct. 15.

capabilities, airfield management, air traffic control and aerial port considerations.

A team within the ESS checks the runways, taxiways and aprons for strength to determine the size and frequency an aircraft can land on a runway. The runway check was done by the 200th REDHORSE CAPE team. The process consisted of drilling small holes into the concrete to verify the runway's thickness and the compactness of the dirt beneath it.

The team also performed a visual inspection of the concrete and asphalt sections.

"Depending on the types of distress I find," said Capt. Johnathan Whitesell of the 200th REDHORSE CAPE team, "I can recommend repairs or limit aircraft in certain spots."

For the Illinois National Guardsmen, it was a chance to work with their state partners, the

Republic of Poland. Illinois has been a state partner with Poland for more than 30 years. The State Partnership Program was originally designed to help European countries emerge from behind the Iron Curtain. Now, 50% of the world's countries are paired with the National Guard of each U.S. state and territory.

"Working with my Polish counterparts was an amazing experience, especially because the Illinois Air National Guard is paired with Poland through the State Partnership Program," said Master Sgt. Tasia Clark, 126th Force Support Squadron, services. "I am extremely grateful to have been a part of this expedition and hope it will not be my last one."

Chisolm hopes there will be more of these cooperative endeavors between USAFE and the Air National Guard.



Chris Figura, Scott Air Force Base Veterans Center, discusses his mental health journey during a Suicide Prevention Panel discussion at Scott Air Force Base, Illinois, Sept. 8. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Brian Ellison)



The 126th Air Refueling Wing commander Col. Nick Henschel and Lt. Col. Eric Wolf, 906th Air Refueling Squadron commander, receives a check for more than \$350,000 after winning first place in the Mission Execution Excellence Program, for fuel efficiency, Air Reserve Component category. Henschel received the check from Secretary of the Air Force Frank Kendall and Air Mobility Command, commander Gen. John Lamontagne.

Loves Park Soldier Retires after 21 Year Career

Lt. Col. Nicholas Camardo of Loves Park, Illinois laced his boots for the last time Sept. 14.

Camardo retired after more than 21 years in the Illinois National Guard where he has served as an Infantry officer. He joined the Illinois National Guard five days after the Operation Iraqi Freedom began. Initially the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 inspired him to join the military, but he had business to finish at Northern Illinois University.

"Unfortunately, I had two more semesters to complete before I graduated," said Camardo.

He graduated with a bachelor's degree in marketing in December of 2002, and three months later joined the Illinois National Guard in March of 2003.

Six years later after a deployment to Afghanistan with the 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team where he served as a platoon leader of a Provencial Reconstruction Team, Camardo said he was at a crossroads in his career.

He credits Col. (Ret) Paul Hastings for the inspiration to make the Illinois

National Guard a career.

"He told me this is a profession and a calling." Said Camardo. "He demonstrated that by checking on his Soldiers and following up with our wounded warriors. I took that to heart and tried my best to always put our Soldiers first.

Camardo said another mentor early in his career told him "always do the tougher right over the easy wrong." He said he's carried that mantra throughout his career.

Camardo said the Illinois National Guard has remained mostly the same over his career and urges younger Soldiers to concentrate on the fundamentals.

"Focus on discipline. Do physical fitness, it's free, so get some," he said. "Practice the fundamentals; shoot,



Lt. Col. Nicholas Camardo of Loves Park, poses with Col. Shawn Nokes after being presented with his retirement certificate during a retirement ceremony at Camp Lincoln in Springfield Sept. 14.

move, communicate. Have integrity and a 'make it happen' attitude."

Camardo said now that he's retired, he plans to spend more time with his family, including coaching his sons, 10-year-old Hudson and 7-year-old Parker.

Springfield Mayor's Staff Tours 183rd Wing

Springfield Mayor Misty Buscher's staff, led by Chief of Staff Mike Disco, visited the Illinois Air National Guard 183rd Wing on Sept. 5, to continue strengthening the relationship between the City and the Wing.

The mayor's delegation met with 183rd Wing Commander Col. Shawn D. Strahle and other senior wing staff officers for a comprehensive tour of the base.

A highlight of the visit was an inspection of the new Civil Engineering Complex, currently under construction. The \$13.4 million, 24,000-square-foot facility, set to house approximately 70 Airmen, represents a significant upgrade for the wing's Civil Engineer Squadron.

The mayor's staff gained insights into the Wing's role in national defense and its positive impact on the city. The Wing, with its many units, is a significant employer in the region.

(Illinois Air National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Paul Lauricella)



Kowalski Promoted to Colonel

Michael Kowalski, a native of Chicago Heights and resident of Elmhurst, was promoted to colonel in the Illinois Army National Guard on Sept. 28 at Cantigny Park in Wheaton.

The event, attended by family, friends, and distinguished guests, celebrated more than 22 years of military service.

Brig. Gen. (Retired) Mark Alessia, former Director of the Illinois National Guard Joint Staff, officiated the ceremony.

"Mike has just proven time and time again through his deployments, in command of a troop and a squadron, that he's an excellent leader who Soldiers like to follow," said Alessia, who now serves as the civilian Illinois National Guard Director of Resiliency (J-9). "I'm really glad to see Mike take that next step, and I think he's going to excel as a future strategic leader."

Kowalski's promotion to colonel was effective April 8. His individual qualifications include a Master of Science degree from University of Chicago, a Master of Business Administration from Clemson University, and a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Eastern Illinois University. He is scheduled to graduate next summer from the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College.

"I am proud to be part of a family of military service," said Kowalski. "My older sister joined the U.S. Navy when she was 17 years old in 1998, followed by my older brother enlisting in the U.S. Air Force in 2004. I joined the U.S. Army in 2004 and was commissioned in 2006 as a second lieutenant. I was deployed to Afghanistan with the 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Illinois National Guard, but what you may not know is that my brother was deployed to Iraq and my sister to Turkey - all at the same time."

Also present at the ceremony was Naser Hamidy, a former interpreter who worked with Kowalski in



India Kowalski, wife of newly promoted U.S. Army Col. Michael Kowalski, of Elmhurst, Commander of the 244th Digital Liaison Detachment, Illinois Army National Guard, pins on colonel rank during a promotion ceremony Sept. 28 at Cantigny Park, in Wheaton.

Afghanistan, and was sponsored by Kowalski to immigrate with his family to the United States in 2013.

Kowalski is a data scientist who works for the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation's Division of Complex Institution Supervision and Resolutions.

For the Illinois National Guard, Kowalski most recently served as the Commander of the 244th Digital Liaison Detachment and deployed forward to multiple locations in Estonia in March 2024 in support

of the NATO multi-national named exercise 'Austere Challenge 2024'. His career highlights include serving as the executive officer of the 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team and as squadron commander of the 2nd Squadron, 106th Cavalry Regiment.

The Illinois National Guard provides ready units prepared to respond, on order, at the direction of the President of the United States or the Governor of Illinois to protect our state, defend our homeland, and fight our nation's wars when called on.

1st Bn, 129th Regiment gets new commander



Lt. Col. David Tanner passes the guidon of the 1st Battalion, 129th Regiment to Master Sgt. Michael Ladd during the battalion's change of command ceremony Oct. 20.



Lt. Col. David Tanner addresses the Soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 129th Regiment for the first time as their battalion commander following the battalion's change of command Oct. 20. The Springfield-based battalion trains and qualifies Soldiers as military truck drivers or 88Ms.



Lt. Col. Nicholas Camardo leaves parting words with the Soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 129th Regiment during the battalion's change of command ceremony Oct. 20. Camardo relinquished command to Lt. Col. David Tanner of Bettendorf, Iowa. Camardo led the battalion through a successful accreditation.



Staff Sgt. Keith Sapp sings the Army Song at the end of his battalion's change of ceremony. Lt. Col. Nicholas Camardo relinquished command of the Illinois Army National Guard's 1st Battalion, 129th Regiment (Regional Training Institute) to Lt. Col. David Tanner of Bettendorf, Iowa.



Soldiers in 2nd Battalion, 122nd Field Artillery Regiment, salute during the unit's change of command ceremony Oct. 18.

2nd Battalion, 122nd Field Artillery gets new leader during change of command ceremony

The Illinois National Guard held a change of command ceremony for the 2nd Battalion, 122nd Field Artillery on Oct. 18 at the Marseilles Training Center in Marseilles, Illinois.

Outgoing commander Lt. Col. Paul Seivert, of Round Lake, Illinois, handed over command of the 2-122 FA to Lt. Col. Nicholas Miller, of Bloomington, Illinois. The event was overseen by Col. Seth Hible, commander of the 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, and attended by family, friends, and colleagues.

The ceremony, steeped in tradition, honors the outgoing commander and officially recognizes the transfer of authority and responsibility for the battalion's Soldiers, equipment, and mission to the new commander. The transition is marked by the issuance of an official assumption of command order and the symbolic transfer of the battalion colors. The battalion colors, representing the unit's history, traditions, and accomplishments, are passed as a legacy, serving as a foundation for future success. Historically, a unit's colors were a rallying point for Soldiers in battle.

U.S. Army photos by Mr. Robert R. Adams, Command Information Manager, Illinois National Guard, PAO



Lt. Col. Nicholas Miller receives the colors of 2nd Battalion, 122nd Field Artillery during the battalion's change of command ceremony at Marseilles Training Center Oct. 18.



333rd MP Company mobilizes for overseas mission





Bringing Beauty to Scott Air Force Base

126th Air Refueling Wing members brought a little beauty to the wing's area on Scott Air Force Base, Oct. 6. Wing members weeded, cleaned up walkways and cleared branches to beautify the wing lawns. (Illinois Air National Guard photos by Staff Sgt. Aaron Rodriguez)





Sgt. Shawna Morrison

SEPT 5

2004: Sgt. Shawna Morrison, 26, of Paris, died Sept. 5 in Baghdad, Iraq, of wounds sustained during a mortar attack.

Morrison was assigned to the Illinois Army National Guard's 1544th Transportation Company, Paris.



Spc. Charles Lamb

SEPT 5

2004: Spc. Charles Lamb, 23, of Casey, died Sept. 5 in Baghdad, Iraq, of wounds sustained during a mortar attack. Lamb was assigned to the Illinois Army National Guard's 1544th Transportation Company, Paris.

Lamb was assigned to the Illinois Army National Guard's 1544th Transportation Company, Paris.



Sgt. Joshua Harris

SEPT 17

2008: Sgt. Joshua W. Harris, 21, of Romeoville, died Sept. 17 in Gerdia Seria, Afghanistan, of wounds suffered when his

vehicle encountered an improvised explosive device. He was assigned to the 2nd Battalion 122nd Field Artillery, Illinois Army National Guard, Robbins.



Staff Sgt. Jason Vazquez

SEPT 17

2008: Staff Sgt. Jason A. Vazquez, 24, of Chicago, died Sept. 17 in Gerdia Seria, Afghanistan, of wounds suffered when

his vehicle encountered an improvised explosive device. He was assigned to the 2nd Battalion 122nd Field Artillery, Illinois Army National Guard, Sycamore.



Sgt. Jessica L. Cawvey

OCT 6

2004: Sgt. Jessica L. Cawvey, 21, of Mahomet, died Oct. 6 in Fallujah, Iraq, of wounds sustained when an improvised explosive device

detonated near her convoy vehicle. Cawvey was assigned to the Army's National Guard's 1544th Transportation Company, Paris.

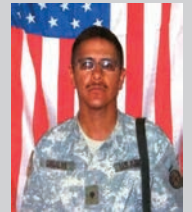


Spc. James Grijalva

OCT 12

2004: Spc. James T. Grijalva, 26, of Burbank, Ill., died in Baghdad, Iraq, on Oct. 14, of a non-combat related injury. Grijalva

was assigned to the Army National Guard's 2nd Battalion, 130th Infantry Regiment, Urbana.



Sgt. Kevin Grieco

OCT 27

2008: Sgt. Kevin D. Grieco, 35, of Bartlett, died Oct. 27 in Baghlan, Afghanistan, of wounds suffered when a suicide

bomber detonated explosives as they were preparing to enter a building. He was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 122nd Field Artillery, Illinois Army National Guard, Sycamore.



THIS DAY IN



HISTORY

Illinois Guardsmen respond to the citizens of Rockford after a tornado

SEPT 14 1928: Upon the request of the Mayor of Rockford, local troops responded to assist with the protection of property from the aftermath of a tornado. Fourteen people lost their lives and over 100 were injured. The tornado destroyed 30 city blocks including 360 homes and four factories. The city flooded and 1,200 citizens became homeless in Southeast Rockford. Company K, 129th Infantry commanded by Capt. Warren Aldrich patrolled the streets to secure property and lend aid to Rockford residents. State active duty lasted for four days.

The 202nd Coast Artillery inducted into Federal Service for World War II

SEPT 16 1940: The 202nd Coast Artillery became the first National Guard unit of the 6th Corps Area to be inducted into Federal Service for World War II. The unit saw action in both Europe and the Pacific. For the European combat they earned three French Croix de Guerre awards. Battery A, 2nd Battalion received a Philippine Presidential Unit Citation.



Illinois musician fought gallantly in the trenches of Lexington, Missouri

SEPT 20 1861: In the desperate fighting at the Battle of Lexington, officers in the 1st Illinois Cavalry were forced to augment the infantry with musicians and other non-combatants. Musician George H. Palmer volunteered to fight in the trenches. When granted permission, he immediately went in with the other augmented Soldiers of the regiment. During the heavy combat he led an infantry charge against a Confederate field hospital, and succeeded in capturing it and the rebel snipers that occupied it. For his act of bravery, he received the Medal of Honor.



Five Illinois units gained victory out of the bitter fighting at Allatoona Pass, Georgia

OCT 5 1864: Ten Federal Regiments, five from Illinois held the Allatoona railway pass under the command of Brigadier General John M. Corse. Confederate Major General S.G. French stopped the merciless bombardment long enough for a surrender demand to be delivered and rejected, at which time he sent 2000 troops against the Pass. The Union held all day with both sides inflicting heavy casualties. Some of the Illinois troops used Henry repeating rifles to mow down scores of attacking rebels. Near dusk the Confederate attack was repulsed with reinforcements under Major General William Tecumseh Sherman. The heaviest losses for Illinois were in the 7th Illinois Infantry which suffered 16% killed, and the 93rd Infantry with 11% killed.

Famous Guardsman: Joseph Fifer

OCT 28 1840: Joseph Fifer from Staunton, Virginia first entered military service in 1861. He enlisted as a Private with the 33rd Illinois Volunteer Infantry. In the Vicksburg Campaign, he received serious wounds in 1863 that affected him throughout the rest of his life. He finished the war as a guard aboard a prison boat. Fifer refused a medical discharge. He graduated from Wesley University in 1868. His postwar career as a city attorney in Bloomington led to involvement in state politics. Fifer spent one year as Bloomington's Corporation Counsel. He served 2 terms as states' attorney for McLean County from 1872 to 1880 and as a two term Illinois state Senator from 1880 to 1884, before being elected as the 21st Illinois governor, serving from 14 January 1889 to 10 January 1893. As Governor he founded the State Historical Library which eventually became the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. After serving as governor, he worked for the Interstate Commerce Commission from 1899-1906 and served as delegate to the Illinois Constitutional Convention in 1920. His daughter became the first female senator of Illinois in 1924. Fifer died in 1938 and was buried in Bloomington.



6TH BATTALION, 54th SFAB SECURITY FORCE ASSISTANCE BRIGADE



TRAIN | ADVISE | ASSIST | ACCOMPANY | ENABLE

OUR MISSION

The 6-54th Security Force Assistance Brigade's (SFAB) mission is to train, advise and assist Foreign Security Forces (FSF). The SFAB is a volunteer unit in which all Soldiers are assessed for their physical fitness, experience, and discipline. We are looking for NCOs, Warrant Officers, and Officers who meet these qualifications and who are interested in belonging to a unit of volunteers motivated to succeed in a new and challenging mission.

Volunteers must...

- * Pass the Army Combat Fitness Test
- * Pass the Army Body Composition Program
- * Currently possess and maintain a Secret Security clearance
- * Have a PULHES of 111221 or better
- * Pass a background screening with no derogatory information
- * Maintain deployable status with non-limiting profile
- * Attend a SFAB Tryout at Rock Island Arsenal
- * Have 36 months remaining on their contract

How to volunteer

Send the following items to the POC listed below:

- * Current DA 705 and DA 5500/01
- * SFAB Volunteer Questionnaire
- * Commander's Evaluation Memo (E6 and below)

MOS Opportunities

* Current Vacancies

SGT/E5: 25B, *25H, 25U, *68W, 88M, 91B, 91C, *91D, *92A, 92Y

SSG/E6: 25U, 35F, *68A, *89B, 91B, 91C, *91D, 91F, 92A, *92F

SFC/E7: 25U, 42A, 68W, 88M, 88N, 91X, 92A, 92Y

1SG/MSG/E8: 88Z, 92A

CSM/E9: 00L

CW3/W3: 890A, 915A, 920B

CPT/O3: 25A, *35A, *42B, 65D, 66H, *70K, 72D, 73B, *90A

MAJ/O4: *62B, 65B, 70H, 90A

LTC/O5: 90A

OUR PURPOSE

The 6-54th SFAB deploys to INDOPACOM, SOUTHCOM, AFRICOM, EUCOM, and CENTCOM to develop our partnered force's capabilities to prevent conflicts, as a deterrent to shape the environment, and when necessary, to bolster FSF to a level that it can win and establish a secure environment. The SFAB is designed to be employed as individual teams on a consistent rotation basis.



INCENTIVES

- * \$5,000 Assignment Incentive Pay (AIP) for enlisted Soldiers
- * Special Duty Assignment Pay (SDAP) for enlisted Soldiers
- * Additional Skill Identifier (ASI) opportunities
- * Additional schools and training opportunities
- * Broadening assignment within your career field

INCENTIVES

POC Information

For more information or to be considered, please contact SSG JUAREZ: arick.d.juarez.mil@army.mil or CALL: 309-567-6909.

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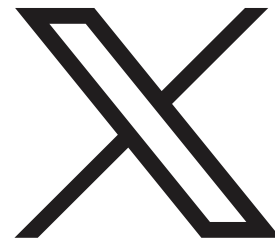
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