

2024 FORT MCCOY YEAR IN REVIEW



SPECIAL INSERT TO THE REAL MCCOY

JANUARY 2025

Fort McCoy 2024 year in review: First half of year brought new construction, historical feats

BY SCOTT T. STURKOL
Public Affairs Staff

When 2024 began, there was already a wide variety of training, new construction, and more going on. The installation had new construction projects finishing up and planned construction soon to start. There was also lots of training was planned, and the year itself would lend itself to historic anniversaries, like 50 years since the name change from Camp McCoy to Fort McCoy.

And as the year went on, the Fort McCoy team and workforce stepped up to get many, many things accomplished successfully. No matter what challenge arose, through every month, the installation team worked with others to get big projects, events, and more completed.

JANUARY

— As January 2024 dawned, contractors were busy getting the foundation complete for a third four-story, 60,000-square-foot barracks at Fort McCoy as construction with the Army Corps of Engineers-managed project continues.

The third barracks was awarded June 28, 2023, to BlindermanPower (Construction) at just over \$28 million. A notice to proceed with construction was given on Sept. 26, 2023. As of Jan. 2, 2024, a lot of infrastructure construction had been completed and work on concrete placements for footings, stem walls, and piers were getting done, said Ken Green with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Resident Office at Fort McCoy.

— An aircrew with the Wisconsin National Guard at Madison operated a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter Jan. 3 at Fort McCoy, Wis., as part of annual training at the post. Members of the unit regularly complete training operations at Fort McCoy and the unit also supports numerous training events at the installation each year.

According to the Fort McCoy Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security, Black Hawk crews were supporting a training event on post in early January. Weather conditions on during the training were favorable to have flight operations, officials said.

— During mid-January, Fort McCoy was hit with nearly a foot and a half of snow followed by sub-zero temperatures. That weather prompted many Soldiers at the installation to go out and get some winter training completed, including Soldiers assigned to U.S. Army Garrison-Fort McCoy.

Nearly a dozen Soldiers with the garrison took the whole day Jan. 19 to practice a host of skills related to Army cold-weather operations.

First Sgt. Jacob Pattison with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, U.S. Army Garrison-Fort McCoy, said the day was filled with all things cold-weather.

“We conducted familiarization training on the Extended Cold Weather Clothing System or Extended Climate Warfighter Clothing System (ECWCS), depending on what regulation you are referencing), in the morning which enabled us to better understand what layers of the system should be worn for different weather and activities,” Pattison said.

— The first Commander for a Day program participant, Ben Meyer, had the opportunity to go through the daily routine of a garrison commander Jan. 11 at Fort McCoy.

The program allows a selected applicant to see first-hand and apply skills necessary to lead a U.S. Army garrison and experience a typical commander’s day.

Meyer, a night shift watch commander with the Fort McCoy Directorate of Emergency Services, was the first person chosen for the new initiative to shadow Fort McCoy Garrison Commander Col. Stephen Messenger. He was able to join Messenger attending meetings and several engagements throughout the day.

The program offered a unique perspective, Messenger said, allowing the participant to witness first-hand the dedication of the men and women who serve at Fort McCoy.

“I learned how great everybody here is on Fort McCoy,” Meyer said. “I’ve always known, but com-



Photo by Scott T. Sturkol

Students participate Jan. 31, 2024, in the Fort McCoy Noncommissioned Officer (NCO) Academy’s Battle Staff NCO Course combined arms rehearsal event at the academy at Fort McCoy, Wis. The Fort McCoy NCO Academy holds several sessions of the Battle Staff NCO Course throughout each fiscal year at Fort McCoy.

ing from nights going to days, you really get to see the passion that everybody has for their jobs over here.”

— Snow-removal crews were busy between Jan. 9-13 at Fort McCoy as the installation received more than 18 inches of snow over that span, plus the snowfall was followed by below-zero temperatures. The snowy weather also caused the installation to go to minimal staffing on Jan. 9 and 12 as driving conditions in the local areas were considered less than favorable.

The National Weather Service (NWS) described the heaviest part of the storms that took place Jan. 12-13, 2024.

“A potent winter storm brought heavy snow and strong/gusty winds to much of the region from early Friday morning, January 12th into the morning of Saturday the 13th,” the NWS stated at <https://www.weather.gov/arx/jan1224>. “A broad swath of a foot or more of snow ran from southern Iowa into southern and eastern Wisconsin. The bulk of the snow fell that Friday. Meanwhile, north winds were gusting 40-plus mph at times across portions of Iowa and southern/eastern Wisconsin on Friday afternoon and evening. Widespread blowing and drifting snow lead to blizzard conditions across parts of these areas.”

— Dozens of Fort McCoy community members gathered Jan. 16 to celebrate the life and ideals of Martin Luther King (MLK) Jr. during Fort McCoy’s 2024 Martin Luther King Jr. Day Observance at McCoy’s Community Center at Fort McCoy.

The 2024 observance at Fort McCoy featured opening comments by Master Sgt. Ana Guzman with the Fort McCoy Equal Opportunity Office who organized the event. It also included an opening prayer by Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Amy Noble with the Fort McCoy Religious Support Office, and Fort McCoy Garrison Commander Col. Stephen Messenger spoke about the legacy of MLK Jr. The 2024 theme for the observance was “Remember! Celebrate! Act! A Day On, Not A Day Off!”

— Fort McCoy Garrison Commander Col. Stephen Messenger, Command Sgt. Maj. Thomas Calarco, garrison command sergeant major, and other Fort McCoy Garrison personnel visited the Mississippi Valley Archaeology Center on Jan. 26, 2024, to learn more about their support in curating and housing archaeological artifacts found at the installation.

The visit, organized by Garrison Archaeologist Ryan Howell with the Fort McCoy Directorate of Public Works Environmental Division Natural Resources Branch, took a couple hours at the center on the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse campus.

Howell said Fort McCoy’s artifact collection contains more than 600,000 artifacts ranging in age

from Native American artifacts more than 12,000 years old to 1942-45 World War II-era military artifacts.

“The Mississippi Valley Archaeology Center is the closest federally sanctioned curation facility to Fort McCoy and has a long history of working with the installation’s cultural resource management program,” Howell said. “Most of the Fort McCoy (archaeology) staff and others have worked or trained with the program over the years. Plus, most scientific interest in the Fort McCoy collections would most likely come from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse archaeology program or scholars visiting it to see other collections.”

— Fort McCoy Garrison Commander Col. Stephen Messenger held a town hall session with the installation workforce Jan. 25, 2024, to provide an update on news and information in the garrison, and more.

This was the first town hall for 2024 for Messenger. “Happy Thursday. Happy New Year! Welcome back from the holidays,” Messenger said.

The garrison commander continued to open by thanking the Fort McCoy workforce for making a difference. He also discussed the Army Civilian Corps Creed and how Fort McCoy people exemplify what that creed stands for.

“So, I just wanted to walk through it with you real quick on the importance of what you do every day,” Messenger said. “(The creed) says ‘I’m an army civilian, a member of an Army team.’ And I tell you, there are not many teams that I have been with that are closer knit and fun than Fort McCoy.”

“I am dedicated to our Army, Soldiers, and civilians.’ While we talk about the Soldier being the center of gravity, the civilian aspect is so important here,” Messenger said. “This garrison is 99 percent civilians, and (you) support each other ... (and) you do it so well.

“I will always support the mission.’ ... Last week, we had ... two snow events and there are mission essential and critical personnel who have to come in even when it snows,” Messenger said. “All of the fire department, the Directorate of Emergency Services and police officers who have to show up ... plus other areas. ... these are mission essential things that you support in times of hardship. And I really appreciate that.”

— As of late-January 2024, the construction progress on an \$11.96 million transient training brigade headquarters project at Fort McCoy reached 96 percent complete, according to an update from Ken Green with the Army Corps of Engineers Program Office at Fort McCoy.

Overall, the contract for the project, totaling nearly \$12 million, was awarded June 9, 2022, and construction operations began in August 2022. The contract completion date was February 2024.

This project was the first of three planned brigade headquarters buildings projects, said Master Planner Brian Harrie with the Fort McCoy Directorate of Public Works. The plan is to build four barracks buildings, the three 20,000-square-foot brigade headquarters buildings, and two 160-room officer quarters.

— Students with the Fort McCoy Noncommissioned Officer Academy Basic Leader Course learned about land navigation Jan. 29, 2024, at the Fort McCoy Virtual Battle Space simulations facility. The students spent a day training at the facility as part of course instruction, said Basic Leader Course Instructor Staff Sgt. Sabrina Magness.

“Our students are here receiving their block of instruction and some hands-on time for the land navigation portion of our course,” Magness said. “Currently at Fort McCoy, we’re not able to put students out on the (outdoor) course ... in the field. So, this is the next best thing. They’re still getting a lot of hands-on training, map reading, plotting points, and they’re using their avatar to navigate to these points.”

The training is called “Virtual Battle Space for Map Reading and Land Navigation,” and is one of the newest additions to the course, Magness said.

According to the Fort McCoy Directorate of

Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security concept of operations for the tactical land-navigation training the academy students underwent, the mission for the training is designed for four squads of six Soldiers. Each squad will be briefed to conduct dismounted land-nav following designated points.

“Upon reaching the second point, squads will find a vehicle with which to conduct movement to their third point,” the training document states. “Upon reaching the third point, A/B squad will link up into a section, C/D squad likewise.” And then the students continue with a specific scenario.

Sgt. David Smith, an Army Reserve Soldier in the BLC who attended land-navigation training, said all of the training has helped him become a better Soldier.

“Being in this course, I’ve learned to become a better leader, become a better listener, and also just become a better team worker as it pertains to leadership in my unit and also in small group units as well.”

— The first Triad Night of the new year was held Jan 25, 2024, at the Whitetail Ridge Ski Area lodge hosted by Fort McCoy’s Directorate of Family and Morale Welfare and Recreation (DFMWR).

Garrison Commander Col. Stephen Messenger began Triad Night with a leadership forum discussing how to be a leader. His talk focused on leadership influence, purpose, direction, improving the organization, accomplishing the mission, and motivation.

“Do you bring out the best in people? Why do they follow you?” Messenger asked the attendees. “I encourage you as you talk to people...are you bringing out the best in others. That is what it is all about.”

After the leadership forum, the fun and games began with cardboard sled building. Attendees were able to team up or work individually on their sleds for an hour before they would compete to see who went the farthest down the ski hill.

— The first class of Soldiers in calendar year 2024 at the Fort McCoy Noncommissioned Officer (NCO) Academy’s Battle Staff NCO Course held their course finale’s combined arms rehearsal Jan. 31, 2024, at the academy at Fort McCoy.

The future enlisted leaders of the Army Reserve, National Guard, and active-component units who were in the course combined their experience from the course to hold the rehearsal.

“(This) is the culminating event for the ... course,” said Master Sgt. David Shimota, course director for the Battle Staff NCO Course. “It synchronizes what the students have been doing over the last 22 days here at Fort McCoy. ... One of the one of the main points of having the combined arms rehearsal is to synchronize each battalion, so that way then the brigade can understand exactly what’s going on. It also gives the picture to the other battalions on what’s going on across the entire battle space.”

As part of the rehearsal, two special guests were also present from the 3rd Brigade Engineer Battalion, 340th Infantry Regiment (3-340th), 181st Multi-Functional Training Brigade. This included 3-340th Commander Lt. Col. Brian Corbin, and the unit’s senior enlisted advisor, Command Sgt. Maj. Matthew Zwolinski.

FEBRUARY

— As bitter cold winter weather subsided and steel started flowing in, work on the third four-story, 60,000-square-foot barracks at Fort McCoy picked up significantly at the end of January 2024 with framing for the building starting.

A Feb. 2, 2024, update from Ken Green with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Resident Office at Fort McCoy showed that construction progress was still at 11 percent complete, but it was now back to a significant pace.

This barracks project was awarded in June 2023 to BlindermanPower (Construction) at just over \$28 million to get it done. A notice to proceed with construction was given on in late September 2023. And as of Feb. 2, a lot of infrastructure construction has been completed and some work updates on concrete placements, stem walls, and piers were also being done, Green said.

And getting the structural steel in place will take a while as there will be four stories of the building to go up. As of Feb. 6, 2024, the progress showed a (See YEAR IN REVIEW 2024, Insert Page 2)



Photo by Lt. Col. James Ontiveros

Soldiers with U.S. Army Garrison-Fort McCoy conduct cold-weather training Jan. 19, 2024, at Fort McCoy.



Photo by Scott T. Sturkol

Dusk and sunset are shown behind the brigade headquarters construction project Jan. 29, 2024, at Fort McCoy.

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fairly large section of steel already erected.

— **Ken Green with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Program Office** gave his **64th and final update on the brigade headquarters construction project at Fort McCoy on Feb. 2, 2024, where it stated the project at that time the project was 97 percent complete.**

At that time in early February, workers with the contractor were busy finishing a list of small tasks and “punch out” items so the building could be turned over to Fort McCoy Garrison in time for a Feb. 8 final inspection.

The building is now furnished, has solar power capacity, it's built with the latest energy saving materials, and much more. Additionally, exterior landscaping is still being planned and completed as weather permits, officials said.

When the new year began, the project was about 96 percent complete, and more and more furniture was arriving as this nearly \$12 million project was drawing closer to completion.

— **He was dressed in a vest and tie that likely would have made the Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Ernie Pyle proud. Sergio “Matias” Chontal-Harter showed up for his interview with Fort McCoy Garrison Commander Col. Stephen Messenger on Feb. 12, 2024, ready to go.**

A student at Immanuel Lutheran School in La Crosse, Wis., Chontal-Harter is the son of Moriah Harter, administrative officer with the Fort McCoy Directorate of Public Works, and Sergio Chontal. Harter said his school was doing a Social Studies Night where they presented their projects to their class, teachers, families, and families of their classmates.

“Each class was assigned a different topic for the event,” Harter said. “Matias’ first grade class was assigned the topic of ‘historical figures’ or ‘American heroes.’ Matias was clear from the beginning he wanted to do his project on a Soldier, so I started to list off some historical figures he may be interested in. He could not relate to any of them and didn’t want to do any of the suggestions that came from his teacher.

“After some reflection, Matias asked me if he could do his project on Col. Messenger,” Harter said. “

— **Fort McCoy held its 2024 Black History Month observance Feb. 20, 2024, at McCoy’s Community Center with guest speaker Shaundel Washington-Spivey.**

Spivey, the co-founder and executive director of Black Leaders Acquiring Collective Knowledge Inc., brought a wealth of experience and passion to the event. With roots in the La Crosse, Wis., community since 2007, Spivey’s commitment to community organizing shows through in his every venture.

During his address, Spivey shared insights from his extensive involvement in community-based discussions, action planning, and advocacy efforts while leading interactive discussions with those who attended the observance. His dedication to fostering a more equitable and collective community resonated with attendees, who were inspired by his commitment to social change.

— **Fort McCoy’s artifact collection contains more than 600,000 artifacts ranging in age from Native American artifacts that are more than 12,000 years old to World War II-era military artifacts from the 1940s, and nearly all are stored with the Mississippi Valley Archaeology Center at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse.**

Those artifacts are the result of nearly 40 years of archaeological work and documentation at the installation, and their helping tell the story of Southwest Wisconsin’s recent and distant history in the Driftless Area of North America, said Fort McCoy Archaeologist Ryan Howell with the Fort McCoy Directorate of Public Works Environmental Division Natural Resources Branch.

Howell is part of the team that leads the effort to oversee the large collection of artifacts, and said the center at the university is a perfect place to house the artifacts.

“The Mississippi Valley Archaeology Center is the closest federally sanctioned curation facility to Fort McCoy and has a long history of working with the installation’s cultural resource management program,” Howell said.

— **Several members of Fort McCoy Garrison learned at the end of January they earned major command-level awards as part of the 2023 Army IMCOM Maj. Gen. Keith L. Ware Communications Awards Competition.**

First, Photographer Amanda Clark with the Fort McCoy Multimedia-Visual Information Office earned the 2023 Installation Management Command Civilian Photographer of the Year.

In addition to Clark winning from the Multimedia-Visual Information Office, Audiovisual Production Specialist Greg Mason also earned a first-place finish. Mason led Broadcast Category B, Feature Video.

And sticking with the video winners, Public Affairs Specialist Claudia Neve with the Fort McCoy Public Affairs Office earned a first place as well. Neve led Broadcast Category A, News Video.

For this category, the “entry must be a news story, event-/mission-oriented, and would be significant enough to place at or near the top of a news cast.”

Also earning a first place in the competition from the Fort McCoy Public Affairs Office was Public Affairs Specialist Scott T. Sturkol, the editor of The Real McCoy newspaper. Sturkol placed first in Photography Category A, Feature Photograph.

— **Fort McCoy’s total economic impact for fiscal year (FY) 2023 was an estimated \$1.38 billion, Fort McCoy Garrison officials announced in February 2024.**

The data was compiled by Fort McCoy’s Plans, Analysis and Integration Office.

Workforce payroll, operating costs, and other expenditures totaled more than \$346 million for FY 2023.

A total of 2,113 personnel worked at Fort McCoy in FY 2023 — 1,279 civilians, 411 military, and 499 contract employees.

Approximately 69 percent of the workforce lives within Monroe County. The total FY 2023 workforce payroll for civilian and military personnel was \$190.5 million.

FY 2023 operating costs of \$346 million included utilities, physical plant maintenance, repair and improvements, new construction projects, purchases of supplies and services, as well as salaries for civilian contract personnel working at Fort McCoy.

Other expenditures accounted for \$22.5 million and covered \$435,850 in payments to local governments (including land permit agreements, school district impact aid, etc.) as well as \$22.1 million in discretionary spending in local communities by service members training and residing at Fort McCoy.

— **Fort McCoy began its support for the 82nd Army Emergency Relief (AER) Campaign on Feb. 28, 2024, with a campaign kick-**

off breakfast at McCoy’s Community Center at the installation.

The AER campaign runs annually from March 1 to May 15, according to the AER webpage, www.armyemergencyrelief.org. AER helps provide emergency financial funds for food, rent, funeral expenses, emergency medical expenses, and other needs.

Contributions to AER help active-duty Soldiers (single and married) and their families, retirees and their family members, and surviving spouses or orphans of Soldiers who died while on active duty or after they retired.

The breakfast included dozens of Fort McCoy community members. The breakfast was organized by the Fort McCoy Army Community Service (ACS) Office with the Directorate of Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation. Fort McCoy Garrison Deputy Commander Lt. Col. Mike Corkum and Fort McCoy Deputy to the Garrison Commander Cameron Cantlon provided opening remarks at the event. ACS Director Sylvia Lopez also provided opening and welcoming remarks to breakfast attendees.

— **After a whirlwind competition, the 2024 Northern Warfare Challenge ended after competing Feb. 23-24 at Fort McCoy and in La Crosse, Wis.**

There were 48 teams from five Army ROTC brigade and one team from West Point — the U.S. Military Academy that also stepped up to try their hand at the “hardest race in ROTC,” according to U.S. Army Cadet Command.

Teams first met on Feb. 23 at Fort McCoy to compete in winter survival events before preparing for a 14-mile ruck on Feb. 24 in the bluffs of La Crosse.

— **Fort McCoy Deputy to Garrison Commander Cameron Cantlon held an open discussion for garrison civilian employees in grades GS-8 and GS-9 on Feb. 22, 2024, aimed at providing those employees with an avenue to openly share their perspectives on the workplace environment.**

During the session, some of the topics employees discussed were workplace mindset, supervisors and their roles, and what they most appreciate about working at Fort McCoy.

One notable discussion revolved around the distinction between viewing one’s employment as merely a job versus a career. Attendees engaged in a thoughtful exchange, ultimately agreeing that this perception hinges on mindset.

Many stated this realization opens doors for individuals to approach their work with a long-term perspective, recognizing it as an opportunity for growth and development.

— **Members of the Fort McCoy prescribed burn team coordinated a prescribed burn Feb. 29 — the first of 2024 — along the railroad tracks on South Post at Fort McCoy.**

The post prescribed burn team includes personnel with the Fort McCoy Directorate of Emergency Services Fire Department; Directorate of Public Works (DPW) Environmental Division Natural Resources Branch (NRB); Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security; and the Colorado State University Center for Environmental Management of Military Lands, under contract with the post.

The entire burn began at approximately 10 a.m. and was completed in the afternoon.

MARCH

— **Framing on the third four-story, 60,000-square-foot barracks at Fort McCoy started Jan. 31 and by March 6, 2024, the shape of the entire building was nearly in place.**

A March 4 update from Ken Green with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Resident Office at Fort McCoy showed that construction progress was at 12 percent complete, but it was significantly growing and taking shape on site.

Overall, the statement of work for the project states the contractor will make the building be made of “permanent construction with reinforced concrete foundations; concrete floor slabs; structural steel frames; steel stud infill; masonry veneer walls; prefinished standing seam metal roofing; heating, ventilation, and air conditioning capabilities; plumbing; mechanical systems; and electrical systems. Supporting facilities include land clearing, concrete sidewalk paving, general site improvements, and utility connections.”

— **In 2023, a special kind of history was made at Fort McCoy when four World War II-era barracks were moved from the 1600-block to other areas of the cantonment area in an effort to save the buildings for reuse in spaces in other blocks.**

In a way, this recycling of buildings was another way to not only save the 80-plus-year-old buildings but also fill in areas on blocks where buildings were lost in years past.

Right away, contractor JMJ Construction of New Lisbon, Wis., and Heritage Movers of Blue River, Wis., successfully moved the first two of the four barracks on Feb. 24 and March 2, 2023. Then they moved the last two buildings from the 1600 block to the 1800 block and 2800 block on April 4 and April 6, 2023, respectively.

Once the buildings were moved, they were set on blocks and fenced off until further work could be completed in their new areas, which was in August 2023. Slowly and methodically, new foundations were built and by the end of December 2023, the last building was moved on to a new foundation in the new locations.

Construction Inspector Tim Peterson with the Fort McCoy Directorate of Public Works said the contractors continued working on the buildings through the winter, getting interior work completed and other work done so the building can be ready for reuse.

The original contract amount to do the move of the four buildings and complete all the work was approximately \$1.7 million, DPW officials said.

— **Since fiscal year (FY) 2019, tens of millions of dollars in construction funds have been counted by the Fort McCoy Plans, Analysis, and Integration Office as a key factor and contributor to the installation’s annual economic impact each fiscal year.**

In fact, in those five years combined, more than \$217 million has been calculated in new construction of buildings and ranges alone, reports show. Over that same time, more than \$1.3 billion has also been applied to operating costs that included utilities, physical plant maintenance, repair and improvements, other new construction projects, purchases of supplies and services, and salaries for civilian contract personnel working at Fort McCoy.

That combined investment shows the commitment the Army and the Department of Defense has to the installation, according to many leaders who have discussed this investment in recent years. Maj. Gen. Darrell Guthrie, former Fort McCoy senior commander and commanding general of the 88th Readiness Division at Fort McCoy, discussed



Photo by Scott T. Sturkol

Soldiers in the Regional Training Site-Maintenance's Construction Equipment Repairer Course learn about engines and other equipment during course operations March 6, 2024, at Fort McCoy. The course has two phases of training.

the opening of the first \$20.6 million four-story transient troop training barracks that was completed in April 2022.

— **Among the thousands of students the Fort McCoy Regional Training Site (RTS)-Maintenance facility trains every year, many are Soldiers training to the 91L military occupational specialty of construction equipment repairer.**

By description by the Army at goarmy.com, a construction equipment repairer has a significant role in Army operations.

“As a construction equipment repairer, you’ll keep the Army’s engineer equipment safe and operational by repairing and maintaining trucks, bulldozers, power shovels, and other heavy equipment that is needed for construction,” the description states. “You’ll replace and perform tune-ups on brakes, motors, engines, drive pumps, water pumps, transmissions, and high-pressure hydraulic systems.”

At RTS-Maintenance at Fort McCoy, the 91L10 Construction Equipment Repairer Course trains both active- and reserve-component Soldiers into the career field in two phases, said Master Sgt. William Parker, chief instructor for RTS-Maintenance.

The course has two phases of training, Parker said. Phase one of training is 120 hours and consists of 40 hours of shop operations, 40 hours of basic electrical systems training, and 40 hours of hydraulic systems training.

Phase two training is 179 hours and consists of 80 hours of diesel systems training, 40 hours of power train systems training, 40 hours of brake systems training, and 19 hours of preventive maintenance checks and services training.

— **Numerous Soldiers with the Army Reserve’s 204th Army Band of Fort Snelling, Minn., were at Fort McCoy on March 5, 2024, to exchange and turn in thousands of dollars worth of equipment to the Fort McCoy Central Issue Facility (CIF).**

The equipment exchange itself wasn’t unique, but it was another opportunity for the facility to test its capability, said CIF Property Book Officer Thomas Lovgren.

“We have exchanges like this regularly with units like this from all over our region,” Lovgren said. “We support a large number of units every year — especially from the Army Reserve — and this was another example of that effort.”

Members of the 204th were at the Fort McCoy CIF for less than two hours to get their equipment exchange completed.

Master Sgt. Karsten Finseth, band detachment noncommissioned officer in charge, described her unit’s experience at the CIF.

“We experienced superb customer service with immediate attention to our needs, including several third-person turn-ins,” Finseth said. “The staff was ready to rock and processed us quickly. The facility was immaculate. The space to navigate the turn-in and issue process also lend to a seamless experience.

“During our two-hour visit, several thousand dollars of materiel was returned and issued efficiently,” Finseth said. “Many thanks to the team at CIF.”

— **Betty Christiansen, publisher and owner of the Coulee Region Women Magazine in La Crosse, Wis., served as the featured guest speaker for the 2024 Fort McCoy Women’s History Month observance March 19, 2024 at Fort McCoy.**

The observance was held at McCoy’s Community Center where dozens of Fort McCoy community members attended the event that was organized by the Fort McCoy Equal Opportunity Office.

Each year, the Department of Defense honors the women who have shaped U.S. history, and through their contributions paved the way forward for future female pioneers, according to the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI), which is headquartered at Patrick Space Force Base, Fla.

The 2024 theme for Women’s History Month was “Women Who Have Made Great Achievements,” according to DEOMI. It celebrates the women who have left an impact on the United States through their sacrifices, public service, and inspirational work.

According to her biographical information at the magazine’s website at <https://www.crwmagazine.com>, Christiansen “is a longtime writer and editor who has lived and worked in the Twin Cities, New York, and La Crosse, where she was editor of the magazine for 10 years before taking the helm as publisher. She loves to knit and dreams of a life structured around writing and travel.”

And during her presentation, Christiansen discussed how in the magazine they like to tell the stories of women. She described how all women have a story to tell, and in the magazine they try to express many of those special stories.

“I believe these stories provide inspiration to other women, and even hope to other women,”



Photo by Scott T. Sturkol

Training operations are shown at Fort McCoy on April 12, 2024.



Photo by Scott T. Sturkol

The construction area for a new \$28.08 million barracks building is shown March 28, 2024, at Fort McCoy.

Christiansen said. “We can read stories about a woman doing something, achieving something, overcoming something. ... You entered her life for just a moment. You put yourself in her shoes. So, there’s really deep and valuable connection being made. And at the same time, you might read that story and say, ‘If she did that, maybe I could do something too.’”

— **For the many years that Fort McCoy Regional Training Site (RTS)-Maintenance facility has been in operation at the installation, thousands of Soldiers have trained into the “91-Lima” career field as part of the facility’s 91L10 Construction Equipment Repairer Course and other related 91L training.**

Regularly, Soldiers come to the Fort McCoy facility to go through hundreds of hours of training to earn the construction equipment repairer military occupational specialty (MOS)

Master Sgt. William Parker, chief instructor for RTS-Maintenance, said 91L is one of the main MOS’ to the Army and Army Reserve that provides special abilities to not only keep engineer units in the fight, but also much more.

Parker said when students come to Fort McCoy to train in the 91L course, they have the latest items available to complete their training.

“So, each course that is written is required to have certain equipment to run that course,” Parker said. “It is very essential that Soldiers who are coming to train have the most up-to-date equipment to train on because that’s the equipment they’re going to see when they get back to their units. We have that here.”

In past years, the facility has also hosted 91L Advanced Leader Course in addition to other levels of training. That course had two phases of instruction and combined was more than 240 hours of instruction.

— **They opened the doors to the new Fort McCoy Central Issue Facility in September 2015 after months of construction, setup, and hard work, said the facility’s Property Book Officer Thomas Lovgren, who was there when the doors were opened.**

“This Central Issue Facility (CIF) is a newer one that was built ... at a cost of approximately \$9 million, and it’s 62,548 square feet,” Lovgren said. “We typically do about between \$30 and \$40 million worth of CIF transactions annually, which equates to about 400,000 to 500,000 pieces of equipment being issued out and turned in each year.

In the years since the new CIF has been open, tens of thousands of transactions have taken place there, Lovgren said. He said customers have plenty of space to process through and receive equipment, and more.

“We have two waiting areas near the entry and exit areas and a streamlined setup that helps create a smooth flow for CIF operations,” he said. “Our facility makes the issuing process a nice experience for Soldiers as they visit here to receive their equipment, especially at busy times.”

Lovgren also stated that Reserve Soldiers make up approximately 98 percent of all CIF transactions.

“As a matter of fact, this CIF was built with Reserve funding,” Lovgren said.

— **Fifteen Soldiers who were students in the Regional Training Site (RTS)-Maintenance Unit Armorer Course in early March 2024 learned about how the different weapon systems work, about assembly and disassembly of those weapons, how to correct malfunctions, inspection, and more.**

The course, taught by instructors Sgts. 1st Class Carlos Vazquez and Shane Bender, provides performance-oriented training on administrative and technical tasks required of a unit armorer, according to the course description.

Training includes arms inspection, disassembly, assembly, required operator and organizational maintenance, parts ordering, prescribed load list maintenance for small arms, and turn-in procedures for direct-support maintenance. The course also covers physical security and security inspections conducted by an installation provost marshal office.

The students came from units from across the Army and from a variety of career fields. The course covers weapons Soldiers will typically see within their units, instructors said.

As the students learn about the physical-security requirements that have been entrusted to them by their commander, they also understand what a big responsibility they are assuming for their unit. And they also learn about troubleshooting problems with weapons.

— **Results from the Army Materiel Com-**
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FORT MCCOY’S 2024 YEAR IN REVIEW

YEAR IN REVIEW 2024

mand’s 2023 David G. Harris Public Affairs Competition were announced in March, and three winners from Fort McCoy were announced.

The three who placed were in video, photo, and community relations categories, and it follows the same people also previously winning in the same categories at Army’s Installation Management Command 2023 Public Affairs Competition.

First, Public Affairs Officer Tonya Townsell with the Fort McCoy Public Affairs Office earned a second place for Category L: Kathy Canham-Ross Award of Distinction. The Kathy Canham-Ross Award recognizes the products that best exemplify excellence in community engagement contributions. The award is named for Kathy Canham-Ross, a distinguished director of OCPA-Los Angeles, who set an outstanding example to emulate throughout her 30 years as a public affairs officer.

Townsell said even though the award has her name listed, it is more of a unit award for Fort McCoy as it recognizes the work of the 2023 Fort McCoy Armed Forces Day Open House and the contributors to that event.

Next, Greg Mason with the Fort McCoy Multimedia-Visual Information Office, which falls under the Fort McCoy Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security, earned third place in Category B: Feature Video. Mason earned the award for his 2023 Month of the Military Child at Fort McCoy video, which is available at <https://www.dvidshub.net/video/879195/2023-month-military-child-fort-mccoy-wi>.

And the third winner at the awards was Scott T. Sturkol with the Fort McCoy Public Affairs Office who earned first place in Category A: Feature Photograph with his photo entitled, “Rainbow and new barracks at Fort McCoy.” That photo can be found at <https://www.dvidshub.net/image/8019024/rainbow-and-new-barracks-fort-mc-coy>.

APRIL

— Soldiers from across the Red Arrow brigade came together for a final week of training at Fort McCoy, Wis. prior to their upcoming month-long rotation at the Joint Readiness Training Center this summer.

The training varied across the needs of the battalions, including final weapons qualifications, dry- and live-fire exercises, a command post exercise (CPX), as well as loading gear to ship to Louisiana ahead of the units.

Lt. Col. Matthew Myers, executive officer of the 32nd IBCT, described this week of training as a way to simulate what the brigade will see at JRTC on a smaller scale in order to work out any final details and pinch points before taking part in the larger exercise.

“We needed to exercise these movements to test our systems and refresh those who have been in the brigade for a while,” reflected Myers. “At the same time, we were able to get our new Red Arrow Soldiers up to speed with how things run and what the expectations are.”

Command Sgt. Maj. Aaron Johnson, the senior enlisted leader of the 32nd IBCT, echoed a lot of those comments, emphasizing the importance of bringing the entire brigade together so that everyone is on the same page leading up to the training this summer.

“As a brigade, we were able to come away with a definition of what success looks like, and an understanding of what needs to be done before this summer to make sure that happens,” conveyed Johnson.

— Fort McCoy conducted its second Area Development Plan workshop in mid-April 2024 as part of the installation Real Property Master Plan update, said Fort McCoy Master Planner Brian Harrie.

Key stakeholders and leaders from various garrison and tenant organizations participated in the weeklong event. A similar workshop was also held in January.

The workshop focused on identifying projects across four different district areas for short-term (0-5 years), mid-term (6-15 years), and long-term (16+ years) timelines. The areas targeted for development were transient training, simulations, institutional training, and administrative, Fort McCoy Directorate of Public Works (DPW) Director Liane Haun said.

The primary goal of the Fort McCoy Master Plan and Area Development Plans update is to validate existing plans and revise the master planning framework for installation development through a long-range planning horizon of up to 25 years.

Robert Weisbrod, training support officer with the Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security, highlighted the importance of the workshop in shaping the future of Fort McCoy.

— Fort McCoy held a special event April 15, 2024, in the chapel building 2672 to observe the 2024 Holocaust Days of Remembrance and Holocaust Remembrance Day.

Rabbi Brian Serle, the rabbi for the Congregation Sons of Abraham of La Crosse, Wis., served as the featured guest speaker and presenter for the event that was organized by the Fort McCoy Equal Opportunity Office.

According to the National Archives at www.archives.gov, International Holocaust Remembrance Day is an international memorial day designated by the United Nations to mark the anniversary of the January 27, 1945, liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau — the largest Nazi concentration and death camp.

The Days of Remembrance, according to <https://nationaltoday.com/days-of-remembrance>, is observed every year in April and May and is a week-long commemoration of the Holocaust. In 2024, it is observed from May 5-12, with Remembrance Day being May 6.

“The Days of Remembrance was established as the country’s annual commemoration of the Holocaust by the United States Congress,” the website states. “The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum is responsible for leading the country in commemorating Days of Remembrance and also for encouraging these commemorations. The Holocaust was the state-sponsored persecution and murder of six million Jews by the Nazi rulers, allies, and collaborators.”

— Derek Daly, chief executive officer of Tomah Health at Tomah, Wis., visited Fort McCoy on April 12, 2024, along with another representative from Tomah Health to learn more about the installation’s mission.

Daly’s visit was led by Fort McCoy Garrison Commander Col. Stephen Messenger and Command Sgt. Maj. Thomas Calarco, garrison command sergeant major.

The three-hour visit included several stops. Daly first went on a windshield tour of the installation to see current construction operations as well as training operations that were taking place.

The visit also took Daly to the Medical Simulation Training Center (MSTC) to see how Fort McCoy holds medical training for service members. Luis Illescas, course coordinator with MSTC, said the center is always busy with training, such as combat-lifesaver or first-responder training.

— Red Arrow Soldiers from the 1-120th Field Artillery Battalion and 1-105th Cavalry Squadron were visited by a team of civilian researchers and Wisconsin National Guard surgeons on April 9, 2024, during their training at Fort McCoy, Wis., to discuss a study being planned to measure blast exposure and evaluate associated effects among Soldiers during routine training.

Dr. Walter Carr, research psychologist with Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, Center for Military Psychiatry and Neuroscience, Blast Induced Neurotrauma Branch, has conducted this type of research for several years, and explained that it is eye-opening when he talks about the possible effects of blast exposure in front of people who have responsibility for Soldiers and they frequently nod and say “yup, I’ve heard this and I’ve seen this before.”

“We’re out here today to see how everything works in the field during training and plan how we can bring our equipment and research personnel on site to gather the information without interfering with the mission,” elaborated Carr.

The idea of bringing this study to the 32nd IBCT came from a conversation two years ago between Maj. Gregory Miller, 1-105th HHT Squadron Surgeon, and Sgt. First Class Joseph Russett, Troop A 1-105th, who serves as an indirect fire infantryman.

Russett has served in the Wisconsin National Guard for 16 years, most of which he has been around mortar fire. “Maj. Miller asked me if I had any questions, and all I could think was ‘What can we do for myself and my friends 20 years from now? What is that going to look like?’” reflected Russett. “A lot of us have or will have issues that are likely related to our MOS (military occupational specialty), but it isn’t documented anywhere.”

— After years of troop projects by multiple Army engineer units from the Army Reserve and Army National Guard to shape an area for a garrison operations support area at Fort McCoy, contractors are now beginning infrastructure work in the same area, Fort McCoy Directorate of Public Works (DPW)

from Page 2



Photo by Scott T. Sturkol

Fort McCoy community members plant trees May 1, 2024, during the 2024 Arbor Day Celebration at Fort McCoy, Wis. Dozens of community members planted 600 trees on the installation cantonment as part of the observance. The installation also received its 35th Tree City USA award during the event from the National Arbor Day Foundation.

officials said.

The project is located in an area of land near the old Gate 20 and Logistical Support Area Liberty and the cantonment area fence. Work began to landscape this area in June 2021 with Soldiers from the Army Reserve’s 492nd Engineer Company, based in Mankato, Minn.

Then in July 2021, about a dozen Soldiers with the 4th Platoon of Wisconsin National Guard’s 950th Engineer Company (Route Clearance) continued working in the area with bulldozers and other construction equipment.

Fort McCoy Troop Projects Coordinator Larry Morrow said in a 2021 news article that the site work to start was mainly moving out organic material, such as tree stumps and vegetation, and then developing it further from there.

“Larry set us up on this project, and we are continuing to move the organic material from the site,” said 2nd Lt. Nick Bures, 4th Platoon leader, at the time.

Now just under three years later, after many more units and contractors have continuously worked at the site, DPW General Engineer said more permanent work is now going on at the project now named the “Prepare Garrison Operations Support Area Site and Install Utilities Project.”

MAY

— After 18 months and millions of dollars’ worth of upgrades, the Rumpel Fitness Center at Fort McCoy was reopened before hundreds of attendees May 1, 2024, during a grand reopening and ribbon-cutting ceremony.

The ceremony was coordinated by the Fort McCoy Directorate of Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation (DFMWR), which also is in charge of Rumpel. The ceremony included opening words by DFMWR Director Patric McGuane as well as special comments from Fort McCoy Garrison Commander Col. Stephen Messenger, and Fort McCoy Senior Commander, Maj. Gen. Matthew Baker, commanding general of the 88th Readiness Division.

“The original Rumpel Fitness Center (Field House) was built in 1966 by the Job Corps,” McGuane said. “This program was created under President Lyndon Johnson’s administration in 1964 as part of his war on poverty. The program trained young men in vocational, technical, and social skills, and the McCoy Job Corps operated at Fort McCoy from 1966 to 1968.

“And during that time, they used \$750,000 to build a field house with a swimming pool,” McGuane said. “It cost a little more to do this one. That building became what is known now as Rumpel Fitness Center, arguably one of the most important buildings on Fort McCoy.”

McGuane also noted how the building is named after Lt. Col. Donald O. Rumpel. Rumpel served as the Fort McCoy executive officer from 1978 until his untimely passing in November 1979. Rumpel was a native of Hancock, Wis., and a 1954 graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Madison where he was a member of the ROTC program.

— Fort McCoy celebrated the Army Reserve’s 116th birthday April 23, 2024, with a special celebration at McCoy’s Community Center in combination with the installation’s April Triad Nights event.

Fort McCoy’s Senior Commander, Maj. Gen. Matthew Baker, commanding general of the 88th Readiness Division, led the Army Reserve birthday observance and also took charge of the leadership bakerable portion or Triad Nights.

Baker discussed many facets of leadership from his experiences, and he reflected on the day.

“The Reserves have been around for 116 years, and we’re gonna be around for another 116 years,” Baker said. “Our brother ... the National Guard are going to be there right beside us, and we’re going to continue to support the mission. We know we activate. ... And if you see ... at what’s happening in Europe, they’re depending on sustainment operations. ... We need to be ready.”

— The 2024 Fort McCoy Arbor Day Celebration was delayed from April 26 to May 1, 2024, because of inclement weather but it didn’t stop dozens of people from arriving to the event to plant trees for the good of the future.

Fort McCoy held its 2024 Arbor Day event with community members that included adults and children in attendance. And they in turn planted more than 600 trees in a plot near building 102 on the cantonment area at the installation — an area adjacent to 2023 Arbor Day tree plantings on post.

During the observance, Fort McCoy Garrison Commander Col. Stephen Messenger and other installation personnel and children from the post Child Development Center planted the hundreds of tree seedlings in rows that were pre-dug by Directorate of Public Works (DPW) staff.

Messenger addressed everyone, but he specifically addressed the children in attendance to the event.

“Who’s ready to plant some trees?” Messenger said, speaking specifically to the children. “The trees we plant today are going to grow up big and strong. ... You are about to make a difference on Fort McCoy.”

And at the end, they all said in unison, “Happy Arbor Day!”



Photo by Scott T. Sturkol

Sergio “Matias” Chontal-Harter interviews Fort McCoy Garrison Commander Col. Stephen Messenger on Feb. 12, 2024, at the garrison headquarters at Fort McCoy. Matias, 6, interviewed Messenger as part of a school project.

— Fort McCoy Garrison Commander Col. Stephen Messenger held a quarterly town hall meeting for the garrison workforce April 25, 2024, and as part of that meeting, Messenger asked the workforce members to take a walk-through of Fort McCoy’s historic Commemorative Area.

The 900 block of Fort McCoy and the 11-acre area surrounding it are at the hub of the fort’s history-preservation efforts and is called the Commemorative Area. The Commemorative Area consists of five World War II-era buildings set aside to help tell Fort McCoy’s unique story.

These facilities are representative of the types found in the cantonment area when it was constructed in 1942. Three of the buildings — an administrative facility, a dining facility, and a barracks — are set up to depict Soldier life during the 1940s. Display items include a World War II chapel, bunk beds, footlockers, mannequins, and potbelly stoves.

Another building highlights four different modern military training venues, and a separate facility shows various training aids. The area also has the Equipment Park. Veterans Memorial Plaza is a tribute to all of the men and women who have served the nation during each era of Fort McCoy’s history.

In doing the Commemorative Area walk-through, it was a first for the town-hall meetings and it included hundreds of workforce members. They went through three of the historical buildings, saw Equipment Park, and made their final stop at Veterans Memorial Plaza.

— The 2024 fishing season at Fort McCoy is going to be well stocked with fish as anglers have several thousand more reasons to fish on post after workers with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s (USFWS) Genoa National Fish Hatchery of Genoa, Wis., stocked more than 15,000 rainbow trout in several waterways throughout the post.

USFWS personnel delivered the trout April 23 and 26, said Fort McCoy Fisheries Biologist who works with the Directorate of Public Works Environmental Division Natural Resources Branch (NRB). Trout were stocked in Suukjak Sep, Sandy, Stillwell, and Big Sandy lakes and Sparta and Swamp ponds.

“Each year we purchase and stock the same number of rainbow trout into each lake,” Rood said. “The average length of the rainbow trout that were stocked this year is 10.8 inches. These quality fish will provide an exciting opportunity for all anglers to pursue.”

— Marlene Hemsey, formerly known as Marlene Hackett and a native of Tomah, Wis., now calls Winona, Minn., her home, and at 86 years old, has a fondness for history — including Fort McCoy history.

As she entered her mid-80s, Marlene and her family embarked on a journey to document notes and conversations of her cherished memories from her formative youth spent near Fort McCoy and in Tomah during the 1940s and 1950s.

Coming to age on the edge of Fort McCoy in Tomah, Marlene Hemsey said her childhood was punctuated by the sounds of American Soldiers training for World War II.

As a young girl during the early 1940s, Hemsey’s family farm was close enough to the Army post that the booming sounds of training ammunition would sometimes shake their old farmhouse, often spooking their cow and Collie dog that her family named Bing Crosby.

“We could hear the shooting and whatever kind of equipment they were using for the Soldiers,” Hemsey recalled. “And I don’t know if there were bombs or what, but you could hear the shelling and it would rattle the old farmhouse windows. This was a constant noise that I was experiencing when I was growing up because World War II was going on, and the Soldiers were sent to McCoy, to you know, learn how to go into battle and what to do.”

— Located in the heart of Fort McCoy, the Wisconsin Challenge Academy stands as a beacon of hope for at-risk youth, offering them the chance to change for the better.

Established in 1998 as part of the National Guard Youth Challenge Program, the academy has been instrumental in reclaiming the lives of thousands of youths falling behind in high school and providing them with the guidance needed to thrive in adulthood.

Milwaukee’s WISN 12 News anchor and reporter, Dianna Gutierrez, visited Fort McCoy to spotlight the academy with a series that so far has captured the experience of cadets from the beginning of the semester to just over a month from graduation. Through interview with staff and cadets, the series offered a firsthand view of the program’s profound impact on Wisconsin’s troubled youth.

— An estimated audience of nearly 4,000 visitors participated in the 2024 Fort McCoy Armed Forces Day Open House on May 18, 2024, at Fort McCoy, which included a Vietnam veterans welcome home ceremony, Army band performances, numerous military vehicle static displays, bus tours, and much more.

The day’s activities were centered on the Commemorative Area from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., which features the History Center; five World War II-era buildings filled with historical equipment and displays, the outdoor Equipment Park, and Veterans Memorial Plaza.ithin the Commemorative Area, there were dozens of displays set up under tents for more interactive fun. Planned activities included guided installation bus tours, a sandbag-filling station, personalized ID tags, camouflage face painting, military equipment displays, marksmanship galleries, the special ceremony honoring Vietnam veterans, and more.

Open house visitor Catrice Jackson Boyer wrote on a Facebook post about the event that she enjoyed participating. “Even the bus drivers were great!! Nice job everyone!”

Another attendee, Dave Jorgensen, also wrote on Facebook, “Had a great day there with the grandsons. Favorites were the bus tour, historical vehicles and buildings, shooting simulation, talented band, and the belly crawl! Thanks to all for your service!”

— The 238th Quartermaster (Field Feeding) Company competed in the 2024 Philip A. Connelly Competition in the U.S. Army Reserve in mid-May 2024 at Fort McCoy.

The unit, comprised of 92G (culinary specialist) Soldiers, held their competition under the eyes of Army Reserve evaluators at Logistical Staging Area (LSA)-Freedom on May 14-15. The 238th is newer concept field feeding unit in the Army Reserve, said Sgt. Zachary Smalley, the unit’s competition noncommissioned officer in charge. And in this competition, it’s about feeding troops in the field.

“When it comes to this competition, we’re judging the troops on how to jump in a combat situation and feed their troops without having extra assistance from others,” Smalley said. “It’s supposed to be like a mobile site feeding situation. ... They judge to see if we can do a speedy set up in a field situation, and then we should be able to (feed) our Soldiers and then pack back up and continue the mission.”

According to the U.S. Army Quartermaster Corps, the Philip A. Connelly Program is “the personification of food service excellence executed by culinary specialists resulting in the presentation of extremely gratifying dining experiences across all Army food service platforms in garrison and field environments.” The 238th has Soldiers from teams in multiple states, including Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin, and they often train together at Fort McCoy, Smalley said. So, completing this competition at the installation also made sense.

— Fort McCoy is supporting its first rail movement of 2024 in the second half of May with an effort that includes nearly 200 railcars and approximately 800 pieces of equipment for the Wisconsin National Guard’s 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT).

This rail operation, according to Warrant Officer 1 Eric Frank with (See YEAR IN REVIEW 2024, Insert Page 4)



Photo by Scott T. Sturkol

Soldiers with the 238th Quartermaster (Field Feeding) Company conduct operations during the 2024 Philip A. Connelly Competition in the U.S. Army Reserve on May 15, 2024, at Fort McCoy.

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the 32nd IBCT who helped plan the movement, is “the largest rail movement with civilian linchaul the Wisconsin National Guard has ever done.”

The 32nd IBCT is sending its equipment and vehicles for a future rotation of training at the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Johnson (formerly Fort Polk), La. Frank said the rail movement has been about six months in the making.

“Basically, I built this plan from scratch with the help of all my (unit mobility officers) from all over the state,” Frank said. “Putting each and every single piece of equipment on the railcar takes consideration of length, width, height, and all of the dimensions. Certain rail cars can only handle certain pieces of equipment.”

Frank said prior to this rail movement, dozens of 32nd Soldiers also received training to be ready. A representative from the Army's National Training Center conducted a three-day course on railcar loading at Fort McCoy in October 2023.

“Then our Soldiers could then train the train the troops who are here today loading these railcars,” Frank said.

— **Fort McCoy hosted the Vietnam-era Veteran Recognition Ceremony during the 2024 Fort McCoy Armed Forces Day Open House on May 18 at the installation.**

Several Vietnam-era veterans attended along with their family members. Overall, approximate 150 to 200 people attended the event that was held early on in the open house in building 905.

The event honored the service and sacrifices of Vietnam-Era veterans, including those who served overseas and in the United States.

The ceremony brought members of the community of all ages together to honor the courage, sacrifice, and unwavering duty of Vietnam-era veterans, organizers said, serving as a heartfelt tribute to the brave men and women who served the nation during a restless time in America's history.

The ceremony was conducted by Headquarters and Headquarters Company, U.S. Army Garrison-Fort McCoy. They also coordinated the pinning of veterans with a commemorative pin, which was completed by members of Fort McCoy Garrison leadership. Each Vietnam-era veteran in attendance received the commemorative pin and personal thanks for their dedication.

“As a community it is important that we acknowledge the roles these veterans played in our history,” Lt. Col. James Ontiveros, a key organizer of the event, said. “This ceremony was one way to show appreciation.”

Participating from Fort McCoy Garrison leadership was Garrison Commander Col. Stephen Messenger; Garrison Deputy Commander Lt. Col. Mike Corkum; Deputy to the Garrison Commander Cameron Cantlon; and Command Sgt. Maj. Thomas Alarco, garrison command sergeant major.

— **Chief medical noncommissioned officers, whose military occupational specialty is 68Z where they specialize in healthcare, came from across the United States to gather at Fort McCoy for the two-day 68Z Active Guard Reserve Forum from May 7-8, 2024.**

The summit, aimed at enhancing collaboration and discussing future initiatives for the combat medic specialist (68W) community within the Army Medical Department, drew attendees from various installations nationwide.

Formed by a coalition of distinguished command sergeants major and sergeants major, the 68Z summit provided a platform for 68Zs to engage in vital discussions on pertinent issues facing the 68 Career Management Field (CMF) community, officials said.

Some of the attendees included Command Sgt. Maj. Thomas Alarco, Fort McCoy Garrison command sergeant major and 68Z from Fort McCoy; Sgt. Maj. Rachel Kaye with the Office of the Surgeon General in Falls Church, Va.; and Sgt. Maj. Adalgisa Fernandez, who is slated to become the incoming U.S. Army Medical Center of Excellence sergeant major at Camp Parks, Calif.

“This summit offered an invaluable opportunity for 68Zs to exchange insights and explore strategies for addressing challenges within the 68 CMF community,” said Sgt. Maj. Tinamarie Reese, who attended as the U.S. Army Reserve Surgeon sergeant major.

— **News team members with the show Good Morning America and USO members from all parts of America traveled to Fort McCoy on May 6, 2024, to be a part of a news gathering effort to recognize USO's National Volunteer of the Year for 2023.**

Evan Nelson, a volunteer through USO Wisconsin at the Fort McCoy USO station, earned the National USO Volunteer of the Year in 2023 and has served as a volunteer at McCoy for several years.

Nelson was interviewed by ABC television journalist Elizabeth Harrison for a Good Morning America segment that will air nationally about his reasons for volunteering, and more.

“I see our service members as being at the very top,” Nelson said about volunteering. “I have such respect for them and their serve. Being able to help them out, even in a small way. I will do whatever I need to do.”

The news team, which also included a videographer/photographer and sound specialist, also covered Nelson in action doing work for the USO, including serving Soldiers during an ice cream social at the Fort McCoy USO building on the cantonment area.

The news team also covered Nelson supporting

service members out in a training area at Fort McCoy, which the USO volunteers complete regularly at the installation.

Harrison and the news team also took time to interview Fort McCoy Garrison Commander Col. Stephen Messenger about the importance of volunteers like Nelson and how they contribute to the welfare of the installation community.

“It's fun to see the USO go out to the field and provide for the troops,” Messenger said. “As soon as the truck pulls up, they realize they are about to get something that is not part of their normal day.”

Messenger went on to refer about how a treat from the USO makes a busy day of training in the field a little easier.

He said that's what people like Nelson have done and continue to do daily through their volunteer service with the USO.

— **Soldiers participating in the E3B event — Expert Field Medical Badge for medics, Expert Infantry Badge for infantry, and Expert Soldier Badge for all other Soldiers — held their first day of activity May 6, 2024, at Fort McCoy, Wis.**

More than 150 Soldiers from the active-duty Army, National Guard and Army Reserve tried out to earn their badge. To earn their badge, candidates demonstrated their proficiency through physical fitness, day and night land navigation skills, various duty related tasks, and a ruck march.

At the end of the event, five Soldiers earned Expert Infantry Badges, 17 earned Expert Soldier Badges, and nine Soldiers earned Expert Field Medical Badges.

— **Every year, watershed management biologists and specialists with the Colorado State University's Center for Environmental Management of Military Lands who work in partnership with Fort McCoy's Directorate of Public Works Environmental Division Natural Resources Branch (NRB) hold fish surveys at Fort McCoy's 10 lakes and ponds.**

Fort McCoy Fisheries Biologist Steve Rood who works with NRB said this work is critical to understanding the health of each of those 10 waterways, and more.

“Each spring we conduct surveys of the fish populations in the lakes on Fort McCoy,” Rood said. “Since there are 10 lakes and ponds on Fort McCoy, they are sampled on a rotating schedule and each water body can be thoroughly surveyed.”

— **Contractors were busy for weeks in May 2024 getting the site set up for the fourth transient training troops barracks project at Fort McCoy, which was awarded in February to L.S. Black Constructors, LLC, for approximately \$27.3 million.**

L.S. Black Constructors is a familiar name in the barracks construction history at Fort McCoy, having built the first two of the 60,000-square-foot transient training troops barracks on post. They also recently built the new brigade headquarters building located in the same block as the barracks buildings.

In the first update about the project on May 23, Nathan Butts with the Resident Office of the Army Corps of Engineers at Fort McCoy said the basic setup of the site was taking place.

“The contractor continues to strip and stockpile topsoil,” Butts wrote in the update. He also wrote the contractor is continuing the silt fence installation, “surveying and building layout continues,” and “project trailers are being set up.”

Work on the site officially began May 13, Butts' update showed.

— **The U.S. Army Reserve hosted its annual Expert Soldier Badge (ESB), Expert Infantry Badge (EIB), and Expert Field Medical Badge (EFMB) train-up and testing at Fort McCoy, Wisconsin from May 5 to 17, 2024.** Active-duty and Army Reserve candidates pursued one of three badges, collectively referred to as E3B.

The E3B encourages all Soldiers, enlisted, commissioned, and warrant officer, to become experts in their profession and set themselves apart from their peers. Candidates completed 34 tasks demonstrating their expertise in physical fitness, land navigation, weapons knowledge, medical and patrol procedures, and other warrior tasks and battle drills. Of the 158 candidates who registered for E3B, only 31 completed every task necessary to secure one of the badges.

As ESB and EIB test board president, U.S. Army Command Sgt. Maj. Kenneth Randles oversaw the integrity of those assessments and pinned 17 ESB recipients and five EIB recipients during a ceremony on May 17, 2024.

Randles remarked that “you learn to be a soldier first, right?...So how do Soldiers, identify themselves as being the best?” He continued, “that is what this these badges allow a Soldier to do. They allow Soldiers to say that not only am I good at the job that the Army has me do, but at the core of it all, I'm an excellent Soldier.”

— **Fort McCoy community members gathered at McCoy's Community Center on May 21, 2024, to observe May as Asian-American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month.**

The 2024 Fort McCoy AAPI Observance, organized by Master Sgt. Ana Guzman-Gregory with the Fort McCoy Equal Opportunity Office, featured Tony Yang and other members of the Hmoob Cultural and Community Agency of La Crosse, Wis.

Yang and three other members from the agency gave a special presentation to talk about Hmong culture, and much more. According to the agency's



Photo by Scott T. Sturkol

A Good Morning America news team interviews Fort McCoy Garrison Commander Col. Stephen Messenger about USO support on May 6, 2024, at Fort McCoy.

description, as seen on LinkedIn, it was originally founded in 1982 as the La Crosse Area Hmong Mutual Assistance Association, Inc.

Yang took the time to explain the rich history of the Hmong community, the areas in Asia where they originally are from, and how many of them arrived in the United States and other countries.

— **Tyler Griffith, a heavy mobile equipment repair leader with the 88th Readiness Division's Equipment Concentration Site-67 at Fort McCoy is being hailed as a hero after his quick actions saved a family from a potentially tragic house fire on the morning of May 24, 2024.**

Griffith, a former U.S. Marine with extensive military training who currently serves in the Army Reserve as a staff sergeant, was on his morning commute May 24 when he noticed a manufactured home ablaze near the Monroe County highway intersection of Q and B outside of Cataract, Wis.

“I turned on one of the side roads and happened to look and see a porch on fire,” Griffith recounted. “The first thing I thought of was, ‘That's weird for somebody to be burning stuff this early in the morning.’ And then I realized nobody was out there.”

Without hesitation, Griffith pulled into the driveway, rushed to the door, and woke the occupants, ensuring their safety.

“I said, ‘Hey, you need to get everybody out and your house is on fire,’” Griffith explained. He then assisted in extinguishing the fire, quickly utilizing a garden hose found on the property to save the family and their home from being engulfed in flames.

Griffith arrived on the scene at a pivotal moment, just mere minutes away from potential tragedy for the family. “I found out later that the fire department said if it had been a minute or two more — or had nobody stopped — the parents would have probably been separated from their kids and wouldn't have been able to get to them in the house,” Griffith said. “With me having kids myself, that was a really sobering thing right there.”

JUNE

— **Warrant Officer 2 (WO2) Paul Barnes, hailing from the British Army's Land Warfare Centre, made a pivotal visit to Fort McCoy in May. His mission? To champion the importance of international cooperation and interoperability in military operations between the U.S. and United Kingdom.**

From immersive installation tours with Fort McCoy Garrison leadership to insightful presentations covering warfare doctrine and lessons learned from the British Army's studies on the war in Ukraine, Barnes' itinerary was packed with engagements aimed at fostering deeper cooperation between the British and American military.

“The purpose of my visit to Fort McCoy was to come over and do some personal development for the U.S. Army, bringing experience of doctrine and warfare development from the U.K. perspective to show what it's like to work in an international environment,” said Barnes.

“Another purpose was to showcase Fort McCoy's training capabilities, specifically the ones that can enhance interoperability like the Noncommissioned Officer Academy (NCOA) and the Medical Simulation Training Center (MSTC),” added Fort McCoy Deputy Garrison Commander Lt. Col. Michael Corkum, who first met Barnes in Turkey at the 2022 NATO Land Operations Working Group.

“It was great catching up,” Corkum said. “Having WO2 Barnes here was a fantastic opportunity to strengthen the bonds between our nations and enhance our mutual understanding of each other's military capabilities and training methods.”

— **Command Sgt. Maj. Jason D. Kirkman became the 15th commandant of the Fort McCoy Noncommissioned Officer Academy (NCOA) on June 29, 2024, during a special change-of-commandant ceremony at the academy.**

The 83rd United States Army Reserve Readiness Training Center Commander, Col. William G. Morris, presided over the ceremony.

Kirkman took over responsibility from Command Sgt. Maj. Deanna L. Czarnecki who had been the commandant since July 2022.

In accepting his new role, Kirkman said he looks forward to the challenge.

“I am humbled to serve as the commandant for the Army's finest NCO Academy where we will develop the next generation of NCOs,” Kirkman said. “For when the nation calls, they will be ready. I accept this honor and privilege ... I thank you again for attending today and for continuing to support the Fort McCoy Noncommissioned Officer Academy.”

— **Fort McCoy Garrison Commander Col. Stephen Messenger was everywhere on the installation during the 2024 Fort McCoy Army Birthday Celebration on June 14.**

Starting early on, Messenger opened the day with the Commander's 5k Run/2-Mile Walk discussing the Revolutionary War roots of the Army Birthday to the more than 200 participants. He then joined them in the effort, running 5 kilometers himself with fellow members of the Fort McCoy Garrison leadership team.

Later on, Messenger opened the free luncheon for the Army Birthday Celebration at McCoy's Community Center. Messenger's effort first included the opening remarks.

“Today we celebrate our people — Soldiers, civilians, and family who protect America 24/7,” Messenger said. “Today, we continue to defend this country, and we're needed so much with our all-volunteer force. Serving one's country is a noble cause, and I got to tell you I believe it's among life's greatest work.”

“Whether you're a Soldier or a civilian serving, nothing illustrates our nation's commitment more to freedom and democracy than putting boots on the ground where they're needed and conducting defensive and offensive action at the expense of our enemy,” he said.

— **Training by thousands of troops at Fort McCoy in June 2024 has been steady with a wide variety of engineer units supporting troop**

projects as well as other types of training, including weekend training.

Engineer Soldiers with Wisconsin National Guard units supported major troop projects both on and off the the cantonment area. On the cantonment area, Soldiers with the 824th Engineer Detachment (Concrete) set up to work in early June on the cantonment area to replace a 100-foot section of sidewalk, and within days had the troop project completed.

Staff Sgt. Jesse Flores, construction supervisor for the project with the 824th, which is a Wisconsin National Guard unit based in Baraboo, said the first part of the project, and likely the most difficult, was dealing with muddy conditions following some recent steady rain.

Flores' team dug out all of the 100 feet old sidewalk, put in new aggregate on the base, and set in forms to pour concrete for the new stretch of sidewalk.

— **As June 2024 begins, the third four-story, 60,000-square-foot barracks project at Fort McCoy — funded in fiscal year 2022, stands at 22 percent complete.**

According to a May 31 update from Ken Green with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Resident Office at Fort McCoy, construction remained steady and lots of work is getting completed.

Initial framing on the new building started Jan. 31. As of the latest update from Green, structural steel installation currently continues as well as rebar installation.

Other work includes slab-on grade completion, steel stud/exterior sheeting installation, slab-on grade vapor barrier installation, and rebar and concrete placements continuing to be placed.

Also, mechanical, electrical, and plumbing rough-in continues; and roof truss installation was continuing. All this work continues even as the start of a fourth barracks project by a different contractor begins nearby.

— **Organizers with the Wisconsin Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) held their 2024 Boss Lift event on June 5 at Fort McCoy that included Wisconsin National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters flying in employer representatives, static displays, a Commemorative Area visit, and more.**

According to their website at <https://www.esgr.mil/About-ESGR/Contact/Local-State-Pages/Wisconsin>, the ESGR, a Department of Defense office, “is comprised of dedicated and trained volunteers and staff. (They) develop and promote employer support for Guard and Reserve service by advocating relevant initiatives, recognizing outstanding support, increasing awareness of applicable laws, and resolving conflict between employers and service members.”

On a Facebook post by Wisconsin ESGR, they also reviewed their Boss Lift event that took several hours on the installation.

“Patriotic employers of Guard and Reserve service members from around the states of Wisconsin and Minnesota were treated to an Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve Boss Lift courtesy of the Wisconsin Army National Guard. Wisconsin National Guard aviators and crews flew employers from Appleton, Eau Claire, Madison, Milwaukee, and Wausau to Fort McCoy for a day of briefings and static displays of military equipment.”

— **Fort McCoy's rail operations support team steamed into action once again in late June and early July to support the return of more than 800 pieces of equipment and vehicles belonging to the Wisconsin National Guard's 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team in the post's second large rail movement of the year.**

Fort McCoy first supported a rail movement in May to move the same 800-plus pieces of equipment on dozens of railcars, which made their way to the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Johnson, La., for a rotation of training for the 32nd.

All along, Fort McCoy's personnel has worked in step with unit movement coordinators for the 32nd, who have conducted the loading and off-loading of the equipment with the railcars, said Warrant Officer 1 Eric Frank with the Wisconsin National Guard who has coordinated the rail movements for the 32nd.

The last of the equipment was offloaded on July 9 on the second rail movement, Frank said. And overall, he said it was not only a historic rail movement for the Wisconsin National Guard but also well done.

“This was the largest rail movement with civilian linchaul the Wisconsin National Guard has ever done,” Frank said in May when the movement of the 800-plus pieces of equipment and vehicles started.

— **Soldiers with the 106th Engineer Detachment (Quarry) were having a blast June 8-9, 2024, at Fort McCoy when they coordinated a pair of quarry demolitions at the installation to help take apart a sandstone hill that's part of an ongoing troop project at the post.**

The project leader was 1st Lt. Nicholas Bures, commander of the 106th. Ironically, Bures had previously worked on the same project in 2021 when he was the 4th Platoon leader with the 950th Engineer Company (Route Clearance).

The site plan is to make it into a base operations support site for installation service contractors, such as facility maintenance, roads and grounds, solid waste, custodial, pest management, and more. Plus, it also serves as a borrow pit for sand for projects around the installation.

For the June 8-9 quarry demolition event by 106th, Bures said his troops prepared extensively for it and worked with installation officials to make sure it was conducted safely and correctly. Both blasts were at the top of a hill in the borrow pit area.

Four explosions took place — one borehole test blast to start on June 8, then a a grid blast on the afternoon of June 8, then two more grid blasts on June 9 at midday and late afternoon.

“It all went great,” Bures said. “We figure we blasted around 3,400 tons of sandstone from the hill. There's definitely more up there but it was a great first step and proof of concept.”



Photo by Scott T. Sturkol

A scene from the 2024 Fort McCoy Armed Forces Day Open House is shown May 18, 2024, at the Commemorative Area at Fort McCoy.

FORT MCCOY’S 2024 YEAR IN REVIEW

Fort McCoy 2024 year in review:

Second half of year sees new leadership, training exercises, continued construction

BY SCOTT T. STURKOL
Public Affairs Staff

After a first half of the year with extensive construction projects going on and a historic rail movement and many types of training going on, the second half of 2024 at Fort McCoy continued to build on that foundation of activity.

Throughout the second half of 2024, Fort McCoy saw several large Army Reserve exercises take place, numerous troop projects were completed, and the start of yet another large construction project began. Here’s a continued look at main stories and events through the rest of 2024 at Fort McCoy.

JULY

— Maj. Gen. Joseph A. Ricciardi took command of the 88th Readiness Division from Maj. Gen. Matthew V. Baker during a change-of-command ceremony July 20, 2024, at Veterans Memorial Plaza at Fort McCoy’s historic Commemorative Area.

Lt. Gen. Jody J. Daniels, chief of the U.S. Army Reserve and commanding general of U.S. Army Reserve Command, served as the presiding officer for the ceremony.

Ricciardi was previously he was assigned as the Deputy Commanding General, U.S. Army Installation Management Command since June 2023. In addition to the commanding general of the 88th, he will also be the senior commander for Fort McCoy.

According to his biography, Ricciardi was commissioned through the U.S. Military Academy. He obtained master’s degrees in strategic studies from the Army War College and Purdue University. He additionally obtained a doctorate from Benedictine University.

— Col. Sheyla Baez-Ramirez assumed command of Fort McCoy Garrison from Col. Stephen Messenger during a change-of-command ceremony July 19, 2024, at Veterans Memorial Plaza at the installation’s historic Commemorative Area.

Patrick J. Appelman, director of U.S. Army Installation Management Command-Readiness, served as the presiding officer for the ceremony. Dozens of people were on hand to witness the ceremony as Baez Ramirez became the first woman to command the garrison in the installation’s history.

“Steve, I know this is a bittersweet day for you,” Appelman said as he reviewed the accomplishments of Messenger during his last two years as commander of the garrison. “Commanding a garrison is one of the most unique military assignments one can experience. Serving our Soldiers, civilians, and their families. ... Installation Management Command and the Army entrust garrison commands to defend and secure Army installations. And you Steve as the garrison commander provided that defense and that security of U.S. Army Garrison-Fort McCoy with unparalleled expertise and grace. Thank you.

“I would also like to welcome Col. Sheyla Baez (Ramirez),” Appelman said. “I’ve enjoyed getting to know you the past couple of days, and I also would like to welcome your family to the IMCOM-Readiness team. Sheyla, I am excited to see you assume command and lead U.S. Army Garrison-Fort McCoy. As a proven leader, I am confident you will invest the same time, passion, professionalism, pride, and expertise into the entire community of Fort McCoy. Trust me, they deserve nothing less for each and every day of your command.”

After taking command, Baez-Ramirez said she was proud to come to Fort McCoy to lead the garrison.

“Today is a very special day,” she said in her first remarks as the garrison commander. “And not because I am here and not because I’m taking command of Fort McCoy. It is because we are expanding the community. It’s because we are building up on Col. Messenger and what he has done for Fort McCoy. I am super proud to have the opportunity to serve with you. I hope to have the opportunity to serve with all of our partners in the community.

“To the staff here at Fort McCoy, you have done an amazing job, and I hope to continue ...,” Baez-Ramirez said. “All policies and procedures remain in place, and we will continue to move Fort McCoy forward.”

— In July 2024, an unusual discovery was made on one of Fort McCoy’s training ranges that sparked interest among archaeologists and workers alike.

What was first believed to be a Civil War-era shell unearthed during training was later revealed to be a replica used in reenactments during the 1970s to 1990s.

Range Safety Specialist Erik Christianson received a call regarding unexploded ordnance (UXO) that was found on one of the ranges. Finding UXO is not an uncommon experience while training, however, upon Christianson’s safety inspection and slight excavation of the UXO he noticed it did not have any tell-tale signs of modern ammunition.

“What was unique about this was there was no firing pin to indicate that it was any sort of projectile. There were no fins to indicate that it was any sort of mortar... taking some dirt away around it I noticed that there was a spot for a fuse,” Christianson recalled.

Christianson then called the Explosive Ordnance Disposal team to ensure that the shell was rendered safe before further action. After calls were made, the explosive ordnance team with the 115th Fighter Wing of the Wisconsin Air National Guard in Madison was planning to take action to blow up the unidentified shell.

— In late-July 2024, aircrews with the Minnesota National Guard’s 2nd Battalion, 147th Aviation Regiment operated UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters at Fort McCoy supporting training operations at the installation.

Some of the operations included specialty training and others included unit-directed training. Black Hawk units and crews regularly complete training operations at Fort McCoy, and they also unit also support numerous training events at the installation each year.

— Fort McCoy’s Quarterly Safety and Occupational Health Advisory Council met on July 9, 2024, to discuss safety measures both on and off the base. The meeting, led by Safety Manager Edson De Leon with the Installation Safety Office emphasized the importance of safety awareness and proactive prevention of accidents.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Bob Yarbrough
Maj. Gen. Joseph Ricciardi assumes command of the 88th Readiness Division from Maj. Gen. Matthew Baker during a change-of-command ceremony July 20 at Fort McCoy.

De Leon’s presentation included a thorough review of safety statistics showing a significant downward trend in accidents, along with an open discussion encouraging input from attendees.

The exchange highlighted the need to communicate risks effectively, especially to those unfamiliar with them, noting, fresh eyes can give you a new angle to help mitigate risks that we become accustomed to. Normalized risks does not mean it is safe for others and allowing feedback from both experienced and inexperienced workers can better work environments.

Deputy Garrison Commander Lt. Col. Michael Corkum added, “Qualified doesn’t equal experience,” underscoring the importance of practical knowledge in safety practices. He also added to empower junior leaders to help them gain knowledge in more controlled environments so they can be successful in moments of need.

De Leon concluded his presentation with a poignant remark: “No safety, know pain. Know safety, no pain.” He stressed that being aware and making educated decisions are key to preventing accidents.

— Forty-five people over two tours from the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin visited Fort McCoy on July 15 to participate in a butterfly field day at the installation for a second time.

The Fort McCoy coordination for the field trip was again led by Endangered Species Biologist Jessup Weichelt with the Directorate of Public Works Environmental Division Natural Resources Branch (NRB).

Weichelt said the weather for the event was ideal and he had a great turnout for both the morning and afternoon tours.

“The mission was to find as many butterflies as we could,” Weichelt said. “The goal also was to find some of the more rare butterflies, such as Ottoo Skipper and the Karner Blue Butterfly. And luckily the weather allowed us to be successful. We were able to find Ottoo Skippers and Karner Blue Butterflies.

“There were 25 people signed up for the morning session and 25 for the afternoon session,” Weichelt said. “We did have some cancellations, but total we had 45 people participate.”

— Fort McCoy’s rail operations support team steamed into action once again in late June and early July 2024 to support the return of more than 800 pieces of equipment and vehicles belonging to the Wisconsin National Guard’s 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team in the post’s second large rail movement of the year.

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The last of the equipment was offloaded on July 9 on the second rail movement, Frank said. And overall, he said it was not only a historic rail movement for the Wisconsin National Guard but also well done.

“This was the largest rail movement with civilian linehaul the Wisconsin National Guard has ever done,” Frank said in May when the movement of the 800-plus pieces of equipment and vehicles started.

— Fort McCoy held a special Triad Nights celebration to honor the Army Community Service’s (Acs) 59th birthday July 25 at McCoy’s Community Center.

The night’s events began with Lisa David Olson, a business humorist, having a discussion with several dozen attendees to the leadership discussion portion of Triad Nights at McCoy’s Community Center.

Olson held a humorous discussion, then also continued with activities that included audience members.

Olson’s event was then followed by the official cake cutting to celebrate the ACS birthday. But before that would happen, Fort McCoy Garrison Commander Col. Sheyla Baez-Ramirez discussed the importance of what ACS does for the community.



Photo by Scott T. Sturkol
Col. Sheyla Baez Ramirez takes the garrison flag from Patrick J. Appelman, director of U.S. Army Installation Management Command-Readiness, to officially take command of Fort McCoy Garrison during the 2024 Fort McCoy Garrison change-of-command ceremony July 19, 2024, at Fort McCoy.

— Soldiers from multiple units participated in the Installation Run on July 19, 2024, at Fort McCoy.

The formation run saw more than 130 Soldiers participate and covered approximately 2 miles.

The run included the installation’s senior commander, a two-star general, with the 88th Readiness Division leading the way with Soldiers from the division.

The run also included Soldiers with the Fort McCoy Garrison, 86th Training Division, 181st Multi-Functional Training Brigade and its related units, Fort McCoy Noncommissioned Officer Academy, Fort McCoy Regional Training Site-Maintenance and related 94th Training Division service members, and other units.

— Fort McCoy Garrison Commander Col. Sheyla Baez-Ramirez held her first town hall with the Fort McCoy workforce July 25, 2024, in building 905 to take an opportunity to introduce herself to the community.

Baez took command of the garrison on July 19 and has been bus learning more and more every day about Fort McCoy, she said.

As garrison commander, Baez is responsible for day-to-day operations and management of the only U.S. Army installation in Wisconsin. A garrison commander also represents the Army and the installation in the surrounding community, approves and issues garrison policies in accordance with respective Army regulations, approves and issues policies for the civilian workforce, and supports mobilization station requirements.

Baez shared a lot of information about herself, such as how her last names are arranged. She said in her native Puerto Rico, it’s customary for children to take the last names of both of the parents. In her case, her father’s last name is Baez and her mother’s last name is Ramirez.

Baez also talked about how important family is to her, how she’s looking forward to working with the workforce, and more. She also discussed some of her command philosophy.

— Firefighters and police officers with the Fort McCoy Directorate of Emergency Services (DES) responded to an emergency situation July 25, 2024, on the cantonment area at Fort McCoy.

Deputy Fire Chief Brady Brever with the DES Fire Department said firefighters safely stopped a heated brakes emergency on a military trailer with an immediate response.

“The fire department deployed a handline to cool the brakes and checked the temperature with a thermal imaging camera,” Brever said.

B Shift firefighters combined their skills to successfully complete the response, Brever said, along with police personnel providing additional support.

— Fort McCoy held an annual session of its Installation Planning Board (IPB) on July 18, 2024, at McCoy’s Community Center that included senior leaders and upcoming leaders at Fort McCoy.

Installation Management Command (IMCOM)-Readiness Director Patrick J. Appelman; Maj. Gen. Matthew V. Baker, then Fort McCoy senior commander and 88th Readiness Division commanding general; Maj. Gen. Joseph A. Ricciardi, now the Fort McCoy senior commander and 88th commanding general; Col. Stephen Messenger, then-Fort McCoy Garrison commander; and Col. Sheyla Baez Ramirez, now Fort McCoy Garrison commander; all attended.

The overall meeting was organized by the Fort McCoy Plans, Analysis and Integration Office (PAIO). The purpose of the IPB, according to the agenda, is it serves as a “forum for identifying, assessing, and providing a common operating picture regarding installationwide planning requirements.”

It also enhances “collaborative communication and decisions installationwide” and “ensures resourcing decisions are aligned with the installation’s strategic business plan.”

— The fiscal year 2022-funded Transient Training Troop Barracks Project, also referred to as the South Barracks Project, maintained its scheduled progress and stood at 25 percent complete as July 2024 began.

Framework for the four-story, 60,000-plus square-foot barracks started at the end of January 2024 and has continued to steadily be built up by contractor BlindermanPower (Construction) who got the contract to build the facility in June 2023 at just over \$28 million.

As of July 5, according to an update from Ken Green with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Resident Office at Fort McCoy, construction progress was at 25 percent complete and the contractor has made progress on building walls and installing the roof and more.

— Aircrews with the Wisconsin National Guard’s 1st Battalion, 147th Aviation Regiment operate UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters in July 2024 at Fort McCoy.

Members of the unit regularly complete training operations at Fort McCoy and the unit also supports numerous training events at the installation each year.

— Hundreds of Army Reserve Soldiers with a multitude of units descended on Fort McCoy in July 2024 to train in the 87th Training Division’s Warrior Exercise (WAREX) 87-24-02, said Training Coordination Chief Larry Sharp with the Fort McCoy Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security.

The dates of the exercise are July 13-27, and it covers a wide variety of activities for units participating in the training. For example, at the 87th Training Division’s Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/87thTrainingDivision>, a post from July 16 where Soldiers in WAREX were completing M249 shooting at a Fort McCoy live-fire range, division officials gave an idea of what the exercise was about.

“Part of the WAREX is validating Soldier warfighting capabilities in both individual and collective common Warrior tasks,” the 87th’s post stated.

AUGUST

— More than 6,000 service members descended upon Fort McCoy at the beginning of August 2024 to train and build their Soldier skills in the 86th Training Division’s Combat Support Training Exercise (CSTX) 86-24-02 from Aug. 3-17, 2024, at Fort McCoy.

The 86th Training Division, a tenant organization at Fort McCoy, conducts a CSTX annually at the installation.

In a video about CSTX 86-24-02 by Staff Sgt. Samuel Conrad with the 326th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment at <https://www.dvidshub.net/video/934058/86th-training-division-conducts-cstx-24-02>, Col. David Nash, deputy commander of the 86th Training Division, discusses how the exercise is unique.

“A Combat Support Training Exercise, or CSTX, is the Army Reserve’s last fully evaluated — externally evaluated — collective training exercise. It is to validate that units are ready to go into their available year into a (Forces Command) ready pool of units that could be picked to deploy worldwide. The CSTX is the Army Reserve’s equivalent of a combat training center (CTC).

“A lot of these units don’t get the opportunity to go to a CTC because the CTC is built for really that brigade combat team forward and ... maybe a division construct. At echelon, in the size that these units are, they really need a different exercise design to get after all of their individual trading objectives at the same time, forcing them to work together across organizations to develop the relationships to get after how integrated sustainment, the casualty evacuation, and replacement process works.”

Units like the 652nd Multi-Role Bridge Company were a unique addition to the exercise. The unit completed a training event on the Mississippi River at Fountain City, Wis. They also trained on Big Sandy Lake on Fort McCoy’s South Post where the lake has special areas set up so units can do this exact kind of training.

— Maj. Michael A. Robinson became the new commandant for Regional Training Site (RTS)-Maintenance at Fort McCoy in August 2024 at Fort McCoy.

As commandant, Robinson is responsible for overseeing 12 separate ordnance-specific courses that support training of students of both active- and reserve-component forces annually.

According to his biography, Robinson joined the Army in 2010 and attended Officer Candidate School at Fort Moore, Ga., and was commissioned in November 2011.

— Aircrews piloted several UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters for training during the third weekend of August 2024 as part of some specific weekend training at Fort McCoy.

According to Fort McCoy training officials with the Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security, several Black Hawks and (See YEAR IN REVIEW 2024, Insert Page 6)

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crews held training at Fort McCoy the third week-end of August at Young Air Assault Strip as well as the airport.

All of the crews and UH-60s were with the Wisconsin National Guard's 1st Battalion, 147th Aviation Regiment which regularly conducts training at the installation.

— **Soldiers with the Army Reserve's 612th Engineer Detachment (Utilities) of Duluth, Minn., worked on a sidewalk troop project in mid-August 2024 on the cantonment area at Fort McCoy.**

The engineers replaced 220 feet of sidewalk on the project. The work was done while the Soldiers were at Fort McCoy for training in the 86th Training Division's Combat Support Training Exercise 86-24-02.

Completing troops projects at the installation is very important, according to Fort McCoy's Directorate of Public Works. The projects help troops get the training they need, and the post benefits from the work they do, such as improving Fort McCoy training ranges and quality-of-life programs.

— **During August 2024, some 6,000 service members were participating in the 86th Training Division's Combat Support Training Exercise (CSTX) at Fort McCoy, but those same thousands of troops also cross-flowed in participating in the 2024 Global Medic exercise at the installation as well.**

According to Army Reserve Medical Command (ARMEDCOM), Global Medic had two iterations in 2024. Once was held at Fort Hunter-Liggett, Calif., earlier in the year, and the second was held in August at Fort McCoy.

"Commanders bring their Soldiers and units to Global Medic as a capstone military medical training event to put previous individual and collective training in a theater context consistent with Big Army's posture transition away from counterinsurgency to large-scale combat operations," ARMEDCOM stated about the training.

Throughout the exercise at Fort McCoy, Global Medic operations operated from numerous areas of the installation. At Tactical Training Base-Justice on Fort McCoy's North Post, a large encampment of troops were set up at the austere location with a large number of medical units.

— **UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters operated by aircrews with the 5th Battalion, 159th General Support Aviation Battalion of Fort Eustis, Va., conducted operations on the cantonment area Aug. 7-8, 2024, at Fort McCoy as part of training operations for the 87th Training Division's Combat Support Training Exercise 86-24-02 at the installation.**

The UH-60 Black Hawk has been the Army's front line utility helicopter for the past 40 years, and it shows no signs of letting up, said service officials at Redstone Arsenal, Ala.

— **More than 56 paralegal (27D) Soldiers from over five Army Reserve commands participated in the annual Paralegal Warrior Training Course (PWTC) hosted by the United States Army Reserve Command (USARC) from July 21 to Aug. 3, 2024, at Fort McCoy.**

Participants of the PWTC spent a week in the classroom learning about paralegal competencies, and about another week conducting field training exercises that ranged from establishing an Office of the Staff Judge Advocate to area security operations.

— **Ninth-grade students from Milwaukee's Greenfield Bilingual and Wedgewood Park Middle Schools recently had a unique opportunity to explore potential careers and experience military life during a field trip to Fort McCoy.**

The Aug. 6, 2024, visit, organized by Marilu Rodriguez-Kroll, Talent Search Education Specialist with the Wisconsin Educational Opportunity Programs, was designed to introduce students to various career paths within the U.S. Army. Rodriguez-Kroll chose Fort McCoy due to her familiarity with the area and its picturesque setting.

"When I was looking for a base to visit, I tried Fort McCoy first. Mainly because I was familiar with it, and it is in a beautiful part of Wisconsin," she said. "Our family farm is in the area (outside of Ontario). I've driven by the base so many times. Once I made contact, Christopher Jones from the Fort McCoy Public Affairs Office was so helpful that I didn't need to look at another base."

The students engaged in a range of activities during their visit. They toured the historical Commemorative Area, participated in a convoy driving simulation, and enjoyed a meal at McCoy's restaurant. They also had the chance to meet with STEM-focused Army recruiters, receive MREs (Meal-Ready-to-Eat) to take home and get photos inside an actual Humvee. Rodriguez-Kroll reported that the students were particularly enthusiastic about the experience.

— **Fort McCoy demonstrated its ability to support large numbers of personnel with Task Force McCoy (in 2021-22), which supported Operation Allies Welcome to temporarily house, feed, clothe, provide medical care, and process for immigration nearly 12,600 Afghans.** Despite that achievement, its capability to mobilize units at a similar scale has not been tested in recent decades.

"It is not only the quantity of thousands of Soldiers that we need to process through Fort McCoy, but also the rate of throughput of hundreds per day that will stress the mobilization task force. This is an order of magnitude greater than we have experienced, so we are not currently familiar with our gaps and weaknesses," said said U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Stephen P. Case, deputy commanding general of 88th Readiness Division.

Previous exercises at Fort McCoy did not stress this capability or capacity in intensity, nor frequency. This led to the creation of the Mobilization Support Force – Exercise, which seeks to prove and test the capability of the enterprise to support and process large amounts of Soldiers at Fort McCoy. The exercise was conducted from July 28 to Aug. 3, 2024.

— **Maj. Gen. Robert D. Harter, a lieutenant general selectee and the newly selected Chief of the Army Reserve and commanding general of U.S. Army Reserve Command, visited Fort McCoy from Aug. 7-9, 2024, to visit the 86th Training Division's Combat Support Training Exercise (CSTX) 86-24-02 as well as the 2024 Global Medic Exercise.**

On Aug. 7, the Chief of Army Reserve Facebook page showed the new Army Reserve leader making an early morning visit to Fort McCoy's newly renovated Rumpel Fitness Center. Rumpel Fitness Center reopened May 1 after 18 months and millions of dollars worth of upgrades to the facility.

Besides experiencing Fort McCoy's upgraded fitness facilities Aug. 7, Harter also went to the Global Medic training. The Chief of Army Reserve Facebook page shows he visited with numerous Soldiers completing training in the exercise in a video as well as photos. In the video he wrote about the stop.

— **As blood drips onto the floor of the tan polyurethane medical tent. Airmen, who were strangers just five days earlier, work together, tying a tourniquet, packing a wound with medical gauze, inserting a laryngoscope. Doing everything they can to save the life of a patient with a missing leg.**

Approximately 500 U.S. Air Force Reserve medical personnel assigned to 14 units participated in Exercise Patriot Medic 24 with Joint and Allied Forces, at Fort McCoy, Wisconsin, Aug. 2-17, 2024. PM24 is an annual exercise conducted to challenge and assess Citizen Airmen on their ability to manage administrative, medical and patient transport tasks according to their specific mission requirements while operating in a simulated deployment environment.

"The intent of this exercise is to get our medical personnel a feel for the field environment," said Col. Scott Williams, 445th Aeromedical Staging Squadron commander and the lead observer and trainer for PM24. "We want to switch them from a counterinsurgency environment that we've been in for the last 20 years and start looking at the potential future fight."

— **Aircrews and maintenance personnel with the 5th Battalion, 159th General Support Aviation (5th, 159th) Battalion of Fort Eustis, Va., brought four CH-47 Chinook helicopters to support training in the 86th Training Division's Combat Support Training Exercise (CSTX) 86-24-02, and for two weeks those helicopters were busy.**

CSTX took place from Aug. 3-17, 2024, at Fort McCoy. For the 5th, 159th Soldiers who were supporting the training, they set up shop at the Sparta-Fort McCoy Airport to conduct their operations, said Fort McCoy Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security (DPTMS) officials.

Throughout the exercise, the four Chinook helicopters of the 5th, 159th could be seen soaring over the installation's training spaces. The helicopters and their crews ferried troops all over Fort McCoy's 60,000-acre space, and more. They even supported the 652nd Multi-Role Bridge Company with some of their training with building bridges at Big Sandy Lake on South Post.

— **U.S. Army Lt. Gen. Anthony Hale, the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Army, G-2, visited U.S. Army Reserve military intelligence Soldiers training at Fort McCoy from Aug. 8-9, 2024.**

As the Army's top intelligence officer, Hale's travels allowed him to engage with troops assigned to the Military Intelligence Readiness Command (MIRC) participating in this summer's Combat Support Training Exercise, the largest annual U.S. Army Reserve-centered exercise.

The MIRC's 321st Military Intelligence Battalion (General Support) worked hard to deliver vital intelligence capabilities while operating in an austere field environment. They established a secure area and set up communications equipment while dealing with the challenges presented by the exercise. Their training focus included providing intelligence to the exercise's corps level staff engaged in large scale combat operations.

— **Thousands of troops participated in the 86th Training Division's Combat Support Training Exercise (CSTX) 86-24-02 as well as the 2024 Global Medic exercise and among the top priorities for exercise planners was making sure those troops had the food supplies needed for meals, and more.**

Enter the Fort McCoy food-service team. The installation's food-service team ensures that need is always met, said Fort McCoy Food Program Manager Andy Piskey with the Fort McCoy Logistics Readiness Center (LRC).

That team includes the LRC Food Program Management Office (FPMO) and the LRC Subsistence Supply Management Office (SSMO); the full food-service contractor DCT Inc.; and food suppliers, such as Sysco Foods of Baraboo, Wis.

The 86th's CSTX and Global Medic took place from Aug. 3-17 with 6,000-plus troops participating, said 86th Training Division Public Affairs Officer Maj. Jon Dahl. With that many troops, Piskey said the SSMO was busy providing constant support.

He also noted that members of the SSMO oversee the installation central fuel facility, so they pull



Photo by Scott T. Sturkol

Training operations for the 86th Training Division's Combat Support Training Exercise (CSTX) 86-24-02 are shown Aug. 17, 2024, at Fort McCoy.

dual duty at both 490 where they unload, store, and issue rations, and they also unload fuel and maintain the Central Fuel Point at building 3010.

By the numbers, for food-service support, the team provided a significant number of items throughout the training, Piskey said.

Piskey said for food service the SSMO supported CSTX/Global Medic with Class I in the following quantities: Meals, Ready-to-Eat (MREs), 100,992 meals; Unitized Group Rations (UGRs), 99,316 servings; UHT milk, 51,840 containers; bagged ice, 110,140 pounds; and additional enhancements such as cereal, fresh fruit, salad mix, and salad dressings.

— **On a hot August day, Bataan Death March and World War II veteran Sgt. Jack Hohlfeld was laid to rest in La Crosse, Wis., approximately 82 years after his death.**

A Mass of Christian burial service was conducted at St. Patrick Parish in Onalaska, Wis., on Aug. 26, and internment was then held at the Catholic Cemetery in La Crosse. Hundreds of people attended the event, including family members, veterans, Catholic clergy, active military members, and even complete strangers thankful he was home.

"This is a very special event," said Kathy Gurnee at the service. Gurnee, of Fenton, Mich., is the grandniece of Hohlfeld. "This is very nice."

Accounting for a hero

In July, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) announced it had identified Hohlfeld and would bring him home. The identification was made conclusive in May.

"U.S. Army Air Forces Sgt. Jack H. Hohlfeld, 29, of Trempealeau, Wis., who was captured and died as a prisoner of war during World War II, was accounted for May 29, 2024," the DPAA release stated. "Hohlfeld was a member of Headquarters Squadron, 24th Pursuit Group, when Japanese forces invaded the Philippine Islands in December 1941. Intense fighting continued until the surrender of the Bataan peninsula on April 9, 1942, and of Corregidor Island on May 6, 1942."

— **Numerous current and even some former Soldiers associated with Fort McCoy took time Aug. 26, 2024, to be part of a special Mass of Christian Burial for former World War II POW Sgt. Jack Hohlfeld who was returned home from having been found in the Philippines earlier in 2024.**

Soldiers with Fort McCoy Garrison and the 86th Training Division were among the hundreds of people at the Hohlfeld service in St. Patrick Parish in Onalaska, Wis., and at the Catholic Cemetery in La Crosse, Wis., on Aug. 26.

From Fort McCoy Garrison, Deputy Garrison Commander Lt. Col. Mike Corkum and Command Sgt. Maj. Thomas Calarco, garrison command sergeant major, attended the event to represent the installation.

From the 86th, and in probably one of the most important jobs of the day for the event, seven Soldiers served as the pallbearer/flag folding team for Hohlfeld. Those Soldiers included Maj. Steven Kelly, Capt. Jiaru Bryar, Sgt. Maj. Abdul Parsons-Bey, 1st Sgt. Matt Hardin, Master Sgt. Kristy Roemer, Staff Sgt. Haley Dexter, and Sgt. Dalton Bruser.

The team met the arrival of Hohlfeld to the parish for the start of the service, carried him into the parish and stood by him throughout the ceremony. Then returned with him to the hearse. At the cemetery, they also carried him from the hearse and to his final resting place.

SEPTEMBER

— **Work on the fiscal year 2022-funded Transient Training Troop Barracks Project, also referred to as the South Barracks Project, at Fort McCoy has jumped to 45 percent complete thanks to work completed by the contractor into September 2024.**

The contractor BlidermanPower (Construction) got the contract to build the facility in June 2023 at just over \$28 million.

In his Sept. 13 update, Ken Green with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Resident Office at Fort McCoy, said the progress of the project is 45 complete and doing well.

"Mechanical, electrical, and plumbing rough-in continued," Green wrote in the update. "Interior steel stud framing continued. Interior spray foam continued. Interior sheet rocking continued. Interior blocking continued. Interior sound batting continued. Interior finishing continued. (And) masonry continued."

— **An aircrew with the Wisconsin National Guard's 1st Battalion, 147th Aviation Regiment operated a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter Sept. 18 at Fort McCoy in support of training at the installation.**

Members of the 1st Battalion, 147th Aviation Regiment regularly complete training operations at Fort McCoy, and the unit also supports numerous training events at the installation each year. In 2024, the unit has been supporting training on Fort McCoy nearly every month.

According to the Army fact sheet for the Black Hawk, its mission is to provide air assault, general support, aeromedical evacuation, command and control, and special operations support to combat, stability, and support operations.

The UH-60 also is the Army's utility tactical transport helicopter, the fact sheet states. The versatile helicopter has enhanced the overall mobility of the Army due to dramatic improvements in troop capacity and cargo lift capability over the years as well.

— **Contractors continued work on a new \$27.3 million transient training troops barracks project Sept. 11, 2024, at Fort McCoy. Contractors began in May 2024 getting the site set up for the fourth transient training troops barracks project at Fort McCoy, which was awarded in February 2024 to L.S. Black Constructors, LLC, for approximately \$27.3 million.**

L.S. Black Constructors is a familiar name in the barracks construction history at Fort McCoy, having built the first two of the 60,000-square-foot transient training troops barracks on post. They also recently built the new brigade headquarters building located in the same block as the barracks buildings.

The exact contract amount for the project was \$27,287,735. In the award announcement, it states it was "for the construction of the barracks, which will provide housing for enlisted service members undergoing training at the installation."

— **Dozens and dozens of military retirees and their family members made the trip to Fort McCoy on Sept. 6 to participate in a full day of activities for Retiree Appreciation Day (RAD) 2024 at the installation.**

The first part of RAD 2024 was a prayer breakfast that started at 7:30 a.m. in building 905. The breakfast was organized by the Fort McCoy Religious Support Office and featured retired Army Command Sgt. Maj. Rufus M. Parker as the featured guest speaker.

Attendees also were served a free breakfast on tablecloth-covered tables while Parker gave his presentation. As one retiree mentioned later in the day, "Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Amy Noble and her team did a great job once again setting up the prayer breakfast once again, and we hope to continue this tradition."

Following the breakfast, attendees were able to visit with agency representatives who were at the event to provide support and information. Some included people from the Social Security Administration, TriCare, Military OneSource, Fort McCoy Army Substance Abuse Program Office, American Legion, and more.

In addition to visiting with the representatives, Fort McCoy Retirement Services Officer Nick Gimson with the Soldier for Life Retirement Services Office of the Fort McCoy Directorate of Human Resources made sure those same representatives also gave briefings and answered questions about the varied programs and subjects that military retirees are concerned about.

Gimson said he was happy to see how the entire day and event was completed.

"Retiree Appreciation Day was a tremendous success," Gimson said. "We had the pleasure of serving 155 retirees, veterans, and spouses. This year, we welcomed several new community partners, and the feedback from attendees was overwhelmingly positive. Many expressed a desire for more time and additional events."

— **The University of Wisconsin (UW)-Madison ROTC "Badger" Battalion held its Alumni Tailgate and Hall of Fame induction Sept. 7 at the university campus not far from Camp Randall Stadium and among the inductees to the Badger Battalion Heritage Alumni Hall of Fame was Maj. Gen. Robert Bruce McCoy.**

McCoy is the namesake for Fort McCoy, formerly named Camp McCoy. Maj. Gen. McCoy has ties to UW-Madison and so for the 2024 hall of fame induction it was decided to honor the Spanish-American War and World War I veteran.

Maj. Michael Centola, associate professor of military science with UW-Madison's ROTC, led the effort to recognize McCoy. He explained how it came to fruition.

"We hold a hall of fame induction and alumni event roughly every two years — this was the third event since 1919," Centola said. "Leading up to the event, we solicit nominations for individuals who have either had an impact on the ROTC program, are distinguished alumni from the ROTC program, or distinguished military individuals with University of Wisconsin-Madison ties."

— **More than 30 Fort McCoy Garrison and local community guests participated in the 2024 Fort McCoy Community Connect Night held Sept. 5, 2024, at McCoy's Community Center on post.**

The annual Fort McCoy Garrison event, formerly called Community Appreciation Night, was co-ordinated by the Fort McCoy Public Affairs Office.

The 2024 event was held in the banquet room at McCoy's Community Center and included guests from agencies around the installation as well as guests from communities such as Tomah, Sparta, La Crosse, Onalaska, and other Wisconsin municipalities (See YEAR IN REVIEW 2024, Insert Page 7)



Photo by Scott T. Sturkol

A CH-47 Chinook and crew with the 7th Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment of New Century, Kansas, support students and staff in the 89B Ammunition Supply Course as they participate in sling-load training Sept. 26, 2024, at Sparta-Fort McCoy Airport at Fort McCoy.



Photo by Scott T. Sturkol

A scene from the Mass of Christian Burial graveside service for Sgt. Jack Hohlfeld is shown Aug. 26, 2024, at the Catholic cemetery in La Crosse, Wis. Hundreds of people attended a special Mass for Hohlfeld at St. Patrick Parish in Onalaska, Wis., and the graveside service as well.

FORT MCCOY’S 2024 YEAR IN REVIEW

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ipalities.

Fort McCoy Garrison Commander Col. Sheyla Baez-Ramirez welcomed everyone to the event.

“I want to thank you for taking time out of your busy schedules to be with us tonight to celebrate kicking off our first Fort McCoy Community Connect Night, which is a smaller, more-personal version of the Community Appreciation Night,” Baez said.

— **Fort McCoy Garrison leaders and staff with the Fort McCoy Directorate of Family and Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (DFMWR) held a special ribbon-cutting ceremony Sept. 3, 20-24, to officially open the New Edge String Pinspotter Bowling System now available at McCoy’s Community Center.**

Fort McCoy Garrison Commander Col. Sheyla Baez-Ramirez, Fort McCoy Garrison Deputy Commander Lt. Col. Mike Corkum, Fort McCoy Garrison Deputy to the Garrison Commander Cameron Cantlon, DFMWR Business and Recreation Chief Karla Rynes, and other DFMWR employees were on hand to support the ceremony.

Rynes said new system for bowling is a major improvement for McCoy’s Community Center.

“It’s a new era of bowling,” Rynes said. “Your pinsetters don’t break down, and lanes stay open. The simple design of this system really makes it easy for any staff to be able to operate. Staff can be trained to operate the system in an hour — that’s how simple the system is to operate.”

— **Fort McCoy joined many other Department of Defense and Army installations in testing its energy resiliency as it held a Black Start Exercise on Sept. 10, 2024, at the installation.**

The no-notice exercise began at 8:06 a.m. when the power to the installation was shut down and went on for eight hours. During the exercise, the Fort McCoy Installation Emergency Operations Center was active and activity during the power outage was managed throughout the day.

Facilities that have working generators were able to continue full operations. Other areas allowed for maximized teleworking for employees.

Fort McCoy Directorate of Emergency Services leaders said the installation security and emergency services coverage were not affected as the area remained fully secure and emergency personnel stood ready as needed.

Black Start is an energy resilience readiness exercise designed to test the installation’s emergency and standby energy generation systems, key infrastructure, and equipment, planning documents show. Garrison leaders learned from exercise outcomes about the infrastructure needs for crucial installation missions in the event of a power loss.

— **Dozens of Soldiers, veterans, workforce members, family members, Wisconsin Challenge Academy cadets, and others lined up in the dark, early morning hours Sept. 11, 2024, to pay honor to the victims of the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, on the United States as they participated in the 2024 Fort McCoy 9/11 Memorial Run and Stair Climb.**

The 2.975-mile run/1.34-mile walk started and ended in the parking lot of one of the new four-story barracks at Fort McCoy — the tallest buildings on post. The stair climb, which also was meant to resemble the firefighters climbing the stairs of the World Trade Center, also took place inside the barracks building. Nearly every participant also did the stair climb.

Chaplain (Maj.) Carlos Ruiz with the 181st Multi-Functional Training Brigade gave an opening prayer to start the event after having a moment of silence to remember the victims of the events from 2001.

Fort McCoy Garrison Commander Col. Sheyla Baez-Ramirez also gave opening comments about remembering what happened 23 years ago.

“Sept. 11, 2001 — some of you were not even born that day,” Baez said. “So, I’m not sure if your parents or your family members ... have given you a recount of what happened. (However) I think this is a day that changed the course of our history, and it left a big mark in our hearts and in our minds.

— **Pilots driving the A-10C Thunderbolt II completed several days of bombing practice at Fort McCoy in early September during bombing training runs with 1,000-pound munitions at the installation’s impact area.**

The Thunderbolts were from the 303rd Fighter Squadron at Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo., according to Fort McCoy Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security officials. Over the course of several days (Sept. 5-9), A-10s made passes to targets on the installation’s impact area on North Post — accurately hitting targets as efficiently as possible.

— **Students and staff with the 89B Ammunition Supply Course conducted sling-load training with a CH-47 Chinook crew at Sparta-Fort McCoy Airport on Sept. 26, 2024, at Fort McCoy.**

The Ammunition Supply Course (ASC), taught by Regional Training Site-Maintenance staff with the 94th Training Division at Fort McCoy, is a four-week course that provides training for Soldiers who are reclassifying to the 89B military occupational specialty, said course manager Staff Sgt. Christopher Nieves. The sling-load training is one of the last major training events during the course.

According to the Army, a sling load is used to transport munitions to remote locations or to expedite shipments in hostile locations. By Army definition, ammunition supply specialists are “Soldiers responsible for the management of ordnance to include ammunition and explosives.”

The sling-load training is one of the last major training events during ASC, Nieves said.

“We teach all of our students here how to perform sling-load operations,” Nieves said. “We’ll go over the basics, including about some of the types of aircraft that the Army utilizes to perform this operation, the different types of operations where its needed, and the different equipment that we use to do sling loads.

“We also teach them hand signals to use during sling loads because obviously, if you can’t communicate ... it’s not gonna happen,” Nieves said.

— **Several Vietnam War-era veterans with the 85th Ordnance Company made a reunion visit to Fort McCoy on Sept. 26, 2024, and the vets had a full day of activities at the installation.**

The former Soldiers in the company first started their post visit with a stop at Fort McCoy Garrison Headquarters where the veterans visited with Garrison Commander Col. Sheyla Baez-Ramirez, Garrison Deputy Commander Lt. Col. Mike Corkum, and Command Sgt. Maj. Thomas Calarco, garrison command sergeant major.

Following their visit with the garrison command team, the 85th vets received an installation driving tour to show some of the current training areas and facilities of Fort McCoy, and more.

The driving tour was then followed by the tour of the Fort McCoy Commemorative Area with members of the Fort McCoy Public Affairs Office. The group visited mainly the Fort McCoy History Center and the historical buildings at the area with additional looks at Equipment Park and Veterans Memorial Plaza.

OCTOBER

— **Another Soldier, once missing in action, has made it home to Wisconsin.**

Dozens of family members, military members, and community members gathered together Oct. 1, 2024, at Woodlawn Cemetery in La Crosse, Wis., to honor the return of Pvt. Robert L. Skaar to his hometown 79 years after he was killed in action in France during World War II.

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) posted Sept. 5 in a press release that “U.S. Army Pvt. Robert L. Skaar, 18, of La Crosse, Wis., killed during World War II, was accounted for June 7, 2024.”

Additionally, the release stated, “In early 1945, Skaar was assigned to Company C, 1st Battalion, 222nd Infantry Regiment, 42nd Infantry Division. On March 10 (1945) Skaar was killed in action while his unit was on patrol near Wildenguth, France. The Germans never reported Skaar as a prisoner of war, and his remains were not immediately recovered.”

So, for 79 years, it was mainly unknown what happened to Skaar. The release states the history of how the search for Skaar took place as well as how he was identified in 2024.

— **Several family members of fallen World War II Soldier Pvt. Robert L. Skaar made a special visit to Fort McCoy’s Commemorative Area on Sept. 30, 2024, to not only tour the area but also donate a uniform of Skaar’s to the Fort McCoy History Center at the area.**

The family members were in Wisconsin for the funeral service for Skaar, which took place Oct. 1 in La Crosse, Wis. Skaar had been



Photos by Scott T. Sturkol

(Above) Family members of former Army Pvt. Robert Skaar tour the Fort McCoy Commemorative Area on Sept. 30, 2024, at Fort McCoy. During their visit, the family donated an Army uniform of Skaar’s for the Fort McCoy History Center. (Below) A scene from the graveside service for Army Pvt. Robert L. Skaar, a Soldier killed during World War II in France, is shown Oct. 1, 2024, at Woodlawn Cemetery in La Crosse, Wis.



recently identified by the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) and after 79 years was being returned to his hometown of La Crosse.

The family members visiting the Fort McCoy Commemorative Area were Skaar’s nieces and nephews from southern Illinois. The uniform they brought to donate was not one Skaar had actually worn, but rather one the Army provided as a final uniform for the graveside service.

“We wanted to see that his uniform was donated somewhere, and his story would be told instead of the uniform being interred with him,” said John Cauble, Skaar’s nephew from Dongola, Ill.

John was visiting the area with his brother Scott Cauble of Cobden, Ill.; sister Sandra Dillow, also from Cobden; sister Ginger (GiGi) Hurt of Elkton, Ky., and sister Cheri Honey of Ullin, Ill.

Honey is the oldest of the siblings who were part of the visit. She said she was glad to be able to visit Fort McCoy as well as to be able to experience the honors being given to her uncle.

“Makes me glad that I’m an American, and it makes me realize that freedom is not free,” Honey said.

— **Entering the fifth month since the start of the fiscal year (FY) 2023 Transient Training Troops Barracks Project, also called the Fort McCoy East Barracks Project, the construction of the 60,000-plus-square-foot building has reached 10 percent completion.**

The contractor, L.S. Black Constructors, has made continuous progress on the project, to include beginning the installation of steel framework on Sept. 18.

Since May 13, construction the fourth, \$27.3 million barracks project have been in high gear by the contractor who was awarded the project in February. The exact contract amount for the project when it was awarded was \$27,287,735.

— **Fort McCoy completed another busy year supporting troop training with 73,991 troops training at the installation in fiscal year (FY) 2024.**

The FY 2024 number is less than the 86,090 troops who trained on post during FY 2023 and the 77,411 troops who trained at the installation in FY 2022. The lower total for FY 2024 is largely due in part to units not completing their annual training at Fort McCoy because of other Army commitments, said Larry Sharp, chief of the Fort McCoy Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security (DPTMS) Training Coordination Branch.

“Numbers from FY 24 dropped due reduced training attendance of the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT) and 33rd IBCT for both annual training and battle assembly training,” Sharp said. “Many 33rd IBCT units are currently deployed, and 32nd IBCT Soldiers attended a Joint Readiness Training Center rotation.”

Sharp said the training numbers include Army Reserve Soldiers; National Guard service members; and active-duty troops from not just the Army but also other services, such as the Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force.

Training statistics also reflect many types of training opportunities that take place at the installation by active- and reserve-component forces and other governmental agencies, according to DPTMS.

— **The Fort McCoy Central Issue Facility is one of several organizations on Fort McCoy that provides direct support to troops, and in fiscal year (FY) 2024 the facility had a “great year” supporting those troops, said the facility’s Property Book Officer Thomas Lovgren.**

“This Central Issue Facility (CIF) is a newer one that was built ... at a cost of approximately \$9 million, and it’s 62,548 square feet,” Lovgren said. “We typically do about between \$30 and \$40 million worth of CIF transactions annually, which equates to about 400,000 to 500,000 pieces of equipment being issued out and turned in each year.”

For FY 2024, Lovgren said the CIF completed 19,212 transactions, which was \$37.07 million worth of transactions.

“Through the work completed in this facility, we also had a transportation cost avoidance savings of \$438,725,” Lovgren said.

The current Fort McCoy Central Issue Facility opened in September 2015 after months of construction, setup, and hard work, Lovgren said. In the years since the new CIF has been opened, tens of thousands of transactions have taken place there. He said customers have plenty of space to process through and receive equipment, and more.

— **During fiscal year 2024, nearly 74,000 troops trained at Fort McCoy in a variety of venues, and through that whole year the Fort McCoy food-service team was there making sure those troops had all the food supplies they needed.**

“The installation’s food-service team always makes sure those needs are met,” said Jim Gouker with the Fort McCoy Logistics Readiness Center (LRC) Food Program Management Office (FPMO).

The FPMO and the LRC Subsistence Supply Management Office (SSMO); the full food-service contractor DCT Inc.; and food suppliers, such as Sysco Foods of Baraboo, Wis., make up the Fort McCoy food-service team.

“The SSMO is one of the busiest organizations during any large training event,” said Andy Pisney in previous articles. Pisney worked as the installation food program manager until recentlt before moving to a new position.

The SSMO orders, receives, and distributes all food and rations necessary for each exercise as well as for units conducting weekend, extended combat, or annual training, Gouker said. The SSMO also oversees the installation central fuel facility. SSMO staff pull dual duty at both building 490 where they unload, store, and issue rations, and they also unload fuel and maintain the Central Fuel Point at building 3010.

During FY 2024, with support from other members of the team, the SSMO put up some impressive support numbers, Gouker said.

For food service in FY 2024, excluding three major exercises, the SSMO supported training with Class I in the following quantities: Meals, Ready-to-Eat (MREs), 8,684 meals; Kosher meals, 38; Halal meals, 118; Sun Meadow meals, 6,580; Unitized Group Rations (UGRs), 1,450 cases; UHT milk, 2,506 cases; bagged ice, 1,238 bags; and additional enhancements such as cereal, fresh fruit, salad mix, and salad dressings.

— **Fort McCoy held its 2024 Hispanic Heritage Month observance Oct. 10, 2024, in building 905 at Fort McCoy where dozens of installation community members attended to hear Garrison Commander Col. Sheyla Baez-Ramirez as well as enjoy some traditional cultural cuisine at no cost to the attendees.**

“Thank you everybody for coming here today,” Baez-Ramirez said. “As we look at today’s society, it is great that we are here celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month. Not only for throughout history, all of the things that Hispanic Americans have done for our military, all of the contributions that Hispanic Americans have brought to the military, but also to all of the changes that that has brought to our society.

“As we look at the future, and we look at our community internally, the actions that many of these Soldiers, many of these officers, and many of these Soldiers took years ago, was the first step to start closing the bridge and closing the gap that we still see in society today,” the colonel said. “The reason why the military celebrates Hispanic Heritage, Asian Pacific Heritage Month, and all of these other celebrations, is because still in today’s society, we have to remind people that even if the color of our skin is different, even if we look different, we have a common goal.”

— **National Fire Prevention Week 2024 took place from Oct. 6-12, and October is also National Fire Prevention Month. During this time, the Fort McCoy Directorate of Emergency Services (DES) Fire Department took advantage of the observances to further inform the post community about fire safety.**

“The theme for this year is ‘Smoke Alarms: Make Them Work For You,’” said Fort McCoy Fire Inspector Curt Ladwig with the DES Fire Department, referring to the National Fire Protection Agency’s (NFPA) theme on fire prevention for 2024.

— **The Fort McCoy Directorate of Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation (DFMWR) with support from other Fort McCoy organizations and personnel held a special visit Oct. 15, 2024, for DFMWR sponsors on post.**

The nearly 30 visitors received a bus tour, lunch, and a stop at the Fort McCoy Commemorative Area, a stop at the installation simulations training complex areas, and more, DFMWR officials said.

The post has also held similar past visits. DFMWR personnel state the visit is a “special day” to thank sponsors who supported events serving MWR and the Fort McCoy community throughout the year.

Sponsors help DFMWR with many events throughout the year on Fort McCoy. They support the annual tree-lighting event every December, the Army Birthday Celebration, and many more.

During their stop at the Fort McCoy Commemorative Area, they got to review Army and Fort McCoy history while fall colors were around Equipment Park, Veterans Memorial Plaza, and the entire area was at near peak. The group saw the park, the plaza, and the Fort McCoy History Center where they were led by Fort McCoy Public Affairs Officer Tonya Townsell.

— **Fort McCoy held its 2024 National Disability Employment Awareness Month observance Oct. 15, 2024, in building 905 at Fort McCoy with the therapy team of Jancee Doemel and Brutus the Mini Pig as the main presenters.**

Doemel and Brutus have been regular attendees in the past at Fort McCoy events, including for unit functions as well as Fort McCoy’s Armed Forces Day Open House every year.

Senior Equal Employment Opportunity Specialist Jaime Herrera with the Army Reserve Equal Employment Opportunity Office at Fort McCoy opened the event discussing the importance of the observance.

— **Maj. Gen. Joseph Ricciardi, commanding general of the 88th Readiness Division and senior commander for Fort McCoy, took time out Oct. 30, 2024, to visit several areas of Fort McCoy Garrison and visit with garrison personnel.**

Ricciardi visited the Range Management Branch with the Fort McCoy Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security (DPTMS).

DPTMS Range Management Branch includes Range Operations, Range Safety, Range Scheduling, Range Fire Desk, and Range Maintenance. The team who works in these areas has a lot of space to manage.

Fort McCoy has 31 live-fire ranges, 17 of which are automated or instrumented; 21 artillery firing points; 12 mortar firing points; and an 8,000-acre impact area, DPTMS officials said. Ranges supporting collective live-fire training include two multipurpose training ranges, a convoy live-fire range, an infantry platoon and squad battle course, three multipurpose machine-gun ranges, two live-fire shoot houses, and a live-fire breach facility.

— **On Oct. 22, 2024, the Fort McCoy Directorate of Emergency Services Fire Department conducted a prescribed burn at Range 29, marking a key step in preparing the area for military training come next spring.**

The burn on Range 29 began at approximately 10 a.m. and was completed in the afternoon.

Conducting burns prior to training season can reduce the chance of wildfires and their spread.

“This range has been under construction for over three years and will be used starting next spring,” Fort McCoy Forester Charles Mentzel said. “The majority of our prescribed burns happen in the spring; conditions are normally better. This fall, with the extended drought, we are seeing “spring-like” conditions which isn’t normal, but we are trying to take advantage while we can and get a head start on the ranges for next spring.”

— **Fort McCoy Garrison Commander Col. Sheyla Baez-Ramirez, along with other garrison command team members, held a pair of town hall meetings Oct. 24 in building 905 at Fort McCoy.**

This was the second town hall meeting for Baez since taking command of the garrison in July.

(See YEAR IN REVIEW 2024, Insert Page 8)



Photo by Claudia Neve

Training operations are shown at Fort McCoy, Wis., on Oct. 10, 2024. During October 2024, thousands of troops trained at Fort McCoy to start off fiscal year 2025.

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During the meeting, Baez reviewed a variety of subjects and news. One of the first items discussed was about an upcoming Defense Organizational Climate (DEOC) survey for the workforce.

“You will receive an email (soon) with our DEOC survey. Does everybody know what a DEOC survey is? Who does not know? All right, so for the benefit of everybody, just going to throw it out there,” Baez said. “Our DEOC survey is the tool, the mechanism that the Army utilizes to get a sense for how the environment and units are working.

“So even though the DEOC surveys are volunteer, I am asking please and encouraging everybody to participate in the DEOC survey,” Baez said. “This is one of the methodologies that I have, and the command team have to see what is happening around the workforce. I know that a lot of time people do not feel comfortable coming forward and bringing up concerns, and the DEOC survey is one method that you can use to do that.”

— **U.S. Army Garrison-Fort McCoy was among many garrisons that recently earned the Army Superior Unit Award for mission excellence in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-2021.**

Fort McCoy Garrison Commander Col. Sheyla Baez officially presented the award to the garrison during a townhall meeting Oct. 24, 2024, in building 905.

“As you look around, we have civilians who have been here for a long time because they love their job, and they do it very, very well,” Baez said. “Thank you for your service. ... As an organization, the Army changed in their practice, in their policies. ... Many installations across the globe shut down and closed and stopped doing what they were doing. ... Fort McCoy continued to work. We had some diminished capacity in some sections, but Fort McCoy did not shut down.

“Fort McCoy did not close the gates, did not close the door. Why?” Baez said. “Because we have people who are committed. Because we had the space to take the measures that we could take to do the separation between people. ... This award is for every one of you. So, a big round of applause.”

The citation for the award states fully what the award was all about.

“Army Superior Unit Award. By order of the Secretary of the Army, United States Army Garrison-Fort McCoy, demonstrated superior performance and devotion to duty from Feb. 1, 2020, to Dec. 31, 2021,” the citation states. “United States Army Garrison-Fort McCoy, conducted an exceptionally difficult and challenging mission under extraordinary circumstances that resulted in safe communities and preservation of lives across the Coulee Region, including Sparta, Tomah, Black River Falls, and Fort McCoy, consisting of 37 tenant units and 1,500 Soldiers and Department of Army civilians.

NOVEMBER

— **The fiscal year 2023 Transient Training Troops Barracks Project, also called the Fort McCoy East Barracks Project, is now 14 percent complete, said Nathan Butts with the Resident Office of the Army Corps of Engineers at Fort McCoy.**

As of Nov. 12, 2024, workers with contractor L.S. Black Constructors were putting in more steel framing and building the skeleton of the new barracks. At the beginning of October, the barracks was 10 percent complete.

In a Nov. 8 update, Butts wrote about the ongoing work to the eventual 60,000-plus-square-foot building.

“Structural steel deliveries are ongoing,” Butts wrote. “Decking and rebar placement continues on the south wing of the building. Stairs have been installed on the south side.

“Steel erection continues in the center section of the building. Mechanical, electrical, and plumbing rough-in at the center section of the building is close to complete. And rebar installation to start in the center section,” Butts wrote.

— **Michael Charette, also known as Laughing Fox, with the Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa shared his people's history through story and music during his presentation for the 2024 Fort McCoy Native American Heritage Month observance Nov. 19 at Fort McCoy.**

Charette is a Native American storyteller and flutist. He also gave the presentation for this monthly observance at Fort McCoy in 2023.

During his presentation, Charette told stories and played music for the dozens in attendance.

“The last time I was here, I believe the staff sergeant had presented ... that indigenous folks started coming over here some 35,000 years ago,” Charette said. “We started across that land bridge. But when I say this to my elders back home, they very much tell us that ... that's their story of how this place was populated. Because we, as indigenous people, have all of our own creation stories that were gifts from us by the creator and by the spirits to help guide us along our path.

“And a lot of times they'll even tell me that, you know, there are more tracks going the other way,” Charette said. “As they had found things like tobacco inside of Egyptian mummies, a new world crop ... wild rice as well, another new world crop. So, there's a lot of questions out there, and it seems

like the more of the facts come out, the more our history changes, the more that we look at it.

— **Maj. Gen. Timothy Brennan, Deputy Commanding General — Support for First Army at Rock Island Arsenal, Ill., visited Fort McCoy on Nov. 12-14, 2024, to learn more about the installation.**

According to planners for the visit with the 181st Multi-Functional Training Brigade, the main purpose of the visit, which was alternately named a “terrain walk,” was to inform the major general “on Fort McCoy's large-scale mobilization operations sustainment capabilities and shortfalls through 2030.”

Brennan's main day of activity on post was Nov. 13, where he had a full day of visiting sites, meeting with installation personnel, and much more.

His day on Nov. 13 started out at building 2000 with a teleconference meeting and then a sustainment overview brief with a full conference area of Soldiers and personnel from the installation. This briefing lasted 90 minutes and gave the leader a detailed overall look at capabilities at Fort McCoy.

Joining Brennan at the overview briefing were Fort McCoy Garrison Commander Col. Sheyla Baez-Ramirez, 181st MFTB Commander Col. Charles Wells, Fort McCoy Deputy Commander Lt. Col. Mike Corkum, and many other unit leaders and directorate personnel from Fort McCoy.

Following the overview briefing, Brennan then went to visit several areas and training venues on post. This included visiting the installation rail areas.

— **Leaders with Fort McCoy Garrison and installation agencies met Nov. 15, 2024, with community leaders and workforce professionals in Sparta, Wis., during the Fort McCoy Workforce Collaborative Meeting.**

The meeting brought together people who are working to improve employment opportunities in the region, including at Fort McCoy.

Officials at the meeting noted the collaboration is helpful in filling jobs at Fort McCoy, and also helps people like military family members learn about opportunities for employment.

Community outreach is an important part of the Army mission. According to the Army, as stated at <https://www.army.mil/outreach>, “the Army is about more than ensuring our national security at home and abroad, it's about giving back and getting to know the communities that support us.”

— **Preparation and beginning work has started for the fiscal year 2024-funded \$55.75 million Collective Training Officers Quarters Project at Fort McCoy.**

The contractor for the project, BlindermanPower (Construction), was awarded a contract totaling \$55,759,100, according to the Army Corps of Engineers, which is overseeing the project. The notice to proceed was acknowledged on July 19. The contract duration is scheduled for completion in 1,260 calendar days.

BlindermanPower is also currently working on another major project at Fort McCoy — the fiscal year-2022 funded South Barracks Project.

For this project, Ken Green with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Resident Office at Fort McCoy said it calls for the construction of two new 48,000-square-foot, four-story Collective Training Officers Quarters buildings.

According to the project description in the contract, the plan is to build the two buildings based on the standard layout depicted in the Operational Readiness Training Complex.

“This facility is required to replace antiquated World War II-era wood transient training officer quarters currently being utilized to train Soldiers during major exercises, annual training, battle assembly, and mobilization at Fort McCoy,” the description states. “This facility will be designed with the ability to be winterized or deactivated during the winter months. When Fort McCoy is not stood up as a mobilization platform, its primary mission is to support the seasonal requirements of training ... Army Reserve Soldiers. In order to conserve as much energy as possible, while also decreasing the funding necessary to field extended utility costs, this building will be deactivated when it is not being used for training.

— **During November 2024, the second month of fiscal year 2024, Fort McCoy supported thousands of troops training from several Army Reserve units as well as others in institutional training.**

Among the larger units training at McCoy was the 687th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, which is headquartered in Wausau, Wis., and has sub-units throughout Wisconsin as well as Ohio.

Fort McCoy Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security (DPTMS) officials said the 687th brought more than 450 Soldiers for training, covering a wide variety of training.

Another Army Reserve unit, the 389th Engineer Battalion, which is headquartered in Dubuque, Iowa, also sent nearly 500 Soldiers to train at Fort McCoy during November 2024.

DECEMBER

— **Fort McCoy community members participated in the 2024 Fort McCoy Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony on Dec. 5 at McCoy's Community Center at Fort McCoy.**

Hundreds gathered to celebrate the annual event,



Photo by Scott T. Sturkol

A scene from the 2024 Fort McCoy Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony is shown Dec. 5, 2024, at McCoy's Community Center at Fort McCoy.

which signals the start of the holiday season for the installation.

This year's celebration featured not only the iconic tree lighting but also an array of festive activities, including holiday crafts for children, photos with Santa and Mrs. Claus, and a short play featuring the Grinch and citizens of Whoville.

“We celebrate our strong sense of community, the bonds we share, and the spirit of giving that makes this time of the year so special,” said Karla Rynes, Business and Recreation Division Chief. Rynes welcomed attendees also saying “it's time to come together as a community and spread joy, warmth, and cheer.”

The ceremony also included remarks from the Garrison Command Team. Fort McCoy Garrison Commander Col. Sheyla Baez-Ramirez emphasized the importance of community and gratitude during the holidays.

“It's a special evening for all of us here at Fort McCoy because this marks the official start of the holiday season,” Baez said. “We always have things to be thankful for, and this is a great opportunity to gather outside of the office, outside of work, and get to know each other a little bit better and celebrate the great things we have around us.”

— **Amy Borman, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army Environment, Safety, and Occupational Health made a visit Nov. 21 to Fort McCoy to present the 2024 Secretary of the Army Environmental Award for Environmental Quality, Individual/Team to the 88th Readiness Division's Hazardous Materials Centralized Management Team.**

Edward Tebo, 88th Readiness Division Environmental Division chief, accepted the award from Borman in a ceremony in building 60 at Fort McCoy. Division officials said this the first time in five years the U.S. Army Reserve has been recognized in the environmental award selection process.

The award shows Tebo led a team across the 19-state region, building a data base so they could access all their materials with QR codes. The development of a centralized hazardous material database by location provided hazardous material inventories for more than 3,000 specific flammable cabinets, rooms, cages, and other hazardous material storage areas.

— **Wisconsin's and Fort McCoy's 2024 nine-day gun-deer season took place Nov. 23 to Dec. 1, and hunters saw some warmer weather to start the season and ended the season seeing 385 deer harvested.**

“We did not get the harvest we were hoping for, but not too terrible either,” said Wildlife Program Manager and Biologist Kevin Luepke with the Fort McCoy Directorate of Public Works Environmental Division Natural Resources Branch. I think we had a number of factors that influenced the harvest this year. The warmer weather during the first half of the season, no acorn production forced deer to seek out alternative food sources, the late season (this year was the latest that a gun-deer season can take place, ending in December), the first recorded case of Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD) on the installation, and not having all the bonus antlerless harvest authorizations purchased through the lottery drawing.”

Entering the 2024 gun-deer season at Fort McCoy, Luepke said the deer herd was looking plentiful.

“The herd was looking good during the summer with doe-fawn ratios exceeding levels over the past five years,” Luepke said. “The mild winter and abundant acorn crop in fall 2023 really lent itself to deer herd growth.”

Luepke also said little to no acorn production on the installation in fall 2024 was noted by wildlife and forestry staff. It's difficult to say whether or not that contributed to a lower harvest in 2024 (was 426 in 2023), but it does make a difference.

— **Fort McCoy held its 2024 Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony on Dec. 5 at McCoy's Community Center at the installation with hundreds of post members joining in on the official kickoff of the December holiday season.**

The event included the tree lighting, crafts for families and children, and much more, and the event was coordinated by the Fort McCoy Directorate of Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation (DFMWR).

DFMWR Business and Recreation Division Chief Karla Rynes emceed the event at McCoy's and she was like many in Fort McCoy's 110-year-plus history who led a similar celebration for the holidays.

“Tonight, as we gather together to celebrate the holiday season, it's time to come together as a community and spread joy, warmth, and cheer,” Rynes said Dec. 5. “It is truly a pleasure to see so many faces, both who live here and new, as we gather to kick off the holiday season as we light this beautiful

tree tonight.”

Eighty years ago, in December 1944, the nation was at war and the celebration of Christmas and the holiday season seemingly served as a source of hope and optimism for the future.

“As our nation enters the fourth wartime Christmas, the outlook is definitely brighter,” wrote Col. George M. MacMullin in the Dec. 23, 1944, edition of ‘The Real McCoy newspaper at then-Camp McCoy. “Our hopes are higher as a result of brilliant victories on land, on the sea, and in the air in all theaters of action. There is promise of even greater triumphs to come, decisions which we hope will bring the final victory for which all of us have been praying and striving.”

— **Throughout December 2024, the work on the fiscal year 2022-funded Transient Training Troop Barracks Project, also referred to as the South Barracks Project, has made continuous progress, and by month's end has surpassed being 60 percent complete.**

The contractor BlindermanPower (Construction) now has the structure at approximately 62 percent complete, said Ken Green with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Resident Office at Fort McCoy in his Dec. 20 update on the project, the last update for 2024.

In his update, Green said the contractor continued with a wide variety of construction operations.

“Mechanical, electrical, and plumbing rough-in continued,” Green wrote in the update. “Electrical pulling in wires (and) interior steel stud framing continued. Interior sheet rocking continued. Interior blocking continued. Interior sound batting continued. Interior finishing continued, (and) painting continued.”

Green also wrote that latrine tile work-prep continued, mechanical pad rough-in continued, exterior caulking continued, and work on downspouts and the ceiling grid began.

— **An aircrew piloted a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter for training Dec. 17, 2024, for some specific training at Fort McCoy.**

According to Fort McCoy training officials with the Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security, the Black Hawk and crew were with the Wisconsin National Guard's 1st Battalion, 147th Aviation Regiment which regularly conducts training at the installation.

— **Fort McCoy saw its first significant snow of the winter season Dec. 19-20, 2024, followed by a similar snowstorm Dec. 23, keeping the Fort McCoy snow-removal team busy.**

On Dec. 19, according the National Weather Service's (NWC) La Crosse (Wis.) station, “the first significant winter storm of the 2024-2025 snow season brought a widespread 2 inches to 6 inches of snow with higher amounts from 6 inches to 8 inches in spots.” Fort McCoy received more than 6 inches.

“As the initial band of snow moved from west to east early (Dec. 19) morning, locations in southeast Minnesota reported 1 inch to 3 inches by the morning commute,” the NWS states at <https://www.weather.gov/arx/dec1924>. “This initial snowfall reached the Mississippi River Valley just in time for the morning commute creating slippery to hazardous travel conditions. Overall initial accumulations of 1 inch to 4 inches were reported through the morning commute.

— **Contractors completed electrical work Dec. 10, 2024, on the cantonment area at Fort McCoy. Fort McCoy and Xcel Energy are in the process of changing the electrical grid on post from a Delta Electrical System to a Wye Electrical System, Fort McCoy Directorate of Public Works officials said.**

Wye is a three-phase electrical system that uses a wire for each electrical leg and a separate neutral wire. Delta is also a three-phase but uses one of the legs as the neutral, so it only has three wires.

Fort McCoy's motto is to be the “Total Force Training Center.”

Located in the heart of the upper Midwest, Fort McCoy is the only U.S. Army installation in Wisconsin.

The installation has provided support and facilities for the field and classroom training of more than 100,000 military personnel from all services nearly every year since 1984.

Learn more about Fort McCoy online at <https://home.army.mil/mccoy>, on Facebook by searching “ftmccoy,” on Flickr at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/fortmccoywi/>, on X (formerly Twitter) by searching “usagmccoy,” on Instagram at <https://www.instagram.com/fortmccoywi/>, and on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/@fortmccoy>.

Also try downloading the My Army Post app to your smartphone and set “Fort McCoy” or another installation as your preferred base. Fort McCoy is also part of Army's Installation Management Command where “We Are The Army's Home.”



Photo by Scott T. Sturkol

Michael Charette, also known as Laughing Fox, with the Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa shares his people's history through story and music during his presentation for the 2024 Fort McCoy Native American Heritage Month observance Nov. 19, 2024.

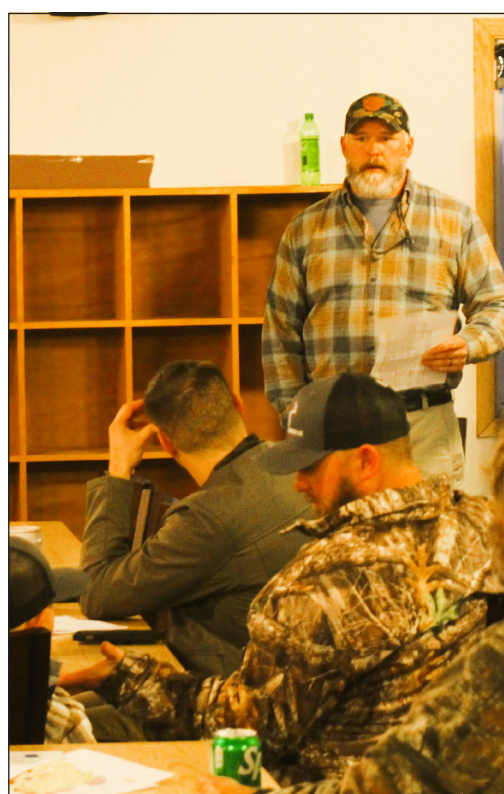


Photo by Scott T. Sturkol

Wildlife biologist Kevin Luepke talks with hunters Nov. 22, 2024, during a special Meet and Greet event at Whitetail Ridge Ski Area at Fort McCoy.



Photo by Scott T. Sturkol

Contractors work on a new \$27.3 million transient training troops barracks project, known as the Fort McCoy East Barracks Project, on Nov. 13, 2024, at Fort McCoy.