

The FOCUS

GUARD MEMBERS ON DUTY IN D.C.
P.2



SEPTEMBER 2025

NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS THEMES AND MESSAGES

September Observances

National Hispanic Heritage Month
(Sept. 15 - Oct. 15)
National Preparedness Month
National Suicide Prevention Awareness
Prevention Month

1 Labor Day

2 National V-J Day (1945)

4 National Wildlife Day

7-13 Suicide Prevention Week

11 Patriot Day and National Day of Service
and Remembrance

16 National Voter Registration Day 4th
Tuesday in Sept.

18 Air Force Birthday (1947)

19 National POW/MIA Recognition Day

22 Autumn Equinox

27 National Family Health and Fitness Day
(Last Saturday of September)

28 National Gold Star Mother’s and Family
Day

September - Reform

Army introduces new fitness test for 2025

*By U.S. Army Sgt. Woodlyne Escarne,
Defense Media Activity*

FORT GEORGE G. MEADE, Md. — The U.S. Army officially adopts the Army Fitness Test as the new test of record for Soldiers starting June 1. The change will replace the Army Combat Fitness Test and introduce updated scoring standards that emphasize readiness and combat effectiveness.

Soldiers will have until Jan. 1, 2026, to meet the new AFT requirements without facing adverse actions. Active-duty Soldiers in 21 designated combat specialties must additionally meet the more rigorous combat standard of a minimum score of 350 points total, with a minimum of 60 points in each event. National Guard and Reserve Soldiers in those same specialties will have until June 1, 2026, to meet these requirements. The passing score for all other specialties is 300 points, with a minimum of 60 points in each event. Active Guard Reserve Soldiers and those mobilized on orders exceeding 60 days must meet the Jan. 1, 2026, suspense.

“The AFT is designed to improve Soldier readiness and ensure physical standards [and] prepare Soldiers for the demands of modern warfare,” said Sgt. Maj. Christopher Mullinax, senior enlisted leader, deputy chief of staff for Operations, Army Headquarters. “It emphasizes holistic fitness over event-specific training and is grounded in performance.”

The decision to replace the ACFT with the AFT follows 18 months of analysis

[Click here for AFT score chart PDF](#)
NIPR users copy and paste: <https://tinyurl.com/4jmyhxx4>

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and feedback from thousands of test iterations. The Army describes the change as a data-driven reform focused on combat-effective fitness.

The AFT is a five-event assessment, including the three-repetition maximum deadlift, hand-release push-up, sprint-drag-carry, plank and two-mile run. While similar in structure to the previous test, the standing power throw event is no longer a requirement.

“We eliminated the standing power throw because it wasn’t effectively promoting fitness and readiness as well as we would like,” Mullinax said. “Furthermore, it presented an elevated risk of overuse injury and encouraged Soldiers to focus on technique rather than demonstrating true power.”

The new test raises expectations, particularly for Soldiers in combat roles. The updated scoring tables are standardized, and combat standards are sex-neutral for the 21 direct combat roles, a change designed to ensure fairness and operational readiness.

“We’re a ‘Be All You Can Be’ Army, and that means if you’ve got the heart, the grit, and the drive to meet our toughest standards, you belong in the fight,” Mullinax said. “It doesn’t matter who you are, what matters is that you want it and you’re willing to earn it. The battlefield doesn’t care about anything but performance, and that’s what we’re built to deliver.”

Leadership News and Notes

Guard members on duty D.C. provide life-saving aid

By: U.S. Army Master Sgt. Whitney Hughes, National Guard Bureau



(From left) U.S. Army Sgt. Russell Dozier, Spc. Nicholas Garrison, and Staff Sgt. Zachery Graham, assigned to the 4th Battalion, 118th Infantry Regiment, South Carolina Army National Guard stand together during a patrol of the Washington Metro in Washington, D.C. Aug. 23. The team provided immediate assistance to a civilian who was struck by a train as they patrolled a Metro station Aug. 20.

WASHINGTON – Since its activation Aug. 11, Joint Task Force – District of Columbia has supported efforts to reduce crime in the nation’s capital while also stepping in to provide direct aid to local citizens. Guard members have assisted civil authorities during multiple life-threatening incidents, highlighting their role in safeguarding both public safety and community well-being.

In one of these occurrences, Guard members were on scene Aug. 20, when a man was struck by a Washington Metro train.

“It was chaotic—people were running and screaming,” said U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Zachary Graham, a member of the South Carolina Army National Guard assigned to JTF-DC. Graham and his fellow Soldiers, all members of the 4th Battalion, 118th Infantry Regiment, immediately secured the

On the Cover:

Soldiers with the Tennessee Army National Guard recite a federal deputization as they are deputized for Joint Task Force - District of Columbia in Washington D.C., Aug. 20. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Joseph Spraktes)

scene, called 911, and assisted first responders in rendering first aid, ultimately reviving the man to the point that he was conscious and moving when EMTs transported him.

“Everybody was panicking but able to keep a clear head and make the phone call to 911 to get an ambulance on the way,” said U.S. Army Spc. Nicholas Garrison, who was on patrol with Graham at the New York Avenue-Florida Avenue-Gallaudet University Washington Metro Station. “Our presence was important for getting him help as quickly as possible.”

In another event at Union Station Aug. 15, two District of Columbia Army National Guard military police officers were conducting a joint patrol with the Amtrak Police Department when they encountered an unconscious man.

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October Observances

National Cyber Security Awareness Month

13 - Navy Birthday (250 Years)
Columbus Day

26 - National Day of the Deployed

31 - Halloween

October - Cyber

Texas, Nebraska Guard Train With Czechia Against Cyber Threats



Story and photo By: U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Jasmine McCarthy

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va. – Hidden within a discreet concrete building, teams from various states and countries collaborate across screens and keyboards for Cyber Shield 2025.

For the May 30 to June 13 exercise, 28 states and 15 state partners have come together to share best practices and lessons on how to defend the cyber front. One cyber team, composed of Air and Army National Guardsmen from Nebraska and Texas, has been working closely with its shared partner, Czechia.

Czechia became partners with Texas and Nebraska in 1993 through the Department of Defense National Guard Bureau State Partnership Program. The program involves cooperation between both militaries, cultural exchanges and shared training. Exercises such as Cyber Shield allow both partners to use their knowledge to train for and react to real-world scenarios.

“It’s important to work with our state partners because we do not know everything that is out there,” Abella said. “Bringing in our state partners through the program allows us to understand how they operate in the cyber world and helps us build alliances,” said 1st Lt. Karina Abella, a cyber operations officer from the 72nd Brigade Combat Team with the Texas Army National Guard

Cyber Shield is the longest-running and largest Department of Defense cyber exercise. This year, about 900 National Guard and Army Reserve Soldiers, Airmen, Sailors, Guardians and civilian cyber professionals from around the world are gathering to participate in training and a cyber defense exercise.

“For those who would like to come and do an exercise like this, they should do it as it is a good experience,” Hernandez said. “In the future, I believe that warfare is going to take a different approach towards cyber, so we should always be ready.”

November - People

Continued from page 3



(From right) U.S. Army Sgt. Jay Whited, Spc. Elias Figueroa, and Cpl. Cynthia Fowler, assigned to the 372nd Military Police Battalion, District of Columbia Army National Guard, stand together outside of the D.C. National Guard Headquarters in Washington, D.C. Aug 23. The team helped provide life-saving aid to a local resident while on a joint patrol with the Amtrak Police Department Aug. 15. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Ian Doyle)

“He was having what appeared to be a pretty serious episode, and looked like he might be dying. It did not look good, but we helped [first responders] get him into an ambulance,” said U.S. Army Sgt. Jay Whited, a team leader assigned to the 372nd Military Police Battalion, D.C. Army National Guard.

The APD suspected the man was experiencing a narcotic overdose and asked the Guard members to help secure the scene while civilian first responders administered naloxone (often referred to as Narcan), said Whited.

Whited said he then radioed for his medic, U.S. Army Spc. Elias Figueroa, to perform a medical evaluation. Figueroa is also a third-year civilian medical student and has responded to several different medical incidents while assigned to the task force. Before Figueroa could complete an evaluation, Whited said the man regained consciousness, was disoriented, and nearly ran into traffic. However, the Guard members were able to pull

him to safety at the request of local authorities, he said.

“We are pretty uniquely positioned here, like all National Guard units, but even more so because it’s D.C. and it’s so small,” said Whited. “We are uniquely experienced as well, and we integrate with local agencies well because we have done it so many times.”

In addition to the Metro incidents, Guard members intervened during the assault of a U.S. Park Police officer, alerted the D.C. Metropolitan Police Department to a man brandishing a knife and making verbal threats at the Waterfront Washington Metro Station, and helped authorities locate a missing child at the southwest waterfront.

“The members of the District of Columbia National Guard are highly trained and capable of assisting our interagency partners to keep our District safe,” said U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Leland D. Blanchard, commanding general, D.C. National Guard.

November Observances

Veterans and Military Families Month
Warrior Care Month

2 - Daylight Savings Fall Back

10 - Marine Corps birthday (250 Years)

11 - Veterans Day

27- Thanksgiving

Community Relations

Please send Army National Guard flyover requests with six weeks lead time to allow for staffing at National Guard Bureau and the Office of the Chief of Public Affairs. Be sure to check the DD Form 2535 for Federal Aviation Administration review and signature, as this is often a cause for delay in completing packets in-state. Air National Guard flyover requests are processed through the Secretary of the Air Force for Public Affairs Aerial Events website. Send ANG Civic Leader Flight requests with at least four weeks’ lead time.

ARNG CLFs require TAG-level approval and must be staffed in accordance with regulations.

You may email us for flyover and CLF packet instructions. All requests should be ng.ncr.ngb-arng.mbx.ngb-community-engagement@army.mil