

The FOCUS



OCTOBER 2025

NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS THEMES AND MESSAGES

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.”

Leadership News and Notes

Department of War Style Notes:

The Associated Press has not made any formal updates, the former style applies:

- Always capitalize Department of War
- War Department is acceptable on second reference
- The AP generally avoids abbreviations such as DoW unless it is necessary in a quote



(U.S. Army illustration by Master Sgt. Whitney Hughes)

Soldiers and Airmen can submit to the U.S. Army Year in Review (formerly year in photos).

**<https://www.army.mil/yearinphotos/>
See page five for more information.**

On the Cover:

A U.S. Soldier with the Oklahoma Army National Guard looks up to observe a potential drone threat during Exercise Thunderstruck in Muskogee, Oklahoma, Sept. 13. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Amber Monio)

November Observances

National Hispanic Heritage Month
Veterans and Military Families Month
Warrior Care Month

2 - Daylight Savings Fall Back

10 - Marine Corps birthday (250 Years)

11 - Veterans Day

27- Thanksgiving

November - People

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.”

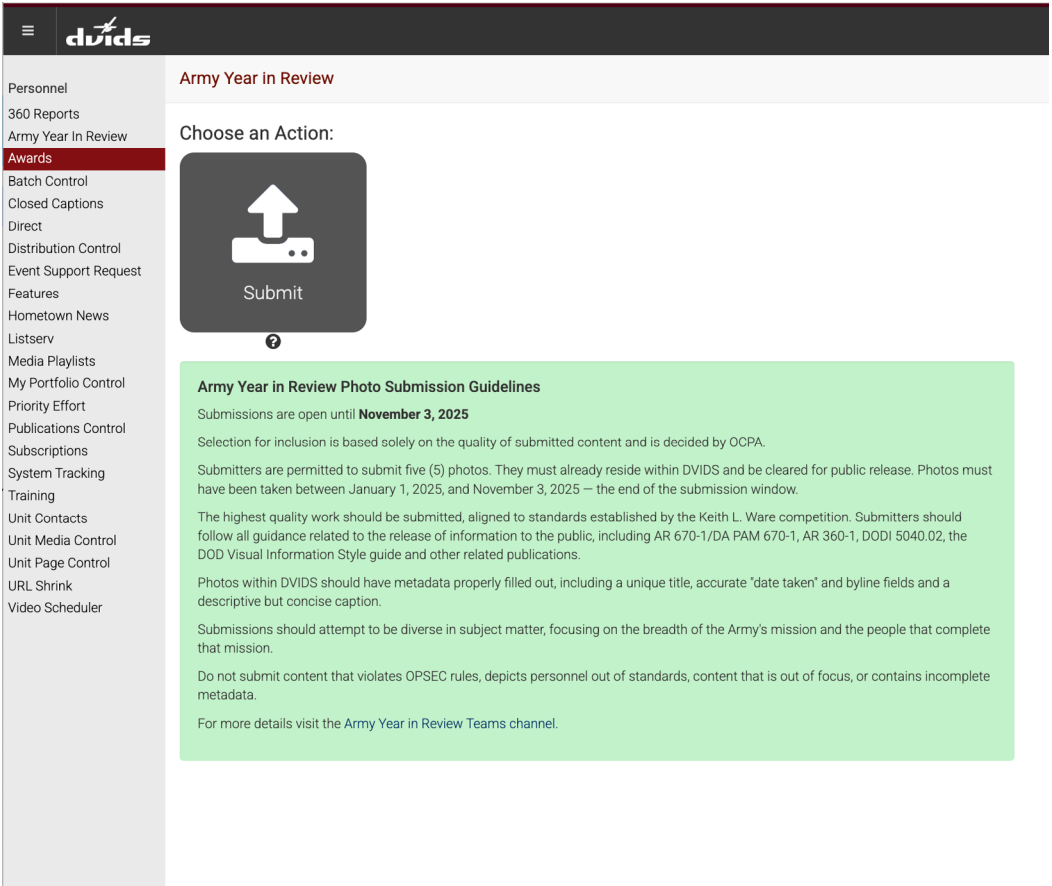
The new test raises expectations, particularly for Soldiers in combat roles. The updated scoring tables are standardized, and combat standards are sex-neutral for the 21 direct combat roles, a change designed to ensure fairness and operational readiness.

“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.”

December -
Year in Review

Army Year in Photos:

- **Deadline Nov. 3**
- **Up to five photos**
- **Submission through DVIDS**



Contact Master Sgt. Whitney Hughes at whitney.r.hughes.mil@army.mil if you need an SOP for the submission. The U.S. Army Center of Public Affairs are the selecting officials. Their guidance is above.

December Observances

Dec. 7 - Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day

Dec. 13 – Army-Navy Game

Dec. 13 – National Guard Birthday
(389 Years)

Dec. 16 – Wreaths Across America Day

Dec. 20 – Space Force Birthday (7 Years)

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