

OREGON SENTINEL

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE OREGON NATIONAL GUARD

ORARNG Battalion fires final tank rounds before Infantry transition



Three M1A2SEP tanks from Bravo Company, 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment, participate in the last round ceremony July 30, 2025, on Range 26 at Orchard Combat Training Center, Idaho. The historic ceremony marked the final 120mm rounds the Eastern Oregon battalion will ever fire as they transition from a combined arms unit to an infantry formation, ending decades of armored heritage.

Story and photos by Maj. Chris Clyne,
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

ORCHARD COMBAT TRAINING CENTER, Idaho — The thunderous boom of 120mm tank rounds echoed across the Idaho training ranges one final time as the Oregon Army National Guard’s 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment fired their last shots as an armored unit before transitioning to infantry.

Three M1A2SEP tanks from Bravo Company positioned on Range 26 during a ceremonial last round event July 30, 2025, marking the end of an era for the Eastern Oregon battalion. The historic ceremony allowed several mechanics to fire the main gun for both their first and final time, symbolizing the unit’s farewell to its current armored heritage.

The transition brings the unit full circle in its long military history. The battalion traces its lineage to 1888 militia cavalry companies, serving as infantry during World War II as the 2nd Battalion, 186th Infantry Regiment with the 41st Infantry Division, before returning to its cavalry roots in the post-war era.

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Aviation Excellence:

Search and Rescue, Innovations, and Training keeps Oregon Guardsmen Committed to the Mission



The Oregon Army National Guard’s 641st Aviation Regiment, working with several agency partners, responded to multiple Search and Rescue operations - all in the course of one day.

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Joint partnership training provides Oregon Citizen-Soldiers with the chance to develop new aviation collaborations with civilian first responders while enhancing water rescue skills.

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The 173rd Fighter Wing’s F-15 Eagle A/C 114 was inducted into the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum, securing its place in history as a symbol of courage, innovation, and freedom.

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41st IBCT returns home after Successful Kosovo deployment



Photo by Aaron Perkins, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

Story by Maj. Chris Clyne,
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

HAPPY VALLEY, Ore. — Soldiers from the Oregon Army National Guard’s 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT) returned home July 19, 2025, following a successful year-long deployment to Kosovo as part of the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) mission.

The welcome home event held at Camp Withycombe, in Happy Valley, Oregon, marked the homecoming for soldiers participating in KFOR’s 34th rotation. This mission has been crucial for maintaining peace and stability in the Balkans since 1999. Approximately 300 soldiers returned in two groups, with the first group arriving around 1 p.m. A formal demobilization ceremony will be held in the near future.

The first group to return consisted primarily of soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 162nd Infantry Regiment, headquartered in Springfield, along with medical and support personnel from the 600-member task force that included soldiers from Oregon, Idaho, West Virginia, New Jersey, and Tennessee.

Lt. Col. Joseph Twigg, commander of the 2nd Battalion, 162nd Infantry Regiment, addressed the returning soldiers and their families. “Over the past year, you stood watch in Kosovo as part of KFOR. You built partnerships, maintained stability, and represented the United States with professionalism and integrity,” Twigg said. “From the smallest patrol to the most complex multinational mission, you performed with discipline, heart, and commitment.”

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The Oregon Sentinel is distributed to members of the Oregon Army and Air National Guard, and other interested persons by request, free of charge. Circulation: 13,600. The Oregon Sentinel is published by Eagle Web Press, a private firm in no way connected with the DoD, Departments of the Army or Air Force, or the State of Oregon, and is under exclusive written contract with the Oregon Military Department. The Oregon Sentinel is also distributed electronically, and can be found online at: www.oregon.gov/OMD/AGPA/publications.shtml, and at: <https://www.dvidshub.net/unit/ONGPAO>

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COMMAND

Accomplishments and innovation sharpen our competency

As we prepare to start a new Fiscal Year, I would like to commend the hard work that has gone into the past 12 months. This has been one of the most productive and inspiring periods for the Oregon National Guard in more than half a decade. The array of accomplishments has had a major impact on our Nation, State, and local communities.

Touching on just a cross-section of these mobilization endeavors, our Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen returned home in recent weeks after concluding assignments around the world. In June, Airmen from the 116th Air Control Squadron completed a successful mission supporting USCENTCOM air and space operations in the Middle East. Following this, Soldiers from the 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team wrapped up a year-long deployment to Kosovo in July. Finally, at the beginning of August, we proudly welcomed home the 2nd Battalion, 218th Artillery Regiment after their strategic deployment to Iraq and Syria in support of OPERATION INHERENT RESOLVE.

While these units returned home, in May, nearly 220 soldiers from the 41st Infantry Brigade Combat

Team mobilized to join Task Force BATAAN as part of Operation Inherent Resolve in the Horn of Africa. These significant and high-profile mobilizations have played a crucial role in establishing a lasting legacy in the fight against terrorist groups.

Closer to home, our training year has been robust and historic. During their annual training this summer, the 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment fired their final shots as an armored unit with a ceremonial "last round" training event on July 30, as the unit transforms to an infantry asset. Our other '116th unit' on the Air Guard side, the 116th ACS, began transitioning from an air control mission to a new cyber mission in April. Just recently, I had the pleasure of officiating the groundbreaking for a new Army National Guard Readiness Center in Hillsboro on August 21st. Going through these transitions and periods of innovation, it is critical that we focus on flexibility and modernization as we build competency in our new skillsets.

The future of the Oregon National Guard has never looked stronger. With new Armories being upgraded and built, new modern



Brigadier General
Alan R. Gronewold
Adjutant General,
Oregon National Guard

missions being defined, and a proven record of accomplishments, our place as the service of choice for Oregonians continues to evolve. If you have friends or family members looking to serve their Nation and State, this is a great time to have them join our forces. With incredible benefits like tuition assistance for college and a chance to work in new military occupational skills, reach out to those you feel would be assets to our growing team.

Thank you for what you do and for being a valuable member of the Oregon National Guard.

Always Ready, Always There!

41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team demobilization ceremony

Story & photo by Staff Sgt. Emily Simonson,
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

SALEM, Ore. – The Oregon National Guard welcomed home the 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team in a demobilization ceremony at the Salem Armory Auditorium, Sep. 6, 2025, in Salem, Oregon. The 41st IBCT returned in July from a year-long deployment to Kosovo as part of the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) mission.

The 41st IBCT served as part of KFOR's 34th rotation, contributing to what the 41st IBCT commander Col. Peter Helzer described as, "the longest and most successful NATO mission in the history of the alliance."

The deployment to Kosovo was crucial for maintaining peace and stability in the region, a mission that has been ongoing since 1999. "The 41st mission supporting

Operation JOINT GUARDIAN directly supported our national interests and security, bringing value and pride to our state and our nation," said Brig. Gen. Alan R. Gronewold, Adjutant General, Oregon.



Col. Peter Helzer, commander of the 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team, and Mr. Doug Grafe, advisor to the Office of Gov. Tina Kotek, exchange flags during the 41st IBCT's demobilization ceremony at the Salem Armory Auditorium, Sept. 6, 2025, in Salem, Oregon.

The brigade's support was widespread, encompassing security forces, logisticians, medical professionals, intelligence analysts, and a command team

stationed at various locations, including Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina; Pristina, Kosovo; and Bondsteel, Kosovo.

They completed more than 4,000 security patrols, 13,000 public engagements, and 5,000 volunteer hours supporting communities in Kosovo.

Gronewold expressed his gratitude to the families and loved ones of the 41st IBCT Soldiers, thanking them for their resilience. "While your loved ones were deployed, you carried the weight of the home front with grace and courage," Gronewold said. "Your sacrifices made their mission possible, and we recognize that their service is truly a family commitment."

The 41st IBCT continues its long legacy of service, tracing its lineage back to the 41st Infantry Division that served in World War I and performed the longest overseas service of any division in the U.S., in the Pacific during World War II.

41st IBCT Change of Command ceremony

Story & photo by Sgt. 1st Class Cory Grogan,
Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs

SALEM, Ore. – On Sept. 7, 2025, the Oregon National Guard held a Change of Command ceremony at the Maj. Gen. George A. White Building in Salem. Col. Peter Helzer formally passed leadership of the Oregon National Guard's 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team to Col. Paul Dyer.

This event followed long-standing military tradition, highlighting the smooth transfer of responsibility and the brigade's ongoing commitment to service at both the state and national level. Under Col. Helzer's leadership, the brigade maintained

its reputation for readiness and strong community partnerships. Col. Dyer now steps into the role with deep experience and a clear dedication to leading Soldiers into the future.

The 41st IBCT, also known as the "Sunset Brigade," has a long and proud history. Originally organized in 1917, it traces its lineage to Oregon's earliest citizen-soldier units. The brigade fought with distinction in World War I and World War II, and in more recent decades, its Soldiers have deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan, and Kosovo, among other missions.

The Change of Command was not only a moment to honor Col. Helzer's service, but also a reminder of the brigade's legacy of dedication,



Outgoing 41st IBCT Commander, Col. Peter Helzer (right), pauses for a photo with Lt. Col. Eric Zimmerman during the 41st IBCT Change of Command Ceremony on Sept. 7, 2025.

resilience, and service to both country and community as Col. Dyer moves the brigade into the future.

COMMAND

Oregon Guardsmen join other First Responders for the 9/11 Memorial Stair Climb at Autzen Stadium

Story and photos by John Hughel,
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

EUGENE, Ore. – Every year, the nation pauses to remember the terrorist attacks that happened in New York City, Washington, D.C., and a rural field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania, on September 11, 2001. This year, nearly 700 firefighters, police officers, military personnel, along with their families, took part in the 3rd annual “9/11 Memorial Stair Climb” at Autzen Stadium, at the University of Oregon, honoring those who lost their lives twenty-four years ago.

When participants checked in, they received a badge for the stair climb, honoring a fallen first responder through their name, photograph, and profession, an emblematic tribute to their courageous actions in the line of duty that day.

The ceremony began with the playing of the National Anthem, sung by Oregon Army National Guard Sgt. 1st Class Duane Reno, from the 234th Army Band. With participants gathered on the football field, a special video presentation was played on the two large scoreboard monitors, recalling the events through television news reels and footage recorded by witnesses that day, now nearly a quarter century ago. The stadium, usually a place of energy and commotion, was markedly silent.

“After watching the video, which is absolutely amazing and stunning, I have to admit, I’m a little bit shaken up, and it brings me right back to that morning,” said Owen McGovern, one of the guest speakers and a retired New York City firefighter, who by chance was off duty that day. “Everyone in my firehouse that was officially on duty that day was lost.”

After he retired from the FDNY in 2017, McGovern continued his career in the Eugene-Springfield area and now works for the Clackamas Fire Department. But the events of September 11, 2001, still resonate deeply for him.



Fire Department members and other first responders pass by each other going up and down the stairs, giving ‘Fist Bumps’ and encouragement during the 9/11 Memorial event, on Sept. 11, 2025.

“Sometimes it feels like another lifetime, and sometimes it feels like 9/11 was yesterday,” he said. “And so we were here today to remember everyone from 9/11 – the 343 firefighters, 23 NYPD (New York Police Department), 37 Port Authority Police, 55 military, and a total of 2,977 civilians at the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and in Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

He, along with thousands of first responders, doctors, EMS, nurses, and others, worked at Ground Zero, or often referred to as “The Pile,” for months after the attack. Many of those workers have succumbed to exposure illnesses, including cancer, respiratory disorders, and PTSD, adding to the list of fallen 9/11 victims.

“Unfortunately, it happens every day as we are still losing firefighters, but I remember unity, just like today,” he said. “We are all gathered here today in a solemn unity and remembrance of all the sacrifices from 9/11. Let us also remember the spontaneous unity of this amazing country, as the whole country rallied around and supported each other.”

As the speakers concluded, Taps were rendered, followed by the colors being retired, and the playing of ‘Amazing Grace’ by the Lane Fire Brigade Pipes and Drums, finally breaking the quiet reverence of the remembrance ceremony.

The Pipes and Drum members then formed an entry to the first staircase up toward the press boxes on the north sidelines of Autzen Stadium. A looping up and down course around the stadium took the climbers toward the east side, around to the end zone, then trekking south, encompassing nearly three-quarters of the Stadium.

Along the route were time markers, indicating momentous events of September 11th. One of the first signs was: 0846, specifying the time American Airlines Flight 11 crashed into the north face, hitting the 93rd to 99th floor of the North Tower of the World Trade Center.

The stair climbing event was not timed, but many of the participants were firefighters in their full protective gear, or soldiers with heavy backpacks or ‘rucksacks,’ pushing themselves to experience the daunting challenges of that day. As the rows went up and down the stairway aisles, there were occasional high-fives, fist bumps, and shouts of encouragement.

The highest floor reached by first responders on the morning of September 11, 2001, was the 78th floor, and when the climbers matched the corresponding number of floors, they each took turns ringing a fire bell as a fitting tribute as they continued around the football stadium.

In total, participants climbed the equivalent of 110 stories, matching the height of the fallen Twin Towers, where many FDNY firefighters were attempting to climb, trying to rescue people trapped in the two burning skyscrapers.

Many members of the Oregon National Guard took part in the event, including Brig. Gen. Alan R. Gronewold, Adjutant General, Oregon, Command Sgt. Maj. Lee Smith, Command Senior Enlisted Leader for the Oregon National Guard, as well as other senior leaders, paid tribute to the fallen as they completed the entire route in just under 40 minutes.



Firefighters and other first responders take part in the 9/11 Memorial Stair Climb, a tribute to the 343 firefighters, 71 law enforcement, and 55 Military personnel who gave their lives during the tragic events on September 11, 2001.

“For me, when I was watching the video, I still had a bit of anger,” Smith said. “I know that when we were doing the stairs, I just thought, ‘I got to be positive,’ because we are remembering...and we are also honoring.”

With the camaraderie between first responders forming a cordial bond during the event, it was easy for the aspirants to absorb the moment as well.

“I would like to think that the people killed [on 9/11] probably would join us today – at least with a smile, and would enjoy each other’s company while we were climbing today,” Smith said.

In many ways, the event has two contrasting parts, one as a solemn remembrance ceremony that then evolves into a powerful experience of physical reflection. It was natural to feel invigorated in the stair climbing, while finding a rejuvenating purpose in the commemoration as a distinctive tribute.

As one of the speakers for the ceremony before the stair climb began, Eugene Fire Chief Mike Caven described why this event is so important to the community of first responders.

“The way that we’ve come together, the way that we’ve grown, the way that we work better together to serve our country, to shield our communities and protect them day in and day out. That’s what we’re here today,” Caven said, drawing together the mutual bond of those attending this community event each year.

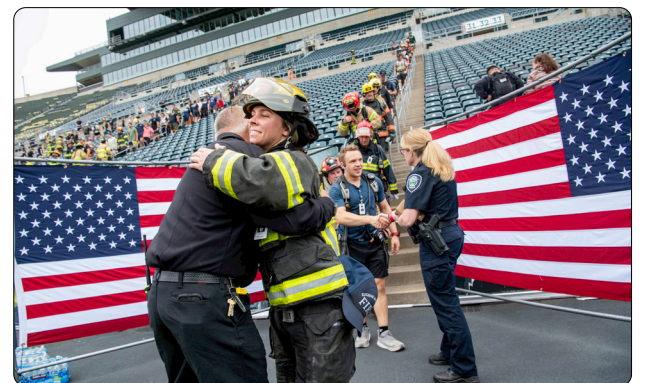
Caven emphasized the significance of events like the 9/11 Stair Climb, and more importantly,

“those who stand on the front lines,” as well as those who can comprehend and support first responders’ call to action.

“I think that’s why this event is so important, that it is just us...so we can remember and share in a collective experience,” he said. “I thank you all for your willingness to stand up, climb, and remember, and continue to do so here and forever.”



Brig. Gen. Alan R. Gronewold, Adjutant General, Oregon, rings a ceremonial fire bell representing the “78th Floor” during the 9/11 Memorial Stair Climb.



Community fire Department members congratulate finishers during the 9/11 Memorial Stair Climb, at Autzen Stadium, at the University of Oregon, Eugene, Ore., Sept. 11, 2025.

COMMAND



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29 September 2025

To the Soldiers and Airmen of the Oregon National Guard

SUBJECT: Title 10 Federal Mobilization – A Message to Our Team

By now, many of you have heard that approximately 200 of our service members will be mobilized under Title 10 federal authority for operations in the Portland area. I want to take a moment to speak with you directly about what this means and my expectations.

Yesterday, the Department of Defense requested our support through U.S. Northern Command. The mission is straightforward: protect federal facilities and the federal employees working in them.

I need everyone to understand the command relationship with this particular mission. Once our service members are mobilized under title 10, they are in federal service. They answer to U.S. Northern Command – not to me and not to Governor Kotek. Different authority, and a different chain of command.

I know some of you may have strong feelings about this mission. That's okay. You are citizens first, but you're also service members who took an oath to support and defend the Constitution and follow the orders of the President and the Governor. That oath doesn't come with an asterisk that says, "only when I agree with the mission." We don't get to pick and choose. We execute lawful orders with professionalism and honor, period. That's what sets us apart. That's what makes us the National Guard.

I also want to be clear with those of you who aren't mobilizing: this doesn't diminish our ongoing state mission. We will continue to respond when the Governor calls – whether for wildfires, floods, ice storms, or whatever else Mother Nature or circumstances throw at Oregon. We're still Oregon's Guard, and we remain ready to serve our communities. This hasn't and won't change.

For those of you who are mobilizing, take care of your families. Have a solid family readiness plan. Use your unit Family Readiness Groups. We have Servicemember Family Support, Chaplain, Legal, and other resources available to help you. Remember, your families need to hear from you, even if you can't discuss operational specifics. A phone call home matters more than you think.

Communicate with your civilian employers. Link them up with our State Employer Supporter of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) Committee if they have questions about your military commitment. Contact your unit administrator about USERRA protections for your job, if needed.

For everyone, I'm asking you to be smart on social media. Don't post about unit movements, mobilization details, or operational information. Please don't get into political arguments online while wearing the uniform or identifying yourself as a member of the Oregon Guard. Understand you represent something bigger than yourself, and the public is watching. Show them the professionalism I know you're capable of.

I'll be honest with you – I know this isn't easy. Some people in Oregon won't understand or won't support this mission. Some might even be hostile about it. But we've been through tough situations before. We are professionals who do our duties, regardless of how it's received.

We are the Oregon National Guard – Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen who serve where we live. We've been doing this for over 150 years, through wars, disasters, and everything in between. We don't serve because it's easy or popular. We serve because it's our duty and because we took an oath.

To those mobilizing: Execute your mission with honor. Stay focused, stay professional, and stay safe. To those remaining: stand ready. Support your teammates. And keep taking care of Oregon.

We're in this together.
Always Ready, Always There!

Alan R. Gronewold
Brigadier General,
The Adjutant General

COMMAND

Called to Serve: U.S. Army Chief of Chaplains visits Oregon for annual Chaplain Sustainment training

Story and photos by John Hughel,
Oregon Military Department
Public Affairs

PORTLAND, Ore. – In a return visit to the Pacific Northwest, U.S. Army Chaplain (Maj. Gen.) William Green, Jr., Chief of Chaplains, U.S. Army, along with Sgt. Maj. Meaghan Simmons, Regimental Sergeant Major, U.S. Army Chaplains Corps, addressed military Chaplains, Religious Affairs Specialists, and other guests taking part in the opening day of the Oregon National Guard Chaplain Corps Annual Sustainment training held at the Portland Air National Guard Base Chapel on September 8, 2025.

Having previously served as 'I Corps' Command Chaplain at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Chaplain Green had also worked as a Clinical Pastoral Education Resident at Madigan Army Medical Center and as the Chaplain for the 1st Battalion, 37th Field Artillery at Fort Lewis, Washington. While leading the discussion on "Spiritual Readiness and Army Transformation," this marked his first visit to the Portland Air National Guard Base.

"I am still quite amazed at how many of these World War II Chapels are still in use across the country," Green said to a group of nearly 40 attendees participating in the training, sitting in the original wooden pews. Dating back to 1941, the base chapel is the last remaining building from the WWII era and has survived the 1948 Vanport Flood as well as the closure of the active-duty Portland Air Force Base in March 1966.

Coincidentally, the annual Chaplain training occurs nearly 84 years to the day after the chapel was completed and dedicated on Wednesday, September 10, 1941. The base Quartermaster, Lt. Col. Willis A. Platts, presented the building to the base Commander, Col. Joseph L. Stromme, who accepted it on behalf of the officers and men of his command.

The setting of the Air Base Chapel also worked as a segue to open a discussion on the importance and contributions to the Chaplain Corps in the U.S. Military from the writings of former Secretary of State and Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall's years of service to the nation.

Before holding these highly influential positions, Marshall

commanded the 5th Brigade of the 3rd Infantry Division at Vancouver Barracks in Vancouver, Washington, from 1936 to 1938. He served as the post commander and oversaw 35 Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camps in Oregon and southern Washington.



U.S. Army Chaplain (Maj. Gen.) William Green, Chief of Chaplains, U.S. Army, addresses a group of military Chaplains, Religious Affairs Specialists, and special guests taking part in the Oregon Nat'l Guard's Chaplain Corps Annual Sustainment training.

"There were hundreds of these chapels built (more than 550) when General Marshall was the Army Chief of Staff during the Second World War. They were built to provide a sense of home...a sense of comfort," Green said. Then, referring to his own notes and quoting Marshall's writings, "in enlisting the aid of chaplains by the hundreds and in building chapels by the hundreds, to give the Army the spiritual food we want it to have...not in reliance on things of steel and the super-excellence of guns and planes and bomb-sights."



Brig. Gen. Alan R. Gronewold, Adjutant General, Oregon, addresses military Chaplains and Religious Affairs Specialists attending the first day of the Oregon National Guard Chaplain Corps Annual Sustainment training held at the Portland Air National Guard Base, on Sept. 8, 2025.

Expanding on this sentiment, Green recognized during the discussion, Oregon Army National Guard Chaplain (Maj.) Jason Dong, as he read from his own personal notebook more of Marshall's writings, saying, "The soldier's heart, the soldier's spirit, the soldier's soul, are everything. Unless the soldier's soul sustains him, he cannot be relied on and will fail himself, his commander, and his country in the end."

In setting the foundation of spiritual readiness from the past, Green pivoted to the persistence of the Army and other Department of Defense branches to keep pace with innovation and changes.

"Where is our force going, where and how can we be supportive of

our people, with new equipment, and shifting missions?" he said, inquiring the group about these transformations. "One way, if we look at our core vision, is to remain fully engaged with our people...to meet them both on a spiritual level and in their military vocation."

Alternating with Chaplain Green and interjecting into the conversation, Sgt. Maj. Simmons directed many of the same points to Religious Affairs Specialists and their role supporting Chaplains and their unit.

"So much of what we do as religious affairs specialists involves integrating spiritual support into the mission, and helping our soldiers navigate many of the challenges that come with military service," Simmons said, describing a key aspect of service members' spiritual health.

Religious affairs service members serve as invaluable servant leaders. They are responsible for managing accountability of supplies, organizational records, training schedules, and conducting small group sessions, while also working closely with Chaplains to ensure deployment readiness. As the Army adopts new missions involving drones and cyber warfare, other military roles are also transforming.

"Being open to some of these changes allows for innovations, too," Simmons said. "You really can make a big difference by looking for opportunities to boost morale and build a culture of inspired readiness."

Before Chaplain Green and Sgt. Maj. Meaghan Simmons' presentation, Brig. Gen. Alan R. Gronewold, Adjutant General, Oregon, and Sgt. Maj. Lee Smith, Command Senior Enlisted Leader for the Oregon National Guard, welcomed the group and answered questions.

"First and foremost, I want to thank our Army leadership team for attending this important

annual training and welcome home for those of you who have been deployed to Kosovo," Gronewold said. "When we talk about our 'Top Three' priorities of 'being Connected, Competent, and Committed,' the work you all undertake as our religious affairs team really embodies the attitude and outreach of 'being connected' to our force."

Chaplain Scott took the opportunity to acknowledge the work and diligence of several key service members for their recent contributions. The four senior leaders then presented their 'Challenge Coins.'

"These individuals embody this implicational leadership model we are talking about in training this week," Scott said. "They play an instrumental role – both in some of their recent deployments and domestic operations support."

The training on the first day included a presentation on "CERF-P 101" and Fatality Search and Recovery Teams by Oregon Air National Guard Capt. Daniel Gates and 1st Lt. Raul Reyes, before shifting to Camp Rilea, Warrenton, for the final two days.



U.S. Army Command Sgt. Maj. Meaghan Simmons, Regimental Sergeant Major, U.S. Army Chaplains Corps addresses a group of military Chaplains, Religious Affairs Specialists.

This year's annual training, themed "Called to Serve: A Light in the Darkness," culminated with a powerful call to spiritual service from Chaplain Green.

"One of the things I want to encourage you to do is to always reflect on that 'Why,' and when the days get tough, when they become challenging, when you don't feel like you're winning... focus on 'The Call,'" Green said, emphasizing the spiritual path and foundation for Chaplains and Religious Affairs service members.

"There is nothing more important than 'The Call,' because you are going to touch someone else's life. How will you bring light into the darkness? Because of 'The Call.'"



Military Chaplains and Religious Affairs Specialists from the U.S. Army, U.S. Navy Reserves, and Oregon Army and Air National Guard gather for a group photo on Sept. 8, 2025, at the Portland Air National Guard Base Chapel, Portland, Oregon.

LEADERSHIP

41st IBCT returns home from Kosovo deployment, from front Page

During their deployment, the Oregon soldiers made significant contributions to what Col. Peter Helzer, Commander of the 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team, described as “the longest and most successful NATO mission in the history of the alliance.”

“Oregon soldiers contributed to a robust international mission, adding to over 4,000 security patrols, 13,000 public engagements, and 5,000 volunteer hours supporting communities in Kosovo,” Helzer said. “Additionally, soldiers from the 41st IBCT successfully responded to one of the largest terrorist attacks in Kosovo in recent years by providing security to critical infrastructure, working with our local and international partners to maintain peace in the region.”

The deployment provided unprecedented opportunities for international cooperation and professional development. Soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 162nd Infantry Regiment conducted fully integrated patrols with German and Latvian armies across contested terrain in Northern Kosovo. At the same time, headquarters staff planned operations alongside Italian, Hungarian, Slovenian, Turkish, and Swiss soldiers.

“The greatest lesson for most of us, I’m sure, was the importance of building trust in your team and your partners,” Helzer explained. “In this business, relationships matter, and Kosovo provided an unprecedented opportunity to learn how to better connect and operate together.”

The skills gained during the deployment will have immediate applications back home in Oregon. “Much of the experience gained from the mission in Kosovo can be immediately applied to supporting emergency services and domestic operations back here in Oregon,” Helzer noted. “As part of KFOR, we had to immediately integrate into a complex system of law enforcement, local government, and emergency services to be successful. The organizational, communication, and logistical skills we stressed overseas will most certainly make us more effective in case of an emergency here at home.”



Photo by Aaron Perkins, OMD Public Affairs
Families wait to greet Soldiers from the Oregon Army National Guard's 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team returning home from deployment on July 19, 2025.

Beyond the professional development, the mission provided many soldiers with their first opportunity to serve in Europe and experience a different part of the world.

Speaking to the families and communities who supported

the soldiers throughout the deployment, Helzer emphasized the strategic importance of the mission. “The Balkan region is a historic crossroad of empires, and maintaining stability there prevents greater disorder that will eventually impact us here at home,” he said.

“I want you to know the command team from top all the way down are committed to normalizing the demands on you and your soldiers over the coming years,” Helzer told families at the ceremony. “Thank you for your commitment and support.”

Twigg praised the soldiers’ performance during the deployment, telling them they “shaped the security picture, provided real-time assessments that reached leaders at every level, and ensured informed decision-making from the ground up.”

He also recognized the families’ sacrifices during the deployment. “To the families here today—you served too. You kept things running at home, carried the burdens of distance, and supported your Soldiers every day,” Twigg said. “Thank you for your sacrifice and resilience. We could not have done this without you.”

The 41st IBCT’s community engagement efforts extended far beyond traditional military operations. “Whether on missions



Photo by Aaron Perkins, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs
Lt. Col. Joseph Twigg gives some quick remarks to the waiting crowd before dismissing the soldiers from the Oregon Army National Guard's 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team after returning home July 19, 2025, following a successful year-long deployment as part of the NATO-led Kosovo Force mission.

such as patrols, observation posts, or aerial recon and resupply, or community engagements and projects, they have done work that had a real impact on the lives of the Kosovar people,” Helzer said. “Beyond that, they have served as a strategic deterrent to malign actors across the region.”

The successful completion of the KFOR mission demonstrates the Oregon National Guard’s continued commitment to serving both state and federal missions while maintaining readiness for any contingency.

The 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team, known as the “Jungleers,” is headquartered in Clackamas with subordinate units spread throughout Oregon. The brigade’s successful deployment to Kosovo continues the unit’s proud tradition of service, building on previous deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan.

With the soldiers now home, the focus shifts to reintegration and applying the valuable experience gained during their time in the Balkans to future missions, both at home and abroad.

ORARNG’s 2-218th Field Artillery Regiment returns from deployment

Story and photos by
Staff Sgt. Emily Simonson,
115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

HAPPY VALLEY, Ore. – Approximately 230 members of the Oregon Army National Guard 2nd Battalion, 218th Field Artillery Regiment (FA) returned to Oregon, August 2, 2025, after a yearlong deployment to the Middle East.

The 2-218th FA deployed to Iraq and Syria in support of OPERATION INHERENT RESOLVE, to advise, assist, and enable partner forces to secure lasting defeat of terrorist elements across the Central Command Area of Responsibility. This mission helped protect regional stability while supporting overall U.S. national security.

While awaiting the return of their Soldiers, family and friends gathered in



the Camp Withycombe gymnasium, making welcome home signs and connecting with other military families.

The Forest Grove Police Department and Clackamas Fire Department joined in the homecoming celebration, providing support for their return.

The Oregon National Guard command team greeted Soldiers when they arrived at Camp Withycombe to congratulate them on their hard work overseas.

“It’s an honor to welcome this group back,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Adrian Gonzales, command sergeant major for the 2-218th FA rear detachment. “They did an outstanding job out there.”

After a year of waiting, the Soldiers of the 2-218th FA collected their loved ones and bags, and went home.

“We couldn’t be more proud of what they accomplished,” Gonzales said.



LEADERSHIP

Warrenton Airmen return from deployment as 116th ACS Squadron converts to Cyberwarfare

Story by Steven Conklin,
142nd Wing Public Affairs

WARRENTON, Ore. – Thirty-four Airmen of the 116th Air Control Squadron (ACS) stationed at Camp Rilea in Warrenton, Oregon deployed to support USCENTCOM air and space operations in the Fall of 2024 through Spring of 2025. After returning, a demobilization ceremony was held to welcome them back and recognize their achievements in defense of the U.S. and its allies.

During the ceremony, Brigadier General Alan R. Gronewold, Adjutant General of the Oregon National Guard, addressed the returning Airmen.

“You provided critical air and space mission support that was essential to regional stability in the Middle-East,” Gronewold said. “Your operators and maintainers performed with distinction, upholding the proud tradition that has made this unit one of the most respected command and control organizations in the Air National Guard and the U.S. Air Force.”

The 116th, known as the “Longracks”, was federally recognized as a unit in 1971, and has since supported national defense during many operations to include Noble Eagle, Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom, and Inherent Resolve among others. This most recent deployment, which supported Operations Spartan Shield and Inherent Resolve, saw members of the

squadron deploy across multiple locations in the continental United States and overseas.

“Our world stands at a constant inflection point between peace and instability,” said Lt. Col. Casey Robbins, prior 116th ACS Commander. “It was these [deployed 116th ACS Airmen] who, when tasked, planned and executed large scale strikes against terrorist organizations bent on sowing regional instability.”

This gathering marked the final demobilization ceremony for the 116th ACS as they transition

day of the demobilization. Rhodes, previously the Director of Operations (DO) for the 116th ACS, served as the DO of the 727th Expeditionary Air Control Squadron during the deployment.

While preparing for their deployment, the Airmen knew that they would not be returning to the unit that they were leaving, but their focus was on the contingency tasks that awaited them.

“We were laser focused on executing operations,” Rhodes said. “The week we arrived, Iran launched a large-scale missile and drone attack, and a few months later we were controlling strikes in Yemen. So our daily focus was on controlling the airspace and finding enemy missiles and drones to destroy.”

According to Rhodes, the reality of returning home and not belonging to their long time squadron began to set in toward the end of the deployment.

“As we prepared to return, the feeling was somewhat anxious and somber. There were a lot of unknowns about the future and of course, losing a mission that is so vital, and one we care deeply about.”

At the unit’s demobilization, Gronewold reflected on the Longracks’ legacy and care for the coastal communities.

“Your deep connections to the communities of Astoria, Warrenton, and Seaside reflect



the very essence of what it means to be a citizen Airman,” said Gronewold during the demobilization ceremony. “You’re not merely stationed here, you’re integral parts of these communities, balancing your military service with your civilian lives, strengthening both through your dedication.”

During this moment of transition, the unit is still based out of Camp Rilea, but where they will end up is still unknown. A lot of work remains as the Operations Group Section works to stand up two new cyber warfare squadrons, the first of their kind in the state of Oregon.

“We should find out where the two Cyber Ops Squadrons will be based this summer, and in September our first group of cyber warfare operators and operations officers will head off to school in Mississippi,” Rhodes detailed. “By next summer we plan to officially stand up the two new cyber ops squadrons and work to get Initial Operational Capability as soon as possible.”

As to how the remaining members are responding to this revolutionary change to their journey, Rhodes made it clear. “We have a phenomenal team that will take on the challenges of the conversion and carry on the Longracks’ tradition of excellence in this new mission.”



Photo by Senior Airman Eduardo Varela, 142nd Wing Public Affairs

ORANG Lt. Col. Nicholas Rhodes returns the Oregon State Flag to Brig. Gen. Alan Gronewold, Adjutant General, Oregon during a demobilization ceremony in Warrenton, Oregon on June 8, 2025. The flag was brought with members of the 116th Air Control Squadron when they deployed in the fall of 2024 in support of United States Central Command.

from an air control mission, to a new cyber mission. What’s left of the Airmen who previously performed command and control, now temporarily exist as the 142nd Operations Group Section during the transition that began on 1 April, 2025.

Robbins, Commander of the 116th at the time of the deployment, passed on leadership of the unit to Lt. Col. Nicholas Rhodes during a ceremony held later on the

ORANG’s 123rd Combat Weather Flight integrates with Army for training

Story and photo by
Master Sgt. Steph Sawyer,
142nd Wing Public Affairs

FORT HUNTER LIGGETT, Calif. – For two weeks in late spring, a team of six Airmen from the 123rd Combat Weather Flight completed their two weeks of annual training at Fort Hunter Liggett in California.

During this training, the Airmen integrated with G Company, 1st Battalion, 189th Aviation Regiment out of Salem, Oregon. The 189th operates HH-60M Blackhawk helicopters and provides medevac and fire support for the state of Oregon.

When the 123rd Combat Weather Flight integrates with the Army, they go out with a unit and provide them with weather forecasts and weather plans for the military decision making process, helping to ensure safety and success in the mission from a weather standpoint.



123rd Combat Weather Flight (CFW) Senior Airman Seth Hibbs and Kandice Cornett trouble-shoot the TMQ-53, a portable weather station, during a joint training mission with the Oregon Army National Guard’s 189th Regiment at Fort Hunter Liggett in California, May 2025.

Integrating with a unit allows for more accuracy as well as streamlined and seamless coordination between

the two entities, explained Senior Airman Seth Hibbs, a weather forecaster with the 123rd Combat Weather Flight.

“They just wanted us to be there because typically, when they get their weather, they have to go through other channels that aren’t as nice as having someone in house,” Hibbs said.

Maj. Timothy Heater, Commander of the 189th Aviation Regiment, explained the impact of having weather on site with his unit for this training.

“G Company does not have organic weather personnel, so having a dedicated team, trained to understand weather in a region without aviation reporting was invaluable,” Heater said. “Most of our training areas are away from airports and weather reporting stations so having the 123rd with us allowed for specific region reporting for timelines and altitudes specific to our mission.”

Supporting units like the 189th is equally advantageous for the 123rd. Playing a pivotal role in the planning and execution of missions allows combat weather flight Airmen the opportunity to apply and practice skills that they aren’t able to exercise at home station.

Working in a joint environment gives everyone involved the opportunity to collaborate, develop working relationships, and gain professional experience.

“For me the value I received was learning how to integrate well into a welcoming army unit,” Hibbs said. “The ability to forecast for them and then hear how the forecast turned out after they flew was also excellent training value.”

In addition to providing weather support, Airmen conducted land navigation, fired weapon systems, and had an opportunity to fly in a Blackhawk and play patients for medevac personnel to practice their skills on.

NEWS

ORARNG responds to multiple Search and Rescue missions in one day

Story by John Hughel,
Oregon Military Department
Public Affairs

SALEM, Ore. – The Oregon Army National Guard’s 641st Aviation Regiment, in collaboration with several agency partners, responded to multiple Search and Rescue operations during their scheduled July weekend’s Inactive Duty Training (IDT) at various locations across Oregon.

Working with Clackamas County, the Oregon National Guard was activated on July 13, 2025, using a UH-72A Lakota helicopter to assist in searching for a missing gravel biker who had been unaccounted for since Friday, July 11. Given the large search area, the Lakota was primarily used to scan the Trillium Lake region, where the individual has yet to be located by air and ground teams working together.

Gravel biking, similar to mountain biking, features on-road tires and is versatile enough to traverse various terrains. With this type of bike, the search area can be immense.

After receiving a call in the early hours of July 13 from Klamath County Search and Rescue, Scott Lucas, State SAR Coordinator, with the Oregon Department of Emergency Management, reported that a hiker had fallen off a cliff in the Crater Lake area.



An Oregon Army National Guard HH-60M Black Hawk helicopter, assigned to the 641st Aviation Regiment, conducts a search and rescue mission on July 13, 2025, in the caldera at Crater Lake National Park, Oregon.

The Oregon Guard deployed an HH-60M Black Hawk from the Army Aviation Support Facility in Salem to Crater Lake in the morning to assist with the rescue.

“Klamath County (Search and Rescue) said they had information that he had fallen off a cliff into a heavily wooded area, and they could hear him yelling,” Lucas said. “In both cases, the mountain biker and the individual at Crater Lake left their cell phones in their cars, so we couldn’t figure out where they were by locating their signal on the mobile devices.”

When ground crews from Klamath County were searching for the fallen hiker, his call for help was echoing from the Caldera in the cone of the volcano, making it hard to locate him. After a lengthy period of aerial observation, the Black Hawk had gone to Medford for refueling while the ground crews had put a boat in the water to search along the shoreline, looking into the cliffs.

“All of a sudden, (the ground crew) they heard a rock slide, and the guy pops out of the tree line, all bloody and limping,” Lucas said, describing a follow-up phone call from Klamath County officials. “He basically...was self-rescued.”

As the Black Hawk was on the ground refueling, Lucas said another call came in from Klamath County SAR about three injured hikers near Lake Harriett, Southeast of Crater Lake.

“A tree limb had fallen on them as they were hiking, and there was a doctor there who happened to be hiking nearby, saying one case had a severe head injury,” Lucas said. “So we sent the Black Hawk up to Lake Harriett, where they landed, and a medic checked out all three hikers.”

The Black Hawk transported the one serious patient to Medford Airport, where they were taken by ground transportation by ambulance to a local hospital. By 5:00 pm on Sunday, July 13, all

the aircraft were back in Salem. In total, three missions, two by the Black Hawk and one by the Lakota, were all done in one day.

“These incidents went on and on...it was quite a day,” Lucas said. “I don’t think we’ve ever had a day like this with so many incidents to assist that we responded to, except for a couple of years ago, where we rescued two people stranded in separate locations.”

That incident occurred on October 26, 2023, when an Oregon Army National Guard HH-60M Black Hawk rescued a mountain biker stuck in a 5-foot snowdrift along a trail near Hawk Mountain as he had sheltered in place overnight. They later rescued a female hiker on the Pacific Crest Trail who was caught in whiteout conditions for two days. She activated her In-Reach GPS device on Oct. 24, but ground crews could not reach her also due to the heavy snowdrifts and downed trees.

Recent missions have kept members of the Oregon Army National Guard’s aviation units fully engaged in supporting critical search and rescue operations. This high-stakes work showcases their unwavering discipline and commitment to excellence, whether during drill weekends with added personnel or when working with a leaner team. They consistently rise to the challenge, delivering essential care and life-saving results.

ESGR recognizes two Oregonians with the Volunteer of the Year Award

Story by John Hughel,
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

SALEM, Ore. – Following their selection as 2024 regional Volunteers of the Year representatives for the Western district, two Oregonians were named recipients of the national-level Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve award for their areas of expertise.

Mr. Greg Malkasian, an Oregon ESGR Volunteer Coordinator, was selected as the Military Outreach award winner, and Mr. Richard Thibodo was chosen for the ESGR Training award.

The Volunteer of the Year (VOTY) Award is a prestigious national recognition from ESGR that acknowledges the outstanding contributions of volunteers in their primary functional areas during the past calendar year. This award highlights the significant impact that dedicated individuals make within ESGR, serving as a benchmark for excellence.

Each of the 54 committee State Chairs nominates volunteers from their respective Committee annually for one of the six functional area awards. Those functional areas are Military Outreach, Employer Outreach, Public Affairs, Training, Ombudsman, and Operational.

Greg Malkasian is a retired Lieutenant Colonel from the Army Reserve and also serves as the Area 2 Chair for ESGR. His nomination summary stated that his “contributions are extensive as he coordinated all Unit, Soldier Readiness Check (SRC), Yellow Ribbon events for all seven of our components, which resulted in 109% Military Operation (MO) engagements.”

Through his efforts in this role, he has been responsible for briefing over 2,700 Oregon Army National Guard Soldiers who were deploying, while also including more than 1,500 family members. He also played a crucial role in ensuring that volunteers were present at all 50-plus military operations



Left photo: Mr. Rick McReynolds (left), along with Mr. Keith Schwartz (right), present the ESGR national-level Volunteer of the Year Award to Mr. Richard Thibodo (center). Photo Right: Greg Malkasian holds his Volunteer of the Year Award.

overall compliance rate of 95%.

He proactively collaborates with the State Chair and Area Chairs to foresee and mitigate any potential issues, ensuring seamless training for the committee. His steadfast dedication is also evident in his training sessions for service members and employers on the Uniform Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act. He is an active participant in numerous Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Programs and Service Members Support events, further demonstrating his commitment to serving the Soldiers and families of the Oregon National Guard.

Thibodo’s national-level award, signed by John Sampa, ESGR’s National Chair, stated, “We recognize the significance of your valued service and dedication of personal time to ESGR. We look forward to honoring you by highlighting your accomplishments in the future.”

Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve is a Department of Defense office established in 1972. It is dedicated to fostering strong cooperation and understanding between Reserve Component Service members and their civilian employers. ESGR is supported by a network of more than 2,750 volunteers in 54 committees located across all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam-CNMI, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Volunteers come from various backgrounds—including small businesses, industry, government, education, and prior military service—and bring a wealth of experience to support employers, service members, and their families. Alongside the Headquarters ESGR staff and a small support staff for each state committee, these volunteers work to promote and enhance employer support for the military service of Guard and Reserve members.



NEWS

From “Forged in Fire” to the Oregon Army National Guard: Sword Maker Finds new purpose in military service

Story and photo by Maj. Chris Clyne,
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

GRANTS PASS, Ore. – The gleaming blade caught the sunlight as Pvt. Mark Howland stood beside an HH-60 Black Hawk helicopter, proudly displaying one of his handcrafted knives during his first drill weekend with the Oregon Army National Guard. For most people, the transition from reality TV star to Soldier might seem unlikely. Still, for this 31-year-old Medford resident and artisan, it represents the perfect blend of pursuing his passion while serving his community.

Howland, who appeared on the History Channel’s “Forged in Fire” reality competition, enlisted in the Oregon Army National Guard after years of feeling conflicted about military service, drawn by the unique opportunity to maintain his blacksmithing career while contributing to something greater than himself.

“I had spent most of my adult life avoiding the military, not because I didn’t feel compelled to serve, but because I wound up just having a lot of stuff kind of thrown at me where it was like, ‘Oh, the military is bad,’” Howland said during recent training at Grants Pass. “I had an interest in serving, but life circumstances and outside influences kept steering me away from it. I decided that I wanted to pursue something that was different than what I was usually working with. So I decided to reconsider the military, and it’s bringing me a lot more options I didn’t realize I had.”

The path that led Howland to the Guard began five years ago when he worked as a sword maker for a sport fencing company. His craftsmanship eventually caught the attention of “Forged in Fire” producers, who selected him for a special episode featuring “monstrously large knives and swords” based on his experience creating full-sized weapons.

“I wound up going out to the East Coast, and had a great time out there,” Howland recalled. “I wound up meeting a whole bunch of wonderful people, and it really got me inspired to continue working on this. After that, I had really jumped into making my own knives and just exploring the artistry of that.”



ORARNG Pvt. Mark Howland (left) and Staff Sgt. Erik Andreason displays handcrafted knives made by Howland in front of an HH-60 Black Hawk helicopter during training at Grants Pass Airport in Grants Pass, Oregon, on July 13, 2025.

The reality TV experience opened doors and connected him with fellow artisans. Still, it was the arrival of his two-year-old son that ultimately motivated his decision to join the Guard. COVID-19 had disrupted his sword-making career, forcing him to work various jobs,

including prosthetic technician, fabricator, and personal trainer, but he never abandoned his passion for metalwork.

“There are a lot of circumstances that brought me to going into the National Guard, and I had just recently had a son,” Howland explained. “My life hadn’t necessarily been as structured as I needed it to be for my family. So I decided that going through the military might give me that sort of structure and the benefits as well to help make sure that my son has a good future.”

Staff Sgt. Erik Andreason, Howland’s recruiter, recognized the unique story and potential in the former reality TV contestant after seeing examples of his craftsmanship.

“He already sees me getting ready and prepared. He’s seen a lot of transformation in me already, even at two years old, he knows what I’m doing,” Howland said of his son’s awareness of his military journey.

Currently participating in the Recruit Sustaining Program (RSP) before heading to basic training, Howland plans to use his military earnings to invest in a proper blacksmithing shop and equipment. His business, Shrikes Forge, remains in development as he prepares for the next chapter of his life that will balance citizen-soldier duties with his artistic calling.

“Once I get back with the money that I earned through basic and AIT, as well as a large enlistment

bonus, I’m going to be investing in a shop and equipment where I’m going to be taking that to further my career as a blade smith and hopefully continue to balance that with my life in the National Guard,” he said.

Howland’s story exemplifies the Oregon Army National Guard’s appeal to citizens from diverse backgrounds who seek to serve their communities while pursuing their civilian passions. Oregon National Guard members serve part-time, typically one weekend a month and two weeks a year, while maintaining civilian careers. They stand ready to respond to state emergencies such as wildfires and floods, while also training to defend the nation when called to federal service.

The flexibility of Guard service allows Howland to envision traveling Oregon’s Renaissance fairs and trade shows, plying his craft while serving his state and nation. His journey from avoiding military service to embracing it demonstrates how the Guard attracts citizens who might not consider traditional military paths.

“Right now, I am working as much as I can to make sure that he has a great place, and I’m setting up as much as I can through the guard to make sure that he has everything he needs,” Howland said of providing for his son’s future.

From the forge to formation, Pvt. Howland’s transformation illustrates why the Oregon Army National Guard offer Oregonians the opportunity to serve their communities while pursuing the passions that define them.



Welcome to the Cohort: Three New Warrant Officers pinned to the U.S. Army Warrant Officer Corps on the 107th Birthday

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Emily Simonson,
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

SALEM, Ore. – The Oregon National Guard celebrated the 107th birthday of the U.S. Army Warrant Officer Corps by pinning three Warrant Officer Candidates,



Oregon Army National Guard Warrant Officer Candidates Keith Purdy, Tania Mutsuddi, and Kyle Simpson recite the Oath of Office during their pinning ceremony on July 9, 2025.

Keith Purdy, Tania Mutsuddi, and Kyle Simpson, in a ceremony at the Maj. Gen. George A. White building, on July 9, 2025, in Salem, Oregon.

“The Warrant Officer Corps contains an enormous depth and breadth of knowledge and experience to facilitate the Army’s evolution,” said Chief Warrant Officer 5 Lenora Landwehr, Command Chief Warrant Officer for the Oregon National Guard. “I can think of no better way to mark the 107th birthday of the Army Warrant Officer Corps than welcoming the three newest members to the cohort.”

Officially established on July 9, 1918, the U.S. Army Warrant Officer Corps has grown to encompass more than 40 specialties across nearly all army branches. Warrant officers bridge the gap between enlisted personnel and commissioned officers as technical experts in their specialties.

Often deemed as the backbone of the U.S. military, Warrant Officers are entrusted



Oregon Army National Guard’s newest warrant officers, Keith Purdy, Tania Mutsuddi, and Kyle Simpson, pose for a group photo with the warrant officers in attendance during their pinning ceremony at the George White building, July 9, 2025, in Salem, Oregon, as July 9 marks the U.S. Army Warrant Officer Corps’ 107th birthday, formed in 1918.

with immense responsibilities and play a fundamental role in reinforcing the command structure of the service.

NEWS

ORARNG Flight Medics help design the future of MEDEVAC technology

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Emily Simonson,
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

SALEM, Ore. – The future of Army flight medicine has been driving across the country in a shipping container for the past year. The Future Medical Evacuation Cabin Technical Demonstrator is a 20-foot mockup of the Future Long Range Assault Aircraft MEDEVAC patient handling system that allows Army flight medics to participate in a Special User Evaluation and provide input on the cabin’s MEDEVAC capabilities. The Army announced the MV-75 as the new FLRAA, to replace the UH-60 Black Hawk as the preferred MEDEVAC aircraft, and the results of these flight medics’ evaluations will impact the MV-75’s MEDEVAC cabin.

The most recent stop on the FMC-TD’s tour was to Salem, Oregon, where flight medics with the Oregon Army National Guard Golf Company, 189th Aviation, gave their feedback on the design. “Due to the Oregon National Guard’s high proficiency and familiarity with MEDEVAC missions, it is the only reserve unit participating in this unique opportunity,” said Lt. Col. Nathan Edgcombe, Oregon Army National Guard State Aviation Officer. Edgcombe said the key to the unit’s success

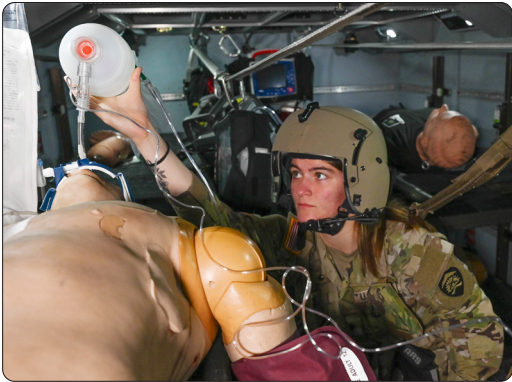
is their flight medics. Unlike active duty MEDEVAC units, ORARNG flight medics can supplement their medical knowledge with their civilian careers. Many of ORARNG’s flight medics practice medicine in their full-time lives, serving as firefighters, paramedics, and nurses within their communities. This diversified knowledge gives flight medics a more well-rounded perspective when evaluating the FMC-TD.

“Our crew members are helping to shape the future of the MEDEVAC mission,” said Maj. Tim Heater, ORARNG MEDEVAC Commander, Base Operations Officer.

The flight medics evaluate the FMC-TD by performing medical interventions on mannequins, testing the cabin’s design. An operator team monitors the scenarios and surveys the medics about their experiences throughout the Special User Evaluation.

With 30% more cabin space compared to a Black Hawk, the Special User Evaluation collects data on things like ease of patient loading, litter configuration, and equipment organization. It also tests new technology like a new modular rail system and the use of articulated litter pans, which allow medics to pull patients away from the cabin walls for easier access.

This is not an evaluation of



ORARNG Spc. Natalie Foote, Golf Company 189th Aviation, simulates giving rescue breaths to a medical mannequin during the Special User Evaluation for the Future Long Range Assault Aircraft MEDEVAC patient handling.

the flight medic’s knowledge, said Maj. Nick Toney, the assistant MEDEVAC product manager with the Program Executive Office - Aviation. This is the medics testing their skills against the capabilities of the cabin.

Designed with assault and MEDEVAC capabilities, Toney said the MV-75 is “twice as fast, twice as far” concerning the UH-60 Black Hawk, the MEDEVAC “bird” of choice for more than 40 years. Edgcombe said the increased speed and mileage will be especially beneficial to the Oregon guard.

“If we can get [the MV-75], there’s nowhere in Oregon that we can’t provide assistance on one tank of gas,” Edgcombe said.

Since the MV-75 is still in development, Army Medical Command (MEDCOM) is taking the opportunity to gather feedback to enable the highest level of patient care. Oregon National Guard is the fourth stop on the FMC-TD’s tour. They previously visited Fort Bragg, Fort Novosel, and Fort Riley, and will finish the tour at Fort Cavazos. Army MEDCOM’s goal is to collect the input of more than 100 flight providers. The input will be compiled into a report that will inform the final design of the FLRAA MEDEVAC patient handling system.

“When this new aircraft comes out, hopefully Oregon will get to say we had a hand in designing that,” Edgcombe said.



ORARNG Spc. Chris Kinkade simulates a medical assessment on a mannequin during the Special User Evaluation for the Future Long Range Assault Aircraft MEDEVAC cabin.

Oregon Army Guardsmen take flight during MEDEVAC training

Story and photos by Maj. Chris Clyne,
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

GRANTS PASS, Ore. – The steady thrum of rotor blades filled the air as Staff Sgt. James Grow raised his right hand 1,500 feet above southern Oregon, reenlisting for three more years of service while aboard a CH-47 Chinook helicopter during what may have been the most memorable oath ceremony of his military career. Grow was one of dozens of Oregon Army National Guard Soldiers who participated in MEDEVAC 101 training on Sunday, July 13, at the Grants Pass Armory. This event combined critical medical evacuation instruction with morale-boosting familiarization flights that left lasting impressions on participants.



ORARNG 1st Lt. Ian Namu administers the oath of reenlistment to Sgt. Cruz Lopez aboard a CH-47 Chinook helicopter during MEDEVAC 101 training in Grants Pass, Oregon, July 13, 2025.

“It’s important, especially in such a large organization, to see what other parts of the organization do, and how the state as a whole utilizes us,” said Warrant Officer 1 David Weber, a pilot with Company G, 1st Battalion, 189th Aviation Regiment, who helped conduct the training alongside his Salem-based unit. The comprehensive training brought together Soldiers from Delta Company and

Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry Regiment, along with personnel from Headquarters and Headquarters Company for hands-on instruction in medical evacuation procedures. Using an HH-60 Black Hawk helicopter from Company G, 1st Battalion, 189th Aviation Regiment, aviation crew members demonstrated proper litter loading techniques and the intricacies of both cold and hot loading procedures – critical skills that could mean the difference between life and death in emergency situations.

“We do it all the time on the radio and do practical exercises as just infantry, but actually doing it with the helicopter here and doing the hot loading, cold loading, seeing their capabilities is huge to us as infantrymen,” said 1st Lt. Ian Namu, who coordinated the training event.

The training extended beyond medical evacuation to showcase the broader mission capabilities of Oregon’s aviation assets. Weber’s crew covered their diverse mission set, including search and rescue operations and wildland firefighting support roles that directly serve Oregon communities during natural disasters and emergencies.

For many Soldiers, the highlight came during familiarization flights aboard the CH-47 Chinook from Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 168th Aviation Regiment, based in Pendleton. Before the morale flights began, the Chinook crew conducted preflight briefings for all participants. When Namu asked how many had never flown in a Chinook or worked with helicopters, 20 to 30 hands shot up, representing a significant learning opportunity for the ground forces.

“It’s an experience that these guys will



ORARNG Soldiers hot load onto a CH-47 Chinook helicopter at Grants Pass Airport before a familiarization flight during MEDEVAC 101 training on July 13, 2025.

take and be like, ‘Hey, I did something cool this drill weekend,’” Namu said. “I think it shows some form of appreciation for the things that they do, the hard work that these ground pounders do.”

The aerial portion of training proved so memorable that two Soldiers chose to conduct their reenlistment ceremonies while airborne, in addition to Grow’s three-year commitment, Sgt. Cruz Lopez also reenlisted during the flight, both taking their oaths while soaring over the Oregon landscape.

The event also included members of the Recruit Sustaining Program, giving future Soldiers who have enlisted but not yet completed basic training and Advanced Individual Training a preview of the opportunities awaiting them in the Oregon National Guard.

“Big thing, I think morale and retention is the biggest thing, hopefully that helps our numbers,” Namu said, reflecting on the training’s broader impact beyond just technical skills.

The MEDEVAC 101 training exemplified the Oregon National Guard’s commitment to preparing Soldiers for diverse missions while fostering the esprit de corps that keeps citizen-Soldiers engaged and ready to serve both state and nation when called upon.

COMPETITIONS

Oregon Nat'l Guard hosts inaugural statewide sniper competition

Story and photos by Maj. Chris Clyne,
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

HERMISTON, Ore. – The crack of precision rifles echoed across the high desert as Oregon’s best sniper teams gathered for an unprecedented competition designed to elevate the state’s long-range marksmanship capabilities to national standards.

The inaugural Oregon State Sniper Qualifier, held Sept. 4-6 at Raymond Rees Training Center and Boardman Training Area, marked a historic first for the Oregon National Guard – a comprehensive, multi-stage event specifically designed to prepare local sniper teams for national-level competition.

“What we’re trying to accomplish out here is really for the Oregon sniper teams around the state,” said Sgt. 1st Class Andrew Graham, section sergeant and course manager for the 11B Military Occupational Specialty Qualification and Infantry Training Course at the 249th Regional Training Institute. “We’re trying to create a competition and a program of training that prepares them for competition at higher levels.”

The competition represents a significant departure from traditional Army range training. Rather than focusing solely on marksmanship accuracy, the event challenges participants with complex problem-solving scenarios that mirror real-world sniper operations.

“This is more traditional sniper style training and stages and format that you could expect to see at the next level,” Graham said. “It’s more than just a shooting expert. It’s thinking outside the box. It’s problem-solving. It’s working with limited information, making timely and correct decisions.”

The stakes are high – the winning team earns the coveted slot to represent Oregon at the prestigious Winston P. Wilson Sniper competition, a stepping stone to potential participation in the International Sniper Competition.

The competition’s origins trace back to Oregon’s competitive history at national events. According to Sgt. 1st Class Robert Gillam, branch chief for the infantry training battalion at the 249th RTI, Oregon teams have consistently performed well, including a fourth-place finish at Winston P. Wilson that barely missed qualifying for the International Sniper Competition.

“We had a shot at winning the international sniper comp, because the guys who won, we had beaten before in competitions,” Gillam said. However, inconsistent team selection processes in subsequent years motivated RTI leadership to establish a fair, standardized competition to identify Oregon’s best representatives.

“We kind of wanted to start our own,” Gillam said. “The main effort was to make a fair chance for all the snipers in Oregon to have a shot to see who would represent Oregon the best.”



ORARNG Sgt. Alex Beglau and Sgt. Geoffrey Machado, both assigned to 2nd Battalion, 162nd Infantry Regiment, engaged targets while Sgt. 1st Class Andrew Graham, Staff Sgt. Michael Kissee and Staff Sgt. Tyrone Morris spot and score from behind at Boardman Training Area, Ore., Sept. 5, 2025.

The competition’s design pushes participants beyond their comfort zones. One featured stage at Boardman Training Area required teams to complete a grueling sequence within an unforgiving 18-minute time limit.

Competitors began with a 300-meter movement carrying full equipment, arrived at an unknown firing position where they had to quickly identify targets, engage a target string, advance to elevated positions for additional target engagement, and return to their starting point – all while managing time, breathing, and decision-making under pressure.

“If they don’t hit the time limit, they don’t retain any points from the exercise,” Graham said. “So it’s a zero for them. If they make it back in the time limit, regardless of how many targets they’ve engaged, then they acquire some amount of points.”

The three-day competition featured nine total stages, including precision rifle stages, movement scenarios, and culminating events designed to test every aspect of sniper team capabilities.

The competition’s creation story is one of determination and resourcefulness. Gillam revealed that the event was planned and executed in just three months, from June to September, after finally receiving approval following the successful Adjutant General’s match earlier in the year.

“I had from June to now to plan the whole thing,” Gillam said. “So next year I’ll actually be able to have a whole year.”

The compressed timeline forced creative solutions. Range limitations initially restricted portions of the event to the Boardman machine gun range, rather than the expansive multi-range competition originally envisioned. The team made it work through collaboration with the Oregon Training Center and careful adherence to approved Standard Training Zone parameters.

One innovation that caught the shooting community’s attention was the use of Impact Scoring, a mobile application typically used for civilian precision shooting competitions. The technology allowed organizers to manage competitor information, send documents, and automatically calculate scores without paperwork.

“Soon as that got posted, everybody, all the sniper communities, three gun community, pistol community, was like, ‘Hey, what are you guys doing? We want in,’” Gillam said.

The technological integration helped the relatively small Oregon event gain recognition across multiple shooting disciplines.

The competition benefits from the 249th RTI’s unique collection of qualified instructors. Many cadre members are Bravo 4 sniper-qualified and have competed at national levels in both military and civilian competitions. This expertise ensures participants receive training that translates directly to higher-level competition requirements.

“Our instructors, the cadre out here at the RTI, many of them are Bravo 4 sniper qualified and many of them have competed at the national stage,” Graham said. “This is a moment and a program that we’re building to give back to the units, to give back to the younger generation.”

The competition’s success has generated significant interest beyond Oregon’s borders. Gillam reports that Special Forces units from the 1st and 10th Groups, Washington State teams, and multiple law enforcement agencies have expressed interest in participating in future events.



ORARNG 1gt. 1st Class Robert Gillem, branch chief for the infantry training battalion at the 249th Regional Training Institute, addresses competitors during the master brief at the Rees Training Center, Ore., Sept. 4, 2025.

“Every surrounding law enforcement agency wants to be part of it,” he said. “We’re going to open up to kind of regional and then have multiple classes next year.”

Plans for the 2026 competition are already underway, with organizers working to secure additional training areas at Boardman and expand the event’s scope. The goal is to create a lasting annual program that not only identifies Oregon’s best sniper teams but also elevates the overall standard of precision marksmanship training throughout the region.

Beyond the competitive aspect, the program serves a broader strategic purpose in developing what Graham describes as “asymmetric tools for commanders to use.”

“Snipers are an asymmetric tool for commanders to use, and they should think that way,” Graham said. “This is exposing them to that here. Now it’s good training.”

The competition represents more than marksmanship training – it’s about developing decision-makers and problem-solvers who can operate effectively with limited information under time pressure, skills increasingly valuable in modern military operations.

As Oregon’s sniper teams prepare for next year’s expanded competition, they’re not just competing for bragging rights or advancement opportunities. They’re participating in the development of a program designed to ensure Oregon maintains its competitive edge in precision marksmanship while contributing to the broader evolution of sniper training and tactics.



ORARNG Staff Sgt. Brandon Wessels and Spc. Justin Metzler, both assigned to 1st Squadron, 82nd Cavalry Regiment, engage targets from a prone position during the inaugural Oregon State Sniper Qualifier at Boardman Training Area, Ore., Sept. 5, 2025.

COMPETITIONS

Oregon Guardsmen compete in the Regional Marksmanship Shooting 2025 Championships

Story and photos by John Hughel,
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

GUERNSEY, Wyo. – National Guard Soldiers and Airmen from eight western states mustered at Camp Guernsey, Wyoming, to compete in the Marksmanship Advisory Council Region VI Marksmanship Shooting Championships, from August 8-10, 2025.

Four dedicated soldiers from the Oregon National Guard proudly represented their state in a competitive showdown against highly proficient rivals from Alaska, Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Washington, and Wyoming. The Marksmanship Advisory Council's match aims to sharpen combat-focused marksmanship skills, validate essential rifle and pistol capabilities, and reinforce mobilization readiness.

"In many ways, combat is competitive," said Oregon Army National Guard Staff Sgt. John Shown. "In matches like these, we're using competition as a tool to increase our overall combat skills and build competency."

Shown began his military career eight years ago as a Combat Medic Specialist, also known as a '68 Whiskey', before transitioning to become an Infantryman, now assigned to Hotel Company, 145th Brigade Support Battalion – where he is utilizing his background as a concealed carry instructor and civilian competition target shooter for the past 15 years.

"So I'm a big handgun guy, so I am looking forward to the pistol matches starting today and into tomorrow," Shown said as competitors began the second day of the contest. "I am looking forward to the barricade pistol and the antibody armor pistol stages."

During the three-day match, competitors shuttled between two ranges at Camp Guernsey, allowing the large entry field of nearly 60 participants to balance their time between the main range, where they focused on rifles, and the North Range, which hosted shorter distance rifle events and pistols, located approximately 20 miles away.

Competing in his first regional event, Shown commented on how the staff were particularly helpful with all the representatives from each state, and how geographically expansive and diverse the firing ranges are for this competition – a place where the North Platte River has carved an expansive landscape across the North American continent.

"This is my first time in Wyoming. It's gorgeous and uncluttered, especially in this part of the state," he said, overlooking a hilltop vantage point. "The cadre have been super helpful, especially as we have gone from range to range while managing the changing weather conditions thrown our way."

This part of Eastern Wyoming is an important topographical region in U.S. history. Just over a mile southeast of the National Guard Camp is Register Cliff, a protected historic site along the Oregon Trail where westward-bound immigrants stopped to set up camp. They carved

their family names and passage dates into the soft sandstone, many dating back to the 1840s. To the south of the long rifle range, nearly five-foot-deep tracks were made by travelers, leaving some of the most prominent ruts along the entire Oregon Trail route.

With high temperatures and building gusts of nearly 50 miles per hour late in the afternoon on day one at the North Range, some of the events were suspended and pushed to the second day. Undeterred, the competitors were eager to begin what would be a long second day of competition, using the extra time to make necessary adjustments.

"We were having some crazy wind yesterday, in some pretty big draws that were funneling winds at full value, 15 to 18 [miles per hour] winds sustained over time with gusts over 20, and that was definitely noticeable," said Sgt. Chase Kaleta. "But...we persevered through it. All the guys got good shot groups and did well on the special zero."

After an initial four-year stint of active duty service, Kaleta joined the Oregon Army National Guard in early 2021 and is currently an infantryman with 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry.

"I've been an '11 Bravo' my entire career. In some ways, I get more range time in the Guard than when I was on active duty," Kaleta said. "Since we participated in the Winston P. Wilson earlier this year in 2025, and then had

our annual training right before heading to Regionals, we've had significantly more shooting time on the M-17 than before."

The 54th Annual Winston P. Wilson (WPW) Small Arms Championship took place from March 31 to April 11, 2025, at the National Guard Marksmanship Training Center in North Little Rock, Arkansas. This event allowed service members from the Active Duty, National Guard, Marine Corps, Air Force, Navy, Coast Guard, and foreign allies to demonstrate their skills in rifle, pistol, machine gun, and combined arms disciplines in a combat-focused setting. A total of 45 teams battled for top honors as Michigan, North Dakota, and Arkansas finished in the top spots, respectively.

"At nationals, there were nearly 400 shooters from every part of the country, including many foreign competitors," Kaleta said, assessing the competition now



ORARNG Sgt. Chase Kaleta, assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry (right) has his weapons scores recorded in "The Pit" by a fellow competitor during the Region VI Championships.

at regionals. "In this region, many of those same shooters are here, but they're all the top ones. The Dakotas came heavily prepared – I think North Dakota brought four teams, and their program is very robust."

Building a team and mentoring new members are key goals that the Oregon Team aims to promote. Many factors contribute to building a strong program, including training time, mentorship, funding, and a dedicated team approach.

Taking part in his first regional event, Sgt. Devon Chesbrough, assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry, qualified for this advanced stage in 2023 but didn't compete due to last-minute paperwork issues. Earlier this year, he participated in the Winston P. Wilson match and won at the Oregon State level, so he valued the chance to compete in Wyoming.

"Better late than never," he said, smiling at the opportunity now to challenge the best of Region VI. "This has been a good run for our unit lately...we had a member just win Best Warrior this spring, and when our command saw that four of us went home with 'Governor Twenty's' and two of us brought home first-place trophies (at state match), he was ecstatic."



ORARNG Staff Sgt. John Shown (far right) and other members of the Oregon Army National Guard team compete against eight other western states during the Region VI Marksmanship Championships at Camp Guernsey, Wyo., on Aug. 9, 2025.

As weapons team leaders in their unit, Kaleta and Chesbrough are taking leadership roles in training and mentorship. They also spend off-duty time perfecting their skills.

"Two of us are in the weapons squad – specifically, Sergeant Kaleta runs first platoon weapons. I lead the second platoon's weapons as team leader," Chesbrough said. "If we're not teaching others about weapons, we practice in our own time with personal pistols and rifles because it's become part of our lives over the last six months."

With seven years of service in the Oregon Army National Guard, Chesbrough serves as the lead instructor for Threat Dynamics in Sherwood, Oregon, when not in uniform. Many training principles overlap between his military and civilian work.

"It's about mastering grip, stance, and practicing different positions – kneeling, standing, offhand, and so on – but nothing beats shooting at these kinds of targets here at Camp Guernsey," he said. "We shot about 500 extra rounds during annual training, but that's at silhouettes, not bull's-eyes."

Story continued on Page 13



ORARNG Sgt. Code Butterworth, assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry, records notes after firing from one of fixed distances during the Region VI Championships, on Aug. 8, 2025.



ORARNG Sgt. Devon Chesbrough, assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry (far left) and other competitors fire their M-17 Pistol at targets at Camp Guernsey, during the Region VI Championships on Aug. 9, 2025.

COMPETITIONS

Regional Marksmanship Championships
Continued from Page 10

Chesbrough explained that at regionals, scoring is based on bull’s-eye targets. “So you work your way in from 5 out to 2 points, sometimes even smaller, and sometimes you get the bonus of V or X, which is just a tiebreaker but still counts as a 5.”

As the 4th member of the Oregon Quartet at Regionals, Sgt. Cade Butterworth has been a member of the Oregon Army National Guard for going on five years. He’s a full-time student, attending Oregon State University in Corvallis, and he’s also a member of the 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry with Kaleta and Chesbrough.

“In terms of shooting at long-range targets, I improved from the first day to the second. The short stuff that I’ve shot before...this is my first time shooting over 300 meters. You know, it’s challenging, and there is a learning curve with these targets and changing conditions,” Butterworth said, describing his approach to the event. “Overall, I am pretty happy with my shooting.”

He’s applied the same approach of steady improvement and focusing on the details to his academic life, too. He’s set to graduate in December with a degree in finance and has set his sights on becoming a financial advisor.

“I got a 20,000 dollar signing bonus, I got the G.I. Bill, and a kicker. So it’s like 800-850 dollars a month while I am in school... and tuition is fully paid for.” Butterworth



The ORARNG Marksmanship Team, composed of (L to R) Sgt. Cade Butterworth, Sgt. Chase Kaleta, Sgt. Devon Chesbrough and Staff Sgt. John Shown pauses for a photo during the Region VI Championships.

said, describing the education benefits as an Oregon National Guard member. “So in January, I have a job already lined up. Being a member of the National Guard has just given me so many opportunities, like being able to be part of this marksmanship team.”

As the competition moved into the third and final day, he continued to apply the lessons learned from the first two days, taking 3rd place Novice Division, Reflective Fire competition.

“The shorter range at 200 to 300 meters has been my best. My shots on the second day were more accurate, and I had better groupings, whereas two days ago, I was not even hitting the box,” he said, but was quick

to also congratulate his teammate, Sergeant Kaleta, who had won the Open Division, Reflective Fire Open competition. “He had an incredible round. Getting a win here, in any event, and with this competition is a really big deal,” Butterworth said.

With a score of 175 out of a possible 180, Kaleta described how pacing his firing cadence, along with speed shooting on shorter ranges, was part of his success.

“The reflective fire with rifle, I do a lot of speed shooting, like the three gun and two gun, as well as a lot of where I live, there are many shorter ranges in rifle marksmanship, I am good at, and so at a closer range I can stack rounds,” he said. “In some events, it all comes together.”

With the competition concluded, it was time for the team to head home after nearly a month of training, travel, competitions, and refining their marksmanship skills. Fortunately, they wouldn’t need a covered wagon to retrace the adjacent ‘Oregon Trail’ – all that was needed was enough space in a rented minivan for themselves and their gear for a three-hour trip to Denver, followed by a flight back to Portland.

And with an upbeat attitude, they were discussing the next competition, inspired by their experience at the Region VI championships, and hoping that their efforts would serve as a foundation for other Oregon Guardsmen to follow.

Oregon Nat’l Guard Physician Assistant retakes Push-Up world record

Story and photos by Maj. Chris Clyne,
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

WEST SALEM, Ore. – Oregon Army National Guard Physician Assistant Major Tommy Vu demolished the world record for most chest-to-ground push-ups in one hour Sept. 20, completing an astounding 1,721 repetitions at West Coast Strength gym in West Salem.

Vu’s performance shattered the previous record of 1,530 repetitions set earlier this year by a New York-based athlete who had previously taken the record from the Oregon Guard member. The achievement marks Vu’s sixth world record, adding to his growing collection of fitness accomplishments that began during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“I’ve got a really strong will, and I just don’t know how to quit,” Vu said, reflecting on his approach to record-breaking challenges.

“My goal was around 1,600, but I like to give myself a bit of headspace,” Vu said before the attempt. “As the crowd gets into it, you know, the first half I do great. The second half, I feed off of the energy in the crowd and then all the cheering and motivation.”

The 38-year-old soldier’s record-breaking journey began in 2020 during the pandemic, when gyms closed and he turned to outdoor training. “When the gyms closed down, I had to be outside, lifting, running, doing all the bodyweight exercises,” Vu explained. “Turns out, I’ve got a really strong will.”

Using a metronome set to 2.1 seconds per repetition, Vu maintained a steady pace throughout the grueling hour-long challenge. His family plays a crucial role in his training regimen, with his wife Linda and son Adonis present to support him, along with fellow Oregon National Guard members who cheered him on throughout the attempt.



Oregon Army National Guard Physician Assistant Maj. Tommy Vu looks up during his world record attempt for most chest-to-ground push-ups at West Coast Strength gym in West Salem, Ore., Sept. 20, 2025.

This record attempt held special significance for Vu, who dedicated the achievement to Leonardo Bearstein Luu, a 12-year-old chow chow who belonged to his in-laws and passed away in April. Following his tradition of donating \$1 per repetition to charity, Vu will present a check for \$1,721 to the Oregon Humane Society.

“We lost our chow chow, who was 12 years old. He lived a great life, but it was still a really cool dog,” Vu explained. “So I thought, hey, let’s dedicate something in memory for Leonardo. Whenever I do these, I always find a charitable cause.”

Katie Hamlin, representing the Oregon Humane Society, attended the event with Odin, a dog adopted through the organization’s Second Chance program that works with partner shelters across the country to help animals from overcrowded facilities.

“We are a nonprofit organization. We’re the largest animal welfare organization in the state,” Hamlin said. “We help all across Oregon, and we have a lot of different programs, including foster programs, adoptions, and a humane law team with trained officers that help protect animals from cruelty and neglect.”

The record attempt comes after Vu faced previous setbacks, including developing rhabdomyolysis during a recent burpee pull-up record attempt and illness that forced the postponement of an earlier world record attempt.

Looking ahead, Vu already has his sights set on reclaiming another record. His original chest-to-ground burpee record of 1,027 repetitions, which he reclaimed in October 2024, was recently broken by a competitor who achieved 1,107 repetitions.

“Now with this training, my arms are going to be so much stronger, so I’m hoping to



ORARNG Physician Assistant Maj. Tommy Vu celebrates with Odin, a dog from the Oregon Humane Society’s Second Chance program, surrounded by family and friends after completing his world record attempt at West Coast Strength gym in West Salem, Ore., Sept. 20, 2025.

reclaim that record,” Vu said, noting that his enhanced upper body strength from push-up training should help with the burpee challenge.

True to his character, Vu shows no signs of slowing down. “If you have a one-hour world record for burpees or a burpee variation,” he has said, “I’m coming for it!”

Brig. Gen. Alan R. Gronewold, Adjutant General, Oregon National Guard, said Vu’s achievements reflect why the Oregon National Guard is the military service of choice for Oregonians.

“Major Vu demonstrates the type of individual who chooses to serve with the Oregon National Guard - someone who excels professionally while pursuing personal challenges that benefit others,” Gronewold said. “His record-breaking performances, combined with his charitable mission, showcase the leadership and community spirit that define our citizen-soldiers.”

When asked about future plans, Vu remains committed to his mission of breaking records while supporting charitable causes.

“People always ask when I’m going to stop or when enough is enough,” Vu said. “There’s always going to be charity out there, people to help, and records to break. I encourage anybody to break these records because I’ll keep coming back for them and I’ll keep helping more people along the way.”

COMPETITIONS

Three Oregon Army Guardsmen test their Endurance at the National Guard Marathon

Story by John Hughel,
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs
Photos courtesy of the
Nebraska National Guard Public Affairs

LINCOLN, Neb. – Stepping to the starting line of a marathon, every runner endures a unique storyline, wary of the trials and tribulations that have led up to that moment. Like a constantly updating weather forecast, a runner reflects on all the details to make predictions — a nagging muscle ache, questioning their choice of race day shoes, what they ate the night before, and overanalyzing their recent training plan are common and contribute to the apprehension before the gun goes off.

On May 4, nearly 200 runners representing the National Guard’s 54 states and territories came together for the 48th annual Lincoln Marathon, vying for a spot on the All Guard Marathon team. Among the participants, three runners represented the Oregon National Guard, eager to take on the challenge of the 26.2-mile race and add a new chapter to their journey.

“In 2023, that was my first marathon— it was definitely a bit of a scary experience, but I’ve been increasing my running mileage and preparing more and felt better trained this year,” said Capt. Amy Mireles, who commands Echo Company, 141st Brigade Support Battalion. “I was able to cut about 20 minutes off my time since that race two years ago, which is super exciting.”

In the 2023 National Guard Marathon, Mireles completed the course in a time of 4:02:28, finishing in 20th place among female guardmembers and capturing a spot on the All-Guard Marathon Team. This year, she improved her performance, finishing in 17th place in the women’s division with a time of 3:43:58, which translates to an average pace of 8:32 per mile—43 seconds per mile faster than her previous time. By placing in the top 20, she once again qualified for the All Guard Marathon team.

“This year, the race was really competitive as a lot of the female finishers were around the three-hour thirty to forty (finishing time) area,” she said. “I was unsure when I finished if I had placed in the top 20 because it’s hard to gauge how many had completed the race. I had to wait for the awards ceremony to find out... It’s always nice to be surprised if you do make it!”



Oregon Nat'l. Guard Marathon team members pause for a team photo on May 3, 2025, at Lincoln, Nebraska. Team members (left to right) Capt. Amy Mireles, 1st Lt. Miguel Mendoza-Lopez, and Staff Sgt. Jacquelyn Prevish.

Runners who earn a spot on the All Guard Marathon Team are eligible to participate in numerous races throughout the United States and even abroad over the next two years. The National Guard Military Competitions Program is designed to champion physical fitness, self-discipline, and a robust sense of camaraderie among Guardsmen, providing a valuable role in retention and recruiting efforts.

Over the past two years, Mireles has completed full and half marathons in Philadelphia, Arizona, Ohio, and again back in Nebraska for the 2024 Marathon with the National Team. She credits a balanced training plan for her success, but also making a change in the type of shoes she wears.

“Changing shoes has made a huge difference, because for several races I was getting blisters and calluses,” Mireles said, noting that those injuries were creating consistency gaps in her training. “I have been able to increase my mileage and dedicate more time to morning and evening workouts. This contributed to the big improvement in my marathon time.”

Now, as a seasoned veteran of the team, Mireles has taken over the role of State Coordinator for the Oregon National Guard Marathon team. She succeeded Lt. Col. Billie Cartwright, who completed her tenure after finishing the Lincoln Half-Marathon in May 2023, and retired from the Oregon National Guard a few months later, in October.

As the State Coordinator, she added two new members to the team for the 2025 event by recruiting 1st Lt. Miguel Mendoza-Lopez and Staff Sgt. Jacquelyn Prevish. Despite the rising temperatures in the afternoon, the three of them successfully completed the full marathon on the Lincoln course.

“When Captain Mireles put out the announcement about the National Guard Marathon team, the original requirement was having a time under four hours,” Mendoza said, having recently completed the Portland Marathon with a 3:43:00 time. “But they had updated a new qualifying time of 3:35, and I thought, well, maybe next year.”

With a late registration for the Lincoln Marathon, Mendoza had already committed himself to run the Eugene Marathon just one week before. Now, with a new training plan, he shifted his approach to complete both races.

“My biggest goal was to not get injured,” he said, recalling his ability to balance the heavy mileage. “I ran Eugene at an easier



File photo by John Hughel, OMD Public Affairs
Capt. Amy Mireles (left) and Lt. Col. Billie Cartwright (right) pause for a photo at the finish line at the Lincoln Marathon, on May 7, 2023 in Lincoln, Nebraska. Mireles took over as the ORNG State Coordinator after Cartwright retired in October 2023.



pace, around 8:45 or so, that way I could run and finish the National Guard race a week later.”

To add one more challenge to the mix, Mendoza said that a couple of days after the race in Lincoln, he had to take the Army Combat Fitness Test.

“I ran a personal best at Lincoln, with an official time of 3:38:20,” he said, somewhat surprised after running two full marathons in seven days. “I missed making the All Guard Team by about three minutes and thirty seconds, but that heat is no joke. After 10 a.m., it got really toasty, and my pace was all over the place.”

The Lincoln Marathon was his 5th full Marathon, as he is still relatively new at running long-distance races. It took a recent injury in an automobile accident to change his approach to fitness.

“All it took for me to run more than 4 miles was a car accident,” he said, pausing to laugh at the irony. “I had tried a variety of activities, and running was the only thing that didn’t hurt while recovering. Without much serious training, I signed up to run a marathon.”

With each race, he has decreased his time, going from 4:58:00 in his inaugural run to 4:10:00, 3:43:00, and now his personal best in the National Guard event. This sense of steady progression is all in stride for a Soldier who first served a four-year active duty stint before receiving his commission through the ROTC program at the University of Oregon in 2021. He balances his running routine, working full-time as the S1/S2 for the 821st Battalion and as the Officer in Charge for the 1186th Military Police Company in Hood River.

“Running is a big part of my life now. I run about 25 miles a week to reach 100 miles in a month. My times have gotten better with a mix of interval runs or like VO2 max workouts, where I am just gasping for air and sprinting as hard as I can,” Mendoza said. “I plan on running the Chicago Marathon in October, so maybe I can run sub 3:30 or 3:15, but improving for each race is the goal.”

Already, members of his unit have expressed interest in running at the Lincoln Marathon next year, having drawn inspiration and encouragement from his success. He has also become involved with running clubs in Salem and Portland, building camaraderie with like-minded runners.



ORARNG Capt. Amy Mireles (bib number 9102) and Staff Sgt. Jacquelyn Prevish (bib number 9157) runs at a relaxed pace during the opening miles of the 48th annual Lincoln Marathon, in Lincoln, Nebraska, on May 4, 2025.

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COMPETITIONS

National Guard Marathon
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“It’s phenomenal how organized the National Guard Marathon is, and the work by the Nebraska National Guard, as well as the people of Lincoln, is very supportive of the entire event. If you go into a local store, they want to know where you’re from and which state you represent,” Mendoza said, reiterating his experience in Nebraska. “I’d say that it took an injury to ‘fall in love with running,’ and being part of several running clubs just extends my participation with the sport.”

Appreciation takes many forms, but a common theme emerged among all three Oregon runners: a shared sense of gratitude simply for the opportunity to compete. For Staff Sgt. Jacquelyn Previs’s participation in the 2025 National Guard Marathon might be better described as unimaginable. A severe injury she sustained during the 2023 Oregon Best Warrior Competition left her unable to walk, let alone run, for several months.

Suffering a stress fracture in her femur, the long road to recovery took nearly a full year, as she had to push herself through physical therapy, all the while overcoming hitches with health care coverage.

“I knew there was something wrong toward the end of the second day of Best Warrior when I couldn’t get my right leg to move over the last station on the obstacle course,” she said, describing both the immobility and pain that were increasing with each event. “The next morning, somewhere around mile nine on the ruck march, I was reduced to intermittent walking and running.”

With only two events left to complete the contest, the medical staff decided to pull her from the competition. Although it took several months after the event to diagnose the injury, Previs said, “It probably saved me from further damage.”

“I kept thinking it was just fatigue or a deep muscle pull in my hip, and I was determined to continue the final events, telling them, ‘I can finish, I can finish.’ However, if the medics hadn’t intervened, I would have lost the ability to use my leg and walk again because of necrosis, which



ORARNG 1st Lt. Miguel Mendoza-Lopez (bib number 9101) keeps pace with a group running the Lincoln Marathon, which also serves as the National Guard Marathon Team time trials, held on May 4, 2025, in Lincoln, Nebraska.

could have resulted in the death of my leg,” Previs said.

Over the next two months, she couldn’t be seen by health providers since she was dropped from TRICARE, instead using Urgent Care for short-term relief of the pain and persistent symptoms. Eventually, back on insurance, she was able to get an MRI and began physical therapy.

“At first, I was only able to get around using crutches for the first four months until I could bear more weight on my legs,” she said, describing the tedious recovery process. “I had to retrain my body, first with being able to walk just a quarter mile at a time. There was so much atrophy, and it took until July of 2023 before I could start walking again.”

By November of that year, she could run for one minute, then walk for four minutes. With the pace of recovery increasing, she optimistically set a daunting goal of running a half-marathon in the near future.

“There was a race in March of 2024 that I set my sights on while deployed in Kuwait,” she said. “With that first one accomplished, I signed up for another half-marathon, increased my training harder, and picked up my speed.”

During weekly workouts with military coworkers on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday runs, Previs first heard about running the National Guard Marathon through her unit, Charlie Company, 741st Brigade Engineer Battalion, where she serves as a 12 Bravo, or Combat Engineer. Her application to Capt. Mireles detailed her desire to test herself and the months of recovery by running her first Marathon at Lincoln this year and being part of the Oregon team.

“Yes, this was my 1st Marathon. It was such an awesome opportunity to run within the National Guard,” Previs said, recalling the excitement of the event. “It was such an amazing opportunity to compete, and so many incredible athletes were there, all these ultra-athletes who were part of this race, and it felt incredible to be part of this event.”

Her race day plan was to run around 8:40-8:50 minutes per mile for the 25.2 miles, but with the Midwest heat and humidity beginning to build, she experienced hydration issues in the later stages of the race. With her running vest hydration system, she had two small fuel bottles and a water supply, fully prepared for the conditions.

“I was on pace and felt strong through the first 18 miles, but had gone through two of my water bottles with added fuel powder,” she said. “When I went to use my Platypus (water backpack), it had a chlorine taste, so I decided not to use it, which cost about 400 calories in my fuel plan.”



ORARNG Staff Sgt. Jacquelyn Previs (bib number 9157) nears the finish line to complete the 48th annual Lincoln Marathon, which also serves as the National Guard Marathon Team time trials, held on May 4, 2025, in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Her pace dropped, but undeterred, she adjusted her running tempo to finish with a time of 4:09:21. With this accomplishment, she hopes to keep running longer distance events.

“In the future, I would like to test myself and run an Ultra Marathon [races longer than 26.2 miles], or triathlon, but for now, one step at a time.”

Sergeant Previs also acknowledged how her teammates helped inspire her before the race, as they attended a workshop and meeting teams from around the country.

“What’s funny is that Capt. Mireles had a more relaxed approach, like ‘I’m going to run how I feel and have my MP3 player,’ while Lieutenant Mendoza had his Garmin watch that would buzz to keep his pace and splits, more surgical in his technique,” Previs said, reflecting on their approach to running a marathon. “And Captain Mireles went ‘above and beyond’ for our team, too; she made special jackets and shirts for us, which really made the entire event feel more meaningful.”



ORARNG Capt. Amy Mireles takes part in the Lincoln Marathon, which also serves as the National Guard Marathon Team time trials. Mireles finished in 17th Place in the Female Division among National Guard Runners.

Team bonding events that are part of the National Guard Marathon All-Endurance

program aim to enhance physical fitness and build esprit de corps among service members. These events extend beyond just recruiting efforts and raising awareness about Citizen-Soldier fitness. They motivate participants to push past their perceived limits, demonstrating excellence through perseverance and resiliency while promoting a holistic approach to health and wellness.

“Before someone runs their first marathon, most of them say, ‘I just want to make it across the finish line.’ Often, more experienced runners have different goals,” Mireles said, describing the held ambitions shared by runners. “I love that an event like a marathon unites so many people in such a positive manner. I think that’s why runners have a special bond with each other.”



Oregon National Guard Marathon team members (Left to Right) Capt. Amy Mireles, 1st Lt. Miguel Mendoza-Lopez, and Staff Sgt. Jacquelyn Previs, pause for a group photo with their finisher medals after completing the Lincoln Marathon.

TRAINING

Oregon Guard Aviation partners With Clackamas Fire Department To enhance flood response capacity

Story and photos by Maj. Chris Clyne,
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

SANDY, Ore. – The roar of CH-47 Chinook rotors filled the air at Sandy River Airport as Oregon Army National Guard aviators and Clackamas County’s Fire Water Rescue Team completed groundbreaking training that could revolutionize the state’s response to flood emergencies.

The Aug. 12 exercise marked the culmination of a two-phase joint training program designed to develop rapid deployment capabilities for water rescue operations across Oregon and beyond. The partnership between Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 168th Aviation Regiment, and Clackamas Fire demonstrates how military aviation assets can quickly deliver specialized rescue teams to disaster-affected areas.

“This operation would go such that we would get a phone call from a state authority saying that they need to utilize our water rescue team for, let’s say, a flood event,” said Lt. Mike Gasperson, a firefighter with Station 19’s Water Rescue Team. “We could rally our team, get all our gear ready in a relatively quick time frame, and utilize the Guard to get us to where we need to go.”

The training began on July 24 at Aurora State Airport, focusing on equipment familiarization and loading procedures. Fire rescue personnel learned aircraft safety protocols while Guard crew members inspected water rescue equipment to determine optimal loading configurations and weight distribution.

“The biggest thing it did is open the door to communication,” said Chief Warrant Officer 3 Anthony Ives, pilot-in-command for the Aug. 12 mission. “Now we have some phone numbers. We have some emails, and with obviously recent events happening in the United States, with floods and the ever-present possibility of a Cascadia tsunami, we could go pick them up.”

The August exercise simulated a real-world deployment scenario. Guard aviators transported six water rescue specialists and their equipment, including inflatable rafts, chainsaws, rope rescue gear, and emergency medical supplies, from Aurora to Sandy River Airport in approximately 15 minutes – a journey that would take significantly longer by ground transportation.

“We have night vision capabilities so that if we need to operate at night, we have that. So we’ve got a lot of tools at our disposal if

we need them,” Gasperson said, describing the team’s comprehensive equipment package.

Division Chief Kyle Olson, who oversees Clackamas Fire’s special operations teams, said the partnership addresses a critical capability gap identified in recent flooding events nationwide. The Texas flooding earlier this year helped spark conversations about rapid deployment strategies.

“The idea is we need to be able to deploy fast and not have to drive 18 hours and hopefully get there and help,” Olson said. “Whether we can at that point, we’re going to deploy quickly and get out around Oregon or the Northwest or even go further.”



The training revealed both capabilities and challenges. While equipment loading and transport proceeded smoothly, radio communication between military and civilian agencies required workarounds and remains an area for continued development.

“Communication, I think, is probably the number one challenge dated back since the Civil War, and it’s still a problem, whether it’s civilian or military,” Ives said. “The biggest problem that we had was they were calling a frequency something that they were familiar with, and we were calling it something different that we were familiar with.”

Despite communication challenges, the exercise demonstrated significant tactical advantages. The CH-47’s auxiliary fuel tanks provide approximately four hours of flight time, enabling deployment anywhere in Oregon on a single tank of fuel.

“Within six or seven hours we could be picking them up and deploying them in the event of an emergency,” Ives said.

The Water Rescue Team, headquartered at Station 19 in Damascus, operates as part of a regional consortium including agencies from



Clackamas Fire Water Rescue Team members load their inflatable raft into a fire department vehicle at Sandy River Airport, Oregon, Aug. 12, 2025, as an ORARNG CH-47 Chinook helicopter prepares for departure in the background.

across Clackamas County. The 16-member team has provided mutual aid for 30 years, responding to a range of incidents, from river rescues to major flooding events.

“We are a regional team, and have been for 30 years,” Olson said. “It takes way more agency help to be able to pull some of these things off.”

For Guard aviators, the training provided valuable experience working with civilian emergency responders while fulfilling their state mission.

“We’re a big helicopter. We’re loud,” Ives said. “The biggest thing is when I think back to flight school, the first time you turn those engines on and the rotors start turning, it even intimidates us sometimes. So from the standpoint of a civilian that’s never hot loaded on even a Black Hawk, a CH-47, it’s very intimidating.”

The successful training establishes a foundation for future cooperation. Plans call for annual exercises to familiarize additional personnel with aircraft loading capabilities and procedures.

“All the training flights we go on, when we go on a real-world mission, whether it’s a fire or a rescue, it makes the training pay off,” Ives said. “For us, it makes what we do every day worth it.”

Oregon National Guard members serve part-time, typically one weekend a month and two weeks a year, while maintaining civilian careers. They stand ready to respond to state emergencies such as wildfires and floods, while also training to defend the nation when called to federal service. Guard members live and work in the same communities they serve, creating a unique connection between military service and local communities.

The Aug. 12 crew included Chief Warrant Officer 3 Jeremiah Williams, Sgt. 1st Class Marcus Hickman, and Staff Sgt. Skyler Leasy is also working alongside Ives to ensure mission success.

“This just adds one more thing that will benefit the state, being able to load the rescue team and the raft and take them anywhere in the state,” Ives said. “Now we’ve established a working relationship.”

Oregon and Washington Nat’l Guard conduct helocast training on the Columbia River

TROUTDALE, Ore. – Members of the Oregon Army National Guard, Washington National Guard and U.S. Army Reserve, participated in Helocast training on the Columbia River, at Troutdale, Oregon on August 8, 2025. The event, led by the 2nd Battalion, 162nd Infantry Regiment, 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Oregon National Guard, included soldiers with 1st Squadron, 303rd Cavalry Regiment, 96th

Troop Command, Washington National Guard and 244th Expeditionary Combat Aviation Brigade, U.S. Army Reserve.



Photos by Washington Nat’l Guard Sgt. 1st Class Nicolas Cloward, 96th Troop Command



TRAINING

Oregon Citizen Soldiers and Airmen conduct CERFP annual training

Story by Master Sgt. Steph Sawyer,
142nd Wing Public Affairs

WARRENTON, Ore. – Airmen and Soldiers from the Oregon Air and Army National Guard completed week-long annual training at Camp Rilea in Warrenton, Oregon in mid-August.

These Airmen and Soldiers are part of a National Guard initiative known as CERFP, an acronym within an acronym which stands for CBRNE (Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and Explosive) Enhanced Response Force Package. CERFP Airmen and Soldiers specialize in CBRNE and are trained to respond to varied mass casualty events.

The scenario that was played out in August’s exercise was an ammonia tank explosion which caused structural damage to a building, resulting in a number of trapped victims.

One of the first teams to respond in a disaster situation is search and extraction CERFP medics. This team is responsible for locating, rescuing, and medically stabilizing victims at the site of a disaster. Their overall objective is to evacuate victims from the “hot zone” to a location where they can be decontaminated, if needed, and medically assessed and treated.

CERFP Senior Airman Kevin Batsch, a search and extraction medic, explained the impact and importance of this recurring training.



Photo by Master Sgt. Steph Sawyer, 142nd Wing Public Affairs
CERFP search and extraction medics, Senior Airmen Kevin Batsch and Jasmine Plata secure an Airman to a stretcher as Soldiers observe during joint training at Camp Rilea.



Photo by Sgt. Hannah Hawkins, 115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment
“Disaster victims” are medically treated after being rescued from a simulated explosion during a CERFP training exercise at Camp Rilea, Warrenton, Oregon on August 14, 2025.

“I think the advantage is getting to work, not only with your team, but with your counterparts,” Batsch said. “So that way you’re comfortable with them...so when they send you down into a hole on a rope, you have absolute faith in them that they’re going to be able to get you down safely and they’re going to be able to haul you and your victim up.”

Training events such as this give members the opportunity to practice and apply their skills in a scenario designed to resemble what would happen in a real world disaster. It also allows Airmen and Soldiers to train alongside each other, building team cohesion and trust as well as enhancing skillsets through knowledge sharing and collaboration.

In a real world disaster, CERFP is meant to work alongside civilian rescue personnel to aid their efforts.

“Our goal is to help the resources that are already in an area that are overwhelmed,” explained Batsch. “[To] help them do their jobs of rescuing victims and getting them to medical care.”

Before the scenario played out in the later part of the training week, twenty Airmen took

an opportunity to visit the U.S. Coast Guard Air Station in Astoria, Oregon.

Coast guard personnel hosted and briefed the Airmen on their mission. They showed and talked about some of their rescue equipment, as well as an HH60-T helicopter.

The visit enhanced the Airmen’s training week by opening a door for a broadened understanding of the coast guard and how CERFP and coast guard missions could potentially overlap.

“In the event of a real world mass casualty disaster, our paths would definitely cross,” said 142nd CERFP Commander, Lt. Col. Christopher Webb, explaining the value of the visit. “It’s very likely that in that scenario, we would be handing patients over for evacuation to the coast guard.”

The goal of the exchange was to lay the groundwork for a more fruitful and effective relationship between the two entities by

familiarizing both organizations with each other.

“We...learned quite a bit about how they do patient movement [versus] how we do patient movement so we can speak in the same language when we’re loading their helicopter and using their equipment,” said Webb.

Webb intends to continue to build the relationship moving forward.

“We established that we both have a tremendous desire to start communicating with one another,” said

Webb. “So we’re going to do that in future exercises...and potentially even coordinate a landing and maybe even a patient evacuation.”



Photo by Sgt. Hannah Hawkins, 115th MPAD
ORARNG Sgt. Elizabeth Ruiz, 1186th Military Police Company, 821st Troop Command Battalion, washes and rinses a role-playing contaminated casualty during joint training at Camp Rilea.

Chance meeting leads to Combatives Training partnership with Guard unit

Story and photos by Maj. Chris Clyne,
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

MEDFORD, Ore. – What started as a routine haircut turned into a valuable training opportunity for Oregon Army National Guard Soldiers when Staff Sgt. Brandon Ellis spotted a fellow veteran at a local salon.

Ellis, a recruiter with Detachment 8, Recruiting and Retention Battalion, noticed the telltale signs of a martial artist when Cody Torrez walked into the barbershop – cauliflower ears and the unmistakable presence of an experienced fighter.

“He walks in looking good–has cauliflower ears. He just has the persona of a wrestler,” Ellis said. “I’m like, where do you train at, sir?”



Cody Torrez, demonstrates an arm bar technique to ORARNG Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry Regiment, during combatives training in Medford, Oregon.

That casual conversation during the unit’s drill weekend led to Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry Regiment, “Guardians,” rolling on the mats at Rice Brothers Gym in Medford, participating in their first combatives training in years.

Torrez, a former Army combat medic who served at Fort Wainwright, Alaska, brought valuable military experience to the instruction. During his active-duty service, he taught combatives at the base’s combat training facility and won the Fort Wainwright combatives championships.

“I was a combat medic, and my additional duty was to teach combatives at the Fort Wainwright combatives room,” said Torrez, who now works as a biological laboratory scientist while teaching jujitsu at multiple locations.

The training partnership came together quickly thanks to the coordination of Capt. Ian Namu, who connected with Torrez to arrange the session during drill weekend.

“Sergeant Ellis connected with Cody, and basically said he was open to teaching the guys some jujitsu, or combatives, as we like to call it, in the army,” Namu explained. “We were able to do a quick FRAGORD – a fragmentary operation order – to get it in this drill.”

For Ellis, the opportunity represented more than just physical training. “The more hands-on training the unit can get, the better cohesion we build, camaraderie, teamwork,” he said. “This hasn’t been many years since we’ve done combatives, so this is great.”

Torrez, who continues to compete and teach troubled youth through YMCA programs in Yreka, California, was eager to work with military personnel again. After getting out of the Army in 2014 and spending a decade in Alaska, he moved to southern Oregon and welcomed the chance to share his expertise.



Cody Torrez, a former Army combat medic and instructor at Rice Brothers gym, supervises Oregon Army National Guard Soldiers as they practice a takedown technique during combatives training in Medford, Oregon, during the August drill weekend.

The collaboration exemplifies how Oregon National Guard members leverage community connections to enhance their training. Guard members serve part-time while maintaining civilian careers, creating unique opportunities to partner with local businesses and fellow veterans.

“It’s fun. I think it’s for everybody. I really think it’s a good thing to learn,” Torrez said, expressing interest in future training sessions with the unit.

The Rice Brothers gym partnership demonstrates the Guard’s ability to find innovative training solutions while strengthening bonds between military service members and the communities they serve. These unique opportunities and community connections are part of what makes the Oregon National Guard the military service of choice for Oregonians.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND REGIONAL EVENTS

The Oregon Military Museum celebrates its Grand Reopening

Story and photos by John Hughel,
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

HAPPY VALLEY, Ore. – After sixteen years of hard work, renovations, and careful planning—along with various challenges and successes—the Oregon Military Museum at Camp Withycombe in Happy Valley, Oregon, officially reopened to the public with a ribbon-cutting ceremony held on July 11, 2025.

The museum closed in 2008 with the desire to expand exhibit space, build new gallery areas, and highlight the large archive of items the museum has been curating for years. Overcoming years of funding challenges, the dedicated team behind this grand reopening was proud to celebrate this exceptional new era for the museum.

Cutting the big blue ribbon, Kathleen Sligar, director at the Oregon Military Museum, along with Brig. Gen. Alan R. Gronewold, Adjutant General, Oregon, used a ceremonial pair of scissors to open the doors to currently serving military members, veterans, and eager guests gathered for the momentous day. Other dignitaries who spoke at the ceremony included Tom Ellis, Mayor of Happy Valley, Oregon, and Jay Jones, President/CEO, North Clackamas Chamber of Commerce.

“This is an exciting day, and we’re finally able to open our doors and show all of our years of hard work,” Sligar said, pausing with a laugh, admitting she was running on limited sleep over the past week. “I don’t think anyone expected it to be as phenomenal as it is now.”

Parts of the overall museum have been open to the public over the past several years in the Historic Park area, including the Quartermaster Storehouse, the Battery ‘A’ Field Artillery Horse Barn, and a display of prominent tanks. Now that the museum is complete and open full-time to the public, it will serve as a valuable resource for school groups and a meaningful venue for military retirees’ events and others with a strong interest in military history.



U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. (ret.) Terrence Popravak, 142nd Historian, along with his wife, tours the Oregon Military Museum's Main Gallery during the Grand Reopening ceremony held on July 11, 2025.

“The Oregon Military Museum first started in 1975 and became the official military history repository,” Sligar said. “Between 2009 and 2000, we had a slow stream of legislative dollars to design and install exhibits to welcome the public to come back again to the completed museum.”

The museum boasts one of the country’s most impressive small arms collections west of the Mississippi, featuring a comprehensive Weapons Gallery that showcases a diverse array of weapons from the 1600s to today.



Brig. Gen. Alan R. Gronewold, Adjutant General, Oregon, along with Kathleen Sligar, Oregon Military Museum Director, and other leaders and volunteers, cut a ceremonial ribbon to officially mark the Grand Reopening of the Oregon Military Museum at Camp Withycombe, Happy Valley, Oregon, on July 11, 2025.

In the Drill Floor Gallery, the captivating “We Are Oregon” exhibit invites visitors to explore the varied chronology of people, places, and historic events that have shaped this region, and Oregon’s military history from its early days before statehood to the current day.

With the opening of the museum, the Temporary Gallery currently hosts “History in Art’ Selections from the Oregon Military Museum Collection,” with artwork to help connect the past. Adjacent to the museum entrance is The Hall of Valor, rich in color and light provided by the large windows, which presently recognizes 13 Oregon Medal of Honor recipients.

“For me, I think one of the biggest goals for this museum was to change what a military museum is. What is the perception of what a military museum is for our state, that really anyone can come in here and find something that they’re interested in,” Sligar said, relaying her thoughts since taking over the position just four years ago. “I wanted to change the direction for this museum so that it wasn’t just a bunch of guns and trucks...that there’s more to it, whether that’s an object or story or concept.”

One of the centerpiece exhibits that highlights Oregon’s history both at home and abroad is the F-86 Saber jet, which was reassembled in March 2020. A similar transonic airframe was flown during the Korean War by future NASA legends John Glenn, Buzz Aldrin, and Wally Schirra. U.S. Air Force Captain Clyde A. Curtin, a native of Portland, Oregon, was distinguished as one of the 40 ‘Aces’ to earn this title, while assigned to the 335th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron. The Oregon Air National Guard also made its mark by operating the F-86 during the same period. In February of 1951, the 123rd Fighter-Interceptor Squadron of the Oregon Air National Guard was federalized and reassigned to the 325th Fighter-Interceptor Wing of the Western Air Defense Force, advancing Oregon’s Air Defense legacy.

considering today’s modern military and the Oregonians who continue to serve in uniform.

“I was very excited to see the look on people’s faces when we opened. I think this is also an exciting opportunity to share this space with visitors because it is such a wealth of information,” Sligar said, taking in the full impact that led up to the open day. “We’ve all worked so hard to get to this point, especially over the last year, but we are here now, with an amazing end product.”

Visitors will be able to access the Thomas E. Withycombe Library and other resources for research on specific pieces of military history. Over time, more documents will be digitized, providing an important link to preserving Oregon’s military legacy.



(Pictured left to right) Brig. Gen. Alan R. Gronewold, Adjutant General, Oregon, Tom Ellis, Mayor of Happy Valley, Oregon, Jay Jones, President/CEO, North Clackamas Chamber of Commerce, and Kathleen Sligar, Oregon Military Museum Director, pause for a photo after the official ribbon cutting ceremony.

“We want to show that it’s been worth 16 years since our reopening,” she said. “If that helps with retention or letting our military members know that their service matters, it can really make a difference. Especially as the public learns more about our history.”

With the museum now complete, the years of planning, design work, fundraising, and dedication from staff and volunteers are clear. The welcoming space and exhibits invite visitors to connect with Oregon’s military heritage and acknowledge the proud service of its citizens. This museum offers an opportunity to reflect on the past while considering today’s modern military and the Oregonians who continue to serve in uniform.



Maj. Gen. (ret.) Raymond F. Rees, former Adjutant General of Oregon, is interviewed by a local television network at the Main Gallery during the Grand Reopening ceremony.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND REGIONAL EVENTS

ORNG’s Rees Training Center hosts nation’s Most successful burrowing Owl Colony

Story and photos by Maj. Chris Clyne,
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

HERMISTON, Ore. – Deep in the sandy terrain of Rees Training Center, a small owl with bright yellow eyes peers from an artificial burrow that has become home to the most successful burrowing owl colony in the United States.

What began as a desperate conservation effort in 2008 has transformed into a remarkable success story, with the Oregon Military Department’s training installation now hosting more than 100 nesting pairs, a dramatic increase from just five remaining pairs 17 years ago.



Solai Le Fay, a master's student in raptor biology at Boise State University, holds an adult burrowing owl during monitoring and banding operations at Rees Training Center.

“This has become one of the most successful colonies in the United States right now,” said Janet Johnson, Natural Resources Program Manager for the Oregon Military Department, during recent monitoring operations at the site. “Last year was a bumper crop. We had an amazing amount of forage, and the population doubled from 2023 to 2024.”

The colony’s success stems from an innovative partnership between the Oregon Military Department, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, and wildlife researchers led by conservationist David “DJ” Johnson of the Global Owl Project. When natural badger burrows disappeared due to decades of military development, the team developed an artificial burrow system using repurposed apple juice barrels from a local processing plant.

Each artificial burrow consists of two chambers – one for nesting and another for food storage – connected by irrigation tubing that serves as the entrance tunnel. The system is designed to last 10-15 years and can be relocated when military training requirements change.

“My number one job here is to ensure that the military can continue to train on this parcel into perpetuity,” Johnson explained. “In order to do that, they need a healthy ecosystem without restrictions from endangered species or species of concern. Those tend to go together quite nicely.”

The collaborative effort has attracted researchers from around the world to study the colony. Solai Le Fay, a master’s student in raptor biology at Boise State University, in Idaho, is currently leading field research efforts and using 11 years of data for her thesis work.

“Every single chick and every single adult in 17 years has been banded,” Johnson noted. “We know their ancestry, who was their father, who was their mother. We’re getting six generations over time.”

The program demonstrates how military installations can balance training missions with conservation goals. Lt. Col. Mark Timmons, incoming commander of the 249th Regional Training Institute at Rees Training Center, said his Soldiers frequently train in areas near the owl burrows.

“We walk that ground training, and they do tend to coexist quite well,” Johnson said of the relationship between military operations and the owl population.



A visitor holds a burrowing owl chick during monitoring and banding operations at Rees Training Center, on June 11, 2025.



Three burrowing owl chicks sit in a collection bucket during monitoring and banding operations at Rees Training Center, Ore., June 11, 2025. Researchers use the buckets to safely hold the young owls while conducting measurements, health assessments, and banding procedures as part of the ongoing conservation program that has grown the colony from four pairs in 2008 to over 100 nesting pairs today.

The research has contributed to nine different scientific discoveries about burrowing owl behavior and biology, with studies ranging from vocalization patterns to migration tracking using GPS transmitters.

Lindsay Chiono, Wildlife Habitat Ecologist for the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, leads tribal conservation efforts on adjacent lands where about two-thirds of the colony’s burrows are located.



Janet Johnson, Natural Resources Program Manager for the Oregon Military Department, places a burrowing owl on a digital field scale during monitoring operations at Rees Training Center, Ore., June 11, 2025. Weight measurements are part of the comprehensive data collection that tracks the health and development of the owls in what has become the most successful burrowing owl colony in the United States.

“The tribal side and the Oregon Military Department biologists work together to manage the colony as a whole,” Johnson said. “The tribe is doing a tremendous amount of effort on their end and has really dedicated a lot of resources.”

The colony’s success has made it a model for other military installations across the Department of Defense, demonstrating that conservation and military readiness can advance hand in hand.

Oregon Guard breaks ground on new Hillsboro Readiness Center

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Emily Simonson,
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

HILLSBORO, Ore. - Oregon National Guard senior leaders and elected officials break ground for the new Hillsboro Readiness Center in a ceremony, August 21, 2025, in Hillsboro, Oregon.



Brig. Gen. Alan R. Gronewold, Adjutant General, Oregon, and Hillsboro Mayor Beach Pace shake hands during the groundbreaking ceremony for the new Hillsboro Readiness Center, August 21, 2025, in Hillsboro, Oregon.

The new Hillsboro Readiness Center is located just one mile east of the original armory, which was built in 1954. The new facility will extend the National Guard’s capabilities in Hillsboro for the next 50 years.

“As we break ground for the wonderful new readiness center, we look forward to continuing this legacy of connection and collaboration with Delta Company, 2nd Battalion, 162nd Infantry Regiment and Charlie Battery, 2nd Battalion, 218th Field Artillery Regiment,” said Hillsboro Mayor Beach Pace. “We are excited for the future and remain deeply committed to the Hillsboro community.”

The 45,000 square-foot facility will include a drill floor, unit administrative areas and offices, storage, classroom space, and a kitchen. These updates will give the Oregon National Guard proper space to accomplish their mission.

The project will also include a 20,000



Oregon National Guard senior leaders and elected officials break ground at the new Hillsboro Readiness Center during a groundbreaking ceremony, August 21, 2025, in Hillsboro, Ore. The Hillsboro Readiness Center, a \$30 million project, will expand the Oregon National Guard capabilities in the Hillsboro community for the next 50 years.

square-foot storage facility for the M777 howitzers with pass-through bay doors, allowing the field artillery Soldiers to safely store and protect their equipment.

“This new readiness center will allow our Guard members to have a continued presence in the Hillsboro community, the same community in which they work and live,” said Brig. Gen. Alan R. Gronewold, Adjutant General, Oregon.

FEATURES: Youth and Mentorship Programs

STARBASE Rees empowers students to apply hands-on STEAM skills

Story and photos by John Hughel,
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

HERMISTON, Ore. – Over the past five years, STARBASE Rees has been inspiring students across Eastern Oregon to explore the exciting world of Science, Technology, Engineering, Art/Design, and Math (STEAM). The year-round educational program empowers students to apply a “hands-on, minds-on” approach to learning that takes place through creative problem-solving, experimentation, and scientific innovation.

As the newest of the four STARBASE Oregon academies run by the Oregon Military Department, STARBASE Rees, located at Rees Training Center (RTC) near Hermiston, serves students in Umatilla and Morrow counties, as well as schools across the Oregon High Desert region, as a valuable community-based outreach educational program. STARBASE Rees is one of the 90 nationwide Department of Defense programs located on Air Force, Space Force, Army, Navy, and National Guard military bases – promoting academic development while helping shape future leaders and innovators.

With summer winding down, STARBASE Rees hosted its final summer STEAM Camp from August 18-21, giving a group of eager 5th graders a jump-start on the school year. They worked on a variety of projects over four days, including building and launching paper rockets, creating marble mazes from recycled materials, using Sphero robot balls in ‘BattleBot’ competition, learning aviation skills with laptop flight simulators, and gaining hands-on knowledge about Wildland Firefighting from the Oregon Military Department firefighters assigned to Rees Training Center.



John Stubbs, a teacher with STARBASE Rees, helps student day campers set up the launch site for their rockets while attending the Robotics STEAM Day summer camp on Aug. 19, 2025, at STARBASE Rees, near Hermiston, Oregon.

“I wish they had this program around when I was a kid,” said John Stubbs, helping lead the summer camp, and is a full-time Learning and Development Specialist at STARBASE Rees. “This program is very hands-on. We get to walk around and help them, and after they have completed a couple of projects, they’re learning math or some engineering skills and don’t even realize it until they’re done.”

The STARBASE Rees classrooms have a vibrant and energetic atmosphere, complete with painted murals on the walls and some ceilings, colorful floor patterns, and workstations designed for creating limitless projects.

Originally built in 1941, the facility served as the on-base bowling alley for the Umatilla Army Ordnance Depot. Although the depot officially closed in 2012 after all chemical weapons were incinerated, the complex process of transferring the Umatilla Depot to the National Guard began with the completion of a license agreement in 2017.

On September 29, 2022, the depot was officially renamed the Raymond F. Rees Training Center, in honor of the former Adjutant General of the Oregon National Guard.

Found on one of the walls now is an array of spaceships that Stubbs made in his woodshop at home, which inspires kids to build their own straw and paper rockets in class. He said there is a sense of “continuous learning” built into the overall program.

“I found myself measuring in the metric system now more than the standard inch and foot...and now I am teaching it...it seems so easy,” Stubbs said. “When I graduated High School, personal computers were just coming out, and I never really got into fully utilizing them – yet now I enjoy that I can take a photograph, turn it into a cartoon character, and then create a 3D (dimensional) print.”

In many ways, the hands-on approach with the STARBASE program allows students to thrive outside of the traditional education model. With no tests or grades to limit their experience, every activity is deemed a success, encouraging a culture of innovation and working in groups to develop collaborative solutions. Often during the summer camp session, campers would work on a design or construction project alone, like the paper rockets, only to share what they had just done with someone sitting next to them for validation.

“The classes during the school year are a little different than the summer camps, but it’s pretty much the same feedback loop,” Stubbs said. “There is a set curriculum during the course of the school year. We have a set class that we teach every Monday through Friday, and the courses meet all of the state education requirements.”

As the program has evolved over the past five years at STARBASE Rees, in Fiscal Year 2024, to align with the Every Student Succeeds Act [Section 4107], the program transitioned from a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) program to a Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Design, and Mathematics (STEAM) program.

In February of 2025, STARBASE Rees, along with STARBASE academies in Oregon at Klamath Falls, Portland, and Camp Rilea, as well as locations across the country, faced closure while waiting for a federal budget to pass. In March, a Continuing Resolution with the STARBASE funding passed the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate.

“When we learned that funding had stopped for this important program, Representative McIntire and I went to work contacting the key legislators, the Governor, our Federal partners, and the Oregon Military Department, advocating to restore funding,” said Representative E. Werner Reschke, Oregon House District 55, in a released statement on March 15. “We are pleased to see that the bipartisan Continuing Resolution passed by Congress will restore funding for STARBASE.”



John Stubbs, a teacher with STARBASE Rees, helps student day campers troubleshoot their code programs that help move their Sphero robot balls during the Robotics STEAM Day summer camp held the last week of summer from Aug. 18-21, 2025.

“It’s hard right now because we have an open position I need to fill because of federal funding,” said Amanda Smith, who serves both as the State of Oregon Training and Development supervisor and, in her federal capacity, is the Director of STARBASE Rees. “I am probably doing 50% of the teaching in the class right now, but at full staff, we have two teachers working with the kids over the course of the week. This way, each teacher is saying things in their own tone of voice so that the children have someone they can relate to, and it helps reinforce lesson plans.”

When federal funding is approved, Smith said she plans to add a new teacher to the program at a competitive salary. “It’s our goal to be able to employ the best teacher out there and match what a school district is at.”

Smith first started working at STARBASE Rees in November 2022 and then became director in April of 2023. She noted that one of the changes that has taken place is the classroom size during the school year.

“After COVID, the first four classes we saw were very small that year; we were lucky if we had 12 children in the classroom,” she explained. “The class size has been steadily climbing. So we’re expecting probably 30 children per class and can handle up to 40.”

Scheduling the classes and camps throughout the year can be a complicated task, but Sharon Trumbul keeps all the schools organized as the office manager for STARBASE Rees. On a large wall calendar, most of the school year has been filled in, including some camps during winter break.

“It’s been a very busy summer, and we have done seven summer camps, and we can do

camps during Christmas and spring breaks too,” Trumbul said, detailing the balancing act of courses and schools involved with the STARBASE program. “We coordinate with the schools, working with their schedules to plan out our openings for the school year. This includes students coming from the Athena-Weston area, and that’s an hour-plus ride each way.”

Many of the schools in Eastern Oregon are on a four-day week schedule, and Trumbul tracks that they line up with weekly lesson plans. In some cases, like Helix School

District, the staff often will travel to the school to teach the classes and give them follow-up assignments and supplies.

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Amanda Smith, Director of STARBASE Rees, works with student campers on flight simulators as they learn about aviation technology while attending the Robotics STEAM Day summer camp on Aug. 20, 2025.

FEATURES: Youth and Mentorship Programs

STARBASE Rees
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“Yeah, it can be a little tricky, because we don’t want to have them miss any of the lessons. Coordinating this in advance, we can ensure they get the full benefits of the program,” she said.

In light of the staffing challenges at STARBASE Rees, Trumbul has helped out in the classroom. During the final summer camp, she was working with kids on rocket construction, capturing their creativity and excitement. She also joined in with firefighters, helping kids use a fire hose to knock down targets.

“The things they learn with all the hands-on experience they get here, it is just amazing for the kid,” she said. “It’s just awesome to see the light bulbs go off over their head when they accomplish something new for the first time.”

According to Smith, this type of “hands-on, inquiry-based, cross-curricular activities” offered by the STARBASE program is key to its success since it was introduced over 30 years ago. She highlighted the effectiveness of the curriculum in teaching STEAM and



A student day camper attending STARBASE Rees summer camp works on programming his Sphero robot ball to complete the “Moon Rover Mission 1.”

emphasized that raising awareness about the STARBASE program positively impacts the community in Eastern Oregon schools.

“We’ve had a lot of success with Lego Robots. It’s hands-on, and they’re using both screens and things they can construct with their hands,” she said. “Kids really want to do that kind of stuff because they have to work through the process on multiple levels.”

While attending STARBASE, whether it is during the school year or for a seasonal camp, Smith said that there are four key areas of success they strive for.

“Respect, dedication, responsibility, and teamwork,” she emphasized. “We will have up to 1,500 students use some of the same equipment for the entire year, so stressing personal responsibility to take care of classroom items is essential.”

During the summer camp, it was easy to see the other three traits in action, as student campers helped each other, utilizing teamwork skills to solve a problem, or hurried through lunch, excited to get back to work on their ‘BattleBots.’

“Each day the kids attend, we assign them different roles,” Smith explained, as this approach allows them to experience various responsibilities while learning and completing tasks. “In doing so, they gain an understanding of everyone’s contributions and recognize the importance of each of their roles in successfully finishing any project.”



Student day campers show off their completed paper rockets and designs prior to launch while attending the Robotics STEAM Day summer camp on Aug. 19, 2025, at STARBASE Rees, near Hermiston, Oregon.

Campers enjoy the sun, games, and beach activities at Camp Rosenbaum

Story and photos by John Hughel,
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

WARRENTON, Ore. – Every summer, Camp Rosenbaum becomes a haven for children, providing a much-needed break from everyday challenges and an opportunity to simply be kids. Now celebrating its 55th year, the camp is serving 146 children, aged 9 to 11, from underprivileged families, helping them develop valuable citizenship skills. Campers participate in exciting activities such as horseback riding, fishing, recreational games, and arts and crafts, while building friendships and confidence that will last for years to come.

“Camp Rosenbaum has spent more than five decades giving underserved youth a life-changing summer experience,” said Oregon Air National Guard Col. Brian (Camp name, ‘Rouge’) Kroeller, who has served as the Camp Director, an unpaid position, for the past three years. “The theme for camp this year is ‘Building Positive Life Skills for Future Success,’ as our entire staff strived to create a week filled with learning, adventure, and connection.”



Camp Rosenbaum staff member Jonathan “Bing” Dyer helps campers in the Science Center work on a fingerprint detection project on July 29, 2025, held at Camp Rilea, Oregon.

The camp was founded by former Brigadier General (ret.) Fred M. Rosenbaum during his military career with the Oregon National Guard. As a survivor of the Holocaust, Fred was forced to flee Austria as a child during the Kindertransport to Great Britain in 1938-1940. He was eventually reunited with his parents, and in 1941, they moved to the United States.

The idea for the camp was first conceived by Fred in 1969, with the inaugural camp



A group of Camp Rosenbaum campers enjoy horseback riding as part of their camping experience of summer fun, held at the Camp Rilea Armed Forces Training Center from July 26 to Aug. 1, 2025.

held in the summer of 1970. His vision was to provide children with the opportunity to benefit from a citizenship camp. Today, the camp’s staff includes members of the Oregon National Guard, Portland police officers, firefighters, first responders, volunteers from the Portland, Salem, and Southwest Washington Housing Authorities, and other dedicated community members. Their goal is to teach children valuable life skills.

Although Fred Rosenbaum passed away in early 2010, his legacy lives on through family members and a dedicated cadre who continue to volunteer at the camp and help raise funds each year to ensure its operation. Thanks to generous donations, the camp is 100% free to families, offering three nutritious meals a day to the campers and a lifetime of memories.

“This year’s highlight included horseback riding, an epic sandcastle building contest with 16 creative entries, the ‘Fire Dawg Challenge’ – modeled after a world-class firefighter obstacle course,” Kroeller said. “We even had a CH-47 Chinook helicopter visit that introduced campers to aerodynamics and the Oregon National Guard’s lifesaving missions such as search and rescue and wildland fire suppression.”

At camp, kids attending have the opportunity to understand the importance of teamwork, cooperation, and respect through a variety of engaging activities. Even building a sandcastle together can demonstrate how collaboration and support can foster a sense of belonging and shared success, serving as a reminder

that teamwork and collaboration are essential building blocks for achieving mutual accomplishments.

The camp went through a challenging period during the outbreak of the Coronavirus and could not host an in-person camp in 2020 and 2021. To fill in the gap, Operation Lemonade was launched in 2020, where backpacks for the campers were put together and delivered to over 1,000 kids in Oregon and Southwest Washington.

“Post-COVID, I think we’re getting our legs back,” said Lori Rosenbaum (Camp name, ‘Tadpole’) Krasnowsky, Fred’s daughter, who has helped ‘carry historch,’ supporting the administrative staff at camp and helping teach campers how to catch a fish. “The weather was perfect, and around 40 fish were caught and released at Slusher Lake [at Camp Rilea].

“I keep in mind and reiterate Dad’s oath to the kids: ‘Stay away from drugs, stay away from gangs, get a good education, make good decisions for yourself, and you can achieve anything,’” she said.

With the camp back to full strength over the past few years, Kroeller noted that this year, a staff of 208 dedicated volunteers was part of Camp Rosenbaum 2025. “They represented a combined 1,535 years of Camp Rosenbaum experience,” he said. “Every one of them came together for one reason: to help kids succeed.”

This Adjutant General-approved event would not be possible without the leadership of the Oregon National Guard, Home Forward, and the Portland Police Bureau. Camp Rosenbaum 2026 will return next summer in late July.



Camp Rosenbaum campers tour an Oregon Army National Guard CH-47 Chinook helicopter after it landed at Camp Rilea on July 29, 2025, as part of the “VIG Day.”

FEATURES

Gold to Green: A Soldier's journey from O-5 to E-5

Story by Army Staff Sgt. Timothy Jackson,
41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team
Public Affairs Office

HAPPY VALLEY, Ore. – Oregon Army National Guard Sgt. Ed Winkler remembers facing the mirror in 2021 wearing his army combat uniform, with a Lt. Colonel rank on his chest, pulling the velcro rank off, and replacing it with the three chevrons of the sergeant stripes. He looked at himself and said, “Damn, that looks good on you!”

Winkler is currently a trumpet player in the 234th Army Band out of Camp Withycombe in Happy Valley, Oregon, but his military career started in 1983 at the age of 17. He served in the active duty army until 1986. He then went to officer candidate school, where he made his way up the officer ranks in the Oregon National Guard. In 2003 he was the first commander to lead Oregon troops into combat since World War II, as the commander of Bravo company with the now disbanded 1st Battalion, 162nd Infantry Regiment. With 41 years in service, Winkler didn't allow a lack of Colonel slots to slow his service.

“As I approached 30 years as an officer, I had to ask, ‘Am I ready to stop being a Soldier?’” In 2021 he enlisted into the 234th Army Band, becoming a music performance team (MPT) leader. Winkler said he doesn't believe service is a matter of a rank on your chest, explaining that he never let his ego get wrapped around his rank or his title.

“I didn't have anything to prove to those in the band,” he said. “I'm an old man, I've been married for 34 years, and I've been in the army for forty-one years, six and a half years of which I was in command. I don't elevate myself, I'm very approachable to the soldiers.”

Sergeant Enrique “Ricky” Mesa, a trombonist with the 234th Army band, was given the opportunity to experience Winkler's leadership as his line leader.

“Winkler puts in huge amounts of time giving advice, and in everything Winkler does it does two things,” Mesa said. “One - it shows you how you should lead at the front doing things for your soldiers proactively.” Mesa said that Winkler did an incredible job of building trust and creating high morale within the MPT; and Winkler's openness about his career has brought the lower enlisted soldiers within the unit to a different level of professionalism.

“Secondly,” Mesa detailed, “Sgt. Winkler gives a perspective of what officers think. I have a good understanding of how a non-commissioned officer operates, but when it comes to how officers view things and look at doctrine, all of these things are a mystery, especially as a lower enlisted member... and Winkler gives you a really good window if you're paying attention, into how officers think and operate and it's really valuable.”

Mesa says that this has created an ability for him to perform his duties as a specialist more thoroughly. “I now have more patience with officers, by understanding what they have to deal with. It's enlightening; it can be easy to feel that the higher ups are spraying random stuff towards you like ‘do this’ and ‘do that’, so understanding what they're dealing with through someone like Winkler makes it a lot easier, it keeps morale up.”



Photo by Staff Sgt. Timothy Jackson, 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs
Oregon Army National Guard Sgt. Ed Winkler, a musician with the 234th Army band, poses with his trumpet at Camp Withycombe in Happy Valley, Oregon, on April 7, 2024. Winkler took the unusual career path of enlisting as a sergeant after completing 30 years as an officer.

Winkler says the evidence of his leadership is shown in one of his specialists being promoted to the sergeant rank under his tutelage, with one now promotable, and another making a jump into officer candidate school. Winkler says that his wisdom to enlisted soldiers is that the only thing they have complete control of is their attitude.

Staff Sgt. James Cameron is Winkler's first line leader, and also joined the army at age 17. As the enlisted concert band director, and also leader of the MPT alongside Winkler, their combined wisdom brings 70 years of experience to the group. Cameron believes it's Winkler's great sense of humility that makes his transition from a lieutenant colonel to a sergeant so seamless.

“Given that he has a ton of experience, I am giving him as much leadership as he would like to take,” Cameron said, noting that Winkler leads by example in the small things, such as continually practicing his instrument. “He does a lot of training by pulling people aside and doing leadership training. This MPT is highly motivated, they practice harder than any group I've ever had in my 29 years in the army band.”

Winkler echoes this sentiment in assessing his team as a whole, saying the 234th Army Band “is amazing, an incredible group of citizen soldiers.”



Photo by John Hughel, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs
Oregon Army National Guard trumpeter Staff Sgt. Ed Winkler, along with trombonist Staff Sgt. Dave Williams and Sgt. Ricky Mesa from the “No Brass, No Ammo” music group, took part in the 4th of July Family Festival held at Happy Valley Park, Happy Valley, Oregon, on the evening of July 4, 2025.

Outside of his military career, Winkler's excellence in life extends beyond his influence on the 234th army band. He's the CEO of a franchise in 10 states in 38 markets, and a published author with the book “Sheltered from the Storm,” which details his deployment to Iraq in 2003 and the sacrifices he and his family made.

Winkler was called up on state active

duty orders along with approximately 1,500 National Guard members mobilized in January of 2022 to support understaffed hospital employees during a COVID-19 variant surge. The Soldiers served in over 41 hospitals throughout the state, performing critical non-clinical support roles such as administrative and phone duties, janitorial and food services, logistics and supply, transportation, COVID-19 screening and testing, information technology and lab support.

Winkler found himself serving at the Kaiser Sunnyside hospital, where he took an assessment of the hospital floor where he was stationed. He

could see he was not in a time consuming role. “That's when I went and developed relationships with other teams, and began transporting patients when there was a need.”



File photo by Jeff Thompson, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs
The Oregon National Guard held its first U.S. Army Combat Jiu-Jitsu Tournament in Salem, Ore., on July 25, 2009 at the Anderson Readiness Center. Maj. Ed Winkler and Sgt. Joe Seeger struggled for dominance during the competition. Winkler went on to win this match and came in fourth overall in his weight class.

Winkler would go to each department at the start of every shift, so they knew he could be reached with the hospital provided ‘Walkie Talkie,’ each soldier carried around, so that patients wouldn't have to sit and wait for transport.

In making sure his efforts were impactful, Winkler made his rounds to each unit, making a memorable effect on each citizen who he interacted with.

“I'd say - ‘my name is Sergeant Ed Winkler, I'm a soldier in the Oregon National Guard and we have been deployed on an active duty status to support this hospital because of the shortages of medical personnel. It is an honor to be here and provide service to you here today, and I am proud to be a member of the Oregon National Guard.’”

Winkler said he kept that same message consistent for everyone he met in the hospital, whether it was a patient or a nurse. He recalled the nurses being ecstatic about the way patients would feel cared for by the Oregon National Guard being present. Now, more than two years after the mission ended, nurses at Kaiser Medical Center on Sunnyside still remember the impact soldiers like Winkler provided.

Olivia Weber, a nurse at Kaiser Medical Center said, “It was a critical time. I remember looking forward to coming to work because the Guard was there assisting. Our patients were appreciative of the presence of the Oregon National Guard... the community was coming together.”

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A Soldiers Journey
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Danielle Delves, an Emergency Room nurse, recalls Winkler being a calming presence. “Soldiers like Winkler’s willingness to go out of their way to make our job easier - it took the workload off all of us nurses. Every interaction was positive, she said. Winkler said ‘yes’ to every job we handed him.” “The National Guard is such a unique organization with an opportunity to step up at times when your neighbor next door can’t step up; when there’s fires, or riots, or global pandemics,” Winkler said. “This is what it means to be an Oregon National Guard soldier, when stuff happens you can count on me going to make it possible for you to do what you are doing.” Now, in the swan song of his career, Winkler has been tasked to use his vast military experience to promote and publicize the 234th Band’s new Cascade Brass MPT.

Winkler said his bird’s eye view and deep connections, resourcefulness, and history in the Oregon National Guard allow him to create new inroads, even when his rank is “just” a sergeant. “We could use a 40-foot banner to stretch across the highway in Astoria to promote our gigs during the world’s largest volleyball tournament in Seaside. I am able to produce results, and some people call it a mystery, they ask ‘how did you get that done?’ Because of my corporate and military experience, I know how to beat the jungle drums.”



Photo by John Hughel, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs
ORARNG Sgt. Ed Winkler, a trumpet player with the “No Brass, No Ammo” music group, greets kids between music sets during the 4th of July Family Festival held at Happy Valley Park on the evening of July 4, 2025.

Oregon Army National Guard Soldier renews his commitment to service

Story by John Hughel,
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

HAPPY VALLEY, Ore. – As he raised his right hand to take the oath of enlistment, Oregon Army National Guard Sergeant Dominic Kotz began a new and unconventional path in his military career. With a confident smile and a freshly pressed uniform embracing a new chevron, he repeated the pledge with an invigorated sense of pride. Repeating each stanza given by the presiding officer, Col. Russell Gibson, 82nd Troop Command Brigade Commander, Kotz reaffirmed his new role in the Oregon National Guard, leaving behind his rank as lieutenant colonel and continuing his service as an enlisted soldier. With a firm handshake of congratulations from Gibson and applause from those attending the ceremony on August 3, 2025, Kotz wasted no time reading the Army NCO Creed to a room full of his peers, held at the 82nd Brigade Conference at the Armed Forces Reserve Center at Camp Withycombe, Happy Valley, Oregon.

“No one is more professional than I. I am a Non-Commissioned Officer, a leader of soldiers. As a Non-Commissioned Officer, I realize that I am a member of a time-honored corps, which is known as ‘The Backbone of the Army,’” Kotz recited. And thus began the next chapter in Sergeant Dominic Kotz’s Army career. “This isn’t about just wanting to be in uniform,” Gibson said, “When you say ‘connected, competent, and committed,’ can you say committed any louder than this!”



Photo by John Hughel, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs
Oregon Army National Guard Sgt. Dominic Kotz reads the Army NCO Creed to a room full of his peers, held at the 82nd Brigade Conference at the Armed Forces Reserve Center at Camp Withycombe, Happy Valley, Oregon, on Aug. 3, 2025.



Photo by John Hughel, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs
Oregon Army National Guard Col. Russell Gibson, 82nd Troop Command Brigade Commander (left), reads the oath of enlistment for Sgt. Dominic Kotz (right) as he starts a new chapter in his military career as an enlisted soldier on Aug. 3, 2025, at Camp Withycombe, Oregon.

“I thoroughly enjoy putting on the uniform, I love to serve, and it keeps me accountable to myself,” Kotz said following the enlistment ceremony. “It keeps me connected to the soldiers, but where I have seen the training from a manager’s perspective, I will now see the training from a soldier’s lens.” Kotz joined the Oregon National Guard in 1995 after initially enlisting in the active duty Army in 1992 and received his commission through Eastern Oregon University in La Grande, Oregon, in 1997. He served for the next twelve years with the Alpha Company, 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment, including a deployment with the unit in 2004 to support Operation Iraqi Freedom in Iraq as the Alpha company commander. His leadership skills have been developed through a variety of positions, including roles as a Federal Technician and a professor of Military Science at Eastern Oregon University. He then became the S-1 for the 82nd Brigade Support Battalion, handling training, personnel qualification, evaluations, and administrative matters. This experience led him to work at the USPFO for several years before becoming the Army Chief of Staff. Up to 2021, he held other leadership roles within the Oregon Army National Guard, including commanding the 1st Squadron, 82nd Cavalry Regiment for three years and serving as Deputy Joint Chief of Staff (Joint Force Headquarters).

He also deployed to Ukraine with the 81st Brigade in 2021. “I was part of the JMTGU (Joint Military Training Group Ukraine) training and mentoring service members outside of Lviv,” he said. “I came out of the country in December of 2021, right before the war kicked off a few months later in February [2022].” Approaching his Mandatory Removal Date of August 31, 2025, Kotz still felt he could contribute to the military in another role. When he first approached his leadership team about serving as an enlisted member, some of them thought he was kidding. “Most everybody that was either against it, for it, or made fun of it has come around to the fact that, ‘Hey, good for you,’ type of sentiment,” Kotz said, recalling how his peers reacted. “In this last chapter of my career, I will be proving to myself that I was asking soldiers to do certain things. Now, as a soldier myself, you will never hear me say, ‘When I was a commander, I did...,’” Kotz said. “That’s a different career. I am now an E-5 [Enlisted pay rate], and I obey the orders of my officers.” As part of this transition, Kotz also had to resign as a Federal Technician and will take on a new full-time role as a State of Oregon employee, working as a site training manager at Camp Rilea.



File photo by Capt. Elijah Preston, TF 3-116 Armor Signal Officer
Oregon Adjutant General Maj. Gen. Raymond Rees (left), talks with (L to R) Platoon Leaders 1st Lt. Max Arvidson, 1st Lt. Charles Cathcart, 2nd Lt. Seth Muskgrove and Alpha Company Commander Capt. Dominic Kotz at Forward Operating Base Warrior Sept. 26, 2005.

When wearing the uniform, Kotz is preparing himself to rejoin the team with the 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment. “I will fully embrace that as an M-Day soldier. You know, as an E-5, you are a team leader, as an E-6, you’re a squad leader,” he said. “In the tank world, that would make me a gunner, so whatever position they assign me, that’s the one I’ll embrace.” The unit will be in transition over the next several years as the 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment will leave the 116th Armored Brigade Combat Team and become an infantry battalion, and Kotz said he is ready to be part of that change. “I’ll be there to serve, and my only goal now is to be the best NCO that I can be.”

FEATURES

3-116th Cavalry final tank rounds, from front Page

"It was bittersweet," said Master Sgt. Joseph Carson, the battalion's Master Gunner who has served with the 3-116th for 22 years. "Those last rounds going down range that we knew were out of our tanks - it was definitely significant, but it's just like closing that door and moving on and embracing the change."

The transition comes as the Army implements its Transformation in Contact initiative, reorganizing units to meet modern battlefield requirements. The 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment will leave the 116th Armored Brigade Combat Team and become an infantry battalion, with an official announcement expected September 9, 2025.

Carson, who enlisted in 2000 and deployed with the battalion to Iraq in 2004-2005 and 2010-2011, said the ceremony was particularly meaningful for the unit's mechanics who keep the tanks operational. "A lot of the tank maintainers are awesome, and they did great for us," Carson said. "We had an experienced tank

commander in each tank that was guiding them to make sure they were on target, and we set up some target reference points so they knew which targets they were going to engage."

The Master Gunner said some of the mechanics had never fired a tank's main gun, even during their initial military training. "It seemed like there was a few of them that have said they never got to fire at all," Carson explained. "They signed up thinking this would be their career path, possibly, or at least what they would be doing for six years. So it definitely meant a lot to them to let them get on there and at least shoot those couple rounds."

tanks they would soon turn in.

"We want to make sure everybody gets a chance to qualify," Miller said. "So if that pushes into our maneuver, and we don't get all the maneuver done, that's fine. I just want to make sure the crews get that one last chance at tank qualification."

The battalion conducted intensive training throughout their two-week Annual Training, with approximately 260 personnel participating in tank table VI gunnery, Joint Light Tactical Vehicle operations, platoon live-fire exercises, and specialized sniper training.



Soldiers from Bravo Company, 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment, unload extra 120mm rounds from their M1A2SEP tank after the last round ceremony.

Tank crews achieved higher operational readiness than in recent years, Carson noted, with "more tanks up than we've had, probably in the last five years."

Carson said the ceremony's timing was complicated by wildfires sparked by tracer rounds during training, requiring careful coordination of the final shots. "It was a little hard navigating all the wildfires that were getting started on the range," he said. "But I think it worked out just fine."

The transition presents challenges for a unit whose tanker identity runs deep. "I think it's gonna take some time, definitely," Carson said. "Different mindset. It's definitely a big change for the tankers."



An M1A2SEP tank from Bravo Company, 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment, fires from a battle position July 28, 2025, on Range 26 at Orchard Combat Training Center, Idaho, during tank table VI gunnery annual training.

Lt. Col. Christopher Miller, the battalion commander, said this Annual Training was originally planned as maintenance-focused preparation for a 2027 National Training Center rotation, including four days of combined maneuver training. However, with the unit's transformation, the emphasis shifted to ensuring every Soldier had a final opportunity to qualify on the

I think some of the younger tankers are pretty excited about it, doing something different. But I definitely can tell that some of the guys that have been around for 15, 20 years, kind of aren't that excited about it, just because they want to be tankers."

Like all Oregon National Guard members, the Soldiers of the 3-116th serve part-time, typically one weekend a month and two



ORARNG Tank crews from Bravo Company, 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment, and mechanics stand on an M1A2SEP tank following the last round ceremony held on July 30, 2025, at Orchard Combat Training Center, Idaho.

weeks a year, while maintaining civilian careers throughout Eastern Oregon. They stand ready to respond to state emergencies such as wildfires and floods, while also training to defend the nation when called to federal service. These Guard members live and work in the same communities they serve, creating a unique connection between military service and the local communities of Eastern Oregon that depend on them. This dual commitment to community and country makes the Oregon National Guard the military service of choice for Oregonians.

As the battalion prepares for its transformation, Carson emphasized the continuity of service to Eastern Oregon communities. "We're still going to be Eastern Oregon's own," he said. "We're still going to have that tight-knit bond within the battalion."

The transformation reflects the Army's broader modernization efforts through Transformation in Contact, which delivers new equipment and capabilities to operational units. While the specific equipment and modified table of organization for the new infantry battalion remains undetermined, the unit

expects to receive approximately 600 Soldiers when fully transformed.

For Carson, who has about two and a half years until retirement, the change represents both an ending and a beginning. "It didn't really hit me 100% yet, because it just kind of came off of AT," he said. "It probably won't

hit me for a little while. But yeah, it was definitely fun. I'm glad we did the last round little ceremony the way we did to actually capture that moment so we have it saved for our unit history."

The last rounds fired by the 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment closed a chapter of armored tradition dating back more than a century, while opening the door to a new mission serving the citizens of Eastern Oregon and the nation.



ORARNG Spc. Darren Johns and Sgt. Jose Lopez, both loaders with the 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment, participate in boresighting their respective M1A2SEP tanks July 28, 2025, at Orchard Combat Training Center, Idaho.

The 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment traces its lineage to 1888 militia cavalry companies and was awarded the Meritorious Unit Commendation in 2024 for exceptional service during their 2010-2011 deployment to Iraq. The unit has frequently mobilized for both state missions and overseas deployments, including a recent 2023 mission to Morocco for Exercise African Lion.

Carson, who attended Master Gunner school in 2020 after years away from tanks, reflected on what he'll miss most about the armored mission. "My favorite thing was just when we were actually firing table six, and then just hearing the big boom go off when those tanks are functioning right and working," he said. "It's nothing cooler than that with getting rounds on target. I'll definitely miss that."



ORARNG Sgt. Philip Worthington, a mechanic with Hotel Company, 145th Brigade Support Battalion, performs track maintenance on an M88 recovery vehicle July 30, 2025, at Orchard Combat Training Center, Idaho.

FEATURES

173rd Fighter Wing F-15C Eagle A/C 114 enshrined at Smithsonian

Story and photos by
Master Sgt. Daniel Reed,
173rd Fighter Wing Public Affairs

CHANTILLY, Va. – On August 13, 2025, beneath the vaulted ceilings of the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum, a legend of American airpower was enshrined. The 173rd Fighter Wing A/C 114 was inducted into the museum’s collection, securing its place among the nation’s most treasured symbols of courage, innovation and freedom.

The ceremony marked the culmination of a remarkable career that spanned more than four decades, from the Cold War’s tense standoffs to the deserts of Iraq, and eventually to the training fields of Oregon. A/C 114’s story is not just the tale of one aircraft, but the embodiment of an era — the rise of the F-15 Eagle and its unrivaled reign over the skies.



ORANG Col. Adam Gaudinski, 173rd Fighter Wing Commander, dates and signs A/C 114’s badging during the induction ceremony at the Smithsonian Museum in Chantilly, Virginia, Aug. 13, 2025. Gaudinski flew A/C 114 for its final flight to its new resting place in the laurels of history.

A Legend is Born

The F-15 program was born out of necessity in the late 1960s, when American air combat performance in Vietnam revealed a pressing need for a dedicated air superiority fighter. What emerged was the F-15 Eagle: a sleek, twin-engine machine that combined raw power, advanced radar, and unmatched maneuverability.

From its first flight in 1972, the Eagle proved unstoppable. Over the decades, it amassed an unmatched air-to-air combat record with 104 confirmed victories without a single loss. The F-15 became the benchmark for dominance in the skies, deterring adversaries and reassuring allies across the globe.

Within that lineage, A/C 114 stood as a proud example of the Eagle’s mission and legacy.

Combat Proven

Delivered in the late 1970s, A/C 114 quickly became part of the Air Force’s frontline fleet, carrying America’s defense into some of the most critical theaters of the modern era.



ORANG Col. Adam Gaudinski, 173rd Fighter Wing Commander is greeted by Tech Sgt. David Ingerson after landing at the Smithsonian Museum in Chantilly, Virginia, on Aug. 13, 2025.

Its most celebrated moments came in the hands of Col. Cesar “Rico” Rodriguez, one of the Air Force’s most storied fighter pilots. Flying 114, Rodriguez scored two air-to-air kills that solidified both his place in history and the aircraft’s enduring reputation.

During Operation Desert Storm in 1991, Rodriguez engaged and destroyed a MiG-29 over Iraq, showcasing the Eagle’s superiority in the skies. Years later, in Kosovo, he repeated the feat, downing another enemy fighter and becoming one of only a handful of American pilots since Vietnam to achieve multiple aerial victories.

“Every time 114 took off, it carried with it not just fuel and weapons, but the confidence of a nation,” said Rodriguez. “It was more than a machine, it was a partner, and it never let me down.”

Guardian of the Cold War

Long before Desert Storm, A/C 114 stood ready during the height of the Cold War, when U.S. airpower was the thin blue line of deterrence against potential adversaries.



Airmen from the 173rd Fighter Wing and Col. Cesar “Rico” Rodriguez gather for a group photo in front of A/C 114 for the last time during the induction ceremony at the Smithsonian Museum in Chantilly, Virginia, on Aug. 13, 2025. A/C 114 was selected for induction into the Smithsonian based on its historic combat prowess.

Stationed at forward bases and strategic locations, Eagles like 114 were constant reminders that America’s skies would never go undefended.

From intercepting Soviet aircraft probing NATO airspace to maintaining a watchful eye over contested regions, A/C 114 played its role in ensuring peace through strength. Though much of its Cold War service remains routine, its presence was part of the larger shield that kept conflicts from igniting.

A Teacher at Kingsley Field

In later years, A/C 114 found a new purpose. Retired from frontline combat duty, it was reassigned to the 173rd Fighter Wing at Kingsley Field in Klamath Falls, Oregon — the Air National Guard’s premier F-15 training unit.

There, it became a mentor in metal, helping train hundreds of the Air Force’s elite Eagle drivers. From student pilots strapping into its cockpit for their first high-speed intercept to instructors using it to sharpen the edge of air dominance, 114’s role shifted from warrior to teacher.

“For those of us who trained in it, 114 was more than just an aircraft,” said Col. Adam Gaudinski, 173rd Fighter Wing commander. “It was a bridge between generations of fighter

pilots, from the combat veterans of Desert Storm to the young men and women preparing to defend America today. Its legacy is not only what it did, but who it shaped.”

Joining the Pantheon of Aviation History

The induction of A/C 114 places it among the Smithsonian’s most iconic artifacts — alongside the Wright Flyer, the Spirit of St. Louis, the Apollo 11 command module and the Enola Gay. Each of these machines tells the story of American innovation and courage, and now the Eagle joins their ranks.

“This is where 114 belongs,” said Gaudinski. “Here, in the nation’s museum, future generations will look up at its wings and know what it stood for: freedom, courage and the unbroken promise of American air superiority.”

The aircraft will serve not just as a static exhibit, but as a storyteller, carrying forward the experiences of the thousands of pilots, maintainers and support crews who kept it flying.



ORANG 173rd Fighter Wing Crew Chief, Tech. Sgt. David Ingerson poses with David Westrup, fellow Crew Chief of A/C 114 during the induction ceremony at the Smithsonian Museum in Chantilly, Virginia, on Aug. 13, 2025. Westrup was the crew chief during Col. Cesar “Rico” Rodriguez’s time as the pilot of A/C 114.

A Legacy That Soars

As visitors walk past its swept wings and towering vertical stabilizers, they will see more than a machine. They will see the Cold War watchman, the Desert Storm victor, the Kosovo warrior, the Kingsley Field teacher. They will see the living story of America’s Eagle.

“The Eagle has landed in its final home,” said Gaudinski. “But though it will never take flight again, its spirit will soar forever.”

With its induction, A/C 114’s journey is complete, from the heat of combat to the quiet honor of the museum floor. Its legacy, however, will continue to inspire, reminding generations yet to come that America’s skies are defended by the best, and that the Eagle, undefeated, will always fly in the hearts of those who served.

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HARD TO REALIZE: OREGON CONNECTIONS TO THE END OF THE WAR IN THE PACIFIC

1945-2025: Commemorating the 80th Anniversary of the end of World War II, Part three in a series

History feature story by
USAF Lt. Col. (Ret.) Terrence G. Popravak, Jr.,
142nd Wing Historian's Office

PORTLAND, Ore. – Eighty years ago, August 15, 1945, U.S. and Allied forces in the Pacific were fighting with Imperial Japanese forces on land, sea and air across the theater of operations. Colossal production, assembly, logistical, staging and deployment efforts were underway to bring the men and materiel from the U.S. and even faraway Europe into theater for the prospective invasion of Japan in Operation Downfall. The first landings were scheduled in Downfall's planned Operation Olympic for November 1, 1945, on the beaches of the home island of Kyushu. Operation Coronet, the final landings to achieve a decisive victory, were to be on the beaches of the Kanto Plain on Honshu was to follow, tentatively, on March 1, 1946.

Invading Japan was a prospect many in uniform regarded with great dread. In the last year of the war in the Pacific, as the Allies pressed in against Japan, the battles grew more ferocious and costly. Airmen and air units with Oregon connections were part of the effort to secure victory in the Pacific, including prominent future leaders of the Oregon Air National Guard (ANG), from locations in the Pacific, Europe and the United States.

The Potsdam Declaration and Response

The Allies jointly issued the Potsdam Declaration on July 26, 1945 demanding "...unconditional surrender of all Japanese armed forces," with additional surrender terms specified in detail. The militarists in the Japanese government bristled at these demands, and insisted on continuing the war, even after the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the Soviet invasion of Japanese-held Manchuria. But as the Allies continued to exert military pressure on the Empire, men of reason in Japan saw otherwise.

On August 15, 1945, at 12:00 p.m. Japan Standard Time (August 14 in the U.S.), a voice recording by Imperial Japan's Emperor Hirohito broadcast over radio throughout the country proclaimed an end to the war in the Pacific. Most of his subjects had never heard Emperor Hirohito's voice before, as he announced his decision to terminate hostilities.

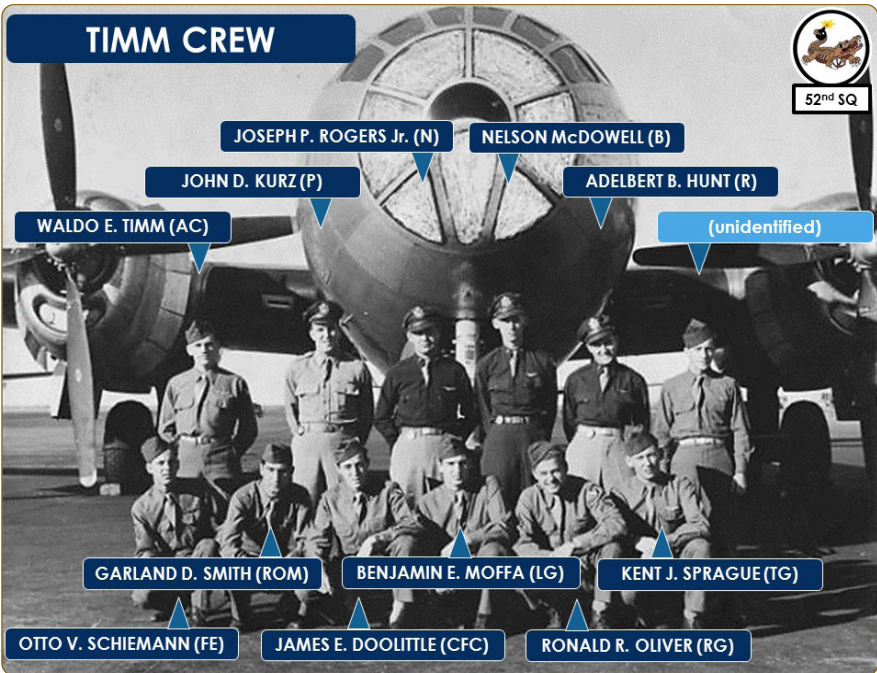
The Emperor Speaks

"After pondering deeply the general trends of the world and the actual conditions obtaining in Our Empire today, We have decided to effect a settlement of the present situation by resorting to an extraordinary measure.

"We have ordered Our Government to communicate to the Governments of the United States, Great Britain, China and the Soviet Union that Our Empire accepts the provisions of their Joint Declaration.

"To strive for the common prosperity and happiness of all nations as well as the security and well-being of Our subjects is the solemn obligation which has been handed down by Our Imperial Ancestors and which lies close to Our heart.

"Indeed, We declared war on America and Britain out of Our sincere desire to ensure Japan's self-preservation and the stabilization of East Asia, it being far from Our thought either to infringe upon the sovereignty of other nations or to embark upon territorial aggrandizement.



Courtesy B-29 Museum, Pratt, Kansas, used with permission
Waldo E. Timm was a B-29 Superfortress aircraft commander in the 52nd Bomb Squadron (Very Heavy) of the 29th Bomb Group (VH) based in Guam who, with his crew, flew 35 combat missions against the Imperial Japanese Empire. His unit was prepared to continue combat operations against the Imperial Japanese Empire. After the war, Timm joined the Oregon ANG and later commanded the 142nd Fighter Group and the Oregon ANG.

"But now the war has lasted for nearly four years. Despite the best that has been done by everyone—the gallant fighting of the military and naval forces, the diligence and assiduity of Our servants of the State, and the devoted service of Our one hundred million people—the war situation has developed not necessarily to Japan's advantage, while the general trends of the world have all turned against her interest.

"Moreover, the enemy has begun to employ a new and most cruel bomb, the power of which to do damage is, indeed, incalculable, taking the toll of many innocent lives. Should we continue to fight, not only would it result in an ultimate collapse and obliteration of the Japanese nation, but also it would lead to the total extinction of human civilization.

"Such being the case, how are We to save the millions of Our subjects, or to atone Ourselves before the hallowed spirits of Our Imperial Ancestors? This is the reason why We have ordered the acceptance of the provisions of the Joint Declaration of the Powers..."

"The hardships and sufferings to which Our nation is to be subjected hereafter will certainly be great. We are keenly aware of the inmost feelings of all of you, Our subjects. However, it is according to the dictates of time and fate that we have resolved to pave the way for a grand peace for all the generations to come by enduring the unendurable and suffering that is unsufferable."

Around the Pacific

Across the Pacific, indeed, around the world there was a collective sigh of relief at the end of the Second World War. Allied forces remained on guard against the possibility of Japanese zealots acting on their own to continue fighting the Allies. Indeed, such was the case when Japanese fighter plane attacked U.S. Okinawa-based Convair B-32 Dominator very heavy bombers conducting reconnaissance over Tokyo to monitor the ceasefire on August 16 and again the next day. In the clash on August 17, Sergeant Anthony J. Marchione, a photographer's assistant, became the

last American to die in aerial combat in World War II in the clash with rogue fighters over Tokyo.

In south and southeastern China, the 35th Photographic Reconnaissance Squadron Redhawks, today's Oregon's 123rd Fighter Squadron at Portland ANG Base, 51 officers and 189 enlisted men and their Lockheed F-5E Photo Lightning aircraft, was scattered at airfields across China, with HQ and "H" Flight at Chanyi, "G" Flight at Nanning, "F" Flight at Lao Whang Ping, "E" Flight at Chihkiang and an advanced detachment at Luichow preparing for the HQ to relocate there from Chanyi. Each flight was composed of about 50 men and four F-5E aircraft, which expanded the reach of photo reconnaissance

operations. A dozen or so of the original charter members of the 1941 123rd Observation Squadron (redesignated to the 35th PRS in 1943) were still assigned to the squadron in China. Most of the charter members of the squadron were reassigned to other air units and served worldwide during the great expansion of the U.S. Army Air Force in World War II.

But as the end of the war was anticipated in China, indeed, "G" Flight intelligence officer Lt. Arthur Clark wrote on August 11, the same day his detachment at Nanning learned of a big bomb dropped on Japan, the following: "News came last night that the war is over. We find it hard to believe. Rather it's hard to realize. There was a veritable barrage here for hours. All types of rifles, pistols, Tommy guns, and machine guns were shooting all grades of ammunition for an hour or so. They were really being sprayed around. We drank a little FIC (French Indochina) rum. I don't mix liquor and gun powder, so I did no firing." It was a bit premature, and some more diplomatic efforts, accompanied by additional B-29 and carrier air raids against Japan, finally obtained the sought-after response.

Across the East China Sea, at Machinato Airfield on Okinawa, was the 439th Bombardment Squadron (Light), Oregon's 114th Fighter Squadron at Kingsley Field today. The 439th was assigned to the 319th Bomb Group (L) (aka Col. Joseph R. "Randy" Holzapple's Flying Circus) in Seventh Air Force. The group was the

first complete combat group to redeploy from Europe to the Pacific. It left the Mediterranean Theater of Operations in January, 1945, redeployed to the US where personnel took 30 days leave, transitioned into the new Douglas A-26 Invader attack bomber, and redeployed for combat in the Pacific.

The group flew its first combat mission from Okinawa on July 16, 1945 and flew a total of 22 against Japanese forces in China and Japan when the war ended, including an August 9 mission against Kanoya Airfield where group aircrew saw the atomic mushroom cloud over Nagasaki some 110 miles to the northwest. It experienced some

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File photo courtesy of John Brasko Collection, 142nd Wing History Archive
Engineering personnel of one of the detached flights of the 35th Photographic Reconnaissance Squadron are seen here servicing the engines of a Lockheed F-5E "Photo Lightning" (converted in the U.S. from Lockheed P-38J-15-LO 43-28301 to become an F-5E-2-LO, and given the squadron ID number 815) at an austere location in southeastern China late in the war. 815) at an austere location in southeastern China late in the war.

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aircraft battle damage and a wounded gunner, but likely would have incurred personnel and aircraft losses in an invasion effort.

Major Charles H. Wolf, a 439th Bomb Squadron A-26 pilot, penned this poem about his experience on Okinawa with a yearning for the end of the war with expression in the vernacular of the time:

*“Ryukus the name of this blasted place, An island of reddish hell,
But it’s known by a more specific name, The which I cannot tell.*

It’s not that I don’t know the name, Of this lush tropic isle,

But the censors say it’s not to be, So them I will not rile.

Now this Island is set in the midst of violent tropic seas,

And is studded with hills, and rocks and rills, And stunted runty trees.

It rains half the time in this lousy clime, And the muddy waters rush,

Down the sides of the hills to level ground, Where it quickly turns to mush.

When it doesn’t rain it’s hot as hell, And the dust flies thick and free,

Till’ it coats your hair, and lungs, and nose, And you lose your sense of smell.

What God thought when he made this place, I’ll probably never know,

But for all I wait is the day they say, “My boy, you’re free to go.”

I know now why Japs fight so hard, I know damn well it’s from fear,

They’re afraid if we win, we’ll make them move, And transport all of them here.

Then they’ll live on this isle, The name of which I cannot tell to you,

And we’ll make them write letters at night, From somewhere in Ryuku.”

(Poem via the 319th Bomb Group website, shared with permission of Maj. Wolf’s grandson, Mr. Blair Wolf)

Among members of the group granted a reprieve by Japan’s surrender were Donald K. “Deke” Slayton in a sister squadron, a future astronaut; and William B. Monroe, Jr., the Group’s Public Relations Officer and Historian who became the executive producer and moderator of NBC’s “Meet the Press” program, 1975-1984.

Aside from Oregon-connected air units, several future leaders of the Oregon ANG suddenly found themselves at peace in the Pacific and not in a state of war.

Lt. Col. G. Robert Dodson, the first commander of Oregon’s first military aviation unit, the 123rd Observation Squadron, the founding father of the Oregon Air National Guard completed a command tour of the 3rd Combat Cargo Group in the China-Burma-India (CBI) Theater, a Douglas C-47 Skytrain unit transporting troops (including wounded), cargo, consumables like gas and equipment. During his command, the group moved from Dinjan, India into Myitkyina, Burma in June, 1945. He previously commanded the 1st Liaison Group under Tenth Air Force in Burma, where he flew 413 combat hours in light liaison-type aircraft like those the 123rd Squadron operated earlier in the war.

Experienced in fighting Imperial Japan, he probably was glad not to have to return to war, and would conceivably be involved in air transport operations enabling or conducting the invasion of Kyushu and/or Honshu. After the war, he was released from active duty in November, 1945 and returned to the Oregon National Guard.



File photo courtesy of the American Air Museum in Britain

Lt. Staryl Austin, Jr. flew the P-47D Thunderbolt in combat in the European Theater of Operations with the 410th Fighter Squadron (squadron code R3) of the 373rd Fighter Group in Ninth Air Force. He completed 58 combat missions by the end of the war in Europe and returned to the US with his squadron and group after Victory in Europe Day, expecting to redeploy to fight Japan. Post-war he served in the Oklahoma ANG and after the Korean War returned to Oregon, where he commanded the 142nd Fighter Group and later the Oregon ANG.

He commanded the 142nd Fighter Group from activation in 1946 until the Korean War activation in 1951. After the group returned from active duty, he became the first commander of the Oregon Air National Guard until his sudden illness and death in late 1958.

Capt. Waldo E. Timm was a Boeing B-29 Superfortress very heavy bomber Aircraft Commander in Twentieth Air Force. He was based at North Field on Guam in the Mariana Islands in the 52nd Bombardment Squadron (Very Heavy) of the 29th Bomb Group(VH). He named his aircraft, a B-29-65-BW Superfortress, serial number 44-69869, “City of Portland” with the group tail code “Square O” and aircraft “victor” number 48 on the fuselage. He completed 35 combat missions by the end of the war.

Although never seriously damaged, “City of Portland” was holed 12 times, and the propellers were damaged on three occasions. With the war’s end Capt. Timm averted any further holding of his aircraft, his crew and his person. After the war he joined the Oregon ANG and became the Commander of Oregon’s 142nd

Fighter Group from 1957 to 1962. He also commanded the Oregon Air National Guard.

Of note, assigned to the same bomb squadron as Waldo Timm was a fellow Oregonian, George A. Simeral, aircraft commander of the “City of Los Angeles.” On this ship, during a mission to Koriyama, Japan on April 12, 1945 his crewman, radio operator Henry E. “Red” Erwin, deployed a white phosphorus flare as a signal to other aircraft, but the fuse malfunctioned and the flare ignited inside the aircraft, filling the crew compartment with smoke.

Completely blinded by the 1500-degrees Fahrenheit heat, he struggled to keep hold of it and carried it forward and tossed it out of a cockpit window. Erwin was grievously burned in the process – back in Guam he was expected to die of his wounds. He was awarded the Medal of Honor for saving his

crew and aircraft and ultimately survived. After 30 months in hospital and 41 surgeries, he regained his eye sight and use of one arm. He lived to reach 80 years of age before he passed away in 2002.

Elsewhere in the broad expanse of the Pacific theater, Capt. Patrick E. O’Grady was busy in the Air Transport Command’s India-China Division(ICD). In early 1945 he deployed overseas when he ferried a Curtiss C-46 Commando twin-engine transport to India, and was then assigned to the 1345th Army Air Force Base Unit at Tezgaon Airfield in eastern India (Bangladesh Air Force Base Bashar, Bangladesh today).

From India he flew the four-engine Douglas C-54 Skymaster transport aircraft in the China-Burma-India theater, including 754 combat hours in 79 round trips over the “Hump,” the Himalayan mountains in between India and China. In July 1945, the last full month of ICD operations, 662 aircraft airlifted 71,042 tons to China. Even with the early 1945 completion of the “Stillwell Road” to resupply China by road from India, air transport still delivered the bulk of cargo and personnel to China.

Although O’Grady had completed the 750 flight hours required for rotation back to the U.S., it’s unclear if he was required to remain in-theater for the 12 month tour of duty, a requirement established in March, 1945 by Brig. Gen. William H. Tunner, who also achieved notoriety in the Berlin Airlift. O’Grady could possibly have been diverted to other tasks in the Pacific War in closer proximity to Japanese forces.

After the war Patrick O’Grady served in the Air Force Reserve, and then the Oregon ANG in which he commanded the 123rd Fighter-Interceptor Squadron 1959-1962, then the 142nd Fighter Group from 1962 to 1971, deputy commander of the Oregon Air National Guard 1972-1977 and commander of the Oregon Air National Guard in 1977-1978.

In the European Theatre

On the other side of the world, the personnel in Oregon-connected units also welcomed the end of World War II.

The 371st Fighter Group, these days designated Oregon’s 142nd Wing, was about to make a move with its Republic P-47D Thunderbolts and personnel from Fürth-Industriehafen Airfield (Advanced Landing Ground R-30) by Nürnberg (Nuremberg), Germany to Hörsching (Hoersching) Airfield (ALG R-87), near Linz, Austria in the postwar occupation of the former Third Reich. Hörsching was the group’s best base in all its European Theater of Operations experience of the war.

But many group veterans didn’t have the chance to enjoy it as those with a sufficiently high number of points in the Adjusted Service Rating (ASR) Score system were ordered back to the States. Many were replaced by men with a lower number of points from other units being drawn down in Europe after the end of the war there.

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File photo courtesy 142nd Wing History Archive

G. Robert Dodson, the founding father of the Oregon Air National Guard, was the first commander of the 123rd Observation Squadron, which was Oregon’s first military aviation unit. He is seen as the rank of Major, standing on the wing of a North American BC-1A basic combat training aircraft, the unit’s first aircraft in 1941.

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Hörsching was also an airfield last used by the first group of the Luftwaffe's Jagdgeschwader 52 (I./JG 52) and its ace of aces commander, Hauptmann Erich A. Hartmann before he and the men of his group surrendered to the US 90th Infantry Division. They were subsequently handed over to the Soviet Union in accordance with the Yalta agreement which stipulated German forces who had fought against the Soviets were to surrender to them. Hartmann is generally credited with 352 aerial victories against seven USAAF P-51s and 345 Soviet aircraft during the war.

Although some personnel were to be demobilized and discharged, others remained in Europe, where the 371st Fighter Group's future was uncertain before Japan surrendered, and rumors speculated that the unit would be sent to China via the United States. The group may have transitioned to the longer-range P-47N variant of the Thunderbolt. But Japan's surrender obviated all that; the group closed the old HQ at Fürth on August 16, completed the move to Austria, and celebrated Japan's surrender with a holiday for all personnel the next day.

With the end of the war, the group and its three fighter squadrons returned to the U.S. in November, 1945 and inactivated. The following spring, in May, 1946 the 371st Fighter Group was redesignated into National Guard 100-series unit numbers as the 142nd Fighter Group and allotted to Oregon. The group's 404th Fighter Squadron was redesignated as the 186th Fighter Squadron and allotted to Montana; the group's 405th Fighter Squadron was redesignated as the 190th Fighter Squadron and allotted to Idaho. All these new National Guard units inherited the lineage and honors of their World War II predecessors.

And in the States

There were other future leaders of the Oregon ANG in Europe whose fate might have been different if the Pacific War hadn't ended when it did.

Capt. Gordon L. Doolittle flew the Lockheed P-38 Lightning and then the North American P-51 Mustang in the 435th Fighter Squadron of the 479th Fighter Group in the ETO where he completed 70 combat missions and achieved three aerial victories. After completing his combat tour in March, 1945, he was reassigned to Portland Army Air Base (PAAB), where P-38 Lightning transition training was conducted for new pilots assigned to fighters. See "Pacific Northwest Lightning: Portland's P-38 Lightning Flying Training Program of 1944 - 1945."

The end of the war in the Pacific meant Capt. Doolittle didn't need to train pilots for combat, nor operate PAAB supporting a war effort or to go to combat again himself. He joined the Oregon ANG after the war, commanded the 123rd Fighter Squadron from 1947 to 1952, the 142nd Fighter Group in 1953 and filled in a few months in 1958 for G. Robert Dodson when he was ill. Doolittle later commanded the Oregon ANG from 1962 to 1977.

While Capt. Doolittle was in no immediate danger of being sent to the war in the Pacific, such was not the case with another future Oregon ANG leader,



"LETHAL LADY" RETURNS FROM BOMBING CHIRAN AIRFIELD, KYUSHU, JAPAN 12 AUGUST 1945
PILOT GENE RYAN & GUNNER STEVE SAGAN
PILOT REG JONES, NAVIGATOR & PHOTOGRAPHER JOHN CARLISLE, GUNNER DAN WOJCIK

A pair of 439th Bomb Squadron (Light) Douglas A-26 Invaders return to Okinawa from a combat mission against Chiran Airfield in Kyushu, Japan. The A-26B "Lethal Lady" is the subject of the photo, piloted by Gene Ryan with gunner Steve Sagan.

1st Lt. Staryl C. Austin, Jr. He was home on 30-days leave from the 410th Fighter Squadron of the 373rd Fighter Group, a Republic P-47D Thunderbolt fighter unit in Ninth Air Force which fought in the ETO. Lt. Austin flew 58 combat missions in the ETO and like other airmen in other combat groups in Europe expected to redeploy with his group to the Pacific to help finish the war.

In fact, the 373rd had already returned from Europe to the U.S. and was at Sioux Falls Army Air Field in South Dakota when the war ended. His group might have transitioned to the longer-range N-model variant of the P-47 enroute to the Pacific for combat had the war continued. Austin joined the Oklahoma Air National Guard after the war, and after the Korean War activation returned to Oregon. He commanded the 142nd Fighter Group from 1953 to 1956 and later served as the Assistant/Deputy Adjutant General of Oregon from 1963 to 1978; he then commanded the Oregon Air National Guard from 1978 to 1980.

President Truman Responds

President Truman held a news conference on the evening of August 14, 1945 to announce receipt of an important message from the Government of Imperial Japan, the Swiss Government. He said: "I have received this afternoon a message from the Japanese Government - in reply to the message forwarded to that Government by the Secretary of State on August 11. I deem this reply a full acceptance of the Potsdam Declaration which specified the unconditional surrender of Japan. In the reply there is no qualification."

"Arrangements are now being made for the signing of the surrender terms at the earliest possible moment."

"General Douglas MacArthur has been appointed the Supreme Allied Commander to receive the Japanese surrender. Great Britain, Russia, and China will be represented by high-ranking officers."

"Meanwhile, the Allied Armed Forces have been ordered to suspend offensive action."

"Proclamation of V-J Day must await the formal signing of the surrender terms by Japan..."

The prospective end of the war in the Pacific rendered an invasion of the Home Islands of the Imperial Japanese Empire unnecessary. This sudden end to the war thus spared the lives of many American military personnel, Allied prisoners of war, Japanese military personnel and civilians, and many combatants and civilians in the portions of Asia occupied by Imperial Japan. It was an outcome in the best interest of all.

The combat and operational experience of American military personnel in the units was vital to the postwar establishment of the air component of the National Guard. This air component was built up significantly from prewar levels, as a lesson for readiness to have a robust and capable reserve force to meet future challenges. Oregon's citizen Airmen have done just that since, for the community, state and nation, always ready to answer the call of duty.

On this day, we remember with gratitude August 15, 1945 when the fighting in the Pacific War ended. For the United States, Victory over Japan would be proclaimed with the formal surrender of Imperial Japan on the deck of the U.S. Navy battleship USS Missouri (BB-63) in Tokyo Bay on September 2, 1945.

A special thanks to Mr. Blair Wolf, webmaster of the 319th Bomb Group; Mr. Allan Pawlikowski, former Secretary of the 29th Bomb Group Association; and Mr. Mark Martin of the B-29 Museum in Pratt, Kansas for their assistance in producing this article and photographic images.



File photo courtesy 142nd Wing History Archive

Capt. Gordon L. Doolittle (left) and crew chief Tech. Sgt. Levi Campbell were assigned to the 435th Fighter Squadron of the 479th Fighter Group in Eighth Air Force. They are seen here with P-51D Mustang "Mugs," serial number 44-14406, squadron fuselage code J2, aircraft letter P. Doolittle was a flight leader in the 435th FS, where he first flew the P-38J before the squadron transitioned to the P-51D.



The World War II Victory medal depicts Nike standing victorious, holding a broken sword, representing the broken power of the Axis, with one foot upon the helmet of Mars, the Roman god of war, representing the end of the conflict.



File photo courtesy 142nd Wing History Archive

Patrick O'Grady flew a C-46 Commando to the China-Burma-India theater in early 1945 and then joined a C-54 Skymaster transport unit of the Air Transport Command. He flew 79 round-trip missions over the Himalaya Mountains. After the war, he was in the Air Force Reserve, then joined the Oregon Air National Guard. He commanded the 123rd Fighter-Interceptor Squadron, 142nd Fighter Group and later the Oregon Air National Guard.