



THE HORNET

NORTH CAROLINA NATIONAL GUARD

MISSION FORWARD

Neighbors
Today
Warfighters
Tomorrow



North Carolina National Guard
Quarterly Issue

Fall 2025

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NORTH CAROLINA GUARD ARTILLERY UNIT NAMED BEST IN NATION



130TH MEB SUPPORTS U.S. CUSTOMS & BORDER PROTECTION



PEOPLE FIRST NC GUARDSMEN ANSWER THE CALL



ON THE COVER

North Carolina Helicopter Aquatic Rescue Team conducts a mountain rescue training scenario in Spruce Pines North Carolina, March 30, 2025.

U.S. Army photo by
Sgt. Wesley Riley

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ASSISTANT ADJUTANT GENERAL SUSTAINMENT



Resilience is defined as the ability to withstand or recover quickly from difficulties. I cannot think of a better word to describe each of you. Whether you serve full-time in our military organizations or work in our communities, you have repeatedly illustrated your resilience. You have not only recovered quickly from difficulties, but you have continued to serve and work through all these challenges regardless of personal impact. You have shown time and again that, as members of our communities, we will continue to serve our neighbors selflessly. We stand ready to respond to natural disasters or whenever we are called in support of domestic operations. We stand ready to protect our Nation's borders, fight our enemies for the freedoms we hold so dear, and strengthen the world through our partnerships.

We currently have many of your fellow service members actively serving to support these efforts. Whether they are on the Southern Border, overseas, or working closely with our State Partnership countries, they all are serving away from their families throughout this holiday season. Their dedication to the mission, along with yours, is why the North Carolina National Guard excels when called. The sacrifice you make daily does not go unnoticed, it does not go without appreciation. You matter.

In this issue of the Hornet, we will focus on our service members not only as members of our communities, but also as warfighters. We will see how they serve as neighbors and in deployments. I hope that you see their resilience, their dedication, and commitment to serve.

I am thankful to each and every one of you and wish you a wonderful holiday season. I know that I can rest easily at night knowing that each of you stand ready to serve when called.

BRIG. GEN. CRISTINA MOORE
ASSISTANT ADJUTANT GENERAL – SUSTAINMENT
NORTH CAROLINA NATIONAL GUARD



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449th Combat Aviation Brigade Welcomes New Commander

by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Hannah Tarkelly



U.S. Army photos by Staff Sgt. Joe Roudabush

449TH COMBAT AVIATION BRIGADE

U.S. Army Col. Daniel McAuliffe assumed command of the 449th Combat Aviation Brigade in place of U.S. Army Col. Benny Collins during the change of command ceremony at the 449th Combat Aviation Brigade Armory, Aug. 2, 2025.

“As I passed the brigade colors today, I did so with immense pride, humility and gratitude,” Collins said.



“As I passed the brigade colors today, I did so with immense pride, humility, and gratitude”



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Hannah Tarkelly



U.S. Army Col. Daniel McAuliffe assumed command of the 449th Combat Aviation Brigade in place of U.S. Army Col. Benny Collins



During his time as the brigade commander, Collins exhibited remarkable leadership and an unwavering devotion to the Soldiers under his command. Collins remained steadfast and led the way as the 449th Hurricanes responded to calls for service amid natural disasters in the Tar Heel State.

With the passing of the guidon, McAuliffe assumed command of five battalions with almost 850 Guardsmen and more than 130 aircraft.

“The 449th Combat Aviation Brigade has a proud history and a vital mission for both the nation and the state of North Carolina,” McAuliffe said. “I am incredibly proud to re-join your ranks and serve as your commander.”

McAuliffe’s military career began in 1995 when he graduated from the U.S. Military Academy and went on to graduate from Army flight training a year later. During his time in the military, McAuliffe has taken

on various leadership roles and been awarded a plethora of medals to include the Bronze Star Medal for his meritorious service.

McAuliffe’s extensive experience and dedication to his fellow Guardsmen displayed a confident readiness to lead the Hurricanes.

“I am confident that we, as a team, are ready to answer the call and accomplish our mission when our Nation or the citizens of North Carolina need us to respond,” McAuliffe said.

Would you like to see more?



NORTH CAROLINA NATIONAL GUARD COMMUNITY CONNECTION

NC Guard Delivers Supplies for Governor's Drive

by U.S. Army
Staff Sgt. Joe Roudabush



U.S. Army photos by Sgt. Wesley Riley

Over several weeks at various armories, readiness centers, offices, and other facilities, NCNG members filled boxes with paper, pens, pencils, crayons, notebooks, and educational technology that were loaded up at NCNG Joint Force Headquarters in Raleigh, North Carolina



photo by Mr. Robert Jordan

Murfreesboro,
N.C.

North Carolina National Guard members and state employees delivered a van full of school supplies to a Hertford County elementary school as part of the annual Governor's School Supply Drive.

Raleigh, N.C. Soldiers, Airmen, and civilian employees from the NCNG and the N.C. Department of Public Safety collected paper, pens, notebooks, and other educational tools over several weeks. The items were loaded at the NCNG Joint Force Headquarters in Raleigh for delivery to Riverview Elementary School on Aug. 5, 2025.

Staff and faculty, including Principal Beshelya Smith, were waiting to help unload the supplies for the kindergarten through fifth-grade school, which serves 347 students.

"This donation eases the burden on the parents and provides tools to help our faculty teach our students," Smith said.

N.C. Department of Public Safety Secretary Eddie M. Buffalo Jr. also joined the group, helping to unload the thousands of dollars' worth of supplies into the school's library.

"I am tremendously grateful for the donations made by DPS employees during the Governor's School Supply Drive," Buffalo said. "Due to their selfless contributions, these necessary donations will allow teachers and students to start the year right."

The drive, which ran from June 30 to Aug. 1, encouraged North Carolinians to donate supplies to local classrooms.

Smith said the donation would benefit students beyond her own school. Riverview is one of seven schools in Hertford County.

"It was wonderful, we are truly appreciative," Smith said. "We are going to share [the supplies] so all schools in the county benefit."

Would you like to see more?



DONATION IMPACT
19,453

Citizens Served
Across 7 Schools



Supplies for
Success

"This donation eases the burden on the parents and provides tools to help our faculty teach our students."

— Principal Beshelya Smith, Riverview Elementary



photo by Mr. Robert Jordan



A wealth of experience to help strengthen the state's military role & infrastructure.

A New Chapter in Service: Pittman Appointed to Military Affairs Commission

by Christopher Long. Reprinted with permission from The Wilson Times

Gov. Josh Stein appointed Rep. Dante Pittman, D-Wilson, to the North Carolina Military Affairs Commission on Tuesday.

Pittman told the Times on Wednesday morning that he was proud of the appointment.

“For almost 10 years, I have served in the Army National

Guard, and I’m grateful to use my experiences to work to make our state safer. This is an important time at home and abroad, and I’m ready to continue my work to protect North Carolina and make our state stronger.”

Pittman, who holds the rank of captain in the North Carolina National Guard, was one of eight

appointees to the commission from across the state.

“I’m most looking forward to learning about our role in the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process and advocating for our bases in North Carolina,” Pittman said. “North Carolina is home to strategically important bases like Fort Bragg, Seymour Johnson and

A Career Defined by Dedication

Camp Lejeune that are integral to the nation’s national security.”

The commission was established in 2013 with the purpose to “provide advice, counsel and recommendations to the governor, the North Carolina General Assembly, the secretary of commerce and other state agencies on initiatives, programs and legislation that will continue and increase the role that N.C.’s military installations, the National Guard and Reserves play in America’s defense strategy and the economic health and vitality of the state.”

According to the state’s website, the commission



recommends actions to protect the existing military infrastructure in North Carolina, maintain a high quality of life for military members and their families and to promote new military missions and economic opportunities for the state and its citizens.

Pittman said the commission appointment was his first. Along with serving in the National Guard, Pittman represents all of Wilson County along with Nash County’s Sharpsburg precinct in the N.C. House of Representatives.



“For almost 10 years, I have served in the Army National Guard, and I’m grateful to use my experiences to work to make our state safer.”

–Capt. Dante Pittman



The Wilson Times



NORTH CAROLINA TUITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

When U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Verlin K. Harper enlisted in the North Carolina Air National Guard in January 2022, he was looking for direction. Today, he's on track to become an active-duty pilot thanks, in large part, to the opportunities made possible by the North Carolina Tuition Assistance Program.

NCTAP covers up to 100% of tuition and fees at North Carolina community colleges and North Carolina Promise schools, and up to 100% of tuition at state universities. For Harper, a radio-frequency transmission systems operator with the 263rd Combat Communication Squadron, the program opened doors he never imagined.

"I wouldn't have been able to make the progress I have without NCTAP," Harper said, who began his academic journey at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte and transferred to North Carolina State University. There, he joined the Reserve Officers' Training Corps, a decision that required balancing full-time classes, leadership courses, and military field training, all of which were made more manageable



through Guard support.

Harper is a prime example of what can happen when you take full advantage of the benefits available through service in the Air National Guard. His training and leadership experience in the Guard not only helped him stand out among his peers but also gave him clarity about his goals. Through ROTC and the Guard, Harper secured a pilot slot, which is proof that NCTAP is more than just financial aid; it's a career catalyst.

"It's not just a benefit—it's a fully funded



U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Verlin Harper, 263rd Combat Communications Squadron radio-frequency transmission systems operator, sets up an antenna for tactical satellite communication.



Learn more at about the tuition assistance program

opportunity to graduate debt-free while continuing to serve," said U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Francis J. Strother, 145th Airlift Wing retention program manager. "As the retention manager, I strongly encourage all eligible members

to take advantage of NCTAP because it offers a powerful opportunity to earn a college degree or certification at little to no cost."

However, it's important to understand how NCTAP works. It's a reimbursement-based

program, meaning tuition must be paid upfront, and funds are returned once the semester is completed and approved. You must remain in the Guard for at least two years after your last funded class or training, and the school must be an in-state program with a North Carolina vendor account.

The program has a strict application window and documentation requirements. Fall applications open Aug. 1 and are due by Aug. 30, and applicants must maintain good academic and unit standing to remain eligible.

NCTAP removes financial roadblocks and replaces them with possibilities. Whether you're pursuing technical training, a four-year degree, or looking to build a future in military leadership, this program can be your launchpad.

For Harper, the Guard wasn't just a part-time commitment; it helped launch him into a full-time career with purpose.

"The Guard gave me a broader understanding of how the Air Force works," Harper said. "It helped me bridge the gap between ROTC and real-world operations."

As Harper prepares for his next chapter, he encourages others to take advantage of every opportunity, starting with NCTAP.



The 5/113th Field Artillery Regiment conducts mid-day High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems equipment movement operations

U.S. Army photo by 2nd Lt. Bridget Pittman-Blackwell



AWARD CEREMONY HIGHLIGHTS FIELD ARTILLERY IN ACTION



1/139th Regiment field artillery training.
U.S. Army photos by Sgt. Wesley Riley

HAMILTON AWARD

5-113TH FIELD ARTILLERY

NORTH CAROLINA GUARD ARTILLERY UNIT NAMED BEST IN NATION

by U.S. Army 2nd Lt.
Bridget Pittman-Blackwell

Honoring Excellence

For a field artillery battery in the Army National Guard, there is no higher honor than winning the Alexander Hamilton Award.

When it comes to the demanding world of field artillery, where precision and readiness are paramount, the North Carolina National Guard's Alpha Battery, 5th Battalion, 113th Field Artillery, has been recognized as the best in the nation, officially securing that title during a ceremony held at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, Sept. 27, 2025.

The annual award pits the 5-113th



U.S. Army photos by Sgt. 1st Class Leticia Samuels

Field Artillery against roughly 140 other Guard artillery batteries nationwide.

The award, named for the nation's first treasury secretary and a distinguished Continental Army artillery commander, was established in 2002 to signify the pinnacle of operational excellence.

Earning the honor is the result of a grueling, yearlong evaluation. Units are rigorously judged on mission accomplishment, training proficiency, deployment service and overall unit excellence.

Their culminating event was a landmark joint mission with the 167th Airlift Wing and the 20th Special Forces Group, integrating airlift, special operations, and precision fires in a dynamic scenario. The exercise concluded with SFODA 2324 of the 20th Special Forces Group seizing an airfield, enabling two High Mobility Artillery Rocket System launchers, transported via C-17, to insert and execute multiple fire missions within minutes.

The 5-113th also implemented new training on unmanned aircraft systems, enabling launcher chiefs to detect vulnerabilities and refine concealment techniques. This is just another example of the battery's willingness to push boundaries to increase survivability.

According to U.S. Army Sgt. Maj. Jason W. Marsh, former Alpha Battery first sergeant and battalion command sergeant major, this innovative approach set Alpha Battery apart.

"Alpha Battery was competitive

due to the nature of the training we were conducting and the battalion's desire to increase proficiency as a HIMARS battalion," Marsh said. "Their accomplishments and contributions to the field artillery community were unmatched."

For the Soldiers of the North Carolina battalion, the award validates a year of relentless dedication.

Alpha Battery's excellence wasn't limited to tactical operations. In September 2024, when Hurricane Helene devastated Western North Carolina, 28 Soldiers from the battery deployed for more than eight weeks to support search and recovery missions.

Their actions helped families find closure as communities began rebuilding in the aftermath of one of the state's most destructive storms. These Soldiers' commitment to service, both to state and nation, was a key factor in their selection.

For Marsh, who watched the unit grow from the inside, the award is deeply personal.

"This recognition means the world to me and even more for the Soldiers, NCOs, and officers of Alpha Battery," he said. "Each and every one of them put their heart and soul into their performance. Their pride in being an Outlaw, and a Griffin, shows in everything they do."

For a National Guard artillery battery, there is no higher honor. With 65 field artillery battalions across the Army National Guard, representing 59% of the total

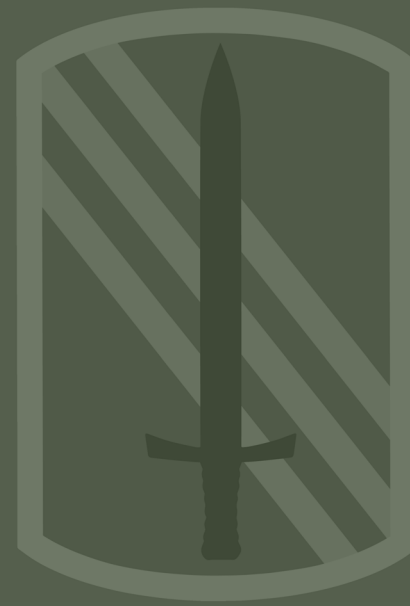
Army's artillery force, the competition is fierce. But Alpha Battery has now carved its place in history.

"They have every bragging right," Marsh said. "Their award will hang in their armory, and every member of Alpha can take pride knowing they represent the entire Army National Guard field artillery branch."

Despite the national recognition, the Soldiers of Alpha Battery don't train for trophies.

"They do it for the man or woman to their left and right," Marsh said. "Their bond is unspoken, and their camaraderie is untouched."

The Hamilton Award simply confirms what those who have served with 5-113th already knew: their status as the most lethal and ready field artillery unit in the Army National Guard for the past year.



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WELCOME HOME!



THE 145TH AW WELCOMES HOME AIRMEN AFTER FIRST C-17 DEPLOYMENT

by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Reanna Hartgrove



Families, friends, and community members welcome home 164 Airmen from the North Carolina Air National Guard's 145th Airlift Wing and local communities as they return to Charlotte, Sept. 15, after a 90-day deployment in the Middle East. This marks the unit's first C-17 Globemaster III deployment.

The Airmen, assigned to the 156th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron, supported the U.S. Transportation Command in operations Spartan Shield, Inherent Resolve, and the 12-Day War.

Over the course of the deployment, they executed more than 200 combat missions, transported over 13.4 million pounds of cargo, 6,300 passengers, and 2,264 pallets. The squadron accumulated more than 1,000 combat flying hours while maintaining a 99% quality assurance rate across nearly 2,000 maintenance actions.

"This was the first C-17 deployment for the NCANG, and it was a base-wide effort to support the launch and recovery of the deployed package," said U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. James P. Balcom, the 145th Maintenance Squadron commander. "Deploying for the first time as a C-17 unit, during the hottest time of the year, with never-before-seen challenges and situations is no small feat. Hundreds

of missions, thousands of passengers, millions of pounds of cargo, accomplished with professionalism, safety in mind, and a positive attitude. What a team!"

This deployment underscored the unit's readiness to respond globally while maintaining connection to its home state. The 156th EAS worked closely with host nations and embassies, ensuring equipment and support were in place to accomplish their mission. Rotational maintenance crews worked around the clock to keep the aircraft mission-ready.

"The professional Airmen of the 156th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron proved the Agile Combat Employment and Mission Ready Airmen training we've accomplished over the past five years prepared us to generate airpower despite multiple hurdles we faced while deployed," said U.S. Air Force Maj. Nicholas Tomlin, the officer in charge of the 156th EAS. "These Airmen made the U.S. Air Force, the North Carolina Air National Guard, the city of Charlotte, and their families very proud. Personally,

I've never been prouder to serve in my 27-year career. It was a total epic airlift effort."

Balcom emphasized that mission success would not be possible without the families left behind and non-deployers who provided support for both pre- and post-deployment requirements, as well as sustainment operations at home.

"The camaraderie developed for both the away and home teams should enhance operations indefinitely, as will the support given from families, employers, and coworkers alike," said Balcom.

The 145th AW's mission is to provide airlift, combat, and humanitarian support to both state and federal authorities. The recent deployment reflects the dual role of Citizen-Airmen: serving abroad and at home. Whether supporting overseas combat operations or delivering aid during state emergencies, the Airmen of the 145th AW continue to demonstrate dedication to their communities and nation.



GUARDIANS OF THE BORDER

130th MANEUVER ENHANCEMENT BRIGADE SUPPORTS U.S. CUSTOMS & BORDER PROTECTION

by U.S. Army Sgt. Wesley Riley

On Oct. 4, approximately 150 North Carolina National Guardsmen from the 130th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade began preparations for a 13-month Title 10 federal active-duty mobilization. Their mission is to support the U.S. Customs and Border Protection operations at the nation's southern border in Texas.

The 130th MEB can date its history as far back as 1861 when its parent unit, the 1st Regiment North Carolina Volunteers, was first constituted. On March 6, 1911, the unit was officially organized under the NCNG in Charlotte as Company D (Hornets' Nest Rifles), 1st Regiment of Infantry. Since then, the unit has participated in campaigns in World War I, World War II, the Korean War, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Operation Enduring Freedom.

"We are here today to recognize the mobilization of the 130th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade as we prepare to answer our nation's call," said U.S. Army Col. Robbie Felicio, the 130th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade commander. "This mission is historic, and it is exactly the kind of mission the National Guard was built for. Protecting our nation is one of our top priorities—and it is in our very

name: the National Guard."

This mobilization is part of a directive coordinated by the Department of War as a means of enhancing security along the southern border. It is a routine rotation in support of the Department of Homeland Security, and not the first such mission for the 130th MEB. From October 2023 through 2024, the 514th Military Police Company, a subordinate unit of the 130th MEB, participated in similar operations under Joint Task Force-North, supporting the Del Rio Customs and Border Protection sector.

"Our mission, in partnership with federal agencies, will be to defend and safeguard the territorial integrity of the United States and achieve 100% operational control of our assigned sectors of the southern border," said Felicio.

The history of Task Force Southern Border traces back to the early 2000s, when it operated under the name Joint Task Force-North. In response to evolving national security priorities and recent executive orders, a more unified and comprehensive approach to securing the southern border was adopted. As a result, Task Force Southern Border was formally established in March 2025, with the headquarters element provided by the 10th Mountain Division. In coordination with supporting brigades, including the 130th MEB, Task Force Southern Border is responsible for securing approximately 2,000 miles of the U.S. and Mexico border, stretching from California to Texas.

"This team is formed, trained, and we will succeed. The 130th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade has always lived up to its reputation, and this deployment will be no different," Felicio said.



Would you like to know more?



SILVER STAR RECIPIENT STRENGTHENS AIR FORCE CAPABILITIES

by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Reanna Hartgrove



After receiving the Silver Star for valor during a deployment to Afghanistan in 2011, U.S. Air Force Senior Master Sgt. Tavis J. Delaney made a deliberate choice to continue serving—not just in uniform, but as a mentor, strategist, and innovator working to advance the U.S. Air Force.

Now, as the Tactical Air Control Party superintendent at the 118th Air Support Operations Squadron, Delaney leads squadron operations and organizational alignment. In addition to his military duties, he also serves as an independent consultant for the Joint Staff under the Coalition Interoperability Assurance and Validation organization and as a mission director at the Combat Air Forces Distributed Training Center. These civilian and military roles are not separate but deeply intertwined.

“Being a superintendent grounds me,” Delaney said. “It keeps me in the fight with Airmen, making sure things are done right at the tactical level, while my other roles let me zoom out and assess whether we’re doing the right things strategically.”

As a consultant, Delaney travels globally to assess special operations organizations, helping to align their capabilities with real-world mission demands. At the training center, he builds, executes, and debriefs complex mission simulations involving multiple U.S. Air Force units. These responsibilities require him to maintain a firm grasp of both policy-level vision and hands-on execution, which he attributes to his experience as a senior enlisted leader.

“I think that’s a unique aspect the Guard provides,” Delaney said. “As a traditional guardsman, I am still doing the

job and maintaining all code qualifications requisite for my unit manpower document, so when I’m talking to national-level leaders, I can give insight on the challenges that the guys on the ground are actually running into.”

Delaney, who holds a master’s degree in war studies, said his academic background as a conflict scholar also complemented his operational work.

“The Guard gives me the unique opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge and practical leadership in real time,” Delaney said.

It’s a synergy that fuels his ongoing commitment to the force. Balancing his multiple responsibilities hasn’t come without challenge. Delaney spoke about the strain of managing multiple careers but he remains focused on staying grounded, leading with purpose, and ensuring that the U.S. Air Force is equipped to meet future threats.

Ultimately, each of his roles, whether in the squadron or briefing senior leaders, feeds the other. It’s this dual perspective, shaped by experience, education, and personal conviction, that allows Delaney to push the U.S. Air Force toward greater readiness and resilience.

The Silver Star, while a monumental moment of recognition, became a turning point for Delaney, not a conclusion. Rather than step back, he chose to lean in, using his platform to improve the Air Force and guide others.

“I didn’t want the award to be the peak,” Delaney said. “I wanted to use the placement access granted from that to pour into everybody I possibly could to help them get to a level of competency to be successful.”



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to know more?



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OPERATION TOBACCO ROAD: NCNG CYBER EXERCISE

by Mr. Robert Jordan

Leaders of the North Carolina National Guard invited hazard mitigation, cyber, and information technology experts for a five-day exercise, Operation Tobacco Road, held at NCNG Joint Force Headquarters and North Carolina Emergency Management in Raleigh, North Carolina, July 21-25, 2025.

The technical cybersecurity exercise invited over 140 local, state, and national government and corporate partner experts to identify and respond to cyber threat actors in a real-time environment reflecting real-world cybersecurity threats.

"It is pretty important for us," U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Allen Boyette, the NCNG Deputy Adjutant General, said.

The teams' goal was sharing common cyber defense tools and gaining valuable experience in network security and intrusion analysis.

"They need to know why it [cyber training] matters [and] take the lessons learned back," Erik A. Hooks, a former North Carolina Department of Public Safety Secretary, FEMA Deputy Administrator, and career public safety professional and consultant, said.

The members were assigned to five different defensive cyber operator teams who were defending a fictional North Carolina local government from an NCNG opposing force trying to exploit any weakness in the various scenarios.

Other professionals of the assessment team monitored the progress of the cyber operators and provided their expertise to help train them.

"North Carolina has one of the most mature models and emulates Cyber Shield [a long-running United States Department of Defense international cyber exercise]," Chief Information Security Officer, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University Eric Zach said.



The days of online interactions, simulated cyber intrusions, and in-person tabletop exercises tested skills and training. Members identified network vulnerabilities, including hacking, ransomware, and unauthorized network access.

"What can we [learn to] do better," U.S. Army Lt. Col Seth Barun, NCNG Chief of Cyber Operations, said.

Having this much talent under one roof attracts attention at the highest level. Visitors from public and private cybersecurity institutions toured the exercise July 24.

"I love it [OTR] it will strengthen North Carolina cybersecurity," said Teena Piccione, secretary and state chief information officer of the North Carolina Department of Information Technology.

Leaders guided their guests to the North Carolina Department of Emergency Management offices at JFHQ used for the exercise.

"It is a challenging environment," NCDIT Chief Information Security Officer Bernice Russell-Bond said.

When you bring the Senior Director, Information Security and Chief Information Security Officer of the world's largest privately held software company into a warren of so many cyber experts with decades of experience, you get very expected benefits.

"We are here to partner; they build skills here, we hired someone from [a previous] OTR, and he brought a lot of skills to us," Senior Director, Information Security and Chief Information Security Officer, SAS Institute Inc. Brian Wilson said.

The NCNG's Cyber Security Response Force hosts OTR twice a year. For more information <https://www.csrf.nc.gov/operation-tobacco-road>.

The CSRF mission is to conduct defensive cyberspace operations to support mission requirements as directed by the NCNG's adjutant general or governor.

Their duties include cyber incident response, digital forensics, cyber hygiene assessment, penetration testing, training, and outreach.



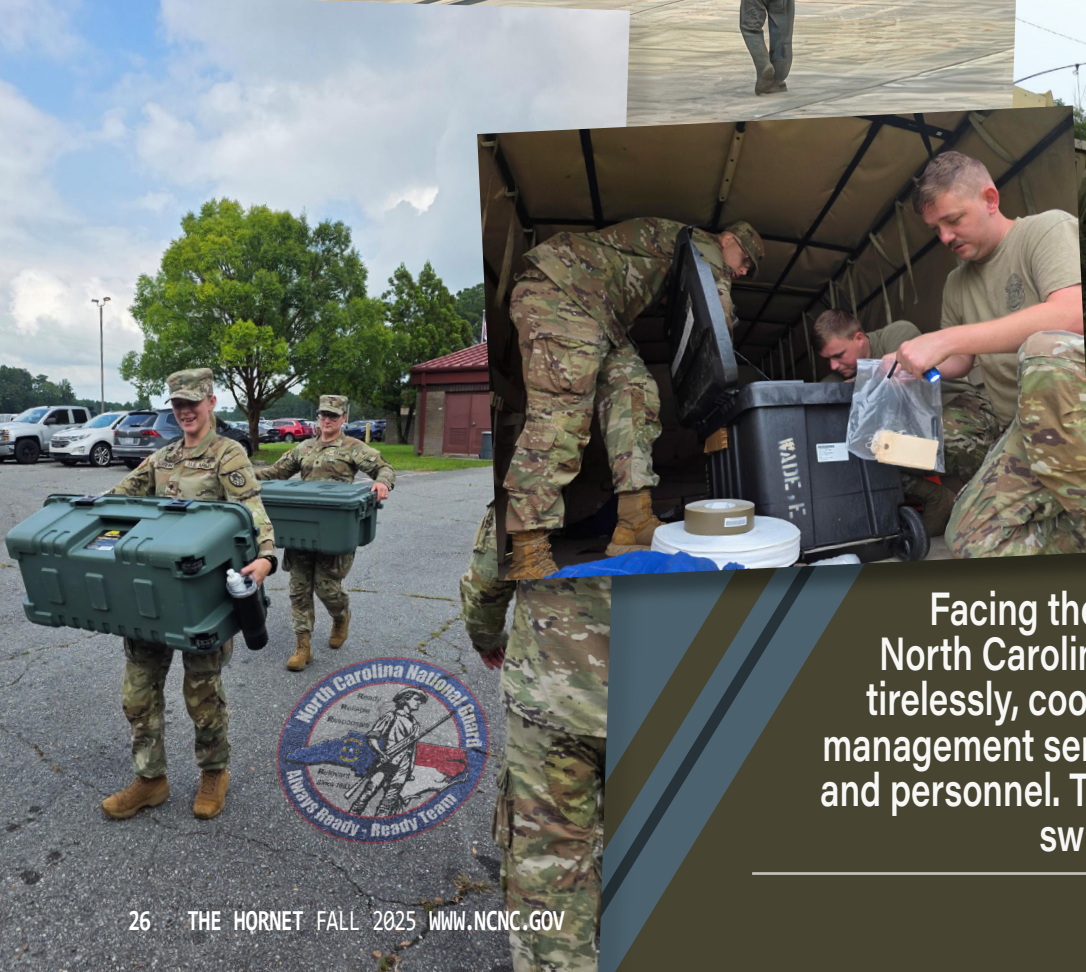
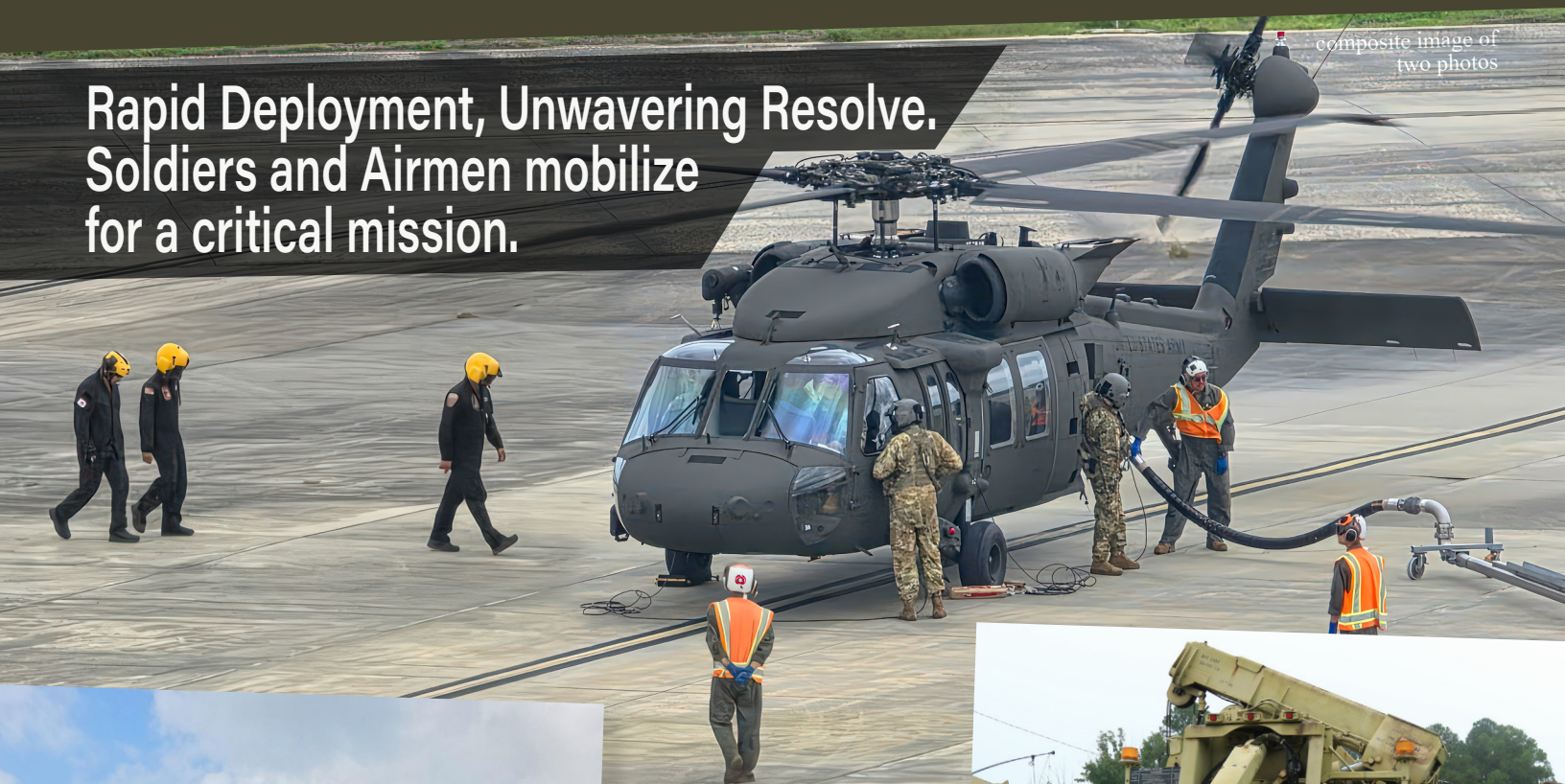
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to know more?



ANSWERING THE CALL:

NC National Guard's Response to Hurricane Erin.

Rapid Deployment, Unwavering Resolve. Soldiers and Airmen mobilize for a critical mission.



Facing the storm's challenges, your North Carolina National Guard worked tirelessly, coordinating with emergency management services to stage equipment and personnel. Their dedication ensured a swift and effective response.



**IT'S ABOUT TEAMWORK AND DEDICATION.
WHEN THE CALL COMES, WE ARE READY TO
SERVE OUR COMMUNITIES.**



Air assets proved crucial for moving supplies and personnel to hard-to-reach areas. The seamless cooperation between ground and air crews, alongside civilian agencies, was key to the mission's success.





photos courtesy of U.S. Army
Sgt. Matthew Watson

People First

NC Guardsmen Answer the Call

by U.S. Army Sgt. Aimee Grace Trinidad



“But if they see just one person take action, it prompts others to follow.”

On storm-damaged roads in Western North Carolina, two National Guardsmen didn’t hesitate to act when a vehicle collision unfolded before them in October 2024.

U.S. Army Sgt. Matthew Watson of Charlotte and U.S. Army Sgt. James Tarlton from Salisbury, North Carolina, both assigned to the 1454th Transportation Company at the time, were on state active duty during Operation Hurricane Helene. Their mission was to deliver critical supplies to an elementary school turned staging area for disaster relief. But on the way, duty called in

a different form.

As they descended a steep hill, a vehicle ran a red light and collided with an oncoming car. Tarlton, driving at the time, immediately parked their truck and both soldiers rushed to assist. While Tarlton searched the inventory box for recovery equipment, Watson ran to the smoking vehicle that had been T-boned. The driver was dazed and nearly pinned inside.

“He was complaining that his head hurt. He didn’t know what happened, but I grabbed him ... I pulled him out of the car,” Watson said.

Watson pulled the man out

through the driver’s side window, then leaned him against a telephone pole, away from the smoking vehicle, to minimize further injury. By that time, bystanders had already called 911.

Watson then checked on the occupants of the vehicle that caused the crash — two teenagers, one of whom complained of a headache. Watson and Tarlton continued their mission through debris-littered streets and downed power lines to deliver supplies to the community after ensuring everyone was stable and emergency services were en route.

Watson had faced a similar situation once before. Years earlier, while driving late at night, he came across a burning vehicle on the highway. The occupants had already escaped, but the experience reminded him of the importance of acting decisively in crisis.

“I’ve noticed that in times of crisis, some people are nervous, anxious, or wary of stepping up,” he said. “But if they see just one person take action, it prompts others to follow.”

North Carolina National Guard Soldiers are trained to respond quickly and effectively in

high-pressure situations, beginning with basic combat training and courses like Tactical Combat Casualty Care. Watson embodies those principles, overcoming the body’s instinct to freeze and act decisively when it matters most.

“I didn’t get jelly legs or butterflies in my belly ... it was really quick,” Watson said. “I knew something had to happen and we needed to make sure those people were okay.”

The Soldiers’ decision to temporarily halt their supply mission to assist at the crash site reflects the core mission of the North Carolina National Guard: to serve and protect the lives and property of fellow North Carolinians.

“It doesn’t matter your background, what you do, or how much money you make. We’re all people,” Watson said. “Sometimes it’s okay to put all your problems aside and help others because that’s what it’s ultimately about.”





Tar Heel Tough:

North Carolina National Guard Forges Army's Vehicle Recovery Experts

by Staff Sgt. Joe Roudabush

Would you like
to know more?

Soldiers from across the U.S. Army are learning crucial vehicle recovery skills at a schoolhouse run by the North Carolina National Guard's 139th Regional Training Institute. The 16-day Wheeled Vehicle Recovery course, known as the H8 course, trains mechanics from all three Army components—National Guard, active-duty Army, and Reserve—to recover damaged or disabled vehicles.

The course is part of the One Army School System, which standardizes training across all three Army components' training locations, and is taught at the Regional Training Site-Maintenance facility at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Managed by the 139th Regiment Regional Training Institute, the RTS-M is one of 13 sites nationwide operated by the National Guard.

"We're proud here at the schoolhouse to be able to teach all three components," said U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class David Robertson, a senior NCNG instructor and H8 course manager. "We teach National Guard, Reserves, and active-duty from all over the country."

A key part of the training is the "mire pit" event, where students recover a truck stuck in a deep mud hole. The pit provides



a challenge that maintainers may face in the real world.

"Everybody likes to play in the mud, at least mechanics do," Robertson said. "You get a chance to get out here and have a good time while still learning and doing things safely."

Students must first assess the situation, calculating the vehicle's weight and the resistance of the mud and water, which can be chin-deep for some Soldiers. They then determine the necessary rigging, including winch cables and chains, to safely extract the vehicle.

"The students have to watch what's going on around them," Robertson said. "Verify that the chains and everything they're using is strong enough, and pay attention to where they're walking."

The course also includes training on recovering overturned vehicles and practicing driver maneuvers while towing a disabled vehicle. Soldiers learn to operate the Heavy Expanded Mobility Tactical Truck and the Medium Tactical Vehicle, known as a HEMTT wrecker and MTV wrecker.

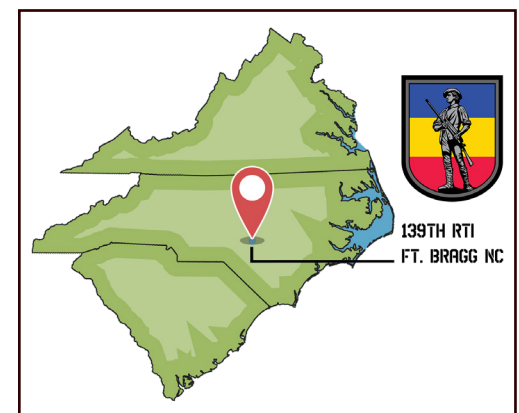
"It's not just a chance for us to just throw a bunch of gear out there and say this is how you can set it up," said U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Steve England, one of the NCNG H8 senior instructors. "It also teaches them to think outside the box."

Soldiers who complete the H8 course are qualified to operate and maintain recovery vehicles, a skill crucial for maintaining military readiness.

The training emphasizes safety, as recovery operations can be dangerous. The instructors highlighted the importance of proper rigging and constant vigilance to prevent equipment failure.

"As it's being winched under load, there's a lot of potential for breakage in the chains and pins," Robertson said.

One mission of the 139th RTI is to ensure that Soldiers from all components of the Army receive standardized, high-quality training, a mission Robertson describes as "just another day in the North Carolina National Guard."





U.S. Army Sgt. Claudia DePouli, 5th Battalion, 113th Field Artillery Regiment, competes in the ruck march event during the Best Warrior Competition in Raleigh, North Carolina, Sept. 7, 2025.



Soldiers plot grid coordinates during the land navigation event of the 2025 Best Warrior Competition in Raleigh, North Carolina, Sept. 6, 2025.



North Carolina National Guard Soldiers compete in the two-mile run event during the 2025 Best Warrior Competition at Claude T. Bowers Military Center, in Raleigh, North Carolina, Sept. 6, 2025.

The competition evaluates Soldiers' physical and mental capabilities by competing in physical fitness, tactical and warrior tasks, marksmanship, land navigation, written essay, ruck march, military knowledge, and professionalism.

60TH TROOP COMMAND BEST WARRIOR COMPETITION

Winners of the major subordinate command-level 2025 Best Warrior Competition earn the right to represent their command at the state level and potentially represent North Carolina at the regional and national competitions.

U.S. Army photos by Pfc. Brooke Kentler

Key Areas of Competition

- Physical Fitness
- Tactical & Warrior Tasks
- Marksmanship
- Land Navigation
- Military Knowledge



U.S. Army Spc. Thomas Tulbert, Company B, 1st Battalion, 20th Special Forces Group (Airborne), completes the deadlift event during the 2025 Best Warrior Competition at Claude T. Bowers Military Center, in Raleigh, North Carolina, Sept. 6, 2025.

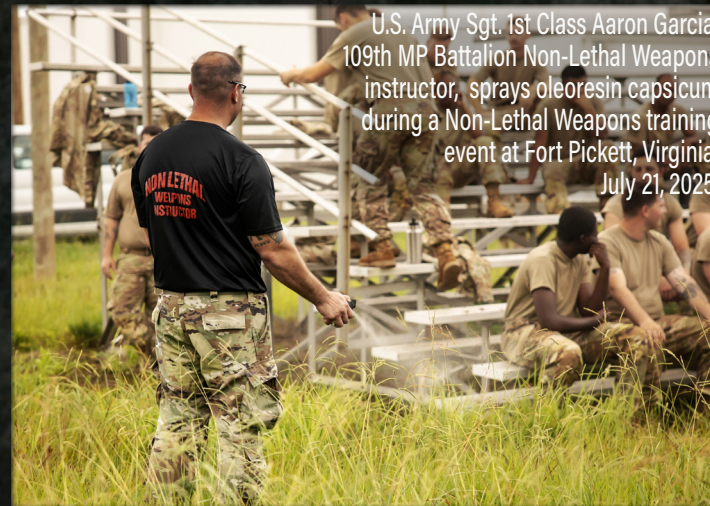


U.S. Army Spc. Thomas Tulbert, Company B, 1st Battalion, 20th Special Forces Group (Airborne), and U.S. Army Sgt. Caludia DePouli, 5th Battalion, 113th Field Artillery Regiment, are named the overall winners of the 2025 Best Warrior Competition during an award presentation at Claude T. Bowers Military Center, in Raleigh, North Carolina, Sept. 7, 2025.

109TH MP BATTALION ANNUAL TRAINING FORT PICKETT

U.S. Army Pfc. Ashton Black, 514th Military Police Company, is sprayed in the face with oleoresin capsicum during a Non-Lethal Weapons training event at Fort Pickett, Virginia, July 21, 2025.

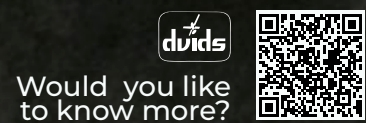
U.S. Army photos by Sgt. Wesley Riley



U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Aaron Garcia, 109th MP Battalion Non-Lethal Weapons instructor, sprays oleoresin capsicum during a Non-Lethal Weapons training event at Fort Pickett, Virginia, July 21, 2025.



U.S. Army Sgt. Jeff Lovett, 514th Military Police Company, fires a Sig M17 during a Law Enforcement Weapons training event at Fort Pickett, Virginia, July 19, 2025.



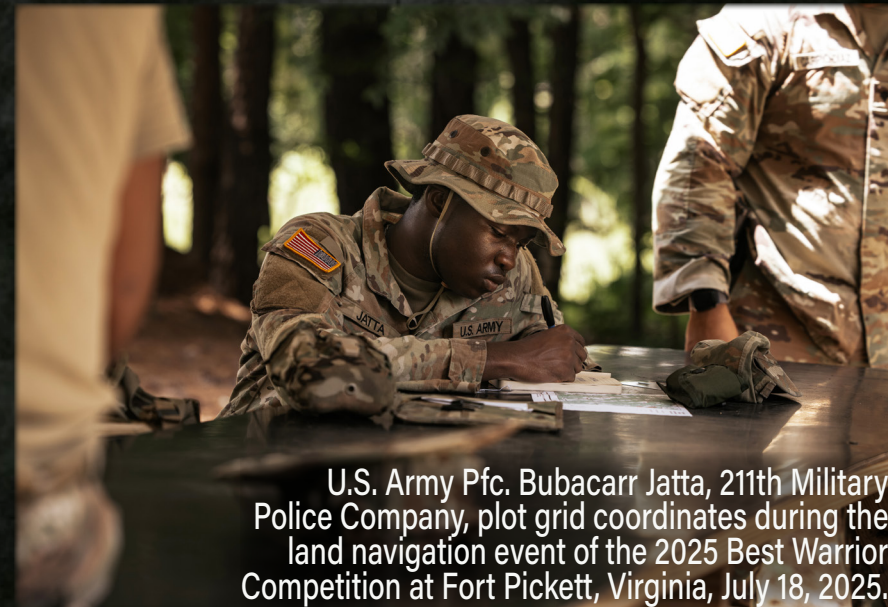
Would you like to know more?

Law Enforcement

Law Enforcement Weapons training tests Soldiers' reaction times through various simulations and include hip firing, rapid weapon deployment, marksmanship, and speed reloading under strict time limits.



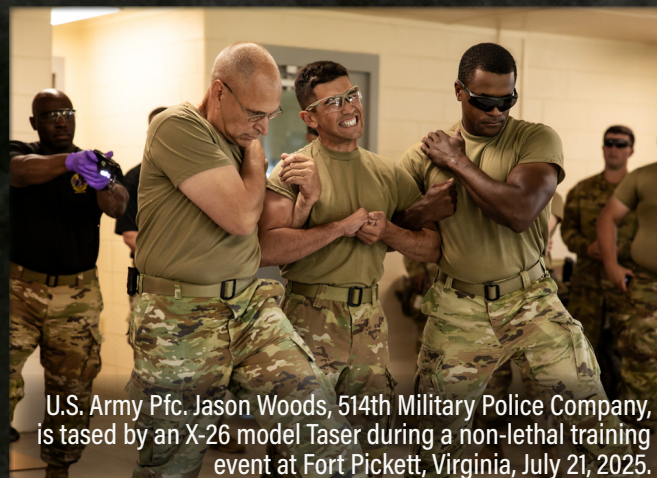
U.S. Army Pfc. Bubacarr Jatta, 211th Military Police Company, fires an M4 during the 2025 Best Warrior Competition's Stress Shoot event at Fort Pickett, Virginia, July 20, 2025.



U.S. Army Pfc. Bubacarr Jatta, 211th Military Police Company, plot grid coordinates during the land navigation event of the 2025 Best Warrior Competition at Fort Pickett, Virginia, July 18, 2025.

109th MP BEST WARRIOR COMPETITION

The Best Warrior Competition challenges Soldiers to push their limits to determine who has what it takes to represent their major subordinate command at the state-level competition.



U.S. Army Pfc. Jason Woods, 514th Military Police Company, is tased by an X-26 model Taser during a non-lethal training event at Fort Pickett, Virginia, July 21, 2025.

Non-Lethal

Non-Lethal Weapons training is an essential event where new military police Soldiers gain an in-depth understanding of the harshness of non-lethal weapons and build confidence in their abilities.



U.S. Army Sgt. Ian Orr, 514th Military Police Company, takes a breath of fresh air after completing the 6-mile ruck event during the 2025 Best Warrior Competition at Fort Pickett, Virginia, July 18, 2025.



We Are the SPECIAL FORCES

U.S. Army photos by Sgt. Wesley Riley



Albemarle, NC

The North Carolina National Guard joined the National Guard Bureau, Virginia National Guard, Army Reserve, and active duty components in Albemarle, North Carolina for joint training in order to enhance readiness and tactical proficiency in close-quarters combat, including vertical movement and coordinated air assault tactics.



Would you like to know more?



HONOR & REMEMBRANCE



U.S. Army photo by Capt. Shamari Pratt

We remember those whose lives were changed forever,
but we also remember our country coming together.

Members of the North Carolina National Guard observed the anniversary of September 11th, 2001, through coordinated local tributes. Keynote speakers U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Todd Hunt and Gov. Josh Stein led the wreath-laying ceremony at Joint Force Headquarters in Raleigh, while the NCNG Color Guard paid tribute nearby at RDU Airport, honoring the lost and recognizing the profound impact of that day.



U.S. Army photos by Sgt. Wesley Riley



Would you like
to see more?





Soldiers with the 109th Military Police Battalion, 130th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, conducting night fire training during their annual training in Fort Picket, Virginia.

U.S. Army photo by Command Sgt. Maj. Christopher Smith



U.S. Army Sgt. Sgt. Guin, a combat engineer with the 151st Combat Engineer Company, 130th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, navigates a trench during a field training exercise in Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Leslie Foster

Struggling with Alcohol / Drug use?

Let us help.

Confidential counseling at no cost to NC Air & Army National Guard Members



Contact us for referrals to a licensed counselor in your area

919.909.1317

bguarda@alcoholdrughelp.org
www.alcoholdrughelp.org



Brenda Guarda

Director, NCNG SBIRT Voucher Program
Alcohol/Drug Council of NC

SBIRT
Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment

Partnership for Early Intervention Support Services



The Alcohol / Drug Council of North Carolina is partially supported by the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services through a Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Grant.



Physical Fitness Safety

To date, the NCARNG has experienced 7 mishaps this FY due to injuries encountered during the ACFT. We must do a better job to personally prepare for strenuous activity through established personal fitness, stretching, acclimatization & implementing proper control measures when administering the future AFTs.

Scan the accompanying QR code for more information regarding proper planning during physical readiness training.

State Active Duty

Personal Preparedness is vital to ensure that your loved ones are safe so you can perform your duty as an important member of the NC National Guard.

Scan the accompanying QR code for more information to make sure YOU are prepared!

Unit Preparedness is critical to mission success during State Active Duty. During Helene Response, our Servicemembers were involved in 11 mishaps resulting from inattentiveness of the assistant driver & 7 mishaps resulting from improper ground guiding.

REQUIREMENTS and RECOMMENDATIONS

Motorcycle Safety Training

Every Servicemember who rides a motorcycle is required to comply with the Motorcycle Training Program.

For initial training, all motorcycle riders must complete Basic Rider Course (BRC) prior to riding a motorcycle.

Within 1 year of completing the initial training course, riders are required to complete Experienced Rider Course (ERC), Basic Rider Course II (BRCII) or advanced Rider Course (ARC) to satisfy intermediate training requirements .

Within 5 years of completing intermediate training, riders must complete an intermediate course to satisfy sustainment training requirements.

Any riders who are deployed for 180 days or more must complete Motorcycle Refresher Training (MRT) at the unit level before riding again.

Fire Safety

Fire Safety applies on & off duty. There are fire risks to our homes, workplaces & vehicles. We must ensure we are knowledgeable to protect ourselves as well as others.

Have you checked your vehicle's fire extinguisher to ensure it's ready to use? Each vehicle, generator, kitchen, ammunition storage location & building must have fire extinguishers that are properly charged & inspected.

Scan the accompanying QR code for more information on common causes, prevention, & helpful information on fire prevention & safety.

STAY CONNECTED
STAY INFORMED

NCNG MOBILE APP

STAY READY



THE HORNET

U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Joe Roudabush



Would you like
to see more?

