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# The Real McCoy

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Photos by Kevin Clark, Fort McCoy Multimedia-Visual Information Office (left) and Scott T. Sturkol, Fort McCoy Public Affairs Office (right)

Soldiers with the Wisconsin National Guard's 120th Field Artillery conduct winter sling-load operations Jan. 28 at Fort McCoy with support from UH-60 Black Hawks and a CH-47 Chinook helicopters from the 2nd Battalion, 147th Aviation Regiment of the Minnesota National Guard. Training was held for several hours in extremely cold temperatures. It was designed to test equipment during cold-weather operations as well as gear Soldiers are issued for cold-weather survival.

## Wisconsin National Guard's 1st Battalion, 120th Field Artillery holds winter sling-load training at Fort McCoy

BY SCOTT T. STURKOL  
Public Affairs Staff

With one CH-47 Chinook and three UH-60 Blackhawks from the 2nd Battalion, 147th Aviation Regiment supporting, Soldiers with the 1st Battalion, 120th (1-120th) Field Artillery held cold-weather sling-load training Jan. 28 at Firing Point 421 at Fort McCoy.

Because the focus was to operate during cold weather, Mother Nature didn't disappoint as temperatures were as low as -10 degrees Fahrenheit at the start of the training. Soldiers with the 120th prepared for the event, setting up a couple of Arctic 10-person tents with heaters.

Soldiers also donned their Army Extreme Cold-Weather Clothing System, or ECWCS, that's issued to Soldiers. The system includes a lightweight undershirt and underwear, midweight shirt and underwear, fleece jacket, wind jacket, soft shell jacket and trousers, extreme cold/wet-weather jack-

et and trousers, and extreme cold-weather parka and trousers.

"It's a layered system that allows for protection in a variety of climate elements and temperatures," said Fort McCoy Central Issue Facility Property Book Officer Thomas Lovgren, who's facility manages the ECWCS distribution for Army Reserve members. "Each piece in the ECWCS fits and functions either alone or together as a system, which enables seamless integration with load-carrying equipment and body armor."

With helicopter blade wash just increasing the wind-chill factor ten-fold during the training operations, all the cold-weather preparation was a good

**"This was a great opportunity to test our equipment."**

Command Sgt. Maj. (CSM) Nick Kletzien  
1st Battalion, 120th Field Artillery

thing, said Command Sgt. Maj. (CSM) Nick Kletzien, battalion CSM. And the training provided a realistic feeling for what 120th members would have to face in extreme cold-weather conditions possibly somewhere else in the world.

"This was a great opportunity to test our equipment," Kletzien said. "And a good opportunity to have a training event that's realistic to what we could face."

For the sling-loads, the helicopter aircrews were lifting the M119 Howitzer. According to Army facts about the Howitzer, the M119 is a lightweight, 105mm towed artillery piece used by the U.S. Army for mobile fire support, based on the British L119 gun, known for being air-transportable by helicopter or

parachute and towed by Humvees, with upgrades like the M119A3 adding digital fire control for increased accuracy and effectiveness in rapid deployment scenarios.

This training event was completed over several hours. Teams of Soldiers took turns hooking up the sling-load Howitzers to the different helicopters. The helicopters would then pick up the pieces, take them for a short flight, and then return them to the same spot they were picked up from.

According to U.S. Army training manuals, Army sling load operations enable rapid transport of equipment via helicopters, such as the UH-60 and CH-47, to remote or hard-to-access areas. This effort involves three key elements — the supported unit (rigging), the aviation unit (lifting), and the receiving unit. These operations are critical for sustaining forces, enhancing mobility, and delivering supplies when ground methods are hindered.

There are also three phases to sling-load operations. (See SLING-LOAD TRAINING, Page 4)

## Fort McCoy Resource Management Office: Team leads installation's money mission, support

STORY BY SCOTT T. STURKOL & GREG MASON  
Fort McCoy Public Affairs Office

If it involves appropriated funds and the U.S. Army Garrison-Fort McCoy, chances are the Fort McCoy Resource Management Office (RMO) is leading the effort to manage those funds.

Resource Management Officer Bonnie Hilt has worked at the office for more than 12 years — first as a budget officer and then the resource management officer since May 2021. She said her team does extraordinary work.

"One of the biggest things we do, and one that people see most often, is the budget portion of the Resource Management Office," Hilt said. "We're out here making sure our contracts get funded, tying our resources to Army priorities, senior commander priorities, and our strategic planning."

Other things we do is oversee acquisitions," Hilt said. "So, we are really intertwined with everybody on the garrison when it comes to money, when it comes

to helping them plan for and execute their contracts. And then also, we oversee the manpower and equipment documentation. So, we help make sure that we have the right resources to enable Fort McCoy to be successful."

Hilt described how manpower, for example, is an important part of what they do.

"So, manpower, from an RMO perspective, is ensuring that we have ... the right people in place to enable the mission, whatever the mission may be, so that we can support," Hilt said. "As you know, it changes often. And so we align those resources where they need to be to support priorities."

Another part of RMO's mission is enabling official travel or garrison employees and service members. Tara Lewis, a Defense Travel administrator with RMO, discussed what she does to complete that mission.

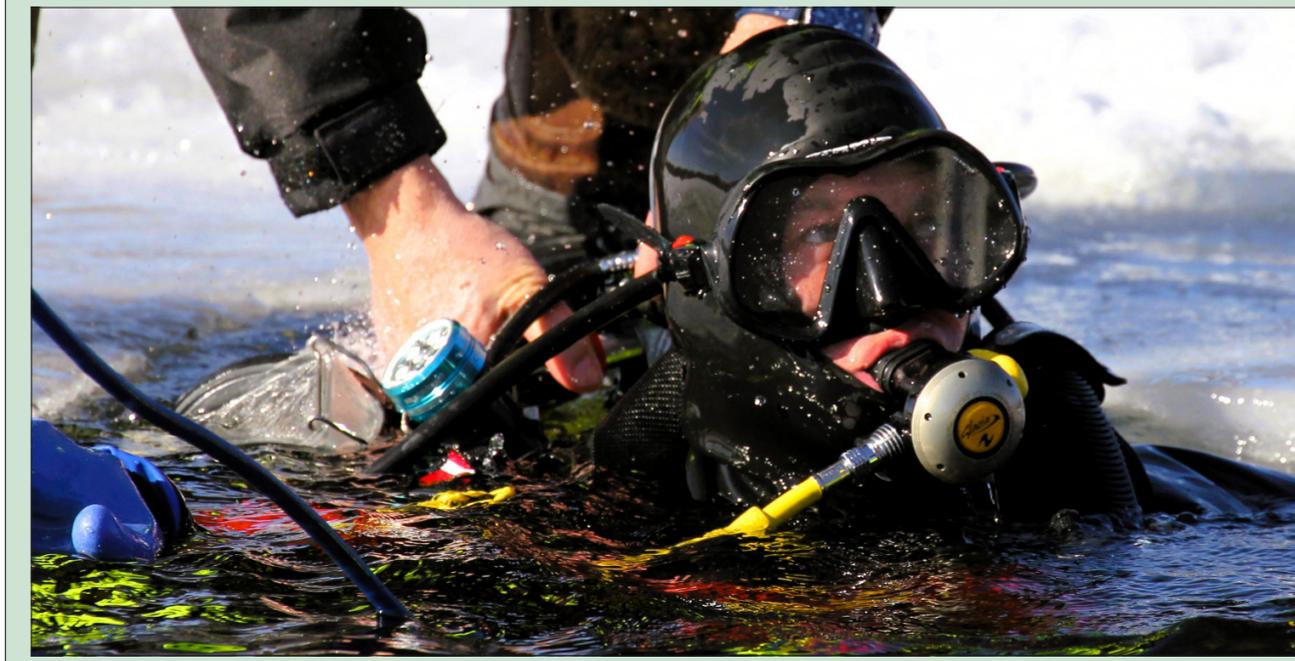
"Overall, my role is to make sure our Soldiers and civilians who are traveling for temporary duty can do so accurately,

(See RMO, Page 6)



Photo by Scott T. Sturkol

Lead Defense Travel Administrator Tara Lewis and Customer Service Representative Kimberly Raap (right) with the Fort McCoy Resource Management Office talks with Fort McCoy Garrison Commander Col. Sheyla Baez-Ramirez and Command Sgt. Maj. James Riddle, Fort McCoy Garrison command sergeant major, on Jan. 15, 2026, during an interview for a Behind the Triad video at the office at Fort McCoy.



### Ice rescue training

A firefighter with the Directorate of Emergency Services Fire Department dive team practices an ice rescue scenario Feb. 11 at a frozen Big Sandy Lake on South Post at Fort McCoy, Wis.

Several firefighters with the team took their turn getting in a suit, strapping an air tank and full-face mask, and diving into the depths of Big Sandy Lake under the ice on Fort McCoy's South Post.

The divers were covering depths of up to 25 feet or more completing several types of rescue scenarios under the guidance of fellow firefighters.

Divers took turns going in and out of the same hole that was cut in the ice.

Each diver was tethered with a connecting line that included a communications connection. This is an annual requirement for dive team members to maintain their abilities.

Read more about this training in the March 2026 edition of The Real McCoy newspaper.

Photo by Scott T. Sturkol

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NEWS

# U.S. Army Garrison-Fort McCoy leaders hold first town hall for workforce of 2026

STORY & PHOTOS BY SCOTT T. STURKOL  
Public Affairs Staff

Fort McCoy's senior commander as well as leaders with U.S. Army Garrison-Fort McCoy led the first pair of garrison town hall events Jan. 22 in building 905 at Fort McCoy.

To open the event, Chaplain (Maj.) Walter McCall, Fort McCoy Garrison chaplain with the Fort McCoy Religious Support Office, gave an invocation.

"Oh, blessed Lord, we thank you for this day that you have made," McCall said. "We are rejoicing, and we are glad in it. We thank you for giving us life and life more abundantly, and we thank you for the opportunity to be able to hear these people. I continually pray for them.

"I pray for our leadership," McCall said. "I pray for our leadership above so there may be peace with us. I thank you that all wisdom comes from you, and we ask that you provide it liberally to all. We know that you're able to do exceedingly abundantly above all we could ever ask or think, and we thank you Lord for your sovereignty. Thank you for your love. Thank you for your hand being with us and moving us forward in the direction not only that we desire to go but the direction that you desire for us to go. We ask and thank you for all these things in your mighty and precious name, we pray, Amen."

McCall was followed by Fort McCoy Senior Commander Maj. Gen. Joseph Ricciardi, commanding general of the 88th Readiness Division.

Ricciardi updated the workforce members and Soldiers present on news and information affecting Fort McCoy. He also took questions from several Fort McCoy team members.

When wrapping up his discussion, Ricciardi said he was proud to work with the Fort McCoy team.

"I want to thank you for all you do. ... I wear many hats. One I am so proud of is that of senior commander," Ricciardi said.

The major general was followed by the Fort McCoy Garrison Commander Col. Sheyla Baez who discussed ongoing activities at the installation, and more. She addressed the ongoing personnel challenges as well as planned priorities in the coming year.

"For those of you who might not know what our (Integrated Priority List) IPL items are, we go through planning in the headquarters, and we talk to the senior commander, and we look at what are the priorities for McCoy," Baez said. "We go to a planning process, and we get from the senior commander his priorities. We determine which project, which initiatives, which things we are doing for the garrison during a... fiscal year."

Among the priorities discussed were garrison reshaping, which is also being completed across the service with the Army Transformation. Also discussed were training improvements and changes, many which extend beyond 2026.

Baez also discussed communication as one of the Fort McCoy team's main priorities for fiscal year 2026.

"We have communications as one of our priorities in there," Baez said. "When I stand here in front of you, I want to make sure that we that we provide transparent communication to the workforce. Anything that we know to the level that we know, and we can share with the team, we would do so."

For all the IPL items planned by the garrison, Baez said it's important to remember there's a lot of thought and work that goes into them, and they are designed to project the installation's action in a positive direction in the future.

"The main thing that I want to tell you about this priority system is we try to do everything so that we can be relevant," Baez said. "To be relevant, we have to make sure that we can train our Soldiers to standard, that we are complying with the senior leader's directives, and also that we are meeting their priorities as well. So, every time... this is a domino effect. Every time that we do a project or a planning session here at Fort McCoy, we look at how we are synchronizing those projects those priorities to make sure that those are trickling down to our workforce, into our the units that we train, and trickling up to make sure that they are meeting and are satisfying the priorities from the senior leaders."

After Baez spoke in both sessions, then numerous Fort McCoy workforce members were presented with awards they earned. These included longevity awards for federal service as well as medals for commendable service.

Updates were also provided by representatives from the Fort McCoy Exchange discussing the ongoing upgrades and renovation of the exchange; from the Directorate of Family and Morale, Welfare and



Fort McCoy Senior Commander Maj. Gen. Joseph Ricciardi, commanding general of the 88th Readiness Division, holds a discussion Jan. 22 with the garrison workforce and military members in building 905 at Fort McCoy as part of a town hall meeting.



Fort McCoy Garrison Commander Col. Sheyla Baez Ramirez holds a discussion Jan. 22 with the garrison workforce and military members in building 905 at Fort McCoy as part of a town hall meeting.

Recreation; from the Directorate of Public Works; and closing comments from Command Sgt. Maj. James Riddle, garrison command sergeant major.

The next Fort McCoy town hall sessions will take place in April. Fort McCoy has supported America's armed forces since 1909. Located in the heart of the upper Midwest, Fort McCoy is the only U.S. Army installation in Wisconsin.

The post's varied terrain, state-of-the-art ranges, new as well as renovated facilities, and extensive support infrastructure combine to provide military personnel with an environment in which to develop and sustain the skills necessary for mission success.

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

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

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## 40-year DES employees recognized with length-of-service awards

Fire Inspector Curt Ladwig, Officer Julio Rivas, and Public Safety Dispatcher David Hansen, all with the Fort McCoy Directorate of Emergency Services (DES), were recognized in January 2026 by Fort McCoy DES Director Micah Komp for each reaching 40-plus years of service.

All three of the DES employees received the 40-year U.S. Army length-of-service award. According to the Office of Personnel Management, with the Army Civilian Length of Service Recognition, the program recognizes civilian employees for sustained federal service supporting Army missions. These awards are time-based (not performance-based) and are part of the Army civilian awards and recognition program.

Awards are typically presented at these service points: 10 years, 15 years, 20 years, 25 years, 30 years, 35 years, 40 years, 45 years, and 50-plus years. Some organizations also recognize 5-year increments by local policy.

Most recipients receive a service emblem or lapel pin showing years of service, an official certificate, and command or organization acknowledgment. Service is determined using official personnel data including the civilian service computation date, federal employment records, Army human resources systems, and verified creditable prior federal service.

And each employee has a unique heritage of service.

Ladwig said he started his firefighting career in 1972 as a member of the Elroy (Wis.) Fire Department and worked his way up to become fire chief.

"In 1984, I joined the federal government with a job as Fire Chief of the Army Aviation Support Facility in West Bend, Wis.," Ladwig said. "In 1988 to get closer to home, I transferred to the Fort McCoy Fire Department as a firefighter/EMT. In 1990, I was promoted to the rank of lieutenant of fire prevention and have been with fire prevention ever since."

Ladwig is also proud of his family. "I am married to my wife Diane and together we have five children, 13 grandchildren and two great grandchildren," he said.

As far as his career, he said, "Anyone can be a fire inspector. Fire prevention is education. We need to teach the public how to be fire safe." And he has done that for thousands of federal employees as well as the general public over his four decades-plus of service.

According to Hansen, he has spent his life serving his country and community through a remarkable career that spans military service, entrepreneurship, law enforcement, and public safety.



Public Safety Dispatcher David Hansen (above), Officer Julio Rivas (right), and Fire Inspector Curt Ladwig (lower right), all receive Army 40-year length-of-service awards in January 2026 from Fort McCoy Directorate of Emergency Services Director Micah Komp at Fort McCoy.

As Management Analyst Kevin A. Nelson wrote about Hansen's career, he stated, "His journey is a testament to dedication, adaptability, and a commitment to excellence. Hansen began his career in the U.S. Air Force from 1981 to 1984 as an automatic tracking radar technician. Stationed in Bayshore, Mich., he provided radar bomb scoring and electronic warfare training to aircraft such as the B-52, B-1, F-15, and F-16. His expertise earned him the honor of assisting in the reopening of the radar site in Rozet, Wyo."

Hansen's biography also states that in 1986, he transitioned to the Army, serving as an 11C indirect fire infantryman and section sergeant. During Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm, he was deployed with the 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment of the 24th Infantry Division, where he served as a vehicle commander for forward air controllers on the front lines. His military career was cut short due to a medical discharge, but his contributions left a lasting impact.

"Following his military service, Hansen ventured into entrepreneurship, founding Terminator Information Systems in 1994. As a sole proprietor, he provided online dial-up access to his community before the internet became widely available locally," the biography states.

"In 1996, Hansen embarked on a distinguished career in law enforcement as a police officer at Fort McCoy. Over nearly three decades, he took on numerous roles, including field training officer, traffic accident investigator, radar and laser instructor, and patrol sergeant. His training included instruction at the

Wisconsin State Patrol Academy and advanced collision investigation at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas."

Hansen also volunteered for the agency's Special Response Team and played a key role in officer training and development. Since 2023, Hansen has continued his service as a public safety dispatcher, where he remains a vital resource for training officers and ensuring the safety of his community.

"David Hansen's career reflects a lifelong commitment to service, leadership, and innovation," Nelson's message about him shows. "From the military to public safety, his contributions have made a lasting impact on those he has served and worked alongside."

Rivas' journey of service began in 1983, Nelson also stated in his message about the longtime officer.

"To put that into perspective, that was the year the final episode of MASH aired and Michael Jackson's Thriller was dominating the charts," Nelson stated. "It was also the year Julio answered the call to duty, beginning a distinguished 20-year career in field artillery with the U.S. Army. For two decades, he served our nation with the discipline, courage, and commitment that would become the hallmark of his entire career, concluding his active duty in 2003."

For many, a 20-year military career would be the pinnacle of a lifetime of service.

"For Julio, it was just the first half. In 2005, he began a new chapter as a PCF escort at Fort Sill, Okla., where he first applied his military experience to a civilian role. But his drive to pro-



tect and serve led him to a new path," Rivas' biography shows. "In 2008, he transitioned to become a Department of the Army security guard at Letterkenny Army Depot, Penn., and by 2011, he brought those skills back to Fort Sill. This dedication to security and law enforcement culminated in 2018, when he achieved a significant milestone, becoming an Army civilian police officer at Red River Army Depot. His journey as a police officer continued in 2020 when he transferred to Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., further expanding his impact across the Army community."

In 2023, Rivas joined the ranks of the

Fort McCoy Police Department. "Though he has only been with us for a part of his long journey, he brought with him an incredible depth of experience and a calm, steady presence that can only be forged through four decades of service," Nelson wrote about Rivas' service. "From the artillery fields of the Army to the gates and streets of our depots and forts, Julio has stood the watch. He has been a guard, a protector, and a dedicated officer, ensuring the safety of Soldiers, civilians, and their families."

(Article prepared by the Fort McCoy Public Affairs Office and the Fort McCoy Directorate of Emergency Services.)

# SLING-LOAD TRAINING

from Page 1

tions. First is inspecting and preparation. Cargo is prepared and inspected for safe air transport, including rigging nylon ropes or chains to equipment like Humvees, artillery, or supply containers.

Second phase is the hook-up: Ground crews — a hook-up team — secure the load to the helicopter using reach pendants, ensuring all attachments are secure, and guide the aircraft if necessary.

Third phase is inspection and release. Here, a certified inspector reviews the load, and upon arrival at the destination, the load is released from the aircraft.

Staff Sgt. Dylan Baird, one of the 120th Soldiers training during the sling-load event at McCoy, said sling-load training is not something they do very often, especially in extreme cold temperatures.

"This is to help us get proficient," Baird said in a video interview by Greg Mason with the Fort McCoy Multimedia-Visual Information Office at <https://www.dvidshub.net/video/994442/sling-load-operations-fort-mccoy-wis>. "It's really nice opportunity because when you think of artillery ... this definitely doesn't come to mind. It's not something we do very often. It's a big morale booster, so it's really nice to just get hands on and have the actual training on how this stuff actually works."

Kletzien said the 1-120th has done a lot of cold-weather related training in recent years supporting an exercise at Camp Grayling, Mich. But this year, with many of the battalion's members supporting deployments and off at training schools,

they decided to complete a smaller, similar version of the Grayling training during January at Fort McCoy. The 1-120th held their training on post from Jan. 21-31.

Also, sling-load training is a regular activity at Fort McCoy. Students in the 89B Ammunition Supply Course at Regional Training Site-Maintenance hold sling-load training with ammunition pallets several times throughout the year.

Sling-load training has also been a part of many major exercises at Fort McCoy in the past number of decades on post.

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

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

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

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Photo by Scott T. Sturkol

An aircrew with the the 2nd Battalion, 147th Aviation Regiment of the Minnesota National Guard lifts a Howitzer with a CH-47 Chinook on Jan. 28 during sling-load training at Fort McCoy.



Photo by Scott T. Sturkol

An aircrew with the the 2nd Battalion, 147th Aviation Regiment of the Minnesota National Guard lifts a Howitzer with a UH-60 Black Hawk on Jan. 28 during sling-load training at Fort McCoy.

# 1-120th Field Artillery troops get cold-weather acquainted during special January training

BY SCOTT T. STURKOL

Public Affairs Staff

Soldiers in Wisconsin National Guard's 1st Battalion, 120th Field Artillery brought more than 180 unit members to Fort McCoy from Jan. 21-31 to not only complete important individual Soldier/Warrior tasks but also to get training in on their M777 and M119 Howitzers in cold weather.

Command Sgt. Maj. Nicholas Kletzien, battalion command sergeant major, said this January training was meant to mirror, in some ways, the training the unit has completed in previous years at Camp Grayling, Mich.

"Those were good training opportunities during their exercise at Grayling called Northern Strike," Kletzien said. "What we wanted to do here was do some training to be similar to that exercise but in a smaller scale."

Kletzien said just over half of the battalion was able to complete this January training because many members are either supporting deployments or completing institutional training that's typically done this time of year.

"So, because our unit would be training with a smaller number of troops, we decided to set up this training at McCoy, and it worked out great," Kletzien said.

Lt. Col. Rustin Billings, battalion commander, and Kletzien stated their training plan was built on several operational goals to help improve the unit in a number of ways.

These included:

— **Train in all environments** — cold is a genuine environment to prepare for.

— **Test skills and equipment** — challenging conditions reveal gaps in skills, training, and equipment that can be masked in "regular" temps/environments.

— **Build real-life skills** — these Soldiers live in Wisconsin and can use this knowledge in real life and when called on for state active-duty community emergencies.

— **Natural challenge vs artificial simulation.** Extreme conditions are a natural challenge which drives resilience in Soldiers that artificial simulations can't replicate.

"We find this resonates with Soldiers better than when we make training artificially hard," Kletzien said.

Many times, during this training while training outdoors, the unit set up Arctic 10-person tents with heaters to keep troops warm while they operated at firing points with the Howitzers and also during the sling-load training event on Jan. 28.

Kletzien said practicing those cold-weather operations skills as well as when all the Soldiers practice wearing their Army Extreme Cold-Weather Clothing System, or ECWCS, items, helps fill that capability of "training in all environments."

Last October, Kletzien said his unit was visited by former Fort McCoy Cold-Weather Operations Course Instructor Joe Ernst, who now is an officer with the Fort McCoy Directorate of Emergency Services.

Ernst, he said, helped show the unit Soldiers a variety of skills-building ways to operate and use cold-weather equipment, and more.

"When Joe came to talk with our unit, he showed us how to use that equipment and in turn it really helped us to be prepared for the training at McCoy," Kletzien said.

Throughout their entire training experience at McCoy, the 1-120th Soldiers experienced some of the more challenging weather a Wisconsin winter can throw at them, including snow showers and multiple days with below-zero or near below-zero temperatures.

"Our goal was to do some testing with the equipment," Kletzien said. "Individual tasks and training were also our focus. ... And that was accomplished."

Kletzien also said Fort McCoy serves as an ideal place for his unit to complete extended combat training, weekend training, and annual training.

"Fort McCoy, besides its location being close for everyone, offers a wide array of firing points for our unit to choose from for training," Kletzien said.

"This flexibility helps us build scenarios and realistic training for our Soldiers. ... Plus, all the support we get here, the Wisconsin Military Academy has training for artillery specialties, our Soldiers attend the Fort McCoy Noncommissioned Officer Academy, we store equipment here, and more. McCoy just works out great for us consistently."

Kletzien said plans are already under way to look at collective training in 2027. It could include training with their sister unit, the 121st Field Artillery.

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

Located in the heart of the upper Midwest, Fort McCoy is the only



Photos by Command Sgt. Maj. Nicholas Kletzien

(All photos) Soldiers with the 1st Battalion, 120th Field Artillery of the Wisconsin National Guard complete training with Howitzers Jan. 28, 2026, at a firing point at Fort McCoy, Wis. The unit trained from Jan. 21-31, 2026, to get familiarized with cold-weather operations and more with their equipment.

U.S. Army installation in Wisconsin.

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

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NEWS

# 2nd Battalion, 147th Aviation Regiment helicopters, crews support sling-load training event with artillery unit at Fort McCoy

STORY & PHOTOS BY SCOTT T. STURKOL  
Public Affairs Staff

A CH-47 Chinook helicopter and several UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters and their aircrews stepped up to support a winter sling-load training event Jan. 28 at Fort McCoy during some of the coldest temperatures the installation will see for all of 2026.

The crews and helos, all with the 2nd Assault Helicopter Battalion, 147th Aviation Regiment of the Minnesota National Guard (2-147th), were supporting Soldiers with the 1st Battalion, 120th (1-120th) Field Artillery of the Wisconsin National Guard at Firing Point 421 at Fort McCoy.

With helicopter blade wash just increasing the wind-chill factor tenfold during the training operations, all the cold-weather preparation was a good thing, said Command Sgt. Maj. (CSM) Nick Kletzien, battalion CSM. And the training provided a realistic feeling for what 120th members would have to face in extreme cold-weather conditions possibly somewhere else in the world.

“This was a great opportunity to test our equipment,” Kletzien said. “And a good opportunity to have a training event that’s realistic to what we could face.”

For the sling-loads, the helicopter aircrews were lifting the M119 Howitzer. This training event was completed over several hours. Teams of Soldiers took turns hooking up the sling-load Howitzers to the different helicopters. The helicopters would then pick up the pieces, take them for a short flight, and then return them to the same spot they were picked up from.

The 2-147th has supported training at Fort McCoy in the past in a number of ways in addition to sling-load training. The unit also has a strong history of supporting National Guard units in neighboring states.

According to the unit description at <https://minnesotanational-guard.azurewebsites.us/2-147>, the Saint Paul-based 2nd Assault Helicopter Battalion, 147th Aviation Regiment “is a National Guard utility helicopter unit that supports the 34th Red Bull Infantry Division and the state of Minnesota by providing airlift, scouting, mobility, and support of civil authorities.

“The battalion has six subordinate units: A Company, D Company, and E Company at St. Paul’s Holman Field as well as B Company in the Kentucky National Guard and C Company in the Iowa National Guard.

When looking at the airframes themselves, an Army fact sheet shows the CH-47 is the Army’s only heavy-lift cargo helicopter supporting critical combat and non-combat operations, according to the Army fact sheet on the helicopter. The CH-47 has an empty weight of 24,578 pounds and a maximum gross weight of 50,000 pounds. The helicopter also can lift intra-theater payloads up to 16,000 pounds in high/hot environments.

The CH-47 Chinook is also one of the most recognizable and dependable aircraft in the inventory of the Army, the fact sheet states. Known for its distinctive twin-rotor silhouette and deep, thunderous rotor sound, the Chinook has served as the Army’s primary heavy-lift helicopter for more than six decades. Built by Boeing, it first entered service in the early 1960s and has remained continuously relevant through steady modernization and mission adaptation.

Designed around a tandem, counter-rotating rotor system, the Chinook eliminates the need for a tail rotor and converts nearly all engine power directly into lift and forward motion. This configuration gives it exceptional lifting ability and stability, especially when carrying oversized or externally slung loads.

From a distance, it often appears to move with deliberate strength rather than speed — a flying heavy hauler built to move what other helicopters cannot. Inside its wide fuselage, the Chinook can carry dozens of fully equipped Soldiers, palletized cargo, artillery pieces, light vehicles, and evacuation litters. A rear loading ramp allows rapid roll-on and roll-off operations, making it ideal for air assault insertions, resupply missions, and battlefield recovery tasks.

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

The UH-60 also is the Army’s utility tactical transport helicopter, the fact sheet states. The versatile helicopter has enhanced the overall mobility of the Army due to dramatic improvements in troop capacity and cargo lift capability over the years as well. Now in its fourth decade of service, the Black Hawk was developed as a result of the Army’s requirement in 1972 for a simple, robust, and reliable utility helicopter system to satisfy projected air-mobile requirements around the globe.

Named after Native American war chief and leader of the Sauk tribe in the Midwest, Black Hawk, the first UH-60A was accepted by



Aircrews with the the 2nd Battalion, 147th Aviation Regiment of the Minnesota National Guard lift Howitzers with a CH-47 Chinook (above) and UH-60 Black Hawks (below) on Jan. 28 during sling-load training at Fort McCoy.



the Army in 1978 and entered service in 1979 when it was delivered to aviation components of the 101st and 82nd Airborne Divisions, the fact sheet states.

Learn more about Army aviation by visiting the Army Program Executive Office for Aviation webpage at <https://www.army.mil/peoaviation>.

Black Hawks and Chinooks from many different units, especially Army Reserve and National Guard units, train regularly at Fort McCoy every year.

Learn more about the Army Reserve by visiting <https://www.usar.army.mil>. Learn more about the National Guard by visiting <https://www.nationalguard.mil>.

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## Fort McCoy firefighters provide mutual aid support to fire in Tomah

BY SCOTT T. STURKOL  
Public Affairs Staff

Firefighters with the Fort McCoy Directorate of Emergency Services Fire Department responded to a mutual aid call for a fire response Jan. 25 of a structure fire in Tomah, Wis.

“At approximately (2:30 p.m.) Fort McCoy Fire responded with automatic aid to Tomah for a structure fire,” said Assistant Fire Chief Huner Young with the Fort McCoy DES Fire Department. “(Fort McCoy) responded with a command truck, engine and five personnel. Fort McCoy Fire helped with extinguishment of an abandoned building with heavy structural damage. Fort McCoy Fire returned to quarters around (3:30 p.m.) without further incident.”

In a press release by the Tomah Fire Department about the incident, posted on their Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/Tomahfiredepartment>, it further states what happened at the fire.

“At approximately 2:19 PM today (Jan. 25), the Tomah Fire Department responded to a reported structure fire at 621 East Clifton Street,” the release states. “Upon arrival, crews found the structure heavily involved. The occupants who reside at the address reported they were not inside the residence at the time of the fire, and no civilian injuries were reported. A total of 24 firefighters were on scene working to suppress the fire.

“Due to significant fire damage and concerns for structural stability, the building was determined to be structurally compromised,” the release further states. “As a result, an excavator from the City of Tomah Department of Public Works was requested to assist with demolition to ensure scene safety and allow for complete extinguishment of remaining hot spots.

“Assisting agencies on scene included the Tomah Area Ambulance Service, Tomah Police Department, Fort McCoy Fire Department, Alliant Energy, Monroe County 911 Communications Center, and the City of Tomah Department of Public Works. The cause of the fire remains under investigation at this time.”

Acting Fort McCoy Fire Chief Brady Brever said he was proud of the response.

“Grateful that our firefighters were able to support the local community,” Brever said. “Always professional!”

Fort McCoy’s Fire Department is accredited by the Commission on Fire Accreditation International. They received the most recent accreditation in 2022.

In a previous news story, Brever explained what it means to be accredited.

The accreditation process takes place every five years, Brever said. The Fort McCoy Fire Depart-



Photo by Tomah Fire Department

Firefighters battle a blaze Jan. 25 in Tomah, Wis. Fort McCoy firefighters were among the firefighters attacking and extinguishing the fire as part of a mutual aid support effort.

ment is one of more than 200 agencies to achieve Internationally Accredited Agency status with the Commission on Fire Accreditation International and the Center for Public Safety Excellence.

“It’s an international accreditation from a third party,” Brever said. “They are looking at the department as a whole and all the programs and processes that are in place to conduct business as a fire department. The accreditation process allows a fire department to review their programs and identify strengths in programs that are going well and weaknesses that provide opportunities for improvement. We see accreditation as a continuous improvement plan for the fire department to be able to provide the best emergency response to the community we serve and protect.”

The fire department is also part of the Wisconsin Mutual Aid Box-Alarm System, or MABAS. Mutual aid agreements are signed documents that define how and when assistance might be provided between partner agencies, Brever said.

Those partners will then send crews out to help Fort McCoy if asked, and Fort McCoy can respond to help those agencies as well.

Fort McCoy has supported America’s armed forces since 1909. Located in the heart of the upper Midwest, Fort McCoy is the only U.S. Army installation in Wisconsin.

The post’s varied terrain, state-of-the-art ranges, new as well as renovated facilities, and extensive support infrastructure combine to provide military personnel with an environment in which to develop

and sustain the skills necessary for mission success.

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

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RMO

from Page 1

efficiently, and in compliance with the joint travel regulations,” Lewis said.

“As a lead Defense Travel administrator, I’m here to help other travel administrators and travelers at each directorate before, during, and after travel,” Lewis said. Whether someone is traveling for the first time, dealing with complex travel, or has questions about their government travel card, my role is to provide support from start to finish so that the travel is done right and their mission can move forward.”

Kimberly Raap, customer service representative (CSR) for RMO, also discussed what her role is in supporting Fort McCoy Garrison as the CSR.

“My primary function is to ensure accurate and timely payments to our employees,” Raap said. “I also act as the liaison between our employees and the payroll office at Defense Finance and Accounting Service.

“My job as the CSR helps the mission of Fort McCoy by ensuring the people who keep the installation running are supported, informed, and paid correctly and timely so they can focus on training readiness and operational support,” Raap said.

Both Lewis and Raap also said they find that being part of the Fort McCoy team has been a great experience.

“For me, the best part about working at Fort McCoy is being part of a really great team,” Lewis said. “Overall, Fort McCoy has a very important mission in strengthening Total Force readiness, and I enjoy being a small part of that through helping Soldiers and civilians whenever I can.”

Raap said, “Working here at Fort McCoy means having a purpose, stability, and community while supporting the Army’s mission every single day. The camaraderie I personally experience is a powerful thing. It makes me want to continue to do better.”

Both RMO members also said how federal employment at Fort McCoy can be beneficial.

“I believe there are many benefits and rewards to

working at Fort McCoy, and being a federal employee,” Lewis said. “For me personally, the opportunity for career development and the work-life balance offered here is wonderful. There’s also a sense of belonging. And knowing that what we do supports the readiness of our organization every day is very rewarding.”

“I think federal employment offers security, strong benefits, and a sense of purpose, making it a rewarding long-term career. Also, this year is my 28th year of government service, and throughout the 28 years, you get to meet some pretty cool people,” Raap said.

Fort McCoy Garrison Commander Col. Sheyla Baez Ramirez said the RMO is a great contributor to the mission, and she’s proud of the workforce supporting Fort McCoy’s diverse mission.

“RMO is only one office on Fort McCoy,” Baez said. “We have so many civilian employees who work hard every day to help support the mission. ... RMO has a very, very important job. We appreciate what you do.”

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

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Photos by Scott T. Sturkol

(Above) Several members of the Fort McCoy Resource Management Office gather for a group photo Jan. 15, 2026, at their office. (Below) Resource Management Officer Bonnie Hilt (right) with the Fort McCoy Resource Management Office talks with Fort McCoy Garrison Commander Col. Sheyla Baez-Ramirez and Command Sgt. Maj. James Riddle, Fort McCoy Garrison command sergeant major, on Jan. 15 during an interview for a Behind the Triad video about the office.



# Longtime Regional Training Site-Medical employee retires from service

The Regional Training Site-Medical facility at Fort McCoy honored employee Victor Hinze who served as a bio-medical technician at the facility from 1991 to 2025.

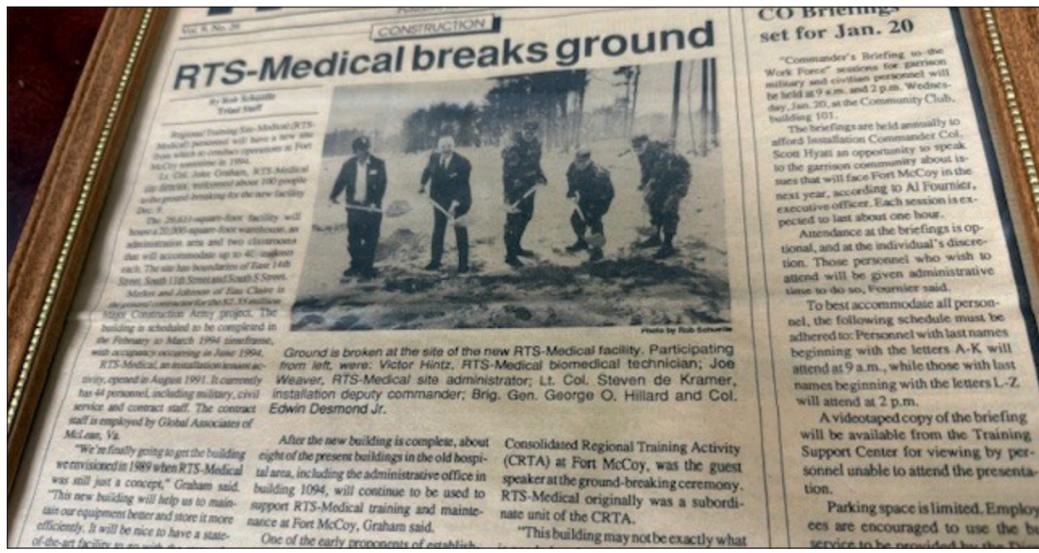
Throughout his remarkable tenure, he delivered expert instruction, meticulous maintenance support, and invaluable institutional knowledge that strengthened the readiness and training of Reserve medical units.

Col. Fernando Rivera, RTS-Medical site director, and the RTS-Medical team offered Hinze heartfelt congratulations on his retirement.

They recognized “Victor’s unwavering dedication and the critical role he played in sustaining lifesaving medical equipment both in training and operational environments. His professionalism, expertise, and commitment set a lasting standard of excellence for the organization.

“RTS-Medical celebrates Victor’s legacy of service and wishes him a rewarding and well earned retirement.”

(Article prepared by Regional Training Site-Medical at Fort McCoy.)



Victor Hinze, now-retired employee of Regional Training Site-Medical at Fort McCoy, is shown above in a photo of the ground-breaking of the current RTS-Medical facility. (Right) Hinze is shown with his co-workers during his retirement luncheon.



Courtesy photos

# Fort McCoy Garrison, tenant organizations gather for January meeting

STORY & PHOTOS BY SCOTT T. STURKOL  
Public Affairs Staff

Dozens of representatives of Fort McCoy Garrison staff as well as personnel with installation tenant organizations gathered Jan. 20 in McCoy’s Community Center for a special postwide meeting.

The Garrison-Tenant Staff Meeting is an important opportunity for all who attend, garrison officials said.

Fort McCoy Garrison Deputy Commander Lt. Col. Chad Holder, who took over as deputy commander in July 2025, led the meeting. Also attending from the garrison leadership team was Command Sgt. Maj. James Riddle, garrison command sergeant major.

The meeting is an opportunity for open dialogue between the garrison staff and tenant organization partners, Holder said during the meeting.

Holder welcomed everyone to the forum. Riddle then followed, explaining some of the latest news and information with U.S. Army Garrison-Fort McCoy.

Also speaking throughout the meeting there were people from Fort McCoy Garrison directorates, such as the Directorate of Emergency Services; Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security; Directorate of Public Works; and Directorate of Human Resources.

Garrison special staff represented included the Plans, Analysis, and Integration Office; Public Affairs Office; Installation Safety Office; Installation Legal Office; U.S. Army Garrison Fort McCoy Headquarters and Headquarters Company; and more.

Tenant organizations present included the 88th Readiness Division, Fort McCoy Regional Training Site-Maintenance; Fort McCoy Regional Training Site-Medical; Fort McCoy Noncommissioned Officer Academy; Wisconsin Military Academy; Wisconsin State Patrol Academy; Wisconsin Challenge Academy; and more.

In past years, the meeting was conducted in different ways, including a round-robin format where interaction between all attendees was encouraged. The current format was updated as every attendee from the different organizations took time to share news and information about their organization.

During the meeting, for example, Fort McCoy Directorate of Public Works Director Liane Haun discussed on-post construction projects that are planned or ongoing.

“We’re going to do a replacement of our air traffic control tower,” Haun said. “It’s a pretty big project for us because they’re actually going to have to construct a separate temporary tower in order to actually do all the work in the main tower. So, it’s like a \$6 million project, probably about a year long. So, it’ll just be a lot more work down at the airfield if you come down off of County Road A and you head up Quarry Hill Road. You’ll see some more work down at the airfield this next summer. They’re going to do a runway repaving as well ... on the main runway, the east-west runway.”

Haun also said Bridge 4, that goes to the State Patrol Academy and the Wisconsin Military Academy (WMA) on the cantonment area, is going to be replaced in 2026.

“That is going to get a complete replacement probably starting this winter and going through the summer,” Haun said. “So, right now we’re going to be putting a temporary fence up around that area of the Wisconsin State Patrol Academy and WMA, and the gate there, Gate 15, will be locked open for those people to (use). So, if you do need to get to WMA or State Patrol Academy, you’ll have to go outside the gate, and then come back in that way instead because you will not be able to get across the bridge.”

Haun added another bridge replacement will also take place down by Fort McCoy’s Pine View Campground.

“The big one is down at the campground,” Haun said. “Ao if you ever go out to the campground, we have an old Bailey Bridge that’s in a failing condition right now. It’s actually a pretty cool bridge, but it’s going to get a complete replacement, and it’ll be much safer than what we’ve had in the past as well.”

The next Fort McCoy Garrison-Tenant Staff Meeting is planned for this fall, although an exact date hasn’t yet been set.

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(Above and below) Fort McCoy Garrison leaders and representatives from garrison and tenant organizations gather for the Garrison-Tenant Staff Meeting on Jan. 20 in McCoy’s Community Center at Fort McCoy. The meeting brings together representatives from Fort McCoy Garrison and installation tenant organizations to discuss various topics, news, and information in a postwide forum.



# REMEMBERING 35 YEARS SINCE OPERATION DESERT STORM AT FORT MCCOY



FEBRUARY 2026: SPECIAL EDITION CELEBRATING THE 35TH ANNIVERSARY OF OPERATIONS DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM

## SHIELD TO A STORM: A look back Fort McCoy's impact supporting Operation Desert Storm

BY SCOTT I. STURKOL  
Public Affairs Staff

Between August 1990 and March 1991, Fort McCoy was a hub of mobilization and support for Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm.

According to history, Operation Desert Storm (Jan. 17 – Feb. 28, 1991) was a U.S.-led coalition military campaign to liberate Kuwait after Iraq's August 1990 invasion. Following months of buildup (Desert Shield), a five-week air campaign crippled Iraqi defenses, followed by a decisive 100-hour ground assault that expelled Iraqi forces.

### First mobilization in 40 years

At the time, this was the first major mobilization at Fort McCoy since the Korean War in the early 1950s. Fort McCoy history shows there were 74 units from nine states processed through Fort McCoy in 1990–1991. More than 18,000 service members and more than 3,000 pieces of equipment were mobilized or shipped from Fort McCoy.

History also shows Fort McCoy's mission included processing, weapons qualification, equipment prep (including desert paint), land navigation, medical readiness, and deployment staging.

Retired Col. Raymond G. Boland, commander of U.S. Army Garrison-Fort McCoy during Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm, was a guest during the first May 1 National Prayer Brunch in 2025 at Fort McCoy. During his guest speaker portion of the event, he discussed the call-ups of units for Operation Desert Shield/Operation Desert Storm.

In a Sept. 7, 1990, article in The Triad newspaper at Fort McCoy, in a story written by Lou Ann Mittelstaedt, titled "McCoy supports call-up," Boland was quoted discussing how the post was ready to take on a mobilization effort.

"Practice makes perfect," the article states. "Fort McCoy has banked on this philosophy for many years. And, in terms of the installation's mission as a mobilization station, the practices of the past will place the post in an excellent position to support the needs of the reserve component Soldiers processing through here when called to active duty in support of Operation Desert Shield."

"Although the installation has not been used as an actual mobilization processing site since the Korean War, it has been the site of many mobilization training exercises, according to Garrison Commander Col. Raymond G. Boland.

"These exercises have allowed our staff to continually test and refine our mobilization plans and procedures in preparation for this eventuality," Boland said. "Now, when the order to serve in this capacity has come down from headquarters; we find ourselves very prepared to complete the mission."

During the prayer brunch Boland further explained the Desert Shield mobilization started at McCoy.

"I met with the 181st last week and mentioned that we were actually doing a mobilization training exercise when the balloon went up in 1990," Borland said. "The guys were in the ops center next to the post headquarters. One of them came in to see me and said, sir, something strange is happening. I said, 'Oh now what?' He said, 'Well we think we're getting real mobilization messages. ... This ain't April Fool's Day. Well sure enough it was true. And lots of things started to happen really fast.'"

### Getting the job done

And between September 1990 and January 1991, Fort McCoy did what it was called to do — mobilize personnel and equipment.

Here's a look at the timeline of events from January to March 1991 at Fort McCoy:

— **Jan. 7–16, 1991** — Early deployments and processing — As Desert Storm buildup continued, units processed through Fort McCoy and prepared for deployment rotations.

— **Jan. 15, 1991** — Congressional authorization for combat, UN deadline passes; hostilities imminent — Desert Storm's air campaign is set to begin.

— **Jan. 17, 1991** — Air campaign begins — U.S. and coalition aircraft begin strikes against Iraqi targets in Desert Storm.

— **Early February 1991** — Units depart from Fort McCoy — Multiple units deployed directly from Fort McCoy in early February (five units and counting), and additional Soldiers continued training and processing.

— **Feb. 8–15, 1991** — Military police and transportation units advance — The 822nd Military Police Company (Army Reserve) deployed; detachments from Wisconsin and Illinois activated and processed at Fort McCoy, including transport and rail-ops squads.

— **Feb. 26, 1991** — Ceasefire announced — Ground operations conclude after rapid coalition offensive; Fort McCoy begins preparing for redeployment and return of units.

— **March 1991** — Units begin redeployment through Fort McCoy.

Not mentioned a lot in historical files related to Fort McCoy and Desert Storm is the fact that many installation civilian employees volunteered to go to Saudi Arabia to support the operation as well.

In an article from the Jan. 4, 1991, edition of The Triad Newspaper at Fort McCoy by Hugh Williams of the newspaper staff of the Fort McCoy Public Affairs Office entitled "Post civilians join Desert Shield," it described this effort.

"Eleven Fort McCoy Department of the Army civilian employees are now in or en route to Saudi Arabia to help support Operation Desert Shield," the article states. "The 11 are among 51 post civilian employees who volunteered for Saudi duty in response to an Army Materiel Command message asking for civilian volunteers with certain skills and occupational specialties."

"The employees were first sent to Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md., for about one week of pre-deployment processing. Seven of the Fort McCoy volunteers departed La Crosse for Aberdeen on Dec. 16, while the remainder left Dec. 30.

"The normal tour of duty is 179 days. Nine of the 11 men from Fort McCoy work for the Directorate of Logistics (DOL) and two from the Directorate of Engineering (DE).

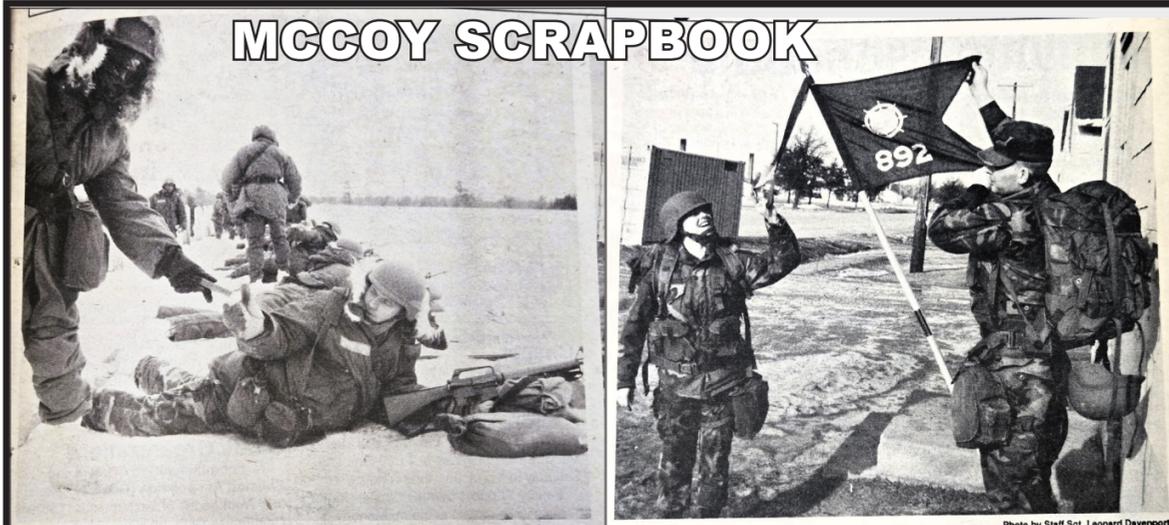
"Those who departed Dec. 16 were: Elwood Decora, electronics mechanic, DOL; Randy Goldsmith, heavy mobile equipment mechanic, DOL; Norval Miller, fabric worker, DOL; Jim Pacer, heavy mobile equipment mechanic, DOL; Everette Patterson, warehouse worker/motor vehicle operator, DOL; Duaine Rasmussen, warehouse worker foreman, DE; and Jim Scorsone, electronics mechanic, DOL.

"Departing Dec. 30 were: Robert Bemis, automotive worker, DOL; Dennis Brueggeman, warehouse worker, DOL; John Crooks, painter, DE; and Tom Habegger, warehouse worker foreman, DOL. Rita Verkerier, a personnel staffing specialist at the Directorate of Civilian Personnel (DCP) said all volunteers are in a temporary duty status and will remain attached to Fort McCoy during their deployment. Of the original 51 Fort McCoy volunteers, some changed their decision, and others did not have job skills matching those needed.

"Verkler said the only real pay incentive being offered is a pay differential of 20 percent, payable after 42 days in country. "There also will be considerable overtime, since they will be working six days a week, 12 hours a day," she said.

"Miller, who lives in Viroqua (Wis) with his wife Alma, said he volunteered for two reasons — to support the troops who are over there and to see a different part of the world. "It should be a good experience, and my family, though they have some doubts, are supporting

(See DESERT STORM AT MCCOY, Insert Page 2)



**One more round**  
A soldier from the 892nd Transportation Company, a U.S. Army Reserve unit from Belleville, Ill., accepts a magazine from a range controller during weapons qualification. The 892nd was the last unit deployed from Fort McCoy to support Operation Desert Storm.

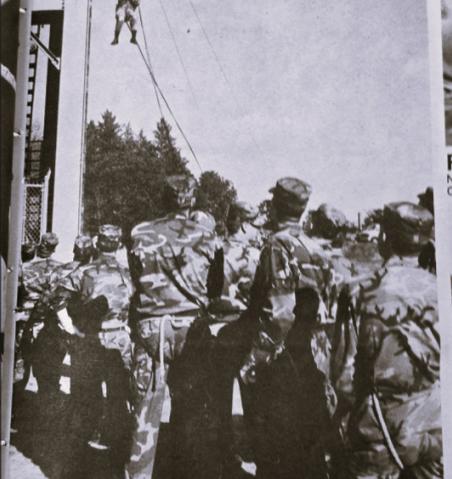
**To guide them on**  
Two soldiers from the 892nd Transportation Company, a U.S. Army Reserve unit from Belleville, Ill., display the unit guidon. A total of 74 units representing more than 8,700 soldiers were activated and processed through Fort McCoy to support Operation Desert Storm.



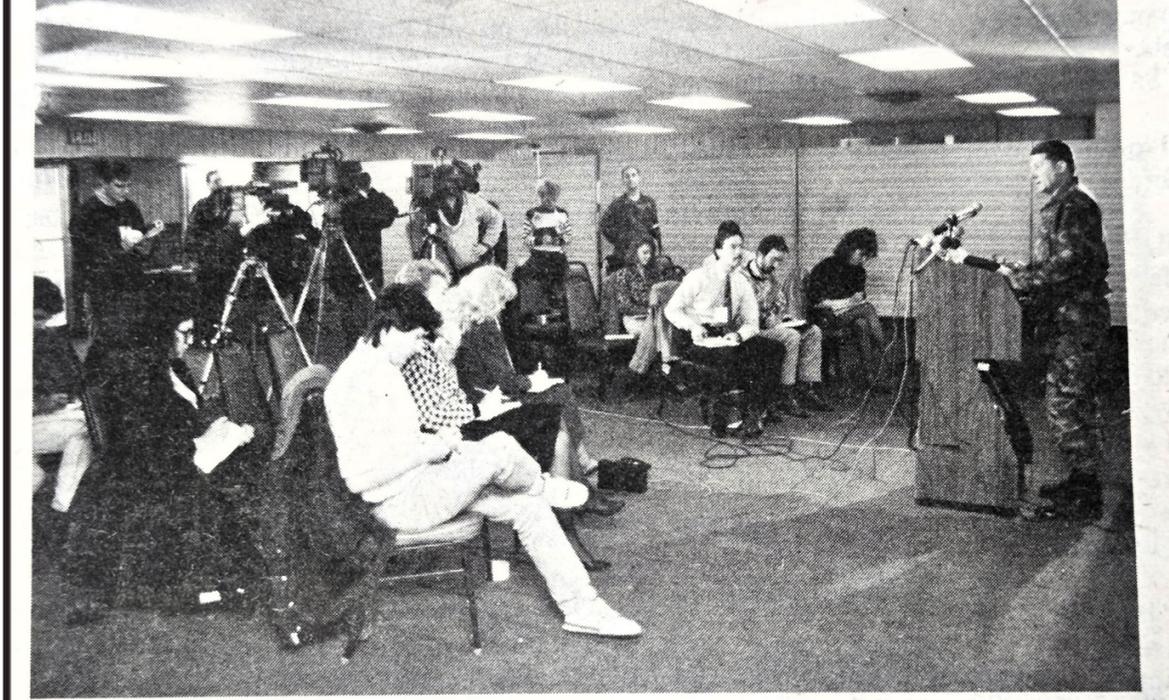
The eight members of the 220th Medical Detachment from Madison, Wis., salute the American flag during the post's Command Retreat ceremony.



**2361st support:** Switchboard operators Spec. Carol Maratta and Staff Sgt. David Noaker, both of the 2361st Signal Center Detachment, assist at the Fort McCoy switchboard. Approximately 50 members of the Akron, Ohio-based U.S. Army Reserve unit were activated to provide the post with around-the-clock communication's capabilities.



**Rappelling:** A member of the 915th Transportation Corps Company, Council Bluffs, Iowa, slides down a rappelling rope while other soldiers wait their turns. Rappelling was part of many units' physical conditioning and also served as a means of relieving soldiers' stress and tension.



Garrison Commander Col. Raymond G. Boland addresses members of the media during a press conference held the day after Operation Desert Storm commenced.

# DESERT STORM AT MCCOY

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my decision 100 percent,' he said."

## Starting to slow down

By February 1991, Fort McCoy leaders noticed a change in the pace of operations for Desert Storm support as the orders for mobilizing units began to slow down.

An article by The Triad staff in the Feb. 1, 1991, edition of the paper entitled, "McCoy's ODS role winding down," it shows an update from the garrison commander.

"Morale remains high among the Soldiers completing processing and training at Fort McCoy for deployment to the Operation Desert Storm theater of operations, said Garrison Commander Col. Raymond G. Boland.

"Boland said that although the post is in a winding down stage for the deployments, it is awaiting word of further missions. The short-term mission will include processing and training about 840 additional Soldiers for deployment.

"More than 90 percent of these troops are with the 224th Engineer Battalion (Combat Corps), an Iowa National Guard unit that has its headquarters in Fairfield. The 224th has subordinate units in Mount Pleasant, Burlington, Ottumwa, Muscatine, Centerville, and Keokuk.

"The remainder of the Soldiers are from two smaller military police detachments, the 34th and 146th. The 34th is an Iowa National Guard unit from Camp Dodge, and the 146th is a Michigan National Guard unit from Owosso. Each unit has about 30 personnel.

"Beyond that, the post had no further word of possible activations, Boland said. Fort McCoy is prepared to handle any future activations, he added, and preparations are being made for processing and returning re-deployed Soldiers to their Reserve units."

## Training received

Another newspaper article from the Feb. 15, 1991, edition of The Triad newspaper discusses some of the types of training Soldiers were receiving in preparation for Desert Storm.

The article, "Training: CRTA staff prepares Desert Storm Soldiers," also written by Hugh Williams, highlights one of the post's training organizations.

"Things are returning to a degree of normalcy for four subordinate units of the Fourth U.S. Army Consolidated Regional Training Activity (4A CRTA) as Phase II of Operation Desert Storm training here winds down.

"Lt. Col. Orman House, 4A CRTA deputy commander, said that the majority of units reporting to Fort McCoy for processing and training received training from a 4A CRTA unit before deploying.

"House said training was provided by the Light Fighter Academy (LFA), the Non-Commissioned Officer Academy (NCOA), the Regional Training Site (RTS)-Maintenance, and the Fourth Army Intelligence Training Army Area School (Fourth ITAAS).

"Between early September and mid-January, a total of more than 13,000 deploying troops trained with the four units,' he said. The LFA provided preliminary rifle instruction (PRI) for 5,992 Soldiers. LFA Commandant Capt. Jeffrey Smits said PRI prepared soldiers for the rifle range. The eight-hour class included basic shooting techniques, safety, zeroing in mechanically, and dry-fire exercises. After completing this instruction, the students went to the range for live firing.

"The Soldiers are very attentive during training,' he said. 'They all realize it would be to their benefit to become as proficient with their weapons as possible before they deploy.'

"Smits said the LFA also provided specialized training when requested. Sling loading, night vision, and fitness training were examples Smits cited. 'We have a total staff of 18, and all

were involved in the training one way or another,' Smits said. 'We would generally have 10 people instructing at any one time,' he added.

"The NCOA provided land-navigation training to 5,916 Soldiers according to Command Sgt. Maj. Ron Packard, academy commandant. Land navigation training included map reading, use of hand-held navigational instruments, and three to four hours in the field. Students were divided into teams of three to five Soldiers for the field training which took place in training area 108.

"Each team, equipped with a compass, protractor and map, was to find three specific points within the training area as quickly as possible. Though the length of the field course varied, it is usually between 3,000 and 4,000 meters (1.8 to 2.5 miles).

"The training has been pretty tough due to the deep snow conditions in the woods,' Packard said. 'In some areas the snow was knee deep,' he added. However, in spite of conditions, Packard said there have been no complaints.

"We show them a map of the Saudi Arabian area, and all they see is brown, which denotes sand, and grid lines. It makes them realize a knowledge of land navigation could someday be necessary for survival. The instructors usually get total attention.

"Packard said that most Soldiers consider the land navigation course a real confidence builder, and most units have done quite well. The course record before the snows came was 38 minutes; with the deep snow, it was 53 minutes. 'Both are darn good times,' Packard added.

"The NCOA has a staff of six, four of whom are instructors. 'We really had to push to get all the training done in the times allotted,' Packard said. 'At one point, we went three weeks straight without a break, and there were only three days off during the holidays.'

"Packard also noted that all training

was accomplished without an injury, and that only two classes were canceled due to subzero temperatures. 'We had a lot of real cold days out in the field, but it was important that the Soldiers received the proper training.'

"RTS-Maintenance provided operator and organizational level maintenance training to 383 Soldiers. According to Chief Warrant Officer Jim Thompson, RTS-Maintenance director, much of the training involved heavy-wheel recovery operations. RTS-Maintenance combined classroom work and hands-on training to provide the student with the best training possible.

"Thompson said the deploying Soldiers were good students. 'I'm sure they realized that maintenance could be a real problem in a desert environment, and they wanted to learn all they could.' RTS-Maintenance operates with a staff of nine, four of whom are instructors.

The Fourth ITAAS didn't get involved in Desert Storm training until November, when it was tasked to provide language training for units deploying to Germany. According to Fourth ITAAS Operations Officer Maj. John Gibbons, the school provided German language training for 820 Soldiers from three different units."

## When the war was won

After the successful campaign of Operation Desert Storm, Fort McCoy shifted into the effort to support Soldiers redeploying back home, just like was done during World War II and the Korean War.

And in the March 15, 1991, edition of The Triad newspaper, the transcript of President George Bush's address about the Desert Storm conclusion was a good reminder of what everyone at Fort McCoy and other installations across the then-Department of Defense completed to win the effort.

"Never have I been more proud of our troops, or more proud to be your commander in chief, for today, amid prayers of thanks and hope, the Kuwaiti flag once again flies high above Kuwait

City," Bush stated in his address. "And it's there because you and your coalition allies put it there. Kuwait is liberated, and soon hometowns across America will be welcoming back home the finest combat force ever assembled — Army, Navy, Coast Guard, Marines, Air Force — the brave men and women of the United States of America.

"Saddam Hussein's dreams of dominating the Middle East by the terror of nuclear arsenal and an army of a million men, threatened the future of our children and the entire world, and the world was faced with the simple choice — if international law and sanctions could not remove Saddam Hussein from Kuwait, then we had to free Kuwait from Saddam Hussein. And that's exactly what you did.

"Throughout seven long and arduous months, the troops of the 28 nations stood with you, shoulder to shoulder, in an unprecedented partnership for peace. Today, we thank you for the victory in Kuwait was born in your courage and resolve.

"The stunning success of our troops was a result of superb training, superb planning, superb execution, and incredible acts of bravery. The Iraqi Army was defeated. Forty-two divisions were put out of action. They lost 3,000 tanks — almost 2,000 armored vehicles — more than 2,000 artillery pieces, and over half a million Iraqi soldiers were captured, defeated or disarmed.

"You were as good as advertised," Bush said. "You were indeed, good to go.' This is a war we did not seek and did not want. But Saddam Hussein turned a deaf ear to the voices of peace and reason, and when he began burning Kuwait to the ground and intensifying the murder of his people, the coalition faced a moral imperative to put a stop to the atrocities in Kuwait once and for all. Boldly, bravely, you did just that, and when the rubber met the road, you did it in just six weeks, and 100 decisive hours.

"The evil Saddam has done can never be forgotten. But his power to attack his neighbors and threaten the peace of the region is today grievously reduced. He has been stripped of his capacity to project offensive military power. His regime is totally discredited, and as a threat to peace, the day of this dictator is over. And the bottom line is this: Kuwait's night of terror has ended.

"Thomas Jefferson said that the price for freedom is eternal vigilance. We must remain vigilant to make absolutely sure that the Iraqi dictator is never, ever allowed to stoke the ashes of defeat into the burning embers of aggression. The sacrifice you've already made demands nothing less. The sacrifice of those who gave their lives will never be forgotten.

"Saddam made many mistakes," the president said. "But one of the biggest was to underestimate the determination of the American people and the daring of our troops. We saw in the desert what Americans have learned through 215 years of history about the difference between democracy and dictatorship. Soldiers who fight for freedom are more committed than soldiers who fight because they are enslaved.

"Americans today are confident of our country, confident of our future, and most of all, confident about you. We promised you'd be given the means to fight. We promised not to look over your shoulder. We promised this would not be another Vietnam, and we kept that promise. The specter of Vietnam has been buried forever in the desert sands of the Arabian peninsula.

"Today, the promise of spring is almost upon us, the promise of regrowth and renewal. Renewed life in Kuwait. Renewed prospects for real peace throughout the Middle East, and a renewed sense of pride and confidence



**Face paint:** Soldiers from the 132nd Quartermaster Company of Cando, N.D., practice camouflage make-up techniques. The exercise was part of the

Photo by Spec. Phill Pharr



Photo by Phill Pharr

## Embarking

Deploying soldiers settle into their seats as final preparations are made for their departure from Volk Field to the Desert Shield theater of operations.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Leonard Davenport

A soldier from the 311th Evacuation Hospital, Bismarck, N.D., greets his wife and family upon his return to Volk Field.

here at home. And we're committed to seeing every American Soldier and every allied POW home soon, home to the thanks and the respect and the love of a grateful nation, and a very grateful president. Yes, there remain vital and difficult tests ahead, both here and abroad, but nothing the American people can't handle. America has always accepted the challenge, paid the price, and passed the test.

"On this day, our spirits are high as our flag, and our future, as bright as Liberty's torch. Tomorrow, we dedicate ourselves anew, as Americans always have, and as Americans always will. The first test of the new world order has been passed. The hard work of freedom awaits. Thank you, congratulations and God Bless The United States of America."

## Monumental effort overall

After all was said and done, what Fort McCoy completed to aid in the victory during Operation Desert Storm could be considered impressive, particularly in the short amount of time where everything was coordinated, supported, and completed.

First, according to records, following are some Army Reserve and National Guard units that processed and trained at Fort McCoy for Desert Storm:

— **890th Transportation Company (Army Reserve)** — Land navigation, weapons quals, vehicle preparation.

— **Army 892nd Transportation Company (Army Reserve)** — Arrived early February with 220 Soldiers; trained and prepped equipment.

— **822nd Military Police Company (Army Reserve)** — Prepared at Fort

McCoy before deployment Feb. 8-15, 1991.

— **224th Engineer Battalion (Iowa National Guard)** — Over 90 percent of Soldiers training at McCoy in February 1991.

— **Army detachment units** — 757th, 1150th, 1151st, and 1152nd Transportation Company detachments from Wisconsin. Through late-February 1991, approximately 65 units with 8,200 total personnel had been processed, trained, and deployed via Fort McCoy since August 1990.

From February 1991 alone, historical reports at Fort McCoy showed the last five units deployed from Fort McCoy in early February 1991. And at the point, Fort McCoy had processed and trained a total of 64 units with more than 8,000 Soldiers for deployment. In total, 3,076 pieces of equipment were shipped on 1,150 rail cars, which, placed end to end, would stretch over 19 miles.

## Behind the scenes:

— **Logistics, training equipment prep** — Nearly 3,000 vehicles and equipment pieces repainted in desert tan colors and prepared for shipment.

— **Transportation coordination** — Fort McCoy worked with Volk Field Air National Guard Base and commercial carriers for troop and equipment movement.

— **Air movements** — Over 100 air missions used aircraft like C-141 Starlifters and C-5 Galaxies to support deployment phases.

Boland later was also impressed in what was accomplished. He noted that Fort McCoy's role in Desert Shield/Storm strengthened its status as a criti-

cal Total Force mobilization and power projection platform, supporting Army Reserve and National Guard units' transition from U.S. soil to overseas operations.

"Fort McCoy is proud of its contribution to the war effort," Boland said in the May 18, 1991, edition of The Triad. "Members of the units that were trained here, as well as representatives of their higher headquarters, consistently have praised the installation for affording them the finest degree of support possible. The outstanding manner in which Fort McCoy performed its mission of processing, training, and preparing these troops for war was no coincidence. From the start, it required teamwork on the part of every unit member and Fort McCoy's military and civilian workforce."

Fort McCoy's motto is to be the "Total Force Training Center." Located in the heart of the upper Midwest, Fort McCoy is the only U.S. Army installation in Wisconsin. The installation has provided support and facilities for the field and classroom training of more than 100,000 military personnel from all services nearly every year since 1984. Learn more about Fort McCoy online at <https://home.army.mil/mccoy>, on Facebook by searching "ftmccoy," on Flickr at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/fortmccoywi/>, and on X (formerly Twitter) by searching "usagmccoy." Also try downloading the My Army Post app to your smartphone and set "Fort McCoy" or another installation as your preferred base. Fort McCoy is also part of Army's Installation Management Command where "We Are The Army's Home."

# Operation Desert Storm veterans recall pre-deployment training at Fort McCoy, wartime service with 890th Transportation Company

BY SCOTT T. STURKOL  
Public Affairs Staff

Thirty-five years after the completion of Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm, former Army Sgts. Mark Christensen and Phillip Cornelius remember their service with the Army Reserve's 890th Transportation Company quite vividly.

And through all the time since they served together in the deserts of Southwest Asia in 1990 and 1991, both men have remained the best of friends. Some would even say they are like brothers.

## How it started

History shows Desert Shield and Desert Storm, also known as the Gulf War, took place from Aug. 2, 1990, to Feb. 28, 1991. On Aug. 2, 1990, Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein led a well-equipped Iraqi army into Kuwait, a major supplier of oil to the United States.

According to a Department of Defense report in 2019 by Shannon Collins, it states the U.S. had supplied Iraq with military aid during its eight-year war with Iran, giving Iraq the fourth-largest army in the world at that time. This posed a threat to Saudi Arabia, another major exporter of oil. If Saudi Arabia fell, Iraq would control one-fifth of the world's oil supply. The Iraqi leader also was repeatedly violating United Nations resolutions, so the U.S. had U.N. support in responding to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait with Desert Shield and then Desert Storm.

Once the Gulf War began, thousands of Guard and Reserve services members were called to active duty — including Christensen and Cornelius. An Oct. 10, 1990, Associated Press news article by Robert Burns states that on that date the 890th was among many activated.

"More than 33,000 military reservists have been called to active duty in support of the U.S. buildup in the Persian Gulf area — nearly as many as were activated during crises in Vietnam and Korea in 1968," the article states. "The Army today activated 12 National Guard and 24 Army Reserve units from 24 states and Puerto Rico, for a total of 4,846 troops. Meanwhile, the Marine Corps said Wednesday it was calling up about 160 reservists. Those actions brought to 33,252 the number of reservists from all services activated since Aug. 22 when President Bush authorized their use in support of Operation Desert Shield."

The 890th, in 1990, was headquartered in Green Bay, Wis., and that's the area where both Christensen and Cornelius still reside. When the 890th was mobilized, that meant training had to be completed. To do that training, they went to Fort McCoy.

## Training at Fort McCoy

By October 1990, Fort McCoy had already had many units — both Guard and Reserve — already busily training and preparing for Operation Desert Shield. Soldiers with the 890th were among them and had already been preparing for deployment in September.

"While at McCoy, we painted the trucks, did weapons qualifications, and basic field combat training," Christensen said.

Just before leaving on deployment, 890th Soldiers were featured in a Nov. 16, 1990, article by Rob Schuette with the Fort McCoy Triad newspaper (now The Real McCoy). The article discussed land-navigation training the unit had completed on Fort McCoy's South Post in late-October 1990.

"Training has been keeping people very busy," said 890th's 1st Sgt. Calvin Thomson in the article. "They're enthusiastic because they know that their survival could depend on what they learn." Thomson noted that the 890th's mission is to haul containerized military cargo on 40-foot trailers.

Spec. John Panosian of the 890th also mentioned in the article, "We've got our trucks ready and in working order. I'm anxious to get over there and get the mission completed."

890th's Sgt. James Socha discussed how busy their time training at McCoy was in the article: "You put in a lot of long hours during something like this."

Christensen and Cornelius were among the many 890th Soldiers doing the land-navigation training and so much more before deploying. Christensen

said his unit's mobilization training at the "Total Force Training Center" was "excellent."

By early November 1990, the 890th finished their two-plus months of mobilization training at Fort McCoy and departed the installation. The unit's Soldiers arrived at their deployed location in Saudi Arabia on Nov. 14.

## In the fight

Christensen and Cornelius both knew when they arrived in Saudi Arabia that they had to hit the ground running to be ready for anything.

Both Soldiers served as truck drivers for the unit and had an important mission.

"We provided combat support," Christensen said. "We were responsible for transporting ammunition, bombs, Patriot missiles, multiple-launch rocket systems, 155-millimeter rounds for tanks, water, and pallets of food."

In the book "United States Army Reserve in Operation Desert Storm: Ground Transportation Operations," which was released in January 1994, it shows the 890th supported the 766th Transportation Battalion and operated from Logistical Base Echo in Saudi Arabia.

The book states the units within the battalion primarily hauled spare parts, Patriot missiles, ammunition, and basically whatever was needed in support of the Army VII Corps.

"Their line-haul before the air combat began was from the port of Dammam (Saudi Arabia) to Log Base Echo, which was a 500-mile trip one way," the book states. "During the ground war, continual transportation support of sustainment supplies — food, ammunition, and repair parts — was provided to the VII Corps elements as they moved deep into Iraqi territory. Once the ground phase ended, the 766th started to provide support to the XVIII Airborne Corps redeployment as well as the VII Corps. The 766th also hauled relief supplies into Kuwait while the corps were withdrawing."

Both Christensen and Cornelius were part of those long hauls from the port to their base as well as other areas, especially in February 1991.

"We were all over," Christensen said. "We were in Saudi, Kuwait, and Iraq."

The book states the 766th experienced the same problems with inadequate communications for command and control as other units had during the war along with other issues. But the mission got done because Soldiers like Christensen and Cornelius were working hard.

"Some of the line-hauls were almost 1,000 miles one way, and days would go by before contact was re-established," the book states. "Good platoon leadership and responsible E-4 and E-5 drivers kept things on the right track."

The book's review about the battalion Cornelius and Christensen were assigned to also states that for the entire period of the deployment, the battalion's operational rate exceeded 95 percent, which was "a remarkable performance attributed to the versatility and multiple talents of the Reservists' civilian skills. These units didn't have to wait on direct support maintenance units for repairs. Their own mechanics could change a diesel engine in a tractor in one day or rebuild a transmission."

In essence, Cornelius and Christensen and their fellow transportation Soldiers achieved amazing results despite the tough missions they faced in a wartime environment.

## Looking back 35 years later

After three-plus decades since they survived the war and did their part in liberating Kuwait, Christensen and Cornelius recall their service there as a hard one because of what they faced and experienced. But that service has also kept them bonded like brothers.

"What I remember most are the special friendships that I made and how well everyone worked together," Christensen said. "I remember how hot it was during the day and cold at night. I remember the oil fires in Kuwait."

"I came home angry because we didn't finish the job," Christensen said. "I was feeling guilty because of helping in the killing all those people. Trivial things that bothered me before deployment were no longer a big deal, and I appreciated all that I had going for me at home."

Cornelius added, "It feels like we didn't finish the



File Photo by Robert Schuette, Fort McCoy Public Affairs Office

**Soldiers with the 890th Transportation Company, an Army Reserve unit based in Green Bay, Wis., complete land-navigation training Oct. 28, 1990, at Fort McCoy, Wis. The company was doing the training as part of mobilization training to deploy to Operation Desert Shield.**



Courtesy photo

**Army Sgts. Mark Christensen and Phillip Cornelius with the 890th Transportation Company, an Army Reserve unit based in Green Bay, Wis., are shown in Kuwait City, Kuwait, on Feb. 27, 1991. Both Soldiers were part of the deployed 766th Transportation Battalion and operated from Logistical Base Echo in Saudi Arabia during Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm. Both Soldiers became best friends during the operations and are still friends today. Both trained at Fort McCoy, Wis., prior to deploying for the Gulf War.**

job that we were sent to do. I have suffered from hearing loss and PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder). But even with these issues, I'm very proud to have served my country. I would do it all over again with my brothers and sister who I served with."

Christensen talked about some things he and his fellow Desert Storm vets have done since the Gulf War.

"If I knew then what I know now, I would have done my full 20 years instead of getting out at 12 years," Christensen said. "Having kids made me decide that I didn't want to take the risk of being deployed. I saw how it affected my unit members who did have kids at home. Also, while deployed, I made the best friend for life that a person could ever ask for. That is Corny (Cornelius)."

"When we got home, along with another friend of ours, Dave Rasmussen, had an idea to start a group similar to the Vietnam Vets of America,"

Christensen said. "We all started the Desert Veterans of Wisconsin. The group is not only desert vets. It is open to any service member who was honorably discharged or is still in service in any branch of the military."

Sadly, Rasmussen — also a 890th Soldier who served with them in Desert Storm — died in 2009 at the age of 39 from cancer. He is remembered by all the founding members of the Desert Veterans of Wisconsin with fondness and respect. Through the group, Christensen said they make a difference in the lives of veterans and their families every day, and he knows Rasmussen is proud of everything the group does.

The 890th Transportation Company completed its active-duty activation for the Gulf War in June 1991. The unit's service, along with many like them in the Gulf War, helped end an invasion and occupation, and returned freedom to a foreign nation. It also made two men brothers for life.

# Two 88th RD mechanics recall equipment volume, condition during Operation Desert Fix

STORY & PHOTOS BY CHERYL PHILLIPS  
88th Readiness Division Public Affairs

Many people are familiar with Operation Desert Shield/Storm and Operation Desert Fox. But not as many are aware of Operation Desert Fix where the heroes were the mechanics assigned to the Equipment Concentration Site (ECS) 67 at Fort McCoy.

Starting in spring of 1991, ECS 67 started receiving equipment and vehicles for repair from the Middle East after the conclusion of Operation Desert Storm, which grew to "hundreds of hundreds" recalled George Hafner, one of only two current employees at ECS 67 (in 2022) who were there at the time of Desert Fix. Presently a work leader, then he was a "straight 8" or wage grade 8 mechanic. Hafner has been with ECS 67 since December 1990.

Joining him was Timothy Lawrence, then an automotive worker and now a heavy mobile equipment repair supervisor. He joined ECS 67 the same month and year as Hafner. Currently, ECS 67 belongs to the 88th Readiness Division dual headquartered at Fort Snelling, Minn., and at McCoy. At the time of the mission, the ECS fell under the 86th Army Reserve Command.

For six to eight months, Lawrence and Hafner were joined by about two dozen other mechanics to repair the flood of equipment and vehicles surging into the ECS. Other shops located here also participated in Operation Desert Fix over the course of a year.

"The volume of the equipment coming in was taking away from our mission, so halfway through we went to two shifts," Lawrence said.

Lawrence feels that two reasons ECS 67 was chosen for the mission were the location and availability of manpower. "A lot of the equipment belonged to units located around here. We maintain and store Army Reserve equipment from Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Indiana and parts of Ohio," he said.

One positive was that the mechanics saw no equipment that they hadn't worked on in the past. Hafner spent most of his time at the trailer shop where he mainly repaired M872 three-axle flatbed trailers. "Most of them were pretty rusty...they were really in tough shape," he said.

Lawrence worked largely on tactical wheeled vehicles, such as deuce-and-a-halves, 5-ton, cargo trucks, and tractors.

Hafner said he saw the competing requirement to repair the equipment coming in for Desert Fix and continue to execute the dual mission to support the Army Reserve units as the biggest challenge.

He also noted that another difficulty was that "the condition of the equipment was so bad, rusty, rusty, rusty. Trying to repair equipment when it's rusty is really rough. It's hard to get it apart, hard to repair."

Lawrence said the poor equipment condition was the result of the climate, from the desert environment, sand and exposure to salty sea water and sea air during transport to and from the Middle East. "All that coming together really takes a toll on the equipment," he said.

One of the lessons Hafner learned from the experience was "being



**George Hafner and Timothy Lawrence review the parts list for an air compressor unit March 9, 2022, at the 88th Readiness Division Equipment Concentration Site. Both men were part of the original team of mechanics that supported Operation Desert Fix.**

flexible with my schedule. At a moment's notice you could be pulled to work on something else."

Lawrence said that one of the advantages of being involved in the historic mission was that the work "enhanced my learning and broadened my maintenance skills."

He added that "the completion of the mission, having a sense of purpose and supporting the troops" gave him fulfillment.

Hafner also felt a sense of accomplishment from the mission. "Seeing a piece of equipment after it first came in, getting it apart and repairing it back to (Technical Manual) 10-20 standards was the best part about the mission. Seeing a trailer go out ready for a mission was by far the best, and we know the units that used the equipment were

appreciative of the work we did."

Lawrence recounted an interesting story. The mechanics had an issue with a 10-ton crane.

"The hydraulics weren't working. They got to the point where they drained the reservoir; you're looking at 50 gallons of hydraulic fluid. When they started draining it, they noticed chunks of rubber, like inner tube rubber. They could see this thing laying in there. It was an AK-47 [rifle] a troop wanted to bring back to the States. He wrapped it up in tire rubber and dropped it in the hydraulic tank and was planning to recover it at the Reserve Center."

The unidentified Soldier didn't get to keep the rifle.  
(Editor's note: This article is reprinted from 2022.)

# Army Desert Storm vet, Bradley driver, recalls service in ground operations for Gulf War

BY SCOTT T. STURKOL  
Public Affairs Staff

Growing up in Wakefield, Mich., in the state's western Upper Peninsula, former Army Spc. Arthur L. Saily II was described by many of his school friends as "one tough kid."

Wakefield sits in the heart of "Big Snow Country," where every winter the snowfall totals are in the hundreds of inches, and people native to the area are considered the hearty, tough, independent type. That certainly describes Saily, he'll admit.

Throughout his youth, Saily said, he enjoyed working to help his family get through tough winters, doing things outdoors, and having good friends. However, once he graduated from Wakefield High School in the spring of 1987, he also knew he wanted more adventure in his life. So, not long after graduation, Saily signed up to "be all he could be" in the U.S. Army.

## Joining the Army

After completing Army basic training in summer 1988, and then advanced individual training to further his Soldier skills and become the operator of an M2 Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicle, Saily was assigned to Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Division at Fort Hood, Texas.

Fort Hood is surrounded by the Killeen, Copperas Cove, Harker Heights, Belton, Gatesville, Temple, and Lampassas communities and was an area like a foreign country to a young man from Michigan's Upper Peninsula, Saily said.

According to the Fort Hood website, it's a 214,968-acre installation and is the only post in the United States capable of stationing and training two armored divisions. Saily said he was happy to be at a new place doing something new.

As an M2 Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicle operator, Saily was in control of one of the Army's newest armored vehicles at one of the busiest active-duty Army installations.

The Army introduced the M2 Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicle in the mid-1980s, according to Britannica.com. The armored vehicle weighs 27.6 tons, has a three-person crew, can carry six infantry Soldiers, and is armed with a turret-mounted 25-millimeter cannon and an antitank missile launcher.

"I enjoyed driving the Bradley and did it for three years before Desert Storm," Saily said. "I became very good at it."

## Getting call to Desert Shield

By August 1990, when Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein sent his military forces into Kuwait on an invasion to take over the country's oil supply, Saily was a well-trained warfighter who had honed his skills as a Bradley driver.

As Operation Desert Shield began at that same time, Saily said he knew they were going to get the call. And he knew they were ready for anything.

"Prior to going to combat, we did three, three-week tours in a year and a half at the National Training Center in Fort Irwin, Calif., in the Death Valley desert," Saily said. "That was very helpful."

On Oct. 1, 1990, Saily said his unit went on lockdown, and they were finalizing their deployment to Desert Shield to Saudi Arabia.

"During that time, we got a lot of medical shots, did our packing, and so much more," Saily said. "I felt nervous and excited at the same time."

By Oct. 6, 1990, Saily said he boarded a plane at Fort Hood wearing full combat gear and headed to Dhahran, Saudi Arabia.

"After arrival, we went through quarantine for a week, picked up brand new Bradleys and ammunition, and headed northeast to a neutral zone that Iraq had taken over. We dug in positions on the

border there and waited for orders."

## Transitioning to Desert Storm

Saily said he and his fellow Soldiers stood guard at their positions for three months.

"We trained doing what we could do with our guard up," Saily said. "There was lots of radio watch and guard duty. I got bored."

However on Jan. 17, 1991, everything changed. Operation Desert Shield transitioned to Operation Desert Storm with the start of the air war. The air war continued daily until the ground war started on Feb. 24.

Saily recalled some of his missions.

"I went on a reconnaissance mission in late February to blow up communication towers," said Saily who operated the Bradley Fighting Vehicle with his unit's commanding officer. "That was exciting because we called for fire from artillery and watched from a distance at night as that mission got done."

A day after that mission, Saily said his unit received orders to go forward through the Wadi Al-Batin border area. Wadi Al-Batin is an intermittent river in Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Kuwait. It is the lowest and final section of Wadi al-Rummah, according to the U.S. Geological Survey. It runs 45 miles in a northeast-southwest direction through the Al-Dibdibah plain and has been recognized since 1913 as the border between Kuwait and Iraq.

After crossing the Wadi Al-Batin, Saily said, all hell broke loose.

"Right away we engaged the enemy bunkers, artillery, and tanks," Saily said. "We lost two Bradleys and three comrades. Two of those comrades were good friends."

"During this time, I did my job on instinct as the training took over," Saily said. "This was the most afraid I'd ever been in my life so far. I was sweating horribly during what was a 7-hour battle. I was praying as I was driving and taking orders from my captain."

Saily said that after he experienced that first contact, he was a changed man.

"I was so alert about everything and feared at some point my life could be taken," he said.

Saily said his unit continued to advance and they came across other skirmishes as the ground war continued. Officially, the timeline states the ground war lasted 100 hours. In reality, Saily said, there was more to everything they faced, but overall, the fight didn't last an extended time.

## Looking back 35 years

In February 1991, Saily was in combat putting his life on the line. In February 2021, he still relives the combat he experienced and the things he saw in war and has severe PTSD.

Saily said he gets treatment and care for his condition, but it is not easy.

"I still stress out every time the third week of February comes around," Saily said.

Now approaching 57 years old, Saily is back living in his native Upper Peninsula. He's not in his native city of Wakefield on the west end of the peninsula — rather 300-plus miles east on the eastern section of the Upper Peninsula in Detour.

Saily said he misses the camaraderie he had with his fellow Soldiers, and is glad he was part of the Army. "Even though I had to experience and see what I did, I would do it again," Saily said. "Proud to be an American!"

According to the Department of Defense, about 697,000 U.S. troops took part in the war, with 299 losing their lives — including the three Soldiers who served with Saily. Additionally, the U.S. and 40 allied nations, including several Arab nations, flew more than 18,000 air deployment missions, more than 116,000 combat air sorties, and dropped 88,500 tons of bombs.



Courtesy photo

Army Spc. Arthur Saily II with the Army's Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Division of Fort Hood, Texas, peers out the hatch of an M2 Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicle on Feb. 23, 1991, near the Saudi Arabia/Iraq border. Saily was part of combat operations in the ground war for Operation Desert Storm. Saily is a Wakefield, Mich., native.



XVIII Airborne Corps History Office photograph by Spc. Randall R. Anderson

This is a left front quarter view of an M-2 Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicle shown on Nov. 20, 1990, at the Theater Ammunition Supply Point outside Dhahran, Saudi Arabia in the Eastern Province while the Soldiers were on guard duty.

# Reviewing 83rd, 86th, 88th Army Reserve Commands during Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm

BY WARD ZISCHKE  
88th Readiness Division Historian

The U.S. Army Reserve is undergoing change and transition today. To better understand today's changes, let's go back several transitions ago to 1990-91 during Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm.

The U.S. Army Reserve Command, or USARC, was in carrier status during Desert Shield/Desert Storm. The Army Reserve units were divided into Armies, and each Army controlled several Army Reserve Commands, or ARCOMs, for a total of 20.

The 83rd, 86th, and 88th ARCOMs were under Fourth Army, located at Fort Sheridan, Ill., and are now inactivated. These ARCOMs wore the same shoulder patch as the 83rd Army Reserve Readiness Training Center (ARRTC), 86th Training Division, and 88th Readiness Division.

The 83rd ARCOM's headquarters were in Columbus, Ohio, and it mobilized 19 units for Desert Shield/Desert Storm from Ohio. Of these units, six are still active today in the same state.

The 86th ARCOM's headquarters was in Forest Park, Ill., and it mobilized 32 units from Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. Of these units, the 395th and 826th Ordnance companies remain in the same state today, as do seven other units.

During Desert Shield/Desert Storm, the 86th ARCOM controlled Equipment Concentration Site (ECS) 67 on Fort McCoy, which was also involved in Operation Desert Fix (see page 3) for equipment returning from the theater. Plaques commemorating Desert Fix are still on the wall at ECS 67.

The 86th ARCOM also had the 12th Special Forces Group under its control, but this unit did not go to Desert Shield/Desert Storm.

The 88th ARCOM headquarters were located at Building 506 on Fort Snelling, Minn., where the 88th commanding general resides today. It mobilized 14 units to Desert Shield/Desert Storm.

Five units mobilized from their home stations on Thanksgiving Day 1990. Of the mobilized units, only the 79th Military Police Company exists today in the same state.

The 88th also had command and control of the 205th Infantry Brigade (Arctic) (Light). Part of the obstacle course on Fort McCoy today was used by the 205th for their school — the Light Fighter Academy.

Each of the ARCOMs also had several Army Reserve Forces Schools. The 5042nd Army Reserve Forces School, 88th ARCOM, conducted emergency training for several critical military occupational specialties on Fort McCoy during Desert Shield/Desert Storm.

The 83rd, 86th, and 88th ARCOMs also had civil affairs and psychological units, as well as 105mm, 155mm, and 8-inch artillery battalions under their command and control. Examples of these artillery pieces are located at the Fort McCoy Commemorative Area and the 88th Readiness Division Headquarters at Fort McCoy.

The ARCOMs lost all these units due to the Offsite Agreement of December 1993. The 83rd, 86th, and 88th ARCOMs were inactivated in 1996, and their territories were combined to become the 88th Regional Support Command (RSC) from 1996 to 2003.

(Editor's note: Elements of the 83rd ARRTC [Fort McCoy Non-commissioned Officer Academy], 86th Training Division, and 88th Readiness Division are tenant organizations at Fort McCoy today.)



Little Britany Russell greets her returning father, 1st Sgt. Bruce Russell, 758th Maint. Co.



Courtesy photos



COMMUNITY

# Fort McCoy Exchange to see store reset, updates during 2026 transformation

STORY & PHOTO BY SCOTT T. STURKOL  
Public Affairs Staff

It's been quite a few years since the Fort McCoy Exchange has seen a major update and in 2026, that's about to change as the store will see a major change over the next 10 months, store officials said.

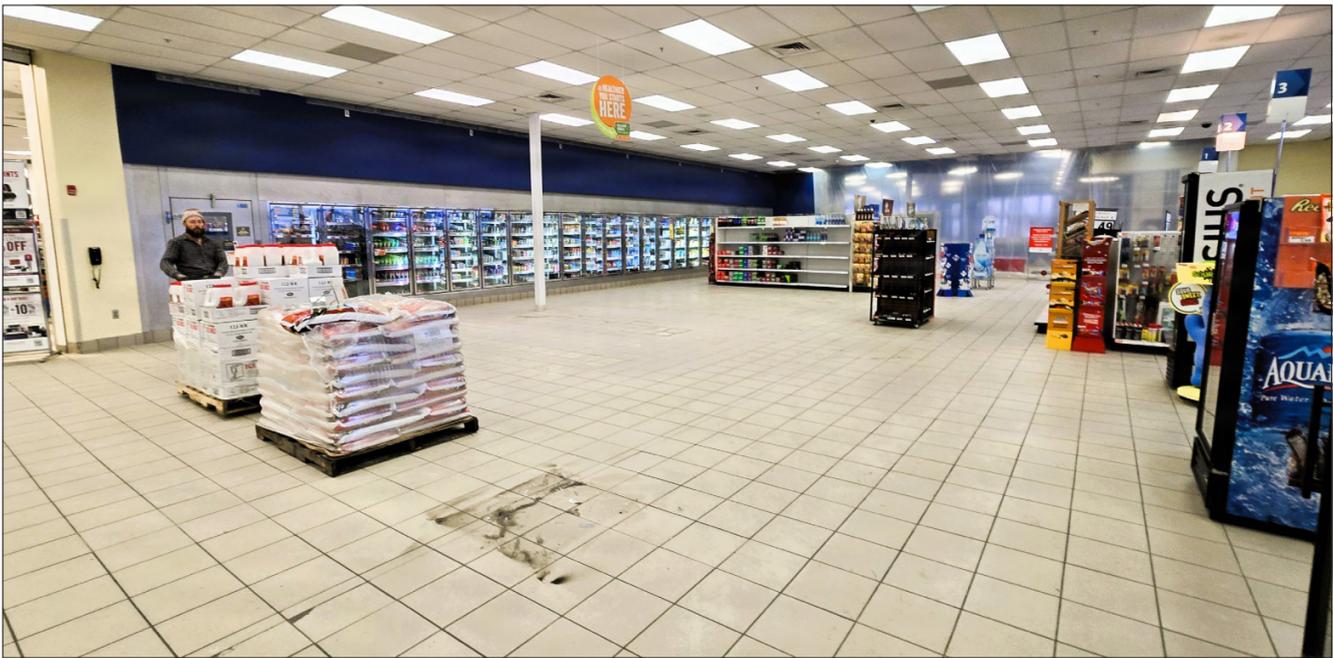
Mindy Scholze, store manager, described some of what is changing.

"If you haven't been to the store, we have started our construction project that will be going through October," Scholze said. "We are getting all new floors, polished concrete, we're going to have murals, all new fixtures, and it's going to look really nice. We're really excited. It's going to make for a long summer though."

"We started phase one in the express at the food court area, so hopefully that will be ready, completed in that area by the time (major) training starts," Scholze said. "Because we don't want a huge mess, and that's obviously where everybody wants to get the food, the snacks, and the drinks. So that was a priority to get that done as soon as possible."

Scholze said the upgrades will include a food area that is more convenient and easier to use. Plus the floors will really be improved.

"We're getting all new polished concrete floors, and it's going to be really nice and smooth," Scholze said. "Much, much nicer than what we currently have because our current floors are over 20 years old."



Work to change up the Fort McCoy (Wis.) Exchange is shown Jan. 20 where contractors are beginning the steps to transform the store. Planned are new floors, registers, and a completely new layout. Store officials said the work will take place through October 2026.

And the way registers are set up will also be different, Scholze said.

"We're also getting some self-checkout registers," she said. "We're going to have, I believe, four self-checkout registers and two manned registers, and there will be a queuing line and that will be at a central location."

Scholze said the store will open up even more than it is now.

"Where the barbershop and alterations and that will that kind of separates the express from the main store are right now, that's all coming down and that's where the registers are going to go," Scholze said.

And as things change, what's being sold in the store will also focus more on items that troops need when they are at Fort McCoy for training. And they'll continue to carry popular items that have traditionally been popular items at the store.

Scholze wanted to also remind the community of who can now shop at the Fort McCoy Exchange.

"So, I don't know if everyone is aware, but all government civilian employees with common access cards can now shop in the store for anything except for military clothing items," Scholze said. That includes items like tobacco and alcohol and everything else too, so spread the word."

The Fort McCoy Exchange won't see any major exterior changes except for a new sign for the gas station area.

"We're getting a new fuel monument," Scholze said. "So, the road sign that has the fuel prices on it, that's going to get replaced."

Scholze said they'll also be getting another exterior sign on the side of the building repaired.

"All I can say to the community is stay tuned and be patient. The store is going to be very nice when it's all done," she said.

Fort McCoy's upgrade is just one of several being completed by the Army and Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES) in 2026. In a Jan. 14 press release from AAFES, they stated the service is "making significant investments to modernize and upgrade operations, with new constructions, image upgrades, expansions and more, at remote and isolated locations."

The Army's original pilot program targeting quality-of-life improvements at its "big three" installations (Fort Irwin, Calif.; Fort Polk, La.; and Fort Wainwright, Alaska) launched in 2020.

"These three installations have seen major improvements including nearly \$17 million in upgrades to the Fort Wainwright Post Exchange, Ex-

press and Burger King; a new \$16 million Express at Fort Irwin; and a \$2.9 million Express upgrade at Fort Polk," the news release states. "After the big three initiative was established, the Army added Fort Hood (Texas) as a fourth installation. The Exchange responded with related projects to improve the shopping experience at Fort Hood as well."

The release also mentioned the Fort McCoy project.

"At Fort McCoy ... Express update to integrate Military Clothing Store; 94 percent of total project cost funded by the Exchange," the release states.

Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Rich Martinez, the AAFES senior enlisted advisor, discussed the importance of these Exchange upgrades in the release.

"The Exchange has completed or awarded all quality-of-life projects originally planned at the start of the Army's big three program," Martinez said. "This collective achievement is a result of hard work and collaboration with installation partners, ensuring the best customers in the world are taken care of no matter where their service takes them."

Projects at similar remote and isolated facilities from mid-May 2024 through approved projects scheduled throughout 2026 total nearly \$92 million in investment directly from AAFES earnings, the

release also stated.

"These investments are a testament to the strength of the virtuous circle that is the 130-year-old Exchange benefit," Martinez said. "100 percent of Exchange earnings are returned to the communities the organization is honored to serve. In 2024, the Exchange achieved \$492 million in dividend-eligible earnings, with \$295 million generated for budget-constrained quality-of-life programs — without burdening American taxpayers. In the last 10 years, the Exchange benefit has provided \$15 billion in value to the military community."

Learn more about AAFES online shopping, eligibility, and more by visiting <https://www.aafes.com/exchange-stores>. For questions about the Fort McCoy Exchange, call 608-269-5604.

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

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# Dueling pianos entertainment event held at McCoy's Community Center at Fort McCoy

BY SCOTT T. STURKOL  
Public Affairs Staff

Musicians with the Howl2Go band entertained Fort McCoy community members Jan. 23 with a variety of songs as part of the Dueling Pianos event held at McCoy's Community Center at Fort McCoy.

According to their website at <https://www.howl2go.com>, the band has a unique brand of entertainment that is family friendly.

"All our shows are 100 percent clean, family-friendly, and suitable for all ages," the website states. "Our Dueling Piano show prides itself on playing high energy, fun music that has something for everyone. Sensitive to your guests, we do not perform any unsuitable material during a Howl2GO show."

The website also states the entertainment group plays nationwide.

"Howl2GO is the only truly nationwide Dueling Pianos live music show," the website states. "From Boston to Orlando, Kansas to Colorado, our fabulous teams of entertainers and production crew bring the Howl at the Moon party to you at any venue in any town."

Dozens of Fort McCoy community members bought tickets to attend the event. Fort McCoy Directorate of Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation (DFMWR) Director Scott Abell said it was great to see everyone come out despite some of the coldest winter weather the post has had in years.

"It was great to see so many members of our community brave the frigid weather to come out to support the event and have a great time," Abell said. "We look forward to having more events like this."

The close-to three-hour show even had guests dancing around the room. As one attendee said, "It was a good time."



Photos by Ashley Sivert/Fort McCoy Directorate of Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation

In recent years, Fort McCoy DFMWR has held this kind of entertainment at McCoy's Community Center. Learn more about events and activities at Fort McCoy DFMWR by visiting their webpage at <https://www.mccoy.armymwr.com> or their Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/mccoymwr>.

Fort McCoy's motto is to be the "Total Force Training Center." Located in the heart of the upper Midwest, Fort McCoy is the only U.S. Army installation in Wisconsin.

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

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

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## COMMUNITY

# Fort McCoy team members finish effort to move two new items to installation's Equipment Park

BY SCOTT T. STURKOL  
Public Affairs Staff

In an effort that was four years in the making, an M7 "Priest" Self-Propelled Gun and an M114 155 mm Towed Howitzer were placed on equipment pads at Equipment Park on Jan. 28 in the Fort McCoy Commemorative Area.

According to Historian Ward E. Zischke with the 88th Readiness Division, these two pieces were part of the former Fort Snelling Military Museum Collection.

"The M114 Towed Howitzer was on a display pad to the north of Building 507 at Fort Snelling and was in excellent shape. The M7 Priest was in the motor pool and was rusty," Zischke said.

Zischke said in 2011 the Army Center for Military History dissolved the Fort Snelling Military Museum and started taking the artifacts away.

"Somehow the 75th Division made some sort of deal and the Priest and M114 and a Sherman tank got taken down to the Army Maintenance Support Activity at Fort Sheridan, Ill., and stayed there for years," he said.

Enter Chris Hanson and Kaleen Holliday, director and deputy director of 88th Readiness Division Public Affairs respectively. Both Holliday and Hanson worked alongside Zischke to get the equipment moved to Fort McCoy for the Equipment Park in the Commemorative Area.

Both Hanson and Holliday had previously worked in the Fort McCoy Public Affairs Office — the office in charge of the Commemorative Area. They both knew how well the addition of this equipment would be for historical purposes. Hanson, especially, completed a great deal of coordination to get the two pieces of equipment moved to Fort McCoy.

The equipment initially arrived at Fort McCoy on Jan. 12, 2023, from Fort Sheridan. From there, the professionals at Fort McCoy's Installation Material Maintenance Activity of the Fort McCoy Logistics Readiness Center (LRC) went to work to get the two pieces prepared for outdoor display.

By mid-year 2024, the equipment items were fully set up to be set out on display at Equipment Park. The next process was to find a way to move the items to Equipment Park.

That effort was finally mapped out and decided by Jan. 28. It would involve a cooperative effort between Fort McCoy LRC, Fort McCoy Directorate of Public Works (DPW), and DPW's roads and grounds contractor, said Nate Sobojinski, chief of the DPW Operations and Maintenance Division.

"This was a joint effort between LRC (contracted staff), DPW, and DPW's roads and grounds contractor, Kaiyuh Services," Sobojinski said. "We were waiting until the ground froze. Working with Mark Nohr and the team at LRC, myself at the DPW, and a less than \$500 service order to roads and grounds ... we got it done."

Previous planning ideas to move the equipment included using cranes and other equipment and to contract it out would have been tens of thousands of dollars. In this case, all that expenditure was saved.

In addition to Sobojinski and Nohr, people completing the move were Dave Nedland and Karl Schoenfeld with the Fort McCoy LRC contractors serving as semi and forklift drivers respectively.

From the roads and grounds contractor, John Pauley (project manager) and Mike Pierce (excavator operator) served as key players, Sobojinski said.

## History of equipment

Now that the two equipment items are in place at the two equipment pads that were open at the park, work to add signs and to document the historical value of these items begins.

With the M7 "Priest" Self-Propelled Gun, Army historical facts show it had a unique role. According to history, the official designation of this tracked vehicle is the 105 mm Howitzer Motor Carriage

M7. It received the nickname of "Priest" by the British due to the pulpit-like machine gun mount.

Specifications show the M7 is a fully tracked self-propelled artillery piece for armored unit fire support. The item is from World War II as it entered service in 1942 and was also used in post-war service by several nations.

The Priest's length is 19 feet, 9 inches. Width is 9 feet, 5 inches. Height is 8 feet, 4 inches. Weight is 50,600 pounds, or 23 tons. Main armament is the 105 mm M1/M2 howitzer and it could carry 69 rounds.

The crew size for a Priest was typically seven to eight people (commander, driver, gunner, cannoners), depending on variant and source, history shows. Between April 1942 and July 1945, the total number of M7s built were: 3,489 M7 units, 826 M7B1 units, and 127 M7B2 conversions (from M7B1).

In post-World War II action, the M7 served with several nations into the 1950s and beyond. Even though the howitzer was eventually replaced in U.S. service by the more modern M198 in the late 1970s and early 1980s, its decades of use around the world speak to its rugged design and usefulness as a heavy indirect fire weapon.

Artillery crews often respected it for its reliability, and its continued appearances on battlefields as late as 2025 — whether in training or actual combat — are a testament to its longevity.

With the M114 155 mm Towed Howitzer, it's one of the U.S. Army's longest-serving artillery pieces. The M114 began life in the early 1940s as the 155 mm Howitzer M1, designed to give U.S. and allied forces a reliable medium-weight artillery piece capable of indirect fire support. It entered production right as World War II was under way.

The Howitzer wasn't fast or self-propelled — it was towed — typically by a truck or artillery tractor, then set up by its crew (about 11 gunners) to rain heavy shells onto enemy positions, history shows. It was used during World War II, Korean War, Vietnam War, and other conflicts.

Even though the Howitzer was eventually replaced in U.S. service by the more modern M198 in the late 1970s and early 1980s, its decades of use around the world speak to its rugged design and usefulness as a heavy indirect fire weapon.

Hanson said he's glad to see the equipment make its way to Equipment Park for future generations of visitors to enjoy.

"This is so incredible to see the project finally come to completion," Hanson said. "From start to finish, we relied on the capability and generosity of so many people from delivery to Fort McCoy, unloading and restoration, to ultimately placing them on the pads for public display. They all deserve our thanks."

Learn more about and Equipment Park by visiting the Fort McCoy website at <https://home.army.mil/mccoy/my-fort/all-services/public-affairs-office-1/fort-mccoy-commemorative-area>.

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Photos by Nate Sobojinski/Fort McCoy Directorate of Public Works

(All photos) Fort McCoy team members move pieces of Army equipment to the installation's Equipment Park on Jan. 28 at the Commemorative Area at Fort McCoy. Two equipment pieces were moved Jan. 28 after four years of having them moved from another state, refurbished and painted, and set in as static displays.



## Fort McCoy personnel engage with local chamber of commerce during January 2026 meeting

STORY BY MELISSA DUBOIS & SCOTT T. STURKOL  
Public Affairs Staff

Fort McCoy members took time Jan. 21 to engage with the Tomah (Wis.) Chamber of Commerce during their January monthly meeting at a business in Tomah.

Command Sgt. Maj. James Riddle, senior enlisted leader for U.S. Army Garrison-Fort McCoy, and other representatives from the installation talked and engaged with dozens of members of the chamber.

According to its website at <https://www.tomahwisconsin.com>, the Tomah Chamber of Commerce welcomes a variety of organizations and businesses to be a part of their group.

"The Tomah Chamber and Visitors Center invites businesses, organizations, and not-for-profit organizations to become a member and grow with the Tomah community," the website states. "We work to create an environment where it is desirable to do business, raise a family, and explore the area. Investing in the chamber is investing in Tomah."

Meeting with chambers of commerce and other civic organizations allows Army leaders like Holder to have direct engagement with community leaders, and more.

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



Photo by Melissa Dubois

Members of the Tomah (Wis.) Chamber of Commerce, including Command Sgt. Maj. James Riddle representing Fort McCoy Garrison, hold a meeting Jan. 21 at a local business in Tomah.

ties that support us."

The Tomah Chamber of Commerce meets monthly to discuss events, programs, organizations, and more. According to the website,

they have an important purpose.

"The Greater Tomah Area Chamber of Commerce is a not-for-profit organization of business and professionals who have joined together to foster a cohesive environment where our businesses, families, and community can prosper," the website states. "The economic well-being of this area is directly related to the caliber of work that is done by the chamber of commerce. The progressive and positive attitude of the chamber has a major impact on business, income, and future growth."

Riddle was the latest Fort McCoy leader to visit the Tomah Chamber. At times several leaders have attended chamber events throughout the past year.

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## Stay safe at Fort McCoy: Remember the 3 R's of UXO — Recognize, retreat, report

Fort McCoy's training areas support military readiness year-round and are also used by Soldiers, civilian employees, family members, hunters, and other authorized visitors.

Because of this shared use, everyone on the installation should understand the potential risk of unexploded ordnance (UXO) and how to respond safely.

UXO are military munitions that were fired, dropped, or placed but did not function as intended. While many are old, they can still be extremely dangerous if disturbed.

Fort McCoy Range Control receives an average of 20–30 calls each year for suspected UXO across the installation.

This number varies depending on weather, training activity, and land use.

Ongoing efforts to identify and clear, known areas containing military munitions and explosives of concern (MEC) have helped reduce the number of incidents over time—but the risk is not eliminated.

If you encounter a suspicious object, remember the 3R Program:

— Recognize

UXO may appear rusted, damaged, or partially buried. If it looks like military ordnance or an unfamiliar metal object, assume it is dangerous.

— Retreat: Do not touch, move, or disturb the item. Safely move away using the same path you entered and keep others out of the area if possible.

— Report: Reporting procedures depend on who you are. For training units, immediately contact the Range Control Fire Desk via landline or FM radio. Phone number is 502-898-4455. There is always someone staffed at the Fire Desk during training operations.

Civilian personnel/general public should contact the Fort McCoy Directorate of Emergency Services Dispatch who will coordinate with Range Operations. Call 502-898-2266 in this case.

Also call the Installation Safety Office with questions or safety concerns at 502-898-6451.

Whether you are training, working, hunting, or enjoying the outdoors, your awareness is key to keeping Fort McCoy safe. When in doubt—stay back and report it.

Recognize. Retreat. Report.

If you did not drop it, do not pick it up!

UXO, Dud, Training Round, War Trophy, Souvenir

NO MATTER WHAT YOU CALL THEM! THEY CAN BE DEADLY!

Learn and Follow the 3Rs

RECOGNIZE: The danger that a souvenir mission poses to yourself, your family, and your neighbors

RETREAT: Do not disturb, touch or move it. Do not give or throw it away

REPORT: Call 911

www.denix.osd.mil/uxosafety

COMMUNITY

# Winter extremes didn't slow progress on Fort McCoy's East Barracks Project

STORY & PHOTOS BY SCOTT T. STURKOL  
Public Affairs Staff

Much of January and into February 2026, Fort McCoy has seen extreme cold temperatures as well as snow, yet the contractors working on the post's East Barracks Project keep making progress on this fourth four-story barracks project, said Nathan Butts with the Resident Office of the Army Corps of Engineers at Fort McCoy.

In his Feb. 13 update, Butts said the contractor, L.S. Black Constructors, was steadily making progress on the project. And as of Jan. 23, the project was at 95 percent complete, and work was scheduled to be 90 percent finished at this time.

Butts wrote in the update, "Commissioning verification was conducted. The contractor must correct several issues before verification is rescheduled. Elevator installation continues — the installation is delayed due to damaged parts being reordered.

Furniture delivery is delayed due to the elevator installation — new date is being coordinated," he wrote. "Floor tile setting continues. Mechanical, electrical, and plumbing finishing continues. Dry-wall painting and touchups continued throughout the building. Two-part exterior door modification was issued to the contractor."

During February, contractors are working on the front entrance of the building with the site wrapped in plastic to allow for heating and bearable work conditions with outside weather getting as low as -20 degrees Fahrenheit at times.

Since its initial construction phase in May 2024, construction of this barracks have been nonstop by the contractor who was awarded the project in February 2024. The exact contract amount for the project when it was awarded was \$27,287,735.

As the workers with L.S. Black Constructors work on this project, they can look over to the two other barracks — the first two erected — they constructed in the same block. They are a familiar name in the construction history at Fort McCoy, having not only built the first two of the 60,000-square-foot transient training troops barracks, but they also built the new brigade headquarters building located in the same block as the barracks buildings.

The contract duration is scheduled for completion in 780 calendar days, Army Corps of Engineer contract documents show.

From the building description, when completed, the building will be able to house up to 400 people like the other completed barracks in the same block. According to the scope of work, it's going to be "made of permanent construction with reinforced concrete foundations; concrete floor slabs; structural steel frames; steel stud infill; masonry veneer walls; prefinished standing seam metal roofing; heating, ventilation, and air conditioning capabilities; plumbing; mechanical systems; and electrical systems. Supporting facilities include land clearing, concrete sidewalk paving, general site improvements, and utility connections."

Work also continues in 2026 by contractors to prepare a large swath of the 1600 block on Fort McCoy's cantonment area to construct the fiscal year 2024-funded \$55.75 million Collective Training Officers Quarters Project by contractor BlindermanPower (Construction).

Fort McCoy Directorate of Public Works planning officials said all the construction is done with projects on this part of Fort McCoy, it will demonstrate a major transformation of the block and hold lots of barracks space for troops training at the installation.

This project and others like it also have in economic impact on local economies.

For the past six years, and even before that, millions of dollars in construction dollars have been counted by the Fort McCoy Plans, Analysis, and Integration Office as a key factor and contributor to the installation's annual economic impact each fiscal year. Since fiscal year (FY) 2019, more than \$310 million has been calculated in new construction of buildings and ranges alone, reports show.

Projects at Fort McCoy like the current \$27.3 million East Barracks Project, \$28.08 million South Barracks Project, and the \$55.75 million Collective Training Officers Quarters Project, are among those projects adding to the economic impact currently.

These projects are on top of recently completed projects like the \$20.6 million and \$18.8 million barracks projects as well as the \$11.96 million brigade headquarters building that was fully completed in 2024.

See more news about the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers by visiting <https://www.usace.army.mil/Media/News>.

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

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Contractors work on a new \$27.3 million transient training troops barracks project, known as the Fort McCoy East Barracks Project on Feb. 12 (above), and Feb. 17 and 18 (below) at Fort McCoy.



## Snow Removal

An equipment operator with the Fort McCoy snow-removal contractor, Kaiyuh Services LLC clears snow Jan. 16 at Fort McCoy.

Winter in Wisconsin can provide all kinds of bad weather, including freezing rain, snow, or sleet at any time or even all in one day. When that happens, the Fort McCoy snow-removal team plows through whatever Mother Nature dishes out.

The team includes contractor Kaiyuh Services LLC and Directorate of Public Works personnel.

The team helps keep more than 400 miles of roads, sidewalks, and parking areas clear so the Fort McCoy workforce can operate safely.

Photo by Scott T. Sturkol



NEWS NOTES/FACILITIES

**Operation: FIND YOUR DRESS**

Fort McCoy MWR is providing Military Spouses with an opportunity to receive a FREE Ball Gown!

**FEB 27, 2026 | 4 PM - 6 PM**

**MCCOY'S COMMUNITY CENTER**

Valid Military or Dependent ID Required. Dresses & sizes are limited. Available on a first come, first served basis.

For Additional Information contact Ashley Sivert at, [ashley.n.sivert.naf@army.mil](mailto:ashley.n.sivert.naf@army.mil) or call **502-898-5358**

Facebook: @FortMcCoyMWR

GARY SINISE FOUNDATION PRESENTS

**MILITARY FAMILY NIGHT**

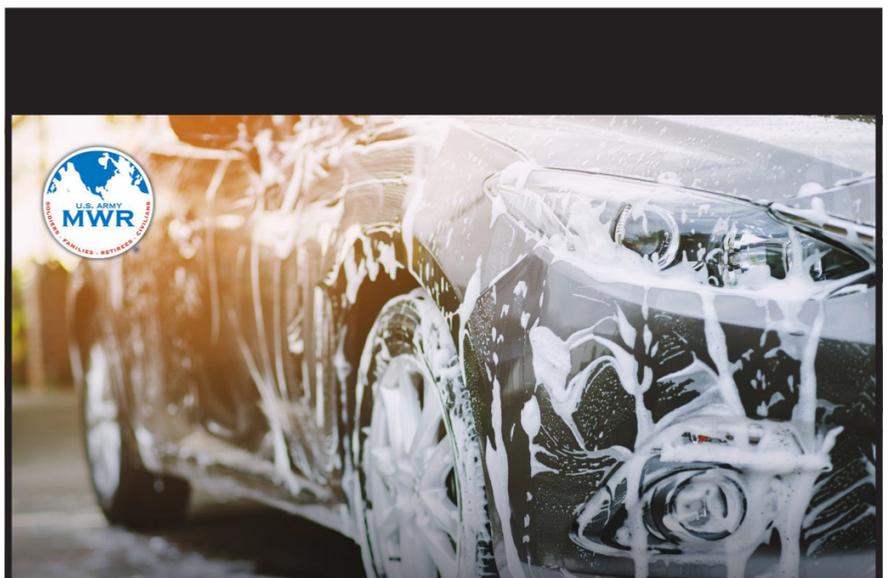
CALLING ALL ACTIVE SERVICE MEMBERS & THEIR FAMILIES! The Gary Sinise Foundation is providing a free meal of **WHITETAIL RIDGE**

**THURSDAY, FEB 26 | 4PM**

Food is limited & available on a first come first served basis!

**50% OFF TUBING FOR ALL ACTIVE SERVICE MEMBERS & THEIR FAMILIES!**

502.898.3517 @FortMcCoyMWR



**PCS Open House**

PCSing from Fort McCoy? Your next move starts here!

REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE FOLLOWING AREAS WILL BE ON-SITE:

- ACS Relocation Readiness
- ACS Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP)
- Personal Property Processing Office (Household Goods Movement)
- IRC Transportation Passenger Movement Section
- DPW Housing Office
- DIR Military Personnel Division
- MWR's School Liaison Officer

Info tables, children's relocation materials, maps, and other relocation items will also be available.

March 18, 2026  
September 16, 2026  
11 am to 1 pm

**McCoy's Community Center (B1571)**

Register with ACS to receive tailored information for your upcoming PCS at 502-898-2359

ACS events are open to Military, Retirees, Civilian workers, Family Members and spouses of Fort McCoy Soldiers, unless otherwise stated. Employees must contact their supervisor regarding attendance from work centers.

For information on upcoming training opportunities through ACS please go to <https://www.army.mil/acs> or contact your PCS manager or community resource and click on ACS Shared.

502-898-2359 | [www.mccoymwr.com](http://www.mccoymwr.com)

WHITETAIL RIDGE SKI AREA

**GROUP RATES**

BOOK A GROUP RATE & RECEIVE PRIVATE HILL ACCESS!

Perfect for SCHOOL GROUPS, COMPANY RETREATS, FAMILY OUTINGS, BIRTHDAYS & MORE!

TUBING ONLY	TUBING + SKIING
2 HOURS \$15	2 HOURS \$20
3 HOURS \$20	3 HOURS \$30
4 HOURS \$25	4 HOURS \$40

\*Unlimited equipment rental not included.

TUE - FRI | CALL FOR RESERVATIONS & AVAILABILITY

502-898-3517 @FortMcCoyMWR

**NEED A FAST AND CONVENIENT WAY TO WASH YOUR GSA VEHICLES?**

**THE MWR CAR WASH NOW ACCEPTS THE WEX FLEET CARDS**

Come and see us at MWR Headquarters Building 1668 to purchase your tokens to wash your GSA Vehicles at the MWR Car Wash.

502.898.3011 @FortMcCoyMWR

**Income tax assistance**

Western Technical College Western Technical College Tomah Regional Campus is offering free income tax assistance for Western students and community members. This service is open to individuals and married households filing in Wisconsin with an annual income under \$89,000. Appointments are encouraged, and walk-ins are welcome if

space allows. Takes place Thursday, March 12 | 3 to 5:30 p.m. at Western Technical College – Tomah Regional Campus, 120 E. Milwaukee St., Tomah.

**Next issue of The Real McCoy**

The March 2026 edition of The Real McCoy will be published March 20, 2026. The deadline for submissions or article ideas is March 18, 2026.

**Dining Facilities**

Building 1672 operates April-September, Building 1362 operates October-March - Offers full meal service

- Military members, military family members, and Department of Defense (DOD) civilians on official orders for temporary duty training may use dining facilities.
- DOD civilians working on Fort McCoy and retired military personnel may use dining facilities when MWR facilities are not open.
- Units must coordinate through the Food Program Management Office at 502-898-6518/4739.

**Open Hours**  
Breakfast: 6-8 a.m.  
Lunch: 11:30 a.m. – 1 p.m.  
Dinner: 5-6:30 p.m.

**Rates per meal**  
Breakfast - \$4.40  
Lunch - \$7.10  
Dinner: \$6.10

**Other Dining**

**McCoy's Community Center:** Building 1571. Catering/administration, call 502-898-2065. Building 1571. Open 11 a.m.-10 p.m. Tues.-Fri. and 4-10 p.m. Sat. Call 502-898-7060.

**Snack Avenue:** Building 1538. Located inside Express. Open 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Mon.-Sat. and 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Sun. Call 608-269-5604 or 502-898-4343.

**Specialty Express Food Court:** Building 1538. Open 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Mon.-Fri. Limited seating available. Delivery available to South Post and in cantonment area. Call 608-269-5615, ext. 303.

**Whitetail Ridge Chalet/Ten Point Pub:** Open during regular ski area hours. Call 502-898-3517.

# facilities services

This schedule is projected through March 14, 2026. Hours of operation and services can change frequently. Call facilities to verify hours before traveling.

**Bold, italic typeface** indicates a change since the last publication.

**Personnel Automations:** 502-898-4842. Reassignments: 502-898-4746. Records Update: 502-898-5677. Centralized Promotions: 502-898-5677.

**Multimedia/Visual Information:** Building 2113. Open 7:30 a.m.-4 p.m. Mon.-Fri. DA/command photos are by appointment only. Schedule at <https://www.aesmp.army.mil/> or call 502-898-4520.

**Official Mail Distribution Center:** Building 1009 (by Gate 20). Open 7:30 a.m.-4 p.m. Mon.-Fri. Call 502-898-3205.

**Patriot Outfitters:** Building 1538. Closed until further notice. Call 608-269-1115.

**Permit Sales:** Building 2168. Hunting, fishing, and firewood permits. Open 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Check <https://ftmccoy.sportsman.net> for updates. Call 502-898-3337.

**Personal Property Processing Office:** Building 200. Open 8 a.m.-4 p.m. Call 502-898-3060, fax: 502-898-5634, email: [usarmy.mccoys.asc.mbx.irc-pppo@mail.mil](mailto:usarmy.mccoys.asc.mbx.irc-pppo@mail.mil).

**Retirement Services Office:** Building 2187. Open 7:30 a.m.-3 p.m. Mon.-Fri. By appointment only. Call 502-898-3716.

**R.I.A. Credit Union:** Building 1501. Open 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Mon.-Fri. and 2-4 p.m. Tues. and Thurs. ATMs are located in building 1501 (available 24/7); McCoy's, building 1571; Exchange, building 1538; and IHG Army Hotels, building 51 (available 24/7). Call 502-898-2171.

**Service Station/Express/Class VI:** Building 1538. Open 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Mon.-Sat. and 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Sun. Call 502-898-4343. Pay-at-the-pump gas is open 24/7.

**Transition Service Center:** Open 7:30 a.m.-4 p.m. Mon.-Fri. By appointment only. Call 502-898-7956.

**Visitor Control Center:** Building 35. Open 6 a.m.-2 p.m. Mon.-Fri. Passes issued at Main Gate outside of VCC hours. Physical Security open for fingerprints Thur. only; call 502-898-2266. See ID/DEERS section for its hours.

**Family Support**

**Army Community Service:** Building 2111. Open 7:30 a.m.-4 p.m. Mon.-Fri. Call 502-898-3505.

**Army Substance Abuse Program:** Building 1344. Open 7:30 a.m.-4 p.m. Mon.-Fri. By appointment only. Call 502-898-2441.

**Red Cross:** Fort McCoy active-duty Soldiers and Family members can call 877-272-7337 for emergency assistance. For other Red Cross services, call 800-837-6313 or 608-788-1000.

**Veterans Crisis Phone Number:** New option by dialing 988 and pressing 1. Veterans may still reach the Veterans Crisis Line with the previous phone number — 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1.

**Worship**

**Catholic:** Chapel 10, building 1759. 9:15 a.m. Sun. Call 502-898-3528.

**Protestant:** Building 50. 11:30 a.m. Sun. Call 502-898-3528.

**All faiths, self-worship:** Sun. Building 2672, 10 a.m.-3p.m.

**Fellowship:** Sun. Building 2675, 8:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

**Other faiths in the local area:** Please call the RSO office at 502-898-3528.

**Counseling:** Call the on-call duty chaplain at 608-630-6073.

**Organizations**

**American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), Local 1882:** Call 502-898-1882.

**Reserve Officers Association, Fort McCoy-Readiness 43:** For more information, call 920-535-0515 or email [justdave49@centurylink.net](mailto:justdave49@centurylink.net).

**USO Wisconsin at Fort McCoy:** Building 1501, 10th Ave. For more information or to volunteer, call 414-477-7279 or email [esokol@uso.org](mailto:esokol@uso.org).

**Warrant Officers Association, Chapter 0317:** For more information email [usawoamcco@outlook.com](mailto:usawoamcco@outlook.com).

**Health Care**

**Alcoholics Anonymous:** For more information, call 502-898-5955/2441.

**Fort McCoy Civilian Employee Assistance Program:** Screening and referral services for civilian employees and Family members experiencing difficulties due to problems related to substance abuse, mental health, marital/family discord, or other causes. By appointment only. Call 502-898-2441/5955.

**Fort McCoy Sexual Harassment/Assault Response & Prevention (SHARP):** 24/7 hot-line: 502-898-3000.

**Occupational Health Clinic:** Building 1679. Open 8 a.m.-4 p.m. Mon.-Fri. By appointment only. Call 502-898-8461.

**TRICARE:** TRICARE North Region, 877-874-2273; TRICARE West Region, 877-988-9378; TRICARE South Region, 800-444-5445; TRICARE for Life, 866-773-0404; or [www.tricare.mil](http://www.tricare.mil).

**Recreation**

**Automotive Skills Center:** Building 1763. Open 1-9 p.m. Thur.-Fri. and 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Sat.-Sun. Call 502-898-3013.

**Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers (BOSS):** Call 502-898-3200.

**iSportsman:** Portal for outdoor recreational activities; registration and check-in required. Register, apply for permits, and sign in or out of recreation areas at <https://ftmccoy.sportsman.net>.

**McCoy's Community Center:** Building 1571. Offers books, arcade, gaming area, and bowling. Open 11 a.m.-10 p.m. Tues.-Fri. and 4-10 p.m. Sat. (Bar, food, bowling). Call 502-898-7060.

**Bowling Center:** Open 11 a.m.-10 p.m. Tues.-Fri. and 4-10 p.m. Sat.

**Leisure Travel Services Office:** Open 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Mon.-Fri. Call 502-898-3011.

**Pine View Campground/Recreational Equipment Checkout Center:** Campground opens May 1. Building 8053. Call 502-898-2619/3517.

**Recreation Accommodations:** Open 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Tues.-Fri. Mon. by appointment only. Call 502-898-2029.

**Rumpel Fitness Center:** Building 1122. Open 5 a.m.-8 p.m. Mon.-Fri. and 6 a.m.-2 p.m. Sat.-Sun. 24/7 access available. Call 502-898-2290. Use designated parking areas.

**Sportsman's Range:** Closed for the season. Call 502-898-9162 for information.

**Tactics Paintball/Laser Tag:** By appointment only; 2-day notice required. Call 502-898-3517.

**Whitetail Ridge Ski Area:** Closed for Season. Call 502-898-4498 or 502-898-3517 for more information.

**Services**

**Barber Shop (Exchange):** Building 1538. Open 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Mon.-Fri. Call 608-269-1710.

**Car Rentals (Enterprise):** Information available at the Exchange, building 1538. Use the phone at the Enterprise sign. Call 608-782-6183 or 800-654-3131; use CDP# 1787245.

**Car Wash:** Building 1568. Offers self-service and automatic bays and vacuums. Open 24/7.

May close during extremely cold weather. Accepts cash or credit cards. Call 502-898-4161.

**Commissary:** Building 1537. Open 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Mon.-Sat. Call 414-977-5332.

**Computer Lab:** Building 50, room 100A. Open 7:30 a.m.-4 p.m. Mon.-Fri. Computers, projector, printer, scanner, fax machine available. Call ahead for availability. Call 502-898-2474.

**CWT (Carlson Wagonlit Travel) SatoTravel:** Building 2180. Open 7:30 a.m.-4 p.m. Mon.-Fri. No walk-ins. Call 502-898-2370, 608-269-4560, or 800-927-6343.

**Education/Learning Center:** Building 50, room 123. Open 8 a.m.-2 p.m. Mon.-Fri. No walk-ins. Email [darril.hawkins.ct@mail.mil](mailto:darril.hawkins.ct@mail.mil) to schedule tests. Email [connie.j.schauer.civ@mail.mil](mailto:connie.j.schauer.civ@mail.mil) for other services.

**Equal Employment Opportunity:** Open 7 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Mon.-Fri. No walk-ins. Call 502-898-3106/3107 or email [usarmy.usarc.usarc-hq.mbx.eeo@mail.mil](mailto:usarmy.usarc.usarc-hq.mbx.eeo@mail.mil).

**Exchange:** Building 1538. Open 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Mon.-Sat. and 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Sun. Call 608-269-5604.

**ID Card/DEERS Section:** Building 2187. Open 8-11:30 a.m. and 12:30-3:30 p.m. Mon.-Wed. and Fri. and 9:30-11:30 a.m. and 12:30-3:30 p.m. Thur. Call 502-898-4563.

**IHG Army Hotels:** Building 51. Open 24/7. Call 502-898-2107 or 877-711-TEAM (8326).

**Installation Legal Office:** Building 2171. Call 502-898-2165.

**Launderette/Dry Cleaning:** Building 1538. Open 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Mon.-Fri. Call 608-269-1075.

**Laundry Facilities:** Open 24/7. Exclusively for use by Soldiers training on Fort McCoy. Civilian, family members, and retired military members are not authorized to use these facilities. Call 502-898-3800 to find out which buildings are open.

**Military Clothing:** Building 1538. Open 8 a.m.-7 p.m. Mon.-Sat. and 8 a.m.-3 p.m. Sun. Call 608-269-5604, ext. 203.

**Military Personnel:** Building 2187. Open 7:30 a.m.-4 p.m. By appointment only. In-/Out-processing: 502-898-4822.

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CONDITION	IF YOU HEAR	THIS INDICATES	INDIVIDUAL ACTIONS
<b>Natural Disaster</b>	3- to 5-minute steady tone or voice announcement	Disaster imminent or in progress. Examples: Tornado, flash flood, hazardous-materials release, wildfire.	Be alert. Ensure all personnel are warned. Take cover by evacuating to a safe location or sheltering in place. Notify supervisor of location. Tune in to local radio or TV stations for emergency information.
<b>Attack</b>	30-sec. to 5-min. wavering tone or voice announcement	Attack imminent or in progress. Examples: Vehicle bomb, terrorist action, release of biological or radioactive materials.	Be alert. Ensure all personnel are warned. Implement force-protection condition (FPCON) procedures as indicated. Take cover by evacuating to a safe location or sheltering in place. Notify supervisor of location.
<b>All Clear</b>	Voice announcement	Immediate threat from disaster or attack is over.	Be alert for secondary hazards. Report for all personnel. Check building. Await instructions on FPCON level. Record fires, injuries and other hazards.

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**The Real McCoy**

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Send news items to the Public Affairs Office, ATTN: (IMMC-PA), 100 E. Headquarters Road, Fort McCoy, WI 54656-5263, or call 502-898-4128 or 2769 or send e-mail to [usarmy.mccoys.imcom-central.list.pao-admin@mail.mil](mailto:usarmy.mccoys.imcom-central.list.pao-admin@mail.mil).

**Garrison Commander** .....Col. Sheyla Baez-Ramirez  
**Senior Public Affairs Specialist/Managing Editor**.....Scott T. Sturkol  
**Public Affairs Specialist/Community Relations**.....Melissa Dubois  
**Commemorative Area Caretaker**.....Robin Michalski  
**Editorial Content** .....502-898-4128

Read this publication online at <https://home.army.mil/mccoys>.

**FIREARM REGISTRATION POLICY**

All privately owned firearms brought on the installation must be registered through the Directorate of Emergency Services (DES) Police Department. Firearm registration is required by Army Regulation 190-11, 4-5, "Privately owned weapons and ammunition."

Firearms are required to be registered prior to entrance or immediately upon entering any lands identified as Fort McCoy property. For more information, call 502-898-2266.

COMMUNITY

# Fort McCoy communicators earn big in 2026 IMCOM, AMC communications competitions

During January 2026, U.S. Army Installation Management Command and Army Materiel Command held awards competitions back-to-back and from that several Fort McCoy public affairs and multimedia-visual information personnel were recognized with numerous awards for 2025 excellence.

## 2025 Army Installation Management Command Communications Awards

The 2025 Army Installation Management Command Communications Awards (IMCOM) were held in mid-January.

**Greg Mason**, audiovisual production specialist with the Fort McCoy Multimedia-Visual Information (MM-VI) Office, which falls under the Fort McCoy Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security, earned a first place in Broadcast Category C, Social Media/Multimedia Video (Individual Category). This award was for his video, available at <https://www.dvidshub.net/video/971315/walter-reed-army-institute-research-effects-mortars-soldiers>, entitled, "Walter Reed Army Institute of Research on effects of Mortars on Soldiers."

**Mason** also earned second place in Category G: 2025 Clark Taylor Civilian Videographer of the Year. Mason's judged entries for this category were as follows:

— **MICLIC (Mine Clearing Line Charge) at Fort McCoy**, <https://www.dvidshub.net/video/973020/miclic-mine-clearing-line-charge-fort-mccoy-wi>.

— **U.S. Army Engineer Research and Development Center at Fort McCoy**, <https://www.dvidshub.net/video/978138/us-army-engineer-research-and-development-center-erdc-fort-mccoy-wi>.

— **Walter Reed Army Institute of Research on effects of Mortars on Soldiers**, <https://www.dvidshub.net/video/971315/walter-reed-army-institute-research-effects-mortars-soldiers>.

— **USAR BSC — Helocast at Fort McCoy**, <https://www.dvidshub.net/video/964369/usar-bsc-helocast-fort-mccoy-wi>.

Because Mason was in the top two of the competition in the category, he moved on to compete in the Army Materiel Command-level of competition.

In the photography competition, **Kevin Clark**, MM-VI photographer, earned a first-place award in Photography Category B, News Photograph (Individual Category).

Clark's photo was entitled, "CH-47 Chinook crew helps Army Reserve competitors for Best Squad competition at Fort McCoy," and covers Soldiers jumping from a Chinook into Big Sandy Lake on Fort McCoy's South Post. The photo is available at <https://www.dvidshub.net/image/9074076/ch-47-chinook-crew-helps-army-reserve-competitors-best-squad-competition-fort-mccoy>.

In the graphics competition, **Graphic Artist Kendra Pierce** with the Fort McCoy MM-VI Office earned first place in Graphic Design Category A. Pierce's Entry was entitled "UAS Couter-Drone Tri-fold." The tri-fold is available for viewing at <https://www.dvidshub.net/image/9409530/uas-couter-drone-tri-fold>.

From the Fort McCoy Public Affairs Office, **Senior Public Affairs Specialist Scott T. Sturkol** earned a second-place finish for Category I: 2025 Moss-Holland Civilian Writer of the Year. Sturkol's judged entries for this category included:

— **80 YEARS LATER: Recalling end of World War II at Camp McCoy**, <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/547183/80-years-later-recalling-end-world-war-ii-camp-mccoy>.

— **Lt. Dan Band entertains nearly a thousand guests during July 2025 concert at Fort McCoy**, <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/543247/lt-dan-band-entertains-nearly-thousand-guests-during-july-2025-concert-fort-mccoy>.

— **Research with Walter Reed study on mitigating impacts of blast exposures continued in 2025 during training at Fort McCoy**, <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/547022/research-with-walter-reed-study-mitigating-impacts-blast-exposures-continued-2025-during-training-fort-mccoy>.

— **Hundreds attend Clydesdales visit to Fort McCoy; parade held at Pine View Campground**, <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/502187/hundreds-attend-clydesdales-visit-fort-mccoy-parade-held-pine-view-campground>.

— **Soldiers with 13th Battalion, 100th Regiment hold sling-load training at McCoy; Wisconsin National Guard Black Hawks, crews assist**, <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/499635/soldiers-with-13th-battalion-100th-regiment-hold-slingload-training-mccoy-wisconsin-national-guard-black-hawks-crews-assist>.

**Sturkol** also earned a second-place finish in Writing Category A, News Article (Individual Category). His entry for this category was entitled, *Research with Walter Reed study on mitigating impacts of blast exposures continued in 2025 during training at Fort McCoy*, and is available at <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/547022/research-with-walter-reed-study-mitigating-impacts-blast-exposures-continued-2025-during-training-fort-mccoy>.

As managing editor of Fort McCoy's monthly official newspaper, **Sturkol** also led the Fort McCoy Public Affairs Office to first-place finishes in Writing Category C, Online Publication (Unit Category), and Writing Category D, Printed Publication (Unit Category). **Public Affairs Specialist Melissa Dubois** was a significant contributor for these categories as well as the Fort McCoy MM-VI team who includes **Mason, Clark, Pierce**, and also Photographer **Amanda Clark**.

For the winning, first place online edition, it was Fort McCoy's September 2025 edition of The Real McCoy Online. That edition is available at [https://d34w7g4gy10iej.cloudfront.net/pubs/pdf\\_75293.pdf](https://d34w7g4gy10iej.cloudfront.net/pubs/pdf_75293.pdf).

The winning first-place printed edition was Fort McCoy's June 2025

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## Army Reserve 2025 Best Squad Competition held at McCoy

By CAPT. ELEANOR POLK  
Army Reserve

A competitor in the 2025 Army Reserve Best Squad Competition jumps from the back of the CH-47 Chinook helicopter May 15 during the competition.

Photo by Army Chaplain Fort McCoy Multimedia-Visual Information Office

This year, 75 warriors divided into 15 squads to endure six grueling, challenge-filled days during the U.S. Army Reserve Command (USAR) Best Squad Competition at Fort McCoy.

The 200th Military Police (MP) Command's squad emerged victorious. The squad, consisting of Staff Sgt. Cameron Lamson, Sgt. Aaron Coyne, Sgt. Steve Foss, Plt. Luke Grigolo, and Pvt. 2nd Class Scott Neri, demonstrated resilience and exceptional teamwork to secure the annual top honor.

Before arriving at Fort McCoy, each Soldier fought to qualify in the brigade and command level competitions. The winners then became a part of the 200th MP Command's best squad and sent to Wisconsin.

"We were taken from our individual battalions or our individual brigades, and we created the best squad from those brigades. From there, we came here to the USAR level, and it's been a journey the whole way. We finally overcame last month," said Lamson, the squad leader.

Command Sgt. Maj. Judd Hanson and Sergeant Popper presented each squad member with the Army Commendation Medal for their distinguished achievement.

**Planning, execution**

The success of the 2025 Army Reserve's Best Squad Competition hinged on meticulous planning and coordination of all activities, planners said. Immediately following the conclusion of last year's competition, preparations for the 2025 event began, collaborating logistics, support, equipment, and personnel. Soldiers assigned to these tasks dedicated long hours to meet critical deadlines and ensure the smooth execution of the competition.

Sgt. 1st Class Corey Lallambone, assigned to the USAR G-3/577 Competition Operations, was named BEST SQUAD Leader.

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## Fifth World War II-era barracks moved at Fort McCoy in May 2025; completes historical effort to save 80-year-old buildings

STORY & PHOTOS BY SCOTT T. STURKOL  
Public Affairs Staff

A barracks building from the 1600 block at Fort McCoy is shown being moved May 13 from the 1600 block to another area of the installation. Contractors moved five buildings in 2025.

Photo by Scott T. Sturkol

The \$25 million Collective Training Officers Quarters Project at Fort McCoy's 1600 block now has full construction space open after the fifth and last World War II-era barracks was moved from the area to the 500 block on May 13.

Five World War II-era barracks buildings were already moved on June 22, Feb. 12-13, March 15, and April 16. The movement of the last building went as fast as the fourth — less than a day. Drought Building Moves of Maintenance, Wis., in the contract during the building moving with wheels and remote control powered by a generator.

Fort McCoy Directorate of Public Works (DPW) planners have said a plan was previously worked out with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for the contractor to move the five old barracks buildings to the 500 block of Fort McCoy in three moves. The buildings are temporarily set in that block until new locations are determined.

In the fifth move, the crews had ideal weather to get it done with purely sunny skies and moderate temperatures.

DPW officials here said the movement of these buildings is historical in that it's only the second time that barracks from 1942 are being moved to be reused at the installation. Four barracks were moved in 2023 and then rest in these different blocks on the post.

Built in 1942, these buildings were "state-of-the-art" and made them Camp McCoy one of the "premier training facilities" preparing troops for the war effort. The July 26, 1942 edition of The Real McCoy newspaper talked about the new barracks 83 years ago.

As an article entitled, "Soldiers await moving orders to new McCoy," they noted service members were getting ready to move.

"Here to the right of them, trees to the left of them barracks in front of them with Mother Nature coming her traps, spill all around such will be the future surroundings of those who will move to the new camp area," the article stated.

"One of the largest and most modern Army camps, the new Camp McCoy, located further inland than the old one, will offer its promise."

(See BARRACKS MOVE, Page 3)

## Soldiers hold slingload training at McCoy; Black Hawks, crews assist

BY SCOTT T. STURKOL  
Public Affairs Staff

Helicopter crews with the Wisconsin National Guard's 1st Battalion, 147th Aviation Regiment utilizing UH-60 Black Hawks combine with the Army Reserve's 13th Battalion, 100th Regiment for slingload training on May 22 at Fort McCoy.

Photo by Scott T. Sturkol

Soldiers with the Army Reserve's 13th Battalion, 100th Regiment held slingload training at Fort McCoy on May 22 at Fort McCoy with the support of two UH-60 Black Hawks and crews from the Wisconsin National Guard.

Leading the preparations for the training was Sgt. 1st Class Colton Lee Kincaid with the 13th Battalion, 100th Regiment. Kincaid, who said the slingload training they're completing here could be described as "cross level" training for unit personnel. Kincaid, who regularly serves as an 80th military occupational specialty (MOS) of ammunition supply specialist.

"The here ... to present to some different MOS' to do some cross-level training and also try to share our experience and our knowledge base with what we do here as well as it," said Kincaid, who regularly serves as an 80th military occupational specialty (MOS) of ammunition supply specialist.

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Kincaid said they started the training operation's planning process several months in advance. That included working out having the correct equipment in place as well as working with the Wisconsin National Guard to have the Black Hawks and crews participate.

(See SLINGLOAD, Page 5)

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edition of The Real McCoy newspaper. An electronic version of that edition is available at [https://d34w7g4gy10iej.cloudfront.net/pubs/pdf\\_73346.pdf](https://d34w7g4gy10iej.cloudfront.net/pubs/pdf_73346.pdf).

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## 2025 Army Installation Management Command Communications and Public Affairs Awards WINNER

BEST ONLINE PUBLICATION  
WRITING CATEGORY C, UNIT CATEGORY

September 2025 Edition  
of The Real McCoy Newspaper  
Fort McCoy Public Affairs Office

Editor: Scott T. Sturkol, Senior Public Affairs Specialist

Significant Contributors:  
Melissa Dubois, Public Affairs Specialist  
Fort McCoy Multimedia Visual Information Office

# 2025 Army Installation Management Command Communications and Public Affairs Awards WINNER

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## 2025 Army Materiel Command David G. Harris Competition Awards

The 2025 Army Materiel Command David G. Harris Competition was completed toward the end of January, and again Fort McCoy's Public Affairs/MM-VI team did well again.

**Greg Mason**, again, earned first place in Category C: Social Media/Multimedia Video, for the *Walter Reed Army Institute of Research on effects of Mortars on Soldiers* video.

And in Category G: 2025 Clark Taylor Civilian Videographer of the Year, **Mason** earned first place for Army Materiel Command. Mason will serve as the command's representative in the category at the Army-level Keith L. Ware competition. His second time doing so in the last few years.

For Category B: News Photograph, **Photographer Kevin Clark** earned a third-place finish.

In Category A: Layout and Design, **Graphic Artist Kendra Pierce** had a second-place finish.

For Category C: Online Publication, The Real McCoy of the **Fort McCoy Public Affairs Office** earned a third-place finish.

And lastly, in Category D: Printed Publication, The Real McCoy newspaper earned first place, making the paper the Best Printed Publication in Army Installation Management Command and Army Materiel Command in 2025. The newspaper also earned the same title for IMCOM in 2024.

"Earning awards for news, video, photo, newspaper, graphics, individual news and video coverage demonstrates the caliber of talent that Fort McCoy has in the people who manage the public affairs and multimedia missions at Fort McCoy," Sturkol said.

"It's a great honor to represent Fort McCoy and its great mission as the Total Force Training Center. The work accomplished by our team in PAO and MM-VI isn't possible without the support of the entire Fort McCoy team, so these awards are really Fort McCoy awards. We all appreciate the support across the post."

Kevin Clark said he appreciated his work being recognized. "I'm just glad we can help show the rest of the Army all the amazing things we're doing at Fort McCoy," he said.

Mason also said he appreciates his work being recognized across the Army.

"Great to be recognized for creating quality video productions highlighting training at Fort McCoy," Mason said. "I have a wonderful job that allows me to enjoy using my skills to support the Fort McCoy mission."

In a message about competition results, U.S. Army IMCOM Public Affairs stated there was a lot of competitors.

"IMCOM public affairs professionals from 20 garrisons worldwide entered 245 pieces of content into 24 categories," the message stated. "Their work reflects excellence in sharing and communicating the Army's story around the globe. The work of these civilian and military writers, editors, photographers, videographers, and graphic designers was distinguished from that of their peers by a panel of 10 judges."

Fort McCoy Garrison Commander Col. Sheyla Baez Ramirez also discussed these results in a postwide message to the Fort McCoy team.

"Fort McCoy Community Team, it is my distinct pleasure to share the results of the 2025 Army Installation Management Command and Army Materiel Command Awards," Baez wrote.

"Once again, Fort McCoy has proven that we are home to some of the most talented communicators in the Army. Our Public Affairs and Multimedia-Visual Information Team secured an incredible 14 major command awards (and nominations), marking our strongest performance since 2022."

"From first-place finishes in photography and graphic design to 'The Real McCoy' being recognized as a premier publication, the quality of work coming out of this installation is second to none," Baez wrote.

"Special shout-outs to **Scott Sturkol, Gregory Mason, Kevin Clark, Melissa Dubois, and Kendra Pierce** for their individual and unit placements. Your dedication to telling the Fort McCoy story with excellence does not go unnoticed."

Fort McCoy's motto is to be the "Total Force Training Center." Located in the heart of the upper Midwest, Fort McCoy is the only U.S. Army installation in Wisconsin.

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

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

(Article prepared by the Fort McCoy Public Affairs Office.)



Photo by Kevin Clark, Fort McCoy Multimedia-Visual Information Office

**A U.S. Army CH-47 Chinook helicopter and crew with the 7th Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment of New Century, Kansas, supports an event May 15, 2025, at Big Sandy Lake on South Post at Fort McCoy, Wis., for the 2025 Army Reserve Best Squad competition. Dozens of Soldiers participated in this competition. This photo earned a first place award in the 2025 Army Installation Management Command Communications Awards and a third place award in the 2025 Army Materiel Command David G. Harris Competition Awards.**

# THIS MONTH IN FORT MCCOY HISTORY

Fort McCoy, Wis., was established in 1909. Here is a look back at some installation history from February 2026 and back.

## 80 Years Ago — February 1946

FROM THE FEB. 1, 1946, EDITION OF THE REAL MCCOY NEWSPAPER: *Gen. Rice lauds McCoy's staff for good work* (By Newspaper Staff) — Camp McCoy's booming separation center celebrated the first six months of its operation this week with a total score of 156,982 discharges.

Brig. Gen. John K. Rice, Camp McCoy commanding general, congratulated the operating staff of the Personnel Center and post personnel, adding his congratulations for a "job well done" to his officer, enlisted, and civilian staff.

### Near record month

January (1946), he revealed, was a near-record month for separations. A total of 31,550 enlisted men and 1,650 officers were separated from the service during the past month. The January total, 33,200, compares to the peak month of November when 35,295 were separated and to next larger month, October, with 34,053 discharged.

Maj. Hammond predicted at least 25,000 separations during the next month. "It is difficult to make estimates, however," he qualified.

A record number of officers and enlisted men joined the Reserve Corps as they were being processed in the separation center, Maj. Hammond revealed. A total of 84.3 percent of the officers and 21.44 percent of the enlisted personnel separated Wednesday of this week joined the Reserve, he said.

### Men retain patriotism

"A good many of the men obviously retain a certain amount of patriotism, as the Reserve figures indicate," he said.

The Personnel Center lost several old-time officers who were veterans in its operation at Fort McCoy, Maj. Hammond said. Capt. Daniel D. O'Connell, commanding officer of the reception station, and Capt. Laurence Rickanasrud, chief of the records branch of the personnel center, were both processed in the organization they helped found, and relieved from active service Thursday. Both were among the pioneer officers helping found the Personnel Center at McCoy.

## FROM THE FEB. 1, 1946, EDITION OF THE REAL MCCOY NEWSPAPER:

*Col. Robeson praises nurses; Corps honors 45th year* (By Newspaper Staff) — "As we celebrate the 45th anniversary of the Army Nurses Corps on Feb. 2, we are proud that Camp McCoy nurses have played such an excellent part in bringing total victory to the allied forces. Their contribution in care of wounded on battle areas and their hospital services, here and abroad, were among the most outstanding achievements of World War II," stated Col. David L. Robeson, post surgeon and station hospital commander, on citing the corps' anniversary.

According to records, over 100,000 nurses have served with the Army Nurses Corps since it was militarized in 1901. Fifty-seven thousand was the peak strength of the corps during World War II. Of this number approximately 4,250 were trained for duty (at Camp McCoy) at the Station Hospital School for Nurses and since have served in all parts of the globe. Of this number, 240 were (black) nurses.

The Station Hospital School for Nurses was organized in July 1943, under the direction of Col. Robeson and Lt. Col. Nellie E. McGovern, chief nurse. Playing a big part in the program was Maj. A. Christine Jensen, training director of the school.

According to the War Department, Army nurses have been the first woman in history to receive many of the War Department decorations including 23 Distinguished Service Crosses, one Purple Heart, and 203 foreign decorations. Thirty-seven McCoy nurses were among those receiving decorations.

Of the 17 nurses who were killed in action, tribute is paid to 1st Lt. Annette Staniszeski of Chicago — first McCoy nurse to lose her life in a combat zone.

And even though the present war crisis seems ended, the nurse is still playing a big part in re-converting to a peace-time basis. They are still on duty wherever American troops are stationed; with the occupation troops in Germany and Ja-

## Gen. Rice Lauds USO Workers For Courtesies

Brig. Gen. John K. Rice, commanding general, guest speaker for the USO Fifth Anniversary celebration held Monday night at the Tomah USO, was high in his praise for the work carried on by the local organization and for courtesies extended to post-military personnel and their families. Speaking before a capacity crowd, Gen. Rice told of personal contacts with the USO at home and abroad, giving a resume of work carried on in rest areas; the shows, wandering minstrels and recreational sports launched by the organization.

"I have had contact with USO's on a broad basis and had personal contact with men from California to Holland, Belgium, Germany and the rest area on the Riviera in Southern France," stated Gen. Rice, "and find the USO activities very tremendous and very cooperative."

Pointing out another side of the USO work which he declared was even more important, Gen. Rice stressed the fact that the friendly atmosphere and the warm reception offered soldiers by the local community USO was most important to the individual, his wife and family.

This is a news clipping from the Feb. 8, 1946, edition of The Real McCoy newspaper at then-Camp McCoy.



U.S. Navy recruits march during a snowstorm Feb. 4 at Fort McCoy. The Navy's Recruit Training Command (RTC) of Great Lakes, Ill., negotiated with the U.S. Army in 2020 at Fort McCoy so the post could serve as a restriction-of-movement (ROM) site for Navy recruits prior to entering basic training. Additional personnel support from the Navy's Great Lakes, Ill., Millington, Tenn., and Washington, D.C., sites deployed to McCoy to assist RTC in conducting the initial 14-day ROM to help reduce the risk of bringing the coronavirus to RTC should any individual be infected. More than 40,000 recruits train annually at the Navy's only boot camp. This is also the first time Fort McCoy has supported the Navy in this capacity. Fort McCoy's motto is to be the "Total Force Training Center."

This is a news clipping from the Feb. 12, 2021, edition of The Real McCoy newspaper.

pan; and giving aid to civilian population that may jeopardize the health of our American Army; and are still on duty at home with the Soldiers who are fighting to regain health.

FROM THE FEB. 8, 1946, EDITION OF THE REAL MCCOY NEWSPAPER: *Blaze causes \$5,000 damage; fire guts supply room* (By Newspaper Staff) — Fire gutted a separation finance storeroom in Building 1916 early Saturday morning, causing over \$5,000 damage to the building alone.

A large stock of mimeograph stencils, paper, envelopes, and other office supplies were damaged beyond use and some material was damaged slightly by smoke and water.

The probable cause of the fire was a cigarette that had been discarded in a cardboard wastebasket in the single story frame building. Capt. Theodore H. Ebert, Utilities Maintenance officer, stated.

Pfc. William McGahn, Service Co. 2, discovered the blaze and reported it immediately to the station fire department. Two engines responded to the call and by the time of their arrival the flames were coming out of all the windows and doors. Utilizing three 2 1/2-inch hoses, the firefighters soon got the blaze under control and cleaned up by using a 1 1/2-inch hose.

Shortly after the fire's discovery, it had spread to a pile of stationary which caused the blaze to mushroom out of the center of the room. The inside of the building was completely blackened by the intensity of the fire. The windows were all broken, the flooring severely damaged, and much of the wall and ceiling badly burned.

The building, which had been converted into a supply and store room for the finance section, was formerly a mess hall. The station fire department responded to a second call Saturday morning at the Station Hospital where a discarded cigarette had lodged between the flooring and wall and caused the Celotex insulation to smolder. Approximately \$15 damage was reported.

## 40 Years Ago — February 1986

FROM THE FEB. 20, 1986, EDITION OF THE TRIAD NEWSPAPER: *Marine recruits observe training* (By John Simmons) — This sprawling, snow-capped Army training base played host to 105 United States Marine Corps Delayed Entry Program (poolee) members Saturday, Feb. 8.

Arriving by chartered buses and government automobiles, the high school seniors were greeted by Col. H.W. Baker, chief of staff, 4th Marine Amphibious Brigade (MAB). The poolees were issued cold weather parkas, mittens, and a MRE (Meal, Ready to Eat) to protect them from the wicked Wisconsin wind and cold.

"This is great," remarked Larry Jones, senior, North High School, St. Paul, Minn. "I didn't know there was a base this large this close. Are we going to get to ride on anything? What are we going to see? Let's get started."

The excited Minnesotan and his companions were taken to amphibious assault vehicles (AAV) of the 2nd Assault Amphibian Battalion, Camp Lejeune, N.C., and given a hair-raising ride to the II Marine Amphibious Force's Arctic Survival training site.

Emerging from their tracked taxis, they hastily assembled and were briefed by Maj. W.C. Smith, officer in charge, Arctic Survival Course.

"What you gentlemen will see today," said Smith, "are shelters that anyone can construct and utilize if they are ever stranded in cold weather without means of rescue. You will see primitive methods of snaring or capturing game to keep you alive when you have no food."

First stop for one group was the igloo complex where they were told how to build an igloo, when was the best time to use the igloo and how many people could sleep in it.

"Shelter is your primary concern when out in the cold," said P01 David Sickle, corpsman for the site. "You must get out of the wind and temperatures. Once you get shelter, you can conserve energy and think about what to do next."

Sickle continued, "After shelter, the next priority is heat." The poolees were shown different methods of starting fires.

"Next," said Sickle, "you need water." He then demonstrated how to melt snow in various vessels.

"Food is the last priority in a cold-weather environment," he said. "A person can go without food for four to five days, if he is conservative in his activities. In a forest or other remote areas there are many different animals and fish that can provide food to a savvy individual."

He then led the group through various demonstrations of employing snares, building deadfalls and using fishhooks to catch animals on land. Sickle concluded the tour with the statement, "No one should starve to death in the wild. Always remember the list of priorities and you will have no problem with surviving in the cold."

"This is fantastic," said 18-year-old Brian Williams, a senior from Sparta High School. "I've lived in Wisconsin all my life and played in the cold, but I never knew how to survive in it if I were cast off by myself."

## 30 Years Ago — February 1996

FROM THE FEB. 2, 1996, EDITION OF THE TRIAD NEWSPAPER: *Positive Force '96 — Exercise to test McCoy's mobilization capabilities* (By Rob Schuette) — Mobilization capabilities will be tested by a unit-level exercise at Fort McCoy from Monday, Feb. 26 to Thursday, March 14.

The exercise, "Positive Force '96," has two major goals. First, it will assess the readiness of 40 units that will participate in the exercise, said Lt. Col. David Thompson, chief of Plans, Mobilization and Operations Division in the Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security.

Second, the exercise is an important part of the process to assess Fort McCoy's role as one of 15 Power-Projection Platforms in the Department of the Army, he said. Representatives of the 40 units will be alerted and deployed to Fort McCoy from Feb. 26 to March 14. The Department of Army-level exercise, which is under Joint Chiefs of Staff control, will run from March 1 to 14.

During this time, the Fort McCoy staff will report data about each unit's readiness.

Maj. Craig Meeusen, DPTMSEC U.S. Army Reserve mobilization planner and Positive Force project officer said some of the key factors of unit readiness that will be evaluated are:

- \* **Unit strength** — including determining how many Soldiers are deployable and whether their military occupational specialties match their duties;

- \* **Logistics** — including determining whether soldiers have the right equipment, and whether the unit is battle ready;

- \* **Training** — including evaluating how prepared commanders believe their units are for deployment compared to how prepared the unit must be to successfully complete a mission.

Positive Force also will test a new computer system, the Mobilization Level Application Software program, Meeusen said. The equipment will permit reserve-component units to transmit a wide range of unit personnel data directly to Fort McCoy during this exercise.

Later, the system will be able to accept logistics and training data from each unit.

"This equipment will allow us an on-line, real-time snapshot of how a unit looks before it arrives at Fort McCoy," he said. "It should give us a more realistic idea of units' shortfalls and requirements and how to enhance their readiness posture."

The data from the exercise will be collected, formatted to meet reporting requirements and sent to Forces Command, Thompson said.

## 25 Years Ago — February 2001

FROM THE FEB. 9, 2001, EDITION OF THE TRIAD NEWSPAPER: *Mobilizing units prepare for Southwest Asia duty* (By Newspaper Staff) — Soldiers dressed in desert clothing who were training for duty in Southwest Asia may have looked a little out of place on snow-covered Fort McCoy training sites.

The cold weather helped keep the Soldiers' minds on the task at hand and provided an incentive to quickly refine their skills. About 200 Soldiers from or attached to C Company, 1st Battalion, 168th Infantry Regiment of Denison, Iowa, or from B Company of the 2nd Battalion, 135th Infantry Regiment of Rochester, Minn., went through training from Jan. 22-Feb. 4. The Soldiers are from the Iowa and Minnesota Army National Guard.

The units were the last of three rotations to deploy from Fort McCoy to Southwest Asia to support Operation Desert Spring. The second rotation redeployed as this rotation was deploying.

Sgt. 1st Class Brian Nichols of the 1st/168th said the Soldiers sailed through the training at the South Post Patriot missile site mock-ups. The personnel were able to learn the basics and concentrated on doing things right.

The unit also was trying to beat the snow that arrived shortly after the PAT site training was completed.

"We used the additional time to do extra training to keep up our edge and get prepared to go," Nichols said. "The Soldiers are eager to go. Many of them haven't been to a foreign country."

Sgt. Clay Chickering, an Iowa National Guard Soldier who was attached to C Company of the 1st/168th, said he volunteered for the duty and to see a different country.

Although many people think the weather is hot, the temperatures will probably be in the 60s and 70s for highs when the unit arrives for duty, Chickering said.

The high temperatures probably will be in the 120- to 130-degree range before they leave, however.

"For a lot of guys it's odd to come here to get trained to go to the desert," Chickering said. "It was good training and was set up right for us to get used to the site conditions in Southwest Asia."

Spc. Chad Griffin, an Iowa National Guard Soldier attached to C Company of the 1st/168th, said the Soldiers trained hard and came together.

"When you do things correctly the first time, you'll be in good stead over there," Griffin said. "I know we'll do the duty as we trained."

Pfc. Montgomery Jensen of B Company of the 2nd Battalion/135th Infantry, Rochester, Minn., said training in the colder weather was only a state of mind.

"We see how things would work on the site," he said. "You have to do the same procedures no matter what the weather is."

Spc. Greg Bohn of B Company, 2nd/135th said the cold weather gave unit members a two-in-one training mission.

"We had heat classes and were thoroughly informed of the situation of where we're going in Southwest Asia," Bohn said. "We may go to someplace where it's cold so this will help prepare us for that possibility, as well."

## 20 Years Ago — February 2006

FROM THE FEB. 10, 2006, EDITION OF THE TRIAD NEWSPAPER: *Young Air Assault Strip to be upgraded* (By Rob Schuette) — The draft design to expand and lengthen Fort McCoy's Young Air Assault Strip to serve as a test site to accommodate C-17 aircraft has been approved.

Terry Hoff, Fort McCoy range officer, said he expects the draft design will be fairly close to the final design. An environmental review is under way. The project is expected to be completed in time to allow for testing later this fall.

"The purpose of the test is to determine the requirements for landing C-17s on various airstrips that are unimproved," Hoff said. "They (military officials) know the airstrip requirements to land it on dry or icy surfaces. They don't know the requirements for the different conditions in between."

Fort McCoy is an ideal site for the testing because it has sandy loam features, which is the most common soil type in the world, Hoff said. Fort McCoy also can offer differing climates, including cold weather for the testing. The two other sites chosen for the tests are Fort Hunter Liggett, Calif., and Fort Chaffee, Ark.

The 264th Engineer Group of Chippewa Falls, Wis., is scheduled to do the necessary work at Fort McCoy to upgrade the airstrip as a troop project. Hoff said the runway will be lengthened from 4,300 feet to 6,250 feet.

Hoff said the shorter length will accommodate the C-17 landing under dry conditions, while the longer length will accommodate the C-17 landing under wet conditions.

The runway will be widened from 60 to 90 feet to accommodate the increased wingspan of C-17 aircraft. Young Air Assault Strip will remain open during the work to support training exercises scheduled for June (Patriot Warrior) and July (National Guard Global Patriot), Hoff said.

Work in June will include the expansion of the existing runway and the rerouting of a road. In July, work will include removing the existing runway surface and replacing it with sandy loam.

The sandy loam will be transported from several on-post sites, including from a Swamp Pond dredging site and borrow sites, Hoff said.

"The improvement of the runway means the Air Force can bring more aircraft to train at Fort McCoy," Hoff said. "The Air Force also will have more opportunities to conduct joint training with the Army."

The Air Force is required to provide air cargo support to Army missions, he said. The C-17s were introduced several years ago to supplement the cargo missions of the C-130s and will come into more common use as more airfields can handle the aircraft.

## 10 Years Ago — February 2016

FROM THE FEB. 12, 2016, EDITION OF THE REAL MCCOY NEWSPAPER: *McCoy institutional-training opportunities growing; new improvements planned* (By Scott T. Sturkol) — More areas at Fort McCoy will be dedicated to institutional training use by Fort McCoy tenant organizations, such as Regional Training Site (RTS)-Maintenance or RTS-Medical, said Range Officer Mike Todd with the Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security (DPTMS).

According to the Fort McCoy Executive Summary, published annually, the installation provides full-scale support to its customers at each juncture of its training triad — transient, institutional, and exercise. Institutional training fulfills the educational requirements and furthers the career status of its students. Fort McCoy currently offers institutional training opportunities in the leadership, medical, and maintenance fields.

"Institutional Training Areas (ITAs) are areas where school training can take place and these (training) organizations are not competing for space," Todd said.

"ITAs also provide a space to support individual-level training for units conducting annual or battle-drill training.

"Also, each time we make improvements to these areas, it allows for improved training capabilities for our tenant training organizations," Todd said.

Training Area D-8 recently was updated and will become an ITA, Todd said. In fall 2015, a new mire pit was constructed there as part of the development of a Vehicle Recovery Site. More work will be done at D-8 as part of a future troop project and through assistance from Land Rehabilitation and Maintenance (LRAM) personnel.

Integrated Training Area Management Coordinator Brent Friedl of DPTMS assists with management of LRAM projects. Friedl said the troop-project work for D-8 is in the initial stages of development. Draft designs of the layout and the planned stations have been drawn up.

Todd said the process to make Training Area D-8 a full ITA likely will take two years.

"There is currently a rough-terrain driving course and an engineer training area at the D-8 site," Todd said. "Once done, D-8 will serve as the primary training site for vehicle-recovery training and other training as well."

Training Areas D-10E and D-10W also will expand in the future. "We also are working at creating another emergency services training facility for DES (Directorate of Emergency Services) at D-10W eventually," Todd said. "That is something that will be closer to where they work. (DES personnel) generally do their training on South Post, but sometimes they get pulled away for real-world activity. That facility is a future project, and the Directorate of Public Works is working the environmental assessment for that area right now."

At Training Area D-10E, Todd said plans include the development and construction of a hand-held detector lane for improvised-explosive-device-detection training and more.

"While some of our projects are expected to be done in the next couple of years, the hand-held detector lane we hope to get in by the end of the fiscal year," Todd said.

Range improvements align with the Fort McCoy strategic objectives to continually modernize the infrastructure and to enhance military value through improved training area utilization and land-use initiatives. Learn more about Fort McCoy online at <https://home.army.mil/mccoy>, on Facebook by searching "fmccoy," on Flickr at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/fortmccoywi/>, and on X (formerly Twitter) by searching "usagmccoy."