

The FOCUS



MARCH 2026

NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS THEMES AND MESSAGES

March Observances

National Nutrition Month

3 National Anthem Day
Navy Reserve Birthday (1915)

13 K-9 Veterans Day

17 St. Patrick's Day

19 Operation Iraqi Freedom Began (2003)

25 National Medal of Honor Day

March - Space

Air Guard units in six states transition space mission to Space Force



California Air National Guard members with the 216th Electromagnetic Warfare Squadron pose for a photo with Space Force leadership prior to a transition of operational responsibility at Vandenberg Space Force Base, California, Sept. 5. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Kevin Hernandez)

Story by Ashley George, U.S. Space Force Combat Forces Command

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. – On Oct. 1 Space Operations Command took operational responsibility for nine designated space missions under the Air National Guard, a move designed to preserve mission effectiveness while streamlining the organization, training, and equipping of space professionals for long-term lethality.

This transition is part of the 2025 National Defense Authorization Act, section 514, which directed the Department of the Air Force to transfer covered space functions from the Air Guard to the U.S. Space Force. Once fully implemented, the Space Force will be able to manage their unique military force more effectively to meet current and evolving mission requirements, while simultaneously improving retention and quality of life.

“The Space Force’s operational responsibilities are critical to national security and this substantial, but necessary, transfer is another milestone to building a warfighting service and advancing the nation’s defense posture,” said U.S. Space Force Lt. Gen. David N. Miller, Jr., commander of Space Operations Command. “We will continue to build a unified team, capitalizing on the talent, experience and dedication that ANG personnel bring to the Space mission.”

A total of nine Air Guard missions, across six states, will transfer their space mission to Space Operations Command; those missions include electromagnetic warfare, intelligence, missile warning, and satellite communications. The new structure will capitalize on skillsets developed outside the military to continue delivering unmatched space capabilities.

Leadership News and Notes

Guard participants win two of the 2025 KLV Awards categories



MAJ. GEN. KEITH L. WARE

COMMUNICATIONS
AWARDS
COMPETITION

The National Guard Bureau Office of Public Affairs congratulates the two National Guard winners in the 2025 Maj. Gen. Keith L. Ware Communication Awards. They distinguished themselves by taking first place in these service-level categories:

Category A: Soldier Communicator of the Year

Sgt. Seth Cohen, the chief digital marketing NCO with the New Jersey Army National Guard Recruiting & Retention Battalion.

Category E: Civilian Photographer of the Year

Alejandro Peña, a public affairs specialist with the Alaska National Guard Public Affairs Office.

To see their entry portfolios and the full list of National Guard Media Contest winners follow the link below (NIPR users copy and paste link into browser):
<https://www.nationalguard.mil/Portals/31/Documents/Article%20Documents/2025/2025-KLV-Winners.pdf>

NGB-PA Plans and Policy Resources

SharePoint Site

The National Guard Bureau Office of Public Affairs hosts a SharePoint website that serves as a central hub for public affairs offices and units across the National Guard. This secure platform provides valuable instruction, standard operating procedures, and guidance to support effective communication, media engagement, and storytelling.

Please check out the platform and provide any feedback on what else should be made available on the site. The points of contact are Maj. Megan Wood, megan.j.wood5.mil@army.mil and Master Sgt. Whitney Hughes, whitney.r.hughes.mil@army.mil

Sharepoint link (only available on NIPR):
[NGB-PA PPR SharePoint](#)

Virtual Refresher Training

The next public affairs fundamentals refresher training hosted by NGB-PA will be held March 8 at 1 p.m. EST. The topic will be basic photography composition.

The training will be held live on Zoom and also recorded and placed on the PPR SharePoint site the week after the training is conducted. Please join us at:

Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87536388866?pwd=ZKqehOx890IsjObn8G3tor37idbilv.1>
Meeting ID: 875 3638 8866
Passcode: 893809

On the cover:

A U.S. Soldier assigned to Battery A, 1st Battalion, 119th Field Artillery Regiment, Michigan Army National Guard, fires an M777 155mm howitzer at a tactical field site during exercise Northern Strike at Camp Grayling, Michigan Jan. 28. The exercise is sponsored by the National Guard Bureau and is one of the largest U.S. Department of War reserve component readiness exercises. Participants face cold-weather conditions while training to meet the objectives of the DOW Arctic strategy. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Scott Thompson)

April - Family

Alaska Army Guard Family Readiness team ranked best in nation

Story by U.S. Air Force Maj. David Bedard, Alaska Air National Guard



JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska — As the demands on military families grow amid deployments, separations and fiscal constraints, the National Guard Bureau recognized the Alaska Army National Guard’s Military and family readiness specialists as the top team in the nation for Fiscal Year 2025.

Despite a 50 percent reduction in staff due to budget cuts and attrition, the Alaska Army National Guard ranked first among all 54 states and territories for Family Readiness personnel following the bureau’s evaluation.

Performance evaluations conducted by the NGB assess staff training, deployment outreach, quality assurance reporting, personnel management, systems access and execution of spending plans.

The recognition highlights the team’s ability to sustain mission-critical support to service members and families under challenging conditions.

Military and family readiness specialists play a vital role in maintaining force readiness by ensuring troops can focus on their missions knowing their families are supported. They serve as the primary point of contact for service members and families seeking non-medical assistance and information on crisis intervention resources, general referrals, and deployment support tailored to the unique demands of military life.

Kera Spaulding, lead military and family readiness specialist, underscored the importance of the family’s well-being to the mission.

“Family readiness is a critical component of military effectiveness and mission success,” Spaulding said. “The core idea is that a service member’s ability to perform their duties is directly linked to the well-being of their family. When families are stable, resilient and well-supported, service members can focus on their military responsibilities with fewer distractions and less stress.”

For the full story follow the link below (NIPR users copy and paste link into browser):

<https://www.dvidshub.net/news/556500/alaska-national-guard-family-readiness-team-ranked-best-nation>

April Observances

Military Saves Month
Month of the Military Child

5 Gold Star Spouses Day

6 Army Day
U.S. Entered WWI (1917)

9 National Former POW Recognition Day (1942)

14 U.S. Air Force Reserve Birthday

19 Purple Up Day

23 U.S. Army Reserve Birthday

30 End of Vietnam War (1975)

30 National Military Brats Day

May - Readiness

More than 450 Guard members participate in Arctic readiness exercise



NIPR users to play video copy and paste: <https://tinyurl.com/yme7ktcs>
Video by: U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Daniel Garas, Michigan Army National Guard

Story by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Richard Mekkri, National Guard Bureau Public Affairs

GRAYLING, Mich. — More than 450 U.S. Soldiers and Airmen braved freezing temperatures and extreme winter conditions during the winter iteration of Northern Strike 26, Jan. 26-29. An Army-sponsored, National Guard Bureau exercise, Northern Strike provides service members from across the total force the opportunity to train to meet the objectives of the Department of War’s Arctic strategy.

The winter iteration of the exercise focuses on one of the most unforgiving aspects of warfighting: surviving, moving, and fighting in extreme cold.

Held across more than 14,000 acres at the National All-Domain Warfighting Center in Northern Michigan, the event pushed service members to operate in sub-zero temperatures while training in a complex, contested environment — conditions leaders say are essential for meeting Department of War priorities and preparing for potential conflict against rival competitors.

“Northern Strike replicates the complexity of the modern environment and it’s an outstanding learning opportunity,” said U.S. Army Col. Todd Fitzpatrick, officer in charge of the Northern Strike plans team, Michigan National Guard. “It’s a very robust scenario that answers the call.”

The training includes conventional maneuver operations alongside modern threats such as unmanned aircraft systems, electronic warfare and complex opposing-force attacks. Northern Strike affords units the opportunity to perform these operations across each warfighting domain: land, sea, air, space, and cyberspace.

For the full story follow the link below (NIPR users copy and paste link into browser): <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/557461/northern-strike-26-winter-iteration-concludes>

May Observances

OPSEC Awareness Month
Military Appreciation Month
Month of the Military Caregiver

6-12 National Nurses Week

8 Victory Day in Europe Day (1945)
Military Spouse Appreciation Day

10 Mother’s Day

15 Peace Officers Memorial Day

17 Armed Forces Day

22 National Maritime Day

25 Memorial Day