

OREGON SENTINEL

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE OREGON NATIONAL GUARD

Oregon Guard Peacekeepers return from Egypt's Sinai Peninsula After a nine-month Multinational Force and Observers Mission

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

MEDFORD, Ore. – Nearly 200 Oregon Army National Guard Soldiers assigned to the 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry Regiment were formally welcomed home January 11, 2026, during a demobilization ceremony at South Medford High School.

The ceremony, presided over by Brig. Gen. Alan Gronewold, Oregon's adjutant general, honored the unit's nine-month deployment to Egypt's Sinai Peninsula as part of the Multinational Force and Observers mission.

"Welcome home," Gronewold said. "Those two words carry the weight of nearly a year of service, sacrifice, and separation."

The 205-soldier battalion, designated USBATT 74 during the deployment, served alongside military forces from 14 other nations supervising the implementation of security provisions of the Egyptian-Israeli Treaty of Peace.

"In a region marked by volatility and tension, you stood watch. You maintained peace. You prevented violations of that historic treaty," Gronewold said. "You represented not just Oregon, not just the United States, but the cause of peace itself."

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Lt. Col. Joshua Rapp, left, commander of the 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry Regiment, and Command Sgt. Maj. Evan Garner render honors during the national anthem at a demobilization ceremony at South Medford High School in Medford, Oregon, Jan. 11, 2026, after a nine-month deployment to Egypt's Sinai Peninsula.

On Their 'A Game' Soldiers and Airmen Compete For Top Honors during the 2026 Oregon Best Warrior Competition



Photo by Maj. Leslie Reed, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

Oregon National Guard Soldiers and Airmen participated in the 2026 Oregon Best Warrior Competition at Camp Rilea Armed Forces Training Center, Warrenton, Oregon, March 19-21. Winners in Soldier and Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year will advance to the Regional VI Best Warrior Competition in late May at Camp Grafton, North Dakota.

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Governor Tina Kotek Welcomes Home Oregon Army Guardsmen



Photo by John Hughel, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

Nearly 100 Oregon Army National Guard Soldiers are greeted by Oregon Governor Tina Kotek as they disembark from their airplane at the Portland International Airport on the evening of January 15, 2026, after arriving home from Ft Bliss, Texas.

Joint Press Release from Governor Tina Kotek's Press Office and the Oregon Military Department Public Affairs Office

PORTLAND, Ore. — On Thursday, January 16, 2026, Oregon Governor Tina Kotek and Oregon Military Department leadership greeted approximately 100 Oregon Army National Guard Soldiers returning to the Portland International Airport (PDX). Soldiers were arriving back home from Ft Bliss, Texas, concluding their mission as part of Task Force Rose Shield.

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The Oregon Military Department's 2026 Innovation Summit brought together National Guard members, partner agencies, academic institutions, and industry representatives.

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The 102nd CBRN Defense Enhanced Response Force Package (CERFP) team integrates with first responders on two recent regional training exercises focused on chemical leaks.

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Boy Scout Troop 258 joined the Oregon Military Department environmental staff in support of National Public Lands Day on March 14th at Camp Rilea.

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The Oregon Military Department

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Governor Tina Kotek

The Adjutant General
Brig. Gen. Alan R. Gronewold

Joint Domestic Operations Commander
Brig. Gen. Jenifer E. Pardy

Air Component Commander
Brig. Gen. David N. Unruh

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COMMAND

Spring is here; let's seize this moment to reach our goals

As we approach the annual training season, I hope every leader across our formation arrives ready to train, rather than arriving to prepare for training. Know your tasks, know your standards, and hold your formations accountable. Units that train hard and look out for one another uphold our values of Connection, Competence, and Commitment. They build culture, retain talent, and create a climate others want to be part of.

As our operational tempo increases with the training season, I want to be direct. Safety is not a condition we sacrifice for speed or schedule. The risk of accidents and injuries rises when units are fatigued, rushed, or inattentive. I expect every leader to conduct thorough risk assessments and enforce standards. Create an environment where Soldiers and Airmen feel empowered to speak up when conditions are unsafe. We cannot serve Oregon or our nation from the sidelines – protect your people.

At the Joint Senior Leader Workshop (JSLW), I introduced

updates to our organizational design. These changes are deliberately aligned to support our operational mission and our strategic plan. Every structural adjustment is intended to create clearer lines of responsibility, reduce friction, and ensure that our resources are focused where they have the greatest impact on readiness. Structure exists to serve the mission. And when it doesn't, we fix it.

Our Lines of Effort – People and Culture, Readiness, and Partnerships – remain the framework that guides how we invest our time, people, and resources. The recent task-organization adjustments are intended to implement these priorities more effectively across the force.

Disciplined initiative was a key concept at JSLW. I do not want an organization that waits for direction. I want leaders who know my intent, understand the mission, and act decisively—even in ambiguity.

We are building the Service of Choice: an organization of



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

high-performing units staffed by trained, ready, and connected individuals. They are proud to serve Oregon and our nation. Every decision and action should support this goal. If it does, proceed. If not, stop and reassess.

Be Connected. Be Competent. Be Committed. These are the standards of leadership I expect from every person in this organization. Spring brings renewed energy and purpose. Let's seize this opportunity.

Always Ready, Always There!

Oregon National Guard Joint Senior Leadership Workshop emphasizes organizational goals for 2026

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

HAPPY VALLEY, Ore. – With calendar year 2026 off to a fast start, the Oregon National Guard held a series of leadership workshops from February 26-28, focusing on organizational goals for Soldiers, Airmen, and the joint civilian staff.

The workshops were held at the Armed Forces Readiness Center at Camp Withycombe in Happy Valley, Oregon, and included lectures and breakout sessions over three days of the conference.

“Everyone joined this organization, even if it was just for the money to attend college; they still joined knowing they were going to serve the state and nation,” said Brig. Gen. Alan R. Gronewold, Adjunct General for the Oregon National Guard, during his opening remarks at the Joint Senior Leadership Workshop on Feb. 27.



Brig. Gen. Alan R. Gronewold, Adjutant General of the Oregon National Guard (right), addresses those attending the Joint Senior Leadership Workshop held at Camp Withycombe, in Happy Valley, Oregon, on Feb. 27, 2026. Gronewold opened the workshop by describing the Oregon National Guard's roles and responsibilities, as well as the key changes over the coming year.

“When you look through that lens at your Soldiers, your Airmen, your subordinates, your people, you see they all had good intentions for joining the Oregon National Guard – because everyone is here for the right reasons.”

As the first of many presenters for the day, Gronewold expanded on what it means to be a member of the Oregon National Guard and the Oregon Military Department, posing the rhetorical question, “Who are we?”

“We’re the service of choice. This is our vision for today, tomorrow, and every day from now until 2030,

2040, and beyond,” he said, emphasizing the Oregon National Guard's continuous assurance. “We have to be the service of choice for Oregonians – integrity, leadership, and a commitment to our communities – we do this every day.”

The workshop allowed many of the Oregon National Guard senior leaders, as well as several civilian-led partners, to address key areas,

including recruiting, retention, and workplace mental health and well-being.

Dr. Leslie B. Hammer spoke after Brig. Gen. Gronewold and shared research her team at Oregon Health Sciences University is conducting with the Oregon National Guard. She serves as Associate Director of Applied Research and a Professor at the Oregon Institute of Occupational Health Sciences. Dr. Hammer also collaborates with the Oregon National Guard on the Military Employee Sleep (MESH) and Health program. Their study examined sleep related health issues, which are increasingly a focus of military research.

“The effort I am discussing today has received DoD (Department of Defense) funding for the past 15 years. In designing this program, we ensured alignment with TAG's current initiatives focused on people and culture,” Hammer said,

Story continued on Page 3



ORARNG Col. Russell Gibson, Government and Legislative Affairs Director and 82nd Command Brigade Commander, addresses attendees at the Joint Senior Leadership Workshop held at Camp Withycombe on Feb. 27, 2026. Gibson described some of the research and ongoing programs aimed at enhancing culture and recruiting during his presentation.

COMMAND

Joint Senior Leadership Workshop

Continued from Page 2

referencing the earlier MESH project and its influence on current efforts to train future military leaders. “Our work builds upon these prior initiatives, examining leadership culture and training. More recently, we implemented the program with active-duty service members at JBLM (Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington), focusing on readiness and leadership support training, and have since extended and tailored this work for the National Guard.”

The leaders identified in the study are being trained to recognize critical risk factors that impact the mental health, well-being, and readiness of military personnel. Analysis of data from nearly 70,000 service members at JBLM revealed a significant reduction in risk factors during the initial nine-month period.

“When we train leaders on these issues related to connection, related to culture, related to belonging in your unit, we really see amazing outcomes because we see that we have a stronger, more ready force,” she said. “So what we are doing with our leadership training is teaching leaders on how to prevent some of the harmful behaviors we see day to day, and it’s vital for leaders to be the key, to be the conduit, to such culture change.”

The workshop’s next two speakers explained how the Oregon National Guard is using this leadership training model to improve the force. Brig. Gen. Jenifer Parady, Joint Domestic Operations Commander, and Col. Russell Gibson, Government and Legislative Affairs Director and 82nd Command Brigade Commander, outlined key aspects of the research methodology to the attendees.

“You’ll see the synchronization plan. We’ve developed a charter that truly puts action behind the words of this plan,” Parady said, as she presented a list of slides



Dr. Leslie Hammer from Oregon Health Sciences University addresses attendees at the Joint Senior Leadership Workshop held at Camp Withycombe, and serves as Associate Director of Applied Research and a Professor at the Oregon Institute of Occupational Health Sciences, and has described some of the programs developed in cooperation with the Oregon Guard.



Brig. Gen. Assistant Philip R. DeMontigny, Adjutant General – Army ORNG, leads a discussion about changes in mission and equipment in the Army National Guard during the Joint Senior Leadership Workshop held at Camp Withycombe, in Happy Valley, Oregon, on Feb. 27, 2026.

detailing the work completed so far. “We really want a single unifying voice that identifies us as an organization, whether you wear the uniform or are one of our civilian leaders – state or federal. We’re all part of the same agency.”

To demonstrate the data analysis process, Gibson showed a clip from the 2011 film “Moneyball” to illustrate how value can be ‘found inside the numbers.’ This approach can help identify how key talking points, leads, target audience



ORANG Brig. Gen. David N. Unruh, Air Component Commander for the Oregon National Guard, addresses senior leaders during the Joint Senior Leadership Workshop on Feb. 27, describing many of the changes the Oregon Air Guard is working through over the next two years, including integrating new aircraft and missions.

profiles, engagements, and other Request Packet Selections can shape the future of the Oregon National Guard.

“We are delegating a certain amount of decision authority to that business development group. For example, if a unit is organizing a community operations event and handles resources entirely internally, we’ll need an AAR (After Action Report) to evaluate whether it effectively supported the event,” Russell said as he presented a flow chart of the process. “At the Business Development Group [level], we can analyze, process, recommend, and decide whether to decline or accept as we go along in the sequence.”

This strategic communication plan strengthens community involvement by bringing Army and Air assets together and builds a positive culture across all units.

Especially as some units are undergoing transformations in mission, military occupation, and staff sizes.

While presenting some of those changes that impact the Army, Brig. Gen. Philip R. DeMontigny, Adjutant General – Army for the Oregon National Guard, described ‘The Why’ behind some of the changes that will take place over the next year.

“This change represents a different approach to force structure and is a significant adjustment as we adapt to the times,” DeMontigny said. “So what does this mean for the ‘Big Army’? It means that we can move much faster and engage in areas where we need to maneuver.”

These developments reflect a national strategy that prioritizes lethality over mass mobility. In contemporary warfare, mass has become a vulnerability that can be mitigated through speed and dispersion. Oregon is ready for these new vital missions.

“When you look at Ukraine, they are changing their systems now every 30 to 60 days and changing the software that goes

with them,” he said. “Part of that change for us is bringing an end to the 3-116 Cavalry (Regiment) as we reactivate the 2-186th Infantry Regiment, dating back to the Second World War.”

The Oregon Army National Guard will also inactivate the 1-82 Cavalry Squadron, which will officially case its colors on September 1, 2026. Members from this unit will move into new roles in the 2-186th Infantry Regiment and other positions within the 41st Brigade.

The Oregon Air National Guard is also undergoing changes. Air Component Commander Brig. Gen. David N. Unruh outlined some of the updates already underway.

“So, what are we going to do with these changes? First of all, we’re going to evaluate the way we do business,” Unruh said, drawing on the theme of the day. We’re going to integrate our people wherever we can to get the best return on investment.”



Photo by Maj. Leslie Reed, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

Oregon National Guard Command Senior Enlisted Leader, Command Sgt. Maj. Lee Smith, hosted nearly 40 Army National Guard Senior and Noncommissioned Officers along with Soldiers serving in various capacities during the Senior Enlisted Workshop on Feb. 26, 2026, at Camp Withycombe, Happy Valley, Oregon. Soldiers attended mentorship classes, brigade breakout groups, and took part in a question-and-answer session with Brig. Gen. Alan R. Gronewold, Adjutant General for the Oregon National Guard.

These changes include the deactivation of the 116th Air Control Squadron, the transition to a Cyber Operations Squadron focused on threat-driven intelligence, and the 142nd Wing’s ongoing conversion to the F-15 Eagle II airframe. The 173rd Fighter Wing at Klamath Falls divested its final F-15 Eagle in December 2025 and will focus on base infrastructure upgrades while awaiting the arrival of the first F-35 Lightning II aircraft in August 2027.

“So, everything in the Oregon Air National Guard is in a state of transition,” he said. “This is an opportunity to break out of some of these artificial bowls and look at new initiatives on how to do our mission better while protecting Oregonians and defending the United States of America.”



Photo by Maj. Leslie Reed, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

ORANG Col. Jeffrey “Nozy” Yeates (center) speaks with fellow participants during the Oregon National Guard Company Grade Officers Joint Senior Leadership Workshop on February 26. Officers attended joint and component-specific breakout sessions and engaged with senior leaders from across the state during the two-day event, held February 26-27, 2026, at Camp Withycombe in Happy Valley, Oregon.

LEADERSHIP

1-186th Infantry returns from Sinai Peninsula, from front page

Lt. Col. Joshua Rapp, battalion commander, said the mission provided security for two camps in the Sinai while operating remote observation sites monitoring key routes and airfields between Egypt and Israel.

“We observed military aircraft, vehicles, and equipment to ensure that both countries were abiding by what is directed in the peace treaty,” Rapp said.

The deployment tested the unit during a period of heightened regional tensions. The battalion faced a three-month lockdown period when MFO bases were identified as potential targets during conflicts in the region.

“There was about a 48 to 72-hour period where we were in full combat equipment for 24 hours a day, other than sleeping,” Rapp said. “We had to be inside a hardened building, we had to be in our full kit, even to go eat chow.”

Despite operational challenges, Rapp emphasized the mission’s unique aspects, particularly the multinational integration.

“What I would say the best thing about it was the level of multinational integration and the fact that we were working so closely with all our partners,” Rapp said. “There were 15 nations, including us, that we worked with on a daily basis.”

The battalion worked most closely with forces from Fiji, Colombia, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Uruguay, and Japan, participating in combined training exercises and sporting tournaments that built international relationships.

The deployment also provided extensive training opportunities.

Soldiers conducted air insertion training, aeromedical evacuation exercises, range time, and leadership courses, often integrated with multinational partners.

“The 1-186th Infantry really went above and beyond to train throughout the whole

deployment,” Rapp said. Command Sgt. Maj. Evan Garner emphasized the unit’s growth during the deployment.

“The battalion did come back stronger,” Garner said. “There was a multitude of opportunities for soldiers to train both within our units and battalions and then cross-train between nations. We worked with 15 different national partners over there and spent many, many hours and days learning about what they do and teaching them what we do, also, so we have a better knowledge across the board of operations.”

Garner emphasized the teaching opportunities soldiers gained.

“Our soldiers got a chance to improve their abilities as teachers, not just of United States soldiers, but soldiers from different countries and other groups,” he said.

For many soldiers, the mission offered unique leisure opportunities uncommon in most deployments. Service members became certified scuba divers and participated in organized duty tours to Egyptian landmarks, including the pyramids, Luxor, and Mount Sinai.

“My message to the soldiers and families is first off and most importantly, thank you,” Garner said. “Thank you for your sacrifice. Thank you for your service and thank you for being there for each other. The greatest thing about 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry is that we’re a family, and the family is what makes us able to do this mission.”

Garner also emphasized the importance of maintaining connections during the transition home.

“Be patient. Know that things have changed while we’re gone, and just work together as a team within your family,” Garner said. “Reach out to your soldiers. Since we were there 24/7



ORARNG Soldiers assigned to the 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry Regiment stand in formation during a demobilization ceremony at South Medford High School in Medford, Oregon, on Jan. 11, 2026.



Brig. Gen. Alan R. Gronewold, the adjutant general of the Oregon National Guard, delivers remarks during a demobilization ceremony for the 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry Regiment, in Medford, Oregon, on Jan. 11, 2026.

around everybody, I know it becomes more of a challenge once we get home, but reach out. It could be a call, it could be a text, a stop by—all of that matters and just shows that we continue to care and be there for our buddies.”

The battalion was mobilized on Oct. 20, 2024, during a ceremony in Ashland and returned to Oregon on Oct. 3, 2025. Approximately 150 soldiers returned to Medford, while about 50 service members arrived in Portland.

While most soldiers came from the 1-186th Infantry Regiment based in Southern Oregon, the deployment also included National Guard members from the 2nd Battalion, 162nd Infantry Regiment and other Guard units across multiple states for specialized positions.

“This deployment to Egypt adds another distinguished chapter to that legacy—one that future generations of Oregon Guardsmen will look to with pride,” Gronewold said.

The 1-186th Infantry Regiment previously mobilized for the 2021 Presidential Inauguration security mission in Washington, D.C., Oregon’s COVID-19 response, and overseas operations in the Horn of Africa from 2019-2020, in Afghanistan from 2014-2015, and in Iraq from 2009-2010.

Gronewold concluded the ceremony by acknowledging the families who supported the deployed soldiers.

“To the spouses, parents, children, and loved ones who held down the home front while these Soldiers served overseas—your strength and resilience made this mission possible,” Gronewold said. “Thank you for your service to Oregon and to our nation.”

Oregon Guard Youth Program brings ‘Month of the Military Child’ proclamation to Woodburn

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

WOODBURN, Ore. – The Woodburn City Council recognized April as the Month of the Military Child during its regular meeting on March 23, when Mayor Frank J. Lonergan signed a proclamation honoring the resilience and sacrifice of children with parents serving in the armed forces.

The proclamation was coordinated by the Oregon National Guard’s Child and Youth Program as part of a statewide effort to secure similar recognitions from cities across Oregon.

“We do the proclamations for Month of the Military Child — it’s our way of spreading the word that we have children

who serve alongside their parents,” said Lorene Moore, Oregon National Guard Child & Youth Program manager. “We reached out to cities across the state to see if they wanted to be part of honoring our kids.”

Moore said up to five cities are expected

to sign similar proclamations before April, including Tualatin, Madras, and Warrenton, with a state-level proclamation from the governor’s office also under consideration.

Two members of the Oregon National Guard’s Teen Panel attended the Woodburn ceremony to speak on behalf of the program. The Teen Panel — a youth leadership initiative that trains military children in public speaking and civic engagement — has become a centerpiece of the proclamation events.

“It’s nice to have that support system,” said Grace Carlile, a Teen Panel member whose father, Maj. Stephen Carlile, recently returned from deployment with the 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team as part of the NATO-led Kosovo Force’s 34th rotation. “Especially for kids during deployment, we’ve been able to lean on each other and have someone who understands, whereas our civilian friends wouldn’t.”

Natalie Nunn, also a first-year Teen Panel member and student at Cascade High School in Turner, said she has taken on a creative role within the program, designing posters and social media graphics for events including a youth symposium, the Military Ball, and the Back to School Bash. Her father, Tech Sgt. Roy Nunn, is an F-15EX crew chief with the 142nd Wing.

Maj. Stephen Carlile, who recently returned from the Kosovo Force rotation, said the program fills a gap that can otherwise leave military children feeling isolated.

“It gives the children an opportunity to see that there are other children like them,” Carlile said. “You might not have somebody in your neighborhood, or even your school,



Lorene Moore, ORNG Child and Youth Program manager, Teen Panel member Natalie Nunn, and Teen Panel member Grace Carlile stand before the Woodburn City Council following the reading of the proclamation at Woodburn City Hall.

who is going through the same sorts of things — but there are other children throughout the state who are.”

As part of its recognition, Woodburn announced plans to illuminate a local overpass in purple in honor of Purple Up! Day, a national observance encouraging communities to show visible support for military children.

April has been designated the Month of the Military Child since 1986, when former Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger established it to recognize the contributions and sacrifices of military families.



(From left) Teen Panel member Grace Carlile, Oregon National Guard Child & Youth Program manager Lorene Moore, and Teen Panel member Natalie Nunn stand in front of Woodburn City Hall, Woodburn, Oregon, on March 23, 2026.

LEADERSHIP

Change of Command ceremony held for 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Rgt.

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

HERMISTON, Ore. – The Oregon Army National Guard’s 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment, held a formal Change of Command ceremony at the Hermiston Army National Guard Armory on Jan. 10, 2026, as Lt. Col. Christopher R. Miller relinquished command to Maj. Jorge L. De Anda, who assumed command.

The ceremony marked both a leadership change and the start of the 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment’s transition to an Infantry Battalion. This change is part of the Army’s Transformation in Contact initiative to reorganize units for modern battlefield requirements.

“This unit has a great history and lineage, and as you transition from 3-116 Armor to the 2nd [Battalion] of the 186th Infantry, you will honor the 116th lineage from World War II and the 2nd Battalion of the 186th Infantry Regiment,” said Col. Russell Gibson, 82nd Troop Command Brigade Commander, who presided over the ceremony. “As the 186, this unit was heavily involved in the Battle of Biak, which marked the first tank-versus-tank battle in the Pacific Theater.”

The Change of Command ceremony helped link the long-established history of the Oregon Army National Guard with the 1888 militia cavalry companies, which served as infantry during World War II as the 2nd Battalion, 186th Infantry Regiment, with the 41st Infantry Division, before returning to their cavalry roots after the war.

The Biak Training Center in Redmond, Oregon, is named for the Battle of Biak, fought from May 27 to June 20, 1944, and was part of the New Guinea campaign of World War II. The 41st Infantry Division of the United States Army landed on Biak on May 27, 1944. The 162nd Infantry Regiment arrived first, followed by the rest of the division, including the 163rd and 186th Infantry Regiments. By late afternoon, nearly 12,000 troops had come ashore, along with 12 Army M4 Sherman tanks, 29 field guns, 500 vehicles, and 3,000



(Left to right) Maj. Jorge L. De Anda, Lt. Col. Christopher R. Miller, and Col. Russell Gibson render a hand salute during the playing of the National Anthem as the Change of Command ceremony begins for the 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment, held at the Hermiston Army National Guard Armory in Hermiston, Oregon, on Jan. 10, 2026.

tons of supplies. A group of Japanese light tanks briefly attacked the beachhead but were defeated by M4 Shermans in the first tank battle between opposing forces in the Pacific War.

“The capture of the island and its airfield was a strategic victory supporting the final push for the Philippines, and after the war, the unit returned to its cavalry roots,” Gibson said as he expanded on these historical linkages. “So I do not want you to leave your armor lineage behind. I want you to carry it forward with you.”

The 116th Cavalry Brigade Combat Team is based at Gowen Field in Boise, Idaho, with units across Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Nevada. Reorganized as a heavy armor brigade in 1989, it is often called the Snake River Brigade and was once known as the 116th Armored Cavalry Regiment. The 3rd Battalion (Combined Arms), 116th Cavalry Regiment, based in La Grande, has a history of armored service going back over a century.

“We need you to take your skills and expertise into the next chapter of this historic battalion, Gibson said. “Just like

the Soldiers who came before you, and like them, you have always answered and always delivered.”

Before the Change of Command ceremony, on July 30, 2025, three M1A2SEP tanks from Bravo Company participated in a ceremonial last-round event at Range 26, Orchard Combat Training Center in Idaho. This event served as a symbolic farewell to the unit’s armored heritage.

Lt. Col. Miller oversaw the last-round event to ensure tank crews had a final opportunity to demonstrate qualification proficiency.

“They say when one door closes, another one opens; it’s no different here...as the battalion now is returning to its roots as the second battalion, 186 Infantry Regiment,” Miller said, as he addressed the unit after the passing of the colors. “As Colonel Gibson said, ‘don’t forget, this is not a new identity, but a homecoming to the lineage our predecessors established long ago.’”

Miller also reflected on his role after passing the colors, handing over command, and wishing his successor and the unit success in the future.

“Despite all that, I’m extremely grateful to be here and have the opportunity to hand off the baton officially. Getting the chance to come back here and serve alongside you over the past couple of years has truly been the greatest honor of my life. Major De Anda, I wish you the best of luck as you lead this amazing battalion into the future.”

With the transition to an Infantry Unit, Maj. De Anda, who has advanced from enlisted Soldier to noncommissioned officer, now serves as Battalion Commander.

“I would like to acknowledge the local community members here today... In the National Guard, we have a unique mission to defend our nation and protect our state and local communities, and I am deeply grateful for your ongoing support,” De Anda said. “As we look ahead, I feel both excited and a touch of sadness. I am excited to be the first unit to transition to Mobile Infantry, but I will miss the gunnery...Nevertheless, our readiness to serve our state and country is what defines us, regardless of the equipment and our multiple roles.”



ORARNG Maj. Jorge L. De Anda delivers remarks as the incoming commander to those in attendance at the 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment Change of Command ceremony, held in Hermiston on Jan. 10, 2026.

Governor Kotek recognizes Task Force Rose City Soldiers, from front Page



Photo by John Hughel, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs
Oregon Gov. Tina Kotek speaks to nearly 100 Oregon National Guard Soldiers over the airplane’s intercom to welcome them home after their arrival at Portland International Airport on the evening of Jan. 15, 2026. The Soldiers who were called up on Sept. 27, 2025, as part of Task Force Rose Shield, supporting U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

“On behalf of all Oregonians, we thank you, we’re with you, and we’re glad you’re back,” Governor Tina Kotek said after boarding the plane and addressing the

soldiers over the intercom shortly after it landed at Portland International Airport. “Oregon will always have your back, no matter the situation. I appreciate your commitment, courage, and professionalism. Thank you, and welcome home.”

Gov. Kotek and the Oregon National Guard leadership group greeted each service member as they disembarked. The group boarded buses to Camp Withycombe in Happy Valley, Oregon, to collect their remaining personal items before heading home.

Before returning to Oregon, the Soldiers spent several days at the Ft Bliss Mobilization and Deployment Division, completing medical exams and required paperwork following their mobilization in Sept. 2025.

These 100 Soldiers were part of a larger group of 200 Guard members deployed to Portland by Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth on September 27, 2026. Their deployment coincided with small, mostly peaceful protests outside the

Immigration and Customs Enforcement facility located in downtown Portland.

With the soldiers’ return, their Title 10 active duty orders have concluded, and they are now under the authority of Gov. Kotek.



Photo by John Hughel, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs
Oregon Army National Guard Soldiers listen to Oregon Governor Tina Kotek speak over the airplane’s intercom to welcome them home just after touching down at Portland International Airport on the evening of Jan. 15, 2026. The Soldiers who were called up on Sept. 27, 2025, as part of Task Force Rose Shield to support U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement facilities during protests in Portland.

NEWS

Oregon National Guard Innovation Becomes Army-Wide Standard for MEDEVAC Operations

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

SALEM, Ore. – An innovation born from operational necessity on the flight line in Salem has become the new standard for medical evacuation operations across the entire U.S. Army.

Oregon Army National Guard aircrews with Golf Company, 1st Battalion, 189th Aviation Regiment, identified and solved a critical equipment compatibility issue that threatened to limit the use of cutting-edge rescue technology. Their solution – a redesigned litter strap designated SK-1189-V and named after their unit – has been certified by the U.S. Army Aeromedical Research Laboratory and will now be issued to every MEDEVAC unit in the Army.

“I’m happy that the legacy we’ve built in Oregon from Golf Company, 1-189th Aviation, will be represented in this new technology,” said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Josiah Zeiner, Aviation Safety Officer with 2nd Battalion, 641st Aviation Regiment. “Oregon has a part in making this a reality.”

The innovation emerged during training on June 18, 2025, when Oregon became only the third unit in the Army to receive the Vita Vertical Rescue System (VRS), an advanced hoist stabilization technology that eliminates dangerous spinning during helicopter rescue operations.

“We realized that the seat belts that the Army outfitted the Black Hawk helicopter with were not long enough to go over the top of the litter and patient with the VRS device connected to the bottom of the litter basket,” Zeiner said. “That was the moment when we realized that this was a great device, but it still had some refining that needed to be done.”

The VRS represents a significant advancement in rescue capabilities. The device uses four fans and air pressure to automatically stabilize rescue baskets during hoist operations, eliminating the need for taglines – ropes that crew members traditionally use to prevent spinning.

“We’ve never had any litter spin out of control in the Oregon Army National Guard,” Zeiner said. “But we have had challenging situations with very high hoists over 280 feet, where the tagline is only 300 feet. This device would eliminate, in certain scenarios, the need for a tagline, and we could just hoist straight up at full speed.”

Rather than wait for a solution from higher headquarters, the Oregon aircrews took initiative. Sgt. James Gale, a crew chief

with Golf Company and a Heavy Equipment Technician with the Oregon Department of Transportation in his civilian career, was among those who identified the problem during initial testing.

“We made the recommendation that this is very simple with the Cobra straps for when you’re on mission,” Gale said. “They just need to be longer. In our testing, we found that the easiest thing to do with the VRS is load it directly to the floor using the D-rings, rather than onto the litter pan.”

The Oregon team collaborated with Skedco, a manufacturer of rescue equipment, to develop the solution. They evaluated existing Army litter strap designs for different Black Hawk configurations, incorporated the best features, and developed prototypes.

“We took an existing Skedco strap, the SK-958, lengthened it, and added a Cobra buckle to allow us to hook it to the different Black Hawk floor configurations and quickly disconnect the strap,” Zeiner explained. “We did two prototypes to get the final design correct, then made 10 prototypes. We kept seven in Oregon and sent three to the Army Aeromedical Research Laboratory for testing.”



ORARNG Sgt. James Gale, a crew chief with Golf Company, 1st Battalion, 189th Aviation Regiment, secures the SK-1189-V litter strap across a simulated patient in an HH-60M Black Hawk at McNary Field Army National Guard Heliport in Salem, Oregon, Dec. 5, 2025. Oregon aircrews developed the extended strap design to accommodate the Vita Vertical Rescue System, and it will become standard equipment for all Army MEDEVAC units.

The design centers the Cobra buckle over the patient and accommodates two different Black Hawk floor configurations, reducing the time required to secure and release patients.

“When somebody’s injured, every second matters,” Zeiner said. “We took a lot of time and effort making sure we got the design right.”

After evaluation at Fort Rucker (formerly Ft. Novosel), Alabama, the laboratory certified the strap for airworthiness and submitted it for



ORARNG Sgt. James Gale, a crew chief with Golf Company, 1-189th Aviation, Oregon Army National Guard, displays the SK-1189-V litter strap at Salem’s McNary Army National Guard Field Heliport, Dec. 5, 2025.

inclusion in the Army’s standard equipment package for the VRS. The process took approximately six months from problem identification to Army-wide adoption.

On January 21, 2026, Oregon aircrews used the new strap system in training for the first time following its airworthiness certification, marking the system fully operational.

“The Oregon Army National Guard is committed to using the latest technologies and advanced procedures to provide the best possible care, not only to soldiers, but to the citizens of Oregon that we rescue,” Zeiner said. Oregon MEDEVAC crews regularly conduct high-risk rescue operations throughout the state, from Mount Hood climbing accidents to wildland fire rescues and flood evacuations.

“The amazing part about this job is actually what we get to do,” Gale said. “In the summertime, we’re out fighting fires, rescuing stranded hikers off the side of mountains. In the wintertime, we do that quite a bit as well. It’s not just doing what the Army expects of us – we actually get to serve our community.”

Gale has participated in numerous memorable rescues, including extracting a climber on Mount Hood who had fallen 600 feet and suffered severe injuries, and conducting flood rescues in Hermiston in 2020.

As Oregon aircrews complete training on the VRS and new strap system, they will be ready to employ the technology on rescue missions throughout the state.

“Once the airworthiness release is completed, it will be up to the individual aircrews to decide if this is the right tool for a specific rescue,” Zeiner said. “There’s a good possibility that we’ll have crews ready to employ this device on a real rescue very soon.”

The innovation represents another example of Oregon National Guard leadership in advancing military aviation capabilities. The designation SK-1189-V ensures that Golf Company, 1-189th Aviation, will be permanently associated with this life-saving equipment improvement across the Army.

U.S. Navy Blue Angels Demonstration Team visits Portland ANG Base



The mission of the Blue Angels is to showcase the teamwork and professionalism of the United States Navy and Marine Corps through flight demonstrations and community outreach while inspiring a culture of excellence and service to the country.

The team is stationed at Forrest Sherman Field, Naval Air Station Pensacola, Florida, during the air show season. The squadron spends January through March training at Naval Air Facility El Centro, California.

Photos by Staff Sgt. Nichole Sanchez, 142nd Wing



A Blue Angels F/A-18 Hornet arrives at the Portland Air National Guard Base on Jan. 15, 2026. The F/A-18 has served the Blue Angels since 1987, the longest tenure of any aircraft type assigned to the U.S. Navy Flight Demonstration Squadron. The Oregon International Air Show will have them perform later this summer in McMinnville, on August 14 through 16, 2026.



U.S. Navy Blue Angels Demo Team Pilots, Lt. Rooney Hafeza and Commander Lilly Montana, visit Portland Air National Guard Base, Portland, Oregon, on Jan. 15, 2026. The pilot’s visit was in preparation for the 2026 Oregon International Air Show to be held at McMinnville from August 14-16, 2026.

NEWS

142nd AMXS Honors Dedicated Crew Chiefs in Appointment Ceremony

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Nichole Sanchez,
142nd Wing Public Affairs

PORTLAND, Ore. – The 142nd Wing held its first-ever induction ceremony for Dedication Crew Chiefs (DCC). This was not just ceremonial; it signified the depth of work the maintainers do daily, ensuring the success and safety of the F-15EX and their pilots. DCCs are system-matter experts for their assigned aircraft. This ceremony celebrated the maintainers who manage every aspect of an aircraft's lifecycle, from scheduling maintenance and coordinating aircraft downtime to synchronizing maintenance actions with other shops. Through their actions, DCCs ensure mission readiness.



142nd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron Commander, Maj. Cassandra Herman addresses attendees during the Wing's first ever Dedicated Crew Chief appointment ceremony at the PANG Base, on Jan. 31, 2026.

The ceremony formally codified the trusted relationship among the pilot, the DCC, and the aircraft. While this commemorative effort is a long-standing tradition in active-duty realms, it was the first of its kind for the 142nd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron. The commander of the 142nd AMXS, Maj. Cassandra Herman emphasized the significance of the DCC role during the ceremony.

"To our new DCCs: you are not just assigned to an aircraft- you are LINKED to it. When that jet taxis, launches, and recovers, everyone knows who stood behind it and who maintained it because your name is tied to it. You are the historian of your aircraft. You are its advocate. You are the standard others will measure themselves against. Some days will be hard. Your jet will break. The pressure will feel high. But nobody will want to get the job done more than you."

During the ceremony, nine DCCs for the F-15EXs were formally recognized and received official crew jackets and patches from their respective pilots.



The 142nd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron's nine Dedicated Crew Chiefs (DCC) and the pilots of the 123rd Fighter Squadron gather for a group photo at the conclusion of the 142nd Wing's first DCC Appointment Ceremony held at the Portland Air National Guard Base in Portland, Ore., on January 31, 2026.

ORANG Tech Sgt. Cody Peterson, DCC for aircraft number A1011, shared what the ceremony meant for him. "It is important to preserve the heritage of our craft and an honor to be enshrined in Air Force history," Peterson said. In closing, Maj. Herman highlighted the responsibility, pride, and duty that the DCCs take on for themselves, the pilots, and the aircraft they maintain. "...the EX represents the future of air dominance," said Maj. Herman. "However, these aircraft won't win wars; the people will. Today, we recognize the names on these aircraft not as a decoration, but as a promise that these jets will be cared for with pride."

Washington, Oregon Guard Soldiers Inducted into the Order of the Spur

Story by Sgt. Vivian Ainomugisha,
Combined Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa

CAMP LEMMONIER, Djibouti – Soldiers from the Washington Army National Guard, including those assigned to the 303rd Cavalry Regiment and the 81st Brigade, along with attached Soldiers from the Oregon National Guard, were formally inducted into the Order of the Spur during a gold spur ceremony Jan. 8–9, recognizing their combat deployment to Djibouti, Africa.

The ceremony symbolized the Soldiers' acceptance into the enduring cavalry brotherhood. The unit's mission focuses on base defense operations against air and ground threats in the region in support of Combined Joint Task Force–Horn of Africa.

Staff Sgt. Zachary Hendricks, a squad leader, said receiving his first set of gold spurs marked a meaningful milestone in his cavalry career.

"A lot of Soldiers take pride in what the spurs represent and what they show about where you've been and what you've done," Hendricks said.

In the U.S. Army Cavalry, spurs are a powerful symbol of tradition, pride and earned belonging, marking a trooper's acceptance into the historic Order of the Spur. Rooted in mounted cavalry and medieval warrior customs, spurs are never decorative and must be earned.

Much like the Infantry's Expert Infantry Badge and Combat Infantry Badge, cavalry spurs serve as visible proof that the wearer has upheld one of the Army's oldest and most storied traditions. Silver spurs are awarded to Soldiers who complete the physically and mentally demanding Spur Ride, while gold spurs are reserved for troopers inducted through combat service with a cavalry unit.

Staff Sgt. Alvin Probbly, a platoon sergeant who first earned gold spurs in Iraq in 2005, said the honor reflects both personal

history and military legacy.

"My family has served in almost every war since World War I," Probbly said. "Earning gold spurs meant I was part of that combat legacy, and as a cavalryman, that carries a lot of pride."

Probbly added that, as a child who looked up to the Buffalo Soldiers, earning his spurs made him feel connected to the legacy of the 9th and 10th Cavalry Regiments.

For junior Soldiers, the ceremony marked an early milestone. Pfc. Kenneth Schultz said earning gold spurs early in his career strengthened his sense of belonging within the cavalry community.



Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Kenneth Tucceri
U.S. Army Command Sgt. Maj. Tim Englund, a master spur holder assigned to the 303rd Cavalry Regiment, Washington Army National Guard, inspects a gold spur during a ceremony at Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti, on Jan. 9, 2026.

"Not everyone gets this opportunity anymore," Schultz said. "With cavalry downsizing, fewer Soldiers will earn gold spurs. This is a great start to my career."

Schultz hopes to one day earn silver spurs through a Spur Ride, a grueling test of cavalry knowledge, weapons proficiency, leadership and physical endurance.

Unit leaders emphasized that spurs are more than ceremonial items. They raise expectations and reinforce responsibility.

"When Soldiers earn their spurs, they're

expected to hold themselves to a higher standard," said Capt. Alfred Cane, a troop commander. "It motivates them to work harder and take greater pride in what they do."

Cane noted that the ceremony's significance was elevated by the engagement of key Washington and Oregon National Guard leaders. The presence of senior leadership downrange offers opportunities for critical mentorship, a much-needed element in an austere environment, and highlights the importance of Combined Joint Task Force–Horn of Africa's mission. Soldiers who hold both gold and silver spurs are referred to as 'Master Spur Holders.'

1st Sgt. Caleb Bryan, who earned his silver spurs in 2007 and received his gold spurs in 2008, holds the title.

Bryan has helped facilitate multiple Spur Rides and said he takes pride in seeing Soldiers strive to earn their spurs. Watching the young Soldiers in his unit remain "hungry for tradition," he added, reinforces the importance of preserving the cavalry's legacy.

Capt. Ransom Holland, commander of Bravo Troop, said the tradition strengthens both morale and professional identity.

"The spurs are symbolic of who we are as cavalrymen," Holland said. "They remind our Soldiers that reconnaissance matters, that our mission matters and that they are part of something bigger than themselves."

Holland said the ceremony came at a critical point late in the deployment, when morale can begin to wane. Since receiving their spurs, he noted, the troops' energy and motivation have been visibly renewed. As the unit approaches the final phase of its deployment, leaders said the ceremony reinforced unity, pride and commitment to the cavalry's enduring legacy.

"Reconnaissance isn't going anywhere. Cavalry tradition still matters," Holland said.

NEWS

A Story About Jets (But Not the Story You're Thinking)

Story and photo by Senior Airman Yuki Klein,
142nd Wing Public Affairs

PORTLAND, Ore. – From the manufacturing floor to soaring in the sky, the story of our jets often skips the in-between. The work that happens behind the scenes is quiet, methodical, and essential, carried out far from the spotlight, but critical to every flight.

Staff Sgt. Kenneth Fritz, an avionics integrated systems technician at the 142nd Wing, Portland Air National Guard Base, Oregon, spends his days solving problems most people never see. When an aircraft system fails, the broken component is removed from the jet and sent to the avionics integrated system team, also known as the “backshop.” Fritz and other backshop members determine whether it can be repaired, rebuilt, or redesigned entirely.

“We’re kind of like in-depth tech support,” Fritz said. “The flight line pulls a part they think is bad, and we verify that it actually is. If we can fix it, we do. If we can’t, we make sure it gets where it needs to go next.”

Fritz joined the Air Force in 2014, initially working as a flight line avionics technician. For years, his job was pulling components, replacing boxes, and getting aircraft back in the air. Over time, however, his interest shifted from the aircraft’s exterior to its hidden electronics.

“I was the guy pulling the box out of the jet,” Fritz explained. “Now I’m the guy fixing what’s inside that box.”

Members of the backshop work on troubleshooting individual circuit boards and systems, many of which were designed decades ago. Much of the test equipment used to evaluate these components is well past its intended life cycle, and replacement parts are often no longer available.

“When you can’t order a part anymore, you have to get creative,” Fritz said. “You

look at the technical data, you work with engineers, and sometimes the answer is to build the solution yourself.”

Innovation and creativity have become one of Fritz’s defining contributions. Using 3D printers, laser cutters, and digital design tools, he designs and manufactures locally approved fixtures, adapters, covers, and part add-ons to keep the aging F-15C systems operational. Each item must fit exact dimensions and meet Air Force standards before it can be used.



ORANG Staff Sgt. Kenneth Fritz adjusts the intercommunication control panel with a dial adjuster he manufactured, Portland Air National Guard Base, Oregon, on Jan 31, 2026. The dial was used to assist pilots in the cockpit to adjust their intercommunication control panel.

Some of Fritz’s designs have extended far beyond his own workbench. He helped develop multiple cable tester systems that were distributed to Air Force bases overseas, supporting backshop operations worldwide. In another case, using a 3D printer on base, he developed a custom tool to make dialing the cockpit intercommunication control panel (ICCP), or in other words, the radio, faster and less physically demanding—a simple idea that became an approved, locally manufactured solution.

“You’re testing it literally hundreds of turns, and they’re kind of inconveniently placed and awkward,” Fritz said of the ICCP. “So I made this thing like a giant knob that you can spin onto the dials.” Outside the scope of building tools, Fritz also plays a key role in identifying system-wide trends. When failures recur, he looks for patterns, software revisions, or processing issues, and communicates those findings back to engineers. That feedback loop has led to direct collaboration with Air Force and industry engineers, sometimes resulting in changes to testing procedures or system design.

“That was when it really clicked for me,” Fritz said. “I realized nothing is carved in stone. You can actually improve the process if you understand it well enough.”

Today, Fritz has returned to his role as a full-time technician after spending several years as a traditional drill status guardsman. As some aircraft begin to phase out, his shop finds itself in a period of uncertainty, evaluating which systems can be supported and how its expertise fits into the Air Force’s future.

“It’s a weird spot to be in,” Fritz said. “But it’s also an opportunity to figure out where we can still add value.” When asked to describe his job in just a few words, Fritz was quick to respond with, “Consistency, detail, and thoroughness. You spend way more time setting up a test than actually running it. If one thing is misaligned or miscalculated, the whole thing falls apart.”

For Fritz, the work isn’t about recognition or quick wins. It’s about precision, curiosity, and building something that didn’t exist before, so the mission can keep moving forward.

“If you have an interest in micro controllers, Raspberry Pi, Arduino, or you want to be involved in powerful tools, this is a good place to be,” he said.

41st IBCT Soldiers Welcomed Home from Operation Inherent Resolve

Photos by Aaron Perkins,
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

PORTLAND, Ore. – Nearly 200 Oregon Army National Guard Soldiers from the 41st IBCT, who were serving with Task Force Bataan for Operation Inherent Resolve, returned home to Oregon from their federal deployment on March 20, 2026, at the Jackson Armory in Portland, Oregon. Task Force Bataan is made up of Soldiers from Oregon, New Mexico, Washington, and Louisiana. During their deployment, they served in Djibouti, Kenya, and Somalia, supporting Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa and Joint Special Operations Task Force-Somalia. Their main job was to provide security and defend the base.



FEATURE STORY

Pathways to Progress: Oregon Military Department's Innovative Approach to Warfighting Challenges

Feature Story and photography by John Hughel, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

WARRENTON, Ore. – Success in The Profession of Arms calls for more than elite troops and cutting-edge equipment. It demands effective management of evolving needs and making informed program decisions to turn ideas into tangible results. At the Oregon Military Department's 2026 Innovation Summit, military leaders, partner agencies, academic instructors, and industry experts came together to explore new ways to advance technology for U.S. warfighters in the Pacific Northwest, sharing practical insights to guide future efforts and avoid unnecessary detours and costly setbacks.

The Oregon Military Department Innovation Summit (OMDIS) hosted a two-day event at Camp Rilea Armed Forces Training Center near Warrenton, Oregon, on March 23 and 24, 2026. Rally Point Ventures, the organizer, focuses on helping startups that create products for both military and commercial use. They connect these startups with Department of War and Department of Defense buyers, and help them find non-dilutive funding and opportunities to pilot/field-test their products. Rally Point Ventures has helped originators turn real-world needs into practical steps and has supported military partners in finding and developing new technology.

"There's a phrase that exists in the United States military that concerns and worries me: 'Late to need.' We're constantly behind when it comes to meeting our needs," said Oregon Air National Guard Col. Adam Gaudinski, commander of the 173rd Fighter Wing, as he opened the event, touching on the increasing pace of adapting new technology. "So now where are we? Where is AI? What is it going to do for us?"

"Late to need" is a term commonly used in military and defense acquisition to describe situations in which critical capabilities, equipment, or forces are not delivered in time to support operational requirements. On April 30, 2025, Secretary of Defense [War] Pete Hegseth issued a memorandum titled "Army Transformation and Acquisition Reform," which outlined the Army Transformation Initiative to Congress and underscored the necessity to "cancel programs that deliver what is described as dated, late-to-need, overpriced, or difficult-to-maintain capabilities."



Oregon Military Department 2026 Innovation Summit participants from the Oregon Nat'l. Guard, along with partner agencies, academia, and industry, connect during scheduled breaks to discuss topics to support technological advancements for U.S. warfighters in the region.

"We build constellations, satellites, and GPS capabilities that are, once again, revolutionary," Gaudinski said, emphasizing the spirit of ingenuity and entrepreneurship. "With government support to manage the risk, the private sector has the space to step in and create these innovative and exciting

things... that start with an idea in your garage. That's Americanism."

Gaudinski summarized his opening by posing several questions for the group to reflect on during the summit: "How do we build faster? How do we cut through the bureaucratic red tape? How do we bring this to the warfighter, to society, and protect future generations?"



ORANG Col. Adam Gaudinski, 173rd Fighter Wing commander delivers the opening "Landscape Brief" to start the Oregon Military Department 2026 Innovation Summit, on March 23, 2026 held at Camp Rilea, near Warrenton, Oregon, and brought together Oregon National Guard members, along with partner agencies, academia, and industry.

This didn't take long, as nearly 120 participants took the first of many coordinated breaks to start those conversations. The interaction among vendors, participants, and scheduled speakers around Warrior Hall was noticeably lively and energetic.

Taking this enthusiasm from the break, Chris Pavel, Founder and CEO of Rally Point Ventures, described how he saw a need for this type of product innovation management organization, which he started after retiring from the Washington Air National Guard.

"Everyone on our team has worn the uniform and brings both expertise and a problem-solving approach to this work," he said, while showing the early framework with several slides. "What we found is that starting with the end in mind, and focusing on 'starting with the why' is important to achieve operational success, to find and fill in the capability gap."

Founded in 2025, the team possesses more than 160 years of collective defense experience. The summit leverages this proven track record and offers military and industry professionals actionable guidance to help them make decisions more efficiently and effectively.

"Many of you know about the 'frozen middle,'" Pavel said, noting that project approvals often stall for various reasons. "By addressing barriers such as funding gaps, investment shortfalls, and by clarifying needs and DoW requirements, we can improve our success in these cross-sector relationships."

With that, a series of scheduled professionals presented their areas of expertise over the rest of the summit, with working group lunches and interactive breaks.

In describing both the speed of innovation and cutting-edge tools, Marguex Gala, with Augmented AI, led a discussion on how organizations can make better decisions faster and with greater clarity using AI technology during her presentation.

"Our philosophy is that human endeavors come first, especially in a military context; you are not going to solely make a decision based on what is the most optimal, or what is the most efficient, and what is the path of least resistance," she said, recognizing the need to weigh the desired risk in life and death decision-making. "So AI is not responsible in vital risk situations. Human judgment needs to come first and should be part of the strategic process."

Using current statistical data, accounting for costs, and considering other factors that affect project timelines, artificial intelligence is among the most innovative tools of recent years. The overall, long-term goal for AI might be to have a basic tool that one can 'plug and play' with, but keeping accurate, up-to-date data, using prior cost analyses, and asking the right kinds of outcome questions are critical for the cost-benefit analysis.

"We want to move fast. We want to make things more efficient, but we are also talking about leveraging real intelligence, real human experience - our instinct. There is so much value there," Gala said, looking at all of the factors for success and the full array of AI applications. "The funny thing about my team is we're vertical agnostic and tech agnostic. We use every AI tool available to help you (end user) accelerate and achieve your goals."

Using this innovative approach and focusing on human responses and performance, three representatives from the Air Force Research



Chris Pavel, Founder and CEO of Rally Point Ventures, kicks off the morning session of the Oregon Military Department 2026 Innovation Summit on March 23, by discussing the event's overall goals with attendees, helping bring together military members, partner agencies, academic institutions, and industry representatives.

Laboratory, 711th Human Performance Wing at Wright-Patterson AFB in Dayton, Ohio, presented several ongoing Health and Wellness Initiatives projects at the OMDIS. Building on AFRL's mission to "discover, develop and deliver integrative human performance knowledge, technology and solutions," the presentation focused on human performance obstacles and practical solutions.

"So let's talk about this link between AFRL and the Air Force's priorities, as well as the medical side funding that allows us to use really creative collaborative things that bridge the gap between performance and medical," explained Dr. Nicole Ray, Director of the STRONG Lab at AFRL, referring to ongoing physiology programs her team has been working on. "Right down the hall from us (at Wright-Patterson) is USAFSAM, the School of Aerospace Medicine, so we have all of this expertise in the same building."

Through collaboration with the Air Force and Navy Research Laboratories, USAFSAM maximizes the application of aeromedical science and technology to enhance the performance, health, and survival of individuals in abnormal or extreme environments, such as combat, air, space, and cyberspace. Dr. Ray described a study conducted in extreme cold-weather environments.

"So rather than having a bunch of little one-off projects, we have a more unified focus, and we can achieve things on a larger scale," she said. "Looking at FROST Advisor, which is a custom GPT to generate responses related to cold weather environments. The user can detail a question and get recommendations for active mission sets."

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FEATURE STORY

OMDIS Continued from Page 9

The sample question for FROST was, “I have a mission for 5 days in -50 degrees, what should I wear?” Within seconds, FROST generates recommendations for base-layer clothing, insulation layers, outer layers, and hand, head, and foot protection. Now the service member can pack all the critical gear and review guidance based on the latest research and field data that FROST can calculate.

Technology and real-time data collection are also important for AFRL human performance research when used with wearable devices. Tracking body temperature, heart rate, oxygen use, and hydration in real time provides some of the best holistic indicators for long-term performance.

“In our lab, our mission is to facilitate high fitness levels. So when we design these studies, our hypotheses, our research, or design and our analysis – we do this with the intent to improve fitness,” said Maegan O’Conner, a Human Performance Researcher with AFRL, yet also described some of the challenges with wearable devices. “We have found that for some, it’s a culture change where users aren’t comfortable with the personal data collection, even though we don’t put a name to the data. For others, it is a nuisance, and in some cases, there are security issues with GPS tracking a service member’s location.”

Collecting physical data and vital signs is not new in the U.S. military. In his 2011 book “WAR,” author Sebastian Junger wrote about decades of human performance studies in combat, which he found still applied to the soldiers he reported alongside in Afghanistan. He described how, in 1966, Army researchers took daily blood and urine samples from soldiers camped deep in enemy territory along the Cambodian border in South Vietnam to monitor their stress levels.

The study showed that two officers in the unit saw cortisol levels climb until the day of an expected attack, and drop when it failed to materialize, Junger wrote, citing the study The Psychology and Physiology of Stress with References to Special Studies of the Vietnam War, by Peter G. Bourne. “Among the enlisted men, the stress levels were exactly the opposite: their cortisol levels dropped as the attack drew near. The only explanation the researchers could come up with was that the soldiers had such a strong physiological defense that the attack created a sense of ‘euphoric expectancy’ among them.”



Marguex Gala (right) with Simply Augmented AI, speaks with other participants during one of the many break sessions at the Oregon Military Department 2026 Innovation Summit, held on March 23, 2026 at Camp Rilea.

Before the Innovation Summit, Ray, O’Conner, and AFRL associate Kristyn Barrett experienced this sense of ‘expectancy’ by observing the Oregon Best Warrior Competition at Camp Rilea. They saw firsthand the tough psychological and physical challenges service members faced during three days of intense endurance events under the nonstop competition agenda.

O’Conner stated, “This was a valuable precursor to the summit. It allowed us to be out there and observe participants in changing weather conditions and various situations. It’s a great reminder, too, of why this research is so important.”

Whether it comes from observations, wearable devices, controlled experiments, or published studies, each provides data that helps advance artificial intelligence, enabling it to make inferences and offer up-to-date recommendations.

As the nature of warfare continues to change in real-world situations, Oregon Army National Guard Lt. Col. Mark Timmons, commander of the 249th Regional Training Institute at the Rees Training Center in Hermiston, Oregon, began his presentation by

asking for feedback and suggestions on the cost of building, testing, and developing custom-built aircraft to supplement some of the specialized commercial systems.

“Can somebody tell me what air superiority looks like when we have to take on a thousand drones? Right now, nobody knows the answer to that question,” Timmons said, pointing out the rapid reconfiguration of the modern battlefield. “We now have the chance to design and build our own aircraft using 3D printing. By working with a company that specializes in

both technology and compliance, we can combine our efforts to create a system made in Oregon and, more broadly, in areas around the world.”

Simmons described how he has used ‘Sparkle Balls’ to drop from drones on soldiers in the field training to simulate battlefield ‘kills,’ which he bought commercially. He also wants them to learn innovation, but a variety of limited-cost options sidelines them.

“I want them to take your ingenuity – you know the parts, you know the integration, you know the coding,” he said, addressing the summit audience. “I then want to take your ingenuity and put it in a system that I can build, print, and adapt 3-D drones to shape our training missions.”

The biggest concern is the product’s quality vs. the price per unit, as it’s difficult to train without an affordable platform, Timmons noted. “I don’t have the budget to buy 20 drones at \$40,000, but if we can get a usable product at around \$2,000 per unit, then we can fly, fix, and adapt to that technology.”

One key benefit of the innovation summit is that it helps solve urgent problems quickly, without relying on the slower traditional contract bidding process.

“Innovation is like resiliency. It can be an overused term; it’s not the idea but more about getting things done at the lowest level,” said Oregon Air National Guard Capt. Jared Boyer, who has orchestrated these last two years of the OMDIS. “On a scaled-down version, Air Force squadrons have similarly managed their resources.”

Boyer brings both his technical skills and budgetary knowledge to this process, having worked for several years in the Avionic back shop repairing aircraft system components before obtaining his commission, and now is the Budget officer for the F-35 Lightning II conversion at the 173rd Fighter Wing at Kingsley Field in Klamath Falls, Oregon.



Sa Faumuina (right), with Rally Point Ventures, works with a group of Oregon Guardsmen and civilian participants on a practical exercise using a Problem Sourcing Workbook created by Rally Point during the Oregon Military Department 2026 Innovation Summit. Faumuina is also a member in the Washington Air Nat’l. Guard serving as the First Sergeant for the 194th Medical Group at Camp Murray, Wash.

“So I do think of ways to build teams up, that correctly solve problems, to flesh out the details, where solutions can be solved at the lowest level, and have an added cost saving to the resolution,” he said, describing how he wants to “get everyone at the table to talk to each other.”

While looking for ‘crossover effects,’ Boyer said, observing that if the “Oregon National Guard already has a drone training program and the ranges to operate them, there shouldn’t be a problem obtaining additional manufacturing equipment and printers for the Army by sharing resources.”

“At some point, the Air side will need that technology too. Why aren’t we working with the Army on more issues? Both services have some of the best training ranges because Oregon isn’t very populous in the central and southern part of the state,” Boyer said,

reflecting on long-term ‘win-win’ outcomes. “If we use our strengths, I think we’ll keep hitting home runs and succeeding.”

The second- and third-order effects of this innovation crossover include increased recruiting numbers and students at the high school and college levels seeking these technology-driven careers, both in

civilian jobs and in the National Guard.

“My biggest goal is to build something that lasts beyond my own career. By working with universities and community colleges, we can close the technology gap and bring in the people we need,” Boyer said.

The summit concluded by answering many of the questions posed by Col. Gaudinski in his opening remarks and underscoring that innovation is not a static proposition or theoretical concept in the profession of arms.

“Innovation does not lead to leadership; innovation does not lead to success. Our ability to operationalize that scale is what accomplishes successful leadership,” Guadinski said. “So, whether we talk about our state or region or go national, who else is better to lead than us? How about you? How about me? I can’t wait!”



ORANG Capt. Jared Boyer, assigned to the 173rd Fighter Wing (right), talks with Col. Christopher Lantagne, Director of Staff - Air (left), during the Oregon Military Department 2026 Innovation Summit, held at Camp Rilea.



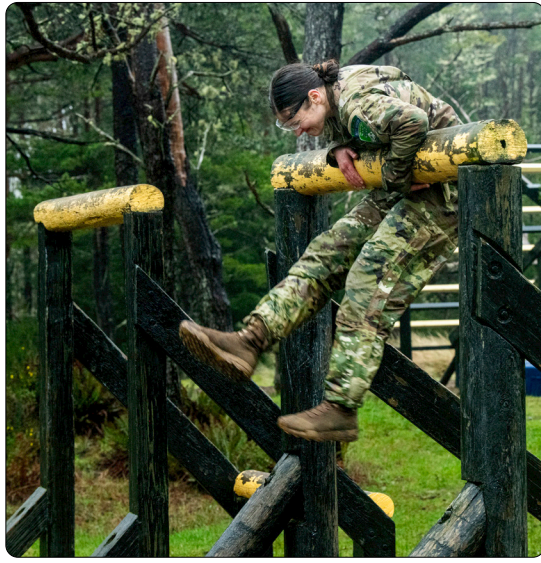
Maegan O’Conner, a Human Performance Researcher discusses ongoing programs with the Air Force Research Laboratory in Ohio. She is one of over a dozen presenters at the OMD 2026 Innovation Summit.



ORARNG Col. Mark Timmons from the 249th Regional Training Institute leads a discussion on the use of 3D printed training drones during his presentation at the Oregon Military Department 2026 Innovation Summit.

TRAINING

*Best Warrior Competition,
Continued from Front Page*



**Oregon National Guard
Best Warrior Competition 2026**



WARRENTON, Ore. - The annual Oregon National Guard Best Warrior Competition was held at Camp Rilea Armed Forces Training Center from March 19 to 21, 2026. Taking top honors as the Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year was Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Eric Stanfill (photo left) and Senior Airman Colton Edezey (photo right) capturing first place in the Soldier/Airman division, as both winners are pictured with Command Senior Enlisted Leader, Command Sgt. Maj. Lee Smith and Master Sgt. Mark Kretschmer on March 21. (Event photos by Maj. Leslie Reed and John Hughel, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs)

TRAINING

Benton County Search and Rescue Academy trains Volunteers with Oregon National Guard Aviation



Participants in the Benton County Search and Rescue Academy pause for a group photo during training on March 14, 2026 in Corvallis, Oregon. The nine-week academy prepares volunteers for state search and rescue certification and includes classroom instruction and field exercises that are supported by the Oregon National Guard.

Story and photos by Sgt. 1st Class Cory Grogan, Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs

CORVALLIS, Ore. – Volunteers training to help find missing people and rescue injured hikers in Benton County recently received a close-up look at military aviation during a Search and Rescue Academy exercise supported by the Oregon National Guard.

During the training, Oregon National Guard aircrews brought an HH-60M Black Hawk helicopter to demonstrate how aircraft support search missions, including inserting rescuers into remote areas and evacuating injured patients. The training is part of the Benton County Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue Academy, a nine-week program that prepares community volunteers to respond when emergencies happen in the outdoors.

The aviation training was coordinated by the Benton County Sheriff's Office Special Services Unit, which manages search and rescue operations across the county.

Benton County maintains six search and rescue teams supported by about 130 volunteers. The teams include specialties such as mountain rescue, mounted posse units, K-9 teams and amateur radio operators who assist with communications during missions.

The program is managed by Kevin Higgins, Special Services Manager for the Benton County Sheriff's Office. Higgins began his search and rescue career as a volunteer in 1989 and has spent more than three decades supporting emergency response in the region, including 23 years in the fire service and 11 years working for Benton County.

"The desire to help people has always been the motivation," Higgins said. "Even though my role today focuses more on coordinating teams and managing missions, it's still incredibly rewarding when someone is found and brought home safely."

Many volunteers train year-round and remain ready to respond at any hour when someone is missing or injured.

"Many of our volunteers are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year," Higgins said. "They'll drop what they're doing to help when someone needs it." The search and rescue teams operate under a simple motto that reflects their mission: "So others may live," he said.

The Search and Rescue Academy runs annually from early March through late April. Participants attend classes on Thursday evenings and Saturdays, learning skills that include navigation with map, compass and GPS, search techniques, shelter building, knots, fire building, canine operations and aircraft coordination.

The training combines classroom instruction with field exercises designed to meet state search and rescue standards.

"Training is critical because emergencies involve lives on the line," said JonnaVe Stokes, a Special Services Program Specialist with the Benton County Sheriff's Office who helps coordinate the program. "Every one of these students is a volunteer, and their efforts are extremely important in saving lives."

During the aviation training session, volunteers learned how helicopter crews support rescue operations. Oregon National Guard aviators explained landing zone requirements, winch capabilities and how rescuers prepare injured patients for transport.

Capt. Matthew Sherburn, a medical evacuation officer with Golf Company, 1st Battalion, 189th Aviation Regiment, said the training helps both agencies work together effectively during emergencies.

For many academy participants, the training also provides a chance to serve their community. Volunteer Aaron Pyles said search and rescue offers a way for people to contribute beyond their everyday routines.



Volunteers with the Benton County Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue program participated in aviation training as part of the annual Search and Rescue Academy at the Corvallis Municipal Airport on March 14. Benton County currently has about 130 search-and-rescue volunteers across six teams. These volunteers train year-round and are often available 24 hours a day to assist during emergencies.

Pyles serves in the 142nd Fighter Wing of the Oregon Air National Guard.

"It's easy to get wrapped up in work and everyday life," Pyles said. "This is a chance to do something bigger than yourself and help other people."

The academy concludes with a 24-hour overnight field exercise where participants practice large-scale search scenarios. Volunteers must demonstrate navigation, tracking, communications and teamwork while organizing teams and establishing incident command.

Those who successfully complete the program and pass a written exam become state-certified search and rescue personnel through the Oregon State Sheriffs' Association. Program leaders say Benton County is always looking for additional volunteers willing to train and serve.

Volunteers often work long hours in difficult conditions, sometimes searching through the night or for several days until a mission is complete.

"People volunteer because they want to help," Stokes said. "They're out there in the rain, the cold or the middle of the night because someone needs them."

Information about the Benton County Search and Rescue Academy and volunteer opportunities is available on the Benton County Sheriff's Office.



Volunteers with the Benton County Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue program participated in aviation training as part of the annual Search and Rescue Academy at the Corvallis Municipal Airport on March 14. The training included a demonstration by the Oregon National Guard featuring a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter from Golf Company, 1st Battalion, 189th Aviation Regiment.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND REGIONAL EVENTS

Oregon Guard's 102nd CERFP Team boosts chemical leak preparedness

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

PORTLAND, Ore. – The Oregon National Guard's 102nd CBRN Defense Enhanced Response Force Package (CERFP) took part in two recent regional training exercises focused on chemical leaks. These drills aimed to boost preparedness and teamwork among various federal and local agencies during mass-casualty emergencies.

The first exercise scenario occurred on Thursday, February 26, 2026. The 102nd Civil Support Team (CST) responded after the Clackamas Fire Department reported a forklift accident involving a tank of anhydrous ammonia in Clackamas, Oregon. The CST notified the Oregon Army National Guard chain of command and the 102nd CERFP of the need for additional support. On Tuesday, March 4, CERFP team members assisted with decontamination procedures at Portland Providence Medical Center following a tanker truck accident on Interstate 84 that spilled 7,000 gallons of concentrated sulfuric acid onto the roadway.

"It was important to collaborate with other agencies regarding plume monitoring and to allow all our agencies to work together on a designated air monitoring exercise," said Lynsey Amundson, the Public Information Officer for the Clackamas Fire Department.

One of the challenges was maintaining communication across multiple agencies, both on the ground and via radio channels. Amundson said that this exercise quickly highlighted this issue. "Getting on the same radio channels took some effort initially, but we had our radio technician there to help connect everyone to one channel so they could talk to each other to mitigate the leak."

Another goal was to avoid "pre-staging" the exercise with each participating agency. This assessed the use of the chain of command, response times, and the effectiveness of each agency in utilizing its equipment during response development.

"Demonstrating the importance of the air monitors in this exercise for the EPA and the National Guard team was essential for validating how their findings aligned, as they were using real-world data," said Morgan West, Community Resilience Officer for the Clackamas Fire Department.



ORARNG Spc. Daniella Terawaki, with the 102nd Oregon CBRNE Enhanced Response Force Package, demonstrates an air monitoring device while leading a class on decontamination procedures with members from Portland Providence Medical Center during a day of emergency management training held at the hospital in Portland, on March 4, 2026. Terawaki also worked with the same equipment working with the Clackamas Fire Department on the Feb. 26 exercise.

"The monitors were collecting 'zeroes' while taking air samples every few seconds in real-time during the training period, and having this information up to date allows the incident commander to make critical decisions."

As the firefighters suited up to 'plug the leak,' Clackamas Fire also launched an aerial drone over the site to monitor the response during the exercise. While each agency worked on the response timeline, the Oregon Guardsmen arrived and started setting up their rapid-deploy decontamination



Clackamas and Gresham firefighters prepare to work in a contaminated zone by donning protective chemical suits during response procedures in an Air Monitoring Exercise on Feb. 26, 2026, in Clackamas, Oregon. The training brought together partner agencies, including the ORNG CBRNE Enhanced Response Force Package (CERFP) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), following an Oregon Emergency Response System notification.

stations. With many moving parts, the training helped each agency understand the roles of other partners in the effort.

"We're a bit jealous of the CERFP's air monitoring equipment," West said. "They have some new gear we'd love to have, but it's good to know what they can bring when there's an incident."

The next week at Providence Medical Center, the CERFP team kicked off training with a hands-on session with decontamination equipment and procedures for almost 50 staff members. Sgt. Aaron Stiner explained each step of putting on a chemical suit as Spc. Daniella Terawaki demonstrated. Staff also asked about the best ways to stay safe while wearing the suit and to avoid cross-contamination.

One question in particular sparked a longer discussion about how long someone would remain in the chemical suit, given the temperature and humidity.

"The time can vary based on conditions, so we look at the wet bulb temperature for wearing a chemical protective suit because it can add up to 15-20 degrees to the external temperature," Stiner explained. "Factoring in humidity, this would reduce the time considerably. That's why you have to check on each other's vital signs more often when it's hotter and muggier conditions."

When the 90-minute class wrapped up, the group headed toward an emergency entrance reserved for mass casualty situations. Three teams rotated through their stations: the first crew suited up in chemical protective gear. In contrast, the others alternated between a decontamination site adjacent to the emergency room and a portable station set up outside.

Working with inflatable mannequins, Stiner and Carrie Guerry, the night charge nurse at Providence Medical Center, demonstrated how to remove contaminated clothing while collecting personal items for each patient at the outdoor portable station. Having taken two separate hands-on FEMA courses at the Center for Domestic Preparedness in Anniston, Alabama, Guerry was one of the event organizers for the training.

"The FEMA incident management and casualty response procedures are part of this exercise. It's allowing us to work on the same page with the National Guard today or other agencies that we would be working with," she said, while coaching staff at the decontamination site. She added, "We haven't done anything like this in a long time, so we're definitely doing the 'crawl' portion of the 'Crawl, Walk, Run' approach."

Keeping a positive and energetic attitude also helps. For Monica Mitchell, another Providence, working with the National Guard was a chance to work with fellow guardsmen, having served with the Oregon and Washington Army National Guard for 12 years as an '68 Whiskey' - Army Combat Medical Specialist.

"I used to be part of Charlie MED [Oregon Army National Guard Medical Group], so setting up tents, ripping them down, and working quickly under pressure is something I am familiar with," she said, while role-playing as a patient during part of the exercise.

"It's always nice to see something that you know once again, like the CBRN process, but it's really good having folks here who it's 'bread and butter,' and go through and reteach many of these procedures."

Mitchell serves on the Disaster Committee at Providence, where she works closely with the leadership team. "I've got some good experience

working with the Brits when working with NATO partners overseas. Having that type of team attitude is another plus for this first responder approach," she said.

At the conclusion of the exercise, participants gather quickly to share feedback and gauge the training's temperature.

"When everyone can relax and not have this expectation of 'is this right or wrong way to do it,' that's the best way to learn because ultimately you have to be able to adapt to each situation with flexibility," Stiner said, noting how the day's training impacted both teams. "It's also two-fold (process) because we're testing each other's systems and in a real-world event, we function as force multipliers to ultimately better serve the community."



ORARNG Sgt. Aaron Stiner, assigned to the 102nd Oregon CBRNE Enhanced Response Force Package (left), works alongside Carrie Guerry (right), a Night Charge Nurse at Portland Providence Medical Center, during an emergency management exercise held at the hospital in Portland, Oregon, on March 4, 2026.



Monica Mitchell (right), a Providence Medical Center nurse and a military veteran of the Oregon and Washington Nat'l Guard, role-plays as a victim during a decontamination training exercise at the hospital in Portland, Ore., on March 4, 2026.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND REGIONAL EVENTS

Roots run deep: Volunteers restore Neacoxie Creek Riparian Corridor

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

WARRENTON, Ore. – Shovels hit the ground, and native trees went into the earth along Neacoxie Creek at Camp Rilea, March 14, as volunteers from Scouts BSA Troop 258 joined Oregon Military Department environmental staff in support of National Public Lands Day. The event was part of a nationwide effort organized by the National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF), which makes grants available to Department of Defense installations to support natural and cultural resource stewardship projects. This year, more than 56,000 volunteers participated in over 900 events across the country. For the Oregon Military Department Natural Resource Program Manager, Rhande Shaw, the timing couldn't have been better. When she learned Scout Troop 258 of Canby, Oregon, was already on post for their annual campout, she reached out to the troop's Scoutmaster, Dan Cushman, and asked if they'd be willing to spend part of their visit working on a community project. "He jumped on it immediately and said, 'Absolutely, we want to give back,'" Shaw said. The scouts, ages 11 to 17, began the morning with an educational presentation on Camp Rilea's mission, its natural and cultural resources, and the importance of riparian ecosystem health before they picked up tools and got to work. The team planted approximately 120 native trees and shrubs along roughly 1,400 feet of Neacoxie Creek, including about 75 red alders, 19 Pacific crab apples, and 16 spireas. The species were selected for their ecological value and cultural significance. Red alder has been used by local indigenous

tribes for centuries as a source of food, dye, medicine, and ceremonial materials. The work addresses a growing problem along the creek. Years of invasive species encroachment, particularly Scotch Broom, combined with erosion, have degraded the riparian zone, affecting water quality and wildlife habitat. By reestablishing a native plant corridor, the project aims to stabilize stream banks, reduce sediment runoff into Neacoxie Creek, and improve conditions for pollinators, birds, and riparian species throughout the installation. Beyond these direct benefits, Shaw noted the impact extends well beyond the creek bank. "If we're improving the water table, it can support the violets that the Oregon Silverspot Butterfly relies on," she said. "So it's that bigger picture — protect this, and it's the domino effect." The Oregon Silverspot Butterfly is a threatened species that depends on coastal prairie habitat, some of which exists along the Neacoxie corridor. The restoration is also expected to benefit Suckley's Cuckoo Bumblebee, a proposed endangered species that relies on healthy pollinator habitat



Tyler Triplett, a scout from BSA Troop 258, dumps a bucket of enriched soil into a planting hole at Camp Rilea, Warrenton, Oregon, on March 14, 2026, prior to a native sapling being planted along Neacoxie Creek during a volunteer event held in support of National Public Lands Day.



Rye Heilman, left, and TJ Sigler, scouts from Scouts BSA Troop 258, place protective wire around a newly planted native tree along Neacoxie Creek at Camp Rilea, Warrenton, Oregon, March 14, 2026, during a volunteer event held in support of National Public Lands Day.

the Oregon Coast. Camp Rilea is also open to recreational visitors, and the restored riparian zone is expected to enhance the area's visual character, enjoyed by campers and lodging guests. Cushman said the scouts were glad to contribute. Each participant received community service hours toward their next rank advancement. "We camp here every year," Cushman said. "This was a really neat opportunity for them." Shaw said the scouts made the most of it.

"I'm really impressed with how well they've all worked together," she said. "They were gung-ho and ready to go." A NEEF grant of \$2,440.84 funded the Oregon Military Department's project. Staff completed site preparation—including removing remaining Scotch Broom, marking planting locations, and procuring plant materials—in the weeks leading up to the event. For the Oregon Military Department, the project reflects a broader commitment to both protecting the lands that sustain natural plant life and training for vital missions. "If we can protect our resources and keep things as native as possible, that protects our mission," Shaw said.



Boy Scouts of America Troop 258 and Oregon Military Department staff gather for a group photo following a native tree planting event along Neacoxie Creek at Camp Rilea, on March 14, 2026, held in support of National Public Lands Day. The volunteers planted approximately 120 native trees and shrubs along roughly 1,400 feet of creek bank as part of a riparian restoration and invasive species management project.

Knights Under the Stars: Oregon National Guard Military Youth Ball

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

SALEM, Ore. – The ORNG Child and Youth Program hosted the "Knights Under the Stars" Military Youth Ball on Jan. 24, 2026, at the Willamette Heritage Center in Salem. With a medieval Renaissance theme, the event brought together over 207 attendees, including 118 children, for an evening of celebration

and connection. Organized by the program's youth teen panel, the annual ball serves as one of the largest family-focused events of the year, bringing military families together from across the state for dinner, dancing, and community building. The event was supported by VFW posts throughout Oregon and local community partners.



FEATURES

Oregon Guard Women Leaders

Setting the example through Military Service & Nonprofit Work efforts supporting Veterans

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

SALEM, Ore. – As communities recognize Women’s Military History Month and Women’s History Month in March, Oregon Employer Support of the Guard & Reserve (ESGR) is recognizing three Oregon National Guard service members who are setting an example as women leaders, both in uniform and through nonprofit organizations supporting veterans.

Women’s Military History Week will be observed March 16–20, 2026, as part of the national monthlong recognition of women’s contributions, which include service in the armed forces.

The work also reflects part of Oregon ESGR’s mission, which supports service members and the employers and organizations, including nonprofit groups, that help sustain the Guard and Reserve community.

Leanne Babcock, a volunteer with Oregon ESGR, serves as the organization’s Employer Outreach Director and as the Director of Logistics in the Oregon Air National Guard. She is also involved in nonprofit leadership supporting veterans through the [Dauntless Veteran Foundation] as their volunteer Executive Director. Dauntless Veteran Foundation’s mission is to help Veterans translate their talents from the field to the farm. Their Agriculture Grant is open to all Veterans and dependents who are starting or growing their agricultural ventures. Babcock said Oregon is home to several drilling service members who also lead nonprofit organizations supporting veterans, particularly women veterans.

“It’s pretty incredible that the Oregon Military Department has drilling service members in leadership positions who are also nonprofit leaders serving the veteran community,” Babcock said. “They’re actively serving in the Guard and Reserve while building programs that connect and support veterans.”



ORANG Chief Master Sgt. Amy Almond-Schmid, 142nd Medical Group chief, is shown in uniform alongside her civilian role as executive director of the Returning Veterans Project. Almond-Schmid serves in the Air Nat’l. Guard while helping lead the nonprofit organization that connects veterans with volunteer health care providers across Oregon and SW Washington.

One of those leaders is Chief Master Sgt. Amy Almond-Schmid, 142nd Medical Group chief with the Oregon Air National Guard and executive director of the Returning Veterans Project. For more than 20 years, the nonprofit’s Volunteer Provider model has served Oregon and SW Washington.

Almond-Schmid said women leaders often bring a broader perspective to both military and nonprofit leadership.

“One strength women bring is a whole-person perspective,” Almond-Schmid said. “Women leaders often take a holistic view, considering family systems, community factors, and the long-term well-being of their fellow Airmen, Soldiers, teams, and civilian counterparts. It is not at the expense of mission goals, but alongside them.”

In February 2025, Oregon ESGR presented a Patriot Award to the organization’s board in recognition of its support of service members and their civilian employment responsibilities.

Babcock said Almond-Schmid’s dual role reflects how Guard members often balance military service with community leadership. Army National Guard Capt. Dakota Olson-Harris is another leader who stands out for her work as co-founder of the Reveille and Retreat Project. Olson-Harris is the commander of the Oregon National Guard’s 115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment and is preparing to mobilize with her Guard unit while continuing to support the nonprofit’s mission.



ORANG Capt. Dakota Olson-Harris, commander of the 115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, is shown in uniform alongside her civilian role as co-founder of the Reveille and Retreat Project. Olson-Harris helps lead the nonprofit organization that creates retreats and programs supporting the health and wellness of women veterans.

The Reveille and Retreat Project was recently named a top-three finalist for the Melissa Washington Small Business Award. The organization also co-hosted the 2025 Oregon Department of Veterans’ Affairs Women Veterans Conference and organizes retreats that bring together women veterans, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and medical professionals to focus on health and wellness.

The nonprofit also participates in nationwide simulcasts focused on women veterans’ health and is working to expand retreat opportunities across Oregon.

Babcock said events like these often provide one of the few opportunities for women veterans to gather and build community. “For many women veterans, this is the only opportunity to gather in this type of community,” she said. “The visibility and exposure are powerful, especially for those of us in the Guard and Reserve.”

Olson-Harris, who lives in Eugene, said women bring a leadership style that strengthens both military units and veteran support organizations.

“Women bring a high level of emotional intelligence to leadership, which enables empathetic advocacy while still maintaining an operational mind-set,” Olson-Harris said.

“People want to feel like they belong and like they’re part of a community or family, not just filling a position.” She said that leadership approach carries across her roles serving in the Guard, leading a nonprofit, and providing counseling to veterans.

Despite progress, these leaders say women in the military and veteran community still face unique challenges. Almond-Schmid said the relatively small number of women in the force can affect mentorship opportunities and visibility.

“Because women make up a smaller percentage of the military and veteran population, there are naturally fewer of us,” she said. “While serving, there are fewer women in senior leadership positions, and after service, there are fewer of us within the veteran community.” That can make it harder to find shared experiences and established pathways for advancement, she said. “It can be hard to envision yourself rising to the upper echelons of our force when the landscape doesn’t reflect you being there,” Almond-Schmid said. “When women take off the uniform, it’s often not obvious they served.”

Olson-Harris said many women veterans also do not always identify themselves as veterans. “In my experience, many women veterans don’t readily identify as veterans,” Olson-Harris said. “Sometimes they undervalue their service, or they’ve experienced trauma and prefer not to talk about it.” Women veterans also face gaps in timely and specialized health care related to their military experience, along with challenges such as housing stability and access to child care, she said. Those needs helped inspire the creation of the Reveille and Retreat Project.

“We saw a gap in support for women who have served or are currently serving in the military,” Olson-Harris said. “Our goal was to create a healing space with no barriers to access and a community where women are seen, heard, validated, and genuinely celebrated.” Almond-Schmid said partnerships with organizations like ESGR help strengthen support networks for service members and veterans. “ESGR provides education, advocacy, and resources that help ensure military service is understood, respected, and protected in the workplace,” she said. “For veteran-focused non profits, ESGR partnerships create opportunities to collaborate, share resources, and expand support networks for service members and their families.” As Women’s History Month and Women’s Military History Month continue, leaders say visibility remains critical for recognizing women’s contributions to military service and to the veteran community.



ORANG Maj. Leanne Babcock, Director of Logistics, is shown in uniform alongside her civilian role as executive director of the Dauntless Veteran Foundation. Babcock also serves as the Oregon Employer Support of the Guard & Reserve’s Employer Outreach Director and helps lead programs supporting veterans transitioning into agriculture.

“Women who have served deserve to be seen, heard, and celebrated,” Olson-Harris said. “Many continue to serve as pillars for their families, their communities, and as advocates for other women.” All three women and their nonprofit organizations are also part of the planning team for the Pacific Northwest Women Veterans Engage events scheduled for May 29–30 in Bend and Forest Grove. Women Veterans Engage is an annual nationwide live simulcast event that brings women veterans together in local communities across the United States and beyond.

FEATURES

Oregon Army National Guard Soldiers bring The State Capitol to life with their music

Photos by Maj. Leslie Reed and Maj. W. Chris Clyne, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

SALEM, Ore. – Two Oregon Army National Guard Soldiers had the opportunity to showcase their musical talents while playing their guitars during the opening sessions at the Oregon State Capitol inside the chambers of the Oregon House of Representatives.

On February 16, 2026, Oregon Army National Guard Sgt. 1st Class Duane Reno of the Recruiting Retention Battalion played acoustic guitar and sang the National Anthem. A week later, Oregon Army National Guard Maj. Jason Goddard performed an electric guitar rendition of “The Star Spangled Banner” on February 23, 2026, to begin the session at the Oregon House of Representatives chamber. The performances highlight the Oregon National Guard’s ongoing connection to the communities it serves and its dual state and federal mission.



ORARNG Sgt. 1st Class Duane Reno, pauses for a photo at the Oregon State Capitol prior to playing the National Anthem on February 16, 2026.



ORARNG Sgt. 1st Class Duane Reno, Recruiting and Retention Battalion, sings the National Anthem at the Oregon State Capitol on February 16, 2026.



Above: ORARNG Sgt. 1st Class Duane Reno, is greeted by a member of the House of Representatives after playing the National Anthem on February 16, 2026.



Right: ORARNG Maj. Jason Goddard, performs an instrumental rendition of “The Star-Spangled Banner” on guitar inside the chamber of the Oregon House of Representatives on February 23, 2026.



Above: Maj. Jason Goddard, is greeted by a member Oregon House of Representatives after his instrumental rendition of “The Star-Spangled Banner” on his electric guitar inside the chamber of the Oregon House of Representatives on February 23, 2026.

A Second First Day: An Airman’s Fight to Serve, Advocate for Others

Story by Senior Airman Eduardo Figueroa Varela, 142nd Wing Public Affairs

PORTLAND, Ore. – At age 36, Alisha Sargent was exactly where she felt she belonged: leading her flight as dorm chief at Basic Military Training. She was just days away from receiving her first set of uniforms when a medical exam changed everything. “They told me while I was at basic that I would have to go home and get a hysterectomy,” Sargent recalled. A severe case of anemia, driven by undiagnosed uterine fibroids, hadn’t just stalled her training, it had triggered a military discharge process that seemed final. While a medical discharge at age 36 would lead many to close the book on military service, Sargent’s story was only beginning.



Photo by Senior Airman Eduardo Varela, 142nd Wing Oregon Air National Guard Senior Airman Alisha Sargent poses for a photo in the weapons hangar at Portland Air National Guard Base, Portland, Oregon, on March 8, 2026.

“No one here knew how to handle my case because they’d never heard of someone wanting to come back so badly,” she said. She wouldn’t let her career end in paperwork. During the peak of COVID-19, she worked with Salem’s Judge Advocate General (JAG) to navigate a difficult appeals process. She wasn’t looking for a payout; she was fighting to fix her discharge status so she could have a fresh start.

When she finally earned her re-enlistment code in April 2022, she returned to BMT at age 39. This time, the feeling was different. “My second basic... it felt like I made it,” she said. “I felt right. I don’t think it’s something you can share with anyone who hasn’t experienced putting on the uniform. I was prouder.”

Despite the age gap between her and her peers, she excelled in the physically demanding weapons loading career field. Her father, a retired Air Force crew chief, joked about her choosing weapons over maintenance, but her performance spoke for itself. Within two years, she was named Airman of the Quarter, 142nd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron Airman of the Year, and helped her team win Load Crew of the Year. The 18-month struggle also gave Sargent a new mission: advocacy. With uterine fibroids affecting up to 80% of women in the U.S. by age 50, and endometriosis impacting 1 in 10 women nationwide, these conditions represent a significant, often silent, hurdle to military readiness.

Sargent now speaks openly about her health journey to ensure other female Airmen don’t simply accept chronic fatigue or debilitating pain as “part of life.” Her message is simple: early

treatment is essential for career longevity. Her own return to the flightline proves that a diagnosis isn’t the end of the story. Today, Sargent’s dream has become a reality. She was recently selected for a permanent, full-time technician position within the 142nd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron. As she looks forward to promoting to Staff Sergeant and leading her own crew, she remains grounded by the memory of the 500 days she spent fighting just to get back to the starting line. “If you dream about something and you want to do it,” Sargent said, “stick to your guns and get it done.”



Photo by Staff Sgt. Nichole Sanchez, 142nd Wing Public Affairs ORARNG Staff Sgt. Tyler Phelps, Senior Airman Alisha Sargent, and Staff Sgt. Bailey Buck capture the title of ‘Load Crew of the Year’ with a timestamp of 22 minutes and 28 seconds in the Weapons Load Crew of the Year Competition on Aug. 3, 2025.

AZUWUR

OLE' 777 RETURNS TO OREGON: FAMED F-4C PHANTOM II NOW PART OF OMM COLLECTION

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Oregon & Military History

History feature story by

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HAPPY VALLEY, Ore. – The number is 777, Triple 7, or if you will, seven, seven, seven, a McDonnell F-4C-23-MC Phantom II supersonic all-weather fighter bomber, U.S. Air Force serial number 64-0777. Though in the case of 777's Oregon service in the 1980s, it was in the fighter role, not used as a bomber.

After more than three decades away from Oregon, 777 returned this year, arriving late last August to the Oregon Military Museum at Camp Withycombe in Clackamas, Oregon, just southeast of Portland. It was previously displayed at the Cavanaugh Air Museum in Addison, Texas, now closed permanently due to airport expansion there.

The aircraft remains property of the USAF. But veteran aviators in the Oregon Air National Guard and Oregon Military Museum (OMM) communities led by Maj. Gen. Daniel B. O'Hollaren, USAF (Retired), President of the Oregon Military Museum Project, were successful in their bid to convince the USAF that 777 would enjoy a good and appropriate home back in Oregon.

Origins of the F-4 Phantom II

The McDonnell aircraft factory in St. Louis, Missouri built 777, one of 583 F-4Cs built for the USAF in 1965. The aircraft first flew on June 28, 1965. After USAF acceptance, the aircraft was initially assigned to the 33rd Tactical Fighter Wing (33rd TFW) at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida.

On March 4, 1966, it was assigned to the 389th Tactical Fighter Squadron (389th TFS, the T-Bolts) of the 366th TFW, then based at Holloman AFB, New Mexico. A week later, the squadron and wing deployed for combat operations overseas to Phan Rang Air Base in South Vietnam. In October of that year, the units moved to Da Nang AB in South Vietnam where the 366th TFW later received the nickname as "The Gunfighters of Da Nang."

The next month, 777 was damaged in battle by a North Vietnamese SA-2 Guideline surface-to-air missile, though the jet recovered safely at Udorn Royal Thai AFB, Thailand. It was repaired there and returned to service with the 389th Tactical Fighter Wing.

MiG Kill in Vietnam

On May 20, 1967, the combat crew of 777, 389th TFS Commander, Lt. Col. Robert F. Titus and backseater 1st Lt. Milan Zimer, achieved an aerial victory over a North Vietnamese MiG-21 Fishbed fighter using an AIM-7E Sparrow radar-guided air-to-air missile. Their call sign that day was ELGIN 03. It was the first of three MiG-21 kills this crew received credit for, but the only one in 777 (the other two were achieved while flying in F-4C 64-0776, known in the Oregon ANG as "Miss Piggy," preserved at the Seattle Museum of Flight).

Titus and Zimer got their first MiG-21 as they escorted the rear flank of a Republic F-105 Thunderchief fighter-bomber strike force which attacked the Kinh No motor



Courtesy photo L. Turket, via Rick Williams
U.S. Air Force F-4C Phantom II, number 64-077 is seen in flight over the scenic Pacific Northwest during its Oregon Air National Guard period of service in the 1980s. Mount Rainier in Washington State rises prominently in the background.

vehicle repair yard in North Vietnam. As two MiG-21s attempted to engage the F-105s post-strike, ELGIN Flight spotted them and spoiled their attack. ELGIN 03 pursued them but abandoned the attack just when they were about to fire a missile at one as ELGIN 04 called for 03 to break hard because of another MiG coming onto the scene in a threatening position.

Titus and Zimer then moved to rejoin the strike force, at which point they spotted a third MiG, engaged and obtained a full system lock-on. The crew fired two AIM-7 Sparrow missiles to no avail, as these AIM-7s didn't guide properly.



File photo courtesy of the 142nd Wing History Archive
U.S. Air Force F-4C Phantom II, number 64-077 is seen here second from the right at the William Tell 1986 USAF Air-to-Air Gunnery Meet held at Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida in the Hill Gray paint scheme. It has the "City of Medford" name painted on the air conditioning system ram-air heat exchanger intake.

But the third time was a charm. From his website, Titus recalled: "I thought I was going to have to ram this guy!" He fired a third Sparrow and it hit the MiG-21's wing root. When the pilot ejected, Titus whooped, "Yahoo! I got that son-of-a-bitch! Yes, it was exciting. I'd been wanting to shoot down enemy airplanes since I was a kid!"

On April 12, 1968, 777 was reassigned to the 12th TFW at Cam Ranh Bay Air Base, in South Vietnam.

Post-Combat Service

After the F-4Cs in SE Asia were replaced by newer versions of the F-4, such as the D- and E-models, 777 returned Stateside for depot overhaul and maintenance at the Ogden Air Materiel Area, Hill AFB, Utah. It arrived at Hill on April 25, 1969. On August 29 of the same year, it was gained by the 4453rd Combat Crew Training Wing (4453rd CCTW) at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, in Arizona.

When the 4453rd CCTW was inactivated in 1971, this Phantom jet transferred on paper over to the 355th TFW at Davis-Monthan, on September 30, 1971. But less than a month later, on October 21, it was assigned to the 310th Tactical Fighter Training Squadron of the 58th Tactical Fighter Training Wing at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. It served at Luke until its transfer to Oregon sometime between May and November, 1982.

In Oregon Service

In Oregon Air National Guard service, 777 was assigned to the 123rd Fighter-Interceptor Squadron (123rd FIS, the Redhawks) of the 142nd Fighter-Interceptor Group (142nd FIG) at Portland ANG Base. While in Oregon service, the aircraft wore at least two different paint schemes, and quite possibly at least one more. It may have come to Oregon in the SE Asia paint scheme common to active duty F-4 units such as worn in its previous unit in Tactical Air Command's 58th Tactical Training Wing before being repainted to a scheme more suitable for the Redhawk squadron's air defense mission.

Available photographic evidence shows the aircraft in its early period of Oregon service wearing the semi-glossy, easier to maintain Air Defense Command (ADC) Gray paint scheme (FS 16473) with full-size national insignia and markings. The name "RAZ-MA-TAZ" from crew chief John W. Rasmussen was painted on the left-side air conditioning system ram-air heat exchanger intake, a small air scoop forward and low on the fuselage just abaft the radome.

BRING Oregon's Jet HOME

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F-4C 64-0777

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- Decorated Vietnam Era Fighter, 1 MiG kill
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www.oregonmilitarymuseumproject.org

This Oregon Military Museum Project flyer was used circa 2024-2025 to advertise the fund-raising campaign to bring F-4C Phantom II, number 64-0777 back to Oregon. It contributed to the successful effort to bring a significant aviation artifact to the Oregon Military Museum collection, and one with an Oregon historical connection.

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"777" Returns to Oregon*Continued from Page 15*

This location was a place that 123rd Fighter Interceptor Group/142nd Consolidated Aircraft Maintenance Squadron personnel favored to paint its aircraft names.

The other paint scheme observed was the low visibility, matte-finish Hill Gray scheme with small national insignia in subdued tones.



File photo courtesy of the 142nd Wing History Archive

U.S. Air Force F-4C Phantom II, number 64-0777 is seen here transiting the ramp at Mather Air Force Base, California during a 1984 or 1986 air show wearing the ADC Gray colors and markings worn by many F-4Cs in Oregon ANG service in the 1980s. By the summer of 1986, 777 was repainted into the low-visibility "Hill Gray" paint scheme.

During this time, the aircraft sported the new name "CITY OF MEDFORD" painted on the ram-air heat exchanger intake. This name was added after August, 1986 when the aircraft, perhaps freshly repainted into Hill Gray, was observed sans name. It certainly had the name by the time the aircraft participated in the 1986 'William Tell' United States Air Force Air-to-Air Weapons Meet held at Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida wearing this paint scheme and moniker. The other 123rd Fighter Interceptor Squadron jets at WT86 also had city names from Oregon. Aircrew names on the canopy rails for 777 as BEAVER 03 were Majors Ron Moore and Bill DeJager.

It appears 777's name changed again, to "MENACE" by crew chief Dennis Budworth, around the time the Redhawks deployed to Nellis AFB, Nevada in the spring of 1987. It may have retained that name for the 1988 William Tell competition. At WT88 the aircrew names on the canopy rails for 777/BEAVER 03 were Capt. Dave McKinney and 1st Lt. Gary Thompson.

Among the pilot names on the canopy rail over the years was the 142nd Fighter Interceptor Group commander, Col. Ray A. Pilcher, who commanded the group from July, 1985 to November, 1986.

The end of the Phantom era came in 1989 as the 142nd Fighter Interceptor Group transitioned to the next generation McDonnell Douglas F-15A Eagle, and 777 was retired from military service. It was flown to the Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Center, also known as "The Boneyard" at Davis-Monthan AFB, in Arizona on October 24, 1989, where it rested in the desert sun after nearly a quarter century of service in peace and in war.

Post-Service Disposition

Perhaps because it was a surviving MiG-killer from the Vietnam War, 777 was transferred to the National Museum of the Air Force's Loan Program. After a little over five years in the boneyard, in December, 1994 it was placed on loan with the Frontiers of Flight Museum in Dallas, Texas. It didn't stay there long, perhaps, as one source indicated that it moved in September, 1995 about ten miles north to the Cavanaugh Flight Museum in Addison (another source indicated the move took place in December, 2007) where it remained until July this year, when forced to relocate because of the museum's closure.

After much staff coordination and the fundraising necessary to acquire the necessary long-haul transportation,



File photo courtesy of the 142nd Wing History Archive

The completion of the initial basic reassembly of the F-4C Phantom II, number 64-0777 in the late summer of 2025, and is a key step in preparing "777" for eventual static display at the Oregon Military Museum at Camp Withycombe, in Happy Valley, Oregon.

777 was transferred from Addison to the Oregon Military Museum (OMM) via two tractor trailers. One carried the fuselage and the other the wing assembly, and arrived at the OMM on August 25, 2025, almost 36 years after it left the state.

Shortly after arrival, the fuselage was joined atop the wings to assemble the aircraft, and it is now being prepared for display at the OMM. Bird and insect mitigation are part of the preparation plans for outdoor static display.

A suitable foundation for the aircraft's landing gear to rest on will be created, and at this time, it appears the aircraft will be placed on the south side of the museum entrance.

The aircraft is currently in the SE Asia colors and 389th TFS markings in which it achieved its 1967 MiG kill; it will reportedly be repainted into the colors and markings of its Oregon service in the 123rd Fighter Interceptor Group, although which colors and markings scheme is not yet clear. No specific time for the refurbishment, protective measures, emplacement and dedication of this new addition to the OMM's aviation artifacts has been announced to the public yet, but 777 is back home.



File photo courtesy of the 142nd Wing History Archive

U.S. Air Force F-4C Phantom II, number 64-0777 is seen being reassembled at the Oregon Military Museum in late August, 2025. With the F-4, the fuselage is placed over the wing assembly, as opposed to each wing attaching to the fuselage like in some aircraft designs.



File photo courtesy of the 142nd Wing History Archive

The fuselage of F-4C Phantom II, number 64-0777 is pictured during the aircraft's return to Oregon passing through the front gate at Camp Withycombe, in Happy Valley, Oregon, during late-August, 2025, carried from Addison, Texas aboard a flatbed tractor trailer.

Special thanks to Rick "Cecil B. de" Williams, Robert B. Haskell, Craig Dixon and Peter Greengrass for their help with the information about and images of 64-0777.

If any Oregon Air National Guard veterans have any additional recollections and/or images of 777's service in the Oregon Air National Guard, please share them with the 142nd Wing History Office via the 142nd Wing Public Affairs Office. Also welcome are information and/or images from anyone else associated with this aircraft and missions from its service in Southeast Asia and the United States.

After a short closure during the fall of 2025, the Oregon Military Museum announced that, beginning on Jan. 7, 2026, the Museum will once again be open Wednesday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Veterans are invited to join the "Veterans Morning Meet ups" on the First Friday of every even month (February, April, June, August, October, and December) from 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.