

The Castle

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Farewell Issue for Maj. Gen. Matthew Warne



Preventive maintenance keeps equipment operational. Consistent attention to our personal well-being strengthens resilience.



412th Theater Engineer Command



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Farewell to the Force

To the Soldiers and Civilians of the 412th Theater Engineer Command

By Maj. Gen. Matthew Warne, Commander, 412th Theater Engineer Command



As I prepare to relinquish command on June 6, I am filled with profound pride and gratitude. Serving as your Commanding General over the past two years has been one of the greatest honors of my career and of my life.

Together, we have strengthened this formation into a true warfighting headquarters — disciplined, capable, and ready to answer the Nation's call. Your commitment to excellence has been evident in every mission, every exercise, and every deployment. Whether conducting realistic training across the United States, supporting operations overseas, or mobilizing forces for missions at Fort Hood and along the Southern Border, you have delivered results that matter.

Across the command, you demonstrated what it means to be Army Engineers: problem solvers, innovators, and leaders. From Pacific Sentry and Keen Edge, to Global Strike (CSTX 25-02) to Operations Mojave Falcon and Sentinel Justice, from NTC and JRTC rotations to Warfighter exercises, from bridging operations in Korea and Fort McCoy to Sapper Stakes, Best Squad, and the Best Sapper Competition, you have consistently shown that the 412th knows how to “breach the lane” and accomplish the mission.

Your achievements reflect not only technical skill but also the character and professionalism that define the Army Reserve Citizen Soldier. You balance service, family, and civilian careers and still deliver excellence at every turn.

I want to extend special appreciation to **Command Sgt. Maj. Ryan Bodmer**. His leadership, counsel, and unwavering commitment to our Soldiers have been instrumental to our success. I am equally grateful to our Command Teams at every echelon. Your leadership has shaped this organization and ensured our formations remain ready, resilient, and lethal.



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To our exceptional civilian workforce: Thank you! You have stood shoulder to shoulder with our Soldiers through every challenge. Your expertise, continuity, and dedication have been vital to the strength of this command. Our families of this great organization also have been pivotal in the success of this organization, thank you for your support.

As we look to the future, the Nation will continue to rely on your engineering expertise, your readiness, and your ability to solve the toughest problems on the battlefield. I challenge each of you to maintain the momentum we have built. Continue rigorous training, uphold the profession of arms, and remain responsible stewards of our equipment and resources. The Army must be ready when called, and I have absolute confidence that the 412th will always answer that call.

I am proud to pass the colors to **Maj. Gen. Kent Lightner**, a leader who will guide this command to even greater heights. Embrace the evolving tools of our profession including the age of ‘AI enabled’ decision support, Vantage, and other systems that help us see ourselves more clearly and act more decisively.

As I transition to my next assignment, know that I will always carry deep respect and admiration for the Soldiers and Civilians of the 412th family. Thank you for your service, your sacrifice, and your unwavering dedication to our Army and our Nation.

Essayons – and thank you for allowing me the honor of serving alongside you.

One Team – Build to Serve!

– MG Warne

BE ALL YOU CAN BE!

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Soldiers assigned to the 323rd Engineer Company (Clearance) stand in formation before entering the airport by a cheering crowd of friends and family on December 20, 2025. The Soldiers returned home just in time for Spartan Shield. (U.S. Army Reserve photo by Sgt. 1st Class Ryan Green)



hangar at Greenville–Spartanburg International Airport in Greer, South Carolina, where they were greeted the holidays following a 10-month deployment in support of Operation Inherent Resolve and Operation

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Cover Photo Caption:

A Soldier assigned to the 365th Engineer Battalion's Forward Support Company in Schuylkill Haven, Pennsylvania, checks the oil on a Humvee during a routine PMCS inspection on February 5, 2026. Despite the 10 inches of snow that recently blanketed the area, Soldiers of the 365th continued training and maintenance operations without pause. (U.S. Army Reserve photo by Sgt. 1st Class Ryan Green)



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Brig. Gen. Sandra Martin, Deputy Commanding General–Support, 412th Theater Engineer Command, receives a briefing on safety protocols during a Maintenance Terrain Walk (MTW) at the 365th Engineer Battalion Forward Support Company in Schuylkill Haven, Pennsylvania, on February 5, 2026. The MTW served not as an inspection but as an azimuth check, emphasizing the battalion's readiness and preparation to provide combat-ready forces in support of upcoming missions and real-world training exercises. (U.S. Army Reserve photo by Sgt. 1st Class Ryan Green)

Command Team's Corner

The Marathon, Not the Sprint

By Brig. Gen. Sandra Martin, Deputy Commanding General - Support
412th Theater Engineer Command

Commanders,

As we enter the peak training season, many of our formations are deep in the train-up for major collective training events - from exportable training to Combat Training Center rotations. The energy is high, the pace is demanding, and the pressure to perform is real. But I want to challenge every leader in this command with a simple question:

Are we building our junior leaders up or burning them down?

Let me share a personal story. Years ago, as a young platoon leader preparing my unit for a National Training Center rotation, I poured everything into the train-up. Long hours, endless rehearsals, and a relentless push to squeeze every ounce of readiness out of my platoon. By the time we arrived at NTC, I felt like I had crossed the finish line. I was mentally drained, and so were my Soldiers. But the truth is, NTC wasn't the finish line - it was the starting line.



That realization hit me hard the first time OPFOR made contact, and I saw the impact of mental burnout on my team's performance. Tasks that were second nature, like refueling vehicles immediately after use, were suddenly neglected. I remember watching my squad leaders, normally sharp and disciplined, lose focus on basic responsibilities. And I didn't check either. The mental fatigue had dulled not just their focus, but mine as well. The pull to lazily lead from the dashboard of my HMMWV tempted me more than I care to admit.

That experience taught me a critical lesson: mental focus is a key driver of readiness, and it starts with deliberate leadership engagement. This lesson is especially important in the Army Reserve, where time is one of our most precious resources. With fewer duty days and the added demands of civilian careers and family responsibilities, our Soldiers face unique challenges that active-duty counterparts don't experience. This reality means that leaders at every level must focus on maximizing the effectiveness of every training event and ensuring Soldiers understand its purpose. It's not just about executing tasks; it's about connecting those tasks to the bigger picture. When Soldiers see how their efforts contribute to the mission, they are more motivated, focused, and engaged. Leaders must communicate clearly, plan efficiently, and respect their Soldiers' time by eliminating unnecessary distractions and wasted effort.

The goal is not to simply check the box on training requirements - it's to build cohesive, confident teams that are mentally sharp and mission-ready. A unit that understands the 'why' behind its training is a unit that performs at its best, even under the constraints of limited time.

Take the time to talk to your Soldiers. Remind them of the mission ahead. Keep them focused on the goal, not just the grind.



Brig. Gen. Sandra Martin, Deputy Commanding General–Support for the 412th Theater Engineer Command, right, surveys the company motor pool during a Maintenance Terrain Walk (MTW) at the 365th Engineer Battalion's Forward Support Company (FSC) in Schuylkill Haven, Pennsylvania, on February 5, 2026. The MTW served not as an inspection but as an azimuth check, highlighting the battalion's readiness and preparation to provide combat-ready forces in support of upcoming missions and real-world training exercises. (U.S. Army Reserve photo by Sgt. 1st Class Ryan Green)





Brig. Gen. Sandra Martin, Deputy Commanding General-Support for the 412th Theater Engineer Command, left, talks with leadership from 365th Engineer Battalion's Forward Support Company (FSC) in Schuylkill Haven, Pennsylvania, on February 5, 2026. (U.S. Army Reserve photo by Sgt. 1st Class Ryan Green)

412th TEC Senior Leaders Conduct Maintenance Terrain Walk at 365th Engineer Battalion

By Sgt. 1st Class Ryan Green, 412th Theater Engineer Command Public Affairs

SCHUYLKILL HAVEN, Pa. — Eastern Pennsylvania recently received more than 10 inches of snow, freezing temperatures remained, and slick roads all posed a challenge for Soldiers during an integral Maintenance Terrain Walk. Despite the harsh conditions, Soldiers of the 365th Engineer Battalion pressed forward with training and maintenance operations, underscoring a simple truth: readiness does not pause for winter weather.

To evaluate the battalion's maintenance posture and reinforce the importance of equipment readiness, Brig. Gen. Sandra Martin, Deputy Commanding General-Support for the 412th Theater Engineer Command, and Chief Warrant Officer 4 Christopher Tomblin, the command's G4 Maintenance Chief, conducted the MTW with unit leadership. The MTW was not an inspection, but a deliberate leader engagement designed to assess maintenance culture, identify strengths and weaknesses, and ensure readiness practices are being executed at every echelon. Tomblin emphasized that the MTW revealed how effectively leaders are involved in the maintenance process.

"The MTW demonstrated the unit leadership's level of involvement in the maintenance process and the level of emphasis and support given to maintenance operations," Tomblin said. Martin noted that MTWs offer senior leaders a more accurate picture of readiness than reports alone can provide.



"Conducting an MTW offers senior leaders the 'pulse' of the unit, whether policies and procedures are trickling down to battalion leaders, how well they are implementing them, what challenges they face, and whether leaders are fostering a positive maintenance culture," Martin said. "MTWs provide crucial ground-level assessment that moves beyond reported statistics." During the visit, Martin observed strong leader engagement and highlighted the battalion's success in empowering junior noncommissioned officers to execute key programs such as safety and dispatching. She also identified opportunities for improvement, including more deliberate maintenance planning.

"Leaders can be more intentional by including motor stables on the training schedule every battle assembly, with specific bumper numbers that need a PMCS," Martin said.

Both senior leaders stressed that maintenance readiness is a combat multiplier, especially for engineer formations whose missions depend on mobility, survivability, and technical capability. Tomblin underscored that Soldiers cannot maintain proficiency without consistent access to operational equipment.

"Soldiers cannot perform their learned skills if they don't get an opportunity to stay familiarized with the equipment, further sharpening their skills and improving their confidence," Tomblin said. Leadership involvement emerged as a central theme throughout the MTW. Tomblin emphasized that command emphasis is essential to sustaining readiness. "Senior leaders care about equipment readiness because it leads to overall unit readiness to deploy and win the nation's wars," he said. Martin reinforced that maintenance is a command responsibility at every level. "Maintenance is a foundational element of readiness," she said.

Both leaders also highlighted the indispensable role of NCOs in enforcing standards and maintaining discipline in the motor pool. Tomblin stressed the importance of communication and supervision. "NCOs should constantly communicate equipment readiness status to their officers," he said. "They must take an active role in leading, supervising, and training subordinate leaders and Soldiers." Martin described NCOs as the driving force behind maintenance readiness. "Their role is completely hands-on—enforcing standards, training Soldiers, and supervising maintenance and recovery operations," she said.

The leaders also acknowledged the unique challenges faced by Army Reserve units, particularly limited training time. With only 32 training days each year, TPU Soldiers must balance mandatory training requirements with maintenance demands. Martin emphasized that overcoming these constraints requires proactive planning. "It really comes down to junior leaders getting proactive instead of reactive," she said. "They need to build a simple annual maintenance plan that is detailed down to the bumper number."

As the MTW concluded, both leaders reiterated that equipment readiness is one of the most difficult metrics to recover once degraded. Tomblin noted that maintenance challenges often involve funding, long lead-time parts, and manpower requirements. Martin closed with a reminder that readiness is inseparable from warfighting credibility. "Readiness is not an administrative metric; it is the foundation of our credibility as a fighting force," she said. "Equipment readiness is forged in the motor pool, long before the first shot is ever fired."

Through engaged leadership, disciplined maintenance practices, and deliberate planning—despite the conditions—the 412th TEC continues to strengthen readiness across its engineer formations, ensuring Soldiers remain prepared to deploy, fight, and win.





Chaplain (Maj.) John Binkley presents a block of Building Strong and Ready Teams to Soldiers of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 412th Theater Engineer Command as part of their December 2025 battle assembly. The program adopts a multi-faith perspective, fostering shared understanding and teaching principles that help Soldiers better understand themselves and those around them. (Courtesy photo)

Maintenance and Resiliency: Keeping Soldiers Mission-Ready

"Resiliency is our personal PMCS"

By Chaplain (Col.) Scotty Riggs, 412th Theater Engineer Command, Command Chaplain

In the Army, every Soldier quickly learns the acronym PMCS, which stands for **Preventive Maintenance Checks and Services**. These routine checks are essential, yet they are often overlooked until something fails or a piece of equipment is urgently needed. When a HUMVEE is required for a mission, it is not the time to discover it isn't operational. Daily, weekly, and monthly maintenance ensures equipment is mission-ready when it matters most.

This newsletter focuses on maintenance and resiliency. At first glance, these terms may seem unrelated, but they share a central principle: consistent, proactive care enhances readiness. Just as Soldiers maintain equipment, taking care of ourselves directly impacts our ability to face challenges. What we do on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis—our personal maintenance—determines how prepared we are physically, mentally, and emotionally for the mission.

According to FM 7-22, Holistic Health and Fitness, resiliency is defined as the ability to face and cope with adversity, adapt to change, and recover, learn, and grow from setbacks. This concept parallels PMCS: just as preventive maintenance keeps equipment operational, consistent attention to our personal well-being strengthens resilience.

Building Strong and Ready Teams

One example of this approach is the Building Strong and Ready Team events, implemented by the 412th Chaplains. These events serve as PMCS for Soldiers, helping them develop skills to cope with adversity, adapt to change, and recover from setbacks. The program adopts a multi-faith perspective, fostering shared understanding and teaching principles that help Soldiers better understand themselves and those around them. In this way, Soldiers can perform "maintenance" on their mind, body, and spirit to remain mission ready.

The 412th TEC Chaplain Section collaborates with the Suicide Prevention Program Manager to deliver Ask, Care, Escort-Suicide Intervention and BSRT training tailored to the operational tempo, risk profile, and unique needs of each unit. This integrated approach enhances leader engagement, reinforces early intervention capabilities, and cultivates a command climate where seeking help and providing peer support are normalized. By aligning chaplain support with data-informed prevention strategies, the command can proactively identify concerns, provide timely resources, and sustain Soldier well-being and unit cohesion.

BSRT in Action:

In West Palm Beach, Florida, the 412th Chaplain Section participated in a joint ACE-SI training event. The team led the Life Worth Living resiliency program for 87 Soldiers, including 55 from the 412th. Facilitated by CH (Capt.) James Haynes, CH (Capt.) Yves JeanBaptiste, and Master Sgt. Mariano Hernandez, this session used diverse philosophical and religious readings to guide reflection on purpose, responsibility, suffering, and daily living. Soldiers engaged in discussions that strengthened resilience by connecting meaning to their military experience.

During March Battle Assembly, the Chaplain Section led another Life Worth Living session with over 100 Soldiers. Participants worked in small groups to explore challenging passages and engaged in discussions around seven core questions:

- What does it mean to belong?
- To whom am I accountable?
- How does a good life feel?
- What does it mean for a good life to go well?
- How should I act?
- What role does suffering play in life?
- What should I do when I fail?

These discussions encouraged Soldiers to reflect on personal values, resilience, and the connection between daily actions and life purpose. The sessions expanded on FY25 BSRT foundational events, which focused on the Speed of Trust. Small group dialogue allows Soldiers to share perspectives, examine personal experiences, and reinforce skills for coping with challenges in real-life scenarios.



The analogy between PMCS and resiliency is intentional. Just as routine checks ensure equipment performs reliably, consistent attention to resiliency strengthens Soldiers' mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being. BSRT programs provide a structured framework for personal maintenance, equipping Soldiers with tools to monitor and sustain their own readiness.

Importantly, not all challenges can be resolved independently. Some issues require external support—just as equipment problems sometimes need specialized repair. It is normal for Soldiers to feel overwhelmed or uncertain about where to turn for help. The Chaplain Section and SPPM, Dr. Jennifer Thomas, are available to provide guidance, resources, and support to ensure every Soldier can maintain resilience and readiness.

Key Takeaways:

- Resiliency requires consistent, proactive attention—daily, weekly, and monthly “checks” on the mind, body, and spirit.
- Programs like BSRT provide structured opportunities for Soldiers to reflect, learn, and grow in a supportive environment.
- Collaboration between chaplains, prevention specialists, and unit leaders ensures training is tailored, relevant, and effective.

Seeking help is a normal and necessary part of maintaining overall readiness.

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- Suicide Prevention Program Manager: Dr. Jennifer Thomas, 910-656-5380

Maintenance for the Mind, Body, and Soul

Through these efforts, Soldiers learn that just as PMCS keeps equipment reliable, proactive attention to resiliency ensures readiness for life's challenges. While no one receives an immunity card from life, daily maintenance builds the strength to cope with adversity, adapt to change, and thrive despite setbacks. By committing to routine “checks” on our personal well-being, every Soldier can remain mission-ready—physically, mentally, and emotionally.



Chaplains from the 412th Theater Engineer Command presented the Life Worth Living resiliency program to Soldiers in West Palm Beach, Florida, December 20, 2025. Nearly 90 Soldiers from various commands participated in the Ask, Care, Escort-Suicide Intervention event. (Courtesy photo)



Essayons!
de Fleury Medal awarded to NCO

Congratulations to **Sgt. 1st Class Anthony Carrillo** of the **375th Engineer Vertical Construction Company (EVCC)** based in Huntsville, Alabama, on being awarded **the de Fleury Medal**.

Carrillo was recognized for more than 16 years of superior service and support to the United States Army Engineer Regiment, and in particular his execution of the 375th EVCC's 2025 annual training mission.

The de Fleury Medal honors and recognizes those individuals who have provided significant contributions to Army Engineering. The medal also emphasizes the history, customs, and traditions of the Corps of Engineers community.



Sgt. 1st Class Anthony Carrillo of the 375th Engineer Vertical Construction Company (EVCC) was awarded the de Fleury Medal for his 16 years of service. (Courtesy photo)

The medal is named for a French Engineer Francois Louis Tesseidre de Fleury, a French engineer who served with the American Army in its fight for independence from Britain during the American Revolutionary War. The Continental Congress appointed de Fleury a captain of engineers, and he quickly proved himself through courage under fire. On October 1, 1779, de Fleury was praised for his valor by the men who had penned the Declaration of Independence and who would later sign the Constitution. For his intrepid behavior, the Continental Congress ordered that a medal be struck in his honor.

The de Fleury Medal is the highest award for professional excellence in the Engineer Regiment. There are four orders of the medal — Gold, Silver, Bronze, and Steel. The Gold de Fleury medal is normally awarded only to a single individual each year and is the highest honor. The Steel de Fleury Medal is awarded annually to several junior Soldiers and civilians within the Engineer Regiment based on input from Commanders and their Sergeants Major. While the award is not part of the U.S. Army awards system, it may be worn at official Regimental functions.



(Courtesy photo)



Service through Support: A Look Inside the Mobilization Enterprise

The 206th Regional Support Group Commander offers three key lessons for leaders to ensure successful deployments

By Col. Aaron Vandiver, Commander, 206th Regional Support Group

FORT HOOD, Texas - Many Soldiers take the mobilization (MOB) process for granted. Orders arrive, units travel to the MOB station, they complete collective training and then proceed into theater. However, few see the complex background work within the mobilization enterprise that gets Soldiers to their destination.

Over the last seven months, 79 members of the 206th Regional Support Group (RSG) have experienced these details firsthand. Hailing from McLeansville, North Carolina, the 206th is often associated with the processes related to reception, staging, onward movement, and integration (RSOI) into a theater (in addition to being the parent unit for the 844th Engineer Battalion, the 458th Engineer Battalion, and seven Engineer Facility Detachments). But over the last half year, the 206th has been forward-mobilized as the Mobilization Support Brigade (MSB) at Fort Hood, Texas, one of two mass force-generation platforms alongside Fort Bliss, Texas.

For context, the MSB is responsible for coordinating across U.S. Army Components (primarily COMPOs 2 and 3) to ensure the smooth deployment of Soldiers. Additionally, the MSB helps enable the rapid expansion of the mobilization platform, if required, for large-scale mobilization operations. The MSB operates across Fort Hood providing admin and operations support to the Fort Hood Deployment Readiness Center (DRC), logistics support to the Field Support Battalion, Soldier arrival and departure services at the airfield, and North Fort Hood site support, including Fort Hood ministries and movement operations (plus container inspections). The MSB also partners with organizations from across the enterprise, including First Army, III Armored Corps, and the Fort Hood Garrison. When units arrive and depart as scheduled, the enterprise can effectively plan. If units arrive early or unexpectedly, the enterprise must react quickly.



U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Christopher Cook addresses members of the Mobilization Support Force alongside Col. Aaron Vandiver, commander of the Mobilization Support Brigade, during a briefing at Fort Hood, Texas, Feb. 20, 2026. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Nathaniel King)

As the commander, I have learned why the “S” in MSB truly does stand for “Support.” On the surface, this is an arguably trivial statement. But in practicality, support is the essence of the MSB’s mission. As professionals, we often look to the left and right limits to determine the scope of our execution. Like a construction project bound by time and materials, we venture to keep things on schedule and within cost. But when the mission is to support, one needs to truly understand their objectives, capabilities, and authorities to get the job done.

Case in point. The MSB has been the central focus of multiple highly visible actions. None more so than the variable timelines arising from the federal government’s requirements for Continental United States civil support operations over the winter holiday season. The standard demobilization timeline at Fort Hood is 14 business days. However, for demobilizing CONUS civil support units, the timeline is seven business days. Success meant understanding what the MSB could and could not do within the bounds of our authority. As the commander, I flexed sections of my HHC and special staff to the DRC to work both at the front desk and within operations. I approved an increased workload to six days a week and 12-hour shifts. And I was able to utilize my movement team for transportation between North Fort Hood and Austin, Texas, for flights.

This experience managing the MSB mission has made the 206th’s motto even more fitting: “Service Through Support.” And we are proud to do it. But, as leaders, and future leaders, across the TEC, I ask three things of you for the next time you take Soldiers down range or to the field:

1) Actively participate in IPRs and your unit’s manning document development processes.

These forums are where friction is identified early, and solutions can be shaped before they become operational problems. Your presence and engagement ensure your unit’s requirements, constraints, and risks are faithfully reflected in the larger planning effort. Leaders who treat these processes as administrative tasks miss opportunities to influence timelines, resources, and support that directly affect Soldier readiness and quality of life.

2) Know what decisions you are empowered to make- and where your authority ends.

Knowing your authority allows you to act fast without causing issues. When you know your limits, you solve problems at your level and only elevate issues when needed. This builds trust enterprise-wide and prevents delays from overreach or hesitation.

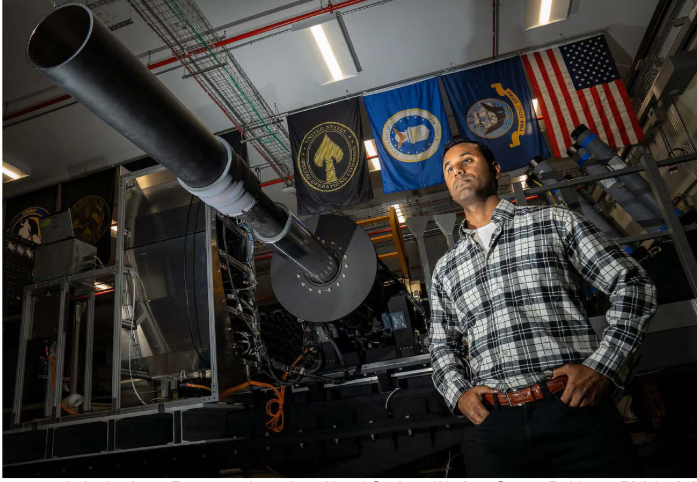
3) Invest in relationships with your First Army training partners and your reception and integration liaisons.

Mobilization succeeds or fails at the seams between organizations. Relationships strengthen those partnerships. Strong partnerships create shared understanding and efficient communication. They foster a willingness to solve problems together when timelines tighten or plans change. When obstacles arise, and they will, leaders who have built trust can shift from coordination to collaboration without losing momentum.

A look inside the mobilization enterprise reveals that readiness is not accidental; it is engineered through relationships and disciplined execution. When leaders understand their position within the enterprise and invest in trusted partnerships, they reduce friction and increase speed without sacrificing standards. Understanding our role and truly committing ourselves to collaboration over coordination transforms friction into forward momentum. That is the difference between pushing units out the door and launching ready formations into mission success.

Service Through Support!





Serving as a captain in the Army Reserves, has given Naval Surface Warfare Center Dahlgren Division's Vijay Ahluwalia a unique perspective as a civilian engineer. "When I'm in uniform, I'm the customer. When I'm at Dahlgren, I'm building a solution," he says. (Dave Ellis/NSWCDD Photo)

Dual duty: Bridging military leadership and engineering excellence at NSWCDD

By Kristin Davis, Naval Surface Warfare Center Dahlgren Division

Dahlgren, Virginia - At 19, Vijay Ahluwalia was adrift. He'd recently returned to New York after more than a decade away in his mother's native Uganda, where they'd moved after his father died. College was off the table, for the moment. So was a dream to become a travel documentarian. He needed time and space to figure out what he wanted to do with his life.

The answer was waiting for him in Kentucky, where a cousin lived, and where a change of scenery and slower pace helped Ahluwalia find his way.

His cousin had joined the Army; he asked if Ahluwalia had ever considered a similar path. "It had never crossed my mind," he said. But when he saw Soldiers jump from a UH-60 Blackhawk at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, something stirred in him. Ahluwalia, an optimist who grew up on survival shows and sci-fi action flicks, had always been drawn to adventure and the outdoors. He enlisted in the Army Reserve in the fall of 2012. The decision would take him to college on an academic scholarship, to Reserve Officer Training Candidate School, to the Middle East on two separate tours, to an elite position as an aide-de-camp to a two-star general. And it would bring him to Naval Warfare Dahlgren Division (NSWCDD), where today he engineers solutions for the warfighters he continues to serve alongside.



Path to Dahlgren

Ahluwalia didn't plan to go to college. But the military brought mentors, including a master sergeant named Clint Hale.

"He pushed me to become an officer," Ahluwalia recalled, and that required a college degree. In 2014, he began electrical engineering studies, doubling minoring in systems engineering and military science at Western Kentucky University on an academic scholarship.

During his final year, while working on a capstone project, a professor asked Ahluwalia if he'd ever heard of Dahlgren. He hadn't. NSWCDD had developed the electromagnetic railgun Ahluwalia often talked about, the professor told him.

Ahluwalia had first heard about the experimental weapon while watching the 2007 movie Transformers and had been intrigued ever since. Though the Navy would later pause the program, it was still active in 2018, and Ahluwalia was soon on his way to Dahlgren to interview for a job as an engineer supporting railgun operations.

But it was another open position – that of a systems engineer in the Weapons Control and Integration Department – that drew Ahluwalia to Dahlgren.

"I just loved the [Battle Management System] BMS mission set," he said. After six years in the Army, the young reserve officer was used to fast-paced operations. "I liked the energy of the group. They were highly motivated, dedicated and not afraid to fail fast in order to fulfill capabilities." Parallel careers

In April 2019, less than a year after becoming an officer, Ahluwalia joined the team at NSWCDD. He'd enlisted in the military to experience what it had to offer; in many ways, it was another adventure. Now, he realized it had given him much more. It gave him two fulfilling careers. Over the next three and a half years, Ahluwalia served as an operations officer and a platoon leader for the 249th Engineer Battalion, Delta Company, a unit within the Army Corps of Engineers that delivered commercial-grade power to military teams and federal emergency efforts. As a platoon leader in the 412th TEC/424th Engineer Company, he deployed to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar and Syria, and led construction, prime power generation and base camp design supporting the Afghanistan retrograde and refugee transition mission. He learned the value of discipline, of showing up early, of being the first one in and the last one out.

In October 2022, Ahluwalia received the prestigious assignment of aide-de-camp to the commanding general of the 412th Theater Engineer Command – an experience that continues to impact Ahluwalia's defense and military careers.



He learned to maintain composure no matter what was going on around him, he said, to turn a seemingly impossible "no, it can't be done" into a "yes."

Naval Surface Warfare Center Dahlgren Division's Vijay Ahluwalia's military experience gave him a deeper appreciation for America's warfighters and drives him to bridge tactical realities with innovative engineering, and to prepare the next generation of leaders with the same autonomy and resilience he has learned on his own journey. (Dave Ellis/NSWCDD Photo)



“Had I not been in that position or learned from key leaders and critical thinkers, I never would have thought there were alternative ways to get things done. You just have to think outside the box,” Ahluwalia said.

It was exactly the kind of innovative mindset embraced at NSWCDD, where scientists and engineers are empowered to think creatively, work as a team and drive their own paths.

Service and patriotism

Today, Ahluwalia leads the Battle Management Systems project team in Dahlgren Division’s Weapons Control Systems Engineering Branch, supporting Special Operations Command and Air Force Special Operations Command fixed-wing platforms. Day to day, he and his team design and manage the complex systems that control weapons on special military aircraft, ensuring the warfighter is equipped with cutting edge technology that is both safe and accurate. He’s also a captain in the United States Army Reserve and company commander for the 310th Engineer Company at Fort A.P. Hill, Virginia.

That combination gives him a unique perspective, he said. “When I’m in uniform, I’m the customer. When I’m at Dahlgren, I’m building a solution.”

His experience shapes the way he leads at Dahlgren—bringing operator input into engineering cycles, insisting on redundancy for reliability in combat and applying military planning principles to rapid development timelines. Likewise, his civilian work strengthens his command leadership, where he encourages decentralized decision-making, creativity and ownership.

Both roles are demanding, but for Ahluwalia they’re tied to the same purpose: service and patriotism. Years of traveling across countries and continents while living in Uganda gave Ahluwalia a perspective few of his peers shared — and a deep appreciation for the country he now serves. His military experience also gave him a deeper appreciation for America’s warfighters and drives him to bridge tactical realities with innovative engineering, and to prepare the next generation of leaders with the same autonomy and resilience he has learned through his own journey.

There are challenges, to be sure. “There are times I’ve worked 14 days with no rest. You don’t really have a schedule—your time doesn’t belong to you anymore. I feel like I’m on call a lot of the time, and that does bring stress. But I know it’s for a better cause. During tough times, faith is everything, as is leaning on family,” he said.

At the end of the day, the work is less about balancing two careers and more about advancing a shared mission from two vantage points. In uniform, he experiences the urgency of reliable systems in combat; at Dahlgren, he transforms that urgency into engineering solutions that bring warfighters home.



Vijay Ahluwalia’s military experience shapes the way he leads at Dahlgren—bringing operator input into engineering cycles, insisting on redundancy for reliability in combat and applying military planning principles to rapid development timelines. Likewise, his civilian work strengthens his command leadership, where he encourages decentralized decision-making, creativity and ownership.



Army Reserve Aviation Command participates in inaugural Army Best Drone Warfighter Competition

By Maj. Jeffrey Windmueller Army Reserve Aviation Command

HUNTSVILLE, Ala. – Members of the Army Reserve Aviation Command along with **411th Engineer Brigade** competed for the titles of Best Operator and Best Squad against active and National Guard teams in the first annual Army Best Drone Warfighter Competition Feb. 17-19, 2026, at the University of Alabama Huntsville, UAS and C-UAS test range in Huntsville, Alabama.

The team, led by 1st Lt. Finn Willman, designed, developed, tested and tactically deployed the first low-cost, one-way, first-person view (FPV) strike drone in the Army Reserve. The team outperformed several units from the other components, given a 34-day notice with no UAS components on-hand.

The ARAC’s 1st Lt. Joshua Goff placed in the top half of the Best Operator Competition while **Sgt. 1st Class Job Smith** and **Staff Sgt. Daniel Hallberg** of **411th Engineer Brigade** completed the hunter/killer lane, attacking 3 out of 5 engagements using the ARAC’s own purpose-built attritable system (PBAS) before time expired.

During the competitions, team members conducted an FPV race and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) with follow-on kamikaze engagements and subsequent simulated call-for-fire on armored targets.

Prior to competition, the team traveled to JRTC and MacDill AFB for training with the 509th and SOCCENT. While at competition, the team attended workshops on UAS and dedicated time to network with other UAS professionals from the public and private sector in order to enhance their understanding of UAS integration opportunities.

The ARAC is keen to develop knowledge around UAS from the perspective of the operator and manufacturer. Currently, there are six custom fully-mission capable Group 1 UAS in the ARAC’s possession and three functionally proficient FPV operators.



Staff Sgt. Daniel Hallberg (left) of 411st Engineer Brigade and Sgt. 1st Class Job Smith (right) of the Army Reserve Aviation Command plan for the hunter/killer lane of the Army Best Drone Warfighter Competition, February 17-19, 2026 in Huntsville, Ala. (Courtesy photo)





Capt. Preston Reeves, officer in charge of future operations, Fort Hood Mobilization Support Brigade, shakes hands with III Armored Corps and Fort Hood Commanding General Lt. Gen. Kevin D. Admiral Jan. 8, during the Phantom Lethal Excellence ceremony at III Armored Corps Headquarters at Fort Hood. At the ceremony, Reeves was awarded an Army Commendation Medal for his efforts to streamline demobilization processes at North Fort Hood. (Photo by Spc. Bowden Drake-Deese, III Armored Corps Public Affairs)

GREAT PEOPLE AT THE GREAT PLACE: Preston Reeves

By Sgt. 1st Class Nathaniel King, MSB

Capt. Preston Reeves, a native of Durham, North Carolina, was instrumental in the recent successful planning and execution of demobilization for several Army National Guard and Reserve units.

Reeves serves as the officer in charge of future operations for the Fort Hood Mobilization Support Brigade.

He was the lead planner for the demobilization of multiple units, including the 90th Sustainment Brigade and sections of the Oregon and California National Guard.

Demonstrating exceptional commitment, Reeves worked through the Veterans Day holiday, managing constant communication to ensure a seamless, short-notice demobilization for the Oregon National Guard. His efforts in coordinating working groups and synchronization meetings were critical to the mission's success, enabling the unit's expedited return home.

"Our primary goal was to ensure a smooth and efficient process for our fellow service members returning from their mission — and we did exactly that," Reeves said. "It was an extraordinary team effort; our Soldiers within the MSB and our partners across the Fort Hood enterprise were able to react with professionalism and outstanding customer service in a dynamic environment with exceptionally short timelines. I'm proud of what we were able to accomplish, and thankful for everyone who helped take care of these Soldiers on their way home."



Reeves also skillfully managed unexpected challenges, including the unannounced arrival of the California National Guard and an unavoidable delay for the 90th Sustainment Brigade.

He ensured all units received the necessary support, mitigating disruptions and maintaining operational continuity from planning through their transition to the reception staging officers.

"Captain Reeves's professionalism and dedication were absolutely critical to the success of this complex operation," said Col. Aaron M. Vandiver, commander of the MSB. "He consistently performs above and beyond the call of duty."

Reeves is the son of Michael and Ashley Reeves of Maiden, North Carolina. He is a 2014 graduate of Lincolnton High School and a 2018 graduate of Wake Forest University.



Capt. Preston Reeves, officer in charge of future operations for the Fort Hood Mobilization Support Brigade, participates in the III Armored Corps Build-A-Thon training Dec. 1-5, 2025, at Fort Hood, during which officers collaborated to develop a process that consolidates required mobilization documents into a centrally accessible file to reduce delays between units and support agencies. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Tanganika Ramos, MSB)

CIVILIAN SPOTLIGHT: Mrs. Shannon R. Fischer

This quarter, we are proud to recognize Mrs. Shannon Fischer, Administrative Officer, as our featured Civilian Spotlight!

With an impressive career spanning 25 years of dedicated civilian service within the 412th Theater Engineer Command and downtrace units, Mrs. Fischer has served in multiple key roles at every level of the organization; always ensuring Soldiers and civilians are supported, mission-ready, and positioned for success.

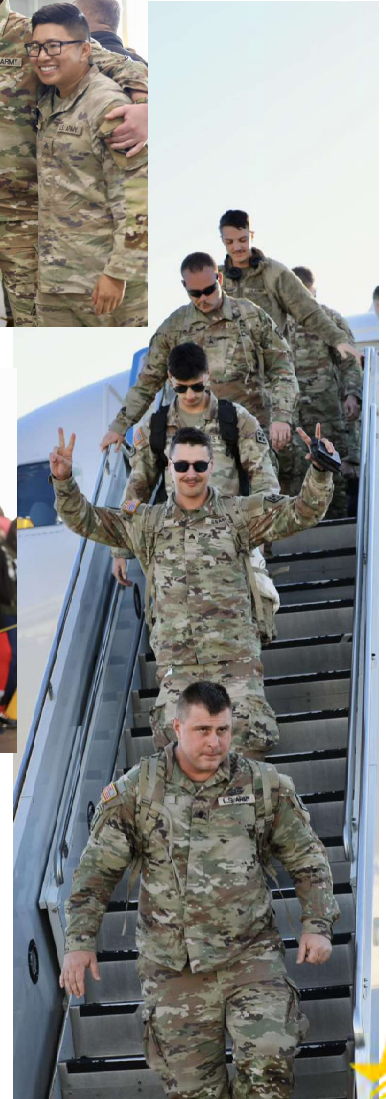
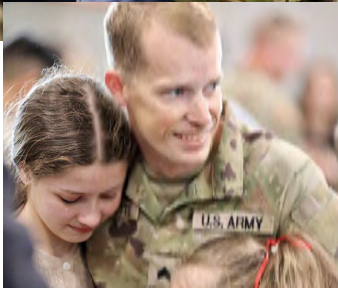
Her commitment to service runs deep. After enlisting in the Army in 1995, she retired from the Army Reserve in 2019 with 24 years of honorable service. She continues that legacy today through her dedication to the Army Reserve community.

Married for 28 years to her high school sweetheart and a proud mother of four sons, Mrs. Fischer exemplifies leadership, loyalty, and selfless service both at work and at home. Thank you, Mrs. Fischer, for everything you do to strengthen our team and support readiness across the force!



Welcome Home!

Soldiers from the 323rd Engineer Company (Clearance) returned home just in time for the holidays following a 10-month deployment in support of Operation Inherent Resolve and Operation Spartan Shield.



A Cup of Coffee

with the Command Chief Warrant Officer

By Chief Warrant Officer 4 Christopher Tomblin, 412th Theater Engineer Command, Maintenance Division

Engineers in the U.S. Army Reserve are a force multiplier by improving mobility, counter mobility, survivability, and sustaining the mission. For our engineers to remain effective highly skilled, experienced, and proficient maintainers are critical. For our maintainers to gain and keep their skills sharp, foundational training is paramount. The largest portion of this foundational training occurs in the garrison environment. While there isn't a specific amount of garrison-based training after AIT that is "required" to make an Army mechanic effective in the field, continuous development is required. Effective training is not measured by a set number of hours or weeks in garrison, but rather by the continuous development of practical skills, experience, and adaptability is gained through ongoing work.



Here's why:

Continuous Learning Environment: Army maintainer training is more about a sustained cycle of on-the-job training (OJT) and professional development throughout a mechanic's career and less about AIT or PME training opportunities. A garrison environment provides the ideal setting for this continuous learning before deployment.

Diverse Equipment and Scenarios: In garrison, mechanics encounter a wide variety of equipment issues, from routine maintenance to complex failures. The more diverse the problems they solve and the more vehicle types they work on, the more robust their skill set becomes. This prepares them for the unpredictable nature of field operations.

Skill Progression: New mechanics (e.g., private, private first class) will initially focus on supervised basic repairs, periodic services, and preventive maintenance checks and services (PMCS). As they gain experience and rank (e.g., specialist, sergeant), they take on more complex diagnostic tasks, lead small teams, and become responsible for more critical repairs, including Battlefield Damage Assessment and Repair (BDAR) training. This progression happens organically over time in garrison.

No "Magic Number": Unlike AIT and PME which have a defined length, garrison training isn't quantified in that manner. A mechanic might be highly proficient after a year of intense, varied work, while another might need more time or specific experience to reach the same level of readiness. The quality and diversity of the work performed are more important than a strict duration. Readiness Cycle: Units go through readiness cycles that include training exercises in garrison, which simulate field conditions. These exercises are crucial for mechanics to practice their skills in a more dynamic and challenging environment, bridging the gap between motor pool work and actual deployment.

In essence, effectiveness of an Army mechanic in the field is a direct result of the breadth and depth of practical experience accumulated in garrison. The longer and more varied their garrison service, the better prepared they generally are for the demands of field operations.

For the commander of a COMPO3 unit, this complicates developing a unit in his or her effort to have a holistically trained unit that is truly ready for field operations. Garrison-based training and experience is foundational and, in my opinion, considered the Crawl and Walk phase of maintainer training where field operations would be the Run phase.

This generates several questions. How do we incorporate this type of training into CRTG guidance? In the limited time available, how do we ensure mechanics get appropriate amounts of "wrench time" and balance other training and requirement such as weapons qualifications and other field craft skills, not to mention administrative requirements?

Christopher Tomblin
CW4, Maintenance Division



Chief Warrant Officer 4 Christopher Tomblin, the 412th Theater Engineer Command's G4 Maintenance Chief, provides guidance and best practices to maintenance leaders of the 365th Engineer Battalion during in Schuylkill Haven, Pennsylvania, February 5, 2026. (U.S. Army Reserve photo by Sgt. 1st Class Ryan Green)



Build to Serve!

The leadership team from the 323th Engineer Company were the first to step off the plane at Greenville-Spartanburg International Airport in Greer, South Carolina, December 20, 2025 after 10 months in the Middle East. (U.S. Army Reserve photo by Sgt. 1st Class Ryan Green)



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