



ILLINOIS NATIONAL GUARD

# PRAIRIE SENTINEL

VOLUME 9

VACCINATION STATION:  
ILLINOIS NATIONAL GUARD STANDS UP  
MASS VACCINATION SITES STATEWIDE

JAN-FEB 2021

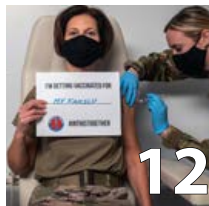
# ILLINOIS NATIONAL GUARD PRAIRIE SENTINEL



10



8



12



14



17



18



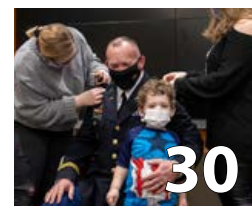
22



28



29



30

For more, click a photo or the title of the story.

## COVID-19 Vaccine Town Hall Questions and Answers 4

Questions and answers from Col. John Fulk, ILARNG State Surgeon and Lt. Col. Aaron Boyer, Flight Surgeon for the 182nd Airlift Wing

## Highlighting Diversity with TF Illini 7

Task Force Illini uses Martin Luther King Jr. Day as an opportunity to have hard conversations about equality and inclusion in the Guard. By Cpl. Shaylin Quaid 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs

## Homecoming Day: 232 Returns from Kuwait 8

A photo spread highlighting the return home for approximately 70 Soldiers with the 232nd Combat Service Support Battalion. By Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

## Always There, Always Ready: ILNG Supports P159 10

The Illinois National Guard is called to support the 59th Presidential Inauguration and security in Washington, D.C. By Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

## Taking Shots: 182nd AW starts vaccinating Airmen 12

A photo spread highlighting the 182nd Airlift Wing's shot clinic to vaccinate Airmen with their first dose of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine. By Tech Sgt. Lealan Buehrer and Tech. Sgt. Joseph Pagan, 182nd Airlift Wing Public Affairs

## Vaccination Station: ILNG Activated to support mass vaccination sites in Illinois 14

With COVID vaccinations in full-swing, Governor Pritzker activates more than 1300 Soldiers and Airmen to operate mass vaccination sites across the state of Illinois. By Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

## Illinois Soldiers and Airmen activated for U.S. Capitol security 16

Approximately 500 Soldiers and Airmen are activated at the request of the Department of Defense to aide in security at the U.S. Capitol. By Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

## Welcome Home: 126th CES and FSS return from 6-month deployment 17

A photo spread highlighting the 126th Air Refueling Wing's Civil Engineer Squadron and Force Support Squadrons' return home after 6-month deployment to Africa. By Tech. Sgt. Brian Ellison, 126th Air Refueling Wing Public Affairs

## Winter Strike 21: 106th Aviation participates in Winter Strike 18

A photo spread highlighting B Co. 1st Battalion, 106th Aviation Regiment's participation in the Winter Strike 21 exercise in Alpena, Michigan. By Master Sgt. Scott Thompson, Michigan National Guard Public Affairs

## From the desk of the President 20

A letter from President Joe Biden, the President of the United States of America, thanking the Illinois National Guard for its role during and following the Presidential Inauguration.

## Climb to Glory: ILNG Helps honor WWII veteran 22

Col. Eric Smith travels to Freeport, Illinois, to help honor a 10th Mountain Division WWII veteran. By Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

## Decatur Soldier promoted to lieutenant colonel 24

Scott Gilman is promoted to lieutenant colonel during a small ceremony at Camp Lincoln. By Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

## Sherman Soldier retires after 22 years of service 25

Sgt. 1st Class Richard Hollinshead retires after 22 years of service. By Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

## Chicago Soldier nominated for Gen. MacArthur Leadership Award 26

Cpt. David Ekblad of Chicago is the Illinois Army National Guard nominee for the Gen. Douglas MacArthur Leadership Award. By Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

## 233rd MP Company mobilizes for CENTCOM 27

A mobilization ceremony is held for the 233rd Military Police Company as they prepare to head to the CENTCOM area of responsibility. By Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

## Ramping Up: IL Governor visits MVAT site, Sangamon County MVAT begins operations 28

A photo spread highlighting Governor Pritzker's visit to the ILNG-run Belle-Claire mass vaccination site and Maj. Gen. Rich Neely speaking at the opening of the Sangamon County MVAT site. By Staff Sgt. Aaron Rodriguez 126th Air Refueling Wing Public Affairs

## A prince among Soldiers: ILNG hosts retired first sergeant for African-American History month 29

A photo spread highlighting 1st Sgt. Dogood Efe-Nogo's keynote at the Illinois National Guard's African-American History event. Efe-Nogo is, a former Illinois Army National Guard Soldier and Nigerian tribal chief and prince. By Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

## The bird is the word: Ron Bonesz promoted to colonel 30

Ron Bonesz, the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel for the Illinois Army National Guard is promoted to colonel. By Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs



# Take it From the Top:

## Senior Leader's Corner

### Experts: Vaccines protect you, family, friends and community

If I said, the military had new body armor that was a miracle of science and was well tested and scrutinized by the leading experts, would you wear it? What if this body armor would protect you AND your family, your friends and your community. Sure, you might still have to wear other protective equipment while we are in the fight - and you might at first experience some discomfort. Still, the leading experts say it will, without a doubt, save lives.

Imagine the military said you could have it if you want it.

By now, you probably know where I am going with this.

Yes, I'm referring to the COVID-19 vaccines. The U.S. Department of Defense leadership, including your Illinois National Guard leadership, is trying to do everything we can to educate and advise you to take the vaccine when you get the offer.

This is because we want you and your family protected from COVID-19. We care about our Soldiers and Airmen and their families. We also want you ready to fight our nation's wars and to respond to emergencies. Your state and your country need you to be healthy.

The vaccines are under an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and I know that may give you pause. This does not mean the vaccine is not well studied. Scientists and physicians have studied the vaccines extensively and more evidence mounts as to its safety and efficacy as thousands of Americans are vaccinated each day - many at facilities operated by the National Guard.

I can understand that many troops are asking why the military has not already required service members to get vaccinated. The military gives you strict grooming standards, requires you to maintain physical fitness, tells you when and where to report and in what uniform, so I can understand some skepticism when the military actually gives you a choice. I can also understand some hesitancy. I know many are thinking, "I'm just going to see how this plays out."

Under a EUA, the military cannot order you to take the vaccine. The DoD has a very strict policy in which only the President can direct vaccinations and only after the completion of the FDA final approval process. However, the longer we wait the more of our



Maj. Gen. Richard Neely  
The Adjutant General  
Illinois National Guard

Illinois National Guard members, and their families and friends, contract COVID-19. I have lost people in my family to this disease and many of your fellow Illinois National Guard service members have as well.

I truly believe that one of the greatest strengths of the U.S. military is the ability of our service members to think on their own. Healthy skepticism and rational thinking make us stronger, more creative, and able to out think our adversaries. However, refusing the vaccine is unhealthy skepticism.

I jumped at the opportunity to receive the vaccination and did not grow a tail or have any adverse actions. So I

strongly encourage you to take the vaccine if given the opportunity. However if you are still skeptical, please make your own decision based on facts. Talk to medical professionals. Talk to true experts. Read what the Centers of Disease Control (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/index.html>), or the National Institutes of Health (<https://www.niaid.nih.gov/diseases-conditions/covid-19-vaccine-faq>), or the New England Journal of Medicine (<https://www.nejm.org/covid-vaccine>) has to say about the vaccines. Talk to your doctor, who knows your personal medical history better than anyone else does. Just do not base that decision on unfounded rumors and fears prevalent on social media. There is a lot of false information out there. Be skeptical of the sources of information.

We have made Illinois National Guard medical experts available to you through two virtual Facebook Live town halls and we'll continue to push accurate information to you. On the adjoining pages are questions and answers that troops and their families have asked during these events and the straightforward answers our medical experts have given.

These answers are from medical professionals who studied the vaccines and the virus. They are straightforward about not having all the answers - these vaccines are new - but the overwhelming weight of the evidence shows that the vaccines are both safe and effective.

So let's get this done. Let's beat this pandemic.

# ILNG FB Live COVID-19 VACCINE Q&A



Q. How did we get the vaccine so fast?

A. The emergency use authorization came so quickly for a variety of reasons. First, the mRNA delivery method has been around for about 20 years, and second, during development, many of the traditional starts and stops in vaccine production happened simultaneously. All of the steps and tests required by the FDA and CDC were followed, but done at the same time instead of one after the other.

Q. It seems the vaccine was rushed to the public without much research, what, if any are the severe side effects.

A. Vaccine trials had 44,000 participants, since the last CDC report, there have been nearly 2 million Pfizer doses administered and only 21 anaphylactic allergic reactions and no deaths. Similarly, there were only 10 cases of anaphylaxis after more than 4 million Moderna doses had been administered.

Q: Has the J&J vaccine been used before?

A: The Janssen COVID-19 Vaccine is an unapproved vaccine under emergency use authorization (EUA), just like Moderna and Pfizer. It is an ongoing clinical trial, 21,895 individuals 18 years of age and older have received the Janssen COVID-19 Vaccine without any major side effects.

Q. How long will the vaccine work?

A. Research indicates those that have been infected with COVID-19 have immunity for at least 90 days, current data shows a significant lasting immunity, but more data is necessary to determine vaccination frequency and protection rate.

Q. I've gotten my vaccine, can I stop wearing my mask?

A. No. We still need to practice proper prevention of the spread of COVID. Though the vaccines are highly effective at around 95%, it remains unknown whether or not a vaccinated person can still carry and spread COVID to unvaccinated people. The CDC has recently released interim guidance regarding what fully vaccinated individuals are allowed to do, however.

Q. Which vaccine should I get?

A. The short answer is whichever is offered. All three vaccines are highly effective. The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines use similar technology.

Q: What age can I get the vaccine?

A: The minimum age for the Moderna and J&J vaccines is 18 years old and 16 years old for the Pfizer vaccine.

Q: Who should not get the vaccine?

A: If you have had severe reactions, such as anaphylaxis, to other types of vaccines, it is recommended that you do not receive the vaccine.

Q: How long does it take for the vaccine virus protection to "kick in"

A: With all three vaccines, immunity builds over a few weeks after immunization. Data from Johnson & Johnson show that most vaccinated trial participants had a robust immune response 15 days after getting the shot, with significant protection reached by day 29.

Q: How does the J&J vaccine work?

A: The J&J shot is based on a different technology than the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines. Those use mRNA, or messenger RNA, to deliver bits of genetic code to cells. This code serves as a sort of instruction sheet — telling cells how to make a harmless piece of the spike protein that sticks out of the surface of the coronavirus. The immune system then learns to recognize the spike protein and fight it.

The Johnson & Johnson vaccine, by contrast, is what's known as a viral vector vaccine — the same technology that's been proven safe and effective in creating an Ebola vaccine and others currently in the works. Basically, Johnson & Johnson started with an adenovirus, which causes the common cold, and modified it so it can't make anybody sick. They then used this harmless cold virus to deliver the genetic blueprint of the protein spike to cells, so the immune system will learn to recognize that spike when it runs into the coronavirus.

Q: Why only one shot for J&J vaccine vs the other vaccines for COVID?

A: The vaccine was designed to use a different delivery system (DNA) vs mRNA. Based on the studies, over 30,000 individuals did not develop severe COVID symptoms and there were zero deaths secondary to COVID. Overall all COVID vaccines (Moderna, Pfizer, J&J) are effective in preventing severe COVID infections. In most cases surpassing

the effectiveness of the influenza vaccine.

Q: What are the advantages of having the J&J vaccine available?

A: The relative ease to store the vaccine. The J&J does not require the freezer temps or refrigeration temps that the other vaccines require. Thus making it available to medical offices and remote areas. The fact that a patient only requires one dose can make it more convenient for individuals who have difficulty accessing medical care.

Q. What side effects are expected?

A. All three vaccines are safe. Only 21 cases of severe allergic reaction occurred in the first 2 million doses of the Pfizer vaccine, most of which occurred within the first 15 minutes after getting vaccinated. The FDA and CDC are monitoring and recording effects of the vaccine. Side effects that have been reported with the vaccines include injection site reaction (pain, redness of the skin and swelling), headache, feeling very tired, muscle aches, nausea, and fever. These are normal reactions and show that your body is reacting to the vaccine to produce antibodies.

There is a remote chance that the Janssen COVID-19 Vaccine could cause a severe allergic reaction. A severe allergic reaction would usually occur within a few minutes to one hour after getting a dose of the Janssen COVID-19 Vaccine. For this reason, your vaccination provider may ask you to stay at the place where you received your vaccine for monitoring after vaccination. Signs of a severe allergic reaction can include difficulty breathing, swelling of your face and throat, a fast heartbeat, a bad rash all over your body, and/or dizziness and weakness.

Q. Are there any contraindications for the vaccines?

A. Most contraindications are based on vaccine ingredients, if you're worried about contraindications with other medications you're taking, speak with your healthcare provider.

Q: Does the Johnson and Johnson/Janssen (J&J/Janssen) vaccine contain eggs, preservatives or latex?

A: No. Many Soldiers and Airmen are concerned that if offered they would not be able to take the vaccine due to the above considerations. The answer is that it does not contain any of the above.

Q. If I get the first shot, then get COVID, do I start over with the first shot?

A. No. If you've received the first shot and then become ill with COVID, follow guidelines and wait until your isolation period ends and you're feeling well again and get your second dose.

Q. As a member of the Guard, if I decline the shot, can I opt to get it later?

A. Yes. While the vaccines are under emergency use authorization, it takes an act of the President of the United States to mandate servicemembers get vaccinated, so right now you have the option to decline and you can always change your mind.

Q. Can I get the vaccine if I'm pregnant?

A. Yes. Women who are pregnant or want to get pregnant are advised to talk with their primary care provider to help decide whether or not to get the vaccine. Women that are pregnant are at risk of severe complications if they contract COVID, so the recommendation is to vaccinate against it, much like TDAP and influenza.

Q. How many vaccines are available to Soldiers and Airmen?

A. We're making it as widely available as possible given supply of the vaccines and when we receive shipments from the federal level. Currently only the Moderna vaccine is available for Soldiers and Airmen.

Q. What if I have a severe allergy to other shots, like penicillin?

A. You can still get the COVID vaccine. Having a severe allergy to penicillin, or other vaccines has not been a contraindication to getting the COVID vaccine.

Q. Where can I find more information on the ingredients of the vaccines.

A. You can go to the Moderna, Pfizer and Janssen websites, they all have links to vaccine ingredients.

Q. If you have adverse reactions, will it result in an LOD?

A. If you are in a duty status (IDT, AT, FTNGDOS, etc.) and receive the vaccine and have an adverse reaction, a line of duty can be initiated. If you receive the vaccine while not in a duty status, an LOD cannot be initiated.

Q. Will this become a mandatory vaccination for servicemembers?

A. We can't speculate on what may happen once the vaccines have full FDA approval, currently unless ordered by the President of the United States, the vaccines remain voluntary.

Q. Have there been any adverse effects on those with severe blood clotting disorders getting the vaccine?

A. We have not seen any data with regards to

clotting disorders. If you have questions, contact your hematologist or your primary care physician and seek those answers.

Q. What about people whose bodies “burn off” other vaccines? Will they have to constantly get vaccinated?

A. There hasn’t been enough data to show that those with immune systems that don’t produce normal antibodies need to be on a different vaccination schedule than others.

Q. Will the Pfizer vaccine be made available to the National Guard?

A. Currently only the Moderna vaccine is available. There are some logistical issues with the storage of the Pfizer vaccine that make it difficult to get to the field.

Q. If I’ve had COVID and I get the vaccine, can I still donate my plasma?

A. There is no indication that you cannot donate plasma once you get the vaccine.

Q. Can someone who has been vaccinated still spread the virus?

A. It may be possible to still contract and spread COVID once vaccinated. The goal is to shorten the window of infectivity.

Q. Why is it important for young, healthy people to get vaccinated?

A. By vaccinating, we increase the likelihood of “herd immunity.” With limited data on long term effects of COVID-19 and with the unpredictable nature in which people react to the virus, it is important to vaccinate to limit severe reactions to COVID-19.

Q. Which vaccine should I take?

A. Whichever is made available to you, but if you start with one, finish with the same one.

Q. How long will the vaccine last and will boosters be required?

A. As more people get vaccinated and data is collected, there will be a better idea on how long the vaccine will be effective. Currently the second dose for Pfizer and Moderna vaccines act as a “booster” for either vaccine.

Q. How should someone manage injection site effects?

A. You can manage them with anti-inflammatories such as Tylenol and Advil.

Q. Will these vaccines be effective against the emerging strains of COVID?

A. Preliminary data shows some level of immunity to other strains of COVID-19, but more data is required to say definitively.

Q. Will the National Guard be involved in vaccine distribution.

A. Yes. We are citizen-Soldiers and Airmen and will always answer the call when needed.

Q. Can you get the second dose before 21 days for Pfizer or 28 days for Moderna?

A. No. You have to wait at least the specified amount of time. If something comes up and you can’t get your second dose exactly at 21 or 28 days, you can get your second dose after that time frame.

Q. Should I show up to get the vaccine if I have symptoms of an illness?

A. It’s advisable to wait either until you’ve had a negative COVID test or are symptom free before getting vaccinated.

Q. Where can someone go to get the most up to date, factual information on the vaccines?

A. The CDC’s website is a great place, as well as the New England Journal of Medicine’s website. Try to avoid blogs and anecdotal sources of information.

Q. Many are servicemembers are worried about record keeping after getting the vaccine, is there a mechanism for tracking vaccinations?

A. Servicemembers get a vaccination card at the site. Personnel make copies of the card, and then it is uploaded into both MEDPROS/MODS and ASIMS depending upon your branch of service.

Q. If you had severe respiratory symptoms and effects from COVID, are you at risk post-vaccination?

A. Once vaccinated the risks of severe effects from COVID are dramatically reduced.

Q. Will there be any adverse actions or flags placed on Soldiers and Airmen that don not vaccinate?

A. No. The vaccines are currently under EUA and are completely voluntary. No adverse actions will be initiated by those who do not volunteer to get vaccinated.

Q. How does liability transfer depending on if you volunteer for the vaccine versus if the vaccine is mandated?

A. As long as the Soldier or Airman is in a duty status, they would be covered under a line of duty injury, regardless of whether the vaccine is mandated or voluntary.



## Task Force Illini Soldiers use MLK Day to have difficult conversations

*By Cpl. Shaylin Quaid, 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs*

**LVIV, Ukraine** – Soldiers of Task Force Illini, 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Illinois Army National Guard, observed Martin Luther King (MLK) Junior Day by discussing the impact of racial inequality, what MLK’s teachings mean to them, and how we can all overcome racial bias.

“This holiday is one of the few days throughout the calendar year celebrated by African-Americans and people of color,” said 1st Lt. Makiya Turner of Decatur, Illinois. “I am proud to be an African-American and to celebrate many great pioneers in history like MLK. Each year, I look forward to honoring such a noble man who impacted history tremendously. I usually spend MLK day waking up early to march downtown with family and friends. Following the MLK march is a ceremony honoring him and celebrating his memory. For as long as I can remember, I have proudly celebrated this special day.”

Chaplain (Maj.) Vincent Lambert of Chicago, Illinois, remembers a time before MLK Day was recognized as an official holiday.

“It is great that it is a national holiday so that we can remember that MLK sacrificed his life to ensure equal rights for all. MLK Day is a day for each of us to look internally to see where we are personally in terms of how we relate to one another. This is especially true during this time when racial issues are at the forefront of our nation. This day presents an opportunity to have conversations, and to give and receive greater understanding about the complex issues we face,” said Lambert.

Capt. Nathan Brinkman, of Marina, California, is one half of a biracial marriage. His wife, Denisha, is an African-American serving on active duty in the Air Force.

“We honor MLK because of his tenacity in pursuing equality for all. For bringing to light the hardships and obstacles faced by minorities. To force those otherwise unaware to look at their life, reflect on their predisposed beliefs, and work

to make a difference through their mindset and through inclusion of all peoples regardless of race,” said Brinkman. “Everyone can be an asset to any team, and diversity can play a key role in providing skill sets from people of all walks of life. Perspective is everything and we, as a force, must ensure we capitalize on all benefits that come with having individuals serving from all different backgrounds.”

Lambert said he is sometimes affected by the unsavory cultural narrative.

“In some cases, African-Americans can be categorized in a certain way, even before being given an opportunity to contribute,” said Lambert. “Over the years I have learned to continue to press forward and to stay focused on the things that I can control and be the best version of me possible. At the end of the day, that is what I am responsible for. I cannot allow someone else’s issues to become my issues.”

Turner said the key to embracing those who are different is being open-minded and willing to learn.

“As an African-American female officer in the United States Army, I have been viewed as incompetent, less than, and unqualified all because of my race and gender. Throughout my military career I have worked twice as hard as my counterparts to prove I deserve my position and rank that I currently hold,” said Turner, “We need to do better because we as a people are constantly evolving, and we cannot treat people as our ancestors did.”

Task Force Illini is the command element of Joint Multinational Training Group-Ukraine, which is responsible for training, advising, and mentoring the Ukrainian cadre at Combat Training Center-Yavoriv, Ukraine to improve Armed Forces Ukraine’s training capacity and defense capabilities. 🇺🇸

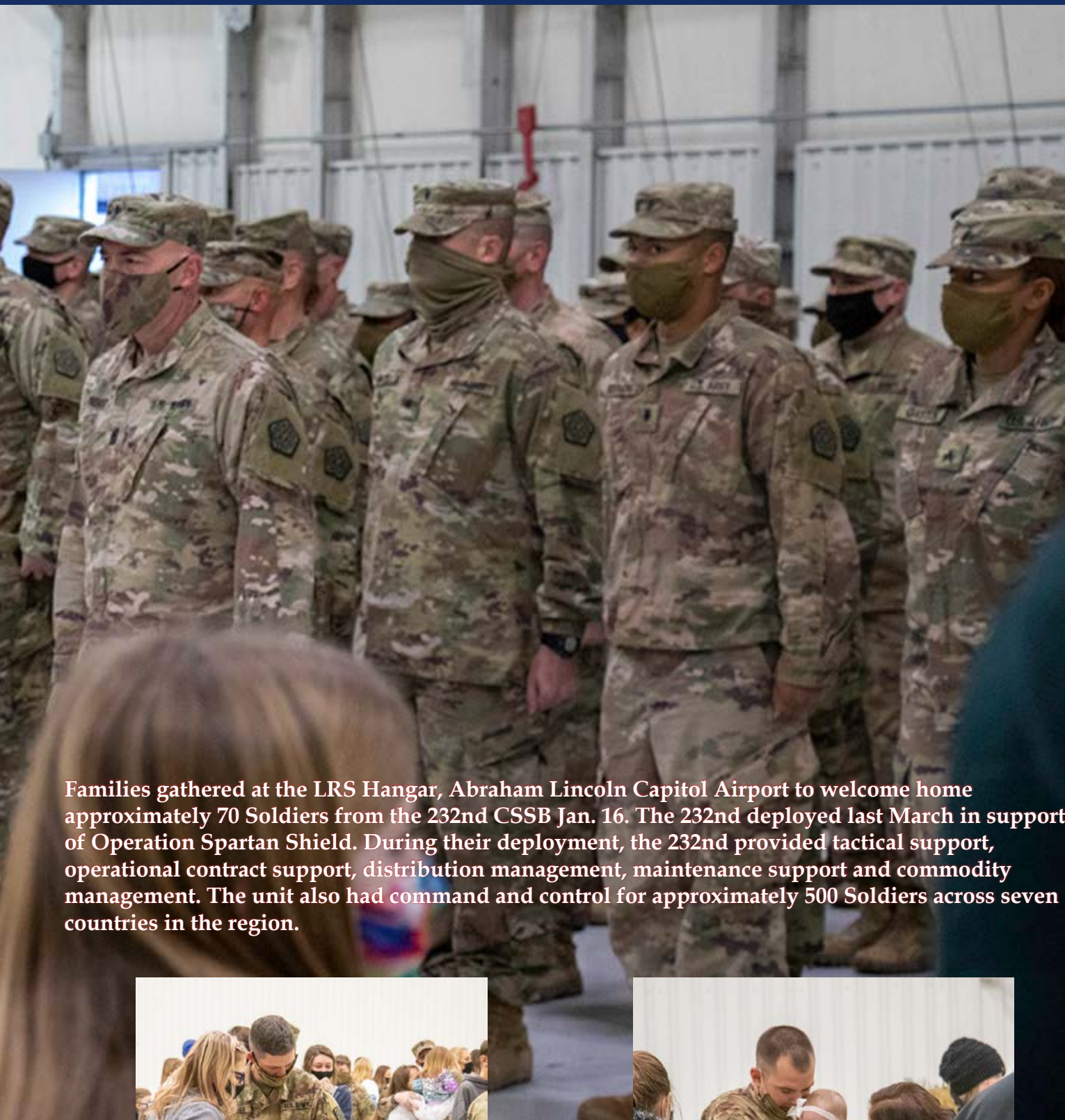
# Homecoming Day

**232 Combat Sustainment Support Battalion returns after deployment to Kuwait**

*By Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs*







Families gathered at the LRS Hangar, Abraham Lincoln Capitol Airport to welcome home approximately 70 Soldiers from the 232nd CSSB Jan. 16. The 232nd deployed last March in support of Operation Spartan Shield. During their deployment, the 232nd provided tactical support, operational contract support, distribution management, maintenance support and commodity management. The unit also had command and control for approximately 500 Soldiers across seven countries in the region.





# ***Always There, Always Ready***

## ***Soldiers and Airmen activated to support the Presidential Inauguration***

*By Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs*

**SPRINGFIELD, Ill.** – In early Jan., Illinois Governor JB Pritzker ordered the activation of approximately 200 Illinois National Guard members in support of the 59th Presidential Inauguration. The District of Columbia requested additional support from the Guard in advance of the upcoming event. The Illinois National Guard deployed 100 additional servicemembers to support the Inauguration in the nation's capital, bringing support to the Inauguration to 300 troops.

"Supporting the presidential inauguration is a great opportunity for the Illinois National Guard to be part of history and represent the state of Illinois," said Maj. Gen. Rich Neely, the Adjutant General of Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National Guard. "Our Soldiers and Airmen are highly trained and I have full confidence in their abilities to support local and federal agencies as needed."

Approximately 100 Illinois Army National Guard Military Police Soldiers from the

**"The Illinois National Guard is renown for its exemplary Soldiers and Airmen and I am proud to have them represent Illinois..."**

"In the wake of the recent incident at the Capitol, ensuring a peaceful transfer of power to the Biden administration is of the utmost importance," said Governor JB Pritzker. "The Illinois National Guard is renown for its exemplary Soldiers and Airmen and I am proud to have them represent Illinois alongside other servicemembers during the upcoming presidential inauguration."

404th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade's 33rd Military Police Battalion supported the inauguration. The battalion is based in Bloomington with subordinate units in Springfield, Freeport and Fort Sheridan. In addition, a small medical team was activated to support the Military Police.

About 45 Security Forces Airmen from the 183rd Wing based in Springfield, the 126th Air





Refueling Wing based at Scott Air Force Base, and the 182nd Airlift Wing based in Peoria, were also activated to support the Presidential Inauguration. Another 30 Airmen from the Illinois Air National Guard were activated to provide communications, logistics, and religious support.

About 10 Soldiers with the 5th Civil Support Team, based in Bartonville, also supported the District of Columbia National Guard's 33rd Civil Support Team.



The Illinois National Guard was tasked with assisting federal and local agencies to ensure safety and security during the inauguration. Soldiers and Airmen supporting the inauguration in Washington, D.C. returned to Illinois near the end of January.

On January 11, the FBI issued an intelligence bulletin pointing to the potential for armed protests at all 50 state capitals and in Washington, D.C. in the days leading up to the inauguration of President-elect Joe Biden.

In response, governor JB Pritzker activated 250 members of the Illinois National Guard for State Active Duty.

The Soldiers, with 2nd Battalion, 123rd Field Artillery Regiment, based in Springfield, Illinois, were activated to assist local law enforcement around major sites around the state's capital.

Illinois' public safety agencies, including the Illinois State Police (ISP), Secretary of State Police and Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) worked in tandem with local and federal counterparts to protect the residents of Illinois while safeguarding the right to peaceful protest.



"Following the violent siege at our nation's capitol and reports from federal law enforcement on threats to state capitals, I am bringing all resources to bear to protect our residents and our democratic process," said Governor JB Pritzker. "Our exemplary members of the Illinois National Guard will be working closely with our State Police as well as local and federal authorities to keep our capital city safe. We will continue to be fully transparent with the public on any new information and the steps we are taking to respond."

Those protecting the State Capital were released from state active duty a few days after the inauguration.

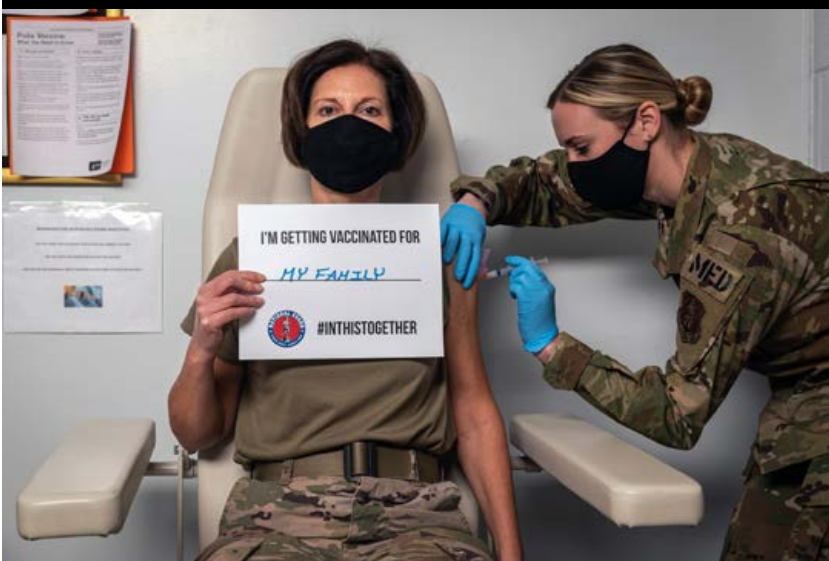




# Takin' Shots

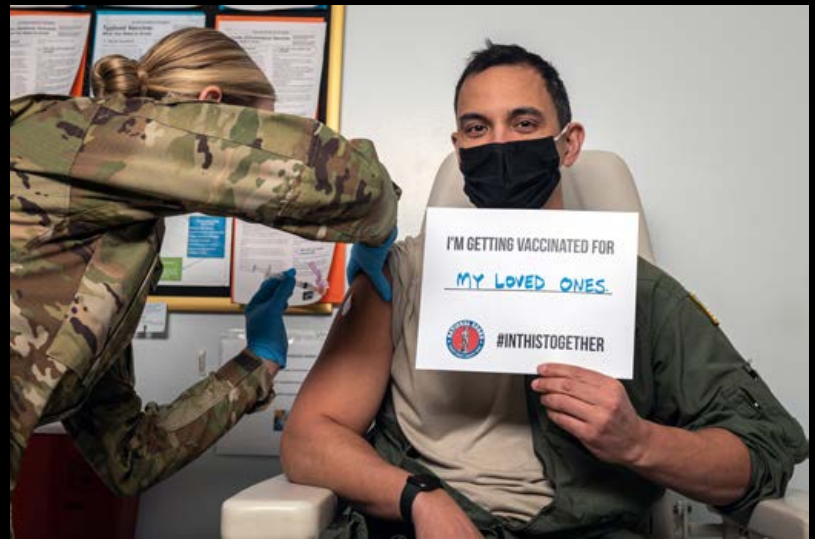
## 182nd Airlift Wing starts COVID-19 Vaccinations

by Tech. Sgt Lealan Buehrer and Staff Sgt. Joseph Pagan, 182nd Airlift Wing Public Affairs



The 182nd Medical Group based in Peoria, Illinois, held a COVID-19 vaccination clinic with Airmen from the 182nd Airlift Wing. Aerospace medical service specialist Tech. Sgt. Katie Gonder administered the shots while Airmen held cards that gave a reason each was choosing to vaccinate with the hashtag #inthistogether.







# Vaccination Station

## Illinois National Guard Stands up Mass Vaccination Sites across the state

By Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs, Photos by Staff. Sgt. Aaron Rodriguez, 126th Air Refueling Wing Public Affairs



**SPRINGFIELD, Ill.** – Building on the state’s Vaccination Administration Plan, Governor JB Pritzker has activated more close to 1,400 Illinois National Guard members to support COVID-19 vaccination operations and that number is growing almost daily.

as well as a command element and Soldiers and Airmen from other military jobs able to perform administrative duties. The troops were organized into small teams to support local health departments in increasing the throughput of COVID-19 vaccinations in their

**“Standing up these sites is a pivotal first step of a plan that coordinates our 97 local health departments statewide...”**

The first two teams from the Illinois Army National Guard and two teams from the Illinois Air National Guard began operations in mid-January. The teams included military medics able to administer the vaccine



communities.

The teams are all scalable and can be configured to run smaller sites, large sites, or even work as standalone teams. “Illinois is moving forward with an aggressive vaccination plan that centers equity



and focuses communities which have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “Standing up these sites is a pivotal first step of a plan that coordinates our 97 local health departments statewide – who operate clinics already and will open up more as vaccine supply grows.”



Beginning January 25, the state moved into phase 1B of the vaccine plan and sites began vaccinations for the eligible population by appointment only. As a part of Phase 1B, all residents over the age of 65 and front-line essential workers can receive the vaccine. Additionally, as part of the state’s plan, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) partnered with large pharmacies to launch hundreds of new sites in communities across Illinois.

As vaccinations ramped up, more teams from the Illinois National Guard were stood up. Each team, following in-processing and screening,



received training before beginning COVID-19 vaccination operations.



“The Illinois National Guard has played a vital role in the whole-of-government effort to control the spread of this deadly virus and we are proud to help communities save lives with these vaccines,” said Maj. Gen. Rich Neely, the Adjutant General of Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National Guard. “I’m proud of our Guard women and men as they step up to the plate again to help our fellow citizens.”



# Governor activates approximately 500 servicemembers for U.S. Capitol security at DoD request

*By Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs*

**SPRINGFIELD, Ill.** – At the request of the U.S. Department of Defense, Illinois Governor JB Pritzker activated approximately 500 Illinois National Guard members in support of the continued security mission in Washington, D.C. Approximately 400 Illinois National Guard members returned home March 15.



About 100 Illinois National Guard members volunteered to remain in the nation's capitol as part of nearly 2,300 National Guard members who will provide continued support to the U.S. Capitol Police until about mid-May. "The U.S. Department of Defense has asked Illinois to assist federal and local agencies in this continued effort, and Major General Neely and I are ready to ensure that the state of Illinois continues its proud legacy of protecting our democracy," said Governor JB Pritzker.



"Ultimately, we must root out the dark forces of racism, white supremacy and disinformation that have created this moment, but until we do

that, our extraordinary troops will deploy with honor."

The Illinois Army National Guard's Chicago-based 108th Sustainment Brigade and its subordinate battalion, the North Riverside-based 198th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, provided the bulk of the Illinois National Guard force for the Washington, D.C. mission.



"We are deploying these forces in support of civilian law enforcement based on threat-levels against the U.S. Capitol. These threats were assessed by the FBI and other federal agencies," said Maj. Gen. Rich Neely, the Adjutant General of Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National Guard. "Our soldiers and airmen are committed to the defense of both our nation and our state. We have asked a lot of them in the last year and each time these men and women have answered the call and upheld their oath to defend and support the U.S. Constitution. I could not be more proud of these Soldiers and Airmen."

The Illinois National Guard forces joined a force of approximately 7,000 National Guard members from throughout the United States in assisting federal and local agencies with safety and security throughout Washington, D.C. In February that force drew down to 5,000, and then 2,300 by mid-March.

The Illinois National Guard members were activated under the provisions of U.S. Title 32, which leaves them under the authority of the Governor with all costs paid by the federal government.



# Welcome Home

## *The 126th Civil Engineer Squadron and the 126th Force Support Squadron return from Africa*

*by Tech. Sgt. Brian Ellison, 126th Air Refueling Wing Public Affairs*

Airmen from the 126th Air Refueling Wing's 126th CES and 126th FSS returned home from a six-month deployment to Africa Jan. 23. Friends and family gathered to meet them at Lambert International Airport in St. Louis.





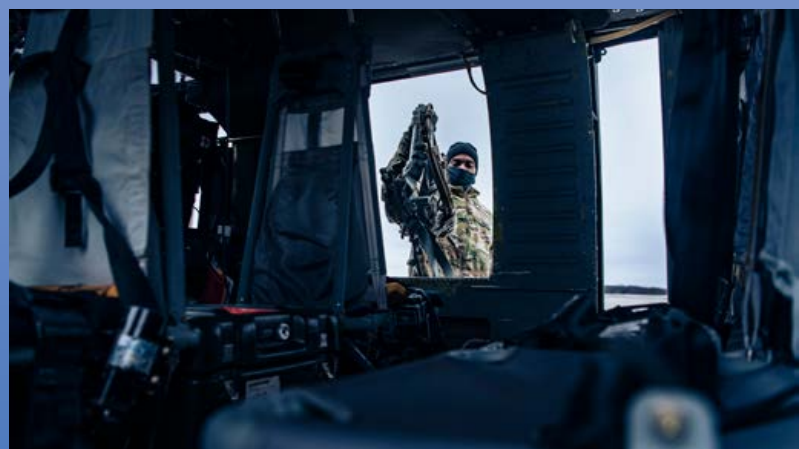
# ***Winter Strike 2021***



## ***1st Bn. 106th Aviation Regiment takes part in Winter Strike 2021***

*Courtesy of Master Sgt. Scott Thompson, Michigan National Guard Public Affairs*

The Illinois Army National Guard's Company B, 1st Battalion, 106th Aviation Regiment based in Kankakee, Illinois, participated in Winter Strike 21 at Alpena Combat Readiness Training Center, Mich. Winter Strike 21 is a cold-weather readiness event held as part of the Northern Strike exercise series for U.S. and coalition forces to receive advanced multi-domain joint fires training in all weather conditions.







# *From the desk of the President*



January 26, 2021

Dear Members of the National Guard of Illinois and Adjutant General Neely,



When the United States Capitol was attacked on January 6th, it was an attack that struck at the heart of our nation. It was an attack on our first branch of government. An attack on our Citadel of Liberty. An attack on our very democracy. Many wondered what it meant for America. And all the world was watching to see if this nation would be able to hold its quadrennial Inaugural ceremony to carry out the

peaceful transfer of power as we have for more than two centuries. Thanks to you and your fellow men and women of the National Guard the whole world saw that America is strong and our democracy is very much alive. You proved what I have long believed: It is never a good bet to bet against America.

When I delivered my Inaugural Address, I looked out over our National Mall and saw you standing watch. I couldn't help



but think of my son, Major Beau Biden, who served in the Delaware National Guard and a year in Iraq. Beau was always proudest of his service in the Guard. Especially because of the courage and character of the men and women he served alongside. That's what I saw amid that sea of flags. Men and women of extraordinary courage and character. And I knew our nation's Capital City was in good hands.



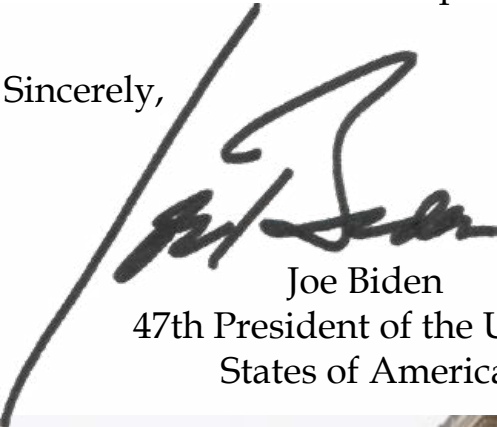


So, with this, my first letter as Commander-In-Chief, I write to you and all your fellow men and women of the National Guard to convey from the bottom of my heart our nation's gratitude for not only ensuring a safe and secure inauguration, but for facilitating the peaceful transfer of power and for protecting and preserving the health and well-being of our democracy. What you did here will not soon be forgotten. When your nation needed you, you

stepped up. And we will always be grateful.

May God bless you and protect you and your families and all of our troops.

Sincerely,

A large, stylized handwritten signature of Joe Biden in black ink.

Joe Biden

47th President of the United  
States of America







# Climb to Glory

## Illinois National Guard Helps Honor 10th Mountain WWII Veteran

By Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

**SPRINGFIELD, Ill.** – A request from the Adjutant General of Vermont led to the Illinois National Guard stepping in to help honor a World War II veteran on his 97th birthday Jan. 29 in Freeport, Illinois.

William Hills, of Freeport, Illinois, a U.S. Army veteran of the 10th Mountain Division's Po Valley and North Apennines campaigns in Italy, was presented a flag flown in Afghanistan by the 10th Mountain Division. Hills originally served in the Veterinary Corps working with

dogs and mules. He later became the driver of the colonel who was leading the setup of advanced

headquarters posts as the front advanced through the Po Valley.

"We're here in honor of William Hills who served in the original 10th Mountain Division during World War II," Lt. Col. Eric Smith, of Springfield, Illinois, Deputy Logistics, Illinois Army National Guard (ILARNG) said. "I'm grateful for the opportunity to help you celebrate your 97th birthday. We don't want to overlook your impact on the military and this community."

Smith said the presentation to Hills happened when a friend of Maj. Gen. Greg Knight, the Adjutant General of Vermont, who hunts on property near Hills' hometown in Illinois passed along Hills' military affiliation to Knight. Knight then reached out to Maj. Gen. Brian J. Mennes, Commander, 10th Mountain Division.

"The 10th Mountain Division is deployed to Afghanistan. Maj. Gen. Knight asked Maj. Gen. Mennes to fly a flag in Mr. Hills' honor and send a note," Smith said. "Maj. Gen. Knight thought it would be better if a member of the Illinois National Guard made the presentation."







Smith said he got involved in the presentation because of his 10th Mountain Division affiliation during his last deployment to Afghanistan. Hills

told his fellow residents at the Oakley Courts Assisted Living and Memory Care facility in Freeport, Illinois, he doesn't think he deserves the attention.

"I didn't think about my military experience," said Hills. "I just served my country. The military provided me all my education."

Hills earned his masters degree and 30 hours towards a doctorate courtesy of the GI Bill.

"It's hard to express my gratitude in words," Smith said during the presentation. "You serve as a great example."

Smith, who recently served as the Commander of the ILARNG's Bilateral Embedded Staff Team (BEST) A24, which returned from Afghanistan in May 2020, shared with Hills the BEST A24 fell under the 10th Mountain Division.

"As part of the State Partnership Program, we served alongside the Polish military in both Afghanistan and Iraq," Smith explained. "In World War II, the friendly forces adjacent to the U.S. forces in the Po Valley were members of the Polish military."

Hills shared memories of his time in the military.

"The Army showed me the world that I would never had been able to see any other way," he said.

Hills said he was in Paris, France, on the first Bastille Day celebration after the German's occupancy was removed.

"It was the wildest celebration I've seen," he said.

Hills also talked about the welcome the Allies received from the Italians.

"As we would pull into Italian towns, the local people would swarm our vehicles and offer heartfelt thanks," he said. "They were completely broken. The Germans had come through and taken every single thing and executed most men and teen-aged boys. They treated the American forces as the liberators they had been praying for."

Hills also shared a memory of the colonel he was driving for commandeering a large villa from a woman.

"She was very upset and worried the military would destroy the art and furnishings she had," he said. "Myself and another Soldier wrapped up and moved all the art and non-essential furniture into a nearby shed for safekeeping."

Another memory involved what began with being invited to dinner by an Italian family, but ended with Hills and another Soldier sharing their C-rations with the family.

"We were invited to Easter dinner by an Italian family," Hills said.

"When we arrived, we found out the family had essentially no food, so we broke out our C-Rations and divided it up with the family. When we departed, we left behind all the food we had with us."

Hills served in the U.S. Army from Nov. 4, 1942 until Dec. 15, 1944. Among his awards and decorations are the Bronze Star medal, the European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign medal, the World War II Victory medal, and Good Conduct medal.



# Decatur Soldier Promoted to lieutenant colonel

By Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

**SPRINGFIELD, Ill.** – Scott Gilman, of Decatur, Illinois, was promoted to lieutenant colonel at a ceremony at the Illinois National Guard headquarters on Camp Lincoln, Springfield, Illinois, Feb. 4.

Gilman joined the U.S. Army in 2002, serving on active duty until 2008. He transferred to the Illinois Army National Guard (ILARNG) in 2008 and has served in a variety of leadership positions, including Commander, Company B, 2nd Battalion, 130th Infantry Regiment, based in Effingham; Commander, ILARNG Officer Candidate School, Camp Lincoln, Springfield; and Training and Executive Officer, 2-130th Inf Reg. Gilman is assigned to the Joint Force Headquarters G-3 (Training), Camp Lincoln, Springfield.



National Guard, and Commander of the Illinois Army National Guard. “I remember flying back from an Eager Lion exercise, sitting in

the airport and encouraging you to finish your school so you could get promoted. Let’s get this done so you can move on to bigger and better things as a battalion commander in the future.”

“There are too many people to thank for today,” Gilman said. “I joined the Illinois National Guard thirteen years ago with plans on riding out my commitment. After a few short

months at the 65th Troop Command, now Brig. Gen. Jackson kicked me out so I could become the commander of Company B. After one tour on flood duty I was hooked.”

Gilman and his wife of three years, Lillian, have three children, Adriana, Cole and Ireland. Gilman credited the support of his family for his success.

“Your support is important to me especially when I’m gone and working so much,” he said.



“This promotion has been a long time coming,” said Maj. Gen. Michael Zerbonia, Assistant Adjutant General – Army, Illinois



# Sherman Soldier retires after 22 years of service

By Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs



**SPRINGFIELD, Ill.** – Sgt. 1st Class Richard Hollinshead, of Sherman, Illinois, was honored for 22 years of military service in a retirement ceremony Feb. 26 at the Illinois Military Academy, Camp Lincoln, Springfield, Illinois.

Hollinshead enlisted in the Illinois Army National Guard in 1997 as an Information Services Operator, serving in the 623rd Personnel Services Detachment, based in Springfield, Illinois. Hollinshead began his full-time service with the State Area Command serving as the Personnel Management NCO in the Military Personnel Office at Camp Lincoln, in Springfield.

Hollinshead also served as the first Readiness NCO during the establishment of the Recruit Sustainment Program under the ILARNG Recruiting and Retention Command. Since 2017, he has served as the Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge of the Casualty Operations Branch.

“There are not many positions where you touch the lives of people every day,” said Col. Mark Alessia, of Sherman, Illinois, Chief of the Joint Staff, Illinois National Guard. “The Recruit Sustainment program gives a new Soldier the first impression of life in the Illinois National Guard. It makes a difference to know an NCO



cares about them and welcomes them into the military.”

Alessia talked about Hollinshead’s impact on the ILNG Casualty Operations program.

“Casualty operations is not an easy job, but there

is no greater honor than making sure we recognize our fallen service members,” Alessia said. “The Illinois National Guard Funeral and Honors team performs more than 4,000 funerals each year. You have done an outstanding job. Thousands of people have no idea the work you did behind the scenes.”

Alessia thanked Hollinshead’s family for their sacrifice during his career.

“There are events he missed, but without your support he would not be as successful as he was,” he said.

Command Sgt. Maj. (Ret.) Lester Edwards also addressed the sacrifice the Hollinshead family has made.

“Without the support of family, this job is impossible,” Edwards said. “He was successful because of your love, support and your understanding when events were missed because of the job.”

Hollinshead thanked friends and family for their support throughout his career.

“Thank you for the advice, friendship and encouragement throughout the years,” he said. “Thank you for the opportunity to help develop some of the best programs in the state.”

Hollinshead also thanked his wife, Erin, for her support.

“You are my world,” he said. “You have always been there for me. I’m ready to start a new chapter with you.”



# Chicago Soldier nominated for Gen. MacArthur Leadership Award

By Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs



**SPRINGFIELD, Ill.** - Gen. Douglas MacArthur once said a true leader "does not set out to be a leader, but becomes one by the quality of his actions and the integrity of his intent."

For Capt. John Ekblad, of Chicago, being a

state nominee for the Gen. Douglas MacArthur Leadership Award validates his hard work throughout his 19-year career in the Illinois Army National Guard.

"It is special to be a state nominee," said Ekblad, Commander of the 1744th Transportation Company, based in Crestwood, Illinois. "It means my command thinks I am a true steward of my profession."

Lt. Col. Timothy Newman, Commander, 108th Sustainment Brigade, the 1744th's brigade headquarters, which is based in Chicago, said Ekblad's leadership, influence and values stood out above everyone competing for the nomination.

"Captain Ekblad exemplifies the spirit and intent of the General Douglas MacArthur Leadership award," Newman said. "His leadership is demonstrated through his contributions to the community, his civilian employment, and the Illinois Army National Guard."

Ekblad enlisted in the Illinois Army National Guard in 2002, rose to the rank of Staff Sergeant before commissioning as a second lieutenant through the Illinois Army National Guard Officer Candidate School in 2012.

Ekblad, who deployed to Iraq in 2004 with

Battery G, 202nd Air Defense Artillery Regiment, and to Afghanistan in 2009 with the 333rd Military Police Company, based in Freeport, Illinois, encourages his fellow junior grade officers to lean on the experience of the senior non-commissioned officers in their units.

"Trust your gut," Ekblad said. "If you don't know the answer, seek feedback from knowledgeable Soldiers and make the best decision you can based on that information."

Ekblad urges Soldiers in leadership positions to keep their eyes open to help their Soldiers.

"The National Guard is a balancing act between civilian life and military life. The military side, which we mostly see when we gather for drill weekends, annual training and deployments, is structured, but sometimes things happen in our civilian life which gets a Soldier off track," he said. "We have to be able to help them get back on track. We, as leaders, are in the best positions to help Soldiers lead a better life and achieve their goals."

Ekblad said each battalion in the Illinois Army National Guard encourages their eligible company grade officers and warrant officers to complete a packet to submit for consideration for the annual award. Each packet is evaluated at the battalion level before being considered at the brigade level. Following the brigade selection, the state leadership selects the state nominees and forwards those packets to the National Guard Bureau for further consideration. The Army-wide award selections will be announced in late March.

Ekblad recently completed his Master's Degree in Business Administration at the University of Illinois - Chicago. While working toward his Master's, he worked for the Chicago Transit Authority leading a change management project.

Since 1988, the award has recognized officers and warrant officers in the regular Army, Reserve and National Guard who have displayed the ideals that MacArthur once stood for -- duty, honor and country. MacArthur commanded troops in the Southwest Pacific during World War II and oversaw the successful occupation of postwar Japan before he lead United Nations forces in the Korean War.



# Springfield's 233rd MP Co. Mobilizes for CENTCOM

By Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs, photos by Robert Adams, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. – A mobilization ceremony was held at the Illinois Military Academy, Camp Lincoln, Springfield, Illinois Feb. 22 for approximately 60 Soldiers from the 233rd Military Police (MP) Company, based in Springfield, Illinois.

The Soldiers are deployed to the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility.

"The 233rd MP Company is very prepared for what lies ahead," said Col. Craig Holan, of Litchfield, Illinois, Commander of the 404th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade. The 404th MEB is the brigade headquarters for the 233rd MP Company. "I've had the opportunity to attend some of your training and you have exhibited a great deal of professionalism. I'm proud of each of you as you take this step in this journey."

The 233rd MP Company received a notice of sourcing for the overseas mission in late 2019. While deployed, the 233rd will support law enforcement missions and conduct security operations in the Middle East.

"You have dealt with the state active duty responses and were able to complete training and readiness for your upcoming mission," Holan said. "Go complete this mission that you've been asked to do, that you are more than prepared to complete and return home safely to your families and loved ones."

The mobilization ceremony took on a different look with families

attending via Zoom due to COVID-19, however the importance of family support was not forgotten.

"To the families who are unable to be here

today because of COVID-19, we thank you for your support," said Lt. Col. Justin Wilkerson,

of Peoria, Illinois, Commander of the 33rd MP Battalion. The 33rd MP Battalion is the immediate higher headquarters for the 233rd. "We are able to complete our mission because of you."

Wilkerson also addressed

the Soldiers of the 233rd.

"It is an honor to lead such fine Soldiers," he said. "Each of you raised your hand to serve when asked. You are well prepared to complete the mission ahead of you. To the leadership, you've trained them hard and you've trained them well."

Capt. Monica Perez, of Mount Prospect, Illinois, Commander of the 233rd MP Company, told the Soldiers she is proud of the unit's dedication and commitment.

"Approximately 18 months ago, we received notice of this mission. At first you think, that's plenty of time to get ready," she said. "Then 2020 happened. We have many new faces who were not with us when we started training."

Perez said she's proud to command the unit and knows there will be good days and bad days.

"Just remember whatever happens, we have each other," she said. "We go as a team and we come back as a team."

Perez said she understands the mixed emotions that comes with each mission.

"Leaving our families is not easy, whether it's for the weekend or our annual training," she said. "But without our families, we couldn't be here today. Our families are what keeps us going."



# Ramping Up



## VACCINATION STATIONS

## ESTACIONES DE VACUNACIÓN

COVID-19  
COMMUNITY  
VACCINATION

### Governor Pritzker visits Belle-Claire, Sangamon County Mass Vaccination site opens

by Staff Sgt. Aaron Rodriguez, 126th Air Refueling Wing Public Affairs

As vaccinations moved forward in the state, Illinois Governor JB Pritzker toured a mass vaccination site at the Belle Clair Fairgrounds in Belleville on Feb. 18.

“The St. Clair-Belle Fairgrounds, which has administered over 10,000 doses after opening Feb. 1, is one of the most vital vaccination sites in this state,” Pritzker said.

The Belle Clair Fairgrounds location provides approximately 1,200 vaccine doses each day. This is one of approximately 850 vaccination sites across Illinois.

On Feb. 19, Maj. Gen. Rich Neely attended the opening of the Sangamon County Mass Vaccination Site at the Orr Building on the Illinois State Fair grounds. The Illinois National Guard-run site is capable of administering 1,300 doses a day and is one of many sites statewide where the Guard is assisting with COVID-19 vaccinations.

So far, nearly 2 million doses have been administered across the Land of Lincoln.







# ***A prince among Soldiers***

***Retired first sergeant and Nigerian tribal prince keynote speaker at ILNG's African-American History event***



The Illinois National Guard's African-American History Month event on Friday, Feb.19, at Camp Lincoln in Springfield celebrated the proud history of African-Americans serving in the Illinois National Guard, including the "Fighting" 8th Infantry Regiment, the first all African-American unit that was led by Black officers. The event also discussed the contributions of African-Americans to the Illinois National Guard today. The keynote speaker was Illinois Army National Guard 1st. Sgt. (retired) DoGood Efe-Nogo, who is a chief and prince of an African tribe in the delta region of Nigeria.





# *The Bird is the Word*



## ***Ronald Bonesz, ILARNG Personnel Director promoted to colonel***

*by Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs*

**SPRINGFIELD, ILL.** - Illinois Army National Guard Soldier Ronald W. Bonesz, of Normal, Illinois, was promoted to colonel in a ceremony at the Illinois Military Academy, Camp Lincoln, Springfield, Illinois, Feb. 26.

"This is a big day for Ron and the entire Bonesz family," said Maj. Gen. Michael Zerbonia, Assistant Adjutant General - Army, Illinois National Guard, and Commander of the Illinois Army National Guard.

"This promotion to colonel is well deserved and we look for big things from the G-1 (Personnel) directorate."

Zerbonia thanked Bonesz's family for their sacrifice throughout his career.

"You pushed him to be what he is today," Zerbonia said. "Thank you for your sacrifice and for letting Ron do what he loves to do. We appreciate everything his family and friends have done."

Bonesz commissioned as a second lieutenant through the ROTC program and completed branch qualification as an engineer officer in

1995. Following his active duty service, Bonesz transferred to the Illinois Army National Guard.

Bonesz has served in a variety of leadership positions, including Chemical Officer, 1st Battalion, 106th Aviation Regiment, based in Peoria, Illinois; platoon leader and Company Commander, 333rd Military Police Company, based in Freeport, Illinois.

Bonesz also served as Battalion Commander of the 33rd Military Police Battalion, based in Machesney Park, Illinois; and Brigade Plans, Training and Operations officer in the 404th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, headquartered in Normal, Illinois.

In addition, Bonesz has served as the Deputy Director, Operations and Security Cooperation Officer of the Joint Staff, Illinois National Guard; and Deputy Director, Personnel, Illinois Army National Guard. Bonesz is the Military Personnel Officer, and Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, Illinois Army National Guard.





Bonesz deployed to Iraq in 2003 as the Company Commander, 333rd Military Police Company; again in 2006 as Plans, Training and Operations Officer, 33rd Military Police Battalion; and to Afghanistan as the Commander of the Bilateral Embedded Staff Team 20 in 2017, serving alongside the Polish Armed Forces.

"This is a very exciting day for my family and I," Bonesz said. "It's been a long time coming. I'm very excited for this promotion."

The newly-promoted colonel said senior leaders, mentors and others have had a vital impact on his life.

"Without your leadership and mentorship handed down to me I couldn't be where I am at today," Bonesz said. "Thank you for working with me year after year, helping me to grow as an officer."

Bonesz also offered appreciation to Soldiers who have worked for him in the past as well as his current team at the G-1 directorate.

"Without a doubt it is because of the men and women who wear the uniform, their hard work and dedication has gotten me here and has made me successful," he said. "We have one of the best teams out there. I am constantly amazed at what my current team does each day. It is nothing short of amazing."

Bonesz pledged his continued dedication to the personnel staff.

"You know my work ethic," he said. "You know I will continue to dedicate myself to our team, our



Soldiers and to our mission."

Bonesz thanked his family for their support.

"You have been with me each step of the way," he said. "I am extremely grateful. You've dealt with my late nights and my busy schedule. I am so appreciative of your understanding. You are my rock and I love you to death."

Bonesz rounded out his remarks by offering advice to fellow Soldiers.

"You can do everything right in your career and still not make it to this position," he said. "I believe we are the product of the opportunities given to us. I appreciate the opportunity to prove

myself as a competent staff officer and I believe it ultimately led me to where I am today."

Bonesz urged his fellow officers to not become attached to a certain career path.

"Maximize your opportunities," he said. "Take a chance on the jobs you may not be good at, step out of your comfort zone and apply yourself to the new position."

Bonesz said he is extremely grateful for the opportunity to serve as the Military Personnel Officer and Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel.

"I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to lead this team," Bonesz said. "I have learned a lot in the past year and I have so much more to learn. I have a great team to lean on." 🇺🇸



# THIS DAY IN HISTORY

## January

### 7 66th Brigade Activated for Operation Enduring Freedom

2002: The first group of the 66th Infantry Brigade to mobilize for Operation Enduring Freedom received an official sendoff from Illinois Governor George Ryan. He said,

"The President has called you to duty, and without hesitation you have answered the call like so many patriots before you. You are men and women who believe so strongly in your country, your freedoms and the American way of life, you willingly take up arms to defend your country. You are truly citizen soldiers, sons and daughters of Illinois. All of us are thankful for your sacrifices. It's not easy leaving your homes and your families behind, but it is a sacrifice you make in the name of freedom, to ensure your sons and daughters and neighbors can live without fear."

The 66th made up a contingent of Task Force Santa Fe, a National Guard force of 2,100 Soldiers from Kansas, Illinois, and Kentucky.



### 21 Militia Act of 1903

1903: As a revision of the Militia Act of 1792, Congress passed the Militia Act of 1903, otherwise known as the Dick Act. The Act made all males between the ages of eighteen and forty-five inactive members of the militia eligible for call-up. It did away with the 1792 Act and split the militia into two separate groups: the National Guard and the Reserve Militia. Each congressional representative had 200 Guardsmen assigned to them, and the President could now call out the Guard whenever he or she deemed it necessary. National Guard funds for weapons, equipment, and training were to be the same as that of the regular Army.

### 25 Decatur Soldier Earns Silver Star at Ardennes Offensive

1945: The Illinois Army National Guard's 2-106th Cavalry, 33rd IBCT, then known as the Army's 32nd Cavalry Squadron, was heavily engaged in the "Battle of the Bulge." The 106th was critical in protecting the town of St. Vith. One of the unit's Soldiers, Private Harold W. Munson of Decatur, received the Silver Star for his bravery during the battle.



### 30 Illinois Soldier Earns Medal of Honor

1945: In the bitter fighting on Bougainville in the Solomon Islands, Staff Sergeant Jesse R. Drowley of the Americal Division braved enemy fire to rescue three wounded comrades from an exposed position. After successfully moving two of the men to safety, he climbed aboard a tank to direct fire on a hidden enemy bunker. He used tracer rounds from his Thompson sub-machine gun to pinpoint the position for the tank crew. In the process he took a bullet to both the chest and left eye. Despite these wounds, he remained on the field until the bunker had been destroyed. For his heroic actions and unflinching devotion to his task he received the Medal of Honor.



## February

### 3 Illinois Part of the Meridian Campaign

1864: The Union Army of the Tennessee, which included over seventy-two Illinois regiments, marched out of Vicksburg, Mississippi and headed 120 miles east to Meridian. On the march, the troops under Major General William Tecumseh Sherman destroyed southern infrastructure and crops such as railroads, cotton, and wheat. The operation would be conducted similar to the Savannah Campaign, known more famously as the March to the Sea.





## 8 Staff Sgt. Jason Burkholder and 1st Lt. Jared Southworth



2009: On Feb. 8, 2009, Staff Sgt. Jason Burkholder, 27, of Champaign, Illinois, and 1st Lt. Jared Southworth, 26, of Oakland, Illinois, were killed in action when they encountered an improvised explosive device in Helmand, Afghanistan. Both Soldiers were assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 130th Infantry Regiment based in Marion, Illinois.

## 9 Sgt. Jessica Housby

2005: On Feb. 9, 2005, Sgt. Jessica Housby, 23, of Rock Island, Illinois, was killed in action when the vehicle she was traveling in struck an improvised explosive device on Route Golden, in Iraq. Housby was assigned to the 1644th Transportation Company, based in Rock Falls, Illinois.



## 11 SAD comes to an end for 108th Observation Squadron

1937: Twenty-one days of state active duty ended for the 108th Observation squadron, 33rd Division Aviation on February 11, 1937. During the disastrous floods in the southern Illinois towns of Karnak, Rosiclare, Mound City, Metropolis and Shawneetown the 108th played a vital role. The Airmen provided reconnaissance over levees, dropped food and medicine to stranded people and livestock and took photos of flooded areas.

## 17 Illinois becomes first state to offer troops after sinking of the USS Maine



1898: Two days after the explosion of the USS Maine in Havana, Illinois Governor John R. Tanner received approval from the House of Representatives to raise troops for the coming war with Spain. By April 27, the United States had declared war and Illinois had mobilized seven regiments of infantry, and one regiment of cavalry at Camp Tanner in Springfield. On April 30, a battery of artillery also mobilized. Eleven thousand one-hundred forty-two Illinois Soldiers served in the war, 276 of whom died in battle or from disease.

The Illinois call up included: 1st Illinois Volunteer Infantry; 2nd Illinois Volunteer Infantry; 3rd Illinois Volunteer Infantry; 4th Illinois Volunteer Infantry; 5th Illinois Volunteer Infantry; 6th Illinois Volunteer Infantry; 7th Illinois Volunteer Infantry; 8th Illinois Volunteer Infantry; 9th Illinois Volunteer Infantry; 1st Illinois Volunteer Cavalry; and Battery A, Illinois Volunteer Light Artillery

## 24 Sgt. Schuyler Patch and Sgt. Scott Stream



2009: On Feb. 24, 2009, Sgt. Schulyer Patch, 25, of Galva, Illinois, assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 2nd Battalion, 106th Cavalry Squadron, based in Kewanee, Illinois, and Sgt. Scott Stream, 39, of Mattoon, Illinois, assigned to B Co., 2nd Battalion, 130th Infantry Regiment based in Effingham, Illinois, died of wounds suffered when the vehicle they were in struck an improvised explosive device in Afghanistan.

**THE PRAIRIE SENTINEL  
1301 NORTH MACARTHUR BOULEVARD  
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS 62702**

**DSN: 555-3569  
PHONE: (217) 761-3569  
FAX: (217) 761-2988**

**THE PRAIRIE SENTINEL IS THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE ILLINOIS NATIONAL  
GUARD AUTHORIZED BY THE  
ADJUTANT GENERAL.**

**DEADLINES:**

**STORY AND PHOTO SUBMISSIONS ARE DUE THE 1ST OF EACH MONTH TO  
NG.IL.ILARNG.LIST.STAFF-PAO@MAIL.MIL**

**CONNECT WITH THE ILLINOIS NATIONAL GUARD:**



[www.il.ngb.army.mil](http://www.il.ngb.army.mil)



[https://twitter.com/IL\\_Natl\\_Guard](https://twitter.com/IL_Natl_Guard)



<https://www.facebook.com/illinoisnationalguard/>