

ILLINOIS NATIONAL GUARD

PRAIRIE SENTINEL

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ILLINOIS NATIONAL GUARD PRAIRIE SENTINEL

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Take it From the Top:

Senior Leaders' Corner

The Illinois National Guard: 300 years of rich history



The Illinois National Guard turns 300-years-old on May 9, 2023. In the small village of Kaskaskia, Diron d' Artaguiette, the Inspector of Troops for the French Commandant, drilled the first militia in the Illinois Country on May 9, 1723.

As we turn 300, we are celebrating our shared history with Illinois communities by marking important dates in that history with them. Our history is rich with many amazing accomplishments and leaders. Abraham Lincoln, Ulysses S. Grant, John A. Logan and even Dick Butkus served in our ranks. An Illinois Soldier fired the first shot at Gettysburg. Our Soldiers were the first in the U.S. military to fight alongside Australian troops and our 8th Infantry Regiment was the first all-Black unit to be led by all Black officers. In World War II, we were the first U.S. troops to engage the enemy in tank warfare, we rescued King Leopold of Belgium, and we freed Baguio in the Philippines.

These commemorations can be big or small. In many cases, it may just be a social media post or a short visit.

Sgt. 1st Class Cody Schaefer of the 123rd Engineer Battalion visited the Murphysboro City Council in March to mark the anniversary of the Great Tri-State Tornado. This 10

to 15-minute presentation gave the Illinois National Guard the chance to say 'thank-you' to Murphysboro for the sons and daughters who have served in our ranks and for our partnership in responding to the tornado as well as other natural disasters and national emergencies through the years.

On March 18, 1925, the 130th Infantry based in nearby Marion sent a medical company to Murphysboro to support overwhelmed first responders and a community devastated by the tornado. The unit was part of a task force of 579 Soldiers sent to assist local first responders. Today the "Black Hawks" of the 2nd Battalion, 130th Infantry Regiment are still based in Marion and are still ready to help. And now Murphysboro and the surrounding area also have the 123rd Engineer Battalion situated in the city.

In February, Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd visited the South Side of Chicago, where he grew up. There he celebrated the life and legacy of the Illinois National Guard's Capt. Walter Dyett. The 8th Infantry Association and the National Guard Association of Illinois presented Eugene Shelby, a junior at Walter Dyett High School with the first Captain Walter Dyett Award. The 8th Infantry Association also presented Mr. Shelby with a computer to help with his studies.

It was a great event celebrating the life and legacy of the legendary 8th Infantry Regiment band leader and Chicago music educator. Captain Dyett taught such music greats as Nat King Cole, Bo Diddley and Dinah Washington. He mentored and guided tens of thousands of Chicago Public School students with his mantra: "You are who you think you are."

The event also celebrated the legacy of the all-Black "Fighting"



8th Infantry Regiment, which fought against our nation's enemies from the Spanish-American War to World War II and against racism here in the United States. The unit's World War I service is commemorated by the Victory Monument at 35th Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Drive in Chicago's Bronzeville neighborhood. The 8th Infantry's lineage and honors is alive in the 1st Battalion, 178th Infantry Regiment headquartered in the historic General Richard L. Jones Armory on Chicago's Southside.

We had a couple more local events in April. At the Cerro Gordo village meeting on April 17 we marked the Illinois National Guard victory in



the Mexican-American War that gave the town its name. On April 26, we will celebrate the 33rd Infantry Division's World War II liberation of the city of Baguio, Philippines, with the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's Philippine Student Association and Soldiers from the university's ROTC program. That event will be at the 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team's headquarters in Urbana.

Then on Saturday, May 6, we are planning a day-long series of events in Springfield to celebrate our 300th Birthday in Illinois' capital city. Also, on May 6 we are celebrating the 30th anniversary of our State Partnership Program with Poland. One of our own, Lt. Col. Andrew Adamczyk has been named as the Grand Marshal of the Polish Constitution Day Parade in Chicago and after the parade we are inviting our Polish guests to Springfield for the Illinois National Guard 300th Birthday Gala at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum that evening.

Representatives from Belgium and Australia have also been invited to join us in Springfield on May 6. During the World War I Battle of Hamel on July 4, 1918 Illinois National Guard Soldiers became the first U.S. troops to ever fight side-by-side with Australian Soldiers. We've been allies ever since. On May 5, 1945, the Illinois National Guard's 106th Cavalry rescued King Leopold of Belgium and his family from the Nazis. Belgium and the United States remain close allies and neither have forgotten our shared history.



by a smaller event in Kaskaskia on our actual birthday. Kaskaskia today is even smaller than it was in 1723, with about 20 residents. It will take both small towns and big cities to continue to make the Illinois National Guard successful as we start into our next 300 years, and we are proud of our connection to this community along the Mississippi River.

As with go through this year, we will continue to celebrate our 300 years with our communities. The size of the community or of the commemoration does not matter. What matters is that we show our gratitude to the communities that we first gathered to defend in 1723 and still defend to this day.

The National Guard is unique. We are the only U.S. military component with dual state and federal missions. Our state mission is derived from our roots as local militia units raised from the community to defend the community. We have a special tie to the Land of Lincoln and its towns, villages, and cities.

Understanding this history is important both for our Soldiers and Airmen and for the communities we serve. We live in a time where the U.S. military struggles to remain connected to America. Unlike in the past, where military service was the norm and expected, today we are less than one percent of the population.

Because of our deep historical connections to our communities, the National Guard is well situated to help the U.S. military stay connected to our citizens. Today, as throughout our history, we live and work in the communities we serve. Today, as then, choosing to serve in the Illinois National Guard means being 'Always Ready, Always There' for our

communities, our families, our state, and our nation.

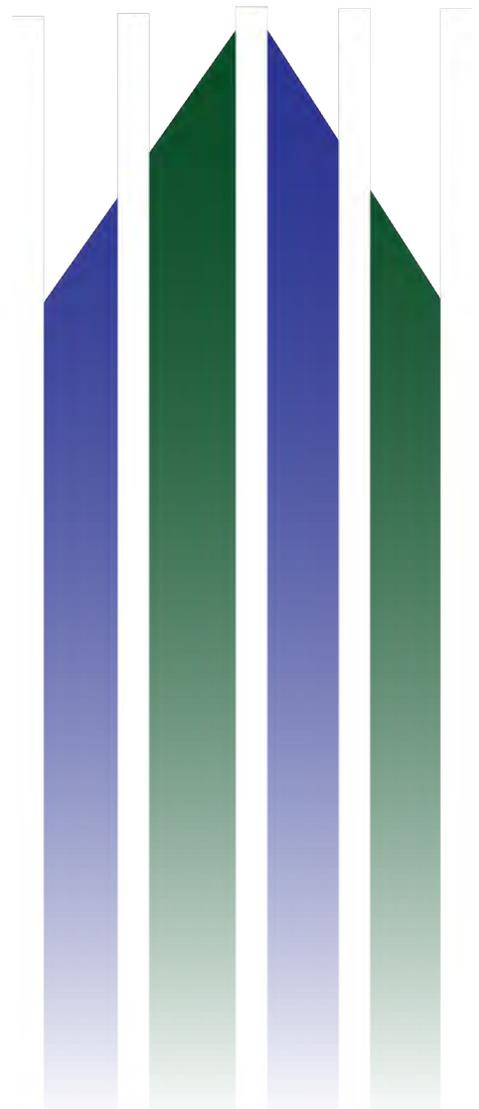
We were then, as we are today, a community-based organization. We are part of our communities, and we draw our strength from our communities.



1723 - 2023



ALWAYS READY, ALWAYS THERE



The May 6 events will be followed



High Notes: Illinois honors Cpt. Walter Dyett; awards Dyett School of Arts student inaugural Dyett Award

CHICAGO -Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, the Assistant Adjutant General - Army of the Illinois National Guard and the Commander of the Illinois Army National Guard joined with Chicago Public School officials and the 8th Infantry Illinois National Guard Association in awarding the 2023 Captain Walter Dyett Award to high school junior and musician Eugene Shelby.

"Today we get to celebrate a student's achievement and character while honoring a great Soldier and teacher, Captain Walter Henri Dyett," Boyd said during the inaugural Captain Walter Dyett Award Ceremony at the Walter Dyett High School for the Fine Arts on Chicago's South Side.

"Today the members of the 8th Infantry are keeping the memory of one of our own alive and celebrating the legacy of Captain Walter Dyett in a way we think he would appreciate. By honoring a student that exhibits the values he lived by."

The award, co-sponsored by the 8th Infantry Association and the National Guard Association

of Illinois (NGAI), goes to a high school fine arts student that best exemplifies the creativity, discipline, hard work, selfless service, respect, and integrity that Captain Walter Dyett brought to his military career leading the "Fighting" 8th Infantry Regimental Band and as a music educator in the Chicago Public Schools for decades.

"To go to this school and to understand who Walter Dyett was not only as a captain, but as an educator in the South Side of Chicago gives me a lot of inspiration to know that one day, I could become something, I know I can become something," said Shelby, a junior at the Walter Dyett High School for the Fine Arts.



Walter Dyett High School Principal Doreatha “Dory” Butler nominated Shelby for the award, and he was selected by the 8th Infantry Association in conjunction with NGAJ. The award was presented by 8th Infantry Association President Ron Murdock and Lt. Col. (retired) Dr. Donald Harris, a member of the 8th Infantry Association and Senior Army Instructor for King College Prep High School and its JROTC Jaguar Battalion.

“We are here to today to celebrate Captain Walter Dyett who himself was a father of the 8th Infantry, as well as a musician and educator,” said Ron Murdock, President of the 8th Infantry Association. The 8th Infantry Association also presented Shelby with a new computer to help him with his studies.

The Jaguar Battalion presented the colors for the ceremony and the King College Prep High School Band performed at the ceremony along with the Illinois Army National Guard’s 144th Army Band, based on the South Side of Chicago in the historic General Richard Lee Jones Armory.

Capt. Walter Dyett directed the Illinois National Guard Band’s 8th Infantry Regiment Band and served as music director and educator within the Chicago Public Schools from 1931-1962 on the South Side of Chicago. Captain Dyett fostered the growth of jazz and Black musicians



in Chicago. He led the Pickford Orchestra, Washington Park summer concerts, the DuSable-ites, the “Hi-Jinks,” and many others. From 1931 to 1962, Dyett taught classical, military, and jazz music to more than 20,000 students at Wendell Phillips and DuSable High Schools. Jazz greats including Nat “King” Cole, Dorothy Donegan, Joseph Jarman, Dinah Washington, Johnny Griffin, and Mwata Bowden credit Dyett for their early musical training.

“His students were his children and he taught them to be resilient and tough, while also loving them with all his heart. He inspired them to find a path from poverty and prejudice. He taught them to believe in themselves and he believed in them,” said Director of Student Life

and Partnerships for Walter Dyett High School Cinque Cullar. “His motto was ‘You are what you think you are.’”

Boyd said the same values Dyett lived by are the values the Illinois National Guard tries to instill in all its Soldiers and Airmen. “The Illinois National Guard is a part of our communities, and its strength comes from our communities,” said Boyd. “This is very true here at the South Side of Chicago and has been for a very long time.”

Boyd said the Illinois National Guard will remain an integral part of the South Side of Chicago.

“As we turn to the voices and impacts of leaders and train blazers this Black History Month, I’m proud to stand with you all and raise up Captain Walter Dyett for making his mark and contributing to this chapter of Black history, our community’s history, our state’s history and our nation’s history,” said Boyd, who is the first person of color to be promoted to major general in the nearly 300-year history of the Illinois National Guard.



B E C A U S E SPRINKLES are for winners

Command Sgt. Maj. Mike Behary, an unapologetically sarcastic and Soldier-focused leader retires as the state's top NCO after 28 years in uniform

By Sgt. 1st Class Bryan Spreitzer, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

A young private first class stands in line on his first day at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. He's not paying much attention until he sees a sergeant major making his way down the line asking the new recruits why they joined the Army. Many give the same answers, college money, family tradition, patriotism. The young Soldier waits, hoping the sergeant major doesn't stop in front of him, because at that moment, he's not sure what he's doing there.

Then, it happens, the sergeant major stops in front of the young Soldier.

"Why'd you join the Army," the sergeant major asks the young private first class.

"I had nothing better to do," blurted out the Soldier.

The sergeant major turns to step away, then spins back, "What the heck did you just say?!"

The Soldier repeats himself, "I had nothing better to do."

Flummoxed, the sergeant major presses, "How did you get PFC?"

"College," the Soldier replied.

"Maybe you should've finished college," replied the sergeant major, "That might have been something better to do!"

Illinois Army National Guard Command Sgt. Maj. Mike Behary of Sherman, Illinois, jokes about his first experience in uniform, but says he never thought he'd get this far.

"I never had a goal to be a sergeant major, I thought I might retire as an E-8," he said. "Really from my first day in the Army, I didn't think I'd be cut out for this."

Behary said he wasn't quite sure about joining, so he talked to his parents.

"My dad was already retired from the military and my mom was in the reserves at the time," said Behary. "Because of the family thing, it was something I had considered briefly before going to college. Since college wasn't really an option for me at the time, my dad and I had a long talk and felt the right fit



was the Army.”

Behary enlisted in 1994 for a 3-year enlistment and stayed on active duty for 9 years as a logistics specialist. After his stint on active duty, he came to the Illinois National Guard as an Active Guard Reserve supply sergeant. He served in a multitude of roles and deployed to Afghanistan in 2011 with the 1-14th Agribusiness Development Team in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. He said initially he just wanted to do a three-year enlistment to “reset.”

“I wasn’t planning on staying this long,” he said. “I liked the environment, the culture, the people I worked with and the exciting things you get to do. I remember when I was on active duty my first nine years, I could be in the office one day or out in a truck in the woods the next day. It was always something different and always something challenging.”

Though he never set out to be a sergeant major, Behary said his early experiences with senior noncommissioned officers (NCOs) shaped his leadership style and his work ethic as an NCO.

“My first NCOIC at Fort Hood, Carl Seaton, always took the time to mentor us and explain to us what was happening,” said Behary. “When we worked, he worked, and he always made sure he worked with us even as an E7/E8. If we had to stay for whatever it was, even if it was staff duty, he’d call and check up on us. My first day at Fort Hood he gave me the keys to his car and told me where to go to find a place

to live. He even helped negotiate the contract.”

Behary said the way Carl treated him and his fellow Soldiers is the way he thought senior NCOs should be.

“The way he interacted with us was the way I thought it should be,” said Behary. “It’s what was done for me, and it was what I felt that I owed my Soldiers, that level of care. It’s looking out for those that are coming next.”

When you ask those who worked with him, or anyone that’s interacted with him, you get the same response: he’s a smart-a**, but not in a way that makes him unapproachable. His wit and humorous style are engaging and directly contributed to his success as a leader.

Behary attributes his sarcastic wit to his dad.

“It’s the way the house was, and it’s stuck with me. My parents just kind of let me be me and it developed way before I enlisted. I’ve been fortunate enough to work with leaders that put up with my sarcasm because they knew I wanted to be a part of and contribute to a successful team.”

The Illinois Army National Guard’s former Assistant Adjutant General – Army and Commander of the Illinois Army National Guard, Maj. Gen. (retired) Michael Zerbonia, was there when Behary came to the Illinois Army National Guard.

“Mike came to the 1st Battalion, 202nd Air Defense Artillery as an E-5 or E-6 supply sergeant straight off active duty as the battalion supply sergeant when I was the battalion commander,” said Zerbonia. “We kind of followed each other throughout our careers. When I was a brigade commander,

he was our brigade supply NCO, then when I became the ATAG, he landed a job as the G4 (logistics) sergeant major, then became the state sergeant major a little while after that.”

Zerbonia said his first impression was the same as everyone else.

“What a smart-a**,” he said with a laugh. “Constant one-liners, but never disrespectful. He’s the only person in uniform that got away with talking to me the way he did.”



Zerbonia shared one of his favorite stories about working with Behary. Chief Warrant Officer 5 (ret.) David Hammon, the former State Chief Warrant Officer, and Zerbonia were riding with Behary in a government vehicle during one of their many trips as a command team and Behary let fly with his wit.

“Behary’s driving the car and Chief Hammon is in the front seat, I’m in the back,” he recalls. “I see him looking at Chief Hammon then looking in the rear-view looking at me, then back to chief, then to the rear-view back to me and I say, ‘What the heck are you doing?!’ and he says, ‘I just gotta say this: the command team’s having a good hair day today.’ Mind you, both chief and I are bald, so that’s the kind of smart-a** he is.”

Command Sgt. Maj. Joseph Cistaro, command sergeant major for the U.S. Army Garrison, Poland in Poznan, Poland, worked with Behary throughout his career and noticed his demeanor right away.

“He’s so quick to humor, it’s almost disarming,” said Cistaro.



"It's also subtle, he makes you do a lot of double takes."

Cistaro said regardless of the situation, Behary knew his stuff and always made it fun to come to work. Behary made it something to look forward to.

Col. Shawn Nokes, commander of the 129th Regiment, Regional Training Institute, met Behary as a company commander and worked with him throughout his career,

mostly in the state's Logistics office.

"He doesn't fit the 'hey, get over here' sergeant major," said Nokes. "Sure, he's tactically and technically knowledgeable, but he also has a genuine care for the Soldiers around him and he could relate to them and instantly get them to open up."

Nokes said most of the things he remembers about working with Behary came from their battalion command time together.

"He's an empathetic leader, he always looked at Soldiers as individuals and not numbers," said Nokes. "He makes people around him better leaders, he made me a better leader."

Nokes said Behary's mentorship directly led to three first sergeants in the battalion becoming sergeants major.

"If I helped my Soldiers in any small way, then I'm glad for that," Behary said. "One of the last calls I got to make as state (command sergeant major) was to offer a



Soldier a (command sergeant major) position. It just so happened to be one of my first sergeants."

Nokes said Behary never passed on an opportunity to teach and mentor Soldiers.

"One of my favorite memories was during one of our ATs," said Nokes. "I can't remember where we were at, but it was cold and like two in the morning and we were out checking on Soldiers in the field."

"We were watching a Soldier and his battle buddy pull security," continued Nokes. "Like I said, it was cold, so they're both in their vehicle staying warm. One of the Soldiers gets out to

use the latrine and sergeant major and I stopped the Soldier on his way back to



'test' his battle buddy."

Nokes said they had the Soldier stay hidden in the wood-line while he and Behary went to ask his battle buddy where he was.

"When the Soldier didn't have a clue where his battle buddy was, sergeant major used his sense of humor instead of yelling," said Nokes. "He quoted a Key and Peele skit, 'You done messed up A-A-ron,' which opened the Soldier up, and sergeant major gave him a brief, but entertaining lesson on not losing his battle buddy."

Behary said he always liked interacting with his Soldiers. He said tried to make sure to broaden their experiences and keep them engaged.

"While we were on AT, Nokes and I decided since headquarters Soldiers in the TOC (tactical operations center) don't often get to see the missions that are going on or why they're doing the work they're doing, every time we went out we'd fill the van up," said Behary. "We'd take them around and they'd see the missions that were going on. At the same time, we got to know our Soldiers and they got to know us. At the end of every trip, we took them all to Dairy Queen as a little reward. We always got sprinkles on our ice cream, because sprinkles are for winners."

Sgt. 1st Class Sean Eskridge, a senior supply NCO with the G4 office who has worked with Behary since starting on his active guard career, said he learned a great deal about being a logistics NCO from Behary.

"When I first



came on as an AGR, he was the logistics NCO for the brigade,” said Eskridge. “He failed me at my first inspection but took the time to teach me what I had done wrong. I learned a lot about the ins-and-outs of what I should be doing, and it’s helped me progress in my career.”

Eskridge said regardless of the situation, Behary would find a way to inject his sarcastic sense of humor. He said it made it easier to learn lessons because you weren’t focused on being yelled at for something you did wrong, you could focus on the lesson to learn.

Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, the Assistant Adjutant General - Army, for the Illinois National Guard, said Behary exemplifies the Creed of the Noncommissioned Officer.

“I pulled the NCO Creed up to take a look while thinking about Mike’s career,” said Boyd. “He is the epitome of the creed. He’s a consummate professional, he’s always looking out for his Soldiers,

no matter what position he was in, and he makes it easy for the senior staff to accomplish the mission.”

Boyd said Behary never looked ahead to his next position. He just did the most he could in the positions he had and always looked to use the influence he had to put Soldiers first. He said Behary understood

and exemplified the term ‘the backbone of the Army,’ and made sure his Soldiers understood what it meant too.

Behary said he owes his work ethic and leadership style to those around him throughout his career. He said leaders like Carl Seaton, Command Sgt. Maj. Joseph Cistaro, and Maj. Gen. Michael Zerbonia were leaders he could emulate.

“I saw these leaders that were tough, but had a genuine care for the Soldiers,” he said. “I also saw that they succeeded in the organization without changing who they were at their core.”

Zerbonia said Behary was the right person at the right time to be the state sergeant major. In the middle of his stint as state sergeant major the COVID pandemic gripped the world, and the Illinois National Guard conducted the longest state active duty mission in its history. Zerbonia said his engaging and interactive style was just what Illinois needed during a tumultuous period.

“Whenever we went out, Mike would always talk to the lower enlisted Soldiers like a sergeant major is supposed to,” said Zerbonia. “The

difference with him though, was the way he engaged them, he could get them to share their issues and he would personally take care of them.”

Zerbonia said Behary wouldn’t just listen and pass the issues along, he’d personally follow up with the Soldiers he engaged with to make sure the problems were solved. Behary said it’s just what he felt he was supposed to do. He said he never felt that getting promoted meant he could relax.



After more than 28 years, Behary retired from the Illinois National Guard in November 2022. Always one to make things better, he works for the Illinois National Guard as a civilian in the state logistics office. If you ask him what the secret to success is, he’d tell you he never thought there was a secret.

“I never viewed this as a difficult job,” he said. “If you make yourself available, you’re responsive and you take care of your Soldiers, then things will work out the way they’re supposed to in the end. I was never one to celebrate my accomplishments but I always celebrated the achievements and milestones of my Soldiers; it’s humbling to see them succeed and thank you for helping them. That, to me, is how you succeed in this job.”





FORWARD REACH

By Staff Sgt. Wynndermere Shaw, 18th Airlift Wing Public Affairs

Tactical air control party (TACP) members of the 169th Air Support Operations Squadron of the 182nd Airlift Wing based in Peoria, took part in Exercise Forward Reach Dec. 3. The exercise, focused on domestic response capability, offered the TACPs to showcase their new Mobile Response Team concept. The Mobile Response Team is a small team of TACPs that deploy forward during a domestic response to increase the reach and effectiveness of first responders. During the exercise, the team demonstrated helicopter insertions, communication uplinks and first aid capabilities, all of which enhance the ability to respond to a domestic incident.





SPRINGFIELD, Ill. - Matt Palmisano gets it.

The new Illinois National Guard Integrative Prevention Officer was an active-duty Army officer who served in the Infantry and then as a Behavioral Science Officer with a combat deployment to Iraq. He understands that training time is precious, especially for Illinois National Guard units that only have one weekend a month and 15-days of annual training each year.

He also gets how a sexual assault, a suicide, family violence or workplace violence or harassment can absolutely devastate unit cohesion, morale, and readiness. "It can be so divisive and can really split a unit apart," he said. As a licensed clinical social worker, he served as the 182nd Airlift Wing's Director of Psychological Health after working with struggling veterans for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in Iowa and Massachusetts. He has several years of experience in mental health and has seen the devastating effects of these harmful behaviors, up close and personal.



Palmisano now leads a team of seven charged with preventing sexual violence, self-directed harm, workplace violence and harassment, and family violence and abuse before they occur - before the damage is done. It is part of a new nationwide effort to use a public health approach to addressing these societal issues within the National Guard. "We will provide new, fresh assistance to Soldiers, Airmen and their families," Palmisano said. "Looking at the service member's whole health and protective factors, such as, family or friends can

Getting Fresh

New Integrative Prevention Officer looks to find 'new and fresh' solutions to harmful behaviors.

By Lt. Col. Brad Leighton, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs



Matt Palmisano, the new integrative prevention officer for the Illinois National Guard, helps guide his teammate during a resiliency exercise

What works and what doesn't work? What do we keep and what do we throw away?" he said. "Then we come up with creative approaches."

The Illinois National Guard prevention team is using a "community of preventionists" on the Department of Defense's All Partners Access Network to share information and ideas as it seeks new ways to approach these varied and difficult issues. The network includes mental health professionals, advocates, and university researchers.

"We are looking to provide a web of support for both the organization and individuals," Palmisano said. It is important to take a holistic approach and "come up with good balanced solutions" for the Illinois National Guard and the people within it before harmful behaviors emerge, he added.

"Commanders want assistance. They want to do what's best for their Soldiers or Airmen and their families. Commanders need to take full advantage of limited time to train their troops and they need to balance it with mental and spiritual health," Palmisano said. "This all flows into the mission of readiness and taking care of your people. People are your most critical weapon system."

prevent harmful behaviors."

It is new program and Palmisano said he is excited about the opportunity to build it from the ground up. Palmisano's eyes are wide open as to the difficulties of the problems his team is trying to address, but he sees a chance to make a difference rather than being overwhelmed by the magnitude of the issues. "You have to be passionate about the work - and you have to like people."

While his team is tasked with "a really big mandate," he chooses to be both realistic and optimistic. "These are (resiliency and prevention) skills that can be taught," he said. The preventionists can give information that National Guard members can use to protect themselves and their battle buddies or wingmen. "What role does alcohol play? What do boundaries look like? Some don't know and we don't want to assume anything. Maybe, what can sexual harassment look like and how to best intervene," he said.

Illinois is "way ahead" of most states, he added. Most of the Illinois National Guard's prevention professionals are already hired and Illinois has the lessons learned and data from Task Force Restore Trust to help as it begins to develop training. But much is still taking shape.

Palmisano could already make a couple of promises. "It is not going to be the same old PowerPoint slides" and his team is not going to waste the Soldiers and Airmen's time, he said. "People don't want their time to be wasted. We want to give them effective tools and take advantage of learning opportunities," he said.

Effectively reducing harmful behaviors in the Illinois National Guard is going to take both analysis and creativity. "We need to look at the resources we have available. There are so many resources, but what's effective? What's data-driven?"



THE

INNOVATION

CONNECTION

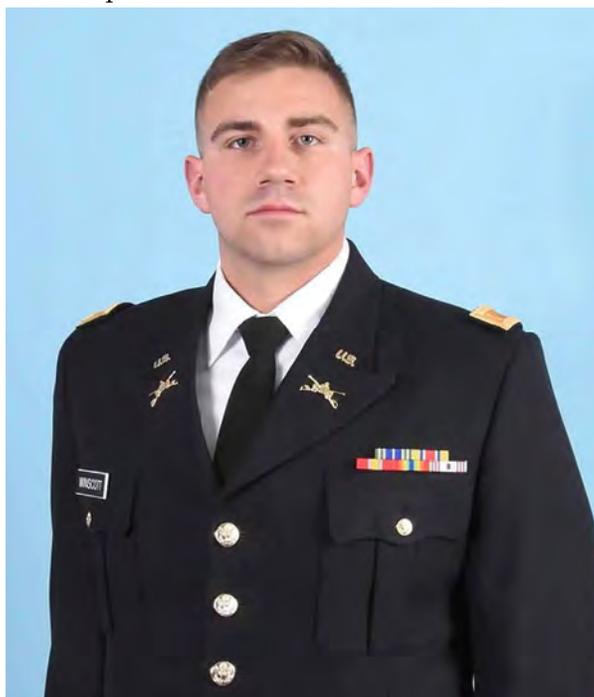
PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT + INNOVATION = READINESS

By 1st Lt. Benton Winscott, Strategic Plans and Policy, Illinois National Guard

As the Strategic Plans and Policy Officer in the Joint Staff, one of my responsibilities is connecting Illinois National Guard (ILNG) members to innovation opportunities. These develop an innovative workforce within the Illinois National Guard that promotes organizational efficiencies that support readiness. This involves informing ILNG members about training courses that provide necessary knowledge to enact change and think "Outside the box," when approaching complex issues.

What is innovation? What does it mean to us? The Army defines innovation as "the action or process of introducing something new or creating new uses for existing designs." Air Force Work Project (AFWERX), an Air Force funding program, defines Air Force innovation as, "applying technology, methods, or processes to solve problems facing Airmen in the accomplishment of their

mission." The common theme between these two definitions is the application of something new or existing to improve the organization. Every four years the Illinois National Guard (ILNG) produces a strategic plan. In this plan the TAG outlines his vision,



priorities, and the goals for our organization to focus on. Section 6-2 in the current plan, labeled Operational Innovation Objectives, highlights two specific goals:

Innovation Objective 2.1 – Future Planning & Modernization

The ILNG must continue to look forward leveraging our future planning capabilities in innovative ways to improve and modernize our facilities, equipment, and mission capabilities to meet the changing environment. Deliberate planning and modernization of our training, facilities, and equipment, with specific emphasis in our State Partnership program, aircraft modernization and exercises will prepare the organization for continued success in the future.

Innovation Objective 2.2 – Collective Process Improvement

The ILNG leverages our strengths and achieves our vision through Continuous Process Improvement. Maintaining our competitive edge and accomplishing our

objectives can only be achieved through systemic, repeatable evaluation process where we learn and apply changes. At all levels of the organization, we must use our collective process improvements activities to enable the force of the future and meet our National Defense Strategy.

Educational Programs

How exactly are we to reach these goals? Through innovation education at all levels. Project Mercury and AIM-HI are 12-week programs that are open to all services and all ranks. They are run by the Air University and the University of Michigan. They aim to develop creativity and innovation skills, facilitate problem solving, break barriers, anticipate the future, accelerate decision cycles, and give the tools to out-compete existing and new adversaries. They achieve this by teaching classes on the innovation process, offer coaching and direction with each group's innovation project and then connect participants to industry/military leaders. These leaders listen to groups pitch and offer advice, connect them further, or start the process to implement the group's solution. Project Mercury is completely distance learning based. As you work through each milestone within the program all

the groups will have "clashes." Each group compares their progress against the others and present the current version of their project pitch. In the AIM-HI program, however, the training is broken up into cycles. After each cycle all groups meet in person in Michigan to discuss, present and gain feedback on their progress. With AIM-HI there is a funding requirement.

The ILNG has already been sending potential innovators to these courses. There are 15 graduates between the two courses just from Illinois alone. Maj. Christopher Copeland is one of these graduates and this is his innovation experience:

When we look to train and equip our members, we often think of what we can add to their toolbox. One such thing is the innovation experience through Project Mercury or the National Guard program, AIM HI.

My time with Project Mercury has allowed me to learn a new skill set for when I am approaching problems. In the military, we look to the end state of what is trying to be solved and then work backwards of how to get there. Instead, the program has us look to identify an issue and determine what problem needs to be solved to rectify the issue through competing values and analysis. I was afforded the opportunity to tackle an enterprise level issue which had me

speak with senior leaders from the Air Force and other outside organizations. Those organizations included private industry, Fortune 500 companies, and academia. Their insight gave our team an understanding of what the competing values were in the problem we wished to solve and helped us develop a solution.

Going through the Project Mercury cohort, I have found that it has opened my eyes to evaluate issues from other perspectives that I would not normally consider. Completing the program has given me one more tool for my toolbox that I hope to use throughout my career.

I recently attended Project Mercury as a part of Cohort 8. My group was tasked with the prompt, "How might we identify processes we can improve or eliminate?" The High-Quality Target we selected was based around Agile Combat Employment. Starting with questions such as, "How do we make training Multi Capable Airmen easily attainable, efficient, and a realistic process?" We focused on creating more efficient training pipelines for Airmen and leveraging training commands and "School Houses," more efficiently. The result of our efforts was a national policy change introducing a sort of "Transfer Credit" system for prior experience and certifications, that will shorten the training times from enlistment to vacancy fills. These are just a few examples of all the great work achieved as a direct result of this program.

Innovative Organization

Along with personal development, the ILNG Strategic Plan discusses building partnerships with innovative organizations. MxD (Manufacturing x Digital) is where manufacturers go to forge their futures. In partnership with the Department of Defense, MxD equips U.S. factories with the digital tools, cybersecurity, and workforce expertise needed to begin building every part better than the last. They offer space for organizations to house innovation teams. The ILNG has a history of working with this organization. They have hosted multiple Cyber events our members



have attended. We also conducted the August 2022 Senior Leader Engagement, where Senior Leaders toured the facility and discussed potential partnerships and future opportunities.

The Defense Innovation Unit (DIU) is a United States Department of Defense (DoD) organization founded to help the U.S. military make faster use of emerging commercial technologies. This is to strengthen our allied and national security innovation bases. DIU partners with organizations across the Department of Defense (DoD), from the services and components to combatant commands and defense agencies, to rapidly prototype and field advanced commercial solutions that address national security challenges. One of their initiatives is GigEagle, an initiative that is in development. It is intended to be a joint talent marketplace that allows interested Reserve and National Guard Members to build profiles that highlight their civilian expertise and find short-term work within the Department of Defense. Think Indeed but for the DoD.

Innovation Spotlight

One unit that rose into the Air Force spotlight is the 182nd Airlift Wing. They did this through hard work and innovative practices. Here is their story as told by Col. Rusty Ballard, Commander, 182d AW:

The 182nd Airlift Wing has historically been a very strong wing with high morale. In the 2006 timeframe while the wing was supporting the Global War on Terror, it was obvious that there were not enough aircraft available for the aircrews to fly for operations and training. Therefore, maintenance personnel had a challenge to overcome to generate more flyable aircraft. This started with a change in their mindset. The new mindset set out to have maintainers ensure that no one went home until the aircraft was once again flyable and that they fix the discrepancies right the first time. This was supported by a flexible work schedule and solid relationship with all entities on the base.

Historically, maintenance only fixed broken aircraft during work hours and only generated aircraft against what was on the flight schedule. Air Force maintenance tracking of a flyable aircraft is based on the amount of time that an aircraft is available to be flown, known as its Mission Capable Rate (MCR). For example, if an aircraft was fixed on a Friday before a long weekend or holiday, the wing would maintain a high MCR throughout the weekend. With a flyable aircraft more readily available, the aircrews could train to a higher level of proficiency more

frequently. With this new mindset in place, the overall MCR rate started to rise, more aircraft were generated, and the maintenance organization began to have a brand-new sense of pride in their ability to have the highest MCR rate in the entire Air Force C-130 fleet. Now on top of the C-130 fleet maintenance, they began to refine their processes by tackling their Isochronal inspectional process (ISO).

An ISO is completed as periodic home station maintenance that is scheduled to take 60 days. By applying continuous process improvement initiatives, they were able to drastically reduce an ISO inspection from 60 days to 18 days. Initiatives such as combining all inspections that could be done at the same time rather than sequentially. For this process to become 'lean' the maintenance team needed to coordinate with all entities on base, such as the Comptroller flight to acquire additional end of year funds to purchase additional tooling and equipment that would facilitate quicker inspections. Equipment like permanent stands that didn't take 5 days to set up like previous ones. They had to coordinate with Logistics to have more parts on hand that were most common to be replaced. Finally, they had to coordinate with the aircrews to limit training



on certain days so that they could perform preventative maintenance that ultimately led to aircraft being more available.

The increase in the MCR and the reduced ISO timeline put the 182AW on top of all Air Force C-130 wings for 13 of the last 14 years. We have shared this process with multiple other C-130 wings to increase the MCR for the entire fleet as well as the MCR of other types of aircraft in the Air Force. The Peoria Way is what is said throughout the base, it is said with pride and is known throughout the ANG community. When the Air National Guard Readiness Center needs help either in Washington DC or with another Air Force, they often call on the 182AW to support their initiatives and provide support to other ANG wings within all functional areas.

In conclusion, the intent for the ILNG Innovation Program, in support of the ILNG Strategic Plan, is to foster a continuous mindset. A mindset similar to what the 182d AW has developed over the past 15 years. It is to establish processes and procedures and utilize techniques and technologies to find efficiencies that positively impact readiness across organization. The program goal is to develop, staff, and publish a program guide that informs and prepares leaders, Soldiers, and Airmen through a deliberate process to identify potential opportunities, seek funding outlets to actualize approved projects for innovation, and recognize the contributions of our service members.

If you are interested in these programs, companies, or to discuss options for your organization, please contact me at:

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June's Wish

Illinois Helps Make 3-Year-Old June Peden-Stade's Wish for a Parade a Reality

By Lt. Col. Brad Leighton, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs





The temperature was 23-degrees Fahrenheit, but it was a warm June Day in Auburn, Illinois, on Dec. 17 as the Illinois National Guard joined hundreds of first responders, schools, and community groups from across the region to give 3-year-old June Peden-Stade a parade.

"It means the world to June and us to have June's wish granted in such a big and heart-warming way," said Adam Stade, June's father. June bravely fought neuroblastoma, a rare form of cancer. She died five days after the parade on the morning of Dec. 22, in the comfort of her parents' arms.

The parade included more than 200 vehicles and floats as well as two high school marching bands, multiple cheerleading squads, school sports teams, and colorful characters from the Paw Patrol to Santa and Mrs. Claus themselves. The Illinois Army National Guard contributed 10 trucks and about 20 Soldiers from the 232nd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion; Charlie Company of the 634th Brigade Support Battalion; Battery B of the 2nd Battalion, 123rd Field Artillery; and the 3637th Maintenance Company - all based in Springfield, Ill., about 30 minutes from Auburn.

The parade lasted more than two hours, with many pausing in front of June's Washington Street home to perform or to give a gift to June. The Illinois National Guard Soldiers presented June with flowers and a big Teddy Bear and saluted her bravery. With the weather outside being a little too frightful for June's health, she watched the parade through her front door window.

The Make A Wish Foundation reached out to the City of Auburn with June's wish just four days before the parade and supporters flocked in from all over Central Illinois to make the parade a reality.

Town, city, and county police and sheriff took part, including the Illinois State Police and the Illinois Secretary of State Police. Fire departments from all over, including the Illinois Fire Marshal's Office, were there in force. The Christian County Shrine Club sped around in miniature cars and "CJ and Joey" the mascots for HSHS Children's Hospital - where June receives treatment - waved to June from the back of a pick-up truck.

Lt. Col. Mike Barton, the Commander of the 232nd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, said that his unit's noncommissioned officers jumped on the opportunity to support June's parade as soon as the public affairs office sent the request.

"The National Guard is part of the community and this was the community pulling together for June. We were truly honored to be part of her special day."

New diversity leader fosters inclusive culture

By Sgt. Trent Fouche, 139th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

SPRINGFIELD, III. - Fort Jackson in South Carolina was a long way from the southside of Chicago where Army Capt. Anthony McClain grew up. The intensity of basic combat training and drill sergeants yelling in his face didn't prepare him for an interaction with another Soldier one afternoon in the barracks.



McClain's bunkmate, a white Soldier from a small town in West Virginia, asked McClain if he could touch his skin. The Soldier had never seen a black person in real life. He had only seen black people on television. The two trainees would go on to become good friends throughout their training, but this experience expanded McClain's cultural awareness and his understanding of diversity. Twenty-seven-years later, McClain now serves as the Illinois National Guard Director of Diversity and Inclusion.

McClain leads the Illinois National Guard's Diversity, Inclusion, and Access program and strives to help the Guard achieve a more inclusive organizational culture.

"We have an obligation to develop, mentor and retain top talent reflective of the communities we serve," McClain said. "Some of my responsibilities include striving to improve the representation of underrepresented groups to ensure each individual in the Illinois National Guard has the opportunity, guidance and information necessary to reach their maximum potential."

The Illinois National Guard has faced some diversity challenges. Although the ILNG is diverse at the junior enlisted ranks, it loses this diversity among senior noncommissioned and commissioned officers. "We have recognized the low number of female and underrepresented groups in the senior ranks. This is not just a state issue but also nationwide. We are working with the Army and Air Diversity Leads to identify barriers to leadership diversity," McClain said. "A lot of it has to do with promotion opportunities, getting married, having families, the length of schools and civilian obligations. For example, if a female decides to have children she may start to fall behind her peers. Not just in the military but also in her civilian career. We have to find better ways to support and assist in the decision to stay in the Guard. We must focus on building diversity into all ILNG leadership pipelines," McClain said. "To sit in this role, you truly have to care about people," said Maj. Gen. Rich Neely, the Adjutant General of Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National Guard. "Anyone who has been around Captain McClain can attest that he is passionate about people and the betterment of this organization." McClain spent the first 15 years of his career on the enlisted side, making it to the rank of sergeant first class (E7) before attending the 129th Regiment (Regional Training Institute) Officer Candidate

School (OCS) on Camp Lincoln. Throughout the majority of his career, he has worked in human resources, but has a background in logistics and operations as well. He credits his upbringing and family for helping him to accomplish his goals.

"I grew up on the southside of Chicago, in a single-parent home," McClain said. "There were definitely some challenges, but we didn't let it stop us. Today, I'm the person that always roots for the underdog. My desire to want to serve came from wanting to go to college and have a career that I can take pride in. The National Guard gave me an opportunity to obtain both, and I think that everyone should know that this opportunity exists, no matter what community you come from. I had family that served, so I kind of always knew. Unfortunately, there are a lot of people that don't know about the opportunities the National Guard can provide. We're taking steps to change that by going out into those communities so that we better reflect the state of Illinois."

"He has served in this role very well," Neely said. "He brings a plethora of ideas and is a great resource in ensuring that we have the best people in place so that we can remain successful." McClain helps coach and educate individuals on promotion rates and what branches and military occupational specialties help service members hit their career marks.

"It's important for individuals to have their sights on what they want to do in their careers, but also have a leader that pulls them to the side to discuss their options," McClain said. "Laying out a career timeline that factors life events and planning for those events is extremely important. You should factor in where you want to be as far as your military career, your education, family and civilian goals."





FOR HONOR

Illinois' Funeral Honors Team Supports more than 3,100 veteran funerals in 2022

By Mike Chrisman, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

The military prides itself in honoring the legacy of Veterans. Whether a Service member dies in combat or a Veteran passes away due to age, the military ensures the Veteran is recognized for their service. Military Funeral Honors have traditionally been provided when the Veteran is laid to rest. Providing those honors is a solemn duty undertaken by the men and women of the Illinois Army National Guard Funeral Honors Program. These Soldiers serve the families of any deceased member of the Army in the state of Illinois. As part of the Illinois National Guard, the Soldiers of Funeral Honors provide support to military families in times of grief.

"The rendering of military funeral honors is one of the ways to show the nation's deep gratitude to those who, in times of war and peace, have faithfully defended our country," said Paul Kindred, Casualty Operations Branch Chief. "The Illinois Army National Guard Military Funeral Honors pledges through commitment and training to continue to provide all eligible Veterans of the United States with the appropriate level of Military Funeral Honors."

During Fiscal Year 2022, the Honors Teams supported more than 3,100 ceremonies for Soldiers of the United States Army, the Army Reserve, and the Illinois Army National Guard. This equates to nearly nine funerals per day.

"These are some of the most professional Soldiers in our force," said Maj. Gen. Rich Neely, the Adjutant General of Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National Guard. "I couldn't be prouder of the great work these Soldiers do while honoring the service of these Illinois Veterans."

Since 2005, the Illinois National Guard MFH program has supported funerals for more than 62,000 Veterans across Illinois. That is

an average of approximately 3,500 funerals each year. Four different years during that time span, the MFH Teams supported more than 4,000 funerals.

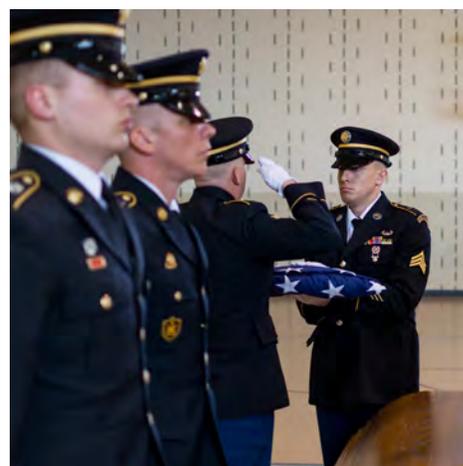
The Illinois National Guard MFH program has 16 full-time Soldiers, and is based in Springfield. They have four satellite offices in Marion, Decatur, Macomb and North Riverside. The satellite offices allow the MFH teams to support funerals throughout the state, with limited travel time. MFH Soldiers take pride in their mission, and many see it as a privilege to pay respect to Veterans who honorably served their country. "The Illinois Army National Guard Military Funeral Honors renders these honors with the highest level of dignity and respect," Kindred said. "Our Soldiers take this mission very seriously and are extremely proud to provide military honors for our Veterans, they train extensively to ensure the same high standards are utilized at each service."

Requests for support come from the families themselves, funeral homes, and the Casualty Assistance Center at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. The ceremonies are conducted at no cost to the families. Families that did not receive honors at time of

burial can request an Honors Team to perform a ceremony at a later date for the family as well.

In 2023, Funeral Honors will continue to support as many requests as possible recognizing that the Veteran population from World War II, the Korean and Vietnam Wars are aging. Illinois Military Funeral Honors continues to support the families of Illinois Soldiers in their times of need and fulfills the Army's mission to honor the service of all Soldiers from Illinois.

For questions about Illinois Army National Guard Military Funeral Honors, call Paul Kindred at 217-761-1766 or 217-720-5610.



Winchester native promoted, making her one of only two female O-6s in the Illinois Air National Guard

Story by Staff Sgt. Gerardo Valdes, photos by Spc. Dejuan Patterson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs



a group of 12 military and civilian members providing financial services to the wing's more than 900 personnel. She worked with both the Air National Guard's financial management office and Illinois' United States Property and Fiscal Officer on fiscal matters and budget actions. She also served on the Air National Guard Comptroller Advisory Board starting in 2014 and held the role of chairperson from 2017-2020.

In March 2020, DeJanovich was assigned to the 183rd Wing Force Support Squadron where she led a group of 40 military and civilian employees providing personnel services to the Wing. She holds a bachelor's degree in business administration and a master's degree in public administration, both from the University of Illinois.

In October 2021 DeJanovich was selected to serve as the Deputy United States Property and Fiscal Officer, serving under Army National Guard Col. Brian Creech. The USPFO receives and accounts for all federal funds and property in possession of the Illinois National Guard and ensures federal funds are legally and properly obligated and expended. The USPFO also provides financial and logistical resources for maintaining federal property provided to the Illinois National Guard.

DeJanovich said that she encourages stepping outside of a person's comfort zone. "That's what I've been doing over the past year," said DeJanovich. "It's been a whole new environment for me. Even though we're all one military we have our own different languages to figure

out. It's been a big learning curve, but it's been a good challenge at the same time."

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. – Tara L. DeJanovich, a resident of Springfield and native of Winchester, Illinois, was recently promoted to colonel in the Illinois Air National Guard.

DeJanovich, the Deputy United States Property and Fiscal Officer (USPFO) for the Illinois National Guard, is now one of only two female colonels serving in the Illinois Air National Guard, the other being Col. Asheleigh Gellner, the Vice Commander of the 182nd Airlift Wing in Peoria.

"I've been told 'no' many times throughout my career," DeJanovich said. "If you have the desire to do something, and you're told 'no,' keep working hard and keep going because that's persistence - to keep bettering yourself with whatever that goal is."

DeJanovich enlisted in the Air National Guard in May 1996 and was trained as a Financial Services Apprentice. In December 2000, she deployed in support of Operation Southern Watch to Prince Sultan Air Base, Saudi Arabia and deployed again

in October 2004 in support of Operation Enduring Freedom to Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar.

After serving almost nine years as an enlisted member in a variety of financial management positions, she received her commission in April 2005 from the Academy of Military Science, McGhee-Tyson Air National Guard Base, Tennessee.



After receiving her commission, DeJanovich was assigned first as a budget officer and then as Commander of the 183rd Wing Comptroller Flight where she led

Hible takes command of 33rd IBCT

Story by Cpl. Justin Malone, photos by Staff Sgt. Gerardo Valdes, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

URBANA, Ill. – Col. Seth Hible, of Winfield, Illinois, assumed command of the Illinois National Guard’s 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT) from Col. Michael Eastridge on Jan. 8 at the Illinois National Guard Readiness Center in Urbana.

“Colonel Eastridge did an



outstanding job moving the 33rd IBCT forward during the COVID-19 pandemic, a very challenging time for maintaining training and readiness,” said Brig. Gen. Rodney Boyd, the Assistant Adjutant General – Army of the Illinois National Guard and Commander of the Illinois Army National Guard. “I am confident that Colonel Hible is the right officer to continue the unit’s legacy of excellence.”

With more than 3,500 Soldiers, the 33rd IBCT is the largest brigade in the Illinois Army National Guard and has units with lineage dating as far back as the Black Hawk War in 1832. Both Hible and Eastridge are traditional National Guard officers



with full-time civilian jobs along with their part-time military duties. Eastridge, a native of Wheaton, Illinois, who now lives in Northville, Michigan, is the marketing and sales support manager for Mercedes-Benz Financial Services USA. Hible, who grew up in nearby Danville, Illinois, is now a high school teacher at Lake Park School in Roselle, Illinois.

Eastridge took command of the brigade in 2020 during the peak of COVID-19.

“Colonel Eastridge has been a phenomenal leader across the board,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Kelly, the brigade command sergeant major. “He came in at a time of COVID. COVID made things more difficult, but he powered through that. Even when we were operating at minimal staff, his leadership was instrumental to the organization and kept it going in the right direction.”

Completing the mission and Soldier care were his highest priorities, Eastridge said. “I established a diversity and inclusion council to ensure we are offering opportunities for all our Soldiers to develop in the organization. Additionally, I set up a program called Adapt, Innovate and Motivate to help further develop leaders within the organization. Both the diversity and inclusion initiatives and the leadership development program support Soldiers and ultimately mission success.”

After approximately three years of leading the 33rd IBCT, Eastridge hopes that he is leaving a positive impact.

“I had a platoon sergeant that mentored me during my enlisted time,” said Eastridge. “I look back at that as what an NCO should be doing and how that impacted me. That NCO and my enlisted time helped me to better understand the need for mentorship. The mentorship and guidance by that E-7 helped me get to where I am

today and I hope I have done the same thing for the Soldiers I have worked with in the brigade.”

Hible brings decades of key command and staff experience. His last position was the Chief of the Illinois National Guard Joint Staff where he led domestic operations, international cooperation, as well as interagency and intergovernmental coordination. Hible said that helped prepare him to command the 33rd IBCT. Part of his job as the Chief of the ILNG Joint Staff was to translate objectives from the strategic or operational level for implementation at the tactical level.

“To do this you have the responsibility to take care of both the mission and the people in your care,” Hible said.

Hible said essential part of his plan is to focus on the mission essentials, let “leaders lead” and prioritize Soldier and noncommissioned officer care. “For years, I was told, officers plan and NCOs execute, but the truth is, the NCOs help build the plan,” he said. “The NCO’s are what allow the vision to succeed or fail.”



“My hope is that I will leave the brigade with a plan on how to continue to develop leaders,” Hible said. “I want the brigade to have a sense of its history. I want a Soldier to be able to leave the brigade knowing their place in history. I want the Soldiers to feel like they are a part of something else. They are part of a legacy.”

Airmen from the 182nd Airlift Wing and 126th Air Refueling wing take top honors for airmen of the year

By Master Sgt. Shelly Stark, 183rd Wing Public Affairs



SPRINGFIELD, Ill. – Three Airmen from the 126th Air Refueling Wing based at Scott Air Force Base and an Airman from the 182nd Airlift Wing based in Peoria earned top honors from the Illinois Air National Guard during its Outstanding Airmen of the Year ceremony, Jan. 7, at the Illinois State Military Museum in Springfield.

The 182nd Airlift Wing's Senior Airman Erik Kamphouy of Elgin was named the Outstanding Airman of the Illinois Air National Guard. Kamphouy was named the Outstanding Airman of the 182nd Airlift Wing based in Peoria in late 2022. Kamphouy is an information technology specialist with the 182nd Airlift Wing.

The 126th Air Refueling Wing's Master Sgt. Marcus Lollis of Shiloh was named the Outstanding Noncommissioned Officer of the Illinois Air National Guard. Lollis was named the Outstanding Noncommissioned Officer of the 126th Air Refueling Wing based on Scott Air Force Base in late 2022. Lollis is an integrated flight control system specialist with the 126th Air Refueling Wing.

The 126th Air Refueling Wing's Master Sgt. Jacob Lider of Fairview Heights was named the Outstanding Senior Noncommissioned Officer of the Illinois Air National Guard. Lider was also named the winner in the Senior Noncommissioned Officer category for the 126th Air Refueling Wing in late 2022. Lider is the quality assurance manager for the 126th Comptroller Flight, 126th

Air Refueling Wing.

The 126th Air Refueling Wing's Senior Master Sgt. Nichole Peterson of Chicago was named the Outstanding First Sergeant of the Illinois Air National Guard. Peterson was named the First Sergeant of the 126th Air Refueling Wing based on Scott Air Force Base in late 2022. Peterson is the 126th Wing First Sergeant and a program administration officer in her civilian life with the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency in St. Louis.

Outstanding Airmen at the Wing level are:

183rd Wing based in Springfield: Staff Sgt. Madeline McDevitt of Chatham of the 183rd Maintenance Squadron was named Outstanding Airman of the Year. McDevitt works in the Propulsion section for the Maintenance Squadron as an engine mechanic. She is currently attending school in Louis and Clark community college in Godfrey, Illinois for Occupational Therapy.

Master Sgt. Kevin Mullins of Plainfield, a Security Forces planner in the 183rd Air Component Operations Squadron, was named Outstanding Noncommissioned Officer of the Year. He is a Law Enforcement Officer with Canadian Pacific Railroad.

Master Sgt. Joseph Bandy of Hillsboro was named the Outstanding Senior Noncommissioned Officer. Bandy is the 183rd Security Forces Squadron Unit Training Manager.

182nd Airlift Wing based in Peoria: Kamphouy was named the Outstanding Airman of the Year.

Technical Sgt. Jamie Mahan of Chatham was named the Outstanding Noncommissioned Officer. Mahan is an administrative assistant at the 182nd Airlift Wing.

Master Sgt. Benjamin Graser

of Bethalto was named the Outstanding Senior Noncommissioned Officer. Graser is the Chief of Weapons and Tactics for the wing.

Master Sgt. Dawn Tavenner of Paxton was named the Outstanding First Sergeant. Tavenner is the first sergeant of the 264th Combat Communications Squadron and the full-time Chief of Information Protection for the 182nd Airlift Wing.

126th Air Refueling Wing based on Scott Air Force Base in Belleville:

Airman First Class Kimberly Bruning of Highland was named the Outstanding Airman. Bruning is a maintenance production specialist at the 126th and an operations assistant in her civilian life with Mercy Hospital based in St. Louis.

Lollis was named the Outstanding Noncommissioned Officer.

Lider was named the Outstanding Senior Noncommissioned Officer.

Peterson was named the Outstanding First Sergeant.

"I couldn't be more proud of these Airmen; they represent the best of the best," said Maj. Gen. Rich Neely, The Adjutant General of Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National Guard, during the ceremony. "I'd like each one of you to go home and thank your families as well. None of us could do our jobs without their support and understanding. Please personally thank them for me as well."

"Events like today, recognizing the incredible work of these Airmen, keep me humble when I read the outstanding and amazing accomplishments of each one of these Airmen over the past year," said Brig. Gen. Dan McDonough, the Assistant Adjutant General – Air of the Illinois National Guard and Commander of the Illinois Air National Guard.

Springfield Soldier continues to build on more than 30-year career

By Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. – Springfield resident and Illinois Army National Guard Soldier Eric Smith laid the initial foundation to his military career when he enlisted in January 1989 as a carpenter/mason serving in the 744th Engineer Company. On Jan. 13, Smith, the Director of Logistics for the Illinois Army National Guard, continued to build on his 34 years of service when he was promoted to colonel in a ceremony at the Illinois Military Academy on Camp Lincoln in



Eric Smith's daughter Asya, removes his lieutenant colonel rank during his promotion ceremony at Camp Lincoln

Springfield.

“Eric and I go way back. When I was a brigade commander, he was one of my battalion commanders,” said Brig. Gen. Rodney Boyd, Assistant Adjutant General – Army and Commander of the Illinois Army National Guard. “He would always take care of business and get the job done.”

Boyd said it was great to see someone he has worked with in the past get elevated to the next position.

“I know you will continue to do great work in our organization,” Boyd said. “The Directorate of Logistics is a very daunting position. Handling logistics all across the organization is a very daunting task because not only do you deal with Soldiers but civilians who work

within that directorate as well.”

Boyd said a Soldier doesn’t just get to be a director.

“You have to compete against your peers and stand out among your peers,” Boyd said. “You also have to demonstrate you can work with service members and civilians. Eric has proven that along the way. This job is a lot more responsibility, but I have no doubt Eric is ready to take on the task.”

Smith graduated from Officer Candidate School and was commissioned as a Quartermaster officer in August 1998. He has served in a variety of leadership and staff positions including commander of the 1144th Transportation Motor Transport Battalion, executive officer for the 65th Troop Command, and deputy commander of the 129th Regiment (Regional Training Institute).

“As a Soldier, you wait for years, hoping this moment will come,” Smith said. “I have been preparing for this my entire officer career. It has been a challenging and rewarding career up to this point.”

Smith said achieving a promotion to colonel is partly by chance, and partly timing.



Eric Smith is pinned with his new rank by his daughter, Reagan, during his promotion ceremony at Camp Lincoln

“For me things worked out,” he said. “Here I am now, the director of logistics, the position I’ve worked toward for the last 20 years.”

Smith said he was humbled to receive the promotion and the single factor is the family support he has received over the years.

“I wanted the promotion, probably more for them because they have made more sacrifices than I did,” Smith said.



Smith thanked his family, wife, Lori, calling her the rock of the family, his two daughters, Reagan and Asya, and his mother, Candy.

“I owe my mother everything,” he said. “Especially the foresight to immigrate with me and my sister to this great country and for instilling in me to always move forward regardless of the circumstances.”

Smith also thanked the noncommissioned officers he has served with throughout his career.

“I truly believe I wouldn’t be here with the support of my NCOs,” he said. “You helped me navigate the things that are really important to Soldiers.”

Smith also thanked the Directorate of Logistics staff.

“I can’t say enough about the support you’ve given me,” he said. “You’ve kept me on track and I look forward to the next couple of years.”

Smith has deployed numerous times in his career, including as commander of the Bilateral Embedded Staff Team A-24 to Afghanistan in 2019-2020, support operations officer, Task Force Phoenix VIII, to Afghanistan in 2008-2009 and Operation Crescent Relief in support of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, Louisiana in 2005.

Rodney Boyd promoted to major general, becoming highest ranking black, officer of color in ILNG history

By Lt. Col. Brad Leighton, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs



SPRINGFIELD, ILL. – Governor JB Pritzker announced today that Brigadier General Rodney Boyd, the Assistant Adjutant General – Army of the Illinois National Guard and the Commander of the Illinois Army National Guard, has been promoted to Major General. This makes him the highest-ranking Black and officer of color in the nearly 300-year history of the Illinois National Guard.

“I’m honored to congratulate Major General Rodney Boyd on his promotion – becoming the highest-ranking Black and officer of color in the Illinois National Guard’s history,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “This promotion speaks to the progress the Illinois National Guard has made in ensuring historically underrepresented communities are fairly represented within its ranks and given the same opportunities to excel as everyone else. Major General, congratulations on this extraordinary achievement – and on behalf of the State of Illinois, thank you for your service.”

General Boyd, who grew up on Chicago’s South Side, received his second star promotion during a ceremony at the Carver Military

Academy in Chicago, where Lieutenant Governor Juliana Stratton officiated.

“The promotion of Rodney Boyd to Major General is a tremendous milestone for the Illinois National Guard and a major step forward for our state,” said Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton. “As we turn to the voices of leaders and trailblazers this Black History Month, I’m proud to raise up General Boyd for making his mark and contributing to this chapter of American History. His leadership and dedication to service has built a legacy that will inspire future generations to reach new heights.”

General Boyd expressed feeling humbled and honored to be promoted to Major General. He said officers like Brig. Gen. (retired) Alicia Tate-Nadeau, the highest-ranking female officer in the history of the Illinois National Guard, and Lt. Col. (retired) Tammy Duckworth, who is now in the U.S. Senate and helped confirm his promotion, have helped pave the way for him as well as many future Illinois National Guard leaders.

He also pointed to Brig. Gen. Walt Whitfield, who commanded the 33rd

Separate Infantry Brigade and was the last Black general in the Illinois National Guard before General Boyd, and Brig. Gen. Richard Jones who lent his name to the General Jones Armory on the South Side of Chicago, established the integrated 178th Infantry Regiment out of the all-Black “Fighting” 8th Infantry Regiment, and served as the U.S. Ambassador to Liberia.

“I stand on the shoulders of giants to achieve this second star. There are many minority leaders who have made their mark on the proud history of the Illinois National Guard. Seeing someone that looks like you in the upper echelons can serve as an inspiration. A historic achievement like this never belongs to one person. I have my family to thank, especially Darlene, my wife of 32 years who has inspired and supported me through all the deployments and military commitments,” said General Boyd. “I have multiple mentors to thank, including my boss, Major General Neely. I have many teachers and role models to thank – people who motivated a kid from the South Side of Chicago to find success in life. I’m also grateful for many historical



leaders in the Illinois National Guard and the military. I see tremendous talent coming up through the ranks now. There are leaders from many different backgrounds. It is the job of senior leaders to mentor and develop their replacements. I see that happening at all levels in the Illinois National Guard.”

“Recruiting and retaining great talent that is reflective of the diversity of the State of Illinois is an important strategic goal for the Illinois National Guard,” said Major General Rich Neely, the Adjutant General of Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National Guard. “Rodney Boyd was chosen to Command the Illinois Army National Guard because he was the best officer for the job, period. General officers are developed over many years. This promotion reflects his hard work and talent as well as the progress the Illinois National Guard has made and continues to make in developing all its Soldiers and Airmen to their fullest potential.”

General Boyd grew up on the South Side of Chicago, often passing by the General Jones Armory and participating in the Bud Billiken



Parade as a child. Seeing the service members parade by inspired him to join the Marine Corps in 1982. After completing his obligation as a Marine, he joined the Illinois Army National Guard.

In August 1990, he received his commission as a second lieutenant from the Officer Candidate School at Camp Lincoln, Springfield. He took on progressively more challenging staff and command assignments in logistics, plans, and operations, and deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan, and Kuwait. He commanded the 1644th Transportation Company, the 405th Brigade Support Battalion, and the 108th Sustainment Brigade. His first assignment as a general officer was as the Assistant Chief

of Staff J4 (Joint Logistics Wartime) for U.S. Forces Korea. Governor JB Pritzker appointed him as the Assistant Adjutant General – Army of the Illinois National Guard and Commander of the Illinois Army National Guard on July 1, 2021.

In addition to his military achievements, General Boyd worked in law enforcement for decades. He served with the Bellwood Police Department for 23 years, working his way up from a patrolman in 1990 to the Chief of Police from

2011 to 2013. After retiring from the Bellwood Police Department, General Boyd worked as a vice president for operations for JP Morgan Bank and as a supervisory criminal investigator for the Northwestern University Police Department. He worked for AASKI Technology Inc., which supports the Army National Guard Mission Command Training Support Program, prior to being appointed Commander of the Illinois Army National Guard.

General Boyd has been a lifelong learner. His professional military education includes the U.S. Army War College, the Joint Combined Warfighter Course, and the Dual-Status Commander Course. He holds a bachelor’s degree in Criminology from Northern Illinois University, a Master of Arts degree in Education from the University of Illinois at Chicago, and a second Master of Arts degree in Strategic Studies from the U.S. Army War College.

While he will be the first minority Major General in the Illinois National Guard, he will not be the last. “I see tremendous talent coming up through the ranks now. There are leaders from many different backgrounds,” Boyd said. “It is the job of senior leaders to mentor and develop their replacements. I see that happening at all levels in the Illinois National Guard.”





Headed South

933rd MPs deploy to U.S. Southern Command
By Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

FORT SHERIDAN, ILL. – Friends, family and Illinois Army National Guard leaders, gathered Jan. 17 at the Armed Forces Reserve Center at Fort Sheridan, Illinois, to bid farewell to approximately 110 Soldiers serving with the 933rd Military Police Company who are deploying for a security mission in support of the U.S. Southern Command.



“Every now and then in your career, our troops get the opportunity to do something special,” said Brig. Gen. Rodney Boyd, Assistant Adjutant General – Army and Commander of the Illinois Army National Guard. “The 933rd Military Police Company is getting ready to do something special.”

Boyd thanked the families of the Soldiers for the support they give loved ones.

“Without you and your support, our Soldiers are not able to complete the missions we need them to accomplish,” Boyd said.

Boyd encouraged the Soldiers to remember two things, people first in all you do and winning matters.

“Our Soldiers sign up for a reason and when they’re gone on deployment things happen,” he said. “As leaders in this organization we’ll walk our Soldiers through those things. If we get that right, we’ll have a successful mission.”

Boyd reminded the unit that by doing the right things and taking care of each other at the end of the day, the 933rd Soldiers will win together.

“Your leaders will hold you accountable, but at the same time hold your leaders accountable because this is a two-way street,” he said.

He also encouraged the Soldiers to take advantage of the opportunity to do things they normally don’t have the opportunity to do.

“I encourage you to continue your



military education, take a college course, or even save some money,” he said. “Take advantage of this rare opportunity to do those things and come back to your families in the right place.”



Boyd presented Capt. Cameron McCreery, commander of the 933rd Military Police Company, an Illinois state flag on behalf of Gov. J.B. Pritzker, reminding the Soldiers Illinois supports them and awaits their safe return.

McCreery took a few moments to thank the families of the Soldiers.

“You are all amazing and it is not obvious that we could begin to accomplish any part of our mission without your love and support,” he said. “While we are preparing to depart, we will always be drawn back to you.”

Sr. Leader Symposium aims to shield leaders from the trappings of power

By Lt. Col. Brad Leighton, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

SPRINGFIELD, ILL. – The Illinois National Guard held its Leader Symposium at the 183rd Wing in Springfield, Illinois, on Jan. 27. The day-long symposium for the Illinois National Guard's senior officers and NCOs featured three experts on being ethical leaders: The Inspector General of the National Guard Bureau Laurel Hummel, University of North Carolina Professor Alison Fragale, and FranklinCovey Senior Consultant Kim Jabbar.



Hummel discussed 'Why Leaders Fail.' She said that most military senior leader misconduct is limited to sex, money, abuse of their power or position, and violations of government ethics regulations with alcohol often being a single triggering or compounding factor.

She discussed how senior leaders will often rationalize ethical failings and ethical problems often start small and then build. Hummel identified multiple senior leader "risk factors" such as stress and high operations tempo, social isolation, hubris caused by "rock star status," and a fear of failure. "Preventive measures" included understanding the psychology and science behind ethics, self-awareness, good reporting and inspections,

an appreciation of "what you have to lose," establishing good ethical habits and considering your personal moral compass, which could be another leader or spiritual figure.

Hummel warned that "good honorable people, senior leaders of character, can and do fail." When they do fail, often their actions make no sense to even themselves "once the fog lifts." These leaders almost always implicate subordinates in their misconduct and ask those subordinates to sacrifice their own integrity to cover up their own misconduct.

"Each of us can improve our character and ethical fitness through honest reflection, self-education and self-training," she said.

Fragale discussed the 'Psychology of Power.' Ethical lapses, she said, is often not because of inherent character flaws, but rather because "all good eggs can go bad under the right circumstances."

Hierarchy is not only necessary in an organization, it improves performance, she said. Feeling powerful improves cognitive abstraction, executive functioning, self-presentation, creativity, speaking up against incivility and your golf game, she added.



FranklinCovey Senior Consultant Kim Jabbar discusses trust during the senior leader symposium.

However, feeling powerful can also lead to people acting impulsively and to rationalize that behavior, Fragale said.

She cited studies that showed that leaders who do not receive candid feedback, or who are "chronically low power" and are then given power, or who are threatened or insecure are often at risk for abusing their position.



University of North Carolina Professor Alison Fragale discusses the psychology of power during the senior leader symposium.

We can reap the benefits of hierarchy and minimize unethical and undesirable behavior by being aware that we are hardwired to be more disinhibited, impulsive and egocentric as we gain power, Fragale said. People can also suppress their natural tendencies through culture, norms and procedures that shape the desired behavior if the circumstances are right, she said.

Jabbar discussed trust as vital to successful organizations and people and how leaders can increase trust in their organizations and personal lives. She said that high-trust people engage in 13 behaviors: talk straight, demonstrate respect, create transparency, right wrongs, show loyalty, deliver results, get better, confront reality, clarify expectations, practice accountability, listen first, keep commitments, and extend trust.

Ethics and character are foundational to trust, she said.

Prayer Bank

Former Banker turned chaplain promoted to lieutenant colonel

By Lt. Col. Brad Leigton, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs



Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Vince Lambert poses with South Holland, Illinois' contingent of the Assembly of God's Royal Rangers at his promotion ceremony.

CHICAGO –The Illinois Army National Guard's Deputy Command Chaplain Vince Lambert of Evergreen Park was nearing 40, was running two banks, had a master's degree in business administration and nearly 20 years of experience in finance and investment when he decided to become an Army Chaplain.

Lambert, who wasn't even in the Army when he was called to service as an Army Chaplain, is now Chaplain (Lieutenant Colonel)

Lambert after being promoted from major during a Feb. 2 ceremony at the Illinois Army National Guard's historic General Richard L. Jones Armory on the South Side of Chicago.

"It was a surprising pivot," said LaTonia Lambert, who has been married to Vince for nearly 28 years but has only been an Army Chaplain's wife for half that time. "It was something he really wanted to do. It has been a journey that we are both excited to be on."

Lambert started his relationship with God much sooner than his relationship with the U.S. Army. He has 28 years of civilian ministry experience in various roles including pastor, associate pastor, and church planter. In addition to his bachelor's degree in finance from Chicago State University and MBA from North Park University, he has a master's degree in religion and urban ministry from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, a master's degree in human services counseling



Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Vince Lambert's wife of 28 years, Latonia, and son, John, pin his new silver oak leaf rank onto his uniform.

(marriage and family) from Liberty University and is in the final stages of a doctorate of ministry from the Trinity Theological Seminary in Pastoral Care and Counseling.

Still, when he first started with the 2nd Battalion, 122nd Field Artillery Regiment in 2009, his battalion officer-in-charge was worried about getting a new chaplain whose only Army experience was the Chaplain Basic Officer Course. The unit had just returned from Afghanistan where three of its Soldiers were killed in action and several more wounded.

"These were battle-hardened Soldiers," said Col. Lenny Williams, the battalion officer-in-charge back then and now the Illinois Army National Guard Chief of Staff. "It wasn't an easy assignment, but he was remarkable from the get-go."

Williams joked about having to

"Army-up" his new chaplain on a couple of occasions, but said Lambert just connected with these Soldiers who were adjusting to life after combat. Williams praised Lambert's candor and transparency, his servant leadership, his credibility and how he earned the "unbridled trust, faith, and confidence" of the Soldiers and the leadership.

"It is just who he is. He has a knack for doing it," Williams said.

"God had a calling for me to be an Army chaplain," Lambert said. "But at the time, I didn't know the difference between a corporal and a colonel."

Chaplain (Colonel) Steve Foster, the Illinois National Guard's Command Chaplain – and Chaplain Lambert's fulltime supervisor – said Lambert was a "respectful truth-teller."



"He will tell you if you're jacked up. He's told me when I'm jacked up!" Foster said. But Lambert also listens and takes and incorporates constructive criticism, he added.

"He has no personal agenda," Williams said. He prioritizes the greatest good, puts people first, and genuinely cares about people, Williams added.

Lambert said he was always interested in being an Army Chaplain, but he was earning his daily bread by managing two banks. It was 2007-2008 financial crisis that finally led him to heed the call to service and join the Illinois Army National Guard. "There are always ups and downs in the financial market, but that was it for me. I almost missed the age to join. I was 39 and I think the maximum age to join as a Chaplain was 41."

Since that time, he has 'Army'd up,' quite a bit.

After serving as the chaplain for the



2-122nd Field Artillery, he served as the 634th Brigade Support Battalion chaplain, the 108th Multifunctional Medical Battalion chaplain, the brigade chaplain for the 108th Sustainment Brigade and then the 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team. In 2020, he deployed for a year to Ukraine as the Task Force Illini chaplain at the Joint Multinational Training Group Ukraine. Now the ILARNG's Deputy Command Chaplain and as a full-time support chaplain, he has responsibility for all 10,000 Soldiers in the Illinois Army National Guard.

His Army courses include the Chaplain Officer Basic Course, the Captain's Career Course, the Intermediate Level Education, and the Operational Religious Leader Course. He is also an adjunct faculty member at Moody Bible Institute, Trinity International University, in the MBA program at North Park University, DeVry University's Keller Graduate School of Management and Northwest University. Lambert also has several certifications in marriage and family counseling and pastoral care as well as suicide intervention.

In his remarks, Lambert thanked God, his mentors, and his wife.

"Without LaTonia, I could literally do nothing," he said. They have two sons, John, who is in middle school, and Joshua, who is in college.



Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Vince Lambert gets a photo with the Chicago Embassy Church Network's Joseph Banks during Lambert's promotion.

Department of Labor's VETS director selected as Illinois Air National Guard Senior Enlisted Leader

By Lt. Col. Brad Leighton, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs



SPRINGFIELD, Ill. – Chief Master Sergeant Marlon Burton of Park Forest, the senior enlisted leader of the 182nd Mission Support Group based in Peoria and the U.S. Department of Labor's Illinois State Director of the Veterans' Employment Training Service (VETS), has been selected as the next Illinois Air National Guard State Command Chief Master Sergeant.

Burton will replace State Command Chief Master Sergeant Jennifer Aurora of Bloomington, who is retiring from the U.S. Air Force in March after more than 34 years of service. Aurora has been the Illinois Air National Guard's senior enlisted leader since July 2020.

"State Command Chief Master Sergeant Aurora has done an outstanding job leading the enlisted force and addressing the concerns of Airmen during one of the most challenging periods in the history of the Illinois Air National Guard,"

said Brig. Gen. Dan McDonough, the Assistant Adjutant General – Air of the Illinois National Guard and Commander of the Illinois Air National Guard. "Chief Master



Sergeant Burton has dedicated his life to helping and mentoring others and will continue Chief Master Sergeant Aurora's legacy of excellence in all we do."

Burton said he was grateful for Aurora's mentorship. "She has been an inspiration. She's a kind spirit with great communication skills who is always helping others."

"Chief Burton has a unique presence when he walks into the room that puts the Airmen at ease and fosters an immediate feeling of trust. His passion for mentorship will support Airmen and the State of Illinois in achieving their best," Aurora said.

As Illinois State Director of VETS, Burton directs many diverse programs for service members and veterans throughout the state including the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) and the Hire Vets Medallion Program (HVMP) and works with other state and federal



agencies to advance resources for service members and veterans.

In addition, he runs a consulting business with his wife of 20 years, Jenna, that assists companies with leadership, staff development, team building, communication and offers courses on diversity, equity, inclusion, and access, unconscious bias, micro-aggressions, goal mapping, emotional intelligence, and coaching.

Burton said there is great crossover between his civilian work and his military job, which includes mentoring Airmen and advising commanders on all enlisted matters. Among the first things he plans to do as the State Command Chief Master Sergeant is “get out to each of the units,” he said. “I want to let the Airmen know that I’m here for them. I’m here to help them achieve their goals, whether those are civilian or military.”

He also said he plans to reach out to the family readiness groups across the Illinois Air National Guard and listen to family concerns and aspirations. As the Command Chief Master Sergeant of the 182nd Mission Support Group, Burton established a great relationship with the unit’s family readiness leader, Kim Crouch. He aims to establish similar relationships across the Air National Guard. “Military life can be challenging for families. It is important to recognize those challenges and the resources that are out there that can help,” he said.

Military life has its challenges including deployments, he said. Burton has deployed to Germany, Saudi Arabia and Jordan. But military service also offers opportunities and resources for Airmen and their families. “The majority of our Airmen are traditional, serving one weekend a month and two weeks each year. Many are just starting out in civilian careers as well as their military careers. Leaders can help them navigate their lives – help them see who they are and where they want to be.”

Service in the Illinois Air National Guard can often enhance civilian careers, he added. “It can really catapult any career.”

Burton, who grew up in the south

suburbs of Chicago, has a passion for mentoring and helping others. In the military, he started in security forces then transitioning to safety and then human resources. On the civilian side, he served as an Illinois Department of Corrections senior parole agent in the Chicago area for 10 years, managing a caseload of about 150 parolees, referring them to addiction and mental health treatment and trying to chart a productive path forward. As a parole officer, he learned to focus on those he did help and not to give up on those who fell into the traps of a rough environment. “There can be burn out because of the challenges in the community and the high recidivism, with many sad outcomes. But you learn to keep trying, to keep helping and you think about those individuals who were able to find success despite the adversity.”

After his service as a parole officer, Burton worked for 10 years with the U.S. Marshals Service before starting his job with the U.S. Department of Labor in July 2020. All of his civilian careers have involved working in the communities, something that helps him do his part in drawing people into military service. “My goal is to get out into the community – to be a representative of the Illinois Air National Guard.”

He said retention is as important as recruiting. “I tell people that are thinking of ending military service to take a pause and look at all your options. To maybe look at other jobs in the military or even other services. There are a lot of benefits to staying with us.”

Burton said he learned to be resilient by balancing careers, family concerns and prioritizing responsibilities for over 25 years. He and Jenna raised four children; Alexa, now a kindergarten teacher; Anthony, a police officer; Amari, a senior at the University of Illinois at Urbana/Champaign and a member of the 182nd Airlift Wing; and 16-year-old Aubrey, a junior at Southland College Prep Charter High School in Richton Park.





FLYING OFF

The 106th and 935th Aviation Battalions deploy for CENTCOM mission

By Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

PEORIA, Ill. – Approximately 190 Soldiers from the Illinois Army National Guard’s 1st Assault Helicopter Battalion, 106th Aviation Regiment, based in Peoria, and Company B, 935th Aviation Support Battalion, based in Kankakee, mobilized for an overseas mission to the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility in a ceremony Feb. 7 at the 182nd Airlift Wing, in Peoria.

During the deployment the unit will provide aviation support to U.S. forces in the Middle East.

“In its 300-year history, every member of the Illinois National Guard has been always ready, always there to defend our homeland,” said Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker. “To the Soldiers of the 1st Assault Helicopter Battalion, 106th Aviation Regiment, you make us proud, including by standing at the forefront of innovation by field-testing the UH-60V Blackhawk helicopter. Your willingness helped enhance our military capabilities to take us into the future.”

The UH-60V Blackhawk helicopter is an upgrade to the Blackhawk helicopter currently used by the U.S. Army, the UH-60L, with a comprehensive cockpit redesign which replaces the legacy analog instrumentation with a fully open, digital, and integrated avionic suite.

Pritzker also thanked the family, friends, and employers of the 106th’s Soldiers.

“Thank you to those who toiled in the background doing what is necessary to ensure the 106th was ready for this deployment,” he said. “The Illinois National Guard would

not be able to complete its missions, from combat to emergency response, without your sacrifices. On behalf of Illinois, we are eternally grateful.”

Illinois Lt. Gov. Juliana Stratton told the Soldiers it was an honor to join family and friends to show her gratitude and commitment to supporting their service.

“Thank you for everything you do for our nation, state and our



communities," she said. "Many of you deploying today have been down this road before. The 106th Aviation Battalion has been called to serve many times over the years for both its federal mission and its state mission, responding to emergencies wherever you are needed."

Stratton said for many of the Soldiers and their families, this deployment is a familiar turn on the road of life, but she wanted to remind the Soldiers and their families, whether it's a first deployment or just one more deployment, there are resources available for both Soldiers and their families if they are in need.

"Both during the deployment and after you return, these resources are in place to help you," she said. "There are nearly 200 organizations with resources available to offer a no wrong door system of support. I'm proud that Illinois has a robust community dedicated to support our military community and our veterans."



Stratton said the most important resource is the Soldier.

"You, your fellow Soldiers and families reach out to your family readiness groups, your chaplain network, your leadership team," she said. "If you need assistance, reach out. We have seen what you contribute to our nation, and we want to give back."

Stratton offered her heartfelt gratitude to the deploying Soldiers and their families.

"Being apart is not easy. I hope you draw on your faith to see you through," she said. "Just know we



stand with you and always will."

Maj. Gen. Rich Neely, the Adjutant General of Illinois, and Commander of the Illinois National Guard, thanked everyone for attending the ceremony.

"We've recognized a lot of dignitaries and important people today," he said. "But the most important people are the Soldiers standing in front of us who will deploy to the Middle East and support this mission and our country. The rest of us are just here to recognize and honor your amazing service and what you are about to do as you carry the flag of freedom around the world."

Neely reminded the Soldiers the Illinois National Guard celebrates its 300th year of service in 2023 and they are a part of that 300-year history.

"It's humbling if you think about the number of Soldiers and Airmen who have deployed to defend this great nation, both at home and abroad," Neely said. "The 106th has led the innovation of the UH-60V, not only being the first unit to field the helicopter, but also the first unit to deploy with the helicopter."

Neely said the Illinois National Guard must continue to lead the nation with tech skills.

"That's exactly what you have done, and you set the bar very high," he said. "We are very proud of each of you. You have answered

the call because this mission is very important. Each of you truly epitomize the value of the Soldier and what it is to be a member of the National Guard, men and women who protect their neighbors and defend their nation."

Neely said family is important to the Soldiers' success.

"We could not do this job without their support," he said. "To the families, you must continue, so it will be you who will pick up the load of your Soldier."

Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, Assistant Adjutant General - Army and Commander of the Illinois Army National Guard, challenged the deploying Soldiers to use the time overseas to better themselves.

"Every now and then you get to do something amazing in your career. Today is that opportunity to go downrange and do something great for this nation," Boyd said. "Challenge yourself to come back a better person. Most importantly, keep the lines of communication open to your family. Be safe in all you do but don't get too comfortable. You're ready for this mission."

Lt. Col. Jason Celletti, Commander of the 106th Aviation Regiment, said it has been nearly 20 years since the battalion left for its first deployment overseas.

"Task Force Blackhorse has answered the call time and time again in the history of this battalion," he said. "I couldn't be more proud of the professionalism of the Soldiers here today."

Celletti said he couldn't guarantee there will be no challenges throughout the deployment, but is confident in the unit's ability to overcome any challenge.

"The Blackhorse can work through any challenge, as we have the past two years and many more times before then," he said.

Celletti thanked the families for their support.

"You all are a vital part of the Blackhorse team. I urge you to reach out to the family readiness groups and the other resources available," he said. "We are all in this together."



A.C.E. O M B A T

126th Air Refueling Wing takes part in Agile Combat Exercise '23

By Senior Master Sgt. Ken Stephens, 126th Air Refueling Wing Public Affairs

SCOTT AIR FORCE BASE, Ill. -The 126th Operations Group, located at Scott Air Force Base, Illinois, deployed 44 personnel to Hunter Army Airfield, Georgia, Feb. 6-10, 2023, for Agile Combat

Employment training to increase survivability while generating combat power. The KC-135 Total Force aerial refueling unit, assigned to the Illinois Air National Guard, used two of their Stratotankers to exercise the Air Force's ACE concept for a week to expand their aircrew and support personnel's ability to conduct operations at contested and degraded locations.

"This exercise was critical for our members to train in an environment where they must self-sufficiently operate to ensure we are ready to respond to any contingency, anytime, anywhere," said Lt. Col. Lee Rinella, 108th Air Refueling Squadron commander.

This concept promotes the idea of multi-capable Airmen, who, according to an Air Force doctrine note, are trained in expeditionary skills and capable of accomplishing tasks outside of their core Air Force specialty.

The event included representatives from all three of the group's assigned squadrons, the 108th Air Refueling Squadron, the 906th Air Refueling Squadron, and the 126th Operations Support Squadron.

"We're taking our aircrew and putting them outside of their comfort zone," said Lt. Col. Brent Smith, Chief of Standards and Evaluations for the group.



"We've taken away all the comforts that crews normally have access to," Smith said. "This is forcing them to plan every single mission themselves. The crews are getting together the day prior and planning their mission. They're doing self-plan, self-file, they're finding their own weather products, they're calling the receivers themselves, and they're going out and they're doing the mission."

In addition to their own mission planning, crews are learning how to launch and recover KC-135s without the benefit of trained maintenance personnel.

"This allows us to take some of those fundamental core tasks that a maintenance crew chief would do as far as servicing oil and hydraulic

fluids, or putting fuel on the aircraft, and help the aircrew have more knowledge. It allows us to do those things in an environment where we may not have maintainers with us to keep the mission moving forward," said Master Sgt. Ashley Bradford, an instructor and evaluator of the in-flight refueling specialists for the group.

Bradford stressed the importance of this training.

"It means that at a moment's notice we are able to pick up, move anywhere that we could possibly land our aircraft, and be able to still do our job, maintain the aircraft, and turn and continue to do operations, if necessary," said Bradford.

One of the few tools they did bring was a Starlink satellite internet unit, provided by the 375th Air Mobility Wing, to do a proof-of-concept test for ensuring connectivity during degraded command and control environments.

"We took that unit and plugged it into the power of the KC-135 and we set up a Starlink on the ramp. By doing that we were able to successfully establish connectivity with a satellite and link up a mission planning computer as well as several iPads in order to download mission related data," Smith said.

This can provide vital command and control communication updates from higher authorities at places that wouldn't have such access, according to Smith.

In addition to mission operation planning and aircraft maintenance, the team practiced their Aircrew Contamination Control Area procedures that assist aircrew who may be contaminated with chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear matter in removing their gear. This training was provided by a multi-capable Airmen team led by the aircrew flight equipment shop.

Senior Master Sgt. Matt Luebeck, the superintendent of aircrew flight equipment, also had his Airmen train in new skills in an effort to be truly multi-capable.

"We are one of the support entities and I think it's beneficial for the Airmen to understand that we may be pulled into situations where

we're doing things that we're not used to as well. We may have to marshal in an aircraft, we may have to help a crew chief replace a part, we may have to refuel if necessary," said Luebeck.

While some of these skills aren't new to the aircrew, they aren't regularly practiced. This type of training ensures they stay current.

"We're taking the skills that we know they have, but they're a little rusty, we're sharpening that blade and making sure that they're fine-tuned to do these tasks," said Smith.

With the Air Force always involved in world-wide operations,



whether exercises with allied nations, real world operations or humanitarian relief efforts, the 126th Operations Group is prepared for their next mission, wherever it lands them.

"In the future we may find ourselves in a situation where aircrew members are servicing the aircraft themselves, something that we're not use to. We're trained to it, but we don't ever do it, so we're out here actually doing that task to make sure that we honed our skills for the future," said Smith, provided with feedback after each level."

Zoerner said if the unit scores high enough in the competition, or the judges recommend it moves, to the next level in the competition, they are able to make changes to the packet before it is sent forward.

"Battery B will be competing in the Army-level competition against active duty units," Zoerner said. "We are incredibly proud to participate in the AAME competition. We have shown that a combat arms unit with no internal maintenance can and will do great competing in the AAME."



FIRED UP

ILARNG cooking team turns up the heat with national award on the line

Story by Cpl. Justin Malone, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

Photos by Staff Sgt. Gerardo Valdes, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

PARIS, Ill. -It's dark. The sun has yet to rise on a cold February morning. Wind is gusting across the open fields sending chills up the backs of Soldiers who ignore the cold breeze and frosted tree branches. Soldiers are moving fast paced from every direction carrying heavy boxes and large barrels as they race against the clock to complete their mission. Their goal - to feed and fuel the Soldiers of the Illinois National Guard and win the U.S. Army's coveted 55th annual Philip A. Connelly Award for excellence in food service. Soldiers with the Illinois Army National Guard's Detachment 3, 733rd Quartermaster Platoon have already been deemed the best in the Illinois Army National Guard and in the top four in the nation. Now the knives - and spoons, forks and spatulas - are out for the national competition. The 733rd is competing against worthy opponents from

Iowa, Ohio and Hawaii.

The Army's Philip A. Connelly Award Program is run with the support of the National Restaurant Association. It was established in 1968 to recognize excellence in Army Food Service. The program is named for the late Philip A. Connelly, former president of the International Food Service Executives Association.

The 733rd Quartermaster Soldiers refused to talk smack about their fellow Midwest Hawkeyes and Buckeyes competition. And - given the frozen tundra of the Illinois Army National Guard's Paris-based Field Maintenance Facility on Feb. 4 and Feb. 5 - many wished they were in Hawaii for the evaluation. But, with the Connelly Award scheduled to be presented in Chicago later this year, the Illinois Army National Guard Soldiers figure they have the homefield advantage.

The winners - most likely the Illinois Soldiers - will hoist the Connelly Award's prestigious Silver Cup over their heads - and receive specialized training at the award ceremony in the Windy City.

Samuel Stanovich from the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation and a competition judge





has been involved with the Philip A. Connelly Program for over 15 years. "We've seen the power of the program," said Stanovich. "We need great culinarians. If you feed people better, they perform better, which helps support the mission of the military. This program is worth all of the volunteer time in the world to better prepare our Soldiers for service."

The Philip A. Connelly is a program that challenges the skills and capabilities of the whole Army culinary specialist. It's not just about preparing the meal - although the meals the 733rd Quartermaster prepared were absolutely gourmet. The menu included a scrumptious butternut squash soup, baked creole chicken quarters spiced to perfection over Southwest barley and brown rice pilaf. Side dishes were sauteed cabbage with bacon and a fresh cucumber and onion salad. For dessert - American-favorite strawberry shortcake and fresh fruit.

But there's a lot more that goes into it other than the cooking, said Chief Warrant Officer 3 Melissa Downey, the senior food service advisor for the Illinois Army

National Guard's 108th Sustainment Brigade. The Soldiers are expected to deliver the right equipment to the right place, setup and maintain equipment and then break everything down.

During the setup, the culinarians are responsible for setting up the mobile kitchen trailer and the field sanitation center, to cook the food and clean the dishes in the field. The environments must be setup quickly, correctly, cleanly and you better not go past the time limit. Once

facilities are built, Soldiers must quickly prepare and serve meals to troops in both garrison and field environments.

The Soldiers must also keep safety and sanitation in mind at all times, Downey added.

The 733rd Quartermaster's 5-person team of culinary experts was ready to go after months of preparation and after having already burned through previous rounds of competition.

The path to the top has not been an easy one, or, to quote the 1970s rock band Queen, "It's been no bed of roses, no pleasure cruise."

The team started the competition as the food service section of the Paris, Illinois-based 1544th Transportation Company and rolled through the state and regional rounds as part of the 1544th





Transportation Company, 232nd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 108th Sustainment Brigade. They advanced to the Final Four after a legendary performance in the May 2022 regional round. And then the Army implemented force structure changes in August 2022 that knocked culinary specialists out of the transportation unit.

But Staff Sgt. Justin Hill, the head culinarian from the 1544th, kept his band together. Now as Detachment 3 of the newly formed 733rd Quartermaster Platoon, they “mean to go on and on and on and on.” Because they are the champions, my friends.

To get to this level, the Illinois National Guard

was nominated by the National Guard Bureau as one of those four top culinary performers from across the country. At the regional level, they competed against other states on a point system. After that, only four states emerged at the Department of the Army level – four elite culinary teams.

Hill, also a food service program manager for the Illinois Department of Corrections, was proud of the team for getting to the Department of the Army level. “It means a lot to get this far,” said Hill. “You think about all of the hard work that you put in and the time away from our jobs. The learning experience was extremely valuable for the Soldiers.”

Hill also said that their chain of command supported them through the competition and Army transition.

“We want Soldiers to embrace the program as we continue to modernize our efforts,” said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Tollie Yoder, the Senior Army National Guard Food Advisor, and an inspector for the competition. “It’s a great time to be in food service and this is an exclamation point as to what we can do and what we provide and to showcase some of our true culinarians and the great things that they have been doing in the force.”

After the long day of competition, Cpl. Madhi Ina, a culinary specialist and the

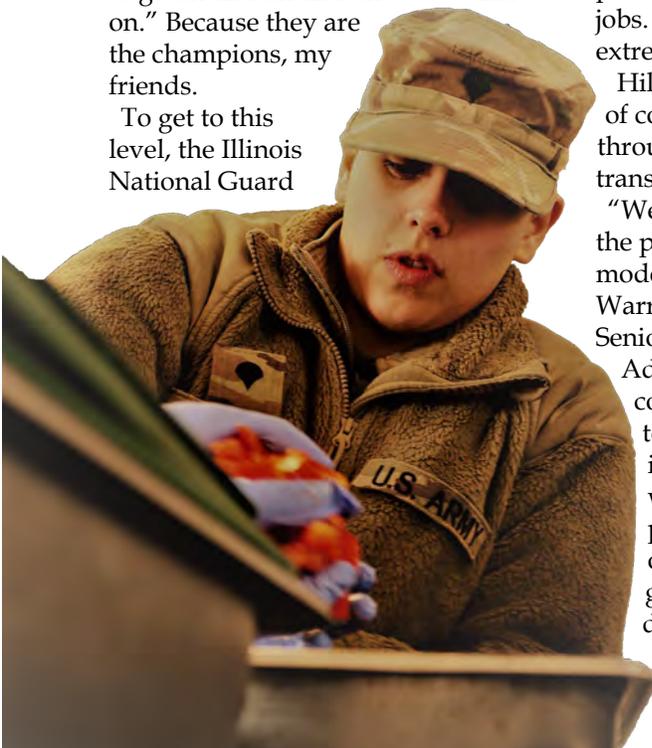
team baker, was excited to have participated in such a great event.

“This was a great learning experience,” Madhi said. “I want to go to school to be a baker and looking to start a career as a baker. I love culinary and making meals, but I fell in love with baking a little bit more after I joined the Army.”



According to Madhi, this experience brought her one step closer to learning more about the culinary arts and she hopes to one day open up her own café.

Now that the Illinois Army National Guard has completed their portion of the competition, the judges will inspect the last two competitors before announcing (Illinois as) the winner and (one of the other states as the) runner-up in May.



Illinois Dept. of Veterans Affairs and Illinois National Guard honor veterans of the Persian Gulf War

By Sgt. Trent Fouche, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. –Several Illinois veterans came to the Illinois Department of Veteran Affairs’ Desert Storm Remembrance Ceremony to remember the service of those who made the ultimate sacrifice in the Persian Gulf War and to commemorate a conflict that reshaped the U.S. military. The ceremony was held at the Illinois State Military Museum on Camp Lincoln, the Illinois National Guard’s headquarters in Springfield on Feb. 28. The date marked the 32nd anniversary of the cease fire announcement of the Persian Gulf War.

Lt. Col. (retired) Renysha Brown, the keynote speaker, served in the Illinois Army National Guard for

28 years. During her career, she deployed to Saudi Arabia in support of Desert Storm and Desert Shield.

“I enlisted into the Army on March 16, 1989 as a

gift to my mother to help pay for college,” Brown said. “One of the biggest fears I had speaking with my recruiter was potentially going to war, something he ensured me was unlikely to happen. I can remember August 2, 1990, when Iraq invaded



Kuwait. My company commander had a meeting in the day room, with the platoon sergeant, informing us that we had less than fourteen days to pack and make sure that had our personal affairs in order. I was then calling my mother on a payphone to inform her that I was going overseas.”

Desert Storm, the final phase of the Persian Gulf War, was initiated against Iraq with United Nations authorization by a coalition force from 39 nations. Their mission was to expel Iraqi forces that had invaded Kuwait.

During the conflict, 18 service members from Illinois would pay the ultimate sacrifice.

“This conflict had a significant impact on not just Illinois, but our country as a whole,” said Brig. Gen. Mark Alessia, Director of the Illinois National Guard’s Joint Staff.

“The military had several small engagements during the 1980s, in Panama, Libya and Grenada, but had not mobilized this large of a force since the Vietnam era.”

Illinois State Rep. Stephanie Kifowit, a Marine Corps Veteran, thanked service members for their sacrifice. “Serving our country, whether in peacetime or war still has risks,” Kifowit said. “Illinois values and appreciates all of our veterans and everything that they do, as well as

the current service members who call Illinois home.”

After returning from Saudi Arabia, Brown would continue to grow as a leader and give back to other service members and their families, deploying in support of Iraqi Freedom II and working in various capacities such as a management analyst in the Illinois National Guard’s United States Property and Fiscal Office and as an assistant professor of military science and regional coordinator for Lincoln’s Challenge Academy, an Illinois National Guard quasi-military program for youth facing challenges completing high school. She retired from the Illinois Army National Guard in 2017.

“The bonds I made with my brothers and sisters in arms will never be broke or forgotten,” Brown said.



Glen Carbon Officer selected to command the Illinois National Guard's 126th Air Refueling Wing

By Lt. Col. Brad Leighton, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. –Colonel Steven Olson of Glen Carbon has been selected as the next Commander of the Illinois Air National Guard's 126th Air Refueling Wing based at Scott Air Force Base.

"Colonel Olson has been filling this vital role for several months and already doing a tremendous job," said Brig. Gen. Dan McDonough, the Assistant Adjutant General – Air of the Illinois National Guard and Commander of the Illinois Air National Guard. "Steve was selected from multiple well-qualified candidates within the state."

Colonel Olson serves as the 126th Air Refueling Wing Vice Commander, with several prior positions in the 126th Air Refueling Wing including the Operations Group Commander, Air Refueling Squadron Commander, Director of Operations, Director of Training and Deputy Chief of Scheduling. He has also served in wing staff positions including in plans and as the Crisis Action Team Director. In addition, he served as the Commander of the 506th Expeditionary Air Refueling Squadron, Andersen AFB, Guam. "It is very humbling and an honor to be selected as the Wing Commander. I could not have made it to this position alone. From my family to my co-workers, everything we accomplish in the Air Force, we accomplish as a team," Olson said. "We have an outstanding team here that leads the Air Force in so many ways. For my family, Sara, and our three children; Katelyn, Ryan and Kaylee, I want to thank them personally for allowing me to



continue to serve and for supporting me. Their support and sacrifices though out my military career have been amazing."

General McDonough said the 126th Air Refueling Wing is a top-tier unit thanks to the hard work and dedication of its Airmen.

"The 126th Air Refueling Wing is a high-performing outfit and will continue to excel with the leadership of Colonel Olson," he said. "Our 126th Air Refueling Wing Airmen set the standard for the entire Air Force. The wing has the highest KC-135 mission capable rate and most recently was awarded the 2023 Verne Orr Award."

The U.S. Air Force Association's Verne Orr Award was named in honor of former Secretary of the Air Force Verne Orr and recognizes an Air Force unit that makes the most

effective use of its human resources. Colonel Olson will be responsible for the 126th Air Refueling Wing's approximately 800 Airmen and for the wing's eight KC-135R aircraft. The wing executes worldwide air refueling and airlift operations and supports a wide range of plans. The wing is well known for their excellence. In 2021, the wing received the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award for the third time in a row and the 10th time total. The award is designated for units that have distinguished themselves by exceptionally meritorious service or outstanding achievement that clearly sets the unit above and apart from similar units.

Colonel Olson attended Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. He began his military career as a KC-135 Boom Operator at Fairchild Air Force Base prior to transferring into the 126th Air Refueling Wing at Scott Air Force Base. He graduated from the Academy of Military Science and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in 2003. Upon receiving his commission, Colonel Olson attended undergraduate pilot training. His assignment was to the 108th Air Refueling Squadron, Refueling in 2005 as a KC-pilot. initial flying was to Refueling 126th Air Wing, as a 135E





Sherman Soldier promoted to Lieutenant Colonel in Illinois Army National Guard

By Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

SPRINGFIELD, III. – Matthew Dodsworth of Sherman, Illinois, was promoted to the rank of lieutenant colonel during a ceremony at Camp Lincoln in Springfield March 3.

Dodsworth grew up in Jacksonville, Illinois, and is a 1999 graduate of Jacksonville Routt Catholic High School. He joined the Illinois Army National Guard as an infantryman on Jan. 20, 1998 and completed basic training in between his junior and senior years of high school.

“Joining the military is something I always wanted to do and the National Guard offered the chance to do that on a parttime basis. And the money for college didn’t hurt,” said Dodsworth.

He holds a bachelor’s degree in nursing from St. John’s College of Nursing and served as an emergency room nurse before becoming a full-time guardsman in 2007. He also holds a Master’s of Business Administration from American Public University.

Dodsworth received a commission in 2004 through the Illinois National Guard’s Officer Candidate School.

He is the Officer in Charge of the 404th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade in Normal, Illinois, where he manages the day-to-day operations of the brigade.

Dodsworth lives in Sherman, Illinois, with his wife Courtney, daughter Norah and son Liam.



Bloomington based Illinois Cyber Protection Team share defensive cyber skills with African partners

By Staff Sgt. Luke Wilson and Capt. Joe Legros, U.S. Army Southern European Task Force, Africa

NAIROBI, Kenya –Illinois Army National Guard Soldiers with the Bloomington-based 176th Cyber Protection Team used their expertise to help African partner nations bolster their cyber defenses during Africa Command’s Justified Accord 23 exercise.

20 countries from four continents to increase partner readiness for peacekeeping missions, crisis response and humanitarian assistance.

It was the first time the defensive cyber elements were included in the exercise. Justified Accord

and it affects both our civilian and military operations,” said U.S. Army Lt. Col. Kendra Tippett, chief of plans and exercises for the chief information officer or “G6” of U.S. Army Southern European Task Force, Africa.

“It is critical we understand the threats in cyberspace and effectively defend against them,” she added. Tippett said multinational forces including Kenya and Uganda focused on key cyber aspects such as incident identification, threat intelligence, artifact collection, containment and eradication. Kenya hosted activities primarily in Nairobi and Isiolo, while Uganda and Djibouti provided venues for additional exercise events.

“Working together in cyberspace with our African partners and sharing our best practices will ultimately enhance our ability to defend against malign actors who seek to degrade critical infrastructure and impede military and civilian operations,” Tippett said.

SETAF-AF, based in Vicenza, Italy, is U.S. Africa Command’s lead agent for planning the Justified Accord exercise series conducted annually in East Africa. SETAF-AF is responsible for coordinating all U.S. Army activities in Africa in support of U.S. Africa Command and U.S. Army Europe and Africa.

Activities include military readiness exercises across the continent, hundreds of security force assistance engagements, crisis response and enduring posture support. These engagements strengthen partner networks in Africa, build partner capacity against regional and global security threats, and provide strategic access for U.S. forces in contingency operations.



“Cyber is one more battlefield domain where defense is critical,” said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Cory Robinson, 176th Cyber Protection Team, Illinois Army National Guard. “The combination of U.S., Ugandan and Kenyan participants showcased the multinational effort to address this emerging threat to African security.” The unit conducted the Defensive Cyber Operations Course in Nairobi, Kenya, during the exercise. Justified Accord ran from Feb. 10 through Feb. 23. It is U.S. Africa Command’s largest exercise in East Africa. Led by U.S. Army Southern European Task Force, Africa, this multinational exercise brings together more than

also included an African Union academics course, a multinational field training exercise, a live-fire exercise, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief projects.

“Cyberspace is an increasingly important aspect of our daily lives



Niantic Soldier retires after more than 20 years of service

By Sgt. 1st Class Bryan Spreitzer, photos by Staff Sgt. Geraldo Valdes, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs



SPRINGFIELD, III. – Friends, family and colleagues gathered Mar. 4, at the Illinois Military Academy in Springfield, Illinois, to recognize Chief Warrant Officer 4 Lindsay Glynn on her retirement. Glynn, a native of Niantic, Illinois, began her military career in 2001 as personnel services specialist for the 623rd Personnel Services Detachment and from early on knew she wanted to be a warrant officer. “It was one of my first drills and I saw Chief David Mavis and saw how he and the other warrants worked and the expertise they had,” said Glynn. “I said to myself then, ‘that’s what I’m going to do.’” Glynn worked in nearly every major command in the Illinois Army National Guard as a personnel services NCO before becoming a warrant officer. After commissioning, Glynn served in a multitude of positions including warrant officer strength manager for the Recruiting and Retention Battalion and as the officer in charge for Joint Force Headquarters. Col. Lenny Williams, Chief of Staff for the Illinois Army National Guard, said Glynn never shied away from the tough jobs and always looked to take care of Soldiers. “Lindsay has had some tough assignments as a warrant, few were probably tougher than her last one as OIC for JFHQ, a unit that’s not only one of the largest, but is also heavy with senior and general officers,” said Williams. “She not only excelled at being the OIC but was an asset to the senior staff and always took care of the Soldiers in the unit.” Glynn thanked those in attendance, but broke from traditional gifts for family, opting to give her mother, sister, and aunts custom tote bags instead of flowers as “flowers die.” For her hard work and dedication over more than 20 years, Glynn was awarded the meritorious service

medal.

“Now is the part of the ceremony where we’re supposed to leave words of wisdom for the rest of you,” said Glynn in closing. “I don’t have any sage advice, except step out of your comfort zone, be willing to volunteer and do things that you may be uncomfortable with. You may fail, but you’ll never miss an opportunity.”



HORN OF PLENTY



404th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade celebrates successful Horn of Africa mission

By Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – The Soldiers of Illinois Army National Guard’s 404th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade celebrated a successful deployment to Africa with their families by holding a welcome home ceremony as part of the unit’s final reintegration event on March 12 at the Parke Regency Hotel and Conference Center in Bloomington, Illinois.

The unit returned to Illinois in November from to Djibouti, Africa, after an 11-month deployment serving as the nucleus staff of Combined Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa.

The 404th MEB deployed in early 2022. During the deployment, they trained and operated with their Djiboutian partners as well as several other allies with forces in the Horn of Africa region.

Djibouti is a strategically important environment. Its proximity to one of the busiest shipping lanes in the world has made it a place of great interest to a lot of different nations who rely on goods being shipped through its waters. There are very few places in the world where different military installations from many different countries are clustered in close proximity, including China’s only overseas military base.

During the deployment, the Illinois National Guard Soldiers worked with military forces from the United Kingdom, France, Japan, Italy, Spain, Kenya, and South Korea as well as Djibouti

The unit monitored and oversaw day-to-day operations and provided situational updates throughout East Africa. It supported operations in Kenya by preparing and conducting training for security forces including explosive ordnance disposal training.

The unit’s liaison officers strengthened the relationships with host nations and foreign partners. Illinois National Guard Soldiers worked directly with multiple Djiboutian military organizations to stand up 10 language computer labs, implement six English discussion groups at Djiboutian military bases, and coordinate dozens of key leader engagements with senior Djiboutian officials. The 404th MEB also planned, coordinated, and executed the East Africa Security Forum, which showcased CJTF-HOA capabilities to ambassadors and defense attachés from 13 East African countries.

The unit coordinated multiple aviation training exercises with French forces including air-to-air refueling and joint missions over coastal waters. The 404th MEB

coordinated U.S. to French training engagements in explosive ordnance disposal, aviation, pararescue, medical, logistics and military working dog teams, among others.

Illinois National Guard liaison Soldiers in Kenya and Ethiopia worked at the U.S. Embassies in Kenya and Ethiopia, and became a vital link between the Department of State and CJTF-HOA, arranging for important meetings and providing logistical support. The 404th MEB also had a liaison officer in Germany, expediting the information flow between CJTF-HOA and its higher headquarters, AFRICOM.

The unit also provided force protection to multiple locations across East Africa for more than 5,000 service members and Department of Defense personnel as well as over a billion dollars in mission critical assets. Illinois National Guard Soldiers conducted threat vulnerability assessments to identify risk to U.S. and Allied force and provided mitigation strategies and equipment.

The 404th MEB Soldiers coordinated with other Army personnel as well as the U.S. Air Force, Marines, and Navy to ensure force protection equipment was moved, installed and maintained and that proper training on the equipment was conducted.

A team of Illinois National Guard Soldiers conducted multiple demonstrations of counter unmanned aerial aircraft capabilities





to foreign partners and dignitaries, re-assuring our partners of U.S. capabilities in this new area of warfare. These demonstrations consisted of drone detections and engagements, The team regularly met with foreign partners to discuss airspace and developments in unmanned aircraft systems around the world.

A team of Illinois National Guard communications experts successfully integrated multiple expeditionary tactical communication terminals to support operations for the CJTF-HOA and the East African Response Force. This ensured reliable voice and data communications. The team also reestablished an important digital connection for strategic operations in Africa.

The communications team conducted more than 60 missions across four countries on the African continent ensuring reliable military communications for U.S. forces. They assisted in personnel recovery communications and



with establishing persistent communication channels with U.S. personnel in Somalia. The team provided communication channels for security at Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti, and forward operating locations in East Africa.

Other 404th MEB Soldiers worked with the Djiboutian government and the U.S. Embassy in Djibouti to enhance an American Corner in Djibouti City and establish English language labs throughout the country. The American Corner is a community building which allows Djiboutian citizens to learn about American culture, classes for resume writing, learning the English language, and learning how to operate computers and 3D printers.

The unit also completed the first ever all digital personnel accountability exercise in East Africa. It processed more than 2,000 individual awards, managed evaluations for more than 300 task force service members, updated more than 30 policies and instruction documents, maintained accountability of more than 1,700 service members and worked with other services and the higher adjacent headquarters to ensure the Task Force has the right positions and people to accomplish its missions.

The Illinois National Guard Soldiers participated in multiple military exercises while deployed including African Lion 23. African Lion 23 was an all-domain, multi-national exercise which focused on preparing forces for large-scale combat operations.

The 404th MEB also has medical experts, including a behavioral health team. The team strengthened and cared for the mental health and resilience of 5,000 service members and Department of Defense personnel while deployed. The Illinois National Guard behavioral health team and a Japanese military behavioral health team shared best practices and techniques. The team also facilitated strategic partnerships with the French Medical Command.

The 404th medical team also assisted a U.S. Air Force civil affairs team and the Djiboutian Ministry

of Agriculture with administering vitamins, deworming medications, and anti-pesticide treatments to over 2,000 goats, hundreds of sheep, and dozens of camels. This helped support relations with the Djiboutian populace and increased health of the animals that are a main source of food and income.

The Illinois National Guard Soldiers also enhanced the Warfighter Recovery Network (WRN) improving the joint trauma care network, integrating trauma assets, facilitating options for evacuation with enroute resuscitative care and validating health service support plans through site assessments.

Illinois National Guard Soldiers also operated the CJTF-HOA protocol team. The team planned



and executed more than 180 distinguished visitor engagements, ranging from hour-long office calls to multi-day extended stays on Camp Lemonnier. The team was tasked with coordinating the involvement of CJTF-HOA leadership and ensuring each visit and ceremony was conducted properly according to both U.S. military and government protocols as well as foreign protocols.

"Our Soldiers did an outstanding job with a vast and complex mission," said Col. Justin Towell, who commanded the 404th MEB and served as the CJTF-HOA Chief of Staff during the deployment. "Illinois can be proud of how our Soldiers protected our nation and represented our state on foreign soil."

Brigade Commander, Brigade Command Sergeant Major receive prestigious MP award

By Lt. Col. Brad Leighton, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – Illinois Army National Guard Col. Justin Towell of Edwardsville, Illinois, and Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Carroll of Mattoon, Illinois, were awarded the prestigious Military Police Regimental Association’s Order of the Marechaussee “to recognize exceptional dedication, competence, and contribution to the Military Police Corps Regiment over an extended period of time” during the 404th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade’s welcome home ceremony on March 12, at the Parke Regency Hotel and Conference Center in Bloomington.

Towell, the brigade commander, and Carroll, the brigade’s sergeant major, are both career Military Police officers.

The Illinois Army National Guard’s 404th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, based in Normal, returned from Djibouti, Africa in late 2022 where it filled the nucleus of Combined Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa. The unit celebrated its successful 11-month deployment as part of its final reintegration event with its families.

The Military Police Regimental Association’s mission is to promote the history and preserve the traditions of the Military Police Corps Regiment while supporting Military Police Leadership, Soldiers, and Families Army-wide. The Order of the Marechaussee recognizes a degree of professionalism, high standards of integrity and morality, and esprit de corps consistent with the long standing history and traditions of the Military Police Regiment.



Springfield Soldier earns “major” promotion

By Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. – Illinois Army National Guard Soldier Anthony McClain, of Springfield, took a “major” step forward in his 27-year military career when he was promoted to major in a ceremony March 17 at the Illinois Military Academy on Camp Lincoln in Springfield.



“You want Soldiers like Tony to achieve these ranks because they work so hard,” said Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, Assistant Adjutant General - Army and Commander of the Illinois Army National Guard. “Tony is ready to live up to the new challenges which come with the new rank.”

Boyd thanked McClain’s family for supporting him throughout his career, especially his wife, Tarah, who also serves in the Illinois National Guard.

“Being a husband-and-wife team with both serving in the military cannot be easy and thank you to the



support system which allows them both to serve,” he said.

Boyd said he and McClain have known each other for several years, and, with both serving as logisticians, their paths have crossed along the way.

“When I met Tony I liked him immediately, and not just because he’s from the South Side of Chicago and a White Sox fan,” Boyd said. “When you give Tony an assignment, and he presents it back to you after completion, he is very thorough.”

Boyd said he has worked with McClain closely the last 18 months on diversity, equity and inclusivity issues within the Illinois National Guard, since becoming the Assistant Adjutant General - Army.

“On occasion due to scheduling conflicts, Tony has stepped up and briefed some of my meetings oftentimes to general officers,” Boyd said. “He doesn’t let rank affect him, he just goes out and does it.”

McClain enlisted in the military in 1996, spending the next 14 years as an enlisted Soldier before receiving his commission through the Illinois National Guard Officer Candidate School in 2010. He has served in a variety of leadership and staff positions in the Illinois National Guard. He was appointed as the Security Cooperations Officer in March 2021. As the Security Cooperations Officer, McClain is responsible for the overall planning, coordination, and execution of the State Partnership Program with Poland and the Homeland Defense Cooperation with the Israeli Homefront Command.

He was also appointed the Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion for the ILNG in October 2021. As the DEI director, he provides strategic leadership and administrative oversight for maintaining a range of successful practices and initiatives for supporting an organizational climate that values and prioritizes equality, diversity and inclusiveness within the Illinois National Guard

and Department of Military Affairs. “This has been a long road. I know this promotion comes with increased responsibility and I appreciate the opportunity to serve this great organization,” McClain said. “I appreciate the opportunity to be instrumental in strengthening our relationship both at home and abroad.”



McClain thanked the leaders who he has worked alongside and those who challenged him throughout his career.

“You are all great contributors to my motivation and success,” he said. McClain thanked his wife, Tarah, for her support.

“I appreciate your love and support,” he said. “Words cannot express how much I appreciate you as a wife, mother, and friend.” He also thanked his family, calling his children, Amelia, Olivia, Joshua, and Stephon, his motivation. McClain said even though he’s moving from company-level leadership to becoming a field-grade officer, his reasons for serving won’t change.

“I will continue to take care of people and do my part to take care of this organization,” he said. “I will work to move the organization forward and represent the Illinois National Guard honorably.”

Springfield soldier retires after 28-year career

By Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs



Maaney enlisted in the Illinois Army National Guard in February 1995, serving in the Military Police for more than 20 years before joining the Illinois Army National Guard State Protection Branch and serving as the noncommissioned officer in charge. He started in the Active Guard and Reserve Program in 2005. He has held various leadership positions throughout his career including team leader, supply sergeant, readiness noncommissioned officer, and platoon sergeant.

"I am a man of few words," Maaney said. "But I do want to talk about the things that are important."

Maaney, who deployed once to Afghanistan and once to Iraq, thanked his parents for instilling in him character, work ethic, and integrity. He also thanked his wife, Sarah, for holding the household together during his military service.

"Family is what makes this organization," he said. "It's why we do what we do in uniform and for the Soldier next to us. Family is what really drives everything. Soldiers can't do their jobs if they are worried about family at home."

Maaney said he probably helped his Soldiers more than what was justified but in the long run it's about the people and the tasks will get done.

"I've learned from a lot of great noncommissioned officers and officers in my career," he said. "Hopefully I've been able to be an example for the next crop of leaders because as leaders that's what we should do. It has been an honor to serve the state and our nation. Twenty-eight years is longer than I thought I would be here but I'd do it all over again."

Maaney was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal during the ceremony.

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. – Illinois Army National Guard Sgt. 1st Class Joel Maaney of Springfield was honored for his 28 years of military service during a retirement ceremony March 24 at the Illinois Military Academy, Camp Lincoln, Springfield, Illinois.

"This is a big day for the Maaney family," said Col. Randy Edwards, the Illinois Army National Guard director of Plans, Operations, and Training. "He will be missed."

Edwards described Maaney as a man of few words but when he does say something, people listen.

"I would describe him as a quiet person and a powerful leader," Edwards said. "With more than 20 years of law enforcement and force protection experience, Sgt. 1st Class Maaney knows what he's talking about. He's trained a lot of people in his position including the branch chief."

Edwards said at the

end of the day, the most important words he can use to describe Maaney is a big family man.

"Family is important to him," Edwards said. "Not only his own family but the family within the branch, whether a Soldier has a new baby, an emergency at home, he'll work with them to make sure their family is taken care of."



Seven Illinois National Guard Soldiers presented with the Bronze Polish Armed Forces Medal

By Lt. Col. Brad Leighton, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs



MARSEILLES, Ill. – Polish Army Col. Edward Chyla, the Commander of the Polish Territorial Defense Force Training Center, presented the bronze Polish Armed Forces Medal to seven Soldiers between March 25 and 31. Four Soldiers were presented the award March 25, at Marseilles Training Center, two were presented in Urbana March 30, and one at the Gen. Jones Armory March 31. The Polish Armed Forces Medal is approved by the Polish Minister of National Defence Mariusz Błaszczak. The Illinois National Guard Soldiers received the medal for their excellent work last May and June with Polish Training Center Soldiers training Polish Territorial Defense Force Soldiers in Poland on mass casualty response and emergency medical care, use of the Javelin anti-tank system, and in sniper operations. Many of the Polish trainers have helped train Ukrainian Soldiers as they fight off the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Receiving the Polish Armed Forces Medal were:

Capt. Drew Weaver of Mahomet, the Commander of A Troop, 2nd Squadron, 106th Cavalry Regiment based in Pontiac. Weaver is an Illinois State Police Trooper in his civilian life. He served as the sniper officer-in-charge of the training team last year.

Sgt. Elizabeth Hernandez of Murphysboro, a senior medic for the headquarters of the 2nd Battalion, 130th Infantry Regiment based in Marion and a Jackson County emergency medical technician in her civilian life. Hernandez helped train

Polish Soldiers in mass casualty response and emergency medical care last year.

Sgt. Albert Herda of East Dundee, an electrical worker for RPM Building Solutions of Crystal Lake, Illinois, in his civilian life and a medic for the headquarters of the 2nd Battalion, 130th Infantry Regiment based in Marion in the military. Herda also helped train Polish Soldiers in mass casualty response and emergency medical care last year.



Sgt. 1st Class Paul Herrick of Tinley Park, the full-time readiness noncommissioned officer for the 1st Battalion, 178th Infantry Regiment based in the General Richard L. Jones Armory on Chicago's South Side. Herrick is also a reconnaissance platoon sergeant in the 1-178th Infantry and assisted the Polish in the Infantry training.

Sgt. Maj. (ret.) Michael Alvis of Champaign, Illinois, a former noncommissioned officer in charge with the 33rd Brigade Combat Team and Staff Sgt. David Tilley of Spring

Bay, Illinois, were awarded the medal Mar. 30 for their work during last year's Critical Knowledge Exchange.

Staff Sgt. Kyle Gleeson of Chicago, a platoon sergeant with D Co. 1st Battalion, 178th Infantry Regiment was awarded the medal Mar. 31, for his work with the Polish TDF last year.

Col. Chyla said that he recommended the Soldiers for the Polish medals, and they were approved by Defense Minister Błaszczak "in recognition of outstanding efforts and cooperation between the Polish Armed Forces and the United States."

Prior to presenting the medals, Col. Chyla and his team conducted marksmanship training and observed U.S. Army range operations with Illinois Army National Guard 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team Soldiers at Marseilles. Later that evening, they attended a Gold Star Mission banquet in Springfield.

The nonprofit Gold Star Mission conducts events throughout the year and presents college scholarships to high school students. Its mission is to keep the memory of Illinois' fallen service members alive. Several Polish Soldiers traveled to Illinois last year to participate in the organization's annual Gold Star 500 bicycle ride.



W.O.T.

SHOTS!

By Lt. Col. Brad Leighton, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

On March 25, the Wojska Obrony Terytorialnej (Polish Territorial Defense Force) visited Marseilles Training Area to get some range time with Illinois National Guard Soldiers. Following training, Polish Army Col. Edward Chyla, the Commander of the Polish Territorial Defense Force Training Center, presented the bronze Polish Armed Forces Medal to four Illinois National Guard Soldiers. The Polish Armed Forces Medal is approved by the Polish Minister of National Defence, Mariusz Błaszczak. The Soldiers received the medal for their excellent work last May and June with training Polish Territorial Defense Force Soldiers in Poland on mass casualty response and emergency medical care, use of the Javelin anti-tank system, and in sniper operations.



THIS DAY IN HISTORY

December

6 Spc. Brian Wright

2005: Spc. Brian Wright, 19, of Keensburg, Illinois, was killed in action when the vehicle he was travelling in encountered an improvised explosive during patrol operations in Ramadi, Iraq. Wright was assigned to 135th Engineer Company, based in Lawrenceville, Illinois.



10 Illinois Reserve Militia Activated

1941: The heightened state of emergency following the surprise Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor required the callout of the Illinois Reserve Militia. Seven companies deployed throughout the state to protect interstate railroad and highway bridges. The following day, more units arrived to guard airports in Springfield, Chicago, Peoria, and Joliet.

18 126th Air Refueling Squadron activated for Desert Shield

1990: Acting on orders from President George Bush Sr., Illinois Governor James R. Thompson activated the 126th Air Refueling Squadron for Operation Desert Shield. Based out of Chicago's O'Hare International Airport, the 126th became the second Illinois Air Guard unit to be sent to the Persian Gulf. The Airmen from the 126th joined the 182nd Tactical Air Support Group from Peoria.

22 Co. B, 192nd Tank Battalion takes place in first tank battle of WWII

1941: Company B of the 192nd Tank Battalion hurried to Lingayen Gulf on Luzon followed by the 194th slow a Japanese assault. The two battalions had a paper strength of 108 tanks, however, only five were serviceable enough to be sent to meet the invasion. In total, the Japanese landing force included 50,000 infantry, 100 tanks, and 106 artillery pieces. Four out of five of the American tank shells did not explode, meaning that the two units fled almost immediately after arriving on scene. This was the first U.S. tank battle of World War II. It ended with the loss of one American tank and its crew.



28 Air Guard delivers first U.S. military aid to Iran after deadly earthquake.

2003: An Illinois Air National Guard cargo plane that joined an international effort to aid victims of a devastating earthquake was the first U.S. military flight to Iran since 1979. The C-130 touched down at an airport in Kerman, about 120 miles from the ancient city of Bam, where up to 45,000 people were killed in a predawn earthquake. The plane carried pallets laden with 20,000 pounds of medical supplies, food, and purified water.



January

7 66th Infantry Brigade mobilizes for Enduring Freedom

2002: The first group of the 66th Infantry Brigade mobilized for Germany in support of Operation Enduring Freedom received an official sendoff from Illinois Governor George Ryan. The 66th made up a contingent of Task Force Santa Fe, a National Guard force of 2,100 Soldiers from Kansas, Illinois, and Kentucky.



15 Battle of Mount Austen, Guadalcanal comes to an end

1943: After several weeks of continuous combat the 132nd Infantry Regiment received relief from the 35th Infantry Regiment of the 25th Division. Beginning on Christmas Eve 1942, the 132nd had counterattacked against the Gifu and its 45 machine-gun nests. Only direct hits by American artillery could destroy these concealed bunkers. During this time, the 132nd suffered casualties of 112 dead, 268 wounded, and three missing.



19 Congress enacts the 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.

27 106th Cavalry sees action at Ardennes

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.



February

8 Staff Sgt. Jason Burholder and 1st Lt. Jared Southworth

2009: Staff Sgt. Jason Burholder, 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 Kabul, Afghanistan. Both Soldiers were assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 130th Infantry Regiment based in Marion.



9 Sgt. Jessica Housby

2005: Sgt. Jessica M. Housby, 23, of Rock Island, Ill., died Feb. 9 on Route Golden, Iraq, of wounds sustained when an improvised explosive device detonated near her convoy. Housby was assigned to the Army National Guard's 1644th Transportation Company, Rock Falls, Ill.



24 Sgt. Schulyer Patch and Sgt. Scott Stream

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 Kandahar, Afghanistan.



March

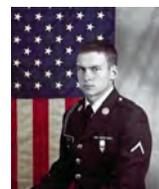
1 Sgt. Simone Robinson

2009: Sgt. Simone Robinson, 21, of Robbins, Illinois, a member of Co. E, 634th Brigade Support Battalion based in Crestwood, Illinois, died from wounds suffered when a suicide bomber attacked her security post in Kabul, Afghanistan, Jan. 17, 2009.



15 Sgt. Christopher Abeyta, Spc. Norman Cain, Sgt. Robert Weinger

2009: Sgt. Christopher Abeyta, 23, of Midlothian, Illinois, Spc. Norman Cain III, 22, of Mount Morris, Illinois, and Sgt. Robert Weinger, 24, of Round Lake Beach, Illinois, died of wounds suffered when their vehicle struck an improvised explosive device near Kot, Afghanistan. All three men were assigned to Company D, 1st Battalion, 178th Infantry Regiment based in Woodstock, Illinois.



17 Staff Sgt. Ivory Phipps

2004: Staff Sgt. Ivory L. Phipps, 44, of Chicago, Ill., died March 17, 2004, in Baghdad, Iraq, of injuries sustained from a mortar attack. Phipps was a member of the 1544th Transportation Company.



27 The 106th Cavalry Group deployed to Europe for the Normandy Campaign

1944: Four years after its induction, the 106th Cavalry Group shipped out for Britain. The unit landed in Normandy, France in late June, and entered combat on July 4th attached to the U.S. VIII Corps. The 106th saw action in Normandy, Northern France, the Rhineland, and Central Germany.

29 Staff Sgt. Jacob Fraizer

2003: Staff Sgt. Jacob Frazier, 24, of St. Charles, Illinois, was killed in action when the convoy he was travelling in was ambushed near Geresk, Helmand Province, Afghanistan. Frazier was a Joint Tactical Air Controller assigned to the 169th Air Support Operations Squadron of the 182nd Airlift Wing based in Peoria, Illinois.



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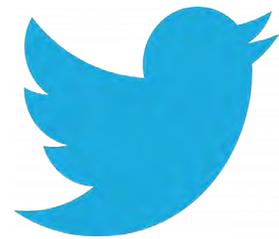
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