

OREGON SENTINEL

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE OREGON NATIONAL GUARD

Oregon National Guard Soldiers compete at CNGB Nationals



Story and photos by
Maj. Leslie Reed,
Oregon Military Department
Public Affairs

JERICHO, Vt. - While shooting and cross-country skiing may seem like an odd pairing to the general public, it's less of an oddity to those who wear a military uniform. Testing speed, endurance and the ability to effectively engage a target, along with fatigue; seems like a likely challenge a Soldier could face in combat today. And with the 2021 Army release of its "Regaining Arctic Dominance" strategy, which stresses an increase in "the Army's ability to operate in extreme cold-weather, mountainous, and high-altitude environments," the National Guard's biathlon program seems timelier than ever.

If you're not familiar with what exactly a biathlon is, you're not the only one. It can be easily confused with other events like triathlons, heptathlons and decathlons. However, what sets a biathlon apart from other multi-discipline sports is that it's a winter event. As its name indicates, the biathlon is made up of two events coupled together: cross-country skiing and shooting.

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Oregon Army National Guard Sgt. McKinley Keener, a squad leader with 224th Engineer Company, 1249th Engineer Battalion, climbs a hill during the Men's Sprint race at the Chief of the National Guard Bureau's (CNGB) Biathlon Nationals at the Camp Ethan Allen Training Site in Jericho, Vermont, on February 18, 2023. Competitors are assigned to one of three groups, Masters, Open or Novice, based on both experience and age.

Charlie Troop, 1-82nd Cavalry Regiment recognized during demobilization ceremony

Story by John Hughel,
Oregon Military Department
Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs

CLACKAMAS, Ore. - Oregon Army National Guard Soldiers of Charlie Company, 1st Squadron, 82nd Cavalry Regiment were recognized by federal, state, and local officials during a demobilization ceremony, held at Camp Withycombe Armed Forces Readiness Center, in Clackamas, Oregon on Feb. 4, 2023. The event formally acknowledged more than 120 members of the unit, during their nearly yearlong deployment as part of Operation Atlantic Resolve in Poland.

The unit provided a vital role while contributing support to U.S. NATO Allies in Eastern Europe while deterring further Russian aggression after the invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022. This deployment was one of the largest mobilizations of Oregon National Guard Citizen-Soldiers since Operation Enduring Freedom in 2006.



Photo courtesy of Oregon Governor Tina Kotek office
Oregon Governor Tina Kotek, (center-right), with her wife, Aimee Kotek Wilson (left), greet and talk with Oregon Army National Guard soldiers from Charlie Troop, 1-82nd Cavalry Regiment following their formal demobilization ceremony held on Feb. 4, 2023.

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Oregon National Guard members and their families are encouraged to submit articles and story ideas. Stories and letters to the editor from any source, military or civilian, are accepted. All submissions must include the author's name, mailing address and daytime phone number. Names may be withheld in print upon request. All submissions are subject to editing prior to publication, and the Public Affairs staff reserves the right to print or reprint submissions at any time. The Oregon Military Department Public Affairs Office and Oregon Sentinel staff are not accountable for factual errors presented by contributing authors or photographers.

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COMMAND

Retention in the Oregon National Guard remains strong

At the end of fiscal year 2022, a Pentagon study reported that only 23% of young Americans qualify for military service without some type of waiver, and among those an even smaller number have the desire to serve. Although this shrinking pool of potential Service Members has contributed to a significant recruiting slump, a growing percentage of people that are interested in military service want to serve in the National Guard and Oregon is taking a larger share of enlistments than in previous years. I believe this is not just due to the tangible benefits such as education incentives, bonuses, and other monetary assistance, but because there is an awareness that a Guardsman not only serves the Nation, but also their local community. Whether deploying overseas or providing local domestic response, the National Guard has always been the military force most closely tied to the people.

Even before the Revolutionary War, militiamen from the Massachusetts Bay Colony were called together to provide for the welfare and defense of its people. Descendants of this volunteer force fought for our independence as minutemen and ultimately the founding of our Nation.

Today, that continued tradition is represented in the official seal of the Army and Air National Guard by a minuteman with one hand on the plow and the other holding a musket. The backbone of the National Guard has been

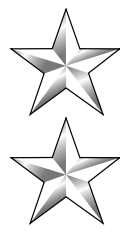
and always will be our traditional Guard members who, like their forebears, are ready "at a minute's notice." Individuals who skillfully balance the demands of two worlds, are simultaneously carpenters, students, teachers, pilots, doctors, salespeople...and also members of the world's greatest fighting force.

On April 1st, we will bid farewell to one shining example of the traditional force as Brig. Gen. Mark Crosby retires after more than 40 years of total service. That is essentially two consecutive 20 year careers – what an amazing accomplishment! A graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy, he served as the Assistant Adjutant General, Commander of Joint Domestic Operations Command multiple times, and has the distinction of being the only real-world activated Dual Status Commander in Oregon history. He also played a key role in establishing two very successful relationships with our State Partners in Bangladesh and Vietnam, personally taking part in more than 30 separate engagements. His efforts and contributions will continue to impact the organization for many years to come.

Despite his long and distinguished military career, most of his community simply know him as Mark, the Vice President of Aviation for a distinguished U.S. company, having served in a multitude of leadership roles in airport and seaport management, public safety consulting and construction. He accomplished



Major General Michael E. Stencel, Adjutant General, Oregon National Guard



all this while also leading Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen as they too supported our Nation and their local communities. Congratulations to him for a lifetime of military service and living what it means to be a true traditional Guardsman.

Thank you to all of our traditional Guard members, and to our full-time military and civilian staff for volunteering to serve the Oregon Military Department and the Oregon National Guard. During today's challenging times, take pride in being part of an incredible team of professionals and dedicated public servants. Share with everyone the pride and benefits of being part of something bigger than yourself.

The National Guard was founded by everyday citizens more than 386 years ago. It will continue to endure, sharing the common thread from the Massachusetts Bay Colony militia to our members that serve our communities today. Be "Ready, Relevant and Resilient," with one hand on the plow and the other on the musket!

Governor Brown thanks the Oregon National Guard during visit

Photos by Chris Clyne, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

SALEM, Ore. – Taking time to say thank you to military members and civilian staff, Gov. Kate Brown visited the Oregon National Guard Headquarters at the Major General George White Building, in Salem on January 4, 2023, as she prepared to leave her office as Governor of Oregon for the past eight years following her second term, ending on January 9, 2023.

Maj. Gen. Michael E. Stencel, Adjutant General, Oregon, welcomed Governor Brown, as they both greeted and took time to talk with full time military members of the Oregon National Guard and civilian employees of the Oregon Military Department.



Military members and civilian staff of the Oregon National Guard gather for a group photo with Gov. Kate Brown at the Maj. Gen. George White Building in Salem, Jan. 4, 2023.



Gov. Kate Brown pauses for a photograph with civilian employees of the Oregon Military Department during her visit to thank the Oregon National Guard.



Oregon Gov. Kate Brown makes one of her last public visits as Governor to the Oregon Military Department, thanking both military members and civilian staff as she prepared to leave office on Jan. 9, 2023. Brown has been Oregon's Commander-in-Chief for the past eight years.

COMMAND

ORNG Command Senior Enlisted Leader retires after 38 years of service

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

SALEM, Ore. – Over the past twenty-seven months, Command Chief Master Sgt. Daniel C. Conner has played an essential role as the Command Senior Enlisted Leader for the Oregon National Guard and doing so during one of the most challenging periods in the state's history. As 2022 came to a close, he also concluded his 38-year military career that began as an Aircraft Armament Systems Specialist in 1984.

Serving as the first Air National Guardsman to be named Command Senior Enlisted Leader (CSEL) of the Oregon National Guard, Conner's tenure came as the COVID-19 pandemic was intensifying around the nation in October 2020. Oregon Guard members were actively supporting Covid testing sites and helping deliver Personal Protective Equipment around the state.

It was also a hectic period for mobilizations for the Oregon National Guard as service members were completing assignments to support wildland firefighting, and by the end of the year, over 200 Oregon Army National soldiers, assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 162nd Infantry Regiment were returning home from Task Force Kosovo, following their 10-month deployment. This was the largest mobilization of Oregon Troops since World War II.

To better connect with the soldiers and airmen across the state, Conner created a monthly podcast to help senior leaders communicate important up-to-date information while many members and civilian staff were still working remotely.



Chief Master Sgt. Dan Conner, Command Senior Enlisted Leader for the Oregon National Guard, speaks with Oregon Army National Guard soldiers who recently returned from a deployment in Jordan, during the podcast, 'Get a Sign,' on Oct. 14, 2020.

"I am a big fan of podcasts, and decided that this would be a great way to get out a 20 to 40-minute message to our entire Oregon (National Guard) team," Conner said, when he launched the "Get a Sign" podcast in late 2020. "What I hope is that when someone receives the messages, you can 'share and then move up the chain,' more topics that you think are important to soldiers and airmen."

During his formal retirement ceremony on December 3, 2022, at Camp Withycombe, Maj. Gen. Stencel, Adjutant General, Oregon, recalled this period in late 2020. "I had the opportunity to have him come to Headquarters in Salem, and bring him onboard as my right-hand man on all enlisted matters."

As the host for Conner's retirement ceremony, Stencel said one of the key traits for the Command Senior Enlisted Leader, "requires a person to become a strategic thinker, to start thinking long range, and provide criticism and feedback to someone senior in rank to them."

"More than anything, it is to serve as a representative of our



Command Chief Master Sgt. Daniel C. Conner receives a Certificate of Appreciation from President Joe Biden, presented by Maj. Gen. Michael Stencel, Adjutant General, Oregon, during his retirement ceremony on Dec. 3, 2022 at Camp Withycombe, Clackamas, Oregon.

entire enlisted force. He's done a wonderful job and stepped up to all challenges along the way," Stencel said.

Beginning his retirement ceremony remarks, Conner reflected back — nearly four decades, while describing how he began his military career.

"My mom, who raised two boys in the Post-Vietnam era, wasn't too keen on one of her son's joining the military," he said, as she was seated in the front row during the ceremony. "But that summer day in 1984, when I came home and told her, 'Mom, I joined the United State Air Force today,' - she has exhibited nothing but support and pride ever since that moment."

After initial training, his active duty career first took him overseas to Bitburg Air Base, West Germany, and later to England Air Force Base, where he maintained F-15 Eagles and A-10 Thunderbolt II, 'Warhog' armament systems. By December of 1988, he left active duty and enlisted in the Oregon Air National Guard with the 142nd [Fighter] Wing in Portland.

With a long tenure with 142nd, Conner worked on the F-4 Phantom II, and later as the wing transitioned to the F-15 aircraft in the early 1990s. Leadership positions within his career field soon followed, first as the Munitions Flight Supervisor, then as a unit First Sergeant, Wing Weapons Manager, then to the Equipment Maintenance Flight Superintendent and Maintenance Group Superintendent.

As his career broadened, Conner served for over three years as the 142nd Mission Support Group Superintendent, allowing him a chance to work with wing support staff and the variety of auxiliary career fields in civil engineering, logistics, communications, security forces, environmental, and force support.



Chief Master Sgt. Daniel Conner, Oregon National Guard Command Senior Enlisted Leader addresses soldiers assigned to 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry Regiment as they prepared to depart Medford, Oregon, for Washington D.C., on March 24, 2021. Over 75 Citizen-Soldiers from Oregon supported security efforts in the National Capital Region.

This perspective prepared him for taking on the job as the CSEL, working in a joint senior leadership position with the Oregon Army and Air National Guard. As the soldiers and airmen were activated to support over 50 hospitals during the Omicron variant surge in late 2021 and into early 2022, Conner made several site visits around the state, making sure that the nearly 1,500 activated service members had the resources they needed.

He echoed many of these immense experiences during his career as part of his retirement remarks for those in attendance.

"First, it is imperative we accept and embrace our core values, these are values that truly define our institutional union," he said, recounting the basic

tenants of military service. "It's important to also build quality relationships with those you support — and those that support you. Quality relationships are the cornerstone to good leadership, and as you should all know; Every Soldier and Every Airman is a leader."



Maj. Gen. Michael E. Stencel, Adjutant General, Oregon (center) watches Chief Master Sgt. Dan Conner, Oregon National Guard Command Senior Enlisted Leader 'Elbow Bumps' Pvt. 2 Scarborough (right) after his promotion at the 211-info center, Portland, Oregon, on February 11, 2021.

Conner also reiterated other timeless lessons from his initial training and entry into military service. "While at basic training, I was assigned to the 3701st BMT Squadron. The squadron motto was 'Lead, Follow or Get out of the way.'"

The quote, he said has been attributed to "Thomas Payne, Will Rogers, and Lee Iacocca — among others." But Conner put his own authorship on one modification in his remarks.

"Allow me to make a minor change to this quote and make it mine...Lead, Follow AND ...Get out of the way," he said, empathizing with 'how' this principle has shaped his career. "Choose to leave when some folks still want you around, and some are ready for you to leave. The worst legacy you can leave is overstaying your welcome," he said.

Although his ceremony was held during the December drill weekend, he still had some projects to finish prior to his last day in uniform on December 31, 2022. This included a couple more days in the Public Affairs recording studio, working on his final production podcast "Get a Sign," and narrating the 2022 Oregon National Guard Year in Review Video.

"In practice and as expected, we were all leaders. Good leaders are also good followers. And one of our primary objectives from the beginning is to build our bench...or get out of the way."

LEADERSHIP

Women's History Month: Driven and determined, it's never 'nice and easy'

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

SALEM, Ore. – Four women. Four career paths. Working for the National Guard, no matter the capacity or status, is different today for women than it was 20-years ago. Women are serving in larger numbers, in combat roles and in more visible leadership positions.

When I spoke to these women leaders; a senior non-commissioned officer, a warrant officer, a field-grade officer and a civilian director they all said essentially the same thing, I come to work, I do my job, I work hard. "It's the same as you would anywhere," said Chief Warrant Officer Two Shiketha Riley.

"When I first came in, women were not allowed in combat arms, there were a lot of different perspectives and views about women and their role in the armed forces," reflects Sgt. 1st Class Anna Rutherford. As time has progressed, and we have seen women on the battlefield (i.e. Iraq and Afghanistan), doing what their male counterparts are doing, we have evolved and now we are in a place where women are allowed, and we see women doing what their male counterparts are doing day in and day out. We've evolved over time."

Tracy Garcia, Human Resources Director for the Oregon Military Department's State Personnel, remembers first coming to the Oregon Military Department in 2018, "it wasn't hard for me to change because I am pretty much the same person and I just do my work. Coming into an organization that didn't have a whole lot of executive leadership on the female side – the reality is my peers have never treated me any differently that would lead me to believe it's because I'm a woman."



Sgt. 1st Class Anna Rutherford

Growing up, Chief Riley put all her time and energy into academics. "I always wanted to be a dentist, but my family didn't have the money to send me to dental school," she remembers. During her sophomore year, when "I realized the money wasn't there, (and) my friends were getting in trouble, getting pregnant, a recruiter came into the school, and I took the ASVAB and passed. I had written down my goals, and the constraints that were preventing me -- it was the money. I said, "Sign me up."

Initially enlisting in the Alabama Guard, Riley later commissioned, but as a 2nd Lt., couldn't make a living off ADOS, "it was too unpredictable as a single parent." She resigned her commission and accepted an active-guard reserve (AGR) position reverting back to serving as a specialist. "I was okay with it; it was a solid career. I had to ensure that my daughter was going to be taken care of," she recalls.

Lt. Col. Julia Appt, also faced the tough decision of how to pay for college. Walking into the 17th Street (Salem) Army she told recruiters, "So I need to pay for college, what can you do for me?" Having no familial ties to the Oregon Guard, the signs she had seen around Salem "built by the Oregon National Guard," had sparked an interest and a solution, particularly coupled with the student loan repayment program and a bonus. She ultimately signed on to become a Communications Security (COMSEC) repairer and was assigned to Bravo Company, 141 Brigade Support Battalion.

As a private in 1997, remembers Appt, "My world was different...I was really only concerned about my platoon. I think I was the only female in my platoon in the maintenance company of 141. I think we had more females in general, than some of the other units out there at the time. We did have females on the 141 battalion staff, but in my little world, I just didn't see them a lot. As long as I've been in a position, I've shown up and done my job, I was always treated the same, well. It didn't feel like it was any significant issue."



Lt. Col. Julia Appt

Sgt. 1st Class Rutherford remembers her recruiter really selling it to her, "he told me it was the greatest thing, that I should be this (a military police officer) and I shipped off in January to Fort Leonard Wood...I actually told my family, and they were not happy, to this day, my mother still isn't

happy. Parents are worried about their kids, that's a constant." Rightfully so, as Rutherford's father had served as a Marine with the Republic of Korea (ROK) Marine Corps at the end of the Vietnam War.

Garcia believes it important for people to "find what their interest is, to match their skills. I think that there is a lot of room here (at the Oregon Military Department). If you work hard and you do a good job, it gets recognized. I think that anyone can grow a career as long as they are willing to put in the effort."

Riley remembers she was initially "mad at myself for not going active duty. I wish I would have. "But you know what, I decided I'm not going to change anything, let's see how this unfolds." Ultimately, she was able to complete her bachelor's degree in computer programming in 3-years without deploying.

The same couldn't be said for Appt. With her bachelor's degree complete, Appt had hopes of obtaining her Master's, to experience something new on the east coast, and be closer to Canada, where her husband is from; little did she know what lay ahead. "I was a pretty new 2LT" she recalls, "I IST'd (inter-state transferred) to Maine, I showed up, had a MUTA (Multiple Unit Training Assembly) 2, got to know a couple people and a couple of weeks later was notified that I was cross leveled for a deployment to Iraq."

Appt credits the built-in resiliency we have as Soldiers, when she was called to deploy as a heavy equipment platoon leader, something she had no previous experience doing as a military intelligence officer. I told myself, "You've done this before, you can figure it out. And take it one bite at a time and it will work out. Moral of the story is, don't panic." "It was a tough start, because not only was I new, I wasn't an engineer, I wasn't a logistics officer, it was a matter of jumping in, listening to people and figuring it out on the fly. It became a fantastic experience and I learned a lot."

"You can do hard things and carry on," says Appt. "Take in the problem, do we need to hit the emergency button, who can we approach? Being able to have a network or sense of how the organization works" is important, "so we know who to go talk to, and to get to resolutions."

As if work isn't difficult enough sometimes, balancing both a career and life outside of the guard can also be complicated. As an organization, the Army asks a lot of its Soldiers, civilians and military families. Riley recalls there were times early on in her career that she slept in her supply room, because there was just that much work, "I would wake up at 4 o'clock and work until like ten o'clock at night, we just didn't have that layer of support, they just expected so much without layers of support. I spent a lot of time away from my family."

Riley even began doing her "laundry early in the morning and bringing it to work with me so I could iron during my lunch time instead of going out, I stayed here and knocked out my laundry."

In 2010, Riley decided to leave her AGR career path on the east coast behind, move across the country to be with her spouse, and join the Oregon Guard, these were "hard decisions but I had a good support system, and they

(her family) knew there was no talking me out of it." "It is kind of a difficult situation, particularly as an AGR says Rutherford being frank, "The Operational Tempo is difficult. We have good leaders, but sometimes those leaders aren't great at the work-life balance." How she asks, "do we fill that fuel tank up? Make time to do things like playing an instrument or working out. "It's a critical part of maintaining health and vitality. Sleep and recovery are absolutely critical...You have to find ways to maintain vitality. Find a way to refuel, whatever that looks like."

One thing all four women also agree on, is the importance of mentors and a support system, whether in or outside of the guard. These mentors' support, feedback, and perspectives were a key part in their decision-making and in working to attain their goals.

Garcia credits three different mentors throughout her career who pushed her beyond what she thought she was capable of and comfortable with. While she had successfully demonstrated early in her career her ability to be a back office medical assistant, she wasn't ready to work the front office, "I did not want to do that, I begged her (supervisor). But I am where I am today because of her. Through her forcing me." One of her mentors explained she was "willing to take that risk" challenging Garcia's aversion to change. It was these mentors that pushed Garcia to do bigger things.



Chief Warrant Officer 2 Shiketha Riley

Appt, who is the only woman yet to have commanded the Civil Support Team and currently serves as the 41st Infantry Brigade's full-time administrative officer believes that "all I can do is control how I do my job, how I build relationships and work as a team. And then, doing what I can to support other peers. Everything is possible, just like the female leaders who went ahead of me. I have lots of different mentors," says Appt, "My most enduring mentor is actually outside the Guard, my former college advisor. She doesn't have a military connection but can talk to and relate both concepts and issues to help me out."

"Anyone can be a mentor to somebody," says Rutherford. "I ask a lot of people I respect and admire their opinions on various things. Sometimes they will provide me nuggets and I will take and store it away and take that with me throughout my career. It's not necessarily (a) designated (person), it's picking up everything of value that I can put in my tool bag."

"A lot of people helped me get here," recalls Riley, who is now pursuing opportunities to mentor young women in her community, the same community that welcomed her and her husband after she IST'd from Alabama to Oregon in 2010. She describes she has "a passion to work with young people. I volunteer at my church, I just want to (in 10-years), be able to transition to a mentorship program. That's really what I'm working towards. We've obtained so many great skills that younger people haven't been exposed to. We have to be invested in them (younger generation); they can be great leaders."

Rutherford spends her drill weekends instructing "classes on the Army Combat Fitness Test. I give Soldiers tools on how to do this, get better at this... Every time I'm instructing, I can see visibly when the light bulb comes on and that is worth its weight in gold."



Ms. Tracy Garcia

Looking to those who may be starting their military careers, Riley asks "How bad do you want it? You have to want this. It's not going to be all nice and easy you'll be faced with things throughout your career, you'll have to be able to stand your ground, you won't always have someone in your corner at the beginning to push you through things, but if you are determined, willing to learn, willing to go through trials and experience and allow them to make you stronger, it will be a great career and it's one of the best decision I've made."

Appt agrees, "It's going to be hard at times, but there's a way to figure it out. So if it's a passion, something you like to do, then things will generally work out. You will have to work for it, you're going to have to get some support networks in place, and you're going to have rough days and good days and sometimes it's getting through those bad days to the good days and making sure those good days give you a sense of purpose and fulfillment."

"I'm still in the process of learning," says Rutherford. "I don't think the process never ends for me. I always want the feedback, how do I improve, how do I do better, how do I get to that next level. I've learned that what I wear on my chest has nothing to do with the quality of a Soldier or Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) I am. Me being better is always a plus."

"Don't put things off from life," concludes Riley, "Keep pushing through, seek someone you can trust, reach out to people, we are always here to help one another. Live your life and serve your country - you can do both."

LEADERSHIP

Retiring Oregon National Guard General reflects on his time in service

Story by Aaron Perkins,
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

SALEM, Ore. – With nearly four decades of military service, Brig. Gen. Mark A. Crosby has experienced many unique opportunities during his time in uniform. Crosby formally retired from the Oregon National Guard on April 1, 2023.

Upon graduating from the Air Force Academy in 1986 and receiving his commission into the active Air Force, he served for almost seven years on active duty in the Strategic Air Command and Air Training Command (ATC) at Mather Air Force Base, California, in the 441st Bomb Squadron, 320th Bomb Wing and the 323rd Flying Training Wing. He then transitioned from active duty to the California Air National Guard in 1993, serving in a traditional role as a drill status guardsman as the State Emergency Plans Officer. In 1998 he transferred to the Oregon Air Guard where he was appointed the Deputy Commander of the newly formed Civil Support Team.

During his Oregon Air Guard career, Crosby has held a number of air and joint staff, communications, and command assignment positions. A significant highlight during his career was being selected as the first ever Oregon National Guard Dual Status Commander (DSC) where he led the Oregon National Guard's (ORNG) exercise response during the Vigilant Guard National Level Exercises in 2016 and again in 2022.

A DSC is an officer of the Army National Guard (ARNG), Air National Guard (ANG), commissioned officer of the Regular Army or Regular Air Force who has completed specialized training and certification, which can direct both federal active-duty forces



File photo by Sr. Master Sgt. Jennifer Shirar 173rd FW Public Affairs

Oregon Air National Guard Brig. Gen. Mark Crosby, Joint Task Force Oregon Duals Status Commander, takes a moment to check in with the Civil Air Patrol volunteers, during the Jackson County Vaccination Equity Project at Central Point, Ore., on Apr. 21, 2021.

and state National Guard forces in response to domestic incidents. In 2020 as the DSC for Oregon, he provided support to federal and local authorities at vaccination centers in support of the Covid-19 pandemic response efforts.

A second career highlight was serving as a Squadron Commander. He was instrumental in directing the 244th Combat Communications Squadron, as the unit ultimately transformed into the 125th Special Tactics Squadron in 2005.

"When I was a young officer, a commander of mine told me once that squadron command is the best job you'll ever have and the hardest—and I agree with that," Crosby said, reflecting on his career.

"As a Major and Lieutenant Colonel, I commanded two squadrons during which we were shutting down one squadron and merging it with another. As well as merging two different cultures, even though the mission was similar," Crosby said, recalling this unique period of evolution in the Oregon Air National Guard. "It was a short-term pain but a long-term gain, and it was the right choice."

Within those challenges, Crosby saw the satisfaction of building a new team with the officers and noncommissioned officers, and getting the unit's readiness up to standards for upcoming training exercises.

"To see that readiness improvement in action was very rewarding, but also hard," said Crosby.

Another personal highlight he reflected upon was the position he was tasked with in 2010, and which, he considers also his "baby" - was that of the Oregon National Guard's State Partnership Program (SPP).

Over the last few years the Oregon National Guard, as well as the rest of the country, have been met with an extremely high operational tempo. This included multiple federal overseas deployments, as well as domestic active duty mobilizations around the state with Wildland firefighting, Covid-19 operation support and other important missions.

With all these accomplishments, Crosby is looking forward to stepping back and being able to spend more time with his granddaughter, while playing with her and enjoying family time...which includes enjoying open water and pool swimming. He'll also continue working in his civilian career with airport and seaport management.

"I recently learned, shockingly, that there are four weekends in a month, and I am really excited about that."



File photo by Sgt. Hanna Hawkins, 115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Brig. Gen. Mark Crosby, is greeted by a member of the Bangladesh Armed Forces Division during the Bangladesh Pacific Resilience Disaster Response Exercise and Exchange in Dhaka, Bangladesh, Oct. 30, 2022.

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File photo by Tech. Sgt. Jason Van Mourik, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

Oregon Air National Guard Lt. Col. Jeffrey Copeck (left) and Brig. Gen. Mark Crosby (second from left), observe the 2017 Disaster Management Engagement Activity culminating exercise alongside their counterparts from Vietnam's National Committee for Incident, Disaster Response, and Search and Rescue (VINASARCOM) in Hanoi, Vietnam, on August 11, 2017.

Former 142nd Wing Commander promoted to new ORNG leadership role

Story by Tech. Sgt. Alexander Frank,
142nd Wing Public Affairs

SALEM, Ore. – The Oregon National Guard has promoted Col. David N. Unruh, former 142nd Wing Commander, to the rank of Brigadier General during a promotion ceremony held at the Major General George White Joint Force Headquarters in Salem, Oregon, March 4 2023. Maj. Gen. Michael E. Stencel, Adjutant General, Oregon, served as the presiding officer for the event, which included Unruh's friends, family and co-workers in attendance.

As he leaves the Retired Reserve, Unruh will serve as the Assistant Adjutant General-Air for the Oregon Air National Guard, taking over the position formerly held by Brig. Gen. Mark Crosby, who will transition to retirement.

After his official pinning to Brig. Gen., Unruh offered his appreciation to serve again in the Oregon National Guard during remarks to those in attendance.

"Thank you to my friends, my family, to my colleagues, my leaders...for this opportunity,

said Unruh. "I do not take it lightly, and I look forward to serving."

Brig. Gen. Unruh brings more than 20 years of strategic and operational experience to this new assignment, having previously served as 142nd Wing Commander, 142nd Operations Group Commander, and the Director of Air National Guard Forces for Air Combat Command.

In addition to his vast military experience, Unruh holds numerous advanced degrees, including a Doctorate Degrees in Jurisprudence, Philosophy, Theology, and a Master of Arts in Church History, and a Bachelor of Science in Aviation Science.

Maj. Gen. Stencel highlighted Unruh's unprecedented experience in his military career and civilian life as a key component that makes him uniquely qualified to lead in this position.

"The breadth of that experience teaches you how to think, how to collect your thoughts, and how to make huge contributions and mentor folks," said Stencel. "It helps you be a better officer and a better leader."

Brig. Gen. Unruh first joined the Air Force in March



Photo by Master Sgt. Steph Sawyer, 142nd Wing Public Affairs

Col. David Unruh is pinned to his new rank by his wife and father during his promotion on March 4, 2023, at the Joint Force Headquarters in Salem, Oregon.

1997, and has deployed in support of contingency operations throughout the world, most recently in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

FEATURE STORY

Oregon National Guard medical doctors: Supporting vital

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

SALEM, Ore. – The COVID-19 pandemic, on a universal scale, became a reality check for numerous critical factors of the U.S. healthcare system. Three years ago, these regionally diverse systems, whether they were large or small, quickly became strained under the increased workload and oftentimes struggled to absorb the sudden and increased burdens of serious patient care.

Oregon National Guard doctors and medical care service members found themselves pulled in multiple directions at times, working in the community - both in uniform and in their civilian capacities. The challenges can be complex with demanding dual careers; both focusing on providing patient care, and each requiring a balanced approach with a supportive team.

These military doctors bring a wealth of experience and a range of skills to insure mission readiness. They also follow a devoted calling, of providing care to injured soldiers, dating back to the nearly 1,400 practitioners that served in the Continental Army.

Taking on these demands over the past decade, Oregon Air National Guard Col. Damon Armitage has been able to balance the 'ebb and flow' between the two.

"The reality is, there is no such thing as being a traditional guardsman in a senior leadership position...it might be that on paper, but the time commitment is going to be that much greater to stay actively engaged with the unit," said Armitage.

After graduating from the University of Arkansas Medical School-Little Rock, in 2005, Armitage began his medical career in the Air Force during three years of residency work in family medicine at Travis Air Force Base, California, in a University of California-Davis affiliated program in 2008. He stayed on active duty until 2012, when he and his family decided to come back home to Cottage Grove, Oregon.

Working as a family medical care physician, he is the co-founder of the Camas Swale Medical Clinic, which opened in 2017 near Cottage Grove, with a patient population of over 3,000. Managing his time between the clinic and in his role as the Medical Group Commander for the 142nd Wing can be a balancing act at times, he said.

"It's very rewarding, and every bit as much work as I thought it would be when I decided to pursue both jobs as a medical provider and officer," he said, describing the adjustment of both jobs. "With my role in the Wing and state leadership, I also get a great deal of satisfaction when providing good mentoring and fostering the development of the next generation of Airmen...to me, that's the most important thing we can do; leave it better than we found it."

Knowing how much time it would take to get his private practice off the ground, he volunteered for several deployments in a row, covering assignments for other 142nd Wing doctors. "The staff is well-balanced, as we back each other up and make sure our unit mobilizations are covered well in advance."

The deployments over his military career have taken him around the world; from Afghanistan as a flight

surgeon, to Burkina Faso, supporting nation-building and community stabilization, and in 2017, supporting Operation Atlantic Resolve in Romania, ensuring 142nd Wing pilots were safe to fly.

"During my deployment to Africa, we were living on the economy, developing personal connections while training local providers, which allowed me to utilize my French language skill too," he said. "While working with the State Department, we provided assistance at an orphanage, getting them the supplies they needed and setting up a mobile clinic."



Air National Guard Col. Damon Armitage, Commander, 142nd Wing Medical Group

These deployments to other countries offer an additional benefit for medical professionals, as they work with infrequent issues among diverse populations.

"As a medical provider, you need a good scope of practice, especially for our younger and active duty doctors," Armitage said, noting that these deployment experiences offer those unique opportunities to develop new aptitudes. "If all they are seeing is good healthy young people within the garrison environment, they are not seeing a significant disease burden in the population to maintain their skill sets of management in complex medical diseases states."



Army National Guard Col. John Maddox, State Surgeon, Oregon National Guard

Throughout the height of the pandemic, these disease-burdened members of the population became a center stage, as vulnerable and older members of the population faced the greatest overall health threats. These were also perilous concerns for Col. John Maddox, the State Surgeon for the Oregon National Guard. Faced with the rapidly changing data and rising case count, the overall health of the force became his crucial focus.

"Being a state surgeon in a pandemic is bad timing," he said, now looking back three years ago with a slight jest. "There was so much unknown early on and we were learning on the fly, but as I told our staff and our service

members – hopefully we will never see this again."

For Maddox, his military career began in 2000 when he joined the Army Reserves, but in many ways, he was influenced by his father's service in the military.

"Like a lot of folks who serve, I had family in the military and my dad was a physician and a surgeon in Vietnam," said Maddox, reflecting on his early career in uniform. "During my first deployment, I was a trauma surgeon with a forward surgical team in Iraq from 2003 to 2004. When I got back from deployment, I was looking to serve in a more operational unit. That's how I found the Oregon National Guard...when the 1-82 CAV Commander, then Maj. (William) Prendergast, recruited me."

As a board-certified general surgeon with a specialization in Colon and Rectal surgery, he lives in Colorado and serves as a chief medical officer and administrator for a private medical business in Puyallup, Washington.

"I still enjoy being in the operating room, there is something very amazing and magical about seeing the human body from the inside," he said. "Yet I feel that I peaked as a surgeon on deployment; the challenges and situations had a way in heightening my abilities."

Over his career, Maddox has noticed how much the business of medicine has changed with various regulations, overall costs, and factors regarding health insurance and access to care. He's also noted philosophical approaches to health care among various age groups now.

"It's very generational if you talk to an octogenarian...they'll take what you have to say with more perceived acceptance. 'Yeah, you're the Doc, you know what's best,'...and if you talk to a millennial, they will show up to an appointment with a print out from the web with data and questions. It's really interesting to see the full range."

This was also evident to Maddox when the Oregon National Guard was operating max vaccination sites. As the COVID-19 Task Force Commander, he said the National Guard members operated an impeccable system functioning in the community, working alongside their civilian counterparts and providers.

"When we opened the first vaccination site in Salem, people came in and were in tears," he said, remembering the initial vaccine rollout. "They were getting something that gave them the ability to see their grandchild. They were emotional and relieved to get the vaccine."

Not only were older and venerable members of the community thankful for having the vaccine, but they also had a sense of reassurance from Guard members providing direct support to the community.

"Just the presence of the Guard made a difference, if you looked at the drill floor in Salem when we first opened that site, and you looked at the Guardsmen - Air and Army members there - it was just table after table...as far as you could see."

This work in the community, where he could see his staff grow and take on new responsibilities made the difficult challenges and long days fulfilling.

"Being in the National Guard, for most members over the past years, it's not a weekend job. And as any other commander, in every other unit can tell you - it's an everyday responsibility."

Much like Col. Maddox, many members of the military following in the footsteps of previous generations. When Maj. Jacquelyn Dunn enlisted in the Army National Guard in 2003, she not only joined the Oregon Medical Command like her father but was extending a long legacy of family members who served before her.

"I grew up in Hermiston, where a lot of my friends joined (the Guard) too, and became a '68 Gulf, working as a medical technician," she said. "My dad [Col. Mike Dunn] was the deputy State Surgeon, and I am the seventh generation of my family that's continually served."

After completing her undergraduate studies in 2007 at Willamette University, in Salem, she worked full-time for the Medical Command (MEDCOM), running the post-deployment health reassessment and other areas of services of the department.



Army National Guard Maj. Jacquelyn Dunn, Physician, Oregon Nat'l Guard MEDCOM

"The job allowed me to grow programs...it was great," Dunn said, recalling her development as a Non-commissioned officer while working toward new goals. By 2009, she had been commissioned as an officer and took advantage of education programs in the National Guard for her medical degree through Arizona College of Osteopathic Medicine in Glendale, Arizona.

"The military has been good to me, and for a short period of time, there was a three-year scholarship through the guard that was available and reduced my loans by 50 percent," she said. "I joined at the right time because there have been great benefits to serving, even part-time."

Yet reflecting on why she continues to serve, Dunn quickly points out - "it's all about the people."

"Like the diversity compared to my primary care job, it's the best aspect," she said. "I continue to learn and grow in an environment with people who have different perspectives and experiences."

As one of only two women in MEDCOM, she's also seen some of the delays that women often encounter, "just by being a mom," saying, from the experience with her own three children... "progression is difficult when raising a family, there are certain opportunities for advancement and course work you just miss out on, but with remote training increasing, this is one-way things are getting better."

Continued on next page

FEATURE STORY

missions, both in uniform and in their local communities

In her civilian career, Dunn works for Legacy Medical Group - Northwest, in Portland, focusing on outpatient and internal medicine. She works with her Oregon Medical Command teammate, Lt. Col. Kenna Wood, having referred her to the employer.

"She's an amazing advocate and mentor," Dunn said of the only other female physician with MEDCOM. "We relate to the tempo of having a guard career and a civilian career, and that known history of 'doing hard things' with other veterans."

For her part in the military, Lt. Col. Wood has served in the military for nearly 35 years, enlisting with the Louisiana Army National Guard in 1988. She completed her undergraduate work in Biology at the University of New Orleans and then medical school in Florida with an Osteopathic specialty, but eventually transferred to the Oregon Army National Guard during her residency at Good Samaritan Hospital in Corvallis.



Army National Guard Lt. Col. Kenna Wood, Physician, Oregon Nat'l Guard MEDCOM

"I was an NCO...all the way," admitting with a laugh, saying that she always envisioned herself as, "that crusty Sergeant...being one of the troops, and taking care of my soldiers."

Along the way, Wood worked for 10 years as an Active Guard Reserve (AGR) enlisted member and was activated in 1991 for Operation Desert Storm in Saudi Arabia, then later forward deployed into M.A.S.H (Mobile Army Surgical Hospital) field unit in Iraq. When she completed medical school in 2006, she was working toward her officer commission. In 2019, she later deployed to Djibouti and Somalia as a member of the Oregon MEDCOM.

"Well you can't be a medical physician and still be enlisted so I was at a crossroads," said Wood. "I thought about retiring then, but I was still enjoying the job, and love the comradeship I get out of serving in the National Guard."

In private practice, she recently was promoted to a Medical Director position at Legacy Northwest Clinic, focusing her work on internal medicine with a specialty in obesity consulting.

"I get a lot of fresh ideas in the military environment, and some I use in my civilian job," Wood said, comparing the parallels and differences in her patients. "Some of the Army skills in exercise and training I can use in business, but I've seen what the Mess Halls were like in the 80s, that's been revolutionized from the 'starch, starch, starch' dietary menus."

She's also noticed other post-pandemic medical trends with her patients. These are challenges that medical providers are now paying

closer attention to as well.

"Depression and anxiety now are increasing factors into people's health, and are underlying factors to other medical disorders," said Wood. "There isn't any one reason - but there is a notable difference from just even nine or ten years ago."

With a demanding career and decades of providing medical care, Wood isn't slowing down and has a new goal in mind. She recently started school again in January, with an eye toward owning her own business.

"I can't be still, I like new challenges so I recently began an M.B.A. program...trying to determine if I am going out on my own at some point," she said. "For me, I guess you could say that my work is my hobby."

Lengthy military careers for medical doctors in the Oregon National Guard are not uncommon, even with deployments, ongoing short-term assignments, and mandatory training required for all members. The reasons for staying well past a 'normal 20 years', vary from member to member, and often there is a sense of "paying it forward."

When Col. Jonathon Park was growing up in Korea, his family immigrated to the United States when he was just six years old. It was several years later that his older brother would help plant the seeds of military service, while his family was adjusting to their new life in Los Angeles.

"My older brother was in the U.S. Army in the early 1970s, so this was my first introduction to the military," said Park, remembering how impressed he was with the change in his brother. "He came back from basic training on leave and he had a different attitude and mindset. His physique had changed too, and he took me up to the trails for a workout around Griffith Observatory one day before 6:00 a.m., running up and down in the hills."

Taking advantage of his desire to attend college, Park completed his undergraduate studies at the University of California at Santa Cruz, then later completed medical school in Puerto Rico. While completing his medical training in Pennsylvania, he joined the Army National Guard.

"I could have never done this in Korea because back then, you either had the means or you didn't. If it hadn't been for America I would have never had that opportunity to pull myself up...socially."

After four years as a practicing physician in the Midwest, he returned to the West Coast, moving to Coos Bay, Oregon, 21 years ago and became a member of the Oregon National Guard. His practice is in family medicine, working for North Bend Medical Center, at a satellite office in Bandon.

"For me, I am the kind of physician that looks at health holistically; whether it be how someone approaches life through work, task, or even a certain profession," he said. "It's looking at the whole spectrum of medicine - from birth to death."

"The time came when I knew I wanted to pay America back - somehow...as my new country," Park described, saying that joining the military was a way to serve

and defend his adopted nation. "I serve to maintain peace, to defend democracy...this is my calling in the military, to take care of our troops as a physician."

During his nearly 30 years of military service, Park has deployed five times, taking on some of the most notable and daunting assignments by the U.S. military over the past three decades. His most recent was in 2020, where he was in charge of Covid mitigation protocol during the initial phases of the pandemic, mitigating how the virus would impact soldiers and civilian populations in Djibouti and Somalia.

"I was tasked to identify American and civilian contracts who are all over the Horn of Africa, and see if they were at risk of developing complications of Covid," he said. "We needed to quickly identify high-risk cases and get them out of the country for treatment. With the public health risk, we self-isolated and experimented with ways to avoid threats early on with the virus."

He has also deployed twice to Iraq, with his first assignment in 2004-2005, and then with the 21st Combat Support Hospital, out of Ft. Hood, Texas, in 2010, which processed more than 2,500 emergency room visits during the nine months of operations in Mosul. By 2013, Park found himself working with many of his former Pennsylvania Guard members in the 20th Infantry Division when deployed to Kuwait.

"In each of these assignments I had various roles, but providing direct medical care to our troops was always a primary concern," he said, as each deployment built skills and knowledge for future missions. One of those significant assignments was his deployment with the 41st Brigade in 2006 to Afghanistan. While visiting an isolated area in Saharan, he quickly realized an urgent need for a troop clinic.

"They had only one medic that made the rounds just once a week," Park said, describing the state of operations in the area. "I contacted Col. (Mike) Dunn, the Chief medical liaison for 41st Brigade to establish a treatment site to be established there."

He has been working for the last seven years in family medicine for Kaiser Permanente, with a focus on public health and infections. Though he wasn't activated on military orders during the pandemic, he was still seeing a steady case load, especially during the Omnicorn variant surge.

"I am getting close to retiring from the military, yet the opportunities that I've had for special training that the Air Force offers have made it beneficial."

Some of those unique opportunities can come in Hyperbaric training and studying the risk of sudden depressurization, as well as space medicinal course work - including studying the effects of working in austere environments that pilots might be subjected to in combat.

In total, the benefits of having a dual career provide irreplaceable dividends during a physician's career in research and patient care treatment. Characterizing why many doctors serve for long careers in the Oregon National Guard, Col. Armitage said, as it comes down to a sense of "camaraderie and serving others."

"It's always the people. The mutual support and professionalism that's here [on base] is really something I have rarely experienced anywhere," he said. "It's hard to walk away from that - we all want to give something back."

With the assistance of the Navy's Seabees, the Aid Station in Sharana helped treat coalition forces, contracted civilians, and Afghans, establishing direct care from the medical staff that would later be assigned to the region.

shares a similar story to Col. Park. When he left Vietnam in 1992, Ho was only 14 years old, and like his father who served in the military, he joined the military too, giving him the opportunity to strive toward his goal to become a doctor while serving in the U.S. Air Force. With the assistance of the Health Professions Scholarship Program (HPSP), he attended Albany Medical School in Albany, New York, and completed his residency requirements at Travis Air Force Base, California.



Air National Guard Lt. Col. Minh Ho, Flight Surgeon, 142nd Wing Medical Group

"I love being in the military," said Ho. "I've been able to travel, serve my adopted country, and help our Airmen sustain their military careers."

Other duty assignments for Ho have included Keesler Air Force Base, in Mississippi and Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington.

After serving for seven years on active duty, and deployment to Qatar in 2010, Ho wanted to spend more time at home. He joined the 142nd Wing and is currently in a supervisory role as a Flight surgeon.

"I thought for a long time about staying on active duty for a twenty-year career, but decided that I wanted to begin my civilian medical career too," he said, describing why he joined the Air National Guard. "It's enjoyable doing both. Right now I work on the operations side, making sure our pilots are mission ready, and how they are doing on a case-by-case basis."

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Army National Guard Col. Jonathon Park, Physician, Oregon Nat'l Guard MEDCOM

OREGON NATIONAL GUARD COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND REGIONAL EVENTS

Oregon Army National Guard trains with Bangladesh Army during Exercise Tiger Lightning

Story and photos by
Sgt. Hanna Hawkins,
115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

GAZIPUR, Bangladesh – Moving sluggishly through the hot, steamy haze, a commuter train passes by a diverse group of soldiers working alongside the tracks. It's packed with travelers, and even in late winter, many riders choose to sit on top of the train to find a place of respite from the cramped muggy conditions inside. The soldiers are a mixed group of Bangladesh Army service members and U.S. troops training together, and like the train passengers, trying to mitigate the heat and humidity here in late February.

As Exercise Tiger Lightning 2023 began at the Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Support Operations Training (BIPSOT) center on Feb. 26, 2023, members of the Oregon Army National Guard 3-116th Cavalry Unit, Charlie Company out of Woodburn, Oregon, as well as members of the 5th Security Force Assistance Brigade (5th SFAB) out of Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington, and several



Oregon Army National Guard members of Charlie Company, 3-116 Cavalry unit, along with Bangladesh Army members use the embankment of a train track to provide some cover while pulling security during field training as part of Exercise Tiger Lightning 2023 near Dhaka, Bangladesh March 9, 2023.

“Tiger Lightning is a bilateral exercise where we focus on partnership and interoperability and strengthen the partnership that we have with Bangladesh,” said Oregon Army National Guard Lt. Col. Demian San Miguel, assigned to the State Partnership Program and the lead planner for Tiger Lightning 2023. “For the past couple of years, we have been doing exchanges with Bangladesh, focusing on peacekeeping operations for their units deploying to Mali, Central Africa Republic, and Congo. So these exercises allow the U.S. forces to learn more about what the Bangladeshis do in Africa related to peacekeeping operations.”

Exercise Tiger Lightning was first conducted in 2017 with a pause to do the Covid-19 pandemic. For the past two years, the exercise has been held in Bangladesh again.

The exercise was particularly aimed at developing mutual understanding and mission connectivity between the forces in a peacekeeping environment.

“The main purpose and intent are to build on capacity,” said Maj. Gen. A.S.M. Ridwanur Rahman, BIPSOT Commandant. “Last year we conducted the exercise that was more of a tabletop exercise with a few tactical exercises but this time we tried to really go at platoon levels and into the specific drills.”

“Looking at the drills of both countries, we found there are a lot of things that we can really incorporate into our systems. So from that perspective, it is great learning for us as a training institution and for the peacekeepers who will be deployed in



Bangladesh Army members and U.S. Oregon Army National Guard members come together as a Bangladeshi official gives an after-action review of the checkpoint training conducted between the two militaries as part of Exercise Tiger Lightning 2023 on March 7, 2023.

members from Civil Affairs, as well as Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) teams, conducted various tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) during the two-week exercise that concluded on March 12, 2023.



Oregon Army National Guard Sgt. Arthur Alvarez, assigned to Charlie Company, 3-116 Cavalry, helps secure the tailgate of a transport truck along with a Bangladesh Army counterpart during cordon and search operations training on March 9, 2023.



Oregon Army National Guard Soldiers work with their Bangladesh Armed Forces partners on a cordon and search operations training mission during Exercise Tiger Lightning 2023, on March 7, 2023.

the future,” said Maj. Gen. Rahman.

This exercise allowed all parties to share in best practices, from the U.S.’s engagements in the Middle East and Bangladesh’s peacekeeping TTPs from Africa allowed both countries to see “there are a lot of things that we can really incorporate in our systems,” said Maj. Gen. Rahman, “for us as a training intuition and for the peacekeepers who will be deploying in the future.”



An Oregon Army National Guard member gives commands to two local role players seeking aid during checkpoint during Exercise Tiger Lightning 2023, on March 6, 2023.



Oregon Army National Guard members of 3-116 Cavalry unit, Charlie Company, secure a structure during cordon and search operations training as part of Exercise Tiger Lightning 2023 at the BIPSOT center near Dhaka, Bangladesh, March 7, 2023.

“Tiger Lightning 2023 focused on a platoon-level exchange where we saw how Bangladesh would do it, we demonstrated how the U.S. does it, then we combined the platoons to encourage that interoperability and see how they work together,” said San Miguel. “That only strengthened our partnership, not only at the strategic and operational level but really at the tactical level with our Soldiers interacting with their Soldiers and developing that friendship and partnership.”

In total, 150 Soldiers from the Bangladesh Army and 75 U.S. Army members trained together during the two-week exercise. The first week focused on counter-improvised explosive devices (C-IED), mine-resistant ambush-protected (MRAP) vehicles, and a combat lifesaver (CLS) course.

“This year for the first time, the MRAP vehicles that we have received from the U.S. Army for the peacekeeping missions, we have tested and tried those on the ground so this is a good avenue,” said Maj. Gen. Rahman.

The second week began with an academic discussion on peacekeeping missions and EOD knowledge between Bangladesh and the U.S. militaries, with the remaining majority of the week holding field exercise training (FTX). The FTX consisted of Checkpoint establishment, C-IED, counter-ambush, and cordon and search operations.

The culminating exercise showcased cordon and search operations in multiple iterations allowing Charlie Company, 3-116 Cavalry to observe, for training purposes, the Bangladesh Army’s way of assaulting a staged village.



Oregon Army National Guard Spc. Lane Nelson inspects the serial number on a weapon with a Bangladeshi Army member in preparation for field training during Exercise Tiger Lightning 2023.



Oregon Army National Guard Sgt. Chase Kaleta, along with a Bangladesh Army counterpart escorts a role-playing enemy prisoner of war during cordon and search operations training as part of Exercise Tiger Lightning 2023 at the Bangladesh Institute of Peace Support Operation Training center near Dhaka, Bangladesh, March 9, 2023.

The two militaries switched roles so the Bangladesh Army could see Charlie Company’s TTPs when assaulting the village. This allowed for much discussion during after-action reviews where both countries talked about best practices and what was noticed about each other’s ways of executing the mission.

and hope to continue the partnership into the future. The Oregon National Guard has been an SPP nation with Bangladesh for over ten years.

“The U.S. and Bangladesh Army have a very rich history of bilateral cooperation,” said Maj. Gen. Rahman.

“One of the most powerful things I have witnessed here was the casual interaction between the U.S. Soldiers and the Bangladesh Soldiers even when there was no task going on and just some downtime, it was nice to see some of our Soldiers interact with them, laugh, joke, share patches,” said San Miguel. “That right there is the foundation of our friendship with Bangladesh.”



Oregon Army National Guard Sgt. Jose Torreszavala of Charlie Company, 3-116 Cavalry unit, pulls security during counter-improvised explosive device training as part of Exercise Tiger Lightning 2023 at the Bangladesh Institute of Peace Support Operation Training (BIPSOT) center near Dhaka, Bangladesh on March 7, 2023.



Oregon Army National Guardsmen of Charlie Company, 3-116 Cavalry unit, along with a Bangladesh Army counterparts carry a local role player on a litter during cordon and search operations training as part of Exercise Tiger Lightning 2023 at the Bangladesh Institute of Peace Support Operation Training center near Dhaka, Bangladesh, March 9, 2023.

MOBILIZATIONS

Charlie Troop, 1-82nd Cavalry Regiment recognized during homecoming ceremony

Continued from Front Page

In his remarks welcoming home Charlie Troop, Maj. Gen. Michael E. Stencel, Adjutant General for Oregon emphasized the timely sense of uncertainty when they first arrived in Poland in January of 2022.

“As we deploy more frequently and recurring – deployments become more normal, our risk is that they no longer garner public attention,” he said, acknowledging the past several years of both global and pandemic domestic operations to members of the unit.

“When you embarked upon your mission to support our NATO partners, tensions in Eastern Europe were coming to a critical point – shortly after your arrival, the Russian military invaded Ukraine. I am sure there was some initial trepidation and apprehension for many of you, as you witnessed the immense influxes of Ukrainian refugees arriving in Poland...by car, train, and often on foot,” Stencel said.

Following Stencel’s remarks, he introduced newly elected Governor, Tina Kotek for her first official military observance as the leader of the State of Oregon.



Photo courtesy of Oregon Governor Tina Kotek office

Oregon Gov. Tina Kotek, pauses for a group photo with Oregon Army National Guard Soldiers from Charlie Troop, 1-82nd Cavalry Regiment following their formal demobilization ceremony at Camp Withycombe on Feb. 4, 2023.

“In Ukraine, I am proud to know that you were there serving the communities of Poland,” she said, emphasizing their tasks during the nine-month deployment, working with numerous European nations. “I am not surprised that you were there, doing very key work at a critical time because that’s what the Oregon National Guard has been doing – you are no stranger to demanding situations and you are well equipped to work with a wide variety of partners.”

While in Poland, the troop also took part in the Iron Wolf II Exercise with Battle Group Lithuania, driving their Strykers over 200 miles to the Runka training area in Lithuania from Poland. This was a challenge, as the trip took over 14 hours but the transition was quick, all the while taking part in a major training exercise. Over 4,000 Soldiers from Lithuania, Norway, Germany, Poland, and Great Britain conducted training in a ‘Near Peer Threat,’ exercise, mirroring real-world dangers in neighboring Ukraine.

This was just one of the many actions that Charlie Company conducted with other U.S. European partners; building trust, reassurance, and friendships while enhancing readiness.

The unit also held a ‘Spur Ride,’ for the entire Battle Group in September – testing Cavalry scouts on reconnaissance tasks.

Soldiers from Charlie Troop, the Royal Dragons, and the Romanian Air Defense

rucked more than 60 miles while taking part in over 10 Cavalry-related Knowledge tests and exercises. By the end of the training, 18 U.S. Soldiers and one Romanian Air Defense Soldier earned their Silver Spurs.

Also in attendance during the ceremony, U.S. Senator Ron Wyden, of Oregon, touched on the long U.S. relationship with Allied partners dating back to World War II, through the Cold War and now to the present deployment. Paraphrasing a famous quote from Winston Churchill, Wyden stated, “Americans always get it right...after they’ve tried everything else,” but with General Stencil and the Oregon National Guard – they always get it right the first time.”

“All of us appreciate the wonderful courage and valor of our troops because Oregon’s National Guard – they weren’t running from potential dangers, they just kept answering the call and volunteering [during this deployment] to help in any way they could,” said Wyden.

Prior to her election as Governor and Oregon’s new Commander-in-Chief, Kotek served as the Speaker of the Oregon House of Representatives from 2013 to 2022. She has seen up-close, the direct support with domestic operations by Oregon service members when responding to the initial outbreak of the COVID-19 virus.

“We all know the past three years have been, and indeed, extraordinary times... and the Oregon National Guard has distinguished itself by providing testing locations, vaccine sites, and staff assistance to over 50 hospitals across our great state during the pandemic.”

In her closing remarks, Kotek praised these long-sustained efforts made by Oregon National Guard members.

“As Citizen-Soldiers, you have demonstrated, time after time, mission after mission – how to draw on past accomplishments and apply them to current challenges,” she said, highlighting the many additional assignments outside the normal overseas mobilizations.

“Your rapid and professional response has earned you a place in history and in the hearts of Oregonians. You are patriots in every sense of the word.”



Photo courtesy of Oregon Governor Tina Kotek office

Oregon Gov. Tina Kotek, (right), with her wife, Aimee Kotek Wilson (center), and Maj. Gen. Michael Stencel, Adjutant General, Oregon (left), greet Oregon Army National Guard soldiers from Charlie Troop, 1-82nd Cavalry Regiment following their demobilization ceremony.

“Just a few weeks ago, I took the oath of office to serve as your governor. It is now my honor to be your Commander-in-Chief, to welcome you home as your deployment officially ends today,” said Kotek.

“As many Americans watched the invasion

San Francisco 49ers honor Oregon Airmen following game-day flyover

Story and photo by Master Sgt. Jeff Thompson, 173rd Fighter Wing Public Affairs

SAN FRANCISCO, Calif. – The National Football League signals the start of every game with the National Anthem and quite often the last note is punctuated with the roar of a military jet streaking overhead in a show of patriotism.

Sunday, Dec. 4, 2022 was no exception – as the San Francisco 49ers hosted the Miami Dolphins for an afternoon NFL game.

The 173rd Fighter Wing lent the roar to the crowded stadium, as four F-15 Eagles performed a flyover to the 70-thousand fans; cheering the jets and pyrotechnics.

“There’s a lot of coordination that goes into it,” said Capt. Logan Smith, the flight lead for the event. A primary concern for air traffic in the area was shifting wind direction and the resulting deconfliction of air space with three major airports in the immediate area, he explained.

“It was actually in question whether we would be able to fly it until 15 minutes before time-on-target and we were only able to take off three minutes before time-on-target,” he said.

And three minutes later they were there

showcasing the Air Force above one of the most popular and highest rated sport in the country.

The San Francisco 49ers organization arranged to say ‘thank you’ to those same Airmen before the game was even over.

After landing, Smith, his fellow pilots, two crew chiefs and a radio operator made their way onto the playing field. The announcer addressed the stadium thanking the Airmen and honoring their service at the 173rd Fighter Wing, even as the teams huddled during a time-out not 30-yards away.

“I will never forget that,” said Tech. Sgt. Jeff Southern, a dedicated crew chief for the lead jet during the earlier flyover. “We didn’t really know what to expect but when we got down there everybody started cheering and clapping—it was so loud it made my ears ring.”

“For my first TDY and first NFL game, that



Nine 173rd FW Airmen stand on the playing field during a game between the San Francisco 49ers and the Miami Dolphins to recognize their service to the Nation at Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, Calif., on Dec. 4, 2022.

was pretty special,” said Senior Airman Riley Hinshaw, the radio operator for the trip to San Francisco.

Following the on-field recognition the group was able to head to the stands where the fans welcomed them with lots of fist-bumps and high fives as San Francisco outpaced Miami 33-17 to end the game.

MOBILIZATIONS

3-116th Cavalry Regiment conclude Operation Spartan Shield deployment

Story by John Hughel, Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs

HERMISTON, Ore. – Oregon Army National Guard Citizen-Soldiers, assigned to Bravo Company, 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment, along with maintenance support members from the 145th Brigade Support Battalion were recognized by federal, state, and local officials during a demobilization ceremony, held at the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center, in Hermiston, Oregon on March 5, 2023.

The event formally acknowledged the 75 members of the combined unit, during their nearly yearlong deployment to support overseas contingency operations in the Middle East. The Oregon Soldiers were combined with two Army National Guard Companies from the Montana Army National Guard’s 163rd Infantry Regiment, as part of ‘Task Force Griz,’ supporting the United States Central Command. In addition, service members from Idaho, Nevada, and Florida made up the total force supporting Operation Spartan Shield, strengthening defense relationships, and building partner nation abilities in the region.



Photo courtesy of Bravo Company, 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment

A U.S. Air Force C-17 Globemaster III is used to load both service members and heavy equipment for Bravo Company, 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment during their nearly nine month mobilization in the Middle East.

While addressing the troops of Bravo Company, Maj. Gen. Michael E. Stencel, Adjutant General, Oregon, described several important enduring characteristics of their deployment, which included participation in the Eager Lion Multinational Exercise, conducted in Jordan and involved Italy, Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom, as well as the host nation.

“The exercise enhanced America’s ability to coordinate and operate effectively as a member in a multi-national joint force when they arrived,” he said, detailing many of the accomplishments. “This mission placed all of you in a dynamic part of the world, and you performed your duties in line with our core values of competency and commitment.”

The 116th Cavalry Brigade Combat Team is headquartered in Idaho and is made up of soldiers across the four western states of Idaho, Montana, Nevada, and Oregon. The unit is one of five armored brigade combat teams in the U.S. National Guard and one of 16 in the United States Army.

Touching on some of the individual accomplishments, Stencel highlighted several unit members, with practically one member who has been on multiple overseas assignments.



Photo by John Hughel, Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs

Oregon Army National Guard 1st Lt. Justin James is greeted by State and local elected leaders, and Oregon National Guard military leadership at the conclusion of the demobilization ceremony members of Bravo Company, 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry in Hermiston, Ore., on March 5, 2023.

“First Sergeant Alejandro Sanchez, has now deployed three times, in three decades – and all with Bravo Company,” he said.

In his two previous deployments, Sanchez was part of Operation Iraqi Freedom from 2004-2005, and then during his second deployment to Iraq from 2010 to 2011, as part of Operation New Dawn, he served as an assistant convoy commander for the unit. With this third deployment, he has taken part in all three of the unit’s largest mobilizations since 9/11.

“I can’t begin to tell you how proud I am of each of your individual efforts and appreciative of the support by your families, friends, and employers while you were away,” Stencel said while concluding his remarks. “Thank you for the service to the nation for a job extremely well done.”

Serving as a representative for Oregon Governor Tina Kotek, State Treasurer Tobias Read also welcomed the unit home while reflecting on their collective actions.

“Service is a shared commitment, so I hope you will join me in a big round of applause for all the family, friends, and employers who made this mission a success – both at home and abroad,”

said Read, in his address to those attending.

The Oregon Soldiers were initially mobilized on Nov. 4, 2021, under the command of Capt. Sean Popravak, and first conducted additional specialized training at Fort Bliss, Texas, before departing overseas to their deployed area.

“Our mission was to be a mobile, armored reaction force to deter malign foreign influence and reassure allies within the Middle East of the United States’ continued commitment to the region,” said Popravak.

Arriving on New Year’s Day 2022 at Camp Buehring, Kuwait, the unit brought their Oregon tanks to the range and ensured all tanks were able to move, shoot and communicate.

They also ‘inherited’ eight MaxxPro Mine Resistant Ambush Protected Vehicles (MRAPs), from theater stock

and brought them to working condition. Platoons became proficient in MRAP rollover trainers, Obstacle Courses, realistic CLS training, and vehicle decontamination. They also conducted truck gunnery on the MRAP platform, a first for many new Soldiers.

In October, the unit redeployed stateside, working for the 29th Infantry Division and later in conjunction with the 35th Infantry Division, subsequently, returning their tanks over to Alpha Company, 2nd Brigade, of the 116th Cavalry Regiment before returning home.

“By your actions, you have obviously proven yourself as a highly skilled and trained force that is always prepared to respond both domestically and abroad,” said Read during his concluding remarks.

Read also thanked each member as they proceeded through a receiving line of local, state, and federal officials, each receiving ‘The Adjutant General and ‘Governors Challenge Coins.’ In this same spirit of unity, an American Flag was given to service members that had been flown over the U.S. Capital in Washington, D.C.



Photo by John Hughel, Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs

Oregon State Treasurer Tobias Read, representing Gov. Tina Kotek, hands out the ‘Governors Challenge Coins’ to each Soldier of Bravo Company, 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry at the conclusion of their demobilization ceremony in Hermiston, Ore., on March 5, 2023.

“I want to offer one other observation – when it’s really easy for us to focus on the things that divide us, I am practically struck by the important example all of you provide,” Read noted, as he summarized his sentiments to the unit members. “What you found, when you all worked together to accomplish a shared purpose, the superficial things seemed to slide away. And we remember that we are all Oregonians... as we work to build the state for ourselves and future generations.”



Photo courtesy of Bravo Company, 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment

American armored vehicles line up for a live fire exercise, as members of Bravo Company, 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment conduct training during their deployment in the Middle East.

NEWS

142nd Wing Airmen complete Operation Noble Eagle mobilization

Story and photos by, Staff Sgt. Sean Campbell, 142nd Wing Public Affairs

LANGLEY AIR FORCE BASE, Va. – In January, 200 Guardsmen from the 142nd Wing returned from a multi-month mission on the east coast which commenced in September of 2022.

The team was mobilized to support the North American Aerospace Defense Command's Operation Noble Eagle (ONE), a continental defense operation that started on Sept. 12, 2001, in response to the September 2001 terrorist attacks. Initially, the operation provided Air Support to cover many key infrastructure points across the United States. Today, NORAD closely coordinates air defense activities with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), monitors those operations and responds to requests for assistance and emergency situations.

Working on location at Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Virginia, Guardsmen from Oregon, Florida, Virginia, California and Massachusetts formed together to create the 123rd Expeditionary Fighter Squadron (EFS), which consisted of more than 200 Airmen.

Oregon's 123rd Fighter Squadron Commander, Lt. Col. Josh Hovanas and 142nd Operation Support Squadron Commander, Lt. Col. Bradley Young ran the operation on the ground. Both served as the



An Oregon Air National Guard F-15 Eagle takes off from Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Va., as a part of Operation Noble Eagle, a United States homeland defense mission on Dec. 14, 2022.

commander for the 123rd EFS during the first and last halves of the mission, respectively. While on location, the EFS conducted air support missions enforcing the Federal Aviation Administration's Temporary Flight Restricted airspace throughout the east coast. Young remarked on the unique advantages of combining efforts with other units to accomplish the mission.

"There's synergy in the diversity that multiple units bring. We don't always have the numbers, the quantities or the capabilities to do everything organically," said Young. "We reach out to some of our fellow brother and sister units to see if there are any volunteers, and then we try to make it beneficial for everyone involved."

The EFS consisted not only of flyers, but also supporting units required to make the mission happen, to include Ammo, Weapons, Security Forces, Aircrew Flight Equipment, Supply, Maintenance, and others units.

A big contributor to the success of ONE is Aircrew Flight Equipment (AFE) Airmen, whose goal is to make sure that the pilots have the gear they need to be safe and successful.

AFE maintains equipment like parachutes, flight suits, and other gear; and keeps it easily accessible for the flight crew. Having these dedicated Airmen maintaining the gear allows pilots to be ready as quickly as possible.

Staff Sgt. Selina Rodriguez is a 142nd Wing AFE Airman who played an important role in daily flying operations. "Our main focus is the pilots," said Rodriguez. "Anything and everything that they need for flight is what we do... our equipment is made to save your life."

Missions like ONE are not only critical to national security, but also give participating Airmen the opportunity to hone their skills while gaining real world experience in their career fields.

In addition to personnel, the 142nd Wing sent eight F-15C Eagle aircraft. Supporting the mission with these aircraft allowed other fighter units on the East Coast to continue their mission sets and training with minimal impact to daily operations.

The 142nd Wing continued operations in the Pacific Northwest during this time with the remaining aircraft left at home station.

Operation Noble Eagle continues to be a crucial aspect of how we defend our homeland.

For almost 65 years, NORAD aircraft have identified and intercepted potential air threats to North America in the execution of its aerospace warning and aerospace control missions and maintain a watchful eye over Canadian and U.S. internal waterways and maritime approaches under its maritime warning mission.



Oregon Air Nat'l Guard Tech. Sgt. Timothy Nieto, 142nd Maintenance Group weapons loader, loads an F-15 with ordnance at Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Va., Dec. 14, 2023.



Airmen assigned to the 142nd Wing Maintenance Group conduct routine maintenance on a U.S. F-15 Eagle before an Operation Noble Eagle mission, on Dec. 13, 2022.

Guardian Angel: 142nd Wing Airman saves life during morning commute

Story and photo by Tech. Sgt. Alexander Frank, 142nd Wing Public Affairs

PORTLAND, Ore. – Oregon Air National Guard Staff Sgt. Kyle Mergeler, a religious affairs Airman with the 142nd Wing, has had a varied Air Force career in his 10 years of service. He began his enlistment working in intelligence, and later spent years turning wrenches in maintenance. Recently, Mergeler transitioned to a role in religious affairs, acting as a pillar of support for others. It's a move that speaks to his passion for public service, community engagement, and giving back to others.

Mergeler first joined the 142nd Wing as a maintainer in 2015 after separating from active duty. While he enjoyed his work, Mergeler began looking for ways to give back. When an opportunity came up to work in religious affairs, Mergler jumped at the chance.

"I'm realizing more and more you get what you put in," said Mergeler. "As much as I love maintenance, it was just an opportunity to work with people rather than wrenches."

As a religious affairs Airman, Mergeler works to build a culture of spiritual care while ensuring the free exercise of religion for military members and their families. In addition to

his military duties, Mergeler works to support healthcare workers in his civilian career.

"I'm a videographer for Providence Health Care System," said Mergeler. "That includes making training videos as well as some audio-visual support for the surgical suite and whatever technical stuff the hospital might throw at us."

Whether he's supporting Airmen through religious affairs on base or helping doctors and healthcare workers receive vital training in the community, it's apparent that Mergeler has a genuine desire to help others. It's this desire that would drive him to take action and save someone's life.

During the early hours of Sunday, November 6th, on his way to drill, Mergeler was flagged down by a concerned citizen on Powell boulevard. It was then that he noticed a man lying unconscious on the sidewalk.

"I made a U-turn on Powell and pulled up and jumped out of my car," said Mergeler. "I called 911 and they directed me through chest compressions; I did chest compressions on this individual for probably 5 minutes before fire showed up."

Before deciding to turn around Mergeler admits he had a fleeting moment of hesitation; a thought that he quickly dismissed.



Oregon Air National Guard Staff Sgt. Kyle Mergeler, pauses for a portrait at the Air Base Chapel on Dec. 15, 2022.

NEWS

Oregon Army Guardsmen compete in CNGB Biathlon Nationals Championships

Continued from Front Page

"If the fundamentals of combat are audacity, momentum and to close in and destroy the enemy, those things are much easier to do on skis than running through deep snow," said Capt. Kyle Roe, an Oregon biathlete and troop commander with 1st Squadron, 82nd Cavalry Regiment. "Being a biathlete is like being a Soldier, you have a set of skills that you continue to refine and improve over time. Both require you to shoot, both require you to be physical fit, and both require you to synthesize and put those things together for one product."



ORARNG Lt. Col. Rocky Kumlin, the Oregon National Guard's biathlon coach and coordinator, picks up his poles and departs the range area after completing a round of shooting during the men's relay competition held on Feb. 21, 2023.

Each race starts with cross-country skiing and with each lap, participants stop at a range adjacent to the course to fire their .22 caliber rifles, which they carry on their backs for the entirety of the race. Participants fire from both the prone and standing position during each race. The longer the race distance, the more times they stop to fire their rifles at established targets.

Biathlete Capt. Jared Hoffer, an operations officer with 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry expresses "the better shape you're in the easier it will be," when it comes to shooting.

"It's taking a second to adjust and mentally send that message to your body, you need to calm down, and then it allows you to start the recovery process to steady the rifle and engage the target. The same basic fundamentals of marksmanship are there, we are just doing it after skiing more than 2-kilometers and trying to go as fast as we can."

Failure to engage any of the five targets results in a distance penalty, with each participant skiing an additional 150-meter loop for each missed shot.

The biathlon doesn't play favorites with competitors and requires them to be equally skilled at both disciplines. "That's what so great about this sport, you pay for your deficiencies. Which goes along with being a Soldier too. You can spend all your time

being a phenomenal skier but ultimately the penalty that you incur for neglecting that second domain of the race will usually prove too costly... you can't get away with ignoring one entire facet of the sport itself," conveys Roe.

Competitors must have "the ability to skate ski and shoot at a very high level. It's not a ski-athon and it's not a shoot-athlon, it's a biathlon," said Lt. Col. Rocky Kumlin, the team's coach and coordinator.

"And when you can combine both, it's a lot of fun – and when you don't, it gets frustrating. It takes both aspects."

First demonstrated at the 1928 Winter Olympics as the military ski patrol, it wasn't until 1960 that the sport debuted for men and only in 1992 when the women's biathlon event was added.

The first Chief of the National Guard Bureau (CNGB) Biathlon Nationals were held at the Camp Ethan Allen Training Site in Jericho, Vermont in 1975, the same location that hosted this year's competition.

The Oregon Army Guard's biathlon program has evolved over the years as well. Team coach and coordinator, Lt. Col. Rocky Kumlin, first joined the program in 2007.

Kumlin joined the team just as it was transitioning from "showing up with sweatpants and whatever they had" to gaining more support and being able to obtain "race uniforms, skis, poles and new rifles." A lot has changed over the last 14-years," he recalls.

The team's newest convert, Maj. Kristy Harrison, who has previous experience competing in triathlons, remembers wanting to join the team for years. She got serious this winter, going out and renting skis, and headed up to the mountain on her own.

"I went up to Mount Hood and I got in the parking lot and fell about three times, put the skis back in my car and took my dog for a hike," she laughs, remembering her first attempt with the sport. "Okay this is not something I'm going to do on my own, I need somebody to show me how to do this."

Harrison, who started as a kid downhill skiing made the transition to snowboarding, before taking up cross-country skiing in 2022. In her debut race while at the CNGB event, she drew the short stick.

"The first race I was dead last," she said. To clarify, she started last out of her group of novice competitors. But she definitely didn't finish last, setting herself up for a 3rd place finish in the women's pursuit race on the second day of competition.

Capt. Roe also extended Oregon's tradition of making the All-Guard team, being one of the top 15 overall male finishers, following Lt. Col. Kumlin's top 15 finish in 2022. Individuals on the All-Guard team, consisting of the top 15 male and top five female competitors, can be selected to represent the National Guard or even the United States in different competitions across the world. Developmental team and World Class Athlete Program opportunities also exist for those top skiers on the All-Guard team.



ORARNG Capt. Jared Hoffer, a member of 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry, removes and reapply wax on their skis following the sprint race at the Chief of the National Guard Bureau's Biathlon Nationals on Feb. 18, 2023, at the Camp Ethan Allen Training Site in Jericho, Vt.

The chance to race with top notch people including "a two-time Olympian is pretty awesome and inspiring," says Kumlin, a reference to Col. Robert Duncan Douglass, a Utah Guard biathlete who competed in the 1992 and 1994 Winter Olympics, and in the CNGB event.

When late spring and summer comes, biathletes turn to other forms of cross training such as road biking, rowing, strength training, and hiking in addition to their regular Army Combat Fitness Test training regime.



ORARNG Capt. Jared Hoffer, an operations officer with 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry, prepares his rifle prior to shooting from the prone during the Men's Master Sprint Race on Feb. 18, 2023.

Roe says he also incorporates chasing his two daughters around and training for half and full marathons, "as long as you're active and developing leg strength and endurance, those things put you in place to be successful when the snow starts falling again."

Kumlin recommends taking a skate ski lesson and giving it a shot. "The weather is another consideration," he says "for some people it can be a complete downer skiing in negative 26-degree weather. We don't just ski when it's sunny outside. There are lots of extremes and some people just don't want to deal with that."

"Just do it, if you're at all interested. Let's suffer together" adds Harrison.



(L-R) ORARNG Maj. Kristy Harrison, Alaska Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Jan Bulaong and Colorado Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Lindsey Lopez at the end of the women's patrol event on Feb. 22, 2023.

FEATURES

The Oregon Army National Guard partners with OSAA and OACA to provide Most Valuable Teammate awards to local high school students

Story and photo by Sgt. 1st Class Amy Elker, Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs

BEND, Ore. – One of the National Guard’s primary missions is to build positive relationships with members of the local communities. This past year Staff Sgt. Dimitri Fenrick, Marketing Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge (NCOIC), Recruiting and Retention Command, Oregon Army National Guard (ORARNG), had a vision to extend the Guard’s relationship with local schools by partnering with the Oregon Schools Activities Association (OSAA) and Oregon Athletic Coaches Association (OACA).

“The Oregon Army National Guard is made up of citizen Soldiers who live, work and serve in the Guard locally,” Fenrick said. “It is important for us, as an organization, to support our communities.”

Originally, Fenrick said his team was asked to sponsor the OSAA basketball championships by putting up banners and having recruiter’s present at a booth space. However, he wanted the recruiters to be able to provide additional value to the students at their schools by “engaging more formally with students and highlighting their accomplishments,” he said. “Awards through the OSAA seemed to fit the bill.”

Through this partnership, coaches from any Oregon high school may nominate a participant from each varsity team for the Most Valuable Teammate (MVT) award. OSAA team events are not limited to athletics but may also include choir, band, orchestra, speech, dance, and cheerleading.

A Recruiting and Retention Non-Commissioned Officer (RRNCO) from the ORARNG will present each MVT nominee with an award at their school. Nominees also receive the opportunity to apply for a \$1000 college scholarship awarded by the OSAA. Of the total nominees, one will also be selected as the overall winner for each OSAA event.

Many of the qualities that exemplify a MVT, are the same as those required for an outstanding Soldier: leading by example, willing to play any role, working hard, displaying a positive and energetic attitude,

and supporting others.

In addition to the MVT award, there is also a Most Valuable Classmate award. Nominees for this award are selected by each team and school and is awarded to someone who is not part of the team, but has displayed great loyalty by supporting their peers through school spirit, leadership and sportsmanship. These nominees may include the score or record keeper, team’s biggest fan or team manager.

Oregon Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Heater, Recruiting and Retention Non-Commissioned Officer, for Bend and Central Oregon, had the opportunity to present Riley Ahmuty, a senior at Bend Senior High School, with the “Most Valuable Teammate” award on Jan. 18, 2023. Heater said Ahmuty was nominated by her volleyball coach for being a leader on and off the court. Ahmuty would go above and beyond to help others, including forgoing a celebration with her friends after a game one night to instead help clear the bleachers with a custodian after the game, knowing they were short-staffed.

Heater said this partnership between OSAA and ORARNG has been very exciting. “It’s a great opportunity,” she said, “for us to become even more involved with the students in our schools and support their sporting events.” Bend Senior High has been very kind, she added, inviting her to share in their dinner.

In addition to recognizing students in the local community, Fenrick said this also provides recruiters with “a school point of contact, a center of influence, and opens the door, specifically for recruiting, to provide further partnerships with the school and Oregon Army National Guard resources for school events.” Some of these resources include firing off cannons at games, doing flyovers at events and providing static displays. He added that the Oregon Army National Guard is working to develop and offer Leadership Workshops at these schools.

Fenrick would love to have your help in spreading the word to coaches and athletic directors to let them know these awards are available at OSAA sponsored schools.

The 2023 MVT nomination form is still open through the summer and is available at this link: OSAA – Awards

In addition, if you work at a high school or college, or know someone who does, please contact Fenrick by cell at (503) 887-5792 or by email at dimitri.fenrick2.mil@army.mil



Nomination for Riley Ahmuty:

“Riley is a leader on and off the court. She leads by example of always being early to practice, is the first one to offer help to a coach, teammate or lower-level player. An example of her ‘giving self’ is after our largest varsity match with our cross-town rivals and a packed gym, she took it upon herself to walk with our night custodian and clear the trash from the bleachers knowing we are short on staff. Instead of going and celebrating with her friends, she chose to give back to the ones that are hardly seen for their hard work. It showed what being a true leader does. She is a player that doesn’t get all the sets, all the stats, nor the recognition for everything she gives to this team and this program. I could not be prouder of the teammate she is.”

– By Kristin Cooper, Riley Ahmuty’s High School Volleyball Coach

The Oregon Youth Challenge Program celebrates 131 new graduates

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

REDMOND, Ore. – The Oregon Youth Challenge Program (OYCP) graduated 131 cadets from their 22-week program at the Deschutes County Fair & Expo Center on Wednesday, Dec. 14, 2022. OYCP is The Oregon National Guard’s alternative high school, and is located in Bend, Oregon.

The program gives at-risk students a second chance to catch up on credits. In addition, the program allows attendees to re-enter high school, graduate on time with their peers, or graduate from OYCP with a state-accredited high school diploma.



Oregon Youth Challenge Program, Graduating Class 64, celebrating after their graduation ceremony Dec. 14, 2022 in Redmond, Oregon.

“We want to help students get back on track to be productive citizens for the State of Oregon,” said Daniel Radabaug, OYCP Director. “OYCP is free to attend for any Oregonian that qualifies; cadets live here at no cost during the 22 weeks while they catch up and learn valuable life skills.”

In 1999, the Oregon National Guard established the OYCP in Bend, Oregon, as an intervention program to reclaim the lives of Oregon teens who had dropped out of high school or were not on track to graduate. “At-risk” refers to the risk of not graduating high school. To help at-risk students, the Department of Defense invested in the OYCP style challenge model for youth development and community outreach.

Oregon Army National Guard Assistant Adjutant General, Oregon, Brig. Gen. Eric J. Riley, the Oregon Youth Challenge Program graduation guest speaker, congratulated the graduates during their commencement ceremony.

“You are the future leaders of our communities...we believe there is no better program or alternative school to meet the needs of our students who might otherwise drop through the cracks.”

The stated mission of the Oregon Youth



The Oregon Youth Challenge Program, Graduating Class 64, during the singing of the National Anthem for their graduation ceremony Wednesday, Dec. 14, 2022 at the Deschutes County Fair & Expo Center, Redmond, Oregon.

Challenge Program is: To provide opportunities for personal growth, self-improvement, and academic achievement among Oregon high school dropouts, teens no longer attending, and those failing in school through a highly structured non-traditional environment, integrating training, mentoring, and diverse educational activities.

Attendees must be 15 to 18 years old, a legal U.S. and Oregon resident, and academically deficient (behind in high school credits) or in danger of not graduating high school.

FEATURES

Oregon Air Guardsman meets First Lady Jill Biden at White House event, honoring National Guard service members and families

Story by Tech Sgt. Alexander Frank, 142nd Wing Public Affairs with additional contributions from Master Sgt. Jim Greenhill & Sgt. 1st Class Zach Sheely, National Guard Bureau Public Affairs

WASHINGTON D.C. – How best to support service members and their families dominated discussion when First Lady Dr. Jill Biden hosted National Guardsmen, spouses and children at the White House on November 28, 2022.

“For many Americans, our National Guard and their families are the only service members that civilians might know,” Biden said in a roundtable discussion with Guard families and adjutants general. Guardsmen live in almost every ZIP code nationwide.

National Guard leaders and Guard families from more than 30 states and territories attended the more than three-hour event that included breakout sessions with White House staff to focus on how best to support the families of all those serving in the nation’s Armed Forces.

“We wanted them to be a part of this special day because they represent the heart of our communities – men and women who choose to serve even as they pursue other careers, who answer the call of duty in our hometowns as quickly as disasters strike and needs arise,” Biden said. “Though our nation relies on their courage, the service of our Guardsmen and women and of their families often goes unseen – especially children of National Guard members.”



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Zach Sheely, National Guard Bureau Public Affairs. First Lady of the United States, Dr. Jill Biden is joined by National Guard family members and National Guard senior leaders for a roundtable discussion on support for National Guard children in the Roosevelt Room at the White House on Nov. 28, 2022.

Meeting with some of those children, the first lady also talked about the National Guard’s primary mission as the combat reserve for the Army and the Air Force.

“Our National Guard members and families have served alongside our active-duty forces in every major conflict,” she told the children, “and, here at home, you are a beacon of hope when hurricanes flood our cities, when fire destroys homes, or when a pandemic grips the nation.”

President Joe Biden and the first lady’s connection to the National Guard is especially strong. Their son, the late Army Maj. Beau Biden, was a member of the Delaware Army National Guard until his 2015 death from brain cancer – he also served a tour in Iraq.

“When Beau was deployed, I saw how much his children ... missed their daddy,” Biden said in her discussion with children. “No matter how much we tried, we couldn’t fill his chair at birthdays and holidays. Some of you may know that experience.”

The first lady leads the Joining Forces initiative with a mission to support “those who also serve: military and veteran families, caregivers and survivors.”



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Zach Sheely, National Guard Bureau Public Affairs. First Lady Dr. Jill Biden (left) is joined by Gen. Daniel Hokanson, Chief, National Guard Bureau (right), along with senior leaders and family members, for a roundtable discussion on support for service members’ children on Nov. 28, 2022.

“We deeply appreciate the Joining Forces program and its recognition of the families of those who serve,” said Army Gen. Daniel Hokanson, the National Guard’s most senior general. “Today’s meetings are so timely: Many service members are deployed and will miss the holidays with their families. We are especially grateful for everyone’s support of our National Guard families, and that Dr. Biden invested time with the children of Soldiers and Airmen was so meaningful for all of us.”

Attendees, including Guard children, also joined the first lady’s unveiling of the 2022 White House “We the People” holiday theme and decorations.

Oregon Air National Guard Master Sgt. Christina Mayangitan, who is currently on a statutory tour working at the Pentagon as a Force Management Program Manager for the Technician Recruitment, Relocation, and Retention Incentive Program, and was selected by Maj. Gen. Michael Stencel, Adjutant General, Oregon, join him in representing Oregon guardsmen at the event. Also invited was Mayangitan’s daughter, Makayla.

“It was an honor to get the opportunity to participate in the Joining Forces event... and [it was] an amazing experience for my daughter,” said Mayangitan. “Their team was truly grateful for our children’s stories and insights about their national guard experiences.”

Makayla was one of just a few military youths to sit at a round table and speak directly with the First Lady. In their conversation, they discussed the differences between on- and off-base schools.

“When Makayla and I moved here from Oregon, we moved on base and she attended a school on Fort Belvoir,” said Mayangitan. “This year, she attended a school off post. The First Lady was interested to know the differences between the two schools, and whether or not there were activities at her current school that recognized and supported military children.”

During the event, attendees discussed some of the unique challenges members of the guard face and identified areas of opportunity to better support guardsmen and their families.

Adjutants general shared successful

initiatives in their states and territories that could be applied on a national level, such as programs to support spouse employment, educate young adults about service, or help unemployed or underemployed troops find meaningful vocations.

Hokanson, the current Chief, National Guard Bureau, and the former Adjutant General of Oregon, appreciated the chance for guardsmen and their families to highlight their experiences.

“I truly appreciated the experience of getting to meet the First Lady and the sincere appreciation she’s done, not only for our children but for guard members as a whole.”

For Mayangitan, the meeting recognized the contributions of guardsmen and underscored the importance of supporting service members regardless of status.

“It is uplifting to know the administration actively supports and is driven to not only serve military family members on active duty, but National Guard, veterans, caregivers, and survivors as well,” she said.



Courtesy photo provided by Master Sgt. Christina Mayangitan. Oregon Air National Guard Master Sgt. Christina Mayangitan, along with her daughter Makayla, and Maj. Gen. Michael Stencel, Adjutant General, Oregon, along with his wife Sue, pause for a photograph with First Lady of the United States, Dr. Jill Biden during the “Joining Forces Initiative” held at The White House, in Washington D.C., on Nov. 28, 2022.

The National Guard’s senior enlisted leader said that strength and dedication are what set Guard and military families apart.

“The resilience of our National Guard families and especially the children of Guardsmen in our formations is a force multiplier,” said Command Chief Master Sgt. Tony Whitehead, Hokanson’s senior enlisted advisor. “Taking care of our people and their families will always be our highest priority.”

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FIFTY YEARS ON: REMEMBERING THE SIGNING OF THE 1973 PARIS PEACE ACCORDS

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Oregon & Military History

Commentary by Lt. Col. (ret.) Terrence Popravak
142nd Wing - History Office

PORTLAND, Ore. – On January 27, 2023, marked the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Paris Peace Accords, “An Agreement Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam,” which brought an end to the active US involvement in the Vietnam War. The accords were formally signed on January 27, 1973, in Paris, France, at the Hotel Majestic by the leaders of the four official delegations, United States and Republic of Vietnam on one side with the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and Viet Cong/Provisional Revolutionary Government on the other.

Many Oregon Air National Guard (ORANG) veterans served in Southeast Asia during the war, and talk of the war and their personal experience in it continues to this day in various veteran get-togethers.

To call it peace in Jan., 1973 was perhaps a bit of a misnomer, as the fighting in Southeast Asia between various opposing military forces in the countries of Indochina (the Vietnams, Laos and Cambodia) continued for over two years. More Americans lost their lives in the war after the accords were signed, adding to the more than 58,000 dead by the end of it. This was part of the estimated 1.3 to 3.4 million dead between all combatants and civilian populations in the region. Not to mention the post-1975 slaughter of an estimated 2.2 million or more souls in the “Killing Fields” genocide of Cambodia by the conquering Khmer Rouge. “War is hell,” as American Civil War General William Tecumseh Sherman said, and the Vietnam War certainly was that.

But for the most part, aside from isolated actions such as the SS Mayaguez Incident of May, 1975, after the signing of the Paris Peace Accords US forces in Southeast Asia observed the ceasefire re against their North Vietnamese adversaries, began the withdrawal of all U.S. troops and advisors from South Vietnam as well as the dismantling of U.S. bases in South Vietnam. The signatories of the accords looked forward to the exchange of prisoners to follow within 60 days after the agreement was signed. For US personnel, Operation Homecoming welcomed the return of 591 former POWs.

POW/MIA Situation

Although Oregon’s Air Guardsmen were dedicated to defense of the homeland, the organization’s members, especially those who had served overseas in the war, were acutely aware of their comrades-in-arms service and sacrifice in Southeast Asia. As America’s involvement in the war culminated in late 1972, issues of the Oregon ANG’s newly-revived “Air Scoop Newsletter,” conveyed how much the Prisoner of War (POW)/Missing in Action (MIA) situation weighed on the hearts and minds of Air Guardsmen and American public.

The July, 1972 of the “Air Scoop” noted that some 1,600 Americans were POWs or MIAs in Southeast Asia, and that the “Missing Man” formation was being flown by USAF and ANG units to honor absent or departed comrades in the war.

From Portland ANG Base, the ORANG’s 123rd Fighter-Interceptor Squadron conducted such salutes with flights of four F-101B Voodoo fighter-interceptor jets in fly over sat appropriate public events, like the Hillsboro Independence Day commemoration. As a four-ship flight flew over a particular geographic point, one plane ascended, pulled up and away from the others leaving a symbolic empty place in the formation for viewers on the ground to see and contemplate.

In the August, 1972 issue of the newsletter, the 142nd Fighter Group’s Chaplain (Maj.) William C. Hurn, Jr., wrote that, “I hope that all of you are aware of this tragedy (POW/MIA) and will personally remember the prisoners and their families in your prayers. Another strong suggestion I can make is that you support them and their cause in whatever way you can.”

POW/MIA Bracelets

The same Air Scoop issue highlighted one of those ways with the example of an ORANG couple that made notable personal efforts to bring awareness to the plight of the American POW/MIAs in SE Asia. Capt. Neal Justice and his wife Pat coordinated the local sales of POW/MIA bracelets inscribed with the name of an individual POW or MIA and the date of their loss.

An F-101 Weapons System Officer in the 123rd FIS, Justice was a “River Rat,” a Vietnam combat veteran with credit for 100 missions north and member of the Red River Valley Fighter Pilots Association. He and Pat helped interested citizens to acquire POW/MIA bracelets offered by a non-profit organization called Voices in Vital America. Such bracelets were to be worn with a vow to wear it until the day the Red Cross was allowed in Hanoi to determine the status and treatment of POWs.

In 1972, a POW/MIA bracelet cost \$2.50 for one in silver finish and \$3 for one in copper, with part of the proceeds going to a national scholarship fund for the children of POW/MIA/KIAs. Many Air Guardsmen wore bracelets and the Justices initially accounted for between 300 and 400 bracelets sourced for people in the local area.

As the Paris Peace Accords were implemented, American POWs began to return home. The February, 1973 “Air Scoop”



Then Capt. David L. Hrdlicka (left) stands with four other 563rd TFS squadron members at McConnell AFB, Kansas where the squadron was based and assigned to the 23rd TFW when they deployed to S.E. Asia in April, 1965. He was an F-105 Thunderchief pilot assigned to the 563rd TFS when he was shot down over Laos on May 18, 1965, captured but remains MIA. (powhrdlicka.com)

carried a front-page article titled “My Man is Alive!”

This excitement was shared by many bracelet-wearers as former POWs returned, a number of whom called the Justices to tell them about theirs. Capt. Justice and his wife Pat could take some satisfaction that their efforts were fruitful. The two eventually accounted for around 3,500 POW/MIA bracelets being distributed in the local area. Mrs. Pat Justice said the bracelet experience “has just been fantastic.” Capt. Justice added that the bracelets serve “as a real personal thing, and you get a feeling of deep responsibility toward the man whose name is on the bracelet.”

Members of the Justice Family wore four of the bracelets, though at this time none of their men had returned. Capt. Justice wore one for his friend, Maj. Charles Burkart, a B-57 Canberra bomber pilot in the 13th Bombardment Squadron, shot down over Laos in June, 1966 and listed as MIA. “It’s a personal thing” Justice said. Sadly, Lt. Col. Neal E. Justice and his wife Pat passed away in 2014 and 2006, respectively while his friend Col. Charles W. Burkart, Jr. is still missing. Col. Burkart’s case is categorized as “Active Pursuit” by the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency.

In the May, 1973 “Air Scoop,” Chaplain Hurn wrote about how he was able to meet and talk with one of the returned POWs, then Capt. (later Brig. Gen.) James E. Sehorn, an F-105 pilot of the 469th Tactical Fighter Squadron, shot down at the height of the Rolling Thunder bombing campaign. Capt. Sehorn was on his seventh mission and had dropped his two M118 3,000-lb bombs on the Paul Doumer Bridge near Hanoi during a major air attack on December 14, 1967. Pulling off the target, his Thunderchief was hit by enemy 85mm anti-aircraft artillery. He nursed it about 30 miles southeast of Hanoi but then had to step out of the jet, and step into some five-and-a-half years of captivity.

Sehorn, from Forest Grove, Oregon, told Chaplain Hurn of the value of faith in his time of captivity and suffering, 1,917 days imprisoned. “Capt. Sehorn feels so strongly about the strength that is gained from others knowing of their concern, their prayers, and their love.” Of note, Capt. Sehorn’s wife Darleen fought on the Homefront for him and others as the Oregon coordinator for the POW/MIA movement.

On May 6, the Portland Air National Guard Base Chapel held a time of “Recognition and Remembrance,” and the Chief of Staff of the USAF Gen. John D. Ryan designated Sunday, May 13, 1973, as a “Day of Recognition and Remembrance” for Air Force personnel who served in SE Asia. This was to “...share joy and gratitude for the return of our POW’s, to remember in prayer and hope our MIA’s and their families, to commemorate our KIA’s, and remember all personnel who served in Southeast Asia.”

A drawing in that May, 1973 “Air Scoop” depicted someone wearing a POW/MIA bracelet for USAF Maj. Edward D. Silver of Corvallis, Oregon. He was an F-4C Phantom II piloting the 390th Tactical Fighter Squadron who was shot down on July 5, 1968 over Quang Binh Province of North Vietnam and still unaccounted for at that time. Nearly 43 years after his loss, and 39 years after the bracelet was drawn in the “Air Scoop,” Lt. Col. Edward Dean Silver’s remains were eventually found, recovered and identified using modern forensic techniques in May, 2011.

POW/MIA Bracelets Today

But many other men thought to be POW, or carried on the rolls as MIA, did not come home in 1973. Some people still wear POW/MIA bracelets to remember them; I’m sure there are many amongst the families, friends and others interested across our country. I personally know of three people who do.

One of these persons is my oldest son, Oregon Army National Guard Capt. Sean Popravak, commanding B/3-116 Cavalry in Oregon. For years he’s worn a POW/MIA bracelet for Navy Capt. Harley H. Hall of Vancouver, Washington. Capt. Hall, a former Blue Angels Leader and a previous SE Asia combat tour veteran, was an F-4J Phantom II pilot with Navy fighter squadron VF-143 aboard USS Enterprise (CVA(N)-65) as the Paris Peace Accords were signed. He flew his last combat mission on the morning of January 27, scant hours before the ceasefire was to take effect.

While attacking enemy vehicles in South Vietnam’s Quang Tri Province, North Vietnamese Army forces which had invaded South Vietnam during the Easter Offensive of 1972 and remained there, his aircraft, bureau number 155763, was hit by anti-aircraft fire. It caught fire and a short time later as they headed back toward the sea, he and his Radar Intercept Officer (RIO) backseater, Lt. Cmdr. Philip A. Kientzler, were forced to eject as their F-4 died. His wounded RIO was captured by North Vietnamese forces and

was released later in 1973. Hall was seen to land in his parachute by his wingman and then run off into some brush.

Initially carried as MIA, then as POW, Capt. Hall’s status was later changed to killed, though no remains to account for him were returned until 1994, when the Joint Task Force-Full Accounting (JTF-FA, a predecessor of today’s DPAA) accomplished forensic analysis to confirm that the meager human remains they received from the Socialist Republic of Vietnam were from Capt. Hall.

Capt. Popravak reflected on his well-worn, washed-out, and faded bracelet: “Captain Hall was from Vancouver, that’s where I was living. I think it’s important to remember those left behind, and it’s not just a name. There’s a real person behind that. Guys that maybe should’ve made it back, but didn’t. It’s a reminder for myself and those that see it that there’s still a lot (of MIA cases) left over from that war, decades before I was born, that unfortunately remain unsolved. They should never be forgotten.” Fifty years later, Capt. Harley H. Hall, United States Navy is not forgotten.

Over 1, 500 other servicemen remain missing and unaccounted for. In some cases, DPAA deems remains are unrecoverable for various reasons, such as a loss at sea. Foremost others, however, their cases are still classified as being in “Active Pursuit.”

My youngest son, Nathan, an Air Force Brat, wears a POW/MIA bracelet for Maj. Vincent A. Scungio, 13th Tactical Fighter Squadron, USAF, an F-105F Thunderchief Wild Weasel Electronic Warfare Officer backseater who joined the Air Force from New Castle, Pennsylvania. His aircraft, F-105F serial number 62-8273, went missing on a combat mission over North Vietnam while fighting surface-to-air missile sites defending Kep Airfield against an air strike on November 4, 1966, during the Rolling Thunder bombing campaign. The remains of his pilot, Col Robert E. Brinckmann, were eventually returned by Vietnam and identified in 1989, but Maj. Scungio remains missing and unaccounted for. His is another DPAA case in “Active Pursuit.”

Nathan, who spent his younger years listening to the roar of 388th Fighter Wing F-16 fighters at Hill AFB, Utah, 366th Fighter Wing F-15s and F-16s at Mountain Home AFB, Idaho, and now the 142nd Wing’s F-15s at Portland ANG Base, Oregon, sees the bracelet as a reminder of unfinished business: “War never ends for those it affects. Sometimes it seems like those who have the power to bring these active pursuit cases DPAA has open to completion and account for our missing have long since forgotten the men who sacrificed everything for us. The torch has been passed down from one generation to those in another who can make a choice to remember and to do something helpful. It’s our duty to encourage them, and hold their feet to the fire if necessary, until that torch is taken up again. Until those brave souls who gave their all for us reach the finish line and are returned to their loved ones.” Fifty-six years later, Maj. Vincent A. Scungio, USAF is not forgotten.

I wear the POW/MIA bracelet for Col. David L. Hrdlicka, USAF, 563rd Tactical Fighter Squadron, who joined the service from Littleton, Colorado. He was shot down over Houa Phan Province in Laos on May 18, 1965 when his F-105D Thunderchief, serial number 59-1731, was hit by antiaircraft fire as he attacked a road segment and couldn’t get him back to base. He successfully ejected from his stricken aircraft but was subsequently captured by Pathet Lao forces in the Sam Neua area. Communist-bloc countries later showed a photograph of him in captivity in their media publications which confirmed his capture. But he’s still unaccounted for and his case is in DPAA’s analytical category of “Active Pursuit.”



POW/MIA bracelet for U.S. Navy Captain Harley Hubert Hall (Photo courtesy of Oregon Army National Guard Capt. Sean M. Popravak)

My bracelet came from a little POW/MIA booth near the Vietnam War Memorial during an impressively huge and emotionally-evocative Rolling Thunder motorcycle gathering in Washington D.C. in 2000. After a 1990s assignment to the 388th Fighter Wing, which operated the F-105 in the Vietnam War, and earlier association with the 561st Tactical Fighter Squadron, a sister-squadron of the 563rd, I chose Col. Hrdlicka’s bracelet to remember one of our missing from that “forever-war” which took place when I was a youth. Fifty-seven years later, Col. David L. Hrdlicka, USAF is not forgotten.

These men are among the 1,582 total still unaccounted for from the Vietnam War, with over 1,000 in the “further pursuit” category (as of October 5, 2022). This includes 196 in the former North Vietnam, 497 in the former South, 263 in Laos, 41 in Cambodia and seven in China. DPAA continues work via Joint Field Activities with the governments of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia to account for more of our missing.

The echoes of the fighting ripple across the years and generations of lives touched by the scourge of war long after the guns go silent. The echoes from the Vietnam War are still heard in the hearts and minds of veterans, the families affected and others with memory or connection to the fallen and MIA. On this 50th anniversary of the Paris Peace Accords, we remember those who served in Southeast Asia, the fallen, the prisoners and the missing.