

THE CONNECTICUT
GUARDIAN

America's Favorite 4-legged hero

SGT STUBBY

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The Connecticut Guardian

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Members from the 103d Airlift Wing help inspire the next generation of aviators

Staff Sgt. Emme Drummond

EAST GRANBY, Conn. — From flight simulators, hands-on activities, and even speaking with industry professionals, the annual Women Take Flight event at the New England Air Museum is a tradition embedded not only in education but history. This event, hosted this year on Saturday, March 14, aims to introduce young people to the wide range of careers in aviation and STEM through conversations with military members, pilots and engineers that work behind the scenes. The 103d Airlift Wing has been involved in the event for almost 10 years, becoming the cornerstone to inspire the next generation to see how military service can be a path to both opportunity and purpose. The goal is to spark the interest of young adults who may not have considered aviation or the military to be careers for them, and to open their eyes to the multitude of options that are out there.

“Getting to inspire a younger generation and show them the positive sides of military service and the cool things we get to do is what makes events like this special,” said Master Sgt. Kaitlin Cardello, an evaluator loadmaster with the 118th Airlift Squadron. “It gives young adults a different perspective on the military and aviation and shows

them opportunities they might not have known existed.” Cardello has played an integral part of the Women Take Flight event for several years, serving as one of this year’s coordinators for the 103d Airlift Wing’s involvement.

“It’s important to celebrate how far women have come and how much more we’re capable of than previous generations may have been allowed to pursue,” mentioned Cardello. “Women are still a minority in aviation, so seeing women in those roles helps younger generations realize it’s an option for them too.” Although this event highlights the milestones and achievements made by women, it is open to everyone who may be interested.

With over 17 exhibitors from aerospace and STEM companies attending along with the 103d, the Women Take Flight event bolsters the ability to network and learn more about the various career paths one can take within aviation. “Everyone thinks if you love aviation you must be a pilot, but there are so many different roles in the aviation community,” noted Lt. Col. Cheryl Mead, the senior Inspector General officer at the 103d Airlift Wing. “You can work in engineering, logistics, maintenance, and many other fields that keep

aircraft in the air.” Mead has been part of Women Take Flight since it began in 2016 as a small gathering centered around informational pamphlets. Since then, the event has expanded into a full-day program at the New England Air Museum, where participants can explore exhibits, view historic aircraft and network with all those involved.

“These events help people realize that the military and aviation community are made up of regular people doing extraordinary work,” said Mead. “When we get the chance to interact with the community, it builds understanding and excitement about what we do.” By giving young people the chance to speak with aviation professionals and learn about the various career options that are out there, the Women Take Flight Event helps open doors that many young people have not previously considered. Although women remain underrepresented in many areas of aviation, events like this aim to encourage the next generation to pursue those careers.

“You belong there,” said Lt. Col. Cheryl Mead. “Don’t let anyone tell you your dreams are too big.”

National Guard Association of Connecticut



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CTNG hosts first Symposium for Cyber Yankee 2026

Sgt. Damien Vega

From April 10–12, 2026, the Connecticut National Guard hosted its first Defensive Cyber Operations (DCO) Symposium at Camp Nett, bringing together over 100 cyber soldiers from across New England to enhance readiness ahead of the upcoming Cyber Yankee exercise. The event marked the first time Connecticut has hosted a symposium of this kind, featuring participation from the 126th Cyber Protection Battalion and strengthening collaboration across New England cyber forces.

The three-day symposium focused on preparing cyber teams to execute defensive operations in response to evolving cyber threats. Participants included Army and Air National Guard cyber units, fostering joint interoperability and reinforcing a unified regional defense posture. The training directly supports preparation for Cyber Yankee, the National Guard's premier regional cyber defense exercise.

The symposium commenced with a keynote briefing from Ian Leatherman of Microsoft, who emphasized the importance of adopting a zero-trust security model in today's cyber environment. His presentation highlighted the growing sophistication of adversaries and underscored the necessity of continuous verification, least-privilege access, and resilient network architectures. This industry perspective provided attendees with valuable insight into current threat trends and best practices used across the private sector.

Following the keynote, experts from Palo Alto Networks Unit 42 delivered a threat intelligence briefing, outlining real-world attack methodologies and recent global incident trends. Their analysis provided cyber soldiers with a deeper understanding of adversary tactics, techniques, and procedures, enabling more informed and proactive defensive strategies.

A key component of the symposium was hands-on technical training led by 1st Lt. Hausmann of the 146th Cyber Warfare Company. During a Windows



exploitation exercise, members of the 126th Cyber Protection Battalion explored common system vulnerabilities, including Discretionary Access Control Lists (DACLS) misconfigurations and Dynamic Link Library (DLL) hijacking. Soldiers not only learned how adversaries leverage these exploits but also practiced mitigation techniques to defend against them.

The training progressed to a focused session on using PowerShell for incident response. Participants developed skills in system auditing, threat detection, and automated response actions, capabilities that are increasingly critical in modern cyber defense. Mastery of tools like PowerShell enables cyber operators to respond rapidly and effectively to incidents, reducing dwell time and limiting the impact of adversarial activity.

Enhancing proficiency in exploitation analysis and incident response directly supports the National Guard's mission in today's complex cyber landscape. As cyber threats continue to evolve in scale and sophistication, these technical skills ensure that cyber soldiers

remain agile, adaptive, and capable of defending critical systems and infrastructure.

Beyond technical development, the symposium played a vital role in strengthening cohesion among cyber units throughout New England. By training together in a battalion-level environment, Army and Air National Guard personnel built stronger working relationships, standardized procedures, and improved communication across state lines. This unity of effort is essential for coordinated responses during large-scale cyber incidents, such as those simulated in Cyber Yankee.

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Connecticut State Library Unveils New Sgt. Stubby Statue

Timothy Koster

HARTFORD, Conn. — The Connecticut State Library unveiled a brand-new statue of famous World War I canine Sgt. Stubby during a ceremony at the Library April 20, 2026.

Stubby, who was adopted by Cpl. J. Robert Conroy of the Connecticut National Guard's 1st Battalion, 102nd Infantry Regiment after the Boston Terrier mutt wandered onto the unit's training grounds at Yale Field (and was smuggled to France), is widely considered the first-ever U.S. Military working dog—and the most decorated.

"Sergeant Stubby probably never understood the details or purposes of World War I, the great ideals and visions of the political leaders," said Connecticut Senator Richard Blumenthal. "What he understood was loyalty to his buddies, which is what motivates a lot of our human heroes."

The timing of this unveiling was significant in a couple of different ways. Earlier this month, on April 4th, marked the 100th anniversary of Stubby's death. April 20th is also the anniversary of the Battle of Seicheprey, the United States first major military conflict during The Great War, in which the less experienced 102nd pushed back a larger, more seasoned German

military.

"What we're really celebrating today is another example, especially in the year of the [United States' 250th anniversary], of Connecticut's contribution to our great nation," said Maj. Gen. Francis J. Evon, adjutant general for the Connecticut National Guard, who also shouted out the 1-102nd, which is still an active unit and once again overseas fighting for our country.

But Stubby was more than just a mascot and friend of the 102nd; he was an integral part of the team. His acute olfactory senses could sense incoming gas attacks before any of the human members of the 102nd, allowing him to alert his comrades about the incoming dangers. And if that wasn't enough to prove how good of a boy he was, Stubby is also credited with capturing at least one German soldier during the war by ... biting his bum.

Stubby survived the war, despite being hospitalized after being caught in gas attacks and being injured by shrapnel from a grenade.

"Sgt. Stubby was loyal as the day is long," Blumenthal said. "He came back after recovering from his wounds to the front lines and participated in battle after battle after battle, saving his fellow

Army soldiers from the gas and the attacks that awaited them."

Following the war, Stubby was a celebrity. He led parades, appeared at war bond rallies, and even met with Presidents Woodrow Wilson, Warren G. Harding, and Calvin Coolidge. But his connection to the military never faded. He reportedly had visits with wounded soldiers and helped ease family members into difficult conversations to understand what their loved ones experienced during the war overseas.

Also in attendance at Monday's event was Curtis Deane, Conroy's grandson, who shared stories about his experience with his grandfather and his love for Stubby.

"I was always told by my father and grandfather that we were raised by dogs," said Deane. "I learned that being raised by dogs meant learning the meaning of unconditional love, being both trustworthy and faithful, and living with dignity and without hesitation or regret, and caring for others who are less fortunate or in need."

Conroy's love for Stubby was eternal. According to Deane, Stubby passed away in his grandfather's arms and he never adopted another dog for the rest of his life.

“There's an old expression, speak the name of the dead and they shall remain alive,” said Deane. “That's what I'm doing on behalf of my grandfather and Stubby.”

And this new statue will also help keep Stubby's memory alive, but like most heroes, the little four-legged pup's legacy is cemented in the groundwork he laid for future generations. Because of Stubby, and other war dogs like him, canines play a vital role in the modern military. In fact, Connecticut is home to the 928th Military Working Dog Detachment, the only military working dog unit in the reserve components of the U.S. military.

Right: U.S. Sen. Richard Blumenthal and Maj. Gen. Francis J. Evon Jr., the adjutant general of the Connecticut National Guard, unveil a statue of Sgt. Stubby during a ceremony at the Connecticut State Library in Hartford, Connecticut, April 20, 2026. Photo by Spc. Emmanuel Gibson



Command Sgt. Maj. Arthur Fredricks, the State Command Senior Enlisted Leader (left) and Chief Warrant Officer 5 Stephanie Richard, the Command Chief Warrant Officer pose with a mascot of Sgt. Stubby following the unveiling of a statue honoring the World War I veteran at the Museum of Connecticut History, April 20, 2026. The event at the Hartford museum, held on the 100th anniversary of Stubby's death, highlights his status as the first and most decorated U.S. military working dog.



CTANG supports joint airborne training with 160th Special Operations

Capt. Jennifer Kaprielian

EAST GRANBY, Conn. — Airmen from the 103d Airlift Wing in the Connecticut Air National Guard collaborated with the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment to conduct Joint Airborne/Air Transportability Training at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Tacoma, Washington from 24-26 March, 2026.

The airmen, a combination of aircrew from the 118th Airlift Squadron and 103d Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, flew a C-130 Hercules to Joint Base Lewis McChord to provide transport to soldiers to designated drop zones throughout the week. The exercise also included heavy equipment and container delivery system cargo drops that provided training for loadmasters and pilots.

JA/ATTs are a support function regularly conducted by the U.S. Army and U.S. Air Force, and the 103d supports multiple JA/ATT exercises each year. This trip was notable in that it was the first time in recent history that the CTANG has travelled to Washington

state for a JA/ATT, and it provided the opportunity to team up with top-tier special operators. The 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment, known as the 'Night Stalkers,' is an elite Army aviation unit recognized for supporting high-profile special operations missions around the globe.

Besides dropping cargo, JA/ATTs help paratroopers maintain readiness with jump qualifications, and joint partners such as the 103d provide the critical airlift for ensuring drops happen accurately. JA/ATTs are about more than keeping paratroopers qualified - they are also essential for precise airdrop capability and joint readiness in contested environments.

With different service components working together frequently in deployed locations, it is essential that airmen and soldiers are on the same page. When every second counts, JA/ATT exercises are one of the things that streamline the mission.

"Every successful airdrop represents

dozens of systems and teams working in sync," said Col. Robert Krueger, commander of the 103d Operations Group. "That muscle memory and synchronization is built here."

The comprehensive effort at Joint Base Lewis-McChord by the 103d Airlift Wing reflects the Connecticut Air National Guard's operational readiness and ability to integrate seamlessly with joint partners. Following recent deployments around the world last year, the 103d continues to strengthen its readiness through joint training exercises like JA/ATTs.

The 103d Airlift Wing, Connecticut Air National Guard, is based at Bradley Air National Guard Base in East Granby, Connecticut. The 103d provides trained, equipped, and mission-ready Airmen to support federal and state requirements, including tactical airlift, aeromedical evacuation, and domestic operations—anywhere, anytime.



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CONNECTICUT ARMY NATIONAL GUARD PATCH REDESIGN INITIATIVE

The Command Senior Enlisted Leader CSM Arthur Fredericks, Command Chief Warrant Officer CW5 Stephanie Richard and I are proud to announce the Connecticut Army National Guard Shoulder Sleeve Insignia Redesign Initiative.

While our current patch has proudly represented our shared identity and history, we recognize that as our formation evolves, our heraldry must evolve as well. We have heard candid feedback from across the force that our current patch fails to generate the pride, identity, and connection our Soldiers deserve, and we agree it is time for a symbol that truly represents the strength and legacy of the Connecticut National Guard, from our colonial roots to today's operational force. This initiative is a historic opportunity for the Soldiers who wear the patch to shape our visual legacy by designing a symbol that honors our heritage while meeting the strict standards of military heraldry.

To ensure a fair and thorough selection, this will be a multi-phased process. All members of the CTARNG are invited to submit their design concepts. Access our Army 365 Teams CTARNG Patch Redesign channel for additional details and guidance at CTARNG Patch Redesign > General > Shared.

Following the open submissions phase, a dedicated redesign committee will review the concepts. The panel will select three finalists who will receive formal feedback and an opportunity for revisions. Ultimately, one final design will be chosen and submitted to The Institute of Heraldry (TIOH) for official authorization and implementation.

This is more than a design; it is about restoring pride in what we wear on our shoulder and strengthening our identity as Connecticut Guardsmen.

Now is the time for you to leave your mark on our history. Completed designs and required documentation must be submitted no later than 1 July 2026 via email to ng.ct.ctarng.mbx.patch@army.mil. MSG Joshua O'Brien is the point of contact for this initiative and can answer any questions at the redesign email address above. We look forward to seeing the ideas that will define the next chapter of our formation. Good luck!

ARTHUR L. FREDERICKS
 CSM, CTARNG
 Command Senior Enlisted Leader

STEPHANIE A. RICHARD
 CW5, CTARNG
 Command Chief Warrant Officer

FRANCIS J. EVON JR.
 Major General
 The Adjutant General



192nd MPs deploy in support of Operation Epic Fury

Timothy Koster

Approximately 150 Soldiers from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 192nd Military Police Battalion, Connecticut Army National Guard, participated in a deployment ceremony at Bradley Air National Guard Base today, April 28, 2026.

The 192nd was tapped by the Pentagon to deploy on short notice to the Middle East to support Operation Epic Fury, U.S. Central Command's military campaign to destroy Iran's offensive missile capabilities, navy, and nuclear infrastructure.

"When the order came down on short notice, these Soldiers didn't hesitate, didn't ask for more time, and didn't look for a reason to say, 'no'," said Maj. Gen. Francis J. Evon, Jr., adjutant general for the Connecticut National Guard. "They said, 'yes', packed their gear, and got ready to move."

The 192nd was issued orders to report to active duty for mobilization training on March 20th, and almost one month later, they're hugging their family goodbye as they embark overseas.

"Most people will never fully appreciate what that movement actually looks like, what it costs a person to step away from a job, a family, a routine, and the life they've built to answer that call," said Evon. "You should know that this unit wasn't selected by accident. The Army looked across the force, identified what the mission required, and chose HHC, 192nd MPs because this unit had what it takes, and they were ready."

The 192nd is scheduled to provide a multitude of support to U.S. military forces engaged in Operation Epic Fury, including mission command, staff planning, security, personnel services, and logistical support.

"We know that this will not be easy but you are prepared," said Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz. "You have spent long hours training and have set the highest standard for character and integrity ... because of your sacrifice, our country is a beacon for freedom and equality worldwide."

The 192nd most recently deployed in 2020 to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba where they provided battalion support to the detention facility. They join the approximately 500 other Connecticut Army and Air Guardsmen currently deployed overseas in support of various contingency operations.

"Go forth and do great things as we all know that you will," said Evon. "Stay focused on the mission, keep each other safe, and look out for one another. Connecticut looks forward to your safe return."



Connecticut Gov. Ned Lamont, the 89th governor of Connecticut, gives remarks during a deployment ceremony at Bradley Air National Guard Base, East Granby, Connecticut, April 28, 2026.



A Connecticut Army National Guard Soldier assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 192nd Military Police Battalion, poses for a photo with family members during a deployment ceremony at Bradley Air National Guard Base, East Granby, Connecticut, April 28, 2026. The 192nd Military Police Battalion, is deploying approximately 150 soldiers to the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility in support of Operation Epic Fury. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Emmanuel Gibson)



Family members and friends watch as Soldiers assigned to the 192nd Military Police Battalion board their aircraft following a deployment ceremony at Bradley Air National Guard Base, East Granby, Connecticut, April 28, 2026. The unit's approximately 150 Connecticut Army National Guard Soldiers are deploying to the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility in support of Operation Epic Fury. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Emmanuel Gibson)



Col. Eric Wismar, the Connecticut National Guard's full-time support chaplain, delivers the opening prayer during a deployment ceremony at Bradley Air National Guard Base, East Granby, Connecticut, April 28, 2026. The 192nd Military Police Battalion, is deploying approximately 150 Soldiers to the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility in support of Operation Epic Fury. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Emmanuel Gibson)



103d Airlift Wing welcomes new commander

Capt. Jennifer Kaprielian

EAST GRANBY, Conn. — The 103d Airlift Wing held a formal Change of Command ceremony Sunday, May 3, at 3:00 p.m., marking the transition of leadership from Neal R. Byrne III to Robert M. Krueger.

The ceremony signified the transfer of authority and responsibility for the wing, ensuring continuity of leadership and honoring Byrne's service while welcoming Krueger as the new commander.

Byrne departs after serving as wing commander since March 2023, leading more than 1,100 Airmen and overseeing eight C-130H aircraft in support of federal and state missions. Throughout his tenure, he emphasized readiness, transformation, and operational excellence.

Brig. Gen. Thomas Olander Jr., Connecticut Air National Guard Chief of Staff–Air, praised Byrne's leadership during the ceremony.

"You tirelessly shepherded this wing through an era of profound transformation," Olander said. "You drove every endeavor with an uncompromising standard of excellence and a relentless, meticulous focus." Olander also thanked Byrne for his unwavering leadership and unyielding motivation through periods of modernization, challenge, and triumph for the Connecticut Air National Guard.

In his remarks, Byrne thanked his leadership team, family, and the Airmen of the wing.

"For everything you've done, I extend my immense, heartfelt gratitude," Byrne said. "This is the best job in the Air Force." He also encouraged the incoming commander to relentlessly endeavor to tell the story of the outstanding airmen of the 103d, stating that in every group, squadron, flight, section, shop and team, they are executing with a level

of dedication, intention, and detail that is unmatched in the total force.

Krueger assumes command following his previous role as commander of the 103d Operations Group. A 2001 graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy, he brings extensive experience in airlift, tanker, and aeromedical evacuation operations across multiple major commands. He has previously served 13 years in active duty with the Air Mobility Command and U.S. Air Forces before serving 11 years with the Air Reserve Command.

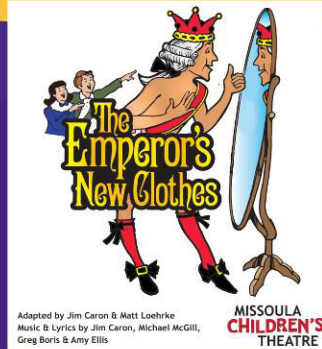
"I'm all in, and I expect you to be too," Krueger said to the members of 103d in attendance. "Make yourself, your team, and our wing better each day. Go Flying Yankees"

The 103d Airlift Wing, based at Bradley Air National Guard Base, provides trained, equipped, and mission-ready Airmen in support of global mobility, tactical airlift, and aeromedical evacuation missions worldwide.



U.S. Air National Guard Col. Neal Byrne, the outgoing commander of the 103d Airlift Wing, receives a gift of thanks from the First Sergeants Council during a change of command ceremony held at Bradley Air National Guard Base, East Granby, Conn., May 3, 2026.

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130th PAD conducts crisis communication exercise

Timothy Koster

Soldiers assigned to the Connecticut National Guard's 130th Public Affairs Detachment conducted its first-ever crisis communication exercise focused on hurricane domestic operations at the Gov. William A. O'Neill Armory in Hartford, Conn. June 10 – 12, 2026.

Exercise Yankee Thunder was designed to help PAD members become familiar with the roles and responsibilities of public affairs professionals during a natural disaster.

"Effective communication is a vital tool during any natural disaster," said Maj. Michael Wilcoxson, the Connecticut National Guard's state public affairs officer and creator of Exercise Yankee Thunder. "We're entering hurricane season here in Connecticut and, as a staff, it's important that all our PAD members know and understand what goes into a crisis communication plan so they can effectively respond to a disaster, should we find ourselves being called up to help our neighbors."

The exercise put members of the PAD in various roles they can expect to fill in a Joint Information Center, or JIC, which are usually stood up during an emergency to manage the flow of internal and external information. In a JIC, soldiers are responsible for receiving queries from media outlets, writing and distributing press releases, and preparing subject matter experts to conduct interviews with the news, among others.

"For many of these soldiers, they've never done any of this outside of the schoolhouse," said Wilcoxson. "But crisis communication is not something you want to try and figure out when you're in the middle of a crisis. We're practicing this now and hoping we never need it, but we'll be prepared in the event we do."

While the soldiers of the 130th, all of whom are traditional guardsmen who have other jobs or attend school when not in uniform, are the primary participants in the exercise, Wilcoxson and other members of the Connecticut National Guard's fulltime state public affairs office serve as observer controller trainers to introduce injects and role-play as National Guard leadership, staff sections, and the civilian media.

"We have a lot of new Soldiers in the PAD, many of whom haven't even gone to school yet to get MOS qualified," said Capt. Joshua Pasay, commander of the 130th PAD. "It's been really awesome seeing how they've come together, focusing on their strengths, while working on the areas they can improve, to ultimately get the job done."

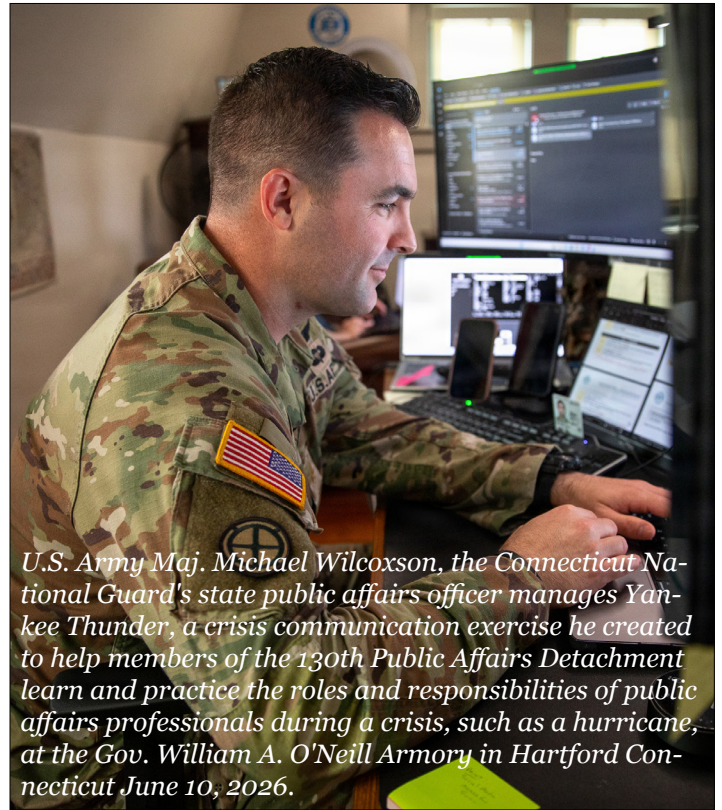
The exercise comes at a pivotal point in time as the state of Connecticut prepares for hurricane season, which occurs each year between June 1st and November 30th. While the Nutmeg state isn't usually as hard hit by hurricanes as other states, such as those in the Southeast, there is enough history

of significant hurricane activity to justify this preparedness.

In recent years, the Connecticut National Guard has activated troops within the state to assist local, state, and federal agencies in the aftermath of storms such as Hurricane Irene, Hurricane Sandy, and Tropical Storm Isaias. It has also sent troops to help other states in their storm response during Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, Maria, and Helene.

“Over the past three days, this team has really come together and embraced the importance of timely and accurate distribution of information during a crisis,” said Pasay. “I truly believe that if our state ever finds itself in a worst-case scenario, this team is ready to step up and effectively manage a JIC.”

To help make this exercise as in-depth and realistic as possible, Wilcoxon utilized artificial intelligence to create injects and social media posts to mimic the rapid developments that one would expect in a real-world situation. Looking toward the future, Wilcoxon hopes to expand Exercise Yankee Thunder to include the public affairs team from the Connecticut National Guard’s 103rd Airlift Wing to better reflect the joint environment that’s inherent during real-world missions like this. And as the exercise becomes more refined, he hopes it can spread beyond the borders of Connecticut and be a model for larger crisis communication exercises across the region.



U.S. Army Maj. Michael Wilcoxon, the Connecticut National Guard's state public affairs officer manages Yankee Thunder, a crisis communication exercise he created to help members of the 130th Public Affairs Detachment learn and practice the roles and responsibilities of public affairs professionals during a crisis, such as a hurricane, at the Gov. William A. O'Neill Armory in Hartford Connecticut June 10, 2026.



U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Matthew Lucibello, a member of the 130th Public Affairs Detachment, talks with members of his team while serving as the Joint Information Non-Commissioned Officer In Charge during Yankee Thunder, a crisis communication exercise hosted by the Connecticut National Guard's state public affairs office at the Gov. William A. O'Neill Armory in Hartford, Conn., Jun 10-12, 2026.

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CTANG and RIANG Conduct joint tactical airlift training

Capt. Jennifer Kaprielian

C-130 air crews from the Connecticut and Rhode Island National Air Guard coordinated last month to conduct a joint interfly exercise between the two units, flying four C-130 aircraft in tactical formations. The crews exercised low-level tactical procedures and multi-aircraft coordination techniques that resembled requirements in deployed locations around the world.

The four-ship formation, comprised of both C-130 H and J models, flew over sections of Connecticut, Massachusetts and Vermont, and executed multiple equipment drops near Westover Air Reserve Base. Joint training missions like this reinforce the Air National Guard's ability to rapidly integrate forces during contingency operations.

U.S. Air National Guard Capt. Erich Buhagiar, a C-130 H pilot with the 103d Airlift Wing, was the lead planner for this exercise, which strengthened both combat readiness and multi-ship tactical airlift capabilities. Buhagiar, who had the original idea coordinated with crews and organized the specific flying patterns. This inter-unit training may become more common as the CTANG and RIANG strengthen their already

robust partnerships.

The 103d Airlift Wing, Connecticut Air National Guard, is based at Bradley Air National Guard Base in East Granby, Connecticut. The 103d provides trained, equipped, and mission-ready Airmen to support federal and state requirements, including tactical airlift, aeromedical evacuation, and domestic operations—anywhere, anytime.

Below: U.S. Air National Guard Capt. Erich Buhagiar, a C-130 H pilot with the 103d Airlift Wing, adjusts the fly path as crews from the 103d and 143d Airlift Wings fly in formation of four C-130s during tactical interfly operations over Massachusetts on May 19, 2026. (Photo by U.S. Air National Guard Capt. Jen Kaprielian)





Connecticut WWII Hero laid to rest 81 years after his death

Timothy Koster

The Connecticut National Guard provided military funeral honors for the cremains of U.S. Army Air Forces Tech. Sgt. Donald A. Dorman, as they were laid to rest at Oak Hill Cemetery in Southington, Conn. June 23, 2026.

Dorman, a Southington native, was assigned to the 429th Bombardment Squadron, 2d Bombardment Group, 15th Air Force, during World War II, where he served as the upper turret gunner aboard a B-17G “Flying Fortress”.

On March 22, 1945, Dorman and ten other airmen were conducting a bombing mission against oil refineries in Ruhland, Germany, when his plane was hit by enemy anti-aircraft fire, forcing the pilot to fly toward allied Soviet-held territory to conduct an emergency landing. As the aircraft was making its way over Poland, the bomber was engaged by multiple German fighter planes and critically damaged.

Of the 10 crewmembers, eight, including Dorman, went missing. The two survivors were captured by German

forces and later returned to U.S. custody. Their reports indicated that they weren’t sure how many of the plane’s crew members were able to bail out of the plane before it crashed, but those who did, remained under heavy enemy fire as they parachuted to the ground.

Following the war, the American Graves Registration Command searched for the remains of U.S. personnel missing in action from the European Theater. However, resources to search in Soviet-held territory were extremely limited and Dorman’s remains were not found.

But the search wasn’t over. Between 2008 and 2012, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, the successor to the AGRC, conducted three field investigations into the loss of Dorman’s plane. What they uncovered was evidence that an aircraft matching the description of a B-17 “Flying Fortress” had crashed near Glinica, Poland.

The DPAA conducted additional investigations in 2017 and 2018. Then, between the years of 2019 and 2024,

the organization conducted five excavations at the crash site, and discovered possible human remains. The remains were transferred to a DPAA laboratory for analysis which, in conjunction with circumstantial evidence, and previous recoveries, the research team was able to conclude that the remains belonged to Dorman.

Now, 81 years after he died, Dorman returned home. A memorial service was held in his honor at the First Congregational Church in his hometown before he was laid to rest in his family plot at the Oak Hill Cemetery, near his mother.

The ceremony was open to the public and brought together veterans, uniformed service members, and citizens of Southington, who wished to pay their respects to this fallen American hero.

In addition to providing military funeral honors, the Connecticut Army National Guard also conducted a two-ship UH-60 Blackhawk flyover of the graveside ceremony.

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A close-up photograph of a hand holding a dark wood gavel with a brass band, positioned over a circular wooden sound block on a dark wood surface. The background is blurred.

GS12/13

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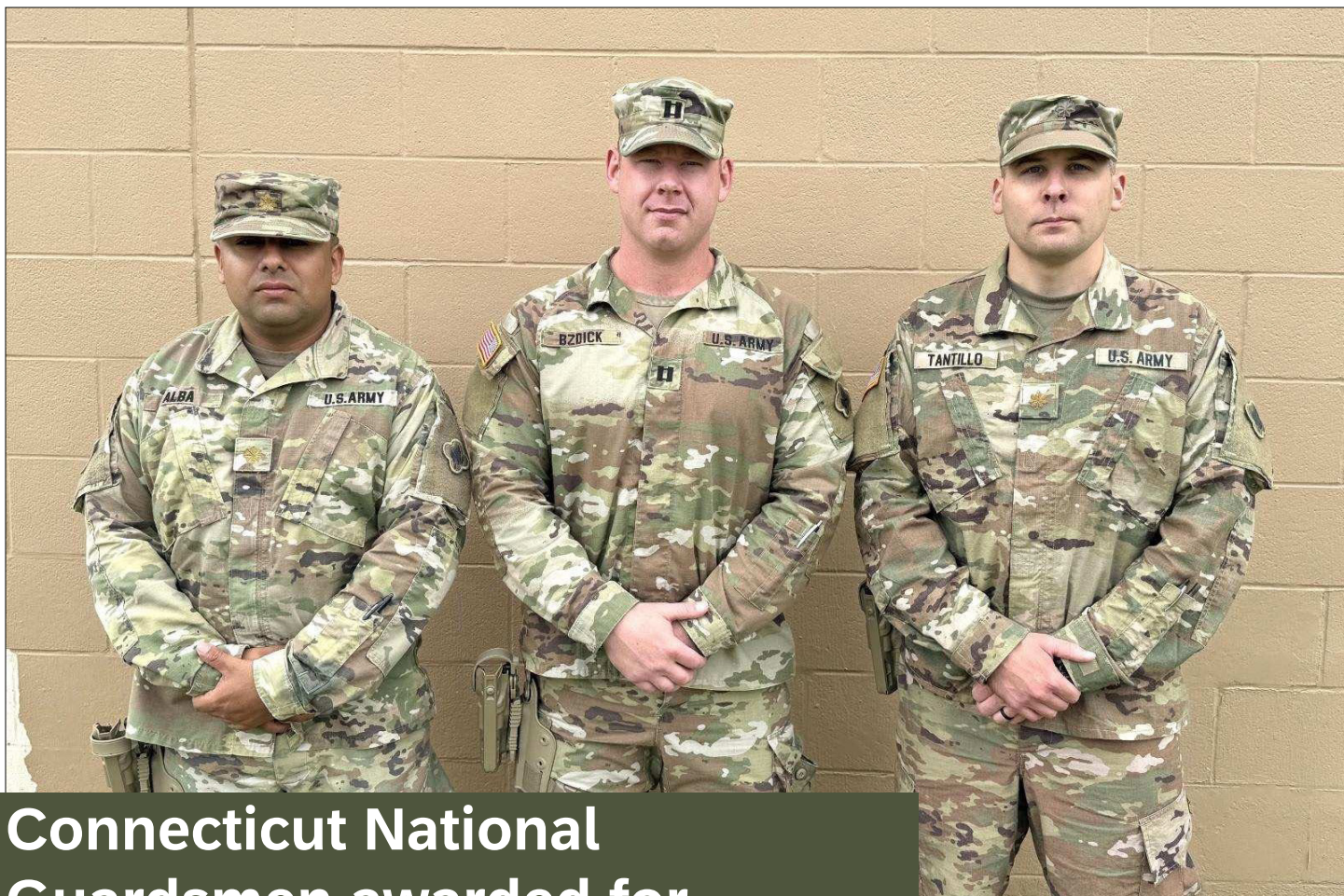
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Connecticut National Guardsmen awarded for saving a life at Fort Hood

Staff Sgt. Christian Ortiz

U.S. Army Soldiers assigned to the 143rd Regional Support Group, Connecticut National Guard, have earned the Army Commendation Medal (ARCOM) for their heroic actions after saving the life of a Soldier on April 22, 2026, in Fort Hood, Texas.

Maj. Steven M. Alba, Maj. Christopher J. Tantillo and Capt. Jason S. Bzdick have all played a huge role in saving the Soldier's life.

The Soldier, part of the 120th Mobilization Support Brigade at Fort Hood, Texas, was experiencing a medical emergency that could've potentially been fatal.

"I saw Capt. Bzdick reacting," said Alba. "And the only thing that was going through my mind is just step up and help the Soldier immediately."

Tantillo, quickly assisted and made the call to the paramedics.

"Once we saw the condition of the Soldier," said Tantillo, "We immediately handled the situation and started to monitor his status. I immediately called emergency services, gave them our location to be there as soon as possible."

While waiting for paramedics to arrive, Bzdick performed CPR to keep the Soldier conscious and stable.

"Having gone through training really made the difference," said Bzdick. "Things like ensuring his head was protected as I removed him from the vehicle and making sure he was

clear of the vehicle in case it moved."

The 143rd RSG recently trained about 14 Soldiers in combat lifesaver (CLS) techniques providing intermediate life-saving trauma care.

"The knowledge and confidence training provides can very well make the difference between life and death," said Bzdick. "The reality of how things could have gone if my team wasn't there. We each had a responsibility, we communicated, and we were able to successfully give aid. It's a testament to our organization and to their character."





103d Airlift Wing Honors 82nd Anniversary of D-Day

Staff Sgt. Emme Drummond

CHERBOURG, France — For many, D-Day remains a powerful symbol of patriotism and combat power, and for others it continues as a tribute to those who paid the ultimate sacrifice. In honor of that sacrifice, Airmen from the 103d Airlift Wing participated in commemorations for the 82nd anniversary of D-Day across Normandy, France June 2-7, 2026.

As part of Joint Task Force 82, The Connecticut Air National Guard provided flyovers for a series of over 90 ceremonial events across the Normandy region. U.S. service components, in addition to French, German, and Dutch military members worked together to coordinate formation flyovers, ceremonies, and personnel airdrops in honor of the anniversary. This year, the 103d Airlift Wing, from Bradley Air National Guard Base in Connecticut participated in the commemorations for the first time aerial support. For the 103d Airlift Wing, participation represented more than a training opportunity; it marked the unit's first time in one of the world's most significant military commemorations, representing both the Connecticut Air National Guard and the United States.

"Participating in the D-Day anniversary flyovers and personnel airdrops allows us to pay tribute to the greatest generation," said Maj. Scott Duguay, a pilot with the 103d Airlift Wing. "We are incredibly proud to represent our wing, our state, and our nation over the skies of Normandy."

The memorial flyovers continued to highlight the service and valor of the veterans, while also allowing the crew to conduct valuable training that enhanced unit readiness. Over the six-day period the crew completed five sorties with over 30 flight hours throughout the area. Despite flying in

unfamiliar skies, the team successfully conducted low-level flights, formation flying, and other advanced maneuvers that contributed to the overall experience. As formations of C-130s crossed the coastlines of Omaha Beach and the cliffs of Pointe du Hoc, it served as a meaningful reminder of the freedoms fought for generations ago.

"How lucky am I to see landmarks such as Pointe du Hoc and the craters that still remain," stated Capt. Alex Laftsidis, a navigator with the 103d Airlift Wing. "It gave me a much deeper appreciation for the scale and intensity of that day, and it's an experience I'll never forget."

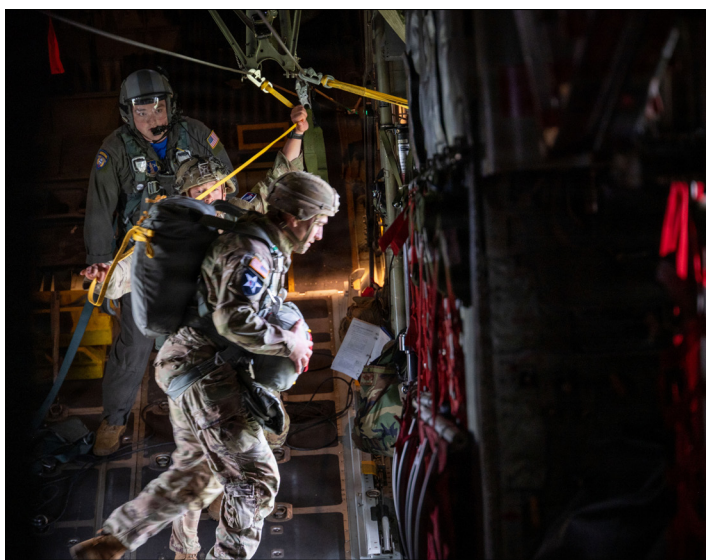
Veterans, families and spectators watched as the array of aircraft flew overhead everyday, while they honored the service members who flew similar routes during World War II. The purpose of the commemoration was to honor the legacy of D-Day, and the principles that were fought for. Most of those principles are the same ones that U.S. Warfighters continue to uphold today—strength, courage, and bravery.

"I hope the local community sees that the legacy of those who fought here 82 years ago is alive and well," Duguay said. "We want the veterans and their families to know that we will never forget their sacrifices that preserved these values"

The 103d's participation in D-Day's 82nd anniversary stands as a defining moment for the unit and international partners, as it pays tribute to the courage and sacrifice of Allied Forces. The unit strengthened relationships with partner nations, as well as demonstrated the professionalism and readiness of the 103d Airlift Wing. Their efforts underscore how shared responsibility and collaboration remain vital to preserving freedom for our future.



U.S. Army, German and Dutch service members board a C-130H Hercules aircraft assigned to the 103rd Airlift Wing, Connecticut Air National Guard, in preparation for airborne jumps over Normandy, France, June 7, 2026. As the United States approaches its 250th anniversary, the event recognized the World War II generation and their sacrifice as a long-standing part of military service. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Emme Drummond)



A U.S. Army paratrooper jumps from a C-130H Hercules aircraft in honor of the 82nd anniversary of D-Day in Normandy, France, June 7, 2026. The event provided an opportunity for current service members to honor the legacy of the paratroopers who served during World War II. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Emme Drummond)



World War II veterans stand for the playing of Taps at the Normandy American Cemetery, France on June 6, 2026. World War II veterans stand for the playing of Taps at the Normandy American Cemetery, France, June 6, 2026. The ceremony honored the courage and sacrifice of those who stood united against tyranny and helped secure Allied victory in Europe. Eighty-two years later, the valor and sacrifice of U.S. and Allied forces during World War II continue to inspire the world, and this legacy lives on in today's Alliance through a shared commitment to peace and security. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Emme Drummond)



AI-Enabled Problem Solving: Accelerating National Guard Readiness

Maj. Christopher Cuotu

HARTFORD, Conn. – As Department of War (DoW) leadership prioritizes Artificial Intelligence (AI) integration, the National Guard Performance Improvement Office is delivering high-impact regional training to meet the mission. Recently, Camp Nett in Niantic, Connecticut, hosted the "21st Century AI Enabled Warfighter" problem solving course. This milestone event marks the 300th Soldier or Airman Connecticut has trained in continuous improvement since 2024, signaling a major shift toward a more agile, tech-forward force.

The multi-tiered program offers Introductory, Foundational, and Advanced levels, immersing students from multiple states in realistic warfighter scenarios. These exercises align with senior leaderships' focus areas, including domestic operations, partnership collaboration, and warfighter missions. By merging AI tools with Continuous Process Improvement (CPI) methodologies, the course develops a culture where personnel at every echelon can solve problems with speed and precision.

This initiative directly supports Connecticut's Adjutant General, Major General Evon's focus on innovation and upskilling through strategy execution and leadership training. Highlighting the operational shift, BG LaPierre, Director of Joint Staff, CTNG and wartime G3, 8th Army (dual-hat), stated, "Leveraging AI empowers our Airmen and Soldiers to rapidly solve problems. It's a game changer, but we must show them the how. This course does that." This modern approach builds on the Connecticut National Guard's long history of quality programs, such as the CT Aviation Repair Activity Depot (AVCRAD) that supports Army National Guard aviation fleet across 14 states and DC.

Armed with these new skills, students now apply their knowledge to high-impact projects designed to reduce lag

times and enhance unit support across the force. These practical initiatives include reducing recruiter vacancy search times, streamlining JEEP program payments, and accelerating mission analysis for Joint Staff domestic operations. Other students focus on technical and administrative innovation, such as implementing the VO1 CRH enterprise workflow management system and decreasing NCOER submission delays. These projects prove that AI-enabled CPI delivers measurable results across both administrative and tactical domains.

The "21st Century AI Enabled Warfighter Problem Solving" course delivers value far beyond immediate efficiency gains. Upon successful completion of these rigorous projects, participating Airmen and Soldiers earn their Lean Six Sigma Green Belt certification. This credential signifies their enhanced capability to drive innovation within their military roles and provides a highly sought-after qualification for their civilian careers. Through this commitment to upskilling, the National Guard ensures its leaders remain ready for the complexities of the modern, AI-enabled battlefield.





CTNG Hosts Joint Active Shooter Response Training With Enfield PD

Spc. Emmanuel Gibson

The Connecticut National Guard, Enfield Police Department, and Capitol Region Emergency Services Team, conducted a joint active-shooter response exercise at the Enfield Armory in Enfield, Connecticut, June 5, 2026.

The exercise helped the Connecticut National Guard reinforce critical security measures, identify potential vulnerabilities and provide local law enforcement personnel with familiarity of the armory while practicing their response to an active-threat scenario.

"Interagency coordination is important because, in Connecticut, the National Guard is a support element," Said Master Sgt. Nicholas Triano, the event organizer, "We need to be able to support police, fire, EMS and other first responders to the best of our ability, and exercises like this show us how to do that."

The full-scale exercise helped prepare interagency partners by using a realistic scenario to utilize technology and communications systems, respond to simulated medical emergencies, conduct practical breaching, threat identification, and hostage negotiation, among other potentially life-saving tasks.

The exercise began with a soldier

role-playing an active shooter, shooting at an Enfield Police officer with simulated rounds from a rooftop. Enfield's CREST Team subsequently rescued the simulated casualty in an armored vehicle and returned fire against the threat.

"The realistic training environment, from the armory itself to the role players, created a high-stress response for our law enforcement partners," Triano said. "It gave them the opportunity to respond to a complex threat in a facility they may have to enter during a real emergency."

Over the course of the exercise, CREST members and Enfield police officers practiced rescuing hostages while simultaneously identifying if they were active threats embedded within victims. The Enfield police simultaneously manned the operations center which served as a conduit for communication between external agencies and the robbers. This allowed them to conduct hostage negotiations and conduct surveillance.

The culminating event concluded with the breach of the Enfield armory, where the CREST team quickly rescued hostages and neutralized remaining

threats.

Planning for the exercise began while the Connecticut National Guard personnel were updating the emergency action plan when they identified an opportunity for improvement in response procedures for incidents occurring at facilities outside Joint Force Headquarters. That opportunity led planners to develop a scenario that would test how the organization coordinates with local first responders during an emergency.

Prior to the culminating exercise, the Connecticut National Guard and Enfield Police Department conducted several internal progress reviews and a tabletop exercise to walk through the response process and identify other areas of improvement for coordination and refine planning before the live action exercise.

"This exercise validated the core components of the battle drill we are developing and highlighted that continuous improvement is essential to interagency coordination," Triano said. "It showed us how local first responders respond, what information they need from us and how we can best support them."

Gov. Lamont Signs Law increasing Job Benefits For State and Local Police, Firefighters, Correction Officers, EMS Personnel, and National Guard Members

Governor Ned Lamont announced that he has signed legislation enacting a new state law (Public Act 26-12) that increases the job benefits available to state and local police officers, firefighters, correction officers, EMS personnel, and National Guard members. Some of the benefits include those related to college tuition reimbursement, mortgage assistance, and health coverage.

Collaboratively written by Lamont and the leadership of the legislature's Public Safety and Security Committee and Labor and Public Employees Committee, the legislation was created with the goal of encouraging more individuals to seek careers in these important public safety fields and help retain those who are already serving.

"Our public safety professionals are integral to the wellbeing of each of our neighborhoods, and it is imperative that we provide them with benefits that ensure we have adequately staffed forces," Governor Lamont said. "I am particularly glad that we could enact the provisions waiving higher education tuition and fees and providing mortgage assistance so these public safety officials have the support needed to live in the towns where they work. Moving forward, I want to continue working with my legislative colleagues on how we can enact further provisions supporting these workers. I am especially appreciative of Public Safety co-chairs—Senator Herron Gaston and Representative Pat Boyd—for working with my office to write this bill and advance it through the legislature so that I could sign it into law."

The related provisions in the omnibus legislation that supports these public safety workers includes:

- **College Tuition Waivers:** Waives tuition at all CSCU schools and CT State schools for state and local police officers, firefighters, and EMS personnel.
- **Mortgage Assistance:** Requires the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority to develop and administer a mortgage assistance program to assist state and local police officers, firefighters, and EMS personnel purchase homes in the communities they were hired to protect. The types of assistance offered could include down payment support or any other appropriate housing subsidies.
- **College Fee Waivers for National Guard:** Expands the current college tuition waiver for active members of the Connecticut National Guard enrolled at CT State, CSCU, or UConn to include all mandatory fees.
- **State Employee Health Insurance Plan Coverage for Survivors of Volunteer Firefighters, State Marshals, Correction Officers, and Investigators:** Allows the surviving spouse and dependent children of a state marshal, correction officer, investigator, or unpaid volunteer firefighter who died performing their duties to participate in the state employee health insurance plan.
- **Military Department Employment Assistance Program for the National Guard & Annual Job Fair:** Requires the adjutant general of the Connecticut National Guard to promote and periodically improve the Connecticut Military Department's employment assistance program for current and former National Guard members;

and requires the department to conduct an annual job fair and publicize it on the department's website and in emails.

- **Legislative Recommendations on Military Employment:** Requires the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development to develop legislative recommendations for promoting in-state employment of current and former Armed Forces members.
- **Grant Program for Junior Firefighter Programs:** Creates a grant program for junior firefighter programs run by volunteer fire departments.
- **UConn Special Police Forces and Fire Department:** Requires UConn's president to establish a recruitment and retention program for the UConn special police forces and fire department.
- **Health Insurance for Retired Police and Firefighters:** Requires the state comptroller to study health insurance coverage for retired police officers and firefighters in the state.
- **State Police Assigned to Highway Construction Projects:** Requires members of the Connecticut State Police to be paid at a rate established under an agreement between the Connecticut Department of Transportation commissioner and the Connecticut Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection commissioner when they are assigned to a state highway construction project.
- **Municipal Tax Abatement for Surviving Domestic Partners of First Responders:** Expands an optional municipal property tax abatement for the spouses of first responders who died in the line of duty to also cover domestic partners.
- **Working Group on Tax Incentives and Credits for Volunteer Firefighters:** Establishes a working group to review and make recommendations for tax incentives and credits for volunteer firefighters.
- **Public Safety Personnel Recruitment and Retention Task Force:** Establishes a task force to study recruitment and retention issues for public safety personnel.
- **Police Officer and Firefighter Career Pipeline Program:** Requires Connecticut's chief workforce officer to develop a plan to establish a police officer and firefighter career pipeline program.

Benefits come in addition to pay increases for state police, correction officers, and firefighters

The benefits approved in this legislation come in addition to across-the-board, cost-of-living pay raises that Governor Lamont recently approved for all Connecticut State Police troopers, Connecticut Department of Correction officers, state firefighters, and other public safety professionals.

Resolutions approving wage increases for the Connecticut State Police were approved in the House of Representatives by a vote of 134 to 12 and in the State Senate by a vote of 36 to 0. Additionally, resolutions approving wage increases for other public safety professionals were approved in the House of Representatives.

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Warrant Officer Candidate School Marks 20 Years, Graduates New Class

Spc. Emmanuel Gibson

NIANTIC, Conn. — The Connecticut Army National Guard celebrated the 20th anniversary of its Reserve Component Warrant Officer Candidate School (CTARNG RC-WOCS) and graduated its newest class of warrant officers during a series of events at Camp Nett in Niantic, Conn., May 1-2, 2026. The events brought together current candidates, cadre, senior leaders and graduates dating back to the program's inception, connecting two decades of warrant officer development with the newest class entering the force.

"Since the program's inception, we have conducted courses annually, graduating highly skilled and technically proficient warrant officers into the operational force," said Chief Warrant Officer 3 Nick Ciullo, course manager and Senior Training, Advising, Coaching Officer and Battalion Course Manager for CTARNG RC-WOCS. The anniversary events began May 1 with the WOC Olympics, where candidates competed against TAC officers in a series of athletic challenges. Later that day, current and former warrant officers gathered for a ceremony commemorating the program's 20-year history, recognizing the leaders, instructors, tactical officers, cadre and graduates who helped build and sustain the school.

The current class also presented its class project, which included a painted class rock placed near WOC Alley at Camp Nett and framed class signs displayed along the hallway. The project recognized each graduating class and created a vis-

ible record of the program's history for future candidates, graduates and visitors.

"These projects are important because they become a part of the program's legacy," said Chief Warrant Officer 5 Stephanie Richards, the command chief warrant officer of the Connecticut National Guard. "They're the physical footprint of a class's technical expertise, teamwork, creativity, and problem-solving skills. To me, these projects represent so much more than simply completing a requirement. They reflect the 'can-do' spirit of the warrant officer cohort and demonstrates how technical professionals come together to solve real challenges."

The day concluded with a mentorship dinner, where warrant officer candidates connected with experienced warrant officers and received branch specific advice about their future careers.

"For me, it really comes down to mentorship, motivation, and connection," Richards said. "When our newest graduates have the opportunity to connect with seasoned Warrants who navigated that exact same path, it reinforces they're now part of a professional family built on shared experience. That networking is way more than just exchanging business cards. It creates relationships that bridge the gap from the classroom straight to the operational force."

The following morning, candidates completed a four-mile

Victory Run through Niantic, one of the final events candidates complete with their cohort before becoming warrant officers. The events culminated with the 26-001 graduation ceremony.

The graduation welcomed eight new warrant officers into the Army National Guard and United States Army Reserve, highlighting a legacy of partnership with the USAR. Senior leaders in attendance included Maj. Gen. Francis J. Evon Jr., The Adjutant General of the Connecticut National Guard, Chief Warrant Officer 5 Stephanie Richard, Connecticut National Guard command chief warrant officer, Chief Warrant Officer 5 Bernard Aguon, Army National Guard command chief warrant officer; Command Sgt. Maj. Arthur Fredricks, the command sergeant major of the Connecticut National Guard and several others.

Founded in 2006, CTARNG RC-WOCS has provided enlisted Soldiers from both the Army National Guard as well as the United States Army Reserve, a path to become warrant officers, technical experts who lead, advise and support commanders across the force. The program has also produced 142 warrant officers since its inception.

Current and former leaders, graduates, tactical officers and cadre of CTARNG RC-WOCS were recognized for their contributions to the longevity and success of the program. According to ceremony remarks, the program has consistently achieved accreditation ratings above 95 percent and

received a 99.9 percent rating last year from the U.S. Army Warrant Officer Career College Accreditation Assessment.

“From what I’ve seen, amazing,” Command Chief Warrant Officer 5 Bernard Aguon, the command chief warrant officer of the Army National Guard said. “They’re proven, the instructors, the cadre, the organization. No doubt they’re getting the very best. If you have any program coupled with excellent cadre and an institution built on valued principles, then it doesn’t matter who comes through it; they’re going to succeed.” Class 26-001 included candidates from Connecticut, New York, and Massachusetts, producing warrant officers in quartermaster, engineer, aviation, and military intelligence career fields.

For the newest graduates, the anniversary added context to their transition from candidate to warrant officer. The related events gave them a chance to see the program’s history firsthand, learn from the warrant officers who came before them and carry those lessons into their new roles as technical experts.

“You learn how to be confident and trust your gut, especially because we are the technical experts,” said SSG Natalia Stewart, the 26-001 Brown Class honor graduate pursuing warrant officer military occupational specialty 920A, property accounting technician. “But also be humble, to know that there is still so much to learn.”

Chief Warrant Officer 5 Stephanie Richards, Connecticut National Guard command chief warrant officer, places her class plaque on the Warrant Officer Candidate School Wall of Fame at Camp Nett in Niantic, Connecticut, May 1, 2026. The wall preserves the history of past WOCS classes and connects current candidates with the warrant officer legacy in the Connecticut Army National Guard. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Emmanuel Gibson)



A Connecticut Army National Guard warrant officer candidate rings a bell at the end of the Connecticut National Guard Reserve Component Warrant Officer Candidate School victory run in Niantic, Connecticut, May 2, 2026. Ringing the bell is a class tradition that marks the completion of the final run and symbolizes the candidates' achievement before graduation at Camp Nett. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Emmanuel Gibson)



‘Sense of Belonging, Sense of Purpose’ – A Conversation with Maj. Gen. Francis Evon and Interim Provost Pamir Alpay

Jaclyn Severance
University of Connecticut

Though he might work out of his offices in Hartford, Maj. Gen. Francis J. Evon Jr. '89 (BUS) likes to get out of the city.

“I like to shake hands,” he says. “I think I get my best intel on the organization, the pulse of the organization, from getting out and shaking hands with soldiers and airmen and their families.”

The organization he oversees is the Connecticut National Guard – he’s served as the adjutant general, responsible for the state’s Army and Air Guard operations, since 2018. But his leadership foundations, he says, started long before, the oldest son in a military family who sought education at UConn after enlisting as an anti-tank crewman in the Guard after high school.

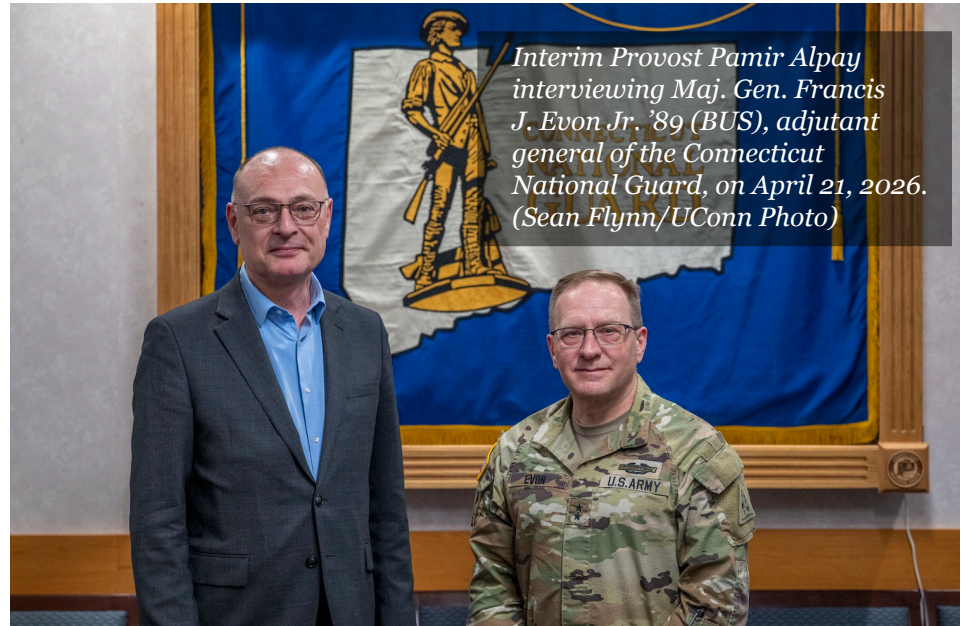
As Evon rose through the leadership ranks during his 40 years of service, his early foundations in selfless service as both a cadet and student proved vital to his success.

UConn, largely through its Office of Veterans and Military Programs, has built a culture of support for both active and retired servicemen and women seeking to pursue academic opportunities at the University. Currently, seven UConn students are also active Connecticut National Guard members on deployment overseas, according to the office.

That’s one of the unique aspects of service in the Guard, says Evon.

“That experience they bring from their civilian career, they apply to the military, and vice versa,” he notes.

In a recent conversation with Interim Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs Pamir Alpay at the State Armory, Evon said his own time at UConn, particularly in the University’s ROTC program, helped to kindle the sense of purpose and build the leadership skills he’s carried with him through his own career.



Alpay: What attracted me most about your background is that you’ve been through the ROTC program and studied finance. I want to get your thoughts on, first of all, what stood out from that education that you received at UConn. And how did that help you through your career, which is really amazing, now leading our National Guard in the state of Connecticut.

Evon: It goes way back. I was the oldest of four, looking for a way to get to college. And thanks to the legislature back in the early '80s, we had the tuition waiver. If you joined the National Guard, you got the tuition waiver, so that got me into UConn.

I didn’t want to burden my parents. Mom and Dad had three others to figure out what their destiny was going to be. I’m from Connecticut, born and raised in the valley. I had seven friends, I was number eight – they dragged me over to the recruiting station that was literally on the other side of the high school. I was eight of eight, and I think I’m the last one still in service, in boots. But it’s been a great ride.

The education experience, back in the mid-80s, was maybe a little different than now. I lived up in Towers, and campus was different, but it was a great

experience. Freshman year was probably my first time away from home, and I think that experience set me up for the military success and basic training later on. Back then, when some of the soldiers went to basic training, that was probably the first time that they had been away from home. Between freshman and sophomore year, I went to basic training and advanced individual training [AIT], so I had at least a year of independence.

The curriculum back then was pretty much wide open, large classrooms, and I think that also helped refine a couple of things, because you quickly had to figure out how to stay engaged.

After the summer between freshman and sophomore year, I went away to military training, and then I came back, had a fresh-skin haircut, and saw an individual in the old uniforms – the BDUs [battle dress uniforms], we used to call them – and this individual had a tail, like one of those hair tails. Walking by, I’m trying to figure out which army are you in? Because I just came from Fort Benning, and that kind of hairstyle wasn’t allowed, was not acceptable.

But that cadet got me to the hangar, and I’d never thought I’d really be an officer. But I got to the hangar, talked

to the PMS [professors of military science] at the time, and said, 'Hey, why don't you give this a shot?' And that's what started the ROTC, the leadership piece.

The idea of 'selfless service' got back to my dad in Vietnam. Through him, there was a little bit of military history in my family, military exposure. But I think the majority of it comes from the experience at UConn, and I credit that to ROTC. ROTC kept me on a path that I could have easily gone off of. I don't want to say that I looked forward to those early morning PT [physical training] sessions, but I think it held me accountable. I needed the structure at that point. Structure and discipline are definitely part of the equation for me.

Alpay: Have you been to campus recently?

Evon: Probably eight months ago now, I think.

Alpay: So, you've seen a lot of the new buildings, new capabilities...

Evon: Absolutely. It's amazing. It was much smaller back in the '80s, but yeah, it's a robust campus. And Stamford – I was at the ribbon cutting down in Stamford when they initiated the housing down there, and it's great.

Alpay: For those who might not know, how would you describe your responsibilities as adjutant general?

Evon: I'm humbled and honored and have the privilege of leading 5,000 men and women in the Connecticut Army National Guard and the Air Guard. We also have the Governor's Guard – two Horse Guards, and two Foot Guards.

But it's an immense responsibility. We have a great team of dedicated individuals who raise their right hand to be part of something larger than themselves.

We currently have 650 members deployed overseas in just about any capacity, and we take that very seriously. We take their families and how we engage with them very seriously. We take the interaction with their employers very seriously as well, because we have the service member, the family, and their employer – none of this synchronizes within the enterprise unless all three are working together. If the family is not comfortable with what's going on at home, then the soldier or airman deployed can't focus on the mission at hand.

So, it's great – I wouldn't trade it for anything, honestly. We have a great team. They're super innovative. Every single time they're given a task and a purpose, what they come up with is just amazing. We started the Innovation Challenge a couple of years back – it's a competition and a great way for them to offer input, and some things are just amazing, refinements on how to make the organization better, highlighting and helping to cut down some of the red tape that we may have in the organization, and just some simple ideas on how we recruit, how we interact with potential candidates, and showing them what this opportunity is to join the Connecticut National Guard.

Our guardsmen live in Connecticut, they serve here, they represent their community. We think we're all better citizens because we interact like that, and we think that's really what sets us apart from our active-duty components, because we have a state mission and a federal mission.

Alpay: Going back to your ROTC time, what is it like being not just a student but also a cadet at the same time?

Evon: I think a big part of it is that selfless service, that being part of something larger than yourself. In addition to your normal curriculum, you're part of the ROTC program, a decades-old program that is producing leaders for the Army, the Army Reserve, and the Connecticut National Guard.

For me, it really kindled my leadership spirit, my sense of responsibility. I think if you were to talk to any of UConn's coaches, for example, they'd say that a sense of belonging, a sense of purpose, would be key. And for me, I think Army ROTC gave me that right from Day 1.

Alpay: What would you advise UConn students, or potential students, who are considering a career in military service?

Evon: I think it's a great opportunity. I don't think we, as a nation, should consider mandated service. But you can truly give back to your country. You can truly lead. You can serve active duty and then come to the Guard. You can serve in the Guard and live in Connecticut and serve here. If someone is thinking about a gap year, the Guard could be a great opportunity. They can come and have a different experience.

They can contribute to the workforce. They can travel.

And they can build some camaraderie. The National Guard didn't telework during COVID. We were there, here, in this room, in many offices around our building, trying to figure out what was next, working with public health, working with emergency management, and the governor's office.

I think it's a great experience, an opportunity to grow leadership skills. I'm amazed at the service members that I meet. We have doctors in their civilian careers who want to be infantrymen on the weekend, because they want to get out and be in the woods. We have members that joined, whether they're in the medical field or in the cyber field, that have gained this experience and are now adding value to the workforce.

And I think that's a key component that makes us stronger when we mobilize, whether stateside or overseas. There are a lot of people like Alyssa Kelleher [director of UConn's Office of Veterans and Military Programs], or we have a command sergeant major who's the superintendent of the West Hartford school system, or we have our infantry command sergeant major who's a state trooper deployed overseas right now. That experience they bring from their civilian career, they apply to the military, and vice versa.

I think Connecticut, as a whole – UConn is the flagship institution, and the Connecticut Guard is Connecticut's home team – is growing into a very positive, innovative environment. We've got a lot of positive interaction going on with industry and innovation, the defense industrial base, and I think some days we don't get enough credit.

There's a lot of great things going on in Connecticut, and it's super exciting.

Alpay: General Evon, thank you for your time. And thank you for your service to our nation and Connecticut. We are very proud of you and your achievements.

UConn offers a number of resources, leadership opportunities, and support programs for active duty and veteran services members pursuing educational opportunities at the University. For more information, visit the provost's Office of Veterans and Military Programs at veterans.uconn.edu.

Congratulations!

Connecticut National Guard Promotions and Retirements

Army

Sgt. Riley Lynwood Carpe
 Sgt. Bernardo Craig Whyte
 Sgt. Ashley Mae Jeane Hornung
 Sgt. Joseph Francis Nazzaro
 Sgt. Nicholas Keith Graham
 Sgt. Christopher Lee Gray
 Sgt. Keatyn Elizabeth Rish
 Sgt. Bryan Paschoal Oliveira
 Sgt. Bryan Cruz
 Sgt. Terrence Earl Grant
 Sgt. Derrick Tayebwa Ndahura
 Sgt. Tafarah Omega Virgo
 Sgt. Daniel Thomas Heffernan
 Sgt. Anthony Raymond Delia
 Sgt. Jacob Stephen Godwin
 Sgt. Andrew Jaylin Smikle
 Sgt. Quinshon Andrew McKoy
 Sgt. Hannah Leigh O'Rourke
 Sgt. David Hans Torgerson
 Sgt. Wood Berdjy Guillaume
 Sgt. Ashanti Gonzalezvillafane
 Sgt. Christina Pietruszkiewicz
 Sgt. Jailene Marie Gomez
 Sgt. Jaykan Daniel Denker
 Sgt. Mark Anthony Gardner
 Sgt. Ryan Patrick Roderick
 Sgt. Hector Xavier Orellana
 Sgt. Seth Charles Courchesne
 Sgt. Joshua Steven Penn
 Sgt. Nathan Daniel Stickels
 Sgt. Grace Carol Ann Harley
 Staff Sgt. Michael John Huminski
 Staff Sgt. Ely Vanessa Pena
 Staff Sgt. Joselin Alexandra Malla
 Staff Sgt. Brianna Renae Mateo
 Staff Sgt. Lucas Michael Risley
 Staff Sgt. Matthew John Murphy
 Staff Sgt. Joseph Eric Leonard
 Staff Sgt. Mark Kenny Carrillo
 Staff Sgt. Nathaniel Stanley Bezz
 Staff Sgt. Kevan Romario Chambers
 Staff Sgt. Nicholas Roy Cody
 Staff Sgt. Mark Stuart Fitzgerald
 Staff Sgt. Richelle Ann Jackson
 Staff Sgt. Alexis Daniel Rivera
 Sgt. 1st Class Daniel Jinbum Pyo
 Sgt. 1st Class Jose Harvey Canales

Sgt. 1st Class Joseph Michael Smith
 Sgt. 1st Class Isaia Luis Pardo
 Sgt. 1st Class Drevaun Antonio Bailey
 Sgt. 1st Class Curtis James Ruckey
 Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Brefort
 Sgt. 1st Class Kyle Robert Boulerville
 Sgt. 1st Class Wade Daniel Harrington
 Sgt. 1st Class Mark John Morin
 Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Frank Clark
 Sgt. 1st Class Elmer Junior Cardenas
 Master Sgt. Teresa Maria Morrison
 Master Sgt. Steven John London
 Master Sgt. Samuel Crespo
 Master Sgt. Kelvia Awilda Flores
 Master Sgt. Richard Carl Flodquist
 Master Sgt. John Farley Wardrop
 Master Sgt. Seifu Kassa
 Sgt. Maj. Jason Alan Dick
 Sgt. Maj. Jose Antonio Cruz Arroyo
 CW3 James Crissman Cizek
 1st Lt. Matthew Joseph Turo
 1st Lt. Joseph Eugene Nowak
 1st Lt. Igor Poliwoda
 1st Lt. Samuel Benjamin Mason
 1st Lt. Carl Dane Hausman III
 1st Lt. Riggley Ruewarren Vandyke
 1st Lt. Meredith Zamzes Buckley
 1st Lt. Stefon Seward
 Capt. Jocelyn Barbara Coutant
 Capt. Ilya Alex Avdeyevkov
 Capt. Joseph Simone Colavito
 Capt. Michael Fredrick Markham
 Capt. Liliana Ribera Chongcuy
 Capt. Max Johann Veiga
 Capt. Maximilian Michael McCarthy
 Capt. Patrick William Hoffman
 Capt. Juliet Chandra Huntley
 Maj. David Robert MacFarland
 Maj. Nathan Martin Caso
 Maj. Benjamin Joshua Markus
 Maj. Joshua Lee Reding
 Maj. Jamila Lamucha Ayeh
 Lt. Col. Steven Robert Alquesta
 Lt. Col. Nichole Bethany Giunto
 Lt. Col. Caitlin McGowan

Air Force

Airman Basic Zachary Freedman
 Airman Basic Eh K lu Htoo
 Airman Basic Patrick Mosur
 Airman LaJuan Butler
 Airman Kodjo Erasmus
 Airman Ainhoa Hernandez
 Airman Kevin Shover
 Airman Miguel Varela
 Airman Angela Vega
 Airman 1st Class Jianna Mrie Artiacco
 Airman 1st Class Angel Beers
 Sen. Airman Veronica Bermeo Garzon
 Sen. Airman Edwin Carrillo
 Sen. Airman Gary Girdvainis
 Sen. Airman Luke Wismar
 Sen. Airman Dominic Zolezi
 Sen. Airman Stacy Bennett
 Sen. Airman Paul Calinao
 Sen. Airman Michael Orellana Navas
 Sen. Airman Katherine Vasquez
 Sen. Airman Christopher Visbal
 Sen. Airman Riley Wilson
 Sen. Airman Robert Barszcz
 Sen. Airman Connor Douglas
 Sen. Airman Connor Richardson
 Sen. Airman Jelani Martinez
 Sen. Airman David Kamladze
 Staff Sgt. John Henry Andrus
 Staff Sgt. Luke Arnone
 Staff Sgt. Guillermo Burgos III
 Staff Sgt. Luke Magge
 Staff Sgt. Tyler Provencher
 Staff Sgt. Nathan Douskey
 Staff Sgt. Henry Roush
 Staff Sgt. Sydney Waterhouse
 Staff Sgt. Nathan Masco
 Staff Sgt. Leon Azemivillasaliu
 Staff Sgt. Harley Laparle
 Tech Sgt. Connor Chicoski
 Tech Sgt. Kiernan Daly
 Tech Sgt. Zainab James
 Tech Sgt. Jason LaRose
 Tech Sgt. Megan Murray
 Tech Sgt. Alex Pichardo
 Tech Sgt. Mohammad Tariq
 Tech Sgt. Arielle Robles

Tech Sgt. Lian Quiles
Tech Sgt. Joshua Salgado
Tech Sgt. Douglas Teeters
Master Sgt. Nathan Monka
Master Sgt. Richard Wood
Master Sgt. Anitress Delgado
Master Sgt. Nichole Murphy
Sen. Master Sgt. Jennifer Starrett
1st Lt. Benjamin Boulanger
Maj. Peter Zlotnick
Maj. Joshua Eichelberger

Retirements

Thank you for your service!

Sgt. Kimberly Sue Westby
Staff Sgt. Marc Andrew Parisek
Sgt. 1st Class Michael Anthony Pane
Sgt. 1st Class Victor CruzBarreto
Master Sgt. Christopher Vesely
Master Sgt. Chad Wink
Master Sgt. Nicola Nardi

1st Sgt. Randy Lynn Atkinson
1st Sgt. Glen Michael Francoeur
Sgt. Maj. Daniel Lewis Genier II
Sgt. Maj. Katarzyna Barbara Zarzycka
CW3 Dewayne Matthew Woods
CW4 Jeffrey Douglas Aspinwall
CW4 Lance Lindon Prager
Maj. Michelle Urso

A Message of Thanks to Our Connecticut Military Department Team

Tucker Salls

As we reflect on the past fiscal year, and on the 250th, I want to take a moment to recognize and thank the dedicated state employees of the Connecticut Military Department.

Since before the revolution our Soldiers and Airmen have often served in the spotlight, while responding to emergencies, supporting overseas missions, or training to defend our nation. However, the success of our mission begins with the exceptional work performed by our civilian workforce. Day after day, you provide the expertise, support, and professionalism that keeps our organization moving forward.

What makes the Connecticut Military Department special is that we are one team. Soldiers, Airmen, state employees, federal technicians, contractors, family members, and volunteers all play an important role in supporting the citizens of Connecticut and the members of our National Guard. The dedication you bring to work each day strengthens our readiness, supports our service members and their families, and helps ensure that we remain prepared to answer any call.

I have had the privilege and honor of serving alongside many of you throughout my time as the Assistant Adjutant General. I know firsthand that your work often happens behind the scenes, without fanfare or recognition. Yet your efforts are essential. Every successful deployment, every training event, every facility improvement, and every state program relies on the foundation you provide. For these reasons, I want to extend a personal and sincere thank you to all of our CTMD Team.

Most importantly, I want to thank you for your commitment to public service. Serving the people of Connecticut is both an honor and a responsibility. Your professionalism reflects the highest standards of our department and exemplifies what it means to serve something greater than ourselves.

As we look toward the future, I am confident that together we will continue to build upon our successes and meet whatever challenges lie ahead.

Thank you for all that you do for the Connecticut Military Department, the Connecticut National Guard, and the citizens of our great state.

Brig. Gen. Michael J. Sipples
Assistant Adjutant General, Connecticut

Medics conduct high-stress medical training at Danbury Hospital

Timothy Koster

Soldiers from the Connecticut Army National Guard's Medical Detachment completed a two-day joint training exercise in coordination with Danbury Hospital, Danbury, Conn. [insert dates].

The training event focused on advanced cardiac life support and basic life support recertification and point of care ultrasound proficiency.

"Mastering advanced cardiac life support and point-of-care ultrasound isn't optional—it's essential in a LSCO environment," said U.S. Army Col. Michael Desena, Connecticut National Guard state surgeon. "The collaboration with Danbury Hospital strengthens our ability to respond anywhere we're needed. Their expertise, paired with Connecticut Army National Guard's medical professionals' dedication, ensures Connecticut's medical force remains ready for both battlefield trauma and emergencies at home."

On the first day, soldiers reviewed updated protocols, refined emergency response techniques, and strengthened their confidence and teamwork in a high-stress environment through a blend of instruction and hands-on practice.

The second day featured comprehensive emergency, point of care ultrasound training led by a provider team from the hospital. That team emphasized rapid assessment, critical decision making, and the use of portable ultrasound to identify life-threatening injuries, which are skills that are vital to life-saving interventions in austere and battlefield environments.

Through completing these courses, Connecticut Army National Guard medical personnel are able to remain prepared to act decisively in high-stress conditions and fully capable of supporting large-scale combat operations and medical emergencies at home.

The Connecticut Army National Guard's Medical Detachment's mission is to plan, program, and sustain health force protection as well as medical and dental support to ensure medical readiness, operations, training, mobilization and demobilization of Army National Guard units, and to operate in a medical advisory role to the Joint Force Headquarters and adjutant general.



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MEMBERSHIP MATTERS!

LEGISLATIVE BREAKTHROUGH

In **July of 2027**, Bill 5003 will completely **eliminate FEES** for all CT State Universities for attending CTNG Soldiers and Airmen.

 **CHAMPIONED BY THE NGACT LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE!!!**

TUITION & FEES BREAKDOWN (CONNECTICUT STATE INSTITUTIONS)

SCHOOL	TUITION	FEES SAVED	TOTAL SAVED
CCSU	\$6,998	\$5,972	\$13,050
SCSU	\$7,200	\$6,242	\$13,442
ECSU/WCSU	\$7,000	\$6,930	\$13,930
UConn (Storrs)	\$17,010	\$4,564	\$21,574

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