



Connecticut GUARDIAN

And Yankee Courier

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Connecticut National Guard hosts first-ever Infantry Day

Pfc. Emmanuel Gibson
130th Public Affairs Detachment

The Connecticut Army National Guard hosted its first-ever Infantry Day Open House at Stones Ranch Military Reservation to experience a day in the boots of an infantryman, June 1, 2024.

The purpose of Infantry Day was to give soldiers, servicemembers, and civilians an exclusive experience of the infantry lifestyle while sharing the camaraderie, connections, and opportunities within it.

Captain Russell Gong, an infantry officer assigned to 1st Battalion, 102nd Infantry Regiment, kicked off the event by briefing approximately 60 attendees about the importance of the infantry's role in the army.

The infantry engages in close-quarter combat with the enemy and fights our nation's wars, they maintain and improve these skills by training individually and as a team. The participants learned infantry skills such as safely rappelling down towers and handling various weapon systems frequently employed by the infantry.

The attendees were subsequently split into two groups based on the skills they were about to learn.

Group A began by repelling down either a 35- or 75-foot wall after receiving a briefing on safety and braking techniques from Sgt. 1st Class. Chris Vincent, an infantryman assigned to the 1-102nd.

Group B received hands-on training behind multiple weapon systems such as the M4 Carbine, a standard issue weapon that all soldiers train with, the M107 Semi-Au-

See **INFANTRY**, page 16



A participant in the Connecticut National Guard's first-ever Infantry Day pulls the charging handle of an M2 machine gun as part of a hands-on exhibit of weapon systems used by the 1-102nd Infantry Regiment during the event at Stones Ranch Military Reservation in East Lyme, Conn. June 1, 2024.

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Connecticut Guardian

360 Broad Street, Hartford, CT 06105-3795
Phone: (860) 524-4858, DSN: 636-7857
E-Mail: timothy.r.koster.civ@mail.mil

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Connecticut Guardian Managing Editor
Maj. Michael Wilcoxson
Connecticut Guardian Editor
Timothy Koster

Contributors
103rd Airlift Wing Public Affairs
130th Public Affairs Det., CTARNG
First Company Governors Horse Guard
Second Company Governors Horse Guard
First Company Governors Foot Guard
Second Company Governors Foot Guard

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Highlights

- 1

BG HED SAID
This document is to provide and accessible communication
- 2

ENGAGEMENT
Give Soldiers the capability to provide feedback
- 3

EXIT SURVEYS
Learn from other Soldier's experiences to improve your unit and leadership

Feedback

Do you have a problem or issue that you have brought to your chain of command, but doesn't seem to be getting resolved? Use this QR code and I'll have it investigated



Self Reflection on Leadership

This is the 12th iteration of BG Hed Said. It was while visiting a unit and asking, “why are you doing that” and getting the answer “because you said we needed to do this,” I decided to create this document to provide some clarity direct from the horse’s mouth. The goal was to provide guidance in this document thereby establishing clear and accessible communication that will streamline the flow of information and prevent miscommunication and misunderstanding. Further, to establish communication at all levels discussing the topics and items contained in the document as a mechanism for leader development in both the officer and NCO Corps.

Each month I receive some feedback. Some Soldiers come up during drill and tell me they like/agree or dislike/disagree with what I say, but they are engaged and engaging our Soldiers and encouraging them to provide feedback, especially in the planning and preparation process, is part of us getting back to basics. My intent is to provide you with guidance based off my direct observation and dialogue with leaders in the field and bottom-up feedback from Soldiers; this is how we will improve our organization and grow future leaders.

I want to share with you some comments from the Exit Surveys completed by some of our Soldiers who are leaving the organization. I ask that as you read these, be a little self-reflective of your leadership and organization. If you think this applies to your unit, what is it we can do to either make changes or change the perception of our Soldiers.

- “When I show up, everything looks like the officers did not plan. It makes me feel like my time is not valued.”
- “Weekend only leaders are disengaged. Soldiers find out information last minute.”
- “The guard isn’t all that bad, it’s bad leadership that drives Soldiers out.”
- “Lack of morale and unit cohesion. Time wasted spent doing menial tasks rather than MOS related tasks. Not enough MOS related assignments/ missions.”
- “My unit is a great unit with very supportive leadership.”
- “Have leadership meeting during the day or after everyone is released, don’t make Soldiers wait on that to go home. We have cell phones; info can be pushed out that way. Know what’s going on prior to drill and make sure the info is disseminated before drill.”
- “There were good times and bad. Leadership is generally good. Only bad times were because of bad leadership.”

I know that no Soldier or Leader in the organization goes to drill with the intent of having another Soldier generate some of these comments and there is always another side to the story. But with a little work, good constructive dialogue and feedback between leaders and Soldiers we can make incremental changes that will make the organization better. I encourage you to include this document in your newsletters and post it on your message boards in your armories. Thank you for all your dedication and service to our country and state. Stay Strong, Stay Resilient, Stay Safe, and continue to make us proud.

-BG Hed



A portrait of U.S. Army Air Corps Tech Sgt. Kenneth McKeeman was on display as family and friends adorned his casket with roses during his burial at the Connecticut State Veterans Ceremony in Middletown, Conn. June 7, 2024. McKeeman was a radioman assigned to the B-24 Liberator aircraft which was shot down off the coast of France in 1944. He was declared unrecoverable at the end of the war, but his remains were identified in 2023 as part of the Department of Defense's ongoing mission to account for and return the remains of missing service members.

Remains of fallen WWII Airman return home after 80 years

Timothy Koster
Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs

The Connecticut National Guard funeral honors team provided an honorable transfer for the repatriated remains of U.S. Army Air Corps Tech Sgt. Kenneth J. McKeeman, a radio operator who served with the 724th Bombardment Squadron, 451st Bombardment Group, 13th Air Force, in the European Theater during World War II, at Bradley International Airport in Windsor Locks, Conn. May 31, 2024.

The team also assisted with the burial of Tech Sgt. McKeeman by providing full military honors as he was laid to rest the Connecticut State Veterans Cemetery in Middletown June 7, 2024.

“[The military] promised to bring them home and not leave them alone, leave them there,” said Mary Bourdon, McKeeman’s niece. “And they did that.”

“It’s a wonderful feeling for the family,” said Kenneth McKeeman, Tech Sgt. McKeeman’s nephew and namesake. “All of us are so thankful for what the military did to find a family member.”

McKeeman, a Fort Jay, New York native, was killed in action on March 11, 1944, when his B-24 Liberator airplane was struck by enemy antiaircraft fire after releasing its payload on German submarine pens and repair sheds near Toulon, France. According to

eyewitnesses aboard other allied aircraft, the plane lost control and plummeted more than 3,000 feet before breaking apart and crashing into the sea.

Because German forces occupied southern France at the time of the incident, U.S. forces were unable to immediately recover the bodies of McKeeman and the rest of the plane’s crew. The Germans did, however, report the recovery, death, and burial of McKeeman and his crew at Lagoubran Cemetery in Toulon, to the International Committee of the Red Cross in Switzerland, which subsequently informed the U.S. War Department.

In 1946, after the liberation of France, the American Graves Registration Command (AGRC) was tasked to begin the process of recovering American Personnel in the European Theater. Although cemetery records indicated the burial spot of McKeeman and his crew, and the exhumed remains were burned and fractured with injuries consistent with casualties of airplane crashes, the AGRC couldn’t find enough evidence to suggest the remains truly belonged to McKeeman.

The investigator assigned to McKeeman’s case believes his aircraft crashed several miles offshore in the Mediterranean Sea and was doubtful his remains would ever be recovered. On April 2, 1951, the AGRC review board recommended McKeeman be declared non-recoverable. In October of that same year, the Memorial Division, Office of the Quartermaster General, approved those findings and McKeeman was officially de-

clared lost and unrecoverable.

“We never imagined that we would ever end up identifying him,” said Caroline LaPorta, McKeeman’s great-niece, in an interview with the New York Post.

The unidentified remains from Lagoubbran Cemetery were interred at what is now known as at Rhône American Cemetery in Draguignan, France.

In 2019, the Department of Defense and the American Battle Monuments Commission began investigating unknown remains interred at Rhône. Through their research, it was determined that the burial of the unknown service members at Lagoubbran Cemetery occurred months before any ground combat occurred, implying they could only belong to air crews.

Based on additional research and evidence, historians were able to conclude that the unidentified remains must belong to an airman who died between January and April, 1944. Of the six aircraft that were documented as crashing in the region during that time, only McKeeman’s was documented as having unclaimed personnel. So, the remains were exhumed and sent to the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory for testing.

Through the test of the remains’ mitochondrial DNA, compared to DNA samples from McKeeman’s maternal bloodline, it was confirmed that the remains belonged to McKeeman on Sept. 18, 2023.

“There’s a profound sense of sadness but it wasn’t like losing a parent or that type of sadness, and in fact, I was born 7 years after he died—but I kind of stepped back and reflected on the sacrifice he made and some 400,000 other individuals killed in that conflict,” said Mike McKeeman, McKeeman’s nephew in an interview with the New York Post. “He died when he was 23 and never had the chance to have kids, grandkids and all stuff like that. He sacrificed for the country. He sacrificed for the country but we’re a big part of that.”

“When I told my mom, she burst into tears,” said LaPorta. “And it touched me because she never really talked about Uncle Ken, she didn’t really remember him. She remembers when he died, when the family was notified ... her mom crying and her grandma crying, and the family just being upset. So, when I told her they actually had identified him using her DNA, she just burst into tears.”

After 80 years of being lost in action, Tech Sgt. McKeeman was finally laid to rest back home with his family, fellow veterans, first responders, and supporters, to give one final farewell.

“We must never forget,” said Ron Welch, commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Veterans Affairs. “We must make every effort we can to recover remains.”

His awards and decorations include: Purple Heart (posthumous), Air Medal, (posthumous), Army Good Conduct Medal, American Campaign Medal, European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with four Bronze Service Stars, World War II Victory Medal, Presidential Unit Citation, U.S. Army Air Force Enlisted Aircrew Member Wings, and Honorable Service Lapel Button-World War II.



A member of the Connecticut National Guard funeral honors team presents the American Flag to the family of Tech Sgt. Kenneth McKeeman during his burial at the Connecticut State Veterans Cemetery in Middletown, Conn. June 7, 2024. McKeeman was a radioman assigned to the B-24 Liberator aircraft which was shot down off the coast of France in 1944. He was declared unrecoverable at the end of the war, but his remains were identified in 2023 as part of the DoD's ongoing mission to account for and return the remains of missing service members.



The Connecticut National Guard's funeral honors team carries the casket of Tech Sgt. Kenneth McKeeman off a plane at Bradley International Airport in Windsor Locks, Conn. May 31, 2024. McKeeman was originally declared unrecoverable after his plane crashed off the coast in 1944 but his remains were identified in 2019 thanks to advances in DNA forensic technology.



The Connecticut National Guard funeral honors team folds the American flag draped across the casket of Tech Sgt. Kenneth McKeeman during his burial ceremony at the Connecticut State Veterans Cemetery in Middletown Conn. June 7, 2024. McKeeman was a radioman assigned to the B-24 Liberator aircraft which was shot down off the coast of France in 1944.

D-Day Squadron Travels Over 3,000 Miles, Crosses Atlantic Ocean to Commemorate 80th Anniversary of D-Day

Sgt. Matthew Lucibello
Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs

OXFORD, Conn. — On May 15, five WWII era transport planes landed at Waterbury-Oxford Airport in Oxford, Connecticut. The aircraft, part of the D-Day Squadron's 2024 Legacy Tour, consolidated at the airport then departed for Europe to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the D-Day landings in France, the first step in the Allied liberation of Western Europe, and the 75th anniversary of the Berlin Airlift.

Included in the fleet were two DC-3 civilian airliners with military service records, having been acquired by the Army during the war; two C-47 Skytrains, military transport planes built off of the DC-3 platform specifically for the U.S. Army Air Corps; and one R4D-6S, a variant of the C-47 built for the U.S. Marine Corps and U.S. Navy.

Despite all once being owned and operated by the U.S. armed forces, these aircraft now belong to various flying museums, nonprofits and private owners from across the country.

These historic airframes, one of which was built 83 years ago in April 1941, traveled approximately 3,000 nautical miles over six days to reach England via the North Atlantic air ferry route. This route, also known as the Blue Spruce Route, was used by the U.S. Army Air Forces, or USAAF, during World War II, to transport military aircraft from air bases in the United States to bases in England for use in operations in the European Theater of Operations.

During the war, USAAF aircraft departed Maine and New Hampshire and flew to bases in Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada. Following stopping in Canada, the aircraft traveled between 776 to 1,000 miles to bases set up by the Army in Greenland. From there, the aircraft flew to Iceland, before making their final leg of the journey to Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. Once in the United Kingdom, the aircraft were directed to their stations of assignment.

The D-Day Squadron's route took them from Oxford, Connecticut, to Presque Isle, Maine, then to Canadian Forces Base Goose Bay. Goose Bay itself was originally a Royal Canadian Air Force station which was expanded to accommodate the USAAF and the British Royal Air Force during the war. It would facilitate the transportation of more than 8,000 aircraft to the United Kingdom.

From Goose Bay the Squadron traveled to Narsarsuaq Airport, known as Narsarsuaq Air Base, or Bluie West One (BW-1), during the war, in Greenland. After Greenland, the next stop was Reykjavik Airport in Iceland, followed by the last stop on the Blue Spruce Route, Prestwick, Scotland. Once in Prestwick, the aircraft departed for North Weald, England, where the Squadron utilized their aircraft to conduct practice airborne operations and other rehearsals to get ready for the scheduled jumps to commemorate D-Day in Normandy.

Besides being the backbone for Army and Navy aerial transportation operations during the war, C-47s were also used as the primary aircraft for dropping paratroopers behind enemy lines. Two of the Squadron's aircraft, "Placid Lassie", owned by the Tunison Foundation, and "That's



A C-47 Skytrain and two DC-3 aircraft fly in formation over the Hudson Valley, New York, May 17, 2024. The aircraft were flying in formation as part of the D-Day Squadron's 2024 Legacy Tour. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Matthew Lucibello)

All, Brother", owned by the Commemorative Air Force, were utilized to drop airborne forces into combat during D-Day and during subsequent operations throughout the war.

"That's All, Brother", piloted by U.S. Army Lt. Col. John Donalson, commander of the 438th Troop Carrier Group, led a formation of 800 aircraft carrying over 13,000 Army paratroopers that were dropped behind enemy lines in France approximately 48 minutes after midnight on June 6, 1944. Once on the ground, the paratroopers secured avenues of approach leading to Utah beach, one of the five amphibious landing sites during the operation, which prevented German forces from reinforcing their defenses during the subsequent assault by the U.S. Army's 4th Infantry Division later that morning.

"Placid Lassie", part of the 74th Troop Carrier Squadron, or 74th TCS, towed Waco CG-4A assault gliders carrying soldiers of the 101st Airborne Division into Normandy during the invasion. Lassie released its first glider at approximately four in the morning on June 6, returned to England, picked up another and flew back to France releasing the second craft at approximately nine at night.

Both these aircraft were also used in Operation Market Garden, part of the allied invasion of the Netherlands, and Operation Varsity, the largest single day airborne operation ever conducted and the sole large-scale airborne operation in Germany during World War II.

During the 80th anniversary commemorations for D-Day between June 3 and June 9, the Squadron will be flying over Normandy and paratrooping reenactors, dressed in authentic reproduction World War II uniforms, via static-line jumps into the drop zones used by the original paratroopers during the invasion.

Following the D-Day commemorations, the Squadron will fly over to U.S. Army Garrison Wiesbaden to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Berlin Airlift.

Operation Vittles and Operation Plainfare, also known as the Berlin Airlift, were operations conducted by the U.S. Air Force and British Royal Air Force to airdrop in food, fuel and medical supplies to Allied forces and over 2 million civilians in West Berlin that were cut off due to rail, road and water blockades set up by the Soviet Union on June 24, 1948. 278, 228 flights were conducted, with a rate of 2,796 takeoffs and landings per 24 hour period, resulting in 2,326, 406 tons of supplies being dropped by the blockades were lifted on May 12, 1949. C-47 aircraft, like those flown by the D-Day Squadron, were utilized to conduct these resupply missions out of bases throughout western Germany, including Wiesbaden.

The public commemoration will be held on June 16, with a smaller event held the day prior for Department of Defense ID card holders.

The Squadron will return to the United States at the end of June.

CTNG Soldier's business raises more than \$70k for fallen state trooper's family

Timothy Koster
Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs

A local business, co-founded by a Connecticut National Guard soldier, has raised more than \$70,000 for the family of Connecticut State Trooper Aaron Pelletier who was killed in the line of duty on May 30, 2024.

U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Alex Faba-spicer, training non-commissioned officer for Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 118th Medical Battalion, co-founded Raise the Standard, a resiliency-themed apparel company in 2020 with his cousin Nicholas Poulin.

The business, while being a for-profit company, sets aside a portion of their profits every month to donate to worthy causes in the community. When Trooper First Class Pelletier, a husband and father of two young boys, was killed after being hit by an intoxicated driver during a routine traffic stop on I-84, Faba-spicer and Poulin knew they needed to take action.

"We both agree that community action is just a huge part of the brand's mission," said Faba-spicer. "Whenever we see an opportunity to help people in need in our community, we dip into whatever small amount of resources we have as a growing company and we do our best to do that."

As an apparel company that prides itself on creating designs which carry "a message of resilience and empowerment, inspired by real-life stories," those resources came in the form of donating proceeds from the sales of t-shirts and sweatshirts printed with a custom design made to honor Pelletier's life.

Because law enforcement is such a tightknit community which is very protective of those within that circle, Faba-spicer said there were some initial concerns about the legitimacy of the company's efforts and whether or not they were just trying to use Pelletier's death as a cash grab opportunity.

"A lot of people didn't know who Raise the Standard was and they didn't know we've done work like this before," said Faba-spicer.

However, once those initial concerns were cleared up—they've donated thousands of dollars to local charities and youth sports since their creation—the business began to see an overwhelming amount of support, both from the military and law enforcement who knew the Pelletier family.

"We had quite a few police officers from Troop H come down and actually help print and pack a bulk of the original order blast," said Faba-spicer. "It's been really great and really encouraging ... this is by far the most significant [amount of money] we've ever raised."

The business owners are planning to present Dominique Pelletier, Aaron's wife, with a check as soon as their fundraising campaign is complete. However, they haven't set a definitive end date yet, as orders continue to come in almost every day.

"Each day that myself and Nick discuss taking it down, we have a large amount of people inquire about purchasing, particularly from the police community and the military community, so we've just been letting it run," said Faba-spicer.



Nicholas Poulin, founder of Raise the Standard, an apparel company which produces attire dedicated to resilience and empowerment, holds a t-shirt designed in memory of Trooper First Class Aaron Pelletier, a Connecticut State Trooper who was killed in the line of duty on May 30, 2024. To date, sales of this t-shirt have netted more than \$70,000 which will be donated to the Pelletier family. (photo courtesy of Sgt 1st Class Alex Faba-Spicer)

He also said they will most likely make the decision to end the campaign later this week so they can get the money to where it needs to be, the Pelletier family.

To learn more about Raise the Standard, you can visit their website at www.raisethe-standard.com or find them on all major social media sites.



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Retiree Voice

Keep Cool This Summer, avoid heat injuries

Sgt. 1st Class (Ret.) Stephanie Cyr
Contributor

As this article is being written, Connecticut is experiencing the first major heat waves. Whether one believes in climate change or global warming, one thing is true, things are getting hotter. Heat illnesses can affect everyone, older persons and children are particularly susceptible. Here is how to recognize the signs of overheating, how to treat a heat injury, and tips on how to keep cool and avoid getting overheated.

The human body maintains a core temperature of 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit. The body regulates to maintain this temperature in both hot and cold weather. In hot weather, the body cools itself by sweating. The evaporation of sweat is what regulates the body's temperature. In hot, humid weather or when exercising strenuously, the body is not as efficient in cooling itself. As a result, a person may become overheated and develop a heat related illness. Heat related illnesses from the mildest to serious are heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heatstroke. Besides overexertion in hot temperatures, contributing causes include dehydration, drinking alcohol, and overdressing.

Heavy sweating, fatigue, and thirst most often accompany heat cramps. Drinking water or sports drinks, rest-

ing, and getting into a cool area may keep the person from developing more serious heat exhaustion or heatstroke.

Heat exhaustion symptoms include any or all of the following: heavy sweating, rapid pulse, cool moist skin with goose bumps when in the heat, faintness, dizziness, fatigue, low blood pressure when standing up, headache and nausea. Heat exhaustion symptoms may start slowly or suddenly, and progress in seriousness at varying rates. In the event you suspect you are suffering from heat exhaustion, stop all activity, move to a cooler location, and drink water and/or sports drinks containing electrolytes. If symptoms do not improve within an hour, seek medical attention. Seek immediate medical help for anyone with heat exhaustion if the person is unable to drink, becomes distressed or confused or loses consciousness.

Prevention is key to preventing heat related illnesses. When temperatures rise, there are simple things that can be done to prevent getting overheated.

In elevated temperatures, wear loose fitting, light colored and lightweight clothing. Always wear a wide brimmed hat and sunglasses, and use broad-spectrum sunscreen with at least an SPF of 50.

Drink plenty of fluids to stay hydrated to help you sweat and regulate body temperature. Fluids means water and

drinks containing electrolytes. Avoid drinks like coffee, tea, and sodas that contain caffeine and drinks containing alcohol as both cause dehydration.

Consult one's doctor about personal prescription reactions. There are both prescription and over-the-counter medicines which may affect the ability of the body to stay hydrated and respond to heat. Be cautious if taking medications or having a medical condition that increases heat-related issues.

Plan activities on hot days. Limit activity times if not acclimated to hot weather. Take it easy during the hottest part of the day, usually the hours of 11:00 am to 2:00 pm. Schedule moderate to strenuous activities, like physical labor, to the cooler parts of the day, like morning or early evening.

Never, never, either sit or leave someone, for example children or grandchildren in a closed car, even with the windows cracked or in the shade in elevated temperatures. When parked in the sun, a car's interior temperature can rise 20 degrees in ten minutes.

In conclusion, the summer is only just starting. Stay hydrated, and take precautions to avoid over-heating. Avoid the heat and act quickly if you notice symptoms of over-heating.

85th Troop Command *hosts* The American Red Cross BLOOD DRIVE

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- 31E - Corrections Specialist**
- 68W- Combat Medic**
- 88M - Motor Transport Operator**
- 91B - Wheeled Transport Operator**
- 92F - Petroleum Supply Specialist**

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- 1C5X1 - Battle Management Operations**
- 1D7X1 - Cyber Defense Operations**
- 2A5X1 - Airlift/Special Mission Aircraft Maintenance**
- 2A6X2 - Aerospace Ground Equipment**
- 2A6X5 - Aircraft Hydraulic Systems**
- 3E1X1 - Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration**
- 3FOX1 - Personnel**
- 3NOX6 - Public Affairs**
- 3POX1 - Security Forces**



Members of the Connecticut National Guard's funeral honors team fold an American flag before presenting it to Angela Leavy, the great-great-great-granddaughter of Mary and Thaddeus Newton, during a celebration of life ceremony for the Newton family at Evergreen Cemetery in New Haven, Conn. June 21, 2024.

CTNG helps unveil burial marker for Civil War Soldier, parents' refurbished gravestone

Timothy Koster
Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs

The Connecticut National Guard funeral honors team assisted with the unveiling of a new burial marker for Pvt. Stephen Newton, a soldier assigned to the 54th Massachusetts Colored Regiment during a celebration of life event for the Newton family at the Evergreen Cemetery in New Haven, Connecticut June 21, 2024.

The ceremony was the culmination of a restoration and research project by John Mills, the founder of the Alex Breanne Corporation, which also unveiled the restored grave marker of Newton's parents, Thaddeus, a former slave, and Mary, a free woman, who worked with prominent abolitionists like Henry Ward Beecher and Henry Highland Garnet to secure the funds needed to purchase the freedom of Thaddeus and many other enslaved families in the South.

"The story of Mary and Thaddeus Newton is a love story," said Mills. "One that began with their marriage on Valentine's Day in 1837; a love that was strong enough that Mary found a way to free her husband. Theirs was a love story of family and of country. Three of their sons serving during the Civil War in the fight for freedom, one dying for it."

Continuing their mother's quest to help free slaves from captivity, three of her sons enlisted in the Union army following President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, when it was declared that colored men could serve in the military.

Private Newton enlisted in the militia on April 18, 1863, and was assigned to the 54th Massachusetts Colored Regiment, the second all-black regiment mustered in the Union, which was famously depicted in the 1989 movie, *Glory*.

On July 18th of that year, the 54th engaged in the battle for Fort Wagner on Morris Island, Charleston, South Carolina. Despite outnumbering the Confederate military by more than 3,000 men, and successfully scaling the fort's parapets, the 54th, led by Col. Robert Gould Shaw, failed to capture the fort after suffering significant losses from Confederate artillery.

One of those losses was Pvt. Stephen Newton.

"On July 18, 1863, Stephen would die on the assault of Fort Wagner," said Mills. "His body would be buried in a mass grave at the side of the battle, his remains never appropriately identified, therefore never returning home to Connecticut."

Follow Stephen's death, his brother Alexander enlisted in the 29th Connecticut Colored Regiment, the first all-black regiment of the Nutmeg state and famous for being the first Union regiment to enter the Confederate capitol of Richmond, Virginia following its sack on April 3, 1865. He brought his younger brother William along with him, who served as a servant to the B Company commander, Captain Charles Griswold.

"The Newton story is an American story," said U.S. Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.). "It is an American story about freedom fighters, and it continues today. The men and women in uniform today have raised their right hand with allegiance not to a government, not to a president, but to the Constitution of the United States that now has an amendment that prohibits slavery."

Also in attendance was Angela Leavy, the great-great-great-granddaughter of Mary and Thaddeus, who said in an interview with WSHU that she was surprised to see so many people in attendance to honor and remember her ancestors.

"I'm still taking it all in," Leavy said. "It's been a blessing. The story is something I can share with my children and grandchildren. I have history to pass on."

For many people in attendance, this was the first time they'd heard of the Newton family, despite their significant impact on the city of New Haven and the country. In addition to Stephen and Alexander's wartime service, and Mary's abolitionist efforts, Thaddeus would also make significant contributions to the city, despite suffering from a terminal case of tuberculosis.

"The reason [this event is] important is not just because of their individual stories, but because of the symbolism behind their stories," said New Haven Mayor Justin Elicker. "Because there are so many other people that we don't know about that walked a similar path."

Thaddeus became a trustee for the First Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church and worked diligently to secure the funds needed to purchase a plot of land for the house

of worship—a building which still stands today. Following the war, Alexander would follow in his father's devotion to his faith and become an official of that same church.

Thaddeus would succumb to his illness on March 15, 1868, having experienced less than 10 years of freedom. Mary would pass away in 1904 after being severely burned by a kettle of boiling water. Knowing her demise was imminent, she proceeded to plan her own funeral, set aside money for the services, selected her casket, made her own burial shroud, and selected the plot for her to be buried alongside her husband.

Several years ago, the gravestone of Mary and Thaddeus Newton toppled over and cracked. It was also slowly being reclaimed by the Earth, threatened to be lost forever, when Mills took on the task of uncovering the family's story.

As part of his efforts to investigate the lives of the Newton family, his non-profit paid for the restoration of the gravestone. And because Stephen's remains were never recovered following the war, he was never given a proper headstone, so he worked with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to have one installed next to his parents.

The Newton family plot at Evergreen Cemetery has also been added as an official location along the Connecticut Freedom Trail, an organization dedicated to preserving and sharing the stories of freedom and dignity of the Black and African communities in the state.



TOP: The refurbished gravestone of Thaddeus and Mary Newton sits beside the new memorial marker for their son Stephen, a Civil War soldier who perished during the battle for Fort Wagner, in the Evergreen Cemetery in New Haven, Conn. June 21, 2024. BOTTOM: U.S. Army Capt. Chris Barnabei, officer in charge for the Connecticut National Guard's funeral honors team, presents a folded American flag to Angela Leavy, the great-great-great-granddaughter of Mary and Thaddeus Newton during a celebration of life ceremony for the Newton family at Evergreen Cemetery in New Haven, Conn. June 21, 2024.

NATIONAL GUARD

June 2024

HOLISTIC WELLNESS CHALLENGE




ALCOHOL MISUSE MINIMIZES
READINESS




CHALLENGE your Service members and yourself to adopt at least one of the recommended resources to prevent alcohol misuse.

STANDARD DRINK SIZES


Drinks come in various sizes because of the different amount of alcohol in each. Be aware that one drink you order at a bar or make at home could be equal to two or three standard drinks:




12 oz of beer
= 5% alcohol



8 oz of malt liquor
= 7% alcohol



5 oz of wine
= 12% alcohol



1.5 oz of 80-proof liquor
= 40% alcohol

FACTS & FIGURES: DID YOU KNOW?

Alcohol tolerance varies from person to person. Factors like height, weight, and gender play a part. Excessive alcohol use, defined as binge or heavy drinking, is harmful to overall health and can increase the risk of Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD). On average¹:

- Binge drinking is five or more drinks for men and four or more drinks for women, in a two-hour period.
- Heavy drinking is 15 or more drinks for men and eight or more drinks for women, per week.

AUD is a medical diagnosis due to the inability to control alcohol use despite the consequences. While not all binge and heavy drinkers will develop AUD, they are at greater risk.

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

✗

MYTH

1. Liquor gets you drunk faster than beer or wine
2. Coffee sobers you up
3. Alcohol helps you sleep

✓

TRUTH

1. It's not the type of drink, it's the amount of alcohol in each drink
2. It takes time to metabolize alcohol, caffeine can't speed up the process
3. It decreases the quality and duration of sleep

CONTACT US

For more information on alcohol or other wellness topics, email us at:
ng.ncr.ngb.mbx.integrated-prevention-branch@army.mil

YOU CALL THE SHOTS

Connecting with family and friends is critical to your well-being. However, many social situations include alcohol. What if you want to cut back or cut out drinking? How can you maintain your connections, but stay in control? Remember, you call the shots. Check out these strategies for socializing on your terms.^{2,3} If one doesn't work, try something else.

- **Set limits.** Plan how many days a week you want to drink and how many drinks you want to have. Schedule in alcohol-free days.
- **Count drinks.** Know what a "standard" drink is and keep track of how many you have. Mix in non-alcoholic options, like water or soda.
- **Manage triggers.** Avoid situations that tempt you to drink more. Engage in non-drinking activities, like going to a movie with friends.
- **Say no.** It's ok to pass on a drink. Confidently decline the offer with a simple response like, "No thanks, I'm good with water."
- **Walk away.** Give yourself permission to exit a situation if you feel uncomfortable.
- **Find support.** Ask someone you trust, like a battle buddy or wingman, to support you.



What's Your Story?

Do you have an interesting hobby, skill, civilian occupation, or recent life event?

We want to help you tell the world!

Contact the Connecticut National Guard Public Affairs Office:

Maj. David Pytlik
david.c.pytlik.mil@army.mil
860.524.4857

Mr. Tim Koster
timothy.r.koster.civ@army.mil
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LOOKING TO BE WELL PAID FOR A CHALLENGING CAREER?

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The 1943rd Contingency Contracting Team has **one vacant E-7 M-Day position, and three vacant E-6 M-Day positions**. Gain contracting experience as a 51C and become in federal contracting, for a highly in-demand career field that has open opportunities in both price and government sectors.

As of April 2, 2023, there are 675 job openings nationwide on USAJOBS.gov for a Contracting Officer.

Considered grades are ARMY E-5, E-6, and newly promoted E-7. E-4 may be considered if Basic Leader Course is completed, and the Soldier is promotable. Must have a GT score of 110.

For more information contact CPT Robert Ragos, 1943rd Commander, at Robert.j.ragos.mil@army.mil





A participant in the Connecticut National Guard's first-ever Infantry Day rappels off a tower at Stones Ranch Military Reservation in East Lyme, Conn. June 1, 2024. Infantry Day allowed civilians and currently serving service members the ability to get a glimpse at what it's like to be a member of the Connecticut National Guard's 1-102nd Infantry Regiment.

Infantry

Cont. from page 1

tomatic Long Range Sniper Rifle, the Browning M2 .50 Caliber Machine Gun, and a 120mm mortar. The attendees were able to simulate firing several of these weapons by using a blank firing adapter.

Hot meals were prepared and served in an assault kitchen by culinary specialists assigned to Hotel Co. Brigade Support Company and Sgt. Michael Osorio briefed the participants on how to prepare several MRE dishes such as egg skillet, beef hash, golden harvest cake with icing, and beverages such as coffee and orange juice.

Major Gen. Francis Evon, the adjutant general of the Connecticut National Guard, and other Connecticut Army National Guard leaders wrapped up Infantry Day with advice and encouragement to those considering joining the infantry.

“People look at the infantry, and they watch movies, and they see things or hear things, and they get scared, right? And to me it’s the same as when you show up at a pool party, and everybody’s talking about how the pool might be cold,” remarked Command Sgt. Major Andres Quintero-Tarazona, the 6th Recruiting and Retention Battalion senior enlisted leader, “But after the pool party, nobody ever talks about how cold the pool was. Everybody talks about how great it is. And that’s what I see for the infantry. So, making that initial decision, there’s a lot of what if this, what if that, I’m scared, I don’t know if I can do it. But after you do it, and you go through it, you’re just so happy that you’re part of such a prestigious organization.”

Click here to learn more about serving in the Connecticut Army National Guard or to learn more about the infantry.



A Connecticut National Guard Soldier takes a photo of a participant rappelling down a wall during the state's first-ever Infantry Day at Stones Ranch Military Reservation in East Lyme, Conn. June 1, 2024.

80 Years Ago, National Guard Units Played Key Role in D-Day Landings

Sgt. 1st Class Jon Soucy
National Guard Bureau

ARLINGTON, Va. — Their waterlogged footsteps were historic.

That thought, however, most likely wasn't on the Soldiers' minds as they stepped ashore from rocking landing craft onto the French coast.

Instead, the focus, for most Soldiers of 1st Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment, Virginia Army National Guard, was simply making it across the beach — Omaha Beach — as part of the first wave of the Normandy landings, or the D-Day landings, as they have become widely known.

They faced stiff German resistance with heavy machine gun fire as they struggled to push ashore, June 6, 1944.

"They came so close," said Elisha Ray Nance about the enemy gunfire. He served in the battalion's Company A and landed in the first wave on Omaha Beach.

Nance was one of the few in his company to survive the landings — only a few dozen Soldiers of the 200-plus company made it, and many of those who survived were wounded. The battalion as a whole saw nearly 80% casualties. But Nance made it through unscathed.

"Suddenly, when I thought there was no more hope, I looked up into the sky," he said in Alex Kershaw's book "The Bedford Boys," which details Company A's efforts in the landings. "I didn't see anything up there, but I felt something settle over me. I got this warm feeling. I felt as if somehow I was going to live."

This year marks the 80th anniversary of the landings, which set the stage for the defeat of Germany and the Nazi regime and the end of World War II in Europe. Guard units played a key role in the landings.

The 116th Inf. Regt. was only one unit of the 29th Infantry Division, made up of Virginia, Maryland and District of Columbia National Guard units, to take part in the Normandy landings. Other units of the division faced a similar ordeal as they waded ashore.

Soldiers with the 111th Field Artillery Regiment, a Virginia Army Guard unit that was to provide artillery support to 116th Inf. Regt., lost all 12 of its guns in high surf. The Soldiers then continued ashore, gathering extra equipment and ammunition from the dead, and fought as infantrymen.

"The confusion was just terrible with all the equipment and men piled up along the beaches," said Grandison K. Bienvenu in a 2019 interview.

Bienvenu, who on June 6, 1944 was a captain commanding B Company, 112th Combat Engineer Battalion, Ohio Army National Guard, landed on Omaha Beach with the rest of the battalion in support of the 1st and 29th Infantry Divisions.

"As we approached the beach, it was all in daylight at that time," he said. "As I remember, we were scheduled to go in at H +120 minutes, which was the sixth wave. But we were probably the second wave that actually landed as a wave, as the others were wiped out as they approached."

Bienvenu saw the remnants of the previous waves as the unit made its way to the shore.

"As we were going in, we could see all these sunken boats and vehicles that had run off the boats, just the top showing," he said.

Clifton Learn, then a first lieutenant serving as the battalion's adjutant, said in the same 2019 interview that he recalled watching enemy rounds strike the upper structure of the landing craft he was on. It was only one obstacle he faced coming ashore.

"Approaching shore, we hit a sand bar and the skipper had to back off to try another lane," he said. "Moving a bit farther ashore, the ramps were dropped but the water was still too deep for safe discharge."

Further maneuvering was done, he said, and eventually they made it to a point where they could exit the landing craft.

"The water was deep, and the waves lifted us off our feet as we staggered and struggled onward amid enemy shooting," Learn said. "Some crafts had to unload in deep water. We worked our way up the beach through obstacles, assisting our casualties, keeping ahead of the tide."

When Alfred Rasche, then a sergeant with the battalion's B Company, exited his landing craft, he found himself in waist deep water and continued moving toward the beach.

"There seemed to be a lull in the firing for a few minutes," he said, also in a 2019 interview. "We ran to the first depression and took the little cover that was afforded. At this



The build-up of Omaha Beach. Reinforcements of men and equipment moving inland. Photo courtesy of Center of Military History.

time, we came under fire again. By what, I could not tell, except that it was very rapid fire. We then ran to the high-water embankment where many GIs were taking shelter."

Ralph Blando, then the first sergeant of B Company, also recalled the lull in firing, and when it picked up again.

"Pappy Glen Kloth, at the edge of the water, asked me to cut his life preserver loose," Blando recalled in 2019. "I started to do so when an 88mm shell came over and exploded a hundred yards away into the sea. I found myself standing there with my knife in my hand and Kloth was gone as were all the others."

Wading ashore was terrifying, said Bienvenu.

"We were wet and scared, hungry, insecure, didn't know where anything was," he said. "You'd look around you and you could see people being killed. And equipment blown up, ships being sunk."

Despite that, they pushed forward and cleared routes off the beach and further inland.

"Under determined enemy resistance, our troops opened a roadway off Omaha Beach around the cliffs inland in vicinity of Saint Laurant-Sur-Mer, France, by nightfall," said Learn.

That led to securing the beachhead and then being able to push further into Normandy.

The troops who landed on the beach were also assisted by National Guard units in the air. Among the units flying missions were the 107th and 109th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadrons, with the Michigan and Minnesota National Guard, respectively.

The Normandy campaign lasted until the end of July and saw additional Guard units take part, all earning the "Normandy" campaign streamer.

The landings were momentous, something Rasche said he didn't quite realize until he and his squad were sent back to Omaha Beach the day after to retrieve equipment.

"There was no firing on the beach now and one could stand up and look around," he said. "The tide was in, and wrecked assault boats were everywhere — loaded boats trying to get in, others trying to get out. Bodies of the dead were in this bobbing mess."

It's a memory he carried with him long after the war and one that speaks to the sacrifices made in the landings, he said.

"Even today I'm thankful that I had the opportunity to return to the beach that day after. One does not realize how little one can see when you have to keep your head down," he said. The day after "one could see all around, and what I saw is still in my mind as I saw it that day."

NOT FEELING LIKE **YOURSELF?**

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WANTED

OLD UNIFORMS & EQUIPMENT



There is a project in the works at the William A. O'Neill Armory in Hartford to display more recent historical uniforms of Connecticut military service. The intent of these new displays is to incorporate them with the other significant historical displays, pictures, and items as a walking tour for visitors to the capital, especially school children field trips for generations.

If you have any of the following uniforms that you would be willing to donate to the CT Military Department for this purpose, please contact us at (860) 524-4968 or email military.history@ct.gov. We would like as much of the uniform as possible, to include foot gear, head gear, and pins/patches/accoutrements. The list of uniforms (with accoutrements) we are looking for are as follows:

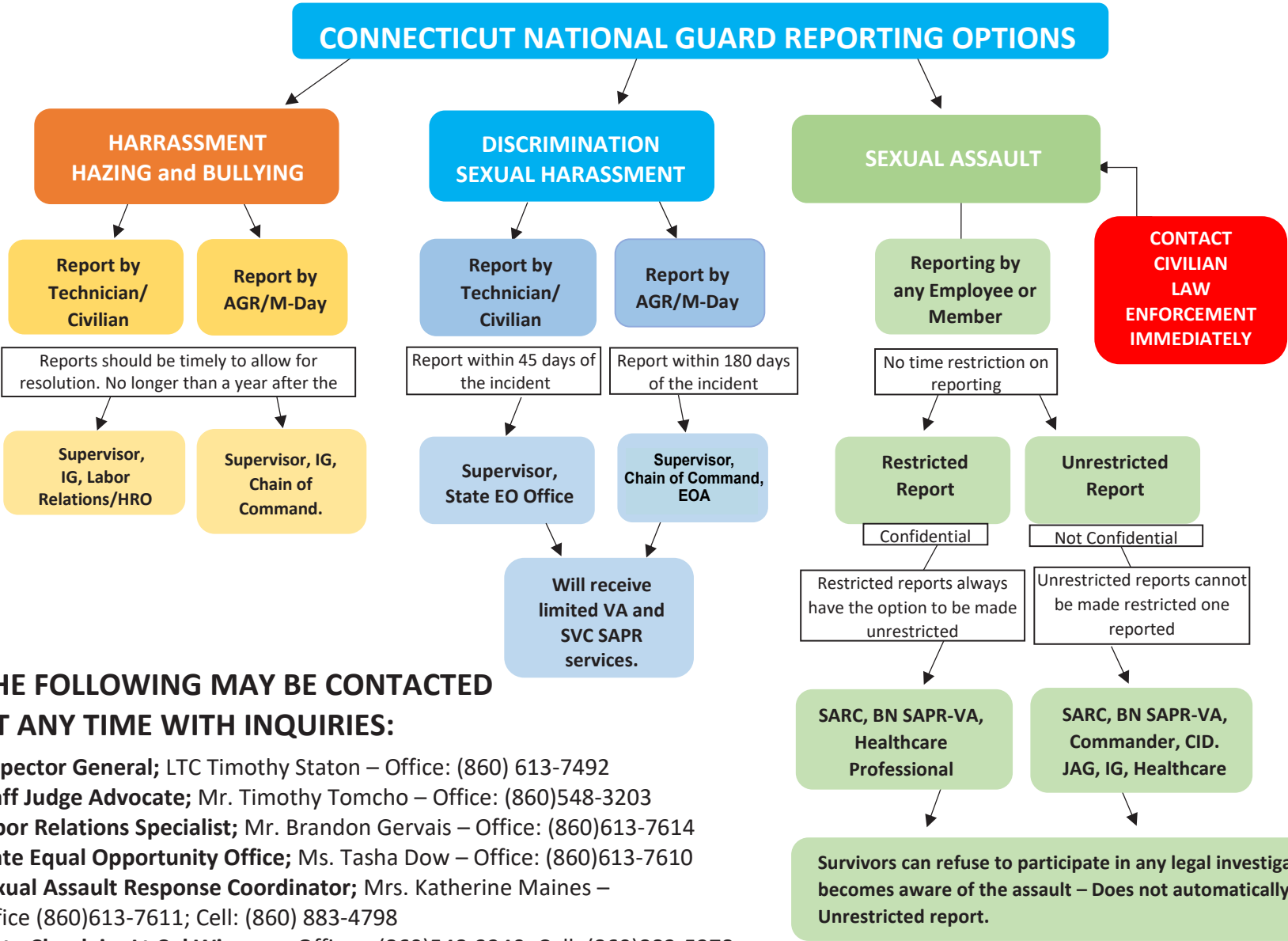
- Vietnam – OG 107 – olive drab combat uniform - tropical/ light weight**
- 1970's – OG 107 – olive drab uniform temperate (preferably with a Fritzzy Badge on pocket)**
- Army Flight Suit (Green, ACU, or OCP)**
- Army Mess Dress**
- Army Blue ASU (female either pants or skirt)**
- Army Khaki uniform**
- Era equipment that can be added to period dioramas.**

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State Equal Opportunity Office; Ms. Tasha Dow – Office: (860)613-7610
Sexual Assault Response Coordinator; Mrs. Katherine Maines – Office (860)613-7611; Cell: (860) 883-4798
State Chaplain; Lt Col Wismar – Officer; (860)548-3240; Cell: (860)883-5278

National Guard Ready for Potential Record-Breaking Wildfire, Hurricane Season

Air Force Master Sgt. Amber Monio
National Guard Bureau

ARLINGTON, Va. — With 2024 projected as one of the hottest years on record, climate scientists have noted a heightened risk of hurricanes and wildfires, but National Guard officials said the Guard is more prepared than ever to respond to these challenges.

“Our saying in Florida is that you’re either in hurricane season or you’re preparing for hurricane season,” said U.S. Army Lt. Col. Blake Heidelberg, director of military support with the Florida National Guard, during a media roundtable discussion on the topic May 28.

With abnormally high ocean temperatures, especially in the Atlantic, scientists anticipate an active hurricane season. The National Hurricane Center predicts between 17 and 25 storms, with at least eight likely to develop into hurricanes. In Florida, where hurricanes are an annual threat, preparedness is paramount.

“We dedicate an annual drill to hurricane response and domestic operations training,” Heidelberg said, underscoring the Florida Guard’s continual readiness.

Heidelberg added the Florida Guard’s structured approach to hurricane preparedness includes coordination with state and county authorities and the integration of national support through the yearly All-Hazards Conference, a comprehensive event designed to address a wide range of emergency management and disaster preparedness topics.

The conference discussion includes preparing for wildfires, which have increased in severity and frequency in California. The National Interagency Fire Center predicts that trend to continue with rising temperatures and prolonged drought conditions in the state.

The California National Guard stands ready to respond, said U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Robert F. Paoletti, director of the joint staff with the California National Guard, praising his state’s proactive measures.

“I’m very proud of the fact that California has made significant investments towards prevention rather than just reaction to wildfires,” he said.

In 2019, the California Guard launched Task Force Rattlesnake, a collaborative initiative with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection where California Guard members help clear forest debris and mitigate wildfire risks alongside CALFIRE personnel.

“California has significantly invested in wildfire prevention, putting over 300 National Guardsmen on emergency state active duty as part of Task Force Rattlesnake,” said Paoletti.

TF Rattlesnake, operating under CALFIRE’s direction, augments the agency with 14 hand crews during fire season. Their efforts include creating defensible spaces, removing fuel sources, and conducting prescribed burns to manage vegetation and lower the likelihood of catastrophic fires.

“California’s significant investment with CALFIRE will hopefully limit how much play time that we have to spend fighting fires, because they’re so much more ready to react than they were five years ago,” said Paoletti.

Paoletti also praised recent advancements in CAL-



A California Air National Guard C-130J Super Hercules aircraft, assigned to the 146th Airlift Wing, equipped with the Modular Airborne Fire Fighting System (MAFFS) performs a water drop during MAFFS training at Channel Islands Air National Guard Station, Port Hueneme, California, April 24, 2024. Air National Guard aircrew from the California Air National Guard's, 146th Airlift Wing and the U.S. Air Force Reserve's 302nd Airlift Wing, train together to accomplish their aerial firefighting certification alongside the U.S. Forest Service and other wildfire prevention agencies. The recertification training includes classroom sessions, flying and ground operations for Air Force aircrews, civilian lead plane pilots, and support personnel from the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and other federal and state agencies. (U.S. Air National Guard Photo by Tech. Sgt. Michelle Ulber)

FIRE’s air fleet and said the California Guard stands ready to augment them when needed.

That includes the California Air National Guard’s 146th Airlift Wing, which operates C-130 Hercules cargo aircraft equipped with the Modular Airborne Fire Fighting System, capable of dropping thousands of gallons of fire retardant.

Additionally, the California Army National Guard assists with helicopters capable of dropping water or fire retardant. California Army Guard ground crews also man checkpoints and assist in evacuation areas while responding to wildfires.

Guard leaders also touched on the potential role of artificial intelligence in disaster response, which includes using it in analysis for flood predictions and tracking hurricane patterns, said Heidelberg.

Paoletti added that the California Guard also uses AI in similar ways in its FireGuard program to enhance early fire detection. FireGuard uses military satellites and incorporates civilian resources from the National Interagency Fire Center, the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, and the U.S. Forest Service to detect wildfires, notify authorities, and create unclassified products to disseminate to firefighting networks nationwide.

In 2023, 14,000 wildfires were detected using a combination of aerial surveillance, ground-based monitoring stations, and advanced satellite imagery technology, said Paoletti.

“Our FireGuard program uses real-time geospatial data to identify fire starts and notify authorities promptly,” he said, adding that the California Guard must be ready for more than just wildfires.

“We responded in the last few years to floods and California’s first hurricane,” said Paoletti. “I know Florida is much more experienced with those than we are, but we stand ready to uphold the National Guard motto of, ‘Always Ready, Always There,’ to respond to the needs of Californians when they need it most.”

U.S. Army Col. Larry Doane, chief of the current operations division at the National Guard Bureau, said the Guard is actively engaged and ready to respond across the U.S.

“As of 2024, we’ve executed about 2.5 million personnel days, with a significant portion dedicated to domestic operations like wildfire missions and severe weather responses,” he said.

Doane said the unique nature of the Guard allows for a locally led, locally driven response, supported by the entire nation, adding that the Guard’s training for the combat mission is what makes it effective in responding during disasters and emergencies at home.

“You know, in my years of doing this, that’s the special sauce that I think really brings the National Guard to the fore in these responses,” he said. “And the thing that our citizens really come to rely upon on their toughest days.”

After 80th D-Day Commemoration, Hokanson Looks to Future

Army Master Sgt. Jim Greenhill and Sgt. 1st Class Zach Sheely
National Guard Bureau

OMAHA BEACH, NORMANDY, France — After honoring the 80th anniversary of the Allies' D-Day invasion and subsequent liberation of Europe, the National Guard's top general looked forward Friday, focused on sustaining enduring partnerships.

"The best way we can honor the sacrifices made here in Normandy is to ensure we safeguard freedom," Army Gen. Daniel Hokanson, chief, National Guard Bureau, said after meeting with ANZUS and NATO defense chiefs and senior U.S. military leaders at a conference hosted by Gen. Thierry Burkhard, France's chief of defense.

Operation Overlord—the Allies' D-Day invasion of French beaches code-named Sword, Juno, Gold, Omaha and Utah—is widely considered the most complex and consequential military operation in history. It required years of planning. It took almost 160,000 service members. It cost thousands of lives. Eighty years on, D-Day is remembered for the sacrifices of Allied troops, the multinational effort, and the resolve of Allied leaders.

"Alliances and partnerships made the extraordinary accomplishment that was D-Day possible," Hokanson said. "It takes a team to preserve freedom. That's why sustaining alliances and partnerships remains so important today."

A weeklong tribute—likely one of the last of the annual celebrations to include World War II veterans, many now centenarians—was set against the backdrop of renewed conflict in Europe. With Russia's most recent war of choice against Ukraine ongoing, world leaders gathered here in Normandy to champion peace, democracy and the international rules-based order.

Like in the first half of the 20th Century, Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin said democracies must again rally against subjugation—together.

"Those rules protect us," the secretary said during his remarks at the Normandy American Cemetery, where 9,388 Americans who fell on D-Day and the ensuing operations lie. "Those rights define us. And those responsibilities summon us once more."

The National Defense Strategy calls mutually-beneficial alliances and partnerships America's greatest global strategic advantage.

Enter the National Guard.

Partnered with 106 nations, the National Guard is at the forefront of global security cooperation.

"Our State Partnership Program is one of the most productive, cost-effective security cooperation programs in the world," Hokanson said. "Walking on this hallowed ground where men from different nations came together to fight for freedom demonstrates how important it is to have like-minded partners—then and now."

The Department of Defense National Guard State Partnership Program started in 1993 as a vehicle to help former Soviet Bloc states emerge from behind the Iron Curtain. It now features partnerships with nations on every continent but Antarctica.

The SPP enables between a quarter and a third of U.S. security cooperation engagements at about 1% of the security cooperation budget. Through the SPP, Guardsmen train with foreign counterparts at home and abroad, building readiness, compatibility and enduring relationships.

Numerous NATO countries are state partners with the Guard, now including Finland, which was formally paired with the Virginia Guard last month. Norway, a founding NATO member, joined last year. Sweden, the newest NATO member, has applied to join the SPP and is undergoing the state pairing process.

Other partnerships are more mature.

California Guardsmen have worked with Ukrainian troops since 1993 under one of the charter SPP affiliations.

However, a key tenet of the State Partnership Program is the access partner nations have to the whole of the Guard.

Today, rotational Guard units are training with Ukrainians in Germany—helping them build readiness and lethality to take back to the frontlines to fight for their country's sovereignty.

In Tucson, Arizona Air National Guard pilots are training Ukrainians to fly the F-16 Fighting Falcon aircraft soon to be donated to Kyiv.

"When we train with our partners, we each learn from each other and it makes both of us better," the CNGB said. "We build relationships that last decades."



Army Gen. Daniel Hokanson meets World War II veteran Joseph "Ben" Miller during the ceremony commemorating the 80th anniversary of Operation Overlord and D-Day at the Normandy American Cemetery, Colleville-sur-Mer, Normandy, France, June 6, 2024. Miller served in the U.S. Army's 307th Airborne Medical Company, 82nd Airborne Division. On the evening of June 6, 1944, Ben and 13 fellow medics landed in Normandy via glider to help any infantrymen and paratroopers who were wounded.

Hokanson laid a wreath at the National Guard Monument built atop a German bunker on Omaha Beach's Dog Green Sector, where the Guard's 116th Infantry Regiment, 29th Infantry Division, took heavy losses in the early minutes of June 6, 1944.

"Today, we retain that fighting spirit," he said. "We stand steadfast with our allies and partners. We continue to stand together for freedom and liberty."

He cited General Eisenhower's order of the day launching Operation Overlord: "The free men of the world are marching together towards Victory."

"More than that, they were marching towards history—their names and courageous deeds echo into eternity," Hokanson said.



Together.

Since the Second World War, partnerships have been at the core of a collective commitment to peace and security in Europe and beyond, French President Emmanuel Macron said at the international ceremony where he hosted 20 world leaders and World War II veterans to commemorate D-Day.

"As we are tragically reminded that peace is not eternal and that security is not a given, the efforts to bolster our collective defense, deterrence and resilience are required more than ever," Macron said.

In his remarks at the Normandy American Cemetery commemoration, President Joe Biden called for solidarity to safeguard democracy and freedom.

"What the Allies did together 80 years ago far surpassed anything we could have done on our own," Biden said. "It was a powerful illustration of how alliances—real alliances—make us stronger—a lesson that I pray we Americans never forget."

<div><div></div><div>Service Member and Family Support Center Staff Directory</div><div></div></div>			
William A. O'Neill Armory: 360 Broad Street, Hartford, CT 06105 (800) 858-2677 Open Monday-Friday			
Director, Service Member and Family Support Center	Kimberly Hoffman	kimberly.j.hoffman.civ@army.mil	(800) 858-2677
Lead Military and Family Readiness	Melody Baber	melodychevenne.c.baber.civ@army.mil	(860) 548-3276 (desk) (860) 883-2515 (cell)
Military and Family Readiness Specialist	Carolyn Kyle	carolyn.r.kyle.civ@army.mil	(860) 524-4920 (desk) (860) 394-8748 (cell)
Military and Family Readiness Specialist	Jason Perry	jason.t.perry.civ@army.mil	(860) 524-4897 (desk) (860) 655-9288 (cell)
Military and Family Readiness Specialist	Michelle McCarty	michelle.m.mccarty4.civ@army.mil	(860) 548-3254 (desk) (860) 883-6953 (cell)
Military and Family Readiness Specialist	Linda Rolstone	linda.b.rolstone.civ@army.mil	(860) 524-4963 (desk) (860) 680-2209 (cell)
Military and Family Readiness Specialist	Kelly Strba	kelly.a.strba.civ@army.mil	(860) 548-3283 (desk) (860) 500-3813 (cell)
Military and Family Readiness Specialist	Rich Timberlake	richard.k.timberlake.civ@army.mil	(860) 493-2797 (desk) (860) 500-3189 (cell)
Lead Child & Youth Program Coordinator	Carrie Joseph	carrie.l.joseph.ctr@army.mil	(860) 524-4908 (desk) (860) 883-6934 (cell)
Military OneSource Consultant	Scott McLaughlin	scott.mclaughlin@militaryonesource.com	(860) 502-5416 (cell)
Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, Volunteer Support Technician	Judith Reiser	jreiser@interactivegov.com	(860) 524-4970 (desk)
Personal Financial Consultant	Jafor Iqbal	pfc.hartford@magellanfederal.com	(203) 233-8790 (cell)
State Support Chaplain	Lt Col Eric Wismar	eric.a.wismar.mil@army.mil	(860) 548-3240 (desk) (860) 883-5278 (cell)
Transition Assistance Advisor	Fausto Parra	fparra-c@gapsi.com	(203) 219-8573 (cell) (202) 987-3942 (desk)
Connecticut Military Relief Fund	Julian Muller	julian.muller@ct.gov	(860) 524-4968 (desk)
Middletown Armed Forces Reserve Center: 375 Smith Street, Middletown, CT 06457			
Military and Family Readiness Specialist	Carolyn Kyle	carolyn.r.kyle.civ@army.mil	(860) 524-4920 (desk) (860) 394-8748 (cell)
Military and Family Readiness Specialist	Jason Perry	jason.t.perry.civ@army.mil	(860) 524-4897 (desk) (860) 655-9288 (cell)
Niantic Readiness Center: 38 Smith Street, Niantic, CT 06357 Open Thursdays			
Military and Family Readiness Specialist	Michelle McCarty	michelle.m.mccarty4.civ@army.mil	(860) 739-1637 (desk) (860) 883-6953 (cell)
Military and Family Readiness Specialist	Linda Rolstone	linda.b.rolstone.civ@army.mil	(860) 739-1637 (desk) (860) 680-2209 (cell)
Windsor Locks Readiness Center: 85-300 Light Lane, Windsor Locks, CT 06096 Open Fridays			
Military and Family Readiness Specialist	Kelly Strba	kelly.a.strba.civ@army.mil	(860) 292-4601 (desk) (860) 500-3813 (cell)
Military and Family Readiness Specialist	Rich Timberlake	richard.k.timberlake.civ@army.mil	(860) 292-4601 (desk) (860) 500-3189 (cell)
103rd Airlift Wing: 116 Rainbow Road, East Granby, CT 06026			
Airman and Family Readiness Program Manager	Selva Cabrera	selva.cabrera.1@us.af.mil	(860) 292-2730 (desk) (860) 734-7482 (cell)
Waterbury Armory: 64 Field Street, Waterbury, CT 06702			
Survivor Outreach Services Coordinator	Reisha Moffat	reisha.a.moffat.ctr@army.mil	(860) 883-6949 (cell)
Military OneSource Consultant	Scott McLaughlin	scott.mclaughlin@militaryonesource.com	(860) 502-5416 (cell)

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