



Connecticut GUARDIAN

The Yankee Courier on page 15

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HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

April 2022

National Volunteer Week - Volunteers Power Breakfast with the Easter Bunny for Connecticut Guard Families

Sgt. Matthew Lucibello
130th Public Affairs Detachment

HARTFORD, Conn — 936. That's how many plastic Easter Eggs volunteers from the Connecticut National Guard Service Member and Family Support Center assembled and filled in one bin for the approximate 400 guests that were arriving for breakfast with the Easter Bunny this past weekend, and that wasn't even all of them, there was another 1,064 more.

For over 20 years the Service Member and Family Support Center, or SMFSC, has been putting on this event. Although back then, it was a lot smaller according to Kim Hoffman, the SMFSC Director.

"We had mess kitchens, these long wooden buildings down at camp at the time before it was named Camp Nett," explained Hoffman. "It was just like 50ish people and now it's grown to this very large, very large, event for us, one of many social ones that we do throughout the year."

This is the first time this event has taken place in person in recent history due to the coronavirus pandemic.

"It truly is the first large event for us back in person," said Hoffman. "It's nice, I think people have missed the opportunity to come together."

To facilitate this, SMFSC staff, which includes many volunteers, took all necessary precautions. To reduce the risks of contracting and spreading coronavirus, volunteers from the program were each assigned a different,



Connecticut National Guard Service Member and Family Support Center volunteers fill bags with cheese balls and pour syrup into cups inside the Governor William A. O'Neill State Armory, Hartford, Connecticut, April 12th, 2022. The volunteers also made paper balloons, inflated foil balloons and assembled plastic eggs for a scavenger hunt.

yet important, role to mitigate risk factors and reduce the chance of exposure to COVID-19. The volunteers worked diligently to fill Easter eggs, blow up balloons and make bright and decorative paper lanterns. That's not including

servicing in the kitchens, making food for the families of our service members and being on standby to clean syrup

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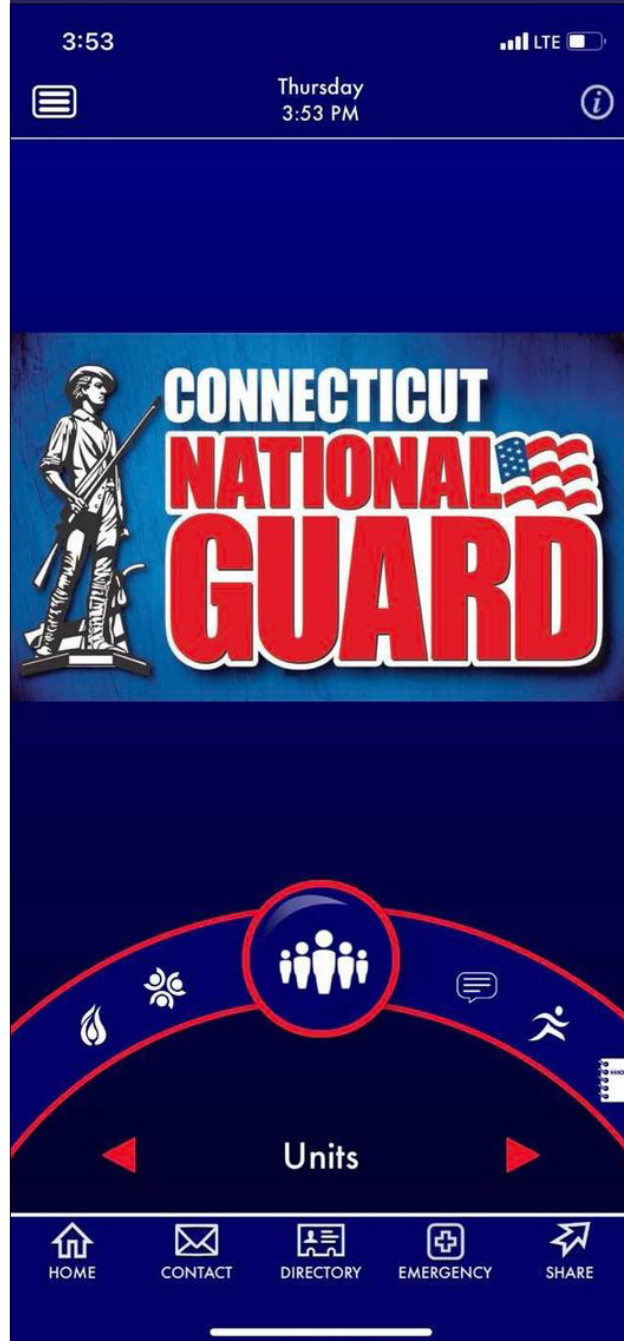


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103rd Airlift Wing

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102nd Army Band

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Facebook (Rock Band) - @RipChord102D
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1-169 Regiment (RTI)

Facebook - @169REG

1109th TASMG

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CTARNG Recruit Sustainment Program

Facebook - ConnecticutGuardRSP

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1st Co. Governor's Foot Guard

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U.S. Army Sgt. Luis Rodriguez, a veterinary food inspection specialist assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 118th Multifunctional Medical Battalion, Connecticut Army National Guard, and other Connecticut Army National Guard soldiers, perform flutter kicks during the 2022 Connecticut Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition at the Connecticut Army National Guard Training Center East Haven Rifle Range, East Haven, Connecticut, April 8, 2022. Exercises like these were conducted to increase the heart rates of the competitors prior to their stress shoot with the M4 carbine. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Matthew Lucibello)

And the winners are ... CTNG announces Soldier, NCO of the year

Tim Koster
Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs

After a physically and mentally demanding four days, the Connecticut Army National Guard has found their Soldier and non-commissioned officer of the year following the annual Best Warrior Competition April 7 – 10.

Specialist Katherine Platt, an internment and resettlement specialist assigned to the 192nd Military Police Battalion, and Staff Sgt. Timothy Horan, an aircraft powertrain repairer assigned to D Company, 1st Battalion, 169th Aviation Regiment won their respective categories in the competition and will move on to represent Connecticut in the regional competition May 9 – 13.

The best warrior competition is a series of events held across all components of the Army and tests Soldiers on a variety of warrior tasks from physical fitness and weapons proficiency to written exams and boards made up of sergeants major. The competitions begin at unit or command levels and continue through until the Army-wide competition where a single junior Soldier and non-commissioned officer are crowned the Army's best warriors.

This year, Platt and Horan will have homefield advantage in the regional competition, which will pit the top-tier Soldiers from the Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey National Guards against

one another at various training sites around Connecticut and Cape Cod to represent the Northeast in the next level of the competition later in the year.

The Best Warrior Competition began in 2002 and this may be the last year for this legacy event. On Feb. 15, 2022, Sgt. Maj. Of the Army Michael Grinston announced the transition into a new competition called the Best Squad Competition in September. The change comes as part of Grinston's "This is My Squad" initiative to replicate the strength and cohesiveness often found in the Special Forces communities.

"For over two years, I've talked about the importance of building a cohesive team that is highly trained, disciplined and fit," Grinston said in an interview with Military.com. "Now it's time to measure ourselves against that standard."

According to the Best Squad website, "the most influential level of leadership is at the squad – where the majority of our Soldiers reside. 'Squad' extends beyond a traditional infantry squad to many small-unit groups of Soldiers, connected by a squad leader, who has the most direct impact on their lives. Soldiers never fight alone, the unbreakable bonds forged through shared hardship and unending support for one another are the hallmark of our most successful small units."

Despite the change, each Soldier competing in a squad will continue to be evaluated individually, which will allow the Army to still declare a Soldier and non-commissioned officer of the year.

Volunteers

Cont. from page 1

or any other messes that were bound to happen when you have a room full of excited children.

The end goal: to maximize the amount of National Guard families that can come together, enjoy some Easter festivities and possibly learn more about the programs and resources the National Guard has to offer, while at the same time, making some new friends.

“Our intent, with any of our social programs, is to get Guard families together to meet one another and to expose them to the programs we have available,” explained Hoffman. “Our hope is if you feel comfortable enough to come to an event you might meet another family that could become a friend, so when your Soldier is at AT (Annual Training), a long school, or deployed, you’ve made a couple of friends, you’ve put some faces to the names and things we email and maybe you’ll feel comfortable using a resource in the future that you might need.”

The families filed inside the gym of the Governor William A. O’Neill State Armory and immediately were met with tinsel lined archways and decorated tables and colored Easter baskets, all of which were prepared and set up by the volunteers. The smell of food lingered in the air.

“Children will select the Easter basket of their choosing,” said Hoffman. “They can eat breakfast first, whichever, but then we have different resource providers that will be out on the floor.”



Cindy Gillanders, left, and Bob Gillanders, right, Connecticut National Guard Service Member and Family Support Center volunteers, fill bags with cheese balls inside the Governor William A. O’Neill State Armory, Hartford, Connecticut, April 12th, 2022.

Each of the programs under the umbrella of the SMFSC would have a station set up. The families would bounce from station to station, the children would receive gifts and goodies, while the parents or guardians learned more about earned benefits and options available to them and their families.

“The Child and Youth Program will provide information on the resources that are available for military children, child care options,” continued Hoffman. “They’ll (the children) get bubbles, and the parents will get some quick

information that they can read later about what Challenge Program (National Guard Youth Challenge Program) has to offer.”

None of this would be possible without the volunteers. Hoffman would also go on to describe how the volunteers, and their work with the SMFSC, have continued to strengthen and build relationships between the community and the National Guard, whether it be at this event or any event the SMFSC puts on.

“They have their different niches,” explained Hoffman. “Some volunteer with us just for our Christmas events, some are volunteers in the Child and Youth area.”

Each volunteer would bring their unique set of skills and expertise to the table.

Some of our younger volunteers offer a totally different perspective for a very unique portion of our population,” said Hoffman. “A very sensitive, delicate age, I don’t think someone my age is relevant.”

Additionally, volunteering with the SMFSC has also kept the desire to serve alive in some of their prior service volunteers.

“Many of them, maybe, weren’t ready to go at age 60, but they had to,” explained Hoffman, talking about some of their prior service volunteers. “It gives them an opportunity to still stay connected to something that they loved.”

“It’s a huge benefit,” said Hoffman. “It, the manpower (the volunteers), gives us that extra exposure to families.”



EVERYONE IS A RECRUITER

TAG Memorial Day Challenge



Time Period

15 FEB – 30 APR 2022

Eligibility

All Soldiers, Airmen & Officers are eligible

Criteria

Provide 2 leads that enlist during the time period above using the CT National Guard App for the CTARNG or (800) 992-4793 for the CTANG

Memorial Day Weekend

Qualified personnel will be favorably considered for a special pass or RTA

Award

Qualified personnel will receive a Certificate of Achievement signed by Major General Evon



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Improving your fitness regime for the new ACFT

Sgt. 1st Class Silas Holden
Contributor

Greetings everyone, after a long and drawn-out time that has seemed to last many years the ACFT has been finalized, or so we are being told. To all those dreading the leg tuck event you can breathe a sigh of relief. For those dreading the plank you can get practicing the new core strength proponent of the ACFT, the plank. The new approved version of the ACFT also goes back to gender/age grading standards like its predecessor the APFT.

This month I am going to focus a bit of fitness writing energy on how keeping your fitness routine simple and clean can prove to be a vehicle for great progress. Many of us often get caught up in the fast-paced overloaded social media fitness propaganda. This advice and information overload helps us get completely distracted from the true goals of fitness which are improvement and growth.

I recently decided to take a simple and clean approach to my training routine. I have always enjoyed running and resistance training but could never seem to find a good balance between the two. After looking at my available time for working out I came up with a new routine that fit my schedule. Below I will summarize how I simplified my workouts and put the focus on consistency instead of focusing on difficulty and volume.

Five days a week I am now doing run/walk intervals at different paces and distances. This has greatly reduced the amount of soreness in my knees from running constantly. I actually feel more benefit from this training than I did from trying to run long distance for time. To stay prepared for the overall fitness requirements of the ACFT I incorporated some daily resistance training into the routine. In just a short time I have achieved noticeable improvements in every aspect of my overall fitness and health.

The resistance portion of the workouts are focused on the four core lifts which are bench press, deadlift, squat, and overhead press. For the other days I throw in some simple isolation work focused on triceps and biceps. To close out each workout I plank for time and continually build upon what I can do. The goal over time will be to max out the plank requirement for the ACFT.

Day one: walk/run intervals for 30 minutes with five minute warm up and 5 minute cooldown. During the walk interval portions keep the pace brisk so that your heart rate stays elevated. You can choose to do 30/60 intervals or 60/120 intervals, mix it up and keep it interesting. This day's resistance focus is on bench press and plank. I do five sets and build upon progressive overload with each set. I close out with one or two planks for

time and then stretch for 10 to 15 minutes.

Day two: walk/run intervals for time and distance of your choosing. Resistance focus is deadlift for five sets with progressive overload. Close out with planks and stretching.

Day three: walk/run intervals for time and distance of your choosing. Resistance focus is overhead press for five sets with progressive overload. Close out with planks and stretching.

Day four: walk/run intervals for time and distance of your choosing. Resistance focus is squat for five sets with progressive overload. Close out with planks and stretching.

Day five: walk/run intervals for time and distance of your choosing. Resistance focus is on triceps with exercise and sets/reps of your choosing. Close out with planks and stretching.

Day six: Resistance focus is biceps with exercise and sets/reps of your choosing. Close out with planks and stretching. I incorporate some yoga into this day to help maintain flexibility and range of motion.

Day seven: active rest day, get out and hike, bike, or do yard work. Just aim to stay active without creating an overtraining/overuse situation.

Overtraining/overuse is one of the leading causes of musculoskeletal injuries and creates most of the training time loss we experience. Keeping a fitness routine simple and clean can help alleviate the possibility of this occurring. A key factor in making the ACFT effective and useful for gauging an individual's fitness is to avoid injury and use the test as a true guide to fitness levels. Simply achieving the minimum standard does nothing to improve on the overall fitness level of the military, but after all it is the individual's choice to just achieve minimums. On another note, having sat on many promotion boards, I will tell you to not get caught in the thinking trap that score no longer matters for promotion. In the end a single point can come between you and others due to the overall score you got on the ACFT.

In fitness there is never a one size fits all solution to improving and maintaining a high level of fitness. It takes time and trial and error to find what works for each person. The routine mentioned above is working great for me and has me noticing great improvement and growth. With the first "for record" ACFT approaching it is time to prepare properly and limit the chance of injury. Leaders and mentors can do their part to help guide their Soldiers, but it ultimately comes down to the individual Soldier putting in the work. Until next month stay motivated, stay hydrated, and stay fit!

Get To Know Your Connecticut Guardians

Sgt. 1st Class Silas Holden
Contributor

This month I catch up with 2nd Lt. Jocelyn Coutant of the 102nd Infantry. This was definitely a difficult task with the frantic pace she keeps while continually improving upon her life, career, and fighting position. Coutant is the first female to commission as an infantry officer in the Connecticut Army National Guard and recently returned from deployment. I also get a bit of information from Spc. Winnie Foo from D CO 1-169 AVN who recently competed in the 2022 CTARNG Best Warrior Competition. Spc. Foo has some extreme motivation and did not quit during any of the events of the competition, as a first-time competitor that is a definite victory. Watch for next month's edition of the Guardian as we will catch up with two other service members and get to know them a bit better.

Name: Jocelyn Coutant

Rank: Second Lieutenant

Unit of Assignment: Platoon Leader, A Co, 1-102D Infantry Regiment (Mountain)

MOS: 11A – Infantry Officer

1. How long have you been in the military and what made you join the CT National Guard?

I have been in the military for eight and a half years. I had always wanted to join the military, but my parents wanted me to pursue a degree in business and then become a Tax Accountant, which I did. When I realized it was not a fit for me, I contacted a recruiter for the CT National Guard and joined. I wanted to serve in the military, and also wanted to be able to use the benefits given, such as student loan repayment and affordable health insurance. I wanted to do something completely different than I had done previously.

2. Tell us about your career so far in the CT National Guard.

I enlisted in the Army in 2013 and became a 92F, Fuel Specialist for the 1-104th AVN unit. I realized my passion for flying and helicopters and in 2017 was able to reclass to a 15T, UH-60 Blackhawk Mechanic. In 2018-2019 I deployed with the 3-126 AVN MEDEVAC unit to Iraq as a Sergeant and worked in the Production Control section. While there, I applied for flight school and was accepted, however could not attend due to an injury. In 2020 I applied for OCS and went to Federal OCS in June at Fort Benning, GA. Immediately upon graduation, I started IBOLC – Infantry Basic Officer Leader Course. I graduated the course in February 2021 and immediately deployed with the 1-102D IN to Djibouti, Africa. After being a staff member for three months, I was moved into A Co and was assigned as the Platoon Leader for 1st Platoon.

3. What do you do away from the Guard in your personal time?

When I haven't been at school or deployed, I have enjoyed time hiking with my dog and husband, going to CrossFit, and just spending time with family and friends. Now that I am finally home after 5 years of being gone, I am pursuing a career with the Connecticut State Police.



U.S. Army Spc. Winnie Foo, a unit supply specialist assigned to the 1st Battalion, 169th Aviation Regiment, Connecticut Army National Guard, aims an M17 service pistol at a target during the pistol qualification event of the 2022 Connecticut Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition at the Connecticut Army National Guard Training Center East Haven Rifle Range, East Haven, Connecticut, April 8, 2022.

FIVE QUESTIONS:

Favorite food: Cheeseburgers

Marvel or DC: Marvel

Favorite character: The Hulk

Favorite movie: Too many to list, but recently I really enjoyed Dog.

Music genre: Rap and Indie Rock

Favorite TV show: Yellowstone



Second Lt. Jocelyn Coutant, courtesy photo

Name: Winnie Foo

Rank: Specialist

Unit of Assignment: D company 1-169 AV BN

MOS: 92Y

1. How long have you been in the military and what made you join the CT National Guard?

I am currently in my second year of being a military member with the CT Army National Guard. Before two years ago I hadn't even thought about joining the military. It all started with my encouragement from my mom. She pushed me to be independent and pay for my own col-

lege tuition. The Connecticut Army National Guard Tuition Waiver covers my tuition costs for attending school. Personally, I don't have great military aspirations, I joined for the training and opportunities I couldn't have in the civilian world. I also appreciate my recruiter's perseverance during my enlistment process.

2. Tell us about your career so far in the CT National Guard.

Being only my second year with the CT Army National Guard I do not have many experiences away from the initial entry training that I completed. When returning to my unit in Windsor Locks, CT I was told I would be a great competitor in the Best Warrior Competition. April 7-10, 2022 I competed in the 2022 CTARNG Best Warrior Competition. As a 92Y Supply Specialist I don't always get to utilize all the Soldiering skills we are taught. The Best Warrior Competition forces us to train on skills and tasks that we don't always use during our drill weekends. This competition will certainly make you dig deep within yourself to find the motivation when things get difficult.

3. What do you do away from the Guard in your personal time?

I am a full-time student currently. Most of my time is focused on my academics. I also work as a receptionist in a restaurant to earn money away from school and weekend drill.

FIVE QUESTIONS:

Favorite food: Durian

Marvel or DC: Marvel

Favorite character: Spider man

Favorite movie: A Star is Born

Music genre: Country music

Favorite TV show: not a fan of TV

The CTARNG is hosting a Dance on April 30th 2022
 The MG Maurice Rose Armed Force Reserve Center
 375 Smith St. Middletown, CT. 06457
 1800-2100

Enjoy a night out with your family and battles. Music from many decades, Hawaiian poke bowls, Hawaiian juices, Hula dancer, Trivia “winning group receives gift cards” AND IT IS FREE!!!



All CT soldiers and their family members are welcome. **Registration is a must!** Please scan the QR code or call 860-613-7626 to register!



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FY-22 ARMY NATIONAL GUARD AWARDS PROGRAM

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Choice of: National Guard Sweatshirt
OCP Backpack or Personalized Tumbler



2ND LEAD TO ENLISTMENT

Choice of: National Guard Sweatshirt
OCP Backpack or Personalized Tumbler



3RD LEAD TO ENLISTMENT

Choice of: National Guard Sweatshirt
OCP Backpack or Personalized Tumbler

JOINT RECRUITING RIBBON

Awarded once 3 enlistments complete their training



Soldiers will submit leads through the "Connecticut National Guard" app which can be downloaded from the google play store or the app store. You will earn the above items when the lead enlists.

**Contact MSG Craig Townsend for questions and more information.
craig.r.townsend.mil@army.mil**

Connecticut National Guard Clergy Day 2022

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REGISTER

Free Blackhawk Flight!

Clergy from all faith traditions are invited to take part in this unique event.

Learn about ministry in the military. Get hands on with military equipment and fly in a Blackhawk!

The day will include a FREE lunch.

When: Friday, July 22nd, 2022

Time: 10:00-2:30

Where: AASF

155 Light Ln, Windsor Locks, CT

Must RSVP by June 30th 2022

To learn more or register:

Chaplain: LTC Eric Wismar

Office: (860) 548-3240

Email: eric.a.wismar.mil@army.mil

OSM: CPT Mark Soltau

Cell: (860) 982-2852

Email: hewan.m.soltau.mil@army.mil

CTNG observes Earth Day with cleanup around facilities



Connecticut National Guardsmen spend Earth Day cleaning the grounds near the Gov. William A. O'Neil Armory in Hartford, April 22, 2022. (Photo by Sgt. Matthew Lucibello, 130th Public Affairs Detachment)



A Connecticut National Guardsman loads bags of litter and other debris into the back of a vehicle near the Gov. William A. O'Neil Armory in Hartford, April 22, 2022. These Guardsmen spent Earth Day cleaning the grounds of their facilities around the state. (Photo by Sgt. Matthew Lucibello, 130th Public Affairs Detachment)



Rob Dollak, the Connecticut Military Department Facility Management Office Environmental Program manager, removes sticks creating a gap along the perimeter fence of the Connecticut Army National Guard Training Center East Haven Rifle Range, East Haven, Connecticut, April 20, 2022. Gaps like these can facilitate an animal's entry onto the rifle range and must be plugged. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Matthew Lucibello)

Connecticut Army National Guard Well Drillers Get Their Boots Wet



U.S. Army Spc. Brandon Turner, a horizontal construction engineer assigned to the 247th Engineer Detachment (Well Drilling), 192nd Engineer Battalion, Connecticut Army National Guard, clears a cut of debris at Naval Support Activity Saratoga Springs MWR, Saratoga Springs, New York, April 15th, 2022. Soldiers from the 247th drilled a well at the request of the U.S. Navy to support their Morale, Welfare and Recreation office, or MWR, during their annual training. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Matthew Lucibello)



U.S. Army Spc. Denize Pine, left, and U.S. Army Spc. Donald Grande, right, horizontal construction engineers assigned to the 247th Engineer Detachment (Well Drilling), 192nd Engineer Battalion, Connecticut Army National Guard, observe the drill of a V-2000 drill rig at Naval Support Activity Saratoga Springs MWR, Saratoga Springs, New York, April 15th, 2022. Soldiers from the 247th drilled a well at the request of the U.S. Navy to support their Morale, Welfare and Recreation office, or MWR, during their annual training. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Matthew Lucibello)



U.S. Army soldiers assigned to the 247th Engineer Detachment (Well Drilling), 192nd Engineer Battalion, Connecticut Army National Guard, operate a drill at Naval Support Activity Saratoga Springs MWR, Saratoga Springs, New York, April 15th, 2022. Soldiers from the 247th drilled a well at the request of the U.S. Navy to support their Morale, Welfare and Recreation office, or MWR, during their annual training. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Matthew Lucibello)



Connecticut National Guardsmen assigned to Charlie Company, 3rd Battalion, 142nd Aviation Regiment conduct an inspection of a new UH-60M Blackhawk helicopter at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst April 28, 2022. The acquisition of this helicopter completes the unit's conversion from their old L-model aircrafts to all-new M-model Blackhawks. (Courtesy Photo)

CTANG completes Blackhawk fleet conversion

Tim Koster
Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs

Soldiers from the Connecticut National Guard's Charlie Company, 3rd Battalion, 142nd Aviation Regiment out of Windsor Locks, retrieved a new UH-60M Blackhawk Helicopter from Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst and delivered it to the Army Aviation Support Facility in Windsor Locks, Conn. April 28, 2022.

The addition of this new airframe completes a conversion of the unit's five helicopters from the legacy L- model to the most modern M-model.

According to U.S. Army Capt. Andrew Maher, commander of Charlie Company, most new aviators come out of the schoolhouse trained on this new M-model, so converting the fleet creates a seamless transition from training to operational environments.

While the Army's newest helicopter pilots come out of training well-versed on the M-model aircraft, the legacy pilots were presented with a hefty learning curve. To become more familiar with the new airframe, pilots familiar with the L-models attend a five-week training course and maintain their certifications with at least 96 hours of flight training every year, including 18 in a flight simulator.

The new helicopter comes equipped with several upgrades, including wider blades for more lift capacity, an auto-pilot feature, a more rigid frame, more crash and electromag-

netic protection, more vibration absorption in the seats, a rotor break, and fully digital displays and navigation.

"Everyone loves [the new model]," said Maher. "The upgrades give us more situational awareness, reduce our workload, and allows us to complete more complex missions with less stress."

The upgrade does more than just provide convenience, however. Since the conversion process began, the unit's M-model craft have acquired no more than 100 total flight hours, a stark contrast to the more than 9,000 hours on the L-models which reduces the amount of maintenance required, allowing the unit to keep more helicopter in a ready-status should they be needed for a real-world mission.

To make room for the new helicopters, the old frames were transferred to other state's National Guards, civilian organizations, and one was moved to the Theater Aviation Sustainment Maintenance Group (TASMG) in Groton.

The UH-60 Blackhawk was first developed by Sikorsky in 1978 and has been the primary multi-mission rotary aircraft since. The helicopter was constructed at the Sikorsky plant in Stratford, Connecticut and outfitted with additional modifications at the U.S. Army Communications-Electronics Research, Development, and Engineering Center Flight Activity at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey.

Army microbiologists leverage improved software to safeguard US forces

Walter Ham
Contributor

ABERDEEN PROVING GROUND, Md. — U.S. Army civilian microbiologists are using an offline bioinformatics tool that collects gigabytes of data and distills it into actionable results.

Army civilian microbiologists from the Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, Explosives Analytical and Remediation Activity, or CARA, are working with the Army Chemical Biological Center to leverage the MinION Detection Software, or MINDS, an offline bioinformatics tool that interfaces between genomic information and maps it to a library.

Based on Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, CARA is part of the 20th CBRNE Command, the U.S. military's premier all hazards command. CARA is an all Army civilian organization that conducts mobile laboratory operations, emergency response missions for Recovered Chemical Warfare Material and technical escort of surety and non-surety chemical material.

With mobile expeditionary laboratories, CARA provides theater-level validation of chemical and biological warfare agents, toxic industrial chemicals and explosives to support operations. These distinct laboratory capabilities are designated to support the combatant commanders or joint task force commanders when called upon to deploy into their area of operations.

Dr. Timothy M. Reed, an Army microbiologist at CARA, said the bioinformatics tool increases the ability of CARA's expeditionary laboratories to produce biological threat information.

"Until recently, CARA's biological detection capabilities were limited to those organisms that we had targeted methods for," said Reed. "We could only detect a few dozen of biological targets of interest. Unfortunately, this did not allow us to confirm identification of any organism that was outside our detection methods."

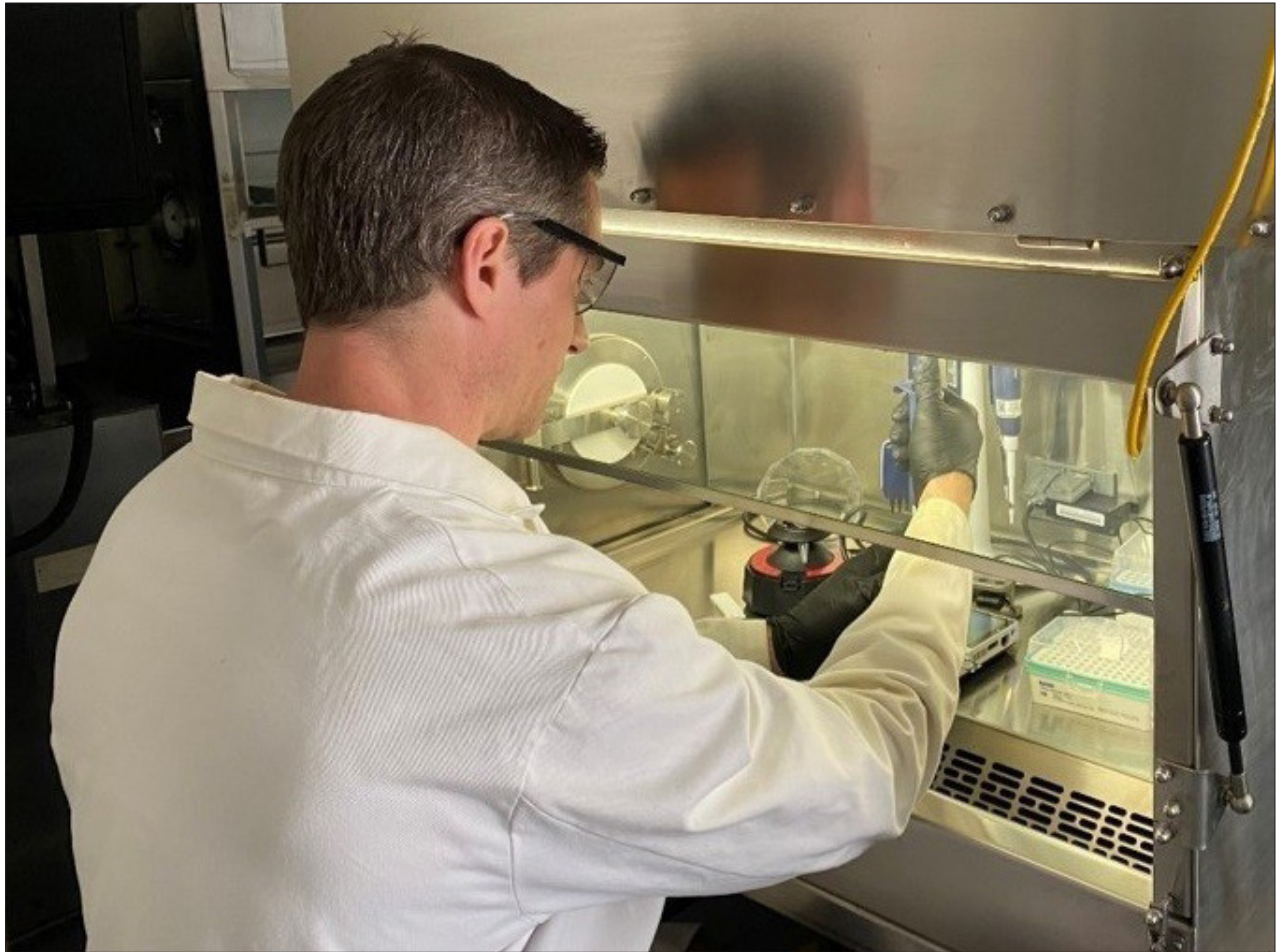
According to Reed, this testing method was similar to a patient visiting a doctor with a sore throat and fever and only being tested for flu, strep and COVID-19.

"If all tests come back negative, no further identification can be made for the causal agent of the illness and the patient is left not knowing what is wrong with him or what possible disease he has," said Reed, a Dallas native who has served at CARA since 2014. "If a sample was outside our detection capabilities, we would have a difficult time trying to identify it."

Reed said the development of nanopore technology has given CARA the capability to sequence everything in a sample and identify unknowns using entire libraries of microorganisms that contains hundreds of thousands of different organisms and species.

In collaboration with the Chemical Biological Center, Dr. Samir Deshpande developed MINDS to provide the same data analysis available in an online cloud-based software to a stand-alone, offline software package.

With this application, the graphical user interface developed by Deshpande runs Centrifuge, a freely available classification software developed by Johns Hopkins Uni-



Dr. Timothy M. Reed, a U.S. Army civilian microbiologist from the Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, Explosives Analytical and Remediation Activity (CARA), tests samples using the MinION Detection Software, an offline bioinformatics tool that interfaces between genomic information and maps it to a library. The tool gives CARA the capability to sequence everything in a sample and identify unknowns using entire libraries of microorganisms that contains hundreds of thousands of different organisms and species. (U.S. Army photo by Christopher Seliga)

versity, which identifies all the organisms in a sample by mapping them to a reference library.

"With MINDS, CARA has all the capabilities of a cloud-based online software now contained in a portable offline laptop that enables CARA to utilize the MinION field sequencer anywhere and not require connection to the internet," said Reed.

Reed said CARA has used MINDS during several recent field exercises, including exercises at Fort Bliss, Texas, and Dugway Proving Ground, Utah, where samples were received and analyzed through MINDS offering orthogonal confirmation to other analytical instrumentation. During the most recent exercise on Fort Bliss, the sequencing technology was able to identify an unknown sample that other devices were not able to detect.

CARA first used MINDS in 2018 at a laboratory in the U.S. Central Command area of operations. Reed said the U.S. Navy, Centers for Disease Control and Food and Drug Administration are also working to incorporate the same detection technology.

"With each exercise, the MinION sequencing technology, along with MINDS bioinformatics tool, matures and demonstrates the need and usefulness of a technology that is not constrained with two dozen detection targets," said Reed.

"MinION sequencing technology, along with the MINDS platform, provide biological threat intelligence at higher confidence to the combatant commanders," said Reed. "Once the biological threat has been confidently described, commanders can take appropriate countermeasures."

Franz Amann, the director of CARA, said Army civilians at his activity lean forward on leveraging technology to better accomplish their high stakes missions.

"Our CARA microbiologists leading the way to incorporate this detection capability into their laboratory operations to provide better support to the warfighter," said Amann, a retired Chemical Corps officer from Spartanburg, South Carolina. "Army civilians at CARA are always looking for better ways to defend our nation and support the warfighters who defend it."

"Expanding our microbiological capabilities allows our team to test and validate a wider spectrum of potential biological agents in theater," said Amann. "This theater-validation capability allows our team to advise the combatant and joint task force commander so they can make timely decisions. Sending samples back to the states or another approved nation to test is time consuming, which causes delays in critical decision-making process."

Health of the Force report examines COVID-19 pandemic impacts to Soldier health, public health response

Douglas Holl
Army Public Health Center

ABERDEEN PROVING GROUND, Md. — The U.S. Army Public Health Center released the seventh annual Health of the Force, or HOF, report April 18, 2022. The report focuses on Active Component Soldiers and presents Army-wide and installation-level data for more than 20 medical, wellness and environmental indicators.

“This year’s HOF report also includes a new COVID-19 metric section for a deep dive into surveillance data and methods, the effect of the pandemic on military healthcare utilization, effects on physical and mental health and local actions focused on Army Public Health Nursing and vaccination efforts,” said Dr. Erin Goodell, HOF editor.

The report also continues the discussion from last year’s report on health disparities faced by racial and ethnic minority Soldiers and introduces a focus on the unique health needs of female Soldiers.

“These features help to frame conversations and analyses necessary to effect real progress towards health equity,” said Dr. Lisa Ruth, HOF project manager.

Goodell pointed out some key takeaways in the report on the COVID-19 pandemic’s impact on Soldiers and readiness:

- According to a survey of behavioral health outcomes in the context of COVID-19, most Soldiers reported COVID-19 stressors, fears and concerns, with junior enlisted and racial/ethnic minority Soldiers reporting more concerns.
- Half of Soldiers reported some negative financial impact because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and those with greater COVID-19 stressors, as well as those who experienced more severe financial impacts during the pandemic, were more likely to screen positive for depression or anxiety.
- One in seven active-duty Families transitioned from being food secure before the COVID-19 pandemic to marginally food insecure during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“This information emphasizes the need for all of us in Army leadership to acknowledge the impacts on Soldiers’ behavioral health, especially for junior enlisted and racial/ethnic minority Soldiers,” said Col. Alisa Wilma, APHC director. “Behavioral health services, financial resources and leadership support are important to help mitigate the impacts of the pandemic on Soldiers’ behavioral health.”

Goodell said it’s important for readers to note that the data in this year’s HOF report were recorded during the first nine months of the COVID-19 pandemic when lockdowns were more commonplace. These public health measures resulted in reduced training schedules, social distancing, isolation, and less frequent deployment, all of which may have biased estimates upwards or downwards, depending on the metric.

“We caution against direct comparisons to previous Health of the Force reports, but we expect that as operations return to pre-pandemic levels, future reports will continue to accurately characterize the health of the force,” said Goodell.

In addition to looking at COVID’s impact on Soldiers, the report also spotlighted the work of Army Public Health Nurses and Army National Guard members, who were involved in all facets of the COVID-19 response. This included conducting emergency response, setting up field hospitals, comforting patients and driving vaccination efforts, said Goodell.

“These efforts were high-demand, but APHNs and Army National Guard accepted their roles and recognized the impact of public perception to public health,” said Goodell. “Their work at the front line of the COVID-19 response undoubtedly raised awareness of their importance by those within the Army medical community and beyond.”

Last year’s HOF first introduced race and ethnicity data into the report. Goodell says the social-ecological model demonstrates that racial and ethnic disparities in health often take place throughout a person’s life.

“Although everyone receives the same medical benefits through TRICARE, the data demonstrate that there are still important disparities for most conditions reported in Health of the Force,” said Goodell.

The current report reveals that racial and ethnic minority Soldiers have a higher occurrence of disease across several medical metrics compared to white (non-Hispanic or



The Health of the Force report makes Soldier health and readiness information accessible to a wide array of stakeholders. (Army Public Health Center photo illustration by Jason Embrey)

Latino) Soldiers. Goodell highlighted these findings from the report:

- Hispanic or Latino Soldiers had the highest rates of COVID-19.
- Black Soldiers had the highest prevalence of injury, behavioral health diagnoses, sleep disorders, sexually transmitted infections and chronic disease.
- American Indian or Alaskan Native Soldiers, followed by Black Soldiers, had the highest prevalence of substance use disorder.
- Obesity prevalence and tobacco use was highest among Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Soldiers.

“It is important to remind readers that these disparities often pre-date military service and may not be solely attributed to individual health choices,” said Goodell.

Goodell said this year’s report also had some interesting findings regarding female Soldiers, which comprise about 15 percent of the Active Component, and whose health needs may sometimes be overlooked across the entire Army enterprise. The current Health of the Force report features numerous vignettes on women’s health topics including contraception, menstrual suppression, pelvic floor health and musculoskeletal health during pregnancy, which are critical areas for Army Senior Leaders to understand.

“By gaining a more detailed understanding of women’s health, Army Senior Leaders can ensure that their entire force is provided with appropriate resources to optimize their health and readiness,” said Goodell.

This year’s Health of the Force report — and the inaugural Health of the Army Family report released in November — recognize the need to look at Soldiers holistically, which includes the family unit.

“Spouses of Soldiers reported job loss, involuntary furlough and reduced hours during the pandemic,” said Goodell. “In addition, numerous childcare centers were closed, forcing Army spouses to provide childcare during normal business hours. Therefore, the health of the force cannot be separated from the health of the Army Family, and Army leaders at all levels should continue to be cognizant of how disease and economic-related factors may impact force readiness.”

Readers are encouraged to provide feedback or seek more specific consultative services by contacting the APHC Health of the Force team through the “Contact Us” button on the APHC Health of the Force website, which also provides links to all previous year reports.

The Army Public Health Center enhances Army readiness by identifying and assessing current and emerging health threats, developing and communicating public health solutions, and assuring the quality and effectiveness of the Army’s Public Health Enterprise.

The **YANKEE COURIER**



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April 2022



Air Force Master Sgt. Chad Wink, an airlift and special mission aircraft maintenance craftsman assigned to the 103rd Maintenance Group, applies heat to a C-130H aircraft propeller, December 13, 2021, East Granby, Connecticut. At sunrise, members of the 103rd Maintenance Group prepared the aircraft for flight. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Tamara R. Dabney)

Kendall, Brown, Raymond tell Congress \$194 billion budget request balances risks, quickens transformation

Secretary of the Air Force Public Affairs Contributor

WASHINGTON (AFNS) --

Invoking Gen. Douglas MacArthur's observation that militaries fail when they are slow and "too late" to change, Secretary of the Air Force Frank Kendall urged Congress April 27 to embrace a \$194 billion budget request specifically tailored to "transform" and modernize the Air and Space Forces to meet growing challenges from China.

"We're comfortable with the balance we have struck in this budget submission, but we also want to ensure that the Committee understands that hard choices do lie ahead, at any conceivable budget level," Kendall told the House Armed Services Committee in the first of a series of hearings to examine the Department's priorities, plans and budget request for the next fiscal year.

"Change is hard, but losing is unacceptable," Kendall told lawmakers in a three-hour session that also featured Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. CQ Brown, Jr., and Chief of Space Operations Gen. John "Jay" Raymond.

"What my colleagues and I are trying to do, and what we need your help with, is to ensure that American Air and Space Forces are never 'too late' in meeting our pacing challenge, which is China," Kendall said. "We are also concerned about the now obvious and acute threat of Russian aggression."

Anticipating questions that emerged during questions from lawmakers spanning two hours, Kendall portrayed the budget request as sufficient to provide "the capabilities we need today," while simultaneously putting both services on a path to develop future needs and capabilities.

"There should be no doubt that great power acts of aggression do occur, and equally no doubt of how devastating they can be for the victims of that aggression," he said in a direct reference to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

All three senior leaders delivered familiar recommendations and perspectives – the need to modernize the forces; make the hardware and operations in space more "resilient," modern and robust; continuing to refine "multi-domain" operations and communications; upgrading the nuclear deterrent; and ensuring that bases are protected, and personnel and equipment can be delivered to wherever they are needed without delay.

All of those elements – and others – are essential parts of "Integrated Deterrence," the overarching philosophy developed by Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin for protecting the nation's security and interests.

The roles played by the Air and Space Forces in that effort are embodied in the Department's official "posture statement," a document that explains how they fit into the nation's larger national security strategy for the 2023 fiscal year.

"The Air Force we are building is critical to integrated deterrence, campaigning, and building enduring advantages," Brown told the Committee, citing three major components in the updated National Defense Strategy.

Brown, like Kendall and Raymond, was blunt about both the promise of what might be and the risk if that vi-



Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. CQ Brown, Jr. testifies before the House Armed Services Committee on the Department of the Air Force's fiscal year 2023 budget request in Washington, D.C., April 27, 2022. (U.S. Air Force photo by Eric Dietrich)

sion is not realized.

"A world class Air Force requires world class Airmen who are organized, trained, and equipped to remain the world's most respected Air Force," he told the Committee, which is the primary source of setting defense policy that later becomes law.

"But, if we do not continue to transform, this may no longer be the case. ... We must modernize to counter strategic competitors. (China) remains our pacing challenge and Russia remains an acute threat so we must balance between the demands of today and requirements for tomorrow," Brown said.

Raymond offered a similar assessment for space and the Space Force, telling the committee: "We find ourselves at a hinge of history, where the rules-based order established after World War II, is under an acute threat from Russia. In the meantime, we continue to face a pacing challenge in the Indo-Pacific from China."

Space he said is a new and indisputable "warfighting domain" which is why the United States and its allies are focusing heavily on space and adapting to the new conditions.

"We cannot allow potential adversaries to gain an unchallenged ability to conduct space-enabled attacks," Raymond said, who is the senior military leader of a service born on Dec. 20, 2019. "Our joint forces will remain at risk until we can complete the transformation to a resilient architecture and protect the joint force from space-enabled attacks. This is critical to supporting all aspects of the National Defense Strategy."

But space today is different and more dangerous, no longer the "benign" environment that many of the satellites operated today were designed for. That is an untenable condition, Raymond said, because "space power provides a series of foundational capabilities upon which our joint forces depend.

The Space Force's \$24.5 billion budget request includes higher levels of spending on "weapon system sustainment, a more resilient Global Positioning System, and next generation satellite communications," Raymond said. The biggest chunk of the budget – \$15.8 billion – is devoted to research, development, test and evaluation.

This will allow the U.S. military presence in space to modernize and "begin the pivot to a more resilient and mission capable missile warning and missile tracking force design," Raymond said.

Lawmakers generally accepted the funding and priorities in space and directed most of their questions to Kendall and Brown about more traditional topics such as plans for modernizing the Air Force's fleet and plans for divesting older aircraft. They also wanted to know how the Air Force will drive down the cost of operating and maintaining F-35 fighters, details about the transition to the new 'Sentinel' intercontinental ballistic missile weapon system, the continuing development of the new B-21 long-range bomber and more prosaic topics such as basing and cyber security, among other diverse topics.

As in past years, lawmakers had multiple questions –



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Budget

Cont. from page 16

mostly directed to Brown this time – about how decisions were made to retire aircraft and if those decisions created vulnerability or operational gaps.

Brown acknowledged that transitions are difficult but said he was comfortable with the Air Force’s direction and the mix of aircraft the budget proposal supports.

“When I talk about balancing risk over time, there’s a balance between the operational risk we will see today as we make that transition versus the risk we’ll have in the future if we don’t start to modernize,” Brown said in response to a question suggesting the Air Force was retiring too many planes.

“We do have to make some tough choices. I don’t just look at the numbers. I look at the overall capabilities and capacity; not just the airplanes but what goes with the airplanes. ... It’s a complete package. There is some risk there but I’d rather take a little bit of risk now than a lot of

risk later in a future conflict,” he said.

In dollar terms, the proposed Air and Space Forces budget for the next fiscal year that was submitted to Congress in March provides \$169.5 billion for the Air Force and \$24.5 billion for the Space Force. If approved as written, it would boost funding by \$1.1 billion to modernize the nation’s aging, ground-based nuclear deterrent (\$3.6 billion compared to \$2.5 billion in the 2022 proposal). It adds \$320 million in additional funding for continued development and nuclear certification of the B-21 long-range bomber (\$3.25 billion from \$2.87 billion). It increases the budget for hypersonic weapons by \$138 million (\$577 million from \$438 million).

The proposed budget calls on the Space Force to spend an additional \$1 billion on “resilient missile warning/missile tracking to address hypersonic and maneuverable RVs (re-entry vehicles).”

In a portion of the request known as ‘procurement funds,’ the fiscal 2023 proposal provides funding to pur-

chase 33 F-35A Lightning II fighters, 15 KC-46A Pegasus tankers, 24 F-15EX Eagle II fighters, among other hardware procurements. It provides funding to the Space Force for three National Security Space launches, three additional launches by the Space Development Agency and two launches that will put into orbit crucial GPS III satellites to enhance the resiliency of the positioning, navigation and timing constellation accessed by billions of users daily.

More broadly, the request calls for spending \$7.9 billion (an increase of \$300 million) to boost flying hours to 1.1 million, a level officials said is the “maximum executable level.” It increases spending for “weapons system sustainment” to \$16.6 billion from \$15.4 billion and carries funding to increase pay for civilians and active-duty personnel by 4.6%. It also has \$77 million for the Air Force to address climate change requirements. The budget also proposes funding for 501,800 Total Force Airmen and 8,600 Guardians.

SECAF issues proclamation, outlines updates during Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month

Staff Sgt. Nick Z. Erwin
Secretary of the Air Force Public Affairs

ARLINGTON, Va. (AFNS) -- Secretary of the Air Force Frank Kendall signed a proclamation reaffirming the Department of the Air Force’s commitment to preventing sexual assault and sexual harassment, as well as supporting sexual assault survivors during a ceremony at the Pentagon, April 27.

In conjunction with the proclamation, he also announced a new provision to the Department’s leave policy that enables sexual assault survivors to take up to 30 days of non-chargeable leave as they seek resources to support their recovery.

“There is no higher priority than taking care of our Airmen, Guardians and their families,” Kendall said. “April’s observance of Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month offers an opportunity to take stock of our efforts and recommit ourselves to ending sexual violence and supporting survivors. Our core values require it, and we have to stay focused on this topic year-round to meet the obligations we share with those whom we serve alongside.”

The Department’s year-round efforts include implementing FY22 National Defense Authorization Act requirement to establish an independent Office of Special Trial Counsel to oversee the investigation and prosecution of sexual assault and other victim-based offenses. Additionally, Department experts are focused on research-informed prevention strategies and ensuring comprehensive support for survivors.

Officials are implementing the ‘Safe-to-Report’ policy, pioneered at the U.S. Air Force Academy, which removes barriers to reporting by eliminating punishment for minor collateral misconduct such as underage drinking. Many other ongoing actions are linked to the Department of Defense’s Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military, including:

- Developing a plan to ensure an independent reporting structure for Sexual Assault and Response Coordinators. This structure will provide independent oversight and empower SARCs to best support survivors while still maintaining direct access to commanders.
- Enabling sexual harassment survivors’ access to advocacy support from Sexual Assault Prevention and Response victim advocates.
- Increasing full-time victim advocates to strengthen the response workforce available to ensure critical support and care of victims.



Secretary of the Air Force Frank Kendall signs a Sexual Assault and Prevention Month proclamation at the Pentagon in Arlington, Va., April 27, 2022. (U.S. Air Force photo by Andy Morataya)

- Researching prevention training initiatives including a Sexual Communication and Consent Program at basic military training, designed to increase military trainees’ understanding of consent and sexual assault.

“Each member of our team shares in the enduring responsibility to eliminate sexual assault and harassment from our ranks,” Kendall added. “I urge every Airman, Guardian, and Department civilian to treat each other with dignity and respect, hold others accountable to our high standards of conduct, and to take care of your teammates.”

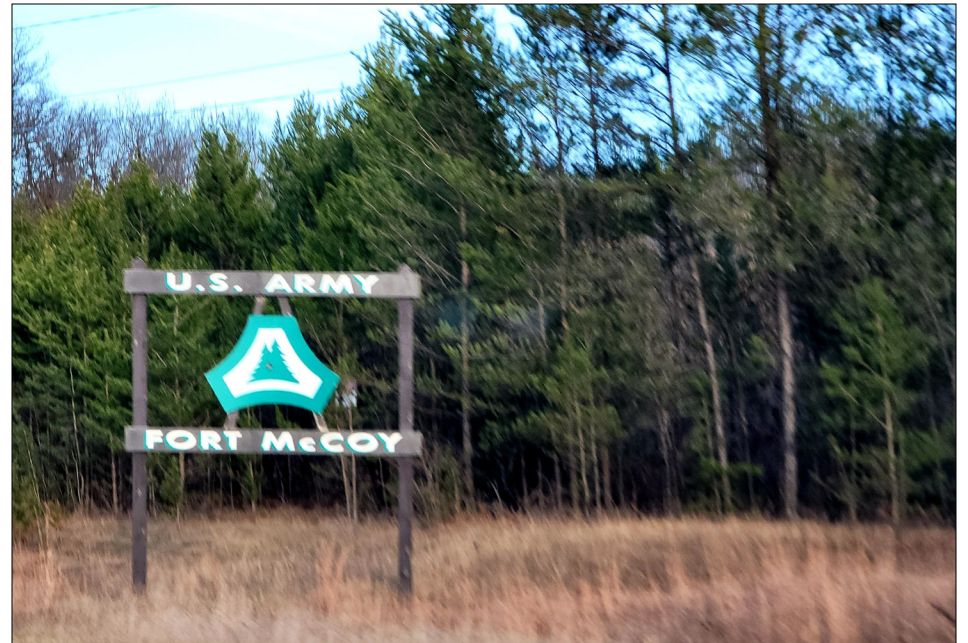
PHOTOS FROM THE FORCE



A U.S. Air Force KC-135 Stratotanker aircraft assigned to the 100th Air Refueling Wing, Royal Air Force Mildenhall, refuels a F-15E Strike Eagle aircraft assigned to the 48th Fighter Wing, RAF Lakenheath, during exercise Point Blank 22-2 over the North Sea, April 28, 2022. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Kevin Long)



A wall of fire is created by explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) technicians for a pyrotechnic display at Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Beaufort, South Carolina, April 21, 2022. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Nathan Saucier)



A sign for Fort McCoy along Highway 16 is shown April 9, 2022, during daily operations at Fort McCoy, Wis. During spring, training often increases on post with warmer weather. Fort McCoy's motto is to be the Total Force Training Center. (U.S. Army photo by Scott Sturkol)

PHOTOS FROM THE FORCE



Rugged mountains of the Alaska Range fill the bubble window of a CH-47F helicopter from B Company, 1st Battalion, 52nd Aviation Regiment April 27, 2022. (U.S. Army photo by John Pennell)



Lance Cpl. Marquise Walker, a combat engineer with Engineer Support Company (ESC), 8th Engineer Support Battalion, shovels dirt during a field exercise at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, April 28, 2022 (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Meshaq Hylton)



Martin Army Community Hospital Soldier Spc. Braelyn Burk overcame an obstacle during the Regional Health Command-Atlantic Best Leader Competition on Fort Benning, April 25-29. (U.S. Army photo by John Tongret)



Gen. Mark Kelly, commander of Air Combat Command presented 9 personnel with awards for ACC's 2022 Outstanding Airmen of the year April 28, 2022. Full Spectrum, the Heritage of America band, performed during the event. (U.S. Air Force Photo by Staff Sgt. Jaylen Molden)



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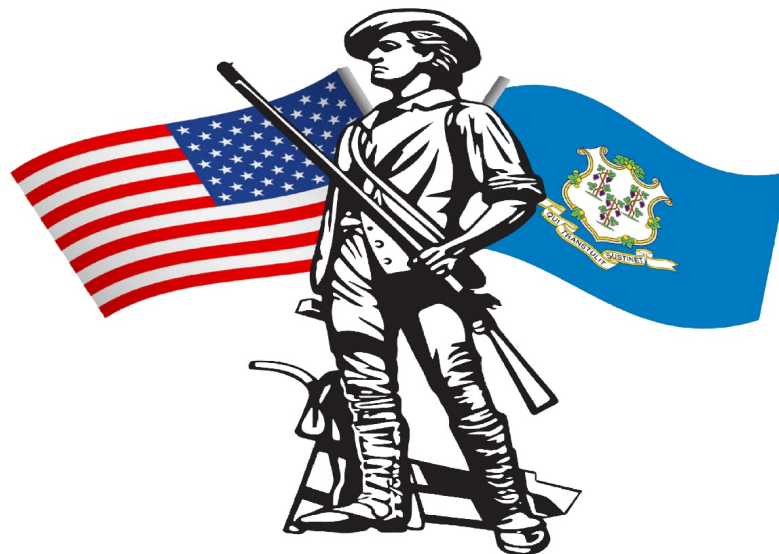
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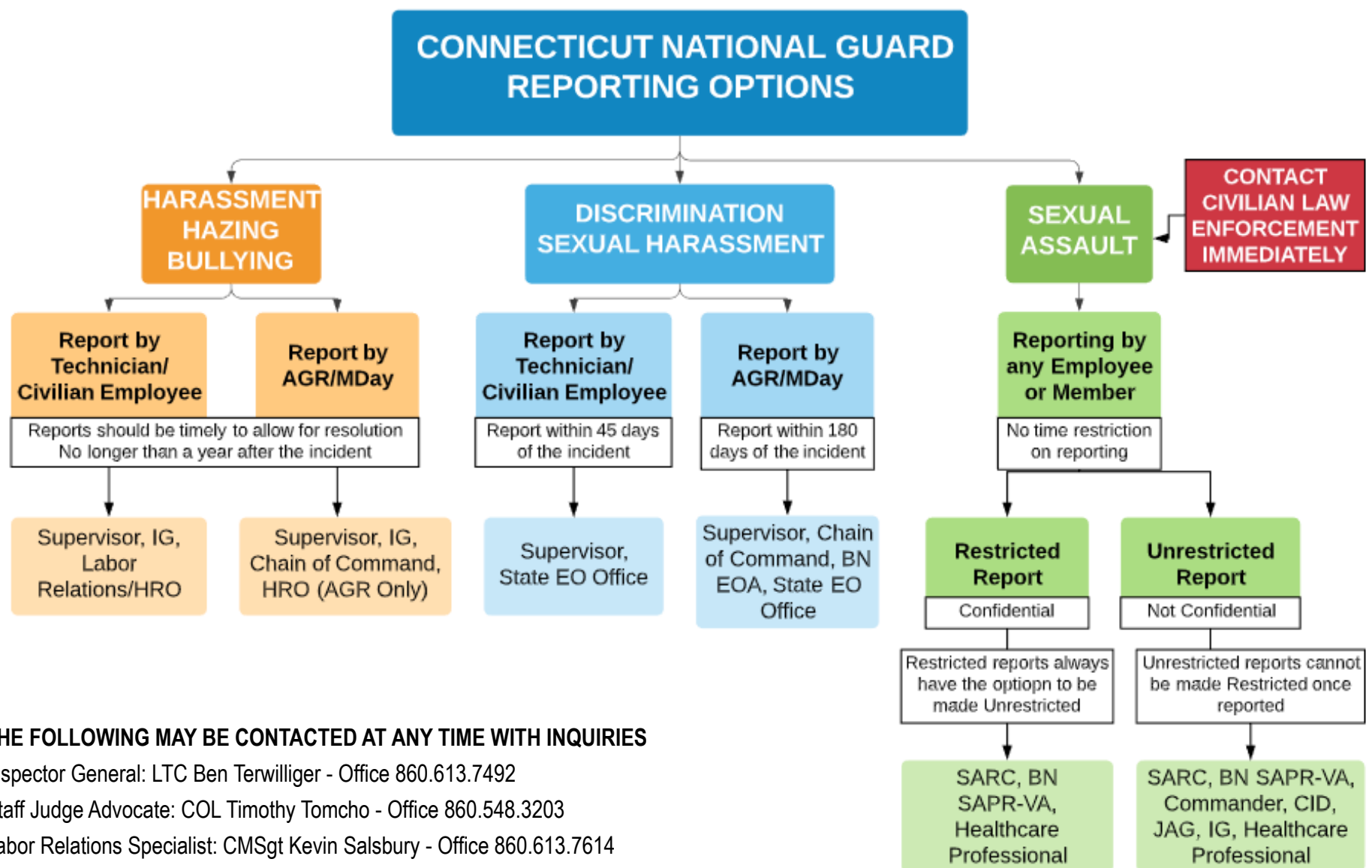
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Staff Judge Advocate: COL Timothy Tomcho - Office 860.548.3203

Labor Relations Specialist: CMSgt Kevin Salsbury - Office 860.613.7614

State Equal Opportunity Office: Ms. Tasha Dow - Officer 860.613.7610

Sexual Assault Response Coordinator: Mrs. Katherine Maines - Office 860.613.7611; Cell 860.883.4798

State Chaplain: LTC Eric Wismar - Office 860.548.3240; Cell 860.883.5278



Service Member and Family Support Center Staff Directory



**At this time, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, remote offices are being staffed on a part-time basis.
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