



# Connecticut GUARDIAN

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## Hiking to Heal: A CT Guardsman's journey in overcoming Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Sgt. Matthew Lucibello  
130th Public Affairs Detachment

HARTFORD, Conn. — For many, closing a chapter in their life entails a party, a celebration, maybe a cake or a night out with friends for drinks. Some favor something more private, maybe a solo trip across Europe or a period of staying home to decompress and to prepare for what's next. For U.S. Army Maj. (ret.) Rick Marshall, conquering the Pacific Crest Trail, a 5 month, 2,650-mile-long trek across multiple states from the Mexican border in Southern California to the border of Canada would be his way of turning the page on his military career and beginning his transition to becoming a civilian.

Marshall, originally from Vernon, Connecticut, enlisted in the active component of the Army in 1989, less than three months after graduating high school. Only one job stood out to him: Infantryman.

"It didn't even occur to me to do anything else," explained Marshall. "I want to be in the Infantry, that is what the Army is all about."

After completing his basic and advanced training, Marshall signed out on holiday block leave on December 10 and headed home to Connecticut for Christmas. This was his only reprieve before heading to his first unit of assignment, the 193rd Infantry Brigade stationed in Panama.

Panama was "hot" as Marshall put it. The country had been under Panamanian military control after a series of



U.S. Army Maj. (Retired) Rick Marshall, poses for a photograph at the California and Oregon border, July 31, 2021. (Courtesy photo by William Kenyon)

military coups overthrew the presidency, deteriorating the relations between Panama and the United States. Tensions boiled over on December 15, 1989 when four U.S. service members were detained by Panamanian military forces

and shot at as they attempted to flee. Of the four, two were wounded in this incident, including U.S. Marine Corps 1st

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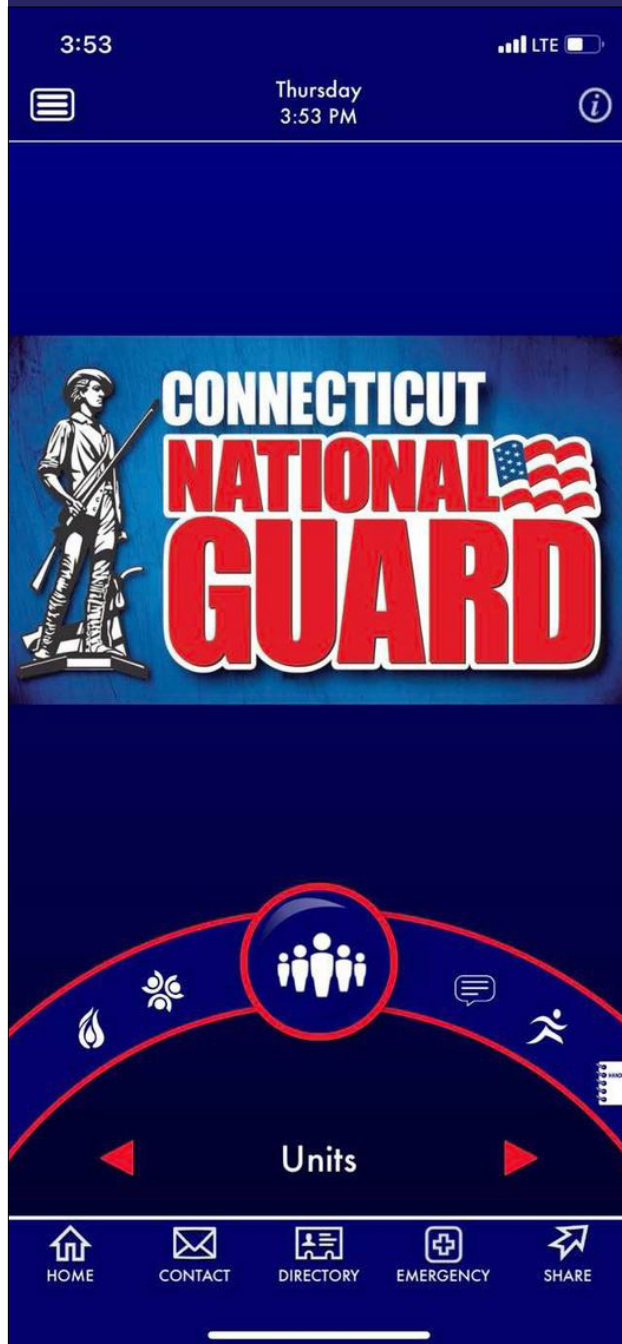
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**S**pecific  
**M**easurable  
**A**chievable  
**R**ealistic  
**T**imely

## Confronting New Year's Resolutions with SMART goals

**Sgt. 1st Class Silas Holden**  
 Contributor

Season's Greetings everyone, another year is ending, and we will soon be working to bring our resolutions to fruition. For this article I want to blend my MFT and MRT skill-sets together as they go hand in hand. 38.5% of U.S. adults set New Year's resolutions each year. 48% focus on exercising more which is the most popular resolution. 43% of all people expect to fail before February, mindset is everything! Only 9% will keep their New Year's resolution, and 23% will quit by the end of the first week. What do these statistics say about this topic? Commitment is difficult unless a person truly wants to change.

How can we help these statistics become more balanced so that more resolutions are fulfilled? Goal setting strategies will certainly help when they are followed and understood. There are seven steps in the goal setting process. Step one is to define your goal, what is the desired end state? Step two is to know where you are right now, this can help energize your motivation. Step three is to decide what you need to develop, set priorities. Step four is to plan for steady improvement, take SMART (more on this later) steps. Step five is to pursue regular action, WIN – What's Important Now? Step six is to commit yourself completely, maintain motivation. And step seven is to continually monitor your progress, in process review.

What does the SMART acronym stand for? Specific, Measurable, Action-focused, Realistic, Time-bound. This acronym provides guidelines for creating Action Statements that move you closer to attaining your goal when they are completed. Your action statements should paint a picture of what you will do. They provide measurability (e.g., I will run three times a week and do resistance training three days a week). State what action you will do rather than what you will avoid doing. Create goals that can be realistically accomplished given your schedule, physical ability, finances, etc. Set a completion time. Having a suspense attached makes you less likely to procrastinate, even though it might have to change later.

Next you need to create power statements using the P3 guidelines. P3 stands for Purposeful, Productive, and Possibility. Create statements that are purposeful, meaning you plan to think of them deliberately rather than allowing thoughts to occur randomly. The statements should be productive and help you direct your energy and attention to where it needs to be. They should help you perform optimally as opposed to making you be reactive to circumstances. Lastly, focus on possibilities, making you more optimistic about your abilities rather than being restrictive.

When you set out on your resolution journey try your best to not overcomplicate the process and aim so high that failure becomes a thought in your mind. Keep it simple and realistic so that you see yourself completing it. Once you complete the initial set goal you can move forward and set another that takes you to the next level. This can be applied to all aspects of your life, not just fitness.

Commit yourself completely to your goal. You must have a plan in place to keep your goal at the forefront of your mind. Internal motivation is very powerful in terms of behavior sustainment; therefore, try creating a commitment strategy that draws on your personal values. Share your goal with your support system, find individuals who will help get you to your goal when you meet an obstacle, and try to avoid the naysayers. Obstacles are an inevitable part of goal achievement. Planning for expected obstacle allows us to have a plan when they occur.

Let's all make 2023 our best year yet and set some realistic goals that we can all achieve to make us better individually and as a team. Whether it be to improve recruiting and retention, raise our fitness and performance levels, or simply to be a better human being to others, setting goals is the first step in the process. I hope everyone's holiday season is filled with health and happiness while surrounded by those you love and your support system. Remember to reach out to those who might be lonely or depressed during the holidays. You could be the contact that brings them the joy they need to get through. Live the creed that applies to you and make each day better than the last. Until next month, stay motivated, stay hydrated, and stay fit.



# Marshall

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Lt. Robert Paz, who died of his wounds as his comrades tried to rush him to Gorgas Hospital. This incident sparked the U.S. to initiate Operation Just Cause, a month-long campaign to safeguard U.S. personnel and interests after Panama's declaration of war against the country.

"I missed the start of Operation Just Cause by eight days," explained Marshall. "I flew back down to South Carolina and I think that was on December 28th, or 29th, flew into Panama, got assigned to my unit, was out on the streets patrolling Panama City just before New Year's."

By the time Marshall had boots on the ground, the majority of fighting was over. His unit was now tasked with performing security missions.

"The combat part was pretty quick," explained Marshall. "We were pretty much at that point doing security missions, and we were doing security for the presidential palace for the new president of Panama."

Following his time in Panama, Marshall would transfer to Fort Knox in January of 1991 and then to South Korea in December of 1994. Here, Marshall served with the 2nd Infantry Division out of Camp Hovey, just south of the DMZ.

"I was a gunner on a Bradley," said Marshall. "I started off being the company commander's gunner."

Marshall would not be the CO's gunner for long though as he was soon transferred to second platoon. Here, he was mentored by a Sgt. 1st Class who had worked in and around Bradleys since the vehicle entered service.

"He knew that Bradley front to back, inside and out, he taught me everything, gunning and all that kind of stuff," Marshall continued. "We go on to company gunnery and I end up shooting top gun out of the entire company."

Despite Marshall accumulating accolades in Korea, things took a sudden turn for the worse. Marshall's stepfather suffered a brain aneurysm back at home. It was not long past midnight when Marshall was woken up to receive the news.

"So, knock on the door at two in the morning, three in the morning, something like that, my time...walk down there, sit in the SDO office with some officer who's not in my chain of command and I don't know...and just verbatim reads this Red Cross message," explained Marshall. "It was horrible."

This incident weighed heavily on Marshall and directly influenced him to decide to separate from the service in August 1995.

"I had done my duty, I did my initial tour for my initial four years, I had done a three-year extension, got all the awards and decorations, no trouble or anything like that," said Marshall. "I think it's time for me to go home."

After coming home, Marshall went to college. Despite making headway on his education, he felt like he was not getting anywhere. He stopped going to school and started working as a sports and camping counselor at the Vernon YMCA in the spring of 1999, running the sports and camping programs for two years. Here, he would get the idea to join the Connecticut Army National Guard and use his college credits to attend Officer Candidate School.

"A few people that I met were like you should go to OCS," said Marshall. "And, I'm like, really, I can do that?"



*U.S. Army soldiers from 3rd Platoon, Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 102nd Infantry Regiment (Forward), Connecticut Army National Guard, pose for a group photo in Iraq, October, 2004. Several members of the platoon are not pictured as they were either injured or on leave at the time of this photo being taken. (Courtesy photo by Rick Marshall)*

Marshall walked back into uniform as a sergeant and once again took on the role of an infantryman in the interim. He would start OCS, going from phase zero to phase three, and graduate as an Infantry officer in July 2001.

Two months later, Al-Qaeda hijacked four commercial airliners, crashing one into the Pentagon, and two into the World Trade Center. The fourth plane crashed into a field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania, after passengers on board struggled with their hijackers in an attempt to regain control of the plane. It would be the deadliest attack on the United States since Pearl Harbor.

Marshall worked in the Operations and Plans section, also known as the G-3, inside Connecticut's Joint Force Headquarters at the time.

"It was my second or first day there," explained Marshall. "So, a woman came up, was like can you turn on the radio, we just heard something about a plane flying into a building."

The building came alive as everyone scrambled to get as much information as they could about what was going on.

"Nobody really knew what to do," said Marshall. "What can you do, you don't have orders to do anything, I was watching it live on tv when both buildings came down with a bunch of other people that a year to two years later would all be in combat."

Despite the absence of orders from higher headquarters immediately following the attacks, local leaders immediately went to work putting plans into action to safeguard Connecticut's military infrastructure. Some members of the Joint Force Headquarters drew weapons out of the arms room and took up positions as armed guards. In the days that followed, Marshall and members of his unit, the 102nd Infantry Regiment, plus other Connecticut National Guard units, took up positions guarding critical infrastruc-

ture across the state, such as the Millstone nuclear power plant, the Gold Star Memorial Bridge and various train stations.

Marshall spent weeks guarding the Millstone nuclear power plant. He never encountered any foreign adversaries, but consistently ran into people who had reservations on how he secured the facility.

"I got yelled at because I had this M60 pointed down this long road, which is what you should do," said Marshall. "And then was told, please don't do that."

Marshall even requested a tube-launched, optically tracked, wirelessly guided, or TOW, missile system to defend the plant against possible vehicle borne threats, like vehicle borne improvised explosive devices, or VBIEDs, commonly found later in the war on terror. That request would be denied.

The mission went on for several weeks with each company in the 102nd rotating in and out protecting these sites. After that, Marshall was sent to West Point to perform security operations as part of Operation Noble Eagle III.

Marshall's next chapter in the Global War on Terror didn't start until 2004. Marshall was sent overseas to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom II with members of 3rd Platoon, Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 102nd Infantry Regiment, as part of an all-volunteer platoon sent to bolster Arkansas's 39th Infantry Brigade Combat Team. Marshall and his men fell in with Echo troop, 151st Cavalry Regiment. Their mission was to conduct stability operations in and around Baghdad.

The tone for the deployment was set almost immediately upon arriving in country. Following a two-day vehicle convoy from Kuwait up to Camp Taji, a former Iraqi Republican Guard installation, now the operating base for



Marshall and his unit, Marshall and his men found themselves on the receiving end of a rocket attack on April 7, 2004.

“I think it was about maybe midday,” said Marshall. “We weren’t even on that camp 12 hours and we got our first rocket attack and first KIA (Killed in action).”

Sgt. 1st Class William Labadie, an Arkansas National Guard soldier with Echo troop, was killed after shrapnel from the rocket attack struck him as he was attempting to run to one of the reinforced bunkers used by coalition forces for cover in the event of such an attack.

“Some of my guys and a couple of Arkansas guys dragged Sergeant Labadie in at the other end of the bunker,” recalled Marshall. “They were trying to do some CPR on him but he had taken a piece of shrapnel.” “We thought he was dead, instantly, but by the time they got to the bunker he wasn’t coming back.”

Two days later, on April 9, 2004, Marshall’s unit suffered another casualty.

While conducting combat patrols in response to the rocket attack days prior, a convoy of five vehicles from the 102nd were hit by a complex and effective ambush. Insurgents drilled under the road the convoy traveled over and pushed an artillery shell into a hole which was used to initiate the attack. Following the explosion, PKC machine guns, RPK machine guns and RPG-7 rocket propelled grenade launchers opened up on the soldiers. Here, 22-year-old Simsbury native Sgt. Felix DelGreco would be killed after being shot. He would be the first Connecticut National Guardsmen to die in Iraq.

“I had to walk down the line [of his platoon] and just tell them Sgt. DelGreco is dead, you have five minutes to absorb that and then I want all squad leaders and the platoon sergeant at the hood of my truck, and that...sucked,” Marshall recalled, thinking back on his immediate decisions after the aftermath of the ambush. “How do you do it, especially when I gotta tell them we’re not done, we’re working this afternoon, we could be out here for days...so I guess my approach was doing the cold water treatment, we’ll deal with this later.”

Marshall believed there to be a time and a place for everything, and now, especially at the onset of the deployment, he could not have his soldiers break down and be unable to conduct operations.

“It’s not now, we have to get out of here,” Marshall recalled. “It happened right at the beginning of our tour, we’ve got 12 more months of this, we have no idea what is going to happen and so we figured it’s gonna be like this from here on out, who else is going to get killed.”

Unfortunately for Marshall and the 102nd, it would indeed be like this from here on out. Months later, on December 11, 2004, another soldier, 21-year-old Spc. Robert Hoyt of Ashford, Connecticut, was killed while out on an ammo convoy escort mission. His vehicle was hit by an explosively formed penetrator, or EFP, a shaped charge designed to penetrate vehicle armor. The blast was so powerful it blew Hoyt out of his vehicle and he was struck by a truck that was part of the convoy.

Hoyt was medevac’d out by helicopter and taken to a hospital. Some time later, Marshall received a call from the hospital informing him that Hoyt didn’t make it.

“So, after a while third platoon comes wheeling in, I’m standing outside the TOC (Tactical Operations Center), because obviously they want to know what’s happening, we didn’t tell them on the radio, we will update them ver-

bally when they get back up to Taji,” said Marshall. “Montes jumps out of his truck and he’s looking at me and I just remember looking right at his eyes and I’m like, we lost him, and Montes just kind of lost his shit right in front of me, so did a lot of the other guys. Come to find why it struck them so badly was because they had gotten him on the litter, they were moving him to the helicopter, he was talking, and I remember Montes said as they were loading him on he kept saying, I love you guys, I love you guys. He said it three times or so as they were putting him onto the helicopter. Those end up being the last thing he says to them before he succumbed to his injuries.”

Hoyt would be the last soldier from the 102nd to be killed during Marshall’s tour. By the end of the deployment in March 2005, the men of the 102nd would receive six Bronze Star Medals, two posthumously, six Army Commendation Medals with V device for valor, 33 Army Commendation Medals and four Purple Hearts, two posthumously. The awards would never be able to make up for the loss of DelGreco and Hoyt, and the emotional toll of the deployment weighed heavily on Marshall and other members of the 102nd to the point that a year later Marshall organized the entire platoon to go together to group therapy.

“One day, we had been back for a year, a couple of the guys called me and they’re like, hey Sir, we got some real problems going on here, I’m like okay, well, what happened...they’re like, well, this one guy wrecked his car, it caught on fire, he’s fine, he walked away...okay, but I think we need some help,” recalled Marshall. “We ended up connecting with this guy at the Newington Vet Center and we arranged with him, but me saying I would go to counseling got everybody else to go too.”

Marshall and his platoon would go to counseling once a month. According to the counselor, their group was the only group of veterans who served together in combat and received counseling through a veteran center as a unit across the country.

“There, that started the process,” said Marshall. “It’s like okay, now, we can talk about this, we had all these things, different things, that we had to work through just to get ourselves right in the head and bring us back to a certain level of normality.”

What happened next was anything but normal.

Six years later, on May 4, 2012, Marshall received a call from his daughter’s step grandfather, Dave, while training out at the National Training Center for another upcoming deployment. Katelyn, his 18-year-old daughter, who was living in Kentucky, had passed away. She had overdosed on heroin and then drowned in a bathtub.

Marshall initially thought she ran away or disappeared upon hearing that Katelyn was gone. Dave had to explain she wasn’t missing, and that she had overdosed. Marshall didn’t believe he was serious at first but after continuing to talk to Dave the reality of the situation hit him.

Marshall had no idea she was using drugs, it completely blindsided him.

“Looking back in hindsight, there were some clues,” said Marshall. “She lived with her mom, so I didn’t have that kind of day-to-day interaction with her, sometimes you don’t know until something bad happens...and I certainly am not nominating myself as parent of the year anytime soon.”

Marshall immediately began working to fly out to meet with his family and deal with this head on. He pulled out

his tablet while in the training area and booked a flight from Las Vegas to Connecticut. At first, his unit insisted he wait for a Red Cross message, like the one that he received when his stepfather was gravely ill, but as he now was working as an Active Guard Reserve Captain, he had “plenty of dough” and figured it would be quicker to buy his own flight instead. The unit relented, authorized the trip and Marshall was ferried three hours down to McCarran International Airport, now Harry Reid International Airport, for his flight.

Marshall landed in Connecticut and traveled by car down to Kentucky. He attended his daughter’s funeral and afterwards spent a week at his house in Oregon. He traveled back to Connecticut from Oregon in three days, never stopping to process the whirlwind of trauma he had just gone through and immediately went back to work.

Marshall, consciously or not, chose to ignore his grief. At the time, although he didn’t know it yet, a blood clot was forming in his leg. It wasn’t until he went for a hike on a section of the Pacific Crest Trail, also known as the PCT, the following month with longtime friend U.S. Army Command Sgt. Maj. William Kenyon, now retired, that he would realize just how much he needed help.

The pair started their hike in Oregon at the end of July. The trip was originally intended as a vacation for Kenyon, together they would do a multi-day hike and tackle part of the PCT. Marshall’s calf was swollen and it hurt to walk but he carried on like he always had. The only problem was their vehicle was dropped off at their planned stopping point...36 miles away.

“I know something is wrong, this is bad, I can’t walk,” recalled Marshall. “We get to the first campsite, I set up my tent, Will starts the fire and he’s thinking we’re gonna be sitting around the fire, kumbaya, and all this kind of stuff, and I just get in my tent and lay down, I can’t stand, I can’t sit, the only thing that feels good is laying down...I have to do that for two more days.”

The pair eventually made it back to the truck and drove back to Marshall’s residence. The next morning, Kenyon discovered Marshall sitting downstairs with a block of ice on his leg. The pair locked eyes with each other, “Dude, take me to the hospital.”

Kenyon drove Marshall to a nearby clinic where a doctor examined Marshall’s leg. The doctor immediately demanded that Marshall go to the hospital. The hospital staff performed some tests and informed Marshall there was a blood clot that ran from his upper thigh to the bottom of his left leg.

“I should have died,” said Marshall. “I should have had about 20 different embolisms, but nothing ever broke off, it just stayed in there and just clotted.”

Marshall was immediately put on blood thinners. He eventually flew back to Connecticut but was dropped from an upcoming deployment due to the clot. Here, he would have a lot of time to think about how close he came to dying and he began the process of coming to terms with losing his daughter.

“I hit that point,” explained Marshall. “My grief was so intense that part of me with that blood clot was like, let’s just get it over with, it won’t be suicide if the blood clot gets me because it’s not like I put the gun in my mouth or swallowed a bunch of pills, it wasn’t an intentional plan, but my subconscious was like, you know what, we can all make this go away right now, we can just end this.”

Thankfully, Marshall had no complications with his re-



covery. The blood clot never broke loose, he never suffered an embolism. The infantryman who had dealt with everything life had thrown at him had finally met his match. Marshall decided it was time to get help. He began counseling in November.

"I finally was like, okay, if I don't get any help for my mental health, I'm either going to drink myself to death or I'm putting a gun in my mouth, one of the two," said Marshall. "It was just headed that direction, something needed to change."

Marshall called up Army OneSource, now Military OneSource, which provides a network of services to active and reserve personnel and their families, including therapy, and spoke with a representative who aided him in getting the help he needed. The representative highly recommended a therapist named Gary, working in Manchester. Marshall met with him and began Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing therapy, or EMDR.

"To this day, I have talked about it openly, even when I was still in the Guard, about going to therapy and doing that treatment stuff, I can't explain how that shit works, but it works," explained Marshall. "[If] anybody that is suffering from PTSD can find somebody that has been trained in EMDR, they should do it."

Marshall continued EMDR therapy and counseling for a year and a half. In early 2014, he was finally cleared by a medical board for the blood clot in his leg. He deployed to Afghanistan in 2015, here he hatched the idea of taking on the Pacific Crest Trail from start to finish as his way of closing the book on his military career after discovering a website of a computer engineer who recorded every day of his journey. Starting in April 2015, Marshall would log onto the site and read the corresponding entry for that date from the hiker's journey a year prior.

"I decided I was going to read his website every single morning when I got into my office for that day that he was on the trail," said Marshall. "I was vicariously hiking, virtually hiking, the trail through his stuff the year before... and that's when I was like, really okay, I can do this."

Marshall set the date. After he hit his twenty years and retired from the Army, he decided he would begin his trek.

In February 2017, Marshall retired from the Army as a Major. Two months later he started his hike down in Campo, California. The journey took him over the Sierra Nevada mountain range, for 33 days of his trip he trudged through snow at differing elevations between 8,000 and 13,000 feet. The freezing mountains would soon turn to a fiery hellscape as he got closer to Bend, Oregon, as forest fires had engulfed the trail sporadically up across Pacific Northwest up until the border of Canada. Marshall was forced to turn around.

"I got to just south of Bend and everything in front of me was on fire," recalled Marshall. "I guess this trip is over."

Next year, Marshall tried again. He would not be on the trail for too long. After making it back to the Sierras, Marshall drank non-treated water from a creek, causing him to contract giardia, a tiny parasite that causes the diarrheal disease giardiasis. The next morning, he felt he had come down with the flu.

Marshall hiked two and a half more days while ill to reach Vermillion Valley Resort, a campground at Edison Lake. He hitched a ride with the owner of the property and traveled down to Fresno to head home. Marshall was on antibiotics for a week, and in recovery for three weeks,



*Creek crossing in Washington, Sept. 12, 2021. (Courtesy photo by Rick Marshall)*

before he felt better. By the time he recovered, he was 160 pounds. As he put it, "I looked like I walked out of a POW camp."

It would not be until 2021, after a brief two-week hike on the PCT and after climbing Mount Whitney, the highest point in the lower 48 states at 14,505 feet, with Kenyon in 2020, that Marshall would return with his best friend to conquer the PCT from start to finish. This time Marshall was ready. He had made all the preparations, he looked into the weather, he calculated the pace they would have to hike at and sent out their resupplies so they would be equipped as they got farther down the trail.

"After all those miles I had put on between '17 and '19, I had the trail dialed in," said Marshall. "I told Will (Kenyon), this is exactly how we are going to do this, and I said, this will get us to the finish line."

Marshall and Kenyon started out back down in California and steadily made great time, narrowly avoiding being stopped by forest fires that now engulfed the trail behind them. This time around the biggest thorn in the pair's side was not a direct part of nature, it was Kenyon's footwear. Kenyon was unable to find a pair of properly fitting hiking shoes, his feet were sore and ached the entire time to the point he would try a new pair of boots at every resupply they came across. He never found a pair that truly were comfortable, but, nevertheless, the pain in his feet never stopped him. For the first half of the hike, they averaged 16 miles per day, eventually hiking approximately 19 miles a day when the terrain was not as steep and more forgiving.

During their 154 days on the trail, the pair found themselves trapped in multiple windstorms, outwalking wildfires, climbing into the mountains, fording through rivers and creeks laden with their 30 pound rucksacks, fighting off deer attempting to steal their supplies and trying to stay ahead of a large group of hikers that they affectionately referred to as "the hoard". Each day brought a new beautiful vista and with every step their confidence grew. As they neared Washington, the last state on their journey, they believed this time they were going to make it.

"If anything was gonna stop us, it was we just quit," explained Marshall. "Once we got to Washington too, since that was the last state, and there really weren't any fires affecting the trail directly at that point, I'm thinking alright, we're gonna get this done."

The final days of the hike as the pair approached the Canadian border were "gorgeous." The weather was about 55 degrees, there were no clouds in the sky. The pair hiked about 20 miles and set up camp three miles from the border. As they steadily approached the final leg of their trek they encountered hikers traveling opposite of them, victorious and on their way back home to the lives they put on hold as they embarked on this journey. Some faces were familiar to Marshall and Kenyon, others they had never seen before.

"We ran into this couple, we hadn't seen them since the Sierras, we hadn't seen them in almost three months, in the beginning we were hiking around them for a long time," said Marshall. "You're like there you are, this is awesome, so we got held up quite a bit because we ended up talking to so many people."

Some people were upset. The lives they left behind they would soon have to return to, for some it was an escape, all they had to do at the end of the day was setup their tent and go to sleep. Marshall didn't dwell on it for too long. As more hikers filtered through, Marshall and Kenyon hatched a plan to wake up early at daybreak to finish the hike before everyone hit the trail during the day.

It took them about an hour to hike the last 3 miles to the Canadian border. The pair signed the logbook at the border and took photos to commemorate their journey. Finally, four years after first attempting to complete the hike from start to finish, Marshall would have his win.

"You feel accomplished, you did it, it's amazing," recalled Marshall. "No one can take this away from you."

The pair turned around and headed back past the campsite they stayed at the night before to head off the trail. From first stepping foot on the trail in 2017 to finishing the journey from start to finish in 2021, Marshall hiked approximately 6,500 miles on the Pacific Crest Trail. During this time, he did a lot of soul searching and found that hiking was able to ease his mind and help him come to terms with the trauma he had endured and bottled up.

"I found that hiking as a whole is my own version of therapy, I can use it almost as a walking meditation," said Marshall. "When I'm walking or hiking like that, you got nothing but time to think about stuff and that really helps a lot, for my mental health hiking has been amazing."





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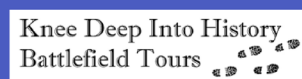
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*Spc. Megan Koszarek, an infantryman with the Alaska Army National Guard's Avalanche Company, 1st Battalion, 297th Infantry Regiment, conducts a security sweep during a training exercise near Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, Dec. 3, 2022. The exercise's aim was to enhance the unit's combat readiness and evaluate proficiency in an arctic environment.*

## Guard Continues Domestic, Global Missions in a Busy 2022

**Master Sgt. Erich Smith**  
National Guard Bureau

ARLINGTON, Va. - The National Guard's footprint on domestic and international events continued in 2022, highlighting its transformation from a Cold War strategic reserve to the combat reserve of the Army and the Air Force.

"People don't realize just how large the National Guard is," said Army Gen. Daniel Hokanson, chief of the National Guard Bureau. "We have 445,000 Soldiers and Airmen, and because we are manned, trained and equipped to fight our nation's wars, we can do about anything we've been asked to do."

In 2022, the National Guard responded to emergencies and large-scale disasters, participated in various training exercises, built lasting partnerships, and tirelessly supported a nation in need.

Within 30 minutes of the start of Russia's unjust invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24, Army Maj. Gen. David Baldwin, then adjutant general of California, received a call from senior Ukrainian leaders.

"The first calls were, 'Hey, we're under attack,' and then the calls throughout that night were, 'Here's the help that we desperately need,'" Baldwin recalled.

Not long after that first call, the California Guard activated its Joint Operations Center to help facilitate requests and requirements from the Ukrainians.

It was an effort, Baldwin added, to break down bureaucracy and streamline processes to get the Ukrainians what they needed.

"Within 24 hours, we had a pretty comprehensive list of all of their requirements for

military equipment – both lethal and non-lethal," Baldwin said.

The timely communication between the California Guard and Ukraine resulted from nearly 30 years of mutually beneficial cooperation made possible by the Defense Department's State Partnership Program. SPP pairs Guard organizations with a partner nation's military, security forces and disaster response agencies in more than 45% of the world's countries.

"The Ukrainians are very proud people and very tough. They have a lot of recent military experience going back to 2014. They are going to fight to the bitter end," said Baldwin, who has since retired from the California Guard.

Though not SPP partners with Ukraine, Soldiers with infantry brigade combat teams from the New York and Florida National Guard oversaw the Joint Multinational Training Group-Ukraine in 2022. A training command in Grafenwoehr, Germany, the JMTG-U allows Ukrainian soldiers to take the lead during combat training.

As 2022 drew to a close, fighting remained intense in the war, especially in the eastern part of the country, according to senior military officials.

Back in the United States, at the beginning of the year, hundreds of Guard members responded to an onslaught of winter weather in Alaska, North and South Carolina, Pennsylvania and Virginia.

Guard members worked with civil authorities and local law enforcement by providing logistical support and communications, clearing trees along power line routes and roads, and assisting with evacuations.

Positioning Soldiers, Airmen and the equipment they used to respond to the storm was vital.



“When we have advance notice of possible severe weather, it enables us to stage personnel at key locations for a more rapid response,” said Army Brig. Gen. James W. Ring, director of the joint staff for the Virginia National Guard.

While Guard members were responding to snowstorms that blanketed much of the East Coast, wildfires raged in the South and Midwest. Texas Army National Guard members and Soldiers from the 36th Combat Aviation Brigade stood ready with UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters and collapsible buckets to drop water on the fires.

“We got a call about 3 o’clock, [got] on station about 4 o’clock, and spent about an hour firefighting with local agencies out there,” said Army Staff Sgt. Michael Penrose, a Black Hawk crew chief with the brigade.

Guard units took on wildfires from Nebraska to Florida, where a weekend training assembly for aircrew members turned into an actual operation to fight the Chipola Complex wildfires.

“We train for it and stay ready to respond, but this is the first time I’ve ever had to put it into practice,” said Army 1st Lt. Isaiah Carlton, pilot and commander of the Florida Army Guard’s Company B, 1st Battalion, 111th Aviation Regiment.

Some weeks later, the New Mexico National Guard would face the Hermit’s Peak Fire, the largest fire in state history, scorching over 340,000 acres.

“It opened our eyes to the seriousness that the fire season could hold,” said Army Capt. Dustin Offret, a pilot with the New Mexico Army Guard’s Company G, 1st Battalion, 168th Aviation Regiment. “Performing flight duties in hot temperatures and high altitudes takes hours of training to become proficient, (and) these types of missions with Bambi buckets take the skill of the whole flight crew to be successful.”

In addition to helicopters dropping water on burning areas, New Mexico Guard units delivered non-potable and bottled water to first responders, rendered medical assistance and performed wellness checks for civil responders, volunteers and others.

As wildfires raged throughout several Western states, heavy rains in Eastern Kentucky set the stage for catastrophic flooding. Guard members from Kentucky, Tennessee and West Virginia came together to conduct search and rescue operations in late July.

“The mission of the National Guard is to be ready at a moment’s notice to help our citizens in need, and right now, our neighbors in Kentucky need our help,” said Army Maj. Gen. Bill Crane, the adjutant general of West Virginia.

That help came from UH-60 Black Hawk and UH-72 Lakota helicopters providing medical evacuation and hoist capabilities. On the ground, Guard units dispatched boat crews and high-wheeled vehicles to conduct search and rescue and supply distribution operations.

For Army Staff Sgt. Matthew Dyal, with the Kentucky Army National Guard’s 577th Engineer Company, 149th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, responding to the disaster took on personal importance.

“My grandparents, uncles, aunts and pretty much that whole side of my family live in Letcher County and they had their road completely wiped out in four different locations,” Dyal said.

Drawing on his knowledge of the area where he grew up, Dyal managed sites that served as ground zero for the distribution of water and supplies.

“I know where those hard-to-reach areas were, so I could send my mobile team up and prioritize better,” he said, adding his team was able to “carry out supply missions and find people who hadn’t had contact for days faster than what normally would have happened if we had done it in sectors.”

Two months later, Southwest Florida would bear the brunt of the hurricane season for 2022.

About 5,000 Florida National Guard troops stood ready to respond, positioned in armories and bases as Hurricane Ian made landfall Sept. 28. With 16 helicopters, 1,640 high-wheeled vehicles, seven boats, 36 fuel tankers and generators, Soldiers and Airmen were ready to conduct search and rescue operations, clear roads and support law enforcement.

“Florida Guardsmen will be providing emergency assistance to safeguard people and property alongside other first responders,” said Army Maj. Gen. James O. Eifert, adjutant general of Florida.

However, the Florida Guard’s response to the hurricane was not a solo act. Along with several other states, the Louisiana National Guard answered the call to support response operations.

“It’s a team effort from all states across the nation to develop plans to fill those gaps and provide a comprehensive National Guard response to the citizens in the affected areas,” said Army Lt. Col. Kevin Middleton, deputy director of the Louisiana Guard’s joint force development.



*Connecticut National Guard Soldiers shake hands with their counterparts from the Uruguayan Army following Counter-Improvised Explosive Device training. Connecticut and Uruguay have been State Partnership partners since 2000.*

That response came in the form of nearly 80 Louisiana Guard members, 30 tactical vehicles and a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter – all to assist search and rescue operations and distribute commodities and supplies.

“That’s what it’s about – people helping people,” said Army Capt. Harry James, executive officer for the Louisiana Army National Guard’s 199th Brigade Support Battalion, 256th Infantry Brigade Combat Team.

The storm’s strength would ultimately have residual effects as far north as Virginia.

But natural disasters weren’t the only domestic operation the Guard actively supported.

In Southwest Texas, Guard members continued to help secure the border in support of Operation Lone Star, a state-led mission that began in March 2021.

Senior Enlisted Advisor Tony Whitehead, the SEA for the chief of the National Guard Bureau, visited the area in November.

“They’re Guardsmen, and I wanted to make sure that we had an opportunity to speak to them about their thoughts and ideas about the mission, how they were doing, how they felt about how the mission was going and any ideas that I needed to take back to the chief of the National Guard Bureau,” Whitehead said.

On the cyber front, Guard members supported cyberspace operations for election systems, providing nonpartisan validity to the process in a mission growing in importance every election year.

“From a National Guard standpoint, we treat this like any sort of domestic operation, with partnerships, because we are Citizen-Soldiers (and -Airmen),” said Army Maj. Gen. Todd Hunt, adjutant general of North Carolina, who provided Guard members to bolster the cyber defenses of state agencies.

Elsewhere, Air National Guard members worked alongside their active-duty counterparts supporting a task force attached to the U.S. Cyber Command’s Cyber National Mission Force at Fort Meade, Maryland.

“It was a lot of excitement to finally see the fruits of our labor when [our task force] delivered its first offensive cyber effects operations during this mobilization,” said Air Force Maj. Corley Bradford, a director of cyberspace operations at the Maryland Air National Guard’s 175th Wing. “It took many years of blood, sweat and tears to get to this point.”

To help make Guard cyber warriors, several Soldiers and Airmen participated in national and international cybersecurity exercises.

In Little Rock, Arkansas, over 800 Guard Soldiers and Airmen participated in Cyber Shield, the nation’s premier unclassified cyber training exercise. In April, West Virginia and North Carolina National Guard field cyber teams joined Locked Shields, the world’s largest international cyber defense exercise, hosted by the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence in Tallinn, Estonia.

The Vermont Air National Guard supported a real-world NATO mission – employing the F-35A Lightning II.

Taking over the organization’s enhanced air policing mission from an active-duty Air Force wing, eight F-35s from the Vermont Air Guard’s 158th Fighter Wing arrived at



Spangdahlem Air Base, Germany, in May.

The mission, designed to build up Europe's Eastern Flank defenses, allowed Air Guard members to "continue the regular touchpoints and routine training integration with U.S. allies and partners throughout Europe," according to U.S. Air Forces in Europe – Air Force Africa officials.

The State Partnership Program grew to 87 partnerships with 95 countries with the addition of the Arizona National Guard and Oman and the New Jersey National Guard and Cyprus.

SPP exercises and training events helped solidify alliances.

In Niger, elements from the country's armed forces and the Indiana National Guard teamed up to train on tactical combat casualty care and behavioral health.

"Everyone broke down barriers and sought a connection," said Sgt. 1st Class Jonathan Lewis, noncommissioned officer in charge of a medical team with the Indiana Army National Guard. "(The Nigeriens) want the knowledge, and they want to share. The strides made in this partnership and the cohesiveness is amazing."

In July, Soldiers with the Connecticut Army National Guard traveled to Uruguay to conduct counter-improvised explosive device training with the country's Army.

The significance of the training wasn't lost on Army Staff Sgt. Nathan Carrasquillo, a communications specialist with the Connecticut Army National Guard's 192nd Engineer Battalion.

"It was awesome to see this side of the Guard," said Carrasquillo. "When we were over there, we represented the U.S. and the Army – filling a bigger role and doing something bigger than ourselves."

The Washington National Guard and the Malaysian Armed Forces held the eighth annual Bersama Warrior exercise focused on command and control operations during military conflicts.

Bersama Warrior was sponsored by the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, the combatant command in charge of a region identified as a top priority in the 2022 National Defense Strategy amid concerns with the People's Republic of China.

"Our dedication to a free and open Pacific is not just for a few of us – it's for all of us," said Army Brig. Gen. Bryan J. Grenon, commander of the Land Component Command for the Washington National Guard's Joint Force Headquarters.

As the Guard's global partnerships flourished in 2022, it continued to play an integral part in operations above the sky: space missions.

Currently, the Guard has about 2,000 members embedded with space and missile defense units.

Assigned to the Air Force's 7th Space Warning Squadron, Air Force 2nd Lt. Roy Davis, an intelligence officer with the California Air National Guard, received recognition from the Space Operations Command as Company Grade Officer of the Year.

"I have really enjoyed helping to integrate intelligence support into the space mission," said Davis, who provides space officials with details that drive planning and execution. "Our warfighting imperative in space demands this."

In June, Guard operations directorates from nine states helped coordinate the transportation of a German satellite from Baltimore to California.

"(The National Guard's) unique support enabled the U.S. Space Force and one of our closest international partners to demonstrate responsive space launch during a crisis, avoiding significant delays," said Garrett Haslem, associate director of global partnerships for the U.S. Space Force.

This year, there were also leadership changes within the Army National Guard. It welcomed its 13th command sergeant major, Command Sgt. Maj. John Raines.

"My job here is to be flexible," said Raines, the Army Guard's senior enlisted leader and principal adviser to the director of the Army National Guard on all matters concerning enlisted members. "I understand the expectations and the demand of this assignment, and I have a great respect for the complexity of this position."

There were also some historic firsts and milestones from across the 54 in 2022.

Aircrew members with the New Hampshire Air National Guard's 157th Air Refueling Wing were part of a record-breaking endurance mission that took them halfway around the globe and back in a KC-46A Pegasus, the Air Force's latest air tanker. On Nov. 16, the Pegasus left the East Coast, making its way to Guam, then returning to Pease Air National Guard Base, New Hampshire, covering 16,000 miles in 36 hours.

The flight was the longest such mission in the history of the Air Mobility Command, an Air Force major command under which the 157th Wing falls as an operational element.

Air Force Maj. Bill Daley, the mission's aircraft commander, said the flight demonstrated its operational effectiveness in providing a global reach for the joint force – as it received fuel three times and delivered it to F-22 Raptor fighters during the flight.



*A UH-60M Blackhawk assigned to the 1-169th Aviation Regiment dumps its BAMBI bucket load over a simulated fire, marked by orange cones, during a joint aerial firefighting training event between the Connecticut National Guard and Westover Fire Department at Westover Air Reserve Base, Chicopee Massachusetts May 24, 2022.*

"We have a healthy fleet and demonstrated full mission-readiness with onload and off-load capabilities," said Daley. "We could execute tomorrow if we had to."

Other milestones included an Air Guard test center facilitating the first live-fire weapons test from an F-15EX Eagle II and a B-2 Spirit pilot surpassing 1,500 hours in the stealth bomber.

"I think it's truly an honor just to be in the same category as some of the other really high-time B-2 pilots that I've looked up to throughout my career," said Air Force Lt. Col. Drew Irmischer, the B-2 pilot with the 131st Bomb Wing who got his start in the bomber with the regular Air Force. "It's been a great opportunity to be with the B-2 community, especially the 131st."

Like many Guard units, some Soldiers with the New York Army National Guard's 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team took some time on Dec. 13 to celebrate the National Guard's 386th birthday.

"The National Guard birthday is important because it's the beginning," Army Col. William Murphy, a senior leader in the 27th IBCT, told Soldiers. "It aligns with the beginning of our nation. It aligns with ordinary citizens standing up for what's right and what's just."

Murphy spoke in Grafenwoehr, Germany, home to the training command responsible for maximizing the combat effectiveness of Ukrainian soldiers as they continue to engage Russians on the battlefield.

"It's reminding us that a community of people stood up, and they took all the skills and abilities they had within their communities and brought it forward to make the world a better place," Murphy added. "The same thing (they) did back then is the same thing that we're doing today."

As the year comes to a close, the National Guard remains ready to meet state and federal missions and satisfy overseas security requirements.



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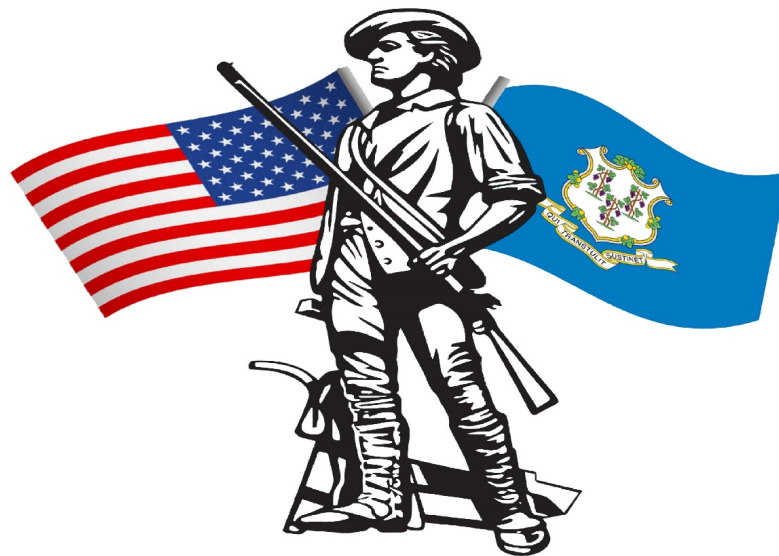
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# Guard's Global Reach, Capabilities Support National Defense Strategy

**Master Sgt. Erich Smith**  
National Guard Bureau

ARLINGTON, Va. — What the National Guard brings to the global stage directly contributes to significant pieces of the 2022 National Defense Strategy, said Army Gen. Daniel Hokanson, chief of the National Guard Bureau.

“Today, we are an integral part of the Joint Force and our nation’s second-largest military organization after the U.S. Army,” said Hokanson, the Guard’s top officer and a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. “The Department of Defense cannot implement the National Defense Strategy without the National Guard.”

The recently released, unclassified version of the NDS serves as a strategic guide for the Defense Department, outlining how it aims to meet “top-level defense priorities,” said defense officials.

At the top of those priorities is addressing the “multi-domain threat posed” by the People’s Republic of China and its desire to upend the Indo-Pacific regional order, according to the NDS.

During a visit with Guam National Guard members in May, Senior Enlisted Advisor Tony Whitehead, SEA to the CNGB, told Airmen and Soldiers their work has regional implications.

“Sometimes, the smallest places are huge, strategically,” Whitehead said during his trip to the 210-square-mile island the NDS calls “an essential operating base for U.S. efforts to maintain a free and open Indo-Pacific region.”

Whitehead added Guam and its “people here play a vital role in our National Defense Strategy. You are what makes this place special.”

Part of that all-important role involves joint training with other services.

In September, the Guam Army National Guard’s D Company, 1st Battalion, 224th Aviation Regiment, conducted joint training missions at sea to increase interoperability among other services in the area.

Describing “close partnerships” as one of the nation’s “greatest assets,” the NDS stated the United States could not meet “complex and interconnected challenges alone. Mutually beneficial alliances and partnerships are our greatest global strategic advantage — and the center of gravity for this strategy.”

For that partnership piece, the National Guard executes the Defense Department’s State Partnership Program, or SPP. Celebrating 30 years in 2023, the program pairs Guard elements with a partner nation’s military, security forces, and disaster response organizations in a cooperative, mutually beneficial relationship. Today, SPP has 87 partnerships with 95 nations — nearly half the world’s countries — including 14 NATO-member countries and 13 Indo-Pacific Command countries.

Earlier this year, the Hawaii National Guard participated in an exercise with its SPP partner, Indonesia, and other countries within the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command. Exercise Gema Bhakti 2022 took place in Jakarta and served as an operational staff-level event to enhance command and control proficiency.

The increasingly tense security situation in the region



*Army Gen. Daniel Hokanson, chief, National Guard Bureau, talks with a member of the Armed Forces of Ukraine in Grafenwoehr, Germany, June 12, 2022. Germany was Hokanson’s second stop on a five-nation trip to recognize and strengthen National Guard relationships with European allies and partners.*

means the exercise has grown in scope and importance since it began in 2013, said Army Maj. Marco Hartanto, with the Hawaii Army National Guard.

“Gema Bhakti has now moved from planning a humanitarian assistance and disaster response mission to the coordination and planning of a mission focused on deterring enemy aggression,” he said.

The SPP’s relevance to global security was evident after Russia, listed as a second priority in the NDS, attacked Ukraine, an SPP partner with the California National Guard.

Retired Army Maj. Gen. David S. Baldwin, the adjutant general of California at the time of the invasion, said Ukrainian leaders came within days of predicting when the Russians would attack.

“But because of that partnership and our ability to have frank discussions about what they needed in the eleventh hour ... I [think] it very much helped them prepare and to do so well in the opening hours of the invasion,” Baldwin said.

Support for Ukraine, however, was not limited to the California Guard.

In early August, the New York Army National Guard took over the Joint Multinational Training Group-Ukraine from the Florida Army National Guard, which had to leave Ukraine weeks before the Russian invasion in late February.

Though the location of JMTG-U has since moved to Germany, the mission remains the same: set up Ukraine for total victory.

“Our mission’s success is measured by our ability to increase the proficiency of our Ukrainian partners in their

lethality and their survivability as they defend their country against Russian hostilities,” said Army Col. William Murphy, a task force commander with the New York Army National Guard.

In illuminating changes in the global security environment, the National Defense Strategy emphasized that “because the cyber and space domains empower the Joint Force, we will prioritize building resilience in these areas.”

Recently, Florida and California Air National Guard members from two space control squadrons trained with Air Force reservists and Space Force Guardians during Black Skies 22, an exercise to increase readiness by practicing offensive and defensive operations in the electromagnetic spectrum, exercise officials said.

Additionally, the Colorado National Guard’s 100th Missile Defense Brigade operates the ground-based midcourse defense system, an element of America’s ballistic missile defense System, which provides combatant commanders the capability to engage and destroy intermediate and long-range ballistic missile threats in space. The brigade supports the U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command missile defense enterprise.

“The National Guard Soldiers assigned to SMDC expertly execute our no-fail mission to defend the nation,” said Army Lt. Gen. Daniel Karbler, commanding general of the SMDC. “We could not accomplish what the American people expect of us without our National Guard team members, particularly the Soldiers of the 100th Missile Defense Brigade.”

The Guard’s space mission is also heavily embedded with the SPP.



“The National Guard’s demonstrated space expertise, paired with the State Partnership Program, offers a readily available capability to strengthen the integration of the space domain into larger deterrence efforts,” said Lt. Col. Nicole David, director of the Strategic Initiatives Group for the National Guard Bureau.

In July, a U.S. Space Command exercise named Global Sentinel highlighted those deterrence efforts. The exercise, which began in 2014, included the New York Air National Guard and space operators from Brazil, New York’s SPP partner. It required participants to support a regional multinational space operations center to detect, monitor and track objects in orbit and respond to scenarios requiring multinational cooperation, according to Space Command officials.

Army Brig. Gen. Jesse Morehouse, deputy director for U.S. Space Command’s policy, plans and strategy directorate, said SPP pairings are indispensable to the space mission.

“We need the Guard’s help to engage globally with our partners, and the relationships forged by the SPP are an advantageous foundation for USSPACECOM’s security

cooperation efforts,” said Morehouse.

Some Guard members continuously test their cyber mettle to support the NDS cyber component.

Through the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre, West Virginia and North Carolina National Guard members participated in Locked Shields 2022, a virtual exercise centered on defending national information technology systems and critical infrastructure under real-time attacks.

As the world’s largest international cyber defense exercise, Locked Shields enabled participants such as Staff Sgt. Ian Frist with the 197th Regional Training Institute to showcase what Guard members can bring to the cyber battlefield.

“The National Guard is able to leverage [part-time] Guardsmen like me who work in the civilian cybersecurity industry,” said Frist, who is employed by a manufacturing company. “Living in both worlds gives me a unique perspective on cybersecurity operations that I felt was indispensable during the exercise.”

But exercises are not the only way some Guard members increase their understanding of cyber warfare.

The Washington National Guard recently hosted a cybersecurity conference for countries within the Indo-Pacific Command area of responsibility, including Washington’s SPP partner, Thailand.

The Cybersecurity Capacity Building Program, the first conference of its kind, according to Washington National Guard officials, focused on how developing cyber capabilities is just as important as enhancing partnerships.

“Recognizing our advanced cyber relationship with Thailand, INDOPACOM asked us to host the conference,” said Army Lt. Col. Keith Kosik, director of the Washington Guard’s SPP. “They also want our cyber teamwork with Thailand to serve as a model for their states and partner nations.”

In the end, Hokanson said the Guard remains committed to domestic missions while being the premier Army and Air Force combat reserve — a major operational contributor to the U.S. warfighter.

“We augment the Joint Force across all aspects of National Defense Strategy implementation and directly support our communities in tangible, substantial ways,” Hokanson said.

## Pre-enlistment Course Helps Turn Recruits into Soldiers

**Sgt. 1st Class Whitney Hughes**  
National Guard Bureau

ARLINGTON, Va. — Amid one of the most challenging recruiting environments since the all-volunteer force’s establishment in 1973, the National Guard has taken a modern approach to engaging prospective service members.

Only 23% of Americans ages 17-24 qualify to serve without a medical waiver, down from 29% in recent years. While obesity, addiction, medical, and behavioral health top the list of disqualifiers, programs like the Future Soldier Preparatory Course work to mitigate the risk of a potential recruit losing eligibility.

“This program is important to the National Guard because it focuses on turning unqualified potential warriors into qualified and ready applicants, ready to ship to basic training,” said Lt. Col. Adam Allen, the enlisted strength maintenance branch chief at the National Guard Bureau.

Since the inception of FSPC in early August, the Guard has referred over 500 potential recruits to the pre-enlistment program at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, with 301 on standby.

“The program has proven wildly successful. By referring 88% of applicants, the would-be recruits receive personalized training for the ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery) Placement Exam, increasing scores and career options upon completion,” said Allen. “Additionally, FSPC instructors offer the tools for Soldiers to improve fitness and holistic health, including an exercise regimen, nutrition and good sleep habits.”

Upon completion of the three-week course, trainees leave prepared to meet Army academic and fitness entry standards and begin basic training. Because of its three-pronged focus on education, holistic health and fitness, the program is more than just a precursor to basic training.

“It’s a campus-style learning environment where it’s not so much ‘in-your-face’ yelling,” explained Maj. Chris Wedge, holistic health and fitness team leader. “It’s more of, ‘Hey, how can I help you achieve this goal of (moving on to basic training) and becoming a Soldier?’ There are going to be some inherent interaction changes.”

The academic portion includes a course modeled after the Basic Skills Education Program the Army has used since 1977. The program aims to improve word knowledge, reading comprehension, arithmetic reasoning, and test-taking skills using a format proven successful for more than 40 years.

Trainees then learn the Army’s five Holistic Health and Fitness program domains — physical, mental, nutrition, sleep and spiritual — supported by dietitians, physical and occupational therapists, strength and conditioning coaches, athletic trainers, and behavioral health specialists.

The program seeks to improve comprehensive health while physically and mentally



*The U.S. Army started a Future Soldier Preparatory Course program at Fort Jackson, S.C., to help America’s youth overcome academic and physical fitness barriers to service so they can earn the opportunity to join the Army.*

preparing them for basic training and uniformed service.

“In the civilian world, learning how to eat clean was a big challenge,” said Jonathan Jeffers, an FSPC trainee. “Like, ‘Hey, I need to eat healthier, but that comes with a higher cost and takes some effort.’ It’s easier to get (healthy alternatives) here — everything’s laid out for you.”

The program is open for individuals seeking to enlist in the Army’s active and reserve components, including the Army National Guard.

Recruits enlisting in the Army through these programs can get the same bonuses and incentives as all other recruits, with those on the academic track potentially renegotiating their contract pending improved test scores.

“The Future Soldier Preparatory Course has created a pathway for so many young men and women who desire to serve in the Army National Guard that otherwise wouldn’t have been able to do so,” said Col. G. Byron Williams, the Army National Guard chief of staff at Fort Jackson. “The training, knowledge and support offered by this program is the ultimate value added for these individuals and our force.”

“This program provides an incredible opportunity for those who wish to give back to their communities and wear the uniform,” he said. “It helps them achieve both their goals and rise to meet Army standards. It’s a win for our recruits and the Army National Guard.”



# SEXUAL ASSAULT. SEXUAL HARASSMENT. NOT IN OUR ARMY.

## Sexual Assault Response Coordinators

**CTARNG SARC** ..... 860.883.4798

**103rd AW SARC (24hr)** ..... 860.895.3526

## Chaplain and Legal

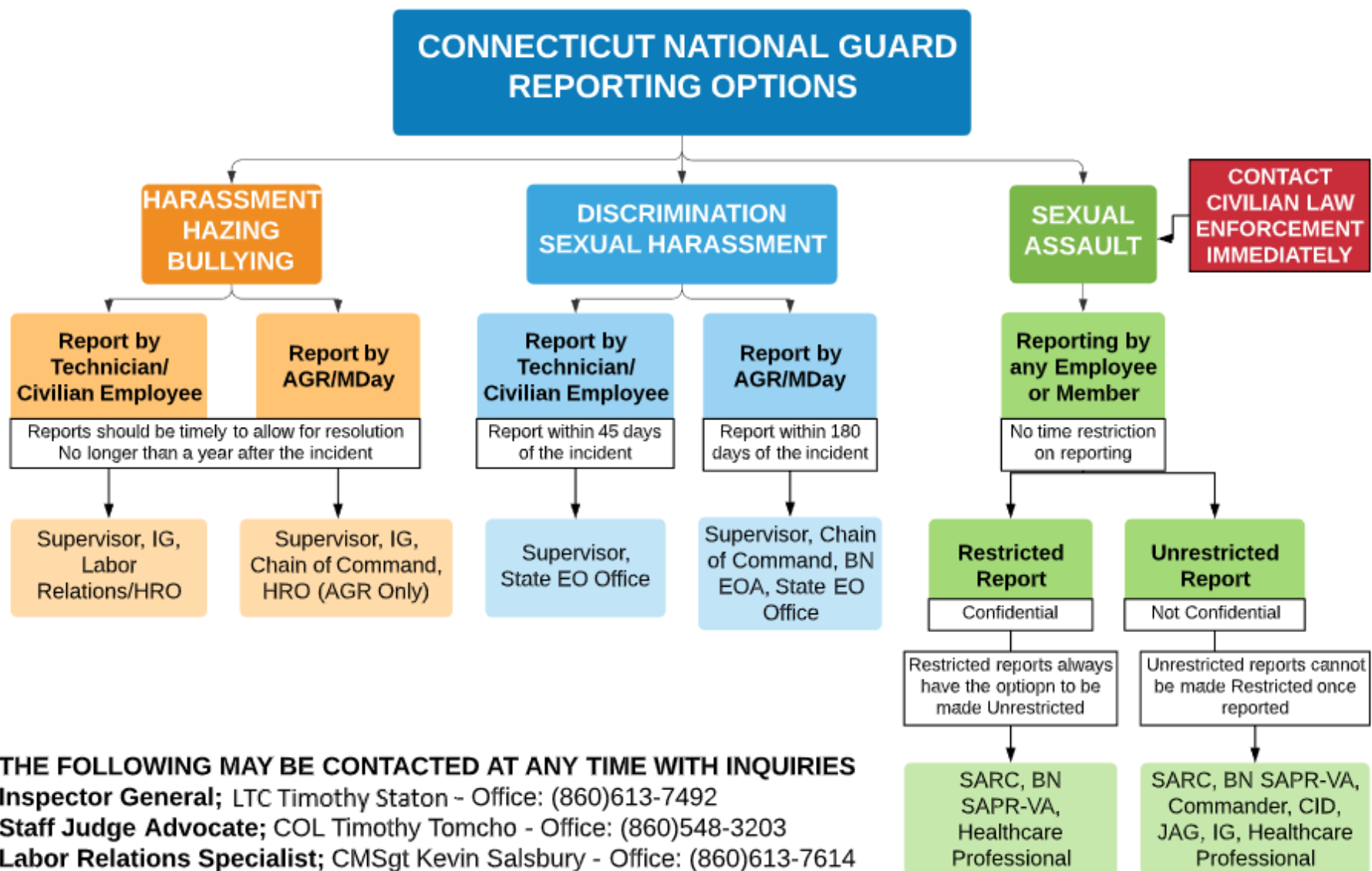
**CT Chaplain** ..... 860.548.3240

**CT Special Victim's Council** ..... 703.607.2263

## Medical

**Military Treatment Facility (Westover)** 413.557.2623

**Navy Health Clinic New London** ..... 860.694.4123



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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 - Office: (860)613-7610

**Sexual Assault Response Coordinator;** Mrs. Katherine Maines - Office: (860)613-7611; Cell: (860)883-4798

**State Chaplain;** Lt Col Eric Wismar - Office: (860)548-3240; Cell: (860)883-5278



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