

ILLINOIS NATIONAL GUARD

PRAIRIE SENTINEL

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300

ALWAYS READY, ALWAYS THERE



300TH ANNIVERSARY

ILLINOIS NATIONAL GUARD PRAIRIE SENTINEL

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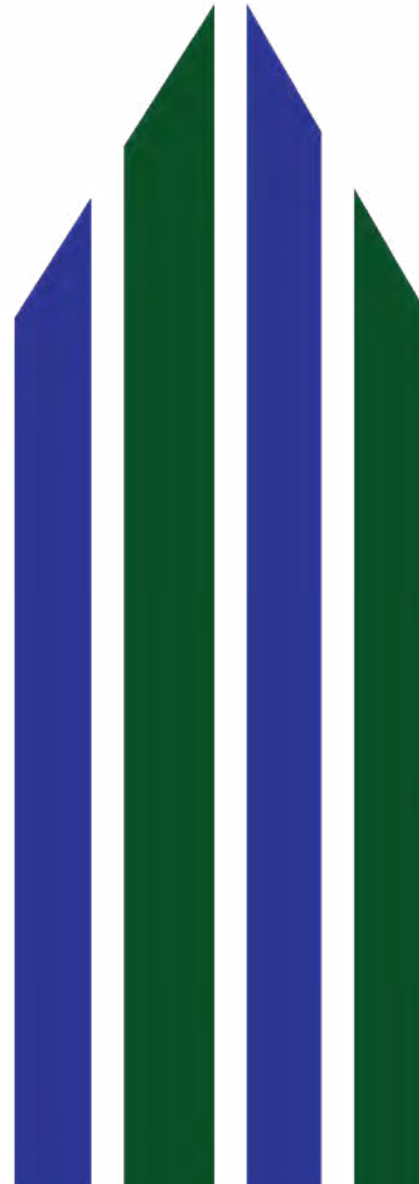
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Take it From the Top:

Senior Leaders' Corner

Mile Marker '93: The Great Flood, State Partnership Program and Lincoln's ChalleNGe are defining moments in our history



Maj. Gen. Rich Neely, Adjutant General, Illinois National Guard; Director, Department of Military Affairs

In July 1993; Janet Jackson sang "That's the Way Love Goes," Tim Allen asked for more power on "Home Improvement," and Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan went "Sleepless in Seattle."

And thousands of Illinois National Guard Soldiers and Airmen were far too busy to pay much attention to any of that.

July of 1993, 30 years ago, was among the busiest times in Illinois National Guard history. It was a time that reverberates to this day for Illinois, for the nation, and for the world. Within those 31 days, the Illinois National Guard would respond to one of the greatest natural disasters to ever hit the Midwest, establish our State Partnership Program with Poland and start Lincoln's ChalleNGe Academy at the former Chanute Air Force Base in Rantoul.

The Illinois National Guard has responded

to many floods over the years, but the Great Flood of 1993 stands alone. About 100,000 homes were destroyed, 15 million acres of farmland were underwater, transportation routes were washed out, thousands were forced to evacuate and nearly 50 people died as a direct result of the flood. The town of Valmeyer in Monroe County re-located about two miles and 400-feet higher because of the flood.

More than 7,000 Illinois National Guard service members responded across 44 counties. Operations included security, levee maintenance and repair, sandbagging, search and rescue, water distribution, medical assistance and aviation support. The response lasted from the beginning of July until December. This made it the Illinois National Guard's longest sustained domestic support operation - until it was eclipsed in 2020-2021 by our 19-month COVID-19 response.

Operation Wave Rider was epic in scale. Lessons learned during that response would help the National Guard become better at all we do. We learned the importance of relationships and emergency planning across local, state and

federal agencies as well as with nongovernmental organizations and business. Partnerships are key both in domestic operations and in the nation's defense.

Today we see the importance of international partnerships. None is more important than the relationship between the United States and Poland. This relationship is vital as the free world responds to Russia's illegal and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. The Illinois National Guard's State Partnership Program with Poland played a key role - perhaps the key role - in fostering and growing this relationship.

We have been with Poland as their nation emerged from behind the Iron Curtain and the yoke of the Soviet Union. We were there when Poland joined NATO in 1999. We co-deployed first to Iraq and then to Afghanistan for 17 consecutive years and 34 rotations. And we are there today as Poland is a key ally and friend.

Today this partnership is stronger than ever. When the Illinois National Guard celebrated our 300th Birthday in May, Polish Minister of National Defence Mariusz Błaszczak traveled

to Springfield to celebrate with us. We conduct more than 30 training exchanges each year. This past month the Illinois Army National Guard's 129th Regional Training Institute formalized training exchanges with the Polish Territorial Defense Forces with a memorandum of understanding. Just recently, we've trained with the Polish in such vital areas as medical, sniper, and anti-armor operations. Two Polish cyber experts participated side-by-side with the Illinois National Guard



team at Cyber Shield this year. These exchanges are growing as we meet emerging threats together, as partners.

It isn't just formal exchanges. Over 30 years we've built many friendships. This month Senior Master Sgt. David Schreffler with the 217th Engineering and Installation Squadron, and a group of Illinois National Guard

retirees traveled to Poland with Gold Star Mission to participate in the Polish Association of Families of Fallen Soldiers' Veterans Bike Rally.

This bicycle tour from Aug. 8-12, honored fallen service members from both nations. Schreffler and his fellow volunteers are doing this on their own, but the connections with the Polish came from our State Partnership Program. One of the rally's organizers is Lidia Kordasz-Garniewicz of the Polish Association of Families of Fallen Soldiers. Lidia's late husband, Lt. Col. Grzegorz Kordasz, was among those Polish Soldiers who served in Afghanistan alongside Soldiers from the Illinois National Guard. Lidia is good friends with Illinois Army National Guard Col. Andrew Adamczyk, who is doing a tour in Poland now.

Our relationships with the Polish are professional, and personal. They are our friends. As Marine Gen. James Amos famously said, "You can't surge trust." We've built trust with the Polish for 30 years.

With Lincoln's ChalleNge Academy, we've also built opportunities and life skills for 30 years. The class that graduated in



June included than 16,000th graduate. That's 16,000 people the program as positively impacted.

LCA Director Maurice Rochelle doesn't call the youth that go through the program "at-risk." To him, that's cliché and stereotyping. The youth in the program are just young men and women. They might come from tough backgrounds. They might have stumbled a bit out of the starting gate. But who hasn't stumbled once



or twice? Learning to get back up, not give up, and to have the discipline to carry on is called resilience. That's part of the life skills that LCA helps instill in our youth.

The 22-week in-residence phase offers classroom instruction, service to community, life skills, job skills, computer literacy, physical training, and challenging individual and team activities. It offers young men and

women a chance to prove themselves. It builds confidence and discipline.

The program has evolved and developed. Academically, it started as a program geared toward helping youth pass the GED. Now it also offers a high school diploma credit recovery program and multiple vocational programs from welding to certified nursing assistant. It is dedicated to helping these young people

build a path to success.

The greatest value of LCA is helping its cadets build confidence and character. LCA alumni have gone on to lead successful lives in all sorts of professions. This includes the military. Illinois Army National Guard Command Sgt. Maj. Jose Sanchez, the command sergeant major of the 198th Combat

Sustainment Support Battalion, is an LCA graduate. He went from a teenager on the wrong path to helping keep his Soldiers and unit on the right path.

For the past three decades, this transformative institution has been a beacon of hope, guiding countless youth toward a brighter future. With unwavering dedication to shaping young lives, the academy has not only produced responsible citizens but has also left an indelible

mark on the community and the nation at large.

The Great Flood, our SPP with Poland and LCA - all in July 1993. It was landmark month for the Illinois National Guard - one which helped shape the Illinois National Guard into the innovative and effective force it is today.

Ballin' Out

Illinois Soldier selected to join All-Army Women's Softball Team



By Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs



SPRINGFIELD, Ill. – Illinois Army National Guard Sgt. 1st Class Mary Joan “MJ” Patten’s love of softball began when she was five years old, playing T-ball for the Rockford, Illinois, Park District. Patten, now of Caledonia, Wisconsin, continued playing softball throughout middle school, high school, and college. On July 18, Patten will don another softball uniform – as the only National Guard member competing in the 2023 All-Army Women’s Softball training camp and the Armed Forces Women’s Softball Championship.

“I’m honored to have the opportunity to be part of the team and compete,” Patten, who plays outfielder, said. “It’s a big deal for me to be the only National Guard member of the team, and to add Illinois in front of that makes it even more special.”

Patten credits her mother, Betty, for her love of and devotion to softball.

“She was my absolute biggest fan.





Sadly, she passed away in 2021," Patten said. "She was so proud of both my softball and military career, and I have no doubt she would be just as proud and thrilled for me to have the opportunity to compete in the All-Army Women's Softball training camp and the potential to compete in the All-Armed Forces championship."

The All-Army Women's Softball team will report to Fort Sill, in Lawton, Oklahoma, July 18 to begin training and playing together before heading to the USA Softball Hall of Fame Complex in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, to participate in the U.S. Armed Forces Sports Softball Championship, Aug. 4-10.

Patten, who graduated from Christian Life High School in Rockford in 2010, played in a fast pitch softball summer league in middle school and high school through the Harlem Community Center in Machesney Park and in college played in a slow pitch softball summer league at Forest Hills Diamond in Loves

Park.

Patten attended Rock Valley College in Rockford for two years, studying exercise science, and playing fast pitch softball from Fall 2011 through Spring 2013. She then transferred to University of Wisconsin-Platteville, graduating in 2016 with a bachelor's degree in psychology with a minor in biology.

Patten, a personal trainer by day at ULINE, a Wisconsin-based corporation which sells wholesale industrial supplies, was introduced to competitive slow pitch softball leagues in 2016 through the United States Specialty Sports Association.

"I played for a travel team, Adrenaline, based in Illinois from 2016-2017. We played mostly in tournaments and then competed in the United States Specialty Sports Association World tournament in Florida at the end of the season."

Patten plays for an Indiana-based team, Bellys/Red Athlete. The team is classed as a Conference-B, or second-tier, team, and travels to participate in slow pitch softball tournaments.

Patten, a traditional National Guard member, became interested in being a personal trainer while at Planet Fitness and has carried the passion for exercising with her to ULINE.

"As a personal trainer, I can

learned of the All-Army Women's Softball team. It took another three years for Patten to submit a packet to be considered for the team.

"I first heard about the team in 2020 when I was deployed," she said. "I got back from deployment in 2021 and decided to stay home. A team wasn't fielded in 2022, so I decided 2023 was going to be my year to apply."

To apply for the team, Patten had to submit a packet through the Army Morale, Welfare and Recreation website, which included a letter of support from her unit commander, a passing score in the Army Combat Fitness Test, meet the Army's height and weight standards, a sports resume, and had to request a tour of duty with the team. Patten was notified in early June of her selection.

"The team is a selection of women Soldiers across the three components, active duty, reserves, and National Guard," Patten said.

Patten, a Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear Specialist, enlisted in the Illinois Army National Guard in 2010 and is a platoon sergeant in Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 766th Brigade Engineer Battalion, based in Decatur.



share my

passion with other people and hopefully help develop the passion for them to enjoy exercising as much as I do," she said.

It wasn't until a 2020 deployment that Patten first



A Leg Up: Illinois commemorates 176th anniversary of victory at Cerro Gordo

By Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

SPRINGFIELD, ILL. - The Illinois National Guard marked the 176th anniversary of the Battle of Cerro Gordo during the Mexican American War in 1847 with presentations at the Cerro Gordo, Illinois, Village Board meeting April 17.

The presentations were part of the year-long 300th birthday celebration of the Illinois National Guard and its shared history with communities around the state.

"The men and women serving in the Illinois National Guard are part of our community. The Illinois National Guard is part of our communities," said Col. Lenny Williams, Chief of Staff, Illinois Army National Guard. "We're taking this time to do these community events to honor our shared history. This is a unique opportunity to see our community members and talk about our shared history."



On April 17, 1847, Soldiers from the 3rd and 4th Illinois Infantry

Regiments, from small communities in central Illinois, placed artillery on the area adjacent to the Cerro Gordo in Mexico. The next day, despite being greatly outnumbered, these Citizen-Soldiers captured that hill and nearly captured General Santa Anna himself. The speed and aggressiveness of their attack forced Santa Anna to flee the battlefield on horseback famously leaving behind his carriage, a chest full of gold, his chicken dinner, and his cork leg.

"Members of your community made up the 3rd and 4th Infantry Regiments back then," Williams said. "The Battle of Cerro Gordo clinched the war. We have units in the Illinois National Guard which traces its lineage to the 3rd and 4th Infantry Regiments."

Williams said it's important for residents to know the history of their community and why the name was changed in 1855.

"The name of this community was changed to Cerro Gordo because so many from this community fought in the battle 176 years ago," he said. "The Soldiers from the 3rd and 4th Infantry Regiments faced General Santa Anna and his 12,000 Soldiers and defeated him with about a third of that. Soldiers from this community chased Santa Anna from the battle. He gets away but we get his cork leg."

Williams thanked the Cerro Gordo community on behalf of the Illinois National Guard leaders.

"Thank you to your community for your support of the military," he said.

Williams presented certificates to

the Cerro Gordo American Legion Post 117 and Boy Scout Troop 39 for their service in the community.

Williams read a letter from Maj. Gen. Rich Neely, the Adjutant General of Illinois, and Commander of the Illinois National Guard, which thanked the village of Cerro Gordo for its long friendship with the Illinois National Guard.



"This victory was not an easy one. The Soldiers were outnumbered, and the enemy was entrenched," Neely's letter read in part. "Often forgotten is their commanding general, Brig. Gen. James Shields, was seriously wounded in battle and carried from the field, along with six Illinois Soldiers who gave their lives in the victory. These six Soldiers were friends, neighbors, fathers, and sons of this community. When they brought the cork leg back to Illinois, and renamed the village Cerro Gordo, it was not only to celebrate a great victory, but to also honor those killed in action and their families who were left behind."

Orion Soldier selected as Senior Enlisted Leader for Illinois' 129th Regiment (RTI)

By Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. –Command Sgt. Maj. Jonathan Genisio, of Orion, Illinois, became the senior enlisted leader of the 129th Regiment (Regional Training Institute) and Commandant of the RTI in a ceremony April 23 at Camp Lincoln, Springfield, Illinois.

“Thank you for the opportunity to serve in such a prestigious role,” Genisio said. “When I left the RTI in 2019, I would have never thought I would have the opportunity to come back as your Command Sergeant Major.”

Genisio assumed responsibility as the senior enlisted leader from Command Sgt. Maj. Brandon Golden, of Easton, Illinois, who had served in the position since Sept. 2.

“Having served with Command Sergeant Major Golden in the 404th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, I know coming into this position, he has laid the groundwork for the unit and my success,” Genisio said.

“I will keep his momentum going as I transition into this position.”

Genisio spoke directly to the Soldiers serving in the 129th.

“I look forward working alongside you. I will strive to give you the same exceptional

leadership as my predecessor,” he said. “We will continue to bring distinction to the RTI by being professional and efficient in everything we do. My door is always open and I’m only a phone call away.”



Genisio, who serves as a traditional Soldier, is a lieutenant in the Moline Police Department, and has been a team leader on the SWAT team since 2017.

He entered the Illinois National Guard’s Detachment 1, 135th

Chemical Company in February 1995 as a light wheel vehicle mechanic. Genisio enlisted in the active duty Army in March 1998.

Following deployments to Kosovo and Egypt, Genisio transitioned to the Illinois National Guard, serving as a Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear specialist with Detachment 1, 135th Chemical Company. Genisio has served in every position in the 44th Chemical Battalion, from private to Command Sergeant Major. He deployed with the 634th Personnel Services Detachment, based in Crestwood, Illinois, and Company B, 2nd Battalion, 130th Infantry Regiment,



based in Effingham, Illinois.

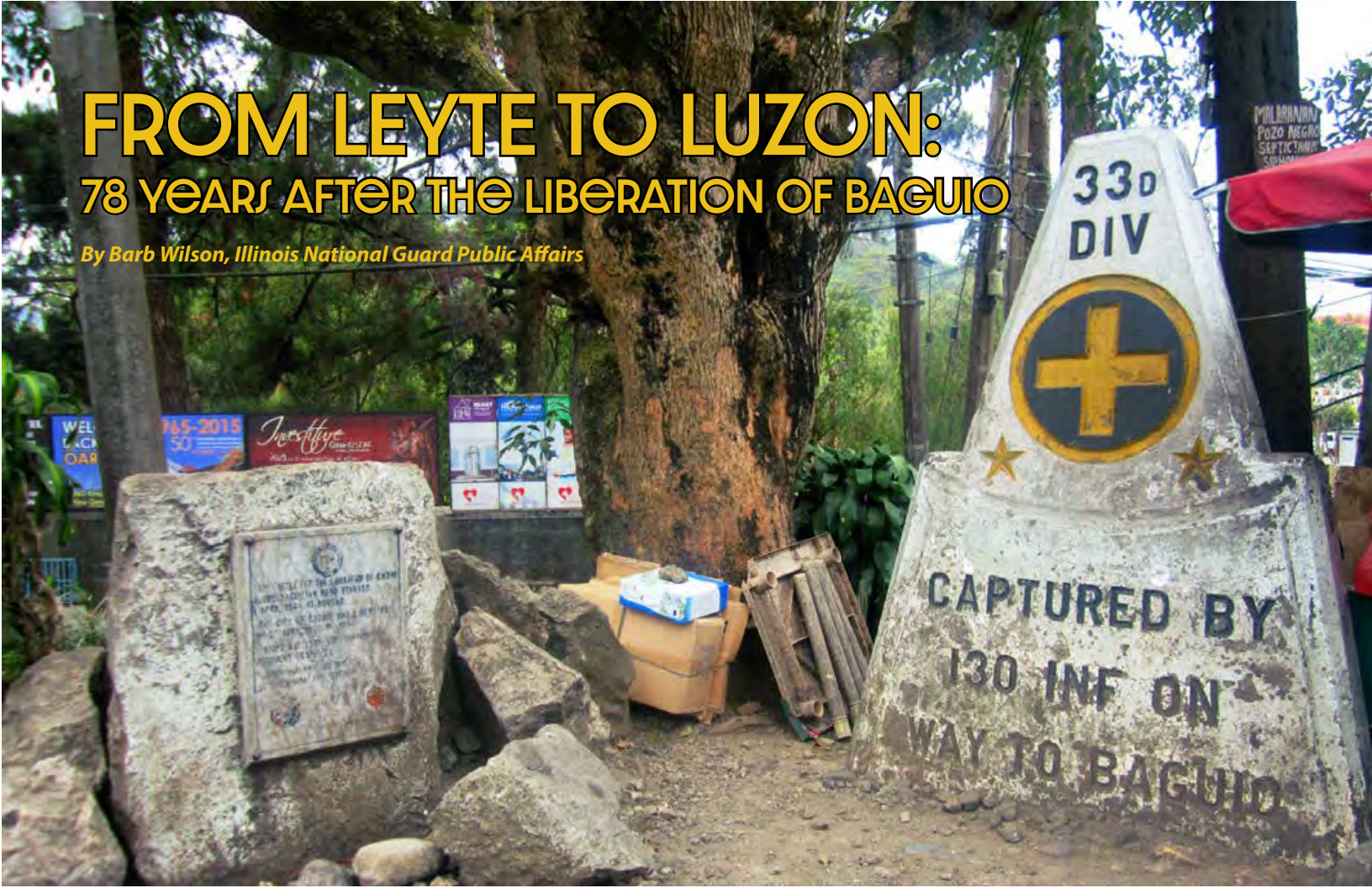
Lt. Col. Wyatt Bickett, of Smithton, Illinois, the 129th’s Deputy Commander, welcomed Genisio back to the 129th RTI.

“You come from a legacy of excellence with the 404th and other chemical environments, and with your previous assignment within the RTI, you have a good familiarity with the unit,” Bickett said. “You have a tough act to follow but I know you’re up to the challenge.”



FROM LEYTE TO LUZON: 78 YEARS AFTER THE LIBERATION OF BAGUIO

By Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs



URBANA, III. –The Illinois National Guard celebrated the 78th anniversary of the Liberation of Baguio in the Philippines during World War II at the Illinois National Guard’s 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team’s headquarters in Urbana on April 26.

The Illinois National Guard is celebrating significant dates in the history it shares with communities throughout 2023 to celebrate its 300th year. It celebrated the liberation of Baguio with the University of Illinois’ Philippine Student Association, which began in 1915.

Baguio was liberated by the Illinois Army National Guard’s 33rd Infantry Division on April 27, 1945, four years after the Division was federalized by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The 33rd IBCT holds the lineage and honors of the 33rd Infantry Division. The

Division spent two years training in the United States before leaving California for the war’s Pacific Theater, landing at New Guinea in May 1944.

“Tonight, as we celebrate our shared history, I look forward to learning more about the Philippines and hope you learn a little about the military,” said Brig. Gen. Mark Alessia, Director of the Joint Staff, Illinois National Guard. “Since it’s

beginning in 1723, 95 years before Illinois became a state, the Illinois National Guard has participated in every conflict.”

Alessia said the actions of the 33rd’s Soldiers were pretty amazing when talking about the Division’s history.

“In World War II, the Division received three Medals of Honor, 31 Distinguished Service Crosses, 470 Silver Stars, 34 Legions of Merit, 2,251 Bronze Stars and six distinguished unit citations,” Alessia said.

Command Sgt. Maj. (ret.) Mark Bowman, who retired from the Illinois Army National Guard in 2017 as the State Command Sergeant Major, talked about the 33rd Division’s role in World War II, and the liberation of Baguio.

“The 33rd landed on the west coast of Morotai Island in mid-December 1944 without resistance,”





Division after the Battle for Baguio. Sixth Army, which included the 33rd Division, began amphibious training, as the Soldiers were to be the first wave of an invasion of Japan, however the war ended before an invasion took place.

“The 33rd entered combat in September 1944 and spent 139 days in combat,” Bowman said. “The Division lost 396 Soldiers, 2,024 were wounded in action and an additional 128 died from their wounds.”

Joaquin Lainson, president, Philippine Student Association at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, talked briefly about the history of the student organization, and provided insight into the Philippines.

“The Philippine Student Association at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign is the second oldest Filipino collegiate organization in the United States, dating back to its beginning in 1915,” Lainson said. “Filipinos have attended UIUC since 1905.”

Lainson said many Filipinos choose to attend UIUC because of the association’s history of celebrating Filipino culture and strong community they have fostered for decades.

“Our association is dedicated to fostering and maintaining relationships through the education

said Bowman. “From December 22, 1945 until January 29, 1945, it relieved the 31st Infantry Division serving at Race Island.”

Bowman said the 33rd landed on Luzon in early February 1945 where it relieved the 43rd Infantry Division in the Rosario area on Feb. 15. In just a few days, the 33rd began moving into the Caraballo Mountains toward Baguio, the Philippines summer capital, and the headquarters for the Japanese in the Philippines.

“The Illinois Soldiers faced two enemies, the well-equipped Japanese force and the mountainous terrain,” Bowman said. “The 108th Engineers used bulldozers to carve trails through the mountainous country to pave the way for the advancing infantry. The Division seized Question mark and Benchmark Hills after heavy fighting on February 22.”

Bowman said Illinois’

Soldiers fought and climbed over rocky ledges and towering peaks 5,000 feet high and many suffered from heat exhaustion due to the limited water supply.

“The 129th Infantry Brigade, which was detached from the 33rd and attached to the 37th Division, pushed up Highway 9 toward Baguio and encountered very heavy fighting in the Salat area from March 23 to April 10,” he said. “The Battle for Baguio ended on April 27, 1945, as both the 33rd and 37th Infantry Division columns converged and overran the city.”

Bowman said the 33rd was relieved by the 32nd Infantry



and awareness of the Filipino identity and culture, and developing academic and leadership skills,” Lainson said. “Our history, our culture, and our experiences define our Filipino identity. We are always creating and adding to it.”

Lainson talked briefly about the

Philippines, a maritime island nation in Southeast Asia, and said location and history gives the Philippines a unique blend of cultures, religions, and experiences.

"Across our 7,000 islands, more than 150 languages are spoken," he said. "Food, music, and clothing is influenced by centuries of cultural exchange with China, Malaysia, Polynesia and elsewhere. Our unique histories and cultures thrive in Filipinos at home and abroad."

Lainson said sports are popular in the Philippines, with basketball being the most popular, followed by boxing, and volleyball.

Lainson explained the Philippines has, at times, a very tense history, beginning with the Philippine revolution in 1896.

"When Japan invaded the Philippines in 1941, the American-backed government was exiled until the end of the war," Lainson said. "Rebel Filipino forces conducted guerilla warfare throughout the Japanese occupation. Under an American coalition led by General Douglas MacArthur, the Philippines was liberated in 1945."

Lainson said the Philippine Campaign was the largest campaign of World War II in the Pacific Theater.

"After the war, the Philippines gained full independence under the Treaty of Manila," he said. "The Philippines is a founding member of the United Nations and is officially



known as the Republic of the Philippines."

Lainson said today the Philippines is a cosmopolitan nation with a renewed sense of identity and culture.

Illinois Army National Guard Maj. Matt Larson, of Mokena, Illinois, a logistics officer with 6th Battalion, 54th Security Forces Assistance Brigade, based at Rock Island Arsenal, who recently completed a year-long deployment to the Philippines with Logistics Advisor Team (LAT) 6611, explained, the Philippine and United States militaries conduct combined training engagements and exercises.

"The connection between the United States and the Philippines is an important and longstanding



relationship," said Larson, a logistics advisor with LAT 6611. "Our team's mission was to conduct combined training alongside the Philippine Army logistic units and the Philippine Army's Training and Doctrine Command."

Larson said the Philippine Army are some of the most hospitable people he's worked with,

and the team enjoyed participating in one of the Philippine's favorite sports - basketball.

"We played basketball with them after work almost every day," Larson said. "Another custom which wasn't mentioned in our pre-mobilization briefings is their love of karaoke."

Larson said going into their mission, they had to identify common ground as military professionals.

"We didn't have to work too hard to understand each other," Larson said. "The Philippine Army spoke English so we were able to communicate. Identifying we both spoke the same language and use it as a starting point allowed us to identify common ground."

Larson told the audience it is important to know that throughout one's career, they will engage with someone from very different backgrounds.

"Continue to build bonds with those you encounter by encouraging communication, and sharing experiences," he said.

Illinois' 1644th Transportation Company selected as NDTA Unit of the Year

By Staff Sgt. Gerardo Valdes, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

ROCK FALLS, ILL.
- The 1644th Transportation Company based in Rock Falls, won the National Defense Transportation Association Unit of the Year for training year 2022.

The award can be won by any singular active duty, reserve, or national guard unit each year across all the different branches of military service.

During the training year the 1644th completed 39 convoy missions logging over 127,300 miles in preparation for, and throughout Operation Patriot Press (OPP), a Joint Munitions Command exercise designed to train the Army and other services on strategic positioning of assets.

During OPP, 41,160 of those miles were driven while hauling a combined 1.5 million pounds of hazardous material across five states with no accidents or injuries.

"We had that combination of safety and perfect execution of a mission, which I think is the most dangerous mission that you can do as a transportation company stateside," said Capt. Konrad Kalita, company commander of the 1644th. "The members of our military, no matter what rank, they're professionals."

The 1644th experienced key personnel vacancies leading up to and during OPP. The Kalita said despite the shortfalls, the junior leaders in the unit stepped up and took charge in a major way.

According to Kalita, six months prior to OPP it became clear that the



unit did not have enough qualified truck drivers (88M) to accomplish the mission. The possibility of withdrawing the unit from this named exercise was entertained, but they insisted on pushing forward and developing solutions instead. The solutions involved training and licensing 35 non-88M soldiers from within the company and executing a second convoy mission to deliver remaining containers during phase two of annual training.

"The unit was inexperienced when we won the award," said Staff Sgt. Aaron Geesy, the supply sergeant for the 1644th. "It's just the good NCOs, good leaders and good training that we receive on the front side. For inexperienced soldiers all it takes is a few days in a truck and you'll be there. I'm not saying that truck driving is easy, because it's actually incredibly difficult. But we still have the experienced NCOs and the experienced leaders to train effectively."

Geesy said one of the aspects of the unit's success was taking ownership of the trucks and not just seeing them as Army equipment.

"We probably have some of the best equipment in the state," said Geesy. "Our equipment is ours. The standard here in this unit is to prioritize our equipment and

make sure it's constantly running and running effectively."

Staff Sgt. Eden Latham, the Senior Maintenance NCO for the 1644th, explained the maintenance section gets feedback from the truck drivers who do their preventive maintenance

checks and services (PMCS) before, during and after the trucks are driven. They also work with the field maintenance shop (FMS) to effect repairs that may not be able to be completed on a drill weekend.

"You know, if we were able to identify faults on a drill weekend and didn't have time to do it, or it was a major repair FMS helped us out," said Latham.

Kalita noted that during OPP the maintenance section did 35 services or repairs.

"They're doing repairs on the side of the road," said Kalita. "Normally, with some of those repairs you have to take that truck to an FMS and it's considered done for the rest of that convoy. In our case, we didn't have to do that with a single piece of equipment."

According to Kalita the award was not only for the miles safely driven and the maintenance but also the basic soldiering performed this year.

"So this unit has a history of truck driving and that's priority one. But training guidance was going back to the basics of soldiering. So these soldiers, on top of being proficient truck drivers, did a lot more individual Army warrior tasks on top of continuing to excel at truck driving."

Illinois team from 2nd Squadron, 106th Cavalry Regiment takes top U.S. Team at Gainey Cup

By Staff Sgt. Robert Adams, 139th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment



SPRINGFIELD, III. – The 2023 Gainey Cup was fierce with 22 U.S. Army and international Cavalry Scout squads competing, but when the dust settled an Illinois Army National Guard team from the 2nd Squadron, 106th Cavalry Regiment was the top U.S. team.

The team from Bravo Troop based in Dixon, Illinois, placed second overall with only the 42nd Brigade Reconnaissance Company Royal Netherlands Army barely edging the Illinois team out of first. The competition was held May 1-5 at Fort Benning, Georgia.

It was another strong showing from the 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team and the 2-106th Cavalry. A team from Illinois placed third in the 2017 competition, which is held every two years.

The Gainey Cup was named after Command Sgt. Maj. William Gainey, a distinguished leader known for his unwavering military bearing. This was symbolized by the steel ball bearing from an M1 Abrams Main Battle Tank that Gainey carried in his pocket. Through his inspiring leadership, Gainey left a lasting legacy of excellence that continues to motivate soldiers to push

themselves to new heights.

The competition challenged Cavalry Scout Troopers to demonstrate their competence, physical and mental stamina, and competitive spirit. Events included various public demonstrations, land navigation, knowledge of various weapon systems, physical and mental tests, and it culminates with the final charge.

“It is a huge morale boost for everyone to show that even National Guard teams can go out there and compete with the best,” said Capt. James T. Watkins of Davenport, Iowa, Commander of the Bravo Troop 2-106th Cavalry Regiment. “We sent a team in 2017 and we placed third. Then they brought a lot of lessons back and that’s how we’ve developed all of our training plans.”

Watkins said with the 2023 Gainey Cup, the unit did their own internal tryouts.

“It was a huge test for these guys. It was tough, realistic training and we thought it would be. These Soldiers outperformed the best that there was,” said Watkins.

Staff Sgt. Michael Gamble of Tacoma, Illinois, said the train up

with the Warrior Training Center in Fort Benning, Georgia, was a confidence builder for the team to prep and get ready.

“I felt like we had a solid squad going into the competition and all the guys I was working with were highly motivated,” said Gamble. “We put in a good amount of work for the short amount of time that we had to work with during the train up.”

Gamble said it was the team’s spirit, drive and desire to go out and represent the National Guard that led to the team’s success.

“You know, throughout my career, whether it’s been on deployments or schools or anything else, there’s almost this lack of an expectation for the National Guard and I think every time you can disprove that, it really helps us as an organization,” said Gamble.

Spc. William Pitney, of DeKalb, Illinois, said he found maintaining momentum was difficult across the competition because the competitors were faced with varying levels of tests throughout each day of competition.

“Just making sure you could maintain the momentum and keep pushing through each event was pretty strenuous,” said Pitney. “It’s a massive physical and mental challenge because not only are you pushing super hard during some events, but some of those are also technically challenging at the same time.”

Spc. Evan Quinn of Ashton, Illinois, said he found the competition to be an awesome test of not only scout skills, necessary scout skills, but also unit cohesion and working as a team.

“I think it says a lot about our unit. We have a high standard we hold ourselves accountable to as Bravo Troopers and we maintain that standard across the board,” said Quinn.



**LIVING HISTORY:
CIVIL WAR ENCAMPMENT AT STATE MILITARY MUSEUM**

Living historians with the 114th Illinois Volunteer Infantry set up a Civil War encampment at the Illinois State Military Museum, which preserves and educates the public on the history of the Illinois National Guard. The encampment, a yearly event, tied in to the Illinois National Guard's 300th Birthday on May 9.



ILNG Joint Staff Director of Plans, Operations and Training promoted to colonel

By Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

SPRINGFIELD, III. –Illinois Army National Guard Soldier Andrew Adamczyk, of Springfield, Illinois, was promoted to the rank of colonel in a ceremony at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum April 28.



"I am honored and humbled to be standing here today in front of my leadership, mentors, comrades, family and friends," Adamczyk said. "Thank you for the trust and confidence in me to fulfill this important role in the organization."

Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, Assistant Adjutant General - Army and Commander of the Illinois Army National Guard said Adamczyk exhibits the qualities every leader must have in order to be successful.

"Great leaders are decisive, able to communicate effectively, lead by example, are willing to put in the work, care about the people you are responsible for, and care about the organization they represent," Boyd said. "These qualities describe Andrew because he understands what it takes to be a great leader."

Boyd said promoting someone to colonel is a great day.

"Any day you get to pin on the colonel rank is a great day, because not too many people make it to that level," he said. "It is truly an honor to promote someone to colonel because that means you have qualified officers ready to take that next step."

Boyd thanked Adamczyk's family for their support throughout his career.

"Thank you for supporting Andrew all these years," Boyd said. "Without your support of our families, we couldn't do what we love to do and that's serve our country and this organization."

Adamczyk, the Director of Plans, Operations, and Readiness of the Joint Staff, Illinois National Guard, advises and assists the Adjutant General of Illinois with joint and combined multinational training and exercises, plans, and policy recommendations.

"The ability to serve my country, our great state and our community and serve with all of you has been a joy and privilege," Adamczyk said. "There are three groups of people who influence me to continue to accomplish more. They are my fellow members of the Illinois National Guard, the non-profit organizations I'm involved in such as the National Guard Association of Illinois, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Capital Car Club, and the Gold Star Mission. I'm proud to serve alongside you each day."



Adamczyk said the third group of people is his family.

"Thank you to my mom and my siblings. Because of you I had the best childhood, and my in-laws, which make it easier to be away from home and serve," he said. "Lastly, I want to thank my wife, Rachael. Thank you for your support and thank you for being my best half."

Adamczyk enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1995 and joined the Illinois Army National Guard in 2000. He served with Company A, 133rd Signal Battalion, based in Crestwood, Illinois, and Company C, 341st Military Intelligence Company, based in Chicago, Illinois, before earning his commission as a second lieutenant through the Illinois National Guard Officer Candidate School in 2003. He has served in a variety of positions throughout the Illinois National Guard and has deployed on multiple overseas missions.

Adamczyk deployed to Poland to become a Garrison Commander with a U.S. Army unit in Poland supporting the European Defense Initiative and Operation Atlantic Resolve.

Easton Soldier retires after 25 years of service

By Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. –Command Sgt. Maj. Brandon Golden, of Easton, Illinois, the 129th Regiment (Regional Training Institute) senior enlisted advisor and Commandant of the Regional Training Institute, retired from the Illinois Army National Guard after 25 years of service in a ceremony on April 23 at the Illinois Military Academy, Camp Lincoln, Springfield, Illinois.

“Two things come to mind when I think about Command Sergeant Major Golden,” said Lt. Col. Wyatt Bickett, of Smithton, Illinois, deputy commander of the 129th Regiment (RTI). “Those two things are protecting Soldiers and growing leaders. It’s not just about telling Soldiers what to do and then have them do it. It’s about growing them to replace him someday.”



Bickett said. “It says a lot about what he does outside of the uniform with so many of you here today.”

Bickett said Golden has a long legacy and history in the military police.

“Command Sergeant Major Golden has had an influence not only in the Illinois National Guard

but also overseas on multiple mobilizations and overseas combat tours,” Bickett said. “He was integral to the success of the 33rd Military Police Battalion during the civil disturbance state active duty mission by working with both state and federal organizations.”

Bickett told Golden it has been a pleasure working with him at the RTI.

“We’re sad to see you go but proud of the job you have done,” Bickett said.

Golden said the Illinois Army National Guard has been a great career and thanked his family for their support.

“Rachel, thank you for your support throughout my career,”

he said. “I am looking forward to spending more time with my family.”

Golden enlisted in the Illinois Army National Guard Jan. 30, 1998 as a military police officer. He served in the 233rd Military Police (MP) Company, based in Springfield, holding every position from private through operations sergeant. Golden also served as the first sergeant of the 333rd MP Company, based at Fort Sheridan, Illinois, the RTI’s Quality Assurance noncommissioned officer, the 33rd MP Battalion operations sergeant and the 33rd

MP Battalion command sergeant major. He has served as the 129th RTI Commandant since Sept. 2.

Golden, a traditional Soldier, is the training coordinator for the Springfield Police Department.



Bickett thanked Golden’s wife, Rachel, son Zachary, and daughter Olivia for their support throughout his career.

“It’s not just the service member who serves, but also the family, including the extended family,”





King's Guard

Illinois commemorates 78th anniversary of the rescue of King Leopold III by the 106th Cavalry Regiment

By Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. -The Illinois National Guard commemorated the 78th anniversary of the rescue of Belgium King Leopold III during World War II with Honorary Consul Patrick Van Nevel of the Kingdom of Belgium as part of events commemorating the Illinois National Guard's 300th birthday in Springfield May 6.

Rain tampered the planned outdoor events and forced the ceremony to take cover inside Union Station, near the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum and Library.

Van Nevel said that most Europeans, especially Belgians, love American Veterans and Soldiers and are thankful for their role in liberating them in World War II and helping ensure their post-war security. "The gratefulness of most European people and their appreciation is indescribable," he said. "The bond between our nations will continue as we work together."

Illinois National

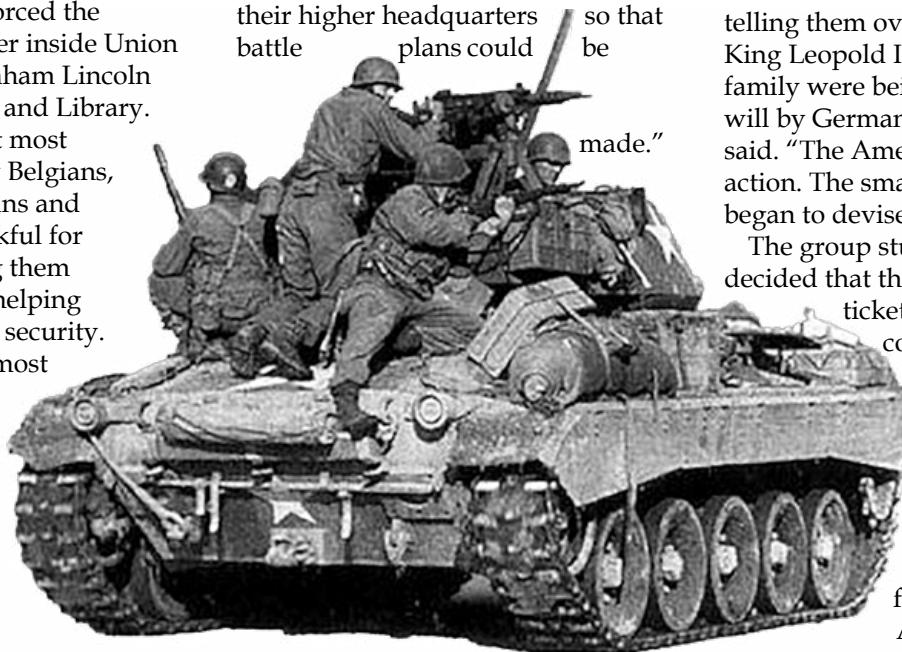
Guard Command Historian Adriana Schroeder shared the story of the king's rescue during the ceremony.

"It was early May 1945. The 106th Cavalry had slogged through the battlefields of Europe for 11 months, serving as scouts," she said. "Their mission was to locate the enemy and engage them just long enough to find out their strength and position and report that information back to their higher headquarters so that battle plans could be

Schroeder said the 106th was held in high regard and became known for conducting actions that held off the Germans long enough so that the Army could shift forces around to meet the threat and save the allied supply lines.

"Officers of the 106th were performing reconnaissance missions through a couple of small towns and several local residents kept telling them over and over that King Leopold III of Belgium and his family were being held against their will by German Nazi Soldiers," she said. "The American decided to take action. The small group of officers began to devise a plan.

The group studied maps and decided that they already had their ticket into the enemy compound. Just the day before, a Soldier had stolen back a Mercedes from the German foreign minister after the Germans had stolen it from a local family." As they approached



the German-held compound, one of the 106th officers, Lt. Bob Moore, told his fellow Illinoisians, "If anybody is thinking about changing their mind it's too late." The group of seven officers only had their pistols.

"However, seconds later, the ruse worked, and the Germans waved in what they thought was a German staff car," she said. "Eventually, they made their way through the building and were greeted by the king's assistant. Much to the relief of the officers, the 17 Germans guarding the king feared the advancing Russians and were more than happy to surrender to the Americans."

Schroeder said the rescue had moved the Americans past the lines agreed to by the U.S. and Russia.

"In Lieutenant Moore's words, ... 'when you rescue a king, word gets around quickly and the Russian leaders were not happy,'" she said.

Schroeder said King Leopold III later presented the seven officers with medals and addressed them at an awards ceremony.

"To the officers and men of the 106th Cavalry Group, the 7th of May 1945 is a date which I shall never forget, for it was on that day that my family and I had the good fortune to be delivered from the enemy by your unit," the king said. "I am

especially happy to be able to express here my profound gratitude to you for this act. I cannot doubt but that this association will reaffirm the bonds which unite Belgium and the great American nation."

Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, Assistant Adjutant General - Army and Commander of the Illinois Army National Guard, told the crowd it is an honor to commemorate the shared history of the Illinois National Guard and the Kingdom of Belgium.

"It is an honor to celebrate the rescue of King Leopold III during World War II, and the shared history between Belgium and the Illinois National Guard," said Boyd. "Although this event happened almost 80 years ago, it is still relevant today. It is part of the bond between Belgium and the U.S. military."

Boyd said the partnership between the United States' and Belgium's armed forces has a long history.

"This partnership has proven to be an incredibly beneficial relationship for both sides," he said.

The friendship between the United States and Belgium dates to World War I, Boyd said.

"Our friendship is strong and enduring. Our two nations have been allies since World War I, and since then, we have worked closely together on many important issues," he said. "Today, our partnership continues to be strong, and nowhere is this more evident than in the realm of defense."

The United States and Belgium have a long-standing



military relationship that spans back decades. Since the end of World War II, the U.S. military has maintained a significant presence in Belgium, primarily in support of NATO's efforts to safeguard Europe's security.

"Just last week Southern Strike wrapped up at the Combat Readiness Training Center in Mississippi," said Boyd. "There more than 200 Belgian military personnel, from the land, air and medical components trained side-by-side with National Guard forces."

Boyd said the U.S. military has also played a crucial role in supporting Belgium's efforts to combat terrorism.

"After the terrorist attacks in Brussels in 2016, the United States immediately offered assistance to Belgian authorities," he said. "The U.S. military provided critical intelligence and support to the Belgian authorities, and we continue to work together to prevent future attacks."

Boyd said the typical citizen of Illinois may not realize the importance of our international partnership with Belgium, but members of the U.S. armed forces do.

Those of us who have trained, worked and fought with our friends and allies know the importance of working together to ensure freedom and democracy for our



nations and to promote liberty throughout the world," he said. "We look forward to continuing to work together to ensure the safety and prosperity of our respective nations and the world at large."

Col. Michael Eastridge, former commander of the 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, the higher headquarters of the 2nd Squadron, 106th Cavalry Regiment, said the unit is proud of the history and of the skill, courage and daring it took to pull off this rescue from behind enemy lines.

"We don't know what would have happened to the king from either his Nazi captors or from the Russians if it were not for our Soldiers from Illinois," Eastridge said. "We do know that he continued his reign after the war and whenever he visited the United States he made a point of meeting with his Illinois National Guard rescuers. We also know that this rescue helped to bring close allies even closer.

Eastridge said it's important for the Illinois National Guard to teach this history to our young Soldiers and Airmen. "They need to understand what the bravery and initiative of just a few troops led by a young lieutenant can have on the direction of world history," he said



Eastridge said there are a lot of differences in the equipment between today's Cavalry Soldier and that of a Cavalry Soldier in World War II.

"The equipment and weaponry we have today is stronger, faster, more accurate, and more lethal," he said. "Our communications equipment is more secure and more reliable and more interoperable for joint operations."

He said there's not much difference between today's individual Cavalry Soldier and the Cavalry Soldier in World War II.

"Today's Soldier generally has a higher education level and there are women in the U.S. Army's Cavalry today," he said. "However, there is the same daring and courage in our ranks today as there was in Lt.

Moore and his troops. There are still Soldiers who plan well, are innovative and creative, and execute those plans with excellence. There are still Soldiers willing to put their lives on the line for the greater good."

Van Nevel, the Honorary Consul of the Kingdom of Belgium, said he was honored to represent Belgium at the event and to commemorate this shared history between the Illinois National Guard and Belgium.

He said that the relationship between Belgium and the United States is vital to his nation. "The smaller the country, the more important is its outreach to the world."

"We depend on each other and need to work with each other," he added.

Van Nevel said Belgium is about one-third of the area of Illinois and has a population of about 12 million people, about a million less than the Land of Lincoln.

However, Belgium is a vital NATO ally and is home to NATO headquarters. Also, according to the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Belgium and Illinois did \$1.05 billion in trade in 2021 and that number has been growing. The small European nation is Illinois' 12th largest export market.

Van Nevel congratulated the Illinois National Guard on its 300th birthday and thanked the Illinois National Guard members for their service. General Boyd presented Honorary Consul Van Nevel with an Illinois plaque to thank him for his participation in the Illinois National Guard commemoration.



Champaign Soldier hangs up the uniform after nearly 30 years of service

By Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

SPRINGFIELD, III. – Illinois Army National Guard Lt. Col. Brian Maloney of Champaign, the U.S. Property and Fiscal Office Comptroller, retired after 28 years of military service including 16 years as a member of the Illinois Army National Guard.

“You came to USPFO in 2009 and what a great relationship and friendship that has been,” said Col. Brian Creech, the U.S. Property and Fiscal Officer for Illinois. “We hate to see you go, but we understand.”

Creech thanked Maloney’s family, including parents, John and Judy Maloney, for their support throughout his career.

“Mom and Dad, you raised an awesome son,” Creech said. “As an organization, we wouldn’t be where we’re at without him and all he brought to the table.”

Maloney thanked his wife, Melissa, and children for their support.

“Thank you to my wife, Melissa. Without your love and support I wouldn’t have made it through these past many years,” he said. “To my daughter Kelly, and son, Alex, you put up with my many deployments, missed birthdays and special events. Mom and Dad, your support and love monumentally shaped me as a person and set me up for success in life.”

Maloney said the Champaign Police Department has been very supportive of his career.

“I couldn’t have been successful in the Illinois

National Guard without their support,” he said.

Maloney said it has been a long career but one that has yielded many perks along the way.



“It has been a long 28 years, but I have had so many wonderful memories, friends and mentors,” he said. “Today is a sad, bittersweet day for me as I reflect on the past 28 years. It really went by in what seemed like a flash. Going into the Illinois National Guard after I came off active duty was truly the best decision I made.”

Maloney said when he joined the Illinois National Guard in 2006

it was transforming into a more professional staff.

“The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 made the state militias relevant again,” he said. “The

Illinois National Guard didn’t miss a beat in that respect. Citizen-Soldier has become a cliché, but it’s true. When we deploy, we draw from the civilian skills of our Soldiers as well as the trained warrior we have developed.”

Maloney commissioned as a field artillery officer May 22, 1995, serving in the active duty U.S. Army until 2006, when he left active duty and joined the Illinois Army National Guard.

Throughout his career, he has held a variety

of assignments including USPFO financial manager, planning and operations officer for 634th Brigade Support Battalion, and assistant professor of Military Science at the University of Illinois.

Maloney has deployed multiple times throughout his career, including to Afghanistan with the 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team in 2008-2009, and in support of COVID contingency operations from April 2020 to July 2022.

Maloney is a police lieutenant for the Champaign Police Department.

He received a Meritorious Service Medal for his many years of service.



Chicago Soldier recognized as Medical Readiness NCO of the Year

By Trent Fouche, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

CHICAGO – Sgt. 1st Class Haley Keenan of Chicago is known by many for her positive attitude and witty humor, but in addition to her ability to boost the morale of fellow Soldiers, she is now the Medical Readiness Noncommissioned Officer (NCO) of the Year.

Keenan has served as the 108th



Sustainment Brigade Medical Readiness NCO for five years, and on April 17 she was recognized for her efforts. Winning the national prize distinguished Keenan from her peers here in Illinois, and throughout the nation.

“I feel honored to be recognized as Medical Readiness NCO of the Year,” Keenan said. “I have met dozens of peers that serve in the same role in other states, and I can attest that I had strong competition. Medical readiness is paramount to the readiness posture of the organization, which in turn lends itself to critical support of civilians and Soldiers. Every mission requires medically ready Soldiers; when a Soldier’s health suffers, the mission suffers.”

Soldiers from around the country competed for the title, but in the end, there could only be one winner.

Lt. Col. Danielle Price serves as the 108th Sustainment Brigade officer-in-charge and commander of the 198th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion. She said she wasn’t surprised to hear Keenan was the winner.

“Sgt. 1st Class Keenan is

a true professional and very knowledgeable about her area of expertise,” said Price. “She is a combat medic specialist, as well as a human resources specialist. She works around a lot of commissioned officers and senior non-commissioned officers. That being said, she knows how to keep her poise. She’s very confident and I feel her knowledge, as well as her area of expertise, are what have helped her to be recognized as the Medical Readiness NCO of the year.”

Keenan transferred from the Minnesota Army National Guard to the Illinois Army National Guard in 2016. She now serves as an Active Guard Reserve (AGR) Soldier for the 108th Sustainment Brigade. As the brigade medical dental NCO, Keenan manages medical documentation for both full-time and traditional Illinois Army National Guard Soldiers. She is also responsible for advising, assisting and counseling on medical personnel matters. Sgt. 1st Class Keenan graduated from the Illinois Army National Guard’s 129th Regiment’s Regional Training Institute (RTI) Officer Candidate School (OCS) and has decided to hip-pocket her commission as an AGR Soldier.



2nd Lt. Angelica De Los Reyes, who met Keenan while in OCS, said she appreciated having NCOs like Keenan in the class for support.

“I’ve known Keenan my entire career, which has been roughly two years,” said De Los Reyes. “After spending time with her, and seeing

her interact with others, I noticed how encouraging she is. She has a knack for motivating. I rode with her from Chicago to Springfield for OCS and she is a great help for people like me who haven’t had as much time in the Guard. I’m a couple of months older than her, but I feel that she has wisdom that goes beyond her age. I can recall in preparation for a ruck march, she had first aid kits and even fed us at her house to ensure that we were well nourished after we were done. She’s mindful of everyone and really takes the time to put things together.”

For Keenan, she feels she is simply doing her job as a leader.



“I continue to stay motivated through Soldier interactions. I specifically chose to serve in this capacity because I firmly believe that Soldiers contribute their best efforts when in full health, and every mission requires medically ready Soldiers. The individual interactions I have with people to resolve their unique needs is very rewarding.”

As a senior leader, Price said she is happy to see new leaders continue to emerge in the Illinois National Guard.

“Her experiences after serving as an NCO, her experiences throughout her career, and her character will serve her well,” said Price. “She’s been there and done that, which will make her relatable to the Soldiers that will one day follow her. Her winning Medical Readiness NCO of the year is just an example of what is to come.”

DIGGERS & DOUGHBOYS

Remembering the Battle of Hamel with our Aussie Mates

By Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs



SPRINGFIELD, ILL. –The Illinois National Guard and Consul General of Australia Chris Elstoft commemorated the first time U.S. forces fought side-by-side with the Australians as part of the series of events celebrating the Illinois National Guard’s 300th birthday in Springfield on May 6.

Those U.S. military forces that fought side-by-side with the Australians in the July 4, 1918, Battle of Hamel were from the Illinois National Guard’s 33rd Infantry Division. The Battle of Hamel was just the beginning of a strong and close relationship, Elstoft said.

“Our shared history is still vital in today’s friendship.”

Rain tampered the planned outdoor events and forced the ceremony to take cover inside Union

Station, near the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum and Library.

Illinois National Guard Command Historian Adriana Schroeder shared the history of the Illinois National



Guard and Australian forces during the Battle of Hamel, July 4, 1918.

“In late June 1918, the 33rd Division was attached to the British Fourth Army for training in the rear sector,” Schroeder said. “During this time, Companies C & E, 131st Infantry and Companies A and G, 132nd Infantry were selected and attached to the Australian Corps with the mission of capturing the town of Hamel. Precisely at midnight on July 3, the attacking troops climbed out of the trenches and opened their Independence Day by crawling to the starting point. There they waited for the zero hour. At 3:10 a.m. on July 4, after eight minutes of artillery preparation, 1,000 American troops marched with three Australian brigades and attacked from behind a rolling barrage of artillery fire.”

Side by side, the Australians and Americans working together silenced the Germans guns and crews as they encountered them.

Schroeder said the troops overcame German resistance by 4 a.m., halting for 10 minutes to reorganize behind a heavy smoke screen and reached the final objective at 5 a.m.

“At dusk the enemy launched a counterattack, capturing five Australians and two Americans and about 80 yards of the frontline trench,” she said. “Company G, 132nd Infantry participated in repulsing the counterattack. Right before the enemy withdrew, the first platoon of Company E flanked the right, while a platoon of the Australians flanked the left. They not only recaptured the five Australian Soldiers and two American Soldiers but made gains in capturing 57 German Soldiers and secured their machine guns.”

The conduct of the Americans elicited high praise from the Australian commanders, but even more valued was the verdict of the Australian Soldiers, she told those gathered at the ceremony.

“The history of the 131st reads, ‘The men of the 131st will forever

hold as their slogan the comment of the comrades in arms in that Fourth of July battle: ‘You’ll do us, Yanks, but you’re a bit rough,’” she said.

“Our shared history is still vital in today’s friendship.”



On July 5, Lt. Gen. John Monash, commander of the Australian Army, penned a letter to Maj. Gen. George Bell, commander of the 33rd Division. In part it read, “that Soldiers of the United States and of Australia should have thus been

associated for the first time in such close cooperation of the battlefield, is an historic event of such significance that it will live forever in the annals of our respective nations.”

Maj. Gen. Rodney

Boyd, Assistant Adjutant General - Army and Commander of the Illinois Army National Guard, said the Australian and United States military forces have a deep and long-standing partnership.

“As you heard today, this partnership started with the Illinois National Guard and the Australians in the Battle of Hamel,” he said. “Since the Battle of Hamel, Australians and Americans have fought together in every major international conflict. We are the strongest of allies.”

Boyd quoted Shakespeare in King Henry “We few, we happy few, we band of brothers. For he today that sheds his blood with me shall be my brother.”

“The Australians have shed their blood with us many times and they are our brothers - and sisters,” he said. “The U.S. and Australia face greater security issues as the result of an increasingly assertive China. But we face those challenges





together.”

The U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin recently said that “The United States and Australia share a vision of a region where countries can determine their own futures, and they should be able to seek security and prosperity free from coercion and intimidation.”

“For decades, our two nations have stood side by side, defending our shared values and fighting for the freedoms we hold dear. We have faced numerous challenges together, from the jungles of Vietnam to the mountains of Afghanistan to the deserts of Iraq and, of course, to the many battlefields of World War I and World War II,” Boyd said. “It all started with a textbook victory in 1918 over the Germans in a little village called Le Hamel in northern France. Our military partnership is built on a foundation of trust, respect, shared goals, and shared sacrifices. We recognize that the security of our two nations is closely intertwined, and we work tirelessly to ensure that our militaries are prepared to respond to any threat, anywhere in the world. We are proud that the Illinois National Guard was there at the very beginning of this strong relationship between two militaries and two great nations.”

Illinois Army National Guard

Col. Michael Eastridge, former commander of the 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, which holds the lineage of many of the units which fought side by side with the Australians at the Battle of Hamel, said the Soldiers were together less than a month before the Battle of Hamel.

“The American Soldiers were green, but anxious to fight,” he said. “The Australian Soldiers were battle-hardened after years of warfare.”

He said the only disagreements between the Australians and the Americans were when one of our Illinois farm boys occasionally confused an Australian for a Brit.

“The Diggers hated to be confused for a Tommie – in their view they were tougher and better fighters than the British,” he said. “But they respected the Americans’ courage under fire.”

Eastridge said the Australians and the Illinois National Guard Soldiers worked closely and interchangeably.

“During the battle, Americans were paired with Australian runners and medics to assist in the U.S. Soldiers’ seasoning. The value of this pairing of experience with inexperience proved valuable,” he said. “The Diggers and Doughboys were a great match. They still are. One thing that hasn’t changed is

the swagger of both American and Australian Soldiers. The confidence that they can overcome any obstacle and defeat any enemy is shared by both our American Soldiers and our Australian allies. And we are still great friends.”

Elstoft, the Consul General, said that Australia also values its shared history with the Illinois National Guard dating back to the Battle of Hamel. “We fought side by side, but I believe you were under our command,” he said, smiling.

That, he said, “has not happened very much since,” as the U.S. has become among the world’s strongest military powers. Much like the name Lincoln is posted all around Illinois, the name of the Australian Commander of both Australian and U.S. forces during the Battle of Hamel, Gen. John Monash, is posted all around Australia as one of their nation’s most prominent national heroes.

Eastridge said the Australians got along great with the Americans from “the get-go.”

“Both shared a tough frontier swagger. They also shared a democratic outlook on military rules and regulations and, honestly, they both shared a dislike of the haughtiness and attitude of British officers toward the Soldiers of its former colonies.”

He said that the Americans and Australians still get along great, and both get along better with the British now too.



EVERLASTING LEGACY

1723 - 2023
300



Illinois celebrates its 300th birthday

By Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. -It was a birthday 300 years in the making.

The Illinois National Guard celebrated the milestone anniversary during a full day of events in Springfield, May 6, with international partners from Australia, Belgium, and Poland, as well as other invited guests.

Although weather put a damper on some of the outdoor events, in true military fashion the Illinois National Guard adapted, improvised, and overcame, and moved some of the events indoors.

The day-long events started with a complete historic timeline of military uniforms and equipment at the Illinois State Military Museum in Springfield and ended with an invitation-only birthday gala at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum.

“The Illinois National Guard and the National Guards of the other 53-states and territories have never been more relevant than it is today. Our relevance is a byproduct of our legacy.”

Events moved downtown Springfield to the area around Union Park, where military vehicles were set up for display. Weather forced the two afternoon ceremonies honoring the shared history of the Illinois National Guard and the Kingdom of Belgium, which marked the anniversary of the Illinois National Guard rescuing King Leopold III from German Nazis in World War II, and later the shared history of the Illinois National Guard and the Australian military during

the Battle of Hamel on July 4, 1918 in World War I, which marked the first time U.S. military forces fought alongside Australian military forces.

“It is an honor to celebrate our shared history with our international partners,” said Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, Assistant

Adjutant General – Army and Commander of the Illinois Army National Guard. “These friendships have endured for so many years, and

these partnerships have proven to be incredibly beneficial relationships for all.”



Boyd said marking the 300th anniversary gives Illinois National Guard members a moment to reflect and celebrate, but it shouldn't stop there.

"This should also be a moment where we consider the future and how we intend to shape it," he said. "We must leverage our historical track-record of churning out talented leaders, building strong multinational partnerships, and helping our friends and neighbors to solve immediate and future challenges."

The afternoon's events culminated in a concert performed by the Air National Guard Band of the Midwest, based at Peoria, Illinois, and a special birthday cake cutting ceremony.

"300 years! Our State, our communities, and our Illinois National Guard look a lot different today than 300-years ago, but there is a lot that hasn't changed over this time," said Boyd. "The first units were comprised of local farmers, fur trappers, blacksmiths, craftsmen, and other occupations who gathered and trained in communities across the Illinois territory. The civilian occupations of our Guard members are different today, but their readiness to set aside civilian careers and take up a post to protect their neighbors remains the same."

Boyd said the Illinois National Guard's history is interwoven with the history of large and small communities throughout the state and has a great impact in the history of the United States.

"Most of us know 23-year-old Abraham Lincoln served as a Captain in the Illinois Militia during the Black Hawk War, many years before he served as commander-in-chief, leading our nation during the Civil War," he said. "Years later when he was President, he told a group of lawmakers that being elected captain in the Illinois Militia was 'a success which gave me more pleasure than any I have had since.'"

Boyd said during his service



in the Black Hawk War, Lincoln learned to be a leader, and he gained first-hand experience of the hardships of a Soldiers' daily life.

But many more careers were impacted by serving in the Illinois Militia and Illinois National Guard. The practical, hands-on education in leadership learned through service in the Illinois Militia and Illinois National Guard propelled the careers of eight future governors, more than a dozen future federal legislators, three future U.S. Ambassadors, hundreds of judges, mayors, police and fire chiefs, and thousands of small business owners.



The Illinois National Guard's history right here in Springfield is amazing. We mustered for two wars, the Spanish-American War and World War One, right at the



State Fairgrounds," he said. "Illinois National Guard Soldiers and Airmen going back hundreds of years - Veterans of this nation's wars - are buried in Camp Butler National Cemetery and near Lincoln in Oak Ridge Cemetery."

Boyd said along the way the Illinois National Guard has answered our Nation's call over-and-over again, helping achieve military victories, initiating and strengthening our Nation's relationships with our allies and partners, and has built lasting relationships with partner nations.

"The men and women, the missions, and the moments make our history rich and vibrant," he said.

The capstone of the Springfield events was an invitation-only gala at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum.

Nearly 300 invited guests were in attendance as Gen. (ret.) Frank Grass, the 27th chief of the National Guard Bureau, spoke about the changes the National

Guard has undergone since its early beginnings, and Mariusz Blaszczak, Polish Defense Minister, talked about the long friendship the Illinois National Guard and Poland have shared as part of the State Partnership Program.

"The cooperation of the Polish Armed Forces and the Illinois National Guard is a great example of close military ties between Poland and the United States," said Blaszczak. "In July 1993 the Polish Armed Forces joined the State Partnership Program. The Illinois National Guard was chosen to work with us. Our partnership was sealed long before Poland was able to join NATO."

Blaszczak said the focus initially was to learn and reach proper military standards.

"This year we're celebrating the 30th anniversary of this event," he said. "I'm very confident that without your help, it could have taken us much longer to be at the level we are today with training, equipment, and capabilities."

Blaszczak said Poland was

honored by the Illinois National Guard co-deployment participation on every Polish Armed Forces rotation to Iraq and Afghanistan from 2003-2020.

"This participation involved more than 30 deployments and more than 32,000 Polish Soldiers," he said. "I'm sure many life-long relationships were built during those deployments. What is equally important is we are doing 35 to 40 annual activities under the State Partnership Program."

Blaszczak said even if the Illinois National Guard doesn't have the capabilities Poland is looking for, the Illinois National Guard uses the sources from other states to support their partner.

"Let me congratulate you on being chosen as one of the top three in the state partnership competition among 88 partnerships across 100 countries," he said. "It tells a lot not only about the quality you're able to provide to Poland, your partner, but it also proves it has been appreciated and awarded here in your own country. We are proud to have such a steadfast partner."

Grass said the National Guard has changed significantly since its beginning.

"In a way, the National Guard has come full circle since the 16 and 17-hundreds. Then, colonial citizens relied on the organized militias, like the Illinois Militia, to protect them from hostile groups and respond in times of emergency," said Grass. "Today...the Army National Guard provides the active Army nearly 40-percent of its operational force, and the Air National Guard provides the Air Force 30-percent of its operational force."

Grass, who often spent summers visiting grandparents in St. Genevieve, Missouri, not far from the birthplace of the Illinois National Guard in Kaskaskia, Illinois, said the closeness of communities down there is precisely the sense you get when you visit any National Guard unit in the nation.

Grass said that for 300 years here in Illinois, and for a total of more than 386-years, the National Guard

has answered the call of our nation and our neighbors.

"National Guard Soldiers and



Airmen are protecting our citizens in ways today that the settlers in 1723 could never imagine," Grass said. "Our mission has changed, but our readiness and relevance hasn't.

"This has imparted a lasting impact on our citizens and our communities. It defines the National Guard's legacy," he said. "The Illinois National Guard and the National Guards of the other 53-states and territories have never been more relevant than it is today. Our relevance is a byproduct of our legacy."

Grass said the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks made the National Guard relevant again.

"Before the September 11, 2001 terrorists attacks, being prepared



to fight and win America's wars was not the National Guard's top priority," he said. "We did what we needed to be somewhat prepared with the resources we had. Being prepared was a goal, but the general thought was...we would have time to get ready if we were ever needed. However 9-11 changed that to 'we

gotta be ready to go, right now.'"

Grass said since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, more than one million National Guard Soldiers and Airmen, including almost 30,000 from the Illinois National Guard, have deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Kuwait, Guantanamo Bay, Ukraine, and dozens of other locations around the globe.

"In a short amount of time, and with significant investment, the National Guard went from providing almost zero operational force to the active Army and Air Force to nearly 40 percent and 30 percent respectively," he said.

"At the same time, here at home, the National Guard supports the communities they serve in a myriad of ways. In 2020, National Guard Soldiers and Airmen served their communities a record 10.9 million man-days, supporting COVID-19, wildfires, civil disturbances, hurricanes, and many other missions."

Grass said that during the Cold War, the National Guard was relegated to a strategic reserve of the Army and Air Force. However, after the Cold War ended, the State Partnership Program was established, where National Guard states were paired with former Soviet Block nations to foster mutual interests and establish long-term relations across all levels of society.

"The Illinois National Guard's SPP with Poland was one of the first partnerships established and, today, serves as the gold standard of partnerships," Grass said. "The SPP is a critical engagement tool to promote U.S. access, enhance military capabilities, improve interoperability and develop the principles of responsible government."

Grass emphasized that only the National Guard can do the SPP mission.

"The Active components cannot develop trust and credibility because their personnel change assignments quickly making long-term personal relationships impossible to establish and maintain," Grass said. "These

partnerships not only foster wartime allies, but they also promote the development of our partners' civil capabilities including emergency services. A great example of this is here in Illinois where the Illinois National Guard is facilitating connections between state emergency response agencies and Poland's fire service personnel."

Grass said the National Guard is relevant because, as former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates said, "our national security

Guard added to Grass' comments about the State Partnership Program.

"In addition to being our 300th anniversary, this year we are also celebrating the 30th anniversary of our State Partnership with Poland," Neely said. "Over these 30 years about 350 Soldiers and Airmen annually participate in military exchanges with the Armed Forces of Poland. To date we've conducted more than 400 bilateral events."

Neely said these bilateral

"You cannot tell the recent history of the Illinois National Guard without Poland and our State Partnership," Neely said. "We are grateful to have a large delegation of our Polish counterparts with us here this evening. Thank you for being great partners, and a great part of our Illinois National Guard history."

Neely said he expects the Illinois National Guard will change over the next 100 years, but the focus will remain the same.

"We should all comfortably



strategy depends upon securing the cooperation of other nations, and the National Guard secures that cooperation."

Grass said it's impossible to predict the challenges and missions the National Guard will face 300 years from now.

"But we should expect our State Governors and the Department of Defense to rely on the National Guard more, not less," he said. "Congratulations on 300 years of service and support to the citizens of Illinois."

Maj. Gen. Rich Neely, the Adjutant General of Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National

engagements have included lending the Illinois National Guard's experience and expertise to assist in establishing its Territorial Defense Forces in 2017, which is similar to the National Guard here in the U.S.

Neely said those exchanges go both ways. "In April of 2020 a Polish medical team came to Illinois to assist with the State's COVID-19 response," he said.

In addition, members of the Illinois National Guard co-deployed on every Polish rotation to Iraq and Afghanistan from 2003 to 2020, which involved more than 30 deployments and more than 32,000 Polish Soldiers.

expect that in a hundred years at our 400th anniversary the Illinois National Guard will be doing the same great things we do today and have always done," he said. "We should also expect to hear accounts of landmark innovations, success in cyber space, and effectively integrating emerging technologies including artificial intelligence.

Today, our Illinois National Guard looks vastly different than 300-years ago, and it will look vastly different in 300-years. And we will still need men and women willing to commit themselves to a larger cause."

S-FABULOUS

6/54th Conducts Pre-mobilization training at MTC

By Sgt. Trent Fouche, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs





Illinois' 6th Battalion, 54th Security Forces Assistance Brigade was in Marseilles May 2-6 for training and evaluations on a multitude of topics to include Improvised Explosive Devices (IED), Land Navigation, Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN), and Squad Tactics in preparation for upcoming mobilizations. After classroom instruction, Soldiers were given an opportunity to put their skills to the test using practical exercises.



Greenville Soldier hangs up the uniform after more than 20 years of service

By Sgt. 1st Class Bryan Spreitzer, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs



SPRINGFIELD, ILL. – Friends, family and colleagues gathered at the Illinois Military Academy in Springfield, May 7, to celebrate the retirement of Lt. Col. Susan Tomko.

Growing up on a farm in Greenville, with her older sister, Steph, and younger brother, James, a young Susan Tomko was into sports, lifeguarding, and running around with friends. When she turned 17, she felt a calling to join the military.



Both of her grandfathers had been in the military, one in the Army, the other in the Navy. As she tried to convince her parents to allow her to enlist, she told her mom, Gena, "If you don't let me do this, I'll always wish I had."

Her parents gave the "okay" and she enlisted as a combat medic with Company C (Medical), 634th Combat Support Battalion. Twenty-four years later, she retired as a lieutenant colonel in the Illinois Army National Guard. Throughout her career, Tomko has held many leadership positions: platoon leader, medical surgical nurse, public health nurse, chief of case management and clinic officer in charge. Her career culminated as the Senior Nurse for the Illinois Army National Guard.

Tomko deployed as part of Task Force Phoenix to Afghanistan from 2008-2009 in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. She said it was one of the most memorable experiences of her career.

"I'll always remember the innocence of the Afghan children," she said. "The way they'd run out and greet us on patrol, always smiling and giving us the 'thumbs up.'"

Cpt. Lyndsey Thorne, a chief case manager with Joint Force Headquarters Medical Detachment, said Tomko was a compassionate leader and a mentor to her and many others in the medical field.

"Even though you're shorter than me, I've always looked up to you," said Thorne. "And though we're only a couple years apart in age, I, like many others, consider you to be our 'Army mom.' You've always been there to mentor me and make me a better officer."

Col. Jayson Coble, commander of Joint Force Headquarters Medical Detachment, said Tomko's retirement was bittersweet, but much deserved.

"You're leaving some pretty big shoes to fill," said Coble. "You've been a great friend and an even better nurse and officer. Even though we'll still run into each other at the hospital, drill will be a much different place without you here."

Tomko said she'll have fond memories of serving, the stories,



winning 'clinic wars,' the camaraderie, the annual trainings and "too much mandatory fun."

"Even though I'm retiring, I'm still here," said Tomko. "Even though I'll miss the time here at drill and my Army family, it'll be nice to have my weekends back to focus more on my family."



Tomko said she was grateful for all who came to help her celebrate and that it had been an honor to serve with the Soldiers of "Charlie Med" and the "Med Det" and looks forward to her time with her family. Tomko will continue to serve the community as the charge nurse for St. John's pediatric intensive care unit in Springfield.



UNDER THE WHITE OAK

THE ILNG CELEBRATES ITS BIRTH IN KASKASKIA

By Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. – The Illinois National Guard returned to its roots to celebrate its 300th birthday May 9.

“This is sacred ground, or as near to it as we’re going to get,” Adriana Schroeder, Illinois National Guard Command Historian told about 75 people gathered in Kaskaskia, Illinois, near the location of Illinois Militia’s first muster under the

French on May 9, 1723. “History tells us society must have two things to survive, some sort of government and a military. Today, we are standing very near the location of the beginning of both for Illinois, the territorial legislature, and the birthplace of the Illinois National Guard by way of the Illinois militia.”

Schroeder said she was tasked in 2011 to determine the actual

birthdate of the Illinois National Guard by the Adjutant General of Illinois at that time, Maj. Gen. (ret.) William Enyart, who served as the 37th Adjutant General of Illinois and following his retirement, U.S. Congressman for District 12.

“This proved to be a challenge and there were obstacles,” she said. “I’m grateful for the help of a long list of historians who aided in my quest to find what I called the Holy Grail.”

Schroeder said once a date had been determined, the year didn’t match, so she continued with her research.

“On January 1, 1718, businessman John Law obtained a charter from the French King that granted him monopoly of French trade in the area known as the Illinois Country. Royal orders dictated a provision for civil government to be arranged for the new province of Illinois,” she said. “During the summer of 1718, French officials set out from Louisiana and journeyed to the area of southern Illinois. Among other governing associates, the party included Pierre Duque, Sieur de Boisebriant, Commandant; Captain Diron, Dartaguiette; two second lieutenants and a company of 100 French Soldiers.”

Schroeder said it was





Dartaguiette's diary, which was eventually translated into English, which determined the Illinois National Guard's birthdate.

"The inspector of Troops, Dartaguiette wrote in his diary, 'I called together all the inhabitants of this village [Kaskaskia] to whom I said that I had an order from the King to form a company of militia for the purpose of putting them in a position to defend themselves with greater facility against the incursions which the Indians, our enemies, might attempt, so I formed a company, after having selected four of the most worthy among them to put at the head. This company being under arms, I passed it in review the same day,'" Schroeder told the crowd. "Dartaguiette's diary marked the date as May 9, 1723, the

first of many hundreds of thousands of drills."

While Schroeder shared the history of how the Illinois National Guard began, Enyart talked about the future of the Illinois National Guard.

"Private Mason Patterson, of Steeleville, is the newest member of the Illinois National Guard here today. He represents the latest in a long lineage of proud Illinoisans who serve our great state and great nation," Enyart said. "Congratulations to you on being one of the few who stepped forward, raised your hand and, in the words of Thomas Jefferson, pledged life, liberty, and sacred honor to the Constitution and our freedoms."

Enyart urged the crowd to "celebrate the gift that Private Patterson, like so many before, has bestowed upon us."

"Their pledge to us is a signature on a blank check offering everything up to and including life for our defense whether it be from foreign attack, flood, or other calamity," he said. "As a Randolph County resident, you have now joined the ranks of history from the French militiamen of 300 years ago, to Presidents Lincoln and Grant, the riflemen of World Wars I and II, aircrews of the Persian Gulf war and the cyber warriors of today. You are now part of that long tradition of valor, both sung and unsung."

Brig. Gen. Mark Alessia, Director



of the Joint Staff, Illinois National Guard, said it was an honor to be in Kaskaskia to commemorate the Illinois National Guard's 300th anniversary.

"When you think about our humble beginnings starting here, the Illinois National Guard today represents 10,000 Soldiers and 3,000 Airmen, based in 49 communities around the state," Alessia said. "That is 13,000 individuals who stand ready and willing to serve the citizens of Illinois and our country."

Alessia described some of the feats of Illinois National Guard members throughout its 300-year history.

"Captain Abraham Lincoln served in the Black Hawk War. During the Mexican-American War, the 4th Illinois captured Santa Anna's leg



and Lieutenant Jones, from the 8th Volunteer Cavalry fired the first shot at the Battle of Gettysburg,” he said. “In World War I, 27,000 members of the Illinois National Guard served with nine earning the Medal of Honor. The 131st and 132nd Infantry Regiments fought side by side with the Australian military at the Battle of Hamel, the only time in World War I American Soldiers fought under a foreign command. In World War II, Illinois Guardsmen fought in the Pacific and Europe. The 106th Cavalry rescued Belgium’s King Leopold III, and the 33rd Division helped liberate the Philippines. Our members have served in Korea, Vietnam and in Desert Storm.”

Alessia said since September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, more than 29,000 Illinois National Guard members have mobilized in support of major U.S. operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

“That service continues today, with our members conducting mobilizations and exercises around the world,” he said. “The Illinois National Guard has not lost its roots and is still a community-based organization.”

Alessia said in 2020 alone, the Illinois National Guard conducted 20 domestic operations in Illinois totaling 400,000 duty days.

“The Soldiers and Airmen of the Illinois National Guard conducted flood response operations, cyber protection duties during the elections, security at both the state and our nation’s capitals, civil disturbance in Chicago, snow, and COVID support including providing 1.487 million vaccinations,” he said. “As we celebrate today’s 300th anniversary, the Illinois National Guard continues with our no fail missions to the citizens of Illinois and our nation, assuring we will always be ready and will always be there.”



Soldier battling cancer promoted to sergeant, awarded Medal of St. Barbara

By Spc. Dasianelle Burton, 139th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

CHICAGO – Spc. Maxwell Ehrlich of Chicago, Illinois, assigned to the Oregon National Guard’s Charlie Battery, 2-218th Field Artillery Battalion based in Portland, Oregon, was promoted to the rank of sergeant May 6, 2023, at the North Riverside Armory in Chicago Illinois.

Ehrlich was unable to return to Oregon for a promotion after being diagnosed with Stage 4 Terminal Astrocytoma in January this year. He has completely lost the use of his right arm and right leg. Despite all he is facing with the illness Ehrlich had one lifelong military goal he wanted to achieve.

“I had always wanted to make sergeant and was one of eight 13B on the order of merit list shortly before my diagnosis. Having this promotion come to fruition was a lot of work and the way it was done was nothing short of extraordinary and beyond anything I could have imagined,” said Ehrlich.

Ehrlich said the main driving force of getting him promoted was Sgt. 1st Class Tera Eilers, Protocol Noncommissioned Officer at the National Guard Bureau.

“Over the past couple months a Martin Luther King Jr. quote kept popping up in my head, ‘The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy’,” said Eilers during the ceremony. “Soldiers will always remember their recruiters, however, it’s not always the other way around. However,



Max you taught me lessons of positivity, humility, determination, courage and resilience and you will constantly inspire me and I will never forget you.”



During the ceremony Ehrlich was pinned by his wife Rebecca Raygoza and Staff Sgt. Tom Hoy. Ehrlich received a special letter from



Command Sgt. Maj. John T. Raines III, 13th Sergeant Major of the Army National Guard congratulating him on his achievements.

Ehrlich also was awarded the Order of Saint Barbara medal for his hard work and dedication during his military career. The Saint Barbara Medal is awarded to Field Artillery members who have demonstrated the highest standards of integrity and moral character.

Prior to joining the Army National Guard, Ehrlich served 10 years with the Coast Guard and two years with the California State Guard. In March 2020, he joined the Oregon Army National Guard and earned the occupational specialty 13B, Army cannon crew member.

At the U.S. Army Field Artillery Weapons Maintenance School, he earned an additional skill as a Weapon Maintenance Specialist and was named the Distinguished Honor Graduate.

In addition to thanking everyone for attending his promotion ceremony, Ehrlich thanks the Illinois National Guard for its assistance.

“The military has come full force in making sure both me and my family are taken care of,” said

Ehrlich. “We’re still in the early stages of things but the fact my National Guard family has come out in full force to support us in any way possible has been a testament to how we take care of our own. Having noncommissioned officers and a command team who truly care makes all the difference.”

Ehrlich also said he will continue to wear the uniform for as long as possible.



183rd Wing breaks ground on 24,000 square-foot civil engineering complex at Abe Lincoln Capital Airport

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. – U.S. Senator Dick Durbin and the Illinois National Guard broke ground Tuesday on a \$13.4 million 24,000-square-foot Base Civil Engineer Complex at the 183rd Wing on Abraham Lincoln Capital Airport.

The two-building complex will allow the 183rd Wing's approximately 70 Airmen in its Civil Engineer Squadron to train together in a modern facility equipped to house modern equipment. Currently the squadron is scattered across seven buildings on opposite ends of the base, three of which do not comply with federal anti-terrorism and force protection standards, two of which are over 50 years old and not designed for military civil engineering functions, and all seven of which have high operating and maintenance costs and are not energy efficient.

"Investing in our national security and supporting our dedicated servicemen and women is not just a responsibility, but a duty we owe to our great state and nation," said U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL). "This \$10.2 million in federal funding I secured for the new Illinois National Guard complex is a testament to our unwavering commitment to provide our guardsmen with the resources they need to continue executing their missions and maintain readiness for new missions in the future."



"We are grateful to our Congressional delegation for their assistance in moving this important project forward," said Maj. Gen. Rich Neely, the Adjutant General of Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National Guard. "Not only will this help in our training, but I believe this modern facility will also help our recruiting and retention efforts."

With Senator Durbin securing the majority of funds for the project through Congressionally Directed Spending – more commonly known as an earmark – in the Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22) Omnibus appropriations bill, the balance of the cost for the project will be drawn from other available federal funds. The project is slated to take two years to complete.

Springfield Mayor Misty Buscher and Airport Director Mark Hanna joined Durbin and Neely, along with the Assistant Adjutant General – Air and Commander of the Illinois Air National Guard Brig. Gen. Dan McDonough, and 183rd Wing Commander Col. Robert Gellner. Representatives from U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth's office and the of U.S. Rep. Nikki Budzinski were also present along with Sergio Pecori, the Chief Executive Officer of Hanson Professional Services, which designed the project and Jason Litteken, the President of Litteken Construction, the general contractor for the project.

MISSING NO LONGER



*MIA WWII casualty returned to Illinois,
interred at Camp Butler National
Cemetery*

By Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

SPRINGFIELD, ILL. – Eighty years ago American service members were engrossed in a great conflict pitting the United States and its Allies against Nazi-controlled Germany and the Axis powers.

On August 1, 1943; a small-town southern Illinoisan, 32-year-old Tech. Sgt. Harold Kretzer, was fighting in the skies over Ploiesti, Romania, to starve the Nazi war machine of the fuel it needed to continue to terrorize the world.

The “Wing Dinger” B-24 Liberator, would not return to the Allied airfields near Benghazi, Libya, that day. Kretzer was declared missing in action. The U.S. Army Air Forces Airman was assigned to the 66th Bombardment Squadron (Heavy), 44th Bombardment Group (Heavy), 8th Air Force. He was one of 225 Airmen lost along with 51 B-24 Liberators during Operation Tidal Wave. Kretzer was among those whose remains could not be identified and he was buried as an “unknown” first in Romania and then after the war ended he was transferred to an American cemetery in Belgium.

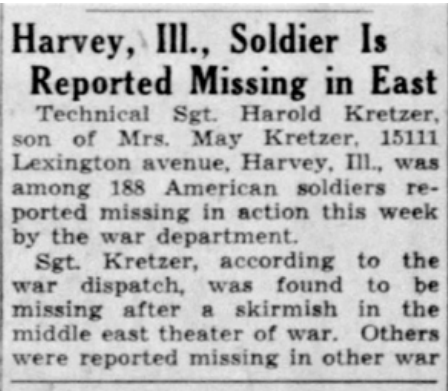
On June 2, Kretzer of Odin, Illinois, became MIA no longer. At 1 p.m. at Camp Butler National Cemetery in Springfield, Illinois, he was interred among his brethren from many different wars and conflicts. Tech. Sgt. Kretzer is now home.

“We appreciate the effort of the U.S. Department of Defense to bring Uncle Harold home after 80 years and its continued effort to identify and bring others home no matter how much time has passed. We are also grateful to the many veterans organizations who tirelessly advocate for those who have served in this nation’s wars,” said Glenda Thomas, the grandniece of T/Sgt. Kretzer.

Thomas said eight decades have dimmed personal memories of her uncle. His mother, Mae Kretzer, was living in Harvey, Illinois, in Cook County when Harold’s bomber crashed. She has long since passed and there are very few around now who knew him. But the family has

taken pride in knowing one of their own served our country honorably and gave his life to preserve our freedoms against tyranny.

The Kretzer family has decided to keep his memorial services private, but his burial services at Camp Butler will be open to the public. According to the U.S. military's Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA), Kretzer was officially accounted for on Aug. 23, 2022.



"DPAA remains dedicated to our mission to the more than 81,000 service members still unaccounted for and we continue to strive to bring answers to families of the missing through our work," said Ashley Wright, a spokesperson for DPAA. "We cannot say thank you enough to the family of Tech. Sgt. Harold Kretzer for their family's sacrifice to our nation's freedom."

Kretzer's remains could not be identified following the war. The remains that could not be identified were buried as Unknowns in the Hero Section of the Civilian and Military Cemetery of Bolovan in Romania.

Following the war, the American Graves Registration Command (AGRC), the organization that searched for and recovered fallen American personnel, disinterred all American remains from the Bolovan Cemetery for identification. The AGRC was unable to identify more than 80 unknowns from Bolovan Cemetery, and those remains were permanently interred at Ardennes American Cemetery and Henri-Chapelle American Cemetery, both in Belgium.

In 2017, DPAA began exhuming

unknowns believed to be associated with unaccounted-for airmen from Operation Tidal Wave losses. These remains were sent to the DPAA Laboratory at Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska, for examination and identification.

To identify Kretzer's remains, scientists from DPAA used anthropological analysis, as well as circumstantial evidence. Additionally, scientists from the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System used mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) and Y chromosome DNA (Y-STR) analysis - DNA from Kretzer's mother's side of the family and father's side of the family - to confirm his identity.

Kretzer's name is recorded on the Wall of the Missing at Cambridge American Cemetery, an American Battle Monuments Commission site in Cambridge, United Kingdom, along with others still missing from World War II. A rosette will be placed next to his name to indicate he has been accounted for.

At 32, Kretzer was five years older than the average World War II servicemember. As a World War II technical sergeant, he was a senior noncommissioned officer equal in rank to today's Army sergeant first class or Air Force master sergeant. While Kretzer was serving overseas, his hometown of Odin was the third largest community in Marion County with the 1940 census showing 1,847 people. Today Odin has approximately 920 residents. By comparison, Operation Tidal Wave included 177 B-24 Liberators, carrying 1,725 American souls from airfields in Libya.

Kretzer was the Wing Dinger's gunner-engineer in the B-24 Liberator's crew of eight during Operation Tidal Wave. The operation was designed as the first large scale, low altitude attack by U.S. heavy bombers. Flying only 100 to 300 feet above the ground, the objective was to destroy Ploiesti oil refineries. Romania produced 60 percent of Nazi Germany's crude oil supplies and an estimated 27 to 35 percent of its refined or synthetic oil. The most important refineries were those surrounding Ploiesti in

southeast Romania near Bucharest.

The bombing was successful, but costly. The Germans defending the refineries were ready and waiting for the American bombers.

Barrage balloons tethered with metal cables hovered over Ploiesti to impede the flight of the American bombers and tear into their aluminum sides. The Germans opened smoke pots in the surrounding fields and set oil tanks around the refineries aflame, sending up dense clouds of black smoke to blind the pilots. They placed anti-aircraft guns along the railroad tracks, among the oil tanks, and in the fields outside of town. As the Liberators approached Ploiesti, German ground defenses unleashed an intense hail of 37mm anti-aircraft and machine gun fire at the low-flying aircraft.



The last moments of Tech. Sgt. Kretzer's life were violent and chaotic but his actions and willingness to serve - and the actions of millions of others like him - led to the defeat of a dangerous dictatorship bent on world domination. For his actions, Kretzer was awarded Distinguished Flying Cross, Purple Heart, Air Medal with one Bronze Oak Leaf Cluster, Army Good Conduct Medal, European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with three Bronze Service Stars, World War II Victory Medal, Presidential Unit Citation with one Bronze Oak Leaf Cluster, U.S. Army Air Force Flight Engineer Wings Badge, and Honorable Service Lapel Button - World War II.

DPAA has now identified more than half of the 80 unknowns associated with Operation Tidal Wave.



HAROLD
KRETZER

TSGT

USAAF

WORLD WAR II

SEP 1 1910

AUG 1 1943

DFC PH AM

KIA

BELOVED UNCLE



FOR HONOR

The Illinois Army National Guard's Military and Funeral Honors team proudly received the remains of Tech. Sgt. Harold Kretzer, a WWII casualty that had been MIA since 1943. Kretzer was interred at Camp Butler National Cemetery with full military honors.



Illinois Officer Candidates study the Battle of Shiloh during Staff Ride

By Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

SPRINGFIELD, ILL. – Gen. Ulysses S. Grant called the Battle of Shiloh, fought April 6-7, 1862 at Pittsburg Landing, Tennessee, “the severest battle fought in the West during the War.”

More than 110,000 men fought at the Battle of Shiloh near Pittsburg Landing, Tennessee. More than 23,000 men were wounded or killed during the battle, including 3,957 Illinois militiamen.

The Illinois Army National Guard (ILARNG) Officer Candidate School’s (OCS) Class 68-23 visited Shiloh National Military Park during their annual Staff Ride May 20.

The Staff Ride is a field academic history exercise, according to Sgt. 1st Class Paul Golladay, the OCS course manager for the 129th Regiment (Regional Training Institute).

“The staff ride links a historical event with candidate research and a visit to the site to produce a professional-development battle analysis,” said Golladay. “Ideally, the officer candidates will come from the event with a better understanding of the principles of war, such as objective, offensive, maneuver, mass, economy of force, unity of command, security, surprise, and simplicity.

Twenty-two ILARNG Officer Candidates were on the staff ride.

Among the 22 candidates was Officer

Candidate Michael Callahan, of Champaign, Illinois, a traditional Illinois National Guard member who is an 8th grade history teacher at Paxton-Buckley-Loda Community Unit School District 10 in Paxton.

“There are about 15 lessons I cover about events during the Civil War,” Callahan said. “Since there is a lot

same area where thousands of people lost their lives, said it was a great experience.

“It’s crazy to think they walked so we could run,” he said. “It was a very humbling, awesome experience especially since today less than one percent serve.”

History has never been Officer Candidate LaQuan Melvin’s forte.

“I disliked studying history very much,” Melvin, of Joliet, said before visiting the battlefield.

“I think touring where the Battle of Shiloh happened will be educational, a place where we turn education into practical.”

Melvin, an Active Guard and Reserve recruiter, said the candidates were assigned to small teams with each candidate researching different

aspects of the battle and how it is relevant today.

“Each member of our small team was assigned a different aspect of the Battle of Shiloh,” Melvin said. “We researched our assigned task and will present our thoughts to the entire class during the staff ride.”

For Melvin, traveling to Shiloh was a very humbling experience.

“The Civil War gave us the country as we know it,” he said. “Once you see the terrain and imagine the fighting, you know the chance of getting shot was very high and yet they still fought for something larger than themselves.”

He said he also learned about faults



of history we cover throughout the year, the lesson plan doesn’t specifically cover the Battle of Shiloh or Illinois’ contribution to it.”

After spending the day at the Shiloh National Military Park, Callahan, who had never been to a battlefield before or walked the





and mistakes and the need for a backup plan.

“Leaders make mistakes, and the Battle of Shiloh underscores the need for leaders to have an alternate plan,” he said.

Officer Candidate Tymon Maurer, a traditional Guard member from Wheeling, Illinois, calls himself a “subdued history buff.”

“I enjoy learning about the battles,” he said before visiting the battlefield. “During this staff ride it will be members of the class teaching their fellow officer candidates about the poor weapons and tactics used in the Civil War as well as the planning principles and

how they are relevant in today’s military.”

Maurer said the plans used at the Battle of Shiloh are relevant even today.

“It was a great learning experience,” he said. “Although it was a different era of warfare, the use and misuse of planning and weapons is still relevant to us today.”

Maurer said he thought the visit to Shiloh was phenomenal.

“It was a moving experience and I wanted to explore more,” he said. “The men who fought at Shiloh were rushing into certain death with hardly any training.”

For Officer Candidate Ross Nations, of Oak Park, Illinois, a four-year veteran of the Illinois Army National Guard, the staff ride to Shiloh brought the battle to life for him.

“Growing up, the Civil War was an interesting topic when it was taught in class,” he said. “It was great being out there physically on the battlefield. It gives you a first-hand view of what those fighting there witnessed.”

Nations, a traditional Guard member who is a commercial recruiter for a warehouse, said he didn’t know Illinois’ role at the Battle of Shiloh before he began his research.

“I’m proud to know the people who came before me contributed then to what I contribute to now and that’s freedom in our country,” Nations said. “It’s humbling to walk the same ground as the men who served, fought, and may have even died at Shiloh.”

Several Illinois militia regiments fought at the Battle of Shiloh.

The hardest hit unit was the 9th Illinois Infantry. With 366 of the unit’s 578 Soldiers killed, wounded, or missing, the 9th Illinois Infantry lost more men than any Union Regiment in the battle.

According to the National Park Service, the Battle of Shiloh claimed more casualties than all of America’s previous wars combined.



Officer who led Illinois National Guard's Ukraine training mission retires after 35 years of service

By Lt. Col. Brad Leighton, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs



URBANA, Ill. – Col. Clayton Kuetemeyer of Champaign, who led the Illinois Army National Guard's 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team's training mission to Ukraine from 2020 to 2021 and then went on to play a key role in the planning of the National Guard Bureau's future operations, has retired from the military after three and a half decades of service.

Kuetemeyer's military retirement was held May 27 at the Illinois Army National Guard's historic Urbana Armory with First Army's Deputy Commanding General of Operations Maj. Gen. Mark Jackson presiding.

Kuetemeyer, an Infantry officer, served as the Commander of the Illinois Army National Guard's 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT), the state's largest brigade with more than 3,000 Soldiers. As 33rd IBCT Commander, he led the brigade's mission as the Joint Multinational Training Group – Ukraine in 2020 to 2021 with approximately 165 Soldiers of the 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team forming the command element of the training group in Ukraine. The unit was responsible for training,

advising and mentoring the Ukrainian cadre at Combat Training Center-Yavoriv, Ukraine to improve Ukraine's training capacity and defense capabilities. As part of U.S. European Command operations, the unit worked hand-in-hand with the Ukrainian Armed Forces, providing training and doctrinal assistance to the Ukrainian military personnel.

"Service in the Illinois National Guard gives ordinary Illinoisans the opportunity to do extraordinary work. Aside from being military professionals, our Soldiers come from many different backgrounds – college students, teachers, farmers, police officers – with experience that complements their skills for military advising tasks," Kuetemeyer said after the unit's return in April 2021. "In Ukraine, they had unprecedented success in multinational partnering and training development, contributing to Ukraine's capabilities, and making an important impact at the international level."

After returning from Ukraine, Kuetemeyer led the National Guard Bureau Joint Staff's Future Operations Division planning for disaster response, developing policies, ensuring future National



Guard readiness within the global force management structure and advising senior National Guard leaders including Gen. Daniel Hokanson, the Chief of the National Guard Bureau.

Kuetemeyer has commanded at all levels up to brigade command and has held several key staff positions including Chief of the Illinois National Guard's Joint Staff, the Illinois Army National Guard's Plans, Operations and Training Officer (G-3), and the Deputy Command Inspector General for the Illinois National Guard. He also served as Commander of the Illinois Army National Guard's 2nd Battalion, 130th Infantry Regiment and the Guard's Recruiting and Retention Battalion.

Kuetemeyer enlisted in the Illinois Army National Guard's 2nd Battalion, 130th Infantry Regiment in 1988. He commissioned



through the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) in 1993 and holds a bachelor's degree in communications and a master's degree in human resource education from the university in addition to a master's degree in strategic studies from the U.S. Army War College. He is a 2015 distinguished graduate of the War College. He also graduated from the Joint Task Force Commander's Training Course and the Dual Status Commander's

Course. He has certifications in consultative facilitation and emergency management.

Kuetemeyer has deployed to Ukraine, Afghanistan and Kuwait and has also served in Poland and Bulgaria. Previous deployments include Afghanistan in 2011 in support of Operation Enduring Freedom with Task Force White Eagle and the 17th Mechanized Brigade of the Polish Land Forces, and Kuwait in 2000 in support of Operation Desert Spring as

Commander of A Company, 2nd Battalion, 130th Infantry Regiment.

Upon retirement he was awarded the Legion of Merit for exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services and achievements. Kuetemeyer's awards and decorations include the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star Medal; Meritorious Service Medal with six oak leaf clusters; Army Commendation Medal with six oak leaf clusters; Army Achievement Medal with five oak leaf clusters; Army Reserve Component Achievement Medal with five oak leaf clusters; Afghanistan Campaign Medal with Bronze Service Star; Silver Medal of the Polish Army; Ukrainian Armed Forces Medal; NATO Medal; Illinois Distinguished Service Medal; Illinois Lincoln Medal of Freedom; Recruiting and Retention Badge; and the Air Assault Badge. He was a 2002 national recipient of the General Douglas MacArthur Leadership Award.

Kuetemeyer and his spouse, Vicki, have returned to live in their hometown of Champaign after his retirement from the U.S. Army and Army National Guard.



Teutopolis Soldier Promoted to Master Sergeant

By Sgt. 1st Class Bryan Spreitzer, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs



SPRINGFIELD, III. – Friends, family and colleagues gathered at the Illinois Military Academy in Springfield, Illinois, June 6, to celebrate the promotion of Erin Connelly to the rank of master sergeant.

Lt. Col. Jason Carter, Deputy Director for the Illinois Army National Guard’s Plans Operations and Training Directorate (G3) officiated the ceremony and congratulated Connelly on her promotion.

senior noncommissioned officer in your military career,” said Carter. “As a sergeant first class, you’re in the top 10 percent of Army NCOs, as a master sergeant, that jumps to the top three percent. Congratulations on making it to the top three percent.”

Connelly, a native of Teutopolis, Illinois, enlisted in the Illinois Army National Guard in 2003 as paralegal specialist with the 634th Support Battalion. She later transitioned to mortuary affairs in the same battalion before starting her federal technician career in 2017 as the budget assistant for the G3. Connelly currently serves as the logistics services senior NCO for the 244th Digital Liaison Detachment based in Chicago and continues to work full-time in the G3 as the new equipment and displaced equipment training (NET/DET) NCO in charge.

Connelly was “pinned” by Col. (ret.) Eric Davis, someone she considers a friend and mentor.

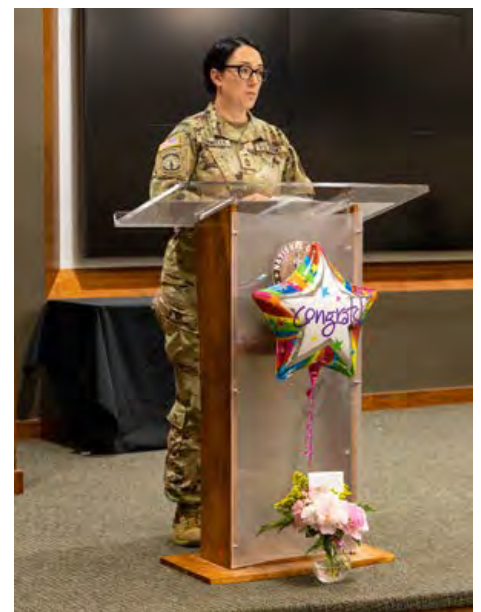
Connelly thanked those in

attendance and those who helped her throughout her career.

“People always ask the question: ‘How much longer will you do this?’,” said Connelly. “I don’t know, but at the end of the day I just wanted to be something nobody thought I could be.”



“This is a momentous step as a



Franklin Grove Master Sgt. retires after more than 30 years in uniform

By Cpl. Justin Malone and Spc. DeJuan Patterson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs



Barton, the commander of the 232 CSSB. "He's a guy who has done just about everything in his career and has done them well to say the least."

Barton continued his praise by depicting Spangler's reliability.

"We have a saying, fire and forget NCO," said Barton. "That is talking about a leader who you can tell, 'Hey I need this done.' After you tell them that, you can forget because you know you don't have to think about it anymore because you know it's going to get done. That's the kind of leader that Spangler has been throughout his entire career."

Spangler encouraged his fellow soldiers to lead with a humble heart, humility and compassion toward everyone around.

"With this job, don't take anything too serious," said Spangler. "There's ups and downs with what we do. You can't let the things that go wrong keep you down."



Spangler thanked all of his fellow service members as he bid farewell and expressed his gratitude as he prepares for his next chapter in life.

With his military career ending, Spangler looks forward to spending time with his significant other, Danielle and his daughters, Sophia and Ella without the call to duty from the military. Spangler will continue serving his community in his civilian capacity with the Illinois Department of Transportation.

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. – Master Sgt. Ian Spangler of Franklin Grove, Illinois, retired after 32 years of service in the Illinois National Guard during a retirement ceremony held June 3, at the Illinois Military Academy in Springfield.

Spangler enlisted in the Illinois National Guard in 1991 as a Single Channel Radio Operator and concludes his career as the Support Operations Master Sergeant with the 232nd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion. During his 30-year career, Spangler served in many roles with the 232

CSSB, the 106th Cavalry Squadron, the 202nd Air Defense Artillery Battalion and with the Recruiting and Retention Battalion.

Spangler deployed twice. First, in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in 2008 and again in 2020 to support Operation Inherent Resolve. Some of the decorated veteran's awards include the Army Commendation Medal with C

Device, Army Commendation Medal with 3 oak leaf clusters and the Meritorious Service Medal.

"He's been a lot of places and done a lot of things," said Lt. Col. Michael



FROM FIELDS TO FLYOVERS:

High-Flying General Retires After 38 Years of Service



SPRINGFIELD, ILL. – When Illinois Air National Guard Chief of Staff Brig. Gen. James Silvasy of Gurnee was an Army lieutenant in the late 1980s, he and his friend and fellow lieutenant, Jeff Caster, would look up into the sky from the woods during field training exercises at jet liners flying overhead.

“I’d say ‘You know, Jimmy, those guys flying the jets up there are clean. And here we are, dressed like trees, no shower in a week.’ It became a goal for a number of us guys – to someday fly for one of the major airlines,” Caster said. “One thing about Jimmy is he is focused and driven. If he says he’s going to do something then, by God, he’s going to do it.”

Both Silvasy and Caster are now airline pilots, Silvasy for United since 1996 and Caster for Delta.

Silvasy retired from the Illinois Air National Guard on June 3 during a ceremony at the 183rd Wing in Springfield. Those who knew him marveled at how he was able to balance his full-time job as a United Airlines pilot, his extensive military career, and his family life.

He served as the dual-status commander for the Department of Defense’s COVID-19 response in Illinois. He flew five different kinds of military aircraft with more than 4,900 military flight hours. As a commercial airline pilot, he has more than 15,000 hours in six different aircraft. He was mobilized for both domestic emergencies and war. And he spent many years as a single father raising two daughters and a son until he met wife Cyndi, in 2011.

“He’s never been afraid of hard work. He’s never been afraid of new challenges,” said Maj. Gen. Rich Neely, the Adjutant General of Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National Guard. Neely and Silvasy were fellow group commanders at the 183rd Wing in Springfield. “He was a quick study in whatever we had going on,” Neely added.

“It takes a very special person to balance everything that he did for so long,” said Maj. Gen. (ret.) Pete Nezamis, the former Assistant

By Lt. Col. Brad Leighton, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs



Adjutant General – Air of the Illinois National Guard and Commander of the Illinois Air National Guard. “The man was balancing so much in life. I still don’t know how he did it.”

Silvasy said he had a lot of help. United Airlines was supportive of his military service and flexible with his schedule. And his daughters, Nina and Karen, helped care for their younger brother, Jimmy, along with neighbors and friends who



pitched in. General Neely often says that for traditional Guard members juggling military duty and civilian jobs, family can sometimes take “last place.” When Cyndi joined the family, she dove right into the role of military spouse and the family was in first place again. Silvasy is grateful.

Silvasy’s career began in the 507th Air Ambulance Co., based at Fort Sam Houston, Texas. The Soldiers had a tough job as Military Assistance to Safety and Traffic (MAST) pilots and crew. They provided aerial medical rescue to rural communities in the south of Texas. This involved responding to traffic accidents or premature births or rescuing people from the flash floods that hit the area. Their job was to stabilize them and get them to San Antonio area hospitals as quickly as possible.

During Operation Just Cause from December 1989 to January 1990, Silvasy was also responsible for flying U.S. Soldiers who gave the ultimate sacrifice in Operation Just Cause from the former Kelly Air Force Base near San Antonio to the Brooke Army Medical Center on Fort Sam Houston. The mission that landed Panama General Manuel Noriega in U.S. federal prison for racketeering and drug trafficking would cost 23 U.S. Soldiers their lives. It was a mission that Silvasy said would forever be fixed in his memory.

Looking back at that time, Silvasy admits, “I was not the best lieutenant out there.” Caster agreed. “If you told me that Jimmy was going to be a general back in those days, I would have told you absolutely no way.”

In fact, Silvasy, one of four boys, was even rambunctious as a child. His mother, Anne Marie Silvasy likes to tell how she received a call from Silvasy’s kindergarten teacher on the last day of school telling Silvasy’s mom that she was retiring and “Your son may have played a major role.” During his retirement speech, he thanked his mother, his father, Jack Silvasy, and the rest of his family for their part in raising a high-energy child who was not

always the best behaved.

A little more than two years before he transferred to the Air Force, the 507th Air Ambulance Co. got a new commander that mentored and guided Lt. Silvasy.

“He was smart,” said Col. (ret.) Gregg Griffin, who was a Military Police officer in Vietnam before taking over the company of UH-1 Iroquois ‘Huey’ helicopters. “I could always tell that he had a lot of potential.”

Then a major, Griffin took over a unit “that hadn’t been to war in a while.” He saw that the officers were doing early morning physical training separate from the enlisted and immediately put an end to that practice. He put Silvasy in front of the physical training formations. Silvasy has never been blessed with imposing height. His 6-foot, 1-inch son towers over him. He’d strap a small pillow to his leg as a helicopter pilot to compensate for his lack of length in the cockpit. But he had plenty of stamina. “Jim was an athlete – a runner,” Griffin said. “He’d lead the push-ups, the squats, and the four-mile runs. If you are going to lead, you need to be up front.”

The future general said Griffin offered a “different perspective.”





He removed barriers between the officers and Soldiers and put an emphasis on “field craft.” Griffin likes to tell the story of how he taught Lt. Silvasy how to take a field shower using water jugs off the back of a truck. Much of the reason Silvasy and Caster were in the woods looking up at airliners was because Griffin believed in field training with the troops. “He said, ‘If you are going to friggling lead, you are going to lead in this too,’” Silvasy said describing his old commander’s leadership style.

Silvasy was up front in how he communicated, Griffin said. “He’d tell me what’s going on and also help talk his Soldiers through problems too. His strength has always been with people as well as his technical expertise.”

Caster said Silvasy’s often blunt honesty did not endear him to everyone.

But his Soldiers, and then his airmen, loved his straightforward honesty. “He would explain the complex to either a CEO or a janitor in the same plain straightforward way,” Griffin said. “And when something needed to get done, he would explain why it needed to get done.”

“Working with General Silvasy as an enlisted service member was refreshing,” said Chief Master Sgt. (retired) Jennifer Aurora, the former

Command Chief Master Sergeant for the Illinois Air National Guard. “He showed us a great deal of respect, provided transparency, and offered development opportunities to allow us to grow. It was an honor and delight to serve with and for General Silvasy. His leadership to the state and nation will be missed especially by the enlisted force.”

One of Silvasy’s regrets was that he did not get to go to war with the 507th Air Ambulance Co. By the time the company was activated for Desert Shield/Desert Storm, Silvasy was already in the Air Force’s pilot training course getting ready to take his place with the Illinois Air National Guard’s 126th Air Refueling Wing, then based at Chicago’s O’Hare International Airport. There he flew the KC-135 Stratotanker, the same aircraft the 126th ARW flies out of Scott Air Force Base today.

He flew around the world with the 126th ARW for five years until a Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) decision relocated the wing to Scott Air Force Base near Belleville in July 1999.

“It really was like breaking up a family,” Silvasy said. He was grateful to then Illinois Air National Guard Commander Brig. Gen. Hal Keistler for his handling of the move and his willingness to support unit members’ decisions whether they wanted to make the move, transfer to another unit or leave the service. Keistler, who would serve as the executive director of the National Guard Association of Illinois after retirement, died in 2019.

Silvasy opted for a break in service after the BRAC move. But soon he began “missing belonging to something bigger than me,” he said. Within a year he was with the



Wisconsin Air National Guard’s 128th Air Refueling Wing based in Milwaukee. He deployed with the 128th ARW in 2003 for the Iraq War and made it overseas for the first day of the Air War. “It is one of those deployments that I will never forget.”

However, it was an assignment after the deployment that Silvasy said, “made me a different person.” Silvasy was placed as the full-time deputy commander of the 128th Medical Group.

“The Medical Group was undermanned and overtaxed,” said Col. Mike Mayo, the 128th ARW’s vice commander. “Its leadership was not around very much.” The unit had just failed an internal inspection and in a year was due for an Air Force inspection. Silvasy was asked to leave the pilot’s seat for a year and prepare the medical group for the Air Force inspection. He had graduated from the University of New Hampshire with a degree in health care administration in 1985 but hadn’t had a job even close to the medical field since his days flying Army Air Ambulance Hueys in the late 1980s.

“I was totally out of my comfort zone,” Silvasy said.

But Mayo said Silvasy had the



leadership that the medical group needed at that time. "He's patient, tolerant, and he keeps people motivated and going in the right direction," Mayo said. "He's great under stress - calm and directive. He treats everyone with respect and keeps everyone together."

The 128th Medical Group went from failing the internal inspection to receiving an "excellent" rating on the Air Force inspection just a year later. "He helped turn it around," Mayo said.

"I learned a ton from those medical professionals. I have a total appreciation for their contribution to the mission," Silvasy said.

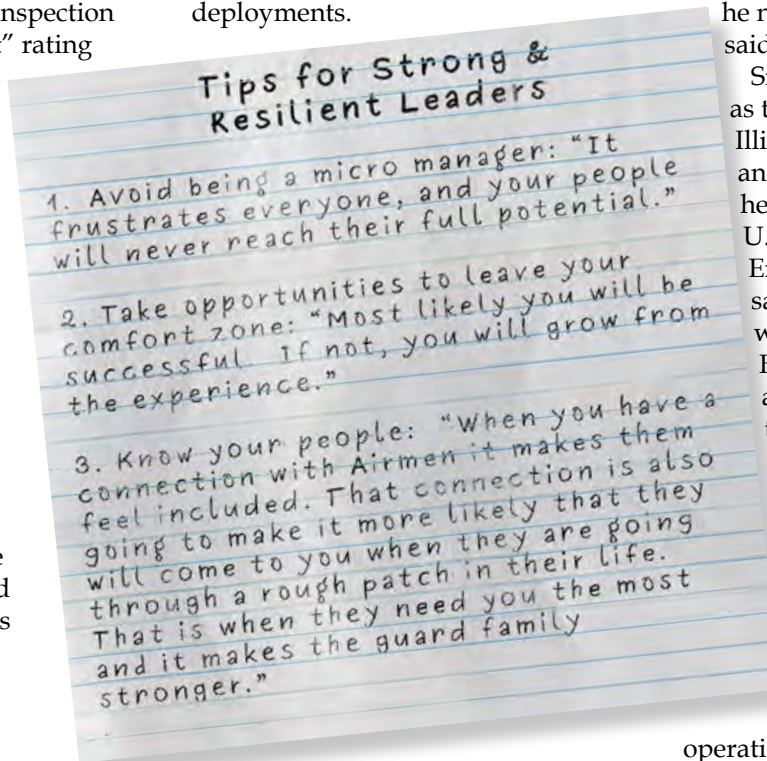
His willingness to step out of the cockpit and try new assignments led him back to the Illinois Air National Guard. In 2013 he transferred to the 183rd Wing in Springfield taking various commands including the 183rd's Air Operations Group, 183rd Air Mobility Operations Squadron and Joint Task Force - Illinois.

Silvasy said Col. Ricky Yoder, the Air Operations Group commander, taught him about the operational level of war after "spending my whole career at the tactical level. He was an outstanding mentor," Silvasy said. "There were so many talented, innovative airmen at the AOG that were always thinking outside the box, solving problems and getting the mission done."

Col. Lee Wheeler worked as the 183rd AOG's full-time deputy commander under Silvasy in 2018. "He was one of the greatest bosses I ever had," Wheeler said. "He was always engaged and knew his people. We spoke almost every day. He always kept fully informed with what was going on."

Even when Silvasy was on long flights with United, he kept in the loop. "He'd be flying over the middle of the Pacific Ocean or over the Arctic Circle and I'd be getting texts from him," said Wheeler.

Silvasy was proud of how well the 183rd AOG integrated with the Polish Air Force during overseas exercises with the Illinois National Guard State Partnership Program. And he took pride in their performance on two 6-month rotations to U.S. Central Command as well as multiple short notice deployments.



During his time commanding the 183rd AOG he was reacquainted with his Army roots working with then 65th Troop Command Commander Col. Nick Johnson and his Soldiers on the Joint Task Force - Illinois. The JTF "melded so well together and were tested on the 2019 floods and the COVID-19 operations," Silvasy said. "They knocked it out of the park on both occasions."

As dual-status commander of the COVID-19 response in Illinois, Silvasy was "the right person at the right place" to coordinate the Illinois National Guard and active-duty forces operating across the state, Nezamis said. "Though he was the dual-status commander, he never took his eye off of the Illinois Air National Guard and his duties there."

Silvasy kept both the Illinois National Guard and

active-duty leadership informed as the dual-status commander of the historic COVID-19 mission. He let the force providers know how their troops were doing and kept them informed of any issues while those forces were under his command. "He would stay engaged. He would be there to 11 p.m. or 3 a.m. - when he needed to be there," Nezamis said.

Silvasy's last assignment was as the Chief of Staff for the Illinois Air National Guard and under his leadership the headquarters received the U.S. Air Force Organizational Excellence Award in 2022. He said that when he was at the wings, working at Joint Force Headquarters "was perceived as the place you didn't want to be assigned."

In reality, "it is a truly joint environment with Army and Air working together, thanks to Maj. Gen. Neely." The headquarters Air staff are "truly amazing" and proved it as the Illinois National Guard responded to multiple domestic operations including COVID-19 over the last few years all the while still performing its federal missions with excellence, Silvasy said. You all contributed so much to this state affecting all three wings," he told his staff during the retirement ceremony. "I know you will contribute even more in the future."



30 years of success: Lincoln's ChalleNGe graduates its 16,000 cadet

By Lt. Col. Brad Leighton, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. - The Illinois National Guard's Lincoln's ChalleNGe Class 59-23 had a long list of accomplishments when its more than 90 cadets graduated on June 10 at the Bank of Springfield Center in Springfield, Illinois.



The class recovered 277 and a half credit hours, awarded seven high school diplomas and 31 GEDs, 33 cadets returned to high school, \$33,050 in college scholarships were awarded, some 24 cadets are enlisting in the U.S. military, 13 cadets were placed in jobs, more than 7,000 hours were completed in vocational programs, more than 5,321 hours of community service were completed, and the cadets lost 1,016 pounds of fat and replaced those with 623 pounds of muscle.

But two important numbers were not listed in Class 59-23's program: 30 and 16,000.

In July, LCA reached its 30th year and among the cadets who walked across the stage on Saturday



included the 16,000th young man or woman to graduate from the Illinois National Guard's youth academy.

Starting in July 1993 on the former Chanute Air Force Base in Rantoul, Illinois, the program has helped 16,000 struggling young men and women find a path to success. As Class 59-23 Valedictorian Taiwo Sowemimo said, the path to success is not always, or often, a straight line, but the "seeds of discipline, consistency, and endurance that we have sewn at LCA will surely bear fruits of victory one day."

Sowemimo said the cadets that enter Lincoln ChalleNGe Academy's 22-week residential phase are far from perfect - as are we all - but those who completed the program bettered themselves and did not quit. She thanked the LCA staff for believing in them and, despite their flaws, "accepting us completely." She urged her fellow cadets to "Thank your parents. Your parent-figures. Your family, regardless of blood. They stood by you, they filed your paperwork, came (to the academy) on passes, bought you supplies. They've seen you at your worst and, today, as the class of 59-23 graduates, will be seeing you at your best. They stood by you all this time because they knew the potential you had in you. And they were right."

LCA's campus is still on the former Chanute AFB, but five years ago it moved out of the old Air Force barracks and into a new three-building state-of-the-art campus. The program has also evolved from being primarily driven toward helping cadets obtain GEDs and learn life skills. Now the academy offers GED completion, credit recovery, assisting with re-entry into high school, and multiple vocational programs ranging from fire services to certified nursing assistance to food services to welding.

As LCA Director Col. (ret.) Maurice Rochelle said "Yes, we give them hot blow torches."

But the welding program, done in partnership with Parkland Community College, is conducted safely and is now one of multiple avenues for cadets to find success. The academy still uses a quasi-military environment to teach discipline, leadership, and life skills. The cadets start their day at 5 a.m. each morning to do physical training and good healthy habits are drilled into the cadets.

It also still has an extensive



community service program. Matthew White, the morning news anchor for WCIA CH 3 in Champaign, was the keynote speaker for Saturday's graduation. He spoke to the cadets about serving the community and the importance of being part of the community.

Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, the Assistant Adjutant General - Army of the Illinois National Guard and Commander of the Illinois Army National Guard, also took part in the graduation along with multiple both retired and active Illinois National Guard officers and NCOs, some of whom serve as mentors for the program.

As she closed her speech, Sowemimo urged her fellow graduates to continue their growth. "Get wisdom and understanding. Open your ears to those who have wisdom and life experiences to share. And only give your time and energy to those who are dedicated to seeing you grow, dedicated to seeing you win, and dedicated to seeing you happy."



LIGHTENING STRIKES: **ILLINOIS AIRMAN SELECTED TO LEAD F-35** **SUSTAINMENT, PROMOTED TO MAJOR GENERAL** *By Sgt. 1st Class Bryan Spreitzer, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs*

PEORIA, III. – Brig. Gen. Donald “DK” Carpenter was joined by family, friends and colleagues June 1, 2023, in the main hangar at the 182nd Airlift Wing in Peoria, Illinois, to celebrate his promotion to major general and selection as the Director of Logistics and Sustainment for the F-35 Lightning program at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio.

Lt. Gen. Michael A. Loh, Director of the Air National Guard, presided over Carpenter’s promotion ceremony.

“It’s a Guard celebration! Is this a great day, or what?” said Loh. “DK’s done just about everything you can do in the state. He has led Airmen multiple times and has gone to combat multiple times, twice to Bagram, as a squadron commander, which is where our paths first crossed.”

Loh said he needed a leader at the National Guard Bureau that could push his staff to the next level, so he invited Carpenter to work for him in the National Capital Region. Loh said Carpenter was instrumental in the success of Air National Guard logistics at the national level, and



given the success that Carpenter had as the lead logistician at the national level, he was a natural fit for the “toughest job that a maintenance officer could get.”

“He’ll be managing global logistics for the F-35 program,” said Loh. “The DoD’s most expensive fighter program with 16 international partners that covers



three services. I can think of no better general officer to lead the F-35 sustainment center than DK Carpenter.”

Carpenter said he attributed his success to those he worked with and leaders that showed him what to do, and some, what not to do to be successful. Carpenter said he hopes to bring the knowledge he’s gained from his time at NGB and his training as a Lean Six Sigma Black Belt to increase the sustainability across all components for the F-35 program.

“It’s a new adventure,” said Carpenter. “It’s more the business side of the Air Force versus the operational side. I’ve got a great team out there ready to get after the mission. We want to better logistical sustainment for the F-35 for the next fight.”

Carpenter thanked Loh for the opportunity to lead the F-35 sustainment program, and thanked his wife, Dana, and his family for supporting him throughout his career. Carpenter said while he loved his time at NGB, he was glad to be “back home” for his next assignment.

Sherman Soldier takes command of 129th Regiment (Regional Training Institute)

By Lt. Col. Brad Leighton, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs



SPRINGFIELD, III. – Illinois Army National Guard Col. Shawn Nokes of Springfield assumed command of the 129th Regiment (Regional Training Institute) at the unit's headquarters in the Illinois Military Academy on Camp Lincoln in Springfield on June 10.

Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, the Assistant Adjutant General - Army of the Illinois National Guard and Commander of the Illinois Army National Guard, was the presiding officer for the assumption of command ceremony.

Nokes was previously the Director of Domestic Operations for the Illinois National Guard. He enlisted in the Illinois Army National Guard in 1998 and received his commission through the 129th Regiment's accelerated Officer Candidate School in March 2004. Nokes also serves as a Title 32 federal technician as the Deputy Logistics Management Officer for the Illinois National Guard.

Nokes has served as the officer-in-charge of the COVID-19 test site operations, liaison officer to the Illinois Department of Public Health's office of preparedness and response supporting COVID-19 response operations. He led the capitol response mission in Washington, D.C., and served as the battalion commander of the 198th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, based in Chicago.

Nokes also served as the 108th Sustainment Brigade's Support Operations Officer and participated in a warfighter exercise and upon return, led a mission to train the Lithuanian-Polish-Ukrainian Brigade in Poland.

Nokes has deployed multiple times with the last deployment to Kuwait in 2014 with the 108th Sustainment Brigade.

Illinois Recruiting Battalion Senior Enlisted Leader retires after 28-year career

By Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

DIXON, Ill. – Command Sgt. Maj. Johnny O’Brien, of Sherman, Illinois, who most recently served as the Illinois Army National Guard (ILARNG) Recruiting and Retention Battalion’s senior enlisted leader, retired from the ILARNG after a 28-year career in a ceremony June 9 at the armory in Dixon, Illinois.

“Command Sergeant Major O’Brien played a critical role in leading the Recruiting and Retention Battalion through COVID and the toughest recruiting environment in the 50 years of the all-volunteer force,” said Lt. Col. Joseph Harris, of Springfield, Commander, Illinois Army National Guard Recruit and Retention Battalion. “His commitment to Soldier care and the development of our Recruiting and Retention



Afghanistan in 2013 as part of Task Force White Eagle, Polish Land Forces, where he served as the Force Protection Noncommissioned Officer in Charge for the task force, and was inducted into the 25th Air Cavalry Brigade, Polish Land Forces.

“Command Sergeant Major O’Brien was a mentor to hundreds of noncommissioned officers and

thousands of junior enlisted Soldiers throughout the Recruiting and Retention Battalion,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Chad McDannald, the RRB’s senior enlisted leader. “He will be remembered for his passion and love for recruiting. He was an instrumental leader who greatly contributed to the overall success of the Illinois Army National Guard.”

O’Brien enlisted in the Illinois Army National Guard in 1995 as an Army Man Portable Air Defense Systems (Stinger Missile) crew member, serving with the 202nd Air Defense Artillery in Dixon. He served with the 202nd ADA until 2001 including units in Kewanee, Milan, Machesney Park and Northern Illinois University.

In 2001, he transferred to the Recruiting and Retention Battalion where he served as a recruiting and retention noncommissioned officer, team leader, first sergeant, operations sergeant major and was promoted to Command Sergeant Major in January 2020.

O’Brien graduated from Amboy High School in 1994 and earned a bachelor of science degree in Human Resource Management from Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, Illinois.

O’Brien deployed to

thousands of junior enlisted Soldiers throughout the Recruiting and Retention Battalion,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Chad McDannald, the RRB’s senior enlisted leader. “He will be remembered for his passion and love for recruiting. He was an instrumental leader who greatly contributed to the overall success of the Illinois Army National Guard.”





NERDS OF A FEATHER

Illinois and Poland highlight partnership at Cyber Shield

SPRINGFIELD, ILL. – The 30-year State Partnership Program between the Illinois National Guard and the Polish military achieved another landmark as two Polish Cyber Command warriors trained side-by-side with their Illinois partners in Cyber Shield 2023.

Cyber Shield is the U.S. military’s premier unclassified cyber exercise involving about 800 cyber warriors from across the country. This year Poland also participated in the exercise, held from June 2-16 at the Army National Guard’s Professional Education Center on Camp Joseph T. Robinson, Ark.

“This bilateral collaboration is beneficial to both sides,” said Maj. Marcin Barszcz of the Polish Cyber Command. He said the relationships built through the State Partnership Program are “crucial in the cybersecurity effort and struggles we have on a daily basis.”

Maj. Gen. Rich Neely, the Adjutant General of Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National Guard, said the 30-year relationship

between the Illinois National Guard and Poland has proven its importance on the world stage.

“Poland has played a vital role in assisting Ukraine against Russian aggression. It is important to remember that Russian-backed hackers have crossed multiple international boundaries in the cyber realm including attacks here in Illinois,” said Neely, a master cyberspace officer. “Poland has robust cyber defense capabilities and a thriving technology sector with incredible talent. We can learn a lot from our Polish friends as they learn from us. Cyber is a natural extension of the incredible State Partnership Program relationship that we have shared for three decades.”

Capt. John Thomas, the Cyber Network Defense Manager for the Illinois Army National Guard’s Bloomington-based 176th Cyber Protection Team was the lead for Illinois’ blue team in the exercise. The blue teams are the cyber defenders or the exercise’s ‘good guys.’ Illinois had more than 30

individuals participate in the exercise including Illinois National Guard Soldiers and Airmen, the Polish service members, and representation from the Illinois Department of Innovation and Technology (DoIT.)

“Poland’s support to the exercise was both critical to our success and it was exciting to bring their perspectives to the exercise,” Thomas said. “Members of the Polish Cyber Command were exceptional additions to the team, bringing vast skill sets and crucial knowledge to the exercise.”

Illinois Army National Guard Col. Jeff Fleming, the exercise officer-in-charge, said that Cyber Shield evolves as cyber threats evolve. This year, he said, the focus of the exercise was defending against threats to “operational technology” – hardware and software that detects or causes a change, through the direct monitoring and/or control of industrial equipment, assets, processes and events. Cyber



Shield's red team hackers attacked critical infrastructure in the U.S. transportation system.

"There are now significant risks to ICS that were never a consideration before," Barszcz said. "To name a few - worms, various viruses, unauthorized remote accesses - a whole arsenal of toys and tools that adversaries use."

Although the Polish and Illinois National Guard have had cyber-related military exchanges before, this was the first time the Polish have participated in Cyber Shield, Barszcz said. "This is our first step

in future collaboration in this field."

Aside from the Illinois-Polish team, National Guard troops from four other states also participated on blue teams with their State Partnership Program countries including Iowa and Kosovo, Kansas and Armenia, Oklahoma and Azerbaijan, as well as North Carolina and Moldova. Colorado's SPP partner Slovenia and West Virginia's SPP partner Peru visited the exercise but did not participate on teams.

Cyber Shield helps retain cyber professionals in Illinois National

Guard, Thomas said. "This is a top tier training event that allows individuals to test their skills, identify training gaps, and continue to grow as professionals. I believe exciting training events such as Cyber Shield encourage soldiers to re-enlist and continue to be stewards of the profession."

The first week of the exercise focuses on training and help cyber professionals get valuable civilian certifications and to learn from instructors representing some of the industry's top cyber and information technology institutions. The second week puts the cyber warriors to the test as Cyber Shield's "red team" attacks the training network as the blue teams try to protect against the onslaught of digital attacks.

"Cyber Shield is an unclassified defensive cyber operations exercise that allows us to build cyber capability, capacity, and competency in the National Guard through unity of effort with industry and government partners and Allies to provide hope, and ultimately will, on the darkest days," said Brig. Gen. Teri Williams, the Vice Director of Operations (Cyber), National Guard Bureau, Arlington, VA.

The State Partnership between the Illinois National Guard and Poland was among the first established and is considered the "gold standard" of State Partnership Programs. It started in 1993 just after Poland emerged from behind the USSR's "Iron Curtain" and helped prepare Poland for NATO membership, which it achieved in 1999. Polish and Illinois National Guard Soldiers co-deployed first to Iraq and then to Afghanistan for more than 17 consecutive years. Each year, the Illinois National Guard and Poland have about 30 military exchanges including recent teams training with the Polish Territorial Defense Forces on sniper, anti-tank and medical operations.



BIG AIR: 182ND LEADS C-130S AT AIR DEFENDER 23

By Staff Sgt. Paul Helmig, 182nd Airlift Wing Public Affairs



WUNSTORF AIR BASE, Germany – The largest North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) multinational air forces redeployment exercise in history began at Wunstorf Air Base, Germany, June 12, and the Illinois Air National Guard’s 182nd Airlift Wing is leading the C-130 Hercules aircraft operations.

Exercise Air Defender 2023, integrates both U.S. and allied air power to defend shared values, while leveraging and strengthening vital partnerships to deter aggression around the world.

According to the National

Guard Bureau, approximately 2,600 U.S. Airmen and 100 aircraft from 42 states rapidly descended on western Europe to train with 24 allied and partner nations to enhance joint capabilities across the globe. Exercise AD23 provides valuable opportunities to bolster tactical interoperability skills of

participating international partners, aircrew, and supporting elements within a composite air operation environment, according to NATO.

A vital element within AD23 is the C-130 Hercules airlift operation, led by the 182nd AW. Maj. Joseph Chambers, the chief of tactics for the 182nd Operations Support Squadron

and the lead C-130 Hercules at Wunstorf Air Base, explained the unit’s participation is a display of commitment reinforcing relations between militaries, and their readiness to defeat hostility toward the U.S. and their partner nations.

“Air Defender



is testing NATO's strength in deterrence," said Chambers. "And the Air National Guard is reassuring our allies of the U.S. resolve to the NATO charter."

Over 440 Airmen from eleven states and Puerto Rico are serving at Wunstorf Air Base during AD23. The 182nd AW is sharing the sky with nine different C-130 Hercules and Super Hercules units from Arkansas, Delaware, Georgia, Kentucky, Minnesota, Missouri, Nevada, Texas and Wyoming.

Chambers began operations planning for AD23 nearly 11 months prior to the start of the exercise in July 2022. Though the C-130 mission is the primary objective at Wunstorf Air Base, it was not Chambers's only aim for this exercise.

"As the lead planner and lead C-130 unit, we had the job to coordinate for 12 different Air National Guard units," said Chambers. "We also are supporting the Joint Tactical Air Control and Combat Communications missions at Air Defender 23."

Exercise AD23 will provide Airmen the opportunity to apply their Multi-Capable Airmen skills through interactive training with personnel from various wings and career fields, along with NATO and state-partner militaries. Airmen operating at Wunstorf Air Base integrated with airmen from Germany, Romania and Lithuania performing full-scale readiness training and completing their mission-essential tasks.

A primary component of exercise AD23 is the NGB's State Partnership Program that has been successfully building relations for 30 years, which includes 88 partnerships with 100



nations around the world.

"Relationships in the ANG are like water to a fish; one can't operate without the other," said Col. Rusty Ballard, the commander of the 182nd AW and the C-130 detachment component commander during AD23 at Wunstorf Air Base.



"The exchange of information, tactics, techniques, procedures, ideas and history will forever benefit the allied NATO countries involved in this massive Exercise."



The SPP engagements capitalize on the MCA concept while enabling Air National Guardsmen to train and learn from our partner nations. The Air National Guard's focus is to prepare mission-ready Airmen to safeguard the U.S. homeland and execute global operations successfully.

U.S. Air Force units, including the 182nd, regularly participate in multinational exercises on the European continent

to strengthen relations and resolve. That frequent interaction sets the stage, allowing stateside Air National Guard units to more easily integrate with allies and partners throughout the region.

The 182nd AW has been cited for multiple readiness awards, such as maintaining the highest C-130 mission capability rate since 2015. As a prominent leader within the C-130 community, Ballard was excited to bring the unit's ready and postured forces to the warfighting training environment.

"As soon as the 182nd found out about the exercise and its intent, we jumped on as the lead unit," said Ballard. "The opportunity for the 182nd to showcase our capabilities amongst the community has been even better than I could have imagined." robust

cyber defense capabilities and a thriving technology sector with incredible talent. We can learn a lot from our Polish friends as they learn from us. Cyber is a natural extension of the incredible State Partnership Program relationship that we have shared for three decades."

Springfield Airman promoted to brigadier general, will serve as Assistant to the General Counsel - Air

By Lt. Col. Brad Leighton, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. – Illinois Air National Guard officer Marty Green of Springfield, a native of Canton, was promoted to brigadier general on June 4 during a ceremony at the Illinois National Guard’s headquarters on Camp Lincoln.

He was selected as the Assistant to the General Counsel-Air for the National Guard Bureau, a “one-star” general position. Green will play a crucial part in overseeing legal matters within the National Guard Bureau. He has extensive experience in providing legal counsel both in the military and in his civilian employment as the Senior Vice President and Legislative Counsel for the Illinois CPA Society.

“This isn’t about me or just one individual,” said Green. “It’s about ensuring the betterment of this organization. I’m proud to represent the Illinois Air National Guard and



ensure that we continue to do a great job taking care of our people.”

Maj. Gen. Rich Neely, the Adjutant General of Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National Guard, said Green will represent Illinois well at the national level.

“He will undoubtedly make significant contributions to the legal affairs of the organization, solidifying his position as a respected leader within the Illinois

Air National Guard and the National Guard Bureau as a whole,” Neely said.

Green previously served as the Air National Guard Assistant to the Staff Judge Advocate for Air Mobility Command, where he played a pivotal role in advising and assisting with legal matters. Simultaneously, he fulfilled the position of State Staff Judge Advocate for the Illinois Air National Guard, showcasing his dedication to both local and national legal affairs.

“This promotion highlights the Illinois National Guard’s commitment to excellence and its contribution to the broader National Guard mission,” Neely said. “This should serve as an inspiration to fellow servicemembers and demonstrate the potential for professional growth and development within our organization.”



Peoria Wing to reorganize, decommissioning TACPs and 566th Band of the Midwest

By Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

SPRINGFIELD, Ill.

–As the U.S. Air Force re-positions to face future challenges, the Illinois Air National Guard received notification from the Air Force that the Tactical Air Control Party (TACP) Group, comprised of the headquarters element and two squadrons, and the 566th Air Force Band (Band of the Midwest) will be decommissioned.

The units are based at the 182nd Airlift Wing in Peoria and will decommission over the next two years, impacting approximately 210 Airmen. However, National Guard leaders said that despite some turmoil from the initial change, the unit will receive new missions that will help position it for success well into the future. The impacted Airmen will have multiple options to stay in the Illinois Air National Guard and fulltime Airmen effected will be transferred to other vacancies.

“As leaders, we never want to lose units,” said Maj. Gen. Rich Neely, the Adjutant General of Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National Guard. “However, the U.S. Air Force is making these changes as the threats against the U.S. change. We must adapt to stay relevant into the future. I remain committed to ensure every one of our Airmen will have an opportunity to cross train into new missions as we



modernize to remain relevant as the Illinois National Guard.”

The Illinois National Guard is working closely with National Guard Bureau to identify additional force structure for the 182nd Airlift Wing that is closely aligned with its Air Mobility Command mission. Maj. Gen. Neely and the Director of the Air National Guard, Lt. Gen. Michael Loh, discussed potential missions for the wing during General Loh’s visit to Peoria earlier this month, Neely said.

“We are very proud of the Airmen of 182nd Airlift Wing and all of its subordinate units,” Neely said.



The 182nd Airlift Wing has won 10 “Outstanding Unit” awards and developed an efficient and effective maintenance system that is replicated throughout the Air Force.

Brig. Gen. Dan McDonough, the Assistant Adjutant General – Air and Commander of the Illinois Air National Guard, said the Airmen in the TACP Group and the 566th

Air Force Band are excellent and the Illinois Air National Guard will work hard to retain every one of them.

“Whatever it takes,” said McDonough. “The Airmen in the band are as a group the most educated individuals we have in the Illinois Air National Guard. Several have doctorates and master degrees. The TACPs are the epitome of special warfare professionals.” He recalled with pride that two TACP Airmen competed in the Illinois Army National Guard’s Best Warrior Competition a few years

back and won both Soldier of the Year and NCO of the Year. “We should also never forget that Staff Sgt. Jacob Frazier, who gave his life for his nation in Afghanistan, was one of our TACPs.”

The changes at the 182nd Airlift Wing are driven by changes at the national level.

The U.S. Air

Force announced in late 2021 it would reduce the number of TACP Airmen by 50 percent across all three USAF components (active duty, reserves and National Guard), from approximately 3,340 to 1,695 Airmen by the end of fiscal year 2025, said Col. Michael Mihalik, the Illinois Air National Guard's Director of Staff. This reduction will include approximately 170 TACP Airmen in the Illinois Air National Guard.

The Air Force also announced the decommissioning of the six Air National Guard bands plus two active duty and reserve Air Force bands. The decision will result in the loss of approximately 40 Illinois Air National Guard band positions in Fiscal Year 2024.

The 566th Air Force Band, the Illinois Air National Guard's 'Band of the Midwest' is well known through Illinois and the region, McDonough said. "They are absolutely amazing musicians and Airmen that have supported community events throughout the state and region as well as many military events."

The decommissioning of the units is expected to save the Air Force approximately \$400 million, which represents 1.4 percent of

the approximately \$30 billion Air Force budget, Mihalik said. "The Illinois Air National Guard will be impacted by the first round of cuts during fiscal year 2023 because that's when the 168th would be decommissioned." The 169th ASOS will be decommissioned in the second round of cuts."

Mihalik said TACP squadrons operate the communication and command and control centered system that fills or prioritizes requests for Close Air Support aircraft to be directed to TACP members embedded with Army units who are in close contact with the enemy. Advances in technology have resulted in less Airmen needed to accomplish this mission.

"We know the TACP professionals and band members are disappointed with the decommissioning. We understand that they joined the Air Force to be TACPs or musicians. Still, we hope they will stay with us," he said. "We can cross train them into one of the many Air Force Specialty Codes that are open or will be open when new missions are offered."

"We are confident this shift will result in the Illinois Air National Guard being assigned a new Air Force mission better aligned

with the 182nd's mobility aircraft mission," Mihalik said.

"The TACPs and musicians are passionate about their jobs," said Col. Rusty Ballard, commander, 182nd Airlift Wing. Ballard has asked the affected Airmen and their families for patience as they work through the process.

"There are many unanswered questions right now. As we get answers, we will share those with the affected Airmen and their families. The sacrifice made by the Airmen and their families won't be forgotten," he said. "They will always be part of the 182nd regardless of where their path takes them."

"Plans are to maintain the current Airmen strength across the Air National Guard at 108,000. Air National Guard planners are re-missioning the uncovered jobs as a single package," he added.

"The new mission assignment announcement will likely occur during the next program objective memorandum cycle," Ballard said. "This mission could be the Contingency Response Group, Cyber, intel, or other possible missions."



Camp Lincoln Celebrates 117th birthday with local government and business leaders

By Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. –The Illinois National Guard Headquarters at Camp Lincoln in Springfield celebrated its 117th birthday July 6 and officials invited local businesses and government officials to learn how to do business with the federal government.

“As we continue to celebrate the Illinois National Guard’s 300th year, I urge each of you to take the time to look at the history of where the Illinois National Guard came from,” said Brig. Gen. Mark Alessia, Director of the Illinois National Guard Joint Staff. “Just last week we commemorated the first shot fired at Gettysburg and that was an Illinois National Guardsman. Look at the history of Santa Anna’s leg, the 106th Cavalry rescuing the Belgium King, and what we accomplished in the Pacific theater of operations during World War II. Every time you look at the things we’ve done throughout our history, it really is amazing. Today is an event which commemorates the anniversary of the start of Camp Lincoln.”

In 1885 Governor Richard J. Oglesby appointed a 5-person board to seek out a permanent base of operations for the Illinois National Guard. Springfield competed against Highland Park, Waukegan, Wilmington, Oregon, Quincy, Ottawa, and Kankakee. The cost of the initial 160 acres was \$18,100, of which Springfield residents raised \$3,100 and the city paid \$15,000. The first building constructed on Camp Lincoln was a horse stable for 100 horses, a quartermaster house and an icehouse.

Today, Camp Lincoln is home to the 233rd Military Police Company, the medical detachment headquarters, Company C, 634th Brigade Support Battalion, Battery B, 2nd Battalion, 123rd Field Artillery Regiment, 232 Combat



Sustainment Support Battalion, 3637th Maintenance Company, Recruiting and Retention Battalion headquarters and several smaller units, including the 129th Regiment (Regional Training Institute) which serves as the training facility for the Illinois Army National Guard Officer Candidate School, as well as Information Technology, Culinary Arts and transportation reclassification courses plus other classes and seminars.

“Today there are more than 550 full-time employees and approximately 2,000 traditional Illinois National Guard members in Springfield,” said Lt. Col. Brad Leighton, Director of Public Affairs, Illinois National Guard. “That translates into approximately \$70 million in annual payroll for Sangamon County.”

Alessia said the second portion of the event was to educate local businesses and officials on how to do business with the federal government.

“We are always interested in doing business with local businesses,” Alessia said. “If we can help out local businesses and the local economy that is what we’d like to try and do.”

Lt. Col. Mark Williams, supervisory contract specialist, U.S. Property and Fiscal Office for Illinois, presented an overview of the requirements for a business to

participate in government contracting programs.

“In fiscal year 2022, the Illinois National Guard had approximately \$4.8 million in small business-eligible contracts,” Williams said. “To date in fiscal year 2023, the Illinois National Guard has approximately \$17.6 million in small business-eligible contracts.”

Williams said businesses and government entities must be properly registered and have identification numbers, and if

competing for contracts specified for small businesses, meet the business size standards set by the Small Business Administration. Businesses must also register with SAM, the official United States government system for contract opportunities, maintain compliance, and meet cybersecurity requirements.

“To sell goods and services to the government, you must meet certain requirements,” Williams said. “It is not a same day approval system, so if you see a contract you would like to bid and the closing date is tomorrow, you won’t be able to bid on that contract (unless you are already registered to do business with the federal government through SAM.gov).”

Williams talked about set-asides for government contracting programs.

“Some government contracting programs are available only for businesses which meet the requirements for specific categories, such as small businesses, women owned businesses, small, disadvantaged businesses and service-disabled veteran-owned businesses,” he said. “Businesses must meet certain requirements to be placed in one of those categories, but there are benefits available for these businesses.”

SPLASHDOWN





FORT MCCOY, Wis. –Soldiers from C Troop, 2nd Squadron, 106th Cavalry Regiment, based in Aurora jump from a CH-47 Chinook into the water at Fort McCoy’s Big Sandy Lake during a helocasting mission.

Helocasting is an airborne technique used by combat units to insert into a military area of operations. Troops are flown by helicopter to a maritime insertion point. Once there, the aircraft assumes an altitude just above the water’s surface and an airspeed of 10 knots (19 km/h) or less and troops then exit the aircraft and enter the water.

In some cases, depending upon the mission parameters and the aircraft used, personnel may be inserted along with an inflatable boat for over-the-horizon operations.

Practicing helocast operations allows the 106th to hone its insertion and reconnaissance skills.



St. Joseph Soldier promoted to sergeant major

By Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. – Illinois Army National Guard Soldier James Ressel, of St. Joseph, Illinois, was promoted to sergeant major at the Illinois Military Academy, Camp Lincoln, Springfield on July 7.

“The past 27 years has been a wild and wonderful ride,” Ressel said. “Looking back at the things and places this organization has afforded me the opportunity to do and see, I never dreamed at the beginning of my career that all of this was possible.”

Ressel enlisted in the Missouri Army National Guard in 1996 serving as a Fire Support Specialist. In 1998, he joined the Illinois Army National Guard with Battery C, 3rd Battalion, 123rd Field Artillery Regiment before transitioning to an infantryman, serving with 2nd Battalion, 130th Infantry Regiment, which is based in Marion.

“What began as a means to an end turned into a rewarding and fulfilling career I can look back on with pride,” he said. “The military gave me purpose. As my career progresses throughout the years, it turned into a passion for a profession I love so much.”

Ressel has served in a variety of leadership positions throughout his career. He is a military technician who works in the Mobilization Readiness Office for Joint Force Headquarters in Springfield and serves as the Operations Sergeant Major for the 244th Digital Liaison Detachment, based in Chicago.

“This is an exciting day for the Ressel family,” said Col. Randy Edwards, Director of Plans, Training, and Operations for the Illinois Army National Guard. “All the hard work and dedication over the past 27 years has



paid off. You are extremely hard working, humble and the best trainer I’ve worked with.”

Ressel deployed to Afghanistan in 2008-2009 in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and to Jordan and Syria in 2020 in support of Operation Spartan Shield.

“Along the way I was

mentored by officers and noncommissioned officers who shaped and molded me throughout my career,” he said. “It was during the deployment to Afghanistan in 2008 to 2009 that I understood what all the training was about. We were tasked with a difficult mission and without the group of men I served with, I wouldn’t be here today.”

Ressel thanked his family for their support throughout his career, including his son, Alex, and wife, Amanda.

“I’ve been blessed with a solid foundation of family throughout my career. Alex, I’m proud of the young man you are and the man you will become,” he said. “My wife, Amanda, who has always been there for better or worse, and for the last 19 years of marriage has been my rock at home which allows me to focus on the mission at hand.”

Ressel offered advice to his fellow members of the Illinois National Guard.

“Take the best aspects of those you meet and make them your own,” he said. “Don’t be afraid to fail, accept the opportunities you are given, train your replacement, and leave the organization better than before.”

Ressel is enrolled in the Sergeants Major Course as a distance learning student.



Dixon Soldier promoted to major general; takes the reigns as Dep. Commanding General, U.S. Army Central

By Capt. Richard Moore, U.S. Army Central Command

SHAW AIR FORCE BASE, S.C. – Lieutenant General Patrick Frank, U.S. Army Central Commanding General, promoted Brigadier General Henry Dixon, a native of Dixon, Illinois, to the rank of Major General as he assumed the role of the Deputy Commanding General at Patton Hall on July 7, 2023.

Dixon previously served as the USARCENT Assistant Chief of Staff, G3 and was responsible for the planning and execution of operations and exercises across the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility.

While Dixon's military service has taken him all over the world and the United States, his roots in Illinois run as deep as the Rock River. Dixon grew up in Dixon, Illinois, along the banks of the river. The general's ancestor, John Dixon, established the town in 1830. John Dixon worked as a mail carrier between Peoria and Galena before acquiring the river ferry service and establishing a tavern at what became the town that now bears the Dixon name.

Frank said that Maj. Gen. Dixon's movement into the Deputy Commanding General role was the right move for the command.

"He is the new DCG because he is a respected officer across the staff," said Frank. "When Henry Dixon talks, people listen. Above all, he is a leader of character. In the Army and for our Soldiers, that matters."

Dixon, who

commissioned in the Illinois Army National Guard as an infantry officer in 1989, spoke about the reason he serves in the Army and at USARCENT.



"I am blessed to have the skill, the talents and the abilities to wear the cloth of this nation," said Dixon. "I am thankful for the opportunity to defend this nation and its people. Lieutenant General Frank, I am also grateful to you for keeping me a part of this team and this family."

During his speech, Dixon spoke about the role his father played as an inspiration in his life. Dixon is the

son of the late Brigadier General (R) Henry Dixon of Illinois.

"As many of you know, (my father) passed away in April," said Dixon. "He was an inspiration and would be proud. But not proud that Henry Dixon became a Major General. Proud that I have the ability to serve this great nation."

During the ceremony, Frank administered the oath to Dixon and presented the Legion of Merit award for his service as the G3. Command Sergeant Major J. Garza, the USARCENT senior enlisted leader, presented Dixon with his new two-star general officer flag.

Dixon reflected on his recent travels as the G3 meeting with partners throughout the Middle East.

"On my recent travels in Saudi Arabia, a young captain asked me a question that made me pause," said Dixon. "She asked, 'was it always your goal to be a general officer?' No, it was not. In every position, it was my goal to do the best job I could at the time. It is what

you do in the job now that determines the future. Do your job to the best of your abilities."

United States Army Central (USARCENT) is the U.S. Army Service Component Command for United States Central Command (CENTCOM) and is responsible to the Secretary of the Army for the support and administration of more than 12,000 Soldiers, including those assigned to joint task forces and embassies, across the 21 countries in the CENTCOM Area of Responsibility (AOR).





600 YARDS INTO HISTORY: IL MILITIAMAN MARCELLUS JONES' FIRST SHOT AT GETTYSBURG

By Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

WHEATON, ILL. –It was the shot which ignited the Battle of Gettysburg, a key turning point for Union forces during the Civil War.

On July 1, the Illinois National Guard, the City of Wheaton, and the DuPage County Historical Museum, commemorated the actions of 1st Lt. Marcellus Jones and the 8th Illinois Volunteer Cavalry, 160 years after Jones borrowed a carbine from Cpl. Levi Shafer, of Naperville, Illinois, aimed it with the assistance of a fence rail and fired a shot at a Confederate officer, igniting the three-day battle in and around the town of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

“History lives in Wheaton and today is a perfect example of that,” said Nancy Flannery, City of Wheaton

Historic Commission. “We are proud to promote awareness of our city’s heritage through events such as this.”

Lt. Col. Matthew Garrison, operations officer for the Illinois National Guard Joint Staff talked about the shared history of the Illinois National Guard and the City of Wheaton and DuPage County.

“Today we are here to

commemorate an important event in our shared history with the communities of Wheaton and DuPage County,” said Garrison during the awards ceremony.

“Both your community and our organization share the history of the 8th Illinois Volunteer Cavalry and the actions of Lieutenant Marcellus Jones, who was part of that unit.”

Marcellus Jones came to DuPage

County in 1858 as a widower with a young son. He enlisted in Company E, 8th Illinois Volunteer Cavalry as a private, but rose to captain by the end of the Civil War. After the war, Jones returned to DuPage County, settling in Wheaton, where he built a home at what is now the corner of Naperville and Indiana Streets.





commemorates its 300th anniversary throughout 2023, Garrison said the organization is still developing leaders among the sons and daughters of Illinois.

“Our Soldiers and Airmen learn to be part of something larger than themselves,” said Garrison. “They learn

to be part of a team. They learn about selfless service, commitment, discipline, and integrity.”

In the Gettysburg Address, Lincoln spoke of the living being “dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced.”

“It was an Illinois National Guard Soldier, Lt. Marcellus Jones, who fired the first shot at Gettysburg and another who wrote its famous epitaph,” Garrison said. “While Lincoln, who served in the Illinois militia during the Black Hawk War, spoke of that epic battle and the Civil War, in many ways the work of the Illinois National Guard will forever be unfinished.”

Garrison said the Illinois National Guard history tells stories of commitment, courage, dedication, hard work, and overcoming adversity.

“Our Soldiers and Airmen are weaving the thread of our history each day,” he said. “Future Soldiers and Airmen, Illinoisans who believe in democracy and the values and rights espoused in our Constitution, will continue our history for perpetuity.”

Don McArthur-Self, a reenactor with the 8th Illinois Volunteer Cavalry, presented a brief history of the 8th Illinois Volunteer Cavalry Regiment.

“The 8th Illinois was a state unit raised after the First Battle of Bull Run in 1861,” he said. “Unlike other units, Soldiers serving in the 8th

Illinois enlisted for three years. They were the only Illinois Civil War unit to serve their entire enlistment in the eastern United States area of operation.”

The 8th Illinois was mustered into service on Sept. 17, 1861, in St. Charles, Illinois, and in November, the unit was shipped to Washington, D.C.

Following the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln, the 8th Illinois was called out to pursue John Wilkes Booth and missed capturing him by several hours.



“We are thankful to be a close partner with the Illinois State Military Museum and their loan of both the 36th Illinois Infantry national colors and the 8th Illinois Cavalry guidon,” said Michelle Podkova, the manager of the DuPage County Historical Museum. “We appreciate to be able to host these two flags for the past decade. Through this loan, we are able to bring the flags home to where most of the people who served in the 8th Illinois Cavalry lived.”

Jones died on Oct. 9, 1900, in Wheaton. He is buried in the Wheaton Cemetery.

After a succession of owners, the house served as the Wheaton School District administrative offices from 1947 to 1977. The law firm of Peregrine, Stime, & Newman saved the home from planned demolition, moved it to Reber and Illinois Streets and rehabilitated it for offices. It was established as a Wheaton Historic site in 1985.

The home is now owned by David and Jennifer Penfield and the couple opened it up for a tour on July 1.

After the war, Jones served as township tax collector, DuPage County Sheriff, a city councilman and postmaster in Wheaton.

“He knew about community service, and knew about military service to his nation,” Garrison said. “He lived it.”

As the Illinois National Guard



Fisher Solder awarded Legion of Merit for success as commander of 108th Sustainment Brigade

By Lt. Col. Brad Leighton, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

CHICAGO -Illinois Army National Guard Col. Tim Newman of Fisher, Illinois, was awarded the Legion of Merit during the 108th Sustainment Brigade Change of Command held on Sunday, July 16, at the brigade's headquarters next to Humboldt Park in Chicago.

The Legion of Merit is among the U. S. military's most prestigious awards, ranking just below the Silver Star, and ahead of the Distinguished Flying Cross. Newman, a veteran of Iraq and Afghanistan, works in his civilian life as the Assistant Dean of Library for Facilities at the University of Illinois at Urbana/Champaign.

During the ceremony, Newman relinquished command of the 108th Sustainment Brigade to Lt. Col. Beth Roxworthy of Springfield, Illinois. Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, the Assistant Adjutant General - Army of the Illinois National Guard and Commander of the Illinois Army National Guard, presided over the ceremony and the presentation of the Legion of Merit.

As the brigade commander, Newman oversaw the deployments of multiple subordinate units as well as the 108th Sustainment Brigade's vital role in the Illinois National Guard's historic response to the COVID-19 pandemic. He also deployed a subordinate unit, the 198th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, to help secure the U.S. Capitol following the Jan. 6, 2021 violence.

Roxworthy is an Iraq veteran and most recently deployed to Africa, where she served as the executive officer to the Commanding General of Combined Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa. As a civilian, she serves as the Legislative Liaison for the Illinois Department of Military Affairs.





'Chicago's Own' 108th SB gets new commander

By Lt. Col. Brad Leighton, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

CHICAGO -Lt. Col. Beth Roxworthy of Springfield, Illinois, assumed command of the Chicago-based 108th Sustainment Brigade from Col. Tim Newman of Fisher, Illinois, during the unit's change of command ceremony held Sunday, July 16, at the brigade's headquarters next to Humboldt Park in Chicago.

"I can't be more proud of what the brigade has been able to accomplish over these last few years and I look forward to seeing what next great things the 108th Soldiers, NCOs, and Officers will accomplish, as Lieutenant Colonel Roxworthy takes command," Newman said.

The 108th Sustainment Brigade consists of five battalions, 25 companies, and approximately 2,600 Soldiers. Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, the Assistant Adjutant General - Army of the Illinois National Guard and Commander of the Illinois Army National Guard, presided over the ceremony. Boyd presented Newman with the Legion of Merit during the ceremony.

The brigade headquarters had just returned from a deployment to Iraq when Newman took command in 2020. During Newman's nearly three years in command, the brigade:

- Supported the COVID-19 vaccination and operational missions.
- Welcomed home one unit and deployed two units overseas.
- Deployed three units to the

Southwest Border Mission.

- Deployed three Security Force Assistance Teams to U.S. Indo-Pacific Command.
- Supported eight named operations during annual training periods.
- Had five units on yearly varied ready force missions.
- Readied three units to support U.S. Central Command and two more Security Force Assistance Teams to support U.S. European Command and U.S. Indo-Pacific Command.



- Deployed approximately 500 Soldiers for three months after the Jan. 6, 2021 riot to secure the U.S. Capital.

- Developed a division alignment for training with the Minnesota Army National Guard's 34th Infantry Division.

- Participated in a Corps-level Warfighter exercise validating 5th Corps, which was standing up in Poland.

- Stood up two field feeding platoons as new force structure.

- The brigade's 1544th Transportation Co. competed in the Army's national culinary competition called the Connelly Award.

- The 725th Transportation Co. placed first and the 108th Multifunction Medical Battalion placed second in the Army Award for Maintenance Excellence competition.

- The 1644th Transportation Co. won the National Defense Transportation Association Unit of the Year Award.

Roxworthy had served as the personnel officer for the 108th Sustainment Brigade and as the executive officer of the brigade's 198th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion prior to serving as the commander of the 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team's 634th Brigade Support Battalion and then deputy commander of the 404th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade.

"I absolutely love that I am back here - this is home to me," Roxworthy said. "My previous time with the 108th was one of the most memorable times of my career - and I know the memories we make will be even better. I've been watching the 108th's continued success



from the sidelines. You've shouldered quite a load over the years, but we all know, future operations are on the forefront as well as contingencies that we have not yet planned for. I have every confidence that we will be prepared and stand ready to accomplish any mission."

Both officers are combat veterans. Newman served as a Combat Engineer platoon leader in Al Anbar Province, Iraq, in 2005; with the Illinois National Guard's Bilateral Embedded Support Team supporting the Polish Army in Ghazni Province, Afghanistan, in 2010; and as the Support Operations Officer for the 108th Sustainment Brigade's deployment to Kuwait in 2014.

Roxworthy deployed to Iraq from 2006 to 2007 as a platoon leader with the 634th Brigade Support Battalion and deployed to Africa in 2022 with the 404th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade where she served as the executive officer to the Commanding General of Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa.

Newman works in his civilian life as the Assistant Dean of Library for Facilities at the University of Illinois at Urbana/Champaign. He is married to Evie and they have a 12-year-old son, Jameson. His father, Fred, served in the U.S. Coast Guard for 30 years retiring as a captain.

Roxworthy serves as the Legislative Liaison for the Illinois Department of Military Affairs as a civilian. She lives with her two "spoiled" dogs, Leonard and Olive. Her parents, Don and Jo Ellen Roxworthy of Crystal Lake, Illinois, celebrated their 56th wedding anniversary the day before they saw their daughter take brigade command.



Normal-based brigade welcomes new commander

By Barb Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

NORMAL, III. –In a ceremony steeped in rich military tradition, Illinois Army National Guard Col. David Helfrich, of Smithton, Illinois, assumed command of the Normal-based 404th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade (MEB) from Col. Kevin Little, of Franklin, Illinois, in a change of command ceremony July 14 at the brigade’s headquarters on the grounds of the Heartland Community College.

Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, of Naperville, Illinois, Assistant Adjutant General – Army and Commander of the Illinois Army National Guard presided over the ceremony.

“Kevin, we asked a lot of you these past couple of years. You took it on and made it happen,” Boyd said. “Everything starts with Soldier care. Kevin demonstrated early on that he cared about the Soldiers in formation. When you have a commander who cares about the Soldiers in formation, it makes leading that formation easier because the Soldiers believe you have their back.”

Little enlisted in the Illinois Army National Guard in 1995, serving with the 233rd Military Police Company. In 2001, he commissioned through the Officer Candidate School. Little has held numerous staff and leadership positions throughout his 28 years of military service.

From 2011 to 2012, Little deployed to Kunar Province, Afghanistan with the 1-14th Agribusiness Development Team in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Little is the director of Human

Resources for the Illinois National Guard.

Boyd assured the 404th MEB Soldiers that Helfrich would continue to have their backs as well.

“Dave’s going to do what’s right for the Soldiers in formation,” he said. “We are very lucky as an organization to be saying goodbye to one great leader and saying welcome aboard to another. This organization is still in good hands.”



Don't forget that."

Boyd thanked the Little and Helfrich families for their support throughout the years.

"Jessica, thank you for all you've done to allow Kevin to do all we have required of him," Boyd said. "Without family support, we can't do what we need to do in conducting the business of being Army Soldiers. Jennie, welcome to the 404th family. You're going to get to know the family even more now. We're going to require a lot of Dave. We know you have his back."

Boyd said it's a bittersweet day when a leader relinquishes command but at the end of the day, it's the opportunity of a lifetime.

"Very few Soldiers get promoted to colonel and get the opportunity to lead a brigade-size element," Boyd said. "That's what we're celebrating today. One Soldier who is relinquishing command and one coming in to do something special in his career."

Little thanked the Soldiers of the 404th MEB for their support during his time as commander.

"There are only a few opportunities in this organization," he said. "I became an officer to command and lead. It has been a privilege and honor to lead the 404th MEB. The 404th MEB is in a good place and is on a trajectory that Colonel Helfrich can continue the success of the team."

Little also thanked his family for their support throughout his career.

"Jessica, I'm forever grateful to you for what you've done for me as well as our family and I know the Soldiers appreciated what you've



done as well," he said. "To all my family, you are all very special to me. We as Soldiers could not do what we do without the support of those at home. We who serve get all the attention from it, but really it's the families who are the unrecognized heroes."

Little offered a word of advice to Helfrich.

"I know the 404th is in better hands with you at the lead," Little said. "My advice to you is listen. Listen to both the specialist and the major. You are all going to grow and become successful. I'm excited for you to take over and very proud of what this brigade has accomplished."



Little was presented a Legion of Merit during the ceremony.

Helfrich, who has served in the U.S. Army and Illinois Army National Guard for 32 years, thanked Boyd for the opportunity to command the brigade and the Soldiers of the 404th MEB for their willingness to serve.

"Thank you, Major General Boyd, for this opportunity. I have wanted

this command for a very long time," Helfrich said. "To the Soldiers of the 404th MEB, thank you for the service you are carrying on, the service in the footsteps of those who have gone before us, and those who will follow us. This year marks 50 years of the All-Volunteer force and it's an honor to serve alongside you all."

Helfrich said he mentioned the fact because that act was a response to change within society, and a change that was needed in the Armed Forces.

"The military is no stranger to change," he said. "Imagine the force structure changes made in the past 100 years. During World War II, General Marshall famously built the 90-division concept. Today, we have 14 Army divisions, compared to China's 75 divisions. We must plan and train to counter a 75-division force with our 14, and we will do it through innovation, discipline, training, strategy, and focus on our best asset - our Soldiers."

Helfrich said for innovation to be part of the military culture, change must be embraced at every level.

"The United States is an innovative society, and the military must continue to embrace innovation to allow us to stay ahead of our competition," he said. "I recognize we must change, we must adapt, and we must be flexible enough to take on any challenge, at any time."

Helfrich said the single most important factor to adapting to change and innovation is effective training.

"I vow to ensure training is creative, adaptive and innovative,"



he said. "We will maximize joint training opportunities everywhere we can. Training with others is how we fight, and it is key to success."

Helfrich urged the Soldiers in the 404th MEB to be strategic leaders.

"Strategic leaders focus on planning, testing new ideas, opportunities for experienced based learning, and recognition," he said. "Strategic leaders are not afraid to try new ideas. They are not afraid to fail in peace so they can succeed in war."

Helfrich asked the 404th MEB Soldiers to continue to trust in the All-Volunteer force.

"Continue to embody the values that make this country great, embody the values that make our military the finest in the world," he said. "We are the torchbearers who will lead it into the future."

Helfrich thanked his family for their support throughout his career.

"Jennie, thank you for being my copilot in this beautiful life, thank you for being my light and always giving me guidance through any storm," he said. "Thank you for allowing me to continue within this fantastic service for I truly believe what we do is important."

Helfrich, who was the director of Strategic Plans and Policy for the Illinois National Guard Joint Staff, is a traditional member of the Illinois National Guard and works full time as the Area Engineer for the Louisville District U.S. Army Corps of Engineers office at Scott Air Force Base.

Helfrich deployed to Afghanistan in 2009 as part of forward support team 33 assisting Illinois' Polish partners in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.



Illinois' 6/54th SFAB deploys two training and advising teams overseas

By Sgt. 1st Class Bryan Spreitzer, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

ROCK ISLAND ARSENAL, III. – Family and friends gathered at Rock Island Arsenal's Heritage Hall Aug. 6, for the mobilization of two teams from Illinois' 6th Battalion, 54th Security Forces Assistance Brigade (SFAB).



Battalion Advisor Team 6600, comprised of nearly 20 Soldiers will deploy to Romania, and Logistics Advisor Team 6622, comprised of approximately 5 Soldiers will deploy to the Philippines. Both teams will conduct multiple training and advising missions with their host nations for approximately six months.

Lt. Col. Beth Roxworthy, commander of the 108th Sustainment Brigade, the SFAB's parent brigade, said she was proud to command a unit like the 6-54th with its unique role.



"I've learned a lot about this unit since taking command, and

I learn more all of the time," said Roxworthy. "The work and dedication that the Soldiers in the SFAB put in day in and day out is amazing. There is no doubt in my mind that they will complete their missions successfully."

Command Sgt. Maj. Jeffrey Sima, team 6600's Command Sergeant Major, said the teams are full of talented Soldiers that are ready to continue the rich history assistance and training teams.

"The Soldiers you see before you are some of the most professional Soldiers that I've worked with in my more than 30-year career," said Sima. "They really do embody the spirit and history of advisor teams that have been doing similar missions since after World War II."

Maj. Thomas Brooks, the team lead for team 6622 directed his comments to the families and friends gathered to send off their Soldiers.

"We don't serve alone, you, our families and friends, are a big part of why we can do this and be successful," said Brooks. "You stay back and take care of the houses and the kids and take all of that off our plates while we're deployed. You're the reason we can focus on the mission. Thank you for being a part of this, without you we couldn't succeed."

Chief Warrant Officer 5 Thomas Black, Command Chief Warrant Officer for the Illinois Army National Guard and Command Sgt. Maj. Phillip Barber, Command Sergeant Major for the Illinois Army National Guard presented the team commanders with their deployment flags that will accompany them overseas.



Illinois National Guard Cyber Expert Rises to Lieutenant Colonel

By Lt. Col. Brad Leighton, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. –Jaime Marlock is on the rise in both her careers.

Last week the Lake St. Louis, Missouri, resident was promoted to technical architect in her information security job for the financial services firm Edward Jones.

And then, on August 6, she was promoted to lieutenant colonel in the Illinois Army National Guard.

Marlock, the G6 (information technology and cyber) Branch Chief, received her military promotion in a short ceremony at the Illinois National Guard's headquarters on Camp Lincoln in Springfield. Col. Lenny Williams, the Illinois Army National Guard's Chief of Staff, presided over the ceremony.

Williams said that Marlock is one of the rising stars in the Illinois Army National Guard and he fully expects her to be promoted to colonel in a few years.

Marlock, who grew up in Moline, Illinois, enlisted in the Illinois Army National Guard as a Signal Corps Soldier 20 years ago. She rose to sergeant but found herself dissatisfied. She felt that the training for Signal Soldiers at that time could be more engaging and challenging.

"I could either get out or put myself in a position where I could improve things," she told her Soldiers. She opted for the latter, enrolling in the Illinois Army National Guard's 129th Regional Training Institute's Officer Candidate School. In 2008 she was commissioned as an Army second lieutenant.

She is now among the key leaders of the Illinois National Guard's cyber force and is involved in cyber planning, training and operations for the National Guard's state and federal missions.



Illinois National Guard NCO Joins Polish Bicycle Rally to Honor Fallen Allies

By Lt. Col. Brad Leighton, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs



Association of Families of Fallen Soldiers, will travel 538 kilometers (almost 335 miles) throughout Poland from the city of Siedlce to Rzeszów, with stops in Terespol, Chełm, Zamość, and Stalowa Wola. It is expected to include about 60 cyclists and is modeled on the Gold Star Mission's annual Gold Star 500 in Illinois. Last year, the Polish had 16 participants in the Gold Star 500 including seven Polish Army Soldiers, six students and three Polish Gold Star Family members.

Both Gold Star Mission and the Association of Families of Fallen Soldiers are private non-profit organizations and the service members who participate in the bike rallies are on leave without any U.S. government contributions. However, the relationships between these organizations emanate from the 30-year State Partnership Program between the Illinois National Guard and the Polish military. Each year there are about 30 training exchanges between the Illinois National Guard and the Polish military. The Illinois Army National Guard also co-deployed with the Polish first to Iraq and then to Afghanistan for 17 years.

"Over the years, during missions where Poles fought side by side with the Soldiers of the Illinois National Guard, many friendships were forged, and the immeasurable losses were shared by allied armies as well," said Lidia Kordasz-Garniewicz of the Polish Association of Families of Fallen Soldiers. Lidia's late husband, Lt. Col. Grzegorz Kordasz, was among those Polish Soldiers who served in Afghanistan alongside Soldiers from the Illinois National Guard.

Those relationships have endured beyond military service. The eight-person team going to Poland for the bike rally includes Illinois National Guard retirees Chuck Kitson, Brian Monahan, Tom Jackson and Diane

SPRINGFIELD, III. –When Senior Master Sgt. David Schreffler started riding with Gold Star Mission it was a great way to combine two of his greatest passions, bicycle riding and a desire to honor and remember fallen U.S. service members.

The Illinois Air National Guard NCO never thought it would bring him across the ocean to ride in honor of the fallen service members of our nation's staunch ally, Poland.

But, from Aug. 8-12, Schreffler will join five other volunteer U.S. riders and two volunteer support staff on the first Polish Veterans Bike Rally.

"It is a great way to ensure the fallen are not forgotten," said Schreffler, the Chief of Quality Assurance with the 217th Engineering and Installation Squadron, 183rd Wing, based in Springfield.

The rally, sponsored by the Polish

Rogers. Much of Gold Star Mission's membership is made up of either active or retired Illinois National Guard Soldiers and Airmen. The organization, whose motto is 'Always Remember, Never Forget,' started as a way to preserve the memory of the 34 Illinois National Guard service members killed overseas after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001 through awarding scholarships in the names of the fallen. It has since expanded its mission to include all Illinois service members killed in service to the United States since 9/11.

The Polish Association of Families of Fallen Soldiers' motto is "Memory and Future" and honors the memory of the Polish fallen service members and takes care of the families of fallen Soldiers, Kordasz-Garniewicz said.

Andrew Adamczyk, a Gold Star Mission member and an Illinois Army National Guard colonel, invited some of his Polish compatriots to participate in the Gold Star 500 last year. This year, the Polish community reciprocated with an invitation of their own.

"It all started with discussions among family members of fallen soldiers, and community organizers who shared a common goal of organizing an event that would not only commemorate the fallen but also bring together veterans from Poland and our allies in the USA," Kordasz-Garniewicz said. "The concept evolved into the idea of a bike rally, which would not only be a physical journey but also a symbolic one, representing the enduring spirit of those who served."

Schreffler has served nearly 34 years in the Air Force, about 29 years in the Air National Guard. He

has been a bicycling enthusiast since he was a teenager and most often participates in competitive bicycle races. He trained as a bicyclist with a friend while stationed in Germany on active duty and later was a stand-out on the Ohio University Cycling Club Sports team. In 1996, he represented Ohio University's Cycling team at "Nationals" - the National Cycling Club Association race where the top three teams from each region of the U.S. compete.



Now in his 50s, he never travels without a bicycle.

Schreffler comes from a family with many members who chose military service including his maternal grandfather, Raymond Cantrell, who served in the Navy during World War II, his uncle, Army Command Sgt. Maj. (ret.) James Schreffler, who served in Desert Storm, and his sister, Air Force Col. LaDonna Schreffler, who commands the 36th Aeromedical

Evacuation Squadron at Keesler Air Force Base in Mississippi.

He's had the opportunity to work with the Polish through his National Guard service including when a nine-member Polish military Medical Corps team visited Illinois during the state's response to COVID-19 in 2020. Schreffler was leading one of the Illinois National Guard's COVID-19 response teams that were deployed across the state.

However, he said participating in the Gold Star 500 last September with the Polish riders was special. "It was eye-opening to see how the Polish Gold Star Families really opened up as the ride continued," said Schreffler, who runs a start-up remote drone business in his civilian life. "They came out and supported us and I'm excited to be part of the team to support them."

"I believe that the special relationship between Poland, Gold Star Mission, and the Illinois National Guard is built on shared values, mutual respect, and a deep appreciation for the sacrifices made by Soldiers and their families," Kordasz-Garniewicz said. "This relationship is characterized by a strong bond of camaraderie and solidarity, transcending national borders and cultural differences."

In addition to the Association of Families of Fallen Soldiers, the Polish

Veterans Bike Rally is supported by the Stage I Sectoral Vocational School in Włoszakowice, Poland; the Polish Military Sports Association GROT; as well as Military Police under Poland's 18th Mechanized Division, Polish General Command.



"A JESLI KOMU
DROGA OTWARTA DO NIEBA
TO TYM, CO SŁUŻA OJCZYZNIE"
(JAN KOCHANOWSKI, PIEŚN O CNOCIE)

W HOLDZIE PAMIĘCI 96 OFIAR,
KTÓRE ZGINĘŁY W KATASTROFIE LOTNICZEJ
POD SMOLENSKIEM 10 KWIECZNIA 2010 ROKU
UDAJĄC SIĘ NA OBCHODY 70-ROCZNICY ZBRODNI KATYŃSKIEJ
SP.
PREZYDENT RP LECH KACZYŃSKI Z ŻONĄ MARIĄ
RYSZARD KACZOROWSKI - BYŁY PREZYDENT RP NA UCHODZCTWIE
WOJCIECH SEWERYN - TWORCA POMNIKA OFIAR KATYŃIA W CHICAGO

SP. JOANNA AGACKA-INDECKA EWA BAKOWSKA ANDRZEJ BŁASIK KRYSZYNA BOCHENEK ANNA MARIA BOROWSKA BARTOSZ BOROWSKI TADEUSZ BUK MIRON CHODAKOWSKI CZESŁAW CYWIŃSKI LESZEK DEPTUŁA ZBIGNIEW DEBSKI GRZEGORZ DOLNIAK KATARZYNA DORACZYŃSKA PIOTR DUCHNOWSKI ANDRZEJ FEDOROWICZ ANNA GINSKA MARCJAN LORCZAK ANDRZEJ MIZGIER MARCJAN NIESIŁA BARBARA MACIEJCZYK BARBARA MAMINSKA ZENONA MAMONTOWICZ-ŁOJEK ANDRZEJ MICHAŁAK STEFAN MELAK TOMASZ MERTA DARIUSZ MICHAŁOWSKI STANISŁAW MIKKE JUSTYNA MONIUSZKO ALEKSANDRA NATALLI-SWIAT JANINA NAWALCZ-MIRER PIOTR NAWALCZ PIOTR NAWALCZ BRONISŁAW NAWALCZ MIEC-LOFFLER JAN OGIŃSKI ADAM POKORSKI KATARZYNA POLESKA MACIEJ POLESKA TADUSZ POLESKA WACŁAWEK



REMEMBERING TOGETHER

Polish Armed Forces Day in Chicago
By Lt. Col. Brad Leighton, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs



The Consul General for the Republic of Poland in Chicago, Dr. Paweł Zyzak, invited the Illinois National Guard to participate in Polish Armed Forces Day on Sunday, Aug. 13. The commemoration included wreath layings at the Polish World War II Veterans Monument, the Polish World War I Veterans Monument, at the Katyn Monument and Smolensk Commemorative Plaque, and at the Monument in Honor of the Men of Saint Hyacinth Parish who served in World War I. The Illinois National Guard also participated in a Polish American Veterans Mass at the St. Hyacinth Basilica in Chicago. The Illinois National Guard has shared a State Partnership Program with the Polish military for 30 years. The Illinois Air National Guard's 566th Air Force Band provided music throughout the day including a special concert after the Mass. The Illinois National Guard's presiding officer was Brig. Gen. Justin Osberg, the Deputy Assistant Adjutant General - Army of the Illinois National Guard.



THIS DAY IN HISTORY

May

April

4 The 1st Illinois goes to war

1917: The 1st Illinois mustered into federal service on April 4, 1917. Its primary mission was to protect the people of Chicago, Joliet, and Lockport. The unit guarded power stations around the area, set up posts on important bridges and patrolled waterways. The unit also conducted training at their home armory on the near south side of Chicago in preparation for the war in Europe.

13 Soldier earns Medal of Honor at Luzon

1945: Private First Class Dexter J. Kerstetter of Company C, 130th Infantry advanced alone ahead of his platoon on the Philippine island of Luzon. Using expert marksmanship he cleared pockets of enemy resistance in several bunkers and caves. In total, Kerstetter killed 16 Japanese that day, effectively saving his platoon from one of the many ambushes that would have befallen them. For his determined effort in knocking out these enemy installations he received the Medal of Honor.

18 Illinois Soldiers capture Santa Anna's Leg at the Battle of Cerro Gordo

1847: In one of the closing battles of the Mexican War, 12,000 troops under Mexican General Santa Anna blocked the highway at the narrow pass of Cerro Gordo.

American Major General Winfield Scott needed to drive the Mexican army from the pass in order to open the road to Mexico City. Captain Robert E. Lee of the Army Corps of Engineers found terrain from which to shell Santa Anna from the pass. By bombarding the Mexican rear, Scott drove the enemy from Cerro Gordo, and inflicted over 4,000 casualties. The Americans lost 64 dead, 417 wounded. The 4th Illinois Volunteer Infantry intercepted the personal caravan of Santa Anna, and while they did not capture the general himself, they did secure his chest of gold and artificial cork leg. Illinois..



29 Sgt. Landis Garrison

2004: Sgt. Landis Garrison, 23 of Rapids City, Illinois, died of non-combat related injuries while serving at Abu Ghraib, Iraq. Garrison was assigned to the 333rd Military Police Company based in Freeport, Illinois.



7 106th Cavalry officers rescue King Leopold of Belgium

1945: Troop B, of the 121st Squadron, 106th Cavalry Group set out from St. Giligen for a patrol of the Austrian town of St. Wolfgang. They received word from Prince Georg Furstenberg that the exiled leader of Belgium, King Leopold in German captivity resided at Strobl. Seven officers drove in a confiscated Mercedes staff car to a villa in Strobl guarded by the SS. Without a shot being fired, the Germans surrendered and allowed the officers to make an easy liberation of the King. The officers were lauded for their decisive actions.

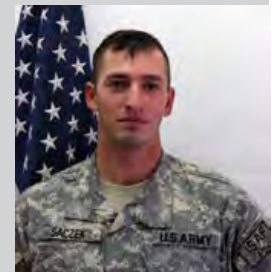
9 First muster of the Illinois National Guard

1723: The roots of the Illinois National Guard began on May 9th, 1723 when the very first militia muster took place under the French Regime at Fort De Chartes, near what is now Kaskaskia. 2023 marks the 300th birthday of the Illinois National Guard.



10 Sgt. Lukasz Saczek

2009: Sgt. Lukasz Saczek, 23, of Lake in the Hills, Illinois. Died from injuries sustained during a non-combat related incident. Saczek was assigned to Co. D, 1st Battalion, 178th Infantry Regiment based in Woodstock, Illinois.



18 Sgt. 1st Class William Chaney

2004: 1st Class William Chaney, 59, of Schaumburg, Illinois, died in Landstuhl, Germany, from complications following surgery. Chaney was assigned to B Company, 1st Battalion, 106th Aviation Regiment based in Chicago.



24 Spc. Jeremy Ridlen

2004: Spc. Jeremy Ridlen, 23, of Paris, Illinois, died in East Fallujah, Iraq, from small arms fire after a dump truck on the side of the road was detonated as his military convoy passed by. Ridlen was assigned to the 1544th Transportation Company based in Paris.



June

6

Sgt. Brian Romines

2005: Sgt. Brian Romines, 20, of Simpson, Illinois, was killed in action when an improvised explosive device detonated near the vehicle he was travelling in near Baghdad, Iraq. Romines was assigned to 2nd Battalion, 123rd Field Artillery Regiment based in Milan, Illinois.



6

Medal of Honor recipient Staff Sgt. Howard Woodford

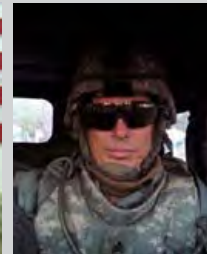
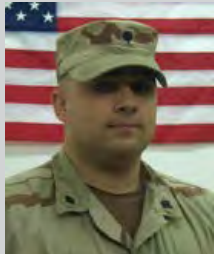
1945: While Staff Sgt. Howard E. Woodford of Company I, 130th Infantry, made his way through the jungle on Luzon to link up with an inexperienced guerrilla force attached to his own unit, he found them under heavy fire and taking many casualties. Assuming command, he began evacuating the wounded and reorganized the unit, leading them to a nearby hilltop for a better defensive position. He remained with the men through the night. When the Japanese counterattacked before dawn, they managed to kill Woodford, but he took 30 enemy combatants with him. For his profound leadership, he posthumously received the Medal of Honor.



19

Staff Sgt. Joshua Melton and Sgt. Paul Smith

2009: Staff Sgt. Joshua A. Melton, 26, of Carlyle, Illinois, and Sgt. Paul G. Smith, 43, of East Peoria, Illinois both died of wounds sustained when their vehicle was hit by an improvised explosive device in Kandahar, Afghanistan. Melton was assigned to 2nd Battalion, 130th Infantry, Marion, Illinois and Smith was assigned to 2nd Squadron, 106th Cavalry, Aurora, Illinois.



30

Col. George Rogers Clark arrives in Illinois

1778: Colonel George Rogers Clark, the famed militia leader of the Revolutionary War, crossed the Ohio River into southern Illinois. He and 175 Soldiers established a base of operations at Fort Massac. He had orders from Virginia to destroy British forts in the state. The forts were used to supply weapons and provisions to the Indians loyal to the English Crown. By severing this supply line Clark would effectively isolate the British within the state. Clark planned to lead a force from Massac to attack Fort Kaskaskia on the Mississippi River.

July

4

Illinois Soldiers fight alongside Australians in Hamel, France

1918: For the first time in the war, American troops from the 33rd Division took part in an offensive operation. Four companies from the 131st and 132nd Infantry Regiments advanced with Australian troops behind a 600-gun barrage. The well-coordinated attack led by Australian Lieutenant General John Monash included sixty tanks and a squadron of the Royal Air Corps. The battle lasted ninety minutes and cost the allied forces 1,314 in casualties. The Germans lost 3,600 in dead and captured. Corporal Thomas A. Pope of Company E, 131st Infantry received the Medal of Honor for actions during the battle.



6

Sgt. Chester Hosford and 1st Lt. Derwin Williams

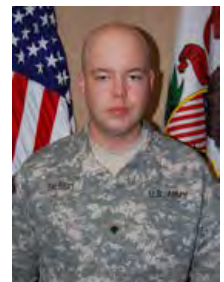
2009: Sgt. Chester Hosford, 35, of Ottawa, Illinois, and 1st Lt. Derwin Williams, 41, of Glenwood, Illinois, died of wounds suffered when the vehicle they were travelling in encountered an improvised explosive device in Khanabad, Afghanistan. Both Soldiers were assigned to Troop B, 2nd Squadron, 106th Cavalry Regiment, based in Dixon, Illinois.



7

Sgt. Christopher Talbert

2009: Sgt. Christopher Talbert, 24, of Galesburg, Illinois, died of wounds suffered when the vehicle he was traveling in encountered an improvised explosive device in Shindad, Afghanistan. Talbert was assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 130th Infantry Regiment, based in Dixon, Illinois.



29

Sgt. Gerrick Smith

2009: Sgt. Gerrick Smith, 19 of Sullivan, Illinois, died as a result of non-combat related injuries while in Heart, Afghanistan. Smith was assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 130th Infantry Regiment based in Marion, Illinois.



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