Oregon National Guard assists with wildland firefighting

SALEM, Oregon - The Oregon National Guard (ONG) was activated to assist the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) with wildfire suppression efforts following Governor Kate Brown’s statewide wildfire emergency declaration on July 18, 2018. The ONG has an ongoing agreement with ODF, known as Operation Plan Smokey, which stipulates how ONG members and assets may be utilized to assist in annual wildland firefighting efforts.

Aviation assets were made available to wildfire crews in Oregon. The Oregon Army National Guard provided CH-47 Chinook helicopters and HH-60M Black Hawk helicopters equipped with Bambi water buckets. Other air assets included an additional HH-60M Black Hawk helicopter on standby for medical evacuations and a UH-72 Lakota to assist with aerial spotting.

Three firefighting teams, each with approximately 125 Oregon National Guard personnel, were trained and “Red Card” certified in cooperation with the Oregon Department of Public Safety Standards and Training, during the spring and early summer in preparation for wildfire season. At the request of ODF, the teams of Citizen-Soldiers and Citizen-Airmen, from Oregon National Guard units across Oregon, were called into State Active Duty from Oregon National Guard across the state were called-up to help support the efforts of wildland firefighters with mop-up operations. The Oregon Army National Guard also provided helicopters to assist with Bambi bucket fire suppression operations, aerial spotting and a medevac on standby.

Oregon Army National Guard Soldiers fight the Garner Complex Fire side-by-side with firefighters from the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) north of Grants Pass, Oregon, August 2, 2018. Soldiers and Airmen from across the state were called-up to help support the efforts of wildland firefighters with mop-up operations. The Oregon Army National Guard also provided helicopters to assist with Bambi bucket fire suppression operations, aerial spotting and a medevac on standby.

Awareness and training keeps Northwest region ready

WARRENTON, Oregon. - The reliable summer weather along the Oregon coast provides an opportunity to prepare for the unpredictable. Annual training activities such as civil defense preparation training or exercises like Pathfinder-Minuteman bring a variety of military and first responders together to learn from recent real-world disasters.

During the recent two-day Pathfinder-Minuteman training, June 18-19, at Camp Rilea in Warrenton, Oregon, simulated post-earthquake and tsunami scenarios were implemented. The training takes into account previous years’ lessons and while incorporating multi-player teams.

“Warrenton, Oregon - The reliable summer weather along the Oregon coast provides an opportunity to prepare for the unpredictable. Annual training activities such as civil defense preparation training or exercises like Pathfinder-Minuteman bring a variety of military and first responders together to learn from recent real-world disasters.

First responders discuss training situations they encountered during Pathfinder-Minuteman Exercise, June 19, 2018, at Camp Rilea, Warrenton, Oregon. The joint multi-agency, multi-state preparedness exercise is based on a possible Cascadia Subduction Zone event.

We can build small, yet effective teams,” Lindsey said. “Over the course of a couple of days in the field, people get to know each other and it feels more natural to all the players.”

Making those decisions in the field, first responders need to assess the risks and safely manage the changing environment. Depending on the severity of the disaster, keeping a ‘culture of safety’ in mind is a fundamental component of the training.

“If our responders get hurt or killed, then we lose our ability to respond to others; it’s that simple,” Lindsey said.

The teams contained a balance of military members working side-by-side with their civilian counterparts. Frequently they are organized to have a variety of skill sets in each group, to include specialist in search and rescue, medicine, and other essential personnel.

Story continued on Page 4
Brigadier General William Edwards transitions to new assignments

As we start the autumn season, we remember September is “Preparedness Month” and October holds the Great Shakeout earthquake drill. It is incumbent upon every individual to be ready to help, prepared to assist with all aspects of military contingencies.

As such, the Oregon National Guard is prepared to weather any emergency. After disaster strikes, our neighbors and communities will be looking to us for leadership and support. Imagine if this was a rupture of the Cascadia fault, and there was no time to prepare. Are you ready? Is your family ready? Can you leave on a moment’s notice knowing that they can take care of themselves in the absence of guidance?

We cannot accomplish these missions without you. In some disasters, you may not be able to reach your unit or armory. Until you can, since you and your family will be prepared, help your neighbors and community. Let us all work together to put the needed assistance to the nearest armory, base, facility and be ready to help. If you need information on how to become more prepared, visit the Oregon Office of Emergency Management website, and follow the guidance to become “Two Weeks Ready.” Being prepared at home, means you are prepared when you need to be. With Oregon’s diverse climates, we must be prepared for anything at any time. “Always Ready, Always There!”

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Chief’s Advisory Council announces scholarship winners

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PORTLAND, Oregon – There are various challenges, setbacks, and rewards for the uncommon citizen who makes the decision to serve in the military and in the Oregon National Guard.

Donna Prigmore emerged the chance to be part of something bigger when she joined the U.S. Air Force in May 2005. She was selected as one of the first female general officers in the Oregon Air National Guard. She was one of the first women on active duty as vice director of the Joint Improvised- Threat Defeat Organization (JIDO).

Prigmore said she is deeply humbled to be standing here in front of you as the first female general officer in the Oregon Air National Guard. She began her military career when she was selected as an electronic technician and spent four years on active duty before joining the Arizona Air National Guard. In 1999, she obtained her officer commission and graduated at the top of her class from the Academy of Military Science in Knoxville, Tennessee.

Colonel Prigmore has her new brigadier general stars pinned during her formal promotion ceremony on Aug. 5, 2018, at the Portland Air National Guard Base. She follows in the footsteps of Governor Kate Brown, who was the first woman Guardsman. She serves as the Oregon National Guard’s Assistant Adjutant General-Air, with oversight over the 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Camp Withycombe in Clackamas, Oregon.

As she was formally promoted to brigadier general, Governor Brown congratulated Col. Donna Prigmore for her new leadership position.

“Colonel Prigmore, you are now joining Governor Kate Brown (left) congratulates Col. Donna Prigmore (right) following her formal promotion ceremony on Aug. 5, 2018. Prigmore acknowledged those that not only shaped her professional development but also encouraged her when the challenges were demanding.

One of those ‘key people’ she described in her remarks was Mr. Harvey Fink, who served as a coach and mentor for her at the Oregon National Guard and the Air Guard.普利格摩尔在她的感言中提到了Mr. Harvey Fink, who served as a coach and mentor for her in the Oregon National Guard and Air Guard.

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173rd Fighter Wing Airmen volunteer for search and rescue

Story by Tech. Sgt. Jefferson Thompson, 173rd Fighter Wing Affairs Detachment

KLAMATH FALLS, Oregon – The area surrounding Klamath Falls, Oregon, is typified by forests, wilderness, lakes, streams, mountains, and rivers. This draws people from all over the state to enjoy the beauty and adventure of the outdoors. Many 173rd Fighter Wing Airmen enjoy these activities, and a number of them are contributing one of their core values, service before self, and their love of nature.

A group of 173rd FW Airmen volunteer their off-duty time with a search and rescue group that works to help those who find themselves in trouble and far from help.

“The members of the Sheriff’s [Department] Search and Rescue have, over the years, been credited for finding lost children, hikers and backpackers in the wilderness,” reads the Klamath County website description of the group. “It should be noted that this group of volunteers, like many others associated with our Search and Rescue Deputies, give freely and tirelessly of their time and energy to protect and serve the residents and visitors to Klamath County.

Chief Master Sgt. George Mulleneix, who has volunteered for the group since 2007, says a search starts when his phone rings.

“Whenever we get a call we go out and either look for an individual, or we get individuals who may want help on the trail and we’ll go in and get them with a litter.”

He relates that during one such search, two hikers on the Pacific Crest Trail were caught in a storm with heavy lightening.

As they ran from the area, one of them slipped while attempting to jump down a knobbed tree and badly dislocated his shoulder. Mulleneix and others hiked in, located the injured hiker, and escorted him to an area where a helicopter could take him to a hospital for treatment.

Another 173rd FW Airmen, Master Sgt. Matt Marshall, says the extensive training they receive helps ready them for whatever situation arises—from small boat rescue to ground and mounted search and rescue. He says his background is one of the reasons he volunteers for the group.

“As an avid outdoorsman with extensive survival, navigational and military training, what I love is exploring the wilderness areas of the Pacific Northwest. I felt a duty to serve my local community and put my skills to use in assisting wherever and wherever possible,” he says.

That service gives him a sense of satisfaction and it provides a lasting camaraderie with the other members of the group Marshall adds.

Another 173rd FW member of the search and rescue team, Tech. Sgt. T.J. Lombardi, 173rd Security Forces Squadron and avid photographer, captures images from one a training event where they learned to use litters to rescue injured climbers from cliff faces or high places. He says it is the kind of environment where they must rely on each other and in many ways it mirrors the Espirit De Corps he finds in the military.

“One thing I love about the SAR community are the sincere and genuine people—willings to help in any capacity,” he said. “The longer you are in this community, the more stories you hear of missions spent alongside each other and those same people quickly become your friends and mentors.”

For the Airmen of the 173rd Fighter Wing it’s perhaps not only to combine a love of the outdoors with service to the community, many would say it’s one of their core values.

Awareness and Training keeps region ready for Cascadia Subduction Zone disasters

Continued from Front Page

Working on her first disaster response exercise, Allison Journey, a physician assistant from Lincoln City, Oregon, integrated quickly to the changing exercise situations given to her group.

“The biggest part of all of this is team communication,” she described.

“I watched other teams struggle because of communication issues, but our team has been fantastic during each phase and we have gotten a lot done.”

With her full-time job in Lincoln City, a location directly charted on the coastline, the danger from of a Pacific Ocean tsunami is only one of the troubling elements that she identified.

“One of my biggest fears, especially this time of year, is the influx of tourists visiting the beaches,” Journey said. “The main takeaway from all of this training will be to help build a plan at the Good Samaritan hospital because eventually, a disaster like this is going to happen.”

Surviving a magnitude 9.0 earthquake with its combined threat of an almost certain tsunami makes responding to both disasters glaring. The Oregon coastline has its own unique geographic issues factored with its combined threat of an almost certain tsunami makes responding to both disasters glaring. The Oregon coastline has its own unique geographic issues factored.

A physician assistant takes part in the Pathfinder-Minutemen Exercise June 19, 2018, at Camp Rilea, Oregon. The joint multi-agency, multi-state disaster preparedness exercise is based on a possible Cascadia Subduction Zone event.

Allison Journey, (right) a physician assistant takes part in the Pathfinder-Minutemen Exercise, June 19, 2018, at Camp Rilea, Oregon. The joint multi-agency, multi-state disaster preparedness exercise is based on a possible Cascadia Subduction Zone event.

The oceans ability to support commerce and attract tourists can transform rapidly when a tsunami or substantial storm surge decimates a coast area. This kind of paradox is also replicated with the recovery operations, as the proximity of maritime assistance becomes a critical factor of aid.

“For those trapped in their communities and for first responders trying to gaining access, we can’t do it without assistance from maritime resources,” Crosby said.

With the likelihood of local hospitals and other urgent care centers being inundated with patients, Mercy class naval hospitals and other urgent care centers plays a crucial role in building communication between first responders, and multiple resource providers,” said James White, civil authority planner, U.S. Air National Guard, reiterated the importance of disaster preparedness.

A fundamental aspect of the DSCA leadership seminar is keeping important operational concepts in focus of engaging partners, joint training exercises, disaster support base assessments and visit, and planning for disaster response.

Between planned events such as the Senior Leadership seminar and the Pathfinder-Minutemen training, learning from each other and fostering open communication principles was a consistent common denominator with both groups.

“It’s about building a plan with a solid team and a sufficient bench in place,” said Rear Admiral David Thoop, commander, 13th Coast Guard District, said during the seminar.

“That way, when it’s time to move those assets, first responders can open up a pipeline, and transport those resources where they are most urgently needed.”

Crosby, Assistant Adjutant General-Air and the commander of the Joint Domestic Operations Command for the Oregon National Guard, reiterated the importance of maritime assistance.”

“This type of interoperability with various agencies plays a crucial role in building communication between first responders, and multiple resource providers,” said James White, civil authority planner, U.S. Air National Guard.

Between planned events such as the Senior Leadership seminar and the Pathfinder-Minutemen training, learning from each other and fostering open communication principles was a consistent common denominator with both groups.

“A fundamental aspect of the DSCA leadership seminar is keeping important operational concepts in focus of engaging partners, joint training exercises, disaster support base assessments and visit, and planning for disaster response.

“A radical paradigm shift was discussed between those same people quickly become your friends and mentors.”

For the Airmen of the 173rd Fighter Wing it’s perhaps not only to combine a love of the outdoors with service to the community, many would say it’s one of their core values.
Oregon Airmen respond to Hurricane Lane during training in Hawaii
Story and photos by Master Sgt. Nick Chey, 142nd Fighter Wing Medical Group

HONOLULU, Hawaii — What started out as a typical summer training deployment for the medical groups of the 142nd Medical Group (MDG), Oregon Air National Guard, turned anything but, when the Hawaiian islands were approached by a category-5 hurricane, the week of Aug. 20, 2018.

The annual training for 43 Airmen of the 142nd Fighter Wing, scheduled for Aug. 18-31 on the island of Oahu, was continued in an effort to increase the capability of medical technicians, services personnel and medical administrative, public health and bio-environmental specialists.

The group was assigned to three geographically separated locations: Tripler Army Medical Center (TAMC), Joint-Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam (JBPHH) and Schofield Barracks. They were joined by the members of the 1984th U.S. Army Reserve Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam (JBPHH) and Schofield Barracks, and the group also provided support to the Hawaiian island of Maui.

The hospital asked about our ability and interest to help and I told them we were interested in being mission ready for the storm, I think the feeling among all of the Airmen was this is an opportunity to serve the people and show our support. —TAMC Commander Maj. Don Kondo

The storm parked just south of the islands while U.S. Coast Guard officials ordered Honolulu Harbor closed by 5 p.m. on Thursday, and Caldwell ordered Honolulu International Airport closed by 5 p.m. on Thursday, and Caldwell ordered Honolulu Harbor closed and requested two large container ships to leave the harbor to anchor off the coast in order to ride out the storm.

“Unfortunately, we did not have enough time to request reservists to assist,” Johnson said. “By that time, the storm had gained momentum and would put much of the central part of Oahu at risk.”

While most on the island of Oahu had planned for the worst, the storm conditions improved by late Thursday going into Friday, with Lane downgraded further to a category-2 and eventually to a tropical storm.

Meanwhile, at TAMC, remaining staff members took note of the professional growth gained during their new, albeit temporary co-workers.

“The TMC staff appreciated the extra help,” and appreciated how the Airmen embraced the mission and brought a new level of excitement to the real-world mission,” said Tech. Sgt. Anina Zalunardo, a bio-environmental specialist.

“I feel that those who (were) here locally felt a tension (as the storm approached) to prepare our homes and prepare,” Coyle said.

“I think (this experience) really helped a lot to learn everyone’s learning styles and to adapt to personality differences and how we get things done,” she added.

“Without these Airmen, the strain would have been over.” —Johnson

The staff agreed that the timing of the annual training for Oregon’s medical training deployment turned out to be a blessing in disguise.

“Without these Airmen, the strain would have been over,” Johnson said. “By that time, the storm had gained momentum and would put much of the central part of Oahu at risk.”

“The hospital was able to utilize 15 medical personnel who were temporarily backfill and support the hospital,” Kondo said. “Without these Airmen, the strain would have been over.”

“Without the memory of two devastating hurricanes, there is a need to provide medical care to those in need and to be able to provide medical care through whatever situation we may find ourselves in,” said Staff Sgt. Anina Zalunardo, a bio-environmental specialist.

“I feel that those who (were) here locally felt a tension (as the storm approached) to prepare our homes and prepare,” Coyle said. "I think (this experience) really helped a lot to learn everyone’s learning styles and to adapt to personality differences and how we get things done,” she added.

“The Army commented several times on our positive attitude, enthusiasm, and willingness to help,” Schadler said. “And the cool part is that all of the units they’d had up there, they said we’ve been one of the best in terms of our willingness to help and how prepared we were, and getting our jobs done.”

For her part in the real-world mission, Zalunardo said she would never forget this experience.

“I’m incredibly grateful for this opportunity. This opens up opportunities and possible career choices for me. Not only do I get to see what the medical teams are capable of, but I get to see what the doctors do — something I’m very interested in becoming,” she added.

“I wasbled as a part of the Air National Guard, Anderson said this experience underscores the flexibility and overall readiness of all members of the National Guard.

“The Army commented several times on our positive attitude, enthusiasm, and willingness to help,” Schadler said. “And the cool part is that all of the units they’d had up there, they said we’ve been one of the best in terms of our willingness to help and how prepared we were, and getting our jobs done.”

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WITH THE MEMORY OF TWO DEVASTATING HURRICANES, THERE IS A NEED TO PROVIDE MEDICAL CARE TO THOSE IN NEED AND TO BE ABLE TO PROVIDE MEDICAL CARE THROUGH WHATEVER SITUATION WE MAY FIND OURSELVES IN,” SAID STAFF SGT. ANINA ZALUNARDO, A BIO-ENVIRONMENTAL SPECIALIST.
Putting out wildfires one charred stump at a time

A CH-47 Chinook helicopters with the Oregon Army National Guard fills its bucket with water from the Rogue River while fighting the Garner Complex Fire north of Grants Pass, Oregon, August 2, 2018.

A Company, 641st returns from deployment

SALEM, Oregon - Members of the Oregon National Guard's 102nd CST conducts multi-agency training.

102nd CST conducts multi-agency training

SALEM, Oregon - Members of the Oregon National Guard's 102nd CST conducts multi-agency training.

Oregon Army National Guard members are welcomed home from deployment by Brig. Gen. William Edwards (right) during a ceremony in Salem, Oregon, July 13, 2018.

Photos by Maj. John Farmelo, 115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

GRANTS PASS, Oregon - Oregon Army National Guard members are welcomed home from deployment by Brig. Gen. William Edwards (right) during a ceremony in Salem, Oregon, July 13, 2018.

Photos by Maj. John Farmelo, 115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment
Oregon Best Warrior Competition tests Soldiers and Airmen

Story by Sgt. 1st Class April Davis, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

WARRENTON, Oregon – Sixteen competitors, from Oregon National Guard units across the state, battled it out to determine the top noncommissioned officer (NCO) and junior enlisted Soldier/Airman of the year during the 2018 Oregon Best Warrior Competition, August 16-18, at Camp Rilea in Warrenton, Oregon.

The annual Army National Guard competition is designed to demonstrate Soldiers’ technical and tactical proficiency. However, Oregon set a new precedence this year by making it a joint endeavor and invited the Oregon Air National Guard to participate. The competitors had to out-perform their peers at the unit level to participate in the competition.

Tech. Sgt. Jared Boyer and Senior Airman David Garcia, both with the 173rd Fighter Wing, were the first Airmen to compete in the Oregon Best Warrior Competition (BWC). The 173rd Security Forces Squadron put on a series of trial events to determine who had what it takes to represent the Air Guard in the Army competition.

“I wanted to compete in the Oregon BWC to represent my unit and challenge myself,” said Garcia. He said the excitement of finishing as an Airman motivated him throughout the competition.

Boyer said his goal was to be a positive, respectful competitor and remained mindful of the people who helped make his participation in the competition a reality.

“I tried hard to realize how lucky I was to be involved in such an event and surrounded by like-minded, fun participants,” said Boyer. “I kept trying to remember that I am by like-minded, fun participants,” said Garcia. He said the excitement of finishing as an Airman motivated him throughout the competition.

The competitors put their mental and physical strengths to the test, conquering a series of challenging warrior tasks with very physical strengths to the test, conquering a sample.”

“is the Army’s world they are offering us to participate in such an event and surrounded by like-minded, fun participants,” said Garcia. “I kept trying to remember that I am by like-minded, fun participants,” said Garcia. He said the excitement of finishing as an Airman motivated him throughout the competition.

The event kicked off Thursday evening, August 16, with the Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT). Immediately following the fitness test, the competitors were surprised to learn they had to complete an additional foot race.

“The simple lack of not having a schedule of events is stressful,” said Spain. “Being told what we are doing on the spot definitely completes preparation. It forced us to assume the worst and pack accordingly.”

Boyer agreed saying the “chess match of unknowns” made the competition more challenging.

“After being tested physically, the competitors changed into dress uniforms and reported to a formal board where a joint-service panel of sergeants major and chief master sergeants tested their military knowledge,” said Spain.

“The board interview is where I struggled the most,” said Sgt. Paul Mannelly, with Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 1st Squadron, 173rd Cavalry Regiment. “I was not competing with previous events, or lack of sleep,” said Spain. “I thought there were a few Soldiers in my category who ran ahead in the beginning, so the whole time I was trying to catch them. As it turned out, I was chasing my imagination and I finished in the lead. My disbelief turned into laughter when I realized what had happened.”

There was little time to rest aching muscles or mosey blistered feet, as the day would bring a full array of even more tribulations. Competitors crawled through a maze of concertina wire while enduring CS tear gas during the combat assault course known as “Mogadishu.” The gas causes a choking cough and burning eyes, making it difficult to breathe and see where you are going.

“Garcia said the gas was the most difficult part of the competition to push through, but when the going gets tough, the tough get going,” said Spain. “I’m really sensitive to CS gas, but the best way to get out of there is to hurry-up and finish.”

Before they had a chance to catch their breath, the competitors had to race through a village filled with smoke, noise and other distractions to locate and treat simulated casualties. They engaged targets in the live-fire shoot-house and then took aim at targets with practice grenades.

“The culminating event tested you physically and mentally. Shoot, move and communicate; all of military operations,” said Mannelly. “Everyone was beyond exhausted by that time and we had to push ourselves even further.”

During the last event, known as “Ocean Beach,” competitors high-crawled through the waves of the Pacific Ocean while wearing full battle gear. Once on shore, with drenched uniforms dripping and sagging, they retrieved ammunition boxes filled with cement and carried them to the top of a steep sand dune. Their boots sunk in the soft sand.

As for the Airmen who completed the competition, they said they have a lot of fun,” said Mannelly. When it was all over, the competitors were relieved, yet proud to count themselves among the rare chosen few who have completed the competition. Mannelly and Spain will go on to represent Oregon in the Region VI Best Warrior Competition and compete with Soldiers from Alaska, Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Washington, and Wyoming. The winners from the regional competition will then progress on to the national level competition.

As for the Airmen who completed the competition, they said they will take away Army tasks and skills that they learned as well as a newfound respect for the Soldier lifestyle. Boyer said he appreciated the opportunity to learn how to adapt in an Army-centric competition.

“My number one goal was to have our Army brothers and sisters glad we came and hoping they can see us compete the following year,” said Boyer. “To get to hear their stories and diverse backgrounds was inspiring. I hope this leads to more possibilities and joint collaborations.”

The 2018 Oregon Best Warrior Competition winners, from left, are: Sgt. Paul Mannelly, NCO of the Year Sgt. Jared Boyer, Army Soldier of the Year Spc. Roger Spain (right), and Soldier of the Year Spc. Garrett Wasson, of Alpha Co., 1st Battalion, 180th Infantry Regiment, low crawls through an obstacle during Best Warrior, Aug. 17.


Wing, were the first Airmen to compete in the Oregon Best Warrior Competition, August 16-18, at Camp Rilea.
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CAMP ROBERTS, California – Thousands of National Guard Soldiers from Oregon, New Mexico, Washington and California completed intense combat exercises in the hot, harsh training environment of central California, July 21-Aug. 12, 2018. The 219th Combat Arms Training Brigade (CABT), First Army, trained the combat readiness of the 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT), Oregon Army National Guard, during an eXportable Combat Training Capability (XCTC) rotation at Camp Roberts and Fort Hunter Liggett, Calif.

Approximately 3,000 Soldiers with more than 10 units from multiple states converged in California to participate in this large-scale training exercise. XCTC is designed to simulate a realistic combat environment in order to test platoon proficiency through a variety of exercises and improve individual Soldier skills.

“XCTC’s primary mission is to prepare units for federal mobilizations and to create skilled and lethal forces at a company, battalion and brigade level,” said Col. Eric Riley, 41st IBCT commander. “It’s important for the 41st IBCT to complete this exercise as XCTC because it builds unit cohesion and it enables units to train for their wartime mission by gaining experience in their MOS.”

From live-fire exercises to simulated combat scenarios, Soldiers honed their tactical, operational, medical, communications and decision-making skills.

“By running us through these scenarios, it can humble us and allow us to see where we stand,” said Spc. Joseph Carse, an infantryman with the 1st Battalion, 200th Infantry Regiment, 41st IBCT, New Mexico Army National Guard. “Personally, I hope to take home a better idea of how to become more effective in combat.”

Active Duty Soldiers from the 108th CABT out of Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington, served as coaches, mentors and operational controllers. They provided oversight and valuable perspectives for National Guard units that may not have had the time or resources to complete the training necessary for deployment.

“Our mission is to provide feedback and corrective training in addition to setting up and running training lanes, controlling battlefield effects and operational forces, and establishing standardized doctrinal operational standards across the board,” said Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Schneider, team leader with 2nd Battalion, 576th Regiment, 191st Infantry Brigade. “We’re embedded with the units 24/7, so they don’t just see us as graders walking around with clipboards who are going to tell them what they did wrong. Instead, we have a more personal relationship where we can help a unit all the way through their planning process and into actual executions on the ground.”

This is not the 41st IBCT’s first XCTC cycle, however this year’s rotation has newly integrated combat enablers such as unmanned aerial vehicles and aviation units to provide air and medical evacuation capabilities.

“This has been an opportunity to collectively dig deep,” said Riley. “I look forward to where this brigade is going in the future. I think we’ve done a great job, and I only see amazing things for this brigade going forward.”

Oregon artillery lights up California skies

CAMP ROBERTS, California – As the last flag and banners of the Mojave Desert sweep across the faces of howitzer crews with 2nd Battalion, 219th Field Artillery Regiment, the quiet morning air is abruptly disturbed by the booming shouts of a fire mission blaring through the radio call-offs as the forward observers reported the command and any following radio call-outs. They would, in fact, be just like a well-oiled machine to prepare, load and fire ordnance on the target July 27, 2018, at Fort Irwin, California.

The battalion traveled over 1,000 miles from Oregon to California to participate in the 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team’s field training exercise known as eXportable Combat Training Capability (XCTC) designed to certify battalion and brigade level, said Col. Jason Marshall, commander of the 2-219th Field Artillery Regiment. “These conditions provided our Soldiers the unique opportunity to be challenged and improve their field craft.”

Marshall explained that unlike Yuma, Fort Irwin gave the battalion the ability to stretch out and train in their doctrinal distances. He said this realistic scenario provided the leaders a good understanding of the time-distance relationship when planning coordinated fires.

Being able to provide indirect fire support with howitzers is a multi-step process that involves resources and input from multiple teams. All of these teams use constant communication and expert battlefield understanding to guide successful indirect fire ordnance and destroy the target.

Staff Sgt. Brett Naylor, an artillery section chief with Charlie Battery, explained how the fire mission would play out like this: the forward observers request a fire mission after locating their target and pass this information to the field direction controllers. The controllers review that data and compute it out to the炮兵 to verify the information is safe and input it into the howitzer. After completing necessary loading procedures, the crew fire the round to the target.

“This training experience has stretched our logistical planning and execution beyond what we are used to,” said Marshall. “Our Soldiers proved they can overcome adversity to get the job done and they met every single one of my training objectives.”

It is believed that XCTC will allow battalions to utilize the high standards of readiness the Army demands and at any time they will be able to support the 41st IBCT no matter where the fight takes place.
ORANGE AIR NATIONAL GUARD

ORANG’s 142nd Fighter Wing welcomes new wing commander

PORTLAND, Oregon – Colonel Adam Sitzer assumed command of the 142nd Fighter Wing during a change of command ceremony held here Aug. 5, 2018. Sitzer assumed command from Col. Duke A. Pirak who will be taking a new position as the Director, Chief National Guard Bureau Action Group in Washington, D.C.

Major General Michael E. Stencel, The Adjutant General for the State of Oregon, was present to officiate the ceremony.

Stencel praised outgoing commander Col. Pirak’s talent and influence, which has been felt well beyond Oregon, said Stencel.

“Every leader needs to embrace the opportunity to make a difference, and it’s clear that Col. Pirak is one of those leaders,” Stencel said. “His leadership of the 142nd Fighter Wing and service to this state will be remembered for years to come.”

Stencel also commended incoming commander Col. Sitzer, who assumed command of the 142nd Fighter Wing during the unit’s official Change of Command Ceremony, at the Portland Air National Guard Base, Oregon, Aug. 5, 2018.

Senior Airman Alec Camp, an EOD technician assigned to the 142nd Fighter Wing, Oregon Air National Guard, disrupts a possible explosive during a training exercise on Fort McCoy, Wisconsin, June 22, 2018. Stencel also praised the outgoing commander for his dedicated service to the Oregon Air National Guard.

“Col. Sitler brings an appreciation for the operations of a fighter wing and an understanding of how to advocate issues on your behalf across the Air Force,” said Stencel. “As he relinquished command, Pirak took a moment to thank the airmen he led.

“[Pirak] said, ‘To the men and women of the 142nd, thank you for being the finest America has to offer,’ ” said Pirak. “Thank you for your willingness to take risks and challenge convention.’

When the incoming commander came to the podium, he addressed the men and women of the 142nd Fighter Wing.

“I will do my best to be a leader of character, someone that you can trust and someone that you can admire,” said Sitzer. The incoming wing commander, Colonel Sitzer, was commissioned in May 1996 after graduating from the United States Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Upon completion of undergraduate pilot training and F-15 Training, he was assigned to the 142nd Fighter Wing at RAF Lakenheath, UK. Sitzer served as a combat mission ready wingman, flight-lead, mission commander, and instructor pilot, including combat missions flown in Operation Allied Force and Operation Southern Watch.

In 2001 Sitzer was assigned to the 71st Fighter Squadron at Langley AFB, Va. He served as a combat mission ready instructor pilot and weapons officer after completing the United States Air Force Weapons School in 2004. In 2004, Sitzer was assigned to the 85th Test and Evaluation Squadron, Eglin Air Force Base, Florida where he served as the chief of F-15 projects.

Colonel Sitzer separated from the active component of the Air Force in January of 2007 and joined the 142nd Fighter Wing, Oregon Air National Guard. He has served as squadron operations officer, flight commander, squadron operations officer, wing consolidated unit inspection project officer, fighter squadron commander, operations group commander and vice wing commander.

“His leadership has served us well because it’s a higher calling,” he said. “I look forward to leading you.”

“I am incredibly thankful for today, I’m humble, I’m enthusiastic, I just can’t wait to get to work,” said Sitzer.
First ever Cascadia Airlift hosted by 173rd Fighter Wing

Story by Staff Sgt. Riley Johnson, 173rd Fighter Wing Public Affairs

KLAMATH FALLS, Oregon - Airmen from the 173rd Fighter Wing collaborate with C-130J crews from Little Rock Air Force Base, Ark. for a multidepartment disaster relief exercise on Kingsley Field in Klamath Falls, Ore.

The four C-130J Super Hercules aircraft and Airmen from Arkansas arrived on Kingsley Field, July 12th, 2018 to participate in the three day exercise. Airmen from the 173rd FW practiced airlift operations such as cargo movement and operations such as cargo movement and logistics planning that could be essential following an earthquake in the Cascadia Subduction Zone.

"The purpose of (the exercise) is to address the current capabilities and limitations of Kingsley Field for disaster response," said U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Christopher Wright, 173rd FW plans officer.

Being the sole formal training schoolhouse for the F-15 Eagle, the 173rd Fighter Wing does not regularly work with cargo aircraft such as the C-130J.

"The challenge is that we are the F-15 (fighter training unit) and we don’t normally host air lift, “said Wright. “It was a blank slate and first proof-of-concept.”

According to the Oregon Office of Emergency Management, the Cascadia Subduction Zone is a 600-mile fault that runs from northern California up to British Columbia. Approximately 300 years since the last quake, the fault line garners the potential threat of a magnitude 9 earthquake that could have a devastating impact on the west coast area.

"(The exercise) was first and foremost to address how Kingsley can be suited to respond to the Cascadia Subduction Zone,” added Wright.

The 173rd FW has a dual mission of training F-15 pilots and serving the State of Oregon. This disaster preparedness exercise falls under the Oregon National Guard’s mission of “A ready force equipped and trained to respond to any contingency. When we are needed, we are there.”

Additionally, the C-130J’s flew with Oregon Air National Guard F-15 Eagles in Dissimilar Air Combat Training scenarios. DACT provides pilots the opportunity to train with and against an aircraft different from their own.

“We are taking advantage of having the C-130J here to do total force training between F-15s and C-130s, something that is traditionally not done in the two communities,” Wright said.

The 270th Air Traffic Control Squadron had the opportunity to practice loading their mobile equipment on to the C-130 as part of the exercise. Major Michael Balzotti, 270th ATCS Commander, says this is something he has never done before and will be key to training Oregon’s military to be ready when the time comes, we will already know what we are doing.”

The Airmen from the 270th ATCS teamed up the C-130J aircrew to load and unload a mobile tactical air navigation system and run the equipment.

This exercise paves the way for future, larger scale Cascadia exercises that include other Federal, State, and local organizations.

Klamath Falls, Oregon - A squadron of new aircraft is up and running at Kingsley Field in Klamath Falls, Ore.; the Adversary Air Squadron (ADAIR) to a contract service from Draken International, which provides adversaries for student pilots to train against for the next six weeks.

“You will see some distinctly different jets flying over Klamath Falls over the next few month," said Col. Jeff Smith, the 173rd Fighter Wing commander. “These Adversary Air aircraft, pilots, and maintenance personnel are contracted by the U.S. Air Force to help us increase our training quality and student throughput.”

The new aircraft, called the Honey Badger, is being flown and operated by the Oregon Air National Guard. An F-16 Falcon and other host nation aircraft take part in joint training, typically, Kingsley Field.

Capt. Chris DuBois, an instructor pilot at the 173rd Fighter Wing, says there are additional benefits as well, including the experience level of the visiting pilots, “Most of them have flown F-15s, F-16s, or most of the inventory currently in the U.S. Military- so learning on some of their experience and depth of knowledge will help our students learn.”

The 173rd Fighter Wing is the sole formal training schoolhouse for the F-15 Eagle.

142nd Airmen return from Theater Security Package deployment

Story by Tech. Sgt. Brandon Boyd, 142nd Fighter Wing Public Affairs

PORTLAND, Oregon - Airmen with the Oregon Air National Guard’s 142nd Fighter Wing gathered for a demobilization ceremony August 4, following a three-month deployment to Grafenwoehr Air Force Base, Bulgaria.

The service members deployed as a theater security package, training and building interoperability with NATO nations and were congratulated at the ceremony by Brig. Gen. James R. Kriesel, commander, Oregon Air National Guard during the ceremony at Portland Air National Guard Base, Oregon.

While deployed, the unit was designated as the 123rd Expeditionary Fighter Squadron.

“It’s nice to fly and a good opportunity to integrate with different nations and to experience training opportunities that you wouldn’t be able to get back home,” said Maj. Jarrod Aranda, of the 123rd Expeditionary Fighter Squadron.

“It’s always a pleasure for us to learn and I hope this process is mutual and beneficial for all of us,” said Bulgarian commander.

The U.S. pilots simulated air-to-air combat with Bulgarian Mig-29’s while maintenance airmen shared knowledge with Bulgarian military counterparts.

“I have a counterpart, a maintenance officer, who I worked with pretty closely and we were in communication a few times a week,” said Capt. Amy Aranda, a maintenance officer with the 142nd Maintenance Group.

Although many of the airmen performed the same duties while deployed they would at home station, supporting our European allies gave them a unique perspective about their work.

“it think it’s nice to be in a deployed location, in the kind of environment where everyone has a job and we stay until the work is done and it gives everyone that sense of purpose," said Tech. Sgt. Trudell, plans and scheduling manager for the 142nd Maintenance Group.

With a supporting cast from the Massachusetts Air National Guard, Spangdahlem and Ramstein Air Bases, the Oregon Air National Guard remains committed to training with our NATO partners.

“The 123rd Expeditionary Fighter Squadron has never been more ready than it is today to accomplish the nation’s business and part of that is in this training environment," said Lt. Col. Aaron Mathena, detachment commander for 123rd Expeditionary Fighter Squadron.

Recently members of the 142nd Fighter Wing have had an opportunity to deploy to multiple locations, increasing overall readiness levels.

“Deploying is like a muscle that has to be exercised. We’re very fortunate that over the last year and a half we’ve had several exercises that have taken us outside the state of Oregon in order to accomplish those objectives," said Mathena.

OGA Air National Guardsmen Senior Airmen Steven Stutzman works on an F-15 Eagle during the units deployment in support of Operation Atlantic Resolve.
The Sustainable deployment, which translates to better of training days leading up to a potential enemy contact, attack and defend, properly build battlefield position," said Lundell. "We practice working with enabler units; engineers and [Unmanned Aircraft Systems]. How effectively do we integrate our mortars and [Unmanned Aircraft Systems]. How effectively do we integrate our mortars and 

The battalion hosted town hall events and having to hire backfill personnel for long periods of time is costly for them. They all agreed they would rather see two-week annual training periods, spaced out, and know when the Soldiers will be gone well in advance.

Throughout the month of April 2018, the battalion rotated their companies through garrison qualifications at the Orchard Combat Training Center (OCTC), near Boise, Idaho. Each company spent 14 training days conducting gunnery. The extra training time can be difficult to balance with civilian careers, but Lundell said communication is the key factor. The battalion hosted town hall events and worked with Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) to get the word out to employers.

"Soldiers want to deploy, they all want to go do something that makes a difference," said Lundell. "In order to do that we have to maintain a high level of readiness.

The extra training time can be difficult to balance with civilian careers, but Lundell said communication is the key factor. The battalion hosted town hall events and worked with Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) to get the word out to employers. "We want to be up front with employers regarding the training dates and let them know the timeframes as soon possible," he said. "The town halls helped open up lines of communication and we asked for their feedback. Rescheduling and having to hire backfill personnel for long periods of time is costly for them. They all agreed they would rather see two-week annual training periods, spaced out, and know when the Soldiers will be gone well in advance.

Throughout the month of April 2018, the battalion rotated their companies through garrison qualifications at the Orchard Combat Training Center (OCTC), near Boise, Idaho. Each company spent 14 days conducting gunnery.

"We spaced the companies out to keep the two-week training aspect for our civilian employers," said Lundell. "The Soldiers are having fun; they are happy doing the training they joined to do."

Soldiers qualified on their weapon systems in phases known as ‘tables’ for crew, squad and platoon level gunnery. The battalion fired everything from sniper rifles and mortars to Bradley Fighting Vehicles and Abrams tanks.

"Soldiers get to spend more time in their [Military Occupational Specialty], that’s the biggest benefit of the extra training time," said Command Sgt. Maj. Ambrosio R. Siller, the battalion command sergeant major. "The other benefit is spending more time building cohesive teams and bonds to make the unit strong."

Gunnery was preparation for the larger training objective this year. In June, the battalion headed back to Idaho for another annual training stint at OCTC, where the 116th CBCT conducted xPotable Combat Training Capability (xCTC). The xCTC exercise is a collective field-training requirement designed to certify platoons for proficiency across the brigade in coordination with First Army. "During xCTC we work on platoon and company level tasks; move-to-contact, attack and defend, properly build battlefield position," said Lundell. "We practice working with enabler units; engineers and [Unmanned Aircraft Systems]. How effectively do we integrate our mortars and scouts? It’s definitely a chance to get the kinks out and refine our [Standard Operating Procedures]."

The 116th CBCT maneuver units conducted force-on-force simulated battle scenarios against opposing forces, from Oregon and Idaho. The exercise was an overwhelming success due to everyone’s efforts,” said Col. Scott Sheridan, brigade commander of the 116th CBCT, in an Idaho National Guard press release. “During the high tempo, spirits remained high, motivation excelled and the professionalism that was on display was top notch.”

In August, members of the battalion also participated in the Brigade Warrior exercise, a collective training event for commanders and their staffs. The computer-simulated war game tested command and control processes during complex combat scenarios as First Army OCTC mentored the staff using Army doctrine.

It seemed the training year was finally coming to a close, but preparing to fight the nation’s battles doesn’t mean foregoing the homeland mission. Nearly 200 Soldiers of the 3-116th Battalion were activated in late July/early August for State Active Duty to support wildfire suppression efforts in Southern Oregon. The Soldiers said the last-minute call-up was the most challenging part of their busy summer.

"It’s been difficult for everybody because they have families, they have normal civilian jobs, they’re single parents, business owners and farmers, and they had very short notice," said 1st Lt. Calvin Halladay, with Detachment 1 (Scouts), Headquarters and Commanding Officer, 3-116th Battalion, who led one of the firefighting crews. "As difficult as it may be for everybody to rearrange their schedules and coordinate with employers, the opportunity to help our fellow Oregonians on the home front is a pretty big deal."

The time spent away from home is also difficult for families to balance. The battalion has been working with their Family Readiness Groups to invite families into the armories during drills. "Whether it’s for a self-defense class or discussions about financial planning and military benefits, the goal is to put faces to names and make the families a welcome part of the battalion," Lundell said.

Next year, the 3-116th Battalion will turn around and do it all over again as the 116th CBCT ramps up for a trip to the Mojave Desert in June 2019 to face off in a heavyweight match against U.S. Army OPFOR at the National Training Center (NCTC) in Fort Irwin, California. It’s all part of the plan to prepare for real-world missions.
Is the juice worth the squeeze: 1-82nd CAV’s journey across three states

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Zachary Holden, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

After more than a year of preparation and just barely a week into their annual training (AT) at Yakima Training Center (YTC) in Washington, Oregon Army National Guard Soldiers with 1st Squadron, 82nd Cavalry Regiment, had less than 24 hours to re-plan their entire mission.

“We could see the smoke, it was a pretty good-sized fire, and it was moving pretty fast,” said Maj. Christopher Kerr, executive officer for 1-82nd Cavalry Regiment.

Due to a nearby wildfire, constant red flag warnings (issued by the National Weather Service to inform about wildfire conditions) had periodically shut down the training grounds and hindered the squadron’s ability to stay on schedule and complete the training requirements they had set out to accomplish. They received an evacuation notice from YTC range control at 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, July 19, 2018.

Nearly 300 troops in the squadron had to pack up three different training sites, almost 90 vehicles, and more than 150,000 rounds of ammunition. With such a large footprint, Capt. Candice Ginestar, Forward Support Company commander, 1-82nd Cav., had concerns about being able to get everyone and everything packed up and evacuated quickly and safely.

“Teamwork was the word of the day. You want your people to get out safely first, more than anything else, but you also have the equipment. You need to be able to move quickly, but also make sure you have all your people, all your gear,” said Ginestar.

Shortly after the evacuation was complete, and all the personnel and equipment were safe, the planning process for the next step was under way.

“Jumping the squadron is a pretty tough deal, lots of teamwork, lots of communication, but we were able to do it,” said Kerr. “The next step was to tragegiously train, but at that point we didn’t have any courses of action.”

Kerr explained that this AT was the first opportunity the squadron has had to qualify on cannon since fielding the Stryker armored fighting vehicles about two years ago, and at the very least had to meet the commander’s intent of qualifying crews on the vehicles.

“When we plan for training in the Guard, we have a very specific allotted time that we can be somewhere,” said Ginestar, explaining that National Guard units, unlike active duty components, are not as easily able to reschedule large blocks of training time.

The squadron needed to salvage what it could with the remaining training time they had scheduled. Knowing that YTC would no longer be the main training location, Kerr said, “The top priority was to try and complete the annual training, the squadron leadership pulled together resources, made phone calls and tried to develop a plan.

“Everybody was utilizing contacts and networks everywhere,” said Ginestar.

Looking at a variety of training sites across three states, Orchard Combat Training Center (OCTC), near Boise, Idaho, quickly emerged as the best option.

By 1:00 p.m. on Friday, July 20, Kerr was on a conference call with more than a dozen officials from OCTC. After confirming that the necessary training space was available, all the questions from both sides were checked off.

“All of a sudden it seemed plausible that this course of action might actually work,” said Kerr. “Now, we just have to get there.”

There was about a year’s worth of planning to accomplish in one day before the squadron could begin the nearly 400-mile convoy to their new training site. Kerr knew that support from above would be extremely limited with most of the Oregon Army National Guard’s resources focused on the 1st Infantry Brigade Combat Team’s Xportable Combat Support (XCS) program at Camp Roberts, in California. However, he believed his unit was suited for the challenge.

“A cavalry squadron, we have to be able to maneuver quickly and support ourselves,” Kerr said.

As plans began developing, several roadblocks were quickly identified. The squadron did not have enough food, fuel, or vehicle recovery support to make the move.

“A lot of our troop commanders and first sergeants had a lot of concerns, and rightfully so,” said Kerr.

At the beginning of the AT, the 1-82nd convoyed from their home station near Redmond, Oregon, to YTC. Along the way, the 1-82nd had five Stryker’s break down.

“That ratio was concerning, that was only 200 miles,” said Kerr. “The next step was to triage annual training, teamwork, lots of communication, but we were able to do the next step was under way.”

Staff Sgt. Zachary Holden, military policeman with 1st Squadron, 82nd Cavalry Regiment, 116th Cavalry Battalion, in La Grande, Oregon. With one call to his supply staff, located in Umatilla at the time, Kerr received an instant solution. Umatilla had a stake and platform truck available and on the road almost instantly, driving first to Baker City to pick up the rations, then delivering the load to La Grande in time for 1-82nd Cav.’s arrival. With the movement plan in place, there was just one thing left to do, get to OCTC.

Ginestar explained, “I think we might actually pull this off.”

Ginestar said the squadron experienced minimal issues throughout the entire movement, attributing the success to the exceptional planning.

“I can’t believe it went so well!” recalled Ginestar. “We had very little margin for error in this entire movement, because of our compressed timeline. It couldn’t have gone any better.”

Kerr explained that once they arrived at OCTC, there was still plenty of work. They had to draw all the lumber, the generators, the fuel, and then go downrange and build all the targets, but the training facility provided everything they needed.

“We had a lot of problems to solve once we got to OCTC,” he said. “The amount of support that we received from Orchard Combat Training Center was unprecedented, they went above and beyond.”

After three days, thousands of gallons of fuel and thousands of miles driven by all the elements involved, all of 1-82nd Cavalry Squadron had arrived at OCTC. Training resumed and they were well on their way to completing the goals they had set out to achieve this summer.

“The amount of logistics it took to move us from Oregon to Washington to Idaho, I don’t think I’ve ever seen that go down as smoothly as it did,” said Sgt. Cody Callahan, a senior medic with Delta Troop, 1-82nd Cav., contributing the success of the unexpected move to excellent planning.

“The way that Orchard Combat Training Center has accommodated us with so few resources, is just a huge accomplishment.”

During the experience, Maj. Ronald Clement, 1-82nd Cav. operations officer, posed the question, “Is the juice worth the squeeze?”

Kerr thought so. With the need of a cavalry squadron to stay flexible, Kerr developed a motto for the whole experience, “Where there’s adversity, there’s opportunity.”

An M1128 Stryker Mobile Gun System, with 1st Squadron, 82nd Cavalry Regiment, Oregon Army National Guard, shoots it’s 105mm cannon during a live-fire exercise during their annual training (AT), July 25, 2018, at Orchard Combat Training Center near Boise, Idaho.

An M1128 Stryker Mobile Gun System, with 1st Squadron, 82nd Cavalry Regiment, Oregon Army National Guard, shoots it’s 105mm cannon during a live-fire exercise during their annual training (AT), July 25, 2018, at Orchard Combat Training Center near Boise, Idaho.

Orention Army National Guard Soldiers with 1st Squadron, 82nd Cavalry Regiment, conduct live-fire exercises late into the evening during their annual training (AT), July 25, 2018, at Orchard Combat Training Center near Boise, Idaho.

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WARRENTON, Oregon – “Air Assault, Air Assault! Air Assault!” are the words repeated by every Soldier when their feet hit the ground as they run. The phrase puts the students rapidly into a training mindset during the first days of Air Assault School, held at Camp Rilea, Warrenet, Oregon, in June. “It’s to Ingram them in the attention to detail,” said Staff Sgt. Ryan McClung, Phase 3 Chief, Warrior Training Center detail, said Staff Sgt. Ryan McClung, Warrior Training Center. “Most of them are young men who don’t do this type of work everyday, and we need to get their mind set right. We are cramming a lot of information in 11 days. They must get all the information, organize it and be tested on it in a matter of days.”

During the Air Assault Course, students train and are evaluated on combat assault, sling loads, rappelling, physical fitness and various other critical skills. The course prepares Soldiers for air mobile operations focusing on physical fitness, attention to detail and safety.

Before the course actually begins, known as “Day 0,” all potential students are required to complete intense physical challenges. Captain James Sturges, executive officer assigned to the MTT for the Air Assault, Pathfinders and Rappel Master courses, explained the requirements necessary to enter the course. He said the Soldiers must pass a 2-mile run and an obstacle course to continue. The student must be able to lift and carry a 35 pound load for an hour. They must also be able to ride a Humvee (HMMWV) and learn techniques for BSU operations, such as how to properly prepare the vehicle for resupply

“Day 0, they are constantly smoked,” McClung said. “They are put in a mental and physical state. They are reminded what they are here for.”

Proper physical fitness is necessary to be able to conduct combat assault, prepare sling loads for transport, and rappel from aircraft. Soldiers are also assessed on various other critical tasks. “This is the hardest course I have ever been in,” said Staff Sgt. Jonathan Schmidt, combat engineer, 818th Engineer Company, 164th Engineer Battalion, North Dakota Army National Guard. The students can be dropped from the course for not passing physical, written and hands-on evaluations, not following directions exactly, and for safety issues and concerns. Two-hundred-sixty-nine potential students arrived on Day 0, but 197 graduated.

Phase 1, Day 1, began with another challenge to overcome: the Soldiers must complete a six-mile ruck march in one and one-half hours while carrying 35 pounds. “The ruck march gets them in the right physical condition and their brains into Air Assault mode,” McClung said. “They are in a good mindset, they know what pain is and they know they can get beyond it.”

Phase 2 focused on sling load operations where the Soldiers learned to hook up a load and run it with speed and accuracy prior to it being mobilized for air transport. “By this time, they are squared away and ready to learn,” McClung said. “Lives depend on making sure every aspect is done with 100 percent accuracy. After Day 0, the sling load test is where we see our most failings. They have two hours to do four loads; you miss one and you’re done.”

“They were strict, and, coming from an infantry background, it was great,” said Pfc. Bjon Thompson, infantryman, 2nd Battalion, 162nd Infantry Regiment, 81st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, Idaho Army National Guard. “They focused on details and deficiencies, which are meant to keep us safe. If the rigging comes out or the lines come out, we have to overcome my fear of heights and to challenge myself.”

The overall reason for the intense instruction, strictness of following orders and attention to detail is safety for all. During this cycle, for example, the rappel rope passed 818th Engineer Company, 2nd Battalion, 161st Infantry Regiment, 81st Stryker Brigade, Washington Army National Guard, plans to use his newly developed skills for search and rescue operations. “I will be able to save lives by hooking up equipment and dropping it in an area where a bird can’t land,” he said.

The path for this course is 14 days. Despite the challenge of the course, the students help each other retain the necessary information to pass the tests. Joyner explained how it’s not a competition, it’s teamwork. “Everyone helped everyone else,” he said. “Those who knew math, helped those who didn’t. Those who were good at English helped those who could remember things well, helped others with tidbits of information and memory tools such as [mnemonics].”

The pass rate for this course was 56 percent. The course began with 52 students, but only 29 of them graduated. “I’ve seen a higher pass rate than usual here at Camp Rilea since I have been teaching,” said Lloyd, who has been an instructor for almost two years, teaching nearly 15 classes all over the United States. Training culminates with a three-day hands-on field training exercise, where the students put their newly learned knowledge to work. They call in aircraft and coordinate landing, drop and pick up zones by calculating wind and airspeed, elevation, and weather.

As a symbol of freedom stretches from the beaches of Normandy to the beaches Oregon, these Soldiers are sharing an honored history.
Guardsmen learn the ropes at Rappel Master Course

Story and photos by
Capt. Leslie Reed,
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

WARRENTON, Oregon – “Safety is the number one priority,” nearly 50-Soldiers from across the country were told while attending Oregon’s annual summer Rappel Master Course, held June 10-14, 2018, at Camp Rilea, near Warrenton, Oregon.

“The Rappel Master Course is a safety course that teaches young leaders how to properly run a rappel tower or rappel operations out of a helicopter using a rappel system,” explained Massachusetts Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Thomas Presuitt, an instructor with Company B, Warrior Training Center.

Army-Rappel Guard instructors, broken down into three companies and assigned to the Warrior Training Center (WTC) located at Fort Benning, Georgia, serve as the point-men for training service members in a variety of specialty skills to increase and maintain the operational readiness of the Army National Guard. Company B, is tasked with instructing the Air Assault, Pathfinder and Rappel Master Courses, and regularly travels as a Mobile Training Team. Instructors have already made the rounds this year, completing courses in Georgia, Pennsylvania and Oklahoma before starting the June course in Oregon.

While any highly-qualified Soldier between the ranks of E-4 and O-2, may be selected to attend (regardless of military occupational specialty), Soldiers must also be a graduate of Air Assault, Ranger, Sapper or the Military Mountaineer Course. Often times, Soldiers come straight out of an Air Assault Course to attend Rappel Master.

They come right in, it’s tough on them, but we don’t bear them up like we do in Air Assault. It’s more of a gentleman’s course,” said Hale. “One of the good things about it is that it’s all fresh,” said Hale. “I didn’t have to come back like some of my other Nevada counterparts and re-learn. I’ve been doing this stuff for the last two weeks.”

Hale said the 12-day Air Assault Course, which wrapped up on June 8th at Camp Rilea, was “more like basic training…more of a gentleman’s course,” which wrapped up on June 8th at Camp Rilea, near Warrenton, Oregon.

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The four-day Rappel Master Course is broken down into three main categories: the Rappel Master Personnel Inspection (RMPI), Basic Rappelling and Advanced Rappelling.

Ideally, all students would pass, however it rarely happens. Typically, instructors see around a 10-15-percent attrition rate, which range true at the Oregon course at Camp Rilea. They started with 46 students and dropped down to 40 for graduation. While the Rappel Master Course doesn’t necessarily have the physical events like Air Assault that knock people out, it is academic and failures typically occur during the RMPI portion.

“These are good Soldiers; they were sent here for a reason and they are going to be leading operations from a tower, where safety is so important.” Presuitt said. “But we all don’t think the same way. Some people can just see where the rope goes, and how the knots work, for others it’s much more difficult.”

Day one starts off at a quick pace, consisting of three exams on knots, hook-ups and equipment familiarization. Each exam is timed and only one re-test is administered for individuals that do not meet a passing score.

Day two focuses on what is routinely known for being the most difficult, the RMPI. Instructors drill in what errors or common mistakes to look for and Soldiers are rigged-up “dirty” with an error meant for the inspecting student to catch and correct. These checks are mandatory, and without them could lead to a serious injury or even death. During the RMPI test, students have three minutes and 30-seconds to inspect three rappelling Soldiers in different configurations and must identify all major deficiencies, missing no more than two, and use proper terminology. Many students choose to become familiar with the RMPI process prior to attending the course by memorizing deficiencies in the Rappel Master Hand Book and by becoming more familiar by watching video materials provided by the schoolhouse.

Students closed out the course by completing Advanced Rappelling, also known as rescue rappelling, where one Soldier would role play the person in distress while another would rescue them. The last task to complete the course is a cumulative written final exam.

Hale said he recommends the Rappel Master Course, “It teaches you a lot more in depth, especially techniques, things you’re going to see and need to know than just the Air Assault course on its own.

But Hale warns future students who start with Air Assault Course, to “check their packing lists, get documents off the website, have everything. You will suffer less.”

Company B instructors will finish the year with their final Rappel Master Course in Grafenwoehr, Germany, in September. The Oregon Army National Guard has hosted the Rappel Master Course at Camp Rilea, on the Oregon Coast, for more than 10-years.
AZUWAR

Oregon Guard mourns the passing of Brig. Gen. James B. Thayer

Story by 1st Lt. Erin Smith,
115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

The Oregon Military Museum, under the direction of its Executive Director, the Rev. Brian Selby, is preparing a缅怀 the passing of Brig. Gen. James B. Thayer, Oregon National Guard, on September 8, 2018.

Oregon Army National Guard commissions 61st officer class

Story and photo by
Spe. Michael Germundson,
115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

SALEM, Oregon Students from American Samoa are finding their way to higher education through the Oregon Army National Guard (ORARNG). With only one community college and no university where they qualify for in-state tuition, educational opportunities are limited for many American Samoans.

Simone Sanitoa, currently a sophomore at Southern Oregon University (SOU) and a Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) cadet, was planning an active duty career until she made a connection with prior service members from the Samoan Islands and National Guard orth for ORARNG to build a presence in American Samoa.

The recruiting mission is not a standard one, because it doesn’t do any good to bring someone to Oregon to live off a part-time drill check.

Lee said very clearly, “We are not recruiting a single Soldier unless they have been accepted to a university first. We will collect all the paperwork but we will wait to process them.”

Once a qualifying candidate is accepted to school and is ready to enlist, the Oregon Guard is ready to welcome and assist them. For Sanitoa the ORARNG has been part of her success story and she wants to share that success with those back home.

“it’s a great opportunity, good opening for anyone who feels like they don’t have a choice, feels like they are just limited to certain options back on the island,” said Sanitoa.

Oregon Guard paves way to higher education for American Samoan youth

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