



125th STS Airmen
train in a variety
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Burrowing Owls
find ideal home
at Camp Umatilla
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Oregon Sentinel

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE OREGON NATIONAL GUARD

Oregon Guardsmen respond to devastating Wildfires



The Oregon National Guard was activated to support state wide firefighting operations beginning with Gov. Kate Brown's emergency declaration on Aug. 19, 2020. **Stories continued on Pages 6**

Deployments end with joyful homecoming reunions



**Story by John Hughel,
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs**

MEDFORD, Ore. - Between a mixture of cheers and tears, more than a hundred Oregon National Guard Citizen-Soldiers made their way home from Djibouti, landing at the Rogue Valley International-Medford Airport, as family and friends welcomed them home on Aug. 18, 2020. Within days, more would return to all

parts of Oregon, landing at Portland, Eugene and other regional airports, arriving from not only in Djibouti, but Jordan, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, and Kosovo. These mobilizations of the 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team are part of the second-largest mobilization of Oregon troops since World War II. The last mobilization of Oregonians this size was in 2009 through 2010 to Iraq. **Story and more homecoming photos continued on Pages 8 & 9**

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COMMAND

Truly remarkable training year 2020 is one for the record books

Oregon Military Department/Oregon National Guard Team: as we begin Training Year 2021, I am humbled to reflect on the accomplishments of 2020. We are known for being, "Always Ready, Always There," but this year I will add, "We Serve." Throughout life we are told not to rest on your laurels, but I think we need to take a moment to recognize and reflect on how professional an organization we are and the incredible work you have done over the past year. In this, what will probably be remembered as one of the most historic years in the National Guard, our team truly met and exceeded every expectation.

We began the year by collectively mobilizing the Oregon National Guard for the second largest mobilization of Oregon troops since World War II for overseas and CONUS missions, with more than 1,700 Oregon Soldiers and Airmen activated in service to our Nation. Just as we successfully completed mobilizations, we then supported the largest search and rescue efforts in Umatilla County for flooding. Shortly thereafter, we were responding to the COVID-19 global pandemic, where we were asked to set up the Oregon Medical Station and write the standard operating procedures on how to successfully do so in the future. We supported hospitals, health care facilities and retirement communities with establishment of medical tents and conducted warehouse and distribution operations of personal protective equipment across all 36 counties, tribal nations and migrant farm work operations to keep the state moving forward.

On August 19th, Governor Brown declared a state of emergency due to wildfires. Our Oregon Army National Guard helicopter crews quickly began operations to assist the Oregon Department of Forestry with suppression efforts. After Labor Day, an extreme weather

system brought hot weather with high winds, and by the following evening on September 8th, we had begun activating additional aviation assets, traffic control points, our Fatality Search and Recovery Team and our wildfire firefighting teams.

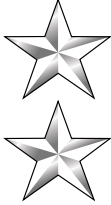
As I drove to Salem early that morning, I can tell you I have never seen anything like this in my entire career. The entire sky and ground took on an eerie, dark orange glow. As we waited for the smoke and weather to cooperate, the Oregon National Guard leaned forward and mobilized. We immediately recalled Guardsmen to man Traffic Control Points and by the weekend we had ground crews reporting for duty. After almost a week of being grounded, aviation assets began flying again.

At the peak we had more than 1,300 Oregon Guard members supporting air and ground wildland firefighting, traffic control points, fatality recovery, county liaison duties and training for additional ground support. Before we could get our last two teams on the fire lines, Oregon Department of Forestry, with some help from a change in the weather, got their arms around the fires and we started to come off missions as fast as we mobilized.

Let me say it once again, take a moment to reflect on your amazing accomplishments, which were only possible through the collaborative efforts of our organization's civilian and military partnerships. This year has been a true testament to the Oregon Military Department's culture of service and readiness like never before. Also, throughout this time we have had a number of our Guard members, civilians and families displaced themselves. Despite the myriad of challenges some of you were facing, you still raised your hand to serve. If not for the incredible work of Service Member Family Support and our human



Major General Michael E. Stencel, Adjutant General, Oregon National Guard



resource teams, this could not have happened. Your work to assist does not go unnoticed; you keep us ready!

Lastly, without the support of our loved ones, families and employers there is no way we would have been as successful. Their support, despite the challenges of the pandemic, was overwhelming. From myself and on behalf of Governor Brown - thank you! To the Citizen-Soldiers, Airmen, Civilians, thank you for ensuring that the Oregon Military Department and the Oregon National Guard is ready to respond to any contingency here on the home front and overseas. You are a testament to our readiness.

As we continue to welcome home those that have mobilized this past year, we are glad to have you back in Oregon. You are all part of one amazing team supporting both the people of Oregon and the United States. The year 2020 is one for the record books. Take a moment to reflect on your contributions and accomplishments; they are truly remarkable. ~Thank you.

An honor and privilege to serve in this new role

It's a true privilege to be appointed as your next Command Senior Enlisted Leader (CSEL). My service began in August 1984 when I joined the U.S. Air Force. I served an air defense mission in Europe during the cold war era on the F-15 Eagle then moved stateside to Louisiana where as an armament specialist I loaded and maintained the weapons system on the A-10 "Warthog" all before returning home to serve here in Oregon. While in Oregon I have served in multiple positions within the 142nd Wing at Portland's Air National Guard Base, and as I gained ingarrison and expeditionary experience I grew through the ranks. As I reflect back I recognize the work, dedication and devotion that many of the leaders before me demonstrated. Their ethic fostered an environment of determination to be the best.

To be the best we must have the best. The best facilities, equipment and training. Our National Guard culture understands that the newest facilities and equipment cannot always be attained so we must make what we have into the best it can be. We don't always get all the seats we need for training so we must take advantage of the seats we get and we must use our dynamic, innovative, diverse culture to create a training environment that meets or exceeds the standards. We must maintain the

highest moral compass and exhibit respect towards all we serve with and for. Our communities, our State and our Nation depend on us.

What you can expect from me is a commitment to our goals and objectives. I lead boldly and serve humbly. This is the main ingredient to my approachability. I make a conscience effort to be available to those I serve. I listen and strive to be a critical thinker in an effort to best understand. These traits and skills have given me an ability to build and maintain quality relationships which is undeniably a cornerstone to good leadership and service. I will ensure our leaders know, understand and are using the great tools we have available to create and foster a resilient force. I have a good understanding of the "every soldier and airman a leader" philosophy. This philosophy is not only about level appropriate data driven risks but also about being part of appropriate organizations and associations that can help shape the outcome of strategic decisions. I'm ready to fully engage with the organizations that support our quality of life. Expect from me the courage to do what is right and the courage to defend the priorities of leadership while putting our members first. I will be discerning and focused in my efforts to advise. I will always be respectful!



Chief Master Sgt. Daniel C. Conner, Command Senior Enlisted Leader, Oregon National Guard



This wasn't and still isn't an easy profession. It's not for everybody. Many times there is no immediate reward. Often job satisfaction cannot be enjoyed and although always appreciated not always recognized. The business can be strenuous, demanding and dangerous and you will be asked to endure more and go faster. You will be asked to put our goals and needs ahead of your own. We are part of an elite team that only a few Americans choose to join. I'm proud to serve on this team with all of you and I look forward to the work ahead.

Former 173rd Fighter Wing Commander takes command of 1st Air Force

By Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

SALEM, Ore. - With his promotion to Lieutenant General, former Oregon Air National Guard 173rd Fighter Wing Commander Kirk S. Pierce, took command of 1st Air Force and Continental U.S. North American Aerospace Defense Command Region during a virtual ceremony at Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida on July 29, 2020.

In his previous assignment at the Pentagon, Washington D.C., Pierce was the Air National Guard Deputy Director and aforementioned, lead the 173rd Fighter Wing, Klamath Falls, Oregon from January of 2015 to April of 2016. A graduate of the Reserve Officer Training Corp program at the University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Indiana in



U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Clayton Lenhardt

1988, he began Undergraduate Pilot Training at Williams Air Force Base, Arizona, graduating in May of 1989.

As the Combined Force Air Component Commander for North American Aerospace

Defense Command, Joint Force Air Component Commander for U.S. Northern Command and 1st Air Force Command, Lt. Gen. Pierce is responsible for three distinct missions: Homeland Air Defense for the continental United States, Air Force Component support of civil authorities, and theater security cooperation for North America.

With assuming his new role at Tyndall Air Force Base, Lt. Gen. Pierce replaces Lt. Gen. Marc H. Sasseville, who has led 1st Air Force since June 2019.

COMMAND

Oregon's Own, former Adjutant General Daniel Hokanson becomes NGB Director

Story by John Hughel, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

SALEM, Ore. – Over the course of his 34-year military career, Gen. Daniel R. Hokanson has persevered through the rigors and challenges that career Soldiers often encounter; with duty and promotions that come from years of continuous training, deployments, and pioneering determination. A graduate from the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1986, he became an active duty pilot, serving in air cavalry and aircraft armament testing operations, before joining the Oregon National Guard in 1995.

As Hokanson received his fourth star on August 3, 2020, he assumed the responsibility as the Chief of the National Guard Bureau during a ceremony held at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall in Arlington, Virginia. The former Keizer resident is now in command of nearly 450,000 Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen, the highest-ranking officer in the nation's oldest military force.



Stock photo by Sgt. Cory Grogen, JFHQ Public Affairs

Lt. Gen. Daniel Hokanson, Director of the Army National Guard, addresses members of C Co., 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment after a reenlistment ceremony where he swore-in three Soldiers at the Woodburn Armory, Woodburn, Ore., Jan. 12, 2020.

"This is an important and pivotal time in the history of the National Guard," said Hokanson, when addressing those in attendance and stressing the tasks that lie ahead. "We have never been busier or more visible, and our missions have never been more complex and more important. What we do now, and what we do next, will ultimately shape our nation's future."

Becoming just the fourth NGB Chief to serve as a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Hokanson served in the Oregon National Guard in a variety of roles before reaching the summit at the National Guard Bureau. From Aide-de-Camp, Office of The Adjutant General, to Commanding the 641st Medical Battalion, then later commanding the 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team, he finally was chosen to lead the Oregon National Guard as The Adjutant General from August 2013 to August 2015. There were also deployments to Afghanistan to support OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM and later to Iraq during OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM.

The U.S. Senate confirmed Hokanson on July 21, following a hearing by the Senate Armed Services Committee earlier in June. He told lawmakers then that this is a pivotal time in the history of the National Guard.



Stock photo by Sgt. Cory Grogen, JFHQ Public Affairs

From left to right: Maj. Gen. Daniel R. Hokanson, adjutant general, Oregon, Oregon Secretary of State Kate Brown, Oregon Congressman Kurt Schrader, Col. William Edwards, commander of 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team, and Lt. Col. Scot Caughran, commander of 2nd Battalion, 162nd Infantry Regiment (2-162), during a mobilization ceremony at the Salem Armory, Ore., June 7, 2014.



Department of Defense photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Jack Sanders

Defense Secretary Dr. Mark T. Esper presides as Army Lt. Gen. Daniel R. Hokanson, director of the Army National Guard, is promoted to general and takes over as 29th National Guard Bureau chief during ceremonies at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall, Va., Aug. 3, 2020.

"We face complex, dynamic missions overseas and here at home. The next chief of the National Guard Bureau must continue to effectively navigate this unprecedented landscape and work closely with stakeholders at the international, federal, state and local levels."

Hokanson emphasizing the role of the National Guard to meet overseas deployment requirements while responding to an immense range of domestic responsibilities, he told the committee that enhancing the diversity of the overall force was a top priority.

"My intent would be to make sure that all of our formations reflect the diversity of the communities which they come from, that the diversity and ethnicity of our nation is reflected at every level of the organization," he said, stressing the makeup of the National Guard force.

This fact was put to the test in June when, more than 120,000 National Guard Soldiers and Airmen were mobilized worldwide, including more than 40,000 performing domestic support to the COVID-19 pandemic and others activated to civil protests following the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis on May 25, 2020.

"Our Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen, at the peak, (in June) responded to these and other events in the homeland while simultaneously meeting all overseas deployment requirements in support of the combatant commanders and the National Defense Strategy," Hokanson said.

Many of the priorities that Hokanson described as essential during his testimony included; supporting the National Defense Strategy, continuing to enhance the Guard's cyber capabilities, and ensuring the Guard keeps up with the Army and Air Force active-duty components with equipment and interoperability.

"Cyber is one of those fields where the National Guard can provide great benefit to our nation," he said.

Another noteworthy discussion revolved around the National Guard's State Partnership Program, paring the National Guard in the states and territories with almost 90 foreign countries.

"When you look at the National Defense Strategy with respect to allies and growing partners, this provides us another avenue to do that by developing low-level relationships that usually start out with humanitarian assistance and disaster response, but then grow," Hokanson said.

When Hokanson was Oregon's adjutant general, he help develop the Cascadia Playbook, which has been recognized by Department of Defense senior officials and FEMA as a model for disaster planning, preparation and response.

In 2015, Oregon Governor Kate Brown said that the Cascadia Playbook was one of the Nation's first disaster response books. "His (Hokanson) accomplishments and impact on our State are unprecedented...he made a difference on every level."

Hokanson's wife, Kelly, also attended the confirmation hearing, as he stressed to the committee that, "she is a tireless advocate for military families, and is always the first to make sacrifices for our family." The couple has three adult children and each are all currently serving as commissioned officers.

Hokanson succeeded retiring Air Force Gen. Joseph Lengyel, who like Hokanson, served as the NGB Vice Chief before serving four years and as the director. Hokanson served as Lengyel's deputy from November of 2016 until June of

2019. Over the past year, Hokanson served as the Director of the Army National Guard, with headquarters also in Arlington, Virginia.

During their Change of Command ceremony on Aug. 3, Lengyel said the Guard has performed brilliantly over the years, particularly during the pandemic response and civil unrest of the past few months.

"I have been a proud witness of the remarkable work the men and the women of the National Guard carry out every day," he said. "You are an indispensable part of the warfighting force."

Noting the role the National Guard has performed under Lengyel's tenure, Secretary of Defense Mark T. Esper said that Guardsmen have responded to unprecedented crises both home and abroad, ranging from wildfires, volcanic eruptions, hurricanes, and significant flooding.



Stock photo by Master Sgt. John Hughel, 142nd Fighter Wing Public Affairs

Oregon Air National Guard Chief Master Sgt. Dennis Budworth (left), discusses various details of the maintenance procedures with the unit's F-15 Eagles with Lt. Col. Joe Harris (center), and Maj. Gen. Daniel Hokanson, Adjutant General, Oregon (right), during his tour of the Portland Air National Guard Base, Ore., Oct. 29, 2013.

"Our nation is safer, stronger and more secure due to their dedication to their fellow Americans," he said.

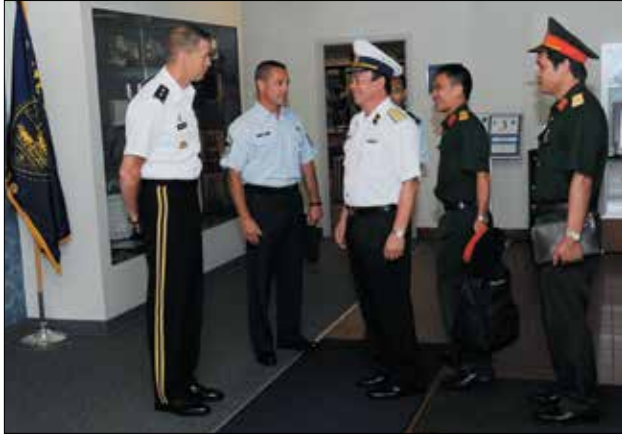
Sec. Esper said that Lengyel passes the torch to another well-qualified and tested leader, remarking that Hokanson takes charge during one of the most challenging times in our nation's history.

"As you take the helm, know that we have full faith and confidence in your abilities," said Esper. "The vision and acumen you have demonstrated throughout your career will serve you well as you lead the Guard into the future."

Within weeks of Hokanson taking command, his experience and guidance were already called into action as Hurricane Sally hit the panhandle in the Gulf of Mexico and wildfires in California, Oregon and Washington State had thousands of Guardsmen active to respond.

"We're here to assist local authorities. Our troops are trained

to protect life and property," said Hokanson after visiting Guardsmen of the fire lines. "Times like this – in fact, 2020 in general – proves just what a tremendous value the National Guard is to our nation."



Stock photo by Master Sgt. John Hughel, 142nd Fighter Wing Public Affairs

Maj. Gen. Daniel R. Hokanson, the Adjutant General, Oregon, far left, and Air National Guard Chief Master Sgt. Daniel Conner, left, welcome Vice Adm. Pham Ngoc Minh, center, Deputy Chief of General Staff of Vietnam People's Army during a State Partnership visit to the Portland Air National Guard Base, Ore., Aug. 25, 2014.

NEWS

Warm Springs leaders, Oregon National Guard discuss COVID-19 support

Story and photos by John Hughe, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

WARM SPRINGS, Ore. - As part of the ongoing response to the novel coronavirus pandemic, the Oregon National Guard is helping to consolidate and distribute critical personal protective equipment (PPE) to medical and assisted living facilities, as well as tribal nations throughout the state.

The shortage of PPE has strained many communities around the country. To stem the stressed resource needs caused by COVID-19, the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) has focused the delivery of emergency shipments to underserved communities such as the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs.

With key leaders from the Oregon Army National Guard traveling to meet with tribal leaders on April 21, 2020, a series of briefings helped renew the relationship between both parties and reinforce the states' overall response to the COVID-19 epidemic.

"It's important that we have adequate PPE because every time we have new testing capabilities come in the door, we immediately look at our PPE supply and surmise if we have enough to match that response," said Hyllis Dauphinais, the local Incident Commander (IC) for the Warm Springs reservation during the COVID-19 outbreak.

During the Incident Command System (ICS) morning briefing, everyone adhered to the recommended guidance to maintain their physical distance and wear protective masks in order to help slow the spread of the virus. Dauphinais said that using a cloth mask, as most were wearing, also helps conserve the medical masks needed by health care workers interacting directly with patients.

"We're trying not to 'take-up' a medical or procedural mask when we are not in direct proximity to each other...this will help extend our supply," he said.



ORARNG Land Component Commander Brig. Gen. William Prendergast IV participates in a group discussion with members of the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs at the Warm Springs reservation, following a morning ICS briefing in response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, April 21, 2020.



Oregon Army National Guard Land Component Commander Brig. Gen. William Prendergast IV participates in a group discussion with members of the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs, April 21, 2020 at the Warm Springs reservation, Warm Springs, Oregon.

The reservation land of the Warm Springs, Wasco and Paiute Native American Tribes resides from the Cascade Mountains and along the Deschutes River, extending over 1,000 square miles of picturesque Central Oregon landscape. The tribe's economic base thrives on the enterprises of natural resource forest products, hydroelectric power and agricultural production. They also draw income from casino revenues and a nationally renowned tribal museum.

The coronavirus outbreak has put a sizeable economic strain on these jobs and the ability to return to work; re-opening tribal commerce is dependent on having enough PPE for workers and visitors. Dauphinais estimated that the casino might open as early as June. "The closure impacts nearly 140 staff and employees who are really struggling now."

The meeting underscored an infrequent occurrence between the tribe and the Oregon National Guard too. Addressing the group during the briefing, Danny Martinez, the emergency manager and IC for the Confederated Tribes, acknowledged the uniqueness of the moment.

"We talk about this every day; trust responsibility...and this goes back to 1855,"

he said, detailing the confidential bond with sovereign nations. "This doesn't allow the state jurisdiction, but we work in partnership...not so much a government to government policy...but more in that trusted understanding, and that's what's so great to have both parties here today. This is history in the making!"

As a representative for Oregon National Guard, Brig. Gen. William J. Prendergast IV, Land Component

Commander for the Oregon Army National Guard, was appreciative of the invitation to visit the reservation.

"Thank you so much, we understand the urgent need for PPE in response to COVID-19," he said.

Prendergast was impressed with the Incident Command System process that was part of the morning briefing and noted the time-tested adage, "All emergencies are local -- and this is truly

spectacular to see how this team here is able to identify the key issues and address them quickly."

ICS Finance Section Chief Yvonne Iverson, who had been tracking all the PPE supply prior to the heavy demand from the COVID-19 outbreak, detected those rapid assessments.

"I just wanted to note that we have been tracking the PPE in our warehouse and we got down to just enough for a few days.... so with your help (the Oregon National Guard) and Danny's help, we were able to receive enough PPE for our present needs," she said, recounting all the ongoing challenges that the pandemic's outbreak has presented.

"We now have enough PPE to adhere to the new guidance of wearing a mask at all times and more importantly, to last for another 53 days," Iverson said. "We are sitting in a good spot, but we started off in rough shape."

The Oregon National Guard has been delivering PPE from the Oregon Department of Administrative Service (DAS) warehouse in Wilsonville to seven major hubs around the state, which in turn serve to ensure PPE reaches all 36 counties and nine tribal nations.

"The big thing for us is serving our communities," said Army National Guard Lt. Col. Philip DeMontigny, Task Force Assurance Commander, who is overseeing the operations at the Wilsonville warehouse for the Oregon Army National Guard.

"Our Soldiers are highly motivated to do this because they know they are helping Oregonians," he told those gathered at the meeting. "I can't wait to tell my Soldiers later this afternoon that, 'hey this is how it looks in Warm Springs' and this is the importance of what you're doing in this community."

The tribal leaders say they welcome the assistance and ongoing support from the National Guard. "There has been a spirit of cooperation over the years, especially with respecting our air space over tribal lands," said Tribal Council Chairman Raymond Tsumpti.

"With search and rescue operations, as well as recovery efforts in the past, the National Guard has always responded in kind, and we appreciate that."

While presenting a lithograph of a World War II era 41st Division Soldier to Tsumpti and the tribe, Prendergast emphasized how he sees more opportunities to grow closer with many of the tribal nations around the state.

"We are all one community within the four walls of the state of Oregon," Prendergast said. "We may be of different cultures but it's us coming together, and I see how the National Guard can help bridge some of that gap."

Also accompanying Prendergast and DeMontigny as part of the National Guard delegation was Command Senior Enlisted Leader for Oregon, Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Foesch. He drew a parallel to younger members of the tribe and many of the Soldiers he directs.



ICS Finance Section Chief Yvonne Iverson (left) along with Hyllis Dauphinais, the local incident commander for Indian Health Services (right) participate in the morning briefing on April 21, 2020.

"There is a shared sense of community and an energy to be part of a larger group, whether it's through working together as a team, setting physical fitness challenges or simply wanting to give something back to the community," he said.

In many ways that same warrior spirit will need to be summoned to overcome the sustained challenges ahead in defeating the complexities of the coronavirus throughout the state and around the nation. By building these partnerships, both parties were able to express a willingness to find common ground solutions.

"When we all look at life, there will always be these outliers," Prendergast said, assessing the current circumstances with the COVID-19 outbreak. "But that's why we're all here, to address that challenge and be successful in helping our communities."

"It's people like yourself...making the difference in a time of tremendous need."

Bangladesh, US Air Forces conduct first virtual Airman-to-Airman Talks together

Story by Capt. Christen Ornella, Pacific Air Forces Public Affairs

JOINT BASE PEARL HARBOR-HICKAM, Hawaii - U.S. Air Force Airmen and their counterparts from Bangladesh got together, virtually this year, to hold the fourth annual Airman-to-Airman Talks (A2AT) Aug. 24-26.

A2ATs are an established avenue for two forces to enhance military-to-military relations, deepen bilateral cooperation, and increase interoperability. The U.S. and partner nation air forces conduct these engagements to plan for upcoming bilateral activities and establish partner goals.

"Both of our countries and certainly our air forces share a desire to have a free, stable, and safe Indo-Pacific region," said U.S. Air Force Maj. Gen. Tyler Otten, mobilization assistant to the commander,

Pacific Air Forces. "We share those objectives and really the foundation of those objectives is our partnership. As we grow our partnership and deepen and strengthen it, it allows us to become more interoperable."

This year, their discussion topics included C-130J interoperability, Military Personnel Exchange Program (MPEP), dissimilar aircraft training, band engagement, and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Response (HA/DR).

Before diving into specific areas of interest, the discussions were led with an overarching strategy brief to challenge the participants to 'rethink how we think' about the Indo-Pacific and provide insight into the future of the theater and how bilateral relations play an important role.

The teams also discussed exercise opportunities in the Indo-Pacific to

establish their five-year exercise program roadmap that will include exercises, such as Cope North, Cope South, Pacific Airlift Rally, Pacific Angel and Red Flag-Alaska.

The most recent exercise the two forces participated in together was Cope South in Bangladesh, which occurred in February 2020.

Through the State Partnership Program (SPP), the Oregon Air National Guard is the State Partner to Bangladesh and works with PACAF to support bilateral engagements. The SPP links a state's National Guard with the armed forces or equivalent of a partner country in a cooperative, mutually beneficial relationship.

"I look forward to continuing this relationship and continuing to build the long-term commitment that we in the Oregon National Guard and Pacific Air Forces have with the members of

the Bangladeshi air force," said U.S. Air Force Brig. Gen. Mark Crosby, Assistant Adjutant General - Air, Oregon National Guard. "And look forward to next year and the 50th anniversary of the Bangladesh Independence Day."

At the conclusion of the three-day engagement, Airmen on both sides of the computer screen exited the meeting with increased understanding of their counterparts' priorities.

"I encourage all of you to engage robustly. Leverage the relationship that we generated this week and in past engagements," Otten said. "This is the foundation from which we will grow more and more participation with each other."

They plan to continue the conversation as they work toward meeting established goals, deepening the Bangladesh-U.S. relationship and bilateral capabilities.

NEWS

Oregon Air National Guard to receive new F-15 EX Fighter Jets

By Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

SALEM, Ore. - The Oregon Air National Guard received news Friday from the Secretary of the Air Force regarding the Air Force's plans to replace the Oregon Air National Guard's aging F-15C/D Eagles at both Oregon wings with the newly updated F-15 EX model. Kingsley Field, Oregon in Klamath Falls, is scheduled to transition to the Air Force's first F-15 EX formal training mission beginning in 2022, and the Portland Air National Guard Base is scheduled to become the first operational F-15 EX squadron in 2023.

The F-15C/D legacy platform is more than 40 years old and nearing the end of its service life. Whereas, the F-15 EX, with a 20,000-hour airframe life, guarantees the long-term viability and extension of the mission of the Oregon Air National Guard for years to come.

"This announcement gives all of our Airmen who work to fly, maintain and support the F-15, a great sense of purpose moving forward," stated Maj. Gen. Mike Stencil, the Adjutant General, Oregon National Guard.

The F-15 EX is a proven homeland defense platform and will complement our 5th generation fighters. With this updated platform also comes the capability for rapid insertion of new technologies which according to Boeing, is the most significant differentiator between the new version and legacy variants.



Photo courtesy of Boeing

The Department of the Air Force awarded a nearly \$1.2 billion contract for its first lot of eight F-15EX fighter aircraft, July 13, 2020. The new aircraft has a 20,000 hours airframe life.

The decision to choose Oregon for the F-15 EX transition highlights the importance and proven record of the Oregon Air National Guard's F-15 missions. The Oregon Air National Guard provides both homeland defense, protecting the skies of the Pacific Northwest, and fighter pilot training to all F-15C/D pilots in both the active and reserve components of the Air Force.

"Now that we know what our future platform will be, we are committed to the same level of professionalism and dedication that we've demonstrated for decades," said

Brig. Gen. Donna Prigmore, Commander, Oregon Air National Guard. "This is an exciting time for the Oregon Air National Guard and we embrace this new fleet of aircraft with absolute enthusiasm."

This news also comes as the nation continues to battle the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting financial and employment impacts that face the state. The decision to choose Oregon for the F-15 EX provides an opportunity to further the livelihood of Oregonians as the transition stimulates growth in the region.

'Task Force Assurance' completes PPE distribution mission

Story by Staff Sgt. Erin Quirke, Oregon National Guard Public Affairs Office

Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Zach Holden, 115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

WILSONVILLE, Ore. - The Oregon National Guard has conducted numerous missions throughout the state in response to COVID-19, to include set up and security of the Oregon Medical Station, outdoor tent space for testing at several hospitals, communications support at the unemployment office as well as other state and county emergency operations centers, the primary mission was the distribution of personal protective equipment (PPE).

On March 29, 14 Soldiers from the Oregon Army National Guard (ORNG) were called by the state of Oregon for a two-week mission to provide support in response to COVID-19. As the pandemic began to rapidly grow, so did the demand for support, ultimately expanding the mission to 183 Soldiers over a period of 79 days.

During the activation, Soldiers of Task Force Assurance completed a total of 2,604 missions, distributing more than 46 million pieces of PPE to all 36 Oregon counties, 9 Tribal Nations, and

two Tribal Health Agencies, covering approximately 140,000 miles throughout the state.

Additionally, the ORNG assisted in shipping 140 ventilators to New York, as well as providing nearly 1 million masks to agricultural workers throughout Oregon.

Despite the ever-evolving situation, Col. Philip DeMontigny, commander, Task Force Assurance, praised the work of the task force. "We did what was required of the state at the time. I think the most important thing is that we know that if we need to flex the guard we can," DeMontigny said of his team "We can quickly get Soldiers on duty and then throw them whatever, and they're going to make the adjustments."



Approximately 200 Soldiers and Airmen were activated in the Oregon National Guard in response to various mission associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Assurance distributed PPE acquired through the US National Strategic Reserve, FEMA and the State of Oregon, including face masks, gloves, face shields, gowns, and hand sanitizer.

As delivery trucks arrived full of PPE at the central distribution hub in Wilsonville, Soldiers received, inventoried, and staged tens of millions of pieces of various PPE, which was then allocated to counties, tribes, and medical facilities throughout Oregon. The allocation quantities were based on population density and COVID-19 cases.

DeMontigny also attributed the success of his team to skill sets that are unique to the National Guard. "Regardless of military occupational specialty, the dual status of the National Guard and Reserves allows that opportunity for the civilian skill sets to be utilized within emergency situations".



"This is outstanding news for the 173rd Fighter Wing," said Col. Jeffrey Edwards, 173rd FW commander at Kingsley Field in Klamath Falls, Oregon. "We have an extremely bright future as the F-15 EX Formal Training Unit. With over 35 years of experience in training fighter pilots for the Air Force, Kingsley Field has proven itself as an outstanding location for fighter training. For over 20 years, we have been training pilots in the Eagle. We are excited to open up a new chapter of fighter training in the F-15 EX."

Edwards added, "Being selected as the F-15EX Formal Training Unit is a tremendous honor, and this wouldn't have been possible without the phenomenal support from our community and local, state and national leaders. We are grateful for all they have done over the years to support the 173rd Fighter Wing. Team Kingsley is energized and motivated, and will continue to strive for excellence in our mission: 'Train F-15 Pilots, Support Combat Operations, and Serve Oregon; America's Air Superiority Starts Here!'"

"Absolutely I'm excited...it's kind of hard to hold back," said Col. David Unruh, 142nd Wing commander at the Portland ANG Base. "I want folks to be excited, I want them to recognize the opportunity we have here in Oregon. The more junior you are or younger you are in the organization, the more excited you should be because this is the airplane you're going to serve your whole career with if you're here at Portland."

These skills, paired with military training in logistics, enabled the task force to adapt quickly, effectively creating a force structure to achieve the mission. In tactical logistics, the Brigade Support Battalion (BSB) supplies the Forward Support Companies (FSCs), who distribute supplies to forces on front lines.

In Task Force Assurance, orders distributed from the Wilsonville central hub were transported throughout seven regional County Assistance Teams (CATs) consisting of approximately 12 Soldiers each, at armories located in key locations across the state. From there they were transported to the end users, similar to distribution in tactical logistics.

With this unique merging of civilian and military knowledge, combined with infrastructure and logistics already in place by the Oregon Military Department, Soldiers of Task Force Assurance were able to get PPE to the end user in as little as 24 hours of the allocation.

In addition to serving the country, the ORNG stands ready to serve our neighbors, families, and friends in the communities in which we live. This mission in particular has been meaningful to Soldiers as they see the impact of their work on their state and their own communities.

As Sgt. Juan Denmark, who joined the ORNG after seven years of Active Duty service, puts it, "We're on the ground level supporting each and every citizen of the state of Oregon, so it's much more personal for me". This shared mentality across the task force has kept the morale high as Soldiers worked tirelessly to meet the demands of their state.

As the task force handed over the mission to the state, DeMontigny is proud that the team proved their capabilities for future operations.

"This is nothing that was planned. It's impromptu in the fact that nobody saw this coming. What we bring is, regardless of how modular the mission is, we can create a functioning unit that has a structure. Once that's done, we can quickly adjust to whatever the mission is," said DeMontigny.

With fire season around the corner and the potential risk of the Cascadia subduction zone, DeMontigny has confidence in the ORNG I'm glad that the task force could prove our value to the state as a response to domestic operations."

NEWS

Guardsmen step up to assist Oregonians with Unemployment Insurance claims

Story and photos by
John Hughel,
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

SALEM, Ore. - When the country was struggling to recover during the depths of the Great Depression, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed into law the Social Security bill, which contained the establishment of Unemployment Insurance (UI) for millions of out of work Americans.

The law was enacted 85 years ago this month, and establish a federal-state joint "safety net" structure, which was funded by both federal and state taxes and designed to safeguard individuals against economic distress for short periods of time. Fast-forward to the present and the need for this program has never been more crucial with persistent job losses due to the novel coronavirus pandemic.

This is where the Oregon Army and Air Guardsmen have stepped up to help their fellow citizens, assisting the Oregon Employment Department (OED) process these record numbers of UI claims.

"It's a combination of factors that have us supporting this mission and has evolved over time," said 2nd Lt. Joshua Osborn, assigned to Bravo Troop, 1st Squadron, 82nd Cavalry Regiment, and the officer in charge of more than a dozen Guardsmen on the UI support team. "We are now in a '5th phase,' as this group has shown that they can take on more tasks."

An estimated 350,000 Oregonians have been pushed out of the work force as the COVID-19 outbreak has placed added stains on a system that was last redesigned in the 1990s. On May 31, Oregon Governor Kate Brown announced she had replaced Oregon Employment Department director Kay Erickson with her deputy, David Gerstenfeld to bring new leadership into the agency and improve procedures, helping solve the considerable number of unpaid jobless claims and substantial time callers were on hold to get a response back from the agency.

"We got started when the Oregon Employment Department was identifying people that needed to be contacted; whether it was letting them know the status of their application or find something that was missing in their application that was holding it up," said Osborn, explaining how the responsibilities have progressed during



Oregon Army and Air National Guardsmen work at the Anderson Readiness Center in Salem, Ore., helping the Oregon Employment Department on a backlog of unemployment claims, Aug. 1, 2020.

the COVID-19 epidemic. "We have now gained system access to processing those applications and can take them all the way through to payment."

With a civilian background in financial service, Osborn noted that the team was working through a list of nearly 5,900 applications, and when accomplished, they are given another project to complete. "The biggest issue(s) we work on are seeing which claims go to pandemic assistance or whether they go to another program."

With the innovative approach to utilize the Oregon National Guard to help with claims, OED Communications Director Melanni Rosales responded to several questions about the new relations and working with members of the military.

"The National Guard has been wonderful to work with. They've been a great addition, eager to adopt to new types of work, and very flexible with continuing missions and changing priorities and duties," said Rosales.

She went on to advocate for the 'creativity and innovation' that the service members have brought, stating, "They made recommendations for adjustments wherever processes could be improved...overall this program has been a great success."

As the Guardsmen integrated more into the organization, Osborn described how they were able to track the team's progress and impact.

"We know that we are making a noticeable

Sgt. Isabell Borrego, assigned to the 142nd Wing Mission Support Group, has been using her summer breaks from teaching school to support a variety of Federal and State missions. She was brought on initially to support OED then needed to complete training in case needed for fire support later in the summer.



Oregon Air National Guard Tech. Sgt. Isabell Borrego, assigned to the 142nd Wing Mission Support Group, works on unemployment claims with other Oregon National Guardsmen working with the OED, Aug. 1, 2020.

"I just recently was 'Red Card' re-certified for wildland firefighting; so in-between days I came off from one set of orders here (at UI), took a pause, then took the refresher course over the weekend-- only to then restart the next week with the unemployment insurance team again," she said.

As a third grade teacher at St. Joseph Catholic School in Salem, Oregon, Borrego has 20 years of military experience, both on active duty and serving in the Army and Air National Guard. A 'Jill of all Trades,' she is a quiet but natural leader in the Services Flight, traveling one summer to the Canadian Northwest Territories as a cook, and then directing training with the Oregon CBRNE Enhanced Response Force Packages (CERFP).

If that's not keeping her busy enough, then volunteering to support wildland firefighting missions has: first in 2017 on the Chetco Bar Fire in the Kalmiopsis Wilderness, and the following summer near Grants Pass, on the Taylor Creek Fire.

"The camaraderie is great, and that's what I like the most about working on these distinctive types of short term projects," she explained. "With this work for OED, I've actually learned a great deal about accounting and working with a variety of electronic spread sheets."

It's this type of versatility and a sense of empathy that is needed for this kind of work, as Borrego described how it's important to listen to people's struggles both to diagnose their unique situation and offering a supportive sense of confidence in solving the problem.

"There is a great sense of gratification, we get to help people with their claims by understanding their stories and where the complications are," she said, describing the balanced approach to filing the cases. "Plus -- the people at OED are really nice and helpful, they answer all of our questions when there is a concern or something are team is unsure of."

As the current mission is scheduled to last though the end of September, Borrego said in jest, that she never would have thought, "The Guard would have been called out to help fix unemployment insurance problems!"

"Overall, I am really pleased with our numbers, we have such a diverse team with different backgrounds and we all have pulled together so well," said Borrego, in summarizing the work demands. "It really opens the doors how the Guard can help out in other ways. We all joined the to help out our state and it feels good to actually support an important state mission."

NEWS

Oregon Guardsmen Respond to Devastating Wildfires



SALEM, Ore. - The Oregon National Guard activated more than 1,300 Citizen-Soldier and Airmen to help confront vast wildfires throughout the state during an unprecedented fire season.

Three Oregon National Guard teams with 125 members, who are red card certified, were utilized to support ground firefighting efforts. Oregon Guardsmen supported multiple counties and assisted the Warm Springs Tribal Nation with Traffic Control Points to protect Oregonians from going into hazard areas and to support the return evacuees to their homes.

Earlier this summer, Oregon Guardsmen completed pre-training for these three principal teams so they would be available to get out on the fire lines quickly when requested by local agencies. Teams four and five were called to training to rotate more members into other areas when needed.

Oregon Army National Guard aviation helicopters have been supporting firefighting efforts since Gov. Kate Brown's emergency declaration on Aug. 19, 2020. With a total of nine HH-60 Black Hawks and two UH-72A Lakota helicopters, the Oregon Guard has been directly assisting local counties, dropping more than 30,000 gallons of water with Bambi Buckets, and are also

working on fire mapping since being activated. The Oregon Guard is also supporting the Oregon State Police with fatality search and rescue operations while standing up recovery elements to further assist other first responders during recovery phases.

On Sept. 16, President Donald Trump issued an emergency declaration for Oregon that will allow a series of federal agencies to provide assistance to people and public establishments affected by the enormous size of burned areas across the state.

The declaration makes federal funding available to affected individuals in Clackamas, Douglas, Jackson, Klamath, Lane, Lincoln, Linn and Marion counties. Assistance can include grants for temporary housing and home repairs, low-cost loans to cover uninsured property losses, and other programs to help individuals and business owners recover from the effects of the disaster.

"Oregon is resilient, but to fight fires on this scale, we need all the help we can get," said Gov. Brown. "I am grateful for the White House's swift response in quickly granting a Presidential Disaster Declaration and the immediate implementation of FEMA's individual assistance program, which will help bring additional relief to Oregonians impacted by the devastation of these fires."



Wildfire response photo support by Major Leslie Reed, Sgt. 1st Class Zach Holden, Sgt. 1st Class Amy Elker, Tech. Sgt. Aaron Perkins, Army Staff Sgt. Anita Stratton, Sgt. Timothy Jackson and Paul Rushing



Training prepares Oregon National Guard members to battle wildland fires

Story and photos by
Sgt. 1st Class Amy Elker,
Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs

SALEM, Ore. - Even during a pandemic and protests, the potential for wildfires does not diminish. Always at the ready, approximately 400 Oregon National Guard (ORNG) Citizen-Soldiers and-Airmen completed "Red Card" training July 11-17 at the Department of Public Safety Standards and Training (DPSST) in Salem.

The training at DPSST certifies red card ORNG members for the upcoming wildfire period. Approximately 180 Guard members had already received the wildland firefighter training in the past and only needed the refresher course, held July 11-12, to maintain their certification. The remaining Guard members, who needed initial certification, arrived on July 13 and concluded their training on July 17. Both groups' training culminated in a live-fire field burn, where the groups put out different fires and scratching lines, replicating what they would do if they were activated in the state this summer for wildland fire support.

Erick Gabliks, DPSST director, said the partnership between the ORNG and DPSST is vital to assisting Oregon's citizens during the fire season.

"Having a ready, trained, well-equipped and physically fit workforce ready to respond to help neighbors is what the National Guard does," Gabliks said, "and from our end at DPSST, we're honored to train the men and women of the National Guard who may answer the call."

The partnership ORNG has with DPSST to train service members in firefighting, stemmed from the Guard's ongoing agreement with Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF), known as Operation Plan Smokey, which stipulates the specifics of how Oregon Citizen-Soldiers and -Airmen can assist in firefighting efforts.

This is the second year the training is being offered, allowing Guard members to respond if their assistance is needed this summer by the ODF quickly.

In the past, ODF would make a request, after all, their resources were depleted, to receive assistance from the ORNG; however, it would take up to 10 days to get the service members deployed, trained and ready to go.

"The nice thing about this proactive approach," Gabliks said, "is we've shaved that 10-day window down to two days. It's pretty exciting that we're able to do this with the fire forecast this summer being very dry, very hot and very dangerous."

The training provided to the members of the Oregon National Guard by DPSST is the same training required of all public and private wildland firefighters, which includes classroom, hands-on, and live-fire elements.

Oregon Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Tyler Meister, 115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, was a member of the recertification group who completed his initial training two years ago. Meister volunteered to become Red Card certified and said it had been a valuable experience.

"Every year, the National Guard is eager to do what we can to support the state and local communities during any natural disaster," Meister said. "Wildfire season is an annual issue Oregon and many other states battle, and the National Guard has become a trusted and reliable asset called upon to assist our Department of Forestry in that struggle."

Oregon Air National Guard Tech Sgt. Elijah Blackwell, 142nd Wing Communications Flight, also volunteered



A trainer from the Department of Public Safety Standards and Training ignites dry brush and grass during a live-burn exercise, part of the training for Oregon National Guardsmen to apply firefighting techniques.

to become certified. Blackwell participated in the five-day initial Red Card certification training at DPSST and said he greatly valued working with experienced instructors and having the opportunity to assist with firefighting efforts in the future.

"The main reason I do it is that it's one of those rare things we get to do where we can contribute to a relevant mission that affects all Oregonians," he said. "These fires impact people's livelihoods, as they can shut down work for many people. It's dangerous, hard work. We all have to take turns, so here I am."

Wildfire training is a hot, tiresome job. However, training during times of COVID-19, while maintaining social distancing practices, made this year's training even more challenging.

"COVID-19 is creating issues for all of us across the world," Gabliks said. "From the wildland firefighting perspective, we had to take a step back and evaluate how we could safely provide training and how we would safely respond to wildland firefighting."

Some of the precautions DPSST put into place were setting up classrooms and living spaces according to CDC guidelines for 6 ft. physical separation, daily medical screenings, including taking all service members' temperatures, maintaining social distancing while eating or receiving food, using face coverings when social distancing guidelines could not be maintained, having hand sanitizing stations readily available, as well as cleaning work surfaces and high-touch points regularly. DPSST also sanitized sleeping and work quarters between the 1st recertification group rotations and the 2nd initial certification group.

Meister said these precautions are necessary, as the role of the ORNG aiding the state is even more important than previous years due to the COVID crisis limiting resources and availability.

"Oregon will have to utilize all available state assets this year, including the National Guard, to ensure we can successfully fight the wildfires this season."

Since March, the ORNG has been busy assisting the Oregon Health Authority in delivering personal protective equipment

as part of the COVID-19 response and preparing for the upcoming fire season.

Oregon Army National Guard Aviation also completed Helicopter Bucket training in June to support potential firefighting incidents. Helicopter Buckets are specialized containers suspended on a cable and carried by helicopters to distribute water for airborne firefighting operations. The ORNG has HH-60M Black Hawk helicopters and the newer F-Model CH-47 Chinook helicopters to support the ODF.



Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen from the Oregon National Guard create a fire line during wildland firefighter training at the Department of Public Safety Standards and Training, Salem, Ore.

From 2015 to 2020, a total of 1,767 Oregon Guardsmen have been trained to assist the state with wildland firefighting. Many have been activated during this time following Governor Kate Brown's emergency declaration orders to include the Canyon Creek Complex in the Malheur National Forest in 2015, the Chetco Bar Fire in 2017 Kalmiopsis Wilderness, and the Garner Complex Fire near Grants Pass in 2018.

Though the citizens of Oregon may be faced with many uncertainties in the days and months ahead; when the call comes, the men and women serving in the Oregon National Guard will be ready to support and help in whatever capacity is needed.

"We have a great state mission here," said Maj. Wayne Pong, wildland fire team lead, Oregon Army National Guard. "Not only do we support our missions overseas, but we also support the state of Oregon's citizens based on what the Governor wants us to do. It allows our Soldiers to come out and show their worth, and when we get called up, we're ready to rock n' roll."



The Social Security Payroll Tax Deferral, set to go into effect for the September mid-month pay.

Unfortunately, neither military members nor civilian employees are eligible to opt-out of the deferral. If your monthly basic pay is less than \$8,666.66, Defense Finance and Accounting Service - DFAS will temporarily defer the 6.2% Social Security Tax withholding.

Leaders — make sure your Soldiers and Airmen along with their families are tracking to prevent financial strain in the future. For the families that need additional financial help, your Family Readiness Centers and Military OneSource are ready to help you with questions and concerns.

For more info on the Social Security Payroll Tax Deferral visit: <https://go.usa.gov/xGWrm>

Photos by Major Leslie Reed,
115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment



Col. Alan Gronewald, Commander, 41st IBCT congratulates Spc. Daniel Froylan, as the "Hero of the Battle" for his actions during the entire two-weeks of training.



Oregon Army National Guard Soldiers with 2nd Battalion, 162nd Infantry Regiment, 41st IBCT pull on straps attached to their inflatable boat during a broaching recovery drill on August 16, at Cullaby Lake, near Warrenton, Ore. Members of the unit completed tasks which included a swim test, paddling and maneuvering.



ORNG Soldiers with 2nd Battalion, 162nd Infantry Regiment, 41st IBCT paddle an inflatable boat during training on August 16, 2020 at Cullaby Lake, near Warrenton, Ore.



Oregon Army National Guard Soldiers with 2nd Battalion, 162nd Infantry Regiment paddle their inflatable boats to the shore of Slusher Lake maneuvering past artillery simulators thrown by oppositional forces on Aug. 26, at Camp Rilea, Ore.

OREGON NATIONAL GUARD COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND REGIONAL EVENTS

HOMEcoming JOY: Oregon Guardsmen return home from Deployments



Continued from Front Page

The arrival of these initial groups of Soldiers represents the first two groups who mobilized to Qatar in September 2019. Known as Task Force Arrow, these Oregon National Guard members acted as a quick reactionary force throughout the region, and were charged with securing critical infrastructure and personnel.

“This team of nearly 500 Oregonians supported overseas operations while being separated from their loved ones back home. Thank you and a big welcome home!” said

Stephen Bomar, Director of Public Affairs, Oregon Military Department.

When the Soldiers left last year, no outbreaks of the novel coronavirus had occurred and the U.S. economy was



U.S. Senator, Jeff Merkley, greets returning Soldiers as they return home on Aug. 19, 2020.

Center where their loved ones were waiting. Signs, banners and cheers greeting them as the busses pulled in. After one quick last ‘Official Formation,’ they darted to meet their families.

The same process happened the next day at the Kliever and Jackson National Guard Armory’s in Portland and other areas around the state over the last two weeks of August into early September.

Oregon Governor Kate Brown together with U.S. Senator Ron Wyden, and Maj. Gen. Michael E. Stencel, the Adjutant General, Oregon, greeted the initial returning Soldiers from Bravo Battery, 2nd Battalion, 218th Field Artillery and Alpha Company, 141st Brigade Support Battalion when they arrived at the Portland



International Airport on Aug. 13, 2020.

Sen. Merkley was also on hand again, along with Forest Grove Mayor Peter B. Truax and Army National Guard Brig. Gen. William Prendergast, Land Component Commander and other Oregon Military Department senior staff members as they greeted troops based out of

Forest Grove as they landed in Portland on Aug. 19, 2020.

“On behalf all Oregonians, I thank the members of the Oregon Army

emotional for siblings to reconnect and co-workers to welcome home their friends’ home too.

For the McGowan triplets, it meant that Rand McGowan could be reunited with his two other brothers, Ian and Aidan and their mother Stephanie Salas

would have all three of her sons home.

National Guard for their service, commitment and sacrifice,” said Merkley. “The support they provide allows the rest of us to live in a safer, more secure country. I know the loved ones of our brave service members will be overjoyed to have them home, and I look forward to joining them today to thank them for their commitment to serve and protect.”

In the midst of the homecoming celebrations, moms and dads, husbands and wives were reunited after months apart. It was also



Oregon National Guard Soldiers returned to Portland on Aug. 19, 2020 after being deployed in Qatar. The soldiers were greeted at the Kliever Memorial Armory in Portland by their friends and family members. They are part of the second largest mobilization of Oregon troops since World War II.

“We enlisted together and went to basic training together too -- so going on this deployment was just another part of our experience in the military,” said Aidan McGowan.

Rand said he was proud of his brothers, who have been part of the Oregon Army National Guard for the past six years. “I didn’t join with them but I am really supportive of everything they’ve done.

I am glad they made it home safe again too.”

Not everyone is home yet, of the 1,300 Oregon National Guard members mobilized for overseas missions, the final group of about 400 Soldiers assigned to the 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team are currently stationed in Kosovo. This last groups of Soldiers are schedule to return home to Oregon before Christmas.



The McGowan triplets (left to right) Sgt. Ian McGowan, Spc. Aidan McGowan, and Rand McGowan pause for a ‘selfie’ with their mother Stephanie Salas at the Jackson County Expo at Medford, Ore., after returning from their deployment in Africa, Aug. 18, 2020.



Oregon Governor Kate Brown along with U.S. Senator, Ron Wyden, greet returning Guard members. Aug. 13, 2020 at the Portland International Airport.

Oregon Military Department Public Affairs photos by John Hughel, Aaron Perkins, Paul Rushing and 142nd Wing Public Affairs, Senior Airman Valerie Seelye



OREGON AIR NATIONAL GUARD

125th STS dives into new underwater capability

Story and photo by
Senior Airman Valerie Seelye,
142nd Wing Public Affairs

PORTLAND, Ore. Note: Names have been left out of the following article due to mission requirements.

It would be pointless to swim subsurface into enemy territory in regular scuba gear, as the adversaries may notice bubbles coming out of the water. That's why members from the 125th Special Tactics Squadron recently adopted a different type of diving.

U.S. Air Force 125th STS Airmen from the Portland Air National Guard Base, along with members of joint forces, participated in closed-circuit dive training at Joint Base Lewis McChord, Wash., July 31, 2020, to train with new equipment and conduct recurrency dives for Special Tactics operators.

"What is unique about closed-circuit diving is it is an infiltration method that allows you to be subsurface and not have any bubbles showing, so as you are moving in to the beach, you are unobserved by the enemy," said one 125th STS operator.

The training was the first time the Air Force has been certified to conduct closed-circuit diving with the new equipment.

"We recently procured the equipment, attained the appropriate certifications, and this last week we culminated all of those things with new equipment training," said the 125th STS operations superintendent.

In the past, the U.S. Navy primarily conducted this type of diving.

"The Navy is the proponent for diving within the Department of Defense," the superintendent said. "They are required to come in and certify your program before you can begin diving with this very particular type of equipment."

Overcoming Adversity: How an Italian became a Special Tactics Operator

Story and photo by
Tech. Sgt. Emily Moon,
142nd Wing Public Affairs

PORTLAND, Ore. - Sometimes in order to achieve one's goal in life, one has to overcome a great deal of adversity and life lessons to do so. No one appreciates this more than Master Sgt. Stefano Guadagnuolo, a Special Tactics operator assigned to the 125th Special Tactics Squadron, Portland Air National Guard Base, Ore. His teammates prefer to call him G for short.

G grew up in the town of Piacenza, Italy in an 80 person condominium, where there was an 'army of kids' for playing and snowball fights. Italians are used to being very social, it's a cultural thing, said G. Every weekend is a celebration and you don't have to walk far to be with friends and family.

He attended college in Parma and at the age of 18 he was drafted into the Italian Army as a Mountain's Troop Officer, where he served for two and a half years. After going back to Parma for college, he decided it was time to venture out and try something new. He ended up in Costa Rica to be a diver, and from there travelled to Honduras for a year to become a Dive Master as an underwater tour guide. G met many American friends there vacationing who told him he should come to the states, so he sold all of his scuba gear and flew to Houstons.

After arriving in the U.S., he toured the country for a while eventually ending up in San Diego, again as a Dive Master on a boat. He remembered how he always wanted to join the Air Force's Combat Control career field because he learned about them during his time as an Italian officer, but he couldn't get a security clearance at the time. Air Force recruiters told him to join the Marines or the Army to get jump and dive certified and then try again. He then joined the U.S. Army

He said it took about three years of obtaining equipment, writing instructions, inspections, and other preparation to make the training happen. Now, the 125th Special Tactics Airmen don't have to rely on other branches for combat diving.

He said the unique gear, called Modular Oxygen Diving Equipment, can be donned in less than 15 seconds.

"It is literally a closed system that you wear on your chest in which you rebreathe your own air after it gets cleaned and goes through a chemical process," the superintendent said. "There are no bubbles, it is very small and very light, and as a military employment capability, it's very stealthy."

The operator reflected on his experience.

"I feel as though I am not swimming in a straight line," he said. "My compass is telling me I'm moving in the correct direction, and even though my brain is telling me that may not be the case, I have to have 100 percent confidence the equipment is working properly for me."

He said the Airmen conducted this training in their initial entry courses, but did not stay current. For many years, the Air Force was primarily focused in land-based theaters, such as Afghanistan and Iraq. Now the squadron is requalified in closed-circuit diving, which contributes to the operators' global-access capabilities.

"Diving as a method of getting stealthily into an environment is just one of the many ways within special tactics that we say we, 'get to work.' It's not the mission, it's how



U.S. Air Force 125th Special Tactics Airmen from the Portland Air National Guard Base, along with member of joint forces, participate in closed-circuit dive training at Joint Base Lewis McChord, Washington.

we get to the mission," the superintendent said. "We're buying ourselves options to 'get to work,' get to the target, and get to where we can execute our mission on behalf of U.S. Special Operations Command and the Air Force."

He said the closed-circuit certification and program at the 125th STS buys capability and capacity for USSOCOM.

"We trooped led this from beginning to end. Now, within Air Force Special Operations Command, the other units will be able to follow on in a much faster way," he said. "That gives a ground-force commander or a geographic-combatant commander operational agility and strategic flexibility. We've increased options and increased lethality within the force."

The operator said they will now dive every six months to remain current in their training.

"We may be called upon at any time to use any of those qualifications," he said. "If we lose those currencies for long durations of time, it is going to take a longer time frame to become requalified to execute that mission."

The superintendent said the Air National Guard here gets things done well.

"We're very agile and forward thinking, and it allows us to do things like this," he said. "The commander advises of his intent, places trust in individuals, and intent is executed at the lowest level. You're enabling people to get things done — that's what we did here."

Airborne Infantry, and ended up with an Army Ranger contract.

"I had only been in the states for less than a year when I joined the Army, so I had to pick up English very quickly," said G. "The American culture is very different from Italy, also. Everyone is so spread out and you have to make plans to see each other."



Members of the 125th Special Tactics Squadron conduct a Full Mission Profile (FMP) on Oct. 30, 2019 in Madras, Ore. STS Airmen train in various remote areas in the Pacific Northwest.

Once he had gotten used to the culture, the Army realized there was a mix up with his security clearance, and as a result the Army sent G back to Italy where he was assigned to an Infantry Airborne Brigade. He served as a gunner in Vicenza, Italy for four years, but still dreamed of joining the Air Force. He decided to give it another try and called up an Air Force recruiter to apply to become a Special Tactics Combat Controller, but found out he would have to be stateside to apply for Active Duty. Once again G had to veer away from his

well keep going."

The year he tried to get into the Combat Control pipeline, was also the year the Army sent G back to Italy where he was assigned to an Infantry Airborne Brigade. He served as a gunner in Vicenza, Italy for four years, but still dreamed of joining the Air Force. He decided to give it another try and called up an Air Force recruiter to apply to become a Special Tactics Combat Controller, but found out he would have to be stateside to apply for Active Duty. Once again G had to veer away from his

While his 20-year-old teammates were out on the town, he would be at home icing up and letting his body recover after long days of intense training.

OREGON AIR NATIONAL GUARD

142nd Wing conducts Change of Command Ceremony

Story by Tech. Sgt. Emily Moon,
142nd Wing Public Affairs

PORTLAND, Ore. - Col. David N. Unruh assumed command of the 142nd Wing during a change of command ceremony held at Portland Air National Guard Base, Jun. 6, 2020. The ceremony was small and attendance was limited due to COVID-19 social distancing regulations.

Unruh assumed command from Col. Adam R. Sitler, who will officially be retired in August, after 28 years of military service. Col. Sitler's retirement ceremony was held in a similar fashion, after relinquishing command of the 142nd Wing.

Major General Michael E. Stencel, The Adjutant General for the State of Oregon, gave his remarks via video recording for the ceremony. Stencel praised outgoing commander Col. Sitler's career and integrity throughout his service.

"He has been a moral compass at every level of service," said Stencel. "Kahn,



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Steph Sawyer, 142nd Wing Public Affairs Incoming 142nd Wing Commander Col. David N. Unruh addresses those attending and watching the units Change of Command ceremony, Portland ANG Base, June 6, 2020.

congratulations on a job well done."

As he relinquished command, Sitler took a moment to thank the airmen in the 142nd Wing and give his remarks.

"I can't thank the Wing enough for all that you've done," said Sitler. "The value of the National Guard has never been higher and our need has never been more urgent,"

He also took a moment to extend his

well wishes to the incoming commander.

"I wish you well, Down," said Sitler. "It'll be my pleasure to hear about the changes that you bring about and the vision, intellect, and character that you bring to this organization."

The incoming wing commander, Colonel Unruh, was commissioned in September 1997 after graduating from Baylor University, Waco, Texas in 1995. He spent 11 years in the United States Air Force, seven

years in the Oregon Air National Guard at the 173rd FW, in Klamath Falls, Ore., and five years in the Statutory Tour Program before joining the 142nd Wing as the 142nd Operations Group Commander in 2019.

Unruh has been deployed in support of contingency operations throughout the world including, most recently, Operation Enduring Freedom.

173rd FW Families members use online resources for homeschooling demands

Story and photo by
Master Sgt. Jefferson Thompson,
173rd Fighter Wing Public Affairs

KLAMATH FALLS, Ore. - Navigating the COVID-19 pandemic is different for every family and for certain military families the road has a few extra twists and turns.

Military families where both parents wear the uniform grow accustomed to overcoming challenges when it comes to maintaining work-life balance. They juggle their responsibilities at work such as alternating shifts to accommodate kids sporting events, after-school activities and even transportation to-and-from school.

Right now, all of the tools they use such as good communication and time management are facing a new twist as they cope with a remain-in-place order from the governor while still going to work because military service remains essential. They are also home-schooling their children.

"I already know I wasn't meant to be a school teacher," said Staff Sgt. Loretta Meserve, a command support staff for the maintenance group, on the biggest curve the pandemic has thrown her family. "We've resorted to a lot of P.E. time. It's been challenging to be creative with every subject."

Her husband Tech. Sgt. Kyle Meserve, a non-destructive inspection technician, agrees saying "it's difficult to get them to

concentrate," speaking of his 1st grade and preschool aged children. He also added that although his school sent home a packet of work for his 1st grade son, it's not always easy to decide how to explain the material.

"Honestly, I feel like I'm shooting from the hip," said Master Sgt. James Whaling, the interim AGE shop supervisor, who also has school-aged children. "When I do come up with a way to explain things I sometimes get 'well, that is not how our teacher showed us.'"

As this situation replays itself in households everywhere, the Airman & Family Readiness Center is working to provide resources to help parents in their new roles as educators.

One bright spot for the Meserve family is the online Khan Academy, which provided everything from an effective way to schedule time for home-schooled children to the curriculum itself.

"Getting online with the Khan Academy has helped a lot," said Brandon Meserve, adding that it helped add some direction when he and his wife felt like they were flying blind.

Finding that resource is as simple as going to the 173rd Fighter Wing website (<https://173fw.usaf.afpms.mil/COVID-19/>) under resources selecting the Family & Children tab and following the link to Khan Academy. It's free and signing up just requires establishing an account. There is



another tab for Helpteaching.com where a person can get a wide variety of teaching materials like tests, printable games and worksheets based on grade level and subject.

Another available tool is tutor.com/military, which is free for military personnel. The program provides on-demand academic support 24/7 online in more than 100 subjects for grades kindergarten through college students. These are only a few examples of the resources available to military families as they navigate the new

Farmers to Families program benefits 173rd FW Airmen

Story and photo by
Master Sgt. Jefferson Thompson,
173rd Fighter Wing Public Affairs

KLAMATH FALLS, Ore. - The 173rd Fighter Wing Health Education Awareness Team partnered with the local Gospel Mission to bring 390 boxes of fresh produce to the base to distribute to the Airmen. This was done through the U.S. Department of Agriculture Coronavirus Food Assistance Program, developed to offset the impacts of COVID-19 on local farmers who were left without means to ship their good to the market after the virus interrupted the food supply chain.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture purchased meat, produce and dairy products from local farmers in order to keep it from going to waste, to help farmers survive financially, and to help fight food insecurity in the local community.

"Through this program, USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) is partnering with national, regional and local suppliers, whose workforce has been significantly impacted by the closure of restaurants, hotels and other food service businesses, to purchase up to \$3 billion in fresh produce, dairy and meat products," said Jenn Green, a member of the 173rd Fighter Wing Resiliency Team and director of psychological health.

In turn, that food is finding its way to households around the country and here in the Klamath Basin. Wing Airmen stopped by the Resiliency Operations Center and picked up a box of locally grown produce, and many of them were able to get an additional box for a neighbor in need. "I was really impressed with the quality of the produce," said Staff Sgt. Penny Snoozy, a member of the command support staff team. "I was also able to take a box to

my babysitter's family and they were really grateful for the extra food."

In addition to helping people with food, the program has another aim--to help forestall the further collapse of the food supply chain. "With no

contracts farmers would be hard pressed to find good reason to continue the food production process," said Major Kraig Kroeker, the wing chaplain and member of the resiliency team. "This food was originally scheduled to go to restaurants and businesses who had to cut orders due



173rd Fighter Wing Resiliency Team worked with local distributors to provide over 200 boxes of fresh produce to Airmen chain workers who fell ill.

to COVID closures."

For many Airmen they say it was no trouble to lend a hand. "I was happy to do my part!," said Snoozy.

Currently, another distribution for base members is planned for the week of June 22-26, with more possible beyond that.

FEATURES

Sgt. Major Robert Foesch reflects on his Oregon National Guard career

Story by Staff Sgt. Tyler Meister,
115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

SALEM, Ore. - Another assignment is in the books for Sgt. Maj. Robert Foesch as he prepares to leave his dual role as the Land Component Command (LCC) Senior Enlisted Leader and the Command Senior Enlisted Leader (CSEL) for the Oregon National Guard (ORNG). In his next assignment, he will be one of the leaders at the United States Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) team in Florida. As he leaves Oregon, Foesch looks back on a history of facilitating changes to develop and train enlisted members during one of the largest deployment periods of Oregon Citizen-Soldiers and Citizen-Airmen.

He will take his vast experience and knowledge, that has been cultivated throughout his 36-years in the Army, and instill the National Guard perspective to the active duty components while supporting SOUTHCOM.

Foesch said that there are often missed opportunities between the National Guard and active duty components, and wants to expedite a better relationship and improve organizational relationships. From experience, he knows that there is more the National Guard can do to contribute to the total operational force, with the Active Army and U.S. Army Reserve.

"I want to be the best leader I can be and inspire and motivate other service members," he said.

Foesch said he aims to "lead by example," and see what he can do to help advance the careers of those members he is honored to serve beside while supporting the overall SOUTHCOM mission.

"Hopefully I will be able to learn Spanish and continue my own higher education goals," he exclaimed, describing some of his new personal aspirations for the job.

While close friends know him as Bob, he is more commonly referred to as that "loud, driven and outgoing leader," pushing the status quo and always putting his Soldiers first. To this day - he's not afraid to jump down on the front lines to understand and



Stock photo by Master Sgt. John Hughel, OMD Public Affairs
Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Foesch (left) congratulates Command Sgt. Maj. (ret.) Brunk Conely (right) during the Order of the Minuteman Ceremony, Eugene, Ore., Apr. 21, 2018.

experience what the junior enlisted Soldiers are going through so he can try to improve their time in the National Guard.

"Believe it or not - I wasn't always this outgoing," said Foesch describing his growth in the Army. "A sergeant by the name Mike Dempsey took me under his wing many years ago when I was a young and quiet private on active duty and he told me that being quiet and shy in the Army won't work."

From that point, Foesch lived his career with the mind-set of 'finding that line that shouldn't be crossed,' putting his toe right up to it, but never stepping over.

This demeanor would serve him well throughout his career as a Military Policeman. It all began at Fort McClellan, Alabama where he completed one-station unit training and left for his first duty assignment. Foesch said the Army has changed drastically since then, at the time his main concerns were keeping his uniform starched and boots spit-shined.

He was chosen to join a small group of MPs to venture up to Washington, D.C. for a short special assignment. While Foesch stated he enjoyed his time in D.C., the desire to remain on active duty was lost to him and he decided to leave active duty to join the Oregon Army National Guard.

Inspired by his father, a Portland Police Bureau detective, Foesch pursued a career in civil law-enforcement with the Eugene

Police Department, while he drilled with an Oregon National Guard MP unit out of Tigard.

As his military career took off, he made it through the ranks up to first sergeant as an MP, and later became the sergeant major for the Regional Training Institute in Oregon. With multiple deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq, he was selected as the command sergeant major for the 82nd Brigade Troop Command and a few years later was selected to fill his final role with the ORNG as the CSEL.

"I tried to do my best every day and made it a point to also lead by example," he stated. "I think that sometimes many senior leaders forget where they come from and think that they are royalty. But you're not, you're a Soldier and you need to act like it."

Looking back on his time in Oregon, Foesch is most proud of the success and progress he helped facilitate with Professional Military Education for Oregon's guardsmen. He feels that getting Soldiers to school and trained in order to then get promoted and stay in the guard is one of the most crucial aspects of retention.

He explained that one of the most important aspects a successful leader should have is the trust and respect of their peers, but more importantly of their Soldiers. "All leaders need to create an environment where Soldiers are comfortable to come up and talk to you about their issues so that you can fix it," Foesch continued. "If that means helping them with physical readiness so they can attend a school or get promoted then we as leaders should be doing it."

"We need to inspire and motivate people to stick with the Army and start commending them for doing a good job," he said. "We are a standards-based organization so do what you got to do to stay in and allow yourself to be successful but also take the time to reward Soldiers for just doing a good job."

Foesch feels that even though Soldiers in the National Guard do not have the same

amount of time to accomplish the mission as active duty personnel, "we step up to the plate every time we are asked and we perform very well."

It all boils down to taking care of our Soldiers Foesch explained. "It is not easy, it's hard but with some hard work and dedication to be there for your Soldiers they will be more prone to do good work and not want to let you down."

As Foesch looks to the south he is proud of the work he has done here and appreciates all of the relationships he has built in Oregon.

"Times are changing and I've been around a long time so my mind-set may be outdated at times but I am always impressed with how well our force is adapting to changes", he said. "Our young Soldiers have all kinds of great ideas and potential to improve our organization."

Foesch implores all Soldiers and Airmen to make the best of their military careers and if you're not happy with your current unit or job, then try to find a more fitting unit, he explained. "If you see something messed up in your unit, then ask yourself this; what are you doing to fix it? Put in the work and effort to improve the organization or make things better but always be tactful and professional."

"Every good leader should understand the role of a non-commissioned officer (NCO)," Foesch claimed. He continued to explain that regardless if you're enlisted or officer, as a leader it is crucial to understand the role NCOs play in taking care of Soldiers and getting the mission accomplished.

"If there's one bit of knowledge I could leave behind, as cliché as it may sound, the Army values: Just seven words on a piece of paper," he stated, adding "If you know the values, understand what they mean and live by them then you will be successful in the Army and in your own lives outside of the military."

As prepares to head out, he wanted to thank everyone who has helped him get to where he is now, but most importantly his family. He said it's a tough job being in the National Guard and he commends everyone's hard work and dedication to the service.

FEATURES

An Oregon Airman's journey leads to new role as Hawaii ANG Commander

Story by John Hughel,
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

SALEM, Ore. - Taking on unforeseen challenges can be both exhilarating and daunting. Second guessing, delaying a decision, or just not taking a chance during one's military career can lead to 'choosing not to choose' as described by the current Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Charles Q. Brown Jr., during his confirmation hearing in May.

"There's a risk in taking a decision, and there's a risk in not taking a decision," Brown expressed to the committee, prior to being confirmed as the 22nd Air Force Chief of Staff. "In choosing not to choose, it defers a chance to move forward."

In 2014, then Lt. Col. Joseph R. Harris II, was serving as the Oregon Air National Guard's 142nd Fighter Wing Deputy Maintenance Group commander. As an Active Guard Reservist (AGR), he had hit a barrier by accruing nearly his maximum years of service time. He faced retirement having served nearly 29 years with the Oregon Air National Guard.

Seeing an opportunity to continue to serve, Harris took a chance, foreshadowing Gen. Brown's assertion 'to choose,' when he and his family moved to Hawaii, as Harris joined the 154th Wing as the unit's Deputy Maintenance Group Commander. That decision would open up several consequential and unexpected new opportunities.

In less than six years, Harris was elevated to unit's Maintenance Group Commander position, then transitioning into the role as the Director of Plans and Programs A5/8, and then his remarkable promotion to Brigadier General in April, as he took command of the Hawaii Air National Guard.

"I wanted to continue to grow both as a leader and in my field," Harris said. "It was never in the picture that I would be in the position I am now - but I would have never had this opportunity if I had not taken the chance."

For Harris, this desire to push himself came from years of taking on new challenges. He enlisted in the Oregon Air National Guard in 1985 and was assigned to the 142nd Fighter Wing's base supply squadron.



"I was 19 years old and basically looking to make some extra money for school," he said, recalling his unlikely journey from Airman Basic to Brigadier General. "As things often go in the military, one thing led to another and then another..."

As Harris's military career took off, he transitioned to aircraft maintenance when he transferred to the 173rd Fighter Wing at Klamath Falls, Oregon, and developed rapidly as a noncommissioned officer. He graduated in February of 1994 from the U.S. Air Force NCO Academy, achieving an Academic Excellence Award. He enrolled in 1996 at Northwest Christian University and completed a Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration in 1998 with a distinguished achievement award for Academic excellence in his class.

When given the opportunity to become a commissioned officer in 1998, then Master Sgt. Harris applied his same level determination toward academic excellence at the Academy of Military Science. He graduating with the highest academic average and was selected for the Commander's Military Achievement Award.

"During my time in the Oregon Air Guard, I was fortunate enough to serve at two unique Wings, and really grow both as an enlisted member and commissioned

Officer," said Harris. "In total, I spent 13 years with at the 173rd, before coming back to the 142nd in 2004 during a really uncertain period after 9/11."

Soon after Harris returned to Portland, the 142nd Fighter Wing and the Portland Air National Guard Base (PANG) was selected by the 2005 BRAC (Base Realignment and Closure Commission) to close. In an assessment in the final hours leading up to the decision by the BRAC commission, the 142nd was taken off the list but the 939th Air Refueling Wing terminated operations at the PANG base.

After coming off BRAC, there was a renewed sense of purpose for the unit members as leadership took on the task of enhancing the base infrastructure while bolstering Airmen readiness.

"I had the distinct pleasure to work for General Harris when he served as our 142nd Maintenance Squadron (MXS) Commander and then soon after as our 142nd Maintenance Group Deputy Commander," said Chief Master Sgt. Daniel Conner, Command Senior Enlisted Leader for the Oregon National Guard.

Conner also emphasized that one of Harris's biggest concerns was to ensure members felt a sense of accomplishment in a job well done, and holding everyone accountable to the same standard.

"He (Harris) was very engaged in ensuring we as Senior NCO's were developing training that not only met standards but were challenging, engaging and valuable in a way that produced pride and job satisfaction," said Conner.

Leading by example, Harris was asked by former Oregon Air National Guard Commander Brig. Gen. Daniel O'Hollaren to investigate a new operating system to de-humidify aircraft and help preserve the ageing F-15 Eagles assigned to the 142nd Fighter Wing. The trip to Hickman Air Force in Hawaii, yet another prophetic marker for Harris, found "the test to be inconclusive, but the results were that the National Guard Bureau had approved shelters for the aircraft."

It took nearly four years to secure the

funding for the new shelters but Harris was able to work with the 142nd Comptroller Flight to get the capital to build nine new shelters. Completed in August of 2014, they were one of the first new projects constructed on the PANG base in several years, and help protect the aircraft against a variety of environmental stressors from rain, heat and occasional snow accumulation.

The project was a significant accomplishment prior to Harris departing Oregon and joining the Hawaii Air National Guard just a few months later.

"It was truly an honor to be part of the Oregon (Air National) Guard, to have mentors that helped me develop, trusted me as a Squadron Commander and in other leadership roles," said Harris, recalling his long tenure in Oregon.

As he assumed his current role as the Commander of the Hawaii Air National Guard, he was quick to point out how the timing was nearly perfect but far from certain.

As Harris was working as a full-time contractor for Lockheed Martin, all matters that might be flagged for conflict of interest had to be approved.

"General (Ryan) Okahara, was about to take a new position so the opportunity to lead the Hawaii Air National Guard came right as the final approval to hold this position -- was finally signed off at SAF/GC," said Harris.

With all the real-world challenges of the novel coronavirus, the development of the U.S. Space Force and changes at the top of the U.S. Air Force, Harris said that the Hawaii Air National Guard is poised to take on all these new challenges and excel.

"We currently have 162 Airmen supporting the state on COVID-19 response and our economy in the state is really constrained with the impact on tourism," he said, a point he emphasized during his first address to his Airmen during Hawaii's ANG August Super-Drill weekend. "These are unprecedented times, I just ask that everyone be good Wingmen -- look for ways to be there and watch out for each other."

Oregon Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition 2020

Story and photos by Spc. Dominic Trujillo,
115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

CLACKAMAS, Ore. - Nine Oregon Army National Guard Soldiers and noncommissioned officers (NCO) from across the state, competed in the 2020 Best Warrior Competition (BWC) to determine the top Soldier and NCO of the year here on June 27.

The annual Best Warrior Competition is designed to demonstrate Soldiers' technical and tactical proficiency in various tasks as well as general and historical military knowledge. In order to participate at the state-level competition, each Soldier first had to outperform their peers at the unit-level competition. This year's competition set precedent by introducing the Army Combat Fitness Test (ACFT) into the events as well as adhering to social distancing guidelines established due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Competitors from various units combined resources and skill sets in order to put on a series of events in order to test and determine the winners of the competition. Sgt. 1st Class Jedediah Powell, Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment (HHQ), 82nd Troop Command Brigade, was the noncommissioned officer in charge of this year's competition.

Powell said the competition was an opportunity for Soldiers to set themselves apart from their peers and competitors while staying motivated and showing a



Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Foesch (left) presents the winning trophy to Sgt. Christian Woodman (right), assigned to 162nd Infantry Regiment for the 2020 Best Warrior Competition NCO category.

commitment to the Army core values.

"These Soldiers were sought out by leadership and competed against their peers to earn the right to compete in today's competition," he said. "It has been great to see these Soldiers live the Army core values and to see the level of motivation they possess. It has been enjoyable to see their professionalism and camaraderie."

The event kicked off Saturday morning with the ACFT. Because this was the first time the ACFT was used in the BWC, it proved to be challenging for all of the competitors.

"The ACFT was surprisingly tough," said Staff Sgt. Kyle Pernula, Charlie Company, 141st Brigade Support Battalion. "BWC gave me an idea of what would be needed to pass the ACFT."

After being tested physically, the competitors changed into their Army dress

uniform and reported to a formal board of three sergeants major in order to test their general and historical military knowledge. .

"The boards were interesting and pretty tough," said Sgt. Christian Woodman, Charlie Company, 2-162 Infantry, who would eventually win the competition for the NCO portion. "I am excited to bring the knowledge of the experience back to the unit now that I know what is expected from the competitors."

Soldiers next competed in a mystery box challenge, where their familiarization of different types of weapons would be tested. Competitors were not given prior knowledge of what type of weapons were inside the box, and had to disassemble and reassemble the weapon while blindfolded and timed.

"The mystery box was a different kind of challenge for me," said Pfc. Connor Wells, Charlie Company, 1st Squadron, 82nd Cavalry Regiment, who won the junior enlisted portion of the competition. "That experience was very challenging and different from anything that I had experienced with weapons before."

Pfc. Wells and others competed in marksmanship skills next by using the Engagement Skills Trainer (EST). The EST simulates the weapons qualification range by using a modified M4 to simulate the trajectory of a round to intended targets on a screen.

"The weapons qualification for me was good," Connor said, "and I encountered no problems with the equipment. It was very

realistic, and I appreciated being able to get set up quickly."

Soldiers also competed in basic land navigation, nine-line medical evacuation and general communication procedures. Sgt. 1st Class Mark Kretschmer, Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 82nd Troop Command Brigade, who was in charge of this portion of the competition, said testing these skills is an important part of military readiness.



Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Foesch (left) presents the winning trophy to Pfc. Connor Wells for the 2020 Best Warrior Competition Enlisted category.

"In this lane Soldiers really get to demonstrate their proficiency and get back to the basics of soldiering," he said. "If a Soldier finds themselves rusty in any portion of this section of the competition, they will definitely know it. They can take that knowledge and understanding back to their unit and share the experience with their fellow Soldiers."

Upon completion of the event, the competitors Woodman and Wells will represent Oregon in the regional competition.

Tech. Sgt. Benjamin J. Schultz is ANG's Outstanding NCO of 2020

Story by Tech. Sgt. Morgan Lipinski,
Air National Guard Public Affairs

ARLINGTON, Va. - Technical Sgt. Benjamin J. Schultz, of the 142nd Fighter Wing, Oregon Air National Guard, was selected as the Air National Guard 2020 Outstanding Noncommissioned Officer of the Year.

The U.S. Air Force core value of "Excellence in All We Do" explains that Airmen must strive for continuous self-improvement and, in doing so, contribute toward propelling the entire force forward. For Schultz, he believes that making consistent, incremental steps toward accomplishing a task will lead to greater success.

"If I look back at my day and feel like I didn't move the needle toward completing something, then I don't feel good," said Schultz. "It doesn't have to be a lot. It's about taking things one day at a time and putting one foot in front of the other to make consistent progress every day."

Schultz is a part-time water and fuels systems maintenance craftsman who helps manage the plumbing, wastewater collection systems, liquid fuel storage, and natural gas distribution systems at the 142 WG. Motivated to learn more, Schultz pursued specialized training in fire suppression systems, a lifesaving skill that promotes the safety of building occupants and assets.



"Fire suppression systems are an aspect of plumbing that's slightly more technical," said Schultz. "I found that challenge interesting and ended up really liking it."

Schultz's experience with fire suppression systems proved to be instrumental during his 2019 deployment as a contracting officer representative with the 380th Air Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron at Al Dhafra Air Base, United Arab Emirates.

One of Schultz's objectives during his 180 days downrange was to spearhead a three-year review of previous base contracts.

"Because of my background in fire suppression systems and life safety systems, I was well-suited to do quality assurance and performance reviews," said Schultz. "I was

reviewing previous inspection reports when I found out that some contractors were submitting reports that claimed they tested devices, but they never did. I gathered the evidence needed and recommended an investigation into the matter."

The investigation findings exposed contractor deception that resulted in a \$102,000 recovery of U.S. Department of Defense funds.

Schultz's initiative during the deployment also led to a discovery that averted imminent disaster. While performing routine checks on the flight line, he noticed that one emergency system was malfunctioning. Upon further inspection, Schultz realized that the water reservoir was empty.

"That tank supplied all the fire hydrants on the ramp," said Schultz. "If there was a fire on an aircraft and you can't get water from that system then there's really nothing you could do."

Schultz expedited the restoration of this critical system in two days, fortifying the safety of seven airframes, 16 buildings and countless flight line personnel.

Over the course of the six-month tour, Schultz and his fellow 380th ECACES wingmen completed 1,500 work orders that serviced more than 780 base buildings and assets. In support of an ongoing base construction project, Schultz also helped transport over 45,000 gallons of wastewater. His contributions toward proper waste disposal neutralized a significant

bioenvironmental hazard that threatened installation facilities.

"I set deployment goals before I left for what I wanted to get done," said Schultz. "I stayed busy, stayed productive and made sure I left a positive impact."

In addition to career skill excellence, Schultz also prioritizes education. He completed 18 credits toward his bachelor's degree while deployed, earning a 3.6 grade point average along the way. In 2019, he also tackled 141 hours of enlisted professional military education, obtained a national-level fire inspection certificate and finished 30 hours of OSHA-certified safety training.

"He's always stepped up and done more than what's expected of him," said Master Sgt. Seth Clark, the 142nd WG water and fuels systems maintenance supervisor. "He goes above and beyond, on duty and off duty, to make the organization better. He has integrity, he's professional, and he's also a great wingman. We're lucky to have him as part of our team."

For his tenacity toward incrementally achieving excellence and bettering his team, Schultz earned his place as the ANG's 2020 Outstanding Noncommissioned Officer.

Schultz expressed that winning this award feels surreal, especially because many ceremonies and events have been postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, he is honored to be recognized as one of the Air Guard's top Airmen.

FEATURES

Oregon Guard completes improvements at Maupin track

Story and photos by Capt. Greg Walsh,
115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

MAUPIN, Ore. - Oregon engineers took on a special mission to help a small city develop future athletes. The Maupin Deschutes River Athletic Complex (DRAC) is being built with the help of the Oregon National Guard through an Innovative Readiness Training (IRT) event.

An IRT is a project where the National Guard has the opportunity to help communities within their state, while also providing unique training the military does not often conduct.

Through this particular project, the 224th Engineer Company, headquartered in Dallas, Ore. Had the opportunity to support the City of Maupin, Ore. The city has a population of 438 residents, and the regional high school serves on average 128 students from the 600,000-acre region making funding for improvement projects scarce.

While common for civilian construction companies, a project like building an embankment, is not common for military engineer units. Together with the support from their higher headquarters, these Soldiers were able to gain valuable real-world experience.

1st Lt. John May explained, “this is a test of our ability to work on civilian projects” explaining that while some of his Soldiers do similar work in their civilian careers, for most, this project is a unique opportunity.

The Maupin Deschutes River Athletic Complex started when Holly Miles, a student at the regional high school, asked her father “why don’t we just get a real track?” The existing high school track was not only an odd shape, but was also not a normal distance, with a surface consisting of loose cinder gravel that could wash away or created puddles and ruts.

Holly’s father, Rob Miles, a local business owner, president of the local Chamber of Commerce, and an active school board member was the right person to ask. It was with his help, community support for the project grew.

“This project didn’t have any momentum without [the 224th Engineers], when we heard the Guard was coming, we knew this was finally happening and really got in gear to get things moving. Miles went on to express his appreciation for the “amazing work the Oregon National Guard is providing the community.”

With substantial support from the community gathered, the Maupin City Chamber of Commerce also reached out to Michael Bergmann, a member of a the Tracklandia program to help them with the new facilities. Looking at the location, he noted, “there is so much potential for this facility.” Together with the city, the Maupin Deschutes River Complex became more than just a new track. “When I arrived and saw the view of the Deschutes, I was amazed,” said Bergmann.

Bergmann has past experience in other cities across Oregon, with track improvement projects. He had previously requested support of the National Guard for an earlier IRT track project in the St. John’s neighborhood of Portland but, the “timing and needs did not work out for available resources.” His previous experience developing sports complex projects lead him to put in a request to The Oregon Army National Guard to support what was now a much larger endeavor.



Oregon Army National Guard Spc. Benjamin Hale and Sgt. Matthew Cruz use survey equipment with CW3 Randy Killen to determine the amount of elevation fill completed to date in Maupin, Ore., Aug. 4, 2020.



Oregon Army National Guard Soldiers with the 224th Engineer Company, 1249th Engineer Battalion distribute fill with a dozer before using a modified compact roller to build up the ground for the regional high school track improvement project in Maupin, Ore., Aug. 3, 2020.

His previous projects include Central Catholic High School’s track and field improvement and the building of the St. John’s neighborhood Teddy Roosevelt Track Project to bring people together through sports.

And this time, when he and the city requested assistance from the National Guard, the 224th Engineer Company with support from the 1249th Engineer Battalion was ready to answer the call.



A 1249th Engineer Battalion dump truck loads at a quarry that donated 5,000 cubic yards of fill to build up the ground for the regional high school track project in Maupin, Ore., Aug. 3, 2020.

Ore., Armory, 150-miles away. The company got right to work establishing the safety boundaries, environmental controls, and moving gravel.

A donation from a local property owner’s quarry also lent to the project, providing the entire 5,000 cubic yards of gravel needed for the project.

Having a quarry to excavate and train on coupled with the unit’s heavy equipment created a different experience for Soldiers from other projects they have supported in the past.

“Our Soldiers are loving this change of pace, not only are we getting to train and get new Soldiers on equipment, we’re getting to help this community,” said Sgt. McKinley Keener.

With the unit on a strict training schedule and only in Maupin for 12 days, it took a few days to iron all the details out. Using eight dump trucks in the rotation on the first day, they were providing fill faster than the spreading team could complete their work.

Unit leadership quickly refined and adjusted the operation to be as efficient as possible. “The average round trip time for the dump truck teams is 24-minutes, using seven trucks (versus the initial eight) they are able to keep enough fill

The 224th’s part of this project is quite literally the foundational first step. Soldiers will build a 5,000 cubic yard sliver fill. Filling this large section of embankment and bringing it up 24- feet to match the current ground height will provide a stable foundation for a new track and future sports complex.

The 224th’s engineers arrived in force with 24 vehicles from locations across Oregon. Most of the needed equipment however came from the Dallas,

with a sheep’s foot attachment. The attachment, which has several inch sized protrusions breaks and compacts the gravel fill. The sheep’s foot was critical as a regular flat roller would not have allowed the fill to settle or compacted the rock as efficiently or nearly sturdy enough.

Another specialized piece of equipment used was a High Mobility Engineer Excavator (HMEE), a combination loader and backhoe. This excavator though it required a team to bring it to the work site, was able to move some larger obstacles that would have stalled the ongoing project.

To also keep on schedule, the company brought their own maintenance team with their trucks, tools and work tent to support all 24-pieces of equipment should something need to be fixed

The sliver fill also required some skill sets outside of what the company was capable of, fortunately, what the 224th did not have, they were able to get from their higher headquarters, the 1249th Engineer Battalion.

The 1249th survey team proved crucial for the project. The three-person team took regular readings using survey equipment to monitor the progress of the project. Although their tripod mounted scope and measuring equipment may be outdated compared to the civilian standard, with refresher training Soldiers were able to accurately determine the height and progress of the project.

“This is great training for us,” said Sgt. Matthew Cruz. His teammate, Spc. Benjamin Hale used some of the survey equipment for the first time in a few years. Because military vehicles are designed to work in difficult conditions most project surveys aren’t typically necessary. However, when a survey is needed, this small team gets called to action.

Working in close quarters and relying on the expertise of the operators, members of the 224th impressed project managers and community members in their efficiency and attention to detail.

The Geological Engineer for the project, Stan Kelsay, who also is a Maupin resident donated his skills and time to the project. Kelsay has more than 35-years working as a geological engineer for construction projects and was “incredibly satisfied” with the 224th’s operations.



Army National Guard Sgt. Tyson Bruer directs Sgt. Sory Diagouraga of the 224th Engineer Co. in the High Mobility Engineer Excavator excavate large rocks to build up the ground for the new high school track Aug. 5, 2020.

Kelsay commented that with what he had seen so far, he had “no concerns about the structural integrity of the project,” and noted that he’s especially critical, since his house is downhill from the project.

Several of the Soldiers expressed their interest in coming back in the future, when the project is complete, to experience the end result of their efforts.

Captain Paul Leifer, commander of the 224th Engineer Company, told community and project representatives, “Our Soldiers are proud to be supporting and improving this community as part of their service in the Oregon National Guard,” a sentiment echoed by every Soldier working on the project.

With the Guard’s improvement, other contractors will be able to build the track to regulation length, with a better surface. It will also allow for the regulation oval shape further providing space for a full-size football field in the center. Maupin will be able to host visiting high school teams, and other community events.

Additional projects to complete the MDRAC will be completed by civilian contractors, these projects include a performance venue, improved seating, and food truck hook ups to enhance concessions.

FEATURES

Camp Rosenbaum’s legacy endures through COVID-19 challenges

Story by John Hughel,
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

PORTLAND, Ore. - Dating back five full decades, “Camp Rosenbaum” has been held at the Camp Rilea Armed Forces Training Center outside of Warrenton, Oregon, alongside the Pacific coastline. The youth citizenship camp is a unique yearly midsummer rite of passage for low-income children from Oregon and Southwest Washington.

The camp is a stimulating weeklong experience for boys and girls’ ages 9-12 whose parents live in housing authority properties, or who participate in the Section 8 rent assistance program. Camp Rosenbaum 2020, originally scheduled from July 19 through July 24, was planning to celebrate a special 50th anniversary until the novel coronavirus forced the cancellation of this year’s occasion.

The decision was difficult but due to the state’s social distancing guidelines, it allowed the Camp’s leadership team to generate an alternative to having nearly 180 children attending in person. With the desire to still reach out to kids in the community, OPERATION LEMONADE was launched to extend to a wider spectrum of children.

Crystal Kroeller, who has been a Camp Rosenbaum counselor and now serves as the Project Manager for the organization, sparked the idea of creating “Camp Rosenbaum-in-a-Bag.” She presented the concept to Brig. Gen. (ret.) Bruce Prunk, who helped bring the idea to the Camp Rosenbaum board of directors and other leaders within the organization.



Photo courtesy of Crystal Krollier, Camp Rosenbaum
Camp Rosenbaum staff members work together to fill backpacks for Operation Lemonade, in Portland, Ore., June 27, 2020.

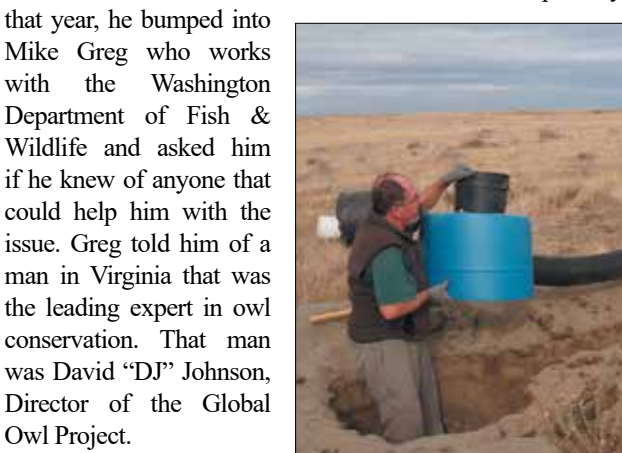
“It’s like the slogan of ‘When life gives you lemons, you make lemonade.’ we really wanted to still find a way to deliver a form of the camp experience,” she said.

With a goal to produce 1,000 Camp Rosenbaum backpacks, Operation Lemonade was generated to give each camper ‘a taste of the camp experience.’ The backpack includes an activity schedule and fun activity guide, with interesting items like foam footballs, books, journals, science experiments, arts & crafts, a personal care kit and other memorabilia.

Camp Umatilla provides a unique environment for Burrowing Owls

Story Paul Rushing,
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs
Photos provided by David ‘DJ’ Johnson

CAMP UMATILLA, Ore. - In 2008 Don Gillis, the Natural Resource Manager at the Umatilla Chemical Depot noticed a decline in the nesting areas for the Burrowing Owls on Camp Umatilla. The decline was a result of a lack of badgers making tunnels in the ground that the owls depended on for their spring nesting areas. Gillis knew that there could be a backlash if the owls continued to decline. Serendipitously that year, he bumped into Mike Greg who works with the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife and asked him if he knew of anyone that could help him with the issue. Greg told him of a man in Virginia that was the leading expert in owl conservation. That man was David “DJ” Johnson, Director of the Global Owl Project.



Construction of an artificial nesting tunnel helps create a passage way that badgers once created for the Burrowing Owls at Camp Umatilla in Eastern Oregon.



Photo courtesy of Crystal Krollier, Camp Rosenbaum
Camp Rosenbaum members Senior Master Sgt. Shelly Davison (left) helps Lt. Col. Connie Opsal, Camp Rosenbaum Camp Director (right) fill backpacks for Operation Lemonade, June 27, 2020.

“We were able to reach 1,000 kids instead of just the annual amount of 170 or so that come to camp each summer in person,” said Kroeller. “We wanted to find a creative way to keep the spirit of camp going through the strains of the pandemic.”

To help distribute backpacks for the families receiving assistance from Home Forward, four sites were set up around the Portland Area to connect with the kids, in a small way, which could not take part in horseback riding or building sandcastles on the beach when attending camp in person.

At one of those locations, Tamarack Apartments in North Portland is home to many of the children who attend camp each year. The 120-unit complex is one of many Home Forward rental assistance properties that Camp Rosenbaum serves.

“Home Forward, who serves Multnomah County, got 427 of the backpacks to kids the that registered for them,” said Leslie Crehan, Senior Project Manager for Home Forward. “This is the second weekend to hand these out and it’s the ‘bookends’ of when the camp was going to be held this year.”

The partnership between Home Forward, the Oregon National Guard, and the Portland Police Bureau and fire agencies shape Camp Rosenbaum into a distinct experience, built on fostering good citizenship traits and providing these kids with role models and healthy relationships with public safety figures.

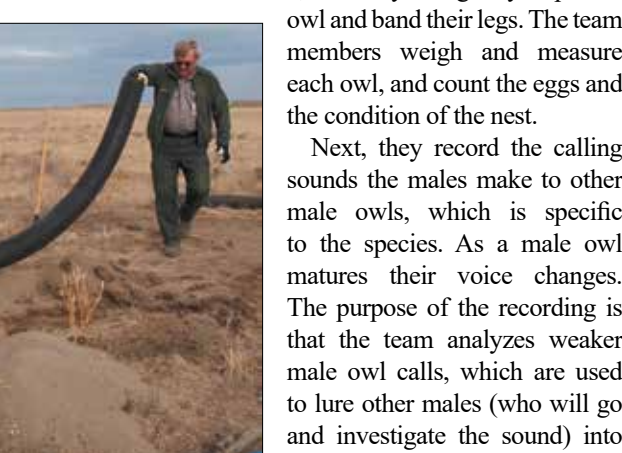
“There also have been video’s online so that the kids’ can check-in on daily activities created by our staff and volunteers that attend Camp every year,” she said.

The activities and daily planned out events allows kids to have fun at their own pace or even with another family member sharing into the activity. Crehan noted that if backpacks can’t be picked up in person, they would be delivered during the last week of July.

“The coronavirus has made everything difficult in our daily lives, to include having our annual summer camp,” said Oregon Air National Guard Lt. Col. Connie Opsal, serving in her second year as Camp Rosenbaum Director.

Together Johnson and Gillis devised a plan to install artificial nesting tunnels to replace the ones made by the badgers. “One male owl waited on a perch watching them install one of the nesting tunnels, Gillis explained, recalling the early work on the tunnels. “As soon as they finished and were walking away the owl flew down and took ownership of the nest.”

In total, they have installed 96 nesting tunnels, and all but one has been occupied over the 12 years they have been tracking the owls. Every spring since 2008, Johnson and a team of faithful volunteers have made Camp Umatilla their home. Johnson and his team, skillfully and gently trap each owl and band their legs. The team members weigh and measure each owl, and count the eggs and the condition of the nest.



Construction of an artificial nesting tunnel helps create a passage way that badgers once created for the Burrowing Owls at Camp Umatilla in Eastern Oregon.

“This pause gives us an opportunity to look at many aspects of our lives and insure that our campers can feel included even if we cannot be all together.”

Opsal said that the backpack program would allow Camp Rosenbaum to serve more than double the amount of kids that attend the traditional overnight camp.

“These kids come from different places, but we look at this ‘Camp in a Bag’ program as a way to reach more kids,” she explained, noting that they can still attend camp in person after the pandemic.

For the staff, the use of social media to connect to each other and the kids have been important to Operation Lemonade. The YouTube channel is another way to connect to the kids and can be re-visited and updated even after the “week of camp” is completed.

“It’s good for the campers and there is a lot of great stuff that people have created for kids being at home for the summer,” said Senior Master Sgt. (ret.) Misty Gremaud, a Camp Rosenbaum group leader, as she and other staff gathered at the Tamarack Apartments for kids to arrive.



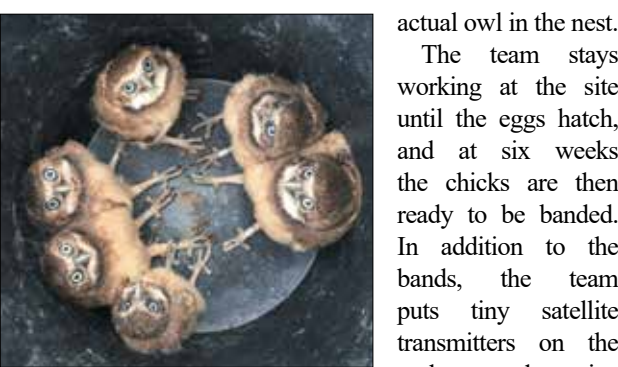
Photo by John Hughel, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs
Staff members of Camp Rosenbaum gather for a group photo at the Tamarack Apartments in N. Portland, Ore., July 25, 2020, as part of Operation Lemonade. Camp staff members wanted to find a way to still serve low-income children in the community during the COVID-19 pandemic and created 1,000 Backpacks.

“It’s amazing that Operation Lemonade was conceived and brought to fruition, that we’re doing the best we can with the constraints we have going on globally right now,” said Gremaud.

In many ways, this goes to the roots of the Camp’s foundation, which began in 1970 when Oregon Air National Guard Brig. Gen. Fred Rosenbaum, a holocaust survivor himself, helped initiate the first youth camp for disadvantaged kids.

“In essence, Fred planted this tree in spirit over 50 years ago. The camp is not so much a thing or a place but an idea,” said Master Sgt. (ret.) Jon Dyer, who leads Camp Rosenbaum’s science program and an active volunteer for over 20 years.

These ‘Good Citizenship’ concepts are still relevant today, said Dyer. “We will be here for the kids when they need us; it’s an unbroken chain of adults looking out for kids in our community.”



Burrowing Owls at Camp Umatilla have increased in population with the help of artificial tunnels.

State in the fall, while the females usually vacation in the south, some as far as Mexico. As of June 2020, there are now 36 pairs of Burrowing Owls using Camp Umatilla as their nesting location.

“Training on the camp will in no way harm the owls and their nesting, and the owls will in no way affect the training,” said Johnson.

In the 12 years of conservation efforts, this has become a victory for the owls and the military mission on Camp Umatilla, Oregon. The unique partnership has brought about a new understanding of how military training sites can balance the needs of the natural environment while still conducting operational training and missions.

AZUWUR

15 Years Later: The Oregon National Guard Remembers Hurricanes Katrina and Rita

AZUWUR
OREGON NATIONAL GUARD

Story by John Hughel,
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

SALEM, Ore. - Hurricane Katrina first began to form into a major storm over the Bahamas on August 23, 2005, and made landfall two days later, cutting across southern Florida as a Category 1 storm. Gaining strength in the Gulf of Mexico, it moved in a northwest direction, building as a massive Category 4 storm -- then slammed ashore near Buras, Louisiana on the morning of August 29; creating a trail of destruction that affected six other states. Katrina became the costliest natural disaster in U.S. history, causing widespread flooding and wind damage while claiming over 1,800 lives.

The response by the National Guard became the largest domestic mobilization since WWII with over 51,000 service members assisting from every single state, territory and the District of Columbia. The Oregon Army and Air National Guard played an integral role; deploying nearly 1,900 members that provided search and recover, medical, communications, security and other vital tasks to aid in the recovery operation.



Military Police assigned to the 1186th Military Police Company and Security Forces assigned to the 142nd and 173rd Fighter Wings were among the first to deploy to the shattered district. A larger response of service members and equipment left the Portland Air National Guard Base on Sept. 2, as Oregon Soldiers and Airmen brought along ambulances, HMMWV's, Five-ton trucks, generators with fuel and communication equipment.



The problems early on revolved around flooded roads downed power lines and trees with only a limited supply of specialized high water vehicles. The Lower 9th Ward had been breached with 6-8 feet of floodwater within hours of Katrina making landfall. When the water began to recede after nearly a week, foot patrols could be expanded and survivors could be accounted for and evacuated out of the more devastated areas.

As additional troops were needed the 41st Brigade Combat Team established a Brigade Headquarters as Soldiers from the 1-162 and 2-162 Infantry Battalion, along with the 1-186th Infantry Battalion, the 141st Support Battalion, 2-218th Field Artillery, 741st Core Support Battalion and Airmen with the 272nd Combat Communication Squadron were mobilized into the region. Members of the 115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment were also deployed to report and document the various units at work.

"We are the front line of the response," said Brig. Gen. Doug Pritt, commander of Oregon's 41st Brigade Combat Team during Katrina and with JTF Rita, when he talked to reporters during the September 2005 deployment in the area of responsibility.

"We are the first responders for Task Force Rita," he said, "Oregon went from covering 75 percent of New Orleans to covering 40 percent of Louisiana."

With recovery operations being pushed to the limits, New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin issued an

emergency declaration authorizing police and military to remove anyone who refused to leave their homes on Sept. 6. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers began pumping water out of New Orleans with an estimated 60% of the city still underwater.

The numbers told part of the picture as 25,000 people who have been sheltering in the Superdome were evacuated and the Red Cross reported 52,000 people in their shelters.

In the final assessment, Oregon Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen rescued over 2,300 people in New Orleans before being assigned to Joint Task Force Rita on Sept. 23 as this second Hurricane struck the region. Another 200 survivors would later be rescued and accounted for during Hurricane Rita recovery operations as military transport planes were taking survivors to Houston, Texas.

"We have the ability to come down here and help and by God, we're going to help -- and we're going to help until they tell us they don't need our help anymore," said 41st Brig. Combat Team Command Sgt. Maj. Brunk Conley, during the unit's deployment to Task Force Katrina.

"No only are we Soldiers but were citizen with families, jobs and careers -- but we put that on hold to come to our country or states needs when called on to do that," said Conley, who would later advance through the ranks just seven-year later, becoming the 10th command sergeant major of the Army National Guard.

In total, the recover effort by the National Guard, accounted for more than 17,000 people being saved from flooding or other hazards triggered by the storms, as more than 51,000 people were airlifted out of the affected areas by the Army and Air National Guard. The combined efforts of National Guard aviation crews accounted for nearly 11,000 tons of cargo airlifted to the affected



areas with approximately 7,000 sorties flown.

"By and large, they (Soldiers and Airmen) said that they've never been under such terrible conditions, including those soldiers who have been to Iraq," said [then] Capt. Michael Braibish, Public Affairs Officer for the Oregon National Guard, "and that speaks to the magnitude of the devastation."



It was a difficult assignment for Guard members whose tasks included rescuing survivors, providing medical assistance, and recovering bodies.



"Katrina tested the mettle of Citizen-Soldiers in a way no deployment overseas ever could," said [then] Sgt. Kevin Hartman, a public affairs specialist assigned to the 115th MPAD during the Katrina response. Years later, Hartman, now a retired Master Sgt. summarized that "There was the threat of violence in our own nation by our own fellow-citizens and seeing one of our own 1st world cities look like a war-torn post-apocalyptic ruin was shocking."

When asked by reporters about the mission that Oregon Soldiers and Airmen were conducting in the aftermath of two horrific storms, Governor Ted Kulongoski said that he was proud of the Guard's performance, first in response to Hurricane Katrina and now Hurricane Rita.

"They represent us in an exemplary manner," he said. "When I sent them to the Gulf States, I reminded them that they are representing Oregon to this nation and that I am proud of the job they are doing."

One year after Katrina pounded the Gulf Coast, Lt. Gen.

Steven Blum, chief of the National Guard Bureau called the rescue effort by the National Guard, "our finest hour."

"There is not a single National Guard entity that did not make a contribution," Blum would later express to a group of congressional committee inspectors. "When you called out the Guard for Katrina, you called out all of America."

