



OREGON SENTINEL

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE OREGON NATIONAL GUARD

Oregon National Guard Soldiers support NATO deterrence task in Poland



Oregon Army National Guard members assigned to 1st Squadron, 82nd Cavalry Regiment, take part in their mobilization ceremony, Jan. 2, 2022 at Camp Withycombe, Oregon. More than a hundred Oregon National Guard members were deployed to Poland to support NATO partners against Russian aggression.

Photo by John Hughe, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

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OFFICIAL BUSINESS

Oregon Guard winds down hospital support mission

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

SALEM, Oregon - With declining rates of infection from the Covid-19 Omicron variant and the indoor mask mandate being lifted, Soldiers and Airmen from the Oregon National Guard (ORNG) who were deployed to assist hospitals throughout the state, wrapped up their mobilization during the month of March, with a few remaining on orders until April.

Approximately 1200 Guard members deployed in January to aid understaffed and overworked hospital employees during the Omicron surge. They served in over 41 hospitals throughout the state performing critical non-clinical support roles such as administrative and phone duties, janitorial and food services, logistics and supply, transportation, Covid-19

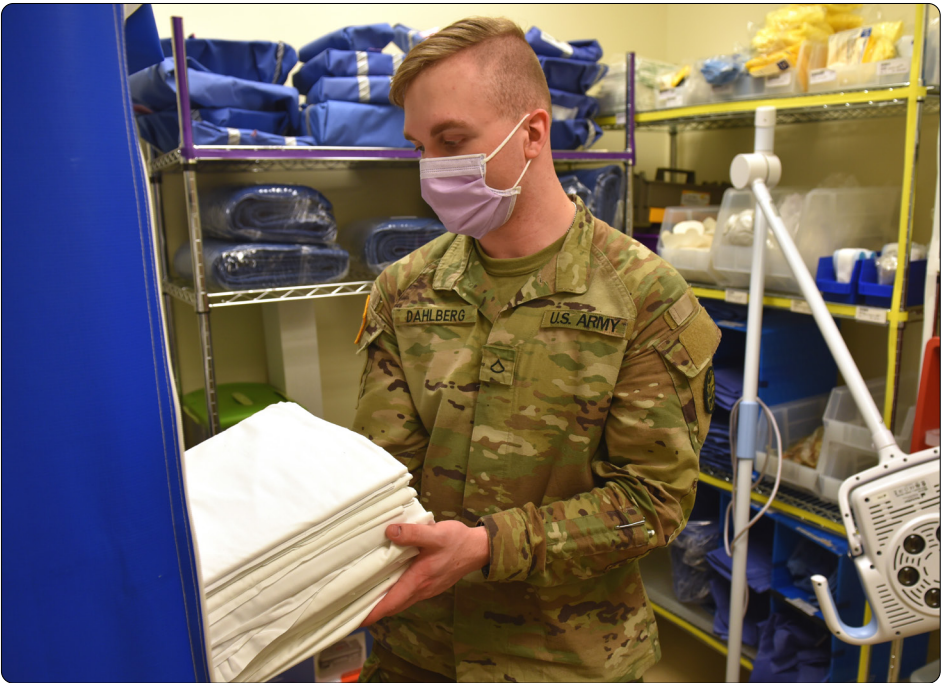


Photo by Air National Guard 1st Lt. Morgan Lindsay, 173rd Fighter Wing Public Affairs
U.S. Army Pfc. Ethan Dahlberg, Oregon Army National Guard, takes stock of medical supplies at Good Shepherd Medical Center in Hermiston, Ore., on Feb. 10, 2022.

screening and testing, Information Technology (IT) and lab support, and even sitting with patients.

Anna Hayter, human resources director, Wallowa Memorial Hospital, Enterprise, Oregon, said she was very impressed by the members of the ORNG who worked at Wallowa, and their readiness to jump in and assist.

Story continued on Pages 8-9

NEWS

Oregon National Guard participates in SPP Tiger Lightning 2022 Exercise

Story and photos by Master Sgt. Aaron Perkins,
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

GAZIPUR, Bangladesh - In the hot March sun at the Bangladesh Institute of Peace Support Operations Training, U.S. military service members partnered with their Bangladeshi counterparts to participate in the Tiger Lightning 2022 training exercise March 19-31.



Maj. Gen. Michael Stencel, Adjutant General, Oregon, gives his remarks as the special guest speaker at the opening ceremony of Exercise Tiger Lightning 2022, on March 20, at the Bangladesh Institute of Peace Support Operation Training center in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Members of the 5th Security Force Assistance Brigade (5th SFAB) out of Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington, the Oregon Army National Guard, and two members from the 303rd Ordnance Battalion, based at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, took part in the two-week exercise.

TL22 is a bilateral exercise sponsored by U.S. Indo-Pacific Command and hosted by the Bangladesh Armed Forces to strengthen Bangladesh defense readiness and interoperability and reinforce the partnership between the Bangladesh Armed Forces and Oregon State National Guard. The two have been partners under the National Guard Bureau State Partnership Program since 2008.



Bangladeshi soldiers construct scenario models in the cordoned-off areas for their counter improvised explosive device (C IED) training at the Bangladesh Institute of Peace Support Operation Training (BIPSOT) center during the Exercise Tiger Lightning 22 in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on March 24, 2022.

Approximately 36 U.S. personnel participated in this field training exercise, focusing on combined operations training and regional crisis response capabilities. The Oregon National Guard assisted with key subject matter experts, focusing on the "E" in explosive ordnance disposal and counter-improvised explosive device training (C-IED).

"What I am seeing from this is that people are exchanging experiences," said Oregon Army National Guard Lt. Col. Demain San Miguel, lead planner for the exercise. "The people know their equipment, they know the capabilities, but they're sharing their experiences from Mali, Iraq, and Afghanistan, on how the equipment worked and didn't work, as well as how you can use the equipment together."

One such piece of equipment the Bangladeshis use is a small, remote-controlled drone in the traditional forces. This commercially produced equipment can give the user all the data they need in a situation while mitigating huge risks for an individual. The Bangladeshi bomb technicians demonstrated by investigating a parked vehicle with an IED inside. The bomb tech used the little drone to inspect the vehicle from a safe distance, then used a remote-controlled wheeled robot with a mechanical claw to remove the IED for detonation.

"I have been impressed by the proficiency of the Bangladesh armed forces in the C-IED field," said U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Patrick Dean, a C-IED subject matter expert assigned to the Oregon National Guard.

The Oregon delegates noted that the Bangladesh military has experience with U.N. peacekeeping operations. "They are much further along in their EOD program than one would think," said U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Grant Holman, a bomb technician assigned to the 303rd Ordnance Battalion. "They have enough working knowledge that their EOD techs would probably pass our EOD training school. They are very capable and understand the actual threats, which makes sense because of their real-world U.N. deployments."



Bangladeshi Army soldiers observe their instructor during an improvised explosive device (IED) class during the Exercise Tiger Lightning 2022, March 19, 2022, held at the Bangladesh Institute of Peace Support Operation Training center in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

"Absolutely, 100 percent. It's very clear that these officers who have deployed to Mali and the Congo know their C-IED procedures. They have different equipment than what we normally use, but they have good procedures built in that helps them unitize all



U.S. Army Lt. Col. Demain San Miguel, Oregon National Guard delegate and lead planner for the Tiger Lightning 2022 Exercise, talks with Bangladeshi service members about the explosive ordnance disposal equipment (EOD) at the Bangladesh Institute of Peace Support Operation Training (BIPSOT) center in Dhaka, Bangladesh March 20, 2022.

the equipment that they do have very effectively," said Lt. Col. San Miguel. San Miguel hopes to have the Bangladeshi C-IED crew visit Oregon in the near future so that they can continue their training on what has been a successful State Partnership Program exercise in the realm of C-IED and EOD training.



U.S. Army Staff Sgt's (from left to right) Abriel Magat, Neemia Tiapula and Ivan Kosolapov from the 5th Security Force Assistance Brigade (5th SFAB) assigned to Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., pause for a photo while awaiting the start of the opening ceremony of Exercise Tiger Lightning 2022, on March 20, 2022 in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

NEWS

Oregon National Guard Soldiers continue to support NATO mission in Poland

Continued from Front Page

Story by Mia Villanueva,
Courtesy of KPTV-12 / Portland

Photos by John Hughel,
Oregon Military Department
Public Affairs Office

PORTLAND, Ore. - More than a hundred Oregon National Guard members were deployed to Poland to support the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, or NATO. The organization includes the United States, Canada, and several western European nations, all working together to provide collective security against potential Russian aggression.

On Jan. 2, about 120 Oregon Army National Guard Soldiers were sent to Poland as part of the Operation



Oregon National Guard Soldiers assigned to 1st Squadron, 82nd Cavalry Regiment spend time with their families following their mobilization ceremony, Jan. 2, 2022 at Camp Withycombe, Oregon.

Atlantic Resolve, the same mission as guard members who returned at the end of last month.

FOX 12 spoke with Cody Comerford on what the mission entails. He is back home after nearly nine months in Bemowo Piskie, Poland. Comerford is a troop commander for the Oregon National Guard and a part of the 130 soldiers formally mobilized in April 2021 in Albany, Oregon.



Oregon Army National Guard Lt. Col. Brian Dukes, 1-82 Cavalry Regiment Squadron Commander (left) and Col. Geoffrey Vallee, 82nd Brigade Troop Commander (right) render a hand salute during the playing of the National Anthem for the Mobilization ceremony for the 1st Squadron, 82nd Cavalry Regiment, Jan. 2, 2022.

"Over there we conducted many field exercises, many NATO live fire shoots with our allies, not just the Polish, but with Croatia, Romania," Comerford said. "That's how we supported each other."

Comerford said he is happy to be home, and has confidence in the 120 guard members deployed to Poland on Jan. 2 to support the same Atlantic Resolve Mission.

"The opportunity to do these types of missions is once in a lifetime out there, so the fact that we got to do it twice, and more soldiers from Oregon get to go do that, is pretty cool and pretty rewarding



Oregon Army National Guard Capt. Cody Comerford (left) Troop Commander for Alpha Troop, 1st Squadron, 82nd Cavalry Regiment and other Soldiers listen to remarks while assembled during their formal mobilization ceremony held at West Albany High School football stadium, Albany, Ore., on April 25, 2021.

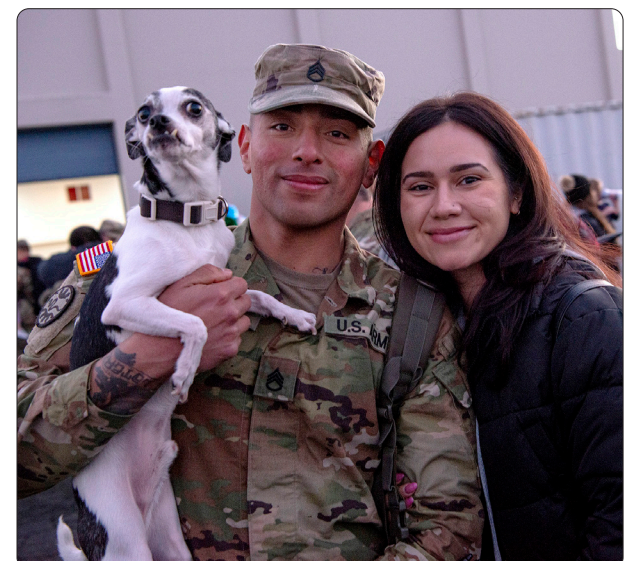
John Hughel, a public affairs specialist for the Oregon Military Department, said the deployment of guard members is not a part of the president's mobilization, but rather was a scheduled rotation. However, he said guard members will play an active role with NATO partners in Poland.

"It's feeding into some of the deterrence missions we have going on, especially now with the Russian troop buildups along the Ukrainian border. Tensions in NATO are picking back up," Hughel said.

The Guard members mobilized on Jan. 2 are assigned to Charlie Troop, 1st Squadron, 82nd Cavalry Regiment.



Patriot Guard Riders create a welcome home procession for Soldiers assigned to Alpha Troop, 1st Squadron, 82nd Cavalry Regiment as they returned from deployment in Poland, at the Jackson Armory, Portland, Ore., on Jan. 25, 2022.



Family members, friends and co-workers greet and welcome home Oregon Army National Guard Soldiers returning from deployment in Poland at the Jackson Armory, Portland, Oregon, when they returned late in the day on January 25, 2022. Soldiers assigned to Alpha Troop, 1st Squadron, 82nd Cavalry Regiment deployed to Poland in support of the European Deterrence Initiative as part of Operation Atlantic Resolve in April of 2021.

NEWS

National Guard Bureau Chief visits Portland Air National Guard Base

Story and photo by
Steven Conklin,
142nd Wing Public Affairs

PORTLAND, Ore. - The Chief of the National Guard Bureau, Gen. Daniel Hokanson, visited the 142nd Wing at the Portland Air National Guard Base on March 19, 2022. During his visit, Gen. Hokanson took time to speak with and recognize members of the wing. Later, he received a familiarization flight in the backseat of an F-15D Eagle, flown by his prior executive, Col. Michael Kosderka.

From August 2013 to July 2015, Hokanson served as Adjutant General for the Oregon Military Department.

This flight gave Hokanson the chance to see firsthand how the Oregon Air National Guard pilots accomplish their mission of guarding and defending the Pacific Northwest, and the importance of future airframes.

“Gen. Hokanson doesn’t get to see and touch what the actual war fighter is dealing with on a daily basis,” said Kosderka. “It was nice for [us] to be able to talk about what we’re doing and the things that are hard for us--and how important it is for us to transition to the new F-15 EX, and keep our readiness availability high so we can ultimately serve at a moment’s notice.”



The Chief of the National Guard Bureau, Gen. Daniel R. Hokanson, pauses with 142nd Wing pilot Col. Michael Kosderka in front of an F-15D Eagle, following a familiarization flight on March 19, 2022, at the Portland Air National Guard Base, Oregon.

Hokanson’s visit to Oregon is part of a larger trip to see several National Guard locations across the western and north central United States.

173rd Force Support Flight provides new IDRenew appointment kiosk

Story and photo by
Senior Airman Adam Smith,
173rd Fighter Wing Public Affairs

KLAMATH FALLS, Ore. - Starting Feb. 15, the Force Support Flight will provide a new option for retirees and dependents want to renew their ID cards without waiting for an available appointment. A brand new IDRenew kiosk sits in the west vestibule of building 211 and will be available whenever the building doors are open.

The IDRenew machine is a new self-service option already available on some active duty bases.

Historically, if a dependent or retiree wanted a new ID card, they would have needed to make an appointment with the FSF and accomplish the process in-person with one of the four qualified Airmen who work full-time in the office.

According to Master Sgt. Melissa Wohlers, the 173rd Fighter Wing Force Support Flight superintendent, the high demand for these procedures and the amount of time it took to work through each application left little time for other, vital duties.

“When we are on the I.D. Card machine, we don’t get anything done,” she said. “By the time we’re done with a customer, we have ten, fifteen minutes until the next customer.” Wohlers added that with the additional burden of last-minute requests from deploying members or Airmen with expired cards, even those spare moments often disappear.

The new machine benefits both customers and the Airmen in the FSF, according to Wohler.

“Retirees and dependents can come to this kiosk and apply for their ID cards in very simple steps,” she said. “We can process the application at the end of the day and focus more on programs during the work day.”



Air Force Master Sgt. Melissa Wohlers, 173rd Fighter Wing Force Support Flight NCOIC, stands next to the IDRenew Self-Service Kiosk at Kingsley Field in Klamath Falls, Oregon, Feb. 5, 2022.

Wohlers was able to fund the project by making a request for Air Force innovation fund, estimating that the machine cost approximately \$20,000.

Wohlers said that personal appointments would not go away completely, but the new machine is specifically installed for the purpose of relieving that burden from the Airmen in the office.

“We’re going to highly encourage the use of the kiosk versus an appointment,” she emphasized.

New robot dog on surveillance patrol at the Portland Air National Base

Courtesy Story by
KATU-2 TV Staff / Portland

Photos by Master Sgt. Jeff Thompson,
173rd Fighter Wing Public Affairs

PORTLAND, Ore. — We’re used to seeing canines working alongside first responders, but what about robot dogs?



Tech. Sgt. Jamie Cundiff, 142nd SFS robot ‘dog’ operator, demonstrates its capabilities to curious onlookers at the 173rd FW Security Forces compound, having it navigate obstacles, March 8, 2022 at Kingsley Field in Klamath Falls, Ore.

The 142nd Wing’s new Quadrupedal Unmanned Ground Vehicle - better known as the “robot dog” - is being tested at the Portland Air National Guard Base. They are the first guard unit in the country to receive a QUGV.

Its goal is for the four-legged robot, fitted with multiple cameras, to patrol the base perimeter and provide extra surveillance.

“We’re also going to have the capability to speak to people through to robot,” Tech. Sgt. Jamie Cundiff of the 142nd Security Forces Squadron.

“So if we do encounter an individual, we can engage with them verbally, remotely, from another place on-base, while we’re responding at the same time, it’s a simultaneous response capability that we’ve never seen before.”

The robot dog can walk up to seven miles on one battery charge, before returning automatically to its dog house to recharge.

“We’ve just been testing it by programming in different routes and seeing how the GPS works in our situation here at the base. Also putting it through different terrain tests, up and down hills and stairs, seeing how it interacts with vehicles and how vehicles interact with it and the people on the installation,” said Cundiff.

The dog’s name is still up for debate. Security forces are taking suggestions from other Air National Guard members for the dog.



Lt. Col. Ryan Barton, 142nd SFS commander, explains to a group how a robot ‘dog’ promises to aid in base law enforcement duties at Kingsley Field, March 8, 2022.

for debate. Security forces are taking suggestions from other Air National Guard members for the dog.

NEWS

Oregon Army National Guard opens two new Recruiting Centers

Story by John Hughel,
OMD Public Affairs

SALEM, Ore. - The Oregon Army National Guard held ribbon-cutting ceremonies at two new recruiting centers in past several months, allowing potential new members a chance to interact with area recruiters closer to home.

On December 15, 2021 the new Wilsonville, Oregon recruiting storefront was officially opened at the Wilsonville Town Center, 8929 S.W. Wilsonville Road, Suite 1. Attendees included Major Julie Fitzgerald along with Area Chamber of Commerce Chair Jaimy Beltran, and several Oregon Army National Guard Soldiers who recently assisted several area Hospitals during the surge of the COVID-19 Delta variant.

“We are proud to be part of our communities across Oregon and again here in Wilsonville,” said Col. Sharel L. Pond, Commander of the Oregon Army National Guard Recruiting Command.

In Southern Oregon the new Medford recruiting center opened officially on February 17, 2022 at their new facility located at 1251 East McAndrews Road, Suite 112.

Representatives from the city of Chamber of Commerce along with Mayor Randy Sparacino helped highlight the important role the Oregon Army National Guard maintains in the Southern Oregon region. Most recently during the COVID-19 surge, Guardsmen from the area have been supporting the Oregon Health Authority at hospitals in Medford and Klamath Falls. They also support Willand Firefighting operations and



Photo by Maj. W. Chris Clyne, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

Recruiting and Retention Professionals Sgt. 1st Class Brian Zirkelbach, Spc. Sandra Avila-Olvera and Sgt. James Passwaters stands outside the newest Oregon Army National Guard recruiting storefront on Dec. 10, 2021, in Wilsonville, Ore.

other domestic tasks around the region.

“As a former member of the Oregon National Guard, this new recruiting center plays an important role in the community,” said Randy Sparacino, Mayor of Medford. Sparacino served in the Oregon Army National Guard as part of the 186th Infantry Regiment in Southern Oregon.

The Oregon National Guard is the only military organization in the state that allows members to serve both the local community and the nation. At both events, recruiters and Guard members from the area answered questions, while refreshments were provided to the community as part of the official ribbon-cutting ceremonies.



Photo by Maj. W. Chris Clyne, OMD Public Affairs
Army National Guard Spc. Sandra Avila-Olvera sits at her new desk, ready to greet visitors at the new Wilsonville office.



Photo by John Hughel, OMD Public Affairs
The new Oregon Army National Guard Medford, Oregon recruiting office officially opened during a ribbon-cutting ceremony held on Feb. 17, 2022.

The Oregon Army Guard now has an APP for your Mobile Device!

Story and photo by Maj. W. Chris Clyne,
OMD Public Affairs

SALEM, Ore. - You now can keep up to date on what’s happening in the Oregon Army National Guard (ORARNG), get information about job openings employment support, access information about education benefits, to name a few?

Download the Oregon Army National Guard Mobile App on Google Play or the Apple App Store.

The new App allows every Citizen-Soldier to reach non-sensitive information without using Common Access Card (CAC) enabled devices. Most of the app’s data is spread out over many legacy websites throughout the state and the Department of Defense. The ORARNG App now pulls all this information together in one place for ease of access.



Oregon Land Component Staff Executive Assistant Sgt. 1st Class Charleen Stancliff, one of the administrators of the New Oregon Army Guard Mobile App, shows the opened App on her cell phone, March 24, 2022 at the Maj. Gen. George White Building, in Salem, Oregon.

This new mobile App is the initiative of Army Land Component Commander Brig. Gen. Gregory Day, who said, “I realized how difficult it is to get the information down the chain of command, and how time-consuming, so I asked the staff for solutions

to this problem. I didn’t think that Soldiers were really getting all of the information about the benefits they can access as a member of the National Guard. I’m hoping that this App helps solve that problem and lets soldiers know about full-time job opportunities, benefits, short term notices, deployment vacancies or other items.”

One of the prominent Soldiers responsible for getting information out on the App is Sgt. 1st Class Charleen D. Stancliff the Land Component Staff Executive Assistant. When asked about Stancliff’s duties, she said, “So whenever

promotion announcements or retirement announcements come out, I’ll add those to the App notifications. Also, other information, like on the CLEP test or when there are position vacancy announcements (PVA) in there so that Soldiers that don’t get their emails, they can see all of that info.”

To be up to date with Oregon Army National Guard info, download the App on your mobile device. Go to either Google Play or the Apple App Store and search for Oregon National Guard. Also, if you have information for the Oregon Army National Guard members to be aware of, contact Sgt. 1st Class Charleen Stancliff to have it pushed out in the App’s notification feature by emailing: charleen.d.stancliff.mil@army.mil.

OREGON NATIONAL GUARD COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND REGIONAL EVENTS

Oregon Guardsmen return to hospital support role during Omicron surge

Continued from Front Page

"I think the quality of character we saw in the Guard members that were deployed at our hospital was just phenomenal," she said. "They displayed such a willingness to help. They were very professional, very respectful, very kind, and willing to do whatever we asked of them. They all had wonderful attitudes throughout the time they were here. It's very nice to know those types of people are in our National Guard."

Hayter said the roles the ORNG performed at the hospital were critical. Due to the hospital's rural location in a town with a total population of 2,400, she said they have been short-handed for as long as she could recall, and the pandemic only served to magnify that.



Photo by Maj. W. Chris Clyne, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs
Hospital Emergency Room Nurse Director Shane Emmert leads a first-day orientation briefing for Oregon Army National Guard hospital relief mission members at West Valley Hospital in Dallas, Oregon, Jan. 18, 2022.

"A lot of our people—the ones who are still here—are tired," she said. "It was just a really welcome relief at a moment when we really needed it, and even though they couldn't help with patient care, it was great to have them fill-in certain areas to give someone a break, or allow us to reallocate one of our full-time employees to a department that was in need."

Staff Sgt. Denny Cline, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Division, Oregon Army National Guard, served as the Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge of the ORNG members deployed to work at Wallowa. Cline assisted with sorting laundry at the hospital. His presence allowed the only hospital staff worker in laundry to be able to take some breaks during the day and make it home to her family on time, rather than working overtime to

finish the job. He said the opportunity to serve in this way, was a rewarding, but also eye-opening experience.

"I think we all joined with the mentality that we wanted to give back to our country," Cline said. "But we forget that our number one goal, as the National Guard, is to give back to our community, and show them we are there for them."

Sgt. Isaac Waggoner, Bravo Company, 741st Brigade Engineer Battalion, 41st Brigade Combat Team, Oregon Army National Guard, also said the mission was extremely rewarding. Working swing shift in the emergency room at Columbia Memorial Hospital in Astoria,

Waggoner cleaned rooms, ran labs, assisted in patient moving and patient packaging for life-flight or ambulance, and helped with anything the nurses and doctors needed.

"Having the opportunity to help others who may or may not have been able to help themselves, or just having a helping hand in the folks' jobs that keep others healthy and safe is a big deal," Waggoner said.



Photo by 1st Lt. Morgan Lindsay, 173rd FW Public Affairs
U.S. Army Spc. Trevor Sweet, Oregon Army National Guard, sanitizes common areas at the Grande Ronde Regional Medical Clinic in La Grande, Ore. on Feb. 11, 2022.



Photo by John Hughel, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs
Maj. Gen. Michael Stencil, Adjutant General, takes time to address Oregon National Guard Soldiers as they begin their in processing actions at Camp Withycombe, Clackamas, Oregon, to support hospital assistance around the state of Oregon on Jan. 21, 2022.

He said the moment he felt he made the biggest difference was when he was assisting the nurses with a patient. The patient's heart failed and Waggoner and two nurses took turns giving chest compressions until the patient was revived and life-flighted to another hospital, where he underwent surgery. That patient is alive today due to their efforts.

"Our missions come in different shapes and sizes," Waggoner said. "No matter how big or small they are, it's our job to answer the call and respond by giving ourselves to the communities we live in and make a positive impact."

Julie Hale, director of support services, Asante Rouge Regional Medical Center, Medford, Oregon, said the ORNG's services not only made a positive impact on the hospital, but the community as a whole. Hospital patients and other local citizens baked bread and cookies and delivered them to the medical center to thank the Guard for their service and sacrifice.

Hale described one incident that stood out to her where the Guard went above and beyond to help. The medical center's drive through Covid-19 clinic, where community members could be tested for the virus from their vehicle, became inundated. At one point, the

line was backed up for a mile or two, which impeded traffic. That's when ORNG members stepped up to try to resolve the situation.

"They ended up doing some traffic control and traffic management because it was so overwhelming, when that type of role would normally have been done by law enforcement or city officials," Hale said. "They've had such a great positive attitude being here," Hale added, "even though I know they have been away from their home and their families."



Photo by Master Sgt. Keven Baker, 1st Sgt./LNO for Joint Task Force Recovery
Airman 1st Class Kumsa Lemessa, assigned to the 142nd Maintenance Group, is working in the respiratory therapy department at Legacy Emanuel Hospital, Portland, Ore.

Maj. John Cascamo, equal opportunity director, 173rd Fighter Wing, Oregon Air National Guard, served as the Officer in Charge of ORNG members deployed at Asante and was also the Task Force Region 5 Commander, where he oversaw ORNG members working at four other hospitals in the region. This was Cascamo's second deployment to assist with the Covid-19 surges, having also served at a medical clinic in Salem from September through December of 2021.

Cascamo said while his experience at Asante was very positive, it was difficult to be away from home, trying to manage a major family transition. A year ago, his wife's father passed away and they inherited his ranch in Arkansas. Though the move to Arkansas was planned, he did not expect to be deployed during that time.

"My wife, Katharine, had to do bear the brunt of moving everything cross country on her own," he said. "It wasn't an easy task."

Despite this hardship, Cascamo said he was very happy to be able to serve at the same medical center that had served him and his family in a miraculous way 12 years ago. In 2009 his wife had a documented case of the swine flu while she was pregnant with their son, Giovanni, which led to some pretty severe complications. Katherine was life-flighted from Klamath Falls, where they lived, to Asante. Their son was born 10 weeks early, weighing only two and a half pounds. The Asante staff treated his son in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, and continued to care for his wife until they were both able to safely go home.

"It felt like a completed circle," Cascamo said, "to give back to the hospital that literally saved my wife's life and my son's life."

Spc. Thomas Halbesleben, Alpha Company, 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment, Oregon Army National Guard, also understands the sacrifice that is often required to fulfill the Guard mission. Halbesleben just completed his second hospital deployment with the

birth to one of their children while he was deployed.

"When we were having issues with our pregnancy, and I was tasked with Covid orders, we were concerned it was going to cause more harm than good with me being gone and taking less pay," he said. "But in turn, it was actually the biggest blessing we had ever seen."

Not only was the hospital very accommodating in allowing Halbesleben to travel back to Idaho for the birth of his



Photo by Maj. W. Chris Clyne, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs
Hospital Facilities Operations Manager Don Wilder gives Oregon Army National Guard hospital relief mission members a tour of West Valley Hospital in Dallas, Oregon on Jan. 18, 2022 as part of the team's first-day orientation.

me to work right away, and they appreciated not only my skillset, but my demeanor toward other people."



Photo by Air National Guard 1st Lt. Morgan Lindsay, 173rd FW Public Affairs
U.S. Army Sgt. Stephanie Hansen, Oregon Army National Guard, prepares equipment for the next patient in a surgery room at Good Shepherd Medical Center in Hermiston, Ore., on Feb. 10, 2022. Nearly 1,200 Soldiers and Airmen were activated to assist hospitals across the state.

child, but there was also an unexpected surprise waiting for him when he returned.

When Halbesleben first arrived at Wallowa, Hayter asked all of the Soldiers and Airmen if they had any specialty areas. After Halbesleben told her he worked as a Computer Specialist and Network Installation Technician, she said she might have the perfect job for him, as their hospital IT tech had just resigned.

"Not many people come through with that skillset," Halbesleben said, "so they put

Hayter said the collaboration between Halbesleben and the team, his knowledge and his experience were exactly what they were looking for. So, when he returned to the hospital after the birth of his child, he found a job application waiting for him to fill out, so he could apply for the vacant IT position at the hospital.

"As soon as he turned in his application," Hayter said, "he was extended an offer, based on his work ethic, his aptitude in learning our programs, he was very well liked among the employee

population, and he had very good feedback about his customer service and being timely."

Halbesleben accepted the job, and will begin working at Wallowa shortly after he demobilizes. The best surprise was that the job at the hospital has better pay and benefits than the civilian job he was working prior to his deployment. In addition, because his home is over a three-hour drive from the hospital, they are going to allow him to start off working remotely. He and his family plan to relocate to the area eventually.

Though Halbesleben's deployment may have started out as a sacrifice and a hardship, his dedication and efforts on the job led him to receive incredible rewards.

"It's good karma," he said. "I love helping people, and people need to help others more often now days instead of thinking about themselves. We need to be more selfless instead of more selfish, and with the world in turmoil as it is, you don't see that much anymore."

Halbesleben also provided some advice for others who may face unexpected opportunities: "Take the chance and try new things," he said. "They might look like a problem in the very beginning, but it's going to turn out well in the end."

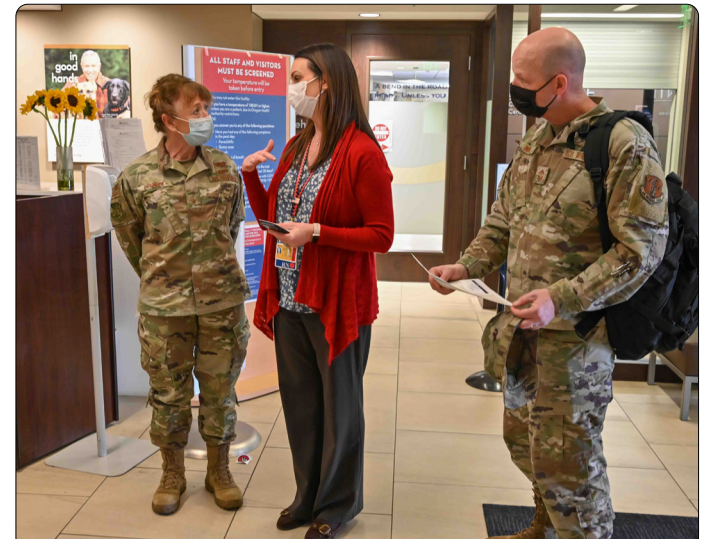


Photo by Air National Guard 1st Lt. Morgan Lindsay, 173rd FW Public Affairs
Oregon Air National Guard Commander Brig. Gen. Prigmore and State Command Chief Master Sgt. Dominic Ingle visit Airmen performing hospital duty at Asante Rogue Regional Medical Center in Medford, Ore., on Feb. 4, 2022.

OREGON AIR NATIONAL GUARD

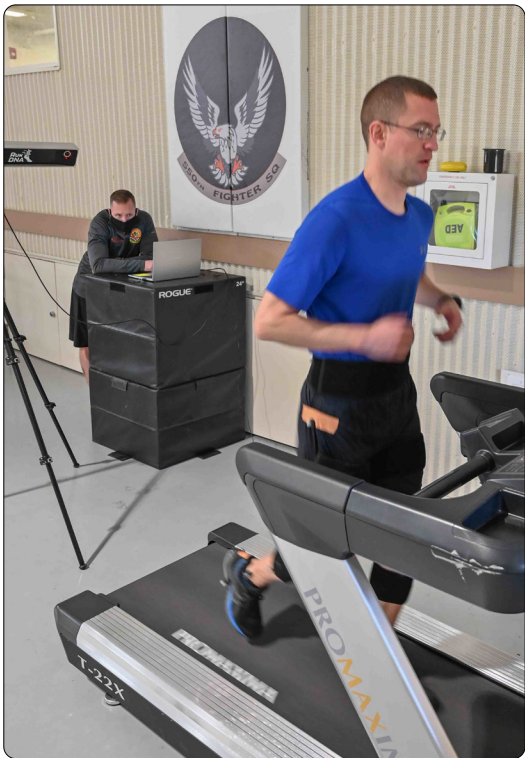
Emerging technology helps runners avoid injury, get faster at the 173rd FW

Story and photos by Master Sgt. Jeff Thompson, 173rd Fighter Wing Public Affairs

KLAMATH FALLS, Ore.-Master Sgt. Justin Lafon stares intently at an image of a skeleton striding along, watching legs, feet and knees working in concert. The knee sweeps forward rolling the foot onto the toes and lifting it into the air—a tracking line depicts the path the foot takes—before planting it once again onto the surface, shifting downward as weight settles onto the leg—again and again.

The bones he’s looking at are his own. It’s the first time he’s ever seen his running stride from the outside, particularly with detailed tracking analysis showing the exact path all of his joints are taking. It’s a brand new program brought to the Airmen of the 173rd Fighter Wing by the Health Awareness and Education Team (HEAT). It’s called Run D.N.A. says certified corrective exercise specialist Amy Jones, and it represents an opportunity for every Airman to avoid injury as they train for their fitness test, or otherwise enjoy running.

“Running is a huge source of injury,” she said. “Typically, that results from over working—not knowing how to run in terms of intensity level and running too hard for too long.”



U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Justin Lafon, the 550th Fighter Squadron first sergeant, runs normally while Senior Master Sgt. Colin Carr, 173rd Fighter Wing health education and awareness team member, captures his gait.

That approach, readily identifies itself in the form of knee pain, low back pain, Achilles pain and foot or ankle pain, she says.

“Running is a part of your life in the military whether you choose to do it year-round or one month out of the year for the PT test,” she says.

That annual one-month crucible works for some Airmen, many of them young, but she stresses that it can backfire.

“It’s a recipe for injury,” she states, “you’re going to go from a state of rest where your body is not used to any sort of physical activity that resembles running and you jump right into running and your running every day and running hard.”

Jones says she and her team can help using Run DNA; “This is cutting edge technology and it’s something that not a lot of Air Force Bases or Air Guard bases have access to.”

The mechanics involve placing 18 different feedback sensors on the legs, knees, hips, ankles and feet and then using a computer based video system to capture their stride on a treadmill.

“We are able to take a single capture,” she said referring to the video file, “and then view it from every single angle.”

The Run DNA software analysis is instant, spitting out solutions for gait problems, fixes for problems like overstriding or favoring one side or the other. If a runner wants to save the file for future reference, they can do that as well.

Lafon, who is an avid runner

and maintains excellent physical condition, says he was able to make several improvements during the session itself.

“I wanted to see what my stride looks like and see some areas for improvement,” he said. “I’ve pretty much been free-wheeling it, going out on my own.”

He left with information on mobility and stretching tailored to him specifically and the promise of more efficient running form.



Amy Jones, a certified exercise specialist at the 173rd FW, points out the mechanics of a runner's gait and stride captured using new technology called Run DNA.

Senior Master Sgt. Colin Carr, who just got certified to administer tests, says it’s useful for any runner regardless of ability or experience.

“I think it’s fun to have this high-tech, super-professional view of how you run,” he said, “you never get that anywhere unless you are a professional.”

173rd Maintenance Group constructs new room for nursing mothers

Story and photos by Master Sgt. Jeff Thompson, 173rd Fighter Wing Public Affairs

KLAMATH FALLS, Ore.-The Kingsley family is a regularly referenced part of working at the 173rd Fighter Wing, a small, southern Oregon Air National Guard base. People say it conveys the tight-knit community shared by Airmen who work, raise their families, and often socialize together.

That sense of family includes the Airmen who fill the ranks at the wing, but as Master Sgt. Michael Shirar, the resource advisor for the 173rd Maintenance Group says, it extends beyond that.

“Our Kingsley mothers and their children are part of the Kingsley family,” he said. “We have nearly 500 members in our maintenance group, and really at any given time we have someone who has had a baby or is going to have a baby.”

It brings up something working mothers have coped with for a very long time. Working mothers who breast feed their new babies need to express breast milk at

various times during the work day and finding a place to do that can be really challenging.

The Air Force is working to help new mothers and provided guidance that units need to provide a dedicated space for this purpose. According to the Air Force guidance, unit commanders are required to identify a private area within the unit’s facilities as a lactation area that is lockable from the inside, clean and sanitary, with adequate lighting and comfortable temperatures. Additionally, there must be access to refrigeration, hot and cold water, and electrical outlets.



In addition to providing an expressing room to breastfeeding mothers, the 173rd provides front row parking for expecting mothers.

“It actually states in Oregon law that you are not supposed to use a locker room or a



The recently constructed an expressing room for nursing mothers in response to updated Air Force guidance stipulating that a private, secure area is provided.

restroom,” said Tech. Sgt. Loretta Meserve, a 173rd Maintenance Group command support staff Airman and mother of two.

When Maj. Richard Schuster, the maintenance squadron commander, learned of the requirement he immediately offered to vacate his office on a moment’s notice to provide such a space for the group’s new moms. It didn’t work. At least one Airman said to him, “I feel completely uncomfortable asking you to use your office for this.”

With that in mind he and several civil engineering professionals set out to find

a spot where a dedicated room could be built.

“This is a maintenance hangar, space is always at a premium, and there is no adding onto these buildings in a lot of cases,” said Shirar. “What we came up with was using a part of a break room. It entailed having CE come out add some walls and electrical and essentially add another room.”

Today that space is ready for use after CE made sure the new room met all guidelines from electrical to HVAC, while others furnished it with a microwave, refrigerator, privacy curtains and chairs.

“It’s going to work great,” said Meserve. “We have six, soon-to-be post-partum moms just in the maintenance group alone—and I am one of them.”

“It’s pretty awesome, the way we take care of our folks, the way we take care of each other,” said Schuster.

OREGON AIR NATIONAL GUARD

116th Air Control Squadron participates in Exercise Red Flag 22-2

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

NELLIS AIR FORCE BASE, Nev.-This month, members of Oregon Air National Guard’s 116th Air Control Squadron (ACS) are taking part in Exercise Red Flag, a two-week advanced aerial combat training exercise held several times a year. It aims to offer realistic air-combat training for military pilots and other flight crew members from the United States and allied countries.

This iteration of the ongoing exercise, Red Flag 22-2, will concentrate on three primary themes to include defensive, offensive, and counter-air techniques.

Although the members of the 116th spend countless hours training within the home environment, participating in a large scale exercise like Red Flag provides scenarios to stretch capabilities within a joint setting.

“Compared to at-home training, there are a lot more players involved and we have a chance to support multiple live aircraft vs. simulation,” said Senior Airman Caitlyn Conn, a command and control surveillance technician for the 116th ACS.



An F-15E Strike Eagle assigned to the 366th Fighter Wing, Mountain Home Air Force Base, Idaho, takes off for a Red Flag-Nellis 22-2 mission at Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada, March 9, 2022. The 414th Combat Training Squadron conducts Red Flag exercises to provide aircrews the experience of multiple, intensive air combat sorties in the safety of a training environment.

Watching four computer monitors at once, Command and Control (C2) technicians like Conn identify, watch and track multiple aircraft and ground units based on flight and sensor data. They pass this information on to decision-makers to help them make sense of an often dynamic air battle environment.

In advance of jets taking off and units mobilizing, the group gathered together to mission plan for multiple scenarios. During the brief, organizers mentioned they would be throwing in some wildcard scenarios in order to test each members’ knowledge and abilities. Part of the briefing includes refreshing on the specific capabilities of

each aircraft, to help the crews make better decisions when scenarios unfold quickly.

“It’s nice being here with people I’ve known for the past three years. It’s a bonding experience with a little stress,” said Conn.

The Red Flag exercise is designed to simulate air-to-air and air-to-ground weapons systems, surface to air missiles, helicopters and combat search and rescue scenarios.

The 116th ACS is a geographically-separated unit under the 142nd Wing and based out of Camp Rilea, Oregon.

“In our typical training, we fly out over the ocean airspace, so the training in a place like Nellis is quite different,” said

116th Air Control Squadron acquires new radar radome assembly

Story and photos provided by, 142nd Wing Public Affairs Office

WARRENTON, Ore. – The 116th Air Control Squadron received a long-awaited radar radome assembly, a domed structure to house its mission-critical air surveillance equipment.

The assembly was installed at Camp Rilea in Warrenton Dec. 13. A week later, the ACS radar shop used a crane to move its AN/TPS-75 antenna array — a tactical transportable long-range air surveillance radar — inside the structure.

The 116th ACS is a geographically separated unit of the Portland Air National Guard Base’s 142nd Wing. Since moving to Camp Rilea on the Oregon coast in the late 1980s, the 116th has backfilled multiple Federal Aviation Administration radar systems along the Pacific Northwest coast. Since 9/11, it has also provided radar coverage in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, supporting Operation Noble Eagle.

The AN/TPS-75’s can mount on a 5-ton truck and convoy to remote locations. It is a vital asset for Air Defense, Command and Control, search and rescue missions across the Pacific Northwest, and combatant commands

The new radome ensures the long-term viability of AN/TPS-75 radar until the Air Force fields a replacement in fiscal 2028 or later.

The ACS began seeking a radome in 2015 when now-retired Chief Master Sgt.

Greg Bosin sought funding for the project. He eventually discovered the Air Force’s Small Business and Innovative Research Program, which allows a streamlined contracting process managed by the Air Force Life Cycle Management at Hill Air Force Base. Still, the process took nearly five years. Then the pandemic delayed the manufacture and delivery several more months.

“I’m really excited to have our radar system undercover and protected



Installation of the 116th Air Control Squadron's new radome structure was completed at Camp Rilea, Warrenton, Ore., on Dec. 13, 2021. Installation of the radome system will protect their TP-75 antenna array against harsh weather conditions on the Oregon Coast and reduce labor by 300 man-hours annually.

1st Lt. Wyatt Aichele, air battle manager for the 116th Air Control Squadron, Oregon Air National Guard.

With a new setting, new airframes and equipment come a wider range of challenges that help personnel involved in the exercise additional opportunity to stretch their skills.

Participants, to include around 14 units with approximately 1,750 personnel from the U.S. Air Force, Marine Corps, Navy and Air National Guard, Royal Saudi Air Force and Republic of Singapore Air Force, will have a primary focus on combat missions, mission commander upgrades and flag-unique experiences that contribute most to readiness and partnerships.

The coalition core function forces will gain a significant combat advantage by being exposed to realistic, representative, relevant and integrated tactical experiences. The U.S. and allied forces train to ensure smooth integration and shared understanding.

Through exercises like Red Flag, Oregon’s best are able to maintain a high-level of professionalism and readiness, prepared to respond to every call for the state and nation they call home.

from the elements,” said Chief Master Sgt. Steve Wilcox. “Not having to recall my radar personnel in from home to fold the antenna in the midst of sudden weather events and exposing them to 30-plus mph wind gusts and sideways rain is a game-changer.”

Radome structures have been around for decades. However, the radome the 116th acquired uses the latest in composite materials and manufacturing technology to reduce costs and keep the radar system operational.

“The radome ensures the longevity of our radar, which ensures we stay in the fight,” said Capt. Daniel Hicks, the 116th assistant director of operations.



The U.S. Air Force’s primary ground-deployable radar, the TPS-75, at the Oregon Air National Guard’s 116th Air Control Squadron, Camp Rilea, Ore., Sept. 24, 2021.

FEATURES

Oregon Army Guardsmen contend for top honors during Best Warrior

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

WARRENTON, Ore. – Assembled in formation and dressed in physical fitness training gear, 17 Oregon Army National Guard Soldiers from across the state listened to testing guidelines as the 2022 Best Warrior competition began on March 17, conducted at the Camp Rilea Armed Forces Training Center.

The Army Combat Fitness Test (ACFT) opened the three days of competition, testing contestants on a variety of technical and tactical skills that make up the National Guard's Best Warrior Competition.



Oregon Army National Guard Spc. Wyatt Wall takes on the challenging 'Mogadishu event' testing portion of the 2022 Best Warrior Competition, March 19, at Camp Rilea near Warrenton, Ore.

The testing is both physically and mentally challenging, putting the competitors through a range of skill sets relevant to today's operating environments. These elements involve land navigation, marksmanship and weapons skills, and also include urban and battlefield operations, an obstacle course, a written essay and an appearance before a board of sergeants major.

"We take the top Soldiers and NCOs from around the state and we run them through series of grueling tasks," said Command Sgt. Maj. Lee Smith, Oregon Army National Guard Command Sgt. Major. "By the end of the competition, we're able to find out who's the best."



Soldiers take part in the 'Mogadishu event,' featuring a series of combat stations and injured patient extraction, at Camp Rilea near Warrenton, Ore., on March 19.

The competition also promotes spirit de corps and recognizes Soldiers who uphold Army values and encompass "The Warrior Ethos."

When the demanding three-day competition was over, Spc. Wyatt Wall, assigned to HHB, 2nd Battalion, 218th Field Artillery, and Sgt. Nathan Flores, assigned to Detachment 1, Delta Company, 741st Brigade Engineer Battalion, emerged as the Soldier and NCO of the Year, respectively.

Oregon participants train and contend at one of the most challenging sites in the country each year, preparing them for success at the next level. This year's competition comes after last summer's region VI championships held here at Camp Rilea where many of the COVID-19 precautions were in place prior to Best Warrior 2022.

Both Flores and Wall will now take time to reflect on their achievements and prepare for the Region VI championships that will take place in Wyoming later in May.

All competitors received recognition during the awards ceremony at the conclusion on Saturday afternoon, and received a unique prize package for taking part in the competition, while Flores and Wall were awarded the Oregon National Guard Commendation Medal.

"When we talk about the future of the Oregon Army National Guard, these soldiers that pushed themselves over these

past three days are our future First Sergeants and Sergeant Majors when we look ahead eight to ten years from now," said Lee during the awards ceremony. "Just to be selected to compete in the Best Warrior competition and to represent their units is an honor – each of them demonstrated an outstanding effort during the course of this competition."



Oregon Army National Guard Soldiers take part in the Army Combat Fitness Test (ACFT) 2-Mile run during the 2022 Best Warrior Competition, March 17, held at Camp Rilea Armed Forces Training Center near Warrenton, Ore.



Oregon Army National Guard Soldiers test and zero their weapons during the 2022 Best Warrior Competition, March 18, at Camp Rilea near Warrenton, Ore.



Oregon Army National Guard Soldiers take on the Obstacle Course, one of the most challenging testing situations during the second day of the 2022 Best Warrior Competition, on March 18



Oregon Army National Guard Soldiers who competed in the 2022 Best Warrior Competition gather for a group photograph following the 3 days of competition held at Camp Rilea, from March 17-19, 2022.

FEATURES

Revision to ACFT with scoring based on a Soldier's age, gender

Story by Rose L. Thayer,
Courtesy of 'The Stars and Stripes'

WASHINGTON D.C. - The Army will implement a revised version of its Army Combat Fitness Test on April 1 that considers gender and age when assessing each soldier's performance, the service announced Wednesday.

The new version follows an initial effort three years ago to make the test gender neutral, which a Rand Corp. report found caused women and members of the National Guard and Reserve to fail the test at higher rates.

Active-duty troops will have a six-month evaluation period before the results could impact their service, and Reserve and National Guard soldiers will have one year, the Army said.

"We listened to what the Rand study provided us. It said, 'You could disadvantage some groups.' This is a better test," Sgt. Maj. of the Army Michael Grinston said Monday during a call with reporters that also included several Army officials who worked on implementing the new fitness test.

This latest revision to the test, known as the ACFT, maintains "the Army's strong commitment to a positive culture of physical fitness while ensuring fairness in the transition to a new fitness test of record," he said.

The Army first introduced the six-event test in 2019 with the intention it could evaluate a soldier's ability to perform specific warrior tasks and battle drills with no need to adjust scoring for age or gender as the current test does. Two years later, women were failing the test at much higher rates than men, so Congress called on the Army to hire a third party to assess this possible disadvantage before using it as the standard and discharging soldiers who could not pass.

Rand conducted the research and found the Army lacked enough evidence to prove that all six test events adequately predict performance on combat tasks or reduce injury risks, according to its report. It also found women, part-time troops, and soldiers older than 45 had a more difficult time passing the test.

"Because this test may ultimately be used for personnel actions, it is especially important that all of the test's events and minimum standards are validated for all genders, components and occupational specialties," said Chaitra Hardison, a senior behavioral scientist at Rand and lead author of the report.

Rand reviewed test data for 460,000 soldiers and narrowed its report to four main findings and four recommendations. It found the Army needs more evidence to support the ACFT and the fitness events included in the test. The report also found higher failure rates in certain populations, training can improve pass rates, and a formal management structure to oversee test refinements would benefit implementation.

All of Rand's research findings and recommendations were based on a previous version of the test that was age and gender neutral, not the version that will be

implemented throughout the Army next week. On those neutral scoring tables from the older version of the test, Rand found an 89% pass rate for men and about 54% for women, said Brig. Gen. Scott Naumann, the Army's director of training.

The report's four recommendations to the Army call for the service to address the shortfall of evidence and collect additional data, consider how to mitigate the impact of the test on the workforce, take steps to support more training over time, and create a management structure for its implementation and use.



Photo by John Hughel, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs
Oregon Army National Guard soldiers take part in the Army Combat Fitness Test during the 2022 Best Warrior Competition held from March 17-19, at Camp Rilea Armed Forces Training Center near Warrenton, Ore.

Army leaders agreed to incorporate all the recommendations, most notably by returning to an age and gender-based scoring system that is based off the pass rates of the previous fitness test.

"With the age- and gender-normed scale, we predict similar outcomes, based on the data that we have right now that we that we had roughly with the old [Army Physical Fitness Test]," Naumann said.

To address other recommendations, the Army issued more than 40,000 sets of equipment to train for the test, instituted the grace period before scores are recorded, established oversight committees, and modified one event of the test.

The six events include a deadlift, standing power throw, hand-release pushups, the sprint-drag-carry, a plank and a two-mile run. The test originally included a hanging leg tuck instead of a plank to evaluate core strength. It was removed based on the results of the Rand study, which found the exercise has weak evidence to show that someone had core strength.

"The leg tuck has really three components to it," Grinston said. "There's a grip strength, then there's an upper-body strength, and then there's the core event. If I don't have the grip strength, but I may actually have core strength, then I actually can't do a leg tuck. The reason of wanting to take that out is that we wanted to measure everybody on the core strength."

Instead of seeing the test as a predictor for how someone will perform physically in combat, Naumann said the revised ACFT is a general fitness test.

"This test is a general fitness assessment, using age and gender performance-based norm scales to accurately assess an individual's physical fitness," he said. "This is just one aspect of a holistic approach to the readiness of our soldiers."

The current APFT measures muscular

endurance through three events, pushups, sit-ups and a two-mile run. This test has been the standard since 1983 and has about a 5% failure rate. In search of a test that would measure more than muscular endurance, the Army began in 2012 to create a new test.

"We knew we could evolve, and we wanted to improve readiness overall and we wanted to reduce injury," said Brig. Gen. John Kline, commander of the Army's Center for Initial Military Training.

He encouraged soldiers to bring their ACFT scores to one of the Army's roughly 2,500 master fitness trainers to help create

a personalized training program for improvement. Starting this month, Kline said they plan to increase the number of master fitness trainers within the service by increasing the program's capacity from certifying 830 soldiers to be trainers each month to more than 1,600.

Members of the 16th Combat Aviation Brigade unit ministry teams competed in the 7th Infantry Division Best UMT Competition at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., March 16-17, 2022. The two-day competition included the Army Combat Fitness Test, land navigation, a 6-mile ruck march, and three tactical religious support critical tasks designed to assess the capabilities and performance of chaplains and religious affairs specialists.

Master fitness trainers are non-commissioned officers and officers who have taken an Army course that certifies them to advise others on fitness.

Under the current APFT, soldiers had 90 days to retake the test after failing. In the new ACFT, soldiers will have up to 180 days to retake a failed test, said Jeff Angers, deputy assistant secretary for military personnel. For enlisted soldiers and officers who fail two tests in a row, commanders will initiate separation and no one in the active Army can be separated for a failed test before April 2023, he said.

"The intent of the Army is to build fit soldiers, not to separate a bunch of soldiers that on one day would be awesome, full faith and doing their job and ... then implement a test that the next day, they would now be separated based on some scoring scale. That is not the intent, and that's not what this test will do," Naumann said.

The Army has established a set of committees meant to review and research the progress of the ACFT and a report on its implementation is expected to the Army secretary by April 2023. Through this oversight, there could be additional changes to the test.

"It's the Army's intent that the transition to full implementation of the ACFT will not adversely or disproportionately affect any soldier group. This is really important to us," Naumann said. "We think this new test maintains the Army's strong commitment to a culture of physical readiness while ensuring a deliberate transition to the new test. And to that end, the Army will incorporate the test in a very deliberate manner to ensure that soldiers can train and adjust to the new events and the new scoring scales before we use those for personnel actions."

FEATURES

Oregon National Guard women supporting COVID-19 Hospital

Story by John Hughel,
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

PORTLAND, Ore. – Tucked away in the Eliot neighborhood of North Portland, Legacy Emanuel Hospital is a level-one trauma center and has been a cornerstone of public health in the community for over 100 years. Long before Oregon Army National Guard Specialist Stacia Coleman, currently a member of Bravo Company, 741st Brigade Engineer Battalion, 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team was assigned here in mid-January to provide COVID-19 medical support; it was a place she was sensitively familiar with too.

Growing up in the foster care system, Coleman had become peculiarly acquainted with the hospital chapel, often serving as a reliable waiting room during her frequent visits. “I spent a great deal of time here when I was growing up, mostly because the people in my life didn’t take proper care of their health and made horrible decisions, and it always ended up leading to this specific hospital -- I spent a lot of time in the Chapel growing up,” she said, retracing her childhood journey to her current assignment. “I never would have imagined being here now working in this capacity.”

The turbulence of growing up in foster care has made her acutely aware of the variety of patients’ medical needs during the surge in the Omicron Variant. Empathy, understanding, and support are essential traits she said, especially in emergency care situations.



Photo by Master Sgt. Aaron Perkins, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs
Brig. Gen. Donna Prigmore, Oregon Air National Guard Commander, along with Command Chief Master Sgt. Dominic Ingle, State Command Chief, pause for a photo with Spc. Stacia Coleman, as they visited Legacy Emanuel Hospital, on Feb. 25, 2022.

“I feel a little bit more of a connection to people here, especially in the emergency room or people with drug and dependency issues because oddly, I grew up with that as my role models,” she said. “I feel like I have a little extra compassion now for patients and families who are in distress.”

Prior to being assigned on COVID-19 hospital orders, Coleman had completed a coding and medical office certification. “It was a coincidence -- which they ended up putting me in the medical office to work with insurance and paperwork, which I have done before,” she said, explaining that the office combined military members and



Photo by John Hughel, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs
Spc. Stacia Coleman, a member of Bravo Company, 741st Brigade Engineer Battalion, 41st IBCB, pauses for a photo during her final shift on Hospital orders at Legacy Emanuel Hospital, Portland, Ore., March 9.

civilian health care specialists.

This current mobilization of Oregon National Guard members is similar to the mission that began in August of 2021 and was completed by the end of the year. With this activation starting on Jan. 12, 2022, the Oregon National Guard activated more than 1,200 soldiers and airmen working in non-clinical support roles at 41 hospitals across Oregon.

Although Coleman was working in administration, others service members had jobs working in janitorial services, supply management, transportation, and coronavirus symptom screening. Like many of the Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen who were part of Joint Task Force Reassurance, they put their civilian jobs and plans on hold again to support pandemic-related hospital support. For Coleman, the past three years

have been a variety of stops and starts. “I originally joined the [National] Guard for the college education benefits and had planned on becoming a nurse, but I found out on my first drill that I was deploying so I was derailed for a while,” she said, explaining her pursuit of education and training goals. “When I get home from Kuwait in 2020, Covid was here so I started looking at other options and decided to go into the trades.”

Her combat engineer training fostered a new interest, discovering a “knack for building and fixing things,” she said, deciding to enroll in a pre-apprenticeship program with Oregon Tradeswomen, an organization designed specifically

for women who want to work in the skilled labor trades.

“Between school, deployments, and now Covid-19 support, I was able to get one of the 12 slots for this program,” she said, noting that 75 other women had applied for the program and her military training helped secure one of the slots. “The Army has given me some much-needed structure in my life, and since my time in the Army, I’ve found that I thrived by working in the construction and transportation aspects of my military career.”

It’s notable that during Women’s History Month, women who serve in uniform are leading and taking responsibility for their career goals, all the while, making an impact on the world. During the past two years of COVID-19 tasks, women service members have played significant leadership roles, especially with the vaccination and hospital support missions.



Photo provided by Spc. Stacia Coleman
Oregon Army National Guard Spc. Stacia Coleman, a member of Bravo Company, 741st Brigade Engineer Battalion, 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team, pauses for a photo during recent military training.

(Continued on
next page)



Photo provided by Spc. Stacia Coleman
Oregon Army National Guard Spc. Stacia Coleman, a member of Bravo Company, 741st Brigade Engineer Battalion, takes part in hands on course work through the Oregon Tradeswomen training program.

FEATURES

Mission draw on a foundation of persistence and resilience

Over the past five years, Senior Master Sgt. Rebecca Marie Pittcock Thompson, a member of the 142nd Wing Maintenance Operations Group, has been on the front lines of multiple domestic operations in the state, deploying twice to support Wildland firefighting efforts, and working at coronavirus vaccination sites and finally with hospital assistance.



Photo by John Hughel, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs
Oregon Air National Guard Senior Master Sgt. Rebecca Thompson pauses for a photograph during her work shift, March 8, 2022, at Oregon Health and Sciences University, Portland, Oregon. Thompson is the NCOIC for the Oregon National Guard team at OHSU, helping support the Omicron variant surge.

“This is my fifth joint; Army and Air, community support mission since 2017,” she said, describing both her current tasking and past regional area assignments. “This is my second time to work the hospital support mission as the NCOIC (Non-commissioned Officer-in-charge) of the National Guard team here at OHSU (Oregon Health and Sciences University). Going back to September of 2017, I was a fire-team leader for a 23-member crew on the Horse Prairie Fire outside of Riddle, Oregon, and then again in 2020, supporting traffic control points as the Joint Staff NCOIC for the Almedia and South Obenchain Fire, near Eagle Point.”

With each assignment, Thompson said that they have reiterated the reason why she has found lasting satisfaction serving in the National Guard, and why she keeps pushing back her military retirement.

“I was set to retire last month but I decided to stay another year because these critical local tasks have continued to revitalize my desire to support our communities around the state,” she said. “I really feel like this is the real reason why I joined the [National] Guard in the first place.”

When she was re-activated for the second hospital support mission at OHSU on Jan. 14, 2022, Thompson said it made integrating back into the assignment quick and easy.

“It really was like coming home, and it ensured that we could really ‘get a leg up’ coming back here because there were relationships already established.”

This was crucial, as the Omicron variant sidelined much of the full-time staff at OHSU in late 2021 and into early 2022. Over 1,950 staff members tested positive, leaving the military members assigned to the hospital filling key roles and manning numerous important tasks.

“We couldn’t have done this without our National Guard partners,” said Andrea Dayot, Director of Occupational Health at OHSU. “There were times when our staff was so depleted and having this already trained staff from the Oregon National Guard literally saved the day.”

One of the critical needs during this time was for a mask fitting. By a twist of fate, Airman Lucas Nguyn, assigned to the Detachment 1, Chemical Biological Radiological Nuclear (CBRN) Defense Enhanced Response Force Package (CERFP) was already trained in this role and provided multiple tests each day, ensuring M-95 masks were properly and efficiently fit for the staff working throughout the hospital.

“He was the only person in the entire hospital who was able to do this for several weeks,” said Dayot, recalling this hectic point in the Omicron surge. “It’s bitter-sweet to see all our National Guard member’s missions come to an end because we don’t want to let any of them go home now!”

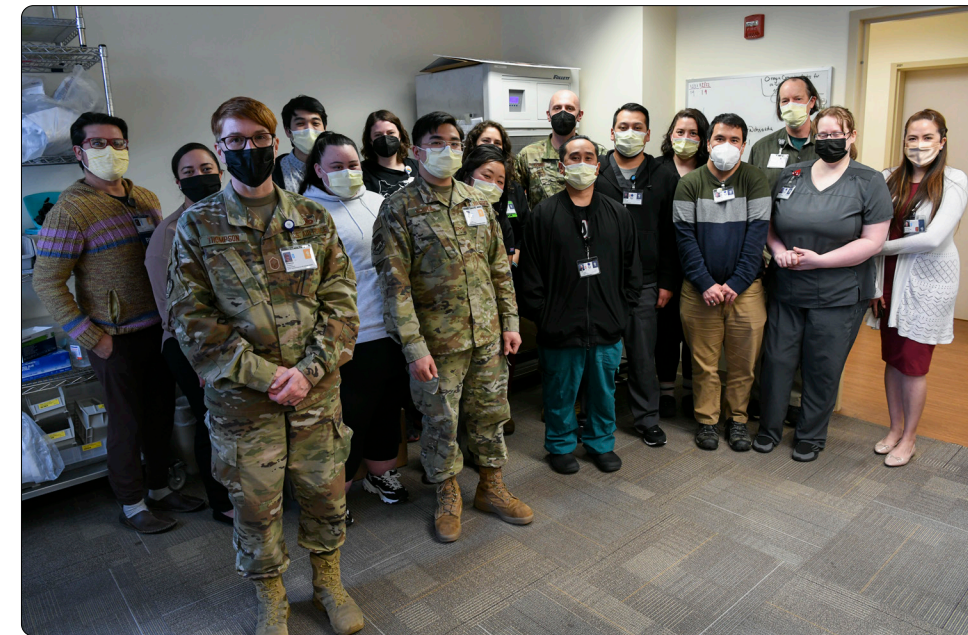


Photo by John Hughel, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs
Oregon National Guard members and OHSU staff members pause for a group photo, March 8, 2022, during the final week of Guard members hospital support.

Echoing this sentiment, Thompson said that there were multiple times when one of the service members on her team played a vital role in this life-saving duty. “It was an amazing feeling



Photo by John Hughel, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs
Oregon Air National Guard Senior Master Sgt. Rebecca Thompson takes time to talk to Oregon Health and Sciences University staff members, on March 8, working with service members helping support the Omicron variant surge at OHSU, Portland, Oregon.

to walk in the door, to be recognized, and to have staff members express profound relief to see us here.”

With a majority of the soldiers and airmen being traditional guardsmen,



Photo provided by Senior Master Sgt. Rebecca Thompson
Oregon Air National Guard Senior Master Sgt. Rebecca Thompson, assigned to the 142nd Wing, works on the flightline at the Portland Air National Guard Base.

Thompson said many of them have civilian skillsets that matched the jobs they were assigned to during this activation. “For some on this mission, they have ambulatory and patient records experience, but during previous mobilizations, we had medics and front line health providers working at mass vaccinations sites in early 2021.”

With the activation ending for most service members on March 11, 2022, it will come as a welcome break and the chance to get back their civilian jobs and other endeavors. For Thompson, she hopes to get back to her family farm in Rainer, Oregon.

“In-between all these deployments, in March of 2018, my husband and I purchased farmland to raise animals and transition into the next phase of life,” she said. “I am really hoping that we have turned the corner on the pandemic. I know almost everyone has put plans or goals on hold during the past couple of years.”

AZUWUR

Making History on History: USS Constitution Gets Its 1st Female Commander

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BOSTON, Mass. - Back in 1998, high schooler Billie Farrell posed for a photo beside USS Constitution, the world's oldest commissioned warship afloat, while visiting Boston from her hometown of Paducah, Kentucky. She had no idea that one day she would become the first woman to command it.

Farrell, now a Navy commander, took over the reins of the Constitution on Jan. 21. When the 2004 Naval Academy graduate was selected to command the historic ship, she found that old photo to be quite ironic.



Navy Cmdr. Billie Farrell, the USS Constitution's first female commanding officer, poses in front of the ship during a visit in 1998 during her sophomore year of high school. (U.S. Navy Photo)

"[The photo was taken] the year that a woman first assumed command of a combatant ship in the Navy," Farrell said, referring to Cmdr. Maureen A. Farren. "Women have been commanding ships for a long time now. I'm just fortunate enough that I'm the person that gets to be the first woman here to command this ship."

As a surface warfare officer, Farrell has done tours of duty on the guided-missile cruisers USS Vella Gulf, USS San Jacinto and USS Vicksburg; she served as the executive officer on the latter. While the technological differences between those ships and Constitution are quite large, she said she believes the foundations are still the same.

"Part of the reason Constitution was so successful [was because] her captains ran gun drills that made her very efficient, and she was able to get rounds out of the barrel faster than a lot of our adversaries at the time," Farrell said. "Because of that, she was able to win. A lot of what we do in the Navy today with drilling and making sure we're proficient — it all started on the decks of Constitution."

Constitution has been operating since 1797 and earned the nickname "Old Ironsides" during the War of 1812 when British cannonballs were seen bouncing off the ship's wooden hull. While the ship is no longer used for battle, its active-duty sailors give free tours to the public to promote the Navy's history and maritime heritage and to highlight the need for a sustained naval presence.



U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Skyler Okerman
Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro, left, poses for a photo with Cmdr. Billie Farrell, center, commanding officer, USS Constitution, and Cmdr. John Benda at USS Constitution's change of command ceremony, Jan. 21, 2022.

Spotlighting Female Leadership

Farrell commands a crew of about 80 sailors. Half of them are on their first assignment out of boot camp, and more than a third of them are women.

While Farrell thinks it's not unusual to see female commanders these days — there are currently about 70,000 active-duty women serving in the Navy, 26 of whom are ship commanders — she said the visibility of her new role can help further put the spotlight on the normalcy of it.

"I was always the senior at my commands. I never worked for a woman captain ... but just because I didn't see it, I knew you could do it," she said. "I think the nice piece here ... is it makes everybody look a little bit wider and say that women are in command of ships and can do this."

Considering March is Women's History Month, Farrell's history-making role has brought her a lot of media attention. She was recently on "Good Morning America" and "The Today Show," and her career was covered by Time Magazine.



U.S. Navy photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Joshua Samoluk
The USS Constitution is tugged out to Fort Independence on Castle Island, Mass., during Chief Petty Officer Heritage Week, Aug. 30, 2019. During the week, sailors teach the chief petty officer selects a variety of time-honored maritime evolutions while working aboard the ship.

"It's definitely been a whirlwind, but it's been such a positive outpouring of support from across the country," she said.

Constitution shuttered its planks to visitors twice during the COVID-19 pandemic, but it's been back open for tours since spring of 2021. It began offering virtual tours, too.

"The nice thing with all the media attention is it's reminded people that the ship is here and open," Farrell said. "We're doing the tours and highlighting those active-duty sailors serving onboard."

Preserving the Past, Preparing For the Future

So, what's a typical tour of duty like for a Constitution sailor? Sometimes it's a throwback to the olden days, like when they do sail training -- climbing the ship's masts and rigs and unfurling the sails so they can cruise into Boston Harbor. But they continue their training for modern-day Navy needs, too.

"I ask my sailors to be an 1812 sailor some days, but I also have to

make sure they're a 2022 sailor and ready to go do the mission the Navy asked of them," Farrell said.

Constitution sailors work closely with the USS Constitution Museum and the Naval History and Heritage Command on training materials that prepare its sailors to pass the ship's history on to the public.

"They actually have to pass the board through the different ranks here, but we don't dictate how they give their tours," Farrell said. "Whatever piece of Constitution history they find interesting, we let them take that and run with ... the story that they feel passionate about."

She said because of that, it's likely that visitors who come more than once won't get the same tour twice.

"The fun part of the job is going to talk to people," Farrell said, "and my sailors do a phenomenal job at giving the tours."

Celebrating 225 Years

This year, the crew plans to celebrate the ship, which will turn 225 in October, with several events that highlight Constitution's history and accomplishments. There are seven public cruises set for this summer, including one on July 4th and one specifically for Vietnam veterans.

"We go about six miles in Boston Harbor. There's a fort there. We exchange a 21-gun salute. Sometimes we get a flyover if we're fortunate enough," Farrell said. "The sailors climb and talk to guests and just enjoy being underway on the ship."

Farrell's time at the helm of the Constitution is just beginning, and she said she couldn't have gotten there without help.

"I was blessed with great mentors. Having positive people that want you to do well and push you and help you find opportunities is extra important," she said, offering advice to others coming up in the service: "Look for those people and surround yourself with those people."

The Constitution is maintained by its crew, as well as members of the Naval History and Heritage Command. Naval Support Activity Crane near Bloomington, Indiana, has a grove of white oak trees that it preserves to use for repairs that might be necessary for the ship.