

GUARD LIFE

SEPTEMBER 2023



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Above: U.S. Army Sgt. Manuel Ramirez with Bravo Battery, 3rd Battalion, 112th Field Artillery Regiment, 44th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, New Jersey Army National Guard, prepares ammunition during a live fire exercise with M119A3 howitzers at the eXportable Combat Training Capability exercise at Fort Drum, New York. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Wayne Woolley)

Cover: A U.S. Air Force F-16C Fighting Falcon with the New Jersey Air National Guard's 177th Fighter Wing flies behind a 108th Wing KC-135R Stratotanker during a refueling mission over the Atlantic Ocean April 21, 2022. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Matt Hecht)

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CAVALRY DEFEATS AL-SHABAAB ATTACK

STORY BY MARK C. OLSEN
NEW JERSEY NATIONAL GUARD PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE

The attack had failed before it even began.

It was Sept. 30, 2019, at Baledogle Military Airfield in the Federal Republic of Somalia. Prior to the explosion, New Jersey Army National Guard Soldiers with Charlie Troop, 1st Squadron, 102nd Cavalry Regiment, had been preparing a convoy to meet the Somali police chief and other leaders in a town 25 miles from the base. The 102nd was part of the New Jersey Army National Guard's Task Force Warrior deployment in support of Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa.



U.S. Army Soldiers with the New Jersey Army National Guard's Charlie Troop, 1st Squadron, 102nd Cavalry Regiment, conduct a medical evacuation drill in coordination with a U.S. Air Force HH-60G Pave

Before deploying to Baledogle, C Troop had approximately 70 soldiers. Because of their mission, Soldiers including fire direction officers from the 3rd Battalion, 112th Field Artillery Regiment were assigned to the unit. In addition, a mortar platoon from the 2nd Battalion, 113th Infantry was added. By the time the 102nd arrived in Somalia, the unit's strength had swelled to more than 160 Soldiers.

They would play a crucial role during a terrorist attack. The airfield, located 60 miles northwest of the Somali capital

Hawk helicopter at Baledogle Military Airfield, Federal Republic of Somalia, July 5, 2019. (U.S Army photo by Capt. London Nagai)

"We hadn't even got into our vehicles when the VBIED (vehicle-borne improvised explosive device) went off," said Lt. Col. Richard Karcher, commander, Task Force Warrior, New Jersey Army National Guard.

This meeting was part of Capt. London Nagai, commander, C Troop, and 1st Sgt. Paul Greenberg's plan to work with people in the communities surrounding the airfield. During their visits, the Soldiers brought a new well pump to a village and soccer balls for the children. The 102nd Cavalry was there to support the Somali people in addition to performing their mission.

"Nagai had devised a plan to expand their defensive posture outside the fence line," said Karcher. "He was doing stuff right that you don't see lieutenant colonels or colonels doing correctly."

Previous page photo: A U.S. Army Soldier with Charlie Troop, 1st Squadron, 102nd Cavalry Regiment, New Jersey Army National Guard, stands in a crater created by a Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Device at Baledogle Military Airfield, Federal Republic of Somalia, Sept. 30, 2019. (U.S Army photo by Capt. London Nagai)

of Mogadishu, was built by the Soviet Union in the 1970s for use by both the Somali Air Force and the Russians. Today, it is home to multi-national forces combatting al-Shabaab, al-Qaeda's Somali-based branch. New Jersey Army National Guard Soldiers were assigned there to provide base security and force protection. They manned towers, entry control points, mortars; and stood by with a quick reaction force.

And they began practicing.

"We would rehearse at all hours of the day and with live rounds," said Nagai. "Charlie Troop exercised and refined this scenario, along with others, over and over again."

There was no question the base would be attacked: Al-Shabaab militants had been probing the base perimeter to locate defensive positions and get a picture of where and how the American Soldiers would respond.

"The hardest part for me was having to tell Soldiers we couldn't fully engage the enemy when they would use recon by fire or other aggressive tactics," said Nagai. "We didn't want to show them how we would respond."

Intelligence was telling them that when al-Shabaab

"The key was not engaging with the enemy until they were committed to utilizing a specific route that would ultimately be a fatal choice for them."

Capt. London Nagai, commander, Charlie Troop, 1st Squadron, 102nd Cavalry Regiment, New Jersey Army National Guard

actually attacked, it would be big.

Sept. 30, 2019's attack exceeded their predictions.

The first explosive-filled truck had driven toward the airfield, but it had exploded prematurely.

"We saw a plume of smoke to the northwest of the airfield," said Karcher. He said later that he knew it wasn't mortars: "It felt like artillery."

As the attack began, a United States Air Force plane was preparing to take off and a United Nations flight was inbound. Additionally, there were more than 50 construction workers repairing the runway.

Clearing the runway became a top priority.

Staff Sgts. Charlie Connolly, Marvin Monroig, and Steven Plumer moved the civilian workers to safety, while 1st Lt. Robert Angelini, Staff Sgt. Wydell Register, and Sgt. Pablo Enriquez used their vehicle to provide additional cover. The Air Force plane was ordered to immediately take off and the UN aircraft was diverted.

"I ran to the operations center and Nagai was already maneuvering Charlie Troop toward the explosion site," said Karcher. "He had the vehicles that were originally part of the convoy going to the airfield; he started moving additional personnel to the towers, which covered the approach to the airfield, and he closed all the entry control points. Snipers were also posted base-wide."

Charlie Troop's quick reaction force headed toward the airfield, while the mortar teams headed to their mortar pits. They

had hoped for the best, but more importantly, had prepared for the worst – which was now in progress.

The 102nd Cavalry Squadron's operations team used cameras on a tethered aerostat to observe the battlefield. With this real-time information, they were able to respond immediately to any threat.

"Our base defense platoon immediately started to fill all the fighting positions along the base perimeter," said Nagai. "The key was not engaging with the enemy until they were committed to utilizing a specific route that would ultimately be a fatal choice for them."

During all their practice, the New Jersey Soldiers had planned for the route al-Shabaab was taking. The advantage would be theirs and not al-Shabaab's.

"Over time, using covert and overt means, we forced the enemy to attack in the way we wanted and, in a place, most advantageous to us," said Nagai.

Ten minutes later, a second truck broke off from a convoy carrying construction materials. The truck had masked its approach by using the convoy as camouflage. The driver was heading directly toward the airfield's fence line.

"We saw the truck's windows were up-armored," said Karcher. The armor was designed to enable the driver to get close to his target before detonating the truck

Sgts. Robert Keil and David Kerwien, Cpl. John Hackett and Spc. Tyler Chochran began firing on the approaching truck.



U.S. Army Soldiers with the New Jersey Army National Guard's Charlie Troop, 1st Squadron, 102nd Cavalry Regiment, set up an 81mm mortar in preparation for a fire mission in support of a reconnaissance patrol at Baledogle Military Airfield, Federal Republic of Somalia, June 24, 2019. (U.S Army photo by Capt. London Nagai)

One month earlier, Nagai and his team had an engineer platoon dig a wide, deep ditch around the airfield. Any vehicle smaller than a tank would get stuck in the ditch before it got to the fence line.

Sure enough, the engineers' work paid off: the enemy truck drove into the ditch.

As C Troop's weapons fire tore into the truck, the driver attempted to back out, but with no luck. Finally, it stopped moving. "The driver was definitely dead," said Karcher.

Five minutes later, al-Shabaab remotely detonated the truck.

The explosion was larger than the

“There is no question that if it hadn’t been for Charlie Troop, al-Shabaab would have destroyed the aircraft and killed as many people as possible.”

Lt. Col. Richard Karcher, commander, Task Force Warrior, New Jersey Army National Guard

first and the concussion rocked the base. It blew a hole in the fence line 200 yards wide. If the construction workers had not been moved, they would have been killed or injured.

Immediately, Sgts. Robert Karch and Christopher Charles led medics to move the injured away from the battle.

“The explosion was massive,” said Karcher. “On the other side of the base, there was an old Russian hanger that had reinforced doors – those doors were concaved in because of the explosion.”

The crater was 20 feet deep, and shrapnel was found base-wide. The Federal Bureau of Investigation later examined samples and estimated that between 4,000 to 5,000 pounds of explosive had been used.

“At the time, it was the largest VBIED used on the African continent,” said Karcher.

Ten minutes later, another truck approached the hole in the fence line and the 102nd immediately opened fire. The driver stopped at the crater left by the VBIED. A tarp covering the truck bed flew up and approximately 12 uniformed al-Shabaab militants jumped out carrying rocket propelled grenades, machine guns, assault rifles, hand grenades, and ammunition.

“They came out looking very surprised,” said Karcher. “The leader looked really pissed off.”

They had assumed they would be on the base. Instead, they were outside the fence line.

“They were completely unorganized; they weren’t taking cover,” said Karcher.

The sniper team of Staff Sgt. Nicholas Swanson and Sgt. James O’Brien immediately began firing on the militants.

While all this was going on, Karcher and Nagai were able to see the militant leader yelling into his cell phone.

Five minutes later, half the militants were dead, while the rest had taken cover behind the berms and began firing their RPGs.

“At that point, Capt. Nagai looked at me and said: ‘we need to use our mortar systems,’” said Karcher.

Clearance was given and Sgt. 1st Class James Kube and Staff Sgt. Michael Ryno initiated mortar fire while under heavy fire. Simultaneously, Sgt. 1st Class Zak Goeb and Sgt. Oleksander Mishyn’s fire support team called in multiple danger close indirect fire missions while forward observer Spc. Naman Singh called for fire while under direct contact.

“The mortar crews had pre-determined points already registered,” said Karcher. “They started firing and that was it.”

After the cease fire was called, Karcher’s team looked at the truck using the television cameras. They couldn’t see what was in the back, but after consulting with the United States Marine Corps unit assigned to the base, they determined that it was another VBIED, which was subsequently destroyed by an Air Force remotely piloted aircraft.

In less than an hour, it was over. None of the 102nd had been injured and the al-Shabaab unit had been wiped out. Not since World War II had a New Jersey unit been involved in a combined arms battle.

“The success on that day was not due to luck or heroism,” said

Nagai. “It was due to disciplined Soldiers executing a well-rehearsed battle drill, that was exercised and refined over and over again.”

The day after the attack, al-Shabaab posted a letter and a video claiming that the militants were successful, and that they had gained access to the base, destroyed aircraft, and killed many Americans and Israelis.

“This attack, though ineffective, demonstrates the direct threat al-Shabaab poses to Americans, our allies, and interests in the region,” said U.S. Army Maj. Gen. William K. Gayler, director of operations, U.S. Africa Command.

“There is no question that if it hadn’t been for Charlie Troop, al-Shabaab would have destroyed the aircraft and killed as many people as possible,” said Karcher.

Three months later, a similar attack took place at a base in Kenya. Al-Shabaab was successful in getting a VBIED on the runway where it destroyed two aircraft and killed three people, including an American Soldier.

In the days after the battle, the New Jersey Soldiers received, depending on their branch, the Combat Infantry Badge, the Combat Action Badge, or the Combat Medical Badge for their involvement in the largest battle against al-Shabaab militants since Operation Gothic Serpent in 1993.

Al-Shabaab attempted no follow-up attacks. Seventy-six days later, the 102nd Cavalry Squadron returned home on Dec. 12, 2019.

In a ceremony at home station, Westfield National Guard Armory, Westfield, New Jersey, Aug. 8, 2020, the Charlie Troop Soldiers received awards ranging from Bronze Stars to Army Commendation Medals with Combat device for their actions during the attack.

“The discipline and bravery of the Soldiers was something I will never be able to fully explain and something I am sure I will never see again,” said Nagai.



306TH ACTIVATED AT 177TH

BY SENIOR MASTER SGT. ANDREW MOSELEY, 177TH FIGHTER WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE

The 177th Fighter Wing is the latest wing to receive an active duty squadron, made up of approximately 50 Airmen, as part of the Air Force’s Total Force Integration.

In a ceremony at the 177th, July 8, 2022, the 306th Fighter Squadron, from Air Combat Command’s 495th Fighter Group, 15th Air Force, was activated, marking the 10th and final full fighter squadron association under Air Combat Command’s restructuring “Program Change Request 12-01”.

“Total Force Integration is a critical piece of our nation’s combat readiness,” said Col. Derek B. Routt, 177th Fighter Wing commander. “Combining active duty personnel with the 177th Fighter Wing enhances our mission of providing dominant airpower for America.”

The 306th will support the increased maintenance requirements of the 177th’s F-16 Fighting Falcon aircraft fleet, bolstering the fleet’s flying combat readiness.

“The 495th Fighter Group’s mission is to produce experienced fighter pilots by leveraging the TFI concept, which relies upon the experience resident within the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve,” said Lt. Col. Anthony M. Mulia, 495th Fighter Group deputy commander. “By embedding active-duty pilots, maintenance, and support personnel into Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve Command Fighter Wings, Air Combat Command, gains more experienced fighter pilots. In return, the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve Command benefit from the infusion of people and flying hours provided by the Air Force.”

This relationship between the active-duty and Air National Guard is known as an Active Association, where the active-duty Air Force provides personnel, and the host Guard or Reserve wing supplies the aircraft and associated support equipment.

The new squadron will be made up of aircraft maintainers, several pilots, a squadron commander, a senior enlisted leader, and several support personnel. With the exception of the commander, senior leader and the commander’s support staff,



U.S. Air Force Col. John Galloway, 495th Fighter Group commander, left, hands a guidon to Lt. Col. Daniel O’Neal, F-16 fighter pilot with the 495th Fighter Group, right, activating the 306th Fighter Squadron July 8, 2022 at the 177th Fighter Wing, Atlantic City Air National Guard base, New Jersey. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Airman Hunter Hires)

all active-duty Airmen will be fully integrated into the 177th, working alongside their Air National Guard counterparts.

“The addition of the 306th Fighter Squadron maintenance Airmen provides the 177th Maintenance Group with the opportunity to bolster our team of professional Airmen, whose understanding of our peer competitors will further advance our ability to generate global power,” said Lt. Col. Brian Cooper, 177th Maintenance Group commander.

In March 2013, the 495th Fighter Group began as nine individual detachments organized under the active-duty Air Force 20th Fighter Wing. Three years later, the Group was formally activated and charged

with providing administrative control and oversight over its expanding number of geographically-separated units. With the 306th’s activation, the 495th will consist of 10 operational fighter squadrons at 23 locations.

“I’m extremely excited for the next step in the 177th Fighter Wing’s integration into the Total Force,” said Lt. Col. Gregory P. Poston, II, 177th Operations Group commander. “With the activation of the 306th Fighter Squadron, we will have a full Active Association here. I can’t wait to welcome them into our team and look forward to building a lasting relationship that will improve the Air Force as a whole in both training and combat employment.”

“Combining active duty personnel with the 177th Fighter Wing enhances our mission of providing dominant airpower for America.”

COL. DEREK B. ROUTT
COMMANDER, 177TH FIGHTER WING

WAIN TAKES COMMAND OF BRAVO BATTERY

U.S. Army Capt. Jennifer Wain, second from left, assumes command of Bravo Battery, 3rd Battalion, 112th Field Artillery Regiment, New Jersey Army National Guard, during a change of command ceremony at the National Guard Armory in Flemington, New Jersey, Sept. 18, 2022. Wain is the first woman commander of an artillery unit in the New Jersey National Guard. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Pfc. Michael Hayes)

ACEs High

By Mark C. Olsen
New Jersey National Guard Public Affairs Office

U.S. Air Force Staff Sgts. Nicholas McLaughlin, right, and Robert Burkett, both electrical and bioenvironmental technicians with the 177th Fighter Wing, New Jersey Air National Guard, work on an F-16C Fighting Falcon at Boca Chica Naval Air Station, Florida, Jan. 11, 2022. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Master Sgt. Andrew J. Moseley)

The 108th Wing and the 177th Fighter Wing conducted their first Agile Combat Employment (ACE) exercise between Naval Air Station Key West, Fla., and Muñiz Air National Guard Base, Puerto Rico, Jan. 21-23, 2022.

This was followed with a hot pit refueling demonstration at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst Feb. 1.

“The Air Force is changing the way they deploy,” said Lt. Col. Brian Grossweiler, commander of the 119th Fighter Squadron. “The intent of this Agile Combat Employment is to go to a location, set up an operation, adapt, and execute.”

In December 2021, the Air Force’s Lemay Center released Air Force Doctrine Note 1-21, Agile Combat Employment. This document details how the Air Force intends to mitigate a peer adversary’s technological advancements in intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance and all-domain long-range fires, a reduced global force footprint, and the increased risk to air bases with aircraft no longer able to operate from relative sanctuary. Units Air Force-wide are now adapting to this new warfighting construct.

“We were able to make this trip happen in one week, from when they said go, the trip is approved,” said Grossweiler. “Our Logistics Readiness Squadron did an incredible job with booking airlift and getting load plans built in less than a week’s time to get our operations and maintenance teams down here.”

The training, part of a month-long series of exercises, was designed to enhance the combat readiness of the 108th’s KC-135R Stratotanker crews from Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, and



Above: U.S. Air Force F-16C Fighting Falcons, from the New Jersey Air National Guard’s 177th Fighter Wing, fly in formation over the Bahama Islands after refueling with a KC-135 Stratotanker from the 108th Wing, enroute to Naval Air Station Key West, Florida, Jan. 23, 2022. The aircraft took off from the 156th Wing, Muñiz Air National Guard Base, Puerto Rico, after completing the NJANG’s first Agile Combat Employment training exercise. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Airman Hunter Hires) Below: U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Michael Baldwin, left, and Senior Airman Matthew Holmes, both phase docks F-16 crew chiefs with the 177th Fighter Wing assemble an F-16 main wheel at Boca Chica Naval Air Station, Florida, Jan. 11, 2022. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Master Sgt. Andrew J. Moseley)



“The Air Force is changing the way they deploy. The intent of this Agile Combat Employment is to go to a location, set up an operation, adapt, and execute.”

LT. COL. BRIAN GROSSWEILER, COMMANDER, 119TH FIGHTER SQUADRON



Above: A U.S. Air Force KC-135R Stratotanker with the 108th Wing, is refueled at the 156th Wing, Muñiz Air National Guard Base, Puerto Rico. The KC-135R participated in an Agile Combat Employment training mission in Puerto Rico. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Airman Hunter Hires) Below: A U.S. Air Force Airmen with the 108th Wing signals the aircrew in a 108th Wing Stratotanker during an Agile Combat Employment demonstration at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey., Feb. 1, 2022. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Matt Hecht)



“Hot pit refueling offers a much quicker turnaround time and reduces the ability of the enemy to target us as we maneuver through the region.”

Lt. Col. Matthew Brito, Commander, 108th Operations Support Squadron

the 177th’s F-16C Fighting Falcon maintainers, pilots, and logisticians from the Atlantic City Air National Guard Base.

The Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst demonstration showed how KC-135R Stratotankers are refueled under the new doctrine. After landing – without shutting down the aircraft or any of its systems – the K135R is immediately refueled enabling faster support of air operations.

“Hot pit refueling offers a much quicker turnaround time and reduces the ability of the enemy to target us as we maneuver through the region,” said Lt. Col. Matthew Brito, commander of the 108th Operations Support Squadron. “Because of the smaller footprint, we can take on gas, as well as deliver fuel at a location quickly, then move on.”

Tying this all together are multi-capable Airmen – Airmen that can perform multiple skills outside their own specialty. The intent is to train Airmen to be more productive and reduce the number of Airmen in harm’s way in austere environments.

“Basically, what we do is empower people and we say here’s the mission, how do we get there and we figure it out,” said Grossweiler.

Creating essentially a leaner, meaner force.

“What’s really exciting for us is that we’re at the ground level of doing it for the Air National Guard,” said Senior Master Sgt. Jake Wheeler, senior enlisted leader with the 177th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron. “We get to share lessons learned with the National Guard Bureau and with Air Combat Command and we can help shape the future of Agile Combat Employment when that doctrine translates down into policy at our functional level.”

NJNG SUPPORTS ALBANIAN NATO CREVAL

STORY AND PHOTO BY SGT. BRUCE DADDIS, 444TH MOBILE PUBLIC AFFAIRS DETACHMENT



U.S. Army Capt. London Nagal, second from right, bilateral affairs officer, New Jersey Army National Guard, shares a handshake with Brig. Gen. Arben Kingji, Albanian Chief of Defence, in Biza, Tirana, Albania, Sept. 14, 2022. As part of the U.S. Department of Defense State Partnership Program, more than 30 New Jersey National Guard Soldiers participated in various military-to-military events as the Albanian Armed Forces conducted their NATO Validation Exercise.

As the Soldiers from the New Jersey Army National Guard arrived in Albania Sept. 12, 2022 to support the Albanian Armed Forces during their critical NATO Combat Readiness Evaluation Exercise (CREVAL), they were joined by their counterparts from the U.S. Army’s 4th Security Force Assistance Brigade (SFAB) out of Fort Carson, Colorado.

The two Army components have both served in key advising and support roles with the Albanian Armed Forces in preparation for the CREVAL, as the New Jersey National Guard continues a more than 20-year state partnership with Albania, while the SFAB Soldiers have been in country for the last six months embedded with the Albanian Light Infantry Battalion Group.

In July, the two organizations were able to work together to demonstrate war-fighting functions for the Albanians at the 44th Infantry Brigade Combat Team’s (IBCT) eXportable Combat Training Capability (XCTC) exercise at Fort Drum, New York.

“XCTC really opened the door for the New Jersey Guard and SFAB partnership,” said Sgt. 1st Class Jonathan Martinez, of the 4th SFAB. “Our working relationship paid dividends and it was an eye-opening experience. I don’t think our success would be as great as it has without the New Jersey National Guard SPP already being here on the ground.”

Leading up to the NATO CREVAL, the SFAB Maneuver Advisor Team was able to build tremendous relationships with the AAF.

“SFAB Soldiers would find counterparts in the Albanian formations and shape training and expectations,” said Capt. Peter Habsburg-Fortier of the 4th SFAB. “Working with the Albanians

is a home run. They are 100-percent welcoming and are quick to make change and affect change based on our recommendations and there’s so much trust between our organizations. Also, working with New Jersey is just one of the best opportunities ever, and we are looking into future opportunities. We’re all here to support Albania and it was just put into action”

The same sentiment was echoed by Albanian Maj. Enerjoll Harka, Executive Officer with 2nd Battalion, LIBG, “It was crucial to have the U.S. here, the SFAB and New Jersey together, because we did it all with this team. They both have trained us and have given us their experience and if we succeeded, we did it because of them. These are the best relationships we could have.”

The official NATO assessment of the CREVAL is forthcoming, but all parties are optimistic about the success of the Albanian forces. Their performance during the exercise was a demonstration of Army force-readiness with highly sophisticated inter-component and international collaboration in critical advising and support roles.

“Our partnership with Albania continues to strengthen every event, and we continue to assist the Albanian Armed Forces as they increase their defense capabilities,” said Lt. Col. Nicholas Calenicoff, executive officer of the 44th IBCT, New Jersey Army National Guard. “The joint and combined efforts of the Albanian Armed Forces, New Jersey Army National Guard, 4th SFAB, and NATO are the strongest they have been. I am very proud of the accomplishments the Albanian Armed Forces have achieved this past year with the assistance from our organizations.”

New Jersey partnership announced with the Republic of Cyprus

By Capt. Amelia Thatcher, New Jersey National Guard Public Affairs Office

The New Jersey National Guard has been selected as the new state partner for the Republic of Cyprus, the third-largest island in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea.

Through the National Guard's State Partnership Program, National Guard units throughout the United States conduct military-to-military engagements, guided by U.S. State Department foreign policy goals, and develop person-to-person ties with their partners.

"Global partnerships are more important than ever before," said Gov. Philip D. Murphy. "Our New Jersey National Guard service members are tried-and-true leaders on the military and civic fronts. They work hard every day to ensure peace and safety, both at home and abroad, and will bring that same dedication and collective expertise to this partnership."

The Republic of Cyprus is New Jersey's second SPP partner. The New Jersey National Guard recently marked 21 years of formal partnership with the Republic of Albania.

"I am excited to welcome the Republic of Cyprus to the New Jersey family," said Brig. Gen. Lisa J. Hou, D.O., The Adjutant General of New Jersey. "As a longstanding participant in the State Partnership Program, we bring experience and motivation to every engagement,



Marios Lysiotis, third from left, Republic of Cyprus Ambassador to the United States; Col. Georgios Ioannou, left, Defense, Military, Air and Naval Attaché; and Maria Savvidou, Deputy Chief of Mission, right; welcomed Brig. Gen. Lisa J. Hou, D.O., second from left, The Adjutant General of New Jersey; Brig. Gen. Timothy A. Coakley, center, Director of the Joint Staff; State Command Sgt. Maj. Mark Leonard, third from right, and Maj. Gyasi Mann, Cyprus Project Officer, have their photo taken during a visit at the Embassy in Washington, D.C., Nov. 30, 2022. This selection demonstrates the growing partnership between the Republic of Cyprus and the United States. (Photo courtesy Republic of Cyprus Embassy)

as well as steadfast commitment to the principles of freedom and security."

The U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs Celeste Wallander met with the Republic of Cyprus's Ambassador to the United States Marios Lysiotis last month to officially announce that the Republic

of Cyprus was paired with the New Jersey National Guard. This selection demonstrates the growing partnership between the Republic of Cyprus and the United States on issues such as maritime security, counterterrorism, and natural disaster and emergency response.

The Republic of Cyprus and its strategic location, European Union membership, and support for Western democratic principles makes it an important partner for the United States.

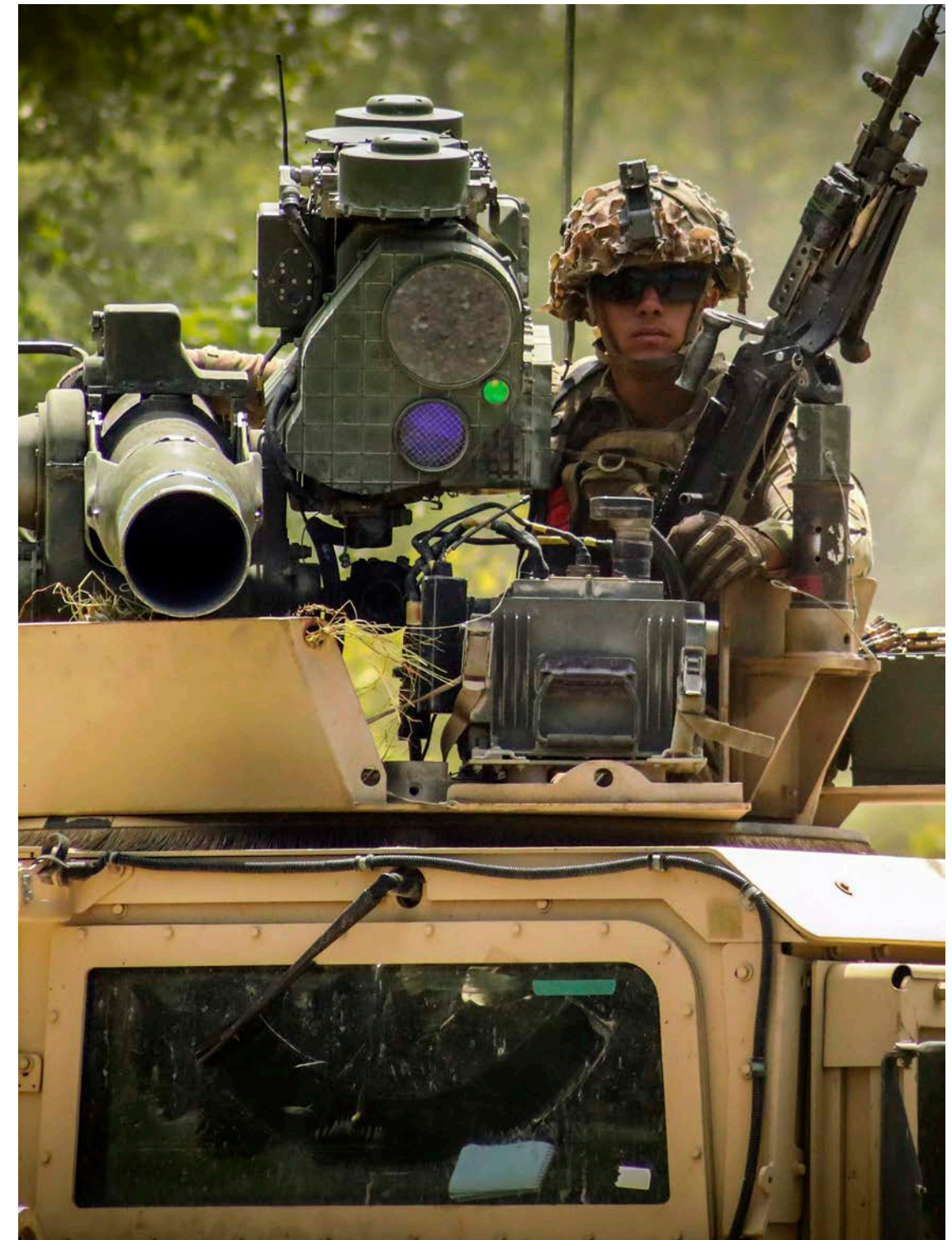
Advocates from more than a dozen U.S. civic, commercial, and academic organizations supported the match between New Jersey and the Republic of Cyprus, while more than 8,300 Citizen-Soldiers and Citizen-Airmen of the New Jersey National Guard support diverse lines of effort in a wide array of hometown and overseas missions.

"I am very excited to welcome the Republic of Cyprus to the New Jersey Family."

**BRIG. GEN. LISA J. HOU, D.O.
THE ADJUTANT GENERAL OF NEW JERSEY**

XCTC

Photos by the 444th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment



A U.S. Army Soldier with Delta Company, 2nd Battalion, 113th Infantry Regiment, 44th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, New Jersey Army National Guard, returns from convoy training during the eXportable Combat Training Capability exercise July 21, 2022 at Ft. Drum, New York. More than 2,500 IBCT Soldiers participated in the training event, which enables brigade combat teams to achieve the trained platoon readiness necessary to deploy, fight, and win. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Pfc. Seth Cohen)



Above: U.S. Army Soldiers with Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 113th Infantry Regiment, prepare to assault a building during a training exercise July 12, 2022. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Benjamin Martinez)

Below: A U.S. Army Soldier with Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 113th Infantry Regiment, communicates with his team at the XCTC. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Bruce Daddis)



Above: U.S. Army Soldiers with Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 113th Infantry Regiment, provide suppressive fire during live-fire training July 12, 2022. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Bruce Daddis)

Below: U.S. Army Soldiers with Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 114th Infantry Regiment, dismount from a UH-60M Black Hawk before moving on to their next objective. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Benjamin Martinez)





Above: U.S. Army Soldiers with Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 113th Infantry Regiment, clear a building during an XCTC training exercise July 12, 2022. Below: U.S. Army Soldiers with Charlie Battery, 3rd Battalion, 112th Field

Artillery Regiment, conduct a CH-47F Chinook sling load operation in coordination with the New York Army National Guard's 3rd Battalion, 126th Aviation Regiment. (U.S. Army National Guard photos by Sgt. Benjamin Martinez)



Above: U.S. Army Soldiers with Bravo Battery, 3rd Battalion, 112th Field Artillery Regiment, 44th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, load a 105 mm M119A3 howitzer at Fort Drum. Below: Bravo Battery Soldiers with the 3rd Battalion, 112th

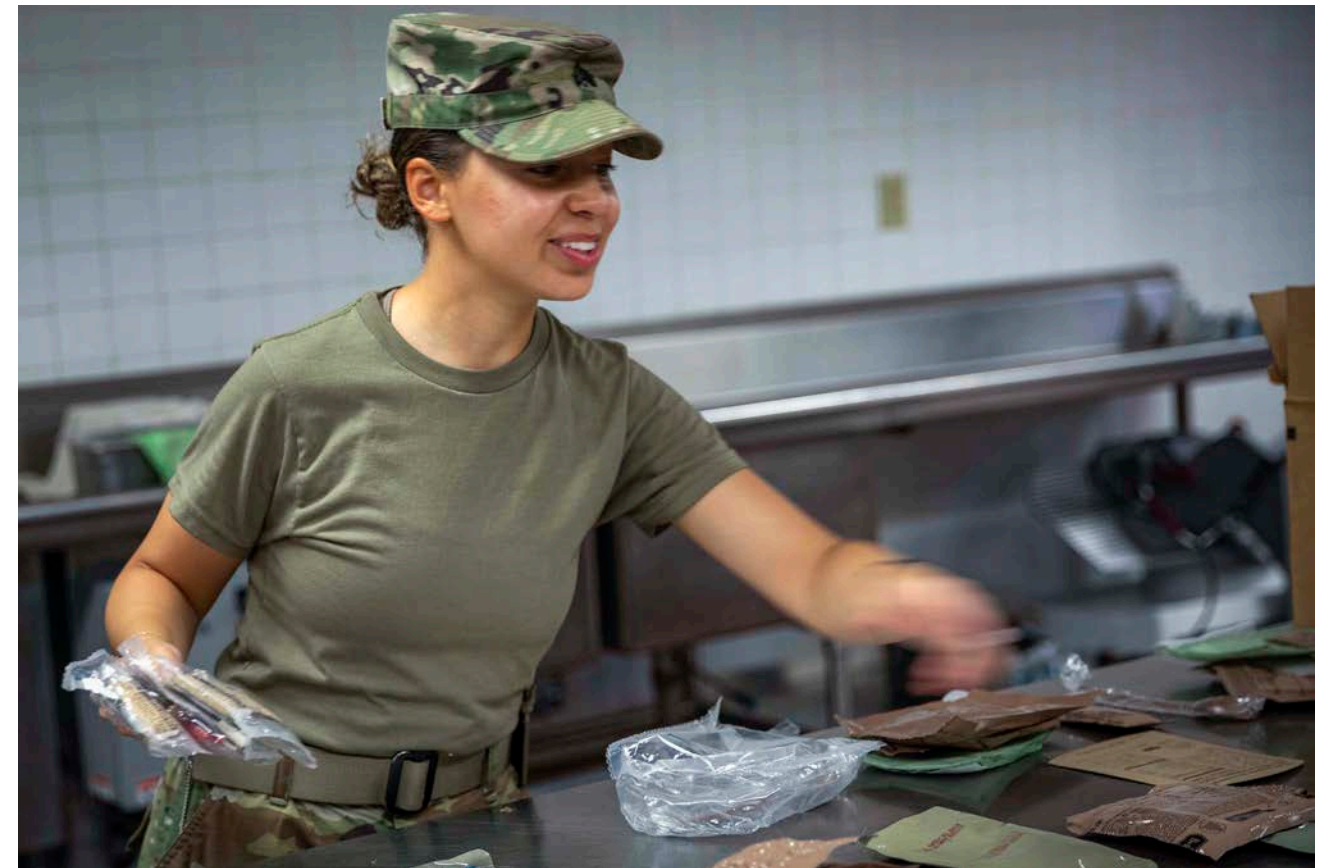
Field Artillery Regiment, fire a M119A3 howitzer. The M119A3 has a digital fire control system and an inertial navigation system for self-location. (U.S. Army National Guard photos by Sgt. Benjamin Martinez)





Above: U.S. Army Soldiers with the 1st Squadron, 102nd Cavalry Regiment, carry 120 mm mortar rounds prior to a live fire training exercise July 24, 2022. Mortars provide high angle, indirect fire support.

Below: 1st Squadron Soldiers with the 102nd Cavalry Regiment, fire M120 mortars during a mortar live fire training exercise July 24, 2022, N.Y. (U.S. Army National Guard photos by Pfc. Seth Cohen)



Above: U.S. Army Sgt. Jailyn Sanchez with the 902nd Field Feeding Platoon, 42nd Regional Support Group, prepares ingredients during the "Golden Spoon" competition, July 25, 2022. Below: U.S. Army Sgt. Dajung Pak with the 902nd

Field Feeding Platoon, prepares a dish for the unit's "Golden Spoon" competition July 25, 2022. (U.S. Army National Guard photos by Sgt. Bruce Daddis)



The face of aviation



U.S. Army women aviators stand for a portrait on Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey, March 19, 2021. Front row: Chief Warrant Officer 2 Nicole C. Richardson, 1st Lt. Natalie C. Fahlberg, 1st Lt. Eden E. Blazovic, and Warrant Officer 1 Helen Rojas; back row, Chief Warrant Officer 4 Guinevere R. Pherson, Chief Warrant Officer 4 Kristina S. Sofchak, Sgt. Melinda M. Gulsever, 2nd Lt. Victoria H. Styers, and 1st Lt. Larissa M. Fluegel. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Matt Hecht)

Command performance

Photos by Spc. Michael Schwenk, New Jersey National Guard Public Affairs Office



U.S. Army Warrant Officer 2 Zachery Appleton, 63rd Army Band, New Jersey National Guard, directs the Albanian Armed Forces Band, along with 63rd Army Band Soldiers, during a ceremony for the 78th Liberation Day of Tirana in Tirana, Albania, Nov. 17, 2022. Soldiers and Airmen of the

New Jersey National Guard are also working with Albanian counterparts on cyber defense, medical training, and military readiness as part of the Department of Defense's State Partnership Program.



Above: U.S. Army Sgt. Andrew Challman, left, with the New Jersey National Guard's 63rd Army Band, rehearses alongside members of the Albanian Armed Forces Band in Tirana, Albania, Nov. 14, 2022. The 63rd Army Band rehearsed with the Albanian Armed Forces Band to prepare

for a ceremony for the 78th Liberation Day of Tirana. Below: U.S. Army Warrant Officer 2 Zachery Appleton, 63rd Army Band, New Jersey National Guard, directs the Albanian Armed Forces Band.





Above: U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Dexter Hendricks, right, with the New Jersey National Guard's 63rd Army Band, shakes hands after a rehearsal with the Albanian Armed Forces Band.
Below: U.S. Army Warrant Officer 2 Zachery Appleton, 63rd

Army Band, directs the Albanian Armed Forces Band and members of the 63rd Army Band during a ceremony for the 78th Liberation Day of Tirana in Tirana, Albania, Nov. 17, 2022.



Above: U.S. Army 1st Sgt. Kencis Kleinschmidt, with the New Jersey National Guard's 63rd Army Band, performs with the Albanian Armed Forces Band Nov. 17, 2022. Below: U.S. Army

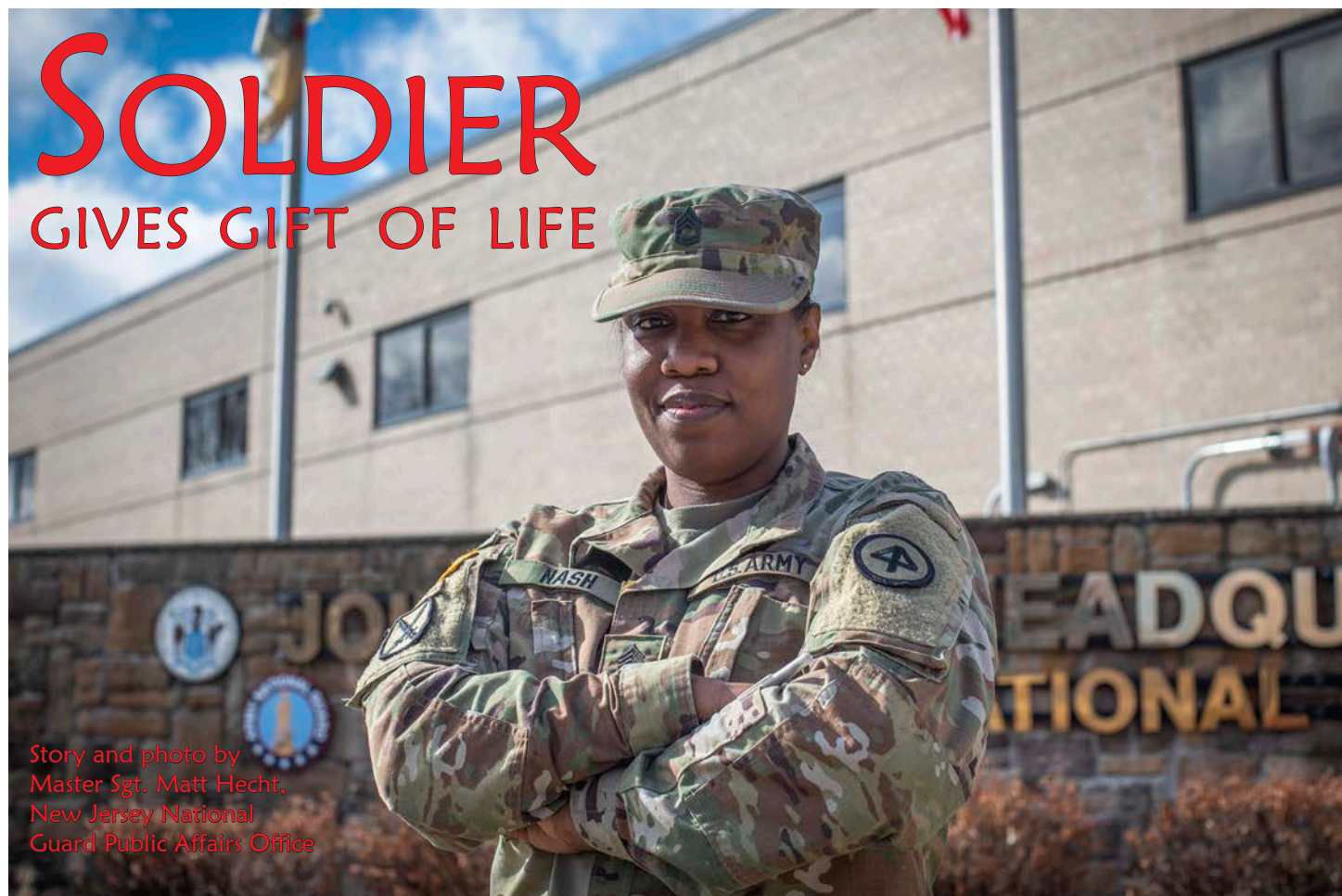
Soldiers with the New Jersey National Guard's 63rd Army Band and the Albanian Armed Forces Band pose for a group photo in Tirana, Albania, Nov. 17, 2022.



FX TRAINING

U.S. Army Combat Medics Spc. Isaac E. Ochoa, left, and Spc. Heather R. Tarasewicz both with the 1st Battalion, 114th Infantry Regiment, 44th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, train with a Trauma FX patient simulator at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey, April 9, 2022. The training mannequin has the ability to mimic human body functions. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Matt Hecht)

SOLDIER GIVES GIFT OF LIFE



Story and photo by
Master Sgt. Matt Hecht,
New Jersey National
Guard Public Affairs Office

The New Jersey National Guard held a Black History Month observance with the theme “Black Health & Wellness,” Feb. 25, 2022, at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey, with guest speaker Sgt. 1st Class Quintessa Nash.

She spoke with fellow Soldiers and Airmen about her experiences as a bone marrow donor.

“I love raising awareness,” said Nash “And I hope to inspire others to do the same.”

A bone marrow transplant can save the life of someone with a blood cancer such as leukemia or lymphoma.

Nash, a Citizen-Soldier with the New Jersey Army National Guard, works full-time as a bureau chief with the Information Services Division at the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs.

In 2011, after a friend was diagnosed with cancer, Nash was inspired to submit a sample to see if she was a match for someone in need.

“I was surprised to find out that Blacks and Hispanics have lower numbers for matching donors in the registry,” said Nash.

According to the National Bone Marrow Registry, there is an urgent need to diversify the number of donors, increasing the likelihood patients can find a match. Many ethnic groups are underrepresented, making it difficult to find matches.

In a recent survey on the site, only 25% of Black Americans are able to find a matching donor.

Nearly a decade later, Nash was contacted by Salute to Life, an organization that works with military personnel, family members, Department of Defense civilians, Reservists, Coast Guard,

and National Guard members to facilitate bone marrow and stem cell donations.

Salute to Life describes itself as an organization that is designed to accommodate the scheduling and security needs of military personnel and donors never bear the cost of registration or donation. Since 1991, they have recruited more than a million donors and coordinated more than 8,000 cellular donations.

“When I got a call that I had a match, they don’t tell you anything about your recipient except for gender and age,” said Nash.

To boost the numbers of stem cells in her blood, Nash spent six days receiving injections of Filgrastim, a drug that increases the blood’s white cell count.

She donated via a peripheral blood stem cell procedure, where blood is removed through a needle in one arm and passed through a machine that collects only the blood-forming cells. The remaining blood is returned through a needle in the other arm.

Nash had some aches and pains for a few days, but said the procedure was easy and she was happy to do it.

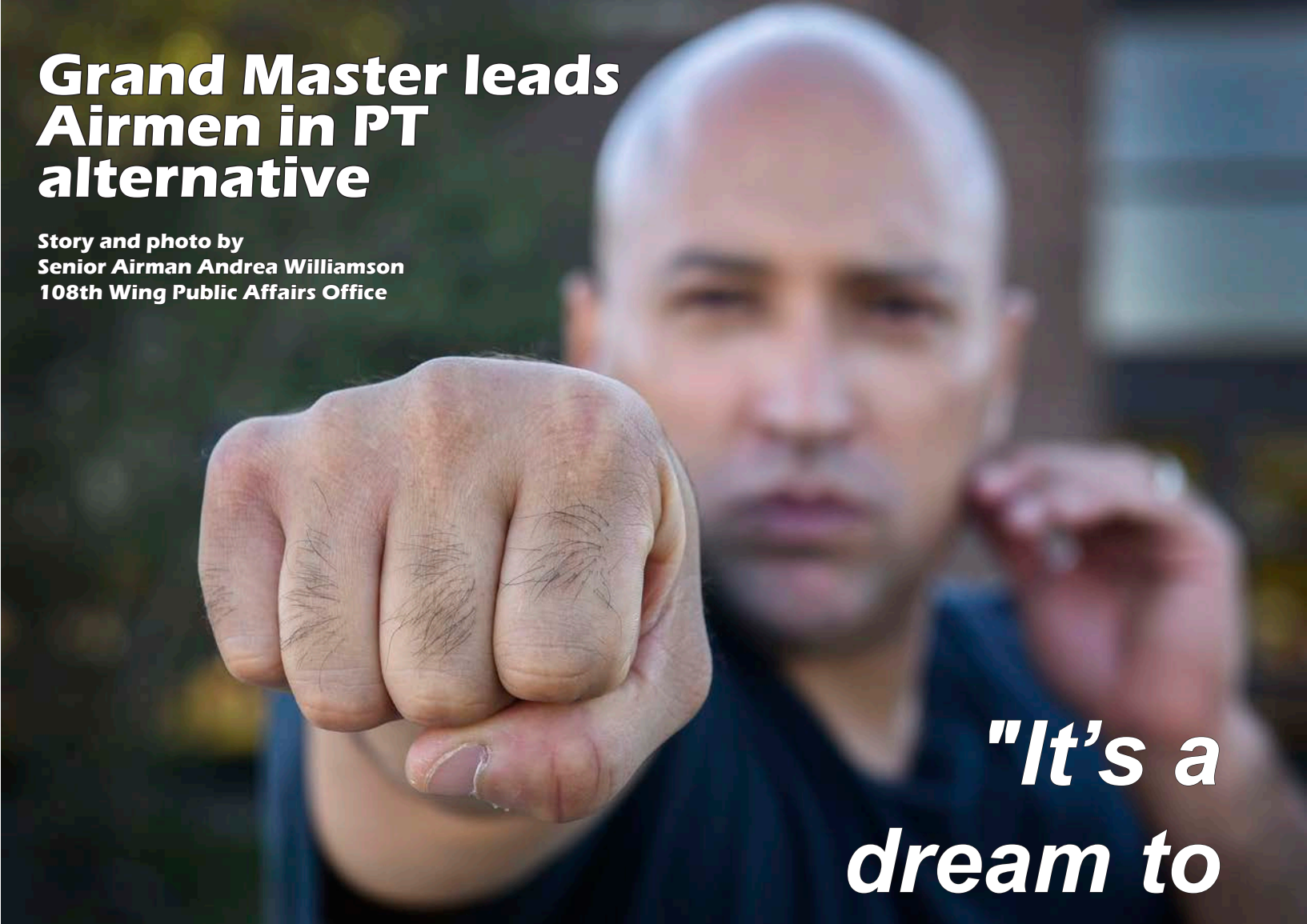
“It felt great because I understand what the families and recipients go through,” said Nash. “Being able to remove some of that worry is an amazing feeling.”

After the ninth month, donors can contact Salute to Life to learn the how the patient is doing.

“I’m hoping this story will have a happy ending. I will not know my recipient’s status until this August.”

Grand Master leads Airmen in PT alternative

Story and photo by
Senior Airman Andrea Williamson
108th Wing Public Affairs Office



**“It’s a
dream to
share
what I
know.”**

Airman and Grand Master. At the 108th Wing, Staff Sgt. David E. Correa serves as a network systems operator with the 140th Cyber Operations Squadron. He also holds a 7th-degree Black Belt in Taekwondo; black belts in Hapkido and Judo, and a brown belt in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu.

Correa is now sharing his expertise and passion for martial arts with the 108th Wing.

Christened, “War-Out” – a play on the term “workout” – Correa leads a structured group session that serves as an alternative to traditional physical training, every Saturday afternoon of uniformed training assemblies at the McGuire Fitness Center.

“My goal is to give them a good workout – for 45 minutes,” said Correa. “It will be an intermediate level guided training, that’s not too advanced, but not too basic. No sparing, contact, or grappling. Instead, I will teach technique.”

Correa, who has spent more than 30 years in boxing and martial arts, credits

his physical strength and mental resilience to the art form.

“It kept me off of the streets,” said Correa. “My friends got caught up with drugs and crime and ended up in bad places. My dedication to the discipline has taught me a mindset that I’ve carried with me throughout my life.”

In 2015, Correa decided it was time to close the doors to the gym where he served as a mentor and grew as a fighter – earning more than 500 trophies – and joined the New Jersey Air National Guard. his identity and principles as a martial artist made him an ideal fit for military service.

“The five “tenets” of Taekwondo are courtesy, integrity, perseverance, self-control, and to possess an indomitable spirit, or strong will,” said Correa. These traits overlap with the Air Force core values, so the transition was seamless. Correa states: “I love the Air Force.”

As a result, he was determined to give back. “It’s a dream to share what I know,” said Correa.

Correa’s workouts have been a success. “I like how he is giving back, creating comradery outside the office,” said Maj. Robert Gatlin, assistant director of operations, 140th Cyber Operations Squadron, and a “War-Out” participant. “I will be back.”

Senior Airman Rafael Sanchez, 140th Cyber Operations Squadron, notes, “It was a great workout. I usually do basic weight lifting for PT, but I figured I’d try this today and I will definitely be back.”

NIGHT FIRE



A U.S. Army Soldier with the 1-114th Infantry Regiment, 44th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, fires the M249 squad automatic machine weapon during a night weapons qualification on Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey, Oct. 22, 2022. Soldiers with the 1-114th Infantry Regiment conducted day and night range qualifications during their drill weekend. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Michael Schwenk)



NJ Guard serves Vineland veterans

Photos and story by Mark C. Olsen
New Jersey National Guard
Public Affairs Office

James Dow watches as U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Edward D. Simms places a bowling ball on a bowling ramp in front of him.

Dow, a New Jersey Veterans Memorial Home at Vineland resident and Simms watch as the ball knocks down all but one pin.

For Simms, working in Life Enrichment at the Veterans Memorial Home in Vineland, New Jersey, was as far as he could get from his regular duties as an intelligence analyst with the 204th Intelligence Squadron, 108th Wing, New Jersey Air National Guard.

"I love this mission," said Simms. "I'm happy to get up every single day to serve these people, our veterans. They say to me, 'Thank you for your service' and I say, 'No, thank you, you paved the way

for people like me to be here and do what I'm doing.'"

The Vineland mission is part of the New Jersey National Guard's Joint Task Force COVID Guardian, which includes supporting New Jersey's three Veterans Homes and two transitional housing programs at Veteran's Havens North and South.

"You learn compassion and patience."

**SENIOR AIRMAN ANDREA A. WILLIAMSON
PUBLIC AFFAIRS SPECIALIST
108TH WING**

Amidst the surge of Omicron variant cases of COVID-19, the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs decided to assign more than 150 additional New Jersey National Guard Soldiers and Airmen to the Homes. Currently, 50 Soldiers and 22 Airmen are serving at Vineland.

"They came in at very critical time and they were a real benefit," said Matthew Daher, assistant chief

executive officer, New Jersey Veterans Memorial Home at Vineland. "They are well trained, well mannered, and very respectful of our veterans."

Unlike previous missions, this one has required more training from the States' Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen: 35 would be trained as certified nursing assistants because that was where the greatest need was.

"They were willing to take on an assignment that for some of them, was a far from their normal lives as it could possibly get," said Allyson Bailey, chief executive officer, New Jersey Veterans Memorial Home at Vineland. "Especially those who became trained in being a CNA."

One of those CNAs is Senior Airman Andrea A. Williamson, a public affairs specialist with the Public Affairs Office, 108th Wing.

"At first, I was nervous to start taking care of the residents," said Williamson. "But once you really get into it, then you can laugh and connect with them."

Williamson works in Honor Circle where most of the residents require total care. There she is doing one-on-one care, which includes bathing and dressing the residents, helping them get up and into their wheelchairs and feeding them.

"Everything from turning the TV so they can see it, or brushing their



U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Edward D. Simms, 204th Intelligence Squadron, 108th Wing, New Jersey Air National Guard, watches as James Dow, a resident at the New Jersey Veterans Memorial Home at Vineland, pushes a bowling ball down a ramp at the Home's bowling alley Feb. 24, 2022. Simms is serving the Home's residents in the Life Enrichment Department.

hair," said Williamson. "Any little thing you do is appreciated."

It also means spending time with them. "You learn compassion and patience," said Williamson.

"I am amazed to see the CNA Soldiers and Airmen filling in a role that is not easy to fill," said Vineland officer in charge Army 1st Lt. Jeffrey M. Silver. "Being upbeat, engaging with the residents in a positive manner."

Silver, who serves with the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 42nd Regional Support Group, continued, "Their resiliency has been phenomenal."

"The residents love them," said Lisa Williams, director, Life Enrichment, New

Jersey Veterans Memorial Home at Vineland. "They've been interacting with residents, assisting them to and from their activities, they've helped us in decorating for special events; they've integrated and become part of our family."

In addition to being CNAs, the Soldiers and Airmen have been working in Food Services, Infection Control, Information Technology, Life Enrichment, Logistics, and Testing.

The Vineland Home is unique among New Jersey's three veterans' homes. Since it opened in 1899, it has served veterans from every war since the Civil War. In 2005, it was completely rebuilt as a state-of-the-art nursing home. Today, 249 residents live at the Home.

For Master Sgt. Kara Kauffman, Maintenance Squadron, 177th Fighter Wing, serving at Vineland is a perfect. Kauffman is a traditional Guardsman whose civilian job is working for the Gloucester County Veteran Affairs.

"I love it. I have a passion for vets," said Kauffman. "I love working with the residents, I love seeing their faces, this is a great feeling, an honor to be here."

"This is a place that will always have a special place in my heart," Simms added.



Above: U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Marquay L. Cherry, Maintenance Squadron, 177th Fighter Wing, New Jersey Air National Guard, prepares sandwiches in the Food Services Department at the New Jersey Veterans Memorial Home at Vineland in Vineland, New Jersey, Feb. 24, 2022. Opposite page: U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Andrea A. Williamson, 108th Wing, New Jersey Air National Guard, assists Vineland resident Orlando Campanella as a certified nursing assistant Feb. 24, 2022.

AT4 TRAINING

PHOTOS BY MASTER SGT. MATT HECHT, JOINT FORCE HEADQUARTERS-AIR PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE



Above: A U.S. Army Soldier with the 1st Battalion, 114th Infantry Regiment, 44th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, fires a M136 AT4 light anti-tank weapon at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey, June 3, 2022. The M136 is a disposable recoilless rifle used

by the infantry against armored and other combat vehicles, as well as landing craft, helicopters, and aircraft. The M136 AT4 fires an 84 mm high explosive anti-armor warhead, which consists of a free-flight, fin-stabilized, rocket-type cartridge.



Above: U.S. Army Spc. Alexander Chanthakhounsy, an anti-armor specialist with the 1st Battalion, 114th Infantry Regiment, practices sighting a M136 AT4 at Joint Base

McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey, June 3, 2022. Below: A U.S. Army Soldier with the 1st Battalion, 114th Infantry Regiment, fires a M136 AT4.





Dress right dress: Training for protocol success

By Capt. Amelia Thatcher, New Jersey National Guard Public Affairs Office

Elizabeth Simpson, Headquarters, Department of the Army Protocol Program Training Manager, center, poses for a group photo with New Jersey Army and Air National Guard personnel at the Joint Training and Training Development Center on Joint Base McGuire-

Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey, Sept. 22, 2022. The protocol seminar covers events such as military ceremonies, retirements, promotions, changes of command, and community events. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Michael Schwenk)

The New Jersey National Guard conducted a two-day protocol course at the Joint Training and Training Development Center, Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey, September 21-22, 2022. Sixty key personnel from the Army and Air National Guard, as well as New Jersey state employees from the Department of Military and Veteran Affairs, joined a cadre of subject matter experts in protocol topics ranging from military ceremonies to flag etiquette.

“We want to create a standard,” said Elizabeth Simpson, Headquarters, Department of the Army Protocol Program Training manager and primary instructor for the course. “It shouldn’t matter the rank or ceremony taking place; we should all be doing the same sequences, same flag lines, and same seating arrangements.”

Course participants, included unit executive officers and administrative support personnel for The Adjutant General of New Jersey, Deputy Adjutant General, and Assistant ATAGs (Army and Air). The joint staff and both Army and Air major subordinate commands were also represented.

“The subject I’ll take away the most from this course is

consistency,” said Air Force 2nd Lt. Tyshawn Jenkins, 177th Fighter Wing. “Regardless of branch or ceremony, we should stay consistent across the board.”

With 60 additional personnel trained in protocol, each organization gained an understanding of how to conduct state and unit events such as military ceremonies, retirements, promotions, changes of command, and community events. An overview of flag etiquette, invitations, awards and gifts also proved key.

“Flags are the number one topic,” Simpson said. “You have many ranks thinking it goes one way or another and it’s hard to figure out exactly what’s right. Another huge topic of discussion is seating. Everyone is trying to seat for a meeting or a ceremony and they want to get it right.”

Many Guard units do not have full-time, professional protocol employees on senior leader staffs; rather, it is an additional duty, explained Col. Lola Washington, commander, 108th Mission Support Group, New Jersey Air National Guard. “We need to spread the knowledge to our units to the extent possible, and as frequently as we can.”

“We want to create a standard.”

**ELIZABETH SIMPSON
HEADQUARTERS, DEPARTMENT OF THE
ARMY PROTOCOL PROGRAM
TRAINING MANAGER**

150th joins National Night Out

Photos by Spc. Michael Schwenk, New Jersey National Guard Public Affairs Office



U.S. Army Warrant Officer Ken Kozak, a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter pilot with the 1st Battalion, 150th Assault Helicopter Regiment, New Jersey Army National Guard, poses for a photo during the Red Bank Police Department’s National Night Out at Count Basie Fields in Red Bank, New Jersey, Aug. 2, 2022. National Night Out is an annual event to enhance the relationship between neighbors and law enforcement.



Above: U.S. Army Warrant Officer Ken Kozak, talks to Red Bank community members at the Red Bank Police Department's National Night Out.

Below: Family members and friend take photos as Kozak assists a future UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter pilot in putting on his helmet.



Above: U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Xavier Soto, a UH-60 Black Hawk crew chief with the 1st Battalion, 150th Assault Helicopter Regiment, poses for a selfie with a child.

Below: Attendees photograph a UH-60M Black Hawk helicopter as it takes off from Count Basie Field.



2022 MILITARY REVIEW

U.S. Army Soldiers of Alpha Battery, 3-112th Field Artillery Regiment, New Jersey Army National Guard, fire M119A3 Howitzers in honor of New Jersey Gov. Philip D. Murphy during the 2022 New Jersey National Guard Military Review at the National Guard Training Center in Sea Girt, New Jersey, Oct. 16, 2022. The Military Review is a long-standing tradition that allows the governor – the commander-in-chief of the state militia – the opportunity to review the Soldiers and Airmen of the New Jersey National Guard. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Michael Schwenk)



Today, you stand on the shoulders of history

BRIG. GEN. LISA J. HOU, D.O., THE ADJUTANT GENERAL OF NEW JERSEY

For more than 130 years, Soldiers and Airmen have stood in formation on this very parade field. They did so to demonstrate their strength, readiness, and willingness to answer the call of New Jersey and the United States. Whether here at home, or deployed overseas, we continue that tradition today.

Over the course of the last year, together we have encountered many challenges. More than two years into the COVID-19 pandemic, this year found Soldiers and Airmen serving in long term care facilities and protecting the most vulnerable among us. Our team supported the relocation of refugees from Afghanistan. We remembered, and will always remember, those who stood by our side in the Global War on Terrorism. As Soldiers, you demonstrated your proficiency in warfighting at the eXportable Combat Training Capability Exercise – or XCTC. As Airmen, you were among the first to retrain and deploy for the Agile Combat Exercise – or ACE. You deployed overseas, from Europe to the Pacific, and in each instance, through your actions, you embodied the spirit of service that represents the best of our big New Jersey family.

You worked with our partners from the Republic of Albania. You strengthened the bonds of friendship, professionalism, and common purpose. You advanced United States strategic objectives and supported our efforts to promote democracy in an increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous world.

And today, as we stand on this parade ground, let us remember the Soldiers and Airmen who are deployed overseas. May they, and equally important, may their families know, that the people of this great state pray for their safe return home and their mission success.

And we don't do it alone. Your achievements are made possible by the support of your families, your friends, your employers, and your communities. To those gathered here today who support our Soldiers and our Airmen, put simply, thank you. From the bottom of my heart, I cannot sufficiently express my gratitude for all that you do to make the New Jersey National Guard's success possible.

For in the end, we are a team. Whether serving in a squadron or a battalion, we are stronger when we work together. In the year ahead, I challenge you as leaders to look out for one another, to rely upon one another, and to work together to accomplish the missions to which you are assigned.

The American Soldier and Airman possess the abilities to plan, lead, and most importantly, to do what is right. That is what it means to be always ready, always there.



Top: New Jersey Air National Guard Airmen and New Jersey Youth ChalleNGe Academy cadets render honors as New Jersey Gov. Philip D. Murphy and Brig. Gen. Lisa J. Hou, D.O., the Adjutant General of New Jersey, enter parade ground at the National Guard Training Center in Sea Girt, New Jersey, for the 2022 New Jersey National Guard Military Review Oct. 16, 2022. Middle: Four U.S. Army UH-60M Black Hawk helicopters with the 1st Battalion, 150th Aviation Regiment, New Jersey Army National Guard, perform a flyover. Bottom: The New Jersey National Guard Color Guard presents the colors. (New Jersey National Guard photos by Mark C. Olsen)

21st WMD-CST passes evaluation

Photos by Mark C. Olsen, New Jersey National Guard Public Affairs Office



U.S. Army Sgt. Eric J. Boyer, survey team member, 21st Weapons of Mass Destruction-Civil Support Team, New Jersey National Guard, collects evidence at a simulated crime scene during an Army North-mandated training proficiency evaluation at the Monmouth County Sheriff Situational Training and Response Simulator Facility, Freehold, New Jersey, Nov. 1, 2022. The 21st identifies chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear substances; assesses and advises civil authorities on response measures to man-made or natural disasters.



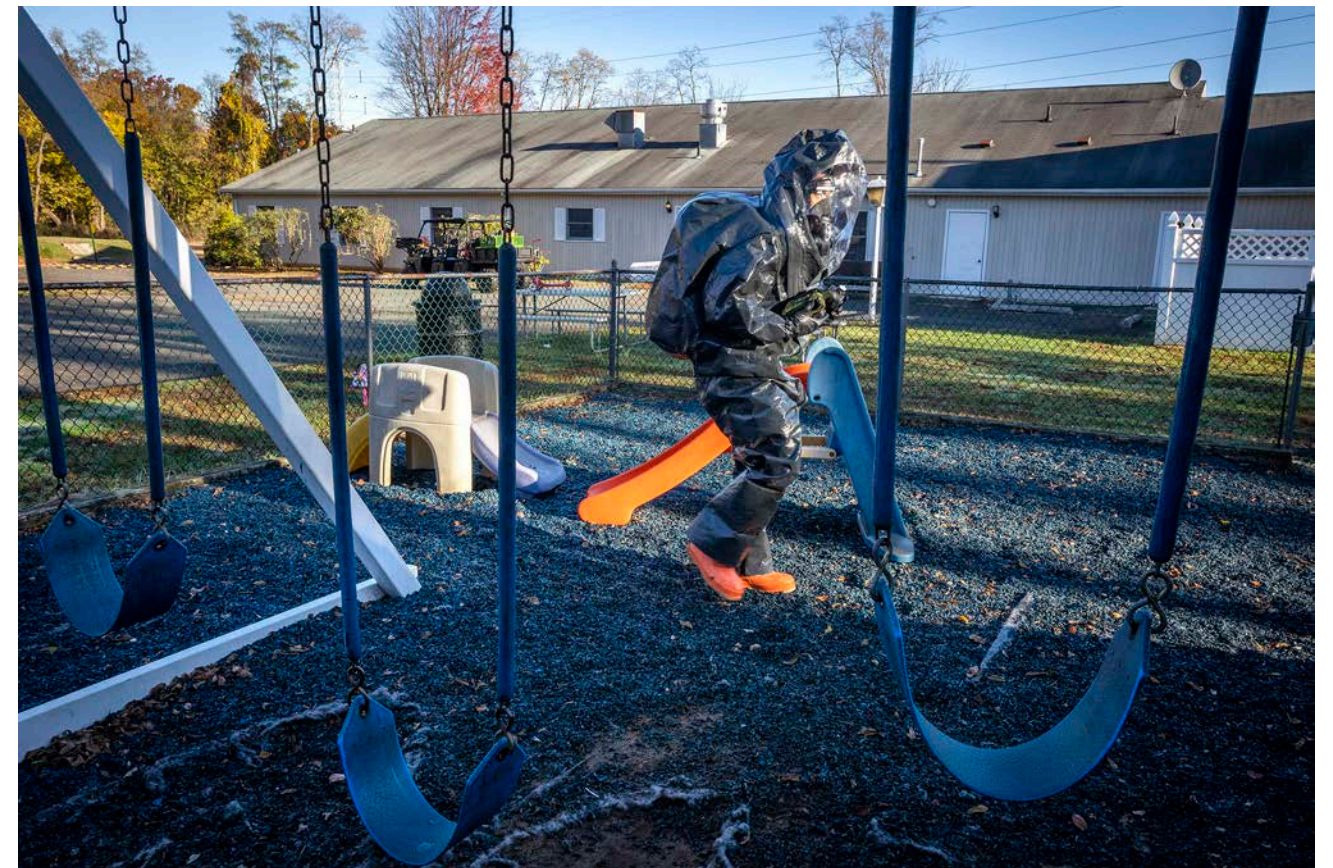
Above: U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Tricia C. Madrigal, survey team member, 21st Weapons of Mass Destruction-Civil Support Team, New Jersey National Guard, adjusts her BG4 rebreather at the Monmouth County Sheriff Situational Training and Response Simulator Facility, Freehold, New

Jersey, Nov. 1, 2022. Below: U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Jesus L. DeLaCruz, 21st WMD-CST, assembles a communications kit at the Monmouth County Sheriff Situational Training and Response Simulator Facility, Nov. 1, 2022.



Above: U.S. Army Sgt. William Liu, right, 24th WMD-CST, New York National Guard, assists Staff Sgt. Mauricio Caceres, survey team member, 21st WMD-CST, New Jersey National Guard, into his Level A Protective Suit at the Monmouth

County Sheriff Situational Training and Response Simulator Facility, Nov. 1, 2022. Below: U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Mauricio Caceres inspects a simulated crime scene at the Colts Neck Community Church, Colts Neck, New Jersey, Nov. 3, 2022.



NJNG activated to assist Youth ChalleNGe

Story and photos by Spc. Michael Schwenk, New Jersey National Guard Public Affairs Office

Thirty-two New Jersey National Guard Soldiers and Airmen were activated on state active duty orders to assist Youth ChalleNGe Academy Class 54 at the National Guard Training Center in Sea Girt.

The Soldiers and Airmen supported the first two weeks – the acclimation phase – at the academy, which orients the 77 cadet candidates to the environment and allows them to adjust to the physical, mental and social discipline needed to complete the 22-week course.

“National Guard support of Youth ChalleNGe is a force multiplier for our cadets,” said Earnest Williams, director, New Jersey Youth ChalleNGe Academy. “With their help, the at-risk young people of our great state can learn the tools to dream, believe, and achieve their goals.”

The mission of the New Jersey Youth ChalleNGe Academy is to train and mentor disengaged teenage youth so they become responsible and productive citizens of their community, state, and country.

“I’ve been assisting by teaching drill movements and how to march around the base,” said Spc. John Winters, 253rd Transportation Company, 42nd Regional Support Group. “Also, I took them through the obstacle course on base for a



U.S. Army Spc. John Winters, 253rd Transportation Company, 119th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 42nd Regional Support Group, addresses Youth ChalleNGe cadets at the National Guard Training Center, Sea Girt, New Jersey, Aug. 5, 2021.

“National Guard support of Youth ChalleNGe is a force multiplier for our cadets.”

Earnest Williams, director, New Jersey Youth ChalleNGe Academy



U.S. Army Spc. John Winters, 253rd Transportation Company, 119th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 42nd Regional Support Group, teaches Youth ChalleNGe cadets drill movements at the National Guard Training Center, Sea Girt, New Jersey, Aug. 5, 2021.

friendly competition in physical fitness.”

After the initial two-week phase, the candidates become cadets and advance to the residential phase of the academy. During the remainder of the course, the cadets have a disciplined schedule that develops their social, emotional, academic, and life skills.

Thirteen of the 32 state-activated service members will stay for 90 days to support the cadre training the cadets in building teamwork, close quarter drill, code of conduct, leadership, and followership, as well as physical fitness.

“I volunteered to come help with Youth ChalleNGe and again to spend the whole 90 days here because I thought it would be a good opportunity to work with kids,” said Spc. Francine Leyva, 50th Chemical Company, 42nd Regional Support Group. “So far it’s been motivating for me to see the cadets push themselves further after I encourage them during PT.”

NFL SALUTE TO SERVICE

PHOTOS BY SPC. MICHAEL SCHWENK
NEW JERSEY NATIONAL GUARD PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE



New Jersey National Guard Soldiers hold the American flag alongside other service members and veterans at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey, Nov. 6, 2022. Soldiers of the New Jersey National Guard participated in the pregame ceremonies at the New York Jets’ “Salute to Service” game.



Above: U.S. Army Spc. Jeremiah Long, 1-150th Assault Helicopter Battalion, New Jersey Army National Guard, cheers while carrying out the American flag alongside other service members and veterans at MetLife Stadium. Below:

U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Jessie Leek, left, and Spc. Jeremiah Long, both with the 1-150th Assault Helicopter Battalion, hold the American flag during pregame ceremonies at the New York Jets' "Salute to Service" game.



Above: Fireworks explode above MetLife Stadium as New Jersey Army National Guard Soldiers hold the American flag during New York Jets' pregame ceremonies. Below:

New Jersey Army National Guard Soldiers hold the American flag as U.S. Army AH-64D Apache helicopters perform a flyover at MetLife Stadium.



BEST WARRIOR



U.S. Army Sgt. Jared Fillmore, Delta Company, 1st Battalion, 114th Infantry Regiment, New Jersey Army National Guard, pulls a mock casualty during the Stress Shoot event at the Best Warrior Competition at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey, April 20, 2022. Twelve Soldiers and one Airman of the New Jersey National Guard were tested on marksmanship, land navigation, and other warrior tasks. The Best Warrior Competition recognizes Soldiers who demonstrate commitment to the Army Values, embody the Warrior Ethos and represent the Force of the Future. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Wayne Woolley)



Above: U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Kyle Morrison, Recruiting and Retention Battalion, fires an M17 pistol April 19, 2022. (New Jersey National Guard photo by Mark C. Olsen) Below: U.S. Army Sgt. Matthew Maurino, Headquarters and Headquarters

Company, 1st Battalion, 114th Infantry Regiment, perform low crawls during the Stress Shoot event April 20, 2022. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Wayne Woolley)





REPORT

U.S. Army Sgt. Jared Fillmore, Delta Company, 1st Battalion, 114th Infantry Regiment, salutes as he reports for the interview portion of the New Jersey Army National Guard's Best Warrior Competition at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey, April 19, 2022. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Diana Rossi)