

SPRING 2023

GUARD DETAIL

A CHRONICLE OF THE MISSISSIPPI ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD



VIETNAM COMMEMORATION 10 | SOUTHERN STRIKE 16

FEATURES



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Overcoming Tornado Damage

The devastation from a tornado that hit Amory, Mississippi at the end of March made national news. The Amory Armory, home of Headquarters Troop, 1st Battalion, 98th Cavalry Regiment, 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team, was left in ruins during a drill weekend.

The Guard Detail is the official magazine of the Mississippi National Guard. It is published three times a year with a circulation of approximately 13,250 copies and also distributed online via the Mississippi National Guard web and Facebook pages. Opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Army, Air Force, Army National Guard, Air National Guard or the Department of Defense.

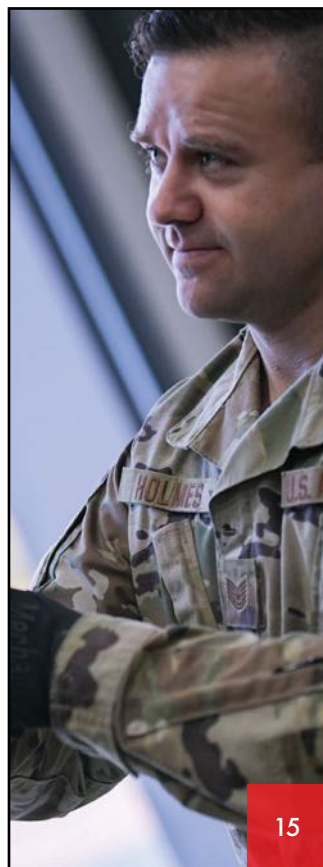
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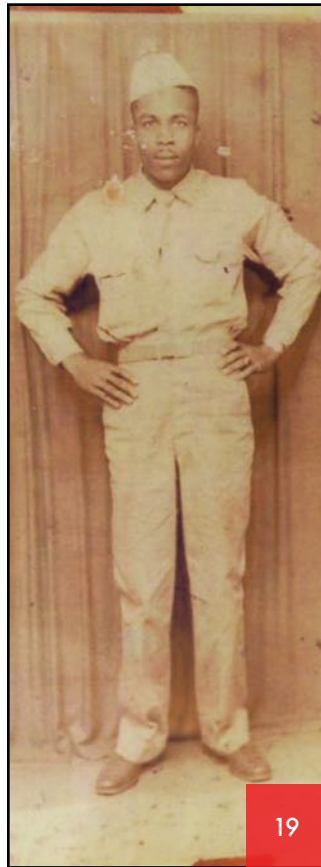
U.S. Air Force HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopter locates a downed pilot during an overwater search and rescue mission in Gulfport, Mississippi, as part of exercise Southern Strike, April 19, 2023. Southern Strike 2023 is a large-scale, joint multinational combat exercise that provides tactical-level training for the full spectrum of conflict. It emphasizes air dominance, agile combat employment, precision engagement, close-air support, command and control, personnel recovery, aeromedical evacuation, and combat medical support. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Shawn Keeton)



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Guardsman Always Serving

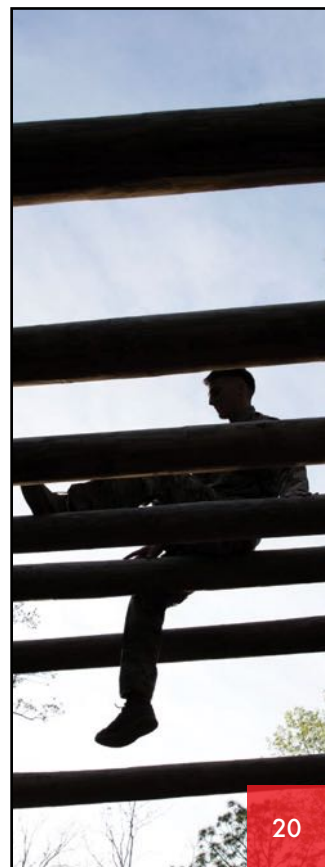
When a driver's car became stuck on the side of the road, car after car passed by without stopping. One Airman from the 172nd Airlift Wing couldn't leave the driver stranded, so he assisted in the best way possible.



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A First for Mississippi

After serving his country in World War II, Sgt. 1st Class Roja Steele came home to serve in his home state, becoming the first Black Mississippi National Guardsman.



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Mississippi Guard Selects Best Warrior

Sixteen competitors from the Mississippi National Guard and state partners from the Armed Forces of the Republic of Uzbekistan fought to the finish line in hopes of being named Mississippi's best warrior. In the end, there were only two.

Letter From THE EDITOR

A TIME OF RENEWAL AND GROWTH



"In order to have new growth in your life, you must cut away the old to make room for new."

~ Chaplain (Col.) Terry Partin
Mississippi National Guard

It is amazing how one person can influence another through their words, actions, and behaviors. Prior to the 184th Sustainment Command's deployment in 2018, Army Chaplain (Col.) Terry Partin was giving a Sunday sermon to Soldiers participating in Soldier Readiness events at Camp Shelby. In his sermon, Partin used the example of pruning roses as a strategy to bring new change into your life. He took a moment of reflection to explain how pruning roses was important for the vitality of a beautiful plant and flower. So much of that is true about our lives and the choices we make.

Pruning a rose bush is essential in encouraging new growth and ultimately improving the overall health and success of the plant. Partin described the cutting away of dead parts as a synonym for negativity and obstacles in one's life. That negativity and discouragement comes from your environment, personal habits, friends, relationships, and sometimes even family. Essentially, you must rip away the doubts, fears and behaviors that keep you from being your best, achieving your goals, and ultimately living your best life. The choice of change can be challenging and even abrasive at times, but the result is new growth, new opportunity, and

new joy. His words still resonate with me today.

As Chaplain Partin begins his transition back to civilian life as a military retiree, I want to take a moment of personal privilege to thank him for his dedication to the men and women of the Mississippi National Guard. He has served as a dedicated chaplain, a consummate professional, a mentor, and a friend to so many in our organization. I look forward to celebrating his retirement of over 20 years of esteemed military service, June 23rd at 10:00 a.m. in the Mississippi Armed Forces Museum. Chaplain Partin, thank you for your legacy of service, I am very grateful for the opportunity to serve with you.

Military members make up less than one percent of the national population. We are experts in our fields, carry compassion and patriotism for our country and serve as true professionals. This summer is no exception to the continued service by our Soldiers and Airmen. Members of the 168th Engineer Brigade, the 185th Aviation Brigade, the 112th Military Police Battalion, the 1st Battalion, 155th Infantry Regiment, the 255th Air Control Squadron, as well as many other service members, are all serving away from home this year. Thank you for your continued service to our state and nation. I am constantly reminded of the superior dedication and unwavering patriotism expressed by our service members and their families living in every county of our state.

For those of us serving at home this year, I encourage you to take advantage of this time with family and friends. Remember water safety during the summer holidays and family vacations. Accidents can happen when you least expect it. According to reports by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "drowning is the leading cause of death in children ages one to four with an estimated 4,000 fatal drowning accidents and approximately 8,000 nonfatal drowning accidents a year." I encourage you to remain vigilant by ensuring your little ones, family and friends are wearing the proper floatation devices. Safety is paramount for a happy and enjoyable summer break.

Thank you, Mississippi National Guard Soldiers, Airmen and families, for your devotion to duty and continued exemplary service supporting our great state and nation!

Lt. Col. Deidre D. Smith
Editor-in-Chief

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Mississippi National Guard





State Command Chief,
Mississippi Air National Guard
John W. Myers

Fellow Guardsmen,

It is an honor and privilege to address you as this affords me an opportunity to give back to you, the Mississippi National Guard.

Soon after high school, I received a phone call from one of my brothers who let me know I had four choices in life, and they were the four branches of the military. At the time, I was a follower with no direction and headed down an off-course path. Two months later I was in Air Force basic training, after which I spent four years on active duty. The military provided a structure in my life I desperately needed, and little did I know it, but this time would lay the foundation for a career in the military.

I did separate from the Active Duty with no plan to ever serve again. Then, September 11, 2001, took place. I felt a strong calling to return to serving my country and joined the MS Air National Guard as an Aerial Porter/Air Transportation Specialist/2T2. It wasn't long after joining when our Flight was tasked with a one-year presidential activation to multiple locations. I soon found myself in Balad, Iraq. As a young non-commissioned officer (NCO), I would have never imagined the opportunities that would come my way, the relationships I would form and the window for my investing in others. Over the course of our deployment, I spent much time in prayer and decided that I would work to wear the uniform every day until retirement came.

Over the course of the next few years, I was able to promote through the ranks and shadow some of the greatest senior NCOs in our nation. This afforded me the opportunity to take the rank of master sergeant, become a first sergeant and ultimately become a chief master sergeant. Through each of these opportunities I operated at the Flight, Squadron, Group, Wing and now State Joint Force Headquarters levels.

It is important that you

understand, every day is a job interview and leadership is always watching. I speak from experience that if you work hard, people will work to bring you to their team. If you feel the calling to spend an entire career in your Air Force Specialty Code (AFSC) or Military Occupational Specialty (MOS), then be dedicated in that through your career. For me, I never planned on any other job than being a "PORT DAWG," but again, through much prayer, I was led to other career opportunities, and I am forever grateful for those who supported and pushed me beyond what I thought I was capable of accomplishing.

My final challenge to you is to take time and consider a career commitment to the service of our nation and the MSNG. Be deeply committed to the cloth of our nation every day, regardless of your status. Finish your career, stronger than you started.

You are our future! The next greatest generation of NCOs and young enlisted Airmen and Soldiers possess ideas about how to best forge into the future. Never be shy about bringing up ideas. Do not fear trying and failing. Failure is simply an opportunity to fine tune a process.

Our peer and near peer advisories are equally committed to disrupting our way of life and dismantling our great nation. What these adversaries do not possess is the American spirit and the heart of a Patriot. They will never truly understand "LAND OF THE FREE, BECAUSE OF THE BRAVE." It is my honor to serve alongside you and I look forward to meeting you in the coming days.

AIR POWER

CMSgt John W. Myers
MS ANG State Command
Chief

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER



"The one constant in life is change." - Heraclitus

Indeed, change is one of the few constants of life. It is a guarantee. There are some changes we can prepare for and there are others that are thrust upon us, but change is a constant. Summer is a season for change. In the military, it is PCS season as many military families move with new assignments. There are changes of command and changes of responsibility.

Retirement is another major change. We recently had the privilege of conducting a "Change of Stole" ceremony as Army Chaplain (Col.) Terry Partin prepares for retirement in June 2023. It is a great honor for me to serve as the new state chaplain for the MSARNG, it is also a major change for my family.

Some change is good. Some change is not. There's an old sea story in the Navy about a ship's captain who inspected his sailors, and afterward told the chief boatswain's mate that his men smelled bad. The captain suggested perhaps it would help if the sailors would change their underwear occasionally. The chief responded, "Aye, aye sir, I'll see to it immediately!" The chief went to the sailors' berth deck and announced, "The captain thinks you guys smell bad and wants you to change your underwear. Pittman, you change with Jones; McCarthy, you change with Witkowski; and Brown, you change with Schultz. Now get to it!" Some change is helpful. Some change is not.

Changes like retirement or family moves are significant emotional events that can sometimes bring about intense feelings of isolation. So, how can we face the challenges of change and be successful? What

are some principles to help us in and through times of change? I would like to offer a few.

Accept that change is a normal part of life. As we accept this reality, it is easier to move forward when faced with change. As they say, "The grass is always greener where you water it." Celebrate the past, but don't live there. Keep a focus on the possibilities of the future.

Connect with Others. Cultivate relationships with family and friends. Withdrawal from others leads to isolation and loneliness. There are many advantages to learning from others who have already been where you are. Not all lessons have to be learned the hard way.

Have a Solid Foundation. Jesus stressed the importance of foundations for living in His story about two men who endured the storms of life. The one who built on a solid foundation was the one who thrived when the winds blew. Build your life on solid principles that are founded in truth.

Be Courageous. If it were easy, everyone would do it. Face your fears with the certainty of faith and a tenacity that embraces change with the boldness of a lion. Be strong and courageous!

Never Give Up. Too many have given up when they were so close to winning the battle. Winston Churchill famously said, "If you're going through hell, keep going." Keep the faith! The reward for this kind of determination is to come out on the other side victorious. Never quit!

Change is hard. But the rewards of facing change with faith, enthusiasm and determination are worth the challenges you face.

CH (COL) Cregg Puckett
State Command Chaplain



SNAPSHOTS



A member of the Belgian Army Special Operations Regiment provides dropzone security after a high-altitude jump at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, Mississippi, during the Southern Strike 2023 exercise, April 19, 2023. This large-scale, joint multinational combat exercise provides tactical level training for the full spectrum of operations. It emphasizes air dominance, agile combat employment, precision engagement, close-air support, and combat medical support. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by 2nd Lt. Jarvis Mace)



**SCAN
HERE**





Soldiers of 1st Battalion, 155th Infantry Regiment, 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team, Mississippi Army National Guard, receive a hero's send-off from Mississippi Gov. Tate Reeves and senior leaders of the Mississippi National Guard before boarding a plane, May 26, 2023, at the 172nd Airlift Wing in Flowood, Mississippi. The unit is conducting pre-mobilization training in Texas prior to an overseas mission in the fall. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Lt. Col. Deidre D. Smith)



As the 65th Governor of Mississippi, I am incredibly proud to be the Commander-in-Chief of the single greatest National Guard force in our entire nation.

You represent the absolute best of Mississippi. Your character, selfless sacrifice, and commitment to our state are models for every citizen to learn from and follow. The fact is that no matter the storm or crisis, the Mississippi National

Guard consistently stands ready to respond. Our state will always be thankful for your service.

The track record of the Mississippi National Guard is clear. On countless occasions you have risen to the challenge and delivered on behalf of Mississippians. There is no fighting force in the world that I'd rather have protecting our state and our people than this one.

Your impact on our state does not end when you are out of uniform. I know that many of you balance civilian careers, families, and community leadership on top of your military roles.

I'd also like to thank all of our Mississippi National Guard families for the sacrifices that they make every single day. Your support for our Guardsmen makes them and our state stronger. You are valued members of our community, and our state owes you a debt of gratitude for your service.

Thank you, Mississippi National Guard, for your many contributions to our great state. Thank you for keeping us safe and defending our freedom. Your tireless service to Mississippi and the United States does not go unnoticed.

We will always be grateful for you.

Sincerely,
Governor Tate Reeves

1-155 IN DEPARTS FOR PRE-MOBILIZATION TRAINING

Story by Lt. Col. Deidre D. Smith, MSNG Director of Public Affairs

The Mississippi National Guard is a combat ready reserve force that maintains an active global presence supporting our nation's ongoing sustainment of freedom. The 1st Battalion, 155th Infantry Regiment, also known as the "Mississippi Rifles," embarked for pre-mobilization training to support an upcoming overseas deployment mission this fall.

The Soldiers of the 1-155 IN received a hero's send-off as senior leaders shook every member's hand, May 26, 2023, before they embarked on their flight for pre-mobilization training. Mississippi Gov. Tate Reeves led the line-up of leaders alongside Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles, the adjutant general of Mississippi, Brig. Gen. Joe D. Hargett, MSNG director of joint staff, Col. Michael G. Dykes, commander of the 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team, Col. Cregg M. Puckett, state command chaplain, Lt. Col. Jason L. Odom, executive officer of the 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team, and Command Sgt. Maj. Darrell L. Masterson, MSNG state command sergeant major.



Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles, the adjutant general of Mississippi, passes the Mississippi state flag to Lt. Col. Frank G. Querns III, commander of the 1st Battalion, 155th Infantry Regiment, during a pre-mobilization send-off ceremony at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, Mississippi, May 24, 2023. The "Mississippi Rifles" are preparing for a future overseas deployment in the fall. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Amber Milsap)



U.S. Airmen of the 183rd Airlift Squadron, 172nd Airlift Wing, Mississippi Air National Guard, conducted water survival training, a necessity for aircrews operating in a global airlift capacity, April 1-3, 2023. Aircrew members could be expected to survive at sea for days or weeks before being rescued, making their confidence and experience incredibly important. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Jared Bounds)

THE OCEAN MAKES COWARDS OF US ALL: 172ND CONDUCTS WATER SURVIVAL TRAINING

Story by Staff Sgt. Jared Bounds, 172nd Airlift Wing Public Affairs

The Earth's oceans cover more than 70 percent of the planet's surface. Due to the nature of the 172nd Airlift Wing's mission of global airlift capability, it is essential for aircrews to be able to survive should they need to ditch a C-17 Globemaster III aircraft over the sea. To ensure Airmen can survive adrift for longer periods, members of the 183rd Airlift Squadron, 172nd Airlift Wing, Mississippi Air National Guard, completed their required water survival training April 1-3, 2023.

Each day was split into classroom and practical application. In class, crewmembers were briefed on survival equipment such as their life raft, canopy, signal devices, food and water. Once familiarized with their gear, the crew leapt into an Olympic-sized pool, swam to a pre-inflated life raft and were given their lesson on how to defy the elements while adrift at sea.

"Aircrews are expected to survive for days in a rescue life raft, even weeks in extreme cases," said Master Sgt. Jake Lyons, the aircrew training continuation lead instructor with the 172nd Aircrew Flight Equipment (AFE) shop.

Not only does the 172nd AFE imbue expert knowledge of survival equipment, but they drive home the importance of mental fortitude in a survival situation.

"We get them to understand they can absolutely go one more day," said Lyons.

The training emphasizes the importance of staying busy and active while expecting rescue.

"The mental aspect of any survival scenario is key, but being adrift presents a unique set of circumstances," said Master Sgt. Jeff Campbell, a survival, evasion, resistance and escape instructor with the 185th Air Refueling Wing, Iowa Air National Guard.

Campbell said a crew's mindset during a water survival scenario should remain positive.

"You have to keep the bigger picture in mind; remember that your position and aircraft are being tracked and that you will be rescued," said Campbell.

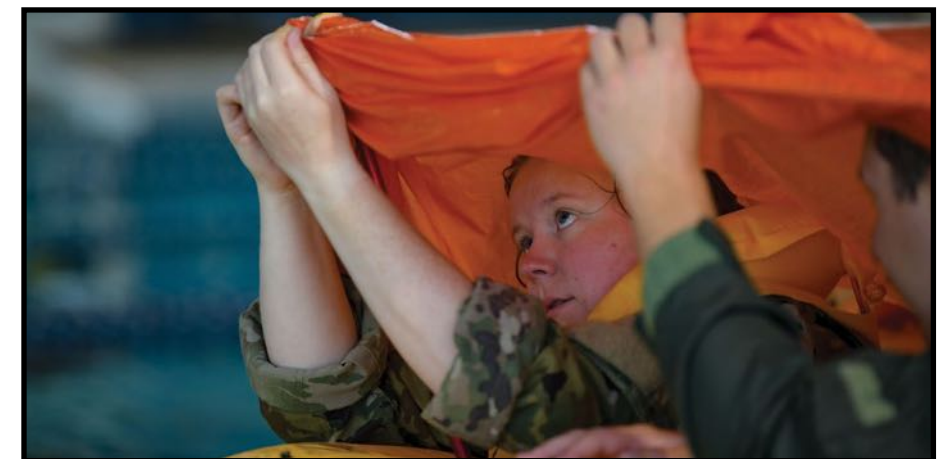
While a single Airman can maintain

a raft, the expectation is to protect a team of Airmen. "The best advice we can give the crews is to look out for each other and remember they're part of a team," said Lyons.

That team mindset stays with crews long after they leave the training raft.

"This training strengthens the value of life and the concepts of being prepared," said Lyons.

Whether it's keeping some bottled water in your vehicle for roadside emergencies, offering a helping hand or just actively engaging with the Airmen around you, water survival training teaches more than just learning how to survive; it teaches how to be a better Airman.



U.S. Airmen of the 183rd Airlift Squadron, 172nd Airlift Wing, Mississippi Air National Guard, conducted water survival training, a necessity for aircrews operating in a global airlift capacity, April 1-3, 2023. Ultimately, the preparedness instilled by this type of training will affect other aspects of an Airman's life and career, keeping them ready to overcome any obstacle. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Jared Bounds)

VIETNAM VETERAN COMMEMORATION CEREMONY HOSTED AT CAMP SHELBY



Retired Air Force Lt. Col. Thomas E. Collins III, a Vietnam War veteran and native of Utica, Mississippi, sits in front of an exhibit honoring him at the Mississippi Armed Forces Museum, Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, Mississippi, April 12, 2023. Camp Shelby hosted a Vietnam Veteran Commemoration Ceremony to honor the sacrifices of those who served during the Vietnam War. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by 2nd Lt. Jarvis Mace)

Story by Capt. Kandi Murphy, JFH-MS Public Affairs

The Mississippi Armed Forces Museum at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, Mississippi, hosted a Vietnam veteran Commemoration Ceremony to honor Vietnam veterans from all branches of service on April 12, 2023.

The ceremony opened with the National Anthem played by Maj. Amanda Woods, commander of Company B, Recruiting and Retention Battalion, Mississippi Army National Guard. As the anthem ended, Mississippi Army National Guard aviation performed a fly-over in an array of helicopters, including a UH-60 Black Hawk, a CH-47 Chinook, an AH-64 Apache, and a UH-72

Lakota.

The ceremony took a somber tone as TAPS was played and veterans, civilians and service members alike took a moment to honor the Vietnam veterans who gave the ultimate sacrifice in service to their country. U.S. Sen. Cindy Hyde-Smith, Mississippi Sen. Mike Seymour, 47th District, and Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles, the adjutant general of Mississippi, laid a wreath at the base of the Traveling Vietnam War Memorial Wall, a wall etched with the names of the fallen as an eternal memorial.

Boyles asked those in attendance to always remember the 227,000 Mississippians who answered the call to serve, 12 who are still missing in actions, and 636 who were mourned as they returned home under the protection of the American flag and escorted to

their final resting place.

Sitting by the wall as the guest of honor, retired Air Force Lt. Col. Thomas E. Collins III reflected on his time as a POW in Vietnam. Collins, a Utica, Mississippi native, was captured by enemy militia in Vietnam in October 1965, when he was flying his 35th mission with the 68th Tactical Fighter Squadron and had to eject due to enemy fire. Collins stayed a prisoner of war in Vietnam for more than seven years, being tortured and beaten severely. Collins said he was reunited with his family in 1973.

“From this, I saw I could improve myself to better serve my family, country, and mankind,” said Collins. “I learned to truly appreciate the many things we enjoy as Americans so often taken for granted, ranging from lesser things like our high standard of living to the great individual freedom we possess.”

Vietnam veterans were pinned by federal, state, and local leaders. The pins were awarded to veterans who served in Vietnam from November 1, 1955, to May 15, 1975. Inscribed on the back of each pin was, “A grateful nation thanks and honors you.” Vietnam veterans who served but are no longer with us were also remembered during the ceremony, as well as their families for their untold sacrifices in supporting their service member during a time of war.

The ceremony concluded as veterans and families gathered around the wall, looking for familiar names etched into the wall and recount stories from their time of service during fellowship in the Museum’s Grand Gallery.

The Vietnam Veteran Commemoration Ceremony is not a new tradition. In fact, the National Commemoration was authorized by Congress, established under the Secretary of Defense and launched by President Barack Obama in a 2012 proclamation to recognize the 50th anniversary of the war in Vietnam.



U.S. Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith speaks to a Vietnam veteran during a Vietnam Veteran Commemoration Ceremony at the Mississippi Armed Forces Museum, Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, Mississippi, April 12, 2023. The ceremony was held to honor the sacrifices of those who served during the Vietnam War. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by 2nd Lt. Jarvis Mace)



Brig. Gen. Joe D. Hargett, director of joint staff for the Mississippi National Guard, pins a Vietnam War veteran during the Vietnam Veteran Commemoration Ceremony at the Mississippi Armed Forces Museum, Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, Mississippi, April 12, 2023. The ceremony was held to honor the sacrifices of those who served during the Vietnam War. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by 2nd Lt. Jarvis Mace)



Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles, the adjutant general of Mississippi, salutes as U.S. Sen. Cindy Hyde-Smith, and Mississippi Sen. Mike Seymour, 47th District, put their hands over their hearts after laying a wreath during a Vietnam Veteran Commemoration Ceremony at the Mississippi Armed Forces Museum, Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, Mississippi, April 12, 2023. The ceremony was held to honor the service and sacrifice of those who served during the Vietnam War. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Quinterrence Reynolds)

MISSISSIPPI AIR NATIONAL GUARD RETIRES RC-26 AIRCRAFT

Story by Retired Lt. Col. Rick Berryhill

The Fairchild C-26 Metroliner aircraft was assigned to select Air National Guard Flying Wings to provide Operational Support Airlift (OSA). It hauled people, aircraft parts, and other supplies as needed by each wing, state headquarters, and other military and government customers. The original allocation totaled 22 aircraft that were distributed throughout the U.S. Each wing operated its assigned aircraft independently and coordination between units nationwide also occurred frequently. Annual flying hour budgets were approximately 300 hours and the program started with one full-time pilot position and multiple part-time positions, usually filled with dual-qualified pilots.

In the early '90s, as the 186th Tactical Reconnaissance Group (soon to be re-designated the 186th Air Refueling Wing) was busy transitioning to the air refueling mission, the C-26 became the heartbeat of the wing. In its OSA heyday at the 186th, the C-26 was vital to everyday operations and typically flew 90 to 100 sorties per month and executed 500-600 flying hours per year for almost three full years. The majority of sorties supported tanker operations that were displaced to Columbus Air Force Base while aircraft ramp, hangar, and other facility construction projects were taking place at Key Field.

In the mid 1990s, with tightening budgets and missions diversifying, many ANG units lost their C-26 aircraft and missions. Several of the aircraft transferred to Army units and OSA missions were consolidated nationwide. Only 11 ANG units were selected to keep their C-26s and undergo a transition to the counterdrug mission. Through tireless efforts by wing and state leadership, and with significant



From left, Lt. Col. Jay Hollis, Lt. Col. Rick Berryhill, Capt. Charles Gailey, 1st Lt. Will Wassell, Lt. Col. Scott Craven, and Maj. Johnathan Smith stand near their RC-26 aircraft at an undisclosed location in 2012. Ranks listed are at the time the photo was taken. (Courtesy photo)

help from Mississippi Congressional offices, the 186 ARW was one of the final two sites selected to keep their C-26.

The unit's original C-26A model aircraft was swapped to a C-26B model and eventually modified to the counterdrug configuration which included an external surveillance pod with a retractable turret containing a video camera with a thermal imager and two KS-87 aerial photography cameras. The 186 ARW began flying counterdrug surveillance and photography missions in late 1999 with the typical counterdrug manning of six officer crewmembers and one enlisted administrative position.

For the nationwide counterdrug program, years of success eventually led to requests to deploy the C-26 to battlegrounds in the Global War on Terror, which the program began supporting with deployed operations in 2003 and 2004. The 11 counterdrug units nationwide worked together to support the deployed operation, while simultaneously maintaining domestic counterdrug support.

Success in the deployments led the

C-26 program to support the U.S. Special Operations Command in Operations Iraqi Freedom and its follow-on derivative Operation New Dawn. Over an unprecedented 13 years of uninterrupted overseas support, the C-26 would amass tens of thousands of flying hours in support of U.S. Special Operation Forces in Iraq and Afghanistan. The 186 ARW C-26 personnel continued annual rotations to support deployed operations, with the typical crewmember averaging 180 days deployed per year from 2004 through 2015.

With more experienced instructors and pilots than any other unit in the nation, the 186 ARW was selected to conduct Mission Qualification Training (MQT) for the newest USAF platform, the MC-12 Liberty. In 2009, the wing began training and deploying active-duty Air Force crewmembers in the MC-12 program. For the first two years, all aircraft, crewmembers and support personnel would train and deploy from the 186th, exceeding 1,250 personnel and 36 aircraft. The MC-12 program executed tens of thousands of flying hours in the tactical manned

Airborne Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) mission, while maintaining one of the highest sortie utilization records in USAF history.

In the thick of the MC-12 era, the Deepwater Horizon oil platform disaster was set to become one of the most catastrophic environmental events in U.S. history. A small contingent of Mississippi Army National Guard personnel fulfilled a command and control role, supporting the 186 ARW C-26 in clean-up efforts. Using a video downlink system to coordinate with the command element and utilizing direct radio communication with a fleet of ships specialized in skimming oil from the surface of the Gulf of Mexico, the 186 ARW developed techniques and procedures to identify massive areas of oil on the ocean's surface, and then direct the surface vessels to the exact locations to conduct oil skimming operations. Millions of gallons of oil-polluted sea water were skimmed, significantly reducing, and in most cases eliminating, oil from beaches and coastal areas.

After the MC-12 program was transferred to the active-duty Air Force, the C-26 program resumed its typical mission roles in counterdrug, stateside support missions, and deployed support. Eventually, the 186 ARW would re-establish itself in the refueling mission and the C-26 program would transform into a squadron entity with over 20 assigned personnel and two assigned aircraft. The squadron would retain a robust set of operational mission requirements and remained the ANG's training base for C-26 crewmembers.

It is now in that role that the C-26 program will finally see its sunset in the Air National Guard as it ceases its service to our state and nation. The scheduled retirement will be a bittersweet ending to an aircraft and program with an unprecedented record of service. Over the 34-year run of the C-26 at the 186 ARW, the wing's dedication, pride, and excellence was clearly demonstrated as it utilized resources, personnel, expertise, and culture to overcome many challenges. The C-26 Program will leave an amazing legacy that will not be easy to match.



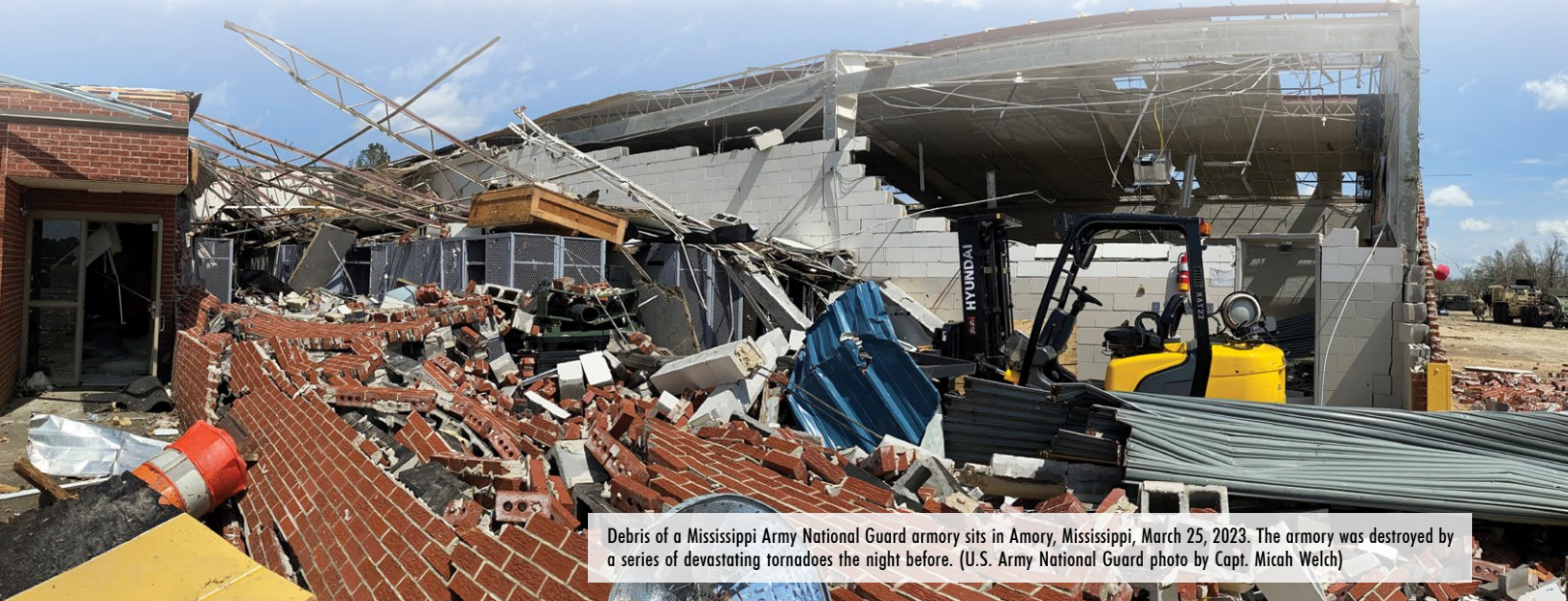
Retired Col. Tommy Gunter, left, and retired Col. John "Hoss" Ladner pose in this undated photo after flying a sortie on the RC-26 aircraft at Key Field Air National Guard Base, Meridian, Mississippi. The RC-26 program had an unprecedented record of service in its 34-year history at Key Field, in both operational support and counterdrug missions. (Courtesy photo)



From left, retired Col. John "Hoss" Ladner, retired Lt. Col. Jay Hollis, and retired Col. Mark Kleinpeter stand in a maintenance bay after flying a sortie on the RC-26 aircraft at Key Field Air National Guard Base, Meridian, Mississippi. The RC-26 program had an unprecedented record of service in its 34-year history at Key Field, in both operational support and counterdrug missions. (Courtesy photo)

**"THE C-26 PROGRAM WILL
LEAVE AN AMAZING LEGACY
THAT WILL NOT BE EASY TO
MATCH."**

AMORY ARMORY TORNADO DAMAGE



Debris of a Mississippi Army National Guard armory sits in Amory, Mississippi, March 25, 2023. The armory was destroyed by a series of devastating tornadoes the night before. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Capt. Micah Welch)

Story by Capt. Micah Welch,
155th ABCT Public Affairs

A series of devastating tornadoes struck Mississippi, March 24, 2023. One of the towns hit by this disaster was Amory, located in Monroe County. Within the path of destruction stood many homes, buildings, businesses, and the Mississippi National Guard Armory for the Headquarters of the 1st Squadron, 98th Cavalry Regiment, 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team, Mississippi Army National Guard. Many of the members of the 1-98 CAV and 155 ABCT became aware of the damage through news reports that highlighted the path of destruction.

On Saturday, March 25, 2023, the 1-98 CAV, who had been at Camp McCain Training Center for drill that weekend, headed back to Amory along with members of the brigade command staff. They made their way to the armory to see the devastation that had fallen on the building and, even more so, on the area surrounding the building.

With debris littering the ground everywhere and powerlines laying all over the streets, the drive into Amory was more like navigating a maze. Roads and areas were blocked off or required planned maneuvering to get through. Homes were destroyed or damaged, and much of the school next to the armory stood as an example of the power of the storm. Trying to find the armory itself



Debris of a Mississippi Army National Guard armory sits in Amory, Mississippi, March 25, 2023. The armory was destroyed by a series of devastating tornadoes the night before. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Capt. Micah Welch)

proved to be a challenge as it seemed to blend into the rest of the ruins.

While the building itself was still standing, the damage was very evident when looking at the building or looking at the debris on the ground, in the parking lot, and across the street. The building was missing most of the roof's exterior, the floor was covered with water and remnants from the ceiling. In the drill hall, the overhead rolling door had been ripped down and a giant piece of the exterior brick wall was missing from the back of the building. Glass, bricks, ceiling, and standing water covered the concrete floor of the drill hall, while the motor pool was filled

with debris, damaged vehicles, and more pieces of the building. The fence around the back of the armory was basically gone, and both a shipping container and a dumpster had been moved by the powerful winds.

Upon arrival, the Soldiers immediately got to work, gathering up important documents and sensitive items and loading them onto trucks. Damage assessments and written and visual documentation of the building were completed as well.

Many of the regiment's commanders were onsite and checking out both the damage to the property and the welfare of the Soldiers. A local reporter spoke with Lt. Col. Michael Greco, commander of 1-98 CAV.

"We don't expect any significant impact on the actual training mission for us at this time," said Greco. "And fortunately, we were at Camp McCain when the event occurred, so all our Soldiers are safe."

Later, members of the National Weather Service came out and interviewed several unit leaders.

Soldiers continued their mission, cleaning up what was left. They stood strong, defiant, and boldly against what had happened to them and their unit. They would not be stopped. Through working, smiling, and fighting the despair, this unit lived the specific Warrior Ethos, "I will never accept defeat. I will never quit."

U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Adam Holmes, an air transportation specialist with the 172nd Logistic Readiness Squadron, Mississippi Air National Guard, prepares to inspect webbing used to transport equipment aboard a C-17 Globemaster III aircraft. Holmes, a volunteer firefighter known for his leadership and selfless service, recently applied his skillset and servant mentality to assist a stranded driver when no one else would. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Jared Bounds)



AIRMAN FROM THE 172ND AIRLIFT WING ASSISTS STRANDED DRIVER

Story by Tech. Sgt. Vanessa Rivera,
172nd Airlift Wing Public Affairs

As Airmen, we're taught to embrace the Air Force Core Values of "Integrity First, Service Before Self, and Excellence in All We Do." Recently, an Airman from Jackson, Mississippi, epitomized the core value of "Service Before Self" through his benevolent actions.

On March 4, 2023, U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Adam Holmes, an air transportation specialist assigned to the 172nd Logistic Readiness Squadron, Mississippi Air National Guard, stopped to assist a driver in need of aid, whose vehicle had broken down and was stranded on the side of the road.

While driving to a co-worker's residence, Holmes noticed a vehicle that seemed to have been in an accident parked on the side of the road. After passing by the vehicle again on his way home, Holmes observed tire marks leading to the parked vehicle and decided to pull over.

"I felt in my gut that something was wrong, so I decided to stop and check on

the driver," said Holmes. "I wanted to make sure the driver was not suffering from a medical emergency."

Holmes was able to use his knowledge from being a volunteer firefighter to assess the situation and ensure the driver, Ms. Connie Chatmon, was not physically injured or in need of medical attention.

Chatmon stated that her car just stopped, and she was scared. She'd been trying to get someone to come help her, but everyone she knew was at work. Chatmon said that she was stranded, and Tech. Sgt. Holmes was the first person who had stopped to help her.

Lt. Col. Christopher Wright, 172nd Logistics Readiness Squadron commander, commended Tech. Sgt. Holmes' reputation as a selfless leader, and someone always willing to help those in need.

"Adam is a person who genuinely cares about other people. That's just who he is. He embodies the Air Force Core Values, especially 'Service Before Self'. That's Adam," said Wright.

Holmes called a tow truck to assist

Ms. Chatmon and concurrently escorted her to a local mechanic shop. He then drove her to a nearby pharmacy where she was met by a family member. Both Ms. Chatmon and the family member expressed their gratitude towards Holmes for his assistance that day.

Sharing his thoughts on how Holmes handled the situation, Wright said, "First and foremost, that's who he is. That is an absolute reflection of who he is all the time, not just when he's driving down the highway and sees somebody stranded. He is a person who genuinely cares about other people and someone who does not hesitate to step up and jump in when needed. He's going to sacrifice his time, that's just who he is."

When asked what he would say to someone who found themselves in a similar situation, Holmes replied, "Go with your gut feeling. If you see someone in need, and decide to stop and help them, I believe the Lord will provide your safety."



U.S. Air Force F-15E Strike Eagle aircraft is connected to a C-17 Globemaster III aircraft for aircraft-to-aircraft refueling operations, one of the many agile combat employment strategies being tested during Exercise Southern Strike at Gulfport Combat Readiness Training Center, Gulfport, Mississippi, April 20, 2023. Exercise Southern Strike 2023 is a large-scale, joint and international combat exercise, featuring agile combat employment, counterinsurgency, close air support, non-combatant evacuations, and maritime special operations. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Emily Batchelor)

SOUTHERN STRIKE 2023

Story by Airman 1st Class Angelina Stokes, Gulfport CRTS Public Affairs

U.S. military forces from every branch of service worked with international forces for a two-week training event on Mississippi's Gulf Coast during Exercise Southern Strike 2023, hosted by the Mississippi National Guard.

"Southern Strike is an effective way for National Guard and Reserve as well as Active-Duty forces to come together to learn how to train as a collective unit and achieve one goal," said Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles, adjutant general of Mississippi.

Southern Strike has been hosted annually at the Gulfport Combat Readiness Training Center for twelve years because of its prime location and the resources available in the area.

"The Combat Readiness Training Center is considered the premier training space for the Southern Strike exercise," said Maj. Gen. Barry A. Blanchard, assistant adjutant general-Air, Mississippi National Guard. "This facility can host a large number of Airmen and Soldiers, as well as aircraft. It encompasses over 11,000 square miles

of airspace to conduct air-to-air and air-to-ground fights."

This year, the exercise focused on the Agile Combat Employment (ACE) tactics, techniques and procedures, and multi-capable airmen training.

"Agile Combat Employment is the ability to project, employ, and sustain combat air forces over long distances," said Blanchard. "We need to remain agile to enhance our ability not to be detected by the enemy. If we are detected, we need to be able to redeploy to another location quickly."

One ACE concept consists of spreading supplies and equipment across multiple locations rather than concentrating them in one, making it harder for enemies to target.

"We disperse our assets and forces throughout many different contingency locations as it confuses adversary planning," said Col. Bryce Butler, director of Exercise Southern Strike 2023.

Units conducted training missions that prepared personnel for air-to-air combat, aerial refueling, special operations, aerial & ground transport, aeromedical evacuation, and close-air

support. Conducting this exercise with international partners is a way to train with them as if in a real-world situation.

"This year, we have over 300 international partners participating in this exercise," said Blanchard. "Notably, we have our Mississippi State Partners, the Uzbekistan forces. We also have Belgium, Netherland, United Kingdom, and Canadian forces participating with us."

Cyber protection also played a big role in the exercise this year.

"Another focus is on multi-domain operations; Camp Shelby has been designated as one of the cyber centers of excellence in the Army National Guard," said Blanchard. "We are looking to integrate more and more into the cyber domain, offensive and defensive cyber effects as well as electronic warfare aspects into the battlespace."

Southern Strike 2023 provided a unique opportunity for all servicemembers involved to experience a dynamic training exercise; one that will continue to grow annually.

A U.S. Air Force KC-135 Stratotanker aircraft assigned to the 186th Air Refueling Wing, Mississippi Air National Guard, refuels an F-15E Strike Eagle aircraft assigned to the 4th Fighter Wing, headquartered at Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, North Carolina, during exercise Southern Strike, April 19, 2023. The exercise focuses on agile combat employment which aims to shift generations of airpower from large, centralized bases to networks of smaller, dispersed locations to complicate adversary planning. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Ashley Sokolov)



U.S. Air Force HH-60G Pave Hawk aircraft, assigned to the 210th Rescue Squadron, Alaska Air National Guard, perform Helicopter Air-to-Air Refueling (HAAR) in support of Southern Strike 2023 over the Gulf of Mexico near Gulfport, Mississippi, April 18, 2023. Southern Strike promotes interoperability between special forces, conventional ground forces, and air assets in order to ensure the U.S. military stays relevant and ready to respond to a peer-to-peer, large-scale combat operation. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Daniel Hernandez)

U.S. Airmen with the 186th Air Refueling Wing, Mississippi Air National Guard, perform maintenance checks on a KC-135 Stratotanker during a Large-Scale Readiness Exercise (LRE) at the Combat Readiness Training Center, Gulfport, Mississippi, March 1, 2023. The LRE is designed to test airmen's capabilities and response to adverse situations in a deployed environment. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Airman 1st Class Dakota Strait)

186TH PRACTICES RAPID RESPONSE SKILLS

Story by Senior Airman Alexandria Fulton, 186th Air Refueling Wing Public Affairs

The 186th Air Refueling Wing, Mississippi Air National Guard, conducted a Large-Scale Readiness Exercise (LRE) Feb. 28 - March 3, 2023 at the Combat Readiness Training Center in Gulfport, Mississippi.

The LRE allowed Airmen to demonstrate their ability to operate in a contested, degraded and functionally limited environment.

"It's important to know our strengths and weaknesses to ensure we are always mission ready no matter the environment," explained Lt. Col. Vaughn Threatt, director of the emergency operations center.

During the exercise, each section underwent various levels of simulated threats to evaluate their ability to deploy in the event of a short-notice wartime tasking. While performing simulated

threats, inspectors from Air Mobility Command (AMC) and the Wing Inspection Team (WIT) observed and assessed Airmen responding to scenario injects.

Lt. Col. James Hamrick, the 186th Wing Inspector General, understands how vital exercises are, and he firmly believes that "capabilities not tested, can't be trusted."

"These simulations allow our Airmen to train in a real-world environment so when they are in a deployed location, they can rely on their skills and training to accomplish the mission," said Hamrick.

The WIT evaluated Airmen on multiple scenarios such as their ability to defend the base, conduct maintenance on aircraft, find and rescue downed Airmen, and perform duties while wearing Mission Oriented Protective Posture (MOPP) gear.

It took many Airmen and multiple agencies to pull this week off. Threatt

was thrilled to see so many Airmen step up to the task.

"The men and women of Key Field are to be commended for their high level of professionalism and dedication during the LRE," said Threatt. "We had many different functional areas such as medical, services, civil engineering, security forces, operations, headquarters staff, maintenance, and logistics come together and make the weekend a success."

The 186th Air Refueling Wing provides over 1,100 personnel and eight KC-135R Stratotanker aircraft to Air Mobility Command for worldwide operations. The Wing also supports domestic counterdrug and emergency response missions as well as overseas combatant commander requirements with an RC-26B Condor aircraft. Additional units at Key Field include the 238th Air Support Operations Squadron, the 248th Air Traffic Control Squadron, and the 186th Air Operations Group.

Story by Sgt. Taylor Cleveland, 102d Public Affairs Detachment

Mississippi is the home of the blues, good food, and hospitality. The state is the host of rich diversity and southern culture. Most importantly, there's a great sense of patriotism that rings throughout each county of Mississippi. In response to the call for military service following the onset of World War II, a man from Beaumont, Mississippi, by the name of Roja Steele, Sr., became the first Black man from the state to join the Mississippi Army National Guard in 1943.

Steele enlisted in the U.S. Army at the age of 21. His first three years of service were spent overseas during World War II as a truck driver with the Headquarters Battery, 369th Antiaircraft Artillery Gun Battalion, an all-Black unit. Separating from the military after the war, Steele rejoined the Mississippi Army National Guard in 1949 as a mechanic with the 3656th Maintenance Company. He became the first African American to work at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, Mississippi, employed at a mechanic shop in the early 1950s.

Dianne Steele Sumrall, Steele's daughter, was young when her father was a Soldier, but she remembers how family oriented he was.

"He had 11 kids and we were all little, but we had a good life. We were poor but we had a good life, and we didn't go hungry," Sumrall said.

Steele continued his service with the MSARNG, for a total of 25 years, until he passed in 1971.

"He was a good Soldier, an excellent soldier," said Sumrall. "He made a way for Black people to be able to join. He made a way for my brother and my daughter, who is in the Mississippi National Guard right now."

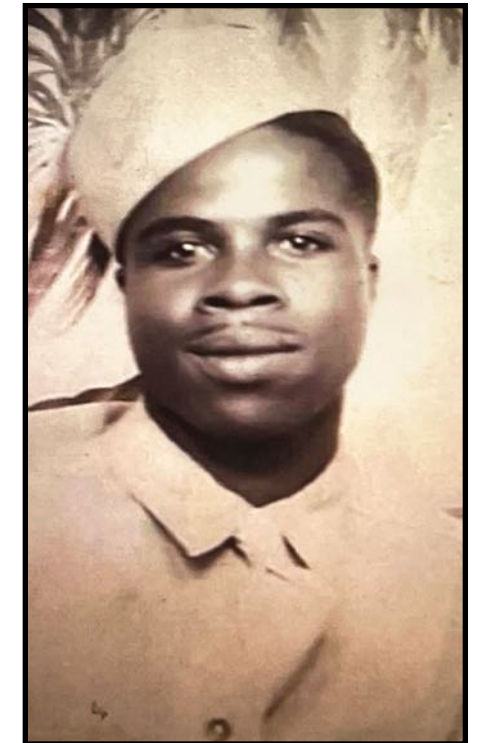
Damien Moody, grandson of Steele, expressed how proud he is to be the product of a man who made history.

"I actually came from a heritage of something important," said Moody. "And that's what it feels like, to know that my grandfather left a legacy and has a stamp on this state."

Even though Moody never got the chance to meet his grandfather, he is proud of him and the things he accomplished.

Pictures of Steele and his awards can be viewed in the African American Military History Museum in Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

SFC ROJA STEELE: MISSISSIPPI TRAILBLAZER



Sgt. 1st Class Roja Steele Sr., a World War II veteran and mechanic who served with the 3656th Transportation Company, Mississippi Army National Guard, was the first African American to join the MSARNG in January 1943. (Photos provided by the Mississippi Armed Forces Museum, Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center)



Damien Moody, left, grandson of Sgt. 1st Class Roja Steele Sr., a mechanic who served with the 3656th Transportation Company, Mississippi Army National Guard, and Dianne Steele Sumrall, daughter of Steele, hold pictures of him at the Mississippi Armed Forces Museum, Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, Mississippi, Jan. 26, 2023. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Taylor Cleveland)

MISSISSIPPI NATIONAL GUARD BEST WARRIOR COMPETITION 2023



U.S. Air Force Tech Sgt. Bo Wilcher, 186th Air Refueling Wing, works through an obstacle course during the Mississippi National Guard Best Warrior Competition at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, Mississippi, March 21, 2023. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Connie Jones)

U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Ismael Luna, 172nd Airlift Wing, Mississippi Air National Guard, fires an M17 pistol during the Mississippi National Guard Best Warrior Competition at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, Mississippi, March 21, 2023. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Connie Jones)

Story by Staff Sgt. Connie Jones, JFH-MS Public Affairs Office

The military is known for its training. To enter any service, one must successfully complete some sort of basic training, generally consisting of a rigorous physical regimen, learning about the service, and developing new skills to become the best warrior they can be. As a testament to maintaining and improving those very skills, National Guard units everywhere host best warrior competitions annually, beginning at the unit level and working its way up to the national level.

Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center hosted the 2023 Mississippi National Guard Best Warrior Competition, March 20-23, 2023.

"This is the state-level best warrior competition for not only Soldiers but Airmen and our Uzbekistan state partners," said Command Sgt. Maj. Darrell Masterson, state command sergeant major, Mississippi Army National Guard.

Competitors' bodies and minds are put to the test for three days, getting little sleep in between the competition's grueling events.

"We test not only their physical abilities

but their mental abilities," said Masterson. "They'll do a written essay, they'll do a paper on a subject we've picked for them, they do an obstacle course, a ruck march, ACFT, and several other events that we keep secret until the end."

For some, the pressure is what keeps them going.

"I've enjoyed the stress of the events. It's definitely taken me to a deeper level of my mind and it's challenged me to push through mentally on the events," said first-time competitor and runner-up for the noncommissioned officer category, Sgt. 1st Class Steven Gonzalez of the 184th Sustainment Command.

For others, such as returning competitor and winner of the NCO category this year, Staff Sgt. Wesley Byrd, 154th Regiment Regional Training Institute, the comradery of the competition made it worthwhile.

"I've enjoyed it. There were a lot of great guys this year bringing their best efforts," Byrd said.

Spc. Logan Hunt, the winner of the enlisted category of the competition, just enjoys the opportunity to compete.

"I've always liked competing. I grew up powerlifting and playing football. I have that drive where I enjoy this kind

of stuff," Hunt said.

While it is a fun, action-packed and challenging few days, building partnerships and inoperability between countries during events like these and in combat will always play a major part in military success.

"Whether it's here for domestic operations or across the globe, when we deploy, we will deploy in a joint environment," said Command Chief Master Sgt. John Myers, state command chief master sergeant of the Mississippi Air National Guard. "For the Army and the Air to understand each other's [jobs] and how they will interact in hometown USA or on the battlefield, this is where those relationships start."

At the end of the competition, a ceremony was held to honor the competitors from Uzbekistan for their fierce training ethic and team spirit. The MSNG competitors were all presented with Army Commendation medals and challenge coins from Masterson and Myers, as well as Command Sgt. Maj. Silvester Tatum, senior enlisted leader of the Mississippi National Guard.

The winners of the two categories, enlisted and NCO, were presented with trophies during the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of Mississippi's



U.S. Army Pfc. Daniel Wooten, 66th Troop Command, prepares for the sprint-drag-carry event during an Army Combat Fitness Test at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, March 20, 2023. The ACFT was part of the 2023 Mississippi National Guard Best Warrior Competition. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Connie Jones)

annual conference in Natchez, Mississippi, March 25, 2023. Gonzalez and Hunt were selected to compete at the 2023 Region III Best Warrior Competition, hosted by the Georgia National Guard. Byrd will return to compete in the 2024 regional competition.

Basic training is only the beginning of becoming a warrior. One must continue to develop themselves through reading, attending military schools, and training

to remain physically fit. Some service members go above and beyond the requirements, setting themselves apart as the best warriors and ultimately, some of the best leaders.

"It's an excellent competition," said Masterson. "It's always encouraging when you see the young Soldiers and Airmen here, competing in the Best Warrior Competition. This is the next generation of leaders."

"IT'S AN EXCELLENT COMPETITION. IT'S ALWAYS ENCOURAGING WHEN YOU SEE THE YOUNG SOLDIERS AND AIRMEN HERE, COMPETING IN THE BEST WARRIOR COMPETITION. THIS IS THE NEXT GENERATION OF LEADERS."

- COMMAND SGT. MAJ. DARRELL MASTERSON, STATE CSM, MSARNG

MEMORIAL DAY 2023



Lt. Col. Andrew Adcock, commander of the Mississippi Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention Battalion, administers the oath of enlistment during a Mississippi Braves pregame ceremony at Trustmark Park in Pearl, Mississippi May 28, 2023. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Lt. Col. Deidre D. Smith)



A C-17 Globemaster III aircraft assigned to the 172nd flies over Trustmark Park during a military appreciation baseball game in Pearl, Mississippi, May 28, 2023. The game was part of a series of Memorial Day weekend events to honor service members. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by 1st Lt. Kiara Spann)

Story by Lt. Col. Deidre D. Smith, MSNG Director of Public Affairs

Memorial Day weekend is a time to remember those who paid the ultimate price for freedom, while celebrating the brave men and women still serving in our military today.

The Mississippi Army National Guard welcomed the newest enlisted Soldiers and celebrated current Soldiers reenlisting to continue their military service during a Mississippi Braves pregame ceremony, May 28, 2023, in Pearl, Mississippi. The

ceremony was led by Lt. Col. Andrew Adcock, commander of the Mississippi Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention Battalion, as he administered the Oath of Enlistment on the field in front of a stadium full of family and friends.

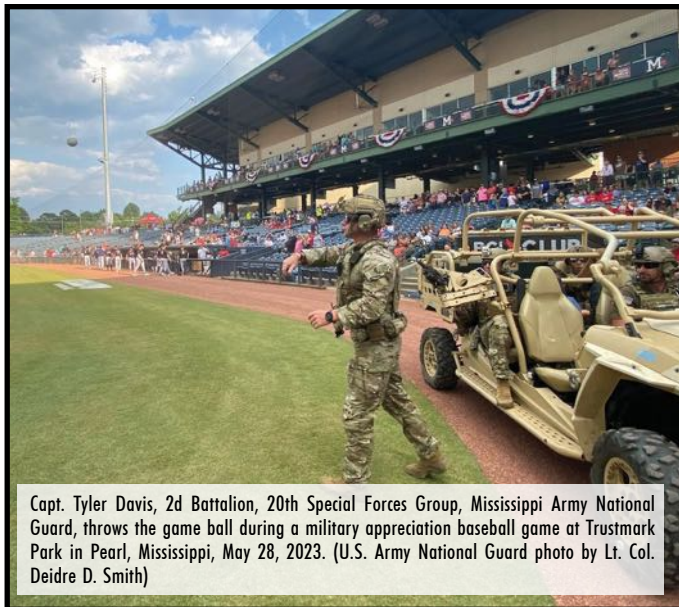
Mrs. Skylar James, spouse of Chaplain (Capt.) Christopher James, sang the National Anthem as the 172nd Airlift Wing, Mississippi Air National Guard, performed a military flyover as the last notes rang out.

Members of Mississippi's elite 2nd

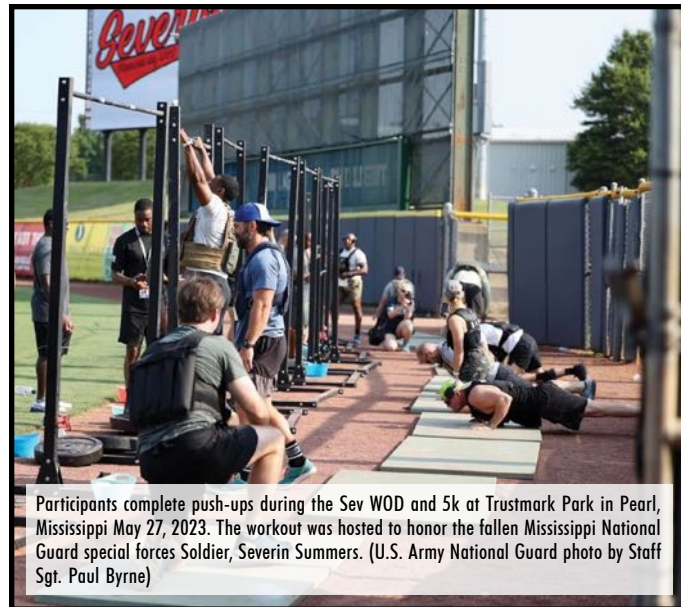
Battalion, 20th Special Forces Group, delivered the ball to the field to start the game.

The Military Appreciation game was made possible through coordinating efforts of Mississippi's own 5th Squad and the Mississippi Braves. 5th Squad is a nonprofit organization dedicated to enriching the lives of military service members, Veterans and their families.

Thank you to the members of the Mississippi Army and Air National Guard serving at home and abroad and the dedicated families who support them.



Capt. Tyler Davis, 2d Battalion, 20th Special Forces Group, Mississippi Army National Guard, throws the game ball during a military appreciation baseball game at Trustmark Park in Pearl, Mississippi, May 28, 2023. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Lt. Col. Deidre D. Smith)



Participants complete push-ups during the Sev WOD and 5k at Trustmark Park in Pearl, Mississippi May 27, 2023. The workout was hosted to honor the fallen Mississippi National Guard special forces Soldier, Severin Summers. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Paul Byrne)



Senior Master Sgt. Melissa Herron, senior enlisted leader of the 183rd Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, 172nd Airlift Wing, Mississippi Air National Guard, and Senior Airman Adam Perry, an aeromedical evacuation technician assigned to the 183rd AES, stand outside of the 183rd AES lactation room at the 172nd AW, May 7, 2023. The nursing room is strategically located in a private area of the squadron, giving nursing mothers the comfortability and privacy they need. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by 1st Lt. Kiara Spann)

183RD AES CREATES SPACE FOR NURSING MOTHERS

Story by 1st Lt. Kiara Spann, 172nd Airlift Wing Public Affairs

Mothers at the 172nd Airlift Wing, Mississippi Air National Guard, now have a dedicated location to privately and comfortably breastfeed or pump. A lactation room for nursing mothers was officially opened in the 183rd Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, May 7, 2023.

The demographic of the 183rd AES is unique because the squadron is made up of a large number of women. The need for having a dedicated nursing room was realized last year when there were multiple nursing mothers at one time within the squadron.

During one of the squadron's post unit training assembly meetings, Senior Master Sgt. Melissa Herron, the senior enlisted leader of the 183rd AES, asked what some of the unit's needs were that had not received closure. Senior Airman Adam Perry re-sparked the discussion of a lactation room.

Perry recalled last year when there

were multiple nursing mothers within the squadron, and it was difficult for them to find a space to pump without feeling as though they were impeding on the other members' workspace within the unit.

"We have a lot of shared office space throughout our squadron, so there were times when mothers needed to pump, and they would have to lock out their officemates," said Perry, an aeromedical evacuation technician assigned to the 183rd AES. "We wanted to create a permanent space where mothers could have privacy and feel comfortable."

The thoughtfully designed "Mothers Room" is outfitted with a refrigerator, a comfortable chair, a table, storage space and other items nursing mothers may need to have a cozy, clean and intimate place to pump.

"As a young nursing mother, I would have loved a room like this," said Herron. "I've been in the military for 21 years and I've seen the entire culture shift. We are more aware of our members' circumstances and that they

sometimes carry over into their work life, so introducing this room is a way of recognizing those circumstances and alleviating some of the stressors we can control."

Herron said that establishing morale today looks completely different than what it looked like years ago. It's not about forced fun, but it's about knowing your people, listening to them and identifying their needs to assist them with a healthy work-life balance.

This space is not only supporting Airmen of the 183rd AES, but it's also a space for nursing mothers across the Wing and mothers who may need somewhere to nurse while on base during squadron-hosted family events.

"I couldn't be prouder to work side by side with the Airmen we have," said Herron. "They inspire me every single day to make these changes. They are the ones who are cultivating change, and we have the power to execute it."

185TH ECAB DEPLOYS



Col. J. Ashley Mills, left, commander of the 185th Aviation Brigade (ECAB), Mississippi Army National Guard, and Command Sgt. Maj. Douglas J. Krol, 185th ECAB command sergeant major, uncase the unit colors at a transfer of authority ceremony at Camp Buehring, Kuwait, May 9, 2023. The 185th ECAB assumed responsibility for aviation operations in the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility from the 36th Combat Aviation Brigade, Texas Army National Guard. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Shane Hamann)

Story by Sgt. 1st Class Shane Hamann, 185th Aviation Brigade Public Affairs

The 185th Aviation Brigade (ECAB), Mississippi Army National Guard, mobilized at Fort Cavazos, Texas (formerly Fort Hood, Texas) to support Operations Inherent Resolve, Spartan Shield, and New Normal in the U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) area of responsibility in February 2023.

Deployed as Task Force Talon, the 185th ECAB consists of units from 11 states, including California, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Massachusetts, Maryland, Maine, Mississippi, New Jersey, New York, and Vermont, all organized into three battalions along with

the brigade headquarters.

The 3rd General Support Aviation Battalion, 126th Aviation Regiment, Massachusetts Army National Guard; the 1st Assault Helicopter Battalion, 106th Aviation Regiment, Illinois National Guard; and the 642nd Aviation Support Battalion, New York Army National Guard; came together for the first-time during training in Texas.

“There were three main goals for the pre-mobilization training at Fort [Cavazos],” said Col. J. Ashley Mills, task force commander. “The first was to build the team by bringing together over 1,200 Soldiers from 11 states. The second was to rapidly develop everyone’s expertise in their military job, and the third was to

synchronize individual talents into a team focused on one goal.”

Bringing so many citizen Soldiers together, many for their first deployment, presented some obstacles that the Soldiers worked through during training.

“The challenge was transitioning people from an individual mindset to one focused on the mission,” said Mills. “Many Soldiers are young or have never deployed. We overcame this by managing Soldiers’ expectations and consistently enforcing standards.”

All Army standard mission essential tasks from the headquarters down to individual Soldiers’ tasks were trained, including weapons qualifications, driver’s training, maintenance, pilot

and crew readiness, operations, and communications, said Lt. Col. Wangston Sylvien, the task force operations officer.

Training encompassed the brigade’s doctrinal aviation missions: reconnaissance, security, medical evacuation, maintenance, cargo and troop movement, and air traffic control.

One of the culminating training events exercised aviation expeditionary operations, which involved moving more than 400 Soldiers, 45 vehicles and 20 aircraft from Fort Cavazos to Fort Sill, Oklahoma. Another milestone was the planning and execution of seven air assault missions, which are the most complex aviation taskings, and being validated as a Go on all sets, said Sylvien.

Focusing on readiness, the brigade used available resources to introduce training pathways and staff interventions not commonly performed at a mobilization station. The unit brought a decommissioned UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter to allow maintenance specialists to practice and certify on tasks that would typically be performed only when the aircraft requires maintenance. The air traffic controllers trained with their active component counterparts stationed at Fort Cavazos and volunteers from the Civil Air Patrol to validate their precision approach radars and personnel.

With the complexity and inherent risks involved in aviation operations, Task Force Talon leadership continuously enforced safety standards throughout the pre-deployment training to ensure that Soldiers stayed vigilant.

“The leadership team of the 185th Aviation Brigade takes the safety and welfare of each Soldier seriously,” said Mills. “Our Soldiers are our greatest strength. We will mitigate risk to the greatest extent possible to ensure all our Soldiers are safe and return home. Additionally, we will make every effort to improve the quality of life for each Soldier to the extent of our abilities.”

The brigade judge advocate general became aware of Soldiers who enlisted under special provisions in the Immigration and Nationality Act and who were in the process of applying for citizenship. The legal section worked directly with the United States Customs and Immigration Service in San Antonio, Texas, to expedite those applications. Ten Soldiers were sworn in as U.S. citizens and a special ceremony was held to honor



Newly naturalized U.S. Army Soldiers assigned to the 642nd Aviation Support Battalion, New York Army National Guard, reaffirm the U.S. Armed Forces Oath of Enlistment in a ceremony at Fort Cavazos, Texas, March 24, 2023. The Soldiers reaffirmed their oath after becoming naturalized while training at Fort Cavazos to deploy to the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility. The 642nd is mobilized as part of the 185th Aviation Brigade, Mississippi Army National Guard. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Shane Hamann)



U.S. Soldiers with the 36th Combat Aviation Brigade, Texas Army National Guard, case the unit colors at a transfer of authority ceremony at Camp Buehring, Kuwait, May 9, 2023. The 36th CAB transferred responsibility of aviation operations for the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility to the 185th Aviation Brigade, Mississippi Army National Guard. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Shane Hamann)

them. Mills administered the oath of enlistment to the Soldiers as new U.S. citizens.

The task force prepared Soldiers and equipment to travel to Kuwait after assessment by their active-duty component mobilization and training validators, the 166th Aviation Brigade, First Army in April 2023. Once the task force arrived in Kuwait, they began a relief-in-place of the 36th Combat Aviation Brigade, Texas Army National Guard and received the 4th Attack Battalion, 4th Aviation Regiment into the task force.

A Transfer of Authority ceremony conducted May 9, 2023, at Camp Buehring, symbolized the 185th ECAB assuming the aviation operations mission for the USCENTOM area of responsibility as the leaders of the 36th CAB cased their unit’s colors in preparation for their return home while leaders of the 185th ECAB uncased theirs.

(At the time of interviews for this article, Fort Cavazos, Texas was not officially renamed from Fort Hood, Texas. That change was official May 9, 2023)

! IMPOSTOR ALERT !

In the last year, the Public Affairs Office has reported over **1,200 FAKE PROFILES** of our senior leaders

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Janson Boyles

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MISSISSIPPI'S 14TH STATE COMMAND CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT

Story by 1st Lt. Kiara Spann, 172d Airlift Wing Public Affairs

Chief Master Sgt. John Myers assumed responsibility as the state's 14th state command chief master sergeant of the Mississippi Air National Guard (MSANG) from Chief Master Sgt. Lynn Cole during a change of responsibility ceremony at Joint Force Headquarters in Jackson, Mississippi, Feb. 5, 2023.

Myers previously served as the 172nd Airlift Wing's command chief, where he was the senior enlisted leader to the base commander as well as the advocate and advisor on operational effectiveness and the organization's training and equipping of enlisted Airmen.

"My challenge is always to lead and listen to our Airmen and noncommissioned officers," said Myers. "Their ideas improve how we fly, fight and win for our state and our nation."

Maj. Gen. Barry Blanchard, assistant adjutant general-Air, Mississippi National Guard, said the position of state command chief master sergeant will involve moving forward and looking ahead.

"I'm looking for engagement at the national level, outside of our state and within our state when necessary to ensure our Airmen are the best trained and equipped and that we are well represented at the national level," said Blanchard.

Myers brings a depth of knowledge to his new role. Not only did he previously serve as the 172nd Airlift Wing's first sergeant, but he is currently a facilitator assigned to the Air National Guard's Chief Master Sergeant Orientation Course, guiding the future of Air Force chief master sergeants.

Cole, retiring after 38 years of service, capped the last five years of her career as the State Command Chief Master Sergeant for the MSANG.

"Surround yourself with wise counsel, including a person that disagrees or questions your intent," said Cole. "That will keep you true to the mission of developing our Airmen, our greatest



U.S. Air Force Chief Master Sgt. John Myers assumes responsibility as the State Command Chief Master Sergeant, Mississippi Air National Guard, from Maj. Gen. Barry Blanchard, assistant adjutant general-Air for the Mississippi National Guard, during a Change of Responsibility Ceremony at Joint Force Headquarters in Jackson, Mississippi, Feb. 5, 2023. Myers is succeeding Command Chief Master Sgt. Lynn Cole, who served in the role of State Command Chief for five years. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by 1st Lt. Kiara Spann)



U.S. Air Force Chief Master Sgt. John Myers renders a salute to Maj. Gen. Barry Blanchard, the assistant adjutant general – Air, Mississippi National Guard, during a Change of Responsibility Ceremony at Joint Force Headquarters in Jackson, Mississippi, Feb. 5, 2023. Myers assumed responsibility as the 14th State Command Chief Master Sergeant of the Mississippi Air National Guard from Chief Master Sgt. Lynn Cole who served in the role for five years. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Airman 1st Class Shardae McAfee)

asset."

Myers received Cole's words of wisdom and vows to always support Airmen of the Mississippi National Guard, continuing to work towards a stronger, more resilient force for the state and nation.

"I will work tirelessly for our Airmen

and operate from a place of deep humility and continue to seek wisdom," said Myers. "I am deeply committed to all areas regarding recruiting, retention, job proficiency and identifying the future enlisted leaders in the Mississippi National Guard."

PURPLE HEART PRESENTATION



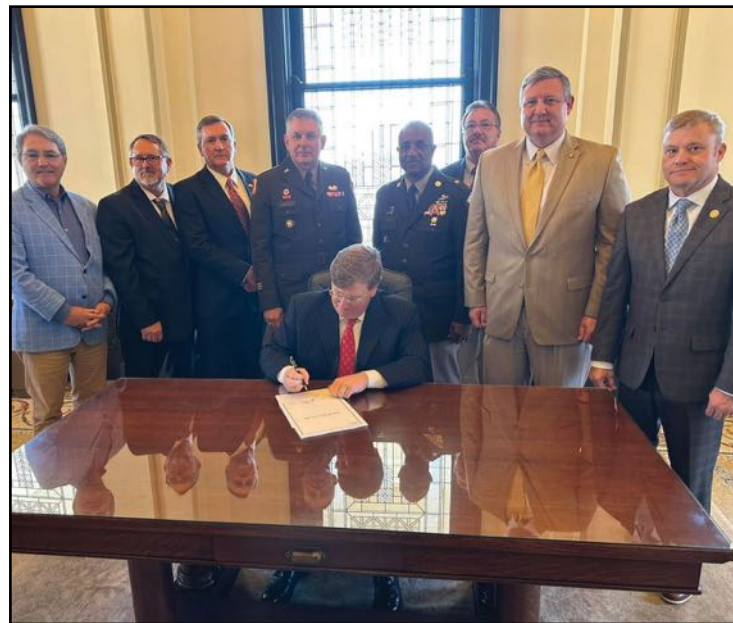
Story by Sgt. 1st Class Veronica McNabb,
184th Sustainment Command

The 859th Engineer Company, Mississippi Army National Guard, hosted a Purple Heart presentation ceremony at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, Mississippi, Feb. 25, 2023. From left, Lt. Col. Joshua J. Ulrich, commander of the 890th Engineer Battalion, presented the Purple Heart award to retired Staff Sgt. Jason Dillon, Spc. Lauren Jones, retired Spc. William Davis, and retired Spc. Maurice Robinson, for injuries sustained during the missile attack on Al Asad Air Base, Iraq, in January 2020.

GOV. REEVES SIGNS THREE NEW BILLS

Story by Staff Sgt. Connie Jones,
JFH-MS Public Affairs Office

Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles, the adjutant general of Mississippi, and Command Sgt. Maj. Silvester Tatum, senior enlisted leader of the MSNG, were present as Mississippi Gov. Tate Reeves signed three bills in support of service members and their families March 13, 2023. SB 2649 makes it easier for beneficiaries of life insurance policies where the insured is a member or veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces (including the National Guard or Reserves) to receive benefits. SB 2700 exempts qualified homeowners whose spouse was killed or died in active duty from property taxes on their primary residence. HB 49 makes it easier for the children of service members to get resident lifetime sportsman hunting and fishing licenses and reduces licensing fees.



GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONY FOR FMS-9

Story by Lt. Col. Deidre D. Smith,
MSNG Director of Public Affairs

The Mississippi National Guard hosted a groundbreaking ceremony for a new maintenance shop at the East Metro Center Industrial Park in Brandon, Mississippi, Jan. 31, 2023. The Brandon Field Maintenance Shop (FMS #9) can support more than 1,100 pieces of military equipment from 34 units within the Mississippi National Guard, providing more than 35 full-time positions and meeting LEED Silver standards as an environmentally friendly green building according to the U.S. Green Building Council's rating system.

The construction, comprised of two building areas, includes a more than 37,000 sq. ft. vehicle maintenance shop with drive-through work bays, tool rooms, supply rooms and storage areas, is proposed to be completed by August 2024. An administration building with offices, a classroom, and community spaces will also be on-site alongside other support elements including wash bays, a controlled waste facility, and oil and fuel storage. FMS #9 will provide daily maintenance support services, ensuring equipment readiness for MSNG mobilization efforts, and natural disaster response and relief missions reaching far into the future.



113TH MP CO RETURNS HOME



Story by Capt. Kandi Murphy
JFH-MS Public Affairs

The 113th Military Police Company, based in Brandon, Mississippi, returned home from a year-long mission at Fort Greely, Alaska, May 13, 2023. More than 60 Soldiers from the unit were tasked to conduct site security for a ground-based mid-course missile defense complex. The unit was introduced to a new training environment as they experienced the extreme arctic temperatures during the mission, working in tandem with Company A, 49th Missile Defense Battalion, based at Fort Greely. The unit excelled in their mission as awards were presented to the team where 10 Soldiers

received the Army Commendation Medal and 43 received the Army Achievement Medal. Three out of the 10 Soldiers who were presented the Army Commendation Medal received the award from Lt. Gen. Daniel L. Karbler, commanding general of U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command/U.S. Army Forces Strategic Command, after they successfully stopped a potential insider threat in February 2023. Upon arrival in Jackson, the Soldiers were greeted at the airport by Mississippi National Guard senior leadership. During a follow-on ceremony, Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles, the adjutant general of Mississippi, spoke to the unit and presented coins to five Soldiers for exceptional service during the company's mission.

168TH ENGINEER BRIGADE TRANSFER OF AUTHORITY

Story by 1st Lt. Desmond Jones,
168th Engineer Brigade Public Affairs

A transfer of authority ceremony at the MWR Theater on Camp Buehring, Kuwait, March 31, 2023, officially attached the 168th Engineer Brigade (168 EN BDE), or Task Force Southern Castle, to Task Force Spartan, the 28th Infantry Division, and the U.S. Army Central Command.

The theater was filled with service members coming together to support the two brigades as the 926th Engineer Brigade (926 EN BDE) passed the torch to 168 EN BDE leadership. Transfer of authority ceremonies signify the start of a new mission for the incoming unit while the outgoing unit is relieved of responsibilities.

Task Force Iron Castle, the 926 EN BDE, distinguished themselves during the period of July 21, 2022, to March 31, 2023, under the leadership of Col. Ken Shurbet and

Command Sgt. Maj. John Pisano, by providing engineering operations at more than 30 locations in seven countries throughout the Southwest Asia region. The 926 EN BDE served as the senior engineer headquarters for United States Army Central, supporting Operation Spartan Shield and Inherent Resolve, a significant feat in theater.

It is evident the 168 EN BDE is no stranger to Southwest Asia. Serving on numerous campaigns, including Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and Operation Iraqi Freedom in Iraq, the brigade assumed its responsibilities as the theater engineer brigade with confidence.

The 168th Engineer Brigade continues to carry the torch forward and build partnerships with host nations by providing engineering capabilities throughout the United States Army Central Command area of responsibility.



Col. Kendrick L. Cager, left, commander of the 168th Engineer Brigade, and Command Sgt. Major Shane Cook, command sergeant major, 168th Engineer Brigade, un-case the brigade colors, signifying the successful assumption of authority as the theater engineer brigade during the transfer of authority ceremony at Camp Buehring, Kuwait, March 31, 2023. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Edward Lee)

RETIREE DAY NORTH

Story by Mr. Bill Valentine
JFH-MS Public Affairs Office

Camp McCain Training Center, Mississippi, honored Mississippi National Guard retirees with a special event May 17, 2023, commemorating their service and sacrifice in defense of the nation. The inaugural MSNG Retiree Day – North brought Veterans, their families, and retirement services vendors together to express gratitude for their contributions and foster camaraderie among generations of MSNG service members.

Attendees were celebrated with an inspiring keynote address by Maj. Gen. John M. Rhodes, the commander of the 29th Infantry Division and a former assistant adjutant general of the MSNG. Also in attendance were Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles, the adjutant general of Mississippi, and Col. Joy Alexander, the commander of Camp McCain. Alexander presented Rhodes with the Maj. Gen. H. Pinckney McCain Distinguished Award of Merit for his exceptional contributions to the Camp McCain Training Center.

“This event serves as a reminder of the lasting impact made by these Veterans and emphasizes the importance of honoring their invaluable contributions to our nation’s defense,” said Brian Rogers, a retirement services officer at Joint Force Headquarters in Jackson, Mississippi.

A Retiree Day for South Mississippi is tentatively scheduled for Nov. 8, 2023, at the Mississippi Armed Forces Museum, Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center. Be sure to follow the Mississippi National Guard on social media for details and updates.



From left, Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Cregg Puckett, state command chaplain for the Mississippi Army National Guard; Command Sgt. Maj. Rickie Fortner, command sergeant major, Camp McCain Training Center (CMTC); Col. Joy Alexander, commander, CMTC; Command Sgt. Maj. Silvester Tatum, senior enlisted leader, MSNG; Maj. Gen. John M. Rhodes, commander, 29th Infantry Division; and Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles, the adjutant general of Mississippi, salute the flag for the National Anthem during the MSNG Retiree Day North at CMTC, Mississippi, May 17, 2023. (U.S. Army photo by Mr. Bill Valentine)



Mr. Brian Rogers, retirement services officer, hands out t-shirts and speaks to retirees during the MSNG Retiree Day North at Camp McCain Training Center, Mississippi, May 17, 2023. Retirement services and other vendors such as the Veterans Affairs, Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), and Work4Warriors coordinated support for retirees. (U.S. Army photo by Mr. Bill Valentine)



Mississippi National Guard retirees pose for a photo during the MSNG Retiree Day North at Camp McCain Training Center, Mississippi, May 17, 2023. The event was hosted to support retirees by providing an update on the status of the MSNG, resources for veterans, and food and space for fellowship. (U.S. Army photo by Mr. Bill Valentine)



Lt. Col. David E. Leiva
Commander,
2nd Infantry Training Battalion
154th Regiment Regional Training
Institute



Maj. David M. Lyon Jr.
Commander, Officer Candidate School
154th Regiment Regional Training
Institute

What is OCS?

Officer Candidate School trains selected personnel in the fundamentals of leadership and basic military skills, instills the professional and physical fitness ethic, evaluates leadership potential, and commissions those who qualify as second lieutenants in the total force.

What are my options for OCS?

There are three options: Traditional OCS, Accelerated OCS, and Federal OCS. Traditional OCS (TOCS) begins in January and ends in August. Traditional OCS candidates attend Phase One at Ft. McClellan, Alabama for two weeks, then

BURNING QUESTIONS

OFFICER CANDIDATE SCHOOL

they conduct Phase Two at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, Mississippi, which consists of six-monthly drills. Drills are Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Then they conduct Phase Three, which lasts two weeks at Fort McClellan. Accelerated OCS is 60 days long with all phases conducted at Fort McClellan. There is a Summer Accelerated OCS class (SAOCS) from June–August and a Winter Accelerated OCS Class (WAOCS) from January–March. Federal OCS is 12 weeks.

Who can attend OCS?

For Traditional and accelerated OCS, 90 College hours must be completed prior to Phase One and Soldiers must be able to commission prior to their 42nd birthday. For federal OCS, Soldiers must have a completed degree and be able to commission prior to their 34th birthday. All Soldiers must have a certificate of release or discharge from active duty (DD214) indicating completion of Basic Training and Advanced Individual Training, an Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery with a General Technical (GT) score of 110 or higher, be able to obtain a Secret security clearance, have no Army Combat Fitness Test profiles, and have a commander’s letter of recommendation.

What if my GT score isn’t high enough?

There is no waiver for the minimum GT score of 110 to attend OCS, WOCS, or Special Forces Assessment and Selection. Also, many low-density MOSs typically require a minimum score of 110. The option to attend the GT Improvement Academy (GTIA) is available to those who need to improve their score.

What is the GTIA and what do I need to do to be admitted?

In June 2020, the MSARNG opened the doors to the GT Improvement Academy. It is a collaboration between the Warrant

Officer Career Accession Program, Officer Candidate School, Officer Strength Manager (OSM), Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, the personnel directorate, logistics, and Recruiting and Retention (R&R). It also meets many of the adjutant general of Mississippi’s lines of effort, who ultimately has made the investment in our Soldiers.

Using the WOCAP facilities, service members attend an intensive seven-day program that concludes with retaking the Armed Forces Classification Test, which measures word knowledge, math knowledge, arithmetic reasoning, and paragraph comprehension. The results are instantaneously available. The AFCT makes up the GT score. In order to attend, a service member must be sponsored by OSM, WOCAP, or R&R – they ensure the SM is eligible. Our average improvement is 10 points across all students. However, amongst those who achieve a GT score of 110 or higher, the average improvement is 17 points. Typically, our pass rate is about 70 percent.

If someone still doesn’t have a high enough score, can they retry?

Yes. You can retake the ASVAB as many times as you like. However, you need to wait either one month or six months to retake the test depending on how many times you’ve already taken it.

How do I start OCS?

Contact Sgt. 1st Class Trggve Thompson at 601-685-1005, or Master Sgt. Joe Coleman at 601-558-2319, and let them know you are interested in attending OCS.



Joint Force Headquarters
Mississippi National Guard
P.O. Box 5027
Jackson, MS 39296-5027

A competitor conducts the ruck march portion of the Mississippi National Guard 2023 Best Warrior Competition at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, Mississippi, March 22, 2023. The competitors were challenged physically and mentally throughout the four-day event where warrior tasks and skills were tested to find Mississippi's best warrior in the Air and Army National Guard. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Shawn Keeton)

