

SPRING 2024

GUARD DETAIL

A CHRONICLE OF THE MISSISSIPPI ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD



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FEATURES



Neptune Strike Hits the Coast

All-hazards response exercise sees multiple Civil Support Teams from Region 4 comparing and coordinating best practice tactics, techniques and procedures for fighting CBRNE.



Mississippian Earns a Third Star

A native of Petal, Mississippi, pins on a third star during a ceremony at the exact location where his service started more than 40 years ago.



Army – Navy Goes Static

A pre-deployment exercise on the Mississippi Gulf Coast helps a Navy leader spread his wings while helping the Army show theirs.



Cleared for Final Approach

Celebrating the life and legacy of two Mississippi aviators gone too soon.

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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COVER PHOTO: Sgt. Jonathan Dean of the 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team (ABCT), Mississippi Army National Guard, shares a moment with his son after returning home from a nine-month long deployment. More than 200 Soldiers of the 155th ABCT returned home after their deployment in support of Operation Spartan Shield, April 4, 2024, at the Air National Guard Base in Flowood, Mississippi. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Madison Hatten)

Letter From THE EDITOR WELCOME HOME



“Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint.”

~ Isaiah 40:31

Readiness is the cornerstone of the Mississippi National Guard. It can only be achieved by the ongoing efforts of our service men and women through every aspect of our mission. It is accomplished through communication, training, empowerment, resilience, interagency partnerships, and steadfast leadership at every level. We continue our legacy of excellence and commitment to our state and nation through the dedication of the talented men and women serving in diverse roles throughout the Mississippi National Guard.

The month of February brought a devastating tragedy for the Mississippi National Guard as we lost two members of our military family. The sting of loss was felt throughout our organization as we mourned with the families of Chief Warrant Officer 4 Derek Abbott and Chief Warrant Officer 4 Bryan Zemek. This accident serves as a constant reminder of the selfless service and sacrifice that our brave service men and women face in the line of duty.

The month of April is dedicated to several

observances and awareness campaigns. April is the “Month of the Military Child” – supporting those who support the ones who serve. Our success is dependent upon the resiliency, strength, and courage of our military families. April is also Sexual Assault Awareness Month, dedicated to remove the stigma of reporting and to educate our formation on the processes of prevention, reporting, and advocating for the victims. I encourage you to be a voice to invoke change in preventing sexual harassment, sexual assault, and sexual violence.

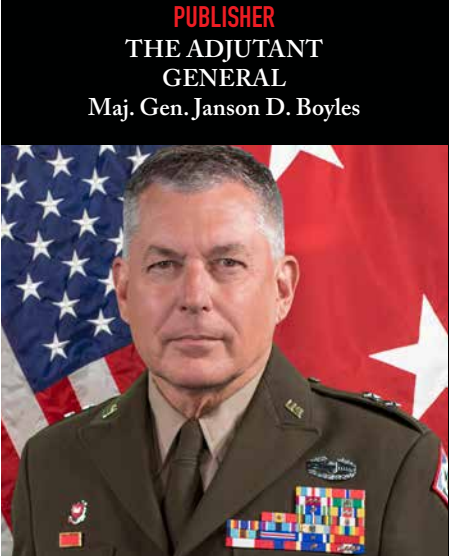
This season is a time to welcome home Mississippi National Guard service members from deployments. Over the past few months, we’ve welcomed home the 113th Military Police Company, the 367th Maintenance Company, the 185th Aviation Brigade, the 168th Engineer Brigade, the 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team, and Soldiers of 2nd Battalion, 20th Special Forces Group.

Military members make up less than one percent of our nation’s 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 in training exercises like Southern Strike, through summer annual training, as well as ongoing overseas deployments. We currently have members of the 185th Aviation Brigade, 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Battalion, 20th Special Forces group, and several Air Guard augmentees deployed.

I encourage all of you to take advantage of this season and spend time with family and friends. Remember safety during the upcoming summer holidays and family vacations. Accidents can happen when you least expect it. The Guard is Family! Please stay connected with members of your unit and recognize situations that may need additional assistance such as suicide intervention and prevention as well as sexual assault intervention and prevention. It only takes one person to be the voice of change for others.

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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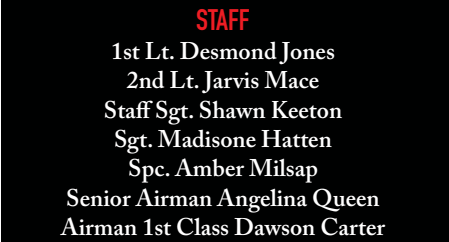
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A SPECIAL THANK YOU FROM GOVERNOR TATE REEVES

Our National Guard's greatest strength is its members. Men and women who every single day, exemplify the ideals of courage, commitment, service, and sacrifice. They are an integral part of serving and building up communities around Mississippi, and our entire state is proud of them.

During the past year, Mississippi's Guardsmen and their families have again demonstrated their unwavering commitment to Mississippi and her people. They have made our state safer, stronger, and more secure, and Mississippi remains committed to supporting them.

Thank you, Mississippi National Guard, for your many contributions to our great state and for the sacrifices you will make throughout 2024. We will always be grateful for the work you do to protect and defend Mississippi and our nation.

Sincerely,
Governor Tate Reeves

Commander, 168th Engineer Brigade,
Mississippi National Guard

COL. KEN CAGER

Greetings to the service members of the Mississippi National Guard. I would like to express my sincere thanks to our Army and Air teammates for the work you have accomplished over this last year. Many of you have recently served our nation in multiple capacities both CONUS and OCONUS. You continue to excel at being the best at what you do. You have represented our state and our nation in a professional manner. Thanks for all your contributions.

Recently, I was able to lead and engage with our Soldiers throughout the CENTCOM Area of Responsibility (AOR). It was refreshing to see that our troops not only aspired to be good, but to be great at their respective crafts. These young men and women are the inspiration that sets apart the American Soldier from any other strata of our society. They represent a very small percentage of our population that raised their right hand to support and defend the Constitution of the United States. They are among a special group of people that volunteered to guard the wall of freedom. In my opinion, this makes them better than the average man or woman. This choice alone says a lot about the character of the Soldiers and Airmen in our formation. Our people represent the very best that our nation has to offer. This is especially true when so many in our society shy away from thought of assuming risks or facing adversity.

Anyone can talk about what should be done in any given moment—but most will never do anything about it. We see it every day on television—all sorts of so called “experts” who are always ready to give their opinions or advice but never stand ready to deploy, engage, and destroy the enemies of the United States of America in close combat. This goes back to the commitment each Soldier makes as part of the

Soldier's Creed.

As commanders or leaders in the field, we owe our Guardsmen our absolute best! We must think outside the box and keep our competitive edge. We must utilize every opportunity to build and sustain our readiness to respond to any emerging mission requirement. We are charged with the primary duty to motivate, inspire, and to care for our Soldiers. We do this by taking the necessary steps to fight for the resources to train, maintain, and sustain our formations. I'm absolutely confident that there are no ceilings to mission success if Soldiers are provided the proper leadership, equipment, and training.

Our Guardsmen constantly demonstrate the ability to adapt and overcome through difficult conditions. They truly amaze and inspire me every day to be the best leader I can be. Again, I want to thank YOU, for a job well done. You have proven your mettle at every level. An unknown author once defined a Veteran as, “A person who wrote a blank check payable to the United States of America for an amount of up to and including one's life.” You are a direct reflection of what's best about America.

First In!

Col. Ken Cager
168th Engineer Brigade





Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center's Maneuver Area Training Equipment Site (MATES) personnel perform a nineteen-gun salute with M120 Cannons during the Inauguration ceremony for Mississippi's 65th Governor, Tate Reeves, at the State Capitol Building, Jackson, Mississippi, Jan. 9, 2024. (U.S. Army National Guard Photo by Sgt. Madisone Hatten)



SCAN
HERE

SNAPSHOTS



MSNG SOLDIER ELECTED AS MISSISSIPPI REPRESENTATIVE HOUSE DISTRICT 20

Maj. Rodney Hall, battalion executive officer of 1st Battalion, 155th Infantry Regiment, takes the Oath of Office as a new member of the Mississippi Legislature, Jan. 2, 2024, at the Mississippi State Capitol in Jackson. Hall was elected as the Mississippi Representative for House District 20, DeSoto County. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Shawn Keeton)

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

The Mississippi National Guard is a diverse organization built of dynamic professionals from every corner of our great state. It is an extraordinary honor to celebrate the achievements of one of our own, Maj. Rodney Hall, an infantry officer in the 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team.

Hall is making his mark in the Mississippi Legislature as “the first Black Republican member in the Mississippi House since 1894,” said Chris Day, The Commercial Appeal, published in the “Mississippi Clarion-

Ledger,” August 20, 2023.

Hall has earned the opportunity to hold numerous titles during his military and civilian career including Soldier, Airborne Ranger, Legislative Director for Congressman Trent Kelly, attorney, father, and now Mississippi Representative.

Hall commissioned as a second lieutenant after graduating from Marion Military Institute in Marion, Alabama, where he led the Corps of Cadets as the Cadet Brigade Commander. Following his commission, Hall earned his law degree from Ole Miss and has excelled in various positions while serving in the MSNG including enlisted time in



the 20th Special Forces Group as a military intelligence code linguist. He’s also served as infantry platoon leader, battalion staff plans officer, company commander, and as a safety officer at Camp Shelby during mobilization. Hall has deployed to Afghanistan as a company executive officer during Operation Enduring Freedom and to Syria during his time as a company commander.

Hall attributes much of his current success, both in military and civilian spheres, to the invaluable mentorship he received within the Mississippi Army National Guard and the 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team. Throughout his tenure, particularly within the 155th, Hall fondly recalls the profound impact of his command group, where he, as a company-grade officer, gleaned wisdom from now Col. Michael Dykes, Col. Christopher Cooksey, and Lt. Col. Tyke Jurney.

“My achievements bear the enduring imprint of Col. Michael Dykes, whose unwavering belief in my capabilities spurred me to surpass my potential,” Hall said. “Col. Christopher Cooksey imbued in me the ethos of selfless service and unwavering commitment to mission, propelling me to complete

Army Ranger School, and Lt. Col. Tyke Jurney’s steadfast mentorship has been a guiding light throughout my military career. To these extraordinary leaders, I owe my deepest gratitude and the privilege of standing where I am today.”

The invaluable lessons gleaned, and the rich experiences accrued during Hall’s tenure in the MSNG, coupled with his tenure as the Legislative Director for Congressman Trent Kelly (R-MS), have equipped Hall for dedicated service to the citizens of Mississippi. Rep. Kelly, who also serves in the Mississippi Army National Guard as the Assistant Adjutant General- Army, holds a special place in Hall’s journey.

“Beyond leading Soldiers, my greatest fulfillment has been in serving the people of Mississippi. Congressman Trent Kelly, a paragon of integrity and service, both in Congress and within the MSNG as a major general, has been my guiding force,” Hall said. “Emulating his commitment to prioritizing the interests of Mississippians isn’t just an aspiration; it’s a calling.”

Hall, although a freshman in the legislature, has bold ideas for moving Mississippi and the MSNG forward.

“Mississippi stands at a pivotal juncture, poised for unprecedented

growth and prosperity. With great leadership both within the state and on the national stage, we are well positioned to seize opportunities for advancement,” said Hall. “I believe Mississippi is chartering a bold course towards prosperity. With advocates like Sen. Roger Wicker and Rep. Trent Kelly wielding influence in Washington, our state’s interests are well-represented on the national front.”

As the Vice Chairman of the Military Affairs Committee, Hall’s vision is to expand the committee’s mandate and leverage the leadership in Washington to fuel an economic renaissance in Mississippi.

“By fostering greater collaboration between our universities and the National Guard in research and development endeavors, we can usher in a new era of defense-related innovation, creating jobs and driving economic growth statewide,” he said. “I also want to bolster and protect our greatest asset - our service members. With unwavering dedication and strategic foresight, we can propel Mississippi and its National Guard towards a future of unparalleled success and prosperity.”

MISSISSIPPI NATIONAL GUARD HOSTS REGIONAL CBRNE EXERCISE ON THE GULF COAST



Iowa Air National Guard Tech Sgt. Ben Crisman, survey team chief with 71st Civil Support Team (CST), helps teammate Staff Sgt. Margaret Foss prepare for site characterization during Operation Neptune Strike at MGM Park in Biloxi, Mississippi, Jan. 28, 2024. Operation Neptune Strike is a Multi-CST and Multi-Agency CBRNE training exercise including 150 participants from Iowa, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Missouri, Kansas, and Mississippi (Region 4). (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Renee Seruntine)

Story by Staff Sgt. Renee Seruntine
102d MPAD Public Affairs NCO

Mississippi Army National Guard soldiers assigned to the 47th Civil Support Team (CST) hosted Operation Neptune Strike, a Multi-CST and Inter-Agency CBRNE training exercise including 150 participants from Iowa, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Missouri and Kansas CSTs (Region 4), January 28-

“OUR TEAM WAS AFFORDED THE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET TRAINING OBJECTIVES THAT WOULD NORMALLY BE UNAVAILABLE TO US WHILE GETTING THE CHANCE TO LEARN FROM OUR SISTER TEAMS”
- SGT. 1ST CLASS TIMOTHY CORBIN

30th, at the Combat Readiness Training Center (CRT) in Gulfport, Mississippi. CBRNE materials refers to any chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, or explosive substance that may pose a hazard to populations, territories, and forces, regardless of origin. The training exercise was based on an all-hazards response to the Mississippi Gulf Coast. “We’re hosting the first regional exercise for Region 4. The 47th CST developed the exercise scenario and hired contractors to set up combined training lanes which simulated chemical, biological, and radiological processes,” said Lt. Col. Len Fortenberry, commander of the 47th CST Weapons of Mass Destruction. “On each of the six lanes set up we sent CSTs to conduct reconnaissance, site characterization, and sampling. These actions help us determine what is being produced, how dangerous it can be to the public, and what needs to happen to mitigate the hazard.” The regional exercise is conducted for teams to communicate and test interoperability using their standard techniques and procedures while sharing ideas to learn from each other’s experiences to become better overall teams in their fields. The key tasks for this exercise were to provide CBRNE expertise, conduct all-hazards detection and monitoring for CBRNE hazards. “We want the exercise to move at a certain pace and ensure there is consistent and accurate communication between the teams,” said Fortenberry. “With my team leading, we are able to facilitate the exercise and we can speed up or slow down the exercise as needed with simulated injects.” In real-world scenarios, CSTs can only sustain continuous operations for so long following a CBRNE incident before relying on sister CSTs to come in and take control of the scene, conducting a thorough battle hand-off with the incoming team. “Our team was afforded the opportunity to meet training objectives that would normally be unavailable to us while getting the chance to learn from our sister teams,” added Sgt. 1st Class Timothy Corbin, Reconnaissance NCO with the Kansas National Guard’s 73rd CST. “It is better to meet new people and see partner capabilities beforehand. You don’t want a “real world” response to be the first time you meet and ask about what each other brings to the table.”

It is the CST’s job to be the first on the scene and are often called in prior to large events to sweep an area and clear it of any possible CBRNE threat. Reconnaissance (recon) and survey teams first collect samples and take them to a mobile testing lab. The CST’s decontamination (decon) team is there to remove contamination from the recon teams. If there were to be civilians or military or law enforcement personnel in the area affected by the biological or chemical agent, they would call in the CBRNE Emergency Response Force Package (CERFP) to handle decontamination. All these components work together to respond quickly to a CBRNE threat. “We’re facilitators in this exercise and we have five teams from five other states that each brought their analytical sections and I’m working with them making sure the exercise runs smoothly,” said Maj. Shane Laschankzy. Laschankzy, a Nuclear Medical Science Officer (NMSO) with the 47th CST, has won the prestigious Czarnecki-Stone Award for accuracy, efficiency, and proficiency four years in a row, a feat less than 2% of lab operators have ever accomplished. “Our International Standards Organization (ISO) accredited lab is audited through proficiency testing to make sure you’re doing what you say you’re doing, your results are reliable, and that your staff is trained,” said Laschankzy. “Our certification is maintained by correctly identifying unknown samples every month for 11 months a year.” Laschankzy is one of only five NMSOs selected nationally to further the Joint Program Executive Office and NGB’s endeavor to eventually bring gene sequencing to not only the CSTs, but to first responders in the nation at large. In addition to Laschankzy, the 47th CST has numerous subject matter experts in the CBRNE field, most having received more than 650 hours of training. “The importance of our teams is to show the long-term viability and the continued expansion of our program. We have federal, state and local partners, and understanding what their mission sets are and how we augment them is vitally important to our program,” said Col. John Sandefur, branch chief of the WMD-CSTs at NGB. “Building those relationships early and often, inviting them to some of the unique training that we have, and participating in some of their training really solidifies the relationships with the CBRNE enterprise as a whole.”



Master Sgt. Phillip Gough (right), survey team member with the Arkansas National Guard’s 61st Civil Support Team (CST), decontaminates Sgt. Mackay Kim, survey team member with the Kansas National Guard’s 73rd CST, during Operation Neptune Strike at Singing River Island in Pascagoula, Mississippi, Jan. 28, 2024. The key tasks for the training exercise were to provide chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and explosive (CBRNE) expertise, conduct all-hazards detection, and monitor for CBRNE hazards. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Renee Seruntine)



Arkansas Army National Guard Sgt. Zachary Craig (left) and Staff Sgt. Daniel Mitchell, survey team members with the 61st Civil Support Team (CST), Arkansas National Guard, are suited up and prepared to site characterize during Operation Neptune Strike at Singing River Island in Pascagoula, Mississippi, Jan. 28, 2024. Reconnaissance and survey teams first go into unknown environments in an encapsulated suit with monitoring equipment to keep track of hazardous material levels while they obtain samples. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Renee Seruntine)

FOUR IMMORTAL CHAPLAINS

Story by Mr. Daniel Szarek
MSNG Deputy Director of Public Affairs

On Jan. 22, 1943, more than 900 Soldiers, Navy security personnel, and crew boarded the S.S. Dorchester in New York Harbor. Less than 12 days later, 678 of them will perish, four of whom will forever live in infamy – George Fox, a Methodist Minister; Alexander Goode, a Jewish Rabbi; Clark Poling, a Reformed Minister; and John Washington, a Catholic Priest.

In the early morning hours of Feb. 3, 1943, U-223 – a German submarine (U-Boat) – sent three torpedoes in the direction of a six-ship convoy sailing across the Labrador Sea from Newfoundland to Greenland. One of those ships, the S.S. Dorchester, was struck on its starboard side by one of the torpedoes, instantly killing many Soldiers. Ice cold water poured through the hole in the ship and hit the hot boilers, causing them to explode, killing even more personnel. Ammonia released into the air by the refrigeration system incapacitated many people below deck and the ship’s generators shorted out, plunging the entire ship into darkness and knocking out the ship’s communication system.

There was absolute chaos in the lower part of the ship as men scrambled over debris, blocked passageways, and each other, trying to reach the relative safety of the upper deck. During this panicked rush away from the inflow of ice-cold water, many of the men left their life jackets behind, and some even left their boots. The upper deck offered no respite as mayhem and chaos had set in and the ship began listing badly to starboard while personnel were being directed toward the lifeboats.

All four chaplains aboard the Dorchester were on deck calmly organizing the frantic men into lines when they realized many of them



Chaplain (Col.) Cregg Puckett, state command chaplain for the Mississippi National Guard, provides the welcoming comments for the Four Immortal Chaplains event, Feb. 2, 2024, at the Two Mississippi Museums in Jackson, Mississippi. The Four Immortal Chaplains is a program of the U.S. Army Chaplain Corps honoring the service and sacrifice of four U.S. Army chaplains one fateful night in February 1943. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Shawn Keeton)

coming from below didn’t have life jackets on. After distributing the last remaining life jackets on the top deck, a Soldier came running by yelling, “I can’t find my life vest! I can’t find my life vest!” Reportedly, it was chaplain Fox who unsnapped his, gave it to the Soldier, and then helped him over the side of the ship into a lifeboat. Another Soldier without a life vest came running by when chaplain Washington stopped him and gave the Soldier his, ordering him to take it when the Soldier initially refused the sacrificial offer.

Chaplain Poling helped another Soldier without a life vest, by giving up his. After donning the life jacket, the Soldier remained unmoved, frozen with fear. Chaplain Poling again helped the Soldier by providing two hands of motivation, swiftly leading him off

the ship. Chaplain Goode, on his way to retrieve an injured Soldier, passed by John Mahoney, a Navy lieutenant who was cursing himself for forgetting his gloves. Goode took off his gloves and said, “Here, I have an extra pair.” Mahoney would later realize that Goode, in fact, did not have another pair. The injured Soldier was unable to don his life vest due to a broken arm, so chaplain Goode unlaced his own boots and used the laces to tie his life jacket onto the Soldier.

The entire S.S. Dorchester sunk just 25 minutes after being struck by the torpedo. The last time the Four Chaplains were seen, they were near the keel on the ship’s hull, standing arm in arm and praying as the ship went fully under. To commemorate their sacrifice, the U.S. Congress unanimously approved the Four Chaplains Medal, also known as the Chaplains Medal of Honor, in July 1960 and presented the medals to the families. The Four Chaplains are the only service members to have received the Chaplains Medal of Honor.



ALEXANDER D. GOODE – Jewish Rabbi

The youngest of the Four Immortal Chaplains, Alexander Goode was born May 10, 1911, in Brooklyn, New York. As a teenager, Goode spent his summers training at National Guard camps. He earned a scholarship to attend the University of Cincinnati followed by attendance at the Hebrew Union College. After becoming a rabbi in 1937, he would later earn his Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins University in 1940.

Working as a rabbi in York, Pennsylvania, Goode reorganized a religious school and initiated inter-faith dialogue within the community. He was also the leader of Boy Scout Troop 37 which became the first multi-cultural Troop in the nation and the first to offer a Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish Badge. Goode was sitting in his living room listening to the radio on the morning of Dec. 7, 1941, when he heard the news about Pearl Harbor. He was 31 years old when he commissioned in the U.S. Army Chaplain Corps and attended Chaplain’s School before reuniting with Chaplain Fox at Camp Myles Standish in October 1942 – quickly becoming friends with two other chaplains, Clark Poling and John Washington.



CLARK V. POLING – Reformed Minister

Chaplain Clark Poling, born Aug. 7, 1910, in Columbus, Ohio, was a minister’s son, a graduate of Rutgers University and the Yale Divinity School, and a spiritual philanthropist starting boys clubs and allowing women to have more responsibility and leadership positions in the church. Poling wanted to join the military even before Pearl Harbor and the U.S. involvement in World War II. However, his first choice was not to be chaplain as he, “Wasn’t going to hide behind the church in some safe office.” His father, who was a chaplain in World War I, convinced him otherwise.

Once the war started, he volunteered for military service and joined the Army with his first duty assignment being Camp Shelby, near Hattiesburg, Mississippi. After his training at Camp Shelby was complete he was ordered to report to Camp Myles Standish for transport to his duties overseas. It was during his time at Camp Myles Standish where he would unite with three other chaplains with whom he would be linked throughout all eternity.



GEORGE L. FOX – Methodist Minister

Chaplain Fox was born March 15, 1900, in Lewistown, Pennsylvania. When he was 17 years old, he lied about his age to join the Army, eventually serving on the Western Front as a medical orderly during World War I. On two separate occasions, Fox took off his own gas mask and put it on wounded Soldiers before carrying them to safety. He would end up being injured by artillery fire during the war and, on the day before the armistice was signed, suffered a spinal injury when the building he was in collapsed after being struck by artillery. For his bravery and injuries, Fox was awarded the Silver Star, the Croix de Guerre, and a Purple Heart.

After the war, Fox continued his studies toward becoming a minister. He was a community pastor and a chaplain for the American Legion in Vermont when he heard the news of the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor. In August 1942, Fox, at 42 years old, commissioned in the U.S. Army Chaplain Corps and attended Chaplain’s School, where he became great friends with Chaplain Goode, and met two others who would later join him in boarding the S.S. Dorchester in January 1943.



JOHN P. WASHINGTON – Catholic Priest

Born July 18, 1908, in Newark, New Jersey, Chaplain John Washington was the son of Irish immigrants and the oldest of seven children. Serving as an altar boy from an early age, Washington had always aspired to serve in priesthood. While playing Army as a child, he was shot in the eye with a BB gun, an injury which severely impacted his vision and would eventually affect his choice of military service.

After Sunday service Dec. 7, 1941, he and his mother heard about the bombing of Pearl Harbor on the radio. Washington immediately contacted his senior pastor and asked permission to join the military as a chaplain. After being rejected by the Navy due to his eyesight, another priest at his church, Father Gordon Byrne who had served in the Army during World War I, suggested that Washington give the Army a try. With a small act of deception, covering the same bad eye both times during the eye test, Washington passed and was commissioned as a lieutenant in the Army. It was at Camp Myles Standish and the Harvard Chaplain’s School where Washington would become friends with chaplains Fox, Goode, and Poling.

“THE LAST TIME THE FOUR CHAPLAINS WERE SEEN, THEY WERE NEAR THE KEEL ON THE SHIP’S HULL, STANDING ARM IN ARM AND PRAYING AS THE SHIP WENT FULLY UNDER.”



Family and friends of U.S. Army Lt. Gen. Thomas L. James participated in his promotion ceremony at the Mississippi National Guard armory in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, Dec. 15, 2023. James, a native of Petal, Mississippi, celebrated his promotion to lieutenant general in the same location where his military career began 40 years ago. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spt. Amber Milsap)

MISSISSIPPI NATIVE PROMOTED TO LIEUTENANT GENERAL

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

Surrounded by family and friends, Maj. Gen. Thomas L. James of Petal, Mississippi, was promoted to the rank of lieutenant general, Friday, Dec. 15, 2023, at the Mississippi National Guard armory in Hattiesburg. It was at this same armory that James took his initial Oath of Enlistment joining the Mississippi National Guard in November 1982. He started his military career serving with the 2nd Battalion, 20th Special Forces Group (Airborne), as a Team Medic.

"This location is important to me for this promotion ceremony, because it all began here," said Lt. Gen. Thomas James, deputy commanding general of U.S. Space Command.

Established in August 2019, the U.S. Space Command (USSPACECOM) is the 11th and newest unified Combatant Command. The headquarters is located at Peterson Space Force Base, Colorado, with components and tactical formations spread around the world.

USSPACECOM is comprised of more than 18,000 service members, civilians, and contractors operating ground and space-based systems. USSPACECOM is responsible for defending the U.S. and its allies' interests in the space domain while providing space-enabled combat effects to joint warfighters, ensuring there is never a day without our presence in space.

"This place is representative of what I want around me for this ceremony today," said James. "The engine room that generates the torque and power of the U.S. military that provides the protection that defends our freedoms and way of life. This armory is like so many others where Soldiers prepare every day for the worst our potential enemies can throw at us."

Retired Army Lt. Gen. Kevin Mangum, a friend, mentor, and senior Army aviation officer to James, served as the senior officer hosting the promotion ceremony. Mangum completed 35 years of distinguished service, a legacy which includes a 2015 selection by the Chief of Staff of the Army to lead the

Holistic Army Aviation Task Force (HAATF), designed to shape the future of Army Aviation. His final U.S. Army assignment was as Deputy Commander of Training and Doctrine Command.

The ceremony included the official publication of the promotion order, the pinning of lieutenant general rank by James' family, and the administration of the Oath of Office. The symbolic furling of a two-star general's flag and the unfurling of a three-star general officer's flag, displayed the change in rank and responsibilities that come with the promotion. Following the promotion ceremony, James had some assistance with the cake cutting ceremony from the next generation of soldiers at Petal High School's Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps.

James concluded the official portion of the ceremony with words of thanks and gratitude saying, "I absolutely love what I do. It's a privilege and a humbling experience to get the chance to do what I do."

MIRE COOK OFF



Spt. Tomika Hope, assigned to the Mississippi Army National Guard (MSARNG) Recruiting and Retention Battalion, displays a dessert dish created by high school students in the inaugural MSARNG High School Culinary Competition hosted by Clinton High School in Clinton, Mississippi, Feb. 15, 2024. High School students participated in a military immersive environment, led by MSARNG culinary specialists, while preparing military rations with their own unique interpretations. The competition featured nine teams from eight high schools across the state. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Paul Byrne)

Story by Maj. Jay Longmire
MSNG JFH Public Affairs Specialist

"An army marches on its stomach," a quote often attributed to Napoleon Bonaparte, remains true today. Soldiers are required to operate at an accelerated level during combat and need higher levels of nutrition than the average person. The military has sometimes been given a bad reputation for the food it prepares. Soldiers of the 284th and 285th Field Feeding Teams, 184th Sustainment Command, Mississippi Army National Guard (MSARNG), along with nine teams from eight high schools across Mississippi, are doing their best to change that, one meal at a time.

The teams are given a set amount of time and a set number of ingredients from Unitized Group Ration A (UGR-A), and are allowed to add a small amount of their own ingredients

to create meals fit for a gourmet restaurant. This year was the first time they used Containerized Kitchens (CK) provided by the MSARNG to prepare their meals. While the use of the CK presented challenges, the students, with some help from military personnel, adapted to the new environment. As the students worked, observers ensured they followed the rules. Based on the pace of work, the participants were not bothered by the oversight.

Competitions like this require a great deal of preparation, coordination, and collaboration. Soldiers from many different departments in the MSARNG, school administrators, and parents had to work together to make this event a success. This was no small task, considering the nine teams were spread from as far north as Oxford to as far south as George County. The large number of supplies and equipment used to introduce these students to a broader

world of culinary service was provided by multiple sources, including Guardsmen, parents, and other students.

The judges, a select group of military culinary specialists and local celebrities, faced a difficult task. The selections provided by the students were carefully crafted and appetizing. The decisions were made, votes were tallied, and the winners were selected. The positive camaraderie and support that had been seen throughout the day carried forward during the awards ceremony as the winners were announced. Clinton High School had two teams that won first and second place, and Hattiesburg High School won third place.

Events like this are rare but crucial. They offer high school students the opportunity to connect with military personnel who consistently use the skills they have learned as part of their job. As for the service member, it helps us remember why we serve.

SOUTHERN STRIKE 2024



Senior Airman William Lane, a crew chief with the 172nd Contingency Flight, Jackson, Mississippi, marshals a U.S. Air Force C-130J Hercules during Southern Strike at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center Auxiliary Airfield, Hattiesburg, Mississippi, March 11, 2024. Southern Strike is a joint military partnership that strengthens contingency response operations including aeromedical evacuation, security forces airfield protection, specialized fueling operations, and rotary aviation medevac and airlift. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Airman 1st Class Shardae McAfee)

“TO OPERATE IN A CONTESTED ENVIRONMENT, BEING ABLE TO WORK TOGETHER, AND KNOW ONE ANOTHER’S TACTICS, TECHNIQUE, AND PROCEDURE IS VERY IMPORTANT”

- COL. ALBERT GERMANY

Story by Capt. Adrian Conner and Sgt. James Vaughan
102d Public Affairs Detachment

U.S. Armed Forces, along with several international partners, converge annually in the southern region of the United States for the joint exercise Southern Strike – an exercise designed for U.S. service members and forces from partner countries to train and hone warfighting skills. This year’s exercise marked the 13th year Southern Strike has been hosted by the Mississippi National Guard at the Combat Readiness Training Center (CRTC) in Gulfport, Mississippi, April 7-26, 2024.

Southern Strike 2024 was split into two parts this year. Southern Strike 2024-1, which took place in March, focused on specialized and routine air missions and the Agile Combat Element, or ACE concept. Southern Strike 2024-2 highlighted the skills of special operations forces and their ground movements.

The exercise saw approximately 800 participants throughout the month with international partners from several

countries participating in training efforts to enable continued coordination.

“The Air Force and Army have transitioned to large-scale combat operations (LSCO) and this exercise integrates special operations forces from the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines,” said Col. Chris Cooksey, the Southern Strike 2024 Exercise Director and commander of the 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team, Mississippi Army National Guard. “In transitioning to large scale operations, this exercise builds partnership capacity between our joint forces and our international partners.”

U.S. Army Special Operations Command’s focus was centered around incorporating emerging unconventional and irregular warfare techniques, preparing for large scale combat operations, and working with allied and international partners.

“Our special operations have come across the full spectrum of the force and they are conducting everything from airborne operations to conventional targeting operations, unconventional

warfare, and working with partner forces,” said Cooksey.

Southern Strike 2024-2 allowed service members an unparalleled experience to train and grow in a fast-paced environment.

“From what I’ve seen so far, I believe there has been an extreme amount of growth on all levels of command as well as down to the lower trace elements within the training audience,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Brandon Thorpe, scenario director

for Southern Strike 2024 and command sergeant major of Special Operations Detachment - South, U.S. Army National Guard.

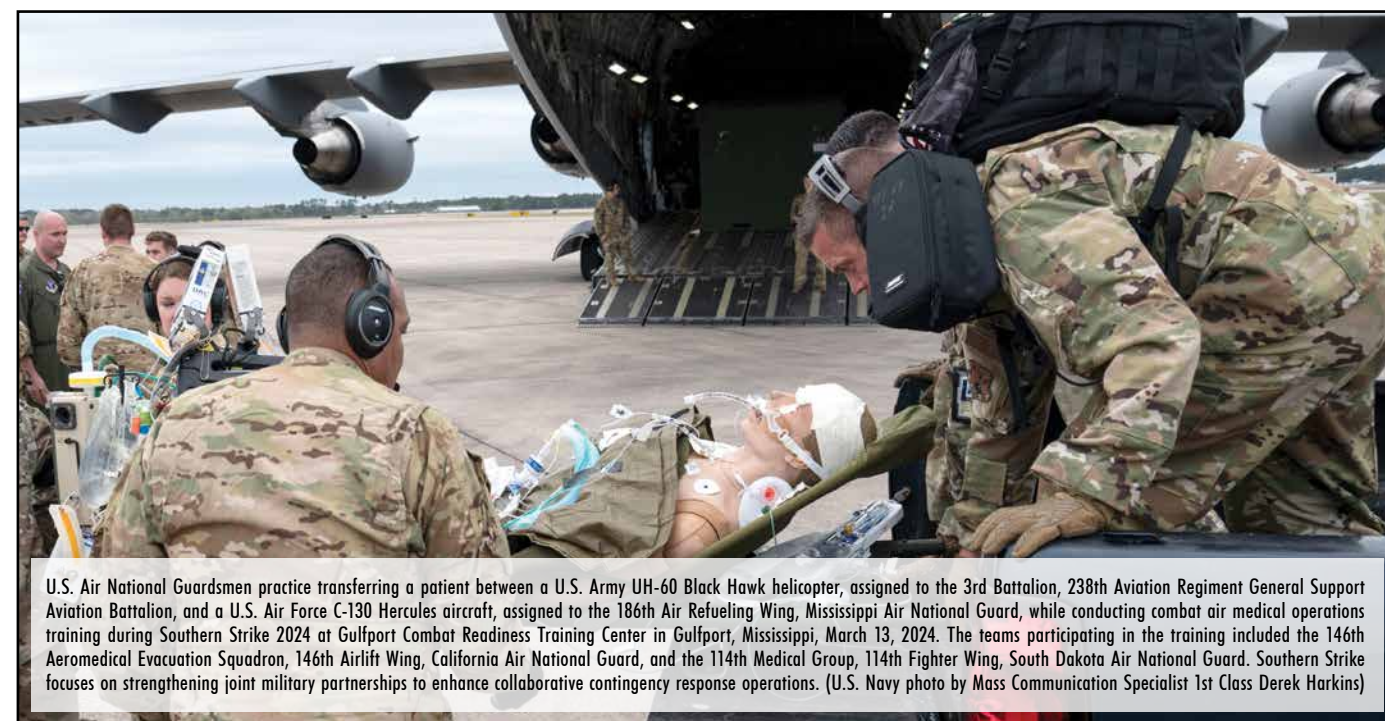
The challenging air and ground scenarios allowed growth, innovation, and the strengthening of partnerships, which are annual goals of the Southern Strike exercise and will continue for years to come.

“To operate in a contested environment,

being able to work together, and know one another’s tactics, techniques, and procedures is very important,” said Col. Albert Germany, Southern Strike 2024 deputy director and 186th Air Operations Group Joint Air Component Coordination Element (JACCE) director, Mississippi Air National Guard. “It’s also an excellent opportunity to pioneer new ways to work together and new ways to execute the mission.”



U.S. Air National Guardsmen assigned to the 146th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, California Air National Guard and the 109th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, Minnesota Air National Guard, participate in the M9 Air Force Qualification Course during Southern Strike 2024 at the Gulfport Combat Readiness Training Center in Gulfport, Mississippi, March 7, 2024. Southern Strike focuses on strengthening joint military partnerships to enhance collaborative contingency response operations. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Derek Harkins)



U.S. Air National Guardsmen practice transferring a patient between a U.S. Army UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter, assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 238th Aviation Regiment General Support Aviation Battalion, and a U.S. Air Force C-130 Hercules aircraft, assigned to the 186th Air Refueling Wing, Mississippi Air National Guard, while conducting combat air medical operations training during Southern Strike 2024 at Gulfport Combat Readiness Training Center in Gulfport, Mississippi, March 13, 2024. The teams participating in the training included the 146th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, 146th Airlift Wing, California Air National Guard, and the 114th Medical Group, 114th Fighter Wing, South Dakota Air National Guard. Southern Strike focuses on strengthening joint military partnerships to enhance collaborative contingency response operations. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Derek Harkins)

U.S. Navy Builder 2nd Class Isaac Ramos, assigned to Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) 11, directs a concrete truck during a concrete pad placement at the Mississippi Air National Guard Combat Readiness Training Center in Gulfport, Mississippi, Oct. 27, 2023. NMCB 11, assigned to Naval Construction Group TWO, is homeported in Gulfport, Mississippi as part of the Naval Construction Force. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class James Hong)

JOINT PROJECT ENHANCES READINESS

Story by Senior Airman
Angelina Queen
CRTC-Gulfport Public Affairs Officer

The Mississippi Aviation Classification and Repair Activity Depot (MS-AVCRAD) is getting three more helicopter static display pads in addition to the two already there. The new displays will feature the Hughes OH-6 Cayuse and the OH-58 Kiowa Alpha and Delta models.

“We currently have a joint exercise at the MS-AVCRAD,” said Col. Andrew M. Ratcliffe III, AVCRAD commander. “We worked out an arrangement with the Seabees from Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) 11 to design and build some aircraft static display pads. We provided the materials, and they are providing the labor.”

Capt. Constance Solina, commodore of NMCB 11, and her staff visited the AVCRAD facility Oct. 27, 2023, to view the operations. Preparing for an overseas deployment, they used this construction project as an exercise.

“This exercise helps me prepare for deployment because it gives me a bearing

on how to be a leader,” said Steelworker 2nd Class (SW2) Julian Garcia, project manager. “This is my first time leading a project from start to finish; it sets an example of what I need to do and work on, and it helps me grow as a future leader in the Navy.”

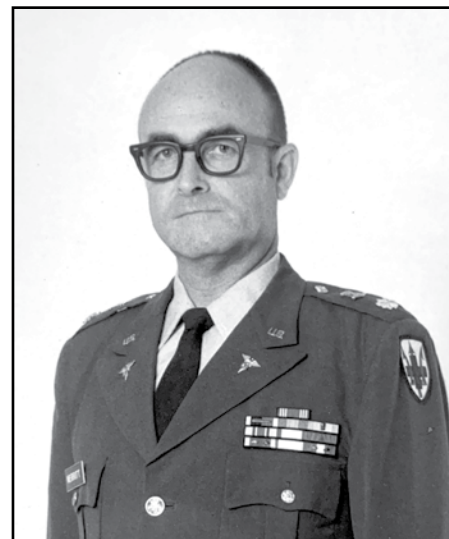
Through exercises similar to this one, the entire NMCB is preparing for deployment across three Combatant Commands, including the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM), U.S. European Command (EUCOM), and the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM).

“Though junior, SW2 Garcia exhibits the leadership and technical knowledge required to manage multiple crews and plan a small project,” said Cmdr. Benjamin Waite, commanding officer, NMCB 11. “By giving him this opportunity to lead and learn in homeport with the entire battalion at his disposal for support, he will build the confidence needed to be successful on deployment. Understanding the importance of project management and enforcing quality control at all levels is critical when working at a remote location.”



U.S. Navy Builder 2nd Class Brayan Ariasniño, assigned to Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) 11, finishes a concrete pad at the Mississippi Air National Guard Combat Readiness Training Center in Gulfport, Mississippi, Oct. 27, 2023. NMCB 11, assigned to Naval Construction Group TWO, is homeported in Gulfport, Mississippi as part of the Naval Construction Force. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class James Hong)

CELEBRATING A LEGACY OF SERVICE COLONEL WILLIAM HARVEY MERRITT



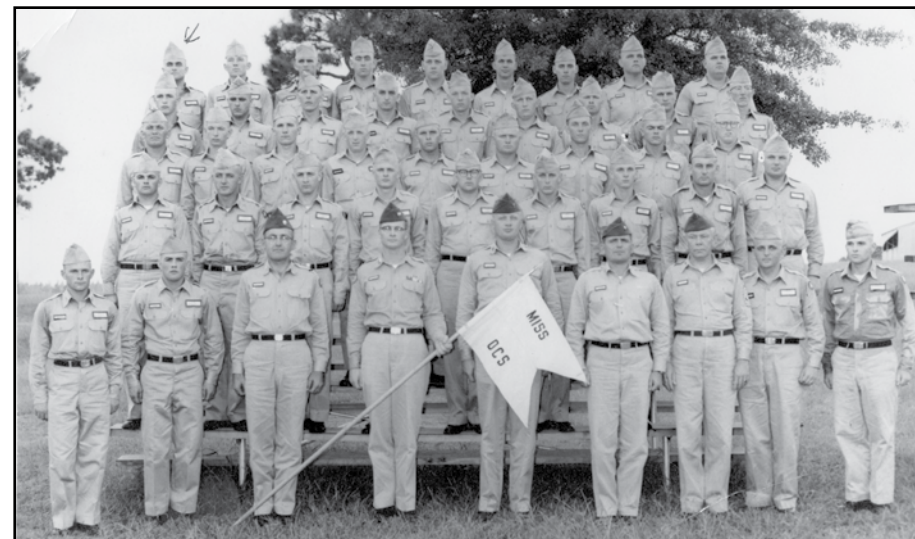
Story by Lt. Col. Deidre D. Smith
MSNG Director of Public Affairs

Retired Col. William Harvey Merritt Sr., born Nov. 5, 1933, in Magee, Mississippi, to parents William Thomas Merritt and Doris Evelyn Brooke Merritt, moved to his heavenly home Feb. 12, 2024.

Merritt served our country with honor and distinction as an active-duty airman in the U.S. Air Force from March 1951 until March 1955, achieving the rank of airman first class. He continued his military service by joining the Mississippi Army National Guard in November 1955, achieving the rank of Sergeant First Class (E-6 at the time) before attending Officer Candidate School at Camp Shelby.

Following active-duty service, Merritt worked for his father in the soil testing lab for the City of Jackson. In December 1958, Merritt began his career as a fireman with the Jackson Fire Department. His first assignment was at the ‘Old Central’ Fire Station #14, becoming District Chief before accepting a transfer to Allen C. Thompson Airport and Hawkins Field Fire Station. He served there until his civil service retirement in June 1980.

Merritt was a member of the Inaugural Class of the Mississippi Army National Guard Military Academy’s Officer Candidate School, graduating Aug. 22, 1959, and commissioning as a second



Col. William Harvey Merritt (top left) with the inaugural class of the Mississippi Army National Guard Military Academy's Officer Candidate School, Camp Shelby, Mississippi, Aug. 22, 1959. (Courtesy Photo of the Mississippi Armed Forces Museum)

lieutenant in December.

Merritt served in various units throughout his military career, including the 815th Food Service Squadron, Forbes Air Force Base, Topeka, Kansas; 86th Fighter-Bomber Wing, Neubiburg, Germany; the Army Reserve National Guard Personnel Center, Pentagon, Washington D.C.; and many units within Jackson, Mississippi, including the 31st RECON Company; 31st Aviation Company; 114th Military Police Company; 134th Surgical Hospital (Mobile Army); Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 213th Medical Brigade; and Headquarters, State Area Command (STARC) Mississippi.

During his military service, Merritt completed a variety of military education courses including the Mississippi Military Academy’s Officer Candidate School, Infantry Officer Orientation Course, Military Police Officer Course, National Security Management Course, Medical Officer Advanced Course, Theater Medical Operations Course, U.S. Army Academy of Health Sciences Command and Staff Course, and the U.S. Army Command and General Staff Officer Course.

Merritt’s awards and decorations include the Legion of Merit, Meritorious Service Medal with 1 Bronze Oak Leaf

Cluster, Air Force Good Conduct Medal, Army Reserve Component Achievement Medal with 2 Bronze Oak Leaf Clusters, Army of Occupation Medal – Germany, National Defense Service Medal, Armed Forces Reserve Medal with a Gold Hourglass, Army Service Ribbon, Army Reserve Component Overseas Training Ribbon, Mississippi Magnolia Cross, Mississippi Magnolia Medal, Mississippi War Medal, Mississippi Emergency Service Medal with 1 Silver and 1 Bronze Oak Leaf Cluster, Mississippi Service School Medal with 1 Bronze Oak Leaf Cluster, and the Mississippi Longevity Medal with 1 Silver and 2 Bronze Oak Leaf Clusters.

Merritt retired at the rank of colonel and received the honorary Mississippi state promotion to brigadier general at his retirement May 8, 1988, after a military career spanning nearly 36 years.

Rest in Peace Soldier. Thank you for your patriotism and service to our country. Without your efforts and your families’ support, our country would not stand so boldly, shine so brightly and its citizens live so freely. You now have earned a rest, so go fly with the Angels, go rest high on that mountain; your work on earth is done. Go to heaven a-shoutin’ Love for the Father and the Son.

MSNG RECOGNIZES THE BEST OF THE BEST STATE BEST WARRIOR COMPETITION 2024



**“IF I HAD TO PICK
PEOPLE TO COMPETE
AGAINST, IT WOULD BE
THIS GROUP ANY DAY.
YOU ALL PUSHED ME TO
BE THE BEST I CAN BE.”
- SPC. WILLIAM HILLMAN**

Story by Sgt. Madisone Hatten
MSNG Public Affairs Office

The Mississippi National Guard’s Best Warrior Competition was hosted at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center in Hattiesburg, March 19-22, 2024. This annual event, aimed at identifying the most skilled and proficient U.S. Soldiers and Airmen in the MSNG, puts competitors, who come boasting a variety of military skill sets, through a series of physical and mental challenges.

The competition kicked off with the Army Combat Fitness Test (ACFT). The ACFT tested the competitors’ muscular strength and endurance, power, speed, agility, coordination, flexibility, and

balance. The competition continued as participants were put to the test mentally as well, facing an exam portion covering a wide range of military subjects.

In addition to the exam, competitors were assessed on their knowledge of several weapon systems including the M18 semi-automatic pistol, M4 carbine and the M240 machine gun. One of the highlights of the competition was the obstacle course where the competitors navigated a series of challenging tasks. This event not only tested their physical ability but also their ability to think quickly under pressure.

Perhaps the most demanding portion of the competition was the 12-mile ruck march, an endurance test that pushed

the competitors to their limits – physical as they traversed various terrains carrying more than 30 pounds on their backs, and mental resilience as they worked through fatigue and discomfort to reach the finish line. In a surprise event, competitors were tasked with completing the Air Force Fitness Test, adding a new challenge to an already demanding competition. The participants were able to showcase their versatility and adaptability.

Each competitor brought a unique set of strengths and experiences to the competition, showcasing the versatility and capability of the state’s Soldiers and Airmen. Spc. William Hillman, 1st Battalion, 204th Air Defense Artillery Regiment, 66th Troop Command, and Staff Sgt. Cody Pellegrin, 3rd Non-Commissioned Officers Training Academy, 154th Regiment Regional Training Institute, were the winners of the 2024 Mississippi National Guard Best Warrior Competition.

Hillman, the winner of the Enlisted Soldier category, expressed his gratitude for his competitors.

“I would like to thank you all for competing with me,” Hillman said. “If I had to pick people to compete against, it would be this group any day. You all pushed me to be the best I can be.”

Pellegrin, the winner of the Non-Commissioned Officer category, was also grateful for the chance to compete.

“I want to thank God for giving me the ability and opportunity to be here,” he said. “I’m very thankful for the sergeants major that I’ve worked with in the past, for putting me in the position to be here. Ultimately, to the competitors, with you guys and being able to work and talk together, it made it enjoyable.”

The Best Warrior Competition stands as a testament to the Mississippi National Guard service members’ commitment to maintain a high standard of readiness and excellence in service to their state and nation.



ANG RECRUITERS HOST CAREER FAIR AT CRTC

Story by Senior Airman
Angelina Queen
CRTC Public Affairs Office

Air National Guard recruiters hosted a career fair for around 1,600 students from 15 high schools at the Gulfport Combat Readiness Training Center (CRTC) Monday, Feb. 5, 2024.

During this community outreach event, students were invited to explore different career paths by having access to more than 60 recruiters who provided educational and job opportunities to them.

“It’s a convenience for the schools and students to come to one location, and it doesn’t cost them anything,” said Master Sgt. Jason Cooksey, assistant superintendent of Mississippi Air National Guard Recruiting and Retention. “Earlier, I was telling my team members that we work for the public; this is our opportunity to give back to them a bit.”

Students had the opportunity to visit informational booths set up in the CRTC hangar. Amongst the multiple college representatives were fire, police, technical school, Army National Guard, and Air Force recruiters. The representatives were glad to discuss their roles and how they can help the students.

“These kids need to know,” said Cooksey. “They need to be informed. They need to come talk to the people who do this for a living.”

Cooksey began organizing the event during Fall 2023. He took inspiration from the annual job fair that the Mississippi Coast Coliseum used to host.

“This is kind of a one-stop shop for high school students,” Cooksey said.

Cooksey’s motivation for this event is part of a larger effort to build relationships. This event allows students to become more aware of the military presence on the Mississippi Coast and the support colleges offer.



Mississippi Air National Guard recruiters hosted a career fair Feb. 5, 2024, at the Combat Readiness Training Center, Gulfport, Mississippi. Around 1,600 students from 15 high schools visited the base and met with more than 60 recruiters about potential careers in the Air National Guard. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Airman Angelina Stokes)



The 172d Airlift Wing Color Guard presents the U.S. and state flag at Mississippi’s 65th governor’s inauguration at the State Capitol Building in Jackson, Mississippi, Jan. 9, 2024. The event also included musical selections from the 41st Army Band, a 19-gun salute with M120 cannons, and a flyover by aviation professionals from the Mississippi Army National Guard. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Madisone Hatten)

MISSISSIPPI GOVERNOR’S INAUGURATION SUPPORT

Story by Sgt. Madisone Hatten
MSNG JFH Public Affairs Specialist

Mississippi’s State Capital witnessed a grand celebration in the inauguration of the 65th Governor of Mississippi, Tate Reeves, with the Mississippi National Guard playing a key role in the ceremony. Airmen from the 172d Airlift Wing Color Guard proudly presented the colors, marking the traditional beginning of the ceremony.

The atmosphere was filled with patriotism as the 41st Army Band, an ensemble within the Mississippi Army National Guard, performed musical selections that echoed across the capitol’s grounds. As the ceremony commenced, the band played the National Anthem, a moment steeped in tradition and reverence.

Adding to the grandeur of the event, Camp Shelby’s Maneuver Area Training Equipment Site (MATES) performed the 19-gun salute, a time-honored military custom honoring dignitaries such as our state’s governor. The salute, fired with M120 Cannons resonating throughout the capital city, demonstrated the Mississippi

National Guard’s dedication to duty and honor.

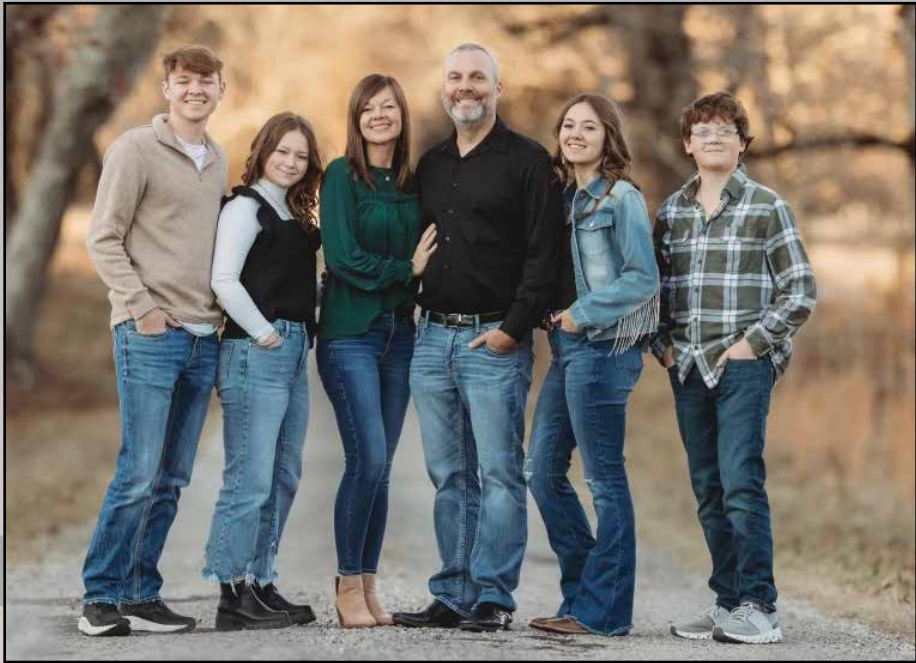
Aviation professionals from the Mississippi Army National Guard executed a flawless flyover using UH-72 Lakota, UH-60 Blackhawk, CH-47 Chinook, and AH-64 Apache helicopters. Following the Inauguration Ceremony, the festivities continued with a vibrant parade where the 20th Special Forces Group showcased some of their military equipment. Among the highlights were the Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected All-Terrain Vehicle and the Ultra-Light All-Terrain Vehicle, exemplifying the Guard’s adaptability and readiness.

Airmen from the 186th Air Refueling Wing added to the spectacle with their display of the High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle, commonly known as the Humvee. Inaugurations mark the beginning of a new era, and as Mississippi welcomed its 65th Governor, the Mississippi National Guard embodied the values of duty, honor, and service to the nation.



The 41st Army Band provides musical selections during the inauguration of Mississippi’s 65th governor at the State Capitol Building in Jackson, Mississippi, Jan. 9, 2024. The event also included a 19-gun salute, a flyover by aviation professionals from the Mississippi Army National Guard, and a presentation of the U.S. and state flags by the 172d Airlift Wing Color Guard. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Madisone Hatten)

CW4 DEREK JOSHUA ABBOTT



Chief Warrant Officer 4 Derek Joshua Abbott began his military career on Dec. 27, 2002, when he enlisted in Tupelo, Mississippi, as a private in Company D, 1st Battalion, 159th Aviation Regiment, Mississippi Army National Guard. Promoted to private second class the following month and transferring to Troop E, 1st Squadron, 104th Cavalry Regiment, Abbott went on to Advanced Individual Training, becoming a 15R – AH-64 Attack Helicopter Repairer upon graduation in October 2003. He quickly rose through the ranks, promoting to private first class in November 2003, specialist in January 2004, and after spending some time in Troop D, 1-104th, he transferred back to Troop E and promoted to sergeant in July 2004.

While serving in Troop E, 1-104th, Abbott attended Warrant Officer Candidate School, graduating on April 29, 2005, and pinning the rank of warrant officer one. Abbott's first assignment as a warrant officer was with Troop E as an AH-64A Apache Pilot. He deployed to Iraq in August 2006, continuing to serve as an Apache pilot. It was during this deployment when Abbott earned the Air Medal with Valor for his actions on April 7, 2007. The award narrative reads, in part:

“For exceptionally valorous achievement during air operations supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom on 7 April 2007 at Diwaniyah, Iraq. WO1 Abbott's willingness to place himself in harms way to protect his fellow Soldiers was beyond the call of duty. He continued to provide protection to the lead aircraft despite having received battle damage to his aircraft.”

Abbott's other assignments included Aircraft Armament Maintenance Officer and Aviation Maintenance Officer with Company C, 1st Battalion, 151st Aviation Regiment; Aviation Maintenance Officer with Company A, 1st Battalion, 149th Aviation Regiment; Maintenance Test Flight Evaluator with Detachment 1, Company B, 834th Aviation Support Battalion; Aviation Maintenance Officer and Aircraft Armament Maintenance Officer with Company A, 1st Battalion, 149th Aviation Regiment; Aviation Maintenance Officer with Company A, 1108th Theatre Aviation Sustainment Maintenance Group in Gulfport; and Aviation Safety Officer for Company D of the 2d Battalion, 151st Lakota Medical Evacuation unit in Tupelo. He most recently served as a Maintenance Test Pilot with 2d Battalion, 151st Aviation Regiment – Lakota Medical

Evacuation.

Abbott's awards and decorations include the Air Medal with “V” device and numeral 2; Meritorious Service Medal (Posthumous); Army Commendation Medal with 2 bronze oak leaf clusters; Army Achievement Medal; Army Good Conduct Medal; Army Reserve Component Achievement Medal with 2 bronze oak leaf clusters; Iraq Campaign Medal with one campaign star; Mississippi Magnolia Cross (Posthumous); the Senior Army Aviator Badge; the Combat Action Badge; and many other decorations and state awards.

Dates of rank:

PV1- 27 Dec. 2002
PV2- 31 Jan. 2003
PFC- 3 Nov. 2003
SPC- 3 Jan. 2004
SGT- 4 July 2004
WO1- 29 April 2005
CW2- 3 May 2007
CW3- 12 Aug. 2011
CW4- 29 May 2018
CW5- 23 Feb. 2024 (Posthumous)

CW4 BRYAN ANDREW ZEMEK



Chief Warrant Officer 4 Bryan Andrew Zemek began his military career on Sept. 3, 2004, when he enlisted in Tupelo, Mississippi, as an Aviation Operations Specialist in Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 185th Aviation Regiment, Mississippi Army National Guard.

On March 4, 2010, Zemek was transferred to Detachment 1, 1st Battalion, 149th Aviation Regiment before attending Warrant Officer Candidate School (WOCS). After graduating from WOCS on May 10, 2010, he was appointed Warrant Officer One the following day. Zemek

Dates of rank:

PV1- 3 Sept. 2004
PV2- 9 Jan. 2005
PFC- 10 Jan. 2005
SPC- 3 Sept. 2005
SGT- 12 Aug. 2009
WO1- 11 May 2010
CW2- 29 May 2012
CW3- 2 May 2018
CW4- 22 Dec. 2023
CW5- 23 Feb. 2024 (posthumous)

completed 152H, AH-64D (Apache) Attack Pilot Warrant Officer Basic Course on Jan. 1, 2012.

Zemek deployed overseas in support of Operation Inherent Resolve with Special Operations Detachment South on March 19, 2021, where he continued his performance as an AH-64D Apache Pilot. His overseas service during this period included Kuwait from May 20, 2021 to June 19, 2021; Syria from June 20, 2021 to July 10, 2021; again in Kuwait from July 11, 2021 to July 21, 2021; Iraq from July 22, 2021 to Jan. 19, 2022; and concluded his overseas deployment in Kuwait from Jan. 20, 2022 to Feb. 1, 2022.

Zemek served in several positions while assigned to Company A, 1st Battalion, 149th Aviation Regiment, including Aviation Mission Survivability Officer, Aircraft Mission Survivability Officer Instructor Pilot, Aviation Standardization Officer, Close Air Support Advisor and Standardization Instructor Pilot.

Zemek's awards and decorations include the Defense Meritorious Service Medal; Meritorious Service Medal (Posthumous); Army Commendation Medal with two bronze oak leaf clusters; Army Achievement Medal; Army Reserve Component Achievement

Medal with one bronze oak leaf cluster; National Defense Service Medal; Global War on Terrorism Service Medal; Non Commissioned Officer Professional Development Ribbon; Armed Forces Reserve Medal with M device and bronze hourglass; Inherent Resolve Campaign Medal with one campaign star; Mississippi Magnolia Cross (Posthumous); Mississippi Medal of Efficiency; Mississippi War Medal; Mississippi Service School Medal; Mississippi Longevity Medal; the Army Aviator Badge and Basic Aviation Badge.





CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

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Welcome Home! Perhaps there are no sweeter words to a Soldier's ear than these. They imply we were sent away from home to a place that was certainly not our home. Yes, we made do and perhaps even made the foreign land feel like home as much as we could. But it was not home! Now, our mission is complete, and we return to what is familiar. We return to family, friends, and loved ones. We return home!

Many Mississippi National Guard Soldiers and Airmen have served abroad recently and heard those sweet words when they stepped back onto American soil, while others are anxiously looking forward to hearing them upon their long-awaited reunions. When I deployed the first time, retired Lt. Col. Rodney Bowman shared some wisdom that I will never forget. I had just hugged my wife and kids goodbye at the armory and boarded the bus to the airport. He could tell I was struggling to hold myself together emotionally and said, "Hey Chaplain, today is awful but think how great it will be to see them standing there to welcome us home!" He was absolutely right!

But I would be remiss if I did not recognize that there are often challenges when we return home. For some service members, that sweet greeting may be somewhat bitter because we find less-than-desirable situations at home. Many of us experienced the loss of loved ones while we were away, and we now face that emptiness. For others, the bonds of companionship which unified us while abroad disappear as we each go our own ways, and loneliness settles in. Even

service members returning to stable environments at home and in our civilian jobs often experience reintegration challenges. Just as we did abroad, we must expect these challenges, lean on each other for support, and work together to ensure a sweet Welcome Home for all Soldiers and Airmen.

For those of us in the Christian faith, we know that there will be a final Welcome Home when our life on earth ends, and we report to Heaven as our eternal home. What a Welcome Home that will be! The Bible assures us that Jesus has prepared a place for us (John 14:2) where we will be in the presence of God (1 Thessalonians 4:17). This assurance gives us a "living hope" (1 Peter 1:3-4) and confidence which can sustain us through difficulties we may face as we march through life.

My prayer is that the resiliency we developed serving our Nation abroad will help us navigate the challenges we may face when returning home. May we all appreciate the sweetness of hearing, "Welcome Home!"


For God and Country!






Chaplain (Maj.) Scott Edwards
Brigade Chaplain,
168th EN BDE

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13F FIRE SUPPORT SPECIALIST		13J FIRE CONTROL SPECIALIST	13R FIELD ARTILLERY FINDER RADAR OPERATOR	14G AIR DEFENSE BATTLE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM OPERATOR	14S AIR AND MISSILE DEFENSE CREWMEMBER	15B AIRCRAFT POWERPLANT REPAIRER	15D AIRCRAFT POWERTRAIN REPAIRER	15E UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS REPAIRER	15F AIRCRAFT ELECTRICIAN	
15G AIRCRAFT STRUCTURAL REPAIRER	15H AIRCRAFT PNEUDRAULICS REPAIRER	15N AVIONIC MECHANIC	15P AVIATION OPERATIONS SPECIALIST	15Q AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL OPERATOR	15T UH-60 HELICOPTER REPAIRER	15U CH-47 HELICOPTER REPAIRER	15W UNMANNED AERIAL VEHICLE OPERATOR	17C CYBER OPERATIONS SPECIALIST	17E ELECTRONIC WARFARE SPECIALIST	18X SPECIAL FORCES CANDIDATE
19D CAVALRY SCOUT	19K M1 ARMOR CREWMAN	25B INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SPECIALIST	25L CABLE SYSTEMS INSTALLER MAINTAINER	25N NODAL NETWORK SYSTEMS OPERATOR MAINTAINER	25Q MULTICHANNEL TRANSMISSION SYSTEMS OPERATOR MAINTAINER	25S SATELLITE COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS OPERATOR MAINTAINER	25U SIGNAL SUPPORT SYSTEMS SPECIALIST 	27D PARALEGAL SPECIALIST	31B MILITARY POLICE	35F INTELLIGENCE ANALYST
35G GEOSPATIAL IMAGERY ANALYST	35L COUNTER- INTELLIGENCE AGENT	35M HUMAN INTELLIGENCE COLLECTOR	35N SIGNALS INTELLIGENCE ANALYST	35P CRYPTOLOGIC LINGUIST	35S SIGNALS COLLECTION ANALYST	35T MILITARY INTELLIGENCE MI-SYSTEMS MAINTAINER	36B FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT TECHNICIAN	42A HUMAN RESOURCES SPECIALIST	42R ARMY BAND	
46S PUBLIC AFFAIRS	56M RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS SPECIALIST	68A BIOMEDICAL EQUIPMENT REPAIRER	68E DENTAL SPECIALIST	68G PATIENT ADMINISTRATOR SPECIALIST	68J MEDICAL LOGISTICS SPECIALIST	68K MEDICAL LABORATORY SPECIALIST	68P RADIOLOGY SPECIALIST	68W HEALTH CARE SPECIALIST	68X BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SPECIALIST	74D CHEMICAL BIOLOGICAL RADIATION NUCLEAR SPECIALIST
88M MOTOR TRANSPORT OPERATOR	88N TRANSPORTATION MANAGEMENT COORDINATOR	89A AMMUNITION STOCK CONTROL ACCOUNTING SPECIALIST	89B AMMUNITION SPECIALIST	89D EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE DISPOSAL	91A ABRAMS TANK SYSTEM MAINTAINER	91B WHEELED VEHICLE MECHANIC	91C UTILITIES EQUIPMENT REPAIRER	91D TACTICAL POWER GENERATION SPECIALIST	91E ALLIED TRADE SPECIALIST	91F SMALL ARMS ARTILLERY REPAIRER
91H TRACK VEHICLE REPAIRER	91J QUARTERMASTER & CHEMICAL EQUIPMENT REPAIRER	91L CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT REPAIRER	91M BRADLEY FIGHTING VEHICLE SYSTEM MAINTAINER	91P ARTILLERY MECHANIC	91S STRYKER SYSTEMS MAINTAINER	92A AUTOMATED LOGISTICAL SPECIALIST	92F PETROLEUM SUPPLY SPECIALIST	92G FOOD SERVICE SPECIALIST	92R PARACHUTE RIGGER	92W WATER TREATMENT SPECIALIST
92Y UNIT SUPPLY SPECIALIST	94A LAND COMBAT ELECTRONIC MISSILE SYSTEM EQUIPMENT REPAIRER	94E RADIO AND COMSEC REPAIRER	94F COMPUTER DETECTION SYSTEMS REPAIRER	94M RADAR REPAIRER	94R AVIONIC AND SURVIVABILITY EQUIPMENT REPAIRER	94T AVENGER SYSTEM REPAIRER	94Y INTEGRATED FAMILY OF TEST EQUIPMENT OPERATOR/ MAINTAINER			

EFFECTIVE APRIL 1, 2024

DAR AWARD 2024

Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles, the adjutant general of Mississippi, and members of the Camp McCain and Camp Shelby construction and facilities management offices' (CFMO) Qualified Recycle Program pose for a photo during the Mississippi State Society Daughters of the American Revolution National Defense Luncheon in Jackson, Mississippi, Feb. 23, 2024. Boyles along with the CFMO members were presented with the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution Conservation Medal for their excellence in recycling, restoration, and conservation efforts. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Shawn Keeton)



YOUTH CHALLENGE ACADEMY GRADUATION



The Mississippi National Guard's Youth ChalleNGe Academy held the Class 59 graduation ceremony Dec. 16, 2023, at Temple Baptist Church in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. The MSNG Youth ChalleNGe Academy's goal is to offer an alternate academic environment for at risk youth ages 16 to 18 years old from our great state. Many graduates continue their education, pursue technical careers or dedicate their lives to military service. Brig. Gen. Joe D. Hargett, director of joint staff for the Mississippi National Guard, was the commencement ceremony's guest speaker. Cadet Troi W. Ellis was recognized as the cycle's Distinguished Honor Graduate, topping the class of 173 cadets. The YCA has graduated more than 11,000 cadets since its inception in 1994.



Mississippi National Guard

RETIREE DAY SOUTH

Thank You For Your Service

Mississippi Armed Forces Museum

Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center

10:00 AM | Wednesday, November 6, 2024



601.313.6349

ng.ms.msarng.list.public-affairs@army.mil



LEADERSHIP MISSISSIPPI

The Mississippi National Guard is proud to celebrate the most recent graduate of the Mississippi Economic Council's Leadership Mississippi Class of 2023, Lt. Col. Andrew Adcock, commander of the Mississippi Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention Battalion. Adcock graduated Dec. 8, 2023, from the year-long leadership course developed by the Mississippi Economic Council in Jackson, and the M.B. Swayze Foundation. The esteemed leadership course has been a longstanding foundation to promote networking and economic development between businesses, communities, and military leaders from across the state. Congratulations Lt. Col. Adcock on your achievement.

Lt. Col. Anthony Burkett, Deputy G-1, Joint Force Headquarters, Mississippi National Guard, is the incoming Leadership Mississippi Class of 2024 candidate selected to represent the Mississippi National Guard. Congratulations and good luck Lt. Col. Burkett.



Lt. Col. Andrew Adcock, commander of the MSARNG Recruiting and Retention Battalion, presents Ms. Cathy Northington, Chief Operating Officer of the Mississippi Economic Council, with a token of thanks during the Leadership Mississippi graduation at the Jackson Convention Center, Dec. 8, 2023. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Paul Byrne)

WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU ARE NOT HERE TOMORROW?



STATE SPONSORED LIFE INSURANCE

SSLI fills the gap between various life insurance policies to ensure funds are available immediately to your family.

Contact

601.354.7555

ccrisler@ngams.org

www.ngams.org



Scan to Apply Online

BURNING QUESTIONS

VOTING



How do I register to vote or check my registration status?

You can register to vote at your Circuit Clerk's office, your Municipal Clerk's office, at the Department of Public Safety when you get your driver's license, or through the mail by sending a voter registration form to your Circuit Clerk. The mail-in registration form and office addresses can be found at <https://www.sos.ms.gov/elections-voting/voter-registration-information>. To check if you are currently registered to vote, all you need is your first and last name, the last four digits of your social security number, your date of birth, and the county in which you live. Visit: https://www.ms.gov.com/sos/voter_registration/amiregistered/Search to find your status today!

What type of photo IDs are accepted?

Driver's license; ID card issued by a branch, department, agency or entity of the U.S. Government or State Government; U.S. passport; firearms license; student photo ID issued by an accredited Mississippi school; U.S. military ID; tribal photo ID; or a Mississippi Voter ID Card.

How do I get an absentee ballot if I'm overseas or serving outside of my home state?

The Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) provides provisions to assist voters in receiving and returning their absentee ballot in time for election day. Contact your County Circuit Clerk's office by visiting <https://www.sos.ms.gov/elections-voting/county-election-information> and selecting the county in which your primary residence is located.

Important dates for the 2024 General Election:

Sept. 6: Absentee ballot applications available at all Circuit Clerks' offices.

Sept. 21: UOCAVA absentee ballots mailed to approved UOCAVA voters.

Sept. 23: Absentee ballots available. Earliest date to vote by an absentee ballot at all Circuit Clerks' offices.

Sept. 30 – Oct. 4: State-wide Circuit Clerks' offices open from 8:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. for in-person voter registration, and from 8:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m., Saturday Oct. 5.

Oct. 7: General election voter registration deadline for those registering in person. Mail in registration applications must be postmarked no later than today.

Nov. 2: Deadline for in-person absentee voting. Circuit clerks' offices open 8:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m.

Nov. 5: General Election and Regular Special Election Day! Polls open state-wide from 7:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m.

Nov. 26: General and Special Runoff Election Day IF NEEDED. Polls open statewide from 7:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m.



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

A family member holds a handmade sign welcoming home Soldiers of the 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team, during a homecoming at the 172d Airlift Wing in Flowood, Mississippi, April 5, 2024. Nearly 600 Soldiers of the 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team returned home between April 4 - 6, 2024, after their nine-month long deployment in support of Operation Spartan Shield. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Madisone Hatten)

