

GUARD DETAIL

A CHRONICLE OF THE MISSISSIPPI ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD



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All submissions should pertain to the Mississippi National Guard and are subject to editing. Contributions and reader comments should be sent to: ng.ms.msarng.list.public-affairs@mail.mil.

COVER PHOTO: Universities across Mississippi joined the adjutant general of Mississippi, Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles, in signing a memorandum of understanding providing free undergraduate tuition to their respective universities for Mississippi National Guard members. Mississippi State University President Dr. Mark Keenum (Top Left), Mississippi University for Women President Mrs. Nara Miller (Top Right), Jackson State University President Dr. William B. Bynum, Jr. (Bottom Left), and University of Southern Mississippi President Dr. Rodney D. Bennett (Bottom Right).

Letter From THE EDITOR

Leave A Legacy



“Iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another”

~ Proverbs 27:17

As comrades in arms, we have several opportunities to share our patriotism, acknowledge each other's successes, and celebrate our service to our nation and the great state of Mississippi. I am honored to be selected as your Director of Public Affairs for the Mississippi National Guard. It is my vision to celebrate the service of our Soldiers and Airmen. It is my goal to promote the Public Affairs' mission – to tell the stories of the lives you touch in our communities. I want to show the citizens of Mississippi the heartfelt service of our service members during various missions, such as emergency response and disaster relief. Your contributions are vital during deployments, missions, and training. It's important to recognize and appreciate the sacrifices our Families make to support us throughout our military service.

As I embark on this new journey with a team of talented public affairs professionals, I encourage each of you to share your stories for publication

by the various public affairs teams throughout our state; Mississippi National Guard State Public Affairs Office, the 102nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, the 186th Air Refueling Wing, the 172nd Airlift Wing, Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, the Combat Readiness Training Center, and your Unit Public Affairs Representative. As a combined initiative, it is our mission to ensure we tell the stories of our talented and diverse Mississippi Army and Air National Guard service men and women.

We come from a long line of patriots in this great state. Members of the Mississippi Army and Air National Guard represent less than one percent of our total state population! The dynamic part of this statistical data is that currently, there are Mississippi Army and Air National Guard service members, whom are actively serving and live in every county in the state. I am so thankful that I too am 'Mississippi Made.'

So, as we continue our distinguished service throughout our state, I encourage each of you to take a vested interest in the positive impacts our service members have on our hometowns and communities. We have the opportunity to share our patriotism, acknowledge each other's successes and celebrate our service to our nation and the great state of Mississippi. I am truly honored for the chance to serve as your Director of Public Affairs for the Mississippi National Guard. Thank you for this opportunity.

Comrades, this is your Mississippi. This is your time. This is your story. Ladies and gentlemen of the Mississippi National Guard, it is time to put Mississippi in the forefront, it is time to 'LEAVE A LEGACY!'

Lt. Col. Deidre D. Smith
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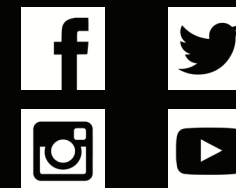
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Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles, the adjutant general of Mississippi, talks to Soldiers in the 1387th Quartermaster Company, 184th Sustainment Command, during exercise Ardent Sentry at Camp McCain, Mississippi on May 29. Ardent Sentry is a North American Aerospace Defense Command and U.S. Northern Command exercise focused on defense support of civil authorities during a simulated New Madrid Seismic Zone earthquake. Ardent Sentry helps build interagency relationships to prepare for possible severe earthquakes. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Pfc. Christopher Shannon)



Scan the QR code to view Ardent Sentry.



Colonel Billy F. Murphy

MSNG Modernization

On July 1, Governor Phil Bryant signed an executive order establishing a Space Directorate in the Mississippi National Guard so “that our state is prepared to respond to ever-changing national security threats and ensure that our Mississippi National Guard members continue to play a critical role in the protection of this country in the 21st century.”

I have the honor of being named the first director for this endeavor. As I began researching the different missions of the United States Space Command, I quickly learned that this project has the potential to be an exceptional mission for the State of Mississippi.

One of the first documents I explored was the Space Threat Assessment 2019 from the Center for Strategic & International Studies. I soon learned that satellites are vulnerable to a wide array of intentional threats from numerous countries around the world. Most people don't realize how much we rely on satellites today. The United States is extremely dependent on space both economically and militarily. Satellites enable our televisions, telecommunications, worldwide networks, and Global Positioning Systems (GPS). If the United States loses any contest in the space battlefield, the risk to our national security would be substantial.

There are many threats to our assets in space from counter space weapons. The types of weapons can be kinetic physical, non-kinetic physical, electronic, and cyber. The sophistication of these weapons has to be researched comprehensively so they can be defeated in a timely manner.

I will be establishing a Space Task Force in order to conduct mission analysis on the different facets in the space program – control, operations, electronic warfare, and early warning to name a few. This group will determine what types of equipment, facilities and training are necessary to accomplish specific objectives. We will identify the skillsets for personnel and define the right space mission for the state. Additionally, we are charged with developing personnel that will be able to augment current space squadrons and elements across the enterprise during deployments and existing operations.

These are exciting times for the men and women of the Mississippi National Guard. We now have an opportunity in this state to move forward in this frontier battlespace, work with cutting edge private industry, and affect homeland defense capabilities. As we explore the vast realm that is space and understand the complexities and intricacies that these missions entail, I am confident we will spawn true space professionals among our ranks and lay a foundation for future growth.

Billy F. Murphy
Vice Commander
186th Air Operations Group
Mississippi Air National Guard



Mississippi National Guard equipment is staged at the Grenada Airfield hangar located at the Grenada Municipal Airport where the 2nd Battalion, 185th Aviation Brigade recently finalized a lease on 25 acres for use in training and air traffic control. (U.S. Army National Guard Photo by Pfc. Micah Longmire)

The Mississippi National Guard Acquires Operational Site at the Grenada Municipal Airport

Story by Pfc. Micah Longmire
102d Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

The Mississippi National Guard recently acquired 25 acres of the Grenada Municipal Airport, following negotiations that began with the city in 2017. The facility will be utilized for training, weather-safe storage, and air traffic control for military and civilian purposes.

The Greater Grenada Partnership facilitated and finalized the agreement as a long-term lease that will serve as a multipurpose operations center for Camp McCain.

The annex allows the Mississippi National Guard to have a permanent footprint for training and increases the capabilities of Camp McCain - which allows for total unit readiness, said Col. Rick Weaver, the garrison commander of Camp McCain.

Soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, 185th Aviation Brigade are serving their state and the city of Grenada by providing qualified air traffic controllers and permanent equipment such as radars and a control tower. This not only allows for increased safety in aerial operations, but will also allow for more air traffic, which may help stimulate the economy of Grenada.

The airport is used as a recurring site for military training, but when operations were to begin, equipment had to be carried in each time, which led to maintenance issues during long-term stays, said Lt. Col. Ashley Sullivan, commander of the 2nd Battalion, 185th Aviation Brigade.

Due to the annex and available space, infrastructure is planned to be built that provides a permanent station to maintain the Mississippi National Guard's equipment.

It's a large enough area to be able to house equipment, yet this infrastructure will not interfere with the civilian or local traffic at all, said Sullivan.

The annex is not only beneficial to the airport due to federal funding, but it is also necessary for the Guard's long-term

operations. Federal Aviation Administration guidelines dictate that the equipment used by the 2nd Battalion, 185th Aviation Brigade cannot be used near large airports because of functional conflicts. Therefore, the unit is restricted to operating at full capacity either in Grenada or New Albany.

The airport saw increased military use during the training exercise known as Ardent Sentry at Camp McCain, and the equipment ran at full capacity to receive aircraft vital to the exercise. Ardent Sentry is a North American Aerospace Defense Command and U.S. Northern Command exercise focused on defense support of civil authorities during a simulated New Madrid Seismic Zone earthquake.

In addition to exercises, the capabilities provided by the annex promote Camp McCain's readiness to respond to emergencies and execute missions, while supporting cooperation between the military and its local partners.



Lt. Col. Ashley Sullivan, (Right) commander of 2nd Battalion, 185th Aviation Regiment, greets Maj. Gen. Janson Boyles, the adjutant general of Mississippi, and Brig. Gen. Stanley Budraitis, commander, 66th Troop Command, at the Grenada Municipal Airport, May 29. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by PFC Austin Eldridge)



USM, MISSISSIPPI NATIONAL GUARD ANNOUNCE GOLDEN EAGLES FREE TUITION PROGRAM

Dr. Rodney D. Bennett, president of the University of Southern Mississippi, and Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles, the adjutant general of Mississippi, sign a memorandum of understanding establishing the Golden Eagle Free Tuition Program at the Ogletree Alumni House in Hattiesburg, July 31. USM is the fourth Mississippi university to join an initiative offering free tuition to eligible Mississippi Air and Army National Guardsmen. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Jovi Prevot)

Story by Mr. Daniel Szarek
JFH-MS Public Affairs Office

The Mississippi National Guard and the University of Southern Mississippi signed an agreement July 31 allowing the state's Citizen Soldiers and Airmen to receive free tuition for their continuing education needs.

Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles, the adjutant general of Mississippi, and Dr. Rodney D. Bennett, president of the USM, signed a memorandum of understanding for the Golden Eagle Free Tuition Program at the Ogletree Alumni House on the university's campus in Hattiesburg.

The memorandum of understanding builds on current National Guard education benefits creating an opportunity for Mississippi Army and Air National Guard service members to reach their educational goals as they continue to serve. In order to be eligible for free tuition, a service member must be a full-time undergraduate student (at least 12

credit hours per semester); in good standing with their unit; must not be within one year of their end of term of service, and must maintain a 2.0 GPA to remain eligible.

Once a student is approved for the State Educational Assistance Program (SEAP), the university of choice receives a solid portion of tuition for each service member in proportion to all other state-supported universities. The chosen university will then combine all other benefits the student has and/or qualifies for to ensure the student graduates with a zero-tuition balance.

The free tuition program is designed to help improve and maintain MSNG readiness and education, and to help increase recruiting efforts throughout the state. Much like military education, civilian and higher education is instrumental in the growth and advancement of service members and adds value to the total Soldier/Airman concept within the Guard.

"Readiness is our constant goal for the



The signing of the USM Golden Eagle Free Tuition memorandum was held at the University of Southern Mississippi's historic Ogletree Alumni House. The Ogletree House was built in 1912 and is now home to the USM Alumni Association. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Jovi Prevot)



Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles, the adjutant general of Mississippi, discusses the Golden Eagle Free Tuition Program during the signing ceremony. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Jovi Prevot)

Mississippi National Guard. We have to be ready at a moment's notice to go defend this country all over the world," said Boyles.

"Developing sound leaders is a cornerstone of readiness in the military. This program allows us to develop leadership through partnering with our universities."

**- Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles
Adjutant General of Mississippi**

More than 50 Army and Air National Guardsmen, recruiters, senior leaders, and USM cadets were present for the ceremony. Many of them are grateful for the program, not just for the monetary advantage, but because it helps relieve some of the stress associated with university life.

"I think it's a great deal right now for everybody that's in the National Guard," said Devonte Wells, USM Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) cadet. "We don't have to worry about tuition anymore and basically just focus on school."

Wells, from Brandon, will commission as a second lieutenant in the Mississippi Army National Guard upon graduation in May 2020. He currently serves with the 857th Engineer Company based in Picayune.

The University of Southern Mississippi is the fourth institute of higher learning to form a program partnership with the MSNG in offering free tuition to Guardsmen. With notable alumni including retired Army Maj. Gen. Jeffrey W. Hammond; Senator and retired Army Col. Ronald Rabin; and Astronaut and retired Army Brig. Gen. Robert L. Stewart, the legacy of serving the nation runs deep in Southern Miss pride.

"Military service to our country is among the highest forms of patriotism and selflessness, and we take our role as a military friendly institution seriously," said Bennett. "I could not be more proud to partner with the Mississippi National Guard to support the educational goals of the men and women whose service and sacrifice protects our state and our country through the establishment of the Golden Eagle Free Tuition Program." #SMTTTT



**SCAN HERE
FOR VIDEO**



MS Guardsmen

Take on The Last Frontier

Story and photos by Sgt. Shawn Keeton
102d Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

When Mississippi Guardsmen think of annual training, several different thoughts surface. Some think of long, hot summer days at Camp Shelby. Others may think of cold mornings on a firing range at Camp McCain. However, the July 2019 annual training for the 114th Military Police Company will be one the Soldiers will not soon forget.

Soldiers of the 114th MP Co., from Clinton, boarded a C-17 at the 172d Airlift Wing in Flowood, Mississippi, July 6, and flew to Fort Richardson, Alaska. Over 70 Soldiers from the four-platoon company attended the annual training. Slated for three weeks

of training in Alaska, Soldiers were excited about a change of scenery for their training site. Several training opportunities were scheduled to improve the unit's readiness ahead of their upcoming overseas deployment.

"We have been hard charging trying to get ready for this deployment," said Capt. Margaret Krisle, 114th commander. "Alaska has challenged us in a way we weren't expecting. It gave us a way to realize our faults and correct them."

The annual training marked Krisle's third year in command of the 114th MP Company.

The training was a combined MSNG effort with the 114th MPs and Company E, 20th Special Forces Group. The Soldiers were able to participate

in numerous training venues that challenged each and every person. These events included a field training exercise, land navigation, military operations in urban terrain training, range operations, tactical combat casualty care, a nine-mile company hike and an eight-mile company ruck march.

"The Soldiers know Camp McCain and Camp Shelby pretty well," Krisle said. "This is a wakeup call for them as far as mission planning. They have to rely on the basics to make sure they are prepared to run their missions. They couldn't base their knowledge off of previous experience."

"Alaska has allowed the unit to have more small group leader time," said Sgt. 1st Class Tarance Spann, 2nd Plt. platoon sergeant, 114th MP Co.

"Being away from Camp Shelby, which is our natural training environment, causes us to have control of all of our planning and we have to own it," he said.

The Soldiers were excited about the opportunity to test their skills in this unique location. Land navigation proved to be particularly challenging for some.

"The terrain is a lot thicker here, and there are more obstacles preventing direct movements," said Staff Sgt. Ryan Rall, 1st Plt. platoon sergeant. "The Soldiers have to work as a team to be successful."

The 23-day training allowed the Soldiers to explore Alaska through group hikes and exercises. For many, this was their first time in the 49th state.

"Some Soldiers don't have the opportunity to travel outside Mississippi, so coming to Alaska is all a lot of them have been talking about," Krisle said. "A change of scenery and training site is good for unit morale overall."

As the training progressed, the Soldiers of the 114th hit their stride as a cohesive unit. This will prove beneficial when the unit deploys later this year.

"We are going to be with each other for roughly 11 months. Building the bonds now with each other will help tremendously once we get overseas," said Spc. Willie O'Reilly.

Company leaders said the 2019 annual training in Alaska helped strengthen the readiness of the unit and prepare them for the mission ahead.

Left: Sgt. Cody Barber, 114th Military Police Company, Mississippi Army National Guard, performs range operations as part of their three-week annual training at Fort Richardson, Alaska, July 17. The unit performed range operations as part of their three-week annual training.

Middle: Soldiers from the 114th Military Police Company, Mississippi Army National Guard, perform military operations in urban terrain (MOUT) training at Fort Richardson, Alaska July 16. The MOUT site exercise was part of the unit's annual training in preparation for an overseas deployment later this year.

Right: Soldiers with the 114th Military Police Company, Mississippi Army National Guard, perform tactical combat casualty care training (TCCC) on July 19, at Fort Richardson, Alaska.



Soldiers of the 41st Mississippi Army National Guard Band pose with Vice Admiral Nancy Norton aboard the U.S.S. Missouri in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii July 16. The band played at the change of command ceremony for Defense Information Systems Agency (DISA) during their annual training. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Victoria Miller)

Mississippi Band

Conducts Pearl Harbor Performance

Story by Sgt. Scott Tynes and Spc. Victoria Miller
JFH-MS Public Affairs Office

The Mississippi 41st Army National Guard Band was given a unique and rare opportunity this July when its 37 Soldiers went to Hawaii for annual training; performing and building relationships with other Army bands.

The highlight of the tour was a performance at the Pearl Harbor National Memorial and performing with their National Guard counterparts in the 111th Hawaii Army Band and the active duty 25th Infantry Division Band.

“Playing at Pearl Harbor is a military band commander’s bucket-list wish,” said Chief Warrant Officer 3 Casey Kirk, commander of the 41st Army Band. “My Soldiers were just in awe of the entire park and the significance of it. We specifically tailored our selections to honor those that had perished and served there, as well as the veterans that went on to fight the war. One thing that struck me

was that the entire band for the U.S.S. Arizona was killed that day. So being able to perform there, right across from where they perished, was just haunting. It’s an experience I know my guys will remember for the rest of their lives.”

The band kicked off its annual training in Camp Shelby and completed its training in Hawaii. The training was centered on missions typically performed by the 25th and 111th bands, both based in Hawaii.

“To come in and have the ability to play on national historical landmarks and memorials. It was a tremendous building exercise,” said Sgt. Joe Raymond.

In many other performances the band performed in their individual groups, or musical performance teams (MPT’s). The teams enable the band to perform modular performances at the same time. They are known as the Jackson Regiment (rock band), Magnolia Brass (brass quintet/ceremonial), Crooked Lettas Brass Band (dixie land style brass band), and Category VI (jazz combo).

Each MPT performance was conducted at different locations. Locations including entertainment/community centers, Flying V Ceremonies at Schofield Barracks, a veteran’s shelter and a change of command aboard the U.S.S. Missouri for the commander of the Defense Information Systems Agency (DISA) Pacific Theater.

“The key note speaker at this ceremony was Vice Admiral Nancy A. Norton and it was held on the battleship, the U.S.S. Missouri - the same battleship where Japan surrendered to the United States and ended World War 2. We had a picture of the band taken with her,” Kirk said.

Many performances were a collaboration with the 111th Hawaii Army National Guard Band.

“This made cross-training very possible, so we were able to plan missions with them while performing as an active duty band. This is something that only National Guard bands can do.”

**- Chief Warrant Officer 3 Casey Kirk
41st Army Band Commander**

“Our unit was recently rated as one of the top performing Army National Guard Bands in the country as a result of our last Organizational Readiness Exercise, a Department of the Army evaluation that happens every 5 to 6 years for us. One recommendation that was made to us was that the unit be taken out more so we can perform as an active duty band and collaborate with other NG bands to assist them in performance of their missions,” Kirk said.

Staff Sgt. James Weary, a former active duty Soldier, said “this training is like a smaller scale deployment. It follows all the same concepts (because) it is the direct reflection of what active duty Soldiers do when they mobilize for a full deployment. Moving troops, moving equipment, and going to a different area of operations.”

Kirk said many people assumed the 41st performed at Army functions on a regular basis.

“We had several spectators (at the Pearl Harbor memorial) that didn’t know we were a National Guard Band, nor that this was something the National Guard could do - they had assumed we were an active duty Army band,” Kirk said. “It was educational to them to learn that the National Guard can do exactly what our active duty counterparts can do.”

The 41st Band consists of members from all across the state and includes many who are band directors or musical instructors in their Civilian lives.



Sgt. 1st Class Terry Miller leads the 41st Mississippi Army National Guard Band during their Pearl Harbor Performance July 18. The band joined with the 111th Hawaii Army National Guard Band during their annual training in Hawaii. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Victoria Miller)



Soldiers of the 111th Hawaii Army National Guard Band and the 41st Mississippi Army National Guard Band pose inside the rehearsal room in Honolulu, July 16. The two bands collaborated on multiple performances during their annual training in Hawaii. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Victoria Miller)



Members of the 41st Mississippi Army National Guard band play a show at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, July 18. The band played a set highlighting songs from the pre-WWII time period to honor the history of Pearl Harbor. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Victoria Miller)



Engineers Answer the Call

Story by Ms. A. Danielle Thomas
JFH-MS Public Affairs Office (Gulfport Bureau)

Mississippi Army National Guardsmen will serve nine months in the Middle East after a short stop in Texas to prepare for the physically and mentally challenging conditions they'll face. The 859th Engineer Company (Vertical) trained at Ft. Bliss in various tactical and technical construction exercises. Since this is the first deployment for many of the Soldiers, Capt. Matthew Hope, 859th company commander, said it's critical to strengthen their ability to operate in an austere environment.

"We are a vertical unit, meaning we primarily focus on [the] construction of buildings to include carpentry, masonry, plumbing, and electrical," said Hope. "The Soldiers are being trained to live and work in climate and difficult conditions that are similar to the U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) areas of operation. These Soldiers are out in the heat and all types of desert, by design, to push them to their limits."

Once the approximately 160 Soldiers arrive in the Middle East, they'll serve as part of Operation Inherent Resolve. Their skills will be used to construct facilities for U.S. and coalition forces.

"The Soldiers over there need a place to lay their heads down, a place to eat, and a place to relax," said 1st Sgt. Brian Rubino, company first sergeant. "So, that's what we will build for them."

Specialist Lauren Jones is deploying for the first time and describes it as bittersweet. She's excited to encounter new experiences, but it's hard not being with her son.

"It will be difficult being away from my family," said Jones. "But I have a great group of people I'm deploying with. I look forward to experiencing many teachable moments with them."

The Guardsmen say the gestures of support they received from their leadership and community before leaving Mississippi will make the separation easier. The 890th Engineer Battalion commander, Lt. Col. Chris Thomas, visited the Gulfport Combat Readiness Training Center to shake the hand of every Soldier about to board the planes for Texas.

"I think it's important for the deploying Soldiers to see the command team interested in how they are doing before they ship out," said Thomas. "We need to reassure them we are watching over them and making sure they have everything they need to be successful."

The city of Pascagoula hosted a sendoff ceremony for the company on June 22. Family, friends, and community members listened as Mayor Dane Maxwell read a proclamation naming Saturday, June 29, 2019, Hometown Heroes Day.



Staff Sgt. Keiane Magee, platoon sergeant for 3rd Platoon, 859th Engineer Company, Mississippi National Guard, inspects his vehicle before starting a training mission at McGregor Range Complex, New Mexico, July 25. The engineers are training and validating in preparation for an upcoming deployment. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Timothy Gray)



Top: Sgt. Mario Rancatore, a team leader assigned to 3rd Platoon, 859th Engineer Company, Mississippi National Guard, inspects his vehicle before starting a training mission at McGregor Range Complex, New Mexico, July 25. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Timothy Gray, 5th AR BDE)

Bottom: Sgt. Cord Dearman, a carpenter assigned to 3rd Platoon, 859th Engineer Company, Mississippi National Guard, inspects his vehicle before starting a training mission at McGregor Range Complex, New Mexico, July 25. The engineers are training and validating in preparation for an upcoming deployment. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Timothy Gray)



emony for the company on June 22. Family, friends, and community members listened as Mayor Dane Maxwell read a proclamation naming Saturday, June 29, 2019, Hometown Heroes Day.

"We realize the job they have to do. It's not an easy one," said Maxwell. "They keep the bad guys away from us so the least we can do is show our support. We look forward to seeing them come home soon."

The family of Sgt. Matthew Riley feels reassured after seeing so many friends and community members come out to show support and extend their well wishes.

"The ceremony was very nice, and I thought all the speakers did a great job," said Bethany Riley, wife of Sgt. Matthew Riley. "This will be his first deployment since we've been married, and I feel like the Mississippi National Guard has prepared us as much as we can be prepared for the separation."

As the 859th left the Pascagoula armory in a convoy, residents lined the streets waving American flags and signs with messages of love and encouragement.

"It brought tears to my eyes. I didn't realize how much support we have," said Jones. "They celebrated us and wished us success in accomplishing our mission. So many people came out whether they knew us or not, and whether they had a Soldier leaving or not."

After the engineers left Pascagoula and jumped on a plane out of Gulfport, they arrived at Fort Bliss to begin the strenuous mobilization training and familiarization necessary for maximum readiness.

Although the 859th began preparing for this deployment over a year ago, Hope says training has taken on a different feel since leaving Mississippi.

"I will say once you are on ground for mobilization, not being able to return home at night after a training day changes your mindset a good deal. It is hard to leave home, and that's one of the first things that really hits you other than the training," Hope said. "These Soldiers all have Family that they love and miss. It really shows the sacrifice that these men and women are making."

YELLOW RIBBON KEEPS FAMILIES STRONG

Story and photos by Capt. Terry Hill
JFH-MS Public Affairs Office

An overseas deployment in the National Guard can be a trying time for Guardsmen and their Families. The anxiety leading up to departure and the separation during may be tough, but hardships don't always end when a Soldier returns home.

"I really didn't know which direction to go. And it's nice that a lot of people are there to... answer my questions," said Spc. Brianna Irby, a Soldier with the Mississippi National Guard. She described her experience at a recent Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program (YRRP) event in Tupelo.

Irby, and the rest of the nearly 3,500 Soldiers of the 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team, recently returned from a nine-month deployment to the Middle East in support of Operation Spartan Shield.

The YRRP is a Department of Defense effort to promote the well-being of National Guard and Reserve members, their Families and communities by connecting them with resources throughout the deployment cycle.

Nearly 1,200 Soldiers and Family members attended the two-day event, one of seven held across the state. For Irby, this was her first deployment, but for others this was not their first experience at a Yellow Ribbon event.

"I've learned a lot. There is a lot more I'm taking home that I wish I had learned during my first deployment," said Sgt. 1st Class James Hall, with Starkville's 2nd Battalion, 114th Field Artillery Regiment. "My life could be completely different now had I listened."

Numerous organizations were on hand to provide returning Soldiers and their Family members resources that would help in the post-deployment transition process. Colleges and universities presented programs that could be used

with the G.I. Bill and Tuition Assistance Soldiers earn as a member of the National Guard. These benefits continue to grow as multiple academic institutions across Mississippi recently signed a memorandum of understanding with the MSNG to provide Guard members free undergraduate tuition.

Attendees listened to sessions on financial management ranging from retirement to buying a home. Other presentations included

resources for behavioral health, transition assistance, and healthcare. These invaluable resources were not limited to Soldiers alone. Family members learned about child and youth programs through the National Guard as well as the Strong Bonds program that offers lodging and meals for service members and their spouses to attend marriage enrichment programs throughout the state.

The job fair appeared to be one of the most popular events of the weekend. Federal and state entities, alongside private companies, made their case for attendees to join their team. Other organizations provided resume writing tips to help Soldiers fully convey their wealth of experience and

Companies from across Mississippi participated in a job fair at a Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program in Tupelo. Recently deployed Soldiers of 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team were able to interact with potential employers and explore prospective job opportunities.



Federal government and Mississippi state entities had an opportunity to share what their programs had to offer Mississippi National Guard members at a Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program in Tupelo.



The Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program provides resources to recently deployed Service Members and their families and also connects them with potential employers.



knowledge gained through their military service.

"We want to give them (Soldiers and Family) the ability to be more employable, to know they can take all the skills they have in the National Guard and apply them to a civilian job."

**- Kim Hart
Area Coordinator for
Families First of Mississippi**

By the end of the event, more than 50 Soldiers and Family members had interviews scheduled or were already planned-hires with potential employers.

Dr. David Anderson, a motivational speaker and counselor, provides leadership and guidance at these events all over the country.

"A lot of it is just coaching folks up, both Soldiers and their Families and loved ones," said Anderson. "Of how to navigate the deployment cycle and where their deployment is not just a downer but could be a time where they flourish."

Throughout Mississippi, the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program offers those resources and opportunities to Soldiers and their families so they don't just flourish during deployment, but thrive during the post-deployment transition period and beyond.



Governor Phil Bryant announced the formation of a Mississippi National Guard Space Directorate on July 1. (Photo courtesy of Twitter/Phil Bryant)

MAGNOLIA SPACE MISSION

Story by Mr. Daniel Szarek
JFH-MS Public Affairs Office

President Donald Trump signed Space Policy Directive-4 on Feb. 19, 2019, establishing the sixth branch of the Armed Forces, the Space Force. On July 1, the Mississippi National Guard and state leadership made their own big announcement; the formation of the state's first ever Space Directorate.

During a ceremony at the INFINITY Science Center in Pearlington, Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles, the adjutant general of Mississippi; Brig. Gen. Mike Nabors, assistant adjutant general – Air; and Col. Billy Murphy, vice commander, 186th Air Operations Group, stood alongside Governor Phil Bryant as he signed Executive Order 1445, establishing a Space Directorate in the Mississippi National Guard.

“[President Trump] understood the importance of

space and how it must be protected,” said Bryant. “This day we will plant our flag and move forward in protection. One day, you will be showing your grandchildren this photograph.”

Space is a key source of gaining a strategic advantage and the United States cannot lag behind in the second ‘space race,’ he said. Adversaries are acting to restrict America’s access but Mississippi’s Space Directorate is determined to gain the advantage. The new directorate will establish a task force to conduct mission analysis in order to build techniques and procedures for future missions conducted by the MSNG.

“The task force will study the personnel, equipment and training requirements for a wide variety of space missions currently being conducted by the U.S. Air Force Space Command and Air National Guard,” said Murphy, director of Mississippi Space Program. “The Mississippi Air National Guard is highly suitable to re-

ceive a future space mission and could easily support a multitude of them.”

With Dr. Mark Esper becoming the 27th Secretary of Defense and Gen. Mark Milley’s selection as the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, modernization is the top priority of leadership within the Pentagon. It is also their central challenge.

Artificial intelligence and information technology are at the top of the list for developing advancements – and the advancements they seek are out of this world.

Establishing and maintaining a strong space presence and preparing for future operations in the cosmos is one of the main reasons Mississippi established a space-specific organization. It wasn’t a difficult decision however; the state already has a starship state-of-mind with the John C. Stennis Space Center. The field center, located in Hancock County, is NASA’s largest rocket engine test facility and already has personnel from the Space Directorate working on site.

The directorate will include experts who specialize in space, mobility, and electronic warfare operations and in cyber, data-link, and radio communications. As with any other wing/company-sized element or larger, it will have the same administrative support system with personnel and financial management specialists as well as judge advocates and legal aides.

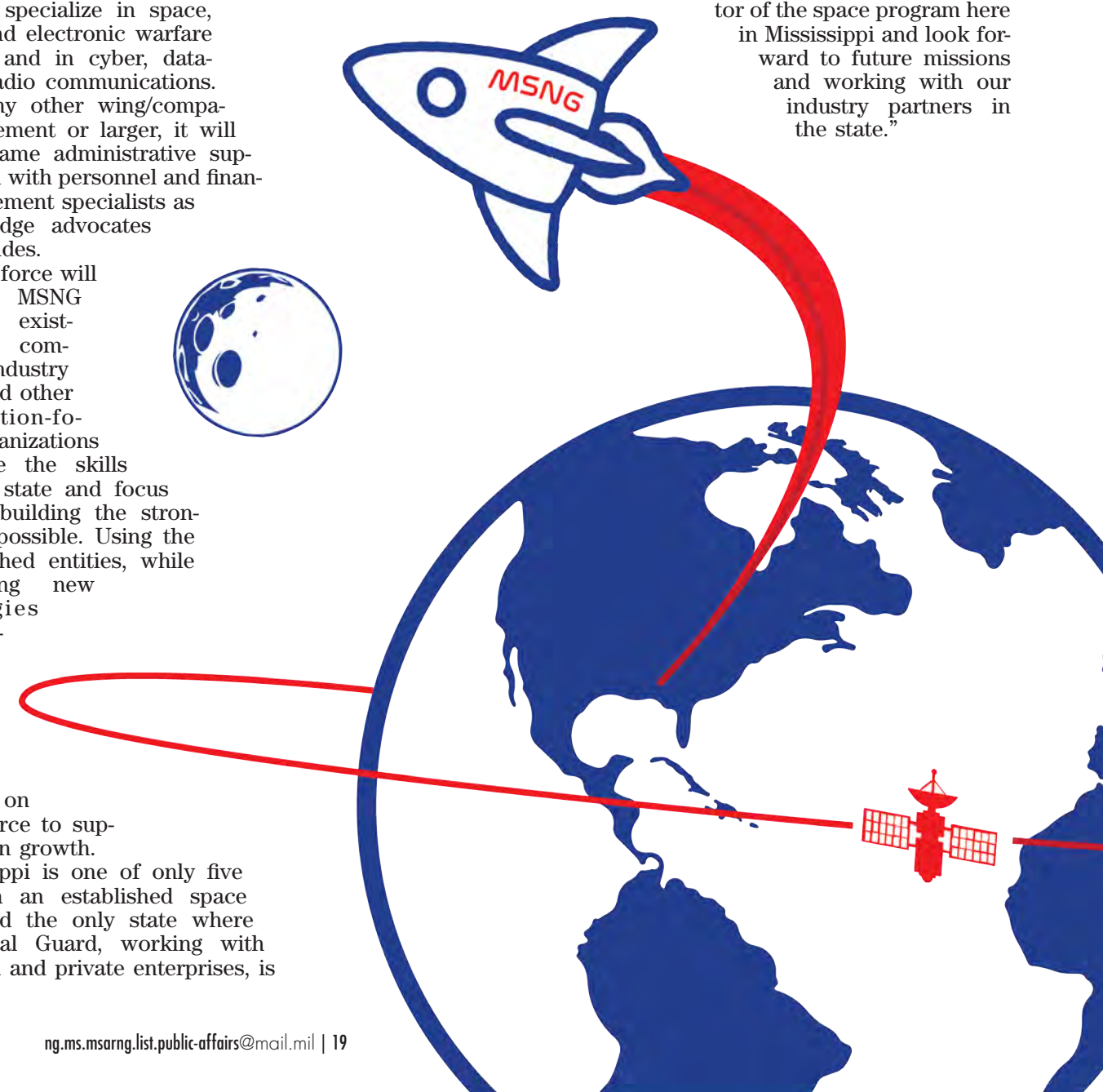
The task force will work with MSNG personnel, existing space commands, industry partners and other modernization-focused organizations to leverage the skills within the state and focus efforts on building the strongest team possible. Using the pre-established entities, while implementing new technologies through research and testing, the Space Directorate will rely heavily on the task force to support mission growth.

Mississippi is one of only five states with an established space mission and the only state where the National Guard, working with commercial and private enterprises, is



taking the lead in space modernization.

“These are exciting times for the men and women of the Mississippi National Guard,” said Murphy. “I feel honored to be selected as the first director of the space program here in Mississippi and look forward to future missions and working with our industry partners in the state.”





ON THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS

Story and photos by Sgt. Scott Tynes
JFH-MS Public Affairs Office

It was a challenge issued during annual resiliency training that started a Soldier down a path that would bring him great happiness and satisfaction while molding a skill.

Inspired by the popular History Channel show, “Forged in Fire,” Master Sgt. Kevin Burr considered forging knives about two or three years ago and began slowly accumulating materials and equipment. However, it was the Army resiliency class in August 2018 that turned his vision into action.

“The instructor challenged each of us to

come up with one thing that we’ve always wanted to do and haven’t done, and do it by the end of the year,” he said. “A lot of people were saying they were going back to school or learning to play an instrument. Mine was (that) I’m going to make a knife by the end of December. It was pretty close. I finished between Christmas and New Year’s.”

The knife he made in December 2018 was a camp knife because it was relatively simple in design and could be crafted in one piece from a lawnmower blade.

I started with the mower blades because they are readily available and they’re a softer steel. They’re easier to work so it’s good

Top: A blade by Kevin Burr heats to temperature inside the forge.

Top Right: Burr quenches a hot blade in oil after forging the shape. The tongs were the first piece he forged using two rods of rebar

Bottom Right: Burr begins the shaping process on a lawnmower blade using a grinder.

stuff to practice with,” Burr said. “But they don’t technically make really good blades. You can get them sharp and they look pretty, but they probably won’t hold an edge very well.”

Now Burr primarily uses leaf springs, from automobiles, made of 5160 steel. They are composed of iron, carbon and chromium. The chromium gives it a little flexibility and helps in the hardening process.

Much of his equipment is hand-me-downs; like the anvil received from his uncle that belonged to his grandfather, who got it from a steel mill he worked for in Ohio. Other things were picked up along the way. Burr says he does not have a lot invested in the hobby currently, but is planning to make larger purchases, such as belt grinders and power hammers, sometime in the future.

To keep costs down, he sometimes even makes his own tools. Made from two rods of rebar, the first thing he crafted was a set of tongs for use in the forge.

Self-taught, Burr said he still makes a lot of mistakes. However, one thing he learned in the Army is that each mistake is a lesson on how to improve his craft. He continues to watch “Forged in Fire” and picks up a few tips “here and there.” He has also read books and watched instructional videos on YouTube. Occasionally, he gets tips from Derek Melton, a Clinton-based “Forged in Fire” champion, whom he met once he took up the craft.

“I’ve just been researching stuff like the different kinds of materials and different techniques,” he said. “The order of doing things is pretty important. I learned the hard way that you get it as close to the dimensions that you want before you quench it and it’s a little less time consuming to finish it up.”

Quenching is the rapid cooling of a workpiece in water, oil or air to obtain certain material properties. A type of heat treating, quenching prevents undesired low-temperature processes from occurring and hardens the blade.

Eventually, he said he would like to learn more advanced techniques, like Damascus. The Damascus technique adds high carbon to the iron of the metal to make a much stronger and durable composite. It also often includes folding and forging multiple layers of metal together.

“Right now, I’m still just kind of refining; making one out of a solid piece of steel,” he said. “I think next I’m going to do San Mai, which is hard steel in the middle with some mild steel on either side of it. My plan is to use the leaf spring in the middle and then mower blades on the sides.”

Burr said he spends as much time in his shop as he can find, but it’s a time-consuming hobby. He can’t currently imagine competing on one of his favorite shows in the near future because they have to complete crafted blades in under three hours and a completed knife within five.

“It takes me probably 10 to 15 hours right

now from start to finish," he said. "I'm learning tricks and techniques to speed the process up. But it really takes me weeks to do one because I only work an hour here and there and on the weekends off. It's slow and meticulous and paying attention to what you're doing. You can't put wood back on a handle and you can't put steel back on a blade."

The patience and attention to detail required are traits he learned in the Army, Burr said.

"It's just like going out and (performing routine maintenance) on a vehicle," he said. "If you just go out there and blow through it and don't do a thorough job, you're going to get a quarter-mile down the road and have a breakdown. But if you take your time and do things right, the way they're supposed to be done, you'll have a quality product at the end."

The end of a career is also on his mind with about three years before he is eligible for an active duty retirement under the state's Active Guard Reserve (AGR) program.

Burr enlisted in 1997 with the 114th Military Police Company and deployed with them to Ft. Campbell, Ky., and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, in 2002. Twenty-three days after their return from Cuba, they deployed again to Ft. Hood in 2003. The deployments were to replace active duty military



Kevin Burr displays a pair of knives he made. The camp knife on the right was the first knife he crafted in December 2018.

police units for operations overseas.

He started his AGR career in 2005 with the 114th and later moved to the 112th Military Police Battalion. While there, Burr volunteered to mobilize with the 184th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) to Afghanistan in 2010. He was home from that deployment for about a month when the 112th was mobilized to Kuwait for nine months. Once he returned home, he transferred back to the 114th as the readiness NCO for a few years before taking his current job as the operations NCO for 66th Troop Command.

Burr plans to continue refining his

craft regardless of whether he stays active or retires.

"I don't know if full-time knife-making will support my mortgage, but it's definitely something I'm going to keep doing one way or the other," he said. "This is my happy place. I can come up here and forget all about everything else. The stresses of work and everything else, they stay outside so I can get in the zone. I can spend hours and before I know it the whole day is gone."



These blades have just been quenched. The top blade still shows some of the oil while the bottom blade has been cleaned.

BASIC MOTORCYCLE COURSE

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COLUMBIA ARMORY REOPENING



Courtesy Photo



Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles, the adjutant general of Mississippi, speaks during the grand opening of the new Columbia Army National Guard Readiness Center July 13. The center was destroyed on Dec. 23, 2014, by a tornado. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Scott Tynes)



Columbia Mayor Justin McKenzie and Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles, the adjutant general of Mississippi, cut the ribbon to officially reopen the Columbia Army National Guard Readiness Center July 13. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Scott Tynes)

Story by Sgt. Scott Tynes
JFH-MS Public Affairs Office

Hurricane Barry was moving inland on July 14 as Soldiers and Civilians gathered to celebrate the reopening of the Columbia Army National Guard Readiness Center, which had been destroyed by Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and again by a large tornado in 2014.

The irony was not lost on those in attendance and several speakers remarked about how timely the circumstances were.

"This was built to withstand high winds and to be a shelter we can use in case of state emergencies," said Lt. Col. Paul Lyon, commander of the 150th Brigade Engineer Battalion (BEB). Lyon transferred command of the unit to Lt. Col.

James Barry the next day.

The weather had been worsening steadily the morning of Dec. 23, 2014. As he prepared to leave for the holiday, Sgt. 1st Class Donald Harrod, the readiness non-commissioned officer for Company A, 150th BEB, had his plans precipitously changed at the time a tornado ripped through Columbia.

"It pulled half the roof off the drill hall," he said. "I dodged into the men's room and grabbed onto the pipes. It lifted the roof and set it back down. It happened so fast. I'm glad it didn't last any longer than it did or I would have had time to think about it – like in a hurricane. It was very violent."

Storm protection was worked into the design for the new \$11.6 million, 43,400 square foot readiness center. It consists

of two stories that are accessible on each level because the lower floor is partially buried in the natural terrain on the eastern side and exposed on the remaining three sides. A rise on the eastern side, complete with parking, offers easy access to the building's second floor and a landing that overlooks the assembly hall in the center of the structure on the first floor.

When Harrod emerged from his impromptu shelter in 2014, he was faced with a nightmarish sight. The armory was in shambles and ceiling tiles floated in the hallways.

"It was like I was in a different place and time," he said. "The hallway and drill hall were knee-deep in water and there were no lights. Then the generator did what it was supposed to do and came

on. I was afraid I was going to get electrocuted."

Today, First Sgt. Harrod is the operations NCO at the battalion headquarters in Lucedale. He visited the new armory in June while final touches were still being made.

"It's crazy," he said. "It's like walking into the front office of a major corporation. It's going to be a magnet for a long time for VIP visits."

Mayor Justin McKenzie agreed. He said it was the finest armory he had ever seen and he was proud it was located in Columbia.

"All of the cities around are going to be envious about this ... and I'm ok with that," McKenzie said to chuckles from the audience.

Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles, the adju-

tant general of Mississippi, said he was proud to continue the tradition of Columbia hosting a readiness center.

"There is a great legacy here in Columbia with this armory. This has always been an engineering unit. It's been both construction engineering and combat engineering. Today, it's a combat engineering unit and we're very proud of the legacy we have here in Columbia."

**- Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles
Adjutant General of Mississippi**

"This is what connects us to you, the community," he continued. "This is what connects us to the families and the businesses and the churches and the neighborhoods that we represent when we put on this uniform to go overseas."

Following the tornado, Company A moved to Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center to await the rebuilding of their armory. Shortly thereafter, they deployed to Kuwait with the 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team in support of Operation Spartan Shield and returned home this past March. The reopening was the first time Company A assembled as a unit in Columbia since the tornado.

UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI

STAFF HELP TRAIN NEXT GENERATION OF MISSISSIPPI NATIONAL GUARD LEADERS



MSNG Lecture Series 02-19 Group Photo, July 2019, Oxford, Miss. (Photo courtesy of UM Communications Department)

Story by Shea Stewart
University of Mississippi Communications

The Mississippi National Guard leaders gathered at the University of Mississippi recently, were nearly 5,000 miles away from Estonia, but their minds for an afternoon were focused on the tiny Baltic country that looms under the shadows of Russia.

The MSNG senior leaders, part of a new Guard leadership development program held July 12-13 on the UM campus, were engaged in a national security simulation titled "Russian Attempt to Fracture NATO in Estonia." The simulation, with about 50 participants, was conducted by the university's Center for Intelligence and Security Studies, or CISS, which is part of the national Intelligence Community Centers of Academic Excellence program.

Besides the simulation, the participants spent their two days on the UM campus involved in the leadership development program designed by the Guard to pre-

pare military leaders for positions of greater responsibility in Mississippi.

"The Mississippi National Guard Lecture Series is a professional development program used to prepare leaders to serve at all levels of command and key staff positions," said Brig. Gen. Amos Parker, Mississippi Army National Guard assistant adjutant general - Army. "The program introduces the challenges that leaders face at the national and state level as well as in the joint, interagency, intergovernmental and multinational environments. The program (provides) opportunities to gain insights and a greater understanding of the volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous environment we face every day."

"Our primary focus for this event (was) to provide our leaders with an understanding of interagency processes in the development of national security policy and how these agencies assist the president in the formulation of national security policy."

The Guard was hosted by the universi-

ty's ROTC program for the two-day event, which started with classes on July 12 in the ROTC building. Later in the day, instructors and participants toured the Ole Miss Athletics facilities, including a tour of the football program's facilities conducted by former Ole Miss football players Jordan Ta'amu and Dawson Knox.

The simulation was held the next day. "This came about as a result of Days of Intrigue," said Timothy Russell, director of the CISS, referencing the two-day intelligence simulation held each spring for UM students enrolled in the CISS program. "We invited colleagues from the Guard to observe, and they ended up inviting us to do something similar with them."

On the morning of the simulation, Guard leaders were educated on the various U.S. intelligence agencies by CISS staff. After a brief history lesson on Estonia and its relations with Russia, the Guardsmen were given a mock conflict, including rising tensions between Estonia

and Russia, a collision between a Russian fighter jet and an Estonian airliner, and fears of further Russian aggression against Estonia, a NATO member since 2004.

The leaders were expected to develop a draft approach to the situation that would provide policy options to the U.S. National Security Council. Some questions included how to de-escalate the situation while also planning to successfully deter or defeat Russian aggression, whom to engage internationally and for what, and the biggest concerns arising from the simulated conflict.

"The purpose of the simulation and event overall was to prepare Mississippi National Guard leaders for senior-level education opportunities ... and to lead at the enterprise level," said Ken Pope, an instructor at the CISS, which was founded in 2008. "We accomplished this by providing an understanding of the various interagency departments and agencies; how those agencies operate and work with one another; and exercising critical thinking skills in a national security simulation that required the participants to assume the role of an interagency working group."

The Estonia and Russia scenario was chosen due to its complexity and the difficulty surrounding such a national security challenge, Pope said.

"We designed the event and simulation specifically to place the participants in the role of an interagency working group tasked to develop an approach to address a complex national security crisis," he said. "The participants at this stage of their careers have focused primarily on tactical and operational problems. Very few have had exposure to strategic level or interagency level organizations."

The leaders involved were Mississippi Army and Air National Guard field grade officers, warrant officers and senior non-commissioned officers preparing for professional military education opportunities and senior leader command and staff positions.

"The Mississippi National Guard senior leadership knows the importance of mentoring and training our next generation of leaders," said retired Col. Chris Scott, Future Operations program manager with the Mississippi National Guard. "The (Guard) partnered with the University of Mississippi and the Center of Intelligence and Security Studies to enhance our professional military education of national security and interagency processes. This partnership is important to the development of our officers, warrant officers and non-commissioned officers. We look forward to future training opportunities."

"The Mississippi National Guard Lecture Series is a professional development program used to prepare leaders to serve at all levels of command and key staff positions,"

- Brig. Gen. Amos P. Parker



MSNG leaders participate in a Professional Military Education Lecture Series at the University of Mississippi in July. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Lt. Col. Deidre D. Smith)



Senior leaders from the Mississippi National Guard toured the Manning Center, also referred to as the Indoor Practice Facility, at the University of Mississippi in Oxford, July 12. Special coordination by Mr. Charlie Scott, Ole Miss Alumni, made the guided tour for MSNG leaders possible with special guests to host the tour; former Ole Miss Football players, Jordan Ta'amu and Dawson Knox. The tour presented a behind-the-scenes look at how the University of

Mississippi builds leaders in their athletic program, among their coaching team and among the players. Their leadership strategies and success stories offered a greater understanding and a different perspective that could inspire MSNG leaders as they build leaders in their formation. (From Left: Jordan Ta'amu, Carol Parker, Brig. Gen. Amos Parker, Dawson Knox, Charlie Scott, Chris Scott, and Tulio Chirinos: U.S. Army National Guard photo by Lt. Col. Deidre D. Smith)

Strategy School

Four Graduate War College

Congratulations to the newest MSARNG Graduates of the U.S. Army War College! Col. Bobby Ginn, Col. Brent McCullough, Lt. Col. Joy Alexander, and Lt. Col. Andrew Rendon. Thank you for your service and dedication to the MSNG. We are so proud of you!

Friday Morning, July 26, the Army War College graduated 296 Army, 22 Marine, 4 Navy, 4 Air Force, 4 international fellows and 38 inter-agency Civilians from its distance learning class of 2019.

Lt. Col. Andrew Rendon completed Resident Senior Service College in June 2019. He was recognized as a Superior Graduate performing at the top 30 percent of his resident class.

(Photos courtesy of U.S. Army War College Public Affairs)



Courtesy Photo



Lt. Col. Andrew Rendon



Col. Bobby Ginn



Col. Brent McCullough

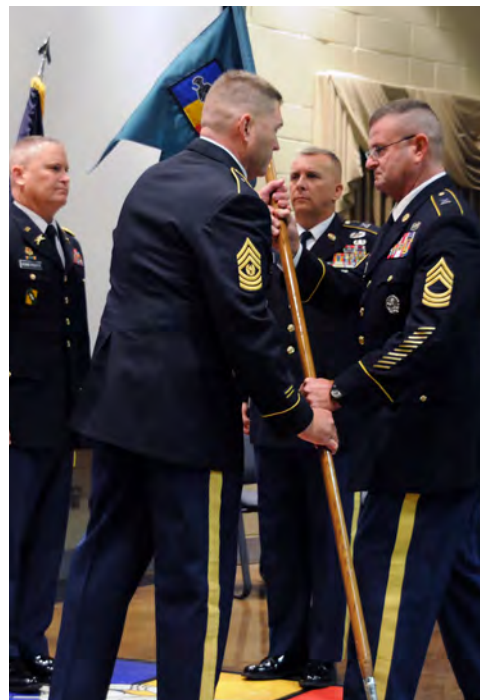


Lt. Col. Joy Alexander

Command Change

CRTC Welcomes McCormick

Brig. Gen. Mike Nabors, assistant adjutant general - Air, passes the colors to Lt. Col. Berry McCormick during a change of command ceremony at the Combat Readiness Training Center in Gulfport, Miss. Aug. 3. Col. Joe Reid, the outgoing commander, is now the new maintenance commander at the 186th Air Refueling Wing in Meridian. (U.S. National Guard photo by A. Danielle Thomas)



Third NCOA

Welcomes New Commandant

Congratulations to Command Sgt. Maj. Larry Odom on his appointment as the commandant of the 3rd Non-commissioned Officer Academy at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center.

Congratulations to Command Sgt. Maj. Chris Young, the outgoing commandant, as he assumes responsibilities as the senior command sergeant major - Army at Joint Force Headquarters in Jackson.

(Photo) Command Sgt. Maj. Chris Young, outgoing 3rd Non-commissioned Officer Academy commandant, receives the colors one last time during a Change of Responsibility Ceremony, August 1, at the Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Michael Needham)
Pictured left to right: Col. Michael Honeycutt, Command Sgt. Maj. Chris Young, Command Sgt. Maj. Larry Odom, Master Sgt. (P) Paul Bedford.



Cultural Kudos

McCarty Earns National Recognition

Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles, the adjutant general of Mississippi, presents Rita McCarty with the 2019 Secretary of Defense Environmental Award for Cultural Resources Management, Team/Individual, during a ceremony at Joint Force Headquarters July 30. McCarty, the state cultural resources manager, received the award for her efforts to rehabilitate two historic buildings at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, establishing a state-of-the-art curation facility and program offices and a cultural center for the MSARNG. Other efforts that led to the award included saving curation costs for artifacts by moving them into the facility, providing public access to all cultural holdings, and initiating an internship program with the University of Southern Mississippi. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Scott Tynes)

#CONGRATULATIONS



Congratulations to Lisa Spencer (Top) on receiving the Mississippi Meritorious Civilian Service Medal and to Crystal Dedmon (Bottom) on receiving her 10-year certificate Aug. 5 from the State Resources Office at Joint Force Headquarters in Jackson. The awards were presented by Brig. Gen. Amos P. Parker, assistant adjutant general - Army. (U.S. Army National Guard photos by Sgt. Scott Tynes)



859th Engineer Company (Vertical) Pascagoula, Mississippi

- July 1951 – Federally recognized in the Mississippi Army National Guard as the 148th Engineer Company.
- March 1961 – Ordered into state active duty to assist civil authorities in evacuating flood victims, controlling traffic, and restoring order in affected areas.
- April 1961 – Attached to the 890th Headquarters & Headquarters Company, 890th Engineer Battalion.
- May 1963 – Reorganized as Field Maintenance Platoon, Company D, 890th Engineer Battalion with an authorized strength of 106 Soldiers.
- November 1965 – Re-designated as Company D, 890th Engineer Battalion with an authorized strength of 128 Soldiers (6 Officer, 122 Enlisted).
- February 1968 – Reorganized as Company B, 890th Engineer Battalion, establishing the first General Construction Platoon in the state.
- April 1968 – Ordered into state active duty for Operation Restraint to assist civil authorities in enforcing the law and protecting the lives and property of all citizens.
- May 1970 – Ordered into state active duty for riots at Jackson State College.
- September 1979 – Ordered into state active duty in response to Hurricane Frederic; assisting civil authorities in housing evacuees, providing traffic control, and preserving order.
- September 1998 – Activated to help rescue Pascagoula residents trapped from flooding after 16.7 inches of rain, from Hurricane Georges, fell on the surrounding areas.
- February 2003 – Deployed into federal active duty in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom repairing airstrips, building roads, and helping to construct forward operating bases across Iraq.
- August 2005 – Activated after Hurricane Katrina to clear massive debris from the roads so vehicle transportation could resume.
- July 2006 – Reorganized and Re-designated as 859th Vertical Company with the authorized strength of 106 Soldiers.
- February 2013 – Deployed to Afghanistan as part of Operation Enduring Freedom to complete construction projects in support of U.S. troops and to train engineers in the Afghan National Army.
- July 2019 – Deployed to the Middle East in support of Operation Inherent Resolve to build morale centers and support buildings for Soldiers overseas.



BURNING QUESTIONS

Guardsmen Gain Ground on Continuing Education

Capt. Marcus Parker
Commander, HHC 66th Troop Command
Education Services Officer

What are the educational benefits of the Mississippi National Guard?

Both Mississippi Air and Army National Guard members receive G.I. Bill benefits so long as respective G.I. Bill (Post 9/11 or Montgomery) qualifications are met. Air National Guard members receive MSNG State Educational Assistance Program (SEAP) funds totaling \$2,250 per semester. Mississippi Army National Guard members receive Federal Tuition Assistance (FTA) funds equaling \$4,000 per fiscal year; \$250 per semester hour, up to 16 semester hours per fiscal year.

What is the Free Tuition Program?

It is a partnership with specific universities that's aimed to provide a unique benefit to the service members of the Mississippi National Guard resulting in an increase in National Guard accessions, higher retention rates, and an increase in the National Guard student population for those universities.

Which schools in Mississippi offer free tuition?

The Mississippi National Guard has formed partnerships with four schools so far. Mississippi State University was the first school to sign a memorandum of understanding with the MSNG; followed by the Mississippi University for Women and Jackson State University. Most recently, the University of Southern Mississippi joined in to provide our Guardsmen with exclusive higher education learning opportunities.

What do you need to do to qualify for the program?

Mississippi Air National Guard members must apply for and meet the SEAP qualifications while Army National Guard members within the state must apply for and meet the FTA qualifications. Army Guardsmen receiving FTA funds however, can still be eligible to receive MSNG-SEAP funding as long as they would naturally qualify under SEAP guidelines. Specific qualifications for the program are – service members must be in good standing with their units (no flags for adverse actions); cannot be within one year of their Expiration of Term of Service (ETS) or Mandatory Removal Date (MRD); must provide grades at the end of each semester (minimum 2.0 GPA); must be enrolled as full-time status (at least 12 semester hours per semester); and must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) and State Aid application in a timely manner. There are no age limits but Guard members must be an undergraduate working towards their first undergraduate degree.



Does the program cover distance learning or online training?

Yes, the program includes distance and online training. However, it excludes distance education fees and distance tuition above 12 credit hours per term/semester. In order to qualify for the Free Tuition Program for on-line-only courses, Guardsmen must still meet and maintain full-time student status.

How does the program work?

First-time Mississippi Air National Guard members must apply for SEAP by filling out an Adjutant General's Office (AGO) Form 5 and provide a copy of their voter's registration card. Members who have used state or federal aid in the past must provide last semester's transcript along with their AGO Form 5. Mississippi Army National Guard members must apply for, qualify for, and receive, FTA by establishing a GoArmyEd account and submitting necessary documentation for the FTA application. For GoArmyEd, visit: <https://www.goarmyed.com/>. All MSNG members must meet the qualifications listed above to be eligible for the Free Tuition Program.

For more information contact:

CPT Marcus Parker
JFH-MSNG Education Services Officer
(601) 313-6183
<https://ms.ng.mil/resources/education/Pages/SEAP.aspx>

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



Soldiers with the 114th Military Police Company, Mississippi Army National Guard, conduct an eight mile ruck march July 20, at Fort Richardson, Alaska. The ruck march was completed as part of the unit's annual training in preparation for its upcoming overseas deployment. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Shawn Keeton)