

# MISSISSIPPI MILITARY DEPARTMENT PRESENTS GUARD DETAIL

A CHRONICLE OF THE MISSISSIPPI ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD  
WINTER/SPRING 2025



PRESIDENTIAL INAUGURATION 10 | NEW AIR MISSION 22





## GOVERNOR'S LETTER

On behalf of the more than 3 million Mississippians who live here, I'd like to thank the Mississippi National Guard for continuing to deliver exemplary service to our state and nation. You make Mississippi better every single day, and I want you to know that our entire state will always be incredibly grateful to you and your families

The commitment you show to Mississippi and the United States is invaluable. Our state is stronger thanks to you, and we're accomplishing historic things thanks to your efforts. Keep up the good work.

In 2025, I know you will remain dedicated to defending our communities, state, and nation as the country's leading combat reserve force. Please know that the state of Mississippi will continue to support you, just as you support the citizens of this great state.

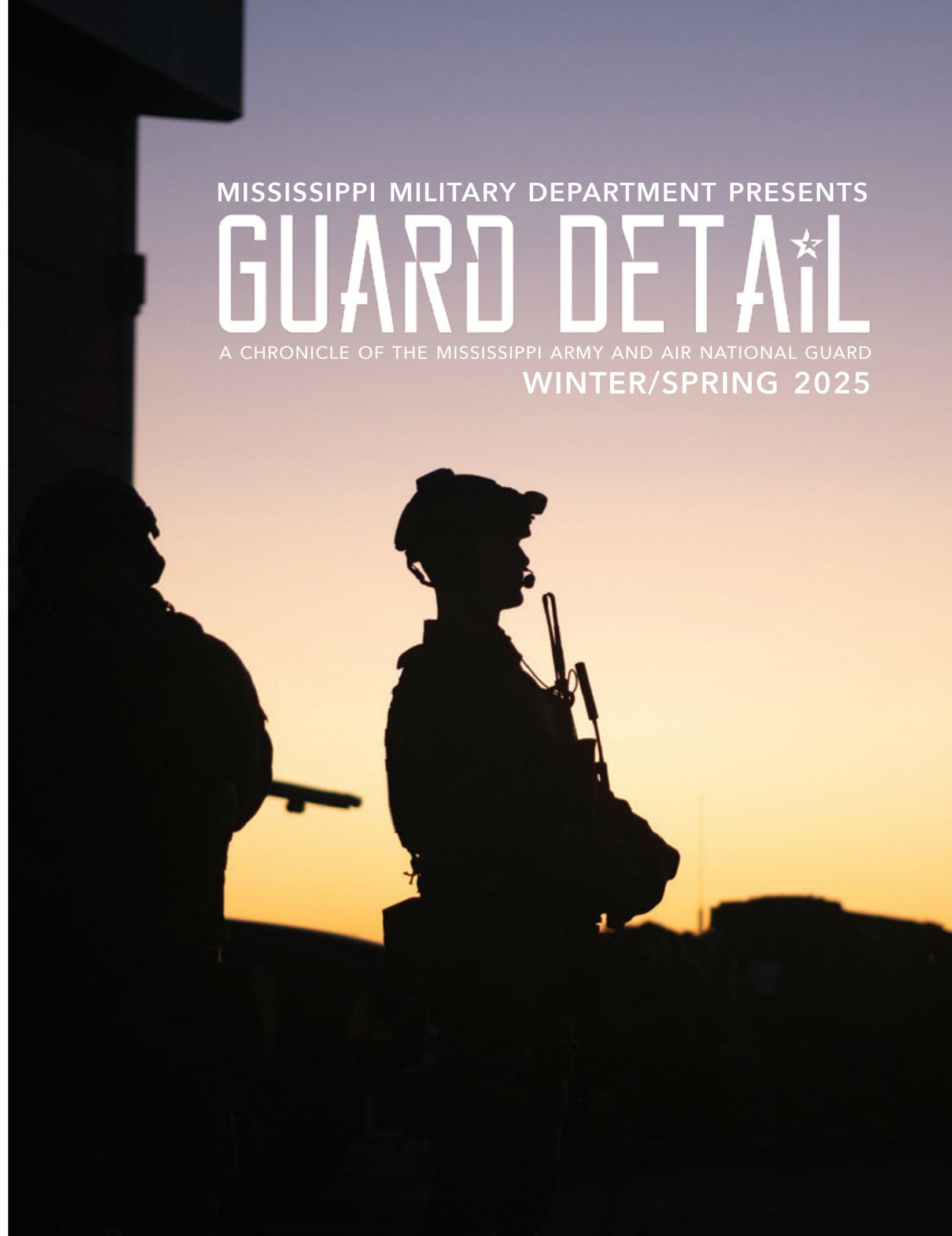
Thank you again for everything you do for Mississippi and her people. You've made us proud.

Sincerely,  
Governor Tate Reeves

MISSISSIPPI MILITARY DEPARTMENT PRESENTS

# GUARD DETAIL

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# FEATURES



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## SECDEF Visits Mississippi

For the first time in the state's history, the U.S. Secretary of Defense visited Mississippi, toured the Army Aviation Support Facility in Tupelo, and took a ride in a Guardian.

The Guard Detail is the official magazine of the Mississippi Military Department. It is published twice a year with a circulation of approximately 13,250 copies and also distributed online via the Mississippi National Guard website and Facebook page. 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:

Maj. Gen. Bobby M. Ginn Jr., the 53rd Adjutant General of Mississippi, passes the colors to Command Sgt. Maj. Silvester Tatum, senior enlisted leader of the Mississippi National Guard, during an assumption of command ceremony at the Mississippi State Capitol in Jackson, Sept. 6, 2024. The Honorable Tate Reeves (top), governor of Mississippi, hosted the ceremony in the capitol's rotunda where Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles, the 52nd Adjutant General of Mississippi, relinquished command of the Mississippi National Guard after eight years in that role. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by 1st Lt. Desmond Jones)



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## Sharing is Caring

You have two, why not share? A Mississippi Guardsman saves an Alabama Guardsman and receives a blessing in return. A story that expands the Guard family, transcending state lines.

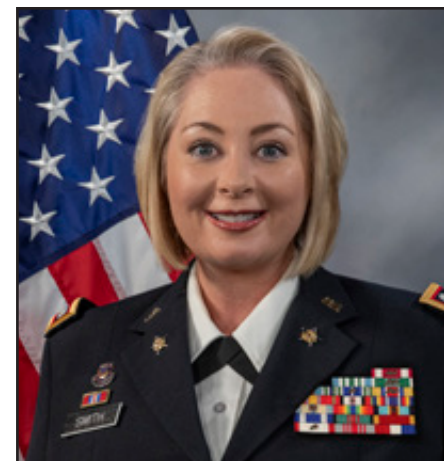


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## Serving Those Who Serve

What happens when a civilian unaffiliated with the Guard serves the Guard and his community for more than three decades? Hint: It involves an Adjutant General and the Mayor of a major city in Mississippi.

# Letter From THE EDITOR THE HONOR OF A LIFETIME!



*"She is clothed with strength and dignity, and she laughs without fear of the future."*  
~ Proverbs 31:25

There are rare moments in life, especially in your military career, that absolutely take your breath away. I am humbly blessed that I have experienced that joy by administering the Oath of Enlistment to my daughter, Harley M. Smith. At the tender age of 17 and still just a senior in high school, Harley raised her right hand and accepted the enormous challenge of serving as a member of the Mississippi Army National Guard as a 68W combat medic.

Our family celebration and legacy of service continues as my husband, Maj. James Kevin Polk of the 183rd Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, also experienced the honor of a lifetime as he swore in our daughter, Lyndi E. Polk, as a member of the Mississippi Army National Guard – also aspiring to become a 68W combat medic. We are tremendously blessed through our military service, and we celebrate the opportunities to come as our daughters begin their journey.

In case you didn't know, the MSNG Recruit Sustainment Program (RSP) is an amazing opportunity for young men and women to begin their military career, earn a drill paycheck, earn retirement points, and earn military benefits for college. If you know of someone who

needs help with paying for college, the Mississippi National Guard has career opportunities available with talented recruiters to assist.

It has often been said that the only thing constant in life is change.

*To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven.*  
~ Ecclesiastes 3:1

I never imagined my career in the military would stand the test of time for twenty-eight years of commissioned service. This journey started with a 'Triple Dog Dare' from my younger brother, LaTrell Smith. The dare was to join the military, go to basic training, compete for Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) Scholarships, and attend Marion Military Institute to earn an Army Reserve Officer's Commission while attending college. What started as a chance to prove my brother wrong; turned into a legacy of service I am proud to pass on to my daughters.

*So I saw that there is nothing better for a person than to enjoy their work, because that is their lot. For who can bring them to see what will happen after them?*  
~ Ecclesiastes 3:22



Lt. Col. Deidre D. Smith, director of public affairs for the Mississippi National Guard, stands with her daughter, Pfc. Harley M. Smith, after administering the Oath of Enlistment during a ceremony at the Jackson MEPS, Oct. 28, 2024, officially welcoming Harley to the Mississippi National Guard family. (Courtesy Photo)

I have always been passionate about the mission of Public Affairs. I enjoy celebrating the success of the brave men and women serving in our organization and the families that support them. It is with a humble heart that I announce my retirement. As I begin this new journey, I will always be grateful for the opportunities presented through my military service, especially education and personal growth. I have had the chance to travel the world serving on active duty – Germany was one of my favorite assignments. I have served on two deployments; Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraq Freedom. These opportunities presented life lessons that have molded me into the person I am today.

Military members make up less than one percent of the national population. We are experts in our fields, carry compassion and patriotism for our country and serve as true professionals. As the winds of change bring new opportunity into my life, I will always cherish the memories and the friendships gained from all with whom I've served. Thank you for your service to our state and nation. Mississippi National Guard, **Thank You** for being a part of the greatest one percent!



Maj. James K. Polk, flight nurse with the 183rd Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, 172nd Airlift Wing, administered the Oath of Enlistment for his daughter Pvt. Lyndi E. Polk, during a ceremony at the Jackson MEPS, Jan. 6, 2025, officially welcoming Lyndi to the Mississippi National Guard family. (Courtesy Photo)





# CHAPLAIN’S CORNER

## THE MAGNIFICENCE OF SERVICE

*...whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many. Mark 10:43-45*

It’s one of the core values of wearing our nation’s uniform—Selfless Service. Service over self. It is a value that reflects the Divine Nature seen through humanity. To be great, one must be a servant. To be first, one will be last.

There are countless individuals throughout our nation’s history who inspire us with examples of lifetime service or those who demonstrated ultimate service in giving their lives for freedom’s cause. Those are the ones who make our lives better. They help us understand what it means to serve. They challenge us to be better. They encourage us to never give up.

What does this type of service look like and why is it important?

## THE MISSION OF SERVICE

General James McConville stressed the “Mission first, people always” priorities. Service is born out of mission. Our purpose or calling flows forth from a life that is on a mission. We capture a vision that our lives exist for something greater than ourselves. Once we capture the vision of what the mission is, we sacrifice for it through the good or the bad. It keeps us on track and energizes us to fight, to sacrifice, to serve. Purpose always precedes service. We were made to give ourselves for something greater than ourselves.

## THE MOTIVATION OF SERVICE

What motivates selfless service that leads to sacrifice? We have all been inspired by the great sacrifices on Omaha Beach in 1944. On that

incredible day, General Norman Cota told his men, “Gentlemen, we are being killed on the beaches. Let’s go inland and be killed.” Serving something greater than self, motivates us to keep going, to sacrifice for others and to never give up.

Too many struggle with depression or insecurities because they have not been able to settle the question of purpose. Booker T. Washington famously said, “If you want to lift yourself up, lift up someone else.” In the must-read book, “Man’s Search for Meaning,” Victor Frankl said, “In some ways, suffering ceases to be suffering at the moment it finds meaning.” When we connect the dots and put service over self, we overcome suffering realizing our meaning and purpose. Our lives are lifted to another level of existence that compels us to give.

## THE MARK OF SERVICE

Mae West said, “You only live once, but if you do it right, once is enough.” Did you ever hear the phrase, “That’s gonna leave a mark?” George Washington addressed his officers in 1783 as he said: “Gentlemen, you will permit me to put on my spectacles, for I have grown not only gray, but almost blind in the service of my country.” Service requires courage, perseverance, commitment, vigilance and the understanding that life will be markedly different from the life that has not been tested by sacrificial service.

## THE MAGNITUDE OF SERVICE

William Blake said, “Great things are done when men and mountains meet.” As we understand our purpose and commit to selfless service, life makes sense and mountains are conquered. The world is a better place because we live out the calling to serve.

**Chaplain (Col.) Cregg Puckett**  
**MSNG State Command Chaplain**



## STAFF SGT. KEITH WHEATLEY

**Drill Sergeant, Recruiting and Retention Battalion**  
**Mississippi Army National Guard**

I am a native of Greenville, Mississippi, a 2010 graduate of Greenville-Weston High School, and since joining the Army in 2015, leadership has been at the forefront of why I serve. Leadership is both a form of art and a responsibility. It’s about empowering others and creating an environment where Soldiers feel valued.

One of the most important lessons I’ve learned is that leadership isn’t about power or control, it’s about serving selflessly. To lead is to serve others, to place their needs above your own, and to create space for others to succeed. True leadership is about recognizing

that your role is to lift others up, help them maximize their potential, and give them the tools they need to thrive. Leadership is about being open, transparent, and honest. It’s about showing others that it’s okay to make mistakes, to learn from them, and to grow in the process.

Leadership is about inspiring others to see the greatness within themselves. A true leader is someone who can recognize the potential in others, even when they can’t see it in themselves. I’ve always believed that the best leaders are those who help others realize their strengths and then step back to allow them to flourish. This kind of leadership is not about seeking personal accolades but about fostering an environment where others can grow into the best versions of themselves. The greatest reward of leadership has been watching the Soldiers I’ve mentored or led go on to achieve things they never imagined possible.



# SNAPSHOTS

Airmen and Soldiers of the Mississippi National Guard deployed to Washington, D.C., to support the 60th Presidential Inauguration ceremony, Jan. 20, 2025. The 112th Military Police Battalion, along with personnel from the 172nd Airlift Wing and the 186th Air Refueling Wing, carried out security missions in support of civilian authorities. (U.S. Army National Guard video production by Staff Sgt. Taylor Cleveland)



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TO SEE  
VIDEO







Left to Right: U.S. Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith of Mississippi, Chief Warrant Officer 5 Donny Dukes, command chief warrant officer of the Mississippi National Guard, U.S. Senator Rodger Wicker of Mississippi, and Brig. Gen. Andrew Rendon, commander of 66th Troop Command, visit Mississippi National Guard members during their deployment to our nation's capital. The senators, alongside senior leaders of the Mississippi National Guard, speak to MSNG soldiers of the 112th Military Police Battalion during the MSNG's mission in support of civil authorities at the 60th Presidential Inauguration in Washington D.C., Jan. 17-22, 2025. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Taylor Cleveland)



Maj. Gen. Bobby M. Ginn Jr., the adjutant general of Mississippi, congratulates MSNG soldiers and airmen on an exceptional job during their support mission at the 60th Presidential Inauguration in Washington D.C., Jan. 17-22, 2025. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Taylor Cleveland)

# MSNG SUPPORTS 60TH PRESIDENTIAL INAUGURATION

Story by Staff Sgt. Taylor Cleveland,  
102nd Public Affairs Detachment  
and Tech Sgt. Jessica Hulbert,  
186th Air Refueling Wing Public Affairs

People from all walks of life and countries around the world gathered in our nation's capital to witness an American tradition during the 60th Presidential Inauguration, Jan. 20, 2025.

Among the thousands in attendance, around 200 Soldiers and Airmen from the Mississippi National Guard deployed to Washington from January 17-22, 2025, to assist local, state, and federal authorities to ensure a safe and secure environment.

The 112th Military Police Battalion, along with security forces from the 172nd Airlift Wing and the 186th Air Refueling Wing, executed security missions in support of civil authorities.

Security forces personnel are responsible

for ensuring the safety of people, property and resources. They are dedicated and specially trained in defense strategies ranging from law enforcement to combat tactics. Other responsibilities during this mission included crowd management, entry control points, and traffic control. The team secured locations at the Military Ball, Inauguration Ball, and Washington Union Station. Ultimately, the Soldiers and Airmen completed their mission without any serious issues.

"We had some stuff happen, but we've all been trained well enough to know how to react, and we've reacted to it very well," said Sgt. Christopher Ainsworth, 113th Military Police Company.

This wasn't their first time in our nation's capital, the Mississippi National Guard has supported the last two Presidential Inaugurations.

"Mississippi was always in the top tier because of what we had done in the

past," said Maj. Gen. Bobby M. Ginn, Jr., the adjutant general of Mississippi. "The great job, the experience, that we had previously, we will get that call to support presidential inaugurations again because of the job that Mississippi does."

Ginn, along with several other distinguished visitors, played an active role in the mission, supporting the Soldiers and Airmen throughout the entire trip.

Members of the 186th Security Forces Squadron and one member of the 186th Logistics Readiness Squadron were presented Army Achievement Medals, Mar. 1, 2025.

Lt. Col. Steven Jackson, commander of the 112th Military Police Battalion, presented medals to the Guardsmen and also a newly established Presidential Inauguration Decoration (PI-60).

During the award presentation, Jackson spoke about his family's long-standing

military tradition, sharing names of multiple relatives who have served. He also expressed his deep gratitude and pride in having the chance to serve alongside his daughter.

Senior Airman Mercedes Jackson, a Material Management Specialist with the Logistics Readiness Squadron, played a key role in supporting personnel by assisting with supply administration and overseeing distribution activities.

The joint Army and Air National Guard team worked alongside civil authorities conducting security sweeps, manning traffic control points, and maintaining checkpoint operations.

"The Presidential Inauguration Mission was a joint service opportunity," said Lt. Col. Jackson. "Collaboration among services is imperative to adapting to mission changes. I cannot express enough how proud I was to have airmen from the 186th a part of it."

Jackson thanked 186th ARW leadership and 186th Security Forces leadership for their assistance in facilitating the support of the 186th ARW and 172nd AW.

The MSNG is a ready force, and their participation in the inauguration was crucial to their commitment of supporting civil authorities.



Command Sgt. Maj. Larry Primeaux (left) and Soldiers of the 112th Military Police Battalion visit with Command Sgt. Maj. John T. Raines III, Senior Enlisted Advisor for the National Guard Bureau, during the Mississippi National Guard's support of civil authorities mission at the 60th Presidential Inauguration in Washington D.C., Jan. 17-22, 2025. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Taylor Cleveland)



Members of the 186th Air Refueling Wing, Mississippi Air National Guard, based in Meridian, were presented Army Achievement Medals for their outstanding work while supporting civil authorities during the 60th Presidential Inauguration in Washington D.C., Jan. 17-22, 2025. Army Lt. Col. Steven Jackson (first row, far right), commander of the 112th Military Police Battalion based in Canton, presented the awards March 1, 2025, along with the new Presidential Inauguration Decoration (PI-60). (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Alexandria Fulton)



# MSNG WELCOMES SEC DEF TO TUPELO ARMY AVIATION SUPPORT FACILITY



The Honorable Pete Hegseth, U.S. Secretary of Defense, shares his Warfighting Focus with MSNG soldiers highlighting the importance of lethality, meritocracy, accountability, readiness and standards at the Army Aviation Support Facility #2 in Tupelo, Mississippi, March 20, 2025. (U.S. Navy photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Alex Kubitzka)



Sen. Roger Wicker of Mississippi (left) and the Honorable Pete Hegseth, U.S. Secretary of Defense, along with Mississippi National Guard senior leaders receive a welcome brief at the Army Aviation Support Facility #2 in Tupelo, Mississippi, March 20, 2025. (U.S. Navy photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Alex Kubitzka)

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

The Mississippi National Guard (MSNG) is accustomed to welcoming distinguished guests and senior leaders across all components of the military including active duty, reserve forces and the National Guard. We train with interagency partners and civilian law enforcement agencies to refine our skills and foster joint partnerships.

It was a rare occasion March 20, 2025, as the Mississippi National Guard welcomed the U.S. Secretary of Defense,

Pete Hegseth to the MSNG Army Aviation Support Facility #2 in Tupelo, Mississippi. He was accompanied by Sen. Roger Wicker, the Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee for the 119th Congress. They were greeted by Maj. Gen. Bobby M. Ginn Jr., the adjutant general of Mississippi, and several key leaders from our formation.

“It was an honor to welcome our Secretary of Defense, Pete Hegseth, and Sen. Roger Wicker to witness firsthand the amazing work our Mississippi National Guard Soldiers do every day in Tupelo, Mississippi,” said Ginn. “Our

warriors are a vital resource to our nation’s combat-ready reserve military strength.” said Ginn.

Hegseth toured the facility and received briefings about MSNG missions, capabilities, and the lethality our aviators and maintenance experts bring to the support and protection of our nation. He took the time to personally address the MSNG soldiers about his Warfighting Focus, highlighting the importance of lethality, meritocracy, accountability, readiness, and standards. He experienced a bird’s eye view out of an aviator’s office window while participating in a flight operation aboard an AH-64 Apache helicopter.

As a military veteran, Hegseth is no stranger to the demands and sacrifices required by a service member and their family. While on site in Tupelo, he recognized five Soldiers for their exceptional service presenting them with a SEC DEF coin to show his appreciation of their service to our state and nation: Chief Warrant Officer 2 Hope McCoy of Pontotoc, Sgt. Dustin Lindsey of Belden, Staff Sgt. Keely Haley of Pontotoc, Staff Sgt. Jonathon Hines of Guntown, and Sgt. 1st Class Kelcy Weed of Tupelo.

This is the first time in Mississippi history that the Secretary of Defense visited the Mississippi National Guard and toured our facilities.



Lt. Col. Josh Christian, 183rd Airlift Squadron commander, engages a target under low-light conditions during the inaugural test fire at the new 172nd Airlift Wing small arms range, Jan. 24, 2025. The fourteen-lane, fully enclosed and impenetrable facility is rated for munitions up to .50 caliber, features moving targets and a dynamic lighting system that can be dimmed, color-adjusted and can simulate strobing police lights, bringing a sense of realism that is commonly difficult to achieve. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by 2nd Lt. Jared Bounds)

## 172ND AIRLIFT WING OPENS STATE-OF-THE-ART SMALL ARMS RANGE

Story by 2nd Lt. Jared Bounds,  
172nd Airlift Wing Public Affairs

Members of the 172nd Airlift Wing (AW), Jackson, Mississippi, celebrated the opening of a state-of-the-art small arms range on Thompson Field Air National Guard Base, Jan. 24, 2025.

The fourteen-lane, fully-enclosed and impenetrable facility is rated for munitions up to .50 caliber, features moving targets and a dynamic lighting system that can be dimmed, color-adjusted and can simulate strobing police lights, bringing a sense of realism that is commonly difficult to achieve.

“This range is really something special,” said Col. Matthew Caudell, deputy commander of the 172nd AW. “We took the original National Guard Bureau idea and enhanced it beyond the standard for this type of facility for the entire Air National Guard.”

The cutting-edge facility falls squarely in line with Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth’s instruction to promote a more lethal force.

In the past, every training period that required 172nd AW members to practice at a range involved coordination with local law enforcement or six hours of down-and-back travel just to reach the nearest suitable ANG facility in Gulfport, Mississippi.

“The cost was approximately \$90,000, over two days, every time we held the training,”



project and construction manager, oversaw the project from start to finish.

“For an \$8 million facility with so many details, the process was very smooth,” said Allen. “Our great working relationship with contractors and architects delivered a beautiful and efficient design.”

The location and sophistication of the new range is attracting attention. “We would like to get to a point where we could host local, and potentially state or federal, law enforcement as well as joint training,” said Caudell.

Multiple organizations from across the base provided crucial guidance during the project’s development, including the 172nd Civil Engineer Squadron (CES), the 172nd Security Forces Squadron, and the 172nd Contracting and Safety offices.

Master Sgt. Rakiam Allen, 172nd CES





# MISSISSIPPI FIRST TO FIELD NEW JLTV

U.S. Army National Guard Joint Light Tactical Vehicles (JLTV), assigned to the 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team, sit in a holding lot at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, Mississippi, Feb. 20, 2025. The JLTV replaces the Humvee (HMMWV) marking a substantial upgrade over previous tactical vehicles and offering superior protection, enhanced mobility, and state-of-the-art technology, ensuring MSNG troops are better equipped for modern challenges. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Madisone Hatten)

Story by Madisone Hatten,  
MSNG Camp Shelby Public Affairs  
Specialist

The Mississippi National Guard (MSNG) is making a significant leap forward in operational capability with the introduction of more than 300 Joint Light Tactical Vehicles (JLTVs) to its 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team (ABCT). These advanced vehicles mark a substantial upgrade over previous tactical vehicles, offering superior protection, enhanced mobility, and state-of-the-art technology, ensuring MSNG troops are better equipped for modern challenges.

The JLTV was conceptualized in 2006, during the Global War on Terrorism, as a response to the vulnerabilities exposed in the Humvee (HMMWV) when faced with improvised explosive device (IED) attacks. Attempts to up-armor the Humvee more than doubled its weight, from approximately 6,000 pounds to nearly 13,000 pounds, leading to significant mobility and maintenance challenges due to its smaller 190-horsepower engine. Although they provided better protection, successors such as the Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle (MRAP) and the updated MRAP All-Terrain Vehicle (MATV) lacked off-road mobility because

of their increased height and weight.

JLTVs combine and improve on the best features of its predecessors. Featuring a powerful 6.6-liter turbo-diesel engine that delivers over 400 horsepower, the JLTV offers exceptional off-road capabilities with adjustable suspension, more than 20-inch ground clearance, and the ability to traverse water up to 60 inches deep. This combination of maneuverability and protection makes the JLTV a game-changer for the MSNG.

The JLTV brings unmatched versatility, allowing it to be transported by air, land, and sea via CH-47 Chinooks, amphibious vessels, and low-velocity aerial delivery. Enhanced armor protection, combined with its V-shaped hull design, helps reduce the impact of IED blasts, significantly improving soldier safety. Additionally, the JLTV's advanced onboard systems offers self-

diagnosis, allowing soldiers to complete more than half of their maintenance checks directly through an integrated monitor. This system simplifies the monitoring of critical aspects of vehicle serviceability compared to previous tactical vehicles, but requires additional hands-on experience before it hits the field.

“Proper training produces proper preparation which produces efficient operators,” said Capt. Deitrich Flanagan, JLTV Project Officer and commander of Bravo Company, 106th Brigade Support Battalion, 155th ABCT. “This principle underscores the importance of ensuring that soldiers are fully trained to handle the JLTV’s advanced capabilities.”

The more than 300 JLTVs received by the MSNG will be distributed across the 155th ABCT, with many assigned to line units and supporting elements. With the introduction of this cutting-

edge technology, soldiers will undergo specialized drivers’ and maintenance training to ensure safe and effective operation. Given the JLTV is 70% faster off-road than its up-armored Humvee predecessor, training focuses heavily on maneuverability and operator preparedness.

The JLTV mission statement encapsulates its value: To provide protected, sustained, and networked light tactical mobility for Joint Forces with global deployment capability.

The enhanced speed, safety features, and ease of maintenance will significantly bolster the MSNG’s effectiveness in various mission environments.

The MSNG stands ready to face modern operational challenges, ensuring troops are equipped with the best tools to serve and protect both home and abroad.



Capt. Deitrich Flanagan, JLTV Project Officer and commander of Bravo Company, 106th Brigade Support Battalion, 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team, MSNG, secures a compartment on the exterior of a JLTV (Joint Light Tactical Vehicle), during fielding operations at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, Mississippi, Feb. 20, 2025. The JLTV replaces the Humvee (HMMWV) marking a substantial upgrade over previous tactical vehicles and offering superior protection, enhanced mobility, and state-of-the-art technology, ensuring MSNG troops are better equipped for modern challenges. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Madisone Hatten)



# AIR NATIONAL GUARD CONDUCTS SENTRY SOUTH-SOUTHERN STRIKE 2025

U.S. Navy Lt. Kyle Brazes, a pilot assigned to Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 26, Norfolk, Virginia, releases a smoke signal during a simulated search and rescue exercise at Sentry South-Southern Strike in Gulfport, Mississippi, Jan. 28, 2025. Exercise Sentry South-Southern Strike is a joint military partnership that strengthens contingency response operations, agile combat employment, aeromedical evacuation, joint maritime training, specialized fueling operations and intra-theater airlift and airdrop. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Airman Shardae McAfee)

**“SOUTHERN STRIKE IS SIGNIFICANT BECAUSE WE BUILD OUR EXERCISE AROUND THE TRAINING INITIATIVES THAT OUR WARFIGHTERS NEED TO GET PREPARED TO GO DOWN RANGE AND FIGHT THE MISSION”**

**- COL. JEFF KIRBY**

Story by Senior Airman  
Shardae McAfee  
172nd Airlift Wing / Public Affairs

Approximately 500 service members from the active, guard and reserve components of the U.S. military participated in Exercise Sentry South-Southern Strike 2025 at the Gulfport Combat Readiness Training Center and Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, Mississippi, Jan. 27 – Feb. 6, 2025.

Exercise Sentry South-Southern Strike is a joint military partnership that strengthens contingency response operations, agile combat employment, aeromedical evacuation, joint maritime training, specialized fueling operations and intra-theater airlift and airdrop.

“Through these joint training opportunities, we learn to speak one another’s languages,” said Col. Albert Germany, Sentry South-Southern Strike exercise director. “We also build contacts that we can use in actual operations and

in future exercises.”

In addition to supporting future operations and participants, the exercise provided invaluable training opportunities for service members.

“Southern Strike is significant because we build our exercise around the training initiatives that our warfighters need to get prepared to go down range and fight the mission,” said Col. Jeff Kirby, Gulfport CRTC commander.

During exercise Sentry South-Southern Strike, airmen of a Tactical Air Control Party (TACP) team, alongside U.S. Army soldiers, conducted airborne and close air support missions for joint fires integration.

“For an exercise at this scale, it is quite important for us to integrate when it comes to close air support,” said Capt. Henry Garcia, a 548th Combat Training Squadron TACP Officer and Southern Strike subject matter expert. “It requires detailed integration with the ground forces to help communicate with air players during training exercises or missions that we’re

conducting to prepare us for any near-peer fights or large-scale combat operations.”

Because the Gulfport CRTC and Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center offer a wide range of training environments, they serve as ideal locations for exercises such as Southern Strike.

“The CRTC provides rare training infrastructures you can’t get too many places in the world,” said Kirby. “We have a large air-to-air training environment over the Gulf where fighters go out and fight air war, then transition through tactical air spaces to our overland ranges where the aircraft can engage ground targets and support ground troops.”

Southern Strike strengthens military members’ skills and improves joint coordination when electronic warfare capabilities were added to the training venues.

“Each year is different,” said Kirby. “We’re putting electronic threat environments out there this year, so the warfighters have to suppress or defeat the electronic threats before they come in and actually drop ordinance over their range.”

This year during Sentry South-Southern Strike, U.S. Air Force B-1 bombers executed precise simulated bomb drops over Camp Shelby.

“We’re conducting a live, close-air support training event where we’ll have B-1s dropping three GBU-54 inert bombs,” said Garcia.

As the methods of warfare evolve, the exercise focused on balancing past and future tactics and techniques to ensure the warfighters are equipped for any challenge.

“We’re dusting off Cold War era techniques, tactics and procedures and adjusting them for the modern environment,” said Germany. “We’re integrating new domains, such as cyber systems, as we work to validate new methods of employing new technologies combined with old technologies to fight large-scale combat.”

Sentry South-Southern Strike shifts the focus from counterterrorism and counterinsurgency to preparing for near-peer adversaries while expanding training opportunities for future exercises.

“We’re exploring new ways to innovate and exercise as we push toward the future,” said Germany. “Our mission is to ensure that our warfighters receive the essential training they need in the most realistic environment possible, so they are fully prepared when called upon.”

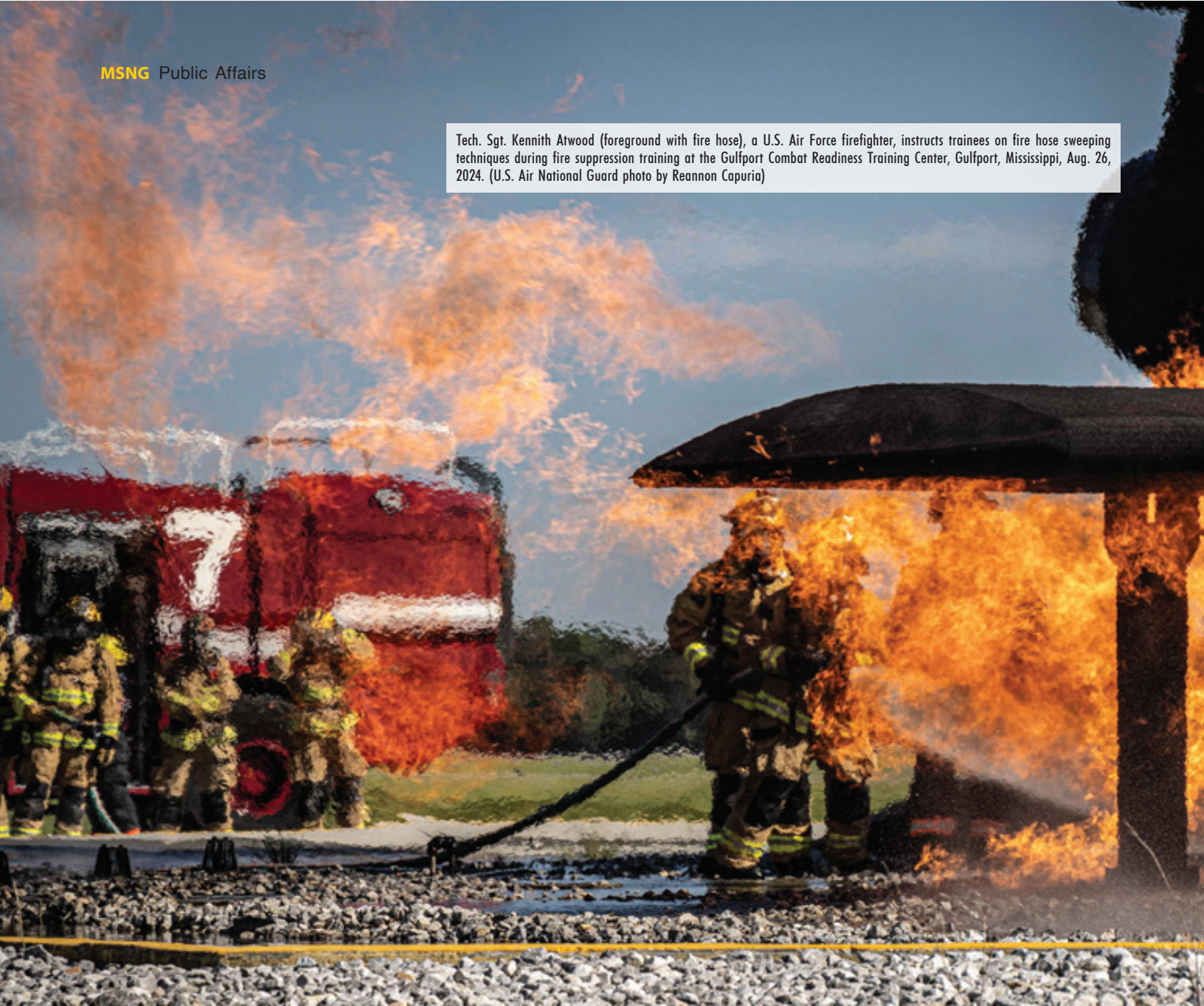


Marines assigned to Marine Wing Support Squadron 271 of Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, North Carolina, and Airmen from the 137th Special Operations Wing, Oklahoma Air National Guard, work together to operate, test, and control the Forward Arming and Refueling Point at Trent Lott International Airport, Moss Point, Mississippi, Jan. 28, 2025. Exercise Sentry South-Southern Strike is a joint military training exercise focusing on contingency response operations, agile combat employment, aeromedical evacuation, maritime training, specialized fueling operations and strategic airlift and airdrops. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Reannon Capuria)



A U.S. Army soldier, role-playing as an opposing force, shoots a simulated rocket launcher at units assigned to the 310th Psychological Operations Company, an Army Reserves unit based in Georgia, during an attack at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center, Hattiesburg, Mississippi, Feb. 4, 2025. Exercise Sentry South-Southern Strike is a joint military training exercise focusing on contingency response operations, agile combat employment, aeromedical evacuation, maritime training, specialized fueling operations and strategic airlift and airdrops. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Jeffrey Yale)





Tech. Sgt. Kenneth Atwood (foreground with fire hose), a U.S. Air Force firefighter, instructs trainees on fire hose sweeping techniques during fire suppression training at the Gulfport Combat Readiness Training Center, Gulfport, Mississippi, Aug. 26, 2024. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Reannon Capuria)

# CRTC LIVE-FIRE TRAINING

Story by Reannon Capuria,  
CRTC-Gulfport Public Affairs

The Gulfport Combat Readiness Training Center (CRTC) Fire Department holds true to the tenacity of the past while embracing the technology of the future. Fundamental training scenarios and facilities keeps the U.S. military and local fire and emergency services personnel prepared for both peacetime and contingency firefighting operations.

What really sets the CRTC apart is the expertise that comes with the training facilities. “Some places may

have bigger more advanced facilities,” said Fire Chief Senior Master Sgt. Demetrius O. Baldwin, “but units come here and return here for the expertise and consistency.” Training participants come from the Mississippi Gulf Coast fire departments and Airlift Wings across the nation.

Consistency is a core part of the Gulfport CRTC legacy that has grown with the base since 1942. With humble beginnings as a small patch of land known as the Gulfport Army Airfield, the base now known as CRTC was originally constructed with the mission to train B-25 and B-29 flight crews for

WWII. The name and occupants of the base have long since changed, yet the core mission remains – training with the intent to save lives.

CRTC Fire Department members take pride in the knowledge that each unit they help train leaves Gulfport better equipped with knowledge and techniques to impact emergency response, embracing the National Guard motto, “Always Ready. Always There.”

The CRTC Fire department takes pride in its tradition of providing hands-on training while embracing the changes to technological advances that are needed to stay current and

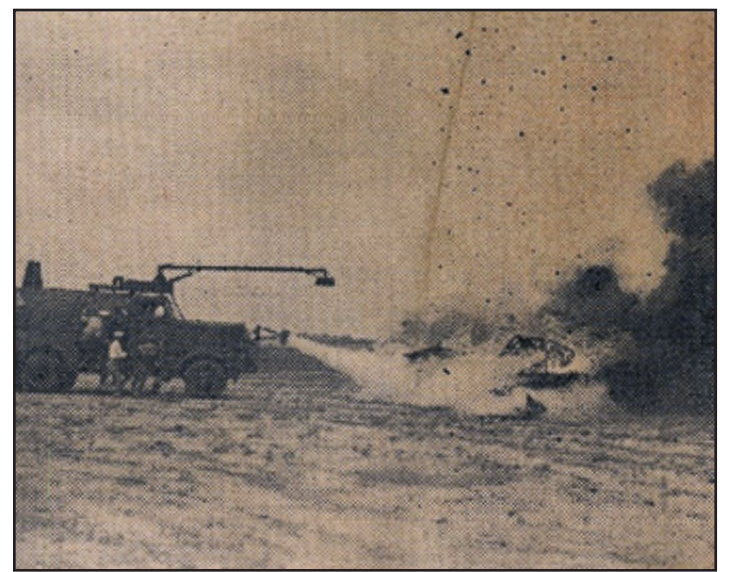
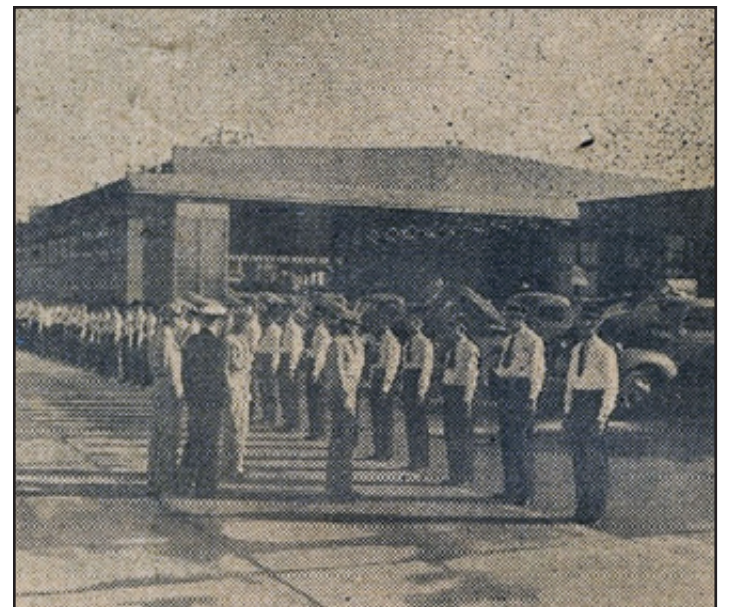


**Above**, cover page of the Dec. 29, 1944, Gulfport Army Air Field Block Buster newsletter. Established in 1941, Gulfport Field was later renamed the Air National Guard Field Training Site in 1954, then to its current name Gulfport Combat Readiness Training Center in 1990. The base has always been a focal point in Mississippi for the Air Force to train pilots, maintainers, and support personnel, including fire fighters who have consistently trained and supported CRTC for more than 80 years.

**Top right**, Gulfport Army Air Field fire fighters stand ready for inspection by their chief and head training personnel.

**Bottom right**, fire fighters of the Gulfport Army Air Field use the state-of-the-art Cardox truck to douse a plane fire during suppression training at the base.

(Historical photos courtesy of The Block Buster Newsletter and the Gulfport Combat Readiness Training Center)



competitive.

Live-fire training can be dangerous and even deadly if not done with effective leadership and proper equipment. Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting (ARFF) is a compilation of basic skills firefighters must exercise constantly and consistently. Firefighters must be able to react in a habitual way that will allow them to operate safely, efficiently, and effectively. In 2000, a live-fire aircraft trainer was installed at CRTC, providing a safer, more effective training area for firefighters. The trainer helps familiarize firefighters with responding to aircraft emergencies and affording teams that train at CRTC an opportunity to practice effective techniques in fire suppression while conducting rescue operations.

“Our facilities and our knowledgeable

staff allow us to run some of the best training in firefighting operations,” said Baldwin. In 2010, a Class A live-fire trainer was installed at CRTC. A Class A structure is built using concrete or metal fabrication with special heat-absorbing linings on the inside. These structures only burn Class A combustibles or use propane, offering an environment that resembles a structural fire with real heat and flames for firefighters to confront. This three-story building allows practical skills to be safely instructed and assessed. The CRTC fire department is dedicated to making constant improvements, striving to implement the most up-to-date training methods and facilities every year.

According to Brandon Jackson, a Gulfport CRTC firefighter, “One of

the things that makes our team so successful is our administrative office. They are not sayers; they are doers.” In 2023, when the need for confined spaces certification training arose, the CRTC Fire Department leadership took a proactive approach to finding a viable option, converting used concrete culverts into a confined spaces training site.

The mission is always to provide U.S. military fire and emergency services with training to better prepare them for peacetime and contingency firefighting operations. With the capabilities and the facilities to train real-life emergencies, led by subject matter experts who are constantly upgrading their expertise, Gulfport CRTC stands ready to respond to any scenario both man-made and natural.





# A MATCH MADE IN SERVICE: MISSISSIPPI AIR GUARD'S KIDNEY DONATION FINDS UNEXPECTED RECIPIENT IN ALABAMA AIRMAN

Chief Master Sgt. Kevin Sargent (middle) and family visit with Master Sgt. Ron Bohl (second from left) and his family at a Tuscaloosa, Alabama restaurant, celebrating one month after successful kidney transplants for Sargent and Bohl's brother, Matthew. Bohl, a Mississippi Air National Guardsman, donated a kidney to Sargent, an Alabama Air National Guardsman, through a University of Alabama at Birmingham paired donor program. Bohl was found not to be a match for his brother, but through the program, Matthew ultimately received a kidney from another donor, Nicole Brannon (second from right), in a successful kidney swap. (Photo courtesy of Master Sgt. Ron Bohl)

**"MY BROTHER WAS  
ACTUALLY A MATCH FOR  
ME, BUT DURING THE  
SCREENING PROCESS, HE  
FOUND OUT HE HAD COLON  
CANCER"**  
**- MASTER SGT.  
KEVIN SARGENT**

Story by Maj. Dusty Culpepper,  
186th Air Refueling Wing Public  
Affairs

Master Sgt. Ron Bohl, Mississippi Air National Guard, didn't hesitate when action was needed. His brother, Matthew, was battling stage five kidney disease and time was running out. When Bohl learned the wait for a donor kidney could take up to six years, he knew he had to act.

Matthew had been on dialysis since early 2023, but his condition was worsening. His blood pressure would shoot up to 180/140 without warning. Dialysis helped, but his blood pressure remained dangerously high.

"We really couldn't go anywhere for any length of time because he had to be close to a dialysis center to be able to dialyze three times a week for four hours at a time," Bohl said.

Bohl serves as a cyber operations noncommissioned officer in charge at the Mississippi National Guard headquarters

in Jackson. When he learned his brother's wait for a transplant could last years, he immediately volunteered to be a donor.

After a year-long screening process, he found out he wasn't a match for Matthew. However, he learned about a paired donor program through the University of Alabama at Birmingham, which operates one of the largest kidney transplant programs in the country.

According to UAB Medicine, its Paired Kidney Donation Program allows incompatible donor-recipient pairs to be matched with other pairs increasing the chances of finding a compatible kidney. The incompatible kidney program has facilitated more than 125 kidney transplants since it launched in 2013 and completed one of the longest-running transplant chains in U.S. history.

Although Bohl's kidney wasn't going to his brother, he could still save a life through the program at UAB. Chief Master Sgt. Kevin Sargent, a guardsman with the Alabama Air National Guard,



Three days post-transplant, Chief Master Sgt. Kevin Sargent (left) and Master Sgt. Ron Bohl, who donated a kidney to Sargent, share a smile at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, marking a new beginning for Sargent's health journey. Bohl, a Mississippi Air National Guardsman, donated a kidney to Sargent, an Alabama Air National Guardsman, through a paired donor program after Bohl was found not to be a match for his brother Matthew. (Photo courtesy of Master Sgt. Ron Bohl)

was also in desperate need of a kidney.

Sargent, an equipment maintenance flight branch chief at the 117th Air Refueling Wing in Birmingham, had been diagnosed with stage five kidney disease in March 2023 and faced the same predicament as Bohl's brother.

Three potential donors stepped forward on his behalf: his brother, James Vick; a member of his church; and a family friend, Nicole Brannon. But one by one, complications arose.

"My brother was actually a match for me, but during the screening process, he found out he had colon cancer," Sargent said. "Thankfully, he's okay now."

He was 0-1.

The church member was also a match but had to opt out due to his own health issues.

He was 0-2.

That left Nicole Brannon. She was a match.

A UAB transplant coordinator told Brannon that she actually matched with a

different donor in addition to Sargent and asked if she would be open to donating to another kidney seeker – a paired donor. She agreed.

At the same time Nicole was informed, Matthew was told that he had a match. His match was Nicole, and Sargent's match was Ron Bohl. After coordinating schedules, a date was set for the transplant, Dec. 20, 2024. The two pairs of donors would undergo their respective procedures simultaneously. In the waiting room, their spouses sat anxiously, hoping for the best. As they waited, a conversation sparked between two strangers about their family members in surgery. They soon realized their spouses were both service members.

When the surgeries concluded, the kidney swaps were a success. Within a few days, all four were on their way home.

Bohl recounted the "victory lap" each patient must complete before discharge.

"They make you take two laps around the nurse's station before you can go home," Bohl said. "We all took our laps



Master Sgt. Ron Bohl (right) and his brother, Matthew, share a smile after a successful three-week checkup, marking a major milestone in Matthew's recovery from a kidney transplant, which was made possible by a paired donor program at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. After Ron Bohl, a Mississippi Air National Guardsman, was found not to be a match for his brother Matthew, he received a kidney from another donor in a successful kidney swap. (Photo courtesy of Master Sgt. Ron Bohl)

together."

Sargent's quality of life has improved substantially since the transplant. No longer bound to dialysis, he has regained his freedom and energy.

"You don't have to be tied to a machine or to a dialysis clinic three to four days a week," Sargent said. "And all of that would have never happened without somebody with a heart like Ron and Nicole."

Sargent and Bohl agree that the kidney exchange was meant to be. Not only do they now share kidneys, but they were born just hours apart on nearly the exact same day.

It's often said that the National Guard is a family, but for Bohl and Sargent, that phrase is no longer just a saying – it's their reality.

"This kidney was meant for his biological brother, but his brother [Sargent] still got it," Sargent said. "We are family now."





# 238TH ASOS LEAVES LEGACY OF WARRIOR ETHOS, BRAVERY, AND COMRADERY

A Tactical Air Control Party of the 238th Air Support Operations Squadron, Mississippi Air National Guard, watch as an F-16 Fighting Falcon releases a flare while performing a show of force movement during a combined live-fire exercise June 6, 2017, at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, California. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Veronica McNabb)

**“HAVING THE MOST MOTIVATED, ADAPTIVE AND LETHAL SPECIAL WARFARE AIRMEN TAKE ON THE NEW MISSION OF CONTINGENCY RESPONSE, ONLY MAKES SENSE”**

**- LT. COL. SCOTT DUCKWORTH**

Story by Maj. Sabrina Dalton, Chief of Public Affairs, 186th Air Refueling Wing

Humble, brave, valiant, selfless, and highly decorated are just a few words to describe members of the 238th Air Support Operations Squadron (ASOS) located at Key Field Air National Guard (ANG) Base in Meridian, Mississippi. Comprised of Special Warfare Airmen known as TACPs or Tactical Air Control Party, Air Liaison Officers (ALO), operations support, and Joint Terminal Attack Controllers (JTAC), the ASOS was redesignated as the 238th Contingency Response Squadron, April 1, 2025.

“Having the most motivated, adaptive and lethal special warfare airmen take on the new mission of contingency response,

only makes sense,” said Lt. Col. Scott Duckworth, commander of the 238th ASOS. “It is a relatively new mission for the Air Force with personnel who are already combat proven and capable of being the benchmark of what a Contingency Response Squadron should be.”

On the heels of escalating Al Qaeda terrorist activity in 1999, the 238th ASOS was established following the restructuring of the 238th Combat Communications Squadron, which activated in 1953.

Since activation, ASOS members deployed in support of U.S. Africa Command, U.S. Central Command, and U.S. Special Operations Command missions including operations Iraqi Freedom (OIF), Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Inherent Resolve (OIR). They conducted combat operations in the initial invasion of Iraq in 2003;



Nine members of the 238th Air Support Operations Squadron stand with then-Brig. Gen. Mike Nabors (far left), former commander of the Mississippi Air National Guard, and then-Col. Ed Evans (far right), former 186th Air Refueling Wing Commander, following a ceremony where the nine Tactical Air Control Party airmen were each awarded a Bronze Star Medal for actions during a recent deployment, Nov. 3, 2019, at Key Field Air National Guard Base in Meridian, Mississippi. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Adam Vance)

the liberation of Fallujah, Sadr City, and Karbala in 2004; counter insurgency in Afghanistan; and the Defeat ISIS campaign in Syria.

Over the years, as world geopolitics evolved, the mission of the 238th adapted to meet the needs of the National Security Strategy.

As the only Air Force Special Warfare squadron within the Mississippi National Guard, the federal, wartime mission of the ASOS is to provide liaison and expertise to U.S. Army combat units. However, ASOS members worked with all U.S. military services including the Marines, Navy and Air Force, calling in close air support (CAS) or airstrikes, artillery fire, and naval gunfire – amplifying the mission as a force multiplier.

Their stateside or peacetime capacity consists of supporting domestic operations as air advisors, providing reconnaissance support such as searching for missing persons; participating in natural disaster and hurricane relief efforts for Katrina and Irma; and supporting counterdrug operations.

The year 2003 hailed the first of many deployments for the 238th, when six TACPs deployed within seven days of notification in support of OIF, including one of the original members of the unit, retired Col. Billy Murphy, who served from 2000 – 2008 as a Battalion ALO. Murphy, who was a major at the time, and five other Airmen including then-Maj. Scott Snively, deployed to Iraq with Fort Campbell’s 19th



Tech. Sgt. Timothy Mills (left), Operations Superintendent for the 238th Air Support Operations Squadron, Mississippi Air National Guard, and Senior Airman James Munn, also of the 238th, following a ceremony where Munn was awarded the Bronze Star with Valor for acts of bravery during the Second Battle of Fallujah, Iraq, Nov. 7 to Dec. 23, 2004. Mills was Munn’s team leader in Iraq and is one of the founding members attributed to building the squadron from the ground up. (238th ASOS courtesy photo)

ASOS.

“We were responsible for providing close air support, and I spun up the Apache pilots on emergency CAS who were my eyes on target. We had combined armed effects on different targets throughout Iraq,” Murphy detailed. “Apaches were on target, Army long range missiles, and 2,000-pound bombs dropping all at the same time, and everyone made it home.”

When the 238th returned home Dec. 3, 2023, both Murphy and Snively were awarded the Bronze Star Medal for their actions during their first OIF deployment. Murphy said that his time spent with the 238th was instrumental in developing him to be a valued staff member at every

command level, setting the stage for the remainder of his career where he later progressed to serving as commander of the 186th Air Operations Group at Key Field ANGB.

In support of OIF in 2004, four, 6-member teams deployed for three-month combat tours, supporting the 39th Infantry Brigade Combat Team of the Arkansas Army National Guard. It was during this deployment that the campaign to liberate Fallujah, Iraq, Operation Phantom Fury (the Second Battle of Fallujah), occurred.

Former ASOS member, then-Senior Airman James Munn, deployed alongside

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 24**





Senior Airman James Munn, a member of the 238th Air Support Operations Squadron, Mississippi Air National Guard, played a key role in Operation Phantom Fury (the Second Battle of Fallujah) in Iraq, Nov. 7 to Dec. 23, 2004. (Courtesy photo)



Tech. Sgt. Allan Truesdale, 238th Air Support Operations Squadron, Mississippi Air National Guard, during operations in Paktia Province, Afghanistan, in early 2011. (238th ASOS courtesy photo)

the unit's JTACs and members of a U.S. Navy special operations team. The team was tasked to insert into Fallujah during Operation Phantom Fury and provide direct action and CAS operations. While there, Munn remembers being hit in the chest by the spoon of a grenade, part of the events leading up to a two-hour long firefight. In totality, the 238th's support of the operation lasted 17 days. Munn was awarded the Bronze Star with Valor during a ceremony following his return from the deployment. This is just one of the many acts of bravery exhibited by ASOS members throughout the unit's activation.

From 2004 – 2020, 238th ASOS TACPs traversed the world 14 times, fighting the war on terrorism. They've been accredited in the defeat of ISIS, were instrumental in Baghdad, had more than 2,000 enemy kills, and dropped more than one million pounds of bombs, all in defense of U.S., coalition and host nation forces.

California resident Lt. Col. Frank Monterrosa, who serves as a fireman in his civilian job, began his military career with the 238th in 2007 as an enlisted Radio Operator Maintainer and Driver (ROMAD) and later commissioned to become a TACP officer. In all, Monterrosa deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan twice each, and to Syria from 2018-2019.

"The reason I stayed with the 238th is the people," explained Monterrosa. "Living in California, I could have gone to Washington State or Houston. At one point, at least 20 members all lived out of state. That really drives home the point of brotherhood. I've always loved the atmosphere and culture."

Most every year, at least 20% of the unit was deployed at any given time, speaking to the legacy of not only bravery, but also of comradery fostered by shared deployments, experiences and adversities.

For the past 26 years since the inception of the 238th ASOS, one Purple Heart, more than 20 Bronze Stars, one with Valor, numerous Army Combat Action Badges, at least three Air Force Combat Action Medals, and hundreds of other decorations have been awarded to members of the squadron. In fact, the 238th proudly holds the most Bronze Stars and Combat Action Badges/Medals of all Mississippi Air National Guard units.

With the ASOS redesignated, the 238th's legacy persists in perpetuity due to the 26 years of heroic actions and accomplishments embodying the Air Force warrior ethos through deterrence and the defense of our freedoms and national security.

# MISSISSIPPI NATIONAL GUARD CELEBRATES UZBEKISTAN'S ARMED FORCES DAY

Story by 1st Lt. Jarvis Mace, Mississippi National Guard

Senior leaders of the Mississippi National Guard and soldiers of the 41st Army Band participated in the 33rd anniversary of Uzbekistan's Armed Forces Day celebration at the Embassy of Uzbekistan in Washington, D.C., Jan. 31, 2025.

The Mississippi National Guard has been in the state partnership program with Uzbekistan for 13 years, conducting hundreds of engagements including key leader meetings, military-to-military exchanges, and exercises. The Defense Department's State Partnership Program links a state's National Guard with a partner nation's military, security forces and disaster response organizations in a cooperative, mutually beneficial relationship.

Officials of Uzbekistan and the U.S. recognized the partnership and the close cooperation in defense and security during the January ceremony. Maj. Gen. Bobby M. Ginn, Jr., the adjutant general of Mississippi, was a keynote speaker, honoring the service members of Uzbekistan and their dedication, bravery, and leadership while serving in their nation's military.

The event featured a looping video of Uzbek military demonstrations and training, as well as a vibrant display of the nation's military traditions. The highlight of the evening was the presence of dignitaries from the Mississippi National Guard including Command Sgt. Maj. Joseph Shane Cook, senior enlisted leader of the Mississippi National Guard, and retired Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles, former adjutant general of Mississippi.

Furkat Sidikov, the Ambassador of Uzbekistan to the U.S., invited Ginn to be a keynote speaker along with other U.S. Officials. During Ginn's speech, he emphasized the significance of the military partnership.

"The bond between Mississippi and Uzbekistan through the state partnership program has grown into a relationship of deep trust, cooperation, and mutual respect," said Ginn. "Since the beginning of our partnership in 2012, we have worked hand in hand to strengthen military readiness, improve disaster response capabilities, and



Furkat Sidikov, the ambassador of Uzbekistan to the U.S., presents a gift to Maj. Gen. Bobby M. Ginn, Jr., the adjutant general of Mississippi, during the 33rd anniversary of Uzbekistan's Armed Forces Day at the Embassy of Uzbekistan in Washington, D.C., Jan. 31, 2025. Officials of Uzbekistan and the U.S. recognized their partnership and their close cooperation in defense and security. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by 1st Lt. Jarvis Mace)



Furkat Sidikov (center), Ambassador of Uzbekistan to the U.S., poses with musicians of the 41st Army Band, Mississippi Army National Guard, during the 33rd anniversary of Uzbekistan's Armed Forces Day at the Embassy of Uzbekistan in Washington, D.C., Jan. 31, 2025. Officials of Uzbekistan and the U.S. recognized their partnership and their close cooperation in defense and security. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by 1st Lt. Jarvis Mace)

build cultural and professional ties."

Soldiers of the 41st Army Band were proud to be invited to perform at the Uzbekistan Armed Forces Day celebration and entertained guests by playing a selection of songs.

"It was an honor and also amazing to have experienced the hospitality and support from the Embassy staff," said Staff Sgt. Tré Farley, a musician with the 41st. "Beyond having a state partnership, it allows for the service members to learn from their culture, fellowship, and build bonds within the warrior's mindset."

Gifts and tokens of appreciation were exchanged during the celebration and both U.S. and Uzbek officials made a toast as a reminder of their unity. The partnership between the Armed Forces of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Mississippi National Guard continues to grow, fostering deeper defense collaboration, joint training exercises, and strategic engagements. This Armed Forces Day celebration honored the bravery and dedication of their military personnel and reaffirmed a crucial alliance that will help shape the future of both nations.



# 2024: A YEAR FOR THE MISSISSIPPI STATE GUARD

Story by Maj. (MSSG) Andy Bryson, Mississippi State Guard PAO

The Mississippi State Guard (MSSG) experienced a banner year in 2024, marked by a record-breaking surge in recruitment, an impressive annual training (AT) attendance rate, and an expanding role in the state’s emergency response and security framework. With an 80 percent attendance rate for its 2024 AT and over 100 new recruits joining its ranks, the MSSG has solidified itself as a premier state defense force, setting a standard for state guards nationwide.

The MSSG is a defense force that operates as a volunteer military organization, authorized to the state under US Title 32, Section 109. It operates as part of the Mississippi Military Department under the command and control of the Adjutant General as delegated by the Governor of Mississippi. It serves as a crucial supplement to the Mississippi National Guard, particularly in times of emergency when additional manpower and logistical support is needed. Unlike the National Guard, the MSSG is a purely state-run force and is not subject to federal activation, ensuring that its personnel remain available for state-level missions.

The MSSG’s primary function is to provide rapid support during state emergencies, including hurricanes, flooding, and other natural disasters. With an expanding and well-trained force, the State Guard will be able to deploy personnel more efficiently to affected areas, assisting in establishing emergency shelters, and providing logistical support to state agencies. This increased operational capacity has made the MSSG an indispensable asset to Mississippi’s emergency management strategy.

Recruitment efforts in 2024 reached unprecedented levels, with more than 100 new members enlisting. The MSSG’s leadership has focused on highlighting the personal and professional benefits of service, such as leadership training, emergency response skills, and a strong sense of camaraderie. Strategic partnerships with law enforcement agencies, state agencies, emergency management organizations, and



Cpl. Christian McGowin of the Mississippi State Guard directs traffic during the 9/11 Memorial event on Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center during MSSG’s Annual Training. (Mississippi State Guard photo by Capt. (MSSG) Mike Brown)

veterans’ associations play a vital role in attracting new recruits. Many of these new enlistees come from diverse backgrounds, including former military personnel, first responders, and civilians eager to contribute to Mississippi’s safety and resilience.

AT is a cornerstone of MSSG’s operational effectiveness, covering critical areas including disaster response, search and rescue, medical aid, and tactical coordination with other state agencies. In an era where volunteer organizations often struggle with retention and participation, the MSSG’s ability to maintain such high engagement levels is a testament to its leadership and organizational culture.

Beyond its military and emergency response functions, the MSSG has also prioritized community engagement and public outreach. Through organized events, public safety demonstrations, and educational initiatives, the MSSG has worked to strengthen its relationship with the communities it serves. This focus on community involvement has not only bolstered recruitment efforts but also increased public trust and awareness of the MSSG’s role.

In 2025, the MSSG looks to inform younger generations to the concept of

state service, inspiring future recruits and reinforcing a culture of civic duty. As more Mississippians recognize the value of the MSSG, support for its mission continues to grow, ensuring long-term sustainability and success. Expanding partnerships with state agencies and enhancing technological capabilities will be crucial in ensuring that the MSSG remains an effective and adaptable force.

“I look forward to building on this past year’s successes as we reorganize and tailor our units to enhance the MSSG’s capabilities to provide mission support and augmentation to the MSNG when called,” said Brig. Gen. John Carter, MSSG commander.

One of the key objectives for the coming years will be securing additional resources to further professionalize the force and enhance its operational capabilities. With the continued backing of state leadership and the unwavering dedication of its members, the MSSG is well-positioned to build on its 2024 successes and play an even greater role in Mississippi’s security and disaster response framework.

# CULINARY MASTERPIECES AT MRE COOK OFF



Culinary specialists with the 184th Sustainment Command and students from Oak Grove High School pose for a photo during the 2nd annual Mississippi Army National Guard High School Culinary Competition in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, Feb. 13, 2025. The MRE Cook Off is an event sponsored and conducted by the Mississippi Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention Battalion and was hosted by Oak Grove High School in Hattiesburg this year. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Paul Byrne)

Story by 1st Lt. Jarvis Mace  
JFH Public Affairs Specialist

The sizzle of burners and the aroma of ingredients filled the air as high school culinary students from across Mississippi tested their skills in the 2nd annual MRE Cook Off. Hosted by the Mississippi Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention Battalion, this friendly competition challenges students to transform military rations into gourmet meals using their creativity, technique, and expertise.

This year’s event, held at Oak Grove High School in Hattiesburg, featured six participating schools: Oak Grove High School, Clinton High School, Clark County Vocational School, Brandon High School, Pascagoula High School, and Oxford High School. Each team was given 75 minutes to prepare a five-course meal using the Unitized Group Ration A-Option (UGR-A), a military ration designed to simplify high-quality food service in the field. Students prepared the meals in Containerized Kitchens (CKs), mobile kitchen units used by the U.S. Army to serve troops in the field.

Despite the challenges of working with limited ingredients and military-grade cooking equipment, the students embraced the experience.



Sgt. Kaylee Clifton, culinary specialist with the 284th Field Feeding Team, 184th Sustainment Command, displays a dish created by high school students in the 2nd annual Mississippi Army National Guard High School Culinary Competition in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, Feb. 13, 2025. This year’s event was hosted by Oak Grove High School in Hattiesburg. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Paul Byrne)

“Each team was allowed to bring up to 10 additional civilian ingredients or pieces of equipment to elevate their dishes,” said Master Sgt. Amanda Williams, senior culinary specialist and event supervisor. “The meals were then presented to five judges, who graded them based on appearance, taste, and creativity.”

This is only the second year of the MRE Cook Off, with last year’s inaugural event taking place at Clinton High School.

With more time to prepare and improve organization, this year’s competition ran smoothly, allowing students to focus on refining their dishes.

“Compared to last year, we had more time to set up stations,” Williams said. “We were more prepared and had time to test equipment and replace them in a timely manner if needed.”

Beyond the thrill of competition, the event is a valuable recruitment opportunity for the Mississippi National Guard. By showcasing their culinary skills in a military-style setting, students gain hands-on experience that could translate into future careers as culinary specialists in the Guard.

“Students can take their culinary experience and use it to join the Mississippi Army National Guard as 92Gs [culinary specialists],” said Williams. “If it weren’t for the military, I would not have the career I have as an Assistant Director of Child Nutrition for my school district.”

As the competition wrapped up and the last meals were plated, the event underscored the power of creativity and skill in transforming simple rations into gourmet-quality dishes. With growing interest and increased participation, the MRE Cook Off is quickly becoming a successful recruitment tactic, offering young chefs an exciting and unique challenge.

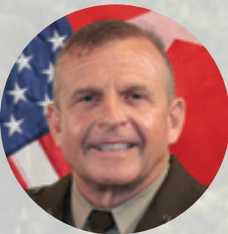
“I believe events like the MRE cookoff are really needed when it comes to recruiting efforts,” said Sgt. Tomika Hope, event supporter and culinary specialist in the Mississippi National Guard. “Many soldiers, including myself, didn’t realize jobs such as culinary specialist were even an option when joining the armed forces. These events give young people a look into what a support unit is like in comparison to a combat unit, which is usually talked about more.”

Winner and first place overall of this year’s competition was the Brandon High School Culinary Arts Program from Brandon, Mississippi.

Judges for this year’s competition were Wayne McQueen, area director of Half Shell Oyster House in Hattiesburg; Chef Nevil Barr, chief culinary officer and lead chef for the New South Restaurant Group of Hattiesburg; Lt. Col. Jason Holmes, plans officer for the Mississippi National Guard, Lt. Col. Anitria MacLewis, deputy director of joint plans, training, and exercises for the MSNG; and Master Sgt. Bernice Jackson, operations NCO, MSNG.



SENIOR LEADERSHIP



Maj. Gen. Bobby M. Ginn Jr.  
The Adjutant General of Mississippi



Chief Warrant Officer 5  
Donald R. Dukes, Jr.  
State Command  
Chief Warrant Officer



Command Sgt. Maj. Shane Cook  
Senior Enlisted Leader



Brig. Gen. Andrew  
S. Rendon  
Commander, 66th  
Troop Command



Brig. Gen. Christopher  
M. Thomas  
Commander, 184th  
Sustainment Command



Col. Christopher W.  
Cooksey  
Commander, 155th  
Armored Brigade  
Combat Team



Col. Cynthia L. Smith  
Commander, 186th  
Air Refueling Wing



Col. John L. Wilkinson  
Commander,  
172nd Airlift Wing

JOINT



Brig. Gen. James Hankins Jr.  
Director of Joint Staff



Col. Brian A. Pazzaglia  
Chief of Joint Staff



Command Sgt. Maj.  
Jonathan B. Coleman  
Land Component Command  
Sergeant Major



Command Sgt. Maj.  
Douglas Krol  
66th Troop  
Command



Command Sgt. Maj.  
Stanley T. Williams  
184th Sustainment  
Command



Command Sgt. Maj.  
John T. Gist  
155th Armored Brigade  
Combat Team



Chief Master Sgt.  
W. Blake Stanley  
Command Chief Master  
Sergeant,  
186th Air Refueling Wing



Chief Master Sgt.  
John K. Elliott  
Command Chief  
Master Sergeant,  
172nd Airlift Wing

ARMY



Maj. Gen. John T. Kelly  
Assistant Adjutant General  
Army

OUTGOING



Maj. Gen. John M. Rhodes  
Assistant Adjutant General  
Army

INCOMING



Command Sgt. Maj.  
Darrell L. Masterson  
State Command Sergeant Major

AIR



Maj. Gen.  
Edward H. Evans  
Assistant Adjutant  
General - Air



Brig. Gen.  
Tommy F. Tillman  
Chief of Staff - Air



Command Chief Master Sgt.  
John W. Myers  
State Command  
Chief Master Sergeant



Col. Wyatt K. Rives  
Director of Staff - Air



Col. William L. Henry  
Post Commander,  
Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center



Lt. Col. William D. Harwell  
Commander, Combat  
Readiness Training Center, Gulfport



Col. Curtis J. Garrette  
Garrison Commander,  
Camp McCain Training Center



Command Sgt. Maj.  
Carl P. Dean II  
Post Sergeant Major,  
Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center



Chief Master Sgt.  
Michael A. Jamison  
Chief Enlisted Manager, Combat  
Readiness Training Center, Gulfport



Command Sgt. Maj.  
Rickie L. Fortner  
Garrison Sergeant Major,  
Camp McCain Training Center

MAJOR SUBORDINATE COMMANDS

INSTALLATIONS



# SUPPORTING THE GUARD FOR MORE THAN THREE DECADES



Charles Herrington, a reporter for news station WDAM 7 in Hattiesburg, received the Mississippi Distinguished Civilian Service Medal following a mock interview with Mississippi National Guard senior leadership at WDAM's Moselle, Mississippi, station Sept. 4, 2024. Pictured left to right: Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles, former adjutant general of Mississippi; Lt. Col. Deidre D. Smith, director of public affairs for the Mississippi National Guard; Charles Herrington, WDAM 7 reporter and award recipient; and Maj. Gen. Bobby M. Ginn Jr., the adjutant general of Mississippi. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Daniel Szarek)

**"I JUST DO MY JOB. I JUST DO IT. YOU KNOW, I DON'T THINK ABOUT IT. I JUST TRY TO DO THE RIGHT THING AND HANDLE THINGS IN THE PROPER WAY. SO, THIS IS JUST EXTRAORDINARY TO ME."**  
- MR. CHARLES HERRINGTON

Story by Mr. Daniel Szarek,  
Deputy Director, Public Affairs

Charles Herrington, a reporter for news station WDAM 7 in Hattiesburg for more than 35 years, has supported the Mississippi National Guard and Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center for just as long. For his dedication, professionalism, and reliable journalism, Maj. Gen. Bobby M. Ginn Jr., the adjutant general of Mississippi, and Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles, former adjutant general, presented him with the Mississippi Distinguished Civilian

Service Medal during a surprise event at the Moselle, Mississippi news station Sept. 4, 2024.

"I was completely blown away. I had no idea it was coming," Herrington said. "I just do my job. I just do it. You know, I don't think about it. I just try to do the right thing and handle things in the proper way. So, this is just extraordinary to me."

Herrington was under the impression he was interviewing Boyles and Ginn about the transition of one adjutant general to the next and about the present and future of the Mississippi National



Charles Herrington, WDAM 7 news reporter, conducts an interview with Maj. Gen. Janson D. Boyles (left), former adjutant general of Mississippi, and Maj. Gen. Bobby M. Ginn Jr., current adjutant general of Mississippi, at the WDAM channel 7 studio in Moselle, Mississippi, Sept. 4, 2024. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Lt. Col. Deidre D. Smith)

Guard. However, in the middle of this interview he was interrupted by more than 30 people gathered in an adjacent studio to witness the impromptu award ceremony.

The citation read during the presentation of the award sums up the gratitude the MSNG has for such great support:

*For meritorious service while serving as a multimedia journalist covering more than 35 years of events to tell the story of the Mississippi Army and Air National Guard service members and the families that support them. Your heartfelt dedication and patriotism promote communication awareness that enhances the success of service members and the overall readiness of our force. Your efforts reflect great credit upon yourself, the Mississippi National Guard, the Mississippi Military Department, the state of Mississippi, and our great nation.*

The award presentation honoring Herrington was not the only surprise in store for the veteran journalist. Toby Barker, mayor of the city of Hattiesburg,

recorded a special message showing his and the citizens of Hattiesburg's appreciation for Herrington's continuous service to the state.

"Charles Herrington, a proud graduate of Hattiesburg High School and the University of Southern Mississippi, has dedicated his life and career to the service of our community," started the mayor's proclamation. "Beginning his distinguished career on WDAM 7 on Dec. 1, 1988, Charles Herrington has served as a beacon of reliable journalism covering major news events that have shaped our state, including the devastation of Hurricane Katrina and the tornadoes of 2013 and 2017."

The proclamation continued honoring Herrington's accomplishments and experience including his opportunity to interview the last six governors of Mississippi, his unwavering commitment to spotlighting Camp Shelby and dedicated National Guardsmen and women, and how his "Storytelling has

made significant impacts on local medical facilities and schools, non-profits and economic development agencies," before Barker closed with a historic honor for "Hustle" Herrington, a nickname given to Charles for his love and support of local high school football.

"Now, therefore I, Toby Barker, mayor of the city of Hattiesburg, along with the city council do hereby proclaim Wednesday, Sept. 4, 2024, as Charles Herrington Day in the city of Hattiesburg and encourage the citizens of Hattiesburg to recognize his exceptional service and contributions to the city of Hattiesburg, the state of Mississippi, and beyond."

Barker closed his message to Herrington with a sentiment shared by the Mississippi National Guard, the Soldiers and Airmen in uniform, and the families that support them.

"Congratulations Charles. Today is your day and thank you for all you do."



# ANNIE “MERLE” LEE PROMOTION

Congratulations to Annie “Merle” Lee on her promotion to colonel at the Mississippi Armed Forces Museum in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, Jan. 17, 2025.

Lee began her military career in 1990 and went on to attend Mississippi’s William Carey University, receiving a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration and a commission as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army Quartermaster Corps in 2003. She has served in numerous positions of increasing responsibility across the state and beyond.

Lee currently serves as the Division Director at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center and Chief of Staff for the 184th Sustainment Command. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Madisone Hatten)



# MSNG LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT HELPS LOCAL SCHOOL BECOME CHAMPS



The Hornets Football Team of Poplarville High School, Mississippi, celebrates the school’s first State Championship win after a 29-28 victory over the Louisville (Mississippi) High School Wildcats, Dec. 7, 2024, at the University of Southern Mississippi’s M.M. Roberts Stadium. (Courtesy photo)

Story by Sgt. Maj. Beau Graham, 154th RTI Operations Sergeant Major

Jay Beech, Head Coach of Poplarville High School Football, collaborated with the Mississippi Army National Guard’s 154th Regiment Regional Training Institute to design a program supplementing the existing leadership development and team building program inside the Poplarville Hornets football organization.

The coaching staff invited certified Army instructors to introduce a yearlong training plan comprised of monthly classes and various training events. The program

teaches the Army’s proven Be, Know, Do, leadership model and highlights the collective requirement for values-driven trust as the basis for critical team cohesion. Initial program feedback indicates the same skills needed for battlefield success also support success on the football field.

Throughout the training cycle, the players of the Hornets football team joined with leaders of the Mississippi Army National Guard’s 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team to discuss course lessons. As one of America’s most dominant instruments of combat power, the soldiers of the 155th ABCT were uniquely suited to offer valuable, experience-formed insight on

leadership styles and mentalities that has yielded tactical success throughout their careers. The players’ eagerness to learn quickly created relationships between many in the Hornets Football program and members of the 155th that continue today.

After asking Beech about his program, he affirmed, “This works because we have so many similarities with each other. They are a natural fit for what we are trying to do.”

Soldiers share this sentiment as well.

“We are all cut from the same fabric,” said Col. Chris Cooksey, commander of the 155th ABCT. “When I talk to this team, it feels like I’m in front of soldiers preparing for battle and, in my world, that is the highest compliment I can give a team.”

The Poplarville Hornets were crowned 2024 Mississippi High School Activities Association (MHSAA) District 4A State Champions, Dec. 7th, 2024, after defeating Louisville (Mississippi) High School 29 – 28 in the University of Southern Mississippi’s M.M. Roberts Stadium.

This is the first state championship win for the Hornets football team. Coach Beech was named the 2024 MHSAA 4A Coach of the Year and says he’s looking forward to continuing to grow this team’s bond in the future.

# YOUTH CHALLENGE ACADEMY GRADUATION

The Mississippi National Guard’s Youth Challenge Academy hosted a commencement ceremony for class 61 at Camp Shelby’s parade field, Dec. 14, 2024, with Maj. Gen. Bobby M. Ginn Jr., the adjutant general of Mississippi, as the keynote speaker.

Cadet Brayden A. Harbour was recognized as the cycle’s Distinguished Honor Graduate, the top graduate of YCA Class 61 – a class of approximately 175 cadets. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Madisone Hatten)



## Mississippi National Guard RETIREE DAY NORTH

Camp McCain Training Center

Parade Field located at 3152 James H. Biddy Rd.

10:00 AM | Wednesday, May 21, 2025



601.313.6349

[ng.ms.msarng.list.public-affairs@army.mil](mailto:ng.ms.msarng.list.public-affairs@army.mil)



# MS ARMY NATIONAL GUARD CURRENT BONUS INCENTIVES

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	<div>13F</div> <div>FIRE SUPPORT SPECIALIST</div>	<div>13J</div> <div>FIRE CONTROL SPECIALIST</div>	<div>13R</div> <div>FIELD ARTILLERY FIREFINDER RADAR OPERATOR</div>	<div>14G</div> <div>AIR DEFENSE BATTLE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM OPERATOR</div>	<div>14S</div> <div>AIR AND MISSILE DEFENSE CREWMEMBER</div>	<div>15B</div> <div>AIRCRAFT POWERPLANT REPAIRER</div>	<div>15D</div> <div>AIRCRAFT POWERTRAIN REPAIRER</div>	<div>15E</div> <div>UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS REPAIRER</div>	<div>15F</div> <div>AIRCRAFT ELECTRICIAN</div>	
<div>15G</div> <div>AIRCRAFT STRUCTURAL REPAIRER</div>	<div>15H</div> <div>AIRCRAFT PNEUDRAULICS REPAIRER</div>	<div>15N</div> <div>AVIONIC MECHANIC</div>	<div>15P</div> <div>AVIATION OPERATIONS SPECIALIST</div>	<div>15Q</div> <div>AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL OPERATOR</div>	<div>15T</div> <div>UH-60 HELICOPTER REPAIRER</div>	<div>15U</div> <div>CH-47 HELICOPTER REPAIRER</div>	<div>15W</div> <div>UNMANNED AERIAL VEHICLE OPERATOR</div>	<div>17E</div> <div>ELECTRONIC WARFARE SPECIALIST</div>	<div>19D</div> <div>CAVALRY SCOUT</div>	<div>19K</div> <div>M1 ARMOR CREWMAN</div>
<div>25B</div> <div>INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SPECIALIST</div>	<div>25L</div> <div>CABLE SYSTEMS INSTALLER MAINTAINER</div>	<div>25N</div> <div>NOOAL NETWORK SYSTEMS OPERATOR MAINTAINER</div>	<div>25Q</div> <div>MULTICHANNEL TRANSMISSION SYSTEMS OPERATOR MAINTAINER</div>	<div>25S</div> <div>SATELLITE COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS OPERATOR MAINTAINER</div>	<div>25U</div> <div>SIGNAL SUPPORT SYSTEMS SPECIALIST</div>	<div>27D</div> <div>PARALEGAL SPECIALIST</div>	<div>31B</div> <div>MILITARY POLICE</div>	<div>35F</div> <div>INTELLIGENCE ANALYST</div>	<div>35G</div> <div>GEO.SPATIAL INTELLIGENCE IMAGERY ANALYST</div>	<div>35L</div> <div>COUNTER-INTELLIGENCE AGENT</div>
<div>35M</div> <div>HUMAN INTELLIGENCE COLLECTOR</div>	<div>35N</div> <div>SIGNALS INTELLIGENCE ANALYST</div>	<div>35P</div> <div>CRYPTOLOGIC LINGUIST</div>	<div>35S</div> <div>SIGNALS COLLECTION ANALYST</div>	<div>35T</div> <div>MILITARY INTELLIGENCE MI-SYSTEMS MAINTAINER</div>	<div>36B</div> <div>FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT TECHNICIAN</div>	<div>42A</div> <div>HUMAN RESOURCES SPECIALIST</div>	<div>42R</div> <div>ARMY BAND</div>	<div>46S</div> <div>PUBLIC AFFAIRS</div>	<div>56M</div> <div>RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS SPECIALIST</div>	<div>68A</div> <div>BIOMEDICAL EQUIPMENT REPAIRER</div>
<div>68E</div> <div>DENTAL SPECIALIST</div>	<div>68G</div> <div>PATIENT ADMINISTRATOR SPECIALIST</div>	<div>68J</div> <div>MEDICAL LOGISTICS SPECIALIST</div>	<div>68K</div> <div>MEDICAL LABORATORY SPECIALIST</div>	<div>68P</div> <div>RADIOLOGY SPECIALIST</div>	<div>68W</div> <div>HEALTH CARE SPECIALIST</div>	<div>68X</div> <div>BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SPECIALIST</div>	<div>74D</div> <div>CHEMICAL BIOLOGICAL RADIATION NUCLEAR SPECIALIST</div>	<div>88M</div> <div>MOTOR TRANSPORT OPERATOR</div>	<div>88N</div> <div>TRANSPORTATION MANAGEMENT COORDINATOR</div>	<div>89A</div> <div>AMMUNITION STOCK CONTROL ACCOUNTING SPECIALIST</div>
<div>89B</div> <div>AMMUNITION SPECIALIST</div>	<div>89D</div> <div>EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE DISPOSAL</div>	<div>91A</div> <div>ABRAMS TANK SYSTEM MAINTAINER</div>	<div>91B</div> <div>WHEELED VEHICLE MECHANIC</div>	<div>91C</div> <div>UTILITIES EQUIPMENT REPAIRER</div>	<div>91D</div> <div>TACTICAL POWER GENERATION SPECIALIST</div>	<div>91E</div> <div>ALLIED TRADE SPECIALIST</div>	<div>91F</div> <div>SMALL ARMS ARTILLERY REPAIRER</div>	<div>91H</div> <div>TRACK VEHICLE REPAIRER</div>	<div>91J</div> <div>QUARTERMASTER &amp; CHEMICAL EQUIPMENT REPAIRER</div>	<div>91L</div> <div>CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT REPAIRER</div>
<div>91M</div> <div>BRADLEY FIGHTING VEHICLE SYSTEM MAINTAINER</div>	<div>91P</div> <div>ARTILLERY MECHANIC</div>	<div>91S</div> <div>STRYKER SYSTEMS MAINTAINER</div>	<div>92A</div> <div>AUTOMATED LOGISTICAL SPECIALIST</div>	<div>92F</div> <div>PETROLEUM SUPPLY SPECIALIST</div>	<div>92G</div> <div>FOOD SERVICE SPECIALIST</div>	<div>92R</div> <div>PARACHUTE RIGGER</div>	<div>92W</div> <div>WATER TREATMENT SPECIALIST</div>	<div></div> <div>\$10K BONUS</div>	<div>92Y</div> <div>UNIT SUPPLY SPECIALIST</div>	<div>94A</div> <div>LAND COMBAT ELECTRONIC MISSILE SYSTEM EQUIPMENT REPAIRER</div>
<div>94E</div> <div>COMPUTER DETECTION SYSTEMS REPAIRER</div>	<div>94F</div> <div>RADIO AND COMSEC REPAIRER</div>	<div>94M</div> <div>RADAR REPAIRER</div>	<div>94R</div> <div>AVIONIC AND SURVIVABILITY EQUIPMENT REPAIRER</div>	<div>94T</div> <div>AVENGER SYSTEM REPAIRER</div>	<div>94Y</div> <div>INTEGRATED FAMILY OF TEST EQUIPMENT OPERATOR/ MAINTAINER</div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>

MISSISSIPPI ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

APR 1 - JUN 30 2025

# BURNING QUESTIONS

## BLENDING RETIREMENT SYSTEM (BRS) CONTINUATION PAY (CP)

The Blended Retirement System retains the traditional defined-benefit annuity, but adjusts the years of service multiplier from 2.5 percent to 2.0 percent for calculating monthly retired pay. In addition, the Blended Retirement System contains the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP), which includes government automatic 1% and up to an additional 4% matching contributions to a service member's TSP account. The law also included a continuation pay provision as a way to encourage service members to continue serving in the Uniformed Services at the mid-career point. Continuation Pay is a direct cash payout, like a bonus, in return for a commitment of four more years of service. DoD is currently working the implementation policy for the new Blended Retirement System.

The CP CY24 amount will be computed using eligible Soldiers' current pay grade and years of service as listed on the monthly basic pay table provided by DFAS in effect on the date of the Soldier's request. Soldiers flagged or ineligible for the obligated service are NOT eligible to apply until cleared. Soldier will submit the CP application along with an LES to their Retention NCO or S1 for processing through Retirement Services enroute to State Incentive Management and NGB. Eligibility rules and multipliers change yearly. DO NOT WAIT, you may miss the window altogether. KEY TAKEAWAY: IF YOU ARE IN BRS, APPLY EARLY AT 8 YEARS OF SERVICE.

Date (PEBD). Service members in BRS between 8 – 12 years of service have the opportunity to apply for 4.0 (Mday) or 2.5 (AGR) times their active duty monthly basic pay in return for 4 years of additional service from the date on the application form.

**Is continuation pay part of the service member's retirement package?**

Continuation pay is technically not part of a service member's retirement benefit, but it is essential to maintain DoD's existing rates of retention of experienced personnel for the All-Volunteer Force (AVF). DoD analysis and experience suggests that the reduction in the legacy retirement plan (monthly retired pay) may result in fewer members staying for a full career, and that providing continuation pay will help encourage these members to stay. Continuation Pay does not affect any bonus/incentive eligibility.

**How is 8 to 12 years of service for continuation pay calculated?**

Active Component and members of the Reserve Component in pay status are eligible for continuation pay when they complete their 8th to 12th year of service calculated from the service member's Pay Entry Base

**FAQ:**

**What is continuation pay?**

Blended Retirement System (BRS) Continuation Pay (CP) is a Retention Tool.

MSARNG RETIREMENT SERVICES

PHONE: 601.313.6383 / 601.313.6803

EMAIL: ng.ms.msarng.mbx.msng-retirementservices@army.mil

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

Airmen and Soldiers of the Mississippi National Guard deployed to Washington, D.C., to support the 60th Presidential Inauguration ceremony, Jan. 20, 2025. The 112th Military Police Battalion, along with personnel from the 172nd Airlift Wing and the 186th Air Refueling Wing, carried out security missions in support of civil authorities. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Taylor Cleveland)

