



# ***1<sup>ST</sup> Battalion***



## ***204<sup>th</sup> Air Defense Artillery***

***“First to Fire, Last to Leave”***

*Change of Command Ceremony  
Farewell Ceremony  
2 June 2025  
1000  
ECCC Huff Auditorium*

**1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 204<sup>th</sup> Air Defense Artillery Lineage  
1942 - 2023**

October 14, 1995, the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion 114<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery formally accepted the Avenger Air Defense Missile System, and with its re-designation as the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 204<sup>th</sup> Air Defense Artillery, the battalion accepted the heritage and spirit of an organization rich in tradition as a major combat unit in World War II.

The Air Defense Unit was organized May 21, 1942, as the US Army's 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion 609<sup>th</sup> Coast Artillery (Anti-aircraft). After several re-designations, the unit departed the United States for Europe as the 204<sup>th</sup> Anti-Aircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons Battalion, thus landing in England on March 8, 1944.

The unit participated in the defense of England against German air assaults for just over three months prior to moving to the European continent June 19, 1944, there serving in the Normandy, Northern France, Rhineland, and Central European Campaigns. The 204<sup>th</sup> returned from overseas and was inactivated November 28, 1945, at Camp Shanks, New York.

The unit was allotted to the Mississippi Army National Guard and federally recognized April 30, 1951. The headquarters was at Vicksburg but was relocated to Laurel later that year. Redesignated the 204<sup>th</sup> Anti-aircraft Artillery Battalion, the unit was broken up May 1, 1959, and elements re-designated as other units in the Mississippi National Guard.

Following September 11, 2001, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 204<sup>th</sup> Air Defense Artillery Regiment has been an active participant in the Global War on Terror. In November 2001, the Battalion participated in Operation Grand Gulf by providing a security force for the Grand Gulf Nuclear Power Plant in Port Gibson, Mississippi. In 2003, the Battalion mobilized in support of Operation Noble Eagle in the air defense of the National Capital Region, the President's ranch in Crawford, Texas, and the G8 Summit. The Battalion deployed again in 2008, 2015 and most recently, in 2020 to the National Capital Region in support of Operation Noble Eagle and the European Deterrence Initiative. In 2011, the Battalion deployed to Iraq in support of Operation New Dawn, where it provided Counter-Rocket, Artillery and Mortar protection throughout the Iraq Joint Operations Area. In addition to its federal missions, the Battalion mobilized in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Isaac, and most recently, they supported the Jackson Water Crisis.

**1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 204<sup>th</sup> Air Defense Artillery Regiment  
Change of Command Ceremony**

**Welcoming Remarks .....MSG Joshua Barrett**

**Entrance of Official Party ..... 41<sup>st</sup> Army Band**

**Invocation .....Chaplain Josh Sherer**

**National Anthem .....Mrs. Krystal Burton**

**Presentation of Flowers ..... HHB Soldiers**

**Unit's Heritage .....MSG Joshua Barrett**

**Passing of Battalion Colors ..... BG Andrew Rendon**

**66 Troop Commander's Remarks .....BG Andrew Rendon**

**Outgoing Commander's Remarks.....LTC Marilyn M. Upton**

**Incoming Commander's Remarks .....LTC James W. White**

**Benediction.....Chaplain Brett Cole**

**Exit of Official Party ..... 41<sup>st</sup> Army Band**

**Closing Remarks ..... MSG Joshua Barrett**

**\*\*\*Ten-minute break before farewell ceremony\*\*\***

**\*\*\* Reception following farewell ceremony \*\*\***

## Lieutenant Colonel Marilyn M. Upton

### Outgoing Commander

Lieutenant Colonel Marilyn Upton was born and raised in DuBois, PA, and graduated from DuBois Senior High School in June 1985. She enlisted in the delayed entry program February 2, 1986 and began her military career on the yellow footprints at Parris Island, South Carolina June 2, 1986. After boot camp then school in 29 Palms, California, she served as a telephone and switchboard repairman in Communications Company, 2nd Force Service Support Group at Camp Lejeune, NC, where she was also promoted to Corporal. In 1990 she was transferred to Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, where she assisted with the recall, mobilization and deployment of over 12,000 Marines for Operations Desert Shield and Storm. She was promoted to Sergeant during that time and deployed to Iraq. Upon return from deployment, Sergeant Upton PCS'd to Okinawa, Japan, where she was assigned to the G1 of III Marine Expeditionary Force. She was promoted to Staff Sergeant during her six-year tour and participated in multiple joint services exercises to include Japan, Thailand and Korea. SSgt Upton returned to the United States in 2002 and did an inner-service transfer to the MSARNG as Sergeant Upton with the 31st Rear Operations Center. Within five months she obtained an AGR position in the G1 of Headquarters, State Area Command (STARC), where she was promoted to SSG. In 2006 SSG Upton was accepted for the State OCS program and commissioned as an Air Defense Officer, August 7, 2007. She began her Officer career as an Avenger Platoon Leader in Bravo Battery, 1-204th Air Defense Artillery and deployed to the National Capital Region. In December 2009, 2LT Upton was promoted to First Lieutenant and became the Executive Officer of Bravo Battery. In January 2011 1LT Upton was moved to Charlie Battery to assume command. She took Charlie Battery to Iraq in support of Operation New Dawn, and they successfully completed the Counter-Rocket Artillery and Mortar Mission. 1LT Upton was promoted to Captain in 2012 and assigned as the Operations Officer in the Joint Force Headquarters G1 until December 2014 when she was assigned as a TAC Officer for the State OCS program. In April 2016 she was provided the opportunity to be the S1 for the 185th Theater Aviation Brigade and promoted to Major. She was there for only a short time before being transferred to the 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team as their brigade S1 where she completed a rotation at the National Training Center and deployed in support of Operation Spartan Shield. In March 2020 MAJ Upton was transferred back to the 185th Expeditionary Combat Aviation Brigade as their brigade S1 until receiving the promotion opportunity to serve as the G1 for the 184th Expeditionary Sustainment Command. LTC Upton served in the 184th ESC from April 2021 through 31 May 2023 when she was transferred to 1-204th Air Defense Artillery to her present position as Battalion Commander.

LTC Upton received her Associates and Bachelor's degrees from Excelsior University, and her Masters in Leadership Studies from the University of Texas. LTC Upton's personal awards include the Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal (2 OLC), Army Commendation Medal (3 OLC), Army Achievement Medal, Navy & Marine Corps Commendation Medal and Navy & Marine Corps Achievement Medal.

LTC Upton currently serves full-time as the Deputy Human Resources Officer for the MSNG. She resides in Decatur, MS and attends Midway Baptist Church. She has two children: Joseph and Rebekah, and one granddaughter: Minerva Marie.

## Lieutenant Colonel James W. White

### Incoming Commander

Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) James W. White enlisted in the US Army during his senior year at Richton high school and departed for Basic Training in July of 1988. He completed Basic Combat Training and Advanced Individual Training at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, as a Cannon Crewmember (13B) and was immediately assigned to Fort Hood, Texas where he served as a Cannon Crewmember on an M110-A1 Self-Propelled Howitzer. In July 1990, LTC White was honorably discharged after serving his active-duty commitment and subsequently joined the Mississippi Army National Guard, where he was assigned to A BTRY 4-114<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery. In 1996, the unit transitioned to A BTRY, 1-204<sup>th</sup> Air Defense Artillery (ADA), and he transitioned to the Air and Missile Defense Community as a 14S on the Avenger Weapon System.

In 2003–2004, his unit deployed to the National Capital Region (NCR), where he served as a Site Noncommissioned Officer in Charge (NCOIC) in support of Operation Noble Eagle. LTC White completed the Mississippi Military Academy's Officer Candidate School and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in 1-204<sup>th</sup> ADA in 2006. From 2006 to 2008, he served as the Battalion Maintenance Control Officer. He was promoted to First Lieutenant in 2008 and selected as the Rear Detachment Commander during the NCR Integrated Air Defense System (IADS) mobilization from 2008 to 2009. In 2009, LTC White attended the ADA Transition Course at Fort Sill, Oklahoma and subsequently served as the ADA Assistant Tactical Operations Officer until he was promoted to CPT in 2011. That same year, he deployed to Iraq as the Liaison Officer (LNO) during the 1-204th ADA deployment, conducting Counter-Rocket, Artillery, and Mortar (C-RAM) operations in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Upon returning from deployment in 2011, he served as the Battalion ADA Tactical Operations Officer from 2012 to 2014. In 2014, LTC White assumed command of C Battery, 1-204th ADA, and led the unit through its mobilization to the NCR in support of Operation Noble Eagle from 2015 to 2016. During this deployment, he also served as the Battalion Assistant Operations Officer. Upon redeployment, he was selected as the Battalion Operations Officer and promoted to Major in 2018. In 2019, LTC White was selected to serve as the Battalion Executive Officer for the unit's mobilization to the NCR in support of Operation Noble Eagle 2021. Following this mission, he was selected as the Air, Space, and Missile Defense (ASMD) Branch Chief at Army National Guard Headquarters in Arlington, Virginia. He was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel on 11 November 2021. Upon his departure from the ARNG Headquarters on 31 March 2025, he was serving as the Interim Chief for the Multi-Domain Activities Division.

In addition to these assignments, LTC White held simultaneous positions while on Title 10 Active Duty from 2009 to 2011 and again from 2012 to 2014 as a Range Control Officer at Camp Shelby, Mississippi. He also served as the Air Defense Artillery Program Manager at the Army National Guard Headquarters from 2017 to 2019.

LTC White has received numerous awards during his military career with the highest being the award of the Bronze Star Medal for his performance as the BN Liaison Officer in support of Operation New Dawn (OND), Iraq, 2011.

LTC White earned a Bachelor of Science in Chemical Engineering from Mississippi State University in 1997. He is the owner of J&D Wastewater Solutions, LLC and currently resides in Meridian, Mississippi. His greatest enjoyment is spending time with his family.

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## ***1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 204<sup>th</sup> Air Defense Artillery Regiment***

### ***Farewell Ceremony***

Welcoming Remarks .....LTC (Ret) David S. Alexander

Entrance of Official Party ..... 41<sup>st</sup> Army Band

Welcome video..... 1-204th Soldiers

Invocation .....Chaplain Brett Cole

Honorable Guest Remark's.....MG John M. Rhodes

66th Troop Commander's Remarks .. BG Andrew Rendon

1-204th Commanders Remarks.....LTC James W. White

1-204th CSM Remarks.....CSM Jon M. Mason

Closing video..CPT Roman Ramirez and 1LT Thomas Hoey

Benediction .....Chaplain Brett Cole

Exit of Official Party ..... 41<sup>st</sup> Army Band

Closing Remarks .....LTC (Ret) David S. Alexander

\*\*\* Reception following farewell ceremony \*\*\*

# Major General John M. Rhodes

## The Assistant Adjutant General of Mississippi National Guard

Major General Rhodes currently serves as the Assistant Adjutant General-Army for the Mississippi National Guard. Major General Rhodes is a native of Corinth, MS. He and his wife Debbie currently reside and work in Alcorn County, MS. Maj. Gen. Rhodes has served in the military for 41 years. He is veteran of the 1991 Gulf War, Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2005-06 and 2009-10, and Operation Spartan Shield and Operation Allies Refuge in 2021-22.

Maj. Gen. Rhodes began his military career in November 1983 as a Private First Class in the U.S. Marine Corps Reserves. In 1985, he enrolled in the Army ROTC program at Mississippi State University where he was received his officer commission upon graduation in May 1987. As an infantry lieutenant, Maj. Gen. Rhodes was stationed in Germany with the 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division. In the 1991 Gulf War, he served as the mortar platoon leader for the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division. In September 1991, Maj. Gen. Rhodes transferred to the Mississippi Army National Guard and was assigned to the 155<sup>th</sup> Separate Armored Brigade. In 2002, Maj. Gen. Rhodes was temporarily assigned to the Pentagon serving as an Action Officer in the Army Operations Center in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. In 2004, he was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and assumed Command of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 155<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment serving as the Battalion Commander during Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2005-06. In 2008, he was promoted to Colonel and served as the Deputy Brigade Commander for the 155<sup>th</sup> Brigade Combat Team during their second deployment to Iraq in 2009-10. Upon the 155<sup>th</sup>'s redeployment in 2010, he assumed command of the 155<sup>th</sup> Armored Brigade Combat Team. In 2015, he was promoted to Brigadier General and assumed command of the 66<sup>th</sup> Troop Command and served as the Assistant Adjutant General for the Mississippi Army National Guard. In 2018, he transferred to the Virginia Army National Guard and served as the Deputy Commanding General of Operations for the 29<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. In 2020, he was promoted to Major General and assumed command of the 29<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division serving as the Commanding General during their deployment to the Arabian Gulf Region in support of Operation Spartan Shield and Operation Allies Refuge. In 2023, Maj Gen. Rhodes assumed the Deputy Commanding General - Army National Guard for the XVIII Airborne Corps. In 2025, he assumed his current position as the Assistant Adjutant General – Army for the Mississippi National Guard.

Maj. Gen. Rhodes is a graduate of the Infantry Officer Basic and Armor Officer Advance courses. He is a graduate of the Combined Arms and Services Staff School, the Command and General Staff College, and the U.S. Army War College.

His decorations and awards include the Distinguished Service Medal, Legion of Merit, Bronze Star Medal with 2 Oak Leaf Clusters, Meritorious Service Medal with 2 Oak Leaf Clusters, Iraq Campaign Medal with 3 Campaign Stars, Combat Infantry Badge with 1 Star, Parachutist Badge, Air Assault Badge, and other service and campaign ribbons.

# Brigadier General Andrew S. Rendon

## Commander of 66<sup>th</sup> Troop Command

Brig. Gen. Andrew S. Rendon serves as the Commanding General of the 66th Troop Command, Mississippi Army National Guard (MSARNG). He is responsible and accountable for the readiness, training, and development of all Soldiers within the formation and oversees the development and coordination of all policies, plans, and programs of the 66th Troop Command and all subordinate units.

Brig. Gen. Rendon has over 28 years of military service beginning nearly three decades ago after graduating from ROTC and branching as an Army Aviator. From 1998-2000, he served as a platoon leader and logistics officer for the 2-1 Aviation Regiment, Katterbach, Germany. In 2000, he was selected for company command, serving as commander, F Company, 1-212th Aviation Regiment, Fort Rucker, Alabama. Shifting over to the Mississippi National Guard, he served as the logistics officer for 1-185th Aviation Regiment and platoon leader, C Company, 1-114th Aviation Regiment in Tupelo. As a major, he served as the 185th Expeditionary Combat Aviation Brigade (ECAB) communications officer and assistant operations officer. In 2008, he became the 1-185th battalion executive officer and, from 2009 to 2011, the commander of C Company and the 1-114th Aviation Regiment. From 2011-2012, he served as an aircraft maintenance officer in A Company, 1108th Theater Aviation Sustainment Maintenance Group (TASMG) in Gulfport. From 2012-2014 he served as the aviation officer in the 155th Armored Brigade Combat Team in Tupelo. He was promoted to lieutenant colonel in 2014 and selected as one of four (Army-wide) commanders for A Company, 1108th TASMG. In 2016, he was selected to command the 1-185th Assault Helicopter Battalion. In 2019, he served as the plans officer for Joint Forces Headquarters, promoted to colonel, and accepted command of the 185th ECAB in Jackson. Following command, he served as the state aviation officer and chief of staff - Army. On 1 July 2024, he was appointed as Commander of the 66th Troop Command. Rendon has a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from the University of Mississippi, a Master of Public Policy and Administration from Mississippi State University, a Master of Strategic Studies from the U.S. Army War College, and a PhD from Mississippi State University. His military operational assignments include three deployments to Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo, and one deployment supporting Operation Enduring Freedom to Camp Marmal, Afghanistan. His military education and training is an extensive list that includes the Army Airborne Course, pilot qualification courses for TH-67 Creek, UH-1 Huey, UH-60 Blackhawk, and LUH72 Lakota Helicopters including Maintenance Test Pilot and Instructor Pilot courses, U.S. Army Command and General Staff Course, Senior Operations, and the U.S. Army War College. His awards and decorations include the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star Medal, six Meritorious Service Medals, and numerous other federal and state awards. He has also earned the Senior Army Aviator and Parachutist badges and the order of St. Michael.

Brig. Gen. Rendon lives in Starkville, with his wife Hilary Rendon. They are the proud parents of Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Kyler Rendon and Ms. Sarah Rendon. His civilian career is at MSU where he serves as the Executive Director for Veteran and Military Affairs. His memberships include the National Guard Association of Mississippi, the National Guard Association of the United States (Lifetime Member), Army Aviation Association of America, Lifetime Member of the U.S. Army War College Alumni Association, member of the America College Personnel.

## *The Army Song*

March along, sing our song, with the Army of the free.  
Count the brave, count the true, who have fought to victory.

We're the Army and proud of our name!

We're the Army and proudly proclaim:

First to fight for the right,

And to build the Nation's might,

And the Army goes rolling along.

Proud of all we have done,

Fighting till the battle's won,

And the Army goes rolling along.

Then it's hi! hi! hey!

The Army's on its way.

Count off the cadence loud and strong;

For where'er we go,

You will always know

That the Army goes rolling along.

## *The ADA March*

**In the dawn's early light.**

**Through the dark of the night,**

**The Air Defense Artillery**

**Stands first for liberty**

**We're Air Defense Artillery**

**Proud to keep our country free.**

**"First to Fire" both night and day.**

**We're ADA!**

