

WASHINGTON MILITARY DEPARTMENT

EVERGREEN

MAGAZINE
WINTER 16

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P. 10

Tribute to
Sgt. 1st Class
McClintock

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Earthquake Committee
objectives for 2016



In memory of
Sgt. 1st Class Matthew McClintock
who was killed in action Jan. 5, 2016 while serving with the 1st
Battalion, 19th Special Forces Group in Afghanistan.

Courtesy photo gofundme

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Cover photo:
Sgt. 1st Class Jason Kriess



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Soldier teaches dance lessons while deployed





THE ONLY CONSTANT IS **CHANGE**



Story by Staff Sgt. Virginia M. Owens



“The 81st was basically in a death match with two other brigades... By converting to strykers, that takes us entirely out of that force structure cut and the 81st Brigade is safe.”

Washington National Guard Prepares for

MAJOR TRANSFORMATION

The Washington Army National Guard is in the midst of a major transformation.

Among the biggest changes, the 81st Brigade is transitioning from an Armored Brigade Combat Team to a Stryker Brigade Combat Team (SBCT) and the 56th Information Operations Group is establishing a new brigade-sized organization. These top level moves will have far reaching and long-lasting impacts on the entire Washington Army National Guard and its members.

For the 81st Brigade, the largest brigade-sized element in the Washington National Guard, there are a number of positive takeaways from the transition: equipment that is more cost effective and versatile, reduced travel for hands-on training, and better promotion opportunities throughout the ranks. For guard members, this move protects positions and secures the force structure into the future.

“With sequestration and the defense budget cuts, the National Guard is probably going to lose a Heavy Brigade Combat Team out of our force structure,” said Maj. Gen. Bret Daugherty, the states adjutant general and commander of the Washington National Guard.

“The 81st was basically in a death match with two other brigades to see who was going to survive and who was going to be cut. By converting to strykers, that takes us entirely out of that force structure cut and the 81st Brigade is safe.”

There will be some necessary changes though. For most guard members, this will come in the form of relocating from one duty/drill location to another; for others, it may mean adding an additional Military Occupational Specialty (MOS).

“In this two year [period] we’re going to work with the soldiers to find the right fit, the right home, and the right opportunities for them,” said Col. Dan Dent, Washington Army National Guard director of operations. “It’s just going to take a little bit of time. It’s going to be tough to get kicked off, but once it gets going it’s going to streamline out.”

The 81st is beginning the transition process now. Soldiers are starting to prepare the current equipment, getting it ready to return to the Army. And leadership is working with the ranks to determine possible relocations. It’s expected that the entire cycle of equipment turn in, receipt of new equipment, training and relocation will take about two years.

“The National Guard is probably going to lose a Heavy Brigade Combat Team out of our force structure.”



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Cory Grogan

A NEW BRIGADE

The Washington National Guard also just added a Major Subordinate Command (MSC) to its structure—the 56th Theater Information Operations Group (TIOG)—a brigade-sized element made-up of units that used to be under the 96th Troop Command. (See realignment chart on next page.)

The new MSC is home to five specialty units and was strategically established to meet the needs of the small structured organization.

“The potential for short overseas deployments and future training opportunities is going to increase because they have a headquarters that is better postured to understand their specific and special needs,” said Maj. Tim Ozmer, force integration readiness officer.

Another commonality of these units is engagement in the Asia-Pacific region. A significant por-

The new MSC is home to five specialty units and was strategically established to meet the needs of the small structured organization.

tion of the Washington Army National Guard’s participation in this region comes from special forces, military intelligence and information operations

units. Bringing them together will make it easier to synchronize efforts in support of commanders in the Pacific.

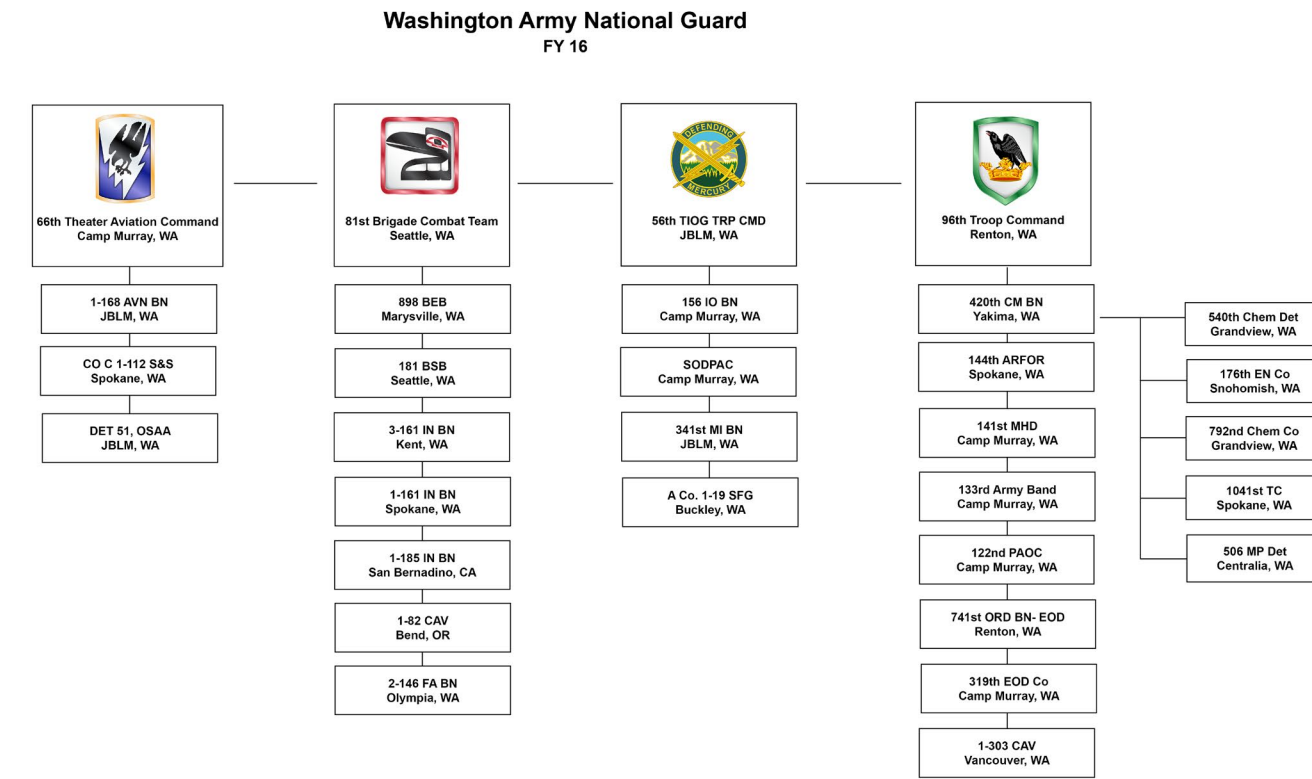
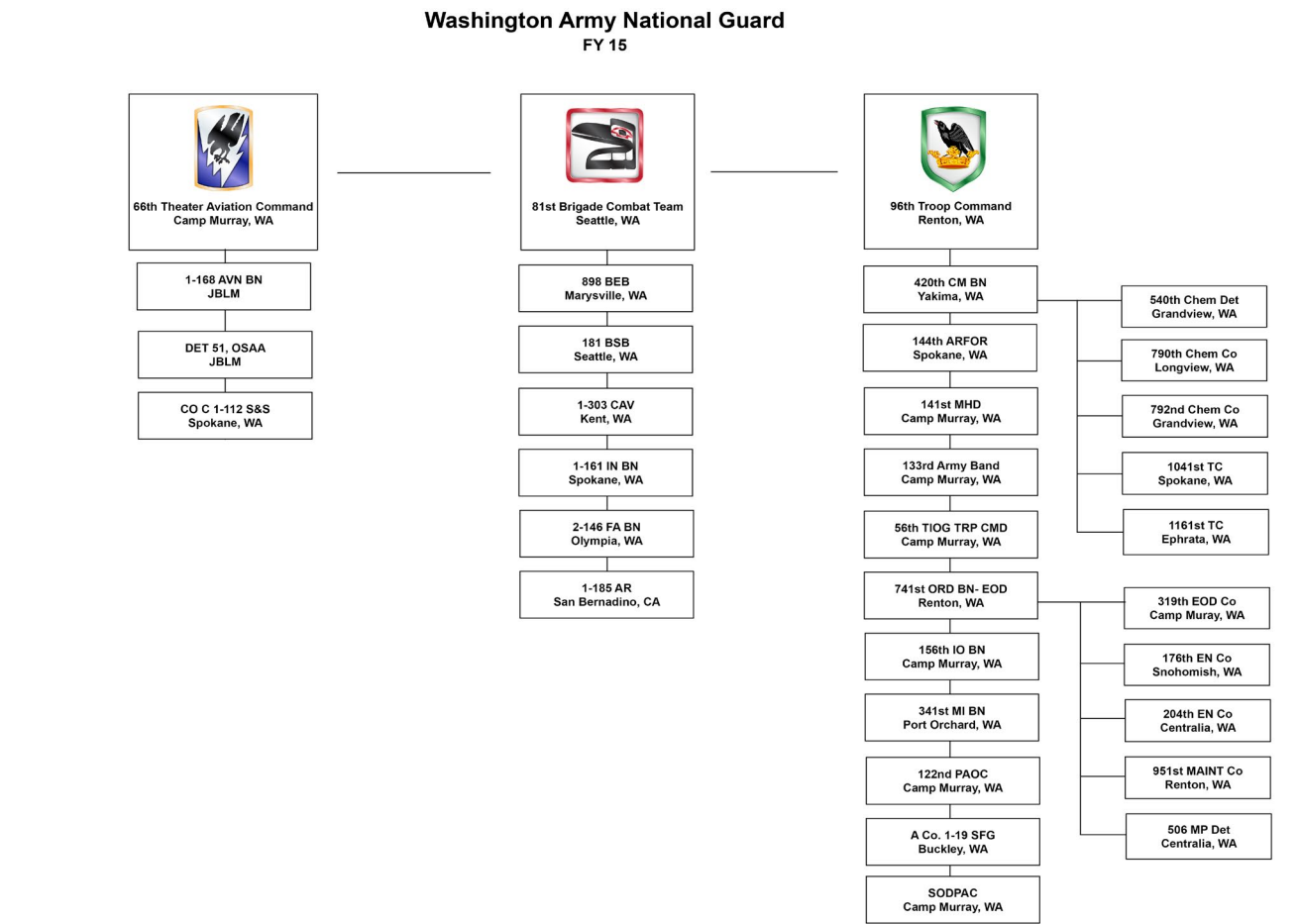
“Placing units with similar missions in the same MSC provides better opportunities to support one another,” said Col. Curt Simonson, 56th TIOG commander. “This benefits our soldiers, the Washington Army National Guard and the commanders we support in the Pacific Theater.”

The bottom line for most soldiers moving to the 56th TIOG is that there will be no significant impact on their lives. The most noticeable event will come in December when designated units will move into the Information Operations Readiness Center on Joint Base Lewis-McChord, a new 127,000 square foot facility designed to support the unique requirements of military intelligence operations.

Ultimately, this organization-wide transformation will enable continued service and opportunity for timely advancement and worthwhile training for every soldier in the Washington Army National Guard.

“Our troops are going to be able to look across the new formation and find opportunities,” Dent said. “It’s going to break up some logjams we’ve had...It’s going to give these opportunities for everyone we have to serve, they’re just maybe going to be in different places or different jobs or locations.”

For the latest information on the transformation, follow the Washington National Guard on [Facebook](#).





Construction fair helps prepare cadets for future

JOB SKILLS

BY STEVEN FRIEDERICH

More than 150 cadets from the Washington Youth Academy took part in a construction career day on Nov. 19 at the Washington State Fairgrounds, joining thousands of students from across the region.

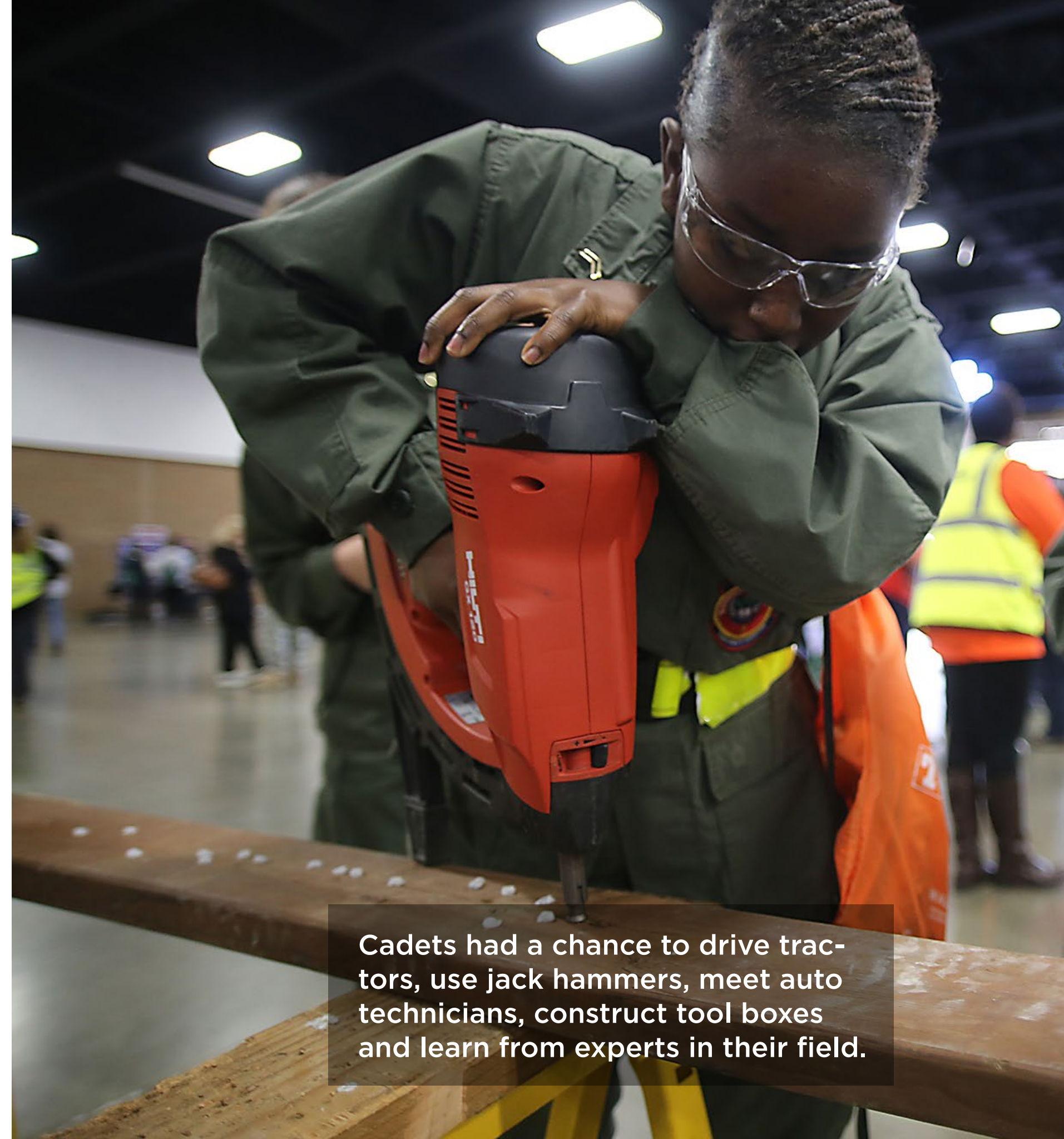
It was part of Pierce County Career Day, where students got a chance at discovering the technical skills required for occupations in the trades through interactive exhibits and information on internships, registered apprenticeships and training resources.

Industries from the military, construction, aerospace, engineering, manu-

facturing, utilities and transportation sector were represented. There were also technical jobs at the event – from baristas to dental hygienists.

Cadets had a chance to drive tractors, use jack hammers, meet auto technicians, construct tool boxes and learn from experts in their field.

Learning job skills is one the eight core components of the Washington Youth Academy. Commandant Chris Acuna says that cadets attend a career fair each cycle to help them understand what they might want to do when they leave the Academy.



Cadets had a chance to drive tractors, use jack hammers, meet auto technicians, construct tool boxes and learn from experts in their field.



DOGGY DECON

BY PUBLIC AFFAIRS
OFFICE STAFF

Photo by Spc. Matthew Sissel



It's the unmistakable odor after bathing your furry four-legged friend. If wet dog were a perfume, it would be aggressive and foxy with notes of musk and wet towel.

For military working dogs, who trudge through any and every environmental condition when on a mission, that post-bath aroma is the sweet smell of success. It signifies their work day is done, and it's time to get clean.

Washington National Guard soldiers who responded to the SR 530 Landslide in Oso last year did a lot of this dog bathing.

This winter, they used that real-world experience to assist an active duty veterinary unit with dog decontamination -or bath-training.

The 218th Medical Detachment



Active Duty soldiers from the 218th Medical Detachment (Veterinary Service Support) take direction from a chemical specialist with the 420th Chemical Company on proper decontamination practices during a training exercise Nov. 12, 2015. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Virginia M. Owens)

“This training will allow us to revise our animal decon procedures.”

(Veterinary Service Support), an Army veterinarian unit from Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., hosted the week-long exercise, which focused on decontamination of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) hazards.

To help facilitate the training they invited members of the Washington National Guard’s 420th Chemical Battalion, who served a critical role in decontaminating search and rescue workers and dogs as they left the site of the devastating SR 530 Landslide.

That knowledge and experience made them prime candidates to administer the training.

“This is our first exposure to how another military unit goes about larger-scale decon procedures,” said Capt. Kenneth Strawn of the

218th Med Det. VSS. “It was really helpful for us bringing in the subject matter experts.”

The joint training allowed National Guard chemical specialists to share insight on CBRN detection and proper decontamination techniques. Capt. Allen Hale, with the 420th Chemical Battalion, said his team learned invaluable

medical advice and practical dog-handling skills from the veterinarians.

“The information exchange from this training will allow us to revise our animal decon procedures and develop a kit of equipment to keep on hand for managing animals during decontamination,” Hale said.



Did you know?

- The U.S. military has used working dogs since the Revolutionary War
- There are about 2,300 active Military Working Dogs throughout the Department of Defense
- Their strongest asset? Their nose—which is 5-10 times stronger than a human’s
- On average, a MWD serves between 10 to 12 years, then can be adopted by their handler or a civilian family
- Each dog saves an estimated 150-200 lives over the course of their career
- Both male and female dogs are used as MWDs



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WASHINGTON ARMY NATIONAL GUARD



coming
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DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES?

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BATTLE COMMUNICATIONS

By 1st Lt. Hans Zeiger

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embers of the Army and Air National Guard from Washington state, California and Oregon joined in a test of battle communications and force integration over a few days in November. It was the first ever squadron-level joint live, virtual and constructive joint fires training event that tied digital simulations involving air support operations squadrons, an air support operations center and tactical operations centers into live field training.

Led by the Washington Air National Guard's 116th Air Support Operations Squadron and 111th Air Support Operations Squadron, Exercise Cascade Warrior 2015 drew participation from the California Army National Guard's 40th Infantry Division, the Oregon Army National Guard's 41st Brigade Combat Team and Washington's 81st Brigade Combat Team.

Cascade Warrior included core joint terminal attack controller (JTAC) teams operating in a close air support simulator alongside two brigade tactical operations centers (TOCs) at the 116th ASOS, a new prototype simulator system running at the 111th Air Support Operations Center with 40th Infantry fires staff integration - all connected digitally and via radios and satellite to 116th ASOS JTACs in the field.

The ASOC simulator is a "prototype for a system of record" for Air Combat Command, said Senior Master Sgt. Greg Kassa, simulations

The exercise was the culmination of several years of hard work and progressive steps that started very simply on a **bar napkin**.

operations chief for the 111th ASOC. A separate simulator at the 116th is a pre-cursor for a large-scale 270-degree dome simulator that is set to be built in 2016 as part of larger Washington Air National Guard Close Air Support Simulations Center of Excellence at Camp Murray.

The exercise was the culmination of several years of hard work and progressive steps that started very simply on a bar napkin, and it has grown in scope each year, said Lt. Col. Raed Gyekis, commander of the 116th ASOS. "It has now successfully expanded to include amazing out-of-state support by the entire Joint team from Washington, California, Oregon and agencies in the DoD."

The U.S. Air Force Research Laboratory provided support and equipment for the simulation. "[It was] the first time ever for an ASOC to be using AFRL equipment in a real-world exercise," said Dr. Leah Rowe, a senior research psychologist at AFRL, headquartered at Wright-Patterson

Air Force Base, Ohio.

"From a research perspective, allowing operators to use the system we designed in a real world scenario allows for better operational alignment for R&D," said Rowe. "It allows us to design training like we would use in the real world, to train like we go to war. We're able to harvest data from the system to make it more applicable to warfighting. Partnering with the Washington Air National Guard here has been a tremendous win for us. It's a win-win. They get training. I get research."

The AFRL simulator at the ASOC, with the help of several Washington Air National Guard communications experts and a lot of troubleshooting, vastly improved communications with participants throughout the simulation, said Gyekis. "This is a huge step forward, connecting our entire joint fires team in a Washington Air Guard exercise. Like we have in the past, we will continue to build on this year's success, as we link the

new CAS Dome Simulator with the improved ASOC Sim and an even more robust training presence from our partners at the 40th Infantry Division, 81st BCT and 41st BCT,” said Gyekis.

At both of the Tactical Operations Center tents set up in the 116th ASOS compound during the exercise, a team worked to integrate the ASOC system. “We try to mimic the machine at the ASOC,” said Staff Sgt. Justin Fajardo, of the 111th. “We want to make sure the players have the same setup as we do. All systems need to be talking with no errors on it. When things are not connecting, we put our brains together to keep the systems up.”

“We’re getting our handshake down,” said Sgt. Ben Wiley, of the 41st Infantry Brigade, out of Oregon, as he worked in the TOC alongside TACPs from the 116th ASOS. “The Air Force and Army are putting our ducks in a row for real-world situations.”

“We have to work together, support each other with assets and make ourselves more relevant for the fight,” added Capt. Dean Blachly, of the 41st Infantry. “We get to come up and see what [the airmen] do and share our perspective from

the ground.”

Soldiers and Airmen experienced different aspects of the exercise. “The goal is to flow our Guardsmen through each of the stations, allowing them to experience the field perspective, the simulation perspective, and the operations center perspective - all three” within the span of the same exercise, said Master Sgt. Nicholas Wise, operations superin-

“The end state is calling in airstrikes to put bombs on target.”

Lt. Col. Erik Eliel

tendent for the 116th ASOS.

In a wooded area several miles away at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, JTACs and radio operator/maintainer/drivers (ROMADs) relayed information from the ground back to Camp Murray.

“The end state is calling in airstrikes to put bombs on target,” said Lt. Col. Erik Eliel, director of operations for the 116th.

Army Guard joint fires observers coordinated with the JTACs and ROMADs on the ground.

“We’re doing a lot of really good integration, coordinating fires, getting used to talking to each other, just like we do downrange,” said Staff Sgt. Alex Wood, a joint fires observer with the 81st Brigade Combat Team.

“Two wealths of knowledge come together and it’s amazing,” added Sgt. Paul Martinek, another joint fires observer with the 81st. “It’s great to sit down and have face-to-face meetings so when we’re downrange we’ll know who we’re dealing with.”

With a successful test of the ASOC simulator by the 111th ASOS in the books, the AFRL will enter into a memorandum of agreement with the 111th to become the first user of the new system starting in March 2016, around the same time that the 116th ASOS plans to open its immersive dome simulator facility.

Furthermore, Air and Army Guard units will continue their work to improve live maneuver integration at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, said Gyekis.

Air Combat Command observers were on hand at Camp Murray and Joint Base Lewis-McChord for the exercise to “see what’s possible, how to do it and how this same training can be exported to other states,”

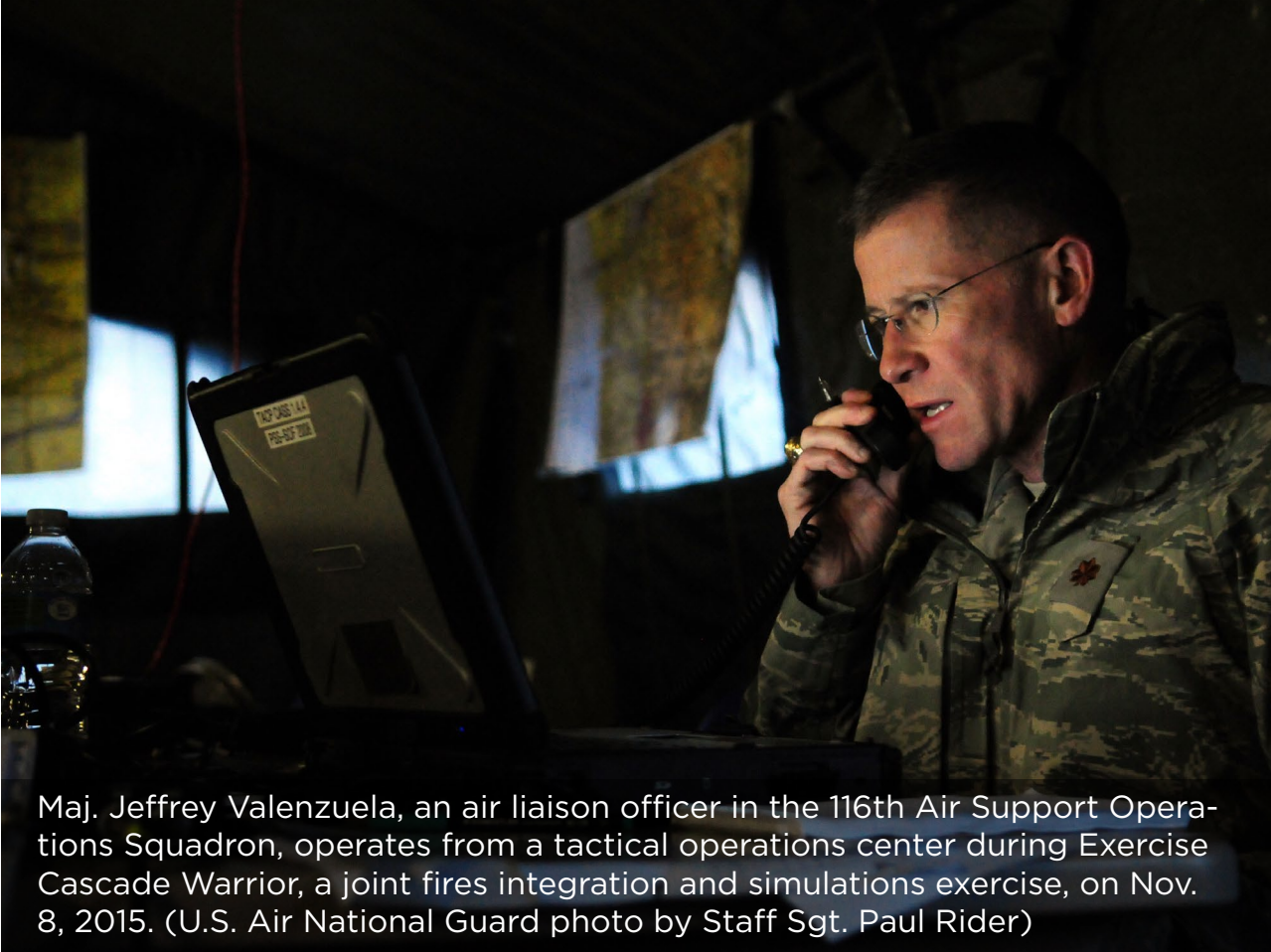
said Gyekis. “It’s a great opportunity for Washington and our West Coast Guard partners to lead the way with joint fires.”

Lt. Col. Craig Sandman, cell chief for the 40th Infantry Divisions Joint Air Ground Integration Cell, who brought his team from California to participate in the exercise, emphasized the opportunity for ongoing collaboration.

“Instead of separate efforts, it’s all one team effort,” said Sandman. “We will definitely be a part of this again next year.”



A tactical air control party from the 116th Air Support Operations Squadron confers during Exercise Cascade Warrior on Nov. 8 at Joint Base Lewis-McChord. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Paul Rider)



Maj. Jeffrey Valenzuela, an air liaison officer in the 116th Air Support Operations Squadron, operates from a tactical operations center during Exercise Cascade Warrior, a joint fires integration and simulations exercise, on Nov. 8, 2015. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Paul Rider)

“We’re getting our handshake down,” said Sgt. Ben Wiley, of the 41st Infantry Brigade. “The Air Force and Army are putting our ducks in a row for real-world situations.”



GET SCHOOLED

Former Congressman Norm Dicks and former U.S. Sen. Mary Landrieu visited the Washington Youth Academy in December. Dicks was a longtime congressman representing the Olympic Peninsula until his retirement in 2012 and was essential in getting the support needed to get the Academy started back in 2009. Landrieu represented Louisiana in the U.S. Senate and was a big ChalleNGe program supporter there. Both now work as policy experts for Van Ness Feldman, a law firm with offices in Washington, D.C. and Seattle and were interested in education best practices they could glean from the Washington Youth Academy. They had a great time asking questions to cadets and checking out the facility.



Photos by Steven Friederich

FLOOD WATCH

The state Emergency Operations Center was activated to Phase III twice this fall in response to flooding and wind events. The Washington National Guard was put on notice, activating a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter in November to provide situational awareness of flooding in Snohomish County and King County areas. In December, a major wind storm hit the Spokane area, knocking out power to hundreds of thousands of homes. This happened at the same time flooding and wind events were happening elsewhere in the state, prompting the governor to declare a disaster.



Photos by Staff Sgt. Virginia M. Owens



CERTIFIED

BY STEVEN FRIEDERICH

Community Emergency Response Training educates individuals about disaster preparedness for hazards that may impact their area and trains them in basic disaster response skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization and disaster medical operations.

The scene looks like something out of a movie set. Crushed rock and asphalt lie criss-crossed as if a freeway overpass had collapsed. There's a destroyed car a few feet away and plastic limbs from mannequins on the ground.

Firefighters in Kitsap County use the property as a training ground. Located adjacent to the Washington Youth Academy's campus, the training center also doubled as a perfect place to allow teen cadets to gain some realistic experience on what to do when facing a devastating earthquake.

For the second class in a row, each of the Academy's 152 cadets received Community Emergency

Response Team (CERT) training. A previous class only saw a few dozen cadets receive the training.

But Youth Academy Executive Director Larry Pierce directed staff to come up with a way so each of the cadets could get the training.

"This is important because it not just helps the Academy, but each of these cadets will go back home and bring this knowledge with them to their home communities," Pierce said, noting that the cadets helm from each corner of the state.

The month-long training consisted of classes and lessons from everything on how to build an emergency kit to how to assess a mass causality situation. The classes

come directly from material provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and dedicated community volunteers from established CERT programs in Pierce and Kitsap counties, who spent several days with the cadets. [CERT](#) educates individuals about disaster preparedness for hazards that may impact their area and trains them in basic disaster response skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization and disaster medical operations.

On the final day of training in November, Master Sgt. Darwin Wiggins, cadre team leader, taught a FEMA-backed lesson to cadets on what terrorism was and the importance of telling authorities if the

The Mission

of the Washington Youth Academy is to provide a highly disciplined, safe, and professional learning environment that empowers at-risk youth to improve their educational levels and employment potential and become responsible and productive citizens of the State of Washington.



Photo by Steven Friederich



Photo by Steven Friederich

cadets see anything suspicious. The lessons were especially timely given the terrorist attacks in San Bernardino, Calif. and in Paris.

“We need people like you to take responsibility of their well-being in the face of an emergency,” Wiggins told the cadets.

“It really made me think that this was something to take seriously,” said cadet Miriam Rojas of Yakima, who is 16. She was just 5 years old

“It really made me think that this was something to take seriously,” said cadet Miriam Rojas.

when the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001 occurred.

Cadet Amanda Torres, 17, also of Yakima, noted that she hadn’t ever thought of emergency kits before the CERT training. Now, non-perishable items like canned goods and bottled water are something she actually thinks about.

“Now, I know how to use a fire extinguisher,” she added. “I never had to use one before, but it’s pretty easy. There were some pretty important lessons we learned here that we can take with us after graduation.”

Patrick Cruz, the programs officer

with the Washington Youth Academy, noted that CERT training fits the goals outlined by Maj. Gen. Bret D. Daugherty, the adjutant general in charge of the Washington Military Department, including the Youth Academy.

“This meets TAG’s goals of emergency preparedness,” Cruz said. “We’re getting our young people to be leaders in their community. They might not use this every day, but if we get a major earthquake, we think

they’ll be able to figure out what to do, to be there to help.”

At the mock earthquake set, about a dozen cadets pretend to be injured as another dozen come in to check out the scene and assess the injuries.

Mana Gach of Kent is one of those pretending to be injured in the scenario, stretching her arms out on the pavement and trying her best to act like she’s unconscious.

Nearby, Torres is lying upside down.

As cadets move forward, CERT instructor Chuck Finkbiner reminds

them, “Head tilt. Chin lift. You’re looking for movement in the chest or gut. Check twice. You have 30 seconds to determine the health of a person.”

“But she’s my friend,” a cadet insists, wanting to spend extra time to make sure Gach is going to be OK.

“This is about a rapid assessment so that you can get your friends the real help they need,” Finkbiner explains. “You need to get to your squad leader so you can make a plan on how to best help everyone.”

A similar scenario also played out inside one of the classrooms at the academy, where the lights flickered on and off and chairs and tables sprawled out over potentially injured citizens. Cadets entered the room in teams of two or three, shouting, “We’re with CERT. If you can hear my voice, shout out to me so I can find you.”

Nearby, other cadets were in a gym, learning how to properly lift an injured person using planks of wood and other material. And cadets were also given scenarios on how to handle specific injuries, i.e., a 25-year-old woman, eyes dilated, staring into space with no obvious injury and a blanch test showing normal readings. Such a victim would likely take



As part of CERT training, one group of cadets pretend to be injured inside a classroom following a mock earthquake, another group enters the room to gain situational awareness of the room and identify any potential injuries. (Photo by Steven Friederich)

a backseat to a woman with severe wounds.

At graduation on Dec. 19, state Sen. Ann Rivers cited the CERT training as part of her commencement speech as being particularly invaluable for the entire state.

“CERT training is something you’ll be able to use in your own family, your own community and all over

the state,” Rivers told the cadets and their families. “You can take it with you and teach others and that’s really exciting. You can hold your head high because you know your journey has just begun.”

Find a nearby CERT program to participate in by using FEMA’s search feature at citizencorps.fema.gov.

DANCING QUEEN



Story by Sgt. Ian Kummer



Soldier
dances
through
deployment
one step at
a time

According to O'Malley, all one really needs to ballroom dance is an empty motor pool bay and a nice shirt.

S

pc. Megan O'Malley, a small-framed woman with an unobtrusive demeanor, might not immediately stand out from a crowd. Once she warms up to a new person, it does not take long to see a no-nonsense attitude for her work and a dry sense of humor.

After the day's tasks are done, just about any conversation with her will lead to one topic. She loves ballroom dancing.

O'Malley is a Washington Army National Guard automated logistics specialist deployed with Company E, 1st Battalion, 168th Aviation Regiment, 40th Combat Aviation Brigade, in Camp Buehring, Kuwait. Buehring is a military compound of faded wood and damp concrete jutting from the mud of the winter desert – not the first place that comes to mind when the word “ballroom” is mentioned. But according to O'Malley, all one really needs to ballroom dance is an empty motor pool bay and a nice shirt.

O'Malley grew up on a farm in Port Angeles, Washington. O'Malley and her older brother were first introduced to dancing in their living room by their mother, who used to be a professional dance roller-skater.



O'Malley dances with instructor Joseph Platt from his Vancouver, Wash. home in 2014.

“With dancing, you have to love it, if you don’t love it, you won’t really get good at it.”

Spc. Megan O’Malley



That May, O’Malley enlisted in the Washington National Guard and started basic training on her 30th birthday.



“We started dancing as a family, and branched out with our own interests as individuals,” O’Malley said.

Shortly after turning 16, O’Malley found a new energy in her dancing interests when she saw the 1998 film *Dance with Me*. She fell in love with ballroom dancing.

“As a teenager, I had two passions, dancing and horses,” O’Malley said. “In my twenties, every weekend I would drive two hours to meet up with friends and ride all day, then shower and change to go dancing.”

In January 2012, O’Malley faced the darkest period of her life, losing her job and home in the same month. That May, O’Malley enlisted in the Washington National Guard and started basic training on her 30th birthday.

“My ex told me I wouldn’t even make it through boot camp, yet there I was,” O’Malley said.

After completing her training, O’Malley started

drilling at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington. She had no problem fitting in with her fellow Soldiers and becoming a valuable team member.

“She really enjoys helping people,” said Pfc. Logan Easton, a generator mechanic and Vancouver, Washington, resident in the company. “She acts like an NCO [noncommissioned officer].”

In October of 2015, O’Malley deployed with the 40th CAB to Camp Buehring, Kuwait. Outside of work, O’Malley has turned her eye back to dancing. With the support of her company leaders and the local Family Morale, Welfare and Readiness center, she’s started a dancing class for the other Soldiers. O’Malley looks forward to growing both as a Soldier and as a dancer during her unit’s tour in Kuwait.

“With dancing, you have to love it, if you don’t love it, you won’t really get good at it,” O’Malley said.

In October of 2015, O’Malley deployed with the 40th CAB to Camp Buehring, Kuwait.

Around the Department

Members of the Army and Air National Guard faced off in a seasonably sloppy flag football championship game on the Camp Murray Parade Field Dec. 18. With the slippery playing surface and temperatures just above freezing, turnovers proved to be the difference.

Army	35
Air	21



Photos by Staff Sgt. Virginia M. Owens



Around the Department

Dozens of colleagues from the Emergency Management community came together in the state Emergency Operations Center Dec. 18 to celebrate the retirement of Dave Hall, the state EMD's Emergency Planning Program Coordinator.

Hall, a U.S. Army veteran, leaves behind a flag that once flew over Baghdad and is framed on the wall at the entrance of the Washington Emergency Management office.



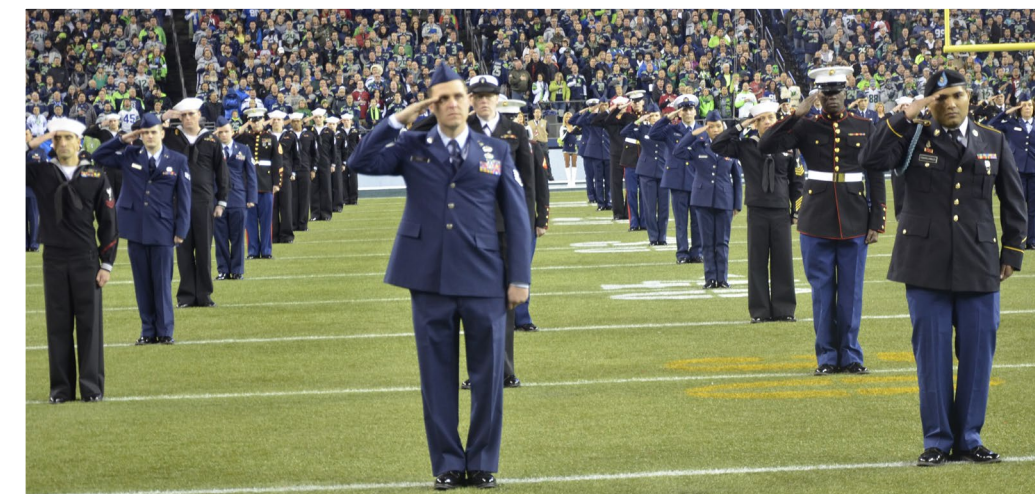
Photos by Steven Friederich



Around the Department

Dozens of competitors from across the state took to the mat for the 2016 Washington Army and Air National Guard Combatives Tournament at Camp Murray, Wash., Jan. 9-10, 2016.

Photos by Spc. Taylor Whitaker



Video Feature

On Sunday, Nov. 15, 2015 the Seattle Seahawks held their Salute to Service game in recognition of service members past and present. The Washington National Guard's 66th Theater Aviation Command conducted a flyover with a CH-47 Chinook and a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter, one carrying the U.S. flag and the other carrying the French flag in a showing of solidarity with the country in the aftermath of a terrorist attack on Paris.

Photos by Pfc. Tyler Main

LEADING THE WAY

Washington EMD director boosts the national conversation on earthquake preparedness

Robert Ezelle

Washington EMD Director

Washington Emergency Management Director Robert Ezelle says he's hoping to elevate what has been a series of regional conversations about earthquake preparedness into a cohesive national one in 2016. Ezelle was recently appointed as chairman of an earthquake subcommittee of the National Emergency Management Association.

Ezelle notes that NEMA, which has a core membership of state directors of emergency management and also includes federal and private sector interests, has long had subcommittees taking a special look at hurricanes and other kinds of natural disasters to improve our nation's disaster resilience.

"This is really to elevate the conversation about earthquake hazards, some of our nation's most catastrophic events, to the same

level as those other natural disasters," Ezelle said.

Already, the group has an agenda of issues it wants to look at in 2016.

John Schelling, the Earthquake/Tsunami/Volcano Programs Manager for the state Emergency Management Division, says this is a big step in the right direction for a national focus on earthquake preparedness.

Schelling explains, "The concept of NEHRP is taking research from the U.S. Geological Survey, National Science Foundation, the National Institute of Standards and Technology, both theoretical and applied, and then working through FEMA to implement this through, to improve stronger building codes, education and outreach, and, ultimately, community resilience to earthquake disasters. Without the authoriza-

tion of the National Earthquake Hazard Reduction Program, for instance, the NEHRP agency budgets can get siphoned off into other things. Here we have this great research being done, but not the ability to apply it. It keeps getting short shrift. And that's where NEMA can play a critical role and how Robert can be in a place to help."

"We'll be in a position to shine a spotlight on things that can work and move forward with those," Ezelle said.

"We'll be in a position to shine a spotlight on things that can work and move forward with those," Ezelle said.

The appointment is timely as Washington state continues to develop a state Earthquake Response Plan which it continues to test, refine and improve. A big national level earthquake exercise is slated for June called Cascadia Rising, which focuses on the potential for a 9.0 earthquake and an accompanying tsunami to hit Washington state.

"The majority of earthquake preparedness and dialogue has been taking place among the consortium of emergency managers having interstate and regional dialogues preparing for events like Cascadia

Rising," Ezelle said.

Besides the West Coast states, another heavily seismic area of concern is along the New Madrid seismic area in the central U.S., but Ezelle points out that there's the potential for earthquake hazards all over the country. A 5.8 earthquake rattled Washington, D.C. back in 2011, the strongest East Coast tremor in 67 years and the first time in a century that particular fault line had ruptured that strongly.

Schelling says he hopes earthquakes remain on the brain of national officials as a result.

"NEMA can now play a more crucial role keeping a broader spectrum of natural disasters at the forefront of Congress," Schelling said.

"This committee has been in the works for a while," Ezelle said. "I'm really excited to see it get going in 2016."



2016 Earthquake Committee Agenda

1. Addressing the issue of a national earthquake program on the federal level and outlining what it would look like.
2. Supporting reauthorization of the National Earthquake Hazard Reduction Program.
3. Working with states that have current projects that contribute to the national discussion on earthquakes in order to capture and disseminate best practices.
4. Supporting further study and implementation of early earthquake warning – education and monitoring.

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