



DMAVA HIGHLIGHTS

APRIL 1, 2016



State military honors awarded at Deptford Mall ceremony

Story by Tech. Sgt. Matt Hecht, New Jersey National Guard Public Affairs



Brig. Gen. Michael Cuniff, left, The Adjutant General, New Jersey National Guard, shakes Gerald L. Hastings hand after awarding him the New Jersey Distinguished Service Medal during a state medal ceremony March 30, 2016, at the Deptford Mall. Click on this photo to visit our Flickr site for more photos from the ceremony. (NJDMAVA photo by Kryn Westhoven/Released)

Veteran Soldiers, Airmen, and Seamen were presented with state military awards during a ceremony at the Deptford Mall March 30.

The recipients included two World War II veterans, three from the Vietnam era, and six from Operations Desert Storm, Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom.

The ceremony marked the start of a three-day visit of the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Veterans Outreach kiosk at the mall, where veterans and their family members can learn more about benefits and entitlements that they may be eligible to receive.

"This is the best part of my job," said Brig. Gen. Michael L. Cuniff, The Adjutant General of New Jersey. "I get to come up here and represent the 8,600 Soldiers and Airmen of the New Jersey National Guard, and not only that, but represent about 413,000 veterans who call New Jersey home."

Family members, friends and service

"I'm excited and honored to be here. These are people who I look up to."

**Brig. Gen. Michael L. Cuniff
The Adjutant General of New Jersey**

members stood by as leadership from the New Jersey Government, NJDMAVA and the New Jersey National Guard presented awards and thanked the veterans.

"I'm excited and honored to be here," said Cuniff, whose father was a veteran. "These are people who I look up to."

The awardees all received the New Jersey Distinguished Service Medal, New

Jersey's highest military award as well as campaign specific ribbons. Since 1988, more than 30,000 medals have been awarded to combat veterans from New Jersey.

"Thank you, from a grateful nation, who understands the sacrifice you have placed for our country, but more importantly, to some extent, to your families," said Rep. Donald Norcross, from the 1st District of New Jersey.

"You keep us safe each and every day," continued Norcross. "We are here to say thank you."

Cover: In memory

Brig. Gen. Michael Cuniff, left, The Adjutant General of New Jersey, presents the New Jersey Distinguished Service Medal to Anne Bertino, daughter of John B. Bertino, a World War II Marine Corps veteran. Bertino brought a photo and her father's service cap to the state medal ceremony March 30, 2016, at the Deptford Mall. (NJDMAVA photo by Kryn Westhoven/Released)

NGB top NCO visits New Jersey Guardsmen

Story and photo by Tech. Sgt. Armando Vasquez, 108th Wing Public Affairs Office

The Senior Enlisted Advisor of the National Guard Bureau, Chief Master Sgt. Mitchell O. Brush, paid a visit to New Jersey National Guardsmen at the Joint Training and Training Development Center at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., March 20, 2016.

Brush advises the Chief, National Guard Bureau on all enlisted matters affecting training, effective utilization, the health of the force, and professional development for enlisted Airmen.

During his visit to JT2DC, Brush reminded the more than 100 Airmen and Soldiers of the important role they play in the total force mission.

"I need you to tell the Army and Air Guard story to your communities," said Brush. "You do great work for the National Guard because you provide a well-trained and ready combat force to the overall mission of the nation."

In addition, Brush reminded all in attendance the great buy the National Guard provides in today's resource reality. "If you had a proven commodity that was capable of doing the job and you could get it at 25 or 30 cents on the dollar or a dollar on the dollar in a constrained budget environment, which would you take?" asked Brush.

Brush also reminded the Guardsmen to take care of themselves and continue to develop the future leaders of the National Guard.



Chief Master Sgt. Mitchell O. Brush, the Senior Enlisted Advisor of the National Guard Bureau, spoke to more than 100 Airmen and Soldiers of the New Jersey National Guard at the Joint Training and Training Development Center in Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey, March 20, 2016. As the top noncommissioned officer of NGB, Brush advised the Chief, National Guard Bureau on all enlisted matters affecting training, effective utilization, the health of the force, and professional development for the National Guard. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Armando Vasquez/Released)

"My replacement is sitting in this room," said Brush. "So if you are a first-line supervisor, call your subordinates and ask them three things, 'how are you, how are your finances, and how is your family doing?'"

He emphasized that these questions will let the Guardsmen know that they are

part of the National Guard family.

After the town hall meeting, Brush coined Senior Airmen Tyler Martin, 108th Security Forces Squadron, and Edwin Rodriguez, Jr., 108th Logistic Readiness Squadron, for their outstanding military service with the 108th Wing.



Construction of the \$34 million Regional Training Institute at the National Guard Training Center in Sea Girt continues to move forward as windows are now in allowing for more interior work. The

86,000 square foot educational complex will allow the 254th Training Regiment to accommodate more students. (NJDMVA photo by Kryn Westhoven/Released)

Eason receives top honor guard award

Story and photo by Master Sgt. Mark C. Olsen, 108th Wing Public Affairs

And the recipient of the 87th Air Base Wing Honor Guard Member of the Year for January 2015 to December 2015 award goes to...

Staff Sgt. Brianna M. Eason.

As a traditional Guardsman, Eason is an orderly room clerk with the New Jersey Air National Guard's 108th Wing Maintenance Operations Flight.

But during the week, Eason serves as the Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge of training for the 87th ABW Honor Guard.

The award is all the more impressive because the 87th Honor Guard is the Air Force's busiest honor guard rendering military funeral honors to veterans residing in Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania.

"We have been AMCs' (Air Mobility Command's) honor guard of the year for 2011, 2012 and 2013," said Eason.

The honor guard is comprised of approximately 30 Airmen who are rotated on a quarterly basis. This period is referred to as a rotation. Members come from all the Air Force units - active duty, Guard and Reserve - at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst.

This means that during the year there are 120 to 140 members who are eligible to be nominated and go before the awards board. Eason was the third quarter award winner, so she qualified for the annual board.

"Everyone I went up against were all worthy nominees, so it was humbling," said Eason.

Eason joined the honor guard in January 2012. Once Eason completed her initial training, her rotation was extended and she was offered a position in September 2012 as an instructor to keep up the continuity of training.

"Subject matter experts are what I strive for as a trainer - where everyone understands what their responsibility is and why it is that way," said Eason.

Because of her success as an instructor, her three-year tour has been extended a year.

"My biggest thing is trying to train a replacement," said Eason. "It's basically knowing the manual, having the experience and making sure that during each rotation continuity isn't lost."

That experience covers a lot of ground.



Staff Sgt. Brianna M. Eason poses with the Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst Honor Guardsman of the Quarter, July – September 2015 trophy March 14, 2016. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Mark C. Olsen/Released)

The Honor Guard is divided into five elements, training flight, funeral detail, firing party, colors and other details.

The training flight runs the ten-day basic technical training course for all newly assigned members to the Base Honor Guard.

"As a trainer, the most difficult task is making sure every member feels very comfortable, as everyone learns differently," said Eason. "So I make sure that that when people go out there, they've got plenty of training and they are certified."

That initial training covers presenting colors, flag folding, marching, formations, commands and rifle handling. This is done by repetition creating muscle memory making the movements second nature.

"By the end of training, 99.9 percent of the individuals want to be extended," said Eason. "It reminds people why they joined the Air Force."

The funeral detail literally performs the heavy lift portion of the honor guard. The body bearers carry the casket, which generally weighs between 450 to 600 pounds, to the gravesite while keeping the casket perfectly level and without showing any visible sign of strain.

"We have to have superb military bearing, sharp crisp and motionless, that is part of our charge," said Eason.

Once they reach the grave-site, they continue by holding the flag tight and level while at rigid attention until the service is complete.

The firing party, which is comprised of either a three or seven-person team, performs the firing of three volleys during the funeral service.

The color guard flight presents the colors during Air Force specific events and with other services' honor guards for joint service missions.

"Some events are in front of thousands of people, sometimes on national television," said Eason. "You are representing so much more than just yourself, your base, your branch; it's the military as a whole."

Other details include POW/MIA table ceremony, retirement ceremonies, dignitary arrivals, parades, and saber and rifle cordons.

"It gives us an opportunity each every time we put that uniform on to let people know what we're about," said Eason.

Funerals though are the biggest part of what the honor guard does.

"We cover 25-30 funerals a week, more than 120 a month, annually about 1,700," said Eason.

And when it comes to funerals, there are no do overs.

"I train hard because this may be the first or the last image they have of the Air Force. We make sure it's done right."

Initially, the toughest part of funeral service for an honor guard member is presenting the flag to the family and reciting the next-of-kin speech.

"A lot of people say I could never do honor guard because I couldn't get through that speech, but you'd be surprised what you can accomplish once you apply yourself and realize it's not about you, it's about what you are doing for this family."

"For me every time I say 'for a loved one's honorable and faithful service' I always remember that this was somebody's father or child, mother, son, daughter, grandchild, or cousin."

"As members of the honor guard, it's way bigger than you," said Eason. "There is no other job like it."

Menlo chooses Employee of the Year



New Jersey Veterans Memorial Home at Menlo Park Employee of the Year Zana Smajlaj, third from right, poses with, left-to-right, CEO Joseph Brandspiegel, Resident Council President William O'Brien, Kerry Keane and Deputy Adjutant General Brig. Gen. Steven Ferrari during an awards ceremony held at the Home March 3, 2016. (Courtesy photo)

VA relocates out-patient facility

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs has moved its Burlington County out-patient clinic to a larger space off of Route 73 in Evesham, N.J. The nearly 10,000 square foot facility at 3000 Lincoln Drive E replaced the facility located on Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst and allows the VA to offer optometry, audiology and radiology services. The clinic hours remain the same 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday to Friday. Veterans can call 844-441-5499 to make a health care appointment. (NJDMAVA photo by Kryn Westhoven / Released)



WINGS INCREASE TEMPO



Airmen from the 177th Fighter Wing's Maintenance Squadron conduct night flight line operations at the Atlantic City Air National Guard Base, N.J., during exercise Dastardly Devil 16-1. The exercise is designed to test the New Jersey Air National Guard wing's operational readiness in a deployed environment. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Andrew Merlock/Released)



Airman 1st Class Dannielle Garcia, left, Readiness and Emergency Management Flight, 108th Wing, New Jersey Air National Guard, checks to see if an Airman has properly donned his M50 joint service general purpose masks and mission-oriented protective posture gear during the Wing's Expeditionary Skills Rodeo at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., March 20, 2016. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Mark C. Olsen/Released)

New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs

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Veterans Services (DVS)

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