



the BAYONET

The Official Magazine of the Maine National Guard

Vol 5 // Issue 2

MAINE TRAINS WITH MONTENEGRIN PARTNERS

MAINE TEAMS WIN NATIONAL AWARDS

MEDICS MERGE AT SYMPOSIUM

POUNDING THE PAVEMENT GUARDSMEN AT THE MARATHON

MAINE IAC IN THE RING

BEST WARRIOR COMPETITION

YOUR OPINION: BLENDED RETIREMENT SYSTEM



The Maine National Guard Public Affairs Office is pleased to present the June 2017 edition of the Bayonet Magazine.

The Bayonet is the official magazine of the Maine National Guard and is made possible by Soldier and Airmen provided content and feedback.

This edition highlights some of the recent accomplishments and updates from the Maine National Guard, including a historical look at the state partnership program with Montenegro, highlights from the Outstanding Airman and Best Warrior Awards, a look at one servicemember who has taken to the ring, recognitions and much, much more!

If you enjoy the content that is provided in the Bayonet and would like to see more of it, please consider "liking" the Maine National Guard on Facebook where you can keep up to date on Maine National Guard current events!

We are also interested in sharing your story ideas and imagery. Please send them in to us for consideration for future editions of the Bayonet.

Thank you for your continued interest and unwavering support to your National Guard.

Always Ready! Always There!

-Public Affairs Officer

Maj. Norman Stickney



the BAYONET

The Adjutant General BRIG. GEN. DOUGLAS FARNHAM

Assistant Adjutant General - Air BRIG. GEN. SCOTT YOUNG

Assistant Adjutant General - Army BRIG. GEN. HUGH CORBETT

Public Affairs Officers MAJ. NORMAN STICKNEY (ARMY)
MAJ. DEVIN ROBINSON (AIR)

Managing Editor STAFF SGT. ANGELA PARADY

Journalists STAFF SGT. ANGELA PARADY
TECH. SGT. KATI PELLETIER
SPC. JAROD DYE
SPC. PATRIK ORCUTT
STAFF SGT. MICHELLE HOPKINS

Contributors CHAPLAIN (COL.) ANDY GIBSON
1ST LT. JONATHAN BRATTEN

Layout and Design STAFF SGT. ANGELA PARADY

Questions and feedback:

Public Affairs Office, Building 8, Camp Keyes, Augusta, ME 04333

Phone: (207) 430-5759

Email: ng.me.mearng.list.public-affairs@mail.mil

Online: www.me.ngb.army.mil



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A MESSAGE FROM THE STATE COMMAND SERGEANT MAJOR



My vision for the Maine National Guard Non-Commissioned Officer Corps is to continue to train our Soldiers for domestic emergency and combat operations. Our Country is still at war with people trying to hurt us. Our NCOs will serve as the standard bearers for the Army by being the most professional, proficient and resilient leaders. We will achieve this through the three Lines of Effort put out by the Director of the ARNG.

1.) Ready Forces- NCOs will ensure our Soldiers are mentally and physically fit. We need to take care of our Soldiers both on and off duty to keep their heads in the game. We will put in extra effort to leave no Soldier behind. NCOs are the primary trainers of our force and are responsible for the health and welfare of our Soldiers. That being said, everyone needs to pass their APFT and meet the Army's height and weight standards. We also need to continue to provide safe, realistic, dynamic, and fun training.

2.) Leadership Development- Soldiers are entitled to outstanding leadership, we will provide that leadership. NCOs will make time to complete their proper NCOES and ensure the same for their Soldiers. It's not easy being a leader, if it was everyone would be one. Leaders lead by respect not fear. NCOs must provide

purpose, direction and motivation to accomplish all of our missions.

3.) Resilient Force- NCOs will always keep their Soldiers informed. Presence and knowledge about our Soldiers prevents the onset of behaviors detrimental to the MEARNG. We need to take care of our troops, educating our Soldiers on SHARP, Suicide prevention, the hazards of DUIs and by being aware of our Soldiers personal lives. Soldiers 18-24 years old are going through the hardest times of their lives, making choices about their families, homes, careers, and tackling many other life changing events. We need to be their solid rock, to mentor and guide them in the right direction by instilling the Army values

The MEARNG NCO Corps has stepped up to improve the State's readiness with at least five new initiatives this year, including:

1.) Safe Ride Home- In order to assist in keeping our Soldiers safe we partnered with the Air Guard. Last year the MEARNG had 18 Soldiers convicted of Driving Under the Influence and this year we have already had over a dozen. This is very dangerous and unacceptable; luckily no one has been killed or killed anyone else by their actions. The Safe Ride Home program provides any Soldier a safe ride home if they find themselves in an uncomfortable situation or if their designated driver plan falls through. Safe Ride Home is a transportation plan provided at no charge and the names of those using it remain anonymous.

2.) Not in my Squad Workshop- This is the Sergeant Major of the Army's initiative focused on building mutual trust and cohesion at the squad level. Maine was the first state in the National Guard to participate in the workshop. 46 squad leaders worked on issues and devised solutions to fix them. Senior leadership must continue to ensure squad leaders are empowered to make educated decisions and properly lead our Soldiers.

It is important to remember that squad leaders are the ones who fight and win our nation's wars.

3.) Crossroads Program- This program is designed to properly and respectfully out-process our Soldiers who complete their contact and have decided to move on to other ambitions. This program will give Soldiers education on benefits they earned and inform them of benefits they may lose when they leave. It helps Soldiers decide whether or not to continue their service. Most of all, it provides formal recognition to thank our Soldiers who have served our country honorably.

4.) Soldier Wellness and Training AT (SWEAT) - The SWEAT program is designed to improve our State's readiness and help our Soldiers live healthier lifestyles. This program focuses on Fitness, Nutrition, Army Warrior Tasks, Distance Learning (SSD/NCOES), Weapons Qualification and Combat Life Saver training.

5.) NCO Indoctrination Dinner/NCODP- The NCO induction ceremony is a celebration of the newly promoted Soldiers joining the ranks of a professional noncommissioned officer corps. It is an opportunity to emphasize and build on the pride we all share as members of such an elite corps.

The last item I would like to say is "thank you". Thank you for choosing to serve our State and Country. We realize joining the Guard is a choice and a tough one to balance with everything else going on in life. Only 30% of the American population is capable of service in the military. Out of that population less than 1% actually chooses to serve. In Maine only .2% choose to serve in either the Army or Air National Guard. We all are part of a very elite team sworn to protect and serve the great state of Maine and our free Country. For that I thank you!

Bayonets, Forward!!
CSM Scott Doyon
Maine State Command Sergeant Major



The U.S. Uniformed Services Blended Retirement System

At a Glance

Saving with the New Blended Retirement System

The Fiscal Year 2016 National Defense Authorization Act provides our military force with a modernized retirement plan built for retirement savings. Beginning in 2018, our service members can get **automatic and matching Thrift Savings Plan contributions** as well as mid-career **compensation incentives** in addition to monthly **annuities for life**. All service members under the current system are grandfathered into today's retirement system.

Today's Retirement System:



Annuity

$2.5\% \times \text{Years Served} \times \text{Retired Pay Base}$
after completing 20 years of service

1 Automatic and Matching Contributions

Automatic contributions are seen immediately



You Contribute	DoD Auto Contribution	DoD Matches	Total
0%	1%	0%	1%
1%	1%	1%	3%
2%	1%	2%	5%
3%	1%	3%	7%
4%	1%	3.5%	8.5%
5%	1%	4%	10%

The DoD automatically contributes **1%** of your basic pay to your **Thrift Savings Plan** after **60 days of service**.

You'll see matching contributions at the start of 3 through the completion of 26 years of service, and...

You're fully vested—it's yours to keep—as of the beginning of 3 years of service and goes with you when you leave.

2 Continuation Pay

Received at the mid-career point



You may receive a **cash payment** in exchange for additional service.

3 Full Retired Pay Annuity

Received after completing 20 years of service

$2\% \times$  **\times** 
Years Served **Retired Pay Base**

Calculate your **retired pay base** by **averaging the highest 36 months of basic pay**. You'll gain this monthly annuity for life after completing 20 years of service.

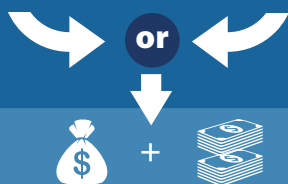
Options for Collecting Your Retired Pay

Active Component

Full retired pay annuity

Reserve Component

Full retired pay annuity beginning at age 60*



Lump sum with reduced retired pay

50% or 25% of monthly retired pay annuity bumps back up to 100% at full retirement age (67 in most cases).

**Could be earlier based on credited active service*



Effective Date of the New System

Your Retirement System

If you joined the service...

► After December 31, 2017

You'll be automatically enrolled in the Blended Retirement System.

► After December 31, 2005 but before January 1, 2018

You'll have the choice to enroll in the Blended Retirement System or remain in today's current retirement system.

► Before January 1, 2006

You'll be grandfathered and remain in today's current retirement system.

Additional information coming soon.

Sources: Sections 631, 632, 633, 634, and 635 of the Fiscal Year 2016 National Defense Authorization Act.

Created:12/2015

THE CHAPLAIN'S WORD

This fable has come down to us in several forms, with several protagonists. However, this is how I first heard it:

King Solomon of Israel, Son of David, Wisest and Wealthiest of all the Kings in the world, was despondent. After acquiring all the power, women, wisdom and wealth that he could, he still remained unfulfilled. Therefore he made a challenge to all the people:

"In all that I have, I still seek that which will set my heart at rest. I feel empty and incomplete and will not rest until I have found the unknown thing I am looking for. Therefore, I challenge all the people in my realm and all the people of the world: bring me the one most valuable thing in the world and I will grant you half of my kingdom. However, should you bring anything that does not meet this standard, you shall be killed and forfeit all you have."

Despite the odds, people came from all over trying to please the

King. They brought precious gems, softball sized diamonds, beautifully crafted jewelry from all over the world. They brought beautiful women, promised acres of fruitful land, pledges to serve for years; but

each was not enough to please the King. The

King's coffers filled as man after man was executed.

Then one afternoon, when the King seemed to most sad and

frustrated, an old rag-clad man, hunched over

with age and illness made his way to the throne. Humbly, he placed a simple gold ring at the foot of the King. The King was enraged! "What is this?" he cried. After all that has been offered all you bring is a simple gold ring?"

"Your majesty," he answered, "please see the inscription inside." The King bent to lift it into his palm, and there he saw three Hebrew letters (in English transliteration): gimel, zayeh, yodh. The King, still angry, said, "What do these letters stand for?"

"Gam zeh ya'avur" replied the old man. Immediately the King's coun-

tenance had softened for he realized in his wisdom that this indeed was the most valuable thing in the world – a reminder that all must heed and one that can bring both humility and hope. The King granted the man the half of his kingdom and both lived happier lives.

Gam zeh ya'avur means, in English, "This too shall pass." As we exult in the outcomes of political wins of favorite candidates or the wins of our favorite sports teams, as we are blessed with unexpected happiness of wealth, of children, of a great job; remember, to enjoy, but know that his is but for a time. When we lament the outcome of political losses, the years of waiting for our teams to win, when tragedy hits our families; remember, this also, is but for a time.

Always remember to live in peace and confidence that we can bless others with our prosperity, but there is always hope in our sadness, for God oversees all and His will be done.

CH Andy Gibson
Senior Army Chaplain, Maine



The Eloquence of Deeds

The Maine National Guard cohosted a World War 1 Centennial Commemoration with the Maine State Museum entitled "The Eloquence of Deeds," commemorating the Centennial of the United States Entry into World War 1 on Thursday, April 6 at the Maine State Archives in Augusta.

Guest Speakers included Earle Shettleworth, the State Historian, Brig. Gen. Douglas Farnham, Adjutant General for the Maine National Guard and 1st Lt. Jonathan Bratten, Maine National Guard command historian. Representatives from Sen. Susan Collins, Rep. Chellie Pingree and Rep. Bruce Poliquin's office were also present to read prepared remarks honoring the occasion.

Former Maine Governor Carl Milliken said in his War Address to the Maine Legislature on April 3, 1917, "Let us, by appropriate action, assure the President and Congress of our full and loyal support in this solemn hour of national crisis. No words need be added to his noble statement of the case. The eloquence of deeds can best be ours."

April 6 commemorates the entrance of the United States and Maine into the First World War. After World War I was declared in 1917, the entire National Guard of the state was called into service of the United States.

"Entry into the war was not a surprise and most of the men who signed up to serve knew exactly what they were getting in to," said Farnham. "The Maine National Guard was made up from community members and families serving side by side. Mainers of all backgrounds: millworkers, lawyers, politicians, farmers, immigrants, Native Americans, sailors, fisherman, and lumberman".

The War Department granted authority in September, 1917 for the establishment of an infantry regiment of National Guard. This unit was formed around the 2nd Maine Infantry and was designated the 103rd Infantry Regiment, assigned to the 26th "Yankee" Division.

"For the first time in our history we were entering a European conflict," said Bratten. "Sending our soldiers to

European shores".

"The coming two years would change the face of Maine and the Nation, forever," said Bratten. "The echoes of World War I are still felt in our time, from as wide a spectrum as the events in the Middle East, down to the lopped off branches of family trees here at home".

Over 32,000 Mainers served in uniform during the war; over 1,000 never came home, paying the ultimate sacrifice.

"As we commemorate the United States entry into World War I, we remember the service and actions of those who served; not just for what they did but for their legacy of service," said Farnham.

Maine National Guard campaign credit in World War I includes the following: Champagne-Marne, Aisne-Marne, St. Mihiel, Meuse-Argonne, Ile de France 1918, and Lorraine 1918.



1st Lt. Jonathan Bratten, Maine National Guard Command Historian, provides remarks during "The Eloquence of Deeds," commemorating the Centennial of the United States Entry into World War 1 on Thursday at the Maine State Cultural Building in Augusta. Over 32,000 Mainers served in uniform during the war; over 1,000 never came home, paying the ultimate sacrifice.



Maine citizens and service members gather at the Maine State Museum on April 6 to participate in the World War 1 Centennial Commemoration. Guest Speakers included Earle Shettleworth, the State Historian, Brig. Gen. Douglas Farnham, Adjutant General for the Maine National Guard and 1st Lt. Jonathan Bratten, Maine National Guard command historian. Representatives from Sen. Susan Collins and Rep. Chellie Pingree's office were also present to read prepared remarks honoring the occasion.

THE GREAT WAR

100 Years Ago the Maine National Guard Mobilized for World War 1

Article and Images Courtesy of 1st Lt. Jonathan Bratten

On **April 6, 1917**, the United States entered the Great War. Six days later, a telegram from the War Department arrived at Camp Keyes in Augusta: The 2nd Maine Regiment was ordered into active service.

"I am, in consequence," the letter from Secretary of War Newton Baker read, "instructed by the President to call into the service of the United States forthwith, through you, the following units of the National Guard of the State of Maine." President Woodrow Wilson and Congress had exercised their right to mobilize the National Guard in a state of war for the first time since the signing of the National Defense Act of 1916.

The 15 companies of the 2nd Maine began recruiting to wartime strength in towns across the state. On July 5, the companies began to assemble at Camp Keyes in Augusta.

Who were the men who made up this 2,002-man organization? More than 50 percent were traditional National Guardsmen who had been with the regiment since they were mobilized to the U.S.-Mexican border in 1916 and before. Men signed on eagerly to serve with "the Old Second."

One unique individual was Brig. Gen. Albert Greenlaw, who in 1915 was the adjutant general commanding the Maine National Guard. In this capacity, he had represented the Military Department of Maine at the funeral of Maj. Gen. Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain in 1914. Greenlaw resigned as adjutant general to accept appointment as captain and commander of the Support Company, serving in that capacity in the Mexican border expedition. He retained this position as the 2nd entered service for the war.

Hundreds were students from Maine universities. No fewer than 23 Harvard graduates passed through the regiment during its train-up and wartime service.

A notable member of Augusta's Company M was George Sterling of Peaks Island. He enlisted into Company M after graduating high school, serving on the Mexican border. When he returned home, he took a job as a wireless radio operator on the steamship Philadelphia because of his interest in radio communications. On April 6, his ship received a coded order to raise the Navy's colors and run without lights — the U.S. was on war footing with the Central Powers — Austria-Hungary, Germany, Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire. Sterling requested a transfer to the Signal Corps, but his commanding officer denied that request.

Once in France, however, Sterling learned the French wireless tactics, and he was eventually transferred to be an instructor of wireless at the U.S. Army 1st Corps School at Gondrecourt in northeastern France. From there, he was transferred to Gen. John J. Pershing's headquarters at Chaumont, where he helped establish the new radio intelligence service, intercepting German radio transmissions. After the war, Sterling's career led him through the newly developing world of wireless communications, including in the Radio Intelligence Division in World War II. By 1948, Sterling was chairman of the Federal Communications Commission.

Some men were recent high school graduates, such as Ralph T. Moan from East Machias who joined Company K, and one whole squad in Company E was made up of recent graduates from Skowhegan High School.



birth, and they had been living in western Maine working on the railroads when the call for recruits went out. All joined up in Company B.

Lucien L. Arsenault was one of eight Arsenaults from the neighboring towns of Rumford and Mexico who enlisted in the 2nd Maine in 1917.

From the Passamaquoddy town at Pleasant Point in Down East Maine came Samuel Dana, Charles Lola, Peter Lewey, John Newell, David Sopiell, George Stevens, Henry Sockbeson, Peter Stanley and Moses Neptune. Not yet American citizens, they came to do their part — including the tribal governor's own son, Moses Neptune.

In a time when to be German, or to even have a German sounding name, was a liability, Albert and Eric Klick — both born in Mecklenburg in northern Germany — decided to show their loyalty by enlisting into Company H.



Above: Recent graduates of Skowhegan High School enlisted together in 1917, forming what was nicknamed "The High School Squad." The majority would be killed or wounded. (Maine National Guard Archives)

Below: Soldiers of the 2nd Maine Infantry parade at Camp Keyes, Augusta, Maine, prior to mobilization in 1917. (Maine National Guard Archives)

Some, such as Michael McQuade from Rumford who enlisted into Company B, and John Murphy of Bangor's Company G, were former soldiers in the British army.

Frank Marinelli, Mike Molino, Ignazio Polleschi, Dominick Samarco and Fortunato Verro were all of Italian

For all their varied backgrounds, the majority of the aforementioned men had one thing in common: By the close of 1918 and the end of World War I, they would all be casualties.

MAINE & MONTENEGRO

PARTNERS FOR LEADER DEVELOPMENT EVENT

Story and photos courtesy of 1st Lt. Jonathan Bratten



PODGORICA, Montenegro. Smoke billowing over the road and the muffled staccato of machine gun fire echoing off the rocks, Montenegrin Soldiers completed their final practical exercise of the Troop Leading Procedures Event. For eight days, Montenegrin and Maine (U.S.) Soldiers worked together in the soaring peaks and lush valleys around the town of Kolašin. Five U.S. and over 18 Montenegrin officers and noncommissioned officers ran through intensive drills that included tactical mission planning and dynamic scenarios.

The troops were brought together as part of the National Guard's State Partnership Program, which pairs U.S. states with nations around the world. Maine and Montenegro have been partners since December 2006, a relationship that has grown in importance every year. This year marked the 10th Anniversary of the Partnership and Montenegro hosted the Maine National Guard's Adjutant General in celebration of the friendship between the two organizations.

This year, the partnership holds even more weight because Montenegro is pursuing entrance into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. To assist them in their preparation for NATO validation, the Maine National Guard sent over a military team of subject matter experts for a review of NATO Troop Leading Procedures and best practices. This event emulated an abbreviated light leader exercise and was meant to assist Montenegrin small unit leaders by providing tools to help educate their own Soldiers on NATO standards. "It's been fantastic to work with our Montenegrin partners," said Sgt. 1st Class Nate McCray. "They are outstanding Soldiers and excellent hosts."

The eight-day engagement focused on reinforcing and consolidating lessons learned from previous events, exercises and schools on troop leading procedures and mission planning through written orders. The Montenegrins produced operations and fragmentary orders, briefed them, and then conducted their missions, all the while rotating through

different leadership positions. This experience highlighted the importance of teamwork and knowing all the roles within a company. Noncommissioned officers would sometimes be put in the platoon leader role while officers assumed the duties of squad leaders. "This way they all get to experience the different duties and responsibilities inside a platoon," said Staff Sgt. Eric Christie.

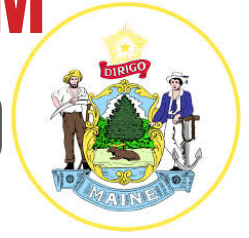
The visit brought together officers and noncommissioned officers from all around the Montenegrin Armed Forces, including from the infantry, artillery, engineers, and military police. Everything culminated in a full platoon practical field exercise, where the Soldiers demonstrated their technical and tactical proficiency while being observed by senior Montenegrin military and U.S. Embassy officials. "Seeing their tactical proficiency is the biggest reward for us," said Staff Sgt. Cameron Worcester. "We look forward to working together with them in the future."





THE STATE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

A DECADE OF MAINE AND MONTENEGRO



In 2006, Maine and Montenegro joined together in a cooperative agreement under the National Guard's State Partnership Program. The two states share much in common: rugged and beautiful country, a long coastline, and common industries such as tourism.

The partnership is built on long-term relationships and helps provide stability to the Balkan region. The State Partnership Program supports U.S. European Command's security cooperation objectives and the Maine National Guard is the partner of choice for security cooperation activities due to its enduring relationship with Montenegro.

An average of 14 State Partnership Program events have taken place every year since 2006, in both Maine and Montenegro. However, Maine National Guardsmen support other EUCOM initiatives annually and are often engaged with Montenegro on more than 20 security cooperation events per year.

In recent years, the Maine National Guard has been assisting Montenegro with its membership action plan and goal of accessing into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Montenegro is expected to be a full-fledged member of NATO by early June 2017.

The State Partnership Program is a model for security cooperation in the 21st century and an integral component of the new national defense strategy. The program adds the title of "Statesman" to the "Citizen Soldier" brand of the Maine National Guard, building Guard members' professionalism and skills through cooperative events.

TIMELINE

June 3, 2006 – Montenegro becomes an independent nation from Serbia

December 7, 2006 – The Maine National Guard and Montenegro enter into a cooperative agreement under the State Partnership Program

2007 – Governor John Baldacci and Montenegrin President Filip Vujanovic meet in Maine to discuss the State Partnership Program

2009 – Montenegrin Minister of Defense meets with the Maine Army National Guard Adjutant General and Governor John Baldacci in Maine to discuss greater cooperation between the two forces

2010 – Montenegrin Minister of Defense and the Maine Army National Guard Adjutant General meet in Maine for a conference with a focus on Montenegro eventually joining NATO

2012 – Development of Medical Operations Seminar in Danilovgrad

December 13, 2016 – The Maine National Guard and Montenegro celebrate ten years of mutually beneficial cooperation at ceremonies in Montenegro, attended by Brig. Gen. Douglas Farnham, The Adjutant General.

May 19, 2017 – NATO and Montenegro conduct a signing ceremony at NATO headquarters in Brussels for Montenegro's membership invitation

NEXT MILESTONE

June 2017 – Montenegro is scheduled to become a NATO member.



ABOUT MONTENEGRO

Population: 630,000

Land Area: 5,019 square miles (similar to Connecticut)

Capital: Podgorica

Government: President, Parliament of deputies and prime minister

Industry: Electricity generation, steel, aluminum, coal mining, forestry, wood processing, textiles, tobacco, tourism.

Military: The Montenegrin Military is composed of the Montenegrin Army, the Navy, and the Air Force



(L) Montenegrin officers show then Adjutant General, Maj. Gen. William Libby the layout of Montenegro in 2006.

(Bottom Left): Information Technology experts from Maine visit with Montenegrins to discuss different techniques and strategies in 2014.

(R: The Adjutant General, Brig. Gen. Douglas Farnham, gets a first hand look at Montenegrin weapon systems during a visit as part of the 10 year celebration of the partnership in 2016. (All archived photos.)



MAINE TEAM NAMED BEST DEERS/RAPIDS SITE FOR 2016

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Angela Parady

The Maine Army National Guard received the 2016 Site Excellence Award for Defense Enrollment Eligibility System and Real-time Automated Identification System in an award ceremony held at Camp Keyes in Augusta on May 17.

According to Staff Sgt. Charles Miller, from the Army National Guard project office, this was the first time that the Army National Guard has received this award.

"The performance criteria is a combination of usage, management of personnel and equipment, excellent policy/procedure practices and innovation," he wrote in a letter to the winning office.

Michael Sorrento, the Director of Defense Manpower Data Center, came to Maine to present the award to the Adjutant General for the Maine National Guard and the personnel who directly support the DEERS / RAPIDS office year-round.

"All of the benefits that are available to service members, veterans and their families would not be accessible without these systems and the services these offices provide," said Sorrento. "Mission, benefits, and there are people, like the two we are here for today, that make this mission successful."

During the evaluation period, Oct 1 2015 through Sept 30, 2016, the MEARNG location issued 1,534 Common Access Cards and 3,758 Teslin Identification Cards. They provide service to over 3,500 National Guardsmen, State employees, contractors and over 10,000 retirees and their dependents in the region.

Rhonda Bonenfant became the Site Security Manager for the MEARNG location and three deployable sites in 2005. With over 12 years of experience working with DEERS and RAPIDS, she is considered the "go to" person by many when they have questions about eligibility. Together, with Sgt. Davis McKenney, a Site Security Manager since 2013, they have continued to work to improve the customer experience.

The office seeks out ways to help facilitate services for individuals that are not able to physically go to the Augusta office, such as their Community Outreach Service. This program visits Veterans Hospitals, nursing homes and hospice living centers where they identified a need for services, said Bonenfant.

A checklist that outlines all of the items needed for transactions at the DEERS office helps reduce the number of customers making multiple visits or being turned away because they are missing paperwork, she added.

The two are proud of the steps taken to improve efficiency and customer satisfaction and will continue working to improve the process. They work closely with several other veteran organizations around the state, including the Transition Assistance Advisor and the Survivor Outreach Support contractor when information needs



sharing, particularly if computer based systems are not working. This helps ensure the widest possible dissemination of information when a system is down.

The Adjutant General - Brig. Gen. Douglas A. Farnham recognized the hard work of Bonenfant and McKenney during the ceremony, but also praised the state for their accomplishments overall.

"I am consistently proud of our Maine National Guard team when different segments of our workforce are recognized," said Farnham. "This accomplishment is another example of how our team is committed not only to excellence, but pride in taking care of our Veterans and their families."

NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS



Newly promoted Lt. Col. Scott J. Lewis stands between Brig. Gen. Dwaine E. Drummond and wife, Lynn, during the promotion ceremony held at Camp Keyes on Thursday. (Maine Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Angela Parady.)



Brig. Gen. Douglas A. Farnham pinned the Army Commendation medal on Sgt. Maxim Nickerson May 18 during an impromptu ceremony recognizing Nickerson's achievements in during the 2017 U.S. Army Small Arms Championship in Fort Benning, Georgia.



The Adjutant General, Brig. Gen. Douglas A. Farnham swears in the Maine Army National Guard's newest brigadier general, Dwaine Drummond, in a ceremony March 24. (Maine Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Angela Parady.)



U.S. Air Force Maj. Richard Daigle has his rank pinned by family members during his promotion ceremony, Camp Keyes, Augusta, May 6, 2017. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Travis Hill)



Col. Diane Dunn, Chief of Staff- Army pins Sgt. Maj. Caree Kavanaugh with the Army Commendation Award at a ceremony at the Regional Training Center in Bangor, March 24. Kavanaugh was recognized for her role in authoring a document for a newly created Crossroads program that standardizes out-processing procedures for Soldiers.



Col. Hamilton Richards hands Sgt. 1st Class Earl Watts a certificate of retirement. Watts retired May 22, 2017 after 31 years of distinguished service. (Maine Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Angela Parady.)

MAINE MEDICS MERGE AT SYMPOSIUM



Regardless of their assigned position in the hospital or unit, they all help physicians.

"Medics are the first line eyes and ears at the initial point of contact, for them to have a good set of assessment skills helps me do my job better," Maj. Jonathan Bausman, a physician with the MEARNG Medical Detachment.

The event was organized almost entirely by Maine medical staff in order to focus the training goals.

"It's the first time they've done a National Guard-led conference or symposium in the country, it has never been done before," said Picard.

The benefits of this training are clear and seem to be agreed upon by the participants.

"There's a ton of knowledge and competent providers and professionals in the state so we're bringing them all together to put on a pretty good series," said Picard.

"We get to showcase what people know and what they're competent in and then teach those skills to others"

Sharing their skills has helped fill in knowledge gaps that may have previously existed.

"We're doing an airway lab, suturing, and assessment skills," said Bausman.

"We're trying to get the medics a chance to do the cognitive, classroom based training but to also do the hands on training and really get their hands back on the medical equipment,"

The medics, however, are not the only ones who benefited from these events.

"It's really challenged us as instructors to be better officers and providers and hopefully the medics will have developed their skill sets and what they have in their clinical tool bag as they advance their careers," said Picard.

The training was very well received by the approximately 70 combat medics who participated in the event.

"This has probably been some of the best medical training that I have received, we should definitely stay with it," said Bowen.

For the first time in the history of the Maine Army National Guard, all combat medics gathered to conduct a medical training symposium.

The training, held at the 240th Regiment (RTI) in Bangor, consisted of outdoor training including live MEDEVAC (medical evacuation) flights with a UH-60 Black Hawk as well as indoor medical simulations and presentations.

"This is going to be a good refresher," said Capt. Matthew Picard, an organizer of the event and a physician's assistant with the MEARNG Medical Detachment. "Medical skills in general are extremely perishable, if you don't practice putting a needle in for IV's, you're not going to be able to do it."

Other training included ear and eye exams, mental health instruction, litter carrying, even instruction on how to deliver an infant.

Combat medics are often associated with being only trained for trauma, however they do far more.

"We can either work in the hospital, out in the field, on helicopters, we are just an all-around military medical jack of all trades," said Staff Sgt. Randall Bowen, a combat medic with the 185th Engineer Support Company.





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MAINE AIR GUARDSMEN IS A MAINEFIAC IN THE RING





For many in the Maine Air National Guard, the term “MAINEIAC” is merely a tongue-in-cheek term of endearment; a calling card that Maine Airmen have left stuck to windows, walls, and airport terminals around the globe.

Used to being called a “MAINEIAC” for his role as NCOIC of Cyber Transport Systems and a Team Chief with the 243rd Engineering Installation Squadron, Technical Sgt. Rafael Velado has recently been recognized as a “maniac” in another area: the world of amateur mixed martial arts. In less than two years on the MMA scene, Sgt. Velado has racked up an impressive 4-0 record, and is ranked 5th amongst New England lightweights.

A native of Nashua, New Hampshire, Sgt. Velado joined the military in 1998 in an effort to “find direction” in his life, and he considers it one of the best decisions he’s made in his life.

“I love the military,” Velado said. “I want to be a Chief Master Sergeant someday!”

About a decade into his time in the

military, Sgt. Velado started training in martial arts, and found that he had a knack for the discipline.

“I trained and competed in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu for about a decade,” Velado said. “When I earned my Black Belt in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, I started looking for a new challenge. MMA just seemed like the logical next step.”

Sergeant Velado’s family and friends have embraced his decision to fight competitively, and he maintains their support has been key to his early success in the octagon.

“They love that I’m a fighter,” Velado said. “I’m just a regular guy, and because of that, I think it makes them feel like it could be them in there.”

Sergeant Velado works hard to maintain a balance between fighting and his military service, and even Sgt. Velado’s commander, Maj. Maynard Hinckley has become a fan.

“The military comes first, period. Maj. Hinckley has been extremely supportive of my MMA career,” Velado said. “If it wasn’t for him, I don’t think I

would be as successful as I am.”

When asked about the obvious hazards of competitive fighting, Sgt. Velado demurs.

“I’m a grappler. My fights don’t last very long because I get my opponents on the ground pretty quickly. Other than some busted knuckles and a black eye or two, I’ve been pretty lucky with injuries.”

In Sept 2016, Sgt. Velado defeated Bangor’s Jimmy Jackson to become the NEF Lightweight Champion, and he credits his military training for helping him to develop the discipline needed to succeed in MMA.

“Airmen are elite,” he said. “To make it through the training process before ever even putting on the uniform is extremely difficult...we tend to succeed in everything we apply ourselves to.”

Sergeant Velado will seek to defend his NEF Lightweight title in June 2017, although an opponent for that bout has not been officially set.



POUNDING THE PAVEMENT

MAINE GUARDSMEN COMPETE IN 2017 LINCOLN MARATHON

One hundred and fifty National Guard members representing 40 states and two territories were among 13,500 marathoners registered for the 2017 Lincoln National Guard Marathon in Lincoln, Nebraska on May 7. Not only did the number of registrants make it the largest event in the past 40 years, but runners also saw temperatures soar to the low 80s throughout the course of the day. Regardless of the crowds and the heat, the National Guard members present worked to earn one of the 61 positions available on the All Guard Marathon Team.

Sgt. Sarah Myrick, a photojournalist with the Maine Army National Guard's Public Affairs Detachment and Sgt. Jhustin Welch, a survey team member with the 11th Weapons of Mass Destruction-Civil Support Team, represented Maine at the marathon. This was Welch's first marathon, and the second year that Myrick earned a spot on the All Guard team.

This year, Myrick bested her previous mara-



thon placement, securing an 11th place finish for females. Last year she placed 12th. Only 15 females are selected for the All Guard Marathon Team, the remaining spots are awarded to the males.

"I started running competitively in high school because I had friends on the track team," said Myrick. "I fell in love with the sport. I ran cross country and track in college because I wanted to continue being part of a team and I wanted to challenge myself."

Welch, who also competed with the Maine National Guard Biathlon Team this year, had heard individuals in his unit talking about the marathon team and running in the past. Interested to learn more, he called then team coordinator, Col. H. Jay Brock, and found himself not only signed up for the marathon, but also an offer to take over as team coordinator.

For his first marathon, Welch focused on running consistently, but not necessarily for long distance. Even though he didn't run much over 12 miles during his training, he was still able to complete the entire 26.2 miles.

"It felt good to complete my first marathon

and make it to the finish line," he said. "I started out a little too fast, especially for how hot it was that day. The last few miles seemed like they were never ending, but my legs didn't feel anywhere near as bad as I thought they would."

Welch would often take his dog on the longer runs to help him keep pace, or even help him pick up some speed. He would also rest a few days before a long run so he wouldn't get sore.

Myrick runs about 60-70 miles per week with at least one 18-22 mile run per week and has now completed six marathons. Two weeks before the Lincoln Marathon, Myrick completed what would be her fastest marathon ever, 26.2 miles in 3:31:04 at the Gettysburg North vs. South Marathon back in April 22, 2017.

Even though the Gettysburg Marathon earned her a qualifying time for the Boston Marathon, Myrick said she is not done challenging herself.

"I love a challenge and I always have a new goal," she said. "I want to run a marathon faster than three hours and thirty minutes. I also want to start running longer races. I have signed up for two 50 kilometer (31 miles) races and maybe I will run a 50 miler this year...maybe."

Welch said that this won't be his last marathon either.

"I have already signed up for the Marine Corps Marathon in the fall," he said. "Like many others that run marathons, I want to see how much I can decrease my time at each marathon."

When asked what motivated them to just keep running for that distance, Myrick said that her long runs were her "personal time."

"I love running," she said. "For me, it is my alone time, and my time to be 'unplugged.'"

As far as anyone who may be interested in trying out distance running, Myrick says to just do it!

"Just sign up for a race," she said. "Having a goal will help motivate you to keep training. Start slow and don't get discouraged when you are sore or tired, that happens to everyone."



Photos: Left Page: Sgt. Justin Welch and Sgt. Sarah Myrick represent Maine at the Lincoln National Guard Marathon. This Page, Top Left: Myrick, somewhere along mile marker 15. Top Right: Welch represents the 11th WMD-CST as he just keeps moving forward. Bottom: Nebraska Assistant Adjutant General, Brig. Gen. Richard H. Dahlman and State Command Sgt. Maj. Marty Baker present Sgt. Sarah Myrick with an award for placing second overall in her age category during the 2017 Lincoln National Guard Marathon. (All photos courtesy of the Nebraska National Guard.)

MAINE'S BEST WARRIOR COMPETITION

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SPC PATRIK ORCUT

The Maine Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition was held at the 240th Regiment (RTI) in Bangor from March 31-April 2 to select the best non-commissioned officer and junior Soldier in the state.

The winner in each category will go on to compete at the next competition at the regional level in New Jersey to earn a chance to compete nationally. The Best Warrior Competition is considered to be one of the premier events for Soldiers in the National Guard.

The competition is split up into different events called "Warrior Tasks." The Soldiers were given a surprise physical fitness test the first night when they arrived at the training center. The test was administered with the standard amount of time for pushups and sit-ups, two minutes, but they ran three miles instead of two.

After the first surprise, the Soldiers hurried into their Army Service Uniform for a board presentation. This measures their appearance and knowledge as they are graded in an oral board conducted by command sergeants major and sergeants major.



On the second day they must prove their marksmanship with both the M16 rifle and pistol. Then they must undergo a stress shoot which involves carrying water jugs and dragging a litter sled up and down the range while stopping and engaging targets in 30 degree weather.

The next set of tasks are all in a round robin style. These include a weapons disassembly and reassembly station, Casualty analysis and treatment, Chemical

mask and suit rehearsals, Radio Communications tests, Vehicle and personal searches, and lastly a written test filled with one hundred questions. Land navigation tasks tested their skills, patience, and endurance.

"The only problem was you would be walking through the snow, take a step and fall down to your waistline," says Sgt. Jared Smith from the 488th MP CO, who would go on to win for the NCOs.

Exhausted after having been tested mentally and physically for the last few days, the last event is a twelve mile ruck march. Before the event kicked off, all of the competitors had to show what was in their ruck, in order to make sure that everyone was carrying at the very least the same amount. For some, this was all that stood between them and potential victory. Even some of the more physical capable soldiers had a hard time with this event.

"I felt great for eleven miles and started getting cramps up for the last mile" said Spc. Joseph Smith, a combat engineer with the 251st Engineer Company (Sapper).

The Best Warrior Competition recognizes



soldiers who demonstrate commitment to the Army Values and show that they embody the Warrior Ethos. These warriors represent the best of us and the force of the future. Many of these tasks are essential to being a soldier.

Competitor Spc. Don Kent, an infantryman from the Company B (-), 3rd Battalion, 172nd Infantry Regiment (Mountain) said "the knowledge we are talking about in these situations can mean the difference between life and death. If you have to save your buddy, and you don't know what you are doing, he dies."

Everyone who competes at this level has already competed at least one other time to get here. Hours of studying and making sure they are both mentally and physically prepared before this event keeps the competition at the state level challenging, said Sgt. Smith.

"The two guys I competed against are phenomenal," said Spc. Smith. "It's an honor to be victorious amongst them."

Sgt. Smith said he felt the same way, and felt as though the hours he had put in to get ready for this event were well worth it.

"It's always great to see when you work hard at something, you get rewarded" said Smith after winning.



Sgt. Jared Smith, dons a gas mask as part of a timed event during Maine's Best Warrior Competition on 1 April. Three noncommissioned officers and three enlisted soldiers competed in the 48 hour long event. After the state level competition, those who earned the top spot in their category went to the regional competition, held in New Jersey. (Maine National Guard photo by Spc. Patrik Orcutt)









Two Soldiers study a map as part of a land navigation event at the Re-cruit Sustainment Program's (RSP) annual FTX in Gilead, Maine May 20, 2017. The Soldiers of the RSP are new to the National Guard and are training in order to become more ready to attend Basic Combat Training or Advanced Individual Training. (Maine Army National Guard photo by Spc. Jarod Dye.)





Soldiers of Company G, 3rd Battalion, 126th Aviation Regiment finished the final movements from Operation Timberhook Tuesday, May 30. The original mission brought together several Black Hawk Helicopters, Park Rangers and support personnel to Baxter State Park in November. Due to weather conditions, the crews were not able to complete the work until now. The mission provides much needed training for the National Guard crews and it helps the Park by slingloading materials transported safely to various remote locations around the Park to help replace lean-tos, bridges and supply back country campgrounds. (Maine Army National Guard photo by Chief Warrant Officer 5 Jon Campbell.)









Soldiers assigned to Company B, 3rd Battalion, 172nd Infantry Regiment (Mountain) conduct medical evacuation training with Company G, 3rd Battalion of the 126th Aviation Regiment at Bog Brook Training Area in Gilead, Maine. All Soldiers practice life saving measures to stabilize the wounded and requesting MEDEVAC support for aerial evacuation and urgent care. (Maine Army National Guard photo by Spc. Patrik Orcutt.)



MONTENEGRIN SOLDIERS VISIT RSP WEEKEND

Story and Photography by Spc. Jarod Dye



The Recruit Sustainment Program (RSP) hosted special guests from the Montenegrin Ground Army on May 20 during their annual field training exercise (FTX) as part of the National Guard State Partnership Program at the Bog Brook Training Area in Gilead.

The Montenegrin Soldiers observed several training

events the new Maine Army National Guard recruits were participating in and talked to them about their Army experiences so far.

The Montenegrins started their visit with a briefing about the RSP program.

"The Recruit Sustainment Program is a national program tailored to each state's individual needs," said 1st Sgt. Joseph Whitmore, the lead noncommissioned officer in the RSP. "The primary reason for its inception was to reduce training pipeline losses."

It reduces the loss of Soldiers in training by educating all Soldiers about what to expect and how to handle basic combat training (BCT). It also makes sure each Soldier is physically and mentally fit as well as administratively correct.

"The loss rate in the ARNG Training Pipeline has been reduced by over 10 percent since the RSP's implementation, with the current BCT graduation rate exceeding 95 percent," said Whitmore.

After the program was explained to the Montenegrins, they observed training events such as repelling, land navigation, and squad tactics using paintball.

The State Partnership Program is widely regarded as very useful and beneficial to both military forces.

"It helps us develop our capabilities, we use the experience of the National Guard," said Lt Col. Radoljub Vitorov c, a human resources officer with the Montenegrin Army. "From these four years of cooperation, we know each other very well, they know our system and how we work."

This specific group of Montenegrins was involved in human resources and had indicated a high interest in the new Soldier training through RSP.

"It's very important to work with young people, that's the reason we are here today," said Vitorov c. "This part of the visit was planned because the training that is going on, we wanted to see for ourselves."

After the Montenegrins observed the training, they talked to some of the new Soldiers.

"Hearing about what they do and where they come from is really awesome," said Pvt. Symone Malbaurn, a Soldier in the RSP. "We can learn things from them and they can learn things from us."

The Montenegrins also talked to the RSP leaders about recruiting methods and strategies to then turn these recruits into successful Soldiers.

"It was a great opportunity for our state partners to come over here and see what we're doing with our new recruits. They can take back things they see here and maybe incorporate it into their own recruiting and training of their new enlistees," said Chief Warrant Officer Carlo Paratore, the commander of the RSP.

"I think any exposure for a young recruit is beneficial, when they see our allies here, touring our facilities it helps emphasize to them that we're the United States military, these are our allies, this is a big deal, this is the real thing. I think opportunities like that really drive these ideas home for a young recruit," said Paratore.

The Montenegrins will continue their travels in Maine by touring various other National Guard facilities and units.



OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUCCESS

STORY BY TECH SGT. KATI PELLETIER

Technical Sergeant Douglass Connolly, noncommissioned officer (NCOIC) of combat arms at the 101st Air Refueling Wing in Bangor, Maine, was awarded the distinguished Brigadier General Raymond A. Portin Award, which recognizes the best of the best in the Maine Air National Guard. Connolly was selected to receive this award from winners of the Airman of the Year award in all categories in Maine.

"Chief Qualls submitted my package to the selection board and I'm grateful for that. My command has really given me every opportunity to succeed and continues to let me build my career based around those opportunities," Connolly said. "For example, I have taken part in the Raven program. We go in three man teams, and there is not a lot of direction sometimes. They put a lot of faith in us to make the right decision and that requires a lot of trust. We are in some pretty austere locations."

Connolly is definitely self-motivated and his resume certainly shows that. Not only has he been taking part in the Raven program for the last five years, but he has run the combat arms program for just as long.

"I have been in charge of qualifying everyone from the 101st, 265th, and the 243rd who have a need for combat training. I have been running this program for five years. I had decided to pursue this and go to school and it just sort of grew from there."

Again, he credits this accomplishment to his leadership.

"These opportunities seem to present themselves because of my motivation and initiative, but ultimately, it is my leadership who has opened these doors for me."



When asked what it takes to have a successful career in the Air National Guard, Connolly said, "I have the desire to do more than just collect a paycheck. We need to set goals, meet them, and then set new goals. My desire to do better than I did before drives me. I'm also consistent with the tasks that are given to me and I feel that is why more opportunities arise."

"In terms of the future, I'm going to continue mentoring the next generation of Airmen coming up in Security Forces. I think it's important to lead the Maineiacs and show them that we have a reputation to succeed, and to follow suit with those who led before me. I also plan on finishing up my bachelor's degree in real estate studies, and pursuing a career outside of the unit in real estate and income

properties."

As mentioned before, Connolly is a goal setter, and he doesn't set the bar low. His long-term goals include seeing how close he can get to chief before he retires. "I plan to stay in Security Forces," he said. "I have definitely found my calling here, but I'm looking forward to seeing what comes up along the way."

LIVING IN THE GREY

STORY BY STAFF SGT MICHELLE HOPKINS



As the needs of the Air Force evolve, first sergeants often find themselves evolving with it, occasionally fulfilling several of these positions during their career. A first sergeant's main role is to take care of their people and help them grow and prosper. Senior Master Sgt. Ken Fox, first sergeant of the 101st Air Refueling Wing in Bangor, Maine, recently moved from his role as the first sergeant in the 101st Maintenance Squadron to begin his tour with the wing.

His role is to mentor and give opportunities to people to expand and evolve in their Air Force careers. Leadership and professional development play a huge role in a first sergeant's duties. A major focus is to ensure an enlisted force is available to the commander and prepared to meet the objectives of the mission. "People are our business," Fox said. He stated that there was a need for resilience and being able to recover from various situations a first sergeant may face.

Fox will spend the next four years as the Wing's first sergeant as he previously spent four with maintenance. While looking back on his time with maintenance, he noted that maintenance was incredibly mission focused and diverse. He voiced appreciation and admiration for the flight line, calling them the tip of the spear.

"The mission always comes before activities and sometimes the demands never stop."

Fox pointed out that working for the Wing has its own difficulties because of how geographically scattered everyone is. There's potpourri of different professions, missions, and objectives that are greatly differentiated from each other.

"There is a hard and fast need to be trusted as First Sergeant," he said.

As first sergeant, Fox has to balance empathy with professionalism while maintaining Air Force

standards. The Air Force regulations are black and white.

"The First Sergeant has to live by the grey world," Fox admitted that he had a low tolerance for people who didn't help themselves, noting that when individuals faced hurdles they needed to set plans to improve.

The next generation of Airmen is quickly catching up and Fox's goal is to help them along and see how broad their potential is. Opportunities and experiences need to occur but to get there, mistakes need to be made. People learn through experience and Fox wants to allow the next generation to become good leaders by teaching them that when they make mistakes, that they need to be able to stand back up on their own feet and learn from them.

"Push yourself outside your comfort zone," he said. "The only time you're going to improve is if you push yourself."



CEREMONY HONORS EXEMPLARY NATIONAL GUARD MEMBERS

Story By Spc. Jarod Dye, photo by Spc. Patrik Orcutt

The 2017 State Outstanding Airman and Best Warrior of the Year Ceremony was held Sunday at the Blaine House in Augusta and included guest speaker, Governor Paul LePage.

"It's important to have days like today so that the best of the best can shine out and encourage everyone to do their very best," said LePage, "you are why we are a free nation."

Two soldiers and six airmen were recognized and received various awards. Soldiers recognized as soldier and non-commissioned officer of the year received that title by winning the state level of the Best Warrior Competition, which was a three day lineup of grueling military tasks and tests.

"Getting recognized as the State Soldier of the Year is simply an honor. Every year someone wins, and it's an honor because I get to put my name in a hat with all those really great soldiers that have done it before," said Army Spc. Joseph Smith, a combat engineer from the 251st Engineer Company (Sapper), who won the state Best Warrior Competition.

Spc. Smith recently went on to the

Regional Best Warrior Competition and placed second, only trailing the winner by 4 points.

"It took a lot of time and dedication, fitness training, a lot of studying, and really just putting your head down and preparing for the multifaceted events," said Spc. Smith.

The title of NCO of the Year was won by Sgt. Jared Smith from the 488th Military Police Company who competed in the same competition except against other NCOs.

"I feel very humbled and am very proud of the time I put in to get to this point. It's always good to see hard work get rewarded," said Sgt. Smith

Sgt. Smith is a team leader at the 488th Military Police Company and offered insight on what winning this competition has brought to his unit.

"Anytime you win an individual award in the military, it's usually based on a collective effort of those leaders who trained you, the other soldiers who have trained with you and helped turn you into the soldier you are. So, I think, anytime you

win and individual award it's similar to winning an award for your entire unit," said Sgt. Smith.

The event was part of an increasing effort to have more joint operations and events between the Air and Army National Guard.

"Cross talking between the two organizations is very helpful, the Air Force has security forces, we have MP's (Military Police), and they do a similar job," said State Command Sgt. Maj. Scott M. Doyon. "This will make our people better. The Air gets different training than the Army gets and the Army gets different training than the Air, they can cross talk and actually be more effective."

As the State Command Sergeant Major, Doyon oversees Army National Guard soldiers and provides support to the National Guard Command staff.

However, senior personnel are not the only ones looking forward to more joint training, "It's great to see that we're starting to work with individuals and other branches, they have a lot of skills that we can benefit from and vice versa," said Spc. Smith, "It's an overall win for the entire state."



GUARD MEMBERS DOMINATE ARMY MARKSMANSHIP COMPETITION

Top Left: Sgt. Maxim Nickerson takes aim during one of the kneeling firing exercise during the 2017 State Marksmanship Matches. Bottom Right: Members of the 2016 All-Army Marksmanship Team: Sgt. Mark Moulton, Sgt. 1st Class Joshua Holmes, Sgt. Maxim Nickerson, Staff Sgt. Christopher LaSalle, and Sgt. 1st Class Kyle Bartman. While Nickerson won the individual award, the Maine team took home third place during the competition which put them against over 35 teams from the Active duty, Reserves and National Guard.

By Tech. Sgt. Erich B. Smith | National Guard Bureau
Photos by Staff Sgt. Angela Parady

National Guard members walked away with top honors in the U.S. Army Small Arms Championship, an advanced combat live-fire, competitive training event that took place March 12-18 at Fort Benning, Georgia.

Out of the competition's 23 categories, Guard members gave up first place standings in just two, and the top seven of the 35 teams competing in the team category were Guard teams.

Army Sgt. Max Nickerson, an avionics mechanic with the Maine Army National Guard's Company D, 3rd Battalion, 142nd Aviation Regiment, was the overall individual champion at the event, besting 198 competitors in pistol, rifle and multi-gun matches.

He chalked up his victory to a "train-as-you-fight" mentality.

"I practiced all the courses of fire [while] wearing the uniform I wore in the event," said Nickerson, who made his first showing in the competition last year. "I was very happy to bring home the award." He said he plans on furthering his marksmanship chops by transitioning into the infantry, and ultimately earning the sniper designation from the U.S. Army Sniper School.

Representing the Iowa Air National Guard's 185th Air Refueling Wing, Tech. Sgt. Micah Larson claimed the event's Col. Ralph Puckett Trophy, which recognizes the top novice shooter from both rifle and pistol matches.

Larson beat 129 competitors in the category and credited his success to discipline and simply following shooting basics.

"It was about getting back to fundamentals [and] the consistent application of marksmanship so that

we can perform our tasks to the best of our ability," he said. "It was a great honor to shoot in the match."

Nickerson and Larson were both awarded M1 Garand rifles, the standard-issued rifle during World War II.

The Illinois Army National Guard's Small Arms Readiness and Training Section placed first in the team category, a result of continual training and practice by team members.

"The long hours put into the event and individual practice really showed the dedication that everybody had," said Army Chief Warrant Officer 2 Joseph Nicholas, who served as the team's leader.

For Army Staff Sgt. Jacob Blount, part of the Illinois Army Guard team, the practice and training was all part of the drive to succeed.

"Nobody likes to lose," he said, adding that the marksmanship skills he and his fellow team members trained on also make them better prepared should they deploy to a combat environment.

That's also part of the competition focus, said Nicholas, as well as building camaraderie among the team and picking up tips and techniques from other competitors.

"It was great to meet a lot of old and new shooters, and learn from each other," he said.

According to a fact sheet from the U.S. Army Marksmanship Unit, which hosted the event, the small arms competition aims to not only develop marksmanship skills and recognize superior shooting performances, but increase "lethality across the entire force."



RECRUIT SUSTAINMENT PROGRAM SOLDIER OF THE QUARTER



Name: Jesse Hutchinson

Rank: Private 1st Class, E3

Military Occupational Skill: 91E; Allied Trade Specialist

Unit: 152nd Maintenance Company

Basic Training Location: Fort Jackson, SC

Advanced Individual Training: Fort Lee, VA

Hometown: Carthage, ME

College: University of Maine, Orono

Major: Wild Life Ecology

Hobbies and Interests: Being outdoors, hunting, fishing and hiking.

What are your goals as a Soldier?

I would like to commission as an officer and potentially serve on active duty.

What are your future plans as a civilian?

I would like to become a wildlife biologist.

Why did you join the Maine Army National Guard?

I wanted to serve my state and country while being able to get an education with the education benefits that the National Guard provides.

Did you know:

Pfc. Hutchinson was a member of his hometown volunteer Fire Department before he left for college.

Both Pfc Hutchinson's father and grandfather served in the Armed Forces.

Pfc. Hutchinson offers the following advice for anyone who is preparing for Basic Combat Training:

"Prepare yourself physically before you go down to BCT. It will be one less thing you have to worry about and will allow you to focus on other things"



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TRAINED AND READY

The 126th is Always Prepared for Emergencies

Story and Photo by Spc. Jarod Dye

Soldiers of Company G, 3rd Battalion of the 126th Aviation Regiment of Bangor provide vital medical support for the Maine National Guard both while overseas and home side. However, they do not only provide medical support and first-aid for the military.

"We're here full time, we keep an alert shift that's always on call," said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Andrew Curtis, the pilot in command of the MEDEVAC (medical evacuation) operation.

"We supplement with the warden service, the park authority, and state agencies to perform rescues when no one else is available to do it."

The aviation regiment can provide hoists and get into difficult locations some civilian medical helicopters cannot reach. "Most of the real world MEDEVACs we do are in fact civilians," said Curtis.

To maintain their skills Soldiers of the 126th trained with Soldiers from Company B, 3rd Battalion of the 172nd Infantry Regiment (Mountain) of Brewer this weekend at Deepwoods Training Site. The focus of the training was to hone both units MEDEVAC skills.

"Today is a multi-unit training where the Bravo Company is going to go out and do their normal, mission critical tasks,

and they wanted to incorporate MEDEVAC training into these events," said Staff Sgt. Philip Sutton, a flight medic for the 126th.

"Our task is to go out there and provide that MEDEVAC training for them"

The aviators flew to the landing zone in the Deepwoods Training Site and picked up a simulated casualty the infantry medics prepared. The litter team carried the casualty to the helicopter, loaded it up and the black hawk crew with patient in the back flew off to the aviation headquarters. This process was repeated three times during the day time and three more times at night.

The weather for the training event was extremely frigid with high winds. This created a new set of challenges for the 126th.

"Today is windy and cold which is going to present challenges for both us and them, we need to figure out those and overcome," said Sutton.

Although temperatures with wind dipped below zero, the mission was not affected.

This training was conducted to keep the infantrymen's skills sharp for when they need to call a real MEDEVAC and to keep

the aviation unit in constant practice for when a real medical evacuation is required, according to Sutton.

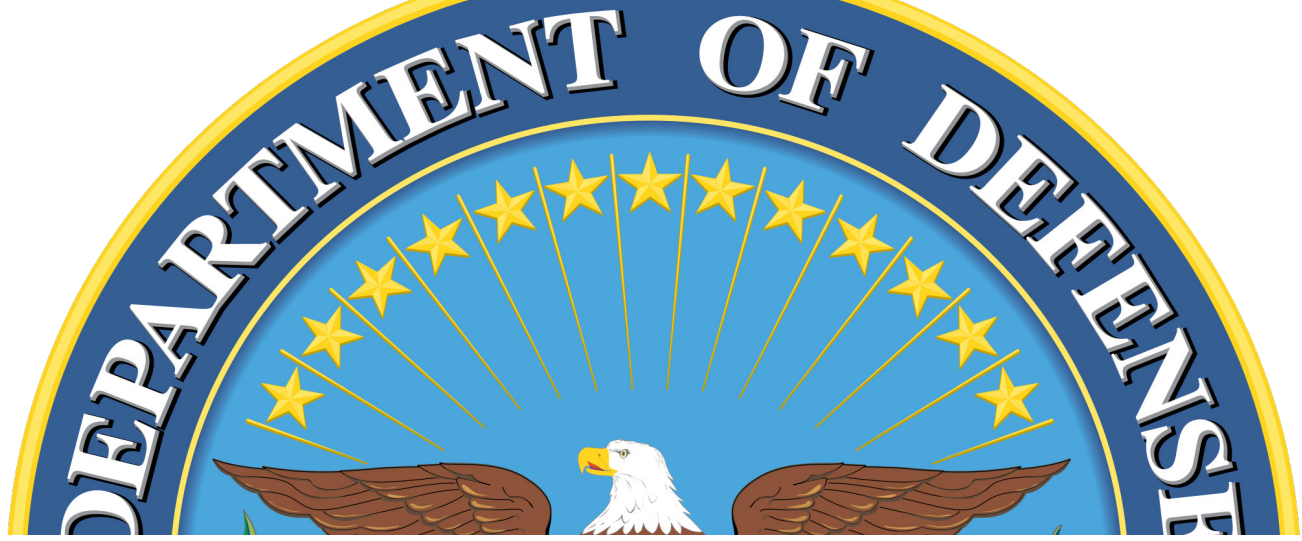
"It incorporates the simple task of putting together a 9-line (MEDEVAC request), it is actually very useful for everybody because they have to figure out a grid coordinate, they need to figure out communications with us, and then actually sending the radio communications," stated Sutton. "It helps us too because we have a crew ready to go and it gives us muscle memory for our 15 minute launch time."

"I like the idea of doing multi-unit training," explained Sutton. "I find it useful to have everybody come in at once and use all the equipment that we have."

Joint training also creates a stronger relationship between the participating units.

"We like to prove to the ground units that when they call, we will actually come," said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Andrew Curtis, the pilot in command of the MEDEVAC operation.

The training concluded Saturday night and when Soldiers from both the 126th and the 172nd returned to their headquarters where they did recovery operations and prepped for next month's drill.



YOUR OPINION

FEEDBACK FROM THE FIELD

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE NEW DOD RETIREMENT SYSTEM: BLENDED RETIREMENT?

Beginning in January 2018, a new Department of Defense enterprise-wide retirement system will go into effect.

Service members with less than 12 years of active duty service and National Guard and Reserve members with less than 4,320 points will have until Dec. 31, 2018 to choose whether to remain in the current system or opt into the new one. The new blended retirement system is three-pronged:

Prong 1 consists of a defined pension benefit upon retirement, which is similar to the current system, said Col. Steven Hanson, Army G-1 Compensation and Entitlements, Allowances branch chief.

The current retirement system awards a pension of 2.5 percent of basic pay per year times the number of years of service for those serving 20 or more years, he said. So someone with 20 years would receive 50 percent of base pay per year in retirement.

The new blended retirement system awards 2 percent per year. So that same [service member] serving 20 years would earn a pension of 40 percent of base pay.

Prong 2 consists of a Thrift Savings Plan, or TSP, which is similar to a 401K plan, Hanson said.

Under the TSP plan, the government will contribute 1 percent of base pay for new [service members] after 60 days and then will match up to 5 percent of contributions after two years. For Soldiers who opt into the blended retirement system, the government contributions to TSP begin immediately.

Prong 3 is a one-time continuation payment for [service members] with eight to 12 years of service. It will at minimum be 2.5 months of base pay for those on active duty. For Guard and Reserve Soldiers, it will be a half-month's basic pay as if they were on active duty.

If the service member accepts this one-time payment, known as continuation pay, he or she will have to agree to serve for a minimum of three additional years.

DECISION MAKING

Each service member's circumstances are unique when it comes to deciding whether or not to opt in or remain in the current system, Hanson said. A mandatory Joint Knowledge Online course will help them decide which is best for them.

ANALYSIS

Under the new system, all service members who serve honorably for at least two years (approximately 85 percent of service members) will now have some retirement benefits when they leave the service.

It is widely recognized that Thrift Savings Plan is an excellent retirement plan, with very low fees and other benefits, Hanson said. Even after separating from the Army, [service members] can keep contributing to their TSP or roll it into some other plan like a 401K.

The other good news, he said, is service members currently serving are not being forced into a new plan. "There's no opting out, only opting in."

YOUR OPINION: WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THE BLENDED RETIREMENT PROGRAM?



"I think for our newest servicemembers, the blended retirement system is the reality of a changing landscape that no longer can afford traditional pensions. Unfortunately, attrition is the reality of a mobile work force that typically doesn't stay in the same area for a full 20 years. The new system is no longer all or nothing, so those who don't want to make a career out of it and are willing to serve for lesser periods of time still receive benefits. However, those in the organization that are still in the opt-in years have a more difficult challenge to decide to switch. Soldiers in that group should take the time to understand the impacts of changing."

- Lt. Col. Michael Steinbuchel, Commander, Recruiting and Retention Battalion

"I think that it's a great opportunity for our guardsmen, as it gives them more options to meet their retirement goals. The blended retirement system offers automatic matching contributions of up to 5 Percent into your Thrift Savings Plan. The new program allows portability for our guardsmen that do not reach a 20 year retirement they would still leave the military with their Thrift Savings Plan."

-Master Sgt. Solomon Shaw, Maine Air National Guard



"Anytime you change a system there will be the naysayers and the yaysayers. The Blended Retirement System seems to offer a multifaceted financial benefit package for servicemembers. Rather than just a retirement check at the completion of 20 years of service, this plan allows for potential retirement financial support whether one completes 20 years of service or not. The longer one stays, the more robust their TSP package may be for them upon retirement, and if and when they decide to leave service, they can roll that TSP to an external 401K plan. Providing something more than an 'all-or nothing' option is a good thing I believe, and could encourage service members to continue to serve longer periods."

- Chief Warrant Officer 3 Kartika Wright, Sexual Assault and Response Coordinator



"I feel that the new blended retirement system may provide a method for younger military members to gain more benefits from their service. It may also motivate Soldiers to continue serving longer than they originally intended. Senior leaders should stress that proper planning will allow Soldiers to build a solid retirement. Training for all will be critical to understand the system. Military retirement planning will become an individual responsibility. Not only will soldiers be responsible for the achievements within their careers, but also for the successfulness of their retirements. "

- Sgt. 1st Class Jennifer MacGillivray, Command Group



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