

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Fall 2023

GUARDSMAN

MAGAZINE





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The New Hampshire Guardsman Magazine is a joint publication for soldiers and airmen serving in the N.H. National Guard, as well as their families and retirees.

The New Hampshire Guardsman Magazine is produced by the State Public Affairs Office.

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COVER: From left, **Capt. Brendan Meehan** and **Sgt. Jackson McWade** of Charlie Company, 3rd Battalion, 238th Aviation Regiment (MEDEVAC) hoist a U.S. flag a few hours after an Iranian missile strike Jan. 8, 2020 destroyed the company's operations center and hangar at Al Asad Air Base, Iraq. The flag was displayed at the entrance of the hangar and discovered amid the rubble with only a slight tear. *Courtesy photo.*



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DETERMINED TO FLY AGAIN

By Staff Sgt. Courtney Rorick, 114th Public Affairs Detachment NCOIC

After receiving intel of a potential Iranian attack on Al Asad Air Base in western Iraq, Capt. Brendan Meehan began calling units from his operations tent on the flight line, warning them to seek shelter.

In the early morning hours of Jan. 8, Iran fired a barrage of 22 missiles at coalition headquarters in Al Asad and Erbil Air Base in northern Iraq in response to the U.S. assassination of Iranian Commander Qassem Soleimani.

A missile struck about 100 yards from Meehan's location and sent a shockwave of shrapnel and debris thousands of feet in every direction.

The blast threw him 15 feet.

"I was compressed into a spring, thrown, tumbled, then hit my back," Meehan said. "I looked down, and there was this big fireball of smoke. Things were crackling, and my first thought was that they blew up the ops tent."

Once Meehan assessed his injuries, he rolled over and attempted to move.

"I couldn't get up," Meehan said. "I began crawling to the nearest bunker."

Once inside, after a long pause, Meehan heard a faint "Sir, are you okay?"

After a little while longer, Meehan regained his bearing enough to navigate back and forth between two bunkers, situated about 50 yards apart. Bouncing back and forth between the two, he continued to check on troops inside.

He said an onslaught of multiple missile strikes ensued.

"The ground moved," Meehan said. "It felt like tremors. I've never felt anything like it. They came down, one by one, down the runway."

"I originally placed my team in a bunker located 10 feet from a hangar by the airfield," Meehan said. "I ended up moving them, because it was too far away from my location; I needed better command and control."

The vacated bunker was later found peppered with shrapnel.

Meehan—a pilot with Charlie Company, 3rd Battalion, 238th Aviation Regiment (MEDEVAC)—was awarded the Army Commendation Medal with Valor for helping save the lives of nine soldiers.

While no U.S. troops were killed in the attack, Meehan said the base was destroyed. The unit lost aircraft, buildings and various equipment.

Three days following the attack, Meehan realized the true severity of his team's injuries and called one of the flight doctors located nearby to assess.

Each soldier was diagnosed with a traumatic brain injury (TBI). And although he didn't feel well himself, Meehan focused on his team's well-being. He had to be ordered by his commander to seek medical care.

"He said, 'When are you going to get seen? You're not okay,'"

described Meehan. "I wanted to set the example, so I got checked out. It was the right thing to do."

It was only 10 minutes into the assessment when the doctor told Meehan he needed further evaluation.

"That's when the symptoms really crashed in," he said. "It was debilitating. I felt like the world was spinning."

"I couldn't look at screens," Meehan said. "I had major headaches."



Capt. Brendan Meehan

Meehan recalled having to lie on the floor just to be "okay."

"My neck was so locked up at one point, because my brain was trying to perceive the world correctly, which caused everything to seize up," Meehan said.

While Meehan awaited his replacement, he continued to push through the injury, placing the mission first and getting the MEDEVAC team operational.

On February 7, Meehan was evacuated to a military medical facility in Landstuhl, Germany, for further assessment.

"Unfortunately, due to my condition, they determined I needed immediate relocation to Walter Reed (National Medical Center)," said Meehan, who arrived there February 13.

After multiple evaluations, doctors told Meehan he would never fly again.

"I was told, 'you know, you really should be looking for other jobs outside of aviation,'" Meehan said. "Or, 'you should be on this medication, so you can get better.'"

Meehan made the decision to refuse any medication treatment, because he didn't want his brain to develop a reliance on a prescription to function normally.

"This is my life," Meehan said. "I felt like I was being told to recreate my sense of self, which is something I wasn't willing to do until I exercised all other options."

"This would have grounded me indefinitely, and any hope of flying again would be in jeopardy," Meehan said. "I wasn't willing to give up that easily."

On May 7, nearly four months after the attack, Meehan was awarded the Purple Heart, presented by Gen. James McConville, then chief of staff of the Army.

Amidst the recognition for his wounds, Meehan recognized within himself that his symptoms were worsening. He made the decision to seek alternative treatment plans and pursue other options.

"He always kind of downplayed how serious everything was, because he didn't want anyone to feel bad," said retired Sgt. 1st Class Rodney Anderson, an operations noncommissioned officer with 54th Troop Command at the time.

Anderson, who was also Meehan's first platoon sergeant, was informed of the decision to leave the hospital and arrived at Walter Reed with fellow aviators to bring him back to the Granite State.

Upon arriving home to New Hampshire, Meehan began exploring other forms of care. After an exhaustive search, Dr. Victor Pedro, the chief innovation officer at the International Institute for the Brain in Manhattan, New York, accepted his case.

Pedro described meeting Meehan and his father for the first time.

"His dad came in with him, and I remember I was looking up at him," said Pedro of the vast height difference between himself and Meehan's father. "He put his hands on my shoulders and said 'You've got to get my son better. You've got to get him flying again ... please.'"

"As a dad, as a father of four, I just understood," added Pedro, who choked up as he recalled the events.

When describing the most challenging part of the recovery process, Pedro said the impact from a traumatic brain injury can become more severe the longer it's left untreated. Meehan was a victim to the detriment of time.

"He couldn't get the treatment he needed because everything was shut down," recalled Pedro, in reference to the nationwide health care stress on medical facilities due to COVID-19. "This let the situation set in. Whereas, ideally, you get them in right away."

Although new obstacles continued to

emerge, Meehan never lost focus on his goal to fly again.

"This guy was at it and you have to hand it to him, because he just didn't stop," Anderson said of Meehan's resilience. "He never quit.

"He went the extra mile to make sure he got where he needed to be, which was back in the cockpit," Anderson added.

Pedro said one of the keys to getting the Aviator better would be his sheer determination and drive.

"He was willing to do whatever it took," Pedro said. "That's half the battle."

Simply put, Pedro described Meehan's rehabilitation as a series of stimulations, which tested his visual and sensory abilities.

"Once the cogs and the wheels start going, you want them to synchronize," Pedro said. "The brain has two pacemakers; we wanted the timing of those loops to be right."

Approximately two years after his injury and extensive work with Pedro, Meehan went back to Walter Reed to complete a series of neuro-cognitive tests required to fly again. These included, but were not limited to, brain exercises to test reactions to loud noises and lights, as well as memory assessments.

"The lead-up to being cleared was extremely daunting and unknown," Meehan said.

Meehan's efforts paid off and he received an "up slip," clearing him to fly. And in June of 2022, while on annual training at Camp Edwards, Joint Base Cape Cod, in Massachusetts, Meehan conducted his first flight post injury.

"My first flight back, I was very nervous," Meehan said. "I just kept thinking 'I hope this goes well."

"It really took a year after I finally flew to get the mission set back," Meehan added. "At that point it felt like I finally knew what my future would be like again."

Meehan attests that without the doctors at Walter Reed, Dr. Pedro, the support from the New Hampshire Army National Guard, and a list of other encouraging individuals throughout his healing journey, he would never be in the cockpit again.

Today, not only is Meehan flying but he is also in command of Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 169th Aviation Regiment.

"His drive, dedication, compassion and tenacity to recover are the epitome of a truly well-rounded leader," said Col. Woody Groton, special projects officer with Joint Forces Headquarters and former commander of 54th Troop Command. "His resilience, when faced with adversity and uncertainties, is something we can all learn from."

That feeling is shared by long-time friend, Anderson.

"Overcoming this injury, to then fly again, and take command," added Anderson, "He's simply unmatched by others and this is a testament to his incredible character."

When asked how it felt to look back and to see how far he's ventured, Meehan described the experience as eye-opening.

"I think this has made me more well-rounded," said Meehan. "I'm able to better understand the things my soldiers go through when it comes to challenges, sacrifices and adversity."

"This journey really made me grow as a person, professionally and personally," he added. "I think this has made me a better pilot."

Chief Warrant Officer 3 Jonathan Shallow of Charlie Company, 3rd Battalion, 238th Aviation Regiment (MEDEVAC), stands in a large crater after an Iranian missile strike Jan. 8, 2020 destroyed the company's operations center and hangar at Al Asad Air Base, Iraq. *Courtesy photo.*



NEW PARTNERSHIP ENABLES CRITICAL TRAINING

Story and photo by Tech. Sgt. Victoria Nelson, 157th ARW Public Affairs

Amid the chaotic buzz of the Catholic Medical Center Emergency Department, an airman from the 157th Medical Group kept pace with the nurses and paramedics bustling from room to room.

Master Sgt. John McDowell, an aerospace medicine technician, was completing annual training requirements alongside CMC's medical personnel in the ED and Intensive Care Unit Oct. 9-13.

The opportunity was part of a new partnership that allows New Hampshire Air National Guard medics to hone their skills with patients in the hospital setting.

"It's a training affiliation agreement," said Maj. Michelle Mastrobattista, the medical administrative officer with the 157th MDG. "A method for training with industry partners to complete our critical requirements."

The New Hampshire Air National Guard is one of only five units in the country to create this type of partnership.



A team of 157th Medical Group airmen and **Kevin Drew**, director of emergency services for Catholic Medical Center, form the start of a new training partnership in the Emergency Department of Catholic Medical Center on Oct. 12 in Manchester.

The agreement allows guardsmen to follow patients from the beginning to the end of their emergency care. The airmen are licensed by the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians and can perform selected core tasks under the supervision of CMC's medical staff.

"They are assigned four rooms with a nurse, but if a trauma comes in or a cardiac arrest, they have one of our walkie-talkies, the staff will pull him in to get the exposure," said Kevin Drew, CMC's director of emergency services.

The partnership enables airmen to practice caring for patients from different demographics while accomplishing 40 hours of necessary training.

In only one week at the hospital, McDowell saw patients ranging from newborn to 104 years old. He completed over 100 core tasks alongside nurses and paramedics, including

blood draws, intravenous lines for medicine or fluids, electrocardiograms, and patient assessments.

"This is the first time New Hampshire has ever had this opportunity, and we could not be more grateful for CMC to be our first partners," Mastrobattista said. "This experience is far outside of what we can provide in a training environment on base. These are real people and real exposure to what our airmen may see if they are deployed."

Mastrobattista said the partnership means they do not have to travel far for the in-depth training.

"This is the shortest commute I have ever had," laughed McDowell, who lives in Manchester. "Even though I am less than 10 minutes from home, being immersed in the culture here is my biggest takeaway for adapting in settings like this overseas."

McDowell said this experience will help airmen incorporate faster into the pace of hospital teams when deployed.

Shadowing is also specific to each airman's training needs. Every member is required to have 40 hours of shadowing and hands-on training annually.

"The flexibility in this partnership is just one of the huge benefits compared to group training," said Master Sgt. Meghan O'Regan, an aerospace medic with the 157th Medical Group and training coordinator for the partnership. "Everyone from our newest medics to our most experienced will have a completely unique week tailored to honing their perishable skills."

The hospital has worked with the New Hampshire National Guard in the past during pandemic relief missions and while setting up acute care centers across the state. Both teams said the partnership was well worth the effort to make it a reality.

"This collaboration and connection are beneficial for the hospital," Drew said. "For me, this partnership is also personal.

"I was a 19-year-old medic in the Army and had no skills," he recalled. "Someone took the time to help me out, and I was able to get to where I am today. Now, both of my boys are in the military. I want to make sure we are passing on everything we can and doing as much as we can to support one another."



From left, STARBASE New Hampshire Director **Mark Campbell**, NH Adjutant Gen. **David Mikolaities**, and Franklin School District Superintendent **Dan LeGallo** conduct a ribbon-cutting ceremony Nov. 13 for STARBASE New Hampshire -- a Department of Defense education program for fifth graders -- at the Edward Cross Training Complex in Pembroke. Photo by Master Sgt. Charles Johnston, NHNG Deputy State PAO.

BLAST OFF

The New Hampshire National Guard held a ribbon cutting for STARBASE New Hampshire, a Department of Defense education program for fifth graders, Nov. 13 at the Edward Cross Training Complex in Pembroke.

Coinciding with the ceremony, students from Dunbarton Elementary School began the inaugural session of STARBASE, which stands for Science and Technology Academies Reinforcing Basic Aviation and Space Exploration.

"Our goal is to motivate New Hampshire students to explore STEM opportunities as they continue their education," said Mark Campbell, director of STARBASE New Hampshire. "We have two, trained educators who will teach the lessons. We will work with school districts to ensure we are supporting their standards and learning objectives."

The only cost to the school districts is transportation to and from the classroom at the ECTC. STARBASE covers all other expenses, including materials.

First started in Detroit in 1991, STARBASE is being conducted in more than 40 states. Lessons can include robotics, rocketry, engineering, physics, FIRST LEGO League, solar cars, chemistry, technology, and aerospace.

The academies serve students who are historically underrepresented in STEM. They are hosted at National Guard, Army, Air Force and Marine bases across the country.

"I'm hopeful this experience will excite students to learn more about STEM opportunities as a future career and be a catalyst for them to become future scientists, engineers,

mathematicians, and technology specialists," Campbell said. "I'm also hopeful that teachers who visit our classroom will be inspired to do more STEM activities back at their schools." Each session offers students 25 hours of STEM-based learning spread over five days. Franklin School District will comprise the second group of fifth graders. Their session begins Nov. 16. Manchester School District has signed up for January of 2024. -compiled by NHNG Public Affairs



Principal **Tim Vasconcellos** and fifth grader **Leighton Filiau** of Dunbarton Elementary School conduct an Alka-Seltzer rocket propulsion experiment Nov. 13 at the New Hampshire National Guard's Edward Cross Training Complex in Pembroke. The Dunbarton fifth graders participated in their first class for STARBASE New Hampshire. Photo by Master Sgt. Charles Johnston, NHNG Deputy State PAO.

PEASE AIRMEN INSTALL FIRST FLIGHT CONTROL SURFACE

Story and photos by Tech. Sgt. Victoria Nelson, 157th ARW Public Affairs

Repair and reclamation mechanics with the 157th Maintenance Group completed the first full replacement of a flight control surface on a KC-46 on Oct. 5 at Pease Air National Guard Base in Newington.

Airmen replaced the left outboard elevator. This surface on the tail controls the angle of the nose or “pitch” of the aircraft, causing it to climb or dive during flight.

“This is an enormous milestone,” said Col. Christine Banks, the commander of the 157th Maintenance Group. “This is the first time a flight control surface has operationally been installed in the KC-46.”

Complete removal and installation took the team two full days and one week of preparation prior.

“We have never done anything of this caliber,” said Tech. Sgt. William Rand, a unit repair and reclamation technician. “With R&R you learn the very basics in tech school, but the rest is on the job training. You might not ever see this kind of maintenance happen in someone’s career.”

In addition to completing an extensive and unique maintenance request, airmen pioneered the path to installation from supply to outfitting the new elevator.

The damage occurred during a weather-related event at Pease. Airmen removed both the inboard and outboard elevator with a crane to ensure the replacement surface could be reinstalled safely.

“There are a lot of moving parts,” said Master Sgt. Adam Hart, the unit’s R&R lead. “It’s different than our normal day-to-



Airmen of the 157th Maintenance Group and 64th Air Refueling Squadron replace an elevator on a KC-46A Pegasus on Oct. 5 at Pease Air National Guard Base in Newington.

day because the scale is bigger, and it requires rigging of flight controls that don't normally get replaced."

"We are also working through everything for the first time," he added. "It's new to everyone. We have to be extra cognizant of the different parts and everyone's roles."

Rand explained the job required an extreme level of focus as he pointed out the size of the jet.

"A KC-46 elevator is about the size of a wing on the F-16," Hart said. "You have to get everything exactly right. There are very serious and dangerous implications for anything less than perfect."

Before the KC-46 can fly in operational missions again, a team of test pilots from Tinker Air Force Base are required to certify the aircraft is safe and airworthy.

"Our maintainers handled this mission safely and efficiently," Banks said. "They were methodical and deliberate, and they took time to ensure discrepancies with the technical data we follow were noted for correction for future maintainers doing this task."

"I'm incredibly proud of their diligence through the whole process," she said. "They demonstrated the capabilities our future airmen have to offer."



Tech. Sgt. William Rand, an aircraft maintainer with the 157th Maintenance Group, coordinates the removal of the flight control surface with the maintenance team and equipment operators Oct. 5 at Pease Air National Guard Base in Newington.



Thunder Over New Hampshire Air Show visitors surround a B-52H Stratofortress from the 307th Bomb Wing of Barksdale Air Force Base, La., on display Sept. 10 at Pease Air National Guard Base in Newington. Photo by Staff Sgt. Timothy Hayden, 157th ARW Public Affairs.

ONE AIR SHOW, ONE COMMUNITY

By Staff Sgt. Courtney Rorick, 114th Public Affairs Detachment NCOIC

As storms threatened the region, nearly 80,000 visitors flowed through the gates of Pease Air National Guard Base in Newington to experience a different kind of thunder.

The gates of New Hampshire's only Air National Guard Base were open to the public for the Thunder Over New Hampshire Air Show and Open House, Sept. 9-10.

During the event, the community had the opportunity to engage with members of the New Hampshire National Guard while being immersed in an international military experience. The show featured world-class aerial performers, military equipment and static displays from as far away as Australia, and virtual reality military simulations.

The show also gave the 157th Air Refueling Wing the opportunity to put its next-generation aerial refueler, the KC-46A Pegasus, on display for the public. Each day featured a flying demonstration, and six jets were open for guests to walk through with aircrews.

"We watch you guys over our house doing refueling on a weekly basis," said Patrick Leonard, who drove two hours from Woodstock, Vermont, to see the 157th Air Refueling Wing's mission. "It was a great experience to see everything up close."

Also featured during the air show and open house were two hangars filled with STEM exhibits for people of all ages to enjoy.

"Look how fast it goes," said 6-year-old Isaiah Xiong, while he followed a robotic car across colored tiles in one STEM exhibit. "We got to see the airplanes flying in loops and the robots."

While sunshine radiated the flightline on opening day, the U.S. Air Force F-16 Viper Demo Team, U.S. Special Operations Team Para Commandos, Rob Holland, and several others dazzled spectators from the air.

The air show also featured two key ceremonies. On Saturday, the wing dedicated the KC-46A Spirit of Portsmouth, which features one-of-a-kind tail art, to the men and women of

the NHNG as well as the towns of Portsmouth and Newington.

On Sunday, a second ceremony was held in front of a 307th Bomb Wing B-52 to commemorate Medal of Honor recipient Capt. Harl Pease Jr. for heroic actions during World War II, which cost him his life. Pease was assigned to the 93rd Bomb Squadron, which is now assigned to the 307th BW, Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana.

The two-day event, which took nearly a year to plan and develop, was led by Maj. Michelle Mastrobattista, air show director and a medical administrations officer with the 157th Air Refueling Wing Medical Group.

“Our airmen worked diligently to ensure the show was ready, enjoyable and successful for those in attendance,” Mastrobattista said. “I’m also grateful for our community partners who assisted us along the way.”

The commander of the 157th ARW echoed her sentiments.

“This event would not be possible without the support from the community,” said Col. Nelson Perron. “We hope to utilize that support to inspire future generations.”

Despite the rain and clouds putting an early end to flying on Sunday, Patrick Leonard and his family left Pease exhilarated.

“It made my son’s day,” said Leonard. “He absolutely loved it. He turns 14 on Monday, and this event was a great start to his birthday. Man, what a good time, you guys absolutely killed it.”

Spc. Tyler Miglionico of Charlie Company, 3-172nd Infantry Regiment (Mountain), helps **Evelyn Woodhouse**, a 6-year-old first grader from North Hampton, shoulder an M240L machine gun at the Thunder Over New Hampshire Air Show at Pease Air National Guard Base on Sept. 10 in Newington. Miglionico, a cannon crew member, helped spectators interact with various types of unloaded small arms on display at the two-day event. Evelyn’s father, Ben, said he noticed her watching other kids holding rifles from the NHARNG exhibit and could tell she was also interested. “She kind of pulled me over,” he explained. “It was pretty cool, to be honest. That gun was bigger than her. I thought she was going to tip over when she picked it up.”
Photo by Master Sgt. Charles Johnston, NHNG Deputy State PAO.



Musicians from Portsmouth High School perform alongside the KC-46A “Spirit of Portsmouth” during a dedication ceremony for the aircraft during the Thunder Over New Hampshire Air Show on Sept. 9 at Pease Air National Guard Base in Newington. *Photo by Staff Sgt. Courtney Rorick, 114th Public Affairs Detachment NCOIC.*



WHERE IT ALL BEGINS

A leadership team from the 157th Air Refueling Wing visits with the most recent class of United States airmen to graduate from Basic Military Training at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas from Nov. 7 to 9. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Victoria Nelson, 157th ARW Public Affairs.

VETERANS DAY OBSERVANCE

From left, University of New Hampshire Cadets **Zachary Barthel**, **Dylan Shedd** and **Daniel Raymond** place American flags alongside headstones Nov. 9 at the New Hampshire State Veterans Cemetery in Boscawen. Photo by Master Sgt. Charles Johnston, NHNG Deputy State PAO.



THE HONORABLE ORDER

Col. Davis Ulricson, brigade commander for the 197th Field Artillery Regiment, NHARNG, awards the Honorable Order of Saint Barbara to **Cpt. Patrick Filkins**, outgoing commander for the Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 197th Field Artillery Regiment, on Oct. 10 at the Manchester armory. The Honorable Order of Saint Barbara is awarded to individuals who have demonstrated the highest standards of integrity, moral character, displayed outstanding professional competence, served the artillery branch with selflessness, and contributed to the promotion of the branch. The award is named for Saint Barbara, the patron saint of stone hurlers, archers, catapultiers, rocketeers, and gunners. Photo by *Spc. Liam Reilly*, 603rd Public Affairs Detachment.





ROCKETMAN

New Hampshire **Gov. Chris Sununu** stands in the crew chief's hatch of a High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS) during his visit with New Hampshire National Guard's 3rd Battalion, 197th Field Artillery Regiment at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, on Oct. 6. *Photo by Spc. Devin Bard, 603rd Public Affairs Detachment.*



FIELD OF DREAMS

The athletic field at the Edward Cross Training Complex in Pembroke was recently resurfaced with artificial turf and branded with the logo of the New Hampshire Army National Guard at midfield. Soon, it will be available for military and community sporting events. *Photo illustration by Master Sgt. Charles Johnston, NHNG Deputy State PAO.*

VIEW FROM ABOVE

Cabo Verde Prime Minister José Ulisses Correia e Silva awaits takeoff aboard a Black Hawk medevac helicopter Sept. 25 during a tour of the NHNG Army Aviation Support Facility in Concord. Cabo Verde, an island nation off the northwestern coast of Africa, and New Hampshire are paired through a Department of Defense program that links state National Guards and foreign countries to facilitate military, government, and civilian exchanges. *Photo by Master Sgt. Charles Johnston, NHNG Deputy State PAO.*



AS A COLD RAIN FALLS

An honor guard from the New Hampshire Army National Guard escorts the body of **Staff Sgt. Tanner Grone** during an honorable transfer Nov. 22 at the Army Aviation Support Facility in Concord. Grone, a U.S. Special Operations aviation soldier, died in early November during a training exercise in the Mediterranean. A funeral service was held in his hometown of Gorham. Grone was 25 years old. *Photo by Master Sgt. Charles Johnston, NHNG Deputy State PAO.*



IN SYNC

From left, **Pvt. Peter Kratovil**, **Staff Sgt. Dante Davis**, **Spc. Noah Phillips**, and **2nd Lt. Nick Hughes** of Charlie Company, 3rd Battalion, 172nd Infantry Regiment (Mountain) sync their watches at the start of a 12-mile ruck march for the New Hampshire Army National Guard Ranger Assessment on Oct. 21 at the Edward Cross Training Complex in Pembroke. The bi-annual test, held in April and October, measures the physical and tactical abilities of soldiers vying for a seat at U.S. Army Ranger School. *Photo by Staff Sgt. Courtney Rorick, 114th PAD NCOIC.*



WORKER BEE

Airman 1st Class Jade Croissant, an aerospace ground technician with the 157th Maintenance Group, conducts a yearly in-depth inspection of aerospace ground equipment Sept. 20 at Pease Air National Guard Base in Newington. Croissant had no prior mechanical experience before joining the New Hampshire Air National Guard. She plans to continue honing her technical skills in her civilian career. *Photo by Tech. Sgt. Victoria Nelson, 157th ARW Public Affairs.*

SPOOKTACULAR

A skeletonized **Stevens family**--from left, **Zynthia**, twins **Zander** and **Amelia** (in stroller), and **Zóltán**--accept candy from **Kristin Haley** of Military OneSource at a Trunk or Treat on Oct. 28 at the state military reservation in Concord. Husband and father, **Sgt. Timothy Stevens**, is a mechanic deployed to the Middle East with 744th Forward Support Company, 3-197th Field Artillery Regiment. *Photo by Master Sgt. Charles Johnston, NHNG Deputy State PAO.*





TRUE GEM

Col. Richard Oberman, commander of the Medical Readiness Detachment, presents the U.S. flag to **1st Sgt. Tosha Noel**, senior enlisted advisor of MEDDET, during her retirement ceremony Oct. 14 at the state military reservation in Concord. Noel was honored for 21 years of service in the New Hampshire Army National Guard. *Photo by Sgt. Sean Ferry, 114th Public Affairs Detachment.*



HOME GROWN

Tate Kapise, a 2023 Merrimack High School grad, is sworn into the New Hampshire National Guard by **Gov. Chris Sununu** on Nov. 29 at the state military reservation in Concord. Kapise will attend University of New Hampshire as a homeland security major and Army ROTC cadet. *Photo by NHNG Public Affairs.*



FROM A LOG CABIN TO THE WHITE HOUSE

Col. Allen Aldenberg, commander of 54th Troop Command, NHARNG, addresses students from St. John Regional School during a graveside ceremony to commemorate President Franklin Pierce's 219th birthday Nov. 21 at Old North Cemetery in Concord. Pierce was the 14th U.S. president from 1853 to 1857. A lifelong statesman, Pierce was an officer in the volunteer militia, leading a brigade of reinforcements during the Mexican-American War. *Photo by Master Sgt. Charles Johnston, NHNG Deputy State PAO.*



HOLIDAY CHEER

Spc. Anna Salisbury of the 197th Field Artillery Brigade passes out candy during Manchester's annual holiday parade Dec. 2. Soldiers marched in formation and drove unit vehicles along a short parade route that extended from the armory and along Elm Street. *Photo by Master Sgt. Charles Johnston, NHNG Deputy State PAO.*

NEW AGE TECH

Staff Sgt. Nathan Pincince, an aerospace ground equipment technician with the 157th Maintenance Group, parks a self-generating nitrogen cart Sept. 20 at Pease Air National Guard Base in Newington. AGE airmen master multiple skill sets that are required to inspect and repair generators, hydraulic systems and other equipment used to maintain the KC-46A Pegasus. *Photo by Tech. Sgt. Victoria Nelson, 157th ARW Public Affairs.*



197TH FAB SOLDIERS AWARDED CABs

From left, **Sgt. Kailey MacDonald**, **Staff Sgt. John Cotter**, **Sgt. Connor McKeogh**, **Sgt. Matthew McGrath**, **Staff Sgt. Ryan Faulkner**, and **Sgt. Zachary Blocker** are awarded the Combat Action Badge during a ceremony July 29 at the Manchester armory. The soldiers, all with the 197th Field Artillery Brigade, played an integral role in tracking and responding to rocket attacks from Iran-affiliated militants on Mission Support Sites Conoco and Green Village in northeast Syria on August 24, 2020. About 130 soldiers from the brigade were deployed to the Middle East, supporting U.S. Army Central Command missions in Syria, Jordan, Qatar and Kuwait. *Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Richard Frost, 603rd Public Affairs Detachment NCOIC.*

TRUE INTERNATIONAL EVENT

By Sgt. Bei Simmons, 114th Public Affairs Detachment

A squad of five lieutenants from El Salvador won the team competition in this year's New Hampshire National Guard Combat Marksmanship Match at Fort Devens, Mass., Sept. 6 to 8.

The annual TAG match featured 66 military personnel from the NHNG, Canada, Cabo Verde, and for the first time, El Salvador.

Capt. Robert Matzelle, commander of Charlie Company, 3rd Battalion, 172nd Infantry Regiment (Mountain) placed first as the top individual shooter.

"It's more than just shooting," said NH Adjutant Gen. David Mikolaities, who has competed in nearly every TAG match. "It's maintaining professional marksmanship skills that we are able to share with our partners."

"What's really unique about this event is that we have our allies and partners here, he added. "So it is a true international event."

One of the Salvadoran competitors, Subteniente Alejandro Vasquez, said the firing ranges at Devens were "a lot more complex than the ones in El Salvador."

He was grateful for the new experience.

"We're very happy to be here and the people are so warm to us," Vasquez said. "I would like to say thank you for all the efforts to make us feel welcome."

Maj. Mario Rey, state partnership director, said the event was a unique opportunity for the Guard's foreign partners to see the role NCOs can play in the planning and execution of large-scale events, "which is not so common in their countries."

The TAG match provides a comprehensive assessment for people at various skill levels to learn, practice and improve their technique, according to support staff. While many championship shooters represent New Hampshire on the national level, novice shooters are also taking their first step towards mastery.

"I didn't really have the ability to practice shooting in my personal life, so I wanted to take any opportunities to build up my skills", said first-time competitor Sgt. Nathaniel Sanborn, a supply sergeant with the 3643rd Brigade Support Battalion. "What's a better start than the TAG match to learn from other people who have done it for several years?"

For Senior Airman Zachary Whipple of the 157th Operations Support Squadron, the match was a chance to shoot an M18 pistol for the first time.

"I'm definitely prepared to come back next year, and I plan on doing better next year," he said.



A squad of five lieutenants from the Salvadoran navy, artillery and infantry took first place in the team competition of the 2023 New Hampshire National Guard Combat Marksmanship Match held Sept. 6 to 8 at Fort Devens, Mass. Congratulations to our state partners represented from left by **Subteniente Alejandro Vasquez**, **Teniente Max Orantes**, (**Maj. Jeremy Sanders**, bilateral affairs officer for NHNG-El Salvador state partnership), **Teniente Rodrigo Merino**, **Subteniente Jaime Peraza**, and **Subteniente Roberto Torres**. About 70 military personnel from the NH Army and Air National Guard, 5th Canadian Division/ 5e Division du Canada, and state partners Fuerza Armada de El Salvador and Forças Armadas de Cabo Verde competed in the three-day shoot. *Courtesy photo.*



NH Adjutant Gen. **David Mikolaities** presents his challenge coin to **Subteniente Roberto Torres** of the Salvadoran Special Forces at the conclusion of the 2023 New Hampshire National Guard Combat Marksmanship Match on Sept. 8 at Fort Devens, Mass. A five-man squad from El Salvador competed for the first time in the NH TAG Match, winning the Remington “Vulcan” Trophy as team champion of the three-day shoot. *Photo by Sgt. Bei Simmons, 114th Public Affairs Detachment.*



Staff Sgt. **Caitlin Hogan**, a defender with the 157th Security Forces Squadron, fires her M18 during a combat pistol event in the New Hampshire National Guard Combat Marksmanship Match on Sept. 7 at Fort Devens, Mass. *Photo by Staff Sgt. Brianna Passi, 114th Public Affairs Detachment.*



Military award recipients (or designees in their absence) stand front and center at the New Hampshire National Guard's annual awards ceremony and 387th birthday celebration Dec. 13 at the Edward Cross Training Complex in Pembroke.

ALL ABOUT THE PEOPLE

Story and photos by Master Sgt. Charles Johnston, NHNG Deputy State PAO

The New Hampshire National Guard held its 387th birthday celebration and annual awards ceremony Dec. 13 at the Edward Cross Training Complex in Pembroke.

The youngest and oldest guardsmen in attendance, Airman 1st Class Keegan Werner of the 157th Air Refueling Wing and Col. James Kelly of Joint Force Headquarters, joined NH Adjutant Gen. David Mikolaities for a traditional cake cutting.

"When you look back at the year in review, it is truly amazing what a small state can do," Mikolaities said. "And it's all about the people. It's about all of you."

The NHNG recognized top military and civilian performers for 2023.

For the NH Army Guard:

Soldier of the Year: Spc. Brendan Tuttle
 Noncommissioned Officer of the Year: Staff Sgt. Davis Jollimore
 Recruiting Rookie of the Year: Staff Sgt. Isabella Igoe
 Recruiting Expert of the Year: Sgt. 1st Class Robin Rojek
 Production Recruiter of the Year: Staff Sgt. Steven Pierce
 TAG Match Grand Champion: Capt. Robert Matzelle
 TAG Match Novice Champion: Pfc. Eddy Louis
 Top Army Combat Fitness Test Score (Female): Spc. Nicole Skare
 Top Army Combat Fitness Test Score (Male): Capt. Matzelle
 Company Grade Officer of the Year: Capt. Jennifer Dumark

For the NH Air Guard:

Airman of the Year: Airman 1st Class Abby Stroup
 Noncommissioned Officer of the Year: Tech. Sgt. Victoria Nelson
 Senior NCO of the Year: Master Sgt. Joh Fiorentino
 First Sergeant of the Year: Master Sgt. Lauren Diogo
 Company Grade Officer of the Year: 1st Lt. Jason Churches
 Spirit of Hope Award: Staff Sgt. Nathan Willard
 Honor Guard Member of the Year: Senior Airman Andrew Aquino
 Title 5 Employee of the Year: Steven Cusack

For State Employees:

Anti-Terrorism Program Manager of the Year: David Beecher
 Real Property Specialist of the Year: Robert Mora
 Building Grounds Utility of the Year: Lea Souther
 Accountant of the Year: Nancy Gauthier
 Directorate of Information Management of the Year: Erin Zayac
 Human Resources Technician of the Year: Cheri Fitzgerald
 Grants Program Coordinator of the Year: Heather Smith

In the spirit of "The Twelve Days of Christmas," Mikolaities highlighted the top 12 organizational achievements of the year beginning with the new athletic field at the Edward Cross Training Complex and ending with Army and Air deployments in support of combat operations in the Middle East and at the southern border.



The New Hampshire National Guard annual awards ceremony and 387th birthday celebration featured a cake cutting by the state's youngest guardsman, **Airman 1st Class Keegan Werner**, NH Adjutant Gen. **David Mikolaities**, and the oldest guardsman, **Army Col. James Kelly**, on Dec. 13 at the Edward Cross Training Complex in Pembroke.



From left, NH Adjutant Gen. **David Mikolaities** coins **Capt. Robert Matzelle** during the NH National Guard's annual awards ceremony and 387th birthday celebration Dec. 13 at the Edward Cross Training Complex in Pembroke. Matzelle was recognized for winning the 2023 TAG Match and earning a perfect score on the combat physical fitness test.



From left, **Brig. Gen. John Pogorek**, commander of the New Hampshire Air National Guard, congratulates **Senior Airman Andrew Aquino** during the NHNG's annual awards ceremony and 387th birthday celebration Dec. 13 at the Edward Cross Training Complex in Pembroke. Aquino was recognized as NH Air Guard's Honor Guard Member of the Year.

ARMY NATIONAL GUARD PROMOTIONS

Private (PV2)

Mason Creager
Vazquez Encarnacion
Paul Goding
Joseph Hebert
Aric Huter
Elija William Antonio Keldo
Sean Kneeland
Martin Sierra
Stephen Simons
Logan Virtue
Bozhidar Vladimirov
Brody Wesler
Corban Williams
John Wilson

Private First Class

Renee Champagne
Jaslyn Coldwell
Macenzi Connors
Nicolas Cullerot
Storm Dupree
Matthew Feole
Ethen Hall
Dennis Harris
Jordan Hilditch
Colt Janes
Shant Koyounian
Aiden Lepage
Cameron Lumbard
Taylor Markwith
Edward Moore
Jacob Morris
Shereen Munir
Kevin Alfonso Pagan Ramos
Corey Santana
Ryan Tatman
Cameron Watts
Aaron Weatherbee
Richard White

Specialist

Joshua Burner
Benjamin Thanh Cong Carter
Jessica Hayes
Ariana Krom
Tyler Maviki
Andrea Obando Gordillo
Boden Rand
John Savage
Ashley Stephens
AJ Richard Tamburino
Madelyn Urizandi

Sergeant

Johann Badaoui
Devin Bard
Donald Beliveau
Kelly Boyer
Roy Burns
Caio Campos
Thomas Companion
Helen Connor
Connor Decker
Lauren Dennett
Dylan Dibernardo
Thomas Echelberger
Bukola Fatukasi
Luis Galvezsoza
Alexander Greer
Erik Hauck
Reilly Howard
John Kakavoulis
Christopher Kiernan
Vincent Kirathi
Appalachia Kunz
Conor Laselva
Ashly Lavery
Georgia Le Comte
Rachel Lester
Brenna Lynn
Bryan Lytle
Jerry Nineza
Patrick Ogarr
William Petro
Mintiney Pham
Harry Pinti
Simon Quinn
Corey Riordan

Dylan Schupp
Nicole Skare
Paul Smith
Hayden Souza
Justin Sweet
Richard Taylor
Jenny Tran
Brendan Tuttle
Jedidiah Walz
Cameron West
Elizabeth Williams

Staff Sergeant

Jacob Atkins
Emma Berman-Inglis
Juan Brunocuret
Lawrence Davis
Sean Gregoire
Elizabeth Hayward
Blake Jalbert Sullivan
Paul Knight
Clinton Lagace
Brandon Loyd
Kailey MacDonald
Ryan Martel
Matthew McGrath
Alexander Moir
Nathan Monroe
Ryan Moran
Amani Mwingira
Andrew Newman
Cameron O' Shaughnessy
Shamir Rai
Jesus Salamanca
Nathaniel Sanborn
Samuel Surawski
Ryan Swarbrick
Matthew Tejada
Marissa Urban
John Webb

Sergeant First Class

Danica Whorton

Master Sergeant

Jeremy Dingman
Jonathan Gunby
Kevin Harvey
Rachel Robak

First Sergeant

Andrew Childs
Christopher Duquette
Juan Rodriguez

Chief Warrant Officer 4

David Breton
Scott Canavan

Second Lieutenant

Nicholas Curro

Captain

Anthony Machado
Michael Miller
Nathan Walters

Major

John Glennon

Lieutenant Colonel

Rudolph Cartier

AIR NATIONAL GUARD PROMOTIONS

Airman First Class

Jamie Kosakowski
Kyle Castrigno
Malikatou Mossi

Senior Airman

Emma Anderson
Camila De Paula
Jarret Canney
Travis Carroll
Morgan Carter
Reid Eckhart
Nathan Forster
Dominic Fusco
Louis Granger
Megan Haley
Marcus Herold
Jeremias Cruz Fuentes
Malik McKinnon
Theogene Munyabuhoro
Dustin Nichol

Technical Sergeant

Dana Bartell
Shantelle Berry
Alexander Bettcher
Evan Delhay
Andrew Doucette
Aaron Flynn
Jared Griffin
Jake Redman
Logan Sneirson
Gabrielle Stinson
Adam Taatjes
Daniel Taylor

Master Sergeant

Nicholas Bertell
Coleen Doty
Jared Karos
Mary Lux
Joseph Melanson
Melanie Mendel

John Pochebit
Dylan Pratt
Aaron Vezeau

Senior Master Sergeant

Ariel Feindel
William Hoover
Jason Suidut

Chief Master Sergeant

Keith Beaudry
Jeremy Hutchinson

First Lieutenant

Maron Sorenson

Major

Jordan Gauvin
Emily Hanson
Ryan White

Lieutenant Colonel

James Lux
Jeffrey Morgenthau
Christopher Williams



At right, 1st Sgt. Carolina Compton of NHARNG Recruiting and Retention Battalion congratulates newly promoted Master Sgt. Rachel Robak on Nov. 8 at the state military reservation in Concord. Robak will serve as senior human resources NCO for 54th Troop Command. Photo by Master Sgt. Charles Johnston, NHNG Public Affairs.

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