

# OREGON SENTINEL

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE OREGON NATIONAL GUARD

Story by Master Sgt. Steph Sawyer,  
142nd Wing Public Affairs

EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE, Fla. – Five F-15C instructor pilots from the Oregon Air National Guard’s 123rd Fighter Squadron are conducting training in the F-15EX with instructors from the 85th Test and Evaluation Squadron at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida for two weeks in March.

Training commenced last week with the first training flight flown by 123rd Fighter Squadron pilot, Lt. Col. Joel “Thermo” Thesing, on March 7th, marking a significant milestone for the 142nd Wing.

Thesing commented on the long road the wing has travelled to get to this point, which marks a huge step in laying the foundation for a successful conversion from the weathered F-15 C-model to the novel EX.

“The Wing’s ability to train its first group of pilots on the EX is the direct result of all the hard work that members across the wing have done to lobby for this aircraft, to plan it’s bed down and sustainment, and ultimately how to employ it,” said Thesing. “It’s an honor to be a part of that effort.”

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## Portland pilot conducts first flight in F-15 EX for 142nd Wing



U.S. Air Force photo by Dave Shelikoff

Oregon ANG 123rd Fighter Squadron pilot, Lt. Col. Joel “Thermo” Thesing climbs into an F-15 EX at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., on March 7, 2024. Thesing is the first Portland, Oregon based pilot to fly and train in the EX, marking a significant milestone for his unit, the 142nd Wing, which is slated to receive their first EX this summer.

## Demobilization Ceremony held for Oregon Army National Guard Aviation Soldiers



Story and photos by John Hughel,  
Oregon Military Dept. Public Affairs

SALEM, Ore. – A formal Demobilization Ceremony was held on Jan. 19, 2024 at the Army Aviation Support Facility in Salem, Oregon for 27 members of the Oregon National Guard who were activated along the U.S. Southwest border for the past 12 months. Members of Detachment 1, Company Alpha, 1st Battalion – 112th Aviation were recognized for their yearlong support to the U.S. Customs and Border Protection agency.

While addressing those in attendance, Col. Russell Gibson, 82nd Troop Command Brigade Commander, said the unit conducted a total of 385 missions - flying both day and night operations. The unit conducted operations in their UH-72 Lakota helicopters, working to detect and deter illegal border crossings, drug smuggling and human trafficking.

Story continued on Page 6

Oregon Army National Guard Soldiers assigned to Detachment 1, Company Alpha, 1st Battalion – 112th Aviation listen to remarks during their Demobilization Ceremony held at the Army Aviation Support Facility at Salem, Oregon on Jan. 19, 2024. A total of 27 Oregon Army National Guard Soldiers teamed-up with Soldiers from Idaho, North Dakota, Montana and Wisconsin as part of a 12 month mobilization along the U.S. Southwest Border.



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## COMMAND

# Our Top Three: Be Connected, Be Competent, and Be Committed

I would like to take this opportunity to discuss our duties and responsibilities within our organization and my top three priorities: Be Connected, Be Competent, and Be Committed. These priorities should remain at the forefront of our minds as we carry out our duties. First and foremost, “Be Connected.” This priority underscores the importance of fostering strong relationships within our teams and ensuring that we prioritize the needs of

those we serve alongside. Being connected means understanding the challenges, aspirations, and necessities of one another. It’s creating an environment where individuals feel comfortable raising concerns and addressing problems openly, knowing that they will be met with support and assistance. Whether it’s a supervisor ensuring their team members are adequately resourced to complete the mission or understanding the value of each others’ time, being connected demands our attention, effort, and genuine care for one another. Second: “Be Competent.” Honing our skills and abilities to the highest level possible, ensuring that we are fully trained to execute our missions effectively and efficiently, cultivates competence. Competence is continually striving for excellence and pushing ourselves to excel in each one of our roles. It means being aware of the latest developments in our field, and always being prepared to tackle any challenge that comes our way. Our competence is a reflection of our dedication to our duties and also a testament to our unwavering commitment to the mission at hand.



Brigadier General  
Alan R. Gronewold,  
Adjutant General,  
Oregon National Guard



Finally, “Be Committed.” Commitment embodies dedication to our duties, our teammates, and the mission of the Oregon National Guard and the Oregon Military Department. It is born of the connection and competence values we live and uphold. Embrace these priorities wholeheartedly and integrate them into every aspect of service. These words are the very core of who you ought to be, who you can be, and who you will be. Thank you for your continued dedication and service to our great state and nation and thank you for making our organization the service of choice.

*Always Ready, Always There!*

## Fostering a culture of continuous improvement and growth

Dear Members of the Oregon National Guard, as we welcome the arrival of spring, I am filled with a sense of gratitude for the dedication and commitment each of you demonstrates in service to our great state and nation. It is truly an honor to stand alongside such a remarkable group of individuals who embody the values of duty, honor, and selfless service. This season, let us reflect on the importance of readiness and resiliency in our roles within the Oregon National Guard. As we begin the changing of the seasons, may we approach our duties with a renewed sense of purpose and determination. Our readiness is not just about being prepared for the challenges that may come our way but also about fostering a culture of continuous improvement and growth. I am inspired by the unity and strength of our team, knowing

that each of you brings unique skills and experiences to our collective mission. Together, we form a cohesive unit capable of executing our tasks with precision and effectively responding to the needs of our community during times of crisis. As we celebrate the Month of the Military Child this April, let us also take a moment to recognize the sacrifices and resilience of our military families. They stand beside us, providing unwavering support and strength, and their contributions are vital to our success. I am committed to ensuring that our Service Member Family Support continues to offer the necessary care and resources to support the well-being of our military families. In the coming months, I encourage each of you to continue striving for excellence in all that you do.



Command Sergeant Major  
Lee G. Smith,  
Command Senior Enlisted Leader,  
Oregon National Guard



Your dedication and professionalism are a testament to the values we hold dear in the Oregon National Guard. Together, we will navigate the challenges ahead and emerge stronger and more resilient than ever before. Thank you for your service and commitment to our shared mission. Stay safe, stay strong, and know that your efforts are truly appreciated.

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The Enlistment Enhancement Program (EEP) aims to gain assistance in enlisting Soldiers into the Oregon Army National Guard. The Program will provide a monetary incentive of \$750 to Soldiers and Retirees who can provide a lead to Recruiters that results in an Enlistment.

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COMMAND

# Working Groups Build Capacity and Develop Capabilities with Allies and Partners Across Indo-Pacific Command

Story by U.S. Indo-Pacific Command  
Public Affairs Office

CLACKAMAS, Ore. – More than 450 security cooperation stakeholders and international partners gathered at Camp Withycombe, at Clackamas, Oregon, for the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command’s combined Capabilities Development Working Group and Security Cooperation Education and Training Working Group from Feb. 26-March 1, 2024.

Hosted by the USINDOPACOM J-5 Strategic Policy and Planning Directorate, CDWG aims to identify and develop specific partner nation military capabilities, while SCETWG focuses on education and training opportunities for partner nation military members. The two events work in concert to further security cooperation initiatives in the region through numerous plenary and small group working sessions.

Representatives from Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom,



Photo by John Hughel, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs  
Members of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Capabilities Development Working Group gathers for a group photograph at the Camp Withycombe Auditorium, Clackamas, Ore., Feb. 26, 2024. The ORNG has hosted the four-day U.S. Indo-Pacific Command conference for the second time in the past two years.

As the largest milestone event of its kind, this year’s CDWG gave in-country security cooperation officers the opportunity to interface directly with representatives from across the enterprise to include Department of Defense organizations, component commands, and other United States government agencies, all with a role in taking a security cooperation initiative from ideation to implementation.

“Your untiring efforts over the past two years have advanced our goals to operationalize security cooperation and take a more proactive approach to achieving top U.S. defense and security objectives in the priority theater,” said David Jensen, USINDOPACOM’s Security Cooperation Division Chief, with his closing remarks.

returned to participate in CDWG. Delegations from Japan and the Republic of Korea ROK attended this year’s event for the first time, to further integrate and synchronize security cooperation efforts.

The U.S. team hosted Bilateral Regional Capacity Building forums with both Japanese and ROK delegations to collaborate on current and future security cooperation initiatives and map out approaches to security cooperation in the region.

USINDOPACOM’s Deputy Director for Policy, British Commodore Jonathan Lett, chaired bilateral sessions and a trilateral luncheon with Japan and ROK to foster informal dialogue.

“The United States cannot and should not act alone in ensuring regional security,” Lett said. “For many years, our partners have been the missing piece in the puzzle in security cooperation planning. Your attendance at this event is a testament of what truly is a multinational effort to ensuring a free and open Indo-Pacific.”



Courtesy photo by U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Public Affairs  
Members of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Capabilities Development Working Group work in a classroom at Camp Withycombe, Oregon during their 4-day conference, Feb. 26 to March 1, 2024.



Courtesy photo by U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Public Affairs  
Members of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Capabilities Development Working Group work in small groups at Camp Withycombe, Oregon during their 4-day conference, Feb. 26 to March 1, 2024.

## U.S. Army National Guard leaders tour Ft. Moore training facilities

Story and photos by Maj. Chris Clyne,  
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

FORTMOORE, Ga. – U.S. Army National Guard Brig. Gen. Eric Riley, U.S. Army Maneuver Center of Excellence deputy commanding general and Oregon ANG land component commander, recently conducted a terrain walk with multiple states’ National Guard Brigade Combat Team commanders and sergeants majors to familiarize them with Fort Moore’s world class training facilities, courses, and cadre.

The familiarization included a stop at the Infantry Basic Officer Leader Course, where Lt. Col. Thomas G. Dull, 2nd Battalion, 11th Infantry Regiment commander, briefed attendees on the cadre’s mission to develop infantry lieutenants capable of leading infantry platoons to victory on the modern battlefield. The leaders also visited the 2nd Squadron, 16th Cavalry Regiment’s Armor Basic Officer Leader Course at the Advanced Gunnery Training System simulator, which provides new armor officers a safe, efficient way to develop precision gunnery skills necessary for becoming Armor Platoon Leaders.

“The terrain walk intent was to [bring] brigade commanders and their sergeants majors back to the Maneuver Center of Excellence because many had not been here for over a decade,” Riley said. “It was only the school for infantry back in the day, and now it’s the Maneuver Center of Excellence, which includes Armor and Infantry.”

Col. Christopher Hammonds, commander of the Airborne and Ranger Training Brigade, briefed the leaders on the brigade’s mission to train Rangers, Parachutists, and Reconnaissance Leaders. Hammond shared information on success rates and evolving courses to meet modern battlefield challenges.

Next, Lt. Col. Joseph Hardigree, Army National Guard Warrior Training Center brigade commander, and Mr. Tom Siter, WTC deputy commander, briefed the group on courses like Ranger Assessment, Air Assault, Rappel Master,



Col. Christopher Hammonds, Airborne and Ranger Training Brigade commander briefs Army National Guard leaders about ARTB’s mission to train Rangers, Parachutists, and Reconnaissance Leaders during a training facilities tour at Ft. Moore, Ga.

and Tank Gunnery, and their goal to serve as the premier functional training organization for the Army National Guard.

The terrain walk ended at the 30th Adjutant General (Reception) Battalion, where recruits begin military transition. There, representatives

of the 198th Infantry Brigade and 194th Armored Brigade overseeing Basic Combat Training One Station Unit Training explained their missions to transform civilians into disciplined Infantry and Armor soldiers. Col. Jimmy Hathaway, 198 Infantry Brigade commander, noted that half of OSUT honor graduates were National Guard members due to their maturity and the Recruit Sustainment Program.

“[I] wanted to showcase the resources available from these and other Maneuver Center training components,” said Riley. “The terrain walk really shows how the guard is represented at Fort Moore and how we are a big proponent and component of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command mission Army National Guard brigade combat team commanders need to see that their soldiers’ training is continuously improving for the modern battlefield.”



Brig. Gen. Eric Riley, U.S. Army Maneuver Center of Excellence deputy commanding general, gives career advice to Oregon Guard Infantry Basic Officer Leader Course students during a National Guard leader terrain walk through the post-training facilities at Ft. Moore, Ga., Feb. 29, 2024.

LEADERSHIP

# Religious Affairs training promotes ‘Providing Hope’ to global partners

Story and photos by John Hughel,  
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

WARRENTON, Ore. – Oregon Army National Guard Chaplains from around the state were greeted with near picturesque spring weather for their Chaplain Annual Sustainment Training, held this year at Camp Rilea, from March 14-17, 2024.

As the four-days of training began, Chaplain (Col.) Jacob Scott, State Chaplain for the Oregon National Guard, welcomed the Chaplains and Religious Affairs Specialists from across the state by focusing on three goals in his opening remarks to those in attendance.

“I am hoping that you’re encouraged by the time that you spend here... I hope that you’re equipped to be better fit for the mission that you have that God has called each and every one of us serving in the military together...and I hope that you are inspired.”



Tara Howie with the Oregon National Guard Military Families Readiness Program, address the Oregon Army National Guard 2024 Chaplain Annual Sustainment Training held at Camp Rilea on March 14, 2024.

These aims of being ‘Encouraged, Equipped and Inspired,’ helped the group springboard through a variety of activities and events over the training weekend and helped foster the theme of “Providing HOPE in the LSCO and the USINDOPACOM Area of Operation.”

In setting a broader tone for the morning session, Scott referenced a quote from Chaplain (Maj. Gen.) William Green, Jr., Chief of Chaplains for the U.S. Army, saying, “this really hits the nail on the head.”

“We must collaborate with one another to prepare the souls of our Army teammates for war, so that spiritual readiness will empower our Army to win with adaptability and resilience,” Scott said, quoting Chaplain Green.

Scott expanded this concept, describing the various levels of commitment and cooperation for the Religious Affairs mission to be successful for all service members.

“We provide religious support and we collaborate together to make sure that we can provide the best for the men and women who wear our uniform and also to our civilian workforce who support us in our mission,” Scott said. “When I first started working at Joint Force Headquarters, it was one of the eye opening experiences for me to realize the number of civilians who support our great organization.”

Two of those key civilian resource providers briefed the group following Chaplains Scott’s opening presentation. Tara Howie took time to detail all the programs from the Military Families Readiness Program – which provides quality of life information and resources for service members, their families and their communities in which they live. Then Richard Bradeen, from the Survivor



ORNG Chaplain (Col.) Jacob Scott, State Chaplain for the Oregon National Guard opens the 2024 Oregon Army National Guard Chaplain Annual Sustainment Training held at Camp Rilea, near Warrenton, Oregon on March 14, 2024.

Outreach Service described the role of the program and how SOS helps support families of the fallen by delivering services to survivors around the state and region.

As the training shifted to broader military operations, Army Capt. Jackson Turner, assigned to the 189th Combined Arms Training Brigade, First Army from Joint Base Lewis-McChord, gave a detailed presentation on Large Scale Combat Operations, or “How Battalions and Brigades Fight.”

Also attending this part of the training presentation was Chaplain (Maj.) Myoung Cho, who currently serves as the Brigade Chaplain with the 189th Infantry Brigade (CATB). The unit’s mission is to observe, coach and train members of the Army National Guard and U.S. Army Reserve – thus providing ready units to combatant commanders in support of global requirements.

“Looking at how Large Scale Combat Operations compare to Counterinsurgency missions, it’s important to look at the entire Spectrum of Conflict,” Turner said, detailing the levels of force, violence and destruction compared to the military assets committed. “Multi-Domain Operations are the Army’s contribution to joint campaigns, spanning the competition continuum found in the narrative, indirect and direction levels of competition.”



The St. Martin of Tours Presentation honoring (left to right) retired Chaplains Col. Daniel Thompson, Col. Scott Delbridge, and Religious Affairs Specialist Master Sgt. William Kaemmer, on March 14, 2024 at the Base Chapel, on the Camp Rilea Armed Forces Training Center.

In pointing out the value of the narrative phase, Jackson illustrated the important early aspects found in Peaceful Competition, Peaceful Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid to the group.

“This level of competition is particularly valuable before actions expand to indirect actions and escalate to direct actions,” he said, allowing the group to see how religious support roles play a part of

the ‘Big Picture,’ in the COIN vs LSCO spectrum.

One other important theme discussed during the training supports the ‘Oregon National Guard’s Top Three.’

“Our new Adjutant General – Brigadier General Alan Gronewold’s ‘Top Three,’ helps ensure that our National Guard is ready for whatever Oregon and our Nation needs us to do,” Scott explained to the group from one of

the posters at the forum. “Be Connected, Be Competent and Be Committed...if we can build an organization that people will want to be a part of, and be willing to meet the needs of Oregonians and the people of the United States of America, then that’s at the core of everything we’re trying to do.”



U.S. Army Chaplain (Maj.) Myoung Cho, who currently serves as the Brigade Chaplain with the 189th Infantry Brigade (CATB) talks with other Religious Affairs members during a break at the 2024 Chaplain Annual Sustainment Training on March 14, 2024.

The well-organized agenda included other presentations, team building breakout sessions, physical fitness activities and time for members to interact during and after scheduled events.

During the late afternoon on March 14, a special ceremony took place at the Base Chapel for three former members of the Oregon National Guard’s Religious Affairs team. The St. Martin of Tours Presentation honored retired Chaplains Col. Scott Delbridge, Col. Daniel Thompson and Religious Affairs Specialist Master Sgt. William Kaemmer.

St. Martin of Tours a long history with the chaplaincy – and is awarded to “those chaplains and religious affairs specialists who have demonstrated the highest standards of integrity and moral character, displayed an outstanding degree of professional competence, selflessly served soldiers and families, and contributed to the promotion of the Army Chaplaincy,” according to the

Office of the Chief of Chaplains. After Chaplain Scott presented these awards, he noted the combined service of these three members through the course of their careers.

“In total, they contributed nearly a hundred years of military service as members of the Chaplain Corps,” he said. “These awards have been long overdue but it’s also great to see them here with us this weekend.”

LEADERSHIP

Oregon Air National Guardsman recognized for acts of bravery

Story and photo by Senior Airman Yuki Klein,  
142nd Wing Public Affairs

PORTLAND, Ore. - In May 2023, during a casual drive over a mountain toward Three Rivers Marina on Lake Billy Chinook, Oregon, Staff Sgt. Mara Fenwick and Senior Airman Bailey Buck, both weapons loaders with the Portland Air National Guard's 142nd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, found themselves faced with a life-or-death situation while off duty.

Their Memorial Day weekend took a dramatic turn when they noticed a hillside on fire. Without hesitation, they sprang into action, with Fenwick staying on the road to call 911 while Buck and a companion ran down to investigate.

"What we discovered was like a movie scene. The car was down there, the driver was unconscious, and the flames were getting closer," recalls Buck.

Despite the difficult situation, Fenwick and Buck remained calm and focused, doing everything they could to help. They assisted in extinguishing the fire, ensuring the safety of bystanders, and coordinating with emergency services until help arrived.

"We didn't pull him out because the car was on its side, crumpled against trees. He was...pinned up against a tree, and the



Oregon Air National Guard Col. David Christensen, 142nd Maintenance Group Commander, presents Staff Sgt. Mara Fenwick, assigned to the 142nd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron with The Oregon National Guard Meritorious Service Medal for acts of bravery, during a ceremony on February 25, 2024 at the Portland Air National Guard Base, Oregon. Fenwick and a fellow Airman intervened when a truck went off the road in Eastern Oregon in May 2023.

driver was on the ground, completely knocked out," explained Fenwick.

Despite their heroic actions, both Airmen exuded a humble attitude, downplaying their role in the events that unfolded.

"We just did what we could to keep the

scene safe until professionals came to take over," said Fenwick.

Though they viewed their actions to be nothing out of the ordinary, they have not gone unnoticed by their leadership.

"They are both super humble...but that's what makes our folks great," said 142nd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron 1st Sergeant, Master Sgt. Ryan Rosso. "The extraordinary is our normal!"

Their story serves as a powerful reminder of the impact that ordinary individuals can have when faced with extraordinary circumstances.

On February 25, 2024, 142nd Maintenance Group Commander, Col. David Christensen presented both Airmen with meritorious service medals for their acts of bravery.

During the small ceremony, Christensen remarked on Fenwick's and Buck's willingness and ability to take action in high stakes circumstances.

"Their actions, demonstrating their training in stressful situations and first aid, have not only saved a life, but also set a remarkable example of service and dedication," said Christensen.

In the everyday chaos of life, helpers like Fenwick and Buck guide and inspire others by encouraging bravery, compassion, and selflessness.

Bringing the 'Land of No Slack' to Hawaii for Exercise Sentry Luau

Story by Staff Sgt. Emily Copeland,  
173rd Fighter Wing Public Affairs  
Photos by Tech. Sgt. John Linzmeier,  
154th Wing Public Affairs

HONOLULU, Hawaii - Nearly 90 Airmen from the 173rd Fighter Wing at Kingsley Field in Klamath Falls, Oregon took to the skies at Joint Base Pearl Harbor- Hickam, Hawaii for exercise Sentry Luau.

Team Kingsley Airmen worked directly with the Hawaii Air National Guard's 154th Wing and the 19th Fighter Squadron to play "Red Air" and "Blue Air" with their F-22 Raptors. This friendly and adversarial play allows the jets to hone their skills while flying with other airframes that are not stationed alongside the Hawaiian Raptors.

While similar to the more well-known exercise, Sentry Aloha, Sentry Luau was created specifically to test the capabilities of the F-22 Raptors against the grandfather of fighter jets, the F-15, within the Pacific Air Force domain.

"The integration of fourth and fifth generation fighter aircraft is key to expanding the Air Force's capabilities in real world situations and to be prepared to fight against any given aircraft," said Maj. Jacoby McCoy, 173rd FW Sentry Luau project officer. "The F-15s were able to provide robust red air threat replication that they are unable to produce organically from within their squadron."

He went on to add that the F-15s delivered invaluable basic fighter maneuver training replicating "high off boresight heat threat", meaning threats that are at a long distance and out of direct visual range.

During Sentry Luau, the F-15s were able to complete more than 100 flying hours and 68 sorties, without any major maintenance issues during the exercise.

"The professionalism and capabilities of the Airmen working in maintenance led to a 100% flight generation success rate during the exercise," said 1st Lt. Bryce Balin, 173rd FW maintenance officer in charge. "To those who don't know, this is a very impressive feat when working with older aircraft, and in addition to the line success,



An F-22 Raptor maintainer assigned to the 15th Maintenance Group displays a Sentry Luau patch on March 7, 2023, during on-going training at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii.

This experience allowed Airmen who performed excellent work throughout the year to experience firsthand the culmination of their efforts in the flight of a lifetime over the turquoise waters of the Hawaiian Islands.

"I am particularly proud of all of the Airmen who stepped in to not only complete their own jobs, but also to fill in and work together for other career fields that needed assistance," said Balin.



Two F-15 Eagles from the 173rd FW return to Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, after completing a training sortie. The visiting aircraft traveled from Kingsley Field, Oregon, for Sentry Luau exercise.

the maintainers were able to help exceed the amount of scheduled familiarization flights that occurred in Hawaii."

Alongside the training flights, approximately 20 Airmen also had the opportunity to participate in familiarization flights in the backseat of the F-15 Eagles.

applaud the team effort that went into accomplishing Sentry Luau.

"This exercise took the work and experience of all different types of careers, from finance, planning, aircrew flight equipment, maintenance, and flight operations," he said. "Logistically, the work involved to support a large temporary duty exercise takes an incredible amount of home station planning as well as coordination with the gaining unit. For the two-week TDY, Kingsley Airmen worked to get the planes off the ground and into the fight without delay."



An F-22 Raptor, operated by the 199th and 19th Fighter Squadrons, taxis Feb. 27, 2024, at Honolulu International Airport, Hawaii. The fifth-generation aircraft trained alongside visiting F-15 Eagles from the 173rd FW as part of a two-week exercise, called Sentry Luau.

NEWS

# 112th Aviation Soldiers complete 12 month Southwest border mission

Continued from Front Page

It was the longest continuous deployment to the border region to date.

“They flew a total of 1,825 hours across the area, with a majority of those missions flown at night,” he said, and noted that the Soldiers volunteered their extra time to community service projects. “They contributed over 1,000 hours of direct community service as they volunteered



ORARNG Col. Russell Gibson, 82nd Troop Command Brigade Commander, addresses those in attendance for the Demobilization Ceremony held at the AASF in Salem.

to assist local food banks, distributed toys during the “Toys for Tots” drive and other activities to show support for the community.”

Eleven of the Soldiers also took advantage of taking on-line classes and in person course work during their time in Texas. Of the 27 Guard members mobilized, 24 of them either enrolled or completed the next level of their military education.

During the ceremony, four Soldiers were recognized for their superior performance during the ceremony by Brig. Gen. Alan Gronewold, Adjutant General, Oregon.

Brig. Gen. Gronewold presented Sgt. Lucien Isom, Spc. Lizbeth Gonzalez-Bernal, Staff Sgt. Joseph Elmore and Staff Sgt. Matt Stephenson with his ‘Challenge Coin, for their contributions to the mission.

“These four here exemplify the values we hold and aspire to... by taking care of their people in their formation, the people in the community and their commitment to their unit making it the best that it could be,” Gronewold said.



Brig. Gen. Alan Gronewold, Adjutant General, Oregon (right), formally recognizes four ORARNG Soldiers after presenting them his ‘Challenge Coin,’ on Jan. 19, 2024. The four Soldiers are (Left to Right) Sgt. Lucien Isom, Spc. Lizbeth Gonzalez-Bernal, Staff Sgt. Joseph Elmore and Staff Sgt. Matt Stephenson.

Though not in attendance, a letter from U.S. House 6th congressional district Representative Andrea Salinas acknowledged the long mobilization by the service members and the impact on their families.

“I understand this is the longest deployment to the border, and so I want to extend my heartfelt appreciation to

your loved ones and families, who endured their own sacrifices with the long hours of your absence these past 12 months and are here today happy to have your back.”

The Oregon Army National Guard members were teamed-up with Soldiers from Idaho, North Dakota, Montana and Wisconsin during their mobilization.

# Oregon Troops back from Operation Spartan Shield mission

Story and photos by Maj. Chris Clyne, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

ONTARIO, Ore. – Soldiers from Oregon Army National Guard’s Adder Company were welcomed home Saturday, Feb. 3, 2024, after a yearlong deployment to the Middle East in support of Operation Spartan Shield.

The demobilization ceremony occurred at the Ontario Army National Guard Armory for the 16 soldiers from Adder Company, 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment, and was attended by an audience of families and community members.

A previously recorded video message played featuring Brig. Gen. Alan Gronewold, adjutant general of Oregon, and Command Sgt. Maj. Lee Smith, senior enlisted leader. Also, welcome-home letters sent by U.S. Senators Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley were



Soldiers of Adder Company, 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment with company guidon after their Middle East deployment demobilization ceremony Feb. 3, 2024, at the Ontario Army National Guard Armory.

read by 1st Lt. Steven Sawyer during the ceremony.

Col. Russell Gibson, commander of the 82nd Troop Command Brigade, spoke to the soldiers, praising their service and sacrifice. Lt. Col. Christopher Miller, commander of the 3-116th Cavalry Regiment, officiated the event along with Col. Gibson, personally welcoming home each soldier in a receiving line.

Adder Company deployed in March 2023 to provide a rapid reaction force for U.S. Central Command, deterring malign influence and reassuring allies in the

region. The company trained for two months at Fort Bliss, Texas, before mobilizing for nine months in Kuwait.

While overseas, as part of Task Force Rattler, Adder Company conducted exercises and worked with partner nation forces in Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates in addition to Kuwait. They displayed U.S. Army capabilities through emergency drills, weapons qualifications, and Abrams tank gunnery exercises. Select soldiers were chosen to

qualify on the new Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Integrated Defense System known as M-LIDS, gaining experience to combat electronic warfare and unmanned aerial threats.

In August 2023, Adder Company returned to Oregon after completing a relief-in-place with the Mississippi National Guard’s 155th Armored Brigade. Throughout their deployment, the soldiers maintained readiness as a quick reaction force for Central Command.

“Time and again, you demonstrated your competence, heart, and skill as members of the Oregon National Guard. When duty called, you answered,” said Gibson. “You show the best of the Oregon spirit: committed, tough, resilient, pulling together to meet any test. Always ready, always there.”



1st Lt. Steven Sawyer reads letters from U.S. Senators Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley at the Adder Company, 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment demobilization ceremony Feb. 3, 2024.



Community leaders welcome home Adder Company, 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment Soldiers during their Middle East deployment demobilization ceremony Feb. 3, 2024, at the Ontario Army National Guard Armory.

NEWS

# 142nd Wing pilot gets first impression with next generation F-15 EX

Continued from Front Page

While the new EX very closely resembles its C-model predecessor, beneath its exterior casing lies an entirely different, and much improved aircraft.

“My impression of the F-15 EX after flying it for the first time was that it is an awesome, awesome aircraft,” said Thesing. “The engines

feel like they have a lot more power than the those in the C-model, and the radar and avionics are a generational improvement over the F-15C as well.”

Nevertheless, some features that are packaged into the EX will inevitably take some getting used to. For example, the EX is the first U.S. Air Force F-15 to boast fly-by-wire flight controls.

Fly-by-wire is a term used to describe the digital system which replaces the manual flight controls featured in the older model F-15s. Some of the advantages of a fly-by-wire system include reduced weight and enhanced aircraft maneuverability, but the system itself differs greatly from what C-model pilots are accustomed to.

While at Eglin, Thesing and his colleagues are taking a momentous stride in acclimating to the EX.

“The initial work will take a lot of studying and practice to get the basics of flying the aircraft down and learning it’s systems, and that process has a steep learning curve, and never really ends for as long as you’re a pilot,” said

Thesing. “That being said, I look forward to when the focus can shift from how to fly the EX, to how to employ it tactically.”

The Air National Guard intends to provide the 142nd Wing with 18 total new EXs, with the first slated to arrive in Portland, Oregon this summer.



Courtesy photo by Capt. Lindsey Hefflin

123rd Fighter Squadron pilot, Lt. Col. Joel “Thermo” Thesing, along with 85th Test and Evaluation Squadron pilot, Maj. Scott “Hoosier” Addy (back seat), taxis the runway in an F-15 EX at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla. on March 7, 2024.



Courtesy photo by Dave Shelikoff, U.S. Air Force

123rd Fighter Squadron pilot, Lt. Col. Joel “Thermo” Thesing, along with 85th Test and Evaluation Squadron pilot, Maj. Scott “Hoosier” Addy, prepares to board an F-15 EX at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla. on March 7, 2024.

## Team Kingsley defender champion of ‘Official Military Skate’ competition

Story by Tech Sgt. Daniel Reed,  
173rd Fighter Wing Public Affairs

Photos courtesy of  
Staff Sgt. Erick Fregoso

**KLAMATH FALLS, Ore.**—Working the gate at Kingsley Field or patrolling the streets of the 173rd Fighter Wing you would never know that Staff Sgt. Erick Fregoso, 173rd Security Forces Squadron, lives a dual life. In his uniform he’s every bit of a Security Forces Defender, kitted out for the job, wearing a meticulously formed beret, but when he isn’t working, he’s a skater.

When he’s not wearing the uniform, he’s pushing around on his skateboard perfecting frontside heelflips, pop shuvit, to name a few, and the 360 Ollie heelflip, his best trick.

“My earliest memory of skateboarding is spending countless hours in my grandma’s garage with my older brother and other neighborhood kids trying to learn how to skateboard,” Fregoso said.

Erick’s older brother rode BMX and was a huge influence on him and he did everything he could to emulate him. The only difference between Erick and his brother was that he took to skateboarding rather than BMX.

Early on in his life skateboarding afforded him some form of accomplishment and “fame” through a couple of sponsorships.

“I was sponsored in 2012 by two different companies Urban Gold-Las Vegas, and CKST, a local brand which made stickers and hats,” he said.



ORANG Staff Sgt. Erick Fregoso, 173rd Security Forces Squadron, pauses for a photo before going on duty, Feb. 24, 2023, at Kingsley Field, in Oregon.

Skateboarding provided him with a way to continue pushing his skills to the limit, but he found that it didn’t pay the bills. He was fortunate to know someone in the Oregon Air National Guard who explained the benefits of becoming an Airman. After talking with his friend, he made the decision to join the ORANG and left his board hanging in the garage.

After graduating basic military training and security forces technical school, he found himself spending all his time focusing on learning his new trade and rarely anything else. Working long hours and trying to balance his sleep cycle meant the skateboard stayed in the garage where he left it before shipping off to basic training. Solving his initial financial problem came at the expense of his lifelong passion, but Fregoso refused to give up on skating.

It wasn’t until a recent competition cropped up across the mountains in White City, Oregon, that he stepped back onto his skateboard.

He won that competition, and it took him to Santa Ana, California shortly thereafter. Video of his performance caught the attention of a military skate page and they messaged him saying they, “like all the things you are doing; can you make a one-minute video and send it to us and we will submit you for this competition?”

Fregoso created an audition video and the Official Military Skate in Santa Ana, California, invited him to the competition, Nov. 12th, 2023. He packed his board and a few items for the weekend and made the eleven-plus hour drive to OC Ramps in coastal California.

The Official Military Skate competition brings together all military branches to compete in a game of trick-for-trick. One person leads with a trick and subsequent skaters attempt to mimic it. Think the basketball game HORSE but on a skateboard; naturally skaters call it SKATE. If you fail, you get a letter and when you can spell SKATE, you are eliminated.

Fregoso skated well making the final round against the three-time champion. He squared off against Space Force Airman Jemel Thomas and things took a turn for the worse. Fregoso trailed, failed four tricks consecutively and had the letters, S, K, A, T, one letter from the end of the competition.

Somehow, those years in his grandma’s garage with

the neighborhood skaters, helped him hold on. He performed a barrage of tricks staving off elimination and saw his opponent miss four tricks as well. With the match tied at S, K, A, T, he threw down the switch front-side big spin. With that trick he dethroned the reigning champion.

With his trophy in hand, Fregoso returned to Kingsley Field where he continues to provide security for the base while serving the state of Oregon.



ORANG Sgt. Erick Fregoso, center, celebrates with a group of friends while holding his trophy after winning the Official Military Skate competition, Nov 12, 2023, at Santa Ana, California. Fregoso competed against all branches of service where his skills on a skateboard brought him to victory.

COMPETITIONS

# Oregon biathletes descend on Utah for CNGB Championships

Story by Maj. Leslie Reed,  
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

MIDWAY, Utah. – Utah claims to be the “Home to the Great Snow on Earth” where with more than 100 sunny days a year, it creates a “magical environment,” one of “skiers’ dreams.” But for the Oregon National Guard’s Biathlon Team, it was a bit of a different experience. “We hit every quadrant of severe winter weather,” recalls veteran biathlete Capt. Kyle Roe, 1st Squadron, 82nd Cavalry Regiment, “even the nice days, had ice. Another day, we had significant snowfall without a re-groom. It was slow, even for elite skiers.”



Photo by Private 1st Class Dustin Smith, Utah National Guard Public Affairs  
Oregon Army National Guard team members pause for a photo at the 50th anniversary of the Chief of the National Guard Bureau Biathlon Championships held at Soldier Hollow Nordic Center, Utah on Feb. 17, 2024.

Regardless, Roe left the 2024 competition on a high, “individually I feel happy, it’s technically the best I’ve ever done.” This was the second year in a row Roe made the All-Guard Team, consisting of the top 15 male biathletes from across the participating states and territories. “But it’s also humbling as you get better, you realize there are more things you can work on and get better at...”

“I take a lot of time watching other people,” says Maj. Kristy Boucher, deputy inspector general, Joint Force Headquarters, “Trying to work on my posture, my stride, all the little things that I could see people with more experience and who were skiing faster were doing. I try to mimic them.”

The 2024 team included a mix of veteran competitors Lt. Col. Rocky Kumlin, Capt. Kyle Roe, and Maj. Kristy Boucher, alongside newcomers Maj. Rob Gruber, Maj. Leslie Reed, 1st Lt. Parker Wilttrout and Staff Sgt. Jason “Manny” Mahnesmith.

“I’ve had an interest tangentially in biathlon for years, seeing it in the Olympics,” said 1st Lt. Parker Wilttrout, 1st Squadron, 82nd Cavalry Regiment, “and a couple years ago I learned that Kyle (Capt. Roe) did it, and I mentioned it to him and this year he was like, ‘hey you want to do biathlon?’ And I was like hell yeah. The opportunity arose and I pounced on it.”

“I was totally unprepared that it was actually like roller-skating, only worse.”

Wilttrout’s least favorite part initially were the “hills and going up them” but he later concluded that “...after that fourth race, you have the previous days of exhaustion sort of building on it – and then the patrol race, it’s long as hell. Being tired afterwards is probably the actual worst part.”

“I’m super proud of all of our members, everyone came out and left it all out there. Nobody felt like they could have given it more. Tired legs, lats, and brains,” Roe said.

Biathletes participate in four different races during the championships – a sprint race and the pursuit which are individual races, followed by the relay and patrol which are done with a team. For the men’s distance, a team is composed of four skiers for both races, while the women’s teams are composed of three.

For Oregon’s Biathlon Coach and Coordinator Lt. Col. Rocky Kumlin, it’s now about taking the program to the next level. Kumlin first started participating with the program in 2007, and later took the reins for the team in 2013.

Both Kumlin and Roe assisted with range and course operations for the International Biathlon Union (IBU) World Cup event, also held at Soldiers Hollow Nordic Center, near Midway, Utah, the very same facility where just a few weeks prior the Chief of the National Guard Bureau Biathlon Championships were held.

A non-profit organization, the IBU is recognized by the International Olympic Committee as the international governing body for the Olympic sport of biathlon. It regulates and oversees competitions world-wide in cooperation with other national federations.

In order to work as officials at the event, both Kumlin and Roe obtained official credentials after taking a weeklong course and passing a written test mandated by the IBU and U.S. Biathlon Association. In total, a team of six National Guard members from Utah, Oregon, Wyoming and Washington supported the international event.

“At the end of the day, if Rocky and I are going to continue to grow our program,” says Roe. “It’s good to be able to say that we’ve had the proper training and then have used that training to support an official event.”

This last year, the two also started volunteering locally with the Mount Bachelor Sports Education Foundation (MBSEF). “Rocky and I did an initial touchpoint last year,” says Roe and “linked up again about four months ago.” Roe volunteered in January supporting a rifle clinic for high school aged kids using laser rifles.



Photo by Maj Christopher Kroeber, Utah Nat’l Guard Public Affairs  
Kyle Roe, from the Oregon National Guard finishes the Sprint Race at the 50th anniversary Chief of the National Guard Bureau Biathlon Championships at Soldier Hollow Nordic Center, Feb. 17, 2024.

Then in March, both he and Kumlin volunteered for a biathlon-type familiarization event put on by MBSEF coaches, where 7-to-12-year-olds skied a loop and then completed the range portion with paintball guns.



Courtesy photo by Capt. Kyle Roe, 1st Squadron, 82nd CAV  
Oregon Army National Guard Lt. Col. Rocky Kumlin, Oregon National Guard Biathlon Coordinator and Coach, supports the International Biathlon Union World Cup at Soldiers Hollow Nordic Center, near Midway, Utah on March 8, 2024.

Being involved in the community has multiple layers for Kumlin, “the main one, is just to grow the overall sport of biathlon. The U.S. has never medaled (in the biathlon) at the Olympics and there are a lot of really good skiers in central Oregon. If I can potentially help find that next biathlete, that’s a win for our nation and potentially even the Guard.”

The National Guard had three Soldiers compete in this year’s IBU World Cup, Sgt. Deedra Irwin, Spc. Sean Doherty and Pfc. Maxime Germaine, who all serve with the Vermont National Guard. Both Irwin and Doherty previously competed in the 2022 Olympic Games in Beijing as members of the U.S. Biathlon Team.



Photo by Maj. Leslie Reed, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs  
Oregon Army National Guard Maj. Kristy Boucher, Deputy Inspector General, Joint Force Headquarters stands at the top of the Women’s Novice Sprint Race podium at the Chief of the National Guard Bureau’s Biathlon Championship, February 17, 2024, at Soldier Hollow Nordic Center near Midway, Utah.

COMPETITIONS

# Oregon National Guard Crowns Best Warrior 2024 Winners



Photography by Chris Clyne,  
John Hughel and Aaron Perkins,  
Oregon Military Dept. Public Affairs

**WARRENTON, Ore.** — The Oregon National Guard concluded its annual Best Warrior Competition March 14-16, 2024, held at Camp Rilea with Pfc. Francisco Garcia was named Soldier of the Year, and Sgt. Mitchell Sierra was named Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year for 2024. Garcia, a light wheel mechanic with Fox Company, 2nd Battalion, 218th Field Artillery Regiment from Damascus, Oregon, and Sierra, an infantryman assigned to the Scout Platoon of 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry Regiment from Talent, Oregon, prevailed after a three-day event that pushed competitors through grueling challenges. The diverse events tested the warriors’ physical fitness, land navigation skills, marksmanship, and other battle tasks. They included a physical fitness test, essay writing, an oral board with the senior enlisted leaders, a land navigation course, rifle qualification, a 3-gun competition, an obstacle course, and a ruck march.

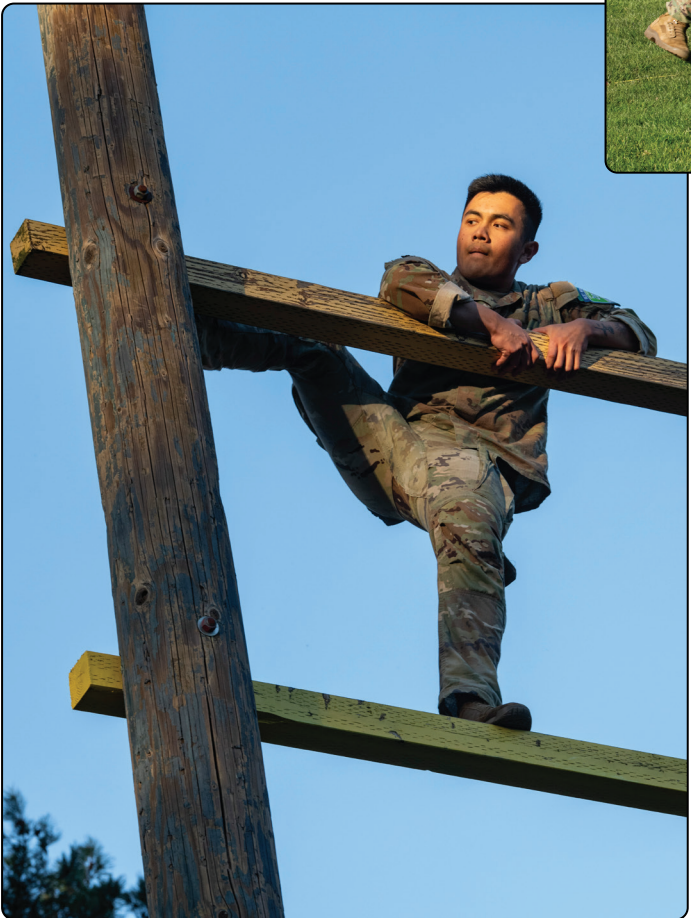


“These warriors displayed connectedness, commitment, and competence throughout the competition,” said Brig. Gen. Eric Riley, Oregon Army National Guard Land Component Commander. “It was an honor to witness our best and brightest soldiers working so hard. Thank you for the extraordinary effort that makes our Army great.”

Command Sgt. Maj. Lee Smith, the Command Senior Enlisted Leader, commended the support staff who put in tremendous work to organize the annual event.

“This is my favorite time of year—these Best Warrior competitions showcase the caliber of our soldiers,” said Smith. “The staff’s preparation to pull off this complex event is pretty amazing.”

The winners, Garcia and Sierra, will go on to represent Oregon at the Region VI Best Warrior Competition scheduled for May 13-17, in Washington state. Soldiers from Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming and Washington will compete at the regional event for the chance to advance to the NGB’s national-level Best Warrior Competition later this year.



TRAINING

# Oregon National Guard ‘Always Ready’ with M3E1 Fielding

Story and photos by Maj. Chris Clyne,  
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

**BOISE, Idaho** — The Oregon Army National Guard’s infantry units trained on the new M3E1 Multi-Role Anti-Armor Anti-Personnel Weapon System (MAAWS) at Orchard Combat Training Center near Boise, Idaho, from February 5-9, 2024. The lightweight recoilless rifle, manufactured by Swedish company Saab, provides enhanced capabilities over the AT4 Light Anti-Armor Weapon, also made by Saab, that infantry units previously depended on for this role.

The M3E1, known colloquially as the “Carl Gustaf,” is 28 percent lighter at just 14.8 pounds than its predecessor, the M3, which U.S. special operation units have relied on since 1994. It contains an integrated fire control system for engaging moving targets, improved ergonomics, and an automatic round counter. With an effective range of 1300 meters against soft targets, the M3E1 can engage light armored vehicles out to 700 meters and utilize multiple ammunition types, including high explosive anti-tank, smoke, and illumination rounds.

“The fielding of the M3E1 MAAWS is a significant step in modernizing and enhancing the lethality of the Oregon Army National Guard,” said Brig. Gen. Eric Riley, Land Component Command, Oregon. “The M3E1 provides increased tactical capabilities for our infantry units with improved fire control, lighter weight, and multi-target use. This modernization effort reinforces our commitment to equipping Oregon Guardsmembers with



Oregon Army National Guard members fire the new M3E1 MAAWS recoilless rifle at Orchard Combat Training Center, Idaho, on February 7, 2024 during initial training after being issued the new weapon system.

the very best tools for the battlefield.”

Training on the new system included a block of classroom instruction at Orchard Combat Training Center. The hands-on learning provided essential education on the operation, maintenance, and capabilities of the M3E1. To build proficiency, soldiers in the course then moved to live-fire exercises to reinforce classroom learning at the range, including firing live combat explosive rounds.

“Having deployed to Afghanistan in 2015 with the Oregon Army National Guard, I used the older M3 variant issued to my platoon,” said Master Sgt. Andrew Burk, non-commissioned officer overseeing the fielding. “This state-of-the-art M3E1 brings increased capabilities and modularity that will bolster our lethality and flexibility across a range of combat scenarios.”

As the combat arms reserve of the Army, the National Guard must be ready to fight alongside its active counterparts at a moment’s notice. Fielding of the M3E1 allows Oregon guard members to train on this cutting-edge system, modernizing capabilities and ensuring lethal readiness. The expedited procurement and fielding of the M3E1 recoilless rifle reinforces the priority placed on providing Oregon’s citizen soldiers with the tools

they need to prevail on any battlefield. This modernization effort will bolster the combat power of the state’s infantry formations, enabling them to fulfill their federal mission, equipped and trained to the highest standards.



Oregon Army National Guard members received classroom instruction on the newly issued M3E1 MAAWS recoilless rifle at Orchard Combat Training Center, Idaho. The instruction familiarized the Soldiers on the capabilities, operation, and maintenance of the new weapon system on February 6, 2024.

# National Guard approach to Flight Medic Training bridges civilian and military expertise for Paramedic Certification

Story and photos by Army Staff Sgt. Cory Grogan,  
Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs

**SALEM, Ore.** – The Oregon National Guard’s 641st Aviation Regiment medics received comprehensive paramedic training at the Major Larry Diebert Flight Facility in Salem, Oregon on Feb. 3, 2024, and is the same training civilian paramedics are required to take annually.



The Oregon National Guard’s 641st Aviation Regiment medics received comprehensive paramedic training at the Major Larry Diebert Flight Facility in Salem, Ore., on Feb. 3, 2024, and is the same training civilian paramedics are required to take annually.

In 2013, the U.S. Army mandated that all Army flight medics be certified paramedics, setting a standard for emergency medical proficiency within its ranks. This strategic move is aimed at enhancing the capabilities of flight medics, recognizing the critical role they

play in providing emergency medical care in diverse and challenging environments.

One of the cornerstones of this initiative is the annual credentialing requirements for recertification as a paramedic. This ensures that Army flight medics maintain the highest standards of proficiency, in-line with the evolving landscape of pre-hospital emergency medical care.

This initiative serves a dual purpose, benefiting both flight medics as part-time Soldiers and civilians alike. The National Guard offers the same medic-paramedic training that various agencies, including fire departments, EMS, and other first responders, undergo annually. This standardized training underscores the National Guard’s commitment to professionalism and expertise and is provided at no cost to part-time soldiers, enabling them to obtain a professional credential that can be updated annually.

Willy Giddings, a seasoned paramedic and EMS trainer with the City of Salem, Oregon, Fire Department delivered the training that includes advanced cardiac life support, pre-hospital trauma life support, and pediatric advanced life support. Notably, these training hours contribute to the recertification process, ensuring that flight medics remain updated on advanced-level medical treatments, Giddings said.

“The holistic training approach ensures that flight medics are not only equipped to handle complex medical scenarios but are also proficient in fundamental life-saving techniques.”

The inception of the program can be credited to the vision of Battalion Command Sgt. Maj Patrick Casha, who coordinated the training and brought this to the unit more than five years ago.

“This commitment to comprehensive training exemplifies why the National Guard stands out as the service of choice for those seeking excellence in emergency medical services,” Casha said.

Gidding said the flight medic training not only fulfills Army mandates but goes above and beyond, offering a model that blends civilian and military expertise to the highest standards of emergency medical care within the military while strengthening the capabilities of part-time Citizen-Soldiers.



The Oregon National Guard’s 641st Aviation Regiment medics received comprehensive paramedic training at the Larry Diebert Flight Facility in Salem, Ore., on Feb. 3, the same training civilian paramedics are required to take annually.

TRAINING

Ready & refreshed, Army Medics complete hands-on, scenario-based training

Story and photo by Maj. Leslie Reed,  
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

WARRENTON, Ore. – It came as no surprise that Specialist Kimberly Harless had done her homework. A combat medic specialist with 1249th Engineer battalion and an Oregon State University public health student, she had canvased her brother Conner (also an Oregon Army Guard medic), to help set expectations ahead of her first annual combat medic refresher training, held at Camp Rilea, in late January.

“I knew initially that we would be doing some good training that I don’t get at my unit,” she recalls, “which I really wanted. I knew we would be doing things similar to Advanced Individual Training (AIT), like a field training exercise (FTX), so I was looking forward to doing ‘live action’, hands-on, scenario-based training to help boost my confidence and secure in my abilities as a medic.”

More than 15 Combat Medic Specialists, including both Harless’ attended the week and a half course, which covered everything from hemorrhaging practical exercises to IV therapy, training that more closely aligned with their initial entry training, “you do a lot of trauma-based training at AIT and when you get to your unit, it’s a little bit of a shock because you have a lot of clinical stuff you have to do and we don’t focus on that as much as a combat medic in AIT.”

Sergeant Bailee Stauch, an army medical instructor assigned to the 249th Regional Training Institute, explained the diverse group of attendees, “All of the students are 68Ws, a few are in school in medical career fields, we have some that are current active EMTs, and we have some newer, less experienced medics this year.”

For Stauch, much like Harless, it was also her first time attending, only as an instructor. “We were able to pick the subjects we are most comfortable with, or that we feel confident about teaching” she said, “Sometimes we choose ones that also help broaden us as instructors – we want to be well-rounded.”

When decision time came, she remembers, “I selected abdominal trauma, thoracic trauma, and triage. I selected triage specifically because I came from Charlie MED (Charlie Company, 141st Brigade Support Battalion) where mass casualty (MASCAL) events are really our bread and butter.”

With seven years at Charlie MED, Stauch had “grown as a medic there and came to RTI, I hope to be here for a couple of years and then move on. It’s a great broadening assignment before going back out to the force.”



ORARNG medics carry a simulated casualty to their designated helicopter landing zone, known as an HLZ, during annual refresher training held at Camp Rilea, near Warrenton, Oregon, January 31, 2024.

Aa a young man, SSG Daniel Garcilazo, a medic with 1186 Military Police Company had a tough, but honest conversation with his mom, “my mother told me when I was young that she would not be able to afford to send me to school,” recalls Garcilazo, “I was sixteen, I said, I hate leadership, I’m never going to be able to deal with anyone telling me what to do. And seventeen came around and we had a real talk and was like, well this is an option...I started planning, and thought I’m going to make this happen.”

For Garcilazo “doing medical training, reignites the fire, I very much intend to pursue the physician assistant (PA) route, he says, “talking to Col. Van Horn (State Surgeon) and Maj. Burns (physician assistant), they are great resources and I’ve been picking their brain on how to set myself up for success.”

Since completing his initial entry training in 2009, Garcilazo, who on the military side has deployed with 2-218 and 3-116 as a medic, has worked as both a medical assistant (immediate care medicine) and with electronic medical records systems on the civilian side.

“I joined as a medic because I needed something to do in real life. And it directly translated into being a medical assistant... And I would say it also helped me become more disciplined. I am somebody that my whole family comes to – not just for medical advice, but someone they can look up too. The kids look up to me, it’s nice to feel, to be that leadership.”

His mother has also, he says has “voiced her pride in the man that I’ve become.”

“I joined and it turned into more,” said Garcilazo, “It gave me discipline, benefits, comradery, support, it’s endless the ways we benefit.”

Harless too dreams of pursuing more, “I want to become a nurse, that’s my goal” she says. Joining the Guard was part of her continued plan to “...push myself to get outside of my comfort zone.”

“Emergency medicine,” she says, “I love that it will be applicable anywhere. My skills and knowledge won’t just be used in the national guard or if I become a nurse one day, there are so many scenarios where you can be that one person, instead of being a bystander.

Garcilazo appreciates that as a medic, “You’re relied on, you’re a professional.” And indeed, they are, it’s our medics that give us confidence down range, confidence that we will be taken care of should our worst day happen. As we transition from a counterinsurgency battlefield to Large Scale Combat Operations, one of the very subjects addressed within the multi-day course, our medics must be able to face “challenges unseen since World War II” writes U.S. Army officers, Lt. Col. Matthew K. Marsh and Capt. Ryan L. Hampton, “...with contested air and ground movement along with increased lethality associated with emerging weapons systems, casualties in future LSCO will require critical care for more prolonged periods.”

173rd Medical Group lends expertise to local youth mountain bikers

Story by Master Sgt. Jeff Thompson,  
173rd Fighter Wing Public Affairs

KLAMATH FALLS, Ore. – A 173rd Fighter Wing Airman who serves in the medical group saw an opportunity to help a local mountain bike team and arranged wilderness first aid training for more than 25 Klamath Basin cyclists, January 31, 2024.

Master Sgt. Wyatt Stinnett’s children cycle for the local Jackelopes, a composite team of mountain bikers who compete in the Oregon Interscholastic Cycling League. Composite refers to the fact that they are made up of students from around the local area, and range in age from 6th graders to high school seniors.

“There was some interest from amongst the kids and parents on the team after the season ended in October to do some sort of first aid training,” said Stinnett.

Initially, they looked into commercial providers for the training, but ruled it out because they require students to be at least 16 due to regulations surrounding CPR certification and charge a hefty fee.

Initially, they looked into commercial providers for the training, but ruled it out because they require students be at least 16 due to regulations surrounding CPR certification and charge a hefty fee.

Stinnett said it was natural for him to

consider the very office where he works every day, the 173rd Medical Group.

“Well, we have medical professionals, medics, EMTs here at Kingsley Field,” he said with a smile. “Doc. Macko himself is an avid cyclist, so let me see if there is interest in some of our medical folks putting on a course for them.”

He found a number of willing volunteers, including Master Sgt. Brant Shaw, Senior Airmen Keegan Dentinger and Mason Geigle, as well as a flight doctor, who were all willing to donate their own time and with the understanding that there would be no first aid certifications.

Dr. Jeremy Macko, a flight surgeon for the wing and an avid backcountry athlete by his own admission, conducted the main session with the young mountain bikers and covered a wide range of topics centering on wilderness first aid.

In his presentation helped the riders visualize what to do after a riding accident a few miles from a vehicle in a first aid situation, saying, “broken arms, dislocations, you may



Photo courtesy of Wyatt Stinnett

ORANG Master Sgt. Brant Shaw, a member of the 173rd Medical Group, demonstrates proper splinting and immobilization technique during a presentation for a local youth mountain bike team on Jan. 31, 2024.

need to immobilize a limb which means you need to splint them using sticks, or an old bike tube or a torn up strips of a shirt—how do you “MacGyver” your way into taking care of these situations?”

MacGyver being a “verb” coined by the popular television show where the main character ingeniously used things in his immediate surroundings to overcome problems. He also asked them to consider the situation before an accident or injury happens.

“There is a smart way to mitigate risk,” he added, describing not

only traditional first aid but asking them to consider surprise situations. “How are you going to respond if you come across an angry black bear or cougar, or a western rattlesnake, which we have in this area?”

Stinnett says he feels the whole presentation went very well and said one of the team members summed it up saying, “When’s the next time they are gonna do this?” as she walked out the door, “I want to come back and do this again!”

FEATURES

From Over the Top - to Under the Bottom

Story by Steven Conklin,  
142nd Wing Public Affairs

PORTLAND, Ore. – Members of the 142nd Wing got the chance to escape the Pacific Northwest winter this year with a trip to Antarctica. December to March is actually summertime for the continent due to its location on the bottom of the globe; but this was no tropical vacation.

“It was cold!” said Senior Master Sgt. Jeff Reynolds, the weapons safety manager for the Oregon Air National Guard’s 142nd Wing.

Indeed, it was, which is why the Department of Defense aptly refers to this mission as Operation Deep Freeze.

According to the DOD, this operation is a joint military mission to resupply the nation’s Antarctic stations in support of the National Science Foundation, the lead agency for the U.S. Antarctic Program.

During his time in Antarctica, Reynolds was the Occupational Safety service member at McMurdo Station, and was responsible for ensuring the safety of roughly 80 military personnel there. When he wasn’t conducting facility inspections, or doing spot inspections on workers and equipment, he would often be out collecting photos of the local wildlife.

“I got to see two different



Penguins waddle about in the Antarctic summer near McMurdo Station, Antarctica, December 2023. These penguins were photographed by Senior Master Sgt. Jeff Reynolds who deployed for Operation Deep Freeze, a joint DoD mission to resupply McMurdo station in support of the National Science Foundation’s research.

types of penguins...I’d have to say the smaller Adelie were my favorite ones as I saw more of them, and in action, as opposed to the one Emperor I saw who was just standing there molting his feathers.”

Operation Deep Freeze involves U.S. Air Force, Navy, Army and Coast Guard service members providing operational and logistical support of the National Science Foundation’s research activities in Antarctica. Including Reynolds, seven total 142nd Wing Airmen supported the operation this year. Five firefighters from the 142nd Civil Engineer Squadron and one Airman with the 142nd Logistics Readiness Squadron also supported the mission.

In such an austere environment, protecting the DOD’s most valuable asset, its people, is key. That’s why Reynold’s was a great fit for the job. During his tenure at

the station, Reynolds capitalized on his 30 plus years of military experience to keep accidents at a minimum.

“I’d say my success at McMurdo was that I only had one military member mishap the whole time I was down there.”

While the North Pole is experiencing extended night this time of year, the South Pole is experiencing what could be considered the polar opposite.

“One fascinating note, I was on the ice from 10 December to 14 January and during that time, the sun never set. In fact, the next sunset was at 11:12 a.m. on 21 February!”

The sun does set in the Pacific Northwest though, and while scientists may never fully discover its malfunction at the poles, Reynolds can sleep peacefully back home knowing that he left McMurdo a safer place.



ORANG Senior Master Sgt. Jeff Reynolds, 142nd Wing Weapons Safety Manager, poses for a photo at McMurdo Station, Antarctica in December 2023. Reynolds served in a safety manager role there from December to January supporting Operation Deep Freeze, a joint Department of Defense mission to resupply the station in support of the National Science Foundation’s research.

Oregon National Guard heroes honored in Purple Heart Ceremony

Story and photos by Army Staff Sgt. Cory Grogan,  
Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs

CORVALLIS, Ore. – Purple Heart Ceremony held at the Corvallis Armory on Feb. 3, 2024, recognized three Oregon National Guard heroes for their sacrifice during Operation Iraqi Freedom 2. The ceremony paid tribute to Jeromy Turner, Martin Theurer, and Ken Kaiser, who were members of Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 162nd Infantry Regiment (2-162), a unit that faced some of the fiercest fighting in the Iraq war.

The event, which drew attention to the courage and resilience exhibited by the Soldiers, featured remarks from Brig. Gen. Eric Riley, Land Component Commander for the Oregon National Guard and former Bravo Company Commander during the 2004-05 deployment. visibly moved during the ceremony, Riley highlighted the sacrifice, camaraderie,



Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 162nd Infantry Regiment, pauses for a photo during their 2004-05 deployment to Iraq. A Purple Heart Ceremony held at the Corvallis Armory on Feb. 3, 2024, recognized three Oregon National Guard heroes for their sacrifice during Operation Iraqi Freedom 2.

and competence displayed by the three soldiers and the entire Bravo Company.

The incident that led to the recognition occurred on the afternoon of September 30, 2004, when Turner, Theurer, and Kaiser were part of a 20-person patrol conducting route security north of Camp Cooke. The patrol’s vehicle became the target of an Improvised Explosive Device (IED), resulting in significant injuries, including Traumatic Brain Injury, for the three soldiers.

The emotional recognition underscored the enduring camaraderie within Bravo Company, as the ceremony brought together many who had served with the unit during that tumultuous period. The presence of comrades served as a

testament to the unit’s commitment to honoring the sacrifices made by Turner, Theurer, and Kaiser, who served in one of the most decorated units in the Oregon National Guard’s history.

Bravo Company, 2-162, played a pivotal role in some of the heaviest fighting during the Iraq war, adding historical significance to the Purple Heart Ceremony. The event not only acknowledged the bravery of the three soldiers but also served as a reminder of the collective sacrifice made by the unit.

As the ceremony concluded, the Purple Heart recipients stood as symbols of resilience, their courage etched into the records of the Oregon National Guard.



Friends and family listen to the National Anthem during a Purple Heart Ceremony held at the Corvallis Armory on Feb. 3, 2024, recognizing three Oregon National Guardsman for their sacrifice during Operation Iraqi Freedom 2.



Brig. Gen. Eric Riley (second from left), Land Component Commander for the Oregon National Guard and former Bravo Company Commander during the 2004-05 Iraq deployment recognizes three ORANG Soldiers for their sacrifice during Operation Iraqi Freedom 2. The ceremony paid tribute to Jeromy Turner (right), Martin Theurer (second from right), and Ken Kaiser (third from right) on Feb. 3, 2024.

FEATURES

Story and photos by  
Tech Sgt. Daniel Reed,  
173rd Fighter Wing Public Affairs

KLAMATH FALLS, Ore. – The constant drone of equipment accompanies a crew of four 173rd Aircraft Structural Maintenance Airmen who are painting divested F-15C Eagle tails to display the 173rd Fighter Wing’s iconic eagle tail flash.

Changing a tail flash is not merely peeling off the old one and slapping a new one on; it takes hours and hours of highly detailed work said Staff Sgt. Sean Green, 550th Fighter Squadron. “With the current setup it takes five full days to complete one tail flash,” he adds.

Tail preparation begins with a thorough pressure washing and ends with a meticulous hand scrubbing for each piece, ensuring no grease or grime is left on the surface. The wash process spans several days, because the surface must be perfect. Any imperfections on the surface will show through the final finish and are avoided at all costs, adds Green.

Once the aircraft has been washed and prepped for paint a stencil is created bearing Kingsley’s unique tail flash.

“Building a stencil takes multiple layers, built up, to produce a single image,” said Green. “The key to getting it right is to take your time and ask for a second opinion while paying particular attention to detail.”

Green produces the stencil design using commercial graphic design tools in tandem with a Roland printer, a very large material cutter, much like an industrial strength Cricut.

He double checks his work taking precise measurements and verifying them before he cuts a stencil. Then, the stencil is placed on the tail and checked for exact alignment before peeling the adhesive backing and sticking it to the surface; something you can only do once with each stencil as they are a single use product.

The tail flash is then painted in layers, again carefully because one wrong step means starting over with a new stencil.

It is a time consuming, exacting process but it’s an improvement over what structural troops used to do; sketch the eagle by hand and free-hand it with a brush, which required a high level of artistic talent.



ORANG Staff Sgt. Drew Sorlien, a structural maintenance technician with the 173rd Maintenance Squadron, organizes the Kingsley Field eagle tail flash stencils before placement on the F-15C begins, Jan. 17, 2024, at Kingsley Field. Painting the tail flash requires several layers of stencils that must be done in the correct order.

Prior to any painting or stencil mounting, structural troops also create a custom frame from PVC pipe and plastic sheets to cover the tail and create a vacuum-tight seal to prevent overspray from getting onto other surfaces.

The corrosion control facility, commonly known as the paint barn, has four HEPA filter vacuum pumps plumbed to the paint area, which pull toxic fumes from the workspace.



The first round of stencils is placed on the tail of the 173rd Fighter Wing F-15C, and all other areas are covered to prevent overspray, Jan. 17, 2024, at Kingsley Field in Klamath Falls, Oregon. Painting the iconic eagle tail flash that adorns the 173rd FW aircraft, requires several layers of stencils and multiple coats of paint.



Airmen from the 173rd Fighter Wing structural maintenance section construct a custom PVC pipe frame enclosing the tail of the F-15C requiring paint, Jan. 17, 2024, at Kingsley Field in Klamath Falls, Oregon.

Clean air is also supplied to the workspace with an aircraft cart, thus balancing inflow and outflow. This raises another issue for the painters, that of temperature. It must remain stable at 100-degrees Fahrenheit—yes, these painters emerge from the booth dripping sweat—and so two heaters are also piped into the booth.

The stencil itself is in layers, allowing Airmen to paint a layer, let it dry and remove the top stencil material revealing the next section to be painted. Each successive layer reveals the eagle taking form. The eagle emerges from the talons, then the head and then the body. Thirty-six hours later the Kingsley Field tail flash is complete.

Finally, a special primer layer is added to keep the tail flash looking. This work ensures it can withstand the harsh conditions of flying at altitude and the unique weather it will encounter being nested at Kingsley Field. After the final coat, it cures for 48 hours before flying again.

“It’s nice to see the tail completed to show Kingsley pride; being active-duty, I’ve seen a lot of different tails, but this is the most in-depth one I’ve had to do,” said Green.

Many consider the tail an icon, having graced every airframe since the F-4 Phantom II in 1983 where the eagle tail flash made its appearance, the F-16 Fighting Falcon (1989) to the current F-15C Eagle and continuing into the future with the F-35 Lightning II.

“It is bittersweet seeing the iconic Kingsley Field tail flash on the last of our F-15 fleet here at Kingsley,” said Col. Lee Bouma, 173rd Fighter Wing commander. “That tail represents the dedication and attention to detail Team Kingsley is known for, and there is a huge sense of pride knowing it will

be seen for many years to come on the F-35 Lightning II as we transition to a 5th generation fighter pilot training mission.”

The aircraft acceptance process begins in Phase where each F-15C Eagle is inspected upon arrival and ends with the iconic “stamp” of approval with the Kingsley Field eagle painted on its tail letting everyone know it’s officially part of the 173rd Fighter Wing convocation—the official title for a flock of eagles.

“The tail flash reflects pride of ownership,” said Bouma. “It represents all the Airmen here at Kingsley Field everywhere it flies, which has been from Australia to Finland, to Poland, and everywhere in between.”



USAF Staff Sgt. Sean Green, a structural maintenance technician with the 550th Fighter Squadron, paints the talons and head before applying more stencils on the F-15C, Jan. 17, 2024, at Kingsley Field in Klamath Falls, Oregon.

## FEATURES

# Redhawk Athena drives positive change for 142nd Wing Airmen

Story by Master Sgt. Steph Sawyer,  
142nd Wing Public Affairs

**PORTLAND, Ore.** – In recent years, the Air Force has seen positive change trickle down through its echelons, and many of these changes seek to address barriers to readiness which have predominantly affected women service members.

The Department of the Air Force Women's Initiative Team, or DAF WIT, established in 2008, is one of seven Barrier Analysis Working Groups, or BAWGs, which has been driving much of the recent positive change, including updated hair standards for women, normalizing support for nursing mothers in the workplace, and improved in-flight bladder relief devices for women flyers, to name a few. Additionally, organizations at the Major Command or MAJCOM level, such as Sword Athena for Air Combat Command (ACC), have been instrumental in highlighting and addressing barriers to readiness for Airmen.

Athenas, named after the Greek Goddess of wisdom and victory, aims to identify, assess, and remedy women-and family-centric issues affecting the readiness of Airmen to carry out the mission.

Since the inception of Sword Athena in 2019, other MAJCOM Athenas have been formed, such as Reach Athena for Air Mobility Command, Dagger Athena for Air Force Special Operations Command, Torch Athena for Air Education and Training Command, and ARC Athena for Air Reserve Command. ARC Athena was recently established in 2023 to focus on issues that specifically affect female service members belonging to the Air Guard and Reserve.

Lt. Col. Kari "Axis" Armstrong, the Inspector General for the 142nd Wing, led one of the nine lines of effort for the ARC Athena inaugural conference in April of 2023, as well as contributed to three others. The event was a success and allowed Airmen from across the Guard and Reserve to come together to discuss issues specifically affecting female service members.

Upon returning from the conference, Armstrong worked with 142nd Wing Deputy Commander at the time, Col. Christopher Lantagne, to establish a wing-level BAWG, nicknamed "Redhawk Athena." The name is a nod to the wing's ACC flying mission and the 123rd Fighter Squadron, commonly referred to as "The home of the Redhawks."

Redhawk Athena was established to serve the 142nd Wing Airmen. The first Redhawk Athena meeting was held in May 2023.

It was Armstrong's past 12-year experience in the active duty Air Force that allowed her to see the potential for the positive change Redhawk Athena could bring to the 142nd Wing.

Armstrong joined the Air Force in 2007 as a Weapons Systems Officer, WSO or "wizzo," in the F-15E Strike Eagle, and was the first female fighter WSO to attend the U.S. Air Force Weapons School in 2015. She said that while her active duty career was a great experience, she faced a lot of obstacles as a woman in a male-dominated career field.

Everything about the career field, from the uniforms to the equipment, was designed for men. Compounding these obstacles was the fact that because there were so few women in the career field, she often felt isolated and without a venue to discuss issues impacting her readiness.



Photo courtesy from Lt. Col. Kari Armstrong  
ORANG Lt. Col. Kari Armstrong pause for a photo with her children at her home in Ridgefield, Washington, on April 2023.

Eventually, Armstrong was introduced to the Chick Fighter Pilot Association or CFPA. The group was founded in 2006 by three female F-16 fighter pilots at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. The group was formed to give female fighter pilots and WSOs a support system and a sounding board.

Armstrong said that getting involved with the group helped her feel supported and less isolated.

"I know when I initially got looped into the CFPA, I just loved it," she said. "It was the first time I didn't feel like an outsider."

Through her experience with the CFPA, Armstrong came to understand the value of having the support and validation of people with similar experiences.

"I just saw the benefit that comes from having a community where you can talk about issues [and] to also not feel like you're the only person experiencing it, because that's important for mental health," said Armstrong.

Her positive experience with the CFPA inspired her to become involved with the DAF WIT, ARC Athena and establish Redhawk Athena for the 142nd Wing.

Armstrong manages the Redhawk Athena working group, keeping records of meetings, tracking lines of effort, and disseminating information on the group's progress, accomplishments, and endeavors.

Since its inception, the group has worked to ensure the timely availability of maternity OCP (Operational Camouflage Pattern) uniforms, published the 142nd Wing Pregnancy and Postpartum Guide, instructed commanders on pregnancy discrimination and maternal bias, and established a dedicated lactation room in the wing headquarters building, as well as ensured lactation room compliance across the entire wing, to include Camp Rilea, the location of the wing's geographically separated unit, the 116th Air Control Squadron.

During Redhawk Athena meetings, which are held twice every month, participants can discuss issues they're facing to identify pervasive problems across the wing which are limiting or hindering the readiness of Airmen. Once an issue is identified, the group works to determine the root cause and begins to brainstorm ways to improve or solve the issue with the support and cooperation of wing leadership.

One of the efforts the group is currently working on is establishing funding for a drill weekend childcare program on base.

The group estimates that in a wing of 1,400 members, there are roughly 910 families that could benefit from a no cost on-base childcare option over drill weekends. Many drill status guardsmen encounter difficulties related to arranging and paying for childcare in high-cost areas, negatively impacting Airmen's morale and readiness.

Currently, Armstrong is drafting a proposal for funding from the National Guard Bureau to support the endeavor. The group hopes to have a program and facilities in place by summer.

Among other changes, current Redhawk Athena projects include developing a local miscarriage policy, enabling time off for Airmen whose partners experience a pregnancy loss, improving reporting and education regarding sexual harassment, installing baby changing tables across the wing, and purchasing feminine hygiene product dispensers for base restrooms. Additionally, the Redhawk Athena group is hosting a one-day Women's Leadership Conference on May 1, 2024 at the Portland Air base, to discuss leadership topics through the lens of a female service member.

Though the issues that Redhawk Athena sets out to identify are women-and family-centric in nature, in addressing them, the group stands to impact all Airmen in a positive way.

"We talk about issues that particularly affect women, but men come to our meetings too," said Armstrong. "Just because an issue affects women at a higher rate, that doesn't necessarily mean it's a women's issue."

There's no doubt that Redhawk Athena has and will continue to make a positive impact in the lives and careers of 142nd Wing Airmen.



U.S. Air Force photo by Chief Master Sgt. Jaimee Freeman  
As an outcome of the 101st Air Force uniform board, women will be able to wear their hair in up to two braids or a single ponytail with bulk not exceeding the width of the head and length not extending below the shoulder blades.

Armstrong said that in the early years of her career, she didn't always feel supported or heard, but through Redhawk Athena, she can use the privilege that her years of experience and rank have given her to advocate for others.

"I have a voice, and if I don't use it, that's the biggest travesty," said Armstrong. "So at Redhawk Athena meetings, as people tell me things that are going on, I see it as a privilege that I can go fight for them because that is something I felt I did not have when I was younger."

FEATURES

# End of an Era: Kingsley Field trains the last F-15 Eagle Instructor Pilots

Story and photos by Master Sgt. Jeff Thompson  
173rd Fighter Wing Public Affairs

KLAMATH FALL, Ore. – The journey begins at Undergraduate Pilot Training or maybe long, long before, but for this account an Air Force pilot starts the road to the cockpit at Laughlin Air Force Base in Texas, in the T-6 Texan, a 1,200 horsepower propeller-driven trainer. From there, they have to find their way in a T-38 supersonic jet trainer, if they make the cut for fighter aircraft.

A fledgling fighter-pilot-in-the-making then heads to Introduction to Fighter Fundamentals at Randolph Air Force Base in San Antonio — a quick primer, smoothing the transition to warfighting aircraft.

Some of these students track to the F-15 and travel to Kingsley Field to test themselves against the 173rd Fighter Wing B-Course and learn to fly the Eagle, the venerated fighter aircraft boasting an undefeated combat record and bearing the moniker WGASF—world’s greatest air superiority fighter.

None of this is easy, but once a student steps into the ranks of Eagle drivers it’s time to relax, having arrived at their goal ... right?



USAF Capt. Andrew Marshall, an F-15C pilot with the 550th Fighter Squadron, suits up for another sortie on his way to becoming a rated instructor pilot in the Eagle, at Kingsley Field in Klamath Falls, Oregon, Jan. 18, 2024. He and one other pilot are the last two selected in the U.S. Air Force to receive this upgrade training.

“No. Never,” says Capt. Andrew Marshall, an F-15 pilot with the 550th Fighter Squadron, with a laugh.

Marshall has navigated this path over the last seven years, since graduating from the University of Colorado ROTC program, and is now making his way into the ranks of F-15C instructor pilots at Kingsley Field in Klamath Falls, Oregon.

“I’m hoping to get it done within six months, that’s my personal goal,” he said. “But there’s a lot of other factors—TDYs, weather—all those different things can get in the way of keeping the momentum going. It definitely is a period where you’re just working, working, working...you’re studying all the time.”

He says there are 11 thresholds to cross to become a rated instructor pilot beginning with close-range dogfighting and progressing to a very broad scenario involving many aircraft performing defensive counter-air and everything in between, and a couple of “top-off” events following that.

“I’ve made it through the first two events so far, and it took me seven flights to do it,” adding that the syllabus somewhat mirrors that of his first years



USAF Capt. Andrew Marshall, an F-15C pilot with the 550th Fighter Squadron, gets the status on his waiting aircraft from crew chief Staff Sgt. Jonathan Hediger prior to a training sortie where he will continue toward becoming a rated instructor pilot in the Eagle, Jan. 18, 2024 at Kingsley Field in Klamath Falls, Oregon.

at Kadena Air Base, getting his flight lead ratings culminating with a mission commander upgrade where he controlled 20 fighter aircraft, two tankers and an AWACS.

“It was intense, probably the most stressful experience of my Air Force career,” he said.

He’ll do it again and the difference this time will be one of fine-tuning.

“Now you’re doing it at a higher level,” he explains. “It’s much more refined in how you go through the instructor upgrade; now you have to be able to not only understand and do it yourself but you have to convey that knowledge and execute it in a way that shows credibility as an instructor.”

It’s a new process for him, but many have gone before him over nearly four decades of service from the Eagle. He and one other pilot are likely the last.

The Air Force at-large has divested itself of nearly all F-15 Eagle aircraft, most recently deactivating squadrons at Kadena Air Base and transferring those aircraft to the Air National Guard, rendering the future need

for instructor pilots minimal. But as with any program there are always the final students.

Marshall says this career trajectory suits him very well and he feels it positions him well for a likely airframe conversion to the F-35 Lightning II, which is slated to arrive at Kingsley Field in 2026. He sums up his career choice saying, “It’s one of the best jobs in the world and you have some of the best camaraderie with your pilots and your fellow service members.”



USAF Capt. Andrew Marshall, an F-15C pilot with the 550th Fighter Squadron, settles into the cockpit of an F-15C aircraft in preparation for a mission where he will progress toward becoming a rated instructor pilot at Kingsley Field in Klamath Falls, Oregon.



USAF Capt. Andrew Marshall, an F-15C pilot with the 550th Fighter Squadron, settles into the cockpit of an F-15C aircraft in preparation for a mission where he will progress toward becoming a rated instructor pilot at Kingsley Field in Klamath Falls, Oregon.



USAF Capt. Andrew Marshall, an F-15C pilot with the 550th Fighter Squadron, taxis his F-15C aircraft across a rainswept tarmac on a chilly January morning before taking off to nearby range space for upgrade training, January 18, 2024 at Kingsley Field in Klamath Falls, Oregon. He and one other pilot are the last two who will receive the F-15C Instructor Pilot rating as the Air Force transitions away from the venerable airframe to the F-35.

AZUWUR

MEMORIAL SERVICE HONORS: 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE 1944 EXPLOSION AT UMATILLA DEPOT

AZUWUR  
Oregon & Military History

Story and photos by John Hughel,  
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

**HERMISTON, Ore.** – The Columbia Development Authority and the Oregon Military Department hosted a memorial service on March 21, 2024 to observe the 80th Anniversary of the 1944 munitions explosion at the former Umatilla Army Ordnance Depot, which claimed the lives of six workers.

Oregon State Rep. Greg Smith, representing the Columbia Development Authority, spoke to those who gathered to pay tribute to the six people who made the ultimate sacrifice for their country.

“The cause of the explosion has never been determined, however what we do know is that six civilians lost their lives that day,” Smith said. “It is important that we recognize the men and women who sacrificed for each and every one of us.”

The accidental explosion occurred at 9:21 p.m., on March 21, 1944 inside one of the 1,002 storage igloos — instantly killing Harry D. Sever, Hiram Cook, Kenneth L. Fraser, William Sanders, Alice Wolgamott, and Lance Stultz.



Robert Daniel of the American Legion Post 37 (left) holds a ceremonial wreath, along with Raymond Huesties of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (center) and Oregon National Guard Chaplain (Col.) Jacob Scott, (right) during the 80th Anniversary of the 1944 igloo explosion site.

Following Smith’s remarks, a tribal prayer was offered by Raymond Huesties of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, recalling the special significance of the area of the explosion.

“This place is in our ceded territory. Our people utilized it for a millennium prior to European settlements. It is important to let people know we, the tribe, are still here and we still practice our way of life the best we can in this modern time,” Huesties said. “All these places are important to our way of life, and we’re glad to be acknowledged



Oregon Army National Guard Chaplain (Col.) Jacob Scott leads a moment of silence at the historic memorial marker at the Rees Training Center, near Hermiston, Oregon on March 21, 2024.



An Oregon Army National Guard Color Guard team presents the colors during the national anthem at the 80th Anniversary ceremony of the 1944 explosion at the former Umatilla Depot, on March 21, 2024 near Hermiston, Oregon. On March 21, 1944, at 9:21 p.m., six civilian workers were killed in a munitions explosion as part of defense of the United States during WWII.

as a part of the process for the future to preserve and protect places like this one.”

After the tribal blessing, Oregon National Guard Chaplain (Col.) Jacob Scott offered a prayer to those gathered at the memorial site in front of the still visible crater left 80 years ago.

“On this spring day we pause to remember and honor the service to our nation the six people who perished in the igloo explosion on this spot eighty years ago today,” Scott said. “They were part of a massive effort to defend America and the world against tyranny.”

Oregon Army National Guard serviced members took part in the ceremony with an honor guard unit presenting the colors with music presented for the national anthem, as taps were played as a wreath was posted on a white cross by Robert Daniel of the Hermiston American Legion Post 37 at the former site of igloo B-1014.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, the Oregon Military Department Wildland Fire led a procession back to the Rees Training Center to the Explosion Site Memorial Plaque for a moment of silence, led by Chaplain Scott.

As the United States prepared for World War II, the U.S. Army began building a military munitions and supply depot on twenty thousand acres of land located on Umatilla and Morrow counties near Hermiston, Oregon in 1940. The Umatilla Army Ordnance Depot was designated a military reservation when it officially opened on October 14, 1941. The site was selected because it was safe from attacks by sea, as well as the proximity to established railroad lines and a port location on the Columbia River. During the height of WWII, the depot employed over 2,000 workers.

The depot was later renamed the U.S. Army Umatilla Chemical



Robert Daniel of the Hermiston American Legion Post 37 salutes a wreath placed on a cross at the explosion site of igloo B-1014, at the former Umatilla Army Depot on March 21, 2024.

Depot — with nearly 12 percent of the nation’s chemical munitions stored at the site. By 1988 the Base Realignment and Closure Committee identified the depot for closure, and by 2004 the process to incinerate the chemical stockpile stored at the site began. When the process was completed in 2011, the Army declared the entire site as excess property in 2012.

The installation was officially renamed the Raymond F. Rees Training Center on Sept. 29, 2022 as the home of the Oregon Army National Guard Regional Infantry Training center.

In remarks held after the two ceremonies, State Sen. Bill Hansell reflected on the past history of the region and the sober significance of the explosion at the depot in 1944. He noted that his father and uncle had “the largest hog farm in the United States,” on property adjacent to the depot in the 1950s and 60s.



State Sen. Bill Hansell addresses those who attended the 80th Anniversary ceremony to honor the six civilian workers killed in a munitions explosion as part of the defense of the United States during WWII. Hansell described growing up near the depot during the Second World War as his family had one of the largest hog farms in the nation nearby.

“Over the years — I’ve often thought about the six people who perished at the site,” Hansell said, reflecting on the anniversary. “Can you imagine if you had a loved one working the swing shift that evening and the concern you would have wondering if they would walk through the door? It’s fitting (today) that we pause and remember their sacrifices.”