



The Defender



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The quarterly newsletter for the 20th CBRNE Command

December 2024

20th CBRNE Command marks 20 years of defeating hazards



Soldiers from the 181st CBRN Company (Hazardous Response) "Double Dragons" served alongside the 23rd CBRN Battalion, 2nd Infantry Division and Eighth Army during a nine-month rotational deployment to South Korea. The Double Dragons served with many American and South Korean units and trained for many missions, including sensitive site exploitation. Courtesy photo.

ABERDEEN PROVING GROUND, Md. – The U.S. military's premier CBRNE command marked 20 years of countering the world's most dangerous hazards, Oct. 16.

The 20th CBRNE Command held a series of celebratory events over the week to commemorate 20 years of defending liberty.

Established in 2004 to consolidate the U.S. Army units that tackle Weapons of Mass Destruction and explosive hazards across the nation and around the world, the 20th CBRNE Command is headquartered on Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, to leverage the CBRNE expertise in Northeast Maryland's science, technology and security corridor.

The deployable formation relies on the technical reach back capabilities

of many commands on Aberdeen Proving Ground, including the U.S. Army Combat Capabilities Development Command Chemical Biological Center, U.S. Army Chemical Materials Activity and Joint Program Executive Office for Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Defense.

From World War I through the Global War on Terrorism, units from Aberdeen Proving Ground have helped to safeguard U.S. forces and enable mission readiness.

In the aftermath of 9/11, the Army recognized the need for a standing operational command to oversee homeland and worldwide CBRNE response and technical exploitation missions and that led to the establishment of the one-of-a-kind command.

Retired Vice Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. Richard Cody drafted the memo that charted the course for the establishment of 20th CBRNE Command when he served as the deputy chief of staff of the Army for operations and plans.

The command was activated as part of U.S. Army Forces Command on Oct. 16, 2004, and originally called the 20th Support Command (CBRNE). It was renamed the 20th CBRNE Command on October 16, 2013, to reflect its mission more accurately.

From serving with conventional and Special Forces to teaming up with Federal, state and local law enforcement agencies, highly specialized units from the 20th CBRNE Command support military operations around the world and domestic authorities across the nation.

Soldiers and U.S. Army civilians deploy from 19 bases in 16 states to take on the world's most dangerous hazards in support of joint, interagency and multinational operations.

After confronting and defeating hundreds of thousands of Improvised Explosive Devices in Iraq and Afghanistan, the 20th CBRNE Command is focused on preparing to support maneuver formations during large-scale combat operations.

"The 20th CBRNE Command stands ready to face any CBRNE challenge with unmatched technical skill, unwavering dedication and a relentless drive to protect our nation," said Brig. Gen. W. Bochat, the commanding general of the 20th CBRNE Command. "That's how we defend our nation and take care of our people. We, as a military, succeed through teamwork."

[Read full story](#)

From the Command Sergeant Major

As I reflect on 2024, I am filled with immense pride and gratitude for the extraordinary dedication and resilience demonstrated by our Soldiers, Civilians, and our Families. This year has been marked by numerous challenges, and we have overcome them with the same professionalism and unwavering commitment that defines our command. From short-notice deployments to world-class training exercises, the Defender Family has proven time and again that we are ready to answer the call, no matter where or when it comes. One of the defining features of 2024 has been the high demand for our capabilities, which led to several short-notice deployments. These missions required our units to deploy rapidly and provide critical support in response to emerging threats. Whether conducting CBRNE operations in complex environments or providing crucial support in areas of heightened risk, our Soldiers exemplified the utmost professionalism and skill. These deployments underscore the unique role the command plays in supporting global security and ensuring the safety of our nation.



Throughout the year, our Soldiers participated in numerous high-profile training exercises across the globe. Exercises such as Austere Challenge, Freedom Shield, Liberty Shield, and Ardent Defender were vital in enhancing our readiness and interoperability with both domestic and international partners. These exercises tested our capabilities in real-world scenarios, ensuring we remain ready to face the challenges of modern warfare. Whether preparing for a chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear (CBRN) threat or enhancing explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) proficiency, these events allowed us to hone our skills and reinforce our commitment to mission success.

Across the command, our Soldiers stood out as shining examples of excellence. The level of professionalism and expertise displayed by our Soldiers was truly exceptional. Something was in the water this year at Fort Drum, New York, which produced prestigious titles of All Army EOD Team of the Year and Best CBRN Warrior. These achievements are a testament to the dedication and determination of the men and women serving in our units. I'm continuously inspired when I see our Soldiers rise to the occasion and exceed expectations, and these victories are a direct reflection of their hard work and commitment to excellence.

One of the highlights of this year was the induction of retired CSM Kenneth Graham as the first enlisted recipient of the Defender of Liberty Award. CSM Graham's achievements have left an indelible mark on our command, and his recognition with this prestigious award speaks volumes about his leadership, dedication, and tireless efforts to mentor the next generation of CBRNE professionals. CSM Graham's legacy will inspire many in our ranks for years to come, and I couldn't be prouder of his accomplishments.

This year saw the change of command between MG Hood and BG Bochat. Both officers have been instrumental in shaping the direction of the 20th CBRNE Command, and I am confident that under BG Bochat's leadership, our command will continue to thrive. MG Hood's leadership set a high standard, and we are eager to build upon the foundation he laid of growing extraordinary professionals who lead, care, train, and maintain resources as we move forward under BG Bochat's guidance and drive to push us to better versions of ourselves. As I look ahead to the future, I remain confident that the Soldiers, Civilians, and Families of the 20th CBRNE Command will continue to meet every challenge with the professionalism, dedication, and skill that has come to define our unit. Whether it's responding to a crisis, training for the next mission, or supporting our global allies, we will always be ready to defend our nation's freedom and security. In closing, I want to thank every member of our Defender Family for their outstanding service in 2024. Your hard work and sacrifices make our command what it is today. Together, we are ready to face whatever challenges the future may bring. Liberty, We Defend!

Command Sgt. Maj. Dave Silva
Command Sergeant Major
20th CBRNE Command



The Defender

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Chaplain's Corner

Unlocked Gates and Open Hearts

For this edition, I want to share a heartwarming story of the Christmas spirit as recounted by Charlie Flood in a story entitled Christmas I Remember Best.

A feisty nine-year-old named Kevin found himself in quite a sad situation as Christmas approached in the early 1930's. The country was in the grips of the Great Depression but families like Kevin's didn't notice much since they had nothing anyway. That fall, Kevin's dad got sick and passed away suddenly around Thanksgiving, leaving the family more destitute than ever before. A resourceful lad, Kevin did his part to help by snatching a pie from window here, grabbing a milk jug from a porch there, all provided to him, he reasoned, by the gracious God that the preacher talked about every Sunday.

Christmases came and went and came and went and there was never anything under their tree early on Christmas morning. In fact, there was no tree, which explained why Santa seemed to pass by his house every year. Kevin decided one year that Christmas trees should be just as much a part of God's provision as pies and milk, so he set out to nab one from Mr. Petersen's market. After all, old man Petersen had tons of trees left over on Christmas day, he wouldn't miss one. Apparently, Mr. Petersen felt differently and promptly jumped out of seemingly nowhere to chase Kevin back down the street.

The next year, Mr. Petersen installed a fence with a locked gate and a security light. No worries, Kevin thought, he'd just scale the fire ladder on the side of the shed and make off with a tree. Not so fast. Mr. Petersen was ready for him with the brightest flashlight in the face Kevin had ever seen. "Off with you Kevin," Mr. Petersen shouted. Fine, Kevin thought. The next year Kevin crept up to the furthest section of fence from the building with some borrowed wire cutters. Only a couple of snips later, Kevin became aware of a menacing pair of eyes staring at him through the darkness, with wisps of steam from hot breath and sharp teeth. "Hey Kevin," Mr. Petersen bellowed in the distance. "Have you met my new dog Spike, yet." Darn him, Kevin thought as he ran for his life. Foiled again. It seemed to Kevin that there was simply no way to beat Mr. Petersen. That old scrooge was always going to win.

Next Christmas, Mrs. Davis, his sixth-grade teacher decided everyone was going to write a hand-made Christmas card to their very favorite person. Kevin, feisty as ever, decided to do the exact opposite, writing a syrupy sweet card to his arch nemesis Mr. Petersen. Kevin was certain this was the only card, or any gift for that matter that the old codger would get this year. Late on Christmas eve, Kevin decided on a quick pass by Mr. Peterson's. To his surprise he noticed the gate was open and the security light was turned off. Instantly he sensed a trap – there's no way old man Petersen would be so dumb as to leave his prized trees unguarded. Kevin slowly inched his way through the gate and noticed a beautiful tree standing in the center all by itself. An obvious trap, but with no sign of Petersen or his dog, Spike, maybe he could grab it quickly and be gone. As he crept forward, light from the tree suddenly split the night wide open with brilliant colors. Kevin, now a silhouette of surprise and fear against the dark night spotted a hand-lettered sign next to the tree, now alive with color. It read: Don't forget to pull the plug and lock the gate – Merry Christmas!

Still adjusting to the lights, Kevin noticed wrapped presents and a bag of groceries had been carefully arranged under the tree. The fear melted away into gratitude and he hollered out, "Merry Christmas, Mr. Peterson. This is the best Christmas ever." The moral of this story is simple: Never underestimate how a simple gesture of Holiday kindness to a lonely heart can open a locked gate.

With this story in mind, allow me to encourage everyone this Christmas season to look out for ways to be kind, generous and to care for one another.

Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Ben Clark
20th CBRNE Command Chaplain
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Top 20th CBRNE Command warrant officer promoted on APG



Chief Warrant Officer 4 Victoria RamageGarcia, the senior warrant officer advisor for the 20th CBRNE Command, is promoted to her current rank during a ceremony on Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, Nov. 15. A native of Pioneer, California, RamageGarcia is only second Soldier in 20th CBRNE Command history to hold the position. U.S. Army photo by Marshall R. Mason.



ABERDEEN PROVING GROUND, Md. – The senior warrant officer advisor for the U.S. Department of Defense's premier Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, Explosives (CBRNE) command was promoted to chief warrant officer 4 on Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, Nov. 15.

Chief Warrant Officer 4 Victoria RamageGarcia pinned on her current rank during a widely attended ceremony at the 20th CBRNE Command Headquarters.

Brig. Gen. W Bochat, the commanding general of the 20th CBRNE Command, hosted the promotion ceremony.

A native of Pioneer, California, RamageGarcia has served in the U.S. Army for almost 20 years.

RamageGarcia became the second command chief warrant officer in the

20-year history of the 20th CBRNE Command during a ceremony where she assumed the charter from Chief Warrant Officer 4 Jesse S. Deberry, who took an assignment at the Defense Threat Reduction Agency.

RamageGarcia became the top chief warrant officer after serving as the CBRN technician for Weapons of Mass Destruction Coordination Team 1 in the 20th CBRNE Command.

WMD Coordination Teams provide combatant commanders, lead federal agencies and supported commanders with specialized support and subject matter expertise for overseas and stateside CBRNE and counter-improvised explosive device operations, accidents and incidents.

She has served around the world in a wide variety of staff and leadership positions.

RamageGarcia previously served as the division CBRN technician for the 2nd Infantry Division ROK-U.S. Combined Division in South Korea.

She deployed to Mosul, Iraq, with the 1st Cavalry Division in 2008 – 2009.

RamageGarcia earned her bachelor's degree in occupational safety and health with an emphasis in environmental science from Columbia Southern University and her graduate certificate and master's degree in strategic studies with an emphasis on Weapons of Mass Destruction from the National Defense University Counter Weapons of Mass Destruction fellowship program in coordination with Missouri State University.

As executive level professionals, warrant officers provide the U.S. Army with specialized technical and tactical expertise to advise the command.

Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear (CBRN) warrant officers' area of focus is on the world's most dangerous hazards.

The 20th CBRNE Command enables military operations around the world and supports domestic authorities across the nation.

Headquartered on Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, in the science, technology and security corridor of northeastern Maryland, the multifunctional and deployable 20th CBRNE Command is home to 75 percent of the active-duty U.S. Army's Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) technicians and CBRN specialists, as well as the 1st Global Field Medical Laboratory, CBRNE Analytical and Remediation Activity, Weapons of Mass Destruction Coordination Teams and Nuclear Disablement Teams (Infrastructure).

From 19 bases in 16 states, Soldiers and U.S. Army civilians from the 20th CBRNE Command confront and defeat the world's most dangerous hazards in support of joint, interagency and multinational operations around the world.

[Read full story](#)

Army unit changes name to 1st Global Field Medical Laboratory

ABERDEEN PROVING GROUND, Md. — A deployable U.S. Army medical laboratory officially changed its name to reflect its global laboratory mission.

The 1st Area Medical Laboratory was renamed the 1st Global Field Medical Laboratory on Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, Oct. 16.

The name change coincided with the 20th anniversary of the 20th CBRNE Command, which has training readiness authority for the 1st Global Field Medical Laboratory.

The Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland-headquartered 1st Global Field Medical Laboratory is part of the 44th Medical Brigade and 20th CBRNE Command.

During numerous overseas missions, Soldiers from the 1st GFML have forged partnerships with many nations, including Australia, Germany,

Poland, South Korea, Romania and Ukraine.

The 1st GFML served in seven locations overseas during the COVID-19 response.

Col. Dubray Kinney Sr., the commander of the 1st Global Field Medical Laboratory, said the name change better reflects the mission of the 1st GFML Soldiers who save lives and enable mission readiness on the frontlines of freedom.

“Our Lab Dragons make a difference around the world,” said Dubray, a graduate of the University of Maryland at Eastern Shore from Washington, D.C. who has deployed to Kuwait, Jordan, Iraq and Afghanistan. “Our new name represents the important mission that our Soldiers accomplish every day in defense of our nation.”

[Read full story](#)



American Soldiers from the 1st Global Field Medical Laboratory attend at training session on Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, Oct. 23. To better reflect its global mission, the 1st Area Medical Laboratory was renamed the 1st Global Field Medical Laboratory on Aberdeen Proving Ground, Oct. 16. U.S. Army photo by Marshall R. Mason.

Awards

Civilian of the Quarter

Robert B. Roberts - 71st EOD Group
Susan C. Persing - 20th CBRNE Command

Staff Sgt. Douglas Smith - Army Achievement Medal
Cpl. Jonathan Hoffman - Army Achievement Medal

20th CBRNE Command

Lt. Col. Valerie Knight - Meritorious Service Medal
Master Sgt. Chiquita Youngblood - Meritorious Service Medal
Sgt. 1st Class Stephanie Beachley - Meritorious Service Medal
Sgt. 1st Class Brian Gardner - Meritorious Service Medal
Staff Sgt. Tyler Jean - Army Achievement Medal

48th Chemical Brigade

Capt. Kacey Adams - Meritorious Service Medal
Capt. Anthony Diaz - Meritorious Service Medal
Capt. Pamela Jones - Meritorious Service Medal
1st Sgt. Dustin Westfall - Meritorious Service Medal
Master Sgt. Dwayne Bautista - Meritorious Service Medal

Army civilian helps to safeguard troops from blast overpressure

FORT CARSON, Colo. — A U.S. Army civilian safety manager was recognized for improving the safety program at the Explosive Ordnance Disposal Group that covers the western United States and contributing to the blast overpressurization standards for the entire U.S. military.

Robert B. Reynolds, the safety manager for the Fort Carson, Colorado-based 71st EOD Group, was recognized as the 20th CBRNE Command Civilian of the Quarter for his outstanding contributions to the 71st EOD Group’s safety program.

Reynolds has followed the effects of blast overpressure on the human body and has completed a number of executive summaries of the on-going studies for the 71st EOD Group.

Reynolds serves on the U.S. Department of Defense Blast Overpressurization Working Group and the Department of the Army Blast

Overpressurization Safety Group.

Through his participation in these working groups, Reynolds contributes to safety standards for the entire Department of Defense.

A native of Atlanta, Robert knows firsthand the importance of the Army safety program and how it helps safeguard U.S. troops around the world, especially EOD technicians.

Reynolds retired from the U.S. Army as chief warrant officer 5.

“I’m motivated in continuing my support to the nation, the Army and its Soldiers and to hopefully help in improving the readiness of the force,” said Reynolds, who earned two master’s degrees in business administration from Regis University in Denver, Colorado.

[Read full story](#)



Robert B. Reynolds, the safety manager for the Fort Carson, Colorado-based 71st EOD Group, was recognized as the 20th CBRNE Command Civilian of the Quarter for his outstanding contributions to the 71st EOD Group’s safety program. Reynolds serves on Department of Defense and Department of Army working groups. Courtesy photo.

Awards

48th Chemical Brigade

Sgt. 1st Class Jason Aman - Meritorious Service Medal

Sgt. 1st Class John Barackman - Meritorious Service Medal

Sgt. 1st Class Rebecca Hernandez - Meritorious Service Medal

Sgt. 1st Class Rudy Perez - Meritorious Service Medal

Staff Sgt. Quinter White - Army Commendation Medal

Staff Sgt. Jose Atkinson – Career Counselor Badge

52nd EOD Group

1st Lt. Sean Hoisington - Meritorious Service Medal

Master Sgt. Jeremy Hiltibidal - Meritorious Service Medal

Master Sgt. Scott Schmitz - Meritorious Service Medal

Sgt. 1st Class Victor Campau - Meritorious Service Medal

Sgt. 1st Class Dmarquet Gilliam - Meritorious Service Medal

Sgt. 1st Class Joseph M. Peery - Meritorious Service Medal

Sgt. 1st Class Michael Schofield - Meritorious Service Medal

Sgt. 1st Class Benjamin Summerfield - Meritorious Service Medal

Sgt. 1st Class Cody Zick - Meritorious Service Medal

Army civilian protocol officer recognized for outstanding service



Susan Persing, the protocol officer for the 20th CBRNE Command, was selected as the Civilian of the Quarter for the command. U.S. Army photo by Marshall R. Mason.

ABERDEEN PROVING GROUND, Md. – A U.S. Army civilian protocol officer was recognized for her service at the U.S. Department of Defense’s premier CBRNE Command.

Susan Persing, the protocol officer for the 20th CBRNE Command, was recently selected as the command Civilian of the Quarter.

Persing plans and coordinates official

events, visits and ceremonies for the one-of-a-kind command that supports joint, interagency and multinational operations around the world.

Persing works to highlight the 20th CBRNE Command and forge stronger relationships with organizations.

“I take pride in ensuring everything runs smoothly, showcasing the professionalism and excellence of our command,” said Persing. “One of the most rewarding parts of my role is building strong relationships with our joint, interagency, and multinational partners, while respecting customs, courtesies and cultural traditions to strengthen our connections.”

Persing started her civil service career at the Perry Point VA Medical Center and moved to the 20th CBRNE Command in 2022 where she served at the CBRNE Analytical and Remediation Activity. In January 2024, she became the 20th CBRNE Command protocol officer.

She welcomed the opportunity to serve her nation as a U.S. Army civilian, adding that people are what make the 20th CBRNE Command a great place to serve.

“I am motivated to serve my country by knowing that my contributions support the U.S. Army’s mission to protect and defend the nation inspires me every day,” said Persing.

“I value the sense of purpose, teamwork and commitment to excellence that comes with being a U.S. Army civilian,” said Persing. “The best part of serving at the 20th CBRNE Command is working alongside such dedicated Soldiers and professionals who truly embody teamwork and camaraderie. The Command Group feels like a family, creating a supportive and collaborative environment where everyone is committed to the mission and to helping each other succeed.”

[Read full story](#)

Awards

71st EOD Group

Command Sgt. Maj. Christopher Simpson - Meritorious Service Medal

1st Sgt. Brian Fox - Meritorious Service Medal

1st Sgt. Montana Hughlett - Meritorious Service Medal

1st Sgt. Drew McDowell - Meritorious Service Medal

Sgt. 1st Class Quincy Baumeister - Meritorious Service Medal

Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Dean - Meritorious Service Medal

Sgt. 1st Class Luis Perez-Baez - Meritorious Service Medal

Sgt. 1st Class Steven Villanueva - Meritorious Service Medal

Staff Sgt. Joshua Tapper - Meritorious Service Medal

Capt. Ian MacKinnon - Army Commendation Medal

1st Lt. Luis Ortiz – Army Achievement Medal

Staff Sgt. Kyle Michael – Army Achievement Medal

1st Global Field Medical Laboratory

Staff Sgt. Stephen Riddick - Meritorious Service Medal

Adjutant General officer retires from 20th CBRNE Command



Lt. Col. Valerie Knight (center) poses with her family and friends at the 20th CBRNE Command Headquarters on Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, Nov. 22. Knight, the former Assistant Chief of Staff for Personnel and Secretary of the General Staff for the 20th CBRNE Command, was recognized for her 21 years in uniform. U.S. Army photo by Marshall R. Mason

ABERDEEN PROVING GROUND, Md. – A U.S. Army Adjutant General Corps lieutenant colonel completed her career at the headquarters for the U.S. military’s premier CBRNE command on Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, Nov. 22.

Lt. Col. Valerie Knight, the former Assistant Chief of Staff for Personnel (G1) and Secretary of the General Staff for the 20th CBRNE Command, was recognized for her 21 years in uniform during a widely attended ceremony.

Brig. Gen. W Bochat, the commanding general of the 20th CBRNE Command, hosted the retirement ceremony.

Bochat said retirement ceremonies recognize not only the military retirees but also the many people who supported them throughout their career.

“The retirement ceremony is not only about you but also about everyone who invested in you and believed in you,” said Bochat. “Less than one percent of the nation has served or is serving and that is a really big deal.”

A native of Sumter, South Carolina, Knight was commissioned into the Adjutant General Corps through the Reserve Officers Training Corps in 2003 after earning her bachelor’s degree in sociology from Newberry College.

Knight earned her master’s degree in human resources from Oklahoma University.

During her last assignment, Knight managed personnel plans, programs and policies for the multifunctional and deployable 20th CBRNE Command

She then served as the Secretary to the General Staff where she coordinated command group operations and administrative actions for the command.

Soldiers and Army civilians from the 20th CBRNE Command take on the world’s most dangerous hazards in support of joint, interagency and multinational operations.

Knight is a veteran of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

From Fort Stewart, Georgia, to the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe in Belgium, Knight served in a wide variety of Army formations across the nation and around the world during her more than two decades in uniform.

Knight thanked her family and friends in attendance for their support throughout her career.

Knight said it was an honor and privilege to wear her nation’s uniform and to have the opportunity to write her own chapter in the storied history of the U.S. Army.

[Read full story](#)

Awards
20th CBRNE Command
Marshall Mason – Civilian Service Commendation Medal
Albert Marte – Civilian Service Commendation Medal
Adam Ochylski – Civilian Service Commendation Medal
Susan Persing – Civilian Service Achievement Medal
Robert Reynolds – Civilian Service Achievement Medal
Craig Rempel – Civilian Service Achievement Medal
Althea James – Certificate of Appreciation
Christopher Snyder – Public Service Commendation Meda
Tammy Allender – Public Service Commendation Medal
CBRNE Analytical and Remediation Activity
Edward Keen – Civilian Service Commendation

Soldier recognized for excelling in Army leadership course



Col. Phillip P. Murrell (left), the deputy commanding officer of the 20th Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, Explosives (CBRNE) Command, presents Cpl. Jonathan L. Hoffman (right) with an Army Achievement Medal during a ceremony on Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland. Hoffman, a Human Resources Specialist at the 20th CBRNE Command, was recognized for earning a 3.99 grade point average in the Basic Leader Course on Fort Drum, New York. U.S. Army photo by Marshall R. Mason.

FORT DRUM, N.Y. – A Soldier from the U.S. military's premier Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, Explosives (CBRNE) command was recognized for earning a 3.99 grade point average in the Basic Leader Course on Fort Drum, New York.

Cpl. Jonathan L. Hoffman, a Human Resources Specialist at the 20th CBRNE Command, excelled during the 22-day leadership course that was also attended by many Infantry Soldiers from the 10th Mountain Division.

Col. Phillip P. Murrell, the deputy commanding officer of the 20th CBRNE Command, presented Hoffman with an Army Achievement Medal during a ceremony on Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland.

"The secret to my success was the time and attention to detail I put into everything. Staying in the barracks at the Noncommissioned Officer Acade-

my, I had a lot of time to dedicate to each assessment. I familiarized myself with each rubric and spent as much time as needed preparing to ensure I earned the best grade I could," said Hoffman.

Originally from Florence, Arizona, Hoffman attended Grand Canyon University before joining the U.S. Army.

Hoffman said he joined the Army because he was unable to finish college due to financial reasons and needed to find a new career path.

"My stepdad recommended I consider the Army and my mom, having served in the past, supported that recommendation," said Hoffman. "I went to speak to a recruiter, and I liked the numerous opportunities he said the Army would provide, so I decided to enlist."

Hoffman serves in the G1 Human

Resources Directorate of the 20th CBRNE Command.

The G1 Directorate develops, manages and executes manpower and personnel plans, programs and policies across the 20th CBRNE Command.

Headquartered on Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, the deployable and multifunctional 20th CBRNE Command is home to 75 percent of the Active-Duty U.S. Army Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) technicians and Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear (CBRN) specialists, as well as the 1st Global Field Medical Laboratory, CBRNE Analytical and Remediation Activity, Weapons of Mass Destruction Coordination teams and Nuclear Disablement Teams.

Soldiers and Army civilians from the 20th CBRNE Command deploy from 19 bases in 16 states to confront and defeat the world's most dangerous hazards in support of joint, interagency and multinational operations.

Hoffman said his most memorable Army experience so far has been representing the Headquarters and Headquarters Company during the 20th CBRNE Command Best Warrior Competition on Fort Stewart, Georgia.

The five-day Best Squad Competition included teams from the 20th CBRNE Command Headquarters and Headquarters Company; Fort Cavazos, Texas-based 48th Chemical Brigade, Fort Carson, Colorado-based 71st EOD Group; and Fort Campbell, Kentucky-based 52nd EOD Group. The squad from the 48th Chemical Brigade came in first place.

"Getting out of the office and competing in Soldier tasks I don't commonly use was a unique experience that I thoroughly enjoyed," said Hoffman, adding that he plans to continue to seek positions of greater responsibility in the U.S. Army. "My future plans are to finish my degree and commission as an Adjutant General Officer."

[Read full story](#)

20th CBRNE Command hosts South Korean allies for exercise

ABERDEEN PROVING GROUND, Md. – American and South Korean military leaders held a tabletop exercise to strengthen their combined counter Weapons of Mass Destruction posture, Sept. 25.

The U.S. Army's 20th CBRNE Command hosted the Republic of Korea CBRN Defense Command for Exercise Liberty Shield.

Leaders from the 20th CBRNE Command welcomed their South Korean counterparts to their headquarters on Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, in Northeast Maryland's science, technology and security corridor.

U.S. Army Brig. Gen. W Bochat, the commanding general for 20th CBRNE Command, met with her counterpart, ROK Army Brig. Gen. Jaehoon Yoo, the commanding general of the ROK CBRN Defense Command.

Yoo said the relationship between the two highly specialized commands continues to strengthen the counter Weapons of Mass Destruction posture on the Korean Peninsula.

Bochat emphasized the importance of the annual meeting to the ROK-U.S. Alliance and the CBRNE forces that serve in it.

Bochat previously served as the first female chief of staff in the 107-year history of the storied South Korea-based 2nd Infantry Division/ROK-U.S. Combined Division.

"The relationships that I have had personally and professionally both on and off the peninsula cannot be overstated," said Bochat.

The ROK-U.S. Alliance was officially established by the Mutual Defense Treaty that was signed on October 1, 1953.

The ROK-U.S. Alliance has provided the security on the Korean Peninsula and stability in Northeast Asia that enabled the meteoric rise of South Korea from the ashes of war to become one of the world's leading economic and cultural powers.

[Read full story](#)



(Top) The U.S. Army's 20th CBRNE Command hosted the Republic of Korea CBRN Defense Command for Exercise Liberty Shield. Leaders from the 20th CBRNE Command welcomed their South Korean counterparts from the ROK CBRN Defense Command to their headquarters on Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, Sept. 25. U.S. Army photos by Marshall R. Mason. (Below) Established in 2002, the ROK CBRN Defense Command incorporates personnel from all branches of the South Korean Armed Forces and routinely trains with the 20th CBRNE Command. U.S. Army photo by Maj. Steven M. Modugno.

US Army civilian pilots fly missions for lifesaving surety program



U.S. Army civilian pilots from the CBRNE Analytical and Remediation Activity (CARA) are the only aviators in the U.S. military authorized to support chemical surety missions off military installations. A one-of-a-kind Army civilian activity, CARA maintains organic airlift capabilities with U.S. Army civilian pilots who are dual rated to fly both rotary and fixed-wing aircraft. Courtesy photo.

ABERDEEN PROVING GROUND, Md. – A team of seasoned U.S. Army civilian pilots routinely support chemical surety missions that contribute to lifesaving research across the nation.

Army civilian pilots from the CBRNE Analytical and Remediation Activity (CARA) are the only aviators in the U.S. military authorized to support chemical surety missions off military installations.

CARA maintains organic airlift capabilities with U.S. Army civilian pilots who are dual rated to fly both rotary and fixed-wing aircraft.

CARA also supports remediation missions at Formerly Used Defense Sites and conducts emergency responses, overseas and stateside, to characterize and assess Recovered Chemical Warfare Materiel. The CBRNE Analytical and Remediation Activity is part of the 20th CBRNE Command.

In addition to CARA, the 20th CBRNE Command is home to 75 percent of the active-duty U.S. Army Explosive Ordnance Disposal technicians and CBRN specialists, as well as the

1st Global Field Medical Laboratory, Weapons of Mass Destruction Coordination Teams and Nuclear Disablement Teams.

Christopher J. Hurst, a U.S. Army civilian pilot and retired Army chief warrant officer 5, said CARA Aviation provides the Army's only dedicated fixed and rotary wing support for the transportation of chemical surety, non-surety material, recovered chemical warfare material, command response and site evaluation teams.

CARA Aviation has also recently supported Nuclear Disablement Teams and WMD Coordination Teams training exercises.

"When not supporting real world missions, CARA Aviation conducts rigorous aircraft training during day, night and Instrument Meteorological Conditions (flying in the clouds using instruments as the sole navigation reference)," said Hurst.

The CARA pilots are graduates of the U.S. Army Initial Entry Rotary Wing training program on Fort

Novosel, Alabama. All CARA pilots hold FAA Commercial Pilots Certificates as well as numerous other FAA certificates and aircraft type ratings.

With more than 150 years of collective military aviation experience, the CARA civilian pilots have a combined 28,000 flight hours with an average of more than 5,600 flight hours per pilot. CARA pilots have collectively flown to 39 nations and served on more than 18 deployments.

The Surety Program enables the research and development of cutting edge personal protective equipment, chemical monitoring devices, medical countermeasures and chemical decontamination capabilities. Hurst said surety missions directly support the readiness of U.S. forces and protects the homeland from WMD threats.

"Moving surety material across the United States directly supports future warfighting capabilities in the CBRNE arena," said Hurst.

Franz J. Amann, the CARA director, said the Army civilian pilots are key to CARA's mission success. Since not many Army pilots are dual rated to fly both helicopter and fixed-wing aircraft, CARA pilots bring critical skill sets to the organization, said Amann.

"Our highly experienced CARA Aviation team safely transports surety materiel to designated research facilities," said Amann. "The delivered chemical agent is critical to accurately test the effectiveness and survivability of the CBRN personal protective equipment. This testing provides our warfighters the confidence that they can fight and survive in a contaminated environment."

"When not on mission, the pilots support other 20th CBRNE teams in their training that supports these team's readiness," said Amann, a retired U.S. Army Chemical Corps colonel from Spartanburg, South Carolina. "Like the other CARA civilians, our pilots bring a wealth of experience to this organization and keep us ready to conduct our critical missions."

[Read full story](#)

20th CBRNE Command Defenders win APG Turkey Bowl



Soldiers from the 20th CBRNE command won the championship during the Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, Turkey Bowl, Nov. 25. The 20th CBRNE Command “Defenders” outlasted the defending champions from the Program Executive Office Command, Control and Communications – Network during the flag football championship game and came away with a 12 - 7 win. U.S. Army photo by Marshall R. Mason.

ABERDEEN PROVING GROUND, Md. – Soldiers from the U.S. military’s premier CBRNE command proved their grit on the gridiron by winning the championship during the Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, Turkey Bowl, Nov. 25.

The 20th CBRNE Command

“Defenders” outlasted the defending champions from the Program Executive Office Command, Control and Communications – Network during the flag football championship game and came away with a 12 - 7 win.

The 20th CBRNE Command Defenders defeated four teams to take

top honors on the nation’s oldest operational proving ground.

1st Sgt. Christopher D. Holmstadt, the senior enlisted leader for the 20th CBRNE Command Headquarters and Headquarters Company, said Spc. Keon Forbes saved the game for the Defenders with an end zone interception that led to their winning score.

“The team comradery was excellent,” said Holmstadt, a Master Explosive Ordnance Disposal technician from Lake City, Michigan, who has served in the U.S. Army for 18 years.

Holmstadt also credited 20th CBRNE Command Coach Sgt. Traci A. Bennett for shepherding the team to victory in the Aberdeen Proving Ground competition.

In the annual intra-command 20th CBRNE Command Turkey Bowl, the noncommissioned officer team went from being down 8 – 6 at halftime to quadrupling the officers score 32 – 8 and winning their second consecutive championship title, Nov. 27.

From 19 bases in 16 states, Soldiers and Army civilians from 20th CBRNE Command deploy in support of joint, interagency and allied operations around the world.

The 20th CBRNE Command Communication Directorate (G6) took home the trophy during the intra-command field goal kicking contest.

Maj. Steven M. Modugno, the public affairs director for the 20th CBRNE Command, said the 20th CBRNE Command Soldiers came together for the annual Turkey Bowl in the spirit of friendly competition.

“The 20th CBRNE Command Defenders are always a smart, tough and tenacious team, both on and off the gridiron,” said Modugno, a native of Santa Clarita, California. “From confronting and defeating the world’s most dangerous hazards to winning championships on the gridiron, our team always brings a winning attitude to the fight. Happy Thanksgiving.”

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Soldier represents Chemical Corps at West Point Branch Week



Spc. Chase H. Jordan from the 63rd Chemical Company (Hazard Response) was selected as the 20th CBRNE Command Soldier of the Month for representing the U.S. Army Chemical Corps during the U.S. Military Academy at West Point Branch Week. Jordan was also recognized by the Dean of Students and other U.S. Army National Guard and U.S. Army Reserve senior leaders at the event. Courtesy photo.



U.S. MILITARY ACADEMY, West Point, New York – A U.S. Army Chemical Corps Soldier was recently recognized for representing his life-saving and mission enabling profession during branch week at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.

Spc. Chase H. Jordan from the 63rd Chemical Company (Hazard Response) was selected as the 20th CBRNE Command Soldier of the Month for participating in the West Point Branch Week.

Jordan was also recognized by the Dean of Students and other U.S. Army National Guard and U.S. Army Reserve senior leaders at the event.

The Fort Campbell, Kentucky-based 63rd Chemical Company "Dragon Masters" are part of the 2nd Chemical Battalion, 48th Chemical Brigade and 20th CBRNE Command.

Jordan, who has been selected for promotion to sergeant, ensured one of the company's Nuclear, Biological, Radiological Reconnaissance Vehicles (NBCRV) was in pristine condition for display at the U.S. Military Academy.

"I spent two weeks prepping the NBCRV," said Jordan. "We deep cleaned the inside and outside ensuring that everything was ready for Branch Week."

The 63rd Chemical Company provides combat units with mounted and dismounted CBRN reconnaissance and decontamination capabilities.

Jordan said the West Point cadets were curious about the capabilities of the NBCRV and how it would be used to support maneuver forces during large-scale combat operations against a near-peer adversary.

"I spoke with hundreds of cadets over the week, advocating on behalf of the Chemical Corps and teaching them about CBRN Mounted Reconnaissance," he said.

Jordan said he also enjoyed seeing what the other branches brought to the event.

"Every branch had a representative at Branch Week, from Aviation to Air Defense Artillery," said Jordan. "I loved to see booths from branches I had never seen before and all the new gear the Army was coming out with in the future."

Jordan said the highlight of branch week was watching the West Point Black Knights football team defeat the Lehigh Mountain Hawks, 42 – 7.

"It was amazing to see an entire campus of students, faculty and staff come together to support the football team," said Jordan. "I loved to see how much work was put into it, making it a good event to watch."

A native of Billings, Montana, Jordan is currently studying criminal justice at Purdue Global. He hopes to serve as a CBRN specialist in the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment.

"My most interesting mission so far was during a National Training Center rotation (on Fort Irwin, California). I was able to execute all the skills I've learned thus far as part of a Mounted Reconnaissance Platoon," said Jordan. "I chose the Chemical Corps because I have always been interested in Weapons of Mass Destruction and chemicals. I love the job because it makes me feel like I can make a difference and save lives."

[Read full story](#)

Army civilians donate holiday essentials to veterans home



opportunity to donate winter essentials and spend time with veterans at the home.

The donations were received from numerous Redstone Arsenal organizations, including CARA, RCA, Hendrix Enterprises and the U.S. Army Materiel Command.

CARA provides a world-wide emergency response capability for Recovered Chemical Warfare Material, remediation support for combatant commanders, technical escort of chemical surety materials and mobile laboratories for theater validation of suspect CBRNE materiel.

CARA is headquartered at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, as a subordinate unit under the 20th CBRNE Command

Mark C. Hammond, the U.S. Army civilian supervisory program manager for the Redstone Arsenal-based CARA Remediation Response West, said the visit was a great opportunity to help brighten the holiday season for everyone involved.

"We were able to sit down and spend quality time with some brothers- and sisters-in-arms, playing games, visiting and listening to war stories," said Hammond, who is from St. Louis.

Hammond has served at CARA for 13 years. A veteran of Operation Desert Storm and Operation Just Cause, Hammond also served in uniform as a U.S. Army Health Physics Technician and Environmental Health and Safety Specialist. He later continued his service in the Army Reserve as a Chemical Operations non-commissioned officer.

Hammond said the volunteers plan to visit the state veterans home on a regular basis.

"The residents were thankful for the afternoon spent playing cards and visiting. They said above all else the time spent was most appreciated," said Hammond. "Looking forward, CARA and RCA plan on making this a quarterly event."

[Read full story](#)



U.S. Army civilians from Redstone Arsenal, Alabama, recently donated more than 700 blankets, socks, slippers, hats and bags of candy to veterans at the Floyd E. "Tut" Fann State Veterans home in Huntsville, Alabama. Together with volunteers from the Redstone Chemical Activity, U.S. Army civilians from CBRNE Analytical and Remediation Activity's Remediation Response Activity West took the opportunity to donate winter essentials and spend time with veterans at the home. Courtesy photo.

REDSTONE ARSENAL, Ala. — U.S. Army civilians from Redstone Arsenal, Alabama, recently donated more than 700 blankets, socks, slippers, hats and bags of candy to veterans at the Floyd E. "Tut" Fann State Veterans home in Huntsville, Alabama.

Together with volunteers from the Redstone Chemical Activity (RCA), U.S. Army civilians from Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, Explosives (CBRNE) Analytical and Remediation Activity's Remediation Response Activity West took the

US Army EOD officer earns Perfect Edge during assessment



1st Lt. Timothy M. Arndt, the 2nd Platoon leader in the 759th Ordnance Company (Explosive Ordnance Disposal), earned the "Perfect Edge" title in the Expert Soldier Badge assessment by passing all events with a first-time "Go" and earned a perfect 600 on his Army Combat Fitness Test. Arndt said he became a U.S. Army EOD officer to challenge himself in the lifesaving and mission enabling profession. Courtesy photo.

FORT IRWIN, Calif. – A U.S. Army Explosive Ordnance Disposal platoon leader earned the "Perfect Edge" title during the Expert Soldier Badge (ESB) assessment on Fort Irwin, California.

1st Lt. Timothy M. Arndt, the 2nd Platoon leader in the 759th Ordnance Company (EOD), passed all events with a first-time "Go" and earned a perfect 600 on his Army Combat Fitness Test.

Arndt earned his Expert Soldier Badge with 1st Lt. Alexander Ball and Staff Sgt. Mark Owens from the 759th EOD Company.

"We decided to get our Expert Soldier Badges because it gave us the opportunity to broaden our skillsets and master tasks not directly related to EOD," said Arndt. "It is a great program to provide a ton of basic Soldiering tasks in a condensed but effective fashion and it allowed for us to share those skills with people at our unit."

Arndt said he was also motivated to get his Expert Soldier Badges by the 759th EOD Company Commander Capt. Alexander K. Olson, who previously earned his badge.

The assessment was part of Fort Irwin E3B assessment event that included assessments for the Expert Infantry Badge, Expert Soldier Badge and Expert Field Medical Badge.

More than 300 Soldiers began the E3B assessment and less than 100 earned their badges with only 20 earning the "Perfect" distinction with the "True Blue," "Perfect Edge" and "Top Doc."

To earn the Expert Soldier Badge, Soldiers need to qualify "Expert" on their assigned weapons system, pass the Expert Physical Fitness Assessment (a combat-focused physical assessment conducted in the Army Combat Uniform, boots, "slick" body armor with plates and helmet), complete Day and Night Land Navigation, execute 10 weapons, 10 medical and 10 patrol lanes and then complete a 12-mile ruck march.

The training lanes vary from clearing and firing a heavy grenade launcher, to creating a Range Card for the M240B weapons system to treating an injury in a CBRN environment.

Arndt said the key to earning the "Perfect Edge" was staying focused during the preparation phase and asking questions.

"Having a battle buddy who is not afraid to tell you that you messed up and correct your errors before your official attempt at the task is important," said Arndt. "Going in with confidence and trusting my training allowed me to execute all of the tasks proficiently."

A native of Fairfax Station, Virginia, Arndt earned his bachelor's degree in applied physics and mathematics from Creighton University, and he earned his master's degree in mental health and wellness from Grand Canyon University.

Arndt knows firsthand the importance of being ready. He supported a Special Operations Task Force in the U.S. Africa Command Area of Operations.

"As a 1st lieutenant, being the EOD officer-in-charge of a 12 country Area of Operations while having Soldiers in three separate countries helped me gain an immense amount of experience," said Arndt. "EOD is unique because we are expected at any given moment to be able to support conventional missions, Special Operations, homeland response or Very Important Person Protection Support Activity missions."

"Serving here for the past year and a half has allowed me to continue to push myself and trust that I will gain valuable knowledge," said Arndt. "Being an EOD officer, I have to lead my Soldiers, while at the same time learn how to become an EOD Team Leader, which is where that knowledge and experience from my NCOs and junior enlisted Soldiers is invaluable."

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Soldier welcomes opportunity to lead in Army Chemical Corps

FORT LIBERTY, N.C. – A Soldier who was born in Uruguay and grew up in the Spanish Canary Islands before moving to the United States welcomed the opportunity to lead and serve in a U.S. Army chemical company.

Sgt. Micaela Rodriguez from the 21st Chemical Company (Hazard Response) graduated with honors from Fitchburg State University with a bachelor's degree in criminal justice sciences before joining the Army in 2021.

Rodriguez currently serves as the assistant squad leader in the 2nd Squad, 3rd Hazard Assessment Platoon, in the 21st Chemical Company.

The Fort Liberty, North Carolina-headquartered 21st Chemical Company "Blackjacks" are part of the 83rd Chemical Battalion, 48th Chemical Brigade and 20th CBRNE Command.

Rodriguez was born in Montevideo, Uruguay, and lived there for three years before moving to the Canary Islands.

"I vaguely remember helping my grandma with the cows and pigs and running around the pastures. It was a very humble home and everything we had was earned by very hard work," said Rodriguez. "Thanks to my parents, I was able to grow up with a better life in the Canary Islands in Spain. I grew up knowing that everything I wanted I had to work hard for."

After moving to Fitchburg, Massachusetts, Rodriguez learned English and excelled in school.

"I focused on school so I could show my parents that leaving family behind was worth their struggles because I was going to make them proud. At the age of fourteen, we came to the United States," said Rodriguez.

"Thankfully, we had family here that helped us get on our feet in a new country where the language was not our native tongue," said Rodriguez. "Once again, I continued to focus on school and graduated top of my class in high school."

Rodriguez decided to serve in the U.S. Army Chemical Corps after doing research on the lifesaving and mission enabling profession.

"My recruiter said there was a high demand for Chemical Soldiers and that our job was extremely important," said Rodriguez.

"I did my research on my own and came across a lot of information that was very useful to make my decision," said Rodriguez. "I just didn't know I was going to like the experiences that came with the job so much. The opportunities I have had to learn my job more in detail have been extremely rewarding."

Since reporting to the 21st Chemical Company, Rodriguez has deployed to the U.S. Central Command area of operations and served in Romania with NATO.



Sgt. Micaela Rodriguez currently serves as the assistant squad leader in the 2nd Squad, 3rd Hazard Assessment Platoon, in the Fort Liberty, North Carolina-based 21st Chemical Company. Rodriguez graduated with honors from Fitchburg State University with a bachelor's degree in criminal justice sciences before joining the Army in 2021. Courtesy photo.

Rodriguez said being away from home, especially during the holidays, has been the biggest challenge of serving in the Army.

Rodriguez is currently training to become a squad leader and working on an Active-Duty Green to Gold program package. The Army's Green to Gold program is a two-year program that provides enlisted Soldiers with the opportunity to complete their college degree and earn a commission as an Army officer.

Since Rodriguez has already earned her bachelor's degree, which is required to be a commissioned officer, the Army Green to Gold program will pay for her to earn a master's degree.

"I love being a noncommissioned officer but I find myself doing a lot more planning and coming up with events and opportunities for my Soldiers and I think my potential could be useful in the officer world," said Rodriguez. "Having prior experience is also a great thing because as an officer I'll be able to understand how my decisions impact the Soldiers around me."

[Read full story](#)

US Army EOD officers take time to honor fallen heroes



U.S. Army Explosive Ordnance Disposal officers from the 55th Ordnance Company (EOD) paid tribute to fallen EOD heroes at Arlington National Cemetery, Nov. 1. Capt. Caroline C. Hamann (left), the commanding officer of the 55th EOD Company, and 1st Lt. Madison E. Faust (right), the 55th EOD Company operations officer, placed flowers on the graves of fallen EOD heroes and placed a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Courtesy photo.

ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY, Va. – U.S. Army Explosive Ordnance Disposal officers from the 55th Ordnance Company (EOD) paid tribute to fallen EOD heroes at Arlington National Cemetery, Nov. 1.

Capt. Caroline C. Hamann, the commanding officer of the 55th EOD Company, and 1st Lt. Madison E. Faust, the 55th EOD Company operations officer, placed flowers on the graves of fallen EOD heroes and placed a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

"We were assigned 30 gravesites and 30 flowers as a company, so we walked through sections 60-65 to find them and pay tribute," said Faust. "The highlight of the visit was laying the wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in unison with Gold Star father Marc Seidler."

The Fort Belvoir, Virginia-based 55th EOD Company "VIPpers" are part of the 192nd EOD Battalion, 52nd EOD Group and 20th Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, Explosives (CBRNE) Command, the U.S. military's premier multifunctional and deployable CBRNE formation.

From 19 bases in 16 states, Soldiers and Army civilians from the 20th CBRNE Command confront and defeat the world's most dangerous hazards in support of joint, inter-agency and multinational operations.

The Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland-headquartered 20th CBRNE Command is home to 75 percent of the active-duty U.S. Army Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) technicians and Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear (CBRN) specialists, as well as the 1st Global Field Medical Laboratory, CBRNE Analytical and Remediation Activity, Weapons of Mass Destruction Coordination Teams and Nuclear Disablement Teams.

The 55th EOD Company covers explosive response missions in most of Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, half of Pennsylvania, part of Washington D.C., and part of West Virginia.

EOD companies support the U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of State during Very Important Person Protection Support Activity missions to provide protection to the president, first lady, vice president and visiting foreign heads of state.

Faust said the visit gave her the opportunity to take a break from the company's busy schedule and remember those who gave all in defense of the nation.

"Taking the time to reflect on what it is that we do and to remember those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice provides context, meaning and purpose," said Faust. "We are grateful to have been provided the opportunity to participate in this event."

A native of Center Valley, Pennsylvania, Faust graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point with a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering.

Faust chose to serve as an EOD officer because of the technical competence and practice knowledge needed to be successful in the lifesaving and mission enabling profession.

"I chose to become an EOD officer because I was attracted to the mission," said Faust. "I love that EOD units are small and tight knit, as they feel a lot like a team."

Faust said joint service Explosive Ordnance Disposal technicians share a bond service that comes from defeating dangerous explosive devices.

"From the moment we embark on the journey at the Naval EOD School, all branches of service are united behind one mission," said Faust. "After school, we all head in different directions to meet the demands of our assigned units. This event included EOD techs from all the services, reminding us of this unity and shared bond. EOD truly feels like a family, and I feel blessed to be a member of it."

[Read full story](#)

1st sergeant comes through for Soldiers in barracks after hurricane

FORT STEWART, Ga. – The first sergeant for the 51st Chemical Company (Hazard Response) came through for the Soldiers in his battalion after Hurricane Helene shut down power at their barracks on Fort Stewart, Georgia.

1st Sgt. Christopher J. Noseworthy, the senior enlisted leader for the 51st Chemical Company, broke out his grill and provided hot meals to the Soldiers in the 83rd Chemical Battalion who live in the barracks.

“The power at our house was out for about 10 hours at the time and we didn’t have any way to cook food for ourselves,” said Noseworthy. “Power was out in multiple areas on and off post, which included the Warrior Restaurant’s ability to serve, and we already had our personal grill in the work area from a previous event.”

“Our company is known for taking care of one another and I wanted to make sure the barracks Soldiers at least had a hot meal and were doing okay,” said Noseworthy.

Noseworthy and his wife Katie cooked more than 30 hamburgers and 50 hot dogs for Soldiers in his battalion.

“My wife Katie supported the cause throughout, didn’t even think twice when I asked her if she wanted to go grill and hangout at the barracks for a few hours,” said Noseworthy. “All she asked was what items we needed to go get.”

Noseworthy said the power and water are still off for some of his Soldiers on Fort Stewart.

As a result of the powerful hurricane, several trees and power lines were knocked over and street lights were destroyed by wind while gas stations ran out of fuel for generators and stores were closed or will have limited supplies for days to come.

“With over 16 years in the Army, I’ve never seen anything like this,” said Noseworthy, a native of Phoenix who has deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan and Kuwait. “I am just appreciative that we only caught the outskirts of the main



1st Sgt. Christopher J. Noseworthy, the senior enlisted leader for the Fort Stewart, Georgia-based 51st Chemical Company, and his wife Katie provided more than 30 hamburgers and 50 hot dogs to the Soldiers in the 83rd Chemical Battalion who live in the barracks after Hurricane Helen shut down power. A native of Phoenix who has deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan and Kuwait, Noseworthy said he always works to make sure that his deeds match his words. Courtesy photo.

storm itself and can only imagine what the other areas are enduring.”

The Fort Stewart, Georgia-based 51st Chemical Company is part of the 83rd Chemical Battalion, 48th Chemical Brigade and 20th Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, Explosives (CBRNE) Command, the U.S. military’s premier deployable and multifunctional CBRNE command.

Soldiers and Army civilians from the 20th CBRNE Command deploy from 19 bases in 16 states to confront and defeat the world’s most dangerous hazards in support of joint, inter-agency and multinational operations.

U.S. Army Hazard Response companies like the 51st Chemical Company conduct Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear (CBRN) reconnaissance, surveillance and decontamination operations with conventional and special forces around the world and provide support to civil authorities across the nation.

From serving in the quick response force with the 2nd Infantry Division in Iraq to honing his leadership skills as a 1st sergeant and drill sergeant on Fort Sill, Oklahoma, Noseworthy said he always works to make sure that his deeds match his words.

Noseworthy said his Soldiers appreciated the effort that he and his wife put into providing them with hot meals when the power was out.

“They loved it, thanked us and seemed very appreciative for the food, and you could tell that they genuinely felt cared for not just as Soldiers, but as people,” said Noseworthy.

“I am a true believer that if you take care of your personnel at any level, they will in turn take care of you when the time comes and that we can accomplish anything as a team,” said Noseworthy.

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US Army officer recognized for supporting 3rd EOD Battalion



1st Lt. Luis M. Ortiz (right), the Human Resources officer (S1) for the 3rd Ordnance Battalion (Explosive Ordnance Disposal), was selected as the 20th Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, Explosives (CBRNE) Command Adjutant General Officer of the Year. The Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington-based 3rd EOD Battalion "Nighthawks" are part of the 71st EOD Group and 20th CBRNE Command, the U.S. military's premier CBRNE formation. Courtesy photo.

JOINT BASE LEWIS-MCHORD, Wash. — A U.S. Army Human Resources officer was recently recognized for supporting Army Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) technicians stationed in Washington state, California and Texas.

1st Lt. Luis M. Ortiz, the Human Resources officer (S1) for the 3rd Ordnance Battalion (EOD), was selected as the 20th Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, Explosives (CBRNE) Command Adjutant General Officer of the Year.

Staff Sgt. Michael S. Kyle from the 3rd EOD Battalion was selected as the 20th CBRNE Command Adjutant General Noncommissioned Officer of the Year.

The Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington-based 3rd EOD Battalion "Nighthawks" are part of the 71st EOD Group and 20th CBRNE Command, the U.S. military's premier CBRNE formation.

From 19 bases in 16 states, Soldiers and Army civilians from the 20th CBRNE Command confront and defeat the world's most dangerous hazards in support of joint, inter-agency and multinational operations.

The 3rd EOD Battalion commands six geographically

dispersed EOD companies that are homebased on Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington; Yakima Training Center, Washington; Fort Irwin, California; and Fort Bliss, Texas.

Ortiz said he welcomed the opportunity to serve with the Soldiers who confront and defeat explosives around the world.

"The highlight of serving at the 3rd Ordnance Battalion (EOD) has been the incredible individuals within the organization. Their dedication and support create a powerful and cohesive team," said Ortiz.

"Witnessing these remarkable people overcome challenges and execute their missions with professionalism and precision has been genuinely inspiring," said Ortiz. "It is an honor to serve alongside such extraordinary individuals and their collective spirit makes every moment here profoundly fulfilling."

Ortiz attributed his success to the Soldiers in the 3rd EOD Battalion S1 office.

"I firmly believe that our achievements stem from collective effort, mutual support and teamwork with my Soldiers. Our major accomplishments include enhancing personnel management systems and refining HR processes," said Ortiz.

"These improvements have boosted efficiency and morale within our unit," said Ortiz. "Moving forward, I plan to further refine our systems and processes to ensure our Soldiers can focus on their critical missions with confidence."

A graduate of Robert Morris University who earned his bachelor's degree in business administration with a concentration in management, Ortiz started his U.S. Army career as an enlisted Human Resources Specialist before commissioning through Officer Candidate School into the Adjutant General Corps in July 2021.

Ortiz said he was inspired to become an Adjutant General officer while he was serving in the G1 office at U.S. Army Pacific.

"The dedication of those around me solidified my decision to become an Adjutant General officer, enabling me to blend my passion for leadership with my commitment to caring for our Soldiers," said Ortiz, who has deployed to Kuwait and Jordan.

Originally from Chicago, Ortiz said he is proudly upholding a family tradition of military service.

"My decision to join the U.S. Army was influenced by my grandfather, a Vietnam War veteran," said Ortiz. "His legacy of hard work and commitment inspired me to uphold these values, driving me to serve and support others."

[Read full story](#)

20th CBRNE Command conducts interagency surety exercise



The U.S. military's premier CBRNE Command trained with nearly 300 personnel from 52 Federal, state, local and private industry partners during "Exercise Toxic Buckeye" in Ohio and West Virginia. Army civilian employees from the U.S. Army 20th CBRNE Command conducted an accident-response exercise with partners from Battelle, FBI, Environmental Protection Agency, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Department of Homeland Security, and the Pennsylvania, Ohio, Maryland and West Virginia National Guard during the full-scale exercise. U.S. Army photo by Maj. Steven M. Modugno.



COLUMBUS, Ohio – The U.S. military's premier CBRNE Command trained Sept. 16 - 20 with nearly 300 personnel from 52 Federal, state, local and private industry partners during "Exercise Toxic Buckeye" in Ohio and West Virginia.

Army civilian employees from the U.S. Army 20th CBRNE Command conducted an accident-response exercise with partners from Battelle, FBI, Environmental Protection Agency, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Homeland Security, and the Pennsylvania, Ohio, Maryland and West Virginia National Guard during the full-scale Chemical Incident or Mishap Response and Assistance exercise.

"Exercise Toxic Buckeye" simulated responses to a trio of emergencies, including a U.S. Army helicopter

crash, an airplane crash and an accident involving a ground convoy carrying Schedule 1 chemical surety material. The Chemical Weapons Convention Treaty allows state parties, such as the United States, to use Schedule 1 chemicals "for research, medical, pharmaceutical or protective purposes.

Highly trained U.S. Army civilian employees from the CBRNE Analytical and Remediation Activity (CARA) are the designated professionals in the U.S. Department of Defense authorized to transport chemical surety material off military installations.

CARA also supports remediation of formerly used defense sites and conducts emergency responses – both overseas and stateside - to identify and assess Recovered

Chemical Warfare Materiel. CARA is part of the 20th CBRNE Command. CARA civilians who escort and transport surety materials are armed and trained to respond to incidents or mishaps.

CARA maintains organic airlift capabilities to support missions with U.S. Army civilian pilots who are dual rated to fly both fixed wing and rotary aircraft.

In addition to responding to the simulated helicopter crash, the exercise included transportation of a laboratory worker with a simulated injury to the Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center.

Dr. Nicholas E. Kman, the medical team manager for FEMA Search and Research Ohio Task Force 1, one of 28 FEMA Urban Search and Rescue teams, said the exercise enabled the different organizations to increase their collective readiness.

A graduate of the Ohio State University medical school who completed his residency training in Emergency Medicine at Wake Forrest University, Kman joined Ohio Task Force 1 in 2009 because he wanted to be a physician first responder to disasters.

As a part of Ohio Task Force 1, Kman has deployed for Hurricanes Harvey in 2017, Hurricane Dorian in 2018 and Hurricane Laura in 2020 as well as Hurricane Ida in 2021 and Hurricane Ian in 2022.

Kman said the exercise enabled the interagency partners to forge stronger ties.

"The highlight for me was seeing all the civilian and military resources convening to respond to the incident. It was great to see Columbus Fire Hazmat, Ohio National Guard's 52nd Civil Support Team, U.S. Army and the Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center all participating with Battelle," said Kman. "It is good for these organizations to learn each other's processes prior to an actual event."

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US military leverages multicomponent expertise at exercise



U.S. Army civilians and National Guard Soldiers participated in a full-scale exercise in Ohio and West Virginia that simulated responses to crashes of a U.S. Army helicopter, fixed-wing aircraft and ground convoy carrying Schedule 1 surety material. Planned by the 20th CBRNE Command, the exercise brought together nearly 300 personnel from 52 Federal, state, local and private industry partners during Exercise Toxic Buckeye in Ohio and West Virginia, Sept. 16 – 20. U.S. Army photo by Maj. Steven M. Modugno.

CAMP DAWSON, West Va. – U.S. Army civilians and National Guard Soldiers participated in a full-scale exercise in Ohio and West Virginia that simulated responses to crashes of a U.S. Army helicopter, fixed-wing aircraft and ground convoy carrying Schedule 1 surety material.

Planned by the 20th CBRNE Command, the Chemical Incident or Mishap Response and Assistance (CIMRA) exercise brought together nearly 300 personnel from 52 Federal, state, local and private industry partners during Exercise Toxic Buckeye in Ohio and West Virginia, Sept. 16 – 20.

Battelle, FBI, Environmental Protection Agency, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Department of Homeland Security, and the Pennsylvania, Ohio, Maryland and West Virginia National Guard trained together during Exercise Toxic Buckeye.

U.S. Army civilians from the CBRNE Analytical and Remediation Activity (CARA) are the only personnel in the U.S. Department of Defense authorized to transport chemical surety material off of military installations.

The West Virginia National Guard's 35th Civil Support Team (Weapons of Mass Destruction) responded during the convoy accident scenario at Camp Dawson, West Virginia.

Chief Warrant Officer 2 James W. Reynolds, the survey team leader for the West Virginia National Guard's 35th CST (WMD), said the exercise enabled his unit to work together with other interagency partners.

"Multicomponent training is of the utmost importance to Total Force Readiness. How each agency was able to support one another in specific areas was vital to overall mission success," said Reynolds, a native of Winfield, West Virginia, who earned his master's degree in business administration from the University of Charleston.

"The exercise was realistic based on how each agency was utilized," said Reynolds. "We trained as if this was a real-world response."

Reynolds said the National Guard Civil Support Teams are the "tip of the spear" for domestic CBRNE response missions.

Maj. Ryan Schwartz, the commander of the West Virginia National Guard's 35th CST (WMD), said his team was able to identify ways to work with the U.S. Army civilians who serve in CARA during the exercise.

"We have not worked with the CARA team in the past, so identifying how to integrate our respective tactics, techniques and procedures into a coordinated response effort was a tremendous success," said Schwartz, who took command of the 35th Civil Support Team (WMD) in October 2023.

"A vehicle accident during a ground movement is always a possibility and being able to execute joint tasks in order to determine the safety of the packaged material is a primary concern for both mission success and public safety," said Schwartz.

Christopher J. Gutberlet, who serves as the Surety Manager for the Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland-headquartered 20th CBRNE Command, coordinated the exercise.

"The training and research enabled by the DoD Schedule 1 chemical surety program safeguards U.S. troops and American citizens from the threats posed by chemical weapons. The Surety Program not only prepares the U.S. military to operate in a WMD environment but also helps civil authorities to prepare for any potential WMD attack on the homeland," said Gutberlet.

The Surety Program enables the research and development of cutting edge personal protective equipment, chemical monitoring devices, medical countermeasures and chemical decontamination capabilities, said Gutberlet.

"The 20th CBRNE Command remains committed to ensuring the safe and secure transport of chemical surety material," said Gutberlet. "These exercises are vital to ensure we have an immediate coordinated response with partnering Federal agencies and our state and local emergency response and law enforcement personnel across the United States."

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Army EOD techs train with civilian bomb squads at airport



U.S. Army Explosive Ordnance Disposal techs trained with other bomb squad members at the Ontario, California, Airport during Operation All American. Soldiers from the 759th Ordnance Company (EOD) trained with the Transportation Security Administration, Ontario Fire Department, San Bernardino Sheriff's Department and Riverside Sheriff's Department during the exercise. Courtesy photo.

ONTARIO, Calif. – Army Explosive Ordnance Disposal technicians trained together with other bomb squad members at the Ontario, California, Airport during Operation All American.

Soldiers from the Fort Irwin, California-based 759th Ordnance Company (EOD) trained with the Transportation Security Administration, Ontario Fire Department, San Bernardino Sheriff's Department and Riverside Sheriff's Department during the exercise.

The 759th EOD Company "Detonators" are part of the 3rd EOD Battalion, 71st EOD Group and 20th CBRNE Command, the U.S. military's premier multifunctional and deployable CBRNE formation.

From 19 bases in 16 states, Soldiers and U.S. Army civilians from the 20th CBRNE Command confront and defeat the world's most dangerous hazards in support of joint, interagency and multinational operations.

Capt. Alexander K. Olson, the commander of the 759th EOD Company, said his EOD techs honed their life-saving skills together with the other bomb squad personnel.

"We received feedback on different tools and equipment they might use in similar scenarios," said Olson, adding that the exercise was part of an ongoing series of training events with other bomb squads. "The next events will host bomb squads from the ATF and FBI."

Olson said the EOD training scenarios during Operation All American focused on safely responding to an improvised explosive device discovered on aircraft.

"The training was extremely realistic. It's hard to beat running EOD problems in an airworthy Boeing 737," said Olson. "The best thing about events like these is the shared knowledge from different organizations. It enables better training within our company to prepare for our homeland response missions."

A native of Bloomington, Indiana, Olson graduated from the United States Military Academy at West Point with a bachelor's degree in economics in 2018.

His most memorable EOD response was when he was stationed at Fort Carson, Colorado, and had to drive

to Aspen, Colorado, to pick up and dispose of a World War I antitank projectile.

EOD techs cover a wide variety of missions in support of maneuver forces and domestic authorities.

As the U.S. Army explosives experts, EOD techs solve dangerous and complex explosive problems every day. Not only do they defeat dangerous devices during operations but they also render safe unexploded ordnance, on and off post

EOD Soldiers serve with joint, interagency and multinational partners around the world. On a regular basis, these elite Army units also conduct missions to protect the president, vice president and their families as well as foreign heads of state and they train allied forces in demolition, minefield clearance and explosive safety.

In addition to supporting training rotations at the National Training Center, a Mojave Desert training center that is almost as big as the state of Rhode Island, EOD techs from the 759th EOD Company also support civil authorities in 89 counties across California, Nevada and Arizona.

Olson said his EOD techs often train with other bomb squads across Southern California.

"We try to send enough personnel to maximize shared expertise for implementation of lessons learned in our internal training while ensuring little to no interruption in competing requirements," said Olson, adding that Fort Irwin, California, is a one-of-a-kind assignment.

"There are opportunities just two hours away for great training like this in two major cities —Los Angeles and Las Vegas – as well as recreational activities to suit anyone while you are off duty. There's no other duty station like it," said Olson. "With the National Training Center, the opportunities to provide EOD support to combat brigades throughout the Army develops a level of expertise not available at other assignments."

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Top Army EOD tech: Only bomb techs should take on bombs



An unexploded U.S. Marine Corps 155 mm high-explosive artillery round sits at a construction site in Joshua Tree, California, Jan. 4, 2024. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Justin J. Marty.

ABERDEEN PROVING GROUND, Md. – The senior Explosive Ordnance Disposal technician in the U.S. Army encourages anyone who discovers something that might be an unexploded bomb to call in the bomb squad.

Command Sgt. Maj. Dave Silva, the senior enlisted leader for the 20th CBRNE Command and the senior EOD tech in the U.S. Army, has responded to hundreds of unexploded ordnance calls during his 28 years as an EOD tech.

From Civil War era cannon balls to potentially explosive items from foreign battlefields, unexploded ordnance, also known as UXO, comes in all shapes and sizes, said Silva.

“Most people don’t realize just how prevalent the UXO problem is globally. Unexploded ordnance is most often discovered in former war zones. Artillery, mortar and aerial bombardment produce unexploded munitions that are often slightly or deeply buried,” said Silva. “Years later through either natural earth movement or often construction, UXO is unearthed.”

Silva said unexploded ordnance is frequently discovered at home and abroad.

“A large-scale source of UXO outside of the United States are minefields. Once emplaced for area denial, long after a war concludes, minefields remain hazards forever,” he said. “Here at home, we find UXO in former training areas, in people’s residences that they kept after wars, and occasionally we still dig up Civil War era cannonballs.”

Explosive remnants of war continue to live on long after the guns fall silent during battles studied in history books.

“We still discover World War II bombs all over Europe and the Pacific,” said Silva. “The United States supports Humanitarian Mine Action missions. The State Department, along with the Department of Defense, assist nations to rid UXO saturated areas, most often land mines, so that their citizens can live safely. All around the world U.S.

EOD techs teach partner nations how to safely render safe and dispose of UXO that would otherwise kill or maim.”

As the senior enlisted leader for the 20th CBRNE Command where most of the U.S. Army’s Explosive Ordnance Disposal techs are assigned, Silva travels around the world to meet CBRNE Soldiers and see them in action.

Since civilian bomb squads are not authorized to work on military munitions due to the Military Munitions Rule in the Code of Federal Regulations, U.S. military EOD techs are called when old military munitions are discovered off base. Per DoD Directive 3025.18, DoD Instruction 3025.21 and Joint Publication 3-42, EOD technicians are the only Department of Defense personnel authorized to respond and render safe unexploded munitions and ordnance.

During the past two years, EOD technicians from the 20th CBRNE Command have responded to an average of 1,500 discovered military munitions a year off-post and on-post.

A Master EOD technician who has deployed seven times and served in Iraq and Afghanistan, Silva said UXO can be found just about anywhere.

“I’ve responded to everything from dynamite and cannonballs to stolen hand grenades. I’d say the most unusual response was when the ATF was serving a warrant and their Radiac alarms went off so they backed out and requested support,” Silva said. “DoD EOD techs are trained and equipped to respond to chemical and radiological hazards.”

After performing reconnaissance, his team discovered that the radioactive hazard was not explosive at all but rather an instrument cluster from an L39 Albatross aircraft.

“We also found a Jet Assisted Take Off (JATO) bottle on the same incident,” said Silva, who is originally from Long Beach, California. “You never know what you’ll come across, so we take every precaution until we are sure what we’re dealing with.”

Silva said that only explosives experts should deal with anything that resembles an unexploded munition.

He encouraged anyone who discovers something to immediately contact local authorities.

“Leave it where you found it, don’t touch it and notify local law enforcement. In every case, it’s important to note, ordnance doesn’t get ‘safer’ over time. So just because it hasn’t detonated, doesn’t mean it can’t,” said Silva.

“Lots of explosive hazards aren’t obvious, so if there’s any suspicion at all, call it in,” said Silva. “We don’t mind coming out. We would rather respond to 100 false alarms than one post-blast where someone was hurt.”

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EOD battalion covers missions across eastern United States

FORT LIBERTY, N.C. – A U.S. Army Explosive Ordnance Disposal Battalion confronts and defeats unexploded ordnance during response missions across the eastern United States.

EOD techs from the 192nd Ordnance Battalion (EOD) support local, state and Federal civil authorities from east of the Mississippi River and north from South Carolina to Maine.

The Fort Liberty, North Carolina-based 192nd EOD Battalion is part of the 52nd EOD Group and 20th Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, Explosives (CBRNE) Command, the U.S. military's premier multifunctional and deployable CBRNE formation.

The 192nd EOD Battalion is one of many EOD units in the 20th CBRNE Command that tackle unexploded ordnance both on and off base. The 20th CBRNE Command has two U.S. Army EOD groups, five EOD battalions and 32 EOD companies.

During the past two years, EOD techs from the 20th CBRNE Command have responded to an average of 1,500 discovered military munitions a year off-post and on-post.

Since civilian bomb squads are not authorized to work on military munitions due to the Military Munitions Rule in the Code of Federal Regulations, joint service EOD technicians are called when old military munitions are discovered off base.

Lt. Col. Elizabeth A. Schwemmer, the commander of the 192nd EOD Battalion, said her EOD techs help to save lives, prevent suffering and protect property during Domestic Support to Civil Authorities missions.

Schwemmer said the 192nd EOD Battalion responded to 187 missions on-post and 40 off-post during fiscal year 2024.

"Local law enforcement can request our support, and we will respond in an advisory role," said Schwemmer. "An exception is if local law enforcement is unavailable due to time and location constraints and the threat warranted immediate action, then we would respond."



Staff Sgt. Chris Martin from the U.S. Army 192nd EOD Battalion looks for any disturbances during Exercise Ardent Defender, a multinational Explosive Ordnance Disposal training exercise at 5th Canadian Division Support Base Gagetown in Oromocto, New Brunswick, Canada, Sept. 25. Canadian Armed Forces photo by S1 Larissa De Guzman.

The 192nd EOD Battalion has seven EOD companies stationed across Fort Liberty, North Carolina; Fort Belvoir, Virginia; and Fort Drum, New York. The battalion supports airborne forces, Army Rangers and Special Forces units.

Capt. Christopher H. Whelan, the commander of the battalion's 18th Ordnance Company (EOD), said the domestic response mission is a 365 day-a-year, 24-hour-a-day no fail mission.

The 18th Ordnance Company (EOD) has three EOD teams supporting homeland response missions at a time, with teams on Fort Liberty, North Carolina, and Fort Jackson, South Carolina.

"Most of the domestic EOD calls we receive are ordnance-based, which is a core function of EOD domestically and overseas. EOD techs are performing real-world missions on live ordnance, which also easily translates to overseas operations," said Whelan. "This gives EOD team leaders experience and the chance to learn in an environment much safer than overseas."

Whelan said EOD technicians are

required to control the scene, manage their team and return the scene to normal.

Originally from Carl Junction, Missouri, Whelan graduated from Missouri State University with a bachelor's degree in accounting. He deployed to Iraq in 2015. Whelan said that some missions require the EOD technicians to take on ordnance found in history books.

Staff Sgt. Nicholas R. Mackowiak, an EOD team leader from the 18th EOD Company, said his team has to balance homeland response missions with preparing to serve on the Immediate Response Force. A native of Gardner, Massachusetts, Mackowiak earned his associate's degree in applied science and certifications in forest and logging management.

"We have to work longer hours to make sure training is being completed," said Mackowiak. "Most importantly, I work and train with my team and make sure newer EOD soldiers are adapting to the diverse EOD mission set. If we need to respond, I want my team to be known for its expertise and discipline."

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