COWBOY GUARD



2025

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2025

On the Cover



Three Wyoming Air National Guard C-130s equipped with the U.S. Forest Service's Modular Airborne Fire Fighting Systems, or MAFFS, and associated personnel were activated by U.S. Northern Command to support firefighting efforts in the Los Angeles area, California, Jan. 9, 2025.

See page 46 for full story.

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Views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not neccessarily reflect the official opinion of and i not endorsed by the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense, or Departments of the U.S. and Air Force.

Dear Readers,

As the nation enters its 250th year, one truth endures: Freedom is defended by those willing to stand up for those in need and to answer the call.

Wyoming does!

This past year proved what the Cowboy Guard exists to do. We are the Shield when stability is threatened, and the Sword when the nation must fight.

When democratic order required protection during Presidential Inauguration 60, Wyoming Soldiers and Airmen deployed as the Shield. A joint force stood sworn, trained, and ready to restore order if needed. The fact that nothing happened is the point.

When fire threatened lives at home, you remained the Shield. Wyoming Guard crews stood medical evacuation ready during the Red Canyon and Dollar Lake fires. When wildfires devastated communities in Los Angeles, Wyoming Airmen flew into smoke and danger to protect lives and property. You also upheld the Shield by supporting U.S. Immigration and customs enforcment and federal partners.

When the nation required combat power, Wyoming provided the Sword.

The deployment of the 2-300th Field Artillery Regiment alongside the 115th Field Artillery Brigade to the Middle East was not training. It was real. One of the largest field artillery deployments in more than 70 years. Wyoming Soldiers responsively and lethally carried the Sword on behalf of the nation.

In addition, the 153rd Airlift Wing is making history by preparing to deploy as the first Deployable Combat Wing for the Air Guard.

Behind both Sword and Shield stand our Families. You carried the weight that makes readiness possible. We see it!

The Cowboy Guard is not a weekend force. We are the Shield that protects our people and the Sword that defends the nation. When people are having their worst day;There you will find the Cowboy Guard!

We deploy. We respond. We act.

As the United States marks 250 years, the Cowboy Guard stands ready.

Ride for the Brand!

Maj. Gen. Greg Porter
Adjutant General - Wyoming





Sgt. Maj, Thad Ehde
Command Senior Enlisted Leader



















Cowboy Guard



In our formations we care for each other – in combat and across our state and nation. Our people are our greatest asset because they are our strength. We answer the nation's call to **fight** and **win** against any ememy foreign and domestic. We safeguard our citizens of the great state of Wyoming. We prepare the Cowboy Guard to serve as both the **Sword** and the **Shield** through our four main lines of effort:

Lethality, **Resiliency, Responsiveness** and **Partnerships**.

MISSION

Our mission is to provide ready and professional personnel and formations capable of winning the fight, enabling competition across all domains, saving lives, alleviating suffering and protecting property in support of civilian authority whenever the govenor or president may designate.

VISION

The Wyoming Military Department will serve as the **Sword** and **Shield** for the state and nation. As the Sword, we will project lethal force capable of winning in amy domain. As the Shield, we will be responsive and effective in safeguarding our fellow residents.

We are the Cowboy Guard–the Sword and the Shield.

Contact us: (307) 772-5040 wyomilitary.wyo.gov



LETHALITY

SWORD OF THE NATION

PRECISE & DELIBERATE

DRIVEN BY PURPOSE

Photo By Staff Sgt. Leanna Russell

Forging the Future

153rd Airlift Wing Launches Historic Transformation

In a move marking a pivotal shift in its organizational evolution, the 153rd Airlift Wing hosted a transformation ceremony August 2025, at the Wyoming Air National Guard Base in Cheyenne.

Presided over by Col. Brian W. Diehl, 153rd Airlift Wing commander, the ceremony officially restructured the wing's command alignment to enhance combat effectiveness agility and joint-force interoperability.

"We are purposely separating combat and garrison functions," Diehl said. "We're improving our interoperability with the joint force, and we're adjusting our formation to unleash our best and brightest to innovate, execute with decision-making, authority where it belongs – at the point of execution."

Previously organized under the traditional Air Force model, consisting of wing leadership, special staff, five groups, 14 squadrons and two flights. The 153rd will now operate under a dual-deputy structure, dividing leadership responsibilities between operations and sustainment.

As part of the ceremony, the 153rd Operations Group and 153rd Maintenance Group formally relinquished command. Their former commanders, Col. Lawrence Sullivan and Col. Bret Trippel, assumed the new roles of deputy commander for operations and deputy commander for sustainment, respectively.

Sullivan, who will oversee combat operations when the wing deploys, spoke to the strategic vision behind the change.

"We stand today at a critical juncture," he said. "A time that demands transformation, honors the courage to trailblaze, and ultimately rewards lethality."



Trippel, now responsible for garrison and support functions, emphasized the readiness focus of his new role.

The reorganization aligns with broader Department of the Air Force initiatives to create more agile, mission-ready units capable of thriving in an era of strategic competition.

"The new command staff structure is designed specifically so we can better answer the call when our nation needs us," Trippel said. "My priority will be ensuring the 153rd Airlift Wing will have the personnel, equipment, and mission systems needed to remain ready and sustained."

Photos & Story by Staff Sgt. Kylee Warren



"The nature of war changes and our military changes. The nature of war drives changes in our formations, and history is not kind to those who are unable to evolve. We can, we should, and we must transform our wing into a deployable combat wing formation, capable of delivering decisive power anytime, anywhere."

Col. Brian W. Diehl



OneArmy

Wyoming Army Training Institute Certified to Train Entire Army

The Wyoming Army National Guard's 213th Regional Training Institute was certified to train Soldiers from the active Army, Army Reserve and Army National Guard, expanding the Army's capacity to prepare troops for future conflicts.

Army leaders have identified long-range precision fires as a top modernization priority.

The designation, known as One Army School System compliance, authorizes the institute to provide institutional training across the Total Army. The certification also applies to the school's 13M10 Military Occupational Specialty – Transition course, which prepares Soldiers to operate rocket artillery systems.

The achievement was enabled by the fielding of an Organizational Maintenance Trainer, a simulator that replicates the components and functions of the **high mobility artillery rocket system** (HIMARS), multiple launch rocket system (MLRS) and the resupply vehicle. The device gives instructors the ability to train operators and maintainers without requiring the actual vehicles on site.

The certification comes as the Army expands its HIMARS battalions, shifting from ***16*** to ***27*** to increase long-range firepower. Soldiers from the 25th Infantry Division in Hawaii recently attended training at Camp Guernsey as part of their transition from cannon artillery to HIMARS-equipped rocket artillery.



Firepower

By meeting compliance standards, the Wyoming institute is now positioned to provide the kind of consistent, standardized training needed to sustain that modernization across all components of the Army.



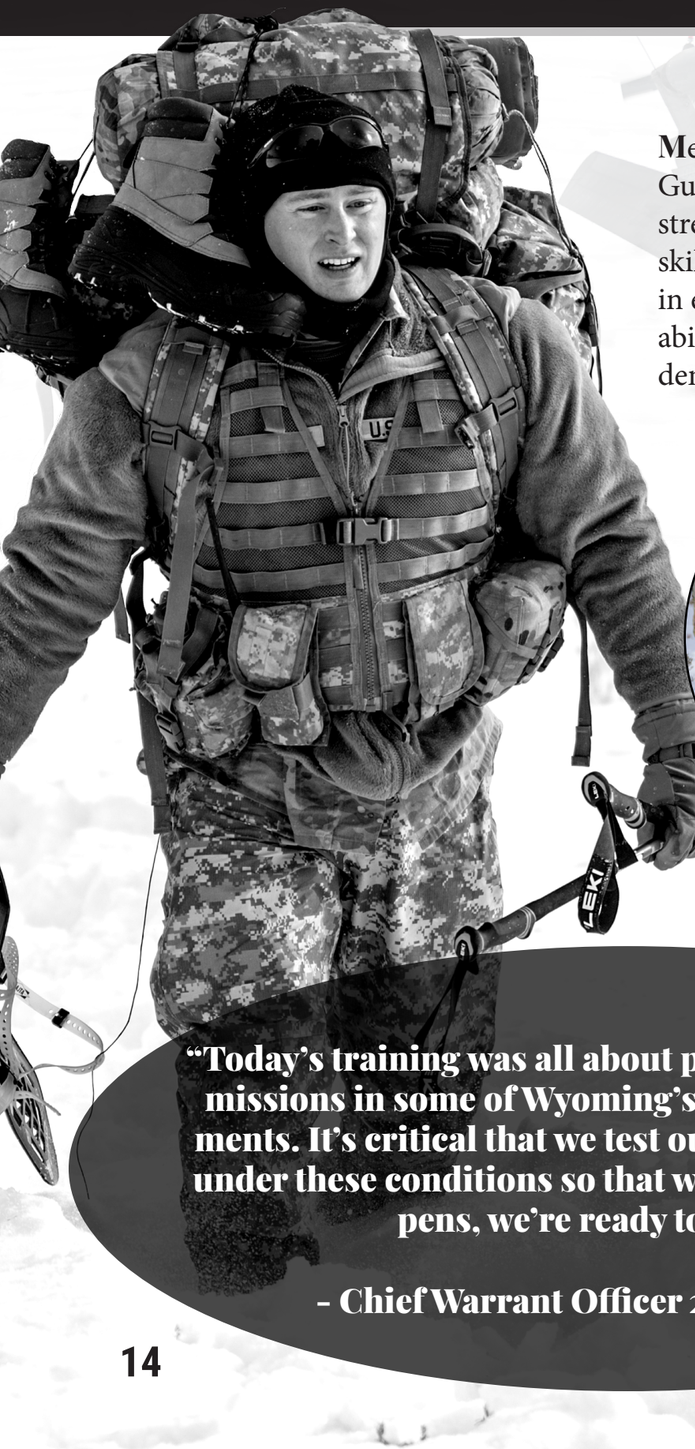
Officials said the designation not only enhances the school's training capacity but also directly supports **national defense readiness.** The ability to train Soldiers from multiple components at a single institution helps ensure interoperability, reduces training gaps and strengthens overall warfighting capability.

The 213th Regional Training Institute will continue to host courses in support of the Army's evolving force structure, giving Soldiers the skills they need to operate advanced rocket artillery systems and respond to future threats.

Story by Sgt. Joseph Burns Photots by Staff Sgt. Leanna Russell

84th Civil Support Team Conducts Rapid Response Training in Wyoming's Most Austere Environments

Members of the Wyoming National Guard's 84th Civil Support Team (CST) strengthened their all-hazards response skills through two major training events in early 2025, showcasing the unit's ability to operate in Wyoming's most demanding environments.





"Today's training was all about preparing for real-world missions in some of Wyoming's most austere environments. It's critical that we test our skills and equipment under these conditions so that when an emergency happens, we're ready to respond"

- Chief Warrant Officer 2 Taylor Russell

January 25, 2025 the 84th CST partnered with Teton County Search and Rescue and the Wyoming Army National Guard's G Company, 2-211th Aviation Regiment for a joint winter exercise in the Teton Mountains. Training focused on helicopter insertions, cold-weather survival and CBRN response while operating in deep snow and steep terrain.

On May 22, 2025, CST personnel conducted swift-water rescue training in Jackson Hole, using pendulum-swing techniques, throw bags and strategic positioning to guide teammates safely across fast-moving currents. Led by the Swiftwater Safety Institute, the exercise honed the team's timing, communication and precision in dynamic conditions.

Both events emphasized interagency teamwork, with aviation crews and local rescue partners contributing expertise and support.

Whether on rushing rivers or frozen mountain slopes, the 84th CST continues training year-round to ensure a unified and effective response when disaster strikes.



"This type of joint training benefits all the agencies involved. Working together before a real-world incident builds the confidence and relationships we need to succeed."
-Russell

Photos by Staff Sgt. Cesar Rivas & Sgt. Joseph Burns

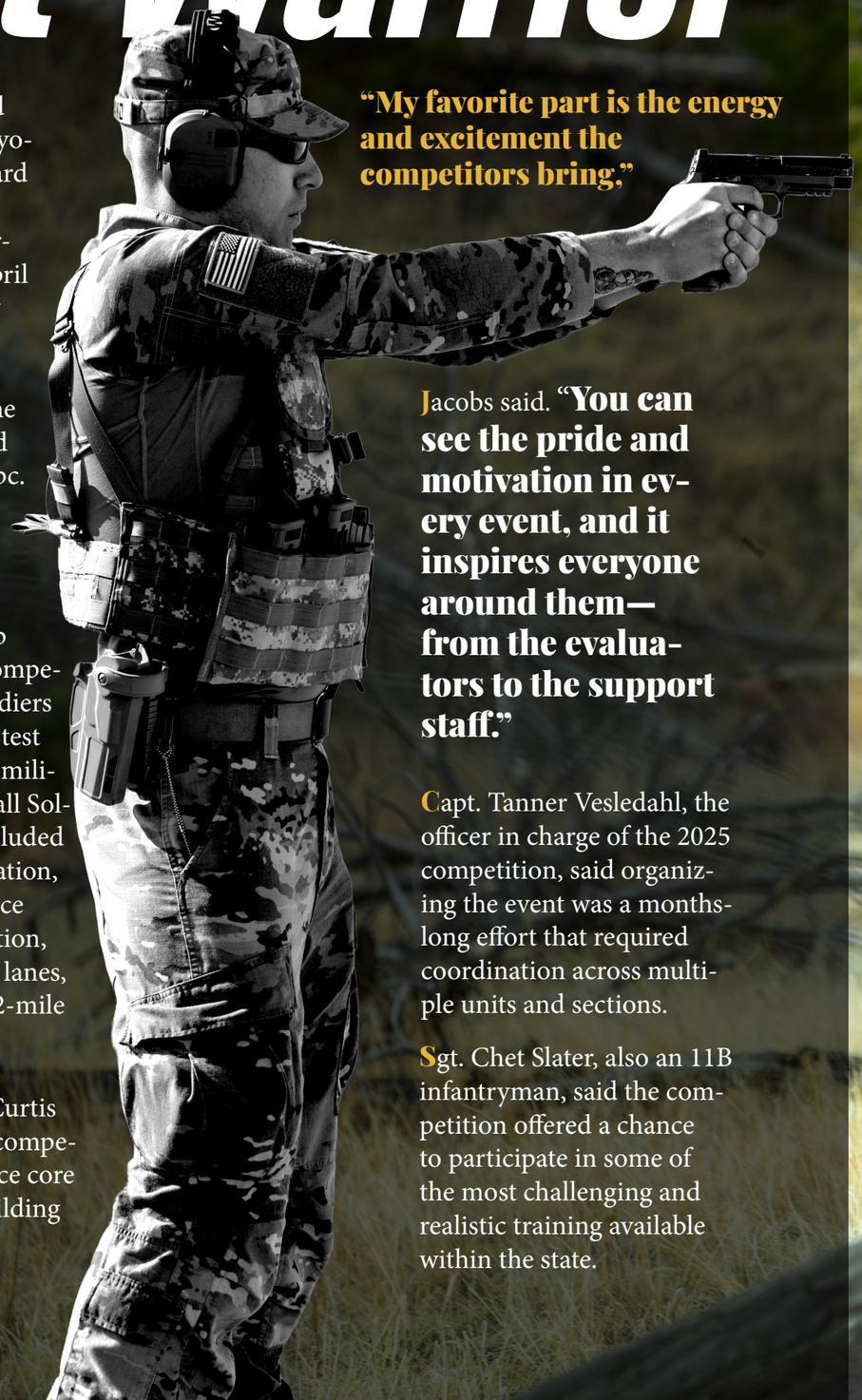
Best Warrior

After days of physical and mental challenges, the Wyoming Army National Guard named its top Soldiers during the 2025 Best Warrior Competition held April 10–14 at Camp Guernsey Joint Training Center.

Sgt. Chet Slater earned the title of Noncommissioned Officer of the Year, and Spc. Jacob Hicks was named Soldier of the Year.

Hosted by the 94th Troop Command, the annual competition brings together Soldiers from across Wyoming to test their tactical proficiency, military knowledge and overall Soldier readiness. Events included day and night land navigation, a written exam, appearance board, weapons qualification, medical and warrior task lanes, obstacle courses, and a 12-mile ruck march.

Command Sgt. Maj. Curtis Jacobs emphasized the competition's ability to reinforce core Soldier skills while building esprit de corps.



"My favorite part is the energy and excitement the competitors bring."

Jacobs said. "**You can see the pride and motivation in every event, and it inspires everyone around them—from the evaluators to the support staff."**

Capt. Tanner Vesledahl, the officer in charge of the 2025 competition, said organizing the event was a months-long effort that required coordination across multiple units and sections.

Sgt. Chet Slater, also an 11B infantryman, said the competition offered a chance to participate in some of the most challenging and realistic training available within the state.

"I wanted to be a part of some great training and see what the state of Wyoming has to offer. The event I looked forward to most was the 12-mile ruck. It's tough, but it's also one of the best ways to test your endurance and grit."

Sgt. Chet Slater





COWBOY THUNDER

When Soldiers left Wyoming, they didn't just pack rucksacks and gear.
They carried names, faces, towns and families. The quiet weight of knowing that what they did far from home mattered to the people waiting for them there.
From December 2024 through September 2025, the Soldiers of the **115th Field Artillery Brigade** deployed across the Middle East—seven countries, 18 locations—into an environment where nothing is routine and every decision counts.

They organized as **Task Force Thunder,** and from the start, the mission was real. Real responsibility, real risk and real impact.
The job was long-range precision fires and command and control in support of **Operation Spartan Shield** and **Operation Inherent Resolve**. That sounds clinical on paper. In reality, it meant long nights, compressed timelines, and constant awareness that instability in the region could turn kinetic without warning—especially as tensions rose across the Arabian Gulf.

What made this deployment different wasn't just where the Soldiers were—it was the scale of trust placed in them. From Wyoming, they commanded and synchronized combat power across borders. Soldiers controlled two subordinate battalions at the same time: **Task Force Blackhawk**, a light infantry formation, and **Task Force Lightning**, a high mobility artillery rocket system or HIMARS battalion built from the 2-300th Field Artillery Regiment. The distances were vast. The stakes were high. And the margin for error was zero.





Then came the moment that will be talked about long after this deployment fades into history.

For the first time ever, the Cowboy Guard executed a combat fire mission entirely through a Wyoming kill chain—from brigade-level processing at the 115th, to the 2-300th, to a HIMARS launcher crewed by Wyoming Soldiers. Not even during the Korean War was that possible. This time, it was—and it worked exactly as designed.

But the mission wasn't only about fires. Across the deployment, Task Force Thunder conducted **199** Theater Security Cooperation events in seven partner nations.

In Iraq and Syria, the target acquisition platoon deployed Q-53 Counterfire and multi-mission radars, giving multinational forces early warning and protection against indirect fire. Most people will never know their names. But because of them, **others made it home safely.**



Back home, families carried the mission in their own way. They held things together through missed holidays, long months and late-night phone calls. They bore the uncertainty so they could stay focused. This deployment belongs to them as much as it does to the Soldiers who wore the uniform overseas.





When they finally returned to Wyoming, the Soldiers came home changed—but whole. Every Soldier accounted for. **Every family reunited.**

This was the 115th Field Artillery Brigade's fourth deployment since the beginning of the Global War on Terror. Experience prepared them for this mission. Commitment carried them through it.

Soldiers left Wyoming to serve. Soldiers came home having done exactly that.







LET ER BUCK

Wyoming's 2-300th Field Artillery Regiment Delivers Precision Fires Overseas

The desert is quiet until the radio breaks the silence.

"Lightning fires. Berserker main ready to receive fire mission."

Red light reflects off steel as Soldiers move with calm precision. For Wyoming's **2nd Battalion, 300th Field Artillery Regiment**, this moment captures months of preparation and a mission spanning five countries and multiple fronts.

The battalion deployed from Wyoming in the summer of 2024 to 2025 and reorganized as Task Force Lightning, becoming the **only American rocket artillery capability** operating in the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility. Elements operated across Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates, delivering long-range precision fires while supporting regional partnerships under **Operation Spartan Shield.**

"This is the only long-range precision fires capability in CENTCOM,"

said Maj. Luke Meyer, battalion operations officer (S-3).

"We're spread across five countries, but we operate as one formation. That takes trust, discipline and constant communication."

Task Force Lightning supported Combined Joint Task Force–Operation Inherent Resolve, providing precision fires in the fight against ISIS in Iraq and Syria. Each mission required exact coordination and disci-

"When a fire mission comes, there's no hesitation," Meyer said. "The moment is brief, but the effects reach far beyond our position."

For Lt. Col. Michael Kingman, battalion commander, the deployment marked a historic milestone.

"We are forward deployed to provide long-range precision fires for the combined joint task force," Kingman said. "At the same time, we're building partnerships across the region."

While the battalion has deployed eight times since Sept. 11, 2001, this mission marked its first full-battalion field artillery deployment since the Korean War.

More than **350 Soldiers** from Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, Alpha Battery, Bravo Battery and the **920th Forward Support Company** executed the mission. Bravo Battery directly supported maneuver commanders in Iraq and Syria, while Alpha Battery operated under Operation Spartan Shield. The 920th Forward Support Company sustained operations

"When the batteries get a mission to launch, we provide that rocket or missile," Meyer said.

Leaders emphasized discipline, teamwork and growth under demanding conditions. "All we can control each morning is our attitude and our effort," said Capt. Ryan Shupe, Bravo Battery commander.

The results were consistent.

"When I asked this battalion to deliver precision fires," Kingman said, "they did so every time, on target."



As the mission continued, the Soldiers of the 2-300th stood watch as the **Shield** and delivered the **Sword** when called, carrying Wyoming's standard across the desert.

Maj. Luke Meyer, battalion operations officer (S-3), 2nd Battalion, 300th Field Artillery Regiment

At night, the desert settles into a tense quiet. Red light washes over steel. Radios crackle. Crews move with calm precision. Standing on the line, you feel it clearly—this is where Wyoming Soldiers serve as both the Shield and the Sword.



Since deploying in the summer of 2024, our battalion reorganized into Task Force Lightning, the only long-range precision fires capability operating within U.S. Central Command. From positions across Jordan, Iraq, Syria, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates, we protect the force as the Shield through constant readiness, and deliver the Sword when precision fires are required.

When a mission comes, there is no hesitation. Coordinates are confirmed. Commands are brief. Systems respond exactly as designed. The moment is short, but the effects reach far beyond our position.

What defines this deployment is the team. Shared standards, shared trust, and disciplined execution allow us to operate across multiple countries as one formation. We reset after every mission and prepare for the next call, because readiness is not an event—it is the expectation.

Powder River. Let er buck.











Powder River Excellence

From Soyang to Today

The recent deployment of the 2nd Battalion, 300th Field Artillery Regiment (2-300th) stands as a modern chapter in a legacy forged more than seven decades ago on the hills of South Korea. While today's Soldiers operated across the Middle East in support of Operations Spartan Shield and Inherent Resolve, their mission echoes the courage and resolve first demonstrated during the Battle of Soyang in the Korean War — one of the most significant moments in Wyoming National Guard history.

In 1951, as the Korean War intensified, the 300th Armored Field Artillery Battalion was among hundreds of Army National Guard units mobilized for federal service. Arriving in Korea in February, the battalion entered combat that spring alongside the U.S. Army's 2nd Infantry Division. On the night of May 15, 1951, Chinese forces launched a massive offensive aimed at encircling United Nations troops. For seven days, the 300th delivered relentless artillery fire during the Battle of Soyang, inflicting heavy enemy casualties and helping halt the advance. On May 18, the battalion was ordered to destroy a critical enemy roadblock, firing both directly and indirectly to protect withdrawing UN forces. Their actions helped prevent the collapse of the front line and gave the Eighth Army time to regroup. For its extraordinary bravery, the battalion was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation, the first of four such honors.





That Same Spirit of Service and Sacrifice Lives on Today

When the 2-300th Field Artillery Regiment deployed the summer of 2024, it marked a historic moment for the unit. While the battalion has deployed multiple times over the past two decades, this mission was the first full battalion deployment for a field artillery mission since the Korean War. More than 360 Soldiers from communities across Wyoming — including Torrington, Gillette, Lander, and Casper — served together overseas, representing the Cowboy State on a global stage.

Just as their predecessors once provided decisive firepower at Soyang, today's Soldiers supported regional security and coalition forces during a time of heightened global tension. Their return home, greeted by families and state leaders on the tarmac in Casper, symbolized not only the end of a deployment, but the continuation of a proud tradition.

From the frozen hills of Korea to the deserts of the Middle East, Wyoming's Cowboy Artillery has answered the nation's call time and again. The legacy of the 300th — forged in battle, carried forward through generations — remains a powerful reminder that history is not just remembered, but lived.



RESILIENCE

Growth through Hardship

adapting to change

stronger together

Rucking *with* Purpose

Wyoming Guardsmen March Through Cheyenne for Those in Need

Before the city stirred awake, 38 Soldiers from the Wyoming Army National Guard stepped off from the 115th Field Artillery Brigade Armory at 6 a.m., ruck sacks strapped tight and hearts full of purpose in Cheyenne, Wyoming Aug. 3, 2025.



With approximately 30 pounds of canned goods, clothing and hygiene products loaded in each pack, the Soldiers—dressed in full fatigues—moved quietly but steadily through Cheyenne's still-slumbering streets. The sky glowed with the first light of dawn, casting a warm orange hue over the horizon as the group began their ***3.4-mile route***.

Led by Capt. Cameron Boeckel, Commander of Headquarters Battalion 115th Rear Detachment and 148th Signal Company, the formation wound its way past local landmarks including Lions Park, the State Capitol, and historic residential neighborhoods. The city was still quiet, its traffic lights blinking red, and its sidewalks mostly empty save for the determined line of **Guardsmen rucking with purpose.**

"This is about showing up for the community before the day even begins," Boeckel said. "Our Soldiers know what it means to serve—this is just another way to put that into action."





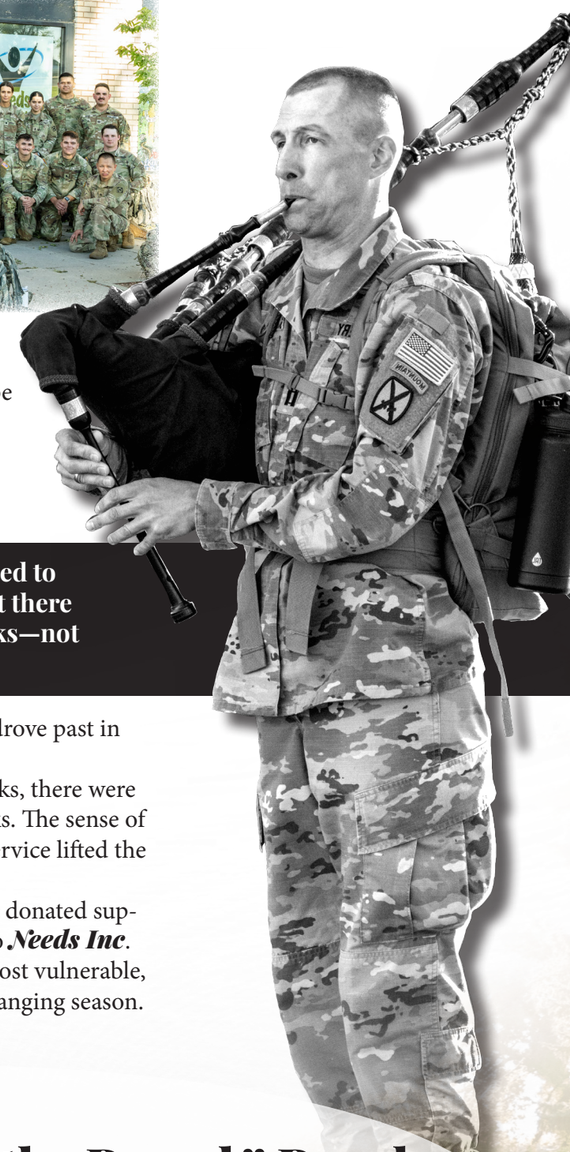
The effort wasn't just about miles and muscle. Every ruck carried items for donation—essentials for those who may be struggling. Private 1st Class Isabel Holler, Wyoming Army Guard, who helped collect the supplies, said the idea came from a simple desire to do more for those who often go without.

"I want to give back so we give people what they need to stay warm, to feel human, and to know someone out there cares," Holler said. "That's why we loaded our rucks—not just with weight, but with compassion."

As the ruck neared its end, passing the Cheyenne Depot and climbing the final bridge along Highway 180, the rhythmic sound of boots on pavement was joined by a melody. The unit's chaplain took up the bagpipes and played a series of patriotic songs, echoing off the streets and drawing a few early risers to their right as they drove past in admiration.

Despite the heavy rucks, there were smiles across the ranks. The sense of shared mission and service lifted the weight, step by step.

By mid-morning, the donated supplies were delivered to ***Needs Inc***. serving Cheyenne's most vulnerable, just in time for the changing season.



"This is how we Ride for the Brand," Boeckel said. "We don't just wear the uniform—we live its values."

Photos & story by Joseph Coslett Jr.

TAKING FLIGHT

It's official. The Wyoming Air National Guard formally recognized their recruiting and retention unit as a flight during an Activation and Assumption of Command Ceremony last week.

When U.S. Air Force Capt. Nicole Zoellner raised her hand in salute during the ceremony, she also became one of the first commanders in the country to lead recruiting and retention as an official unit.

The activation of a new flight marks an important milestone by establishing a unit designed to support the mission of the United States Air Force and the Wyoming Air National Guard.

The term "flight" dates to World War One and was originally used to designate a group of aircraft. Today, the term can be used for any kind of group with a distinct mission.

And the Recruiting and Retention Flight at the Wyoming Air National Guard have a big one.

The number one priority for leadership at the Wyoming Air National Guard is bringing in the next generation of talent. This is no small feat, especially when one considers that Wyoming is the least populated state in the country, with the lowest population density as well.

In fact, the state has more antelopes than people.

But the number of enlistments for the Wyoming Air National Guard continues to increase in large part thanks to the grit, drive, and determination of the Wyoming Air National Guard's Recruiting and Retention Flight. Last year, they ranked in the top 15 recruiting and retention units nationwide in total accessions.

During the Activation and Assumption of Command Ceremony last week, Brigadier General Barry Deibert presented the official activation orders. The audience rose for the publishing of the order. Military members stood at attention. The guidon posted the flag.

"By order of the Adjutant General and the Governor of Wyoming, effective 17 May, 2025, Recruiting and Retention Flight, Joint Force Headquarters, is hereby activated to support the mission of the 153rd Airlift Wing, U. S. Air Force," Deibert said.

With the activation of the flight,

Zoellner faced Deibert and saluted.

"Sir, I assume command"



Story by Airmen 1st Class Michael Swingen
Photos by Tech. Sgt. Lee Murphy

With the passing of the orders, the Recruiting and Retention Flight at the Wyoming Air National Guard will gain additional resources to achieve their mission. The flight will now have a defined chain of command, additional manning, and new opportunities for the recruiters to advance in their career field.

Also, they will now be known as talent management craftsmen.

"This is such an exciting time for the flight to be moving forward," Zoellner said. "Recruiting and retention has always been given the expectation to push and do more, but now they are given the resources to make that happen."

They're tasked to reach **102%** manning for the 153rd Airlift Wing in 2028.

The Recruiting and Retention Flight of the Wyoming Air National Guard are on the frontline of the future, taking on the mission of attracting the next generation of the best and brightest.

"Our recruiters let interested people know that by joining the Wyoming Air Guard they can be the heroes of their own story, and we are here to be their guide," Zoellner said. "You need tuition assistance for school? You want to be a part of something bigger than yourself? We have a solution, but it's your story."



Government Shutdown

As the federal government moved into a shutdown earlier this year, the **Wyoming Air National Guard's 153rd Comptroller Fligh** found itself at the center of a challenge that affected every Airman on base: Uncertainty about pay, funding and how long the disruption would last.

For Staff Sgt. Rebecca Frederickson, financial technician; Master Sgt. Dillon Deshay, chief of financial services; and Senior Master Sgt. Carrie Galaz, senior enlisted leader, the shutdown triggered an immediate shift from routine operations to a **crisis-level workload.**

Finance personnel take precautions as the end of each fiscal year approaches.

"We see this possibility every year," Galaz said. "But this one came at a time when we were preparing for major exercises."

The first days were defined by ambiguity as guidance changed rapidly. Airmen across the base faced the possibility of missed paychecks, and the finance office had no clear timeline for resolution. Questions grew daily: Will I get paid? How do I cover bills? **What happens next?**

It's hard to listen to Airmen worry about finances," Galaz said. "We couldn't give firm answers, and that weighs on you."

Behind the scenes, the team accelerated every process they could influence. The flight normally sends payroll to the Defense Finance and Accounting Service twice a week. During the shutdown, they processed pay data **every day,** working late into the night to ensure DFAS would have the information ready the moment funds were released.

Frederickson and other technicians entered and verified pay data, while Galaz and Deshay completed final audits before releasing each batch. When national guidance directed technicians to submit their own timecards, the team chose not to push that burden onto members. Instead, **they processed four full pay periods for the entire base themselves.**

"We took it on because we didn't want that weight on the members," Galaz said. "We knew how overloaded the system already was."

Some nights, team members worked until nearly midnight to overcome system slowdowns and data backlogs. Their goal remained constant: **ensure every airman would be paid as soon as legally possible.**

A turning point came when news outlets reported that the military would receive funding for the first affected pay period. Finance personnel learned of the decision at the same time as the public and continued submitting daily payroll data until DFAS confirmed processing.

Even after the shutdown ended, the resolution phase brought new challenges. The office must now reconcile retroactive leave, compensatory time and any transactions that posted incorrectly under compressed timelines. Travel operations resumed but under continued funding constraints, requiring coordination with commanders to prioritize missions until additional budget authority is released.

"We have the green light to function again, but it's not an open faucet," Galaz said. "We have to be deliberate and careful."

Despite long hours and emotional strain, the team shared that members of the 153rd remained patient and understanding throughout the shutdown.

For the members of the 153rd Comptroller Flight, the priority never changed: **Keep Airmen informed, protect their pay and absorb administrative burdens** so the rest of the wing could stay focused on mission readiness.

"This is our job," Galaz said.

"It's stressful, but our goal is always to take care of the members — technicians or military, it doesn't matter. That's what we're here to do."



Story & Photo by Staff Sgt. Edward Hermsen

ONE TEAM

South High School Football Team Builds a Legacy with the Cowboy Guard

South High School's football program kicked off a new era this summer through a growing partnership with the Wyoming Army and Air National Guard—a collaboration focused on readiness, resilience, and community connection.

On July 10, 2025, U.S. Army National Guard recruiters led student-athletes and coaches through a full Army Fitness Test during the team's summer weights program in Cheyenne, Wyoming. Athletes pushed through timed events and strength challenges designed to mirror the demands placed on modern service members. Coaches trained alongside their players, modeling the same discipline and determination expected on the field.

This partnership is visible not only in training but also in the Bisons' new look for the season. South High unveiled special jerseys featuring **"Ride for the Brand,"** the Guard's sword and shield emblem, and the American flag—a combination that symbolizes pride, unity, and commitment to a larger purpose.



The significance of that symbolism took center stage during a special visit from Maj. Gen. Greg Porter, Command Sgt. Maj. Ehde, and Col. Robert Lejune. The senior leaders met with the athletes ahead of a Friday night game, speaking about the values represented on the uniforms and the shared mission of teamwork on and off the field. Porter emphasized the importance of the American flag and the heritage behind the Guard's insignia.



Photos by Staff Sgt Leanna Russell & Sgt. Joseph Burns

ONE FIGHT

"In the Army, no one succeeds alone. Your strength comes from the person next to you—pushing you, supporting you, and trusting you. Football is no different. When you choose to show up for each other, you become more than a team. You become a unit." -Ehde

As part of the celebration, Guardsmen joined the Cheyenne community for the Bisons' Friday night matchup—launching T-shirts into the stands, cheering from the bleachers, and connecting with families and fans.

The presence underscored the Guard's commitment to building strong ties with Wyoming youth and supporting programs that develop leadership, resilience and belonging.

The partnership between South High School and the Cowboy Guard is still growing, but its foundation is strong. Through shared values and shared effort, both organizations are building something lasting.

Win or lose, the Bisons aren't standing alone—because, as Ehde reminded them, strength comes from **standing together.**



The Quiet Professional

Building the Mission, One Base at a Time

Story & photos by Airman 1st Class Michael Swingen

Every day, lights come on. Water runs. Roads hold. Buildings stand. Most people never stop to consider the hands that make it all work.

Civil engineers rarely draw attention. They don't chase recognition. Their success is measured in systems that function exactly as they should.
They just want the lights to come on.

The Wyoming Air National Guard's 153rd Civil Engineer Squadron returned from a weeklong training exercise at the North Carolina Air National Guard Regional Training Site, joined by Airmen from the 90th Civil Engineer Squadron at F.E. Warren Air Force Base, Chyenne, Wyoming. Together, they trained across a range of specialties—from heavy equipment and structural systems to electrical power, HVAC/R, water and fuel operations.

"**We build bases,**" said U.S. Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Christian Lowe of the 153rd.

"You take a patch of dirt, and suddenly there's a runway, towers, utilities—everything needed to fly and fight. For the right person, that's incredibly rewarding."

As a prime base engineer emergency force unit, the 153rd focuses on sustaining and restoring **critical infrastructure**, often under pressure. During training, that meant repairing damaged airfields using Rapid Airfield Damage Recovery, or RADR.

Engineer assistants surveyed runways. Explosive ordnance disposal cleared hazards. Heavy equipment crews cut, excavated and refilled cratered concrete with assembly-line precision. **One team** can repair dozens of craters in a matter of hours, returning an airstrip to operational status.

"Muscle memory is everything,"

Lowe said.

"We train until it's instinct. When aircraft need to launch, there's no time to figure it out."

Between scenarios, bulldozers and graders moved steadily across the training site. U.S. Air Force Airmen 1st Class Nicholas Cardillo and Levi Phillips operated heavy equipment late into the afternoon, learning new machines and refining old skills.



"You get to see the work you've done," Phillips said. "You build something, then you drive on it later. That's a good feeling."

The training doesn't end in uniform. The 153rd partners with Laramie County Community College and follows civilian industry standards, ensuring Airmen leave with certifications that translate directly to the private sector.



As the exercise concluded, the squadron gathered on the airstrip. A C-130 Hercules descended, taxied in, and opened its rear cargo door. Airmen boarded quietly, strapped in, and lifted off, leaving North Carolina behind. The aircraft's takeoff—like so many unseen moments—was made possible by the people who prepared the ground beneath it.

"They don't seek praise,"
Lowe said.
"They are the quiet professionals."

Welcome *Home*

A Homecoming Decades in the Making

The Cowboy Guard celebrates a homecoming decades in the making as Soldiers of the **115th Field Artillery Brigade** and the 2-300th Field Artillery Regiment return safely from deployment to the Middle East. Their mission—supporting Operations Spartan Shield and Inherent Resolve—sent more than ***360*** Wyoming Soldiers across several countries, providing critical fire support and strengthening U.S. partnerships

"This deployment marks the eighth time since Sept. 11, 2001, that this formation has answered the nation's call. Most of those deployments involved only portions of the battalion. This mission marks the first time the battalion has deployed as an integrated whole on a field artillery mission since the Korean War."

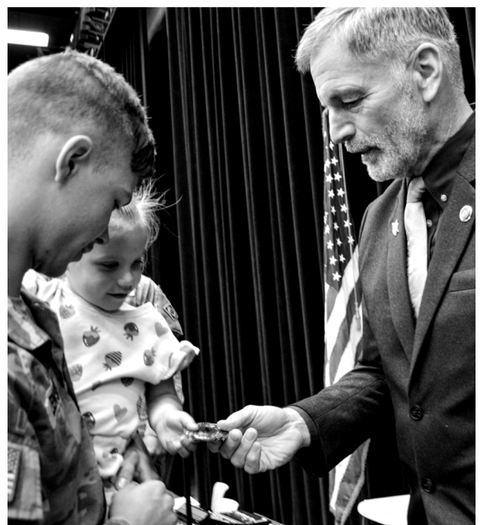
The deployment was more than another rotation for the Cowboy Guard—it was historic. ***For the first time in 70 years,*** the 2-300th Field Artillery Regiment deployed together as a unified field artillery formation.

During their time overseas, Soldiers of the 115th and 2-300th demonstrated the values Wyoming's Guard is known for—dedication, responsiveness, and unmatched lethality. Their efforts strengthened regional security, protected U.S. forces, and upheld America's commitment to stability in the region.

In September 2025, the focus shifted from mission success to long-awaited reunions. Families, friends and communities across Wyoming welcome home Soldiers who not only served with distinction, but who also carried forward a ***legacy*** that reaches back generations.









Photos by Staff Sgt. Leanna Russell & Joseph Coslett Jr & Sgt. Joseph Burns.

Constructing *the* Future

Across Wyoming, construction crews quietly shaped the future of the Wyoming National Guard and its partners—one project at a time. From historic preservation to modern readiness, these efforts reflected a balance between **honoring the past** and preparing for what lay ahead.

In Casper, the Wyoming Veterans Memorial Museum entered a rare moment of transformation as it temporarily closed its doors for the most significant renovation in **two decades**. The $2 million project focused on essential upgrades—roof replacement, improved heating and cooling systems, enhanced drainage, and modernized restrooms—while adding a new entry ramp to improve accessibility. Housed in a World War II–era building that once served the Casper Army Air Base, the renovation was carried out with careful attention to preserving the museum's historic character, including its **nationally recognized murals.**

When the museum prepared to reopen in early 2026, it stood **stronger**, more accessible, and ready to continue sharing Wyoming's military story for generations to come.







Farther north in Sheridan, construction reached a major milestone with the dedication of a new **Field Maintenance Shop** designed to enhance readiness across the state. Spanning more than 27,000 square feet, the $17.9 million facility replaced an aging shop and provided the Wyoming Army National Guard with modern service bays, administrative offices, classrooms, and fitness areas. Built to support combat and tactical vehicles from units **statewide,** the shop represented increased efficiency, collaboration, and a long-term **investment** in soldiers' ability to train and respond when called upon.

Together, these projects tell a broader story. Whether preserving a historic landmark that connects communities to their veterans or completing state-of-the-art facilities that keep equipment **mission-ready,** construction efforts across Wyoming are more than brick and steel. They represent an enduring investment in people, history, and preparedness—ensuring the Guard remains rooted in its **heritage** while fully equipped for the future.



RESPONSIVENESS



SHIELD OF THE STATE

SWIFT & DECISIVE

ALWAYS READY

LA FIRES

“It has been difficult to watch the absolute devastation of the wildfires in California. We’re honored to be able to participate in our nation’s efforts to combat these fires and return normalcy to the people and communities of Southern California, and as soon as possible.”

Col. Brian Diehl, commander of the Wyoming Air National Guard’s 153rd Airlift Wing.

Background photo by 302nd Airlift Wing, Colorado



Photos by Senior Airmen Zachary Herold
Story by Joseph Coslett Jr.

Three Wyoming Air National Guard C-130s equipped with the U.S. Forest Service’s Modular Airborne Fire Fighting Systems, or MAFFS, and associated personnel were activated by U.S. Northern Command to support firefighting efforts in the Los Angeles area, California, Jan. 9, 2025.

The three C-130 aircraft travelled to Channel Islands Air National Guard Base in California, where they provided critical assistance to the state’s firefighting apparatus. They accompanied a fourth C-130 support aircraft from Colorado. Approximately **40 aircrew** and maintenance personnel deployed.



The MAFFS-equipped aircraft came from the 153rd Airlift Wing and 187th Airlift Squadron in Wyoming, 146th Airlift Wing in California, 152nd Airlift Wing and 192nd
Airlift Squadron in Nevada, and the 302nd Airlift Wing and 731st Airlift Squadron in Colorado.

MAFFS began in **1971** as a joint effort between the U.S. Forest Service and the Department of Defense to produce the equipment, training and operational procedures to integrate military air tankers into a **national firefighting response.**

MAFFS are the U.S. Forest Service’s portable fire-retardant delivery systems and can be inserted into military C-130 aircraft without major structural modifications to convert them into airtankers when needed.

They can discharge their entire load of up to **3,000 gallons** of retardant in less than five seconds, covering an area one-quarter of a mile long by 100 feet wide, or they can make variable drops.

Once a load is discharged from a MAFFS-equipped aircraft, and the aircraft lands at a tanker base, it can be refilled in less than **12 minutes.**





Answering the Call

60th Presidential Inauguration



Members of the Wyoming National Guard completed intensive civil disturbance and security training as they prepared to support the 60th Presidential Inauguration on **Jan. 20, 2025**, in Washington, D.C.

They joined nearly **7,800 service members** from more than 40 states and territories as part of Joint Task Force–District of Columbia, assisting with crowd management, traffic control, CBRN response, and civil disturbance operations.

Military support to presidential inaugurations is a long-standing tradition, and the National Guard has participated in every inauguration ***since 1861***. The Cowboy Guard continued that legacy, helping ensure a safe, secure transfer of power.

In the weeks before deployment, **Wyoming Air and Army Guard** members trained together on riot-control movements, shield formations, and coordinated response tactics.

For some, the mission marked a career milestone. "This training was actually really cool for someone like me," said Senior Airman Kalie Ward, who trained on the shield line. **"This was one of the top 10 things I've wanted to do in my career."**

Every Guard member on the mission volunteered. As Gaskins put it: "**Everybody was excited and ready to do what was asked."**



"We had been training all week—Army and Air National Guard together—making sure Soldiers and Airmen were prepared for whatever was asked of us," he said. "This event was critical to ensuring a safe and secure transfer of power."

-Senior Master Sgt. Robert Gaskins

U.S Immigration and Customs Enforcement

On May 9, 2025, the Department of Homeland Security submitted a formal request for Department of Defense assistance to provide National Guard personnel in support of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and its interior immigration enforcement mission.





In response, the Secretary of Defense authorized the mobilization of up to **1,700 National Guard members** to support ICE activities across 20 states from the date of approval through October 31, 2025.

The request was for ***15 Guardsmen*** to support ICE operations in Cheyenne, Casper and Rock Springs.

"When asked by our Nation, Wyoming Responds.

By handling essential support work, the Guard enables ICE agents to focus on public safety and national security. Our Guard is our Sword and Shield."

-Govenor, Mark Gordan

Blazing New Trails

Wildland Fire Academy

Wyoming Army National Guard's Wildland Fire Academy is shaping the state's next generation of wildfire responders. In Camp Gurnsey, the academy's three-phase program pushes Soldiers through some of the most intensive hands-on fire instruction offered in the region—blending physical endurance, fieldcraft, and real-world fireline experience.

The journey begins in phase one, where classroom fundamentals quickly shift into practical fire-line work. Trainees learn to read fire behavior, build hand lines, and operate in tight, fast-moving teams.



Early mornings and long, demanding days mirror the pressures of a true wildfire environment.

In phase two, students transition into sawyer operations—mastering chainsaw techniques, clearing hazardous fuels, and cutting control lines to support real mitigation efforts around Camp Guernsey and nearby communities.

But it's phase three that defines the academy. Trainees embed with the Bureau of Land Management and county agencies across the West, joining active wildland responses. Over the summer, academy participants supported **70 incidents involving more than 600,000 acres**, gaining experience in initial attack, extended operations, engine crew work logistics, heavy equipment, and fire-camp management.

Maj. Steven Doble, the academy's officer-in-charge, said the hands-on intensity is deliberate.

"Wildfires don't give you easy days, We train our Soldiers in the same conditions they'll see in the field—long hours, tough terrain, and decisions that matter. The goal is to make them confident, capable, and ready on day one." -Doble

Built through collaboration among Guard leaders, local fire chiefs, and federal partners, the Wildland Fire Academy has become a cornerstone of Wyoming's wildfire-response readiness—preparing Soldiers not just to fight fires, but to protect communities across the West.





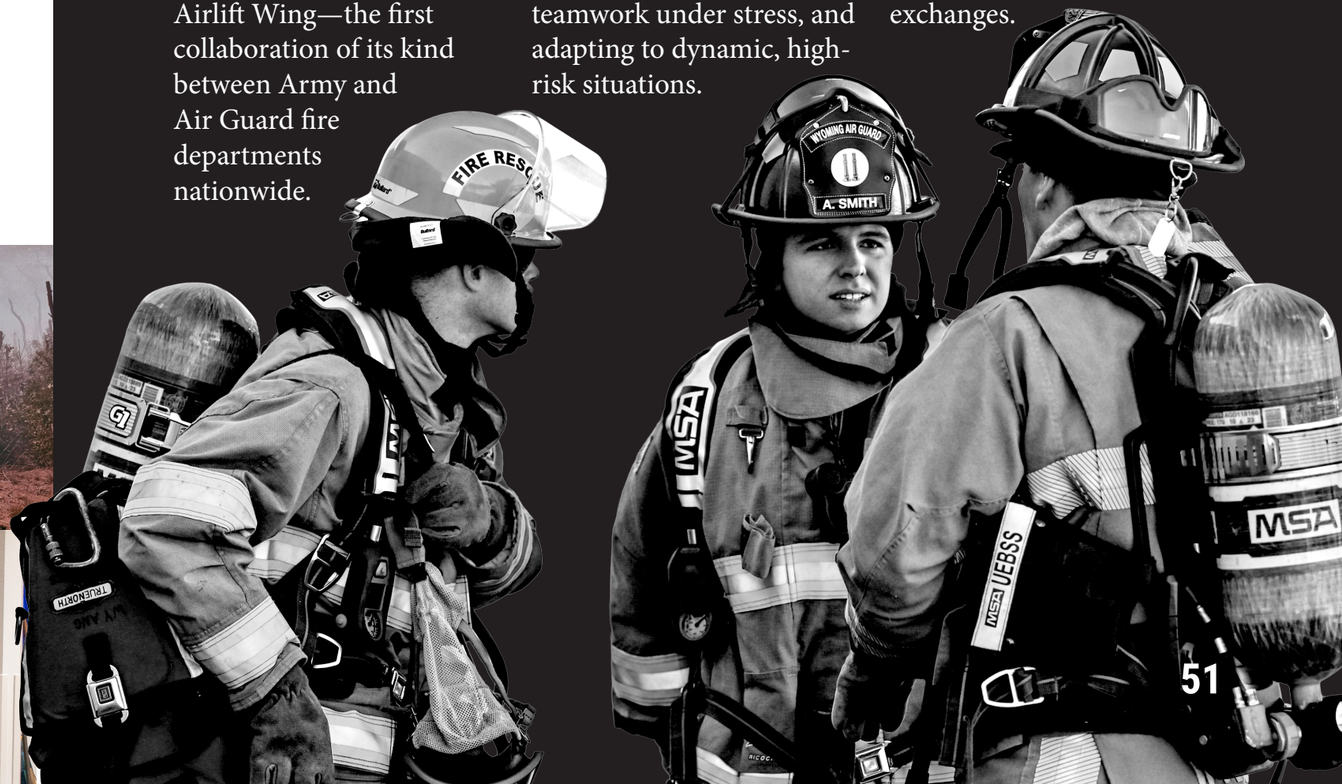


Air & Army Guard Sharpens Fire Fighting Skills

Camp Guernsey Joint Training Center's hot, dry terrain and live-fire training environment create a constant wildfire risk, requiring its Army National Guard firefighters to specialize in wildland techniques. To expand their skill sets, eight firefighters traveled 65 miles to Cheyenne for a six-day joint training exercise with the Wyoming Air National Guard's 153rd Airlift Wing—the first collaboration of its kind between Army and Air Guard fire departments nationwide.

The training exposed Camp Guernsey firefighters to structural firefighting skills they don't use daily, including SCBA confidence courses, search-and-rescue drills, vehicle extrication using the Jaws of Life, and rapid bunker gear drills. The week culminated in realistic structural fire scenarios inside a smoke-filled building, where firefighters practiced size-ups, victim rescue, teamwork under stress, and adapting to dynamic, high-risk situations.

By week's end, the joint training strengthened inter-service partnerships and sharpened firefighter readiness. The impact was immediate: U.S. Army Pvt. Cody Carr applied the training during a real chimney fire just days later, helping rescue trapped firefighters. Leaders from both units say the exercise marked the beginning of an ongoing collaboration, with plans for future joint training and wildland certification exchanges.



Against all Odds

Wyoming Guard Airmen Make History with Antarctic Cardiac Evacuation

MCMURDO STATION, Antarctica – In a historic feat of teamwork, precision, and life-saving expertise, members of the Wyoming Air National Guard's **187th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron** played a critical role in the first successful evacuation of a cardiac arrest patient from Antarctica in more than 35 years.

The patient, a U.S. civilian contractor and veteran of more than 20 Operation Deep Freeze missions, suffered a massive heart attack at McMurdo Station. The station, a key hub for the U.S. Antarctic Program, is home to over **500** personnel during the harsh winter months when flights in or out are nearly impossible.

Temperatures had hovered near -35°C (-31°F), and a prior rescue attempt had been thwarted by severe blizzards.



The emergency began when the approximately 60-year-old male collapsed in the station's galley. Medical professionals from McMurdo's fire department, National Science Foundation, and U.S. Air Force responded instantly, finding the man in cardiac arrest — a **"widow maker"** heart attack caused by a complete blockage of the left anterior descending artery.

First responders initiated CPR and delivered multiple defibrillator shocks en route to the station clinic. After nearly 40 minutes of intensive efforts, including CPR, epinephrine injections, and eight defibrillation shocks, the team stabilized the patient and began planning an immediate medical evacuation.

"This was a truly remarkable case," said Maj. Nate Krueger, flight nurse with the Wyoming Air National Guard. "From the moment of collapse to the successful evacuation, every step was executed with precision and urgency. The coordination between emergency responders, the clinic team, and the flight crew made all the difference."

Krueger and Master Sgt. Lyndsey Glotfelty, an aeromedical technician also with the 187th AES, were deployed to support Operation Deep Freeze — the U.S. military's logistical mission in Antarctica since 1955 — and led the patient's stabilization and transport efforts.

In a place where help is measured not in minutes, but miles and hours, the airlift was no routine mission. A Royal New Zealand Air Force Orion aircraft carrying additional medical staff landed on McMurdo's icy runway during a brief daylight window. Following about 90 minutes on the ground, a U.S. Air Force LC-130 flew the patient 2,500 miles to Christchurch, New Zealand — a seven-hour flight across one of the world's **most unforgiving terrains.**

Upon arrival, the patient was rushed to a hospital catheterization lab where two stents were placed to reopen his arteries. In total, the ordeal lasted about 12 hours from collapse to advanced cardiac care — and ended with the patient walking out of the hospital days later.

"This was a win through teamwork and rapid emergency response," said Maj. Thomas Powell, McMurdo Station flight surgeon. "Having a robust cooperative partnership between the National Science Foundation and the military was key."

The success of this mission highlights the strength of the longstanding partnership between the U.S. military and the National Science Foundation in supporting scientific operations in Antarctica. It also underscores the critical importance of readiness and training in environments where help is hours — or even days — away.

"This was more than a mission — it was a life saved against all odds," said Brig. Gen. Michelle Mulberry, Director of Joint Staff for the Wyoming National Guard. "What our Airmen and their teammates accomplished is extraordinary. The 187 AES embodied what it means to be Citizen-Airmen — bringing compassion and expert care to one of the most remote places on Earth. Great job Krueger and Glotfelty. If I were dying, I would want Nate Kreuger taking care of me; **he is an amazing nurse."**



Story by Tech. Sgt. Lee Murphy
Photos courtesy of U.S. National Science Foundation

SHERIDAN MOUNTAIN RESCUE





No where to Land. No Time to Waste.

On a summer evening in Wyoming's high country, a civilian aircraft crashed into rugged mountain terrain near Sheridan. The impact scattered wreckage across steep, forested slopes, leaving multiple survivors injurewd and in urgent need of rescue.

Within minutes, the Wyoming National Guard launched a medical evacuation mission that would test the limits of aviation skill, coordination, and endurance. Four Soldiers from Golf Company, 2-211th Aviation Regiment—already forward-positioned on wildfire standby—were the closest asset capable of reaching the site in time.

What followed was a race against darkness, terrain, and fuel—one where preparation became the deciding factor.

Maj. Lauren Gurney and her crew were finishing dinner at a small restaurant in Pinedale when her phone rang.

"Hey, Major Gurney," said Col. Ryan Brock, the Wyoming National Guard's director of operations. "We've got a potential mission. There's a downed aircraft. We're still working the location."

Gurney didn't need more detail.
She looked at her crew.

"It's time to go."

They paid the bill, walked out the door, and shifted instantly from waiting posture to execution. There were no questions, no hesitation—just movement.

Because the crew was already forward-positioned, the UH-60 Black Hawk was configured for medical evacuation. Uniforms were ready. Medical equipment was staged. The aircraft was fueled and prepared.

"**W**e were airborne in 36 minutes," said Staff Sgt. Ashley Ott, the flight paramedic. "If we'd been launching from Cheyenne, it would've taken hours just to get off the ground."

As the rotors spun, information streamed in from the Joint Operations Center. Reports changed rapidly. Injury assessments shifted. Coordinates updated again and again.

"All we knew was there were people alive in the mountains," Gurney said. "And we were the closest crew that could get to them in time."

Before lifting off, the crew paused together.

"We prayed,"

Gurney said. "For safety. For clarity. For the people waiting for us."
Then the Black Hawk lifted into the evening sky.

Story by Joseph Coslett Jr.



Dusk
is one of aviation's
most dangerous transitions.
Light fades unevenly. Depth perception lies.
Smoke from distant wildfires dulled the horizon as the aircraft climbed toward the mountains.

"**O**nce you transition to night vision goggles, your world narrows," said Chief Warrant Officer 2 John Mathews, one of the pilots. "You lose peripheral vision. You're flying through a tunnel."

Fuel calculations ran constantly. Every climb over a ridgeline burned precious minutes. Every detour through a valley traded speed for endurance.

"**T**here's a hard line called bingo fuel," Gurney said. "Once you hit it, you leave. No debate." Then the signals came through—an emergency locator transmitter screaming over the radios, infrared strobes pulsing beneath night vision.

They had found the site.

The
crash location
offered no place to land.
Steep slopes, dense trees, and scattered wreckage left only one option.

"**T**he hoist was the only way," Mathews said. The Black Hawk settled into a nose-in hover—one of the most dangerous positions a helicopter can hold.

"If we lost power, there was nowhere to go," Gurney said. **"No escape route."**

Sgt. 1st Class Andrew McCown, the crew chief, anchored himself at the cabin door, hoist cable threaded between his boots.

"**M**y job was to be their eyes," he said. "They can't see straight down. Everything depends on voice commands."

Ott
clipped into the
hoist and handed off her intercom cord.

"**T**hat's the point of no return," she said. "Once that cord is gone, you're committed."

She descended into violent rotor wash as 60-foot pines bent and thrashed around her.

"It's loud, chaotic, and incredibly focused all at once," Ott said.

Her boots hit the ground amid twisted metal and broken terrain.

Ott moved immediately—triage, assessment, packaging. Injuries were serious. Time mattered.

She secured the most critical survivor into a stable flight bag and clipped them to the hoist.

As the lift began, the situation deteriorated.



The hoist twisted violently. The litter snagged high in the branches of a pine tree.

"They were stuck," McCown said. "That's the scenario you never want."

Inside the cockpit, the pilots held a razor-thin hover. McCown guided the hoist inch by inch. Ott stabilized the patient, suspended in the canopy, trusting the voices above her.

Finally, the cable broke free.
When Ott and the survivor were pulled into the cabin, there was no celebration. Fuel was dropping fast.

They turned immediately for Sheridan.

At Sheridan Airport, ambulances were already waiting. The survivor was transferred. The Black Hawk refueled.

Minutes later, the crew lifted off again. Returning to the site meant the same hazards—with fewer margins. The aircraft was heavier. Winds hadn't eased. Darkness had fully settled.

"There was still no place to land," McCown said. "The hoist was the only option."

Ott descended a second time.

"This one was smoother," she said. "Still dangerous—but controlled."

The final survivor was lifted cleanly into the aircraft. Due to injury severity, the crew rerouted to Billings, Montana, for advanced trauma care.

Back on the mountainside, responders escorted another survivor out on foot.

The mission was complete.

By the time the Black Hawk touched down in Billings, exhaustion set in.

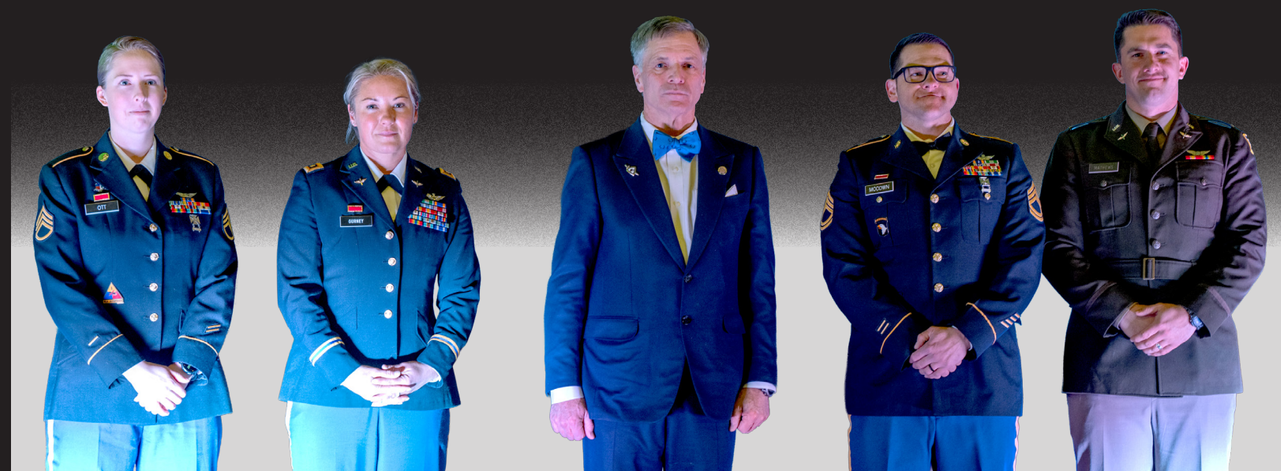
"This was my first real rescue," Mathews said. "Training prepares you, but nothing compares to knowing someone's life is in your hands."

For Gurney, the night reinforced a simple truth.

"If we hadn't been there," she said, "those survivors would not have made it out. In Wyoming, readiness isn't theoretical. It saves lives."

Four Soldiers. One aircraft. A mission measured in minutes.
When the call came, they were ready.

So that others may live.



PARTNERSHIPS

Shared Purpose
Shared Strength
Shared Success

Photo by Sgt. Joseph Burns

Lead the Way

Wyoming Guard Hosts Tunisian NCO Development Exchange

The Wyoming National Guard hosted a delegation from the Tunisian Armed Forces for a weeklong noncommissioned officer development exchange, strengthening a long-standing partnership through the **State Partnership Program.**

Staff Sgt. Eric Wenner, a civil affairs senior sergeant currently assigned to U.S. Africa Command's Office of Security Cooperation Tunisia, said the visit aimed to showcase the U.S. Army's approach to empowering NCOs and building leadership capacity at every level.

One of the key challenges for Tunisia's military, Wenner noted, is a lack of funding and access to modern facilities. The exchange provides an opportunity for Tunisian leaders to observe U.S. processes and infrastructure, sparking ideas on how to improve efficiency with limited resources.

"This visit is about giving them better ideas on how to maximize what they have," Wenner explained. "Through the State Partnership Program, they can see firsthand how we organize and train and adapt those lessons back home."

The visit included tours of Wyoming National Guard facilities, NCO-led workshops, and opportunities for Tunisian soldiers to engage directly with their American counterparts. The focus was not only on military tactics but also on leadership philosophy, mentorship, and the role of the NCO in mission success.

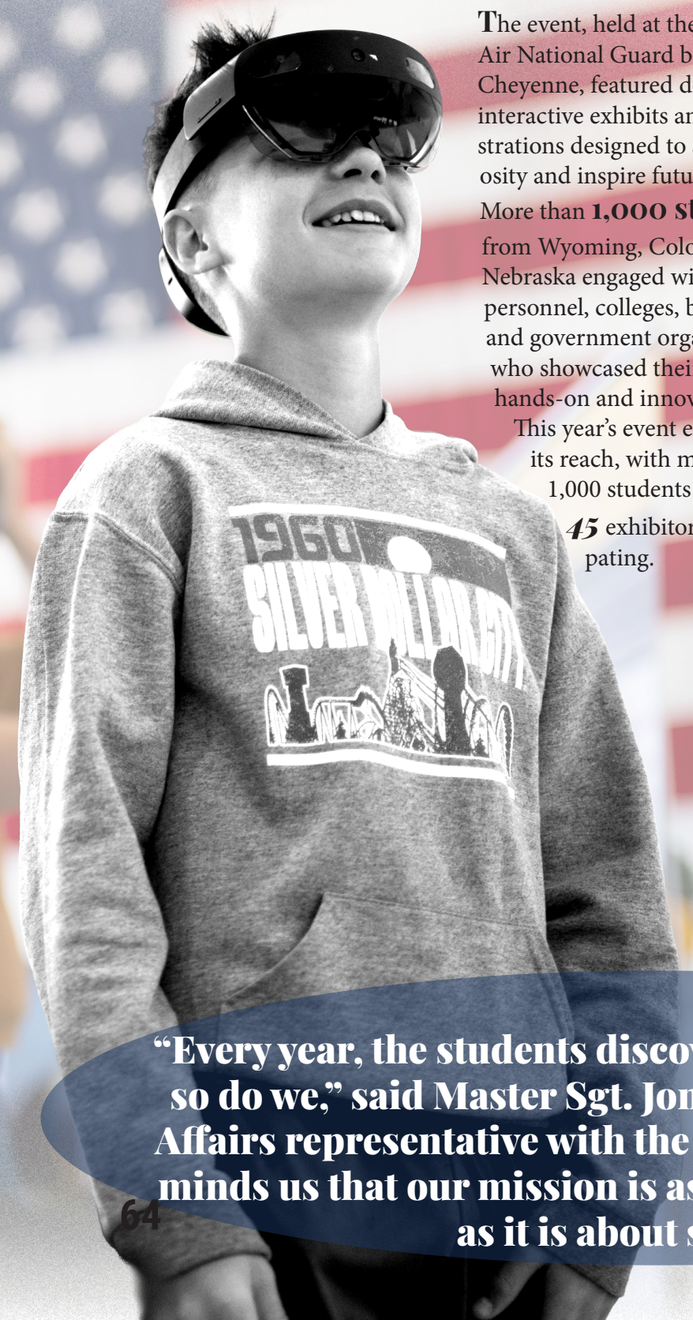
From a civil affairs perspective, Wenner emphasized the importance of NCO empowerment and independent decision-making. In civil affairs teams, where small team sizes require flexibility, enlisted Soldiers are often expected to take on responsibilities typically reserved for officers. Elisted Soldiers are often expected to take on responsibilities typically reserved for officers.





Discovery Day

The Wyoming Air National Guard hosted its fifth annual Discovery Day on Sept. 25, 2025, bringing together students, educators, and community partners to explore opportunities in science, technology, engineering, art, and math.



The event, held at the Wyoming Air National Guard base in Cheyenne, featured dozens of interactive exhibits and demonstrations designed to spark curiosity and inspire future careers. More than **1,000 students** from Wyoming, Colorado and Nebraska engaged with military personnel, colleges, businesses and government organizations who showcased their fields in hands-on and innovative ways. This year's event expanded its reach, with more than 1,000 students and over *45* exhibitors participating.

"Discovery Day is about opening doors and showing students what's possible," said Capt. Dalton King, a pilot with the 153rd Airlift Wing and the event director. "With science, technology, engineering, art, and math all represented, this event helps them imagine pathways they may never have considered."

From aviation and engineering to medical technology and the arts, the displays covered nearly every corner of the STEAM spectrum. Students explored outdoor conservation exhibits, watched military dog handling demonstrations, learned about electric power through lineman displays, climbed into fire and EMT rescue vehicles, tested their skills on virtual reality and simulator setups, and got a close-up look at both vintage and modern aircraft. Universities, airlines, robotics teams, and community organizations joined military partners to showcase career paths in a fun and hands-on way.

"Every year, the students discover something new — and so do we," said Master Sgt. Jonathon Alderman, Public Affairs representative with the 153rd Airlift Wing. "It reminds us that our mission is as much about community as it is about service."

Photos by Master Sgt. Jonathon Alderman

Since its launch in 2021, Discovery Day has grown from just over 200 student attendees to one of the region's largest STEAM outreach events. Organizers credit its success to the collaboration between the Wyoming Air National Guard and its community partners.

Discovery Day reflects the **Wyoming Air National Guard's** commitment to inspiring, educating and guiding youth toward fulfilling futures, while strengthening connections between the military and surrounding communities, Dalton said.









Once *in a* Lifetime

Educator Leadership Rendezvous

For three days, Aug. 6–8, 2025, Camp Guernsey Joint Training Center transformed into a hands-on classroom for Wyoming educators during the **fifth annual** Educator Leadership Rendezvous. Teachers traded lesson plans for helmets and harnesses as they toured C-130 aircraft, rappelled with the Civil Support Team, and engaged targets with M4 simulation weapons.



"I came to ELR to promote the idea that all people can access adventure and push themselves past what they think they can," said Jessica Cecrle, a school nurse from Fremont 14.

"The military shows students that purpose can be found in many different paths."

"We want to be good partners in our community," said Maj. Eric Jacobs, ELR officer-in-charge. **"By bringing Soldiers, Airmen, and educators together, we give teachers the knowledge they need to share military opportunities with their students."**

The goal:
Build stronger connections between Wyoming's educators and the National Guard.



Adventure



Educators emphasized that ELR also strengthens connections across the state. **"ELR provides one-of-a-kind experiences that challenge participants to grow as leaders,"** said Madison Lacey from the Wyoming Department of Education. "It helps educators better understand what the Wyoming Guard offers to districts, students, and the community."

By the end of the event, attendees walked away not just with unforgettable experiences, but with a new network of trusted partners committed to helping Wyoming students discover their own path forward, according to Jacobs.



Photos by Airmen 1st Class Michael Swingen, & Joseph Coslett Jr.
Story by Cadet Samantha Butkovich



Bringing the Cowboy Spirit

Air National Guard and the University of Wyoming Team Up

The bucking horse and rider, a lasting symbol of Wyoming, took center stage this season as the Wyoming **Air National Guard** partnered with the University of Wyoming to bring shared values of teamwork, service and pride to football games at **War Memorial Stadium**.





From the opening coin toss to in-game video features, the Guard's presence was woven into the game-day experience, highlighting opportunities for military service while reinforcing a common **Wyoming identity**. Air Guard members participated in pregame ceremonies, served as honorary captains and engaged fans throughout the season.

Military Appreciation Day marked a highlight of the partnership, as service members recognized Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps cadets during halftime, underscoring the Guard's **commitment to education** and community involvement.

With the cowboy emblem displayed on both uniforms and aircraft, the collaboration reflected a shared spirit rooted in teamwork, service and Wyoming pride — on the field and **beyond**.

Photos by Airmen 1st Class Michael Swingen



"Football and the military have many similarities — you can't get the mission done without the teammates around you," said Andrew Johnson, a University of Wyoming strong safety who plans to join the Wyoming Air National Guard after graduation.



Honoring Tradition

Cheyenne Frontier Days, 2025

For generations, the Wyoming National Guard maintained a strong and meaningful connection with Cheyenne Frontier Days, reflecting a shared **spirit of service**, volunteerism, and Western heritage. During the 2025 celebration, Guard members once again stepped forward to support the **"Daddy of 'em All,"** volunteering alongside community members to help ensure the success of one of the nation's most iconic events.

Cheyenne Frontier Days 2025 welcomed hundreds of thousands of visitors to Cheyenne for ten days of rodeo competition, parades, concerts, and cultural events that showcased the **Western way of life.** The Wyoming National Guard's presence was visible throughout the celebration, from assisting with community events to participating in time-honored traditions that brought residents and visitors from far and wide together.

A notable highlight of the week was the visit by **U.S. Air Force Gen. Steven Nordhaus**, Chief of the National Guard Bureau. While in Cheyenne, Gen. Nordhaus took part in Frontier Days activities and met with Wyoming National Guard service members, underscoring the National Guard's **dual mission** of defending the nation while remaining closely connected to the communities it serves.







Morning gatherings at the downtown pancake breakfasts remained a beloved Frontier Days tradition, drawing thousands for a welcoming start to the day. This year, the **yellow feather,** worn by many throughout the celebration, stood as a powerful symbol of **suicide awareness** and mental health support.

Together, these traditions reflect the values shared by Cheyenne Frontier Days and the Wyoming National Guard — **service, resilience**, and a commitment to looking out for one another in the heart of **cowboy country.**

On the Flight Line

Chief of the National Guard Bureau Visits the 153rd Air Wing

In the summer of 2025, Cheyenne's National Guard base welcomed a distinguished visitor whose boots have touched ground from Alaska to Europe. **Gen. Steven S. Nordhaus**, the 30th chief of the National Guard Bureau, made a highly anticipated stop in Wyoming as part of his nationwide engagement with citizen-soldiers and airmen.

Nordhaus's visit, which coincided with Cheyenne Frontier Days and other community events in July, was more than ceremonial. While serving as grand marshal of the CFD parade, he took time to tour Guard facilities and meet members of the 153rd Airlift Wing, the Wyoming Air National Guard unit known for its **C-130 Hercules** tactical airlift and aerial firefighting missions.



At the heart of his engagement was a message of appreciation and readiness. He spoke informally with airmen, observed unit capabilities firsthand and acknowledged the unique role the wing plays — from wildfire response missions to global airlift support — as a critical component of the nation's strategic and domestic operations.

For Guardsmen at the 153rd, the visit reinforced the bridge between community roots and national defense, a reminder that even in remote corners of the American West, military excellence is **alive and thriving**.



Never Forgotten

I**n Wyoming, remembrance is not reserved for a single day. It is carried year-round—in quiet ceremonies, shared stories, and moments when the state pauses to look its service members and families in the eye and say: **we remember.

***A**cross the state, banners rose bearing names and faces, turning streets into places of memory. Purple Hearts were honored, bridging generations from jungle firefights to modern battlefields, reminding all that **courage does not fade with time**.*

Veterans who once returned home in silence were finally welcomed properly—with handshakes, eye contact, and gratitude long overdue.

***T**his year, Wyoming gathered again and again to honor those who bore the **cost of freedom**. Gold Star families placed ornaments by hand, each one marking a life that never returned home and a family forever changed.*

*Wreaths were laid beneath the Capitol dome, not as symbols of loss alone, but as promises—to teach the next generation why **sacrifice matters.***

***W**yoming also looked forward. As America approaches its **250th** birthday, Soldiers and Airmen gathered with the community. Children, educators, leaders and veterans came together at the Wyoming capitol building to reflect and celebrate the coming year. **History** was not treated as something distant, but as something alive, carried by people still willing to serve.*

***T**hrough every ceremony, one truth remained clear: Wyoming does not forget. It honors not just service, but families. Not just sacrifice, but responsibility. And not just the past—but the duty to carry its lessons forward. Here, remembrance is not passive.*

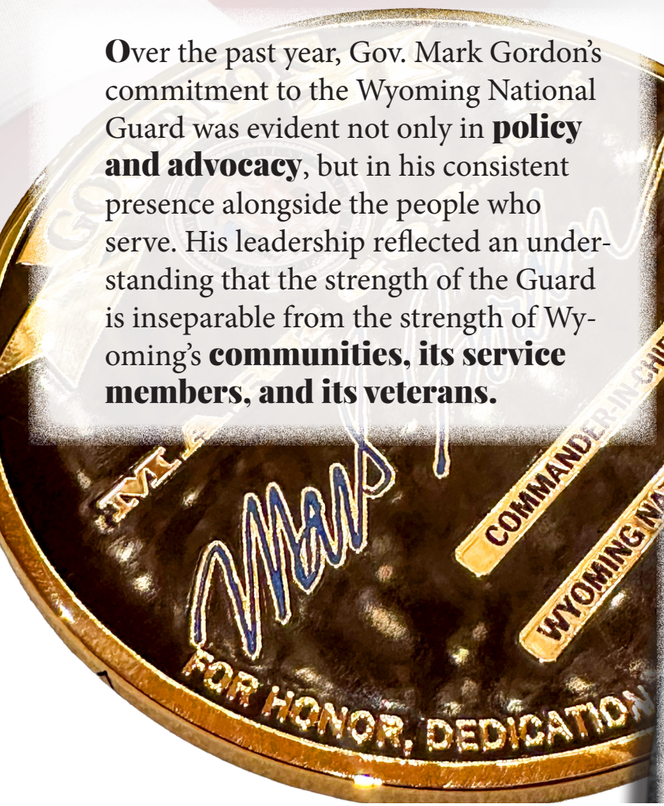
It is a commitment.



Photos by Leanna Russell & Joseph Coslett Jr.

Our Governor

MARK GORDON



Over the past year, Gov. Mark Gordon's commitment to the Wyoming National Guard was evident not only in **policy and advocacy**, but in his consistent presence alongside the people who serve. His leadership reflected an understanding that the strength of the Guard is inseparable from the strength of Wyoming's **communities, its service members, and its veterans.**



Throughout the year, Gordon remained a visible and vocal supporter of the Guard's mission at home. He championed resources that improved readiness, training, and infrastructure, while continuing to emphasize the **Guard's vital role** in disaster response, wildfire suppression, and community support across the state. Just as importantly, he maintained a steady focus on **Wyoming's veterans**, reinforcing the state's responsibility to honor service not only in words, but through sustained action and care.











That support extended far beyond state lines toward the end of the year, when Gordon traveled overseas to visit Wyoming soldiers of the **2nd Battalion, 300th Field Artillery Regiment** during the final phase of their CENTCOM rotation. Meeting with soldiers in person, he witnessed firsthand the **professionalism** and **dedication** that defined the battalion's mission. His visit served as a reminder that, even thousands of miles from home, Wyoming's service members were **not forgotten.**

As the 2-300th prepared to conclude its deployment, Gordon's presence underscored a deeper message: the state stood firmly behind its soldiers, from hometown armories to forward locations overseas. Over the course of the year, his **steadfast support** reinforced trust between leadership and those in uniform, strengthening the bond that has long defined the relationship between **Wyoming and its National Guard.**











By the Numbers

About the Wyoming National Guard



1,073 Full-Time Employees

188 Army Active Guard Reserve

217 Army T32/T5 Federal Employees

303 Air Active GuardReserve

168 Air T32/T5 Federal Employees

197 Total Active State Employees

Wyoming Army National Guard Members live in 23 Wyoming Counties and 35 States.

Wyoming Air National Guard Members live in 18 Wyoming Counties and 46 States

Where we Serve

WYOMING ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

Wyoming Army National Guard, Cheyenne, WY - BG Edward Lewis, CW5 Derek Fisbeck, SCSM Thad Ehde
Joint Force Headquarters, Cheyenne, WY – MAJ Jacob Rogers, 1SG Samuel Beecham
Wyoming Medical Detachment, Cheyenne, WY – COL Aaron Taff | HHD - CPT Hannah Plush, 1SG Nathan Reitz
84th Civil Support Team, Cheyenne, WY – LTC Jonathan Dyer, 1SG Trevor Cotton
Recruiting and Retention Battalion, Cheyenne, WY - LTC Paul Leoni, CSM Edwardo Herrera | RSP Command – MAJ Eric Jacobs, 1SG Aaron Feagler

Training Center Command, Guernsey, WY – COL Marko Rubich, CSM James Swingholm | HHC – MAJ Adam Stanfill, 1SG Justin Gydesen

115TH FIELD ARTILLERY BRIGADE | CHEYENNE (HQ), GILLETTE, LANDER, CASPER, SHERIDAN, DOUGLAS, TORRINGTON
115th Field Artillery Brigade - COL Alexander Fisher, CSM Deborah Manzanares | HHB - CPT Charles VanPatten, 1SG Derek Leonhardt
148th Signal Company - CPT Cameron Boeckel, 1SG Rafael Andrade
2-300th Field Artillery Regiment - LTC Michael Kingman, CSM Spencer Jolley | HHB - CPT Matthew Buchanan, 1SG Cody Parker
A Battery, 2-300th - CPT Jacob Brabender, 1SG Jason Lutz
B Battery, 2-300th - CPT Ryan Shupe, 1SG Evan Bock
920th Forward Support Company – CPT Chad Parris, 1SG Kenneth Degraw
960th Brigade Support Battalion - LTC Ross McGee, CSM Timothy Smith | HSC - CPT Lucille Queen, 1SG Chancy Elkins

94TH TROOP COMMAND | LARAMIE (HQ), CHEYENNE, ROCK SPRINGS, GUERNSEY, WHEATLAND, EVANSTON, AFTON
94th Troop Command Brigade - COL Jakob Norman, CSM Joshua Phillips
941st Battalion - LTC Daniel Johnson, CSM Curtis Jacobs
213th Regiment - LTC Brooks Harris, 1SG Katie Upton
G Company, 1st Battalion, 211th Aviation Regiment – MAJ Lauren Gurney, 1SG Tyler Neff
307th Engineer Detachment - CPT Kyle Schinkel, SFC Tyler Cunningham
197th Public Affairs Detachment - CPT Chelby Rush, SFC Ashley Motley
67th Army Band – CW3 Brett White, 1SG Richard Fertig
C Company, 1st Battalion, 297th Infantry Regiment - CPT Andrew Grimmer, 1SG Christopher Thompson
D Company, 1st Battalion, 297th Infantry Regiment – CPT Jeremy Daniels, 1SG Austin Laffitte

WYOMING AIR NATIONAL GUARD | CHEYENNE

Wyoming Air National Guard – Brig Gen Barry Deibert, CMSgt Sarah Brewster
153rd Airlift Wing - Col Brian Diehl, Col Larry Sullivan, Col Bret Trippel, CMSgt Michael Coughenour
153rd Comptroller Flight – Maj Randi Carpenter, SMSgt Carrie Galaz
187th Airlift Squadron - Lt Col Tyler Brewer, CMSgt Scott Leffel
187th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron - Lt Col Melissa Stevens, CMSgt Jacqueline Carlson
153rd Operations Support Squadron - Lt Col Andrea Seefeld, CMSgt Bryan Beyer
243rd Air Traffic Control Squadron – Lt Col Nate Kaley, CMSgt Gary Purnell
153rd Maintenance Squadron – Lt Col Josh Eveslage, SMSgt Brian Moomey
153rd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron - Lt Col Melissa Martin, CMSgt Christopher Carlson
153rd Maintenance Operations Flight – Capt Jeremiah Singleton, CMSgt Heath Loftin
153rd Mission Support Group - Col Jeremy Sparks, CMSgt Christopher Lujan
153rd Logistics Readiness Squadron – Maj Anthony Munoz, SMSgt Rob Knight
153rd Civil Engineer Squadron - Lt Col Dan Koch, SMSgt Justin Watt
153rd Force Support Squadron – Lt Col Eric Green, CMSgt Victoria Welsh
153rd Security Forces Squadron – Maj Terrence Bell, CMSgt Greg Wardle
153rd Communications Squadron – Capt Ryan Kirby , CMSgt Emily Young
253rd Command & Control Group – Col Derek Rutledge, CMSgt Jennifer Braisted
153rd Command & Control Squadron – Capt Rebecca Nott, SMSgt Stephen Kroner
253rd Support Squadron – Capt Austin Rodemaker, SMSgt Mark Ramler
253rd Security Forces Squadron – Maj Garrett Shinkle, SMSgt Jonathan Tanner

COWBOY leadership



Gov. Mark Gordon

The Commander & Chief



Maj. Gen. Gregory Porter

The Adjutant General



Brig. Gen Barry Diebert

Air Component Commander



Chief Master Sgt. Sarah Brewster

State Command Chief Master Sergeant



Brig. Gen. Michelle Mulberry

Director of Joint Staff



Chief Master Sgt. Michael Coughenour

153rd Airlift Wing Command Chief Master Sergeant



Col. James Ezell

U.S. Property & Fiscal Officer



Chief Warrant Officer 5 Derek Fisbeck

State Command Chief Warrant Officer



Command Sgt Maj. Thad Ehde

Command Senior Enlisted Leader



Brig. Gen. Edward W. Lewis

Land Component Commander



Command Sgt Maj. Thad Ehde

Land Component Command Sgt. Maj.



Col. Robert LeJeune

Chief of Staff- Army



Col. Tina Tweedy

Director of Staff- Air



Col. Brian Diehl

153rd Airlift Wing Commander



Mr. Mel Muldrow

Wyoming Military Department Deputy Director



Mr. Tim Sheppard

Wyoming Veterans Commission Director

Wyoming Army National Guard

SFC Timothy Ockler has been a cornerstone of success for the Wyoming Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention Battalion, providing consistent, mission-focused leadership in support of HQ and HHB, 2-300th Field Artillery, and the RSP Command.

Over six years, he achieved his recruiting mission every year, earned multiple Quarterly Mission Maker awards and **FY20 Rookie of the Year**, and repeatedly strengthened the team by mentoring new recruiters, supporting struggling areas, and expanding recruiting efforts beyond his assigned area of operations.

Drawing on his experience as a Drill Sergeant and **deep community ties** in Natrona County, Ockler built trust through hands-on mentorship, innovative retention initiatives, and unwavering community engagement—directly reinforcing unit readiness and **long-term force sutaiment.**



WYOMING ARMY GUARD
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Senior Master Sgt. Michael Palmer delivered record-setting results for the Wyoming Air National Guard, leading the recruiting team to 144 enlistments in 2025—including a historic 42% non-prior service rate—while strengthening readiness and force modernization.

He improved retention by 1.6%, responsibly managed $22.64 million in incentives, and expanded statewide visibility by securing $383,000 in external marketing support through innovative partnerships and campaigns.

Committed to the Whole Airman Concept, Palmer also strengthened community trust through extensive youth mentorship and leadership of key outreach events, reinforcing the Guard's reputation as a trusted and **mission-ready force.**

FLY FOR THE BRAND
WYOMING AIR GUARD

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Get in contact! www.153aw.ang.af.mil/contact-us/

Scan to learn more!



















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