

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Fall 2025

GUARDSMAN

MAGAZINE





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NEW HAMPSHIRE NATIONAL GUARD LEADERSHIP



The Honorable Kelly Ayotte
Governor of New Hampshire



Maj. Gen. David Mikolaities
Adjutant General of the N.H. National Guard

Brig. Gen. Allen Aldenberg
Commander of the N.H. Army National Guard

Brig. Gen. William Davis
Commander of the N.H. Air National Guard

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

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

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COVER PHOTO: **Airman 1st Class Deborah Wembabazi**, a heavy equipment specialist with 157th Civil Engineer Squadron, levels concrete for an expeditionary runway as part of a week-long training mission at the 201st Regional Training Site, Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania, on July 30. *Photo by Tech. Sgt. Victoria Nelson, 157th ARW Public Affairs.*

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IT WAS ALWAYS ABOUT THE SOLDIERS

William Ferland joined the New Hampshire Army National Guard in 1984 to become a welder. On a hazy drill Sunday more than four decades later he retired as the state command sergeant major.

It was a career the Somersworth product said he could have never imagined after he relinquished responsibility of the NHARNG to Caleb Smith, incoming state command sergeant major, during a June 8 ceremony before family, friends and battalion-size formation at the Edward Cross Training Complex athletic field in Pembroke.

“Over 41 years, I’ve seen the Army change,” Ferland said. “But what hasn’t changed is the grit, courage and relentless drive to complete the mission. That’s the soul of the Army, and that’s what I’ve loved most about serving.”

Ferland assumed the duties as the 13th state command sergeant major and senior enlisted advisor to the adjutant general in 2020. With three deployments and key assignments at every level of command under his belt, Ferland guided the readiness, welfare and education of NHNG soldiers.

He also was the driving force behind the creation of a volunteer NHNG search and rescue team.

“Command Sgt. Maj. Ferland has acted with both humility and empathy in taking care of and advocating on behalf of our most precious resource -- our soldiers and airmen,” said NH Adjutant Gen. David Mikolaities, who awarded Ferland the Legion of Merit.

Smith inherits the role with more than 25 years of service and four deployments in the NHARNG. His most recent post was command sergeant major for 54th Troop Command.

“To the soldiers in formation here and across the state, you matter, and you make a difference,” Smith said. “I look forward to continued service with you and for you as the 14th command sergeant major of New Hampshire.”

-compiled by Pfc. Makayla Panzer, 114th PAD



From left, **Command Sgt. Maj. William Ferland**, outgoing state command sergeant major of the New Hampshire Army National Guard, and **NH Adjutant Gen. David Mikolaities** pose with Ferland's Legion of Merit certificate during his retirement ceremony June 8 at the Edward Cross Training Complex in Pembroke. *Photo by Pfc. Makayla Panzer, 114th PAD.*



Command Sgt. Maj. William Ferland, outgoing state command sergeant major of the New Hampshire Army National Guard, gives a farewell speech during his retirement ceremony June 8 at the Edward Cross Training Complex in Pembroke. *Photo by Pfc. Makayla Panzer, 114th PAD.*

SILVER JUBILEE

By Master Sgt. Charles Johnston, JFHQ Public Affairs

New Hampshire and El Salvador celebrated the 25th anniversary of its State Partnership Program on Sept. 6 at Pease Air National Guard Base in Newington.

“It’s been 25 years of an exceptional partnership,” said NH Adjutant Gen. David Mikolaities, who is the fourth adjutant general to guide the program.

In 2000, Maj. Gen. John Blair signed a formal declaration with the Armed Forces of El Salvador under what was then a fledgling strategic initiative by the National Guard. Today, SPP accounts for 115 partner nations.

Day one of the Thunder Over New Hampshire Air Show provided a superspectacle backdrop for a modest flight-line ceremony with Gov. Kelly Ayotte, Mikolaities, and Col. Pablo Soriano, chief of staff of the Salvadoran Air Force.

Commemorative gifts and plaques were exchanged after a vintage biplane with a daredevil standing atop its wing roared past. An estimated 43,000 visitors were treated to various aerial performances and static displays during the free show.

“There’s been increasing engagements over the years, whether it’s Best Warrior or marksmanship events,” Soriano said. “Our countries have become close friends as a result of the partnership.”



NH Gov. Kelly Ayotte presents Col. Pablo Soriano, chief of staff of the Salvadoran Air Force, with a plaque to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the New Hampshire National Guard-El Salvador State Partnership Program on Sept. 6 at Pease Air National Guard Base in Newington. The modest ceremony was held on the flight line between aerial demonstrations of the Thunder Over New Hampshire Air Show. Photo by Master Sgt. Charles Johnston, JFHQ Public Affairs.



Carol Pilon performs her wing walking demonstration during the Thunder Over New Hampshire Air Show at Pease Air National Guard Base in Newington on Sept. 6. Pilon has been a wing walker since 2000. Photo by Mark Herlihy, U.S. Air Force.



From left, Col. Pablo Soriano, chief of staff of the Salvadoran Air Force, presents NH Adjutant Gen. David Mikolaities with a gift and plaque at the Thunder Over New Hampshire Air Show on Sept. 6 at Pease Air National Guard Base in Newington. A modest ceremony was held on the flight line to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the New Hampshire National Guard-El Salvador State Partnership Program. Photo by Master Sgt. Charles Johnston, JFHQ Public Affairs.



The U.S. Navy Blue Angels perform the Opposing Knife Edge maneuver during the Thunder Over New Hampshire Air Show at Pease Air National Guard Base in Newington on Sept. 6. Photo by Mark Herlihy, U.S. Air Force Public Affairs.

PEASE HOSTS THUNDER OVER NEW HAMPSHIRE AIR SHOW

By Tech. Sgt. Victoria Nelson, 157th ARW Public Affairs

Over 60,000 people braved a mixed weather forecast to get a close-up view of military aviation, Sept. 6–7.

The two-day Thunder Over New Hampshire Air Show and Open House forged ahead into the storms, opening New Hampshire's only Air National Guard base to the public. During the show, attendees had the opportunity to connect with service members while being immersed in an international military experience, including the U.S. Navy Blue Angels.

As a result of the projected storms, the schedule was shifted both Saturday and Sunday to allow visitors the best opportunity to experience each day. Most of Saturday's performances occurred as scheduled, with only the tail-end of the Blue Angel's performance being cut short. On Sunday, gates opened early as the rain streamed from gray skies. Flying began around 1:30 p.m. as the Blue Angels performed a single-ship flight that included several high-speed passes, complete with a massive vapor cone, before ending their performance. Weather improved through the afternoon, and the day concluded with an extended demonstration by the Air Combat Command F-35A Lightning II Demonstration Team.

"Our airmen worked diligently through the rain and storms to ensure the show was ready and as enjoyable as possible for our guests," said Maj. Michelle Mastrobatista, the air show director. "I'm also grateful for our community partners who assisted us all along the way."

In addition to the Blue Angels, the show featured the Air

Combat Command F-35A Demonstration Team, and the 157th Air Refueling Wing's own KC-46A Pegasus, the Air Force's next-generation aerial refueler. They were joined by the U.S. Marine Corps C-130 "Fat Albert," the U.S. Army UH-60 Black Hawk, the U.S. Para Commandos, Michael Goulian, Carol Pilon's Third Strike Wingwalking, the JackAces P-51 Demo, and the Smoke-N-Thunder Jet Car.

Alongside the celebration of aviation, two large aircraft hangars and a portion of the air ramp were filled with interactive STEM exhibits. Children and adults explored robotics, aviation technology and other hands-on learning opportunities.

The air show was made possible through a collaboration between the 157th Air Refueling Wing and its community partners: New Hampshire Military Assistance Foundation, Port City Air, Pease Development Authority, Veterans Count, the Gigunda Group, New Hampshire Army National Guard, the Brunswick Airport, and state and local law enforcement.

"This event is for our community and those that came out to enjoy this awesome experience," said Col. Nelson Perron, commander of the 157th ARW. "We really appreciate everyone's support, and we know this show and open house wouldn't be possible without it."

The air show also paid homage to Rob Holland, a decorated aerobatics pilot and world-renowned flier from New Hampshire, who lost his life in an aircraft accident earlier in 2025.



A U.S. Air Force F-35A Lightning II performs aerial maneuvers during the Thunder Over New Hampshire Air Show at Pease Air National Guard Base in Newington on Sept. 6. *Photo by Mark Herlihy, U.S. Air Force Public Affairs.*

“Rob was the kind of pilot who walked into a room and the Blue Angels go over and shake his hand,” said Capt. Jake Ricciotti, a pilot with the 157th Operations Group. “He was one of the most down-to-earth people you’d ever meet. For a man as quiet as he was to leave such a void in aviation after his passing means he was able to do some impossible things in the air.”

In Holland’s honor, the SOCOM Paracommandos displayed a “Fly Good, Don’t Suck” flag, a signature Rob Holland message.

In addition to the Saturday and Sunday performances, the base also hosted a family day for local military members on Friday, when the demonstration teams were practicing for the event. The day allowed active military and veterans the opportunity to spend time with their loved ones while getting a sneak peak at the weekend’s performances.

While the rain darkened the skies and wet the runway, it didn’t dampen the spirits or enthusiasm of many in the community.

“I want to be a pilot now,” said Hannah from Brentwood, NH. “When the F-35 went by, I could feel it in my lungs! They were going so fast and the fact that the pilot could stop and change directions in a split second, that was the coolest thing in the world.”



Kylie Kerr of Claremont boards a 157th Air Refueling Wing KC-46A refueler during the Thunder Over New Hampshire Air Show on Sept. 6 at Pease Air National Guard Base in Newington. *Photo by Master Sgt. Charles Johnston, JFHQ Public Affairs.*

PIVOTAL ROLE

By NHNG Public Affairs

The 157th Air Refueling Wing will spearhead the modernization of the KC-46A Pegasus after its selection as a combined test force in September at Pease Air National Base in Newington.

Backed by New Hampshire's governor and congressional leadership, the first-ever KC-46A CTF will operate under the authority of the Air National Guard's Air Force Reserve Test Center or AATC. The partnership with the Tucson, Arizona-based testing facility establishes the New Hampshire Air National Guard wing as a critical player in the development of advanced capabilities for the U.S. Air Force next-generation refueler.

"There is no better unit suited to accelerate the aircraft's capabilities," Sen. Jeanne Shaheen said. "In the Senate, I pushed to make Pease the Air National Guard's main operating base for the KC-46A. Since then, I've had the privilege to speak with the men and women who fly and maintain the KC-46A about the innovative ways they have advanced their missions and tactics. I continue to be impressed by their creativity and dedication."

The newly created CTF will be a separate unit of the AATC hosted and staffed by the 157th ARW, said Col. Daniel Wittmer, AATC commander. The CTF will explore capability gaps on the KC-46A to develop, test, and make fielding recommendations for potential solutions.

"The 157th Air Refueling Wing plays a pivotal role in our national defense, and this new KC-46A Combined Test Force will help keep our military the greatest fighting force in the world," Gov. Kelly Ayotte said. "I'm proud that our New Hampshire Air National Guard continues to lead the way in defending our country."

The 157th ARW was the first Air National Guard wing to field the KC-46A refueler, which replaced the Eisenhower-era KC-135.



Brig. Gen. William Davis, NH Adjutant Gen. David Mikolaities, Col. Daniel Wittmer and Col. Nelson Perron conduct a ribbon-cutting to commemorate a new KC-46A Combined Test Force at Pease Air National Guard Base on Sept. 5. The milestone establishes the 157th Air Refueling as a key player in testing and fielding advanced capabilities for the KC-46A Pegasus. Photo by Senior Master Sgt. Timm Huffman, 157th ARW Public Affairs superintendent.

ANYTHING BUT SMALL

Story and photos by Sgt. Sean Ferry, 114th PAD

The New Hampshire Army National Guard welcomed the addition of a new type of helicopter during the activation and assumption of command ceremony for 2nd Detachment, Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 151st Aviation Regiment on June 14 at the Army Aviation Support Facility in Concord.

The detachment, fielded with nine soldiers from overstrength units within NHARNG aviation, will fly and maintain two, LUH-72 Lakotas.

More compact in size and power than NHARNG's existing fleet of UH-60L and HH-60M Black Hawks, the Lakotas will augment the state's existing missions, which include search and rescue, counter drug, and transportation.

"We now have a third airframe with increased range, increased endurance, and increased fuel efficiency," said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Nicholas Rosetti, a pilot with the detachment.

The Black Hawk can fly two hours on a tank of gas, the Lakota three. It also takes less time to preflight a Lakota, Rosetti added, "because it has less moving parts."

"We can dedicate almost two hours of search time before we hit our bingo and have to go back for fuel," Rosetti said. "That extra hour we have adds up and makes a huge difference."

The Lakota is equipped with a camera system that has thermal and infrared day- and night-vision optics and a laser-guided GPS tracker.

A searchlight, known as the "night sun," will help enhance ground visibility.

"When compared to the '60 units within the state, you might seem small in both manpower and helicopter cross weight," said Capt. Alex Hodsdon, the detachment commander, while addressing his troops. "But the significance of Bravo Company within the organization is anything but small."



A LUH-72 Lakota anchors the activation and assumption of command ceremony for 2nd Detachment, Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 151st Aviation Regiment on June 14 at the Army Aviation Support Facility in Concord.



Sgt. 1st Class Patrick Combs, senior enlisted advisor for 2nd Detachment, Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 151st Aviation Regiment, uncases the unit guidon during an activation and assumption of command ceremony June 14 at the Army Aviation Support Facility in Concord.

SNAPSHOTS



MAGNIFICENT 7

Congrats to **Sgts. Thomas Hyland, Nicole Skare, Jared Toms; Spcs. Olivia Cook, Edward Moore, Stephen St. Laurent; and Pfc. Nieve Boulter** for graduating from a 10-day air assault course Sept. 19 at Camp Edwards, Joint Base Cape Cod. They were among more than 180 National Guard soldiers and airmen from across the country to earn the Air Assault Badge. *Courtesy photo.*



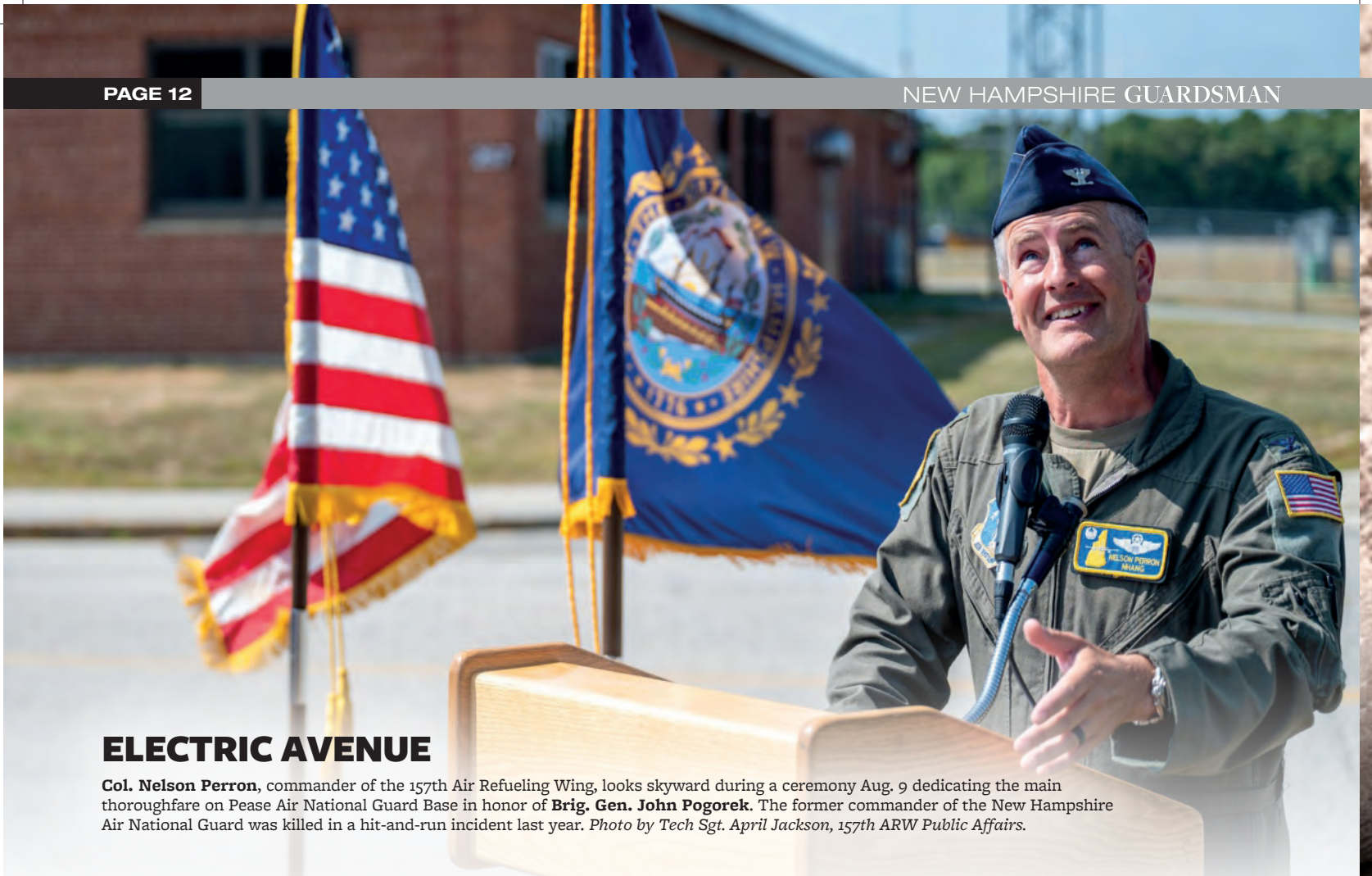
LAST SALVO

Brig. Gen. John LeBlanc, outgoing commander of the New Hampshire Army National Guard, hands the state area command guidon to **NH Adjutant Gen. David Mikolaities** during a change of command ceremony Sept. 7 at the Army Aviation Support Facility in Concord. LeBlanc relinquished command of the NHARNG to **Brig. Gen. Allen Aldenberg**, far right. *Photo by Spc. Liam Reilly, 603rd PAD.*



THESE TWO

From left, **Master Sgts. Angel Cardona** and **Joshua Dempsey** of the 157th Security Forces Squadron were coined by the 380th Air Expeditionary Wing at Al Dhafra Air Base, United Arab Emirates in July for “outstanding leadership” during the Israel and Iran conflict. Cardona is the operations superintendent. He is responsible for more than 200 airmen assigned to flight operations. Dempsey is the day flight chief. He is responsible for 52 airmen assigned to flight operations. They were among 80 New Hampshire Air National Guardsmen deployed to the Middle East in support of U.S. Central Command. *Courtesy photo.*



ELECTRIC AVENUE

Col. Nelson Perron, commander of the 157th Air Refueling Wing, looks skyward during a ceremony Aug. 9 dedicating the main thoroughfare on Pease Air National Guard Base in honor of **Brig. Gen. John Pogorek**. The former commander of the New Hampshire Air National Guard was killed in a hit-and-run incident last year. *Photo by Tech Sgt. April Jackson, 157th ARW Public Affairs.*



SHUTTERBUG

Spc. Josephine Malloy, mass communications specialist for the 114th Public Affairs Detachment, takes a photo during Saber Junction 25 at the Hohenfels Training Area, Joint Multinational Readiness Center, Germany on Sept. 9. For its annual training, the PAD provided public affairs support to Saber Junction, a multinational military exercise involving more than 7,600 participants from 15 allied and partner nations. *Photo by Sgt. Christian Aquino, JMRC.*



RIGHT ANGLE

Tech. Sgt. Richard Bittle, aerospace medical technician with the 157th Air Refueling Wing, rescues a trapped casualty during a hazmat training exercise at the Rhode Island Fire Academy on July 17. The realistic disaster scenario was set up to test the skills and knowledge of the New England CERFP (Chemical, Biological, Radiological and high-yield Explosive Enhanced Force Package). The regional response team includes soldiers and airmen from New Hampshire, Maine, and Rhode Island National Guards. *Photo by Tech. Sgt. April Jackson, 157th ARW PA.*



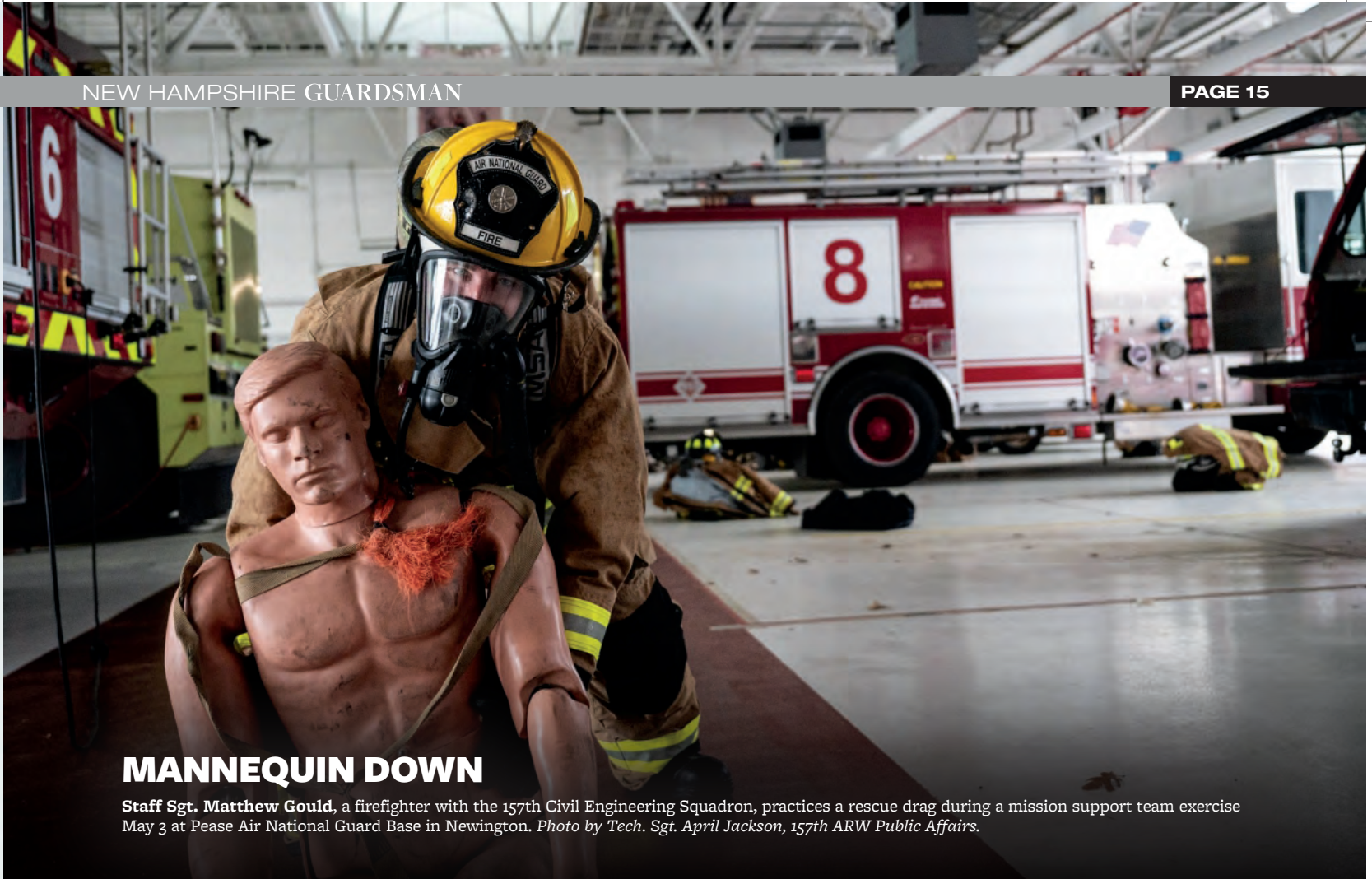
DYNASTY

For the fourth consecutive year, a New Hampshire National Guard shooting squad won the Marksmanship Advisory Council Region 1 Championship held earlier this month at Fort Devens. NHNG's Team Alpha bested a field of 14 teams from six states. From left are **Spc. George Munson**, **Tech. Sgt. Michael Stempfer**, **Sgt. 1st Class David Musso** and **Staff Sgt. Timothy Huntley**. *Courtesy photo.*



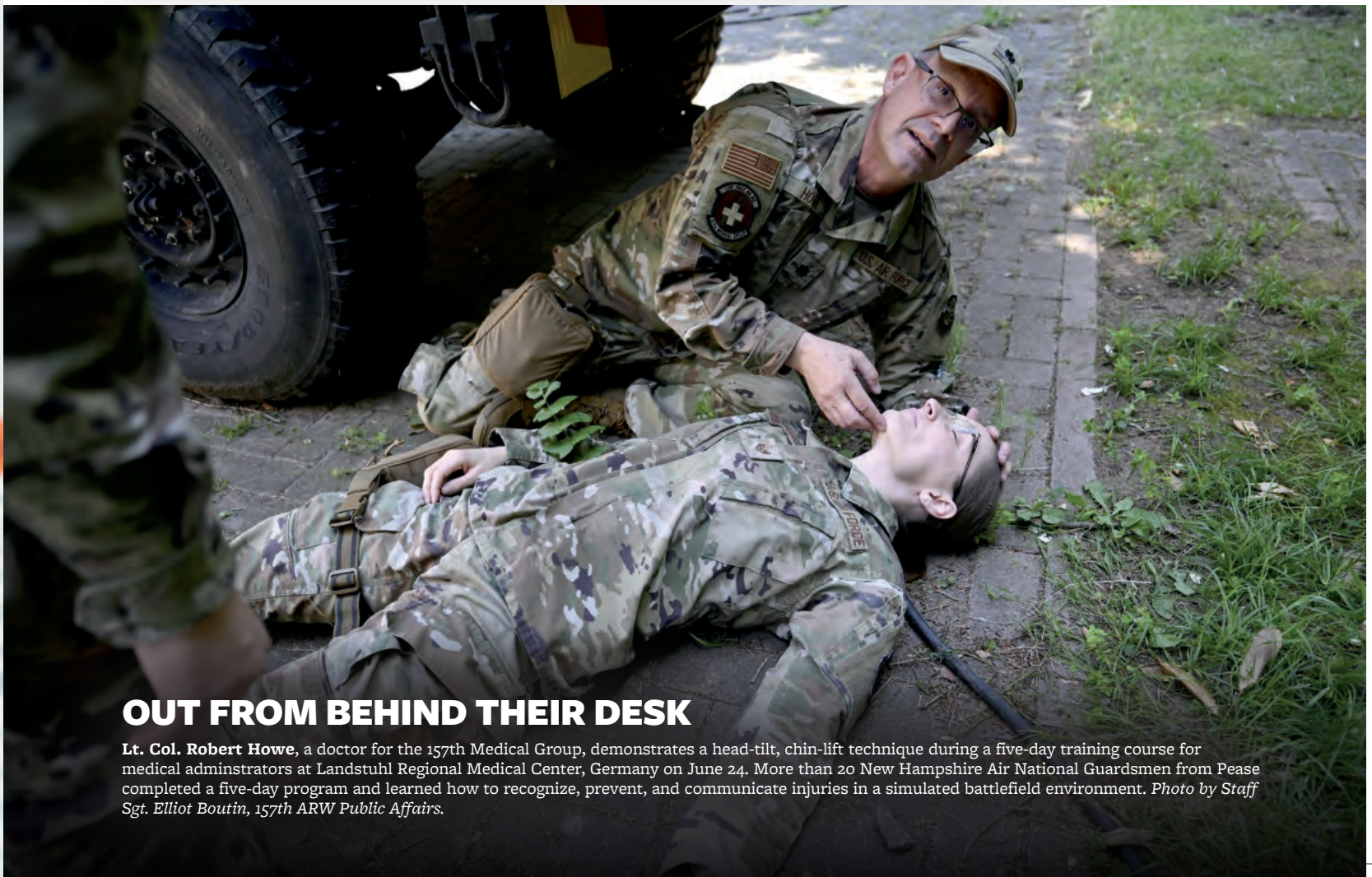
ALL FOUR ONE

Sgt. Conner Sills, a survey team member with the 12th Civil Support Team, checks for infrared radiation inside of a box truck during a joint exercise at Pease Air National Guard Base in Newington on July 9. The 12th CST partnered with Pease Fire and Emergency Services, 157th Security Forces Squadron and Department of Energy's Nuclear Emergency Response Team to conduct a weapons of mass destruction exercise. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Victoria Nelson, 157th ARW Public Affairs.



MANNEQUIN DOWN

Staff Sgt. Matthew Gould, a firefighter with the 157th Civil Engineering Squadron, practices a rescue drag during a mission support team exercise May 3 at Pease Air National Guard Base in Newington. *Photo by Tech. Sgt. April Jackson, 157th ARW Public Affairs.*



OUT FROM BEHIND THEIR DESK

Lt. Col. Robert Howe, a doctor for the 157th Medical Group, demonstrates a head-tilt, chin-lift technique during a five-day training course for medical administrators at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, Germany on June 24. More than 20 New Hampshire Air National Guardsmen from Pease completed a five-day program and learned how to recognize, prevent, and communicate injuries in a simulated battlefield environment. *Photo by Staff Sgt. Elliot Boutin, 157th ARW Public Affairs.*



MISSION ORIENTED

In a ceremony presided over by **Gov. Kelly Ayotte**, Allen Aldenberg was promoted to brigadier general June 7 at the State House in Concord. The former Manchester police chief was designated to become the commander of the New Hampshire Army National Guard later in the year. The day before his promotion, Aldenberg relinquished command of 54th Troop Command. His 32 years of military service includes key assignments with the Massachusetts and New Hampshire Army National Guard as commander of the 972nd and 211th Military Police Companies and 79th and 54th Troop Commands. Last year, he retired as Manchester’s chief of police after 30 years of law enforcement service. “I’ve always believed in the focus of service over self, the mission over the title, the people over the position, then the rest takes care of itself,” he said. “I am grateful, I am humble, and I am ready.” *Photo by Staff Sgt. Kelly Boyer, 114th PAD.*



BACK ON HAYSTACK

Chief Warrant Officer 4 Luke Koladish uses a Chuck Norris figurine to demonstrate the hoist capabilities of a Black Hawk helicopter for Boston Magazine scribe **Catherine Elton** on Nov. 20 at the Army Aviation Support Facility in Concord. **Elton** is writing a story about the Dec. 19, 2024 rescue of hiker Patrick Bittman on Little Haystack Mountain in Franconia Range. Looking on from left are **Staff Sgt. Ethan Major** and **Sgt. Daniel Bourque**, medic and hoist operator for the mission. *Photo by NHNG Public Affairs.*



SLABBED TOGETHER

From left, **Spc. Hunter Gotshall**, **Sgt. Wagner Nascimento**, and **Spc. Alec Yanulavich** of Charlie Company, 3rd of the 172nd Infantry Regiment (Mountain), New Hampshire Army National Guard, conduct an overwatch with 3rd Infantry Regiment, Kosovo Security Forces, at Krivolak Training Area in North Macedonia on May 29. About 90 infantrymen from Mountain Company were part of Immediate Response 25, a large-scale U.S. Army exercise focusing on enhancing NATO integration and capabilities. The exercise, part of DEFENDER 25, involved more than 12,000 participants from the U.S. and NATO allies, spanning eight countries in the Balkans and Eastern Europe. *Photo by Sgt. Patrick Mayabb, 125th Theater Public Affairs Support Element, Michigan National Guard.*



UNDER HOVER

Soldiers with the 744th Forward Support Company hook an ammunition pod to a Moroccan CH-47 Chinook during a sling-load operation May 17 for African Lion 2025 in Tan-Tan, Morocco. About 130 New Hampshire Army National Guardsmen from the 744th and 3rd Battalion, 197th Field Artillery Regiment are nearing the end of a five-week, large-scale military exercise involving more than 50 nations and 10,000 troops. African Lion 25 is the largest annual military exercise on the continent. Led by U. S. Africa Command (AFRICOM), it spans Ghana, Morocco, Senegal and Tunisia, and runs April 14 to May 23. *Photo by Spc. Liam Reilly, 603rd PAD.*

BETTING ON THEMSELVES

By Pfc. Makayla Panzer, 114th PAD

A Rhode Island combat medic and New Jersey hazmat specialist won the Army National Guard Region 1 Best Warrior Competition hosted by New Hampshire from May 20 to 23.

Spc. Adam Andrews of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 126th Aviation Regiment, RIARNG and Sgt. Kristopher Piwowarczyk of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 104th Brigade Engineer Battalion, 44th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, NJARNG earned Soldier and NCO of the Year, respectively.

They bested a field of 15 competitors from Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York and New Jersey. They also qualified for the national BWC, scheduled July 11 to 20 in Maryland.

“I wasn’t competing against other competitors,” Piwowarczyk said. “The only thing I was up against was myself. I asked how I could perform at my highest level and learned from past weaknesses and failures.”

New Hampshire’s contenders – Pfc. Nieve Boulter, a forward observer with Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 197th Field Artillery Brigade, and Sgt. Christopher Kiernan, an interior electrician with 1st Detachment, 185th Engineer Support Company, 54th Troop Command – left their marks on the regional competition. Kiernan finished fifth among NCOs and Boulter scored a first and second place in two of the events among the junior enlisted – the formal board and rifle shoot.

Held at various locations across the state, the RBWC kicked off before sunrise May 20 with the Expert Physical Fitness Assessment, a grueling event involving long-distance running, sprints, high crawls, weight carries, and body-weight exercises. All competitors successfully completed the seven exercises in under 30 minutes.

With only an hour to recover, competitors changed into their dress uniforms for the board and a written exam. State command sergeants major from across the region evaluated their composure, presentation, military knowledge, and awareness of current events.

“Challenges like this are important,” said NHARNG State Command Sgt. Maj. William Ferland. “It allows senior noncommissioned officers to identify and mentor soldiers with strong traits, even when the soldier doesn’t realize their own potential.”

Later that afternoon, soldiers toured the SIG SAUER and Wilcox factories for hands-on weapons familiarization, preparing for day two’s marksmanship challenges at the SIG SAUER Academy in Epping.

They fired XM7 rifles and M17 pistols at targets ranging from 50 to 300 meters under tight time constraints. A stress shoot followed. Competitors sprinted 100 meters, quickly loaded their weapons, and engaged targets at a 270-degree range. This tested their speed, composure, and accuracy under pressure.

Day three began with land navigation deep in the White Mountain National Forest.

Using only a map and compass, soldiers had four hours to find five points in Crawford Notch, a rugged terrain surrounded by peaks more than 4,000 feet high. None were able to locate all the points in the thick foliage and rainy, 40-degree conditions.

“The most difficult event was land navigation,” Andrews said. “The site had never been used before, and the terrain was steep and thick. Rain interfered with my gear, so I had to rely on the skills passed down to me.”

That evening, soldiers faced a “mystery” hazmat event in Littleton, where they donned and doffed protective masks and suits under a simulated gas threat.

“To prepare, I ramped up my workouts, studied Army tasks, and practiced weapons assembly in case it came up as a mystery event,” Boulter said.

The final day began with a 12-mile ruck march through the rainy backroads of Strafford. Soldiers carried 35-pound packs with no knowledge of the total distance.

Piwowarczyk finished first with a time of 2:05:58.

“Your mind wants to give up first,” he said. “But if you’re mentally strong, you can push past your own limits.”

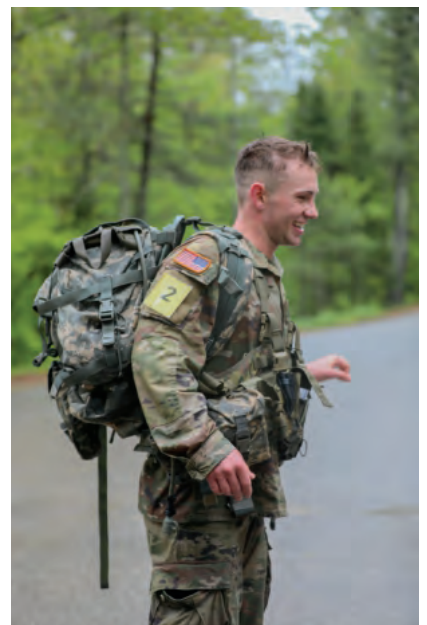
Immediately following the march, competitors moved into a warrior tasks event, executing tactical combat care, medical evacuation, and land navigation drills in a simulated combat zone.

Sgt. 1st Class John Nedeau, this year’s RBWC coordinator, was awarded an Army Commendation Medal for his efforts. A section chief with Bravo Battery, 3rd Battalion, 197th Field Artillery Regiment, Nedeau has supported 10 state and regional BWCs as a competitor, sponsor, and organizer.

“I love doing this event,” Nedeau said. “It’s great to see everyone compete and to be a part of it.”



Spc. Adam Andrews, a combat medic with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 126th Aviation Regiment, Rhode Island Army National Guard, engages in a notional firefight as part of a warrior tasks event during the Army National Guard Region 1 Best Warrior Competition on May 23 at the Regional Training Institute in Strafford. Photo by Sgt. Nicole Blake, 114th PAD.



Sgt. Kristopher Piwowarczyk, a chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear specialist with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 104th Brigade Engineer Battalion, 44th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, New Jersey Army National Guard, removes his rucksack after completing a 12-mile ruck march for the Army National Guard Region 1 Best Warrior Competition on May 23 in Strafford. Piwowarczyk finished first with a time of 2:05:58. Photo by Pfc. Makayla Panzer, 114th PAD.

NEW HAMPSHIRE GUARDSMEN DELIVER HOPE TO CABO VERDE AFTER STORM

By Tech. Sgt. Victoria Nelson, 157th ARW Public Affairs

In a swift response to the devastation resulting from Tropical Storm Erin, which hit the Cabo Verde Islands off the west coast of Africa Aug. 11, airmen assigned to the New Hampshire Air National Guard loaded nearly 40,000 pounds of life-saving resources onto a KC-46 Pegasus bound for the storm-stricken region.

Since 2021, the New Hampshire National Guard has worked closely with Cabo Verde through the Defense Department's National Guard Bureau State Partnership Program. In an effort to further mutually beneficial, security cooperation relationships built on trust and shared values, the SPP aims to improve interoperability, increase readiness and foster enduring relationships.

"The prescheduled flight was part of an off-station training mission that overlapped with an SPP engagement on Sal island," said Air Force Capt. Kirsten Arends, a bilateral affairs officer for the New Hampshire National Guard. "With the onset of Tropical Storm Erin, [New Hampshire National Guard] took the opportunity to transfer needed supplies that were then distributed to the hardest hit communities."

The critical supplies arrived as the islands continued to grapple with widespread destruction from Tropical Storm Erin. Heavy rainfall and flash flooding left multiple fatalities, displaced families and blocked major roads across the islands. The government declared a state of emergency as mudslides and power outages compounded the crisis.

The pallets were stacked with medical supplies, personal protective equipment, clothing, blankets, shoes and hygiene products, alongside additional aid procured by state and military agencies.

"This is the largest cargo movement a single KC-46 has done from New Hampshire," said Air Force Lt. Col. Moira Cuthbert, commander of the 157th Logistics Readiness Squadron.

The lift was run through the Defense Security Cooperation Agency's Denton Program, a Defense Department transportation program that moves critical resources donated by U.S.-based nongovernmental organizations to countries in need.

A team of 20 airmen, representing nine distinct Air Force specialties, conducted thorough inspections to ensure the cargo met Air Force and Denton Program regulations.

"We broke down, sorted and repackaged every box, all 33,000 pounds, to meet airworthiness requirements," said Air Force Master Sgt. Andrew Norton, noncommissioned officer in charge of the air transportation function with the 157th Logistics Readiness Squadron. "It was a huge lift and on short notice."

Tropical Storm Erin rapidly intensified into a Category 5 hurricane within 24 hours between Aug. 15-16, unleashing sustained winds of 160 mph and earning its place as one of the fastest-strengthening Atlantic hurricanes on record.

The rapid response required of the New Hampshire National Guard members tested their readiness and enhanced the guard members' logistical and operational skills, preparing them to respond effectively to any crisis.

"We have a strong state partnership with Cabo Verde," Cuthbert said. "This mission demonstrates how both nations benefit, and we have the chance to contribute to something that is really meaningful."

Through the SPP, the New Hampshire National Guard conducts military-to-military engagements in support of defense security goals. The partnership also leverages relationships and capabilities to facilitate broader interagency engagements that span military, government, economic and social spheres with Cabo Verde.

"To me, this was the epitome of what it means to be in the guard," Cuthbert said. "You are responsive, you're flexible and you work outside your normal duties when the mission calls for it. 'Always ready, always there,' that's our mantra and that's what we did."



Senior Airman Rachel Pincince, an air transportation specialist assigned to the 157th Logistics Readiness Squadron, repackages donations from the Cabo Verdean Medical Society at Pease Air National Guard Base in Newington on Aug. 14. Photo by Lt. Col. Moira Cuthbert, 157th ARW.



From left, **Adm. Antonio Monteiro**, chief of defense for Cabo Verde, and **NH Adjutant Gen. David Mikolaities** catch up in Monteiro's office prior to the 3rd Military Region Day of Unity celebration March 18 in Praia, Cabo Verde. Monteiro is retiring later this year. Courtesy photo.

AIRMAN WINS TOP GUN

By Pfc. Makayla Panzer, 114th PAD

Tech Sgt. Michael Stremper, an aerospace ground equipment mechanic with the 157th Air Refueling Wing, won the overall championship for combined arms in the 2025 New Hampshire National Guard Combat Marksmanship Competition held July 16 to 19 at Fort Devens.

The four-day shoot, known as the TAG Match, tested 78 NHNG soldiers and airmen as well as military operators from state partners El Salvador and Cabo Verde.

“We need to out innovate and out compete in order to win the future battleground tomorrow,” said NH Adjutant Gen. David Mikolaities, a longtime participant of the annual competition. “That means being here, getting in the repetitions and mastering the fundamentals.”

This year’s TAG Match featured 10 marksmanship skill events, using both the M17 pistol and M16 rifle. Scoring was weighted by team and individual efforts. For the first time in four years, the Salvadorans did not win the team match. In a separate competition with Cabo Verde and a stacked New Hampshire team, they came in second.

Different events included elements such as rapid fire, time constraints under 10 seconds, running before engaging with targets, firing distances varying from 10 yards to 500 yards, and dominant-arm-only firing.

The new state command sergeant major, Caleb Smith, competed for the first time.

“I always look forward to seeing soldiers and teams out doing their basic soldier tasks,” Smith said. “Shooting is a fundamental soldier skill, so I’m out here to do it, and I will definitely be back.”

The purpose of the TAG Match, Smith continued, is to provide an opportunity for soldiers and airmen to train as a group, practice and master their marksmanship skills in a competition-based environment.

“I came here to see how well I can shoot under pressure in a competitive environment,” said Pfc. Daniel Svendsen, an infantryman with Charlie Company, 3rd Battalion, 172nd Infantry Regiment (Mountain). “This is my second year doing this event, and I’ve improved from last year after going through all the events and getting more time to fire.”



1st Sgt. Aldemiro Nascimento of the Cabo Verdean special forces fires at a target during “The Run-Down Match” at the 2025 New Hampshire National Guard Combat Marksmanship Competition at Fort Devens on July 16. Competitors dropped to a kneeling or sitting position and shot from varying distances at multiple different target sizes. *Photo by Tech. Sgt. Victoria Nelson, 157th ARW PA.*



Staff Sgt. Austin Rosende, joint fire support specialist with 3rd Battalion, 197th Field Artillery Regiment, fires at a 100-yard target during the “Special Zero” rifle course at the 2025 New Hampshire National Guard Combat Marksmanship Competition on July 16 at Fort Devens. *Photo by Tech. Sgt. Victoria Nelson, 157th ARW Public Affairs.*

AIR SUPREMACY

Story and photos by Master Sgt. Charles Johnston, JFHQ Public Affairs

Midway through the rain-soaked race, Tech. Sgt. Amber Martine surged forward to seize the lead.

She never looked back.

That's what the transportation specialist from the 157th Air Refueling Wing said after she bested 56 New Hampshire National Guard soldiers and airmen in an 18.6-mile Norwegian Foot March on June 14 in Concord.

The 41-year-old triathlete from Kittery, Maine, had just completed a 70.3-mile Ironman in Hawaii two weeks earlier. Though fatigued, Martine was motivated to compete in the march.

"It sounded like a new challenge, something that I've never done before," she said.

Martine's dominant 3:15:00 winning time was about nine minutes faster than the runner-up and 11 minutes quicker than the third-place finisher. She lapped several competitors during the fourth and final loop around the city course.

The event featured 44 soldiers and 12 airmen. They donned 25-pound packs, battledress uniforms, and then "rucked" around the capital in a race against each other and the clock. Time requirements were set by age and gender.

This marked the third time since 2021 the NHNG has coordinated the event through Norwegian consulate officials. Known as the Marsjmerket, it dates to 1915 when the Norwegian military used it to prepare soldiers for combat. Qualifiers earn a bronze badge for their first completed march, silver for the second and gold for a fifth.

Master Sgt. Jason Inglis, a boom operator with the 133rd Air Refueling Squadron, pushed through severe side cramps in the 13th mile to place second at 3:24:00.

"I feel tired, but that was awesome," Inglis said. "My goal was to run maybe for the first seven miles. But then I was, like, 'All right, now run to 10. Now run to 13.' I just kept pushing the bar, basically."

Col. Paul Kell, a pilot with the Wing, placed third at 3:26:00. Upon crossing the finish and catching his breath, his attention turned to the winner.

"That's super impressive," an incredulous Kell told Martine. "The pack is such a disproportionately large amount of weight for your body size."

Martine, Inglis and Kell combined for an Air Force sweep of the march. The first soldier to cross the finish was Capt. Anthony Rorick of the 12th Civil Support Team. He placed fourth at 3:36:55.

Airmen have now won two of the three foot marches hosted in Concord. Lt. Col. Heath Huffman won last year's race.

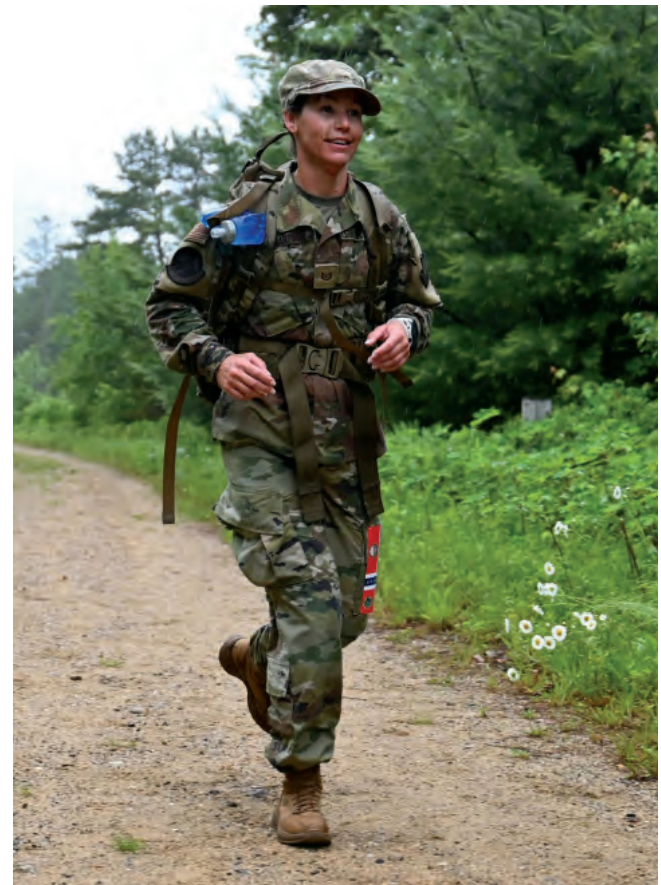
Chief Warrant Officer 4 Athena Clements, the event's lead organizer, held a brief awards ceremony at the conclusion of the march.

Forty-three of the competitors earned a badge. Thirty-five bronze and eight silver badges were awarded.

"All who earned this prestigious badge poured a lot of sweat and maybe some blood and tears into the effort and should wear it proudly," Clements said.



From left, **Master Sgt. Jason Inglis**, **Tech. Sgt. Amber Martine** and Col. Paul Kell of the New Hampshire Air National Guard swept the Norwegian Foot March on June 14 in Concord. Martine finished first, Inglis second and Kell third.



Tech Sgt. Amber Martine of the 157th Air Refueling Wing dashes through Concord's Karner blue butterfly conservation easement during the Norwegian Foot March on June 14. Martine, a triathlete and ultramarathoner, dominated a field of 56 soldiers and airmen with a winning time of 3:15:00.

ARMY NATIONAL GUARD PROMOTIONS

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Nasiem Conely Smith
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Amanuel Dery
Anett Galan Chevez
Philip Hubacher
Tyler Inman
Luke Labonte
Matthew Leblanc
Brett Ruhmann
Venessa Sam
William Spillman
Jeremiah Williams
Teagan Wright

Private First Class

Braydon Amiot
Ryan Brown
Sam Caldwell
Anthony Cannon
Naomy Chevez Benitez
Yasin Cicekci
Logan Connors
Bryce Cronin
Owen Czekalski
Ryley Decosta
Vincent Desmarais
William Dewitte
Devid Donchev
Dentanio Duncanson
Rian Fournier
Martin Fraser
Krishna Fry
Michael Furey
David Galante
Edwin Garcia
Madison Garduno
Jonathan Giordano
Rylee Goodwin
Samuel Gosselin
Gabriel Gregorio
Braydon Hatstat
Jeremy Hayes
Justin Hewitt
Nicholas Hogan
Zackary Houde
Alexander Hunter
Michael Ings
Javien James
Nickolas Kaizer
David Krutov
Gwendolyn Labbe
Hugh Manor
Chase Martinez
Paige Mccarthy
Solomon Mellish
Christopher Morgan
Joshua Mubuuke
Auston Muller-Fulton
Shawn Murphy
Michael Oliver
Michael Omalley
Braeden Parry Pignatiello
Alexzander Picard
Gabriel Rodriguez Molina
Aleksander Rudewicz
Natalia Silverman Rogers
Mark Simpson
David Thibault
Tyler Thomas
Cadence Wujcik

Ervin Yoder
Jason Yorulmaz

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Nieve Boulter
Jacob Brown
Jeremy Bunker
Daniel Carter
Benjamin Carter
Julian Chmiel
Lionel Content
Olivia Cook
Christian Cordio
Austin Davison
Ryan Duddy
Leevi Elliott
Edwin Feliz
Dion Flanders
Kiera Gardiner
Xavier Glidden
Paul Goding
Izzet Goktepe
Carlos Gonzalez Pagan
Liam Hanks
Jayden Hendrickson
Jordan Hilditch
Gavin Hunt
Michael Jezierski
Sabastian Johnson
Elija Keldo
Samuel Kfoury
Alexander Kiley
Sean Kneeland
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Brady Legassie
Jacob Leyden
Cameron Lumbard
Killian Macpherson
Veronica Madore
Josephine Malloy
Dylan Mcintyre
Ashley Michaud
Skyler Mikolaities
Evan Munroe
Tatiana Mwanza
Kennedy Odero
Trevor Pacheco
Jhonson Peguero
Leland Perron
Adam Price
Cameron Reynolds
Ty Rivera
Addison Rodger
Emily Santos
Martin Sierra
Payton Sills
Benjamin Smith
Daniel Svendsen Cang
Robert Swist
Jonathan Uber
Logan Virtue
Bozhidar Vladimirov
Cody Vongsa
Tyler Whiting

Sergeant

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Parker Adams
Kenneth Barker
Tyler Biron
Nicole Blake

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Olivia Mangowal
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Logan Marcotte
James Nigzus
Bryant Perez
Noah Phillips
Cinjin Praska
Logan Prichard
Andrew Purington
Yasser Quadri
Dustin Richard
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Cordell Drabble
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Aaron Lavoie
Tyler Lefebvre
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Sawyer Lyman
Alex Martinez
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Nicholas Miller
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Joseph Stevenson
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Taylor Hallett
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Travis Lawrencehurt
Khaokham Luangoudom
Ethan Major
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Steven Pierce
Stephen Rondeau
Christopher Sieczkarski

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Jose Mendez-Morales
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Riley Pepper
Jacob Pincine
Luke Tavares
Katharine Yeaton

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Andrew Crutchfield
Thomas Denton
Bruce Gallagher
Drew Haley
Micah Huffman
Finnegan Lawler
Zacharie Leclerc
Jaccob McArthur
Sophiaann Piccolo
Christian Soeur
Samuel St. Onge
Avery Wells
Jason Yeaton

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Kaleigh Boulanger
Kwabena Danso
Nicholas Denton
Hannah Douglas
Djulya Ferraz Fer Gould
Ryan Greco
Ashlyn Levine
Mylee Little
John Liu
Matthew Mezza
John Mormando
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Richard Ochoa
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Dawson Samperi Dubois
Sarah Souliere
Sara Taylor
Warren Tucker
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Wesley Hodgman
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Tyler Meyers
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Collin Small
Abby Stroup
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