

WASHINGTON MILITARY DEPARTMENT
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AN EYE TO THE FUTURE: WASHINGTON NATIONAL GUARD BUILDS COUNTER-UAS PARTNERSHIPS AHEAD OF WORLD CUP 2026

As unmanned aerial systems continue to evolve from recreational tools into potential threats to public safety, critical infrastructure, and major public events, the Washington National Guard is positioning itself at the forefront of counter-unmanned aerial systems training and readiness.

On June 2, 2026, representatives from federal, state and local law enforcement agencies, multiple National Guards, state defense forces, Washington Emergency Management Division, Civil Air Patrol, and active-duty military units gathered for a counter-Unmanned Aerial Systems field demonstration day at the Yakima Training Center, Wash.

The event showcased emerging technologies and operational tactics designed to detect, track, and mitigate drone threats while highlighting the Washington National Guard's growing role in developing a regional schoolhouse for counter-UAS training and innovation.

Maj. Gen. Gent Welsh, the adjutant general and homeland security advisor for Washington, said the event represents a milestone not only for Washington, but for the nation.

"When you look at all the FIFA states, all the FIFA cities and all the different challenges that people are dealing with, Washington is the only state that actually brought people together to rehearse and discuss any of this stuff," said Welsh during the event. "This is the only, one-of-its-kind, event in the entire country that's going on."

The demonstration marks the latest step in a year-long effort by the Washington Military Department and Washington National Guard to build a comprehensive counter-UAS program ahead of the FIFA World Cup 2026, which will bring millions of visitors to the greater Seattle area.

Recognizing the growing threat posed by unmanned aircraft

systems, the Washington Military Department hosted a counter-UAS summit in late 2025, bringing together leaders from government, public safety, academia, and industry to discuss emerging challenges and opportunities in the rapidly evolving drone environment. The summit laid the groundwork for expanded partnerships and highlighted the need for a coordinated approach to airspace security.

Building on that momentum, the Washington National Guard's Western Regional Counterdrug Training Center launched a counter-UAS Fundamentals Course to provide military, law enforcement, and public safety professionals with foundational training in drone detection, identification, legal authorities, and response planning. The program has attracted interest from

agencies across the region as organizations prepare for large-scale public events and the increasing presence of drones in everyday life.

"A year ago, we were not in this space," said FBI agent Phil Randolph. "A year ago, we wouldn't have thought about drone detection around NFL stadiums. Now we're leaning forward."

Among those preparing for the challenges ahead is the Seattle Police Department, which has sent officers to specialized counter-UAS training in Huntsville, Alabama, as part of its preparations for the FIFA World Cup. While preparations for the World Cup

have helped accelerate the effort, Welsh emphasized that the challenge extends far beyond a single event.

“Don’t just look at this as, ‘Hey, we’ve got to get through FIFA and then we’ll go back to work,’” Welsh said. “We’re going to be dealing with the threat for the rest of our lives.”

Throughout the afternoon, participants observed a series of live demonstrations showcasing drone detection systems, swarm operations, interception techniques, radio-frequency mitigation capabilities, and render-safe procedures. The event provided attendees an opportunity to evaluate emerging technologies while discussing how those capabilities could be integrated into real-world operations.

For Washington National Guard leaders, Yakima Training Center also offers an ideal location to expand those efforts.

“This really is the Kevin Costner moment from Field of Dreams,” said Col. Phillip Lamb, senior Army advisor to the Washington National Guard. “We have 327,000 acres of untouched, unobstructed training area right here at Yakima Training Center.”

Lamb, who served as the garrison commander for Joint Base Lewis-McChord, which also covers Yakima Training Center, said the installation’s vast maneuver space provides a unique environment for agencies to train together, test emerging technologies and conduct realistic counter-UAS operations.

“We can do a lot here and host so many organizations here,” Lamb said. “This space is underutilized, and I would love to see Yakima Training Center become that place that leads the way in counter-UAS.”

That vision extends beyond individual demonstrations and training events.

“We want to build an Army counter-UAS Center of Excellence right here at Yakima Training Center,” said Col. Craig Broyles, director of the Washington National Guard Counterdrug Program.

Broyles noted that the installation already possesses many of the resources necessary to support a comprehensive training pipeline.

“We have the classroom space for the beginner-level instruction and the training areas needed for practical exercises and advanced courses,” said Broyles.

Welsh said recent organizational changes have further strengthened the state’s ability to address emerging aerial threats.

“Bringing the Civil Air Patrol under the Washington Military Department has elevated our capabilities in the counter-UAS environment,” said Welsh.

As drone technology becomes increasingly affordable and accessible, public safety officials continue working to develop policies, procedures, and capabilities that can keep pace with a rapidly evolving threat environment.

“Unmanned aircraft systems provide significant benefits for commercial, agricultural, and public safety applications, but their potential misuse requires government agencies to remain vigilant,” said Welsh. “Some people look at these drones and see a great tool to do agricultural spraying with. I look at these things and I literally see an IED (improvised explosive device) with wings.”

For the Washington National Guard, the demonstration represented more than a technology showcase. It provided a glimpse into the future of counter-UAS training and highlighted Washington’s efforts to bring together military, law enforcement, emergency management, and industry partners to stay ahead of emerging threats. As preparations continue for the FIFA World Cup and other major events, leaders believe the partnerships, training opportunities, and capabilities developed at the Yakima Training Center will help shape the future of counter-UAS operations not only in Washington, but across the nation.

(Photos and Story by Joseph Siemandel)





Sharing Expertise: Washington National Guard Supports Bulgaria's Stryker Modernization Effort

As Bulgaria received its first Stryker vehicles this spring, a small team of Washington Army National Guard soldiers traveled more than 5,000 miles to pass on the knowledge, skills, and lessons learned from years behind the wheel and under the hood of the eight-wheeled armored vehicles.

"The interactions between the Bulgarian and American military personnel will be aimed at supporting training and gaining operational understanding of the platform," said Brig. Gen. Paul Sellars, commanding general of the Washington Army National Guard, during a visit to Bulgaria. "We spent ten years with these machines and we appreciate the opportunity to find them a suitable new home, as well as to see the motivation and desire of the people to train."

From March through June, 2026, a four-member Washington Army National Guard Mobile Training Team worked alongside soldiers from the Bulgarian Land Forces' 61st Mechanized Brigade, providing operator and maintenance familiarization training.

The mission followed the transfer of eight Strykers from the Washington Army National Guard's 81st Brigade to Bulgaria and represented an important step in the country's broader military modernization effort. Bulgaria is scheduled to receive 183 Stryker vehicles through the Foreign Military Sales program, enhancing interoperability with NATO allies and strengthening the country's mechanized capabilities.

Led by Chief Warrant Officer 2 Phillip Sheldon, the Washington Army National Guard's Unit Training and Equipment Site Foreman, the Mobile Training Team, the first to be funded by the Foreign Military Sales program, began instruction shortly after arriving in Karlovo, Bulgaria. Bulgarian soldiers were organized into seven training groups consisting of operators, mechanics, logisticians, and headquarters personnel. Training began in the classroom with instruction on vehicle variants, safety procedures, driver controls, preventive maintenance checks and services, and equipment familiarization. As the first Strykers worked through customs and registration requirements, the training team adapted its schedule to maximize hands-on learning opportunities.

"The level of enthusiasm that we see in the 61st Brigade around receiving the machines is truly impressive. The servicemen are highly motivated and extremely engaged," said Sellars. "With such a team, the process of training and mastering the equipment will develop quickly and effectively."

The partnership extended beyond operator training. Washington National Guard mechanics worked side-by-side with Bulgarian soldiers conducting maintenance and troubleshooting efforts to improve vehicle readiness. Together, they resolved hydraulic, electrical, and mechanical issues while teaching maintenance procedures directly from the technical manuals provided through the Foreign Military Sales process.

One notable milestone occurred when Bulgarian mechanics completed the removal and installation of a Fuel Pump Power Pack under the guidance of the Washington Army National Guard team. The hands-on approach reinforced the long-term goal of developing Bulgarian self-sufficiency on the platform.

The team also assisted the 61st Mechanized Brigade's logistics personnel in setting up and inventorying their new Stryker Associated Support Tool Sets, providing the specialized equipment needed to maintain the vehicles independently.

Throughout the spring, the training team worked closely with Bulgarian military leaders to overcome administrative challenges associated with introducing an entirely new vehicle fleet. While vehicle registration delays postponed formal driver training, both nations continued building operator proficiency through maintenance instruction, recovery operations, and motor pool familiarization.

In early May, the program reached a major milestone when the eight Strykers received registration approval and were moved to the Iganovo Driving Range near Karlovo.

"We did some more 'in-depth' driving around Karlovo base to get some of the operators a bit more comfortable in the seat," said Sheldon. "All of the operators seem to enjoy utilizing the Strykers and learning how they felt in the variety of conditions at the Iganovo Driving Range."

For the final phase of training the Washington National Guard team established multiple driving courses designed to progressively build driver confidence and proficiency. Soldiers first learned basic vehicle handling on open terrain before advancing to routes featuring hills, water crossings, tight maneuvering areas, and more challenging driving conditions.

For many participants, it was their first opportunity to experience the capabilities of the eight-wheeled armored vehicle that will become a cornerstone of Bulgaria's future mechanized force.

By the conclusion of the 13-week mission, more than 70 Bulgarian soldiers had completed classroom instruction, maintenance familiarization, recovery operations, evaluations, and hands-on driver training on the Stryker platform.

"Throughout the engagement, we successfully integrated our instructional methods with Bulgarian Land Forces standards to provide a strong foundational knowledge of the platform," said Sheldon. "We are incredibly thankful for the flexibility and friendliness from both the students and leadership, which has led to genuine, life-long connections between our team and our Bulgarian counterparts."

The effort highlighted cooperation between the Washington and Tennessee National Guards. While Bulgaria has partnered with the Tennessee National Guard through the State Partnership Program since 1993, Washington's extensive experience operating and maintaining Stryker vehicles proved critical to Bulgaria's fielding of the platform.

"On behalf of the Tennessee State Partnership Program, I would like to thank you all for the steadfast training and expertise that you provided to our Bulgarian partners," said Maj. Myyah Lockhart, Tennessee National Guard State Partnership Program director. "You gave critical and timely assistance to extend expertise that Tennessee could not provide and for this, we are immensely grateful."

Lockhart said the knowledge shared by the Washington National Guard team would have a lasting impact as Bulgaria continues building its Stryker capability.

"Our hopes are that the tools and tactics, techniques, and procedures that you provided can extend way beyond your visit as the Bulgarians grow into Europe's most well-suited and competent Stryker force," said Lockhart.

(Story by Joseph Siemandel)



READY TO RESPOND:

GUARDSMEN RESPOND TO LONGVIEW PAPER MILL INCIDENT

Following a tank implosion and chemical spill at the Nippon Plant in Longview, Washington, the Washington National Guard mobilized Soldiers and Airmen to support first responders with air monitoring, decontamination, and facility search and recovery operations.

On May 26, 2026, at approximately 7:15 a.m., a tank implosion at the facility released an estimated 600,000 gallons of White Liquor, a highly corrosive substance containing sodium hydroxide and sodium sulfide, creating a complex and hazardous environment for emergency responders.

“Elements of the Washington National Guard have deployed to the Longview, Washington, area to assist local responders in the response and recovery of the large-scale mass casualty chemical spill yesterday,” said Maj. Gen. Gent Welsh, the adjutant general of the Washington National Guard, in a social media post.

At the direction of Gov. Bob Ferguson and Welsh, the Washington National Guard deployed a 22-member team from the 10th Civil Support Team and 28 personnel from the 10th Homeland Response Force under state active duty orders to assist civilian authorities with life-saving operations and decontamination efforts at the site in Cowlitz County.

The Guard’s response included highly specialized units trained to operate in hazardous environments and support large-scale emergency operations. Within hours, the 10th

Civil Support Team arrived on scene to provide technical expertise and advisory support, as well as assist the Washington Department of Ecology with air monitoring operations.

By Wednesday morning, Soldiers from the 10th Homeland Response Force established a Joint Task Force to provide command and control of Guard elements operating from the Longview Armory, while also supporting integration with civilian emergency management and response agencies.

The 420th Chemical Battalion, Washington Army National Guard, activated decontamination teams and deployed specialized equipment to assist with chemical hazard mitigation and mass decontamination operations for first responders exiting the incident area. Later that afternoon, eight Airmen from the 141st Air Refueling Wing, Washington Air National Guard, arrived with a fatality search and recovery team to support recovery operations with dignity and respect.

Additional Guard medical personnel and chaplains also mobilized to support responders and affected personnel, providing medical care, resiliency support, and spiritual services throughout ongoing operations.

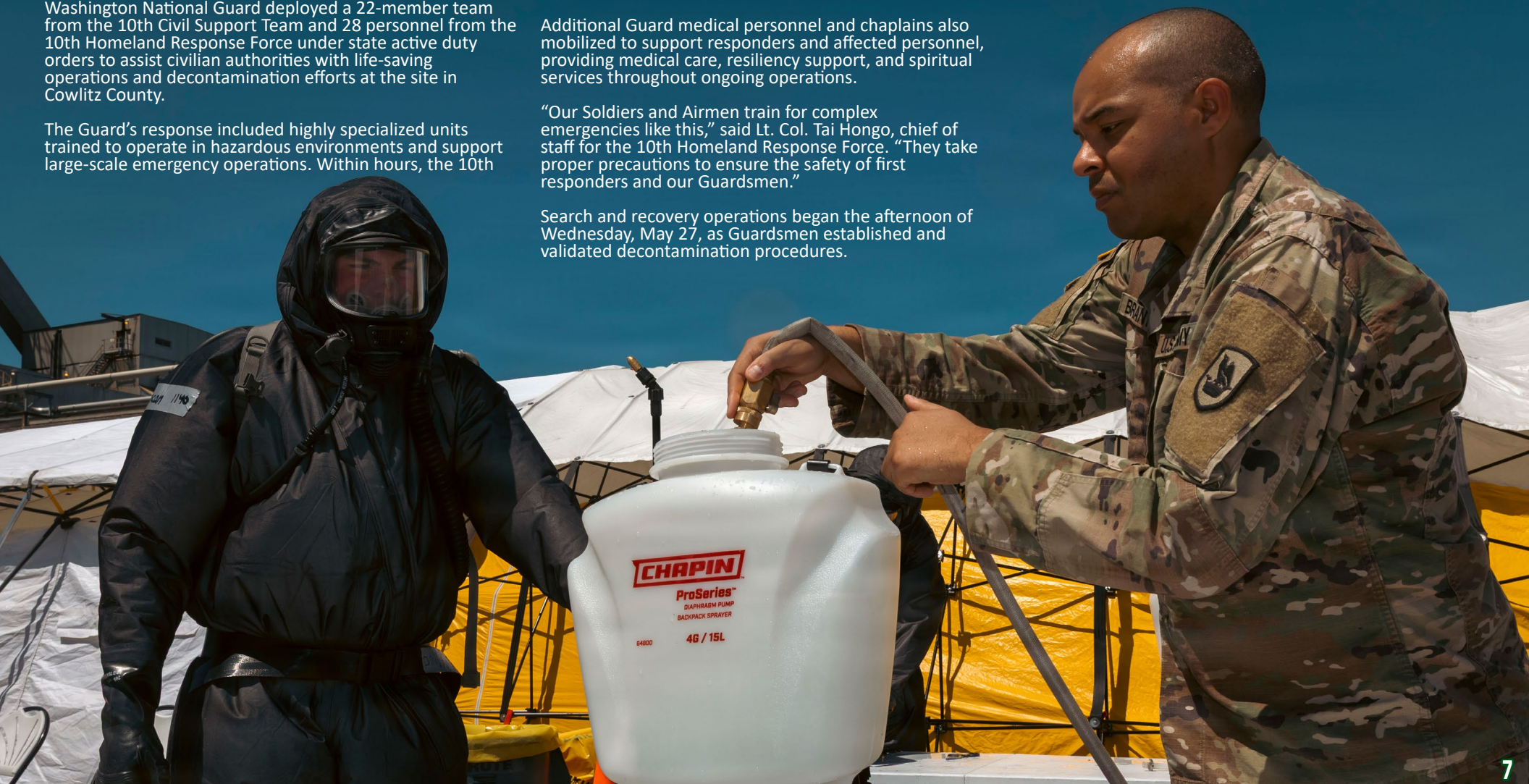
“Our Soldiers and Airmen train for complex emergencies like this,” said Lt. Col. Tai Hongo, chief of staff for the 10th Homeland Response Force. “They take proper precautions to ensure the safety of first responders and our Guardsmen.”

Search and recovery operations began the afternoon of Wednesday, May 27, as Guardsmen established and validated decontamination procedures.

“Once we got that up and running, making sure that it’s all set up correctly and working, then we can ensure that people could start going and doing their jobs and then coming out of the suit properly,” said Staff Sgt. Horace Brantley, team leader for the 792nd Chemical Company’s Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and High-Yield Explosive (CBRNE) Enhanced Response Force Package, a part of the 10th Homeland Response Force. Brantley noted that initial setup required careful validation before operations could fully begin.

“Right before we fully got started, we wanted to know what type of suits that they were in and if it was going to be soluble enough to save those suits, because with the sodium, we want to make sure that it wasn’t going to be fully absorbed into the suit,” Brantley said. “We were able to test with the pH and make sure that it’s within a safe level.”

(Photos by Adeline Witherspoon, Story by Joseph Siemandel and Adeline Witherspoon)





AT ALUMNI EVENT, CADET GRADS GIVE ADVICE TO CURRENT CADETS

Dozens of alumni at the Washington Youth Challenge Academy returned to campus recently with a chance to connect with current cadets, hug staff and see how the campus has changed.

Veronica Gonzalez, who graduated in 17-2, is married, owns a home and works in dentistry today. But when she left the Academy on graduation day, she was a senior who didn't have a high school to return to and was struggling.

"I did so well in the Academy and suddenly I found myself with people that didn't have my back," she said.

That was a constant theme among cadet graduates, with some noting there was a struggle with cadets getting frustrated with friends back home who hadn't gone through the program. One graduate told cadets: "Treat yourself like a mansion, not a hotel."

"You realize you change a lot and you grow, you get more confident," said KimberLee Dally, a cycle 24-2 graduate, who is 17 now. "I was so young here. I was 15. And yet I really felt like an adult when I graduated. I remember being back home and people around me were just so childish to me."

"Those people who won't accept your changes, you just need to cut them off," Cody Opp, a cycle 16-2 graduate, told cadets. "Don't let them dictate who you are."

One graduate said that the thing that helps him even today are deep breathing techniques — where you breathe in for seven seconds and exhale for 11 seconds, noting it still helps him calm down today.

Ruth Vela is 18 and went through the program during 25-1.

"I came here and it became my first home where I actually settled in," she told cadets from the current class. "I loved it so much. It changed me so much. I wanted to come here because you people inspire me. I wanted to see that in myself again. I'm looking at you and I'm inspired to continue to go on."

Vela gave Master SGT Matthew Andrews a hug and said that he taught her boundaries that she still lives by today.

"The sergeants were like family," she said. "They took care of me, showed me love."

Julian Silva graduated in 24-1. He said he made a mistake and had been kicked out of the Academy, but he earned a spot back the following cycle to try one more time and he thrived. The Academy is known for giving second chances.

"Where else can you get 10 credits and work on your body and your mind?" he told cadets. "You are looking forward to that day where you graduate but once you are there and wearing the blue robe, it makes you feel like a little kid on Christmas Day. Feels nice. It's an accomplishment. I did it. You guys are going to do it and make it through. Once you do graduate, it hits differently. At the end of the day, the staff here, they don't get any personal gain for you getting better. They are here just because they want to make a difference in your lives."

Angela Garcia-Salazar graduated from the Academy in cycle 14-2. Her brother went to the Academy after her and, today, her sister Juanita is attending as part of cycle 26-1.

They had a chance to hug after Angela talked to cadets.

"I am just so, so proud of you for being here and doing what you need to do," Angela told her sister. "Don't give up. I'm here for you." (Story and Photos by Steven Friederich)

STATE EOC ACTIVATES FOR WORLD CUP

As the FIFA World Cup 2026 continues here in Washington, the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) at Camp Murray is fully operational and working around the clock to ensure that both residents and the millions of soccer fans visiting for the tournament have a safe and enjoyable experience.

Think of the SEOC as Washington's central "nervous system" for coordinating everything related to the event. While you cheer for your favorite teams, a dedicated team of emergency planners, state and federal agencies, and public safety personnel is diligently working right here at Camp Murray to ensure everything runs smoothly and safely.



ENDURING PARTNERS 2026 ENHANCES U.S.-THAI COLLABORATIVE READINESS THROUGH SPECIALIZED EXCHANGES

Military leaders from the United States and Thailand officially launched the fourth annual Enduring Partners exchange on June 1, 2026. The exchange, which ran, June 1-12, 2026, represents a comprehensive synchronization of the Washington Air National Guard (WA ANG) and the Royal Thai Air Force (RTAF) across an increased number of training sites in both nations.

Throughout the two-week period, participants are engaging in specialized tracks including combined dissimilar air combat, cyber defense, space operations, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR), ground controlled interception and tactical coordination.

“Enduring Partners 2026 has evolved into a premier training event for both the Air National Guard and the Royal Thai Air Force,” said Brigadier General Kenneth Borchers, Commander, Washington Air National Guard. “We continue to bring together Airmen and Soldiers from across the 54 states and territories of Guard Nation with our Thai Air Force counterparts for truly invaluable training and enhanced interoperability on both sides. This is an incredible opportunity that gets better every year.”

During the 2026 iteration of the exchange, U.S. servicemembers are operating out of Bangkok and Chiang Mai, while RTAF counterparts are concurrently undergoing training at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Camp Murray and Spokane in Washington, and Warren Grove Air Base in New Jersey. This dual-hemisphere approach allows the exchange to address regional stability and disaster response protocols in real time, utilizing the National Guard Bureau’s State Partnership Program to bridge the geographic gap.

The exchange reinforces a defense relationship that dates back to the 1833 Treaty of Amity and Commerce, making the Thai-U.S. alliance one of the longest in the U.S.’ history. By focusing on high-level technical foundations, Enduring Partners 2026 ensures both forces maintain the readiness necessary to respond to modern crises and support a free and open Indo-Pacific. *(Photo by Remi Milsagle, Story by Brandy Burke)*



WASHINGTON NATIONAL GUARD MECHANICS BOOST THAI ARMORED FLEET READINESS WITH TARGETED SUSTAINMENT TRAINING

Mechanics and logisticians with the Washington National Guard wrapped up a three week maintenance and logistics exchange with the Royal Thai Army in Ko Chan District on May 30, 2026. The bilateral exchange sought to improve the performance and longevity of Thailand's armored vehicle fleet.

National Guard instructors teamed up with their Royal Thai Army counterparts to develop and deliver the dual-track curriculum. The training program was a two week Stryker and wheeled vehicle maintenance course followed by a one week sustainment and logistics management seminar in Ko Chan District. The training produced 19 graduates from the 11th Maintenance Support Battalion and Forward Support Companies 1 and 2.

The exchange separated participants into maintenance and management courses to address the host nation's priority sustainment gaps. During the initial two week technical block, Thai mechanics conducted intensive, hands-on troubleshooting on operational vehicles. Training focused on safety procedures, power pack removals, C7 valve calibration, engine diagnostics, suspension arm replacement and overhaul.

To support the Royal Thai Army's ongoing modernization, instructors added instruction on operating, maintaining and calibrating Common Remotely Operated Weapon Stations, or CROWS, and integrated vehicle sensor systems.

While mechanics turned wrenches the first two weeks, the last week focused on logistics management, sustainment systems and processes. Classroom discussions and practical exercises helped Royal Thai Army leaders learn to identify, document and track vehicle faults; refine internal maintenance work order flow; forecast requirements for Class III petroleum and Class IX repair parts; manage battery charging and lifecycle programs; and coordinate parts and state of the fleet maintenance reviews.

"During my first iteration of leading the execution of a Stryker Leader Course in July 2023, I had many questions about how the relatively new 112th Stryker Regiment Combat Team conducted maintenance operations of the Stryker fleet," said U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer 4 Ricky Thomas, Combined Support Maintenance Shop Superintendent with the Washington National Guard, "I discovered that the RTA performed PMCS differently than we did in the US Army."

The decision to send specialized maintenance teams to Thailand grew out of observations during a July 2023 training rotation. While supporting a separate leadership course, Washington Guard subject matter experts noted that the newly formed 112th Stryker Regiment Combat Team relied heavily on civilian contractors and managed fleet maintenance differently than standard U.S. Army formations.

A follow on assessment in September 2024 by Washington Guardsmen identified a shortage of school-trained maintainers across the regiment's organic support units. At the time, one forward support company was responsible for maintaining the regiment's vehicles with only 15 mechanics. Just one, a company grade officer, held formal maintenance school training.

Royal Thai Army leaders requested focused maintenance and logistics training to close those gaps. Working through the State Partnership Program and the Joint U.S. Military Advisory Group, Thailand, the Washington National Guard mobilized surface maintenance experts to establish a locally run training pipeline.

The May 2026 graduating class represents the fourth iteration of the technical maintenance course and the third run of the logistics management seminar held in Thailand.

Backed by decades of cooperation under the Joint U.S. Military Advisory Group, Thailand, the latest course iteration strengthens an enduring alliance and helps keep both forces ready to respond to regional security requirements. *(Story and Photo by Peter Chang)*



SENDING A CALL FOR FIRE — FIELD ARTILLERY'S ANNUAL TRAINING

The 2-146 Field Artillery Battalion showed up for their annual training event on April 8, 2026, ready to spend two weeks in the field as an integral part of Operation Courage Lethality at the Yakima Training Center. Their mission: demonstrate their readiness to support and defend their state and nation.

While National Guard members are typically on duty one weekend per month, every year they engage in AT — two weeks of training, putting their skills to the test.

"AT is the accumulation of everything that you've learned during [Inactive Duty Training] IDT's brought into a simulated battlefield," Staff Sgt. Jacob Bradley, supply sergeant for Bravo Battery, 2-146 said. "We perfect individual tasks throughout the year, then bring sections together — especially at brigade level — to operate as an army on a grander scale... Civilians should know we take training seriously — full-time or part-time — to be as lethal and efficient as active duty when called. We don't take it lightly."

During this exercise, the brigade worked as a whole to execute a live fire control exercise as a technical rehearsal for their ability to plan, synchronize, and execute multi-domain lethal and non-lethal fires and effects in support of I CORPS — an active duty U.S. Army unit headquartered at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington, specializing in Indo-Pacific operations.

For the majority of National Guard service members, AT is a major divergence from their everyday life. Guard life, due to being a unique hybrid experience where you live as a full-time civilian and a part-time soldier, is often described as living in two worlds simultaneously. Throughout the year, guardsmen

work in a wide range of professions — in schools, hospitals, law enforcement, or, in the case of Spc. Jose Martinez, a Fire Control Specialist for the 2-146, as a grocery store clerk.

"It's weird because I'm doing normal city stuff and then they're like, 'Hey, we're gonna be out [in the field] for two weeks,'" Martinez said. "So, once I hear that, my mind kind of switches. I guess I have a little switch that flips to help me integrate myself back into civilian and/or military [environments]."

That ability to transition quickly is a skill guardsmen have to learn. A battalion-level fire control exercise is a multifaceted operation that involves solid communication, fast reflexes, and polished skills.

"Once the sensor identifies a target, they'll send up what is called a call for fire mission," Bradley said. "We send up the call for fire, and then it gets routed to what is called an FSC, Fire Support Center... based on their judgment, based on ammo count, based on the commander's intent, they will either approve it or deny it. If it is approved, then it goes over to what is known as the Fire Direction Center. They are another control measure that will verify the rounds, verify that the guns can shoot it, and verify that it's within safe parameters. Once they approve it, then it gets [sent] down to the gun line... They will then get the gun ready and their whole crew will start working together to get the right quadrant and deflection on the gun and the traverse on the gun.... Then, they fire it."

On the battlefield, this process must be executed quickly

and efficiently, and that is what they 2-146 showed they are ready for.

Whether it's leaving normal civilian routines, engaging in complex training, or adapting to unique field environments, AT can present challenges for guardsmen. For the 2-146, their response to this challenge is one that many guardsmen share.

"I love doing this," Spc. Lena Schmidt, Cannon Crewmember for Alpha Battery, 2-146 said.

As a Cannon Crewmember, she is an integral part of the crew responsible for firing the guns, which, while exciting, isn't glamorous.

"I feel really gross again," Schmidt said, covered in soot. "I ran out of baby wipes because the first three days we were here, I was doing two full body wipe downs... That's one thing you can never pack too many of — baby wipes."

Despite the challenges, Schmidt and her team related their experiences with smiles, sharing supplies to help their team in whatever way they could.

"When we have downtime, we'll all just sit down and talk and hang out," said Spc. Kimbrel Boyer, fire control specialist for the 2-146, "talk about how AT's going, check up on each other, and it's just really nice. Our lieutenant calls us a family, which is what it feels like."

Members of the 2-146 returned home from training not just tired but sharpened and ready to step back into their civilian lives, carrying the confidence that, when called, they can operate as one cohesive, capable team.



(Story and Photo by Christopher Chavero)



The 45th iteration of Exercise Tiger Balm 2026 Wraps Up

From detailed planning efforts to explosive ordnance operations and live-fire training, Exercise Tiger Balm brings U.S. and Singapore soldiers together to train side by side, strengthen partnerships and improve the way both forces operate together. Through weeks of coordinated training and support operations from May 4, 2026 to May 15, 2026, the exercise reinforced the two nations' shared commitment to security and stability in the Indo-Pacific region.

"Since 1981, this exercise has served as the bedrock of bilateral relationships between Singapore and the United States Armies," said U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Michael Ake, Land Component Commander, Washington National Guard. "45 years is more than just a number, it represents a professional relationship and a legacy of cooperation. This year marks another milestone as the Washington Army National Guard assumed a lead role."

Now concluding its 45th iteration, Exercise Tiger Balm 2026 (TiB26) incorporates training operations that allow our nations to work together to strengthen combat readiness both on and off the field in many different aspects of military response.

"We as U.S. EOD (explosive ordnance) are paired with Singapore Armed Forces," said 1st Lt. Dakota Jennings, a platoon leader with 759th Ordnance Company (EOD), 3rd EOD Battalion, 71st EOD Group, 20th CBRNE Command. "We conducted EOD operations that involved a classroom portion, a demonstration range day as well as this live STX (situational awareness exercise) lanes portion."

Jennings and his platoon were part of a joint training exercise with members of the Singapore Armed Forces with 36th Battalion, Singapore Combat Engineers, as part of TiB26 that included scenarios for the team leaders and team members to conduct EOD operations in order to render a situation safe.

"It's been going great," said Jennings. "Our TTP's (tactics, techniques and procedures) aligned very well together, which has allowed us to move into integration earlier and then build upon that partnership in a deeper way."

The concept of building upon partnership carries into all aspects of Exercise Tiger Balm. Starting in an instructional environment and ending with well executed range missions, the armies of both nations were able to demonstrate their capabilities and combine their skills to accomplish each task.

"This CALFEX (combined arms live fire exercise) allows us to demonstrate the capacity that our division has for multi-domain operations and specifically joint fires," said 1st Lt. Alyssa Mancias, a platoon leader for 127th Crusader Battery, 1st Battalion, 37th Field Artillery Regiment (1-37 FAR), 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team (1st SBCT), 7th Infantry Division (ID). "Tiger Balm is allowing us to really test our capabilities on a multi and large scale combat operation level."

Beyond training objectives, exercises such as Tiger Balm serve the broader purpose of building and sustaining trust between partner nations, which is essential for effective combined operations.

"The importance of doing this for Tiger Balm is to build trust in our partner nations and build trust in ourselves and our capability to do live fire operations," said Sgt. 1st Class



Tyler Santangelo, a gunnery sergeant for 2nd platoon, 127th Crusader Battery, 1-37 FAR, 1st SBCT, 7th ID. "We were doing a joint live fire training with the Singapore Army to show them how we operate with HIMARS (high mobility artillery rocket system), M777A2 howitzers, drones and precision munitions."

The combined live-fire events provide a venue for U.S. and Singapore Armed Forces to share procedures and improve coordination across multiple fire support systems which allows more integration of the units involved and better execution of each event.

"Bravo Battery's job during Tiger Balm is to execute the final long range precision fires with the HIMARS during the exercise," said Cpt. Eleanor Burnett, battery commander for Bravo Battery, 1st Battalion, 94th Field Artillery Regiment, 17th Field Artillery Brigade.

Each event reflects the broader structure of Tiger Balm, which combines multiple units and capabilities into coordinated operations designed to integrate behind the scenes planning into the delivery of each training scenario.

"The main positives were the collaboration between our partners, the realistic exercise injections and the meaningful learning," said Singapore Armed Forces Maj. Shah Rizan. "It helped us better understand how to operate in a combined environment and how we are grateful for the partnership and professionalism shown by our U.S. counterparts and organizing committee throughout the exercise."

The exercise not only enhanced interoperability between the two forces, but also fostered professional growth and camaraderie among participating Soldiers throughout the training.

"I think both the personnel from the U.S. Army as well as from Singapore Armed Forces learned to various degrees, in various aspects in all inspected areas," said Singapore Armed Forces Col. Philip Khoo, strike chief of staff, Singapore 6th Division. "We also managed to build friendships."

The relationships and lessons built throughout the exercise reflected the enduring partnership between the two nations and reinforced the long-standing purpose of Exercise Tiger Balm.

"It goes along with the theme of Tiger Balm," said Khoo. "It has been ongoing for the past 45 years and will last for a long time as we continue our exercise going forward." (Photos by Joseph Siemandel and Abigail Clark, Story by Abigail Clark)



Check out the wrap up video: Stronger Together: Tiger Balm 2026



WASHINGTON NATIONAL GUARD HOSTS “LEGISLATIVE LIFT” TO HIGHLIGHT READINESS AND STATEWIDE MISSIONS

Washington lawmakers traded committee rooms for a CH-47 Chinook helicopter on June 10, 2026, as the Washington National Guard showcased the aviation assets, emergency response capabilities, and specialized missions it uses to serve local communities across the state and support national defense.

Following the presentations, participants traveled to the Olympia Regional Airport where they learned about the National Guard’s support to the Washington Department of Natural Resources during wildland fire fighting before boarding a CH-47 Chinook helicopter for an orientation flight around Puget Sound.

The flight gave legislators a firsthand look at the speed, reach, and versatility of the National Guard’s aviation assets. As the helicopter traveled across Western Washington, participants gained a greater understanding of how military aircraft can quickly move personnel, equipment, and supplies in support of missions across the state.

“Our helicopters can support the state’s wildland firefighting effort, help with search and rescue and assisted with the floods in Skagit County in December, the search for Travis Decker in Chelan County last year, and the response mission following the Navy Growler plane crash in 2024,” said Maj. Nick Davis, 1st Battalion, 168th General Support Aviation and pilot in charge of the orientation mission. “We do all of this and deploy overseas when called up, so our battalion has a lot of capabilities.”

The annual legislative lift program serves as an important engagement opportunity between the Washington National Guard and state lawmakers, helping to foster a greater understanding of the Guard’s mission, readiness requirements, and service to residents of Washington.

More than 8,000 soldiers and airmen serve in the Washington National Guard, supporting state emergency response operations under the direction of the governor while remaining prepared to deploy worldwide in support of national defense missions.

(Story by Joseph Siemandel, Photos by Peter Chang and Joseph Siemandel)



“Our men and women are some of the hardest working people you will ever meet and the missions they are doing have real impacts here in our state and across our nation,” said Maj. Gen. Gent Welsh, the Adjutant General, Washington National Guard.

Legislative members were provided with updates on several key initiatives, including support for the FIFA World Cup 2026 with the 10th Civil Support Team, counter Unmanned Aerial Systems detection with the Washington Counterdrug Program, cyber defense support to the Secretary of State’s office during elections, and the ongoing transformation of the Washington Army National Guard. Legislative members learned how the Guard’s unique authorities and capabilities enable rapid response to emergencies, similar to the recent Longview paper mill tragedy and last year’s flooding. Displays highlighted recent disaster response missions, partnerships with local, state and federal agencies, and investments being made to ensure the force remains ready to meet future challenges.

New to this year’s event were displays highlighting the Washington State Guard and the newest component of the Washington Military Department, the Civil Air Patrol – Washington Wing. Representatives from both organizations showcased capabilities that support the state’s emergency response mission alongside the Washington National Guard and Washington Emergency Management.

“These partnerships are strategic and can provide support capabilities that sometimes we may not possess in the National Guard,” said Welsh.



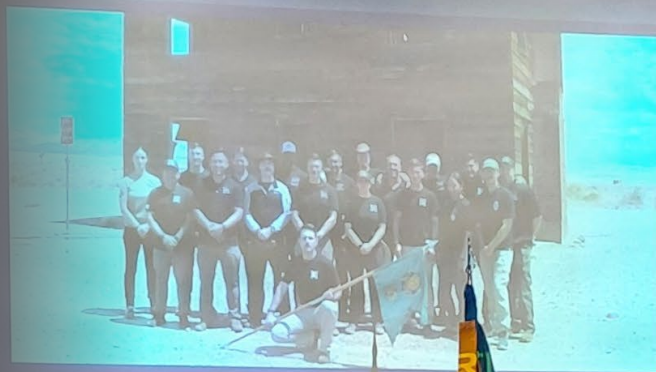
CIVIL SUPPORT TEAM EARN'S PRESTIGIOUS SIBERT AWARD

Already known across the nation as one of the best Civil Support Teams, the Washington National Guard's 10th Civil Support Team was recognized as the Maj. Gen. William L. Sibert Award winner in the CBRN Team category, recognizing the unit as the top performing CBRN team across the Army National Guard, Active Component, and Army Reserve, June 1, 2026 at Fort Leonard wood, MO.

"Winning the Maj. Gen. William L. Sibert Award is a monumental achievement that reflects the relentless dedication and technical expertise of every soldier and airman on this team," said Maj. Ryan Dykes, commander of the 10th CST. "To be recognized as the absolute best CBRN team across the active duty, reserve, and National Guard components is a testament to our unwavering commitment to the mission and to each other."

With a mission set that routinely supports high-profile special events and complex domestic response operations, including large-scale public safety support activities associated with events such as the Super Bowl and the upcoming FIFA World Cup, the unit continues to demonstrate the operational relevance of rapidly deployable CBRN response capabilities in support of civil authorities.

2026 SIBERT AWARD WINNER TEAM/DET



10TH CIVIL SUPPORT TEAM (AF-WMD),
CAMBRIDGE, MA



"Our mission requires us to be ready at a moment's notice, operating seamlessly alongside our civilian first responder partners during some of the region's most visible and complex events," said Dykes.

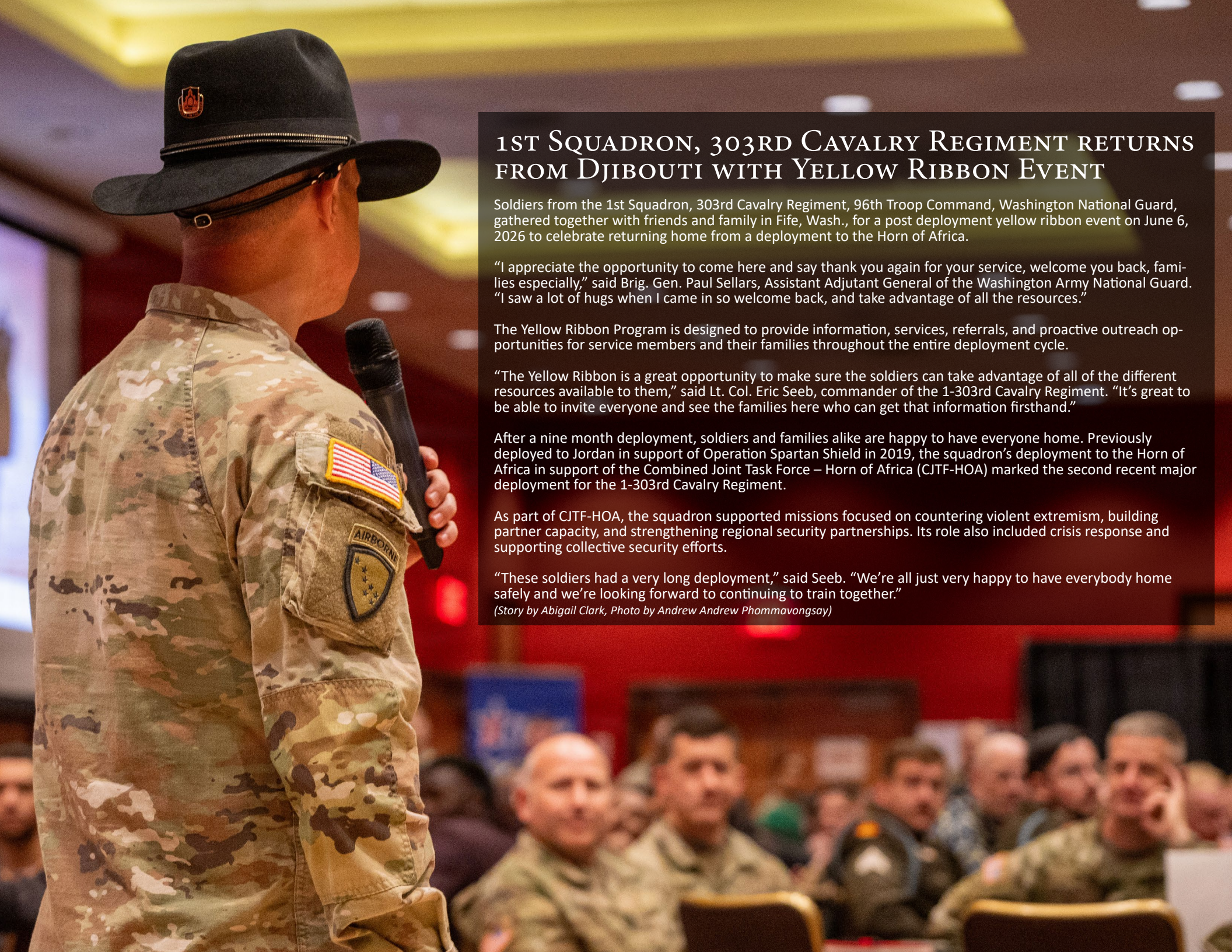
Named in honor of Major General William L. Sibert, long recognized as the "Father of the Chemical Corps," the Sibert Award represents the Army Chemical Corps' highest standard of professional excellence. It recognizes units that consistently demonstrate superior readiness, training proficiency, discipline, maintenance, safety, and overall mission performance while supporting both joint force operations and homeland defense requirements.

This year's competition brought together some of the most capable CBRN formations in the force. Evaluation boards reviewed extensive submissions detailing unit readiness, operational performance, and mission execution. Competing organizations also highlighted their contributions to large-scale combat operations training and defense support to civil authorities, underscoring the critical role CBRN units play across the full spectrum of military operations.

"The 10th CST is only the second in the history of the award to earn this recognition, which truly underscores the magnitude of what this team has accomplished," said Dykes.

Established in 1998, CSTs are specially trained National Guard units designed to support civilian incident commanders during suspected or actual CBRN incidents. They provide technical expertise, identification and analysis of hazardous substances, and on-scene advisory support to enhance situational awareness and inform decision-making during complex emergencies.

(Story by Joseph Siemandel)



1ST SQUADRON, 303RD CAVALRY REGIMENT RETURNS FROM DJIBOUTI WITH YELLOW RIBBON EVENT

Soldiers from the 1st Squadron, 303rd Cavalry Regiment, 96th Troop Command, Washington National Guard, gathered together with friends and family in Fife, Wash., for a post deployment yellow ribbon event on June 6, 2026 to celebrate returning home from a deployment to the Horn of Africa.

"I appreciate the opportunity to come here and say thank you again for your service, welcome you back, families especially," said Brig. Gen. Paul Sellars, Assistant Adjutant General of the Washington Army National Guard. "I saw a lot of hugs when I came in so welcome back, and take advantage of all the resources."

The Yellow Ribbon Program is designed to provide information, services, referrals, and proactive outreach opportunities for service members and their families throughout the entire deployment cycle.

"The Yellow Ribbon is a great opportunity to make sure the soldiers can take advantage of all of the different resources available to them," said Lt. Col. Eric Seeb, commander of the 1-303rd Cavalry Regiment. "It's great to be able to invite everyone and see the families here who can get that information firsthand."

After a nine month deployment, soldiers and families alike are happy to have everyone home. Previously deployed to Jordan in support of Operation Spartan Shield in 2019, the squadron's deployment to the Horn of Africa in support of the Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) marked the second recent major deployment for the 1-303rd Cavalry Regiment.

As part of CJTF-HOA, the squadron supported missions focused on countering violent extremism, building partner capacity, and strengthening regional security partnerships. Its role also included crisis response and supporting collective security efforts.

"These soldiers had a very long deployment," said Seeb. "We're all just very happy to have everybody home safely and we're looking forward to continuing to train together."

(Story by Abigail Clark, Photo by Andrew Andrew Phommavongsay)



WASHINGTON NATIONAL GUARD AND DNR CONTINUE PARTNERSHIP TO STRENGTHEN WILDFIRE READINESS

More than 100 Washington National Guard soldiers and airmen sharpened their wildfire response capabilities during the annual Wildland Firefighting Academy at the Washington State Fire Training Academy in North Bend, May 27-28, 2026.

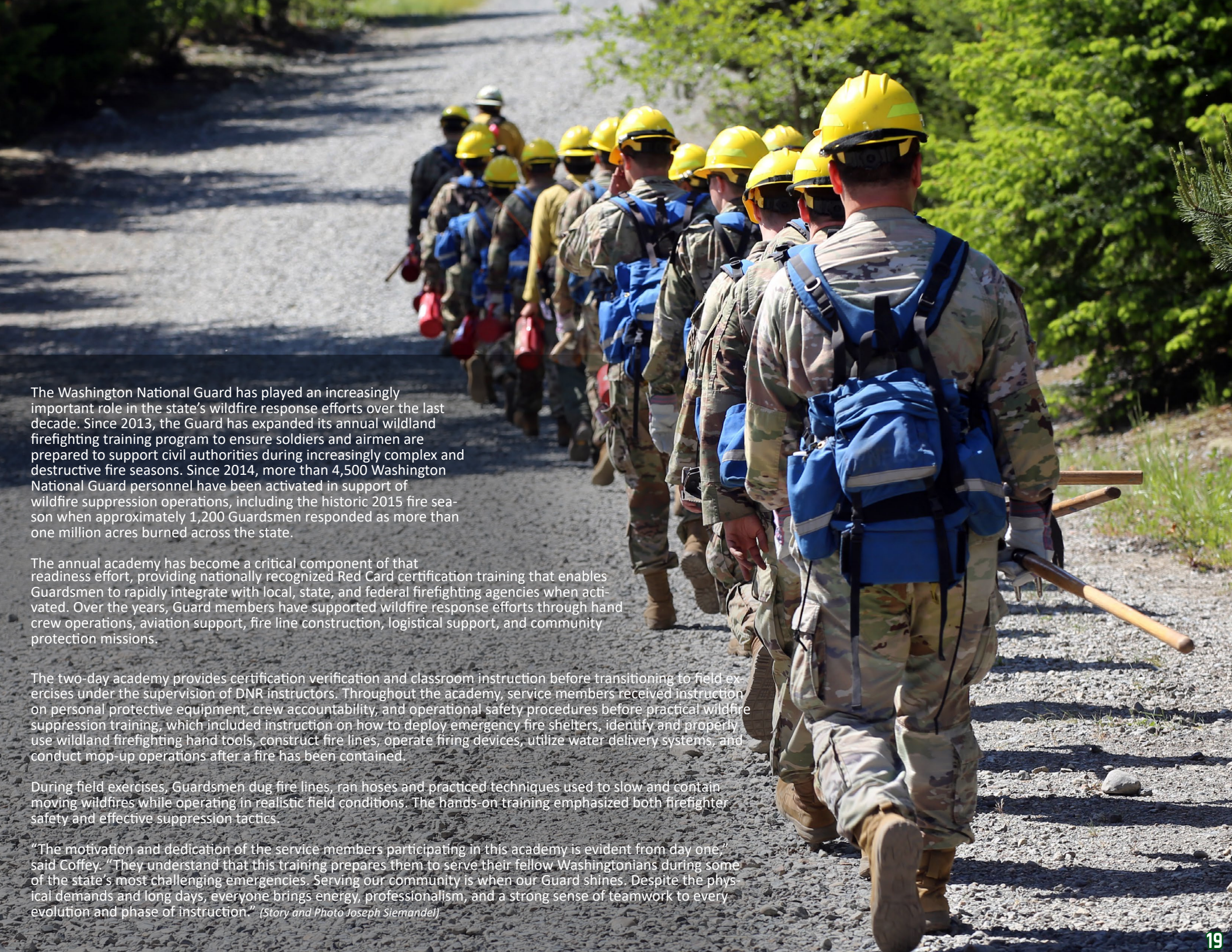
The training, conducted in partnership with the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR), brought together 35 service members completing their initial wildland firefighter certification and 85 personnel participating in refresher training to maintain their qualifications. The academy was one of two major training events this year, with additional service members receiving training at Fairchild Air Force Base, resulting in approximately 185 Guardsmen prepared to support wildfire response operations across the state this summer.

Guardsmen were part of a mixed group, working with nearly 70 personnel representing interagency partners, including DNR, Washington State Parks, and other state and local organizations. Training alongside partner agencies allowed Guardsmen to build relationships and interoperability with the organizations they may work alongside during real-world wildfire emergencies.

"This is probably one of the most diverse groups that we've had and hosted here and it's pretty cool," said Ross Avichouser, a wildland fire training specialist with the Washington Department of Natural Resources. "It's important to build on the interagency wildland fire partner relationships by focusing on a shared mission, interagency cooperation, and enhancing the understanding of interagency differences."

The training isn't new for the Washington National Guard and DNR, as the two organizations have worked together for years to ensure the state has a trained and ready force available to support wildfire suppression efforts.

"The Washington National Guard and the Washington Department of Natural Resources share a longstanding partnership built on a common mission: protecting the people, lands and resources of Washington," said Lt. Col. Ashley Coffey, the officer-in-charge of the wildland fire fighting training effort. "DNR provides expert instructors and oversight throughout the academy. Working side by side during training strengthens our relationship and helps ensure seamless coordination when responding to real-world wildfires."



The Washington National Guard has played an increasingly important role in the state's wildfire response efforts over the last decade. Since 2013, the Guard has expanded its annual wildland firefighting training program to ensure soldiers and airmen are prepared to support civil authorities during increasingly complex and destructive fire seasons. Since 2014, more than 4,500 Washington National Guard personnel have been activated in support of wildfire suppression operations, including the historic 2015 fire season when approximately 1,200 Guardsmen responded as more than one million acres burned across the state.

The annual academy has become a critical component of that readiness effort, providing nationally recognized Red Card certification training that enables Guardsmen to rapidly integrate with local, state, and federal firefighting agencies when activated. Over the years, Guard members have supported wildfire response efforts through hand crew operations, aviation support, fire line construction, logistical support, and community protection missions.

The two-day academy provides certification verification and classroom instruction before transitioning to field exercises under the supervision of DNR instructors. Throughout the academy, service members received instruction on personal protective equipment, crew accountability, and operational safety procedures before practical wildfire suppression training, which included instruction on how to deploy emergency fire shelters, identify and properly use wildland firefighting hand tools, construct fire lines, operate firing devices, utilize water delivery systems, and conduct mop-up operations after a fire has been contained.

During field exercises, Guardsmen dug fire lines, ran hoses and practiced techniques used to slow and contain moving wildfires while operating in realistic field conditions. The hands-on training emphasized both firefighter safety and effective suppression tactics.

"The motivation and dedication of the service members participating in this academy is evident from day one," said Coffey. "They understand that this training prepares them to serve their fellow Washingtonians during some of the state's most challenging emergencies. Serving our community is when our Guard shines. Despite the physical demands and long days, everyone brings energy, professionalism, and a strong sense of teamwork to every evolution and phase of instruction." *(Story and Photo Joseph Siemandel)*

81ST BRIGADE FIRE EFFECTS CELL VALIDATES MULTI-DOMAIN FIRES DURING COURAGE LETHALITY 2026

Soldiers from the 81st Mobile Brigade Combat Team's Fire Effects Cell (FEC) demonstrated advanced fire control capabilities and seamless integration with active-duty forces during a Fire Control Exercise conducted April 8–22, 2026, as part of I Corps' Courage Lethality exercise.

The training served as a technical rehearsal for the brigade's ability to plan, synchronize and execute multi-domain lethal and non-lethal fires in a complex operational environment spanning Joint Base Lewis-McChord and Yakima Training Center.

Courage Lethality 2026 was designed to enhance readiness and interoperability across formations, ensuring units are prepared to operate effectively in large-scale combat operations. Throughout the exercise, the 81st FEC embedded with an active-duty brigade, executing the military decision-making process and conducting current operations fire control while contributing to planning efforts at the corps level.

"Our ability to plug into an active-duty formation and immediately contribute at the operational level shows how ready and capable the National Guard is in a large-scale combat environment," said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Jack Androski, FEC chief.

Soldiers integrated multiple command and control systems, enabling real-time collaboration and synchronization across echelons. Their participation in corps-level planning conferences, working groups and briefs ensured the unit maintained a continuous presence in shaping targeting efforts.

A key achievement during the exercise was the validation of long-distance fire mission processing using Starshield communications, linking operations between JBLM and Yakima Training Center. The capability demonstrated the brigade's ability to execute distributed fires across extended distances while maintaining responsiveness and accuracy. The FEC also emphasized survivability and adaptability by conducting a tactical operations center (TOC) jump into an ad-hoc underground location. Following the displacement, soldiers rapidly re-established fire control systems and resumed operations, reinforcing the importance of command post survivability in contested environments. Prior to the TOC jump, the unit executed digital fires operations from expeditionary platforms, further showcasing their ability to operate in dispersed and resource-constrained conditions.

By the end of the exercise, the FEC successfully integrated with active-duty counterparts, developed a synchronized targeting plan and executed fires in support of I Corps across a complex battlespace.

"The environment we trained in forced us to operate across distance, under pressure and alongside multiple partners," said Androski. "That's exactly how we'll fight, and this exercise proved we're ready."

In addition to tactical training, the exercise included leader engagements and professional development opportunities, strengthening relationships across the joint force and with regional partners. *(Story by Joseph Siemandel)*



From the skies of southern France to the cockpit: A Washington Guard aviator's long flight to purpose

Long before she ever touched the controls of a military helicopter, Chief Warrant Officer 4 Flora Flux-Gooch stood beneath the skies of southern France, watching aircraft cut low across the horizon as they raced toward wildfires along the Mediterranean coast.

"I got the aviation bug when I was a little girl in France," Flux-Gooch said. "The summers were spent watching helicopters and planes scooping water from the sea. I thought, 'This is really cool.'"

In those moments, the seed was planted. Not a fleeting fascination, but something quieter and more persistent. A sense of direction, even if the path ahead was anything but clear.

Today, Flux-Gooch serves in the Washington Army National Guard as a production control officer and maintenance test pilot assigned to Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 168th General Support Aviation Battalion. As a UH-60 Black Hawk pilot, her role demands equal parts technical precision, experience and trust.

It is a position earned over years of persistence, adaptation and a willingness to keep moving forward, even when the route changed.

Born and raised in Toulon, France, Flux-Gooch initially set her sights on aviation through the French Air Force. She completed the required academic testing, only to fall just short of the qualification threshold due to her English score.

"I got a 68 in English and the minimum was 70, so I didn't make it," she said. "And now it's kind of funny because I'm fluent in English and I fly military helicopters in the U.S."

The setback didn't end the dream, but it did redirect it.

After earning an engineering degree and struggling to find work in France, Flux-Gooch made a decision that would ultimately reshape her future. In 2004, she moved to the United States with what she described as a backpack, a plane ticket and dreams. She settled in Minnesota, taking a job as a safety officer in a maximum-security prison, a world far removed from the cockpit she had once imagined.

It was there, through conversations with coworkers who served in the National Guard, that the idea of aviation resurfaced.

"One of them told me, 'Join the Guard. You'll get to aviation. Just pursue that dream,'" she said. "So I thought, 'All right, let's do something different.'"

Flux-Gooch enlisted in 2010 as a petroleum supply specialist while awaiting U.S. citizenship. Within months, she became a citizen and wasted no time charting a new course.

"I told my platoon sergeant right away, 'I want to drop a packet for flight school,'" she said. "He helped immediately. I was surprised, but that support made a huge difference."



By 2011, she stood at attention as her commander handed her orders to flight school, a moment that marked the beginning of a career spent in the air.

"I was like, 'No way. I made it,'" she said. "It was so cool."

Following flight training, Flux-Gooch flew medical evacuation missions with both the Minnesota and New York Army National Guard, gaining experience in some of the most demanding environments military aviation has to offer. In 2019, she deployed to Afghanistan, operating primarily out of Kandahar and flying missions across the southern region of the country.

After relocating to Washington in 2020, she transitioned into her current role, where her focus has expanded beyond flying to include the deeper mechanics of aviation itself.

As a maintenance test pilot, her work requires more than time in the cockpit. It demands a detailed understanding of the aircraft, its systems and the standards that keep it airworthy.

"There's a lot to learn," she said. "The more you know about the helicopter, how it works and how it's put together, the better you are at identifying what's right and what's wrong."

Without a traditional maintenance background, Flux-Gooch has leaned into the collaborative nature of her unit, building trust while continuing to expand her knowledge.

"I told the team, 'I'm going to need your help,' and they jumped right in," she said. "I feel pretty lucky to have people I can rely on. As a team, I know we'll be successful."

That sense of balance between growth and support extends beyond the hangar. Throughout her career, she has also navigated the realities of life outside the uniform, including raising her daughter as a single mother.

"There are points in your career where the pace shifts," she said. "But I wouldn't trade it for anything. Being a mom means everything to me, and I've been lucky to serve in an environment that genuinely supports that balance."

Now, with more than a decade in aviation, Flux-Gooch continues to look ahead, not at a finish line, but at the next opportunity to learn.

"I've barely scratched the surface," she said. "There's still so much to understand, and that's what keeps it interesting."

For those coming up behind her, the message is simple and direct.

"Nobody's going to care more about your career than you," she said. "If you raise your hand, work hard and go for it, you can do anything."

From the fire-filled skies over the Mediterranean to the cockpit of a Black Hawk, the dream that started in childhood never faded. It simply found a new route, one decision at a time, until it became something real. *(Story and Photos by Ryan Dunn)*





FROM PAST TO PRESENT: MOSES LAKE ARMORY REIMAGINED AS A MODERN READINESS CENTER

Walking into the Moses Lake Armory, the building's past is still visible. But not much of it. Beyond a small section left untouched since the building opened more than 30 years ago, the building has been fully modernized to better serve today's soldiers and missions.

"We didn't update about 1,200 square feet which is being utilized by the multi-Agency Communications Center," said Adam Iwaszuk, director of the Construction and Facilities Management Office. "That part of the armory still looks like it is from when it was first opened in 1994."

However, once you pass through the doorway you can easily see where the building goes from the original 1994 armory to an updated 2026 remodel. Gone are the block glass tile windows. Gone are the metal doors, as well as the old open bay showers, toilets and sinks.

"Welcome to a 2026 readiness center," said Iwaszuk.

The first change to the Moses Lake facility, located just across the street from Big Bend Community College and minutes from the Moses Lake Airport, is the front door and the foyer.

"We moved the front door. So the old entrance is gone and now able to provide a break room for our soldiers," said Iwaszuk. "We remodeled the front entrance to

match the theme and natural desert colors."

Once you enter the building, you'll find a new foyer area for families, a family readiness office, and a break room and recruiting office to greet visitors.

"There used to be block glass right at the front so you couldn't see out or in the recruiting office," said Iwaszuk. "Now they have a view of their potential recruits as they walk in the door."

Going down the hallways there are upgrades to the unit leadership offices, classrooms, supply area, training bay and drill floor. The upgrades are also visible across the facility with the new paint, flooring, windows, lighting and HVAC. The exterior improvements included a new roof, sidewalk, enclosure for the trash bin and striping in the parking lot.

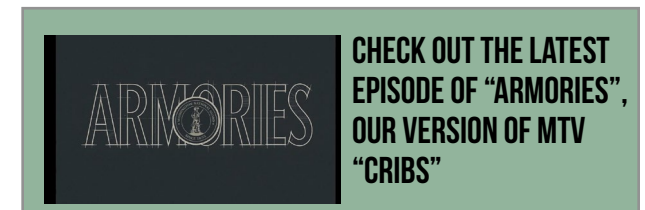
"We didn't fully upgrade every room, like the kitchen we didn't do much except paint and bring in new appliances," said Iwaszuk. "But the physical training room – we took the old indoor shooting range, knocked out the wall, added new windows, double doors, restroom and custodial closet."

The readiness center is equipped with items that have become standard for all new and upgraded facilities in the Washington Army National Guard. Upgrades include

individual showers for both men and women, automatic lighting, upgraded carpeting, larger physical fitness rooms, locker rooms and mother's rooms.

"While the sign on the outside says armory, the amenities of this building are ones you find in a readiness center," said Iwaszuk. "Like Anacortes, the sign may say armory still, but this is a readiness center, treated exactly like the Thurston County Readiness Center when it comes to maintaining."

While Moses Lake is nearing time for the unit to return, the CFMO office has been busy with upgrading facilities in Snohomish, Camp Murray and at the Yakima Training Center. Additionally, CFMO is overseeing the upcoming construction of the new Joint Force Headquarters, the Thurston County Readiness Center Vehicle Maintenance Shop and the future opening of Nuttel Hall in Tumwater.





A Royal Thai Air Force paramedic inserts a nasopharyngeal airway during a tactical field care patient trauma assessment during Enduring Partners 2026 on Don Muang RTAF Base, Bangkok, June 5, 2026. Enduring Partners is an event to improve readiness and interoperability between the RTAF and Washington Air National Guard, while concurrently aiming to enhance strong defense relations.

(U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Airman Jordaan Kvale)