

OREGON SENTINEL

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE OREGON NATIONAL GUARD

Joint Training empowers first responders to excel in emergencies



Joint Training story continued on pages 16-17

Oregon Army National Guard Staff Sgt. John Kilroy, a medic with Golf Company, 1-189th Aviation Regiment, speaks with a Clackamas Fire Department firefighter following a joint training session involving simulated patients in hoist lift carriers conducted at the Sandy River Airport, Oregon, on April 10, 2026. (Oregon National Guard photo by John Hughel)

Oregon Soldiers: Committed To Their Active Duty Missions



Oregon Soldiers with the 150th Test, Measurement and Diagnostic Equipment Support Detachment were mobilized to support Operation Inherent Resolve on April 15 at Camp Withycombe.

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The 442nd Engineer Utilities Detachment was formally mobilized for a year-long deployment to support U.S. Africa Command's mission in the Horn of Africa on May 3, at Camp Rilea in Warrenton.

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Oregon Army National Guard Soldiers assigned to the 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team were formally demobilized from their Horn of Africa mobilization on June 14 at the Salem Convention Center.

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Oregon National Guard Salutes Military Service at University of Oregon Spring Football Game



Oregon Army National Guard Brig. Gen. Alan R. Gronewold, The Adjutant General of the Oregon National Guard, performs the ceremonial "Coin Flip" to officially start the annual University of Oregon Spring Football Game, held at Autzen Stadium, in Eugene, Oregon, on April 25, 2026. (Oregon National Guard photo by John Hughel)

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The Oregon Military Department

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COMMAND

Our Lines of Effort : People, Culture, Readiness & Partnerships

Summer is here — and with it comes more daylight, more opportunity, and more responsibility. It is a signal to our entire organization that the time to prepare, to train, and to execute is now. The days ahead belong to those who are ready for them.

I recently had the privilege of meeting with our senior leaders at the Joint Senior Leader Workshop, and I want to share some of what we discussed, because the direction I provide to our senior leaders ultimately flows down to every Soldier, Airman, and civilian in this organization, and you deserve to understand the “why” behind the “what”. My commander’s intent is clear: we are building the Service of Choice — an organization of winning units of trained, ready, connected people who are proud to serve Oregon and our nation. Every decision you make, every action you take as a leader, should be filtered through that lens. If it moves us toward that end state, do it. If it doesn’t, stop and reassess. At the Joint Senior Leader Workshop, I introduced updates to our organizational design. These changes are not changes for the sake of change — they are deliberately aligned to support our operational mission and our strategic plan. Every adjustment in structure is intended to create clearer lines of responsibility, reduce friction, and ensure that our resources are focused where they produce the greatest readiness impact. Structure exists to serve the mission. If it doesn’t, we fix it.

Our Lines of Effort — People and Culture, Readiness, and Partnerships — remain the framework that guides how we invest our time, people, and resources. The task organization adjustments I’ve made are designed to operationalize those lines of effort more effectively across the force.

One of the most important leadership concepts we discussed at JSLW was disciplined initiative.

I do not want an organization that waits for explicit direction at every turn. I want leaders who understand commander’s intent, understand the mission, and act decisively within their authority to move us forward — even when the situation is ambiguous.

Annual Training is the cornerstone of individual and collective readiness. It is our most concentrated window to sharpen our skills, train to standard, and build the unit cohesion that makes us capable in any environment. I challenge every leader at every level to treat AT preparation as a command priority — not an afterthought. Arrive ready to train, not ready to get ready to train. Know your task, know your standard, and hold your formation accountable to both.

Units with good culture and climate don’t have recruiting and retention problems. Units that train hard, train safely, and look out for one another — those are the units that Soldiers and Airmen choose to stay in. AT and other specialized exercises are opportunities to build that culture, and I expect our leaders to treat them that way.

As our operational tempo increases with the training season, I want to be direct: Safety is not a condition we sacrifice for speed or schedule. The risk of accidents and injuries rises when units are fatigued, rushed, or not paying attention. Our strategy relies on engaging training to build a sense of fulfillment. However, realistic and rigorous training must never come at the cost of the safety of our people.

People First is an operational imperative demanding rigorous risk management. Safety in training is a fundamental leadership responsibility at every echelon. As we increase the complexity of training to meet modern threats, we must equally elevate safety protocols. I expect every leader to conduct thorough risk assessments, enforce standards, and create an



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

environment where Soldiers and Airmen feel empowered to speak up when conditions are unsafe. We do not cut corners. Incorporating risk assessments, enforcing standard operating procedures, and empowering every Soldier and Airman to call a halt when conditions become unsafe is a nonnegotiable standard. We cannot serve Oregon or our nation from the sidelines — protect your people. When we protect our people, we build trust, directly meeting our goal.

Our nation commemorates its 250th anniversary on July 4th. We honor those original Minutemen and our lineage of service. Before the Declaration of Independence was signed, the militia stood ready to defend communities. The uniform you wear represents a quarter millennium of sacrifice, resilience, and commitment to freedom. The strategy we execute today and the safety standards we uphold honor those who served before us. We build a modern, ready force to ensure this legacy endures. Stay focused. Stay safe. Lead with purpose. Be Connected. Be Competent. Be Committed. These are not just words on a slide — they are the standard of leadership I expect from every person in this organization. Summer brings with it renewed energy and renewed purpose. Let’s use every day of it.

Always Ready, Always There!

Oregon Governor Tina Kotek’s 2026 Wildfire Briefing

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

SALEM, Ore. — Oregon National Guard Brig. Gen. Alan R. Gronewold, Adjutant General, Oregon, briefed state and agency leaders during the Governor’s Wildfire Briefing at Oregon State Fire Marshal headquarters in Salem, Oregon, on May 5, 2026. Gronewold presented on National Guard response capabilities as part of a morning-long briefing that brought together Oregon Governor Tina Kotek, state agency directors, and emergency management officials to assess readiness ahead of the 2026 wildfire season. The event included presentations on wildfire season forecasts and emergency coordination, followed by a press conference at which Kotek signed the Wildfire Awareness Month proclamation and took questions from the media.



COMMAND

Honored to serve as the voice of the Enlisted Force to The Adjutant General

As we move into Summer, there have been many senior enlisted moves in the Oregon National Guard. As our new Command Senior Enlisted Leader, I've been on the job for about a month now and am humbled and honored to serve as the voice of the enlisted force to TAG. Tough to follow Command Sgt. Maj. Smith, who was an incredible CSEL during his tenure. His regard for the welfare and development of our enlisted force was at the forefront of his words and actions. I'm no Lee Smith, but I'll do my best to continue to build on his work and those Command Senior Enlisted Leaders who came before him.

Some other updates on key enlisted leadership moves - Chief Master Sgt. Darron Forbes is coming up from the 142nd Wing Command Chief to serve as the next Oregon Air National Guard State Command Chief. Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Bertilson has moved up from the 82nd BDE CSM to serve as the Oregon Army National Guard State Sergeant

Major. I am reluctant to tell you how many years of service our combined years add up to, but let's just say there are some experienced SNCOs to represent our enlisted force and advise senior leaders! Both the 142nd and 173rd Wings are currently selecting new Command Chiefs, and both brigades have new CSMs.

All of those moves result in a domino effect of additional leadership moves, and so it goes in the organizational cycle of retirements and assignments. As we are in a period of significant movement in key enlisted leadership positions, I want to affirm to you that we are committed to working together to advocate for and improve health, morale, welfare, and quality-of-life programs for our enlisted force while maintaining a focus on individual and unit readiness.

Effective communication is a challenge in all organizations, so one way to reach a broader audience from my lane will be to restart the ORNG CSEL podcast

that Chief Dan Conner produced during his tenure. While that is one-way communication, to be an effective voice of the enlisted force, I'll need to address field-driven issues to reach my level.

The primary means of this is connection through enlisted leadership channels - First Sergeants, Sergeants Major, and Chiefs are the primary interface in facilitating communications from the unit to HQs. I also encourage you to use your enlisted councils and professional associations, such as EANGOR, to vector issues to my level. I look forward to battlefield circulation and unit visits to hear directly from our enlisted force. In today's world, effective communication requires the use of multiple media and options. While the chain of command is primary, it must be appropriately supplemented with the other means of communication at our disposal.

In closing, I look forward to the opportunity to have candid conversations and hear from



Command Chief Master Sergeant Brent W. Cavanias
Command Senior Enlisted Leader,
Oregon National Guard

the Soldiers and Airmen of the Oregon National Guard. While we focus on mission and readiness, the combined voice of the senior enlisted of the Oregon National Guard has the potential to influence issues of mutual concern, backed by the decades of competence and commitment of the NCO Corps. When we are connected and unified in our efforts on behalf of your soldiers, airmen, and families, there's no limit to what we can achieve.

Oregon ARNG recognized with Strength Maintenance Awards Program

Story by John Hughel,
Oregon Military Department
Public Affairs

SALEM, Ore. – The Oregon Army National Guard was recognized for their accomplishments over the past year at the Army National Guard Director's Strength Maintenance Awards Conference for Fiscal Year 2025, which was held in Houston, Texas, from March 31 to April 2, 2026.

The Oregon Army National Guard earned first place in the 'Top Retention – Medium' category among mid-sized states. This ranking includes all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and three territories, making up "The 54" jurisdictions under both state and federal control.

The Director's Strength Maintenance Awards Conference is held each year to honor the outstanding work of Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention Non-Commissioned Officers, Marketing NCOs, Reserve Component Career Counselors, Training and Doctrine Command Liaison NCOs, Automations NCOs, and the Military Occupational Skills "79T" Instructors. These individuals play a key role in recruiting and keeping qualified soldiers in the Army National Guard, following all required regulations.

"The work and dedication by our Oregon Army National Guard recruiting and retention service members have been instrumental in not only bringing new members to our organization but keeping our best Soldiers in



ORARNG Lt. Col. Annabel Ortega, Recruiting and Retention Battalion Commander, Oregon Army National Guard, holds the Fiscal Year 2025 Top Retention Award for Medium sized state(s) while attending the Army National Guard Director's Strength Maintenance Awards Conference in Houston, Texas, from March 31 to April 2, 2026. (Courtesy photo by the ORARNG Recruiting)

uniform," said Lt. Col. Stephen Bomar, Director of Public Affairs for the Oregon National Guard. "Being recognized by the Army National Guard Director's Strength Maintenance Awards Program illustrates the results our team has achieved over this past year."

The Oregon Army National Guard reached its highest reenlistment rate since Fiscal Year 2009. This rate was 8.35% higher than the 10-year average and 6.38% above the 25-year average. As a result, the three-year extension rate rose by 15.72%, with more Soldiers choosing longer commitments instead of shorter 1- or 2-year extensions.

The Oregon State Retention Bonus (OSRB) has proven to be

both effective and popular among Oregon Citizen-Soldiers. It offers a \$5,000 lump sum for a three-year extension. In the fourth quarter alone of Fiscal Year 2025, OSRB extensions made up 25% of all extensions for the year, even though this period is usually the slowest for reenlistments. The average number of extensions per month in the fourth quarter was 69, up from 33 in Fiscal Year 2024, which is a 36% monthly increase thanks to the OSRB. The bonus also led to 14 extensions from Soldiers who were "Hard No's," had previously decided not to reenlist, and likely would have separated from service without this incentive.

When reviewing the SWAG Survey Analysis of Oregon Army Guardsmen, Soldiers offered important insights into why they chose to remain in the formation. The top responses were from the Career Progression section, where 78 service members in this group see that being part of the Oregon Army National Guard has helped them advance their military careers. This includes seeking promotions, pursuing officer or warrant officer paths, and continuing full-time AGR (Active Guard Reserve) careers.

Responses like, "So I can continue with my career and better my civilian life," to comments like "the benefits that come with military service," to "I enjoy flying as a crewmember of the HH-60M Black Hawk," and "so I can transfer my GI bill to my son."

Other categories that ranked near the top in responses were financial bonuses, job satisfaction, and the desire to continue to serve

in the military. One of the more attention-grabbing comments was offered by a junior NCO in the Oregon Medical Command, answering the question, "Why did you choose to extend?"

"Because 8 years is almost 10 years... and 10 years is almost 20 years... so basically I am almost done! No, in all honesty, I enjoy my time in the Guard. It works well for my family, I enjoy my section, and I hope to commission in the next three years."

The annual Directors Strength Maintenance Awards Conference brings recruiting and retention professionals together each year to share best practices, solve current challenges, and celebrate the achievements of the Army National Guard's top recruiters and retention noncommissioned officers in charge. Networking and sharing best practices enable top recruiters to respond to rapid changes in the Army and meet the demand for new missions and critical military occupations.

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ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

The OSRB Program has been an important factor in helping Oregon Citizen-Soldiers to continue their military careers.

LEADERSHIP

Oregon National Guard Mobilizes Soldiers For an Integral Middle East Support Role

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

HAPPY VALLEY, Ore. – Eight service members of the 150th Test, Measurement and Diagnostic Equipment (TMDE) Support Detachment were recognized during a mobilization ceremony at Camp Whitycombe in Happy Valley, Oregon, on April 15, 2026, as they prepare to deploy to the Middle East in support of the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) operations.

downrange. Some of the most critical work in any military operation is accomplished by a small team.”

These U.S. Army soldiers specialize in calibrating and repairing the diagnostic testing equipment that all other units rely on. They support aviation, communications, medical, and Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN) defense, as well as weapons systems. Their work ensures instruments measure accurately, so diagnostic tools provide reliable readings. This helps keep the equipment that soldiers trust with their lives safe and dependable.



The unit Guidon for the 150th Test, Measurement, and Diagnostic Support Detachment is presented to those in attendance at the unit's formal mobilization ceremony on April 15, 2026, at Camp Withycombe in Happy Valley, Oregon.

The 150th TMDE is a key sustainment asset for the Army National Guard, maintaining accurate diagnostic equipment, ensuring compliance with Army calibration standards, and supporting unit readiness for all missions. These units fall primarily under the Ordnance Corps, reflecting their essential role in support and maintenance operations.

After a heavy deployment rotation period for the Oregon Army National Guard, during which several hundred soldiers were mobilized from the Middle East, Kosovo, and the Horn of Africa in 2024-2025, the 150th TMDE is the first group of Citizen-Soldiers to mobilize in 2026, with less than a dozen members taking on a specialized role.

“Eight soldiers, that’s the size of this formation today – eight,” said Brig. Gen. Alan R. Gronewold, Adjutant General for the Oregon National Guard. “I want everyone in the room to understand something. That number doesn’t capture the mission’s importance or the impact this unit will have

a legacy worth honoring, and you are adding to it today.”

The unit’s origins date to 1999, when it was established as Detachment 4, 1241st Ordnance Team, to provide precision calibration support for Army systems. Currently, the 150th TMDE Support Detachment remains a critical contributor to Army readiness, supporting both domestic and international missions.



Soldiers with the 234th Oregon Army Band play “The Army Song” at the conclusion of the mobilization ceremony for the 150th TMDE Support Detachment during their mobilization ceremony on April 15, 2026, at Camp Withycombe.



Brig. Gen. Alan R. Gronewold, Adjutant General, Oregon, delivers remarks to Oregon National Guard Soldiers assigned to the 150th TMDE and their family members on April 15, 2026, at Camp Withycombe in Happy Valley, Oregon.

“And now in 2026, the 150th deploys once again. A new mission for the same standards of excellence,” Gronewold said. “When a helicopter maintenance crew uses a torque wrench, they need reliable readings. When a medic uses a diagnostic instrument, lives depend on that instrument being correct. The 150th is the unit that makes sure those standards are met.”

That sense of high standards and pride in their specialized abilities was also noted by Lt. Col. Rocky Kumlin, 821st Troop Command Battalion Commander, when addressing the unit and family members.

“It’s a privilege as I stand here today, and as the first time as the battalion commander to send off citizen-soldiers,” he said, as they will first undertake additional training before heading overseas. “The preparation to support Operation Inherent Resolve began long before today, and I appreciate everything you’ve done and what you’re about to embark upon for our nation and state.”

In his remarks, Kumlin thanked the family members who will “cover down on the home front” while they are deployed on this mission, one in which all eight members volunteered.

“As you go forward, hold your head high, carry your Guidon with purpose. It’s a history with a proud legacy, and know that we will be counting the days until you return home,” Kumlin said.

State House Representative April Dobson visits Oregon Guardsmen during annual training



Oregon State House District 39 Representative April Dobson is briefed by Oregon Army National Guard Lt. Col. Brady Phillips (left) on the features and uses of an HH-60M Black Hawk at Fort Hunter Liggett, near Lockwood, California, on April 27, 2026. Rep. Dobson traveled to observe Oregon Army National Guard Soldiers from Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry Regiment, and the 2nd Battalion, 641st Aviation Regiment conducting Annual Training at Fort Hunter Liggett.

Photos by John Hughel, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs



(L-R) Command Sgt. Maj. Anthony Martin, Lt. Col. Heather Robinson, Rep. April Dobson, Lt. Col. Brady Phillips, and Col. Russell Gibson, pause for a photo during their tour on April 27.



ORARNG Chief Warrant Officer 3 Uriah Steffenhagen (right) gives a range safety briefing to Oregon Army Guardsmen assigned to Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry Regiment, and the 2nd Battalion, 641st Aviation Regiment on one of the small arms ranges at Fort Hunter Liggett, California, on April 28, 2026. During their training day, Oregon State House District 39 Representative April Dobson received a tour of flight operations and specialized training, while interacting with military senior leaders and Oregon Citizen-Soldiers.

LEADERSHIP

Oregon Army National Guard Engineers Mobilize for Africa Mission

Story and photos by
Capt. Ehren Castle,
115th Mobile Public Affairs
Detachment



ORARNG Soldiers assigned to the 442nd Engineer Utilities Detachment stand in formation during their mobilization ceremony at Camp Rilea, Warrenton, Oregon, on May 3, 2026.

WARRENTON, Ore. – Family members, fellow soldiers, and community supporters gathered at Camp Rilea Armed Forces Training Center on May 3, 2026, to formally bid farewell to the Oregon Army National Guard’s 442nd Engineer Utilities Detachment (EUD) as the unit conducted a formal mobilization ceremony, as the Soldiers prepared to depart for a year-long deployment in support of U.S. Africa Command’s mission in the Horn of Africa.

The mobilization ceremony was held at the Camp Rilea Armed Forces Training Center, near Warrenton, Oregon, and

befitting Oregon’s soldiers’ service.

The 442nd EUD, composed of U.S. Army Engineers, will deploy to Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti, operating as part of Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA). The unit will provide vertical and horizontal construction support to military installations throughout the region, directly advancing U.S. Africa Command’s efforts to build partner capacity, promote regional stability, and counter violent extremist organizations across the continent.

“While you’re there, you’ll build, you’ll repair, you’ll improve the infrastructure, and you’ll solve problems,” DeMontigny said. “In doing so, you’ll help support the base, sustain our operations on the Horn, and help create

conditions for the success of the mission.”

Every soldier in the detachment volunteered for this mission. Many came from outside the 442nd and completed cross-training to earn the unit’s 12-series engineer MOS (Military Occupational Specialty).

“It’s a complete volunteer deployment,” said Capt. Ryan Dobler, the unit’s construction operations officer, from Cornelius, Oregon. “A lot of people came from outside of 442, and a lot of them didn’t organically have our 12-series MOS. The ability of the unit to cross-train, learn, adapt, and become one cohesive unit was really, really cool to see.”

Dobler, who will assist the detachment commander, Maj. Emilie Anderson, who

completed construction designs and managed schedules, labor, and material estimates, described a mission environment unlike standard stateside operations.

“There are a lot of variety missions – it’s very fast-paced,” Dobler said. “Our customer gives us a napkin sketch, and we have to take it from that napkin sketch to something in reality, whether it’s force protection or meeting the installation’s needs.”

Soldiers trained extensively in the lead-up to the deployment, including three weeks at the Rees Training Center in Eastern Oregon. Teams tackled live construction projects – removing and replacing sidewalks, building overhead cover, converting buildings into usable office spaces, and using heavy equipment to clear a riverbed for infantry training. The work mirrored the kind of real-world construction they will execute downrange.

“I’m excited,” said Staff Sgt. Rebecca Warden, is a squad leader in the unit. “I’m a little nervous about the unknown, but I’m excited to get there, get into a good routine, and get the mission done.”

CJTF-HOA of Africa conducts operations across the Horn of Africa to enhance partner-nation capabilities, promote regional stability, deter conflict, and protect U.S. and coalition interests. The 442nd EUD’s engineering expertise will directly support those objectives by improving infrastructure at military installations across the region.



Soldiers assigned to the 442nd Engineer Utilities Detachment, Oregon Army National Guard, reunite with family members following their mobilization ceremony at Camp Rilea Armed Forces Training Center, near Warrenton, Oregon, May 3, 2026.

was presided over by Brig. Gen. Philip DeMontigny, Assistant Adjunct General-Army, with remarks from Col. Russell Gibson, 82nd Troop Command Brigade Commander. The 234th Army Band provided musical honors, marking the occasion with the solemnity and pride



Brig. Gen. Philip DeMontigny, Assistant Adjunct General – Army for the Oregon National Guard, greets soldiers assigned to the 442nd Engineer Utilities Detachment, Oregon Army National Guard, during the receiving line following their mobilization ceremony at Camp Rilea, Oregon, on May 3, 2026.

The Oregon National Guard: Leadership in action

The Oregon Youth Challenge Program Honored with 2026 Food Drive Heroes Award



Oregon Youth Challenge Program cadets were recognized as 2026 Food Drive Heroes at the Governor’s State Employees Food Drive Award Ceremony on May 6, 2026, in Salem. Cadet Adysack Khounthavong, Student Government President, and Cadet Jocelyn Gutierrez, Vice President and Corporal of her platoon, accepted the award on behalf of the program alongside two OYCP cadre members. The program was nominated by the Governor’s State Employees Food Drive Committee in recognition of 652 volunteer hours contributed at a local food bank. (Oregon Nat’l Guard photo by Chris Clyne)

Maj. Gen. Duke Pirak, Acting Director, Air National Guard, Visits 142nd Wing in Portland



U.S. Air Force Maj. Gen. Duke A. Pirak, Acting Director, Air National Guard (center), steps onto the flightline at the Portland Air National Guard Base, Oregon, on May 13, 2026, along with Capt. Daniel Pickett (left) and Lt. Col. Joshua Hovanas, 142nd Operations Group commander (right). Pirak, who served as the 142nd Wing Commander from November of 2016 to August of 2018, was visiting the 142nd Wing and piloted one of the unit’s new F-15EX Eagle II aircraft during his return to Portland. (Photo by Master Sgt. Steph Sawyer, 142nd Wing Public Affairs)

Oregon Nat’l Guard Leaders Meet with Ben Cannon, HECC Director at Camp Withycombe



Brig. Gen. Alan R. Gronewold, Adjutant General, Oregon (right), along with Command Chief Master Sgt. Brent Cavanias, Command Senior Enlisted Leader (left), pause for a photo as they meet with Ben Cannon, the Executive Director of the Higher Education Coordination Commission, or HECC (center), at Camp Withycombe, in Happy Valley, Oregon, on May 27, 2026. Oregon National Guard leadership met with HECC leadership to discuss educational benefits and explore how both agencies can support each other going forward. (Oregon Nat’l Guard photo by John Hughel)

LEADERSHIP



A Joint Service Honor Guard team prepares to Post the Colors to begin the Memorial Day Observance at Willamette National Cemetery. (Photo by John Hughel, OMD Public Affairs)

MEMORIAL DAY

Oregon Soldiers and Airmen Honor Fallen Heroes Around the Region

Story by John Hughel, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

SALEM, Ore. – Oregon National Guard service members participated in ceremonies across Oregon and Southwest Washington to honor individuals who died in defense of the nation on Memorial Day, May 25, 2026. As the United States approaches its 250th anniversary, Memorial Day takes on heightened significance, as the country pauses each year to honor those who sacrificed their lives to secure the nation’s pursuit of liberty and cherished freedoms.

During the nation’s 200th anniversary in 1976, President Gerald R. Ford’s speech at Arlington National Cemetery on May 31, as he paused to honor the service members whose sacrifices spanned the nation’s history, link their courage to the anniversary celebrations.



Carla Buyes (left), Gold Star mother of Cpl. Adam J. Buyes, U.S. Marine Corps, and Gov. Tina Kotek stand with a memorial wreath at Oregon Capital State Park in Salem, on May 25, 2026. (Photo by Maj. W. Chris Clyne, OMD Public Affairs)

Speaking at the Oregon Department of Veterans’ Affairs Memorial Day celebration in Salem, Governor Tina Kotek highlighted that Memorial Day unites Americans in remembrance of the sacrifices made by service members.

“Memorial Day is not simply a tradition, it’s a responsibility — a responsibility to remember the human cost of war, to honor those who never came home, and to ensure that their sacrifices are never forgotten,” she said.

Following Governor Kotek’s remarks, Oregon Army National Guard Col. Russell Gibson, Government and Legislative Affairs Director and Commander, 82nd Brigade Troop Command, represented the Oregon Military Department and the State’s military community. He emphasized that the sacrifices made by Oregon’s sons and daughters should always be remembered.



Wendall Pelham, a Gold Star Father, delivers the keynote address during the Memorial Day Observance at Willamette National Cemetery. (Photo by John Hughel, OMD Public Affairs)

“As we mark this milestone of our national independence, however, we must not forget the lessons of history. Other nations have risen to great heights only to weaken in their resolve. We must not repeat their error. We must remain strong in our defense and steadfast in our resolve to uphold the principles with which we began two centuries ago.”

“The men and women we honor today are not just names on a wall or statistics in a history book — they were sons and daughters, husbands and wives, mothers and fathers,” Russell said. “Their stories are our stories, and it is our sacred duty to preserve their memory and ensure their sacrifices are never forgotten.”

Meanwhile, at a Memorial Day event at FirLawn Cemetery in Hillsboro, Oregon, Army National Guard Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Bertilson highlighted that when Oregon Soldiers deploy, “The impact is felt here as the families sacrifice when their loved ones are far from home.”



Culminating the day is one of the major Memorial Day events at Willamette National Cemetery. Oregon Army and Air National Guardsmen, along with Navy, Marine Corps, and other military members, served as Color Guard and performed

military duties for the ceremony. A patriotic flyover conducted by the Oregon Air National Guard at the cemetery was one of nearly a dozen flyovers in cities and towns across the region, where the F-15 Eagles from the 142nd Wing flew in support of Memorial Day events.



ORARNG Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Bertilson was the guest speaker during the Memorial Day ceremony held at Fir Lawn Memorial Park & Funeral Home in Hillsboro, Oregon, on May 25, 2026. (Photo by 1st Sgt. Zachary Holden, OMD Public Affairs)

“We are standing on Hollow ground,” said Wendall Pelham, the Keynote speaker and a Gold Star Father. “Men and women have given their lives so that we could spend this beautiful day together, sharing their legacies. Americans who answered their nation’s call, not because it was easy, not because it was safe, but because they believed there were things greater than themselves worth defending.”



Chaplain (Col.) Jacob Scott, Oregon Nat’l. Guard State Chaplain (left) stands with a memorial wreath along with Col. Russell Gibson, Government and Legislative Affairs Director and Commander, 82nd Brigade Troop Command (right) at the Oregon State Capitol. (Photo by Maj. W. Chris Clyne, OMD Public Affairs)

LEADERSHIP

Soldiers honored at Salem ceremony after Horn of Africa deployment

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

SALEM, Ore. – More than 200 Oregon Army National Guard Soldiers from the 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team stood in formation at the Salem Convention Center on June 14, 2026, where families, leaders and community members formally welcomed them home from a nearly year-long deployment to the Horn of Africa.

“More than 200 Soldiers deployed. More than 200 now here at home,” said Brig. Gen. Philip DeMontigny, Assistant Adjutant General, Army, Oregon National Guard. “The mission was accomplished. The standard was upheld. Oregon is proud.”

Soldiers from Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 162nd Infantry Regiment, and Alpha Company, 741st Brigade Engineer Battalion, mobilized in May 2025 and returned home April 3, 2026. They deployed as part of Task Force Bataan, a multi-state National Guard formation of more than 1,100 Soldiers from Oregon, New Mexico, Washington, and Louisiana.



ORARNG Capt. Nathan Scull, formation commander, salutes as the 234th Army Band, Oregon Army National Guard, plays the national anthem during an official demobilization ceremony held at the Salem Convention Center in Salem, Oregon, on June 14, 2026.

The task force operated in support of U.S. Special Operations Command and U.S. Africa Command, conducting security and base defense at military installations in Djibouti, Kenya, and Somalia. DeMontigny, who previously served in the Horn of Africa and commanded the 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team earlier in his career, brought a personal perspective to the welcome home.

“I know the climate. I know the distance from home. I know what that deployment asks of a Soldier and a family,” he said. Capt. Nathan Scull, commander of Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 162nd Infantry



Oregon Governor Tina Kotek and Brig. Gen. Philip R. DeMontigny, Assistant Adjutant General, stands for the National Anthem during the official demobilization ceremony for the Soldiers of the 41st IBCB at the Salem Convention Center in Salem, Oregon, on June 14, 2026.

Regiment, said Oregon Soldiers built lasting infrastructure for U.S. forces in the region. Engineers from Alpha Company, 741st Brigade Engineer Battalion, constructed three new training ranges at Chabelley Airfield, Djibouti, and fielded a new secure communications network supporting the Djibouti Base Cluster. “U.S. AFRICOM command didn’t just approve the new network,” DeMontigny said. “They designated it as the standard for every other base in the region to follow.” At Chabelley, Oregon Soldiers also stood watch over MQ-9 Reaper drones conducting reconnaissance and strike missions across the U.S. Africa Command and U.S. Central Command areas of operation. Those missions resulted in the neutralization of more than 300 enemy combatants during the rotation. At Kismayo Airfield, Somalia, Oregon National Guard mortar men from Bravo Company conducted counterbattery fire on the point of origin of an Al-Shabaab rocket attack within three minutes. “Three minutes,” DeMontigny said.

“That is training, discipline, and the calm that only comes from Soldiers who know their job and trust the person next to them.”

The task force partnered with service members from Greece, Italy, France, Lithuania, Japan, Germany, and Spain, hosting foreign badge events that included the Norwegian Foot March and the German Armed Forces Proficiency Badge. Oregon Soldiers supported Naval Special Warfare operations against ISIS-Somalia and were chosen for a sensitive detachment supporting the search for an American hostage taken in West Africa. Scull served as officer-in-charge, with 1st Sgt. Richard Bradeen as noncommissioned officer-in-charge. “You too served,” DeMontigny told the families and employers in the audience.

“You managed households, took care of children, held down your own jobs, and absorbed the uncertainty so that your Soldier could be mission-focused.” He pointed to three values that carried the Soldiers through the rotation: “You were connected. You were competent. You were committed.”

Oregon Governor Tina Kotek also addressed the formation, thanking the Soldiers and those who supported them at home. “The relationships that you have formed with other units from other states, as well as other countries, are really, incredibly important,” Kotek said. “You have represented Oregon beyond reproach with such talent, with such skills, with such commitment.”



Oregon Governor Tina Kotek shakes hands with Oregon Army National Guard Soldiers from the 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team in a receiving line at an official demobilization ceremony at the Salem Convention Center in Salem, on June 14, 2026.

Oregon Youth ChalleNGe Program celebrates Class 71 graduation

Story and photos by 1st Sgt. Zachary Holden,
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

BEND, Ore. – The Oregon Youth ChalleNGe Program Class 71 graduated 153 Cadets during a ceremony held at the Riverhouse Convention Center in Bend,

Oregon, on June 10, 2026. OYCP is Oregon’s only accredited statewide alternative high school and is one of more than 40 programs in 28 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia. Youth ChalleNGe Programs help at-risk youth earn their high school diploma, and equivalency, or recover credits toward

graduation. During the five-month program, in addition to the regular curriculum, OYCP class 71 completed 7,554 hours of community service, held a food drive that collected 404,262 pounds of food, and received their food handler’s permit and first-aid and CPR certifications.

Brig. Gen. Philip DeMontigny, Assistant

Adjutant General, Oregon Army National Guard, attended the graduation as the guest speaker. “To the graduates of class 71... You are getting to be first-choice leaders of your own making. Your future isn’t limited by where you started; it’s built by the choices you make from here,” DeMontigny said.



Brig. Gen. Philip DeMontigny congratulates Cadets of Class 71 during their graduation ceremony in Bend on June 10, 2026.

NEWS

Rees Training Center Hosts the annual Oregon National Guard Combat Marksmanship Match and Armed Forces Day

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

Chief Warrant Officer 5 Lenora L. Landwehr, Oregon State Command Chief Warrant Officer (left), and Brig. Gen. Alan R. Gronewold, Adjutant General, Oregon (right), enjoys a lighter conversation after finishing the three-gun part of the "TAG MATCH" on May 15, 2026.



HERMISTON, Ore. – Oregon Army and Air National Guardsmen participated in the annual Combat Marksmanship Training Exercise, or "TAG Match," held as part of the Armed Forces Day celebration at the Rees Training Center near Hermiston, Oregon, which concluded on Saturday, May 16, 2026. Over 125 Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen took part in the completion, with the awards being presented by Brig. Gen. Alan R. Gronewold, Adjutant General, Oregon, during the festivities of Armed Forces Day.



Oregon National Guard Soldiers and Airmen participate in the Annual Oregon National Guard Combat Marksmanship Training Match, or "TAG Match," as they fire their M9 Pistols during the first of three days of competition at the Rees Training Center near Hermiston, Oregon, on May 14, 2026.

The "TAG Match" is a shooting competition open to all Oregon Army and Air National Guard members to improve combat marksmanship, build camaraderie, and give the top shooters a chance to earn distinguished pistol and rifle badges for their military uniforms. The TAG match offers both novice and experienced shooters a series of challenging courses of fire to test their marksmanship capabilities.

"Marksmanship is a Warrior Skill. It demands discipline, patience, physical control, and mental focus," Gronewold said while presenting awards to service members who endured the windy conditions during the three-day event. "Whether it was in the three-gun, practical rifle, speed pistol, or Cascade Cup – our Soldiers and Airmen are trained, ready, and capable. Those of you receiving awards this afternoon, congratulations."

Each course of fire tests competitors, demanding speed and precision as they face

the pressure of ticking clocks and weapons proficiency. While the scoring and standards are the same every year, organizers add new challenges that mirror real-world shooting situations, so every competition feels different. This year, steady winds and sudden strong gusts made things even tougher.

Among the first-time competitors was Sgt. Reese Kern, a Wheeled Vehicle Mechanic with the 641st Aviation. Five years into his service with the Oregon Army National Guard, Kern also hones his skills as an electrician apprentice when he's not in uniform.

Kern's dedication paid off in a big way over the three-day event, earning him the High Pistol Novice award and a coveted spot in the 'Governor's 20' for both rifle and pistol.

"I started hunting in my late teens when a buddy got me interested in it," he said, still caught up in being recognized for his achievements, while hoping to encourage unit members in the future. "Yeah, they'd better be out here next year - and see if they 'can school me.'"

Earning a place among Oregon's top 10 pistol and top 10 rifle shooters is no small feat. Those who qualify receive the prestigious Governor's 20 Tab, proudly displayed on the left sleeve of their combat uniform beneath badges such as Special Forces, Sapper, Ranger, or Honor Guard.

"Events like these don't run themselves, and there has been a tremendous amount of work behind the scenes

to ensure both events," Gronewold said, as he noted the weeks of planning for both the marksmanship match and Armed Forces Day events. "So thank you to the team here



ORARNG Sgt. Reese Kern takes part in the Annual "TAG Match," which was held at the Rees Training Center near Hermiston, Oregon, from May 14-16, 2026. Kern won top honors in the Novice Pistol Shooter category and won two Governor's 20 Tabs in pistol and rifle.

at Rees Training Center for all your work bringing the community together, from our speakers, to our vendors and reenactors, and to the 249th Regional Training Institute and SARS team who planned, developed, and executed this marksmanship competition."

Hermiston Mayor Doug Primmer took the stage as an honored speaker, reflecting on the strong and evolving partnership between the local community and the military.

"Today, the relationship between the City of Hermiston and the Rees Training Center is a vital asset to our region's economy and identity. Over 60 million has already been invested into the construction of barracks, dining facilities, and training," Primmer said. "But the present reality goes deeper than just military drills. The Rees Training Center has woven itself into the fabric of our civilian community.



An Oregon Army National Guard Soldier fires from a fixed barrier with his M-4 Rifle during the annual Combat Marksmanship Training Exercise, or "TAG Match," on May 15, 2026.

Story continued on Page 9

NEWS



Oregon Army and Air National Guard competitors in the Annual Oregon National Guard Combat Marksmanship Training Match, or "TAG Match," spend time on the Zero Range at the Rees Training Center near Hermiston, Oregon, from May 14, 2026.

It hosts innovative educational programs like STARBASE, where local elementary students participate in hands-on STEAM, learning right here on base."

These modern government-to-government collaborations have opened new economic corridors for local businesses and enabled long-term growth planning, Primmer noted. He also touched on the ecological management of the vast facility since the chemical weapons were completely destroyed with the closure of the U.S. Army Umatilla Chemical Depot in 2012. Following the base closure, the opportunity to repurpose the land began in September 2022, and the former depot entered operational phase as the Raymond F. Rees Training Center.

"Leaving behind a vast landscape rich with potential. The Rees Training Center works in active participation with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation to manage environmental resources," Primmer said. "This work helps protect native wildlife and preserve history, such as the Western Burrowing Owl."

During his formal remarks, Maj. Gen. (ret.) Raymond F. Rees congratulated participants in the marksmanship match and provided historical context regarding Armed Forces Day, a federal observance held annually on the third Saturday of May to honor individuals currently serving in all branches of the U.S. military.

"On July 4 this year, we will celebrate our nation's 250th birthday – 250 years since the Declaration of Independence. That independence was achieved through the heroic action of our Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines," Rees said, speaking not only to the service members and their families in attendance, but also to those



Three World War II British Reenactment Soldiers: (L-R) Lawrence, Ewan, and Jay take part in the second annual Armed Forces Day at the Rees Training Center, near Hermiston, Oregon, on May 16, 2026, as they demonstrate equipment used by British Soldiers.

"Marksmanship is a Warrior Skill. It demands discipline, patience, physical control, and mental focus."

- Brig. Gen. Alan R. Gronewold, Adjutant General, Oregon



Army Maj. Gen. (ret.) Raymond F. Rees delivers the opening remarks to welcome those attending the Oregon National Guard Armed Forces Day celebration held at the Rees Training Center, near Hermiston, Oregon, on May 16, 2026. Rees, who served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Training, Readiness, and Mobilization from 2014 to 2019, also served as Adjutant General of Oregon.

civilian members in the communities around Eastern Oregon who took part in the day's activities. "Today, we are celebrating our armed forces to demonstrate our appreciation for our men and women who serve our nation, and I want to take this opportunity to include my appreciation for the men and women who serve in our Oregon Army and Air National Guard."

This year's event marked the Oregon National Guard's second consecutive Armed Forces Day celebration at the Rees Training Center. Attendees explored an array of military vehicle displays, browsed community vendor booths, and wandered through historical exhibits. The 1940s architecture lent the festivities a sense

of timelessness, with many of the original brick buildings still being used for present-day missions.

"One of the foundational aspects of our defense establishment is respect for and perpetuation of the Citizen-Soldier role. In fact, it is so revered that it is enshrined in the Constitution. I often say that there is more ink in the militia or today's modern National Guard than in the Constitution, than in the Army and Navy combined," Rees said.

So, why should we celebrate the modern militia or modern National Guard on Armed Forces Day?" Rees asked aloud. He noted that Article I, Section 8, of the United States Constitution grants Congress the power to legislate on a wide range of national matters, including taxation, defense, and commerce. That even now, after 250 years, they are still preserved in the Constitution.

"Congress shall have the power to provide for calling forth the militia, to execute the laws of the union," Rees said, as he recited key aspects of Article 1. "To suppress insurrections and repel invasions. To provide for organizing, arming, and disciplining the militia, and for governing such part of them as may be employed in the service of the United States, reserving to the states respectively."

He spotlighted the Oregon National Guard's recent history, noting how Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen have stepped up to serve time and again in major global conflicts.

"In the last 30 years, the Oregon National Guard has served in Desert Storm, Iraq, Afghanistan, Kosovo, Bosnia, and just a month ago,

right here at this training center, the 442nd Engineer Detachment of the Oregon National Guard completed their pre-deployment training as they are now on their way to Djibouti in the Horn of Africa."

Armed Forces Day helps reflect that resolute spirit of service that has shaped many generations of Americans. By honoring this day each year, we help future generations understand the courage and sacrifices of those who have defended the United States and its democratic values.



Members of the West Valley High School JROTC pause after Posting The Colors to the start of the second annual Armed Forces Day ceremony at the Rees Training Center on May 16, 2026. The event featured a wide array of static displays of military vehicles, community vendors, and historical exhibits.

NEWS

103-Year-Old WWII Pilot's story silences a room

Story and photos by
Maj. W. Chris Clyne,
OMD Public Affairs

SALEM, Ore. – The hangar fell quiet for nearly 30 minutes on Armed Forces Day while Capt. Richard “Dick” Nelms stood before a crowd at the B-17 Alliance Museum & Restoration Hangar at Salem McNary Airfield and described, in precise and unhurried detail, what it felt like to fly a B-17 Flying Fortress over Nazi-occupied Europe at 25,000 feet with flak tearing through the fuselage around him.

But the afternoon belonged to Nelms.

A volunteer with the Army Air Forces Aviation Cadet Corps, Nelms was commissioned as a B-17 pilot and assigned to the 447th Bombardment Group (Heavy) at RAF Rattlesden, USAAF Station 126 in Mid Suffolk, England, one of the Eighth Air Force's most accurate bomb groups. Between May 18 and September 7, 1944, he completed 35 combat missions over occupied Europe, flying through temperatures of 49 degrees below zero and through curtains of anti-aircraft fire so thick that veterans said you could get out and walk on it.

“The sky’s exploding,” Nelms said, describing a bomb run over a heavily defended target. “You have black puffs of smoke tearing everywhere. When one is close, you fly through it; you can hear pieces of steel tearing holes into the aluminum skin of your airplane. A bad sound. And what do you do? We keep flying.”

The U.S. Eighth Air Force, he reminded the audience, was never turned back by enemy action.

When the tour was finished, Nelms sailed home aboard the Queen Elizabeth. As the ship entered New York Harbor, there were no banners, no confetti, no parade, but when the Statue of Liberty came into view, none of that mattered.

“When we saw the Statue of Liberty,” he said, “it took care of all of that.”

For Terry Scott, executive director of the B-17 Alliance Foundation, having Nelms at the event fulfilled a mission the organization set for itself years ago, after a veteran told her the community was drifting away from honoring those who served.

“Having Dick Nelms here was just heart-wrenching,” Scott said. “He’s like one of the few left.”

Oregon National Guard representatives played a prominent role in the ceremony. Oregon Air National Guard Lt. Col. Christopher Webb,

delivered Armed Forces Day remarks to the assembled crowd, drawing a line from the crews of the Eighth Air Force to the Citizen-Soldiers serving today.

“We have one foot on the military side and one foot on the civilian side at all times,” Webb said. “By doing work with the community, by being ambassadors of the military, we’re really highlighting that dual role.”

As part of the event, the B-17 Alliance Museum joined the Blue Star Museums program, providing free admission to active-duty military personnel, including National Guard and Reserve members, and their families through Labor Day.

Nelms, who lives on Mercer Island, Washington, closed his remarks with characteristic brevity. When his points accumulated enough to leave the



USAAF Capt. Richard A. Nelms, better known as Dick among those who know him, was born Feb. 1923 in Cleveland, Ohio, and ultimately raised in Niagara Falls, New York. He became an avid golfer at 14, competed in track and field, and was senior class president before graduating High School in 1941. (Photo courtesy of the American Military Archive)

to visit the Lacey Lady restoration. Jensen said Nelms’ motivation for continuing to share his story is simple: He wants to honor the comrades he left behind during WWII.



USAAF Capt. Richard “Dick” Nelms, a World War II B-17 pilot, addresses attendees during the B-17 Alliance Foundation's Armed Forces Day Celebration at Salem McNary Airfield in Salem, Ore., May 16, 2026. Nelms, wearing his 8th Air Force veteran's cap and flight jacket, completed 35 combat missions over occupied Europe between May and Sept. 1944.

He is 103 years old. You could have heard a pin drop.

The B-17 Alliance Foundation hosted its fourth annual Armed Forces Day Celebration on May 16, drawing veterans, families, military personnel and history enthusiasts to its restoration hangar in Salem. The event featured military and classic vehicles, live music, a BBQ fundraiser and a color guard presentation, all centered around the foundation's signature project: the “Lacey Lady,” a B-17G Flying Fortress and one of only two active B-17 restoration efforts in the United States.



Oregon Air National Guard Lt. Col. Christopher Webb (right) asks the audience to recognize United States Army Air Force Capt. Richard “Dick” Nelms, a World War II B-17 Flying Fortress pilot during the B-17 Alliance Foundation's Armed Forces Day Celebration at Salem McNary Airfield in Salem, Oregon, on May 16, 2026.

service, a general asked what he wanted to do. Nelms had one question: would he still be flying?

“You’d be flying, Nelms,” the general told him. “Probably flying a pencil.”

He thanked the man and walked out as a civilian, eventually becoming a commercial artist. He told his story standing up, without notes, for the better part of half an hour. At the end, the room applauded, the kind that doesn’t stop right away.

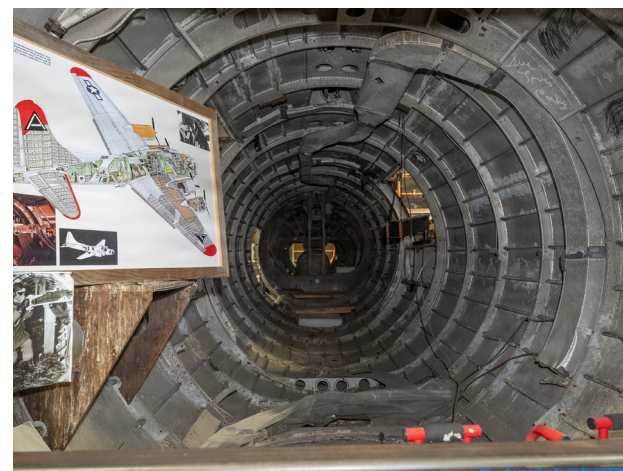
Nelms’ appearance was made possible in part through the Oregon Spirit of 45, a statewide program dedicated to keeping the stories of the World War II generation alive. Barbara Jensen, founder and president of the Oregon Spirit of 45, connected Nelms with the B-17 Alliance after he expressed a longstanding wish

For more information on the Oregon Spirit of 45, visit their Facebook page at: facebook.com/OregonSpiritOf45.

Additional information on the Lacey Lady restoration or future B-17 Alliance events, visit: b17alliance.com.



The partially restored forward fuselage of the “Lacey Lady,” a B-17G Flying Fortress undergoing restoration at the B-17 Alliance Museum & Restoration Hangar at Salem McNary Airfield in Salem, Ore., May 16, 2026.



The interior fuselage of the “Lacey Lady,” a B-17G Flying Fortress undergoing restoration at the B-17 Alliance Museum & Restoration Hangar at Salem McNary Airfield in Salem, on May 16, 2026. The Lacey Lady is one of only two active B-17 restoration projects in the United States. A cutaway diagram of the B-17 Flying Fortress is displayed at the entrance to the fuselage.

NEWS

173rd Logistics Readiness Squadron executes F-15 Eagle divestment

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

KLAMATH FALLS, Ore. – The 173rd Logistics Readiness Squadron at Kingsley Field, Oregon, executed the divestment of F-15 Eagle assets with speed and precision following the effort's initiation in December 2025, achieving key milestones in support of the wing's transition mission. Logistics Readiness Squadron airmen conducted a comprehensive logistics operation to streamline inventory, redistribute critical equipment and ensure accountable asset disposition across the Air National Guard and Department of Defense enterprise.

"In true Kingsley fashion, I would attribute our divestment success to the strong relationships built across functional areas," said Maj. Scott Gelhardt, 173rd Logistics Readiness Squadron commander.

Warehouse Operations Overhaul

The divestment began in the central warehouse, where personnel conducted a detailed review and reduction of on-hand inventory. Within two months, the squadron reduced on-shelf assets by 60.2%, decreasing total inventory from 121,280 items to 48,188.

Airmen also eliminated more than 4,610 redundant warehouse locations, optimizing storage configuration and improving operational efficiency.

"Turning over a warehouse of aircraft parts is equally demanding and even more rapid in nature," Gelhardt said.



The 173rd Logistics Readiness Squadron personnel gather for a final group photo with the heritage F-15 Eagle at Kingsley Field, in Klamath Falls, Oregon, on October 15, 2025. (Photo by Airman 1st Class Zach Cook, 173rd Fighter Wing Public Affairs)

The effort required deliberate inventory validation, coordination with supply chain stakeholders and prioritization to sustain mission-essential capabilities throughout the transition.

Strategic Equipment Redistribution

The Equipment Accountability section reviewed 1,600 equipment items and established a 200-item retention list to preserve assets identified for future operational requirements. To date, Airmen redistributed 253 equipment assets to Air National Guard units in New Orleans, Fresno and Portland, enhancing readiness across the force. "For the redistribution of support equipment, a huge lift, the Maintenance Group continues to lead the way in coordinating with item managers and NGB/A8 for disposition instructions," Gelhardt said.

"The LRS Equipment Accountability Element, Traffic Management Office and Ground Transportation Office then coordinate delivery to the receiving organizations," he added. Additionally, personnel transferred 35 Special Purpose Recoverable Authorized Maintenance assets to Letterkenny Army Depot to support pylon modifications associated with the F-15EX aircraft. Airmen have also processed an additional 850 equipment assets pending shipment.

Record-setting Distribution & Innovative Packaging

The Distribution office executed 4,629 shipment requests, moving 73,092 items from the primary warehouse. The effort also shipped more than 126,190 pounds of cargo, including two F-15 fuselages totaling 42,451 pounds, to Davis-Monthan Air Force Base.

As Gelhardt said, "When NGB 'flipped the switch,' orders started flowing at record rates, at times in excess of 200 shippers per day." He added, "It's common to move to 24-hour supply operations during such a transition." In response to a projected six-to-eight-month lead time for standard Special Packaging Instructions, Airmen developed an innovative solution.

In a first for the Air National Guard, personnel designed and constructed in-house custom packaging solutions, producing more than 38 specialized containers to ensure the secure transport of high-value F-15 components. Gelhardt said, "Additional support from the UCO office, combined with an all-hands-on-deck approach and teamwork across LRS AFSCs, allowed our team to dominate this process in a single shift without crushing our airmen."

Hazmat Olympics: Oregon and Washington Airmen Conduct essential emergency training

Story and photo by Senior Airman Eduardo Figueroa Varela, 142nd Wing Public Affairs

PORTLAND, Ore. – Emergency managers from Oregon and Washington joined forces here for the annual "Hazmat Olympics," a joint training designed to test the limits of their emergency response capabilities on June 7, 2026.

With the sound of breathing masks and the sight of bright yellow safety suits, the 142nd Wing teamed up with the 194th Wing at Camp Murray, Washington. In this hands-on training, the teams went through eight stations to practice finding, testing, and cleaning up dangerous spills. Master Sgt. Lacey Wood, an emergency manager with the 142nd Wing and a key participant in the training, emphasized that while these specific worst-case scenarios are rare, the skills required to handle them are highly perishable.

"We don't do this skill very often, so it's good to keep up on training

on all these different tasks," Wood said. "We need to know how to do it if we were to respond." During the training, Airmen donned heavy-duty protective equipment to practice sampling unknown liquids and solids, performing radiological detection, halting simulated fuel leaks, and managing casualties in a contaminated environment.

While the training ensures Airmen are prepared for global deployments, the scenarios are deeply relevant to potential emergencies closer to home. According to Wood, local emergency management responses can range from containing localized base-fuel spills to answering domestic calls alongside civil authorities, such as identifying unknown cargo at a commercial shipping yard or responding to an overturned

chemical tanker on an Oregon freeway.

"It's an obviously very important job," Wood noted. "It can be a pretty important skill to have, and something that we definitely have to keep up on so we don't forget. There are a lot of different things that go into emergency management." Beyond testing skills, the "Hazmat Olympics" serves as a crucial point for mentorship and integration.

The roster included two recent technical school graduates experiencing the grueling demands of Level A suit operations for the first time alongside seasoned veterans. This hands-on training lets



Air National Guardsmen wear brightly colored safety suits as they test samples of substances during the annual "Hazmat Olympics," emergency training at the Portland Air Nat'l Guard Base, on June 7.

experienced Airmen quickly teach their skills to new members. This helps new team members gain the confidence and experience they need for emergencies. Because the emergency team is small, it is important to have a strong team ready. This is especially true if a crisis occurs at home, when the team might need to pull in extra help from the entire base.

This training ensures our Airmen are ready to respond effectively, keeping our service members and the community safe in the event of an emergency that requires these critical skills.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND REGIONAL EVENTS

University of Oregon Spring Football Game



Top photo: Two Oregon Air National Guard F-15 Eagle Fighter jets assigned to the 142nd Wing in Portland, Oregon, conduct the pre-game flyover at Autzen Stadium in Eugene, Oregon, on April 25, 2026, prior to the kickoff of the annual University of Oregon Spring Football game. (Photo by John Hughel, Oregon Military Department)

Left photo: University of Oregon quarterback Dylan Raiola looks for an open receiver as the “Combat Ducks” and the “Fighting Ducks” battle each other on the football field during the annual University of Oregon Spring Football game at Autzen Stadium, Eugene, Oregon, on April 25, 2026. (Photo by John Hughel, Oregon Military Department)

Autzen Stadium



ORARNG Sgt. 1st Class Ben Pasi sings the National Anthem during the annual University of Oregon Spring Football game, held at Autzen Stadium, Eugene, Oregon, on April 25, 2026. (Photo by John Hughel, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs)



The University of Oregon Duck takes part in events on the field during the annual Spring Football game, which brought the community together and honored military members, veterans, and their families with strong ties to Oregon. (Photo by Sebastian Hughel, for the Oregon Military Department Public Affairs Office)

Prior to the start of the game, head football Coach Dan Lanning told reporters that “The Spring Game is a great opportunity to celebrate our military as well as some of our other sports, with baseball and softball playing in the afternoon.” Lanning was on the field throughout the game, watching and coordinating with staff in the press boxes.

Weipert. The “Fighting Ducks” had transferred quarterback Dylan Raiola from Nebraska and sophomore Brock Thomas, who was previously a backup. Many professional scouts consider Moore to be a first-round draft choice in next year’s National Football League draft.

**Story by John Hughel,
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs**

Eugene, Ore. – The Oregon National Guard teamed up with other military branches at the University of Oregon’s annual Spring Football game, transforming Autzen Stadium into a vibrant celebration on April 25, 2026. This tradition brought the community together to honor military members, veterans, and their families connected to Oregon.

Under clear blue skies and temperatures in the mid-60s, fans spent time with service members and got a preview of the Ducks’ upcoming NCAA football season. As the teams played, tributes around the stadium honored those who have served the nation, state, and local community.

Just before kickoff, service members, veterans, families, and local first responders unfurled a massive American flag across the field. The crowd of over 40,000 roared as Army National Guard Sgt. 1st Class Ben Pasi delivered a stirring rendition of the National Anthem. Overhead, two F-15 Eagles from Portland’s 142nd Wing soared in a thunderous flyover. No Oregon Football game would be complete without the Oregon Duck revving onto the field atop a green motorcycle, flags waving, and cheerleaders igniting the celebration.

Brig. Gen. Alan R. Gronewold, the Adjutant General of the Oregon National Guard, performed the ceremonial coin flip to start the game, using his own ‘TAG Challenge Coin’ for the kickoff ritual.

The “Combat Ducks” included quarterbacks Dante Moore, the returning starter, and redshirt freshman Mark

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Gold Star family members are recognized during the annual University of Oregon Spring Football game held at Autzen Stadium in Eugene, Oregon, on April 25, 2026. (Photo by John Hughel, Oregon Military Department)

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND REGIONAL EVENTS



A large American Flag is displayed for the presentation of the National Anthem on the football field during the playing of the National Anthem, as part of the annual University of Oregon Spring Football Game at Autzen Stadium, Eugene, Oregon, on April 25, 2026. (Photo by Sebastian Hughel, for the Oregon Military Department Public Affairs Office)



University of Oregon Football players and The Oregon Duck enjoy the festivities at the end of the 3rd Quarter, singing along to "Shout" by the fictional band "Otis Day and the Knights," during the annual University of Oregon Spring game. (Photo by John Hughel, Oregon Military Department)

In a back-and-forth defensive game, the two teams battled neck and neck, offering fans an exciting glimpse of rising talent vying for coveted roster spots and minutes in the fall. Last season, the Ducks dropped just two games, both hard-fought losses to Big 10 rival Indiana University as they marched toward the National Championship.

Throughout the afternoon, military families and local veterans were recognized. At halftime, recruits, along with current service members extending their service commitments, took the Oath of Enlistment, administered by Brig. Gen. Gronewold.

The traditional post-game T-shirt exchange between service members and members of the football team closed out the afternoon, which saw the "Combat Ducks" score a touchdown with just 20 seconds left on the game clock, beating the "Fighting Ducks" 17-10.

At the conclusion of the contest, over 125 members of the University of Oregon Football team lined one side of the field, then met at midfield with

another 125 service members from the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, National Guard, and ROTC students, all taking part in the coveted gift exchange, as they traded memorabilia, creating time



University of Oregon Head Football Coach Dan Lanning celebrates the conclusion of the annual University of Oregon Spring Football Game during the T-Shirt Exchange with a member of the Oregon Army National Guard. (Photo by John Hughel, Oregon Military Department)

for lively conversations, handshakes, and plenty of selfies.

Each year, the Spring Game offers the community an affordable way to cheer on one of the nation's top college football teams. It is a lively invitation for families to join the excitement and, after the final whistle, to wander the iconic field at Autzen Stadium together.

Commenting to reporters after the game, coach Lanning said it's good to see the team ready to compete.

"There's nothing like game day experience; we get to have that here, because our fans are unbelievable," Lanning said, describing his approach to the game, which allows each player to take on various responsibilities as they learn and compete on the field. "In doing so, they gain an understanding of everyone's contributions and recognize the importance of each of their roles in successfully working towards our team's goals."



Brig. Gen. Alan R. Gronewold, The Adjutant General of the Oregon National Guard, administers the Oath of Enlistment to new recruits, along with current service members extending their service commitments at halftime of the University of Oregon Spring Football Game. (Photo by John Hughel, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs)

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND REGIONAL EVENTS

Oregon Guard culinary specialists train future Chefs in the second annual “Chopped Challenge”

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

SALEM, Ore. — Eight teams of high school culinary students traded their commercial classroom for two Army field kitchens June 4-5, 2026, as Oregon Army National Guard culinary specialists from the 1249th Engineer Battalion and Joint Force Headquarters mentored them through a two-day “Chopped Challenge” at the Career Technical Education Center in Salem, Oregon.



Sgt. Malik Durden, a 92G Culinary Specialist with the Oregon Army National Guard, briefs culinary arts students at the Career Technical Education Center before the start of the “Chopped Challenge” culinary competition in Salem, Oregon, June 4, 2026.

The event, in its second year, paired experienced 92G Culinary Specialists with CTEC culinary arts students for hands-on training inside the Army Field Feeding System’s mobile kitchens. Each Containerized Kitchen, capable of feeding 800 Soldiers in the field with three hot meals a day, gave students a working laboratory in everything their commercial classroom does not provide: limited equipment, tight space, intense heat, and the pressure of cooking under a clock.

Over the two days, four student teams went head-to-head in the kitchens. The first shift of each day featured two teams competing on an entree; the second shift brought in two new teams to compete on an appetizer. Guard culinary specialists embedded in each kitchen served as team leaders and mentors, and a panel of professional chefs judged the dishes.

“We are always in need of 92 Golf cooks in the National Guard,” said Lt. Col. Thank Vo, commander of the 1249th Engineer Battalion. “My unit specifically is the field feeding team, always needing

cooks. We were thinking outside the box on how to boost that within our ranks, and working with CTEC, we figured what better way to show students what we do than to have them embedded in the Containerized Kitchen with our cooks.”

For students used to a commercial classroom, the Containerized Kitchen was a culture shock.

“They’re in an entirely different environment than they’re used to,” said Sgt. Malik Durden, a 92G Culinary Specialist with the Oregon Army National Guard, served as a team leader inside one of the kitchens. “They’re used to normal commercial kitchens where they have five ovens, multiple stove tops, endless supplies nearby. In the Containerized Kitchen, they’re limited. They have one oven to share, a few burners, and equipment they have no experience with. They just have to adapt.”

Durden, who served 12 years with the Hawaii Army National Guard before transferring to the Oregon Army National Guard in January 2026, said the goal in the kitchens was to prevent students from becoming overwhelmed. “They have 20 things running through their head at the same time,” Durden said. “I’m making sure they’re not making mistakes.”

CTEC culinary arts instructor Caroline Spaulding, in her 10th year at the school, said the experience pushes students in ways their regular classroom cannot.

“The element of chaos that’s contained in these spaces is something that they’re not prepared for,” Spaulding said. “The level of being comfortable being uncomfortable helps them grow a lot. When we asked our graduating seniors, a lot of them told us this was one of their most meaningful experiences of their whole two years in our program.”

Spaulding said the Guard mentors also opened a career pathway many students had not considered. “They’re not seeing the pathway of a culinary specialist very well — it’s usually recruiting at lunch,



Yamir Solis Vives, chef for his team at the Career Technical Education Center, reads the recipe as his teammates prep ingredients inside an Army Containerized Kitchen during the “Chopped Challenge” competition in Salem, Oregon, on June 4, 2026.



ORNG food service Soldiers with the 1249th Engineer Battalion partnered with culinary arts students from the Career Technical Education Center for a two-day “Chopped Challenge” cook-off June 4-5, 2026, in Salem. Using two Army Containerized Kitchens, students worked in four teams per day across two shifts. During each iteration, one team prepared an entrée, the other an appetizer, all under the mentorship of Guard culinary specialists.



Emma Metcalf, a culinary arts student at the Career Technical Education Center, spoons mint cilantro chutney onto a plate of samosas inside an Army Containerized Kitchen during the “Chopped Challenge.” Metcalf’s team was one of two CTEC teams competing head-to-head on an appetizer during the event’s second shift, mentored by Oregon Army National Guard culinary specialists from the 1249th Engineer Battalion and Joint Force Headquarters.

recruiting at events,” she said. “This is really meaningful because it’s really real. They can see, ‘I could actually do something like this as a career.’” Among the judges was Scott Daffron, a chef at Willamette High School who previously owned a culinary school for children and worked for 14 years at Disneyland.



Sgt. Malik Durden (right), a 92G Culinary Specialist with the Oregon Army National Guard, talks with Kyan Lor, left, chef for one of the entree teams at the Career Technical Education Center, as Lor cooks a Mongolian beef dish in a fry pan inside an Army Containerized Kitchen during the “Chopped Challenge” on June 4, 2026.

“Considering they’d never been in there, the food they were delivering, the plates, were amazing,” Daffron said. He added that the experience carried personal weight, as his brother is retiring from the military next month after 25 years of service. “After 25 years, I finally get a glimpse into what he gets to live every day.”

For the 1249th, Vo said, the event ties into a broader vision championed by Brig. Gen. Alan Gronewold, Adjutant General, Oregon, is positioning the Oregon Army National Guard as the service of choice for Oregonians.

“They get to stay within their community, serve their nation on a drill weekend, and still have a civilian career,” Vo said. “A lot of these kids have interests in pursuing a culinary career, and having us out here allows them to see a little of what we do.”

The 1249th Engineer Battalion, headquartered at the Anderson Readiness Center in Salem, Oregon, specializes in construction, contracting, medical operations, and engineering.

TRAINING

Citizen-Soldiers support wildfire Preparedness at City of Corvallis Community readiness event

Story and photo by Sgt. 1st Class Cory Grogan, Joint Forces HQ Public Affairs

CORVALLIS, Ore. – Soldiers with the Oregon National Guard joined approximately 20 local, state, and federal responders and community partners at the May 2, 2026, regional Wildfire Readiness Fair in Benton County, hosted by the City of Corvallis, highlighting their role in both preparing for and responding to wildfire emergencies across the state.

The free event at the Corvallis Community Center brought together agencies and volunteers to help residents prepare for wildfire season. For Guard members, the mission is closely tied to their role in supporting communities during disasters,

“It’s a huge level of importance for the Oregon National Guard because we’re a community-based organization,” said Sgt. Rocco Carley. “When wildfires happen, it affects everyone, and we are part of that response.” In recent years, the Oregon National Guard has supported wildfire response across Oregon by

activating units to assist with firefighting efforts, providing equipment and personnel for logistics, transportation, and security operations.

Through Operation Plan Smokey, the Guard supports wildland firefighting with hand crews and aviation assets, including CH-47 Chinook and HH-60M Black Hawk helicopters equipped with water buckets for fire suppression. Under state active duty, Guard members work with the Oregon Department of Forestry to strengthen firelines, conduct mop-up operations, and support medical evacuations,

They often serve alongside local, state, and federal partners to help protect communities, support evacuations, and maintain critical services during large-scale incidents.

For Marion County Emergency Manager Greg Walsh, who also serves as a public affairs officer with the Oregon National Guard Joint



Matt Neuenheim (right), regional coordinator for the Oregon Department of Emergency Management, and Maj. Greg Walsh, a public affairs officer with the Oregon National Guard and emergency manager for Marion County, talks about wildfire emergency planning at the Wildfire Readiness Fair held on May 2, 2026.

Forces Headquarters, the event highlighted the dual role many service members hold. He said Guard members bring valuable civilian skills to their military service and take pride in supporting the same communities where they live and work.

“I feel proud serving both as a National Guard member and in emergency management on the civilian side,” Walsh said. “We help people be ready for their worst days.”

The Guard’s presence at the event highlighted a larger goal: to build connections and raise awareness before disasters occur, so response efforts are quicker, better organized, and more effective when wildfire season arrives.

Soldiers and Airmen qualify to support Oregon’s wildfire season

Story and photos by 1st Sgt. Zachary Holden, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

WARRENTON, Ore. – Ninety-one Airmen from the Oregon National Guard’s 142nd Wing and 173rd Fighter Wing earned their red card certification after a week of wildland firefighting training at the Camp



Rilea Armed Forces Training Center, near Warrenton, Oregon, from March 30 to April 3, 2026. Two weeks later, 68 Soldiers from the Oregon Army National Guard’s 141st Brigade Support Battalion and 741st Brigade Engineer Battalion also completed their red card certification during a training course conducted from April 13 to April 17.

This training prepares Guard members to help during Oregon’s wildfire season by teaching key skills such as mop-up and building firelines. After finishing the course, Soldiers are qualified to work with professional firefighters and can be sent out through the National Incident Qualification System during fire emergencies.

The Oregon Department of Forestry and the Oregon National Guard work together on this training to ensure more qualified people are ready to help fight wildfires across the state during fire season.



Brig. Gen. Alan R. Gronewold, Adjutant General, Oregon, addressed the importance of seasonal wildfire training with Oregon Guardsmen during his visit to Camp Rilea Armed Forces Training Center on April 13, 2026.



TRAINING

Military First Responders: Teaming up With the Clackamas Fire Department For Aviation Rescue Training

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

SANDY, Ore. – During a simulated disaster where rampant floodwaters isolated entire neighborhoods and submerged access roads, two military rescue helicopters skimmed just above the winding Sandy River, their rotors slicing just above the dense tree canopy in Clackamas County, near Sandy, Oregon, on June 5, 2026.



U.S. Coast Guardsman Petty Officer Third Class Justin Warling, an aviation maintenance technician assigned to Coast Guard Air Station Astoria, talks with a group of fellow first responders regarding lift procedures of an MH-60 Jayhawk Helicopter during a day of joint training held at the Sandy River Airport in Sandy, Oregon, on April 10, 2026.

Since late February, the Oregon National Guard, along with other military first responders, has been training with the Clackamas Fire Department in a three-part “crawl, walk, run” series to enhance joint incident response capabilities. The final “run” focused on water rescues in Clackamas County’s biologically diverse terrain and used an Oregon Army National Guard HH-60M Black Hawk out of Salem, and a U.S. Coast Guard MH-60 Jayhawk assigned to Coast Guard Station Astoria to extract casualties from stranded areas along the fictional “Clackamine River.”

“What we’re working on today is interagency coordination between our capabilities with the National Guard, and the water rescue teams on the Coast Guard and civilian sides,” said Army Staff Sgt. Elliot Ariel, assigned to Golf Company, 1st Battalion, 189th Aviation Regiment. “The training is beneficial to the community, and the practice helps streamline our communication process and how we would have to do this in a real-world event.”

Morgan West, Community Resilience Officer for the Clackamas Fire Department, spearheaded the three training exercises. The “crawl” occurred on February 26 during an air-monitoring exercise that resulted in an accident involving a tank of anhydrous ammonia in Clackamas, Oregon. The “walk” session was held on April 10 at the Sandy River Airport and focused on patient-pack training, aircraft-specific mission briefings, and hoist iterations aboard the Black Hawk and Jayhawk helicopters. An Oregon Army National Guard CH-47 Chinook from Pendleton was used for ground familiarization and loading training.

“Those questions of ‘We’re not sure...I don’t know how to do that... what are

we capable of...’ – That’s why we’re here today,” West said as he opened the April training session, which led up to the final “run” exercise, with the Army and Coast Guard each conducting “one-time goes” to extract injured victims.

A solid plan and open lines of communication set the stage for this final exercise. As with any multi-agency exercise, the real test was weaving everyone together, whether face-to-face, over the radio, on the ground, or soaring above.

“Having the combat controllers here [from the 125th STS] was a critical safety factor,” West said. “They are a great resource because they helped with the sequencing of aircraft into and out of the recovery zone.”

The 125th is one of only two Special Tactics units in the Air National Guard, the other being the 123rd Special Tactics Squadron in Kentucky. This unit comprises Combat Controllers and Special Operations Weather Teams. They also bring extensive experience in static-line and

military free-fall parachuting, rappelling, small-boat operations, and all-terrain vehicle operations.

“Separation in the air space is the biggest thing and having a plan in place,” noted one of the 125th Special Tactics airmen conducting air traffic control for this exercise.

“But today went super-smooth.”

Noting that air rescue operations are generally fixed for Coast Guard operations along the Pacific Ocean, Coast Guard Lt. j.g.



An Oregon Army National Guard HH-60M Black Hawk helicopter from McNary Field, in Salem, conducts takeoff and hoist iteration in a hover as ground crew members, made up of Flight Medics, Search and Rescue Corpsmen, Rescue Swimmers, and civilian firefighters, train with simulated patients at the Sandy River Airport on April 10, 2026.

Griffin Garber said the contrast in training was a welcome change.

“It’s a very unique environment, especially for our crews who are used to the ocean, as there is not a lot of tree coverage around there, so it’s great to train and get that experience in this environment.”

U.S. Air Force Reserve Pararescuemen, known as “PJs,” from the 304th Rescue Squadron at the Portland Air National Guard Base, also took part in the training. They supported both the Army Guard and the Coast Guard Flight Medics on the ground, helping to load patients into rescue litter baskets. Although the squadron is based in Portland, it is part of the 943rd

Rescue Group at Davis–Monthan Air Force Base in Arizona and the 920th Rescue Wing at Patrick Space Force Base in Florida.

Story continued on Page 17



ORARNG Staff Sgt. John Kilroy, a medic working with the HH-60M helicopter crew, talks to Morgan West with the Clackamas Fire Department, who organized the joint training exercise at the Sandy River Airport in Sandy on April 10, 2026.



An MH-60 Jayhawk assigned to the U.S. Coast Guard Station Astoria, Oregon, begins rescue operations along the Sandy River near Dodge Park during the Water Rescue Team Air Mobility Exercise in Sandy, Oregon, on June 5, 2026.

TRAINING



An Oregon Army National Guard CH-47 Chinook helicopter assigned to B Co., 1st Battalion, 168th Aviation Regiment, based in Pendleton, unloads a small rescue boat by members of the Clackamas Fire Department, along with ORARNG and Air Force Reserve Pararescuemen from the 304th Rescue Squadron at the Sandy River Airport on June 5, 2026.

The unit has a long history of search-and-rescue missions in the Pacific Northwest.

On March 7, 2022, 11 members of the unit battled high winds and deep snow to help rescue two injured climbers stranded on Mount Hood, in Central Oregon. As they had before, they joined forces with Oregon Army National Guard aviators to launch a coordinated search-and-rescue operation in the Leuthold Couloir after the two climbers plunged nearly 200 feet. The Clackamas County Sheriff's Office called on its expertise for the demanding ground recovery mission.

The conditions for this final part of the three-step exercise unfolded after days of relentless rain, when the saturated soils of fictional Clackamine County could no longer absorb the rising waters. Streams feeding into the lower Sandyville area quickly overflowed, causing severe flooding along the fictional Clackamine River. Local neighborhoods

Emergency Management and conducted an over-water rescue along a similar stretch of the Sandy River.

At 5:30 p.m., an urgent call came in. Two kayakers were stranded, desperately clinging to a sandbar as the storm-swollen river rose beneath them. Braving the darkness and snow, then - Oregon Army National Guard

“The training is beneficial to the community, and the practice helps streamline our communication process and how we would have to do this in a real-world event.”

- Staff Sgt. Elliot Ariel, G - Company, 1-189th Aviation

R. Hokanson led the mission as pilot-in-command, a role that foreshadowed his future as the 29th chief of the National Guard Bureau.

Despite firing a rope across the river, the ground team could not reach the kayakers, whose hands were too numb from the frigid 38-degree water to grasp it. With a helicopter grounded by surging currents and massive trees hurtling downstream, a boat rescue became the final hope. After more than three hours in the icy water, the kayakers were on the brink of hypothermia. Thanks to the Oregon Black Hawk crew that day, both kayakers survived and fully recovered, and no rescuers were injured.

Real-life responses like this highlight the importance of the training and support the next generation of first responders in the Pacific Northwest as they continue this legacy.

“This has been a step-by-step training for all of our teams involved. Many of our members

mobilizing to assist those affected by the severe flood.

The final exercise mirrored a specific real-life rescue operation by the Oregon Army National Guard over two decades ago.

On December 13, 2003, the Oregon National Guard Military Air Rescue Team responded to an urgent call from Oregon



Two ORARNG Flight Medics assigned to G-Co., 1-189th Aviation Regiment, are hoist lifted back aboard an HH-60M Black Hawk while working with Clackamas Fire Department responders and Pararescuemen from the 304th Rescue Squadron, during joint training along the Sandy River at Dodge Park on June 5, 2026.



Clackamas Fire Department first responders, along with U.S. Air Force Reserve Pararescuemen assigned to the 304th Rescue Squadron, and Oregon Air National Guard Combat Controls from the 125th Special Tactics Squadron out of the Portland Air National Guard Base, discuss rescue procedures at the conclusion of a joint training exercise along the Sandy River at Dodge Park in Sandy, Oregon, on June 5, 2026.

have been deployed outside the region and the Clackamas fire area, so we understand which needs we are missing,” said Kyle Olson, who has coordinated regional disaster readiness exercises for the Clackamas Fire Department. Last August, he worked with the Oregon Army National Guard to begin initial flood response efforts alongside CH-47 crews. “We have so many talented folks in each one of these competencies and with these skill sets who can go out and help when we need it most.”



A USCG Flight Medic assigned to the Coast Guard Station Astoria, Oregon, along with Clackamas Fire Department responders and Air Force Reserve Pararescuemen from the 304th Rescue Squadron, work together using a rescue litter basket to hoist a simulated injured patient along the Sandy River at Dodge Park in Sandy, Oregon, on June 5, 2026.

became isolated and sustained significant damage as the water continued to rise. In response, Clackamas County Emergency Management urgently called on the Oregon Department of Emergency Management for help. This prompted a coordinated rescue effort, with Search and Rescue teams from Clackamas Fire and military units



ORARNG 1042nd Medical Company crew members, [then] Lt. Col. Dan Hokanson, pilot in charge, crew chiefs Staff Sgt. Mark Braeme and Sgt. Rob Armstrong, and Capt. Bryan Houston, pilot, pause in front of a Black Hawk helicopter on Dec. 15, 2003, in Salem. The crew, including Staff Sgt. Travis Powell, flight medic, was credited with saving the lives of two kayakers on the Sandy River following an over-water air rescue during a winter storm and rising flood waters. (File photo by Tech. Sgt. Nick Choy, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs)

TRAINING



KINGSLEY FIELD AIRMEN: ENHANCING SKILLS AND READINESS THROUGH CONTINUOUS TRAINING



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

Oregon Air National Guardsmen with the 173rd Fighter Wing practice hot pit procedures on the F-35 Lightning II with pilots from the 56th Fighter Wing out of Tucson, Arizona, on April 3, 2026, at Kingsley Field, in Klamath Falls, Oregon. Hot Pit procedures are one of many skills members of the 173rd Fighter Wing are developing as they prepare for a future F-35 Flying mission. (Photo by Airman 1st Class Zach Cook, 173rd Fighter Wing Public Affairs)

KLAMATH FALLS, Ore. – Airmen at Kingsley Field are participating in a series of training events this summer aimed at strengthening readiness, reinforcing foundational skills, and honoring the legacy of those who served before them.

From a forward deployment to Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska, to austere field conditions in Central Oregon and a simulated deployment line at home station, the layered approach ensures Airmen are prepared for the full spectrum of military operations and readiness.

Lt. Col. Brian Anderson of the 173rd Operations Squadron said the scope and intensity of the training reflect a deliberate effort to build a lethal and adaptable force.

“This exercise demonstrates our continued commitment to maintaining a highly capable, ready, and lethal force able to respond across the full spectrum of operations,” he said. A centerpiece of the training cycle is the July 8-17 temporary duty deployment to Eielson AFB, where Airmen will travel aboard a C-130J Super Hercules and integrate with active-duty units operating F-35 aircraft.

The deployment provides exposure to high operational tempos and specialized equipment not available at Kingsley Field. Security Forces personnel will conduct heavy weapons qualifications, while Civil Engineering teams will practice contingency operations in austere conditions. Airmen from the 173rd Logistics Readiness Squadron will gain hands-on experience with unfamiliar equipment, while Maintenance Group personnel will embed with F-35 units during an intensive maintenance phase.

“Training like this ensures our Airmen remain proficient, adaptable, and prepared to execute the mission anytime, anywhere,” Anderson said.

Closer to home, Airmen will take part in the Basic Indoctrination Airman Course at the Biak Training Center, a four-day, three-night field exercise designed to challenge participants physically and mentally while reinforcing the heritage of the Oregon National Guard.

Held in two sessions: July 7–10 and July 13–16, with up to 80 participants per session, the training will immerse Airmen in austere conditions. Transportation will be provided by bus from Kingsley Field, with meals contracted and lodging consisting of tents and cots. Participants are limited to

the gear they can carry in a rucksack.

The training also serves as a tribute to those who fought during the World War II battle for Biak Island.

“This training is an opportunity to honor their legacy,” Anderson said. “By stretching our own limits, we attempt to pay tribute to the sacrifice of those who fought and fell on the shores of Biak Island.”

“This exercise demonstrates our continued commitment to maintaining a highly capable, ready, and lethal force able to respond across the full spectrum of operations.”

**- Lt. Col. Brian Anderson,
173rd Operations Officer**

During the course, Airmen will develop tactical skills, including Tactical Combat Casualty Care, basic communication, small-arms familiarization, Military Operations on Urbanized Terrain or MOUT, close-quarters battle techniques, and land navigation. Instruction will also cover essential knowledge areas, including active threat response, explosive ordnance hazards, and the law of war.

Leadership and resilience are further reinforced through events like a low ropes course and physical fitness testing.

“Our focus is on sharpening our tactical edge while reinforcing the fundamentals that underpin readiness and operational excellence,” Anderson said.

For those remaining at Kingsley Field, a separate exercise, Forward Operating Base Ready Airmen Training, will transform part of the installation into a simulated deployed environment.

The two-day training event includes four sessions, each capped at 40 participants, beginning July 9 and concluding July 14, 2026. Airmen will process through a full deployment line before moving to a simulated forward operating base on the south side of the installation.

There, they will conduct hands-on training in chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and explosive defense; basic communication; integrated defense; and small-arms proficiency.

“We are deliberately stressing our systems and personnel to identify opportunities to improve and refine our warfighting capabilities,” Anderson said.

The overarching goal is that the combination of forward deployment, field training, and home-station exercises ensures a comprehensive approach to readiness, preparing Airmen for both immediate and future challenges.

“This is about building muscle memory while ensuring that when it matters most, execution is second nature,” Anderson said. “Ultimately, this training ensures we remain a disciplined, lethal, and ready force aligned with national defense priorities.”



Members of the 173rd Civil Engineering flight carried out airfield repair operations during a Sentry Eagle 25-1 exercise on August 8, 2025. These repairs are essential in civil engineering and help ensure members can respond quickly when needed. This summer, Airmen at Kingsley Field are taking part in training events to build readiness, strengthen core skills, and pay tribute to those who served before them. (Photo courtesy of Master Sgt. Michael Heath)

TRAINING

Redhawk Run Club Combines Fitness And Friendship

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



Members of the Redhawk Run Club make time for an early morning run before the start of the May Drill Weekend at the Portland Air National Guard Base, Portland, Oregon, on May 2, 2026. The run club got its start at the beginning of 2026 and has since united and inspired Airmen across the 142nd Wing to meet other members of the Wing while working towards military physical fitness goals.

PORTLAND, Ore. – It's the early morning hours of a Saturday on a drill weekend. The night sky shows only vague hints of the impending dawn. A small group of Airmen departs from the base fitness center and moves like silent shadows along the dark, quiet streets.

This is the run club's second drill run, both accomplished in the space of time that occurs an hour or so before the file of cars makes its way onto base, and each section and shop is set into motion for the day.

The Redhawk Run Club got its start early this year. The idea behind this club was to provide support and accountability for Airmen, family members, and retirees who want to improve their running or run more consistently. Recent changes to the running portion of the Air Force fitness test have further driven the emergence of the run club, making it even more relevant.

ORANG 1st Lt. Susi Traudt, 142nd Force Support Squadron Services Flight Officer in Charge, is an avid runner and the force behind the Redhawk Run Club.

"[The Redhawk Run Club] is more

about just developing community here, and with our run going from a mile and a half to two miles, I think running is on everyone's minds right now," Traudt said.

Traudt is an accomplished runner. She's qualified for the Boston Marathon twice and completed the Air Force Marathon, placing first overall among military females with a finish time of 3:27:34 with the Air National Guard team in 2022. She's also been officially selected to run on the Department of the Air Force Sports Marathon Team again this September for the Air Force Marathon.

Impressive as her running resume is, Traudt says that she runs for the benefits, but doesn't necessarily enjoy the process, at least not all the time.

"I think the perception is that because I run often, I must really love it," Traudt said. "I run out of necessity because I feel good when I'm done. I enjoy the benefits. Mentally, I feel better. Physically, I feel better."

A pervasive attitude or belief that Traudt has encountered on and off base is the notion that it takes a certain type of person to join a

run club. One of Traudt's goals with this club is to change that line of thinking and challenge such misconceptions, keeping the club open to anyone who wants to run.

"I feel like anyone who runs is a runner," Traudt said.

Much of the goings-on in the Redhawk Run Club happen over a Signal group chat where more than 50 members share their goals, progress, successes, and the occasional meme. The chat is also used by members to coordinate and meet up for runs in the local area.

Being a member of this club is intentionally low commitment. There are virtually no expectations. It's simply a resource available for use; however, the individual sees fit. For some, the run club is not just about improving their running; it's a chance to find mentorship and make friends in the base community.

Airman 1st Class Brendan Reddy, a future firefighter in the 142nd Civil Engineer Squadron, is a new member of the 142nd Wing, enlisting in January 2026.

He joined the run club to meet more people on base and keep up his running regimen.

Reddy said he's still learning a lot about the Air Force and the 142nd Wing, and finding mentors in the Redhawk Run Club has expanded his knowledge and understanding as he prepares to depart for basic military training in July.

"I think I gained a lot of knowledge from people who have been in the Air Force for a while, and just gaining perspective," Reddy said.

As for running, Reddy sees it as a mainstay in his future. He shared that he plans to make a career out of his military service and that he aspires to run the Boston Marathon one day. Over his two-year running journey, Reddy says he's gained a lot from the practice, including improvements in his physical fitness.

"It's taught me how to be resilient," Reddy said. "To push through hard things and to know that I can do hard things."

Future goals Traudt has in mind for the Redhawk Run Club include representing the 142nd at local running events and organizing on-base events to build a sense of community and pride.

Two Soldiers' determination sparks a drive towards powerlifting records

Courtesy story by
1st Sgt. Joseph Watson,
Oregon Army National Guard
Recruiting & Retention Command

LEBANON, Ore. – On February 28, 2026, two Oregon Army National Guard recruiting Non-Commissioned Officers, Staff Sgt. Kody Stonelake and Sgt. Sean Vary, demonstrated exceptional determination by breaking multiple powerlifting records at the National Power Lifting League Sam Pektol Open in Lebanon, Oregon.

Their accomplishments set a high standard for recruiting and showcased what it means to be truly committed to the pursuit of excellence, shattering multiple powerlifting records while setting an elite standard for both the recruiting enterprise and the operational units they support.

Competing in the 110 kg weight class, Staff Sgt. Stonelake proved himself a highly competent athlete and leader,



Oregon Army National Guard Sgt. Sean Vary, assigned to the RSP section of the Region B Oregon Army recruiting (left), and Staff Sgt. Kody Stonelake, an Oregon Army National Guard Recruiter (right) in Springfield, pause for a photo after their record-setting performance at the National Power Lifting League Sam Pektol Open on February 28, 2026, in Lebanon, Oregon.

executing his lifts flawlessly under intense pressure to set a new national bench press record of 457.5 lbs.

His monumental achievement is a direct testament to his rigorous discipline, which he actively models for prospective applicants and his peers across the recruiting command. By operating at the absolute pinnacle of physical conditioning, Staff Sgt. Stonelake serves as a powerful, visible testament to the warrior ethos. He projects an image of uncompromising strength to the public, setting a demanding physical standard that inspires high-quality recruits to step up and join the ranks.

Sgt. Vary, competing in the 82.5 kg weight class, delivered an equally dominant performance that rewrote the record books while directly shaping the next generation of warfighters. He set four new state records, including a 320 lbs Bench Press, a 385 lbs Squat, a 408 lbs Deadlift (also a national record), and an Overall total of 1113 lbs, bringing his

elite understanding of physical readiness directly to the Recruit Sustainment Program (RSP). In his constant, close contact with new enlistees awaiting Basic Training, Sgt. Vary leverages his platform success to physically and mentally harden these future soldiers. His hands-on coaching and lead-by-example approach drastically improved his trainees' initial fitness levels, lowering attrition rates and ensuring they arrive at training ready to excel.

Through extensive preparation and record-setting achievements, both NCOs support the strategic mission of building the Oregon Army National Guard's combat power. Their accomplishments set a benchmark for all Citizen-Soldiers in Oregon and by mentoring others, they inspire fellow recruiters and ensure new Soldiers are physically capable, mentally resilient, and ready to meet the demands of operational units across the state and beyond.

FEATURES

Oregon National Guardsmen take part in the 250th Anniversary of American Independence

Story by John Hughel, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

SALEM, Ore. — Members of the Oregon National Guard took part in ceremonies, festivities, and community events across Oregon to commemorate the 250th Anniversary of American Independence on July 4, 2026. Activities included guest speakers, Color Guard presentations, music performances, static displays, and flyovers. Oregon National Guard service members honored the historic Semiquincentennial, marking the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776.

Air National Guard Brigadier General Jenifer E. Pardy, Director of Joint Staff, addressed attendees at the Star-Spangled Parade and Celebration at Millennium Plaza Park in Lake Oswego. She discussed the legacy of early militiamen and their significant contributions to the American Revolutionary War.

“Two hundred and fifty years ago, a group of farmers, blacksmiths, shopkeepers, and tradesmen stepped out of their homes, picked up their muskets, and changed the course of human history,” Pardy said. “They defended their families and the right to self-governance. That

“Most days of the year they live the same lives you do,” she said. “But when the call comes, when a wildfire threatens a community, when floodwaters rise... and when our nation needs them overseas, they put on the uniform, and they go.”

The 142nd Wing from the Portland Air National Guard Base spent the day flying their F-15EX Eagle II jets over 30 cities in Oregon and Southwest Washington as part of their Patriot flyovers.



Brig. Gen. Jenifer E. Pardy, Director of Joint Staff, pauses for a photo with members of the 741st BEB Color Guard before the start of the Star-Spangled Parade & Celebration in Lake Oswego, Oregon, on July 4, 2026. (Oregon National Guard photo by John Hughel)

“These flyovers are our way of celebrating our nation’s heritage while directly connecting with the communities we serve and protect here in the Pacific Northwest,” said Col. Joshua Havanus, a fighter pilot assigned to the unit.

At the annual St. Paul Rodeo, two Oregon Army National Guard HH-60M Black Hawk helicopters from Company G, 1st Battalion, 189th Aviation Regiment flew over the grandstand right after the national anthem to celebrate the rodeo’s 90th anniversary. Soldiers also brought some of their M-ATVs (MRAP All-Terrain Vehicles) for display, giving visitors a chance to meet Oregon Guardsmen and learn more about the armored vehicles.

The Oregon Army National Guard’s “No Brass, No Ammo” brass band brought Riverview Park in Independence

to life with their performance. As a dynamic part of the 234th Army Band, they energize both military ceremonies and community gatherings. With lively traditional, jazz, and modern brass pieces, stirring marches, and selections from historical repertoire, No Brass, No Ammo shares the Army’s story through its unique musical renditions.

The concert in Independence was not the only venue where members of the 234th Army Band performed.



A Colonial-era American Fife and Drum Band takes part in the Star-Spangled Parade and Celebration at the Millennium Plaza Park in Lake Oswego, Oregon, on July 4, 2026. Oregon Guardsmen presented the colors to kick off the celebration. (Oregon National Guard photo by John Hughel)

tradition of the Citizen-Soldiers is the oldest military tradition in America.”

The Lake Oswego celebration also featured the Oregon Army National Guard’s 741st Brigade Engineer Battalion Color Guard, who presented the Colors. The event included music, carnival games, a variety of food options, and a traditional pie-eating contest.

Pardy explained that Soldiers and Airmen of the Oregon National Guard, who uphold a tradition of service, are also your neighbors and pointed out that they may be present in this audience, working in civilian careers as “teachers, nurses, welders, or business owners.”



Oregon Army National Guard Soldiers assigned to 2nd Battalion, 186th Infantry Regiment, display an M-ATV (MRAP All-Terrain Vehicle) during the 90th annual St. Paul Rodeo in St. Paul, Oregon, on July 4, 2026. (Photo by Maj. W. Chris Clyne, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs)



Two ORARNG HH-60 Black Hawk helicopters assigned to Company G, 1st Battalion, 189th Aviation Regiment pass over the grandstand at the conclusion of the national anthem during the St. Paul Rodeo in St. Paul, Oregon, July 4, 2026. (Photo by Maj. W. Chris Clyne, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs)

The group “45 Away” played at the 4th of July Family Festival at Happy Valley Park in Happy Valley, Oregon. This high-energy, 12-member band played family-friendly songs ranging from the 1970s to today’s most popular hits. The music had attendees dancing and interacting with many members of the band, as the group was the closing act to the day-long festival.



ORARNG Sgt. Bethany Valencia, a baritone saxophone player with the 234th Army Band plays during a musical set at Riverview Park in Independence, Oregon, on July 4, 2026. Valencia is part of the smaller music ensemble “No Brass, No Ammo” that performs at military functions and public performances. (Photo by Maj. Leslie Reed, Oregon Military Department)



Oregon Army National Guard members of the music group “45 Away” perform at the 4th of July Family Festival held at Happy Valley Park in Happy Valley, Oregon, on the evening of July 4, 2026. (Oregon National Guard photo by Aaron Perkins)

FEATURES



Members of the Oregon Military Department, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, and the Global Owl Project install a new artificial burrow on Oregon Army National Guard training lands at Rees Training Center, near Hermiston, Oregon, on Feb. 8, 2024. (Courtesy photo from the Oregon Military Department)

Rees Training Center earns Army Environmental award For Burrowing Owl conservation

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

HERMISTON, Ore. – The Rees Training Center received the 2026 Secretary of the Army Environmental Award in the Natural Resources Conservation, Small Installation category, the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Installations, Energy and Environment announced April 17, 2026.

The award recognizes outstanding achievement in mission-focused environmental program management and is among the Army's highest honors for environmental stewardship. As a category winner, RTC has been nominated for the 2026 Secretary of War Environmental Awards competition, with final winners to be announced by June 2026.

"This award reflects the hard work of an entire team committed to proving that environmental stewardship and military readiness go hand in hand and directly supports our soldiers' ability to train. Through the connections with our partners, like the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, we have invested in making Rees Training Center a model for what competent

and responsible land stewardship looks like on a military installation."

Located on 7,500 acres on the former Umatilla Chemical Depot site near Hermiston, RTC supports Oregon Army National Guard units and regional forces with weapons ranges, maneuver areas, tracked vehicle driver training, and a Regional Training Institute. The installation is also home to one of the DoD's most significant Western Burrowing Owl conservation programs – a species designated as both a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Bird of Conservation Concern and a DoD Military Sensitive Species

When the depot was under Army management in 2008, the owl population had fallen to just four nesting pairs. Through sustained conservation work in partnership with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, RTC and adjacent tribal lands now support more than 80 nesting pairs across 11,500 acres, making RTC a model for burrowing owl recovery across the DoD.



Six burrowing owl chicks sit in a collection bucket during monitoring and banding operations at the Rees Training Center, near Hermiston, Oregon, on June 6, 2019. (Photo courtesy of David H. "DJ" Johnson)

Central to the program's recent success is a low-cost artificial burrow system built from 55-gallon barrels donated by the local Tree Top plant. Each burrow is relocatable to avoid conflicts with active training operations—a design approach that reflects the program's core philosophy.

"Our work with the Western Burrowing Owl at Rees Training Center proves that environmental stewardship and military readiness aren't mutually exclusive — they actually reinforce one another," said Rhande Shaw, Natural Resources Program Manager, Oregon Military Department. "By strategically placing artificial burrows, we are able to carefully deconflict wildlife habitat from active training. Our priority is always the mission and ensuring soldier training remains unimpeded while conserving natural resources, and that is what makes working for this program so rewarding."

Last year's donation of 100 Tree Top barrels will yield 200 burrows. The design has been adopted by the CTUIR and has drawn the interest of University of Boise scientists and Idaho Army National Guard environmental staff, who visited RTC to observe construction and installation. RTC also hosted a DoD Avian Knowledge Network owl training event open to Army, Guard, tribal, and state agency participants.

Beyond owl habitat, RTC has addressed cheatgrass and wildfire risk in Coyote Coulee through prescribed fire followed by targeted herbicide treatment. The installation has since signed an intergovernmental agreement with Oregon State University and the USGS Fire Team to reseed more than 350 acres with native grasses and forbs. Data from the partnership will be used to develop customized fire models and update RTC's Integrated Wildland Fire Management Plan.



Janet Johnson, Natural Resources Program Manager for the Oregon Military Department, places a burrowing owl on a digital field scale during monitoring operations at Rees Training Center, Oregon, June 11, 2025. Weight measurements are part of the comprehensive data collection that tracks the health and development of the owls. (Photo by Maj. W. Chris Clyne, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs)



Solai Le Fay, a master's student in raptor biology at Boise State University, Idaho, holds an adult burrowing owl during monitoring and banding operations at the Rees Training Center, near Hermiston, Oregon, on June 11, 2025. Le Fay is leading field research efforts for the colony and using 11 years of data for her thesis work. (Photo by Maj. W. Chris Clyne, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs)

FEATURES



“I invited several mayors from around the area today because I want to encourage them to consider how these kinds of ceremonies can be held in their own communities.”

*- Lacy Beaty,
Mayor,
Beaverton, Oregon*

Parole in Place Supports Oregon Military Families On Their Path to U.S. Citizenship

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

BEAVERTON, Ore. – With nearly every seat in the packed Beaverton City Hall chamber filled, Oregon Army National Guard Specialist Daniel Lopez Hernandez stood in quiet dignity near the front, listening as leaders, speaking in both English and Spanish, described how the Parole in Place program had transformed his family’s life.

Chely Castillo opened her remarks in Spanish, a simple acknowledgment to the community she has been diligently working with for over 25 years, pausing periodically for translation by Sgt. 1st Class Rosa Cortez, an Oregon Army National Guard recruiter.

“I want to begin my speech with the word ‘Hope’, because it indicates a feeling of confidence and objective goal and aspiration,” Cortez translated,

while reiterating many of the emotions that the Parole in Place offers. “These young people gain significant benefits in their professional and military training when they join the Oregon Army National Guard. Some soldiers can extend this honor to their families by applying for military parole. For their families, hope remains in their hearts.”

Becoming a U.S. citizen is not a quick or simple process, as shifting regulations and unexpected obstacles can slow the journey. Since 2013, the Parole in Place program has offered undocumented parents and spouses of service members a shield from deportation and an expedited pathway to permanent residency. However, only U.S. citizens and permanent residents can join the military.

Story continued on Page 21



Oregon National Guard Spc. Daniel Lopez Hernandez (left) stands with Carlos Quesnel Melendez, Consul of Mexico (right), for a photo at the conclusion of the Parole in Place Ceremony for Hernandez’s father, Daniel Hector Pablo Lopez.

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Spc. Lopez Hernandez joined the Oregon National Guard as a '13 Bravo', working as an Army Cannon Crewmember with the 2nd Battalion, 218th Field Artillery Regiment, before he turned 21. Later, his older sister, who is a legal adult but not in the military, was able to finish the second step to get a permanent residency card for their dad. At this stage, the experience of Oregon Army National Guard recruiters became especially helpful with these applications.

"Specialist Lopez [Hernandez] worked incredibly hard to overcome the mental and physical stressors of intimal training. But know what was taking place back at home kept him driving forward to continue his mission," said Staff Sgt. Anna Mendoza, one of his recruiters, helped him join the Oregon National Guard after graduating from Mountainside High School in Beaverton.

"I invited several mayors from around the area today because I want to encourage them to consider how these kinds of ceremonies can be held in their own communities," Beaty said, drawing from her own experience in uniform. "There are not a lot of pathways to citizenship in America, and that's just the truth. But, as with many great things in life, and in my life, the Army opens those doors. But then it asks you to do the hard thing, which is to walk through it, and walking through the door takes more than courage."

Beaty then invited Señor Daniel Hector Pablo Lopez to join her and his son to the front of the chamber and presented him with his permanent resident card. A simple gesture that was decades in the making.

After the ceremony, Specialist Lopez Hernandez said his dad felt a sense of pride and relief



Oregon National Guard Sgt. 1st Class Rosa Cortez (center-right) is joined by Spc. Daniel Lopez Hernandez (left), Chely Castillo (center-left), and Mayor Lacey Beaty (right), as she addresses those in attendance for the Parole in Place Ceremony for the family of Army Specialist Daniel Lopez Hernandez at Beaverton City Hall in Beaverton, Oregon, on April 16, 2026. The federal program allows service members to petition for family members, including parents, dependents, or spouses, who lack legal status in the United States.



Beaverton Mayor Lacey addresses attendees at the Parole in Place Ceremony for the family of Army Specialist Daniel Lopez Hernandez at Beaverton City Hall. Spc. Hernandez is a '13 Bravo,' a Cannon Crewmember with the 2nd Battalion, 218th Field Artillery Regiment, and attends Portland State University.

With his enlistment, Señor Lopez was approved for military Parole in Place on May 30, 2024, and by November, he received his permanent resident card. Mendoza said, "It was still several months before he obtained his work permit and Social Security Card," when it finally arrived on February 17, 2025.

"By honoring (Spc. Lopez), his service today, we are also honoring his family. The Lopez family's determination and resilience are why we are here today," Mendoza said. "As a recruiter, there is something I like to share with every recruit. 'You don't do anything alone.' Specialist Lopez, his father, and older sister are a testament to this fact."

As both a military veteran and a military spouse, Beaverton Mayor Lacey Beaty felt it was important to hold the ceremony at City Hall and to recognize the Lopez family's commitment to service.

that today had finally arrived.

"I was really eager to join (the Oregon National Guard), and it was mainly my idea to look into this program. But my family was worried, and over time, the idea soothed down some, and it has really paid off."

The benefits for the family have become multidimensional. For Señor Lopez, getting his green card means he can finally visit his home country of Mexico after more than 30 years. Specialist Lopez Hernandez is using the Oregon National Guard State Tuition Assistance program, which covers all his tuition, so he can attend Portland State University and work toward completing his double major in Human Resources and Marketing.

"I've coming up on three years in the military, and I still enjoy it. There are still areas for growth, and it really helps build a foundation for new opportunities," Lopez Hernandez said.

The success of this program for the Oregon National Guard has come from community members working closely with Oregon National Guard recruiters around the state.

While she was part of the ceremony in Beaverton, Sgt. 1st Class Cortez, who is normally in the recruiting area in the Columbia River Gorge and

Eastern Oregon, has been instrumental in completing many of these applications.

"A lot of people who come to see me in the first place do so because they want to serve. I also want everyone to know that Parole in Place is an added benefit, she said, now having served in the Oregon National Guard for over 20 years. "Today, more than 40 percent of the military are Hispanic members. This is possible because of the relationships, trust, and care within the program."

With the Parole in Place application for Spc. Lopez Hernandez, Cortez said, relies on community members like Chely Castillo to help families interested in the process.

"We do this work all the time. Sitting with Ms. Chely is helpful - she gives us the most basic information, then I can sit down and prequalify them for the Guard," Cortez said. "As a mom now, when I work with parents in the Parole in Place program and other recruits, I empathize and answer their questions from the heart. I speak honestly, telling them it won't be easy, but it's so worth it."

This illustrates one more reason why Mayor Beaty felt it was important to hold only the second "Parole in Place" ceremony at Beaverton City Hall on April 16, 2026.

"It takes community champions to connect the dots, and someone like Sergeant Cortez to step in when recruiters were transitioning positions. The Army is a family," Beaty said. "For more than 25 years, I've had a front row seat to what it looks like to be a military spouse. It's led to an extraordinary life, to college, to my husband and home."



Oregon National Guard Spc. Daniel Lopez Hernandez is joined by his family, along with Chely Castillo (right), for a group photo at the conclusion of the Parole in Place Ceremony for the family of Army Specialist Daniel Lopez Hernandez at Beaverton City Hall in Beaverton, Oregon, on April 16, 2026.

FEATURES

A Diamond in the Rough



Story and photo by Steven Conklin,
142nd Wing Public Affairs

BEND, Ore. – Seventeen-year-old Ryan Rosso was flipping burgers and flipping the bird to the law while in high school in Bend, Oregon, back in 2004. The law was not happy.

“I got into some legal trouble at school, and I ended up dropping out,” said Rosso. “But I didn’t want to just keep on working at [fast food restaurant] for the rest of my life.”

With seemingly nowhere to turn to, he knew he needed to act. He heard about a program in Oregon that helps kids who might need a little push to earn their diplomas. Luckily for Rosso, the Oregon Youth Challenge Program (OYCP), established by the Oregon National Guard in 1999, was conveniently in Bend.

“It was actually kind of competitive to get in, but I really wanted this. I was stoked when I found out I was accepted!”

This roughly five-month program graduates around 300 students per year in the state and is one of more than 40 similar programs nationwide. Company Commander Larry Demarr, who oversees the cadets and cadre, says this program is about serving Oregon’s youth.

“We bring in kids that are underserved and not getting what

they need in high school. We provide them with the opportunity to come here, focus on discipline, pride, and esprit de corps, ultimately to create people that can help contribute to society.”

Demarr came to this position based on his past experiences in law enforcement as a corrections officer.

“When I was a CO, I sat there, and I thought, ‘I’d love to serve these people before they get to this point.’ This job popped up, and it spoke to my soul.”

In 2004, Demarr was Rosso’s instructor. Rosso knew he needed to turn his life around, and with the help of Demarr and the other instructors, he graduated from the program. He enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps shortly after and later transferred into the Air Force. At the 142nd Wing, Rosso was an aerial porter, creating aircraft load plans and ensuring safe transportation.

Retired 142nd Wing Command Chief, Chief Master Sergeant Scott Cargin, was Rosso’s supervisor when Rosso first got to the base in 2018. Rosso had made it through the OYCP and the Marine Corps, but now had a family and a demanding job to deal with.

“He did not come in as an all-star Airman,” Cargin said. “He worked hard, but he liked to play.”



ORANG Master Sgt. Ryan Rosso, First Sgt. of the 142nd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, talks with cadets at an open house for the Oregon Youth Challenge Program on April 2, 2026, in Bend, Oregon. Rosso graduated from the program 20 years ago and returned to speak with the current students about their futures.

Rosso didn’t give up, though. According to Cargin, Rosso’s drive and determination had him on a path to greater things.

“I’ve had the opportunity to watch him grow into the leader he is today. When I look at Ryan, I see the very definition of someone who lives the Air Force Core Values every day. [OYCP] probably had to do a lot with it. He put himself in the program, and I think the things they instilled in him had a lot to do with his motivation.”

In October of 2022, Rosso was selected by the Wing Command Chief to become a First Sergeant. An Air Force First Sergeant is charged with the care of all Airmen to ensure their well-being and readiness to deploy.

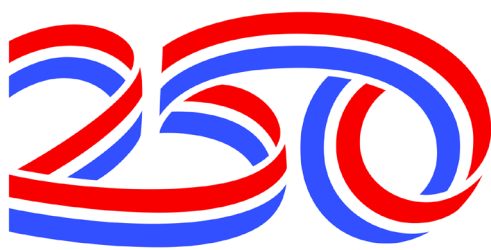
“I puked after my interview,” recalled Rosso. “I was so honored that the organization saw value in me to look out for our members. Although it’s a huge responsibility, the people are so worth it.”

This April, Rosso returned to his roots and decided to give back to the kids who are currently walking in his former footsteps. OYCP held an open house during the school year, allowing around 150 of its students to learn from military service members and first responders about the kinds of opportunities that might await them. For instructors like Demarr, it was a reminder of why he signed up for the job.

“It’s guys like him that solidify my existence and career,” Demarr said. “He’s the reason I do this. Every time I see someone who has achieved, I can show the kids, look at what you can achieve.”

For Rosso, he just wanted to share his story with the students. “What a truly humbling experience. To look back at kids who are where I was 20-plus years ago and tell them they are worth it and they have a shot at a better life is truly something that will stay with me forever.”

AMERICA



WASHINGTON, D.C. – This year, the nation celebrates its 250th birthday, marked by the approval of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776.

On July 2, 1776, the Second Continental Congress enacted a resolution declaring the separation of the 13 American colonies from Great Britain. Two days later, in Philadelphia, the Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence, penned by Thomas Jefferson and edited by John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and others.

The 56 signers of the document were aware they were risking their lives, as the British considered this act treasonous.

On those three eventful days, while Congress was meeting in Philadelphia, the Continental Army, Navy, and Marine Corps, along with state militia, were

battling British forces, German hired troops, loyalists, and Native American tribes allied with Great Britain during the Revolutionary War.

Gen. George Washington, the commander in chief of the Army, was in New York City leading about 10,000 troops preparing defenses against nearly 20,000 British combined forces, who had landed on Staten Island on July 2. It was the largest battle of the war in terms of the number of combatants, with the outcome resulting in the British occupying Manhattan and the port of New York. The British held New York City until Nov. 22, 1783.

3 Consequential Days In The American Revolution

Story by David Vergun, Pentagon News Service

Washington received word of the declaration’s signing on July 9 and ordered it read to his troops.

From July 2 until July 4, 1776, Army Brig. Gen. Benedict Arnold was in the vicinity of Crown Point, New York, leading the retreating American forces from Canada and overseeing the construction of a

naval fleet on Lake Champlain in New York.

Beginning July 3, 1776, the North Carolina militia fought against the Cherokee at the Battle of McDowell’s Station near present-day Morganton, North Carolina. The battle ended on July 12, 1776, with the Cherokee withdrawing.

While Continental forces were retreating from Canada and New York City in early July 1776, success would come later.

After a series of losses, Washington’s forces defeated the British at the Battles of Trenton and Princeton in New Jersey over the winter of 1776-1777. Those victories revitalized the troops’ morale.

The Battle of Saratoga in New York in 1777 was a turning point in the war, convincing France to enter the war as an American ally. Other battles followed, the last major one being the British defeat at the Siege of Yorktown, Virginia, in 1781.

After eight years of battle, the Treaty of Paris, signed on September 3, 1783, formally ended the war.



The Continental Army retreats from Long Island during the night of 29-30 August 1776, in the aftermath of the Battle of Long Island. Chromolithograph by The Werner Company, Akron, Ohio, 1899. (Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.)

FEATURES



Nordhaus Underscores National Guard's Indispensable Role

Story and photo by Army Master Sgt. Zach Sheely, National Guard Bureau

WASHINGTON, D.C. - In the span of a single year, the men and women of the National Guard conducted precision airstrikes to dismantle Iran's nuclear program, rescued dozens of children from rising Texas floodwaters, repelled cyber intrusions targeting critical infrastructure, and sent thousands of troops to restore order and safety in American cities.

Testifying before the House Appropriations Committee's defense subcommittee alongside reserve component chiefs today in Washington, the chief of the National Guard Bureau underscored the Guard's indispensable dual role as a warfighting and response force.

"Our dual mission as the primary combat reserve of the Army and the Air Force, while also serving as the military first responders in domestic crises, is a challenge we accept," Air Force Gen. Steven Nordhaus said. "2025 was a remarkable year for the National Guard, defined by the scale and simultaneity of our operations."

When President Donald Trump called for action against Iran's nuclear program last June, National Guard aircrews contributed to the War Department's Operation Midnight Hammer, the largest operational B-2 Spirit strike in U.S. history. This mission began not at a forward operating base, but in Missouri, where the Air National Guard's 131st Bomb Wing has spent years working side by side with the Air Force's 509th Bomb Wing.

This year, National Guardsmen have participated in Operation Epic Fury, flying strike missions against Iranian targets alongside joint force partners. U.S. forces, including guardsmen, remain postured as U.S. combat power continues to build, while Iranian combat power declines.

In January's Operation Absolute Resolve, guard forces were employed to counter narco-terrorism in the Western Hemisphere.

Meanwhile, back home, guardsmen logged more than 2.4 million hours of direct support to American citizens in response to domestic crises from natural disasters to civil emergencies.

Rep. Ken Calvert, the subcommittee chairman, praised the guard's counterdrug efforts in the homeland, which Nordhaus said was responsible for removing \$15 billion in illicit narcotics from American communities in 2025.

"Every dollar you give the National Guard, you're getting huge bang for your buck," Nordhaus said. "Because our guardsmen are professional, they're experienced, and they use their civilian skill sets to come into those programs and make us stronger."

Today, about 42,000 guardsmen are engaged in the homeland and worldwide, supporting every combatant commander worldwide. Nordhaus said sustaining this operational tempo requires continued investment in facilities, equipment, medical readiness, and people.

The general emphasized that the guard would remain a credible warfighting partner if it modernizes alongside the active component.

"To sustain strategic dominance, we must modernize concurrently with our services to aggressively outpace and overmatch tomorrow's threats," he said, calling for robust investments in flying hours, weapons systems sustainment, facilities maintenance, base operations support, and the Guard and Reserve Equipment Account.

Nordhaus also asked Congress to address a funding gap created when guard forces are called to active duty to respond to domestic emergencies. Under current policy, reimbursement funds for those activations are returned to the Treasury Department rather than restored to the units that spent them on training and equipment. "We ask for your support in restoring that readiness directly back to our formations," he said.

One of the most persistent challenges facing the guard is a personnel system that has not kept pace with the demands placed on the force..

Guard leaders have called on Congress to advance duty status reform, a long-sought effort to simplify the patchwork of legal authorities under which guardsmen are ordered to active duty, and to ensure that equal work is compensated with equal pay and benefits regardless of duty status.

Last month, during a roundtable on crime reduction in Memphis, Tennessee, Trump announced that some National Guardsmen currently activated across the U.S. will soon receive deployment pay and benefits equal to those of their active-duty counterparts.

Perhaps the most cost-effective security cooperation tool in the War Department's portfolio is the National Guard Bureau State Partnership Program, which pairs individual National Guard elements from every state, territory, and the District of Columbia with partner nations for training, exercises, and military-to-military engagement.

The program now connects the department with nearly 60% of the world's countries at just 1% of the theater security cooperation budget. Nordhaus told lawmakers, "Your help with flexible, multiyear budget authority will allow us to sustain the pace of these highly effective engagements."

General Nordhaus closed by thanking the committee for its support and calling on Congress to continue investing in the guard's warfighters and capabilities.

"We are powered by our core advantage: the citizen-soldier and airman," Nordhaus said. "They combine the warrior ethos with civilian-acquired skills, creating an organization that is as innovative as it is lethal, a force that is community-based and globally engaged."



Air Force Gen. Steve Nordhaus, left, chief of the National Guard Bureau, testifies alongside other reserve component chiefs during a House Appropriations Committee's defense subcommittee oversight hearing on April 17, 2026.

The 173rd Fighter Wing looks to the future with AI at the forefront

Story and photo courtesy of the 173rd Fighter Wing's Public Affairs Office

KLAMATH FALLS, Ore. - Kingsley Field is taking a proactive step toward the future by exploring the integration of artificial intelligence to streamline administrative processes and enhance mission readiness.

The initiative aims to reduce the manual workload on Airmen, allowing them to focus more on primary duties and core training—directly supporting the wing's operational effectiveness.

A recent on-base workshop brought together personnel from multiple units, including commander support staffs, squadron aviation resource management and unit training managers, to examine potential applications of AI. Participants shared insights on how emerging technologies could address common administrative challenges across the installation.

Airmen across the force face a significant administrative burden, often spending hours searching regulations, tracking readiness metrics and processing routine paperwork. These time-consuming tasks can fragment data, slow decision-making and reduce time available for mission-critical responsibilities.

Current artificial intelligence platforms offer immediate solutions by functioning

as a "digital staff," capable of assisting with a variety of administrative functions.

One key capability is the creation of a centralized knowledge base. AI systems can organize Air Force Instructions, Oregon Air National Guard Instructions and local Kingsley Field Instructions into a single, searchable resource, providing quick, sourced answers to regulatory questions.



Members of the 173rd Fighter Wing attend a seminar about how AI can help at work, at Kingsley Field on April 29, 2026.

AI can also enhance readiness tracking and forecasting by analyzing unit data to identify training requirements, monitor completion dates and predict when tasks are due. While current processes require manual data uploads from systems such as Envision, efforts are underway to pursue direct integration for real-time visibility.

Additional capabilities include automating routine forms and improving communication. AI tools can generate documents, send automated notifications about upcoming drills or overdue training, and provide direct links to required resources.

During the workshop, Kingsley personnel identified several opportunities to further tailor AI capabilities to local needs.

These include intelligent document management systems that could generate memorandums for record using Air Force standards outlined in Tongue and Quill, ensuring proper formatting and compliance from the first draft. Other proposed improvements include approval tracking workflows for multi-level coordination and automated scheduling tools to help units efficiently plan training around mandatory base events, such as commander's calls.

"The ultimate goal is to free our Airmen from monotonous, repetitive work," said Col. Adam Gaudinski, commander of the 173rd Fighter Wing. "By automating these essential but time-consuming tasks, we can save thousands of man-hours across the wing. This reclaimed time will be reinvested where it matters most - sharpening the technical skills that make our force more ready and lethal."

FEATURES



Bringing together Oregon employers and volunteers to strengthen support for Guard and Reserve members

Story and photos by Sgt. 1st Class Cory Grogan, Joint Forces HQ Public Affairs

HAPPY VALLEY, Ore. – The Oregon Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve continues to be a national leader, bringing together volunteers, employers and service members from across the state to strengthen partnerships that support National Guard and Reserve members and their civilian careers.

That work was highlighted April 10-11 during the 2026 Planning and Awards Meeting, hosted at Camp Withycombe with opening events at the Oregon Military Museum. The annual ESGR gathering drew more than 40 attendees to recognize achievements and reinforce collaboration across the state.

ESGR impact across Oregon

In just the first six months of the current fiscal year, ESGR volunteers in Oregon reported significant outreach and recognition efforts statewide. Volunteers engaged 8,978 service members and 9,853 employers, contributing to an overall engagement total of 32,537 interactions with military members, employers and community partners. During that same period, Oregon ESGR volunteers facilitated 122 Patriot Awards, recognized employers with 31 higher-level awards and secured 238 Employer Statements of Support. Volunteers also responded to 527 inquiries related to the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act, the federal law that protects service members' civilian employment rights when called to military duty.

At the national level, ESGR's work in Oregon has received recognition. Greg Malkasian was named the 2025 West Region

Outstanding Volunteer of the Year, and Shawn Ferguson was selected as the West Region Volunteer of the Year for Ombudsman Services, recognizing exceptional service across 19 western states and U.S. territories. Oregon ESGR State Chair Cecil Owens said the recognition reflects the strength of the organization's volunteer network.

"Shawn and Greg represent the heart of ESGR's volunteer force," Owens said. "But they are just two of many dedicated volunteers across Oregon."

Malkasian said his experience with ESGR has been both meaningful and impactful.

"It's an opportunity to connect with service members and employers in a real way," he said. "You don't need a military background to make a difference, just a willingness to serve."

The event also recognized leadership transition earlier this year. Retired Brigadier General James Cunningham was honored for his service as the previous state chair and received the Oregon Distinguished Service Medal from Russel Gibson, commander of the Oregon National Guard's 82nd Troop Command Brigade. The medal is one of the Oregon National Guard's highest state awards, recognizing exceptionally meritorious service. Leaders said the recognition reflects the Guard's continued emphasis on coordination with ESGR and strong partnerships with employers across the state.

Support in action

For service members, ESGR's work often translates directly into workplace support. The Transportation Security Administration was among the employers recognized for its ongoing support of Guard and Reserve members. "I feel comfortable coming back to my job," said Caleb Bang, who recently returned from a yearlong deployment and works for TSA. "I know my position and benefits are still in place while I'm gone, and that helps me focus while I'm deployed."

Bang's employers said that support is intentional and informed by ESGR outreach.

"We meet with them, go over everything and make sure they know they still have a place with us," said Amanda Perry. "They have our contact information so they know they have a home here."

Perry said her role includes helping deploying employees navigate paperwork, pay and benefits while ensuring they remain connected to their workplace.

Leanne Babcock, an employer outreach director and Drill Status Guard member, said her volunteer work with ESGR is rooted in bridging the civilian and military worlds.

"I represent people who live in both spaces," she said. "We're working to strengthen employer recognition and retain talent in uniform."

Private employers are also part of the effort. Chris Walther, a representative with Risewell New Home Company, said supporting military employees is simply the right thing to do.

"They're volunteering their time to defend the country," he said. "We should support them."

Support depends on strong communication between employers and service members.

"Employers and service members have to work together," said Jeffrey D. Joyce, commanding officer of the Navy Reserve Center Portland. "Employers need to understand the obligations of service, and service members need to do their diligence in keeping employers informed."

Readiness through community connection

Volunteers remain central to ESGR's mission. Oregon's committee includes 51 volunteers organized into six regions, focusing on education, outreach and mediation when workplace conflicts arise.

"Volunteers create real relationships between communities, employers and the military," said Andrew Philpott. "Their work strengthens readiness and builds trust."

With nearly 40% of the nation's military serving in the Guard and Reserve, ESGR leaders said those relationships are more important than ever.

"It's nice to know you're supported," Bang said. "It allows you to focus on serving."



Oregon National Guard Lt. Caleb Bang (center) stands with Oregon ESGR State Chair Cecil Owens (right) and representatives from the Transportation Security Administration on April 11, 2026.



Brig. Gen. (Ret.) James Cunningham receives the Oregon Distinguished Service Medal from Col. Russel Gibson, commander of the Oregon National Guard's 82nd Troop Command Brigade, on April 11, 2026.

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THE OREGON MILITARY HALL OF HONOR: CEREMONY WELCOMES SIX NEW INDUCTEES

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Oregon & Military History

Feature story by John Hughel,
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

HAPPY VALLEY, Ore. – During an evening of celebration and commemoration, six Oregon military veterans were inducted into the 2026 Oregon Military Hall of Honor during a formal ceremony held at Camp Withycombe in Happy Valley, Oregon, on April 18, 2026, in recognition of their acts of heroism and exceptional service to the state and nation. The six inductees, all of whom served in the active duty Army, and some with the Oregon Army National Guard, are

Specialist 5th Class Carston R. “Bud” Calkin, Sergeant First Class Riley E. Lott, Jr., Command Sergeant Major Brunk Conley, Major Charles “Larry” Deibert, Lieutenant Colonel Leonard DeWitt, and General Daniel R. Hokanson. “The men chosen for this year’s Oregon Military Hall of Honor have shown acts of valor ‘above and beyond the call of duty,’ as well as exceptional post-service

contribution in the community or state,” said Daniel Lacy, a member of the Forward Assist Board of Directors and the Master of Ceremonies for the event. Command Sgt. Maj. (ret.) Conley and Gen. (ret.) Hokanson and both began their military careers on active duty prior to joining the Oregon National Guard. They addressed the audience and described their professional journeys, culminating in service at the highest levels of the Pentagon. Sgt. 1st Class Lott, Maj. Deibert and Lt. Col. DeWitt were honored posthumously by friends, family members, and fellow veterans. Although Spc. 5 Carston was not present, his years of service were also recognized by representative veterans.



Command Sergeant Major Brunk W. Conley’s Induction

“This story is about the Oregon National Guard, and the organization that I learned to love,” Conley said. “I became a team leader as I focused on being a guardsman and citizen-soldier.”



Oregon Army National Guard Command Sgt. Maj. (ret.) Brunk Conley, the 10th Command Sergeant Major of the Army National Guard, delivers remarks to those in attendance for the 2026 Hall of Honors ceremony held at Camp Withycombe in Happy Valley, Oregon, on April 18, 2026. (Oregon National Guard photo by John Hughel)

Conley, who is from Sublimity, Oregon, served in uniform for over 35 years and became the 10th Command Sergeant Major of the Army National Guard. He was honored for his leadership and dedication to both the National Guard and the state of Oregon. On June 26, 2024, at Fort Moore, Georgia, he was inducted into the Ranger Hall of Fame as the first Ranger to serve as Command Sergeant Major of the Army National Guard, representing more than 300,000 enlisted soldiers.

After leaving active duty, he served as an infantry soldier in the Oregon National Guard, starting as a scout section leader with the 1-249th Tow Light Anti-Tank unit in Silverton. He later became a squad leader with the 2nd Battalion, 162nd Infantry Regiment in Tigard, and then a platoon sergeant with E Company, 1st Battalion, 162nd Infantry Regiment.



Command Sgt. Maj. Brunk W. Conley, command sergeant major for the Army National Guard, talks with Pfc. Joel Rivas of Willmar, Minn., a wheeled vehicle mechanic with the Forward Support Company, 682nd Engineer Battalion, Minnesota National Guard, during Rivas’ lunch break at Annual Training at Camp Dodge, Johnston, Iowa, on Aug. 7, 2014. (Iowa Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Chad Nelson)

five sons, he said, “changed our whole lives.”

“I said, honey, I am at 10 years now, and I am ready to spend more time together,” Conley told the audience, reflecting on that moment. “I expected to hear, ‘Oh, that’s great.’ Well, she said, ‘that weekend you go to guard (training) we get to sleep in, watch cartoons... and not have someone dragging us through a list of things,’” he said, laughing along with everyone else in the auditorium.

At that point, he knew it was time to ‘step up’ and decided to fully commit to his military career.

“I told myself, I am gonna’ study. I’m gonna’ shoot expert, I’m gonna’ max my PT (Physical Fitness Test), I’m gonna’ be the State’s Army Sergeant Major.”

Along the way, Conley earned a bachelor’s degree in education from Western Oregon University and a master’s in political science from American Military University. He later deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan with the Oregon Guard’s 2nd Battalion, 162nd Infantry Regiment and the 41st Brigade Combat Team, respectively, leading infantry battalions in combat. As he predicted, in 2008, he was appointed the state’s command sergeant major.

“It really is about the organization. They could have ‘thrown me away a couple of times,’ and I would have gone on my own and had a good civilian career,” he said in closing. “Yet, the organization helped draw me back into the experience - when I missed the experience.”



General Daniel R. Hokanson’s Induction

In his introduction as the Master of the ceremony, Lacy painted a vivid portrait of Hokanson’s remarkable journey, which began with his graduation from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York, in 1986 and culminated in his role as the 29th Chief of the National Guard Bureau, retiring in a ceremony at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall, Virginia, on August 2, 2024.



Oregon Army National Guard Gen. (ret.) Daniel R. Hokanson, former Adjutant General of the Oregon National Guard and Chief of the National Guard Bureau (left), receives his Hall of Honors citation from Daniel Lacy (right) during the 2026 Hall of Honors ceremony at Camp Withycombe on April 18, 2026. (Oregon National Guard photo by John Hughel)

As a Master aviator, Hokanson logged more than 2,600 flight hours and nearly 100 air rescue and firefighting missions throughout the Pacific Northwest. His service took him from major deployments with Operation JUST CAUSE in Panama to Operation ENDURING FREEDOM in Afghanistan, where he served as Chief of Staff for Combined Joint Task Force Phoenix, and to Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, commanding the 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team. He served as the 30th Adjutant General of the State of Oregon from Aug. 2013 to Aug. 2015.

“The first thing is this - the importance of why we’re here tonight,” Hokanson said as he began his remarks, touching on the generations of valiant volunteers who have worn the nation’s uniform. “As many of you are familiar, there is only one percent of our nation that serves in the military, and 99 percent haven’t. So if we lose that connectivity to our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Coast

Guardsmen, and now our Space Guardians, we’re not really doing our nation any favors.”

Embracing the notion of storytelling, Hokanson emphasized how the Hall of Honor ceremony brings hidden stories to light and bonds generations. “In our midst, there are heroes not only on the fields of battle, but for what they have done at home and in their communities. We need to continue to tell these stories.”

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Army Gen. Daniel Hokanson, Chief of the National Guard Bureau, visits with Guardsmen at the Joint Readiness Training Center, Fort Johnson, Louisiana, July 18, 2024. Hokanson met with Soldiers from elements of the 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team, headquartered in Salem, Oregon, who are training here to build readiness. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Zach Sheely)

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His own strong sense of community engagement was pivotal in his assignment as Chief of the National Guard Bureau.

During his four-year tenure at the Pentagon, Hokanson spent substantial time abroad, reflecting his strong commitment to the State Partnership Program. He played a key role in expanding the program to include six new partner nations: Finland, Palau, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, Sweden, and Tanzania. These partnerships focus on security cooperation. In addition, they include humanitarian assistance and training with partner nations to enhance emergency management readiness.

Over time, these new nations are combined with other U.S. States and territories' National Guard units, working in concert with the Department of Defense and the State Department.

"The pairing of a state with a nation is not random," Hokanson asserted in March 2024. "Demographics, economics, and military size and composition are all factored in. This helps establish a sense of commonality and to make the partnerships beneficial for both parties."

These lasting partnerships he helped forge reflect his nearly forty years of national service; his dedication, inspired by those who served before him, demonstrates a clear continuity of purpose.

Looking back, Hokanson, who grew up in Happy Camp, California, shared that both his father and grandfather served in the National Guard, though they rarely spoke about it. He was also inspired by two other people when he was young. One was Ray Knudsen, the janitor at his elementary school, who served in the Navy during World War II and the Korean War. The other, he said, was Jim Morrison, an infantryman "who was badly injured in Korea, who came back home to Happy Camp, and continued to serve the community."

"So, it wasn't until they came out with the 'Pearl Harbor Survivor' license plates that I realized he had served on a small ship during the attack," Hokanson said, describing Knudsen's humility. "He was quiet, always put together, an extremely hard worker, and now and then, would keep the kids in line and give a little bit of recommendations on what you should do."

Hokanson once more emphasized that veterans, especially from the WWII and Korea generations, often kept their stories locked away, seldom sharing them with others.

"I always wonder how many kids in our town even knew that (their military history). They were widely respected because of who they were, but they didn't really tell their story," he said. "Looking at the divide across the country now, we need to remind folks our nation is what it is because of those men and women – because of what they have done and the sacrifices they've made."

Hokanson and his wife, Kelly, embrace this responsibility personally, as all three of their adult children are currently serving on active duty in the Army and Air Force. Kelly has devoted nearly three decades to assisting military service members and their families, particularly through the United Service Organizations. She served on the USO Service Council and previously sat on the board for USO Northwest.

"I like the example that each of us sets. There are a lot of people that I really need to thank, because who I became, and the opportunities I was given, are directly reflective of that," he said in summarizing his remarks. "I worked with such amazing people. They inspired me to work even harder – to become better and try and set a good example."



Major Charles "Larry" Deibert's Induction

One of those influential leaders for Hokanson was Maj. Gen. (ret.) Raymond F. Rees, a highly decorated military leader who served as the Adjutant General of the Oregon National Guard for a total of 17 years across three different tenures. After retiring from the military in 2013, he concluded his years of national service as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Training, Readiness, and Mobilization from 2014 to 2019.



Oregon National Guard Maj. Gen. (ret.) Raymond F. Rees, the former Adjutant General for Oregon, delivers remarks to those in attendance for the 2026 Hall of Honor ceremony held at Camp Withycombe in Happy Valley, Oregon, on April 18, 2026. Rees spoke and represented Maj. Charles "Larry" Deibert's posthumous induction into the 2026 Oregon Hall of Honor. (Oregon National Guard photo by John Hughel)

Rees was in attendance to honor many of his former service members, but specifically, his friend and fellow Vietnam veteran, Maj. (ret.) Charles "Larry" Deibert on his induction into the Hall of Honor.

"It's a great pleasure to be able to speak on behalf of the Deibert family and accept this honor on behalf of Larry Deibert," Rees said as he began his tribute.

"To me, Larry was representative of the vast majority of Vietnam veterans. That tens of thousands of those veterans served their nation, and returned to become productive members of society and leaders in their communities."

As the recipient of the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions on September 10, 1967, over the skies of Vietnam, Rees reiterated the action Deibert took that day, supporting the 3rd Battalion, 26th Marines, "where 20 Marines were pinned down in a bomb crater, near Con Thien... along the northernmost part of what was then South Vietnam."

"They were under heavy, cross-border artillery fire and engaged in a vicious fight against two regiments of North Vietnamese Army (NVA) forces," Rees said, describing the seven hours of unrelenting battle. "Despite this extreme danger, then Captain Deibert flew his Cessna O-1 Bird Dog and survived intense anti-aircraft fire to call in air support

and artillery strikes while continually identifying enemy concentrations on the ground."

While Deibert used his limited supply of rockets to destroy an NVA machine gun, he also led a helicopter rescue team to help wounded and fallen Marines. For his bravery that day, he received the United States Army's second-highest award for heroism in combat. Today, he is known as Oregon's most decorated aviator, having flown 570 combat missions and awards including two Distinguished Flying Crosses, three Vietnam Crosses for Gallantry, a Bronze Star, and two Meritorious Service Medals.

Deibert began his military career by initially enlisting in the Marine Corps in 1956. Two years later, he joined the Oregon National Guard. He attended Officer Candidate School, flight school, jump school, and jungle survival school before volunteering for service in Vietnam in 1966. Overall, he served in the Oregon Army National Guard for 15 years and in the Army Reserve for an additional 5 years.

"On August 28, 2010, the Oregon National Guard had the honor of dedicating the aviation operations facility in Salem to Larry for his heroism. Much of the Audience was composed of Marines from the 3-26th, who attested to his courage and his life-saving heroics," Rees said, highlighting Deibert's lasting impact on the Oregon National Guard. The facility now serves as the headquarters for the Oregon Army National Guard's 2-641st Aviation Battalion and 102nd Civil Support Team.

Along with being inducted into the Oregon Military Hall of Honor, Deibert was added to the Evergreen Museum Hall of Honor in 2013, which recognizes outstanding people in Oregon aviation. He served as National Commander of the Legion of Valor from 2001 to 2002. After retiring from the military, he served as the civilian aide to the U.S. Secretary of the Army for Oregon from 2003 to 2017.

After Deibert passed away on March 13, 2024, he was laid to rest with full military honors at Willamette National Cemetery in Clackamas on May 17. He spent his last two years in Spokane, Washington, but lived most of his life in the Columbia River Gorge area. Deibert graduated from Wy'East High School in Odell and went on to study at Hood River Community College and Portland State University.

"He was a patriot dedicated to serving his country and his community, be it in uniform or civilian clothes. To many of us, Larry was a legend," Rees said, in closing his remarks. "A Citizen-Soldier to the core. A great American. A great American Soldier. An Oregon Guardsman, Marine, publisher, and too many of us, the simple words – 'Well done Charles Deibert, well done.'"



Army Gen. Daniel Hokanson, chief of the National Guard Bureau, shakes hands with an Albanian Armed Forces officer at the Ministry of Defense in Tirana, Albania, June 9, 2023. Hokanson visited the Balkan nation to reaffirm the New Jersey National Guard's partnership with Albania through the Department of Defense National Guard State Partnership Program. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Zach Sheely)



Maj. Gen. Raymond F. Rees, the Adjutant General, Oregon, presents Charles L. Deibert, civilian aide to the Secretary of the Army, a photo of the newly-dedicated building named in his honor, at the facility's dedication ceremony, Aug. 28, 2010, in Salem, Oregon. (File photo by Sgt. Zachary Holden, 115th MPAD)

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Lieutenant Colonel Leonard C. DeWitt's Induction

With his induction into the Hall of Honor, Lt. Col. Leonard DeWitt was also praised for his courage in combat during World War II in the Pacific Theater of Operations. After enlisting in the Oregon National Guard in Bend at age 18, he was called back to active duty following the attack on Pearl Harbor.

"Against advancing enemy forces, and recognizing their intent to mass and attack an American position, Dewitt took immediate action, engaging the enemy with available weapons and continued in the fight, even after exhausting his ammunition," Lacy said, reading sections of Sergeant Leonard C. DeWitt's military citation for his action against Japanese forces in New Guinea on July 28, 1943 while serving with Company I, 3rd Battalion, 162nd Infantry Regiment, 41st Infantry Division, United States Army.

As the battle intensified, DeWitt recalled a grenade flying toward him. As he took cover, he dove to the ground, only to tumble into a ravine, and landed between two Japanese soldiers, where he resorted to fighting them in close combat with his bayonet. Afterward, he crawled back up the hillside, then threw his helmet into the ravine. The Japanese soldiers, thinking it was a satchel charge, ran in fear of a massive explosion.

"His actions disrupted the attack and forced the enemy to retreat, demonstrating extraordinary courage under extreme conditions, and he was nominated in 1944 by the commanding general of the Sixth Army for the Congressional Medal of Honor for his extraordinary heroism in action," Lacy said.

The nomination was reduced to the Distinguished Service Cross upon review by General Douglas MacArthur. For more than 80 years, efforts to appropriately recognize the decorated war hero have continued.

Before his own passing on May 11, 2019, Robert D. Maxwell, Oregon's only living World War II recipient of the Congressional Medal of Honor, actively advocated for DeWitt's cause. In January 2014, he drafted a letter urging Oregon U.S. Senator Ron Wyden to support the initiative to upgrade DeWitt's Distinguished Service Cross to the Medal of Honor.

In his letter to Senator Wyden, Maxwell emphasized that DeWitt's recognition would represent "the first Medal of Honor awarded to the 41st Infantry Division." The 41st had seen some of the toughest fighting in the Pacific but had never received or been credited with a Medal of Honor recipient. During the ceremony, Lacy spoke about the ongoing effort to correct the historical record, noting that these attempts continued even after DeWitt died on June 18, 2016.

To accept the award in his honor, Oregon National Guard Brig. Gen. (ret.) Steve Beach, the former Assistant Adjutant General – Army, and his wife, Chief Warrant Officer 4 (ret.) Diane Beach took the opportunity to fill in more of his story and read through some prepared notes, standing in for Leonard DeWitt's wife, Joanne, who was home recovering from a broken foot.

"She was very proud of him and always loved to tell his story," Diane said, as she began to read Joanne's message. "Leonard was a humble man and was liked by everyone he met. He was born in Cherokee, Kansas, but spent his early years in Oklahoma, spending most of his time on his grandparents' farm. His grandfather, a U.S. Marshall, had a reputation for being tough, and taught him how to handle a gun at an early age."

But, like many families devastated by the Dust Bowl in the 1930's, the DeWitt family made their way to California and Oregon. By the time he was 16, according to Joanne's letter, he had dropped out of school to support himself through odd jobs, which included breaking wild horses, working as a lumberjack, and hunting black rabbits.

Her note detailed a monumental moment in Leonard's military career. "One day, in 1938, when living near Bend, Oregon, Leonard heard a lot of shooting going on near town. He went to investigate and found soldiers from the Oregon National Guard practicing with their new Springfield Rifles. Fascinated, they let him shoot, and that was it, he was all in!"

He would join the 41st Division that day, according to Joanne, his enlistment came with \$21.00 a month, plenty of food, and, of course, one of the new Springfield rifles.

After WWII, he returned to Bend and began working in construction, only to be

called back into action with the 7th Cavalry during the Korean War. Once again, just as he had in the fierce battles of New Guinea years earlier, DeWitt faced the enemy without hesitation, only to be seriously wounded when a grenade exploded near his position, sending shrapnel through his body, and he received the Purple Heart. He would spend three months recovering in a hospital in Japan before coming back to Bend and starting his own construction company.

As Diane Beach filled in more details about his military career through Joanne DeWitt's writings, Leonard would eventually be offered a special assignment by the Army in Germany, "working in Intelligence during the Cold War, where he spent four years and would learn to speak three additional languages."



Leonard DeWitt served with Company I, 3rd Battalion, 162nd Infantry Regiment, after joining the Oregon National Guard at the age of 18, and would serve in New Guinea. He distinguished himself during combat action on July 28, 1943, where he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.



Oregon National Guard Brig. Gen. (ret.) Steve Beach, the former Assistant Adjutant General – Army, and his spouse, Chief Warrant Officer 4 (ret.) Diane Beach accepts the Hall of Honor citation and medal for Lt. Col. (ret.) Leonard DeWitt was inducted posthumously into the 2026 Hall of Honor on April 18, 2026. (Oregon National Guard photo by John Hughel)

Along the way, he obtained his commission and adopted two children. After Germany, he served at the headquarters with the Supreme Allied Command Atlantic (SACLANT). During the Vietnam War, he was assigned to the 1st Army, "in charge of Operations and Training for troops deploying across 16 states," Diane said, as she concluded reading his legendary biography.

At this point, Steven Beach interjected, saying, "I think now we will let Leonard speak for himself," and everyone laughed lightly as a short video featuring Leonard's narration, recorded several years before his passing, was played for the attendees. "So in his own words, let's listen to his story about his extraordinary day on the 28th of July, 1943," Beach said.

DeWitt's actions with the 41st Infantry Division illustrate why its members, who wore the golden setting sun shoulder patch, called themselves the "Jungleers." They engaged in more jungle combat in the Pacific than any other American unit in WWII.



Sergeant First Class Riley E. Lott, Jr., Induction

Sergeant First Class Riley E. Lott, Jr., of Springfield, Oregon, exemplified the ethos of jungle warfare. He served as a combat medic in Vietnam for five of his nine years in the military. Lott first gained experience in jungle medicine in Long An, treating individuals during the siege of the Special Forces team when the Civilian Irregular Defense Group turned against U.S. forces. He later served at camps in Hai Yen and Don Phuoc, where he often told his comrades that it was "the best time of my life."



Steve Cornacchia delivers remarks during the 2026 Hall of Honor ceremony at Camp Withycombe in Happy Valley, Oregon, on April 18, 2026. Cornacchia represented Army Sergeant First Class Riley E. Lott, who was inducted posthumously into the Oregon Hall of Honor. Sgt. 1st Class Lott was a combat medic and completed five tours of duty in Vietnam. (Oregon National Guard photo by John Hughel)

Born in Rolling Bay, Washington, Lott was a member of the Lower Umpqua Tribe and later helped unite the Lower Umpqua, Siuslaw, and Coos Tribes. At 16, he altered his birth certificate to enlist as a medic. When basic training personnel discovered his scheme, they sent him home to wait until his 17th birthday, after which he became one of the youngest soldiers to complete Special Forces Training as a Combat Medic.

Lott was inducted into the Oregon Military Hall of Honor following his posthumous induction as a Distinguished and Honorary Member of the Special Forces Regiment in April 2023, recognizing his unwavering and selfless service to Special Operations Forces Soldiers. At both ceremonies, his close friend Steve Cornacchia accepted the award on his behalf.

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"We are here tonight to honor one of our brothers. Riley was the quintessential Green Beret. He was one of many Oregonians who made remarkable contributions to America and the U.S. Military," Cornacchia said.

Among numerous confident actions, Cornacchia noted that Lott worked with Cambodian forces to rebuild the abandoned Special Forces camp at To Chau and clear areas around the camps at Cai Cai and My Dien II. "During this time, he treated many, including myself, for injuries sustained because of booby traps and mines," Cornacchia said.

There, he spent most of his time living with, fighting with, treating, and training the Cambodian strikers that made up the Mobile Strike Force Command, also known as the MIKE Force, and their families. In Don Phuoc, he immersed himself in the lives and fortunes of the IV Corps MIKE Force, whom he helped convince to join forces with the U.S. to fight the communists.

"He spent over five years of his military service in Vietnam. Four of those were continuous. He didn't come home. He stayed there for four straight years," Cornacchia said. These continuous tours lasted from 1964 to 1968, followed by another tour after a one-year break.

His extraordinary time in Vietnam resulted in 3 Bronze Stars with "V" device, an ARCOM with "V" device, the Vietnam Cross of Gallantry (all for bravery in combat), the Air Medal, the Purple Heart, ten Overseas Bars, the Army Commendation Medal, the Combat Medical Badge, and the Presidential Unit Citation.

Lott embodied the core values of special operations forces and positively influenced those around him during and after his military service. After his honorable discharge, he returned to Oregon and continued to serve others.

"Yet his service did not end with wearing the uniform," Lacy noted in his opening formal induction remarks about Lott's post-military career. "For more than 50 years after leaving the army, SFC

Lott continued to serve others, opening his home to homeless and terminally ill veterans, providing transportation and hosting weekly gatherings that built a lasting community and support for other veterans."

Lott passed away on August 29, 2021, and was buried at Willamette National Cemetery in Clackamas, Oregon, with full military honors the following month on September 22.

"One of several Green Berets of Native American descent, Riley E. Lott, Jr. lived an extraordinary life of charity and courage that few men can truly understand, and even fewer can duplicate," Cornacchia said about his Special Forces friend. "Lott left a legacy of how to live the special operations core values."



Specialist 5th Class Carston R. "Bud" Calkin's Induction

"Specialist Carston R. Calkin represents a rare and powerful combination of military service, technical innovation, and lifelong dedication to saving lives both on and off the battlefield," Lacy said, with the formal introduction of Calkin into the class of 2026 Hall of Honor. "A veteran of the United States Army and the National Guard, Calkin served as a combat medic and later as a dental laboratory specialist, including service in West Germany with the 86th Medical Detachment."

After enlisting, he trained at Fort Sam Houston in Texas. Later, he served at Fort Ord on Monterey Bay in California. He started as a combat medic, then became a dental technician, making bridges, crowns, and dentures. He also taught at the Dental Technology School.

After leaving the military, when Bud's sister got stuck on a design for a game hunting carrier she was working on, he suggested she change it into a rescue stretcher for injured people. When she didn't develop that idea, Bud took on the project himself. He redesigned it to be basically the Sked as it is today. For decades, medics and rescue teams used stretchers, also called litters, made of fabric or netting. Skedco makes litters from a strong but flexible plastic, making them small and light. The current versions can be dragged, floated, lifted by helicopter, and loaded onto vehicles for transportation.

"At his own expense, Bud traveled to combat zones, including Iraq and Afghanistan, to train soldiers in the use of his equipment,

ensuring that innovation translated into saving lives," Lacy said, touching on the development of Calkin's Sked. "Specialist Bud Calkin's legacy is defined not only by what he has built, but the lives his work has saved. "His contributions and unwavering commitment to saving those in harm's way make him exceptionally deserving of induction into the Oregon Military Hall of Honor."

The Oregon Hall of Honor recognizes these six Oregonians for their 2026 induction, acknowledging their exemplary military service and their advancement in military programs, doctrine, or education. The recognition also encompasses major technical or strategic contributions that have had a substantial impact on military technology, strategy, or acquisitions.

Forward Assist, a 501(c) (3) nonprofit in Oregon, sponsored the Oregon Hall of Honor ceremony. Founded by combat-injured veterans and supporters, the group helps veterans, first responders, and their families. They support service members as they transition to new chapters in life,

offering tailored events and addressing individual needs. Activities include outdoor adventures, relationship-building events, outreach, and guidance through government systems like the Veterans Administration. The organization is run entirely by volunteer board members and has no paid staff members.



U.S. Army Sergeant First Class Riley E. Lott, Jr., spent nearly nine years in Special Forces, much of it commanding Cambodian strikers in the IV Corps MIKE Force in Vietnam. Lott's time with "his troops" covered five yearly tours, four continuous between 1964 and 1968, and a fifth additional tour in 1969.



Specialist 5th Class Carston R. "Bud" Calkin, pictured in 1959, is a veteran of the National Guard and U.S. Army.



Army Master Sgt. (ret.) John Steinbaugh presents the citation and medal to family members of Army Specialist 5th Class Carston "Bud" Calkin, who was inducted into the Oregon Hall of Honor during the 2026 Hall of Honors ceremony at Camp Withycombe in Happy Valley, Oregon, on April 18, 2026. (Oregon National Guard photo by John Hughel)



An Oregon Army National Guard Color Guard presents the nation's colors during the playing of the National Anthem to open the 2026 Hall of Honor ceremony at Camp Withycombe in Happy Valley, Oregon, on April 18, 2026. (Oregon National Guard photo by John Hughel)



Bill Chisholm (left) is presented a civilian service award American Flag from Daniel Lacy (right) during the 2026 Hall of Honor ceremony held at Camp Withycombe in Happy Valley, Oregon, on April 18, 2026. (Oregon National Guard photo by John Hughel)