

THE BEACON

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE 124TH FIGHTER WING

SUMMER 2026



COMBAT EXCELLENCE - ALWAYS ON MISSION

FROM THE 124TH FIGHTER WING MISSION SUPPORT GROUP COMMANDER

COL. TIMOTHY GANNON

Airmen & Families,

In this edition of our Beacon, we capture only a fraction of the amazing accomplishments over this last quarter. It's been a demanding summer, and I am humbled and inspired to serve with each and every disciplined and dedicated professional in our 124th Fighter Wing.

First and foremost, I want to highlight the brave work of all our teammates currently deployed. Thank you for selflessly answering the nation's call and enduring the continued stress. We're all very proud of your perseverance and laud the incredible resilience exercised by Airmen and families alike during this exceptional and out-of-cycle tasking.

After a year of serving as the commander of the 124th Mission Support Group, I am pleased to underscore some additional mission-readiness endeavors. Our diverse and talented group of experts providing logistics, engineering, security forces, force support, communications, and contracting makes all the difference when executing the mission, developing our Airmen, and posturing for the future. We are indeed fortunate and proud in the MSG to assist and sustain many facets that enable our entire fighter wing to successfully operate in concert across the Medical Group, Maintenance Group, and Operations Group.

This summer, I am particularly impressed by the team's collective and persistent commitment to providing the quiet but crucial behind-the-scenes support for our wing's activation in Operation EPIC FURY. Though not an exhaustive list of efforts, we continue to carefully process changes, produce and amend orders, prepare gear bags, pump fuel for training sorties, validate records for Airmen progression, provide combat arms and emergency management training for replacements, keep the lights on and toilets flushing in facilities, and eagerly plan the redeployment and reintegration.

Beyond contingency coordination, MSG Airmen focused on improving their job performance and combat readiness through various events to include a bilateral US-Canada training deployment to Cold Lake Air Base, Alberta; SAGE EAGLE Exercise in Fort Knox, Kentucky; and PATRIOT Exercise in Volk Field, Wisconsin. Our Airmen also completed dozens of TDYs for special skills certifications, professional military education completions, NGB augmentation, upgrade training, and home-station training to ensure our Airmen are prepared to best support the wing – especially as we pivot to the proposed basing of F-16s here.

As we navigate this next fiscal year, I find it helpful to remember that our service to the state, country, and most importantly the Airmen around us is both a privilege and a sacrifice. We are offered amazing opportunities to learn relevant skills, integrate into a fierce fighting team, and network with the best dang citizen Airmen in the world. We also devote a significant part of our precious spare time throughout the year to step up, prepare, and of course, when given the chance, nobly represent the Idaho Air National Guard in conflict.

Given all the opportunities and challenges ahead, I want to again say thank you and emphasize that the 124th Fighter Wing is always standing ready to provide Airmen and families assistance through each step of this journey in service. Please call on your Gowen teammates anytime!



Go Guard, ATTACK! *Col. Gannon*

2026 PRIORITIES

124TH FIGHTER WING



MISSION READINESS

- Fully engage in the technical, mental, physical, and medical readiness of each organization.
- Provide the opportunity for our Airmen to train to a challenging and realistic threat environment that is applicable to their mission sets.

RETAIN, RECRUIT & DEVELOP OUR AIRMEN

- Foster pride and unit identity with clear expectations, career engagement, and family/employer support.
- Partner with recruiters to fill mission-critical vacancies to maximize strength.
- Empower Airmen with leadership opportunities and decision-making to grow technical experts and future leaders.



POSTURE FOR THE FUTURE

- Sustain and modernize facilities that support our current missions, while also aggressively designing and planning for the upgrades required for our future fighter.
- Pursue partnerships and training opportunities to best prepare our Airmen for future missions.

124TH **FIGHTER WING** PUBLIC AFFAIRS STAFF

WING COMMANDER

Col. Anthony Skeesick

CHIEF OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Maj. Rebecca Solosabal

PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER

Maj. Bonnie Blakely

PUBLIC AFFAIRS SUPERINTENDENT

Senior Master Sgt. Joshua Allmaras

PUBLIC AFFAIRS STAFF

Master Sgt. Mercedee Wilds

Tech. Sgt. Joseph Morgan

Staff Sgt. Jadyn Eisenbrandt

Senior Airman Sarah Welch

WHERE TO FIND US



124THFIGHTERWING.ANG.AF.MIL



FACEBOOK.COM/124FW



INSTAGRAM.COM/124FIGHTERWING



X.COM/124FIGHTERWING



THE BEACON is the official magazine of the 124th Fighter Wing, Idaho Air National Guard. It is published quarterly by the wing public affairs office. Views expressed may not be those of the U.S. Air Force, Air National Guard, Department of Defense or U.S. Government.

SUMMER 2026

CONTENTS

MISSION

PEOPLE

FUTURE



ON THE COVER

Col. Anthony Skeesick, incoming commander of the 124th Fighter Wing, assumes command of the 124FW from Col. Ryan Richardson, the wing's outgoing commander, during a change of command ceremony at Gowen Field, Boise, Idaho, June 6, 2026. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Airman Sarah Welch)

- 2 A Letter from the 124th MSG Commander
- 6 Skeesick takes command of wing
- 8 Hangar ribbon-cutting ceremony
- 10 Finding purpose after the uniform
- 12 Exercise Sage Eagle in Michigan
- 14 Security Forces Squadron training
- 16 Wildland fire training
- 18 Intel Airmen behind the scenes
- 20 ASOS in the field
- 21 Medical TCCC training
- 23 Civil Engineers in Canada
- 26 Medical training on cadavers in Hawaii
- 28 Boston Marathon

124TH
FIGHTER WING
SOCIAL MEDIA LINKS



LIKE AND FOLLOW US!

DO YOU HAVE A STORY
YOU'D LIKE TO SHARE?

Contact PA: x422-6157

WORD SCRAMBLE
ANSWER KEY
1. FIGHTER
2. IDAHO
3. INTEL
4. TACTICAL
5. TRAINING
6. MILITARY
7. AIRMEN
8. COMMAND
9. UNIFORM
10. PURPOSE
11. COMBAT
12. FAMILY
13. THREAT
14. CEREMONY
15. BEACON
16. MISSION



SKEESICK

TAKES COMMAND OF WING

Story by Maj. Bonnie Blakely

Photos by Staff Sgt. Jadyn Eisenbrandt and Senior Airman Sarah Welch

Col. Anthony Skeesick took command of the Idaho Air National Guard's 124th Fighter Wing during a change of command ceremony June 6, 2026, at Gowen Field.

Skeesick assumed authority from the outgoing commander, Col. Ryan Richardson, amidst family, friends, community members, and Airmen from the wing.

"I'm especially grateful and humbled to take command of this wing," said Skeesick. "My commitment to you is to continue to build, and fiercely defend, a culture rooted in absolute respect and genuine care for our Airmen."

Skeesick began his military career in April 2001 when he was commissioned through the Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University Air Force ROTC program. Prior to joining the Idaho National Guard, he served on active duty for 12 years as a weapon systems officer in the F-15E Strike Eagle, as an air liaison officer, and an F-15E instructor weapon systems officer.

He joined the IDANG in 2013 and has served in multiple command positions, with his most recent assignment as the 124th Fighter Wing deputy commander.

Richardson served as the wing commander since January 2025. Under his command, Airmen deployed twice—once as a rotational deployment to the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility and a second mobilization to the same region in support of Operation Epic Fury.

“It’s been the professional honor of my life to lead this organization,” said Richardson. “It’s been an amazing ride. I’m so proud of this team. We’ve asked a ton of you, and you’ve answered the call every time. You embody the motto of ‘first class, or not at all.’”

Richardson continued to discuss the many challenges the wing faced during his tenure, including mobilizations, a government shutdown, manning restructures, hiring freezes, and installation modernization.

“In the next few years, this wing is going to face significant change,” he said, “but one thing that I know won’t change, is that this is the team that is up for the challenge. But here’s the good news – you are getting a great American, human being, and leader in Col. Skeesick.”

Both Richardson and Skeesick highlighted the accomplishments of the wing and the Airmen’s ability to meet the demands of a continuous high-operations tempo.



“Our mission demands flawless execution,” said Skeesick. “You, our people, are the ones who accomplish the mission. The road ahead will not be easy. The ops tempo will not slow down. The expectations will not lower.”

Looking forward, Skeesick said the wing remains focused on training and equipping Airmen for the current A-10 mission, as well as the proposed transition to F-16s.

“As I look at the experience, the talent, and the grit in this wing, I know with absolute certainty that we are ready,” said Skeesick. “And a conversion will demand everything we have. We will accomplish the mission; we will take care of each other; and we will forge a future that honors our proud history. I promise to give you my absolute best every day.”





RIBBON-CUTTING CEREMONY

FOR RENOVATED MAINTENANCE FACILITIES

Photos by Master Sgt. Mercedes Wilds

The 124th Fighter Wing hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony for Buildings 1529 and 1530 at Gowen Field, Boise, Idaho, July 9, 2026. The renovated facilities, originally built to support C-130 maintenance, underwent a \$22 million renovation to support maintenance operations for the A-10 Thunderbolt II and potential follow-on fighter missions.



124FW RESOURCES

SCAN THE QR CODE FOR MORE INFORMATION



Sexual Assault Prevention & Response

Support and resources for Airmen and dependents



Retention Office Manager

Crosstraining, education, benefits, and bonuses



Inspector General Complaints Resolution

Prompt, fair responses to complaints at any level



Directors of Psychological Health

Behavioral health and crisis resources



Airman and Family Readiness Program

Info and referral center for all members and families

finding PURPOSE *after the uniform*



Just minutes into an interview with Chief Master Sgt. Virginia Holmgren the senior enlisted leader for the 124th Medical Group, there was a knock at the door.

Someone needed help.

Holmgren paused the conversation without hesitation, shifting her attention to the Airman standing nearby before quickly solving the issue and returning to the interview with an apologetic smile.

The interruption was brief, but fitting.

After decades of military service, helping people has become second nature to Holmgren. Whether mentoring Airmen, advocating for mental health or supporting veterans through Building Stronger Veterans – a nonprofit that focuses on supporting veterans experiencing homelessness and helping reconnect them with community and purpose – her relentless service has shaped both her career and identity.

Now, as retirement approaches, Holmgren is preparing for another challenge that many service members quietly struggle to discuss: finding purpose after the uniform.

Story and photo illustration
by Staff Sgt. Jady Eisenbrandt

"We talk about all the great things about retirement, all the things we're going to get," said Holmgren. "But it's normal to have that feeling of loss."

For Holmgren, that loss is not just about leaving behind a career. It is stepping away from the structure, purpose and deep sense of belonging that military life creates over time.

"There's just not an equivalent to that on the civilian side," Holmgren said. "We have connections through experiences most of the population can't relate to."

As BSV's director of health and wellness, Holmgren hopes to use both military experience and her civilian career as a Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner to support veterans who may be struggling with isolation, untreated mental health challenges and loss of identity after service.

"What I want them to feel is supported, and like there's hope," Holmgren said.

Holmgren explained her passion for mental health advocacy was shaped by her own experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. After graduating nursing school and deploying to Afghanistan, she returned home while simultaneously working in critical care during one of the most difficult periods in modern healthcare.

The stress, isolation and personal struggles eventually led to her own mental health crisis.

"Even as a high performer, people looked at me and thought, 'She's good. She's got this,'" said Holmgren. "But I was struggling."

Holmgren sought help through counseling and continued prioritizing her mental health, an experience she said ultimately changed both her career path and the way she leads others.

"When I was a young Airman, mental health was not spoken about a lot," she said. "The military asks us to do hard things, but we're still people. We have struggles. We need to take care of each other."

That philosophy now influences the way Holmgren leads within the medical group, where she encourages Airmen to prioritize not only mission readiness, but also their mental and emotional wellbeing.

As Holmgren prepares to close this chapter of her life, she said continuing to serve others remains central to who she is.

"I need to have purpose in whatever I'm pouring my time into," said Holmgren. "I just want to leave things better than when I found it."

For Holmgren, helping veterans reconnect with hope and community has become part of finding that purpose after the uniform.

Veterans in crisis or those seeking support can call or text 988 and press 1 to connect directly with the Veterans Crisis Line.



SAGE EAGLE

SECURITY FORCES ZERO IN ON WARTIME READINESS WITH GREEN BERETS

Story and photos
by Senior Master Sgt. Joshua Allmaras

In the forest near Camp Grayling, Michigan, the rumble from a Humvee's diesel engine slices through the darkness as it creeps down a dirt road, snapping tree branches under its tires.

Just off the road, hidden in the thick brush, a joint team of U.S. Army Green Berets and Air National Guard security forces Airmen sit motionless. No radio noise, no words can be heard, as the team waits for their target to breach an ambush site. In an instant, the silence is shattered by gunfire from the tree line, bringing the Humvee to a stop.

The tactical ambush was just one scenario for Security Forces Airmen from the 124th Security Forces Squadron who participated in Exercise Sage Eagle 26-4, in Northern Michigan, Aug. 3-14, 2026.

The seven Airmen integrated as partner forces for U.S. Army Green Berets from the 2nd Battalion, 5th Special Forces Group, during the

exercise, which was also nested under the larger National Guard Bureau-led Exercise Northern Strike.

This exercise not only validated wartime mission-essential tasks for the Green Berets, it also offered 124th SFS Airmen an opportunity to directly get after one of the wing priorities by accelerating mission readiness and posturing for a future fight.

Tackling irregular warfare, reconnaissance, and small unit tactics isn't something security forces Airmen get to do day-to-day, but this exercise allowed them to hone those skills.

"We get to put them through dynamic situations they wouldn't be able to replicate without us," said Tech. Sgt. Tyler Cannon, a 124th SFS defender. "Because of our civilian jobs and experiences, we bring in traditional Guardsmen who fill the role really well, giving them a realistic partner-force dynamic where they have to teach, lead, and adapt on the fly."



Beyond irregular warfare, the training pushed the defenders through basic combat maneuvers, ground defense, and silent, nonverbal communications. The defenders gained critical "reverse-doctrine" insight not only to protect their home base, but also to prepare for overseas operations.

"Conducting missions that are offensive in nature shows us what we have to be ready to respond to and defeat if turned on us," said Staff Sgt. Mason Olaso, a 124th SFS team lead. "It gives us a baseline of what it really looks like in the profession of arms, and it's a lens we don't always get to see."

According to exercise leadership, the high-tempo training covered roughly 75% of security forces wartime taskings in just 14 days. By pursuing partnerships with special operations forces, the 124th SFS ensures its citizen-Airmen return to Gowen Field technically sharp, cohesive, and ready to meet combatant command demands anywhere in the world.





SECURITY FORCES AIRMEN

ENHANCE READINESS

**THROUGH QUALIFICATION
TRAINING**

Story and photos by
Senior Airman Sarah Welch



Airmen assigned to the 124th Fighter Wing's Security Forces Squadron participated in readiness training at Saylor Creek Training Range, Grasmere, Idaho, June 4 - 6, 2026, to maintain proficiency and strengthen skills needed to support evolving mission requirements.



This annual Security Forces Field Training Exercise (FTX) evaluates Airmen on tactical combat skills, marksmanship, weapons qualification, and air-based ground defense through multi-day simulations, ensuring Airmen remain proficient in maintaining readiness for deployment requirements and mission procedures.

The training also incorporated responding to emerging aerial threats posed by unmanned aircraft systems to address evolving risks and mission demands.

Staff Sgt. Dante Sunseri, fire team lead for the 124th SFS, highlighted the hybrid exercise as both qualification and sustainment training.

"We're training Airmen to understand the full capabilities of their standard duty rifles by engaging targets at distances beyond what they typically encounter, building both confidence and proficiency," said Sunseri. "The training also reinforces core base defense skills while introducing airfield seizure scenarios that require the application of both defensive and offensive tactics."

Regular readiness training ensures security forces Airmen remain prepared to protect, while supporting state and federal missions whenever called upon.

"This FTX is an all-encompassing training event that allows us to integrate both law enforcement officer and security operations in a single exercise, preparing Airmen for missions at home and in deployed environments," said Master Sgt. Nicholas Bevers, alpha flight chief for the 124th SFS.



Photos by Staff Sgt. Jadyn Eisenbrandt

IDAHO NATIONAL GUARD
MEMBERS TRAIN FOR

WILDLAND FIRE RESPONSE

Story and photo by
Master Sgt. Mercedee Wilds



Idaho Air and Army National Guard members participated in a Red Card certification training with Orchard Fire and Emergency Services at Camp Orchard, Idaho, August 17-21 and August 24-29, 2026, preparing them to support wildland firefighting efforts across the state, if activated.

The training provides Guardsmen with the foundational skills and knowledge needed to safely operate on a wildland fire incident while increasing the number of personnel available to support Idaho during periods of heightened fire activity.

"What we're doing here is creating ready teams to potentially meet our state's needs for wildland fire," said Army Command Sgt. Maj. Sheldon Stace, senior enlisted leader of the Joint Staff, Idaho National Guard.

For Guardsmen participating in the course, the training covers more than simply how to fight a fire. Students learn about fire behavior, weather, safety, risk mitigation, and the rapidly changing conditions they could encounter on the fire line.

Assistant Fire Chief Jeb Baker, Orchard Fire Department, said understanding those hazards is essential before Guardsmen are sent to support an incident.

“We want to ensure that when we send them away from their home, they're also coming back to their home,” said Baker. “It's important that they have that knowledge and understanding of how it works across the country, because they could get sent anywhere, not just here in our backyard.”

Baker said Guardsmen also bring experience from their military and civilian careers that can make them valuable additions during large-scale incidents. From operating heavy equipment and driving trucks to agricultural backgrounds and experience working in demanding environments, those existing skills can help them quickly integrate with firefighting teams.

For Air Force Airman 1st Class Cole Kanamoto, a munitions system specialist with the Idaho Air National Guard's 124th Maintenance Squadron, the course offered a new perspective on the complexity and danger of wildland firefighting.

“I didn't know a fire could outrun you,” said Kanamoto. “I didn't know how much it mattered to a fire what the relative humidity is or how fast the wind's blowing. I gained a lot of respect for the people that do this for a living.”

Kanamoto said the course prepared him to step into an entry-level role on a wildland fire response team if called upon. The certification also supports his personal goal of pursuing a civilian career in firefighting. While the training provides Guardsmen with another skill set,

Stace said it also reflects a larger part of the National Guard's mission, remaining ready to respond when Idaho communities need support.

“These Soldiers and Airmen are members of the community,” said Stace. “They're doing this as extra training outside of their military training to make sure that they're ready to meet the needs for Idahoans.”

Whether responding to wildfires, floods or other natural disasters, Stace said maintaining trained and ready personnel allows the Idaho National Guard to provide additional capability to state and local agencies when requested.

“I want them to know that the Guard's got their back,” said Stace. “We're going to continue to train to meet the state's needs.”





Everyday on Gowen Field, Boise, Idaho, Airmen with the 224th Cyber Operations Squadron's Intelligence Support shop work behind the scenes to identify threats, analyze adversary activity, and deliver the intelligence cyber operators need to defend critical networks.

The Intelligence Support shop consists of all-source intelligence analysts and cyber intelligence analysts. Both types of analysts play critical roles in defending against global cyber threats. The squadron's cyber mission requires analysts to monitor rapidly evolving threats worldwide, while cyber intelligence analysts provide the technical expertise needed to identify adversary behaviors and help detect malicious activity. Master Sgt. Kyle Young, noncommissioned officer in charge of intelligence for the 224th COS, highlighted Cyber Knife Fight, a total-force cyber exercise that brings in cyber units from all over the country to Boise, as another responsibility encompassing intel.

"We also play and help develop, White Cell, the intelligence around our semi-annual Offensive Cyber Operations (OCO) vs. Defensive Cyber Operations (DCO) exercise called Cyber Knife Fight," said Young. "It is starting to become one of the premier cyber exercises in the DoW/DoD Cyber Community."

As part of the squadron's mission, the intelligence shop collects and analyzes information on potential cyber threats, turning raw data into actionable intelligence. Analyst assessments help operators understand who they may be up against, what tactics adversaries are using, and how to respond effectively in a constantly evolving digital environment.



According to Young, the mission is to identify and analyze adversary cyber activity before it can impact military networks, equipment, or mission partners at both the state and federal level.

Cyber operations personnel conduct defensive cyber operations by monitoring Department of War systems for malicious activity, analyzing cyber threats to Idaho and mission partners, and supporting federal cyber missions under U.S. Cyber Command.

In addition to the daily operations of the intelligence shop, Airmen must continuously train and adapt as the cyber landscape evolves at a rapid pace.

“Because cyber is rapidly evolving, our knowledge, skills, and abilities must evolve as well,” said Young. “We never feel satisfied with



the knowledge that we have. There’s never a time in which you feel like you have all the information or even know all the information.”

Tech. Sgt. William Hussman, a cyber intelligence analyst assigned to the 224th Cyber Operations Squadron, went on to further note that cyber threat intelligence puts us at the cutting edge of defensive technologies. “The risk calculus for our most critical infrastructure depends on pioneering Airmen to innovate the application of traditional tradecraft to new domains that evolve faster than a Xenomorph family tree.”

While the work can be challenging and overwhelming at times, the intel Airmen depend on each other.



“We are only successful because we can rely on our fellow intelligence Airmen to bring forward hypotheses and insights, challenge assumptions, and collaborate to build an accurate understanding of the threat environment,” said Staff Sgt Joseph Bedford, an all-source intelligence analyst for the 224th Cyber Operations Squadron. “Cyber adversaries are real, constantly evolving, and not going away anytime soon, which makes it rewarding to be part of a team that is continuously training and working to defend against them,”

Intelligence Airmen of the 224th COS are the first line in cyber defense. They identify threats, analyze adversary activity, and provide critical insight cyber operators need to defend the network and base. Always ready, always there.

ASOS IN THE FIELD

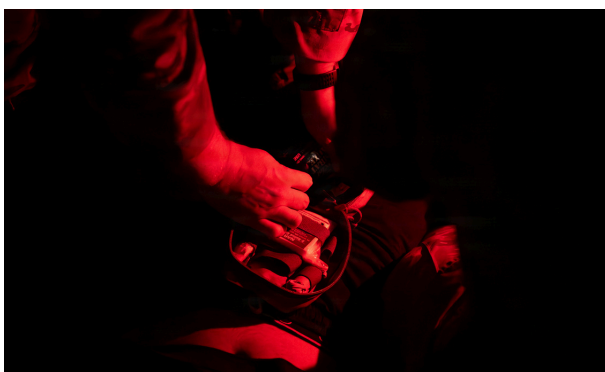
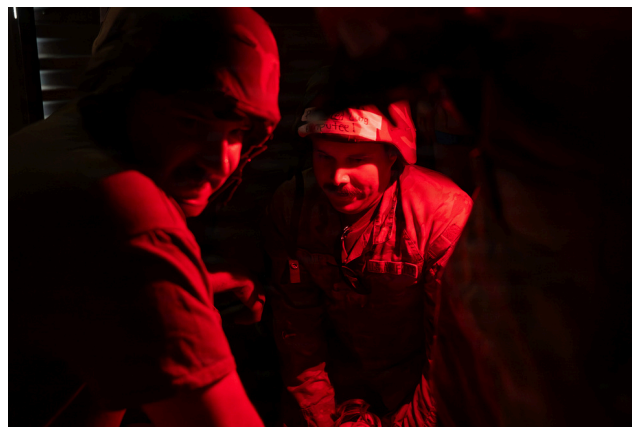
Tactical Air Control Party Airmen assigned to the 124th Fighter Wing, Idaho Air National Guard, conducted small unit tactics and long-range shooting training during a Unit Training Assembly in Fairfield, Idaho, May 11-15, 2026. The training focused on enhancing mission readiness, tactical movement, communication and marksmanship skills in austere environments.

Photos by Master Sgt. Mercedee Wilds



TCCC

Airman assigned to the 124th Fighter Wing, Idaho Air National Guard, participate in a tactical combat casualty care exercise August 8, 2026, at Gowen Field, Idaho. The exercise tested Airmen's ability to assess injuries, provide immediate care, and work together in a simulated combat environment.



Photos by Staff Sgt. Jadyn Eisenbrandt

HELL DAY



Recruiters and air support operations squadron Airmen assigned to the 124th Fighter Wing ran participants through a SOCOM Athlete Hell Day event in Boise, Idaho, Aug. 1, 2026. Through a series of physically and mentally demanding activities designed to build teamwork, leadership, and resilience, special warfare candidate hopefuls pushed themselves to their limits.

Photos by Tech. Sgt. Joseph Morgan



CIVIL ENGINEERS STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIP DURING CANADIAN DFT

Story and
photos by
Master Sgt.
Mercedee
Wilds

Airmen from the Idaho Air National Guard's 124th Civil Engineer Squadron traveled to Canadian Forces Base Cold Lake, Alberta, Canada, August 15-29, 2026, as a deployment for training to complete infrastructure projects alongside members of the Royal Canadian Air Force while gaining hands-on training through an annual exchange between the two nations.

"We partner with the Royal Canadian Air Force and come up here to do different projects for them," said 1st Lt. Ryan Poncia, 124th CES civil engineer officer and officer in charge of the DFT. "We're getting all our different shops a lot of experience and training while we're up here."

The exchange paired U.S. Air National Guard civil engineer units with RCAF Construction Engineering Flights, allowing service members from each nation to work together to complete trade-specific construction projects. At Cold Lake, 124th CES Airmen worked on projects ranging from concrete and facility renovations to electrical, plumbing and power production.





One of the largest projects took place at Mackenzie School, a former school on the installation being converted to support child care and other programming for military families. Airmen renovated portions of the facility to provide an updated and safer space for those who use it.

"It goes directly to supporting our unit," said RCAF Master Cpl. Barry Haughian, a construction technician assigned to 4 Wing Mission Support Squadron Construction Engineering. "We're very thankful to have you guys here."

Other projects included replacing deteriorating concrete, constructing sidewalks, rewiring a facility and completing siding work on military housing. Airmen also worked with generators, aircraft arresting systems, plumbing and wastewater treatment operations, while a 124th CES firefighter trained alongside the 4 Wing fire department.



Beyond completing projects, the DFT gave traditional Guard Airmen concentrated time to practice their career-field skills outside of monthly drill periods.

"We only get our members 24 days out of the year over drills," Poncia said. "Having two solid weeks to come up here, we knock out a lot of training, and it's benefiting the unit overall."

For Airman 1st Class Kaitlin Bryan, a 124th CES pavements and construction equipment specialist participating in her first DFT, the experience provided an opportunity to turn classroom knowledge into practical experience.

"It was a fun experience to get to work with my shop and actually do my job at a higher level than textbook," Bryan said.

Working in Canada also exposed Airmen to differences in terminology, equipment and construction methods, creating opportunities for both nations to learn from one another.

"You learn something every single time you do something like this," Haughian said. "That's another thing that the Americans bring, 'Do you have this cool tool? Do you have this thing that works for making the job a lot easier?' And I go, 'I didn't even think about that, but the next time I will.'"

Poncia said, that exchange of knowledge is what makes training with an allied nation particularly valuable.

"The way that we operate back home is very similar base to base," Poncia said. "Coming up here, there are so many different ways that they've been taught. Working side by side with them, we're able to take some of the things that they do very well and also give that back to them and teach them how we operate."

The experience helps prepare Airmen to adapt to different processes and ways of accomplishing the mission when working alongside partner nations in future operations.

"The different ways that we execute things are beneficial when we get downrange because we will be working with different countries," Poncia said.

Through the exchange, 124th CES Airmen gained hands-on experience in their individual trades while completing projects that will continue supporting 4 Wing personnel and their families, ultimately strengthening readiness and the partnership between the two forces.





124TH MEDICAL GROUP SHARPENS TRAUMA SKILLS DURING ADVANCED TRAINING IN HAWAII

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Jadyn Eisenbrandt

Airmen from the 124th Medical Group joined Army, Air Force, and Navy service members for advanced trauma training in Hawaii, Aug. 22–27, 2026, designed to prepare military medical personnel to perform lifesaving procedures in real-world emergencies.

The Armed Forces Advanced Trauma Training course, hosted by the Global Training Institute, provides medical personnel access to advanced procedures and donated human tissue that are difficult to replicate during routine training at home station.

“We sought out this training because there are some things we just can’t realistically replicate back at home,” said Chief Master Sgt. David Nguyen, senior enlisted leader of the 124th Medical Group. “We can train on mannequins all day, and they’re great tools, but they don’t look, feel, or even smell like a real person.”

The course included classroom instruction at the Hale Koa Hotel in Honolulu before participants moved to Marine Corps Base Hawaii for the hands-on cadaver laboratory.

The realistic environment allows participants to experience the anatomical and physical differences involved in treating traumatic injuries before encountering them in an emergency.

Participants rotated through hands-on stations designed to build skills for treating traumatic injuries. They trained on everything from controlling severe bleeding and treating wounds to managing airway and breathing emergencies. Airmen also practiced using ultrasound, placing IVs and other forms of vascular access, stabilizing fractures, suturing wounds, and treating chest injuries.

Working with human tissue allows Airmen to encounter those differences in a controlled environment where they can learn, ask questions, and make mistakes before facing a situation where a patient's life is on the line, Nguyen said.

Gary Tams, an instructor with GTI, said the hands-on component gives military medical personnel an opportunity to move beyond what can be replicated through simulation.

"They get a lot of training. They really do," Tams said. "But they never get that opportunity to see advanced training and actually get the hands-on part."



For Tams, the difference between performing a procedure on a mannequin and on human tissue is significant. "It gives a whole different outlook on the situation," Tams said. "The tissue's different, the feel's different."

Senior Airman Tavish La Montagne, one of the newest members of the 124th Medical Group, said the realistic training increased his confidence in responding to emergencies.

"You feel more confident going into any sort of real-world scenario that you may encounter," La Montagne said.

While the course gives participants experience performing advanced trauma procedures, Tams emphasized the importance of continuing to practice those skills after returning to their units.

"What you do in practice, you'll do in the real game," Tams said.

Nguyen said creating an environment where Airmen can experience challenging situations before encountering them in the field was a key reason for pursuing the training.

"I want our Airmen to be challenged here, where they can learn, make mistakes, ask questions, and build confidence," Nguyen said, "so when the real situation comes, it isn't the first time they've encountered it."



IDAHO GUARDSMAN'S

ROAD TO BOSTON

Story and photos by
Master Sgt. Mercedee Wilds

For Maj. Annelise Rowe, running the Boston Marathon wasn't just about completing 26.2 miles, it was about chasing a dream that began decades earlier, standing on the sidelines as a young girl watching her mother cross the same finish line.

In 1999, Rowe's mother qualified for and ran Boston, a moment that left a lasting impression on her 13-year-old daughter growing up in small-town Oklahoma. That experience planted the seed for a goal and bloomed a passion for running that Rowe would carry with her for years.

"This is a dream that I've wanted to do for a very, very long time," Rowe said.

Now an Airman with the Idaho Air National Guard's 124th Fighter Wing, Rowe serves as the assistant director of operations for the 224th Cyber Operations Squadron. But outside of her duties, she balances being a mother of three with a relentless pursuit of personal growth.

"I love a good challenge," she said. "Can I do this? Can my body do this? Can my mind do this?"

That mindset, shaped by both her military career and personal life, ultimately drove her to qualify for Boston. After returning to running and training consistently, Rowe earned a qualifying time at the Louisiana Marathon before improving her performance at the Boise Marathon to secure her place at one of the world's most prestigious races.

But her "why" extends far beyond competition.

After becoming a mother and witnessing her own mother battle and survive ovarian cancer, Rowe's perspective shifted. What once centered on performance evolved into something deeper. Family, resilience and legacy.

"To be the mom that my kids will look up to," she said. "To follow in my mom's footsteps—that was really important to me."

That connection came full circle during the race itself.

As Rowe approached mile 18, historically the most challenging point in a marathon for her, she spotted her mother and sister along the course. Instead of pushing through, she made a split-second decision to stop.

"I ran over to them and gave my mom the biggest hug," Rowe said. "It was my slowest mile of the race, and it was the best mile that I had."

Moments like that defined her experience in Boston, where more than 29,000 runners and thousands of spectators filled the course with energy and emotion. Crossing

the finish line brought a wave of realization and relief.

"I actually did something that I trained for for a really long time," she said. "It meant everything." Rowe credits her success not to motivation, but discipline. This is an attribute she says directly connects to her military service.

"It's not always motivation," she said. "It's discipline. It's showing up every single day and doing the work."

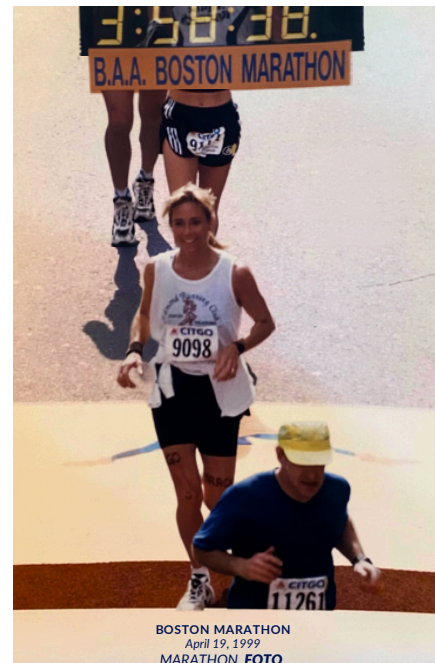
Her role in the Air National Guard has also helped build the resilience required to train for and complete a marathon, especially while balancing the demands of family life and a full-time position.

"The Air Force has taught me how to push through and adapt," Rowe said. "You're always training for something, always preparing for what's next."

That same mindset carries into her work at the 124th Fighter Wing, where she also encourages others to pursue their own fitness goals. Through initiatives like the squadron's "Badger Run," Rowe helps fellow



Courtesy photos





Courtesy photos

Airmen improve their physical readiness while fostering a sense of community.

"I just wanted to make everyone back home proud," she said.

Looking back, Rowe said one of the biggest lessons she learned was to let go of pressure and embrace the experience.

"Boston taught me to enjoy it," she said. "It wasn't about the time, it was about the moment."

For Rowe, that moment wasn't defined by the finish line alone, but by the journey that led her there, and the people who were part of it.

And while the race may be over, the impact continues.

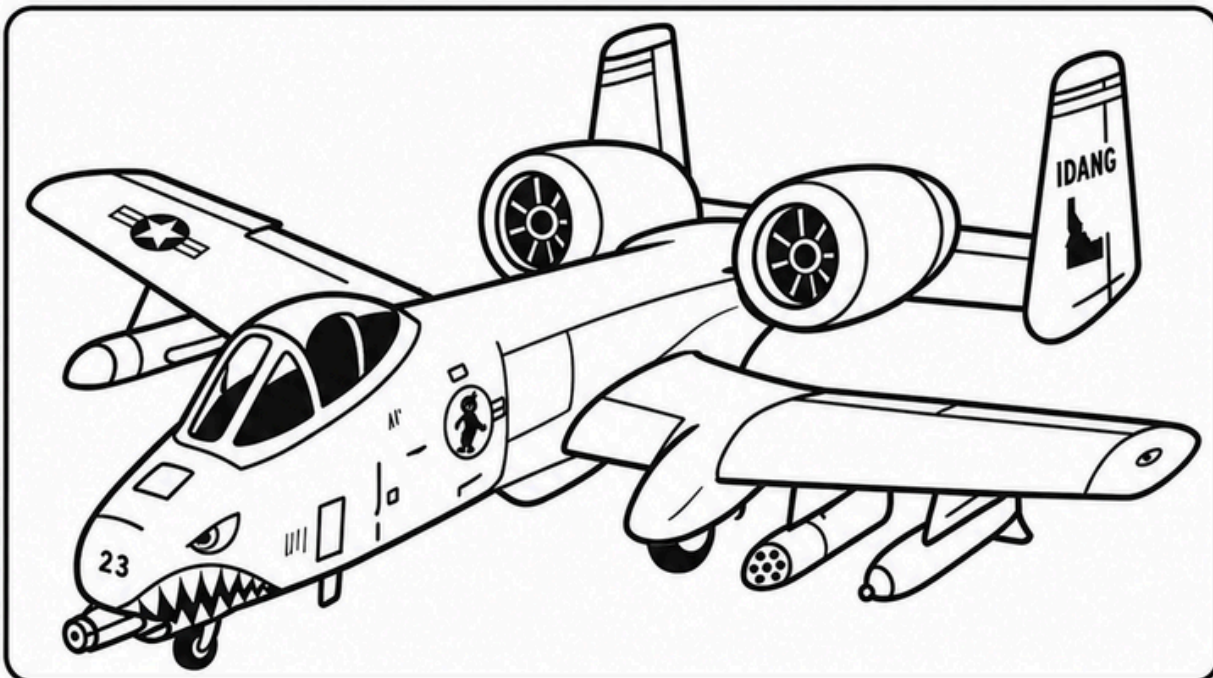
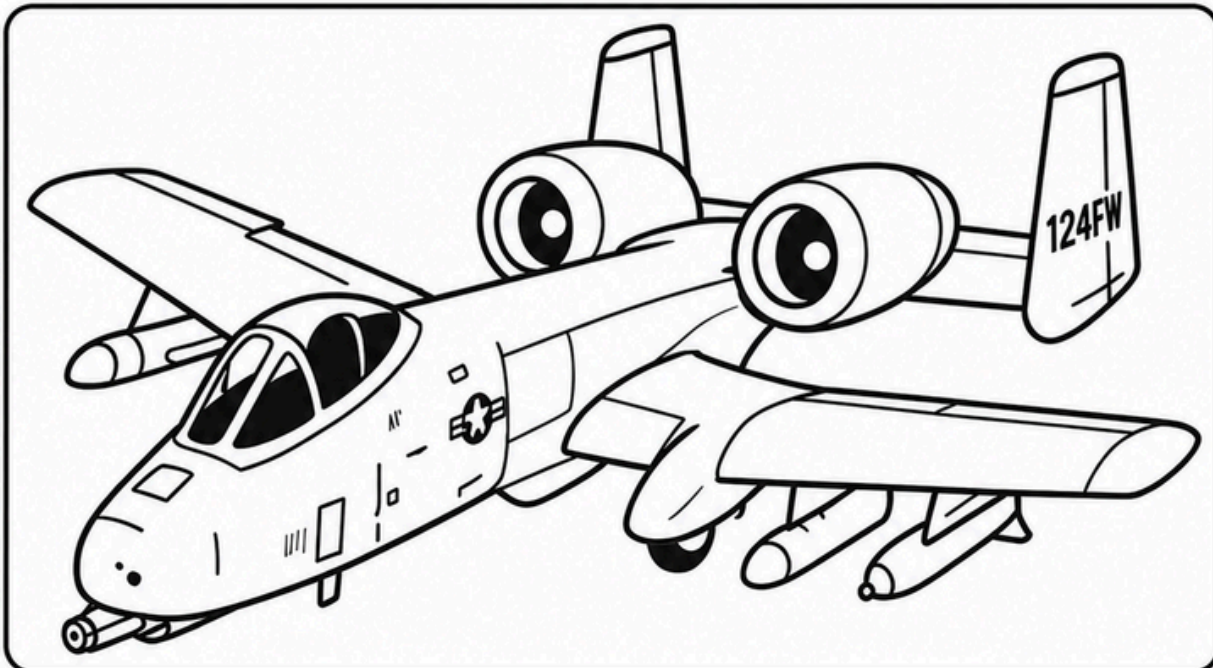
"If you have a goal," she said, "why not go for it? You never know what you're capable of unless you try."



KIDS' ACTIVITY

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

CAN YOU SPOT 10 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO A-10 THUNDERBOLT AIRCRAFT? CIRCLE THEM AS YOU FIND THEM!





124th Fighter Wing
IDAHO AIR NATIONAL GUARD
4474 S. De Haviland St.
Boise, Idaho 83705-8103

WORD SCRAMBLE

- | | | | |
|-------------|-------|--------------|-------|
| 1. IETFRGH | _____ | 9. URIONMF | _____ |
| 2. IAHDO | _____ | 10. EPUPSOR | _____ |
| 3. EITNL | _____ | 11. TMOACB | _____ |
| 4. TICCATLA | _____ | 12. AYIFML | _____ |
| 5. TINNARGI | _____ | 13. TREHAT | _____ |
| 6. IALYIMTR | _____ | 14. NMORYECE | _____ |
| 7. MEANRI | _____ | 15. CNOABE | _____ |
| 8. DONCMMA | _____ | 16. IIMONSS | _____ |

** See answer key on pg. 5