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Fort McCoy honors namesake Maj. Gen. Robert Bruce McCoy during 2026 remembrance ceremony

BY SCOTT T. STURKOL
Public Affairs Staff

Soldiers, military leaders, students, veterans, community members and descendants of the McCoy family gathered Sept. 10 at Woodlawn Cemetery in Sparta, Wis., to honor the legacy of Maj. Gen. Robert Bruce McCoy, the Wisconsin Citizen-Soldier whose vision more than a century ago helped establish what is now Fort McCoy.

The 2026 Maj. Gen. Robert Bruce McCoy Remembrance Ceremony, held at 9:30 a.m. on the north side of Woodlawn Cemetery, marked the second annual remembrance ceremony of its kind. The inaugural event was held in 2025.

The ceremony brought together the U.S. Army Garrison-Fort McCoy community and the local community to remember McCoy's service, leadership, and vision for creating a large-scale military training area in Monroe County.

Command Sgt. Maj. James Riddle, Fort McCoy Garrison command sergeant major, served as master of ceremonies.

The event included an invocation by Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Raymond Leach of the 88th Readiness Division, the presentation of the colors by the Tomah High School JROTC Color Guard, the Pledge of Allegiance led by students from the Sparta Montessori E-2 classrooms, the National Anthem performed by Sparta High School senior Emaly Sutherland, and TAPS performed by Sparta High School senior Patrick Larson.

Col. Kurt Page, chief of staff of the U.S. Army Reserve's 88th Readiness Division, served as keynote speaker.

Fort McCoy Garrison Commander Col. Sarah Fraticelli also addressed those attending.

Remembering a Citizen-Soldier

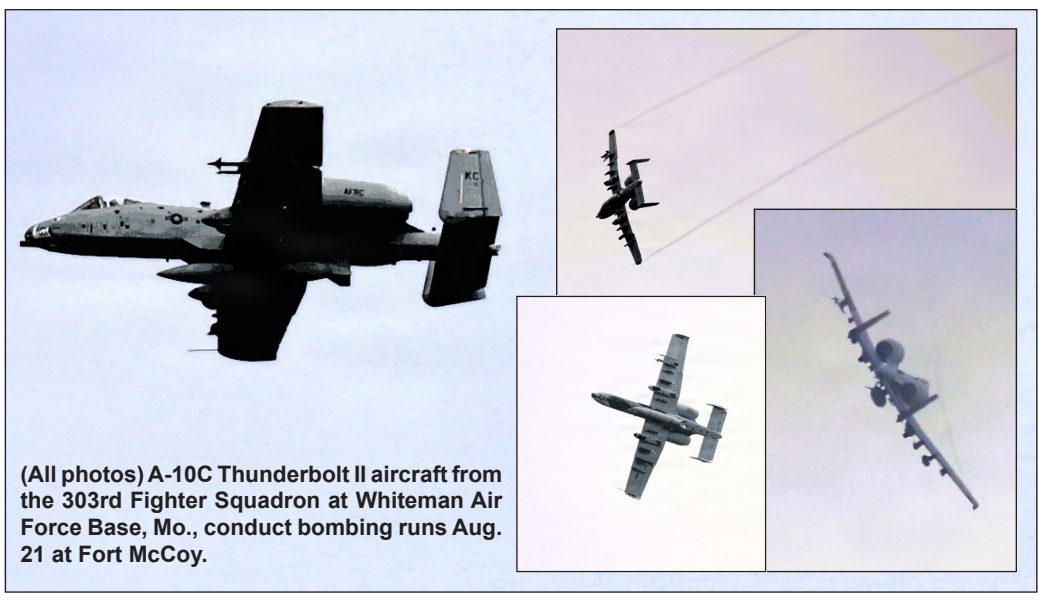
Page opened his remarks by reflecting on his own history with Fort McCoy, dating to 1988 when he arrived at the installation as a young private for

(See **REMEMBRANCE**, Page 2)



Photos by Amanda Clark, Fort McCoy Multimedia-Visual Information Office and Scott T. Sturkol

(All photos) Scenes from the 2026 Maj. Gen. Robert Bruce McCoy Remembrance Ceremony are shown Sept. 10 at Woodlawn Cemetery in Sparta, Wis. Soldiers, military leaders, students, veterans, community members and descendants of the McCoy family gathered to honor the legacy of Maj. Gen. Robert Bruce McCoy, the Wisconsin Citizen-Soldier whose vision more than a century ago helped establish what is now Fort McCoy.



(All photos) A-10C Thunderbolt II aircraft from the 303rd Fighter Squadron at Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo., conduct bombing runs Aug. 21 at Fort McCoy.

A-10s return to Fort McCoy for specialized bombing, low-level training

STORY & PHOTOS BY SCOTT T. STURKOL
Public Affairs Staff

A-10C Thunderbolt II aircraft from the 303rd Fighter Squadron at Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri, returned to Fort McCoy Aug. 17–21 for another round of specialized training that put the aircraft's distinctive capabilities to work over the installation.

According to Fort McCoy Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security officials, the Air Force Reserve pilots conducted bombing training during the week, including low-level missions to the installation's impact area. The training also provided significant flight time for the pilots, giving them an opportunity to maintain and sharpen skills associated with operating the A-10 in a realistic training environment.

The return of the 303rd Fighter Squadron continues a longstanding relationship between the Air Force Reserve unit and Fort McCoy.

The 303rd Fighter Squadron is assigned to the 442nd Operations Group, 442nd Fighter Wing, Air Force Reserve Command, at Whiteman AFB. The squadron has a long history dating to World War II and was originally activated at what is now Whiteman Air Force Base in 1943. The squadron later transitioned to fighter operations and received the A-10 Thunderbolt II in the 1980s. It was redesignated the 303rd Fighter Squadron in 1992.

Today, the squadron flies the A-10C, an aircraft specifically designed for close air support and for operating in environments where accurate air-to-ground weapons employment is critical.

That mission makes Fort McCoy a particularly valuable training location.

A training environment built for A-10s

The A-10 is different from many other fighter aircraft. Its design emphasizes low-altitude maneuverability, weapons-delivery accuracy, long loiter times, survivability and the ability to operate from austere locations.

Fort McCoy's training environment allows A-10 crews to practice several of those capabilities in one location.

The installation's large impact area provides a designated location for air-to-ground weapons training, while its extensive airspace and varied terrain allow pilots to conduct realistic flight profiles approaching and operating over training objectives.

During the August training, pilots flew low-level missions toward the impact area before conducting bombing runs. The combination gives pilots flight experience that goes beyond simply dropping practice munitions — it allows them to repeatedly work through the flight profiles, navigation, maneuvering and weapons-delivery skills associated with the A-10's close-air-support mission.

Fort McCoy has supported similar A-10 training in recent years. In September 2024, A-10s from the 303rd Fighter Squadron conducted several days of bombing training at the installation's impact area, including bombing runs with 1,000-pound munitions. The aircraft made repeated passes against targets on North Post while pilots worked on accurate and efficient weapons delivery.

A-10 training has also included operations at Fort McCoy's Young Air Assault Strip on South Post. In September 2023, A-10s used the strip for takeoff and landing training while flying routes over the installation. Similar A-10 training occurred at Fort McCoy in 2021 and 2022.

The Young Air Assault Strip adds another dimension to the installation's ability to support the A-10.

The strip has been used by a variety of aircraft and military services for austere-airfield training. A-10s, C-130 Hercules aircraft, C-17 Globemaster IIIs and Army helicopters have all operated there over the years. The strip gives aircrews an opportunity to practice operations from a location that differs significantly from a conventional military airfield.

Keeping pilots proficient

For Air Force Reserve pilots, opportunities to obtain meaningful flight time are an important part of maintaining combat readiness.

The August training provided significant flying time while allowing the pilots to work on specific A-10 mission requirements.

That combination is one of Fort McCoy's

(See **A-10s**, Page 6)

Guardsmen boost domestic response capabilities in Patriot '26 exercise

BY SGT. 1ST CLASS BRITTANY CONLEY
165th Airlift Wing

About 1,000 Airmen and Soldiers from National Guard units across 35 states participated in Patriot '26 at Fort McCoy in August alongside federal, state and local agencies, strengthening their domestic response capabilities.

Natural disasters do not arrive on a schedule, and they rarely unfold according to plan. At Patriot '26, that uncertainty is part of the training, held Aug. 24-29 at Volk Field Combat Readiness Training Center and Fort McCoy, Wis.

At the Combined Arms Collective Training Facility at Fort McCoy, Tech. Sgt. Joel Ayala, 103rd Security Forces Squadron, Connecticut Air National Guard, served as an acting incident commander Aug. 25 during a scenario involving civil unrest, damaged structures, injuries and communities in need of basic supplies.

For Ayala, who has served for 18 years and previously responded to real-world emergencies including Superstorm Sandy, severe winter weather and COVID-19 relief operations, the value of Patriot comes from learning how different organizations fit into the larger response. Ayala said they are not alone and have many state partnerships that help them.

Throughout Patriot 26, role players introduce distractions, competing demands and stressful interactions in scenarios, forcing participants to evaluate what is happening around them rather than relying solely on rehearsed responses. Routes may become inaccessible. Casualties may require care. Crowds may become increasingly difficult to manage. Information can change as the scenario develops. Those complications require service members to pause, assess the situation and adjust.

Ayala said even reaching the training site required participants to consider how a disaster could affect their movement.

"The direct route is not always going to be the route," Ayala said. "There's going to be downed limbs, trees. So, knowing what tools we have available for us, and then having those alternate routes to get out here to help our fellow citizens."

Patriot '26 also creates opportunities for Airmen with less experience in domestic response operations to learn from those challenges firsthand.

"Seeing those younger Airmen that have never been exposed to this type of exercise or atmosphere, for them to at least retain a bit and put it in the toolbox for future natural disasters that we get activated for," Ayala said, is an important part of the training.

The learning does not stop when a scenario ends. Following each exercise event, units conduct an after-action review to identify what

(See **PATRIOT**, Page 6)



Photo by Airman 1st Class KC Calhoun/Air National Guard

A U.S. Army UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter supports simulated emergency response operations during Patriot '26 at the Combined Arms Collective Training Facility on Aug. 25 at Fort McCoy.

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REMEMBRANCE

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annual training and Expert Infantryman Badge training.

He said his first experiences at Fort McCoy helped him develop an appreciation for the installation and the surrounding communities, even though he knew little at the time about the man whose vision had helped create it.

"I fell in love with this area and in love with how much this community supports the veterans and those soldiers that train at Fort McCoy," Page said.

Page said researching McCoy's life for the ceremony gave him a greater understanding of how much McCoy contributed to Monroe County and the military.

"This year marks 100 years since General McCoy's passing and 100 years since the War Department put his name on what we know today affectionately as Fort McCoy," Page said.

Robert Bruce McCoy was born Sept. 5, 1867, in Kenosha, Wisconsin. His family had a long tradition of military service, including his father, who commanded Company G of the 43rd Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry during the Civil War.

When flooding destroyed the family grain mill in 1876, the McCoy family moved to Sparta, where Robert Bruce McCoy would establish the deep connection with Monroe County that would define much of his life.

Known to friends as "Bob," McCoy graduated from Sparta High School in 1887. He attended the University of Wisconsin, where he excelled academically and athletically, including as a pitcher and captain of the university baseball team. He later earned a law degree in 1891.

McCoy became active in numerous aspects of civic life. He opened a law practice, edited the *Monroe County Democrat*, served on the local Board of Education, was elected Monroe County judge in 1897, and later served as mayor of Sparta.

His public service also extended into state politics. In 1920, he was the Democratic nominee for governor of Wisconsin and received more than 200,000 votes.

"Judge, editor, school board, mayor, candidate for governor," Page said. "Somewhere along the way, nobody ever taught Bob McCoy how to decline a request."



Photos by Amanda Clark, Fort McCoy Multimedia-Visual Information Office

Scenes from the 2026 Maj. Gen. Robert Bruce McCoy Remembrance Ceremony is shown Sept. 10 at Woodlawn Cemetery in Sparta, Wis.

From citizen to general

McCoy's military career began when he enlisted as a private in the 3rd Wisconsin Infantry in 1885. Within a year, he received a commission as a captain.

During the Spanish-American War in 1898, McCoy led his Sparta company in Puerto Rico. During the fighting, an artillery shell exploded nearby, permanently damaging his hearing.

His military service continued into World War I, when he commanded Wisconsin troops in France.

Page described McCoy's World War I service as the period that "revealed the full measure of the man."

McCoy commanded infantry regiments during some of the war's most difficult fighting and was recognized for his valor with the Army Distinguished Service Medal and French military honors, including the Croix de Guerre and Legion of Honor.

After returning home, McCoy continued serving veterans and fellow Soldiers. He helped establish the 32nd Division Veterans Association and eventually became a major general commanding the division.

But Page emphasized that McCoy's most enduring contribution to the military did not come on a battlefield overseas.

"It was engineered right here, in the low pastures and jack pine ridges of Monroe County," Page said.

A vision for military training

McCoy understood that the nature of warfare was changing, Page said. Having experienced military operations firsthand, he recognized that future armies would need expansive areas where Soldiers could conduct realistic, large-scale training involving artillery, maneuver and combined arms.

McCoy began purchasing land northeast of Sparta at his own financial risk. He eventually accumulated nearly 4,000 acres and leased portions of the property to help finance additional land purchases.

In 1905, he invited the 7th Field Artillery from Fort Snelling, Minn., to conduct 16 days of live-fire training on his ranch.

"Most landowners would write their representatives when artillery lands near their property line," Page said. "But Bob McCoy mailed the invitation to come shoot."

The exercise demonstrated the value of the terrain and McCoy's concept for a large military training area.

Four years later, the War Department purchased more than 14,000 acres to establish the Sparta Maneuver Tract, laying the foundation for the military installation that eventually became Fort McCoy.

McCoy died Jan. 5, 1926, at age 58, Page said. Later that year, the War Department officially renamed the reservation Camp McCoy in his honor. In 1974, the installation became Fort McCoy.

Page noted the remarkable connection between McCoy's original vision and the installation's mission today.

"Today, Fort McCoy spans more than 60,000 acres and trains hundreds of thousands of total force Soldiers, Marines, Sailors, and Airmen, all of them on ground one man bought because he saw that need first," Page said.

"Kenosha may claim his birth, Sparta claims everything after, and at Fort McCoy, we claim the land and the standard that he set that came with it."

McCoy's legacy continues

Fraticelli connected McCoy's original vision to Fort McCoy's role in the region more than a century later.

"Maj. Gen. McCoy's dream shaped Monroe County, and today it provides a home for Wisconsin's only U.S. Army installation," Fraticelli said.

The original approximately 4,000 acres associated with McCoy's efforts have grown into an installation encompassing more than 60,000 acres.

Fort McCoy now supports training for the total force and provides a major economic benefit to the surrounding region. Fraticelli noted the installation has a regional economic impact of more than $1.6 billion and employs more than 3,000 military and civilian personnel.

She also highlighted the installation's modernization and growth during the past decade, including facility improvements, training-area development, increased training and customer-support capabilities, and quality-of-life improvements for Soldiers and their families.

Fort McCoy honors McCoy's legacy by continuing to provide a four-season training environment for military units from throughout the United States and beyond, Fraticelli said.

The installation supports more than 100,000 U.S. and international service members annually, while remaining a primary training location for Wisconsin National Guard units and an important training site for the U.S. Army Reserve.

"We are confident Maj. Gen. McCoy would be proud to see his mission continuing to impact and shape the U.S. Army and our Department of War," Fraticelli said.

A legacy shared by a community

The presence of local students and young people at the ceremony provided a tangible connection between McCoy's generation of service and those who will carry that legacy forward.

The Sparta Montessori students led attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance, while Sparta High School students provided the National Anthem and TAPS. The Tomah High School JROTC Color Guard presented the colors.

For Page, the participation of local students and the community reflected an important part of McCoy's legacy — the relationship between military service and citizenship.

McCoy was not simply a career military officer. He was a lawyer, educator, newspaper editor, judge, mayor, athlete, public servant, community leader and Citizen-Soldier.

His military experience led him to envision a training ground capable of preparing future generations of American service members. His willingness to invest his own resources in that vision ultimately helped transform the landscape of Monroe County.

A century after his death, that vision remains visible every day across Fort McCoy's training areas, Page said.

Page closed his remarks by challenging those gathered to continue carrying McCoy's example forward.

"An athlete, jurist, editor, mayor, father, general, Robert Bruce McCoy proved that a citizen in uniform can see farther than the terrain in front of him," Page said.

"May his legacy keep driving us towards readiness, towards service, and toward the country he loved."

The 2026 remembrance ceremony served not only as a commemoration of McCoy's life, but also as a reminder that Fort McCoy's history is inseparable from the history of Sparta and Monroe County.

From the acreage McCoy purchased at his own risk to the more than 60,000 acres used today, his vision continues to shape the Army's ability to train and prepare for the nation's defense.

And each September, as Soldiers, community members and young people gather to remember him, the story of the Citizen-Soldier who helped make Fort McCoy possible continues to be passed to a new generation.





Fort McCoy holds 2026 Installation Planning Board to shape installation priorities

BY SCOTT T. STURKOL
Public Affairs Staff

Senior Installation Management Command-Western Hemisphere leaders joined Fort McCoy Garrison leaders and representatives from organizations across the installation Sept. 1 at McCoy's Community Center for Fort McCoy's annual Installation Planning Board (IPB) meeting.

Patrick J. Appelman, director of the U.S. Army Installation Management Command Directorate-Western Hemisphere (IMCOM-WH), and Command Sgt. Maj. Danny Castleberry, IMCOM-WH command sergeant major, participated in the meeting as Fort McCoy leaders reviewed current installation priorities and considered recommendations for future priorities.

The annual IPB is one of Fort McCoy's key installation-wide planning forums. The meeting is organized by the Fort McCoy Plans, Analysis and Integration Office (PAIO) and brings together the garrison, installation service providers and tenant organizations to identify, assess and prioritize installation requirements.

Previous Fort McCoy IPBs have been described as a forum for providing a common operating picture of installation-wide planning requirements, improving collaboration and helping ensure resourcing decisions align with the installation's strategic plan.

The Sept. 1 agenda centered on the installation's Integrated Priority List (IPL) and included five major portions: feeder boards; key updates to the 2025-26 IPL; the recommended 2026-27 IPL; a round-robin discussion; and closing remarks.



Photo by Kelsie Steber

Installation Management Command-Western Hemisphere and Fort McCoy Garrison members participate Sept. 1 in the 2026 Fort McCoy Installation Planning Board meeting at McCoy's Community Center at Fort McCoy.

Reviewing current priorities

The first portion of the meeting involved feeder boards, which provide information and recommendations that help inform the installation-level planning process.

The board then reviewed updates to the 2025-26 Integrated Priority List, giving Fort McCoy leaders an opportunity to assess the status of previously identified priorities and discuss progress or changes.

The meeting next turned toward the future with consideration of the recommended 2026-27 Integrated Priority List.

The IPL is a significant product of the IPB process because it helps establish which installation requirements should receive attention and visibility as Fort McCoy plans for future years. During the 2024 IPB, Fort McCoy PAIO planners explained that the process helps ensure resourcing decisions are aligned with the Installation Strategic Plan and the Army's installation-management principles.

The 2025 IPB likewise included Appelman and Castleberry and provided an opportunity for Fort McCoy officials to directly update IMCOM leadership and senior installation leaders on installation issues while working toward approval of the coming years' Integrated Priority List.

Looking across the installation

The round-robin portion of the Sept. 1 meeting provided another opportunity for installation organizations and leaders to discuss issues, requirements and priorities from their respective areas.

That installation-wide approach is central to the IPB process. Rather than looking at individual programs or organizations separately, the board provides a venue for bringing those requirements together so leaders can consider them in relation to Fort McCoy's broader mission and future.

The process is particularly important as Fort McCoy continues to support large-scale training and mobilization requirements while also planning improvements to its infrastructure, facilities and installation services.

Fort McCoy's long-term planning includes projects affecting training, mobilization, housing, utilities, roads and other installation infrastructure, garrison officials said. A separate Installation Real Property Planning Board held in April 2026 addressed the installation master plan, tenant needs, major military construction projects, future development of the cantonment area, space requests and project programming.

While the Real Property Planning Board focuses specifically on real-property planning, the annual IPB provides a broader installation-management perspective in which requirements from across Fort McCoy can be integrated and prioritized, officials said.

Planning for future

The Sept. 1 meeting was part of an ongoing planning process rather than an isolated annual event.

In July, PAIO representative Jobi Spolum briefed Fort McCoy garrison and tenant organization leaders about preparations for the September IPB and the information organizations needed to provide in advance of the meeting.

That preparation reflects the importance of having current information available when Fort McCoy leaders establish priorities for the coming year.

The IPB process has been used at Fort McCoy for years. A 2019 explanation of the board described it as an opportunity to enhance installation-wide communication and decision-making, prioritize local requirements and highlight issues that may need to be elevated to Army senior leaders.

Appelman has participated in Fort McCoy's IPB process previously, including the 2024 and 2025 meetings. His September 2025 visit to Fort McCoy also included an installation workforce town hall and meetings with garrison leaders and organizations across the installation.

The Sept. 1 IPB concluded with closing remarks after leaders and representatives worked through the current and proposed priority lists and shared installation-level information, Fort McCoy PAIO officials said.

For Fort McCoy, the process provides a structured way to look beyond immediate requirements and help shape the installation's future while supporting its current readiness mission.

The IPB is one of the planning mechanisms used to help turn that future-focused approach into installation priorities and actions, PAIO officials said.

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And Fort McCoy's vision is, "To be the premier training center supporting the most capable, combat-ready, and lethal armed forces."

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Learn more about Fort McCoy online at https://home.army.mil/mccoy, on Facebook by searching "ftmccoy," on Flickr at https://www.flickr.com/photos/fortmccoywi, and on DVIDS at https://www.dvidshub.net/unit/FMPAO. Also try downloading the My Army Post app to your smartphone and set "Fort McCoy" or another installation as your preferred base.

Fort McCoy is also part of Army's Installation Management Command where "We Are The Army's Home."

NEWS

New commander holds first Fort McCoy Garrison town hall, discusses installation priorities

STORY & PHOTOS BY SCOTT T. STURKOL
Public Affairs Staff

Col. Sarah Fraticelli, U.S. Army Garrison-Fort McCoy commander, and Command Sgt. Maj. James Riddle, garrison command sergeant major, hosted their first garrison town hall Aug. 27 in Building 905 at Fort McCoy.

The town hall provided an opportunity for the new garrison command team to engage directly with the Fort McCoy workforce while also providing updates from several installation organizations.

Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Walter McCall, Fort McCoy Garrison chaplain, opened the event with a prayer.

Fraticelli, who has been at Fort McCoy for just over a month, said the town hall was an important opportunity to begin building relationships with the workforce and to learn more about the installation and the people who support its mission.

"I really look forward to learning about this garrison," Fraticelli said.

Fraticelli also praised the workforce for the care and effort put into maintaining Fort McCoy. She said that much of the work performed behind the scenes by installation employees is not always visible to Soldiers and visitors.

"We don't see all the things that go behind the scenes," she said, noting the work performed by range personnel, maintenance workers, gate personnel and others who keep the installation operating.

Fraticelli said her experience during her first month at Fort McCoy had given her a greater appreciation for the work required to operate and maintain the installation.

"As I've learned on how you all have cared for this installation, it's been a huge eye-opener for me," she said.

She also described Fort McCoy as a premier Army Reserve installation and a premier training base across the Army. Fraticelli said she has been working to make other Army leaders and units more aware of the training capabilities and facilities available at Fort McCoy.

"I would bring any unit here to train," she said.

During the town hall, several Department of Defense civilians also were recognized for years of honorable and distinguished federal service through Army service awards presented by the garrison command team.

Exchange modernization nearing completion

Jesse Chamberlain, assistant store manager for the Fort McCoy Exchange, provided an update on the Exchange's ongoing modernization project.

Chamberlain, who arrived at Fort McCoy in July, said the Exchange renovation was approximately 85 percent complete.

The project was in Phase 4 of construction, with work continuing in the center and end portions of the main sales floor. The Phase 4 work was scheduled for completion Aug. 28, followed by Phase 5, which will consist primarily of punch-list and close-out work.

That phase is scheduled to run from Sept. 3 through Oct. 30, with the goal of completing the project before Nov. 1. A grand-opening event is tentatively expected in mid-November, although a final date had not been established at the time of the town hall. *(See related story)*

DPW outlines current, future construction

Liane Haun, director of the Fort McCoy Directorate of Public Works, provided an extensive update on current and planned construction projects across the installation.

One current project involves a new parking area near the Installation Management Agency, or IMA, in the vicinity of Building 200. The expanded parking area will support Wisconsin National Guard operations and allow Fort McCoy to resolve an existing safety conflict involving the Scout Recce Range.

Haun also provided an update on the railroad crossing along Highway 21. A final report from the project's architectural firm determined that the panels were not properly installed by the contractor and have been cracking since their installation. A firm replacement timeline has not yet been established, although work could occur next summer.

At the airfield, a project is planned to replace the air traffic control tower. Building 100, which houses the garrison command group, is also nearing completion.

Haun also discussed several major projects planned for the future. McCoy's Community Center is scheduled for a complete renovation. Funding also recently became available for construction of three new classrooms for Regional Training Site-Maintenance. Other planned infrastructure work includes bridge replacements, improvements to the South Post Housing wastewater lift station and replacement of water reservoirs serving the housing area.

Haun highlighted continued development of Fort McCoy's 1600 block campus, which supports transient training and mobilization operations. *(See related story)*

MWR highlights upcoming fall, winter events

Scott Abell, director of the Fort McCoy Directorate of Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation (DFMWR), provided an overview of upcoming MWR and Army Community Service events.



Fort McCoy Directorate of Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation Director Scott Abell gives an update about his directorate Aug. 27 during the Garrison Town Hall meeting in building 905 at Fort McCoy.

September events include the Sports Troops Golf Tournament at Cedar Creek Golf Club, the 9/11 Memorial Run and Stair Climb, and a PCS Open House hosted by Army Community Service.

October events include the Stress Less for the Holidays program, the return of the Wellness Fair at Rumpel Fitness Center, and the annual Trunk-or-Treat event at McCoy's Community Center.

November activities will include the Handmade with Honor event, a Turkey Leg Relay at Rumpel Fitness Center, the Hunter Meet and Greet at Ten Point Pub and Whitetail Ridge Chalet, and the Turkey Bowl flag-football tournament.

December will feature Fort McCoy's annual Tree Lighting Ceremony at McCoy's Community Center, along with other holiday activities including Breakfast with Santa.

Abell also encouraged Fort McCoy community members to use the My Army Post app for information about installation events, services and activities.

He said the app is being built out with Fort McCoy-specific information and provides a central location for information from MWR and other installation organizations. Fort McCoy MWR's website also remains available for event and program information.

The town hall concluded with a question-and-answer session, providing members of the workforce an opportunity to raise questions directly with installation leaders.

The Aug. 27 town hall marked the beginning of a new chapter in Fort McCoy's ongoing town-hall program under Fraticelli's leadership, continuing the installation's practice of bringing garrison leadership and workforce members together for direct communication, updates and discussion.

Fort McCoy leaders hold September 2026 housing town hall; dozens attend

BY SCOTT T. STURKOL & MELISSA DUBOIS
Public Affairs Staff

More than 30 military family housing residents and community members attended a Fort McCoy Garrison Housing Town Hall Sept. 3 at the South Post Community Center to hear installation updates and share questions and concerns with Fort McCoy leaders.

Attendees included Fort McCoy Senior Commander Maj. Gen. Kevin F. Meisler, commanding general of the 88th Readiness Division; Col. Sarah Fraticelli, commander of U.S. Army Garrison-Fort McCoy; Command Sgt. Maj. James Riddle, garrison command sergeant major; and other Fort McCoy housing, garrison and installation representatives.

Housing town halls provide residents with a direct opportunity to engage with installation leaders and housing officials about matters affecting military families living on post. The events also provide Fort McCoy leaders an opportunity to hear directly from residents and provide updates about installation programs, services and upcoming changes.

The September town hall continued a longstanding Fort McCoy effort to maintain open communication with housing residents. Fort McCoy has held housing town halls for years, with past meetings addressing housing maintenance and services, resident concerns, safety, community activities and installation changes.

The format has evolved over time. In 2023, Fort McCoy held its first town hall following the transition to privatized housing, bringing together residents, garrison officials and representatives of Cadence Communities, Fort McCoy's housing partner. In 2024, another resident town hall combined housing discussions with installation and winter-safety information. In 2025, Fort McCoy expanded its engagement approach by holding its first walking housing town hall, taking garrison and housing officials directly into the South Post neighborhood to speak with residents where they live.

During the September 2026 meeting, Meisler highlighted several upcoming plans and changes affecting Fort McCoy and its housing community.

Among the topics was the planned movement of 30 service members from Fort Snelling, Minnesota, to Fort McCoy. Meisler also discussed additional housing plans for the installation, training-related matters and efforts to improve cellular service on post.

Other topics discussed during the town hall included school bus operations and local school district information, along with other issues of interest to military families living at Fort McCoy.

Representatives from the Fort McCoy Directorate of Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation (DFMWR) also provided information about upcoming events and activities available to the Fort McCoy community.



Photo by Melissa Dubois

Maj. Gen. Kevin Meisler, 88th Readiness Division commanding general and Fort McCoy senior commander, speaks to residents of South Post Housing Sept. 2 during a housing town hall meeting at Fort McCoy.

Housing town halls are an important part of Fort McCoy's broader effort to maintain communication with military families and address issues affecting their quality of life. The meetings give residents a forum to ask questions directly, while allowing installation leaders to explain ongoing projects, upcoming changes and available services.

The next Fort McCoy Garrison Housing Town Hall is planned for November 2026.

The continued town hall schedule possibly reflects Fort McCoy's commitment to maintaining an open dialogue with its housing residents as the installation continues to grow, adapt, and plan for the future.

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And Fort McCoy's vision is, "To be the premier training center supporting the most capable, combat-ready, and lethal armed forces."

Located in the heart of the upper Midwest, Fort McCoy is the only U.S. Army installation in Wisconsin. The installation has provided support and facilities for the field and classroom training of more than 100,000 military personnel from all services nearly every year since 1984.

Learn more about Fort McCoy online at https://home.army.mil/mccoy, on Facebook by searching "ftmccoy," on Flickr at https://www.flickr.com/photos/fortmccoywi, and on DVIDS at https://www.dvidshub.net/unit/FMPAO. Also try downloading the My Army Post app to your smartphone and set "Fort McCoy" or another installation as your preferred base.

Fort McCoy is also part of Army's Installation Management Command where "We Are The Army's Home."

Fort McCoy chaplain opens new GC's first town hall with prayer for garrison leadership

STORY & PHOTO BY SCOTT T. STURKOL
Public Affairs Staff

Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Walter McCall, Fort McCoy Garrison chaplain, opened the installation's Aug. 27 garrison town hall with a prayer focused on wisdom, leadership, relationships and the continued mission of Fort McCoy.

McCall opened the town hall in Building 905 by inviting those attending to pray according to their individual faith traditions.

In his prayer, McCall asked for wisdom and guidance for those leading Fort McCoy and for the installation's continued support of the Army mission.

"I thank you that all wisdom truly does come from you," McCall said.

McCall also prayed for truthfulness and strong relationships as the installation moves forward under the new garrison command team of Col. Sarah Fraticelli, garrison commander, and Command Sgt. Maj. James Riddle, garrison command sergeant major.

He asked for continued guidance, grace and strength for the leadership team as it carries out the responsibilities of leading the garrison.

The prayer set the tone for Fraticelli's first town hall with the Fort McCoy workforce, which included updates from the garrison command team, Fort McCoy Exchange, Directorate of Public Works, and Directorate of Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation.

McCall's role at Fort McCoy reflects the broader mission of the Religious Support Office, which provides religious support, pastoral care and opportunities for spiritual growth to Soldiers, Department of War civilian employees, families, and others throughout the installation.

McCall has also participated in numerous Fort McCoy ceremonies and community events during 2026, including the Armed Forces Day Open House and the opening of the installation's Main Gate Microgrid with Battery Backup Project.

At the April 2026 garrison town hall, McCall similarly opened the event with an invocation focused on wisdom, leadership and guidance for those serving at Fort McCoy.

The Aug. 27 invocation continued that tradition while marking the beginning of a new chapter for the Fort McCoy garrison under Fraticelli's leadership.

The Religious Support Office continues to provide worship opportunities, counseling, religious education and other support services for the Fort McCoy community.

Learn more about Fort McCoy online at https://home.army.mil/mccoy, on Facebook by searching "ftmccoy," on Flickr at https://www.flickr.com/photos/fortmccoywi, and on DVIDS at https://www.dvidshub.net/unit/FMPAO. Also try downloading the My Army Post app to your smartphone and set "Fort McCoy" or another installation as your preferred base.



Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Walter McCall, Fort McCoy Garrison chaplain with the Fort McCoy Religious Support Office, gives the opening invocation for the Garrison Town Hall Meeting on Aug. 27 at Fort McCoy. The town hall was the first for Col. Sarah Fraticelli, garrison commander.

NEWS

DPW director: Fort McCoy infrastructure projects position installation for future missions

STORY & PHOTOS BY SCOTT T. STURKOL
Public Affairs Staff

Fort McCoy is investing in the future of its infrastructure as the installation continues to expand and adapt its capabilities to support Soldiers, training organizations and the Army Reserve mission.

Liane Haun, director of the Fort McCoy Directorate of Public Works, highlighted numerous ongoing and planned construction projects during the Aug. 27 Garrison Town Hall in Building 905. The projects range from individual facility improvements to major construction initiatives that are reshaping portions of the installation.

One of the clearest examples of that transformation is the 1600 block campus, where Fort McCoy is building modern facilities specifically designed to support transient training and mobilization operations.

A four-story barracks building near the Fort McCoy Commissary and Fort McCoy Exchange is nearing completion and turnover to the installation. Two additional officer-quarters buildings south of the Directorate of Emergency Services complex are under construction and are expected to be completed next summer. The officer quarters will provide 320 beds.

The campus also includes plans for two additional brigade headquarters buildings that are progressing through the design process.

Haun said the projects demonstrate how Fort McCoy is positioning itself to meet current and future Army training requirements.

The 1600 block development is particularly significant because the new facilities replace or supplement aging infrastructure while creating purpose-built space for the large numbers of Soldiers who come to Fort McCoy for training and mobilization.

The investment comes as Fort McCoy continues to serve as a major regional training platform for the Army Reserve, National Guard and other military organizations.

"It's kind of coming to completion really quickly," Haun said while discussing the 1600 block campus.

The modernization effort extends well beyond the 1600 block. At the Sparta-Fort McCoy Airport, Fort McCoy is preparing to replace its air traffic control tower, Haun said. The project will include a temporary tower to maintain airfield operations while the upper portion of the existing tower is replaced with a larger facility.

Building 100, which houses the garrison command group, is also nearing completion, with remaining work including interior improvements, utility connections, landscaping and furniture installation, Haun noted.



Liane Haun, director of the Fort McCoy Directorate of Public Works, provides a projects update Aug. 27 to workforce members during a U.S. Army Garrison-Fort McCoy Town Hall meeting in building 905 at Fort McCoy. Hundreds of garrison employees and service members attended the meeting.

Additional future projects include a complete renovation of McCoy's Community Center, construction of three classrooms for Regional Training Site-Maintenance, bridge replacements, improvements to the South Post Housing wastewater system, and replacement of water reservoirs.





(Above and below) Contractors complete work Sept. 23 on the fiscal year 2024-funded $55.75 million Collective Training Officers Quarters Project at Fort McCoy. The project description states the plan is to build the two buildings based on the standard layout depicted in the Operational Readiness Training Complex. The project calls for the construction of two new 48,000-square-foot, four-story Collective Training Officers Quarters buildings. The contract duration is 1,260 calendar days.

Another planned project at Building 2187 would consolidate numerous Soldier and civilian in- and out-processing functions into a single location, creating a one-stop facility rather than requiring customers to visit multiple locations across the installation.

Fort McCoy is also planning for potential future growth associated with institutional training.

Haun discussed preliminary plans for a potential new complex for the 98th Army Reserve Training and Evaluation Command. The organization previously operated at Fort McCoy before moving to Fort Knox in 2010.

The proposed complex, located north of the Fort McCoy Noncommissioned Officer Academy, could provide approximately 400 beds and associated facilities. The project is currently estimated at approximately $147 million.

The potential development illustrates the connection between infrastructure and Fort McCoy's broader mission. As training requirements and the number of organizations using the installation evolve, the post must have the facilities and infrastructure necessary to accommodate them.

Haun also pointed to the importance of replacing aging infrastructure before it becomes a larger operational problem.

Fort McCoy's planned bridge replacements and improvements to wastewater and water systems are examples of projects that may receive less attention than new barracks or headquarters buildings but are essential to maintaining the installation's long-term ability to support its mission.

The installation's approach is increasingly one of modernization rather than simply maintaining what already exists.

The 1600 block is a prime example. New barracks, officer quarters and planned headquarters facilities are creating a modern training campus while helping Fort McCoy accommodate the demands of today's Army.

At the same time, projects such as the Community Center renovation, RTS-Maintenance classrooms and Building 2187 consolidation are addressing longstanding facility requirements.

Together, the projects represent a broad infrastructure strategy: improve aging facilities, build new capacity where mission requirements demand it, consolidate services where practical and prepare Fort McCoy for future growth.

As Haun's town-hall update demonstrated, Fort McCoy's infrastructure work is not limited to a single construction project or portion of the installation. It is an ongoing effort to ensure the post remains capable, efficient and ready to support the Army's training and mobilization requirements well into the future.

For an installation whose mission depends heavily on its ability to receive, house, train, and support large numbers of military personnel, modern infrastructure is itself a mission capability, Haun said. The continued development of the 1600 block provides a visible example of that investment — and a look at how Fort McCoy is building the infrastructure needed for the Army's future.

Fort McCoy's motto beginning in 2026 is "Training the Total Force and Shaping the Future since 1909." The installation's mission: "Fort McCoy strengthens Total Force Readiness by serving as a training center, Mobilization Force Generation Installation, and Strategic Support Area enabling warfighter lethality to deploy, fight, and win our nation's wars."

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Contractors work on a new $27.3 million transient training troops barracks project, known as the Fort McCoy East Barracks Project, on Sept. 10 at Fort McCoy.

NEWS

Fort McCoy Exchange renovation advances toward November completion

STORY & PHOTO BY SCOTT T. STURKOL
Public Affairs Staff



Jesse Chamberlain, assistant store manager for the Fort McCoy Exchange, gives an update about the exchange Aug. 27 during the Garrison Town Hall meeting in building 905 at Fort McCoy.

The transformation of the Fort McCoy Exchange is nearing completion as the major renovation project enters its final phase, bringing a modernized shopping experience to Soldiers, military families, retirees and other authorized customers.

The project, which began earlier in 2026, was approximately 85 percent complete as of Aug. 27, according to Jesse Chamberlain, assistant store manager for the Fort McCoy Exchange.

Chamberlain provided the latest update during the Fort McCoy garrison town hall Aug. 27 in Building 905.

The Exchange has remained open throughout the renovation, allowing customers to continue shopping while contractors have worked through multiple phases of construction.

The project includes new polished concrete flooring, new fixtures, a redesigned store layout, updated checkout areas and improvements to the Express and food-service areas.

The renovation is now moving into its final stages.

Phase 4 work, which includes continued work on the center portion of the main sales floor and the end of the sales floor, was scheduled for completion Aug. 28.

The project will then move into Phase 5, which includes punch-list and closeout work scheduled from Sept. 3 through Oct. 30.

"We're hoping to have everything done before November 1st," Chamberlain said.

A grand-opening event is anticipated for mid-November, although an exact date had not been established as of the Aug. 27 town hall.

The final phase will include identifying and correcting remaining punch-list items, completing outstanding installations, finishing the alterations area, completing the barbershop and restoring presentation standards throughout the facility.

Chamberlain said the project represents more than simply giving the store a new appearance.

"The goal is not to simply have a newly remodeled Exchange," Chamberlain said. "Our goal is to provide Fort McCoy with better customer service, stronger operations and a facility positioned to better support the Soldier, their family, our retirees and our civilian employees."

Changes taking shape

The completed Exchange will feature a substantially different interior layout.

One of the most noticeable changes will be the centralized checkout area, which is planned to include four self-checkout registers and two staffed registers.

The new configuration is designed to provide a more open and convenient checkout experience.

The project also removes the existing separation between portions of the Express and main Exchange, creating a more open configuration and allowing the Exchange to better integrate merchandise and services.

The food, snack and beverage area was an early priority in the renovation because of the large number of Soldiers who visit Fort McCoy for training.

The facility's flooring, which was more than 20 years old, is being replaced with polished concrete designed to provide a smoother and more modern surface.

The renovation also includes new fixtures and updated presentation areas throughout the store.

The project is part of a broader effort to modernize Exchange facilities and improve the services available to military communities.

Supporting the Fort McCoy community

The Exchange modernization represents an investment in a heavily used quality-of-life facility at one of the Army Reserve's major training installations.

Fort McCoy supports thousands of Soldiers who come to the installation for training, mobilization and other military missions. The Exchange provides those Soldiers and the broader Fort McCoy community with access to merchandise, food and other services during their time on the installation.

Chamberlain also reminded the Fort McCoy workforce about expanded shopping privileges for eligible Department of Defense civilian employees.

DoD civilian employees with qualifying DoD identification are authorized to shop at the Exchange both in person and online.

The expanded privileges provide another benefit to Fort McCoy's large civilian workforce.

The Fort McCoy Exchange complex provides a variety of services beyond traditional retail shopping, including Military Clothing Sales, Express, a gas station, Class Six sales, food services, alterations, barber services and other customer services.

As the renovation enters its final weeks, customers will continue to see construction activity throughout portions of the store.

Chamberlain thanked the Fort McCoy community for its patience and support during the renovation and said the Exchange team is looking forward to completing the project.

The modernization is intended to provide more than a new appearance. Once complete, the renovated facility will provide Fort McCoy with an updated retail environment designed to improve customer service and better support Soldiers, families, retirees and civilian employees.

The Fort McCoy Exchange is located in Building 1538.

Fort McCoy Retiree Appreciation Day honors service, strengthens retiree connections

STORY & PHOTOS BY SCOTT T. STURKOL
Public Affairs Staff


(Above and photos below) Attendees to the 2026 Fort McCoy Retiree Appreciation Day (RAD) on Sept. 11 participate in activities for the event in Building 905 at Fort McCoy.

Military service may eventually bring a service member's active-duty or Reserve career to an end, but the connection to the military does not end with retirement.

That connection was highlighted Sept. 11, 2026, when Fort McCoy hosted its annual Retiree Appreciation Day, bringing military retirees, veterans, spouses and members of the military community together for information, fellowship and an opportunity to stay connected with the services and benefits available to them.

The annual event, organized by the Fort McCoy Soldier for Life Retirement Services Office within the Directorate of Human Resources, was held in building 905. Fort McCoy Retirement Services Officer Nicholas Gimson continues to lead the installation's retirement-services effort and has been instrumental in organizing recent Retiree Appreciation Days.

The purpose of the event is straightforward: bring retirees together while providing them with current information about the benefits and services they have earned through military service.

Fort McCoy's Retirement Services Office describes Retiree Appreciation Day as an annual September event featuring a morning session with guest speakers from organizations that affect military retirees' lives, followed by a benefits fair with representatives from military retiree and veteran-related organizations.

For Gimson, that combination of information and personal connection is an important part of serving the Fort McCoy retiree community.

"The ultimate goal of a Retiree Appreciation Day is to bring together military retirees and give them an opportunity to receive some of the most up-to-date information on the benefits they are entitled to with a seminar setting," Gimson said in discussing previous Fort McCoy RAD events.

The event is open not only to military retirees, but also to those transitioning into retirement and their spouses.

A continuing connection to service

Retiree Appreciation Day has become an annual Fort McCoy tradition, but its format has evolved over the years to better serve the retiree community.

The 2022 RAD was the first Fort McCoy Retiree Appreciation Day since 2019 and drew more than 300 attendees. The return of the event provided an opportunity for retirees and family members to reconnect with one another while receiving information about benefits and services.

The 2023 event also drew more than 300 military retirees and family members.

That event featured a prayer breakfast, briefings on subjects including TRICARE and Social Security, a Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs presentation, county veterans service officers, a benefits expo and other activities. Attendees could also visit the Fort McCoy Commemorative Area and History Center.

The 2023 event demonstrated another important aspect of RAD: it is not simply a series of presentations. It provides an opportunity for retirees to reconnect with the installation and with the Army community.

In 2023, nearly 100 RAD attendees visited the Fort McCoy Commemorative Area, where they toured the History Center, Veterans Memorial Plaza and Equipment Park and learned more about the installation's history and heritage.

Information retirees can use

The benefits and services available to military retirees can change over time, making opportunities such as RAD important for keeping retirees informed.

Fort McCoy's Retirement Services Office provides assistance to Soldiers and their families preparing for retirement as well as retired Soldiers, surviving spouses and families.

The office provides counseling concerning retirement rights, benefits and entitlements, Survivor Benefit Plan information and Reserve Component Survivor Benefit Plan counseling. It also helps keep retirees informed about changes in laws and benefits.

The Fort McCoy RSO also offers pre-retirement and Survivor Benefit Plan briefings, either in group settings or individually.

RAD brings many of those resources together in one location.

Past events have included representatives from the Fort McCoy Retirement Services Office, TRICARE, transition assistance, Military OneSource, county veterans service offices and other organizations serving military retirees and veterans.

The format gives retirees an opportunity to ask questions directly and learn about resources they may not otherwise encounter in one place.

More than benefits

While information is an important part of Retiree Appreciation Day, the event also recognizes something larger — the continuing value of the military retiree community.

At the 2023 event, Fort McCoy Garrison Commander Col. Stephen Messenger thanked retirees and their families for their service and emphasized the importance of the support systems surrounding military service.

"Everyone needs a support system," Messenger said during the event. "And the military provides that through these forums, the Retirement Services Office, and all the benefits that come with it."

That support extends beyond the individual who served.

Military families are an important part of the retiree community, having supported Soldiers through deployments, permanent changes of station, training, long hours and the many demands associated with military life.

That is why Fort McCoy RAD events are open to retirees, those preparing to retire and spouses.





A tradition that continues

Recent Retiree Appreciation Days have also demonstrated how Fort McCoy organizations work together to support the retiree community.

In 2024, for example, the Fort McCoy Commissary held a special sidewalk sale during RAD, providing retirees and family members another opportunity to participate in installation activities while attending the event.

That year's RAD served 155 retirees, veterans and spouses, according to Gimson.

"Retiree Appreciation Day was a tremendous success," Gimson said following the 2024 event. "We had the pleasure of serving 155 retirees, veterans, and spouses. This year, we welcomed several new community partners, and the feedback from attendees was overwhelmingly positive."

Gimson said many attendees expressed interest in having additional time and events available during future RADs.

The 2024 event also continued the tradition of opening the Fort McCoy Commemorative Area to RAD attendees.

Nearly 60 retirees and family members visited the area to explore Fort McCoy and Army history.

The combination of information, fellowship and access to Fort McCoy resources has helped make RAD an important annual event for the installation's retiree community.

Serving those who served

Fort McCoy';s commitment to retirees extends beyond one day each year.

The installation's Retirement Services Office is available throughout the year to help retirees and their families understand and navigate their military benefits.

The office is located in building 2187 and provides walk-in service, although appointments are recommended.

The office can be reached at 502-898-3716.

NEWS

A-10s from Page 1

strengths.

Rather than being limited to a single training lane or a single type of facility, units can combine Fort McCoy's airspace, ranges, impact areas, terrain and airfield infrastructure to build training events around their mission requirements.

For the A-10, that means pilots can practice the aircraft's ability to fly at low speeds and low altitudes, maneuver toward ground objectives, conduct weapons-delivery operations and repeatedly fly training profiles in a controlled environment.

The A-10C is especially suited to this type of training. The Air Force describes the aircraft as highly maneuverable at low airspeeds and altitude while maintaining a highly accurate weapons-delivery platform. The aircraft also can carry both precision-guided and unguided munitions and can operate from austere locations.

The aircraft's famous 30 mm GAU-8/A Gatling gun is another part of the A-10's unique combat capability, although the August training at Fort McCoy focused on bombing operations.

A Total Force training relationship

The recurring presence of the 303rd Fighter Squadron at Fort McCoy also illustrates the installation's role as "training the Total Force."

Fort McCoy routinely supports training for active-duty, Reserve and National Guard forces from across the military services. Its combination of ranges, airspace, terrain, airfields and training infrastructure allows units to conduct specialized training that may not be available at their home installations.

For the 303rd Fighter Squadron, that means Fort McCoy can provide a training environment where A-10 crews can concentrate on the aircraft's unique strengths and mission requirements.

The relationship also demonstrates the value of joint and multi-service training infrastructure.

The A-10 was designed around a mission that requires close integration with ground forces. Training in an Army environment — over Army-managed training areas and against designated ground objectives — provides Air Force Reserve crews with an environment that more closely reflects the type of joint battlefield for which the aircraft was designed.

The 303rd's return to Fort McCoy in August is another example of that capability.

As the Air Force Reserve continues preparing its A-10 crews to remain ready for operational missions, Fort McCoy provides the space, infrastructure and professional support necessary to turn flight time into meaningful training.

For an aircraft built to get low, stay close and deliver precise effects against ground targets, McCoy offers a training environment well suited to the mission.

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An A-10C Thunderbolt II aircraft from the 303rd Fighter Squadron at Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo., conducts a bombing run Aug. 21, 2026, at Fort McCoy.

PATRIOT from Page 1

worked, what did not and what they need to change before the next iteration.

"We essentially recap the whole day: what went well, what didn't go well and what we're going to implement to improve the next day," Ayala said.

For Ayala, the process mirrors lessons learned during real-world activations.

"The state partnerships, that's the biggest part," Ayala said. "Knowing what we have accessible to us in our toolbox, know that we are not alone."

Patriot '26 allows Soldiers, Airmen, and civilian partners to practice those relationships under pressure before the next disaster is real.

"Natural disasters, there's not a specific time," Ayala said. "It just happens, and we have to be readily available to assist."



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Brittany Conley

A role player throws water balloons toward Airmen participating in Patriot 26 during a simulated civil unrest scenario at the Combined Arms Collective Training Facility on Aug. 25 at Fort McCoy.

Patriot '26 demonstrates Fort McCoy's ability to support unique, joint training

BY SCOTT T. STURKOL
Public Affairs Staff

The ability to train for complex emergencies in realistic environments requires more than personnel and equipment. It requires training locations that can support a wide range of missions and organizations working together toward a common objective.

Patriot '26 demonstrated that capability Aug. 24–29 as approximately 1,000 Airmen and Soldiers from National Guard units representing 35 states, along with federal, state and local agencies, participated in large-scale domestic-response training at Volk Field Combat Readiness Training Center and Fort McCoy, Wis.

Hosted by the Air National Guard, Patriot '26 was designed to enhance domestic-response readiness and interagency coordination by placing participants in realistic, high-stress emergency scenarios requiring them to respond quickly, adapt to changing conditions and operate as a unified team.

Fort McCoy played an important role in that training, providing multiple specialized training areas and facilities across the installation's South Post while working jointly with personnel at Volk Field.

"Fort McCoy's ability to provide multiple training environments in support of the exercise allows participants to train in scenarios that would be difficult to replicate in a single location," Fort McCoy Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security officials said.

Training at Fort McCoy included Training Area Rice, Training Area Harrison, the Combined Arms Collective Training Facility, Young Air Assault Strip and Badger Drop Zone.

The combination of those facilities provided Patriot planners with opportunities to conduct ground-based emergency-response scenarios while also incorporating aviation and other capabilities into the exercise.

Key training events involved U.S. Army UH-72 Lakota helicopters from the Kentucky National Guard supporting scenarios at both Volk Field and Fort McCoy.

At Fort McCoy, Army aviation crews conducted medical-evacuation hoist training using simulated casualties. The training required aircrews to locate and recover patients from areas where an aircraft could not safely land, then hoist the simulated casualties aboard the helicopter for evacuation.

Officials also said the training provided an opportunity for aircrews and ground personnel to practice the coordination required during an actual emergency in which terrain, damaged infrastructure or other conditions prevent conventional helicopter landings.

The exercise also included mass-casualty scenarios, with role players portraying injured victims. Participants had to assess casualties, coordinate available resources and move patients through the evacuation process while simultaneously dealing with other demands created by the scenario, exercise organizers said.

Other scenarios involved civil unrest, damaged infrastructure and communities requiring basic supplies. Security Forces Airmen served as acting incident commanders, giving them an opportunity to practice coordinating complex emergency situations while working with other military and civilian organizations.

Participants also conducted search-and-rescue training that included breaking through barriers, urban search and rescue and aeromedical evacuation. The scenarios were designed to test more than individual technical skills.

They required participants from different organizations to communicate, share information, coordinate resources and establish a unified response — capabilities that become particularly important when an emergency crosses organizational or jurisdictional boundaries.

A joint training partnership

The cooperation between Fort McCoy and Volk Field is a significant part of the Patriot exercise model.

Although the two installations have distinct missions and capabilities, their proximity allows exercise planners to combine those capabilities into a larger training environment, Fort McCoy DPTMS officials noted. Volk Field provides a major Air National Guard combat-readiness training environment, while Fort McCoy offers extensive maneuver space, specialized training facilities and a variety of environments where military and civilian emergency-response organizations can conduct realistic scenarios.

Together, the installations can provide a more diverse training environment than either location could provide independently. That relationship has been demonstrated repeatedly during previous Patriot exercises.

Fort McCoy and Volk Field have hosted Patriot exercises together for years. Earlier iterations incorporated Fort McCoy's airfields, drop zones, training villages, and other facilities into scenarios involving disaster response, search and rescue, mass casualties, security operations, emergency management and aviation operations.

During Patriot North 2017, more than 900 civilians, volunteers, Soldiers and Airmen participated in training involving simulated disasters, mass casualties, search and rescue and other emergency-response missions. Fort McCoy provided Young Air Assault Strip and other training capabilities, with officials noting the installation's airfield and drop-zone capabilities as important additions to the exercise.

Patriot North 2018 again brought hundreds of participants to Volk Field and Fort McCoy. Training at McCoy included operations at Young Air Assault Strip, airdrop training at Badger Drop Zone and emergency-response scenarios in the installation's urban training environments. Military personnel also worked alongside organizations including FEMA, Civil Air Patrol, Team Rubicon, the Salvation Army and medical personnel.

The Fort McCoy connection continued during Patriot North 2019, when the exercise included training at Young Air Assault Strip and an airborne operation at Sparta-Fort McCoy Airport involving special operations personnel establishing an air hub capable of receiving military airlift supplies.

Patriot returned to the Fort McCoy-Volk Field training complex in 2021, when participants responded to simulated earthquake damage, collapsed structures and mass casualties while conducting search and rescue and casualty evacuation operations.

Patriot '26 continued that tradition while incorporating the capabilities required for today's domestic-response missions.

Training the Total Force

For Fort McCoy, supporting Patriot '26 represents another example of the installation's role in Total Force training.

The exercise brought together Air National Guard and Army National Guard personnel, active military capabilities, law-enforcement organizations, emergency-management agencies and other federal, state and local partners.

The variety of participants required an equally diverse training environment.

At Fort McCoy, participants could move from realistic ground-based emergency scenarios to aviation operations and casualty evacuation training while remaining within the larger exercise framework being coordinated with Volk Field.

That flexibility is one of the installation's most important training strengths.

"Patriot '26 is another demonstration of Fort McCoy's ability to support Total Force training in a joint environment," DPTMS officials said.

The exercise also highlighted why maintaining specialized training infrastructure is important to military readiness.

Facilities such as the Combined Arms Collective Training Facility can provide realistic urban environments. Training areas provide space for larger ground scenarios, while Young Air Assault Strip and Badger Drop Zone provide aviation-related capabilities that can expand the scope of an exercise.

When those capabilities are combined with Volk Field's resources, exercise planners can create scenarios that require participants to solve problems rather than simply perform individual training tasks.

For Patriot '26 participants, that meant dealing with situations involving injured personnel, damaged infrastructure, civil unrest, difficult terrain, limited access and competing demands — all while communicating with organizations that may have different missions, equipment and procedures.

The result was training focused on the reality of large-scale domestic emergencies: no single organization is likely to have all the personnel, equipment or expertise required to respond alone.

Patriot '26 gave participants an opportunity to practice bringing those capabilities together.

For Fort McCoy and Volk Field, the exercise once again demonstrated the value of their combined training environments and their ability to support military and civilian organizations preparing to respond when communities need them most.

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Photo by Tech. Sgt. Marissa Welker

Airmen assigned to various Air National Guard units from different states participate in a simulated civil unrest training scenario during Patriot '26 at Fort McCoy on Aug. 26.



FEBRUARY 2026: SPECIAL EDITION OBSERVING THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF 9/11

Fort McCoy remembers 9/11, 25 years later, with 2026 Memorial Run, Stair Climb on post

STORY & PHOTOS BY SCOTT T. STURKOL
Public Affairs Staff

Nearly 100 people gathered at 6 a.m. Sept. 11 at Fort McCoy to remember the lives lost during the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, and to honor the generations of Americans who answered the call to serve in the 25 years since that day.

The 2026 running of the 9/11 Memorial Run and Stair Climb brought Soldiers, military retirees, veterans, Fort McCoy employees, and others together on Patriot Day for a morning of remembrance, reflection, and service.

Before participants began the event, Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Walter McCall, Fort McCoy Garrison chaplain, offered an invocation focused on the selflessness of those who responded to the attacks and those who served in the conflicts that followed.

"I'm thankful for everyone that came out today," McCall said. "I was there and so let's make sure we make this a day to honor our fallen on this Patriots Day."

McCall encouraged participants to use the run and stair climb as an opportunity to remember the firefighters and other emergency responders who rushed toward danger as others fled to safety.

"We ask that as we run, that we run in remembrance of those who got out of their vehicles, the firefighter who got out of the vehicle, who ran … to be able to help and save others as he perished," McCall said.

The stair climb is particularly symbolic because it recalls the thousands of first responders who climbed the stairs of the World Trade Center towers after the attacks. At Fort McCoy, participants use the physical challenge of the event to remember the determination and sacrifice demonstrated by those responders.

McCall also connected the remembrance to the military service that followed Sept. 11.


Event competitors participate in the stair climb portion of the observance Sept. 11 in one of Fort McCoy's newest four-story barracks buildings in the 1600 block of the cantonment area at Fort McCoy.


Fort McCoy community members participate in the 2026 running of the 9/11 Memorial Run and Stair Climb in the early morning hours of Sept. 11 at Fort McCoy.

"We also want to thank you for also that we honor today in our run today that those of many countless service members that served in the war, in the global war on terrorism," he said.

He said the training and sacrifice of today's military should continue the legacy of those who served following the attacks.

"May our sacrifice, may our training today prepare us, Lord, to keep that legacy to train and win our nation's wars," McCoy said.

Following the invocation, Col. Sarah Fraticelli, commander of U.S. Army Garrison-Fort McCoy, welcomed participants and reflected on the significance of the 25th anniversary.

"Thanks for being here and thanks for gathering as one on the 25th anniversary of September 11th," Fraticelli said. "It's hard to believe it's been 25 years."

For those who experienced the attacks as they happened, Fraticelli said the memories remain vivid.

"I know all of us that have those memories will always remember the morning that we found out and where we were," she said. "And that marks really my generation, the beginning of my service."

Fraticelli said the anniversary was an opportunity to remember the innocent people who lost their lives in New York City, at the Pentagon and near Shanksville, Penn., as well as the first responders and service members who placed themselves in harm's way.

"Today we're here to remember the … firefighters, the police, medical workers, and soldiers who rushed into danger without hesitation," Fraticelli said. "And the generation of service members who really put their lives at risk in the months and years that followed."

Before participants moved to the starting line, Fraticelli asked everyone to pause and reflect.

"Please join me in a moment of silence and reflection to honor the fallen, their families, and all who continue to defend our nation," she said.

After the moment of silence, Fraticelli encouraged participants to approach the event with purpose.

"Be safe, support one another, and let's run with a purpose this morning," she said.

A day of remembrance

Sept. 11 is observed nationally as Patriot Day, a day to remember the people killed in the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

Nineteen terrorists associated with al-Qaida hijacked four commercial airplanes that morning, history shows. Two struck the World Trade Center towers in New York City, one struck the Pentagon, and a fourth crashed near Shanksville, Penn., after passengers and crew members attempted to regain control of the aircraft. The attacks killed 2,977 people.

The attacks generated an immediate response from firefighters, police officers, emergency medical personnel, military personnel, and civilians. Many first responders entered the World Trade Center towers and other affected areas knowing they were moving into extreme danger. Passengers aboard United Airlines Flight 93 also fought back against the hijackers, ultimately preventing the aircraft from reaching its intended target.

Congress established Patriot Day in December 2001 as a National Day of Remembrance. The law calls for appropriate programs and activities, the American flag to be flown at half-staff and a moment of silence to honor those killed in the attacks.

For the military community, the anniversary also carries a direct connection to the service and sacrifice that followed the attacks. Millions of service members served during the Global War on Terrorism in the years after Sept. 11, with many deploying multiple times and some making the ultimate sacrifice.

That connection was reflected in McCoy's invocation and in the purpose of the 2026 9/11 Memorial Run and Stair Climb.

Twenty-five years after Sept. 11, the event provided Fort McCoy's community an opportunity to remember those who were lost, honor those who responded, recognize the sacrifices of the military generation that followed and ensure the memory of that day continues to be carried forward.

For the nearly 100 participants gathered before sunrise at Fort McCoy, the event was not simply a run or a stair climb.

It was an act of remembrance — and a commitment to never forget.

Learn more about Fort McCoy online at https://home.army.mil/mccoy, on Facebook by searching "ftmccoy," on Flickr at https://www.flickr.com/photos/fortmccoywi, and on X (formerly Twitter) by searching "usagmccoy." Also try downloading the My Army Post app to your smartphone and set "Fort McCoy" or another installation as your preferred base.

Weight they carry: Fort McCoy firefighters honor those lost on 9/11

STORY & PHOTOS BY SCOTT T. STURKOL
Public Affairs Staff

Twenty-five years after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, the memory of the emergency responders who ran toward danger that morning remains deeply connected to the work of firefighters who continue to answer calls for help today.

That connection was especially visible Sept. 11, 2026, at Fort McCoy as Firefighter/Emergency Medical Technician Brandon Perron and fellow Fort McCoy Directorate of Emergency Services Fire Department firefighters Stephen Darling and Luke Erickson participated in the installation's annual 9/11 Memorial Run and Stair Climb.

Nearly 100 Soldiers, veterans, military retirees, Fort McCoy employees and others participated in the 2026 event, which included a 2.975-mile run/1.34-mile walk followed by a stair climb inside one of Fort McCoy's four-story barracks buildings. The stair climb is designed as a physical remembrance of the thousands of emergency responders who climbed the stairs of the World Trade Center towers after the attacks.

For Perron, the event has become a deeply personal tradition.

Perron, a Sparta, Wis., native, was in fifth grade when the attacks occurred. In previous years, he explained that watching the events unfold helped inspire his decision to become a firefighter.

"I kind of knew at that point that firefighting was something that I wanted to do," Perron said in a 2025 Fort McCoy interview.


Fort McCoy firefighters participate in the 2026 installation 9/11 Memorial Run and Stair Climb on Sept. 11 at Fort McCoy.

In 2024 and 2025, Perron completed the Fort McCoy event wearing his full firefighter turnout gear and carrying more than 100 pounds of equipment. In 2025, it marked his second consecutive year completing the event in that manner.

The equipment was not simply extra weight.

Perron carried a high-rise pack and a New York hook as a way of symbolically representing the equipment firefighters carried into the World Trade Center. The firefighters responding to the towers had to take breathing-air bottles, hose and other tools up hundreds of feet of stairs because elevators were unavailable or unsafe.

"It's to honor the 343 firefighters who perished on 9/11 and those who have perished since because of cancer related issues," Perron said in 2024. "But it's also just in the totality of the circumstances that everybody who has either fought in the wars following and lost their lives or the civilians who lost their lives. Police officers … everybody who was involved with 9/11 … just to honor and respect them for what they've gone through and what their families are going through currently."

That remembrance extends far beyond the 343 members of the Fire Department of the City of New York who died that day.

Remembering New York's emergency responders

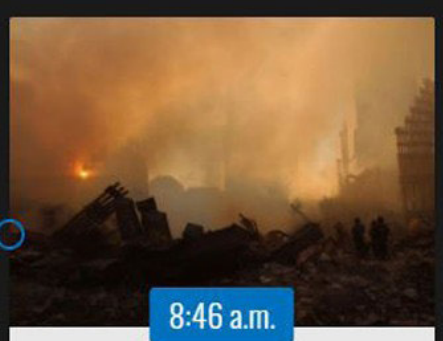
The attacks on the World Trade Center produced what was one of the largest emergency mobilizations in New York City history.

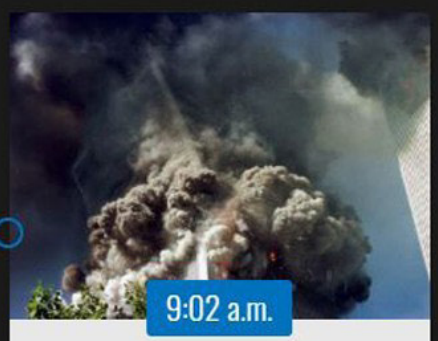
Firefighters, police officers and emergency medical personnel from throughout the New York area responded to the World Trade Center. They faced an almost unimaginable rescue mission as thousands of civilians attempted to escape the burning

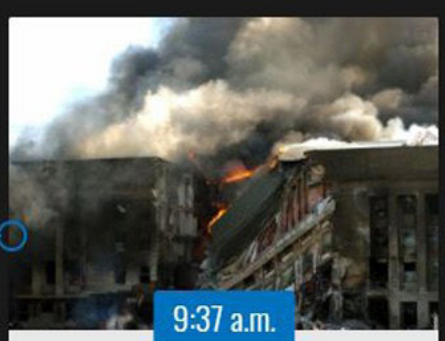
(See **FIREFIGHTERS**, Insert Page 2)

TIMELINE OF ATTACKS ON SEPT. 11, 2001

According to history.com, on Sept. 11, 2001, 19 militants associated with the Islamic extremist group al Qaeda hijacked four airplanes and carried out suicide attacks against targets in the United States. Two of the planes were flown into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, a third plane hit the Pentagon, and a fourth plane crashed in a field in Shanksville, Penn. Almost 3,000 people were killed during the 9-11 terrorist attacks, which triggered major U.S. initiatives to combat terrorism and defined the presidency of George W. Bush.









REMEMBERING 9/11 25 YEARS LATER

FIREFIGHTERS from Page 1

towers. After American Airlines Flight 11 struck the North Tower at 8:46 a.m., and United Airlines Flight 175 struck the South Tower at 9:03 a.m., emergency responders moved toward the buildings while civilians moved away.

Firefighters entered the towers to search for and evacuate civilians. Police officers helped direct people toward safety. Emergency medical personnel treated injured people and established medical operations around the disaster site.

Then the towers collapsed, and 343 FDNY firefighters died on 9/11, 23 members of the New York City Police Department died, and 37 members of the Port Authority Police Department died.

In all, 411 emergency workers were killed in the attacks.

Those numbers represent individuals — firefighters, police officers, paramedics, emergency medical technicians and other responders — who reported for duty that morning and answered a call unlike anything they had encountered before.

For the FDNY, the loss was particularly devastating. Fire companies from throughout New York City responded to the World Trade Center. Firefighters climbed upward into the towers carrying the equipment necessary to perform rescues and fight fires.

Many never came back down.

Their sacrifice also continued long after Sept. 11, 2001. Thousands of first responders and survivors have experienced illnesses associated with exposure to the toxic dust and debris at the World Trade Center site. Numerous emergency responders have died in the years since from illnesses attributed to their service at Ground Zero.

That continuing loss is part of what Perron has sought to recognize through his participation at Fort McCoy.

A legacy carried forward

That idea — answering the call when others need help — is familiar to the Fort McCoy Fire Department.

The installation's firefighters protect a nearly 60,000-acre Army training center, but their emergency-response mission also reaches beyond the installation through mutual-aid agreements with surrounding communities.

Fort McCoy firefighters have provided assistance during structure fires, vehicle accidents, water rescues, wildland fires and other emergencies throughout the region.

The department's capabilities have also expanded well beyond traditional structural firefighting.

For nearly 15 years, Fort McCoy has maintained a specialized scuba dive team, providing a technical-rescue capability that is uncommon among Army fire departments. The team conducts surface and underwater rescue and recovery operations and provides mutual-aid support to surrounding communities.

Its specialized equipment includes dry suits, full-face masks and wireless underwater communications systems. Firefighters regularly train for open-water and ice-rescue operations at Fort McCoy's lakes.

That training has translated into real-world response.

In January 2019, Fort McCoy firefighters responded to an emergency at Perch Lake in Sparta after children fell through the ice, including one who went beneath the surface. Seven firefighters on duty responded, while three additional firefighters came from home to support the dive team.

The department also regularly trains in technical rescue, including rope rescue and high- and low-angle operations.

Fort McCoy maintains aircraft-rescue firefighting capabilities near the Sparta-Fort McCoy Airport, giving the department specialized capabilities for aviation emergencies.

Service beyond the gates

One of the clearest examples of the department's commitment to surrounding communities came during the catastrophic flooding of August 2018.



Fort McCoy firefighters participate in the 2026 9/11 Memorial Run and Stair Climb on Sept. 11 at Fort McCoy.

After portions of the region received as much as 12 inches of rain, flash flooding overwhelmed communities near Fort McCoy.

Fort McCoy firefighters were called to provide mutual aid.

They responded with personnel, boats and vehicles to Sparta, Melvina and Leon. The department deployed eight firefighters, three boats and four support vehicles during the flood-rescue operations.

Firefighters used boats to reach residents trapped by rapidly rising water.

In one case, crews helped evacuate a senior citizen and her granddaughter from a home as floodwater rushed through the area. In another, firefighters used boats to reach residents who were unable to leave their homes.

Overall, emergency responders working in Leon, Sparta, and Melvina helped save 57 people and 27 pets.

Among the Fort McCoy firefighters participating in those flood-rescue operations was Luke Erickson, who joined Perron and Darling for the 2026 9/11 Memorial Run and Stair Climb.

That connection gives the 2026 event an especially meaningful dimension.

Erickson has not only trained to respond to emergencies. He has answered the call during an actual disaster, helping people in danger in communities surrounding Fort McCoy.

Equipment built for the mission

The Fort McCoy Fire Department's equipment reflects the breadth of its emergency-response mission.

During the 2018 floods, firefighters used boats capable of navigating dangerous floodwaters. The department's skimmer boat is a 20-foot, water-jet-propelled boat capable of operating in shallow water.

The department's dive equipment allows firefighters to conduct underwater searches in conditions ranging from open water to beneath the ice.

During annual ice-diving training, divers use dry suits and full-face masks while remaining connected by tether and communications lines to firefighters on the surface. This allows the team to practice lost-diver and underwater-search scenarios under controlled conditions.

The department also maintains specialized wildland firefighting equipment.

In March 2026, Fort McCoy firefighters responded to a wildland fire in the installation's North Impact Area after training munitions ignited dry vegetation. Nine firefighters deployed with four brush trucks and a wildland utility terrain vehicle.

The brush trucks carried water tanks, pumps, hoses and wildland tools, while the UTV provided a smaller, highly maneuverable firefighting platform for areas larger vehicles could not easily reach.

Firefighters established a firebreak using back-burn operations and contained the fire in less than two hours without requiring outside mutual aid.

Earlier in 2026, Fort McCoy firefighters also provided mutual-aid assistance during a fire in Tomah.

Each response is different. The equipment changes. The circumstances change. The people needing help change. But the mission remains the same.

Remembering through service

For Darling, Erickson, and Perron, participating in the 2026 event placed them among the many Fort McCoy Soldiers, veterans, employees and community members who came together to remember Sept. 11.

For these three firefighters, however, the morning carried an additional meaning. They are members of the profession that was so profoundly affected that morning 25 years ago.

They wear protective equipment.

They train for emergencies that can change in seconds. They climb toward danger while others are trying to get away. And they understand the weight of the tools they carry.

Perron's participation in previous years made that symbolism especially visible. Carrying more than 100 pounds of firefighter equipment up the stairs was a physical representation of what firefighters faced inside the World Trade Center.

In 2026, he was joined by Darling and Erickson. Together, the three Fort McCoy firefighters honored the fallen by doing something firefighters have done for generations: showing up, carrying the equipment, climbing the stairs and answering the call.

The Fort McCoy 9/11 Memorial Run and Stair Climb cannot recreate what happened in New York City on Sept. 11, 2001.

It does something more important. It remembers. It remembers the civilians who never made it home. It remembers the firefighters, police officers, paramedics and other emergency responders who ran toward danger. It remembers the families who lost loved ones.

And it reminds those who continue to serve that the legacy of those responders lives not only in memorials and ceremonies, but in the everyday actions of people willing to help others in their greatest moments of need.

Twenty-five years later, three Fort McCoy firefighters carried that legacy up the stairs. And with every step, they carried the memory of those who never came back down.

During Fort McCoy Prayer Breakfast, chaplain holds remembrance for 9/11 sacrifices, resilience 25 years later

STORY & PHOTO BY SCOTT T. STURKOL
Public Affairs Staff

Twenty-five years after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, Fort McCoy community members gathered Sept. 11, 2026, to remember those who lost their lives, honor those who responded, and reflect on the resilience that continues to shape the nation.

During Fort McCoy's 2026 Retiree Appreciation Day Prayer Breakfast, Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Walter McCall, Fort McCoy Garrison chaplain with the Religious Support Office, led a remembrance presentation that combined historical military records, personal reflection, and a message of hope. His presentation included a video recalling the attacks and a review of a historical report documenting the Army Reserve's response to the events of 9/11.

McCall's presentation connected the sacrifices of the first responders and military personnel who served that day with the continuing importance of community, healing, and resilience.



Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Walter McCall leads his own presentation Sept. 11, 2026, that recalls the 25th anniversary of Sept. 11, 2001, during the 2026 Fort McCoy Retiree Appreciation Day event in building 905 at Fort McCoy.

Preserving Army Reserve's 9/11 history

McCall explained that the 311th Military History Detachment was tasked with documenting the events in New York City, while the 90th Military History Detachment covered the Pentagon response in Washington, D.C.

The Army Reserve's Office of Army Reserve History subsequently published two reports in 2003, including *The Role of the Army Reserve in the 11 September Attacks: New York City*, prepared by the 311th Military History Detachment. The reports documented the Army Reserve's response through narrative accounts, photographs, and interviews with Reservists involved in the aftermath.

While reviewing the historical material, McCall highlighted a foreword written by Lt. Gen. Thomas J. Plewes, Chief of the Army Reserve. Plewes served as chief from May 25, 1998, to May 24, 2002. The foreword in the New York report is dated May 21, 2002, rather than 2003.

McCall said reading Plewes' words helped him visualize the events of Sept. 11 and recognize the courage demonstrated by soldiers and civilians.

The foreword describes the attacks as an unimaginable national tragedy and recognizes the courage and selflessness of ordinary Americans and Army Reserve personnel. It also remembers Army Reserve soldiers who died while responding in their civilian roles, including firefighters and personnel working at the World Trade Center and Pentagon.

Remembering those who responded

McCall reviewed individual stories of Army Reserve personnel who lost their lives during the attacks.

McCall also highlighted the story of retired Col. Rick Rescorla, a Vietnam veteran and security director for Morgan Stanley at the World Trade Center. Rescorla helped evacuate thousands of employees and returned to search for people who remained in the building before losing his life.

The stories illustrated the individual acts of courage and selflessness that characterized the response to the attacks.

McCall also described the Army Reserve's broader response, which extended beyond the initial rescue efforts. Army Reserve personnel supported emergency operations, provided security, assisted civilian agencies, and mobilized to support recovery efforts.

The 311th Quartermaster Company (Mortuary Affairs), based in Aguadilla, Puerto Rico, deployed volunteers to the Pentagon within 72 hours of the attacks. Soldiers worked to recover human remains and personal effects from the debris.

The Survivor Tree: A message of hope

After discussing the lives lost and the Army Reserve's response, McCall transitioned to a message about hope and resilience through the story of the Survivor Tree at the World Trade Center Memorial.

The Callery pear tree had been planted in the World Trade Center plaza in 1970. During the attacks, the tree was crushed beneath steel, concrete, and burning debris. In October 2001, recovery workers discovered the damaged tree with a small cluster of green leaves.

Workers transported the tree to a nursery in the Bronx, where arborists cared for its damaged roots and helped it recover. In December 2010, the tree was returned to Lower Manhattan and replanted at the 9/11 Memorial.

McCall used the tree's survival as a metaphor for people who have experienced trauma, loss, and hardship.

"Hope does not require complete fullness to begin," he said. "It only requires a spark."

He explained that even when people feel fractured, the presence of life and the ability to endure can provide the beginning of recovery.

McCall identified three spiritual lessons from the Survivor Tree:

— Sprouting from devastation: Even after profound loss and trauma, the possibility of renewal remains.

— The necessity of the nursery: Healing requires community support, care, and trusted people who help others recover.

— Carrying a scar without being defined by it: Resilience does not mean erasing the past but allowing purposeful growth to continue despite the scars.

McCall emphasized that military service members, veterans, civilians, contractors, and families can all carry visible and unseen burdens. He encouraged those attending to seek support through chaplains, behavioral health professionals, battle buddies, coworkers, family members, and veteran service organizations.

"Resilience is not an absence of scars," McCall said. "It is a courageous decision to allow smooth, purposeful growth to flourish above all."

Honoring sacrifice, looking to future

As his presentation concluded, McCall recognized the 2,977 people killed in the Sept. 11 attacks, including the 184 people who died at the Pentagon. He also honored the military personnel who lost their lives during the conflicts that followed and the Gold Star families who continue to carry the weight of those sacrifices.

Addressing the retirees and veterans attending the breakfast, McCall expressed gratitude for their service and contributions to the nation.

He also recognized current Soldiers, Department of the Army civilians, contractors, and families, describing each as an essential part of the military community and its continued readiness.

"To our retirees and veterans in all branches, thank you for stepping into the breach when the nation needed you most," McCall said. "You remain a permanent, revered part of this garrison family."

McCall concluded by asking attendees to stand for the playing of Taps, providing a solemn close to the remembrance and an opportunity to reflect on the lives lost, the sacrifices made, and the responsibility to preserve their memory.

Twenty-five years after the attacks, his presentation connected the historical record of the Army Reserve's response with a continuing message: remembering the past, supporting one another, and finding hope through resilience.

Fort McCoy's motto beginning in 2026 is "Training the Total Force and Shaping the Future since 1909." The installation's mission: "Fort McCoy strengthens Total Force Readiness by serving as a training center, Mobilization Force Generation Installation, and Strategic Support Area enabling warfighter lethality to deploy, fight, and win our nation's wars."

And Fort McCoy's vision is, "To be the premier training center supporting the most capable, combat-ready, and lethal armed forces." Located in the heart of the upper Midwest, Fort McCoy is the only U.S. Army installation in Wisconsin. The installation has provided support and facilities for the field and classroom training of more than 100,000 military personnel from all services nearly every year since 1984.

Learn more about Fort McCoy online athttps://home.army.mil/mccoy, on Facebook by searching "ftmccoy," on Flickr at https://www.flickr.com/photos/fortmccoywi, and on X (formerly Twitter) by searching "usagmccoy." Also try downloading the My Army Post app to your smartphone and set "Fort McCoy" or another installation as your preferred base. Fort McCoy is also part of Army's Installation Management Command where "We Are The Army's Home."

REMEMBERING 9/11 25 YEARS LATER

THIS MONTH IN FORT MCCOY HISTORY

Fort McCoy was established in 1909. Here's a look at the installation's history from September 2026 and back. This month the section is featuring Fort McCoy news and observances of Patriot Day and the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States.

25 Years Ago — September 2001

FROM THE SEPT. 28, 2001, EDITION OF THE TRIAD NEWSPAPER: *The Days After (Photos on Page 1 remember 9/11 attacks by Rob Schuette, Newspaper Associate Editor)* — Photos on Page 1 of The Triad newspaper documenting what was happening at Fort McCoy in the days immediately following 9/11.

The photo caption of three photos reads: "The days after: American flags at Fort McCoy, including the one (above) near building 100, Post Headquarters flew at half-staff through Sept. 22, to honor the people who died in the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks at the Pentagon and World Trade Centers. Fort McCoy Police Officer Donald Bruley (center, right) checks a motorist's ID at Gate 15 as part of security measures to protect the installation community. People enter Chapel No. 1 (bottom right) to participate in a National Day of Prayer Sept. 14 for the people killed and injured in the terrorist attacks. Members of the Fort McCoy work force can find more information about Sept. 11 and its aftermath by going to the Fort McCoy Corporate Network and clicking on the 'Sept. 11, 2001, Related News' category."

FROM THE SEPT. 28, 2001, EDITION OF THE TRIAD NEWSPAPER: *Reserve components to guard America's homeland (By Staff Sgt. Marcia Triggs, Army News Service)* — As President Bush's campaign to end terrorism gets under way, reserve components prepare to secure America's borders, air space and the nation's interest.

About 10,000 Army National Guard and Army Reserve troops will be activated to support "Noble Eagle," America's homeland defense and civil support operations, officials said.

President Bush authorized the call-up of 50,000 Reserve troops, but service chiefs said they only need 35,000.

Along with the call-up of troops, the Department of Defense announced a mortgage rate cap under the "Soldiers and Sailors Civil Relief Act." Also, Donald Rumsfeld, defense secretary, delegated "stop-loss" authority to the heads of the military departments.

Stop-loss was last used during Operation Allied Force over Kosovo in 1999. It's a program that allows military branches to retain individuals on active duty beyond their date of separation.

Those affected by the order generally cannot retire or leave the service as long as reserves are called to active duty or until relieved by the president, whichever is earlier.

The Army has no immediate plans to implement stop-loss.

Housing and Urban Development issued a letter to all Federal Housing Administration-approved lenders advising them of their obligations under the 1940s Soldiers' and Sailors' Civil Relief Act, said Mel Martinez, HUD secretary.

The act requires that all lenders reduce interest rates on mortgages to no more than 6 percent for all soldiers who are called on active duty. The lenders also are prohibited from foreclosing against any military personnel during and immediately following their tour of active duty.

Active-duty personnel also may qualify for the interest rate cap if they incurred their mortgage debt prior to their active-duty date, Martinez said.

Martinez also is taking additional steps and encouraging mortgage lenders to postpone principal payments on all service members during their tour of active duty.

The relief act also helps military renters, too, by ensuring that they cannot be evicted from their property or by allowing them to terminate lease arrangements, without repercussion.

In 1991, during the Persian Gulf War, the relief act also was re-instituted. For more information, HUD has activated a toll-free number, (888) 297-8685.

The nation's spirit was tested Sept. 11, and now the National Guard feels pressed to protect the citizens of this nation, said Lt. Gen. Roger Schultz, the Army National Guard director.

"You don't find the nation's spirit in buildings. We will rebuild buildings, and over time, we will recover," said Lt. Gen. Roger Schultz, the Army National Guard director.

National Guard troops have been assisting in the recovery effort in New York City since the day the two jetliners crashed into the twin towers at the World Trade Center, causing them to collapse.

National Guard civil and support teams were among the first on the scene to check for chemical, biological and radiological hazards. These teams were designed to be quickly dispatched to emergency sites that may have hazardous chemicals, Schultz said. Guard members will continuously support the recovery effort until it's complete, Schultz added.

Along with the efforts in New York, National Guardsmen will be strategically placed for homeland defense.

Schultz said homeland defense is guarding the nation, and the kinds of units that might be called up include air defense, airlift, intelligence support, military police, medical, logistics, engineers, search and rescue, civil affairs, chaplains and so forth.

"The mission of homeland defense is steadily emerging," Schultz said.

"But it will not take away any of the responsibilities of our state-elected officials. There will always be a local authority, and a first response, such as police and fire departments."

What makes the National Guard unique is that they answer to civil authorities, Schultz said.

"We're in 2,700 communities. We know our first responders, we grew up with them, we work with them, we live with them. Our first responsibility is to the community," Schultz said.

Along with the civil support the National Guard has given, its members also have traveled to 77 countries this year for training and contingency operations, Schultz said.

"We're standing by 365 days a year," Schultz said. "We belong to the communities."



2 SPECIAL 9/11 ANNIVERSARY INSERT TO THE REAL MCCOY, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2021 HOME.ARMY.MIL/MCCOY

20 YEARS SINCE 9-11-2001

Remembering 9/11 in Fort McCoy history

20 years ago — September 2001

American flags at Fort McCoy, including the one near building 100, Post Headquarters, flew at half staff through Sept. 22, 2001, to honor the people who died in the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks at the Pentagon and World Trade Center.

Security measures were quickly implemented at the installation, and community members visited Chapel No. 1 to participate in a National Day of Prayer on Sept. 14 for the people killed and injured in the terrorist attacks.

19 years ago — Sept. 11, 2002

The sounds of patriotic music echoed in the air as Fort McCoy service members and civilians solemnly filled the church pews at Fort McCoy's Chapel No. 1 on Sept. 11, 2002, for "A Service of Remembrance."

More than 150 personnel attended the joint observance commemorating the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States and National Prisoner of War/Missing in Action Recognition Day. Fort McCoy Chief of Staff Al Fournier read President George W. Bush's proclamation designating

Sept. 11, 2002, as the first observance of Patriot Day. The proclamation spoke of remembrance services, candlelight vigils, flying the flag at half-staff from homes, and people observing a moment of silence.

Sgt. 1st Class Virgil Wilk, a member of the 85th Division (Training Support) Band, provided music for the service, playing the hymns "Abide with Me" and "Amazing Grace" on a Highland bagpipe.

15 years ago — September 2006

A marriage enrichment retreat held by the Fort McCoy Religious Support Office (RSO) helped mobilizing and demobilizing Soldiers and their families learn skills they will need to cope with the special stresses that occur with deployments.

Chaplain (Col.) Alan J. Johnson, RSO Site Support chaplain, said the U.S. Army Reserve Command allocated funds to allow the RSO to hold the "Strong Bonds: Marriage Enrichment Retreat" at Wisconsin Dells from Sept. 15-17. The approximately 48-hour event included training, family time, and relaxation. The funding also covered certification training for Johnson and other literature and books to support the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP).

Nineteen couples and their children participated in the retreat, Johnson said. The event was held under the PREP concept.

Spc. Michael Paul Robbins II, a mobilized Reserve member of the RSO, said he attended the retreat with his wife and children to find better methods and solutions to negotiate arguments and to navigate important milestones within the marriage and as parents.

"We wanted to make sure that even though we are a military family and that I have been deployed (to Operation Enduring Freedom) and now (was) mobilized at Fort McCoy that we would still be happy," Robbins said. "I believe that the marriage enrichment weekend has helped my wife and me to better understand each other. My wife and I also believe that the training we received can improve our relationship with our children."

10 years ago — September 2011

The 236th Engineer Company, a Texas Army National Guard unit, deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in September 2011.

The 236th was the last unit to go through mobilization preparations, training, and deployment at Fort McCoy, ending the 10-year history of the mobilization program. That training included their work as vertical construction combat engineers, repairing and renovating several structures on the installation's training lanes.

6 years ago — Sept. 11, 2015

The Fort McCoy History Center reopened Sept. 11, 2015, after several months of work to renovate the interior and exterior of the facility.

Interior renovations provided for expanded exhibit floor space, improved lighting, and installation of energy-efficient heating and air-conditioning systems.

Exterior improvements included new steps and a ramp to improve access for visitors.

During its reopening, visitors experienced the results of these improvements firsthand, especially the increased floor space, which has allowed for the display of more of the installation historical collection.

The History Center features exhibits as well as displays of artifacts, photographs, and memorabilia that tell the story of Fort McCoy since its founding in 1909. The corner first was opened in 1999 in building 902 when the Fort McCoy observed its 90th anniversary, Fort McCoy Public Affairs Officer Linda Fournier said, and never had any type of significant facility upgrades.

(Article prepared by the Public Affairs Office from The Triad and The Real McCoy archives.)

U.S. Army file photo

The U.S. flag near building 100, Fort McCoy Garrison Headquarters, flies at half staff on Sept. 11, 2001, to honor the people who died in the terrorist attacks.

U.S. Army file photo

Sgt. 1st Class Virgil Wilk, 85th Division Band, Headquarters, 85th Division (Training Support), Arlington Heights, Ill., plays Amazing Grace on a highland bagpipe at the Service of Remembrance, which was held to commemorate the anniversary of the terrorist attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center and National POW/MIA Recognition Day. Nearly 150 people gathered for the ceremony held Sept. 11, 2002, at Chapel Number 1, building 2672, at Fort McCoy.

U.S. Army Historical Photos

5 YEARS AGO: A news clip from the Sept. 10, 2021, edition of The Real McCoy newspaper is shown highlighting the 20th anniversary of 9/11. See this special issue at https://d34w7g4gy10iej.cloudfront.net/pubs/pdf_58880.pdf.

20 Years Ago — September 2006

FROM THE SEPT. 22, 2006, EDITON OF THE TRIAD NEWSPAPER: *Combat Support Hospital unit prepares to deploy (By Lori Witscheber, Triad Contributor)* — ***EDITOR'S NOTE: This story highlights a unit deploying to support the Global War on Terrorism, which was part of mobilization efforts at Fort McCoy from 2001-2011 because of the 9/11 attacks.***

The 399th Combat Support Hospital (CSH), an Army Reserve unit headquartered in Bedford, Mass., has trained to the Army standard at Fort McCoy and is ready to provide combat health support in the Operation Iraqi Freedom Theater of operations.

The approximately 445 members of the 399th, which is 30-percent cross-leveled, have trained on medical and Soldier skills since arriving at Fort McCoy in June.

Lt. Col. Joseph S. Blansfield, Task Force Chief Nurse of the 399th, said the CSH will provide services to Soldiers and Iraqi personnel.

"A CSH really is the first full hospital that a casualty would arrive at in a battlefield scenario," said Blansfield. "We have an emergency room, operating room, intensive care wards, pharmacies, etc."

The CSH will have a split-base operation, with the unit running a hospital in the north and south.

To prepare for its mission in-country, the unit has undergone long days of Theater Immersion training.

Theater Immersion is a training approach advocated by First U.S. Army Commanding General Lt. Gen. Russel Honoré, and it is the cornerstone for priming Soldiers for deployment. Theater Immersion training places Soldiers in an environment with situations that replicate, as realistically as possible, those they will experience overseas.

To mirror the Forward Operating Base (FOB) environment Soldiers will occupy in country, the unit lived in tents at Tactical Training Base Freedom, which was surrounded by concertina wire, entry control points and guard towers. Soldiers traveled in convoys and encountered role players posing as civilians on the battlefield or opposing forces. The training is repetitive and intense.

The ultimate goal is to have Soldiers respond intuitively to threats and situations they encounter.

"Training at Fort McCoy has been a challenge," said Blansfield. "It's challenging in the sense that there has been a lot of required training, such as convoy operations, individual movement techniques, and grenade training. The challenge has been trying to find the right balance of getting clinical and hospital operations accomplished, while getting all the mandatory training accomplished as well."

"All of the training received on the lanes, and the instructors, have been excellent," said Staff Sgt. Russell G. McGillivray, the noncommissioned officer-in-charge of the Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) section in the north. "The Army reinforced our Soldier skills; we're Soldier medics."

"The training is good," said Spc. John A. Schirmer, a cross-leveled Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) and EMT for the 399th. "I think the way the instructors treat Soldiers is very respectful and very patriotic."

First Lt. Jeremy F. Brooks, a dietitian and a Public Affairs Officer for the 399th, said the training has been beneficial, especially the convoy operations.

"The convoy training was very realistic with scenarios that were geared toward what we may face overseas," said Brooks.

15 Years Ago — September 2011

FROM THE SEPT. 23, 2011, EDITION OF THE REAL MCCOY NEWSPAPER: *Sept. 11 softball game brings McCoy, Sparta communities together (By Tom Michele, contractor supporting newspaper staff)* — Although Angelini's beat Fort McCoy 22-11, everyone participating in the Sept. 11 softball game left the field a winner.

The game was played at Memorial Park in Sparta, the home field for Angelini's Pizzeria and Ristorante.

Fort McCoy Garrison Commander Col. David Chesser said both teams selected the particular day to coincide with the 10th anniversary of Sept. 11, 2011.

"The game, like the three previous games, was a symbolic moment for both teams," Chesser said. "This one tied all of us together in the 9/11 observance, and it was an honor for all of us to compete."

It was the fourth 16-inch Chicago-style softball game between the two teams in the past two years, and the first win for Angelini's.

"I'm glad Tony Angelini won the trophy he originally created for the softball series and reclaimed it as it is named in honor of his son, Mario, who is battling autism," Chesser said. "The games have brought the Fort McCoy and Sparta communities together, to meet each other at the games at the post and in town. Mr. Angelini is a tremendous partner in this program and other Fort McCoy Morale, Welfare and Recreation and Army Community Service programs. His donations have improved the quality of life for Soldiers."

Chesser also said the spirit of the game was expressed in the inscription on the Fort McCoy team's T-shirts, "In remembrance of the 9/11 attack and to honor those in the armed forces who have fought so valiantly in the Global War on Terrorism."

"And the game was just plain fun, just as it was intended to be," Chesser said.

Angelini said the ball game series is a great relationship for the post and the city. "It is especially appropriate to have the game on the anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks, and dedicating the game to the 9/11 victims and their families."

"The games are a good time to get together and enjoy the camaraderie," Angelini said. "It is also a good way to say 'goodbye' to Colonel Chesser as he retires from the Army next spring."

Some of that support came in the form of 30 members of the Sparta High School Band who played pep band tunes before the game, and, in the dignified role and attitude of the day, played the Star-Spangled Banner moments before the game's first pitch was thrown.

Band co-director Joe Gantzner said his summer camp band students were practicing on a street at the high school and Angelini was momentarily stopped in traffic.

"He talked with us and suggested band members participate at the Army-Angelini's game," Gantzner said. "And so, it came to be."

Chaplain (Col.) Tom Phelan, the Fort McCoy Site Support Chaplain, spoke for several minutes as part of the opening ceremonies for the game.

He commented upon that morning's Religious Support Office service that had been held as the 10th anniversary remembrance of Sept. 11; included a few remarks from his sermon, and concluded with an invocation for the game that was similar to a prayer used at the service that morning. His comments were well-received by those in attendance.

Sparta resident Jim Wiggins gave several remarks to start the opening ceremonies, mostly on a "light-hearted" theme, yet observing the 9/11 connection and also thanking all participants for making the festivities enjoyable.

As for the game, Fort McCoy took a four-run lead in the top of the first inning, but Angelini's countered with four in the bottom half. The Army got one run in the second, to none for the hosts that frame. McCoy scored two in the top of the third, but Angelini's powered five across the plate in the bottom half, never to trail again.

One of McCoy's bright spots was Master Sgt. Darrin Stallworth's solo inside-the-park home run. Stallworth added a run-batted-in single in the eighth inning, but Angelini's poked in four in the sixth, one in the seventh and five in the eighth.

A bases-loaded double by Jeff Ames in the eighth was followed by a bases-loaded triple by Ryan Roberts to cement the win for Angelini's. Chesser did all of the Army's pitching, with Angelini performing all of the mound chores for his team.

Fort McCoy team members included Sgt. Jason Vazquez, Sgt. Manuel Salema, 1st Lt. Shane Ramnarine, Capt. Matthew Wright, Capt. Ryan Pregel, Maj. Blaine Markuson, Master Sgt. Gerald Maynard, Spc. Nick Respicio, Lt. Col. Dan Andresen, 1st Sgt. Justin Maloney, Maj. Thomas Akerlund, Maj. Gen. Glenn Lesniak, Chesser and Stallworth.

Angelini's team members were George Dealba, Jeff Ames, Trevor Jones, Craig DeBoer, Matt Johnson, Dale Stefen, Ryan Roberts, Steve Gorshe, Caleb Diercks, and Angelini.

12 Years Ago — September 2014

FROM THE SEPT. 26, 2014, EDITION OF THE REAL MCCOY NEWSPAPER: *NCO Academy Soldiers hold Sept. 11 remembrance ceremony (By Scott T. Sturkol, Editor)* — Thirteen years after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City, at the Pentagon in Virginia, and aboard United Flight 93, which crashed in a Pennsylvania field, Soldiers from the Staff Sgt. Todd R. Cornell Noncommissioned Officer Academy (NCOA) paused to remember the victims of those attacks.

The Sept. 11 remembrance ceremony was held at the NCOA Auditorium. More than 100 Family members, Department of Defense civilians, and Soldiers attended. NCOA Instructor Sgt. 1st Class Edward Horner was the narrator. First Sgt. Reginald Jefferson of the NCOA gave opening remarks.

"Thirteen years ago, our fellow citizens, our way of life, our very freedom came under attack in a series of deliberate and deadly terrorist acts," Jefferson said. "Thousands of lives were suddenly ended by evil, despicable acts of terror. The pictures of airplanes fl ying into buildings, fi res burning, and huge structures collapsing filled us with disbelief, terrible sadness, and a quiet, unyielding anger. Th ese acts of mass murder were intended to frighten our nation into chaos and retreat, but they have failed. Our country is strong."

Jefferson asked all in attendance to never forget what happened, to remember those who were lost, and to remember their families.

"This is a day when all Americans from every walk of life unite in our resolve for justice and peace," Jefferson said. "America has stood down enemies before, and we will continue to do so. None of us will ever forget this day, yet we go forward to defend freedom and all that is good and just in our world."

On the auditorium's big screen, a pair of videos and a photo slideshow displayed images of the aftermath on Sept. 11, 2001.

During the photo slideshow, Horner read excerpts of the last conversations some Sept. 11 victims had before they died with their loved ones. He also asked the audience, "Where were

(See **HISTORY**, Insert Page 4)



Clarinets, saxophones and trombones make up part of the Sparta High School Band that played for the pre-game festivities, and the national anthem, at the Fort McCoy-Angelini's softball game in Sparta.



Soldiers pause for a moment of reflection Sept. 11 during the Staff Sgt. Todd R. Cornell Noncommissioned Officer Academy remembrance ceremony. Known nationally as Patriot Day and the National Day of Remembrance, Sept. 11, 2014, was the 13th anniversary of the attacks on America.

NEWS

HISTORY from Page 1

you that day?"

He said many service members have served in fighting the war on terrorism since 2001.

"From 2001 to present, more than two million service members have been deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan serving proudly in many roles both in combat and in garrison," Horner said.

At the end of the ceremony, a moment of silence was held by all in the audience, then Jefferson had some final words.

"Thank you to all who came out to remember this day," Jefferson said. "We will continue to remember all who this event affected."

The NCOA ceremony echoed many that took place Armywide. Th e U.S. fl ag in front of building 100 flew at half-mast during the day.

In a message to the Fort McCoy workforce, Garrison Commander Col. Steven W. Nott reiterated the importance of remembering what happened in 2001.

"The unforgettable events of Sept. 11, 2001, united our nation with a resolve that our enemies believed had passed beyond our cultural capacity to embrace," Nott said. "Our just response to these actions cost our nation dearly, and current events indicate the cost will grow ever higher.

"I ask us all to take a brief moment to reflect on the events of that terrible day and what it has meant to our families and our nation. I also want to thank you for all you do to contribute to our common defense."

11 Years Ago — September 2015

FROM THE SEPT. 25, 2015, EDITION OF THE REAL MCCOY NEWSPAPER: *Remembering 9/11 (Photo shared)* — A photo by Staff Sgt. Tamika Stinson shows Soldiers participating in a remembrance ceremony Sept. 11, 2015, in observance of the 14th anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the United States at the Staff Sgt. Todd R. Cornell (Fort McCoy) Noncommissioned Officer Academy.

The academy observed the remembrance with speakers recalling the events that took place, reviewing what has taken place since, and offering inspiration in moving forward.

5 Years Ago — September 2021

FROM THE SEPT. 10, 2021, SPECIAL EDITION OF THE REAL MCCOY NEWSPAPER: *Fort McCoy police veterans recall post-9/11 response (By Scott T. Sturkol, Editor)* — On the morning of Sept. 11, 2001, Fort McCoy was an open installation, and it was a bright, beautiful, blue sky kind of day.

That same morning, current Fort McCoy Police Chief Brian Bomstein was sleeping after working until 1 a.m. at a sawmill, and Deputy Police Chief Brian Lord was in Madison attending a criminal justice college class. By all accounts, it was a pretty normal September morning for all.

Then, at 8:46 a.m. Eastern time, a civilian jetliner slammed into the North Tower of New York's World Trade Center. And just a short time later, at 9:02 a.m., another airplane slammed into the South Tower of the World Trade Center.

"I was woken up that morning by a phone call from a friend who told me to turn on the TV," said Bomstein, who leads the Fort McCoy Directorate of Emergency Services Police Department. "Back then I worked 3 p.m. to 1 a.m. at a lumber mill, and I was an Army Reservist. My friend said, 'Turn on the TV, I think we are under attack.'

Bomstein said he turned on the TV and "saw the two towers smoking."

"I remember the news reporters saying that a third plane had crashed, and discussions began on the news that this appeared to be intentional," he said. "I hung up the phone and immediately started packing my ruck sack. I knew we had been attacked, and we're going to war. And on Oct. 1, 2001, I was activated and in-processed through Fort McCoy."

When Bomstein was activated to active-duty service in October 2001, he was assigned to the 6015th Garrison Support Unit. On Sept. 11, however, Lord was called up to serve in the same unit that very day.

"I was sitting in that college class in Madison, and they wheeled in a television to show what was going on after the first plane hit a tower," Lord said. "Then we watched the second plane strike the other tower. And shortly after the second plane strike, I received a phone call from my first sergeant directing movement to Fort McCoy. I arrived to our admin building that evening."

After the first two plane crashes, a third plane hit the Pentagon at 9:37 a.m. And at 10:03 a.m., a fourth plane, which was kept from hitting another target by hijackers thanks to a brave stand by passengers, crashed into a field outside Shanksville, Pa.

Before that September morning was over, life had changed for all Americans. Life had changed for the world.

"Watching that unfold on TV brought a mix of emotions," Lord said. "I went from being emotionally stunned and shocked to being infuriated." Lord said he excused himself from class and very quickly was packed and on the road to Fort McCoy. He doesn't remember exactly the time he arrived on post, but said he arrived by the late afternoon or early evening.

"That evening I was doing CQ (charge of quarters) duty in building 2014, which is no longer in existence at Fort McCoy," Lord said. CQ is a tasked duty in which a service member is to guard the front entrance to a building — usually a barracks, according to the Army definition for the duty. It is often a 24-hour shift in which the two service members — usually one noncommissioned officer and a junior enlisted service member —sit at a desk to monitor incoming and outgoing traffic into the building.

For Lord, for the first month after the events of Sept. 11, 2001, he said the mission was a lot of "up and downs." His unit worked on getting official orders, and people across the installation were reacting to a new security posture as the Fort McCoy cantonment area now had to be secured and gates had to be manned.

"The biggest thing I remember is coming to the post and seeing someone manning an access control point," Lord said. "Before 9/11, that was never the case."



9/11 20 REMEMBERING 9/11 ... 20 YEARS LATER

Fort McCoy police veterans recall post-9/11 response

BY SCOTT T. STURKOL
Public Affairs Staff

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See POLICE, insert page 4

Photo by Scott T. Sturkol

Police Chief Brian Bomstein and Deputy Police Chief Brian Lord, both with the Fort McCoy Directorate of Emergency Services Police Department, are shown Sept. 2 at Fort McCoy. Both were part of the installation's immediate response to the terrorist attacks and events of Sept. 11, 2001, in the United States. Both were assigned as Soldiers to the 6015th Garrison Support Unit at the time of the attacks.

U.S. Army Historical Photos

5 YEARS AGO: A news clip from the Sept. 10, 2021, edition of The Real McCoy newspaper is shown highlighting the 20th anniversary of 9/11. See this special issue at https://d34w7g4g-y10iej.cloudfront.net/pubs/pdf_58880.pdf.

Post-Sept. 11, the only gate open on the cantonment area was the old Main Gate, Lord said. And other things changed throughout the cantonment area as well thanks to stepped-up force-protection measures.

"I think at that time, with everything going on, it was a learn-as-you-go process for everybody," Lord said. "The physical resources, at first, didn't exist for the mission we were being asked to perform. This included enough people and vehicles. We really had no vehicles to speak of."

Bomstein said he and Lord didn't know each other before 9/11. But slowly after being mobilized together to work on the post, that changed. He said they both worked many long days doing their best to protect resources and to support the ever-changing mission on the installation.

"I remember us working to complete a lot of Soldier readiness processing, and much more," Bomstein said. "I also remember them moving quite a bit around post. One of the buildings we worked from was building 1761, which is now used for the JLTV (Joint-Light Tactical Vehicle) training."

Within a year of being activated at Fort McCoy as a Reservist, Bomstein said he was hired on as a civilian police officer with the Fort McCoy Police Department. "They had some openings, and I got hired," he said.

Bomstein served two years full time as a Soldier after 9/11 before becoming a full-time officer at the end of his second military tour in 2003.

It was much the same for Lord. During activation time on McCoy, he served two one-year tours with military police for his unit. Then by 2005, he was a full-time Fort McCoy police officer.

Now, 20 years after their friendship and service together started at Fort McCoy, Bomstein and Lord said they both would have never thought they would ascend to be the chief and deputy chief of the Fort McCoy police force. They both also said they won't ever forget that day and all the changes that have happened at Fort McCoy since.

"I don't think 20 years ago that I would have ever envisioned myself in this line of work," Lord said. "I think we both worked hard to get where we're at, and I know we'll never forget."

"That was a pretty powerful day," Bomstein said. "I am like many people who play that day back over and over in my head. It was one of those landmark times in history that I think people will never forget. … It's also something that you can look back at and see how that one (day) literally changed the trajectory of your life."

Since 9/11, Fort McCoy has a closed and secured cantonment area and upgraded security measures are set up on range areas as well. The post also had a new Main Gate area built, new police and fire department buildings and the Central Issue Facility built, dozens of range and training areas upgraded, and more.

The installation also has served as a unit deployment mobilization hub the last 20 years. Most recent was the mobilization of two units during exercise Pershing Strike '21.

"I think we're both glad to have been a part of the installation's 9/11 response, but also proud to still be serving here today," Bomstein said. Bomstein left the Army Reserve in 2006 to focus full time on civilian police duties that have included leading the Fort McCoy Special Reaction Team. Lord retired from the Army Reserve in 2019. Prior to that, he had attended the Army Airborne School and Military Police Investigations and Army Equal Opportunity Advisor courses.

Both Bomstein and Lord assumed their current positions in 2020.

FROM THE SEPT. 24, 2021, EDITION, OF THE REAL MCCOY NEWSPAPER: *Fort McCoy observes Patriot Day; remembers 20th anniversary of 9/11 in special ceremony (By Scott T. Sturkol, Editor)* — The words, "TO HONOR ALL WHO HAVE SERVED" that are etched into Veterans Memorial Plaza in the historic Commemorative Area served as the backdrop for the 2021 Fort McCoy observance Sept. 10 of Patriot Day and the 20th anniversary of the terrorist attacks on America on Sept. 11, 2001.

The scaled back ceremony included Police Chief Brian Bomstein and Assistant Fire Chief Brady Brever, both with the Fort McCoy Directorate of Emergency Services, serving as masters of ceremonies. It also included Fort McCoy Garrison Commander Col. Michael Poss and Maj. Gen. Darrell Guthrie, commanding general of the 88th Readiness Division and Fort McCoy's senior commander, both providing remarks about the significance of the day.

On Sept. 11, 2001, 19 militants associated with the Islamic extremist group al Qaeda hijacked four airplanes and carried out suicide attacks against targets in the United States, history shows. Two of the planes were flown into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, a third plane hit the Pentagon, and a fourth plane crashed in a field in Shanksville, Penn. Almost 3,000 people were killed during the 9-11 terrorist attacks

"Thank you for attending. Thank you for remembering the 20th anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks," Poss said during his remarks that followed an acapella rendition of the Star-Spangled Banner by retired Army Master Sgt. Mary Guthrie to start the ceremony. "The attacks on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon are among the most significant events to happen to us in our lifetimes. Me, as well as millions of other U.S. citizens, remember where we were and how we felt on that somber day.

"I, for one, was a bank manager, and I was just coming out of budget meetings when I was told the news," Poss said. "A little over a year later, my unit was preparing for deployment. It certainly was a catalyst for upcoming events because I have stayed on full-time service ever since."

The weather during the ceremony at Fort McCoy was much like the weather on Sept. 11, 2001 — a bright, sunny September day. Poss said it is important to remember what happened.

"Today we honor the service members, civilians, and first responders who lost their lives during the terrorist attacks," Poss said. "And not only do we honor those who lost their lives that fateful day, we also remember all those who have served our great nation since to keep our country secure and free. Thousands of us have witnessed the tragedies and hardships of war firsthand. And many gave their lives in the defense of these causes. The significance of the 9/11 attacks has not dulled after 20 years."

Guthrie also reflected on the importance of always remembering what happened on 9/11.

"Over the past 20 years, hundreds and indeed thousands, of military members have served in Afghanistan," Guthrie said. "The shared experience of Sept. 11 also unified millions of Americans to support our Soldiers, civilians, and family members. Many of today's Soldiers either joined or were inspired and have served our country … because of 9/11."

The patriotic feel of the event was possibly furthered when Capt. Natanael Maria with the 181st Multi-Functional Training Brigade sang an acapella rendition of "America the Beautiful" after the speeches by Poss and Maj. Gen. Guthrie.

The event participants were also likely reminded of the seriousness of what happened 20 years ago when Sgt. Ryan Tatum, also with the 181st, trumpeted the somber notes of "Taps" as the event concluded.



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20 YEARS SINCE 9-11-2001

World Trade Center survivor shares story with post community

BY AIMEE MALONE
Public Affairs Staff

As part of the 20-year commemoration of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States, Fort McCoy hosted a presentation by the last survivor to be pulled out of the World Trade Center debris.

Genelle Guzman-McMillan shared her experiences with Fort McCoy community members Sept. 1, 2021, at the Noncommissioned Officer Academy (NCOA). The event was organized by the NCOA and Fort McCoy Army Community Service.

Guzman-McMillan was working for the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, which was located on the 64th floor of the north tower of the World Trade Center, at the time of the attacks. The north tower was the first building to be hit but the second to collapse.

She said that when the first plane hit her building, she at first thought it was an earthquake, having been through earthquakes in her native country of Trinidad and Tobago. Or perhaps a small plane had hit the building, she said she was thinking, which the World Trade Center was built to withstand.

A few people left immediately, while others in her office, including Guzman-McMillan, tried to figure out what was happening first. She said they'd recently had an emergency drill, and because the alarms and emergency lights weren't going off, she thought it couldn't be that bad. It wasn't until they turned on a television in a conference room and saw the images being broadcast that they realized how bad things were.

Guzman-McMillan said she couldn't believe the images she was seeing or what she was being told when she called family. "Me, the little island girl? In a terrorist attack?" she asked.

Emergency personnel told them over the phone to stay put; rescue workers would come find them. They checked stairwells to see if they were clear and tried to keep smoke out of their office with wetted jackets and sweaters.

"The building shook again. It swayed. And that's when … the other building collapsed," Guzman-Mcmillan said. "I thought, 'Oh no. We're going down. … We're not getting out of here.'"

One of the managers decided they couldn't wait any longer for emergency personnel, and their coworkers checked the stairwells again to find one with working lights that seemed clear. About 15 of them began making their way down the staircase.

Guzman-McMillan said she was wearing high-heel boots that day — her friend and coworker Rosa Gonzalez kept urging her to take them off so they could move faster — but she kept them on, wanting something to protect her feet when she got outside. At one point, they passed firefighters heading upstairs to check the upper floors, who told them to keep heading outside.

Somewhere round the 15th floor, she said, she finally had to pause to take off her shoes because her feet were burning so badly. That was when the second tower collapsed.

"The dust, the darkness… everything just came crashing down," she said. "It happened so fast."

Photo by Aimee Malone

Genelle Guzman-McMillan, the last survivor pulled from the rubble of the World Trade Center after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, shares her story with Fort McCoy community members on Sept. 1 at the Fort McCoy Noncommissioned Officer Academy.

U.S. Coast Guard file photo

Coast Guard crew members patrol the harbor after the collapse of the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001, in New York.

U.S. Coast Guard file photo

An aerial view of the still-smoldering World Trade Center complex is shown Sept. 26, 2001, 15 days after terrorists attacked the Twin Towers with hijacked jetliners.

She lost hold of Gonzalez during the collapse, whose hand she'd held most of the way down. She said she covered her head as best she could and told herself she was having a bad dream. When she came to herself again, she realized she couldn't move. Her body was twisted in an odd position and her legs felt like they were being crushed. She said she could feel steel pushing into her back, and her head was trapped between two pillars.

"I keep being alert. I keep hearing the radios. I keep hearing the firetrucks. I keep hearing the walkie talkies and the communication going on," Guzman-McMillan said. "And for some reason, I just couldn't speak. I wanted to, but my voice just couldn't open up to say 'help.'"

Guzman-McMillan was trapped in the rubble for 27 hours before rescuers found her. She said, after the initial shock, she was awake and aware the entire time, though she couldn't tell how long it had been. At one point, she wanted to fall asleep so she wouldn't have to feel the pain anymore. During her ordeal, she began praying, despite not being religious beforehand, asking for a second chance.

She credits God and possibly a guardian angel for her survival. At some point, she said, she felt a hand reach through the rubble and grasp the one that wasn't entirely trapped. The hand's owner said his name was Paul and began encouraging her to hold on and reassuring her that she was going to make it through. When the radio noise came closer, Guzman-McMillan said, Paul told her she had to speak up so that rescuers would find her.

The hand let go of hers before the rescuers reached her, and Guzman-McMillan said she's never found out who Paul was, leading her to believe he was a guardian angel. She spent months in the hospital afterward; medical workers thought at one point that her leg might need to be amputated. None of the coworkers she'd left the office with made it through the collapse, and she didn't find out until much later that she was the last person to make it out of the rubble alive.

Guzman-McMillan said she doesn't know why she made it out when so many others, especially her friends and coworkers, didn't, but she is grateful for her second chance. She said she put her faith in God after her survival and shares her story with others. She ended her presentation with a prayer, asking God to share his grace and plan with those around her.

According to her biography at her website, yourgoodguzmanmillan.com, Guzman-McMillan is an active member of the Brooklyn Tabernacle Church and serves as a volunteer for the American Red Cross and the 9/11 Tribute Center. She also is the recipient of several awards and proclamations by mayors and senators of New York since Sept. 11, 2001, including receiving a Medal of Honor from the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey.

5 YEARS AGO: A news clip from the Sept. 10, 2021, edition of The Real McCoy newspaper is shown highlighting the 20th anniversary of 9/11. See this special issue at https://d34w7g4g-y10iej.cloudfront.net/pubs/pdf_58880.pdf.

Fort McCoy Prayer Breakfast speaker reflects, remembers 9/11

STORY & PHOTO BY SCOTT T. STURKOL
Public Affairs Staff

Twenty-five years after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, the Fort McCoy community gathered Sept. 11, 2026, for a Prayer Breakfast that connected remembrance of that day with the enduring values of service, sacrifice, faith and leadership.

Hosted by the Fort McCoy Religious Support Office in Building 905, the breakfast brought together military members, civilian employees, retirees, veterans and leaders for prayer, reflection and fellowship. The 2026 Prayer Breakfast fell on the 25th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, giving special meaning to the morning's theme of remembrance. The attacks killed 2,977 people at the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and in Somerset County, Pennsylvania.

Guest speaker Tomas "Tom" Thibodeau, Distinguished Professor of Servant Leadership at Viterbo University, opened his remarks by calling prayer "a school of love" and reminding those gathered that human beings are blessed with "blood, memory and hope."

"Today is a day of sacred remembrance," Thibodeau said.

He then asked the audience to consider a simple question:

"Where were you? Who told you? Who were you with? How did you feel on 9-11-2001?"

Thibodeau said he had been asking people those questions in the weeks leading to the anniversary and consistently saw people become solemn, reflective and quiet as they recalled their experiences.

"The Jewish Talmud teaches us that when in pain, we cry out, we sing, and we become silent," he said.

Thibodeau asked the audience to observe a minute of silence to remember those whose lives were affected by the attacks, as well as those who responded by serving others. He described the anniversary as a moment when Americans remember both loss and love, sorrow and sacrifice, confusion and compassion, hurt and heroism.

"Paradoxically, 9-11 was 25 years ago, and at the same time feels like only yesterday," he said.

The National September 11 Memorial & Museum likewise marked the 25th anniversary in 2026 with a national emphasis on remembrance, reflection and ensuring that younger generations understand the significance and legacy of the attacks. The Memorial's anniversary observance included the reading of victims' names and moments of silence corresponding to key moments.

Remembering those who serve

Thibodeau's remarks then moved from remembering 9/11 to a broader discussion of the importance of service.

"All of our lives are predicated on the service of other people," he said.

He shared stories about his father, who left the University of Wisconsin in 1941 to join the Army Air Corps and served during World War II in the Aleutian Islands, and his father-in-law, a Wisconsin native who joined the Navy as a teenager and was at Pearl Harbor.

Thibodeau said the service of those who came before him helped make his own life possible. "All of those people have gone before us whose service, love made visible, have made our lives possible," he said.

He extended that message to the Soldiers and other members of the Fort McCoy community and the Retiree Appreciation Day event attending breakfast. "You have made so many other people's lives and dreams possible because of your commitment and dedication," Thibodeau said. "Good work, hard work, noble work, sacred work, thank you for doing it so well."

He also recognized the families who support military service, emphasizing that when a service member deploys, the family serves alongside them.

"We send a Soldier, we send a family," he said. See more online at https://www.dvidshub.net/news/575173/fort-mccoy-prayer-breakfast-speaker-reflects-service-leadership-25-years-remembering-9-11.



Tomas "Tom" Thibodeau, Distinguished Professor of Servant Leadership at Viterbo University, gives his remarks Sept. 11 during the Fort McCoy Prayer Breakfast during Retiree Appreciation Day in building 905 at Fort McCoy.

NEWS

Thousands train at Fort McCoy during busy August; exercises, annual training bring troops to post

BY SCOTT T. STURKOL
Public Affairs Staff



Photo illustration by the Fort McCoy Public Affairs Office

More than 10,000 troops took part in military training at Fort McCoy during August 2026, making the month another significant period of activity at the installation as Army Reserve, Air Force Reserve and National Guard forces conducted a wide range of readiness missions.

According to Fort McCoy's Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security, or DPTMS, the month's training included large-scale collective exercises, military police training, medical and sustainment operations, Air Force A-10 weapons training, aviation operations and a major domestic-response exercise.

The variety of missions demonstrated Fort McCoy's ability to support multiple training requirements and military services simultaneously while providing realistic environments for units preparing for a broad range of operational missions.

One of the largest training efforts was the 86th Training Division's Warrior Exercise-Regional Medic 2026, which extended from late July into early August.

Thousands of Army Reserve Soldiers, along with Joint, Total Force, and multinational participants, took part in the exercise. According to Maj. Jon Dahl, public affairs officer for the 86th Training Division, Warrior Exercise-Regional Medic 2026 provided rigorous, challenging and demanding collective training designed to replicate multi-domain environments and large-scale combat operations.

The exercise combined the traditional Warrior Exercise with Regional Medic training, allowing combat-support, combat-service-support and medical organizations to train simultaneously within a common operational scenario.

The 86th Training Division's August photo coverage showed Soldiers conducting dismounted tactical operations, tactical vehicle and convoy operations, mounted weapons training, casualty response, medical operations, sustainment activities and other collective-training tasks.

Training scenarios challenged Soldiers in areas including mission command, tactical decision-making, communications, force protection, engineer operations and chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear response.

Medical elements trained alongside maneuver and support organizations, conducting casualty triage, emergency treatment, casualty movement, medical evacuation and other battlefield medical tasks.

The exercise also incorporated CBRN-response training, with Soldiers responding to simulated contamination scenarios, using protective equipment, recovering casualties and conducting decontamination procedures.

Modern battlefield considerations were also incorporated into the exercise, including training related to unmanned aircraft threats.

The Warrior Exercise-Regional Medic 2026 training demonstrated how Fort McCoy's combination of maneuver areas, ranges, specialized facilities and support infrastructure allows units with different missions to operate within the same realistic training environment.

Other military organizations continued training at Fort McCoy throughout August.

The 327th Military Police Battalion conducted nearly three weeks of training before completing its training period Aug. 19. Soldiers conducted a variety of physical and tactical training events, including confidence-course and litter-obstacle-course training, as well as medical-related instruction.

From Aug. 17–21, Air Force Reserve A-10C Thunderbolt II aircraft from the 303rd Fighter Squadron at Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri, returned to Fort McCoy for specialized training.

According to Fort McCoy DPTMS officials, pilots conducted bombing training during the week, including low-level missions toward the installation's impact area. The training provided significant flight time while allowing pilots to maintain and sharpen skills associated with operating the A-10 in a realistic environment.

Fort McCoy's large impact area, extensive airspace and varied terrain provide an environment where A-10 crews can practice low-level flight profiles and air-to-ground weapons employment. The training also demonstrates the installation's ability to support Air Force Reserve requirements within an Army-managed training environment.

Later in the month, Fort McCoy supported Patriot '26, conducted Aug. 24–29 in conjunction with Volk Field Combat Readiness Training Center.

Approximately 1,000 Airmen and Soldiers from National Guard units representing 35 states participated along with federal, state and local agencies. Fort McCoy provided training areas and facilities for scenarios focused on domestic-response readiness, emergency response and interagency coordination.

Kentucky National Guard UH-72 Lakota helicopter crews were among those participating at Fort McCoy, conducting aviation training that included medical-evacuation and hoist operations in areas where aircraft could not safely land.

The month also included additional specialized readiness activity involving Red Dragon and Joint Task Force-Port Opening training, as well as use of Fort McCoy's simulation capabilities. Those capabilities include the Reconfigurable Vehicle Tactical Trainer, Engagement Skills Trainer, Virtual Clearance Training Suite, and Medical Simulation Training Center.

Together, the August training events illustrate the breadth of Fort McCoy's role as a Total Force training center, garrison officials said.

The installation is not simply a location where units conduct field exercises. Its training mission encompasses live-fire ranges, maneuver areas, airspace, aviation facilities, simulation systems, medical training facilities, classrooms, barracks, dining facilities, maintenance areas and other infrastructure needed to support large numbers of troops.

That training mission also contributes directly to the region's economy.

Thousands of service members training at Fort McCoy require food, lodging, transportation, fuel, supplies, maintenance and other services. The installation's operations also generate requirements for construction, facility maintenance, equipment, materials and other goods and services, creating opportunities for businesses and workers throughout the surrounding region.

Fort McCoy's latest published economic-impact figures show the installation generated an estimated $1.6 billion in economic impact during fiscal year 2024, with more than $398 million in workforce payroll, operating costs and other expenditures.

Training activity is an important part of that economic impact because visiting units bring personnel and equipment into the region while relying on Fort McCoy and surrounding communities for goods and services.

History shows the installation's continued investment in infrastructure further strengthens that training and economic role. Projects involving barracks, training facilities, utilities, roads and other infrastructure help Fort McCoy accommodate the evolving needs of military units while supporting construction and contracting activity.

During fiscal year 2025, Fort McCoy supported training for 109,962 military personnel, demonstrating the installation's established role in supporting high-volume training for Army Reserve, National Guard, active-component and other military organizations.

August's more than 10,000 training participants represent another significant contribution to that annual mission.

For Fort McCoy personnel, supporting that activity requires coordination across DPTMS and numerous installation organizations responsible for ranges, airspace, facilities, logistics, safety, communications, transportation, medical support and other services.

From Soldiers preparing for large-scale combat operations, to military police sharpening specialized skills, Air Force Reserve pilots conducting weapons training and National Guard forces preparing for domestic emergencies, the month demonstrated the range of missions Fort McCoy can support.

It also demonstrated the connection between military readiness and the communities surrounding the installation.

Every training rotation helps prepare service members for future missions while bringing economic activity to the region and possibly reinforcing Fort McCoy's role as one of the Upper Midwest's most important military installations.

Fort McCoy's motto beginning in 2026 is "Training the Total Force and Shaping the Future since 1909." The installation's mission: "Fort McCoy strengthens Total Force Readiness by serving as a training center, Mobilization Force Generation Installation, and Strategic Support Area enabling warfighter lethality to deploy, fight, and win our nation's wars."

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Located in the heart of the upper Midwest, Fort McCoy is the only U.S. Army installation in Wisconsin. The installation has provided support and facilities for the field and classroom training of more than 100,000 military personnel from all services nearly every year since 1984.

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Fort McCoy is also part of Army's Installation Management Command where "We Are The Army's Home."

327th Military Police Battalion Soldiers complete annual training at Fort McCoy

BY SCOTT T. STURKOL
Public Affairs Staff

Soldiers with the 327th Military Police Battalion completed a period of training at Fort McCoy Aug. 19 following nearly three weeks of exercises designed to increase readiness, lethality and operational flexibility across the battalion.

From Aug. 5-19, Soldiers participated in Operation Guardian Refuge and Operation Peace Maker, with most participants coming from the 822nd Military Police Company and the 327th Military Police Battalion Headquarters and Headquarters Company. Elements of the 1304th and 102nd Military Police Companies also participated.

According to Sgt. Maj. Jason Lee, operations sergeant major for the 327th Military Police Battalion, the training was designed to prepare Soldiers for upcoming missions while strengthening individual and collective readiness for the new fiscal year.

"The training focused on increasing lethality, readiness, and operational flexibility across the battalion for the upcoming fiscal year," Lee said.

During the training period, 13 Soldiers completed Combat Lifesaver certification, while another 12 Soldiers became licensed to operate the Army's Light Medium Tactical Vehicle, or LMTV. Soldiers also conducted two Army Fitness Tests to assess and strengthen physical readiness.

The Soldiers further developed their teamwork and unit cohesion by completing four obstacle courses. The events provided an opportunity for Soldiers to work together in challenging environments while building confidence, communication and esprit de corps, Lee said.

Communications training was another key component of the exercise. Soldiers trained on the Joint Battle Command-Platform, or JBC-P; OE-254 antenna systems; and SINCGARS communications equipment, Lee said. The training provided Soldiers opportunities to improve their ability to communicate and maintain connectivity during tactical operations.

The battalion also conducted Tactical Combat Casualty Care and land-navigation training, giving Soldiers additional skills needed to operate effectively and safely in tactical environments.

Fort McCoy provides a broad range of training areas, facilities and support capabilities that allow Military Police units and other military organizations to conduct realistic, mission-focused training in one location.

The installation's training infrastructure includes specialized facilities and ranges that support Military Police training, including facilities used for detainee operations and enemy prisoner-of-war training. These capabilities complement Fort McCoy's extensive maneuver areas, ranges, obstacle courses and other training facilities used by units preparing for missions throughout the Army.

"Fort McCoy is a key training center for the Army Reserve and other military organizations because of the diversity of training opportunities available here," said Fort McCoy training officials.

The installation's ability to support specialized Military Police training while simultaneously accommodating aviation, engineer, medical, transportation, field artillery, infantry, and other training requirements demonstrates Fort McCoy's role as a versatile training platform for the Total Force.

Fort McCoy is the only U.S. Army installation in Wisconsin and encompasses nearly 60,000 acres. Its extensive training infrastructure allows military organizations to conduct individual and collective training, large-scale exercises and specialized mission rehearsal throughout the year.

For units such as the 327th Military Police Battalion, training at Fort McCoy provides an opportunity to combine classroom instruction, hands-on equipment training, physical readiness and realistic field exercises into an integrated readiness program.

The training conducted Aug. 5-19 also highlighted the importance of maintaining proficiency in a wide range of Soldier skills. From tactical communications and casualty care to vehicle operations, navigation and physical fitness, the training provided Soldiers opportunities to strengthen the individual capabilities that contribute to overall unit readiness.

As the 327th Military Police Battalion prepares for future missions, perhaps the training at Fort McCoy provided another opportunity for its Soldiers to build the skills, teamwork, and operational flexibility necessary to respond effectively wherever they are called to serve.

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Photos by Greg Mason, Fort McCoy Multimedia-Visual Information Office

Soldiers with the 327th Military Police Battalion complete training Aug. 14, 2026, at the confidence course at Fort McCoy.



NEWS

86th Training Division WAREX-Regional Medic 2026 showcases Fort McCoy's ability to support large-scale, multinational readiness training

BY SCOTT T. STURKOL
Public Affairs Staff

Thousands of U.S. Army Reserve Soldiers, along with joint, Total Force and multinational partners, converged on Fort McCoy during July and August for the 86th Training Division's Warrior Exercise (WAREX)-Regional Medic 2026 — a large-scale exercise that demonstrated both the complexity of modern military operations and Fort McCoy's ability to support demanding, multi-unit training.

The exercise combined Warrior Exercise 2026 with Regional Medic 2026, creating a scenario-driven operational environment in which combat support, combat service support and medical organizations trained simultaneously while preparing for large-scale combat operations.

According to the 86th Training Division, the exercise challenged participating units in mission command, tactical decision-making, convoy operations, sustainment, engineer operations, communications, force protection and chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear response.

Medical units simultaneously established treatment capabilities, conducted casualty triage, provided emergency medical care, coordinated medical evacuation and practiced prolonged field care under simulated combat conditions.

Army Reserve Medical Command reported that the training audience included approximately 6,000 U.S. service members and NATO partner nations during the July 21-Aug. 9 exercise. More than 80 Army Reserve medical Soldiers from multiple Army Reserve Medical Command organizations provided real-world medical support during Regional Medic 26 in conjunction with WAREX 26.

The medical team included Soldiers from the 7458th Medical Operational Readiness Unit, Fort Bragg, North Carolina; 7224th Medical Support Unit, North Charleston, S.C.; 7207th Medical Support Unit and 7412th Troop Medical Clinic, Webster, N.Y.; 7229th Medical Support Unit, Nashville, Tenn.; and the 7226th Medical Support Unit and 7359th Veterinary Detachment, Fort Jackson, S.S.

The Regional Medic mission also extended beyond simulated battlefield trauma care. Army Reserve medical personnel conducted real-world assessments and preventive medicine activities, including blood-pressure measurements, physical assessments, ankle and foot examinations, tonsil examinations and functional movement screening.

Capt. Abby Dillard, a physical therapist with the 7458th Medical Operational Readiness Unit, participated in functional movement screening during training Aug. 5. The exercise also provided opportunities for multinational cooperation.

Royal Danish Army Lt. Col. Peter Moldrup of the Danish Home Guard, participating through the Military Reserve Exchange Program, worked with U.S. Army observer-coach/trainers to evaluate the 275th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion from Fort Lee, Virginia. Photos from the 86th Training Division documented Moldrup discussing training plans with U.S. Soldiers and later moving through a training area with U.S. Army Lt. Col. Gregory Ogdahl of the 86th Training Division.

Other coverage also documented a joint after-action review involving Soldiers from the United States, Denmark and Estonia, further demonstrating the exercise's multinational character and emphasis on interoperability.

Throughout the exercise, Soldiers trained on a wide variety of missions that reflected the interconnected nature of modern combat operations.

The 380th Quartermaster Company conducted scenario-based lanes and a hasty-defense exercise, while opposing-force Soldiers from the 449th Engineer Company supported the training scenario. Military Police Soldiers conducted roadblock and entry-control-point operations, and Soldiers with the 340th Military Police Company conducted mounted patrol training in wooded terrain.

Medical Soldiers also trained outside the traditional medical role. The 451st Medical Detachment conducted a Humvee recovery lane, reinforcing the requirement for medical formations to maintain tactical mobility and warrior skills while operating in contested environments.

Sustainment capabilities were another major component of the exercise. Soldiers with the 250th Quartermaster Company conducted water-treatment operations, including water-quality testing, while other sustainment units trained on scenario-based missions. AAD-C cargo-drop demonstrations also provided an opportunity to demonstrate aerial delivery capabilities in the exercise environment.

Mounted weapons training was conducted as part of WAREX 26, including an M240B mounted machine-gun range. Other training incorporated tactical vehicle operations, convoy movement, communications and force-protection tasks.

The breadth of training was supported by the 86th Training Division's observer-coach/trainers (OC/Ts). According to the division, OC/Ts evaluated mission-essential tasks, coached leaders and provided immediate feedback intended to improve unit performance and ensure formations meet Army readiness requirements.

Fort McCoy provides the environment for complex training

The scale and diversity of WAREX-Regional Medic 2026 also demonstrated why Fort McCoy remains a major training destination for the Army Reserve and the broader Total Force. Fort McCoy encompasses approximately 60,000 acres, including about 46,000 contiguous acres of live-fire and maneuver land. The installation provides training opportunities ranging from individual and small-unit instruction to brigade-level collective training and supports simultaneous training across multiple environments.

The installation has 31 live-fire ranges, including 17 automated or instrumented ranges, along with 21 artillery firing points, 12 mortar firing points and an 8,000-acre impact area. Collective-training capabilities include multipurpose ranges, a convoy live-fire range, an infantry platoon and squad battle course, multipurpose machine-gun ranges, live-fire shoot houses and a live-fire breach facility.

Fort McCoy's maneuver environment also includes extensive urban and rural training capabilities. The installation has two fully instrumented urban training sites, a 25-building Combined Arms Collective Training Facility, a 20-building Collective Training Facility and three wireless-instrumented Combat in the Cities facilities containing a combined 309 buildings. The installation also has rural training areas, an unmanned aerial systems strip, a search/site-exploitation facility, tunnel systems, an engineer water-bridging site and instrumented home-station training lanes.

That combination allows formations to move from tactical roads and maneuver areas to live-fire, urban, rural and specialized training environments without having to relocate to another installation.

Fort McCoy's Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security (DPTMS) manages training areas, live-fire ranges and simulation facilities while also operating a full-service training support center with training aids, devices, simulations and simulators. DPTMS also provides airfield operations, aviation refueling and air traffic control, coordinates mobilization and demobilization operations, and operates the installation's Medical Simulation Training Center.

The installation's support infrastructure extends beyond ranges. Fort McCoy provides barracks, dining facilities, classrooms, maintenance areas and other cantonment support necessary to accommodate large numbers of Soldiers and units operating simultaneously. During fiscal year 2025, 109,962 troops trained at Fort McCoy, reflecting the installation's continuing role in supporting high-volume Army Reserve, National Guard and active-component training.

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(The 86th Training Division contributed to this article.)



(Above and below, all photos) Training operations for the 86th Training Division's Warrior Exercise/Regional Medic 2026 is shown in August at Fort McCoy, Wis. Thousands of U.S. Army Reserve troops as well as Joint and Total Force members are part of the exercise at Fort McCoy from late-July 2026 to early August 2026.











COMMUNITY

Fort McCoy shares natural resources accomplishments during August 2026 Monroe County meeting

BY SCOTT T. STURKOL
Public Affairs Staff

Fort McCoy natural resources staff shared updates on fisheries, forestry, threatened and endangered species, invasive-species management, and wildlife activities during the Monroe County Natural Resources and Extension Committee meeting Aug. 10, 2026, in Sparta, Wis.

Endangered Species Biologist Jessup Weichelt represented Fort McCoy at the meeting and provided the committee with an overview of natural resources accomplishments completed across the installation during July.

The monthly meetings provide an opportunity for Fort McCoy natural resources staff to maintain communication with Monroe County officials and share information about ongoing environmental stewardship, monitoring, research and management efforts conducted on the installation.

Following is information Weichelt shared with the meeting attendees:

Fisheries management

— Fort McCoy fisheries staff continued water-quality and aquatic-resource monitoring throughout July.

— Staff conducted adaptive management sampling with the average total phosphorus measured at La Crosse River at Black Bottom at 0.08 milligrams per liter for 2026. That is slightly above the 0.075 milligrams-per-liter goal but remains below the historical average.

— Staff also conducted one La Crosse River watershed and one Silver Creek watershed base-flow event and one Silver Creek watershed runoff event. Limited rainfall during July resulted in fewer opportunities to collect runoff samples. Turbidity samples also were collected in the cantonment during a runoff event.

— Temperature and dissolved-oxygen data were collected from all 10 Fort McCoy lakes. Oxygen levels had begun becoming limited at deeper depths in several lakes, which is typical later in the summer. Water temperatures also were high following numerous days in which air temperatures reached or exceeded 90 degrees.

— Water levels at Sandy, West Sandy and Big Sandy lakes were measured weekly on four occasions. Levels reached their lowest point of the summer so far but remained near historical averages.

— Fisheries staff conducted 14 creel surveys and interviewed 73 anglers. Bluegill and largemouth bass catch rates began to decline as summer progressed, although some anglers continued to report good catches. Rainbow trout catch and harvest rates remained low as trout sought cooler water in deeper portions of the lakes.

— Staff also conducted macrophyte surveys on all 10 Fort McCoy lakes to monitor native plant distribution and search for invasive plant species. No new invasive plant species were found.

Two scuba dives were conducted to locate and remove Eurasian water milfoil and curly-leaf pondweed. At West Sandy Lake, 34 Eurasian water milfoil stems and 117 curly-leaf pondweed stems were found and removed. No invasive plants were found during the dive at Sandy Lake. The number of Eurasian water milfoil and curly-leaf pondweed stems removed from West Sandy Lake so far in 2026 represents a substantial reduction compared with the previous year.

Forestry management

— Fort McCoy forestry staff completed edits to an Invitation for Bid and officially sent the document to Seattle for review. The sale advertisement is scheduled for August, with bid opening planned for September.

— Forestry staff also participated in an Environmental Performance Assessment System natural resources audit, assisted with a brief National Environmental Policy Act review involving tree cutting in B23E and completed responder update forms for the Natural Resources Branch and Conservation Support Unit for submission to the Center for Environmental Management of Military Lands.

Threatened and endangered species

— Threatened and endangered species work remained active throughout July, with staff conducting surveys and monitoring for several species of conservation concern.

— Staff conducted biweekly telemetry tracking on four Blanding's turtles and two wood turtles. GPS data were collected from two female turtles equipped with GPS backpacks, and the GPS units were subsequently removed from the turtles. The resulting data are being mapped and analyzed.

— Staff completed 24 Ottoe Skipper surveys and observed approximately 280 Ottoe Skippers during survey efforts, with an additional 18 observed incidentally. They also completed 67 Regal Fritillary surveys, documenting approximately 170 Regal Fritillaries during survey efforts and 13 additional individuals incidentally.

— Seven ghost tiger beetle surveys resulted in documentation of 54 ghost tiger beetles.

Fifteen rusty-patched bumblebee surveys also were completed. During those surveys, staff observed five rusty-patched bumblebees, five American bumblebees and 12 southern plains bumblebees.

— Natural resources staff maintained stationary acoustic bat detectors and completed eight mobile bat surveys. One northern long-eared bat call was recorded on South Post.

— Staff also completed Karner blue butterfly presence/absence surveys and transect surveys. Six bobolinks were documented in Ranges 2 and 4, while blue grosbeaks and Henslow's sparrows were incidentally observed along the edges of those ranges.



U.S. Army photo/graphic illustration

This illustration highlights the participation by Fort McCoy, Wis., natural resources personnel working with Monroe County leaders in supporting the Aug. 10 meeting of the Monroe County Natural Resources and Extension Committee meeting n Sparta, Wis. Fort McCoy personnel attend the meeting monthly and provide updates on the installation's natural resources program.

Invasive species management

— Invasive-species management remained one of the largest areas of natural-resources work during July.

— Fort McCoy staff treated approximately 1,865.8 acres through herbicide applications and hand-pulling activities, addressing invasive species including spotted knapweed, crown vetch, leafy spurge, cow vetch, black locust, Canada thistle, bull thistle, musk and nodding thistle, Siberian pea shrub, creeping bellflower, cypress spurge, Japanese/erect hedge parsley and wild parsnip. Across individual species and treatment methods, the program accounted for approximately 1,985.9 species-acres treated.

— Staff also sampled 41 individual leafy-spurge biological-control monitoring sites at 18 locations for flea beetles.

— Goat grazing continued as another tool for invasive-species management. During July, grazing treatments covered 37.6 acres, including autumn olive, garlic mustard, glossy buckthorn and honeysuckle. Across the individual species treatments, the program accounted for 55.1 species-acres.

— Despite several storms during the first week of July, the remainder of the month was hot and dry, with heat indexes frequently reaching the 90s and several days exceeding 100 degrees. Despite those conditions, natural resources staff continued making progress on invasive-species treatments.

— Midway through the month, four personnel assigned to the lupine crew shifted to assist the invasive-species crew with knapweed removal. Fisheries staff also completed additional glossy buckthorn and common buckthorn cut-stump herbicide treatments along a stream in Training Area B-31.

— Uncrewed aircraft systems mapping and limited invasive-plant treatment also continued. Poor weather limited some mapping efforts, but completed work will contribute to future efforts by helping develop training models for faster invasive-plant identification.

— Goat-grazing coordination continued, with the goats moving from training areas into the cantonment in mid-July.

— Two Wisconsin Conservation Corps crews also conducted autumn-olive removal and treatment work. The crews worked for two weeks with one crew remaining for a third week. In total, they treated 85 acres in the cantonment and Training Areas C03, B16, B15, B14 and B17.

One particularly notable invasive-plant discovery involved broadleaf helleborine, an invasive orchid found near a dwarf milkweed monitoring site near Gate 20. Staff believe it was a single plant, which was removed and preserved as a voucher specimen.

Another plant had been found several years ago several miles east of the Greenfield tower, but no other populations are known in Monroe County. Staff will continue monitoring the area and searching for the species elsewhere on the installation.

— Fort McCoy also continued its partnership with the Monroe County Invasive Species Working Group, holding its July meeting and highlighting invasive treatments and planned restoration work at the Curt and Melissa Jacob property.

Wildlife management

— Wildlife staff continued preparing the Fort McCoy Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Rules and Regulations for Directorate approvals and command signature.

— Staff worked with Fort McCoy Permit Sales on applications for upcoming fall hunting seasons. Applications included 1,332 for gun-deer hunting against an 1,800-person quota; 33 for youth gun-deer hunting; 22 for gun-deer hunting for hunters with disabilities; 326 for cantonment archery against a 180-person quota; and 16 for trapping. Applications for gun-deer hunting for hunters with disabilities remained available through Aug. 31, while the other application periods closed July 31.

— Summer truck-book surveys for gamebirds and predator and mammal species continued from June through September. The surveys provide information used in wildlife population models or as indices for comparison with previous years. Deer truck-book surveys are scheduled to continue through September.

— Wildlife staff also worked with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Wild Turkey Advisory Committee in reviewing and updating the state's Wild Turkey Management Plan.

Registration for a Fort McCoy hunter-education course also opened in July, and all 30 available seats were filled in in less than a week. The course will be held at Whitetail Ridge Ski Area's chalet, with optional range time following the course at the Sparta Rod and Gun Club.

— Additional work included coordination with BanfieldBio to continue research involving tick repellents and acaricides, as well as Environmental Performance Assessment System inspections covering wildlife, wardens, the airfield, Morale, Welfare and Recreation, permit sales and pest-management programs.

— The July wildlife surveys also documented a variety of species across Fort McCoy. June gamebird truck-book results included 314 wild turkeys, 44 ruffed grouse, five woodcocks, six wood ducks, three pheasants, one hooded merganser and two Canada geese. Mammal surveys documented 15 animals, including raccoons, black bears, a bobcat, a feral cat, red foxes and a coyote.

Fort McCoy's natural-resources program encompasses nearly 60,000 acres and supports military training while also protecting and managing forests, wetlands, lakes, streams, wildlife habitat, and species of conservation concern. The monthly Monroe County committee meetings provide an important avenue for Fort McCoy to share that work with local conservation partners and coordinate natural-resources efforts beyond the installation's boundaries.

Fort McCoy has supported America's armed forces since 1909. Located in the heart of the upper Midwest, Fort McCoy is the only U.S. Army installation in Wisconsin.

The post's varied terrain, state-of-the-art ranges, new as well as renovated facilities, and extensive support infrastructure combine to provide military personnel with an environment in which to develop and sustain the skills necessary for mission success.

The installation has provided support and facilities for the field and classroom training of more than 100,000 military personnel from all services nearly every year since 1984.

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FORT MCCOY SALUTES



Public Affairs Specialist Melissa Dubois receives an Army Civilian Service Commendation Medal on May 21 from then-88th Commanding General Maj. Gen. Joe Ricciardi for work in making the 2026 Fort McCoy Armed Forces Day Open House a success.



Directorate of Business Services Director Bonnie Hilt receives an Army Civilian Service Meritorious Service Medal on July 10 from then-Garrison Commander Col. Sheyla Baez Ramirez for her work with the Fort McCoy Resource Management Office.



Pete Hodges with the Fort McCoy Resource Management Office receives an Army Civilian Service Commendation Medal on July 10 from then-Garrison Commander Col. Sheyla Baez Ramirez for his work with the Fort McCoy Plans, Analysis and Integration Office.



Robert Pennebecker with the Fort McCoy Garrison Information Management Office receives an Army Civilian Service Commendation Medal on July 10 from then-Garrison Commander Col. Sheyla Baez Ramirez for his work with the Information Management Office.



Shannon Ontiveros with the Fort McCoy Garrison Headquarters Staff receives an Army Civilian Service Achievement Medal on Sept. 10 from Garrison Commander Col. Sarah Fraticelli and Command Sgt. Maj. James Riddle for her work supporting the successful 2026 Fort McCoy Armed Forces Day Open House.



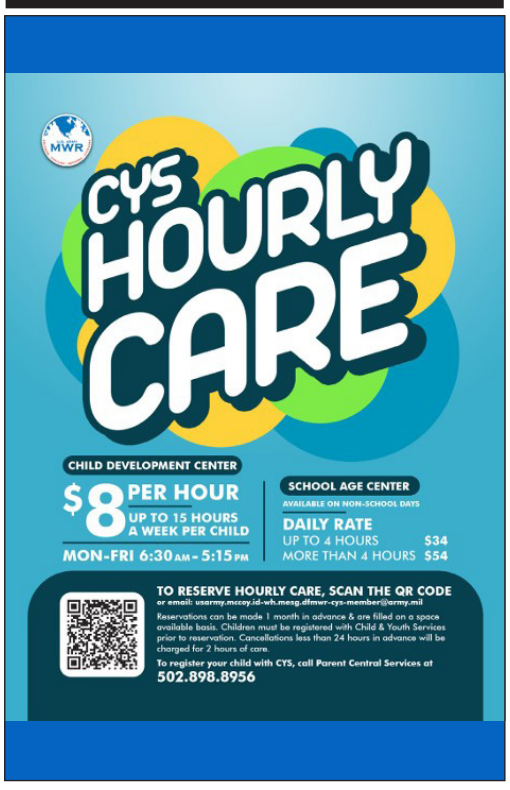
Emily Chapman with the Fort McCoy Garrison Headquarters Staff receives an Army Civilian Service Achievement Medal on Sept. 10 from Garrison Commander Col. Sarah Fraticelli and Command Sgt. Maj. James Riddle for her work supporting the successful 2026 Fort McCoy Armed Forces Day Open House.

NEWS NOTES/FACILITIES













DATE	MEAL	STATUS	HOURS	REMARKS
26-Sep-26	Breakfast	Open	0600-0800	
	Lunch	CLOSED		
	Dinner	Open	1700-1830	
27-Sep-26	Breakfast	CLOSED		
	Lunch	CLOSED		
	Dinner	CLOSED		
28-Sep-26	Breakfast	Open	0600-0800	Meals that have already been coordinated with units will still be provided.
	Lunch	CLOSED		
	Dinner	CLOSED		
29-Sep-26	Breakfast	CLOSED		Meals that have already been coordinated with units will still be provided.
	Lunch	CLOSED		
	Dinner	CLOSED		
30-Sep-26	Breakfast	CLOSED		Meals that have already been coordinated with units will still be provided.
	Lunch	CLOSED		
	Dinner	CLOSED		
1-Oct-26	Breakfast	CLOSED		
	Lunch	CLOSED		
2-Oct-26	Breakfast	CLOSED		
	Lunch	CLOSED		
3-Oct-26	Breakfast	CLOSED		
	Lunch	CLOSED		
4-Oct-26	Breakfast	CLOSED		
	Lunch	CLOSED		
5-Oct-26	Breakfast	CLOSED		
	Lunch	CLOSED		
6-Oct-26	Breakfast	CLOSED		
	Lunch	CLOSED		
7-Oct-26	Dinner	CLOSED		
8-Oct-26	Breakfast	Open	0600-0800	FULL MEAL SERVICE RESUMES
	Lunch	Open	1130-1300	
	Dinner	Open	1700-1830	
9-31 October	Breakfast	Open	0600-0800	
	Lunch	Open	1130-1300	
	Dinner	Open	1700-1830	

Next issue of The Real McCoy

The October 2026 edition of The Real McCoy will be published Oct. 23, 2026. The deadline for submissions or article ideas is Oct. 20, 2026.

If your unit is at Fort McCoy for training, you have some award-winning people, or if you have something newsworthy, please pass it along to the newspaper staff. For more information, call 502-898-4128.

facilities services

This schedule is projected through Aug. 21, 2026.
Hours of operation and services can change frequently.
Call facilities to verify hours before traveling.

Bold, italic typeface indicates a change since the last publication.

Dining Facilities

Building 1672 operates April-September,
Building 1362 operates October-March
- Offers full meal service
- Military members, military family members, and Department of Defense (DOD) civilians on official orders for temporary duty training may use dining facilities.
- DOD civilians working on Fort McCoy and retired military personnel may use dining facilities when MWR facilities are not open.
- Units must coordinate through the Food Program Management Office at 502-898-6518/4739.

Open Hours
Breakfast: 6-8 a.m.
Lunch: 11:30 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Dinner: 5-6:30 p.m.

Rates per meal
Breakfast - $4.40
Lunch - $7.10
Dinner: $6.10

Other Dining

McCoy's Community Center: Building 1571. Catering/administration, call 502-898-2065. Building 1571. Open 11 a.m.-10 p.m. Tues.-Fri. and 4-10 p.m. Sat. Call 502-898-7060.

Snack Avenue: Building 1538. Located inside Express. Open 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Mon.-Sat. and 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Sun. Call 608-269-5604 or 502-898-4343.

Specialty Express Food Court: Building 1538. Open 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Mon.-Fri. Limited seating available. Delivery available to South Post and in cantonment area. Call 608-269-5615, ext. 303.

Whitetail Ridge Chalet/Ten Point Pub: Open during regular ski area hours. Call 502-898-3517.

Recreation

Automotive Skills Center: Building 1763. Open 1-9 p.m. Thur.-Fri. and 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Sat.-Sun. Call 502-898-3013.

Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers (BOSS): Call 502-898-3200.

iSportsman: Portal for outdoor recreational activities; registration and check-in required. Register, apply for permits, and sign in or out of recreation areas at https://ftmccoy.isportsman.net.

McCoy's Community Center: Building 1571. Offers books, arcade, gaming area, and bowling. Open 11 a.m.-10 p.m. Tues.-Fri. and 4-10 p.m. Sat. (Bar, food, bowling). Call 502-898-7060.

Bowling Center: Open 11 a.m.-10 p.m. Tues.-Fri. and 4-10 p.m. Sat.

Leisure Travel Services Office: Open 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Mon.-Fri. Call 502-898-3011.

Pine View Campground/Recreational Equipment Checkout Center: Campground opens May 1. Building 8053. Call 502-898-2619/3517.

Recreation Accommodations: Open 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Tues.-Fri. Mon. by appointment only. Call 502-898-2029.

Rumpel Fitness Center: Building 1122. Open 5 a.m.-8 p.m. Mon.-Fri. and 6 a.m.-2 p.m. Sat.-Sun. 24/7 access available. Call 502-898-2290. Use designated parking areas.

Sportsman's Range: Closed for the season. Call 502-898-9162 for information.

Tactics Paintball/Laser Tag: By appointment only; 2-day notice required. Call 502-898-3517.

Whitetail Ridge Ski Area: ***Closed for Season.*** Call 502-898-4498 or 502-898-3517 for more information.

Services

Barber Shop (Exchange): Building 1538. Open 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Mon.-Fri. Call 608-269-1710.

Car Rentals (Enterprise): Information available at the Exchange, building 1538. Use the phone at the Enterprise sign. Call 608-782-6183 or 800-654-3131; use CDP# 1787245.

Car Wash: Building 1568. Offers self-service and automatic bays and vacuums. Open 24/7. May close during extremely cold weather. Accepts cash or credit cards. Call 502-898-4161.

Commissary: Building 1537. Open 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Mon.-Sat. Call 414-977-5332.

CWT (Carlson Wagonlit Travel) SatoTravel: Building 2180. Open 7:30 a.m.-4 p.m. Mon.-Fri. No walk-ins. Call 502-898-2370, 608-269-4560, or 800-927-6343.

Education/Learning Center: Building 50, room 123. Open 8 a.m.-2 p.m. Mon.-Fri. No walk-ins. Email darrel.l.hawkins.ctr@mail.mil to schedule tests. Email connie.j.schauer.civ@mail.mil for other services.

Equal Employment Opportunity: Open 7 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Mon.-Fri. No walk-ins. Call 502-898-3106/3107 or email usarmy.usarc.usarc-hq.mbx.eeo@mail.mil.

Exchange: Building 1538. Open 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Mon.-Sat. and 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Sun. Call 608-269-5604.

ID Card/DEERS Section: Building 2187. Open 8-11:30 a.m. and 12:30-3:30 p.m. Mon.-Wed. and Fri. and 9:30-11:30 a.m. and 12:30-3:30 p.m. Thur. Call 502-898-4563.

IHG Army Hotels: Building 51. Open 24/7. Call 502-898-2107 or 877-711-TEAM (8326).

Installation Legal Office: Building 2171. Call 502-898-2165.

Launderette/Dry Cleaning: Building 1538. Open 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Mon.-Fri. Call 608-269-1075.

Laundry Facilities: Open 24/7. Exclusively for use by Soldiers training on Fort McCoy. Civilian, family members, and retired military members are not authorized to use these facilities. Call 502-898-3800 to find out which buildings are open.

Military Clothing: Building 1538. Open 8 a.m.-7 p.m. Mon.-Sat. and 8 a.m.-3 p.m. Sun. Call 608-269-5604, ext. 203.

Military Personnel: Building 2187. Open 7:30 a.m.-4 p.m. By appointment only.
In-/Out-processing: 502-898-4822.
Personnel Automations: 502-898-4842.
Reassignments: 502-898-4746.
Records Update: 502-898-5677.

Centralized Promotions: 502-898-5677.

Multimedia/Visual Information: Building 2113. Open 7:30 a.m.-4 p.m. Mon.-Fri. DA/command photos are by appointment only. Schedule at https://www.aesmp.army.mil or call 502-898-4520.

Official Mail Distribution Center: Building 1009 (by Gate 20). Open 7:30 a.m.-4 p.m. Mon.-Fri. Call 502-898-3205.

Patriot Outfitters: Building 1538. Closed until further notice. Call 608-269-1115.

Permit Sales: Building 2168. Hunting, fishing, and firewood permits. Open 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Check https://ftmccoy.isportsman.net for updates. Call 502-898-3337.

Personal Property Processing Office: Building 200. Open 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. Call 502-898-3060, fax: 502-898-5634, email: usarmy.mccoy.asc.mbx.lrc-pppo@mail.mil.

Retirement Services Office: Building 2187. Open 7:30 a.m.-3 p.m. Mon.-Fri. By appointment only. Call 502-898-3716.

R.I.A. Credit Union: Building 1501. Open 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Mon.-Fri. and 2-4 p.m. Tues. and Thurs. ATMs are located in building 1501 (available 24/7); McCoy's, building 1571; Exchange, building 1538; and IHG Army Hotels, building 51 (available 24/7). Call 502-898-2171.

Service Station/Express/Class VI: Building 1538. Open 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Mon.-Sat. and 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Sun. Call 502-898-4343. Pay-at-the-pump gas is open 24/7.

Transition Service Center: Open 7:30 a.m.-4 p.m. Mon.-Fri. By appointment only. Call 502-898-7956.

Visitor Control Center: Building 35. Open 6 a.m.-2 p.m. Mon.-Fri. Passes issued at Main Gate outside of VCC hours. Physical Security open for fingerprints Thur. only; call 502-898-2266. See ID/DEERS section for its hours.

Family Support

Army Community Service: Building 2111. Open 7:30 a.m.-4 p.m. Mon.-Fri. Call 502-898-3505.

Army Substance Abuse Program: Building 1344. Open 7:30 a.m.-4 p.m. Mon.-Fri. By appointment only. Call 502-898-2441.

Child Development Center: Building 1796. Open: M-F: 6:30 am - 5:15 pm. Call: 502-898-2238. Childcare requests should be made at https://public.militarychildcare.csd.disa.mil/mcc-central/mcchome.

Housing Office: Building 6158. Open 7 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Mon.-Fri. Family Housing, Single Soldier Housing, and referral services. Self-Help Warehouse open open noon-3:30 p.m. Wed. and 8 a.m.-noon Fri. Call 502-898-2804.

Military Family Life Counseling: Building 2111. MFLCs can provide short-term, nonmedical counseling at no cost and augment existing military support programs. Services can be provided on or off post. Call 352-598-4972 or 352-801-2742 or email stojalowskyl@magellanhealth.com and meyert@magellanhealth.com.

Red Cross: Fort McCoy active-duty Soldiers and Family members can call 877-272-7337 for emergency assistance. For other Red Cross services, call 800-837-6313 or 608-788-1000.

School Age/Youth Center: Building 1792. Activities for youth kindergarten through 12th grade. Offers after-school, non-school, and inclement weather care for eligible youth. Open: M-F: 6:30 am - 5:30 pm: Summer & Non-School Days; 2:30 pm - 5:30 pm. After School Call: 502-898-4373 Childcare requests should be made at https://public.militarychildcare.csd.disa.mil/mcc-central/mcchome.

Health Care

Alcoholics Anonymous: For more information, call 502-898-5955/2441.

Fort McCoy Civilian Employee Assistance Program: Screening and referral services for civilian employees and Family members experiencing difficulties due to problems related to substance abuse, mental health, marital/family discord, or other causes. By appointment only. Call 502-898-2441/5955.

Fort McCoy Sexual Harassment/Assault Response & Prevention (SHARP): 24/7 hot-line: 502-898-3000.

Occupational Health Clinic: Building 1679. Open 8 a.m.-4 p.m. Mon.-Fri. By appointment only. Call 502-898-8461.

TRICARE: TRICARE North Region, 877-874-2273; TRICARE West Region, 877-988-9378; TRICARE South Region, 800-444-5445; TRICARE for Life, 866-773-0404; or www.tricare.mil.

Veterans Crisis Phone Number: New option by dialing 988 and pressing 1. Veterans may still reach the Veterans Crisis Line with the previous phone number — 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1.

Worship

Catholic: Chapel 10, building 1759. 9:15 a.m. Sun. Call 502-898- 3528.

Protestant: Building 50. 11:30 a.m. Sun. Call 502-898-3528.

All faiths, self-worship: Sun. Building 2672, 10 a.m.-3p.m.

Fellowship: Sun. Building 2675, 8:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

Other faiths in the local area: Please call the RSO office at 502-898-3528.

Counseling: Call the on-call duty chaplain at 608-630-6073.

Organizations

American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), Local 1882: Call 502-898-1882.

Reserve Officers Association, Fort McCoy-Readiness 43: For more information, call 920-535-0515 or email justdave49@centurylink.net.

USO Wisconsin at Fort McCoy: Building 1501. 10th Ave. For more information or to volunteer, call 414-477-7279 or email esokol@uso.org.

Warrant Officers Association, Chapter 0317: For more information email usawoamccoy@outlook.com.



GIANT VOICE EMERGENCY-NOTIFICATION SIGNALS

CONDITION	IF YOU HEAR	THIS INDICATES	INDIVIDUAL ACTIONS
Natural Disaster	3- to 5-minute steady tone or voice announcement	Disaster imminent or in progress. Examples: Tornado, flash flood, hazardous-materials release, wildfire.	Be alert. Ensure all personnel are warned. Take cover by evacuating to a safe location or sheltering in place. Notify supervisor of location. Tune in to local radio or TV stations for emergency information.
Attack	30-sec. to 5-min. wavering tone or voice announcement	Attack imminent or in progress. Examples: Vehicle bomb, terrorist action, release of biological or radioactive materials.	Be alert. Ensure all personnel are warned. Implement force-protection condition (FPCON) procedures as indicated. Take cover by evacuating to a safe location or sheltering in place. Notify supervisor of location.
All Clear	Voice announcement	Immediate threat from disaster or attack is over.	Be alert for secondary hazards. Account for all personnel. Check building. Await instructions on FPCON level. Report fires, injuries and other hazards.

This funded newspaper is an authorized publication for members of the U.S. Army.

Contents of The Real McCoy are not necessarily official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, Department of Defense, Department of the Army or Fort McCoy.

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All photos are U.S. Army photos unless otherwise credited.

The Real McCoy

All editorial content of The Real McCoy is prepared, edited, provided and approved by the Public Affairs Office at Fort McCoy.

Send news items to the Public Affairs Office, ATTN: (IMMC-PA), 100 E. Headquarters Road, Fort McCoy, WI 54656-5263, or call 502-898-4128 or 2769 or send e-mail to usarmy.mccoy.imcom-central.list.pao-admin@mail.mil.

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Commemorative Area Caretaker.....Robin Michalski
Editorial Content 502-898-4128

Read this publication online at https://home.army.mil/mccoy.

FIREARM REGISTRATION POLICY
All privately owned firearms brought on the installation must be registered through the Directorate of Emergency Services (DES) Police Department.
Firearm registration is required by Army Regulation 190-11, 4–5, "Privately owned weapons and ammunition."
Firearms are required to be registered prior to entrance or immediately upon entering any lands identified as Fort McCoy property. For more information, call 502-898-2266.

COMMUNITY

September is Suicide Prevention Month: 'Connect to Protect'

September is Suicide Prevention and Awareness Month, providing an opportunity for Soldiers, Army Civilians, Family members and the entire Fort McCoy community to strengthen connections, recognize when someone may be struggling and take action to help.

The Army's 2026 campaign theme is "We Are Stronger Together. Connect to Protect." The campaign emphasizes the importance of positive relationships, belonging, help-seeking and making connections before a crisis occurs.

Suicide prevention is not the responsibility of one person or one organization. The Army describes suicide and self-harm as complex issues influenced by environmental, psychological, physical and social factors. Its prevention approach therefore emphasizes building resilience, reducing stigma, encouraging help-seeking and strengthening connections across the Army community.

Know the warning signs

A person may be at greater risk when concerning behaviors are new, increasing or connected to a painful event, loss or significant change. Warning signs can include:

- Talking about wanting to die or kill themselves.
- Talking about feeling hopeless, trapped or like a burden.
- Looking for ways to kill themselves.
- Increasing alcohol or drug use.
- Acting anxious, agitated or recklessly.
- Withdrawing or isolating themselves.
- Experiencing extreme mood swings.
- Talking about unbearable pain or having no reason to live.

Recognizing a warning sign is a reason to connect, not ignore.

Remember ACE: Ask, Care, Escort

The Army uses Ask, Care, Escort — ACE as an intervention model for helping someone who may be experiencing suicidal thoughts.

ASK: Talk directly with the person. If you are concerned, ask whether they are thinking about suicide. The Army notes that asking about suicide does not increase the likelihood that someone will attempt suicide.

CARE: Listen and take the person seriously. Remain calm, avoid judgment and let them know they are not alone. If possible, remove access to lethal means and stay with the person.

ESCORT: Help the person get professional assistance. This can include an emergency room, behavioral health professional or other appropriate resource. If someone refuses assistance, do not leave them alone and seek additional help.



Help is available at Fort McCoy

Fort McCoy maintains suicide-prevention resources for members of the installation community. In an emergency, call 911. The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline is available 24/7; military service members and veterans can press 1, or text 838255.

Additional Fort McCoy resources include:

- 24/7 Chaplain Line: 502-898-6073
- Religious Support Office: 502-898-3528
- Military OneSource: 800-342-9647
- Army Substance Abuse Program: 502-898-2441

Fort McCoy's Army Substance Abuse Program also provides suicide-prevention resources and training, while the installation's Army Community Service programs support resilience, stability and other needs affecting Soldiers and Families.

Make the connection

Suicide prevention can begin with something simple: checking in.

A phone call, conversation over coffee, message to a battle buddy or visit with a Family member can open the door to support. If someone you know is struggling, you do not have to have all the answers. Be present, listen, take concerns seriously and help connect the person with professional support.

The Army's message for September is straightforward: "We are stronger together. Connect to protect."

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, call 911. For crisis support, call 988 and press 1 for the Military Crisis Line, or text 838255.

(Article prepared by the Fort McCoy Public Affairs Office.)

Pine View Campground at Fort McCoy offers fall recreation opportunities at Fort McCoy

STORY & PHOTOS BY SCOTT T. STURKOL
Public Affairs Staff

As summer begins to give way to cooler temperatures and colorful autumn scenery, Pine View Campground and Pine View Recreation Area at Fort McCoy offer a variety of opportunities for visitors to enjoy the outdoors during September and October.

Pine View Campground, managed by the Fort McCoy Directorate of Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation (DFMWR), has experienced strong visitation during the 2026 camping season, including full weekends, increasing extended stays and steady demand for outdoor recreation.

The campground opened for the 2026 season May 1 and is celebrating its 54th year of providing camping and outdoor recreation opportunities at Fort McCoy. The campground remains open through the fall camping season until Nov. 30.

"Pine View Recreation Area offers four-season, year-round activities to include camping, hiking, fishing, and more," said Alex D. Karis, supervisory recreation specialist and facility manager with the DFMWR Business Recreation Division's Outdoor Recreation program. "In the entire Pine View Recreation Area there's opportunities to enjoy some fantastic outdoor recreation opportunities."

Pine View Recreation Area encompasses hundreds of acres and includes Pine View Campground, miles of hiking trails, the La Crosse River, Trout Falls, Suukjak Sep Lake and Suukjak Sep Creek, as well as Whitetail Ridge Ski Area.

Fall colors and outdoor recreation

One of the biggest attractions during September and October is the changing fall scenery throughout the recreation area.

The La Crosse River winds through the Pine View Recreation Area and flows over Trout Falls, providing one of the area's most scenic locations for visitors to experience autumn colors. Hiking trails throughout the recreation area also provide opportunities to enjoy the changing landscape.

"If you want to see something incredibly beautiful, then come see Trout Falls," Karis said. The fall season also provides opportunities for fishing. Anglers can fish along the La Crosse River near the campground and at Suukjak Sep Lake, which provides opportunities to catch species including rainbow trout, bluegill and bass.

Anyone fishing at Fort McCoy must follow installation fishing requirements and have the required Fort McCoy fishing license and applicable Wisconsin fishing license and trout stamp. Current fishing rules and requirements are available through the Fort McCoy iSportsman program.

Camping continues through autumn

Pine View Campground offers more than 170 campsites along with cabins and other lodging options. Available accommodations include full-service campsites, electric sites, tent sites and yurts, as well as multiple cabin options.

Campground amenities include hiking and fishing opportunities for registered guests, rental equipment, a camp store, comfort stations, playgrounds, pavilions, miniature golf, shuffleboard, basketball, volleyball and horseshoes.

Visitors can also access the nearby La Crosse River and Suukjak Sep Lake, providing additional opportunities for fishing, hiking, photography and enjoying the fall landscape. Karis said the campground's strong 2026 visitation has included more guests extending their stays beyond traditional weekends.

"We're starting to see people taking a little bit more of an extended weekend type thing and making it a three- or four-day weekend instead of just coming out Friday and Saturday and going home on Sunday," Karis said.

That trend can continue into the fall as visitors take advantage of cooler weather, autumn scenery and the campground's extended operating season.

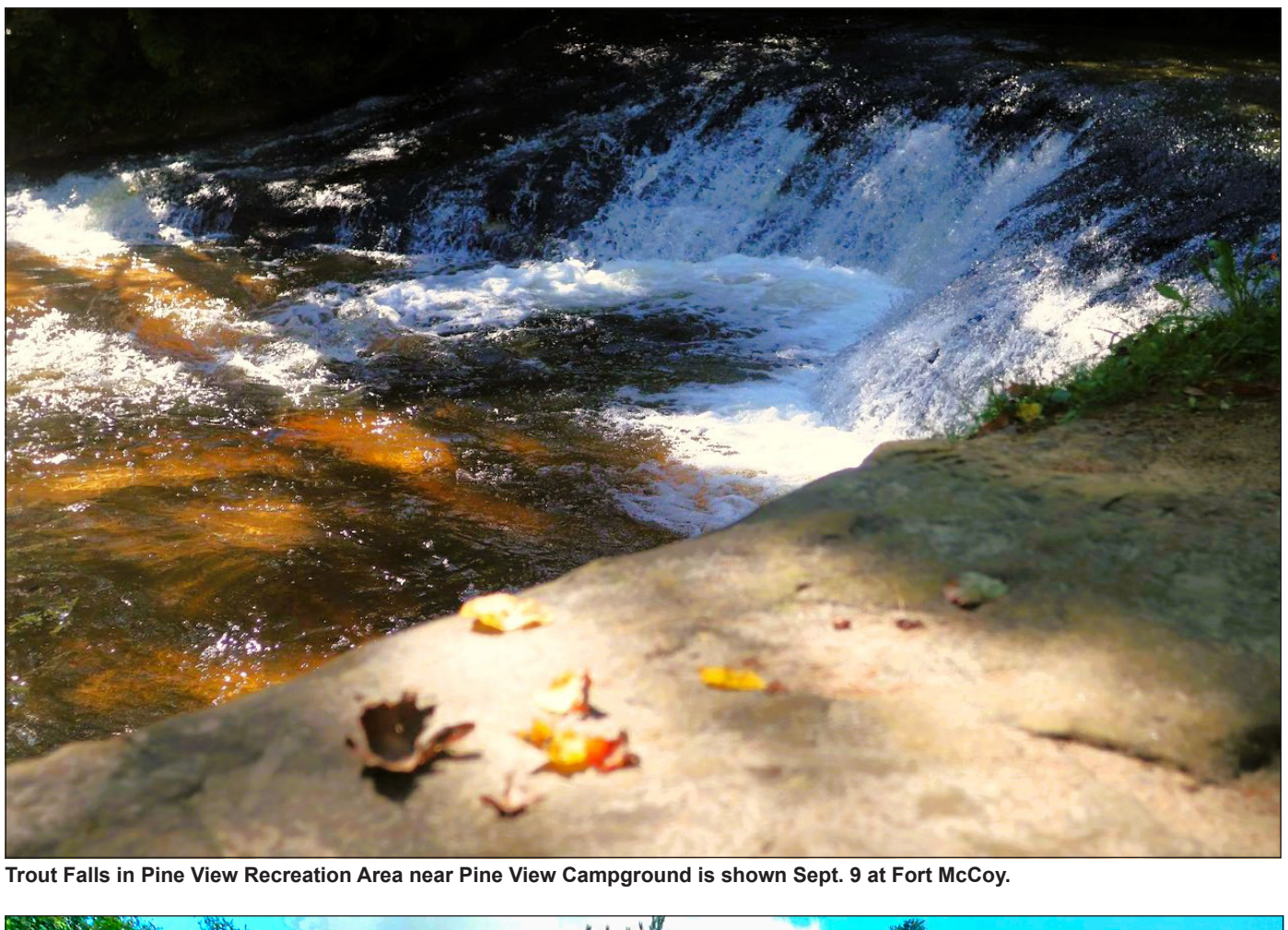
A four-season recreation destination

Pine View Campground is part of a larger recreation area that offers opportunities beyond camping.

The Recreational Equipment Checkout offers equipment for visitors interested in exploring the area's lakes, trails and other outdoor spaces.

The Pine View Recreation Area also provides access to Whitetail Ridge Ski Area and numerous other outdoor recreation opportunities, making the area a destination that changes with the seasons.

With approximately 65,000 visitors annually, Pine View Recreation Area remains one of Fort McCoy's premier recreational destinations for military members, their families, Department of War civilians, veterans and members of the public.



Trout Falls in Pine View Recreation Area near Pine View Campground is shown Sept. 9 at Fort McCoy.



Campers participate in Haunted Trails at Pine View Campground on Aug. 21 at Fort McCoy.

For September and October visitors, the combination of fall colors, cooler temperatures, hiking, fishing, camping and other outdoor activities provides an opportunity to experience a different side of Fort McCoy.

"Visit the campground and the recreation area in the fall," Karis said in a previous fall-season interview. "There's so much to enjoy here and it's a beautiful area. Come and see what's here."

The Pine View Campground reservation office is open seven days a week from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. To reserve a campsite or cabin, call 502-898-3517. Additional information about Pine View Campground, including current rates and fees, is available through the Fort McCoy DFMWR website.

Pine View Campground is scheduled to remain open through Nov. 30, 2026, giving visitors an opportunity to enjoy the recreation area throughout much of the autumn season.

(The Fort McCoy Directorate of Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation contributed to this article.)

HISTORY

5-Year Anniversary: Fort McCoy remembers Operation Allies Welcome; mission that changed installation

BY SCOTT T. STURKOL
Public Affairs Staff

Five years ago in August 2021, Fort McCoy began receiving thousands of Afghan evacuees as part of one of the most significant humanitarian missions in the installation's modern history.

On Aug. 22, 2021, Fort McCoy began receiving Afghan guests as part of Operation Allies Welcome (OAW) — a federal effort to support Afghan nationals evacuated from Afghanistan following the end of U.S. military operations there.

Over the next nearly six months, Fort McCoy became a temporary home and processing center for approximately 12,600 Afghan guests which transformed the installation from primarily a military training center into a massive humanitarian-support operation.

According to the Fort McCoy Public Affairs Office's Feb. 25, 2022, end-of-mission report, the last Afghan guests departed Fort McCoy at approximately 8 a.m. Feb. 15, 2022, officially ending the installation's OAW mission.

The same news report stated that more than 4,000 people representing 35 federal, state, local, nongovernmental and volunteer organizations participated in the operation. Angie Salazar, the Department of Homeland Security lead for OAW at Fort McCoy, described the scale of the operation in the Fort McCoy PAO's end-of-mission coverage.

"We literally put up an entire city with a population of approximately 15,000," Salazar said.

That description illustrates just how dramatically Fort McCoy changed during the six-month operation.

A different mission for Fort McCoy

The Department of Homeland Security led Operation Allies Welcome, while the Department of Defense supported the effort through U.S. Northern Command and Task Force McCoy.

Fort McCoy was one of eight U.S. military installations selected to temporarily house and support Afghan evacuees while they completed required processing and prepared for resettlement throughout the United States.

For Fort McCoy personnel, the mission required the rapid establishment of services and infrastructure that were significantly different from the installation's normal military training mission.

Then-Fort McCoy Garrison Commander Col. Michael Poss described the challenge during the early stages of the operation in the same report.

"We're pretty good at the away game in other countries. This is a new mission," Poss said.

Poss also described the pace of the effort by saying, "We're still building the plane while flying it."

Those comments captured the reality facing Fort McCoy in August and September 2021 as the installation simultaneously received Afghan guests, established support operations and continued preparing for military training activities.

Fort McCoy organizations ranging from the Directorate of Public Works and Directorate of Emergency Services to the Network Enterprise Center; Logistics Readiness Center; Army Community Service; Religious Support Office; Directorate of Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation; and more became involved in supporting the mission.

Feeding thousands every day

The scale of OAW can perhaps be seen most clearly through the food-service operation.

In a Feb. 24, 2022, Fort McCoy Public Affairs news report, Fort McCoy Food Program Manager Andy Pisney described the food-service mission as a monumental undertaking.

According to Pisney, the food-service operation supported nearly 13,000 Afghan guests and almost 2,000 Task Force McCoy personnel during the operation.

The reports states that 31 of Fort McCoy's 34 dining facilities were used during OAW.

Fort McCoy's Food Program Management Office and Subsistence Supply Management Office ordered, received, issued and accounted for approximately $19.3 million in subsistence, according to figures provided by the Fort McCoy food-service team. The food-service operation also received 2,171,448 cans and bottles of water.

Food-service personnel sourced and catalogued approximately 120 new subsistence items, including halal-certified proteins and other culturally appropriate foods. The report also states that the food-service team conducted 279 surveillance inspections during the operation.

At the height of OAW, the food operation received approximately eight semitrailer loads of food each day. The daily food requirements were equally significant.

According to the Fort McCoy food-service team, approximately 9,700 pounds of protein, more than 8,000 pounds of rice and potatoes, and more than 8,000 pounds of vegetables were served each day. Reports also show that dining facility 2472 was serving approximately 4,500 people per meal, despite having a normal design capacity of 1,428 people.

Another dining facility in the 1800 block was serving more than 3,800 people per meal, according to Fort McCoy food-service officials cited in 2022 news reports.

"Right away we knew we would have a monumental challenge before us," Pisney said, according to the Fort McCoy Public Affairs Office's Feb. 24, 2022, article.

Caring for the whole person

OAW involved much more than providing food and shelter.

According to Angie Salazar, as reported, the temporary community included 12 informal schools conducting approximately 70 classes each day.

Afghan guests also participated in recreation and quality-of-life activities that included arts and crafts, movies, sports, sewing programs, tea rooms and community-care centers.One of the memorable recreational events was a production of *The Nutcracker*.

Medical personnel also played a major role.

According to Fort McCoy PAO reporting based on Task Force McCoy information, approximately 87,000 vaccinations were administered to Afghan guests during the operation. Those vaccinations included routine childhood vaccinations as well as COVID-19 and influenza vaccinations. The effort resulted in 100 percent of the Afghan guest population becoming fully vaccinated.

The operation also addressed educational needs.

According to Salazar, more than 100 female Afghan university students were connected with universities offering full scholarships so they could continue their education in the United States.

Wisconsin officials also assisted families during the operation.

Also, 65 birth certificates were issued for babies born during the mission.

Surrounding community responds

While thousands of military and civilian personnel worked inside Fort McCoy, the installation's surrounding communities also became an important part of the OAW response.

Local organizations, businesses, churches, schools, health care providers, nonprofit organizations, community groups and individuals donated supplies and provided assistance to Afghan families.

At the conclusion of the operation, Maj. Gen. Robert Whittle, who commanded Task Force McCoy during the mission, recognized the importance of that support.

In remarks published by the Fort McCoy Public Affairs Office, Whittle said it was an "honor and privilege" to welcome Afghan guests after their difficult journey and help them begin a new chapter in the United States.

Whittle specifically credited the local community for its support, stating that one of his "fondest memories" of the mission was the "overwhelming generosity of the local community."

Poss also recognized the Fort McCoy workforce and community after the mission concluded.

According to the Fort McCoy PAO's Feb. 24, 2022, report, Poss thanked the Fort McCoy Garrison, tenant organizations, and Team McCoy workforce for supporting OAW while continuing to provide services for Fort McCoy's regular military training customers.

Poss also thanked Task Force McCoy Soldiers, interagency partners, nongovernmental organizations, local communities and the public.

"We would not be successful without that support," Poss said.



Photo by Spc. Eric Cerami

Angela Salazar, center right, the Operation Allies Welcome federal coordinator for Fort McCoy, Department of Homeland Security, holds a town hall in a Fort McCoy barracks area to understand the concerns of Afghan evacuees at Fort McCoy on Sept. 13, 2021.

A mission that affected installation's regular workload

The OAW mission also occurred while Fort McCoy continued supporting its traditional military training mission.

According to Fort McCoy's fiscal year 2022 year-in-review reporting, the installation supported 77,421 military personnel during fiscal year 2022, compared with 116,053 military personnel in fiscal year 2021.

The decrease occurred while Fort McCoy was simultaneously supporting the large OAW population and the extensive infrastructure and manpower requirements associated with the mission.

The experience demonstrated that Fort McCoy could support a major humanitarian mission while continuing to provide facilities, ranges, training areas and services for military units.

From current mission to Fort McCoy history

Five years after the first Afghan guests arrived, Operation Allies Welcome has transitioned from an active mission into an important chapter of Fort McCoy history. That history is now being preserved at the Fort McCoy History Center.

In 2026, Fort McCoy established a permanent OAW exhibit featuring artifacts and memorabilia from the operation. According to Fort McCoy historical and Public Affairs officials, the exhibit includes items collected during the mission that help tell the story of the thousands of people who lived and worked at Fort McCoy during OAW.

The exhibit debuted during Fort McCoy's 2026 Armed Forces Day Open House, providing visitors an opportunity to learn about the mission and the people who supported it.

For Fort McCoy, the exhibit represents an important transition. In August 2021, Operation Allies Welcome was an immediate national requirement. Fort McCoy personnel were building facilities, establishing services, coordinating organizations and solving problems in real time.

Five years later, those same efforts are being preserved as part of the installation's permanent historical record.

Remembering numbers — and people

The statistics tell the story of the operation's enormous scale.

— Approximately 12,600 Afghan guests came through Fort McCoy.

— More than 4,000 people from 35 organizations participated in the mission.

— Approximately 87,000 vaccinations were administered.

— Twelve informal schools conducted approximately 70 classes each day.

— More than 100 Afghan female university students received assistance continuing their education.

— Sixty-five birth certificates were issued.

— The food-service operation accounted for approximately $19.3 million in subsistence and more than 2.17 million cans and bottles of water.

But five years later, the legacy of Operation Allies Welcome is about more than statistics.

It is about the Fort McCoy Soldiers, Army civilians, contractors, and volunteers who adapted to a mission unlike anything most had previously experienced.

It is about the federal, state and local agencies that worked alongside the military. It is about the nonprofit organizations and volunteers who provided assistance. And it is about the communities surrounding Fort McCoy that responded with donations, encouragement, and support.

The mission also demonstrated something fundamental about Fort McCoy. The installation is built to support military readiness, but its infrastructure and workforce can rapidly adapt when the nation requires something different. Operation Allies Welcome demonstrated that capability on an enormous scale.

As Fort McCoy preserves the story through its History Center exhibit, the events of 2021 and 2022 are no longer simply memories of a recent mission. They are now part of the installation's history.

Five years later, the numbers remain impressive. But the lasting legacy of Operation Allies Welcome at Fort McCoy may be found in the people who came together — military and civilian, government and nongovernmental, local and national — to accomplish a mission none of them expected when the first Afghan guests arrived on Aug. 22, 2021.

5 years later, Afghan guests return to Fort McCoy that became part of their journey

STORY & PHOTO BY SCOTT T. STURKOL
Public Affairs Staff

When several young Afghan women arrived at Fort McCoy on Aug. 19, they were no longer the teenagers who had stepped off buses here five years earlier.

They were now young women in their early 20s, college students living in another state, and building lives in a new country. But as they pulled up to one particular brick building at Fort McCoy, something from their past came rushing back.

"The energy in the car totally changed," said Jane Donaldson, a Tomah, Wis., business owner who accompanied the women on their return visit. "Because that's like a very distinct memory for them."

The building was part of the Fort McCoy facilities where the young women had lived during Operation Allies Welcome, the six-month humanitarian mission that brought approximately 12,600 Afghan guests to Fort McCoy beginning Aug. 22, 2021.

Five years after their arrival, several women had returned to the installation for the first time. Their visit offered something unusual — a chance for people who experienced Operation Allies Welcome as teenagers to see Fort McCoy again as adults — and to see a place that once represented uncertainty and transition from an entirely different perspective.

"It perhaps gave some closure to that particular time, just to see it again," Donaldson said. "You know how when you go back and see something … it gives you a newer perspective."

From Afghanistan to Wisconsin

The women were among thousands of Afghans evacuated from their country in 2021 as part of Operation Allies Welcome. According to the Feb. 25, 2022, end-of-mission report by the Fort McCoy Public Affairs Office, Fort McCoy began receiving Afghan guests Aug. 22, 2021, and ultimately supported approximately 12,600 people during the mission. More than 4,000 people representing 35 federal, state, local, non-governmental, and volunteer organizations participated in the operation.



Former Afghan guests who were at Fort McCoy for Operation Allies Welcome from August 2021 to February 2022 look through the Fort McCoy History Center on Aug. 19 at Fort McCoy.

The women who returned to Fort McCoy in August 2026 were teenagers when they lived here.

Donaldson said the women came from Afghanistan's Bamyan region, an area she described as having a particularly difficult history for women and girls.

"They're in their early 20s," Donaldson said. "So, they were babies or born … after we started building back the government. So, they had a very different experience than their mothers who were there during the height of Taliban."

Donaldson said that experience shaped the young women and their hopes for the future.

"These young women … are so much the hope for Afghanistan," she said.

The women eventually received scholarships and continued their education at universities in the United States. Donaldson said other young women from the same group went to colleges in several states.

For two of the three who returned to Fort McCoy, however, their connection to the place where their American journey began remained.

A connection that began during OAW

Donaldson's involvement with the Afghan guests began during the operation. She said she traveled to Fort McCoy once or twice a week for the duration of the mission, working with women and children at one of the community centers established throughout the temporary Afghan guest area.

It was there that Donaldson developed relationships with several young women. One woman became an important connection. Donaldson described her as a "fabulous interpreter" who also served as a leader among the women.

Donaldson said the group included approximately 144 women who had been sponsored by the Cindy McCain Humanitarian Initiative. Her involvement with Afghanistan also predated Operation Allies Welcome by nearly two decades.

Donaldson said she traveled to Afghanistan in 2003 while living in France and worked with a French-Afghan group during the constitutional convention process.

She later returned to Boston University for three months to study international public health and said that, because of her experience in Afghanistan, she frequently focused on the country during her studies.

Later, while living in Paris, Donaldson said she helped host 30 of Afghanistan's 69 female parliamentarians for a week, taking them to the French Senate and National Assembly. Those experiences gave Donaldson a longstanding connection to Afghanistan and its people.

That connection took on a new meaning when thousands of Afghans arrived at Fort McCoy in 2021.

When an military installation became home

For the Afghan guests, Fort McCoy was never intended to be a permanent home. It was a staging and processing location while they waited for documentation, family connections, and resettlement opportunities.

Donaldson said that distinction is important when people today ask what happened to the approximately 13,000 Afghans who were at Fort McCoy.

"They are everywhere," Donaldson said.

She explained that some people stayed only a few weeks while others remained for most or all the six-month operation.

"A lot of these folks … had connections in the U.S.," Donaldson said. "And they were just waiting for those people to connect with them and get their visas done. And then they were out of here."

The Fort McCoy Public Affairs Office reported in February 2022 that the final Afghan guests departed the installation Feb. 15, 2022. But Donaldson's connection with some of the young women did not end when they left.

She continued communicating with several of them, occasionally talking with them by phone and maintaining connections with others who had also become involved with the women during their time at Fort McCoy.

A community reaches out

Donaldson said the connection between the Afghan guests and people in the surrounding communities became one of the most memorable parts of the OAW experience. She emphasized that she was far from the only person who became involved.

"It's not just me," Donaldson said. "There were several people that really connected with these young women."

Tomah residents organized efforts to make the women feel welcome. Donaldson recalled a project in which women from Tomah assembled makeup bags for Afghan women and girls.

Some people questioned whether makeup was an important thing to provide during such a massive humanitarian operation.

But Donaldson said the response from the women showed otherwise.

See the rest of the story online at: https://www.dvidshub.net/news/574198/five-years-later-afghan-guests-return-fort-mccoy-became-part-their-journey.