THE
JET GAZETTE
READY TO SERVE...NEIGHBOR & NATION

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE 141ST AIR REFUELING WING
OCTOBER 2026



FIRE SUPPORT
SPOKANE FACES DISASTER; 141ST AIRMEN STEP UP TO SUPPORT COMMUNITY

WING GOLF TOURNAMENT
BUILDING CONNECTIONS AND PROVIDING RESPITE

NOTES FROM THE TOP
COL. QUAM SHARES THOUGHTS ON HIS LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLES

FAREWELLS
DEPUTY WING COMMANDER AND OPERATIONS GROUP COMMANDER RETIRE

THE JET GAZETTE

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE 141ST AIR REFUELING WING

VOLUME 64 ISSUE 2 ▯ OCTOBER 2026

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VICE COMMANDER	COL. MARK SCOTT
EXECUTIVE OFFICER	MR. MICHAEL HART
COMMAND CHIEF	CHIEF MASTER SGT. STEVE WEBSTER

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THE MISSION

THE MISSION OF THE JET GAZETTE
IS TO EFFECTIVELY COMMUNICATE EVENTS
AND INFORMATION OF THE 141ST AIR REFUELING WING
TO UNIT MEMBERS, THEIR FAMILIES AND RETIREES
AND TO RECOGNIZE PERSONAL AND UNIT
ACHIEVEMENTS WITHIN THE WING.

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A KC-135 FROM THE 141ST AIR REFUELING WING, FAIRCHILD AFB, WASH. TAXI'S ON THE FLIGHTLINE DURING THE SPOKANE AREA FIRES. FRONT COVER PHOTO BY TECH. SGT. MICHAEL BROWN



NOTES FROM THE TOP

COLONEL RONALD QUAM INCOMING 141ST MDG COMMANDER

To the men, women, and families of the 141st Air Refueling Wing and the Washington Air National Guard, hello, and welcome!

As I step into the role of Medical Group Commander, I first want to extend my sincere gratitude to Colonel Ronald McNamara, our outgoing commander. Colonel McNamara's steadfast leadership, dedication, and years of selfless service have left a lasting mark on this medical group. We owe him a debt of gratitude for his commitment to our unit, our state, and our nation. We wish him the absolute best in his next chapter.

Building upon the strong foundation Colonel McNamara established, I want to take a moment to introduce myself, share a bit about my journey in and out of uniform, and outline the core values that guide my leadership style. Taking command of this exceptional group is a profound honor, and I am excited for everything we will accomplish together.

My military story didn't start in an office with eagle insignia or medical insignia on my collar. In 1995, I entered the U.S. Air Force Reserve as an Airman First Class and a medical service apprentice. Over those early years, I learned the Air Force from the bottom up, learning what it means to pull drill weekends, balance civilian obligations, and execute the mission at the operational level.

Eventually, I worked my way up through the enlisted ranks to Staff Sergeant. That experience as a noncommissioned officer laid the foundation for everything I do today. It taught me the vital role our NCO corps plays in taking care of Airmen and keeping the mission moving forward.

After earning my medical degree, I transitioned into active service, spending 11 rewarding years as a U.S. Air Force Orthopedic Surgeon and Flight Surgeon. Knowing my time in uniform was far from over, I joined the Air National Guard, serving first with Houston's 147th Attack Wing before making the move to Washington. Since coming to the Evergreen State, serving with the 194th Medical Group and ultimately finding a home with the 141st Medical Group I haven't looked back. The professionalism, dedication, and spirit of this wing are truly second to none.

In my civilian life, I practice as an attending orthopedic surgeon.

Whether in the clinic or the operating room, my daily work centers on precision, clear communication, problem-solving, and mutual trust. In surgery, success depends on a cohesive, synchronized team, from surgical techs and nurses to anesthesiologists and surgeons. That exact same level of teamwork applies directly to our mission in the medical group.

When I am not in scrubs or uniform, I try to take full advantage of everything our state has to offer. You will frequently find me spending quality time with my family, hitting local hiking trails, playing volleyball, out on the water paddleboarding, or working on projects. Balancing family life, a civilian career, and Guard service requires deliberate effort, and I deeply respect the dedication each of you brings every drill weekend to maintain that balance.

My leadership philosophy aligns directly with our Air Force Core Values, grounded in three practical pillars:

1. People First & Servant Leadership:

Having walked in the boots of an A1C, an NCO, an active-duty flight surgeon, and a Guardsman, I know that our Airmen are our greatest asset. My job as your commander is to remove barriers, secure resources, and ensure you have what you need to excel. Taking care of Airmen isn't separate from the mission, it's how we achieve it.

2. Transparency and Open Communication:

Trust is built through honesty and consistency. I value open, bidirectional communication up and down the chain. If something isn't working, or if you see a way we can improve our medical operations or readiness posture, speak up. Bad news doesn't get better with age, and constructive ideas are always welcome.

3. Excellence in medical readiness:

As medical professionals, our readiness directly enables the operational capacity of the entire wing. We must remain sharp, accountable, and thorough in every clinical, administrative, and physical standard we maintain. High standards build confidence, and confidence builds combat capability.

What you can always expect from me is clarity in our goals, accountability in my actions, and unwavering support for your professional growth and personal well-being. In return, I ask for your professionalism, ownership of your individual roles, and a commitment to looking out for the Airmen sitting to your left and right. Show up for each other!

I am genuinely thrilled to serve alongside each of you. My door is open, and I look forward to meeting everyone across the unit in the coming weeks. Thank you for your service, dedication, and your commitment to keeping our unit ready.

See you around the Wing!



R-MAC Parting Words

COLONEL RON MCNAMARA (R-MAC)
141ST MEDICAL GROUP OUTGOING COMMANDER

The Grateful Dead said it best: "what a long, strange trip it's been."

When I was told that I to write one more Jet Gazette article before I retired, I thought, "really?" So, this is not going to be about farewell, because you will here about that at my Change of Command and Retirement ceremonies. Instead, this will just be the ramblings of the most seasoned member of the command team.

Truth be told, I never really wanted to join the military. My father thought it was an excellent idea for me to join right out of high school. But anything that he thought was an excellent idea, I thought was a bad idea, so I didn't join. Eventually, I got a little older and smartened up and realized that I wanted to go to college, again, and I did not want to pay for it. In New York State, if you join the Guard you can go to any of the State Universities tuition free. So, in 1996 at the tender age of 31, I signed up!

I enlisted as an medic with 174th Fighter Wing, got into Physical Therapy school a couple years later at the University at Buffalo, transitioned to 107th ARW and changed career fields to security forces because at the time it was a critical need career field, and they double your GI Bill, and gave you a $20,000 bonus, no brainer!

In my senior year of physical therapy school, a long comes September 11th. I was told that every Security Forces Squadron in the Air National Guard and the Air Force Reserves were activated. This began an almost 2-year title 10 activation, 22 months, and 18 days to be exact.

At the time there was a lot of uncertainty as to where we were going and how long we were going for, this was frustrating. We were ordered to base and to bring our battle rattle because we were going to war. Eventually, we ended up at Andrew's Air Force Base and then onto Gancy Air Force Base in Kyrgyzstan. As enlisted members we were not privy to any information, or did we see how deployment decisions were made, we just had to follow orders and do our job.

Fast forward to February 2026. I was visiting friends in Boise, it was a Saturday morning, we were walking into a bar for brunch, my phone rings at 11am, I see it's J-Mac, and I know it cannot be good. Everyone goes inside; I stay outside and take the call. Not much could be said about the situation, other than I need to get to Fairchild. I catch a flight back to Seattle, pack, and then head to Spokane.





Being a member of the command team, I got to see the deployment process from the decision makers perspective and how that eventually effects the members of our Wing. It was such a unique perspective from what I experienced in 2001 as the Airman that had to respond to the decisions that were made at the meetings that I was now a part of.

Even though the Medical Group only had to contribute a small number of personnel to the fight, it still weighed heavy on me, knowing that our Airmen were going to be in harms way. At this point, I was less than two months from retirement. It did not sit well with me knowing that we were going to war, and I was going to go home, after telling my Airmen that they had to go overseas. I spoke to J-Mac, and asked that if Colonel Quam didn't mind waiting to assume command of the MDG that I would like to stay into October and hopefully see everyone return home safely. J-Mac and Colonel Quam agreed, and that's why I pushed my retirement to October 2026. I was not ready to walk away from responsibilities. Even now with no clear end in sight to this action, I am more at peace with my decision to leave.

You hear about the burden of command, and this is just one aspect of it. Even though there is a heavy burden at times, the good far out weighs the bad. It has been the highlight of my career to work my way to the group command level and share that responsibility with the incredible leadership of this Wing and of this Medical Group.

I never did "my three slides," and I enjoyed it when Airmen would come and present at Wing stand up because it gave me some insight as to who this person is. I'm not going to do "my three slides," but there is one thing that I'd like people to know about me that only a couple of people in this Wing know, and I think it speaks to commitment and why we serve.

I was married to a wonderful woman; her name is Cathy. Things just didn't work out, and that is all right, she and I are still friends. The best thing about our relationship was helping raise her two sons Aiden, and Ethan. I loved and adored them. They were like my own sons and still are to an extent. There was a park near our house that was carved out the woods with trails where we would ride bikes and go running, fields to play soccer, throw a football, and see all types of

wildlife, it was awesome. Ethan was a great little athlete, and he liked to go jogging with Cathy and me, Aiden hated it. At this one spot on the trail Ethan would always challenge me to sprint to this little hill, and he would always win.

Tragically, on August 12, 2020, at age 13, Ethan passed away. I wanted to find the right way to celebrate his life. I worked with the Bellevue parks department, and I donated a bench in his honor and we had it placed on his hill in December 2020. Every Sunday that I am in town, I go to the park and go for our run. I bring flowers down to the bench and maintain the area around the bench where I also planted some trees. In the summer months I usually go there daily to water the flowers, every time I'm there, I take a picture of the bench, I have almost one thousand pictures.

We find purpose in life in many ways, and purpose is much bigger than self. Giving of yourself for the betterment of others is a noble purpose, and everyone that wears the uniform knows that purpose.

R-Mac

CHIEF'S CORNER

CHIEF MASTER SGT. JOSHUA OENS
141ST MEDICAL GROUP DET 1 SENIOR ENLISTED LEADER



"Ignore the noise and stay the course."

This guidance followed an Air National Guard wide meeting focused on the challenges facing our force and the need to care for Airmen in harm's way. These words cut through the confusion, frustration, and uncertainty we continue to face.

They serve as a reminder that our priorities remain clear: execute the mission and care for the Airmen and families who make that mission possible.

As events continue to evolve, information may change quickly and reports may be incomplete or inconsistent. We will remain disciplined, rely on verified information and official channels, and stay focused on what we can control—readiness, professionalism, and support for one another.

We are pursuing every available opportunity to provide relief and maximize time at home for our deployed Airmen, consistent with mission requirements. We remain committed to advocating for our people and supporting their families throughout this period.

This period has placed significant demands on our force. The 141st's tanker crews and supporting personnel have continued to demonstrate adaptability, resilience, and unwavering commitment while operating in a rapidly changing environment.

The sacrifices made by our Airmen and their families do not go unnoticed. We are deeply grateful for your service, professionalism, and continued dedication to the mission and to each other.

CMSgt Joshua Oens

SAFETY CORNER

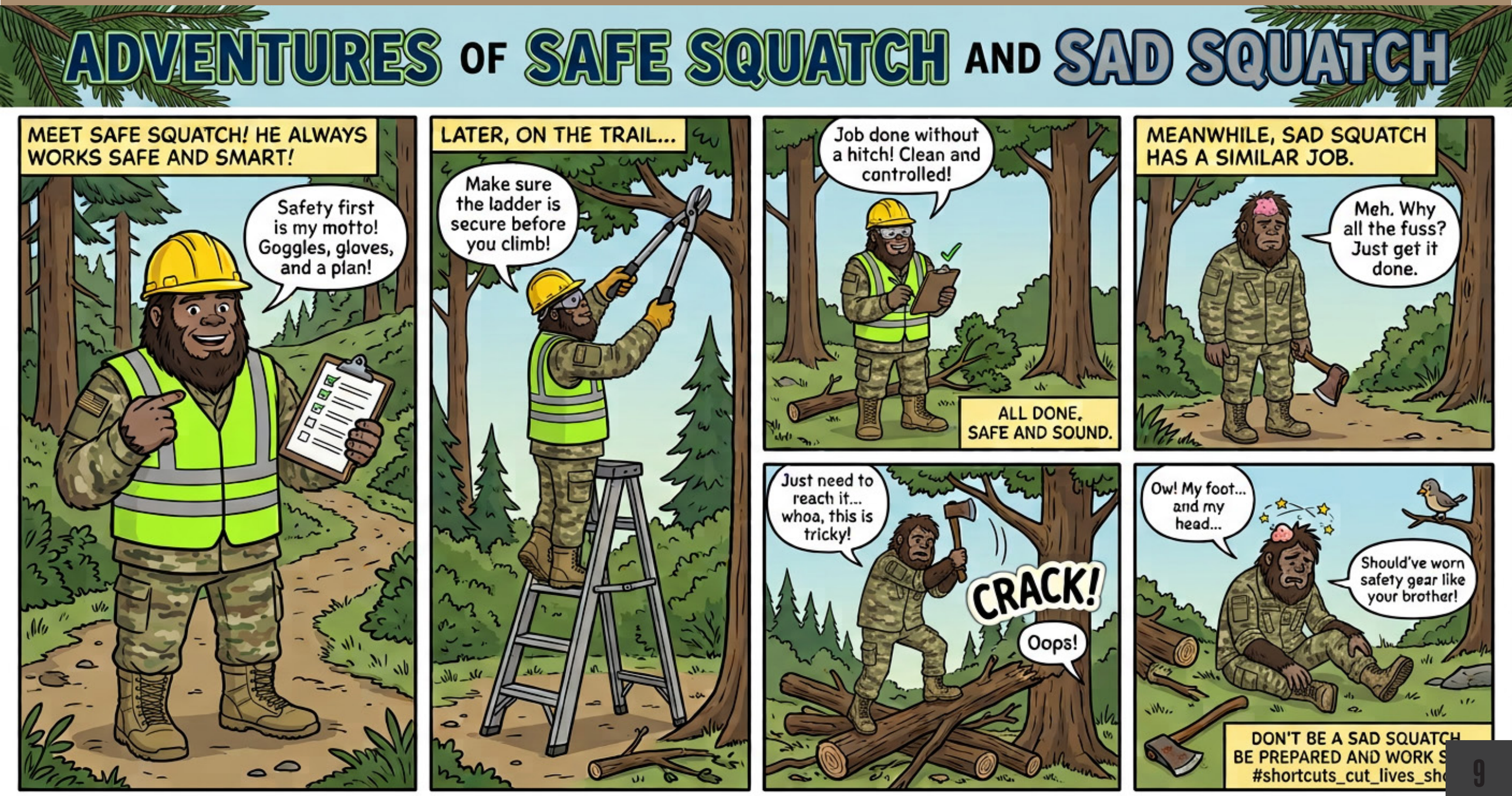
Be a safe squatch!

Provided by 141st ARW Safety Office

Transition periods historically trigger preventable mishaps as summer habits clash with fall hazards (frost, early dusk, slick leaves, migratory wildlife). Our fall objective: zero preventable mishaps through active, real-time risk assessment and management.

Quick ORM Check & Daily Challenge

30-Second Pause: Has the weather, light, or tempo shifted since morning roll call?
Wingman Check: Are we rushing or skipping steps due to end-of-drill time pressure?
Mandate: Every member has the absolute authority and obligation to call "KNOCK-IT-OFF" or "TIME OUT."



FALL FOCUS AREAS

	Hazard	Mitigation
Flight Safety	• Peak BASH Migration: Migratory waterfowl/ raptors concentrated <3,000' AGL. • Induction & Structural Icing: Prime between 20°F–70°F in high humidity. • Low-Angle Sun Glare: Severe forward-visibility loss at sunrise/sunset.	• Check AHAS. Eyes out for birds. • Verify de-ice/anti-ice systems; identify solid weather alternates. • Clean/inspect visors & windscreens to prevent sun scatter
Ground & Ramp	• Slip/Trip/Fall: Frost, morning dew, wet leaves, and delayed fuel evaporation. • Autumn Gusts & FOD: Dried foliage, twigs, and loose gear blown on ramps. • Low-Light Ops: Shorter days; darker morning/evening maintenance shifts.	• Strict 3 points of contact on stands, stairs, and ladders. • Execute diligent FOD walks; tether all covers & buckets. • Observe 15/5 mph ramp limits; hazards on; wear high-vis gear.
Commute & Home	• Wet Leaves & Frost: Wet leaves equal packed-snow stopping distances.• Deer Rut (Mating Season): Sharp spike in wildlife movement at dawn/dusk.• Heating & Fire Safety: Chimney soot, space heaters, smoke/CO batteries.	• Double following distances; brake smoothly; never swerve for animals.• Scan shoulders in wooded corridors; use high beams when clear.• Clear 3 ft around space heaters; inspect fire extinguishers & alarms.

Most Effective	Elimination	Physically remove the hazard
	Substitution	Replace the hazard
	Engineering Controls	Isolate people from the hazard
	Administrative Controls	Change the way people work
Least Effective	PPE	Protect the worker with Personal Protective Equipment

See Something...Say Something...Win Something!
Notice someone doing something safe? Email 141ARW.SE.WORKFLOW@us.af.mil for a chance to win! Both you and that person will be entered to win awesome prizes!



Ground Safety Technician
Tech. Sgt. Hanna Skoog

Flight Safety Officer:
Lt. Col. Jake Yates

Occupational Safety Manager:
Senior Master Sgt. Jess Peterson

4TH ANNUAL ACES COMMANDER'S CUP

GOLF TOURNAMENT BUILDS CONNECTIONS, PROVIDES RESPITE

Members, families and community partners of the 141st and 116th Air Refueling Wings and the 242d and 256th Combat Communications Squadrons gathered at MeadowWood Golf Course in Liberty Lake, Washington, on Aug. 28, 2026, for the fourth annual Aces Commander's Cup golf tournament. The event brought together 136 golfers, as well as local community partners. The day served to celebrate the organizations' perseverance and show support for deployed Airmen and their families. On top of morale and connection, the day also brought about friendly competition.

This August's event was presented by Ace & Dagger, a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting the 116th Air Refueling Squadron. The tournament featured an 18-hole four-man scramble and included several fundraisers and contests. These included raffle, merchandise and bake sales, as well as long-drive and longest-putt competitions. According to Master Sgt. Ryan Kiser, lead organizer of the event, Ace & Dagger spent about $4,700 on shirts, prizes and other expenses to support the 2026 tournament. The tournament's revenue, including registration and item sales, helped keep entry fees at $90 per participant.

The tournament provided an opportunity for participants to strengthen relationships outside of the daily mission. The tournament and its fundraisers provided a chance to connect while recognizing those who support the wing's Airmen and their families.

ARTICLE BY SENIOR AIRMAN COLE SEILER

PHOTOS BY TECH. SGT. MICHAEL BROWN



"It was a nice opportunity for everyone in the wing to get together," said Tech. Sgt. Tyler Dalton, assistant sponsorship coordinator. "Even if they didn't golf, it was a nice way for all of us to decompress after a hard year."



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The tournament followed a demanding year for its participants, including the 141st ARW's first federal activation since 1999 and our longest to dates. Additionally, members of the wing faced hardship in August during the Old Trails, Autumn Lane and Fairview Fires. While some lost their homes, others supported local fire departments' efforts to contain the fires.

"Having that time to spend with each other meant a lot to those of us who attended," Dalton said. "The past year has been a stressful time for all of us."

Tips totaling nearly $450 were donated to Minuteman Disaster Response, an organization that provides no-cost, emergency relief to those in need in the immediate aftermath of natural disasters. Proceeds from the tournament's bake sale helped fund an event for the families of deployed Airmen on Sept. 18.

Kiser said about $4,000 in event revenue will be used to support future tournaments. Organizers also hope to sponsor additional sporting events, including softball and cornhole tournaments.

Organizers said they plan to hold the event again next year.

"Overall, whether it was a day to relax or just a morale boost, it was a much-needed reset," Dalton said.

GROUND TRANSPORTATION MEMORIAL 5K

COMMEMORATIVE RUN RECOGNIZES WOUNDED, FALLEN GROUND TRANSPORTERS



PHOTOS BY SENIOR AIRMAN COLE SEILER AND TECH. SGT. MICHAEL BROWN
ARTICLE BY SENIOR AIRMAN COLE SEILER

More than two dozen ground transportation Airmen from the 92nd and 141st Air Refueling Wings participated in the annual ground transportation memorial 5K run at Fairchild Air Force Base, Washington, Sept. 30, 2026, honoring fallen members of the career field.

The event recognized the combat convoy mission performed by vehicle operators, now known as ground transportation Airmen, beginning in 2004. From 2004 to 2011, these Airmen completed 2,060 missions outside the wire in Iraq and faced at least 459 attacks involving improvised explosive devices, small-arms fire, vehicle-borne explosives and rocket-propelled grenades. Their actions earned Bronze Star Medals, Purple Hearts, Air Force Combat Action Medals and other decorations.

Participants paid tribute to Airman 1st Class Carl Anderson Jr., Airman 1st Class Eric M. Barnes, Airman 1st Class Zachary R. Cuddeback, Senior Airman Ashton L. M. Goodman and Staff Sgt. Dustin W. Peters, the five ground transporters who made the ultimate sacrifice for their country.

The event also recognized the hundreds of ground transportation Airmen wounded during combat convoy operations supporting Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom. Their service highlighted the risks of moving personnel, equipment and supplies through hostile territory and the role ground transportation personnel played in sustaining deployed forces.

The memorial run honored their service and sacrifice while preserving the career field's combat history for future generations of Airmen.



Washington Guard Supports Chemical Spill Response

Washington Guard Supports Chemical Spill Response

Photos: various contributors Article: Joseph Siemandel and Sgt. 1st Class Adeline W

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

A tank implosion at the Longview, Washington facility about 7:15 a.m. May 26 released an estimated 600,000 gallons of white liquor, a highly corrosive substance containing sodium hydroxide and sodium sulfide, creating a complex and hazardous environment for emergency responders.

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

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

The Guard's response included highly specialized units trained to operate in hazardous environments and support large-scale emergency operations. Within hours, the 10th Civil Support Team arrived on scene to provide technical expertise and advisory support, as well as assist the Washington Department of Ecology with air monitoring operations.

By the morning of May 27, Soldiers from the 10th Homeland Response Force established a Joint Task Force to provide command and control of Guard elements operating from the Longview Armory, while also supporting integration with civilian emergency management and response agencies.

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

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

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

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

"Once we got that up and running, making sure that it's all set up correctly and working, then we can ensure that people could start going and doing their jobs and then coming out of the suit properly," said Staff Sgt. Horace Brantley, team leader for the 792nd Chemical Company's Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and high-yield explosive, or CBRNE, Enhanced Response Force Package, a part of the 10th Homeland Response Force.

Brantley noted that initial setup required careful validation before operations could fully begin.

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

As of May 29, Guardsmen remained on site, supporting ongoing decontamination operations and assisting search-and-recovery teams.

"We will be here for as long as it takes to help this community," Welsh said.

Vice Wing Commander Retires

A 30 year journey comes to a close

PHOTOS AND STORY BY TECH. SGT. MICHAEL BROWN



Col. Angela M. O'Connell, deputy wing commander of the 141st Air Refueling Wing, retired during a ceremony Aug. 1, 2026, marking the conclusion of a military career that spanned three decades and included assignments across the active-duty Air Force, Air Force Reserve and Washington Air National Guard.

O'Connell served as deputy wing commander of the 141st Air Refueling Wing, where she assisted the wing commander in directing operations and coordinating staff activities to maintain mission readiness for approximately 1,000 Air National Guardsmen assigned to Fairchild Air Force Base.

Throughout her career, O'Connell held leadership positions in aircraft maintenance, public affairs, inspections and maintenance operations, contributing to missions at installations across the United States and overseas.

O'Connell received her commission in the Air Force in August 1996 through the Reserve Officer Training Corps at The Ohio State University, where she earned a bachelor's degree in criminology. She began her military career as an aircraft maintenance officer at Fairchild Air Force Base, serving with the 92nd Aircraft Generation Squadron and 92nd Logistics Group.

In 1999, she cross-trained into public affairs, beginning a career that included assignments at Laughlin Air Force Base, Texas; Royal Air Force Mildenhall, United Kingdom; Little Rock Air Force Base, Arkansas; Tinker Air Force Base, Oklahoma; and Scott Air Force Base, Illinois.

During her time in the Air Force Reserve, O'Connell served as an executive officer and public affairs officer at wing, numbered Air Force and major command levels. She joined the Washington Air National Guard in July 2014, returning to Fairchild Air Force Base.

Her assignments with the 141st Air Refueling Wing included inspector general for complaints resolution, chief of public affairs, deputy commander of the 141st Maintenance Group and commander of the 141st Maintenance Operations Flight.

In January 2022, O'Connell assumed the role of


RETIRED

deputy wing commander, a position in which she helped oversee the wing's administration, operations, training, maintenance and supply functions. She was promoted to colonel in November 2022.

O'Connell's professional military education included Air Force Squadron Officer School, Air Command and Staff College and Air War College. She also earned a Master of Military Arts and Science from Air University in 2009.

Her military decorations include the Air Force Meritorious Service Medal, Air Force Commendation Medal, Air Force Achievement Medal, Air Force Outstanding Unit Award, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal and Nuclear Deterrence Operations Service Medal.

O'Connell's retirement marks the end of a career that brought together operational experience, public affairs expertise and senior leadership within the Air National Guard.

Her service with the 141st Air Refueling Wing continued a long-standing connection to Fairchild Air Force Base, where she began her Air Force career and later returned to serve in key leadership positions. From the men and women of the 141st Air Refueling Wing we wish you the best in your future endeavors!


CERTIFICATE OF RETIREMENT
FROM THE ARMED FORCES OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
To all who shall see these presents, greeting:
This is to certify that
Colonel Angela O'Connell
having served faithfully and honorably,
was retired from the
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
on the First day of September 2026

Congratulations

Colonel
Angela O'Connell

From Cadet Welch to
Colonel O'Connell

Thank you for 30 years of service to the Nation and your Neighbors!



Operations Group Commander Retires

A 37 year career sunsets

PHOTOS AND STORY BY TECH. SGT. MICHAEL BROWN



Col. Craig A. Gural retired Aug. 1, 2026, after 37 years of military service, concluding a career with the Washington Air National Guard that began as an aircraft mechanic and culminated in his leadership of the 141st Operations Group at Fairchild Air Force Base.

Gural began his military career in December 1988 as an airman basic assigned to the 141st Air Refueling Wing, where he worked as an aircraft mechanic apprentice. Over nearly four decades, he advanced through enlisted and officer ranks, becoming a command pilot, instructor and senior leader responsible for preparing Airmen to execute missions at the local, state, national and international levels.

Before his retirement, Gural served as commander of the 141st Operations Group, overseeing the organization, training and equipping of personnel responsible for supporting the wing's operational missions.

His career reflected a progression through aircraft maintenance, flight operations, safety, training, planning and command, providing him with experience across multiple facets of military aviation.

Gural attended Eastern Washington University in Cheney, Washington, while serving as a drill status guardsman with the 141st Consolidated Aircraft Maintenance Squadron. He earned a bachelor's degree in general studies in 1995 and became a full-time technician in 1994, working in the periodic phase inspection section while pursuing his private pilot's license.

In 1996, Gural was selected as a pilot candidate with the 116th Air Refueling Squadron. He received his commission as a second lieutenant after graduating from the Air National Guard Academy of Military Science in July 1996 and completed undergraduate pilot training at Laughlin Air Force Base, Texas, in October 1997. He subsequently completed KC-135 initial training at Altus Air Force Base, Oklahoma, before returning to Fairchild to fly the aircraft.

In 1998, Gural deployed to Vicenza, Italy, where he served as the Combined Air Operations Center tanker director. In that role, he oversaw U.S. and international aerial refueling tankers operating over Bosnia and Kosovo.

Throughout the following years, Gural continued to expand his responsibilities. He served as a flight safety officer, worked in current operations planning and execution, and became a KC-135 instructor pilot. In 2006, he also was selected to fly the RC-26 Condor in support of domestic counterdrug missions before returning to the KC-135 in 2007.

His subsequent assignments included chief of wing safety for the 141st Air Refueling Wing, chief of standards and evaluations for the 141st Operations Group, and chief of squadron training. As chief of standards and evaluations, Gural completed more than 200


SFOR
COOP
GUAM



evaluations, helping assess and maintain operational readiness.

In 2019, Gural was selected for an Active Guard Reserve position as chief of wing plans. During that assignment, he worked on federal and domestic taskings, including planning efforts associated with the National Guard's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Gural later commanded the 141st Aircraft Maintenance Squadron before being selected to lead the 141st Operations Group in early 2023. He assumed command of the group in February of that year, bringing his experience in maintenance, flight operations and organizational leadership to the position.

As a command pilot, Gural accumulated more than 5,000 flight hours, including 400 hours of combat time. His aircraft experience included the T-3, T-37, T-1, RC-26B and KC-135E, R and T models.

His military education included Squadron Officer School, Air Command and Staff College and Air War College, all through correspondence programs, as well as the Aircraft Maintenance Officer Course Bridge at Sheppard Air Force Base, Texas.

Gural's awards and decorations included the Meritorious Service Medal with one oak leaf cluster, the Air Medal, the Air and Space Commendation Medal with two oak leaf clusters, the Kosovo Campaign Medal, the Afghanistan Campaign Medal and the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal. His decorations also recognized sustained service, readiness and unit performance throughout his career.

From his early years maintaining aircraft to his final assignment leading the 141st Operations Group, Gural's 37 years of service spanned the technical, operational and leadership responsibilities required to support Air National Guard missions.

His retirement Aug. 1, 2026, marks the conclusion of a career that began at Fairchild Air Force Base in 1988 and remained closely tied to the Washington Air National Guard throughout his service.

Congratulations

Colonel
Craig Gural

From Airman Basic Gural
all the way to the OG

Thank you for 37 years of
service to the Nation and
your Neighbors!



AIR NATIONAL GUARD

ALWAYS READY. ALWAYS THERE.

VOTER DO'S AND DON'TS



DoD Directive 1344.10 and The Hatch Act (5 U.S.C. §§ 7321–7326) **restrict the political activities of federal employees, including members of the National Guard when performing federal duties.**
They ensure a nonpartisan government and protect the integrity of your position.

VOTER DO'S | WHAT YOU CAN DO

EXPRESS YOUR PERSONAL VIEWS
You can discuss your personal political beliefs and support candidates, as long as you do so as a private citizen (when not on duty or using official resources).

PARTICIPATE IN NON-PARTISAN ACTIVITIES
You can take part in nonpartisan voter registration drives, get-out-the-vote efforts, and educational programs.

VOTE
You can register and vote in elections.

USE PERSONAL TIME AND RESOURCES
You can engage in political activity on your own time, using your own resources (not government equipment, facilities, or time).

LEARN AND STAY INFORMED
Understand DoD Directive 1344.10, the Hatch Act, and your rights and responsibilities. When in doubt, ask your chain of command or legal office.

VOTER DON'TS | WHAT YOU CANNOT DO

YOU CANNOT RUN FOR OFFICE OR BE A CANDIDATE
Do not seek, accept, or hold a partisan political office (e.g., elected office, party leadership).

YOU CANNOT USE YOUR OFFICIAL POSITION
Do not use your title, authority, or government resources to support or oppose a political candidate or party.

YOU CANNOT ENDORSE OR OPPOSE CANDIDATES
Do not make statements, post on social media, or participate in activities that could be seen as supporting or opposing a candidate, party, or political organization while on duty or in uniform.

YOU CANNOT SOLICIT OR RECEIVE POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS
Do not donate to or solicit money, services, or anything of value for a political campaign.

YOU CANNOT USE GOVERNMENT RESOURCES
Do not use government equipment, facilities, or time to engage in political activity.

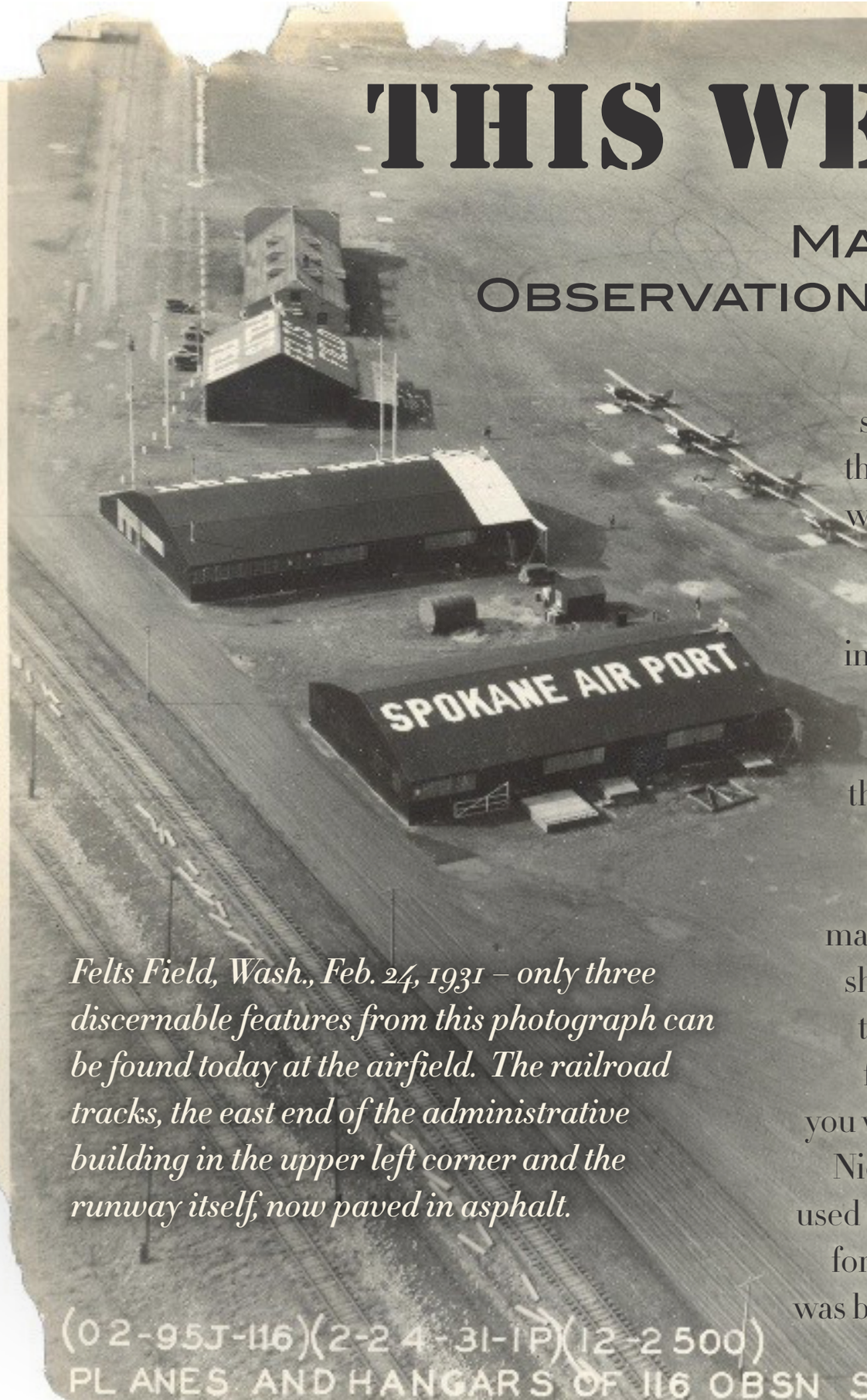
WHEN IN DOUBT... KEEP IT NEUTRAL.

DoD Directive 1344.10 and the Hatch Act protect our democracy and the credibility of the Air National Guard. Let's keep our focus on the mission — not politics.

INTEGRITY ★ SERVICE ★ READINESS

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

Maj. Gen Westover Inspects 116th Observation Squadron, Praises Felts Field



Felts Field, Wash., Feb. 24, 1931 – only three discernable features from this photograph can be found today at the airfield. The railroad tracks, the east end of the administrative building in the upper left corner and the runway itself, now paved in asphalt.

The Assistant Chief of the Army Air Corps, Maj. Gen. Oscar Westover, stopped by the 116th Observation Squadron at Felts Field, Wash. to inspect the country's northern most military aviation facility. Westover was pleased with the unit, it was reported, and complimented Maj. Robert Breene, 116th Commander and Instructor, on the unit's appearance and efficiency. Westover, a former infantry officer at Fort George Wright, expressed interest in local news reports about the development of a northern airway across the country, "the northern airway provides much better flying conditions than many of our present airways." Up until the 1930s, only the most experienced pilots with absolute surety in their plane attempted to fly the route across the United States from St. Paul, Minn. to Spokane, Wash. It was not considered practical for safety reasons for commercial mail or passenger service because of the lack of available airfields if a plane should have a break down, which they often did during this time, between the two points. This meant flying down to the central part of the country, flying across, then back up to whatever northern destination east or west you were trying to reach. It wasn't until local pilot and aviation entrepreneur, Nick Mamer, ran air mail parcels across the northern route (the same route used today by Delta Airlines) in July 1930 was interest in developing the route for commercial use undertaken. It didn't hurt that airplane manufacturing was becoming more codified and airplane models were being developed with increased reliability, range and safety features, either.

Guard Supports Spokane Complex Fires

Washington National Guardsmen ensure safety in the Spokane area during devestating complex wildfires

Story and Photos By: Tech. Sgt. Michael Brown



Washington Air National Guard Airmen mobilized to support local authorities after wildfires swept through the Spokane area starting August 1st, 2026, helping manage evacuation zones, secure threatened neighborhoods and deliver relief supplies to residents affected by the fires.

Airmen assigned to the 141st Air Refueling Wing and 194th Wing began deploying Aug. 1 as the Spokane Complex fires threatened homes and forced residents to evacuate. More than 100 Washington National Guard members were activated to assist civil authorities, including local law enforcement agencies managing road closures and evacuation areas.

The Airmen staffed traffic control points to prevent unauthorized entry into areas affected by the fires and help protect properties left vacant by evacuations. Their presence allowed local law enforcement officers to focus on other emergency response priorities as the fires spread across the region.

“When Spokane needed help, we knew we couldn’t afford to be late,” said Maj. Gen. Gent Welsh, adjutant general of the Washington National Guard, in an August update on the response. “We pushed our systems and our people hard to move from request to response, getting soldiers and airmen on the streets supporting local authorities within hours.”

The Guard's mission evolved as fire conditions changed and evacuation restrictions were adjusted. Airmen and Soldiers later assisted with distributing American Red Cross disaster relief kits to residents whose homes were damaged or destroyed.

On Aug. 12, members of the 141st Air Refueling Wing and 194th Wing delivered relief packages to affected neighborhoods. The supplies helped residents begin navigating damaged properties and taking initial steps toward recovery.

The response demonstrated the Washington Air National Guard's ability to provide personnel and operational support during emergencies, working alongside state and local agencies to address community needs.

As residents began the recovery process, Guard members continued supporting relief efforts while coordinating with civilian authorities and community organizations.

The Washington National Guard concluded its extended statewide wildfire response in September after providing a range of support missions, including security assistance in Spokane and relief distribution for affected residents.


POLICE

