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ON THE COVER: Nevada Air Guard Airman 1st Class Jasmine Plummer displays her Heisman Trophy pose on the Nevada Air Guard Base in Reno. The information technology specialist who doubles as a running back for the Nevada Storm was named the Most Valuable Player in Women’s Football Alliance Division II Championship Game last autumn.

Photo by 1st Lt. Emerson Marcus

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COVID-19 support hopefully nears its conclusion

By Spc. Adrianne Lopez
17th Sustainment Brigade

LAS VEGAS – Nearly two years into the Nevada Guard’s COVID-19 health response mission, about 70 Soldiers and Airmen remain on duty battling the persistent virus daily across the Silver State.

The ongoing coronavirus mission has proven to be the largest and lengthiest domestic response in state history. The COVID-19 health mission began in April 2020 and at the height of the response, more than 1,100 of the state’s 4,400 Guardsmen were on orders supporting Nevada’s pandemic response.

After emphasizing testing and personal protective gear distribution in the early stages of the pandemic, the main priority of the Guardsmen since the release of the COVID-19 vaccine has been immunization and testing assistance to civilian authorities. Two task forces – Task Force Sierra in the north and Task Force 17 in the south – support the coronavirus health response mission.

The combined contributions by the task forces to the vaccine administration efforts across the state have been impressive. In late October, statistics revealed Nevada Guardsmen had given 700,018 inoculations and performed 767,337 COVID-19 tests since April 2020.

Broken down by region, southern Nevada Soldiers and Airmen had administered 559,638 immunizations and recorded 648,312 COVID-19 tests through late October. In northern Nevada, Guardsmen had vaccinated 240,380 people and tested 99,025 individuals for coronavirus.

In Washoe County, six Guardsmen from Task Force Sierra continue to support the Nevada State Public Health Lab located in Washoe County where the Soldiers assist with data entry and test scheduling.

In late autumn, Task Force Sierra supported vaccination points at various schools throughout the Reno metropolitan area, including: Hug High School, Vaughn Middle School, Wooster High School, Dilworth Middle School, The Boys & Girls Club of the Truckee Meadows, Pine Middle School and Desert Skies Middle School. The Boys & Girls Club of the Truckee Meadows was the final temporary vaccination site; operations there ceased in December.

At several non-school sites in Washoe County, several dozen Soldiers and Airmen were on orders throughout autumn to provide COVID-19 testing and vaccination support at multiple Point of Dispensing. Points of Dispensing are temporary sites established by health officials where vaccines can be quickly dispensed to large numbers of people. Those operations also wrapped up in December.

In southern Nevada, Guardsmen remain very visible on all three College of Southern Nevada campuses. At each site, 11 Soldiers and Airmen are on daily duty to administer COVID-19 vaccinations and tests.

The Southern Nevada Health District and the Washoe County Health have become two primary allies of the Nevada Guard during the battle on coronavirus. After cooperatively supporting the state’s health response together for several months, the agencies have refined their combined operations and work together in lockstep.

“It’s been a great experience with Southern Nevada Health District,” said Spc Lauren Damiano of Task Force 17. “It has been huge learning experience for all of us. “Should another pandemic occur in the future, we know how to set up operations quickly. We’re more prepared and knowledgeable should something like this ever happen again.”

Seven Soldiers also assist the SNHD every day by inputting patient data and scheduling future tests. Following inconclusive tests, lab technicians request future tests to determine if a patient is positive or negative for COVID-19.

It’s an important job that allows the lab personnel to focus on the outcome of the coronavirus tests and not administrative tasks.

“The pandemic has been horrible but the experience supporting the state has been great,” said Staff Sgt. Benjamin Vance of Task Force 17. “The realization that my team provides a sense of hope for the community is amazing. My team remains motivated to show up every day and do the best job we can – not just for us – but for our community.”
Like it or not, vaccination deadline looms for Nevada Guard Soldiers

Regardless your personal opinion on COVID-19 mandates, the documentation of your coronavirus vaccination is set to become as important as your fitness test and height and weight screening results for your continued success in the Nevada National Guard.

In accordance with Department of Defense Sec. Lloyd Austin’s order from August 24 stating that all uniformed U.S. military personnel will receive the vaccination, the Army has established the deadline of June 30, 2022, for all National Guard Soldiers to receive the full vaccination for coronavirus. (The deadline for Nevada Guard Airmen to receive the vaccination has already passed: It was Dec. 2.)

Soldiers and Airmen are deemed fully vaccinated 14 days after each receives his or her second vaccination with Pfizer’s or Moderna’s two-shot vaccines, or 14 days after a single dose of the Janssen vaccine.

Receiving or declining the vaccination is not a political statement. Instead, the vaccination campaign is a readiness, health, and welfare priority for the total force.

The inoculation of Nevada Guardsmen against COVID-19 is the localized effort to enhance the protection of our Soldiers, Airmen, communities, and nation in coordination with the Department of Defense’s global effort.

Mandating immunization with FDA approved vaccines is consistent with the Department of Defense’s overarching requirement to use preventive measures to address potential health threats and exposures. Regardless your political affiliation, the goal of the vaccination mandate is simple: To protect you, your fellow Soldiers and Airmen, and family members.

As Army Surgeon General Lt. Gen. R. Scott Dingle recently said: “This is quite literally a matter of life and death for our Soldiers, their families and the communities in which we live.”

Maj. Gen. Ondra Berry and I will continue to analyze higher-headquarters’ deadlines and will adjust as needed to ensure adequate opportunities exist for Soldiers and Airmen who sincerely believe they qualify for a medical or religious exemption from a vaccination.

However, we cannot extend deadlines for longer than necessary to review the exemption requests. The COVID-19 vaccinations are now a readiness and deployment requirement – similar to all the requisite vaccinations you received during basic training – and I can assure you this state will maintain the proper number of fully-vaccinated Soldiers and Airmen needed to maintain the state’s readiness.

Soldiers and Airmen not eligible for exemption but who decline to follow the mandate for vaccination will be counseled by their chain of command and treated professionally with respect.

For those reluctant to receive a vaccination, the chain of command will advise you to speak with a medical provider and answer any lingering questions and address any concerns. You’ll also be encouraged to share that information with your family.

After medical consultation, service members who remain hesitant to receive a vaccination will have an opportunity to speak with a legal representative who will review your status, consequences, and options.

Soldiers who continue to decline this direction will be treated just like any other Soldier or Airmen who fails to follow a lawful order. Consequences will likely include an initial suspension of favorable personnel actions and, ultimately, discharge from the military.

It goes without saying, these past two years have been a historic and challenging time for the military. The military is an institution that does everything it can to mitigate risk, but by its very nature cannot eliminate it. The coronavirus vaccination has proven to be one of the military’s most effective mitigation tools.

We must move on as a nation and globally deployable fighting force. Full vaccination is the quickest way to do this. Not only will it save lives and reduce the risk of catching and transmitting COVID-19 to others, but it will ensure our readiness to protect America and defend freedom.
Air Guard’s ‘Baby Doc’ overcomes early health condition to become leader in pandemic battle

By Staff Sgt. Matthew Greiner
152nd Airlift Wing Public Affairs

LAS VEGAS – Undeterred by a rare health condition early in life, Nevada Air Guard 1st Lt. Caleena Longworth is now on the front line of health care in southern Nevada during the ongoing pandemic. Few in the state have vaccinated more people than Longworth, who has personally administered the vaccine to more than 4,000 people while acquiring the nickname “Baby Doc” from her health care coworkers given her youthful appearance.

And she did that all while finishing her medical doctorate at UNLV’s Kirk Kerkorian School of Medicine this spring.

Her passion for medicine originated during childhood. Longworth, 30, entered the world in Redding, Calif., with a rare health condition called duplex collecting system when she was born with a renal tract abnormality caused by an incomplete fusion of a kidney. The ailment can lead to health problems and kidney damage. Because of the potential threat to her health, a portion of her kidney was removed when she was 13. The procedure left her with a large scar across her abdomen and remains a reminder of what she has overcome.

Inspired by health care providers she encountered during her youth spent in Reno, she was motivated to become a medical doctor.

She’s now a medical service corps officer in the 152nd Medical Group participating in the Early Physician Appointment program. The program aims to recruit young doctors exactly like “Baby Doc” into the National Guard.

Longworth has been busy during the Nevada National Guard activations during the global pandemic. From April-May 2020, she established and was the officer in charge of the initial Community Based Collection Site in southern Nevada.

She was called back into duty this winter, joined Task Force 17, and administered the vaccine to thousands of Nevadans at the Cashman Center in Las Vegas.

Longworth said her first stint on duty focused on planning while this past winter’s duty involved working directly with patients.

“It was just me and the patient and the vaccine,” she said. “There was a real sense of hope.”

Longworth also volunteered to administer vaccines on behalf of UNLV. In total while on
Nevada Soldier boasts strong ties with partnership nation Tonga

By Spc. Olman Meza

State Partnership Program

RENO – Spc. Aleki Po’oi of the 2/238th General Support Aviation Battalion currently serves his Nevada community as a Soldier in the National Guard and looks forward to serving his ancestral homeland of Tonga with future support of State Partnership Program missions to the South Pacific island country. Po’oi has already received State Partnership Program briefings on Tonga and is set to support any and all missions to Oceania. He visited Tonga in 2015 and looks forward to returning soon while on duty with the Nevada Guard.

Under the auspice of the National Guard’s State Partnership Program, the Nevada Guard has partnered with the Kingdom of Tonga since 2014 and with the Republic of Fiji since 2018. The National Guard State Partnership Program began in 1993 to support the security cooperation objectives of the United States around the globe.

Po’oi, 20, of Sparks, Nevada, joined the military in March 2019 and now works as a Signal Support Systems Specialist. Po’oi conducts maintenance checks on specialized radios installed in UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters.

After finishing Advanced Individual training in Fort Gordon, Georgia in May 2020, Po’oi enjoyed a graduation celebration with his two brothers, Pfc. Rod Holu Po’oi and Seaman Recruit Vinnie Po’oi, who also serve in the United States military.

Soldiers and Airmen interested in supporting a future SPP mission can call (775) 887-7227 for information.
STATELINE — Sgt. Cameron Fricke of the 609th Engineer unit based in Fallon helps direct traffic on the south shore of Lake Tahoe in August after the Caldor Fire forced evacuations in the Tahoe area. About 55 Nevada Army Guard Soldiers set up traffic control points in cooperation with the Nevada Highway Patrol and Nevada Department of Transportation. The Nevada Guard Soldiers also escorted residents who needed to return to their homes for important items. All told, about 75 Soldiers, including two helicopter crews, supported the Caldor Fire mission for about two weeks. The Caldor Fire scorched more than 221,000 acres and burned for nearly two months, but fortunately skirted the cities of South Lake Tahoe, California, and Stateline.

LAS VEGAS — During the October Las Vegas City Council meeting, Brig. Gen. Troy Armstrong, right, the Nevada Army Guard’s land component commander, presented retired Pfc. Onofrio Zicari, center, with a Purple Heart more than 77 years after Zicari was injured in France on D-Day. On June 6, 1944, Zicari took part in the D-Day invasion at Omaha Beach. During the amphibious invasion, Zicari was wounded by German shrapnel. Due to the chaotic nature of the invasion and the fact that the field medic in battle who had treated Zicari died, his injuries went undocumented. For more than seven decades, Zicari’s Purple Heart went unrecognized — until October’s city council meeting.

EL DORADO COUNTY, Calif. — A combined fleet of CH-47 Chinook helicopters from the Nevada and California Army Guard flies toward the Caldor Fire in the Tahoe Basin in September. Before it was finally 100 percent contained in mid-October, the fire charred more than 221,000 acres. In late August, the fire forced the evacuation of 50,000 residents living in South Lake Tahoe, Calif. The fire destroyed more than 1,000 structures in El Dorado and Placer counties. The Nevada Army Guard spent much of the summer assisting California officials with aerial suppression with Chinook and UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters at both the Caldor and Dixie fires; the Dixie fire proved to be California’s second-largest wildfire in history. California Guard officials estimated Nevada Guard Chinooks and Black Hawks dispersed more than 1 million gallons of water on the huge blazes during the scorching season.
NORTH LAS VEGAS – About 70 Nevada Army Guard Soldiers assigned to Delta Company, 1st Squadron, 221st Cavalry, marked the start of their deployment to Kuwait with a mobilization ceremony in early November at the Clark County Armory. This is the first deployment of 1-221st Soldiers since the entire 221st Cavalry Squadron deployed to Afghanistan in 2009.

FERNLEY — Spc. Reid Hallam of the Nevada Guard Honor Guard and 422nd Expeditionary Signal Battalion, foreground, plays “Taps” during the military funeral honors for retired Army Specialist 5 Spencer Buxton at the Northern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery in October. The Nevada Guard’s Honor Guard provided military funeral honors for 1,004 military personnel across the state in fiscal year 2021 - the highest number in Nevada Guard history. The high number of funerals correspond to the advanced age of World War II and Korean War Veterans. Look for more on the Nevada Guard Honor Guard in the Spring 2022 issue of Battle Born magazine.

TOWNSVILLE, Australia – 17th Sustainment Brigade executive officer Lt. Col. Joseph Claros, right, participates in an indigenous peoples’ cultural dance during the Talisman Sabre 21 exercise last summer. Talisman Sabre 21 was a huge international training exercise that included Australia, the United States and other Oceania allies. All told, 17,000 military personnel from seven nations participated in ground, air and sea training during Talisman Sabre 21. The Las Vegas-based 17th brigade had about 100 Soldier “Down under” to support the mission.
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Inaugural Battle Born ChalleNGe Academy class graduates

By Staff Sgt. Walter H. Lowell
Joint Force Headquarters

CARLIN, Nev. – The inaugural class of students in the Battle Born Youth ChalleNGe Academy made Nevada history after 21 cadets graduated from the residential phase of the program in December. All 21 students completed the rigorous 22-week residential portion of the program and are transitioning to the one-year mentorship phase of the program as they return to their respective local, traditional high schools.

Opened just last February, the Battle Born Youth ChalleNGe Academy is the state- and Nevada Guard-sponsored educational academy participating in the overarching National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Program. It is a preventive rather than remedial at-risk youth program that includes voluntary participants 16-18 years of age who have dropped out of school or are not satisfactorily progressing academically, are unemployed or under employed, drug-free, and crime-free.

Program director Lauren Schulman said the first class of BBYCA students proved to be “phenomenal.”

“This class established a standard of excellence that all future classes will aspire to match,” Schulman said. “The students all made a remarkable journey from compliance to self-reliance.”

Schulman said two of the 21 students are now back on track to graduate with their local Class of 2022 peers in June. The 19 younger students who completed the residential phase also made enough academic progress to graduate on time with the Classes of 2023 and 2024 if they continue to accrue credits as scheduled.

The class worked on far more than just academics during the fall semester; Schulman said each student recorded at least 40 hours of service to the Elko County community last autumn, including work in cooperation with the Bureau of Land Management and the California Trail Interpretative Center.

The graduation of the students from the residential phase of BBYCA marked the realization of a dream come true for Nevada Guard officials, state legislators and educators, and BBYCA supporters across the Silver State. The idea of the Battle Born Youth Challenge Academy was brought to light by Heather Golding and Grace Nichols of Reno in 2016 when they inquired with former Adjutant General retired Brig. Gen. Bill Burks about the possibility of the National Guard’s regimented Youth ChalleNGe Program expanding to the Silver State.

The measure to establish the BBYCA was passed by the legislature in 2019. The academy received $500,000 annually from the 2019 legislature and it also receives about $1.5 million annually in federal funds.

Schulman said the BBYCA could accommodate 55 students during the Spring 2022 semester and the program was accepting applications. She also encouraged anyone interested in developing the future leaders of Nevada to apply for a cadre position.

For detailed information on the academy and the application process, call 775-684-9340 or visit https://nvng.nv.gov/bbyca.
High Roller crews wrap up another historic firefighting season

By Senior Master Sgt. Paula Macomber
152nd Airlift Wing Public Affairs

RENO — After recording some jaw-dropping statistics during the 2021 wildland firefighting season, the Nevada Air Guard’s Modular Airborne Fire Fighting System crews wrapped up their extended 89-day activation in late September.

The 152nd Airlift Wing’s MAFFS crews flew a total of 330 sorties and dropped 8,181,017 pounds of retardant (912,042 gallons) on western fires. The Nevada crews expelled 36 percent of the total amount of retardant disbursed by the four-unit (eight aircraft) Air Expeditionary Group tasked to douse the summer’s blazes. The group’s other units from California, Wyoming and Colorado were on duty for 96 days.

The Modular Airborne Firefighting System is essentially a storage tank loaded inside a C-130 capable of dropping up to 3,000 gallons of fire retardant through the rear aircraft nozzle in less than 10 seconds across a quarter-mile line. The MAFFS’s equipment belong to the Forest Service while the aircraft are Air Force-owned. Aircrews, maintenance crews and support personnel undergo special National Interagency Fire Center training and certification to perform MAFFS missions each year.

“The Nevada Guard surpassed expectations this year,” said Col. Gary Monroe, the MAFFS 153rd Air Expeditionary Commander. “They were only anticipated to support for 60 days and they hung in there for 89 of the 96 days while providing solid maintenance for the aircraft and having aircrew with positive outlooks ready to go on a moment’s notice. “They made more than one-third of the retardant drops and did this while getting ready for an upcoming deployment. Having eight aircraft available to NIFC for drops was possible because of the High Rollers.”

The busy summer wildland firefighting season marked the 49th year of existence for the MAFFS suppression program. It concluded as the second busiest on record during the nearly five decades C-130 military aircraft have supported the U.S. Forest Service.

It was a notable season for all MAFFS crews across the west. In addition to the 152nd Airlift Wing, the other units who contributed to the record-setting support included the California Air Guard’s 146th Airlift Wing, Port Hueneme, Calif.; Air Force Reserve Command’s 302nd Airlift Wing, Peterson Air Force Base, Colo.; and the Colorado Air Guard’s 153rd Airlift Wing, Cheyenne, Wyo.

“Although it was very busy, it was quite satisfying to be such a huge part in getting these fires under control,” said Lt. Col. Michael Fugett, the 152nd Airlift Squadron commander. “I am so proud to have this rewarding mission and have the chance to help our homeland and our fellow Americans.”

The initial activation of MAFFS-equipped military aircraft occurred on June 25, a full month earlier in the year in comparison to 2020 and the earliest activation of MAFFS-equipped aircraft in a decade.

(See Firefight, page 23)
A squad of 757th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion Soldiers practices ground wildland fire suppression techniques near Washoe Lake in August. About 40 Soldiers in the battalion became the first fully-qualified Army Guard ground firefighters in the Nevada Guard when they graduated from the state’s Division of Forestry Wildland Firefighter Course last summer.

Nevada Guard Soldiers complete firefighting course, ready to join ground battle against wildland blazes

By Staff Sgt. Zandra Duran
Joint Force Headquarters

WASHOE VALLEY, Nev. — After assaulting Nevada’s wildland fires from the air for with helicopter water bucket drops for decades, Nevada Army Guard Soldiers are now ready to join their state partners on the ground in future battles against wildland blazes.

Nearly 40 Soldiers from the 757th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion became the first fully-qualified Army Guard ground firefighters in the Nevada Guard when they graduated from the state’s Division of Forestry Wildland Firefighter Course in August.

The graduates will remain on stand-by for the remainder of the fire season ready to assist other state agencies. As of early October, the firefighters had not been called to duty for an active fire.

According to Nevada Division of Forestry officials, the NDF and the Nevada Guard developed their current firefighting partnership to improve interagency utilization of existing state assets and resources for efficient fire relief and suppression within the state. The cooperation includes interagency support, training and planning in advance of future wildland fires.

The military firefighters received a total of five days of training from Division of Forestry instructors. They received four days of classroom and online instruction before the course culminated with a field day to test the Soldiers’ new fire suppression skills.

All of the Soldiers were outfitted with firefighting personal protective equipment, fire-resistant clothing and hand tools for the duration of the training.

The 40 Soldiers received their instruction in August at the same time 55 Nevada Army Guard Soldiers assisted with traffic control around the Tahoe Basin and another 20 aviation personnel manned several helicopters providing assistance at the relentless Caldor and Dixie fires.

According to the joint operations center, the Black Hawk helicopters assigned to the Caldor and Dixie fires alone dropped more than 200,000 gallons on the blazes through Sept. 30.

Through early October, the Caldor Fire in El Dorado National Forest had burned more than 50 days and had scorched more than 221,000 acres. It was not contained until mid-October.

At the height of firefighting season in late summer, more than 770 National Guard Soldiers and Airmen from eight states were on duty fighting wildland fires.

Four Air National Guard C-130 crews, including the 152nd Airlift Wing, were also busy all summer using their Modular Airborne Fire Fighting Systems to suppress wildland fires. Through late September, the National Guard Bureau reports National Guard MAFFS crews have recorded a total of 357 drops of fire retardant this season.

The 2021 fire season concluded as one of the worst in American history. In late September, the National Interagency Fire Center reported that more than 38,200 fires charred a total of 3.2 million acres across 14 states this summer and autumn.
A decade later, Nevada Guard continues to grieve over Carson City IHOP Shooting Victims

By Lt. Col. (Ret.) Steve Ranson
Special to Battle Born

CARSON CITY – Retired Nevada Army Guard Maj. Kenneth Curtzwiler knows firsthand the meaning of the loss of life as well as the importance of remembrance.

Curtzwiler was one of many family members, friends and Soldiers who gathered at the Office of the Adjutant General in early September for a Remembrance Memorial Ceremony to reflect on the senseless loss of life that occurred during the infamous Carson City IHOP shooting incident on Sept. 6, 2011.

That incident resulted in five deaths and seven injuries. Three Soldiers were killed in the random attack, including Curtzwiler’s daughter, Sgt. 1st Class Miranda McElhiney. The other deceased Soldiers included Joint Force Headquarters commander Lt. Col. Heath Kelly and supply sergeant Master Sgt. Christian Riege. Florence Donovan-Gunderson of South Lake Tahoe was also killed in the shooting before the lone gunman took his own life.

“It was a rough time in this community,” Curtzwiler said, “and in order for us to move on, I ask that we don’t move on too quickly.”

Curtzwiler said he married McElhiney’s mother in 1980, but the couple subsequently separated and years sped by without him seeing his daughter.

Midway through his 20-year career, Curtzwiler said he reported to the Plumb Lane Armory in Reno to take a physical before attending winter training at the Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center. The physical took on a coincidental twist when Curtzwiler asked the medical specialist about her mother. The Soldier, it turned out, was his daughter, Miranda, who had enlisted in the Nevada Army Guard in 1998.

“We spent the next 10 years getting to know each other. I was actually her commander at one time,” Curtzwiler said.

When he heard of the news of the IHOP shooting and what transpired, he was shocked.

“It was like a punch in the gut,” he recalled.

Maj. Gen. Ondra Berry, the Adjutant General, noted the loss of three Soldiers in one tragic moment 10 years ago equaled the number of deaths the Nevada Army Guard suffered in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan. He said the IHOP shooting will remain a defining moment in Nevada Guard history.

“I appreciate you have not forgotten to reflect and remember,” Berry said.

Lily Hansen, McElhiney’s daughter, was also in attendance. McElhiney had become a mother as a teenager and placed Lily up for adoption.

Sept. 6, 2011, became forever etched in Hansen’s mind when her adopted mother took her aside to deliver the news.

“Miranda was shot, and she didn’t make it,” her adopted mother said.

“All I wanted to do was run. I wanted to run. I wanted to fight,” Hansen recounted.

Brig. Gen. Michael Hanifan, the state’s assistant adjutant general, became emotional at the beginning of his remarks. The Fallon native said he knew each Soldier personally. Hanifan also recognized Donovan-Gunderson of South Lake Tahoe, the lone civilian killed. Her husband, Wally, was wounded.

“Please note you’re not alone remembering this day,” Hanifan said to the family members.

Riege, the JFHQ supply sergeant, had spent 19 years in the military including two years in the Navy. He had been deployed both to Iraq and Afghanistan. The 38-year-old Soldier grew up in Hawthorne and his grandfather had managed the Hawthorne Army Depot.

Both Riege and Kelly died at the scene of the shooting. McElhiney
Maj. Gen. Ondra Berry, the Adjutant General, addresses the attendees at the Carson City Shooting Rememberance Memorial in early September in Carson City. The Nevada Guard lost three Soldiers during the incident in 2011 - the same number of Soldiers lost in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan in the past two decades.


died hours later at a local hospital from her wounds. Wounded by the gunman's bullet, Hanifan said she called 911 after the gunman shot himself to report the update. The other wounded soldiers, Hanifan pointed out, provided first aid.

“They are truly American heroes,” he said. Hanifan said it continues to be important to mark the date of the IHOP shooting annually. A memorial run from the restaurant site to the Office of the Adjutant General on Fairview Drive began in 2012 and former Gov. Brian Sandoval joined the throng of runners many times during his stint in office. Hanifan applauded the Carson City Sheriff’s Office for providing traffic control to keep the runners and walkers safe during the past decade.

“Coming to the run is biggest thing I have done,” Hansen said.

Chaplain Maj. Todd Brown referenced a line from Psalm 23 during the memorial: “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.”

“Walking through the valley of death is hard but necessary,” he said.

Two Nevada Army Guard Soldiers, 2nd Lt. Nicollo Murillo and Sgt. Geoffrey Garber, died unexpectedly during the autumn. Brig. Gen. Troy Armstrong said Garber took his own life; the Army has not released the cause of Murillo’s death but there is no indication of foul play.

Murillo, of the 1859th Medium Truck Company based in Reno, died suddenly October 21 at age 22 while attending his Army Basic Officer Leader Course at Fort Lee, Va.

Murillo, a Reno native, was the Honor Graduate of the University of Nevada, Reno’s Reserve Officer Training Corps commissioning class of 2021.

Before earning his bachelor’s degree from UNR, Murillo attended Spanish Springs High School (Class of 2017), Shaw Middle School and Esther Bennett Elementary School. Upon his graduation from Spanish Springs High, he ranked second in grade point average in his class.

Also in 2017, Murillo enlisted in the Nevada Army Guard. While an enlisted Soldier, Murillo attained the rank of private first class in the 1859th. While with the unit, he received two Army Achievement Medals for exemplary service.

Garber died in early September at age 30. Garber, of Henderson, was an armored crewman in Delta Company, 1-221st Cavalry and operated the unit’s M1A1 Abrams main battle tanks. Dozens of troopers attended Garber’s memorial service on Sept. 11.

Garber initially entered the Army in 2009 and joined the Nevada Army Guard in 2013.

“Sgt. Garber was well-liked among his peers and an excellent cavalry Soldier,” Armstrong said. “This is extremely heart-wrenching and saddening. We all send our thoughts, prayers and offer support for Sgt. Garber’s family, friends, and his fellow battle buddies in the cavalry.”
RENO – Airman 1st Class Jasmine Plummer tackles her job as an information technology specialist in the Nevada Air Guard’s 152nd Communications Flight in an unpretentious and unassuming manner.

But on the gridiron, Plummer, 28, of Reno, is the focus of national attention as one of the nation’s top female football players. Last summer, she was named the Most Valuable Player in the Women’s Football Alliance Division II Championship Game after leading the Reno-based Nevada Storm to a 42-18 win over the Detroit Dark Angels.

Her gridiron prowess was established long before the championship game in Canton, Ohio, at the Tom Benson Hall of Fame Stadium in July. She had already earned legendary football status by being the subject of the Hollywood film, “The Longshots” that was released in 2008. The movie was based on Plummer’s journey as an 11-year-old girl in 2003 becoming the first female quarterback to lead a team to the Pop Warner Super Bowl. In the movie, actress Keke Palmer plays Plummer and Ice Cube portrays her football mentor. That year, ESPN The Magazine featured her in an article headlined “The Gridiron Girl.”

After exploring her potential in basketball during her college days, Plummer has reestablished her dominance in football in recent years. As the team’s star running back, she led the Storm to a 9-0 record. The Storm were also the first team in Women’s Football Alliance history to win the Division III (2020) and the Division II titles in consecutive years.

Plummer led all WFA Division II rushers during the regular season in yards (814), touchdowns (15), yards per carry (15.5) and tied for the longest run of the season (95 yards), according to the WFA website.

“She always loved football,” he said. That love of the game became her primary focus as she entered the Junior Pee Wee level of Pop Warner. At quarterback, Plummer led the Harvey Colts to the Pop Warner Super Bowl in 2003 in Orlando, Florida. She was the first female quarterback in the national tournament’s 61-year history, ESPN reported.

“She was shy,” Johnson said. “We would have to prep her for interviews. She didn’t want to go to them. That was Jasmine. She was the sweetest, cutest little girl. But then there is someone I like to call Jazzy Lady. That’s her alter ego. Once she has that ball, running with the ball, it’s like a stallion running loose through a fence.”

Johnson recalled when Plummer played quarterback against one of the leading teams in the league. In Pop Warner, players are requested to keep their helmets on even after the game. In this instance, the opposing
coach asked if she could remove her helmet. “They wanted to make sure we didn’t switch her and put some other kid in,” Johnson said. “She stood there with her dirty uniform, took off her helmet and gave that Jasmine smile. The coach said, ‘You’re the athlete that every dad wants.’”

‘Self-starter’

Plummer stopped playing football as a teenager and transitioned to basketball. “There aren’t a lot of options to play football for teenage girls,” she said. “I thought I had a chance to play sports for a longer period of time if I started with basketball.”

She also wrestled and regularly pinned her mostly male competition.

Eventually, basketball brought her out west, where she played point guard at Feather River Community College in Quincy, California.

“I didn’t know it was so mountainous. I envisioned a lot of beaches. I was like, ‘Oh yeah, I’ll go there.’ I was wrong,” Plummer said with a laugh.

But it worked out for Plummer. That’s where she met wife, Nejae Jackson, who also played basketball at Feather River. Today, they have two children and live in Carson City. Her mother, Cassandra Johnson, also moved from Illinois to Reno to be close to her daughter.

Plummer left Quincy to continue her education at the University of Nevada, Reno. She landed a job at Tesla, but needed to find a way to pay for college. To do so, in 2018, she joined the Nevada Air Guard’s 152nd Communications Flight. The Nevada Guard’s tuition waiver work program provided her a chance to pay for her classes and continue to work.

“She is a real self-starter. You can tell that comes from her sports background,” said Maj. Greg Green, the commander of the 152nd Communications Flight. “She has an amazing work ethic.”

‘Powerful, quick and fast’

Also in 2018, she started attending practice with the Nevada Storm, established in Reno in 2010. With Plummer in the offensive backfield, the Storm won the Division III championship in 2019. The league moved the Storm to Division II in 2020, but they did not compete because of the pandemic. With the team’s win over Detroit in July, the Storm became the first WFA team in history to win back-to-back titles after jumping divisions.

The recent championship win against the Detroit Dark Angels looked to be the Storm’s toughest test of the season. The Dark Angels posted shutouts in six of their eight games this season. Both teams ranked among the league-leaders in points per game and fewest points allowed per game during the regular season. The Nevada Storm scored 39.7 points per game and allowed 6.9 points per game; the Dark Angels scored 36.1 per game and allowed just 7.7, according to the WFA website. But the final score (42-18) highlighted the Storm’s dominance during its 2021 run.

Plummer now has her eyes set on playing in the new Women’s Football League Association, which pledges to become the first professional women’s football league and pay its players. The league has been in contact with Plummer, but the start date for its inaugural season is postponed to 2022 because of the pandemic.

“Hopefully, we will have more information soon,” she said. “I am excited about it.”

These days, Plummer says she prefers running back over quarterback — the position she played in Pop Warner — because it provides more chances to touch the ball in a league focused on running. When asked if there was a running back she modeled herself after, whether male or female, Plummer said Alvin Kamara, of the New Orleans Saints.

“I also like ‘Beast Mode,’ Marshawn Lynch,” Plummer said of the former Seattle Seahawks running back. “I’m a similar kind of runner. I think I’m powerful, quick and fast like them.”

Photo by Tech. Sgt. Bryce Belanger

Photo by Kim Jamison Photography

LEFT: Airman 1st Class Jasmine Plummer takes time out for a photo next to the 152nd Communications Flight office. RIGHT: Jasmine Plummer returns a kick during the Women’s Football Alliance Championship Game in July. She led all WFA Division II rushers during the regular season in total yards (814) and touchdowns (15).
CARSON CITY – After a strong showing by his affiliated political party in November’s election, Nevada Army National Guard officer Capt. Gabriel Uy landed a highly sought-after job at the White House.

Of course he’s not the President.

Instead, Uy of Joint Force Headquarters is Associate Director of the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs in Washington, D.C. The civilian appointee from Las Vegas works in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building, just a stone’s throw away from President Biden’s Oval Office at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

In his position, Uy, 34, of Las Vegas, is part of a team that serves to engage state, local, Tribal and territorial governments to address the most pressing issues impacting the country, including President Biden’s American Rescue Plan, American Jobs Plan and American Families Plan. It’s a huge task, considering there are thousands of elected officials in states, municipalities, territories and Tribal Nations.

“At first, I was overwhelmed with the enormity of it all and thought, ‘What did I get myself into?’” said Uy, who began his job at the White House in March. “But serving in the White House is an incredible honor each day — to work on behalf of the American people.”

Uy’s current status and future potential in the world of politics has already been recognized. This year, he was named as one of the top 40 political and public affairs professionals under the age of 40 by the National Association of Asian Pacifics in Politics and Public Affairs.

Early in life, Uy appeared to be headed on a path to a job in health care rather than the White House. The son of Filipino-Chinese immigrants, Uy was born and raised in Las Vegas and graduated from Palo Verde High School in 2005. He was preparing for medical school at the University of Nevada, Reno, when he first dipped his toes into political waters. He completed two undergraduate degrees at UNR in nutritional sciences and speech communication in 2010, but found himself drawn to politics — not medicine — after serving as the UNR student body president’s chief of staff and in the student senate.

After graduation, Uy interned and worked at the California Legislature in Sacramento and then worked on Barack Obama’s campaign in 2012. He then served on now-retired Sen. Harry Reid’s staff from 2013-2016.

During his stint on Reid’s staff, Uy worked closely with another well-known Reid staffer in Nevada Army Guard circles — now deceased Maj. Gen. Robert Herbert.

Inevitably, Herbert convinced Uy he could serve his country both in policy and the military simultaneously if he joined the National Guard.

“The day I met Captain Uy in Senator Reid’s office, I recognized he had the attributes needed to be successful both in government and military service,” said Herbert, who died in an accident in September. “I’m happy to see that he has continued to pursue dual careers in both political and military service. It is not an easy task. However, Captain Uy continues to demonstrate he has the ability to successfully do both.”

Military Career

After completing basic training in June 2015, Uy found himself at officer Candidate School at Fort Benning, Ga., on the path toward becoming a second lieutenant.
“I definitely had second thoughts during training, but joining the Nevada Army National Guard has been one of the best decisions I’ve ever made,” Uy said. “I’ve met incredible Soldiers and Department of Defense civilians and have had extraordinary experiences so far in the Army, but this past year renewed my sense of pride in being a National Guard member.

From deploying overseas to responding to natural disasters at home, and protecting the U.S. Capitol to supporting vaccination efforts in states, the National Guard has led by example.”

After his initial military training, Uy became a finance officer. His first assignments in the Nevada Army Guard were with the 1864th Transportation Company in 2016 and the Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear Enhanced Response Force Package team in 2017.

In 2018-2019, Uy received an opportunity to work abroad and served at U.S. Army Southern European Task Force-Africa in Vicenza, Italy, where he successfully led the reconciliation of more than $33 million in financial obligations. He also completed the Army Comptroller Course at Syracuse University.

In 2019, Uy returned to the Silver State and transfer to the 17th Sustainment Brigade and became now-Vice President Kamala Harris’s Nevada political director.

Around the time her primary campaign concluded, Uy was selected for a tour at the National Guard Bureau in Arlington, Virginia where he was a budget analyst, program manager, and command fleet manager for the Army National Guard’s Recruiting and Retention Division.

Home Still Means Nevada
Today, Uy remains busy performing duties in Washington, D.C., while simultaneously fulfilling his responsibilities as a Nevada Guard officer. He recently transferred to the Plans and Operations Section of Joint Force Headquarters and will complete his annual and monthly training in extended blocks of time while in Nevada.

“I may live in Washington, D.C. now, but Nevada will always be home,” Uy said. “The entire Nevada Guard leadership has been supportive in my transition back to traditional status so I can serve in my civilian capacity at the White House while still remaining a Nevada Guardsman.”
CARSON CITY – Experienced Soldiers willing to keep their boots on terra firma for the remainder of their military career can quickly transition into the Nevada Army Guard’s warrant officer corps. Warrant officers are the Army’s experts who perform specialized missions and train Soldiers and advise commanders on technical military topics.

There is unprecedented demand for ground technical warrant officers in the Nevada Army Guard, especially in the ordnance and signal corps career fields, according to Warrant Officer Strength Manager Chief Warrant Officer 3 Joshua Bunker. Demand for warrant officers in Army aviation also remains high, but the transition period to become a full-fledged aviation warrant officer will likely take a longer period of time in comparison to Soldiers willing to take a ground-technical position.

“Soldiers with 4-5 years of leadership experience are extremely desirable candidates for technical warrant officer positions,” Bunker said. “For example, a sergeant with a signal or maintenance occupational skill who has been a squad leader would be an ideal applicant for the warrant officer corps.”

The Nevada Guard has 100 authorized warrant officer positions. The majority of the positions are filled but there are more than a dozen vacant positions and more are pending because a high percentage of Nevada’s warrant officers are approaching retirement age.

“We need a minimum of eight new warrant officers in our state each year to offset the retirement exodus of warrant officers. That is the minimum – I would like to get 10 new warrants per year,” Bunker said. “In some occupational fields, we are ‘overdriving’ and recruiting at 200 percent in some vacant positions in anticipation of future retirements.”

Bunker said an experienced enlisted Soldier qualified in an attractive military occupation series of aviation, motor transportation, signal corps, ordnance, maintenance or quartermaster (MOS Nos. 15, 25, 88, 89, 91 or 92) could likely become a full-fledged technical warrant officer in less than a year. He noted now-Warrant Officer 1 Elizabeth Zamora-Lechuga completed her transition from sergeant to warrant officer in just five months this year (April-August).

For those Soldiers with their heart set on becoming an aviation warrant, Bunker said there are vacancies but candidates should anticipate a longer wait for their requisite military schools versus ground-based warrant occupations.

Bunker noted it’s important for most warrant officer applicants to have experience in the military occupation for the career field they are seeking. Although an aviation warrant applicant’s MOS is immaterial, there must be a strong tie between a Soldier’s enlisted MOS and his/her future ground-technical warrant field.

“A strong applicant will have experience and expertise in the ‘feeder MOS’ for their chosen warrant officer field,” Bunker said.

(Soldiers interested in seeing which warrant officer career field their current MOS is associated with can visit: https://recruiting.army.mil/ISO/AWOR/ARMY_FEEDER/.)

Longtime aviator new state command chief warrant officer

CARSON CITY – Chief Warrant Officer 4 Steve Nielsen succeeded Chief Warrant Officer 5 James Baumann this past autumn as the Nevada Army Guard’s State Command Chief Warrant Officer. In the position, he oversees the training, assignments and staffing of the more than 100 warrant officers in the Nevada Army National Guard.

A native Nevadan, Nielsen has recorded 26 years of military service was a longtime rotary-wing aviation pilot and was most recently assigned to Company B, 1/189th Aviation. He initially entered the Army in 1994 as a Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Operations specialist. After completing his bachelor’s degree at Northwestern State in Louisiana, Nielsen transferred from the Louisiana Guard to the Nevada Guard in 1999 and became a flight operations specialist with the 717th Medevac Company.

Nielsen began his warrant officer career in 2004 and for the majority of the past two decades has specialized in piloting CH-47 Chinook helicopters. He has recorded deployments to Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq and Haiti and has served in many position in the state’s Army aviation troop command, including maintenance test pilot, standardization instructor Pilot, instrument examiner and state aviation safety officer.

Nielsen resides in Carson City with his wife and two children. Nielsen is now among a very select group of warrant officers to hold the state command chief warrant officer position that now includes just Baumann and retired chief warrant officers Nancy Ramey and Dave Anderson.
Hundreds mourn untimely death of slain 17th Sustainment Brigade Soldier
By Spc. Lyka Ferry
17th Special Troops Battalion

LAS VEGAS – Family members, friends and Nevada Guard Soldiers joined en masse to mourn the untimely death of Cpl. Graciela Gomez, 22, of the 17th Sustainment Brigade, during two services on Nov. 6. A memorial service at The Crossing Church proceeded her military funeral honors ceremony at Davis Funeral Home.

Gomez was shot and killed on October 31 while attending a house party in east Las Vegas. Police said she was a random victim in the shooting and not a specific target.

Gomez was a full-time student initially interested in a career in cyber security. After taking a special needs education class last semester, though, her goals changed, said her family. After taking the education class, she said she wanted to help children, regardless whether as a counselor, therapist, teacher or advisor. She was determined help kids in any way possible.

In the past year, Gomez had also spent several months on orders supporting the Nevada Army Guard’s support of the state’s COVID-19 health response mission.

In her spare time, Gomez was constantly surrounded by her family and friends. She loved playing with her dogs and trying new restaurants. She was notorious for spoiling her family and friends with gifts.

“My heart is broken, but the beautiful memories I have will help me survive,” said Maylet Rigual-Barrientos on behalf of Gomez’s mother, who was too grief-stricken to comment. “Graciela knew the importance of family. She worked hard, giving her little time to enjoy her youth.”

Nevada Army Guard Chaplain Maj. Troy Dandrea delivered the invocation at the memorial. It was followed by a slideshow of Gomez’s life and then family and friends spoke about the tremendous achievements Gomez realized before her unconscionable death. The slideshow showcased Gomez’s joy for life, full of captured moments of her displaying her love for her family, friends and military service.

“Grace gave love that could move mountains. She knew how to make your day brighter – with endless love, laughter, and adventure,” said Donna Guillen-Montejo, her friend of 12 years. “Grace was selfless and I aspire to be like her. She may not be under the same sky, but she remains everywhere with us.”

The final speaker at the memorial was Land Component Commander Brig. Gen. Troy Armstrong, who elaborated on Gomez’s courage and honor.

“Graciela placed her life on pause and put on her uniform and stood shoulder-to-shoulder with first-responders to fight COVID-19,” Armstrong said. “She was one of the first to raise her hand (to volunteer for the coronavirus mission) and continued to support her unit’s wartime missions.

“She was known for her smile and enthusiasm and loved her uniform.”

During the memorial, Gomez received a posthumous promotion from specialist to corporal. She also received the Army Achievement Medal and the Army Commendation Medal.

Following the memorial message and benediction, Nevada Guard Soldiers saluted her casket as it was loaded into a hearse and escorted to the Davis Funeral Home by the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department.

At Davis Funeral Home, Soldiers filed in line to present their respects for their fallen comrade one last time.

Editor’s note: The assailants who shot Gomez have not been arrested. Those with information on the incident are encouraged to call Las Vegas Metro’s Crime Stoppers Tip Line at (702) 385-5555.
NEVADA GUARD’S SUPPORT IN AFGHANISTAN
CONTINUED FOR NEARLY TWO DECADES

2/238th Aviation
Soldiers were
among first in,
last out of
Afghanistan

Staff Reports

CARSON CITY – The Nevada National Guard’s presence in Afghanistan closely paralleled the U.S. military’s involvement in the country’s longest-running war that finally concluded in August after nearly 20 years.

More than 1,250 Nevada Army Guard Soldiers served in Afghanistan on 19 separate unit activations between 2003-2021, according to statistics from the Nevada Army Guard’s plans and operations section.

Two Nevada Army Guard Soldiers, Chief Warrant Officer 4 John Flynn and Sgt. Patrick Steward, never returned to the Silver State and died in Afghanistan when their CH-47 Chinook helicopter “Mustang 22” was shot down in southern Zabul in 2005. Twenty-two Nevada Army Guard Soldiers received Purple Heart medals for injuries associated with Operation Enduring Freedom, the official name of military operations in Afghanistan through 2014.

Additionally, more than 700 Nevada Air Guardsmen deployed for a variety of missions over the course of the past two decades. These assignments weren’t always by unit, but more by individual personnel, bringing the total of Nevada Army and Air Guardsmen who deployed to Afghanistan to about 1,900.

The first Nevada Army Guard unit tasked for duty in Afghanistan, 2/238th Aviation, was also the last unit out of Afghanistan, likely due to the unit’s invaluable ability to perform medical evacuation missions on the battlefield aboard its UH-60L Black Hawk helicopters. The unit’s nomenclature was 126th Medical Company, Detachment 1 when it became the first Nevada Army Guard unit with seven Soldiers’ stepping foot in Afghanistan in January 2003. The 126th completed its mission and was back home by Sept. 2003.

The 2/238th was ultimately the last Nevada Army Guard unit to leave Afghanistan. The majority of 2/238th Soldiers were home by last autumn from their 60-Soldier deployment that began in April 2020, but five of the unit’s Soldiers remained in the country through January. The entire deployment was completed in the midst of the constraints of the global pandemic and the unit recorded 1,811 flights and completed 77 medical evacuations during its latest deployment. Four of the state’s 19 unit deployments to Afghanistan were made by the 238th.

The Nevada Army Guard’s second deployment to Afghanistan also proved to be its most tragic. On January 2, 2005, about 125 Soldiers from Company D, 113th Aviation mobilized in Reno and deployed to Afghanistan ready to provide personnel and cargo transports aboard its CH-47 Chinook helicopters.

Nine months into their deployment on Sept. 25, 2005, Flynn, Stewart, Oregon Guardsmen Warrant Officer Adrian Stump 3 and Sgt. Tane Baum and active duty Sgt. Kenneth Ross of Arizona were killed when they were shot down by a Taliban-fired rocket-propelled grenade.

A memorial to the five Soldiers killed aboard Mustang 22 remains on permanent display at the Army Aviation Support Facility, 20,000 Army Aviation Drive in Reno. They remained the only Nevada Guard casualties—both Army and Air—the organization suffered in Afghanistan. Also in 2005, Nevada Specialist Anthony Cometa, a Humvee gunner, was killed in Iraq.

The largest unit deployment began in April 2009 when 631 Soldiers in 1st Squadron, 221st Cavalry mobilized to provide security platoons to 12 provincial reconstruction teams across Afghanistan.

They returned intact in May 2010 with no combat deaths despite incurring more than 20 serious injuries.

Only one Nevada Army Guard unit, Delta Company, 1-221st Cavalry, in Kuwait is now deployed abroad.
In midst of holidays, Airmen deploy to AFRICOM

By Airman 1st Class Thomas Cox
152nd Airlift Wing

RENO – Regardless the time of year, duty calls. For several dozen Nevada Guard Airmen, that meant spending the December holiday season away from family and friends supporting an international deployment to the U.S. Africa Command Area of Responsibility. The Airmen left Reno and began their deployment on Nov. 29, a scant few days after Thanksgiving.

The dozens of Airmen, including aircrew, maintainers and logistics readiness squadron personnel are set to provide theater airlift and aerial delivery throughout AFRICOM for about four months. It’s the unit’s first Air Expeditionary Force deployment since 2018.

AFRICOM is the combatant command that oversees U.S. military operations and maintains military relations with 53 African nations.

Utilizing C-130 Hercules aircraft, the Airmen will provide theater airlift and aerial delivery of personnel, equipment, vehicles, or any other palletized cargo throughout AFRICOM.

“I am proud of and inspired by all the Nevada Airmen deployed overseas this holiday season,” said Col. Jeremy Ford, 152nd Airlift Wing commander. “With the challenges thrown at us over the last few years including the COVID-19 pandemic and two consecutive record-setting wildfire firefighting seasons, this is just another example of the dedication of these Airmen and the necessity of the Air National Guard.”

The early morning departure scene included no shortage of hugs, kisses and tears as the Airmen said their last goodbyes before departure.

Fred Barton, the Airman and Family Programs manager, hosted a farewell event for families, friends and loved ones at the base before the departing Airmen boarded their outbound flight.

“The safety, support and well-being of our deploying Airmen and their families is our main priority,” Ford said.

Ford said the preparation for the deployment was challenging.

“Although we constantly train to maintain a high level of readiness to meet all state- and federal-mission requirements, additional efforts were necessary to ensure this international deployment kicked off without any issues,” Ford said. “The efforts required support from our entire wing and also from family and loved ones of our Airmen: It was truly a team effort.”

This deployment will be the first for more than 50 percent of the maintainers who will ensure the aircraft stay mission ready in the upcoming months.

“I am confident this force of ready, professional Airmen will carry out the mission and exceed all expectations,” Ford said. “Everyone wishes them all a safe and successful deployment and we can’t wait to see them all return home.”

(Firefight, from page 12)

The C-130s flew out of McClellan Air Tanker Reload Base in Sacramento and a tanker base in Redding, Calif. From there, they assisted federal and private firefighting assets around the region as they were needed.

“The MAFFS mission is unique in that we work with civilian agencies to do a domestic mission at home,” said Lt. Col. Todd Hudson, a mission commander for the 152nd Airlift Wing MAFFS crew. “Normally, when we’re deployed, we work for the Air Force. In this case, we are working with the U.S. Forest Service and CAL Fire.

“We’re working directly with firefighters on the ground and in the air above making a difference protecting areas right here in our own region.”

Hudson said he appreciated the instant gratification associated with a MAFFS mission.

“I have been on deployments all over the world to several continents. We know we have worked hard and made a difference, but it’s often hard to see the tangible difference immediately – it might not come for 5 years,” Hudson said. “In the case of a MAFFS mission, when we go and build a line of protective retardant around a house and the next day when we return and see that house is still there, then we know we made a difference that day.”

Tech Sgt. Michael Goldsworthy of the 152nd Maintenance Squadron said the MAFFS mission simultaneously grueling, intense and rewarding.

“The biggest challenge is the long days – we had quite a few 16-hour days,” said Tech. Sgt. Michael Goldsworthy of the 152nd Maintenance Squadron. “We don’t really have any days off, fires don’t really take days off. By the time we’re fixing planes usually the sun’s going down.”

“The mission is quite fulfilling though. I’ve deployed and supported a ton of training missions. With the MAFFS mission, you come out and feel like you’re actually making a difference in people’s lives – fighting wildfires and saving houses makes you feel good.”

As the 2021 wildland fire season wound down in October, the NIFC said 46,925 fires had charred 6,423,804 across the country, making it one of the worst fire seasons in history.

Photo by Airman First Class Thomas Cox

Nevada Guard Airmen board an Omni Air International Boeing 777 in Reno in late November to begin their international deployment to support operations within the U.S. Africa Command Area of Responsibility for four months. The Airmen will provide theater airlift and aerial delivery of personnel, supplies, vehicles or other palletized cargo.
1st year of Speakers Series concludes

Innovative series set to continue throughout 2022

By Staff Sgt. Walter H. Lowell
Joint Force Headquarters


Broadcast live on Facebook for those not able to attend in person, Spaulding initiated the series to provide a diverse spectrum of Department of Defense leaders a platform to share their opinions on myriad subjects including force development, respect, inclusion, character building, and even geopolitics.

“We have gaps that professional military education does not always cover,” Spaulding said. “Events like these can bridge those gaps.”

Other speakers during the initial year of the series included: retired Command Sgt. Maj. John Troxell, the former senior enlisted advisor to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Command Chief Master Sgt. Tony Whitehead, the senior enlisted advisor to the chief, National Guard Bureau; and retired Command Sgt. Maj. Teresa Duncan, the director of Military Programs for Cornell University, External Education.

Spaulding said he believes a culture change is ongoing in the military and the Nevada Guard must find innovative ways to broadcast information, opinions and ideas from the higher echelons of the organization to junior-ranking service members efficiently while meeting the challenges faced by a part-time reserve force. Hence, the need for the leadership series.

He said the Facebook platform worked well because it allowed leaders to speak directly to traditional and full-time Soldiers and Airmen. After asking for recommendations, he decided the series would be held on the Friday morning before scheduled Nevada Guard drill weekends because that time slot provided traditional Guardsmen an entire day to watch the program before drill commenced and full-time employees an opportunity to watch while on duty before drill.

As in any healthy conversation, Spaulding said information and ideas should flow back-and-forth between participants. To that end, every appearance in the series concluded with a question-and-answer session. He said young Soldiers and Airmen often pose the most challenging questions.

“I want to hear input from the company grade officers and junior enlisted leaders,” he said. “What do they want to know more about? What are the gaps they see at their level? What do they want to see change in the organization?”

Spaulding said even simple military phrases and notions could spur deep discussions.

“We say ‘Mission First, People Always,’” Spaulding said, quoting the familiar Army motto. “What does that mean?

“These are the kinds of conversations we are trying to facilitate.”

Spaulding said innovation, agility and critical thinking will be crucial in the Nevada Guard’s future — the Nevada Guard can’t keep doing things a certain way just because that process may have worked in the past.

“We have to get out of the mentality of ‘That’s the way it has always been done, and that’s the way we are always going to do it,’” Spaulding said. “That’s the easy button.”

“Innovation and initiative is what’s going to carry us into the future.”

Check the Nevada Guard’s social media platforms for the 2022 Leadership Series Speakers schedule.
LAS VEGAS – Troy Armstrong, the Nevada Army Guard’s land component commander, attained the rank of brigadier general in September. Along with Brig. Gen. Michael Hanifan, Armstrong is now one of two general officers in the Nevada Army Guard.

Armstrong succeeded Brig. Gen. Zachary Doser as the land component commander of the Nevada Army Guard in November 2020. In his position, he commands and oversees the more than 3,300 Soldiers in the Nevada Army Guard.

As a commissioned officer, Armstrong has served in every command position from platoon leader through brigade command. In 2018, following his assignment to Joint Forces Headquarters and his completion of Senior Services College, Armstrong assumed command of the 17th Sustainment Brigade and remained in that position for two years before becoming the land component commander.

Nevada Guard refines Purple Resolve curriculum

RENO – The Nevada National Guard made major strides this past autumn to become the first National Guard state in the nation to develop and implement its organic Purple Resolve curriculum.

Nevada Guard Soldiers and Airmen met at the Washoe County Armory last summer to develop trainers for the program. An introductory and trainer course was then held in Las Vegas in November. The program’s next step will aim to build the program under J9 directorate oversight. That directorate will oversee the Nevada Guard’s resource and resiliency programs with trainers disseminating the program to the force.

The course, titled “Purple Resolve: The Heart and Mind of the Warrior,” is a military adaptation of Blue Courage, a program aimed at enhancing leadership and learning strategies for law enforcement agencies.

2 Air Guard Majs. selected to attend prestigious courses

RENO – Nevada Air Guard Majs. Christopher LeRoy and Reed Kobernik were two of 87 officers from the entire Air National Guard selected to attend prestigious resident professional military education programs during the 2022-2023 academic year.

LeRoy, a Nevada native and current Director of Operations of the 152nd Intelligence Squadron, was selected to attend the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

The college educates, trains and develops leaders for unified land operations in a joint, interagency, intergovernmental and multinational operational environment.

Kobernik, a C-130 pilot with the 192nd Airlift Squadron and current Congressional Liaison at the Pentagon, was accepted into the Air Force Legislative Fellowship program in Washington, D.C.

The Air Force Legislative Fellows program provides qualified officers, enlisted and civilians possessing proven leadership potential with in-depth exposure to the processes, procedures, and culture of the United States Congress.

Women’s Leadership Forum convenes in Las Vegas

The first Nevada National Guard Women’s Leadership Forum took place in Las Vegas in December. The forum united Nevada Guard Soldiers, Airmen and civilian employees for discussions on potential future improvements in the organization. Nevada Guard leaders shared personal stories of courage, growth, and change.

Col. David Clark receives award named after father

RENO – Meritorious service in the Nevada Guard runs in the Clark family. In December, Col. David Clark was awarded the Drennan A. Clark Order of Nevada ribbon for more than 25 years of meritorious service to the Nevada Guard. The award was initially established to recognize and honor the service of his father, retired Maj. Gen. Drennan Clark, who was the Adjutant General from 1986-2001.

Drennan Clark spent more than 40 years in the National Guard and was the first recipient of his namesake award. The senior Clark was on hand to present the award to his son.

The junior Clark is the special projects officer for the Nevada National Guard State Headquarters. He joined the Nevada Air Guard in 1992 and recorded a stint as the 152nd Maintenance Group. In his civilian occupation, he is a teacher at Sparks Middle School.

Drennan Clark joined the Nevada Air Guard in 1960 and recorded 15 years as Adjutant General – the third-longest stint as Adjutant General in Nevada Guard history.

Recipients of the award must have a minimum of 25 years of military service including at least 20 in the Nevada National Guard.

“When this award first came out, I said ‘I want to get that,’” said the junior Clark. “I knew I was 17 years away (from being eligible), but I wanted to get that award and I wanted my dad to put it over my head and give it to me.”

National Guard general also renowned educator, athlete

By Lt. Col. (Ret.) Steve Ranson
Special to Battle Born

RENO Retired Brig. Gen. Douglas Byington, the Sparks native who served as the Commander of the Army Guard for the majority of the 1980’s, died in July at age 88 after a lengthy illness. His military career spanned more than three decades from his initial deployment to South Korea in the 1950s as an enlisted Soldier through 1988 when he retired from the Nevada Army Guard as a general officer.

During his stint as commander, Byington ensured the Nevada Army Guard was ready for any mission. He was also a longtime administrator for the Washoe County School District who prepared thousands of students for their secondary education and the workforce.

Byington and his twin brother, Dallas, who grew up in Sparks during the Great Depression and into the 1940s when World War II raged across Europe and the Pacific. After Doug graduated from Sparks High School in 1950, he joined the U.S. Navy Reserve in Reno, completed his basic training in San Diego, and remained a reservist until he graduated from the University of Nevada, Reno, four years later. While at UNR, he was undefeated while representing the Pack in intercollegiate boxing.

UNEXPECTED DRAFT NOTICE

In 1954, Byington received a notice in the mail that surprised him. He was being drafted.

“I told them I was already in the Naval Reserve,” Byington recalled in a 2005 interview.

His plea to stay home in the Naval Reserve fell on deaf ears.

Byington learned that only the Nevada National Guard’s adjutant general had the authority to excuse males from the draft. The only males usually excused were actively-drilling Guardsmen.

Byington completed his basic training at Ford Ord, Calif. Once basic training ended, Byington headed for the big Red One—the 1st Infantry division at Fort Riley, Kansas in 1955.

Shortly after arriving in the Midwest, his division departed for 11 months in South Korea. He was assigned to the 24th Medical Battalion, two miles south of the demilitarized zone where the wounded were treated.

While with the battalion, Byington taught some classes and wrote lesson plans. He also became a bookkeeper for the officers’ club. Back home 9,000 miles away from South Korea, Byington’s wife Nancy was teaching elementary school in Sparks.

PASSION FOR THE MILITARY

When Byington finally returned to Nevada, he still wanted to serve his country.

“I came home and joined the Nevada National Guard,” he said in 2005. “I was in the first Officer Candidate School class in the state of Nevada. There were eight of us.”

Byington received his commission as a lieutenant in 1958 and remained with the Nevada Army National Guard for 30 years before retiring on June 30, 1988.

Once he completed OCS, Byington attended a 12-week office basic course at Fort Bliss, Texas, the U.S. Army Air Defense Center. On the civilian side, Byington kept busy by completing his student teaching and then studying for a master’s degree in education and eventually a doctorate.

Longtime friend and fellow Guard officer, Dave McNinch, said he first met Byington when they were both assigned to the 221st Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion.

“I first met and associated with Doug in 1961 at Camp Irwin (California),” McNinch said. “He was a platoon leader and I was a specialist. Later on, I had the privilege of working with him as we both progressed through the ranks until his final retirement.”

With Byington’s retirement in 1988, McNinch became the assistant adjutant general, but the two men remained close friends. McNinch said they attended Association of the U.S. Army meetings and retirements and Byington was always available for leadership discussions.

Glenna Smith, the public affairs officer for the VA Sierra Nevada Health Care System in Reno, regularly saw Byington at monthly AUSA dinners in recent years before the general’s health began to decline.

“He was so much fun,” she said. “We’d sit next to each other, giggle and laugh all the time.

“He loved the military. He loved being with others who served.”
Retired Maj. Gen. eulogized, remembered for superlative career

By 1st Lt. Emerson Marcus
Joint Force Headquarters

LAS VEGAS—Retired U.S. Sen. Harry Reid, the former Senate Majority Leader, was the first to speak at Maj. Gen. Robert Herbert’s memorial service in early October. He began his eulogy with a baseball analogy as he addressed the more than 200 people assembled at the Nevada Guard’s Las Vegas Readiness Center a scant few days after the retired general died in an automobile accident.

“In baseball, you have people who play third base, second base, first base, shortstop or the outfield…Robert Herbert could play any position,” Reid said.

The Army aviator turned longtime senior policy advisor for Reid and eventual major general in the Nevada Army Guard died Sept. 24 at the age of 64. He was the last Nevada Guard Soldier to attain the rank of major general.

Meticulous, hardworking and beloved, Herbert was remembered with heartfelt stories during the memorial service. The memorial service included helicopter flyovers by both a CH-47 Chinook and UH-72 Lakota flyover. Herbert is set to eventually be buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

President Joe Biden wrote a letter to Herbert’s wife, Karen, that was read during the service.

“Though this grieving process never truly ends, I promise you the day will come when the memory of Bob will bring a smile to your lips before it brings tears to your eyes,” the letter read. “My prayer for you is that this day comes sooner rather than later.”

In addition to the solemn moments were some memorable stories.

Former Nevada Congressman Jon Porter reflected on Herbert’s personality when he recalled a time Herbert and friends were drinking good wine and playing — perhaps too loudly — “Free Bird” by Lynyrd Skynyrd.

“Nobody messes with Free Bird,” Porter remembered Herbert saying when they were told to turn down the music.

Before the ceremony, a photo collage on display included a black and white image of Herbert as a child wearing a U.S. Army uniform. The son of an Army master sergeant, Herbert grew up at numerous Army bases around the world.

He entered the military during the height of the Cold War in 1975 in the Army’s High School to Flight School program. By the age of 19, Herbert was a warrant officer and helicopter pilot patrolling the East Germany-West Germany border. He later joined the Nevada Army National Guard. From 1982-1989, Herbert worked as a test pilot and eventually became the state’s aviation officer.

In the early 1990s, Herbert worked as a liaison for then-adjutant general Maj. Gen. Tony Clark, successfully lobbying to replace Nevada’s antiquated Huey and Skycrane airframes for more-modern Black Hawk and Chinook helicopters. Reid took notice, especially on the then-Junior senator’s helicopter flights over Nevada with Herbert at the helm.

During the two decades Herbert worked on Reid’s staff, more than $200 million in infrastructure and equipment funding was allocated to the Nevada Guard. Every Nevada Guard installation in the state was either built, replaced or refurbished during the 20-year period Herbert worked as a Reid staffer. He was also an expert in transportation policy around the nation. Reid said his hard work and dedication “helped transform Nevada and the country.”

While his primary residence was in Washington, D.C., Herbert would often travel back to Nevada for his drill weekends. Some of his more visible positions included stints as the deputy commander of the Nevada Army Guard from 2006-2013 and the assistant adjutant general for the Army from 2013-2015. He began his role as national security policy advisor for retired Gen. Frank Grass, the prior Chief of the National Guard Bureau, in 2015.

After military service, Herbert served as senior vice president for Porter Group, a political consulting firm headed by Porter.

Herbert enjoyed a recent honor last March when City of Yerington officials named the building housing the city hall and council chambers the Robert T. Herbert Administrative Building. Herbert died Sept. 24 in an automobile accident.
**AWARDS**

**Moving Up and Moving On** • March through July 2021

Due to space limitations, the awards section does not include Army and Air Force achievement medals.

For a list of the awards, visit the Nevada Guard’s state web page at [https://nvng.nv.gov/](https://nvng.nv.gov/)

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**Legion of Merit**

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**Meritorious Service Medal**

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**Army Commendation Medal**

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**Promotions**

**COL/Col**

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<td>Cristopher Maccario</td>
<td>150th Maint Co</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theresa Faust</td>
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<td>Jaime Flores</td>
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<td>Adam Patterson</td>
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<td>James Brooks</td>
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<td>Anthony Gomez</td>
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<td>Marcelo Vargasgerra</td>
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<td>Christopher Bushey</td>
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<td>Nicholas Coatham</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jacob Roseberhe</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bobby Perody</td>
<td>DET 45 OPER SPT AIRLIFT (OSA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Natalia Dailey</td>
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<tr>
<td>Donald Gibbs</td>
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<td>Christina Holm</td>
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<td>John Cooley</td>
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<td>William Mariona</td>
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<td>Jeremy Dittbner</td>
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<td>Erick Gondorf</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stephen Kauczuk</td>
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**SRG/SSG**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michael Javana</td>
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<td>Kevin Dillon</td>
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<td>Learena Drake</td>
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<td>William Hayes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nicole Islens</td>
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<td>Thomas Knickmeyer</td>
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<td>Gabriela Portilochamul</td>
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**CWS**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joel Oscarson</td>
<td>3/140th Aviation Det</td>
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<tr>
<td>Darius Stewart</td>
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**CSM/SGM/CSMSG**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Javier Sosa</td>
<td>152nd Airlift Wing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Selenia Tatum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chadwick Jennings</td>
<td>152nd Civil Eng. Sqld</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nicole Hanselman</td>
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<td>Kylea Sherman</td>
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<tr>
<td>Michael Wilcokson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joseph Isabella</td>
<td>152nd Logistics Readiness Sqld</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heather Renard</td>
<td>152nd Maint Ops Flight</td>
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<td>Dion Richardson</td>
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<td>Jessica Stewart</td>
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<td>Brandy Vaughn</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elliott Canaday</td>
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<td>Maria Moreoso</td>
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<td>Luis Quiroga</td>
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<td>Katelyn Floyd</td>
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<td>Brian Santor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Benjamin Hopper</td>
<td>3665th Ordnance Co (EOD)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Samuel Boyd</td>
<td>421st RTI</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clark Olsen JR</td>
<td>Air Guard HQ</td>
<td>1LT</td>
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Includes: New enlistments, transfers from other states/active duty and newly commissioned officers.

PV1 Peter Cymus ..............................................1/189th Aviation Co
PV1 Octavio Filsinger ........................................1/189th Aviation Co
WO1 Julio Guzmanbonilla ......................................1/189th Aviation Co
PV2 Yarem Hau Tham ........................................1/189th Aviation Co
PV2 Keagan Liblin ............................................1/189th Aviation Co
PV1 Lorenzo Montolongo Payan ..............................1/189th Aviation Co
PV1 Elliot Punchios ............................................1/189th Aviation Co
PV1 Liliana Rodarte ...........................................1/189th Aviation Co
FPC Hunter Stack ..............................................1/189th Aviation Co
WO1 Nicolas Stevens ..........................................1/189th Aviation Co
PV1 Joel Douthit ................................................1/189th Aviation Co
PV1 Inez Carranza-Gallardo .................................100th Quartermaster Co
PV2 Esmeralda Cordero ......................................100th Quartermaster Co
SPC Katrina Faulkner ........................................100th Quartermaster Co
PV1 Natacha Bunting ..........................................100th Quartermaster Co
FPC Shakiya Pope-Dorsey ..................................100th Quartermaster Co
PV1 Ava Marie Troller .......................................100th Quartermaster Co
2LT Joseph Waldman .........................................100th Quartermaster Co
PV2 Jude Stover ................................................10th PAD
PV1 Jesus Aguiular .............................................1/221st Cav A Troop
FPC Anthony Alvarez .........................................1/221st Cav A Troop
PV2 Rey Calata ..................................................1/221st Cav A Troop
PV1 Vincent Chen .............................................1/221st Cav A Troop
FPC Durrian Clark-Young ..................................1/221st Cav A Troop
PV1 Phan Nguyen .............................................1/221st Cav A Troop
2LT Joseph Stellitello .........................................1/221st Cav A Troop
FPC Brittany Calderon Santos ................................1/221st Cav B Troop
PV1 Andrew Calingo ...........................................1/221st Cav B Troop
PV1 Kirk Horn ...................................................1/221st Cav B Troop
2LT Courtney McKimmey ....................................1/221st Cav B Troop
FPC Isaac Israel ................................................1/221st Cav C Troop
2LT John Todaro ...............................................1/221st Cav C Troop
Q1 T Kyle Efferman .............................................1/221st Cav C Troop
FPC Kevin Clark ................................................1/221st Cav C Troop
PV1 C3 Enriquez .................................................1/221st Cav HHT
PV1 Sofia Flores Beltran ......................................1/221st Cav HHT
PV1 Zarra Johnson .............................................1/221st Cav HHT
FPC Rowan Moza ..............................................1/221st Cav HHT
SPC Kevin Nance ..............................................1/221st Cav HHT
PV1 Dwayne Scott .............................................1/221st Cav HHT
PV1 Braylin Selvig .............................................1/221st Cav HHT
2LT Ethan Mason ...............................................1/221st Cav HHT
SFC Cristo Sepulveda Lujano ................................17th MP
PV1 Ariana Alvarado ..........................................145th Forward Support Co
FPC George Campos .........................................145th Forward Support Co
PV1 Nicolas Escalona .........................................145th Forward Support Co
PV1 Kyle Anderson ............................................145th Forward Support Co
PV1 Francisco Solano Uscanga ...............................145th Forward Support Co
PV1 Alamo Toribio Quiterio ................................145th Forward Support Co
PV2 Angel Voligia ..............................................145th Forward Support Co
PV1 Aiden Yanez ................................................145th Forward Support Co
PV1 Braylon Yepez .............................................145th Forward Support Co
SGT Andres Aguierre Olivarres ................................150th Maint Co
PV2 Xochitl Alejo ..............................................150th Maint Co
WO1 Gabriel Banales ..........................................150th Maint Co
PV1 Christian Bolinane .......................................150th Maint Co
WO1 Joshua Blair ................................................150th Maint Co
FPC Joseph Courts .............................................150th Maint Co
PV1 Matthew Dillon ..........................................150th Maint Co
PV1 Connor Hilton .............................................150th Maint Co
PV1 Brylon Yanez .............................................150th Maint Co
PV1 Logan Wallace .............................................150th Maint Co
PV1 Oddla Wilson ..............................................150th Maint Co
PV1 Anela Wood ................................................150th Maint Co
TSGT Lewis Dix ................................................152nd Airlift Wing
SMGSgt Jan Medina ..........................................152nd Airlift Wing
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