

GUARDLIFE

DECEMBER 2021



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Above: U.S. Army Soldiers with the National Guard secure an area near the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C., Jan. 20, 2021. National Guard Soldiers and Airmen from several states traveled to Washington to provide support to federal and district authorities leading up to the 59th Presidential Inauguration. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Matt Hecht)

Cover: U.S. Army Warrant Officer 1 Zachary Appleton directs the 63rd Army Band, New Jersey Army National Guard, during the 2021 New Jersey National Guard Military Review at the National Guard Training Center in Sea Girt, N.J., Oct. 17, 2021. The Military Review is a long-standing tradition that allows the governor – the commander-in-chief of the state militia – the opportunity to review the Soldiers and Airmen of the New Jersey National Guard. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Michael Schwenk)

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LEANING FORWARD

By Brig. Gen. Lisa J. Hou, D.O., The Adjutant General of New Jersey

Twenty-seven years ago, I made one of the most important decisions of my life when I raised my right hand and volunteered to serve in the New Jersey National Guard.

That decision and the experiences that followed have given me more than just the privilege to serve. I have witnessed Soldiers and Airmen accomplish the seemingly impossible: multiple overseas deployments, Superstorm Sandy, and most recently, numerous domestic deployments, including COVID-19 missions.

Solid fundamentals drive our organization’s success: good leadership, proper planning, teamwork, and an unwavering commitment to doing what is right, instead of what is easy.

We have good reason to be proud. Equally important, we owe it to the Soldiers and Airmen we lead and serve beside to lean forward and be better. Consistent with the priorities of the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, in 2022 the New Jersey National Guard will be ready, relevant, and engaged in the communities that we serve. We will focus on people, readiness, modernization, and reform.

Our first priority is to put people first. The well-being of our Soldiers, Airmen, civilian workforce, and the vulnerable populations entrusted to our care must always be at the forefront of our minds. Our priorities include the development of strong, ethical leaders, and active measures to prevent suicide, sexual harassment, and assault. We will support families and the civilian employers of National Guard personnel.

The foundation of successful service also includes respect for the families who share in the sacrifice of our Soldiers and Airmen. Our organization will continue to be family friendly. Single parents and dual military couples will have a family care plan. Leaders will also ensure that spouses, children, and family members are made to feel welcome and included.

Readiness is key to what we do. Our second priority is to build ready and resilient teams. More than any point in our history we face a complex



U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Lisa J. Hou, D.O., The Adjutant General of New Jersey, left, stands with Maj. Gen. Bajram Begaj, M.D., Chief of Defense, Republic of Albania, at the Ministry of Defence in Tirana, Albania, Sept. 24, 2021. The New Jersey National Guard staff visited Albania to celebrate their 20th anniversary together in the U.S. Department of Defense National Guard State Partnership Program. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Michael Schwenk)

and evolving security environment that requires increased reliance on the National Guard. The New Jersey National Guard must maintain readiness to deploy for contingency operations, while also remaining prepared to execute domestic civil support missions as the state’s military first responders. Each of us can do our part by maintaining and improving our individual physical fitness, medical and personal readiness, and continue to develop ourselves tactically and professionally.

Our third priority is modernization. The National Guard is the primary combat reserve of the Army and Air Force. Like our active duty counterparts, we will modernize to meet threats from peer competitors. Leaders will support the modernizations of units, equipment, and capabilities. The end state is a New Jersey National Guard that is lethal, deployable, and ready to fight to protect the United States of America.

Finally, the New Jersey National Guard will pursue organizational development and reform. Organizations that adapt and reform practices, methods and policies remain relevant and are

highly effective. We will continue our efforts to foster a climate that is inclusive, respectful, and ensures psychological and physical safety. These tenets depend on mutual trust and a firm foundation built upon openness, transparency and feedback. Leaders at all levels must foster diversity of thought and environments that are inclusive of all members. Leaders are encouraged to take acceptable risks and experiment with new ideas.

Looking forward, we cannot accomplish these priorities without working together and supporting one another. This effort starts at the top. I am and will continue to be your staunchest advocate. I ask for your support as we seek to improve our organization and prepare ourselves to meet tomorrow’s challenges.

Together, as a team, we will continue to live the Army and Air Force Core Values and the work of protecting those we have sworn to serve. It is an honor to serve with you.

FOLLOW US ON:

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AIRMEN RIDE HIGHS AND LOWS OF COVID RESPONSE

STORY AND PHOTO BY SGT. 1ST CLASS WAYNE WOOLLEY
JOINT FORCE HEADQUARTERS PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE



U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Maria Mina with the New Jersey Air National Guard's 177th Fighter Wing sorts and labels folding chairs during an operation to dismantle the field medical station set up at the Atlantic City Convention Center July 13, 2020.

For the past few months, they've been called Task Force Vineland, Task Force Edison Task Force Millstone and now, most recently, Task Force Atlantic City.

But by any name, this group of New Jersey National Guard Airmen has found itself in the center of the state's military response to COVID-19. It's been a three-month journey that's sent their emotions from the highest highs to the lowest lows and everywhere in between.

"It's been quite an experience," said Chief Master Sgt. Harry Johnson, as he stood in the cavernous Atlantic City Convention Center floor where members of his team were working on their latest mission, breaking down a 250-bed facility that was part of a temporary statewide coronavirus treatment network.

The mission for this diverse group of about two dozen Airmen from the 177th Fighter Wing began with their mobilization in May to help with patient needs at the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Veterans Memorial Home in Vineland. From there, the group, whose military occupational specialties run the gamut from logistics, to maintenance to transportation, headed to the state's Field Medical Station in Edison to break down the 500-bed temporary medical facility that handled overflow COVID-19 cases in the spring. From there, the team headed to Millstone, where they dismantled a temporary morgue - one of three the state established as the virus peaked in the spring. The temporary field hospital in Atlantic City has been the most recent stop.

For Senior Airman Julian Alicea, a communication specialist, the mission in Vineland was the most gratifying. Nearly everything the Airmen did was related to helping residents cope with the isolation created by the coronavirus. The Airmen arranged for "window visits" where they could safely get close to the family members they couldn't actually touch. Alicea said one of the best parts of his day was helping residents use their phones and tablets to make video calls to family members.

"I've been in two years and it was definitely the highlight. I felt like I was really making an impact in my community," he said. "A lot of the residents there are war heroes ... a lot of them are like family to me now."

Alicea said he still keeps in touch with several of the residents.

Tech. Sgt. Maria Mina said that while there were plenty of emotional highs for her on the mission, she won't forget the experience taking apart the temporary morgue.

"When you're involved in a mission like that, you can't help but think of all the people we lost," she said.

Still, Mina, who has deployed overseas twice in a military career that's spanned nearly 20 years, said the mission assisting her friends and neighbors has been the most gratifying and closest to why she joined the National Guard in the first place.

Her parents emigrated from Columbia to the United States in hopes of providing a better life for her family, she said.

"This is my way of thanking America for the opportunity it's given me," she said. "I feel very proud to be able to serve."

NJNG supports general election

By Sgt. 1st Class Wayne Woolley, Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs Office

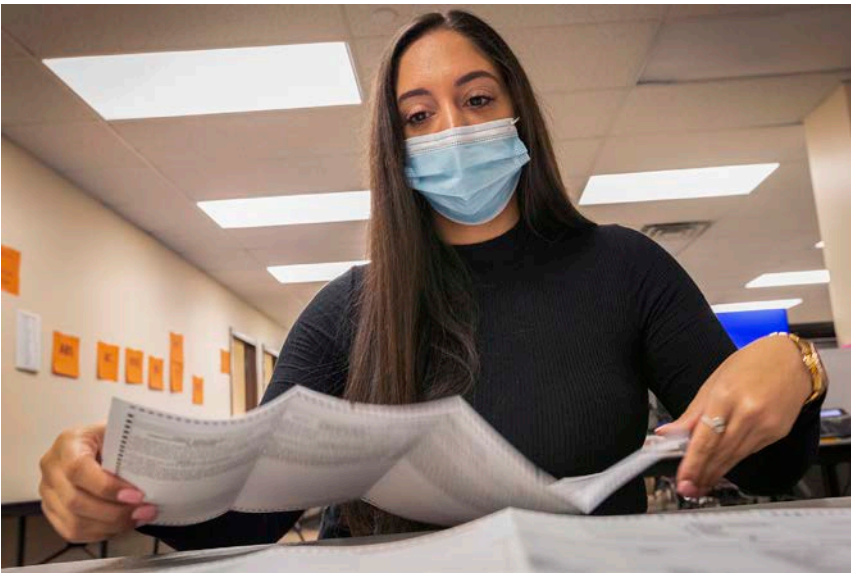
The New Jersey National Guard is ready to make Garden State election history.

Again.
After mobilizing more than 150 Airmen and Soldiers in June 2020 for its first ever mission in support of a primary election, the National Guard will support election officials for the Nov. 3, 2020, general election.

Just as during the primary, the mobilized troops will wear civilian clothes and work under the direction of county election officials to perform a range of duties on Election Day to processing ballots in the days that follow.

The Guard's election mission is an extension of its response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the outbreak began, hundreds of Airmen and Soldiers have operated testing centers, built and staffed field hospitals and assisted at senior residential care facilities – all under the direction of civil authorities. The election missions arose at the request of county election officials who were contending with shortages of poll workers due to the virus.

For the general election, a force of more than 370 will report to election officials in 19 of the state's 21 counties.



U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Destiny J. Carl, 177th Fighter Wing, New Jersey Air National Guard, processes ballots at the Board of Elections Mail-In Ballot Processing Center, Mays Landing, N.J., Nov. 3, 2020.



U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Claude Franklin, 177th Fighter Wing, alphabetizes online, motor vehicle, and hand-written voter registration forms at the Superintendent of Elections, Atlantic County, Mays Landing, N.J., Nov. 3, 2020.



U.S. Army Pfc. Juan I. Guzman, 1-114th Infantry Regiment, New Jersey Army National Guard, alphabetizes online, motor vehicle, and hand-written voter registration forms at the Superintendent of Elections, Atlantic County, Mays Landing, N.J., Nov. 3, 2020. (New Jersey National Guard photos by Mark C. Olsen)



“Our republic is built on the principles of democracy, peace, and the right of the American people to freely choose their leaders. The brave men and women of our National Guard will be deployed in order to preserve these sacred principles.”

GOV. PHIL MURPHY



NJ National Guard deploys to DC

By Master Sgt. Matt Hecht, Joint Force Headquarters-Air Public Affairs Office

At the request of the U.S. National Guard Bureau, and authorized by New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy, 500 New Jersey Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen deployed to Washington, D.C. Jan. 7, 2021.

The mission was to support the D.C. National Guard and local law enforcement, providing security, protection of national monuments, and ensuring the peaceful transfer of power.

“Our republic is built on the principles of democracy, peace, and the right of the American people to freely choose their leaders,” said Gov. Murphy. “The brave men and women of our National Guard will be deployed in order to preserve these sacred principles.”

Soldiers from the 1-114th Infantry Regiment, B Troop from the 102nd Cavalry Regiment, and the 508th Military Company,

as well as Airmen from the 108th Wing and 177th Fighter Wing deployed in support of the security mission.

The New Jersey Guard previously supported the D.C. National Guard during civil unrest during the summer in May 2020.

New Jersey National Guard Soldiers and Airmen have been supporting New Jersey's citizens since March, 2020, manning COVID-19 test sites, setting up field medical stations, and supporting long-term care facilities.



U.S. Air Force Airmen with the 177th Fighter Wing, New Jersey Air National Guard, load equipment and supplies onto a bus at the Atlantic City Air National Guard Base, N.J., Jan. 8, 2021. Prior to deploying, New Jersey Soldiers and Airmen inprocessed at the New Jersey National Guard Training Center in Sea Girt, N.J. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Col. Aaron M. Dunn)

Above: A U.S. Army Soldier with Charlie Company, 1-114th Infantry Regiment, New Jersey Army National Guard, packs his bag at the National Guard Armory at Blackwood, N.J., Jan. 9, 2021. The Soldiers are part of nearly 500 New Jersey Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen deploying to Washington, D.C. (New Jersey National Guard photo by Mark C. Olsen)
Opposite page: U.S. Army Soldiers with the 508th Military Police Company, New Jersey Army National Guard, on board a charter bus to Washington, D.C. The mission is to support the District of Columbia National Guard and local law enforcement, providing security, protection of national monuments, and ensuring the peaceful transfer of power. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Mark Williams)

Guarding the Capitol





National Guard in DC for inaugural support

By National Guard Bureau

National Guard troops from all 50 states, three territories and the District of Columbia are supporting law enforcement in the nation's capital for the presidential inauguration.

More than 25,000 National Guard men and women were on the ground in Washington, authorized to conduct security, communication and logistical missions in support of federal and D.C. authorities.

"I have visited with these Guard men and women every night, and they understand the importance of this mission," said Army Gen. Dan Hokanson, chief of the

National Guard Bureau. "They are also proven, prepared, and proud to do their part to ensure a peaceful and safe inauguration of our 46th commander-in-chief."

The U.S. Secret Service, U.S. Park Service, and U.S.

Capitol Police requested National Guard support.

The Secret Service is the lead federal agency coordinating security for the inauguration.

"The National Guard has a long and proud

history of inauguration support," Hokanson said. "The forefathers of today's National Guard were present for the inauguration of George Washington, and we have been part of every inauguration since."

Outside D.C., 6,565 members of the National Guard were also protecting state capitals around the country.

At the same time, more than 22,000 Guard members were helping states respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, assisting with vaccinations, testing, food bank support and other missions.

Photo above: U.S. Air Force Capt. Reilly Nuckel, center, with the 108th Wing, New Jersey National Guard, directs New Jersey and New York National Guard Airmen to a security post near the Capitol in Washington, D.C., Jan. 12, 2021. National Guard Soldiers and Airmen from several states have traveled to Washington to provide support to federal and district authorities leading up to the 59th Presidential Inauguration. Previous page photo: New Jersey National Guard Soldiers and Airmen from 1st Battalion, 114th Infantry Regiment, 508th Military Police Company, 108th Wing, and 177th Fighter Wing stand in formation near the Capitol prior to setting up security positions in Washington, D.C., Jan. 12, 2021. (U.S. Air National Guard photos by Master Sgt. Matt Hecht)



Above: New Jersey National Guard Soldiers with Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 114th Infantry Regiment work at a security post near the Capitol in Washington, D.C., Jan. 13, 2021.

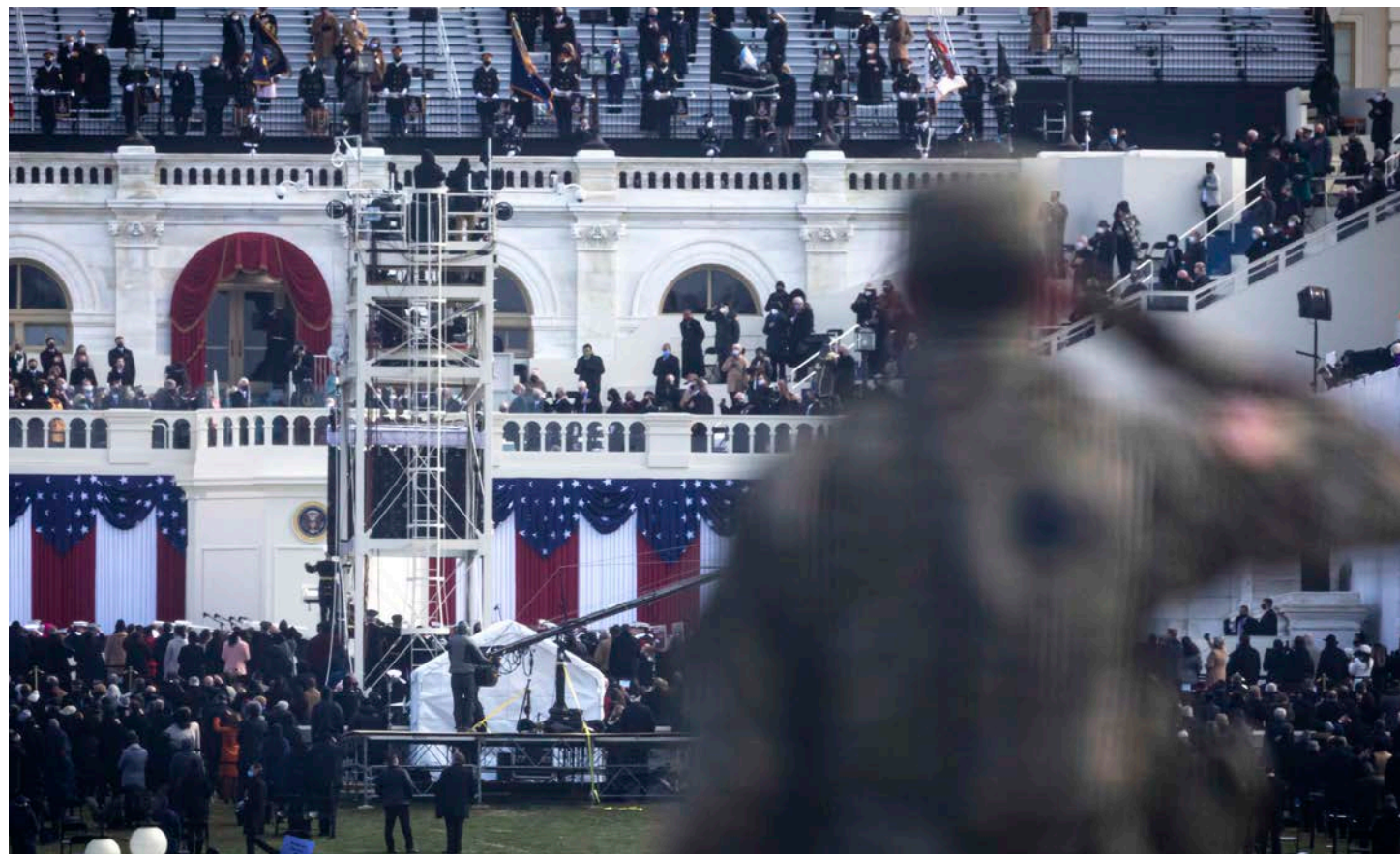
Below: New Jersey National Guard Soldiers with the take the oath of office to serve with Capitol Police in the Visitor Center at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C., Jan. 13, 2021. (U.S. Air National Guard photos by Master Sgt. Matt Hecht)





Above: Chief Deputy U.S. Marshal for the District of Columbia Lamont Ruffin swears in nearly 2,000 National Guard Soldiers and Airmen to be deputized in Washington, D.C., Jan. 17, 2021.

Below: A U.S. Soldier with the National Guard salutes during the 59th Presidential Inauguration in Washington, D.C., Jan. 20, 2021. (U.S. Air National Guard photos by Master Sgt. Matt Hecht)



U.S. Army Col. Robert M. Martinez, center, commander, and Command Sgt. Maj. John R. Hicks, right, senior noncommissioned officer, both with the 42nd Regional Support Group, New Jersey Army National Guard, case the unit colors as Spc. Michael Puccio

holds the guidon at a Transfer of Authority ceremony in support of Operation Inherent Resolve, at Al Asad Air Base, Iraq March 3, 2021. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Maj. Brian Kruzel)

42nd relinquishes base operations

By Staff Sgt. Armando Vasquez, 42nd Regional Support Group Public Affairs

The 42nd Regional Support Group, New Jersey Army National Guard, relinquished command and responsibilities of base operating support integrator (BOS-I) operations, at a transfer of authority ceremony at Al Asad Air Base, Iraq, March 3.

The ceremony was presided by U.S. Army Lt. Gen. Paul T. Calvert, commander, Combined Joint Task Force – Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR).

After conducting relief in place operations with Soldiers from the 734th Regional Support Group, Iowa Army National Guard, the New Jersey Guardsmen relinquished base authority to the Iowa Guardsmen.

“What comes to the forefront of my mind are words like trustworthy, consistency, dependable, unfailing, steadfast,” said Calvert. “Task Force Patriot, under the leadership of the 42nd RSG has been absolutely reliable and has been a basis for the success as realized for CJTF-OIR.”

At the ceremony, the 42nd RSG’s unit colors were cased signifying the

official completion of their mission in support of Operation Inherent Resolve, and the 734th unfurled its unit colors, thus assuming base command of Al Asad Air Base, and BOS-I operations here, Erbil, Kuwait, and Baghdad.

Col. Robert M. Martinez, commander, thanked his Soldiers for their professionalism and outstanding work during the past eight months of the deployment.

“Patriots, when I think of what you accomplished on your watch, I stand in awe,” said Martinez. “You literally changed the base map for the future, and you did it with one eye on world-class customer service and the other scanning for constant internal, external and COVID threats. You have made me, your family, your state, and your Nation proud.”

In addition, Martinez thanked U.S. Air Force Col. Christopher Clark, commander, 321st Expeditionary Air Group, and the leadership of coalition partners from Germany, Norway, Poland, and Spain for their support and co-operation while working together to meet OIR’s mission to continue to deter and ultimately defeat Daesh in the Combined Joint Operating Area.

“We couldn’t be prouder to call each of you teammates, more importantly, we are proud to now call each of you friends,” said Martinez.

Other elements of 42nd RSG Soldiers also conducted transfer of authority at Camp Arifjan in Kuwait, Erbil, and Baghdad.

Airman’s persistence pays off

By Senior Airman Andrea A. S. Williamson, 108th Wing Public Affairs Office

“Remember why you’re here” is a mantra said by basic training instructors to encourage resilience among Airmen.

For Staff Sgt. Adam Chen, an avionics technician with the 108th Maintenance Squadron, those words have pushed him to take advantage of every opportunity the Air National Guard has to offer.

“Growing up, I didn’t see my parents a lot because they worked so much,” said Chen.

With both parents working, Chen said he learned to be independent to offset some of the pressures and anguish his parents already faced.

“Because of the Chinese Civil War, my mom’s family fled to Taiwan,” said Chen. “But her parents were killed in a communist genocide, so she was raised by her uncle. Later, she came to the United States for a better life. My dad’s older family were killed in World War II.”

As a result, Chen learned to rely on himself. So, when it came to going to college, he sought a way to pay for it - on his own.

While seeing the film “The Perfect Storm”, Chen learned of the Guard and was intrigued. It would allow him to pay for school, work in a field he liked, and have a civilian life.

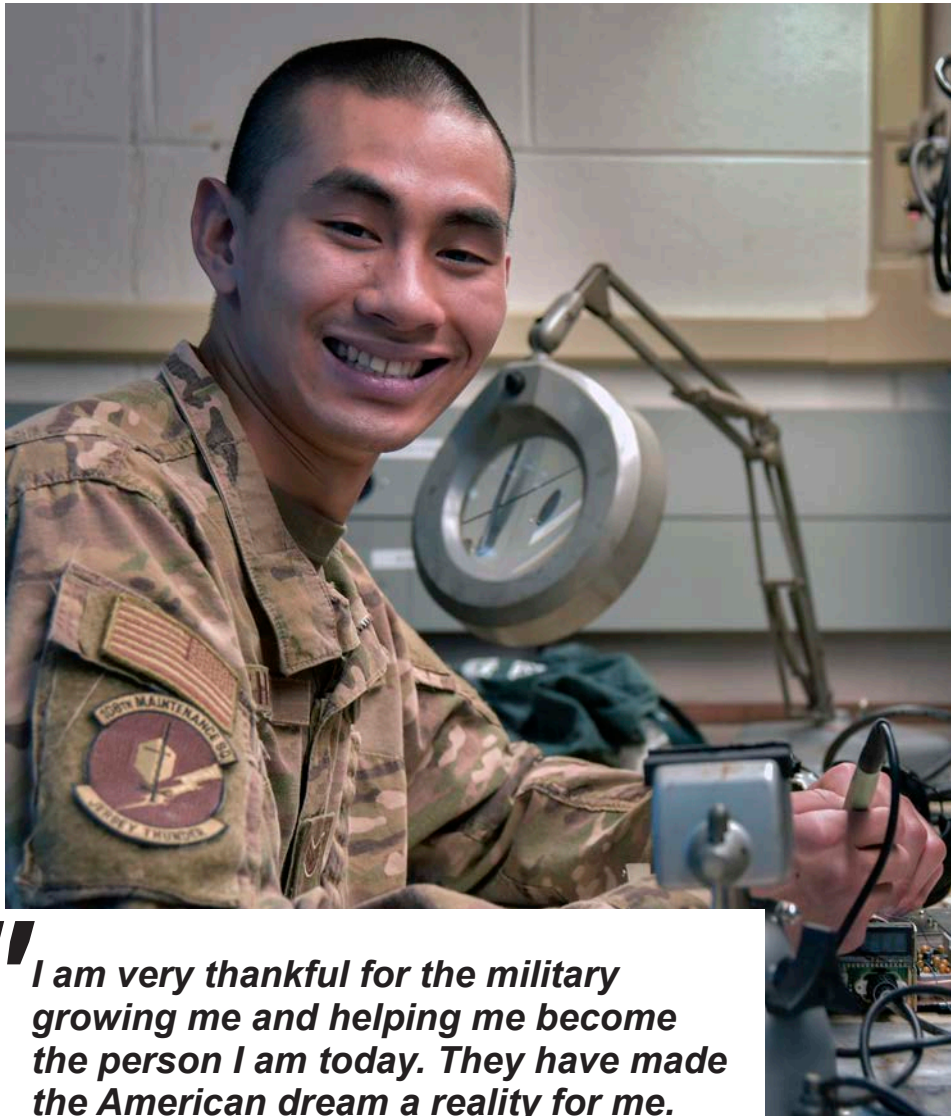
In a way, it was a “Perfect” solution, so he enlisted.

After completing basic training, technical school, and on-the-job training, he sought work in his section, beyond his monthly duties, but was unable to obtain a full-time position.

“So, I took my expertise, and put my resume out there,” said Chen. His childhood experiences, coupled with military training, set him on a path applying what he knew to any challenge.

Throughout his service, Chen’s willingness to adapt and serve, has afforded him valuable life experiences.

After successfully serving as a civilian foreign liaison to help facilitate the Korean Navy’s participation in the Rim of the Pacific Exercise, or RIMPAC, the world’s largest international maritime warfare exercise, Chen was selected for his current position at the Defense Information Systems Agency



“I am very thankful for the military growing me and helping me become the person I am today. They have made the American dream a reality for me.”

STAFF SGT. ADAM CHEN

supporting the Joint Interoperability Test Command in Fort Meade, Maryland, as a government action officer supporting NATO and Non-NATO coalition partners.

In addition, Chen has helped to provide security support to former Vice President Mike Pence for the peaceful transition of power at the 59th Presidential Inauguration. Chen currently serves as an advisory member of the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States. And he was accepted as a participant in the NATO Military Reserve Exchange Program to interchange with the Danish military.

Now 24 years old, Chen credits his parents, childhood experience and military training for the success and resilience he has today. By joining the NJANG to help pay for college, Chen said, he believes has had honored his parent’s sacrifices and now, looks forward to saving his educational benefits for his future wife and children.

“I am very thankful for the military growing me and helping me become the person I am today,” said Chen. “They have made the American dream a reality for me.”

NJ Soldiers and Airmen assist vaccine rollout

Photos by Mark C. Olsen
New Jersey National Guard Public Affairs Office



U.S. Army Pfc. Benjamin W. Reason, 44th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, New Jersey Army National Guard, talks with an individual about to receive the COVID-19 vaccine at the newly opened Bergen County COVID-19 Vaccination Mega-Site at East Rutherford, N.J., Jan. 29, 2021. The Citizen-Soldiers are assisting healthcare workers in temperature screening, inputting insurance information, guiding individuals through the various stations, and monitoring people after they received their vaccinations.



Above: U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. James W. Holdstein, 108th Wing, New Jersey Air National Guard, gives a COVID-19 vaccine to a health care worker at the COVID-19 vaccination Mega-Site at the Atlantic City Convention Center, Atlantic City, N.J., Jan. 20, 2021. Below: U.S. Army Spc. Victor Marquez, 1st

Squadron, 102nd Cavalry, New Jersey Army National Guard, performs a temperature check on an individual scheduled to receive the COVID-19 vaccine at the newly opened COVID-19 Burlington County Vaccination Mega-Site, Moorestown, N.J., Jan. 22, 2021.



Above: U.S. Army Soldiers with the 44th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, New Jersey Army National Guard, review information with an individual who received the COVID-19 vaccine at the newly opened COVID-19 vaccination Mega-Site at the New Jersey Convention and Exposition Center,

Edison, N.J., Jan. 15, 2021. Below: U.S. Air Force Capt. Tanya R. Kaminski, 108th Wing, New Jersey Air National Guard, assists an individual who received the COVID-19 vaccine at the Atlantic County vaccination Mega-Site at the Atlantic City Convention Center, Atlantic City, N.J., Jan. 26, 2021.



Soldiers recognized for life-saving actions

Story and photo by Mark C. Olsen, New Jersey National Guard Public Affairs Office

Six New Jersey Army National Guard Soldiers were recognized May 19, 2021, for saving a man’s life at the COVID-19 Burlington County vaccination Mega-Site in Moorestown, N.J.

It all began close to 7 p.m., Feb. 15. The Mega-Site had been open less than a month.

“We got a call over the radio ‘We need a medic,’” said Spc. Angel Ferreira-Fernandez, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 114th Infantry Regiment. The call continued: “A patient fell on the floor and needs assistance getting up and he needs to be assessed to make sure that he isn’t injured.”

He is part of a group of Citizen-Soldiers that are supporting the site’s healthcare workers. They assist in temperature screening, registering and guiding individuals through the various stations, and monitoring people after they have received their vaccinations, as well as assisting when there is a medical emergency.

Ferreira-Fernandez, a Newark-based emergency medical technician, along with one of the site’s paramedics grabbed emergency medical gear and raced over to the vaccination Mega-Site’s entrance.

“I asked him what’s going on, he said ‘I’m fine, I just fell and I need help getting back up,’” said Ferreira-Fernandez. “He offered me his hand and as I took his hand, I could see how his skin color was changing.”

Realizing that the man was cyanotic – low blood oxygen – Ferreira-Fernandez knew there was more going on than just an individual falling on the floor.

Both Ferreira-Fernandez and the paramedic recognized that the patient was going into cardiac arrest.

“I took his radial pulse, the paramedic took his carotid pulse, to try to asses if he has a pulse or not.”

There was no pulse. Ferreira-Fernandez began chest compressions, stopping briefly to put out a radio call for all medics to come to their location. “Within 30-seconds, Spc. (Kevin D.) Tran and Pfc. (Daniel E.) Magay were there to assist me. I have complete trust and confidence in Army medics based on the training they go through.”



Col. Lisa J. Hou D.O., left, Interim Adjutant General, and State Command Sgt. Maj. Earnest Williams, have their photo taken with New Jersey Army National Guard Soldiers left to right, Spc. Kevin D. Tran, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 114th Infantry Regiment; Staff Sgt. Manuel C. Rodriguez, Alpha Battery, 3rd Battalion, 112th Field Artillery; Staff Sgt. Matthew L. Rehl, Bravo Battery, 3rd Battalion, 112th Field Artillery; Pfc. Daniel E. Magay, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 114th Infantry Regiment; Spc. Jason M. Vaccarella, Detachment 1, Headquarters Battery, 3rd Battalion, 112th Field Artillery, and Pfc. Daniel E. Magay, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 114th Infantry Regiment, after a ceremony at the COVID-19 Burlington County vaccination Mega-Site at Moorestown, N.J., May 19, 2021.

Simultaneously, Staff Sgt. Matthew L. Rehl, Staff Sgt. Manuel C. Rodriguez, and Spc. Jason M. Vaccarella were setting up screens to provide the patient privacy, as well as handling crowd control.

Once they were able to get an endotracheal tube down his throat to enable him to breathe easier, they were able to get a pulse. “The ambulance team took him away to the hospital, we had successfully intubated him at that point and stabilized him,” said Ferreira-Fernandez.

At the ceremony, then Col. Lisa J. Hou D.O., Interim Adjutant General, presented the Army Commendation Medal to Ferreira-Fernandez, Magay, and Tran and the Army Achievement Medal to Staff Sgt. Matthew L. Rehl, Staff Sgt. Manuel C. Rodriguez, and Spc. Jason M. Vaccarella, for their exceptional achievement and heroism.

HONORING THOSE LOST



U.S. Army 2nd Lt. Celine Oh, 3rd Battalion, 112th Field Artillery, New Jersey Army National Guard, participates in the Remembrance of Those Lost during the Memorial Day ceremony at the New Jersey Veterans Memorial Home at Menlo Park, Edison, N.J., May 31, 2021. (New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs photo by Mark C. Olsen)

Guardsmen assist primary elections

By Spc. Michael Schwenk
New Jersey National Guard Public Affairs Office



Always ready, always there.

Following their success during the 2020 primary and general elections, the New Jersey National Guard fulfilled a request by the State Board of Elections for the 2021 New Jersey state primary. On June 8, 2021, more than 600 Citizen-Soldiers and Citizen-Airmen mobilized again, serving 15 counties by assisting the civilian poll workers and county staff.

Somerset County alone has 44 Guardsmen from three units providing support to 24 separate polling sites in the county.

In Basking Ridge, Capt. Gustavo Limo, commander of the 50th Financial Management Support Unit, is assisting local authorities at the Hills Recreation Center.

“The unit leaders have put an enormous amount of time into ensuring our Soldiers are trained and ready to assist in the elections,” said Limo. “We have gone through additional training led by the Somerset County Board of Elections.”

“Today I was able to observe the voting process from the other side of the voting booth,” said Staff Sgt. Armando Vasquez, a public affairs specialist with the 42nd Regional Support Group.

“Participating in this mission made me appreciate and understand better one of our most treasured civic duties: voting for a better government.”

Since returning home from his deployment to Southwest Asia from July 2020 to March 2021, this is Vasquez’s first mission assisting local authorities. “Working with the volunteers is going

great,” said Vasquez. “Most are younger and are the future voters, and it’s nice to see them participate in the voting process.”

For more than 15 months, New Jersey National Guard Soldiers and Airmen have supported local and state authorities on missions, including statewide COVID-19 field medical stations, testing sites, and vaccination sites; as well as processing mail-in ballots, responding to civil disturbance, and providing inauguration support.

“It’s been a busy year for the National Guard,” said Limo. “As packed as our involvement has been, this is why we signed up for the National Guard, to serve our county and our state.”

Opposite page: U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Jonathan T. Palacios, 108th Wing, New Jersey Air National Guard, opens a ballot at the Board of Elections Office, Mount Holly, N.J., June 8, 2021. More than 600 New Jersey National Guard members went to the polls at the request of the Boards of Elections in 15 New Jersey counties. Following the successful Guard support of the 2020 primary and general elections, Citizen-Soldiers and Citizen-Airmen mobilized again to assist civilian poll workers and county staff during the 2021 New Jersey state primary. (New Jersey National Guard photo by Mark C. Olsen)

Above: U.S. Army Capt. Gustavo Limo, left, 50th Financial Management Support Unit, and Staff Sgt. Armando Vasquez, 42nd Regional Support Group, assist at a polling booth at the Hills Recreation Center in Basking Ridge, N.J., June 8, 2021. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Michael Schwenk)

Airmen honored in Atlantic City

Story and photo by Master Sgt. Matt Hecht, Joint Force Headquarters-Air Public Affairs Office



U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Nestor Rivas, Staff Sgt. Lavone Graham, and Senior Airman Salomon Sterling, all with the New Jersey Air National Guard’s 108th Security Forces Squadron, were honored for their life-saving actions during a ceremony at the COVID-19 vaccine Mega-Site in the Atlantic City Convention Center on May 17, 2021.

For more than a year, New Jersey National Guard Soldiers and Airmen have been aiding their communities by manning COVID-19 test sites and now COVID-19 vaccination sites, processing thousands of patients a day.

On April 15, at the end of a shift, the three Airmen noticed that an individual had gained access to their area and was attempting to jump from a balcony on the second floor of the convention center - nearly a thirty foot drop.

Without hesitation, the Airmen moved into action, first trying to talk the person down.

“We were able to use the skills we learned in Security Forces,” said Rivas, who is also a corrections officer in New Jersey. “We talked to the individual, and told him he had things to live for, until we were able to get close enough

to pull him off the ledge.”

“I was just happy that we were able to save his life,” said Graham, who also credited his Security Forces training with helping the situation.

Stirling, who as a civilian is a security specialist for Gucci headquarters, was proud to make a difference.

“I was able to do what I was trained to do,” said Sterling. “To help others and to be there for my fellow Airmen.”

The Airmen were presented with citations from Atlantic City’s Mayor Marty Small Sr., and Atlantic City’s Director of Health and Human Services, Dr. Wilson Washington, Jr., as well as Army Commendation medals presented by Brig. Gen. Patrick Kennedy, Deputy Adjutant General and commander of the New Jersey Air National Guard, and Col. Robert Hughes, commander of Task Force Iron Guard.

“On behalf of the city of Atlantic City, we appreciate and commend you for preventing an attempted suicide,” said Washington. “Because of your quick thinking, someone gets a second chance at life and an opportunity to get the help they need.”

New Jersey Air National Guard

Command Chief Master Sgt. Michael Rakauckas said, “During the past 14 months, our Airmen and Soldiers have been embedded in our communities for COVID-19 response, civil unrest, and election support missions. This was just another example of the professionalism and dedication to service by our Airmen, and we couldn’t be prouder.”

Above: U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Nestor Rivas, Staff Sgt. Lavone Graham, and Senior Airman Salomon Sterling, all with the New Jersey Air National Guard’s 108th Security Forces Squadron, were honored for their life-saving actions during a ceremony at the COVID-19 vaccine Mega-Site in the Atlantic City Convention Center May 17, 2021. They are joined by New Jersey State Command Chief Master Sgt. Michael Rakauckas, left, Col. Lisa Hou, the Adjutant General of New Jersey, Brig. Gen. Wayne McCaughey, Director of the Joint Staff for the New Jersey National Guard; Col. Robert Hughes, commander of Task Force Iron Guard, and Brig. Gen. Patrick Kennedy, commander of the New Jersey Air National Guard, and Deputy Adjutant General for New Jersey. The Airmen saved the life of a suicidal citizen April 15.

Virtual reality training

Story and photos by Sgt. 1st Class Wayne Woolley, Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs Office

Crowded into a small trailer with their eyes fixed on a firefight surrounding them in virtual reality, the dozen soldiers from the Republic of Albania armed forces fought a pitched battle with simulated adversaries on a recent day.

They maneuvered vehicles and returned fire on the orders given in their native language by Albanian Capt. Egluent Rika, who was in turn translating the words of New Jersey Army National Guard Sgt. 1st Class James Harrison.

The scene in the trailer on Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst was emblematic of a military relationship between the New Jersey National Guard and Albania that began informally in 1995 and officially became part of the U.S. Department of Defense National Guard State Partnership Program 20 years ago.

During the course of the partnership, hundreds of New Jersey Soldiers and Airmen traveled to Albania to conduct training. In turn, the New Jersey National Guard hosted hundreds of Albanian military members in New Jersey. The training was considered instrumental in gaining Albania admission to NATO in 2009.



Albanian Army Capt. Egluent Rika, right, briefs members of his team before beginning a combat convoy simulation exercise at the New Jersey Observer Coach/Trainer Operations Group at Joint Base Dix-McGuire Lakehurst July 9, 2021. More than a dozen Republic of Albania soldiers trained on the New Jersey Army National Guard virtual reality combat simulator.



Albanian Army soldiers train on the virtual reality combat simulator at the New Jersey Observer Coach/Trainer Operations Group. The Albanian soldiers are training with New Jersey forces as part of a longstanding National Guard State Partnership Program, a Department of Defense program that links National Guard forces from U.S. States and territories with member nations around the world.

Other milestones followed. In 2011, a joint Albanian-New Jersey Army National Guard training team deployed to Afghanistan to train local military forces there.

The milestone that matters the most to Rika, the captain who was translating in the virtual reality simulator, came in 2014 when he was among two dozen Albanians to graduate from the New Jersey Army National Guard officer candidate school.

Rika, 30, said receiving his commission through a process widely recognized as extremely challenging gave him and his peers an advantage as they began their careers as officers in the Albanian military.

“It gave us a good jump and motivated us to keep going,” he said, adding that nearly every member of his class is still serving in the Albanian armed forces. “Everyone earned promotions and jobs with more responsibility.”

Air Guardsmen support election

Story and photos by Master Sgt. Matt Hecht
Joint Force Headquarters-Air Public Affairs Office

More than 600 New Jersey National Guard members went to the polls on June 8, 2021, at the request of the Boards of Elections in 15 New Jersey counties. Following the successful Guard support of the 2020 primary and general elections, Citizen-Soldiers and Citizen-Airmen mobilized again to assist civilian poll workers and county staff during the 2021 New Jersey state primary.

“I’m very pleased that the Governor got the National Guard to help with the election process,” said John W. Mooney, Commissioner, Atlantic County Board of Elections. “Right now they’re assisting at polling locations, helping the workers there. We need all the help we get.”

Guardsmen were spread throughout the counties, integrating directly with civilian poll workers at numerous locations.

“Voters come in, and we check them in the book and verify their signature, then assist getting them to the voting booth,” said Airman 1st Class Angel Castillo, an aircraft electrician with the 177th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, who was working out of a polling spot at the Oceanville Volunteer Fire Company in Galloway Township, N.J. “It feels awesome to give back to the community when they need me.”

Airman 1st Class Carol Martinez, a public health technician with the 177th Medical Group, was directly serving her own community. The Absecon resident was assigned to a polling site not far from her home.

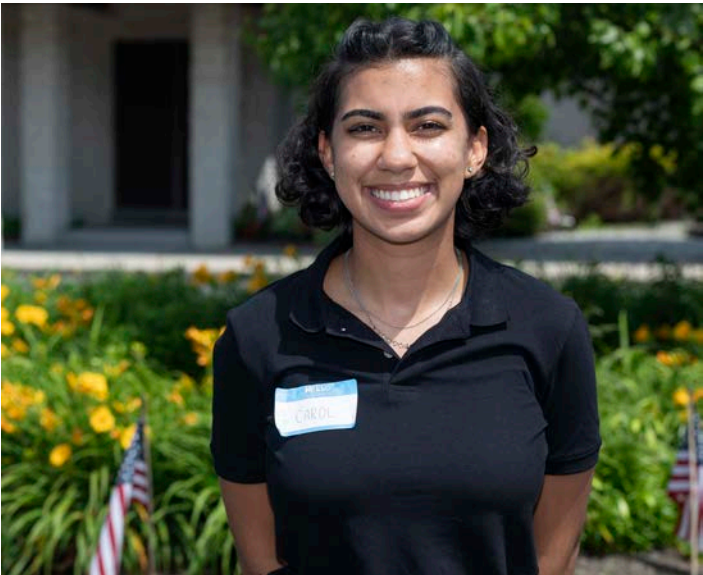
“I didn’t think I would be close to my hometown, but it worked out that I’m here and it’s been really cool,” said Martinez. “I’ve been seeing people I grew up with and their parents, and it’s been full circle serving my own community. People have been asking me about the Guard, and I’ve been telling them about the work we do in our communities, not just on the base.”

In Burlington County, Master Sgt. Namir Laureano, an Administration Airman with the 108th Wing, was assisting city workers.

“It feels good to help out on this important day,” said Laureano. “Helping the community exercise one of their most important rights.”

For more than a year the New Jersey National Guard has been supporting local and state authorities, including Covid-19 testing sites, civil unrest, and Covid-19 vaccination sites.

“Our Soldiers and Airmen continue to step up and ensure that our citizens can be safe in their communities while we get back to finding a sense of normalcy,” said Brig. Gen. Patrick Kennedy, commander of the New Jersey Air National Guard and Deputy Adjutant General of New Jersey. “I couldn’t be more proud of their accomplishments.”



Above: U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Carol Martinez, a public health specialist with the 177th Medical Group, stands for a portrait outside a polling site in Absecon, N.J., June 8, 2021. Below: U.S. Air Force 1st Lt. Johnathan Kim, 177th Medical Group, left, John W. Mooney, Commissioner, Atlantic County Board of Elections, and Airman 1st Class Angel Castillo, 177th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron stand for a portrait in front of the Oceanville Volunteer Fire Company polling site in Galloway Township, N.J., June 8, 2021.



“Our Soldiers and Airmen continue to step up and ensure that our citizens can be safe in their communities while we get back to finding a sense of normalcy. I couldn’t be more proud of their accomplishments.”

BRIG. GEN. PATRICK KENNEDY, COMMANDER, NEW JERSEY AIR NATIONAL GUARD AND DEPUTY ADJUTANT GENERAL OF NEW JERSEY

254th combines field exercises

Story and photo by Master Sgt. Matt Hecht, Joint Force Headquarters-Air Public Affairs Office



U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Dana Eustace, a Soldier attending the 254th Regional Training Institute’s RQ-11B Raven course, assembles aircraft parts during their capstone field training exercise at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., July 22, 2020. The Soldiers in the Raven course integrated with Soldiers in an Infantry Advanced Leaders Course, providing them with reconnaissance and intelligence during the exercise.

With heat rippling through the Pine Barrens on the Fort Dix range, the low hum of summer cicadas droned in unison with the buzzing of small-unmanned RQ-11B aircraft circling overhead. Soldiers, outfitted in full battle gear, laid low in the brush seeking shade from the sun as well as concealment from opposing forces roaming the simulated battlefield.

The intense temperatures and continued threat of COVID-19 created several challenges for instructors with the New Jersey National Guard’s 254th Regional Training Institute.

According to 254th leadership, mitigating the effects of COVID-19 and providing a safe and effective learning environment for Soldiers was a top priority. With eight courses taught at the same time, instructors saw the opportunity to have certain courses overlap.

“We have two courses running simultaneously, our Infantry Advanced Leaders Course, and our Raven B Course,” said Col. Jeff Brownlee, commander of the 254th. “We took the opportunity and combined the field training portion for both courses so they can feed off each other and support each other with the missions that they’re learning how to do.”

More than forty Soldiers in the Infantry Course represented seventeen different states, including Active Duty, Guard, and Reserve forces. While the

infantry ran different scenarios, from ambushes to key leader engagements, five Soldiers with the RQ-11B Raven Course observed overhead, providing real-time battlefield updates to the tactical operations center.

“It’s an amazing feeling to be out here teaching students, and an even more rewarding feeling because of dealing with COVID-19,” said Sgt. 1st Class Saadiq Shakir, a Raven course instructor with the 254th. “COVID shut a lot of things down, but it’s great that we can get Soldiers trained and proficient.”

Shakir said that this is the first year the Raven course has integrated with the infantry course during field training, and the students were excited for the experience.

“These Soldiers are potentially going downrange, flying missions where they could be saving lives, and I want them to be ready,” said Shakir. “One of the biggest things I hold to heart is knowing that not only are they proficient enough to fly, but also confident enough that if something

goes wrong on a mission, they can make adjustments on the fly.”

While hiking out to a launch site, Staff Sgt. Dana Eustace reflected on the Raven course, and said she was really enjoying it.

“My favorite part has been that we’re in the classroom in the mornings, learning the capabilities, and in the afternoon we’re out in the field actually doing it,” said Eustace, who is with the 254th, and is going through the training to be a Raven instructor. “It’s been a fantastic experience.”

“Readiness is very important for the units we support by providing them trained Soldiers,” said Brownlee. “We developed a lot of protocols to mitigate the COVID risk, we conduct temperature checks every day, monitor their health every day, and with that developed the training in such a way that they can complete it and still maintain a safe environment.”

“It’s the pride and joy of our cadre to ensure every Soldier we work with goes home fully trained.”

Mother inspires daughter to serve

By Senior Airman Julia Santiago, 108th Wing Public Affairs Office

U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Namir Laureano has vivid memories of her mother, the U.S. Army Master Sgt. Norma G. Miranda, coming home from drill weekends, annual field training, and missions after the September 11 terrorist attacks.

“I remember going to work with her as a child when she was working with the drug demand reduction program,” Laureano, an administrative specialist with the 108th Wing. “Part of the program was to go to low-income communities on weekends and provide drug and alcohol preventative briefings to the youth.”

While in high school, Miranda was involved in numerous groups and often lead class and sport organizations.

“Those experiences motivated me to join the armed forces,” said Miranda. “I wanted to grow my leadership skills.”

So, on June 14, 1979, Miranda, enlisted in the Puerto Rico Army National Guard. That October, she attended basic training at Fort Dix, New Jersey. After basic training, she was trained as an administrative specialist at Fort Jackson, South Carolina.

Miranda served for 35 years and retired as a master sergeant with the U.S. Army Reserve at Fort Buchanan, Puerto Rico. During her time with the National Guard, she earned a bachelor’s and master’s degree, graduating magna cum laude.

“My favorite time serving was when I was a first sergeant,” said Miranda. “Work never ends and I was taking care of my Soldiers 24/7.”

Miranda currently works as a veteran’s affairs liaison for Puerto Rico Resident Commissioner Jenniffer González-Colón in her district office.

During her time with the Puerto Rico Army National Guard, she worked in different programs that would influence both the Guard, as well as the community.

“I was a part of the Drug and Demand Program, Youth Challenge Course, and drug testing group. I also worked as an evaluator, sexual assault response coordinator, and a REFRAD (Release from Active Duty) first sergeant,” said Miranda.

“Seeing my mom serve definitely



Basic training photos of Pvt. Norma Miranda, left, and Airman Namir Laureano. (Photos courtesy Master Sgt. Namir Laureano)

influenced my decision to join,” said Laureano. “She learned new skills and had other benefits from joining the military. Both of my parents served, and I saw how the military helped them develop their personal and professional lives in and out of the military.”

Twenty-five years after her mother enlisted, Laureano joined in the Air Force Oct. 26, 2004, and served for four years on active duty in bioenvironmental engineering at McGuire Air Force Base, New Jersey before transferring to the New Jersey Air National Guard.

“I joined the military to get out of my comfort zone, learn new things and see new places,” said Laureano. “All of my favorite memories are related to challenging opportunities that helped me grow as an Airmen, wingman, and as a person. As my mom would say: ‘The sky is the limit.’”

“I am very proud that my daughter is in the Air National Guard and is serving our nation,” said Miranda.

According to the Air Force Personnel Center, 20.8 percent of the enlisted Air Force are women and 15.6 percent of the Air Force identifies as Hispanic or Latino. According to the Military Personnel Data System, in 2016, females made up about 18 percent of senior non-commissioned officers in the Air National Guard Laureano fits into

this small percentage of Airmen today.

“It’s an honor to be a woman in the military,” said Laureano. “Not only as a woman, but also as a Hispanic woman. It is encouraging to see how through history our roles have been growing within the military and they continue to grow. I am grateful to be part of a small diverse group that makes a difference in our organization and community and has the ability to serve others.”



U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Namir Laureano, left, and her mother, U.S. Army Master Sgt. Norma Miranda, while attending her brother's graduation from the U.S. Navy's basic training in Chicago, Illinois, March 4, 2016. (Photo courtesy Master Sgt. Namir Laureano)

Night Refueling

Photos by Master Sgt. Matt Hecht, Joint Force Headquarters-Air Public Affairs Office



A U.S. Air Force F-16C Fighting Falcon with the 119th Fighter Squadron, 177th Fighter Wing, is refueled by a KC-135R Stratotanker with the 141st Air Refueling Squadron, both with the New Jersey Air National Guard, over the Atlantic Ocean on July 27, 2021.



Above: U.S. Air Force Capt. Brandon Johnson, right, Lt. Col. Martin Ryan, and Tech. Sgt. Bob Slocum go over pre-flight checklists and documentation before flying a KC-135R Stratotanker training mission at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., July 27, 2021. Johnson, Ryan, and Slocum

are all part of the New Jersey Air National Guard's 141st Air Refueling Squadron "Tigers." The 141st supports Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps, and allied fighter, reconnaissance, and cargo aircraft. Below: Johnson, left, and Ryan fly a KC-135R Stratotanker during a night refueling training mission.



Above: A U.S. Air Force F-16C Fighting Falcon with the 119th Fighter Squadron is refueled by a 141st Air Refueling Squadron KC-135R Stratotanker over the Atlantic Ocean on July 27, 2021.

Below: A U.S. Air Force F-16C Fighting Falcon pilot with the 119th Fighter Squadron watches as his aircraft is refueled by a 141st Air Refueling Squadron KC-135R Stratotanker.





108TH COMPLETES FIRST SENTRY ALOHA

Story and photo by Senior Airman Andrea A. S. Williamson, 108th Wing Public Affairs Office

Eighteen New Jersey Air National Guardsmen from the 108th Operations Group participated in their final day of Sentry Aloha, a three-week exercise at Barbers Point, Kapolei, Hawaii, Aug. 27, 2021.

The training is an annual Total Force Initiative that provides active, reserve, and Guard pilots, aircrews, and maintainers with realistic combat training through a series of missions. The event is hosted by Hawaii Air National Guard's 154th Wing and operated, this year, at both Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam and Barbers Point.

The 108th Wing continues to expand on efforts to advance agile combat capabilities and support their assigned mission at a moment's notice.

"It's a great opportunity to bring a light ops and maintenance package to

"It's a great opportunity to bring a light ops and maintenance package to a different location and provide fuel to the fight."

Lt. Col. Matthew Brito, commander, 108th Operations Support Squadron

a different location and provide fuel to the fight," said Lt. Col. Matthew Brito, commander of the 108th Operations Support Squadron and a KC-135R Stratotanker pilot.

Other wings that participated in the exercise included the 459th Air Refueling Wing, Joint Base Andrews, Maryland, 141st ARW, Fairchild Air Force Base, Washington, and 144th Fighter Wing, Fresno Air National Guard Base, California.

This year, however, marked the 108th Wing's first appearance at Sentry Aloha and proved to be a success.

"Our job is to be at the right place, at the right time, to get the fuel to the receivers and ensure they get the training they need," said Brito. "We accomplished that."

Guardsman key to Phoenix Oracle project

Story and photo by Donna Jeffries, 108th Wing Public Affairs Office

"They call me a unicorn." Staff Sgt. Steven De Leon, an intelligence analyst with the New Jersey Air National Guard's 204th Intelligence Squadron, is playing a significant role in the development of Air Mobility Command's Phoenix Oracle project.

"The New Jersey Intelligence Squadron joined the project because of its ability to provide continuity," said Lt. Col. Drew Eisenhofer, director of operations, 204th Intelligence Squadron.

Phoenix Oracle is the umbrella term for AMC's Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Directorate's (A2) modernization, innovation, and transformation efforts. Part of the project is building a web capability that provides real-time, geospatial data accessible across multiple network platforms. The final product will improve the quality and timeliness of the Air Force's intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance.

"In the beginning, it was just Lt. Col. Eisenhofer attending meetings with AMC," said De Leon. "He found out there was a relation to airfield risk assessments and country risk assessments, and I was asked to attend because I write risk assessments."

De Leon was placed on the geospatial visualization team in March and immediately put his knowledge to use to successfully create a web application for the platform. The A2 personnel then briefed AMC, who in turn were "so impressed with how

the web application turned out, they asked what my skills and experiences were," said De Leon.

"De Leon has the intelligence background, but also has the technology skills to leverage the open source

at Thomas Edison University.

"They call me a unicorn because I have the intel and technology background and I can combine both," said De Leon.

For De Leon, success has led to more responsibilities



"De Leon has the intelligence background, but also has the technology skills to leverage the open source and modern geospatially enabled capabilities to weave into our intelligence mission"

**Melinda Meek
Deputy Director
Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Directorate**

and modern geospatially enabled capabilities to weave into our intelligence mission," said Melinda Meek, deputy director with the Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Directorate.

With his military intelligence training and a bachelor's degree in data science and computer science from Thomas Edison University, De Leon is considered a "double threat." He is currently working on a master's degree in technology

and greater challenges.

As the chief lead for AMC's Phoenix Oracle development team, De Leon is responsible for researching and developing different scripts to support the database and website. He oversees a team of three civilian contract software engineers.

"His passion for making the mission better for everyone, his positive spirit, inquisitive mind, and desire to contribute to a team of people willing to be change

agents," said Meek. "The 'Mod Squad' is a team of people standing together to transform our mission in key technology areas in data, geospatial, visualization and user experience, collaboration and integration, automation and analytics, and modern program management."

The project is the first of its kind and is slated for a two-year completion.

"We are in the beginning stages. The project will streamline data onto the Phoenix Oracle website where intel analysts can easily obtain information about any airfield and countries to use for their briefings or situational awareness," said De Leon. "This will also make it easier for intel analysts to write airfield risk assessments and country risk assessments that are disseminated throughout the Air Force."

Several major commands have eyes on him, too: the Department of the Air Force Chief Software Officer and Joint All Domain Command and Control; the Department of the Air Force Chief Digital Transformation Officer, and their Phoenix Oracle partner, the National

Geospatial-Intelligence Agency; are anticipating the project's readiness.

"The world relies on relevant, trustworthy, and timely data and the ability to understand it's relationships in time and space," said Meek. "That is what De Leon is helping us do in Phoenix Oracle: understand what is happening in the mission space in a virtual world in time and space."

9/11 REMEMBERED

New Jersey Army National Guard Color Guard Soldiers, left to right, Staff Sgt. Donald J. Lange, Sgt. Barbie S. Thomas-Williams, Sgt. Horace B. Bethea, and Staff Sgt. Michael D. Jefferson stand at attention in the Empty Sky Memorial at Liberty State Park, Jersey City, N.J., Sept. 11, 2021. (New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs photo by Mark C. Olsen)





NEW JERSEY AND ALBANIA CELEBRATE STATE PARTNERSHIP

STORY AND PHOTOS BY MARK C. OLSEN, NEW JERSEY NATIONAL GUARD PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE

Himni I Flamurit. The Star-Spangled Banner. Two decades and two national anthems.

The leadership of the Albanian Armed Forces and the New Jersey National Guard held their salutes for both – and for each other.

With shared mementos, memories, and a meal, Brig. Gen. Lisa J. Hou, D.O., The Adjutant General of New Jersey; Niko Peleshi, Minister of Defense, Republic of Albania, and Maj. Gen. Bajram Begaj, M.D., Chief of Defense, Republic of Albania, congratulated each other and their countries on 20 years

“Over the years, we have worked together on a range of many shared goals, challenges and priorities, including fighting terrorism, corruption, strengthening the rule of law, democratization, European security, and expanding the trans-Atlantic bond.”

NIKO PELESHI
MINISTER OF DEFENSE
REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA

Above: Brig. Gen. Lisa J. Hou, D.O., center left, The Adjutant General of New Jersey; Niko Peleshi, center, Minister of Defense, Republic of Albania, and Maj. Gen. Bajram Begaj, M.D., center right, Chief of Defense, Republic of Albania, cut a commemorative cake in honor of 20 years of friendship and bilateral cooperation between New Jersey and the Republic of Albania fostered by the State Partnership Program at the National Guard Training Center, Sea Girt, N.J., Sept. 21, 2021.

of friendship and bilateral cooperation between New Jersey and the Republic of Albania at the National Guard Training Center in Sea Girt, N.J., Sept. 21, 2021.

The ceremony marked the 20th anniversary in the relationship between the New Jersey National Guard and the Albanian Armed Forces, which has evolved through the State Partnership Program. The Program links a component of the Department of Defense – a state’s National Guard – with the armed forces of a partner country in a cooperative, mutually beneficial relationship.

“This is a year of important anniversaries,” said Peleshi. “In March, we marked another crucial milestone, the 30th anniversary of the reestablishment of ties between the United States and Albania.”

The NJNG and the Albanian military relationship began in the mid-1990s and in 2001, officially became part of the Department of Defense National Guard State Partnership Program.

“New Jersey and Albania have one of the

most active partnership programs in Europe with up to 25 events a year,” said Hou. “While the threat of COVID-19 may remain with us for some time, our partnership is on track to complete 10 events by the end of Fiscal Year 2021.”

During the past 20 years, more than 500 New Jersey National Guard and Albanian Armed Forces events have been conducted,

to near western standards,” said Begaj.

During that time, New Jersey Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen traveled to Albania to conduct training with the Albanian Armed Forces. In turn, the New Jersey National Guard hosted hundreds of Albanian military members. The training was considered instrumental in gaining Albania admission to NATO in 2009.

and priorities, including fighting terrorism, corruption, strengthening the rule of law, democratization, European security, and expanding the trans-Atlantic bond,” said Peleshi.

From 2013-2015, Albanian Armed Forces personnel attended New Jersey and Department of Defense military schools. This expanded to include joint civil

agreement between the Rutgers School of Dental Medicine and the University of Dental Medicine, Tirana, in the anticipation of exchanging students and faculty in the upcoming academic years.

“The interaction between the New Jersey National Guard has promoted and achieved a healthy and enduring partnership,” said Begaj.

Numerous other activities occurred both before and after the ceremony. These included visits to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., the World Trade Center in New York, a meeting with National Guard Bureau leadership in Washington, D.C., and a meeting with U.S. Ambassador Yuri Kim.

Even during the ceremony, New Jersey Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen were training members of the Albanian Armed Forces.

“Currently a noncommissioned officer leader development program, familiarization with the Puma unmanned aerial vehicle platform, and cyber security team training are all being conducted jointly in Albania,” said Hou.



with an emphasis on developing the noncommissioned officer and officer corps, as well as logistical, medical, and military police capabilities.

“This ceremony is a symbol of a strong military bond that began informally in 1995 and was made official 20 years ago ignited by the eagerness to reform our military

The partnership extends further than training.

Beginning in 2011, joint Albanian-New Jersey Army National Guard teams deployed to Afghanistan five times to train local military forces there.

“Over the years, we have worked together on a range of many shared goals, challenges

emergency multinational exercises in 2019.

It also includes engagements spanning military, government, economic, and civil sectors of society. The New Jersey National Guard works closely with the Albanian Ministries of Defense, Interior, and Education.

In December 2020, the partnership recently assisted in a cooperative

Army Aviators rescue motorists

Story and photo by Master Sgt. Matt Hecht, Joint Force Headquarters-Air Public Affairs Office

Hurricane Ida caused extensive damage as a Category 4 Atlantic Hurricane in Louisiana, and even as the system was downgraded to a post-tropical cyclone, it caused catastrophic flooding in the Northeastern United States.

As the hurricane was making landfall, planning was underway at the New Jersey Army National Guard's Army Aviation Support Facility to either prepare for sending troops to assist the Southern U.S., or to support local authorities with weather-related events in New Jersey.

A request for assistance came early in the morning on Sept. 2: Motorists were stranded in rising floodwaters near Somerset, N.J.

Maintenance teams, crew chiefs, and pilots with Detachment 2, Charlie Company, 1-171st General Support Aviation Battalion (MEDEVAC) and the 1-150th Assault Helicopter Battalion rushed to the facility, located on Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, and within two hours they had a hoist-capable UH-60L Black Hawk off the ground, searching for survivors.

It wasn't long into the flight when the crew of ROGUE20 saw their first flood victims.

"This was the first actual hoist rescue ever done by the New Jersey Army National Guard in New Jersey," said Chief Warrant Officer 3 Quentin Hastings, a Black Hawk pilot with the 1-171st. "We had gotten word that there were people in the water on top of their cars, and in just a few minutes we started finding people."

Hastings and his co-pilot, Chief Warrant Officer 3 Albert Sbarro, took turns piloting and spotting for threats to the aircraft.

The ROGUE20 crew had to navigate several obstacles to put their flight medic into position, including high-tension power lines, rushing water, and the small sizes of the targets.

"We were only searching for about four or five minutes when we saw cars in rapid moving water that boats couldn't reach," said Staff Sgt. Michael Toth, a flight medic with the 1-171st. "It was tricky because we normally train from 90 to 100



"They train for this every day. The fact that they used their skills to benefit the people in our own communities is really incredible. The National Guard is always ready, always there."

1ST LT. LARISSA FLUEGEL, COMMANDER DETACHMENT 2, CHARLIE COMPANY, 1-171ST GENERAL SUPPORT AVIATION BATTALION (MEDEVAC)

feet, but because of the downwash from the helicopter we did the hoists from between 140 to 150 feet, it was quite a ride."

ROGUE20 picked up five stranded motorists with the hoist, and four more by landing on a bridge that was surrounded by water.

While Toth was riding on the hoist, it was operated by Black Hawk crew chiefs Sgt. 1st Class Timothy Witts and Staff Sgt. Anthony Marotta.

"I was glad to be a part of it, and it was a great feeling to see the looks on the faces of the people we helped pull up," said Witts. "The first woman we got onboard had been on her car for about ten hours, so she was exhausted, and relieved."

Once the ROGUE20 crew had their rescues on board, they flew them to a local triage site set up with waiting ambulance crews on high ground.

A UH-72 Lakota from New Jersey's 1-224th Security and Support Battalion also showed up on scene to provide surveillance for the rescue crews, and New Jersey State Police helicopters also conducted numerous hoist rescues in the area.

"We stood up the MEDEVAC mission, and less than two years after that we deployed to Afghanistan, and had a successful combat tour for nine months in-country. Then we came back home, and have been training for this exact scenario," said Hastings.

"They train for this every day," said 1st Lt. Larissa Fluegel, commander of Det. 2, C Co., 1-171st. "The fact that they used their skills to benefit the people in our own communities is really incredible. The National Guard is always ready, always there."

U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer 3 Albert Sbarro, left, Staff Sgt. Anthony Marotta, Sgt. 1st Class Timothy Witts, and Chief Warrant Officer 3 Quentin Hastings stand for a portrait in front of their UH-60L Black Hawk helicopter at the New Jersey National Guard's Army Aviation Support Facility at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., Sept. 14, 2021.



COMMUNICATIONS TOWER NEARS COMPLETION

Story and photo by Senior Master Sgt. Andrew J. Moseley, 177th Fighter Wing Public Affairs Office

The 177th Fighter Wing is one step closer to the completion of a 112-foot radio communications tower.

The structure's final section was hoisted and bolted down by Airmen May 18. Airmen with the 212th Engineering and Installation Squadron, 102nd Intelligence Wing, Otis Air National Guard Base, Massachusetts, and the 201st Red Horse Squadron, 193rd Special Operations Wing, Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania, collaborated with the 177th Communications Flight and the 177th Civil Engineer Squadron in the project.

The project, more than 10 years in the making, will help the unit communicate more effectively with Airmen and aircraft.

"With 112 feet of height, a lot of the air-to-ground, air-to-air, and land mobile radio antennas will be relocated here, which the added height will benefit the coverage," said Capt. Richard Ryan, 177th Communications Flight

commander. "The next phase will be the spectrum analyzation phase, where all of the intended frequencies will be analyzed, and the placement of each antenna will be determined so they don't interfere with one another."

The project is comprised of multiple parts including the tower, antennas, and a communications equipment shelter.

"It's definitely been challenging in the sense that there's a lot of moving parts and it's very multi-faceted," said Tech. Sgt. Jonathan Tuxbury, cable and antenna systems craftsman with the 212th Engineering and Installation Squadron. "We have the tower assembly and raising of the sections. We also have the waveguide bridge construction, there's various parts of the tower and the tower itself that need to be grounded and then also ancillary items within the shelter itself including the control boxes."

Changes in leadership, personnel,

and continuity of operations, as well as budgeting constraints, soil testing results, airfield regulations, and COVID-19 have caused delays in the tower's completion, but teamwork has won out in getting to the current stage.

Finding fully trained and qualified Airmen with specialized tower construction skills has been critical to the project's success.

"We (The 177th) don't have the crane, we don't have certified tower climbers," said Ryan. "But we have these engineering squadrons and that's what they do."

Teamwork between the separate units has been key in completing the project.

"They're having fun," said Ryan. "They're not putting up towers all of the time, so when these opportunities come up, they look forward to getting to use the skills they learned in Technical School. They love doing these projects."

177TH SERVES AT STAND DOWN

PHOTOS BY MARK C. OLSEN

NEW JERSEY NATIONAL GUARD PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE



U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Taylor Trani, an aerospace medical technician with the 177th Fighter Wing, New Jersey Air National Guard, prepares a flu shot at the Sgt. 1st Class Robert H. Yancey Sr. Stand Down at the National Guard Armory in Cherry Hill, N.J., Sept. 24, 2021. At the Stand Down, co-hosted by the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and Stand Down of South Jersey, 82 veterans were provided access to healthcare, mental health screening, substance abuse counseling, social services, legal services, religious counseling, and winter clothing.



Above: U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Michelle Gross, an aerospace medical technician with the 177th Fighter Wing, gives a veteran a flu shot. Since 1996, the South Jersey Stand Down has served homeless and at-risk veterans.

Below: U.S. Air Force Maj. Kerwin Barden, a nurse with the 177th, directs a veteran to the next station at the Stand Down. Stand Downs are a nationwide, grass roots, community-based intervention programs to help veterans.



Above: U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Elizabeth Bemesderfer, a 177th aerospace medical technician, prepares a flu shot.

Below: U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Hannah Uron, a 177th aerospace medical technician, puts an adhesive bandage on a veteran at the Sgt. 1st Class Robert H. Yancey Sr. Stand Down.



2021 MILITARY REVIEW

New Jersey National Guard Soldiers and Airmen salute during the national anthem as two F-16C Fighting Falcons with the 177th Fighter Wing, New Jersey Air National Guard, perform a flyover during the 2021 New Jersey National Guard Military Review at the National Guard training Center, Sea Girt, N.J., Oct. 17, 2021. The Military Review is a long-standing tradition that allows the governor – the commander-in-chief of the state militia – the opportunity to review the Soldiers and Airmen of the New Jersey National Guard. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Michael Schwenk)



On these fields...

BRIG. GEN. LISA J. HOU, D.O., THE ADJUTANT GENERAL OF NEW JERSEY

Today, this impressive formation stands on the shoulders of New Jerseyans who – for over 130 years – formed up on this very parade field to train and better prepare themselves to serve the people of the Garden State.

At the peak of domestic operations, more than one thousand of you stood on duty. You staffed COVID-19 testing centers, supply distribution points, vaccine mega-sites, and many other missions. You worked around the clock to ensure the health and safety of our New Jersey family.

And at the very same time, you supported the Capitol Police in Washington, D.C., Afghan evacuee support, Hurricane Ida response, and the United Nations General Assembly.

In my twenty-seven years of service, the last nineteen months in particular have proven what I knew to be true about the New Jersey National Guard: Our Soldiers and Airmen have been able to turn the impossible into the possible because of good leadership, planning, teamwork, and an unwavering commitment to doing what is right, instead of what is easy.



Top: U.S. Army Soldiers salute during the 2021 New Jersey National Guard Military Review at the National Guard Training Center in Sea Girt, N.J., Oct. 17, 2021. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Matt Hecht)
Center: U.S. Army Soldiers of Alpha Battery, 3-112th Field Artillery, fire M20A1 howitzers in honor of New Jersey Gov. Philip D. Murphy. (New Jersey National Guard photo by Mark C. Olsen)
Bottom: Four U.S. Army UH-60M Black Hawk helicopters with the 1-150th Assault Helicopter Battalion perform a flyover during the Military Review. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Michael Schwenk)



LIBERTY'S GUARD

A U.S. Army UH-72A Lakota with the 1-224th Security and Support Battalion, New Jersey Army National Guard, flies past the Statue of Liberty National Monument in New York, N.Y., Nov. 9, 2021. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Michael Schwenk)

LAND NAVIGATION



U.S. Army Soldiers, with the New Jersey Army National Guard's 2-113th Infantry Regiment, assist in land navigation training for mortar systems with the Land Forces Command, Albanian Armed Forces at the Land Forces Headquarters in Zall-Herr, Tirana, Albania, Nov. 4, 2021. New Jersey Citizen-Soldiers traveled to Albania to develop working relationships with Fire Support Elements of the Albanian Armed Forces. The New Jersey National Guard and Albanian Armed Forces have been partners for 20 years in the U.S. Department of Defense State Partnership Program. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Michael Schwenk)

44th trains on M110A1

Photos by Spc. Michael Schwenk, New Jersey National Guard Public Affairs Office



Looking down the sights of the M110A1 Squad Designated Marksman Rifle (SDMR) at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., Oct. 28, 2021. The 44th IBCT are the first New Jersey National Guard Soldiers to train and field the new M110A1 SDMR weapon. The M110A1 is a 7.62 mm rifle, which has greater range and accuracy than the standard M4 rifle.



Above: U.S. Army Sgt. Aaron Capolupo, center, 1-114th Infantry Regiment, 44th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, New Jersey Army National Guard, zeros the M110A1 Squad Designated Marksman Rifle (SDMR) reticle at the

*Lawrenceville Armory in Lawrenceville, N.J., Oct. 27, 2021.
Below: U.S. Army Sgt. Joseph Garback, 1-114th Infantry Regiment, 44th IBCT, zeros the M110A1 SDMR reticle at the Lawrenceville Armory Oct. 27, 2021.*



Above: U.S. Army Sgt. Aaron Capolupo, 1-114th Infantry Regiment, 44th IBCT, fires the M110A1 SDMR at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., Oct. 28, 2021.

Below: U.S. Army Soldiers, 44th IBCT, conduct weapon familiarization with the M110A1 SDMR at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., Oct. 28, 2021.



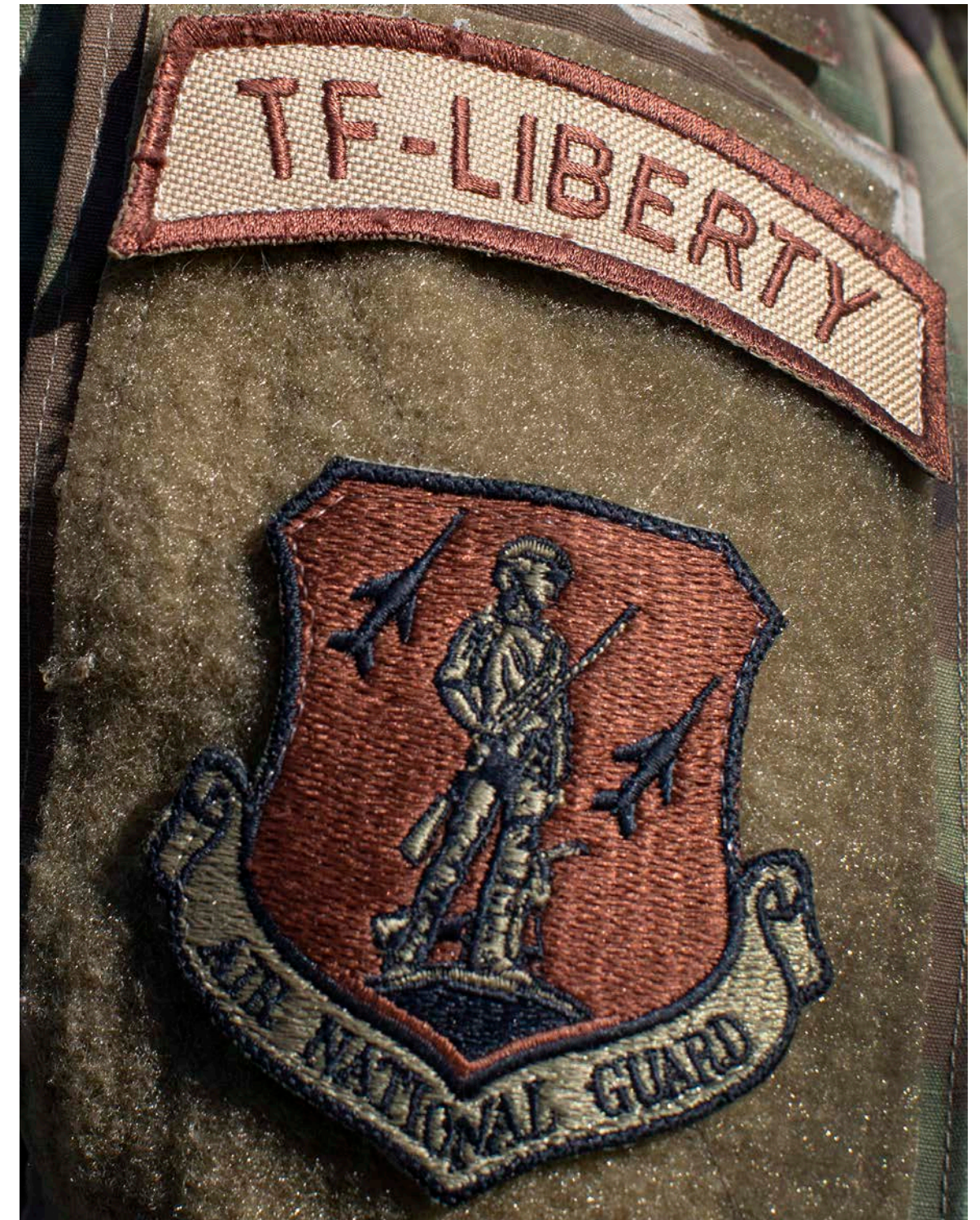
CRIME SCENE TRAINING



U.S. Army Sgt. Christopher Mejia, survey team member, 21st Weapons of Mass Destruction-Civil Support Team, New Jersey National Guard, employs detection equipment at a simulated crime scene during training with the Emergency Response Training Institute at Naval Weapons Station Earle, N.J., Nov. 17, 2021. (New Jersey National Guard photo by Mark C. Olsen)

NJANG supports Operation Allies Welcome

Photos by Master Sgt. Matt Hecht, Joint Force Headquarters-Air Public Affairs Office





Above: U.S. Air Force Col. Bernadette Maldonado stops to greet an Afghan family in Liberty Village on Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., Nov. 8, 2021. Maldonado, commander of the New Jersey Air National Guard's 108th Mission Support Group, is working with Task Force Liberty as

a village Governor. Below: Maldonado walks with an Afghan. The Department of Defense, through U.S. Northern Command, and in support of the Department of Homeland Security, is providing transportation, temporary housing, medical screening, and general support for the Afghan evacuees.



Above: An Afghan girl carries oranges in Liberty Village at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., Nov. 8, 2021.

Below: An Afghan girl hugs Maldonado at Liberty Village. This initiative provides Afghan personnel essential support at secure locations outside Afghanistan.



NJ National Guard Soldier recognized for COVID-19 research

Story and photo by Mark C. Olsen, New Jersey National Guard Public Affairs Office

As the entire New Jersey National Guard leadership watched, Maj. Melinda F. Moyer, D.N.P., was awarded the Army Nurse Corps Association (ANCA) 2021 Military Nursing Evidence-Based Practice Award.

This is the first time an Army National Guard Soldier has received this award and it was in recognition for her participation in a research project in the fight against COVID-19.

Moyer, who serves as the Director of Clinical Programs at the Joint Surgeons Office, Joint Force Headquarters-Army, is also the New Jersey Army National Guard's (NJARNG) first nurse practitioner.

It all started in May 2020 when Moyer was placed on COVID response orders.

"I was working at Sea Girt with the Joint Surgeon's office," said Moyer. There, she oversaw the safety of more than 1,500 New Jersey National Guard Soldiers and Airmen who had been serving on the frontlines since the beginning days of the pandemic.

When the Soldiers and Airmen were finished, they needed to be tested.

"Our service members had a real concern about wanting to be tested before coming off mission," she said.

However, no testing program existed. A conference call changed all that.

"I overheard the Connecticut National Guard mentioning a COVID antibody study that they collaborated with Yale University," said Moyer. "It immediately caught my attention."

She contacted the Connecticut National Guard, who put her in touch with Yale University. New Jersey was added to the project.

"I partnered up with Yale University to conduct the COVID antibody test and offered blood antibody testing to all service members who were on orders at no cost to the New Jersey National Guard or the federal government," said Moyer.

From that point on, it was all up to her.

"I was told I would be taking this on as an independent study," said Moyer. "From getting the Adjutant General's approval, to sample drop off at the Yale lab, to calling the service members to discuss results."

The Soldiers and Airmen started lining up.

"We got them tested for both IGG (Immunoglobulin G) and



IGM (Immunoglobulin M) antibodies for COVID and based on those results, if they were positive, I followed up with them," said Moyer.

Between June 3 and Oct. 17, 2020, she drew 728 blood samples.

"It wasn't hard to get Guard members involved," said Moyer. "I would take samples at the reverse JRSOI (Joint Reception, Staging, Onward Movement and Integration) when service members were

coming off orders. Units then started contacting me directly and I would travel [to their armory] to get the samples."

There was some hesitancy with some of the Soldiers and Airmen, but a straightforward explanation cleared that up.

"One of the biggest hurdles I had to overcome with some service members was the distrust on where their information was going and how it was going to be used," said Moyer. "The study was 100% voluntary and no information was shared with anyone other than myself and the individual."

The New Jersey National Guard's blood samples, along with other units, had a direct impact on the development of the COVID vaccinations.

"Those antibodies were used to design the COVID vaccines that are in circulation today," said Moyer.

Her work subsequently contributed to the development of the NJNG's back-to-work plans.

"When looking at best practices for how to allow our Guardsmen to return to duty safely, I was able to advise our leadership using data from our own backyard," said Moyer. "We looked at how this was affecting the Guard community here."

In her letter congratulating Moyer, retired Army Col. Kathryn Gaylord, chair, Nursing Research Committee, Army Nurse Corps Association, noted, "Your collaboration on the research project titled 'Medical Surveillance of SARS- CoV-2 infections among military personnel' demonstrates your dedication to nursing excellence."

"This pandemic affects the population and community differently and is dependent on countless variables," said Moyer. "The variables used to create the guidelines and practice here was specific to our National Guard Community. This is part of what made this study so special and important."

1-114TH TRAINS WITH M320

PHOTOS BY SPC. MICHAEL SCHWENK
NEW JERSEY NATIONAL GUARD PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE



A U.S. Army Soldier, 1-114th Infantry Regiment, New Jersey National Guard, fires the M320 grenade launcher at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., Nov. 13, 2021.



Above: An instructor with the 1-114th's Charlie Company instructs a Soldier during M320 grenade launcher training. The M320 replaced the M203, which first saw service in 1969. The M320 is designed to operate both as a stand-alone weapon, in addition to being mounted to the M16 rifle

or M4 carbine. Below: A Soldier chambers a round into a M320. Because it is side-loading, Soldiers can load and fire successive rounds faster and the unrestricted breech allows the system to fire a greater variety of standard and non-standard 40mm rounds.



Above: A 1-114th Infantry Regiment Charlie Company instructor watches as a Soldier fires a M320. Soldiers can use the M320 to engage groups of enemy personnel, vehicles, bunkers, and mark targets to assist in direct fire.

Below: A 1-114th Soldier fires an M320 while wearing a M50 joint service general purpose mask. The M320 incorporates infrared technologies combined with a hand-held laser rangefinder and night vision goggles, allowing for easy aiming regardless of the lighting conditions.





GLORY

A U.S. Air Force C-17 Globemaster III with the 437th Airlift Wing is refueled by a KC-135R Stratotanker with the 108th Wing, New Jersey Air National Guard, Oct 19, 2021. The aircraft's shadow can be seen in an optical phenomenon known as a glory, caused by sunlight interacting with water droplets in clouds. (New Jersey Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Brian Kelley)