

THE DISPATCH

THE MAGAZINE OF THE  
TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT



# TEXAS ARMY NATIONAL GUARD COMMANDER LEAVES LEGACY WITH HIS SOLDIERS



December 2016



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*Members of the 149th Security Forces Squadron secure a simulated suspect during an internal active shooter training exercise at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas, Oct. 23, 2016. The squadron is a subordinate unit of the 149th Fighter Wing, Texas Air National Guard, headquartered at JBSA-Lackland, and the exercise was comprised of several active shooter scenarios geared toward maintaining proficiency in the event of a real-world situation. U.S. Air National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Mindy Bloem*





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**Greg Abbott**



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## TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT

# PEOPLE FIRST



I have always been a 'mission first, people always' guy, so when I took this position and talked to Maj. Gen. Nichols (The Adjutant General) about his number one priority of put people first, I won't lie I had a difficult time wrapping my arms around this new concept for me. At first I saluted and moved out like a good Soldier but deep down I felt like the mission should always come first. It didn't take long for me to see that putting people first is something the TAG does instinctually and somehow still manages to always accomplish the mission. By his example I was able to see that putting people first doesn't mean failing the mission ever; it just means think about people first in your decisions and people will take care of the mission always. I very quickly became fully bought in to this new way of thinking for a military leader. While it doesn't come natural for me as it does the boss, there are a few ways I use to help keep me focused on putting people first and I want to share those in hopes that you too can begin to understand and use this principle in everything you do.

**FROM THE TOP**

First and foremost, take time to get to know your folks; not just the required training and point of contact information, but get to know them interpersonally. Both the Army and Air Force leadership manuals talk about the importance of interpersonal skills required for effective leadership. Know their family situation, civilian employment or school status, hobbies and interests, as well as their goals for both military and civilian life (look for TMD Goal Cards coming soon). In order to know these important details we must communicate continually which brings me to my next point.

Good leadership requires consistent and effective communication. This simply can't be done one weekend a month and two weeks a year. In order to accomplish this leaders must contact their folks throughout the month, between drills, and stay connected to what's going on in their lives, as well as keeping them informed. This two-way communication keeps everyone in the loop and allows leaders to pick up on issues requiring mentoring or guidance when they first begin instead of at drill when they've spiraled so far out of control that crisis mode has begun...or worse.

Lastly, I always try and see myself in the other person's shoes. This helps me with empathy, another quality of putting people first that doesn't come natural for me. When we can see a situation or decision from the perspective of the people who will be affected, then we will have a better understanding of the effects of our decisions. This aspect of emotional intelligence helps us to make more informed decisions; and who out there doesn't want their leaders making more informed decisions.

If we all use these three simple techniques I believe several phenomena will take place. First, morale, retention, creativity and training levels will all increase. Second, suicides, ideations and attempts will decrease. We're very good at mission accomplishment already and I believe these added benefits of great leadership will truly place our organization in the elite status of being world class. Besides, it's our duty anyways... CHARGE!!!





ANNUAL CHRISTMAS TREE LIGHTING CEREMONY  
DECEMBER 13, 2016 @11 A.M.



MAJ. GEN. JOHN F. NICHOLS  
CORDIALLY INVITES YOU TO THE  
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A HOLIDAY LUNCHEON WILL IMMEDIATELY FOLLOW IN THE DRILL HALL, SO COME  
ONE, COME ALL AND BRING YOUR BEST CHRISTMAS CAROLING VOICE.

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# TEXAS ARMY GUARD COMMANDER LEAVES LEGACY WITH HIS SOLDIERS

*Story by Sgt. 1st Class Malcolm McClendon*  
Texas Military Department Public Affairs



AUSTIN, Texas - In a ceremony attended by family, friends and fellow Guardsmen, Nov. 30, 2016 at Camp Mabry, in Austin, the Deputy Adjutant General – Army and Commander of the Texas Army National Guard left behind more than 30 years of legacy and service to the state.

Maj. Gen. William L. Smith's insight to the organization was invaluable to fellow senior leaders, said Maj. Gen. John F. Nichols, adjutant general of Texas. He was never afraid to speak up and give a nudge if something needed to be changed.

Growing up in a military family, Smith continued the tradition when he commissioned as a 2nd Lt. from the ROTC program at Southwest Texas State University in 1986.

"My father was in the Air Force and so the military played a huge role in my life," Smith said. "And so I can say that I've never been without a military ID card."

Smith originally wanted to follow closer to his father's footsteps and join the Air Force, but vision restrictions prevented the young cadet from taking to the skies.

"When I got to ROTC in college they told me that I did not have 20/20 vision and could not be a pilot," Smith said. "So then I said, 'why be in the Air Force if you can't be a pilot.'"

Despite changing course, Smith graduated and found a home in the 1st Squadron, 124th Cavalry Regiment, Texas Army National Guard, and began his career as an Armor officer. His career took him through various positions within the unit to include tank platoon leader, scout platoon leader and troop commander.

Smith left the unit to serve as squadron personnel officer, logistics officer and operations officer in the 2nd Squadron, 112th Armor Battalion and later as operations officer and executive officer of 2nd Brigade, 49th Armored Division before returning to the 1st Squadron, 124th Cavalry Regiment as its commander in 2002.

Smith continued his career in the 36th Infantry Division and deployed to Iraq as its deputy commander. There he discovered that the guard and active duty units can integrate and operate seamlessly.

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*Maj. Gen. William L. Smith, Deputy Adjutant General - Army, stands next to his wife, retired Col. Cindy Smith, following a ceremony recognizing Maj. Gen. Smith's promotion in Austin, Texas, June 24, 2013. (National Guard photo by Air Force 2nd Lt. Phil Fountain) (This*



*Then Brig. Gen. William L. Smith, visits with Chilean Col. Leonardo Romanini, Chilean air attaché to the United States. Chile and Texas work collaboratively through the National Guard's State Partnership Program. (National Guard Photo by Air Force 2nd Lt. Phil Fountain)*



*Former Texas Gov. Rick Perry visits with then Army Brig. Gen. William L. Smith, during the Texas Division of Emergency Management's 2013 Showcase and Exercise, May 31, 2013. (National Guard Photo by Air Force 2nd Lt. Phil Fountain)*

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## A VIDEO REFLECTION ON THE CAREER OF MAJOR GENERAL WILLIAM L. SMITH

After returning from deployment, Smith stood up and served as director of Joint Staff and Commander of Domestic Operations Task Force for the Texas Military Department.

“Domestic Operations was his vision,” said Brig. Gen. Patrick Hamilton, Domestic Operations commander. “Now, it is the standard nationwide.”

In 2013, he was appointed, by then, Texas Governor, Rick Perry, to his final duty position as Deputy Adjutant General - Army and as the commander of the Texas Army National Guard.

Throughout his career, Smith was most proud of the influence he had on his fellow Texas National Guardsmen.

“The accomplishments that I am most proud of are not mine, but those of the people that I have touched along the way,” Smith said. “To see people succeed in their careers because of something I did or said, is what I am most proud of.”

Surrounded by those he helped and at his retirement ceremony, Smith reached out to all with departing words of advice.

“Be proud in the work you do to make your organization successful,” Smith said. “Take care of your Soldiers and Airmen, make them the primary focus of what you do and prepare them for their success.” -D



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# GUARDSMAN COMPLETES 32 YEAR CAREER WHILE ACHIEVING PERSONAL GOAL

*Story & Photos by: Sgt. Daisy Broker*

72nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs

AUSTIN, Texas – After 32 years of service, Texas Army National Guard Col. James T. Kenyon, 36th Combat Aviation Brigade Commander, piloted his last flight, at the Austin Army Aviation Support Facility, Nov. 2, 2016, in Austin.

In celebration of his final flight, Kenyon flew an AH-64D Apache, UH-72A Lakota, CH-47F Chinook and the UH-60M Black Hawk in a round robin style event, fulfilling his personal goal of flying all four of the brigade's helicopter types.

"Being able to spend this many years in aviation and with these people, my whole career has been a highlight," said Kenyon. "There is nothing I would have rather done in the Army than fly helicopters and work in aviation and for the last 32 years. I have had the privilege of doing so."

While a traditional guardsman the entire time, he served in a full-time position for more than 24 years.

When the topic of jobs came up and the question about "if a final job could be picked" for his time left in the military that of the 36th Combat Aviation Brigade commander was it, said Kenyon.

"I've had the luxury of being in the brigade most of my career and even went to flight school with some of the battalion commanders and senior leadership," he said.

And to the incoming commander, Kenyon's offer the following advice.

"Learn your people, trust your people and get out to meet as many soldiers as you can," Kenyon said. "Fly as much as you can with as many pilots as you can, in order to get to know your people. Know that you can rely on your staff and just have fun."



*Col. James T. Kenyon pilots a UH-60M Black Hawk through the blast of a fire hose during his final flight as the commander of the 36th Combat Aviation Brigade.*



*Col. James T. Kenyon prepares to take off in a UH-64D Apache Attack Helicopter during his final flight as the commander of the 36th Combat Aviation Brigade.*



*Col. James T. Kenyon is doused with water after completing a round robin of last flights in each of the 36th Combat Aviation Brigades helicopter types.*



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# TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT HALL OF HONOR



**SUBMIT NOMINATIONS FROM  
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# MINUTEMAN BRIGADE TRAINS FOR HURRICANE LANDFALL



## *Story and Photo by Sgt. Elizabeth Peña* Texas Military Department Public Affairs

FORT HOOD, Texas – Guardsmen from the 136th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, Homeland Response Force package based out of Round Rock, exercised their disaster response skills during a command post exercise at Fort Hood, Oct. 29 – Nov. 3, 2016.

“The HRF mission is to advise and assist local responders in the event of chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosives incidents and help them to mitigate the effects,” said Charles (Craig) Parkhill, Defense Support to Civil Authorities coordinator for the 136th MEB.

The scenario featured a hurricane that hit southern Louisiana, causing a flood surge and damage to three incident sites, including destruction to a cancer hospital, chemical storage facility and a radiological facility.

“All three notional sites sustained damage and have a nuclear and biological hazard associated with them,” said Parkhill. “We are commanding and controlling those assets and military units that will come and assist those incident commanders in responding to those hazards.”

The Minuteman brigade is custodian to the FEMA Region VI Homeland Response Force mission, which provides a mission-ready task force in support of local, state and federal officials throughout Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Arkansas and Louisiana.

The HRF headquarters element, support platoons from the brigade support battalion and communications capabilities participated in the command post exercise. The other elements were scenario based.

“We are notionally replicating six CERFPs which are CBRNE Enhanced Response Force Packages and three Civil Support Teams,” said Parkhill. “Since this is a training event, we will speed up or slow down the training as need be.”

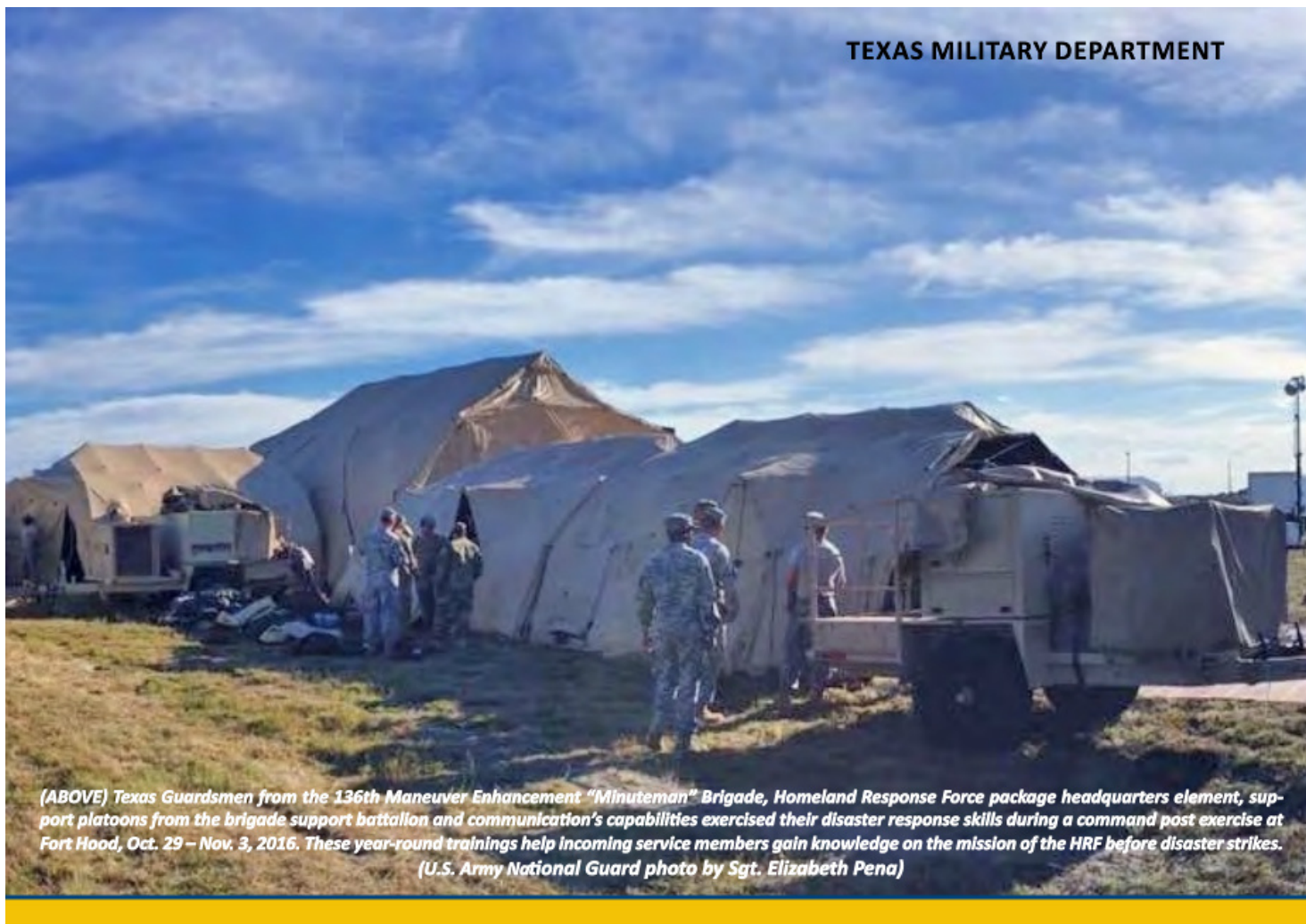
In the event of a disaster, the mission of the Civil Support Team is to identify the hazard, and the mission of the CERFP is to conduct decontamination for citizens that are coming out of the hazard. As well search and recovery team to go in and pull people out who can’t evacuate themselves.

“This scenario is important because the type of natural or man-made disaster drives the environment that we will encounter when we deploy,” said Texas Army National Guard Col. Scott M.

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*(ABOVE) Texas Guardsmen from the 136th Maneuver Enhancement "Minuteman" Brigade, Homeland Response Force package headquarters element, support platoons from the brigade support battalion and communication's capabilities exercised their disaster response skills during a command post exercise at Fort Hood, Oct. 29 – Nov. 3, 2016. These year-round trainings help incoming service members gain knowledge on the mission of the HRF before disaster strikes. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Elizabeth Pena)*

Mac Leod, Brigade Commander for the 136th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade. "The five basic capabilities that we bring are common to just about any type of threat or crisis that we will go into. Yes they will vary to some degree whether it is a nuclear strike or hurricane but our consequence management capabilities will remain the same."

While maintaining proficiency in their battle skills and responsibilities, members of the 136th MEB must also ensure their incoming soldiers have a good grasp on the HRF mission.

"Even though we deployed our headquarters last November to Warfighter, then we deployed again to Houston for a full dress rehearsal, then we deployed again in August to conduct XCTC, we still have brand new people in our staff today that weren't here for any of those events," said Mac Leod.

These year-round trainings help incoming service members gain knowledge on the mission of the HRF before disaster strikes.

"The personnel who've been here in the past have to help train the incoming officers and non-commissioned officers and pass that knowledge on. Things like setting up the DRASH, to plan-

ning convoys, to executing the homeland response force mission," said Texas Army National Guard Maj. Johnny Ray Guerrero, chief operations officer for the 136th MEB headquarters. The unit is scheduled to go through its annual external evaluation this April, which will re-certify the Homeland Response Force package. Elements such as the CERFP and CST will run through battle drills much like this week's exercise.

Although the scenario may change, the mission of the 136th HRF remains the same.

"Our job in life is to go into a crisis and help save men and women and boys and girls," said Mac Leod. "To go in and be a support element to local police and local fire department officials - basically these are going to be our fellow citizens that we are going to go help."

**-D**



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# BONE MARROW FOR OUR BATTLE BUDDY

*Commentary by Capt. Martha Nigrelle*  
Texas Military Department Public Affairs

## One of our Warrior Ethos is “Never Leave a Fallen Soldier.”

Over the last few months, I have seen my fellow Texas Guardsmen stand up to this challenge in a way that both humbles me and makes me proud to serve alongside them.

On March 27, 2015, the Texas Army National Guard came together and conducted an honorary enlistment ceremony for an eight-year-old boy battling a rare disorder, whose dream was to become a Soldier.

The significance of the ceremony is important to mention, because when you enlist in the Texas Army National Guard, you become part of a family.

And on that day, Rowan became part of our family.

“He’s one of us now,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Mark Weedon, the Command Senior Enlisted Leader of the Texas Military Department to Rowan’s mom, as they were getting ready to leave that day. “So please, keep in touch. We want to know how he is doing.”

When we met him, Rowan needed a bone marrow transplant and was scheduled to get one later that year. But there were some bumps in the road and a year later, he still didn’t have a match.

Upon finding this out, many of my fellow Guardsmen came to the same conclusion – we should have a bone marrow drive. Maybe one of us could be the match for Rowan.

So we did the research, asked our leadership and set a date.

In the meantime, Rowan was cleared for an experimental bone marrow transplant with what’s called a “half-match;” with someone who is a perfect half-match because the recipient has half of their DNA. It is risky because as you are trying to do everything possible to convince your body to accept the transplant, you also have to figure out how to protect your body from the half that isn’t a match.

As we planned our bone marrow drive, Rowan and his family flew to Seattle to go through the transplant process.

Then we found out that things weren’t going so well. So what does a good noncommissioned officer do when one of his Soldiers is out of the fight? He checks on the Soldier. He speaks to the family. He lends his support in any way possible.

And that’s exactly what our Command Sergeant Major did – he called the family, he checked on Rowan and he even phoned a friend – the Command Senior Enlisted Leader for the Washington Military Department and asked her to send a few Guardsmen to the Seattle Children’s Hospital to check on Rowan, on behalf of Texas.

Keep up to date with  
Rowan’s recovery at  
[rowansstory.blogspot.com](http://rowansstory.blogspot.com)



## TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT



Members of the Washington Army National Guard visit Rowan while he recovers from a bone marrow transplant at Seattle Children's Hospital. (Photo Courtesy of Carrie Windham)



Capt. Martha Nigrelle, collects cheek cell swab sample from Chief Warrant Officer 5 William Langford, top, and Maj. Gen. John F. Nichols, The Adjutant General of Texas, Bottom, during a bone marrow recruitment drive hosted by the Joint Forces Headquarters Detachment at Camp Mabry in Austin, Texas, Oct. 22-23, 2016 (Photo by Cpt. Chrystal Garcia)

Right away, our friends in Washington stepped up. They visited Rowan and experienced the same thing that we did – Rowan is awesome. So they asked if they could come again, and promised they would be back in a few days.

The next day Rowan slipped into a coma, and medically speaking, things got pretty bad.

This was what was happening when the bone marrow drive kicked off. When word got out that Rowan wasn't doing well, Texas Guardsmen showed up.

They showed up and put themselves on the national registry –if they couldn't be the match for Rowan, maybe they could be the match for someone like him. Even Maj. Gen. John Nichols, the adjutant general of Texas, came by wanting to donate and leave Rowan a note.

"We want to personally thank each service member who got swabbed, and each individual involved in the planning, organizing and processing of the bone marrow drive," said Carrie Windham, Rowan's mother. "We are deeply touched."

A few days later our friends, in Washington, went back to Seattle to check on Rowan for us, and even though he was unconscious, they spent the day by his side.

"These men and women drove over an hour to get here, brought him amazing tokens of their support that he will cherish forever and spent their valuable time getting to know us," said Windham. "What they did for him, though he wasn't aware at the time, was remarkable."

When I joined the Army in 2005, one of the first things I learned was the importance of a battle buddy-it's family. The men and women who fight alongside you become your family, and if you lose one, their family becomes your family.

I'm happy to report that Rowan has made a lot of progress. He is still in the pediatric intensive care unit, but he's no longer in a coma and it looks like his bone marrow transplant may have been successful!

When we brought Rowan into our ranks, we gained a battle buddy and we made a commitment to him, that we would never leave him behind.

To my fellow Guardsmen in Texas and Washington, thank you for showing us what it means to stand by a fellow Soldier no matter what – it is an honor to serve alongside you.

And to Rowan, you have 24,000 people supporting you here in Texas. We're thinking about you, we're praying for you and we've got your back. **-D**

To learn more about hosting a bone marrow recruitment drive at your unit visit [https://www.salutetolife.org/hostadrive\\_1.html](https://www.salutetolife.org/hostadrive_1.html).



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# DARK DROP

*Story by Sgt. Elizabeth Peña*

Texas Military Department Public Affairs

**HONDO, Texas** – Texas Army National Guardsmen from the 1st Battalion (Airborne) 143rd Infantry, 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, conducted a simulated airfield seizure during a major collective training from 17-19 November 2016, near San Antonio, TX.

The two units are partnered through the Associated Unit Pilots Program, which pairs Active-Duty units with those in the Army Reserve and Army National Guard for a multi-year period to meet increasing demands of the Total Army.

“Our battalion is now a part of the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, which is forward based in Europe,” said Texas Army National Guardsman Lt. Col. Kurt J. Cyr, commander of the 143rd Airborne. “Our brigade has the responsibility to be the contingency response force for U.S. Army Europe.

It’s important for us to do collective training exercises such as this to maintain our proficiency in joint forcible entry operations.”


The training exercise, known as Operation Aztec, highlights the programs’ intent to increase the readiness and responsiveness of the Army as a total force. This was one of the first major collective training events for the battalion as an Associated Unit of the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team.

“This weekend took about two months of drill time and preparations,” said Texas Army National Guard Sgt. 1st Class Benjamin Johnson. “We are bringing a lot of guys that have never deployed before to see what it will look like, or similar to, and the types of engagements we would see.”

During Operation Aztec, Texas Guardsmen jumped onto South Texas Regional Airfield in Hondo to secure and con-



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*Texas Guardsmen from the 1st Battalion (Airborne) 143rd Infantry, 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, conducted a simulated airfield seizure during Operation Aztec, Nov. 17-19, 2016, near San Antonio, Texas. Operation Aztec is one of the first major collective training events under the 173rd Airborne Brigade. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Elizabeth Pena)*

control the airfield, worked through the night against opposing forces to seize key terrain from the enemy.

“Our battalion only jumps at night,” said Cyr. “We always try to maximize surprise, security and protection of the force by jumping at night. The airborne relies on the element of surprise, and the cover of darkness gives that surprise. Hours of limited visibility allow us to utilize security to gain a tactical advantage over the enemy by parachuting under the cover of darkness.”

The partnership enables integration of formations from units prior to mobilization through collective training exercises such as Operation Aztec.

“Our airborne infantry battalion is no different than any other you’d find in the Active Component,” said Cyr. “We train to the same standards, and are required to be compatible with our Active Duty counterparts across all warfighting functions.”

“I have full confidence in our Paratroopers, their training, our unit’s leadership and the leadership of our brigade in Europe. If there is ever a call for us to mobilize and fight alongside of the Active Component, we will be ready” said Cyr.

Under the new program, units will see an increase in training.

“The training days are getting longer,” said Texas Army National Guard Private 1st Class Jeremy May, a Paratrooper with the 143rd Airborne. “But this is something bigger than ourselves so we are willing to make that sacrifice. My main motivation is protecting the people that I love. That is the whole reason that I joined.”

A total of 27 units have been selected to undergo the pilot; four of those units come from the Texas Army National Guard. These units will train, build readiness and ultimately fight as one Army.

“There are three different Army components, but when you deploy, everyone wears U.S. Army,” said Capt. Aaron M. Lee, a Ranger Training Assessment Company Commander at Fort Benning, Georgia. “We have to work together and be on the same level as far as individual collective tasks.”

The 143rd Airborne is scheduled to train with the Active Component during a major joint forcible entry exercise in Europe during the summer of 2017. **-D**

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Staff Sgt. Eric Walden, LEFT, and Staff Sgt. Damon Williams, RIGHT, dress as plastic army men while collecting toys for the annual Texas State Guard Toy Drive.

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# THE TEXAS STATE GUARD TOY STORY

Story by CW2 Janet Schmelzer  
Photo's Courtesy of TXSG

Texas State Guard Public Affairs

AUSTIN, Texas- The Texas State Guard "Young Heroes of the Guard" toy drive brings smiles to thousands of children at dedicated pediatric hospitals across Texas, every year during the Christmas season.

Since the program's inception, in 2009, guardsmen have collected and distributed more than 77,000 new toys to pediatric patients in 17 medical facilities – this year State Guardsmen hope to raise that number to 100,000 and collect more than 30,000 toys for children all over Texas.

Every November, Texas State Guard members begin the toy drive by setting up collection points across the state, for fellow Texans to donate and help out children in need of a brighter day. Collections points throughout the various cities and towns, include churches, libraries, businesses and outside of retail stores. Additionally, toy drives held by organizations, veteran and reservist groups and corporate sponsors allow the Texas State Guard to ensure that every child, at every facility they donate to, receives a new toy for Christmas.

The drive is one of the many ways Texas State Guard volunteers can give back to the communities it serves and is designed to bring joy and happiness to children spending the Christmas holiday in the hospital.

"Everyone joins together to help these children. I love seeing the faces on the little ones when they see their new toys, said Pfc. Shawnee Wagstaff. "They are so happy; it fills my heart with joy and humility."

The event was originally organized and run by the Texas State Guard Chaplains.

"A grandfather donated a pickup-sized donation of toys because his granddaughter had received a "Young Heroes of the Guard" toy while in the hospital," said Capt. David Isbell, a Texas State





Guard Chaplain. "So he collected toys from this golf club to donate to the Texas State Guard toy drive. He wanted other hospitalized children to be happy during Christmas time."

For some Guardsmen personal experiences and the desire to give back remain the driving force for those to continue growing the program each and every year.

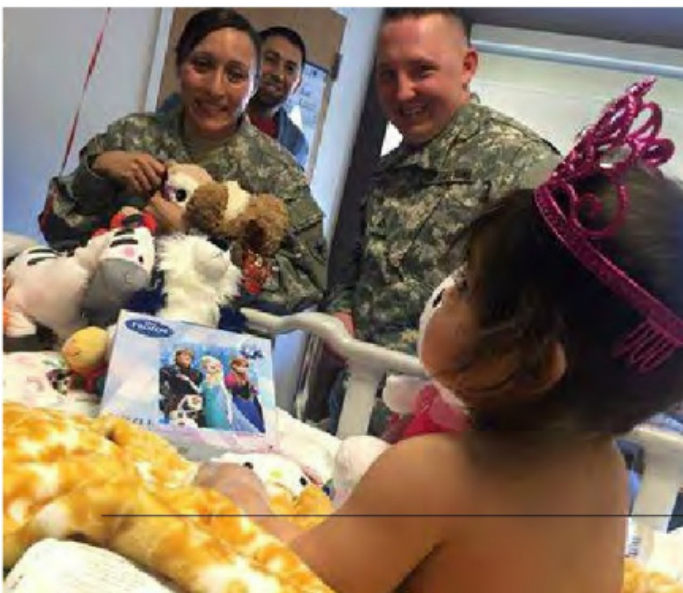
"My daughter was in the hospital and she was able to play with toys from a toy drive. It put a smile on her face in spite of her illness; I'll never forget that," said Texas State Guard Sgt. Greg Illich "The 'Young Heroes of the Guard' toy drive is my opportunity to do the same for other children in the hospital."

The Guard's toy drive also ensures the hospitals can provide toys to their pediatric patients for birthdays and other special occasions throughout the year.

On toy distribution day, guardsmen gather at their armories to sort the toys into age appropriate groups, load overflowing boxes of toys into vans, trucks and pickups and head off to deliver the toys to the children's hospitals.

Wearing Santa hats, they deliver these toys to numerous Texas hospitals and some cases, guardsmen get to go room-to-room bringing toys to sick children and their siblings so that the families can have a Merry Christmas. **-D**

**TO LEARN MORE ABOUT DONATING TOYS CLICK HERE**  
**Donations will be accepted until December 8, 2016,**  
**with a delivery date to hospitals on December 10, 2016.**





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# Texas National Guard Trains First Female U.S. Cavalry Scout



***The Department of Defense announced that all military occupations and positions would be open to women. Sgt. Kayci Landes, had been waiting for this since she was a seven-year-old girl.***

*Texas Army National Guard's 3rd Battalion 136th Regional Training Institute lead soldiers through 12-mile ruck march during a cavalry scout course in Fort Hood, Texas, on Nov. 29, 2016. The Texas National Guard's 136th RTI, headquartered at Camp Mabry in Austin, Texas, offers courses to any soldier in the U.S. Army, active, guard or reserve, including numerous MOS's such as the cavalry scout.  
(Courtesy U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Kristopher E. Townsend)*

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*U.S. Army Sgt. Kayci Landes, poses with her family her graduation as the first female cavalry scout Nov. 17, 2016. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Elizabeth Peña)*

### **Story by Sgt. Elizabeth Peña** Texas Military Department Public Affairs

FORT HOOD, Texas – It was a proud moment for the Texas Army National Guard's 3rd Battalion, 136th Regional Training Institute when Army Sgt. Kayci Landes, walked across the stage as the U.S. Army's first female cavalry scout Nov. 17, 2016, during a graduation ceremony held at Fort Hood.

The Department of Defense announced that all military occupations and positions would be open to women, Jan. 2016. Landes, a wife and mother of four, had been waiting for this moment since she was seven-years-old.

"I've always wanted to be in the combat military occupational specialty; I just wasn't allowed. As soon as it opened I was like 'hey combat MOS's are open, I'm going to have this baby real quick then I'm going to re-enlist for it,'" said Landes.

During the 20-day course Landes, along with her peers conducted 200 academic hours to include the Army's new high physical demands test that both men and women needed to pass at the same standards.

"We've got a streak of seven years of not sending anyone home and we're not afraid to break that," said Texas Army National Guard Sgt. 1st Class Michael C. Dixon, an instructor at the cavalry scout course. "She did the 12-mile, she did the hand grenade toss, dummy drag and pulled out the Bradley main gun that weighs collectively almost 300 pounds. She's done it all."

The Texas National Guard's 136th RTI, headquartered at Camp Mabry in Austin, Texas, offers courses to any soldier in the U.S. Army, active, guard or reserve, including numerous MOS's such as the cavalry scout.

Texas Army National Guard Sgt. 1st Class Kristopher E. Townsend, instructor and course manager, said his favorite part of being an instructor is educating his students.

"It's training soldiers, bringing guys into an MOS that I love and being able to impart my experience, what I've learned in my career down to the joe's and bring them into the fold of the cavalry," said Townsend.

The Texas National Guard instructors led the course for six prior service members that had made the decision to re-class to 19D.

"They have a really good training set up; it's better than most Army training. It's been fun and interesting," said Landes.

In 2014, the U.S. Army Training Command awarded the 136th RTI as an Institution of Excellence, the highest accreditation an RTI can receive.

"We always want to go beyond the program of instruction and make the course better than just the minimum," Sgt. Steven L. Conwill, 136th RTI. "Being new here to Fort Hood we have access to a lot of newer things that might not have had access to at Camp Mabry or Camp Bowie."

As the Army welcomes women into combat roles, Texas' RTI will continue to train soldiers across the force to the best standard possible.

"The RTI is proud to be a part of training so many fine men and women," said Texas Army National Guard Col. Kevin Countie, 136th RTI commander. "Supporting the Army's readiness and combat performance is our top priority."

Landes will be stationed with the 1st Cavalry Division, at Fort Hood. **-D**

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TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT

# REAL GUIDANCE

By Jessie Trofe, MA, LPC

## A HOLIDAY AT P.E.A.C.E

The holiday season is upon us and though millions of people look forward to celebrating the season with family and friends, 80 percent of Americans anticipate experiencing stress during the holidays, according to the American Psychological Association. So, we look forward to it, yet the idea of it stresses us out. Financial concerns about gift giving, worries of stretching ourselves too thin, impossibly high expectations and anxiety that controversial subjects might get brought up by family are enough to raise anyone's blood pressure. But what if instead of anticipating stress during the holiday season, we anticipated peace? It's easy to get caught up in the hustle and bustle of the holidays and forget what is truly important to us. If we approach the holiday season as a peace-keeping mission and practice the strategies outlined below, we have the opportunity to not only lower our stress and anxiety, but to fully enjoy the blessings in our lives. Here's to a peaceful holiday, both internally and externally.

**P- Positivity-** Maintaining a positive outlook sets you up for a successful season. Recognizing gifts in your life immediately lifts the mood and helps paint a more accurate picture as to what is really important. Coming from a place of faith rather than fear helps to quiet anxiety and inspire hope. When you notice the pesky "what if's" beginning to creep in, challenge them. Are these thoughts helpful and do we absolutely know them to be true? Most likely not, so what positive thought can we replace it with? I personally like "Sure that COULD happen, but I am strong and my faith is even stronger. I know that I can and will rise to any challenge." Positive thoughts are powerful and

contagious. They could very well be the best gift you give yourself this holiday.

**E- Energy-** Holiday shopping, managing expectations and juggling celebrations can be extremely draining. In order to be at our best this season, it's imperative we make health a priority. Research shows that exercise, eating well and getting good sleep help to replenish us both physically and emotionally. When we get our blood pumping, provide fuel for our body by eating foods that nourish and focus on getting 7-8 hours of sleep each day, we not only supply our bodies with much-needed energy, but we stabilize and improve our mood. If we aren't in a healthy state of mind (and body), it's very difficult to fully enjoy the holiday season, and to share joy with our loved ones.

**A- Ask -** for help/support- Why is it this is sometimes the hardest thing for us to do? As human beings, we are not meant to survive in isolation, but rather to thrive with the love and support of one another. It's the old adage- "\_\_\_ heads are better than one." We all have different strengths and preferences, so why not capitalize on these? Maybe you have an aunt that loves baking, or an uncle who is great with the kids. Taking on too much typically doesn't end well and often results in exhaustion and resentment. Enlisting the support of others also communicates that you value that person and can help you feel more connected to one another, while simultaneously lessening the load you were attempting to bear on your own. It's a win - win.





**C- Challenge expectations-** Often we start moving full speed ahead when the holidays arrive, and don't take time to examine our own (and our family's) expectations. How do we envision our December and how realistic are our expectations? What are our family's expectations around gift giving and time spent together (or apart)? Unrealistic expectations only sets us up for disappointment and disillusionment. We are each unique and often our agendas do not match those around us, so taking time to examine these beliefs together helps to illuminate what is most important to each of us. If you have children and money is tight this holiday, what are some creative ways you could improvise? Could you focus on an experience you could do as a family or limit gifts to one or two gifts each? With larger families, could you draw names for Secret Santa and/or make gifts for those you love? Get creative with how you show your love for one another and challenge old assumptions about what the holiday must look like. Just because that's the way your family has done things in the past, doesn't mean that's the way it always needs to be. See this as an opportunity to model change and growth in your family, as well as creating new traditions together.

**E- Express boundaries-** One of the concerns I have heard from numerous people this year is anxiety around spending time with family and friends who have different values and views than our own. Hot topics such as politics and religion can be divisive and can cause us to feel the need to defend our viewpoints, often at the expense of others. I personally have seen these situations escalate, and a once peaceful holiday gathering then becomes about our differences rather than our similarities. Before you invite guests over this holiday, or head to family dinner, if you know there is potential for discussion of these topics, nip it in the bud before the event. For example, take time to call family members/friends who are attending the celebration beforehand to have a conversation around boundaries. This might look like, "I am so looking forward to seeing you soon! I know we all want to enjoy each other's company to the fullest, so let's set some ground rules before our party. Can we agree that talking about politics (insert whatever hot topic is relevant for your loved ones) is off the table? Let's instead respect and honor that we all have different views and instead focus on the things we have in common." If your family is anything like mine, often you have to continue reinstating these boundaries. If somebody reverts to their old behavior and brings up the hot topic, you can confront it by reminding that person of the agreement that was made and/or re-direct the conversation to something more appropriate.

I sincerely hope that you and yours find and foster peace this holiday. If you begin to experience stress, do something to push the re-set button for yourself. Whether that be taking a break, a lap around the neighborhood, some deep breaths, listening to your favorite song- just do something that feels good and right for you. Despite boundaries we might set, ultimately we cannot control how others are going to act. We can, however, control our own inner climate and thoughts. So give yourself the gift of inner peace this holiday, and watch how this gift brings light to your loved ones as well.

TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT

# P.E.A.C.E

## **P- Positivity**

Maintaining a positive outlook sets you up for a successful season.

## **E- Energy**

Exercise, eating well and getting good sleep help to replenish us both physically and emotionally.

## **A- Ask**

We are not meant to survive in isolation, but rather to thrive with the love and support of one another.

## **C- Challenge Expectations**

Unrealistic expectations only sets us up for disappointment and disillusionment.

## **E- Express Boundaries**

Before you attend holiday gatherings address the topics you feel comfortable discussing beforehand.



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**TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT**



**OUR HERO**

**SGT. VANESSA DURON**

*Enlisted Promotion Management and Retirement Services Officer.*

*"I joined the Texas Army National Guard eight years ago because I wanted to serve my country and to make my kids proud of me."*





# New Key Leadership Positions



## Col. Ronald W. Burkett II

### Commander, 36th Combat Aviation Brigade

#### EXPERIENCE:

Burkett commissioned as an artillery officer through Army ROTC at Southwest Texas State University in 1989. Since he has served at the tactical, operational and strategic levels of command and senior staff, including, Army North, U.S. Northern Command, Army National Guard staff, National Guard Bureau and the Department of Defense Joint Staff. Following a branch transfer to Army Aviation in 1995, he commanded two Attack Companies on Active duty, one in the TXARNG and a division Headquarters and Headquarters Company in the Army Reserves. His battalion level command was in command of all Joint U.S. Military personnel assigned to the U.S. National Support Elements in Pristina, Kosovo and Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina in support of the United Nations and NATO's multinational forces. Prior to his return to Texas this past October, he served as the NGB Strategic Plans Division Chief. His 27 years of commissioned service involves numerous stateside and overseas assignments, including five deployments. Burkett currently serves as the Deputy State Aviation Officer for the TXARNG.

#### EDUCATION:

He holds a Master of Arts from Eastern Kentucky University in Safety, Security and Emergency Management and a Master of Science from the National Defense University in Campaign Planning and Strategic Studies. Additionally, he completed an Executive Leader Study Program at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government in International and National Security and has attended the Department of Defense Senior Service College and Joint Advanced Warfighter School in Norfolk, Virginia. He is rated to fly in both the AH-64A Apache and the UH-60M Black Hawk helicopters.

#### DID YOU KNOW:

Burkett and his wife Molly recently celebrated their 30th anniversary and have three wonderful children.

#### IN HIS WORDS:

"I am humbled and honored to take command of the 36th Combat Aviation Brigade and to join a proud command team that includes Command Sgt. Maj. Cazares and Chief Warrant Officer 5 Jenschke. Mustangs!"



## Regina Durden

### Purchasing & Contracts Director, Texas Military Department

#### EXPERIENCE:

Durden has served as the Division Chief for Purchasing and Contracts Division for the Office of the Attorney General. Prior to that she worked as the Project Management Office Director, Procurement and Contracts Director with the Texas Department of Insurance.

#### EDUCATION:

Durden holds a Bachelor of Business Administration with a concentration in Computer Information Systems from the University of North Texas.

#### DID YOU KNOW:

She took a trip to South Africa and visited Nelson Mandela's home in Johannesburg, as well as went on a five-day safari near Port Elizabeth, where she experienced Table Mountain--one of the New Seven Wonders of the world in Cape Town.

#### IN HER WORDS:

"I consider it an honor and a privilege to work for an organization that represents strength, resilience, honor and assistance to the community throughout the state of Texas, the United States and the world. My goal is to lead an effective and proactive Purchasing and Contracts Section; and for our section to provide optimal service to the Texas Military Department."



# **YOUNG HEROES OF THE GUARD** **2016 CHRISTMAS** **TOY ROUNDUP**



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