

THE DISPATCH

JANUARY 2017 EDITION OF THE TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT'S OFFICIAL MAGAZINE



DUTY HONOR TEXAS



SOLDIERS LOST BUT NEVER



CW3 DUSTIN LEE MORTENSON

Texas Army National Guard aviation material officer.

Survived by wife Ruth Mortenson, And two children.



CW2 LUCAS MAURICE LOWE

Texas Army National Guard aircraft maintenance officer.

Survived by his wife, Kami Bush who is expecting twins an two children.



PFC ROWAN JAMESON WINDHAM

Honorary Soldier With the Texas Army National Guard.

Survived by his mother Carrie Windham, father Brian Windham and two siblings.

FORGOTTEN



Governor
Greg Abbott



The Adjutant General
Maj. Gen. John F. Nichols

Public Affairs Officer
Lt. Col. Travis Walters

Deputy Public Affairs Officer
Maj. Joshua Amstutz

Public Affairs Staff
Capt. Martha Nigrelle
Capt. Jessica Jackson
Sgt. Elizabeth Peña
John Gately
Laura Lopez
John Thibodeau

Graphic Layout and Design
Bob Seyller

Contributing Writers & Photographers
The Texas Military Department Public Affairs Office would like to thank all the contributing writers and photographers who generously share their work with us. Without the hard work and dedication of Guardsmen and civilians, we would not be able to tell YOUR TMD story.

JANUARY DISPATCH

- 4 From the Top
- 6 Currently Deployed Guardsmen
- 7 Eight Nation Mission
- 8 New Deputy Adjutant General
- 9 NDAA Impacts
- 10 Legislative visit to Camp Mabry
- 12 TMD by the Numbers
- 16 Guardsman aids injured Texan
- 17 36th ID pins new General
- 18 Taylor Armory Rededication
- 20 Snowball Express

* The Dispatch is an authorized publication for members of the Texas Military Department and the Department of Defense. Contents of The Dispatch are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, the National Guard Bureau, or the State of Texas. * The editorial content of this publication is the responsibility of the Texas Military Department Public Affairs Office. * The appearance of advertising in this publication, including inserts or supplements, does not constitute endorsement of the products or services advertised by the U.S. Army or the Texas Military Department. * Everything advertised in this publication will be made available for purchase, use, or patronage without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, marital status, physical handicap, political affiliation, or any other factor of the purchaser, user, or patron. If a violation or rejection of this equal opportunity policy by an advertiser is confirmed, the publisher will refuse to print advertising from that source until the violation is corrected. * Content is edited, prepared and provided by the Texas Joint Military Department Public Affairs Office, Bldg. 10, 2200 W. 35th Street, Camp Mabry, Austin, Texas. 78703.*

TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT

TMD LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES



This year, members of the Texas legislature will convene in Austin. This biannual assembly will be filled with budget discussions, debates over legislation and possible changes, both major and minor, to the operation of the Texas government.

As Soldiers and Airmen of the Texas Military Department these items may have a lasting impact on the operation of the department, your military career and your personal life as a service member. I'd like to take a moment to discuss some of the important legislative items that may affect you.

My priorities for our Guardsmen — People First, Relevant & Ready and Communicate & Partner — will serve as guideposts for our department leaders as they respond to elected officials seeking new ways to empower our citizen Soldiers and Airmen.

PEOPLE FIRST:

During previous legislative sessions, our elected officials provided resources to help support our TMD community members.

Specifically, the Legislature funded a Mental Health Initiative allowing the Department to connect service members, families and veterans with a network of state and private providers, as well as unit crisis support as needed. This program enhances the well-being of our service members and strengthens the support network for those Guardsmen considering suicide.

Additionally, Texas Guardsmen are excelling professionally thanks to our State Tuition Reimbursement Program. As federal funds diminish this has become a critical funding source for Guardsmen seeking higher education. In 2008 this fund helped 5,000 of your fellow service members attend college.

Guardsmen with access to higher education resources not only serve as a capable workforce for their civilian employer, they become skilled and adaptable military members that create a force ready to serve the people of Texas.

RELEVANT & READY:

Over the last two years, you and your fellow Texas Guardsmen have responded to numerous state active duty missions and overseas deployments. We leveraged our resources, built strong partnerships and deployed mission-ready service members each time the state and nation called.

TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT

The ability for the Department to respond quickly hinges on having training sites, readiness centers and other modern facilities equipped to handle the needs of our Soldiers and Airmen. Our elected officials have already taken steps to help upgrade our facilities to meet the evolving needs of the Texas Guard mission set. Through the State of Texas Armory Revitalization, or STAR, program, state funds and federal matching dollars are helping bring our armories up to code, improve energy efficiencies and meet anti-terrorism force protection requirements.

These resources ensure we remain relevant and ready to respond domestically and globally. The last few years have seen our Guardsmen deploy to Operation Secure Texas, battle historic flooding and combat wildfires all within the borders of Texas. Soldiers and Airmen also answer the nation's call by continuously deploying Guardsmen since Sept. 26, 2001.

COMMUNICATE & PARTNER

I believe it's important that our Soldiers and Airmen know the department's Government Affairs Office is prepared to work with all of our state leaders seeking information about the organization. As a state agency, the Texas Military De-

partment does not advocate for, or against any pieces of legislation, however we do work to provide our state leaders with the resources or information they need to make the most informed decisions possible.

If you receive any requests for information from our state elected officials, please contact our GAO team, led by Major Malcolm Warbrick. This dedicated group will ensure our organization is providing consistent information about our agency's implementation of previous legislation or the potential impact of future legislation or funding sources. The GAO can be reached at (512) 782-5531.

For further reading about how the Texas Military Department supports our elected officials during the state session I would encourage you to read TMD P16-06 Elected Official Engagement and Coordination Requirements with Government Affairs Office (GAO). This document is available on-line at tmd.texas.gov/texas-military-department-policies.

Thank you for your work on behalf of Texas I am proud to serve alongside such remarkable Texans Serving Texas!



TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT

TEXAS GUARDSMEN SERVE WORLDWIDE DURING HOLIDAYS

Air Force Maj. Gen. John Nichols, adjutant general, Texas National Guard, left; Army Command Sgt. Maj. Mark Weedon, senior enlisted leader, Texas National Guard, second from left; and Air Force Gen. Joseph Lengyel, fourth from right, chief, National Guard Bureau, poses with members of the Texas National Guard during a Thanksgiving Day troop visit, Kandahar, Afghanistan, Nov. 24, 2016. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jim Greenhill)



Members of the 176th Engineer Brigade celebrate the holidays during festivities held across the Middle East. (Photo's Courtesy of 176th Engineer Brigade Facebook)





TEXAS GUARD MISSION SPANS EIGHT NATIONS

Story By: Capt. Maria Mengrone
176th Engineer Brigade Public Affairs

KUWAIT – Approximately 135 Texas Guardsmen of the 176th Engineer Brigade, currently forward based in the Middle East, continue to provide command and control of more than 1,600 Active Duty, National Guard and Army Reserve engineer forces across the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility while deployed.

“This is a historic mission for the engineer brigade. This is the first time a headquarters brigade has had this type of mission, in a contingency environment,” said 176th Engineer Brigade Commander, Col. Charles M. Schoening. Since arriving, the brigade tackled challenges that tested their strength as a staff and quickly worked to solve and close the communication gap.

“The greatest challenge we initially faced was not having our network infrastructure and connectivity in place,” said Schoening. “We overcame these shortfalls and were able to become fully operationally capable within the first 30 days.” The brigade is responsible for engineer forces spanning eight countries in 19 separate locations.

“We made it possible for battalion and company commanders to conduct battlefield rotations, and we immediately started pushing our brigade resources, such as behavioral health, religious services support and medical support to all the different locations,” said Schoening.

Many of the missions across the various countries are heavily focused on general engineer tasks.

“We are in charge of troop labor construction planning; we help the stakeholders plan the project all the way through execution,” said 176th Engineer Brigade Operations Officer Lt. Col. Robert S. Crockem Jr.

To facilitate the execution of the engineer projects the brigade assigned portfolio managers to each area of operation. “Our portfolio managers coordinate with stakeholders to un-

derstand their requirements and we help them build those requirements into construction projects. Once coordinated we push the project through the funding process to get materials and then start tasking our battalions against that,” said Crockem.

The brigade also touts a geospatial team ready and equipped to meet any additional requirements.

“We provide geospatial products that supplement decision making,” said Warrant Officer 1 Steven Machado, geospatial technician. “We have received positive feedback because we are able to provide perspective on the ground for the entire U.S. Central Command area of responsibility.”

Allowing movements across the various regions is required to obtain critical data to assist in the planning process.

“We survey different base camps and use our instruments to map out what you see on the ground,” said Texas Army National Guard Spc. Quincy D. Daniels, technical engineer, 176th En. Bde. “We then get information important to know for things like drainage flow,” said Daniels.

The arrival of the engineer brigade also helped serve as a conduit to assist its two battalions prioritize its various missions. Additionally, the brigade provides liaison officers to help support and build the various higher command relationships.

“There is a lot of pride in the work being done, the Soldiers are motivated and there are a lot of eyes on the work that they are doing and they are doing everything they can to make Texas proud,” said Schoening.

The headquarters element of the 176th Engineer Brigade is a Texas Army National Guard unit based in Grand Prairie, Texas. The unit is serving a nine-month deployment to the Middle East in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. **-D**

www.tmd.texas.gov 7

TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT

GOVERNOR APPOINTS NEW DEPUTY ADJUTANT GENERAL - ARMY



**Brig. Gen. Tracy R. Norris to serve as
Deputy Adjutant General - Army**

AUSTIN, Texas- Maj. Gen. John F. Nichols, the Adjutant General of Texas, is pleased to announce Brig. Gen. Tracy R. Norris, of Austin, has been named the Deputy Adjutant General-Army for the Texas Military Department, Dec. 1, 2016, following the retirement of Maj. Gen. William L. Smith.

Gov. Greg Abbott made the appointment for a term to expire at the pleasure of the Governor. Norris earned a commission after completing the ROTC program at Florida State University, graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree in Anthropology and a Master of Science in Urban and Regional Planning. Additionally, she received a Master in Strategic Studies from the United States Army War College and a Master of Business Administration from the McCombs School of Business at The University of Texas at Austin.

Since January 2016, Norris served as the Assistant Deputy Adjutant General, Texas Military Department and previously served as Director of Construction and Facilities Management for the Texas Army National Guard. She also served as commander of the 176th Engineer Brigade and as Chief of Staff of the 36th Infantry Division; responsible for oversight of command and control throughout nine southern provinces of Iraq in 2010. Prior to those positions, she served as commander of the Recruiting and Retention Battalion and worked as a program manager for several programs at the National Guard Bureau.

Norris' awards and decorations include the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal (with four Oak Leaf Clusters), the Iraqi Campaign Medal (with two Bronze Stars), Global War of Terrorism Service Medal, Humanitarian Service Medal (Hurricane Katrina/Rita), the U.S. Department of State Franklin Award and the Texas Lone Star Distinguished Service Medal.

As the Deputy Adjutant General for Army, she will be responsible for the coordination of activities for the Texas Military Department with the National Guard Bureau to ensure funding and compliance occur with other federal, state, and local jurisdictions in matters relating to missions of the Texas Army National Guard.

An appointment ceremony is scheduled to take place at Camp Mabry, in Austin, on Saturday, Jan. 21, 2016. Concurrently, Norris will serve as the Commander of the Texas Army National Guard.

8 TheDISPATCH JANUARY 2017

TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT

NDAAs IMPACT ON THE TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT

Courtesy of TMD Government Affairs Office

AUSTIN, Texas – The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017, or NDAA, was approved by Congress on Dec. 2, 2016, and was signed by the president on Dec. 23, 2016. This legislation provides policy guidance for all echelons within the Department of Defense, including the National Guard.

The NDAA outlines strategies for the federal training requirements and missions of the Texas Military Department's Army units and Air National Guard wings. It is the culmination of a yearlong effort led by our congressional leaders, including U.S. Rep. Mac Thornberry (TX-13), chairman of the House Committee on Armed Services.

"Above all else, this bill is focused on supporting the men and women who keep our nation safe," Thornberry said. "It provides them the full pay raise to which they are entitled by law, it improves their health care system, it ensures they receive the equipment and training they need to do their jobs, and much more."

Highlights from the FY17 NDAA include:

- 2.1 percent pay raise for military personnel
- Requires the Secretary of Defense to review and approve the curriculum and program structure of National Guard counter-drug schools such as Starbase and Challenge Academy
- Delays the conversion of some military technicians to Title 5 civilians until Oct. 1, 2017
- Directs the Secretary of Defense to consult with the Chief of the National Guard Bureau to submit a feasibility report to Congress by March 1, 2017, on the potential of converting military technicians to the Active Guard Reservist program
- Authorizes the Chief of the National Guard Bureau to program for, appoint, employ, administer, detail, and assign federal civilian employees to provide full time support to the non-federalized National Guard
- Authorizes the Chief of the National Guard Bureau the authority to delegate to the adjutants general the authority to appoint, employ, and administer federal civilian employees within the 54 states and territories with authority to conduct all personnel functions for employee
- Eliminates the statutory requirement of O-9 rank for the Vice Chief of the National Guard Bureau and the Directors of the Army and Air National Guard
- This year's NDAA went through many iterations during the legislative process and emerged as a compromise.
- From a high-level, the compromised version of the NDAA includes \$618.7 billion in authorized defense spending, of which \$523.7 billion is for base defense activities and \$67.8 billion for the war-related Overseas Contingency Operations account (\$8.3 billion is for base budget programs). The FY17 NDAA authorizes \$3.2 billion more than the president's budget request.

www.tmd.texas.gov 9

TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT

TMD LEGISLATIVE



Soldiers and State Officials pose in front of a TMD Bulldozer.



6th Civil Support Team with decontamination equipment

The Texas Army National Guard Domestic Operations Task Force hosted an annual Legislative Day for State and Federal officials and their staff, Dec. 2, 2016, at Camp Mabry in Austin, Texas.



State Guard members discuss organization



Row of high profile vehicles with different load outs

Photos By: Sgt. Elizabeth Pena
Texas Military Department Public Affairs Office

TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT

RELATIVE DAY



Bambi Bucket used for wildfire suppression



ChalleNGe Academy Student using crane

The event gave elected officials the opportunity to experience the response capabilities of the national Guard and learn how Citizen soldier train to respond to domestic emergencies.



A visit to the cockpit of a Lakota Helicopter



Soldiers and State Officials pose in front of a Black Hawk

www.tmd.texas.gov 11

TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT

TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT 2016 BY THE NUMBERS

STATE ACTIVE DUTY DEPLOYMENTS

121 STATE OF TEXAS ASSISTANCE REQUESTS

RESULTING IN

346 TEXAS STATE ACTIVE DUTY MISSIONS

 **223**
PEOPLE RESCUED

 **1,083**
PEOPLE ASSISTED

1,521 
PEOPLE EVACUATED

490 
ANIMALS RESCUED

 **174**
GUARDSMEN DEPLOYED IN TEXAS

STATE ACTIVE DUTY MISSIONS BY EQUIPMENT USED

78 
HUMVEES

 **180**
HIGH PROFILE VEHICLES

10 
WRECKERS

 **2**
ARMY AMBULANCE

 **20**
UH-60 BLACKHAWKS

9 
UH-72 LAKOTAS

 **22**
CH-47 CHINOOKS

2 
C-130 HERCULES

TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT

TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT PERSONNEL

DEPLOYMENTS OUTSIDE CONTIGUOUS UNITED STATES

491

TEXAS ARMY NATIONAL GUARD
SOLDIERS DEPLOYED IN 2016

319

TEXAS AIR NATIONAL GUARD
AIRMEN DEPLOYED IN 2016

18,212

ARMY GUARD
MEMBERSHIP

3,315

AIR GUARD
MEMBERSHIP

1,871

STATE GUARD
MEMBERSHIP

4,600

FULLTIME MILITARY
SUPPORT STAFF

535

STATE EMPLOYEE
SUPPORT STAFF

99

CONTRACTORS
FEDERAL

MASTER COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT

FEDERAL AGREEMENT FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF NATIONAL GUARD TRAINING FOR FEDERAL MISSIONS

\$61.2 MILLION

TOTAL FEDERAL REIMBURSEMENT

5.3 MILLION

STATE MATCHING FUNDING

INSTALLATION RESOURCES

COUNSELING/MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM:

State funded program that provided over 8,700 counseling and consultation services to military service members, veterans and families on a variety of mental/behavioral health issues.

FAMILY ASSISTANCE SERVICES

Provide assistance in six essential services: Crisis Intervention, Legal Resources, Financial Resources, TRICARE Information, ID Cards and DEERS, Community Resources. Over 6,200 retired service members utilized the ID Card office in 2015

FAMILY READINESS:

Trains volunteers to support soldiers and families within a unit.

YOUTH PROGRAMS:

Support military children emotionally, socially and academically through engaging events designed to enhance leadership and teamwork.

TRANSITION ASSISTANCE:

Assist service members in accessing VA benefits and healthcare services, along with other federal, state, and community resources.

YELLOW RIBBON REINTEGRATION PROGRAM:

Prepare, sustain and reintegrate service members and families throughout the deployment cycle.

RESILIENCE TRAINING:

Teaches soldiers and families methods of preventing stress and enhancing coping mechanisms.

SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAM:

Teaches awareness of person at risk concerns, caregiver tasks and intervention skills.

JOB CONNECTION EDUCATION PROGRAM:

Helps unemployed/underemployed service members develop the skills needed to enter the workforce and foster a career.

SURVIVOR OUTREACH SERVICES:

Help surviving family members cope with the loss of a service member and allow them to maintain a connection with their military family and support networks.

STATE TRAINING FACILITIES

59 READINESS
CENTERS

UNITED STATES
ARMED FORCES
RESERVE CENTERS **20**

33 MAINTENANCE
FACILITIES

TRAINING
SITES **4**

33 AIR GUARD
FACILITIES

AVIATION
SUPPORT FACILITIES **4**

9 

**FY 16-17 STATE OF TEXAS
ARMORY RESTORATION**

TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT

MILITARY TRAINING HELPS GUARDSMAN SAVE TEXAN'S LIFE



Staff Sgt. Aaron Dias with his family
(Courtesy Photo from Aaron Diaz)

Story & Photo by Sgt. Elizabeth Pena Texas Military Department Public Affairs Office

TYLER, Texas – Disaster can strike at anytime. Citizen-soldiers of the Texas Army National Guard are taught to always be prepared.

Texas Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Aaron Dias, recruiting and retention officer for the Recruiting and Retention Battalion, Region II, Team VII in Tyler, was driving back from the Military Entrance Processing Station in Shreveport, Louisiana, to his armory in Tyler with his recruit when disaster struck.

“The sun was starting to set,” said Dias. “It was to that point where you run into the sun it kind of casts a glare on you.”

Hiwatha Hudson, a legally blind 55-year-old man had just stepped off to cross the street with his cane.

“My applicant in the passenger seat hollered at me ‘there’s someone on the road!’ said Dias. “Sure enough, as soon as we cast over the hill, I saw a silhouette of a man and I swerved to miss him.”

At that moment Dias was thankful he avoided the man, but as he was pulling over, he saw something horrid.

“Then I looked back in my rear view mirror, I saw someone hit him so I turned around, jumped in the suicide lane and jumped to assist him,” said Dias.

Without hesitation, Dias immediately called 911 and took the situation into his own hands.

“I jumped out, got my applicant to start blocking traffic. When I came up to the man he was face down and the blood was running down pretty heavy,” said Dias. “So I rolled him over on his side to the recovery position to kind of balance his head so the blood would drain out and I held him there and checked his pulse until the EMT arrived.”

The recovery position, one of the many skills learned in the military, is designed to prevent suffocation through obstruction of the airway.

“We are taught over and over, repetition so that way when it comes to a situation like this, you don’t think you just react. I don’t think if I had that training or that repetition of training I don’t know if I would have done anything successfully like I did,” said Dias.

Service members in the Texas Army National Guard must go through combat life saving courses throughout their military career and are taught to always be ready to help. Dias, father of two, has been a member of the guard for over 10 years.

“Every other generation of my family has served,” said Dias. “It’s a duty, it’s an honor and opportunity to put on this uniform everyday.”

Hudson has since been transferred to the Ocean Behavior Hospital in East Texas.

“I am so glad he was there to render aid because if he hadn’t, I would not have my son today,” said Jerleane Hudson, mother of Henry. “I’m praying that God will forever bless him.”

Although he has not made a full recovery, it is Dias’s fast response that saved his life.

“People will drive past people in wrecks all the time they won’t stop and ask if they’re OK. Heck it could’ve been you, or me and I would pray that someone would stop and do what they could, whether it was helpful or not, at least they were trying. You know, just help,” said Dias.

Thousands of fatalities every year in casualties where the cause of the unconscious was not fatal, but the airway was blocked, causing the patient to suffocate. Dias accredits the military with giving him the knowledge and experience to respond to this situation.

“It’s a part of being in the military but it’s also a part of just being raised in a small town. You help anyone that needs help. That also goes hand in hand with being in the guard. We are citizen-Soldiers we are supposed to help out wherever we can,” said Dias. **-D**



T-PATCH DIVISION PROMOTES NEW BRIGADIER GENERAL

*Story by Spc. Christina Clardy
36th Infantry Division Public Affairs*

Texas Army National Guard Colonel Charles “Chuck” Aris, the Assistant Division Commander of Support, was promoted to the rank of brigadier general in a ceremony Sunday, Dec. 4, 2016 at Camp Mabry, in Austin, Texas.

Maj. Gen. James K. “Red” Brown, the Deputy Commanding General — Reserve Component, United States Forces, promoted Aris to his one-star rank with his friends, family members and colleagues present.

During the ceremony, Brown, a former commanding general of the 36th Inf. Div Infantry Division, and Aris’ wife of 26 years, Amy, pinned the new general’s rank to the shoulders of his uniform. His son Matthew and daughter Kate presented him with a one-star general’s flag, a traditional general officer’s belt and a desk placard. As per Texas tradition, Aris then gave bouquets of yellow roses to both his wife and his mother, Janice.

“Aris is one of those officers that we always knew was going to rise to the top,” said Brown. “He and his family are the ultimate traditional National Guard family. As a civilian, Chuck is a very distinguished and a very successful attorney, who doesn’t have to do this; but he chooses to do so as a service to this great state and this great nation.”

Because of his dual military and civilian careers, several military dignitaries and civilian colleagues attended the ceremony, including Maj. Gen. John F. Nichols, the Adjutant General of Texas, Maj. Gen. Lester Simpson, Commanding General of the 36th Infantry Division, and fellow attorneys from his law firm. Aris, a resident of Waxahachie, Texas, is also a partner with the Dallas-based Byrne, Cardenas and Aris Law Firm, where he handles civil litigation.

“I want to say thank you to every senior leader, every mentor and every person in my life who has supported, trained, and guided

me,” said Aris. “But I need to say thank you to my family, because without them, their love and their support, I would not be standing where I am today.”

Aris will deploy to southern Afghanistan next year as the Commander of the Train, Advise and Assist Command -- South in support of Operation Freedom’s Sentinel.

“It’s an honor to be selected for this,” said Aris. “I pledge to do my very best to make sure that we excel in this mission and continue the great heritage of the Texas Army National Guard.”

His most recent assignments include serving as the acting Assistant Division Commander of Maneuver, division Chief of Staff and Commander of both the 56th and 72nd Infantry Brigade Combat Teams. He served as a task force commander during a 2005 rotation to Kosovo, and deployed to Iraq in 2009 as an assistant chief of staff in operations.

In 1998, he received a Bachelor of Arts degree and commission from Texas A&M University and was awarded as a Distinguished Military Graduate in the ROTC program. After serving on Active Duty in the Army, in 1993 he joined the Texas Army National Guard. Aris also holds a Master of Science from the Army War College and a Juris Doctorate from South Texas College of Law.

Aris’ awards and decorations include the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal (with two Oak Leaf Clusters), Kosovo Campaign Medal, Iraqi Campaign Medal (with two service stars), Global War on Terrorism Service Medal and the Humanitarian Service Medal.

The mission of the 36th Infantry Division is to provide ready and responsive forces that can deploy to conduct unified land operations in joint and coalition environments, in support of a geographical combatant commander. On order, the division provides defense support to civil authorities within the United States in support of state and federal agencies. **-D**

(Above) Maj. Gen. James K. “Red” Brown, U.S. Forces Command Deputy Commanding General - Reserve Component and former 36th Infantry Division Commanding General, and Amy Aris promote Charles “Chuck” Aris to Brig. Gen. on Sunday, Dec. 4, 2016, at Camp Mabry, Austin, Texas.
(U.S. Army Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Michael Leslie)

www.tmd.texas.gov 17

TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT

TEXAS LEADERS REDEDICATE TAYLOR READINESS CENTER



State Rep. Larry D. Gonzales and Capt. Abraham H. Begins, commander of A Troop, 1- 112th Cavalry Regiment, 72nd Brigade Combat Team, 36th Infantry Division, Texas Army National Guard, cut a ribbon during a re-dedication ceremony for a Texas Army National Guard facility in Taylor, Texas, Dec. 3, 2016. Also pictured is Taylor Mayor Jesse Ancira, Brig. Gen. Tracy R. Norris, deputy adjutant general-army and commander of the Texas Army National Guard and members of the Texas Army National Guard.

Story and Photos By 1st Lt. Phil Fountain

Texas Military Department Government Affairs Office

TAYLOR, Texas – The Texas Military Department hosted state and local leaders for a re-dedication and tour of the Texas Army National Guard facility in Taylor, Texas, Dec. 3, 2016.

Since 2015, the Taylor facility has been undergoing a multifaceted repair and was rededicated in a ceremony, which included a ribbon cutting by state Rep. Larry D. Gonzales, who represents the area in the Texas House of Representatives.

“I want to thank you for always being a strong supporter – not just of the Texas National Guard – but, in particular, of our unit here, in Taylor,” said Brig. Gen. Tracy R. Norris, deputy adjutant general-army and commander of the Texas Army National Guard.

During the past several years, Gonzales corralled community support for the facility and the assigned unit, A Troop, 1-112th Cavalry Regiment, a subordinate unit of the 72nd Brigade Combat Team of the 36th Infantry Division, Texas Army National Guard.

18 **TheDISPATCH** JANUARY 2017

TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT

"You monitored the progress of this armory renovation from the beginning," Norris said, "following up with its progress and supporting the unit's progress while they were stationed overseas in the Sinai Peninsula."

The renovations to the facility, which was first constructed in 1964, included new electrical, plumbing and telecom systems, as well as updated restroom facilities and more efficient climate control and lighting systems.

Gonzales deferred praise to the Taylor community and intergovernmental partnerships that have been developed.

"This was a team effort," he said. "Since 2013, we have been working with our friends at the state, city and federal level to bring much needed safety and efficiency upgrades to the National Guard armory in Taylor."

"We are thrilled to attend this official ribbon-cutting," Gonzales said.

In addition to Gonzales, local Taylor leaders were in attendance, including Mayor Jesse Ancira and members of the Taylor Chamber of Commerce.

"We are grateful to have this facility for our Army National Guard soldiers who leave their families and their lives to service their community and their country," said Tia Rae Stone, the chamber's president. "We consider them our heroes, our neighbors and our friends."

The facility upgrades are expected to improve readiness and morale of those assigned to the unit, which is largely composed of traditional National Guard Soldiers who drill one weekend per month and two weeks per year.

In total, the project's budget was \$2.5 million, which was funded through state bonds and federal matching funds provided by the National Guard Bureau.

"All of these upgrades will save the state money, in the long-run, and provide a stable place for our soldiers to work and train," Norris said. "This could not have been done without the support from community and state leadership, who recognized the importance of keeping a well-functioning facility in Taylor." **-D**



Brig. Gen. Tracy R. Norris, deputy adjutant general - army and commander of the Texas Army National Guard, speaks at a re-dedication ceremony for a Texas Army National Guard facility in Taylor, Texas, Dec. 3, 2016. The facility was re-dedicated after undergoing \$2.5 million in repairs, which was funded through state bonds and federal matching funds provided by the National Guard Bureau.



State Rep. Larry D. Gonzales speaks at a re-dedication ceremony for a Texas Army National Guard facility in Taylor, Texas, Dec. 3, 2016. Gonzales represents Taylor in the Texas House of Representatives.

TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT

SNOWBALL EXPRESS

TEXAS AIRMEN SUPPORT GOLD STAR FAMILIES



Members of the 531st Air Force Band, Texas Air National Guard, perform a variety of Christmas songs, Dec. 11, 2016 at Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport, Dallas. The band performed while children deplaned during the 2016 Snowball Express at DFW.

Senior Airman DeJon Williams

136th Airlift Wing Public Affairs

FORT WORTH, Texas — More than 90 Airmen and family members from the Texas Air National Guard's 136th Airlift Wing, based out of Naval Air Station, Joint Reserve Base (NAS JRB), on Carswell Field, volunteered their time during the 2016 Snowball Express at Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport, Dec. 11, 2016.

"The biggest part we play here is being visible to the families who've lost their service member," said Maj. Camille LaDrew, 136th logistic readiness operations officer. "They're still apart of the military family regardless of their military member having since passed. This event gives back so much."

Snowball Express volunteers were able to support more than 1,900 children of fallen heroes who've died since 9/11.

"The volunteers were here to cheer the children on, make the day fun and just have a blast," said Texas Air National Guard Tech Sgt. Stephen Jeffrey, Recruiter, 136th Airlift Wing.

Jeffrey volunteered with his wife and three children. They dressed up in Christmas hats and elf shoes to make the volunteering experience even more fun.

"My main thing in life is how we impact others in this world," said Jeffrey. "Even though I do volunteer quite a bit throughout the year, I feel like I never do enough. I want my footprint on this world to be much larger. Anytime I see something that I want to participate in that's going to make a difference in people's lives, that's when I decide to volunteer."

Jeffrey and his family were among the many volunteers. All who volunteered did everything they could to make the arrival more exciting and welcoming for the children.

"We had quite a few more volunteers this year," said LaDrew, who is also the overall military coordinator for the event. "That includes both military members and their families."

The children were greeted with cheers and applause from the volunteers who showed their support. Service members and civilians made up the welcome party and cheered at the



gates once they arrived. Upon arrival the children were able to enjoy the festivities that lined the airport gates in the terminal. These activities included games, hula dancing and limbo. The children enjoyed music, popcorn and snow cones.

The fun and games at the airport were only the beginning of the experience. Once the children left they were escorted by the Patriot Guard Riders, who are a 100 percent volunteer organization, to begin the four-day experience.

The event has many activities planned for the children around the Dallas/Fort Worth area that include the annual "walk of gratitude," a concert with Gary Sinise & The Lt. Dan Band and the annual "Snowball Express Talent Showcase."

Jeffrey said next year he plans on being more involved and would like to make volunteering in the Snowball Express a family tradition.

For more information on future Snowball Express events visit their website at

www.snowballexpress.org.

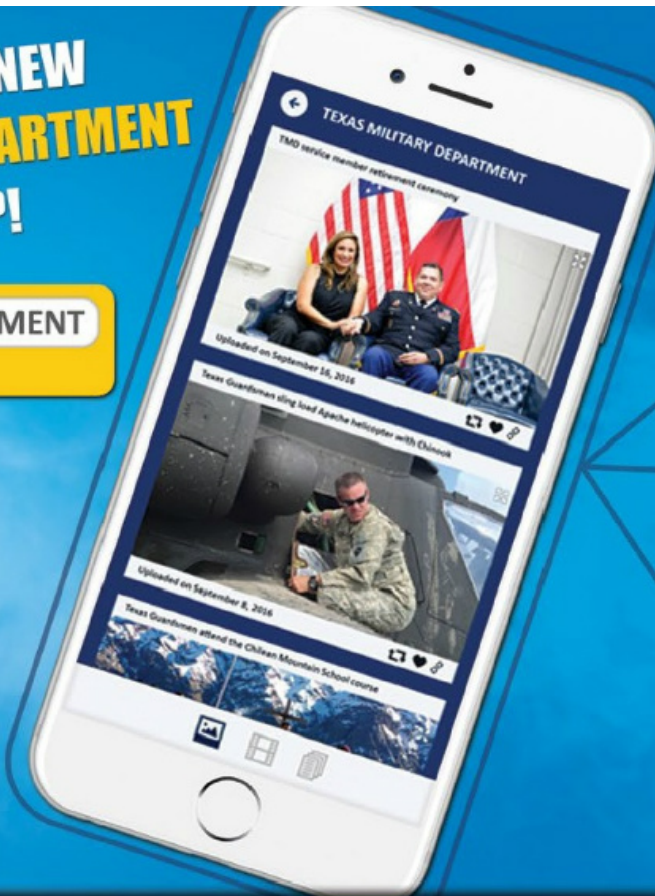
(Above) Members of the 136th Airlift Wing, Texas Air National Guard, pose for a photo, Dec. 11, 2016 at Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport, Dallas. The members volunteered during the 2016 Snowball Express.

(Right) Brayden Hicks and mother Kimberly Hicks, pose with a photo of Spc. Seth Hicks, Dec. 11, 2016 at Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport, Dallas. Hicks attended the Snowball Express in honor of her fallen hero. (Air National Guard photo by Senior Airman De'Jon Williams)



www.tmd.texas.gov 21

CHECKOUT THE NEW TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT MOBILE APP!

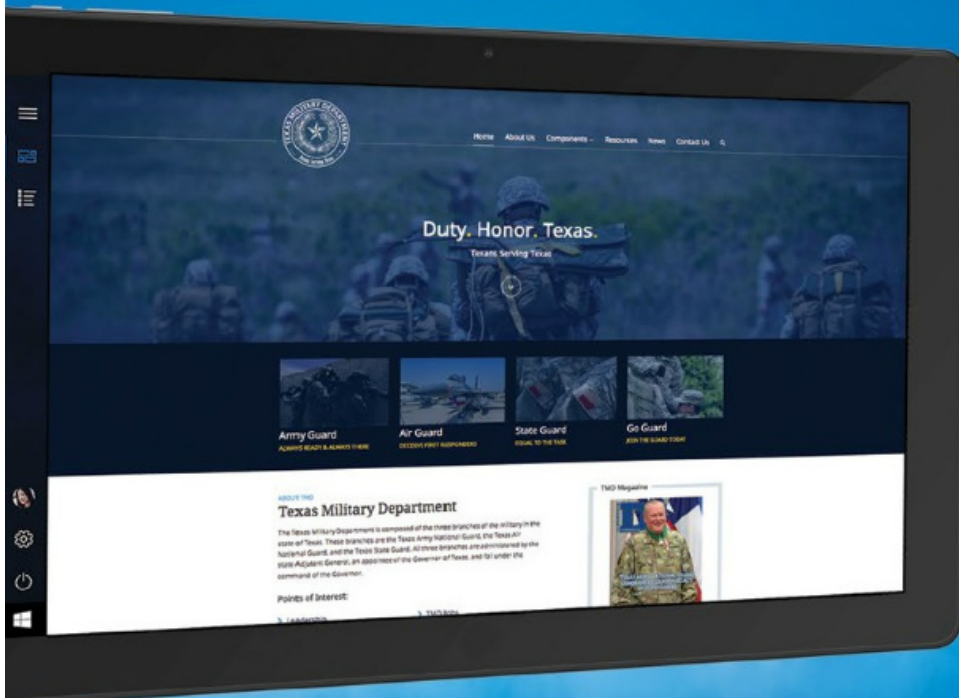


Statewide **ALERTS**

Image **SHARE**

Department **NEWS**

CONNECTING TEXAS GUARDSMEN



DONT MISS THE **UPGRADED** TMD WEBSITE

tmd.texas.gov

NEW LOOK, NEW CONTENT, NEW NAVIGATION!

ENHANCED LONE STAR PORTAL NOW AVAILABLE ANYWHERE!



WHAT YOU NEED TO LOG-ON:

- A COMPUTER WITH INTERNET ACCESS
- COMMON ACCESS CARD (CAC) & CAC READER
- GUARDNET USER ACCOUNT

LOG-IN & VISIT [HTTPS://PORTAL.TX.NG.MIL/](https://portal.tx.ng.mil/)

TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT HALL OF HONOR



**SUBMIT NOMINATIONS FROM
JANUARY 1ST THROUGH MARCH 1ST**

www.tmd.texas.gov/hall-of-honor