

THE DISPATCH

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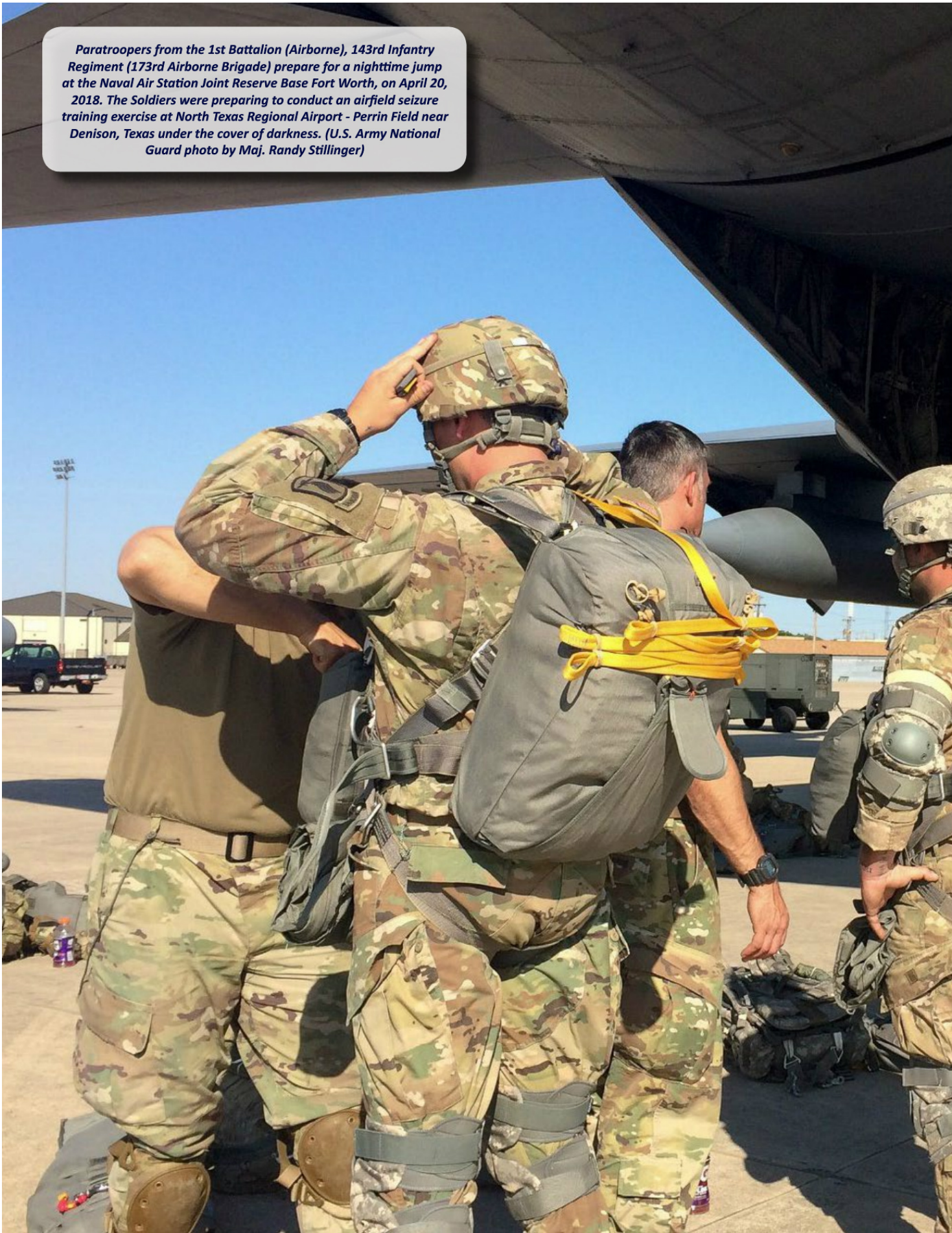
MAY 2018

ON THE BORDER

TEXAS GUARDSMEN ANSWER CALL TO SECURE THE TEXAS - MEXICO BORDER

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT

Paratroopers from the 1st Battalion (Airborne), 143rd Infantry Regiment (173rd Airborne Brigade) prepare for a nighttime jump at the Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base Fort Worth, on April 20, 2018. The Soldiers were preparing to conduct an airfield seizure training exercise at North Texas Regional Airport - Perrin Field near Denison, Texas under the cover of darkness. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Maj. Randy Stillinger)



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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.

(ON THE COVER)

Texas Army National Guard Soldier overlooks the Rio Grande river while participating in the Texas Military Department's border mission.

(Alterations to obscure the identity of this soldier and the exact location have been made within this photograph. Consider this cover a graphic illustration.)

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TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT

FROM THE TOP

COMMENTARIES FROM TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT LEADERS



A NEW WAY FORWARD RETHINKING THE TMD STRUCTURE

MAJ. GEN. JOHN NICHOLS
THE ADJUTANT GENERAL - TEXAS

The month of May begins the official implementation of the reorganization of the Texas Military Department Joint Force Headquarters, based out of Austin, Texas. This month you will notice these changes – to processes, communication practices, and personnel throughout TMD. The thought behind this change has been a long time coming, but as you well know, it takes time to make sure that a major initiative like this is done right.

"As our mission sets continue to get larger in scale and longer in duration, I want to ensure that we are better organized to reduce costly duplications of effort that slow us down in a time when speed and accuracy of response are necessary for success"

~MAJ. GEN. JOHN NICHOLS~

As word of the reorganization spreads throughout TMD, I would like to address this moment in our agency's history and explain its purpose. It represents what I view to be a natural evolution of our Headquarters, and one that will best prepare us for future challenges. As our mission sets continue to get larger in scale and longer in duration, I want to ensure that we are better organized to reduce costly duplications of effort that slow us down in a time when speed and accuracy of response are necessary for success. While upper level changes will be in place by May 1, 2018, the reorganization will not reach the field until the fall. This is not an effort to micromanage, but rather an opportunity for our Headquarters to better support units through better communication and cohesion.

The section most affected by the reorganization is the Domestic Operations Task Force. I want to make it clear that Operation Joint Matrix is in no way a negative reflection on their efforts. The task force performed its duty exceptionally well, and changed the culture of TMD from a force that was reactionary and haphazard in the face of emergencies, to one that stands ever ready and extremely flexible. Thanks to the efforts of the DOMOPS Task Force, TMD is now a highly prepared and capable agency with well-crafted contingency plans and an impressive Mission Ready Package catalogue.

One inadvertent consequence to the creation of the Task Force was a fragmenting of our Headquarters. In order to realign with doctrine and the intent of the National Guard Bureau, while still capitalizing on the successes of DOMOPS, Operation Joint Matrix will realign JFHQ as the singular senior headquarters, with staff elements within it covering Joint Staff, Army Staff, Air Staff, and State Guard. The Deputy Adjutants General and Commander of the State Guard will maintain control of the staff that supports them and through this new structure will be better able to fulfill their statutorily required duties. The utility of various task force HQs will not be eliminated by the reorganization, they will simply be more precisely placed in their relationship around JFHQ, with clearly delineated lines of communication and chains of command extending all the way to my office.

This change will help ensure you have the support from your leadership to do your jobs more efficiently. During this Operation, be an active participant in the execution of the reorganization by communicating through your chains of command the successes and frictions you experience to ensure mission success. Thank you for all you do to serve this great state and nation. I am proud to serve alongside you. Duty, Honor, Texas.

- FROM THE TOP -

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TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT



OPEN HOUSE CONNECTS GUARDSMEN WITH LOCAL TEXAS COMMUNITY



Story & Photos By: Sgt. Amberlee Boverhous 100th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

AUSTIN, Texas- Camp Mabry opened its doors to the public during its annual Texas Military Department Open House in conjunction with the American Heroes Air Show April 21-22 2018. During the event, the organization's State Active Duty mission was highlighted.

"For a state active duty mission, we respond to a multiple of things, whether it be forest fires, flooding, winter events, whenever we have ice or snow and of course hurricanes," said Texas Air National Guard Chief Master Sgt. Michael Cornitius, Command Senior Enlisted Leader for the Texas Military Department. "It's a state support piece, so we can help Texans, which is what we are here for."

The Texas Air National Guard, Texas Army National Guard and Texas State Guard is composed of service members that the Governor can activate to State Active Duty status in response to natural, man-made disasters or Homeland Defense missions.

Recently, the Texas Military Department responded to the Governor's call for Hurricane Harvey relief efforts, assisting local services in rescue and aid to those affected by the disaster. Two Soldiers with Texas Army National Guard's 551st Multi-Role Bridge Company 386th Engineer Battalion, 176th Engineer Brigade based out of El Campo, Texas, were present at the open house to share their stories about their role in the relief effort.

"We went out on the first day after Harvey hit the nearby communities of Katy, Texas," said Texas Guardsman Sgt. Robert Matthews.

A Texas Air National Guardsman and his family watch the opening ceremony at the Texas Military Department Open House and American Heroes Air Show in Austin, Texas, April 21, 2018. Through demonstrations, displays, and personal interaction the public is educated about the missions and capabilities it provides the citizens of Texas. (Texas State Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Timothy Pruitt)



Texas Army National Guard engineers from the 836th Engineer Company, 136th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, work alongside soldiers from the Indiana National Guard, the Czech Republic and Slovakia in support of Operation Toxic Lance, a search and rescue exercise involving a chemical warfare scenario, March 12-23, 2018, at Training Area Lest in central Slovakia. The soldiers were brought together as part of the National Guard Bureau's State Partnership Program that focuses on building interoperability and strengthening international relationships through military-to-military exchanges.

**Story & Photos By: Staff Sgt. Steven Smith
100th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment**

Training Area Lest, Slovakia – Seventeen Texas Army National Guard engineers from the 136th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade's 836th Engineer Company provided search and rescue support and participated in a multinational exercise, Operation Toxic Lance, March 12-23, 2018, at Training Area Lest, central Slovakia.

The operation brought together chemical and engineer trained Soldiers from the Texas and Indiana Army National Guards as well as the Slovakian and Czech Republic militaries, as part of the National Guard Bureau's State Partnership Program that focuses on building interoperability and strengthening international relationships through military-to-military exchanges.

ships through military-to-military exchanges.

The Texas-based Soldiers are search and rescue qualified and provide real world response to Federal Emergency Management Agency Region VI as one part of the Texas-run Homeland Response Force, under the command of the 136th. The purpose of this exercise was to participate with and to demonstrate search and rescue skillsets to partnered service members in the Slovakian and Czech Republic military chemical response units.

"We do not have any type of search and rescue units, or soldiers trained in that discipline here in the Slovak Army," said Lt. Col. Oliver Toderiska, Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Explosives Battalion commander for the Slovakian Army. "Seeing

the Texas soldiers integrated with our chemical response teams, working hand in hand with our own soldiers shows us how we could also use search and rescue.”

While Texas brought refined search and rescue skills, techniques and procedures to the exercise to share with their partners, their Slovakian allies brought experienced chemical experts to share training and response procedures.

The Texas search and rescue team has trained countless hours on simulated exercises, involving scenarios such as accidental and terrorism themed mass explosions, radiation threats and hazardous chemicals. But the main effort during Operation Toxic Lance was a chemical weapons threat and each day a new scenario was presented around that threat forcing soldiers to respond to new challenges.

One scenario presented a lab, run by a terrorist organization that manufactured chemical weapons and released a chemical.

“We’ve worked a lot with how to perform in and mitigate radiation threats, but we haven’t spent a lot of time on weaponized chemical agents,” said Texas Army National Guard Sgt. Myles Merriweather, a search and rescue team member. “We can take what we’ve learned here and use it to establish our own tactics, techniques and procedures back home.”

Each service member involved in Operation Toxic Lance went through a scenario where a live chemical agent was used. For most of the engineers that are certified in search and rescue, this was the first time they were exposed to a live chemical agent. The exercise built confidence in their equipment, proofed the concept of proper decontamination and showed the importance of technical proficiency in a chemical environment.

“The Texas soldiers have come a long way since they first arrived,” said Slovakian Army Capt. Labraska, doctor of Chemistry for the Slovak unit, speaking on the Texas National Guard soldiers’ ability to adapt to new skills. “By the end of Toxic Lance, your soldiers were just as proficient in our TTP’s as our own.”

The Slovak Army has state of the art chemical labs, reconnaissance vehicles, equipment, agents and they are subject matter experts in combating chemical warfare, but have no formal training in search and rescue disciplines.

With the increased threat of terrorism throughout the globe, the Slovak chemical unit is studying how to improve rapid mobilization, response operations and augment rescue efforts in a chemical attack, should that day ever come.

“The Slovak military doesn’t usually practice with its local first responders, nor is there a procedure in place for it, but luckily that’s something that our task force does very well,” said one of the Texas Guardsmen serving as a search and rescue evaluator for the exercise. “What makes our organization so good at working with any entity and in operational constraints, is that we will augment the efforts on the ground and provide whatever support the incident

Commander needs. Even though we are a military unit, we don’t take over an event, we provide the most good for the most people in whatever capacity we’re needed.”

Texas Guardsmen discussed these methods at the National Slovakia Emergency Response Conference, as well as, Slovak Lt. Gen. Pavel Macko, the Deputy Chief of Defense, British Gen. Andrew Garth serving as the military liaison to Slovakia, and a group of military command staff comprised of leaders from several other countries.

“I don’t know how you Guard soldiers do it,” Garth remarked. “How you’re able to have a combat military specialty and also find the time to train on a completely different task such as this, as complicated as this, and be proficient, is beyond me.”

Participating in Operation Toxic Lance was a huge endeavor for the Texas soldiers involved, every day putting on a chemical suit and mask while conducting physically demanding complex search and rescue operations. But the end result was an experience that was once in a military career.

“The training gave me a new perspective on how Search and Rescue operations can integrate into chemical reconnaissance” said Texas Army National Guard Spc. Katty Gracia, chemical noncommissioned officer for the 836th Engineer Company. “Even with a language barrier, it’s amazing what you can accomplish when you have a common goal and the right motivation.” **-D**



Texas Army National Guard; TXARNG; Texas Military Department; TMD; Texas National Guard; TXNG; Indiana Army National Guard; INARNG; Czech Republic; Czech Army; Slovakia; Slovak Army; Training Area Lest; State Partnership Program; SPP; Indiana National Guard; chemical response; CBRNE; 136th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade; Homeland Response Force; Search and Rescue; chemical warfare; disaster response training.

TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT

GUARDSMEN ON THE BORDER

*Story by: Sgt 1st Class Suzanne Ringle
36th Infantry Division Public Affairs*

MCALLEN, Texas – Texas Army National Guardsmen from communities all over the state left their homes and loved ones and headed south to the U.S.-Mexico border in response to an activation by Texas Governor Greg Abbott and President of the United States, Donald Trump.

"My top priority as Governor is ensuring the safety and security of Texans and securing our southern border has always been essential to that mission," said Abbott.

Along the 1,254-mile border, separating Texas and Mexico, more than 750 troops remain busy familiarizing themselves with the various aspects of their counterparts at U.S. Customs and Border Protection stations along the border.

Gov. Abbott has agreed to increase troop strength until at least 1,400 Texas Army National Guardsmen are on hand at five CBP sectors stretching from El Paso to Houston.

"The number of people coming across the border has increased more than 200 percent; the addition of National Guard on the border has proven to have a meaningful impact to reduce the flow of people and illegal activities coming across the border," said Abbott.

The idea of using military members to bolster security efforts along the border is not new and historically it has been proven successful. During a press conference Abbot cited many examples for why he agreed to send National Guard troops south. The press conference was held in the CBP Rio Grande Valley sector, an area that has seen a rapid increase of illegal activity crossing into the U.S. where there are 450 daily apprehensions.



*Governor of Texas Greg Abbott greets Soldiers of the Texas Army National Guard as they arrive to begin participating in the Texas/Mexico Border Mission.
(U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Steve Johnson)*

"The Texas National Guard will be supporting the Department of Homeland Security along the border. Texas brings a wide breadth of expertise and assets to the mission that will serve as a force multiplier wherever they are deployed," said Maj. Gen. John F. Nichols, the Adjutant General of Texas.

Texas Guardsmen are taking over positions previously manned by border patrol agents, such as: administrative duties, surveillance, maintenance, construction, transportation, and information analysis enables agents to focus on apprehensions.

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CIVILIAN SKILL SETS AS MILITARY RESOURCES

In Banks, the Texas Army National Guard has a 30-year-old with an English literature degree working as an analyst with the division's 197th Special Troops Support Company, 36th Sustainment Brigade; a full-time systems analyst with the Texas Workforce Commission and a traveler who describes his love of learning as "compulsive;" a desk-jockey with the physical fitness of an infantryman, who sits in coding classes at the University of Texas for fun.

"I go to lectures at UT and policy organizations in Texas to learn more about local government," Banks said. "I'm a constant presence at Austin events for coders and data gurus. I took up trail riding in my mid-twenties. My favorite vacations are often the ones that follow my returns from active service where I just get in my car and drive until I see something that interests me."

It was Banks' civilian experience with network systems and his appreciation of out-of-the-box thinking that enabled him to create a crucial solution during the Hurricane Harvey response.

When the Texas Military Department mobilized to rescue hurricane victims, complexity arose as several civilian first-response agencies and a diverse set of military units from various forces and components all tested their interoperability. The response efforts included National Guard units from other states, active-duty military personnel, and even service members from the Republic of Singapore Air Force.

Thompson explained that the complexity of the mission and joint force made it difficult to track troops and equipment in relation to areas where they were most needed. Fortunately, Banks could sense this obstacle had arisen and offered to help create a solution.

"We had maintenance teams out there," Thompson said. "We had medical folks out there. We also had our water teams out there. And then tracking all of that so that the powers that be could see on the map, we didn't have the capability."

"He put all of that together in a flowing real-time document that allowed them to see where pieces and parts were moving to anticipate the forward flow and the reverse cycle flow," Thompson said.

Banks said he relied on knowledge he gained from various civilian positions to make it easier for leaders to analyze needs and direct movement.

"In order to build a more functional operations center, I created a shareable operational map which the various units and headquarters elements could easily integrate on their available systems and use to deconflict information," Banks said. "This relates back to my work in information technology. I also used some of the lessons I learned as a former forensic analyst to download meteorological and geographical data from the National Weather Service to identify likely flood areas."



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According to Nichols, the border mission will not hinder the National Guard's ability to respond to other homeland concerns.

"Supporting this operation will not impact ongoing operations or our ability to respond to a natural disaster or incident in the state," said Nichols.

An advantage to using citizen Soldiers and Airmen would be they offer a unique and additional skill set as a bonus to their military occupation specialty.

"Our Guardsmen are your teachers, doctors, first responders and tradesmen who live in communities across Texas. They will bring those same skill sets with them, along with military training, equipment and expertise to support our law enforcement partners and enhance security on the border," continued Nichols.

During the welcoming brief for the service members deployed to the RGV sector, Deputy Chief Patrol Agent Raul Ortiz explained to the troops how they would be matched up with the CBP critical areas of need, "We are going to transition you, as close as we can, to something that satisfies what your civilian job skill sets are and what you normally would do for the military and match it up with our (CBP) requirements."

"The Texas National Guard is no stranger to the border and has served along the Texas-Mexico border in support of state and federal partner agencies for decades," said Brig. Gen. Tracy Norris, Deputy Adjutant General-Army and Commander of the Texas Army National Guard. "We are a force that is ready, and trained with a first-hand knowledge of this mission, the operating area, and a long-standing relationship with federal, state and local law enforcement." **-D**

(Page 7 Photos) Brig. Gen. Tracy Norris, Deputy Adjutant General for the Army and Texas Army National Guard Commander, visits Texas Army National Guard soldiers in the Rio Grande Valley sector of the Texas border, April 11, 2018. Guardsmen from across Texas have been deployed to the border where they will assist border patrol agents and local law enforcement with administrative, logistic and surveillance activities allowing agent's to focus on drug interdiction and human trafficking.

(Texas National Guard Photos by Sgt. Steve Johnson)



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It was not only his knowledge that enabled him to fill this gap, but also the flexible thinking he's developed through his career.

"My own civilian skills have been useful in as far as they allow me to think about problems from "outside the box," Banks said.

WE'RE ALL INFANTRY TO START WITH

Banks reads, codes, analyzes. He builds and maintains computer systems. And he sits for hours on end in his day job and in his part-time military job.

And as he demonstrated at Best Warrior, he can move and he can shoot.

Thompson believes that demonstrating the basic military capabilities that Guardsmen use both abroad and in domestic support missions is what participating in the Best Warrior Competition is all about, she said.

"These skills, the Best Warrior skills, are the ones that are going to help you survive through a defense support to civil authorities mission, through a deployment, or wherever we're needed," Thompson said.

Though the public may perceive Guardsmen as "weekend warriors" who don an Army uniform for a couple days a month, Thompson explained that National Guard service is more than that, especially because the Guard retained the original motto of the Minutemen: "Always ready, always there."

"That doesn't mean always ready to process paperwork or always ready to work on this computer program," Banks explained. "I am ready for whatever you need me for."

Often, she explained, what Guardsmen are needed for has more to do with their Soldiering skills than their specific specialties.

"We're Soldiers first," Thompson said. "We're all infantry to start with. We all have to be able to ruck march. We all have to be able to do all of these tasks."

As Banks demonstrated as he leapt out of the muddy water, ran down the forest trail to the clearing where he would flip tires and then shoot weapons, he's ready to serve, even in a capacity that doesn't draw from his specific non-combat arms field of expertise.

"I truly feel that the Best Warrior Competition absolutely exploits all the skills that we are expected to have, and shows that we are prepared at all times, and ready at all times," Thompson said. "It shows that we truly are."

Banks faced the same challenge that many National Guard Soldiers face with working out, but he adapted and overcame.

"The most important thing is to find time for it," Banks said. "You can do that by finding the routine time that you don't typically use economically. For example, I was unhappy at first when my job required me to take an hour lunch instead of leaving an hour early, but that has turned into my aerobic workout time."

Banks became a Soldier because he wants to serve his country, Thompson explained, but thrives because of the variety of people and experiences it allows him to learn from.

"What he really gets out of it is all the different personalities. It's a melting pot," Thompson said. "Where he works in his day job, everybody's kind of like him. Everybody's doing the same thing. They have their cubicle. Here, obviously, no cubicle."

"The National Guard is actually a very good environment for lifelong learners," Banks said. "There is always another course you haven't done or another country you haven't been to. For people who compulsively collect experiences, it's a good place to be." **-D**

(Photo Page 16) Soldiers with the 36th Infantry Division showed their strength and knowledge in the Best Warrior competition at Camp Swift, Bastrop, Texas. The winning Soldier and NCO will go on to compete at the National Guard level and eventually, their component's active duty Best Warrior Competition. (U.S. Army National Guard Photo by Staff Sgt. Mark Scovell, 36th Infantry Division Public Affairs)

(Photo Page 17) Command Sgt. Maj. Michelle Thompson, the 36th Sustainment Brigade Command Sgt. Maj., motivates Sgt. James Banks, 197th Special Troop Support Company, as he competes in the Best Warrior competition at Camp Swift, Bastrop, Texas. (U.S. Army National Guard Photo by Staff Sgt. Mark Scovell, 36th Infantry Division Public Affairs)

TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT

OPEN HOUSE EVENTS

**Texas Military Forces Museum
36th Infantry Division Band
Service Member Naturalization
Opening Ceremony
Parachute Demo
Chapel Service
American Air Show
Military Helicopter Demo
Texas Revolution Weapons
World War II Reenactment
36th Infantry Division Band
Military Vehicle Displays**

“It was a challenge to see the loss, but we saved a lot of people and the lives are what matters.” said Texas Guardsman Sgt. Willie Wallace,

Opportunities for service members to share their stories with the public is why Cornitius says the open house is important.

“It’s a chance for us to showcase the tools, equipment, and the soldiers and airmen available to help the state and our citizens” said Cornitius. “The citizens of Austin get to come out and look at what we have and how we are supporting them.”

This two day event hosted thousands of guests, who were able to see and interact with Texas Military service members and learn about their State Active Duty capabilities.

The Texas Military Department Open House is an annual event designed to welcome the community to Camp Mabry, in Austin, Texas and provide guests an up close look at its Texas National Guard. Through demonstrations, displays, and personal interaction the public is educated about the missions and capabilities it provides the citizens of Texas. **-D**



A Guardsman assist a young guest to attach a helmet while at the Texas Military Department Open House and American Heroes Air Show on Camp Mabry in Austin, Texas, April 21, 2018. This annual event is an opportunity for the public to interact with the local Texas National Guard and State Guard. (U.S. Army Guard photo by Sgt. Mark Otte)

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HOW WILL YOU REPRESENT THE TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT?

2017 Army Public Affairs Officer Rising Star of the Year reflects on what being a Public Affairs Officer taught her about living the mission and making it your own.

*Commentary by: 1st Lt. Allegra Taylor
100th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment*

In our social media obsessed world, everyone and their pet has a personal brand. It's the public-facing reputation you make for yourself or what people remember you by. As military service members, we chose our brand when we put on the uniform and promised to live the mission and values of our organization. When we wear the uniform, we should feel pride, but also remember that we were issued it so we could be easily identified.

Military public affairs professionals have an acute awareness of how individuals, on-and-off duty, affect the military's public reputation. As a public affairs officer, my job is to help our leaders make informed decisions and assist the civilian media to document and communicate the actions of the service. In this article, I'll list some of my own experiences where the actions of service members affected our public standing. It matters, because that character and public reputation can help us win wars, save lives and build morale.

It isn't optimism, but observation that leads most of us to say we work with the best human-beings in the world. As the Executive Officer for the 100th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, 71st Troop Command, last year I had the privilege of leading a team of incredible soldiers who reported on incredible individuals. We began the year at Camp Williams in Utah, at Cyber Shield 17, an annual exercise that included members of the National Guard from 44 states and territories, the U.S. Army Reserve, state and federal government agencies, nongovernmental organizations and private industry.

The two-week exercise was designed to assess participants' ability to respond to cyber incidents. Over the weeks, we saw civilians, soldiers and government agents work together to ensure that government and civilian infrastructure was safe against cyberattack. While it's our job to defend our nation, what struck me was most of the guardsmen and reservists on this mission were also members of local law enforcement and civilian emergency response. These citizen-soldiers worked the week and weekend in their communities, and when we published our stories their communities noticed.

It figured that my own soldiers did so well at their jobs that we were invited a few months later to provide public affairs support to Saber Strike 17 in Pabrade, Lithuania. While the potential threat during Exercise Cyber Shield 17 was invisible and unknown, in Lithuania, it was very real, and just next door. Exercise Saber Strike 17 was a NATO exercise hosted by four Eastern-European countries, including Lithuania, and designed to promote regional stability and security while strengthening partner capabilities and fostering trust in our Baltic allies. The exercise, which combined 20 partnered nations, focused on building interoperability and improving friendships between our allies.

What started as a public affairs mission turned into something larger however when our presence as public affairs soldiers became key to mission success. Just as it was important for us to foster these friendships, it was also important for us to show locals across the participating countries that U.S. support does not waver. During a field day hosted for local Lithuanians, the number of "thank you" and hugs U.S. Soldiers received was enough to win any heart. But it was only with the realization that less than 30 years ago Lithuania was still under Soviet rule that the soldiers really began to understand how much their presence was appreciated.

During the exercise, we were able to bring hope because the U.S. Army and the U.S. Soldier is still seen in the world as a refuge for those in need. So, when Hurricane Harvey hit Houston, people stranded by the flood water knew to look for camo. The 100th MPAD helped document soldiers rescuing Houstonians from their homes. My own duties also included embedding members of the media with soldiers, so they could help report the soldier story.

Through tragedy and uncertain times, service members need to be the figures our communities and allies can look to for help. When soldiers defame the uniform and our mission by behaving dishonorably, they are crippling the people we serve. It may be hard to correct a friend's behavior, or take seriously staunch memos about how to behave, but the United States is still an example to the world, and our members of the military need to be as well.

Live your mission. Make it your brand. **-D**

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COMBAT BOOTS TO

Sgt Steve Johnson 100th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

AUSTIN, Texas - The southernmost tip of Texas falls into what is colloquially known as "The Valley." No one really knows why it's called this since the actual Rio Grande Valley proper consists of just the four counties of Hidalgo, Cameron, Willacy and Starr counties and the nearest mountains are hundreds of miles away.

It was there, in what she calls the "blink-and-you'll-miss it" town of Premont that Texas Army National Guard Staff Sgt. San Juanita Escobar took the first steps that would both change her life, and the lives of hundreds of young women in Texas and around the world.

These first steps consisted of beauty pageants in the nearby and even smaller town of Concepcion, where pageant competitions are the source of longstanding family rivalries, and defending a title is a matter of honor. Back then no one anticipated that this south Texas girl from the Valley would rise to the title of Miss Texas Galaxy.

"Pageants were always something that my family did," Escobar said. "We had the crown for years, so it was

something you just did when you reached a certain age. After that I competed in several smaller, regional pageants and county fairs."

Those pageants led to small, local modeling jobs and eventually to auditions in California. But as much as Escobar dreamed of getting out of the small town she lived in, she decided this was not the path she wanted to follow. Commitments at home made her decide to decline the audition call-backs.

"At the time, I wasn't going to pick up and move to California," she said. "I had sports, school and my friends that were more important to me. I also didn't want to do that to the rest of my siblings, so I put all that on the back burner."

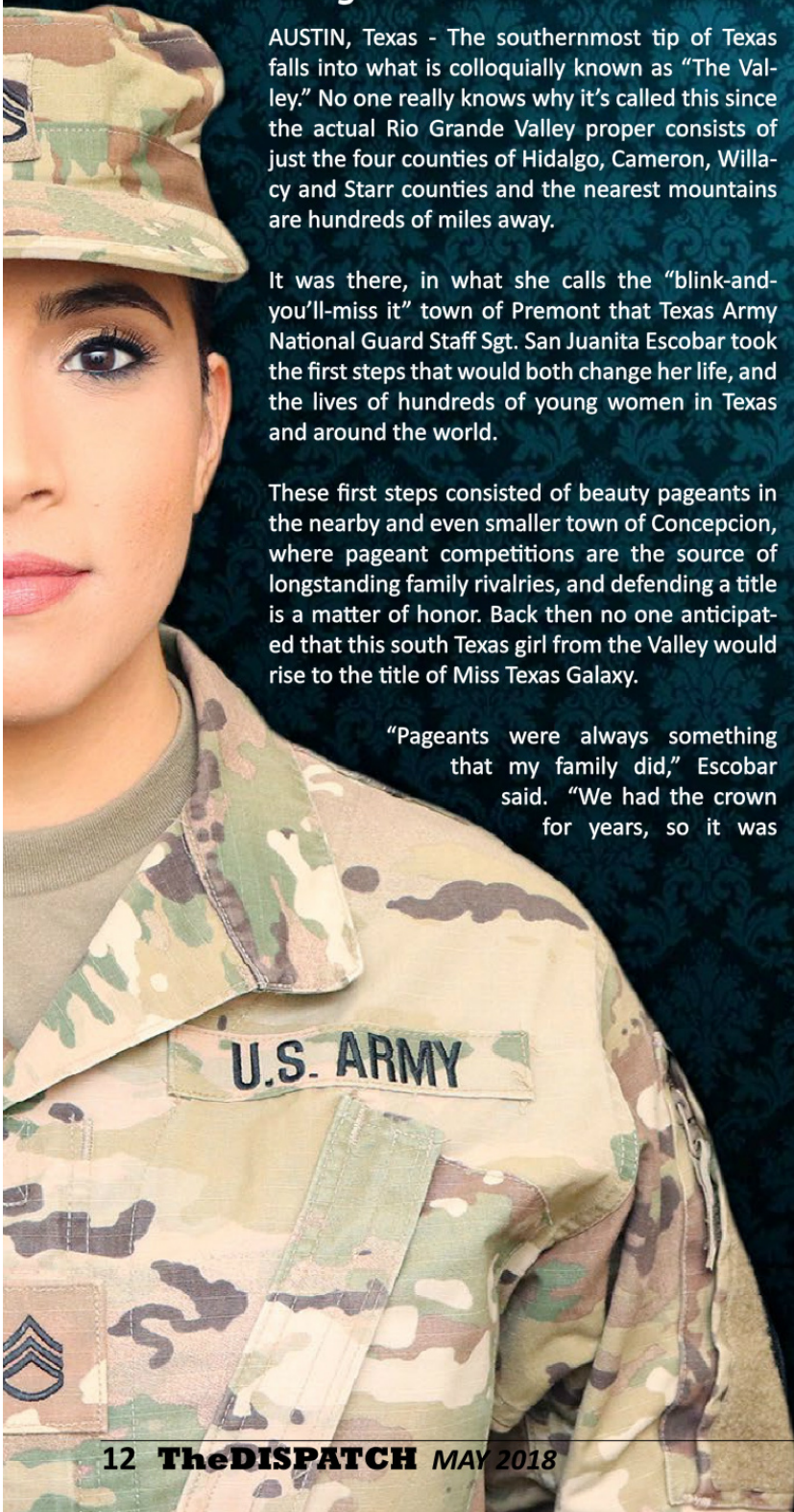
So Escobar stayed in Premont, filling every spare moment of time with studies, volleyball, basketball, cross-country, tennis and band, until one day she was approached by a recruiter from the Texas Army National Guard.

Then everything changed, and it changed in a matter of days.

"When the National Guard recruiter explained the education benefits, I was sold and it became a matter of, 'how fast can we do this?'" Escobar said. "So I met my recruiter on Tuesday and I was enlisted by Friday."

Naturally, the abruptness of Escobar's decision came as a quite a shock to friends and family. But While joining the military was a leap into unknown territory for Escobar and her family, the lure of education and travel while still being able to serve close to home was irresistible to the then 17-year-old.

"I never really knew much about the military," she said. "When they told me I could serve part-time, serve my country, still make a change in the world, better my community and still get my



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OUR FORCE

SN RACHEL SARABIA

*Texas State Guard
TMAR Gulf Company - El Paso*

"I serve because I believe in the mission and values behind the Texas Military Department and am proud to be a Texan Serving Texas."



New Key Leadership Positions



LTC Jamey L. Creek

Commander, Training Center Garrison Command

EXPERIENCE:

Creek commissioned through the Army ROTC at Tarleton State University as an armor officer. Assignments include tactical and operational levels of command and staffs throughout 3-112th AR BN, 75th DIV, 1st Army and Training Center Garrison Command. He commanded an armor company during OIF 04-05, served as an Observer Controller/Trainer Team Chief during OEF and then returned to 3-112th AR as the BN S-3. His Battalion level command was the Garrison Commander for Camp Bowie and Fort Wolters followed by the Brigade Executive Officer for Training Center Garrison Command. Creek currently serves as the fulltime Base Operations Supervisor at Camp Bowie.

EDUCATION:

Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice with a minor in Military Science. Military certifications include: Combined Arms Exercise, CGSC Common Core and Advanced Operations, Garrison Command Leadership Course, AT Level II, Range Operations, Range Safety II and Wildland Fire.

DID YOU KNOW:

Creek serves as the Region V chair for the Training Center Command Advisor Counsel? He will also celebrate 30 years of marriage with wife, Kimberly in September.

IN HIS WORDS:

What an honor to serve in such a diverse organization where each day ranges between traditional troop leading procedures, to multi-million dollar projects and facilities to an all-out combined arms and multi-agency operations to suppress wildland fires.

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education, that's really what made the National Guard stand out from the other services."

In July of 2008, Escobar finally left the small towns of her childhood for basic training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina.

"I'm very competitive. I always want to win and be the best, so I used that as my driving force," she said.

Basic combat training raining was not without some challenges for Escobar. This was her first time really being away from her home and her family. Without them, she had to discover and nurture new internal strengths to help her get through some of the tougher moments on her path to becoming a soldier.

"My strength to continue was knowing that this was something that I truly wanted," she said. "I knew it was going to change my life for the better and I knew it would make my family proud."

When she graduated in November of 2008, Escobar returned to Texas and was assigned to the 386th Engineer Battalion, based out of Corpus Christi, Texas. There she worked in personnel administration, processing paperwork for deploying Guardsmen. It was also while there that she quickly began to feel like it wasn't enough. Escobar decided she wanted to serve her country in an even higher capacity.

"I was there for maybe two drills before I started seeing that all my friends were deploying and I really loved the National Guard active life, so I volunteered to deploy," she said.

By this point, many might look for a chance to relax, but Escobar was looking for a chance to be on the move again. She had been home for about six months when an opportunity came up to deploy to Djibouti, Af-

rica with 3rd Squadron, 124th Cavalry Regiment, as a member of the security forces for a civil affairs team.

While in Africa, the future Miss Texas Galaxy saw a problem, and in a move that would come to be a hallmark of her military career, she decided to help solve it.

"While I was assigned to the civil affairs team, I helped create the Women's Initiative Program in Ethiopia," Escobar said. "Because of how high the school dropout rate is for young women, we developed special groups to go to different villages and orphanages to educate and empower them to speak to their political figures and to also inform other women about different political and medical issues."

In many parts of Africa, women are routinely subjected to discrimination and violence by virtue of tradition or customs.

TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT

Escobar's team was engaged to address these issues head on through a combination of education and strength.

"The women always felt alone, like it was them against everyone, so we brought groups together for school and we would teach them that if males don't want to help them, they can help each other," she said. "That effort fostered an environment of empowerment for them and let them know that their internal strength could be used to benefit each other."

The first groups started with 20 girls who were between the ages of 18 to 23, but would eventually reach out to thousands of girls of all ages. The Women's Initiative Program also worked closely with the Improving the Quality of Primary Education program and the National Women's Coalition Against HIV and AIDS, to reach even further.

The program was gradually increasing when Army Chief of Staff, Gen. Raymond T. Odierno heard about the program and expanded it, leading to an outreach in 13 different countries that focused on teaching women to advocate for themselves.

When that mission was over, Escobar returned home and eventually became a recruiter for the Texas Army National Guard so she could continue to change young people's lives the way her own life was changed. Once again, Escobar saw an opportunity to make a difference within the force.

"When I was a recruiter, my motivation was that I knew where I started and I know where I'm at now and I just want to tell people that there's going to be light if that's what they choose, if they choose to turn their challenges into a positive," Escobar said. "When I would talk to students, the females would always say 'Oh, I'm too girly to serve in the military,' or they would worry they weren't going to be able to 'be girly.'"

Escobar decided she would prove to the females, they could still be themselves and wear the uniform.

"I started doing beauty pageants again. I would go into schools and show them a pageant picture but I would be there in uniform and I would say, 'you can't tell me you can't do this.' It was after that I started seeing more of an 'I can do this' attitude," Escobar said.

Going back in the pageant world after traveling the globe as a Texas Guardsman gave Escobar a unique perspective. She drew on those experiences and prepared as rigorously as she would for a military mission, using the training and confidence she gained while serving to make her an even tougher and more determined competitor. After three years, Escobar left the recruiting world to dedicate more time to school, while still competing in pageants.

On March 10, 2018, she was crowned Miss Texas Galaxy. The Galaxy Pageant system ends with the Galaxy International Competition in Orlando, Florida. In July she will represent Texas against dozens of competitors from all over the world. Despite this potential for international celebrity, her primary focus remains serving those in need.

As Miss Texas Galaxy, Escobar focuses on highlighting suicide prevention for veterans and spreading awareness. And as a Texas Guardsman she focuses on helping others around the world and specifically her fellow Texans.

"As a member of the National Guard I have been able to go to multiple countries but I have also been able to serve stateside," said Escobar. "I saw the impact of what it meant when our soldiers went in to help during Hurricane Harvey, and how much our citizens appreciated that. To me that's important because these are our friends and family. Who is going to take care of them better than us?" **-D**

Texas Army National Guard Staff Sgt. San Juanita Escobar and her fellow soldiers pose with students of the school she helped found in Ethiopia along with other soldiers serving in a civil affairs mission. the school serves females from 18-23 years old who dropped out of the Public Education Program.
(Courtesy Photo)



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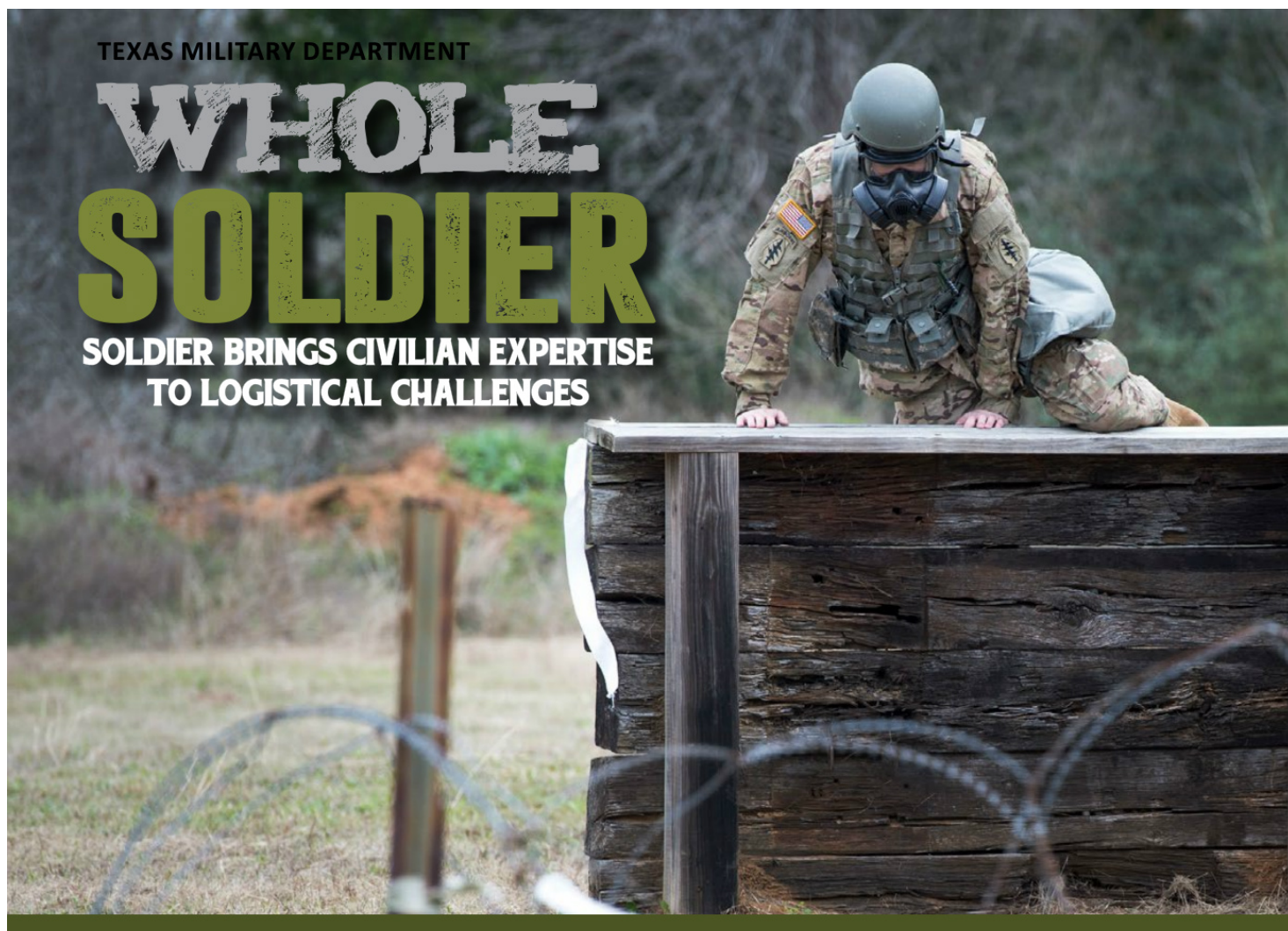
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WHOLE SOLDIER

SOLDIER BRINGS CIVILIAN EXPERTISE
TO LOGISTICAL CHALLENGES

*Story By: Staff Sgt. Michael Giles
36th Infantry Division Public Affairs*

Two at a time, competitors in Army and Air Force combat uniforms, helmets and bulky field protective masks came running out of the woods. They climbed over walls and crawled under barbed wire in the direction of a pair of small, muddy ponds that were covered almost completely by piles of thick and dirty wooden beams. They dove in and disappeared under the wood before emerging from the other side, soaked and dripping with brown water. Many participants needed a minute to catch their breaths before running down the forest trail toward the tire flip, the next piece of the “mystery event” at the 2018 Texas Military Department Best Warrior Competition. Many needed to remove their masks or pause to expel water from them. Many needed breathing coaching. Several struggled to catch their balance and fell. Some crawled out of the water.

But the 36th Infantry Division’s Sgt. James Banks was among a handful of service members who made it look easy, emerging from the water on their own two feet and hitting the tree line without hesitation.

The mystery event didn’t succeed in making Banks pause until he already flipped the tire a dozen times across the sloped clearing overlooking the rifle range. His pauses were brief enough to indicate he had not yet reached the limit of his capabilities he strives to meet and overcome.

“I’m mostly motivated by the need to know what I am capable of,” Banks said. “If you don’t stretch yourself to your limits, you will never know how far they can reach.”

Banks’ sponsor in the competition, Command Sgt. Maj. Michelle L. Thompson, the 36th Sustainment Brigade command sergeant major, said Banks’ participation in Best Warrior and his military service reflect several National Guard ideals, including the whole-Soldier concept and the force-multiplying benefit of Soldiers with full-time civilian careers.

“You have a UPS driver that is an infantryman,” said Thompson. “You have someone that’s a pastry chef that is a combat medic. We can utilize and exploit all of those skills in the Texas Army National Guard, and Soldiers do that.”