

**THE DISPATCH**



**JULY 2018**



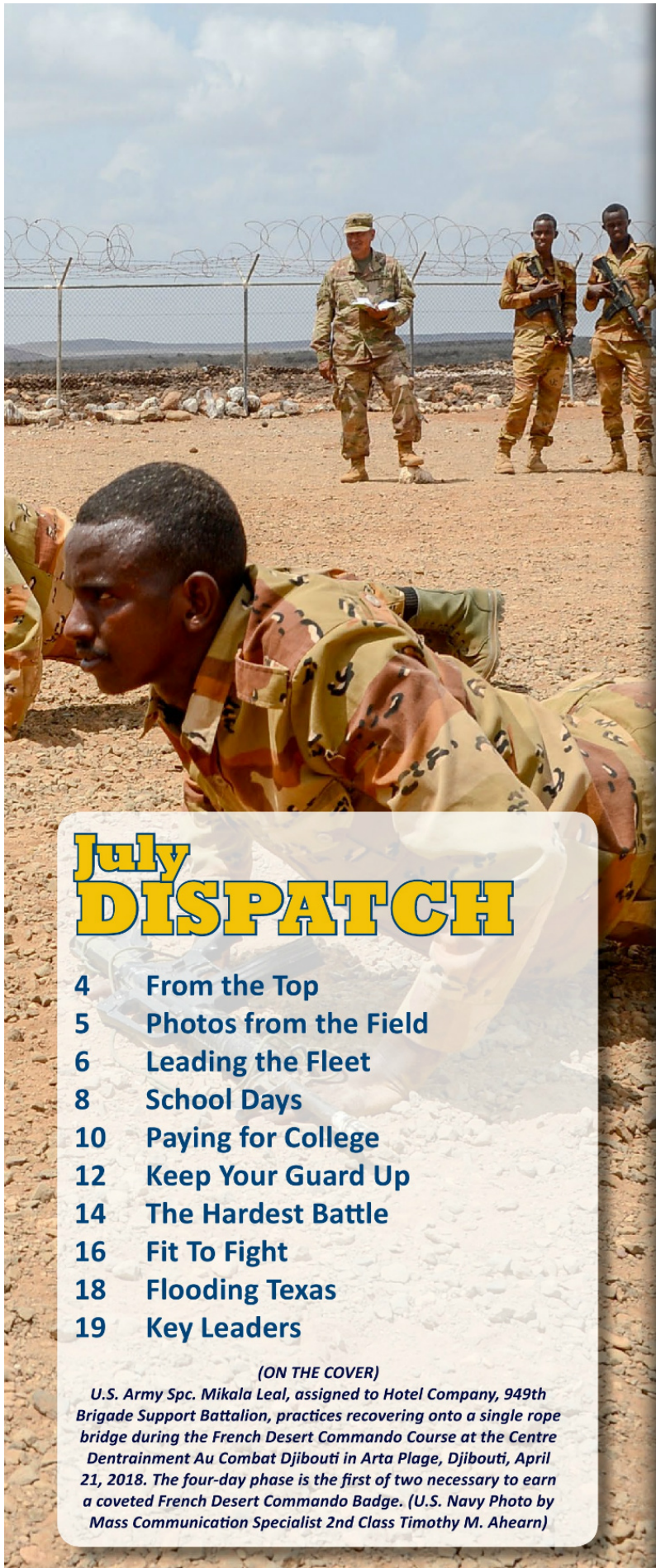
# **FIT TO FIGHT**

**TRAINING THE MOST MISSION  
CAPABLE MILITARY FORCE ON EARTH**

**OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT**



*Texas Army National Guard's Sgt. Vincent Merriman, Alpha Company, 3rd Battalion, 141st Infantry Regiment, demonstrates a proper pushup for a Djiboutian soldier at a training site outside Djibouti City, April 19, 2018. U.S. service members have been training the Djiboutian Army's Rapid Intervention Battalion, a newly formed crisis response unit. (U.S. Navy Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Timothy M. Ahearn)*



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**July DISPATCH**

- 4 From the Top
- 5 Photos from the Field
- 6 Leading the Fleet
- 8 School Days
- 10 Paying for College
- 12 Keep Your Guard Up
- 14 The Hardest Battle
- 16 Fit To Fight
- 18 Flooding Texas
- 19 Key Leaders

**(ON THE COVER)**

*U.S. Army Spc. Mikala Leal, assigned to Hotel Company, 949th Brigade Support Battalion, practices recovering onto a single rope bridge during the French Desert Commando Course at the Centre Detrainment Au Combat Djibouti in Arta Plage, Djibouti, April 21, 2018. The four-day phase is the first of two necessary to earn a coveted French Desert Commando Badge. (U.S. Navy Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Timothy M. Ahearn)*

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TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT

# FROM THE TOP

## COMMENTARIES FROM TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT LEADERS



## ARE YOU READY? BECOMING MENTALLY AND PHYSICALLY PREPARED TO SERVE

**BRIG. GEN. TRACY NORRIS**

DEPUTY ADJUTANT GENERAL-ARMY & COMMANDER OF THE TEXAS ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

I would like to take a moment to talk about individual readiness. The Adjutant General's three priorities of People First, Relevant and Ready, and Communicate and Partner are all essential elements of force readiness. The Texas Army National Guard has developed strategic objectives to implement these priorities. One of these objectives is to "Empower Soldiers to be deployable, promotable, and fit to fight." This means supporting the concept of the whole Soldier, and Airmen. We must give our Guardsmen the opportunity to challenge themselves and the ability to grow, to learn about their own strengths and weaknesses and to discover how to be the best service member and leader that they can be. There is a leader within each of us, and fostering a mentality of personal growth and responsibility alongside of support for fellow service members, while tapping into that inner leader, makes our organization stronger as a whole. As leaders, we hope to leave this organization a better place than we found it, and that begins with supporting our future leaders who will carry our torch of excellence after we have moved on. The foundation of this support is individual readiness. This is the responsibility of every service member and is comprised of mental, spiritual and physical health.

Taking care of one's mental and emotional wellbeing is paramount to our own and our battle buddies' wellness and readiness. There is less of a roadmap for how best to take care of yourself and others in this area. However it is an essential component of readiness. Take time to prioritize your mental health and that of your loved ones. Check in with members of your team – if someone seems off, ask them about it, rather than just assuming they will handle it alone. We are only as strong as each individual member of our organization, and it is on us to support each other through whatever challenges we are facing, however big or small. These invisible wounds should be treated much like visible injuries. You would never leave a wounded Soldier behind. Consider this when confronted with any mental or emotional injury.

Spiritual health means having faith. Whether or not you have an organized religion or spiritual practice that you follow, always have faith in yourself and an ability to lean on this faith during times of stress. Have faith in your training and abilities, they will enable you to accomplish any mission. You are the most capable, experienced and trained military in the history of the world. Trust in that. Faith gives us a safety-net, something to fall back on when it seems as though there is nothing left at our backs. Train in your profession but also take the time, during periods of rest and recovery to develop your faith in each other, in yourself and in your personal spiritual foundation.

Physical fitness is the cornerstone of individual readiness. Being fit to fight not only requires that we pass PT tests and are green on MEDPROs, but it also means maintaining this physical fitness and medical readiness year-round. Taking care of yourselves, being physically active and eating right will make those dreaded PT tests so much easier when they come around and prepare you for the future Army Combat Readiness Test. Our organization is only able to respond to the needs of the president and governor and the needs of our nation because of you. Therefore we must always be ready, deployable, fit to fight and available to answer, when the call comes for Texas or abroad.

We need each of you to be healthy and sharp to make up our formations. Every Guardsman is important and plays a role that we rely on, that we need to support our missions. All this is to say that readiness as an organization begins with readiness at the individual level. By taking care of yourselves, you are taking care of your team, your unit, your Texas National Guard family. I am proud to be a part of that family. Thank you for your service and for all you do. Stay ready, stay safe. Duty – Honor – Texas

**- FROM THE TOP-**

4 **TheDISPATCH** JULY 2018

TEXAS MILITARY FORCES MUSEUM | CAMP MABRY

# HANDS-ON HISTORY



**JULY 21**

**6 PM – 9 PM**

*Story By: Sgt. 1st Class Eric McLeod  
Texas Army National Guard  
Recruiting and Retention*

Upon graduation of each military school, either online self-structured development or a resident course, the service member should begin on the next level of personal military education. A common mishap is that once a service member completes a distance learning course, he or she does not spend the time with the unit readiness or training non-commissioned officer to have the next resident course scheduled. Then, the service member realizes it is a year later, and there are no PME training seats left for the foreseeable future. Military training is a requirement for promotion; if the required training is not complete, the Soldier has the risk of getting a low grade on his or her next evaluation, which could potentially affect promotion potential.

Upon completing military training it is highly encouraged to schedule the next PME. Most of the time, this training will be 18 to 24 months in the future. Which is great for a civilian career, as the service member has ample time to inform a civilian employer to plan for this time away. This allows the service member to complete all tasks and projects for which he or she is responsible, fostering a better relationship between the Guardsman and his or her civilian employer.

As a traditional National Guard Soldier only drilling one weekend a month, it is often difficult to maintain one's physical fitness at the level which is required to attend schools. Working 50 hours a week, taking 12 semester hours and balancing a household leaves very little time for exercise. There are several types of techniques that can be used, including the Life Wheel or Wheel of Life, which are easily found for free online. By measuring these areas of life, Guardsmen can determine where time is wasted and make the correction to better use of the time in the day. Whatever one decides to use to balance military and civilian life, stay ahead of your future. **-D**





## Col Susan M. Dickens

J1, Director of Manpower & Personnel

### EXPERIENCE:

Col Dickens entered military service enlisting in the Army National Guard. After transferring to the Texas Air National Guard, she received her commission from the Academy of Military Science in 1991. Col Dickens has served at the Air National Guard Readiness Center and all three wings of the Texas Air National Guard with assignments at the 136th Airlift Wing, 272nd Engineering Installation Squadron, 149th Fighter Wing and Headquarters, Texas Air National Guard. Her assignments have included several command and staff positions in the Personnel and Cyber Operations career fields and with the Texas National Guard Joint Counterdrug Task Force. In 2009, Dickens deployed to serve as the Deputy J6, Special Operations Command Europe (SOCEUR) and served as the Air National Guard Advisor to the Commander, Headquarters Air Force Personnel Center (AFPC), Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph in 2016. Prior to returning to Camp Mabry, she was assigned as the Commander, 149th Mission Support Group, Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland. Colonel Dickens joined the staff as the Support Director, Domestic Operations Task Force in March 2017 and assumed her current position on the Joint Staff in March 2018.

### EDUCATION:

Dickens holds a Bachelor of Business Administration from the University of North Texas and was a Distinguished Graduate from both the United States Air Force Personnel Programs Officer Course and Communications and Information Officers Course, Keesler AFB, Mississippi. Col Dickens completed the Air War College in 2011.

### DID YOU KNOW:

Dickens is also a member of Texas Task Force 1. She serves as a Canine Search Specialist along with her K-9 partner York.

### IN HER WORDS:

"I am excited to be a part of the Joint Staff and the transformation effort as we continue to improve processes and efficiencies to serve ALL the members of the Texas Military Department and their families. I am continually amazed by the impact our organization has and the variety of missions we support on a daily basis."



## Col Michael J. Lovell

J2, Director of Joint Intelligence

### EXPERIENCE:

Col Lovell received his commission, following nine-years of distinguished enlisted service, through the Academy of Military Science in 1994. He has served in command at the flight and squadron levels along with staff positions at the wing, Joint Force Headquarters, Numbered Air Force and Major Command levels. In addition to his current role as the Texas Military Department's Director of Joint Intelligence, Lovell is the Air National Guard Advisor to the 25th Air Force at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland. He is an Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Mission Operations Commander with more than 1,800 mission hours in the MQ-1 Predator, MQ-9 Reaper, MC-12 Liberty, RQ-4 Global Hawk and U-2 Dragon Lady in direct support of Operations Iraqi Freedom, New Dawn, Enduring Freedom, Odyssey Dawn and Unified Protector.

### EDUCATION:

Lovell is a Certified Public Accountant and holds a Bachelor of Science in Accounting from Virginia Commonwealth University and a Master of Science in Executive Leadership from Champlain College in Burlington, Vermont.

### DID YOU KNOW:

Lovell and his wife Cindy will be sending their 18-year-old twins off to college this fall. with son Carter attending UT-Dallas and daughter Kelsey at Texas A&M.

### IN HIS WORDS:

"It is an absolute honor and privilege to serve Texas and be part of our incredibly talented team."



**SCHINDLER:**

Great question. I think that's part of the problem; people don't know their "why." If you are going to put yourself in that kind of challenge, that level of difficulty or strain, you have to know why you are doing it.

**TMD:**

**What are some of those reasons?**

**SCHINDLER:**

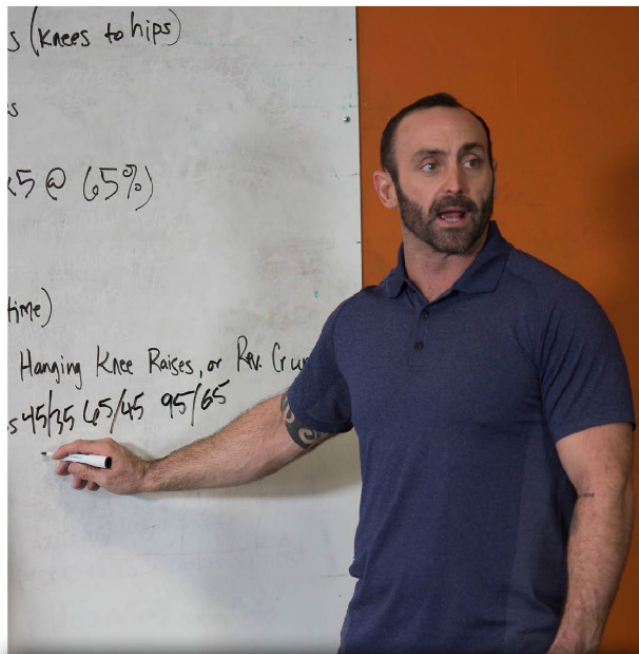
What you do with your physicality makes you better at everything else you do in life. I don't care if you sit at a desk all day long. If you're more physically fit, you are going to outperform those other people who aren't. You're going to have a better memory, your body is going to be able to handle stress better and you'll have more confidence in yourself. We've seen this time and again.

**TMD:**

**What sort of things should leaders be thinking about when organizing physical fitness activities for drill?**

**SCHINDLER:**

I would say you have to have systems of accountability and communication between drill weekends, meaning that you are doing something that ensures you are all staying on top of your fitness needs. Some people are doing that though group texts or social groups. So really, think about how you can help them, not just on drill weekends, but in between those times. **-D**



*Sgt. 1st Class Athan Schindler discusses a workout routine during a training session conducted in a Texas-area gym (Courtesy Photo)*

# TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT GUARD YOUR HEALTH

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## TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT

# PAYING FOR COLLEGE

*Story & Photos By: Orrin Spence & Bob Seyller  
Texas Military Department Public Affairs*

When Soldiers and Airmen think about their education it often comes as a moment to be reached at some future date. A day in the future when they trade in camouflage for coursework and focus on readying for a civilian career. As a Guardsman, that educational attainment does not have to wait until completing a service commitment. It can begin today.

More than 80 percent of service members surveyed in a 2017 RAND Study noted that educational benefits were a major determining factor in enlistment. However, the same survey shows that only 60 percent of members accessed any form of education incentive. To help facilitate access to earned education benefits, Texas Military Department leaders provide assistance through the Education and Incentives Office, located at Camp Mabry in Austin, Texas.

The Education and Incentives Office has a mixed staff of Guardsmen and civilians working to help service members navigate the complex world of tuition assistance, G.I. Bills and other financial tools to help achieve the degrees they desire.

Though funding sources often vary for veterans and service members based on their service era and branch, Master Sgt. Manual Flores, state tuition assistance administration manager, said the staff is ready to help with the variety of state and federal benefits.

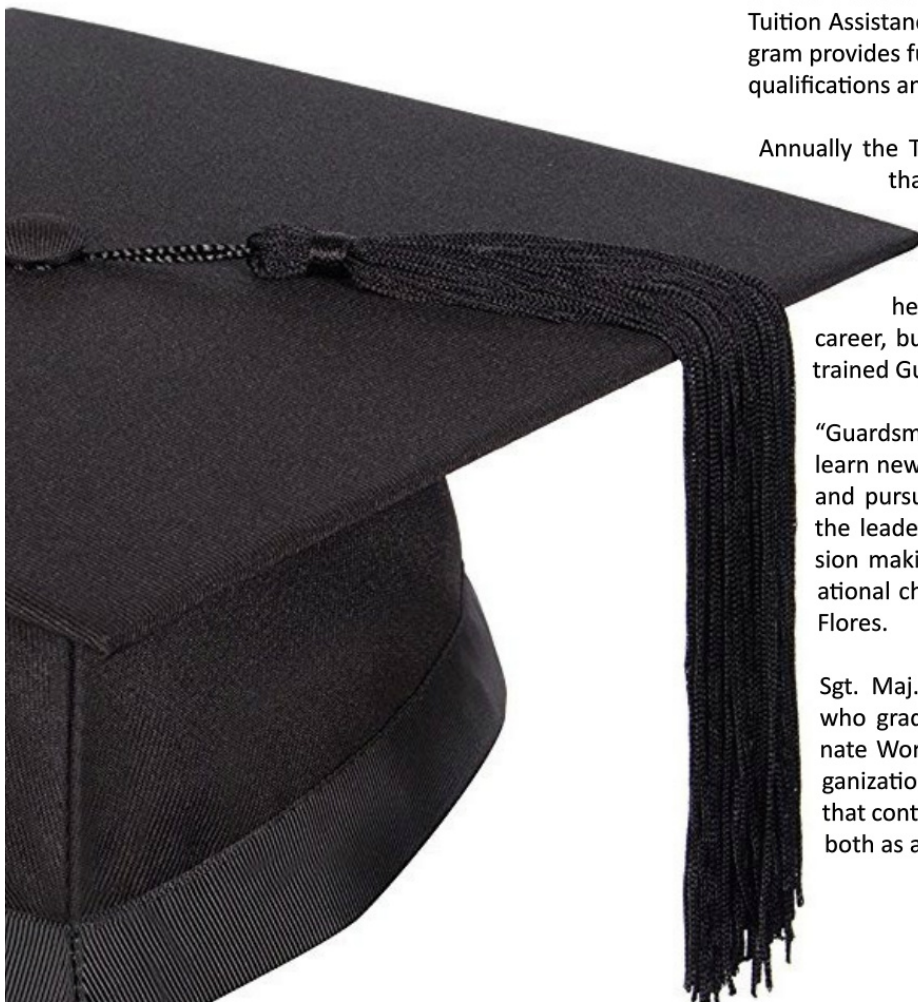
"While primarily responsible for supporting the 19,000 members of the Texas Army National Guard, the rules for many of these higher education programs are the same or similar for members of all components," said Flores. "Any service member or veteran is welcome to stop by for assistance."

Among the education programs available to Guardsmen are the Federal Tuition Assistance Program, G.I. Bill, State Tuition Assistance Program and Hazelwood Act. Each program provides funding to different groups and has its own qualifications and amounts.

Annually the Texas Military Department qualifies more than 750 Guardsmen to receive State Tuition Assistance with total program funding reaching more than \$1.5 million. According to Flores these funds not only help service members prepare for a civilian career, but they also provide the state with better trained Guardsmen.

"Guardsmen must continue to attend trainings, learn new languages, acquire relevant certifications and pursue higher education to be equipped with the leadership, technical acumen and critical decision making abilities needed to react to the operational challenges our service members face," said Flores.

Sgt. Maj. Leveda McCardell, a program recipient who graduated from The University of The Incarnate Word with a master of science degree in Organizational development and leadership, agrees that continuing education is essential to developing both as a Soldier and a good citizen.



"Having a college degree has been critical to my professional and personal growth. Now my children are able to capitalize on my education benefits as well," said McCardell.

Flores encourages Guardsmen to begin their college journey as soon as possible, explaining that current funding programs allow service members to attain their education free of the debt most college student face.

Sgt. 1st Class Jorge Rodriguez, another program recipient who graduated from the University of Texas – Rio Grande Valley with a master of public administration degree, agreed.

"My advice for anyone looking to earn their degree is to start now and it is never too late. Start with one class ...don't overwhelm yourself and once you get started don't stop," said Rodriguez.

Those interested in beginning their college career can contact the Education and Incentives office at 512-782-5515 or visit [tmd.texas.gov/money-for-college](http://tmd.texas.gov/money-for-college). -D

### Sgt. Maj Leveda McCardell

*Touro University*  
Business Administration  
Magna Cum Laude (2006)

*The University of The  
Incarnate Word*  
Master of Science Orga-  
nizational Development &  
Leadership (2017)



## STUDENT PROFILES



### Sgt. First Class Jorge Rodriguez

*Columbia College*  
Associate in General Studies  
(2010)

*Columbia College*  
Associate in Science in Busi-  
ness Administration (2015)

*University of Texas -  
Rio Grande Valley*  
Master of Public Affairs  
(2018)

## Education Programs

### Federal Tuition Assistance:

- Pays for tuition for 16 semester hours per semester with a cap of \$250 per credit.
- Funds are depleted after 130 semester hours for baccalaureate degree and 39 semester hours for graduate or master degree.
- Service branch establishes own rules for eligibility, distribution and criteria.
- Does not include funding for fees, books or other education costs.

### Post-9/11 GI Bill:

- Pays full tuition amount for in-state schools up to the maximum national average of \$22,805.34.
- Provides Basic Allowance for Housing with amount based on school location.
- Up to 36 months of education benefits, available up to 15 years after your release from active duty.
- A percentage-of-maximum-benefit scale based on how much active service you've had since September 10, 2001.

### State Tuition Assistance:

- Available to Texas Army National Guard, Texas Air National Guard and Texas State Guard members E-1 through O-5.
- Funds per service member are depleted after 12 semester hours or a total cost of \$2,250.
- When used with other benefits, funds cannot exceed 100 percent of tuition.
- Failed, dropped or incomplete courses will not be reimbursed.
- Funds availability contingent on total force utilization and appropriated amount.

### Hazelwood Act:

- Provided to qualifying Veterans, spouses and dependent children.
- Funds up to 150 tuition hours to include most fees at Texas public colleges.

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# LEADING THE FLEET

## APACHES FIRST IN LINE TO RECEIVE NEW STRAP PACK MEGANUT

*Story & Photos By: Caitlin Rourk  
Texas Military Department Public Affairs*

HOUSTON, Texas – After months of development, the Army's Aviation and Missile Life Cycle Management Command has begun implementing the redesigned strap pack meganut on the Army's full AH-64 Apache helicopter fleet. The Texas Army National Guard's 1-149th Attack and Reconnaissance Battalion is the first unit in the Army to field the retrofit. Members of AMCOM and representatives from Boeing, which manufactures the Apache, visited Ellington Field, Houston, Texas, to brief the unit's pilots, crew chiefs and mechanics, as well as Texas Army National Guard leaders Brig. Gen. Patrick Hamilton, Assistant Division Commander – Operations of the 36th Infantry Division, and Col. Ronald W. Burkett II, commander of the 36th Combat Aviation Brigade, on the retrofit on June 12, 2018.

The region's severe coastal climate, which can accelerate corrosion, made Houston a natural first stop for AMCOM. But a tragic accident solidified the decision to place the 1-149th at the top of the list to receive the new com-

ponent. Two of the unit's pilots, Chief Warrant Officer 3 Dustin Mortenson and Chief Warrant Officer 2 Lucas Lowe, died after their aircraft crashed into Galveston Bay, Texas, in December 2016. The accident investigation determined that a stress corrosion crack in the strap pack assembly that connects the main rotor blade to the rotor caused the crash.

"I know that crash in the Apache fleet was inevitable. It just so happened that it was in Texas and took the lives of two of our aviators," said Burkett. "But that event triggered a sense of urgency and a series of events to make that component stronger and healthier and prevented the loss of lives elsewhere in the fleet."

Following the crash, the Army instituted more stringent inspection standards throughout its Apache fleet. Maintenance crews use high-resolution bore scopes to inspect the strap pack any time an aircraft flies, a standard that applies to all Apaches, whether deployed overseas or training stateside. The added maintenance requirement not only places operational strain on the force, but it also hampers

training and limits the speed with which Apaches can deploy. While the solution worked in the interim, the Army's 24 attack and reconnaissance battalions were eager for a more permanent fix; a fix the new meganut addresses.

"Anytime an aircraft picks up off the ground, there is an inherent risk. We mitigate that risk by having really superbly trained aviators and crew members," Burkett explained. "Mechanical failures, part failures, especially the strap pack is something that you really can't anticipate. The rebuild of this strap pack assembly and that nut in particular is a very important step forward to restoring the confidence and faith in the aircraft and allows pilots and maintainers to focus on the things they can predict to try to mitigate and focus on their mission."

The Army now designates the strap pack assembly as a critical safety item, meaning it faces increased production oversight and quality control. Engineers enhanced the meganut's design to minimize stress corrosion cracking and increase its lifespan. The nut's new geometry shifts pressure points, its thicker walls make it more durable and upgraded sealant improves corrosion resistance compared to earlier nut designs. Burkett lauded AMCOM for being "all in" the moment the crash happened and steadfastly seeking a solution to keep aviators safe.



*Brig. Gen. Patrick Hamilton, Assistant Division Commander – Operations of the 36th Infantry Division, examines the redesigned AH-64 Apache strap pack meganut on June 12, 2018, Ellington Field, Houston, Texas.*

## TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT

"Looking at the changes in the part and how much more substantial the new part is, the new materials it's being made of and the coatings they're putting on it, much less susceptible to any kinds of issues they've had," said Hamilton. "We're continuing to test it and make sure that our pilots' safety is our number one concern."

Hamilton called the retrofit a "great readiness enhancer for us" and noted that the follow-up process will be highly collaborative, continuing long after AMCOM personnel depart Ellington Field. AMCOM and Boeing representatives will work hand-in-hand with attack and reconnaissance battalions across the force to track and audit the meganut's performance. The 1-149th will ship the meganuts back to AMCOM after logging flight hours so engineers can continuously study and improve the new component. AMCOM officials complimented the unit for its participation and hospitality, noting that the 1-149th leaned forward and made implementation an easy and seamless process.

Both Hamilton and Burkett underscored the most significant takeaway from the retrofit: the need to reassure aviators and their families that the Apache is safe to fly. The retrofit initiative has been a high priority at every level of the Army, and its implementation marks an important step toward increased safety within the close-knit aviation community.

"Regardless of what your MOS is or where you work within the National Guard, our family members are so important to what we do. And having their support based on faith that their service members have great equipment, receive great training, have solid leadership is so important to them," said Burkett. "I do hope the families see this as a very concerted effort by the senior leadership, from the top of the Army chief of staff down to the unit level, that we're all committed to making a safer environment for their soldiers."

AMCOM officials noted it will take time before the new meganut makes it out into the entire force. The team's next stop is Schofield Barracks in Hawaii, then Fort Lewis in Washington, locations whose climates—like Houston's—warrant swift implementation. For Texas, receiving the new component ahead of any other unit is an encouraging development in the wake of heartbreaking loss, providing aviators and families with peace of mind, while enabling the battalion to more effectively fulfill its demanding training requirements.

"The Army was very wise in making this the first battalion to field the new strap pack for this Apache helicopter in the entire Army," said Hamilton. "That shows that we are dedicated to you and the families, showing that we've fixed this problem and we're going to go forward from here." **-D**

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## TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT

# KEEP YOUR GUARD UP

*Story By: Bob Seyller  
Texas Military Department Public Affairs*

Every year thousands of Texans raise their right hands and swear to protect their nation and neighbors as members of the Texas Military Department. For most, this oath is where they mark the beginning of their military careers, but National Guard recruiters know the journey started much sooner.



*Charissa Menken swears in as a new member of the 136th Airlift Wing Sept. 5, 2017 at Naval Air Station Fort Worth Joint Reserve Base, Texas. Menken will become a broadcast journalist with the 136th Public Affairs Office.  
(U.S. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Vanessa Gonzales)*

For many recruits, their first steps into the military were actually taken when they met a Soldier or Airman who measured their character and decided they might have the makings of a Guardsman. Master Sgt. Carl Moore Jr., Austin area strength manager for the Texas Army National Guard, explained that no outreach effort has a greater impact on recruitment than the individual Soldier.

“Most leads come from unit members and Recruit Sustainment Program warriors,” said Moore. “Recruits are receptive to what they hear from individual soldiers because it’s not a sales pitch, it is talking to a friend about experiences in the Guard.”

According to Moore, focusing on personal experiences helps Soldiers better explain what life as a Guardsman is like.

“Even if you are not a great communicator, being proud of your service will help you light up as you describe your service,” said Moore.

Along with focusing on your service, Moore explained that it is also important that new recruits see that you don’t live and breathe only the military. Moore explained that one of the biggest misconceptions that new recruits have is that after enlisting

they will be sacrificing any free time they might have for a life outside the Guard.

“Be active in your community, and show potential recruits that as a Guardsman you still have the ability to participate in local events or activities you enjoy,” said Moore.

For Soldiers and Airmen interested in building a team Moore gave a few tips on how to become a successful community recruiter.

#### **KNOW THE LOCAL AREA RECRUITER:**

Being comfortable with a recruiter will resonate with potential recruits and help them see military members as regular people making an exceptional choice.

#### **KEEP THE BIG QUESTIONS FOR THE RECRUITER:**

Most potential recruits will have a flood of questions about service commitment, deployments, available jobs and benefits. Local recruiters should field answers to these questions.

#### **TAG ALONG TO THE RECRUITER MEETING:**

If the potential recruit is a friend or family acquaintance make time to attend the recruitment meeting. A familiar presence can reduce nervousness and allow the potential recruit to better focus on the discussion with the recruiter.

#### **MEET NEW PEOPLE:**

Not every potential recruit will be a familiar face. If approached by a new recruit about serving in the Guard, make sure to collect contact information and tell them the name of the recruiter that will be contacting them. **-D**



*Staff Sgt. Eric Moreno, a recruiter with the Texas Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention Battalion, poses with Future Farmers of America during an event.  
(U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Steve Johnson)*



most units are unaware. Like Hayes, Parker points to the revamped, more user-friendly website, which broadens its focus from crisis intervention and suicide prevention to overall mental health and wellness. Texas has counselors throughout the state who can take on new clients within 24 hours, and TMD runs its own counseling line where counselors can talk by phone, video counseling and face-to-face, both off-site and on-site.

The office's training also breaks the mold of traditional programs. For example, Parker recently gave a presentation to a unit called "Food and Mood" about how improved nutrition can help improve attitude and energy levels. The mental health office is working to create a culture of mental health awareness among junior service members. Partnering with the Texas Army National Guard's Recruit Sustainment Program, counselors work with "warriors" who recently returned from initial entry training and can be a high-risk group. They help these warriors adjust to new their environment and navigate potential pitfalls they face transitioning back to civilian life and into their new units.

One of the most significant changes Parker noted is how mental health and suicide are addressed within units. Guardsmen are more comfortable with counselors visiting and talking openly about challenging topics, which she attributes to a fundamental change in leaders' outlook. She is hopeful this continued support will ensure Texas Guardsmen, civilian employees and their families will take even greater advantage of the many available resources.

"When the program began, it was about reducing stigma. Now, there's no reaction to mental health visiting a unit, because people understand these problems are real," Parker explained. "Counseling is not a new field anymore. Service members are comfortable with it, having watched a family member seek counseling or going to marriage counseling themselves."

Units must now determine how they can use the agency's new research to implement their own suicide prevention programs. Both Hayes and Parker agree units should take a close look at their culture to determine the mood and identify the problems. Once a unit has a starting point, leaders can then tailor support and training accordingly. While more traditional resilience and suicide prevention programs are still important, units shouldn't be afraid to think outside the box and reach out to Parker and her team for support. When service members learn to manage their mood, conduct self-care, eat right and feel comfortable talking about their issues, units will cultivate a culture where service members aren't afraid to ask for help.

"Spend time with your people. Get to know them. Understand what each Soldier or Airman is dealing with so you can have a perspective," said Hayes. "On the surface, people may look like they're fine, but because we get so caught up in the daily mission requirements, we forget to take a temperature of our people. Show that you care."

**-D**

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## TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT



## TEXAS GUARD PARTNERS WITH TEXAS TASK FORCE 1 DURING RESPONSE TO SOUTH TEXAS FLOODS

**Story & Photos By: Spc. Miguel Ruiz  
100th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment**

LAREDO, Texas – In response to recent flooding in the Texas Rio Grande Valley, rescue swimmers with Texas Task Force 1 (Urban Search and Rescue Team) and Texas Army National Guard helicopter pilots were mobilized jointly.

Both organizations normally work independently of each other but combine their assets and expertise when flood disasters occur said Anthony Di Marco, a rescue swimmer with TX-TF1.

“There are not water-rescue components in the National Guard - That’s where we come in,” said Di Marco. “They fly us to where we need to be and help get us in the water or to where the people are who need rescue. It’s a great working relationship.”

The working relationships between the pilots and swimmers are not developed overnight but rather are orchestrated and fine-tuned regularly.

Di Marco said he sets aside his full-time civilian career being a firefighter in Plano, Texas, once a month to train with TXARNG helicopter pilots and TX-TF1 swimmers.

“We rehearse daytime and nighttime rescue missions with Lakota and Blackhawk pilots,” said Di Marco. “The back and forth di-

alogue is great, we work closely together to determine the most efficient and safest ways of conducting the missions.”

“Thanks to consistent training and set-in-place contingency plans, mission-readiness is very high when disasters occur,” said Texas Army National Guard’s CW4 Brandon Briggs, a Standardization Instructor Pilot of Bravo Company, 1-114th Aviation Regiment – Security and Support.

Briggs said that at any given time he, his helicopter crew and TX-TF1 swimmers can be ready to fly to wherever they are needed within three hours of receiving the call to duty.

“We didn’t have these same capabilities over five years ago,” said Briggs. “Local governments now have in place very specific mission-ready packages put together by the Texas Military Department. Local officials now know exactly how many of what assets are available to them at any given time of need.”

Briggs said what sets the TXARNG apart from other components of the military is its ability to work more closely with Texas’ local governments and organizations such as TX-TF1 to establish disaster contingency plans.

“It’s our job to be able to respond to events as quickly as possible,” said Briggs. “We are always ready.” **-D**

*(ABOVE) Texas Task Force 1 rescue swimmers Trevor Stokes (left) and Greg Reddish (right) check their equipment for safety and functionality before boarding a Texas Army National Guard Black Hawk helicopter June 21, 2018, in Laredo, Texas.*



TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT

# TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT KEY LEADER UPDATE

## Joint Staff And Directorate Leadership Changes

Meet the newest members of the Texas Military Department Joint Staff. The Joint Staff assists The Adjutant General of Texas in accomplishing objectives and providing a mission-capable force for domestic and international responses as needed by the governor or president. The Joint Staff is composed of Army and Air National Guard personnel working together to develop professional Airmen and Soldiers.



### COL Amy Cook Incoming Chief of the Joint Staff\*

#### EXPERIENCE:

COL Cook enlisted in the United States Army in 1986 as a Legal Specialist and was commissioned through Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning, Georgia, in 1992 as a Military Police Officer. Her military assignments in the Texas Army National Guard include: G1/Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel; United States Property and Fiscal Officer for Arizona; Commander for the Texas Guard Training Center Command; State Public Affairs Officer and Commander of the 136th Military Police Battalion (Internment and Resettlement). Other assignments include Commander, Joint Task Force Lone Star, Bagram, Afghanistan (2009-2010); Executive Officer, 136th Military Police Battalion (I/R), Texas Army National Guard; Operations Officer, 506th Law and Order Detachment, Washington Army National Guard; Deputy Public Affairs Officer; Battalion S-3, 181 SB, 81st BCT; Brigade Provost Marshal, 81st BCT, WAARNG; Executive Officer, 6th Region Criminal Investigation Division, Fort Bliss, Texas and Company Commander, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 76th Military Police Battalion, Fort Bliss, Texas. Cook's civilian positions include: Human Resource Officer (Military), State Human Resource Officer, State Public Affairs Officer, Deputy United States Property and Fiscal Officer, USPFO for Texas, Deputy Human Resource Officer, Supervisory Human Resource Specialist, Labor Relations Specialist and Assistant Attorney General, Labor and Employment Division, Washington State Attorney General's Office.

#### EDUCATION:

Cook has an undergraduate degree from Wayland Baptist University in Theatre Arts, a Master's Degree in Strategic Studies from the U.S. Army War College and a Juris Doctorate from the Seattle University School of Law. She is a Certified Defense Financial Manager, will graduate from the Human Resources Manager Qualification Course in July and is also a graduate of the Garrison Commander's Course, Senior Officer Legal Course, MP Pre-Command Course, Criminal Investigation Division Command Course, Public Affairs Qualification Course, Command and General Staff College, MP Captain's Career Course, MP Officer Advanced Course, Special Reaction Team Course, MP Officer Basic Course, NBC Defense School, Combat Lifesaver Course and Airborne School.

#### DID YOU KNOW:

COL Cook and her husband, Tim have five children and eight grandchildren and spend most of their free time working with or in support of animal rescue organizations.

#### IN HER WORDS:

"I am honored and blessed to have the opportunity to continue my service with the Texas Military Department. I am proud to be part of an organization made up of great Texans Serving Texas who are committed to serve in support of Texas and our nation everyday."

\* Effective August 1, 2018

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## TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT



## LTC Robert Eason

### J3/7, Director of Operations and Training

**EXPERIENCE:**

LTC Eason commissioned in the Texas Army National Guard in 1992 from Texas A&M University. He served as a Platoon Leader, Company XO and S-4 in 5-112 Armor and as an Liason Officer in 2nd Brigade, 4th Infantry Division at Fort Hood. He assumed command of Charlie Company, 5-112 Armor in 2000. Eason mobilized the company in August 2002 for Operational Noble Eagle at Pine Bluff Arsenal until July 2003. In May 2005, he deployed to Afghanistan as the Assistant S3 for 3-141 Infantry. Following a tour in the Joint Force Headquarters he was assigned as the S3 of 1-124th Cavalry and deployed to Iraq with the squadron. Upon return to Texas, he was assigned as the Squadron XO, and then the S3 of the 56 IBCT. He commanded the 72 BSTB from July 2013 to September 2016. Eason's full-time assignments include J-3 Planner, Chief of Operations, and Protection Officer, Deputy HRO and Deputy G-1.

**EDUCATION:**

LTC Eason has a Bachelor of Arts degree in History from Texas A&M.

**DID YOU KNOW:**

LTC Eason has been married for 25 years and has a son. He was a Houston cop for seven years and races road, mountain and track bikes for fun.

**IN HIS WORDS:**

"I'm excited about the new organizational model and the opportunities it provides for increased collaboration."



## COL Marvin D. Johnson

### J4, Director of Logistics

**EXPERIENCE:**

COL Johnson received his commission as a second lieutenant in the ROTC program from the University of Alabama. He was the Distinguished Honor Graduate from the Quartermaster Officer Basic Course in July 1992. Johnson began his career in the Alabama Army National Guard as a Platoon Leader. In October 1993, Johnson transferred to the Texas Army National Guard and was assigned to the 536th Forward Support Battalion in Houston, Texas, as the Battalion Maintenance Officer. Other assignments include Commander, Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 536th FSB, Support Operations Officer, Division Support Command, 49th Armored Division and 36th Infantry Division, Executive Officer, 111th Area Support Group, Austin, TX and Combined Joint Task Force-76, Operation Enduring Freedom, in Bagram, Afghanistan. Commander, Special Troops Battalion, 36th Sustainment Brigade, Temple, Texas and Operation Iraqi Freedom in Tallil, Iraq and S3/DCO, 36th SB. Commander, Training Center Garrison Command, Austin, Texas, TXARNG Deputy Chief of Staff - Logistics (G4) and currently serves as the JFHQ-TX J4.

**EDUCATION:**

Johnson holds a Bachelor's Degree in Electrical Engineering Technology from the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, a Master's Degree in Disaster and Emergency Management from Trident University in Long Beach, California, and a Master's Degree in Strategic Studies from the U.S. Army War College in Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

**DID YOU KNOW:**

Johnson met his wife, Faye, of over 25 years at the University of Alabama (ROLLTIDE!!!)

**IN HIS WORDS:**

"I am honored to have been selected to serve as the JFHQ-TX J4 as our organization transitions to better serve and support our fellow Texans and the citizens of this Great Nation."

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TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT



## TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT

# SCHOOL DAYS: PREPARING FOR YOUR MILITARY COURSES

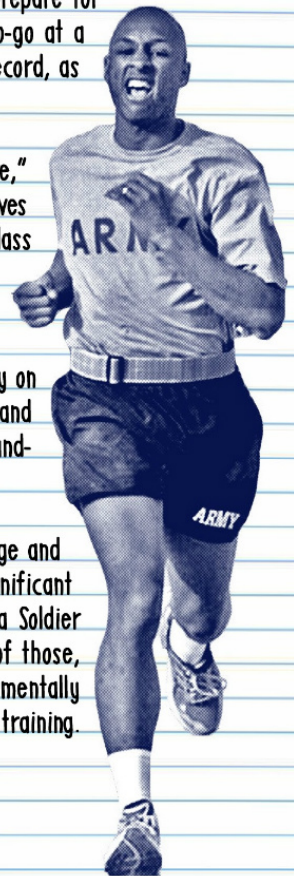
The Texas Military Department takes pride in hitting the Texas Adjutant General's priorities: "People First," "Relevant and Ready," and "Communicate and Partner." These priorities guide everything we do in and out of uniform. Having these priorities in place gives commanders across the force a compass by which to lead their units.

But regardless of how many priorities or mission sets a unit has in place, the real readiness starts with the individual, which includes an important topic of discussion: military education. To have a solid military education foundation, there are several things which must be done in the form of pre-combat checks and pre-combat inspections. These vary greatly based on the individual's job. The three types of schools are the Soldier's specific military occupational specialty qualification course, professional military education and functional training. Some of the most simple, yet important things a soldier can do to prepare for these trainings is making sure their gear or "packing list" is ready-to-go at a few days' notice and having a passing physical fitness test score on record, as well as having their prerequisite distant learning modules completed.

The Texas Army National Guard's motto, "Always Ready, Always There," is so vital to today's fast-paced environment. Being "Always Ready" gives the service member the opportunity to qualify for those last-minute class openings at the schoolhouse.

Individual readiness will also ensure soldiers are trained and able to respond when the mission calls. Ultimately, it is up to the Soldier to stay on track of their military education; however, it is important to understand that civilian education is just as important. Both contribute to a well-rounded and well-educated Soldier and both count toward promotion points.

At times, it is difficult to juggle a civilian career, military career, college and military education. Dedication to the military, family and self has a significant payoff and is instrumental to the Soldier's future life. Not only must a Soldier maintain a household and civilian career with all that goes into each of those, but the service member also must find time to stay physically fit, mentally ready to deploy for duty and up-to-date on resident and online military training.



TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT

# GUARDSMEN'S HARDEST BATTLE

*Story By: Caitlin Rourk*

## **Texas Military Department Public Affairs**

AUSTIN, Texas – Suicide prevention is a growing focus of the Texas Military Department. It's not unusual to hear leaders promote mental and emotional fitness among Guardsmen, alongside their traditional emphasis on physical fitness and intellectual agility. The topic gained renewed attention after an uptick in suicides among both active and former service members, in recent years, following frequent deployments abroad and increased demands at home. In response, military leaders are embracing the notion that issues underlying suicide are complex and multi-faceted, yet manageable when addressed early and correctly.

Although the Army and Air Force had their own established resilience and suicide prevention programs, TMD leaders sought a new perspective on how the agency addressed the problem. Last year, the TAG's Leadership Development Program challenged one group of participants to explore social risk and TMD's existing programs and training. The group, composed of Maj. Eric Hayes, Maj. Rusty Weedman, Lt. Col. Gabe Simonds and Maj. Jesse Allen, examined social risk factors, like sexual assault, behavioral health care, mental health counseling and financial hardship and whether existing programs adequately addressed them.

"What causes all these problems to begin with? Is there

something we aren't seeing? How do we make our Soldiers and Airmen more resilient?" asked Hayes, commander of the 221st Combat Communications Squadron, referring to the questions the team initially asked when confronting the topic.

The team determined that many of the underlying issues Guardsmen face are the issues any normal person would face, like family and finances, in addition to balancing civilian and Guard commitments. These issues are not addressed through a one-size-fits-all approach; they require care, compassion and tailored training and support. The team also identified improvements that would have an immediate impact on the organization. One recommendation was enhancing access to mental health and wellness resources on the TMD app and website. Now, these resources have a highly visible presence on both platforms with refreshed content.

The team shared best practices and brought new perspective to challenges facing both the Army Guard and the Air Guard, a collaboration Hayes believes should continue among leaders from the two branches. While there are many layers and factors that contribute to suicide and its underlying causes, Hayes thinks TMD is on the right track and is encouraged by the agency's continued progress.

Amy Parker, a Behavioral Health Counselor for TMD, also applauded the agency's progress and pointed to the wide range of resources now offered, the existence of which

## TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT

## FIT TO FIGHT



*Interview By: Kyle Burns*  
*Texas Military Department Public Affairs*

We sat down with Texas Army National Guard's Sgt. 1st Class Athan Schindler from the 136th Regional Training Institute to talk about health and fitness and the impact it can have on one's career and day-to-day life. He shared his insight and knowledge that can help Guardsmen to success in today's challenging atmosphere. His credentials are reinforced by an impressive resume: certified personal trainer, certified strength and conditioning trainer, CrossFit level II trainer, certified nutritionist, social worker and Master Fitness Trainer Instructor with over five years' experience.

**TMD:**

**Alright, let's dive right in. What are some of the fitness challenges that Guardsmen face today?**

**SCHINDLER:**

You'll always hear me say consistency and repetition will get you results. So, no matter what your goal is, if you do it with consistency and repeatedly you're going to get better at it and you're going to improve. I think that's really the challenge. It's almost impossible to have that consistency. Even if you're unit is squared away and you're doing by-the-book Field Manual 7-22 activities, you're only doing that once a month.

**TMD:**

**That makes sense. It sounds like you have to make a personal choice to do it. So, if a Guardsman says "I want to get in better shape or improve," how would you recommend he or she do that?**

**SCHINDLER:**

Well, getting in shape means a lot of things to different people. Number one is that they have to define what that is to themselves. They need to have clear measurable goals. Number two is come up with a plan, it needs to have some sort of design, and it has to have some sort of sensical nature to it in order to progress. Number three is what I said earlier: it's consistency and repetition. That means consistency and repetition in your nutrition, as well as consistency in your training program. If you say you're going to train on these days, then train on those days. You have to do the work. But it's the same thing with recovery. Far too many people think they need to destroy themselves daily in order to get better, that's definitely not the

case. You actually improve during your recovery periods and break down during training. Set goals. Create a plan. Show up and execute with a clear understanding about nutrition, fitness and recovery.

**TMD:**

**You said earlier that fitness means a lot of things to different people. How does the direction we are going in as an organization reflect that?**

**SCHINDLER:**

You've probably seen the new models for the fitness test. They're really trying to build a more comprehensive suite of tests rather than just having the current standard APFT.

**TMD:**

**Do you think those tests are going to give a better picture of fitness?**

**SCHINDLER:**

Oh, for sure. At the Master Fitness Trainers Course, we do several different assessments, and some are the ones they've talked about doing for the broader spectrum of tactical athletes. It exposes all kinds of gaps in physical fitness. Just to get into our course you have to have a 70 or higher in each event, so the people that come in are decently fit people. During the course they come and get exposed during those assessments. The tactical athlete has to do it all really.

**TMD:**

**Why is it important for a Texas Guardsman to maintain that tactical athlete level of fitness? Some of us don't really need to do that every day.**



## LTC Robert Crockem

### J5, Director of Strategic Plans & Policies

#### EXPERIENCE:

LTC Crockem attended Texas Officer Candidate School and began his officer career as a platoon leader with C Co. 176th Engineer Battalion, 49th Armored Division. He then served as the unit's Executive Officer before assuming a position as an Operations Officer at the Engineer Brigade. He served as the HHD Engineer Brigade Commander, assistant S3 at the 176th EN BN and brigade engineer for the 56th IBCT where he deployed in 2008 in support of OIF 9-11, Baghdad, Iraq. Subsequently, he served as the XO for the 56th BSTB then commander of the 56th BSTB. Crockem then guided the transition of the 56th BSTB into the 156th BEB where he commanded until his assignment as the S3, 176th EN BDE. In 2016, he deployed as the S3 with 176th EN BDE to Kuwait in support of Operations OSS, OFS, and OIR where the brigade was in charge of troop labor construction throughout the CENTCOM area of region. Upon returning he was assigned as the DIVENG, 36th ID and most recently the J5 of the Joint Staff.

#### EDUCATION:

Crockem holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Industrial Engineering from Louisiana State University (1992), a Master of Science in Leadership with a concentration in Business Ethics from Duquesne University (2011) and is currently in his first year of distance education, U.S. Army War College. He is also attending the TAG's Leadership Development Program, which he will complete this year

#### DID YOU KNOW:

Crockem has been married to his wife, India, for 16 years, and they have four children: two boys and two girls (Jade-21, Aysia-16, Myles-14, Christian-12). He also works for TD Ameritrade as a Regional Fixed Income Sales Manager where he leads a team of 12 fixed income sales specialists.

#### IN HIS WORDS:

"I'm extremely excited to join the Joint Staff team, and I look forward to learning as much as I can in order to make a significant impact on the organization. It makes me proud to know that we in the TMD are 'Texans Serving Texas,' and we want to make it easier for our members to do that. Duty, Honor, Texas!"



## COL Theresa Cogswell

### J6, Director of Information Management & Technology

#### EXPERIENCE:

COL Theresa Cogswell began her career as an enlisted Soldier in the Army Reserves during college, until commissioning as an Active Duty second lieutenant branched Quartermaster. Her assignments include Korea, Germany and Kosovo, and company commander in Iraq from 2004-2005. She transferred to the Texas Army National Guard in 2006 and became a military technician in various positions in the G4 from 2007 to 2012, as Support Operations Officer, 36th DISCOM, 72nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT) Brigade S4 and deployed as Joint Area Support Group, Director for Support Operations from 2009-2010 in Bagdad, as the Battalion Commander of 949th Brigade Support Battalion meanwhile serving as the full-time Deputy G6. She served as the Sustainment Chief, 36th Infantry Division by providing support for Warfighter 15-5 meanwhile, serving as the full-time Assistant Chief of Staff, G6. In March, 2018, she was selected to be the Joint Forces Headquarters, CIO/J6.

#### EDUCATION:

Cogswell holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Management Information Systems from Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana, and has two masters degrees: a Masters of Business Administration from Webster University in Kansas City and a Master of Strategic Studies from the U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

#### IN HER WORDS:

"I am honored to have been selected to serve in this position and to be given the opportunity to lead Texas's most talented information technology professionals to be the best of the best in cyber security readiness in the Nation. As the CIO/J6, my goal is to build a comprehensive Texas Military Department Cyber Security Strategy that comprises all service components and interagency partners, modernize our secure communications infrastructure, and to manage change while minimizing the impact to Texas Military Forces."



## Lt Col Travis Walters

### J8, Director of Resource Management

#### EXPERIENCE:

Texas Air National Guard's Lt Col Walters graduated from the U.S. Air Force Academy in 1999. After completing Euro-NATO Joint Jet Pilot Training, he remained at Sheppard AFB as a T-37 Instructor Pilot, then transferred to Dyess AFB as a C-130 Aircraft Commander. He worked in several staff positions at 18th Air Force and Air Mobility Command at Scott AFB in Illinois, as well as in the Air Directorate of Strategic Plans and Programs (A-8) at NGB in Washington, D.C. After leaving active duty, Walters joined the Texas ANG, where he first served as the executive officer for the 136th Airlift Wing in Fort Worth, Texas. He then took command of the 136th Maintenance Squadron, where he oversaw component and equipment maintenance operations for the unit's C-130H flying mission. Prior to his new role as the J-8, Walters was the State Public Affairs Officer for TMD, where he was responsible to the Adjutant General for strategic communications. He and his wife, Dorothy, have been married for 18 years and have three beautiful daughters.

#### EDUCATION:

Walters holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Military History from the U.S. Air Force Academy and a Master of Arts degree in Air Warfare from the American Military University. His military education includes the Squadron Officer School, Air Command and Staff College and Air War College.

#### DID YOU KNOW:

Walters currently serves as a Commissioner on the Supreme Court of Texas Permanent Judicial Commission for Children, Youth and Families.

#### IN HIS WORDS:

"I am honored to serve the Texas Military Department in this new role and excited to join such a talented team. As the agency's resource integration and communications hub, the J-8 will bring together the many pieces of our state and federal budgets, while supporting the great work our budget analysts, program managers and comptrollers do across our state."



## COL Andrew Rochstein

### Incoming State Aviation Officer, TXARNG\*

#### EXPERIENCE:

COL Rochstein previously served as the J3 and Director of Joint Operations for the Domestic Operations Task Force at Camp Mabry in Austin, Texas. Prior to his appointment as the Director of Operations, Rochstein was the acting State Army Aviation Officer for the Texas Army National Guard. He has extensive experience planning, executing and supporting DSCA and civil support missions throughout the U.S., including Hurricanes Andrew, Katrina, Rita, Gustav and Ike, as well as the Bastrop fires of 2011. Rochstein is a Master Army Aviator and an instructor pilot with more than 3,000 hours of flight time and qualifications in the TH-55 Osage, the UH-1 Huey and the UH-60 Blackhawk. His company-grade assignments began in the Florida National Guard in 1988, prior to his inter-state transfer to Texas in 1995. From 1997 to 2001, Rochstein commanded Blackhawk companies in zAustin and San Antonio. Immediately following the 9/11 attacks in 2001, Rochstein was mobilized in support of Operation Noble Eagle and assigned as Task Force Iron Confidence Officer-in-Charge and Central Texas Regional Commander for airport security. In 2003, he deployed to Bosnia as the Aviation Task Force S3 in support of Stabilization Force 14. In January 2006, he was mobilized as the 36th Combat Aviation Brigade S4 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The 36th CAB was tasked to provide direct support to Multi National Corps-Iraq and was comprised of six National Guard battalions with 2,800 Soldiers and 144 aircraft from 46 states. Upon re-deployment from Iraq, Rochstein held a number of traditional M-day assignments in the Texas Army National Guard, including Executive Officer of the 36th CAB. From September 2008 until December 2011, Rochstein commanded the 449th Aviation Support Battalion, headquartered in San Antonio. He was assigned as the 36th CAB S3 from December 2011 until September 2013. Rochstein also worked as the G5, Chief of Plans for 36th ID.

#### EDUCATION:

Rochstein was commissioned through ROTC at the University of Tampa in 1987, where he received his bachelor of science degree. He completed his master's degree in strategic studies from the U.S. Army War College in July 2014.

#### DID YOU KNOW:

COL Rochstein and his wife Vickie recently celebrated the birth of their first child, Mia Akemi Rochstein. She was only 3 lbs. and 30 weeks gestation when she was born, but she is now 5 lbs., 7 oz. and she's almost ready to come home from NICU. He is eagerly accepting parenting tips from those who are willing to share.

#### IN HIS WORDS:

(Borrowed from a NICU nurse) "If it fires, it wires." "I'm humbled and honored to work with and for the best leadership team in all of the 54 states and territories and the DoD, and to follow in the footsteps of three previous DOMOPs Chiefs of Staff who I consider friends and mentors, COL Scott MacLeod, COL Danny Quick and COL Jim Nugent."

\* Effective August 1, 2018