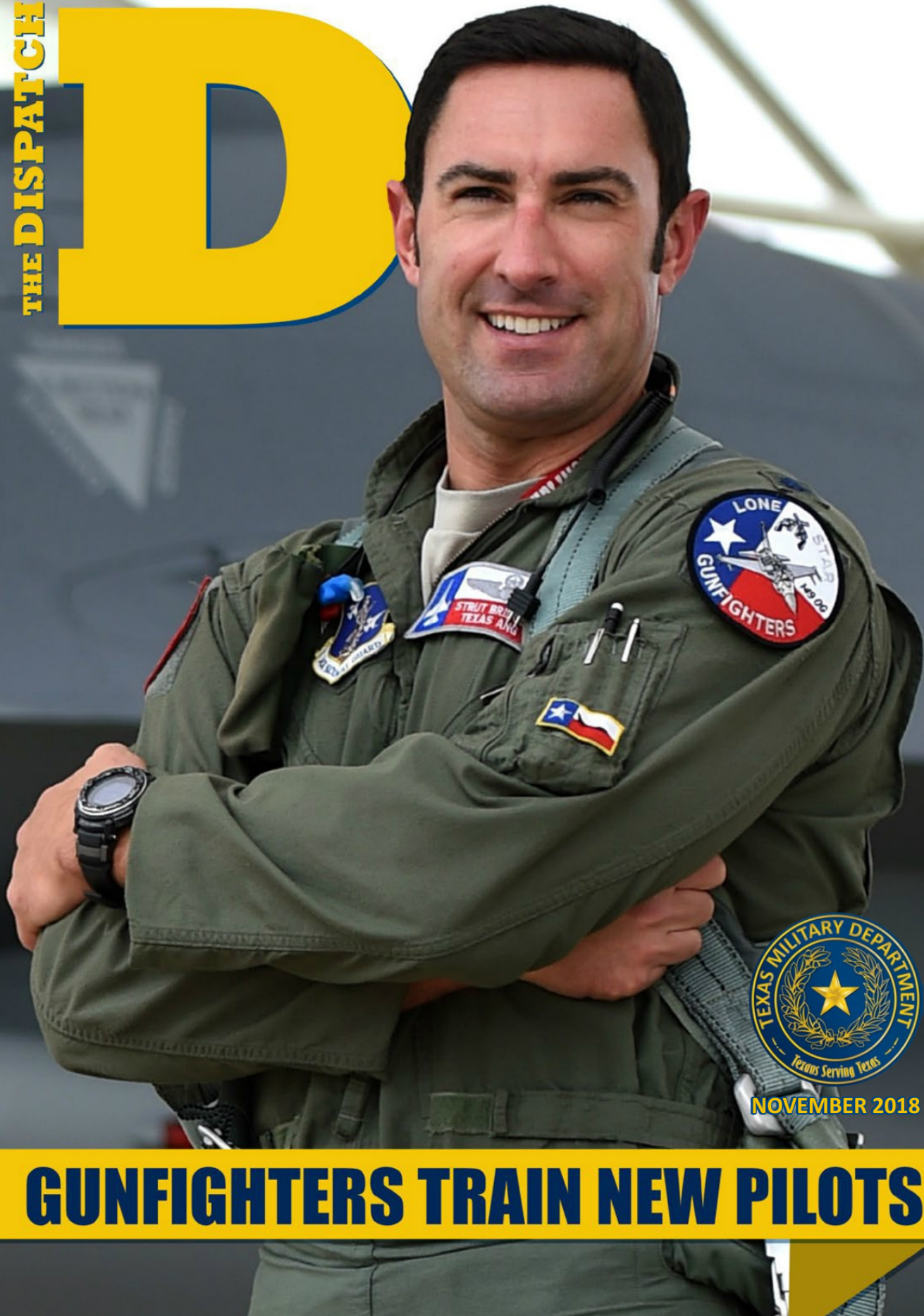


THE DISPATCH

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NOVEMBER 2018

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT

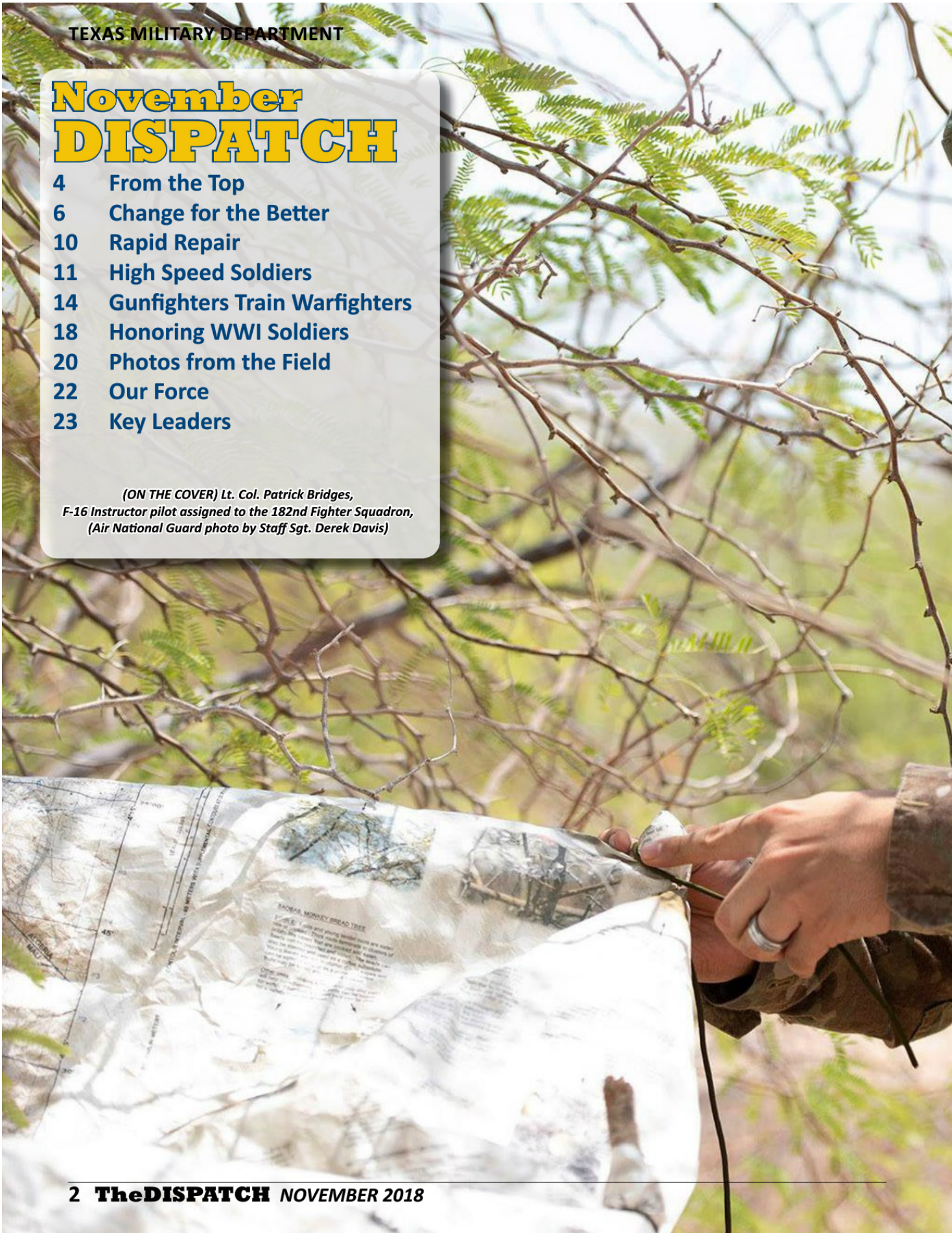
GUNFIGHTERS TRAIN NEW PILOTS

TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT

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*(ON THE COVER) Lt. Col. Patrick Bridges,
F-16 Instructor pilot assigned to the 182nd Fighter Squadron,
(Air National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Derek Davis)*





U.S. Army Pfc. Jonathan Galindo, a field artillery Firefinder radar operator with 3rd Battalion, 133rd Field Artillery Regiment, Texas Army National Guard, uses his evasion chart and 550 parachute cord to create a shade shelter during survival skills training on Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti, Oct. 13, 2018. During this training, Galindo completed various tasks such as constructing a shelter, finding alternative water sources and signaling for rescue. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Sarah Mattison)



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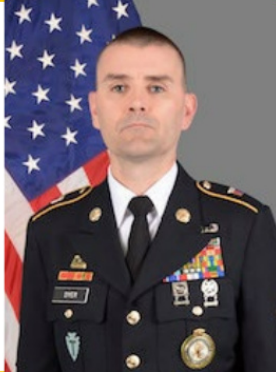
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TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT

FROM THE TOP

COMMENTARIES FROM TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT LEADERS



FOCUS ON INDIVIDUAL READINESS FOR MISSIONS AT HOME AND ABROAD

COMMAND SGT. MAJ. KRISTOPHER L. DYER
SENIOR ENLISTED ADVISOR, TEXAS ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

During November, I ask each of you to place your particular focus on readiness. In today's rapidly moving world, we must be constantly vigilant for new threats and be ready for whatever is asked of us both at home and abroad.

▼ **Remember to take care of each other to ensure that we all are ready for whatever confronts us in our lives.** ▼

It is critical to our lethality as a fighting force that we prepare simultaneously for the war fight of today as well as for that of the future. It is easy to get so caught up in trying to anticipate what might be on the horizon that we forget to prepare for the challenges that are in front of us. We must mentally and physically ensure that we are fully capable for all future situations. Remember to take care of each other to make sure that we all are ready for whatever confronts us in our lives.

Take care of yourselves. As the saying goes, keep your house in order. Do not expect others to prepare you for the challenges you will face; take responsibility for your own preparedness and readiness.

Individual readiness is the cornerstone of overall unit readiness. The focus has to be on your professional military education, individual weapons qualifications, and your warrior tasks and battle drills. With new guidance forthcoming from the U.S. Department of Defense, expect a new focus on physical fitness. Start training now to be ready for the new Army Combat Fitness Test that will be in place Oct. 1, 2020.

There is no greater resource in the Texas Army National Guard than our Soldiers. As such, remember to check on those around you to ask them the difficult questions on issues they may be unwilling or unable to bring up by themselves. The other side of that topic is that you should not suffer in silence and do not let those around you do the same. You are our greatest investment, our greatest asset, and you are a crucial part of our organization's success and future.

Together we remain ever-ready and relevant for whatever we are called on to do. Serve with strength, and always remember: Duty, Honor, Texas.
- FROM THE TOP -



Your Retirement System National Guard & Reserve

Building Retirement Savings with the Blended Retirement System

The Blended Retirement System (BRS) is a modernized retirement plan for all new entrants into the Uniformed Services on or after Jan. 1, 2018, and eligible service members who opted into BRS. Features of the BRS include a **defined contribution**, consisting of government automatic and matching contributions, to a service member's Thrift Savings Plan (TSP), a **defined benefit** (also known as a pension or monthly retired pay for life), after at least 20 years of service, a mid-career bonus called continuation pay and a new lump sum option at retirement.

Key Aspects Under BRS

1 Defined Contribution Thrift Savings Plan (TSP)

You Contribute	DoD Auto Contribution	DoD Matches	Total
0%	1%	0%	1%
1%	1%	1%	3%
2%	1%	2%	5%
3%	1%	3%	7%
4%	1%	3.5%	8.5%
5%	1%	4%	10%

New entrants on or after Jan. 1, 2018

- Automatically enrolled at 3% of your basic pay in an age appropriate TSP Lifecycle Investment Fund.
- Your Service automatically contributes the equivalent of 1% of your basic or drill pay to your TSP after 60 days of service.
- You'll see matching contributions at the start of 3 years through the completion of 26 years of service.

All Service members are fully vested in the automatic 1% contribution – it's yours to keep--after completing 2 years of service

2 Defined Benefit Received after completing 20 qualifying years of service and attaining age 60*

$$2\% \times \text{Years Served} \times \text{Retired Pay Base}$$

Calculate your **retired pay base** by averaging the **highest 36 months** of basic pay
 Calculate your equivalent years of active service by dividing your accumulated retirement points by 360

*or earlier based on qualifying active service

- 3 Continuation Pay**
Received between 8, but not more than 12 years of service
- 4 Lump Sum Option**
A choice of how to receive your defined benefit

Maximize Your TSP

The Power of Compounding

Compounding is powerful because it allows you to make money, not just on the money you contribute to your TSP, but also on the money that it earns. Think of it as having a snowball effect—so the sooner you start saving, the more years you have to save, and the more effective compounding is in building retirement savings.



(*calculation using the planning tools at TSP.gov, based on an annual growth rate of 7% with monthly contributions)

Resource Websites

- TSP.gov
- DFAS.mil
- MilitaryOneSource.mil
- SEC.gov
- MilitaryPay.defense.gov/Calculators
- MilitaryPay.defense.gov/BlendedRetirement



You can find additional information on #BlendedRetirement at <http://militarypay.defense.gov/BlendedRetirement>
 Source: Fiscal Year 2016 National Defense Authorization Act, sections 631, 632, 633, 644, and 635

TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT



CHANGE FOR THE BETTER

HOW THE ARMY COMBAT FITNESS TEST WILL IMPACT GUARDSMEN

Story By: Kyle Burns
Texas Military Department Public Affairs

AUSTIN, Texas - When the Army announced a [new physical fitness test](#) it was expected that Soldiers throughout the force would have questions. However, the questions and concerns of a full-time active duty Soldier may differ from the Citizen-Soldiers of the Army National Guard. Guardsmen are expected to balance a full-time civilian career simultaneously with their military duties and responsibilities within their state. This dual status results in many unique challenges that the leaders of the Texas Army National Guard are working hard to address.

Why change now?

The new Army Combat Fitness Test (ACFT) comes as a necessary evolution in the current American fighting force, and was directed at Guardsmen during this year's [National Guard Association conference](#).

"We Americans have no God-given right to victory on the battlefield. So we need you, my fine young National Guardsmen, at the top of your game," U.S. Defense Secretary James N. Mattis said. "Lethality begins when we are physically, mentally and spiritually fit to be evaluated by the most exacting auditor on Earth - and that auditor is war."

The current [Guard 4.0](#) concept reinforces this idea by identifying some Guard units as rapid response forces that are fully capable of deploying within 30 days, wherever and whenever they are needed. This means an increased battle rhythm, more intense training, and higher need for inherent physical readiness that may be alarming to current Texas Guardsmen.

"We haven't changed the APFT in almost 40 years. The way we fight is completely different," said Command Sgt. Maj. Kristopher L. Dyer, senior enlisted advisor for Texas Army National Guard. "This test measures that explosive strength and is the closest we can currently get to simulating combat on the battlefield."

This improved physical proficiency testing applies to more than just combat scenarios. One of the additions in the new test will evaluate explosive action and the ability to carry heavy items such as ammunition and personnel. For example, in addition to the current two-mile run, Soldiers must conduct a 250-meter sprint drag. These movements are just as crucial to Guardsmen who serve during disaster response where Soldiers may be lifting heavy cases of supplies and helping trapped victims to safety under austere conditions.

(Left and Right) A Texas Army National Guard master fitness trainer performs exercises that will be replacing the current Army Physical Fitness Test during an exhibition for senior leaders in the Texas Military Department held at Camp Mabry in Austin, Texas Oct. 3, 2018. (U.S. Army National Guard Photos By: Sgt. Mark Otte)



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Maj. Gen. Tracy Norris, deputy adjutant general and Texas Army National Guard commander prepares to deadlift weight during a demonstration of the Army's new combat fitness evaluation. U.S. National Guard Photo By: Sgt. Mark Otte

How does this test fit into Guard culture?

The National Guard is a unique community with its own challenges. Many of the concerns among Texas Guardsmen come from knowledge of battle rhythms, training, and deep understanding of how their organizations function. Luckily, their leadership is familiar with these nuances as well.

"Nobody is going to be set up to take this test to fail," Dyer said. "We have two years to get ready and have enough trained Soldiers already within the formation, with more being trained in 2019. This is not going to be an issue."

Texas Guardsmen should already be familiar with one of the ways they can improve their performance on the upcoming test: Physical Readiness Training, or PRT. In current test groups, Soldiers who actively practice PRT correctly are performing better on the new test. It's the choices and habits of Guardsmen outside of drill that are poised to be the most obstructive.

"My concern is after training the Soldier on the weekend; having them maintain and practice what they've learned throughout the week when they are not in uniform," Dyer said. "That's going to be the largest hurdle we have to overcome."

When will we get the equipment and how?

The equipment, currently slated to be provided entirely by the federal government, will arrive in 2019 in time for Soldiers to familiarize and train on the gear before the announced start date.

"We have two units that, starting last month are the test units for one year," Dyer said. "Our master fitness trainers will train the unit, educate them on how to take the test, and then the unit is going to physically take the equipment."

These units will give feedback to the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command on what standards are realistic for Guardsmen who may not have regular access to fitness facilities and are maintaining two separate careers simultaneously. Put simply, the events within the test have been set, but the standards of the test are still being determined.

Dyer said that leaders are confident in Texas Army National Guard Soldiers and that they will rise to the challenge while demonstrating the dedication and physical resolve expected of a Texas Army National Guardsman serving Texas. As Defense Secretary James N. Mattis declared when he addressed National Guard leaders from across the country, "Readiness is being most ready, when our country is least ready. And, readiness depends of preparation." **-D**

TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT



NOMINATE YOUR OUTSTANDING EMPLOYER OCT. 1-DEC. 31, 2018

www.FreedomAward.mil

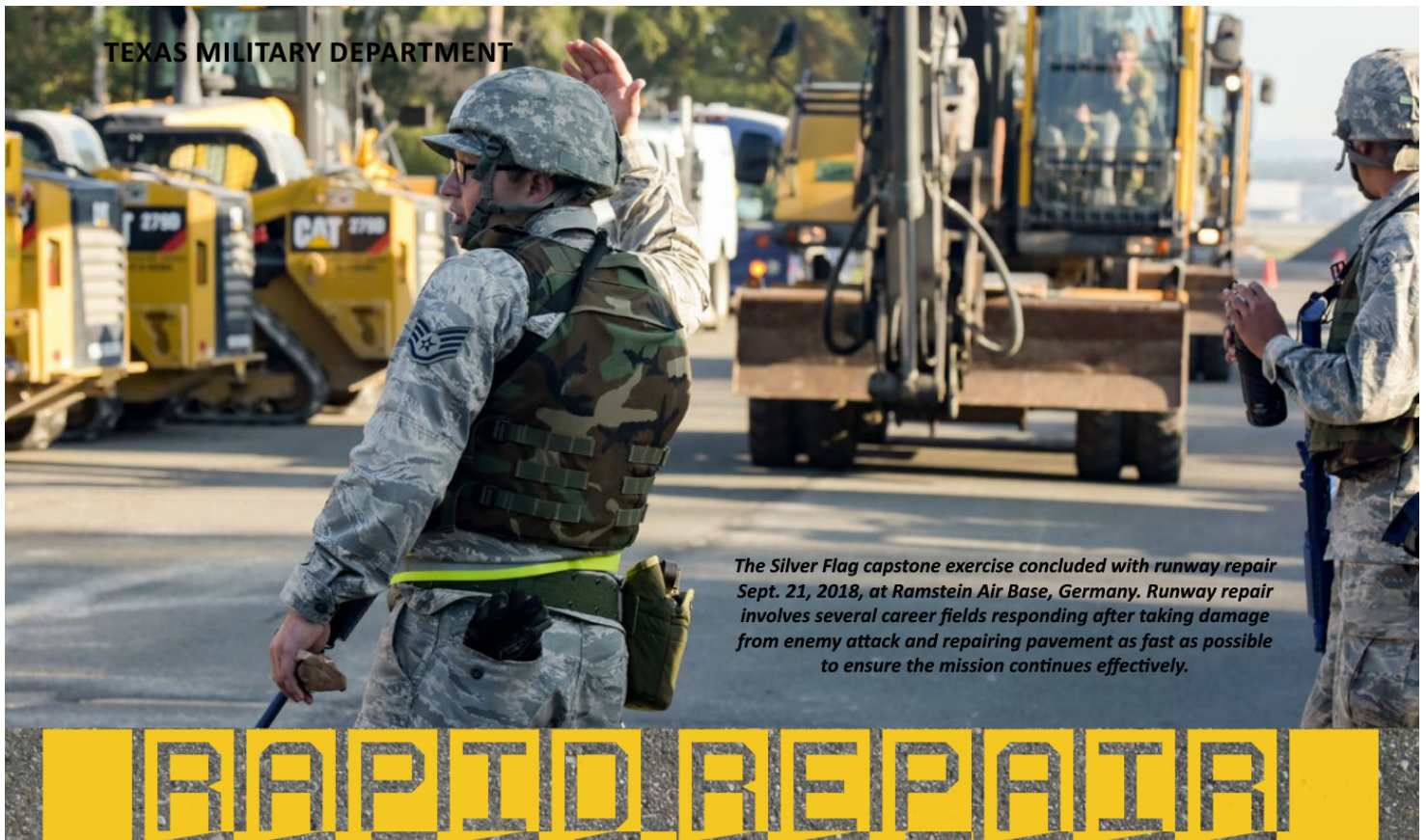


The Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award is the highest recognition given by the U.S. Government to employers for their support of their employees who serve in the Guard and Reserve. The award was created to publicly recognize employers who provide exceptional support to their **Guard and Reserve employees**.



Nominations must come from a Guard or Reserve member who is employed by the organization they are nominating, or from a family member.

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The Silver Flag capstone exercise concluded with runway repair Sept. 21, 2018, at Ramstein Air Base, Germany. Runway repair involves several career fields responding after taking damage from enemy attack and repairing pavement as fast as possible to ensure the mission continues effectively.

**Story and Photos By: Staff Sgt. Daniel J. Martinez
147th Attack Wing Public Affairs**

RAMSTEIN AIR BASE, Germany — Members of the 147th Civil Engineering Squadron, Ellington Field Joint Reserve Base, Texas, participated in Silver Flag training hosted by the 435th Construction and Training Squadron Sept. 21, 2018.

Silver Flag is an opportunity for civil engineering Airman to train in a contingency environment while focusing on different technical abilities across multiple career fields. It provides Airmen with unique, critical training they may not have access to at their home base and makes them more proficient.

“It has been a great experience for us at the 147th CES to train in an environment where we were able to hone in on our contingency mission training,” said Capt. Alyson White, the 147th CES Operations Flight deputy officer in charge. “These Airmen will be able to know that they are prepared to go into real life situations with confidence in their new learned knowledge and skills.”

During the 10-day training, the 147th worked with U.S. Air Force active duty, Air National Guard civil engineering organizations and Norwegian air combat engineers.

“During this exercise we brought over 10 civil engineering units,

Norwegian air combat engineers and for the first time 2T1X1s (vehicle operations) for Silver Flag,” said Master Sgt. Kyle War-nock, the 435th’s Contingency Training Flight superintendent.

“When they arrived, they didn’t have the skills and techniques required, but after completing the training they are able to bed down for a follow-on force and recover an airfield with Rapid Airfield Damage Recovery (RADR) while in a CBRNE (Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear) environment. RADR was developed to counter the emergent threat of anti-access area denial capabilities of our adversaries.”

The goal of Silver Flag is to provide the best and most up to date training to our civil engineer Airmen and give them the opportunity to better serve forces they support. RADR is one of the new items that is essential for civil engineering Airmen to learn.

RADR allows Airmen to respond immediately following an airfield damaging attack by quickly repairing and cleaning the damaged areas. Once repaired, this allows aircraft to continue using the airfield runways to complete their mission.

The 147th CES brought 33 individuals from 12 career fields to participate in the Silver Flag exercise. Civil engineering reserve and Guard Airmen must attend a Silver Flag exercise every four years to stay current in their training. **-D**

HIGH SPEED SOLDIERS

*Story By: Caitlin Rourk - Photos by: Kyle Burns
Texas Military Department Public Affairs*

FORT HOOD, Texas — First Battalion, 143rd Infantry Regiment isn't for the faint-hearted. In addition to being the only airborne infantry unit in the National Guard, the 1-143rd is also part of the Army's Associated Unit Pilot program, which pairs active-duty and reserve-component units.

During a recent company live-fire exercise Oct. 18-20, 2018, the unit's hard-charging ethos was on full display. For active-duty units, such an exercise may be relatively routine, but for a National Guard unit, it marked an impressive undertaking that not only demonstrates the AUP program in action but also provides lessons for National Guard units facing mounting training requirements.

"Few infantry battalions will have the opportunity to conduct a company-level live-fire exercise, let alone during an IDT (inactive-duty training) as compared with a CTC (combat training center) rotation," 1-143rd Commander Lt. Col. William M. Gorby said. "The effort of the NCOs (non-commissioned officers) and officers of the 1-143 is the primary driving force that allowed [us] to accomplish this impressive task—especially for a third year in a row," Gorby added.

Torrential rains didn't stop the 1-143rd's three companies from completing the certi-

fying exercise, which centered on a scenario the unit created with both day and night iterations and several injects. With mud caked on their boots and uniforms, sleeping in rain-soaked tents, 1-143rd Soldiers navigated the course, with more than a dozen range safeties observing their every move. Although the 1-143rd planned to utilize attack aviation and unmanned aircraft systems to make it a true combined-arms exercise, Texas's October weather scrapped those plans. Still, the live-fire exercise helped Soldiers achieve key training objectives, like conducting a deliberate company attack, military urban operations training and integrating indirect fire assets.

Maj. William Cowart, the battalion's operations officer, said the unit's high motivation is emblematic of the 1-143rd long before the AUP program began.

"This battalion has always attempted to run fast and hard, even before the AUP started. It was just a natural progression once we came into the AUP program, and we are continuing to do what we were already doing," Cowart said.

The 1-143rd and its associated unit – the 173rd Airborne

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Brigade Combat Team, based in Vicenza, Italy – coordinate extensively on training exercises and day-to-day operations to ensure maximum synchronization. The 1-143rd training schedule includes a full slate for most active-duty units; a training schedule the battalion successfully accomplishes each year with its traditional National Guard force, often over drill weekends.

“The exercise conducted during the October IDT was a validating event for the battalion. Under the new Objective T guidance (a system that measures a unit’s deployment readiness), live-fire exercises are the required gates for validating some of the battalion mission-essential tasks. Additionally, the live-fire exercise improves lethality, enhances synchronization under fire and builds confidence for our paratroopers,” Gorby said.

1-143rd Soldiers worked in varying roles to support the exercise, and leaders developed additional concurrent training to maximize their time together. 2nd Lt. Aaron Hart, the battalion medical operations officer, had medics who weren’t supporting range operations carry fellow medics for one mile, stop and do a medical task and repeat, for a total of four miles.

“When the infantrymen see the medics are out training hard, it puts more faith in them. The exercise is an opportunity to show new medics the pace of the unit and what they’re all about,” Hart said. “For experienced medics, it’s reminding them what they’re capable of, what their job is, and how important their job is. We have to keep up with this unit,” he said.

Master Sgt. Hsiao Tsung Chao, a liaison officer from the 173rd, said that planning the exercise last year provided some helpful lessons to make the exercise a success. The experience also changed Chao’s outlook to account for underlying challenges and friction points National Guard units face.

“I’ve gotten a lot more perspective on and respect for the Guard. I just didn’t understand it from an active duty mindset,” Chao said. “These guys have day-to-day lives Monday through Friday. These guys genuinely want to be here in the unit. Because

you have civilian jobs, it helps augment our limited resources and we have seen it pay huge dividends out in the field.”

Every 1-143rd training event includes at least one representative from the 173rd, and the presence of liaison personnel ensures close coordination and understanding between the two units. Many Soldiers attribute the success of the AUP program to the immense collaboration between the 1-143rd and its AUP partner.

Chao believes the 173rd benefits tremendously from the AUP on the strategic level by integrating a third infantry battalion (the 1-143rd) to its combat power, something he called “a huge value-add.” He also points to the benefit of having longevity and continuity of personnel, compared to the active-duty force, which helps the 1-143rd maintain its high operational tempo, even with significant time and resource limitations.

“In the event we get called to do our warfighting functions, [the 173rd has] that third maneuver battalion to add to combat,” Chao said. “The 143rd is expected to meet a lot of the same objectives as the 173rd full-time training battalions, but we have way less training days. The airborne operations here are very streamlined. To be able to muster at 5 a.m. and then get to your departure airfield by 1200, and then six hours later, you’re jumping out of an airplane – that’s huge.”

In Cowart’s assessment, the 1-143rd has benefited from the AUP in terms of increased readiness. The 1-143rd does squad live-fire, platoon live-fire and company live-fire exercises every year, as well as joint forcible entry exercises stateside, and overseas with multi-national partners. Cowart is quick to point out that he does not believe the 1-143rd is held to a different standard than other National Guard units, as all infantry units must meet the same requirements, but that the unit is simply expected to perform at a different rate because of its mission.

As the National Guard faces more training demands under Objective T, the 1-143rd offers helpful perspective for units grappling with the added strain. When the 1-143rd moved from a traditional National Guard training schedule to the more robust requirements of Objective T, the unit worked to do more events to engage with employers and families. Most importantly, with just a few weeks off between the unit’s training events, 1-143rd leaders impressed upon their Soldiers clear expectations so they can prepare themselves mentally, physically and with their families to hit the ground during training exercises to take advantage of every precious minute the unit has together. **-D**

**CLICK HERE TO VIEW
THE 1-143RD LIVE FIRE EXERCISE**



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CRISIS HOTLINE:

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838255

HELP IS JUST A PHONE CALL OR TEXT AWAY



LONE STAR GUNFIGHTERS



TRAIN FUTURE WARFIGHTERS

TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT

Story By: Steve Alvarez

Texas Military Department Public Affairs Office

In 2016 while deployed to Afghanistan, U.S. Air Force Maj. Geoffrey Gebhardt received an alert at his base that U.S. forces were in trouble. It is a story he reluctantly explains because he's not a fan of telling "war stories."

"Weather was bad. Nobody was flying and we got a call that 200 miles away there was a base under attack," Gebhardt said.

Within minutes he was airborne, flying the highly maneuverable F-16 Fighting Falcon, a U.S. Air Force workhorse aircraft that has proven itself in combat. The weather, while bad, was no match for the F-16's technology which can locate targets in inclement weather during non-visual bombing conditions.

As Gebhardt flew to the fight, he communicated with forces on the ground and in the background he could hear the gunfire, shouting and chaos of the battle below him. Then Gebhardt inserted his aircraft in the airspace over the battlefield.

"As soon as we got on station, the enemy shooting stopped," Gebhardt said. "Our presence overhead made the enemy stop attacking our guys on the ground and that's what it's all about—providing the support to those guys on the ground who are dodging bullets and need to stay safe. Sometimes that means dropping weapons, but other times it simply means being there ready to help."

It is this type of operational experience that makes the Airmen of the 149th Fighter Wing a crucial part of the U.S. Air Force's F-16 pilot training program. Warfighters, in short, can better teach warfighting.

The 149th maintains a mobility commitment in many support areas including security forces, medical, civil engineering, services, transportation and military personnel. Instructor pilots like Gebhardt who has amassed 1,500 hours in the cockpit, can deploy with other units to support combat operations.

"We just had some people get back who deployed with other units," Gebhardt said. "It keeps us fresh in the combat world of the F-16," he said. "It allows us to identify what skills we need to teach students."

The 149th Fighter Wing, known as the Lone Star Gun-

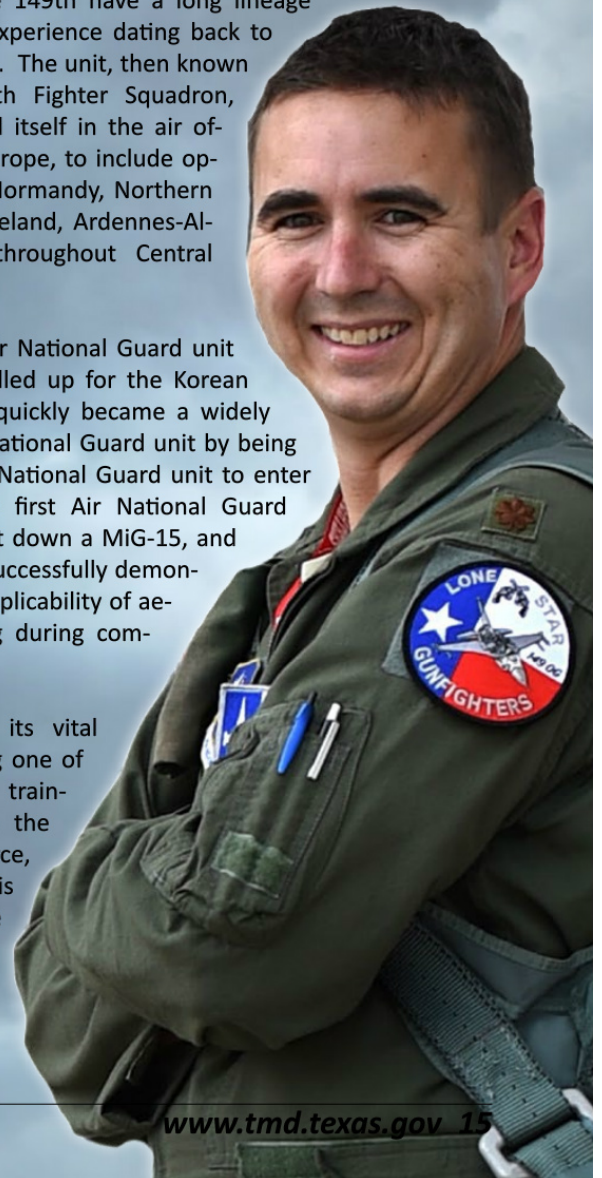
fighters, is an F-16 training unit that is a part of the Texas Air National Guard and the Texas Military Department. Based out of Kelly Field in San Antonio, the cornerstone of the 149th's flying mission is the 182nd Fighter Squadron, whose role is to take pilots, either experienced aircrew or recent graduates from U.S. Air Force Undergraduate Pilot Training (UPT), and qualify them to fly the F-16. The unit trains F-16 pilots for the U.S. Air Force, U.S. Air Force Reserve and the Air National Guard.

"We are grateful to have a cadre of instructor pilots whose average time in the jet is somewhere around 1,500 hours," U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Corey Hermesch said. As the chief of safety for the 149th, a member of the unit for the past eight years, and an F-16 pilot with 2,600 hours, Hermesch speaks with a unique perspective. "The experience in this group of instructor pilots is matched nowhere else in the USAF F-16 fleet," he added.

Pilots of the 149th have a long lineage of combat experience dating back to World War II. The unit, then known as the 396th Fighter Squadron, distinguished itself in the air offensive in Europe, to include operations in Normandy, Northern France, Rhineland, Ardennes-Alsace, and throughout Central Europe.

The Texas Air National Guard unit was later called up for the Korean War and it quickly became a widely lauded Air National Guard unit by being the first Air National Guard unit to enter combat, the first Air National Guard unit to shoot down a MiG-15, and the first to successfully demonstrate the applicability of aerial refueling during combat.

Aside from its vital role of being one of three F-16 training units in the U.S. Air Force, the 149th is home to the 149th Maintenance



Maj. Geoffrey Gebhardt, an F-16 Instructor pilot assigned to the 182nd Fighter Squadron. (Air National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Derek Davis)

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Group, 149th Operations Group, 149th Mission Support Group and the 149th Medical Group. In addition, the 149th has five geographically separated units: Texas Air National Guard Headquarters, 203rd Security Forces Squadron, 204th Security Forces Squadron, 209th Weather Flight, and 273rd Cyber Operations Squadron.

The 149th Fighter Wing was officially formed on Oct. 1, 1995 and it became an F-16 training unit in October 1999. The first class of active duty, Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve pilots began training in May 2000.

“About 80 percent of them are from active duty,” Gebhardt said about the student populace. He has trained about 100 pilots since becoming an instructor pilot in 2009, a role he’s performed on active duty and in the Air National Guard.

In addition to training pilots fresh out of UPT, the 149th also trains senior officers on the F-16 who might be assuming command of an F-16 unit and who are not qualified on the aircraft. However, the rigorous nine-month training program is mostly for brand new pilots, but the 149th also trains instructor pilot upgrade students, requalification students, and this year they also trained students from the Pilot Training Next program which leverages virtual and augmented reality in an effort to

streamline the Air Force’s effort to get qualified pilots in the air. Roughly 14 students fill each class.

The training starts with about a month’s worth of classroom time and F-16 simulator flying, and then pilots take to the skies. Approximately 50 trainees attend F-16 training at the 149th each year, according to Hermes, and the 149th is one of two Air National Guard units that train pilots on the F-16. There is also an active duty Air Force unit with the same mission.

Chief Master Sgt. John Mead, the 149th’s Maintenance Operations Flight superintendent, stated that planning is vital to the unit’s mission of training warfighters. “We make sure we’re coordinating the maintenance and the flying plan and that they mesh seamlessly so we can



A maintenance member assigned to the 149th Fighter Wing, Air National Guard, repairs a tire on an F-16 Fighting Falcon at Čáslav Air Base, Czech Republic, June 29, during Sky Avenger 2018. (U.S. Air National Guard Photo by Tech. Sgt. Mindy Bloem)

TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT



Maintainers from the 149th Fighter Wing, Air National Guard, work as a team to perform interim maintenance on an F-16 Fighting Falcon at Čáslav Air Base, Czech Republic, June 18, during Sky Avenger 2018. (U.S. Air National Guard Photo by Tech. Sgt. Mindy Bloem)

have a good game plan each week and we can properly train our pilots and fly our missions,” Mead said.

Maintenance personnel ensure every component of the aircraft functions as expected. It enables the student pilots to experience, in a training environment, the maximum capabilities of the F-16.

“Whenever they return to their units ... they’re ready to step into their warfighting missions and go do the job,” Mead said.

In the military, lessons learned in combat sharpen the skills of future warfighters when they are applied in training by instructors. Pilots like Gebhardt are a critical source of knowledge. Their experience enables them to better prepare pilots for the future fight.

“Combat experience for our IPs [instructor pilots] is important because it keeps our knowledge relevant for the fight that’s happening now,” Gebhardt said. “Within a year of graduating from our course some of these students will be flying missions in a combat theater and we need to be able to tell our students what they can expect the first time they fly an F-16 over hostile territory.”

The U.S. Air Force’s domestic support missions also provide pilots like Gebhardt unique events his fellow U.S. military aviators in other branches might not get.

In 2008, while on active duty, Gebhardt was on alert status when a claxon sounded giving him several minutes to be airborne. It was Christmas Eve and he was flying toward

Camp David to provide air cover protection for the president of the United States.

“The reason I tend to remember it is because I think it perfectly highlights what we do,” Gebhardt said. “I sacrificed my Christmas by sitting on base 24 hours a day ready to get airborne all so the rest of the country could enjoy their Christmas holiday,” he added.

Hermesch understands firsthand of the sacrifices made by Airmen around the world as they train for war. Sometimes aircrew training can be more perilous than combat missions. It is all part of the mantra, train as you fight; fight as you train. Hermesch was forced to divert his F-16 to Keflavik, Iceland once while on a mission.

“We were 300 miles south of the island in the middle of the Atlantic, and all of a sudden, my single engine can’t produce enough thrust to keep me caught up with the tanker,” Hermesch said. “It had enough thrust to stay airborne, but not enough to refuel. We diverted to Keflavik, and landed without incident, after saying a few prayers on the way in,” he said.

After landing, Hermesch had time to reflect about what could have happened had his diversion been unsuccessful. It is one of his more memorable anecdotes as a pilot.

“You can be exceptionally proud of the men and women who call themselves Gunfighters,” Hermesch said. “They focus on training, on developing people, accomplishing the mission, taking care of families, and serving their community like no other unit I’ve been a part of,” he said. **-D**

TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT

Courtesy Photos By Chris Hunt

Members of the Texas Military Forces Museum Living History Detachment augmented by reenactors from across the nation to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the 36th Infantry Division's first combat operation in WWI at Saint-Étienne, France.

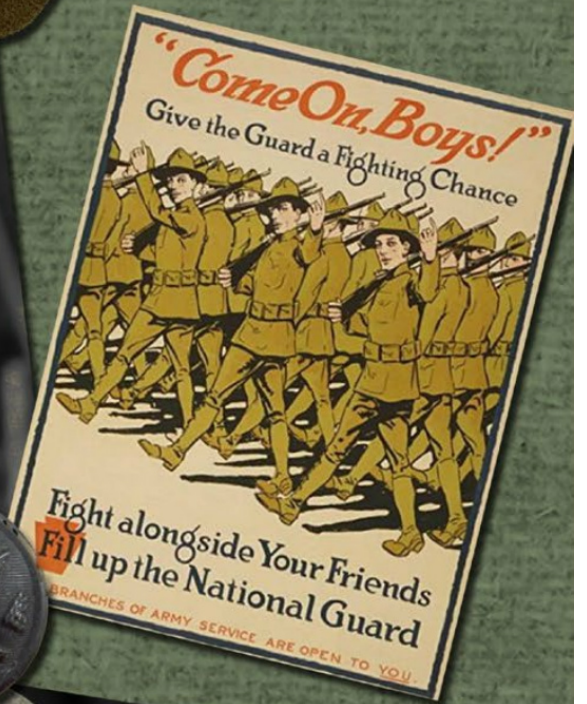
After being established just months earlier at Camp Swift, in Bastrop, Texas the Guardsmen fought their way through 24 intense days of battle culminating in an Allied victory and the end of hostilities in Europe celebrated with Armistice day.

According to Texas Military Forces Museum Director Jeff Hunt, reenactors hosted the event to provide visitors with a condensed version of the battle and provide audience members with the opportunity to experience the tactics, uniforms and equipment of both American and German forces.



REMEMBERING THE WWI WARFIGHTERS

TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT



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PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD



Photo By: Spc. Lidia Jaens
Joint Counter Drug Task Force

CrossFit team at Ellington Field, Houston, Texas, take a group photo.

Photo By: Petty Officer 2nd Class Michael Marotta

The Texas Military Forces Museum recently received a donation from Michael Marotta of two 1841 Texas Navy pay warrants from the Republic of Texas.

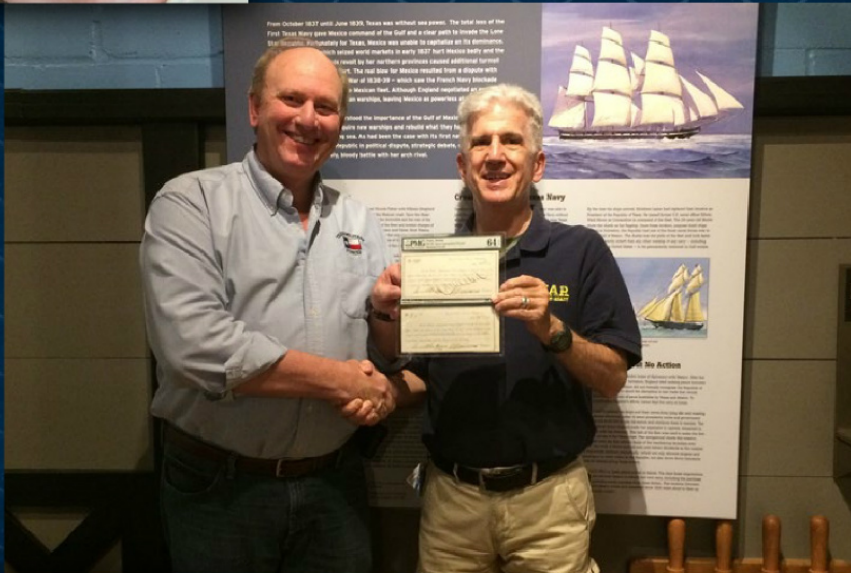


Photo By: Maj. Craig Neeley

Texas Army National Guard Soldiers of the 1st of the 108th Assault Helicopter Battalion from Austin, Texas pose for a picture at the finish line of the Army Ten Miler while deployed in support of Operation Inherent Resolve, Taji, Iraq.



An Inside View Of The Texas Military Department By Soldiers, Airmen & Guardsmen Like You.

Photo By: Warrant Officer James Shew

Texas State Guard members from the Texas Maritime Regiment Dive Team.



Photo By: Warrant Officer James Shew

Texas State Guard members from the Texas Maritime Regiment Dive Team participate in dive rescue training to begin their certification path to becoming public safety divers.



Photo By: Shelby Pruitt

As members of the pick-up zone control team, Capt. Nathan Del Rio (left) and 2nd Lt. Brandon Smolinski (right) monitor the extraction of a 2,000 pound cargo bag of supplies by a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter flown by Soldiers of Company C, 2nd Battalion, 149th Aviation Regiment, as part of a disaster relief exercise Oct. 12, 2018 at Martindale Army Airfield, Texas.



TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT

OUR FORCE

Spc. Johnny Green

**CH-47F (Chinook)
Helicopter Repairer**

**"I serve because
I feel that it is my
duty to assist my
community, state,
and nation in any
way that I can."**



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TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT



Lt. Col. ROSS DAVIS

Executive Officer to the Adjutant General

EXPERIENCE:

Lt. Col. William R. Davis enlisted in the Texas Army National Guard in 1993 and commissioned as a second lieutenant through the state officer candidate school in 1996. He commanded a heavy cavalry troop (B Troop, 1st Squadron, 124th Cavalry Regiment), served as a tank battalion operations officer (5th Battalion, 112th Armor Regiment), and commanded an infantry battalion (1st Battalion, 141st Infantry Regiment). He served in various staff positions to include battalion personnel and operations officer (5th Battalion, 112th Armor Regiment), deputy plans and deputy operations officer (36th Infantry Division), and deputy plans officer, plans officer, and strategic initiatives group officer (Joint Force Headquarters). His most recent assignment was as the deputy commander of the 136th Regional Training Institute at Fort Hood. Davis deployed twice to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

EDUCATION:

Davis earned a Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Development from Texas A&M University, a Master of Science in Operations Management from the University of Arkansas, and a Master of Strategic Studies from the U.S. Army War College. He is a graduate of the Basic Strategic Art program (Functional Area 59 Strategic Plans and Policy qualification course) and the U.S. Army War College.

DID YOU KNOW:

He is an eighth-generation Texan whose ancestors were among the initial 300 families to settle Texas in 1824 as part of Stephen F. Austin's first colony.

IN HIS WORDS:

"I hope to bring my wide range of experience in various command and staff positions into this new role so that I may help inform decision-making and assist with developing the adjutant general's strategic initiatives."



LILIA VANDERWAL

State Procurement Director for the Texas Military Department

EXPERIENCE:

Ms. VanderWal has more than 18 years in both public and private procurement experience. She began her state procurement career in 2003 when she joined the Texas Department of Public Safety. She has spent the last 15 years in the procurement departments of several state and local agencies. Her most recent positions include contracts supervisor at the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, one of the senior purchasers with the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles and the purchasing manager with the Texas Military Department. She has been with the Texas Military Department, Office of Executive Director Procurement Office since 2016.

EDUCATION:

Certified Texas Procurement Manager and Certified Texas Contract Manager with more than 300 hours in specialized training for procurements and contract management.

DID YOU KNOW:

She loves to read and visit sunny tropical beaches. She is happily married and the proud mother of four adult children, ranging in ages of 21 to 28, but her ultimate pride and joy is her 4-year-old granddaughter, Adelina.

IN HER WORDS:

"I am humbled and consider it a privilege to serve as the procurement director for such an honorable state agency as the Texas Military Department. I will do my very best to lead an efficient, productive and knowledgeable purchasing and contracts section."

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