

# VNG brigade HQs, aviation battalion will deploy to Kosovo

The Virginia National Guard's 116th Infantry Brigade Combat Team Headquarters will mobilize for federal active duty in early January 2022 to take responsibility for the NATO-led Kosovo Force Regional Command-East, and the 2nd Battalion, 224th Aviation Regiment will mobilize as their aviation task force according to announcements made by Maj. Gen. Timothy P. Williams, the Adjutant General of Virginia. NATO KFOR troops conduct peace support operations contributing to a safe and secure environment for all people in Kosovo while healthy political dialogue continues between Kosovo and Serbia.

"The 116th IBCT Headquarters has time and again been given the toughest assignments, and they are staffed with some of the most experienced and capable leaders and Soldiers in the Virginia National Guard," Williams said.

He said aviation support for troop movement and medical evacuation is a critical element for the NATO mission in Kosovo, and the 116th IBCT Headquarters is fortunate to have an experienced team of aviators and maintainers who are also their fellow Virginians.

Read more: <https://go.usa.gov/xFtPR>



Virginia National Guard aviation Soldiers conduct medical evacuation training Aug. 4, 2021, at Fort Pickett, Virginia.

## Virginia National Guard News Headlines

### Fort Pickett to support Operation Allies Refuge

Fort Pickett, Virginia, will support the State Department in providing temporary housing and sustainment for Afghan Special Immigration Visa applicants, their families and other at-risk individuals, according to a formal announcement made Aug. 25, 2021, by the Department of Defense.

Read more: <https://go.usa.gov/xFtPQ>

### VNG Soldier finds support, mentor along pathway to citizenship

At the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Field Office on July 29, 2021, Spc. Sri Siri Sundaresan Arumugam became a citizen of the United States of America after joining the Virginia Army National Guard in 2019.

Read more: <https://go.usa.gov/xFtQr>

### 34th CST trains at FIG on chemical, biological hazards

Virginia National Guard Soldiers and Airmen assigned to the Fort Pickett-based 34th Civil Support Team conducted training including two full-scale exercises July 26-30, 2021, at Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania.

Read more: <https://go.usa.gov/xFtQY>

### Youth Program wraps up summer with both in-person, virtual events

The Virginia National Guard Youth Program had a busy and fulfilling summer with National Guard youth at a series of single day, camp-style events as well as a virtual, week-long summer camp.

Read more: <https://go.usa.gov/xFtQ2>

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# 180th Engineer Company returns from JRTC rotation

More than 50 Virginia National Guard Soldiers assigned to the Powhatan-based 180th Engineer Company, 276th Engineer Battalion, 329th Regional Support Group are back home in Virginia after supporting the Arkansas National Guard's 39th Infantry Brigade Combat Team during a training rotation July 10 - Aug. 3, 2021, at the Joint Readiness Training Center in Fort Polk, Louisiana.

The 180th supported the 39th in a variety of ways, including helping build fighting positions and supporting tactical operations, according to 1st Lt. Kevin Eddins, the 180th's executive officer. In addition to those missions, the 180th also employed their vertical capabilities to support both the JRTC training scenario and Fort Polk's facilities.

"Overall, JRTC was a huge challenge for not only our unit but for the brigade and battalion that we were supporting," said Eddins. "However, we not only overcame many obstacles, but we also did much better overall than we anticipated. Our biggest highlight was that we had 90% of the digging assets within the entire brigade and we became the 'go-to' company when digging was a priority. We were able to accomplish all of the missions during the JRTC rotation with no safety incidents. To me, that's a winner across the board."

To accomplish their mission sets, the 180th transported more than 30 pieces of heavy equipment via line haul to Fort Polk, including several bulldozers, excavators, Light Medium Tactical Vehicles, trailers and Humvees. The equipment accounted for all of the 180th's digging assets, though not all of the company's personnel made it to the training rotation, providing a unique challenge for the unit.

"We fared very well considering we only had half our strength in personnel but took all of our digging assets," said Eddins. "JRTC's austere environments pushed us further than we anticipated, but thankfully our Soldiers adapted quickly and we were able to handle everything that we were tasked with."

During their stay "in the box" at JRTC, Eddins said the 180th built two radar sites, one complete artillery battery, three large berms, mortar pits, and anti-tank ditch and more than 30 fighting positions all within a few days. Making those feats even more impressive was the fact the company took a young contingent to JRTC, allowing junior Soldiers a chance to step up and lead.

"We only took three senior noncommissioned officers, which meant that some of our specialists had to take on leadership roles," explained Eddins. "This greatly enabled them to make decisions on their own and build their leadership experience. But overall, our blade teams worked remarkably well together and all gained a lot of knowledge about engineer operations."

Supporting a brigade during an intense training rotation was a new experience for many of the Powhatan unit's Soldiers, allowing them to gain valuable experience in a challenging environment.

"Most of our Soldiers had never seen such a large brigade operating in one area of operation. Integrating into that type of environment was a big adjustment but also proved to be a big



**Soldiers assigned to the Powhatan-based 180th Engineer Company support the Arkansas National Guard's 39th Infantry Brigade Combat Team during a training rotation at the Joint Readiness Training Center in Fort Polk, Louisiana.**

benefit," said Eddins. "One of our heavy equipment operator E-4s, Spc. Matthew Waddill, led three excavators tasked with digging fighting positions for one particular infantry battalion. He later told me that being attached to a battalion without an NCO forced him to make decisions and communicate what engineers could and could not do. It's something he was not at first comfortable doing but he was really thankful for the experience later on.

"Our soldiers really performed superbly and I am so proud of them," added Eddins. "They accomplished all of their missions safely and did so with a lot of professionalism. A commander could not ask for anything else."

Read more: <https://go.usa.gov/xFtQK>

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**Photos: Quinn takes command of 3-183rd RTI**

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