

# AG approves VDF force structure change

The Virginia Defense Force will undergo a force structure change in the coming months to provide opportunities to grow capabilities to better support the Virginia National Guard and Commonwealth of Virginia. Maj. Gen. Timothy P. Williams, the Adjutant General of Virginia, approved the force structure change after a briefing by VDF leaders Oct. 29, 2021, in Richmond, Virginia.

“Our utilization of the Virginia Defense Force in the last 18 months has been the most since they were the Virginia Protective Force in World War II,” Williams said. “VDF personnel have performed critical roles in supporting the Virginia National Guard and the Commonwealth of Virginia during COVID-19 response as well as other domestic operations. We have captured significant lessons learned we can use to grow the organization and capitalize on the skills and experience present across the force.”

The VDF is authorized by the Code of Virginia as the all-volunteer reserve of the Virginia National Guard, and it also gives the Adjutant General the authority to set the VDF’s organizational structure.

Read more: <https://go.usa.gov/xe4mZ>



Effective Nov. 1, Col. (Va.) Robin Phillips (center) will command 1st Regiment, and Col. (Va.) Donald J. Thornley (left) will command the Support Operations Group. Col. (Va.) Nicholas Christoff (right) will serve as interim operations officer and chief of staff.

## Virginia National Guard News Headlines

### TF Spartan, 29th ID move 5,000 Afghans through Kuwait

Soldiers assigned to the 29th Infantry Division operating as Task Force Spartan played a critical role in establishing a camp on a military base in Kuwait to assist with processing more than 5,000 at-risk Afghans.

Read more: <https://go.usa.gov/xe4ya>

### Training helps MTC staff spread UXO awareness

Soldiers and civilians assigned to Maneuver Training Center Fort Pickett completed a two-day “train the trainer” course designed to help spread awareness of the dangers posed by unexploded ordnance Sept. 28-29, 2021, at Fort Pickett, Virginia, taught by representatives from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Read more: <https://go.usa.gov/xe4mw>

### VNG recruiter gives back to area high schools

Staff Sgt. Matthew Riley, the Virginia National Guard’s Abingdon-area recruiter since 2015, balances his full-time recruiting responsibilities with coaching for two area high schools.

Read more: <https://go.usa.gov/xe4m6>

### New VDF recruits graduate from Initial Entry Training

Ten new members of the Virginia Defense Force marked their completion of Initial Entry Training Sept. 11, 2021, in a graduation ceremony at the VDF Headquarters at Waller Depot in Richmond, Virginia.

Read more: <https://go.usa.gov/xe4mF>

## Join the Virginia Army National Guard, Virginia Air National Guard or the Virginia Defense Force

For information about joining the Virginia Army National Guard, the Virginia Air National Guard or Virginia Defense Force, visit the appropriate link below:

### Va. Army National Guard

<http://nationalguard.com/va>

### Va. Air National Guard

<https://go.usa.gov/xGmKG>

### Va. Defense Force

<http://vdf.virginia.gov/joinvdf/>

## Join the Virginia Army National Guard Alumni Network

<https://go.usa.gov/xAYgp>

# 29th ID cadet continues family's legacy of service

Upon swearing into the Virginia Army National Guard Aug. 20, 2021, Cadet Ethan Pulket began adding to his family's legacy of more than 200 years of combined military service. For generations, his family has served in the National Guard and, notably, the Fort Belvoir-based 29th Infantry Division, where Pulket will be assigned upon receiving his commission.

"I always knew I wanted to join the military," Pulket said, explaining that it wasn't until his senior year of high school that he finally decided to join the National Guard, where both his parents served along with several of his aunts and uncles, his grandfather and his great-grandfather, who retired as a brigadier general. "I proudly want to continue that legacy."

Even with a family dedicated to military service, Pulket's parents were still surprised when he told them he'd decided to join the National Guard.

"His mother and I made a point to not push him towards joining or lean on him as an expectation when he was growing up," said his father, retired Sgt. Maj. Brian W. Pulket. He said if their son chose to join the military, they wanted him to do it for himself, not to please his parents or because he felt like he had to.

"Ethan holds a lot of respect for the military and has probably been thinking about it for many years, the same way that his father did when he was in high school," said Pulket's grandfather, retired Col. Arthur W. "Bill" Pulket. "I believe he had joining in the back of his mind for a long time."

His grandfather said the tradition of military service started when his father, Pulket's great-grandfather, joined the National Guard right after World War II.

"My father was a perfect example of someone that would be anyone's mentor, especially to his family," said Bill Pulket. "He went into the Guard in 1948 and served until 1985. He started as a private and retired as a brigadier general."

Pulket's swearing-in ceremony took place at Christopher Newport University, where he's currently a student.

"It's exciting to see the level of commitment he has to the Army National Guard and it's important to know he's was not forced into this," said Staff Sgt. Austin T. Sturtz, Pulket's recruiter. "He wanted to continue the legacy on his own. I am looking forward to seeing him commission and accomplishing great things in the Virginia Army National Guard."

In joining the National Guard, Pulket made use of the many benefits available to him, and is a Minuteman Scholarship recipient, which means his tuition will be paid in full for his sophomore through senior years of college. Additionally, while he's participating in his school's ROTC, he'll be part of the Simultaneous Membership Program, or SMP, which allows ROTC cadets to simultaneously serve in the National Guard, thus earning a monthly paycheck and participating in valuable, realistic officer training.

"I am so proud of him, so, so, proud of him," said his mother, Christine M. Harmon, on her son receiving the Minuteman Scholarship. "I think he's the best kid ever. This is not something



**Cadet Ethan Pulkit swears into the Virginia Army National Guard in front of family, friends and peers during a ceremony held Aug. 20, 2021, in Newport News, Virginia. With more than 200 years of combined family service in the National Guard, Pulket will be following in his family's footsteps and be part of the 4th generation to continue the legacy of military service to the nation and the 29th ID.**

that everybody receives, you have to apply for it. I am just so incredibly proud of him."

Pulket feels he has big shoes to fill as he starts his own military career and ponders the legacy of military service inherent to his family.

"It's a little overwhelming to have to live up to that, but I know that they will be supporting me throughout the entire process. I have a long way to go to continue the Pulket legacy, and I plan on doing it respectfully," Pulket said."

Read more: <https://go.usa.gov/x4mV>

## MORE ON THE WEB

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<https://ngpa.us/16660>

**Photos: VNG R&R selects top recruiters of 2021**

<https://ngpa.us/16661>

**Photos: DMA mentors, mentees gain leadership insights**

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**Photos: RRB welcomes new A Co. 1SG, commander**

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