

180th Engineers head to Louisiana for 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 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 training our Soldiers will be engaging in is extremely important for the Virginia Army National Guard to build and maintain readiness," said Col. Paul Gravely, the Virginia Army National Guard G3 state operations officer. "The evaluations conducted at JRTC are important for units to test and review their training management processes, and gives them the opportunity to participate in an exercise at the BCT level in the most realistic environment available for training."

During the rotation, the engineers will support Arkansas' 39th Infantry Brigade Combat Team. Once the training is under way, the 180th will support the 39th in a variety of ways, including helping build fighting positions and supporting tactical operations, according to the 180th's executive officer.

Read more: <https://go.usa.gov/xF3NM>



Soldiers assigned to the Maneuver Area Training Equipment Site load a 180th Engineer Company bulldozer onto a trailer for transport to the Joint Readiness Training Center July 9, 2021, at Fort Pickett, Virginia.

Virginia National Guard News Headlines

VNG builds partnerships at Regional Cooperation 21

Fifteen Virginia National Guard Soldiers participated in Regional Cooperation 2021, a U.S. Central Command-led exercise designed to promote cooperation and joint combined capabilities among the U.S and partner nations in Central and South Asia, or CASA.

Read more: <https://go.usa.gov/xF3Rc>

Gillis promoted to brigadier general, will lead VaARNG strategic initiatives

Col. Doyle Gillis, Jr., was promoted to brigadier general July 10, 2021, in Richmond, Virginia, and succeeds Brig. Gen. James A. Zollar as the Virginia National Guard's Assistant Adjutant General for Army Strategic Initiatives.

Read more: <https://go.usa.gov/xF3Rg>

VNG Soldiers move historic M84 to Richmond for restoration, display

Soldiers assigned to the G4 Maintenance Assistance and Instruction Team moved a historic M84 self-propelled 4.2 mortar carrier June 25, 2021, from Charlottesville to Richmond, Virginia.

Read more: <https://go.usa.gov/xF3RT>

Deployed 29th ID warrant officers celebrate 103rd birthday

Warrant officers assigned to the 29th Infantry Division, deployed in support of Operation Spartan Shield, celebrated the Warrant Officer Corps' birthday with their 36th Infantry Division counterparts July 9, 2021, at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait.

Read more: <https://go.usa.gov/xF3RB>

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34th CST conducts drug hazard training in Manassas

Soldiers and Airmen assigned to the Fort Pickett-based 34th Civil Support Team conducted unique drug identification training and a full-scale response exercise June 22 - 24, 2021, at the Manassas Readiness Center in Manassas, Virginia.

The 34th CST supports first responders during potential hazardous materials incidents involving possible chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear or explosive threats and can identify unknown substances, assess current and projected consequences, advise an incident commander on response measures and assist with requests for additional state support. During this three-day training event, called DrugIQ, the CST focused solely on hazards presented by illegal drugs.

"We focused on drug identification, clandestine lab identification and threat drug remediation, decontamination, and accidental contamination mitigation," said Lt. Col. Lyndsey Hodgkins, the commander of the 34th CST. "This was our first training in years that focused solely on drug identification and mitigation."

The first two days of the DrugIQ course, taught by experts with Federal Resources, were held in the classroom, extensively covering a wide range of potential hazards presented by illegal drugs and their manufacture. The third day of the course challenged the CST with a full-scale response exercise in which the team had to respond to a complex mock drug lab.

Hodgkins discussed the topics covered by the course and exercise.

"Drug identification and the effects it has on people under the influence, synthetic opioid considerations and risk assessment; THC extraction; practical application and a field training exercise containing multiple traditional and complex clandestine labs," said Hodgkins. "This is helpful to the CST mission because we are empowered to identify, assist, assess, and advise incident commanders of the potential impacts to the public. With the knowledge gained from this course we can better advise incident commanders, therefore being a stronger asset to the public as well as operating more safely as a team."

The full-scale exercise simulated a complex mock drug lab discovered by local authorities under the training scenario. A CST reconnaissance team donned protective gear and used threat identification equipment to determine what substances were involved. They also set up a decontamination station for team members coming out of the suspected lab to ensure their safety.

Soldiers assigned to the VNG Counterdrug Task Force and agents with the Federal Bureau of Investigation were on hand to observe the training, and the CST incorporated simulated response with both agencies during the challenging exercise.

"Unique challenges were training new personnel, implementing a new emergency decontamination medical process being developed across the 57 CST's, and integrating Counterdrug, FBI, and Drug Enforcement Administration counterparts," said Hodgkins. "We overcame these challenges by cross leveling duties and responsibilities, rehearsals and conducting leadership



Soldiers and Airmen assigned to the Fort Pickett-based 34th Civil Support Team conduct a site assessment on a mock drug lab during a training exercise June 24, 2021, at the Manassas Readiness Center in Manassas, Virginia.

huddles to information share and synchronize ideas."

Incorporating all elements and conducting a realistic, multi-tiered exercise were vital to improving the CST's ultimate goal, said Hodgkins.

"Safety is the bottom line," said Hodgkins. "Public safety and service member safety."

The CST's next training event is scheduled for the end of July 2021 in Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania.

Read more: <https://go.usa.gov/xF3RP>

MORE ON THE WEB

Online training provides valuable for VNG chaplains

<https://go.usa.gov/xF3Rd>

Photos: VDEM, VDH personnel recognized

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Photos: Red Dragons train on sling loading in Pulaski

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Photos: 229th MPs conduct M320 live-fire range

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Photos: Saber Soldiers conduct STX lanes

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