

Aviators train fire-fighting skills before KFOR deployment

With an upcoming deployment to Kosovo, Virginia Army National Guard flight crews took to the skies of Chesterfield, Virginia, to certify their ability to fight fires with water buckets Oct. 12, 2021. The buckets are capable of picking up and hauling nearly 6,000 pounds of water, which can then be flown to the site of a wildfire and dropped to assist with fire-fighting efforts.

“Over the last couple of months, Kosovo has had a severe problem with wildfires along their mountain ranges,” explained Capt. Joseph Inglett, commander of the Sandston-based Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 224th Aviation Regiment. His company will be primarily responsible for aerial fire-fighting efforts in Kosovo should the need arise, and said after talking with the aviation assets currently serving in Kosovo, it became clear they needed to ensure crew proficiency with the buckets.

The training made use of two UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters and included seven pilots and three crew chiefs. With the water buckets strapped down inside the aircraft, the crews flew to a pond-dotted training site in Chesterfield where the aircraft landed to offload and hook up the water bucket.

Read more: <https://go.usa.gov/xMu87>



Virginia Army National Guard flight crews conduct water bucket training with UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters Oct. 12, 2021, at a training area in Chesterfield, Virginia, in preparation for upcoming deployment to Kosovo.

Virginia National Guard News Headlines

203rd RED HORSE welcomes new commander

The 192nd Wing's 203rd Rapid Engineer Deployable Heavy Operational Repair Squadron Engineers welcomed a new commander during a change of command ceremony Oct. 2, 2021, at the State Military Reservation in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

Read more: <https://go.usa.gov/xMu9r>

Historic documents help reveal back story of 29th ID patch, creator

Thanks to recently uncovered documents in the Virginia National Guard's historical collection, more is being learned about the 29th Infantry Division's iconic blue and gray unit patch, as well as about the Soldier who designed it.

Read more: <https://go.usa.gov/xMu9B>

DMA Fall Fest provides employees with training, fun

Virginia Department of Military Affairs employees attended the 2021 DMA Fall Fest Sept. 23, 2021, in Virginia Beach, Virginia, which included new required state employee training on Diversity, Equity & Inclusion and Unconscious Bias.

Read more: <https://go.usa.gov/xMu9n>

Governor's certificate recognizes VNG, VDF COVID-19 support

A Certificate of Recognition signed by Governor Ralph Northam recognizes the Virginia National Guard and Virginia Defense Force support to Virginia's COVID-19 response.

Read more: <https://go.usa.gov/xMu9y>

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VDF conducts statewide readiness exercise

Members of the Virginia Defense Force conducted the Highland Guardian 21 field training exercise Oct. 2, 2021, at multiple locations across Virginia to test their regional liaison, incident management assistance, access control and interoperable communications support capabilities. The exercise simulated a severe winter storm and how the VDF would support the Virginia National Guard's role as a member of the state multi-agency response team.

"The Virginia Defense Force schedules robust and realistic training opportunities, and they keep improving their skills and experience with each exercise," said Maj. Gen. Timothy P. Williams, the Adjutant General of Virginia. "I continue to be tremendously impressed by their volunteer spirit and willingness to give their time to assist their fellow Virginians in times of need, and we count on them to be a key part in the overall response capabilities of the Virginia National Guard."

The VDF has established a battle rhythm of two major scenario-based exercises each year, with Highland Guardian serving as the annual fall exercise, explained Brig. Gen. (Va.) Justin Carlitti, Sr., the VDF commanding general.

"Building on successes from previous exercises, VDF personnel deployed across the commonwealth and continued to demonstrate increased levels of confidence in their abilities to utilize their various systems in new ways to enable effective mission control," he said. "The construct and execution of the scenario allowed the various command nodes to consider how they would respond in a real deployment."

Carlitti visited training in Warrenton and said the common theme with the personnel at the location was continued improvement in all aspects of the exercise to simulate a response in support of civil authorities.

"The focus of this year's Highland Guardian exercise was to use the scenario events to give unit leaders at all levels the opportunity to respond to emerging events as they might occur in a widespread disaster," said Col. (Va.) Robin Phillips, VDF operations officer. "Units at all of our armories across the commonwealth were involved in this long-distance emergency communications exercise, and I am 100 percent confident we can communicate in a real emergency, and our people know what they need to do. The Highland Guardian exercise was highly successful, and it will continue to be a highlight of our training calendar going forward."

As part of the exercise, VDF personnel located in Cedar Bluff, Fairfax, Lynchburg, Richmond, Warrenton, Winchester and Virginia Beach were able to communicate by high frequency radio and share exercise message traffic. The VDF's Communication Battalion, Support Operations Group deployed their mobile communication platforms in Richmond, Lynchburg and Warrenton, and the companies of the 1st Regiment provided high frequency radio, incident management assistance and access control teams at their home stations VNG armories.

According to Lt. Col. (Va.) Philip R. Smith, the Highland



Members of the Virginia Defense Force train in a Mobile Communication Platform Oct. 2, 2021, in Richmond, Virginia, during Highland Guardian 21.

Guardian exercise director and acting commander of the Support Operations Group, the VDF fielded four Mobile Communication Platform teams, seven incident management assistance teams, seven access control teams, six high-frequency radio teams and six regional liaison officers during the exercise.

"This year's exercise further demonstrated the VDF's ability to effectively use and communicate using all of our mission-related communications assets and platforms to support a comprehensive statewide exercise," Smith said.

Read more: <https://go.usa.gov/xMu93>

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