

# VaANG awards Airmen for outstanding performance

The Virginia Air National Guard recognized its top performers for 2021 in the organization's annual awards ceremony Feb. 5, 2022, at Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Virginia.

Brig. Gen. Toni M. Lord, Virginia National Guard air component commander, hosted the event and presented Airmen with group and state level awards alongside Col. Christopher G. Batterton, 192nd Wing commander, Chief Master Sgt. Kelly B. Reich, VaANG state command chief, and Chief Master Sgt. Richard A. Roberts, 192nd Wing command chief.

Due to COVID restrictions, the event was live streamed.

"This is the best part of my job, recognizing Airmen," Lord said during her opening remarks. "I want to recognize every Airman, whether they're here or online. Without every single person, we could not get our mission done or accomplished. The sun never sets on the Virginia Air National Guard because our forces are all over the world. I also want to recognize the folks that stood above and beyond. They excelled at the Air Force core values. Their tenaciousness at getting the job done and taking care of their Airmen are going to be recognized today."

Read more: <https://go.usa.gov/xz8hj>



Senior Virginia Air National Guard leaders recognize top performers during the VaANG's annual awards ceremony Feb. 5, 2022, at Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Virginia.

## Virginia National Guard News Headlines

### 34th CST, Counterdrug TF conduct joint training exercise

Virginia National Guard Soldiers and Airmen assigned to the Fort Pickett-based 34th Civil Support Team and the VNG Counterdrug Task Force conducted a training exercise Feb. 16, 2022, at the Virginia Public Safety Training Center in Hanover County, Virginia.

Read more: <https://go.usa.gov/xz8hm>

### Troops to Trucks program paves way for military drivers to earn CDL

In Virginia, the Troops to Trucks program, managed by the Department of Motor Vehicles, provides an avenue of ease for current and former military members to obtain their commercial driver's license.

Read more: <https://go.usa.gov/xz8hp>

### DMA HR manager credits personal, professional families for her success

A life serving in or connected to the military always seemed to be in the cards for Michelle Claiborne, the Human Resources manager for the Virginia Department of Military Affairs.

Read more: <https://go.usa.gov/xz8hF>

### Meet the VDF: 1st Sgt. Alnita V. Baldon

Meet 1st Sgt. Alnita V. Baldon! Baldon serves as the first sergeant from Bravo Company, 11th Signal Battalion, 1st Regiment, and she has been in the VDF since June 2008.

Read more: <https://go.usa.gov/xz9qC>

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# 116th IBCT takes responsibility for KFOR's RC-East in Kosovo

NATO's Kosovo Force officially welcomed the 30th rotation of U.S. Soldiers taking responsibility for the Regional Command – East mission during a transfer of authority ceremony March 4, 2022, at Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo. During the ceremony, the Virginia National Guard's 116th Infantry Brigade Combat Team took responsibility for peace stability operations from the Vermont National Guard's 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team.

"Soldiers of the 116th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, welcome to Kosovo," Hungarian Army Maj. Gen. Ferenc Kajári, commander of KFOR, said during the ceremony. "You are taking over your duties in KFOR in a period when we face numerous challenges inside our area of operations and Europe as well."

KFOR RC-East is comprised of more than 10 contributing NATO partner nations working to ensure a safe and secure environment and freedom of movement for all people in Kosovo.

During the ceremony, leaders from the 86th IBCT cased their unit's flag, or colors, officially signifying the culmination of their nine-month mission in the region, followed by leaders from the 116th IBCT uncasing their unit's colors, representing the beginning of their mission in Kosovo.

"Today's ceremony marks much more than the normal nine-month rotational change of command ceremony," said Col. Brey Hopkins, commander of the 86th IBCT and outgoing RC-East commander. "This ceremony is an indication of the United States' commitment and resolve. Commitment and resolve to the NATO alliance and to the Balkans."

Taking the helm as RC-East's new commander was Col. Christopher Samulski, who's been in command of the 116th IBCT since 2020, a year of which was focused on preparing for their unique mission as the main U.S. contingent in Kosovo.

"I'm convinced that lasting peace, safety and security is achievable through hard work, commitment and dialogue," Samulski said. "And this gives me hope for the future of Kosovo and the greater Balkans region."

To signify the official transfer of authority of the RC-East mission, leaders from the 86th IBCT passed the NATO flag to Kajári, who then passed the flag to the 116th IBCT command team. The passing of the flag from the outgoing commander to the incoming one ensures the command is never without official leadership, representing a continuation of trust while signifying an allegiance of Soldiers to their commander.

"The 29th rotation, the Vermont brigade, (set) the standard high," Kajári said. "But I'm confident that you (the 116th IBCT) will excel in your tasks and will meet the requirements."

Speaking at the ceremony, Samulski praised the work of the 86th IBCT Soldiers and expressed his commitment to carrying out NATO's mission of maintaining a safe and secure environment and freedom of movement for all people and communities in Kosovo.

"Your hard work over the last year has been an absolute testament to your motto, Ready to Go," Samulski said to the outgoing Soldiers. "As we put on this blue patch on our left



**Col. Christopher Samulski, commander, 116th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, receives the NATO flag from Maj. Gen. Ferenc Kajári, commander of KFOR, during the KFOR RC-East transfer of authority ceremony March 4, 2022, at Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo.**

shoulder, we understand the importance that holds. We will continue to uphold the tenets and values of NATO's mission here in Kosovo."

The VNG's 2nd Battalion, 224th Aviation Regiment, 29th Infantry Division serves as their aviation task force for RC-East providing medical casualty transportation and air mobility for all KFOR troops. The conducted their transfer of authority ceremony Feb. 16.

Read more: <https://go.usa.gov/xz8h3>

## MORE ON THE WEB

### 192nd units welcome new commanders

<https://go.usa.gov/xz9qT/>

### Center offers opportunities to learn, lead for evacuated Afghans

<https://go.usa.gov/xz9qF/>

### Photos: Commonwealth Challenge Class 56 graduates

<https://ngpa.us/18652/>

### Photos: VDF trains on satellite communication system

<https://ngpa.us/18616/>

### Photos: DMA graduates second class of mentors, mentees

<https://ngpa.us/18509/>



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