

# 29th ID returns to USA after Spartan Shield rotation

The final group of Soldiers assigned to the Fort Belvoir-based 29th Infantry Division Headquarters returned to the United States March 24, 2022, and were greeted by senior leaders from the Virginia National Guard when their plane landed at Fort Hood, Texas. They completed a 9-month deployment to the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility as the headquarters of Task Force Spartan, which exercises command and control of Operation Spartan Shield.

“The staff of the 29th Infantry Division Headquarters spent over two years training for this mission and shortly after arriving in southwest Asia we added Operation Allies Refuge to our list of tasks,” said Maj. Gen. John Rhodes, Commanding General, 29th Infantry Division. “The Soldiers of Task Force Spartan quickly adjusted to evolving requirements and executed every mission like the true professional citizen-Soldiers they are.”

Task Force Spartan is a unique, multi-component, total Army organization, made up of active Army, National Guard, and Army Reserve support units and is led by a National Guard division headquarters on a rotational basis.

Read more: <https://go.usa.gov/xu3wn>



Maj. Gen. Timothy P. Williams, the Adjutant General of Virginia, greets Maj. Gen. John Rhodes, the 29th Infantry Division Commanding General, March 24, 2022, at Fort Hood, Texas.

## Virginia National Guard News Headlines

### Task Force Red Dragon Soldiers join French-led Exercise WAKRI 22

Virginia and Kentucky National Guard Soldiers assigned to Task Force Red Dragon serving in Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa joined French Forces and units from Camp Lemonnier March 13-15, 2022, for the French-led Exercise WAKRI 22 in Djibouti.

Read more: <https://go.usa.gov/xu3fb>

### Va. Beach native first female cav scout in VNG

After 22 weeks of intense training at Fort Benning, Georgia, Pfc. Noor Habr became the first woman in the Virginia Army National Guard to earn the 19D Cavalry Scout military occupational specialty, or MOS.

Read more: <https://go.usa.gov/xu3fQ>

### Women veterans recognized during ceremony at Virginia War Memorial

Women veterans, including former and current members of the Virginia National Guard and Virginia Defense Force, received pins recognizing their service during an event March 21, 2022, in Richmond, Virginia.

Read more: <https://go.usa.gov/xu3ft>

### Meet the Virginia Defense Force: Col. (Va.) Robin Phillips

Col. (Va.) Robin Phillips is the commander of the Virginia Defense Force’s 1st Regiment, and she is the first female to be promoted to colonel in the VDF as well as to command at the brigade or regimental level.

Read more: <https://go.usa.gov/xu3Gc>

## 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 National Guard Alumni Network

<https://go.usa.gov/xzGT3>

## 229th BEB, RRB Soldiers capture 2022 VNG Best Warrior titles

Virginia National Guard Soldiers representing the 229th Brigade Engineer Battalion and the Recruiting and Retention Battalion claimed top honors at the 2022 Virginia Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition April 3, 2022, at the State Military Reservation in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

Spc. Adam Marcus, assigned to the Fredericksburg-based Headquarters Company, 229th Brigade Engineer Battalion, 116th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 29th Infantry Division, won Soldier of the Year, while Staff Sgt. Austin Sturtz, assigned to Charlie Company, Virginia Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention Battalion, won Noncommissioned Officer of the Year.

Brig. Gen. K. Weedon Gallagher, the Virginia National Guard Land Component Commander, and Command Sgt. Maj. Ronald Smith, the VNG Command Sergeant Major, both gave remarks at the ceremony praising the winners, the other contestants and the support staff which made the competition happen.

"I can't tell you how pleased I am with what's taken place the last four days," Smith said. "I've watched you all give it your best, seen camaraderie and teamwork and developing as young leaders. I know the military is in good hands seeing these are the type of Soldiers we're producing."

In addition to the competitors, Gallagher made a point to recognize the sponsors of the competitors as well as the organizers.

"The reason why it was run so smoothly is because it was run by NCOs," Gallagher said. "Each of the MSCs were responsible for a different event and they did a great job of executing."

Smith pointed out the hard work that went on to make the event happen.

"It's an eight-month process and a lot of things go into this event," he said. "This cannot be done without the hard work of the G3 section and every entity of the Virginia Army National Guard."

The four-day event began at SMR where Soldiers conducted Army Warrior Tasks, a written exam and a physical fitness challenge. They then traveled via Black Hawk helicopter to Fort Pickett where they tackled the Air Assault obstacle course, day and night land navigation, a ruck march and a 3-gun event. After traveling back to Virginia Beach, the Soldiers underwent an appearance board before senior NCOs from around the state.

"At the end of the day, if I wasn't a winner I would have still been happy because I got camaraderie out of it, I got to shoot the new pistol, I got to do a good range and I got some rucking in," Sturtz said. "It was just an all-around good challenge to see your physical fitness state and learn some basic warrior task drills."

Sturtz, who serves as a SMP liaison and on campus recruiter at Christopher Newport University and the College of William & Mary, joined the Virginia National Guard in 2018 after serving three and a half years on active duty. For him, the most challenging aspect of the competition was the mental preparation.

Marcus, a signal support specialist who has served in the Virginia National Guard for four and a half years, has been aiming for this since November 2021 and performed better than he expected.



**Spc. Adam Marcus (left) and Staff Sgt. Austin Sturtz are named winners of the 2022 Virginia Army National Guard Best Warrior competition April 3, 2022, at the State Military Reservation in Virginia Beach, Virginia.**

"It was definitely grueling," he said. "The ruck was toughest event and I'm more exhausted physically than mentally."

Two Soldiers from the 329th Regional Support Group were the runners up. Spc. Luis Camacho, assigned to the Blackstone-based 3647th Maintenance Company, 529th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, was the runner up for Soldier of the Year and Staff Sgt. Stephen Moniuszko, assigned to the West Point-based 237th Engineer Company, 276th Engineer Battalion, was runner up in the NCO competition.

Read more: <https://go.usa.gov/xu3fx>

### MORE ON THE WEB

#### WOCs show community support with service project

<https://go.usa.gov/xu3GT/>

#### Pre-OCS gives Soldiers insight into officer training

<https://go.usa.gov/xu3GK/>

#### Photos: VDF cyber battalion welcomes new commander

<https://ngpa.us/19134/>

#### Photos: VNG supports Army JROTC Raider Challenge

<https://ngpa.us/19135/>

#### Photos: Team helps 29th ID Soldiers demobilize

<https://ngpa.us/19136/>

