

## 576th Engineer Utilities Detachment begins federal duty

Virginia National Guard Soldiers assigned to the Virginia Beach-based 576th Engineer Utilities Detachment, 276th Engineer Battalion, 329th Regional Support Group marked the official start of their federal active-duty mission at a deployment ceremony April 19, 2022, at the State Military Reservation in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

“To be able to deploy a unit to test their months and years of training, to challenge leadership skills, to challenge their personal doubts and fears and to be able to perform a true engineering mission is a special opportunity,” said Col. Michael Waterman, the commander of 329th Regional Support Group (Rear). “There are many units who deploy and don’t get the same opportunity to perform the actual mission they’ve been trained on.”

Capt. Shane McNamara, commander of the 576th, reminded those in attendance that it was on that day in 1775 that the American Revolution began at the Battle of Lexington, creating the opportunity for the writing of the Constitution of the United States. The end result of that are the “brave, smart, passionate” Soldiers sitting among them.

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



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### Virginia National Guard News Headlines

#### Va. Army National Guard expands \$20k sign-on bonus

Virginia Army National Guard is now offering \$20,000 sign-on bonuses for those who enlist into an expanded number of military occupational specialties. Previously, just one MOS qualified for the top-tier bonus, now Soldiers who enlist into one of seven career fields may be eligible for the \$20,000 bonus.

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

#### VNG aviators capitalize on Black Hawk capabilities in Kosovo

Virginia National Guard Soldiers assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 224th Aviation Regiment, 29th Infantry Division fly Black Hawk helicopters for aerial resupply, troop movement and reconnaissance in support of the NATO mission in Kosovo.

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

#### A family business: Virginia family serves together in Africa

Staff Sgt. Daniel Fisher is serving alongside two of his sons, Spc. Caleb and Spc. Jacob Fisher, with the Virginia Army National Guard’s Task Force Red Dragon, assigned to Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa.

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

#### Meet the Virginia Defense Force: Lt. Col. (Va.) Kent Brinkley

Lt. Col. (Va.) Kent Brinkley currently serves as the acting Virginia Defense Force chief of staff. The modern VDF observed its 38th birthday April 18, 2022, and Brinkley is one of the longest serving members in the organization.

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

### 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>

# DMA COO visits Winchester STARBASE Academy

Retired Brig. Gen. Walt Mercer, Virginia Department of Military Affairs Chief Operations Officer, visited students taking part in activities at the Winchester STARBASE Academy April 5, 2022, at the Virginia National Guard's Cherry-Beasley Readiness Center in Winchester, Virginia. During the visit, students took part in lessons on building carbon dioxide-powered cars, robotics and chemistry.

"The more time I spend around the STARBASE program, the more I come to appreciate the positive impacts it has on so many young people that attend the program each year," Mercer said. "Our partnership with several local school districts as well as some of the private schools in the area allows us to serve a wide variety of students in the state."

Mercer said focusing on students from a lower socio-economic situation who often do not get exposure to such state of the art STEM programs with high quality resources and professional instruction in areas like robotics, physics, coding or 3-D printing is a win for the commonwealth and for these students.

"STARBASE provides a great teaching staff, DoD funded resources and a hands on STEM lab setting that combine to create the perfect learning environment," he said.

STARBASE is Congressionally authorized as a Department of Defense Civil Military Program where licensed instructors provide 25 hours of hands-on, rigorous and real-world experiences in a high-tech environment over five days. The goal is to inspire and educate students in science, technology, engineering and mathematics and expand their awareness of future STEM careers while providing a model and vision for STEM education to local school districts and educators.

For the current school year, the academy supported 15 area schools from three public school districts and will also support four private schools and a home school group, explained Dr. Susan Corrigan, the Winchester STARBASE Academy director. More than 1,300 students in 60 classes participated in the 5-day program.



Students conduct a chemistry activity during retired Brig. Gen. Walt Mercer's visit to the Winchester STARBASE Academy April 5, 2022, at the Virginia National Guard's Cherry-Beasley Readiness Center in Winchester, Virginia.



Retired Brig. Gen. Walt Mercer, Virginia Department of Military Affairs Chief Operations Officer, visits students taking part in activities at the Winchester STARBASE Academy April 5, 2022, in Winchester, Virginia.

Corrigan said the staff also ran a STARBASE 2.0 afterschool middle school program during Spring 2022 where they went to James Wood Middle School and worked with 24 students with a variety of technology lessons for 13 weeks.

The VNG's 3rd Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment, 116th Infantry Brigade Combat Team serves as the host unit for STARBASE, and Soldiers provide a facility tour and answer questions about military service during each class.

"I am proud of what we do, and the impact we have on students and am very fortunate to have such a supportive host unit!," Corrigan said.

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

## MORE ON THE WEB

### Fleishman takes command of 276th Engineer Battalion

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

### Youth Program celebrates Month of the Military Child

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

### Photos: AG, DJS brief Virginia Lt. Gov.

<https://ngpa.us/19197/>

### Photos: 11C students conduct mortar live fire

<https://ngpa.us/19321/>

### Winchester STARBASE Academy on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/starbasewinchester/>



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