

29th ID Soldiers recognized for overseas deployment

Maryland and Virginia National Guard Soldiers assigned to the Fort Belvoir-based 29th Infantry Division Headquarters were recognized for their federal active duty service June 26, 2022, in Baltimore. The Soldiers returned to the United States in late March 2022 after completing a nine-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, 29th Infantry Division Commanding General. “The Soldiers of Task Force Spartan quickly adjusted to evolving requirements and executed every mission like the true professional citizen-Soldiers they are.”

Senior state elected officials and military leaders from the Maryland and Virginia National Guard recognized the troops with the Maryland Outstanding Unit Ribbon and the Virginia Governor’s National Service Medal.

Read more: <https://ngpa.us/20643>



Retired Maj. Gen. Craig Crenshaw, Virginia Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs, presents the Virginia Governor’s National Service Medal to a 29th Infantry Division Soldier June 26, 2022, in Baltimore.

Virginia National Guard News Headlines

Slater receives Trail Blazer Award at Virginia Women Veterans Summit

Retired Sgt. Maj. Jacqueline R. Slater, a current federal civilian employee working in the Virginia National Guard Human Resources Office, was recognized with the Trail Blazer Award at the 2022 Virginia Women Veterans Summit held June 15, 2022, in Richmond, Virginia.

Read more: <https://ngpa.us/20621>

VNG maintenance, engineer units supporting XCTC at Fort Drum

Virginia National Guard Soldiers are supporting a New Jersey National Guard brigade’s eXportable Combat Training Capability rotation June 9 - 30, 2022, at Fort Drum, New York.

Read more: <https://ngpa.us/20622>

Military Funeral Honors Program hosts Soldiers from 4 states for training

The Virginia National Guard Funeral Honors Program hosted Level 1 funeral honors training for nine National Guard Soldiers from four states June 27 to July 1, 2022, at the State Military Reservation in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

Read more: <https://ngpa.us/20625>

Virginia National Guard celebrates diversity on Unity Day

The Virginia National Guard celebrated Unity Day June 22, 2022, at the Virginia National Guard Sergeant Bob Slaughter Headquarters at Defense Supply Center Richmond, Virginia, with guest speakers, displays and a variety of food tastings.

Read more: <https://ngpa.us/20642>

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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>

Additional staffers expand VaARNG behavioral health support

The Virginia Army National Guard Behavioral Health Program, which works to ensure that psychological health for service members and their families throughout the VaARNG is effectively addressed, has expanded recently by adding three new psychological health coordinators throughout the state.

“These contractors will provide additional behavioral health support and coordination to Virginia Army National Guard Soldiers and technicians,” explained Jonathan Goldwire, Virginia Army National Guard full-time director of psychological health.

These services include providing intervention and care coordination, clinical case management, consultation to commanders and leaders at all levels, resiliency promotion and linking Soldiers with community-based resources who can provide additional assistance.

Although they will primarily work remotely, using online platforms to communicate with Soldiers, they will also attend events such as drill, unit family days, Yellow Ribbon events and other gatherings in person to provide additional support.

“One of our major efforts will involve providing education so that we can continue to work to reduce the stigma associated with seeking behavioral and mental healthcare,” Goldwire said. “It’s just like any other routine medical visit.”

“Mental health never stops and requires constant maintenance,” said Marie Kennedy, a psychological health coordinator. “The balance between military life and family life is difficult.”

Goldwire explained that most resistance to mental healthcare centers around concerns about confidentiality, security clearances, negative perceptions, and jobs being put into jeopardy. But truthfully, an overwhelming amount of service members never see negative impacts to their careers because, along with a changing perception, senior leaders are encouraging their members to seek treatment for their mental and behavioral health. In Goldwire’s experience, the consequences of not getting help are much worse.

“Soldiers think any sign of weakness is a career ender,” Kennedy said. “We don’t want Soldiers to end up in serious trouble down the line for something we can address now. We want to set them up for success not failure.”

“We want to help Soldiers navigate and access the many resources that are available to them, but they must first reach out,” Goldwire said.

Kennedy, who has spent about nine years working in mental health and specializes in military social work, has first-hand knowledge of the stressors military life puts on families. Her husband currently serves in the 91st Cyber Brigade.

“I’ve seen it and experienced it,” she said. “It can get very stressful very quickly.”

Renee Hannah, who serves as lead psychological health coordinator, said awareness of resources already available in the community is their main goal.

“Soldiers and their families need to know how to connect to the right resources already in existence,” she said. “We also want to identify any gaps or barriers to see what we can do to combat



The Virginia Army National Guard Behavioral Health Program poses for a group photo May 24, 2022, at the Virginia National Guard Sergeant Bob Slaughter Headquarters at Defense Supply Center Richmond, Virginia.

any issues.”

COVID-19 had a huge impact on the availability of programs and resources that used to be available to family members. The behavioral health team is still getting familiar with all the community resources that are available now so they can provide that information to the Virginia Army Guard community.

“What we don’t know, we’re going to find out,” Kennedy said. “We’re here to help.”

The Virginia Army National Guard previously increased the level of mental health support services it offered in 2019 when it added Goldwire, a licensed master social worker. By adding these additional contractors, the organization continues in its goal to extend mental health support to the entire VaARNG community.

Read more: <https://ngpa.us/20623>

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Task Force Saint Lo Deployment Update - June 2022

<https://ngpa.us/20537/>

R&R offering up pizza party for top lead-producing unit

<https://ngpa.us/20624/>

VDF members visit Army Museum at Fort Belvoir

<https://ngpa.us/20626/>

Photos: Sec. Crenshaw receives Counterdrug TF brief

<https://ngpa.us/20627/>

Photos: 34th CST conducts exercise in Richmond

<https://ngpa.us/20496/>

