

Senior leaders present awards to DMA employees

Retired Maj. Gen. Craig Crenshaw, the Virginia Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs, Maj. Gen. Timothy P. Williams, the Adjutant General of Virginia, and retired Brig. Gen. Walt Mercer, Virginia Department of Military Affairs Chief Operations Officer, presented awards to DMA employees as part of a state employee recognition luncheon Aug. 11, 2022, at Fort Pickett, Virginia.

During the presentation at the Fort Pickett Officers' Club, DMA employees were recognized for both agency-level accomplishments as well as for service anniversaries. The ceremony was the first fully in-person employee recognition event since the COVID-19 pandemic, making the event even more special.

"You've done a number of tasks, and surely, as units come here and train, it's a great effort to support that. You do it day in and day out," said Crenshaw during the luncheon. "You come to work to make a difference. That difference is seen, it's very relevant. I'd like to personally thank you."

Since the last formal DMA recognition event, the state employees at Fort Pickett have supported a number of monumental tasks.

Read more: <https://ngpa.us/21244>



Senior leaders present awards for agency-level accomplishments and service anniversaries to Virginia Department of Military Affairs employees as part of a state employee recognition luncheon Aug. 11, 2022, at Fort Pickett, Virginia.

Virginia National Guard News Headlines

Calley succeeds Puckett as VaARNG senior warrant officer

Chief Warrant Officer 5 John D. Calley took responsibility as the Virginia Army National Guard's Command Chief Warrant Officer from Chief Warrant Officer 5 Joseph W. Puckett Aug. 5, 2022, at the Virginia National Guard Sergeant Bob Slaughter Headquarters at Defense Supply Center Richmond, Virginia.

Read more: <https://ngpa.us/21249>

Campers enjoy 17th annual Virginia National Guard Youth Camp

More than 55 children of Virginia National Guard Soldiers and Airmen enjoyed the 17th annual Virginia National Guard Youth Camp July 24-29, 2022, at the State Military Reservation in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

Read more: <https://ngpa.us/21251>

VNG Family Programs volunteers recognized during ceremony

Virginia National Guard Family Programs presented awards and certificates of appreciation to their volunteers during the State Volunteer Recognition Workshop and Youth Symposium Aug. 14, 2022, in Newport News, Virginia.

Read more: <https://ngpa.us/21248>

Fort Pickett hosts CNGB for weapons qualifications

Gen. Daniel Hokanson, chief of the National Guard Bureau, completed a weapons qualification course for the M17 pistol and M4 carbine Aug. 1, 2022, at Fort Pickett, Virginia.

Read more: <https://ngpa.us/21247>

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<http://nationalguard.com/va>

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

Va. Defense Force

<http://vdf.virginia.gov/joinvdf/>

Join the Virginia National Guard Alumni Network

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VNG aviators lead KFOR aerial firefighting success

Aviation Soldiers assigned to Kosovo Force's Regional Command-East have been working hand in hand since arriving in the region to enhance their aerial firefighting capabilities. Their ability to successfully combat wildfires relies strongly on the crew chiefs, pilots, command staff and the Soldiers who perform maintenance on the helicopter buckets used to drop massive amounts of water to extinguish large fires.

Upon their arrival in Kosovo, 2nd Battalion, 224th Aviation Regiment of the Virginia National Guard, implemented training to bring their aviation crews up to standard and certify anyone who has never used the helicopter bucket. Crews use local lakes for training, and even after Soldiers are certified, the teams continue to train because a call to fight a fire can come in at any second.

"Before our pre-mobilization, we got word that there were helicopter buckets here in Kosovo and that KFOR 29 fought fires up in the western side of Kosovo during their rotation," said Chief Warrant Officer 3 Darrell Busquets, the battalion standardizations instructor pilot assigned to Bravo Company. "That prompted us to put our aviators through bucket qualifications. Once we got into Kosovo, we continued to keep current on the Bambi bucket operations. The training makes our crews more cohesive when we get called to do real life operations."

Kosovo is prone to wildfires due to farmers participating in agricultural burning to cultivate fields and clear stubble, weeds, and waste, for the continued production of crops. However, if these fires are not kept under control, they have the potential to turn into larger fires that threaten villages and forest habitats.

First Lt. Caleb Baldwin, acting commander of Bravo Company, received a call July 23, 2022, from the operations desk alerting him of a potential wildfire spreading into two towns in northeastern Mitrovica, Kosovo. The fire was also spreading north, where it could potentially take out a radio tower.

The call came in around 5:00 p.m., and Baldwin called his team to alert them to get ready and to standby. Soon after, they were approved to start the mission, and so they spun up one helicopter to fight the fire and another to function as the command and control center during the operation. They were able to get everything staged, in the air, and to the location in less than two hours after the initial call.

"The first helicopter took off to go to the dip site to get water and we started circling overhead to give them better grid coordinates of where the actual fire was located," Baldwin said. "Each one of the buckets was about 660 gallons of water. We kept sending the aircraft back to the (lake to get water) to fight the next fire that was moving up the mountain towards radio or cell phone antennas."

The team had to navigate through ashes in the air as they found their way to the site of the large fire. The initial water point selected was too far from the fire, which would only allow them to disperse a few water buckets before sundown. So, the team quickly changed the location for a new water point that was closer to the fire, which allowed the crew to successfully drop



Virginia National Guard Soldiers assigned to 2nd Battalion, 224th Aviation Regiment, 29th Infantry Division conduct helicopter bucket aerial firefighting training near Gjilan, Kosovo, June 2, 2022.

water from seven helicopter buckets from the air to diffuse the fire, saving villages and limiting serious damage, and in the end surpassing over 4,400 gallons of water for the entire operation.

"You could feel the heat when we got there, and there were some ashes from the burning underbrush," said Sgt. 1st Class Nathan Pettway, a UH-60 helicopter repairer assigned to Bravo Company. "They were going into the rotor disc so you can see the trails from the rotor disc spinning in the smoke when flying."

The team successfully extinguished 80% of the fire, leaving the remaining 20% to die out overnight. However, the crew was prepared to deploy the following morning in the event the fire did not fully extinguish.

Read more: <https://ngpa.us/21245>

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Photos: NG Soldiers, Airmen support free clinic in Georgia

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Photos: VDF holds Multi-day Unit Training Assembly

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