

VNG aviation battalion ends mission in Kosovo

The Virginia National Guard's Sandston-based 2nd Battalion, 224th Aviation Regiment, 29th Infantry Division officially ended its mission in Kosovo as Kosovo Force's Regional Command-East welcomed their new aviation task force during a transfer of authority ceremony Oct. 11, 2022, at Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo.

The battalion mobilized as Task Force Pegasus, and they relinquished responsibility of all RC-E's aerial operations to the 1st Battalion, 131st Aviation Regiment, Alabama National Guard, mobilized as Task Force Yellowhammer.

Leaders from Task Force Pegasus cased their unit's colors, signifying the end of their nine-month mission, followed by leaders from Task Force Yellowhammer uncasing their unit's colors, representing the beginning of their mission in Kosovo.

"I think before we left, we wanted everybody to come back with three things they could say, which were that we made ourselves better, made the unit better, and made Kosovo better. And I think after our TOA, we can look back and say that everyone is coming back better off than they left," said Lt. Col. Matthew C. Lewis, the Task Force Pegasus Commander.

Read more: <https://ngpa.us/22186>



Lt. Col. Matthew C. Lewis and Command Sgt. Maj. Joseph R. Viera, the 2nd Battalion, 224th Aviation Regiment command team, case their unit's colors during a transfer of authority ceremony Oct. 11, 2022, at Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo.

Virginia National Guard News Headlines

VaARNG celebrates 18 new OCS graduates

The Virginia Army National Guard welcomed 18 officer candidates from the 3rd Battalion, 183rd Regiment, Regional Training Institute's Officer Candidate School classes 64, 65A and 65B during a ceremony held Sept. 18, 2022, at Fort Pickett, Virginia.

Read more: <https://ngpa.us/22188>

Respect integral part of culture for 329th RSG NCO

Master Sgt. Sammy Jones started his military career in the Puerto Rico National Guard before transferring to the Virginia National Guard in 1999. Over his decades of service, Jones deployed three times, including twice to Iraq.

Read more: <https://ngpa.us/22189>

Deployed NCO talks family importance for Hispanic Heritage Month

Sgt. 1st Class Beatrice Nettles first joined the National Guard to help fund her college career. She started her military experience in Florida in 2000 and then transferred to Virginia in 2006, and she is currently deployed to Kosovo.

Read more: <https://ngpa.us/22190>

Soccer, cuisine, holidays central to Colombian heritage for 88M PFC

Pfc. Cristian Contreras-Olaya moved to Virginia Beach, Virginia, when he was just four years old. Born in Colombia, he said his mother, a single parent at the time of their move, wanted to provide a better life for him and sister.

Read more: <https://ngpa.us/22191>

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>

Cyber Fortress brings together federal, state, private sector partners

Approximately 20 Virginia National Guard Soldiers and Airmen took part in the Cyber Fortress exercise with numerous public and private sector partners including Dominion Energy, the Virginia Department of Emergency Management, the Virginia Department of Information Technology, the Virginia State Police and other local, state and federal organizations Sept. 21-30, 2022, in Richmond, Virginia.

“The Cyber Fortress Exercise brought together the organizations who will actually respond in a real-world cyber incident and provided an opportunity to test Virginia’s cyber response plan and better prepare for future collective responses,” said Brig. Gen. James W. Ring, VNG Director of the Joint Staff. “The professionalism with these partners is demonstrated by the ability to execute a statewide exercise in less than 10 months from concept to execution. Virginia is better prepared to defend from future cyberattacks because of the partnerships established or improved in Cyber Fortress.”

Ring said the VNG is well positioned to partner with government in the event of a cyberattack, and Cyber Fortress validated the its ability to also support private sector critical infrastructure partners providing services to citizens across the commonwealth.

VNG Soldiers assigned to the Fort Belvoir-based 91st Cyber Brigade, the Fairfax-based Information Operations Support Center and the Richmond-based Joint Force Headquarters - Virginia Defense Cyber Operations Element and VNG Airmen assigned to the 185th Cyberspace Operations Squadron, 192nd Operations Group, 192nd Wing at Joint Base Langley Eustis supported the event and were integrated into other cyber security teams involved in the exercise.

“We have a lot to be proud of today,” said Shawn Talmadge, VDEM State Coordinator of Emergency Management. “This is among the first cyber exercises involving federal and state response partners in support of a private sector entity. We know the threat is real and incredibly capable. From Virginia’s perspective, we need to look at how we build resiliency and capacity and leverage the whole of government approach to support a private sector.”

Talmadge explained the exercise was a chance to test Virginia’s cyber security plan and identify any potential gaps as well as take a hard look at how to deploy state resources like the National Guard when needed.

He also said this exercise is a starting point, and future exercises will focus on other critical infrastructure capabilities like transportation or communication. Lessons learned will be documented in order to capture the appropriate procedures for receiving support requests and taking appropriate action.

“The Virginia National Guard benefits from collaborating with public and private partners to reduce the impact of a cyber event on the citizens of the commonwealth,” explained Col. Rusty McGuire, commander of the 91st Cyber Brigade and co-director of the exercise. “This exercise helps all mission partners collaborate in an intense exercise to identify gaps and make Virginia’s cyber enterprise more resilient.”



Virginia National Guard Soldiers assigned to the 91st Cyber Brigade work with civilian cyber specialists during the Cyber Fortress exercise Sept. 27, 2022, in Richmond, Virginia.

McGuire said this is a great example of how the VNG works with state leaders and critical infrastructure partners for the benefit of all Virginians.

“Not only is the VNG prepared to respond to floods and snowstorms but the VNG is prepared to assist with the same level of support in a cyber security incident,” McGuire said. “We hope to see exercises like Cyber Fortress hosted annually to improve cybersecurity for all critical infrastructure partners across the commonwealth.”

Read more: <https://ngpa.us/22187>

MORE ON THE WEB

VNG Soldier celebrates heritage by honoring family

<https://ngpa.us/22192/>

Photos: TF Red Dragon Soldiers return to Virginia

<https://ngpa.us/22009/>

Photos: New Sapper Leader Course grad recognized

<https://ngpa.us/22177/>

Read more about the 91st Cyber Brigade

<https://ngpa.us/22193/>

Read more about 2nd Battalion, 224th Aviation Regiment

<https://ngpa.us/22194/>

