

VaARNG recruiters named runners-up at national conference

Virginia Army National Guard recruiters came in as runners-up for both the top recruiter and top section chief in the nation at the Director of the Army National Guard's Strength Maintenance Conference. Staff Sgt. Sydney Mapp took the second place top recruiter spot, called the Director's 54, while Master Sgt. Thomas Clarke Jr. took the second place section chief, or Expert 7, spot.

"There has been only one year in the last decade that Virginia didn't have a Soldier competing for the national honors in either the Director's 54 of Expert 7," explained Sgt. Maj. Paul Johnson, senior enlisted leader for the Virginia Army National Guard's Recruiting and Retention Battalion. "I feel this is a true testament to the caliber of leadership we have had in this battalion and will continue to have for the next decade."

The annual DSMAC, held this year in New Orleans, Louisiana, provides not just an opportunity to recognize the nation's top recruiters, Johnson explained. It also allows a chance for those recruiters, along with their leadership teams, to network, share best practices and bring helpful tips and tricks back home to their respective states.

Read more at <https://ngpa.us/24949>



Master Sgt. Thomas Clarke Jr., Sgt. Maj. Paul Johnson and Staff Sgt. Sydney Mapp pose together at the Director of the Army National Guard's Strength Maintenance Conference March 23, 2023, in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Virginia National Guard News Headlines

VNG public affairs NCO named Army Military Photographer of the Year

Maj. Gen. John Rafferty, the Army Chief of Public Affairs, announced the Virginia National Guard's Staff Sgt. Jeff Clements as the Military Photographer of the Year during the 2022 Department of the Army Maj. Gen. Keith L. Ware award announcements April 14, 2023.

Read more at <https://ngpa.us/24953>

VNG begins 20th anniversary celebration of partnership with Tajikistan

The Virginia National Guard began recognizing its 20th year of partnership with the Republic of Tajikistan March 27, 2023, as VNG senior leaders visited with the Tajikistan Ministry of Defense in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

Read more at <https://ngpa.us/24952>

Barfoot to be honored as part of Fort Gregg-Adams redesignation

The namesake for the recently-redesignated Fort Barfoot will be among those honored with new street and facilities names as Fort Lee becomes Fort Gregg-Adams this year.

Read more at <https://ngpa.us/24951>

229th BEB leaders share experiences with high school students

Leaders from the 229th Brigade Engineer Battalion partnered with the Virginia Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention Battalion to highlight the benefits of National Guard membership during showcase events April 3 and 5, 2023.

Read more at <https://ngpa.us/24955>

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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

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

VNG Soldiers participate in Arctic Forge exercise in Finland

More than 60 Virginia National Guard Soldiers assigned to the Portsmouth-based 2nd Squadron, 183rd Cavalry Regiment, 116th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, traveled to Finland to participate in Arctic Forge 23 Feb. 15 - March 7, 2023, on Sodankylä Garrison, Finland. Training with more than 500 Finnish forces and alongside elements of the 11th Airborne Division and the 10th Mountain Division, the Soldiers conducted Defense Exercise North, part of the Arctic Forge exercise, focused on building arctic military capabilities and cooperation. During the exercise, the Soldiers learned the basics of operating in an Arctic environment, including how to ski, drawing on the Finnish forces' cold climate expertise.

Maj. Sidney Leslie, commander of the 2-183rd, said his team performed admirably despite the shock of moving from Virginia's climate into frigid and snowy northern Finland.

"They did absolutely fabulous. I couldn't be prouder of them," said Leslie. "It was extremely challenging deploying from a temperate climate to the deep cold of an arctic environment, learning basic skills, including cross-country skiing, ski-towing, sled towing, survival and conducting basic military tasks in an arctic environment. During the field training exercise, our Finnish partners often commended how lethal we were, our ability to maneuver in this environment, and our ability to integrate indirect fires and CAS to lethal effect."

The VNG contingent on the exercise consisted of one dismounted reconnaissance troop, including a headquarters element and two scout platoons, and a small squadron headquarters element. The cavalry elements were supported by enablers from across the 116th IBCT, including a fire support team from the Norfolk-based 1st Battalion, 111th Field Artillery Regiment.

The shock of operating in more than a meter of snow and in temperatures significantly below zero were not the only challenges the VNG Soldiers needed to overcome to execute their mission successfully.

"Obviously, there is a language barrier. However, we were able to work through that and were able to overcome the command and control challenges associated with that," said Leslie. "Forces that routinely operate in an arctic environment have certain organic assets such as Small Unit Support Vehicles and Skidoos. We didn't. Our only organic maneuver capability was dismounted on skis. These were all challenges we overcame by collaborating with our Finnish partners. We were stronger when we worked together!"

The highlight of the trip proved to be a five-day field training exercise, during which the Saber Soldiers had to execute the new skills they learned to integrate in to a tactical field environment.

"We were integrated into a task force of Finnish home defense forces," said Leslie. "We conducted field tactical exercises where we provided reconnaissance and security tasks for our partners against a very capable battalion of opposing forces."

Overall, the trip was successful, and made the unit and its Soldiers more capable and ready for future missions in arctic environments.



Virginia National Guard Soldiers assigned to the Portsmouth-based 2nd Squadron, 183rd Cavalry Regiment, 116th Infantry Brigade Combat Team continue building extreme cold weather skills in advance of Exercise Arctic Forge 23 Feb. 19-20, 2023, in Sydonkyla, Finland.

"Arctic Forge 23 was a great experience to train and participate in a multinational NATO exercise with our Finnish partners," said Leslie. "We validated the concept that a M-Day force could deploy on short notice to an OCONUS base in the high north, receive specialized theater-specific training, and be capable of conducting tactical operations in an arctic environment."

The Virginia National Guard enjoys an enduring relationship with Finland that includes military training exchanges between Finnish Defense Forces and VNG Soldiers and Airmen.

Read more at <https://ngpa.us/24950>

MORE ON THE WEB

229th BEB welcomes Pearson as new commander

Photos on Flickr at <https://ngpa.us/24920>

Thunder battalion welcomes new command team

Photos on Flickr at <https://ngpa.us/24916>

VNG medics train combat casualty care with UVA ROTC

Photos on Flickr at <https://ngpa.us/24888>

AG thanks Fort Barfoot staff for redesignation efforts

Photos on Flickr at <https://ngpa.us/24815>

VNG rappel masters train ODU ROTC cadets on rappelling

Photos on Flickr at <https://ngpa.us/24906>



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