

# VNG troops depart for Texas border support mission

Virginia National Guard Soldiers and Airmen departed for Texas July 8, 2023, where they will assist the Texas Military Department and Operation Lone Star border security operation. The VNG assembled Joint Task Force Cardinal, a group of approximately 100 Soldiers and Airmen, with another 10 personnel as the task force leadership team and support element, at Fort Barfoot July 5 for training and administrative tasks prior to their departure. The mission is expected to last about 30 days.

“I am inspired by all of you. I can’t put it any other way,” said Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin when he visited the troops July 6 at Fort Barfoot. “On behalf of the Commonwealth of Virginia, I just want to say thank you. Thank you for your commitment, thank you for your love of nation, and thank you for your love of the commonwealth.”

Youngkin also thanked families and acknowledged the Soldiers and Airmen will be missing out on time with loved ones while they are gone.

“I want to thank you for the sacrifice you are undertaking as we head into an extremely important mission,” he said.

Read more at <https://ngpa.us/26044>



Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin presents a Virginia flag to the command team for Joint Task Force Cardinal July 6, 2023, at Fort Barfoot, Virginia, prior to their departure for Texas where they will support border security operations.

## Virginia National Guard News Headlines

### Year-round operations keep SMR buzzing with activity

Summertime is a busy season for Virginia National Guard Soldiers and Airmen throughout the state, but for the State Military Reservation in Virginia Beach, it’s business as usual. The installation is packed all year by a variety of Department of Defense personnel, community programs and civilian organizations.

Read more at <https://ngpa.us/26092>

### VNG NCO represents Region II at National Best Warrior Competition

Staff Sgt. Dan Abbott, a Virginia National Guard Soldier assigned to Fort Barfoot, is one of 14 Army National Guard Soldiers from across the nation competing in the 2023 Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition in Alaska.

Read more at <https://ngpa.us/26091>

### 203rd RED HORSE tackles runway overrun improvements at BAAF

Airmen assigned to the 203rd Rapid Engineer Deployable Heavy Operational Repair Squadron Engineers conducted a runway overrun improvement project June 5-30, 2023, at the Blackstone Army Airfield near Blackstone, Virginia.

Read more at <https://ngpa.us/26094>

### Virginia Wing Civil Air Patrol visits the VaANG

Cadets from the Civil Air Patrol, Virginia Wing, received a guided tour of the Virginia Air National Guard’s 192nd Wing, July 8, 2023, at Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Virginia, to learn about the opportunities in the VaANG.

Read more at <https://ngpa.us/26095>

## 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>

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### Va. Defense Force

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

## Join the Virginia National Guard Alumni Network

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

## Fourteen earn Expert Infantryman Badge at Fort Barfoot

What 121 Soldiers started, just 14 completed. After five days of testing - plus days, weeks and even years of preparation - 14 Soldiers, including four from the Virginia National Guard, earned their Expert Infantryman Badges June 15, 2023. During a ceremony held on the same Fort Barfoot field where their testing began, the U.S. Army's newest EIB-holders were pinned with the infantry blue rectangular badge bearing a 1795 Springfield Arsenal Musket signifying that they had successfully completed a quest conquered by only around 15% of those who attempt it.

"It's a lot of pressure and it's a lot of pain," said 1st Sgt. Justin Walkup, who served as the noncommissioned officer-in-charge of the event, which was planned and executed by EIB-holders within the 116th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, dubbed the "Normandy Brigade." Part of what makes earning an EIB so difficult, Walkup explained, is the knowledge that your time as an EIB candidate can swiftly end. "There are essentially seven different events that you have to survive, and at any given point, you're done. Right down to the last minute, right to the very end, you could be cut."

First approved in 1943, the EIB serves to "recognize infantryman who have demonstrated a mastery of critical tasks," which "build on the foundation of individual proficiency, allowing them to locate, close with and destroy the enemy," according to the U.S. Army Infantry School, or USAIS. Testing is condensed into four phases and occurs over five days, with a multi-day train-up period preceding testing to allow EIB candidates the opportunity to gain familiarity with the tasks in the testing environment.

In addition to EIB testing, the Normandy Brigade also provided Soldiers a chance to earn the Expert Soldier Badge. The ESB was first awarded in 2019, and 2023 marked the first time ESB testing was offered by the Virginia National Guard. Testing for the ESB is like that of the EIB, with slight deviations in standards for some events. Of the 121 candidates, 15 were vying for their ESB.

Before testing or the train-up period could begin, the first step was external validation by a representative from the USAIS at Fort Moore, Georgia, for the EIB, as well as a representative from Fort Jackson, South Carolina, to validate events for the ESB.

"Roughly 40 cadre members came out early to set up the lanes over the course of just two days," said Walkup. Once set-up was complete, Walkup said their validation took two days, and included validation of all 30 task lanes, 121 candidate packets, the 12-mile road march course, the land navigation course, and the site for the Expert Physical Fitness Assessment.

"100% this has been one of the better ran events that I've been a part of," said Col. Eddie Simpson, a Kentucky National Guardsman who served as the president of the EIB/ESB board. "The validators said this was one of the best National Guard-ran events that they had ever seen."

"The EIB speaks its own language, everyone knows what it means," said Maj. Gen. John M. Rhodes, the Commanding General of the Fort Belvoir-based 29th Infantry Division, who was on hand to congratulate the Soldiers on their achievement. "Congratulations to you all. You practiced, you rehearsed, you



**After five days of intense testing, 13 U.S. Army Soldiers and one Finnish Defense Forces soldier receive their Expert Infantryman Badge June 15, 2023, at Fort Barfoot, Virginia. The event was run by the 116th Infantry Brigade Combat Team and tested Soldiers on their proficiency and skill as infantrymen over the course of five days.**

trained, and that shows your professionalism and dedication."

For many of the Soldiers, earning their EIB wasn't something they accomplished alone. Those who were successful this year and those who have held the badge for years, all seemed to agree that success was achieved through teamwork.

"Soldiers pair up or get in teams and they get themselves and each other through the event. Most everyone who wears the badge can name the Soldier they went through testing with," Walkup said. "It is an individual event, but you get each other through it."

Read more at <https://ngpa.us/26085>

### MORE ON THE WEB

#### Gallagher visits RSP, SMP troops in Leesburg

Photos on Flickr at <https://ngpa.us/25873>

#### 2-224th AVN welcomes Williams as new CSM

Photos on Flickr at <https://ngpa.us/26068>

#### HART practices advanced hoist techniques

Photos on Flickr at <https://ngpa.us/25963>

#### VNG conducts joint aviation exercise

Photos on Flickr at <https://ngpa.us/25964>

#### RSP recruits tackle OPAT, weapons training

Photos on Flickr at <https://ngpa.us/25961>



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