

# Virginia recruiters named top in the region

Three Virginia Army National Guard recruiters were named top in the region following a meeting of Region II's Strength Maintenance Advisory Group, or SMAG, Nov. 16, 2023, in Washington. Sgt. 1st Class David Sanford was named the region's top recruiting noncommissioned officer, 1st Sgt. Thomas Clarke was named the region's top section chief, and Staff Sgt. Tyler Voogd was named the top rookie recruiter for 2023.

"The SMAG sweep truly showcases what Virginia has to offer regarding the [recruiting and retention] NCOs that we're producing," Clarke said. "Sweeping the SMAG is a significant accomplishment for Virginia and an accomplishment we should all be very proud of."

Both Clarke and Sanford competed at the regional SMAG boards in previous years and for them, the experience was familiar. Clarke, who won at the regional level last year as well, said his studying was "the same as last year," and that he went into the boards feeling more comfortable and confident this time around. Sanford was named the runner-up in 2021 and considered this year to be his "redemption tour."

Read more at <https://ngpa.us/27862>



Leaders and recruiters from the Virginia Army National Guard pose together in front of the U.S. Capitol Nov. 16, 2023, in Washington, D.C. after three Virginia recruiters were named top in the region.

## Virginia National Guard News Headlines

### 91st Cyber Soldier, GMU student named top Army ROTC cadet

Bryan Vega, a Virginia National Guard Soldier assigned to the Fort Belvoir-based 91st Cyber Brigade, was named the top Reserve Officer Training Corps cadet of the year by the ROTC Army Cadet Command according to an online announcement posted Nov. 22, 2023.

Read more at <https://ngpa.us/27910>

### DMA launches peer support service for employees

A new, diverse team of Virginia Department of Military Affairs leaders is stepping up to provide critical peer support for DMA state employees in need following a personal or professional crisis.

Read more at <https://ngpa.us/27911>

### H2F partnership brings exercise science students to MREs

A new partnership between the Virginia Army National Guard and Longwood University is providing hands-on experience while providing the Guard with personnel trained to capture information needed to help prevent Soldier injuries.

Read more at <https://ngpa.us/27916>

### 192nd in 90 Seconds: November 2023

In this edition of the 192nd in 90 Seconds, Col. Lange visits the 203rd RED HORSE, Detachment 1, 192nd Medical Group and the 200th Weather Flight, and the 192nd Maintenance Squadron welcomes a new commander.

Watch the video at <https://ngpa.us/27889>

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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:

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<http://nationalguard.com/va>

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<https://ngpa.us/26613>

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## Earn \$1,000 with the VNG Referral Enlistment Program

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# Nevers to replace Mercer as DMA Chief Operations Officer

After eight years guiding the Virginia Department of Military Affairs as the Chief Operations Officer, retired Brig. Gen. Walt Mercer is retiring from the DMA effective Dec. 31, 2023, with another retired Virginia National Guard officer, retired Col. Everton E. Nevers, taking over the role of COO.

“Mr. Mercer is retiring as the chief operations officer at the end of December after serving in this capacity for the last eight years. His contributions to DMA and his unwavering dedication leave an indelible mark on our team, and we thank him for his remarkable service,” said Maj. Gen. James W. Ring, the Adjutant General of Virginia. “Mr. Nevers’s remarkable skills and extensive experience make him the ideal candidate to carry forward the legacy of excellence that Mr. Mercer established within our organization.”

Nevers has already been spending time with the organization, meeting employees and learning the ins and outs of the DMA operation.

“The thing I’m looking forward to the most in leading the DMA organization is working with the outstanding men and women who I will have to opportunity to interact with on a daily basis in order to affect our employees’ lives positively,” said Nevers, who retired from the VNG in 2022 as the G4 logistics officer.

Nevers will aim to fill the large shoes of Mercer, who has spent his time as the COO working tirelessly to improve the organization by investing in its employees. During his tenure, he helped initiate several courses and programs for his state employees to take advantage of as they grow their DMA careers, including the New Employee Orientation, the Supervisor Course, DMA Leader Development Course and the DMA Workforce Development Mentoring Program.

Most of his proudest accomplishments in the COO role came as a direct result of listening to his charges and identifying areas improvement was needed.

“I think that coming in and listening to staff and using data to identify gaps or problem areas was a positive starting point that led to accomplishments or initiatives that were relevant and got after the actual problem,” said Mercer. “I think I have had some success in listening to staff, leading with caring and putting people first, which has had a positive effect on the work climate, level of trust, and teamwork across DMA. Part of this led to our creation of the DMA Mentor Program, which I have seen touch our staff in a truly empowering and positive way.”

With the help of retired Command Sgt. Maj. Tim White, the DMA instructor and trainer, Mercer set out to formalize courses intended to teach new hires about the organization and its policies and procedures, as well as a course for new supervisors to learn about managing and leading state employees.

“When I arrived as the COO there was no formal class for new staff, nor a Supervisor Course,” said Mercer. “I pulled some staff together in several working groups, and we worked to create these initiatives. Tim White and I put the finishing touches on them and they have been very successful. I know we hit the right areas from



**Retired Col. Everton E. Nevers will succeed retired Brig. Gen. Walt Mercer as the Virginia Department of Military Affairs Chief Operations Officer effective Dec. 31, 2023.**

the very positive feedback we have received over and over from staff who have attended these classes.”

Mercer said helping those state employees grow their careers and come together as a team will be the big thing he will miss upon retirement.

“The DMA staff are dedicated and care about their mission greatly,” said Mercer. “There is an overall feel of family here compared to most agencies, and I will miss the caring and loyal staff who supported me and the various initiatives that we have implemented.”

Read more at <https://ngpa.us/27909>

## MORE ON THE WEB

### Yellow Ribbon connects Soldiers, families with resources

Photos on Flickr at <https://ngpa.us/27871>

### VNG aviation battalion conducts Safety Stand Down

Photos on Flickr at <https://ngpa.us/27810>

### Soldiers celebrate the holidays at Blackstone parade

Photos on Flickr at <https://ngpa.us/27867>

### DMA employees recognized at appreciation luncheon

Photos on Flickr at <https://ngpa.us/27834>

### JFHQ-VA celebrates holiday season

Photos on Flickr at <https://ngpa.us/27872>

