

VaANG top performers recognized at annual ceremony

The Virginia Air National Guard held its annual awards ceremony to recognize the 2023 Outstanding Airmen of the Year Feb. 3, 2024, at Joint Base Langley-Eustis, in Hampton, Virginia. Brig. Gen. Catherine M. Jumper, VaANG commander, and Col. Brock E. Lange, 192nd Wing commander, hosted the event and presented awards alongside Chief Master Sgt. Ian D. Stegherr, Virginia Air National Guard state command chief, and Chief Master Sgt. Sean J. Fretwell, 192nd Wing command chief.

“Recognition is part of being in the military,” said Lange. “We have hard jobs, we do hard things, and we ask you to do these hard things, often times away from your family in terribly austere, awful conditions. In 2023, as we always do, the VaANG has done more than her fair share. We represent the commonwealth both deployed and at home with our TFI partners. When we go to basic training and come home as the honor graduate and then follow up with being the distinguished graduate. These are the things we treat as normal in the VaANG because we operate at a high level because we are a team that takes care of one another, we love each other, and we support each other. That’s what today is all about.”

Read more at <https://ngpa.us/28560>



Brig. Gen. Catherine M. Jumper presents the 2023 VaANG Outstanding Airman of the Year Award to Senior Airman Alexis Kyles Feb. 3, 2024, at Joint Base Langley-Eustis, in Hampton, Virginia.

Virginia National Guard News Headlines

203rd RED HORSE conducts engineer exchange in Tajikistan

Virginia National Guard Airmen assigned to the Virginia Beach-based 203rd Rapid Engineer Deployable Heavy Operational Repair Squadron Engineers, 192nd Wing conducted an engineer exchange with Republic of Tajikistan military and law enforcement personnel Jan. 22 - 26, 2024, in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

Read more at <https://ngpa.us/28562>

Burge takes command of 192nd Mission Support Group

The 192nd Wing welcomed Col. Manaal I. Burge as the new commander of the 192nd Mission Support Group during a change of command ceremony Jan. 6, 2024, at Joint Base Langley-Eustis, in Hampton, Virginia.

Read more at <https://ngpa.us/28563>

VNG NCO qualifies as Ranger Instructor, serves as RTAC cadre

Sgt. Daniel Leikin joined the Virginia Army National Guard in 2020, just a few months after graduating from high school. In the less than four years since then, he’s been busy. He completed his initial training as an infantryman.

Read more at <https://ngpa.us/28514>

Field artillery NCO reflects on quick-paced military journey

For Sgt. Christopher Brown, the best part about serving in the field artillery is the camaraderie he’s found there. In just five years he has already experienced a handful of schools and both an overseas and stateside deployment.

Read more at <https://ngpa.us/28495>

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VNG WOCs hit milestones, hurtle toward graduation

The seven Soldiers currently enrolled in the Virginia Army National Guard's Warrant Officer Candidate School are nearly through with their transition from noncommissioned officers to fully-fledged warrant officers. Over their most recent drill weekend, held Feb. 2-4, 2024, the candidates tackled their community project at the Chesterfield Food Bank and Outreach Center, took their capstone academic assessment, and presented their class song and sign to their battalion commander.

"Overall, the weekend was very rewarding," said Warrant Officer Candidate Daniel Canada. "Completing so much instilled in us a feeling of pride for all that we've accomplished, as well as a newfound momentum to take on the challenges that await us as fresh warrant officers."

This class is the first to go through under a newly-restructured curriculum. Previously, Phase I of WOCS was held in-state, while Phase II was held out of state. Now, Phase I is taught out of state and Phase II is taught in state, at Fort Barfoot.

"The course has been great," said Warrant Officer Candidate Logan Heishman, who spent 12 years in the U.S. Marine Corps as a field artillery operations chief before transitioning to the Virginia Army National Guard about two years ago. "For me, it's been a little challenging, trying to learn not just the warrant officer way, but the Army way."

Heishman's initial plan when he joined the National Guard was to immediately start the process of becoming a warrant officer. But military obligations got in the way and he, a field artilleryman, deployed with 1st Battalion, 111th Field Artillery Regiment, 116th Infantry Brigade Combat Team in support of Operation Inherent Resolve to provide short-range air defense against unmanned aerial systems, rocket artillery and motor attacks throughout the U.S. Central Command area of operations in the Middle East.

On the deployment, Heishman served as a battle captain. His leaders recognized his expertise and suggested he become a warrant officer, which, he told them, was the plan. They helped him with letters of recommendation and "got the ball rolling."

"The deployment wasn't a hindrance because I could take my time with my predetermination packet," he said. Once he returned home, he started WOCS and also earned bachelor's degree in homeland security along the way.

For Warrant Officer Candidate William Heiber, the path toward becoming a warrant officer started with a chance encounter on his very first drill weekend with the Virginia Army National Guard.

"My car had broken down, and a warrant office pulled over on the side of the road and saw me standing there and he gave me a ride," Heiber, an engineer, said. He knew about warrant officers from learning the Army rank structure at Basic Combat Training, but said they were still kind of a mystery. "He talked to me about what he did and some of his duties, and from there, I had that aspiration [to become a warrant officer]."

While motivated to join the warrant officer ranks, Heiber, a brand new Soldier, had to wait for multiple promotions and a few rating periods in order to meet the basic requirements. As soon as he



Warrant Officer Candidates enrolled in the Virginia National Guard's Warrant Officer Candidate School present their class sign and song Feb. 3, 2024, at Fort Barfoot, Virginia.

was promoted to sergeant, he went to pre-WOCS, a requirement for all National Guard Soldiers who want to become warrant officers. But he still had to wait for three rating periods to pass.

The candidates are set to graduate WOCS in March and will then officially begin their careers as warrant officers.

"For those thinking about the warrant career path, I recommend they not wait," Canada said. "Virginia needs smart, motivated people to carry it into the next generation of technical and tactical readiness."

Read more at <https://ngpa.us/28561>

MORE ON THE WEB

VaARNG command team visit Soldiers in Gate City

Photos on Flickr at <https://ngpa.us/28534>

529th CSSB conducts final exercise at Fort Cavazos

Photos on Flickr at <https://ngpa.us/28567>

183rd RTI Warrant Officer Candidate School Course Info

Read more at <https://ngpa.us/28568>

State Partnership Program

Read more at <https://ngpa.us/28566>

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