

80th anniversary of D-Day observed abroad, at home

Virginia National Guard Soldiers paid tribute to the valor, fidelity and sacrifice of the U.S. and Allied Forces who participated in the June 1944 invasion of Normandy and commemorated the 80th anniversary of D-Day at multiple events on and around June 6, 2024, in France, Virginia and Louisiana.

“We gather here today, at this solemn and revered National Guard Monument in Normandy, almost a stone’s throw away from Dog Green Beach, to honor the brave souls known as the Bedford Boys,” said Maj. Gen. Joseph A. DiNonno, Commanding General of the 29th Infantry Division. “It is with profound gratitude and deep respect that we commemorate the 80th anniversary of D-Day, a day that marked a turning point in history and showcased unparalleled bravery and sacrifice.”

The Bedford Boys have come to symbolize the courage and sacrifice of thousands of U.S. and Allied forces who stormed the beaches of Normandy June 6, 1944, and began the push to end Nazi tyranny in Europe. During the assault on Omaha Beach, 19 of the Soldiers assigned to Bedford’s Company A, 116th Infantry Regiment, 29th Infantry Division died.

Read more at <https://ngpa.us/30044>



Maj. Gen. Joseph A. Dinonno, Commanding General of the 29th Infantry Division, lays a wreath along with a French dignitary June 2, 2024, at the National Guard Monument situated above Omaha Beach in Vierville-sur-Mer, France.

Virginia National Guard News Headlines

Diddams takes command of the Virginia Defense Force

Col. (Va.) Richard Diddams was promoted to brigadier general and took command of the Virginia Defense Force June 1, 2024, in Richmond, Virginia. Maj. Gen. James W. Ring, the Adjutant General of Virginia, presided over the ceremony officially transferring authority and responsibility of the VDF to Diddams.

Read more at <https://ngpa.us/30045>

VNG combined arms marksmanship match held at Fort Barfoot

The Virginia National Guard’s Marksmanship Training Unit hosted the Adjutant General’s Marksmanship Match, held May 17-19, 2024, at Fort Barfoot, Virginia. The event brought together approximately 50 shooters from across the state.

Read more at <https://ngpa.us/30046>

Fort Barfoot firefighters receive benefits boost

Members of Fort Barfoot Fire and Emergency Services are now eligible for a new retirement benefit after the department was added to the Virginia Law Officers’ Retirement System, or VaLORS.

Read more at <https://ngpa.us/30047>

Dirt Boys pave the way for the VaANG

Within the 203rd RED HORSE, 192nd Wing, Virginia Air National Guard is a prestigious group of Airmen - the Dirt Boys. To be a “Dirt Boy” means to be a highly trained and skilled engineer, technician and craftsman.

Read more at <https://ngpa.us/30048>

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Va. Defense Force

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Join the Virginia National Guard Alumni Network

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TF St. Lo Soldiers complete Immediate Response 24

Nearly 800 Virginia, Kentucky and West Virginia National Guard Soldiers conducted annual training in May 2024 in the Olomouc Region of the Czech Republic as part of Operation Immediate Response 24, a sub-component exercise of STEADFAST DEFENDER 24. The units mobilized for IR 24 as Task Force St. Lo, under the command of the Virginia National Guard's Winchester-based 3rd Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment, 116th Infantry Brigade Combat Team.

"The overall mission was for the task force to assume command of a multinational element, including active duty and reserve units as well as National Guard," said Lt. Col. Kevin Hoffman, commander of Task Force St. Lo. "U.S. Soldiers from Kentucky, West Virginia, Virginia, Germany, also a civil affairs element from New England. The task was to converge on the Město Libavá military training area in the Czech Republic and conduct combined arms training with the Czech military."

Task Force St. Lo Soldiers conducted joint training with Czech military partners, participated in a Victory in Europe celebration, planned and executed a culminating training exercise and also were able to enjoy a cultural day, taking in some of the sights and experiences of the area.

More than 90,000 troops, 50 ships, 80 aircraft, and 1,100 combat vehicles from all 32 NATO allies joined the STEADFAST DEFENDER 24 exercise to boost readiness across different command levels. DEFENDER stands for the Dynamic Employment of Forces to Europe for NATO Deterrence and Enhanced Readiness and the exercise showcased NATO's ability to deploy forces from North America and the UK to support Europe, emphasizing unity and interoperability.

Lt. Col. Tom Bortner, Hoffman's predecessor as 3rd Battalion commander, along with executive officer Maj. Leo Godunov, Command Sgt. Maj. Jason Mendel, and the entire battalion staff, as well as numerous members of the VNG, accepted the responsibility for a mission of this scale and began planning months in advance, explained Hoffman. Coordinating the movement of materials and Soldiers for such a mission was an impressive accomplishment achieved in a very brief period, he said.

Once on the ground, the task force immediately began work to accomplish the major tasks that lay before it in a very condensed amount of time. The first major event was participation in a Victory in Europe celebration held May 8, 2024, in the town of Hranice in the Olomouc Region of the Czech Republic.

Hoffman spoke alongside Czech military officials while Soldiers of Task Force St. Lo stood together with their Czech Army counterparts during the ceremony. Following the formal event, American and Czech Soldiers manned static displays of various military weapons and vehicles while interacting with civilians who eagerly browsed the displays.

Soldiers of the task force were able to take in some of the local sights between training with multiple "cultural days" being planned into the schedule to accommodate the nearly 800 U.S. troops conducting annual training there.



Virginia Army National Guard Soldiers assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment, operating as Task Force St. Lo, conduct fire and movement drills with the Czech 72nd Mechanised Battalion May 9, 2024, at Daskabát Range.

"The Czechs provided transportation so we could go out and do cultural days," Hoffman said. "So that all the Soldiers could experience a little of the Czech culture. We went to a city with a cathedral that's nearly 1,000 years old, and a castle from the 13th century. The Czechs are proud of their culture and their country. They were happy to share it with us."

Members of the Alpha Company, 3rd Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment were able to conduct two days of integrated training with the Czech 72nd Mechanized Battalion. They conducted fire and movement drills, weapons familiarization and cross-trained on various weapons systems at the Daskabát Range.

Read more at <https://ngpa.us/30049>

MORE ON THE WEB

192nd Wing first sergeants - putting Airmen first

Read more at <https://ngpa.us/30050>

2-224th AVN hosts ESGR Boss Lift

Photos on Flickr at <https://ngpa.us/30051>

80th anniversary of D-Day commemorated in Bedford

Photos on Flickr at <https://ngpa.us/29943>

Finnish delegation, VNG leaders visit 91st Cyber Brigade

Photos on Flickr at <https://ngpa.us/30005>

St. Lo Soldiers hone weapons skills during AT

Photos on Flickr at <https://ngpa.us/29987>

