

# VaARNG recruiting battalion tops annual mission

The Virginia Army National Guard's Recruiting and Retention Battalion marked a milestone Aug. 20, 2025, when it surpassed its National Guard Bureau mission of 851 enlistments in what has been an exceptional recruiting year. With weeks still remaining before the Sept. 30 end of the recruiting year, the battalion's recruiters have continued to build on that success, adding dozens more enlistments.

"This remarkable achievement, the first time since 2014 that we have surpassed our accession goal, is a testament to your collective dedication and hard work," said Lt. Col. Eric Johnson, commander of the Recruiting and Retention Battalion, to the battalion in an email sent to mark the milestone.

Virginia's Recruiting and Retention Battalion is organized into two companies: Alpha Company, which covers the western side of the state, and Charlie Company, which covers the east. Recruiters are assigned to specific areas, each with its own challenges and opportunities. Recruiting in Virginia Beach beneath the roar of fighter jets, for example, looks very different than in rural communities like Abingdon or Gate City.

~ Read more at <https://vngpao.info/msmbwmbm>



Col. James C. Shaver, the Virginia National Guard's G1 deputy chief of staff for personnel, addresses 22 of the VNG's newest recruits following Military Signing Day, held May 16, 2025, at the Virginia War Memorial in Richmond, Virginia.

**Virginia National Guard News Headlines**

**Batterton succeeds Jumper to lead Virginia Air National Guard**

Brig. Gen. Christopher Batterton succeeded Brig. Gen. Catherine Jumper as commander of the Virginia Air National Guard effective Sept. 6, 2025, and Jumper assumed responsibilities as the Assistant Adjutant General for Air Strategic Initiatives.

~ Read more at <https://vngpao.info/2p967vzd>

**Harris succeeds Calley as VaARNG senior warrant officer**

Chief Warrant Officer 4 Douglas L. Harris assumed responsibility as the Virginia Army National Guard's Command Chief Warrant Officer from Chief Warrant Officer 5 John D. Calley Sept. 6, 2025, in Richmond, Virginia.

~ Read more at <https://vngpao.info/mrtndw3e>

**VNG aviators conduct water bucket training using portable tank**

Virginia National Guard Soldiers assigned to 2nd Battalion, 224th Aviation Regiment and members of the Fort Pickett Fire and Emergency Services conduct water bucket training Aug. 21, 2025, at Fort Pickett, Virginia.

~ Read more at <https://vngpao.info/2vh7jrhf>

**SAPR course provides refresher training to Soldiers, civilians**

More than 30 Soldiers and civilians from a variety of National Guard organizations participated in a Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Credentialed Education Unit Refresher course Aug. 18-22, 2025.

~ Read more at <https://vngpao.info/2p9xd2rm>

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## 3-116th Soldiers excel “in the box” at National Training Center

More than 70 Virginia National Guard Soldiers assigned to the Alpha Company, 3rd Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment, 116th Infantry Brigade Combat Team supported a Florida National Guard IBCT during their National Training Center rotation July 16 - Aug. 8, 2025, at Fort Irwin, California.

During the rotation, Alpha Company, known as “Outlaw,” filled a line company vacancy within the Florida National Guard’s 2nd Battalion, 124th Infantry Regiment, 53rd IBCT.

“This is a great opportunity to build generational readiness and resilience by tackling some of the toughest and most realistic training in the Army,” said Lt. Col. Kevin Hoffman, commander of 3rd Battalion during the rotation. “Outlaw Company took this challenge head-on, and demonstrated outstanding levels of resiliency and competence. They make us all proud and continue to be tremendous organizational assets.”

A contingent of Finnish Defense Forces personnel also participated in the rotation in support of the Department of Defense’s State Partnership Program, in which the VNG and Finland have been formal partners since 2024. The Finnish forces fully integrated with the 53rd IBCT, acting as a force multiplier. According to Virginia’s SPP director, Lt. Col. Carlos Maldonado, the inclusion of the Finns helped build partner interoperability and readiness, key goals of the SPP and NATO.

During the rotation, several senior leaders including Gen. Steven S. Nordhaus, Chief of the National Guard Bureau, and Maj. Gen. Joseph DiNonno, then the commander of the 29th Infantry Division, thanked the Soldiers of Outlaw and other participating units for their hard work and perseverance.

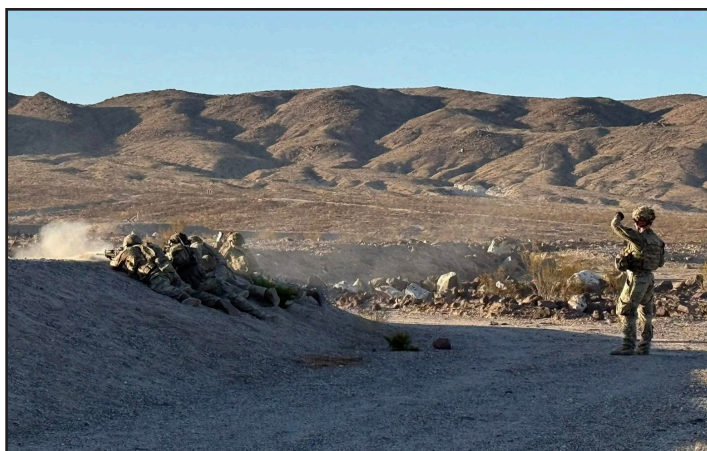
During their time “in the box,” the VNG Soldiers conducted multiple technically-challenging maneuvers and live-fire exercises in support of Florida’s units.

“Throughout the course of the exercise, Outlaw fulfilled either decisive operations or shaping operations across an air assault mission, the breach for our battalion’s entry to an urban assault, support by fire to destroy and fix an enemy battle position, and two battalion sized defenses: one force on force, and one live-fire exercise,” said Capt. John Cabrera, commander of Alpha Company.

While at NTC in a support role, Outlaw led by example, showcasing their strength, training and ability to operate in conditions both adverse and stressful.

“Outlaw Soldiers performed exemplary through the course of the rotation,” said Cabrera. “We sustained zero real-world heat casualties during August in the Mojave Desert, and the fewest casualties of any company during force on force, a feat which rests squarely on shoulders of noncommissioned officers looking after their Soldiers and enforcing discipline throughout the exercise. Ultimately, 2-124 was the only battalion to be evaluated as having accomplished each mission it was tasked.”

Fort Irwin, located in the Mojave Desert in southern California and notorious for its blistering heat and mountainous, dry, rocky terrain, provided ample challenges to the VaARNG contingent,



**Soldiers assigned to Alpha Company, 3rd Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment support the Florida National Guard during a National Training Center rotation July 16 - Aug. 8, 2025, at Fort Irwin, California.**

forcing them to adapt, overcome and excel.

“Fort Irwin provides a premiere training scenario which is catered to mounted unit exercises,” said Cabrera. “The combination of the elements of the desert and the expansive terrain, unforgiving to dismounted units, served as a gauntlet from both a logistical and tactical standpoint.”

Despite the harsh environment, Outlaw shined.

“A few painful lessons learned early on set the stage for Outlaw to re-establish our operational tempo during both planning and execution phases of each mission to ensure risk to mission and risk to Soldiers was mitigated,” Cabrera added.

~ Read more at <https://vngpao.info/3hfkwwp6>

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#### **180th Engineers conduct departure ceremony**

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#### **180th Engineers, loved ones say farewells**

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#### **VNG senior leaders send off 180th ESC Soldiers**

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