

# 116th to field test new MBCT organization

The Virginia National Guard's Staunton-based 116th Infantry Brigade Combat Team will be the first Army National Guard brigade to test and evaluate the approved task organization for a mobile brigade combat team during their 21-day eXportable Combat Training Capability rotation in June 2025 at Fort Barfoot, Virginia. The MBCT concept is part of the U.S. Army's transformation initiative with the goal of making units more agile and lethal.

"The 116th has an incredible opportunity to be at the forefront of the Army's transformation initiative, and I am confident the Soldiers of the Normandy Brigade will rise to the occasion," said Col. Jared Lake, commander of the 116th. "There are still many variables in the transformation process, but our Soldiers are going to focus on their core warfighting skills that will make us a more ready and lethal organization by the end of XCTC."

XCTC is a series of field training exercises simulating realistic combat scenarios including live fire, situational training lanes and force on force with a dedicated opposing force intended to increase the skills and readiness of National Guard units.

~ Read more at <https://vngpao.info/4a5nr2vp>



**Virginia National Guard Soldiers assigned to the Bedford-based Alpha Company, 3rd Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment, 116th Infantry Brigade Combat Team conduct a movement to contact training lane June 9, 2025.**

## Virginia National Guard News Headlines

### VNG military installation renamed to honor World War II hero

By order of the Secretary of Defense, the Virginia National Guard's Fort Barfoot military installation near Blackstone, Virginia, has been renamed as Fort Pickett, effective June 11, 2025, to honor 1st Lt. Vernon W. Pickett for his extraordinary heroism during World War II.

~ Read more at <https://vngpao.info/2p8hkyl7>

### DMA Employees recognized during appreciation luncheon

Virginia National Guard and Virginia Department of Military Affairs senior leaders presented awards to DMA workers as part of a state employee recognition luncheon May 22, 2025, at Fort Barfoot, Virginia.

~ Read more at <https://vngpao.info/3e2hx7m4>

### Civic Leader Appreciation Day showcases VAARNG to educators

The Virginia Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention Battalion hosted its second annual Civic Leader Appreciation Day June 6, 2025, at the Army Aviation Support Facility in Sandston, Virginia.

~ Read more at <https://vngpao.info/3ks63zbr>

### 192nd Mission Support Group holds realignment ceremony

The 192nd Mission Support Group, 192nd Wing, Virginia Air National Guard, commemorated a historical moment in the redesignation of the 192nd Support Squadron June 7, 2025, at Joint Base Langley-Eustis in Hampton, Virginia.

~ Read more at <https://vngpao.info/yyf5escm>

## 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>

### Va. Air National Guard

<https://vngpao.info/3n7hr67a>

### Va. Defense Force

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

## Join the Virginia National Guard Alumni Network

<https://vngpao.info/5c4h4pxx>

## 29th ID Soldiers participate in Normandy D-Day commemoration

As the sun rose on the northern coast of France June 6, 2025, a group of 30 U.S. National Guard Soldiers, all assigned to the 29th Infantry Division, organized themselves into a neat formation. The tide was in and, as the Atlantic Ocean lapped against Omaha Beach, a crowd gathered around the Soldiers. The onlookers had come from all over, traveling from nearby French villages and towns, neighboring European nations and, of course, the United States. Everyone there that morning - from the most junior Soldier standing in formation, to the oldest reenactor on the beach - was there to pay tribute to the men who stormed Normandy's beaches on D-Day.

"Eighty-one years ago, on the morning of June 6th, 1944, these quiet shores roared with chaos and courage. The beaches of Normandy became the front line of liberty, and among the first to land on this unforgiving coast were 34 young men from a small town in Virginia called Bedford," said Maj. Gen. Joseph A. DiNonno, commanding general of the 29th Infantry Division, during a ceremony dedicated to those men, dubbed the "Bedford Boys," and all assigned to the 29th Infantry Division's 116th Infantry Regiment. DiNonno explained that on D-Day, 19 of those 34 men from Bedford, Virginia, a town of just over 3,000, were killed. "Per capita, no American town lost more."

During the ceremony, members of the Omaha Beach Bedford Virginia Association held banners bearing the faces and names of each of the fallen 19 Bedford Boys just across from the formation of 29th Infantry Division Soldiers. After DiNonno's remarks, the names of each of the fallen were read aloud in alphabetical order, their banner bearers stepping forward one by one.

The first name read was Staff Sgt. Leslie C. Abbott, nicknamed "Dickie" and just 22 when he died. Then Pfc. Wallace R. Carter, Pfc. John D. Clifton and Tech. Sgt. Frank P. Draper. Next was Capt. Taylor N. Fellers, their company commander, and Pfc. Nick N. Gillaspie, a prolific letter writer. Then, brothers Pvt. Bedford T. Hoback, buried at the Normandy American Cemetery, and Staff Sgt. Raymond S. Hoback, whose remains have never been identified. Next came Pvt. Clifton G. Lee, who was shot as he tried to swim to the shore, and Staff Sgt. Earl L. Parker, Pfc. Jack G. Powers, Pfc. Weldon A. Rosazza, Pfc. John F. Reynolds and Staff Sgt. John B. Schenk. Next was Tech Sgt. Ray O. Stevens, whose twin brother, Roy, landed on Omaha Beach aboard a different landing craft and ultimately survived the war. Then, Master Sgt. John L. Wilkes, Sgt. Gordon "Henry" White, Staff Sgt. Elmore P. Wright, who played minor league baseball before joining the Army, and finally, Sgt. Grant C. Yopp, who grew up beside the Stevens twins.

As the ceremony unfolded, the 29th Infantry Division Soldiers, who today continue the legacy of those men who died and survived on the beach, stood fast, body posture rigid and rooted to the ground by professionalism and military bearing. They'd watched as remarks were delivered, as the names of the fallen were read, as a lone bugler played "Taps." They watched again as roses honoring each of the Bedford Boys were tossed into the surf of the Atlantic Ocean. Then, once the ceremony concluded and they were released



**U.S. Army Maj. Michael Kone, assigned to the 29th Infantry Division, cleans the headstone of Maj. Thomas D. Howie, the "Major of St. Lo," June 5, 2025, at the Normandy American Cemetery in Colleville-sur-Mer, Normandy, France.**

from formation, several Soldiers swiped at the moisture gathered in the corners of their eyes. It was the start of their fifth full day in Normandy. The gravity of what they were commemorating was clear to each one of them.

"You take what you think you know from movies and the things you've read in books, but being here in person, it's just completely different," said Sgt. Thomas Brock, assigned to the Arkansas National Guard's 1st Battalion, 142nd Field Artillery Brigade. "This has just been very humbling, very surreal."

~ Read more at <https://vngpao.info/28mdmpfr>

### MORE ON THE WEB

#### VNG helps commemorate D-Day 81 in Bedford

~ Read more at <https://vngpao.info/2p9cms7v>

#### VNG commemorates D-Day 81 in France, Bedford

~ Photo collection on Flickr at <https://vngpao.info/yckj7aae>

#### 116th IBCT conducts XCTC rotation

~ Photo collection on Flickr at <https://vngpao.info/2f68jay5>

#### Sky's the limit: 200th Combat Weather Flight

~ Read more at <https://vngpao.info/5n99ts7w>

#### VNG flights crews, aircraft support Fort Lee DZ reopening

~ Photos on Flickr at <https://vngpao.info/bdmjukym>



@VaNationalGuard



@VaNationalGuard



@VaNationalGuard

