



Virginia National Guard the COMMONWEALTH'S GUARDIAN

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229th MPs return from CENTCOM mobilization

Approximately 130 Virginia National Guard Soldiers assigned to the Hanover-based 229th Military Police Company, 276th Engineer Battalion, 329th Regional Support Group returned to the United States June 13-16, 2026, following their federal active duty deployment to the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility. The unit began their federal active duty during a ceremony in June 2025.

During their deployment, the 229th's Soldiers conducted customs clearance operations as their primary mission. After the outset of Operation Epic Fury in February, the unit shifted gears to provide law enforcement support at a military installation in Jordan.

Seventy-two of the unit's Soldiers were validated and credentialed by the Area Support Group - Jordan Provost Marshal Office prior to beginning the mission.

"Over the course of a year, the 229th MPs supported a broad range of locations with vital military customs support enabling U.S. and coalition force missions through United States Central Command," said Maj. Gen. James W. Ring, the Adjutant General of Virginia. "We are glad to have them home and thank their families and loved ones for their support during this extended deployment. They represent the best of Virginia."

"The 229th MPs demonstrated resilience, adaptability and professional growth. This deployment strengthens each Soldier in the formation," said Capt. Austin Smith.

Read more: <https://vngpao.info/2p8n8jzs>



Virginia Gov. Abigail Spanberger and Maj. Gen. James W. Ring, the Adjutant General of Virginia, greet Soldiers assigned to the 229th Military Police Company as they arrive back in Virginia June 19, 2026, after their year-long mobilization to U.S. Central Command.



Normandy Brigade goes "in the box" at JRTC

Read more: <https://vngpao.info/mrxmfd2z>

Photos: <https://vngpao.info/4vma8vb3>

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VNG Counterdrug Task Force supports Roanoke Valley police initiative

Virginia National Guard Soldiers assigned to the Counterdrug Task Force recently supported a multiple-agency law enforcement initiative resulting in arrests and drug and weapon seizures in the Roanoke, Virginia, area.

The operation, named Combined Resolve, was a collaboration of multiple local, state and federal law enforcement agencies, resulted in more than 150 arrests from May 1 - 31, 2026. More than half of the arrests involved violent crimes, according to a release by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of Virginia.

Three CDTF Soldiers supported the operation, working with partner agencies and providing analytical support, according to Maj. Rachel Bowen, the task force's commander.

"The Soldiers served as the primary analytical support throughout the duration of the operation, working closely with law enforcement partners to help develop actionable intelligence and support operational decision-making," said Bowen. "Their efforts exemplify the value of the VANG CDTF's unique support capabilities and enduring partnerships across the commonwealth and beyond."

More than 20 illegal firearms were seized, and a significant amount of illegal drugs were taken off of the streets, including more than \$1 million-worth of methamphetamines, \$800,000-worth of cocaine and 352 grams of fentanyl.

Working side-by-side with law enforcement from the local to federal level on this kind of high-profile operation gave the task force a chance to showcase their skills and contributions to the safety of the commonwealth.

"While our mission to provide support is behind the scenes, it is gratifying to see the extraordinary work our Guard members, both Army and Air, perform every day, recognized on such a significant stage," said Bowen. "Their professionalism, dedication, and commitment to serving our communities are what make these possible. I am immensely proud of the CDTF members and our law enforcement partners who work tirelessly to protect our citizens."

Read more: <https://vngpao.info/4syduwz5>



Virginia National Guard Headlines

29th ID completes Warfighter in Pennsylvania

The 29th Infantry Division concluded its 20-day Warfighter Training Exercise, WFX 26-4, June 14, 2026, at Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania, focusing on large-scale combat operations.

Read more: <https://vngpao.info/y9dfy3hz>

Environmental, CCYA team up for SMR clean up

Commonwealth Challenge Youth Academy and the VNG Environmental Programs Office collected trash and repaired sand dune fences at the State Military Reservation in Virginia Beach.

Read more: <https://vngpao.info/yrskrnxs>

Aviation detachment begins federal mobilization

VNG Soldiers assigned to Detachment 1, Charlie Company, 2-245th Aviation Regiment, officially began their federal active duty with a ceremony May 27, 2026, in Chesterfield, Virginia.

Read more: <https://vngpao.info/2rx6pae6>

Hairston named top prevention specialist

Destiny Hairston, a prevention specialist in the VNG's Integrated Primary Prevention Workforce, is the Region 2 Prevention Specialist of the Year, according to an announcement at the National Guard Bureau's Integrated Primary Prevention Symposium.

Read more: <https://vngpao.info/kezx7s36>



WORKING TOGETHER: U.S. Army National Guard Soldiers assigned to the Virginia National Guard's 276th Engineer Battalion, 329th Regional Support Group train with Finnish forces May 28, 2026, during Exercise Karelian Sword 26 near Kouvola, Finland. More photos: <https://vngpao.info/585yvptc>

29th ID Soldiers honor D-Day legacy across Normandy

In the early morning hours of June 6, 2026, the 29th Infantry Division's blue-and-gray emblem was etched into the sand in the Dog Green Sector of Omaha Beach, marking the ground where the division came ashore 82 years earlier. The tide was out, the morning quiet.

As the sun began to rise, 30 U.S. Army National Guard Soldiers assigned to the 29th Infantry Division fell into formation near the emblem. Around them stood senior military leaders, historical reenactors, French citizens and travelers from around the world, all gathered to honor the Bedford Boys.

"They were simply sons of a small town in the Blue Ridge Mountains - farmhands, mill workers, students, brothers, friends - who had grown up together, trained together and crossed the Atlantic together," said Maj. Gen. Joseph A. DiNonno, special assistant to the director of the Army National Guard and a former commanding general of the 29th Infantry Division.

"Eighty-two years ago, as the ramps dropped on Dog Green Beach, 34 Soldiers from Bedford, Virginia, all members of Company A, 116th Infantry Regiment, were among the very first Americans to face the full force of the German defenses."

Within minutes, 19 of the men from Bedford were killed. "No American community suffered a greater loss on D-Day," DiNonno said.

At 6:30 a.m. on June 6, 1944, the men of Company A, including the Bedford Boys, reached the Dog Green Sector of Omaha Beach. Once off the boat, they faced unrelenting fire from German defensive positions nested in the bluffs above them.

"We gather at dawn because this is where their courage was revealed," DiNonno said. "This is when young men from Bedford stepped forward into history."

Read more: <https://vngpao.info/3682y9r2>



VNG honors D-Day in Bedford



Maj. Gen. James W. Ring and Chief Master Sgt. John F. Nye place a wreath during the 82nd D-Day Anniversary Commemoration June 6, 2026, at the National D-Day Memorial in Bedford, Virginia. Read more online at <https://vngpao.info/m59er78x>.

More on the Web:

2-224th gets new command sergeant major

Command Sgt. Maj. Thomas Davis took responsibility as the senior enlisted leader of the 2nd Battalion, 224th Aviation Regiment June 12, 2026, in Sandston, Virginia.

Read More: <https://vngpao.info/2p932syr>

Senior Army leaders visit 116th at JRTC

Gen. Christopher C. LaNeve, acting Chief of Staff of the Army, and Sgt. Maj. of the Army Michael R. Weimer, the 17th Sergeant Major of the Army, visited the Staunton-based 116th Mobile Brigade Combat Team during a Joint Readiness Training Center rotation at Fort Polk, Louisiana.

Photos: <https://vngpao.info/rb6utmrh>

Voices of the Virginia Air National Guard

For Senior Master Sgt. Rachele Gomez, 192nd Medical Group, the path to leadership with the 192nd Wing wound through different uniforms and a dramatic career pivot.

Read More: <https://vngpao.info/3nxehcvk>

Fort Pickett celebrates multiple birthdays

Fort Pickett hosted a birthday celebration marking the installation's birthday, as well as birthdays of the U.S. Army and former post namesake, Col. Van T. Barfoot.

Photos: <https://vngpao.info/pxrfu3pr>

DMA state employees recognized at luncheon

Maj. Gen. James W. Ring, the Adjutant General of Virginia, helped recognize Fort Pickett's state employees during an appreciation luncheon May 28, 2026, at Fort Pickett.

Photos: <https://vngpao.info/yckpte7h>

VaANG, Finnish partners sharpen tactics, readiness

Two F-22 Raptors from the Virginia Air National Guard's 149th Fighter Squadron touched down at Ebbing Air National Guard Base June 16 for a joint-training exercise with Finnish Air Force F-35 Lightning II aircraft.

The Raptors, assigned to the 192nd Fighter Wing at Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Virginia, are participating in integrated flight operations with Finnish Air Force F-35 Lightning II aircraft currently training at Ebbing. The exercise focuses on sharpening air dominance tactics and strengthening combined readiness between U.S. and allied forces.

The brief but intense two-day window underscores Ebbing's growing role as a premier training hub for allied fifth-generation fighters.



"The Razorback Range gives us unmatched flexibility for multi-aircraft training," said Col. Jonathan Esparza, commander of the 188th Wing. "Its capabilities allow us to host complex, realistic scenarios that build interoperability and readiness for our U.S. and international partners."

The exercise also advances the Virginia-Finland State Partnership Program, established

in 2024. Through the Department of War National Guard Bureau State Partnership Program, or SPP, the two states focus on military-to-military exchanges that enhance interoperability, especially as Finland integrates the F-35 into its NATO operations.

"The Virginia Air National Guard's experienced pilots and maintainers are a vital asset to this nation's air dominance around the globe," said Maj. Gen. James W. Ring, the adjutant general of the Virginia National Guard.

"Sharing their expertise with our Finnish partners through the State Partnership Program strengthens our shared capabilities, interoperability, readiness and lethality."

Read more: <https://vngpao.info/2p8wtdh6>

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