

# The Bluegrass Guard



Vol. 18 Issue 1 - February, 2015

Serving the men and women of Kentucky's Army and Air National Guard



Air Guard Completes Ebola Response Mission



# AROUND THE



**JFHQ**- Maj. Gen. Tonini cuts the cake with some help from Master Sgt. Plowman and Staff Sgt. Woodson to celebrate the 378th birthday of the National Guard.



**63rd TAB** - Col. Michael Stephens renders his first salute as colonel to Maj. Gen. Edward W. Tonini, Dec. 22. Stephens thanked Tonini for entrusting him with the leadership of the 63rd Theater Aviation Brigade.



**75th TC** - Lt. Col. Bryan Howay is promoted to the rank of colonel for the Kentucky National Guard's 75th Troop Command Dec. 23.



**138th FiB** - Lt. Col. Walter Leaumont speaks during the annual St. Barbara's Dining Out in Bardstown, Ky., Dec. 13. The event was Leaumont's last before retiring in 2015.



**238th RTI** - The Kentucky National Guard's newest officers and warrant officers stand at attention during a commissioning ceremony in Frankfort, Ky., Sept. 27.



Capt. Jeffrey Higgs with the 123rd Contingency Response Group arrives home to hug in Louisville, Ky., Nov. 20. The Airmen returned from a deployment to West Africa to assist in the fight against Ebola. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Scott Raymond)

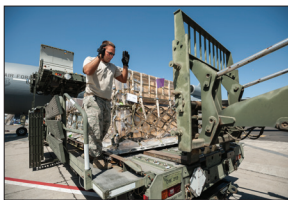


# E GUARD

AND IN OUR PAGES



**123rd AW** - U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Brian Leach, an aerial porter from the Kentucky Air National Guard's 123rd Contingency Response Group, directs the positioning of a forklift to offload pallets of humanitarian aid from a Halverson cargo-handling vehicle at Léopold Sédar Senghor International Airport in Dakar, Senegal, Nov. 12.



**149th MEB** - Spc. Jonathan Benham with the 577th Sapper Company places a M18A1 Claymore mine during training at the Wendell H. Ford Regional Training Center in Greenville, Ky., Nov. 4.



For more information about these stories and the Kentucky National Guard, please visit [www.kentuckyguard.com](http://www.kentuckyguard.com)



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*Don't miss an issue*

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Army Retiree address changes should be made through Staff Sgt. Debbie Devine at the Kentucky National Guard Personnel Services Branch. She can be reached at 502-607-1497 or [deborah.a.devine4.mil@mail.mil](mailto:deborah.a.devine4.mil@mail.mil)

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# IN THIS EDITION...



Ruck marches, land navigation and more took place Nov. 6 -9, at the Wendell H. Ford Regional Training Center in Greenville, Kentucky. The exercise was part of the four-day 2015 Kentucky National Guard Best Warrior Competition in which top Soldiers from across the state competed for a chance to advance to the regional competition.

*Read more on Page 6*



Airmen from the Kentucky Air National Guard's 123rd Contingency Response Group transferred control of a humanitarian cargo hub to replacement forces Nov. 18, successfully completing their support of an Ebola-response mission that has processed more than 750 tons of relief supplies for airlift into Liberia.

*Read more on Page 10*



Surviving family members of fallen U.S. Service members were joined by Heather French Henry, Commissioner of Kentucky's Department of Veterans Affairs, the Vice Chief of the National Guard, Lt. Gen. Joseph L. Lengyel and Adjutant General, Maj. Gen. Edward W. Tonini in the winners' circle at Churchill Downs in Louisville, Ky., Nov. 4, to present a trophy to the winning jockey of a race named in honor of the fallen.

*Read more on Page 15*



One of our favorite annual traditions. The Kentucky Guard hosted friends and family members of the newest officers and warrant officers during a commissioning ceremony in Frankfort, Ky., Sept. 27.

*Read more on Page 16*



# Kentucky Air Guard honors founding father

## Staff Report

with contributions by Jim Warren, Lexington Herald-Leader

Former Franklin Circuit Court Judge Henry Meigs II was a hero and a visionary who helped found the Kentucky Air National Guard.

Meigs died Dec. 5 in Louisville, Kentucky at the age of 93.

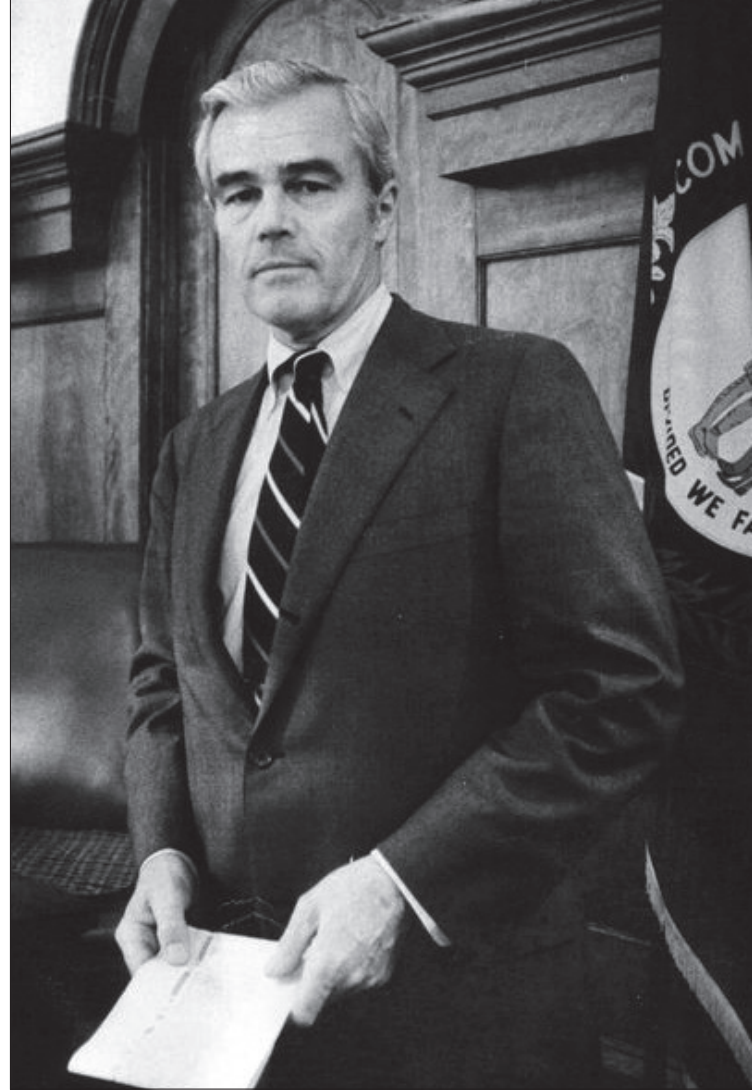
Born in New York, Meigs earned a law degree from the University of Kentucky after his service in World War II. He served as an Army Air Corps fighter pilot in the Pacific, flying the P-38 Lightning, shooting down six Japanese planes. He received the Silver Star and Distinguished Flying Cross among numerous other air medals.

Enlisting into the Army in 1942, Meigs trained as a fighter pilot at Shaw Field in South Carolina. He then transferred to the 6th Night Fighter Squadron, flying missions in the South Pacific around Guadalcanal. Meigs would win at least three of his victories against Japanese bombers here, including the reported feat of shooting down two enemy planes within 60 seconds.

In 1944, Meigs married Sara Lesley Willis, daughter of Kentucky Governor Simeon Willis. The wedding was the first and so far only time the governor's daughter was wed in the Governor's Mansion.

While in law school, Meigs accepted a position as the first air officer in the Kentucky Guard in 1945, assuming the rank of lieutenant colonel. At the same time, the National Guard Bureau was generating interest among the states for the creation of Air National Guard units. In 1946, Gov. Willis sent his son-in-law to Washington D.C. to meet with officials about bringing an Air Guard unit to Kentucky.

Through correspondence with Brig. Gen. Gustavus H. May, Kentucky's adjutant general, that meeting led to the 123rd Fighter Group coming to Standiford Field in Louisville.



Henry Meigs II, former Franklin Circuit Court Judge and founding father of the Kentucky Air National Guard. (Courtesy photo)

Through his hard work and determination, Meigs led the charge to bring the new air assets to the Commonwealth. A few months later, in 1947, the 123rd was federally recognized and then-Lt. Col. Philip Ardery took charge as the wing's first commander.

"The Kentucky Air National Guard has a storied history of excellence, and it all started with Judge Meigs and Philip Ardery in 1947," said Maj. Gen. Edward W. Tonini, adjutant general for Kentucky. "Judge Meigs led quite a distinguished life, from a World War II Ace to a prominent fixture in the courtrooms of the Commonwealth."

"We are grateful for his vision and resolve that helped shape the Kentucky Air National Guard into a major player in the defense of this country and the security of our state."

Meigs practiced law in Frankfort from 1949 until 1960, when then-Gov. Bert Combs selected him to serve as the first circuit judge of the newly created 48th District.

Because the court was based in Frankfort, Judge Meigs immediately was called on to handle cases testing the constitutionality of many pieces of state legislation and issues ranging from Christian schools to the Ten Commandments and the separation of powers in state government.

A second judgeship for the 48th District was created in 1974, and Squire Williams Jr. joined Judge Meigs on the bench. When the two retired in 1983, it marked the closing of "an important chapter in the history of the Kentucky judiciary," the Herald-Leader reported. 🐉



Kentucky Adjutant General, Maj. Gen. Edward W. Tonini, presents the burial flag to Sara Willis Meigs at the funeral of her husband Henry Meigs at the Frankfort Cemetery in Frankfort, Ky., Dec. 5, 2014. A World War II fighter pilot, Meigs would help found the Kentucky Air National Guard.



# Best Warrior Competition stresses full-Soldier concept

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. David Bolton

133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

The Full-Soldier Concept. This was the theme behind the 2015 Kentucky National Guard Soldier and Non-Commissioned Officer Best Warrior Competition. The four-day competition, held Nov. 6-9, 2014, at Wendell H. Ford Regional Training Center in Greenville, Kentucky, saw the top Soldiers from the state's six major commands vie for a shot at the regional competition.

But this crucible was not for the faint-hearted. Competitors were challenged in a series of events meant to test their mental, physical and emotional limits. Even before the competition began, State Command Sgt.

Maj. Thomas Chumley, Jr., senior enlisted leader for the Kentucky Army National Guard, gave the Soldiers a word of caution.

"This is going to be a challenging event, this is serious stuff," said Chumley. "If anybody wants to walk out right now, I

wouldn't hold it against you."

No one moved.

According to Chumley, the Best Warrior Competition provides the best Soldiers from the Kentucky Army National Guard the opportunity to prove themselves. This year, the focus of the competition was on preparing Soldiers for the regional competition and building pride in their skills as Soldiers.



"This year is focused on your basic soldiering skills," said Chumley. "Also I've added more tasks to prepare for regionals like the obstacle course, the ruck march and the stress shoot, which are events at regionals. I want these Soldiers to have

a sense of pride, selfless service, a sense of Esprit De Corps for their units, and just be proud of what they're doing."

This year's events consisted of a written test, composing an essay, completing the Army Physical Fitness Test, negotiating

an obstacle course, qualifying with an M9 pistol and M4 carbine, enduring a stress shoot, a five-mile ruck march with a 35-pound load, land navigation, a series of Army Warrior Tasks and sitting through a review board.

Finishing these tasks, to standard, is one thing. But making sure the 17 competitors were able to do so safely fell to a support staff of more than 40 individuals.

"We make sure nobody gets hurt, us or them," said Pfc. Lacy Bunnell, an automated logistics specialist with the 307th Component Repair Company. "In these events you really don't think too much about safety but that really is the number one thing for these guys, we're here to enforce that."

"We can't physically help them, but we can encourage them," said Spc. James Barnes, a High Mobility Artillery Rocket System Crewman with the 623rd Field Artillery. "We provide moral support as well as physical safety so no one gets hurt."

With such a wide variety of events to take on, competitors across the board agreed

that making it to the state level was all due to solid preparation. Hitting the books is just as important as hitting the gym in a competition like this where every aspect of being a Soldier is put to the test.

"I pulled out the Field Manuals and the study guides and learned as much as I could and went over the Army Warrior Tasks to prepare myself for the higher levels," said Staff Sgt. Jesse Mascoe, a fire directional specialist with Bravo Battery 1/623rd Field Artillery, and this year's NCO of the Year winner.

"The boards are meant to test Soldiers in aspects



Sgt. Daniel Dombusch, a recruiter with the 2/75th Recruiting and Retention Battalion, throws a dummy grenade to finish out the stress shoot event Nov. 7, 2014 at Wendall H. Ford Regional Training Center in Greenville, Ky.





**Soldier of the Year**  
Spc. Christopher Jones  
Infantryman  
Bravo Company  
1/149th MEB



**NCO of the Year**  
Staff Sgt. Jesse Mascoe  
Fire Directional Specialist  
Bravo Battery  
1/623rd Field Artillery



**Senior NCO of the Year**  
Sgt. 1st Class Jay Taheny  
Recruiting and Retention  
Area Supervisor  
2/75th R&R

other than their physical readiness or the combat aspect of being a Soldier,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Scottie Sloan, CSM for 2/75th Recruiting and Retention Battalion. “It is meant to test their ability to study, their

military knowledge, their wear of uniform and appearance, and their ability to handle questions that they’re not prepared for.”

As the weekend progressed and drew to a close, the competitors were able to reflect on

their experiences and what it meant for them to be able to participate on such a highly-visible stage.

“It’s a really high level of competition, not many people get to do this,” said Spc. Caitin Viera, a paralegal specialist with the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 149th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade. “It’s very humbling and very exciting. Especially as a woman, I don’t think there are many that make it this far so just being here is pretty good. I hope to win, but if not, the pride of saying that I made it here is more than enough.”

“It means a lot to represent my unit because I want to put them in the ears of the Army to

say we have Soldiers, even in Field Artillery, who can send people to high positions and high places,” said Mascoe.

“So far everything has been really rewarding,” said Staff Sgt. Andrew Dickson, a range maintenance NCO with the Training Site Garrison Command at WHFRTC. “I’ve gotten more out of it than I thought I would and I’m getting to meet highly motivated soldiers from across the state. It’s an honor to know that I am a potential candidate to represent the state of Kentucky. I love this state, I love the Kentucky National Guard; they’ve done wonderful things for me and my family.”

“It reaffirms that if you put in the effort, the outcome can be good,” said Spc. Christopher Jones, an Infantryman with Bravo Company 1st Battalion, 149th Infantry, and Soldier of the Year winner. “It was a really great competition. The competition was stiff but everyone treated everyone else with respect and the sportsmanship was great. It is a tremendous honor.”

While most of the competitors looked to this weekend as an eye-opening experience, for the Senior NCO of the Year winner, Sgt. 1st Class Jay Taheny, a Recruiting and Retention Area Supervisor with the Kentucky Army National Guard’s 2/75th Recruiting and Retention Battalion, this competition was the defining moment of a career spanning almost 20 years.

“Personally, this is the capstone of my career, there’s not much else I could really do,” said Taheny. “It meant a lot to compete here. This is an accomplishment that can never be taken away from me and I can always consider this a really memorable achievement.”



Staff Sgt. Rebecca Wood, a public affairs specialist with the 133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, navigates an obstacle during the Army Warrior Tasks portion of the 2015 Kentucky National Guard Best Warrior Competition Nov. 8, 2014, at Wendell H. Ford Regional Training Center in Greenville, Ky.



# Kentucky Guard connects families, Soldiers for holidays

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Scott Raymond  
*Kentucky National Guard Public Affairs*

Despite some technical difficulties, live video and sound finally came through the wire, and anxious family members saw loved ones on the large video screen. Several Kentucky families were joined via video teleconference with their deployed Soldiers at the Kentucky Guard's annual holiday luncheon in Frankfort, Dec. 6. Kentucky newest lieutenant governor, Lt. Gov. Crit Luallen joined Maj. Gen. Edward Tonini in greeting the parents, wives and children of Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 147th Aviation currently deployed to the Persian Gulf Region.

The tradition, started by Gov. Steve Beshear in 2009, gathered the family members of those deployed to honor them for their sacrifice, reminding them that the leadership of Kentucky is there for them.

"It's really wonderful to have the adjutant general and the Kentucky Guard to be as supportive as they have been," said Ashley Flanagan, Bravo Co.'s Family Readiness Group leader. "This is just like bringing a little bit of the holidays home."

Dressed in holiday outfits, children ran back and forth in front of the video camera, stopping occasionally to point

at a familiar face on the screen. Toys were distributed, crafts were made and smiles filled the room. Families discussed recent happenings, University of Kentucky basketball games and the rainy Central Kentucky weather. A holiday atmosphere exactly as planned said Lt. Col. Michael Stephens, commander of the 63rd Theater Aviation Brigade.

"That's what this event is about and is always about," he said. "We invite families together to show them that we care. As a brigade commander those Soldiers are my children too, therefore their family members are my family, and we are here to support one another."

Gov. Beshear and First Lady Jane Beshear were unable to attend this year's event, a first for the couple, but Lt. Gov. Luallen was more than happy to fill the role of host. Luallen said it was an honor for her to be there and that her own personal experiences have proved to her how difficult deployments can be.

"I know what a sacrifice it is for everyone of you to be without them during the holidays. It is so important to the security of the state and to the security of the nation that we have a strong Guard, like we do here in Kentucky."


Bravo Co. deployed to the Middle

East in June of 2014, flying UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters in airlift support missions for U.S. military operations throughout the region. They are expected to return in the Spring of 2015.

Flanagan is also the wife of Bravo Co.'s commander, Capt. Cliff Flanagan. This is her first deployment away from her husband. She said she wasn't sure what she was getting into, becoming the commander's wife and FRG leader, but thanks to the support of the brigade and the Kentucky Guard, she called it an easy ride.

"Being able to see the families interact with each other, you never know who's able to speak with their loved ones or not, so for the Kentucky Guard to set that up and see it was amazing."

The unit has deployed several times over the past decade, but the most recent is the first for many of its members, including Sgt. Ethan Skaggs who serves as a crew chief. Skaggs family turned out in a large number to enjoy what they called a great support network.

"It was great to come here and see our loved one on the video," said Ethan's mother, Donna Skaggs. "I even got to see him put up a 'Hi Mom' sign. So that's our Ethan." 



Family members of deployed Soldiers applaud the Soldiers of Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 147th Aviation during a holiday luncheon in Frankfort, Ky., Dec. 6, 2014.



A family member waves to Soldiers of Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 147th Aviation during a video teleconference as part of a holiday luncheon in Frankfort, Ky., Dec. 6, 2014.



# THE ONE STOP SHOP FOR JOBS, EMPLOYMENT COUNSELING, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



The program relies heavily on employer partners notifying ESGR of employment opportunities. These are broadcast to Guard and Reserve personnel and families via email, through social media and Family Readiness Groups across the state.

Check out their Facebook page at [facebook.com/KYESGR](https://facebook.com/KYESGR) to find



[www.ebenefits.va.gov](http://www.ebenefits.va.gov) allows you to enter your military occupation code, and the military skills translator will convert your specific skill set into a comparable civilian job. From there, job seekers can search for employment opportunities by location or interest. eBenefits also has resume writing tips, career counseling and interview technique assistance Service members can use to land that perfect job.

In addition to the eBenefits website, Kentucky Gov. Steve Beshear has established the “Hiring Our Heroes” initiative which matches veteran job seekers with employers in order to retain a critical, high-quality talent pool. This program allows veterans to put their talents to work for Kentucky’s businesses. To find out what resources are available to you, go to: [governor.ky.gov/hiringkyheroes](http://governor.ky.gov/hiringkyheroes)

## **Become an ESGR Volunteer!**

Our dedicated volunteers come from all walks of life. We are business executives, civic leaders, and patriotic citizens. Some of our volunteer activities include the following:

**Employer Outreach:** Develop relationships with employers to promote advocacy for service in the National Guard and Reserve.

**Ombudsman:** Assist in preventing, reducing, or resolving employer or service member misunderstandings regarding employment rights and responsibilities.

**Public Affairs:** ESGR Public Affairs volunteers work with military and civilian media organizations to promote public understanding of the ESGR mission.

**Military Unit Representative:** Inform and educate members of the National Guard and Reserve regarding their employment rights and responsibilities under USERRA.

For more information regarding ESGR, job fairs, counseling and professional development,  
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**Kelli Carter, 502-607-1302, [kelli.f.carter2.ctr@mail.mil](mailto:kelli.f.carter2.ctr@mail.mil)**





Airmen from the Kentucky Air National Guard's 123rd Contingency Response Group remove the transport wheels from a mobile airfield operations center at Léopold Sédar Senghor International Airport in Dakar, Senegal, Oct. 17, 2014.

# Kentucky Air Guard completes Ebola-response mission

**Story and photos by Maj. Dale Greer**

*JTF-PO Senegal Public Affairs*

Airmen from the Kentucky Air National Guard's 123rd Contingency Response Group transferred control of a humanitarian cargo hub to replacement forces Nov. 18, successfully completing their support of an Ebola-response mission that has processed more than 750 tons of relief supplies for airlift into Liberia.

While the Kentucky unit's role is winding down as its members prepare to redeploy to the United States, the humanitarian cargo operation will continue at Léopold Sédar Senghor International Airport under the direction of the new troops — more than 70 Airmen assigned to the 787th Air Expeditionary Squadron.

"As one of the first Air Force assets in theater, the 123rd Contingency

Response Group's mission was to open an airfield for military cargo operations, establish an Aerial Port of Debarkation, and hand off the operation to follow-on forces within 60 days," explained Col. David Mounkes, commander of the 123rd. "We've now completed that mission, and the 787th is ready to take over. I know they will do a superb job."

Lt. Col. Michael Brock, commander of the 787th, expressed his gratitude to the men and women of the Kentucky Air Guard for their "outstanding stewardship" of the aerial port from its inception.

"I'd like to express our sincere thanks to the 123rd CRG for shaping the environment for future success," Brock said. "Due to their exceptional professionalism, our Airmen are fully

prepared to carry on this mission without missing a beat, delivering equipment and supplies to Liberia that are essential for combating an Ebola outbreak that has claimed over 5,000 lives."

Mounkes said he was proud of his forces, which include more than 70 Air Guardsmen from Louisville, Kentucky, and seven active-duty Airmen from Travis Air Force Base, California, and Joint Base Maguire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey.

Those Airmen arrived in Senegal Oct. 4 to find a bare-base facility consisting of little more than two empty buildings and a vacant lot situated next to an airport taxiway. From that, the Airmen built a fully operational aerial port in less than 24 hours, supplying





U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Anthony Hayden, an aerial porter from the Kentucky Air National Guard's 123rd Contingency Response Group, directs the movement of cargo outside the Joint Operations Center at Léopold Sédar Senghor International Airport in Dakar, Senegal, Oct. 24, 2014.

their own satellite-based voice and data communications, electric power generation, airfield command-and-control capability, all-terrain forklifts, specialized cargo-handling equipment and aircraft maintenance assets.

"I could not be more pleased with what our Airmen accomplished here in a rapidly changing, dynamic environment," Mounkes said. "They hit the ground running and never let up, getting critically important humanitarian cargo and troop-support equipment downrange to help fight the worst Ebola outbreak in history."

That cargo, which arrived in Senegal aboard civilian 747s and U.S. Air Force C-17 and KC-10 cargo aircraft, included items like tents, latex gloves, human blood, stretchers, electric generators, and food and water. Airmen from the 123rd worked around-the-clock to offload cargo as it arrived, prioritize it for forward movement, and upload it to U.S. Air Force C-130s for final delivery in Liberia. Since beginning operations in Senegal, the Kentucky Airmen have coordinated the movements of 188 in-bound and out-bound aircraft, processed 809 passengers for airlift and handled 754.9 tons of cargo, Mounkes said.

"The U.S. Government's response to this outbreak is a massive commitment of resources from multiple federal

agencies, all under the direction of the U.S. Agency for International Development," Mounkes noted. "The Department of Defense alone has committed to deploying nearly 4,000 forces to build multiple Ebola treatment facilities in Liberia, staff medical laboratories and train local health-care workers.

"That kind of response requires a tremendous level of logistical support, and I'm proud to say that our Airmen played a central role in establishing the air bridge needed to provide it."

Mounkes also expressed his appreciation to the people and government of Senegal for their support throughout the deployment.

"The Senegalese Military and the High Airport Authority continue to be essential partners in this effort, and their contributions have been fundamental to the success of the mission in every way," he said.

For many of the deployed Kentucky Air Guardsmen, Operation United Assistance has been one of the high points of their careers.

"It's really satisfying to know that all the cargo we sent to Liberia is going to help people who need it," said Capt. Matt Skeens, the 123rd's logistics readiness officer. "It's been a lot of hard work, but



Navy Lt. Cmdr. Joseph Fitzpatrick (left), a surgeon assigned to a Forward Resuscitative Surgical System unit, and Air Force Staff Sgt. Tony Hayden, an aerial porter from the Kentucky Air National Guard's 123rd Contingency Response Group, secure cases of red blood cells and frozen plasma to a C-130 cargo pallet at Léopold Sédar Senghor International Airport in Dakar, Senegal, Oct. 10, 2014.

it's absolutely worth it when you know you're making a direct impact on people's lives. This mission has been one of the most rewarding things I've ever done."

Master Sgt. Charles Wilding agreed.

"I think the entire CRG has done astounding things here," said Wilding, non-commissioned officer in charge of aerial port operations. "Working with all the different entities, including the U.S. Army and the Defense Logistics Agency, has been a real pleasure. Everyone put forth maximum effort, and we all came together like a big family to deliver a lot of support downrange.

"This deployment has been, without a doubt, one of the best of my career. I will look back on this 20 years from now and be able tell people, 'We were there — we helped make a positive difference in the world.'" 🦋



# Just in time for



An Airman with the 123rd Contingency Response Group greets his family after arriving home in Louisville, Ky., Nov. 20, from their deployment to West Africa.

**Story by Lt. Col. Kirk Hilbrecht**  
*Kentucky National Guard Public Affairs*

Approximately 40 Airmen from the Kentucky Air National Guard returned home in the early morning hours of Nov. 19 from a deployment to West Africa. The Guardsmen were based in Senegal where the 123rd Contingency Response Group established a cargo-processing hub in support of Operation United Assistance, the international effort to battle Ebola.

The arrival was the first of several flights scheduled to bring the unit home. Additional members are expected arrive before the weekend.

Senior Airman Jeff Hall worked as a member of the security forces with the said the “fulfilling” experience ranks near the

top in his seven-year career.

“It was my first time able to assist with a humanitarian mission, and to be a part of it was exciting and I am proud to be a part of it,” said Hall.

Even with the excitement of a gratifying mission, the worry of working near Ebola areas reached all the back home. Hall said those worries were absent overseas.

“We didn’t really think about it much. We were so busy. We knew we were in an Ebola-free zone and we have really good officers that kept us on track with our health. We looked out for each other and never felt there was a threat.”

Master Sgt. Matthew Hourigan served as the maintenance



# r the holidays

## Kentucky Airmen return from West Africa



Photo by Staff Sgt. Scott Raymond/KYARNG

Master Sgt. Matthew Hourigan (left) and Tech Sgt. Jacob Harper greet their children in Louisville, Ky., after the Airmen returned from a deployment, Nov. 19, 2014.

Africa.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Scott Raymond/KYARNG

supervisor for the unit taking care of the numerous aircraft arriving with humanitarian aid in Senegal.

"This mission gave you, at the end of the day, when you put your head on the pillow, a feeling that what you are doing is providing a difference for someone else,"

With no concerns over their health, Hourigan and his wife, Rachel said its simply time to enjoy the holidays and move on like today is no different than yesterday.

"Its just a normal day, we get to start our Thanksgiving plans," he said. "We're going back to life and feeling a little bit more fulfillment about what we did over there."

The 123rd Contingency Response Group is the only unit of its kind in the Air National Guard. Conceived as an "airbase

in a box," the group acts as an early responder in the event of contingency operations worldwide. Several members of the CRG were involved in previous humanitarian missions, to include the Haiti earthquake aid in 2010. Unit members represent a broad spectrum of specialties, including airfield security, ramp and cargo operations, aircraft maintenance, and command and control.

"I am so proud of the incredible job our Kentucky Guardsmen executed overseas," said Maj. Gen. Edward W. Tonini, adjutant general for Kentucky. "Our Kentucky Air Guard members continue to show the world how we stand ready to serve and how we are responsive global neighbors who make such an important contribution to this crisis."

■ **More**, Read full story at [KentuckyGuard.com](http://KentuckyGuard.com)



# MEMORABLE PROGRESS



Construction workers set a statue of Daniel Boone into place at the Kentucky National Guard Memorial in Frankfort, Ky., Nov. 18, 2014. A decade-long process, the memorial is expected to be dedicated in the spring of 2015.

## Story and Photos by Sgt. Cody Stagner

133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Construction on the Kentucky National Guard's Memorial continues at Boone National Guard Center in Frankfort, Kentucky. The project remains on schedule for its Memorial Day dedication ceremony.

Visitors of BNGC and local passersby of the site will notice big changes from the past few months.

"Work will continued through the holidays," said John Trowbridge, chairman for the memorial. "We broke for Christmas and, weather permitting, we plan to finish it this Spring."

Trowbridge is also the original visionary of this project.

"I thought of this memorial in 2004," said Trowbridge, former command historian for the Kentucky Guard. "It was right after our first casualty that year and I wanted to come up with a way to help our state remember those killed or captured."

Trowbridge's early passion for our Soldiers inspired teams of individuals. Finally, after a solid decade of planning and

fundraising, his dream has become a reality.

A bronze statue of Daniel Boone, sculpted by Wyatt Gragg of Prospect, Kentucky, now acts as a centerpiece, in front of the Kentucky-shaped, granite memorial, recently shipped in from South Africa.

The concrete stairs leading up to the memorial are the most recent ongoing addition, while the granite tile flooring surrounding the two centerpieces is on the agenda for this Spring.

As a reminder, Kentucky National Guard Memorial is still planning its dedication ceremony for Memorial Day at Boone National Guard Center. Members of the public and family and friends of our fallen heroes are invited. 🇺🇸

For information, visit: [www.kyngmemorial.com](http://www.kyngmemorial.com).



# Humana, Churchill Downs, Kentucky Guard support Survivor's Day at the Races

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Scott Raymond

Kentucky National Guard Public Affairs

For the fifth year in a row, Churchill Downs was the setting for the largest event in the Nation honoring surviving family members of fallen military Service members. More than 800 brothers, sisters, moms and dads of those lost since 9/11 were treated to a day at the races at the storied horse racing track in Louisville, Nov. 2.

Heather French Henry, Commissioner of the Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs speaks to surviving families of fallen U.S. Service members at Churchill Downs in Louisville, Ky., Nov. 4, 2014.



Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs Commissioner Heather French Henry joined Adjutant General, Maj. Gen. Edward W. Tonini in recognizing the family members during an afternoon luncheon in Millionaires' Row. Henry told the families that remembering the fallen is one of the most patriotic missions for Americans, and days like this one are about legacies that we will not forget.

"It's so important for us to have you here today," said the former Miss America. "Not only for us to say thanks for your sacrifice and service, but by having you here today to be able to talk with other families, see each other and share stories is how the legacy of your loved ones live on."

Family members from 10 states, Alabama, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Missouri, Ohio, Tennessee, West Virginia and Kentucky were present for the emotional day, full of camaraderie


and friendship. Churchill Downs partnered with Humana Government Services and the Kentucky National Guard to support Survivors Outreach Services (SOS) in the unique event.

A highlight of the afternoon was a race named in honor of the Survivors of Fallen Military Heroes. Joann Lake from Elizabethtown, Kentucky was among the Gold Star Family members chosen to present the trophy to the winning jockey and owners in the winners' circle. Lake's son, Navy Chief Warrant Officer Jonathan Gibson was lost over the Red Sea last September. The day at the races was Lake's first Survivors Outreach event.

"I'm really blessed to be surrounded by so many heroes' families, moms, dads, wives and children," she said. "Those families gave the ultimate sacrifice for our great nation. Its just amazing to see so many people showing their support."

Becky Lambert was also in the winners' circle and attending the day for the first time. She lost her son, Marine Sgt. Jonathan Lambert in Iraq in 2003 and has found strong support through SOS.

"SOS helps us to get the benefits and the service available for us and that the families are not forgotten, our loved ones are not forgotten," said the New Site, Mississippi native.

"This is a gathering of families that have the same bond, that have gone through the same situation we have. And we look at each other, they know what you're feeling in your heart where that place is missing." Some people don't understand your feelings, here we interact, make friends and build relationships to support one another." 



Surviving family members of fallen U.S. Service members are joined by Heather French Henry, Commissioner of Kentucky's Department of Veterans Affairs, the Vice Chief of the National Guard, Lt. Gen. Joseph L. Lengyel and Adjutant General, Maj. Gen. Edward W. Tonini in the winners' circle at Churchill Downs in Louisville, Ky., Nov. 4, to present a trophy to the winning jockey of a race named in honor of the fallen.

■ **More.** Read full story at [KentuckyGuard.com](http://KentuckyGuard.com)



# Kentucky National Guard honors newest officers, warrant officers

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Scott Raymond

*Kentucky National Guard Public Affairs*

Eyes of the Kentucky National Guard were focused on 30 individual Soldiers who became the Commonwealth's newest commissioned officers during a ceremony on the Capitol steps, Sept. 27.

After completing a rigorous 18-month training program with Kentucky's Officer Candidate School, including a final phase at Fort McClellan, Alabama, 16 Guardsmen earned their second lieutenant gold bars and swore in as commissioned officers.

The remaining 14 Soldiers were recognized after their recent graduation as warrant officers. Kentucky's Warrant Officer Candidate School is a five-month program that has produced technical experts for the Kentucky Guard since 2011.

Kentucky's newest officers' experience spans from decades of enlisted service to just a few short months wearing the uniform. Warrant Officer Stephen Plouvier from Hodgenville, Kentucky entered the military in 1985, while Fort Thomas, Kentucky-native, 2nd Lt. Sarah Powell enlisted in 2012.


Regardless of their time in service, the new leaders said their role leading Citizen-Soldiers of the Commonwealth is a challenge they are up to accepting.

"This was the next step for me to continue serving, I enjoy serving the Kentucky Guard," said Plouvier, who felt he had progressed as far as he could as an enlisted Soldier. "Becoming a warrant was the best choice for my personal growth, to become that technical expert and to mentor young Soldiers and non-commissioned officers."

For others such as Powell, personal growth started with raising her hand to join the Kentucky National Guard, and the commitment she made herself to get to where she is today.

"I worked really hard to prove that I could overcome obstacles and to challenge myself to become a better person," said Powell.

Maj. Gen. Edward W. Tonini, adjutant general for Kentucky presided over the event held at the state capitol. Tonini congratulated the Soldiers and expressed his pride in which he called the "ready, reliable and accessible leaders of the future."

"My charge to you is to lead our Guard forces with the resilience, the patience, the passion and the fervor you have shown to get you to this point," said Tonini. "You are ready, now do it. You are our future." 



Second Lt. Dakota Lawler is pinned by his fiancée, Ashley Holley and grandfather, Neil Lawler during a commissioning ceremony in Frankfort, Ky., Sept. 27, 2014. Lawler and 15 other Soldiers were commissioned as the newest officers in the Kentucky Guard, while 14 other Guardsmen were honored as the newest warrant officers.



Officer Candidate School  
Class 56-14



Warrant Officer Candidate School  
Class 14-001





2nd Lt. Sarah Powell is given the oath of office by Col. Hal Lamberton during a commissioning ceremony for the newest officers in the Kentucky Guard. Powell enlisted into the Guard in 2012 and will become a platoon leader with the 940th Military Police Company.



# Kentucky and Georgia Air Guard drop 82nd Airborne for NATO exercise



Aircrews from the Kentucky and Georgia Air National Guard pose with their C-130 aircraft and paratroopers assigned to the U.S. Army's 82nd Airborne Division, 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team and the 5th Quartermaster Company, as well as paratroopers from the Netherlands, Britain and Poland, at Eindhoven Air Base, Netherlands, Sept. 18, 2014.

U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Mary S. Katzenberger

**Story by Master Sgt. Charles Delano**  
*165th Airlift Wing Public Affairs*

Airmen from the Georgia Air National Guard's 165th Airlift Wing and the Kentucky Air National Guard's 123rd Airlift Wing transported 82nd Airborne Division paratroopers to an airfield outside of Oslo, Norway, Sept. 23 as part of Operation Noble Ledger.

A total of three C-130H Hercules aircraft airdropped 110 paratroopers and performed an engine-running offload of an additional 20 Soldiers to a drop zone in Rena, Norway.

Noble Ledger tested the cohesiveness of about 6,500 U.S., German, Norwegian, Danish and Dutch soldiers in the field. The multinational cadre is part of a larger 13,000 member NATO Response Force that conducts humanitarian and armed conflict missions throughout NATO countries.

The 82nd Airborne's mission for the exercise consisted of seizing an enemy-occupied zone and holding it for 24 hours until reinforcements arrived, according to Air Force Lt. Col.

Dave Flynn, a pilot with the Kentucky Air Guard.

"The airlift portion of Noble Ledger is important because it provides the Army with realistic logistics for delivering Soldiers to combat zones," Flynn said. "It reflects the synergy the Air National Guard provides to the Total Force."

For the Airmen of the 165th and 123rd Airlift Wings, the exercise provided another opportunity to airdrop paratroopers into an unfamiliar drop zone. The aircrews conducted previous airdrops in September as part of a re-enactment of the World War II paratrooper assault known as Operation Market Garden.

"I am thrilled to have participated in the two airdrops in the Netherlands which honored the World War II paratroopers and also for providing air support for this important NATO exercise," said Air Force Capt. Alan Ratliff, a Georgia Air Guard pilot. 🇺🇸



# Louisville, Kentucky Guard partner to commemorate Veterans Day

Story by Staff Sgt. Scott Raymond  
*Kentucky National Guard Public Affairs*

In honor of Veterans Day, the Kentucky National Guard partnered with the city of Louisville, Mayor Greg Fischer and local Veterans organizations to support a patriotic parade and ceremony, Nov. 11, as part of the mayor's Week of Valor. Fischer designated the week "to honor and celebrate the contributions of active-duty military, veterans and their families." The series of events will focus on facilitating Veterans' transition back to civilian life through resources for employment and healthcare.



*Photo by Staff Sgt. Scott Raymond/KYARNG*

Children from Price Elementary School in Louisville, Ky., wave American flags during a Veterans Day parade in the city, Nov. 11, 2014.

At the eleventh minute of the eleventh hour Tuesday morning, in tribute to Armistice Day in 1918, the parade began to march through the streets. Hundreds of school children waved American flags along a windy Main Street downtown, as scores of spectators welcomed the parade of Veterans and military Service members.

Kentucky's Adjutant General, Maj. Gen. Edward W. Tonini joined Fischer and Heather French Henry, Commissioner of the Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs at the end of the parade route. Tonini contributed the success of the Kentucky Guard today to the Veterans of the community and the Commonwealth.

"The legacy of our veterans, of profound sacrifice and dedication, is what made our modern military the powerhouse it is today," said Tonini. "We owe so much to our Veterans. That tradition of dedication, sacrifice and excellence lives on in the Kentucky National Guard."

Henry assisted Tonini in recognizing several recent accomplishments of the Kentucky Guard, including the 1st Battalion, 149th Infantry's

winning the Kerwin Award, awarded to the battalion with the highest level of readiness in its respective component. The infantry battalion also won the Eisenhower Trophy for the Army National Guard unit in each state rated the most outstanding during the training year.

The 307th Component Repair Company was recognized for winning the Army Award for Maintenance Excellence and the 2nd Battalion, 75th Recruiting and Retention for meeting its recruiting numbers for an eleventh straight year.

Lastly, the 123rd Airlift Wing of the Kentucky Air Guard received the Metcalf award, bestowed annually by the National Guard Bureau,

recognizing the airlift or air refueling unit that demonstrates the highest standards of mission accomplishment. The 123rd also was commended for winning its 16th Air Force Outstanding Award. Making them the most decorated airlift unit in the entire Air National Guard.

The accomplishments even brought Fischer to describe the Kentucky Guard as the "best of the best."

■ **More**, Read full story at [KentuckyGuard.com](http://KentuckyGuard.com)



*Photo by Olivia Burton/KYNG*

Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer presents Kentucky's Adjutant General, Maj. Gen. Edward W. Tonini with a plaque honoring the Kentucky National Guard during a Veterans Day ceremony in Louisville, Ky., Nov. 11, 2014.



*Photo by Staff Sgt. Scott Raymond/KYARNG*

Veterans, Service members and the city of Louisville came together to commemorate Veterans Day with a parade and ceremony in Louisville, Ky., Nov. 11, 2014.



# Resiliency training improved my life

Story and photo by Sgt. 1st Class Gina Vaile-Nelson

133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

When Sgt. Gary Forsyth II was given orders to attend the Kentucky National Guard's Resilience Trainer Assistant course at the Central Kentucky Riding for Hope's barn in Lexington, Kentucky, he was nervous. The thought of working with an animal seven times his size was intimidating. Not to mention, he wasn't thrilled about talking about his feelings and he already had his mind made up, he was resilient enough.

"I don't usually spend time around horses," Forsyth said. "I was put off by it at first. I know now that I would not have liked the training any other way."

The week-long course was developed by the University of Pennsylvania and adopted by the Army Resilience Program.



Sgt. Gary Forsyth II, a carpentry masonry sergeant assigned to the 149th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, gets to know Sargent, an American Draft Horse during Resilience Trainer Assistant training Aug. 13, at the Central Kentucky Riding for Hope barn in Lexington, Kentucky.

"Being around the horses helped me personally relax and get comfortable with the training principles," he said, "and with the horses in general."

For Forsyth, getting comfortable has been somewhat of a struggle since his return from Afghanistan in December 2013. While deployed, he was a carpentry masonry sergeant with the 149th Vertical Construction Company.

"When I returned to my employer after my deployment to Afghanistan, I was assigned to a different division with a new product line," he said.

Forsyth said it was hard to stay on task or even stay positive about the move.

"My previous position was so fulfilling, I was disappointed with the new assignment," he said.

Like people do, every day, Forsyth began focusing on the negative. Things won't change. They moved me 'cause I was gone too long. They don't want me here. I don't work hard enough for them. I'm never going to be happy with my work and career. To top it all off, I go home to Gena and the kids and I can't fix their problems either. It's hard watching your child struggle with Autism. I can't bring this stuff home too. Life's not fair. It's really got something out for me.

Forsyth was deep in thinking traps, he was catastrophizing.

This toxic spiral is what senior Army leaders hope to combat with Soldiers across the ranks. For decades, physicians have concluded that combat is a major stressor, but daily life struggles also wear on the mind, which is the Soldier's most important feature. This toxic spiral is exactly what the Kentucky Guard's RTA program helps attendees and leaders recognize.

No leader is more of a champion for the RTA than Capt. Rob Cooley, Kentucky's program coordinator.

"This training has the potential to be life changing," Cooley said.

"I've had the pleasure of reading more than 600 end of course surveys," he said. "I lost count of how many Soldiers have added comments to the effect of: 'this course has made my life better.'"

"My goal is to get this training to as many of our Soldiers, Airmen and Family members as possible," Cooley said.

The training, according to Forsyth, isn't about being happy and staying happy. It's unrealistic, he said, to think that an individual has no problems that weigh on their mind.

"I recognized the thinking traps and patterns that promoted the negative attitude I had during work," he said.

"It helps you recognize activating events, what they are and how they affect you," he said. 🐾

■ **More**, Read full story at [KentuckyGuard.com](http://KentuckyGuard.com)



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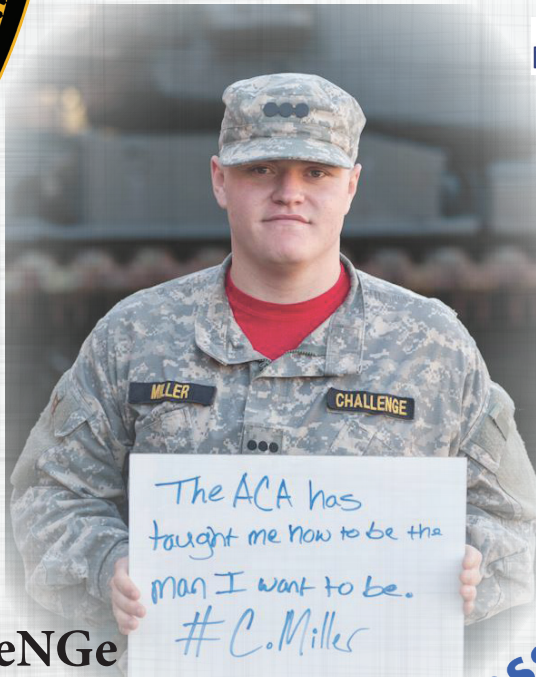
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## SUPPORTING SECOND CHANCES SINCE 1999



# Collaborating for children's cheer



Sgt. 1st Class Paul Hunt and representatives from both the Kentucky National Guard's Family Assistance Center and the Home Builders Association of Lexington work together to load a box truck full of toy donations in Lexington, Ky, Dec. 5, 2014.



Child and Youth Coordinators, Cindy Culver and Linda Jones, collect presents donated by representatives from the Home Builders Association of Lexington, Lexington, Ky. Dec. 5, 2014.

**Story and photos by Sgt. Brandy Mort**  
**133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment**

The third annual collaboration for Operation Military Cheer kicked off Dec. 5, 2014 as members of the Home Builders Association of Lexington came together and handed off donated Christmas presents to members of the Kentucky National Guard's Family Assistance Center in Lexington, Kentucky.

Lead Child and Youth Coordinator, Cindy Culver, helps facilitate most family programs throughout the year. Up to this point, she and the rest of the FAC have prepared mostly by collecting information for children and families for the holiday season.

"Today is when we really start kicking off Operation Military Cheer 2014," said Culver. "After we receive the donations, we can get to work on providing gifts for tons of military families."

The HBA filled a box truck with so many donations, that some gifts carried over into the back of another truck. One gift in particular, was greatly appreciated by Cindy.

"Every year we have special requests from children," said Cindy. "This year a child asked Santa for a Power Wheels toy and, if he got it, he promised to share with his brother. Well the Home Builders Association, without hesitation, granted that child his wish."

Operation Military Cheer means something different to another Family Assistance Center associate, Child and Youth Coordinator, Linda Jones. For her, Operation Military Cheer is the perfect time to give back to those who have sacrificed for her and others around her.

The representatives from the HBA

were very proud to offer the donations. President of Home Builder Cares, and a member of the HBA board, James Monroe, brought his family to include his wife Martha and his daughter Mary.

"This is a very important relationship we have with the members of the Kentucky National Guard," said James. "I'm happy that my family and I can help our Soldiers."

Cindy hopes this will be another successful year and is confident in the success of Operation Military Cheer for the years to come.

"At the end of all this," said Culver. "I have a peace in my heart when I can sit down and eat with my family on Christmas, and know that other families are doing the same thing, with our help. The smiles on their faces mean much more to me than anything else." 🦋



# Security team hones new skills for safety

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Scott Raymond  
*Kentucky National Guard Public Affairs*

The Kentucky National Guard's hub of operations at the Boone National Guard Center (BNGC) took a positive step toward safety as the Security Force, conducted their mandatory annual training, Oct. 29-30 in Frankfort, Ky. Local agencies and organizations from all around the state provided presentations, demonstrations, and exercises in all fields relating to security services.

"To combat or possibly prevent tragedies from happening here, our security force trains and trains hard with certified school instructors on all areas of expertise on the subject matter to be the very best force possible for the mission we serve," said Larry McCord, chief of security.

McCord said his team received a wealth of knowledge, training and input from security experts. The two-day schedule of instruction included visits from the Kentucky Intelligence Fusion Center, a division of the Department of Homeland Security, the Frankfort Police Department (FPD) and the Kentucky Guard's Antiterrorism office.

After the first day of information, the team put it all into action in various areas of active shooter training techniques on day two. Frankfort Police officers trained to teach various swat tactics and techniques in active shooter responses facilitated the exercises.

Capt. Walter Martin with the FPD commended BNGC's security team, calling the interaction an advantage of multi-agency cohesion.

"This is a great group of folks, fast learners and very enthusiastic," said Martin. "The more trainees we get for these techniques, the better interoperability we will have throughout the state."

McCord admits his team doesn't get the opportunity to train as much as he may like, but the quality training, positive response from his officers and gratifying comments from his peers is testament of a job well done.

"To earn the respect of other agencies through training and field trials is the highest compliment this force can receive for the time, dedication, and service put into accomplishing our daily mission." 🦋



A member of the Boone National Guard Center Security Force qualifies with her sidearm during a training exercise with the Frankfort Police Department on security measures in Frankfort, Ky.,



Members of the Boone National Guard Center Security Force train with the Frankfort Police Department on security measures in Frankfort, Ky., Oct. 30, 2014.



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