

FIND US ON SORAL MEDIA ASHINGTON MILITARY DEPARTMENT EVERGREEN MAGAZINE SPRING / SUMMER 2025 Vol. 10, ISSUE 3 Washington Military Department Camp Murray, WA 98430 253-512-8989 - miliwa.gov COMMANDER IN CHIEF Washington State Governor AND LISTEN TO THE PODGAST The Honorable Bob Ferguson THE ADJUTANT GENERAL Maj. Gen. Gent Welsh COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR Karina Shagren STATE PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER Joseph Siemandel CONTRIBUTORS Kimberly Burke **PeterChang** Nicholas Cloward Ryan Dunn Steven Friederich Sarah Foster Tyler Meister Kayleigh Phillips Tristian Salsibury Francine St. Laurent Adeline Witherspoon SQUADRON BIDS FAREWELL CONTROL OF A STATE OF **FEATURES COUNTER DRUG SUMMIT** Washington Military Department takes part in धोरहर प्रतिप्रेव रिवीरिक Gounterdrug Leadership Summit ROADMAP FOR SUCCESS
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Excellence Award







WASHINGTON MILITARY DEPARTMENT TAKES PART IN FIRST TRIBAL POLICE COUNTERDRUG LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

The Washington National Guard Counterdrug Program (CDP), in conjunction with the Western Regional Counterdrug Training Center (WRCTC), hosted the inaugural Tribal Police Counterdrug Leadership Summit on March 12, 2025, at Camp Murray.

Representatives from over 25 tribal police departments attended the summit, marking the first time in nearly two decades that these departments had come together as a group, providing a much-needed opportunity for networking and the exchange of vital information and strategies.

The summit was convened in direct response to requests from Tribal Police Departments (TPD) and supporting state and federal law enforcement agencies, with sponsorship from the Washington State Tribal Opioid/Fentanyl Task Force, to address the devastating impact of the current drug epidemic on Tribal communities.

According to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration Seattle Field Division (SFD) website, "fentanyl is the leading cause of death for Americans between the ages of 18 and 45." Data presented by the SFD at the summit showed that the overdose fatality rate of American Indians was disproportionately higher than that of other races/ethnicities, citing 168 deaths per 100,000 total population in 2023 and 138 deaths in 2024, and that "tribes are a specific target for distributors and are therefore more vulnerable."

The summit built upon the statewide effort to combat opioid use disorder by prioritizing Washington National Guard resources, in partnership with state and federal agencies, to support tribal communities in accordance with the Governor's priorities.

"Your attendance today is a testament to your commitment to really get after the synthetic opioid fight in your communities," said Air National Guard Col. Brian Bodenman, Washington National Guard Counterdrug Coordinator, while addressing the Tribal police representatives. "This day is about you, for all of you to walk away from here with additional resources, capabilities, and tools in your tool kit that you didn't have before you walked in this morning."

One of the summit's leading goals was to inform Tribal Police Departments about the support available to them from the Washington National Guard and the participating state and federal agencies to further Tribal police efforts to respond to the opioid crisis.

"We have multiple counter-drug lines of effort within Washington state," said Bodenman. "We exist to disrupt, degrade, and defeat drug trafficking organizations through our support of supported agencies. We work in the background. We enable you and we partner with a variety of safe local federal agencies."

Much of the Washington National Guard's support to Tribal public safety and public health agencies is through the free training offered by the WRCTC and through CDP's support of multijurisdictional drug task forces in partnership with the Northwest High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (NWHIDTA) program. The Washington National Guard also supports state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies in combating the fentanyl crisis through the 10th Civil Support Team.

Leadership from key federal agencies and programs, including the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the Northwest High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (NWHIDTA), Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI), and Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) provided valuable briefings outlining the resources and support they can provide to TPDs. Representatives from the Western District of Washington U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO), Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Washington State Patrol (WSP), and the Washington Attorney General's Office were also in attendance.

- Story and Photos by Adeline Witherspoon

UNREINFORCED MASONRY BUILDING SURVEY UNDERWAY IN TACOMA

Standing outside an alley near Commerce Street in Tacoma, a small group of yellow-vested workers squint up and inspect bricks and architectural shapes. Their job – to determine whether a building would be considered an unreinforced masonry building (URM) and thus be more susceptible to future earthquake damage.

Derek Ohlgren, a licensed engineer, stood next to Brian Terbush, the earthquake and volcano program manager for Washington Emergency Management Division (WA EMD). Ohlgren pointed at some veneer hiding bricks, creating a facade.

"This is almost detective work, sometimes," Ohlgren said. "But the more we do this inventory work, the more information we will get."

And, information, in this case, has the potential to save lives, says Maximilian Dixon, the hazards and outreach program supervisor at WA EMD.

"Today is a day for local champions," Dixon told a few dozen volunteers, who sat through a training session last fall before starting survey work. "They don't get enough credit. ... This is going to take a long time and today is a great step forward. This is about collecting this data and putting it in a usable database so we can use it to make risk reduction decisions and ask for funding to eventually survey all of Washington's unreinforced masonry building and make our state safer by getting them retrofitted."

Unreinforced masonry buildings have the most potential to experience damage or collapse during an earthquake. These are old buildings made up of things like brick, stone and concrete. They are typically built prior to 1958, before modern building codes, and have masonry walls with wood-frame floors and roofs.

Tacoma's URM survey kicked off on Nov. 15, 2024, and brought together more than 60 city staff members from Tacoma, Seattle, Bainbridge Island, the state and others, where they surveyed almost 300 buildings. Tacoma has continued its survey efforts since then and has now surveyed more than 800 suspected URM buildings.

This data will eventually be maintained and accessible in an unreinforced masonry buildings user portal, developed and housed by the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP). This portal will help communities prioritize emergency preparedness actions, emergency response resources and access risk mitigation funding.

The city of Tacoma is just the second city to do a survey like this, following efforts from the city of Everett in 2023.

In partnership with the DAHP, Cascadia Region Earthquake Workgroup (CREW), and WA EMD, the city of Tacoma's effort was a crucial step in Washington's broader earthquake risk reduction goals, according to Riley McNabb, earthquake program outreach coordinator with WA EMD working on the inventory.

Back in 2018, the state Legislature provided some funding for the state to conduct a survey of unreinforced masonry buildings (Opens in a new window). The result looked at 15,200 buildings statewide and found about





4,300 were URM or suspected URM buildings and another 2,200 were unknown. McNabb says this study was just the start of this larger effort that has continued since then with jurisdictions taking the lead in reviewing their own buildings to see what buildings in their communities might be URMs.

Teams of three spent a full day in Tacoma back in November doing this detective work.

One such team was made up of Ohlgren, Terbush and Ileana Ortega, permit specialist for the city of Tacoma.

Ohlgren, URM program lead engineer of the Seattle Department of Construction & Inspections, said he was happy to lend some time to help Tacoma.

Walking down streets and alleys, there's remnants of old advertising signs interlaced among bricks on a nearby building and graffiti and street art elsewhere. One artwork near the Pantages Theater shows a shadowy figure with the word "FEAR" on it.

Terbush pointed to a building nearby constructed with hollowed clay tile – not brick, but another type of unreinforced masonry. Next to it is an older brick building, definitely unreinforced masonry. "It's not easy to tell what every building is made of," Terbush said. "We need to walk around each building before we can tell for sure."

There were also signs of seismic retrofits on some buildings with parapets – which without bracing would be more in danger of falling off from earthquake ground shaking and onto the sidewalk and anyone who happens to be passing by.

Teams took pictures of buildings and then added descriptions into a web-based app that the city used for gathering information.

Tacoma's survey began with the city's principal plans examiner and chair of the Washington Association of Building officials' (WABO) emergency management committee, Quyen Thai, who learned more about the URM survey process by volunteering to help review the data gathered in the initial Everett pilot survey in April 2023. Tacoma's survey is a continuation of the partnership between WABO and WA EMD.

He reached out to Washington's multi-agency state URM Workgroup, led by WA EMD, and brought his team together to start coordinating their own survey.

Chris Seaman, the commercial building review supervisor for the city of Tacoma, thanked all the jurisdictions for helping each other.

"We're definitely in this together," he said.

Pascal Schuback, the executive director for CREW, says he is creating a guidebook to help the hundreds of jurisdictions who don't have a deep bench on their planning departments understand and plan what a URM inventory would look like in their community.

"We can take the data and nationally look at it, look at the economic loss we might have and that, in turn, helps fund programs like what the state of Washington has done," he said.

- Story by Steven Friederich

ALUMNI RETURN TO CELEBRATE YOUTH ACADEMY





VETERANS UNITED

Honor flight ceremony connect Washington Guardsmen with veterans

As a wave of applause ripples through Concourse C at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, a member of the Transportation Security Administration Honor Guard makes an announcement:

"Veterans coming through—join us in a round of applause."

This heartfelt scene played out on the morning of April 12, 2025, as Guardsmen from the 122nd Theater Public Affairs Support Element (TPASE) joined fellow members of the Washington National Guard, U.S. Navy Sailors, and Coast Guard members in support of the year's first Puget Sound Honor Flight.

"There is nothing more profound than hearing the stories of veterans who served during some of the most impactful eras in our history," said Capt. Amber Cetinel, public affairs team leader with the 122nd TPASE and recruiter for the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs.

Part of the national Honor Flight Network, Puget Sound Honor Flight is a 501(c)(3) all-volunteer organization that pays tribute to veterans by flying them to the nation's capital to visit the monuments erected in their honor. Since 2023, the Washington National Guard has routinely supported the honor flights at SeaTac, taking a moment to salute those who served before them. 122nd TPASE and Washington State Guard members assisted throughout the morning by helping Honor Flight volunteers check in veterans, tag and load baggage, escort veterans through security, spend time with them at the gate, and see them off as they boarded the plane.

"Sometimes, all they need is someone to listen," Cetinel said. "There is no better way to honor our country's veterans than to hear their stories. It was truly a privilege to share this special moment with them as they prepared for their journey to Washington, D.C. Saluting the Honor Flight as the plane pushed back from the gate is a core memory I'll never forget."

Capt. Sarah Taylor, Executive Officer for the 122nd TPASE and a records manager for the Enumclaw Police Department, echoed Cetinel's sentiment.

"Taking part in the Honor Flight was one of the most rewarding and humbling experiences of my career," Taylor said. "Meeting veterans from past wars and hearing their stories is a tremendous honor. Their legacy is an essential part of our history. The entire experience stirred deep emotions and reinvigorated my own sense of duty and responsibility in the military." - Story by Joseph Siemandel, Photos by Ryan Dunn and Tristian Salsibury





When Disaster Strikes... 141st Medical Group Holds Two-Day Collective Training Event



higher level of care was delayed or impossible due to limited resources and

continual threats by enemy combatants.

Airmen and strengthen the ACE concept. The 141st MDG will be ready for

the future fight!"



The 141st Medical Group, Detachment 1 is a group of airmen that also fall under the 10th Homeland Response Force, FEMA Region X. Its units are located across the state of Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Alaska. Washington elements are stationed in Seattle, Tacoma, Anacortes, Port Orchard, Vancouver, Yakima, Grandview and Spokane. Response times are varied, with typical deployment between 6-12 hours of notification. According to the homeland response force website, National Guard mobilization methods are improving as they evolve and expand relating to Homeland Defense. The entire enterprise of response is critical to the nation's readiness as we enter the 21st century's second decade and prepare for unknown but certainly challenging horizons.

Multiple groups participated to kick off the training including airmen from the 92nd Medical Group to help facilitate training with the high-fidelity mannequin, 92nd Maintenance Squadron and 141st Force Support Squadron airmen who helped act as patients in rescue scenarios, Fatality Search and Recovery, 141st and 92nd SFS providing tactical expertise and 242nd Combat Communications Squadron for help with radio communication. - Story by Kayleigh Phillips, Photos by Kayleigh Phillips and Michael Stewart

FIFA CLUB WORLD CUP COMING TO SEATTLE; EMD INVOLVED IN PLANNING EFFORTS

- Story by Sarah Foster



Washington state is about to become the epicenter of the sport of soccer, as the city of Seattle and surrounding communities prepare to host and support two of the biggest events in the sport – the 2025 FIFA Club World Cup and the groundbreaking 2026 FIFA World Cup.

Behind the scenes, the Washington Emergency Management Division (EMD) is already gearing up for the logistical and security challenges of these two large-scale events.

"The coordination for something of this scale starts years in advance," said Robert Ezelle, director of EMD. "You have to prepare for every scenario, so it's a heavy lift for emergency managers and first responders. It's already all hands on deck."

The 2026 FIFA World Cup is the first tournament jointly hosted by three countries (United States, Canada, and Mexico) and the first to feature an expanded format of 48 teams competing in 104 matches over 39 days in June and July. Organizers expect as many as 750,000 visitors to the Pacific Northwest, more people than the current population of Seattle.

"The World Cup is one of those major sporting events that has the power to bring people together. Effective preparedness requires an all-hazards approach," said John Diaz, Seattle's chief of security for 2026 World Cup. "That includes close coordination and planning with our state, local, tribal, and federal partners to address potential risks from every angle."

Seattle's Lumen Field will host six games during the 2025 FIFA Club World Cup, including matches featuring the Seattle Sounders FC, providing an opportunity for multiple agencies and organizations to test their readiness before the larger 2026 World Cup. With large crowds, heightened media attention, and extensive logistical challenges and emergency management demands, EMD is already working with partners at every level to ensure the safety and success of these global events.

"The tournaments will bring unique challenges that our state doesn't often need to address," said Casey Broom, EMD's preparedness section manager. "We're currently building a unified, scalable approach to address everything from security threats to transportation challenges, to public health emergencies. Anything is possible when we have that many people visiting our state at a single time – and we need to be prepared for it all."

In addition to planning with local and federal partners, as well as other World Cup host cities, EMD has been hosting training and exercises since mid-2024. These range from tabletop exercises focused on mass casualty incidents to real-world simulations of large-scale event security.

"Every detail matters and we're working tirelessly with our partners to ensure these massive events go off without a hitch," said Ezelle. "We're proud to partner with our emergency management colleagues to help showcase the Pacific Northwest and be ready to deliver a safe experience for everyone involved."

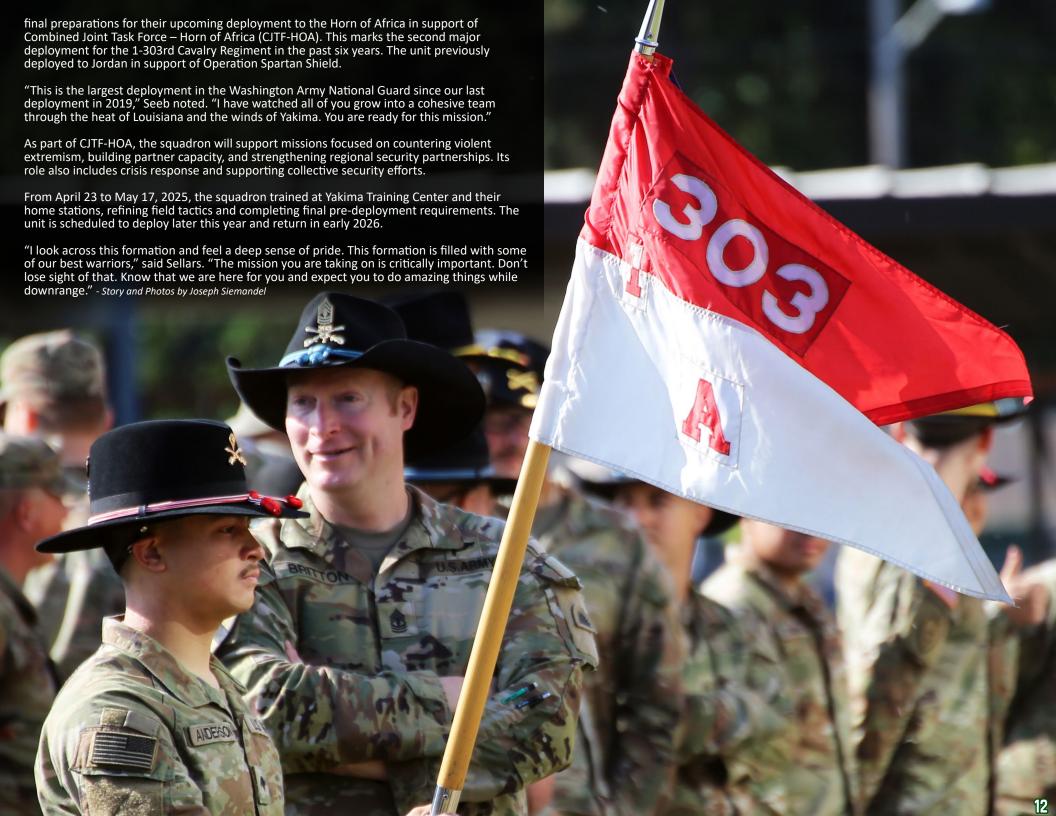
For more information, join the 'World Cup 2026 - General Updates' monthly newsletter mailing list at https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/WAMILITARY/subscriber/new.











RESPECTAND FRIENDSHIP Guardsmen spends time with Royal Thai Air Force during 88th anniversay celebration



The Washington National Guard and the Royal Thai Air Force (RTAF) further deepened their longstanding partnership through the State Partnership Program during the RTAF's 88th anniversary celebration at Don Muang Air Force Base on March 7-8, 2025.

The event marked the RTAF's first major airshow since 2012, an impressive feat accomplished with just three months of planning. Among the distinguished attendees was Maj. Gen. Gent Welsh, the adjutant general for the Washington National Guard, who represented the United States Air Force and the National Guard's State Partnership Program at the event.

"The RTAF flawlessly executed its first major airshow in more than a decade," said Welsh. "We participated with two forward-deployed Eielson-based F-35s from Kadena Air Force Base, the Air Combat Command Demo Team from Hill Air Force Base—flown by Maj. Melanie 'MACH' Kluesner—and a Washington Air National Guard KC-135 featuring our special '100 Years of Flight' tail flash."

The highly anticipated airshow drew massive crowds from across Thailand, including the nation's King and Queen, who personally met with representatives from each demonstration team.

"The impact the team had cannot be overstated—Team USA won today," Welsh remarked, emphasizing the significance of the U.S. presence at the event.

The anniversary celebration featured a diverse array of activities, including aerial performances, static aircraft displays, exhibitions, and an international seminar attended by military and civilian leaders from various nations. The presence of multiple air forces underscored the event's importance in fostering international cooperation and defense collaboration.

One of the most striking moments of the event was the juxtaposition of a Washington National Guard KC-135 taxiing near the Chinese People's Liberation Army Air Force demonstration team.

"It was something you don't see every day," Welsh noted. "A Washington National Guard KC-135 moving alongside aircraft from our greatest competitor in the world today."

Beyond the airshow, the visit also provided an opportunity for Welsh to engage in high-level discussions with key leaders, including U.S. Ambassador to Thailand Robert Godec and senior officials from the Royal Thai Air Force.

"We truly have the best state partners in the National Guard," Welsh said. "Huge thanks to the Royal Thai Air Force team. They are our allies, partners, and most importantly, friends."

- Story by Joseph Siemandel



SHARED VALUES, PARTNERSHIP GUIDE AIR GUARD AND ROYAL THAI AF PLANNING IN 12TH AIRMAN-TO-AIRMAN TALKS



Airmen from the Royal Thai Air Force, Pacific Air Forces, the Washington Air National Guard, and members of the Joint United States Military Advisory Group in Thailand gathered in Pattaya, Thailand, for the 12th annual Airman-to-Airman Talks (A2AT) May 13-15.

The purpose of an A2AT is to facilitate discussions between the U.S. and a country in the region to share best practices and build stronger relationships through collaboration and planning.

Eight working groups focused on areas such as exercises, future logistics frameworks, aerospace medicine, space domain, force development, information security and cyber defense, and air domain awareness. Airmen collaboratively identified engagement opportunities for the next 5 years that will enhance the joint ability to address evolving challenges.

Air Marshal Anurak Romnarak, Royal Thai Air Force Assistant Chief of Air Staff for Operations, welcomed participants to the session.

"This [Airman-to-Airman Talk] not only reflects our sustained engagement but also highlights our collective vision for a future where collaboration, readiness, and innovation define the way we will work together in the future," Romnarak said.

PACAF deputy commander Air Vice-Marshal Carl Newman, who is serving in an exchange role from the Royal Australian Air Force, reiterated the relationships and framework established will enable coordinated, quick response in times of crisis.

"These dialogues are not symbolic gestures; they are the engine driving our interoperability and effectiveness in addressing the complex challenges of the Indo-Pacific. They represent a genuine, enduring friendship built on shared values, mutual respect, and a passion for airpower," Newman said.

"Collaborative dialogues, such as this one, are instrumental in achieving significant progress in interoperability," said Col. Carrie Wentzel, Washington Air National Guard head of delegation. "Enduring Partners 2025 will achieve new milestones, including bi-lateral defensive cyber ops in a remote range, a U.S. Combat Systems Officer operating in the back of an RTAF AT-6, and air refueling operations between a KC-46 and RTAF F-16s. These initiatives represent a deepening in our operational understanding and are a testament to the power of collaboration, mutual respect, and a shared commitment to regional security."

The United States has had diplomatic relations with the Kingdom of Thailand for more than 190 years. The National Guard-sponsored State Partnership Program formally began between the Royal Thai Armed Forces and the Washington National Guard in 2002.

The event concluded with discussions of working group findings, signing of the minutes, and a plaque exchange.







- Story and Photos by Francine St. Laurent



While these sessions provided valuable theoretical knowledge, Chaplin highlighted the profound impact of direct human interaction.

"Being able to read body language and see them face-to-face when talking about issues is a huge care factor and shows we want them to be successful," said Chaplin. We also get a better engagement from them for more in-depth questions that they're having."

Looking to the future, this collaborative strategy increases opportunities for reciprocal crosstraining and a greater frequency of subject matter expert exchanges.

"What we want to do now is more subject matter expert exchanges," said Chaplin. "We want to bring some of their NCOs to Hawaii or Washington state so they can actually see our programs and our NCO corps."

During their visit, the Washington National Guard team had the opportunity to observe their Malaysian and Thai counterparts executing a range of essential military skills. This included observing weapons training, hand-to-hand combat drills, practical survival training exercises, instructor development programs, and ceremonial marching demonstrations.

These observations provided critical insights into the current training standards and operational procedures of their partner forces.

"They're fantastic. They have a natural ability to want to learn and progress within their NCO corps," Chaplin said. "It's refreshing to see they want to progress their NCO corps at all levels."

As the State Partnership Program continues its upward trajectory of growth and as the strategic planning for the next five years continues, the ultimate goal remains the same: provide meaningful and sustainable support to the Royal Thai and Malaysian Armed Forces in their efforts to strengthen their enlisted core and build stronger bonds of trust and mutual respect between their commissioned and noncommissioned officer corps.

- Story and Photos by Nicholas Cloward



81ST SBCT LOGISTICS TEAM EARNS PRESTIGIOUS ARMY SUPPLY EXCELLENCE AWARD

Members of the 81st Stryker Brigade Combat Team's (SBCT) logistics and supply community were recognized for their outstanding performance with the Army National Guard's Supply Excellence Award during a ceremony held May 6, 2025, at Fort Gregg-Adams, Virginia.

The 81st SBCT Property Office, the 181st Brigade Support Battalion's (BSB) Logistics and Supply Office, and Alpha Company, 181st BSB Supply were honored with the prestigious award—marking the first time a Washington Army National Guard unit has earned this distinction.

"The 81st SBCT competed in the Modified Table of Organization and Equipment Command Supply Discipline Program Level (combined) competition," said Command Sgt. Maj. Troy Martin, senior enlisted advisor for logistics, Washington Army National Guard. "This was the inaugural year of the combined competition, which now evaluates a company-level supply operation alongside its parent S4 section and brigade-level property book office. Previously, each level was assessed independently."

The Chief of Staff of the Army's Supply Excellence Award (SEA) Program was established following the Total Army Worldwide Supply Conference in 1984. Modeled after the Phillip A. Connelly Award (for food service) and the Army Maintenance Excellence Award, the SEA recognizes outstanding supply operations at all organizational levels.

The program's objectives include enhancing Army-wide logistical readiness, enforcing the Command Supply Discipline Program, encouraging resource optimization, and providing a structured avenue to recognize both individual and group initiatives. The competition fosters personal and collective challenges, standardizes systems across the Army, and increases public awareness of the importance of supply excellence.

To qualify for the Department of the Army-level competition, a unit must first place in the top four during the Army National Guard evaluation. The first phase is a rigorous virtual review requiring units to submit extensive documentation—including nomination packets, endorsements, organizational structures, ERP system summaries, inventory protocols, and evidence of innovation and best practices.



"Our team submitted more than 230 files during the initial submission to showcase our organization's supply posture across all evaluation categories," said Martin. "We were identified as one of the top three Army National Guard units advancing to Phase two. Although traditionally conducted in person, this year's Phase two evaluation was held virtually due to budget constraints. The team narrated video tours of their facilities and participated in a live knowledge test. Evaluators used the Command Supply Discipline Program checklist to assess their real-time responses and workflows via screen sharing."

"This victory is incredibly meaningful for our team," said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Amber Chichester, property book officer for the 81st SBCT. "It represents years of progress and a steadfast commitment to excellence. While Ms. Karen, Sgt. 1st Class Diane Willis, and I are honored, this win belongs to the entire brigade. Every unit played a role. Despite evolving regulations and increased demands, our team has shown resilience, professionalism, and a drive to improve. I encourage other units to pursue opportunities like this. You may be surprised by what you can achieve together."

The 181st BSB team echoed those sentiments, reflecting on the hard-earned recognition.

"Winning the Supply Excellence Award as a battalion S4 is both humbling and validating," said Sgt. 1st Class David Herring, logistics NCO for the 181st BSB. "This journey demanded meticulous planning, long hours, and tireless effort. We pushed beyond meeting expectations. We aimed to surpass them. This award confirms the dedication and precision we brought to the mission. I couldn't be more proud of our team."

The 81st SBCT's recognition sets a new benchmark for excellence within the Washington Army National Guard, highlighting the strength of collaboration, innovation, and disciplined execution across the logistics community.

WADS OPERATORS SHARPEN WARFIGHTING SKILLS DURING EXERCISE SENTRY ALOHA 25-2

Members of the 225th Air Defense Squadron sharpened their warfighting skills during exercise Sentry Aloha 25-2, a two weeklong large-scale training event at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickman, Hawaii from April 8-17. This exercise brought together Air National Guard battle management teams from five states, 4th and 5th generation fighter aircraft, and allied partners for advanced air combat scenarios over 20 exercise events.

Capt. Micah Slifer, 1st Lt. Shoemaker and Master Sgt. Michelle Lye participated as command and control (C2) leads over multiple Sentry Aloha events, assisting in the development and execution of detailed tactical plans ensuring they accomplished exercise objectives. All three were selected for participation in Sentry Aloha 25-2 to further their tactical development as battle management experts.

A key highlight of this iteration was the rare integration opportunity with the Royal Australian Air Force's E-7A Wedgetail. The airborne early warning and control platform brought additional command and control capabilities that complemented the battle management architecture. For airmen of the 225th Air Defense Squadron, this collaboration provided invaluable exposure to coalition tactics, techniques, and procedures.

"Working with the Wedgetail team offered our members an incredible opportunity to enhance our interoperability with a key ally," said Capt. Bryan Villanueva, Chief of Weapons and Tactics for the 225th ADS who participated as the tactical mentor for the ADS team. "Anytime our members can mission plan, execute and debrief with advanced fighter and AEW platforms in a high-end training environment is a chance for us to practice critical warfighting skill sets that translate across combatant commands and better prepare us to fight and win when called upon." - Story by Kimberly Burke



CARGO INCREMENT MONITOR TRAINING

Airmen from various squadrons of the 194th Wing, designated as their squadron's incremental monitors, completed initial cargo increment monitor training at Camp Murray, Washington on April 5, 2025. The purpose of this training is to equip personnel with the knowledge and skills necessary to efficiently manage cargo for deployments, ensuring equipment is ready and cargo is properly prepared for transport.

The 194th Wing is preparing for a large-scale exercise in May and this biannual training is crucial to ensure that airmen are prepared for the upcoming task.

The classroom training provides an understanding of the policies, regulations, paperwork and all aspects of managing the cargo to ensure it reaches its destination. The hands-on class teaches increment monitors how to properly arrange, secure and move cargo. Course instruction also teaches the trainees how to read and fill out the required cargo documentation.

"The general airman doesn't know all the requirements and restrictions for preparing and packing cargo," said Master Sgt. Derek Yurko, traffic manager and training instructor with the 194th Logistics Readiness Squadron. "We are here to ensure they have the training and skills necessary to be mission ready through this training we provide with this program."

Without this training many squadrons would not be able to maintain mission readiness and deploy when they need to. They would be dependent on the LRS to prepare any mission essential gear, creating delays and slower deployment preparation.

"I'm very grateful for the training and know that I would be unable to prepare my squadron's cargo on my own," said Senior Airmen Sascha Siebertz, an installation entry controller and primary increment monitor with the 194th Security Forces Squadron. "It was also very nice that instructor Yurko stayed longer after the class to help answer my specific questions and review our gear, which was extremely helpful."

Increment monitors are able to prepare and certify that items needed for deployment meet the quality checks performed by an inspector, which speeds up the process and mission readiness.

"Before I was in the LRS I was not exposed to this training and when we prepared cargo for our missions we made a lot of mistakes and forgot essential equipment," said Yurko. "Having the skills and knowledge I do now would have likely prevented those real-world mistakes and led to a more successful mission."

Retaining extra skill sets, like being an increment monitor, can provide additional capabilities for Airmen in the future. They will be prepared if they need to quickly pack and send cargo to airmen in need, or help their own team quickly exit from a hostile location.

Understanding the regulations and requirements to safely pack cargo can lead to saving time and saving lives, said Yurko. The LRS will ensure airmen continue receiving this training and stay refreshed on these skills.

- Photos and Story by Tyler Meister





Citizen-Airman, Global Impact: Guard Member Instructs Life-Saving Skills in El Salvador

Working with Defense Institute for Medical Operations, Washington National Guard members instructed Tactical Combat Casualty Care and Combat Medic training in El Salvador, Feb. 22 – March 8, 2025.

"I volunteered and was selected to be an instructor based on things that we have done with the Thai military through the State Partnership Program and the Washington Counterdrug Program," said Master Sgt. Shane Bedard, an Aerospace Medical Sergeant with HQ Washington Air National Guard. "A couple of our medics and a physician assistant got picked up as well through the program and will support future missions throughout the year."

Working with military members and civilians, the instructors identified specific training and engagements to provide certified medical instruction for the El Salvadorian participants as well as develop instructors to continue to provide regional training in the region furthering the impact.

"This group was experienced, and students' backgrounds encompass various professional areas, including general/orthopedic surgeons, pediatric nurse practitioners, and medics," Bedard said.

The training emphasized improvisation techniques for various medical interventions, offering realistic treatment options in resource-limited environments.

"Students readily sought additional time on breaks and before class to learn whole blood transfusion, walking blood bank and additional practice on skills," Bedard said.

El Salvador's country profile mirrors many of Washington state's challenges, specifically with military support for natural disasters, including wildfires, floods, earthquakes, potential volcanic eruptions, various public health issues, tsunamis, and remote wilderness rescue.

"Future best practice sharing and training could provide us with abundant learning opportunities through instruction and exercises," Bedard said. Following the class, Bedard and the other instructors polled the class about their experience.

"They were all highly positive and 92 percent of students said they planned on making a change in their job based on what they learned, primarily practicing the medical and triage skills learned as well as teaching others," Bedard said.

While the class was beneficial to the students, Bedard believes he got a lot from it as well.

"This class was taught fully in Spanish with interpreters, and with [a little of] my poor Spanish," Bedard said. "This is a good practice to carry forward. It will help me with my Spanish in the future,"

El Salvador and the New Hampshire National Guard have been partners through the National Guard State Partnership Program since 2000, but medical training isn't one of the focus missions.

"With the Salvadorians building a training site, there could be a pathway to obtain training and share our skillsets with them," Bedard said. "Not many guardsmen get pulled to do this mission, so being selected was an awarding experience." - Story by Joseph Siemandel



Two Soldiers, One Dream: From the Guard to the Gridiron

"Girls can't play tackle football."

For Major Jennifer Erickson and Specialist Shaunya Kahananui, those were the words they grew up hearing — and believing — for far too long.

Both women loved the game of football. But for most of their lives, the opportunity to play the game they loved felt just out of reach.

This spring, however, both women are suiting up for the Seattle Majestics — the region's premier women's tackle football team and a proud member of the Women's National Football Conference, competing in full-pad, 11-on-11 American tackle football.

"I was always told I could never play... until my senior year of high school," said Kahananui, a supply specialist with 1st Battalion, 168th General Support Aviation and a full-time member of the Homeland Response Force. "I finally got to play tackle football, and it just lit a fire in me."

That year, she earned a spot on the varsity football team at Waianae High School in Wai'anae, Hawai'i. After graduation, she committed to Olympic College in Bremerton, where she played basketball and competed in track and field from 2021 to 2024.

That competitive spirit still drives her today. Now in her third season with the Majestics, Kahananui plays wide receiver and cornerback, regularly contributing on both sides of the ball.

"My first season was rough, I was the rookie learning everything," Kahananui said. "But the team made me feel like family from day one. Now in my third year, I am much more comfortable." For Erickson, who is one of the older players on the team, the

journey to the Majestic was vastly different.

"I am a little older, so I came from a time when girls couldn't even play flag football," said Erickson, the commander of Charlie Company, 181st Brigade Support Battalion and physician's assistant in her civilian capacity. "I found myself picking up flag football as an adult, even joining a men's league."

Then, a casual conversation at a softball game changed everything.

"One of the girls was like, 'Oh, I play football — real football — for the Seattle Majestics. You should come out and try,'" Erickson said. "I was like, 'I'm in my 40s. I don't think so.' But then she told me, 'I'm older than you. If I can do it, you can do it."

That was the push Erickson needed to try out and make the team.

"Last year I was on crutches for nine months, so when tryouts came this year, I'd only been off crutches for four weeks," Erickson said. "But I went out there and made it. That was my first time running again."

Erickson plays both defensive end and linebacker, despite being considered "a little small" for the position.

"I just want to be helpful. I'll play anything they ask — receiver, cornerback, wherever they need me," Erickson said.

For both Kahananui and Erickson, being part of the Majestics feels a lot like being part of the National Guard: teamwork, camaraderie, and mental and physical toughness. The grind is real, two-hour practices on Mondays and Wednesdays, three hours on Saturdays, and defensive and offensive zoom meetings during the week. Full contact, full speed, every step.

"If you aren't physically ready it will show and you will feel it," Erickson said. "Our coaches are incredible though. They don't just coach your skills — they coach your heart. If you show up, put in the effort, even if you're older or mess up, they see your fight."

And that fight shows on game day.

"Our last game, I don't think the other team was ready for our speed and physicality," Erickson said. "We went full throttle from the first play to the last."

Beyond victories and bruises, it's the family atmosphere that keeps both soldiers coming back.

"You look around at practice and realize — somebody can name every single person on that field. That's how close we are," Erickson said.

The team's growing popularity only fuels their pride.

"I've seen Army friends I hadn't seen in 10 years show up at our games, it's incredible," Erickson said. "People are picking up on it...I think we are on the cusp of something big."

- Story by Joseph Siemandel, Photos by Peter Chang



GUARD MEMBER REFLECTS ON HOW U.S. MILITARY CHANGED HER LIFE DURING IRAQI FREEDOM

As U.S. service members rolled into Iraq in March 2003, a young girl looked on, watching with excitement from the streets of Baghdad as the world around her changed.

"My dream came true. As the Iraqi Freedom operations started in March of that year, it ended the regime of Saddam Hussein," Spc. Rusha Adams, an information technology specialist with 1st Squadron, 303rd Cavalry Regiment said.

It was that everlasting memory, seeing how the U.S. military came to help those in need, that drove Adams desire to serve in the military. The path was not always that clear though.

Born in England in 1983, Adams' father was working toward his master's and PhD. Upon completing his degrees, the family had to return to Iraq in the summer of 1989.

"I was six, it was such a culture shock moving to Iraq," Adams said. "One year later, Saddam decided to invade Kuwait, which led to the collapse of the Iraqi economy."

Adams' father, due to his higher education and experience, was placed on the 'forbidden to travel abroad' list. Their family could not leave the country, and she was forced to stay for all her schooling.

That was until that day in March 2003 when U.S. service members arrived.

"It was really amazing watching them come in. Iraqi families were so grateful," Adams said.

Free to leave the country, the family packed up and moved to Yemen, where Adams' father found work as a professor in the college of engineering. She was able to go to school and earned her bachelor's degree in computer science. In 2014, due to the ongoing civil war in Yemen, the family made one more move, this time to Turkey, where Adams' destiny was about to change.

"Where we lived in Turkey, we were right next to my husband's family," said Adams.

She met her husband, Spc. Tony Adams, in 2017 while he was visiting his family. Prior to joining the military, Tony was providing interpreter support to U.S. troops in Iraq. Feeling a sense of duty, he joined the military.

"Our families knew each other, and we got along very quickly, and after a short time dating, we got engaged," Adams said. "In 2018, we got married while he was stationed in Korea and then moved to the states following a move to Louisiana."

Still holding on to that feeling of gratitude for what those U.S. troops did for her as a young woman, she felt a strong sense of duty to serve.

"I became really proud being an Army spouse, and it became a dream to bear arms to defend the country I chose to be a citizen in," Adams said.

After working a few simple jobs to start, they moved to Joint Base Lewis-McChord in 2023, and that is when she took steps toward fulfilling her dreams of service.

"We moved here, and I earned my U.S. citizenship," Adams said. "The first thing I wanted to do after getting my citizenship was to join the military, and we loved Washington so much I said I would like to join the National Guard."

While she wasn't sure if she could meet the physical demands at age 40, with the help of her husband and recruiter, Adams overcame all the challenges and became an IT specialist in the Washington Army National Guard.

"Because of my background with computer science, IT just seemed like the best fit for me," Adams said.

For her next adventure, Adams will deploy with 1st Squadron, 303rd Cavalry Regiment, later this year to Africa to support ongoing missions in the region.

"I am really excited because I believe that we can make a difference wherever we go," Adams said. "Because the way I became free, maybe I can help someone become free one day, and for that I am really so excited."



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