

Ortner takes command of 29th Infantry Division

Brig. Gen. Blake C. Ortner took command of the Virginia National Guard's Fort Belvoir-based 29th Infantry Division from Maj. Gen. Charles W. Whittington Jr., during a change of command ceremony July 24, 2015, at Fort Pickett, Va. Lt. Gen. Michael S. Tucker, commander of First Army, presided over the exchange of organizational colors.

"I am sincerely honored to be here with you today to take on this distinguished honor as your commander," Ortner said.

Ortner thanked Maj. Gen. Timothy P. Williams, the Adjutant General of Virginia, and Maj. Gen. Linda L. Singh, the Adjutant General of Maryland, for choosing him to command the 29th ID.

"I understand the significance and challenges of this position and I'm humbled that you've expressed the confidence in offering me this challenge," he said.

Ortner also thanked his wife Kristen and his two children for their support throughout his military career.

Read more: <http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2015/07/27/7807/>



Brig. Gen. Blake C. Ortner takes command of the 29th Infantry Division from Maj. Gen. Charles W. Whittington Jr. in a change of command ceremony July 24, 2015, at Fort Pickett, Va.

Virginia National Guard News Headlines

Johnson to succeed Holcomb as Va. Army Guard CSM

Command Sgt. Maj. Cheyenne M. Johnson will succeed Command Sgt. Maj. Carl A. Holcomb as the Virginia Army National Guard Command Sergeant Major according to an announcement made July 29, 2015, by Brig. Gen. Walter L. Mercer, Virginia National Guard Assistant Adjutant General – Army.

Read more: <http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2015/07/28/7824/>

Va. National Guard honors volunteers at Volunteer Recognition Workshop

Maj. Gen. Timothy P. Williams, the Adjutant General of Virginia, joined commanders of several Virginia National Guard commands to recognize and honor Virginia National Guard volunteers at the 2015 Virginia National Guard State Volunteer Recognition Workshop & Youth Symposium July 18, 2015.

Read more: <http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2015/07/28/7822/>

Winchester-based infantry battalion trains for overseas deployment

Soldiers from the Virginia National Guard's Winchester-based 3rd Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment, 116th Infantry Brigade Combat Team spent nearly three weeks training at Fort Pickett, Virginia, July 9-29, 2015, in preparation for a federal mobilization to Southwest Asia.

Read more: <http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2015/07/28/7789/>

Va. Guard aviation battalion trains at Fort Pickett

Virginia National Guard Soldiers from the Sandston-based 2nd Battalion, 224th Aviation Regiment took to the skies, fields and training sites of Fort Pickett during their two-week annual training, held July 11-25, 2015, where they focused on collective training and military occupational specialty qualification training.

Read more: <http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2015/07/26/7800/>

Mark Your Calendars!

Aug. 15, 2015

Back to School Bash

The Virginia National Guard Youth Program will present the Back to School Bash again this year. The Back to School Bash will happen Aug. 15, 2015, from 8:30 a.m - 3:00 p.m. at Great Wolf Lodge in Williamsburg, Va., with lunch provided. The Bash is open to Virginia Army and Air National Guard DEERS-registered dependents, ages 10-17 and costs \$25.

Register through JSS at:

www.jointservicesupport.org/info/B2SB15/

Contact Joe Duerksen for more information at (804) 236-7866.

VDF conducts multi-state communication exercise

Members of the Virginia Defense Force's Winchester-based 3rd Regiment and Lynchburg-based 4th Regiment used the high frequency radios in their Mobile Communication Platforms to conduct a multi-state communications exercise July 18, 2015. During the exercise, they successfully communicated via strong signal connections with state guard forces in Indiana and Tennessee and established weak connections with California.

The exercise was designed to test the VDF's ability to communicate if an incident degraded systems like mobile phone networks. Providing interoperable communications is one of the many different mission sets the VDF provides as the all-volunteer auxiliary to the Virginia National Guard.

VDF members from 3rd Regiment also assisted the Madison County Sheriff and Parks and Recreation Department with access control at the Madison County Fair.

The communication exercise was one of the many recent efforts by members of the VDF to test and train on their interoperable communications capabilities.

VDF members participated in the 2015 American Radio Relay League Field Day for the first time June 27 and 28 at multiple locations across Virginia. The ARRL, a non-profit national association representing the amateur radio community, sponsors its annual "field day" in late June for licensed operators across the United States and Canada.

Members of the VDF's Winchester-based 3rd Regiment and the Lynchburg-based 4th Regiment deployed their Mobile Communication Platforms from their home stations to various field sites. The VDF MCPs were deployed in various operational configurations using a variety of antennas to support short distances of a few hundred miles and long-haul communication paths that covered thousands of miles.

"With many of the VDF personnel being FCC-licensed amateur radio operators, they then tuned to authorized amateur HF frequencies to establish voice and data contact with other radio stations in the commonwealth and across the nation to include reaching Hawaii," said Brig. Gen. (Va.) Justin Carlitti, commander of the Virginia Defense Force.

Joining the VDF at these various field sites were other radio enthusiasts, local emergency management officials, first responders, and even Boy Scouts learning radio fundamentals.

The VDF will participate in the next major AARL training event in October when it supports the national-level Simulated Emergency Test to evaluate strengths and weaknesses in emergency preparedness and communications with local communities.

Earlier in June, the 3rd Regiment's MCP stationed at the Cherry-Beasley Readiness Center in Winchester successfully made inaugural contact with the SHARED RESOURCES, or SHARES, High Frequency Radio Network. The SHARES HF Radio Network, administered by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, provides an additional means for federal, state, tribal, local and non-governmental organizations with an emergency management mission to transmit critical messages when traditional means of communicating are degraded or destroyed.



Members of the Virginia Defense Force's Winchester-based 3rd Regiment use the high frequency radios in their Mobile Communication Platform to conduct a multi-state communications exercise July 18, 2015, in Madison, Va.

Carlitti said this was the VDF's first-ever voice contact with the FEMA Region III SHARES radio net control station, and the VDF is the first state defense force to join this network of more than 1,400 HF radio stations representing over 100 Federal, State and non-governmental organizations located in all states and overseas.

"The VDF, via its fixed and mobile HF stations, now adds this voice capability as a complement to its data mode, the ability to pass email messages via the HF radio-to-INTERNET gateways provided as part of the Department of Defense's Military Auxiliary Radio Systems infrastructure," Carlitti said. "Both of these organic VDF capabilities provide the Virginia Department of Military Affairs with additional modes of operation in responding to a variety of emergency response scenarios."

Read more: <http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2015/07/22/7814/>

MORE ON THE WEB

Photos: Military kids enjoy 10th annual Va. Guard Youth Camp

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/vanguardpao/sets/72157656377405866/>

Photos: Aviation Soldiers conduct Personnel Recovery Exercise

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/vanguardpao/sets/72157656294957995/>

Photos: AG, SEA visit Normandy Battalion

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/vanguardpao/sets/72157654011493773/>

Photos: 116th IBCT Soldiers train with British troops

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/vanguardpao/sets/72157656087288495/>



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