

29th Infantry Division tested at Warfighter Exercise

More than 400 Maryland and Virginia Army National Guard Soldiers from the 29th Infantry Division joined with National Guard and active duty Soldiers from around the country, as well as active duty and Air National Guard Airmen, for a nine-day warfighter exercise Nov. 13-22 at Camp Atterbury, Ind.

The division-level warfighter exercise, Warfighter 16-2, was designed to develop, train, and exercise the warfighting functions of the 29th ID. It tested the division's ability to coordinate a simulated battle with command and control of six brigades and more than 20,000 personnel.

"Warfighter is about learning processes and procedures and bringing together all the warfighting functions to become one team," said Brig. Gen. Blake C. Ortner, commanding general of the 29th ID. "In that way it was a tremendous success. You learn not just what the unit can do but also what you as an individual can do."

Read more: <http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2005/12/01/8338/>



Lt. Gen. Michael Tucker, First Army commanding general, speaks with Brig. Gen. Blake Ortner, commanding general of the 29th ID, Nov.18, 2015, at Camp Atterbury, Ind.

Virginia National Guard News Headlines

Task Force Normandy begins security mission

The Soldiers of the Winchester-based 3rd Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment, 116th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, also known as Task Force Normandy, began their security mission in Southwest Asia with a transfer of authority ceremony Nov. 5, 2015, and celebrated Thanksgiving in their new duty location.

Read more: <http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2015/11/30/8314/>

Va. Soldier escorts acting Secretary of the Army through shoot house

While training to become a 12B combat engineer, Staff Sgt. Christopher E. Rice was one of three Soldiers selected to escort acting Secretary of the Army Eric K. Fanning through a shoot house during a training visit Nov. 17, 2015, at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo.

Read more: <http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2015/11/22/8320/>

Aviator with 40 years military service flies final flight

After 40 years of military service, Chief Warrant Officer 5 Timothy C. Meeks, commander of the Sandston-based Detachment 26, Operational Support Airlift Command, flew the final flight of his military career Nov. 19, 2015, aboard a C-12 Huron aircraft.

Read more: <http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2015/11/21/8325/>

Griffin promoted to brigadier general

Col. Paul F. Griffin was promoted to brigadier general by his wife and daughters Nov. 24, 2015, at the Virginia War Memorial in Richmond, Va. Maj. Gen. Timothy P. Williams, the Adjutant General of Virginia, officiated the ceremony. Griffin serves as the Virginia National Guard Director of the Joint Staff.

Read more: <http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2015/11/25/8331/>

Mark Your Calendars!

Dec. 4-6: Mission: Healthy Families Retreat

Mission: Healthy Families Retreat is a fun, family-oriented skills building course for military veterans and families coping with the impact of deployment, military service, post traumatic stress, operational stress or traumatic brain injury.

The retreat will be held Dec. 4-6, 2015, at the Airfield 4H Conference Center in Wakefield, Va. Check in is from 4-6 p.m. and check out is 12 p.m. Cost is \$25.

For more information contact Kerri Gerke, family resource specialist, at (804)862-8002 ext 3035 or by email at Gerkek@RBHA.org.

Va. Guard encouraging “buddy checks” Dec. 16

The Virginia National Guard is encouraging its members to check in on their battle buddies and wingmen Dec. 16, 2015, to make sure they are doing well and help them find resources if they are experiencing hardship or in crisis. As part of the initiative, Soldiers and Airmen should call, text or make plans to get together to catch up on what's going on each other's lives. They can also show their support by posting on social media with the #VaGuardBuddyCheck hashtag.

“The holidays can be a difficult time of increased stress both in our personal and professional lives, so we should be looking out for each other to make sure we have those stresses under control and can get help if needed,” said Maj. Gen. Timothy P. Williams, the Adjutant General of Virginia. “We have many resources available to anyone who needs them, so we need to work together to get anyone in need pointed in the right direction. Leaders at every level must create a climate where our Soldiers and Airmen know it is okay to reach out and ask for help if they need it.”

As part of the National Guard's “Health of the Force” effort, Soldiers and Airmen are encouraged to ask about how their battle buddy or wingman are doing, as well as asking about the welfare of their families and those they serve with closely in their unit.

“The number one way to notice warning signs and changes in behavior associated with suicide is to know your buddy or wingman,” said Cheyenne Facchina, Virginia Guard suicide prevention program manager. “They could be at risk because of relationship problems, financial issues or substance abuse, not only because of stresses related to combat duty or deployment.”

It is also important to take seriously any of the warnings signs and get help immediately, she said.

If you own a smart phone, the Guard Ready app has listings for mental health providers and other specialists in all 54 states, territories and the District of Columbia, said Army Capt. Brian Pennington, the Suicide Prevention Program coordinator with the National Guard Bureau.

“One thing that we found, a commonality, is that most Soldiers don't know where these resources are actually located,” said Pennington. “So, having this centrally located app gives Soldiers the ability to say ‘hey, I'm having some problems, where can I go to get the help I need?’”

While there may be other, similar apps available, the Guard Ready app is tailored to those in the Guard and offers other features to simplify access to help. For more information about the app and links to download for your device, visit <http://go.usa.gov/cZZtY>.

A full list of resources is available at the Virginia Army National Guard's Resilience, Risk Reduction and Suicide Prevention Program, also known as R3SP, web page at <http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/r3sp/>.

The Virginia National Guard has Family Assistance Centers located throughout the state that are considered one-stop assistance for those who need services and support. Through partnerships with local and national organizations and working closely with

Key Elements of Va. Guard “Buddy Check” Day

- **Virginia National Guard Soldiers and Airmen are encouraged to call, text or make plans to get together with their buddy or wingman to check and see how they are doing.**
- **Make sure your buddy or wingman isn't experiencing hardship or crisis related to issues like financial problems, relationship conflict, substance abuse or stress related to deployment or combat duty.**
- **Help your buddy or wingman find resources that will help them deal with their hardship or crisis.**
- **Be sure to take them seriously and create a climate where they know it is okay to ask for help.**

military personnel such as chaplains, commanders, JAG Officers and volunteers, the FAC Specialists are able to provide the very best assistance possible.

Some of the areas in which a FAC staff can provide assistance includes TRICARE, DEERS, ID Cards, financial and legal assistance, crisis intervention and referral.

For more information about Family Assistance Centers, visit <http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/fac/> or call the 24-hour Hotline at 1-800-542-4028.

If you feel like your buddy or wingman expresses feelings of suicide, call the Suicide Lifeline 1-800-273-TALK (8255) military press 1 to get help.

Read more: <http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2015/12/01/8328/>

MORE ON THE WEB

Resilience, Risk Reduction and Suicide Prevention

<http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/r3sp/>

Virginia National Guard Family Assistance Centers

<http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/fac/>

Virginia National Guard Suicide Prevention Resources

<http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/suicideprevention/>

Guard Your Health

<http://www.guardyourhealth.com>

U. S. Army Ready and Resilient

<http://www.army.mil/readyandresilient>

Air Combat Command Comprehensive Airman Fitness

<http://www.acc.af.mil/comprehensiveairmanfitness/index.asp>



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