



OCTOBER 2016 ISSUE

**THE DISPATCH**

**THE MAGAZINE OF THE  
TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT**

# **BUILDING THE GUARD'S FUTURE IN TEXAS**



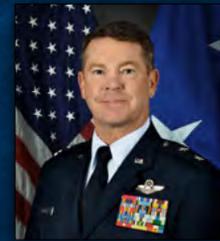
# October DISPATCH

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The Texas Military Department Public Affairs Office would like to thank all the contributing writers and photographers who generously share their work with us. Without the hard work and dedication of Guardsmen and civilians, we would not be able to tell YOUR TMD story.

**HERE & THE COVER:**

**Soldiers prepare for renovations made to local armories using funding from the State of Texas Armory Revitalization program. During the previous biennium a \$19.6 million investment by the legislature allowed the department to access an additional \$47.5 million in federal matching dollars. These funds allowed nine Texas Military Department facilities to receive needed upgrades.**  
(Texas Military Department Photo by: Jordy Keith)

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# AT RISK YOUTH ACCEPT A NEW CHALLENGE



**“ The Texas Challenge Academy has one of the more profound impacts on our future. ”**

**BRIGADIER GENERAL PATRICK HAMILTON**  
COMMANDING GENERAL DOMESTIC OPERATIONS TASK-FORCE

There are many aspects of the Domestic Operations Task Force that most of our commanders in the field and Texans in our community know very well: Mission Ready Packages for floods, wildfires, hurricane support and border security are highly visible and those that commanders and soldiers likely end up supporting in any given year. One program, however, within our Counter Drug Task Force is lesser known but has existed for many years.

The Texas ChalleNGe Academy has a more profound impact on our future than most commanders or the community at large know. So, what is the Texas ChalleNGe Academy? It is a completely voluntary high school education program “designed to reclaim the potential of at-risk youth by training them to become successful, responsible, productive citizens through a program of mentoring, education, physical fitness and volunteer service to the community. The program is open to young people ranging from 16 to 19 years old who have either dropped out of high school or who are in danger of doing so. The Texas

ChalleNGe Academy has two campuses, located in Eagle Lake, West of Houston and in Sheffield in West Texas.

Cadets stay at the academy for five and a half months during the residential phase of the program. They may attain their GED or high school diplomas, but also learn leadership skills and followership. They are taught responsible citizenship, job skills, critical life coping skills, substance abuse awareness and how to develop positive personal relationships. Additionally, a large part of the program is focused on physical fitness and service to the community. After graduation, cadets return home and meet with a mentor every week for 12 months to keep their resolve to change their lives for the better.” I can assure you that if you attend one of the TCA graduations (June and December) at either location, you will be a believer in this program.

The Texas ChalleNGe Academy has operated under the radar of most of our mainstream units because, until this year, we’ve had only one site and many of our voluntary applicants came from referrals from Truancy Court Judges who knew very well the value of the program and referred students early. However, with changes in the truancy law last legislative session, which requires schools to handle truancy cases much longer before they can be referred to the Truancy Court, we are not getting as many second chance students and many more last chance students than in the past.

Second chance students have a much better likelihood of getting back on track and have a higher graduation rate than those who have gone further down the road to dropping out of school. You may ask why I’m bringing this to you and what can you do? The main problem is education

and awareness about TCA. I believe that most school district superintendents are not aware of this program. I've asked a couple around the Austin area and neither had heard of it. Since we are a community-based organization, I think we owe it to the communities we live in to better educate them on the program. I'm beginning a campaign to speak at community service organizations (Rotary and Lions Clubs, Chamber of Commerces, etc.) and meet with superintendents to let them know that we have this program that can save at-risk students. We will develop an exportable presentation with print materials that our members can use.

Our TCA recruiting director, retired Col. Randy Davis, will link you up with one of our regional recruiters to help you. The graduates of this program could very well end up joining the Guard and their families and communities will certainly begin to see yet another value the Guard brings. **- FROM THE TOP -**

# FROM THE TOP



**For More Information About  
The Texas Challenge Academy, Contact:  
Col. (Ret) Randy Davis, TCA Recruiting Director**

**(512)782-1983  
randall.e.davis3.nfg@mail.mil.  
tmd.texas.gov/texas-challenge-academy**

# NEW CAMPAIGN FOCUSES ON DEPARTMENT VALUES

*Story by Capt. Jessica Jackson*

Texas Military Department Public Affairs

Duty, Honor, Texas. For the nearly 25,000 Guardsmen and civilian employees of the Texas Military Department these words will serve as a constant reminder of what it takes to be a Texan serving Texas.

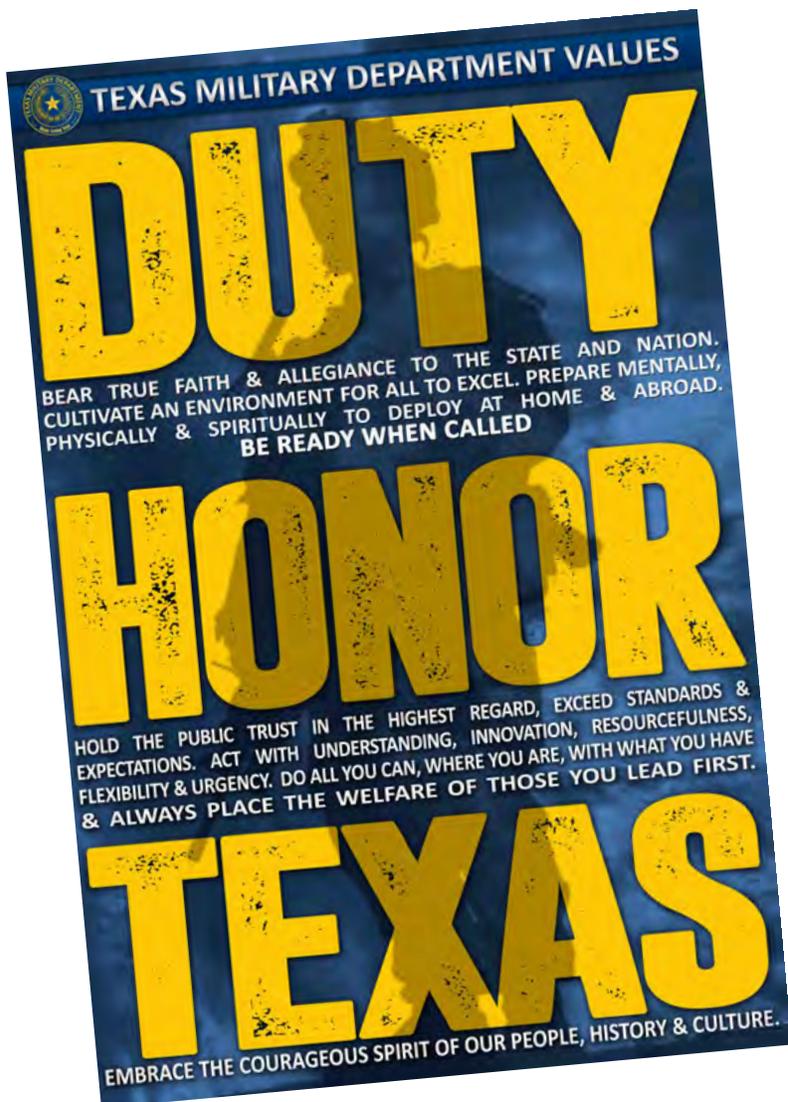
Labeled as the Texas Military Department Values - Duty, Honor, Texas was released in July to coincide with a re-branding of the agency. According the State Public Affairs Officer, Lt. Col. Travis Walters, the values were developed by looking at the department's goals and figuring out how to communicate them as concisely as possible.

"Duty, Honor, Texas. That tells you everything you need to know about why the Texas Military Department is here." said Walters. "Duty is why you serve. Honorably is how your serve and the citizens of Texas are who you serve."

Maj. Gen. John F. Nichols, The Adjutant General of Texas has placed a premium on reinforcing these values to his guardsmen and employees. Walters explained that a series of tools are being deployed to promote the values.

"First, we are putting a poster front and center of each armory so every time you go to drill, or come to work you remember how important your job is." said Walters. "These posters are the first point of contact many of our members will have with our new values and The Adjutant General will be looking for them when he visits his troops."

Walters explained that the posters are only the first push for the new values, with social media and web campaigns to follow but the posters hold a special significance.





***Soldiers, airmen and civilians discuss the Texas Military Department's newly released values featured on a poster hanging outside the Domestic Operations Task-force command suite in In Camp Mabry. Armories and other military facilities across Texas will receive posters in October.***

*(Photo Courtesy of The Texas Military Department)*

"It's something real, something that you can see and feel that highlights that you are a part of the long proud history of the Texas Military," said Walters.

According to Texas Military Department lead graphic designer Bob Seyller, Texas' history is represented within the poster.

"The posters primary colors of blue and gold are more than a stylistic choice," said Seyller "They represent the colors of the first flag of the Republic of Texas, the Burnet Flag."

Seyller explained that the Burnet Flag was a symbol for both the new republic and the Texas military from 1836 to 1839 when the current red, white and blue Lone Star flag was approved. At that time the blue and gold flag was turned over to the Texas Military as the flag of war until Texas achieved statehood.

"I hope all the service members and department employees feel a deep connection with this design," said Seyller. "We were asked to put together a piece that represented the values of the organization but that required more than just words it needed to tap into the heart and history of Texas."

That sentiment is mirrored in the final but possibly most important value on the poster. "Texas: Embrace the courageous spirit of our people, history and culture."

The new posters were mailed out in mid august and should soon be displayed in armories throughout Texas. **-D**

# TEXAS GUARDSMAN DONATES KIDNEY TO SAVE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER

*Story by Sgt. Elizabeth Peña*

Texas Military Department Public Affairs

SAN ANTONIO – Every day holds the possibility for a miracle, but Arthur Corenblieth, 56, husband and father of two, was quickly losing hope and questioned how many days he had left to live.

Corenblieth, an elementary school teacher, was suffering from a genetic illness and needed a kidney transplant fast. He had been on the waiting list for what seemed like a lifetime.

At 93 percent kidney failure, Corenblieth was put on dialysis.

“At that time I had been on the list for four years and I was getting nowhere. I had gotten pneumonia, I had been in the hospital for over a month; I would connect to the dialysis machine every night for a year and a half, for nine hours and I was still teaching school as well; I would literally have to hold on to my podium while teaching,” Said Corenblieth.

One of the hardest parts for Corenblieth was missing out on his youngest son’s soccer season due to being on the dialysis machine every day.

“I really didn’t have a night anymore. My 13-year-old had to be driven to and from soccer practice by his coach,” he said.

Friends and family tried donating to Corenblieth but were disqualified due to medical history.

His sister went as far as writing a sign on her car. “She put on her car, with shoe polish, my brother needs a kidney,” he said.

Under a new policy made by the United Network for Organ Sharing in 2012, the fittest organs would be given to those likely to live the longest with the donated organ. The top 20 percent of kidneys would be offered to the top 20 percent of patients and the other 80 percent would work the same way.



*Texas Army National Guard Spc. Brittany Reppond, recovers after donating kidney to Arthur Corenblieth, left, February 18, 2016, at the Methodist Specialty and Transplant Hospital in San Antonio. (Courtesy Photo)*

“Literally the month I was supposed to get a kidney the national standards changed,” said Corenblieth. “I had no idea what I was going to do.”

That’s when he decided to register in San Antonio to broaden his chances of finding a donor.

“I went to the Methodist Specialty and Transplant Hospital in San Antonio to register because I wasn’t getting anywhere in Houston,” said Corenblieth.

“My brother-in-law had forgotten his luggage and had to return home to get it. On the way back, Brittany was at a gas station he stopped at.”

Unbeknownst to him, he had found his miracle.

Texas Army National Guard Spc. Brittany Reppond, 21, a carpentry and masonry specialist for the 197th Special Troop Support Battalion, based out of Camp Bullis near San Antonio, was working as a sales person outside the local gas station.

“I saw on the back of a car ‘my brother needs a kidney’, said Reppond. “I’ve seen stuff like that in the past, but this time it was like God was calling me to do it.”

Reppond called the number on the vehicle and got all the information she needed from Corenblieth’s sister.

"I prayed about it, I'd say for about a week. I told myself if I'm a match it's God's will, and I was a perfect six out of six," she said.

After getting approval from her chain of command, she began the process.

"I had to do a 24-hour urine sample and give a lot of blood, go on liquid diets, and get x-rays, cat scans and psychiatric testing," said Reppond.

Doctors from the San Antonio hospital asked that Corenblith meet Reppond for the first time to make sure she still wanted to follow through with the procedure.

"I was shaking on my way to meet her -- what do you say to someone who is going to do this for you especially after you have been waiting for so long?" said Corenblith. "The hospital told me afterward, this young woman is focused, she sets her sights and she goes for it, and that's a testament to the National Guard as well."

"When I found out he had two kids I said, I have to do this, I can't let them not have their dad because I don't have my dad anymore," said Reppond, who lost her dad in 2011.

Even though Corenblith said he never felt good enough to receive someone's kidney, Reppond gave him the reassurance he needed.

"I was really nervous," said Corenblith. "Then I saw Brittany the day of the surgery, she was so calm and confident you could tell she's a soldier, those are all the things I'm not. She was just reflecting back to me all the things I needed, comfort, encouragement and happiness that she's doing this for me."

Months after the procedure, the two Texans still stay in contact with each other. Corenblith works hard to stay healthy through exercise.

"I got her a little stuffed monkey and I got a matching one," said Corenblith. "I even went and bought a treadmill and it's on my treadmill. I say to myself- I must be strong - this is Brittany's kidney."

"I don't regret it at all, I would do it again," said Reppond.

She has since moved to East Texas, is a volunteer in the Zavalla Fire Department and is getting ready for EMT school.

"I want to be a paramedic," said Reppond. "I like helping people I've been like that my whole life and the medical field, to me, is the best way to do it. This was a stepping stone for that."

"God made my crooked road straight," said Corenblith. "Several times things looked very bleak for me, bad pneu-

monia, anemia, medications, National Kidney Allocation change and 1.5 years on dialysis - but God straightened it out in the end."

Corenblith is now able to attend his son's soccer practices and recently returned from a weekend at Fiesta Texas, in San Antonio with his two sons, Mitchell, 23, and Cooper, 13.

"Even to this day, this very moment, I struggle hugely with how to thank her enough and what to say. She saved my life. It's the most miraculous story in the world." Corenblith said. **-D**

To learn more about becoming a donor visit [www.organdonor.gov](http://www.organdonor.gov)



Texas Army National Guard Spc. Brittany Reppond poses with her kidney recipient Arthur Corenblith, who she donated to after seeing a please donate sign written on the back of a truck window. (Courtesy Photo)

# BUILDING A FUTURE FOR THE GUARD

By 2nd Lt. Phil Fountain & Jordy Keith

Texas Military Department

AUSTIN, Texas – Maj. Gen. John F. Nichols, the Adjutant General of Texas, recently testified before the Texas Senate Select Committee on Government Facilities to discuss the Texas Military Department’s efforts to improve National Guard armories around the state.

Nichols, Gov. Greg Abbott’s senior military advisor, provided legislators with an update on the use of funds appropriated for the 2016-2017 biennium and discussed the agency’s long-range plan.

“Last year, I presented to you the State of Texas Armory Revitalization, or STAR, Plan,” Nichols testified. “I would like to thank the 84th Legislature for recognizing the importance and validity of the program and investing \$19 million toward the improvement of our facilities for the FY16-17 biennium.”

The legislative appropriation is value-added to the state in that all of the dollars put up by the state are matched 50-to-75 percent by the federal government through the National Guard Bureau Installation Division, in Arlington, Va.

“For FY16, we will obligate the full \$9.875 million in state funds and have asked the National Guard Bureau for a total of \$16.6 million in federal matching funds for the first five STAR projects,” Nichols said. “So far, we’ve received \$12.9 million in federal match, but are working diligently to obtain the additional funding.”

Should the funds not arrive when expected, TMD has a strategy to continue the program.

“We can scale the projects to include a base bid to ensure that each project meets critical life, health and safety major maintenance,” Nichols said.



# FIVE YEAR STAR ROLLOUT PLAN

## FY16 PROJECTS:

Houston – Westheimer;  
Pasadena; San Marcos;  
Grand Prairie; Fairview (Austin)

## FY17 PROJECTS:

Camp Mabry  
(36th Infantry Division HQ);  
El Paso; Temple; Denison

## FY18 PROJECTS:

Laredo; Camp Mabry  
(Joint Forces Headquarters - CFMO);  
Shoreview (Fort Worth)

## FY19 Projects:

Camp Swift (Bastrop); Lubbock;  
Cobb Park (Fort Worth); Weslaco;  
Camp Bowie (Brownwood)

## FY20 PROJECTS:

Waco; Corpus Christi;  
Fort Sam Houston (San Antonio);  
Rosenberg; Weatherford; Greenville;  
Kilgore; La Porte; Victoria

The minimum standards TMD is working to address include: current fire alarm and suppression systems; HVAC upgrades, compliance with state accessibility standards; anti-terrorism and force protection measures; as well as foundation and roof replacements/repairs and modernizing the facilities' restrooms and showers. These renovations will improve the overall safety of soldiers and make armories more structurally sound.

Nichols discussed the importance of facilities to personnel.

“Second only to our people, our facilities are absolutely essential to our ability to perform our mission,” Nichols said. “In past years, we have deferred maintenance on a great many on our facilities and they are in dire need of upkeep and updating.”

The Adjutant General attributed this to increased state and federal operations since 2001.

“In addition to our domestic response to the state, over 32,000 soldiers and airmen have deployed to Afghanistan, Iraq, Egypt and other locations overseas,” Nichols said. “During this time, we have correctly focused resources on our soldiers and airmen, their training and their families. We must, however, continue to invest in our facilities so that we provide world-class support for our world-class service members.”

The STAR plan is nested within the Texas Army National Guard's Construction and Facilities Maintenance Office, located at Camp Mabry in Austin.

"The Texas Military Department currently maintains approximately 5.6 million square feet of facilities," said Lt. Col. John L. Davis, CFMO director. "Nearly half of these facilities were constructed more than 50 years ago and now are in need of substantial repairs, rehabilitation and maintenance to adequately sustain them. The STAR program is designed to restore 27 readiness center facilities over the course of five years."

Besides those upgrades critical to the life, health and safety of our Guardsmen, facility modernization is another top priority. This includes installing energy efficient lighting, interior modifications and upgrading vaults that will help greatly help reduce energy usage, thus saving money for the state. Modernization also includes upgrading armories to reflect current Guard composition.

"Fifty years ago, females didn't serve in our infantry units," Davis said. "Therefore, our armories weren't built with suitable restroom and shower space for females. We need to ensure that all of our facilities serve all of our soldiers."

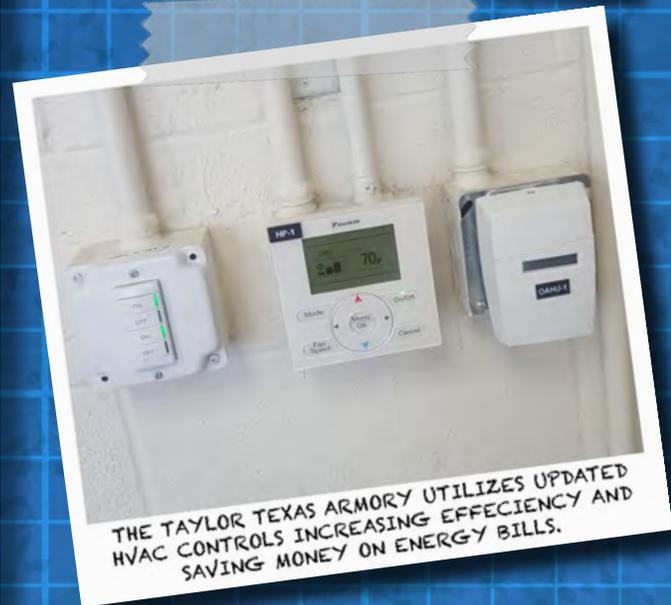
This commitment to universal accessibility extends to making armories and their parking lots meet the standards prescribed by the federal Americans with Disabilities Act.

Fully-functioning armories are important not just for soldier safety during drills and State Active Duty missions, a modern and well-maintained armory can provide a shelter to a local community during a disaster. Likewise, an armory's deficiencies can contribute to poor recruitment and retention.

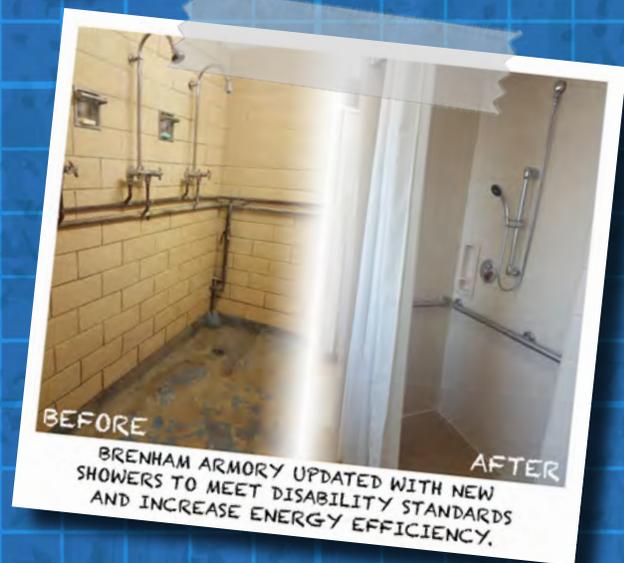
"Our STAR program is a modest and sustainable commitment by the State of Texas to your soldiers and airmen and allows our service members the ability to provide our communities the continued support and protection they need from local and global threats," Nichols said. "We remain standing in support of Texas, ready to respond when called." **-D**



LUBBOCK ARMED FORCES RESERVE CENTER THERMOSTAT SHOWS THE NEED TO UPDATE AILING FIXTURES IN TEXAS MILITARY FACILITIES



THE TAYLOR TEXAS ARMORY UTILIZES UPDATED HVAC CONTROLS INCREASING EFFICIENCY AND SAVING MONEY ON ENERGY BILLS.



BRENHAM ARMORY UPDATED WITH NEW SHOWERS TO MEET DISABILITY STANDARDS AND INCREASE ENERGY EFFICIENCY.

# TILL THE LAST DROP:

## TEXAS GUARDSMEN DELIVER DRINKING WATER TO STATE JAIL

*Story by Capt. Jessica Jackson*

Texas Military Department Public Affairs

EL PASO, Texas—It's the middle of summer, with temperatures in the triple digits and the water main breaks—leaving a jail full of inmates and staff without water. This was the situation at the Rogelio Sanchez State Jail in El Paso, Aug. 11, 2016.

Jail administrators reached out to Texas Army National Guard 3rd Battalion, 133 Field Artillery Regiment based out of El Paso to see if the unit could assist in providing drinkable water for more than 1,400 correctional officers, staff and inmates on-site.

Understanding the severity of the problem, the unit quickly ramped up their water buffaloes to provide assistance.

"The potable water was delivered the same day of the request," said Capt. Charles Peters, 3rd Battalion, 133 Field Artillery Regiment S3 operations officer. "We were able to mount an initial response rapidly to provide the needed water within hours of notification."

A quick response not lost on Garth Parker, Rogelio Sanchez State Jail warden.

"From the time they received the request it was only three hours until water was delivered," said Parker. "This was a very impressive response time. It shows the amount of commitment of the Guardsmen and how very well-trained they are to be able to put together such a rapid response."

The Guardsmen provided water to the jail for approximately 22 hours and delivered more than 30,000 gallons of potable water.

"It is awesome; the guard being able to provide this service to those in need," Parker said. "It shows their high level of leadership, professionalism and organization to be able to gather the requested resources and deploy them in such a quick response."

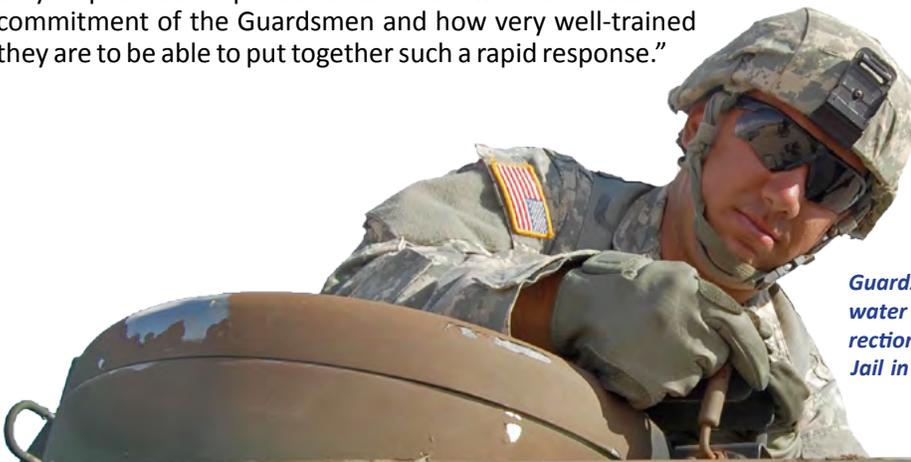
The quick response not only helped those left without drinking water, but also gave Guardsmen a view into how their unique set of skills and equipment could help those locally in need.

"The soldiers were able to conduct a real-world mission, gaining valuable insight into supporting the community, and see how their actions can provide a positive impact within their own community," said Peters.

Emergency situations are bound to occur, having these capabilities allow Texas National Guard units to provide much needed support throughout the state.

"To me this displays superior readiness for any emergency or situation that arises; it's great to know ...we can make a call and receive assistance," said Parker.

Yet another example of how Texas Guardsmen are always ready and always there. **-D**



*Guardsmen for 3rd Battalion, 133 Field Artillery Regiment use water buffaloes to deliver drinking water to more than 1,400 correctional officers, staff and inmates at the Rogelio Sanchez State Jail in El Paso, Texas, Aug. 11, 2016. (Courtesy Photo 133rd Field Artillery Regiment)*



# JUNIOR ENLISTED ADVISORY COUNCIL GIVES VOICE TO NEWEST GENERATION

*Story by Sgt. Elizabeth Peña*  
Texas Military Department Public Affairs

AUSTIN, Texas — Basic military values teach service members to always put the mission first. As those missions are being fulfilled and new policies put in place, leaders must ensure their junior future leaders are not left behind.

Current technology has far surpassed the technology of 20 years ago and these factors present challenges in communicating across generations.

“We are a generation removed from the junior enlisted, who are the bread and butter of our organization,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Mark A. Weedon, Command Senior Enlisted Leader for the Texas Military Department. “So we want to make sure that we have some circular communication from top to bottom.”

Eighteen handpicked service members from the Texas Army National Guard, Texas Air National Guard and Texas State Guard, representing each brigade, wing and major command in the Texas Military Department, came together for an inaugural Junior Enlisted Advisory Council at Camp Mabry in Austin, Texas, Sept. 10-11, 2016 to discuss how to bridge gaps within the force.

“I was picked by my platoon sergeant because he thinks that I would be an asset to this council,” said Texas State Guard Petty Officer William Rogers, 3rd Battalion, Maritime Regiment. “I feel like I’ve got experience in both



*Command Sgt. Maj. Mark A. Weedon, Command Senior Enlisted Leader for the Texas Military Department, discusses department priorities with the newly formed Junior Enlisted Advisory Council. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by: Sgt. Elizabeth Peña)*

federal and state and I can combine those experiences and give my input as someone that's very senior in age as a specialist, E-4."

During the council, service members were broken into sections.

"We split the council up into four groups and they each worked on separate mission sets," said Weedon. "We will be presenting those problem set solutions to the Texas Adjutant General and to the executive council in a couple weeks."

By combining the components, service members were able to discuss issues they saw simultaneously across the force.

"I saw tremendous similarities," said Rogers. "Once we got in there and the boundaries came down, it wasn't State Guard, it wasn't National Guard and it wasn't Air National Guard; we were just all soldiers and troops and airmen working together for a cause."

Through the use of meetings and by providing the opportunity to receive training, network with peers and participate in group discussions, junior enlisted guardsmen can enhance and support the effective communication of the Texas Military Department's strategic vision, mission and goals.

"I think it's going to work great," said Texas Army National Guard Spc. Robert Sanchez, combat engineer with the 836th Sapper Company, 136th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade. "Command Sgt. Major Weedon has a strong opinion behind everything that we are saying. He is trying to understand what we are saying and put everything into his own words so when he presents it, it's what we want but, it's also at a good standpoint for Col. Chaney (Texas Military Department Chief of Staff) and the Texas Adjutant General."

The guardsmen were directed to go back to their respective units and communicate with other junior service members to gather analysis for the next meeting.

"I got the ability to work with diversity and understand what we need to do to help new airmen or soldiers," said Airman 1st Class LaChunda Gibbs, supply specialist with the 147th Reconnaissance Wing, Texas Army National Guard. "What I'm taking back is the info that we can use to resolve the issues within the military."

The council is scheduled to meet quarterly, with members rotating out approximately every two years.

"Our Texas Adjutant General is a people person," said Weedon. "He is probably the biggest advocate in this state for our junior enlisted so when they directly identify issues and make recommendations for solutions, he's going to listen." -D



Texas Air, Army and State Guard members discuss the concerns and needs of junior enlisted soldiers with the department's senior leadership. (Texas National Guard Photo by: Sgt. Elizabeth Peña)

# GUARD PARTNERS WITH ACTIVE ARMY DURING FIELD TRAINING

Story by:

*Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Wheeler* First Army Division West, & *Sgt. Michael Vanpool* 56th Infantry Brigade Combat Team



*Soldiers with Company A, 2nd Battalion, 42nd Infantry Regiment, 56th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, gaze up a hill and aim their weapons during a dismounted platoon attack lane at Fort Hood, Texas, Aug. 14.  
(U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Michael Vanpool)*

**FORT HOOD, Texas - Nearly 2,600 Soldiers from the Texas Army National Guard's 56th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 36th Infantry Division, descended on Fort Hood for the Exportable Combat Training Capability program 16-5, Aug. 6-26, 2016.**

**The xCTC program is an Army National Guard brigade field training exercise designed to certify combat proficiency at the platoon level with support from First Army.**

**"The purpose of an xCTC is to train a National Guard BCT's platoons to proficiency," said Col. Jim Isenhower, commander, 189th Combined Arms Training Brigade, First Army (Division West).**

**The 56th includes infantry, scout and artillery units. In addition medical, engineer, signal and several support platoons comprise the brigade.**

**"Each of their platoons have very different missions and our job is to help them train to proficiency during their ready-year three," he added.**

**With support from nearly 300 Observer/Coach, Trainers (O/CTs) of the 189th Combined Arms Training Brigade based out of Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington, the Guardsmen tackled multiple training lanes ranging from vehicle recovery and platoon defensive operations to mass casualty and route clearance procedures.**

**Each lane conducted multiple iterations following a crawl-walk-run strategy and was followed by an interactive after action review that ensured each participating platoon identified their deficiencies and applied those lessons learned to future repetitions.**

**"It's been the best training I've seen in years," said Col. David Webb, commander of the 56th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, "It's shown me where our weaknesses are and what we need to work on in training-year 17."**

**The multi-faceted brigade is spread across several hundred miles of the north, central, east and west regions of Texas. Annual training allows the brigade to work as one cohesive unit.**

**"The reality of the training far exceeded anything we could do on a drill weekend and with the OPFOR, and xCTC effects, there's no hiding, your readiness is right there in black and white. Because of it we are phenomenally better than when we started on day one," Webb said.**

**Capt. Joanna Van Engel, commander for Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 949th Brigade Support Battalion, 56th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, agreed with Webb about the training value and importance and stressed its role in increasing her unit's readiness.**

**"It increased our readiness because when my Soldiers get realistic, real-world training they learn how to react as a team and that cohesiveness translates to a combat environment," Van Engel said. "It also gives us the validation that we need that our troops can perform in a combat situation and it gives them confidence in themselves and each other."**

**Van Engel and Webb both went on to attribute much of their unit's success during the exercise to the 189th CATB OC/T support.**

**"I really appreciate what the OC/Ts did to create realistic training," Van Engel said. "They gave us some very valuable guidance and were able to observe my troops from aspects that I can't always get to. They really served as my eyes and ears."**

**Following each lane iteration, the platoons gathered with the OC/Ts to have an interactive after action review. Notes were augmented with two and three-dimensional troop movements, as well as video recordings.**

“Their method was to come out here, support us and make us better and they helped us to be successful,” Webb said.

The Guardsmen were not graded, but given a benchmark. They were then trained and coached to improvement and proficiency.

“We are indebted to them for all of their help and mentorship and honest evaluation. The 189th just basically never said no. They facilitated anything that I asked them to. It’s been the best OC/T experience I’ve had, and I’ve had several.”

Since its first rotation held in 2005, the xCTC program has been designed to provide tough, realistic training for participating brigades as well as methods for achieving company level and battalion battle staff proficiency for Army National Guard units during pre-mobilization training.

The exercise also satisfies requirements for possible participation in future Combat Training Center rotations at the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, Louisiana, or the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California. **-D**



*A scout with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 144th Infantry Regiment, 56th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, performs zone reconnaissance during the brigade’s Exportable Combat Training Capability program at Fort Hood, Aug. 12, 2016. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Michael Vanpool)*

# CHILDREN'S MOCK DEPLOYMENT:

## EXPLAINING PARENTS ROLE IN NATIONAL SECURITY

*Story by Michelle McBride*

Texas Military Department Public Affairs

Kids may not know what it means, but they know that everyone is worried. What does deployed mean and where are the soldiers going?

For only the second time in recent years, Heidi Bearden, the airman and family readiness program manager with the Texas Air National Guard 136th Airlift Wing, and fellow volunteers will help answer this question. Children of service members in the wing, ages 5-12, will be walked through a mock deployment as part of a national program called KUDOS, or Kids Understanding Deployment Operations.

The process is scheduled to start with the kids receiving a phone call the night before detailing the time to report, what to bring and when to report.

"Saturday morning they will line up in front of the wing building where they will meet their troop commander, who will be responsible for walking them through all the deployment stations," said Bearden

Deployment stations will be set up throughout the wing and are scheduled to include multiple static displays of aircraft and equipment, a processing line in which they will receive an ID card and complete a power of attorney. Then they will visit supply and be issued a cinch bag.

"This event is about the kids having fun but also providing them an outlet to learn more about what their guard parent does, how the unit works and to provide opportunities to build resiliency if their parent ever deploys," said Bearden. "They have a much better understanding and appreciate what their parent does for the one drill weekend every month and for TDYs as well as deployments."

During the event there is also a briefing scheduled as well as hands-on opportunities with various equipment including battle gear, chemical gear and parachutes.

"This event gives the children of our unit a glimpse at what their parent experiences while getting ready to deploy," said Bearden. "Additionally, it provides networking opportunities for our kids to meet others who are in guard families and have similar experiences to share."

The wing hosted this event one other time in 2009 and had approximately 100 children participate. While the event is mainly for the children, the parents got a lot out of the experience as well and the positive feedback poured in from both the children and the parents.

"The children got very excited about role playing as airmen, going through the deployment line, putting on face paint, donning the MOPP gear and finally coming back to loving arms as the band played a homecoming finale," said Senior Master Sgt. Elizabeth Gilbert, 136th Airlift wing public affairs superintendent. "To them it was all child's play and they had fun. I feel in the end, they have a greater understanding of what their parent goes through to deploy." -D

**For more information regarding this and future events, please contact the Airman and Family Readiness office at 817-852-3558.**



136th Airlift Wing Airmen and their families took part in KUDOS, Kids Understanding Deployment Operations, a mock deployment event that helps children understand deployments and the 136AW mission, Sept. 10, 2016.  
(Courtesy photos: 136th Airlift Wing)

# APACHE RECOVERY SHOWCASES TEXAS GUARD SLINGLOAD SKILLS

*Story and photos by Capt. Martha Nigrelle*

Texas Military Department Public Affairs



HOUSTON - Texas Guardsmen conducted recovery operations of an AH-64D Apache helicopter using a CH-47 Chinook, Sept. 1, 2016, following a precautionary landing in a rice paddy in Wallisville, near Houston, due to mechanical issues.

Wading through six-inch deep mud, and working in 97 degree weather with 90 percent humidity, maintenance soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 149th Aviation Regiment (Attack Reconnaissance) prepared the Apache for a sling-load recovery.

“This was fun,” said Staff Sgt. Mark Guillory, technical inspector and attack helicopter mechanic for the battalion. “For most of us, this is the first real-world sling load we’ve done. We have done it in training plenty, but you can’t beat this. This is the real thing.”

The pilots flying the aircraft initially made the precautionary landing after a warning light went off.

“They did the right thing,” said Guillory. “You get a warning light, you land, wherever you’re at.”

The soldiers on board the aircraft were not injured and were conducting a routine training mission when the landing occurred.

“I want to commend our pilots for their quick reaction and landing,” said Maj. Gen. William Smith, Deputy Adjutant-Army and commander of the Texas Army National Guard. “This was a potentially dangerous situation that demonstrates the caliber of our soldiers as they ensured the safety of the citizens in the local area.”

The unit’s leadership determined the safest way to move the helicopter would be by air, mitigating risk to nearby civilians and their property.

The only way to move a 12,000 pound aircraft via air is with something more than twice its size, something like a Chinook.

Using a universal maintenance aviation recovery kit, designed to move a downed aircraft from one location to another, Guillory and a dozen other maintenance soldiers worked to ensure that the Apache could be transported safely.



**“For most of us, this is the first real-world sling load we’ve done. We have done it in training plenty, but you can’t beat this. This is the real thing.”**  
**~Staff Sgt. Mark Guillory~**

As the soldiers worked, a large crowd of nearby Texans gathered to watch the operation, to include a local judge who handed out cold water to the soldiers working, as well as the civilians watching.

“Everyone worked really well together; I thought they interfaced very well with the public,” said Judge Blake Sylvia, Chambers County Justice of the Peace. “From start to finish it was a really good operation.”

It took two attempts to get the Apache in the air. After fixing a small issue with their hook, the Chinook crew was able to successfully sling load the Apache and fly it 16 miles to the Baytown Airfield.

The maintenance soldiers met the two helicopters in Baytown and immediately went to work preparing the Apache for safety inspections and any necessary maintenance.

“That’s what we do,” said Guillory. “Make sure it’s safe to fly.” **-D**



*Texas Guardsmen prepare an AH-64D Apache helicopter for recovery operations using a universal maintenance aviation recovery kit, September 1, 2016, following a precautionary landing in a rice paddy in Wallisville, Texas, near Houston.*

# Texas State Guard Welcomes New Air Component Commander



*Story by Laura Lopez*  
Texas Military Department Public Affairs

AUSTIN, Texas- Members of the Texas State Guard welcomed Brig. Gen. Johann "John" Kinsey, as the incoming Air Component Commander, during a promotion and change of command ceremony, at Camp Mabry, in Austin, July 23, 2016.

As commander of the Air Component Command for the Texas State Guard, he is responsible for maintaining the preparedness of highly trained guardsmen for State Active Duty and other missions in response to contingencies, incidents or emergencies in the State of Texas, as directed by the Governor and the Adjutant General.

"I consider command an honor and a sacred trust that demands loyalty and dedication in all directions," said Kinsey. "Consequently, it is my responsibility to uphold the highest standards of leadership and personal conduct by always doing the right thing. I also firmly believe that by taking care of my people, they will take care of the mission."

Kinsey was commissioned a second lieutenant in the U.S. Air Force after graduating from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in 1977. As a career security forces officer, he worked at the installation, major command, Air Staff and joint theater staff levels in various positions to include serving as the chief of police and commanding several large nuclear security forces units like the 343rd Training Squadron (Air Force Security Forces Academy) and the 97th Mission Support Group.

Since joining the Texas State Guard in 2010, he commanded the 449th Air Support Group, the 5th Air Wing and most recently served as the Vice Commander of the Air Component Command.

Kinsey holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Geography and a Master of Science degree in International Relations. His military education includes the Air Command and Staff College, Air War College, On Scene Commander Course and Senior Office Protection Awareness Course.

Some of Kinsey's awards and decorations include the Meritorious Service Medal with four oak leaf clusters, the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with silver oak leaf cluster, the Air Force Organizational Excellence Award with two oak leaf clusters, the National Defense Service Medal with one device, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal and the Nuclear Deterrence Operations Service Medal with "N" device.

Kinsey assumed command from Maj. Gen. (Breveted) Donald Prince, who served as the Air Component Commander for five years.

The Air Component Command is organized under a two air wing structure consisting of seven Air Support Groups located throughout the state. These air wings and their subordinate Air Support Groups provide regular direct support to the Texas Air National Guard and other components of the Texas State Guard and the Texas Military Department. **-D**

# New Key Leadership Positions



## Col. Micheal Dye

Director of Army Aviation and Safety,  
Texas Army National Guard

### EXPERIENCE:

Col. Dye was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant in the Texas Army National Guard's Officer Candidate School in 1985. He served as an aviation officer in various positions in the 1-124 Cavalry until 1995 and then numerous follow on aviation assignments in the 49th Aviation Brigade and 36th Combat Aviation Brigade. Dye's deployments include Stabilization Force, or SFOR-7 in 2000 and Operation Iraqi Freedom from 2008-2009. Dye transitioned from a traditional guardsman to a full time federal technician in 1990, and has served at the Austin and San Antonio Army Aviation flight facilities for the last 26 years. In April of 2016, he was chosen to serve as the Director of Army Aviation and Safety for the Texas Army National Guard.

### EDUCATION:

Degree in Business and Management from St. Edwards University.

### DID YOU KNOW:

Dye is qualified in the UH-1 Huey, UH-60 Blackhawk and AH-64 Apache. He is also an Instructor Pilot in the AH-1 Cobra and UH-72 Lakota.

### IN HIS WORDS:

"It is a privilege to be selected as the Director of Army Aviation and Safety. I truly believe I can make a difference in the aviation community to support both DSCA operations and Aviation mobilizing units in a high OPTEMPO environment and continue to produce a world class aviation program for the Texas Army National Guard."



## Shelley Harris-Curtsinger

Chief Fiscal Officer, Office of the Executive Director,  
Texas Military Department

### EXPERIENCE:

Ms. Harris-Curtsinger has more than 27 years of experience with the State of Texas. Positions have included: the Deputy Administrator for Accounts Payable for the Texas Department of Public Safety; the Chief Financial Officer for the Texas Racing Commission; as well as a Financial Analyst for the Commission on Fire Protection and the Department of Banking.

### EDUCATION:

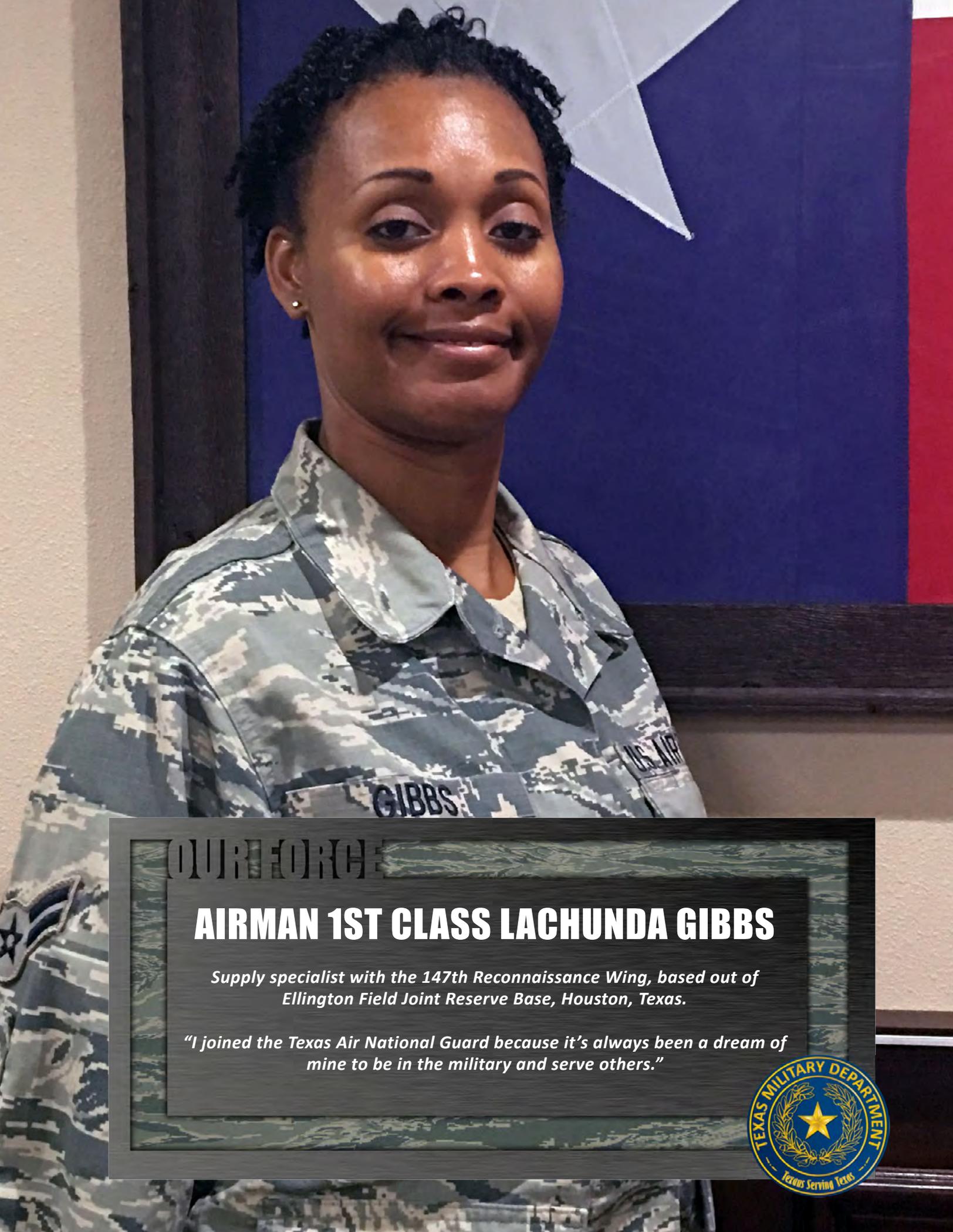
Bachelors of Science from Texas State University.

### DID YOU KNOW:

Ms. Harris-Curtsinger is a graduate of the Texas Fiscal Officers Academy and a member of the Green Mountain Regulators, a cowboy shooting club. She is also a lover of all things relating to horses.

### IN HER WORDS:

"I am truly honored to be selected as the TMD Chief Fiscal Officer. I look forward to continuing my state service as part of the TMD team. I will work hard to do the best job possible for the entire organization."



OUR FORCE

## AIRMAN 1ST CLASS LACHUNDA GIBBS

*Supply specialist with the 147th Reconnaissance Wing, based out of Ellington Field Joint Reserve Base, Houston, Texas.*

*"I joined the Texas Air National Guard because it's always been a dream of mine to be in the military and serve others."*

