

THE JRTC AND FORT POLK

GUARDIAN

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HONORING THOSE WHO SERVE: VIETNAM VETERANS

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Veterans share memories of Vietnam War

By **CHUCK CANNON**
Command information officer

FORT POLK, La. — Next to the American Civil War, the Vietnam War was arguably the most divisive military conflict in U.S. history.

From 1954-1975, the war pitted the communist government of North Vietnam and its allies in South Vietnam, known as the Viet Cong, against the government of South Vietnam and its principal ally, the United States.

A ceremony to honor those who served in Vietnam during the war is held March 29 at 10:30 a.m. at the Fort Polk Main Post Exchange.

Vietnam veterans can visit the PX between 10:30 a.m.-2 p.m. and receive a lapel pin signifying their service.

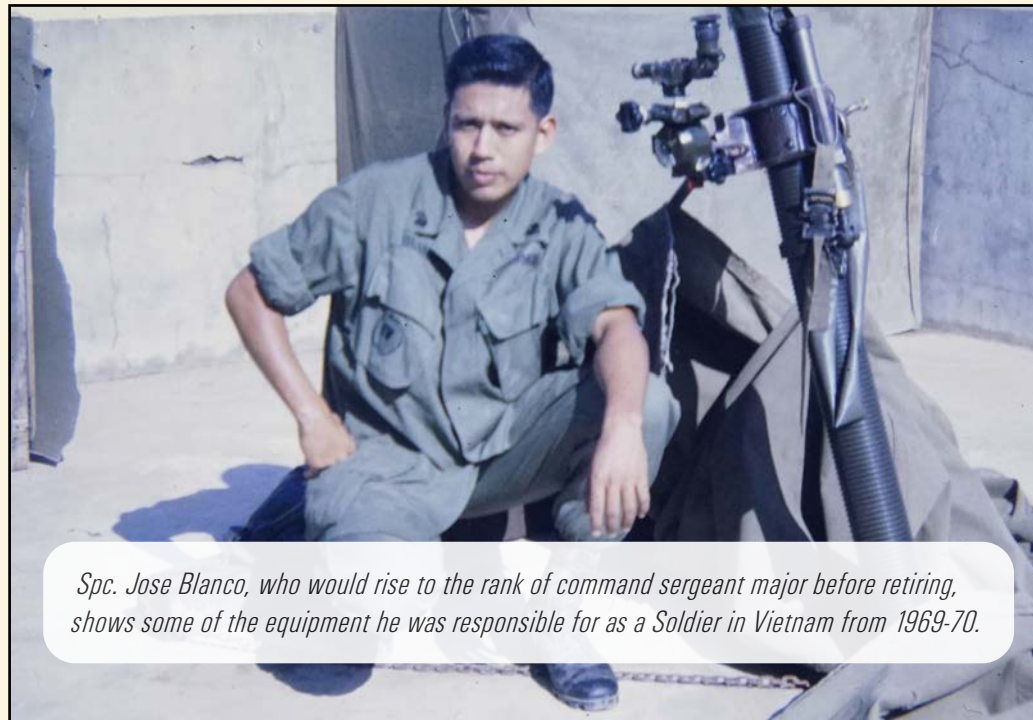
Two of those Soldiers who served during the Vietnam War are retired Sgt. Maj. of the Army Julius Gates and retired Command Sgt. Maj. Jose Blanco. Both men continued their post military careers at the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk and shared their memories and stories of the war.

Blanco was fresh out of high school in Brownsville, Texas, when he enlisted, because, as he related, "All of my friends were getting drafted, so I decided to enlist."

After basic training and Advanced Individual Training, in July 1969, Blanco was shipped out to Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam, as a supply clerk.

"I was immediately sent to Saigon MACV (Military Assistance Command Vietnam) to attend a one-week radiotelephone operator course," Blanco said. "Once I finished the course, I was assigned to MACV Team 84 located in Cao Lah, King Phong Province, which borders Cambodia."

MACV was created in 1962 in



Spc. Jose Blanco, who would rise to the rank of command sergeant major before retiring, shows some of the equipment he was responsible for as a Soldier in Vietnam from 1969-70.

COURTESY

response to the increase in United States military assistance to South Vietnam.

It consisted of 155 Advisory Teams broken down into 361 Mobil Air Teams (MATs), which served in 44 provinces and more than 200 districts.

"MAT Teams were out there alone — not on base camps," Blanco said. "These teams of American Soldiers were often imbedded with Vietnamese forces in remote areas. MAT Teams served as advisors to the Vietnamese forces, Forward Air Controllers, Communication Relaying Teams and liaisons to Vietnamese village chiefs and province chiefs."

Blanco said he was the only private first class on his team — all others were noncommissioned officers or officers.

"I served as the mail clerk, supply clerk and radiotelephone operator," he said. "I carried a field backpack radio known as the PRC-10 and, appropriately enough, my call sign was 'Gofer.'"

Blanco said he also served as a communications specialist in the tactical operations center receiving, and forwarding communications

between the command group and MAT Teams in the field.

"When not performing RTO duties I served as a 24-hour gofer, hence my call sign," he said. "I was always sent to get something or do something, such as restocking ammunition, distributing C-rations, filling water tanks and sandbags, picking up and distributing mail, burning human waste, checking claymore mines, fuel runs, pulling perimeter guard, receiving 55-gallon drums of fuel from our dirt airstrip that were dropped by C-124 and C-130 aircraft, and driver on re-supply convoys to our re-supply point at Can Tho."

While in the field, Blanco said his team was often surrounded by North Vietnamese soldiers, mosquitos, leeches, rice paddies, jungles and bamboo fields.

"But I'd rather be imbedded with a MAT Team, which conducted search and destroy, forward observer, and listening post missions, where my only mission was being an RTO relaying messages, requesting fire missions, and medevacs, or emergency evacuations, than to be

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For more information on Fort Polk units and happenings visit the following Facebook pages:

@JRTCOperationsGrp., **@BayneJonesACH** or **@fortpolkmwr**.



Cover photo: Soldiers with the 101st Airborne Division land on Hill 937, a ridge of the mountain Dong Ap Bia in central Vietnam near its western border with Laos — later to be known as Hamburger Hill — in May 1969. (Photo courtesy www.military.com).

Vietnam

Continued from page 2

stuck in the rear.”

During his year-long tour in Vietnam, Blanco served in three campaigns: TET-69/Counter Offensive 1969, Vietnam Summer-Fall 1969, and Vietnam Winter-Spring 1970.

Like most Soldiers in Vietnam, Blanco said he enjoyed listening to American pop music on Armed Forces Radio. He said his favorite tunes were: “We Gotta Get Out of This Place” by the Animals; “Leaving on a Jet Plane” by Peter, Paul, and Mary; and “Green Grass of Home” by Tom Jones.

After completing his Vietnam tour, Blanco said he flew the, “Freedom Bird back to Travis Air Force Base, where I was released from active duty.”

Before he left Travis AFB and headed to San Francisco International Airport, Blanco said he was directed to change from his military uniform to civilian attire.

“We learned that was for our own safety,” he said. “There were a lot of protesters, yelling terrible things and spitting at us. Fortunately, no one spit on me, but several in our group did get spit on.”

Blanco said he’s happy that Vietnam veterans are finally receiving their due.

“We followed our orders and did what was expected of us,” he said. “We lost a lot of good, young men over there, and for those who survived to be ostracized, was wrong. Thankfully, that’s changing.”

At the heart of the conflict was the desire of North Vietnam to unify the entire country under a single communist regime modeled after those of the Soviet Union and China.

The South Vietnamese government fought to preserve a Vietnam more closely aligned with the West. U.S. military advisors, present in small numbers throughout the 1950s, were introduced on a large scale beginning in 1961, and active combat units were introduced in 1965. By 1969 more than 500,000 U.S. military personnel were stationed in Vietnam.

Staff Sgt. Julius Gates arrived in Vietnam as a rifle platoon squad leader in 1966, and would eventually rise to the rank of Sgt. Maj. of the Army.

“We were never really prepared to go — not like today,” he said. “And even after we got in country, there still was not a lot of training to prepare you to go out and do what you were expected to do.”

Gates said that even though a tour in Vietnam was difficult, his Soldiers were great.

“We had very fine Soldiers who would do what you asked,” he said. “We did some operations that were pretty nasty, but we got them done.”

Gates said one of his Soldiers was a Native

American.

“He seemed to have a sixth sense about things,” Gates said. “Once, we were on patrol and he slid up beside me and said, ‘Sergeant, I can feel there’s something in that big tree up ahead.’ Sure enough, there was a sniper and we were able to take him out before he hit any of us.”

Gates related another experience that showed the character of the Soldiers he served with.

“We had a mission to secure a village that was supposedly empty,” he said. “When we got off the helicopter, we started to receive fire from a bunker in the village.”

Gates said he prepared to send a squad to flank the bunker when one of his Soldiers took matters into his own hands.

“He grabbed his rifle, ran up to the bunker and started shooting, taking out all of the enemy,” Gates said. “When I asked him why, he said, ‘I thought they were going to kill my buddies.’”

“You hear bad things about the Soldiers, but you don’t usually hear the good.”

Gates’ second tour in Vietnam was from 1969-1970 as a platoon sergeant and first sergeant. Both times Gates returned to the U.S. following his Vietnam tours, he said the welcome home was disappointing.

“When I got home in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, there were a bunch of people talking bad about the Soldiers,” he said. “I almost got in trouble, but a friend who I had grown up with and was then a police officer, led me away and convinced me to let it go.”

The second time, the verbal abuse began as three busloads of Soldiers headed to the airport outside of Fort Lewis, Washington, to fly home.

“There were about 100 people who started cussing at us and calling us baby killers as we got off the buses,” he said. “Several wanted to fight. They were throwing eggs and other things at us.”

Gates helped to diffuse the situation and the Soldiers eventually were allowed to fly to their respective homes.

“It helps knowing Vietnam veterans are now getting recognition they deserve,” he said. “It’s time for it to happen. Most Soldiers were draftees and just did what they were told. It wasn’t their fault they were sent over there — they were just following orders.”

The human costs of the long conflict were harsh for all involved. Not until 1995 did Vietnam release its official estimate of war dead: As many as 2 million civilians on both sides and some 1.1 million North Vietnamese and Viet Cong fighters. The U.S. military has



First Sgt. Julius Gates prepares to go on a mission with his Soldiers during his second tour in Vietnam. Gates would eventually serve as Sgt. Maj. of the Army before retiring in 1991.

estimated that between 200,000 and 250,000 South Vietnamese soldiers died in the war.

In 1982 the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was dedicated in Washington, D.C., inscribed with the names of 57,939 members of U.S. armed forces who had died or were missing as a result of the war. Over the following years, additions to the list have brought the total past 58,200.

Gates said he thought the world of his Soldiers, so much so that when the Vietnam Memorial Wall was dedicated, he couldn’t go look, because the name of one his Soldiers was there.

“It took me a while before I could go look at the wall,” he said. “The Soldiers tried to do the best they could; they took care of each other and completed their missions.”



Soldiers show kindness

Col. Sam Smith, Fort Polk garrison commander, presents coins to (pictured from left to right) Spc. William Robinson, Sgt. David Gonzalez and Spc. Clayton Martin, 258th Military Police Company, 519th Military Police Battalion, March 21. The Soldiers were recognized for an act of kindness. While at work at Access Control Point 1 (main gate) – at around 5 a.m. – a car going through the gate had a flat tire. The Soldiers worked together to change the flat and get the driver safely on their way again. Smith told the Soldiers it’s that type of kindness that makes a difference to the Fort Polk community.



Anticipate important changes in Army Combat Fitness Test

ARMY NEWS

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Army has launched a revised Army Combat Fitness Test based on feedback from Soldiers, an independent RAND study (Army Research Division), review of nearly 630,000 ACFT scores and more than three years of ongoing analysis. Implementation of the ACFT will enable the Army to maintain a high level of personal physical fitness, which is important to each Soldier’s holistic health and will support the overall readiness of the Army. The latest revisions to the ACFT maintain the Army’s strong commitment to a culture of physical fitness while ensuring fairness in the transition to a new fitness test of record.

Key changes include implementing the ACFT as a general physical fitness test with age and gender performance-normed scoring scales, which account for age and gender grouped performance observed in ACFT test scores. This allows Soldiers and leaders to tailor physical fitness needs to promote the physical fitness level of each Soldier as a component of their overall holistic health.

The Army is also eliminating the leg-tuck exercise, while implementing the plank as the required core strength assessment; the 2.5-mile walk is also added as an alternate aerobic event.

ACFT

ARMY COMBAT FITNESS TEST EVENTS

3 REPETITION MAXIMUM DEADLIFT (MDL)

HAND RELEASE PUSH-UP ARM EXTENSION (HRP)

STANDING POWER THROW (SPT)

SPRINT DRAG-CARRY (SDC)

PLANK (PLK)

TWO-MILE RUN (2MR)

*The 2.5 mile walk has been added as an alternate aerobic event along with the row, hike, and swim

The **ACFT** is a general physical fitness assessment with age and gender performance-normed scoring scales

The **ACFT** measures a Soldier's readiness in the physical domain of the Army's Holistic Health and Fitness system

ACFT IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

★ **APRIL 1, 2022**

Soldiers continue to take diagnostic tests

★ **OCTOBER 1, 2022**

Regular Army and Active Guard Reserve start taking the ACFT for record

★ **APRIL 1, 2023**

Reserve Component Soldiers start taking the ACFT for record. All Regular Army and Active Guard Reserve Soldiers must have a record ACFT

★ **APRIL 1, 2024**

Reserve Component Soldiers must have a record ACFT

For more info: <https://www.army.mil/acft>

TIME-PHASED PERSONNEL POLICY

	PME	FLAGS	REENLISTMENT	EVALUATIONS	NCO EVAL BOARD	ES/E6 PROMOTION POINTS	SEPARATIONS
REGULAR ARMY/AGR				October 1, 2022			April 1, 2023
ARMY RESERVE	Oct 1, 2022			April 1, 2023			April 1, 2024
NATIONAL GUARD	Oct 1, 2022			April 1, 2023		Will be issued by DARGM	April 1, 2024

		POINTS											
		17-21	22-24	25-31	32-36	37-41	42-46	47-51	52-56	57-61	62+		
MDL (lbs)	Female	100	210	230	230	230	210	210	190	190	170	170	
	Male	100	220	220	220	220	220	220	220	220	220	220	
SPT (meters)	Female	100	8.4	8.5	8.7	8.6	8.2	8.1	7.8	7.6	6.6	6.6	
	Male	100	3.9	4.0	4.2	4.1	4.1	3.9	3.7	3.5	3.4	3.4	
HRP (reps)	Female	100	53	50	48	47	41	36	35	30	24	24	
	Male	100	57	61	62	60	59	56	55	51	46	43	
SDC (m:ss)	Female	100	1:55	1:55	1:55	1:59	2:02	2:09	2:11	2:18	2:26	2:26	
	Male	100	3:15	3:15	3:15	3:22	3:27	3:42	3:51	4:03	4:48	4:48	
PLK (m:ss)	Female	100	3:40	3:35	3:30	3:25	3:20	3:20	3:20	3:20	3:20	3:20	
	Male	100	3:40	3:35	3:30	3:25	3:20	3:20	3:20	3:20	3:20	3:20	
2MR (mm:ss)	Female	100	15:29	15:00	15:00	15:18	15:30	15:49	15:58	16:29	17:18	17:18	
	Male	100	23:22	23:15	23:13	23:19	23:23	23:42	24:00	24:24	24:48	25:00	

*The full ACFT grading scales are available at <https://www.army.mil/acft/>

The Army will incorporate the ACFT into personnel policies in a time-phased, deliberate manner to ensure all Soldiers can train and adjust to the new event and scoring scales before scores are used for personnel actions. Soldiers will begin taking diagnostic tests with the revised ACFT in April 2022.

Record scores for the Regular Army commence in October 2022, giving active duty Soldiers 6 months to train for the revised test. Record scores for the National Guard and Army Reserve commence in April 2023, giving Reserve Component Soldiers a year to train for the revised test.

By implementing this revised approach, the ACFT will provide an accurate assessment of a Soldier’s physical fitness level and sustain

the Army’s efforts to maintain a physically fit force capable of a wide range of missions.

Implementation of the ACFT with regular feedback and ongoing analysis will verify the test continues to meet the needs of the Army.

To accomplish this, the Army has established a new governance structure to regularly assess test performance data though initial implementation, assess any disproportionate impacts to elements of the force and work with stakeholders to identify and recommend any future modifications to Army leadership. RAND will continue to provide analytic support to the Army’s ongoing assessment.

The governance body’s initial comprehensive report to the Secretary of the Army will be provided in April 2023.

QUALITY OF LIFE LINES OF EFFORT



HEALTH CARE



SPOUSE
EMPLOYMENT



CHILD CARE



PCS MOVES



HOUSING

Physical Therapists from BJACH, 3rd BCT conduct **skills fair** for medics

By JEAN CLAVETTE GRAVES
BJACH PAO

FORT POLK, La. — The Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital rehabilitation department, along with physical therapists from 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, conducted musculoskeletal exams, intervention and referral training March 8 and 9 for combat medics at the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk.

Maj. Anthony Williams, chief of rehabilitative services at BJACH, said the intent was to provide hands-on proficiency training to combat medics that would enable them to serve as force multipliers on the battlefield and support overall Soldier readiness.

“We are conducting a post-wide musculoskeletal skills fair for medics and physical therapy specialists to increase their competence and confidence in the assessment of patients who come to sick call,” he said. “We want to equip them with the tools necessary to help as many people as possible.”

Williams said the training would teach Soldiers how to assess shoulder, knee, ankle and lower back pathology.

“The goal of this training is for participants to walk away confident in their ability to provide early evidence based intervention,” he said. “We also want them to be able to determine if it’s appropriate to manage the injuries locally or if the patients need to be referred to higher levels of care.”

Capt. Will Holcomb, physical therapist with 3rd BCT, 10th Mtn Div, holistic health and fitness program, assisted with the training.

“Medics don’t get a lot of musculoskeletal training in general, but the majority of patients they will see in both the garrison and deployed environment will be musculoskeletal based injuries,” he said. “Readiness is affected if they don’t understand how to properly prioritize and treat their patients. If Soldiers are waiting to see the physician assistant or myself that will impact readiness. We know seeing these patients at or as close to the point of injury as possible will improve their outcomes.”

Holcomb said a combat medic’s ability to understand how to evaluate and care for musculoskeletal patients will allow Soldiers to return to the fight faster.

Maj. Mistie Dukes, physician assistant, 1st



From back left: Spc. Madeleine Bryan, Sgt. Nicholas Hanson and Cpt. Will Holcomb observe Maj. Anthony Williams (front right), chief, Rehabilitation Department and 1st Lt. Steven Candeto (front left), physical therapist for Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital, as they demonstrate techniques for assessing knee injuries during the musculoskeletal exam, intervention and referral training March 8 and 9.



Maj. Anthony Williams, chief, Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital Rehabilitation Department, demonstrates a technique to test hip flexor strength with Spc. Madeleine Bryan, combat medic, 1st Battalion, 509th Infantry Regiment, during the musculoskeletal exam, intervention and referral training.

Battalion, 509th Infantry Regiment, encouraged medics from her battalion to participate in the training.

“Given the nature of our occupation, service members are susceptible to musculoskeletal injuries just like professional athletes,” she said. “Medics are often the first health care profes-

sional a service member sees in both garrison and deployed settings. Our medics are the first to see the injuries at the drop zone, in the field, at the range, during physical training and at the clinic.”

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MHS GENESIS live at BJACH, JRTC, Fort Polk

By JEAN CLAVETTE GRAVES
BJACH PAO

FORT POLK, La. — At 7 a.m. March 19, as the day shift assumed their duties, MHS GENESIS became the new modernized electronic health record for the beneficiaries of Fort Polk's Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital.

According to the Defense Health Agency, MHS GENESIS replaced several Department of Defense legacy healthcare systems supporting the availability of electronic health records for more than 9.5 million DoD beneficiaries and nearly 205,000 Military Health System personnel globally.

Col. Aristotle Vaseliades, hospital commander, said the full transition will take some time as BJACH staff and providers learn new workflows.

"On Saturday morning, a mother in labor arrived at our Labor, Delivery and Postpartum department, we had a patient in our mixed medical surgical department and normal weekend trauma and emergencies gave our staff the opportunity to use the system live in real time," he said. "As we prepared for 'go live' we also invited patients to work through our outpatient clinics. We had patients arrive at different departments for periodic health assessments, knee pain, immunizations, pharmacy and lab work. It went pretty smoothly minus a few bumps in the road which our information management department immediately fixed."

Vaseliades said the MHS GENESIS "go live" at BJACH went well thanks in large part to the training and preparation of the hospital staff.



Soldiers and civilian employees at Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital "flipped the switch" to MHS GENESIS at the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk March 19. MHS GENESIS is the new modernized electronic health record that brings together inpatient and outpatient solutions connecting medical and dental information from the point of injury to the military treatment facility worldwide.

JEAN CLAVETTE GRAVES/BJACH

"Our IMD team has done an amazing job," he said. "They've rolled out nearly 3,000 pieces of equipment, conducted 176 training events for our staff and run countless miles of computer cable to install new ports and ensure connectivity for all MHS GENESIS equipment."

Vaseliades reminds everyone to be patient with the staff during the MHS GENESIS transition.

"It is going to take time to get everyone comfortable and confident with the new system," he said. "What we've noticed is that a normal

20 minute appointment will take close to an hour to complete."

Col. Sam Smith, Fort Polk garrison commander, was invited to help test outpatient capabilities as MHS GENESIS went live.

"The staff at BJACH was phenomenal, as always," he said. "The providers, nurses and techs were learning to navigate the new process and a new system which made things take longer, however they were able to identify workflow issues they are now able to mitigate

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Therapists

Continued from page 5

Dukes said medics are integrated into the unit and are often approached with medical concerns from their fellow Soldiers.

"Continued development of diagnostic skills aids the medic's ability to triage, treat and refer their battle buddies effectively," she said. "This improves the communication with higher echelons ensuring timeliness of care and improved patient outcomes."

Spc. Madeline Bryan, combat medic, 1st Battalion, 509th Infantry Regiment, said she learned valuable information that she will apply to her assessment of Soldiers at sick call and in a field environment.

"This is the best training I've received in the Army," she said.

Army physical therapy specialists from BJACH also participated in the training to complete individual critical task list requirements.

Williams said Soldiers in medical military

occupational specialties have ICTLs that they must complete annually and the training was designed to ensure they completed the requirement. "Physical therapy specialists can work either in a fixed facility like BJACH or in a field hospital," he said.

"They will administer the treatment plan recommended by me or one of our physical therapists, promote physical fitness and provide instructions to patients on how to prevent injuries."

Williams said most people get into allied health professions to help others and this training will better equip Soldiers on how to do that from a physical therapy perspective.

Nine participants took part in the two-day training event from three separate units. Due to the positive feedback, the rehabilitation team plans to make this a training available quarterly.



Maj. Anthony Williams, chief, Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital Rehabilitation Department, quizzes Spc. Madeleine Bryan, combat medic, 1st Battalion, 509th Infantry Regiment on proper triage and assessing injuries.

JEAN CLAVETTE GRAVES, BJACH

Drivers should be aware of some **ACP** changes in hours of operation

DES

FORT POLK, La. — The Fort Polk community should take note of the following changes to Access Control Points taking place on Fort Polk as of April 11.

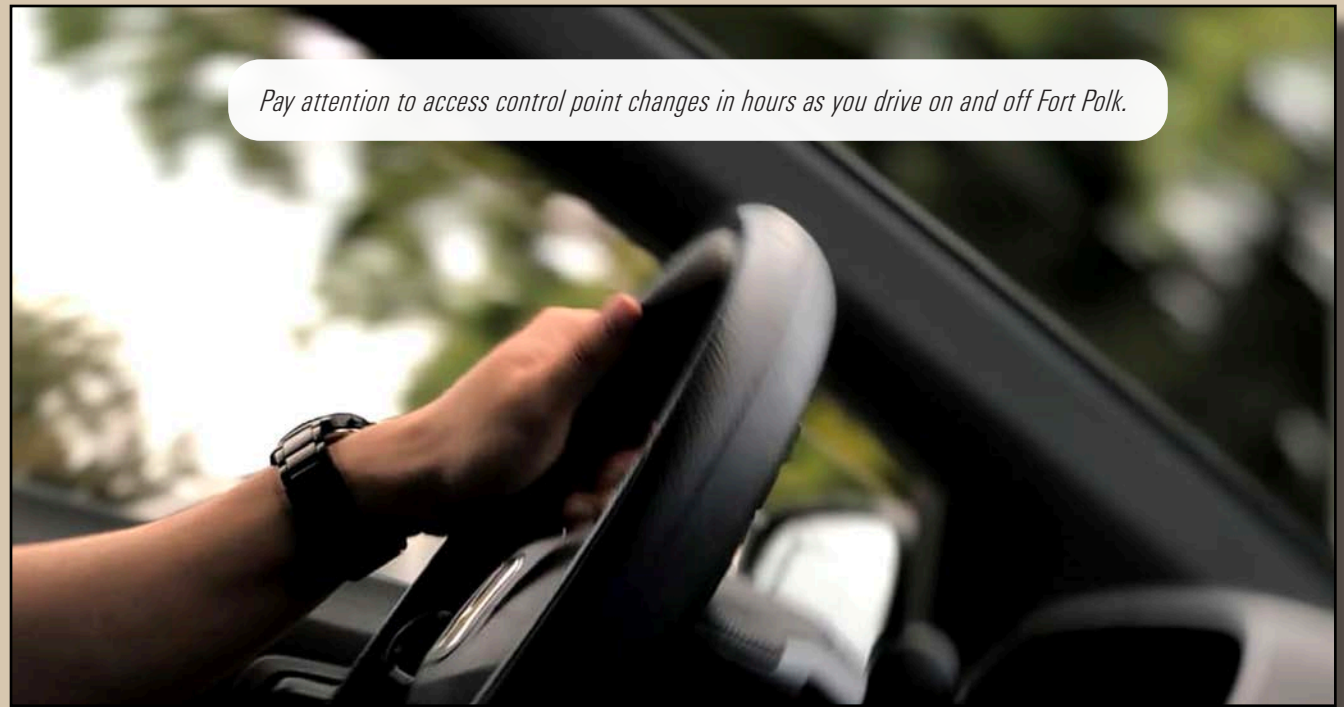
• **ACP 5 (La. Hwy 467 — south/post office gate)** — For a limited time, April 11-May 6, ACP 5's operational hours will be reduced Monday-Friday from 6 a.m.-6 p.m., Saturday 9 a.m.-4 p.m. and closed on federal holidays. The senior commander has determined the need to reevaluate the traffic demand of ACP 5 with reduced operational hours in a follow-up traffic study.

The results of the study will help determine the total traffic volume and demand, which influences manning and ACP hours.

Operational units that need access to training areas may contact DES at usarmy.polk.im-com.mesg.des-psi@army.mil or call (337) 531-1159/6988.

• **ACP 6 (Chaffee gate)** — The gate will see changes to weekend hours — opening Saturdays from 10 a.m.-6 p.m. and closed Sundays and federal holidays beginning April 11. This action is the result of the installation wide traffic study, which demonstrated a tapered demand after 10 a.m. and little to no activity after 6 p.m. on Saturdays.

There are no changes to the weekday operations for ACP 6, which will remain open Mon-



day-Friday from 5 a.m.-9 p.m.

• **ACP 8 (Joint Readiness Training Center box gate)** — The gate will be closed indefinitely, Monday-Sunday and federal holidays, as of April 11. The action is also the result of the installation wide traffic study, which demonstrated low traffic volume.

The following are Fort Polk ACP hours, including those with changes taking place April 11:

• **ACP 1 (main gate/ Louisiana Ave.)** — open 24/7 and on all federal holidays

• **ACP 2 — (Parkway gate)** open 5 a.m.-9

p.m. Monday-Friday; closed on Saturday and Sunday and federal holidays

• **ACP 5 (La. Hwy 467 south/post office gate)** — open 6 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday-Friday; open Saturday from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. and closed on federal holidays

• **ACP 6 (Chaffee gate)** — open 5 a.m.-9 p.m. Monday-Friday; Saturday 10 a.m.-6 p.m. and closed on federal holidays

• **ACP 7 (Alligator Lake gate)** — open 24/7 and on all federal holidays

• **ACP 8 (JRTC box gate)** — closed beginning April 11

MHS GENESIS

Continued from page 6

and work on.”

Smith said in the long term MHS GENESIS will be a good thing for quality of life.

“Long term this system will create efficiency and improve communication not only in our hospital but across the entire Military Health System,” he said. “However until the system is fully functioning as designed there will be some increased wait times that our Soldiers and Families are not currently used to.”

Smith said BJACH provides great quality of care to Soldiers, Families and retirees in the community and MHS GENESIS is a great technological step forward.

Col. Daniel Cash, deputy commander for clinical services, said rebuilding patient records is the biggest challenge in the deployment of MHS GENESIS.

“Not all information from the legacy systems is pulled over into MHS GENESIS so we are updating medical records at each patient's initial visit post ‘go live,’” he said. “Patients and beneficiaries should come to their first appointments prepared to give a little historical background on their medical history in order to populate the new system.”



JEAN CLAVETTE GRAVES/BJACH

Pfc. Alex Baez, 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division and Sofia De La Vega were the first parents to give birth at Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital March 19 during the MHS GENESIS transition at the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk. Pictured with the new Family are Col. Aristotle Vaseliades, BJACH Commander (center), and Command Sgt. Major Shavonda Devereaux (left). BJACH command presented the Family with a onesie embossed with the MHS GENESIS logo on it to mark the historic occasion.

Cash said having the team come in on Saturday was a good exercise to identify and alleviate any potential issues that might arise during the week.

MHS GENESIS enables the application of standardized workflows, integrated healthcare delivery and data standards for the improved and secure electronic exchange of medical and

patient data. The program has been deploying across the MHS in waves that began in the Pacific Northwest in 2017. March 19, Wave Bragg and Wave Hood, which BJACH was a part of, was the largest wave thus far. As more and more military treatment facilities begin using MHS GENESIS the better it will work for all beneficiaries.

Main Post Chapel celebrates new steeple with **dedication** ceremony

By **SpC. KELLY ACEVEDO**
Public affairs specialist

FORT POLK, La. — The Main Post Chapel's steeple was blown off in August 2020, due to Hurricane Laura. A new steeple was put in place Nov. 2, 2021. The new steeple comes with features that will not only bring the community together, but be a beacon to remind them that the dark moments they find themselves in are temporary. Chap. (Col.) Scott Hammond, garrison chaplain, said, "When we lose something He (God) gives us something that is more."

In celebration of the new steeple, a dedication ceremony was held March 16. The event was hosted by Chap. (Lt. Col.) Kenneth Godwin, deputy garrison chaplain. The Catholic women of the Chapel, religious support teams and unit ministry teams across Fort Polk gathered to commemorate a new beginning for the church.

Brig. Gen. David Doyle, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk commanding general, said he recognized the importance of the chapel and steeple to Fort Polk as a symbol that will continue to bring the community together.

"It's seen a host of weddings, memorial services, meetings and worship services. This chapel, along with the steeple, has been the anchor for this installation for fifty years," he said.

Doyle said Hurricane Laura delivered some heavy blows to Fort Polk, one of those blows took the steeple, lifted it off the building and tossed it aside.

"We were able to determine that replacing the steeple was both doable and an important requirement for our post," he said.

Doyle commended the hard work of the religious support and unit ministry teams, Directorate of Public Works and everyone else who made the replacement process possible in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hammond reflected on the events that took place the night of the hurricane and shared how the church was used as a place of refuge, comparing the steeple to a light house that people turn to when it storms.

"Our chapel was a safe haven. We had 15-20 people sleeping on the pews during that incredible night. That's really what a chapel should be about. It should be a place of refuge, a safe house. It didn't matter what their backgrounds were, they were welcomed here," he said. "This church is a safe haven where people can come to weather any storm — physical, spiritual or emotional," said Hammond.

When asked how he felt about the steeple being replaced, Hammond said he felt supported by the command team considering the steeple was on the list of priorities.

"I feel really blessed that we have such great support from the command. I feel blessed and



Chap. (Lt. Col.) Kenneth Godwin, deputy garrison chaplain, says a few words at the Fort Polk Main Post Chapel's steeple dedication ceremony held March 16.

SPC. KELLY ACEVEDO/PAO



The steeple after Hurricane Laura tore through Fort Polk.



The new steeple after it was placed on the roof of the Main Post Chapel Nov. 2, 2021.

CHUCK CANNON/GUARDIAN

happy to have a new steeple for the church regardless of the way we lost the old steeple," he said. "This shows how when God removes something, he gives us something even more. This is so much bigger and nicer than what we had. It's wonderful that we can broadcast more to touch the entire community," he said.

Godwin then gave a demonstration of the carillon bells.

"Due to modern advances, we are able to reproduce the sounds that carillons have made in church steeples for centuries. Going back as far as the 14th century, traditional church bells were rung for many purposes including time keeping, warnings or celebrations," he said.

Demonstrations of the Army chime, Ma-

rine chime, Navy chime, Air Force chime and holiday chimes were played to showcase the church's new sound system.

"The sound produced from these sound systems is very life like and can be programmed for specific needs."

Godwin said he was here when Hurricane Laura hit and the steeple came down.

"It was a horrific scene. So it feels really good to have it back up. It's a symbol of hope and recovery. I hope it means the same for the community," Godwin said.

The steeple comes with a lifelike electronic bell system containing 750 chimes. The bells will be played every day at noon, loud enough for anyone passing by the church to hear.

JRTC, Fort Polk honors women who break barriers, lead way

By **CHRISTY GRAHAM**
Public affairs specialist

FORT POLK, La. — It's Women's History Month, and for the U.S. Army, it's a great time to reflect on women's contributions and service. It's a time to honor and highlight the accomplishments of women who've shaped the military and nation, past and present.

Women are front-line Soldiers and leaders, they serve as Department of the Army civilians; they are also spouses, mothers and sisters who constitute support networks for countless troops.

The Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk honors all women for their service, support and sacrifices which protect the freedoms and liberties paramount to all Americans.

This month, the JRTC and Fort Polk celebrated high-achieving female Soldiers and DA civilians that serve on the installation by highlighting their accomplishments and inspirations.

Maj. Maria Carver, 46th Engineer Battalion executive officer, is one such female. Carver said that Women's History Month is a good time to remember all the females that had to struggle throughout history to open pathways for current generations of women to succeed.

"I've had phenomenal leaders that have never held me back because I'm a female," she said.

"I see myself as a Soldier that just happens to be a female, and I think that anything my male counterparts do, I will do. To some degree, I feel like I have to do things better, but that's because of my personality — not because I'm a female. I want to do it better than the person next to me, not necessarily the guy next to me," she said.

Women are an integral part of the military because they bring differing perspectives when solving problems, Carver said.

"When you have a room full of just males, you're going to miss a perspective. The more diversity you can bring into a room to solve a problem, the better your solution will become," she said.

Sgt. Quiana Whitehead, Enlisted Essential Personnel Services and G1 floor non-commissioned officer-in-charge, oversees all plans and operations, personnel strength and actions and awards that come from JRTC and Fort Polk units.

Performing in various leadership roles, Whitehead said she's served as an S-1 NCO-IC since she was a private at Fort Wainwright, Alaska.

"I think it's important to have women in leadership positions, because it opens doors for women to put themselves out there, and it gives young female Soldiers someone to look up to and establishes goals for them to achieve."



Sgt. Mariah Nelson, 46th Engineer Battalion, serves as a combat engineer and team leader. Nelson recently completed the Advanced Leader Course and is working toward a promotion to staff sergeant, a rank held by only a few females in the U.S. Army serving as combat engineers.



Maj. Maria Carver, 46th Engineer Battalion executive officer, says diverse perspectives are essential to crafting effective and thoughtful solutions.

1st Lt. Kaelin Mercado, G-1 deputy, is responsible for multiple sections including essential personnel services, plans and operations, enlisted and officer strength management and specialty Army programs like Equal Opportunity and Ready Resilience.

Equality starts with treating others the way you want to be treated, said Mercado.

"I was taught you get what you give; and I think that goes hand-in-hand with two Army values — integrity and respect," she said.

"Women have made remarkable strides in combat arms positions, physical fitness and as leaders in high-ranking positions, which highlights the equality we have come so far in achieving," she said.

Amanda Pete, Department of Emergency Services Physical Security chief, said that women bring a lot to the fight.

"Many women are doing extraordinary

Please see **Women**, page 10

CHRISTY GRAHAM/GUARDIAN



March Walking Town Hall

Residents were able to share housing questions and concerns with installation leadership and housing officials at a Walking Town Hall, March 21, in the Maple Terrace housing area.



Women

Continued from page 9

things and paving the way for other awesome females to become leaders. For example, Victoria Gainey (security guard captain) did a fantastic job on the U.S. Army Forces Command Access Control Assessment. She worked well with others and put in so much effort to help shape the program and organization. I think she's a great example of how women are helping shape the future so more females can make a difference."

Sgt. Mariah Nelson, 573rd Clearance Company, 46th Eng Bn, is a combat engineer currently serving as a team leader.

Nelson said she just finished the Advanced Leaders Course and is working toward her next promotion to staff sergeant, which only a few females in the Army have achieved thus far in the combat engineer military-occupation specialty.

"This MOS just opened to females roughly 5 years ago, so now is the time where females are starting to become leaders in their units," she said.

Nelson said that any woman considering a career as a combat engineer should know that it isn't as hard as it looks.

"Take your time and learn to do your job well — you'll continue to advance and be successful. Just know that females can do this, and we're going to do this," she said.

When asked what women bring to the table in the service, Nelson said, "Women maneuver problems in a different way and that difference in perspective is important."

Cpl. Toymeisha Patterson, Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers president, said that Women's History Month is important to her because she feels women can get so caught up in being strong that they forget to give themselves credit and remember that their contributions are important.

"Every day, we overcome something that someone may have thought women can't do, but there's always that one female who sets the tone for the rest of us. It allows women to realize that if another female can do it, then they can do it too."

And having that representation is important, Patterson said. Seeing females accomplish their goals successfully can make the journey easier for another woman to strive for the same, she said.

"Us just being strong and strong minded — I know the future is going to be great."

Sgt. Quiana Whitehead, left, and 1st Lt. Kaelin Mercado, both serve in the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk G-1 and oversee various personnel actions and specialty Army programs for the installation.



CHRISTY GRAHAM/PAO

Celebrating women who led the way in honor of Women's History

By **KEVIN STUART**
Military Ombudsman

FORT POLK, La. — The story of women in America is one of strength, courage and perseverance. It's about women whose responses to inequities and other injustices helped shape our nation. As we continue to march strong, let's remember our past as we continue to shape the future.

From pre-colonial times to the present, women have made significant contributions to America and today's generation owes homage to the daring women with vision that preceded them. Those women have paved the way for others to follow and provided hope for America's future.

Many women have made contributions with exceptional achievements and have inspired their contemporaries to continue fighting for positive change.

The women are reflections of memorable moments in our country's history. Their stories celebrate the events that shaped America. They stood among our founders, leaders, scientists, inventors and famous artists. They played significant roles in important discoveries and inventions and led major causes and movements.

The stories of these women also tell the narrative of our accomplishments and aspirations, failures and frustrations. They speak of insights and intelligences as well as hope and humanity.

The power of their stories is not only about adversity, but optimism, resilience of spirit, inner strength, courage and vision.

Many women in our country have assumed roles that that were once the exclusive domain of men.

They have amassed expertise in domestic issues and influenced business and politics with new styles and leadership. Women are becoming social activists in Third World countries, overcoming health, education and welfare issues that threaten to disrupt the world economy.

The diversity of women in the United States is quite evident, but barriers to unity remain.

Our society is now realizing that equality does not diminish resources, but rather, enhances them. The United States would surely become a pluralistic society if our differences would be freely expressed and celebrated.

Exploring the history and positions of women in America helps us understand the human connections we share across generations. Celebrating women who pioneered our future further contributes to this process.

Some of the numerous women who have and continue to contribute to our nation include the following:



HARRIS



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COMMENTARY

- Harriet Tubman: First African-American woman to be honored on a U.S. stamp and soon to be on the \$20 dollar bill; worked for the U.S. Army as scout nurse and spy; led more than 300 slaves to freedom.
- Patsy Mink: First Asian American woman elected to Congress.
- Susan B. Anthony: Co-founded the Women's Suffrage Association and paved the way for women's right to vote.
- Ellen Ochoa: First Hispanic-American woman to go into space.
- Condoleeza Rice: First woman selected to serve as the National Security Advisor for the U.S.
- Sacajawea: Native-American woman who successfully guided the Lewis and Clark Expedition to the Pacific Northwest.
- Linda Chavez-Thompson: First woman elected to the AFL-CIO and was the highest ranking woman in the labor movement during the early 2000s.
- Dr. Mary E. Walker: Served as a contract doctor for the U.S. Army and the first and only female doctor in the military in any war to receive the Medal of Honor.
- Clara Maas: First contract nurse who con-

- tributed significantly to the study of yellow fever.
- Madeleine Albright: First female selected to serve as the U.S. Secretary of State
 - Clara Barton: Hospital nurse in the Civil and also the founder of the American Red Cross.
 - Wilma Mankiller: First Native-American woman appointed to chief in Cherokee history.
 - Mary Mcleod Bethune: Educator who founded Bethune Cookman College.
 - Eleanor Roosevelt: Devoted her life to see women gain representation in government and world affairs.
 - Sandra Day O'Connor: First woman to serve as a Supreme Court Justice.
 - Kamala Harris: First female vice president of the United States.
 - Mary Golden Ross: Outstanding mathematician and first Native American to serve as an aerospace engineer.
- Many women continue to challenge social traditions that had previously limited their potential. They have suffered, endured and yet triumphed. Women will continue to demonstrate their strength and determination while contributing for years to come.

Take note of **basketball** events from Fort Polk, beyond

By **Spc. KELLY ACEVEDO**

Public affairs specialist

FORT POLK, La. — With March comes basketball season.

Those who play the sport or enjoy watching professional and nonprofessional games, can attend events this spring. This month has been filled with a plethora of events for those on the installation.

Fort Polk has taken part in the basketball season by organizing teams to win the “Fort Polk and JRTC Company Level Basketball Championship.” On March 16, the championship was held at the Warrior Gym on post. Teams “Deadshot” and “Swagger” competed. Team Swagger won with a 9-point lead.

Swagger’s team captain, Sgt. Marcel Palmer from Hotel Forward Support Company, 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, was ecstatic about the win as he held the plaque and congratulated his teammates. “We were a little nervous,” he said, referring to the beginning of the second half when team Deadshot was ahead.

“But we stuck with the game plan and we pulled it out in the end.” When asked how they were going to celebrate, he said, “We are going to celebrate at the company. I’m excited. It’s a blessing, I got me one!”

Deadshot’s team captain, Spc. John Flores, from Veterinary Services, had some advice for his team after the loss. “We have to keep pushing. Next time we’ll score more and pass the ball more,” he said.

Viewers who enjoy watching professional basketball at home can attend games at the “Smoothie King Center” in New Orleans for a discounted price. Discounted tickets are offered by the New Orleans Pelicans for all active, reserve and retired military. “To show support for the brave men and women who have fought for our country,” the New Orleans Pelicans proudly offer ticket discounts to all active, reserve, and retired military. The discounted prices can be applied to any game and any amount of tickets,” according to the website.

Anyone wishing to take a team or squad-sized element to a game will be able to as well. For questions, contact Christopher Harpster at (504) 593-4756 or Chris.Harpster@Pelicans.com.

March Madness, the season, where college basketball teams play against each other is celebrated across the country with entertaining events for fans. The “Men’s



Teams play in the JRTC and Fort Polk basketball tournament March 16.



Final Four Fest” is held at the New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center. For groups of all ages, this public occasion takes place April 1-4.

“As you take your first steps through the doors, you’ll be greeted by a sports wonderland of interactive games, special celebrity and athlete appearances, autograph signings, and much more,” according to the website.

For more information or tickets, visit their website at: <https://www.ncaa.com/mens-final-four/fan-fest#overview>.

Watching exhibition basketball teams can also be entertaining. The Harlem Globetrotters visit Alexandria on March 31 at the Rapides Coliseum and Lake Charles on April 2 at the Civic Center Arena for

their “Spread Game Tour.” This family-friendly event includes a dunk contest, laugh-out-loud funny characters from Broadway, access to the star players, autographs, ankle-breaking moves, 4-point shots, rim-rattling dunks and more.

For more information on the event visit their site at: <https://www.harlemglobetrotters.com/world-tour/schedule/rapides-parish-coliseum/>.

With countless sports events occurring, fans can enjoy the season close to the installation.

Whether you’re a player of the sport or enjoy watching others play, take advantage of the season and all the activities offered!

Spc. KELLY ACEVEDO/BIACH



Soldiers **charged** for UCMJ violations

OSJA

FORT POLK, La. — The preamble to the Manual for Courts-Martial states, “The purpose of military law is to promote justice, to assist in maintaining good order and discipline in the armed forces, to promote efficiency and effectiveness in the military establishment, and thereby strengthen the national security of the United States.” At the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk, the commanding general and subordinate commanders take good order and discipline seriously.

Across Fort Polk, the following disciplinary issues continue to be prevalent: Driving under the influence of alcohol, wrongful use/possession of controlled substances, fraternization, sexual assault and underage drinking.

Below are the most recent examples of adverse legal actions for units within the Fort

Polk jurisdiction.

- Three Soldiers received permanently filed GOMORs for driving under the influence of alcohol.

- A staff sergeant assigned to 32nd Hospital Center received a Field Grade Article 15 for violating the Army’s sexual harassment and fraternization policies. They received a punishment of reduction to E-5, forfeiture of \$1,529 pay per month for one month, extra duty for 45 days, restriction for 45 days, and an oral reprimand.

- A private assigned to 317th Brigade Engineer Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, was separated from the service with an Other than Honorable discharge for abusive sexual contact. A discharge under Other than Honorable conditions results in a loss of all benefits and may cause significant difficulty finding civilian employment.

Briefs

Alabama Ave. closure

Beginning April 6, the segment of Alabama Avenue north of Louisiana Avenue will be closed for approximately 1-2 months. Motorists accessing facilities along Ninth, 10th, 11th, and 12th streets will be detoured to Mississippi Avenue. Fourth Street will remain open for through traffic. Facilities with access limited from Alabama Avenue will be accessed from Georgia Avenue with safe passage across the work zone. Georgia Avenue will be converted to two-way traffic during this closure.

Rough road conditions and loose aggregate are possible near these work zones. Motorists should anticipate traffic delays and pedestrians are encouraged to stay clear of work zones.

Prior to the April 6 closure, Georgia Avenue will return to one-way traffic south of Louisiana Avenue and the part of Alabama currently under construction will be open with the exception of the segment between 22nd Street and Maine Avenue.

519th bicycle clean up

Abandoned bicycles on the 519th Military Police Battalion footprint will be marked for collection and removal withing 45 days of marked notice.

If you own a bicycle at the 2450 22nd Street barracks, call to confirm that your bicycle has not been marked as abandoned as soon as possible. For more information call (513) 967-5620.

Fire marshal class

A fire marshal class is held the second Tuesday of each month at 9 a.m. in the Main Fire Station. The next class is April 12.

The Fort Polk Fire Prevention Division’s goal is to provide fire protection services to prevent loss of life or personal injuries and reduce property loss to the lowest attainable level consistent with mission and sound engineering and economic principles.

Contact fire inspector James McArthur for more information at (337) 531-0686 or (337) 378-9198.



Join Fort Polk Garrison in
STOMPING OUT SEXUAL ASSAULT STEP CHALLENGE
1-30 April

Prizes awarded for highest steps in each category

Compete in one of Two Categories
Individual or Team (5 Members Max)

Every Step You Take Toward Prevention Counts!

Scan to register before March 31



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3 GUN SHOOT

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APRIL 9
REGISTRATION 9AM-10AM
SAFETY BRIEF 10:15AM
FIRST SHOOT 10:30 AM

CATEGORIES
TEENS 14-18 (PARENTS REQUIRED ON SITE)
MALE 19 +
FEMALE 19 +

PLAQUES AWARDED TO 1ST, 2ND, & 3RD PARTICIPANTS **MUST** BRING THEIR OWN REGISTERED FIREARMS

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PER SHOOTER
PRE-REGISTRATION \$20
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(337) 531-7552