



Media Release

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Soldiers celebrate 376 years of Army service

FORT LEONARD WOOD, Mo. – Fort Leonard Wood Soldiers celebrated the Army National Guard’s 376th birthday Dec. 13 at the Maneuver Support Center of Excellence, Lincoln Hall Atrium.

The event recognizes the National Guard as America’s oldest military branch with roots dating back to 1636.

Brig. Gen. Roy Webb, Assistant Adjutant General – Joint and Maneuver Support Center of Excellence deputy commanding general for the Army National Guard, spoke during the event and said the members of the National Guard are a special crew who carry a great weight for our nation.

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He said he's proud to be a Citizen Soldier and put on the uniform, not just because he is part of the 8th largest Army in the world in terms of military strength, but because of its people and their countless acts of self-less service.

Webb cited events where the National Guard was there; from fighting alongside George Washington as he led the troops of the Revolutionary War into battle, to responding to disasters like the Great Flood of 1993.

Staff Sgt. Robert Behrens and Pvt. Galen Heathcock had the honor of cutting the cake as Fort Leonard Wood's oldest senior ranking and youngest junior ranking members of the National Guard.

In combination with the birthday, the National Guard Patriot Chopper was on display at several locations throughout the week, including the 43rd Adjutant General Battalion, the Main Post Exchange and the Maneuver Support Center of Excellence. The Patriot Chopper reflects the service and sacrifice of Citizen Soldiers and Airmen and bears the National Guard motto: "Always ready, always there."

In addition to the Patriot Chopper motorcycle, Soldiers wore period uniforms to reflect a particular era of National Guard history.

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The earliest version of the military organization known today as the National Guard came into existence with a direct declaration on December 13, 1636. On this date, the Massachusetts General Court in Salem, for the first time in the history of the North American continent, established that all able-bodied men between the ages of 16 and 60 were required to join the militia. The North, South and East Regiments were established. The decree excluded ministers and judges.

The National Guard has grown into a worldwide military force. Today, the Army National Guard has a force of more than 470,000 volunteers, with more than 25,000 currently mobilized and deployed around the world serving in 25 different countries. More than 490,000 Citizen Soldiers have mobilized and deployed in support of Overseas Contingency Operations, many of these warriors, more than twice.

At Fort Leonard Wood, the National Guard provides nearly 49 percent of the Army's Engineer Regiment; 48 percent of the Military Police Regiment; 37 percent of the Chemical Regiment; 100 percent of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Civil Support Team; and 75 percent of the Maneuver Enhancement Brigade force structure.

National Guard Soldiers and Airmen continue to bring to the uniform a wide array of civilian skills and talents such as: educators, elected officials, law-enforcement officers and construction workers. Today, Citizen Soldiers hold civilian jobs or attend college while maintaining their military training part time, always ready to defend the American way of life in the event of an emergency.

121213-A-WN220-001-2.jpg: Soldiers celebrate the Army National Guard's 376th birthday Dec. 13 at the National Guard Patriot Chopper display in Lincoln Hall Atrium. Members of Fort Leonard Wood had the rare opportunity to see the Patriot Chopper up close throughout the week in combination with the event. Army photo/Michael Curtis

121213-A-WN220-002-2.jpg: The National Guard Patriot Chopper display at Fort Leonard Wood's Lincoln Hall Atrium commemorates the Army National Guard's 376th birthday, which is officially celebrated Dec. 13. Visitors had the rare opportunity to see the Patriot Chopper up close and National Guard personnel were on hand to take photos. Army photo/Michael Curtis

121213-A-WN220-006-2.jpg: In combination with the National Guard's 376th birthday, the National Guard Patriot Chopper was on display at several locations on post including the 43rd Adjutant General Battalion, the Main Post Exchange and Lincoln Hall Atrium at the Maneuver Support Center of Excellence. The Patriot Chopper reflects the service and sacrifice of Citizen Soldiers and Airmen and bears the National Guard motto: "Always ready, always there." Army photo/Michael Curtis

121213-A-WN220-007-2.jpg: Citizen Soldiers wear period uniforms to reflect a particular era of history during Fort Leonard Wood's celebration of the National Guard's 376th birthday Dec. 13. Army photo/Michael Curtis

121213-A-WN220-009-2.jpg: Brig. Gen. Roy Webb, Assistant Adjutant General – Joint and Maneuver Support Center of Excellence deputy commanding general for the Army National Guard, speaks during the event held Dec. 13 in celebration of the Army National Guard's 376th birthday. The event recognizes

the National Guard as America's oldest military branch with roots dating back to 1636. Army photo/Michael Curtis

121213-A-WN220-011-2.jpg: Brig. Gen. Roy Webb, Assistant Adjutant General – Joint and Maneuver Support Center of Excellence deputy commanding general for the Army National Guard, speaks about the significance of the 376th Army National Guard Birthday Dec. 13 at the Maneuver Support Center of Excellence. Army photo/Michael Curtis

121213-A-WN220-012-2.jpg: As Fort Leonard Wood's oldest senior ranking and youngest junior ranking members of the National Guard, Staff Sgt. Robert Behrens and Pvt. Galen Heathcock had the honor of cutting the cake for the National Guard's 376th birthday observance Dec. 13 at the Maneuver Support Center of Excellence. The first piece of cake goes to the guest of honor. The second is given to the most senior representative, who in turn passes it on to the most junior representative, signifying the passing of experience and knowledge from the old to the young of our Army. Army photo/Michael Curtis