



FORGING THE

WARRIOR SPIRIT

The JRTC and Fort Polk Guardian

Vol. 48, No. 25

Home of Heroes @ Fort Polk, LA

June 25, 2021

JRTC leadership hosts 'State of JRTC, Fort Polk' event

By **CHUCK CANNON**
Public affairs and communications

FORT POLK, La. — FORT POLK, La. — Civic and governmental leaders from west central Louisiana gathered at the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk June 24 to learn the state of JRTC and Fort Polk and get a glimpse of what is planned in the future for the sprawling installation.

Brig. Gen. David Doyle, commanding general, JRTC and Fort Polk, began the event by introducing the tenant units on the JRTC and Fort Polk and their many unique roles. He also explained how the Soldier population on the installation swells or decreases based on rotations.

He then spoke about how JRTC and Fort Polk has a history of training Soldiers for combat throughout the world, from World War II to today's Afghanistan and Iraq battles.

He told those gathered that Fort Polk's No. 1 priority was "People First" and the importance of dialogue between civic and installation leaders. He then pointed out that Army leaders have said the JRTC and Fort Polk will remain a "vibrant location" for the Army.

"We're open for business," he said.

Doyle stressed the importance of "consis-



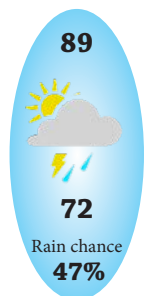
Local community leaders from Vernon, Beauregard and Rapides parishes, receive a briefing on equipment used by Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk Soldiers during a State of JRTC and Fort Polk event June 24.

tent partnerships" between Fort Polk and area communities, including political entities and schools. To that end, he said JRTC

and Fort Polk will continue to invite the surrounding communities to installation

Please see **JRTC**, page 5

Weekend weather



Inside the Guardian

FreedomFest.....3	Bugle calls.....9
Walking town hall.....6	Venomous snakes.....10
EFMB.....7	Power lifting.....11

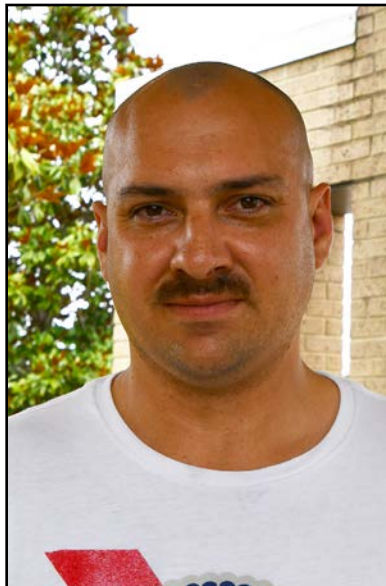
CHUCK CANNON/GUARDIAN

Viewpoint

In our view

Guardian staff asked the JRTC and Fort Polk community, "If you are angry or stressed, what is your go-to choice to decompress?"

Nicolas Caton: "I go to the lake and fish. It helps me get away and I don't have to think about anything."



Sgt. Alexander Harrington: "I work out. It's probably the best way to destress and it's a good way to stay in shape."



Spc. Ronney Ferrell: "I take all my stress, put it in a jar and tuck it away inside my head. I compartmentalize it."



Pvt. Noah Lewis: "I enjoy playing video games with my brothers online."



Melissa Mitchell: "I have a garage gym in my home and when I get overwhelmed, my outlet is to exercise."



Capt. Leigh Ostrander: "I like to listen to music and if the weather is right, I'll light a fire in my fire pit and just relax."



Guardian Editorial Staff

Brig. Gen. David S. Doyle
Joint Readiness Training Center
and Fort Polk commanding general
Col. Samuel P. Smith Jr.
Garrison commander

Public Affairs and Communications
Kavanaugh Breazeale
Kim Reischling
Chuck Cannon
Angie Thorne
Keith Houin
T.C. Bradford
Jeff England

Editorial Offices

Building 4919, Magnolia Street
Fort Polk, LA 71459-5060
Voice (337) 531-4033
Fax (337) 531-1401

Email: **Kimberly.K.Reischling.civ@mail.mil**

Fort Polk Homepage

home.army.mil/polk/

The Guardian, is an authorized publication for members of the U.S. Army. Contents of the Guardian are not necessarily official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, Department of Defense, Department of the Army or Fort Polk.

The Guardian is published weekly by the Public Affairs Office, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk.

The Guardian can be found on the JRTC and Fort Polk web site at **home.army.mil/polk** and the JRTC and Fort Polk Facebook page at **@JRTCandFortPolk/**. Guardian archives can also be found on the JRTC and Fort Polk website.

Links to the Guardian are also included in all-users emails to government email users and by request to non-military units. To be included on all-users messages email **kimberly.k.reischling.civ@mail.mil**.

All editorial content of the Guardian is prepared, edited, provided and approved by the Public Affairs Office, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk.

For more information on Fort Polk units and happenings visit the following Facebook pages: **@JRTCOperationsGrp**, **@BayneJonesACH** or **@fortpolkmwr**.

Briefs

Deployment exercise

The 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division embarks on an exercise that will have troops moving equipment and supplies to Fort McCoy, Wisconsin. This Emergency Deployment Readiness Exercise (EDRE) is an opportunity for the unit to perform procedures associated with mobilizing Soldiers and deploy worldwide on short notice.

ACP hours

Access Control Point 6 (Chaffee Road at North Fort housing) will resume normal hours Monday from 5 a.m.–9 p.m. Monday through Friday and will be closed on weekends. ACP 7 (Alligator Lake) resumes normal operations Monday 24 hours per day, seven days per week to all traffic.

Alabama closed

The segment of Alabama Avenue south of Louisiana Avenue is closed, as of June 24, for two-three weeks.

Motorists accessing facilities along 14th, 15th, 16th, 22nd and 23rd streets will be detoured through Mississippi Avenue. Bellrichard Avenue and 23rd Street will remain open for through traffic. Facilities with access limited to Alabama Avenue will be accessed off of Georgia Avenue with flaggers providing safe passage across the work zone.

The segment of Alabama Avenue north of Louisiana Avenue will consist of work primarily on the west travel lane and along the adjacent curbing and sidewalk with minor saw-cutting operations ongoing on the roadway. Primary construction impacts will be single lane closures with flagging operations around the work zone.

Rough road conditions and loose aggregate are possible near these work zones.

Motorists should anticipate traffic delays due to closures and flagging operations around the work zones and pedestrians are encouraged to stay clear of work zones.

Please see **briefs**, page 8

FREE & OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
JRTC & Fort Polk Present
Opening Act
Trent Cowie
2021 FREEDOM FEST
4TH 5PM On Headquarters Field
RANDALL KING
LIVE
Proudly Sponsored By
BENOIT PAPA JOHN'S SWB Corvias
K&R FURNITURE NSU KUMX FM MIX 106.7 GEICO FirstCommand Taboo
Sponsorship Does Not Imply Endorsement By The U.S. Army, And/ Or By JRTC & Fort Polk
Event & Parking Information Found At
POLK.ARMYMWR.COM OR
FACEBOOK.COM/FORTPOLKMWR
FIREWORKS | FOOD VENDORS | STATIC DISPLAYS

Get ready to attend Freedom Fest 2021

GUARDIAN STAFF

FORT POLK, La. — Fort Polk's Directorate of Family Morale, Welfare and Recreation hosts Freedom Fest 2021 July 4 at Headquarters Field, 1321 Corps Road. The event is open to the public.

Country artist Randall King will headline the event. King, according to www.allmusic.com, is a throwback to classic country such as George Strait and Alan Jackson. King grew up in the small west Texas town of Hereford. While at Texas Tech, he decided to start playing music. Two years later, he transferred to South Plains College where he studied music production while playing music on the side.

He formed an Americana group called the Randall King Band, which released an album called Old Dirt Road before splitting. King then decided to go it alone and sing traditional country. He released the album "Another Bullet" in 2016. Two years later, he issued "Tuggin' on My Heartstrings," the first single from his first full-length album.

The Trent Cowie Band performs Texas country music with a taste of rock and roll. Hailing from southeast Texas, their live shows pump high doses of energy into the room with outlaw country guitar riffs and easy on the ears vocals.

Gates open at 5 p.m. Visitors will be able to access Fort Polk from gate 1 on Louisiana Ave., gate 2 on University Parkway, gate 4 on Lookout Road and gate 7 on Avenue K. All visitors will be vetted at the gate.

Parking areas include Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital, 1585 3rd Street, where you can park and walk to Headquarters Field, or you can park and shuttle from the Commissary parking lot, located at 7445 La. Hwy, the Post Exchange parking area, located at 7742 Colorado Ave., Allen Memorial Library, 7460 Colorado Ave. or the Mission Training Center, 6235 Georgia Ave. Shuttle buses begin running at 5 p.m. from all locations. Shuttle buses are air-conditioned. On post residents are encouraged to walk.

The 1st Battalion, 5th Aviation Regiment will kick things off as they perform a fly over during the National Anthem at 6:30 p.m. and special guest Trent Cowie takes the stage at 7 p.m.

If you plan to attend, the following health, safety and security guidelines must be followed:

- The personal belongings of all persons entering a federal installation are subject to search at the event entry point. No backpacks or large bags.

Please see **Freedom Fest**, page 8

Army News

Change to policy allows transgender Soldiers to serve openly

By DEVON L. SUITS
Army News Service

WASHINGTON — Transgender personnel and individuals with gender dysphoria who meet the Army's standards for military service can now serve openly in their self-identified gender, according to a new policy approved this month by the Army secretary.

Army directive 2021-22 changes the service's retention, separation, in-service transition and medical care standards for transgender personnel and refines entry criteria for individuals with gender dysphoria, following Department of Defense guidance, said Maj. Gen. Douglas F. Stitt, military personnel management director.

"People are the strength of our Army," Stitt said Tuesday. "Our ability to assess and retain qualified personnel provides a more diverse and stronger Army, enhancing readiness."

A Soldier's gender identity will no longer be a basis for involuntary separation or military discharge, denied reenlistment or continuation of service, or subjected to adverse action or mistreatment, the policy states.

The updated policy will apply to all active-duty, National Guard and Reserve Soldiers, U.S. Military Academy cadets and contracted Reserve Officer Training Corps cadets. Military medical providers will provide medically necessary care for transgender Soldiers following guidelines by the assistant secretary of defense for health affairs and the Army surgeon general, Stitt said.

"Every Soldier is different," Stitt said. "When a military medical provider gives diagnosis of gender dysphoria, that Soldier will need to sit down with their chain of command and medical provider to determine what is medically necessary for an effective transition."

Commanders should approach a Soldier's gender transition in the same way they approach any Soldier receiving any other necessary medical treatment, the policy reads. Leaders must also do their part to minimize the impact on mission readiness, all while balancing the Army's needs with the desires of the transitioning individual.

Once a Soldier is stable in their self-identified gender, they can then request to change their gender marker in the Defense



Soldiers with the 603rd Aviation Support Battalion participate in a drill and ceremony competition at Hunter Army Airfield, Ga., June 4.

U.S. ARMY PHOTO

Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System, or DEERS. Once the change is complete, all policies and standards for that given gender will then apply, the policy reads.

Individuals will then be expected to meet all uniform, grooming, body composition, physical readiness and drug-testing standards. Similarly, a Soldier's identified gender in DEERS will permit them to access gender-specific facilities, such as bathrooms and showers.

Recruitment

Transgender personnel and individuals with gender dysphoria must meet all applicable medical accession standards to gain entry into the Army, the policy reads.

Before the updated Army guidelines, individuals with gender dysphoria were presumptively disqualified unless stable for 36 months and willing and able to serve in their biological sex, Stitt said. Under the new guidance, this duration to meet standards is now 18 months of stability and the person can serve in their self-identified gender.

"This gives the Army a bigger applicant pool to consider," Stitt said.

Applicants must present documents to validate their self-identified gender, such as a birth certificate, U.S. passport, or a certified copy of a court order reflecting one's self-identified gender, the policy states.

If an individual cannot meet a medical criterion, they can request a waiver for eval-

uation under DoD and Army policies. The standard for approval will be determined individually and must be in the Army's best interests after a thorough review of the individual's potential.

Equal opportunity

The Army must continue to operate in an environment free from harassment and unlawful discrimination based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity and sexual orientation, Stitt said. Training on the new policy will be necessary to ensure proper integration throughout the force.

Over the next year, the service will launch a three-tiered training model, starting with the Judge Advocate General, Medical and Chaplain Corps and Inspector General personnel, Stitt added.

The second tier will follow shortly after and provide education to leaders and supervisors, followed by unit-level training during the third tier.

All training on the updated policy must be completed no later than June 25, 2022, Stitt said. The Army will then have until September 2022 to adjust existing instruction blocks to train personnel on gender dysphoria and any changes to DoD and Army transgender policies.

"Department of Defense policy allows transgender personnel to serve openly," Stitt said. "Now we have the Army policy to support it."

Continued from page 1

activities such as the Dye Hard Color run, 5K Warrior Swamp Run, Amazing Race, Snowflake Festival, Freedom Fest, Movie Nights and the Louisiana Hayride.

Doyle addressed Quality of Life efforts on Fort Polk, including improvements to housing, barracks, water systems and roads, as well as the addition of a new car and pet wash, lighted walking trails, renovated bowling alley, basketball courts and 50-meter pool.

"We have 12 major Quality of Life projects this year, and 24 more during the next two years," he said. "It's all because we want to take care of our Soldiers and Families.

Following Doyle's briefing, the visitors visited static displays highlighting units on post, toured the barracks under renovation and enjoyed lunch at the Patriot Inn Restaurant.

Leesville Mayor Rick Allen said in his role as mayor and chairman of Fort Polk Progress, it is important to know what Doyle's priorities are.

"Those priorities often change when leadership changes," Allen said. "We need to understand what his priorities are so we know what our priorities are. We'll get more done together than we will separate. It's important we have these kind of events so we can make sure we're pulling the wagon the same way."

Allen said Doyle's briefing eased some of his concerns.

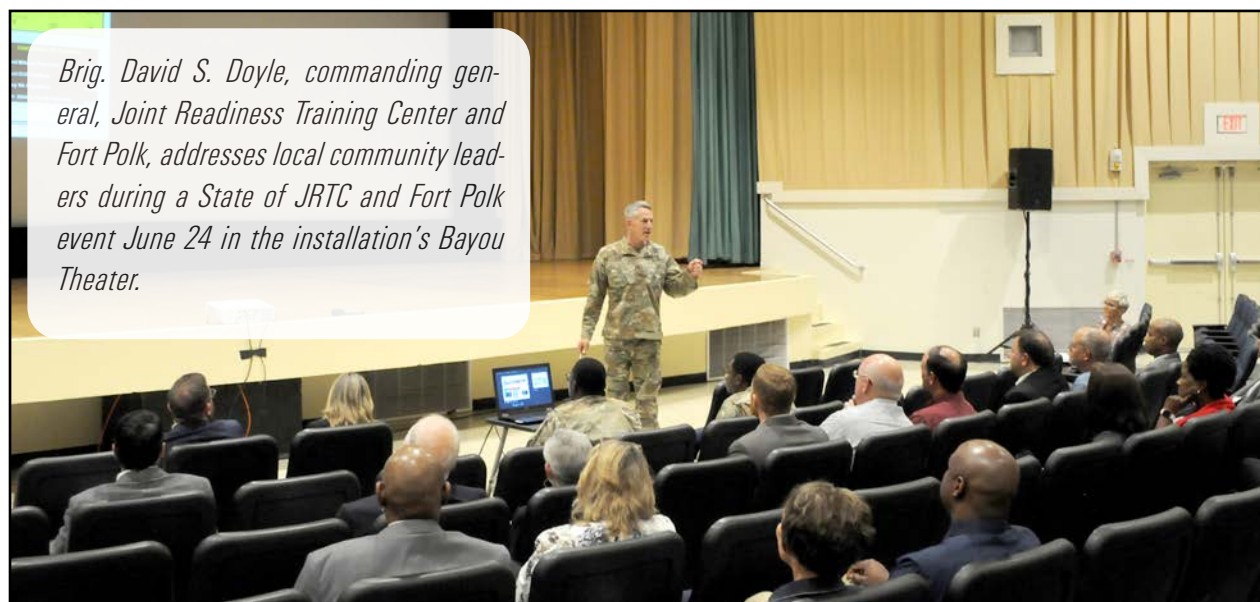
"I was concerned about rotations in the future, and according to the slide the CG showed us today, we're going to maintain a level that I feel like we can deal with," he said.

Allen stressed the importance of the JRTC and Fort Polk to the local economy.

"We're conducting another economic impact study to update the one we currently have," he said. "Our last economic impact study (showed Fort Polk's impact) was \$1.4 billion. We expect that number has increased. It's important we know exactly what that number is."

That updated study is needed to make sure Louisiana's political leadership understands Fort Polk's importance to Vernon Parish and the surrounding area and they continue to fund projects like the annexation of Fort Polk's Entrance Road into the City of Leesville, said Allen.

"The infrastructure on that road is important to the Soldiers at Fort Polk and it's crucial for us to be able to get more busi-



nesses on Entrance Road to serve those Soldiers," Allen said.

Logan Morris, CEO of the Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce, said it's important to strengthen the relationship between the local community and the installation.

"Leesville and Vernon Parish are home to the best hometown in the Army," he said. "It's important to those of us who are talking to our Congressional delegation to see first-hand the importance of the mission of Fort Polk."

Morris said he was encouraged by Doyle's remarks.

"After listening to General Doyle, the future of Fort Polk seems very bright," he said. "We've got an excellent leadership team, both at Fort Polk and in the community. I believe it's a dream team right now and everything looks great for Fort Polk."

Gaston Coco, director of Business Development for Longleaf Hospital, said events such as the State of JRTC and Fort Polk are important.

"I like these events because it allows me to see the faces of those who are defending this country, and by getting out here, it gives them a face to see also," he said. "I thought what General Doyle had to say was great and encouraging. He wants to hear from us and hear our ideas."

Following the event, Doyle said it's important to maintain close relationships with community partners. "Today was an opportunity to provide our community leaders with an update on JRTC and Fort Polk, interact with Soldiers and strengthen our community partnerships," he said. "We're proud to be a part of this community and strive to be good neighbors."

Maple Terrace residents converse with command team during walking town hall



A walking town hall took place in the Maple Terrace housing area June 22. Residents were able to share housing questions and concerns with members of the command group and housing officials. The town hall ended at the Maple Community Center, where members of the community engaged in open discussion with each other and the command. **Above:** Sgt. Jalen Green, 1st Battalion (Airborne), 509th Infantry Regiment, talks to Brig. Gen. David S. Doyle, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk commanding general, about his housing experience.



Alejandro Lopez Torres, (right) talks about his impressions of living in Fort Polk housing with Brig. Gen. David S. Doyle, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk commanding general, June 22. As they finish up, Doyle waves goodbye to Jayleen Lopez Torres, 2.

ANGIE THORNE/GUARDIAN



Col. Samuel P. Smith Jr., Fort Polk garrison commander, converses with Staff Sgt. Michael Mills, 2nd Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, about his housing quality of life during the walking town hall held June 22.



The walking town hall held June 22 ended at the Maple Terrace Community Center. Brig. Gen. David S. Doyle, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk commanding general, and the Fort Polk command team talked to residents like Russell Fillion, (right) who came prepared with a list of housing concerns he wanted to discuss. Waiting patiently for their turn to talk with command were 2nd Lt. Parrish West, 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, and his spouse, Sophie Hsu, along with their dog Mishko (center).



Soldiers earn

Congratulations to (from left to right) Capt. William Clodfelther, biochemist/physiologist, Dwight D. Eisenhower Army Medical Center, Fort Gordon, Ga.; Sgt. Jose Garcia, combat medic, 1st Battalion, 509th Infantry Regiment, Fort Polk, La.; Spc. Coleman Coomer, combat medic, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, Fort Polk, La.; and Staff Sgt. Katherine Anderson, combat medic, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Security Force Assistance Brigade, Fort Hood, Texas.

These Soldiers completed the arduous tasks required to earn the coveted Expert Field Medical Badge after a week of intense competition held at the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk. They were recognized for their accomplishment at a ceremony held June 18 at Fort Polk's Warrior Field. Their achievement sets them apart from their peers as experts in their profession and symbolizes the dedication and drive necessary to be the best.

Fishing

ADVENTURE

July 6 - 9 | 8:30 - 10:30AM

Ages 8 - 16YRS | \$35PER PARTICIPANT

Perez Field



UNITED STATES ARMY
CHILD & YOUTH SERVICES

**MUST BE REGISTERED WITH CYS
CALL 337-531-6004 NO REFUND
BRING YOUR OWN FISHING POLE, LIVE
BATE IS PROVIDED**

Freedom Fest

Continued from page 3

- Coolers and similar containers are not allowed.
- Outside food and drink, including alcohol, are not permitted inside the gates. Glass bottles are not allowed. Refreshments and food are available for purchase.
- Beer is served only to patrons displaying an alcohol wristband. Receive a wristband at the designated area.
- No weapons are permitted. (Includes small knives, leatherman tools)
- No cannabis or recreational drugs are permitted.
- No pets (except service animals), glass, fireworks or Frisbees.
- No tents or canopies.
- No professional cameras with telephoto lenses.
- Unruly behavior will not be tolerated.
- Military police will staff the event to maintain safety and security.

Attendees can bring blankets, lawn chairs, cash (limited ATMs will be on-site), sunscreen, strollers and small insulated coolers for infant formula or water and diaper bags.

For more information call 531.1959 or visit Fort Polk MWR on Facebook.



Briefs

Continued from page 3

Texas closure

The project to repair the failed section of Texas Avenue, just north of Cavanaugh Road, continues through July 10. Wheeled vehicles and civilian traffic should follow the detour route.

There will be limited access to Cavanaugh Road. Tracked vehicles will not use Chaffee Road and must bypass the construction area on Texas Avenue by detouring on Cavanaugh Road.

BJACH appointments

Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital has COVID-19 vaccine appointments available every Tuesday-Thursday. Soldiers, Family members, retirees and beneficiaries, 18 and older, interested in volunteering for the COVID-19 vaccine are encouraged to contact the appointment line at 337.531.3011 or self-book at www.tricareonline.com.

SAFETY CORNER

NATIONAL LIGHTNING SAFETY AWARENESS WEEK

Last full week in June

What to do if you're caught outside during a lightning storm

Avoid tall objects like trees and utility poles



Seek shelter in low-lying areas



Avoid bodies of water



Avoid downed power lines



#LightningSafetyAwarenessWeek

Take note when bugle calls announce activities on military posts

By **CHUCK CANNON**

Public affairs and communications

FORT POLK, La. — The United States Army is steeped in tradition, from saluting to drill and ceremony. Most of the traditions were instilled to develop discipline, such as drill and ceremonies which according to Field Manual 3-21.5, “enables a commander or NCO to move his unit from one place to another in an orderly manner, to aid in disciplinary training by instilling habits of precision and response to the leader’s orders, and to provide for the development of all Soldiers in the practice of commanding troops.”

As for saluting, it is nothing more than an exchange of greetings between enlisted and warrant or commissioned officers, or between officers of different ranks.

Another Army tradition is bugle calls — musical signals prescribed by the commander that announce scheduled and sometimes non-scheduled events on an Army installation. There is a list of 25 daily and nine Sunday bugle calls, from First Call to Taps. Most are used during basic training and advanced individual training or other schools.

The following bugle calls are sounded daily at the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk:

“Reveille,” “Retreat” and “To The Colors,” and Taps.

“Reveille”

“Reveille” was originally intended to awaken Soldiers at sunrise. At the JRTC and Fort Polk it is played at 6:30 a.m., typically when Soldiers are formed for physical training, and coinciding with the raising of the National Colors.

According to Army Regulation 600-25, when hearing “Reveille,” Soldiers outdoors in uniform are required to come to attention and present a salute, either to the flag or in the direction of the music if the flag is not visible.

While in formation, Soldiers are brought to the position of attention and present arms during “Reveille.”

Soldiers not in uniform should come to attention and place their right hand over their heart at the first notes of “Reveille.” If wearing a hat, remove it with your right hand and hold it at the left shoulder while your right hand is over the heart.

Civilian personnel should stand with



their right hand over their heart.

Veterans and Soldiers not in uniform may render a salute.

“Retreat”

“Retreat” and “To the Colors” are played at 5 p.m. on Fort Polk and coincide with the lowering of the United States flag at the end of the day. “Retreat” should be treated the same as “Reveille.”

When you hear the first note of “Retreat” come to the position of attention and face the flag (or the direction the music is coming from if the flag is not visible).

Service members in uniform render the hand salute at the first note of “To the Colors.” Normally the flag is faced when saluting unless duty requires you to face in another direction.

At the conclusion of the music, resume your regular duties.

When in a formation or a group, the senior service member present will call the group to “Attention” and then “Parade, Rest” at the first note of “Retreat.” At the first note of “To the Colors” the senior service member will call the group to “Attention” and “Present, Arms.” At the conclusion the senior service member will give the command “Order, Arms.” Those in civilian clothing will remove their headgear and place their right hand over their heart at the first note of “To the Colors.” Service

members not in uniform and retired service members may render the hand salute if they choose.

If driving, motorists should stop their vehicles and render the proper courtesy as long as it does not present a traffic hazard. Disabled persons and small children are not required to exit their vehicles. If in a group on in a military vehicle or bus, only the senior occupant exits the vehicle and renders honors.

Taps

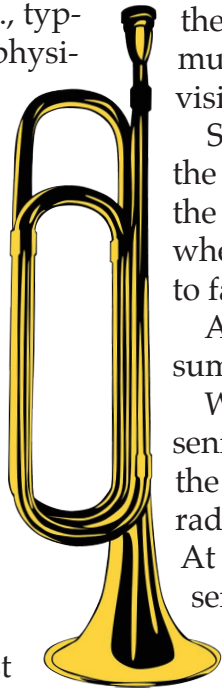
Taps was traditionally the last bugle call of the day, letting Soldiers know it was time to turn out the lights and get their rest. It is also often used at the end of military funerals and memorial services.

On Fort Polk, taps is played at 9 p.m.

In the early years of the United State’s independence, the Soldier’s life was regulated by bugle calls. The daily routine included calls for reveille, breakfast, dinner, supper, sick call, drill, stable, officer’s call, retreat and taps.

“Reveille,” “Retreat” and “To the Colors,” and “Taps” can be heard daily on Fort Polk. The first notes of each call are not meant to be signals sending Soldiers and civilians who happen to be outdoors running for cover.

Instead, everyone should render the proper courtesies when hearing the calls, paying tribute to a tradition that’s as old as the Army itself.



COMMENTARY

Community

Fort Polk community should take precautions when it comes to snakes

GUARDIAN STAFF

FORT POLK, La. — As people head outside to enjoy warmer weather, the chances of accidentally startling a snake while hiking, walking or playing increases.

Rattlesnakes, water moccasins (or cottonmouth), copperhead and coral snakes can all be found in the Fort Polk area and have a venomous bite. It has been estimated that 7,000–8,000 people per year receive venomous bites in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and about five of those people die.

The Eastern diamondback rattlesnake is the biggest venomous snake in the Americas, and may be the biggest in the world. With recorded lengths nearing eight feet and weights in excess of 35 pounds, this is a significant creature and is quite dangerous to humans with a fatality rate of 10-20%. The lower southeastern U.S. is its prime habitat.

Most snakes are not aggressive and will slither away at the first hint of human presence, but people should still take precautions to lessen the chance of being bitten — particularly in wooded areas around lakes or ponds.

Here are some tips to help avoid a venomous snake bite:

- Use the buddy system when walking or running on trails near wooded areas.
- Don't step or put your hands where you can't see.
- Wear over-the-ankle boots, thick socks and long loose pants, especially when venturing off heavily used trails.
- Tap ahead of you with a walking stick before entering an area where you can't see your feet. Snakes will try to avoid you if given enough warning.
- When possible, step on logs and rocks, never over them as you may surprise a sheltering snake.
- Avoid walking through dense brush or blackberry thickets.
- Be careful when stepping over a doorstep. Snakes like to crawl along the edge of buildings where they are protected on one side.
- If you are out at night, always use a flashlight, because most snakes are active on warm nights.
- Never try to pick up a snake, even if



it is dead. A snake's reflexes can still cause the snake to strike up to an hour after it has died.

- If you have an encounter with a snake, give it the right-of-way. Do not attempt to kill the snake, just move out of the snake's way.
- If you encounter a snake in a housing area, call the police desk at 531.2677 and follow their instructions.
- If you hike often, consider buying a snake bite kit — available from hiking supply stores. Don't use older snake bite kits containing razor blades and suction bulbs.

Even if you follow precautions, it's a good idea to have a plan in the event you, your child or a friend is bitten by a snake.

When it comes to treating a venomous snake bite, the most important thing to do is get to a medical facility as quickly as possible.

On Fort Polk, call 531.2677. While waiting for help, you may administer the following first aid measures:

- Keep the person calm, reassuring them that bites can be effectively treated in an emergency room. Restrict movement. Immobilize the site and keep it below heart level to reduce the flow of venom.

- Remove any rings or constricting items because the affected area may swell. Create a loose splint to help restrict movement of the area.

- Bring in the dead snake only if this can be done safely. Do not waste time hunting for the snake, and do not risk another bite if it is not easy to kill the snake. Be careful of the head when transporting it — a snake can actually bite for up to an hour after it's dead.

Don't's

- * Do not allow the person to become over-exerted. If necessary, carry the person to safety.
- * Do not apply a tourniquet.
- * Do not apply ice or cold compresses to a snake bite.
- * Do not cut into a snake bite with a knife or razor.
- * Do not try to suck out the venom by mouth.
- * Do not give the person stimulants or pain medications (to include aspirin) unless a doctor tells you to do so.
- * Do not give the person anything by mouth.
- * Do not raise the site of the bite above the level of the person's heart.

Fort Polk Soldier continues piling up powerlifting wins

By CHUCK CANNON
Public affairs and communications

FORT POLK, La. — At 5 feet tall and 120 pounds, Capt. Erin Harding might not initially present an imposing presence. But put her on a gym floor with a rack of weights in front of her and she turns into a beast.

Harding, the S-1 for 1st Battalion, 5th Aviation Regiment, ranks in the top 1.6% of powerlifters across all genders, weight classes, divisions, age groups and federations according to [OpenPowerlifting.org](https://www.openpowerlifting.org), which tracks the results of competitions across the world.

“I’ve had a lot of success,” Harding said, in what has to rank as the understatement of the year. “When I began this journey three years ago, I never thought I would be this successful this quickly.”

Harding said she was encouraged to take up powerlifting by her then boyfriend, and now husband, 1st Lt. Robert Rubiano, himself a powerlifter.

“We were working out one day and he said, ‘You should give this a try; I think you’d be good at it,’” she said. “I love it, so I stopped doing CrossFit and focus on powerlifting now.”

Thus began a journey that has seen Harding rack up trophies, plaques, certificates and medals at an unprecedented pace, as well as having her name carved into the Louisiana and national powerlifting record books. Among the records to her credit are 92 Louisiana state records and 32 national records. She has competed in 15 sanctioned and three unsanctioned powerlifting meets since 2018 in Louisiana and Texas. Among her winnings are 45 first place awards and 14 best overall lifter awards.

Harding’s most recent event was the 2021 United States Powerlifting Association meet in San Antonio, Texas, where she was crowned national champion in her weight division.

While Harding has only been at the sport for 3 years, it’s not as if she was a stranger to physical fitness: She spent several years as a gymnast and cheerleader.

“I’ve always maintained myself in pretty good shape, so this (powerlifting) was basically an extension of what I was already doing,” she said.

During her three years of competition, Harding has grown slightly in weight, but tremendously in lifting ability. She began lifting at 113 pounds and is now up to 121 pounds. Even more impressive are the increases in the amount of weight she’s lift-



Capt. Erin Harding, 1st Battalion, 5th Aviation Regiment, competes in the squat event at the 2021 United States Powerlifting Association meet in San Antonio, Texas.



Capt. Erin Harding, 1st Battalion, 5th Aviation Regiment, competes in the bench press event at the 2021 United States Powerlifting Association meet in San Antonio, Texas.

ing in the four categories measured at meets: Bench press, deadlift, squat and total weight.

- Bench press — 115 pounds to 193 pounds
- Deadlift — 245 pounds to 364 pounds, or three times her body weight
- Squat — 185 pounds to 320 pounds
- Total — (combining all three totals at one meet) 545 pounds to 871 pounds.

Harding said she’s set even higher goals for next year: Squat — 331 pounds, bench press — 205 pounds and deadlift — 375

pounds. But she said she’s not stopping there.

Her longterm goals include 375-pound squat, 225-pound bench press and 400-pound deadlift for a total weight of 1,000 pounds, and an invitation to compete on Team USA at the International Powerlifting League world championships.

“The overall top three women at nationals are invited each year to compete for Team USA,” Harding said. “I was No. 5 this year, so I have a pretty good chance of getting invited next year or the year after.”