



Mireya Cruz Named EANGUS President



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Publisher Multicopy Printing Co. Inc.

NGAT NEWS

3706 Crawford Ave
Austin, TX 78731
512-454-7300
1-800-252-NGAT (6428)



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NGAT News (usps 015-752) published quarterly by the National Guard Association of Texas, 3706 Crawford Avenue, Austin, Texas 78731-6308.

Periodicals postage paid at Austin, Texas 78710 and additional offices.

POSTMASTER SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO:

NGAT News, 3706 Crawford Avenue, Austin, Texas 78731-6308

MEMBERS MAY EMAIL ADDRESS CHANGES TO:

membership@ngat.org



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ON THE COVER

CONGRATULATIONS TO SFC MIREYA CRUZ on being selected as the new EANGUS President at the EANGUS Conference in Daytona Beach, Florida, on August 3, 2026! SFC Cruz previously served as NGAT President from March 2023 to March 2025. We wish her great success as she leads the association.

(Photo courtesy of EANGUS)

Follow us on





FROM THE PRESIDENT



GREETINGS, NGAT MEMBERS,

AS WE CONTINUE OUR WORK ON BEHALF OF THE TEXAS NATIONAL GUARD COMMUNITY, we begin this issue with heartfelt condolences to **MSG (Ret) Theresa Billeck-Zuniga** on the passing of her devoted husband, **COL (Ret) Frank Zuniga**. Frank was a steadfast leader and a genuinely remarkable human being whose impact on our organization and the Guard family will not be forgotten. His legacy of service, humility, and mentorship lives on through the countless individuals he influenced. Theresa, the entire NGAT community stands with you, honoring Frank's memory and the extraordinary contributions he made throughout his life.

We also enter the national conference season and look forward to proudly representing Texas at the upcoming Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States (EANGUS) and National Guard Association of the United States (NGAUS) conferences. These events offer vital opportunities to join with colleagues from all 54 states and territories to advocate for the policies, benefits, and resources essential to supporting our Guardsmen and their families. By sharing best practices, strengthening partnerships, and collaborating with leaders across the nation, we remain committed to ensuring every Soldier and Airman receives the support they deserve.

At home, early planning is underway for the 2027 NGAT Conference. **Save the date: February 25-28, 2027, in Corpus Christi, Texas.** Our focus remains clear: delivering a high-quality, engaging, and affordable experience for our members and corporate partners. We aim to create a program that blends professional development, camaraderie, and meaningful discussion in a way that reflects the needs of today's National Guard community. Your feedback and involvement will continue to shape this important event, and we look forward to sharing more details as planning progresses.

Most importantly, we recognize that none of this work is possible without our members. NGAT exists to serve Soldiers, Airmen, NCOs, officers, retirees, and families across Texas. **We ask each of you to continue spreading the word about our Association, especially to junior members in your units.** Help them understand the role NGAT plays in advocacy, support, and professional growth. Be a positive force in educating and encouraging them to engage. By investing in the next generation of Guard leaders, we ensure the strength and longevity of our Association for years to come.

Hope to see you at one of the upcoming conferences or events. ★

PAUL CERNIAUSKAS
COL (Ret)
President



NGAT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, LTC (RET) MARVIN HARRIS (CENTER), speaks with attendees at the Texas Military Department State Family Programs Volunteer Workshop, July 25, 2026, in San Marcos, Texas.



JOHN DOCKALL, a living history volunteer for the Texas Military Forces Museum, was moved to poetic expression by the recent post of the museum cats.
(Photo courtesy of the Texas Military Forces Museum)

*The tanks stand still,
the cannons gleam,
the sharpest guards you've ever seen.*

*Right beside the office door,
Two feline scouts patrol the floor.*

*Miss Salem, dark as midnight skies,
Watches close with emerald eyes,
While Momma, gray and wise and neat,
Stands sentry on four quiet feet.*

*They patrol the halls of history,
a proud and purring mystery.
No mice sneak by the armored line,
On guard duty, they'll do just fine!*

NOMINATIONS NOW BEING ACCEPTED FOR NGAT PRESIDENT-ELECT

The National Guard Association of Texas (NGAT) is now accepting nominations for the office of President-Elect.

Members interested in seeking this leadership position must meet the following eligibility requirements:

- Be a current **NGAT Annual or Life Member** in good standing
- Have served **at least one year** as a member of the **NGAT Board of Directors**
- Complete and submit the **President-Elect Nomination Application**, available on the **NGAT website** under the **Board of Directors** page

Be willing and able to serve a four-year commitment on the NGAT Board of Directors, consisting of:

- Two years as **President-Elect**
- Two years as **President**
- **Nomination Deadline: February 5, 2027**

Current and former members of the NGAT Board of Directors who meet the eligibility requirements are encouraged to apply.

For additional information, please contact NGAT Executive Director Marvin Harris at mharris@ngat.org. ★



Helping TEXAS NATIONAL GUARD FAMILIES WHEN THEY NEED IT MOST

Sometimes, all it takes is one unexpected event to turn your life upside down.

A major vehicle repair. A temporary loss of income. Rising utility bills. An unexpected financial hardship can quickly become overwhelming for any family.

Recognizing that these situations can happen to anyone, the National Guard Association of Texas (NGAT) established the **NGAT Relief Fund** to provide temporary emergency financial assistance to eligible Texas National Guard members, veterans, and their families facing short-term financial emergencies.

During its first year of operation, the NGAT Relief Fund has already made a meaningful impact across Texas. With generous support from the Texas Veterans Commission Fund for Veterans' Assistance (FVA), the Relief Fund has provided **more than \$200,000 in temporary emergency financial assistance**, helping military families navigate difficult times and regain financial stability.

THE RELIEF FUND PROVIDES ASSISTANCE FOR ESSENTIAL NEEDS SUCH AS:



HOUSING

Mortgage and rent



UTILITIES

Electricity, water, and natural gas



GROCERIES

Helping families put food on the table during difficult times



TRANSPORTATION

Vehicle loan or lease payments, vehicle insurance, and emergency vehicle repairs



FY27 STARTS SEPTEMBER 1!

The NGAT Relief Fund will continue providing temporary emergency financial assistance in the new fiscal year.

The purpose of the NGAT Relief Fund is not to provide long-term financial support—it is to help bridge the gap during temporary hardships so families can regain their footing and move forward with confidence.

The NGAT Relief Fund reflects the Association's commitment to standing beside Texas National Guard members, veterans, and their families—not only during their service, but whenever temporary financial hardships arise.



If you or someone you know may qualify for assistance, contact the NGAT Relief Fund at relief_fund@ngat.org to learn more about eligibility and the application process.

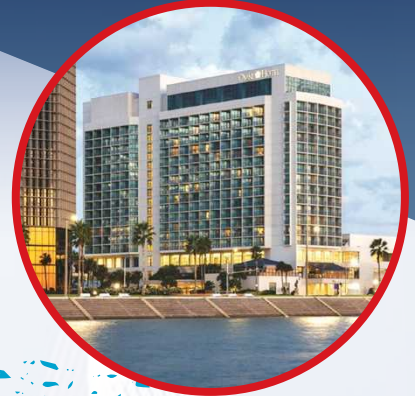


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**TEXAS VETERANS
COMMISSION**

This program is funded in part by the Texas Veterans Commission Fund for Veterans' Assistance. The Fund for Veterans' Assistance provides grants to organizations serving veterans and their families. For more information, visit www.tvc.texas.gov.



LONE STAR UNITY — ANCHORED IN SERVICE 68th ANNUAL NGAT CONFERENCE

February 25-28, 2027

Hilliard Center & Omni Corpus Christi Hotel

The Annual NGAT Conference plays a vital role in supporting the current and former members of the Texas National Guard. The purpose of the Annual Conference is:

NETWORKING

It provides a **platform for members to connect**, share experiences, and build camaraderie across the state.

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Members gather to **discuss and vote on key legislative issues** affecting the National Guard, ensuring their voices are heard.

EDUCATION & RESOURCES

The conference also offers **workshops and sessions** that provide valuable information and resources to enhance the lives of National Guard members and their families.



Registration

(ONLINE REGISTRATION WILL OPEN ON OCTOBER 1)

All attendees must pay the registration fee.

Registration fee is \$15.00 per person for NGAT member/guest and \$30 for a non-NGAT member/guest.

Meal Package Includes: Registration, General Session, Breakouts, Exhibits, Welcome Party, Sat Lunch and Sat Banquet

NGAT Members/Guest Full Meal Package (also includes Prayer Breakfast) \$175.

Non-NGAT Member/Guest Full Meal Package (including registration fee) \$200.
(The deadline for online meal packages is February 8, 2027)

A \$20 late fee will be added to all registrations received after February 8, 2027. All cancellation requests must be received prior to February 15, 2027. No refunds after that date.

Hotel

(continued)

Wake up to breathtaking views of Corpus Christi Bay at the Omni Corpus Christi Hotel, where every room features a private balcony overlooking the sparkling water or the vibrant downtown skyline. Nestled in the heart of the Marina District, the hotel offers more than just a place to stay — it's a destination.

Omni Corpus Christi Hotel, 900 N Shoreline Blvd, Corpus Christi, TX 78401

You can also call the hotel at 1-800-843-6664 to make your reservation. Be sure to identify yourself as a member of the National Guard Association of Texas.

Attendee hotel rate: \$110 single/\$129 double plus tax per night. The Omni will offer the conference rate three (3) days prior and three (3) days post of the conference, subject to availability of rooms at the time of reservations.

The Omni will provide a free Grab and Go Breakfast that includes Coffee, Whole Fruit and Assorted Muffins with room rate.

Hotel reservations can be made online at the NGAT website.
(www.ngat.org/ngat-conference/)

Join the Select Guest Loyalty Program for these free perks from your first stay: Welcome Drink courtesy of the Omni, free deluxe wi-fi, and earn free nights.
DON'T FORGET TO SIGN UP.

(NGAT cannot guarantee room rate after February 3, 2027)

Attire

It's a Red, White and Blue Affair

NGAT Welcome Party: Wear your favorite shades of blue

NGAT Business Session: Business Casual

NGAT Awards Banquet: White attire (business casual or formal), military uniforms are acceptable

NGAT Prayer Breakfast: Wear a touch of red

Conference Optional Events

Golf Tournament at North Shore Country Club — Nestled like a sleeping giant along the intercoastal waterway the beautiful North Shore Country Club offers the perfect combination of natural beauty and challenging play. The tournament is open to both registered and non-registered attendees of the conference. Registration includes green fees, cart, breakfast tacos, lunch, and award. Tournament benefits the NGAT Educational Foundation.

Annual 5K Fun Run/Walk — Come enjoy a leisure run/walk along the scenic Shoreline Blvd while taking in some great views of the Corpus Christi Bay. Registration fee includes a T-shirt, award medals and refreshments.

Wine Tasting — Whether you're a seasoned wine enthusiast or simply looking to explore new flavors, our wine tasting is the perfect way to unwind with your Guard friends. Delight your senses as you sample a selection of wines paired with inspired bites at the Hilliard Center. Raise a glass to great company and an unforgettable evening!

License to Carry Certification — We are pleased to once again offer the License to Carry Certification class at no additional cost to all registered NGAT Conference attendees. You must register to attend.

Welcome to the Blue Skies, High Stakes Welcome Party! We invite everyone to wear their favorite shades of blue as we celebrate the beautiful host city of Corpus Christi. Try your luck at exciting casino-style games for a chance to win great prizes while reconnecting with old friends and making new ones. Guests will enjoy a delicious dinner featuring Jerk Chicken, Snapper Verde, stuffed jalapeños, stuffed mushrooms, and an array of flavorful sides along with some great music.



Spouse & Retiree Luncheon — Enjoy a leisurely lunch and a Guest Speaker TBD on Saturday at the Hilliard Center.

Speed Mentoring is Back — Speed mentoring connects mentees (Company Grade Officer and Junior Enlisted) with multiple mentors (Field Grade/Flag Officer and Senior NCOs) in brief, timed sessions, offering benefits like knowledge sharing, networking opportunities, and exposure to diverse perspectives without long-term commitments. If you are interested in being a mentor please contact our Executive Director Marvin Harris at mharris@ngat.org.

Join us for the All-White Awards Banquet — Dress in your favorite white attire and enjoy an evening of celebration, fellowship, and recognition. Whether you wear business casual or formal attire, we invite you to celebrate with us. As always, military uniforms are authorized. During the evening, we will recognize our award recipients and present the prestigious NGAT Minuteman Award, honoring those whose dedication and service have made a lasting impact on the National Guard Association of Texas. Then, cap off the evening by joining us on the dance floor as we celebrate together.

NGAT Prayer Breakfast — Close out the conference with a delicious breakfast, fellowship, and prayer at the NGAT Prayer Breakfast on Sunday morning at the Omni Hotel. We invite everyone to wear a touch of red as we complete our red, white, and blue conference attire theme.



Keep an eye on the NGAT Conference website for updates, announcements, and new event details as they roll out: www.ngat.org/ngat-conference.

We can't wait to see you in Corpus Christi!



TEXAS NATIONAL GUARD SUPPORTS MASSIVE FLOOD RESPONSE ACROSS CENTRAL AND SOUTH TEXAS

ONE YEAR AFTER CATASTROPHIC FLOODING KILLED MORE THAN 100 PEOPLE ALONG THE GUADALUPE RIVER, another round of deadly July flooding swept across Central and South Texas, creating flash flood emergencies that forced evacuations and rescues along the Guadalupe and elsewhere.

The Texas National Guard provided aid, medical transport and search-and-rescue services to over 50 flood-stricken counties in Central and South Texas. The city of Uvalde, which experienced a torrential downpour, is situated east of the Nueces River, where on July 17 a section of a bridge collapsed due to flooding.

In addition to disaster relief, the Texas National Guard said in a post to X that members were involved in search and rescue. Guardsmen provided airlift support to the state's emergency medical response team, transporting people via Sikorsky HH-60M Black Hawk to medical facilities during the flooding. "Over 700 service members were on the ground and in the air evacuating and rescuing those in need — with Chinooks, Black Hawks, and dozens of tactical vehicles," the Texas Military Department said.

In the Kerr County area, the heaviest rain fell July 15 and 16 around Kerrville in areas further downriver than the year prior.

Several rivers crested at significant flood levels on July 16, including the Nueces River below Uvalde at 28 feet (up from a foot and a half in the weeks prior) and the Pedernales River at 34 feet near Fredericksburg (up from earlier levels around 5 feet). ★



TEXAS NATIONAL GUARD SMALL UNMANNED DRONE SYSTEMS (SUAS) teams provide real-time aerial imagery, delivering critical awareness to emergency responders across West-Central Texas.

Their efforts help monitor severe weather impacts, identify flooded areas, and provide area intelligence for search and rescue operations.



TEXAS ARMY NATIONAL GUARD AND TEXAS STATE GUARD SERVICE MEMBERS supporting #OperationLoneStar cleared debris caused by recent flooding before replacing barriers along the Rio Grande River.



THE ADJUTANT GENERAL OF TEXAS, MAJ GEN THOMAS SUELZER (left) takes an aerial view of the flooded areas with Governor Greg Abbott (right).



LEGAL UPDATE with Doug O'Connell

WHAT MILITARY PERSONNEL SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE DANGERS OF USING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TOOLS offer military personnel rapid access to information and assistance with writing and research. However, the convenience masks substantial dangers related to security, privacy, and legal exposure that service members cannot afford to ignore.

DoD policies on generative AI, emphasize that commercial systems permanently store user prompts and outputs. Inputting any information about operations, tactics, rules of engagement, classified material, or controlled unclassified information risks OPSEC breaches through data aggregation and violates regulations on using unapproved systems for sensitive content. Even non-sensitive personal or professional queries contribute to detailed user profiles that could be exploited.

The most significant individual risk stems from the discoverability of digital activity. Military and civilian law enforcement and prosecutors can obtain subpoenas to secure evidence. Device forensics on phones, laptops, and tablets routinely extract complete browser search histories, timestamps, locations, and application data. Third-party subpoenas directed at providers such as Google or OpenAI can compel production of search records, full chat histories, metadata, and conversations — even those users attempted to delete, as courts have ordered preservation of AI logs. High-profile criminal investigations have already demonstrated prosecutors obtaining and presenting AI chat transcripts to establish intent or planning.

Queries about military justice procedures, mental health resources, or seemingly hypothetical scenarios can later be introduced to demonstrate knowledge, state of mind, or consciousness of guilt, while associated

metadata places individuals in specific locations at specific times. Additional hazards include AI “hallucinations” — plausible-sounding but false information — that may lead to erroneous decisions with severe consequences. In the future, we can expect that patterns of use may influence security clearance adjudications or command evaluations of judgment and reliability.

Service members can mitigate these threats by restricting AI use to officially authorized and secure platforms for any work-related activity, and refraining entirely from entering sensitive, operational, or personal details into commercial AI platforms.

Since no digital interaction is truly private, consider consulting with an attorney prior to making queries with potential legal implications. In the current environment, awareness of these dangers allows personnel to benefit from AI technology while safeguarding their careers, their units, and their legal rights. ★

NGAT Life Member Doug O'Connell is an Attorney representing Guardsmen in criminal law, military law and serious personal injury cases. If you have questions, please contact Doug at Doug@OConnellWest.com or (512) 547-7265.

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GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS UPDATE with SFC Mireya Cruz



YOUR VOICE. YOUR ASSOCIATION. YOUR FUTURE.

NGAT MEMBERS, WE ARE ENTERING OUR NATIONAL CONFERENCE SEASON, DURING WHICH OUR NATIONAL RESOLUTIONS WILL BE CONSIDERED AND APPROVED. These resolutions will establish our organization's federal legislative priorities for the coming year. At the same time, we are fast approaching the 90th Texas Legislative Session. There is no doubt there will be many opportunities, both in Texas and at the national level, where our members' voices will need to be heard.

The Government Affairs Committee is ready to receive your concerns and advocate on your behalf. Over the past year, we have experienced rapid changes in legislation and policy. To keep you informed, we need to ensure your contact information is current. Your email address, along with following NGAT on Facebook and Instagram, will be the fastest ways for us to communicate important updates.

Please take a moment to verify that your email address is up to date with NGAT. We will use email and social media to gather your opinions on legislative issues affecting the National Guard. When you receive these communications, please take a few minutes to respond. Your feedback helps us better understand your concerns and strengthens our ability to advocate for policies that best serve our members.

So, what are we monitoring?

Currently, we are closely following the **2027 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA)**, which includes a significant proposal affecting dual-status technicians. If enacted, dual-status technicians would transition to Active Guard Reserve (AGR) status over a phased 10-year implementation period. We are also monitoring the early filing of bills for the 90th Texas Legislature to identify legislation that may impact our members.

The Government Affairs Committee wants to hear from you. We welcome your questions, opinions, and concerns. Please contact us at Legislative@ngat.org.

We remain committed to staying ahead of legislative issues and advocating for the interests of every NGAT member. ★

Visit this link to update your email and contact information:
<https://forms.cloud.microsoft/r/L0vqSf9eBP>

SFC MIREYA CRUZ
Government Affairs
Committee Chair

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DUTY ★ HONOR ★

BELTON, TX



INCREDIBLE WORK BY THE 36TH COMBAT AVIATION BRIGADE during Operation Hood Strike 26! Sling loading an improved ribbon bridge over Lake Belton is exactly the kind of tough, realistic training that builds combat readiness.



MARSHALL, KS



(Left) **MAJ LEIZL DELEON**, a nurse assigned to the 149th Medical Dental Squadron of the Texas Air National Guard, takes vital signs for the Buffalo River Wellness Innovative Readiness Training mission at Marshall High School in Marshall, Arkansas, on June 16, 2026. The mission provided no-cost health care services to the local community while giving military medical personnel hands-on training in a joint-service environment. (Photo by SMSgt Michael Knodde)

SALINA, KS



PICTURED ARE TEXAS OFFICER CANDIDATES who will officially begin their journey toward earning a commission in the Army National Guard during Officer Candidate School (OCS) Phase 1 in Salina, Kansas, alongside candidates from Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Washington, and New Mexico. (Photo courtesy of the Kansas National Guard Public Affairs Office)

COUNTRY ★



SANTIAGO, CHILE

CAPT NICHOLAS ROBLES, a public affairs officer from the 136th Airlift Wing, exchanges patches with a member of the Chilean Armed Forces during Feria Internacional del Aire y del Espacio (FIDAE) in Santiago, Chile. FIDAE highlights the enduring 18-year partnership between Texas and Chile through the State Partnership Program. (Photo by SSgt Derek Gutierrez)



FORT HOOD, TX

SOLDIERS OF THE 1ST SQUADRON, 124th Cavalry Regiment, take part in the squadron's Spur Ride at Fort Hood, Texas, June 8-11, 2026. The four-day event tested candidates across graded lanes before inducting them into the Order of the Spur. (Photo by Capt Daniel Martinez)



MIDDLE EAST

ON JUNE 6, 2026, THE 36TH INFANTRY DIVISION officially assumed command of Task Force Spartan from the 42nd Infantry Division during a transfer of authority ceremony in the Middle East. The Commanding General, **MG Brad Bowlin** (center) and Senior Enlisted Advisor, **CSM Jesse Kennis** (left) uncased the 36th Infantry Division colors during the ceremony. (Photo courtesy of Task Force Spartan)



CAMP SWIFT, TX

SFC MICHAEL MACON, a member of the 124th Cavalry Regiment, looks through his Advanced Combat Optical Gunsight (ACOG) prior to the start of the Governor's Twenty marksmanship competition at Camp Swift, Bastrop, Texas. The guardsmen compete in several shooting events, with the top 20 percent receiving a special Governor's Twenty tab that can be worn on their combat uniforms. (Photo by SSG Derek Gutierrez)



MIDDLE EAST

AS OUR NATION COMMEMORATES AMERICA'S 250TH BIRTHDAY, more than 250 Soldiers assigned to Task Force Spartan proudly raised their right hands and took the oath of reenlistment to continue to support and defend the Constitution of the United States before Task Force Spartan Commanding General, **MG Brad Bowlin**.

This solemn ceremony marks the continued commitment to selfless service, honor, and the defense of the freedoms that define our nation. These proud Soldiers which includes many Texans and National Guard members join generations of Americans who have answered the call to serve, and who carry forward a legacy of courage, sacrifice, and unwavering dedication to the United States. Happy 250th Birthday, America!

NGATEF SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS OPEN **OCTOBER 1**

Apply Early — The Deadline Has Moved Up!

The National Guard Association of Texas Educational Foundation (NGATEF) is pleased to announce that scholarship applications for the 2027 award cycle will open **October 1, 2026**.

BECAUSE THE 2027 NGAT ANNUAL CONFERENCE WILL BE HELD EARLIER THAN IN PREVIOUS YEARS, the scholarship application and selection process has also moved up. To ensure applicants have adequate time to prepare, we encourage everyone to begin gathering the required documentation now.

Completed scholarship applications **must be received by the NGAT office no later than January 29, 2027**. Applications received after the deadline cannot be considered.

Since its inception, the NGAT Educational Foundation has awarded \$662,070 in scholarships to deserving members, spouses, and dependents of the Texas Military Department, helping them pursue higher education and achieve their academic and professional goals.



In 2027, the Foundation will once again invest in the future of the Texas National Guard family by awarding scholarships to eligible students pursuing higher education.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

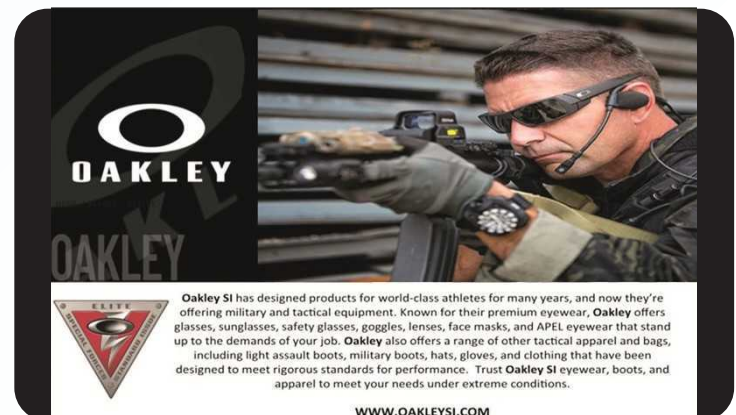
- Applicants must be a current NGAT member, or the spouse or dependent of a current NGAT member.
- Applicants must meet all scholarship eligibility requirements outlined in the application.

Don't miss this opportunity to invest in your future.

Applications open: October 1, 2026

Application deadline: January 29, 2027

For scholarship information, eligibility requirements, and to apply, visit www.ngat.org/ngatef. ★





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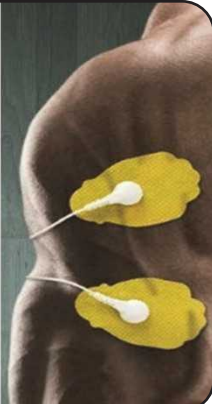
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MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE UPDATE with SMSgt Angela Matthews

THE NGAT MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE has made tremendous progress this year, and we're excited about the momentum we've built as we continue strengthening our organization. One of our most significant accomplishments has been developing a comprehensive **Membership Committee Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)**, creating a sustainable framework that will provide continuity, consistency, and long-term success for future committee members.

Membership growth remains one of our highest priorities. Through our ongoing membership drives, we've welcomed new members to the NGAT family while reinforcing the importance of legislative advocacy, professional networking, leadership development, and support for the Texas National Guard community. Every new member strengthens our collective voice and expands our ability to serve those who serve our state.

This year, we're also placing a greater emphasis on member engagement. Rather than waiting for members to come to us, **the committee is committed to visiting units across Texas to meet Soldiers and Airmen where they serve.** These visits will allow us to share the many benefits of NGAT membership, answer questions, build relationships, and hear firsthand what matters most to our members. We believe personal connections are the foundation of a stronger organization.

Another exciting initiative launching this fall is our **Unit Membership Competition.** Building on the enthusiasm generated by our conference membership drive, units will compete to recruit new NGAT members, with cash awards presented to the top three recruiting units. This friendly

competition recognizes outstanding teamwork, encourages participation across the state, and helps us continue growing our membership.

Looking ahead, the committee remains focused on increasing membership, improving member retention, expanding engagement opportunities, strengthening communication, and ensuring every Texas National Guard member understands the value of belonging to NGAT. We also plan to recognize outstanding members and units, increase our presence at military events, leverage social media to keep members informed, and continue fostering meaningful relationships throughout the Texas National Guard community.

None of this is possible without volunteers who are passionate about serving others. **If you're looking for a meaningful way to contribute, we invite you to join the Membership Committee.** Whether you have years of experience or are simply looking for a way to get involved, your ideas, talents, and enthusiasm can help shape the future of NGAT. Together, we can continue building a stronger organization that serves and advocates for every member of the Texas National Guard. ★

Better Together!



SMSGT ANGELA MATTHEWS
Membership
Committee Chair

ADAPTIVE RADAR FOR NATIONAL GUARD MISSIONS

Persistent Awareness.
Expanded Decision Space.



ECHODYNE

LOOKING AHEAD AFTER THE EANGUS CONFERENCE

BY THE TIME THIS ISSUE OF THE “NGAT NEWS” REACHES YOUR MAILBOX, the 2026 EANGUS Annual Conference will have concluded. While the conference may be over, its impact will shape the coming year for enlisted National Guard members across the nation.

One of the conference’s most important responsibilities is **establishing the EANGUS legislative priorities** for the upcoming year. These priorities guide the association’s advocacy efforts on Capitol Hill, ensuring the voices of National Guard enlisted members, and their families are heard on the issues that matter most.

Another exciting highlight has been the **EANGUS Membership Challenge**, held June 1 through July 30. States from across the country competed to earn the coveted EANGUS membership trophy by achieving the largest increase in membership. At the time this magazine went to press, California led the standings with 895 new members, followed by Texas with an impressive 706 and Georgia with 430. While these numbers are outstanding, the competition doesn’t end with the conference. We encourage every eligible enlisted member to continue strengthening our association by joining EANGUS and helping Texas remain a national leader in membership.

We are also proud to support one of our own, former NGAT President SFC Mireya Cruz, in her campaign for EANGUS President. Her dedication to serving enlisted National Guard members has been evident throughout her career, and we wish her every success as she seeks to lead the national association.

A full recap of the conference — including the final membership challenge results, newly adopted legislative priorities, election results, and other key highlights — will be featured in the next issue of the “NGAT News.”

To learn more about EANGUS, its mission, and membership opportunities, visit EANGUS at www.eangus.org. ★

LEAVE A LEGACY. STRENGTHEN THE GUARD.

★ BECOME AN EANGUS LEGACY LIFE MEMBER TODAY! ★

YOUR LEGACY LIVES ON

Support the future of the National Guard through the EANGUS Legacy Program. Every contribution helps strengthen advocacy, scholarships, member programs, professional development, and support for Guard families nationwide.

Legacy donors receive recognition, exclusive updates, and invitations to special events.

POTENTIAL TAX ADVANTAGES

Contributions to the EANGUS Legacy Program are tax deductible and may provide charitable giving benefits depending on your individual tax situation. CONSULT YOUR TAX PROFESSIONAL FOR DETAILS.

JOIN THE EANGUS LEGACY PROGRAM TODAY!
EANGUS.ORG/LEGACY

LIMITED EDITION EANGUS LEGACY WATCH

Legacy Life Members contributing **\$300 OR MORE** may receive a commemorative EANGUS/Brazen Sports watch while supplies last.

BRAZEN SPORTS

★ YOUR LEGACY SUPPORTS: ★

LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

SCHOLARSHIPS

NATIONAL GUARD FAMILIES

MEMBER PROGRAMS

FUTURE GENERATIONS OF GUARDSMEN & AIRMEN

EANGUS 50+ YEARS OF ADVOCACY, SERVICE & SUCCESS

Improving the Lives of National Guard Soldiers, Airmen, Families, and Retirees Since 1972

1972

★ EANGUS OFFICIALLY ESTABLISHED

- First National Conference
- 23 Charter State Associations
- National enlisted voice created for the Guard community

1970s

★ EARLY LEGISLATIVE VICTORIES

- Expanded BX/PX privileges
- Improved SGLI coverage
- Enlistment bonuses
- GI Bill advocacy
- Creation of senior enlisted leadership positions

1980s

★ GROWING STRONGER

- Membership exceeded 40,000
- Virgil Williams Scholarship Fund established
- Montgomery GI Bill support
- Commissary access advocacy

1990s

★ NATIONAL EXPANSION

- Chartered in all States and Territories
- Membership surpassed 50,000
- We Care for America Foundation created
- Expanded Guard benefits and healthcare initiatives

2003

★ PERMANENT COMMISSARY ACCESS

- Ended limitations on commissary use
- Major quality-of-life victory for Guard members and families

2008

★ POST-9/11 GI BILL

- Education benefits expanded
- Housing, tuition, and book assistance
- Transferability to family members
- Title 32 service included in eligibility

2011

★ NATIONAL GUARD VOICE ELEVATED

- Chief of the National Guard Bureau authorized a seat on the Joint Chiefs of Staff
- Stronger representation at the highest military levels

2012-2018

★ PROTECTING BENEFITS

- Early retirement improvements
- COLA legislation for service members
- Post-9/11 GI Bill expansion
- Enhanced member services and advocacy

2020

★ SUPPORTING FAMILIES DURING COVID-19

- Nearly \$1 million in grants distributed through We Care for America Foundation
- Interest-Free Loan Program launched

2022+

★ CONTINUING THE FIGHT

- Technician Reform
- Major Richard Star Act
- Healthcare improvements
- Retirement Equity
- National Guard Readiness
- Family & Veteran Support

Stronger Together.

FOR SOLDIERS, AIRMEN, FAMILIES AND RETIREES.

EANGUS

ADVOCACY DELIVERED:

GI BILL EXPANSION

COMMISSARY ACCESS

TRICARE IMPROVEMENTS

EARLY RETIREMENT CREDIT

JOINT CHIEFS REPRESENTATION

SCHOLARSHIPS & FAMILY SUPPORT

TECHNICIAN & VETERAN ADVOCACY

★★★ ENLISTED ASSOCIATION OF THE NATIONAL GUARD OF THE UNITED STATES ★★★
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You understand what it means to serve this great nation and what it means to have others depend on you. You provide protection and peace of mind to our country and you can do the same at home. The Armed Forces Benefit Association (AFBA) provides life insurance member benefits underwritten by 5Star Life Insurance Company and offer features suited for the National Guard.

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As a non-life insurance member benefit, AFBA is proud to offer families of eligible fallen members the Charles C. Blanton AFBA Family Survivor College Scholarship. Surviving spouse and children are eligible for \$10,000 per year, up to a total maximum benefit for the entire family of \$40,000 toward an undergraduate degree, license or certification. Available in all states except New York. In Virginia, only available to First Responders.

AFBA is solely responsible for awarding this scholarship and reserves the right to alter or close the program at any time.

Visit www.NGAT.org or call (512) 454-7300



Survivor benefits provided by AFBA are underwritten by 5Star Life Insurance Company (a Lincoln, Nebraska company) with an administrative office at 909 N. Washington Street, Alexandria, VA 22314. Survivor benefits not available in all states and U.S. Territories. Group Policy: LT050197(Rev), MAT Pol



A graphic featuring a row of white stars on a dark background, with the text "THE RACE IS ABOUT TO BEGIN" in a bold, stylized font. The text is white with a blue outline, and the background has red and white horizontal stripes.



- Aug 28, AM – Wait List Only
- Aug 28, PM – Open
- Aug 31 AM/PM – Wait List Only



★ **JOIN US IN INDIANAPOLIS!**



NGAUS REGISTRATION IS NOW \$250 PER PERSON.
REGISTER AT <https://ngat.org/ngaus-conference/>



KEY LEADERSHIP UPDATE



11th Engineer Battalion Commanders Reunion

FORMER COMMANDERS OF THE 11TH ENGINEER BATTALION gathered for the unit's Change of Command ceremony, where **LTC Joseph Meller** relinquished command to **LTC Amber Fullmer** during a ceremony in Brownwood, Texas. Pictured left to right: (front row) **COL Zebadiah Miller**, **COL Matthew Calton**, incoming commander **LTC Amber Fullmer**, outgoing commander **LTC Joseph Meller**, and **COL (Ret) Paul Cerniauskas**; (back row) **LTC Austin Bird**, **BG (BVT) (Ret) Larry Patterson**, **BG (Ret) Stephen Sanders**, and **COL Adrian Perez**. (Photo courtesy of Caryn Patterson.)



LTC Amber Fullmer
Commander
11th Engineer Battalion



CCMSgt Paul McGuirk
Command Chief Master Sergeant
136th Airlift Wing



CSM Michael Sones
Command Sergeant Major
36th Sustainment Brigade



Col Kurt Anderson
Commander
136th Airlift Wing



Lt Col Brandon Rodts
Commander
149th Maintenance Group



NOV 7-8 CLOSE ASSAULT: 1944

SHOWTIMES

SATURDAY:
11 a.m. and 2 p.m.

SUNDAY:
1 p.m.

Rain or Shine

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See tanks, jeeps and armored fighting vehicles
from throughout U.S. history.

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1LT AMANDA WILLIAMS TO COMPETE FOR MS. VETERAN AMERICA

1LT AMANDA WILLIAMS, a chaplain recruiter for the Texas Army National Guard has been selected to attend and compete in the 15th Anniversary of Ms. Veteran America on October 11th in Tampa, Florida.

The Ms. Veteran America competition is an advocacy and awareness event, highlighting more than the strength, courage, and sacrifice of our nation's military women, but also reminds us that these women are Mothers, Daughters, Sisters and Wives.

Ms. Veteran America is a movement, encouraging women veterans to uplift each other and find their tribe. Proceeds from this event provides housing for homeless women Veterans and their children.

For 1LT Williams this journey is about so much more than a crown. Every dollar raised supports Final Salute Inc., helping prevent homelessness among women veterans by providing transitional housing, emergency financial assistance, and the support they need to rebuild their lives.

If you're interested in attending the event, becoming a sponsor, or supporting this mission please follow 1LT Williams on Facebook or LinkedIn. Together, we can make a lasting difference in the lives of women who have served our nation. ★



RECENT EXPERIENCE VS. RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

Article by COL (Ret) Ronald Wilkins

ONE OF THE BIGGEST MISTAKES

organizations make is confusing recent experience with relevant experience.

Recently, a company contacted me about a Budget Analyst position. After reviewing my résumé, they decided not to move forward because they felt my budgeting experience wasn't "recent."

I respect their decision. But it reminded me that how an organization evaluates talent says just as much about the organization as it does the candidate.

Then I thought about a phone call I received in 2024.

The U.S. Department of State didn't ask me to apply. I didn't interview. They reached out because they had reviewed my past Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution (PPBE) experience (2009 Pentagon Relevant Experience) and believed I was the right person to serve as the Senior Strategic Advisor to the Minister of Defense for the Republic of Kosovo.

I accepted the opportunity with confidence. Why?



Because relevant experience doesn't expire. During that assignment, I designed, implemented, and institutionalized Kosovo's first-ever Defense Planning Guidance, creating a sustainable, NATO-interoperable strategic defense framework while helping modernize the country's Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution (PPBE) process.

The difference between the two organizations wasn't my résumé. It was how they evaluated experience. One saw dates. The other saw capability. One looked for recent repetition.

The other recognized proven expertise.

Great leaders don't simply ask, "When was the last time you did this?" They ask, "Has this person demonstrated they can solve this problem?" My résumé never changed.

Only the perspective of those reading it did. Relevant experience builds confidence. Confidence creates Opportunity. ★



TAPS

As of July 30, 2026

TSgt James J. Adams, Life Member #9165, Houston

SFC (Ret) Victor Aguilar, Life Member #5610, Gonzales

LTC (Ret) Oakley Miley Akers Jr., Life Member #8144, Kilgore

***SGT John Arizpe**, Co A 3rd 141st Inf Rgmt, Los Fresnos

SGT (Ret) Daniel D. Castillo, Life Member #28723, Wellington

SSG (Ret) Raymond Castillo, Waxahachie

Mrs. Marcella Cook, Associate Life Member #1060, Wichita Falls

Lt Col (Ret) Robert A. Cron, Life Member #19116, Wylie

***MAJ (Ret) Bradley Fortune**, Life Member #29293, Manassas, VA

SFC (Ret) Brenda Garrett, Life Member #16284, Austin

SGT (Ret) Gary L. Guinn, Life Member #16890, Barry

COL (Ret) Brian H. Hammerness, Life Member #32852, Austin

CW4 (Ret) James Harrison, Life Member #4488, Austin

Mr. Victor Lafitte, Kyle

SFC (Ret) Orvin Odell Lee, Killeen

CW3 (Ret) James R. Lolley, Life Member #2089, Granbury

CW4 (Ret) Michael Mathews, Life Member #13204, Brownwood

Lt Col (Ret) George Mihalcik, Austin

***SPC Robert Ramirez Perdomo**, 436th Chem Co, San Antonio

****SGT Christian Reed**, Co B 949 Spt Bn, Forney

Mr. George Renteria, Life Member #6025, Buda

MSG (Ret) James H. Savage, Life Member #4080, Denison

CSM (Ret) Todd Richardson, Life Member #33099, Sinton

****PV2 Alejandro Villalobos**, Co D 949 Spt Bn, Taylor

MSgt (Ret) Ralph A. Wiseman, Life Member #14318, Houston

SMSgt (Ret) Hector Zuniga, Life Member #5700, Edinburg

** Had NGAT Life Insurance Policy*

*** Had No-Cost Active Guard Policy of \$1,000*



CCMSgt (Ret) Donald Smithers, Life Member #6697,
Sugar Land, 1994 NGAT Minuteman Recipient



IF YOU ARE AWARE OF THE PASSING OF A CURRENT OR FORMER
TEXAS NATIONAL GUARD MEMBER, PLEASE NOTIFY US BY PHONE,
MAIL OR EMAIL NGATNEWS@NGAT.ORG.



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PERIODICAL



TSgt JOSHUA OROPEZA, assigned to the 149th Fighter Wing, prepares for an incentive flight in an F-16 Fighting Falcon at Fort Bliss, Texas, June 6, 2026, in recognition of his hard work and dedication. *(Photo by TSgt Derek Davis)*



SGT DYLAN ISABELL, a crew chief for the 108th Aviation Regiment, performs routine maintenance checks on a UH-60 after landing at Martindale Airfield, San Antonio, Texas. Isabell was participating in SAREX 2026, where the Texas Military Department tests emergency response readiness with partner agencies. *(Photo by SSG Derek Gutierrez)*



NGAT PLANNING CALENDAR

(As of July 31, 2026)

2026

Aug 15	Texas Paratroopers Reunion, Lumberton, TX
Aug 23-24	NGAT Board of Directors Meeting, Austin, TX
Aug 28-Sep 1	NGAUS Annual Conference, Indianapolis, IN
Sep 4-7	Labor Day Observed (NGAT Office Closed)
Sep 11	Patriot Day
Oct 12	Columbus Day (NGAT Office Closed)
Oct 22-25	AFBA Eagle Meeting, Orlando, FL
Nov 11	Veterans Day (NGAT Office Closed)
Nov 26-27	Thanksgiving Observed (NGAT Office Closed)
Dec 13	National Guard Birthday
Dec 24-31	NGAT Holiday Break (NGAT Office Closed)

2027

Jan 1	New Years Day (NGAT Office Closed)
Jan 18	Martin Luther King Day (NGAT Office Closed)
Feb 15	Presidents Day (NGAT Office Closed)
Feb 25	NGAT Board of Directors Meeting, Corpus Christi
Feb 25	NGAT Corporate Partners Reception, Corpus Christi
Feb 26-28	68th Annual NGAT Conference, Corpus Christi



MEMBERS OF THE TEXAS ARMY NATIONAL GUARD AND TEXAS STATE GUARD conduct riverine operations that provide an increased presence along the Rio Grande to help deter transnational criminal activity and enhance security for Texas communities. *(Photo courtesy of the Texas Military Department)*