

13 December 2009

Happy Birthday Army National Guard!

You sure look good for 373! In fact, the modern Army National Guard has never looked better. We have proven our relevance in domestic and combat operations and defined ourselves as a true operational force. In the current high OPTEMPO environment, our forces, both generating and operating, have shown that not only is the Guard meeting readiness requirements, we are often the leaders in those key initiatives, programs, and partnerships sustaining the 21st century Army. The Army National Guard revolutionized military recruiting. The quality of our force has never been higher! After years of historic end-strength growth, we successfully shifted to a focus of quality and training the force. The Army National Guard has made judicious investments in personnel training, equipping, policy needs, and Family and Employer support.

At 358,200 Soldiers strong, we are fielding the most robust Guard force ever imagined. And a defining element of this force is the versatility of our Citizen Soldiers. You are trained and ready to meet the needs of our unique dual mission, and are adaptable and agile in response to the requirements of a volatile era. Our Warriors are capable of functioning across a broad spectrum of conflict and in any environment. In this year alone, over 52,000 Citizen Soldiers deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan while over 11,000 Soldiers at home supported operations including the Presidential Inauguration, the North Dakota floods, Kentucky ice storms, the G20 summit, and the American Samoa tsunami to name a few. For those currently deployed, we are so proud of you; we support you, and wish you a safe return home.

General George Washington profoundly noted that, "When we assumed the soldier, we did not set aside the citizen." As Soldiers in this organization, you too are well prepared to be leaders in your community. This is why the Army National Guard is such a national treasure, because the investment in the Soldier pays dividends in the form of the Citizen whose character and competence add value to the communities across America. For almost four centuries members of the militia and National Guard have served this nation with pride and honor. This generation of selfless volunteers is no different, you are answering the Nation's call. You are the epitome of the Citizen Soldier; Guardsmen and women, who only get better with age!

Happy Birthday!

Major General Raymond W. Carpenter
Acting Director, Army National Guard