

# TENNESSEE GUARDIAN

SGT COLE LUKENS

# NATIONAL GUARD'S BEST



## ■ FROM THE EDITOR

CAPT. KEALY A. MORIARTY  
MANAGING EDITOR

After months of domestic operations combatting the COVID-19 pandemic, Soldiers and Airmen exercised their combat readiness and strength this summer in a variety of events across the United States. Nearly 3,000 Tennessee Guardsmen completed the three-week exercise, eXportable Combat Training Capability, in Fort Hood, Texas; Sgt. Cole Lukens became National Guard's Best Warrior; Airmen trained in joint exercises in Idaho and Alaska; several units completed their annual training requirement; and the Tennessee National Guard partnered with local agencies and participated in Vigilant Guard 2021.

In this issue of the *Tennessee Guardsman* we highlight the sheer strength and readiness of the Tennessee National Guard, despite tribulations brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. We examine the interoperability between the 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment, 230th Sustainment Brigade, 30th Troop Command and the 194th Engineer Brigade during the stress-inducing XCTC exercise. We will understand the importance of partnership, not only between the Army and Air Guard, but with our local and state agencies as we follow along the 164th Airlift Wing's operation during the statewide disaster relief exercise, Vigilant Guard 2021. While discussing partnership, we will also see the 45th Civil Support Team exercise their readiness during simulated missions at local Nashville middle schools and at Nissan Stadium.

Lastly, we follow Sgt. Cole Lukens' inspiring journey becoming the National Guard's Best Warrior after competing against the Nation's best. Lukens had won the state and regional best warrior competitions before he won nationally at Camp Navajo, Arizona. In this issue, we will learn what is next for Lukens in his military career and his best warrior journey.

As you read along, we hope to invoke pride in the Tennessee National Guard as we highlight the accomplishments of the Guardsmen over the summer. Soldiers and Airmen overcame several challenges while operating in extreme weather conditions and harsh living environments, proving their individual and unit readiness. Whether battling the COVID-19 pandemic, or performing battle drills in Texas, the Tennessee National Guard is "Always Ready, Always There!" to answer the call when needed.



ON THE COVER:  
The Army National  
Guard's Best  
Warrior Sgt. Cole  
Lukens. (Photo by  
1st Lt. Sarah Kohrt)



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BRIG. GEN. WARNER A. ROSS II



## To the Soldiers and Airmen of the Tennessee National Guard,

Over the last few months, the Tennessee National Guard has had many challenges sent our way, and in true volunteer fashion, you have not only accepted those challenges, but overcame every obstacle and continued to excel at every mission. From the continued fight against the COVID-19 pandemic that is extending past its 18th month, to the extensive training in the Texas heat during the XCTC exercise to maintain your wartime readiness, you have shown professionalism at every turn. Not only that, you have also demonstrated joint operations during Vigilant Guard 2021, responded to help our fellow Tennesseans in need when Humphreys County was hit with a devastating flash flood, and helping Louisiana recover from Hurricane Ida. This was all accomplished while units deployed to the Horn of Africa and continue to serve throughout the globe in areas like the Middle East and on the U.S.-Mexico border. From pandemics, to natural disasters, and overseas deployments, you all have repeatedly answered our state's and nation's call without hesitation, proving we are "Always Ready, Always There!"

It is nothing less than astonishing to consider what you have accomplished and continue to achieve. None of these things could have been done without Soldiers and Airmen like you. You are the best and brightest our state and nation has to offer, and your example and leadership inspire those around you. This summer, one of our own, Sgt. Cole Lukens from 30th Troop Command became the National Guard Soldier of the Year and is set to represent the National Guard's 54 states and territories at the Army's Best Warrior Competition. He is a perfect example of the professionalism and tireless devotion to our mission that you all have demonstrated this past year, and I am proud that one of our own will represent the entire Army National Guard.

As we keep moving forward, the fight is not yet over. We still have more work to do. As we continue to battle COVID-19 and the countless other missions that we receive, I challenge you all to reach out to your battle-buddies and wingmen to ensure they are doing ok. We have all been accomplishing amazing things during a rapid operational tempo, but we still need to ensure we are taking care of our families and each other. Look out for one another and continue to be the professionals we all know you are. I look forward to seeing what you all accomplish next, "Volunteers!"

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Warner A. Ross II".

*Brig. Gen. Warner A. Ross II  
Assistant Adjutant General, Army*



## Vigilant Guard 2021

Tennessee National Guard host statewide training exercise to simulate emergencies

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — In early August, the Tennessee National Guard hosted Vigilant Guard 2021, a statewide training exercise where National Guardsmen, alongside federal, state, and local first responders, reacted to simulated, large-scale emergency events.

More than 600 Soldiers and Airmen from the Tennessee National Guard worked with 400 emergency professionals from 50 different federal, state, and local agencies. Participants from Tennessee, Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, and North Dakota trained together responding to multiple emergency scenarios.

“Exercises like Vigilant Guard provide critical training for the National Guard and emergency management agencies,” said Lt. Col. Dallas Clements, Domestic Operations Planner for the Tennessee National Guard. “Swift water rescue, a building collapse, train derailment, power outages, and cyber-attacks are just some of the scenarios we trained on.”

This exercise is designed to improve effectiveness, efficiency, and operational relationships with civilian and military partners at all levels. While many of the scenarios were simulated, several large-scale exercise elements took place statewide.

Nashville – Aug. 3-6: More than 200 personnel from the Nashville Fire Department, Rutherford County HAZMAT, and Tennessee National Guard simulated a train derailment with release of hazardous materials at the CSX Radnor Rail Yard.

Memphis – Aug. 5-8: Nearly 300 National Guard personnel from multiple states and the Memphis Fire Department responded to a simulated building collapse at the Memphis Fire Department Training Academy.

Chattanooga – Aug. 7: The Tennessee Army and Air National Guard removed the Chattanooga National Guard Armory from the electrical utility grid and established electrical power with a 100-kilowatt generator. - Story by Lt. Col. Darrin Haas



## Bear Attack Rescue

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. A Tennessee Army National Guard medical flight crew responded to an emergency air evacuation mission after a camper was attacked and injured by a bear while sleeping in the Great Smoky Mountain National Park area, June 18. A UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter from Detachment 1, Company C, 1-171st Aviation Regiment based in Knoxville assembled in under an hour and launched to the incident site. While onboard, the aircrew continued medical aid to the patient during the 20-minute flight to the hospital. This is the third search and rescue mission by the Tennessee National Guard this year. (Photo Courtesy Tennessee National Guard)



## Celebrating Tennessee's Statehood

NASHVILLE, Tenn. Tennessee National Guardsmen from the 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment, headquartered in Knoxville, helped commemorate Tennessee's 225th anniversary of statehood with celebratory cannon fire at the Bicentennial Capitol Mall State Park on June 1. Artillery crews fired blank rounds from three M116 Howitzers during the Bicentennial Capitol Mall State Park's ceremony in honor of the park's 25th anniversary and Tennessee's 225th anniversary of Statehood Day. June 1 recognizes the day Tennessee's constitution was ratified in 1796 and Tennessee became the 16th state to join the United States. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Timothy Cordeiro)



## Hometown Heroes Week

LOUISVILLE, Tenn. Members of the 134th Air Refueling Wing were invited this summer to visit Camp Tipton, a local summer day-camp program, where they participated in "Hometown Heroes Week." The young campers had the opportunity to interact with some of their own hometown heroes who serve in and around their community. These heroes included police, fire, military, and EMT's. The children enjoyed learning about military equipment and vehicles and it was a great opportunity to educate the campers on how guardsmen actively serve our state and nation. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Darby Arnold)



## New Command Chief Warrant Officer

NASHVILLE, Tenn. Chief Warrant Officer 4 David Ward, a Culleoka native, became the Tennessee National Guard's sixth Command Chief Warrant Officer in its history during a ceremony in Nashville on March 31. Ward assumed responsibility from Chief Warrant Officer 5 Ricky Tackett, who served in the position since 2017. The Command Chief Warrant Officer provides senior level counsel to the Assistant Adjutant General, Army and Tennessee's Adjutant General on the supervision and training of Tennessee's Warrant Officers. (Photo by retired Sgt. 1st Class Edgar Castro)



## Funeral Honors for WWII Hero

CHATTANOOGA, Tenn. Medal of Honor recipient Charles H. Coolidge's funeral was held in Chattanooga. U.S. Army Tech. Sgt. Charles H. Coolidge, a World War II Soldier from the 36th Infantry Division, received the Medal of Honor for valorous actions east of Belmont-sur-Buttant in France from Oct. 24-27, 1944. He was born Aug. 4, 1921 in Signal Mountain, Tennessee, and passed away on April 6, 2021 at the age of 99. The Tennessee National Guard provided the Military Funeral Honors for this WWII Hero. (Photo by Lt. Col. Darrin Haas)





## TENNESSEE SNAPSHOT

### **FLOODING IN TENNESSEE**

Aug. 26, 2021 - Members of the Tennessee National Guard assisted with recovery and clean-up efforts following severe flooding in Humphreys County. Guardsmen used heavy equipment to help restore roadways and clear debris.

*PHOTO BY: RETIRED SGT. 1ST CLASS EDGAR CASTRO*






TENNESSEE  
SNAPSHOT

**READY FOR ANYTHING**

July 29, 2021 - The 45th Civil Support Team takes part in their Training Proficiency Evaluation. The simulated missions took place at a local middle school and a Nashville sports arena and are vital in keeping the 45th CST ready for anything.

PHOTO BY: 1ST LT. SARAH KOHRT






Sgt. Cole Lukens from the Tennessee National Guard's 208th Area Support Medical Company in Smyrna is the 2021 Army National Guard Soldier of the Year.  
(Photo by 1st Lt. Sarah Kohrt)

**SGT. COLE LUKENS**

**NATIONAL GUARD'S**

**BEST**



STORY BY: RETIRED SGT. 1ST CLASS WILLIAM JONES

When Sgt. Cole Lukens' drill sergeant told him, "A deficiency that goes uncorrected becomes a new standard," it inspired action.

Sgt. Lukens used this mantra to become the National Guard's 2021 Soldier of the Year.



Sgt. Cole Lukens fires an M-4 rifle during the Army National Guard's Best Warrior Competition in Arizona on July 20. (Submitted photo)



Sgt. Cole Lukens, a tactical generator mechanic in the Tennessee Army National Guard's 208th Area Support Medical Company in Smyrna and a senior at Middle Tennessee State University won the 2021 Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition at Camp Navajo, Arizona.

Lukens was one of 13 finalists who represented the best National Guard Soldiers and noncommissioned officers in the nation during a grueling four-day event that concluded on July 23. "It feels amazing," said Lukens, "and I am really excited to carry out what I learned here back to my unit and sharpen the skills of other Soldiers."

With an elevation of 7,000 feet, Camp Navajo presented its own challenges for the competitors. Two weeks before arriving in Arizona, Lukens prepared himself for the higher elevation by hiking part of the Appalachian Trail; "I did 33 miles with a 55-pound pack. I left about 2 p.m. and hiked until 1 a.m.; I took a nap and then I went the rest of the 10 miles."

The first day of the competition started with the Army Combat Fitness Test followed by a helicopter flight to the desert. "Shooting is



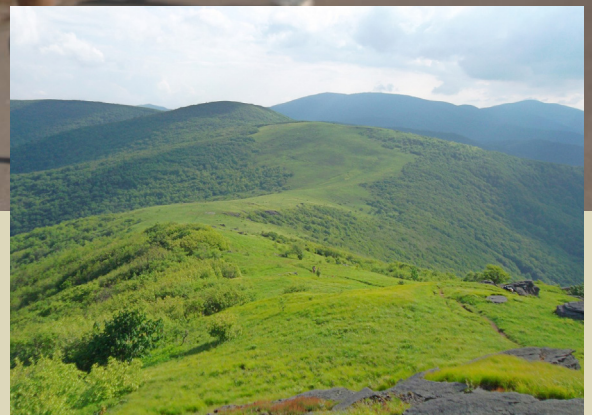
# NATIONAL GUARD'S BEST



Sgt. Cole Lukens from the Tennessee Army National Guard's 208th Area Support Medical Company in Smyrna won the Army National Guard's Best Warrior Competition in Arizona on July 23 and is the 2021 Army National Guard Soldier of the Year. (Photo by 1st Lt. Sarah Kohrt)



## NATIONAL GUARD'S BEST



Carvers Gap on the Tennessee/North Carolina border.  
(Photo courtesy carversgap.org)

something I really enjoy,” said Lukens. “We started with shotguns and pistols. We then flew back to the camp. We fired M-4s at night with [night vision goggles]. It was a lot of fun. I hadn’t done that before!”

After three hours of sleep, next came land navigation. “I was really proud of myself. I quickly found five out of five points.” Following land navigation, the competitors were graded on warrior tasks: radio checks, first aid, the grenade range, weapons range, programming a “dagger” (a military GPS), setting up a claymore mine, and sending a 9-line medical evacuation report. To make it even more interesting, these were timed events with a mile long run in-between.

Next, the Soldiers worked two final events with a combination of stressors. The first event involved troubleshooting an M-4 rifle -- blindfolded. The final event was assembling two different rifles from a box full of parts, in the dark, while loud music played in the background.

The final event on the second day of competition was

*With an elevation of 7,000 feet, Camp Navajo presented its own challenges for the competitors. To prepare himself for the higher elevation, Lukens hiked Carvers Gap to 19 East on the Appalachian Trail, 16 and ½ miles. “I did 33 miles in one day with a 55-pound pack. I left about 2 p.m. I went all the way to 19 East and back to the Big Hump on the first day. I got back up at 1 a.m.; I took a one-hour nap and then I went the rest of the 10 miles.”*





The competition begins with the Army Combat Fitness Test. (Photo by Sgt. Laura Bauer)



Lukens is tested on weapons proficiency during competition. (Photo by Sgt. Nicholas Moyte)

designed to test these professionals in a unique environment. The competitors were bussed to an Olympic sized pool to demonstrate how well they swam in full uniform. “We had to swim 25 meters with an M-4 over our head,” said Lukens. “If your weapon went in the water, you failed.”

The next four events involved diving to the bottom of the pool to retrieve a piece of tactical gear, swimming 50-meters, 100-meters, and treading water with their hands over their heads without going under. Again, in each event the Soldiers were in uniform. “I came in second in the swimming event, so I’ll train harder for next time,” said Lukens.

On the third day, the competitors were taken to the desert and put into three-person teams. They were graded on a field artillery exercise where they demonstrated “firing for effect” and an urban operation exercise where they demonstrated clearing a building. Next, they drove out to Arizona’s Mogollon Rim for a ruck march with a 35-pound pack. Lukens finished first.

The final day of competition was a little more cerebral. There was an essay contest, a written exam, and the competitors appeared before a formal board. The competitors were also tested on their drill and ceremony.

That evening, everyone attended an awards banquet where it was announced that Lukens was the “best of the best” and the 2021 Army



Sgt. Cole Lukens from the Tennessee  
Army National Guard's 208th Area  
Support Medical Company in Smyrna.  
(Photo by 1st Lt. Sarah Kohrt)





“I look forward to representing all 54 states and territories in the upcoming Army Best Warrior competition.”

National Guard Soldier of the Year. He was awarded a Meritorious Service Medal and Soldier of the Year trophy.

“This is a great honor,” said Lukens. “I’m proud to represent my state during the competition and I look forward to representing all 54 states and territories in the upcoming Army Best Warrior competition. This has been an amazing experience.”

Lukens enlisted in the Army National Guard in 2017. In addition to being a college student and president of his fraternity (Kappa Sigma), he is employed full-time with the Guard in Smyrna. He is keeping his plans for the future open, but leaning heavily toward becoming a drill sergeant. “I’ll never forget what my drill sergeant, Drill Sergeant Grainger, said, ‘a deficiency that goes uncorrected becomes a new standard.’”

Lukens will be moving on to the U.S. Army’s Best Warrior competition to compete against Soldiers from Active Duty and the Reserves this fall. He will be representing the more than 330,000 Soldiers from 54 states and territories in the National Guard.

# 164TH HELPS IN VIGILANT GUARD

164th Airlift Wing Transports First Civilian Asset on Tennessee Military Aircraft as Part of Vigilant Guard 2021.



**MEMPHIS, Tenn.** – Seven members from the 164th successfully transported the State of Tennessee Department of Health Mobile Operations Center and a prime mover vehicle, Aug. 5, from Smyrna to Memphis on a C-17 as part of exercise Vigilant Guard 2021. This proof of concept flight could potentially

lead to expedited movement of these MOC trailers across the state in the event of future disasters.

While only seven members were on board this flight, the concept development began approximately two years ago involving many federal agencies from the National Guard Bureau to the U.S. Northern

Members of the 155th Airlift Squadron, 164th Air Terminal Function, and members of the Tennessee Health Department work together to load the Tennessee Health Department's Mobility Operations Center onto a C-17 Globemaster III in Smyrna. (Photo by Airman 1st Class TràVonna Hawkins)



Command. However, two members, Senior Master Sgt. Brian McDonald, 155th loadmaster, and Master Sgt. John Voss, 155th loadmaster and regional planning manager for Tennessee Emergency Management Agency, were a part of the certification process from the beginning.

“Originally, there was nowhere on the trailer to attach restraints. So we got together with engineers and the Tennessee Department of Health to get attachment points added; they welded on a sub train so we could tie it down safely and have all the criteria we need to transport,” said McDonald. “This flight was to prove that this could be done and later it became a part of the Vigilant Guard exercise. The concept was proven, we got the engineering done so now how can we use it?”

Due to the civilian equipment, a waiver from National Guard Bureau was required for this joint maneuver. After a successful test loading of the 21,000 pound MOC on both a C-17 and C-5 aircraft in January 2021, Maj. Gen. Jeff Holmes, Tennessee’s Adjutant General, began the process to get approval to transport the asset in preparation for Vigilant Guard 2021. It was approved only one week prior to the move.

Vigilant Guard is a statewide exercise that involves the three grand divisions of Tennessee. It is led by TEMA in conjunction with NORTHCOM assistance. The scenario included a category 4 simu-



The Tennessee Health Department’s Mobility Operations Center is loaded onto a Memphis C-17 Globemaster III in Smyrna. (Photo by Airman 1st Class TràVonna Hawkins)

lated Hurricane ripping through Memphis causing catastrophic damage, flooding from the Mississippi River, and bridge damage simulated by what is called the rubble pile. The hurricane then headed east towards Nashville and continued throughout the state. Chief Master Sgt. Kenneth MacFeggan, 155th operations group superintendent, was a part of planning the exercise for the western region of the state and the 164th Airlift Wing.

“The exercise will simulate the disabling of the University Hospital at Memphis. The people training at the site are the CBRN Enhanced Response Force Package team from Kentucky and Civil Support Team from Arkansas,” said MacFeggan. “They deal with natural disasters and securing the area. This feeds

into the rubble pile and we simulated that the hospital was taken out and they navigated around electrical outages, personnel extractions and flooding. These teams have the capability to handle it.”

The CERFP and CST teams also worked alongside local entities such as Memphis Fire Department and the 164th Airlift Wing. The modifications made to the Tennessee trailer will make Air Transportability Test Loading Activity certification available to other states allowing them to make changes and support their trailers as well.

“It’s got TAG level visibility. From planning, getting certifications, test loads to actually flying it from point A to B is the pinnacle of this whole process,” said MacFeggan.

**- TECH. SGT. CHELCEE ARNOLD**



**COVID-19**

# BEYOND DUTY

STORY BY LT. COL. DARRIN HAAS

# Tennessee National Guardsman and Eagle Scout does more than his duty to help the community

**CROSSVILLE, Tenn.** – When COVID-19 swept across the United States and throughout Tennessee in March 2020, Spc. Anthony Spencer knew it was his duty to help his state and community during this time of distress. A trained healthcare specialist with the Tennessee National Guard and lifelong Scout, he had the skills and character to do what he knew was right.

A Crossville native and District Executive for the Boy Scouts of America, Spencer put his career on hold, left home, and risked his own health as a part of the Tennessee National Guard's initial COVID-19 response team. For more than a year now, he has been a key part of Tennessee's fight against the deadly pandemic.

"As a Scout and Guardsman, I felt called to be a part of the response and give back to my community that had given me so much," said Spencer.

Serving his country and being a Scout is something Spencer does not take lightly.

He began scouting in elementary school as a Cub Scout and progressed through the ranks to become an Eagle Scout with Crossville's Boy Scout Troop 271 in 2011. He earned Eagle Scout, the highest honor a Boy Scout can earn, by planning, developing, and constructing a firefighter memorial in front of the Crossville Public Safety building.

"There is only one name on the memorial, and I hope that it stays that way forever," said Spencer.

Once Spencer finished the project he continued supporting scouting, trying to live the Scout Slogan, "do a good turn daily," and Scout Motto, "be prepared." While in high school, he worked as a scouting instructor at Camp Buck Toms in Rockwood, and mentored scouts at his troop's meetings.

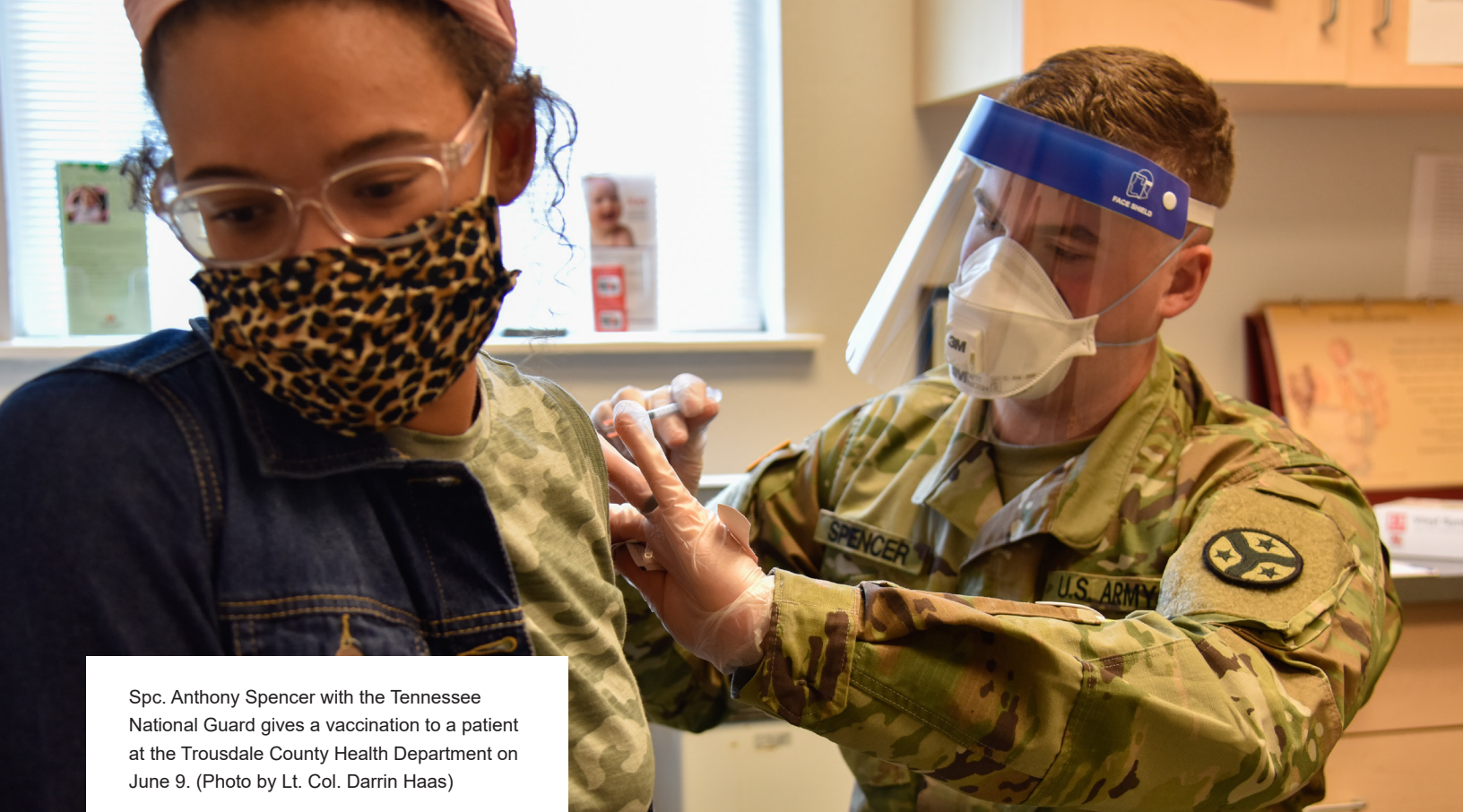
After graduating from Crossville High School in 2014, Spencer attended Cumberland University in Lebanon to earn his bachelor's degree in biochemistry. While studying, he contributed to his local scout troop and served as a lifeguard and ski instructor at Camp Buck Toms. By his junior year, he was the camp's aquatics director.

Two days after graduating from college in May 2018, Spencer enlisted in the Tennessee National Guard as a medic for the 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment's 2nd Squadron, headquartered in Cookeville.

"When school was over, I wanted to do something bigger than myself, I felt called to serve my county," said Spencer. "I chose to become a medic because I wanted to help people directly. Scouting teaches us that service to others is the highest calling."

In September, Spencer left for basic combat training at Fort Benning, Georgia, followed by 16 weeks of advanced training as a healthcare specialist at Fort Sam Houston, Texas. He learned how to treat Soldiers for everything from mild illnesses to battlefield casualties.





Spc. Anthony Spencer with the Tennessee National Guard gives a vaccination to a patient at the Trousdale County Health Department on June 9. (Photo by Lt. Col. Darrin Haas)

Once he graduated in March 2019, Spencer returned to Tennessee to drill at his unit in Cookeville. That summer, Spencer also returned to his scouting roots and worked again at Camp Buck Toms, as he did every year since turning 15-years-old. He also applied for and was offered a position as the District Executive for the Boy Scouts of America's Great Smoky Mountain Council. He now serves the Eagle Creek District, which serves Cumberland, Fentress, Morgan, Pickett, Roane, and Scott County.

"It was a dream of mine to become a professional scouter and help give younger scouts the character building experiences that helped me," said Spencer. "After all those years working at summer camp, I really wanted to make it a career."

As the district executive, Spencer helps the organizations in his district plan events, organize and manage their troops, ensure all policies and procedures are followed, and help fundraise. He was the executive for nearly a year when the pandemic began.

"Troops and packs stopped having meetings and schools shut down. Everything came to a grinding halt

as we started to understand what it meant to live in a pandemic," said Spencer.

As everyone braced for the statewide shutdown in March 2020, the state of Tennessee began fighting COVID-19. Gov. Bill Lee and Maj. Gen. Jeff Holmes, Tennessee's Adjutant General, mobilized more than 250 Soldiers and Airmen with medical backgrounds to support the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency and Department of Health. These Guardsmen were to be on the frontlines of the fight against COVID-19 and supporting testing of Tennessee citizens.

"When my unit called and told me I was needed, there was no pause, I was excited to do what I was trained for," said Spencer. "It was a wonderful opportunity to really use my skills as a medic at home and live up to the Scout Slogan to 'do a good turn daily.'"

He mobilized with the first group of Guardsmen to help test Tennesseans for COVID-19 at drive-thru testing centers across the state. After completing initial training in Smyrna on how to conduct tests and protect yourself and others from the disease, Spencer reported to the Jackson County Health Department to assist with

their testing efforts.

“Everything happened so quickly,” said Spencer. “In just a few days, I was swabbing people who feared they might have contracted the virus. Some people were very scared, but we did everything we could to comfort them and ensure people we were doing all we could to help.”

After a few months, he returned to Smyrna and helped with COVID-19 testing at various nursing homes across Middle Tennessee. He helped at high-risk communities, long-term care facilities, and he even tested Tennessee State Troopers in Jackson. He spent months supporting missions throughout Middle Tennessee to help those in need. At times, he also assisted with administration and traffic control at testing sites.

In November, Spencer reported to Lebanon to support the drive-thru testing site serving Wilson County.



Anthony Spencer during his time as a Boy Scout and as a district executive. (Photo submitted)

He also helped stand up an aid center at the Methodist Hospital in Memphis.

Around January, the Tennessee National Guard began establishing vaccination sites. Spencer stayed in Lebanon to develop vaccination protocols for Wilson County and then began vaccinating local citizens.

“Many people who came to be vaccinated were excited and relieved that this day had finally arrived. Some were so happy that they began to cry and kept thanking me,” said Spencer. “Many times, I was glad to lend my ear to someone who needed comforting due to his or her fear of what was going on. It was humbling to know we were able to have a positive impact on someone’s life.”

From January to April, the Lebanon testing and vaccination site was averaging more than 650 vaccinations per day. Once the vaccination rate began to slow, Spencer had an opportunity to utilize his skills in a different community. In April, he was selected to help stand up another vaccination and testing site in Hartsville with the Trousdale County Health Department. The site averaged nearly 70 vaccinations a day in an area where vaccines were not available previously.

Currently, Spencer is still providing vaccinations at the Trousdale County Health Department. His team has also begun visiting various businesses and organizations in the community offering to vaccinate in locations convenient to them.

“Everyone I’ve worked with during this pandemic has been professional and are doing everything they can to help those in need,” said Spencer. “I love being able to help my fellow Tennesseans to combat this unforeseen enemy. It’s been a privilege to serve.”

Spencer will continue serving until the Guard is no longer needed to help during this crisis. He then plans to return to the Eagle Creek District of the Boy Scouts of America as their district executive.

“It’s amazing how much Scouting and the Guard have in common,” said Spencer. “The Guard has given me the opportunity to live my Scout Oath and Promise every day and to give back. It’s been a privilege and a gift to be able to help this past year and I look forward to taking my experiences back to scouting.”



# TRAINING IN THE LAST FRONTIER

## Airmen from Tennessee's 247th Intelligence Squadron Support Active-Duty Operations in Alaska

**ANCHORAGE, Alaska** – Four thousand miles from home, a group of 247th Intelligence Squadron Airmen from the Tennessee Air National Guard participated in a unique, multi-year mission to augment active duty troops in real-world intelligence operations.

Stationed at the Alaska Missions Operations Center, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, 247th Airmen were exposed to high-tempo challenges and learned skills not easily acquired back home at Berry Field Air National Guard Base, Nashville, Tennessee.

“It really gives them the hands-on training that they need to come back and pass on to our enlisted folks,” said Chief Master Sgt. Shane Robinson, 247th senior enlisted manager. “When they come back here, they’re considered subject matter experts.”

The program, coordinated by the Reserve Guard Integration Office, allows Air Guard units to augment the National Security Agency’s mis-

sion during personnel shortfalls.

The 247th has maintained a win-win partnership with the RGIO for several years, steadily supplying top troops to help the NSA when needed, while giving Airmen the opportunity to enhance their career and skillset.

“A tour like this can be used as a platform to possibly extend an NSA career in uniform or as a civilian,” said Lt. Col. Kirk Larson, the 247th commander. “It may not always be rainbows and butterflies up there, but it’s a great location nine months out of the year, and when they come down, they’ve in essence punched their ticket for future career opportunities throughout the intelligence community.”

Senior Airman Deniea Turner, a 247th target digital network analyst who’s been in Alaska for six months, is enjoying her experience so much she’s in recruitment mode. “I’m currently trying to convince some of my counterparts at the 118th [Wing]

to come here,” she said. “I feel it’s important to experience multiple shops to better develop both trade-craft and leadership skills.”

The program’s success is evident



Staff Sgt. Michelle Aguilar-Villafuerte of the 247th Intelligence Squadron. (Photo by Senior Airman Justin Wynn)



From left to right: Tech. Sgt. Johnathan Thompson, Senior Airman Deniea Turner, and Staff Sgt. Michelle Aguilar-Villafuerte, all members of the 247th Intelligence Squadron, Tennessee Air National Guard, pose with the Chugach Mountains in the background May 12, at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. All three Airmen were in Alaska to support active-duty operations and to learn new skillsets to bring back to their home unit. (Photo by Senior Airman Justin Wynn)

in feedback from active-duty leadership, who frequently contact the 247th to compliment the guardsmen who have seamlessly integrated with their troops.

“The squadron commander there recently said we’ll take all that we can get if they’re all of this caliber,” said Larson. “You cannot put into

words the fact that you have a four-star general being briefed by one of our Airmen.”

Strictly voluntary, the program relies on the lure of career enhancement and spending several years in a unique location.

“Alaska in itself is full of different adventures that you would not get

in other states,” said Tech. Sgt. Jonathan Thompson, a 247th IS senior target development network analyst. “Couple that with working with professionals that have lived the mission for a multitude of years, and you end up with a once-in-a-lifetime experience.”

**- TECH. SGT. MARK THOMPSON**



## 7 Steps to Create Connection in a Crisis™

By Sgt. 1st Class Ken Weichert

Leadership expert John C. Maxwell says, “A crisis does not define us, it reveals us.”

It was over a year ago when the COVID crisis pulled us into new standards of living. We donned medical masks and practiced social distancing at grocery stores and fuel stations, only to retreat home for multiple months of general or enhanced community quarantine.

Continued confinement and isolation within congested spaces created a climate of chaos and calamity for some, while others thrived by cultivating connection and community through any means possible.

Dr. Dean Ornish, author of the *UnDo It! How Simple Lifestyle Changes Can Reverse Most Chronic Diseases* states that “the need for connection and community is primal, as fundamental as the need for air, water, and food.”

The Pandemic is not your opposition, however your opportunity to build strong bonds with your battle buddies, family, and friends, so that you will turn your adversities into advantages! It is when we look through the lenses of unwavering resilience and unyielding resolve together, we learn how to deal with dark days and bounce back better than before.



(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Timothy Cordeiro)

Use the following seven simple steps to create connection in any crisis:

### 1. Embrace Empathy.

Empathy is the ability to understand how someone is feeling through shared emotions, even if you think differently about their dilemma.

### 2. Push for Perspective.

Issues become problems when you fail to accept them, or when you refuse to believe that you are imperfect. Perspective requires that you:

**A. Acknowledge.** Acknowledge the problem for what it is.

**B. Accept.** Accept the problem as something you can repair or have resolve that it is beyond your control.

**C. Address.** Address the problem with action.

### 3. Cultivate Confidence.

Proper posture will help your body to function better, allowing you to respond to situations with more strength and stamina. You will have an easier time connecting with other people by presenting yourself with powerful posture.

### 4. Have Humility.

Your family and friends will love your acts of transparency. It makes you approachable and profound.

### 5. Master the Morning.

Master the morning by exercising vigorously, meditating regularly, eating properly, to produce a pattern of progress for the entire day.

### 6. Restore Resilience.

Make a list of 20 books that you want to read, books that will impact and empower you. Start listening to podcasts by people that have positive messages. The more you have in you, is more you have to help others.

### 7. Champion Change.

Are you living by results or reasons why you won't dive into your dreams? A crisis is not the time to bring back what we had, but to become something better. To be the champion of change requires that you:

**A. Dream.** It is a shame that it sometimes takes a crisis to remind us how to dream again.

**B. Develop.** This means that you will need to take some risks to grow, personally and professionally.

**C. Deliver.** This means that you will need to put action behind your aim and create new growth with what you have already.

**The bottom line:** If you don't restore connections with people you are going to remain in captivity with your problems.

**Call to Action:** How will you use these steps to strengthen yourself and the people you serve today?



Sgt. 1st Class Ken Weichert (aka SGT Ken®) is an award-winning international speaker, six-time US Army Soldier of the Year, Master Fitness Trainer, Master Resilience Trainer, Counterintelligence Agent and decorated combat veteran. (Courtesy photo)





**TRAINING IN TEXAS**

# XCTC

## eXportable Combat Training Capability

STORY BY CAPT. KEALY A. MORIARTY

Over the summer, nearly 3,000 Tennessee National Guardsmen and over 1,000 military vehicles traveled across the Southwest to Fort Hood, Texas, for the three-week combat readiness exercise, XCTC. The exercise, known as the eXportable Combat Training Capability, tests units with realistic deployment scenarios. Additionally, observers with First Army evaluated units on their performance during these high-stress conditions. This exercise provided an environment for the 278th Armored

Cavalry Regiment, 230th Sustainment Brigade, 194th Engineer Brigade, and the 30th Troop Command to practice their combat readiness and work together as one holistic fighting force.

“Even though we had a large portion of the Regiment deployed between 2018 and 2020, this is the largest training event we’ve conducted since our National Training Center rotation in the summer of 2018,” said Col. Steven Turner, 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment Commander.



LEFT: Charlie Med, 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment Company group photo at XCTC in Fort Hood on July 27. (Photo by Sgt. Arturo Guzman)

RIGHT: An M2A2 Bradley infantry fighting vehicle advances to a firing position on a hillside during an attack by opposing force Soldiers during the culminating training event of XCTC on July 26. (Photo by Sgt. Leon Cook)



## From the Front:

The 278th's 1st, 2nd and 4th Squadron simulated attack and defense battle drills to include reconnaissance, movement to contact, platoon attack and breach lanes. The troops were equipped with Multiple Integrated Laser Engagement System equipment while being assessed by First Army. This system allows for a more accurate tracking system on troop movement and weapon accuracy. After 4th Squadron completed their platoon lanes, they acted as opposing forces and partnered with units from the Mississippi National Guard to provide realistic, force-on-force training. Components from the 194th Engineer Brigade also contributed to the opposing forces mission.

"XCTC has allowed us to validate our platoon maneuvers," said 1st Lt. Breven Addington, 4th Squadron's O Troop commander. "Our platoon leaders and platoon sergeants get to go out and maneuver their elements and learn troop leading procedures while implementing them swiftly and safely. It also allows them to really learn their vehicles and their capabilities."

Combat engineers with the Regimental Engineer Squadron blasted through barriers during urban breaching lanes, and practiced setting door and roof charges. The engineers also practiced setting shape and crater charges, which allowed them to test their equipment capability.

Throughout the exercise, combat medics were evaluated on their casualty treatment and evacuation procedures. Moulage artists created trauma wound effects to provide realism to the training, makeup and prosthetics on personnel. The actors in moulage would then enter a scenario and create a mass casualty scene to test troops and reactivity. The troops would provide immediate first aid and transport the acting casualties to be further assessed by medics.



A Tennessee National Guardsman from the 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment, watches for enemy movement during a simulated attack on his squadron's tactical operations center. (Photo by Sgt. Leon Cook)





TOP: A member of the 230th Sustainment Brigade clears a road for units to pass at XCTC. MIDDLE: The 230th Sustainment Brigade's guidon. BOTTOM: 230th Soldiers providing vehicle maintenance. (Photos courtesy 230th Sustainment Brigade)

### Sustainment mission:

While the 278th tackled battle drills through platoon and squadron lanes, the 230th provided the means to do so. With help from the 164th Airlift Wing and the 134th Air Refueling Wing, the 230th was primarily responsible for planning and coordinating transportation for over 3,000 troops to and from Texas. C-17s from the 164th completed over 10 legs and KC 135s from the 134th completed 6 legs transporting troops to and from Fort Hood. Each leg consisted of two aircraft.

Once on ground, the 230th was responsible for supplying meals and water to the field, providing vehicle maintenance recovery and providing fuel points - anything that would help sustain the 278th as they trained. They also partnered with the 278th in railhead operations by loading and unloading heavy equipment from the rail for transportation.

"With each major exercise, the mission and the players change; what does not change is the doctrine and the utilization of Standard Operating Procedures," said Col. Christopher Patterson, 230th Sustainment Brigade's commander. "It's critical you take those SOPs out, you exercise them, refresh them, and teach new players how to do those core functions. So this is a great opportunity for us in the field to exercise that muscle memory and to make sure the new players know the game."

The 30th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, a component of the 230th, was directly responsible for transporting mission-critical supplies to the units in the field. They provided food, ice, and water directly to the Soldiers.

"We pick up the supply from the XCTC warehouse, break the bulk and divide the supply based on how many Soldiers are at each location," Staff Sgt. Bryan Lee, 30th CSSB's class one yard supervisor. "It's great to have a hot meal in the field especially after a long day."







TOP: The sniper section with the 1st Squadron, 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment, practices insertion missions at XCTC. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Matthew Brown)  
 MIDDLE: Members of the 278th prepare for a day of training at XCTC. (Photo by Spc. Sheena Scott)  
 BOTTOM: An artillery simulator, used to simulate the blast from an artillery shell, explodes near the 2nd Squadron, 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment, during training. (Photo by Sgt. Leon Cook)



Later in the month, the 278th's Regimental Support Squadron practiced sling load operations in partnership with the Texas National Guard. Texas provided the UH-60 Blackhawk and crew while Tennessee provided a sling loading team from their A Troop.

The 30th Troop Command operated as higher command and aided in personnel and administrative support for the entire exercise. They provided medical teams to help sustain all troops in the field and provide medical treatment as needed. Additionally, they provided aviation battalion headquarters, capable of planning air operations.

The 194th provided environmental control teams to support the 230th and the 30th's requirements.

XCTC provided an environment for units to hone their combat skills while simultaneously working together, enhancing their lethality as a unified fighting force.

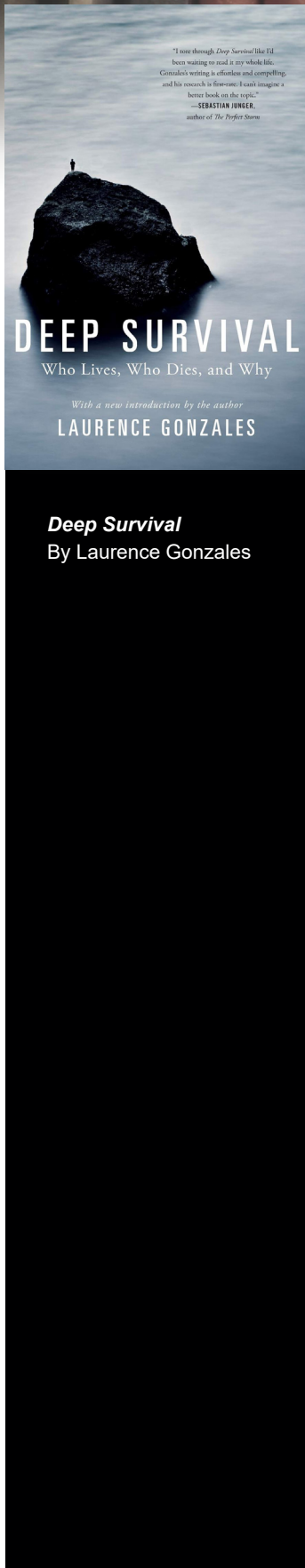
"Our Guardsmen have provided world class support to multiple operations affecting our great state. Over the last 15 months, our Soldiers have responded to natural disasters, the COVID-19 pandemic, and civil unrest events at home and at our nation's Capital," said Maj. Gen. Jimmie Cole, Tennessee's Deputy Adjutant General. "Most recently, our Soldiers are making a tremendous difference by assisting local health agencies in the delivery of the COVID-19 vaccine. I'm extremely proud of their demonstrated flexibility and adaptability and I know they are poised and ready to continue training for their federal mission of large scale combat operations."



*The 278th is headquartered in Knoxville, the 230th in Chattanooga, 194th in Jackson and the 30th in Tullahoma. All the units comprise citizen-Soldiers from across the state, most of which have been a part of Tennessee's ongoing fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.*







Lt. Col. Darrin Haas Gives his Review of:

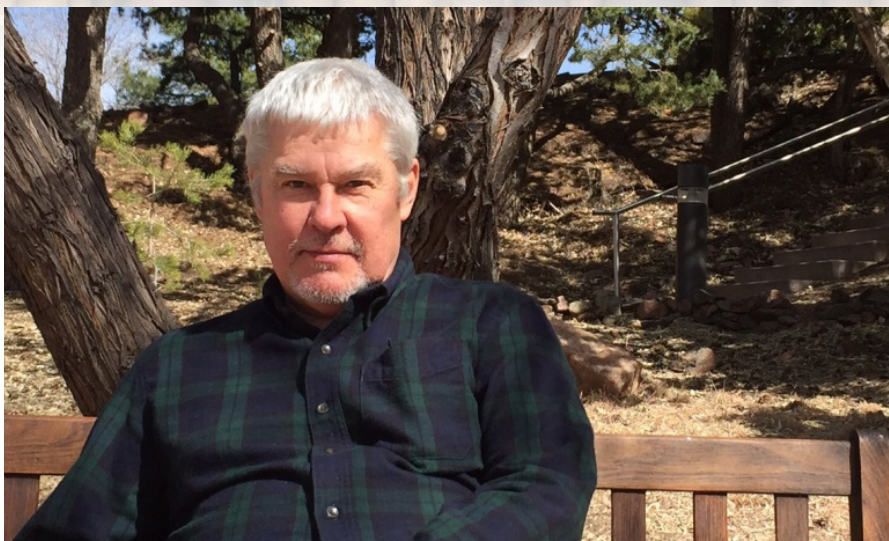
# DEEP SURVIVAL: WHO LIVES, WHO DIES, AND WHY

As Soldiers and Airmen, we sometimes find ourselves in situations and events that can be stressful, dangerous, and traumatic. The jobs we perform and the adventurous hobbies we are interested in may lead to circumstances and conditions that have tragic or deadly results. When put into dangerous situations, especially when your very own survival is at stake, people react differently. Some survive events that appear hopeless, while others perish during situations that appear survivable. What determines if we live or die is often based on how we react, and this is the focus of Laurence Gonzales' influential work, *Deep Survival*.

Combing hard science and a gift for adventure storytelling, Gonzales examines the mystery of survival. According to him, when untrained people are confronted with a life-threat-

ening situation, roughly 80-90 percent of them panic or freeze, unable to make decisions, which result in the loss of life. Only 10-20 percent are able to remain calm and act rationally. Thinking clearly and being decisive without panicking is critical. Gonzales wonders what traits and what training can increase a person's odds of living through difficult situations.

A career journalist and pilot who specializes in the covering adventures and disasters, Gonzales spent decades writing articles about people who survived harrowing experiences and others, often well-trained professionals, who perished in situations they should have survived. Throughout the book, he tells stories about Navy pilots landing on aircraft carriers, mountain climbing disasters, sailors lost at sea in shark-infested



Author of *Deep Survival*, Laurence Gonzales. (Photo by John German)

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waters, and many other examples. He analyzes them to see what we can learn and apply to our own lives. Utilizing a mix of practical advice and knowledge, survival science, scientific studies, and journalism, he studies these actions and psychology of the survivors to better understand what went right, and what went wrong.

Gonzales separates the narrative of his work into two main sections. The first part looks at how people can get themselves into deadly situations. Gonzales argues that this often happens because of bad habits and the way the human brain is wired. Repetitive experiences create a framework the brain draws upon to analyze threats. If a person undergoes a continuous repetition of experiences that all have positive outcomes, the brain can have a diffi-

cult time assessing and examining a threat if the circumstances and conditions are similar. Therefore, a person may not realize events are transpiring that could quickly lead to a disaster. This is how experienced and well-trained professionals can sometimes find themselves in deadly situations.

The second section of Gonzales' work mainly focuses on survival. According to Gonzales' research, survival in dangerous, chaotic, and deadly situations come from making clear and decisive decisions and actions. For many people who are inexperienced or untrained, this can be difficult to do. While experiencing panic or engaged in a flight-or-fight mode, logical thinking is difficult and poor decisions can be made or none at all. Often, experience can

increase a person's odds of survival.

Overall, Gonzales has written a well-crafted and interesting work based on his own experience and the countless disasters he has studied as a journalist. His work has provided him an abundance of real world examples that make this book truly engaging. His easy writing style full of harrowing stories makes this book hard to put down once you start reading. He also offers guidelines and tips on how to remain alive should you end up in a life-threatening situation. I believe that *Deep Survival* is a must-read for any member of the Tennessee National Guard no matter their rank or profession. Everyone can learn from this book, and what you discover, may one day save your life.

**- LT. COL. DARRIN HAAS**





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