



# The Bugler

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Virginia Defense Force

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## ON MISSION

We have had another great year in the VDF. Personnel strength has increased along with our disaster response capabilities and level of professional conduct. The foundation we have built in the past three years will greatly assist our organization in reaching 1,200 trained and capable VDF individuals to respond to a major disaster in the Commonwealth and provide aid and comfort to our Citizens in our communities.



Maj. Gen. John Taylor

Maj. Gen. Long, Virginia's State Adjutant General is very pleased with our organization and each individual member. He is actively promoting the VDF and is recruiting for us every day. He was very impressed with the VDF Field Training Exercise (FTX) at Ft. Pickett in October and has expressed his appreciation during the monthly Virginia National Guard Senior Leader Council meetings which I attend as your representative.

Remember our goal is to have 1,200 trained and capable individuals in the VDF for disaster response. You need to continue to become more trained as a leader and take the required leadership and NIMS courses. We will respond to a disaster as we are trained during monthly drills and at the spring and fall FTX's.

Our level of leadership and professionalism has significantly increased; this is a critical area for our organization in 2011. Take the lead and be in charge of your assigned personnel. Lead by example at all times and present a positive image for the VDF.

Our biggest challenge for 2011 is to retain trained and qualified individuals. Be a leader and look out for your personnel in all areas. Again, 1,200 trained and qualified VDF members is our goal. You as an individual will be the deciding point in our organization during 2011.

I am proud to be a part of the VDF Team and will continue to ensure that we as an organization become a great team member of the VDMA under MG Long, ready and capable to respond to a major disaster anywhere in the Commonwealth.

## Virginia Defense Force Trains at Fort Pickett by 1st Lt. Henry C. Howells

Blackstone, Va. - Fort Pickett served as the area of operations for the Virginia Defense Force's field training exercises from Oct. 1-Oct. 3. The Division wide exercise involved over 500 volunteer soldiers from all areas of the Commonwealth who came to hone their emergency management skills.

Maj. Gen. John D. Taylor, Commander of the VDF, described the broad training mission as continued development of "support for the Virginia National Guard by aiding in the relief of suffering and injury to the citizens of the Commonwealth of Virginia during times of disaster."

The Lafayette, Highland and Black Horse Brigade personnel had specific training duties in support of field operations while also attending simulated exercises, e.g., medical triage. Further, the Brigades supported the communications exercise being conducted by Division Troop Command's Signal Battalion. During this exercise the Aviation Battalion was testing the Geospatial Information Interoperability Exploitation Portable 'GIIEP' system which is a real time system that provides live aerial video links to ground command.

The mission was to monitor the Riverine Detachment's movements during their water based operations. Piloting the aircraft was 2nd LT. Steve Walton of Accomack County, Va.



Sgt. Margie Stetson of Signal Battalion, A Company tests GIIEP system prior to flight

This was his sixth mission using the GIIEP system. He was supported, in flight, by soldiers from the Signal Battalion, A Company.

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## Recollections of Basic Enlistment and Leadership Training

By Spc. Chavis Carter

BLACKSTONE, Va.-On October 1st, 2010 I hopped into my car in route to Ft. Pickett. At Ft. Pickett I would participate in three days of Basic Enlistment and Leadership Training or BELT. I arrived at the west entrance gate to Ft. Pickett at 1645 hours, received directions to building 5450, and eagerly went on my way. I was at the wrong building and received my first military lesson. Plans are always subject to change. I drove up the street after talking to an MP and ran into building 2938, dropped my gear, parked my car and ran back to listen in to what Sgt. Jeremy W. Demey had to say. As the Sergeant stood in the middle of our circle, my eyes began to glance around at the group of soldiers that were sharing the barracks with me. It was a relief to me so see such a diverse group of volunteers that shared the same goal of serving the commonwealth as me.

To say I recall step by step everything that happened would be lie. To say I remember everything that they taught us wouldn't be true either. What I do remember is one thing that my drill instructor Sgt. Demey emphasized to us; he wanted to make sure that the BELT classes provided a strong foundation to build upon. While at BELT, I was educated in the history of VDF, its origins and its purpose in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Drill and Ceremony gave us an opportunity to learn how to properly march from point A to point B and ultimately gave Alpha, Bravo, and Charlie Company a strong sense of unity.



**BELT- Alpha Platoon, instructed by Sgt. Jeremy Demey, drills at sunrise**

We were privileged to meet Maj. Gen. John Taylor, Command Sgt. Maj. Andy J. Stevens along with many other honorable speakers who serve in the VDF and various other branches of the U.S. Armed Forces. The teaching, learning, and molding of us were non-stop and necessary.

What I really gained from BELT was a much needed reinforcement to my own psyche that although I am a volunteer my services are as greatly needed and appreciated as any other branch of the military. Maj. Gen. Daniel E. Long, Jr., the Adjutant General of Virginia, confirmed the VDF's role to all BELT participants during a classroom session. I recall what my uncle, a retired Army National Guard soldier told me, "Chavis as long as you have a mission to complete" ...saying that we all have our part in serving the people of the Commonwealth, whether it is sweeping floors or training future soldiers. Every part is essential and key to the whole.

It was a blessing to see people from all parts of Virginia coming together at Fort Pickett. Male, Female, Black, White, Hispanic, young and younger all with the goal of getting in some good training in an effort to not only better themselves but those around them back in their own community. There is no way that one article or picture can sum up what happened at FT. Pickett those first three days in October. But I learned a word that says it all best....HOOAH!

## October FTX

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The Riverine Detachment used the mission to not only sharpen its multi-unit communication capabilities and response time from aerial reconnaissance, but also to qualify team members, test equipment, and evaluate capabilities for craft launch in limited development areas.

Through the use of demonstrations on less than lethal security and a field exercise, Oleoresin Capsicum "OC" spray training, the MP Battalion continued developing soldiers in crowd control techniques. PFC Tessa G. Smith, a JROTC student at Patrick Henry High School, celebrated her 18th birthday by learning how to fight through OC induced 'blindness'. She stated her confidence was "due to training by the skilled instructors before going through the experience." Working to obtain a West Point Academy appointment, PFC Smith saw this training and the VDF MP certification as an opportunity to "build [her] skills as a soldier and provide an experience to differentiate [her] from other applicants."



**Sgt. Richard Long traverses obstacles after having received OC Spray**  
(Photo by Cotton Puryear, Virginia Department of Military Affairs)

With this year's emphasis on expansion of VDF force size, almost 20% of the soldiers at the weekend's FTX were engaged in Basic Enlisted Leadership Training 'BELT'. The training covered the VDF's mission, drill and ceremony, VDF history, as well as other fundamentals of being a VDF soldier. Maj. Gen. Daniel E. Long, Jr., the Adjutant General of Virginia, spoke with the BELT troops about the importance of their mission while recognizing their volunteer commitment. SPC Carter said of his experience, "The BELT program helped me to further understand the mission of the VDF and what we stand for. Throughout the program I met other soldiers who shared the same level of patriotism and honor to serve the commonwealth as I do. Knowing that there were other people my age, older, and younger that shared similar principles as me helped push me to continue to move forward. As a soldier I have gained a new level of pride to wear my BDU and serve the Commonwealth with the VDF."

During final formation, two brigade command changes were announced. With the retirement of Col. Gerald S. Vintinner, command of the Lafayette Brigade (Norfolk, Va.) was assigned to Col. John R. Fortune, Jr., also known as Swift Fox of the Rappahannock Tribe. A native of Richmond, Va., Col. Fortune spent 26 years active duty with the Virginia Army National Guard and has completed three combat tours. Command of the Highland Brigade (Roanoke, Va.) was assigned to Col. Chad Wheelus.

Maj. Gen. John D. Taylor summed up the weekend's FTX by capturing the sentiment of the troops as having, "a positive attitude, great morale and high level of excitement about dedicated missions."

### 3rd Lieutenant Program

Napoleon once noted that each of his soldiers carried a Field Marshal's baton in his knapsack. Well, the Virginia Defense Force does have a commissioning program. This is the Basic Officer Qualification Course, and details are available from your Battalion or Brigade S2. The application process is simple. The requirements for entry are reasonable. Once admitted, applicants are appointed a3LT and wear a distinctive red bar. The Course consists of two broad parts: one is a series of courses, and the other is a mentoring process within your command. Completion normally takes about a year. Upon completion, applicants will be commissioned as Second Lieutenants in the Virginia Defense Force. The Virginia Defense Force needs bright, focused, energized officers, and if you think that this means you, then it does!

## Highland Brigade

By Spc. Chavis Carter

ROANOKE, Va.-On November 6th of this year, VDF personnel from the Highland Brigade participated in Roanoke's Veterans Day Parade. "The first Veterans Day Parade Roanoke has had in several decades," says Carl Jennings. Candidate Jennings is with the VDF Highland Brigade Headquarters Company. Candidate Jennings felt that it was important to come out and show the colors. "I'm showing state flag colors," Candidate Jennings went on to say. When I asked Candidate Jennings why anyone who isn't military personnel care about the parade he quickly replied, "It commemorates all the veterans and people still serving so, I believe to come out here, is to pay respect to them."

As the clock continued to tick closer to 11am, the start time of the parade, you could see the multitude of people that came out to Roanoke to march in the Veterans Parade. Over 60 groups of participants were signed up to march in the Parade. And hundreds of spectators lined the sidewalks of the parade route. Among those 60 plus groups that were to march in the parade was the Virginia Defense Force's Highland Brigade. "I've come out to support our Veterans, be with them, and be in the parade," says Sgt. Henry Powers 34th Battalion Highland Brigade. Sgt. Powers, stated he "served 1968 and 1969 in Vietnam, Americal Division," Here, on this cool Saturday morning, we find Sgt. Powers still showing his love and support of the people who serve our country. "I got up this morning at four o'clock and drove three and a half hours to get to Roanoke." He further commented, "I like to support our Veterans, be with our Veterans and show the love that I have for them and give them the thanks that they deserve."

After speaking with Sgt. Powers I went on to talk to Sgt. Ramsey, another veteran. Ramsey, is currently a Sergeant in the VDF, and is a retired U.S. Army drill instructor. The Sergeant's reasons for coming out to the parade were similar to Candidate Jennings and Sgt. Powers. "Well, respect for my country and the veterans are the reason I'm here today," stated Sgt. Ramsey.

Everyone has their own reasons that drive them to support their veterans. Some of the soldiers in the Highland Brigade are Veterans and others are family members of Veterans. In a sense every soldier is a brother and sister of each other. We are all a part of a family that has taken an oath to serve and defend. Regardless of the affiliation, the common for all the participants, spectators and supporters at the Veterans Parade, is a shared love and support for all U.S. soldiers and personnel-both veteran and active duty.



**Highland Brigade personnel receive instructions from Roanoke Veterans Day Parade coordinator**

(Photo by Spc. Chavis Carter)

Sgt. Cline of the Highland Brigade explained to me that he has "family members that have been in the service...my grandfather in WWII and my other grandfather was 101st Airborne in Korea." Maj. Hickman, the XO of the 34th Battalion, described his participation in the parade as "a real honor to get to come out and do this for Veterans Day." Sgt. Barbour told me of his amazement at the size of the crowd and overall number of people that came out that Saturday morning. "I was expecting a little crowd," says Sgt. Barbour, "it's better than what I expected, which is good...the more people the better."

The Virginia Defense Force has a remarkable history of service and aid. VDF soldiers have the opportunity to not only better themselves but also the communities they live in.

Cpl. Testerman has been with the VDF for two years. I found him among the group of soldiers from the Highland Brigade and asked him about the kind of service he offers as a volunteer. He stated, "Any kind of community service I can help from disaster relief to security for a function... anything I can do to help the community." Cpl. Testerman is a VDF volunteer because he receives unique training. He stated, "We've done shelter management training, less than lethal security training; we've had medical training, just a whole variety of different things." I asked the corporal what he would say to someone looking at the VDF with curiosity to which he replied, "Come out, see what we do at drill and see if you like it."

Pvt. Randy Martin, also marching in the Roanoke Veterans Parade, joined the VDF in June 2010. I asked Pvt. Martin what made him join the VDF. "I felt it was something I should do...I saw clips on TV about a year ago they [VDF] were doing some search and rescue and it looked interesting, so I decided to join up." Pvt. Martin has now been a volunteer with the VDF for six months. This was his first parade. His father was a U.S. Marine who passed away about five years ago, "Now I feel I just need to be part of it and a little bit of what he did," stated Pvt. Martin.

PFC Kennedy like his fellow soldiers in the Highland Brigade also came out to Roanoke to "represent the Virginia Defense Force on this Veterans Day Parade in Roanoke, just supporting the troops that we have out in the field and at home and just...doing my part." PFC Kennedy traveled from Radford to participate in the parade he stated that it was, "definitely worth the trip." His family also came with him to see the parade and show their support.



**Highland Brigade personnel parade colors at Roanoke Veteran's Day Parade**

(Photo by Spc. Chavis Carter)

The parade got under way approximately at 11am and the 34th Battalion Highland Brigade proudly marched showing their support for Veterans. Their presence at the parade is a reassurance to the community that in time of need should they be called forth they are ready and capable.