



Today, Dec. 13, 2011, the nation celebrates the 375th Birthday of the National Guard, the country's oldest military force in the Department of Defense. The National Guard has defended the people of our nation even before there was a United States of America.

The National Guard's Citizen-Soldiers and Citizen-Airmen have a long and proud history that is rooted in our nation's colonial beginnings. I invite you to view video messages from all of our leaders of the National Guard as well as from the Office of the Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs and video depictions of our storied history at:

http://www.ng.mil/features/birth_2011/default.aspx

I also invite you to take a few minutes to read through the following historical material and reflect on the rich heritage that you should be so very proud to be part of. Happy Birthday!

During the 1630s, British settlements in North America were primarily limited to areas along the Atlantic coast. As colonists expanded west into the interior of the country, they often faced armed conflict with Native Americans. Colonists were often responsible for their own defense and organized into separate militia companies to defend against Indian attacks. They adopted the British militia system, which required all males of a specified age to possess weapons and be prepared to defend their communities.

Rising threats from Pequot Indians against the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1636 forced the town militias and the colonial government to enhance their military readiness. At the time, the colonial militia forces in Massachusetts consisted of 10 infantry companies that varied from 60 to 200 men per unit.

With the growing Indian threat, the Massachusetts General Court, which functioned as the colony's legislature, ordered the militia companies around Boston to form militia "regiments" on Dec. 13, 1636. While most British colonies had organized militia companies before 1636, Massachusetts was the first to organize companies into regiments.

The Massachusetts General Court created the North, South, and East Regiments, organizing units by geography for easier command and control in covering the colony. The "regiment" would later become the basic unit structure for the Continental Army and all other colonial military organizations. These acts, performed on Dec. 13, 1636, is why this day is widely acknowledged as the birth of today's National Guard of the United States.

The first regularly scheduled militia drill, known as the "First Muster," took place in 1637. Although the exact date is not known, the First Muster of the East Regiment occurred on the village green in Salem, Massachusetts, while the other regiments held musters throughout the colony. Other colonies would soon follow suit to ensure the defense of their settlements. During the Revolutionary war, militia units were a vital part of the struggle for American Independence.

Similarly, the Colorado National Guard began its history on Jan. 23, 1860, when the 1st General Assembly of the Jefferson Territory authorized the formation of two military companies: the "Jefferson Rangers" and the "Denver Guards."

On Feb. 26, 1861, Colorado became a territory of the Union and William Gilpin, the first governor, organized the "Colorado Volunteers" for the defense of the territory and to oppose the invasion of Confederate forces during the Civil War, already under way.

A force of mainly Texan Confederates fought its way up through Sante Fe in hopes of procuring the rich Colorado gold mines to help fill the depleted Southern war coffers. The invasion force then planned to head west, form an alliance with the troops under Brigham Young in Utah and eventually take the western seaboard and all of California. The Confederates were intercepted and defeated by Colorado Soldiers at La Glorieta Pass/Apache Canyon, New Mexico, March 26-28, 1862.

On Dec. 16, 1862, Colorado mustered its first artillery unit, the 168th, into service. Two years later, the Colorado Militia was called to duty in the fall of 1864 to protect against the impending danger created by hostile Ute, Sioux, Cheyenne, Arapahoe, Kiowa, Comanche and Apache Indians threatening settlers in the Colorado Territory. The state of Colorado served as host for the battle of Beecher Island (Yuma County) and the infamous Battle of Sand Creek (Kiowa County).

The Colorado Guard was activated as the State Militia for the protection of public rights, safety, and property during the coal miner strike years between 1884 and 1927. The most publicized incidents occurred at Cripple Creek, Ludlow and Leadville.

Since the 1860s, the Colorado Guard has mobilized and distinguished itself during every major federal campaign in U.S. history while never failing to answer the call during state emergencies.

On April 27, 1898, the Colorado Guard was again mobilized for service in the Spanish-American War and on June 14, 1898, sailed for the Philippines. Colorado units participated in numerous battles and played a large role in the capture of Manila. It was on the battlefields of the Philippines that Colorado's only Medal of Honor recipient, Lt. Col. William R. Grove, fought bravely for his state and country.

In June 1916, the Colorado Guard mobilized for Mexican Border service and was stationed on the border until February 1917.

America entered the war against Germany on April 6, 1917, and by the beginning of August, nearly all units of the CONG were called to federal service. The 1st Colorado Infantry was redesignated the 157th Infantry Regiment and attached to the 40th Division (National Guard) in California, and shipped overseas on July 29, 1918. The 168th Field Artillery Regiment was merged with the 148th Field Artillery of the 41st Division and arrived in France on Feb. 8, 1918.

It was June 27, 1923, when the 120th Aero Observation Squadron was mustered into service as part of the CONG, where the Colorado Air National Guard proudly traces its roots.

On Sept. 16, 1940, the 157th Regiment was mobilized for training and by February 1941, all units in Colorado had been mobilized. The 2nd Battalion, 157th Infantry Regiment, commanded by Lt. Col. Felix Sparks (who later became the ground commander for Colorado and also a state Supreme Court justice) was attached to the 45th Infantry "Thunderbird" Division. The Soldiers of the 45th assaulted the beaches at Anzio, Italy, fought their way into Germany and eventually liberated the infamous Dachau labor camp. During World War II, Colorado units served with pride in both European and Pacific theatres.

The 120th Observational Squadron furnished cadre for the both Army and Air Force units and following World War II, the Colorado Army and Air National Guard reorganized the 120th Observation Squadron and the unit then became the nation's first Air National Guard unit on June 30, 1946 – a year ahead of the U.S. Air Force!

In 1953, the 120th Tactical Fighter Squadron organized an aerial demonstration team called the "Minute Men," making it the first and only ANG precision aerial demonstration team. At the height of its popularity, the "Minute Men" performed in more than 100 air shows for more than three million people in 47 states and five foreign countries.

Elements of the Colorado Guard were recalled for federal service in 1950 for the Korean Conflict, in 1961 during the Berlin Crisis, in 1962 for the Cuban Missile Crisis, and in support of forces serving in Vietnam. In 1967, the 140th Wing of the COANG deployed to Incirlik, Turkey, for 15 days to take part in a NATO exercise called Deep Furrow. Six months later, in 1968, the Colorado unit deployed for Vietnam. During the Vietnam War, the 120th Tactical Fighter Squadron became the first intact ANG unit to be called to combat duty as a whole, flying more than 5,900 combat missions from Phan Rang Air Base.

The 140th deployed in 1977 to Gilze-Rijen Air Base, Netherlands, to participate in exercise Coronet Ante, with A-7D Corsair. This was the first time a U.S. Air Force or National Guard unit had deployed to a Dutch-owned and operated base. In September and October 1979, the unit deployed to Merzilon Air Base, Turkey, as part of Exercise Coronet Rider. The unit deployed its entire squadron of 24 aircraft for 30 days. This was the first time any ANG unit had deployed under "bare base" conditions in which only a runway and water supply were provided. Under the Coronet Cove program, the 140th deployed to the Republic of Panama 11 times to support the defense of the Canal Zone as provided for under the Panama Canal Treaty of 1977. The first such deployment took place in December 1978 and the last deployment ended in February 1989.

After the Cold War, the Colorado Guard was mobilized for Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm in 1990-91, where the 1157th Transportation Company of the COARNG was the nation's first National Guard unit on the ground in Saudi Arabia. Colorado Guardsmen also participated in Operations Northern and Southern Watch, where F-16s of the COANG flew in 1996, 1998, and 2000. Colorado Guard Special Forces units were sent to Haiti to help stabilize that country in 1994-95 and when the Balkans became a hot zone in 1999, Colorado's air ambulance and Military Police units responded as part of Operation Joint Forge.

Colorado Guardsmen also proudly serve their community and state. In July 1976, while thousands of travelers came to Estes Park to celebrate Colorado's 100th year of statehood, a quirky and violent rainstorm emptied over the head of Big Thompson Canyon, causing the canyon to flood dramatically. In total, 144 were killed, but many were rescued when the CONG was sent in to conduct relief and rescue operations.

During the late 1990s, the Colorado Air and Army National Guard had the first Guard units to stand up around-the-clock space missions in defense of our nation. Citizen-Soldiers in Colorado Springs are ready to defend our nation from ballistic missile attacks and Citizen-Airmen in Greeley provide immediate, worldwide, mobile missile warning, space launch, and nuclear detonation detection.

Over the years, the Colorado Guard has supported civil authorities during thousands of counterdrug and search-and-rescue missions, as well as dozens of state emergency call-ups for floods (including Katrina), wildfires, blizzards, and tornadoes. The COARNG's High-altitude ARNG Aviation Training Site, between Glenwood Springs and Vail, assists civil authorities in Colorado's high country with 57 percent of all rotary wing search and rescues in the U.S. HAATS provides life-saving combat aviation skills to rotary-wing pilots serving in mountainous environments around the world. The CONG has educated more than 100,000 Colorado youth in drug abuse prevention through its signature Red Ribbon Program. The CONG has been called up for prison riots, pursuing escapees, bank robbers, and murderers (including the Cortez Manhunt), as well as assisting law enforcement following the well-known Columbine High School shootings. Additionally, Colorado Soldiers and Airmen have been needed in support of massive state missions such World Youth Day in 1993, the G8 Summit in 1997, and the Democratic National Convention in 2008. Colorado will host its first Vigilant Guard Exercise in 2013.

Within hours after the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on Sep. 11, 2001, Colorado Guardsmen were activated to Guard sensitive sites across the state

(including Denver International Airport) while dedicated aircrews protected Colorado's skies in support of Operation Noble Eagle, a mission that continues today. The Air National Guard operates 95 percent of U.S. aerospace control alert sites. From the only centrally-located alert fighter facility in the nation at Buckley Air Force Base in Aurora, Citizen-Airmen stand alert and guard our skies 24/7 at a quarter of the cost of a similar active duty unit.

Since the attacks of 9/11, every deployable unit in the Colorado National Guard has been mobilized (some more than once) in support of overseas contingency operations including its prestigious Space units that are nearly exclusive to Colorado.

The National Guard's State Partnership Program between American states and foreign nations advances regional security, stability and prosperity through global engagement. Our state partnership with the Republic of Slovenia began in 1993 and was one of the first state partnerships. Colorado's state partnership with the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, formed in 2004, was the Guard's first state partnership with a Middle Eastern country.

Your Colorado National Guard has been at your service since 1860 and is based in more than 20 communities across the state with an annual economic impact greater than \$240 million.

Not unlike the militias of 375 years ago, today's National Guard remains essential to the nation's defense – more so than ever in history – as its men and women are increasingly called upon to serve in every corner of the world. As of today, and since Sept. 11, 2001, 357,890 ARNG and 90,946 ANG members have been activated and served, or are serving, around the globe and thousands more serve their states and communities every day.

As a community-based organization, the National Guard is the face of the military in more than 3,300 communities across the U.S., with a Guardsman living in nearly every

zip code. We can rapidly respond to any natural or man-made disaster ... saving lives, easing human suffering and protecting property.

For the cost of one active duty service member, our nation can train, retain, and deploy three National Guard Soldiers or Airmen. We provide nearly 40 percent of Army and Air Force operational forces for less than 7 percent of the base defense budget. Much of the National Guard's dual-use equipment can be employed for federal and domestic missions.

Affordable, battle ready, accessible, flexible, sustainable, and equipped and resourced like never before, your National Guard is a great value for America.

With the continuing and ever-changing threats to our security and our American way of life, the National Guard motto remains as relevant as ever: "Always Ready, Always There."

HAPPY BIRTHDAY NATIONAL GUARD!

From the National Guard Association of Colorado and the Senior Enlisted Leaders of the Colorado National Guard,



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