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Missouri National Guard Exceeding Their Goals

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*Submitted by
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Jefferson City, Missouri - The Missouri National Guard is continuing to set the standard for recruiting and retention across the nation with both the Missouri Army and Air National Guard exceeding their strength goals.

In December, the Army National Guard's current strength at more than 107 percent of its allocated force, while the Missouri Air National Guard is flying high with a current strength of more than 103 percent, said Maj. Gen. Steve Danner, the adjutant general.

"These numbers reflect the patriotism of the people of Missouri, as well as the professionalism of the state's 11,500 Soldiers and Airmen," Danner said. "Simply put, people want to serve in the Missouri National Guard. Whether we're talking about flood responses in Missouri or firefights in Afghanistan, our men and women are on the front lines, protecting good people from bad things."

In November, the Missouri Army National Guard ranked sixth among the nation's 54 National Guards in strength and seventh in personnel readiness, said Col. John Oberkirsch, director of personnel and manpower for the Missouri National Guard. Oberkirsch credits the superior performance to increased communication and empowering senior commands.

"Our chief of staff, Col. David Boyle, has been personally visiting armories on a quarterly basis," Oberkirsch said. "His visits have started a dialogue, which has helped raise awareness on the part of our administrative officers and readiness staffers about the organization's strategic plan, where we want to go, and how we want to get there."

Each state is authorized a certain number of Soldiers and Airmen, but may recruit above that number, Oberkirsch said. Because roughly 10 percent of every unit's personnel are going through training schools at any given time, recruiting over authorized strength increases flexibility by ensuring commanders have more Soldiers and Airmen trained and ready to go.

The Missouri Air National Guard's recruiting and retention superintendent, Senior Master Sgt. Carol Walsh, said her team is focused on recruiting and retaining motivated, talented Airmen.

"With our B-2 mission at Whiteman AFB, our C-130 mission in St. Joseph, and our Air Operations Group in St. Louis, the Missouri Air National Guard offers a wide variety of career fields from aerospace maintenance to cyber operations," Walsh said. "Our force is better now than it has ever been, and we serve a critical role in the total Air Force mission. Maintaining our strength and readiness is vital to that mission."

Success in recruiting and retention have a direct role in ensuring readiness, but Oberkirsch said the credit for the Missouri National Guard's current outstanding performance is the result of departments across the organizations working together.

"We've seen great synergy between commands and recruiting in both retention and recruiting," Oberkirsch said. "The commands have a larger role in the retention part of strength, but rely on the recruiting section for technical expertise and support. Our recruiters are responsible for new accessions, but rely on the technical support of our units."

After more than 12 years of war and dozens of state emergencies, it is critical that the Missouri National Guard retain its current generation of seasoned, battle-tested Soldiers and Airmen, Oberkirsch said. That is even more important in light of the determination of Gen. Frank Grass, chief of the National Guard Bureau and member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, that the Guard must remain an operational rather than strategic reserve.

"We don't want to lose that experience" Oberkirsch said. "Our state is at a high state of readiness and stands ready to carry out our mission as assigned by the governor and

president."

For more information about the Missouri National Guard, please visit **www.moguard.com** and our social media sites:
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