

Dept. of Military Affairs: Wisconsin Guard cyber protection unit mobilized

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by Vaughn R. Larson

MADISON, Wis. — Senior Wisconsin Army National Guard leaders joined family and friends at the Armed Forces Reserve Center in Madison, Wisconsin at an Oct. 27 sendoff ceremony for Detachment 1, 176th Cyber Protection Team.

The team — which also includes Soldiers from Minnesota, Illinois and Virginia — will conduct cyberspace operations at Fort Meade, Maryland in support of U.S. Cyber Command and Cyber National Mission Force requirements.

“Go cyber!” Capt. Jamison Clark, commander of the approximately 20-person detachment, exclaimed during the ceremony, drawing a robust response from his team. He explained that cyber protection teams are a major asset to the National Guard.

“These Soldiers — your wife, husband, son, daughter — are among the best and most dedicated cyber warriors I’ve ever had the opportunity to lead,” Clark continued.

A little more than half of the detachment has prior deployment experience, with some members having deployed more than five times. The unit consists mainly of IT

professionals who focus on cybersecurity, intelligence, law enforcement and business leadership at companies such as American Family Insurance, the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the city of Madison, Rockwell Automation, Oshkosh Defense, LLC, Northrop Grunman, the Boeing Company, Protocol 46, Artful Home, and the Wisconsin National Guard.

Capt. Tyler Jongewaard of Hudson, Wisconsin is among them. A former signal officer, Jongewaard is a cyber network defense manager with the 176th Cyber Protection Team, leading a team of cyber analysts. His civilian job is in cyber security.

“I’m expecting a very good experience working with some extremely talented people,” Jongewaard said. “Probably some long hours.”

This will be Jongewaard’s first deployment in 13 years of service.

Brig. Gen. Joane Mathews, Wisconsin’s deputy adjutant general for Army, acknowledged the professional capabilities of the Soldiers in the detachment.

“The National Guard is perfect for this mission because of the phenomenal civilian technical skills you bring,” Mathews said. “Your individual civilian experiences are going to provide a new and unique perspective to your active duty partners during this mission, making this mission even more successful.”

Gov. Tony Evers addressed the deploying troops in a pre-recorded message.

“The Wisconsin National Guard has served our citizens here admirably during our state’s response to COVID-19 and has always accomplished its federal mission,” Evers said. “You are the very best this state has to offer. You are well trained, but you also embody Wisconsin values and you represent this state everywhere you go. That’s why the Army looks to Wisconsin when it needs to call on the National Guard to complete a difficult mission.”

Command Sgt. Maj. Rafael Conde, the Wisconsin Army National Guard’s senior enlisted leader, said that hackers not only attempt to steal information from the Pentagon, but also hack into banks, power plants and corporations.

“Everything we do is connected in some way to cyberspace,” Conde said. “That’s why we have cyber protection teams — to ensure that Americans can live their lives free from hackers.”

Evers, Mathews and Conde thanked families and employers for supporting their Soldiers.