

# Dept. of Military Affairs: Leckel assumes command of Wisconsin Army National Guard's Iron Brigade

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MILWAUKEE — The Wisconsin Army National Guard's 157th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade welcomed a new commander during a Dec. 5 ceremony.

Col. Eric J. Leckel assumed command of the 157th — known as the “Iron Brigade” — from outgoing commander Col. Matthew Beilfuss in a ceremony at Richards Street Armory in Milwaukee.

Brig. Gen. Robyn Blader, the Assistant Adjutant General for Readiness and Training stated that it is an “embarrassment of riches” to be able to transition from one top-notch leader to another one.

“I want to thank Col. Beilfuss for his dedicated service,” Blader said. “You have taken this Brigade to the next level of readiness, execution and accomplishment in your time as commander.”

Beilfuss took command of the 157th MEB in August 2019, after holding various roles in different units within the Iron Brigade since 2001. As a career field artillery officer, he held many roles within the 1st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery, including a stint as its commander. He also served as the plans officer and the deputy commander of the 157th MEB.

Blader commended Beilfuss on leading the 157th MEB through one of its most historic years of domestic operations in 2020 which included civil unrest operations across, Milwaukee, Madison, Racine, Kenosha and Green Bay as well as elections support, COVID-19 efforts, and southern border missions.

“It has been quite a ride over the last two years but our ability to meet the mission has been extraordinary,” Beilfuss said in his final remarks to the brigade.

Beilfuss thanked both his troops and his family, stating that it was wonderful to have the support of the entire Wisconsin National Guard community behind him throughout his time in command.

In his last official act as commander, Beilfuss passed the brigade colors to Blader who then presented them to Leckel, formally completing the change of command.

Leckel has held various roles throughout the Wisconsin National Guard including service as the state partnership program director, deputy director for domestic operations plans and training on the Wisconsin National Guard Joint Staff, and the commander of the 54th Civil Support Team. He later returned to the Wisconsin National Guard Joint Staff as the domestic operations director where he served during an unprecedented time of domestic operations, which included the execution of the COVID-19 pandemic response, election support and civil disturbance operations.

In his remarks, he said that at a recent command orientation he conducted, each director gave glowing remarks regarding the professionalism and dedication of the 157th MEB.

“I have also personally witnessed many of their accomplishments over the last couple years,” stated Leckel. “Their success is a result of the tenacity, commitment and technical skills of each member of this brigade which is respected around the nation.”

Leckel said he is excited to be a part of the 157th MEB and the tremendous opportunities ahead of the unit.

Blader said the National Guard is blessed to have a leader of his caliber to take charge of the brigade.

“This represents a great opportunity for these Soldiers to continue to be molded and shaped into a premiere Army maneuver enhancement brigade,” Blader said.

Headquartered in Milwaukee, the 157th is a diverse brigade with units statewide, spanning artillery, engineer and support units — all of which can be employed in support of the National Guard’s state mission as the first military responder during

emergencies and its federal mission as a component of the Army's primary combat reserve.