

# Dept. of Military Affairs: Two inducted into Wisconsin Army Guard Hall of Honor

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MADISON, Wis. — A former Red Arrow commander and a former chief of staff were inducted into the Wisconsin Army National Guard Hall of Honor during an Oct. 21 ceremony at Joint Force Headquarters.

The Wisconsin Army National Guard Hall of Honor program recognizes Soldiers who have distinguished themselves through exceptional achievement and devotion to duty. Selection for the Hall of Honor is one of the highest recognitions the Wisconsin National Guard can bestow upon a former Soldier, though the honor was also rendered to a currently serving Guard member for heroic and extraordinary actions in combat. The Hall of Honor also includes Maj. Gen. Ray Matera, the first Wisconsin Air National Guard member to serve as Wisconsin's adjutant general, for his service to the Wisconsin Army National Guard

Retired Col. Steven Bensed's 32-year military career began in 1978 as an enlisted mortar gunner in the 32nd Infantry Brigade, and concluded as commander of the "Red Arrow" brigade when it deployed to Iraq in 2009 — the Wisconsin Army National Guard's largest singular mobilization since World War II. He also deployed with the brigade headquarters to Iraq in 2005.

"The Middle East was definitely an experience, and I have to say it wasn't my favorite place," Bensed said during the induction ceremony. "But some of my fondest memories are serving in a combat zone or serving with Soldiers dedicated to make it happen. It is because of these individuals, dedicated and loyal, that we are here today and that we are successful. I believe those Soldiers are the true honorees today, for without them, none of it would have been possible or

successful.”

Bensend was awarded the Bronze Star medal in 2010 for his leadership in providing security for Baghdad’s International Zone. Under his leadership, the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team in 2010 received the Joint Meritorious Unit Citation, a recognition second only to the Presidential Unit Citation, as one of the best-trained National Guard brigades to deploy in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Retired Col. Robert Ronge’s 28-year career began in 1980 when he was commissioned into the Wisconsin Army National Guard as a military police officer. His assignments include assistant professor of military science at St. Norbert College, deputy and acting inspector general, executive officer for the 632nd Armor battalion, commander of the Recruiting and Retention Battalion, Wisconsin Army National Guard deputy chief of staff for personnel, and finally Wisconsin Army National Guard chief of staff. During his time as deputy chief of staff for personnel, Ronge coordinated all personnel matters pertaining to the largest deployment of Wisconsin Army National Guard Soldiers since World War II.

Ronge noted that Brig. Gen. Kerry Denson, former deputy adjutant general for Army, was responsible for three of his assignments in the Wisconsin Army National Guard.

“He’s given me immeasurable opportunities, and every one of these jobs was just so rewarding,” Ronge said. “Brig. Gen. Denson, thank you for everything you did for my career.”

In addition to Hall of Honor plaques, Bensend and Ronge each received a certificate of commendation from Gov. Tony Evers.

With the addition of Bensend and Ronge, the Wisconsin Army National Guard Hall of Honor now has 75 inductees.