

Dept. of Military Affairs: Wisconsin Army Guard transitions from firsts to future

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MADISON, Wis. — Brig. Gen. Matthew Strub cast his vision for the Wisconsin Army National Guard by first acknowledging its legacy.

“The dedication and professionalism of the Soldiers and civilian employees that make up the Wisconsin Army National Guard cannot be overstated, and it’s an honor to be part of such a fine organization,” Strub, Wisconsin’s new deputy adjutant general for Army, said May 13 during a change of command ceremony at Joint Force Headquarters in Madison, Wisconsin.

He also praised his predecessor, Brig. Gen. Joane Mathews.

“Thank you for your leadership and guidance you’ve provided to these Soldiers over the past four years as deputy adjutant general,” Strub said. “But beyond that, thank you for your many years of selfless service to the Wisconsin Army National Guard. You leave this organization in great shape, and you will be sorely missed. I will strive to continue to move the Wisconsin Army National Guard forward in the pursuit of excellence.”

Mathews’ 36-year military career was filled with notable firsts in the Wisconsin Army National Guard — the state’s first non-medical female colonel, the first female commander of the 1st Battalion, 147th Aviation Regiment, the first female brigade commander, the first female chief of staff for Army, the first female assistant adjutant general for readiness and training and the first female deputy adjutant general for Army. In so doing, the Fish Clan member of the Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians became the first female Native American general

officer in the entire Army National Guard.

“I’ve attended many change of command ceremonies, and it’s always most difficult when it’s your own,” Mathews said, poignantly acknowledging the last moments in her military career.

“Being in command of Wisconsin’s finest sons and daughters is the greatest honor bestowed on an officer,” Mathews said. “These past four years have flown by, and I’ve really enjoyed every single minute.”

Mathews spoke of visiting Soldiers training in the field, placing shoulder patches on Soldiers who were ready to join their units after completing advanced individual training, witnessing officer candidate and warrant officer candidate graduation ceremonies, and welcoming troops home from overseas deployments.

“I feel I’ve been blessed with one of the best jobs in the Guard,” she said.

Maj. Gen. Paul Knapp, Wisconsin’s adjutant general, praised Mathews.

“I know the legacy you leave behind is one that will have ripple effects on our troops for generations to come,” Knapp said. “[They] will now know for generations to come, without a doubt, thanks to your example, that they too can achieve their dreams and ambitions if they put in the hard work — no matter their background, race, gender or creed.”

Mathews said she could not have chosen a better person than Strub to follow her as deputy adjutant general for Army.

“You are the right leader at the right time to lead our force, to care for our families and to continue to make our Guard one of the best in the nation,” Mathews said. “I have complete confidence in you, and I know you will succeed. You carry the same unyielding commitment to our Army Guard, to our Soldiers and to our families.”

Strub said he was “honored and humbled” to be selected for this new assignment.

“The gravity of this appointment is not lost on me,” Strub said. “I stand before you today committed to do my very best and confident that the Army National Guard will be trained and ready whenever called upon.

“Soldiers, you are the best of the best,” Strub continued. “I will never ask you to do

anything I have not done or am not willing to do myself. I am committed to providing you with realistic, meaningful training, and I will vigorously serve as your commander.”

Knapp also lauded Strub during the ceremony.

“Matt, you are well prepared, and you have the right experiences and temperament to succeed in this role,” Knapp said. “You are a strategic thinker that has the good of our most precious resource — our Citizen Soldiers — in mind with every decision you make. I couldn’t be more excited to have you leading the amazing Soldiers of the Wisconsin Army National Guard.”

Strub said his focus would be on building readiness, and outlined three priorities to meet that goal — physical, mental and moral fitness, dignity and respect, and eliminating unnecessary requirements that do not build readiness.

“Our focus must be on shoot, move and communicate while developing adaptive leaders who actually think critically,” Strub explained. “Whether it’s defending the homeland, defending the nation abroad or building partnerships, we must be ready to fight tonight. Together we will ensure the Wisconsin Army National Guard is always ready, always there.”

Lt. Gov. Mandela Barnes was on hand to promote Strub to the rank of brigadier general earlier in the day during a formal ceremony in the Senate Chamber of the State Capitol building. Barnes took notice of Strub’s 36-year military career.

“1986 — what a year,” Barnes said, referring to the year Strub enlisted in the U.S. Army Reserve as a helicopter mechanic. “That’s when I was born.

“You have big boots to fill, succeeding Brig. Gen. Mathews,” the lieutenant governor continued. “Your resume suggests you will fill the role with much success. It’s truly an embarrassment of riches that we have in the Wisconsin National Guard to be able to transition from high-caliber leaders like Brig. Gen. Mathews to people like Brig. Gen. Strub. I’m grateful to you for your service to our state and to this country, and I know that you’ll continue to bring a legacy of service to Wisconsin as deputy adjutant general for Army.”

Though retired, Mathews will remain part of the Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs in her new assignment as director of the Wisconsin National Guard Challenge

Academy.