

Dept. of Military Affairs: Wisconsin gains first direct commissioned cyber officer

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MADISON, Wis. – The Wisconsin Army National Guard gained a direct commission officer in a field of critical importance during a May 13 ceremony at Wisconsin's Joint Force Headquarters in Madison.

Capt. Robert Saffell received a rare direct commission from the rank of specialist to captain in the Wisconsin Army National Guard's Detachment 1, 176th Cyber Protection Team.

Saffell is the first Wisconsin Army National Guard Soldier to receive a direct commission into the cyber field.

"He commanded respect, with his skills and his abilities, but most importantly with the way he treated people around him. His humility, his humble nature, his readiness to serve and help others learn is what really shines about Capt. Saffell," stated 1st Lt. David Schroeder, Det 1, 176th Cyber Protection Team. "I know that he's going to carry that forward as a commissioned officer."

Saffell began his military career in 1998 enlisting in the U.S. Navy immediately after high school. In 2000 he graduated from the Navy Nuclear School. After 6 years serving, Saffell left the U.S. Navy to pursue an applied nuclear engineering bachelor's degree. In 2013, Saffell enlisted in the Michigan Army National Guard as an intelligence analyst. He transferred to the Wisconsin Army National Guard in 2016 as a Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Specialist with the 457th Chemical Company before joining Detachment 1, 176th Cyber Protection Team in 2018.

“The 176th CPT is precious to me, and I am proud to have been one of the first recruited to join it,” said Saffell. “The work of now helping lead it, shape it further and take a front-seat role in taking care of the people who make such an amazing team possible are at the forefront of my mind. Everything from ensuring people get placed into solid civilian careers and that we have a strong forward focus on interesting and relevant work.”

On the civilian side, Saffell is a senior security consultant on the Amazon Web Services National Security Team.

Detachment 1, 176th Cyber Protection Team conducts survey, secure, and protect missions to prepare local cyberspace defenders to sustain an advanced cyberspace defense posture and to defend the supported commander’s critical assets and cyberspace key terrain.