

WI National Guard: Change of command ceremony for 64th Troop Command puts spotlight on family and community

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MADISON, Wis. — Col. John Morgen officially relinquished command of the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 64th Troop Command to incoming commander, Lt. Col. Jade Beehler, during a formal change of command ceremony April 2 at the Armed Forces Reserve Center in Madison.

Morgen shepherded the 64th Troop Command through the unit's seminal period over the past two years as it became the lead Wisconsin National Guard element executing the organization's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and countless other mobilizations both here in Wisconsin and overseas.

The audience of family and community members continuously found themselves in the spotlight at the change of command ceremony as Morgen picked up his young son from his wife's lap and held him as he thanked the many family and community members in the audience for their support over the years.

"The premise of having Citizen Soldiers would not work without spouses and families supporting their loved ones in their service to the nation," stated Morgen. "I want to honor the sacrifices that they have made."

The National Guard relies on families, communities, and employers to be successful, and few embody that spirit better than Morgen.

Morgen, who is a social studies teacher at Neenah High School and the head cross

country coach, lined members of his team up in front of the audience and presented them each with a coin to thank them for their support during times when he had to turn his attention to the National Guard.

Brig. Gen. Joane Mathews, the Wisconsin National Guard's deputy adjutant general for Army, presented Morgen's wife and employer with coins to recognize their contributions to the brigade over the last two years.

"The people who are at home often have the hardest job," stated Mathews.

This will be especially relevant for the incoming commander, Lt. Col. Jade Beehler, who hails from Spencer, Iowa where he is also a staple in the community as the assistant principal at the local high school.

Jade made a point to publicly thank several individuals from the Spencer, Iowa school district and community throughout his remarks.

"When you are in the Guard, you have many squads that support you including family, employers and community," stated Beehler. "I have been fortunate for the support that I receive from them that helped me get to this point in my career."

Beehler originally enlisted in the South Dakota Army National Guard where he gained 12 years of experience as a transportation officer and 14 years as a logistics officer. He has served in a variety of roles including commander of the 152 Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, state defense movement coordinator and deputy commander of the 196th Regional Training Institute, Fort Meade, S.D., and deputy chief of staff of operations and training for Joint Force Headquarters, South Dakota National Guard.

Beehler is inheriting a brigade that has been shaped by an unprecedented three years. In her remarks, Mathews recognized Morgen for the leadership skills he displayed during some of the brigade's most trying and historic years of domestic operations which included civil unrest operations in Milwaukee, Madison, Racine, Kenosha and Green Bay as well as elections support, West Coast wildfire responses, and COVID-19 efforts. Units within the 64th Troop Command also deployed overseas in support of the Guard's federal mission. The 107th Maintenance Company remains deployed to eastern Europe, while the 135th Medical Company returned this winter from a mobilization to Iraq and Kuwait, and the 2nd Battalion, 104th Aviation completed a Middle East deployment last year.

Morgen took command of the 64th Troop Command in May 2019, after serving as the executive officer for the 157th Military Engagement Team during their deployment to Southwest Asia. He has held a variety of positions including strength management officer for the state, operations and training officer for the 732nd Battalion, and personnel officer for the 426th Regiment. During his time in command, he led the 64th Troop Command through the COVID-19 pandemic. He took on the dual role as Joint Task Force 64th commander in March of 2020 through September of 2021.

“I am proud of how the Soldiers of the 64th Troop Command served this nation and state during three of the most challenging years we have ever faced,” Morgen said in his final remarks to the brigade.

In his last official act as commander, Morgen passed the brigade colors to Mathews who then presented them to Beehler, formally completing the change of command.