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## **Tennessee National Guard participates in cyber-security exercise**

**NASHVILLE, Tenn.** – Members of the Tennessee National Guard are participating in the annual, nationwide cyber security exercise, Cyber Shield, from July 10-24, at Joint Force Headquarters, in Nashville.

The exercise is designed to increase response capabilities and preparedness by simulating real-world cyber-attacks on infrastructure elements in our country.

Tennessee's Defense Cyber Operations Element, 119th Cyber Operations Squadron, and Detachment 2, 175th Cyber Protection Team, are focusing on testing themselves as a team during the 2-week training event.

"Participating in a training event like this is a real benefit to all of us," said Maj. Ryan Henry, Deputy Chief of the Defense Cyber Operations Element. "Over the course of these two weeks we will be graded and we will get a real idea of where we stand so that we can prepare our strategic training plan going forward."

The exercise is being administered by a team of cyber professionals out of Camp Williams, Utah. Most participants, including those from the Tennessee National Guard, will be conducting this training virtually.

"We have a resilient team that can take on any challenge," said Henry. "Virtually participating in Cyber Shield will have no impact on the training event and what we can gain from it."

More than 750 Army and Air National Guard members from across the country are participating, as well as local, state, and federal government agencies. This year, for the first time, members from 11 different countries are taking part in the exercise as part of the National Guard's state partnership program. The SPP was created over 25 years ago and is a program that connects a state's National Guard with the armed forces from a partner country in a mutually beneficial relationship.

The Williamson County Emergency Management Agency is also participating in Cyber Shield 2021. They are working alongside the Tennessee National Guard to test the inter-agency capabilities of both organizations.

“It’s always beneficial to work together with different agencies,” said Henry. “We can learn things from each other and strengthen our relationship, which will only help us be more effective in the event of a real-world scenario in which we are working together.”

Recently, a number of cyber-attacks have made headline news. In May, the world’s largest meat processing company, JBS Foods, was the victim of a ransomware attack. Also in May, the largest fuel pipeline in the United States was the target of a ransomware attack, shutting down the pipeline.

With cyber-attacks threatening our country, consistent training is vital for cyber professionals to gain the necessary experience to combat these attacks.

“As we work through a training event like this one, we gain invaluable experience,” said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Richard Allen, Cyber Protection Defense Officer. “Cyber security is as important as it’s ever been. We need to be able to confidently identify, protect, and defend against cyber-attacks here in Tennessee, and we need to be ready in the event we are called upon to help with a large-scale attack against our country.”

Cyber Shield 2021 is providing the necessary training to be able to do just that.

“Working through these scenarios and being able to practice everything we’ve learned in a realistic training exercise will give us an understanding of what we need to work on in the future,” said Allen. “Going forward, we will have the ability to be boots on the ground, working to neutralize cyber threats whenever they may occur. That makes us a better organization and a better Army.”



Capt. Curtis Crossman, Det. 2, 175th Cyber Protection Team commander, participates in Cyber Shield 2021, July 14, at Joint Force Headquarters in Nashville. Cyber Shield 2021 is a national cyber-security exercise designed to increase response capabilities of cyber professionals across the country. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Timothy Cordeiro)

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