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Tennessee Military Department celebrates National Guard's 386th birthday

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – Soldiers and Airmen with the Tennessee National Guard gathered at Nashville's Joint Force Headquarters on Dec. 13 to celebrate and honor the 386th birthday of the National Guard.

Maj. Gen. Jeff Holmes, Tennessee's Adjutant General, hosted the birthday celebration and cake cutting ceremony to honor the long and storied history of the National Guard, the oldest component of the United States' Armed Forces.

"386 years ago today, citizens of the Massachusetts Bay Colony came together and raised America's first regiments for the common defense of the colony," said Holmes. "They were the first Citizen-Soldiers who were willing to sacrifice their lives at a moment's notice. Their legacy continues with the men and women serving in the National Guard today and should not be forgotten."

During the ceremony, Col. James Reed, the Tennessee Military Department's Communications Director, discussed the importance of the ceremony and Lt. Col. Darrin Haas, the Tennessee Military Department Historian, gave a presentation on the history of Dec. 13th.

"Each of those militiamen were willing to put down their tools, pick up their rifles, and leave everything behind to defend their communities," said Haas. "That spirit continued through the years giving rise to minutemen and forming the core of the Continental Army during the American Revolutionary War."

After Haas spoke, Holmes asked Master Sgt. Mike Avella, with the 730th Quartermaster Company, and Spc. Caleb Cooper, with the 278th Regimental Support Squadron, to join him in the ceremonial cutting of the cake.

It is customary that the oldest and youngest service members in attendance be given the honor of cutting the cake with a ceremonial saber. Avella, the senior member in attendance, represented the Guard's past, while Cooper, the most junior service member, represented the Guard's future.

"It was an honor to participate in the ceremony," said Cooper. "I'm proud to be a member of an organization with such a strong history defending America."

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Master Sgt. Mike Avella, Maj. Gen. Jeff Holmes, and Spc. Caleb Cooper use a ceremonial saber to cut a cake celebrating the National Guard's 386th birthday at Nashville's Joint Force Headquarters, Dec. 13. (Photo by retired Sgt. 1st Class William Jones)

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