



INNOVATIVE READINESS TRAINING

Premier Military Training for a
Secure and Prosperous America



FEBRUARY 2025 | NEWSLETTER

The Other Side of the Story

The Innovative Readiness Training (IRT) support activities primarily fall into six categories: medical, construction, civil affairs, cybersecurity, aerial spray, and transportation. However, there is also an “other” category for additional support activities.

The “other” support activities include tasks such as diving, environmental protection, and supporting food banks. These activities require creativity from the community and training needs from military units. They are subject to the same guidelines as all IRT support activities: the operations must take place within the U.S. and its territories, provide at least 100 hours of training, avoid

competition with the private sector, exclude commercial development, refrain from involving military personnel in law enforcement, and not be used for immediate responses to natural or man-made disasters.

In 2022, U.S. Navy divers and Seabees collaborated with agencies in Guam, such as the Guam Environmental Protection Agency, on a harbor restoration project. This project involved removing remnants of abandoned derelict vessels.

“Through the Innovative Readiness Training program, we are empowered to conduct an operation that benefits both the Navy and the people of Guam,” said Lt. Max Cutchen, U.S. 7th Fleet salvage officer, Commander Logistics Group Western Pacific/CTF-73. “This salvage operation has provided an invaluable opportunity for U.S. Navy participants to enhance their skills in expeditionary port damage repair and opening. The experience gained in Guam will be directly applicable in future operations to support logistics in any environment.”

In 2023, the Louisiana National Guard’s A Company, 1st Assault Helicopter Battalion, 244th Aviation Regiment, assisted the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service by dropping bundles of recycled Christmas trees in strategic locations for marshland restoration in Bayou Sauvage, the second largest urban wildlife refuge in the United States.

“The Christmas trees help dampen wave energy and allow sediments to settle out of the water,” explained Pon Dixson, project leader for the Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge. “The settled materials provide substrate for plants to take root. The trees are doing exactly what they are intended to do. This project benefits everyone involved.”

In the upcoming year, the 560th RED HORSE Squadron will partner with the Lowcountry Food Bank to provide food services that will significantly benefit individuals facing food insecurity in the 10 coastal counties of South Carolina.

While the six main categories cover most IRT support activities, they do not encompass all possibilities. The “other” option is always available when specific requirements align. IRT’s civil-military partnerships continue to strengthen relationships between military members and American communities, enhance unit and deployment readiness for service members, and provide essential services to local communities. To learn more, visit irt.defense.gov.



U.S. Navy Diver 2nd Class Thomas Liddy waits on the surface as the standby diver. (U.S. Navy Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class David Crawford)

DEFEND THE NATION

IRT provides hands-on, real-world training to improve readiness and survivability in complex contingency environments

SUCCEED THROUGH TEAMWORK

IRT is a collaborative program that leverages military contributions and community resources to multiply value and cost savings for participants

TAKE CARE OF OUR PEOPLE

IRT strengthens and builds partnerships, while providing key services for American communities utilizing joint training operations

IRT TRAINING HIGHLIGHTS

- Civil Military Partnerships
- Other Support Activity Types
- Military Readiness

IRT LEADERSHIP TEAM

- Colonel James Hogan, Director
- Colonel Stephen Rubright, Deputy Director
- Major Melford Simpson, Operations Officer
- Chief Master Sergeant Alexander Wilson, Superintendent
- Master Sergeant Rachele Morris, Public Affairs Superintendent

MESSAGE FROM IRT LEADERSHIP

Major Melford Simpson Operations Officer, IRT



The “Other” category is an excellent option for U.S. communities with needs that don’t align with IRT’s main categories. It follows the same planning process as the primary categories but offers broader range of support activity sets, creating a win-win situation for the military and our community partners.



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SERVICE MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

CAPTAIN TERESA BOWIE

AIR NATIONAL GUARD
ENGINEERING OFFICER



“Throughout my 22 years of service, I have felt profoundly honored to contribute to the missions I was tasked to, from maintaining U-2s or C-130Js as an aircraft electrician to executing design and construction as an engineering officer. However, the IRT program raised the bar. While often confident in the purpose of our role and value of our work, we’re sometimes unaware of our actual impact in the massive picture of global operations. IRT projects offer immediate insight into the lives and communities we are changing, crystalizing our sense of self and commitment to service.”

IRT LEADER OF THE YEAR (E7–E9)

GUNNERY SERGEANT LEONEL A. RIVAS

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS RESERVE
DEPUTY PROGRAM MANAGER



IRT Leader of the Year was awarded to Gunnery Sergeant Leonel A. Rivas for his outstanding work as the Marine Corps IRT Deputy Program Manager. The Leader of the Year award recognizes individuals who plan and execute an IRT support activity while displaying exemplary leadership in finding opportunities to increase readiness and encourage collaboration and innovation. Gunnery Sergeant Rivas exemplified these accomplishments through his meticulous planning and execution skills, which were pivotal in overseeing 16 IRT support activities, resulting in training 872 service members over 10,997 days and achieving 302 mission-essential tasks. Beyond his operational achievements, Gunnery Sergeant Rivas’ leadership extended to mentoring and coaching Marines, fostering a culture of integrity and esprit de corps. He played a crucial role in expanding the Marine Corps IRT impact, increasing application submissions from 16 to 32 for FY25 across the Active and Reserve components.

IRT EVENTS & SUPPORT ACTIVITIES

- Feb 5: Salud en Tu Pueblo, Mid-Planning Meeting
- Feb 6: Cyber Guam, Mid-Planning Meeting
- Feb 6: Cyber Kauai, Mid-Planning Meeting
- Feb 11: Homeland Defender 2025, Mid-Planning Meeting
- Feb 18: Operation Healthy Alaska, Final Planning Meeting
- Feb 24: Operation Healthy MOWA Choctaw, Mid-Planning Meeting
- Feb 24: Operation Healthy American Samoa, Mid-Planning Meeting
- Feb 25: Operation Healthy Ellwood, Mid-Planning Meeting

More information
on missions at:



FY25 IRT PROGRAM MANAGERS

Major John Pineau
Army Reserve | Army Active Duty

Captain Scott Thurman
Army National Guard

Captain Emanuel Mendez
Marine Corps Reserve | Marine Corps Active Duty

Lieutenant Commander Shaun Shillady
Navy Reserve | Navy Active Duty

Major Nathaniel Horwitz-Willis
Air National Guard | Air Force Active Duty

Major Michael Nordin
Air Force Reserve