



# DEFENSE ORIENTATION CONFERENCE ASSOCIATION

---

## Trip Report

Parris Island & Marine Corps Air Station, Beaufort, SC  
Hunter Army Airfield, Fort Stewart, GA  
January 22 – 24, 2023

Day One, in Savannah, GA, began at the Alida Hotel with a social hour in the lounge. There were 22 DOCANS for this two-day event which was a great turn-out. Afterwards, most of us retired to an excellent seafood restaurant within walking distance.



Day two @ Marine recruiting Depot Parris Island and Marine Corps Airstation, Beaufort, SC. Here, after being briefed on their mission, we toured the air traffic control tower that has responsibility over all vehicles and aircraft on the runways. The area of 35 square miles around the installation that is reserved for testing and training is controlled by a room full of air traffic controllers that monitor their aircraft, and those flying into four other airfields including Savannah's commercial airport.

We then were briefed on the aircraft rescue and firefighting center with all the associated equipment. Unlike firefighting equipment normally seen around urban areas, these trucks are six wheel drives capable of going cross-country into the bogs and sandy shores. Before lunch, we received briefings on the K-9 military working dogs, all of which are bred and fully trained at Lackland AFB, near San Antonio, TX.

At the recruiting depot, we were hosted to lunch with two female drill instructors with years of experience and pride in both their jobs as DIs and their own achievements. We were then briefed by the Commanding Officer and the recruitment training officer. Colonel Bradley Ward was obviously proud of his command and the job they achieve each day. The DIs work roughly 120 hours a week, when training and they train by example which today's Generation Z recruits apparently require more than just being

told what to do. Upon arrival, the recruits must immediately surrender their cell phones which is their first real indication of the intense basic training they will be facing.

We then visited a variety of recruiting training sites around the base. Before being allowed to leave, and at the instigation of one unnamed member, we were escorted to the site of the famous inductees' footprints and required to stand at attention while being screamed at by a senior male DI. For those who were not clear on the impact that could have on a new recruit, it became clear. Once back at the hotel a similar majority of us adjourned to another seafood dispensary.

Day three we departed for Hunter Army Airfield which is part of Fort Stewart, GA. This is the Army's largest airfield, with a runway that is 11,375 feet long using 350 acres of concrete. Its location near railways and ports plays a critical role in power projection capabilities. They can deploy both equipment and soldiers within 18 hours to operations anywhere in the world. Welcomed by the Deputy Commanding General of Support for the 3rd Infantry Division, we then visited the 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade (3Cab) hanger and saw more types of helicopters than ever before with a full tour of each craft.

On our bus ride out to Fort Stewart, we were informed by the Major who accompanied us of the history and present-day use. Beside the training area which hosts and acts as landlord to Hunter Airfield, this base is one of nine Force Generation Installations in the U.S. With only a 21-day start up period, they can mobilize and deploy 12k Guard/Reservists in just 16 weeks and later conduct demobilization as units return home. This includes checking physical abilities as well as practicing shooting skills at the largest virtual shooting range that many of us had ever seen; many of us enjoyed participating in the demonstration. The soldiers and contractors that support this command are committed to performing their duty when this country finds itself at war with a Near peer competitor anywhere in the world.

This was a successful conference, enjoyed by all and with exposure to the guard/reserve aspect of our military's preparedness filled in another detail and example of our militaries 24/7 vigilance.