

# **Illinois Army National Guard's 123rd assumes engineer mission**

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SPRINGFIELD - Soldiers from five Illinois Army National Guard companies of the 123rd Engineer Battalion gathered Sept. 22 at the Bank of Springfield Pavilion in Springfield, Illinois, for the battalion's official activation ceremony.



Lt. Col. Krista Soria of Springfield, Illinois, commander of the 123rd Engineer Battalion, and Command Sgt. Maj. Derik Kraus of Ava, Illinois, command sergeant major of the 123rd Engineer Battalion, uncased the unit's colors, officially marking the unit's mission assignment as engineers.

In preparation for the new mission, the 123rd cased its old colors as 2nd Battalion, 123rd Field Artillery Regiment in August 2016. The units of the field artillery stayed in the same locations transitioning to a new role as engineers.

Soria said she was proud to be the commander of the 123rd, telling the Soldiers in formation that their mission as engineers is the very embodiment of the National Guard.

"You have done everything that has been asked of you the past year," said Soria. "It hasn't been easy, but you have stepped up and gotten the job done, I couldn't be more proud to be your commander."

Maj. Gen. Michael Zerbonia of Chatham, Illinois, the Assistant Adjutant General – Army for the Illinois National Guard, said the unit's new role was integral in domestic operations.

"You are moving forward into a new mission, a mission that is incredibly important," said Zerbonia. "The capabilities you will bring to the Illinois Army National Guard will be key in domestic operations."

The 123rd has horizontal construction and engineering capabilities, as well as firefighting capabilities. Soria said the battalion is also adding vertical construction and engineering capabilities. This will add carpenters, plumbers and other trades to the unit's paving and road construction engineering.