

Gov. Pritzker Names Col. Richard Neely to Lead Illinois National Guard

Office of the Governor

Springfield, Ill. - Governor JB Pritzker has named Illinois Air National Guard Col. Richard R. Neely of Springfield, Ill., as the 40th Adjutant General of the Illinois National Guard replacing Army National Guard Maj. Gen. Richard J. Hayes, who is retiring from the military after more than 33 years of service.

“Colonel Neely has extensive leadership experience in both domestic operations and overseas making him exceptionally well-qualified to lead our 13,000 Illinois National Guard men and women,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “I also want to thank Maj. Gen. Hayes for his more than three decades of military service and for his many accomplishments leading the Illinois National Guard since 2015. He is the epitome of a professional military officer.”

Col. Neely becomes the second Air Force officer to lead the Illinois National Guard. The first was Maj. Gen. Harold G. Holesinger, who retired in 1991. Col. Neely has been eligible for promotion to brigadier general since March 2018 and will be promoted soon after assuming the duties of The Adjutant General on Feb. 15.

“I am extremely proud of this team and of the many accomplishments of our Illinois National Guard. The Soldiers and Airmen have often heard me say ‘If you are not first, your destined to be last and in our business thinking about being the best and winning each and every time is pivotal. This great team took that competitive spirit to heart and today’s Illinois National Guard is the best in the nation,” said Maj. Gen. Richard J. Hayes. “I have full trust and confidence that the Illinois National Guard will exceed every goal and meet every challenge put before it. Rich Neely is an experienced and forward-thinking leader and working with the amazing team I leave with him, will do an excellent job leading the National Guard in the years ahead.”

“It is truly humbling to be appointed the 40th Adjutant General of the State of Illinois and to be selected from a field of many excellent high-qualified officers,” said Col. Richard R. Neely. “I have been blessed to have many great mentors throughout my career and to be given challenging assignments that have helped prepare me to lead the Illinois National Guard. I thank Governor Pritzker for his confidence in me, and I also know that the Illinois National Guard will continue to excel as a team.”

In Col. Neely’s most recent national assignment, he was the Air National Guard Principal Deputy Director for Operations/Deputy Director for Cyber and Space Operations at Joint Base Andrews, Maryland. As the Principal Deputy Director, he was the staff officer responsible for the day-to-day management of the Air National Guard’s Air, Intelligence, Nuclear, Cyber and Space Operations portfolio, affecting 105,500 Airmen. He oversaw a staff of 460 personnel with a \$4.1 billion portfolio. As the Deputy Director for Cyber & Space Operations, he was responsible for the support, resourcing, and management of an expansive Cyber, Communications and Space portfolio, which included 154 Cyber, Communications and Space units and a budget exceeding \$2.5 billion. In this capacity, he served as the Air National Guard’s Chief Information Officer responsible for the engineering, integration, sustainment and cyber security of systems supporting the Air National Guard.

Colonel Neely also served in a Joint assignment as the

National Guard Bureau’s Chief of Current Operations in Washington D.C. In this capacity, he was the National Guard’s focal point to respond to all major domestic events and disasters coordinating with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Northern Command, and the 54 states and territories.

From 2012 to 2014, Neely was the Illinois National Guard’s Joint Chief of Staff. As the “Joint Chief,” he was responsible for domestic operations including homeland defense and defense support to civil authorities. He also worked with the Army National Guard, Air National Guard, 37 state agencies, 22 federal agencies and organizations, and 23 international governmental and military commands to ensure the Illinois National Guard was prepared to respond to domestic emergencies. In addition, he also oversaw the service member and family support section and helped lead the Illinois National Guard’s State Partnership Program with the Polish military.

Prior to assuming duties as the Illinois National Guard Chief of the Joint Staff, Neely served as the U.S. Department of Defense’s senior interagency planner for the 2012 NATO Summit National Special Security Event in Chicago. He has held numerous command and staff assignments covering operations, cyber, logistics and finance. He is a Master Cyberspace Officer and fully Joint qualified. His career also included two deployments in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Col. Neely spent six years in the enlisted ranks, first as a Soldier and then as an Airman, before being commissioned as an officer in August 1990. He has more than 33 years of military service.

Col. Neely and his wife Tammy reside in Springfield Illinois where they raised their family Denton, Ashley, Jessica, Jennifer and Janay. He will assume the duties of the Adjutant General on Feb. 15 with an official Change of Command ceremony to be held April 6 at Chatham’s Glenwood High School.

