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Hometown News Release

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Murfreesboro Guardsman Graduates from U.S. Army Ranger School

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. – Staff Sgt. William Lukens, a student at Middle Tennessee State University and squad leader in the Tennessee National Guard, graduated from U.S. Army Ranger School at Fort Benning, Ga, Dec. 9.

As one of the toughest military training courses in the U.S. Armed Forces, Ranger School is the Army’s premier program for teaching small unit tactics and leadership. During the 61-day course, Lukens learned how to lead squads and platoons in dismounted operations, around the clock, in all types of climates and terrain.

“When I found out I was accepted to attend the course, I didn’t have much time to prepare and I knew this would be one of the biggest challenges of my career,” said Lukens. “I actually got up right after the call and ran 10 miles that day, then continued to work on my cardio as much as I could.”

For nine weeks, Lukens endured three brutal phases of training which included; Benning phase, which established his tactical combat fundamentals and assessed his physical stamina and mental toughness; Mountain phase, where he trained on combat mountaineering and learned how to conduct combat patrols in a mountainous environment; and Swamp phase, where he then applied small unit tactics and techniques and led raids, ambushes, patrols, and urban assaults while navigating rivers, swamps, and using small boats. This was all done on little food and sleep.

“It was a very tough course and one of the most difficult things I have ever done,” said Lukens, who completed the course on his first try. Historically, 50 percent of Soldiers who attend Ranger School do not pass, and many of them must make multiple attempts to graduate.

But Lukens was no stranger to challenges and stress. He recently completed the Army Air Assault School and Mountain Warfare School. In 2021 he won the National Guard’s Best Warrior Competition and represented the National Guard’s 54 states and territories at the U.S. Army Best Warrior Competition.

Lukens was recently promoted to staff sergeant and is an infantryman with Jamestown’s Troop F, 2nd Squadron, 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment. He plans to help train junior Soldiers in the tactics and skills he learned at Ranger School.



“I’m looking forward to getting back to my unit and training my junior Soldiers,” said Lukens. “I’ve been privileged to get these opportunities and attend these elite schools, and I will pass on all I have learned.”

Lukens is currently finishing his bachelor’s degree in business finance at MTSU. He plans on graduating next year and is considering attending the Tennessee National Guard’s Officer Candidate School in Smyrna to earn a commission.

“Officer Candidate School is a good, possible option in the future,” said Lukens. “But I really want to make a difference as a squad leader and lead Soldiers at that level. I think I can make the biggest difference there and that’s important to me.”

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Staff Sgt. William Lukens, an infantryman with the Tennessee National Guard's 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment, poses for a photo with his mother, Liz Lukens, Dec. 9, at his U.S. Army Ranger School graduation, at Fort Benning, Ga. (submitted photo)



Staff Sgt. William Lukens, an infantryman with the Tennessee National Guard's 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment, poses for a photograph in the fall of 2021 when he was a Sergeant and competing in the Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition. (photo courtesy of the Tennessee National Guard)

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