

[https://www.wvnews.com/news/wvnews/west-virginia-university-serves-as-venue-for-locked-shields-cyber-defense-exercise/article\\_25ce1f02-0301-11ef-b11d-dbc136dabf33.html](https://www.wvnews.com/news/wvnews/west-virginia-university-serves-as-venue-for-locked-shields-cyber-defense-exercise/article_25ce1f02-0301-11ef-b11d-dbc136dabf33.html)

## West Virginia University serves as venue for Locked Shields cyber defense exercise

by Charles Young SENIOR STAFF WRITER  
Apr 25, 2024



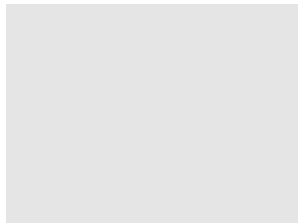
U.S. Air Force Brig. Gen. Heather W. Blackwell, director of cyberspace and information dominance, and chief information officer, headquarters Air Combat Command, Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Virginia, speaks Thursday during a press conference at the conclusion of cyber defense exercise Locked Shields '24.

Screenshot

MORGANTOWN, W.Va. (WV News) — The campus of West Virginia University recently served as the venue for what is billed as the “world’s largest and most complex international live-fire cyber defense exercise.”

Locked Shields '24, organized by Joint Force Headquarters — Department of Defense Information Network (JFHQ-DODIN), included more than 3,500 individuals from 40 countries who participated in a simulated large-scale cyberattack on a fictional nation.

Hosted by the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defense Center of Excellence (CCDCOE) each year since 2008, the “dynamic, critical infrastructure-focused exercise” is an important source of training for various defense partners, said Bill Walker, JFHQ-DODIN chief of staff.



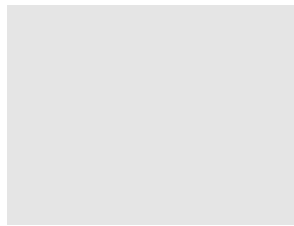
Walker

“The exercise epicenter is in Tallinn, Estonia, where the NATO CCDCOE provides a world-class series of challenges that replicate the complexities of real-world cyber defense, including critical thinking, strategic decision-making, legal considerations, crisis communication and strategic planning,” he said.

The exercise's participants were split into a Red Team and a Blue Team, with the WVU Coliseum serving as the base of operations for the Blue Team.

U.S. Air Force Brig. Gen. Heather W. Blackwell, director of cyberspace and information dominance, and chief information officer, headquarters Air Combat Command, Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Virginia, complimented WVU on its facilities.

"WVU and President (Dr. E. Gordon) Gee were amazing hosts, providing us with the best exercise venue that I've seen in my 26 years in the United State Air Force," she said.

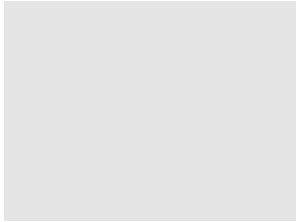


Blackwell

Retired Maj. Gen. James Hoyer, who now serves as vice president for economic innovation at WVU, said the entire university community is "appreciative to be included" in the exercise.

"We believe that this is important to us as a university because it allows us to operationalize our land grant mission," he said. "Land grant institutions have a specific focus on going out and solving problems in the nation."

WVU students and faculty who participated in and supported the exercise sacrificed part of the last week prior to final exams, Hoyer said.



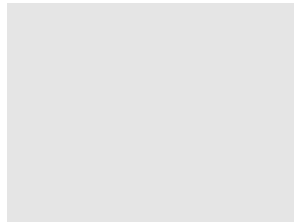
“That tells you the dedication of our faculty and students here at West Virginia University,” he said.

Hoyer

West Virginia National Guard  
Adjutant General Bill Crane

said state officials hope to participate in “many more” similar exercises in the future.

“Thank you for coming here to West Virginia,” he said. “We look forward to the continued partnership and look forward to working together to solve the hardest problems that we’re all being faced with.”



Crane

---

Senior Staff Writer Charles Young can be reached at 304-626-1447 or [cyoung@theet.com](mailto:cyoung@theet.com)