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## CHDS Student Makes Virginia History

### Center for Homeland Defense and Security

Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California

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# CHDS Student Makes Virginia History

 [chds.us/c/item/732](https://chds.us/c/item/732)

Twenty-year Virginia State Police veteran Tracy Russillo was on campus with her master's degree cohort when she received news of historical proportions.

Not only had she been promoted to major, Russillo was made the highest ranking sworn female officer in the agency's 79-year history as deputy director of the department's Bureau of Administrative and Support Services, or BASS. Russillo is a masters' degree student at the Naval Postgraduate School Center for Homeland Defense and Security (CHDS).

"It's a tremendous honor to be the first woman (sworn officer) on the executive staff, but I don't want to be known as the woman major. I want to be known as the hard-working major," Russillo said during a class break. "It makes me want to work harder because I know there is a legacy. I am in a way paving the way for the next person. I don't care if the next major is a man or if it's a woman. It's an important legacy to keep in mind."

In overseeing the BASS office, Russillo will be responsible for a bureau that supports the State Police's law enforcement functions through eight divisions: Communications; Criminal Justice Information Systems, Information Technology and Planning, Personnel; Property and Logistics, Training; and, the Statewide Agencies Radio System (STARTS). Russillo will also be the department's liaison to the Virginia General Assembly.

As with most law enforcement agencies, the Virginia State Police is amid budget challenges during an era in which it has taken on a homeland security role on top of its criminal justice mission. Also, various Virginia agencies, including the State Police, have been plagued by a computer system that has not operated optimally. The system is a joint operation of the Virginia Information Technology Center and Northrop Grumman. Russillo said one of her first goals is improving relations with the company.

"There has been a disconnect between our agency and Northrop Grumman," Russillo said. "Because of that disconnect my job is a little more challenging trying to bring back everybody to a positive working relation."

Russillo was most recently division commander of field operations in the Northern Virginia Region. As homeland security became an increasingly important police function, she decided to further her education.

"There is so much going on in regard to terrorism and being alert. I felt like I needed to be a better leader and to do that," she said. "I thought I needed some more education."

Thus far, she has found CHDS coursework to be invaluable.

"Every course has touched on some aspect of that role," she said. "Whether it is unconventional threat or intelligence class, every class has added to my body of knowledge and has given me some new tool to put in my tool box. I have learned so much it just makes me want to learn more. It makes me more interested in learning more. I want to continue on this path."



